Maxx-XP SKYMAXX PRO

Version 2.0

Sundog™ Software

AVIATION

Support Documentation

Introduction:

Thank you for supporting Maxx-XP, and congratulations on your purchase of SkyMAXX Pro V2. Our goal with version two was to tackle a bunch of improvements and bring even more realism to X-Plane with high quality, high resolution textures.

SkyMAXX Pro V2 is a plug-in driven add-on, that creates a dynamic sky in X-Plane 10 by adding key features lacking in the default cloud engine. The overall look and feel of X-Plane is drastically changed, and it brings a level of excitement to your simulation experience. Creating this environment, we needed a few things not available in the default cloud engine.

SkyMAXX Pro V2 Key Features:

- ✔ Cloud movement depending on wind speed and direction.
- ✔ Clouds morph with weather conditions.
- ✔ A true cirrus layer with static contrails.
- ✔ 3D procedurally drawn clouds.
- ✔ Crepuscular rays (god rays).
- ✔ Custom sky colors.
- ✔ Performance and appearance tuning using a custom user interface.
- ✔ High resolution cloud puffs for more realism.
- ✔ New cloud shadows with adjustable intensity - uses a new shadowing technique never. before seen in X-Plane, with no measurable framerate impact.
- ✔ Lens flare is now available, a first for X-Plane.
- ✔ Towering cumulus clouds (new cloud type!) will be added when thunderstorms are present.
- ✔ Thunderstorms are larger and more dramatic.
- ✔ Ambient lighting on clouds more realistic.
- ✔ Greatly improved dawn/dusk transitions.
- ✔ Rare crash on MacOS resolved.
- ✔ “Low” overcast quality greatly improved.
- ✔ Clouds “popping” when the camera turns is greatly reduced.
- ✔ New and vastly improved sky colors, specifically developed to enhance the clouds.

As usual I we try to offer the best value to you as the consumer, this is why V2 will be offered free to existing customers and the price will remain the same for new additions to the SkyMAXX family. Me ,Frank, the BETA team and XA worked hard to bring you the very best for X-Plane, I hope you enjoy our efforts.

Regards,

John Spahn

Maxx-XP

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Requirements & Installation:

We made SkyMAXX Pro scalable and as frame rate friendly as possible. With that said, X-Plane 10 is a very resource-hungry program when you factor in the global scenery, aircraft simulation, weather engine, and AI traffic, to name a few features. Since SkyMAXX Pro is better on frame rates over the default cloud engine, a good rule of thumb is: if you run X-Plane 10 well, SkyMAXX Pro will enhance your simulation experience.

Basic Requirements:

- ✔ Mid level GPU(video card) with at least 512MB RAM, 1-2 GB recommended
- ✔ Multi-core processor
- ✔ 4-8 GB system RAM

Not Recommended:

- ✗ Integrated GPU's not from Nvidia or ATI
- ✗ Running other programs while X-Plane is running
- ✗ Old outdated system drivers
- ✗ A system that hasn't been optimized for gaming

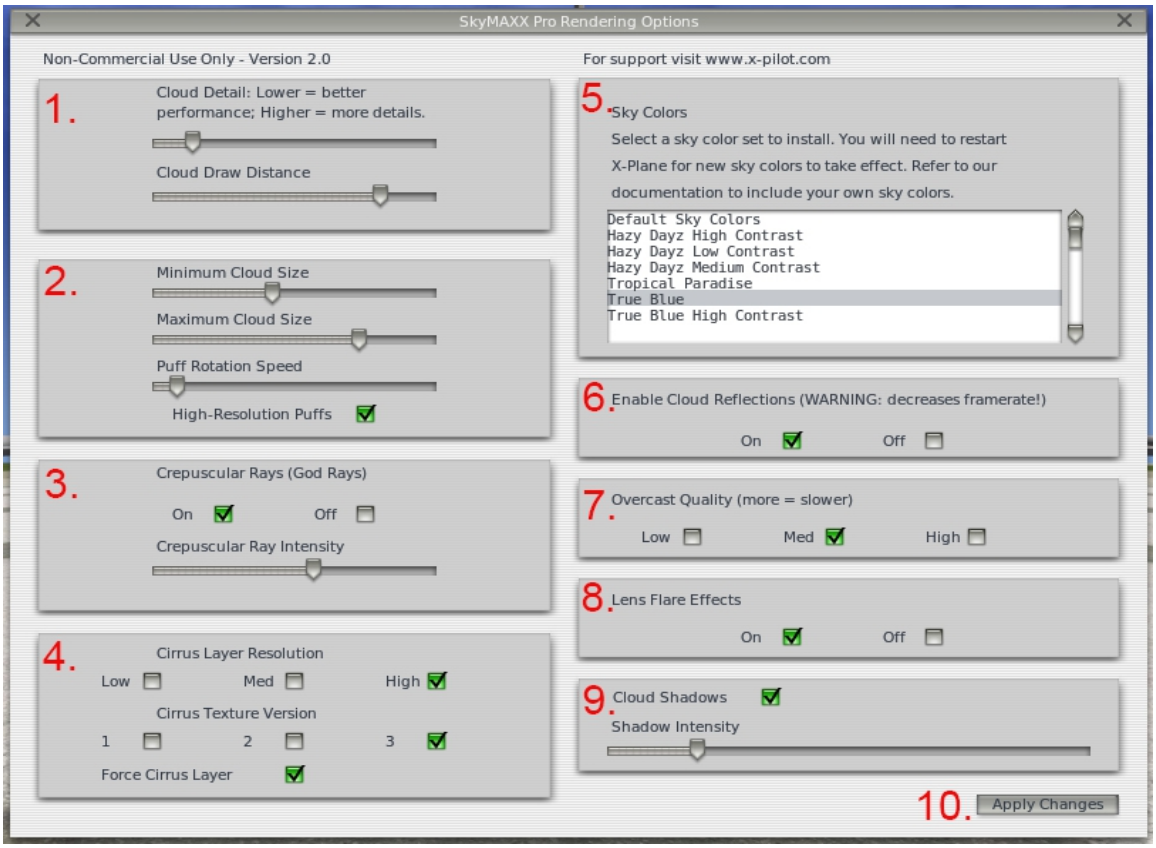
This is just a basic set of requirements to help you get the most out of SkyMAXX Pro. Please check out forums like http://X-Pilot.com for more information on hardware solutions for X-Plane 10.

Configuration:

Once development started rolling along, the need for a user interface became apparent right away. Our main focus was to give the end-user control over the appearance and performance, with an easy to use UI easily accessible from with in X-Plane 10.

To access the UI go to the X-Plane 10 Menu/Plugins/SkyMAXX Pro/Configuration....

You should see this dialog, see explanations below:



(1) Cloud Detail & Cloud Draw Distance

Cloud Detail

Adjusting the cloud detail is one of the best options in the UI for adding performance to SkyMAXX Pro. Basically by adjusting this option, you will see more or less “bumpiness” in the cloud puffs. This option will not affect cirrus or stratus layers.

Cloud Draw Distance

This is the distance of the cloud puffs to the horizon. A higher setting will yield less performance, but the clouds will extend out closer to the horizon. Keep in mind, the visibility setting from the X-Plane 10 weather dialog will also impact the cloud draw distance.

(2) Cloud Size and Puff Rotation

Cloud Size

Not only will adjusting the cloud sizes add performance to the simulation, it is also nice for tweaking the overall look of SkyMAXX Pro. Be creative and adjust to your liking.

Puff Rotation Speed

We included a rotation effect in SkyMAXX Pro, which works along side the morphing function of the cloud puffs. Adjusting the slider all the way left will turn this effect off, and moving it right will increase the speed.

High Resolution Puffs

Although not much a performance hit we added the ability to revert back to the old V1 clouds. Use the radio button to turn the hi rez option on or off.

(3) Crepuscular Rays (God Rays)

The crepuscular rays are an expensive element in SkyMAXX Pro. If you have low-end hardware, I suggest turning these off to increase performance. The intensity adjustment is there for you to tweak the god rays for your tastes.

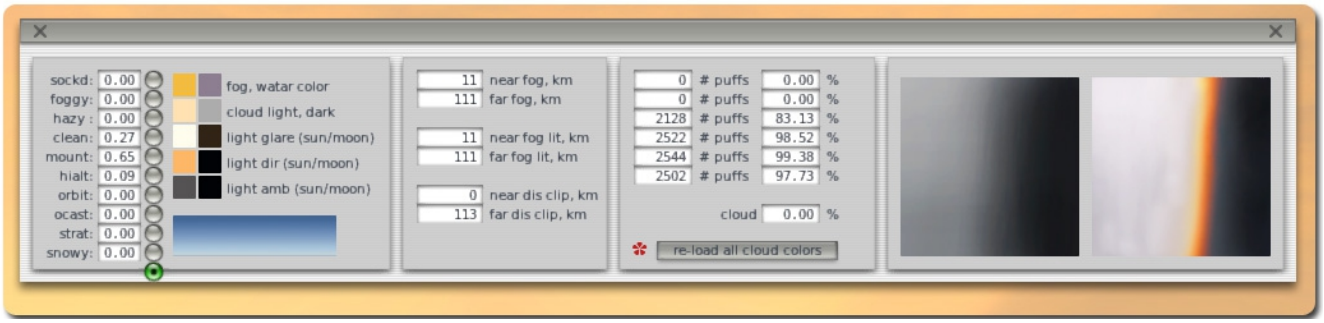
(4) Cirrus Layers

Included are 3 different cirrus layers with 3 different resolutions. Choosing a lower resolution will result in less detail, with a nominal increase in performance.

(5) Sky Colors

Six sky colors are included with SkyMAXX Pro, optimized to work seamlessly with the cloud engine. Once a sky color is selected, SkyMAXX will automatically back up the default sky colors and place them inside the root of the plug-in. There is no need to manually backup your default skies. To restore your default sky colors, just select them from the UI.

To see your new sky color selection, either restart X-Plane 10 or go to the X-Plane menu/special/show sky colors and hit the “re-load all cloud colors” button:



(6) Cloud Reflections

Use these radio buttons to either enable or disable cloud reflections. *(NOTE cloud reflections with water reflections set to low may look strange, recommend setting to medium or higher from the X-Plane rendering options.)*

(7) Overcast Quality

For performance we offer three types of of overcast layers, try playing around with them until you are happy with the results.

(8) Lens Flare

Use the radio buttons to enable or disable lens flare, we thought this option added a more dynamic feel to the skies.

(9) Cloud Shadows

Frank found a way and man does it look pretty, we don't rely on the X-Plane default for cloud shadows but instead we employed a entirely new system to bring this feature to X-Plane. The intensity can be adjusted via a slider and can be turned off using the radio button.

(10) Apply Changes

Hit this and start flying already.

Modifying SkyMAXX Pro:

I included a few features in SkyMAXX Pro to allow for updates or user submitted content, and extend the product by allowing some of the art assets to be modified. Some art assets are subjective and by giving the end-user options we hope to generate more appeal.

Sky Colors

This is one of the most subjective topics I have seen in the X-Plane community. With SkyMAXX Pro, you have the ability to install as many different sky colors sets as you would like. Once installed, they will show up in the user interface and be selectable. There are many freeware options out there already. Find the sky set that appeals to you.

Installation:

Navigate to Resources/plugins/silverlining/skyColors/... Drop your sky set into the skyColors folder, fire up X-Plane 10, and load the new sky color set using the configuration option described in section 2 of this manual.

Cirrus Textures

Cirrus textures can also be changed and distributed as freeware only to the community. Users cannot redistribute modified versions of the default artwork. There are 3 different cirrus textures with 3 different resolutions. The cirrus textures can be modified by painting the "Alpha" layer of the *.tga. You will need a program like Photoshop or Gimp to do this.

Cirrus Resolutions:

1. Low resolution 1024x1024
2. Medium resolution 2048x2048
3. High resolution 4096x4096

Installation:

Navigate to Resources/plugins/silverlining/cirrusTextures/....you will see 3 folders labeled 1 thru 3. Inside each of those folders will be 3 more, labeled with the appropriate resolution for that particular cirrus texture. Install the appropriate texture into the folder and enjoy. Once you have the new textures installed it will be accessible in the UI. *****make sure and backup the original files*****

Support:

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