NOAA's NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
Western Region Notes

February 1, 2008

REGION DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Award Recipients: Please join me in congratulating the following award recipients for their outstanding accomplishments and contributions to our mission:

Bronze Medal Award:

Andera Bair (Western Region Headquarters (WRH) – as a member of a team)
For greatly improving climate data services and data management through enhanced collaboration between National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and its climate service providers.

Weather Forecast Office (WFO) Billings, Montana
For outstanding customer service during the extreme wildfires which afflicted over 640,000 acres of Southern Montana from July through September 2006.

Weather Forecast Office (WFO) Seattle, Washington
For exceptional customer service both before and during the November 2006 flood, one of the greatest floods on record in Western Washington.

NWS Cline Award:

Holly Snell Osborne (WFO Sacramento)
For exceptional outreach to the California Fire Community through the Emergency Command Center Dispatch Area Forecasts 2006-2007.

National Weather Service (NWS) and United States Geologic Service (USGS) Southern California Debris Flow Project: On January 14, 2008, NWS Deputy Assistant Administrator, Vickie Nadolski and Secretary of the Interior, Dirk Kempthorne were in Malibu, California, to review the joint NOAA NWS and USGS debris flow project. The pilot project began in 2005 aimed at improving forecasts and warnings of debris flows, especially in and near areas recently burned by wildfires in Southern California. After the 2007 fires additional rain gauges and web cams were installed. The SMART-R (Shared Mobile Atmosphere Research and Teaching Radar) is

Anne Kinsinger, USGS Western Region Director; Dirk Kempthorne, Secretary of the Interior; Vickie Nadolski, NWS Deputy Assistant Administrator; unknown USGS Geologist; Mark Jackson, Meteorologist-in-Charge, WFO Oxnard.

a mobile radar positioned to provide high resolution remote sampling of intense rainfall over the burn areas in real time. This year, it is stationed at the Los Angeles International Airport to monitor precipitation over the Canyon and Corral burn areas.

METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES DIVISION

John Pulasky, Northern Broadcasting System and Jim Branda, HMT, WFO Glasgow

NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) Promotion in Montana: The four Montana NWS offices have been busy helping promote the Montana Weather Radio Awareness Campaign being led by Midland Radio Corporation, Albertson's grocery stores and Montana based Northern Broadcasting System (NBS). The NWS offices were able to coordinate several two hour long visits to many of the Albertson's grocery stores to promote the weather radio campaign, much of the time with Northern Broadcasting System's weathercaster John Pulasky in attendance, which drew larger crowds of people. Mr. Pulasky, a former NOAA Environmental Hero, broadcasts weather information up to 5 times a day on Montana's radio stations, and most of the state recognizes him as the "Voice of Montana Weather."

The WFO Glasgow staff programmed at least 45 radios at the Glasgow, Montana Albertson's store before they were sold out. Many other stores ran out of the radios within hours of putting them on display, thanks to the daily reminders on the weather broadcasts done by Mr. Pulasky. Many stores had to re-stock several times in order to have them available when they were visited by the NWS and John Pulasky. Montana has worked hard on improving the NWR coverage in the state, taking significant advantage of a grant program, and partnering with various companies and local governments to meet the matching funds. Twelve new transmitters have been installed since 2001.

Boise Staff Attends ICS Course: Ten staff members from WFO Boise took the two-day ICS300, "Intermediate ICS (Incident Command System) for Expanding Incidents" FEMA Course. This course will eventually be required for all persons who may be called to be a technical specialist at an EOC or Incident Command Post. The staff members came away with a much better understanding of how ICS works, and how the modular nature of ICS can address expanding and contracting needs. In after class discussions, the Boise staff couldn't help but make comparisons between the ICS modular structure and changing NWS staffing in different Operations Levels, and the use of the Warning Coordinator and other positions in severe weather operations.

HYDROLOGY AND CLIMATE SERVICES DIVISION

Colorado Basin River Forecast Center (CBRFC) Makes it on Paddler Magazine's Refrigerator: CBRFC worked with Paddler Magazine to publish a short piece in the "Fridge" Section of the January-February edition on how recreational paddlers can "Know the flow before they go". The Fridge Section collects tid-bits that might be useful to the paddling community. The article resulted from one of the contacts CBRFC made at the Outdoor retailers show in Salt Lake City last summer. The piece which appears as a hand written post-it on a refrigerator reads,

"Found a website that will help you work on the shortcomings we talked about: www.weather.gov/ahps/rfc/rfc.php. It reports the river forecast so we can PLAN a weekend, instead of waiting until Saturday morning to find out what the river levels are. These NOAA guys forecast flows up to 10 days in advance using soil moisture, temps, precip, and current river flow. Jeff Smith, a senior hydrologist at NOAA, says they tend to be less accurate during rainy seasons, when they don't know how much rain will fall. 'A degree or two off in the maximum temperature can make a huge difference with how much water runs off,' he told me."

WFO Billings Participating in Dam Break Table Top Planning and Exercises: Billings Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM) Tom Frieders has been attending periodic exercise planning meetings since December for a Tongue River Dam failure functional exercise that will take place the week of February 4th. The Billings office will be an active participant hosting GoToMeeting briefings, issuing practice dam failure warnings, and issuing Civil Emergency Messages (CEM) with Emergency Activation System (EAS) notifications for evacuations. The office may also participate at the exercise's Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

The Billings office is also heavily involved with planning activities for the Mystic Lake Dam Exercise conducted by PPL Montana (an electrical utility). The goal of the exercise is to test PPL's Emergency Action Plan (EAP) via a tabletop followed by a functional exercise during two days in May.

WFO Spokane Participating in Dam Break Planning Activities; Working to Provide Increased Snow Observations for NWRFC: Spokane Service Hydrologist, Royce Fontenot recently met with officials of Grand Coulee Dam in preparation for the March 16th functional exercise. The exercise is a joint US/Canadian effort with British Columbia Hydro and participation from many local communities from both countries. Spokane is also working to provide additional snow data for Northwest River Forecast Center (NWRFC) River Forecasts. Fontenot is also working with the NWRFC to incorporate additional snow water equivalent data from Spokane's spotter network into their River Forecast Modeling System as well as developing new snow measuring locations.

Boise Service Hydrologist attends Idaho Water Supply Meeting Highlighting Water Supply Services: On January 15th, Jay Breidenbach, Service Hydrologist at WFO, Boise, attended a meeting of the Idaho Water Supply Subcommittee held at the Idaho Department of Water Resources in Boise. Jay made a presentation on the upcoming runoff season and discussed the ongoing La-Niña and its impact on Climate Prediction Center long range climate outlooks. He also discussed snowpack and water supply forecasts in coordination with other presenters from the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Bureau of Reclamation. Local television and print media were present and interviewed him after the meeting.

WFO Eureka Helps Create Water Safety PSAs: Eureka, California Service Hydrologist Carol Ciliberti and WCM Troy Nicolini are both members of the Humboldt County Water Safety Coalition, and as such participated in the creation of five water safety Public Service Announcements (PSAs) for broadcast on PBS stations nationwide. The release will occur in May of this year.

Television Media Interviews WFO Portland Regarding Latest Snowpack Conditions: In mid-January, FEMA issued a press release addressing the above-normal snowpack and the possibility of further flooding in Oregon and Washington. Portland media really took an interest, so Portland Senior Service Hydrologist Andy Bryant gave two taped interviews for local television stations, addressing the similarities and differences between the current situation and the conditions leading up to the February 1996 flood.

WFO Hanford Participates in Earthquake, Dam Break Exercise and Briefs Group on Climate Change: WFO Hanford WCM, James Brotherton recently participated in a full scale functional exercise for the Kern County California Government. The exercise was organized by the Kern Public Health office and Office of Emergency Services (OES), and included OES staff from across the California Central Valley and the Los Angeles Region. The earthquake scenario exercise led to 15 HAZMAT incidences, oil refinery fires, and looting. Lake Isabella potentially affecting Bakersfield during the exercise, however a California aqueduct levee failure occurred that flooded a small community. During the quarterly California Office of Emergency Services meeting, James gave a presentation on the climate outlook for this spring

through summer, talked about climate change and how NOAA will be sharpening its message regarding this topic over the next year.

WR HCSD and NWRFC Meet with Bonneville Power Administration: Hydrology and Climate Services Division (HCSD) Deputy Chief Scott Dummer and NWRFC Development and Operations Hydrologist (DOH) Don Laurine visited the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) Operations Center. Scott received a briefing on BPA's mission, their operations and followed up with a discussion on how the NWS could provide increased NWS River Forecast System software support to other US Government Agencies in the form of software releases and documentation.

SCIENTIFIC SERVICES DIVISION

Upcoming Science Workshops

February 29 & March 1- Pacific Northwest Workshop : Information and register on-line via website at: www.atmos.washington.edu/~cliff/PNW2008.html

Activities

Western Water Supply Web Page – Version 2.0 released: Water supply forecasts are an important service provide by the western River Forecast Centers (RFCs).

Version 2.0 will feature new applications and a new look and feel.
Applications in version 2.0 will include:

* New, interactive Forecast map
* Forecast evolution plots which include options for ESP
* Forecast ensemble application
* Verification of historical forecasts
* Data access

The new version (2.0) is at: www.nwrfc.noaa.gov/westernwater

Climate Change -- Summary of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report: Kevin Werner (WR/SSD) will present the second of a two part series on the technical summary from IPCC Fourth Assessment Report on Febrary 6. The full report is available online: www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/ar4-wg1.htm

AWIPS2.0 Java Training: The first session will be held Thursday, February 10 and will last ten weeks, ending April 10. SSD has purchased a JAVA manual for each WR WFO and RFC. Focus is on JAVA training to prepare for AWIPS2.0 Matt Williamson (ITO-PIH), David Pike (ITO-Reno) and Mark Mollner (SSD) organized this effort.

High Impact Events -- WR POP/QPF Web page – time to try it!! Ken Pomeroy and David Myrick provided a briefing on the new POP/QPF High Impact verification web page to all WR offices (**AWIPS internal web site -- 165.92.200.49:8080**) *With the number of winter storms affecting all of the West, offices are encouraged to examine their recent performance*!

Reminder -- Winter Storm Reconnaissance Program, 2008: Approximately 140 flight hours (18-20 missions) will be available on the ONR P-3 plane through March 15. The planes will take dropsonde observations in areas identified by the NCEP SDM as the most relevant for improving the forecasts for events requested by the field and NCEP forecasters. The procedure will be very similar to last year. If there is considerable model uncertainty associated with a storm moving across the Eastern Pacific, the office can contact WFO Monterey to request a flight.

Reminder of Basic Hydrology Course: The Basic Hydrologic Science Course has seven base modules and two local choice modules determined by each WFO. The new completion date for this course is March 3, 2008. This course (the nine modules) is to be completed by every WR WFO Meteorologist, Hydrologist, Operational Shift Worker, HMT, and Physical Scientist. A snapshot of current office progress (percent complete) was sent to each MIC/HIC.

Teletraining Sessions for February: The teletraining calendar is now at: http://rammb.cira.colostate.edu/visit/ecal.asp. Offices can register for the teletraining sessions by sending email to: visit@comet.ucar.edu.

- NEW -- Satellite Interpretation for Various Coastal Effects (Basic, Feb 20,27,29)
- NEW - GOES Low Cloud Base Product (Basic, Feb 11,25)
- Utilizing GOES Imagery within AWIPS to Forecast Winter Storms Parts 1 & 2 (Intermediate, Feb 6,7)
- Water Vapor Imagery and Potential Vorticity Analysis (Intermediate, Feb 6,20,28)
- Use of Ensembles in the Forecast Process - Cold Season Version (Basic, Feb 12,19,26)
- Satellite Interpretation of Orographic Clouds / Effects (Basic, Feb 13)
- MODIS Products in AWIPS (Basic, Feb 12)
- Basic Satellite Principles (Basic, Feb 5,28)
- CRAS Forecast Imagery in AWIPS (Basic, Feb 21)
- TROWAL Identification (Basic, Feb 14)

All previous sessions including those with recorded instructor audio and annotations are available at: http://rammb.cira.colostate.edu/visit/ts.html

SYSTEMS OPERATIONS DIVISION

New Web-Services Hardware Installed by SOD: The Western Region Headquarters LDM Data Ingest / Data Distribution system was recently updated. Galileo, a web services data ingest and data distribution system was replaced on January 22nd. Galileo performs two

essential functions for the Western Region. First, it ingests and writes Satellite Broadcast Network (SBN) products to WR's web services mysql databases; Second, it ingests and re-distributes a variety of specialty data products to WR Forecast Offices. This replacement was part of WR/SODs on-going system maintenance and upgrade activities. The new Galileo is faster, has more memory, complies with DOC/NOAA/NWS security policies, and is....**NEW**. The replaced system had been in service for four years.

SOD Sponsored Training:

Western Region Sponsored NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) training in Salt Lake City, Utah during the third week on January. NWSTC instructors taught Utah State NWR maintenance contractors and local NWS electronics technicians.

Robles Junction Equipment Moved: Tom Page and Lee Jenson traveled to Tucson the week of January 7 to remove a LARK from Robles Junction and reinstall it at the fire station at Douglas, AZ. This will help the office detect storms next to the Mexican border and improve warning lead time for flooding.

Safety - Walking on Ice

Facing an icy surface can be a paralyzing experience. Obviously the best solution is to avoid icy situations. You should salt and sand icy patches around your home or office to eliminate or minimize the threat of slipping. However, what should you do if it's impossible to avoid an icy patch? Believe it or not, body movements can increase your stability on an icy surface.

First, slow down and think about your next move. Keep your body as loose as possible, spread your feet to more than a foot apart to provide a base of support. This will help stabilize you as you walk.

Next, keep your knees loose and don't let them lock. If you can, let them bend a bit. This will keep your center of gravity lower to the ground, which further stabilizes the body.

Now you are ready to take a step. Make the step small, placing your whole foot down at once. Then shift your weight very slowly to this foot and bring your other foot to meet it the same way. Keep a wide base of support.

Some people prefer to drag their feet or shuffle them. If this feels better to you, then do so. Just remember to place your whole foot on the ice at once and keep your base of support approximately one foot wide.