



NOAA's NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

Western Region Notes

April 21, 2005

REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S OFFICE



Farewell from Deputy Director Jim Campbell:

Next Friday, April 29, will be my last day in the NWS. After 35 plus years of federal service I am moving on to new adventures. I have thoroughly enjoyed my weather service career, especially the last 14 years in Western Region as part of the leadership under Tom Potter and Vickie Nadolski.

When I started with the NWS in 1973 we were using teletype machines to communicate, WSR 57 radars and spotter reports to issue warnings, and the first satellites sent a few visible pictures of the

earth's cloud cover. I was an intern in Birmingham, Alabama on April 3-4, 1974 and experienced the biggest tornado outbreak in U.S. history. Those 36 hours had a monumental impact on my career. Today, we have thoroughly modernized our offices, communications, observations, and the way we forecast both meteorology and hydrology. I have seen so much change over my career, and yet the one constant has been the dedication of all you to provide life saving information and extraordinary service to the American people. I believe the NWS is truly a remarkable organization for a government agency, and I leave proud to have been part of it.

The most enjoyable part of my job has been working with or meeting many of you over the years, and it is the one aspect of the job I will truly miss. I thank you for the support you have given me over the years. It has been an honor and a privilege to know you, and I wish you all the very best in life and your careers.

2005 NOAA Administrator Award Winner: Please join me in congratulating Erik Pytlak, of WFO Tucson, who was recently named as a winner of the 2005 Administrator's Award. Erik, along with Raymond Higgins of NOAA's Climate Prediction Center, will receive the joint award for leadership and organization in conducting the North American Monsoon Experiment (NAME). The awards ceremony will take place on May 13, in Silver Spring.

AROUND THE REGION

Sierra Winter Storms Make the News in Europe: The record-breaking storms in the Sierra Nevada this past winter made international headlines. Tom Cylke, lead

forecaster at WFO Reno, recently received an article that was clipped from a newspaper the southern German town of Kirchberg. The article was sent to Tom's neighbors by their relatives abroad. The translation of the article reads:

Sierra Nevada buried under snow

Unusual heavy winter storms have buried the mountain ranges of the Sierra Nevada and American west coast. Almost 6 meters of snow have fallen this winter above 2000 meters. This huge amount of snow hasn't happened since 1916 says spokesman for the National Weather Service Tom Cylke. In other parts of the U.S., several people died from bad weather. The airport in Reno had to be closed for the second time in a week because of heavy snow. Many streets were also closed. Twenty-five cars were stuck in the snow about 30 km south of Reno with many rescued by helicopter. On Donner summit a train was derailed by snow. Ski areas in the Tahoe area had to be closed due to avalanche danger. In Southern California, there was heavy rain, flooding and mudslides closing many streets. Three people were killed.

WFO Pendleton's Employee of the Quarter: The Employee of the Quarter for January-March, 2005 at WFO Pendleton is OPL Jim Zdrojewski. Jim is an exceptionally talented member of the staff and is called upon daily to perform a wide variety of tasks. He never refuses a challenge no matter how difficult it may be. This past quarter he did an excellent job leading a team to restructure and improve the office Intranet. By utilizing his expertise in web applications and databases, Jim created much of the new Intranet infrastructure. The new Intranet will be used daily by the entire staff and will greatly assist with our warning, forecast, electronic, and administrative responsibilities. Jim also does an excellent job as leader of the Cooperative Observer Program. PDT's COOP program is efficient and effective. Congratulations, Jim, on a job well done!

METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES DIVISION

Statement of the Week: This week's Statement of the Week is an aviation section included in the Area Forecast Discussion (AFD) from WFO Las Vegas. The aviation discussion was issued with the afternoon AFD on Tuesday, April 19.

Las Vegas routinely focuses on the McCarron International Airport in their aviation discussions. McCarron is the 3rd busiest airport in the Country on Weekends. Wind speed and direction forecasts are very important to McCarron since the wind affects the airport arrival rate. WFO Las Vegas did a good job highlighting the wind forecast, and also the chance of precipitation over the approach zones.

. AVIATION...WEST WINDS 10 TO 20 KNOTS ARE OVER KLAS AND THE SOUTHERN LAS VEGAS VALLEY THIS AFTERNOON DUE TO A FRONT THAT HAS STALLED OVERHEAD. EXPECT TO SEE THE WINDS SUBSIDE THIS EVENING AND BECOME LIGHT AND VARIABLE TONIGHT AS BOUNDARY WEAKENS. TOMORROW WILL SEE NORTHWEST WINDS OVER THE AREA. PRECIPITATION CHANCES LOOK MEAGER FOR THE VALLEY...WITH THE MORMON MESA AND

PEACH SPRINGS APPROACHES HAVING RAIN SHOWERS IN THEM THROUGH MIDNIGHT.

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Seaside, OR Conducts Tsunami Evacuation Drill: Seaside, a small community on the north coast of Oregon, held a city-wide Tsunami Evacuation Drill on April 16. Participation in the drill was voluntary, but all residents were encouraged to participate. The goal was to reach every Seaside resident and provide them with information on what to do in case of a major earthquake and subsequent tsunami. The drill was a collaborative effort with the state of Oregon and was intended to familiarize the public with the local tsunami warning system and provide them with an organized event to practice walking their evacuation routes in a simulated tsunami scenario. At noon local time, tsunami warning sirens sounded and residents immediately began walking to their evacuation points, recording their time along the way. Volunteers were positioned along evacuation routes to guide people on their way and to record their walking times at the end. This was the final public event in Seaside's Tsunami Awareness Program, which began in November 2004.

The event was coordinated by Darci Connor, formerly an AmeriCorp volunteer. Darci was hired by the city of Seaside, with NOAA support (through the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program). WFO Portland assisted in the build-up to this event, participating in a "table-top" version of this exercise in early April.



Gabe Garcia, Snow Safety official at Alta Ski Area, unveils a 105mm Recoilless Gun used for avalanche control in Little Cottonwood Canyon to MIC Larry Dunn.

Snow Safety on the Wasatch Mountain Range:

With annual snow accumulations around 500 inches, steep terrain, and heavy traffic volume, winter weather hazards abound in Little Cottonwood Canyon, just east of Salt Lake City. MIC Larry Dunn, SOO Mark Jackson, and WCM Kevin Barjenbruch of WFO Salt Lake City recently ventured up Little Cottonwood Canyon to meet with several key winter weather safety partners. Among those visited were snow safety officials at the Alta Guard Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) station, Alta Ski Area, and Snowbird. Officials from the ski areas and UDOT work closely with WFO Salt Lake City, the Forecast Service Utah Avalanche Center (FSUAC), and local communities to help keep outdoor enthusiasts in the canyon

safe. With 2004-2005 seasonal snow accumulations approaching 700 inches in parts of the Canyon, this has been an especially challenging year.

While keeping road surfaces clear during snowfall events is a priority, avalanches also pose a significant threat to motorists. Utilizing WFO Salt Lake City forecasts and avalanche advisories and warnings from the FSUAC, Alta and Snowbird officials

perform avalanche control within their resort boundaries, but also assist UDOT officials by firing shells aimed to produce controlled avalanches along the canyon's communication routes. It is not unusual for the canyon's roads to be closed for a few hours, while avalanche control work is done.

The trip up the Canyon provided an excellent forum to keep the lines of communication open among the various Federal, State, and Private Sector agencies involved in winter safety. From the NWS perspective, it provides a great opportunity to find out which products are most valuable, as well as identifying potential enhancements. The trip also afforded a chance to visit several observation stations in the Canyon and to become familiar with the various avalanche paths.

Western Region Forecaster Publishes Fire Weather Outlook: The May issue of Wildland Firefighter magazine will feature a fire weather outlook for 2005 for the western U.S. written by Brian Brong, Fire Weather Program Manager at WFO Reno. The article discusses the wet winter in the southwest and California, and the continuing drought in the northwest and northern Rockies. A brief discussion of NOAA's fire weather program is also included. Wildland Firefighter is a monthly magazine that reaches over 10,000 wildfire industry readers. It can be found at <http://www.jems.com/wildland/>. Good job, Brian!



Seattle Forecaster Danny Mercer conducts weather spotter training.

Seattle Assists Communications Academy:

WFO Seattle forecaster Danny Mercer and WCM Ted Buehner participated in two sessions at the annual King County Communications Academy, held April 2-3 in Shoreline, Washington. The academy involves a wide variety of training for the amateur radio community -- not only for western Washington, but throughout the Pacific Northwest. About 200 hams attended the academy. The session followed a class on the tsunami warning system as Ted partnered with George Crawford of Washington State Emergency Management.

NFDRS Verification Project at WFO Salt Lake City: Lead Forecaster Chris Gibson has completed a verification study of the NFDRS forecasts issued by WFO SLC in 2004. The results of this study are available on the WFO SLC Fire Weather Page at <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/slc/projects/ifp/NFDRS2004/nfdrsVer2004.htm>. Chris has plans for this summer to database all of the forecasts and observations so that NFDRS verification statistics can be calculated "on the fly". Excellent work, Chris!



(L to R): Craig Peterson (Kern County District 1), Georgianna Armstrong (Kern County Emergency Services Manager), Don Maben (Kern County Supervisor, District 2), MIC Steve Mendenhall, and Chief Dennis Thompson (Kern County Emergency Services Director)

El Paso Mountains NWR is Dedicated: WFO San Joaquin Valley held a dedication ceremony for the new El Paso Mountains NWR transmitter on March 21, 2005. The radio serves the California high desert, which has a population of nearly 500,000 people, many of them commuters to the Los Angeles basin. U.S. Highway 395 and State Highway 58 are also major trucking routes.

Tsunami Summit in Washington State:

Washington State Emergency Management held a tsunami summit for the north interior counties of western Washington on April 6. The event was held in the community of Bow, for Whatcom, Skagit, San Juan, Island, and Snohomish counties. About 70 people attended, including local elected officials, law enforcement, emergency managers, and fire, health, public works, and transportation officials. Seattle WCM Ted Buehner gave presentations on

All-Hazards NOAA Weather Radio and TsunamiReady Communities.

Marine Weather Seminar in Brookings, Oregon: Medford marine focal point Sven Nelaimischkies gave a presentation on April 2 to local commercial fisherman and recreational boaters at the Brookings public library on the southern Oregon coast. The topics covered were NOAA All Hazards Weather Radio coverage on the West Coast, weather terminology, weather patterns along the southern Oregon/northern California coast, and wave generation and propagation. The addition of secondary swells to the forecast and the introduction of the new wave steepness criteria for small craft advisories were also addressed. The audience in attendance had a wide range of weather and wave theory knowledge with some of the recreational boaters in attendance being retired engineers.

WFO Pendleton Takes Part in Local Culture Festival: The annual Culture Festival held at Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton, OR had a new twist this year. On the evening of April 12, Mike Cantin, Journeyman Forecaster, took part in a panel entitled "Arts, Culture and the Natural Environment." The panel was made up of three people; Catherine Clifton (US National Forest Service Hydrologist), Lin Harmon-Walker (Lewis & Clark College of Law), and Mike. Each presenter took 20 to 30 minutes and discussed different ways that the natural environment of Washington and Oregon has affected how people use the land, and how the use of land has changed our environment.

For WFO Pendleton's portion, Mike taped 4 interviews with members of the community from different walks of life and cultures. They were asked questions about how weather affects what they do. Those interviewed included: a forest supervisor with the National

Forest Service, a local farmer, a NWS employee, and a member of the Umatilla Native American Tribe. Findings in the video made it apparent that weather affected people in many ways including how they plan, make career choices, and even define name giving and religious practices. The video was edited by office OPL Jim Zdrojewski. Over 40 people attended the event and feedback was very positive. WFO Pendleton plans to make the Culture Festival an annual endeavor.

HYDROLOGY AND CLIMATE SERVICES DIVISION

Reservoirs and lakes across the Southwest are finally filling with water again. In Flagstaff's area, it has been several years and in some spots almost a decade since these lakes and reservoirs were full. From September 1 through April 15, 26.37 inches of precipitation have fallen at the Flagstaff Airport. This is the third wettest period on record. In late December, the Flagstaff Airport recorded their second highest one day precipitation total during the September through April period with 3.33 inches of rain. Near to above normal snowfall amounts have contributed to filling these reservoirs and lakes. The table provides some snowfall totals from around the Flagstaff CWA.

Station	Total Snowfall	Normal Snowfall (Estimated)	Percent of Normal (Estimated)
Blue Ridge R.S.	50.0	41.9	119.3%
Bright Angel R.S. – Grand Canyon North Rim	187.1	131.7	142.1%
Grand Canyon South Rim	52.3	43.6	120.0%
Greer	53.4	86.0	62.1%
Happy Jack	88.5	88.3	100.2%
McNary	70.5	77.1	91.4%
Pinetop	68.3	75.9	90.0%
Sunset Crater	65.4	59.8	109.4%
Walnut Canyon	61.2	51.4	119.1%
Williams	77.0	66.3	116.1%



*Lower Lake Mary:
Flagstaff Arizona, September 15, 2004*



*Lower Lake Mary:
Flagstaff Arizona, April 13, 2005*



*Mormon Lake:
25 miles SE of Flagstaff Arizona
September 15, 2004*



*Mormon Lake:
25 miles SE of Flagstaff Arizona
April 13, 2005*

SCIENTIFIC SERVICES DIVISION

New Science Papers: Two new WR publications were added to the web.

Technical Attachment 05-01: Effects of Wildfire in the Mountainous Terrain of Southeast Arizona: Post-Burn Hydrologic Response of Nine Watersheds; written by Mike Schaffner and William B. Reed

Technical Memorandum 271: Climate of Las Vegas, Nevada; revised by Andrew S. Gorelow, January 2005 Previous Edition Paul H. Skrbac, December 1999.

They can be found at: <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/wrh/pubs.php>.

Space Weather Training Module: The Space Environment Center is the newest addition to the NWS family. COMET has produced a short introduction training module about Space Weather and the Space Environment Center. The COMET training module can be found at: <http://meted.ucar.edu/spaceweather/intro/> and the Space Environment Center web site can be found at: <http://sec.noaa.gov/>.

Annual AWIPS and Training Requirements Review Underway: Each year, NSTEP gathers training requirements and then develops a training schedule (NWSTC, COMET and WDTB) for the next fiscal year. The task is difficult since requested training often exceeds the training budget by a factor of 3 to 1. For FY06, two dozen groups have prepared training requirements for the various disciplines within the NWS. Approximately 100 one-pagers have been generated. The FRG will now start the difficult process of culling through the requirements and coming up with a FY06 training schedule based on a balanced budget. This will take a few months to complete.

The AWIPS SREC is currently reviewing the requirements for AWIPS Build 7. Mark Mollner will continue to send updates on each requirement activity as interim milestones are completed.

Web Page Icon Survey Underway: Representatives from WR, OCIO, and SR have been working for the past 4 months to develop a national standard set of Icons for the Total Forecast pages. A sampling of the Icons can be found at: http://www.nws.noaa.gov/icon_comments/. We are currently soliciting comments from the public via a link that has been added to all NOAA Weather Service's Total Forecast pages. In the first few days of the survey, well over 5,000 comments have been received. Once the survey period has closed, the team will analyze the comments and make adjustments to the icons as needed. The first phase will be to standardize the icons throughout NOAA Weather Service. The second phase, we are looking at options of flagging Hazardous weather within the icon periods. Additional updates will be provided as the group progresses.

Members of the ICON team are: Don Britton (Great Falls), Dennis Cain (SRHQ), Andy Haner (Seattle), Jim Harmer (Elko), Ron Jones (OCIO), Ken Parker (Boise), Ed Ridley – Team Leader (WR/SSD), Jim Scarlett (Billings), Craig Schmidt (WR/MSD) and Mike Vescio (Pendleton).

Teletraining Session for May: The Virtual Institute for Satellite Integration Training (VISIT) and the Integrated Sensor Training Professional Development Series (ISTPDS) sessions are listed below. Offices can register for the teletraining sessions by sending email to: visit@comet.ucar.edu.

The teletraining calendar is at: <http://www.cira.colostate.edu/ramm/visit/ecal.asp>.

The sessions for May are:

- AWOC Core Strategies (May 3, 4, 11, 12, 17,18, 25, 26, 31)
- AWOC Severe Applications (May 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26, 31)
- AVNFPS (May 12, 18, 25, 27)
- Downscaling Techniques (May 19, 31)
- Forecasting Convective Downbursts (May 12, 26)
- Modern Severe Parameters (May 17)
- Meso-analysis RSO (May 4)
- Predicting Supercell Motion (May 18, 24)
- RSO Imagery with other Remote Sensed Data (May 10, 11)

Changes to the Public Forecast Page: Based on suggestions from the WR offices, Aaron Sutula (WR/SSD) has made several enhancements to the forecast page.

1. Added ability for office to name the location of the Icon point for each zone: For example, under "Forecast at a Glance" For: City of Seattle.

2. 7 Day forecast is clearly identified as a zone forecast: The description comes from your office configuration files you have already set up that describes the name of each zone.
3. Static URL for office welcome and forecast pages when clicking from WWA maps: This allows user to bookmark pages and the user will not have to change bookmark when we make a future change to the maps.
4. On point forecast derived from grids, forecast page more clearly describes location of point: Location is depicted under Forecast at a Glance, in the 7-day Point Forecast text and the red-dot on the map.

Once each office completes the configuration, we will make the change live on April 25.

Advanced Warning Operations Course (AWOC): It is important that offices keep up with the training schedule. In WR, we have broken the two track deadlines up into first and second half of FY05. Completion will be tracked by LMS and reported in the WR Professional Development and Training plan.

March 31, 2005: Complete Core Track (WFO and CWSUs)

August 31, 2005: Complete Severe Weather Track (WFOs and highly recommended for CWSUs)

TBD (probably March, 2006): Winter Weather Track (WFOs)

For more info on AWOC and LMS go to: <http://wdtb.noaa.gov/courses/awoc/index.html>.

SYSTEMS OPERATIONS DIVISION

Frequency Management: Joe Lachacz and George Montenegro attended the Frequency Manager's Conference at Central Region Headquarters (CRH) in Kansas City, MO, on April 4-7. Some topics covered were processing proposals, resolving tabled items issues, hydro, Tsunami Warning assignments, and 5-year reviews, as well as learning about upcoming developments for the frequency management software "Spectrum SXXI".

WSR-88D Build 7.0 Beta: WFO Flagstaff and with three other sites (Atlanta, Wilmington, and Jacksonville), have installed RPG Build 7.0. All four sites are operational and stable. Issues with the installation scripts were observed at sites using frame relay. The fix for the installation script issue has delayed Build 7.0 deployment by one week. The four sites are operational and running Build 7.0, but must be reloaded using the corrected installation scripts, starting with Flagstaff the week of May 5. Deployment is now scheduled to start on June 6, 2005.

NWSTC Safety Training: Sean Wink and Joe Lachacz attended the NWSTC Safety Training for focal points April 12–15. Valuable insight and perspective into this

extremely important program was gained. Sean is the Western Region Environmental & Safety Coordinator. Feel free to forward any and all Environmental and Safety questions to SOD.