

Experimental Weather, Water, and Climate Information Podcasts Product Description Document (PDD)

4/26/07

Part I - Mission Connection

Product Description - The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) [Policy on Partnerships in the Provision of Environmental Information](#) commits NOAA and NOAA's National Weather Service (NWS) to provide information in forms accessible to the public and to make its data and products available in Internet-accessible, vendor-neutral form. Information will comply with recognized standards, formats, and metadata descriptions.

NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards (NWR) is a vital dissemination tool for NOAA and NWS information. Programming of local NWR transmitters is accomplished by conversion of NWS text products to speech, and saved in an audio file format called mp3 (Moving Picture Experts Group [MPEG] audio layer 3) file format. These mp3 audio files are then transmitted over NWR transmitters.

An additional method of disseminating these mp3 audio files is through use of XML file feeds known as Really Simple Syndication (RSS). The combination of RSS feeds and mp3 files are commonly referred to as 'Podcasts'. The "Podcasts" are distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds, for playback on mobile devices and personal computers.

Purpose - The purpose of the Podcasts is to provide Internet access to audio files of weather, water, and climate information. In addition, Podcasts serve as a way to introduce people to NWR. The public may use (widely available) software capable of reading feed formats and automatically download a user-selectable suite of products. This Internet accessibility to specific broadcasts expands and enhances the service provided by the agency. The Podcasts are not a replacement for NWR and do not offer the warning capability of NWR Specific Area Message Encoding or Warning Alarm Tone, but rather allow the user to download products for playback at a later time.

The suite of information available via Podcasts may include meteorological and hydrological watches, warnings, advisories, forecasts, statements, summaries, and educational and outreach messages. Because of their limited lifetimes, short-duration warnings would normally not be appropriate for Podcasts.

Audience - This service is available to anyone who wants audio access to routine meteorological and hydrological information. Recipients must have a computer connected to the Internet, and the ability to download and play mp3 files on their computer or portable mp3 player. Recipients may use software capable of reading feed formats (subscribe) that also enables automatic download of the broadcasts. To ensure accessibility of information, text equivalents for all audio files will be made available.

Presentation Format – Podcasts are web-based, and an example page can be viewed at the following URL:

<http://www.erh.noaa.gov/lwx/podcasts/>

NWS maintains a library of NWS RSS Feeds and Podcasts at <http://www.weather.gov/rss/> and of NWR audio and Podcasts at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/streamaudio.htm>.

Feedback Method - We are always seeking to improve our products based on user feedback. Please submit your comments on these experimental elements by completing our brief **experimental product survey** during the experimental feedback period. Comments may also be submitted by clicking on the “Survey/Comments” links on the experimental Podcast web pages. To provide additional comments/suggestions, or to request more information about the Podcast, please contact:

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Experimental Feedback Period: 75-day experimental feedback period 18 June 2007 to 31 August 2007

Part II - Technical Description

Format - NWS Podcasts will validate as well formed XML and conform to RSS 2.0 standards. Additional information on RSS 2.0 standards are described in [NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 60-103](#), RSS Feed Requirements and Specifications.

Product Availability -This service will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at test sites. Selection of audio products might differ from site to site during this test. Each site can configure which products they provide to suite their customer’s needs.

Software Required – A link to download Podcasting software is found in the NWS RSS and Podcast Library at <http://www.weather.gov/rss/>