



# NOAA's NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE Western Region Notes

May 1, 2008

## REGION DIRECTOR'S OFFICE



(left to right) VADM Conrad Lautenbacher, Brent Bower, Bill Rasch, Andrea Bair, Robert Tibi

**NOAA Award Recipients:** On April 18, 2008, awards were given to the following recipients at the NOAA Awards Ceremony held in Washington, DC: **Robert Tibi**, Western Region Headquarters – Distinguished Career

**Andrea Bair**, Western Region Headquarters (as part of a team) – For greatly improving climate data services and data management through enhanced collaboration between NOAA and its climate service partners.

**Bill Rasch**, representing WFO Billings – For outstanding customer service during the extreme wildfires which afflicted over 640,000 acres of southern Montana from July through September 2006.

**Brent Bower**, representing WFO Seattle - For

exceptional customer service, including four-day advance warnings, both before and during the November 2006 flood, one of the greatest floods on record in western Washington.

**Max A. Kohler Award Recipient:** David Brandon, HCSD Chief, Western Region Headquarters, has been awarded the Max A. Kohler Award. Dave has been a pillar of the NWS hydrologic community for his operational skills, technical knowledge, developmental leadership, and customer service. Dave has held a number of important positions in the NWS, starting as a meteorological intern, Service Hydrologist at Topeka, Research Hydrologist with the Office of Hydrology, Deputy Western Region HSD Deputy Chief, and the Hydrologist in Charge of the Colorado Basin River Forecast Center (CBRFC), prior to his current position as the HCSD Chief. In all of his positions, public service and the provision of quality products and information have always been an important focus. Under Dave's leadership, the CBRFC became one of the first offices in the NWS to have an internet domain and an active web site in 1991--almost five years before the rest of the NWS began running web pages for their offices. Continuing innovation in web services was a hallmark at the CBRFC under Dave's leadership. The theme of interagency collaboration on water resources issues has carried over into Dave's role as the HCSD chief. He remains engaged with NOAA's Western Regional team and NOAA's water resources theme. Please join me in congratulating Dave as the recipient of the 2007 Max A. Kohler Award.

**Diversity Action Committee Takes Action:** *There is a natural connection between a person's work life and all other aspects of life. We live only one life, but for a long time our*

*organizations have operated as if this simple fact could be ignored, as if we had two separate lives.*

*--Peter Senge, The Fifth Discipline*

During the first week of April, the WR Diversity Action Committee (DAC) held its first annual meeting with representatives from the union, management, Western Region, Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management (OEODM) and each WFO. One of the primary goals of the meeting was to build a solid foundation of diversity management throughout the region. In the past, there has been confusion as to what diversity really means and how it impacts the organization from the local WFO level to nationwide. The quote above struck a chord during the conference as we realized one's happiness at work is intertwined with their happiness outside of work. Therefore, work issues ranging from scheduling, management, health, leave, personality conflicts, etc., can directly impact an individual's quality of life.

By bringing together all the focal points, the WR DAC was able to provide training on diversity management, personality styles and communication skills. Discussions brought to light the specific needs of each WFO as well as common issues that affect most offices. At the end of the week, the participants were divided into smaller support groups and developed draft diversity action plans for each office. This conference was a solid initial step in achieving the overall goal: fostering an environment of inclusion where every NWS employee has a voice and knows they will be heard.

## **METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES DIVISION**

**Drought Tools Workshop:** The National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) recently worked with NWS Glasgow and the Fort Peck Reservation Drought Advisory Committee to host a drought tools workshop. The workshop was conducted to get feedback from those involved in the agricultural/ranching industries on two products that the NDMC produces: VegDRI and VegOUT. Dr. Donna Woudenberg and NWS Glasgow WCM, Tanja Fransen organized the workshop. This workshop is an excellent example of one of the anticipated collaborations that was envisioned when Weather and Society: Integrated Studies (WAS\*IS) was created. Twenty-six participants attended the workshop that was conducted by Dr. Woudenberg, Dr. Brian Wardlow, and Dr. Tsegaye Tadesse. For more information on VegDRI or VegOUT, you can visit the websites listed below:

The Vegetation Drought Response Index (VegDRI) tool allows producers to monitor vegetation stress at a regional, state, county or sub-county level by using satellite information.

[http://drought.unl.edu/vegdiri/VegDRI\\_Main.htm](http://drought.unl.edu/vegdiri/VegDRI_Main.htm)

The Vegetation Outlook (VegOUT) tool is a highly experimental forecasting method that incorporates oceanic information into satellite data to provide predictions of the expected level of vegetation stress at 2, 4, and 6-week intervals.

<http://drought.unl.edu/vegdiri/experimental.htm>

**Billings Clinic Research Center Science Expo:** The 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Billings Clinic Research Center Science Expo was held on March 28-29, 2008 at the Montana State University –

Billings campus. More than 400 students from 72 schools and 18 counties across Eastern Montana and Northern Wyoming participated in this year's event. Kids ranging in ages from 1<sup>st</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade presented their science projects for judging. Several staff members from WFO Billings, including Tom Frieders, Joe Lester, Matt Solum, Liz Stoppkotte, Brian Tesar and Carolyn Willis; acted as judges for the event. Dr. Tom Bogdan from the Space Weather Prediction Center also participated in the event as this year's guest scientist and helped pick the winner for the NOAA 2008 Taking the Pulse of the Planet Award.

One March 29<sup>th</sup> the Expo was open to the public to view all of the projects as well as booths from different agencies and companies around the area. Some of these booths included the National Weather Service – Billings, MT, Yellowstone Valley Amateur Astronomy Association, Transportation Safety Administration, Montana Geological Survey and many others. Kids visiting the local NWS booth were able to see how lightning is generated, and even receive a small shock in a thunderstorm via the Van de Graaff Generator. The Tornado Machine was also on display to explain how a tornado is formed. Weather safety information and NOAA balloons were also handed out at the booth. WFO Billings looks forward to participating in this event again next year!



*NOAA robot Sunny interacts with patron at International Sportsman's Expo*

**International Sportsman's Expo:** From March 13-16, WFO Salt Lake City and Western Region Headquarters teamed up to staff a booth at the International Sportsman's Exposition held in Sandy, UT. The NWS booth highlighted NWS products and services with a focus on NOAA Weather Radio. The WFO and WRH have participated in this event for several years, but this year a new staff member helped out, Sunny, the NOAA Robot!

**Eastern Montana Disaster and Emergency Services Workshop:** The NWS offices at Billings, Glasgow and Great Falls recently co-hosted the third annual eastern Montana Disaster and Emergency Services Workshop in Miles City, MT. The workshop included a feedback/listening session facilitated by one of the DES Coordinators, similar to those conducted at the NEMA and IAEM conferences last year. Utilizing GoToMeeting, the Missouri Basin River Forecast Center gave a presentation on their products and services, and Dr. Dave Easterling, SSD Chief at NCDC and contributing author to the IPCC AR4 report presented the "Case for Climate Change." Dr. Donna Woudenberg from the National Drought Mitigation Center presented "Risk Management beyond Boundaries" and WRH MSD Fire Weather Program Manager Roger Lamoni gave an overview of the Incident Support Specialist program. Also, Northern Ag Network weatherman John Pulasky gave a presentation on the Montana CoCoRaHS program and the statewide NOAA Weather Radio campaign from last fall and this spring. The second day included presentations by WCM's Tanja Fransen, Tom Frieders, and Dan Reilly on topics including a major severe weather outbreak last summer, FLARE, MAMA, IEM chat, the updated Montana EAS plan, how we make our forecasts, and the winter weather simplification proposal. A website showing the agenda and presentations can be viewed at: <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/ggw/desworkshop.php>

**Washington Tsunami Summit:** The WCMs from WFOs Seattle and Portland participated in the Washington State Tsunami Summit that was held in Ocean Shores, WA on Apr 17, 2008. National WCM Program Manager, Chris Maier, and WSH Deputy Tsunami Program Manager, Jenifer Rhoades, also attended the Summit. A total of 37 people attended including representatives from several federal, state, all four coastal counties, city and tribal emergency management. NOAA's Pacific

Marine Environmental Lab (PMEL), USGS, state DOT, and Dept of Natural Resources. Two staffers from Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Congressman Norman Dicks (D-WA) offices also attended the

meeting. Several attendees expressed a sincere desire to change the name of the program. Many of the community representatives believe the name "TsunamiReady" is a misnomer since readiness and preparedness is an on-going, continual effort and would prefer something to the effect of TsunamiResilient or TsunamiAware, and want to explore other ideas.



*Ted Buehner, Jenifer Rhoades, Chris Maier, Tyree Wilde*

## HYDROLOGY AND CLIMATE SERVICES DIVISION

**WFO Los Angeles/Oxnard Continues to Develop its GIS Service Capabilities:** Los Angeles/Oxnard Senior Service Hydrologist Jayme Laber has been developing and promoting a project that provides the National Digital Forecast Database (NDFD) in GIS usable formats. In January he gave a presentation at the AMS Annual Conference in New Orleans summarizing the NDFS GIS tools that have been developed allowing NWS partners easy access to digital forecasts.

A new NDFD ArcIMS image service has recently been developed in tandem with the National Ocean Service's Coastal Services Center and WFO San Diego. This new service was recently released to the public and very positive feedback has been received from users and partners. The URLs for the Los Angeles shapefile service and the new ArcIMS image service are:

<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/lox/gis/shape.php> and [http://maps.csc.noaa.gov/CSP\\_SoCal/](http://maps.csc.noaa.gov/CSP_SoCal/)

**WR GIS Technical Advisory Group Working to Develop Regional NDFD in GIS Format:** WR has been coordinating with the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) to provide the National Digital Forecast Database (NDFD) in a GIS useable format with GACC defined boundaries. WFO Salt Lake City Information Technology Officer (ITO) Randy Weatherly is working on the initial phase. Eventual plans are to expand the project to include any and all geographical boundary information for the region.

**The Latest on GIS Science and Training Workshop:** WR will be holding a GIS Science and Training Workshop in Salt Lake City June 3 – 6. The workshop will cover Basic GIS Training and an information and project sharing forum. The objectives of the workshop are to provide basic GIS training to support the recent the software purchase, provide a discussion forum for

GIS projects and information sharing, foster networking and collaboration relationships among GIS focal points and other GIS representatives, provide real examples of GIS applications to stimulate and formulate local GIS projects in each office, and to provide briefings on other GIS activities within the NWS and NOAA.

**Montana AHPS User's Guide Goes National:** Building on the recent work of Gina Loss, Senior Service Hydrologist at Great Falls, MT, OCWWS HSD has produced a six-page AHPS User's Guide which provides examples of the graphical products available on the web along with highlights of each display and how to use each product's interactive features.

**Ultra-sonic Snow Depth Sensor Test Will End :** The testing and evaluation of ultra-sonic snow depth sensors conducted by the Colorado Climate Center which has a contract with NOAA has come to an end. Snow sensors were located at fifteen sites (three in Western Region) across the continental U.S. and Alaska. The Colorado Climate Center was informed that no more funds would be spent on the snow project and it would come to a close in June 2008.

**WFO Seattle Develops Fact Sheet for Potential Spring Snow Melt Flooding:** Seattle Senior Service Hydrologist Brent Bower developed a fact sheet covering the flood potential for Washington State due to the high snow pack this winter. This was expanded on their GotoMeeting they held with their cooperators and partners in early February. There has been heightened concern among emergency management, the media and general public as snow water equivalent amounts have reached levels that are much above normal. The fact sheet was disseminated via e-mail through the WCM contact list and was well received.

**Spring Flood Potential and Water Supply Forecast Briefing given to Idaho Governor:** Idaho Governor Butch Otter, Idaho National Guard and Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security officials were briefed by WFO Boise Sr. Service Hydrologist, Jay Breidenbach on the spring flood potential and water supply expectations. The Idaho National Guard has been used extensively this winter to help Idaho deal with the extremely deep snow, which caused numerous roof collapses across the state, overwhelmed local snow removal capabilities, and raised concerns about spring flood potential. Appreciation was expressed to the NWS in helping them plan appropriate use of National Guard personnel and resources across the state. Jay's briefing showed various Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service (AHPS) graphics including snow accumulation loops and images produced by the National Operational Remote Sensing Center (NORSC). The Governor was very interested in the impact NWRFC water supply forecasts and CPC climate forecasts would have on long term drought conditions in the southern part of the state.

## SCIENTIFIC SERVICES DIVISION

**12th Annual Great Divide Weather Workshop, Billings, Montana October 7-9, 2008:** The focus of the workshop will be on the forecast challenges faced in the Intermountain West and the Western High Plains. Please submit abstracts by **August 1, 2008**. All abstracts may be e-mailed to: [Wr.Great.Divide.Workshop@noaa.gov](mailto:Wr.Great.Divide.Workshop@noaa.gov) All attendees should register by August 1, 2008. The workshop web page and registration page can be found at: [www.weather.gov/billings](http://www.weather.gov/billings) or [www.weather.gov/glasgow](http://www.weather.gov/glasgow) .

**High Impact:** Paul Hirschberg (formerly OS&T, now assistant to Jack Hayes), as part of a long established SSD Chief priority, has been working with CFI on a survey of High Impact needs by local government decision makers. After completing an initial survey of the Sterling VA (Washington DC) users, the effort is now coming west to the state of Washington.

**Reminder: New Western Water Supply Web page:** With WR snowpack at or above normal this winter, there is a newly enhanced website which allows water resource managers to use powerful new interactive forecasting tools to show expected seasonal water volumes at over 500 locations in the Western United States. These water supply forecasts are issued by the RFCs. The web site can be found at [www.nwrfc.noaa.gov/westernwater](http://www.nwrfc.noaa.gov/westernwater).

**WR POP/QPF Web page – updated version -- try it!!** How is your office (and neighboring offices) POP and QPF forecast been performing? SSD just updated the web page again. Check out the regional high impact verification page developed by WR/SSD at **AWIPS internal web site -- [165.92.200.49:8080](tel:165.92.200.49:8080)**

**Teletraining Sessions for May:** The teletraining calendar is at: <http://rammb.cira.colostate.edu/visit/ecal.asp> Offices can register for the teletraining sessions by sending email to: [visit@comet.ucar.edu](mailto:visit@comet.ucar.edu).

- GOES Low Cloud Base Product (Basic, May 21)
- Water Vapor Imagery and Potential Vorticity Analysis (Intermediate, May 20)
- Basic Satellite Principles (Basic, May 28)
- CRAS Forecast Imagery in AWIPS (Basic, May 22)
- Mesoscale Convective Vortices (Basic, May 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

**ASOS Relocation:** Rex Bernhart traveled to Tucson Arizona to assist in the relocation of the ASOS ACU at the Tucson Airport.

**Safety Awareness Course:** The 2008 NOAA Safety Awareness Course is available at: [http://www.seco.noaa.gov/HTML/Training/training\\_Index.htm](http://www.seco.noaa.gov/HTML/Training/training_Index.htm)

Click on the “NOAA Employee Safety Awareness Course” link and enter your NOAA user name to begin the course.

The course is designed to provide a basic overview of safety and environmental compliance requirements, while helping NOAA employees and contractors use safe working practices and ensure environmental compliance.

All NOAA employees are required to complete the NOAA Employee Safety Awareness Course by June 30, 2008. Contractor employees are encouraged to take the course.

**New NWR Generator:** During the week of March 3, Facilities Engineering Technicians Tom Page and Lee Jenson traveled to Spirit Mountain Nevada and install a back up power generator at the NWR Transmitter site. This transmitter provides all hazards coverage to the Bullhead City, Arizona and Laughlin, Nevada. This was a cooperative effort between the NWS and Mohave County.

### **Spring Fire Safety Tips**

- Smoke detector batteries should be checked, and replaced if necessary.
- Smoke detector units should be cleared of dust.
- Electric outlets and extension cords should not be overloaded.
- Air conditioning units and electrical cords should be checked.
- Barbeque gas grills (including gas hoses) and propane tanks should be inspected prior to use.
- Windows should be checked to make sure they open and close properly, in case they are needed as exits.
- Review your family's Fire Escape Plan.
- Fuels for lawn and garden equipment, etc. should be stored in an approved container only.
- Pesticides and chemicals should be stored in an approved container and away from children.
- Swimming pool chemicals should be stored according to manufacturer guidelines.
- Oil based paints and solvents should be stored in a metal cabinet.