

*and give to every part its just proportion.
~ Eli Whitney ~
Inventor of the cotton gin*

Editor's Note: This is the fourth story in our AWIPS II series.

John Vogel, Program Manager, and **Ronla Henry**, Deputy Program Manager, of the AWIPS Program in the Office of Science and Technology, took different paths to the National Weather Service.

Vogel was born in St. Louis, MO. He had no exposure to meteorology in his youth. It wasn't until he joined the Air Force that the field caught his attention.

Vogel explained, "I was given a test and then a list of different career fields I might be interested in. Weather was one of those and off I went." He graduated from Texas A&M University and supported Air Force Weather, both on active duty and as a contractor, for many years before joining the NWS.

Henry is originally from Roanoke, VA. Unlike Vogel, she has been interested in the weather ever since she was a little girl. She remembers begging her parents to get home so that she could watch the weather report and find out the forecast. She also liked to go outside to observe the weather.

"When I got to middle school," said Henry, "I announced to my parents that I wanted to be a meteorologist, and they looked at me blankly and said, 'a what?'"

Henry went on to receive her Bachelors degree in Atmospheric Sciences from the University of North Carolina in Asheville. From there, she attended the University of Maryland and earned a Masters in Meteorology.

While attending the University of Maryland, Henry had an opportunity to intern at the NWS.

She said, "I got my foot in the door at the Weather Service and worked in the Meteorological Development Laboratory. I developed software that was ultimately used on AWIPS. After a recent two year period in the System Engineering Center, also managing AWIPS projects, I eventually ended up in the Deputy Program Manager role."

She has been at the NWS for almost her entire career, approaching 18 years.

In spite of their diverse backgrounds, both are working closely together on AWIPS II which is, as Vogel said, "the most important project in NWS."



Ronla Henry and John Vogel meet to discuss AWIPS II.

Henry says AWIPS II is an opportunity to get modern technology and techniques to the forecasters and to ensure the new system is adaptable, scalable, and flexible. She said, "We are attempting to make the transition from science to operations easier. Our partners at universities and other Federal agencies will be able to enhance the system and develop new capabilities which will allow us to get improved science and technology tools to the forecaster, even faster."

The AWIPS II Service Oriented Architecture is based on a layers concept. Once the foundation layers are in place, functionalities can be added.

Vogel said that, "Having this kind of architecture in place will ensure a solid foundation for future expansion, interoperability with other systems, and the capability to add new functions. It permits differing applications to exchange data without redundant files or databases."

Risk management is a big part of their job. Testing, planning, and experience tell them what they need to do to prevent problems before they arise. Both Vogel and Henry work closely with Raytheon contractors and NWS personnel, meeting with them several times a week.

Vogel and Henry have also reached out to the Regions and forecasters for testing, evaluation, and subject matter experts to support this project.

Henry said, "Our ultimate customer is the forecaster on shift twenty-four seven. They are essential in identifying problems and issues with the software that will impact our ability to make AWIPS II operational. We have engaged them as stakeholders on this entire project."

The NWS Valley, NE, Weather Forecast Office (WFO) is situated near the Raytheon AWIPS II development office. They have worked out a partnership where the WFO forecasters test the AWIPS II software, and the developers go to the WFO and see the existing system in action.

Once AWIPS II is deployed, Vogel and Henry will change gears a little bit and start looking at how the architecture needs to be adapted for future requirements. This will also mean looking at new science and technology and identifying what will need to be incorporated into AWIPS II.

They've been so intensely involved with AWIPS, one wonders how life will change for Vogel and Henry once AWIPS II is deployed. "Deployment will mean that Ronla may be able to ease back into a nine or ten hour work day," said Vogel with a laugh.

Audio Clip:

[Click to hear Ronla Henry and John Vogel speak about managing the development of AWIPS II.](#)

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