Copalis State Beach Airport (S16), Washington, USA

The Copalis State Airport is an interesting stop for Sim pilots and worth checking out. The following information is taken from the Washington State Department of Transportation web site:

Copalis State Airport

UPDATE: September 2007

WHERE TO LAND?

Some pilots have expressed confusion as to the proper landing area at Copalis State Airport. The coordinates in the Airport Facility Guide appear to be incorrect and will be revised. Weather and vandalism are also problems for the maintenance of our windsock and signs. To help with this matter we are looking for "Adopt An Airport" volunteers. Please contact us at 360-651-6300 if you are interested.

WSDOT is currently working with Washington State Parks to replace our windsock and signs with more durable structures. In the meantime, please consult the map above for the correct landing area.

The aircraft landing area at Copalis State is north of the Copalis River and southeast of the large Copalis Ocean Rocks. The runway area is approximately 4500' long and 150'

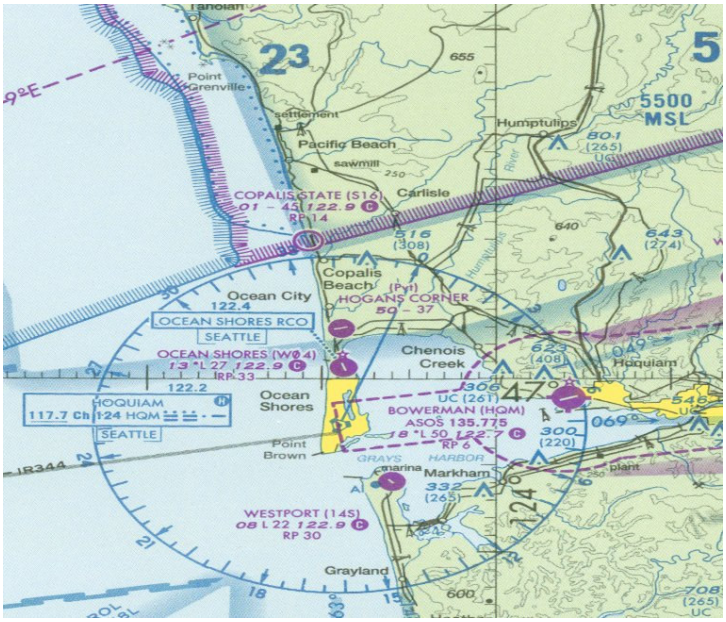
wide.

PILOT IN COMMAND, LAND AT YOUR OWN RISK!

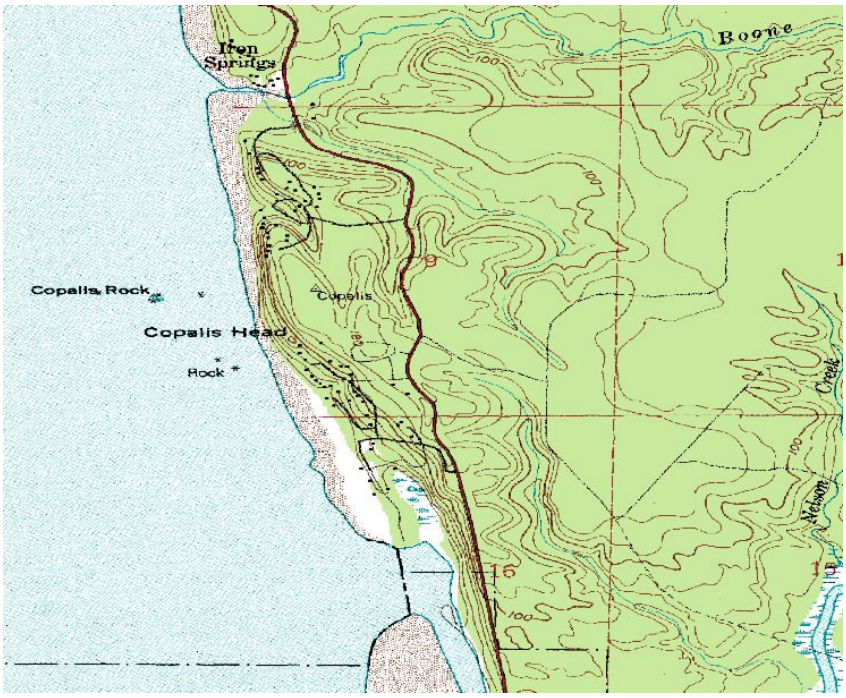
Located at the mouth of the Copalis River, Copalis is a unique airport. It is the only known beach airport in the United States, and is the only stretch of ocean beach in Washington where landing is legal. The runway is the 4500 foot stretch of ocean beach from the Copalis River on the south to the rocks a mile north. The clam digging is excellent, and resting or watching the great Pacific Ocean from here is fantastic. You can surf, fish, hunt for glass fishing balls, or find interesting pieces of driftwood. No camping is allowed at the airport.

Since the runway is the beach itself, there are some things to watch out for. First, land only on the damp sand; the dry sand is very, very soft and dangerous. The airport is generally unusable at high tide since the runway is under water. The available parking area will also be under water, so remaining overnight can cause definite problems to an aircraft. Usage is very high during periods of low tides. As many as 75 aircraft have been reported as being parked there at one time. Ground vehicle and pedestrian access is legal, so the area can be extremely congested. Since the ocean washes the runway twice a day, debris and driftwood are possible. Overflight is essential to inspect for pedestrians, vehicles, animals, and debris. Remember, people on the ground can not hear the airplane with the power off, so be ready to go around. The airport is generally open year round.

The airport is depicted on the Seattle Sectional:

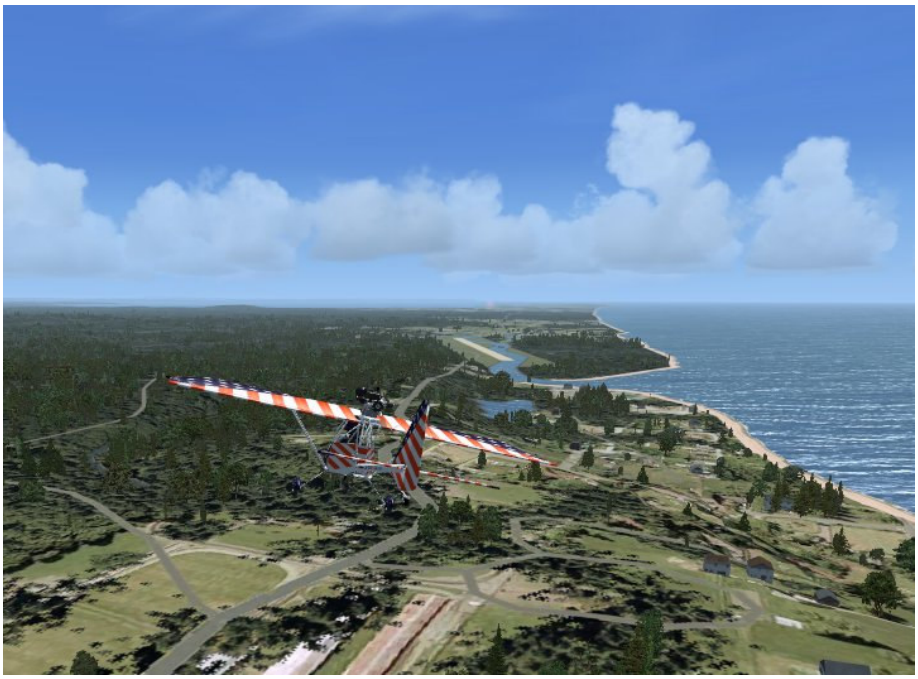


There is no evidence of the airport on the USGS Topographic Map:



Google Earth doesn't have a good image, but Virtual Earth does show us something:

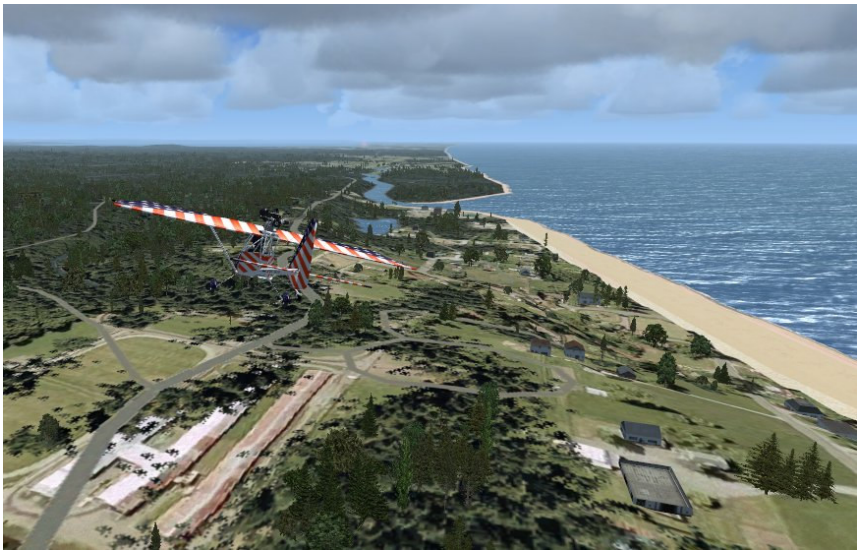
Unfortunately, when FSG mesh and UTX USA vector terrain are installed, the airport in FSX looks nothing like "as real as it gets":



The runway is on the edge of the Copalis River, not on the shore. To fix this, I did the following:

Created a new flatten at the correct location and excluded the old one. Created a new shoreline using the UT USA "ocean sand" texture. Added some beach area by placing a "sand" polygon at the airport. I also placed a windsock. All this was done using SBuilderX.

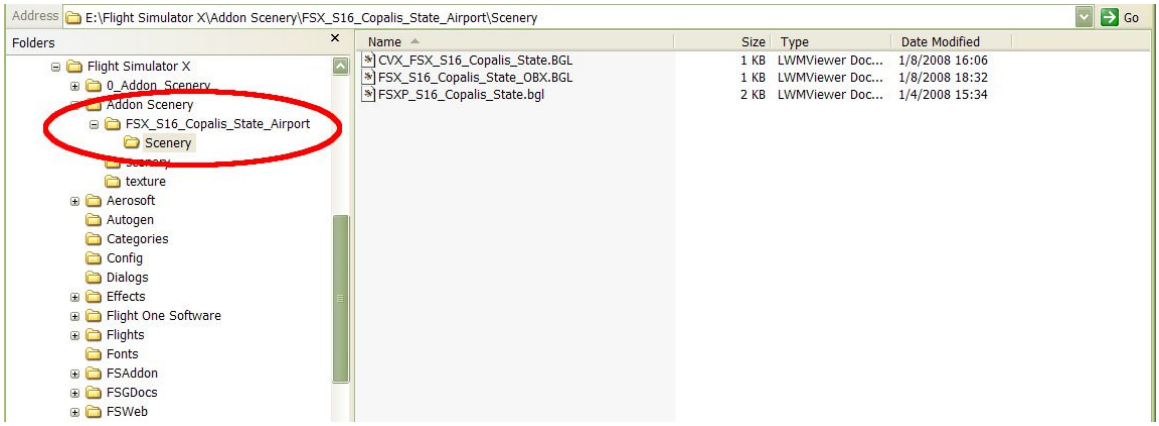
I then moved the runway and added some sand apron under it using FSXPlanner. The result is much better, with just a little work fine tuning the shapes a bit:



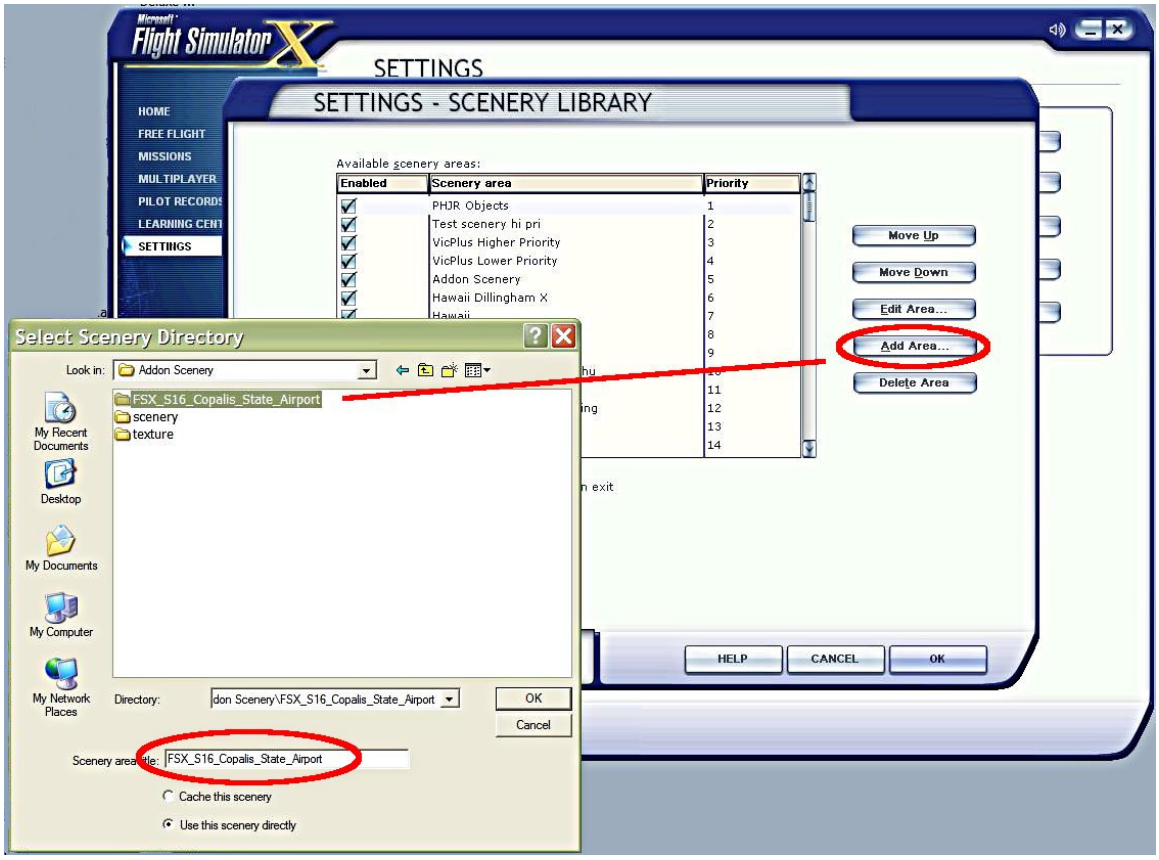
Copalis State Airport is now ready for landing.

Installation: UTX USA vector terrain is a requirement for this scenery. In particular, the water/coastlines are required. I also recommend the FSG terrain mesh be used. I didn't test using the default mesh, but it would probably be OK as well. Note that this scenery was built for FSX sp1. I don't expect any issues with sp2 or acceleration but one never knows. Scenery settings shouldn't be an issue, but for reference I use Mesh complexity 92, Mesh resolution 19m, Texture resolution 1m, Water effects low 2.x, and Scenery complexity Extremely Dense.

The scenery consists of bgl files only – no new textures are required (except for the shoreline textures installed by UTX USA). The zip file is set up with a suggested folder structure. The *FSX S16 Copalis State Airport* folder may be placed in any location. Many users prefer to place it under the *Addon Scenery* folder which is installed by default in the *Flight simulator X* folder, but this is a personal preference item. With most unzip utilities, it is sufficient to simply drag and drop the folder into your FSX installation:

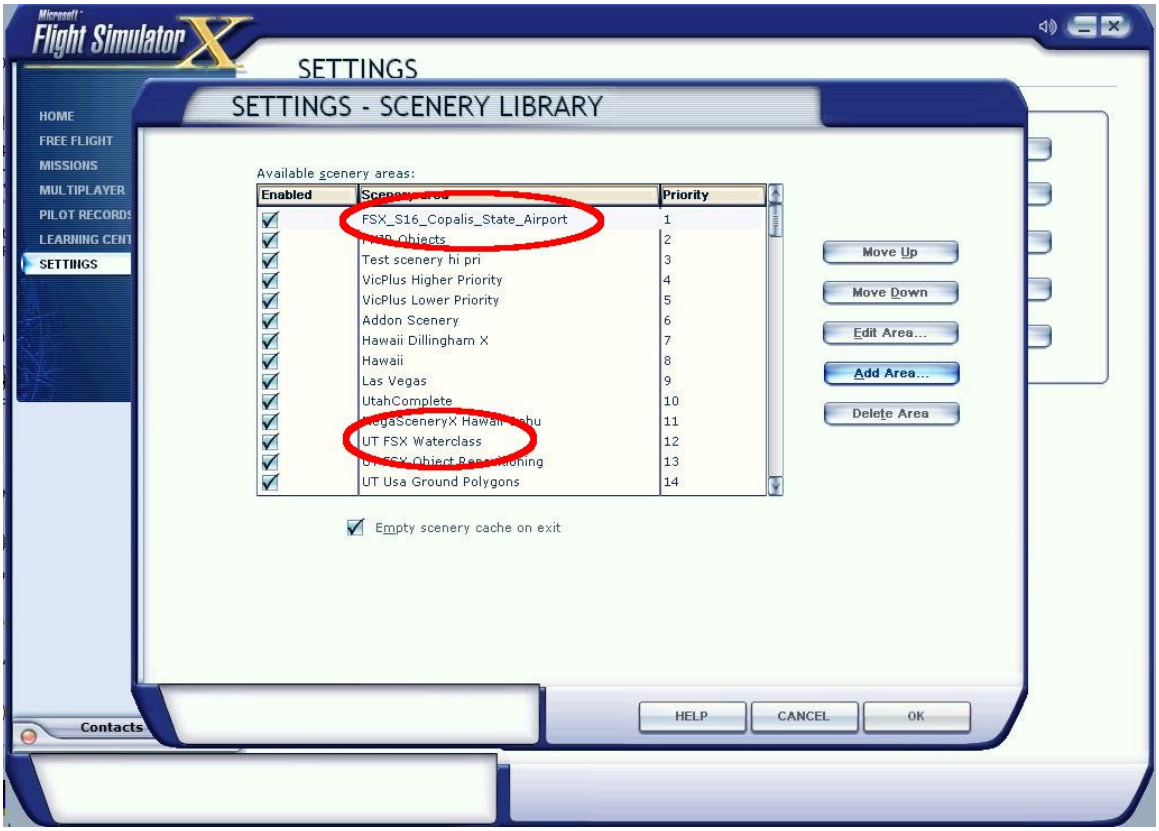


Once you have the file folders installed to the hard drive, it is necessary to add the scenery area in the "scenery library" dialog within FSX. When you click on "Add Area", a dialog pops up that allows you to browse for the parent folder you just created. Highlight this. Note in the bottom, you can edit the title for the scenery area. This title is used in the scenery library listing:



Once you click "OK" the scenery area is added. The library always places new scenery areas in the highest priority position (priority 1). You can highlight it by clicking on the title and use the "move down" to move the area down in priority

if desired. I recommend that you keep it at a higher priority than the UTX USA scenery areas:



Once you have completed this, the scenery is ready for use.

Removal: Removal is simply a reversal of the above steps. Open the scenery library dialog, highlight the scenery area by clicking on it, and then click on "Delete Area". When you click on "OK" it will be removed from the FSX scenery database. Once that is done you can delete the FSX_S16_Copalis_State_Airport folder and all its contents.

Credits:

SBuilderX ver 3.10 is authored by Luis Sa of ptsim, used for terrain modifications and placement of the windsock object.

FSXPlanner ver R27b is authored by Russell Hodgson of zBlueSoftware LLC, used for airport modifications

The aircraft used in the screenshot is the Kolb Firefly v2 by Byron Warwick.

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