NOAA's NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

Western Region Notes

May 5, 2005

REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Old Digital Services Teams sunset, New Management Team Formed: It's been over a year since we formed six Digital Services Teams (Methodology, Grid Quality, Digital Products, Formatter, Outreach, and Backup). The six teams have helped tackle numerous issues facing the implementation of IFPS. Since many of the assigned tasks have been completed or need to be consolidated into a cross cutting team, I have decided to form a single Digital Services Management Team. My thanks go out to all original team members for their efforts to advance the region's digital service activities.

As part of the ongoing implementation of IFPS, the team will set prioritizes and submit proposed (required) methodologies and collaboration practices to MICs/HICs for approval. They will be the avenue for a "ground up" approach to standardizing grid editing methodologies and collaboration practices that make our forecast operations more efficient while improving grid quality.

The team will be led by Dave Reynolds, WFO Monterey MIC. Other team members include: Larry Dunn, Keith Meier, Bruce Bauck, Steve Todd, Harold Opitz, Rob Hartman, Greg Martin, and Robert Baruffaldi.

METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES DIVISION

Statement of the Week: The Statement of the Week for this edition is from WFO Las Vegas. This week is Las Vegas' first annual Safe Boating Weather Awareness Week, and the local WFO issued this statement describing the hazards of wind-driven waves on large lakes like Lake Mead. Heather Davis and Andy Bailey from WFO Las Vegas were the driving force behind this campaign to increase safety awareness among the many boaters in the area. Waves really do occur in the desert – and on more than just sand dunes!

PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE LAS VEGAS, NV
810 AM PDT TUE MAY 3 2005

THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE IN LAS VEGAS...NV IS HOSTING ITS FIRST ANNUAL SAFE BOATING WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK FROM APRIL 30 TO MAY 7 2005.

TODAYS THEME IS WIND AND WAVES.

STRONG WINDS ARE PERHAPS THE BIGGEST WEATHER THREAT TO BOATERS ON AREA LAKES. STRONG WINDS CREATE LARGE WAVES WHICH CAN CARRY AWAY SWIMMERS AND CAPSIZE OR SWAMP SMALLER BOATS. BECAUSE OF ITS SIZE...LAKE MEAD IS ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE TO LARGE WAVES.

TERRAIN PLAYS A BIG ROLE IN ENHANCING WIND SPEED. WINDS ARE OFTEN CHANNELED BY NEARBY TERRAIN FEATURES SUCH AS CANYONS AND OFTEN CAUSE WINDS TO BLOW AT SPEEDS AND DIRECTIONS NOT EXPERIENCED ELSEWHERE. IT IS BECAUSE OF TERRAIN ENHANCEMENT THAT WINDS ARE OFTEN STRONGER AT LAKES MEAD...MOHAVE...AND HAVASU THAN IN NEARBY PLACES LIKE LAS VEGAS OR KINGMAN. THUNDERSTORM WINDS IN PARTICULAR POSE A THREAT TO BOATERS. WINDS NEAR A THUNDERSTORM CAN INCREASE VERY SUDDENLY...LEAVING BOATERS LITTLE CHANCE TO REACH SHELTER.

PARK OFFICIALS AT THE LAKE MEAD NATIONAL RECREATION AREA ESTIMATE THAT SUSTAINED WINDS OF 20 MPH AND GREATER ARE LIKELY TO CREATE HAZARDOUS BOATING CONDITIONS. WIND DRIVEN WAVES ON LAKE MEAD HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO REACH UP TO SIX FEET IN SIZE. WAVES OF THIS HEIGHT CAN WASH OVER THE SIDE OF A SMALL CRAFT AND FILL IT WITH WATER. IN ADDITION...IF A LARGE WAVE HITS A VESSEL AT JUST THE RIGHT ANGLE...THE WAVE COULD CAPSIZE IT.

SWIMMERS ARE ALSO VULNERABLE TO THE EFFECTS OF WINDS AND LARGE WAVES. IMPROPER FLOTATION DEVICES...SUCH AS POOL TOYS...ARE SOMETIMES USED. THESE CAN BLOW OR DRIFT AWAY IN THE WIND AND LARGE WAVES...STRANDING SWIMMERS FAR FROM SHORE. TOYS SUCH AS THESE HAVE NO PLACE IN THE LAKE ENVIRONMENT.

BOATERS AND SWIMMERS MUST BE AWARE THAT WIND CONDITIONS ON AREA LAKES CAN CHANGE RAPIDLY AND OFTEN VARY FROM PLACE TO PLACE. ALWAYS CHECK THE FORECAST BEFORE HEADING OUT TO THE LAKE AND PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO FORECAST WIND SPEEDS AND THUNDERSTORM POTENTIAL.

TO GET THE LATEST FORECASTS...WARNINGS...AND WEATHER CONDITIONS...GO TO WEATHER.GOV/LASVEGAS...CALL THE FORECAST HOTLINE AT 702-736-3854...OR LISTEN TO YOUR NEAREST NOAA WEATHER RADIO STATION.

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Las Vegas Conducts Boating Safety Week: WFO Las Vegas conducted a Safe Boating Weather Awareness Week in conjunction with the dedication of the new Lake Mead National Recreation Area Water Safety Center. Las Vegas Forecaster and Lake Services Program Leader Heather Davis staffed an informational booth at the dedication, and WCM Andy Bailey spoke at the dedication's media event, highlighting the high number of annual weather related deaths on Lake Mead. Andy also announced the WFO's new "Lake Wind Advisory" product. Heather and Andy used the dedication to kick off the WFO's first Safe Boating Weather Awareness week, which the office used to raise the profile of hazardous weather on area lakes. Over the last several months, the two have worked with many different marine groups to develop the new product and get the office networked into the local boating community. See also the current "Statement of the Week," discussing this awareness campaign.

Governor Huntsman addresses the Media, while Dan Pope (right) and Roland Steadham (left), look on.

Spring Snowmelt Flood Potential Prompts Action by Utah Governor: On the heels of a major flood event in southwest Utah in January and with a snowpack nearly double that of normal in some river basins, the need for flood safety was evident to Utah Governor Jon Huntsman, Jr. The course of action by the Governor's Office was to launch a flood safety awareness and preparedness campaign, partnering with local Media representatives and WFO Salt Lake City (WFO SLC).

On April 19, WFO SLC hosted a press conference, kicking off the safety awareness campaign, which focuses on the dangers of flooding associated with spring snowmelt runoff and how to remain safe. Governor Huntsman provided the opening remarks. Following the Governor's remarks, Damon Yauney of Fox 13 updated the statewide snowpack numbers, and Dan Pope of KTVX Channel 4 highlighted the areas in Utah that have the most flood vulnerability. Roland Steadham of KUTV Channel 2 examined the potential for a repeat of the 1983 flood, and Len Randolph of KSL channel 5 detailed the long range forecast. In conclusion, Larry Dunn, MIC at WFO SLC, discussed 5 Dos and Don'ts of flood safety, aimed at "keeping loved ones safe." Prior to the press conference, all 4 Media representatives joined with Governor Huntsman to tape Public Service Announcements which will be aired throughout the spring snowmelt season.

WFO Medford celebrates Earth Day in Ashland, Oregon: WFO Medford participated in Earth Day by staffing a booth in Ashland, Oregon. The NWS booth was manned by Meteorologist Frederic Bunnag and was one of 50 exhibits from local non-profit

organizations, businesses, and government. Children went on a "geojourney" visiting exhibits and doing hands-on activities to earn prizes. The NWS booth had a total of 26 "geojourney" visitors. The children blew on a solar powered anemometer to see how much wind energy they could produce and spun the always popular tornado in a bottle. The adults were interested in the NOAA display on climate change.

Great Falls Participating in Amber Alert Training: WFO Great Falls MIC Steve Brueske will participate in the Amber Alert Regional Work Session on June 13-14. This is part of the Department of Justice's Amber Alert training and technical assistance program, and it is being conducted by Fox Valley Technical College in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The Amber Alert regional work session is designed to:

- Serve as a follow-up to the AMBER Alert Regional Coordinator meeting held earlier this year;
- Feature presentations on topics identified by AMBER coordinators across the
- country; and
- Provide opportunities to work and network with teams and various agencies from other jurisdictions within the region.

This work session is designed for AMBER Alert coordinators and their partners from the media/broadcast industry, transportation, missing children clearinghouse manager, and local law enforcement from the Western region. Funding for this workshop is provided by the US Department of Justice.

CERT Training at Great Falls: WFO Great Falls WCM Rick Dittmann provided weather safety and spotter training to the Cascade County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) on April 25. The CERT Program educates people about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area. It also trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, limited search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Using the training provided in the classroom and during exercises, CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help. CERT members also are encouraged to support emergency response agencies by taking a more active role in emergency preparedness projects in their community.

Now that's a conference room! Medford WCM Ryan Sandler recently gave a weather presentation to a small group of middle school students. The office conference room was already scheduled for a meeting so an alternative location was found across the street inside a Boeing KC-97. Beginning in 1953, this Boeing KC-97 was part of the Strategic Air Command, and its versatility as a multi-purpose

aircraft allowed it to be used as a troop transport/cargo carrier/hospital ship and in-air refueler through 1978. As a cargo carrier, it moved heavy equipment carrying light tanks, ambulances, artillery, or a combination of these. It was converted to a meeting room for the public and holds up to 49 people. It is available free-of-charge for NWS use. The only shortcoming was trying to make the weather talk as interesting as the plane and its cockpit.

AvnFPS 3.0 Update: Revised software for the aviation forecast preparation (AvnFPS) system soon will be available. As part of the rollout of the new software, two types of training will be offered. The AvnFPS team will provide teletraining over the course of two months. A Camtasia presentation also will be available for use in self-training. Pictured is Sacramento forecaster Cammye Sims, the Western Region team member, during a rehearsal of the teletraining.

National EAS Meeting at NAB Convention: On April 18, Craig Schmidt (WR MSD) participated in the Society of Broadcast Engineers (SBE) national EAS committee meeting at the annual National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) convention in Las Vegas. Craig presided over a session that dealt with improving communication between the broadcast community and the NWS. He also presented an overview of the Hazcollect system for all-hazards message dissemination that is expected to be implemented next winter. EAS chairs from at least eight states, from Oregon to Florida, were present at the meeting. They discussed topics ranging from AMBER alerts to the best ways to interact with the NWS in solving EAS problems. The session was very active, and a number of attendees stated that it was the most productive EAS committee meeting they'd attended. Herb White from OCWWS was also present and helped clarify many national issues during the discussions.

SCIENTIFIC SERVICES DIVISION

GFE Facilitator/Technical Coordinator: In order to better support the field on technical issues related to IFPS and the digital forecast process, the WR Methodology Team recommended that a GFE Facilitator/Technical Coordinator position be created in SSD. This position would be considered the regional expert on technical issues associated with the Interactive Forecast Preparation System and specifically the Graphical Forecast Editor interface. Kirby Cook will be the lead. Aaron Sutula will be converted from a SCEP to a permanent position in early May and will work closely with Kirby. Together, Kirby and Aaron will provide the technical support.

To get started, some of the initial activities Kirby and Aaron will complete are:

- Basic Familiarization - SLC WFO working grid editing shifts
- Document Gridded Forecast Process - Office Visits (5 offices)
- Office Support
  - Set up Mod-Note and Training module process to document installation procedures and generate training modules (May)
  - Set up Lessons Learned page (May)
  - Set up WR NDFD/IFPS listserver (May)
  - Test and implement WR GFE application box (mid-June)

Since Kirby's and Aaron's primary mission is to help WR offices with technical issues associated with IFPS and digital services, their primary point(s) of contact will be the IFPS focal point(s) at each of the local offices. Kirby and Aaron will continue to tap various field experts as needed to for either guidance or gain personal knowledge on how to resolve technical issues or requests.

The WR Methodology Team will be the primary group that collects, resolves, and prioritizes regional wide goals and changes. Kirby and Aaron will use the Methodology Team's list of priorities as the primary input to new implementation tasks. Carl Gorski (MSD) will be providing more information on the new IFPS decision process that was implemented last week.

New Science Paper: A new WR publication has been added to the web.

> ***Technical Attachment 05-02***: Notes on the National Digital Forecast Database Verification; written by Mark Mollner (SSD)

It can be found at: http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/wrh/pubs.php.

Next Generation Satellites (GOES-N) Nearing Launch Date: The current series of Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites (GOES-8 through 12) are aging and will be soon replaced. GOES 10 is the operational western satellite and GOES-12 is the eastern satellite. The next generation GOES satellites are called GOES N, O, and P. GOES-N is tentatively scheduled to be launched June 23. As with most rocket launches, there may be some slip in the launch schedule. Once in orbit, the satellite will undergo a lengthy check out and testing phase. The checkout process will last most of the summer and conclude by late August. GOES-N will be assigned a number at that time (either GOES-13 or 14). After successful post-launch checkout at 90W longitude, the satellite will be placed in an on-orbit storage mode so that it can rapidly replace a failure of either GOES 10 or 12. Over the coming weeks, we will be providing additional summaries on what the new spacecraft will provide the forecasters.

New COMET Jet Streak Web Module: COMET has released a new Webcast on Jet Streak Circulations. It can be found at: http://meted.ucar.edu/norlat/jetstreaks/

This Webcast is a presentation given by Dr. James T. Moore of Saint Louis University. Dr. Moore reviews many aspects of jet streak dynamics including convergence/divergence, vertical motion fields, ageostrophic winds, propagation, and coupled jets. The Webcast is 41 minutes in length and includes a quiz.

Changes to the Public Forecast Page: Based on suggestions from the WR offices, Aaron Sutula (WR/SSD) made several enhancements to the forecast page. The following changes became effective on May 3.

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) The 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 bookmarks when we make a future change to the maps. The pages will also accessible via latitude/longitude.

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.

WR Hydrology Science Meeting: A Hydrology Science "Research to Operations" Meeting has been *tentatively* scheduled for October 4-6. The primary goal of the workshop is to develop and improve collaboration and technology transfer between NWS Western Region field offices and the hydrology research community. A secondary goal is to inform the hydrology professionals in both the operational and research communities on each others activities. The meetings contacts are Kevin Werner (SSD) and Michelle Schmidt (HCSD). More information will be coming.

Annual AWIPS and Training Requirements Review Underway: Each year, NSTEP gathers training requirements and 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 1-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 requirements activity as interim milestones are completed.

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)

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

New Upper-Air Facility in Oakland: Team work by facilities technicians Jim MacLellan and Lee Jenson, along with support from Sacramento ET staff Mike Schlosser and Steve Veek, made for a smooth transition from the old BILS facility to a new release facility. The new facility works great and makes it easy to release balloons.

AST Modification: Engineering Facilities Technicians Mike Belarde and Tom Page completed a modification to the fuel storage tank at the Spokane WFO. A fuel return line was added from the inside day tank to the outside fuel storage tank, ultimately eliminating a possible fuel overfill and spillage condition. This modification was a recommendation from the Environmental Engineer who completed the Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan (SPCC).

The Upper Air Site in San Diego: NKX was part of a test of a new upper air balloon tracking system. For about 10 days in March, regular balloons were sent up as well as test balloons to see how the 2 systems compared.