

***NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE POLICY DIRECTIVE 1-10***

***JUNE 26, 2006***

***Administration and Management***

***MANAGING THE PROVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION***

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**NOTICE:** This publication is available at: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/>.

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**Certified by:** CFO/CAO (J. Potts (Acting))

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**SUMMARY OF REVISIONS:** This directive supersedes National Weather Service Policy Directive 1-10, “Managing the Provision of Environmental Information,” dated June 6, 2005. Changes are: (1) Makes wording consistent with revision to NOAA’s Policy on Partnerships in the Provision of Environmental Information<sup>1</sup>, (2) Clarifies role of the Deciding Official, (3) Explains how this policy relates to environmental information services provided under agreement with other agencies (domestic and international), and (4) Clarifies guidance on what is considered a “substantial” modification to an information service.

1. The purpose of this policy directive is to establish guidance for documenting and seeking comments on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) National Weather Service (NWS) products, services, and dissemination systems used for provision of environmental information, in accordance with [Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\) Circular A-130](#) and [NOAA’s Policy on Partnerships in the Provision of Environmental Information](#) (“NOAA’s Partnership Policy”).

2. The nation benefits from government information disseminated both by Federal agencies and by diverse nonfederal parties, including commercial and not-for-profit entities. NWS recognizes cooperation, not competition, with private sector and academic and research entities best serves the public interest and best meets the varied needs of specific individuals, organizations, and economic entities. NWS will take advantage of existing capabilities and services of commercial and academic sectors to support efficient performance of NWS’s mission and avoid duplication and competition in areas not related to the NWS mission. NWS will give due consideration to these abilities and consider the effects of its decisions on the activities of these entities, in accordance with its responsibilities as an agency of the U.S. Government, to serve the public interest and advance the nation’s environmental information enterprise as a whole.

3. NWS’s participation in the environmental information enterprise will be founded on the following principles:

a. Mission connection: NWS’s information services will support the NWS mission.

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<sup>1</sup> See policy document at <http://www.weather.gov/partnershippolicy/> .

As a Government agency, NWS recognizes its core responsibility to protect life and property.

- b. Consultation: Unless public safety or national security concerns dictate otherwise, NWS will provide interested persons and entities adequate notice and opportunity for input into decisions regarding the development, substantial modification, and termination of significant products, services, and dissemination systems.
- c. Open information dissemination: NWS recognizes that open and unrestricted dissemination of high quality publicly funded information, as appropriate and within resource constraints, is good policy and is the law.
- d. Equity: NWS will be equitable in dealings with various classes of entities and will not show favoritism toward any particular entity within a class. NWS recognizes it has special responsibilities to some users (e.g. public safety officials) and different legal requirements for its interactions with entities of different types (e.g. other Federal agencies). NWS will not provide an information service to one entity unless it can also be provided to other similar entities.
- e. Recognition of roles of others: When faced with requests for information services, NWS will explain existing NWS services, including their uses and limitations, and inform the requester that others in the environmental information enterprise may be able to meet the requester's needs.

4. The NWS will conform to OMB Circular A-130 and NOAA's Partnership Policy by:

4.1 Documenting significant information services (See Definitions in [Attachment 1](#)). NWS will establish and maintain an inventory of all significant agency information services. This inventory will contain the following information in a form appropriate for the particular significant information service:

- What - What information is provided; what is the intended use; what are any technical limitations?
- Why - Why is the NWS providing it? Describe the connection to the NWS mission and/or legal mandates.
- Who - Who is the intended audience?
- How - How is it presented/provided?
- When - When is it available?
- Where - Where can comments be directed?

4.2 Communicating with affected parties. Prior to initiating, substantially modifying, altering the method of provision, or terminating significant information services, the NWS will seek comments from affected parties and the public regarding the proposed action. Methods used to seek comments will be designed to notify parties most directly impacted by the change. The comment period will be at least 30 days. When public safety or national security requires prompt action, comments may be obtained after the fact, as appropriate.

4.3 Considering views. Agencies' responsibilities for dissemination include an active knowledge of, and regular consultation with, the users of their information. A primary reason for communication with users is to gain their contribution to improving the quality and relevance of government information -- how it is created, collected, and disseminated. Before initiating, substantially modifying, altering the method of providing, or terminating a significant information service or services, the NWS will consider comments received giving particular emphasis to:

- whether the significant information service is considered helpful to the public or unnecessary;
- those who may be seriously affected (positively or negatively) by the proposed action;
- the ability of private sector entities and the academic and research communities to provide diverse services to serve the public interest by meeting the varied needs of specific individuals, organizations, and economic entities;
- applicable legal authorities and mandates; and
- the effect on NWS resources.

4.4 Open consultative processes. NWS will use various mechanisms to encourage the maximum practical and timely input from the public and all interested parties on decisions regarding the environmental information enterprise. These should occur on local, regional and national levels, should include professional, community and other interested groups, and can range from informal forums, e.g. NWS's Family of Services meetings, to more formal processes such as those convened under the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act. NWS-convened meetings will be open to all parties requesting attendance.

4.5 Notifying users. The NWS will provide public notice of its decisions regarding initiating, substantially modifying, altering the method of providing, or terminating a significant information service or services (see [NWSI 1-1001](#)). Users will be notified of the actual implementation of the change per NWSI 10-1805, *National Service and Technical Change Notices*, or other appropriate directives.

4.6 NWS will participate in and support the administrative review mechanisms and periodic review provisions of the NOAA Partnership Policy.

5. This directive establishes the following authorities and responsibilities:

5.1 The Assistant Administrator (AA) for Weather Services is the responsible official identified in the NOAA Partnership Policy. Persons who believe NWS information services are being provided in a manner contrary to the NOAA Partnership Policy may bring the matter to the attention of the AA for Weather Services, who will ascertain the facts and advise the petitioner of the AA's conclusions.

5.2 NWS headquarters offices are responsible for developing appropriate procedural

directives and supplements implementing this policy. They share joint responsibility for consistent application of this policy in the procedural directives and supplements they develop and maintain. In particular:

- a. The Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Services is responsible for development of procedural directives (e.g., NWSI 10-102, *New or Enhanced Products and Services*) implementing this policy, for NWS products and other services, regardless of the form or method of delivery (e.g., web, radio, graphics, digital);
- b. The Office of Operational Systems (OOS) is responsible for development of procedural directives implementing this policy, for OOS-managed NWS dissemination systems;
- c. The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) is responsible for development of procedural directives implementing this policy, for OCIO-managed NWS dissemination systems.

5.3 National Centers for Environmental Prediction and NWS Regional Headquarters offices are responsible for development of supplements implementing this policy for significant information services under their purview, including numerical model guidance.

5.4 The Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Services Training Division, along with the NWS Strategic Planning and Policy Office (SPP), is responsible for development of training materials as may be needed to assist staff in applying this policy. This includes training and assistance with identification of what changes are considered “significant” and in interpretation of “roles of others” (section 3e). SPP staff will be available to provide guidance to NWS staff in applying this policy to specific cases which may arise.

5.5 The SPP Director will provide NWS support for the periodic review of the NOAA Partnership Policy.

5.6 The Deciding Official (i.e., the NWS official responsible for approving or not approving a substantial change to significant NWS information services) must consider the requirements of this policy in evaluating the comments received on a proposal to initiate, substantially modify, alter the method of providing, or terminate a significant information service, and may confer with other NWS, NOAA, or Department officials (e.g., by seeking the advice of the NWS Operations Committee).

6. Scope. The process described in section 4, above, will apply to initiating, substantially modifying, altering the method of provision, or terminating any significant NWS information service (see definitions) used for the provision of environmental information. This includes:

- a. NWS products (data, forecast, and model guidance),
- b. NWS services,
- c. Dissemination systems, and
- d. Web sites (including significant changes to URL/URIs on these sites)

[Attachment 2](#) provides guidance on what is considered a “substantial” modification.

7. Relationship to other NWS Agreements. For NWS information services provided under agreement with other agencies, domestic or international (e.g., through an MOU, treaty, etc.), this directive will apply, unless the agreement specifies some other mechanism for public comment and review fulfilling the requirements of [Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\) Circular A-130](#).

8. Relationship to other NWS directives. [NWSI 10-102](#) – *New or Enhanced Products and Services*, provides the procedural details supporting this directive, for NWS products and services. [Attachment 1](#) lists additional directives that provide policy and procedures supporting this directive. Additional procedural directives and/or supplements may be required to fully implement responsibilities as designated in this directive.

9. This policy directive is supported by the references and glossary of terms listed in [Attachment 1](#).

Signed by	June 12, 2006
_____ Brigadier General David L. Johnson, USAF, Ret. Assistant Administrator for Weather Services	Date

## Attachment 1

### **References and Relationship to other NWS Directives**

OMB Circular A-130 - Management of Federal Information Resources

NOAA Policy on Partnerships in the Provision of Environmental Information

NWS Instruction 1-101 - NWS Directives System - Structure and Management

NWSI 1-1001 - Tracking and Public Notification of Proposed Changes to NWS Information Services - Implements procedures supporting this directive for tracking and public notification of proposed changes to NWS information services and decisions made concerning these proposed changes.

NWSI 1-1002 - Termination of NWS Information Services - Implements procedures supporting this directive for termination of NWS information services

NWSI 10-1 - NWS Requirements - Establishes policy and procedures for managing the NWS requirements process and the Operational Services Improvement Process (OSIP). NWSPD 1-10 defines policy which must be upheld prior to a final decision to implement changes to applicable NWS information services covered by this or any other NWS change management process.

NWSI 10-102 - New or Enhanced Products and Services - Implements procedures supporting this directive for products and services

NWSI 10-1805 - National Service and Technical Change Messages - Implements procedures for notification of actual (post decisional) implementation of changes to NWS information services; Note: Does not apply to all information service changes (e.g., NWS web pages or file transfer protocol (ftp) servers).

### **Definitions** (as applied in this policy directive)

Information - The term "information" means any communication or representation of knowledge in any medium or form, including textual, numerical, graphic, cartographic, narrative, or audiovisual.

Environmental Information – Any information that changes as environmental condition changes (e.g. weather, water, climate).

Provision – Refers to both the means (e.g., dissemination system) and content.

Information Service - Any product, dissemination system, or other service that provides environmental information to NWS users.

Significant Information Service - An information service that meets any of the following conditions:

- is required by law;
- involves substantial expenditure of funds;
- by reason of the nature of the service, is a matter of continuing public interest; or
- by reason of the time value of the service, commands public interest.

**Attachment 2 – Guidance on Definition of “Substantial” Modification/Change**

NWS officials will exercise judgment in determining whether a change in an existing NWS information service (e.g., an NWS web site) meets the threshold of a “substantial modification” and thus must follow the process described in Section 4 of this directive. In exercising this judgment, NWS officials should keep the perspective of users of NWS information services in mind and “err on the side of caution” in interacting with users regarding changes that may affect them. Table 1, below, provides examples of changes which would typically meet the “substantial” threshold, as well as changes which would not.

Table 1. Examples of Changes to NWS Information Services

Changes which would be considered “substantial”	Changes which would be considered “not substantial”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have the effect of adding new classes of information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reorganize existing information for improved clarity</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make existing information applicable to new kinds of applications,</li> <li>▪ Provide existing information in wholly new formats (e.g., change from text to graphics) or by wholly new means (e.g., new dissemination medium)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adapt existing information to changes in an established standard format already in use</li> <li>▪ Minor changes to product format (e.g., paragraph to bullet format for text product) or dissemination system (e.g., improve signal strength from weather radio transmitter)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adopt a new scientific method or a new data source expected to change important characteristics of the information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adopt modest improvements in the underlying science</li> <li>▪ Adapt the information to modest changes in underlying sources of data</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Significantly change the scope of the existing information in time or space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adjust the scope of the information in time or space in minor ways</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make existing information accessible in new ways by adding major new “navigation” features</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make minor changes to existing “navigation” features</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If implemented using only NWSI 10-1805 or equivalent procedures for public notification, are likely to generate significant opposing views (pro and con) and would yield major impact on the user community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If implemented using only NWSI 10-1805 or equivalent procedures for public notification, would reasonably allow users to adjust to the change without major impact.</li> </ul>