National Weather Service
Product Description Document (PDD)
NOAA Weather Radio Podcasts

Part 1 – Mission Connection

1. Product Description:

The NWS is responsible to make its weather, water and climate information widely available to taxpayers using commonly accepted standards and technologies. Currently the NWS provides audio broadcasts of their NOAA Weather Radio via the Internet only in a limited fashion.

The VIP on the NWR is able to convert the text transmitted to the CRS into mp3 files. Southern Region NWS offices are now testing the transfer of NWR files to the internet. In addition to making the mp3 file more accessible, we are placing links to the mp3 files in Realy Simple Syndication (RSS) files, making them accessible through podcasting. Anyone with an mp3 player and podcasting software can receive a suite of weather products from Southern Region NWS offices participating in this test .

2. Purpose/Intended Use:

The purpose of the podcasts is to provide NWR products and weather information to those people who either don't have a weather radio or don't live close enough to an NWR transmission tower. In addition, podcasting let's people listen to the broadcast on their own time. Someone could have the podcast software automatically download the latest forecast. Then as he or she leaves home they grab their mp3 player and are able to listen to the forecast on their way to work.

3. Audience:

This service is intended for anyone who would need access to the current conditions, forecasts or climate statements. The podcasts are available to anyone with a computer connected to the Internet and an mp3 (such as Ipod, Windows Media Player etc.)

4. Presentation:

The actual podcasts are in the commonly accepted audio format of mp3. All desktop computers can play mp3 files. In addition some stand alone mp3 players are on the market and just recently cell phones and car radios were being sold that could play mp3 files.

To subscribe to a podcast a person would access the RSS (really just a simple XML file) file via some podcasting software. This software like "Itunes" or "Ipodder" is freely available via the Internet. Once the person has subscribed to the RSS feed, the podcasting software will periodically check for new podcast and if it finds any downloads it to the computer and/or mp3 player. For example someone could subscribe to the El Paso zone forecast product. The podcasting software could be set up to check for a new forecast and when one is found it is immediately downloaded to the person's computer or mp3 and is ready to be listened to the next time the person uses their mp3 player.

5. Feedback Method:

We always are looking for positive or negative feedback on this product. Comments regarding the podcast will be emailed to the National Weather Service Southern Region webmaster at: SR-SRH.Webmaster@noaa.gov

Part 2 – Technical

1. Format and Science Basis:

The mp3 files for the podcasts will be generated with the VIP program on the NWR CRS and then transferred to LDAD. Once on LDAD a perl script will take the mp3 file, give it a unique file name based on the product and time the mp3 was created. Then the script file will write the RSS file (XML file) and finally transfer the mp3 and RSS file to the website. When someone access the podcasting website a PHP script dynamically reads each RSS file and creates a table for each geographic location with the latest time stamp for each mp3 file.

2. Availability:

This service will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at test sites. Selection of forecasts, daily climate statements, hourly weather roundups and synopsis might differ from site to site during this test period.