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Feature Article

Mr. Brenner Goes to Miami!



Office Chief Retires after 10 years on the Suncoast

A crowd of nearly 60 persons, including most of the NWS Tampa Bay staff, family, and friends, gathered in South Tampa to send Ira Brenner off to retirement after a long and productive 35 years of Federal Government Service. Following a sit-down supper, Tom Grayson, Chief of the NWS Southern Region's Systems Operations Division, presented Ira with a plaque for exemplary service to the customers and partners of the NWS. After several brief, but moving,

speeches by family and friends, the evening turned festive. The NWS management team successfully "roasted" the former Meteorologist-In-Charge, and Ira himself had a multimedia presentation of his own which poked fun at fellow employees he's worked with in Florida since 1995.

We wish you well in your future endeavors! The following summary, provided by Ira, briefly details a long and well-traveled career with NWS.

Where did the last 35 years go? On March 3, 2004, I retired from federal service, with all 35 years being with the National Weather Service. This was a great agency from the onset, and today ranks among only a few federal agencies with a very high public approval rating.

Today's NWS prides itself on being proactive and staying on the cutting edge of both the science and the technology, and on hiring what I feel are the most skilled, talented and dedicated employees available in this field anywhere in the world.



Our mission is unique and vital, and I am very proud that I have served as a member of the NWS team.

My 35 years included tours of duty at the Phoenix office, at Western Region Headquarters in Salt Lake City under the legendary synoptic and tropical meteorologist Len Snellman, at the National Hurricane Center and the Miami weather office, at Weather Service Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, and as Deputy Meteorologist in Charge of the Atlanta office. I was also privileged to serve on the first ever elite National Weather Service Olympic Weather Support Team during the 1984 Summer Olympics at Los Angeles.

My most recent 10 years of service has been as Meteorologist in Charge at NWS Tampa Bay. While at the Tampa office, I have worked under the outstanding leadership of Southern Region Headquarters, and with the highest caliber of local office staff and partners, such as the emergency managers, the media, the spotter and HAM radio community, and academia. I believe that the last 10 years has also been the most exciting, watching the NWS evolve into the highly modernized and efficient agency it is today.

I have the proverbial mixed feelings about retiring, but I also look forward to spending more time with my family and opening new doors of opportunity. However, the National Weather Service, and all the friends I have made over the years, will also be dear to me.

Partnerships

**Media Workshop Enhances
Broadcaster-NWS Relationship**

Community

**Giving Is "Golden" at NWS
Tampa Bay!**



On January 16th, 2004, NWS Tampa Bay hosted a media workshop to foster better communications between operational staff and on-air television broadcasters serving the Suncoast. Eight broadcasters from Tampa Bay, Sarasota/Bradenton, and Fort Myers/Naples attended.

Warning Coordination Meteorologist Dan Noah opened the workshop with a brief tour of the office, which was followed by a review of the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) NWS Media Personnel segment. The ACSI results showed very good overall scores, with elements of excellent service interspersed with others where some improvements were needed. Science and Operations Office Charlie Paxton (below, left) followed Dan, discussing the graphical forecast process currently used by the NWS, and the digital output that is available on the internet.

After a short break, Senior Forecaster Barry Goldsmith (below, right) discussed the most recent changes in NWS products and services,

including the upcoming Valid Time Event Code to be implemented in December, 2004. Mr. Goldsmith concluded with a review of local long-fused warning and advisory criteria.

Senior Forecaster Frank Alsheimer gave an informative lesson on local radar signatures and the relationship between these signatures and probable ground-truth. Examples of tornadic circulations and false look-alikes captured the broadcasters' attention. Nice job, Frank!

The workshop concluded with a discussion among the participants on methods to improve communication. Instant Messaging (IM) was promoted, with successful examples provided from NWS offices in Alabama. A decision was made to explore IM, for possible use during tropical cyclones and severe weather outbreaks. Among other issues, the broadcasters agreed that the Area Forecast Discussion was the most important daily product they receive, as were timely hazards messages. Thanks to all who participated! We appreciate your support.



It has been written that those with a better lot shall leave some for the poor and the stranger. This past winter, NWS Tampa Bay was a model example of such charity!

The staff opened their hearts (and wallets) to give those in need a little holiday cheer - to the tune of just over \$10,000! The office received a Gold Workplace Excellence Campaign Award (and plaque) for its generous contributions to the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC).

Thirteen staff members received individual awards, including two Gold Eagles (\$1000 or more per year), six Silver Eagles (\$500 or more), and five Bronze Eagles (\$250 or more). A special thanks to Electronic Technician Dave Chaffin for organizing this season's local campaign.

If that weren't enough, Forecaster Richard Rude and Hydrometeorological Technician Russ Henes worked with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office to sponsor a needy family at Christmas. NWS Tampa Bay responded in kind, providing more than \$400 in gifts (pictured above) which made everyone proud! Thanks to all who contributed to these worthy efforts, and for being shining lights in the community.



Forecasting Tools

Real-Time Rainfall Aids Flood Forecasting

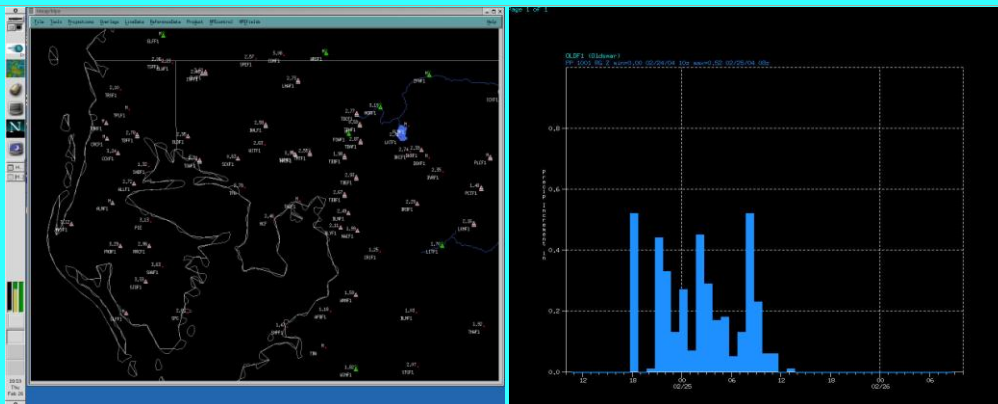


Figure 1. *Left:* Accumulated rainfall from data sites including Southwest Florida Water Management District, Florida Automated Weather Network, and NWS Automated Surface Observing Systems in the Tampa Bay metropolitan area. *Right:* Bar graph of hourly rainfall in Oldsmar, February 24th through 26th. [Click on each for a clearer image.](#)

Streaming Data Increases Ground Truth by Eric Oglesby

NWS Tampa Bay is now linked with the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) hydrologic database. Every hour, SWFWMD sends their data via File Transfer Protocol (FTP) to the NWS regional server. We locally take this data, encode it into Standard Hydrometeorological Exchange Format (SHEF), and send it via a routine text data product, known as the "RR8" (WMO code SRUS97). Thus, the data enters the NWS database for all customers to access. 24-hour rainfall for all SWFWMD sites is provided in the Regional Temperature and Precipitation product (MIARTPTBW, WMO code ASUS62) around 11 AM each day.

What does this mean for our customers? First, the system provides over 100 additional sites of rainfall information across the NWS Tampa Bay hydrologic service area. Second, a large number of these sites provide supplemental stage data on streams and creeks in the region. Most importantly, the Southeast River Forecast Center in Peachtree City, Georgia use the data to enhance river flood forecasting in west central and southwest Florida, and NWS Tampa Bay forecasters use the data to monitor freshwater (urban, small

stream, and flash) flooding.

Programs such as this are only made possible through the cooperation of agencies to promote public safety. Data sharing has always played an important role in weather services, and will continue to do so in the future. The United States Geological Service and SWFWMD are key cooperators in making the weather service hydrologic program successful.

Outreach

Up Close and Personal with Fire! by Rick Davis



Ever wanted to see a small forest fire up close? That's what several staff members of NWS Tampa Bay are getting the opportunity to do, thanks to a new local program which allows the staff to see just how daily fire weather forecasts are used in the field.

The program, coined FAMILIARIZATION FIRE (or FAM FIRE for short), allows the staff to verify forecasts first-hand, build relationships with local fire officials, and to personally witness how important the fire weather and spot forecasts have on fire planning, control, and safety.

Thus far in 2004, a number of staff have participated and completed the first of hopefully many FAM Fires, including Warning Coordination Meteorologist Dan Noah, forecasters Jen Colson, Frank Alsheimer, and Ryan Sharp, and hydrometeorological technician Karl Loeper. These events, which are controlled burns performed under favorable conditions, were conducted by fire officials in the NWS Tampa Bay forecast area - specifically, Manatee County.

WCM Dan Noah, meteorologists Frank Alsheimer, Jennifer Colson, Ryan Sharp and Hydro meteorologist Karl Loeper have participated and completed the first in a series of these fire familiarization visits in January, February and March 2004 with fire officials who are responsible for prescribed burns in the WFO Tampa forecast area. This program is a partnership with the Florida Division of Forestry, the Florida State Park Service, and local county government officials.

Weather Review

Winter 2004: Surf's Up!

Although the Winter of 2004 featured the usual temperature swings and decent rainfall, especially in February, the most recurring weather event was medium to high waves and occasionally rough surf along the barrier Island beaches from Pinellas to Lee Counties.

The predominant surface wind direction was from the west or northwest, which was a primary contributor to the number of high wave and surf events from December 2003 through February 2004. So, why were high surf events so frequent? First, the atmospheric flow pattern favored an eastern U.S. upper level trough, which allowed fronts to penetrate into the Deep South and Florida during January.

Second, when the continental, or "polar" jet stream wasn't active, the subtropical, or "southern", jet stream was. This situation was more common in February, allowing low pressure centers to develop as far south as the eastern Gulf of Mexico.

In each case, seas would build above 8 feet well offshore, with the prevailing low level westerly wind driving the high seas toward the Suncoast. The graphics below show the 500 mb pattern (left) and the surface



map (right) for the Valentine's weekend event.

