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Out In Your Community!

As Summer slipped into Autumn, your National Weather Service staff spread out across the Suncoast to promote weather preparedness, safety, and education to hundreds of citizens. Though customer outreach is a key ingredient in the "Service" part of our name, the Ruskin office was particularly busy this season. We hope to meet you in the community soon!

Weather Information and Safety

Nearly ten staff members participated in a wide array of outreach activities, ranging from large expositions to face-to-face meetings. Forecaster Rick Davis, our resident fire weather program leader, gave a talk at this autumn's Central Florida Prescribed Fire Council meeting in Wauchula. Information pertaining to daily NWS fire weather products and activities was discussed, and the internet was highlighted as an important source for accessing local, regional, and national fire weather information. There were nearly 200 participants from various local, state, and federal land management agencies such as Florida Division of Forestry, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Rick and many others participated in a host of other outreach activities. Presentations on NWS products, activities, and weather safety, among others, were given to groups and organizations up and down the



Barry Goldsmith in front of display at University of South Florida's GIS day, held on the St. Petersburg Campus.

The office was represented in Orlando at the National Businessmen Aviation Association convention; in Jacksonville at the National Weather Association Annual Meeting, and in St. Petersburg at the St. Petersburg Boat Show. Two staff members participated in the Great American Teach-In at Tampa Bay area elementary and middle schools. Emergency management in Sumter and Pinellas County were consulted with, and last but not least, Skywarn™ training picked up, with classes in Hernando, Desoto, Pinellas, and Citrus Counties, to name a few! In all, hundreds of Suncoast citizens were greeted by our staff. Many more outreach opportunities are planned in the future, so look for us in your community.

Suncoast. These included the Venice Area Audubon Society (Sarasota County), Bay Shore Gardens Yacht Club (Manatee County, pictured below), Riverview Elementary School (Hillsborough County), and the Sumter County Commission.



Rick Davis speaking on NWS marine and public products, as well as the Marine Reporting and Observations Program.

DataStreme Atmosphere: Teaching the Teacher

by Rick Davis

DataStreme Atmosphere is a major teacher enhancement initiative of the American Meteorological Society (AMS) and is supported and partnered with NOAA. The goal of the project is to educate and train local teachers to be Weather Education Resource Specialists who will promote the teaching of science, mathematics and technology using weather as a vehicle across the K-12 curriculum in their home school districts.

Training for the basics of atmospheric science consists of using text books, study guides, live internet data, and meeting sessions. After the 13 week course, participants will earn college credit as well as achieve a higher awareness of weather education. Forecaster Rick Davis, a member of the Local Implementation Team, is currently involved with the DataStreme Atmosphere Project in Bradenton.

New Technology

Point and Click Forecasts for Your Neighborhood

For about a year, we've been producing Digital Forecasts to provide customers "limitless possibilities" to utilize gridded data, down to neighborhood level. Soon, residents of the Suncoast will be able to create town-specific forecasts at the click of a mouse!

Rather than receiving a broad-brushed areal forecast when you click on our front page map, instead you will now receive a specific value forecast for the actual point you click. These values come directly from our digital database of weather data, spaced 5 miles apart!

Here's how it works: Let's say a freeze warning has been issued for Pasco County. In the past, if you clicked on any part of the county from our map, you'd receive a general forecast for not only Pasco County, but surrounding counties with similarly expected forecast conditions. The text forecast, and pictograph above, might say "Clear, with a low of 30". However, conditions often vary from rural inland locations to the coast. That's where the digital database comes in!

Now, let's say you live in Dade City, but your siblings live in New Port Richey. If you click in northeastern Pasco County, your forecast might show a low temperature of 28. Yet, your siblings, clicking in southwestern Pasco County, would show a low temperature of 35. In such a case, you could plan on covering your tender vegetation to account for the low temperatures, but your siblings might take no action. Assuming the forecast is accurate, the decisions each of you made would be correct - all because you have the ability to create a truly local forecast!

Aside from site-specific text forecasts, you can also create 3 day hourly forecasts of one or many

common elements, such as weather, wind speed and direction, precipitation probability, and humidity. You can view these in a table, or on a line or bar graph. Someday in the future, one will be able to zoom the maps - perhaps down to street level.

Check out the experimental graphics (as of December, 2003), at

<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/ifps/gridpoint.php?site=tbw>

Observations

Suncoast Citizens Help Us Daily



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Dick Kamp presenting Certificates of Appreciation for outstanding annual observations to the following Cooperative Weather Observers, from left: Brother Felix Agustin at the St. Leo Abbey in Pasco County; Mrs. Frame, Florida Department of Forestry, at Usher Tower just south of Chiefland in Levy County; and Sheryl Nowicki, Chief Wastewater Operator at the Inverness Wastewater Treatment Plant in Citrus County.

Cooperative Weather Observations: Now and Then

by Dick Kamp

The NWS in Ruskin manages 30 official Cooperative Weather Station (Co-op) locations, as part of the National Network of Co-op Observers who contribute daily to the maintenance of the National Climatic Data Network. There is at least one observation station within each of the 15 counties we serve. Several locations have been recording daily weather information since the 1890's! Among these are the sites at the St. Leo Abbey (1890) and Inverness (1899), each pictured above. Older locations such as these are normally considered "benchmarks". See our Climate Page, and click on Co-op stations, for associated maps.

Of the 9 stations who provide hourly precipitation via tape, all data were received on time, and all but one tape (out of 108) was unusable. We thank all of you for your exceptional service! The award presentations at top are just a sampling of our gratefulness.

Share Your Weather Station with Others!

by Daniel Noah

If you have an automated weather station at your residence, and internet access, the NWS would love to receive your data. The Citizen Weather Observer Program (CWOP) was developed to provide a clearinghouse for citizen-based weather data.

Unlike the Co-op Program, which required

As of October 1, there were 25 Co-op sites reporting high and low temperature, as well as 24 hour accumulated precipitation. Two sites recorded 24 hour precipitation only, and three sites record hourly rainfall data. In addition to these official locations, a site in Ona (Hardee County) records temperature and rainfall data, and Fort Myers Fire and Rescue records daily rainfall to backup the official Automated Surface Observing System at Page Field.

The NWS in Ruskin greatly appreciates all those who continue to provide us with observations which meet stringent requirements for the National Climatic Database. Of the 25 locations who record temperature and precipitation, the following statistics were taken, for the annual period ending September 30:

- 100 percent of data were received in time to be incorporated into the National Climatic Database.
- 13 of 25 sites had no missing data, and an additional 9 sites had 8 days or less (88 percent total having 8 days or less)
- Only 3 of 25 sites (12 percent) had more than 8 days missing.

stringent NWS requirements in order to maintain a reliable National Climatic Database, CWOP allows up to 2,000 owners of home weather stations from 23 nations the ability to provide real-time data for wind, temperature, humidity, rainfall, pressure, and more to NOAA. NWS offices in Florida and elsewhere gather CWOP data every 15 minutes, and can use it to make potentially life-saving hazardous weather warning decisions. The following is a partial list of other data users:

- National Center for Environmental Prediction
- National Ocean Service
- National Center for Atmospheric Research
- Kennedy Space Flight Center
- NASA Marshall Space Flight Center
- University Corporation for Atmospheric Research
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology Lincoln Labs

If you would like to join the growing number of people in the Citizen Weather Observing Program, go to <http://www.wxqa.com/>.

NOAA Weather Radio

New Marine-Only Radio Up and Running!

Marine interests around Tampa Bay and it's environs can now turn to a marine forecast and hazards-specific weather radio! The transmitter, located in Largo (Pinellas County), provides reception for an area along the Suncoast stretching roughly from Hernando Beach (Hernando County) south to Midnight Pass (Sarasota County, extending out about 50 nautical miles! This area also includes all of Tampa Bay.

The transmitter, a 1000-watt Crown unit, provides service at 162.450 MegaHertz. The station call letters are KEC-38. Click on the image below, and zoom in, for a map of the coverage area.

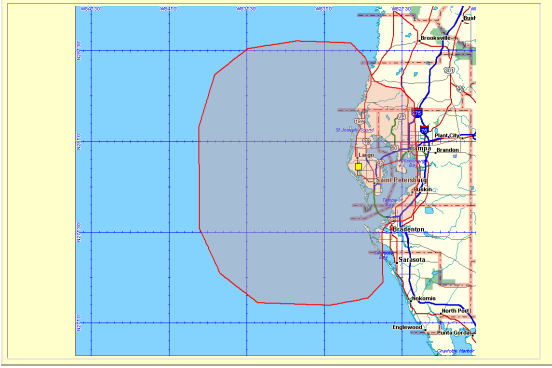
Tropical Cyclone Review

Tropical Cyclones Affecting Florida in 2003

Henri...and Little Else

Despite an active Atlantic tropical cyclone season, in which there were 14 named storms and 6 hurricanes, Florida was largely spared - in fact, it was the quietest season, statewide, in recent memory. There were no direct impacts from any named storm. Tropical Storm Henri weakened to a depression before making landfall in Pinellas County early on September 6. The only deaths attributed to the influence of a tropical cyclone occurred along the Panhandle's Gulf Beaches, where rip currents extending well to the east of Tropical Storm Bill killed two swimmers.

One could say the state was spared once



again in 2003, and can only hope for similar results a year from now. Check out some of next year's Suncoast Weather Quarterly newsletters for more tropical cyclone information.