NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE, ALBANY, NY

2015 F I R E W E A T H E R

A N N U A L O P E R A T I N G P L A N

FOR

EAST CENTRAL NEW YORK AND ADJACENT WESTERN NEW ENGLAND

PREPARED BY
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FIRE WEATHER PROGRAM LEADERS
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE ALBANY, NY
MARCH 23, 2015

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SECTION 1. NWS ALBANY, NY FIRE WEATHER PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Meteorologist in Charge (MIC)	Raymond O'Keefe
Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM)	Stephen DiRienzo
Fire Weather Program Leaders	Hugh W. Johnson IV/Ian Lee

This document is based on the Fire Weather Directive (10-401) issued by the National Weather Service (NWS). NWS Albany, NY issues the following fire weather products consisting of:

1. Fire Weather forecast grids
2. Fire Weather forecast discussion
3. Fire Weather Planning Forecast (FWF)
4. National Fire Danger Rating System Forecast (NFDRS) (FWM)
5. Spot Forecasts (as needed)
6. Fire Weather Watch (RFW)
7. Red Flag Warning (RFW)
8. Special Weather Statements (SPS)

The NWS Albany, NY Fire Weather Program provides forecast and warning services in support of fire management planning and control operations leading to the effective prevention, suppression, and management of forest and rangeland fires. The objective of the NWS Albany, NY Fire Weather Program is to provide a service which will meet the meteorological requirements of federal and state wild land management agencies in the protection and enhancement of the Nation's forests and rangelands. NWS Albany, NY provides these forecasts and services for east central New York, southern Vermont, western Massachusetts, and northwestern Connecticut (Figure 1).

Throughout the entire year, NWS Albany, NY fire weather support, including fire weather grids and Spot forecasts, are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The 2015 NWS Albany, NY fire weather season runs from **March 16 through early November**. The exact end of the season will be determined by antecedent conditions and collaboration with our users. In addition to the creation of fire weather grids, the FWF and FWM products will also be generated twice daily with the 4am/4pm forecast packages.

CONTACT INFORMATION: To obtain fire weather services mentioned in this plan, local, state, or federal officials may contact NWS Albany, NY at 518-435-9575 or by email via ALB.Stormreport@noaa.gov, Hugh.W.Johnson@noaa.gov, or Ian.Lee@noaa.gov.

Written requests should be addressed to:

National Weather Service Office
CESTM, 251 Fuller Road, Suite B300
Albany, NY 12203
Attn: Hugh W. Johnson IV, Ian Lee

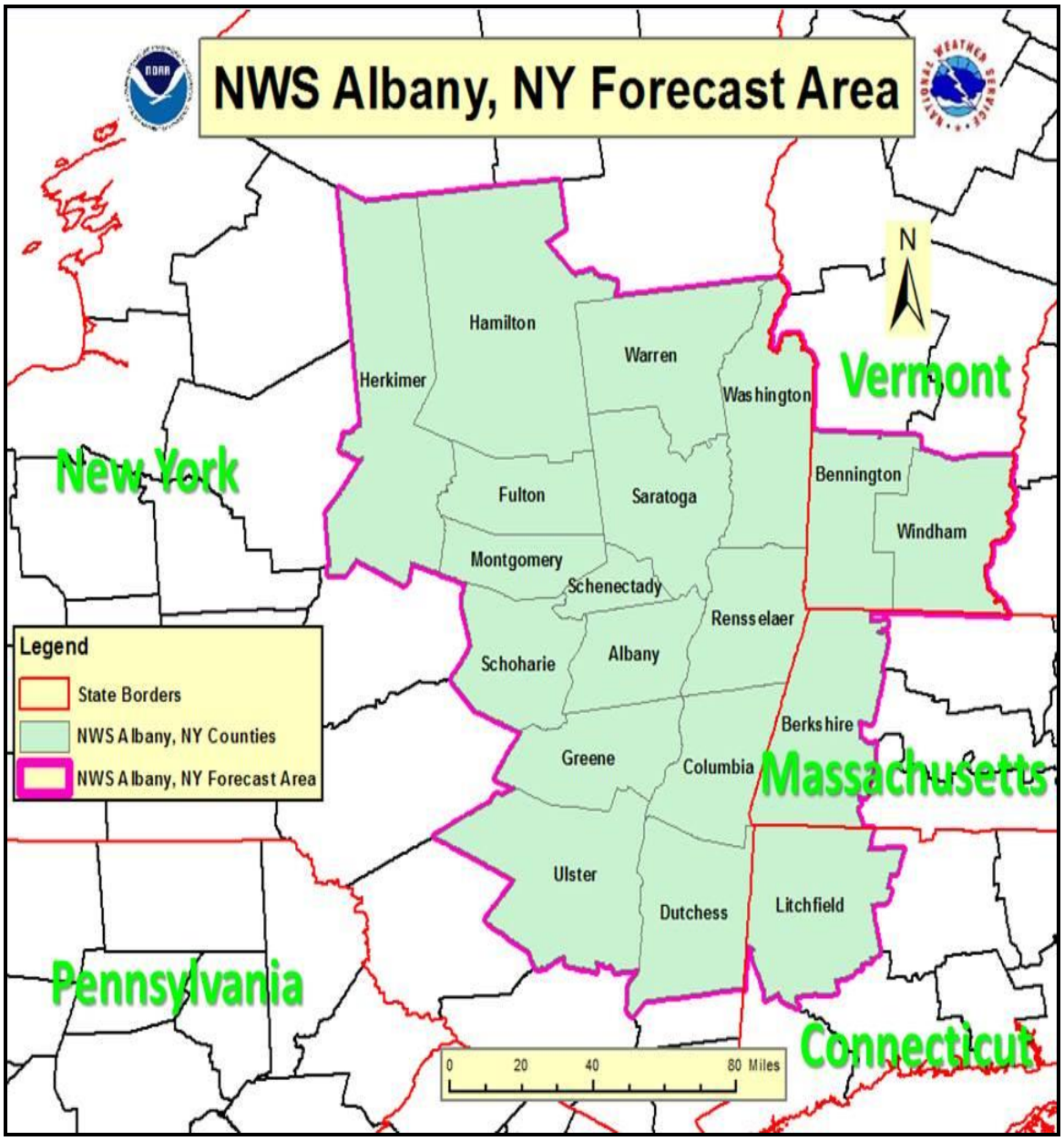

Figure 1. NWS Albany, NY forecast area.

SECTION 2. FIRE WEATHER PRODUCTS

INTRODUCTION

The following fire weather products are issued by NWS Albany, NY during the fire weather season:

1. Fire Weather forecast grids
2. Fire Weather forecast discussion
3. Fire Weather Planning Forecast (FWF)
4. National Fire Danger Rating System Forecast (NFDRS) (FWM)
5. Fire Weather Watch (RFW)
6. Red Flag Warning (RFW)
7. Special Weather Statements (SPS)

1. FIRE WEATHER FORECAST GRIDS

Fire Weather forecast grids (Figure 2) are populated all year long, twice a day at around 4am/4pm (LST) or 4am/4pm (LDT). These forecast grids can be obtained by accessing the following link:

http://graphical.weather.gov/sectors/alyFireDay.php

Fire weather users can also access other aspects of the forecast by visiting the NWS Albany, NY webpage (Figure 3):

http://www.weather.gov/aly

From this page (http://www.weather.gov/aly), forecasts can be generated by clicking a single point on the map or by typing in a zip code. Additionally, fire weather users can access the Area Forecast Discussion (AFD), a text product that describes the thinking behind forecasts, by clicking on the following icon located near the bottom of the page (Figure 4).

NWS Albany, NY also has a webpage solely dedicated to fire weather:

http://www.weather.gov/aly/EMfire

Once at this link, users can access an abundance of fire weather information including the latest version of the Annual Operating Plan (AOP), graphical forecasts, text forecasts, fire weather guidance, and Spot forecasts.

2. FIRE WEATHER AREA FORECAST DISCUSSION (AFD)

The Area Forecast Discussion (AFD) is a text product that describes the thinking behind forecasts. During the fire weather season, a specific Fire Weather section is added to the AFD, outlining forecast thinking behind specific fire weather meteorological issues. The Fire Weather portion of the AFD can be found near the bottom of the text product, underneath the Aviation section and above the Hydrology section.

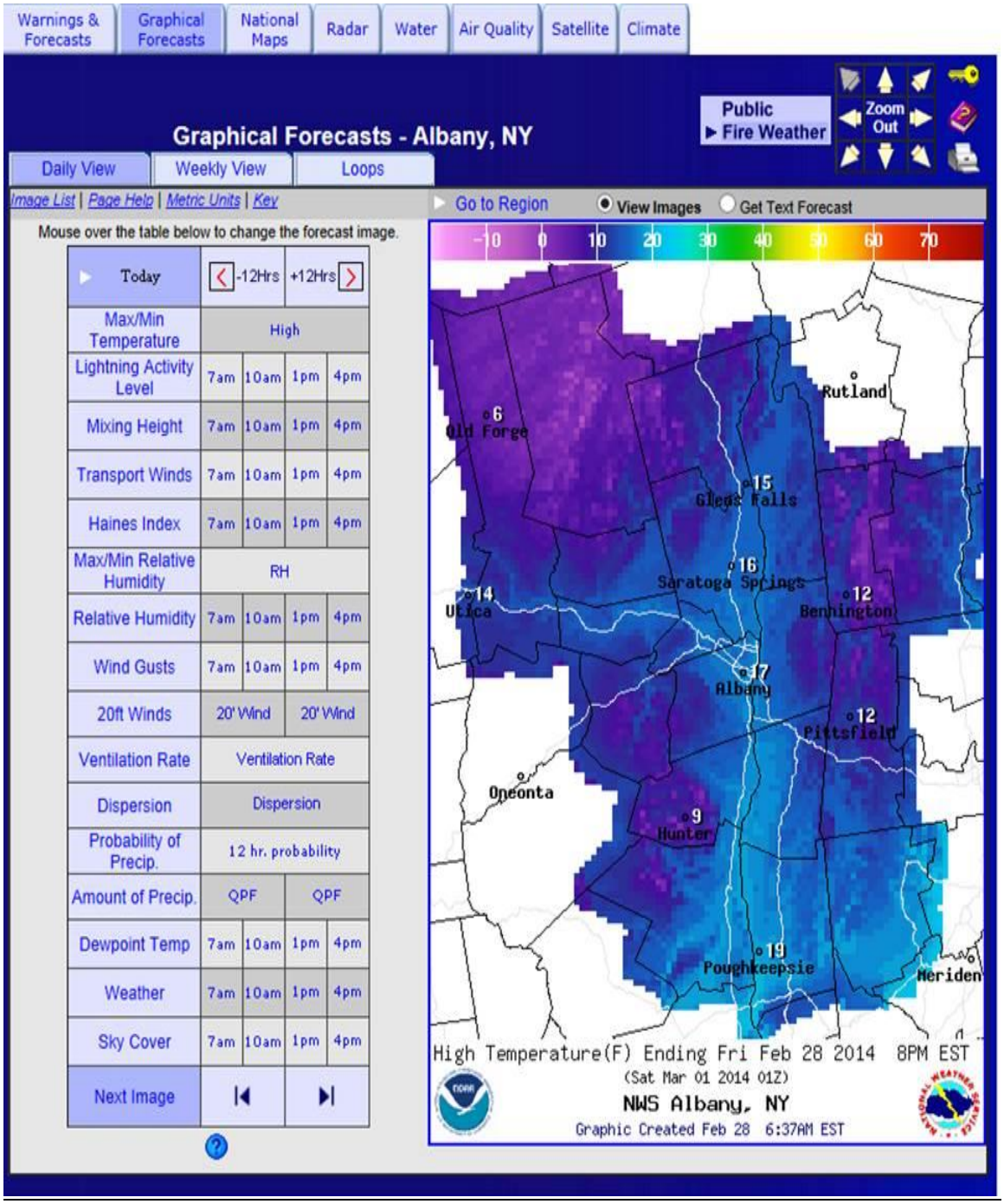

Figure 2. NWS Albany, NY fire weather forecast grids webpage.

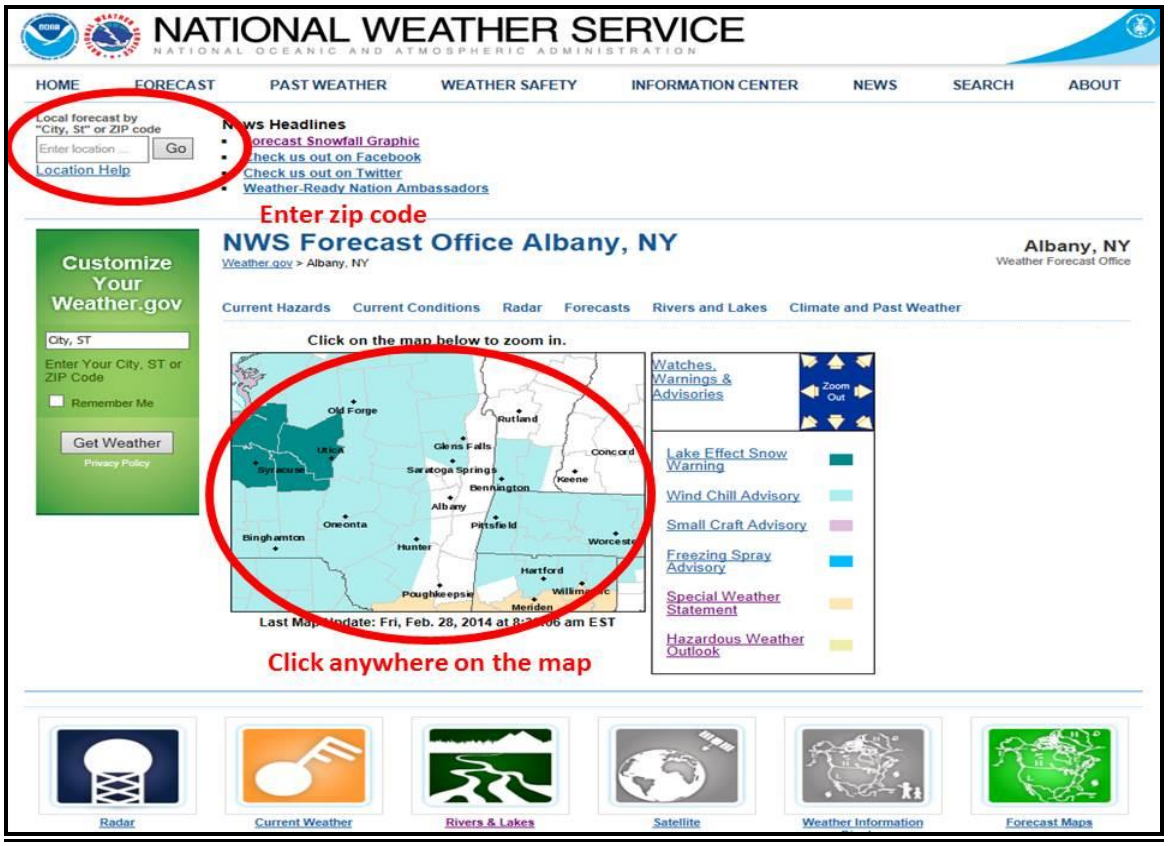

Figure 3. NWS Albany main webpage. Red circles indicate locations where forecast can be obtained.

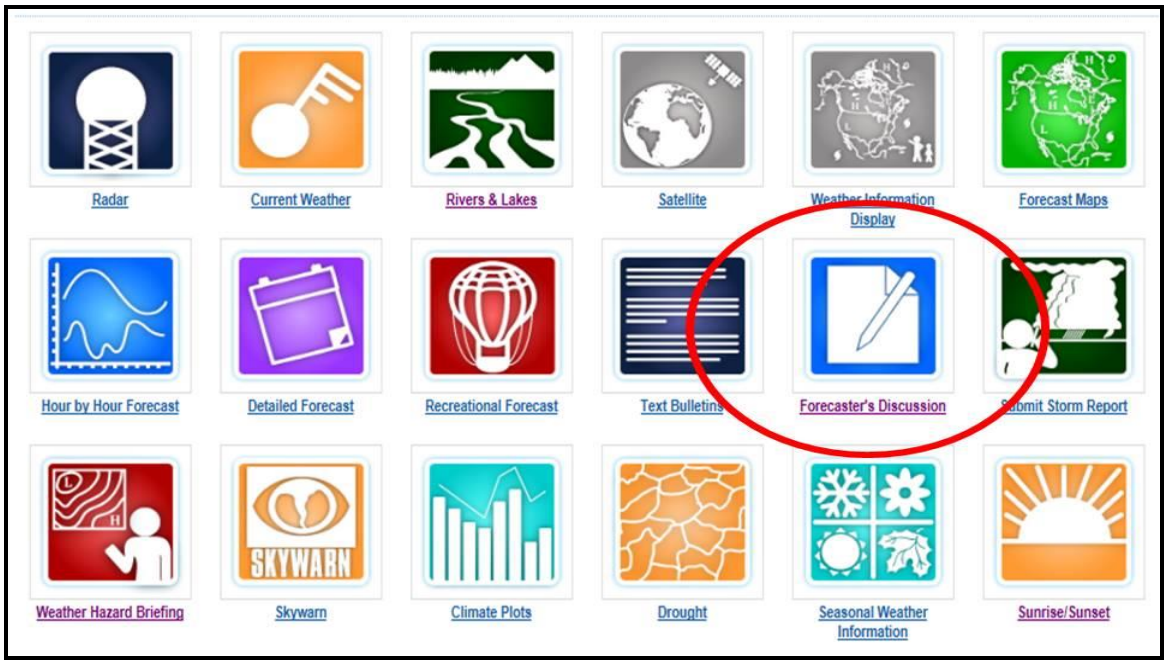

Figure 4. Area Forecast Discussion (AFD) icon, denoted by the red circle.

3. FIRE WEATHER PLANNING FORECAST (FWF)

The Fire Weather Planning Forecast (FWF) is issued twice daily during the fire weather season around 4am and 4pm LDT. The FWF forecasts the average fire weather-focused meteorological conditions across the NWS Albany, NY forecast area.

The FWF is a general zone forecast and may not necessarily reflect the exact current conditions at any exact given location. When a more precise forecast is required, the user is referred to Section 4 (Spot Forecasts).

Fire control and forest officials in each state are familiar with their own local weather influences. Therefore, the FWF may be used as a general overview forecast, and adapted for local conditions.

New York, Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut use the 1964-67 National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) for calculating fire danger, as well as the 1978 and 1988 NFDRS.

The basic information contained in the FWF provides fire control officials with sufficient data to calculate fire danger indices for all versions of the NFDRS mentioned above.

The NWS Albany, NY forecast area of fire weather responsibility includes east central New York, southern Vermont, western Massachusetts, and northwest Connecticut. The forecast area is divided into 34 zones (Figures 5 and 6). Example 1 outlines an example of the FWF product.

DEFINITION OF FWF TERMS

- Day period: Between the hours of 7 am and 7 pm LST.
- Night period: Between the hours of 7 pm and 7 am LST.
- Zone: Refer to Figures 5 and 6 for the NWS Albany, NY forecast area.
- AGL: Above Ground Level
- MSL: Mean Sea Level

BODY OF FORECAST

1. Headline: A headline is required when a Fire Weather Watch (RFW) or Red Flag Warning (RFW) is in effect and should include the watch/warning, what areas are affected, reason for issuance, and effective time period. The headlines are automatically generated by the Graphical Forecast Editor (GFE) software. Significant trends of locally defined critical weather elements will also be headlined for non-watch/warning periods.

2. Discussion: Per NWS Directive 10-401, the discussion is a brief, clear and non-technical description of the weather systems impacting the NWS Albany, NY forecast area. Emphasis is placed on the first two days, but longer periods can be included if significant weather is expected and the forecaster has reasonable confidence that it will occur. The discussion will mention significant trends in temperature, RH and winds, as well as any unusual instability/stability parameters (i.e. high Haines index of 6) as these parameters are used significantly by the fire weather community.

3. Cloud Cover (%)
   a. (CLR) Clear..... 0 TO 6 percent coverage.
   b. (MCLEAR) Mostly clear…7 to 30 percent coverage.

c. (PCLDY) Partly cloudy...31 to 69 percent coverage.
d. (MCLDY) Mostly cloudy…70 to 94 percent coverage.
e. (CLDY) Cloudy…95 percent or more coverage.

4. Precip Type
   a. Rain: continuous liquid precipitation.
   b. Showers: an intermittent precipitation.
   c. Drizzle: very light liquid precipitation, may not measure.
   d. Sleet: solid precipitation of small ice pellets.
   e. Snow: continuous solid crystallized precipitation.
   f. Flurries: intermittent light snow, little no accumulation.
   g. Hail: ice precipitation of varying size and intensity.
   h. Thunderstorms (TSTMS): showers, with thunder/lightning and possibly, strong gusty winds and/or hail.

5. Chance Precip (%)…Probability of precipitation (.01 inch or more) during a 12-hour period.

6. Temp (24hr Trend)...Highest and lowest dry bulb temperature expected during the day or night time period as indicated (°F). The 24-hour trend is the difference between the previous forecasted high/low temp and the current forecast high/low temp.

7. Relative Humidity (RH) (24hr Trend)…The lowest daytime relative humidity (%), or the highest nighttime relative humidity for the period indicated. Note, relative humidity is a direct function of the dry bulb temperature and dewpoint temperature.

8. 20 FT Am Wind...Average 20-foot wind direction and speed (mph) during the morning. (7am – 12pm).

9. 20 FT Pm Wind...Average 20-foot wind direction and speed (mph) during the afternoon for the daytime period (12pm – 7pm), and at night for the nighttime period (7pm – 7am).

10. Precip Amount...Amount of liquid equivalent precipitation (rain or melted frozen precipitation) during the 12-hour period, in inches.

11. Precip Duration...Expected duration of precipitation during any 12-hour period.

12. Precip Begin...Beginning time of precipitation during the period (or continuing from the previous period).

13. Precip End...Ending time of precipitation during the period (or continuing through the period).

14. Mixing Hgt (ft-AGL)...The mixing height is forecast during the day. It is the height to which the air near the surface is well mixed through turbulence. It is typically located at the base of a capping temperature inversion. The mixing height is quite variable in space and time, and in fair weather, typically rises from a few tens of meters at sunrise, to 1 to 4 km at the time of maximum temperature. Because of its typically

low elevation under an early morning surface inversion, the mixing height is frequently assumed to fall to near zero overnight, and often not included in a FWF for the nighttime periods. To determine it, estimate the maximum temperature, and lift it dry adiabatically until it reaches the forecast sounding temperature. During the summer, if neither a low-level inversion nor warm advection is present, daytime heating will produce a mixed atmosphere of 4000 to 7000 feet in depth. The more unstable the atmosphere, the greater the mixing depth.

15. Transport Wind…The average direction and speed of the wind (mph) throughout the lower layer of air to the mixing height.

16. Ventilation Rate...An index which calculates the product of the mixing height times the transport wind speed. It is a measure of the horizontal transport of air within the mixed layer. When the mixing height is low and the transport winds are light, the Ventilation Rate will be poor. The ventilation rate is calculated for the daytime periods only.

100000 and up	(Excellent)
61000-100000	(Good)
41000-60000	(Average)
2100-40000	(Fair)
20000 or less	(Poor)

Example - Mixing height 4500 feet, Transport Wind speed 20 mph (4500 x 20=90000)

17. Dispersion…The dispersion is the average dispersion during the day. General guidance for dispersion is based on surface winds.
    0-4 mph: Poor to very poor (VP to PO)
    5-7 mph: Fair (FA)
    8-9 mph: Good (GD)
    10 mph or greater: Excellent (EX)

18. LAL...Lightning Activity Level category. Ranges from 1 to 6 and relates to areal coverage of thunderstorms corresponding to Lightning Activity Levels. LAL and areal coverage correspond as follows:

LAL Level	Coverage (%)	Descriptor
1	< 15	None
2	15-24	Isolated/Widely Scattered (Slight Chance)
3	25-54	Scattered (Chance)
4	55-74	Numerous (Likely)
5	> 74	Widespread (Categorical/Definite)
6 (Dry lightning)*		Widely Scattered or greater

*Dry lightning, which is lightning with little or no rain, is **extremely rare** in the eastern United States.

19. Haines Index...The Haines Index (HI) is calculated during the daytime period, but not the night period. It is a measure of stability and moisture (not incorporating wind or fuel moisture). The HI ranges from 2 to 6, which is a sum of two components, a temperature difference (categorized from 1 to 3), and a moisture/dewpoint difference (also categorized from 1 to 3). The HI is customized by elevation using a single point

to represent each of the 34 NWS Albany, NY forecast zones. There are different options available in the Haines Index, each customized for elevation. Elevations below 1000 feet MSL, use the low-level HI calculation. Elevations between 1000 and 3000 feet MSL use a mid-level Haines calculation. Elevations above 3000 feet MSL use a high level Haines calculation. The larger the Haines Index number, the better chance of seeing large (plume) fire development, mainly where winds are not a factor.

Haines Index
2-3 VERY LOW (Stable Atmosphere)
4 LOW (Neutral Atmosphere)
5 MODERATE (Unstable Atmosphere)
6 HIGH (Very Unstable Atmosphere)

20. Remarks...Any unusual or pertinent facts, not described in the body of the forecast. These may include wind shifts with frontal passages, temperature inversions, any potential severe weather, smoke management comments, etc.

21. Forecast Extended...A general forecast of weather and temperature trends beyond the first three forecast periods out to Day 7, located at the end of the 34-zone FWF.

22. Outlook 8 to 14 Day...Temperature and precipitation trends of near, above, or below normal for the time of the season. These forecasts are issued directly from the Climate Prediction Center (CPC).

Intermediate FWF Updates – Issued only when the weather scenario changes significantly from earlier thinking during the daytime hours. Potential examples of when an intermediate FWF update may be needed:

1. Red Flag criteria met, but not previously anticipated, or vice versa.
2. If observed wind speeds differ by 10 mph or greater and/or wind direction differs by 90 degrees from forecast with a prevailing wind 10 mph or greater.
3. RH falls below 30%, when forecast to be 40% or greater.
4. RH exceeds 40%, when forecast to be below 30%.
5. A wetting rain likely, when not forecast or vice versa.
6. Convection changes two categories or more (i.e. slight to likely/likely to slight)
7. Any unexpected weather conditions that will significantly impact fire weather operations.

The link during the fire weather season for the NWS Albany, NY FWF can be found at:

http://forecast.weather.gov/product.php?site=NWS&issuedby=ALY&product=FWF

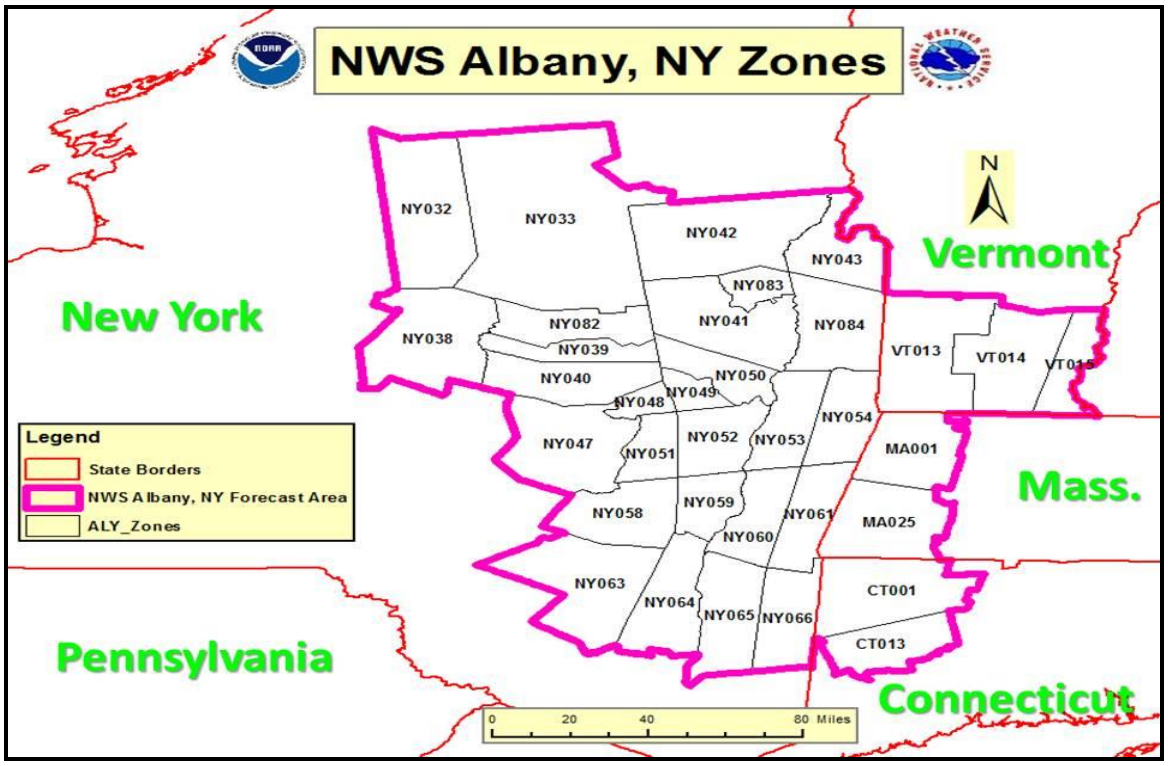

Figure 5. NWS Albany, NY forecast zones.

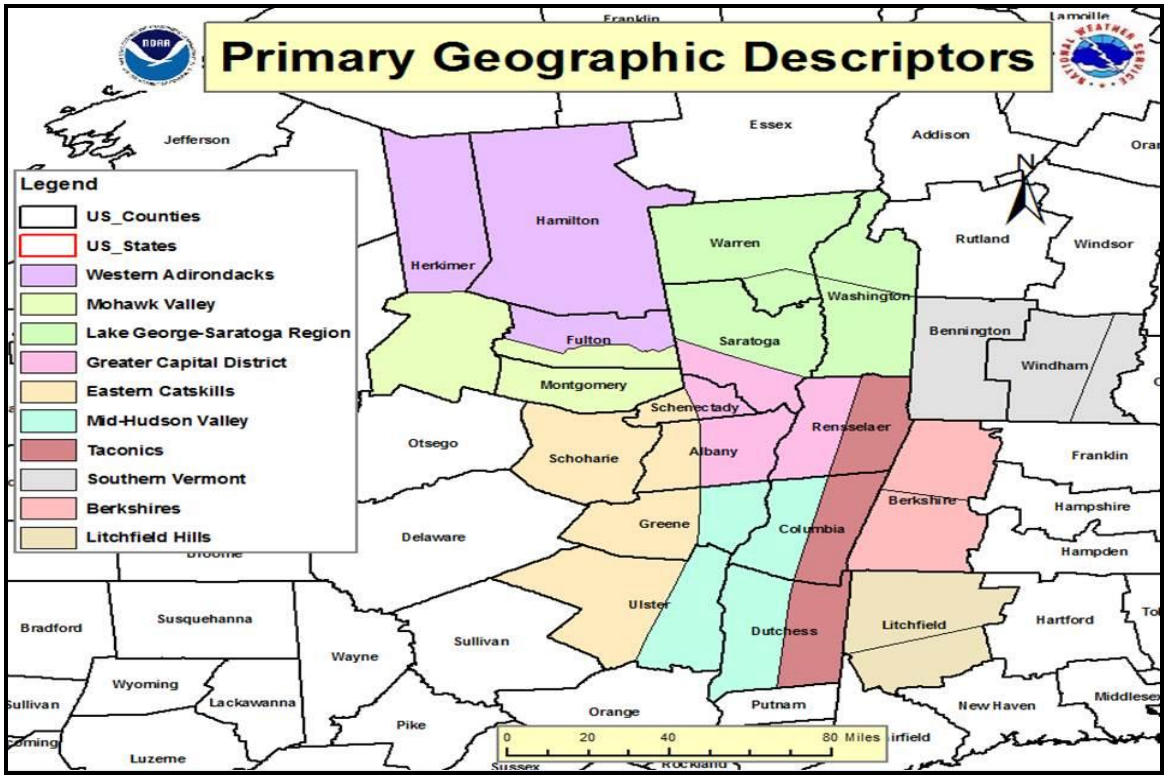

Figure 6. NWS Albany, NY primary geographic descriptors.

Example 1. FWF Sample Product

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FIRE WEATHER PLANNING FORECAST FOR EASTERN NEW YORK...SOUTHERN
VERMONT...WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS AND NORTHWEST CONNECTICUT
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE ALBANY NY
438 AM EDT WED MAR 25 2015

.DISCUSSION...
FIRE WEATHER ISSUES ARE NOT ANTICIPATED THE NEXT SEVERAL DAYS
WITH A WIDESPREAD SNOW PACK IN PLACE...AND WET AND UNSETTLED
WEATHER THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

TEMPERATURES WILL ACTUALLY RISE TO ABOVE NORMAL LEVELS TODAY AND
THURSDAY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SEVERAL DAYS. A WARM FRONT WILL
BRING SOME SHOWERS TO THE REGION WITH RAINFALL AMOUNTS RANGING
FROM A TENTH TO A QUARTER OF AN INCH. SOME MELTING OF THE SNOW
PACK...WHICH RANGES FROM ONE TO THREE FEET IN THE MOUNTAINS...AND
A FEW INCHES TO A FOOT OR SO IN MOST OF THE VALLEY LOCATIONS...IS
LIKELY WEDNESDAY NIGHT INTO THURSDAY.

A LOW PRESSURE SYSTEM APPROACHING FROM THE OHIO VALLEY WILL BRING
A WIDESPREAD SOAKING RAINFALL INTO THURSDAY NIGHT...AND AS COLDER
AIR FUNNELS SOUTH IN THE WAKE OF THE CYCLONE AND ITS COLD
FRONT...THEN THE PRECIPITATION WILL CHANGE TO SNOW IN SOME
LOCATIONS. RAINFALL AMOUNTS COULD RANGE FROM A HALF AN INCH TO AN
INCH...AND A FEW INCHES OF SNOW WILL BE POSSIBLE OVER THE
MOUNTAINS NORTH AND WEST OF THE CAPITAL DISTRICT.

COLDER AND DRIER WEATHER RETURNS FRIDAY INTO THE WEEKEND.

NYZ032-252115-
NORTHERN HERKIMER-
INCLUDING THE CITIES OF...ATWELL...BIG MOOSE...EAGLE BAY...
MCKEEVER...NOBLEBORO...NORTHWOOD...OLD FORGE
438 AM EDT WED MAR 25 2015

                      TODAY        TONIGHT      THU

CLOUD COVER           PCLDY        MCLDY        CLOUDY
PRECIP TYPE           SHOWERS      SHOWERS      RAIN
CHANCE PRECIP (%)     90           80           100
TEMP (24H TREND)      42 (+10)     34 (+30)     41
RH % (24H TREND)      30 (-9)      98 (0)       62
20FTWND-VAL/AM(MPH)   SE  8 G19                 SW  9 G17
20FTWND-RDG/PM(MPH)   SE 20 G34    S 20 G40     LGT/VAR
PRECIP AMOUNT         0.16         0.11         0.33
PRECIP DURATION       3            3            9
PRECIP BEGIN          1 PM         CONTINUING   CONTINUING
PRECIP END            CONTINUING   CONTINUING   CONTINUING
MIXING HGT(M-AGL/MSL) 630                       720
MIXING HGT(FT-AGL/MSL)2060                      2370
TRANSPORT WND (KTS)   S 15                      NW  4
TRANSPORT WND (M/S)   S  8                      NW  2
TRANSPORT WND (MPH)   S 17                      NW  5
VENT RATE (KT-FT)     16210                     10760
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VENT RATE (M/S-M)      2550                        1690
VENT RATE (MPH-FT)     18640                       12380
DISPERSION             5                           4
DSI                    N/A          N/A            N/A
SUNSHINE HOURS         N/A          N/A            N/A
CWR
LAL                    1            1              1
HAINES INDEX           4            2              3
RH RECOVERY            EXCELLENT    EXCELLENT      EXCELLENT
STABILITY CLASS

REMARKS...NONE.

$$
```

There will be 33 additional zone forecast like this one, one per zone. After that, there will be an Extended Forecast. (Days 3-7) followed by the 8-10 Day Temperature/Precipitation Outlook.

```
.FORECAST FOR DAYS 3 THROUGH 7...
.FRIDAY...RAIN OR A CHANCE OF SNOW SHOWERS. LOWS IN THE LOWER
30S. HIGHS AROUND 40. NORTH WINDS 5 TO 10 MPH.
.SATURDAY...MOSTLY CLOUDY. LOWS AROUND 19. HIGHS IN THE LOWER
30S. NORTH WINDS AROUND 10 MPH.
.SUNDAY...BREEZY. PARTLY CLOUDY. LOWS AROUND 17. HIGHS AROUND 40.
WEST WINDS 15 TO 25 MPH.
.MONDAY...BREEZY. MOSTLY CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE OF RAIN OR SNOW
SHOWERS. LOWS IN THE UPPER 20S. HIGHS IN THE MID 40S. WEST WINDS
15 TO 25 MPH.
.TUESDAY...BREEZY. PARTLY CLOUDY. LOWS IN THE UPPER 20S. HIGHS IN
THE LOWER 40S. WEST WINDS 15 TO 25 MPH.

.OUTLOOK 8 TO 14 DAYS...
TEMPERATURES BELOW NORMAL.  PRECIPITATION ABOVE NORMAL.

$$
```

4. NATIONAL FIRE DANGER RATING SYSTEM (NFDRS) (FWM)

The National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) forecast, hereafter referred to as the FWM, measures wildfire danger and is issued around 3am and 3pm LST/LDT (Example 2). The NWS role in NFDRS involves forecasting weather input which, when combined with input from the fire weather community (fuel moisture, etc.), allows the NFDRS software to predict the next day's fire danger index.

Per NWS Directive 10-401, a fire weather observation must be received for a NFDRS forecast to be generated. These forecasts are currently issued for 5 New York locations, with 1 location in southern Vermont. The current NWS Albany, NY NFDRS locations are as follows:

NEW YORK

#300011 Albany Pine Bush (Albany County)
Elevation: 325' MSL
Coordinates: 42° 43' 10.35" N 73° 51' 55.87" W
Owner: New York State DEC Forest Rangers
Contact: Brandon Clifford

#301111 Belleayre Mountain (Ulster County)
Elevation: 1925' MSL
Coordinates: 42° 08' 37.12" N 74° 29' 43.12" W
Owner: New York State DEC Forest Rangers
Contact: Andrew Jacob

#300411 Lake Pleasant (Hamilton County)
Elevation: 1790' MSL
Coordinates: 43° 28' 12.57" N 74° 24' 47.04" W
Owner: New York State DEC Forest Rangers
Contact: Andrew Jacob

#305103 Stony Kill (Dutchess County)
Elevation: 230' MSL
Coordinates: 41° 32' 29.70" N 73° 57' 06.52" W
Owner: New York State DEC Forest Rangers
Contact: Andrew Jacob

#301901 Saratoga Battlefield (Saratoga County)
Elevation 375" MSL
Coordinates: 43° 00' 09.7" N 73° 32' 05.50" W
Owner: New York State DEC Forest Rangers
Contact: Andrew Jacob

VERMONT

#431303 Woodford (Bennington County)
Elevation: 2317' MSL
Coordinates: 42° 53' 25" N 73° 02' 06" W
Owner: Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation
Contact: Tess Greaves

FWM FORMAT

NFDRS forecasts are launched via the GFE FWM Forecast Formatter. The FWM format is as follows…

FCST,######,YYMMDD,13,W,T,RH,Y,M,D,SP,,TX,TM,HX,HM,P1,P2,F
Where:

#####	NFDRS Station Identifier (see above)
YYMMDD	Year Month Day (forecast valid date which is the next day) 060321 (March 21, 2006)
13	Time (forecast valid time 1300 hours/100 PM the next day). Never changes.
W	Weather (Codes)

0- Clear	5- Drizzle
1- Scattered clouds	6- Rain
2- Broken clouds	7- Snow/sleet
3- Overcast	8 -Showers
4- Fog	9- Thunderstorms

*There is no coding for freezing rain.

T	Dry Bulb Temperature at 1300 LST tomorrow

RH	Relative Humidity at 1300 LST tomorrow
Y	Lightning Activity Level (period 1300 LST today to 0600 LST tonight (1 is for none, 2 is 1-8 strikes, 3 is 9-15 strikes, 4 is 15-25 strikes, 5 is more than 25 strikes, 6 is dry lightning)
M	Lightning Activity Level (period 0600 LST tonight to 1300 LST tomorrow (see above for values))
D	Wind direction (N, NE,E,SE, etc)
SP	Wind Speed (10-minute average in MPH)
,,	Between SS and TX commas are needed to hold the place for 10-hour fuel moisture values which the NWS does NOT forecast at this time. Space is held for the time being.
TX	Maximum Temperature from 1300 LST today to 1300 LST tomorrow
TM	Minimum Temperature from 1300 LST today to 1300 LST tomorrow
HX	Maximum Relative Humidity from 1300 LST today to 1300 LST tomorrow
HM	Minimum Relative Humidity from 1300 LST today to 1300 LST tomorrow
P1	Precipitation duration (1300-0600 LST Period) in whole hours
P2	Precipitation duration (0600-1300 LST period) in whole hours
F	Wet Flag "Y/N" (use Y for widespread, moderate to heavy rainfall)

EXAMPLE 2. FWM Sample Product

FNUS81 KALY 202250
FWMALY

FCST, 300011,130327,13,2,44,52,1,1,WNW12,,,,45,28,83,43,0,0,N

Decoded: NFDRS Forecast for the Albany Pine Bush, issued on March 27, 2013, forecast through 1300 LST March 28, 2013. Forecast for a Broken sky at 1300 LST (3/28/2013), 44 degrees at 1300 LST (3/28/2013), relative humidity 52% at 1300 LST (3/28/2013), No lightning activity expected from time of issuance through 0600 LST, no lightning activity expected from 0600-1300 LST (3/27/12), forecast WNW wind, 12 mph, at 1300 LST (3/28/2013),(,,) 10-hour fuel NOT forecasted at this time, 45 is projected maximum temperature through 1300 LST (3/28/2013), 28 is the projected minimum temperature through 1300 LST (3/28/2013), 83% maximum humidity forecast through 1300 LST (3/28/2013), 43% minimum relative humidity forecast through 1300 LST (3/28/2013), no precipitation duration expected from time of issuance through 0600 LST (3/28/2013), no precipitation expected 0600 LST through 1300 LST (3/28/2013), and Wet Flag not forecast.

NFDRS (FWM Forecasts) can be directly found at the following link.

http://www.weather.gov/aly/EMfire

From here, NFDRS forecasts can be obtained for the six NWS Albany, NY NFDRS sites, along with a link to a NFDRS Decoder.

5. SPOT FORECASTS

Spot forecasts are detailed, local forecasts that are issued in support of wildfire suppression and natural resource management. More about Spot forecasts can be found in Section 4.

6. FIRE WEATHER WATCH (RFW)

A Fire Weather Watch (RFW) is issued 12-96 hours before a potential Red Flag event, when a combination of meteorological and fuel conditions are favorable for critical fire weather behavior. More about Fire Weather Watches can be found in Section 3.

7. RED FLAG WARNING (RFW)

A Red Flag Warning is issued up to 48 hours ahead of time when the combination of critical meteorological fire weather conditions coincide with significantly dry fuels. More about RFWs can be found in Section 3.

8. SPECIAL WEATHER STATEMENTS (SPS)

Special Weather Statements (SPS) are issued when conditions support enhanced fire weather behavior, but at levels below Red Flag criteria. SPSs can also be issued to raise elevated fire awareness amongst the fire weather community and the general public. More about SPSs can be found in Section 3.

***FORECAST BACKUP**

In the event that NWS Burlington, VT is unable to issue their fire weather forecasts, NWS Albany, NY is their primary backup. In the event that NWS Binghamton, NY is unable to issue their fire weather products, NWS Albany, NY is their secondary backup.

If NWS Albany, NY is down, NWS Burlington, VT is our primary backup and NWS Binghamton, NY is our secondary backup to issue our fire weather forecasts, watches and warnings.

SECTION 3. RED FLAG PROGRAM

From NWS Directive 10-401:

"Forecasters shall issue Fire Weather Watches/Red Flag Warnings when the combination of dry fuels and weather conditions support extreme fire danger and/or fire behavior. These conditions alert land management agencies to the potential for widespread new ignitions or control problems with existing fires, both of which could pose a threat to life and property."

A Red Flag event is the combination of critical meteorological fire weather conditions coinciding with significantly dry fuels. This combination can lead to the occurrence of large and dangerous wildfires. Since the potential for Red Flag conditions does not exist without receptive fuel conditions, knowledge of existing fuel conditions is essential.

NWS ALBANY, NY RED FLAG CRITERIA

NWS Directive 10-401 and locally conducted fire weather research state that both fuel and weather parameters are important considerations. The following weather criteria are to be considered (must all be occurring simultaneously).

During Vegetation Stage I & II – Pre Green-Up (cured/transition fuels - Spring/Fall)

1. Wind….sustained or frequently gusting at or above 25 mph for two or more consecutive hours
2. RH….less than 30% for two or more consecutive hours
3. Rainfall….less than 1/4 inch during previous 5 or more days
4. Temperatures….greater than, or equal to, 50°F

During Vegetation Stage III – Green-Up (green fuels - Summer)

1. Winds….sustained or frequently gusting at or above 25 mph, for two or more consecutive hours.
2. RH….less than 30% for two or more consecutive hours.
3. Rainfall….less than 1/4 inch during previous 8 or more days
4. Temperatures….greater than, or equal to, 50°F
4. Fuels….Keetch Byram Drought Index (KBDI) at or above 300

*NOTE: Wind, RH, and temperature criteria can only be considered AFTER rainfall criteria (e.g. there must be an extended dry period to prime the fuels for the remaining meteorological criteria)

Local fire weather users will notify NWS Albany, NY of the following:

1. Current fuel stage (I, II, III)
2. When the measured KBDI:
   a. Approaches 300
   b. Is over 300
   c. Falls back below 300

Fire Weather State Liaison Contact points shall determine when a particular state is fully "Greened-up" and will coordinate with NWS Albany, NY accordingly.

FIRE WEATHER WATCH (RFW)

A Fire Weather Watch (RFW) may be issued anywhere from 12 to 96 hours in advance of the

expected onset of Red Flag criteria. The Fire Weather Watch is issued under the AWIPS PIL…ALBRFWALY (Example 3). A Fire Weather Watch is issued when there is a moderate to high potential (50-74%) for the development of a Red Flag Event (per Directives 10-401). The Fire Weather Watch is issued by zone.

*NWS Albany, NY fire weather users MUST be contacted at least once for coordination of the issuance of a Fire Weather Watch. If contact cannot be made, a Fire Weather Watch will be issued if it meets the 50-74% confidence level. A Fire Weather Watch DOES NOT require NAWAS activation.

*The FWF/FWM MUST be updated if a Fire Weather Watch is issued.

*A Fire Weather Watch will appear as a DARK TAN color on the NWS Albany, NY webpage: www.weather.gov/aly

Example 3. Fire Weather Watch (RFW) Sample Product

```
CTZ001-013-NYZ049-050-052-053-059-060-064>066-051000-
/O.NEW.KALY.FW.A.0001.130405T1600Z-130405T2200Z/
NORTHERN LITCHFIELD-SOUTHERN LITCHFIELD-EASTERN SCHENECTADY-
SOUTHERN SARATOGA-EASTERN ALBANY-WESTERN RENSSELAER-
EASTERN GREENE-WESTERN COLUMBIA-EASTERN ULSTER-WESTERN DUTCHESS-
EASTERN DUTCHESS-
352 PM EDT THU APR 4 2013

...FIRE WEATHER WATCH IN EFFECT FRIDAY AFTERNOON FOR GUSTY WINDS AND
LOW RELATIVE HUMIDITY FOR THE MID HUDSON VALLEY...GREATER CAPITAL
REGION AND LITCHFIELD COUNTY IN NORTHWEST CONNECTICUT...

THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE IN ALBANY HAS ISSUED A FIRE WEATHER
WATCH FOR GUSTY WINDS AND LOW RELATIVE HUMIDITY...WHICH IS IN EFFECT
FOR FRIDAY AFTERNOON.

* AFFECTED AREA...MID HUDSON VALLEY...GREATER CAPITAL REGION AND
  NORTHWEST CONNECTICUT.

* WINDS...WEST TO NORTHWESTERLY AT 10 TO 15 MPH WITH GUSTS UP TO
  30 MPH.

* TIMING...FRIDAY AFTERNOON.

* RELATIVE HUMIDITY...AS LOW AS 25 PERCENT.

* TEMPERATURES...IN THE MID TO UPPER 50S.

* IMPACTS...CRITICAL FIRE WEATHER CONDITIONS.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

A FIRE WEATHER WATCH MEANS THAT DANGEROUS FIRE WEATHER CONDITIONS
ARE POSSIBLE TO THE COMBINATION OF GUSTY WINDS...LOW RELATIVE
HUMIDITIES...AND DRY FUELS.  ANY FIRES THAT DEVELOP MAY QUICKLY
GET OUT OF CONTROL AND BECOME DIFFICULT TO CONTAIN.

&&
```

RED FLAG WARNING (RFW)

If Red Flag conditions appear imminent or is already occurring (out to 48 hours), along with a high confidence level (75% or greater), a Red Flag Warning (RFW) will be issued. The RFW is issued

under the AWIPS PIL…ALBRFWALY (Example 4). A RFW must meet the specified Red Flag criteria outlined above. The RFW is issued by zone.

*State warning points MUST BE CONTACTED via NAWAS when a RFW is issued.

*NWS Albany, NY fire weather users MUST be contacted at least once for coordination only if a Red Flag Warning is issued without a prior Fire Weather Watch issuance. Coordination is not required if a Fire Weather Watch is already in effect.

*The FWF/FWM MUST be updated if a RFW is issued.

*A Red Flag Warning will appear as a DEEP PINK color on the NWS Albany, NY webpage: www.weather.gov/aly

Example 4. Red Flag Warning (RFW) Sample Product

NYZ038>040-047-048-051-058-063-082-080000-
/O.UPG.KALY.FW.A.0004.120407T1600Z-120408T0000Z/
/O.NEW.KALY.FW.W.0003.120407T1500Z-120408T0000Z/
SOUTHERN HERKIMER-SOUTHERN FULTON-MONTGOMERY-SCHOHARIE-
WESTERN SCHENECTADY-WESTERN ALBANY-WESTERN GREENE-WESTERN
ULSTER-
NORTHERN FULTON-
350 AM EDT SAT APR 7 2012

...RED FLAG WARNING IN EFFECT FROM 11 AM THIS MORNING TO 8 PM EDT
THIS EVENING FOR THE MOHAWK AND SCHOHARIE VALLEYS AND EASTERN
CATSKILLS...

THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE IN ALBANY HAS ISSUED A RED FLAG
WARNING...WHICH IS IN EFFECT FROM 11 AM THIS MORNING TO 8 PM EDT
THIS EVENING. THE FIRE WEATHER WATCH IS NO LONGER IN EFFECT.

* AFFECTED AREA...MOHAWK AND SCHOHARIE VALLEYS...AND THE EASTERN
  CATSKILLS.

* WIND...NORTHWEST 10 TO 20 MPH...WITH GUSTS AROUND 30 MPH.

* HUMIDITY...DROPPING TO AROUND 20 TO 29 PERCENT.

* IMPACTS...ANY FIRES THAT DEVELOP COULD SPREAD RAPIDLY.
  OUTDOOR BURNING IS NOT RECOMMENDED.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

A RED FLAG WARNING MEANS THAT CRITICAL FIRE WEATHER CONDITIONS
ARE EITHER OCCURRING NOW...OR WILL SHORTLY. A COMBINATION OF
STRONG WINDS...LOW RELATIVE HUMIDITY...AND WARM TEMPERATURES WILL
CREATE EXPLOSIVE FIRE GROWTH POTENTIAL.

"NEAR RED FLAG" AND "WET FLAG" CONDITIONS

Conditions that approach "Near Red Flag" are to be highlighted with a headline in the Fire Weather portion of the Area Forecast Discussion (AFD).

*DO NOT mention the terms "Near Red Flag" or "Wet Flag" in the discussion.

Examples of these situations can include the following:

…Gusty winds over 25 mph today…

(The relative humidity is above the 30% criteria for a Red Flag or 5 days of rainfall below 0.25 inch have not elapsed yet).

…Gusty winds 15-25 mph…

(Other conditions are met for a Red Flag but the winds are not projected to be strong enough and the RH is forecast to be 30 percent or lower.)

…High Haines Index Today (6)…

(5 if RH values drop to 20 or less.)

…Scattered (or greater coverage) of thunderstorms…

…Significant wind shift expected…

…Lack of dew expected at night…

(Rare and only after Green-up)

… Any other meteorological element deemed significant in forecaster's judgment…

SPECIAL WEATHER STATEMENTS

Special Weather Statements (SPS) are issued when conditions support enhanced fire weather behavior, but at levels below Red Flag criteria. SPSs can also be issued to raise elevated fire awareness amongst the fire weather community and the general public. SPSs will be issued when the following occurs:

- Red Flag criteria is met, but temperatures ARE BELOW 50°F, and requested by our users.
- NWS Albany, NY fire weather users request the issuance of a SPS to raise "elevated fire awareness" for the fire weather community and/or the general public. This are only issued at the request of our main state contacts.

SECTION 4. FIRE WEATHER SPOT FORECASTS

SPOT FORECAST REQUEST

Spot forecasts are detailed forecasts of local conditions in support of wildfire suppression and natural resource management. They can also be requested/issued for hazardous material spills or in support of air quality measures. These forecasts differ based on the specific activity and its location. Fire weather Spot forecasts are requested by state and federal officials, with local officials requesting through state or federal officials, based on the need of the fire weather user and type of activity anticipated (i.e. prescribed burns). Spot forecasts will alarm in one of two ways: graphically on the NWS Albany, NY Spot forecast website http://spot.nws.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/spot/spotmon?site=aly (Example 5a), and as an AWIPS text product under the PIL…ALBSTQALY (Example 5b).

When unscheduled fire weather Spot forecasts are needed, officials are requested to give NWS Albany, NY personnel as much advance notice as possible to ensure that staffing provisions, if needed, are in place for the requested service. Requests can be made via phone at 518-435-9575, or by filling out an online request form available at the following link:

http://spot.nws.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/spot/spotmon?site=aly

Fire weather Spot forecasts are to be issued under the following circumstances and conditions:

- Upon request of any federal official who represents that the spot forecast is required.
- Upon request of any state, tribal, or local official who represents that the spot forecast is required to carry out their wildland fire management responsibilities in coordination with any federal land management agency participating in the Interagency Agreement for Meteorological Services.
- Upon request of any public safety official who represents the spot forecast is essential to public safety, e.g. due to the proximity of population centers or critical infrastructure. A "public safety official" is an employee or contract agent of a government agency at any level (federal, state, local, tribal, etc.) charged with protecting the public from hazards including wildland fires of whatever origin and/or other hazards influenced by weather conditions such as hazardous material releases.
- In support of search and rescue operations.

The following information must be provided in a fire weather Spot forecast:

1. Location. (MUST be entered in coordinates, with negative values for longitude)
2. Type of terrain (including slope).
3. Elevation (above mean sea level).
4. Incident on ground, or elsewhere.
5. Size of incident.
6. Existing weather, in as much detail as possible.
   Preferably including: temperature, dew point or relative humidity, wind speed and Direction, significant weather and, if possible, precipitation amounts.
7. Activity time periods for which forecast is requested (including date(s) and hours)
8. Information on limits (conditions) affecting the operation or activity.
9. Fuel type (slag, brush, etc).
10. Agency and person in charge of (responsible for) project (including phone number).
11. Name and telephone number for person to contact regarding changes, questions, etc.

If insufficient information can be collected for a Spot forecast request, NWS Albany, NY can reject the request based on the acting Lead Forecaster decision. If the Spot forecast is rejected, the reason must be recorded in the station log, and the Fire Weather Program Leaders must be notified.

Fire weather Spot forecasts are typically issued within an approximate twenty minute turnaround time after the initial request. If the request cannot be completed in that timeframe, the forecaster should contact the requester and explain why the forecast will be delayed.

The forecaster can use the graphical forecast grids as a first guess for the forecast, provided he/she feels that they are representative of the actual forecast. The forecaster can deviate from the grid forecast should it be unrepresentative (i.e. populating the latest model guidance or manually tweaking the forecast based on latest observations). Once the forecast grids are finished, the Spot forecast will be issued using the GFE formatter, and selecting the "14 – Fire Weather Spot Request" option under the "Products" pull-down menu. The issuance of the Spot forecast will be under the AWIPS PIL…ALBFWSALY (Example 6). This forecast will update on the webpage:

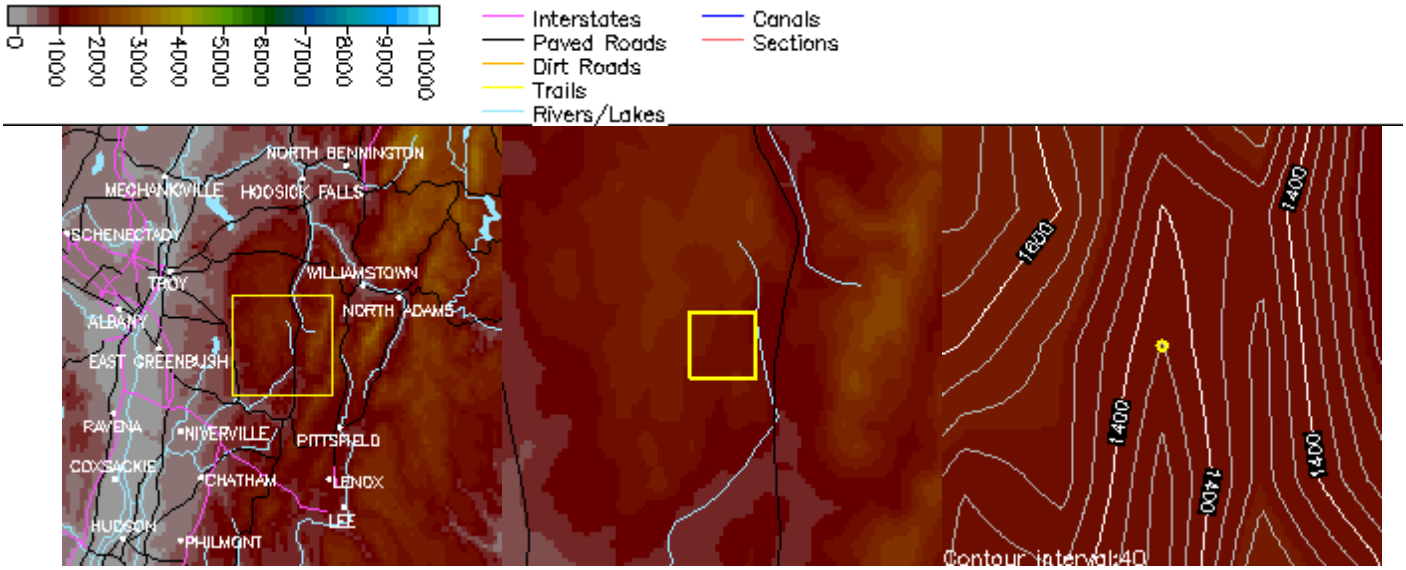
http://spot.nws.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/spot/spotmon?site=aly

and be available by the requestor to view.

EXAMPLE 5a. Spot Forecast Request - Graphical

HAZMAT (HAZMAT) (Requested: 1320 EDT 6/30/05)

Requested by: RENSELAER COUNTY 911 Phone:(518) 270-5252



Location: Legal: Lat/Lon:42.6/73.4 Quad:

Calculated: (42°36'0"N 73°24'0"W) (STEPHENTOWN CENTER NY)

Elevation:1000-1300 Drainage:unknown Aspect:unknown Size:unknown

Fuel Type:unknown (Sheltering Unknown)

Observations:

Place	Elev	Time	Wind	Temp	Wetbulb	RH	Dewpt	Remarks

Requested Parameters	Remarks
X.. Sky / Weather	
X.. Temperature	
X.. Relative Humidity	
... 20 Foot Wind	
... Chance of Wetting Rain	

Example 5b. Spot Forecast Request – Text (STQALY)

```
BMBB91 KALY 151053
STQALY

A SPOT FORECAST REQUEST HAS JUST BEEN RECEIVED FOR A PRESCRIBED FIRE
NAMED "Sam s Point Preserve Rx"

           PRIORITY:  IMMEDIATE
               DATE:  11/15/13
               TIME:  1000
       PROJECT NAME:  Sam s Point Preserve Rx
       PROJECT TYPE:  PRESCRIBED
  REQUESTING AGENCY:  The Nature Conservancy/NYS DEC
REQUESTING OFFICIAL:  Gabriel Chapin
     REQUEST REASON:  STATE LOCAL
                FAX:
    EMERGENCY PHONE:  (914) 772-4304
           LOCATION:
              STATE:
               DLAT:   41.66
               DLON:    74.38
           EXPOSURE:  SW
          FUEL TYPE:
         SHELTERING:  PARTIAL
   BOTTOM ELEVATION:  1900
      TOP ELEVATION:  2000
       SIZE (ACRES):  1

WEATHER CONDITIONS AT PROJECT OR FROM NEARBY STATIONS
 ELEV= TIME= WIND= T= TW= RH= TD=
 ELEV= TIME= WIND= T= TW= RH= TD=
 ELEV= TIME= WIND= T= TW= RH= TD=
 ELEV= TIME= WIND= T= TW= RH= TD=

...REMARKS...
Any local details on min relative humidity at this elevation and
potential for shifting winds would be helpful.

...WEATHER PARAMETERS REQUESTED...
         SKY / WEATHER: 1,1,1
           TEMPERATURE: 1,1,1
     RELATIVE HUMIDITY: 1,1,1
          20 FOOT WIND: 1,1,1
CHANCE OF WETTING RAIN: 1,1,1

SITE:  ALY
OFILE:  20131115.SAMSP.01
TIMEZONE:  EST5EDT
```

EXAMPLE 6. Spot Forecast Text Sample Product (FWSALY)

423 PM THU MAY 18 2006

SPOT FORECAST FOR THATCHER PARK
ISSUED BY NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE ALBANY NY
VALID UNTIL 1223 AM FRI MAY 18 2006
IF CONDITONS BECOME UNREPRESENTATIVE, CONTACT THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE.

HIGH PRESSURE WILL MOVE OFF THE NEW ENGLAND COAST THIS AFTERNOON. INCREASING MOISTURE WILL MOVE NORTHEAST FROM THE OHIO VALLEY…AS A COLD FRONT DROPS THROUGH THE GREAT LAKES. THE FRONT WILL MOVE ACROSS THE FORECSAT LOCATION EARLY FRIDAY AFTERNOON…TAPERING TO SCATTERED SHOWERS BY FRIDAY NIGHT. GUSTY WINDS WILL DIMINISH ON SUNDAY.

FOR THE REST OF TODAY
SKY/WEATHER……..INCREASING CLOUDS.
CHANCE OF PCPN…….LESS THAN 20 PERCENT.
BEGIN/END OF PCPN…NONE
TEMPERATURE……..75 TO 80
HUMIDITY……..40 TO 45 PECENT
20-FOOT WIND……..S 10 TO 15 MPH.

FOR TONIGHT
SKY/WEATHER……..CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE OF SHOWERS. STEADY AFTER 3 AM.
CHANCE OF PCPN…….90 PERCENT.
BEGIN/END OF PCPN…8 PM.
TEMPERATURE…….60 TO 65.
HUMIDITY……..INCREASING TO 100 PERCENT.

OUTLOOK FOR TOMORROW
SKY/WEATHER…….. OCCASIONAL RAIN.
CHANCE OF PCPN…….100 PERCENT
BEGIN/END OF PCPN…CONTINUING
TEMPERATURE……. MID 60S
HUMIDITY……. 100 PERCENT AM, 90 PERCENT PM
20-FOOT WIND……..SE 12-18 MPH SHIFTING TO NW IN THE PM

SECTION 5. ADDITIONAL NWS ALBANY, NY FIRE WEATHER SERVICES

SUPPLEMENTAL WEATHER BRIEFINGS

Supplementary weather briefings may be requested by certain officials, such as emergency managers, to provide more detailed weather information in support of fire weather issues and concerns. These briefings may be provided via phone, GoTo Meeting, and/or email.

If a fire weather-focused briefing is requested, the following information should be provided:

1. A general short term weather outlook for planning purposes.
2. A long-range weather outlook for planning purposes.
3. Detailed fire weather information, including meteorological parameters and fire behavior.
4. Expected impacts/issues/concerns pertaining to the fire weather community.

INCIDENT METEOROLOGIST (IMET) SERVICES

In the event a fire weather hazard (i.e. large, uncontained wildfire) involves significant support from the fire weather community, an Incident Meteorologist (IMET) may be requested to assist in on-site meteorological services. NWS Albany, NY will also assist in coordination efforts, providing critical weather forecasts and briefing information to those working in the field.

ON-SITE SERVICES/COORDINATION

Modularized, Air Transportable Mobile Units (ATMU) are stored and dispatched from a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) forest fire cache on a seasonal basis. These units are available, upon request, for duty at an incident fire, critical prescribed burn project, or other fire weather sensitive incidents.

Further information concerning the ATMU, such as weight, size, forms needed, etc. can be obtained from the USDA forest service dispatch meteorologist in Boise, ID at (208) 334-9824.

The unit is to be operated only by a certified IMET working closely with the fire behavior analyst (FBA) or planning section chief (PSC) in setting up the unit at the incident site.

Agencies requesting an ATMU and/or IMET should provide the following information:

1. Name of the fire or incident.
2. Location of the fire or incident.
3. Directions to the place of the fire or incident.
4. Name of the incident commander, and of the FBA or PSC.

The requesting agency is responsible for:

1. Coordinating transportation of the ATMU and IMET to and from the incident.
2. If commercial air is used to transport the ATMU to the incident.
3. Storage of the ATMU while in transit.
4. Shelter and provisions for the IMET.
5. Shelter for the ATMU at the incident site.
6. Provision of daily telephone access for short periods.

Upon arrival at the incident site, the IMET will:

1. Brief the FBA, PSC and incident commander on current and expected weather as it affects the incident.
2. Establish a schedule with the incident commander and FBA for written forecasts and/or formal briefings.
3. Request a briefing of the incident situation (fire) and potential problems, as time and resources permit.
4. Request an aerial inspection trip, current fire line maps and a radio with fire line frequency, if possible.
5. In cooperation with the FBA and PSC, arrange for a schedule of observations from key points around the fire. This information can be provided from belt weather kits.

The IMET will work closely with NWS Albany, NY staff to assist the requesting agency in fulfilling any fire weather services/operations/coordination that is required.

A NWS meteorologist is available, at times, to assist state and federal agencies with training needs. Written requests for assistance should be forwarded to the "Meteorologist-in-Charge" (MIC) at the NWS Albany office as soon as dates for such training are known.

Other special services include, but are not limited to:

1. Forest and fire weather research projects.
2. Weather advisor to the northeastern forest fire protection commission.
3. Participation in the northeast forest fire protection compact (including weather presentations and ATMU equipment displays and demonstrations).

PRESCRIBED/CONTROLLED BURNS

The NWS Albany, NY Fire Weather Program Leaders are available to provide on-site support during prescribed and controlled burns. The requesting agency should request participation at least 48 hours in advance and provide appropriate clothing/boots/apparel to allow for sufficient time to accompany any scheduling changes. Requests should be forwarded to the Fire Weather Program Leaders, with a cc: to the WCM and MIC.

Hugh Johnson (Hugh.W.Johnson@noaa.gov)

Ian Lee (Ian.Lee@noaa.gov),

cc: Stephen DiRienzo (Stephen.Dirienzo@noaa.gov)

Raymond O'Keefe (Raymond.Okeefe@noaa.gov).

SPECIAL REQUESTS

Special meteorological services are those services and/or training uniquely requested by the fire weather community, which require NWS personnel to be away from their duty station and/or, in emergency situations, to be on overtime.

Fire weather agencies must pay the costs for:

1. Overtime.
2. Travel and per diem (food, lodging, etc.).
3. Other miscellaneous costs pertaining to these special services.

Costs will be coordinated with the NWS Albany, NY administrative assistant.

SECTION 6. ADDITIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

NEW YORK STATE

Albany Central Office
Colonel Andrew Jacob

Region 3 New Paltz (Duchess and Ulster Counties)
Captain Dan Walsh

Region 4 Schenectady (Rensselaer, Albany, Schenectady, Montgomery, Schoharie, Greene, Columbia)
Captain Pat Kilpeck

Region 5 Ray Brook (Saratoga, Washington, Warren, Hamilton, Fulton)
Captain John Streiff

Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission
Brandon Clifford, Fire Management Specialist

Saratoga National Historical Park
648 Rte 32 Stillwater NY 12170
Trevor Smith, Chief Ranger

VERMONT

Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation
1229 Portland St., Suite 201
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819
Tess Greaves

MASSACHUSETTS

District 12 Fire Crew (Primary)
Margaret O'Brien Carnevale

District 9 Fire Warden (Franklin County) (Secondary)
Philip Gilmore

Department of Conservation and Recreation Dispatch
Staffed 24/7 during Fire Season

CONNECTICUT

Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection
Kevin Grady