

# NWS Spot

## Operating Instructions

### for requesting and receiving spot weather forecasts

#### Overview

NWS Spot is an Internet-based interactive program available to all State, Federal, and other approved users who need spot weather forecasts for prescribed burns and wildfires. It is also the new standard procedure for requesting and receiving text spot forecasts from the National Weather Service (NWS).

#### Access:

The NWS Bismarck home page is at: [www.crh.noaa.gov/bis/](http://www.crh.noaa.gov/bis/)

Each NWS Internet home page has a clickable “Fire Weather “ text line on the left that takes you to the Fire Weather Page. See Figure 1. The NWS office serving your area is the only one that can process your individual request. For example, if your burn unit is near Jamestown in

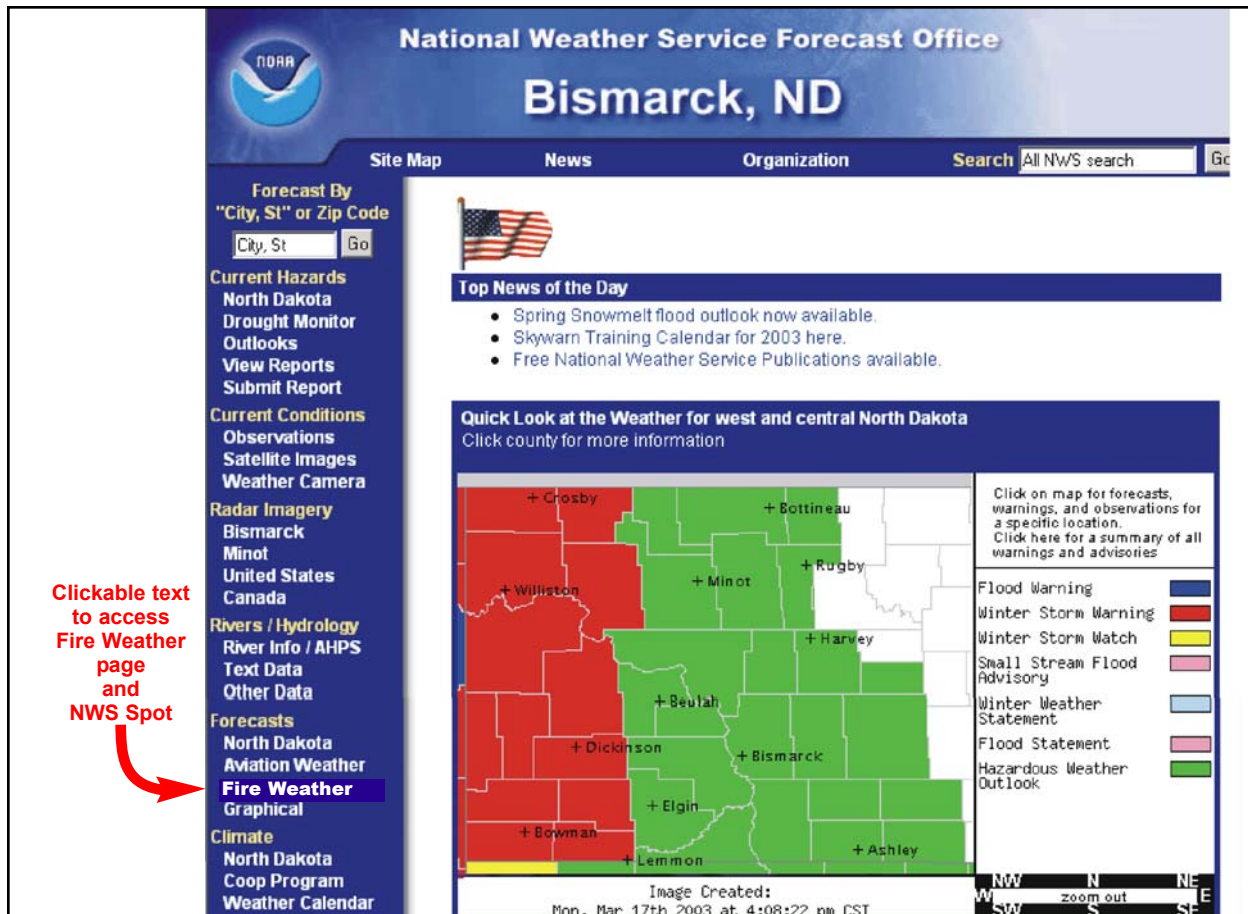


Figure 1. Each NWS office’s homepage has ready access to the NWS Spot program through clickable text menu items.

You must use the homepage of the NWS office that serves your area.

Stutsman county, which is part of NWS Bismarck’s county warning area, you cannot request a spot for that fire through the Aberdeen, Grand Forks, Rapid City or Glasgow home pages.

Next, the Fire Weather Page appears, from which you can directly access the NWS Spot Program. See Figure 2.

Figure 2. The Fire Weather Page for each NWS office has clickable text that takes you to the NWS Spot Program. Each office's Fire Weather page will be different in appearance.

The Main Entry Page for NWS Spot then comes up and is shown in Figure 3. Click on "Submit a new Spot Request" to input the details of your burn. **Make sure you have read the latest NWS narrative forecast and have a recent observation from the fire site.**

Figure 3. The Main Entry Page for the NWS Spot Program.

The Forecast Request Page (Figure 4) appears. Enter the information for your burn into this form. The items in red are required. Although not shown in red, a recent observation is also required before a spot forecast can or will be provided for a burn on the same day as the request.

## BISMARCK SPOT FORECAST REQUEST

Required Elements in RED

<b>PROJECT NAME</b>				<b>REQUESTING AGENCY</b>				
Project Name:	Prairie Meadow			Requesting Agency:	US Fish & Wildlife Svc			
	<input type="radio"/> Wildfire <input type="radio"/> WFU <input checked="" type="radio"/> Prescribed Fire			Phone Number:	701-555-9876		Ext.:	
	Ignition Time:	1645		FAX Number:	701-555-1234			
	Date:	3/17/03		Contact Person:	Sparky Grassberg			
<b>LOCATION</b>				<b>FUEL</b>				
Lat:	48.38		Elevation:	<input type="radio"/> Top <input type="radio"/> Bottom 1548		Type:		
Lon:	100.017		Drainage:			<input type="radio"/> Sheltering		
7.5' Quad:			Aspect:	South		<input type="radio"/> Full		
	Size:	12		(Acres)		<input type="radio"/> Partial		
						<input checked="" type="radio"/> Unsheltered		
<b>OBSERVATIONS</b>								
Place	Elev	Time	Wind	Temp	Wetbulb	RH	Dewpt.	Sky/Weather
On site	1540	1630	SE 8 MPH	62		21	21	Scattered cumulus
<b>PRIMARY FORECAST ELEMENTS</b>				<b>REMARKS</b>				
TDA TNT TMR (Today, Tonight, Tomorrow)				Test Spot Forecast Request				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sky / Weather					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Temperature					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Relative Humidity					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	20 Foot Wind					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Haines Index					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Smoke Dispersion					
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	LAL					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chc Wetting Rain					
<input type="button" value="Submit Request"/> <input type="button" value="Cancel Request"/> <input type="button" value="Clear Form"/>								

Figure 4. The Forecast Request Page. The red items are required so that NWS Spot can supply simple topo charts and so you can update the request, ask questions, or offer feedback later.

Requests should be submitted through a dispatch center or staffed office so that the forecaster has a contact point. This will enable the forecaster to send the spot forecast efficiently over the Internet, rather than spending time on the phone reading the details. Plus, it will allow coordination, observations and any updated forecasts to be exchanged more effectively. Changes can be made, and questions can be sent to the forecaster, but ONLY from the PC that made the original request. Field users may at times need to use cell phones from the fire site, but the NWS asks that contact be attempted first through the dispatch or staffed office location.

For the fire location, you may supply either latitude and longitude or a legal description in Township, Range, Section format. The NWS prefers latitude and longitude because it is easier to locate the burn unit more precisely on its radar and satellite imagery. Township, Range, Section format is also OK. If you use "legal" format, do so in this format: T39N R7E SEC8. NWS Spot will convert legal description to lat./long. when it processes the request.

You may request data for Today, Tonight, and Tomorrow by checking the boxes under "Requested Forecast Elements" in the lower left corner of the forecast request page shown in Figure 4. However, the NWS asks that you request no more than you actually need at the time to perform your work that day, since the more you request, the longer it will take to prepare the forecast. You can always go back later in the day and update your request. The existing routine narrative forecast issued in the morning will likely have the best forecast for later periods. If you request a spot only for tomorrow, you will be told to consult the latest narrative forecasts.

So that the NWS may fully understand your needs, use the "Remarks" text box in the lower right corner to ask questions or to state any concerns or special problems. For example, "A west wind would take the fire into a nearby resort", or "2 p.m. temperature 85, RH 18 percent".

When your request is ready to send, click on the "Submit Request" button at the bottom of the Forecast Request Page. "Cancel Request" will obviously end your request without sending it. "Clear Form" will erase all your entries, enabling you to start over.

The spot request will alarm at the forecaster's work station. To ensure that the forecaster received it, NWS Bismarck asks that you call the office. Faxing requests and forecasts will be done only in very rare circumstances such as during Internet or computer outages. Once your request is submitted, NWS Spot will respond with a Request Feedback Page shown in Figure 5.

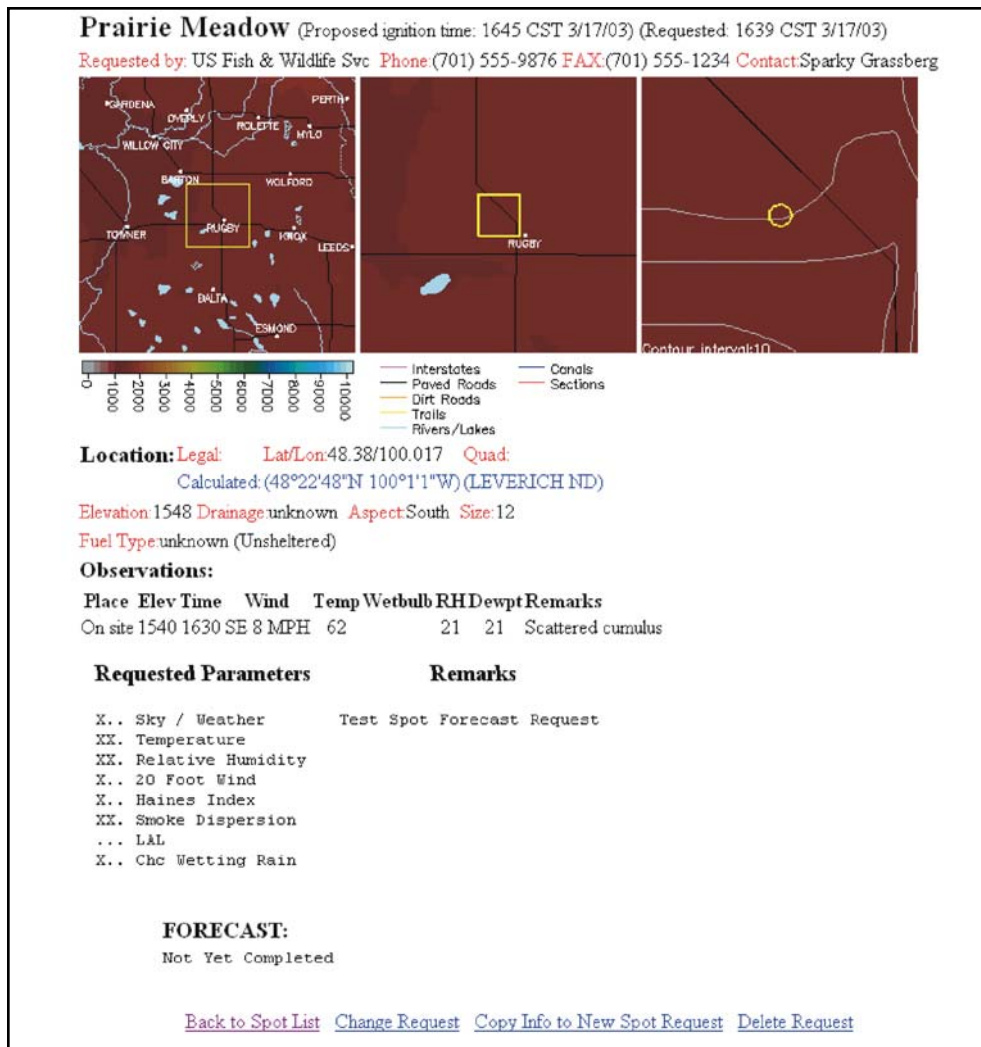


Figure 5. Request Feedback Page.



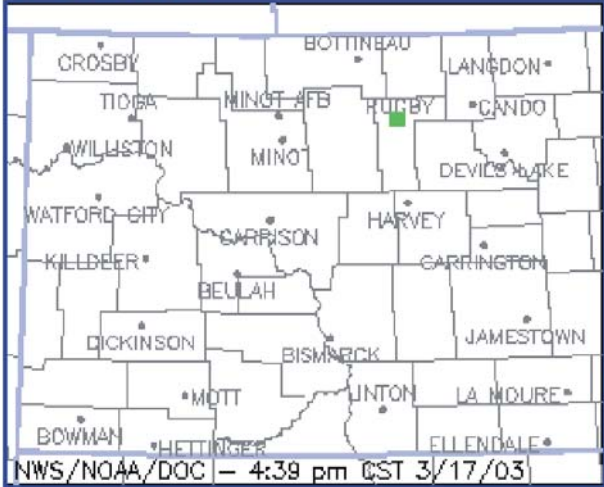
The page will contain a series of three topo maps, each at a different zoom level as well as all the data that you submitted. Take time to look at the map. If you entered lat. and long. incorrectly, the maps may reveal that. After the forecast request is sent, the word "PENDING" will appear in the Status block of NWS Spot's Main Entry Page shown in Figure 6. Also, the location of your fire will be designated by a small green square. If more than one pending request exists, more green squares will appear. All named fires for which forecasts have been requested will appear

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# BISMARCK SPOT FORECASTS

for  
**Monday**  
← Mar 17 2003 →  
[CALENDAR](#)

[Submit a new Spot Request](#)



NWS/NOAA/DOC - 4:39 pm CST 3/17/03

Pending Question Complete

Name	Ignition Time	Status
<a href="#">Prairie Meadow</a>	<a href="#">4:45 pm CST</a>	<a href="#">PENDING</a>

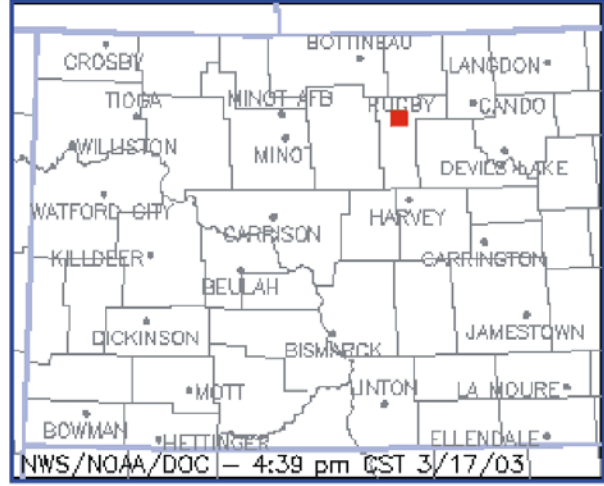
Figure 6. Once the request is submitted, the Main Entry Page will show the project or fire name, the ignition time, and that the status of the request is PENDING.

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NWS/NOAA/DOC - 4:39 pm CST 3/17/03

Pending Question Complete

Name	Ignition Time	Status
<a href="#">Prairie Meadow</a>	<a href="#">4:45 pm CST</a>	<a href="#">COMPLETE</a>

Figure 7. A completed forecast will contain "COMPLETE" in the lower right corner and a small red square on the map.

in the data block at the bottom of the page. When the forecaster has completed the spot forecast and sent it back, the red word "COMPLETE" will appear in the status window. See Figure 7. This tells you that the forecast is now available at the bottom of the Request Feedback Page (Figure 5).

Clicking on either the text in the data blocks at the bottom or on the colored square in the map will bring up the Request Feedback page (Figure 5) Using the clickable text options at the bottom of that page (shown in Figure 8) you can send a question, an on-site observation, or other information to the forecaster.

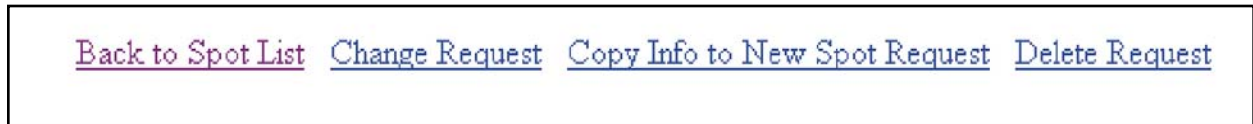


Figure 8. Several options at the bottom of the Request Feedback page (Figure 5) enable you to communicate with the forecaster or initiate another request.

The calendar page of NWS Spot allows you to access forecasts from previous days. This is most useful if you're dealing with an ongoing fire that spans several days. The Main Entry Page of NWS Spot is shown once again below in Figure 9. You can also look at a whole month by clicking on the word "CALENDAR" underneath the date. This will take you to the Calendar

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for  
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[Submit a new Spot Request](#)

NWS/NOAA/DOC - 4:39 pm CST 3/17/03

Pending Question Complete

Name	Ignition Time	Status
<a href="#">Prairie Meadow</a>	<a href="#">4:45 pm CST</a>	<a href="#">PENDING</a>

Figure 9. The calendar page is used to schedule, or update spot forecast requests and to check on forecasts. Click on "CALENDAR" below the date. This will take you to the calendar page shown in Figure 10.

Page shown in Figure 10. The arrow icons on either side of the date take you to next or previous day. You CANNOT post a spot request on the Calendar Page for anything other than the current day. So for prescribed burns beyond the current day, it's a good idea to call the NWS directly. The advance notice will enable the forecaster to look over the weather and to be better prepared when you do submit a request through NWS Spot.

[earlier dates](#)

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<a href="#">Mar 2</a>	<a href="#">Mar 3</a>	<a href="#">Mar 4</a>	<a href="#">Mar 5</a>	<a href="#">Mar 6</a>	<a href="#">Mar 7</a>	<a href="#">Mar 8</a>
<a href="#">Mar 9</a>	<a href="#">Mar 10</a>	<a href="#">Mar 11</a>	<a href="#">Mar 12</a>	<a href="#">Mar 13</a>	<a href="#">Mar 14</a>	<a href="#">Mar 15</a>
<a href="#">Mar 16</a>	<a href="#">Mar 17 1 Spot</a>	<a href="#">Mar 18</a>	<a href="#">Mar 19</a>	<a href="#">Mar 20</a>	<a href="#">Mar 21</a>	<a href="#">Mar 22</a>
<a href="#">Mar 23</a>	<a href="#">Mar 24</a>	<a href="#">Mar 25</a>	<a href="#">Mar 26</a>	<a href="#">Mar 27</a>	<a href="#">Mar 28</a>	<a href="#">Mar 29</a>
<a href="#">Mar 30</a>	<a href="#">Mar 31</a>	<a href="#">Apr 1</a>	<a href="#">Apr 2</a>	<a href="#">Apr 3</a>	<a href="#">Apr 4</a>	<a href="#">Apr 5</a>

[later dates](#)

Figure 10. Calendar page for checking previous and proposed spot forecast requests.

### Summary

- \* NWS Spot is the national standard procedure for requesting spot forecasts.
- \* READ THE MOST RECENT FIRE WEATHER NARRATIVE FORECAST BEFORE YOU SEND A REQUEST OR BEFORE YOU CALL THE NWS.
- \* Submit requests through a dispatch center or other office that will have people on duty with whom the NWS can coordinate.
- \* Always remember to submit a recent observation with your request for the day of the burn. Spot forecasts will not be provided without a recent observation from the burn.
- \* Request only the items needed. This will speed up the turn around time for the forecaster.
- \* Call your servicing NWS office after you submit a request to make sure they have received it. You do not need to fax anything unless asked to do so. When a spot forecast request arrives at the NWS office, it alarms at the forecaster's workstation.
- \* Expect a 20 to 30 minute delay between your spot forecast request and the subsequent forecast reply.
- \* The NWS will NOT normally fax any forecast unless specifically requested to do so. If the Internet is not available as the primary means of sending a request, the user may fax the request and the NWS Duluth office will fax or call the forecast back.
- \* Notify the NWS by phone or fax about future burns. A spot forecast is not given 24 hours in advance. That's what the narrative forecast is for. Giving the forecaster as much notice as possible will give him or her an opportunity to study the weather situation and to brief the evening or midnight forecast shift. The next morning, submit a request along with an observation through NWS Spot. Requesting ahead of time merely gives forecasters time to adequately prepare for a later issuance on the day of the burn and to do that in the shortest time possible.