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○ ISSUE 7 | ○ SUMMER | ○ 2014



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Tallahassee topics

NEWS AND NOTES FROM YOUR LOCAL NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE OFFICE.

The National Weather Service (NWS) office in Tallahassee, FL provides weather, hydrologic, and climate forecasts and warnings for Southeast Alabama, Southwest & South Central Georgia, the Florida Panhandle and Big Bend, and the adjacent Gulf of Mexico coastal waters. Our primary mission is the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the local economy.

Spring Severe Weather & Flooding By Mark Wool

There were several instances of severe weather and flash flooding during the Spring of 2014. On March 16th, severe storms from the late morning through mid afternoon hours brought trees and power lines down across parts of Southeast Alabama and Southwest and South Central Georgia. Across our Florida zones, heavy rains were the main impact with 3 to 4-inch totals common from Leon County west across the Panhandle.

On April 7th, severe weather once again impacted the forecast area and was accompanied by some flooding. Most of the severe wind gusts occurred along the coast. There were also two tornadoes confirmed in the forecast area, and EF1 in Irwin County, GA and an EF0 in Leon County, FL. Much of the forecast area received in excess of three inches of rain, with most areal flooding concentrated in Dougherty and Worth Counties in GA.

On April 15th, extensive flash flooding occurred across the Florida Panhandle. Most of the flooding was concentrated in Washington, Walton and

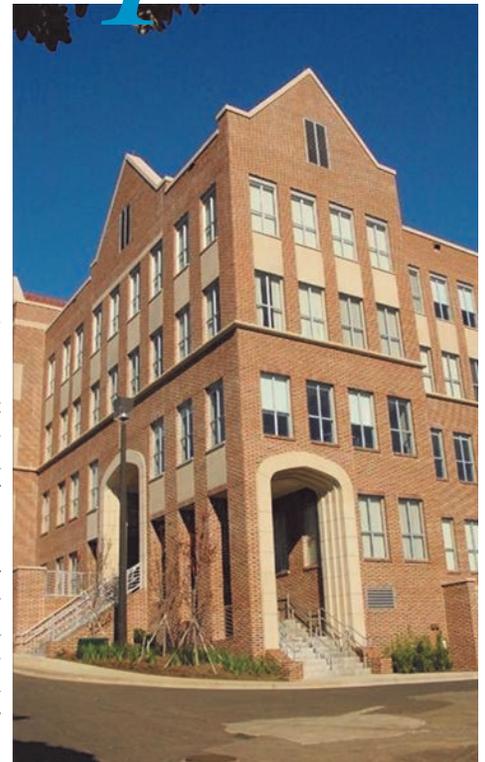
Jackson Counties, although some flooding also occurred in Leon County.

Severe weather and flooding impacted the forecast area once again on April 29-30th. Two EF1 tornadoes were confirmed in Jackson County, FL and excessive rainfall caused flash flooding and river flooding across the region.

Finally, several small supercells formed in far southeastern Alabama on the afternoon of May 10th. The leading cell in the group generated a tornado in southeastern Geneva County. A National Weather Service Survey Team found that an EF1 tornado touched down just north of the Florida state line along County Road 9.

Additional details on the April 7th, April 29-30th and May 10th events, along with photo galleries, can be found on our significant events web page located at the website included below.

<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/tac/?n=events>





Employee Spotlight: Parks Camp

Senior Forecaster, GIS Focal Point

By Katherine Moore & Parks Camp



Q: What sparked your interest in weather?

A: The first memory where I knew that I wanted to be involved with weather was in third grade. A tornado came through our town that day, and I recall being in the hallway of the elementary school during the tornado warning. While everyone else was crouched down, head between their legs, I was doing whatever I could to see out the door and catch a glimpse of the approaching storm. If you combine this with doing 'TV' forecasts in front of windows, it was pretty clear what direction I was headed.

Q: How did you get your start in the National Weather Service?

A: After finishing graduate school at Colorado State University, I joined the NWS in 1999 as an intern at the Mobile, AL office. I was in Mobile for a little over a year before moving to the Sterling, VA office. In 2001, I became a journeyman forecaster in Jacksonville, FL before rising to a lead forecaster in Tallahassee in 2007.

Q: You work a lot with GIS and other technology to advance operations, including working on a team to create the Damage Assessment Toolkit (DAT) app and web interface. Do you have any advice for people who are trying to stay up with technology changes through their career?

A: In developing and deploying the Damage Assessment Toolkit, I was often surprised by the initial resistance of some to new technologies. It seems that there was sometimes a fear that the new technology would

actually make the job harder, or that the learning curve would be too steep. What the team found, was that usually a little experience went a long way, and that once people tried the new tools (and used them enough to work through the learning curve), that they quickly became more comfortable and 'bought in' to the enhanced capabilities. So, if I had one piece of advice, it would be to view new technologies with an open mind and give them a chance. One thing is for certain, developers of new technologies are much more open to input from those who have tried them, versus those who resist without trying.

Q: What is the best/worst part of your job?

A: The best part is getting positive feedback from customers after a job well done. This could be from EM's or the public after a weather event, or internally from fellow employees after successfully getting through an event or solving a problem. The worst part is rotating shifts.

Q: Where do you see yourself in 5 to 10 years?

A: My current goal is to remain in a position 'near' operations, possibly as a Science and Operations Officer (SOO). I enjoy being on that interface between research and operations where new ideas and technology can be quickly implemented and put to the test.

Q: What do you like to do when you're off duty?

A: Spend time with my wife and daughter, play golf, and go mountain biking.

Reporting Severe Weather

By Don Van Dyke

At NWS Tallahassee (TAE), we are very interested in receiving reports of hail, strong winds, funnel clouds, tornadoes, flooding, or any type of storm-related damage, including trees or power lines that are downed. In order to be classified as "severe," a storm needs to have one or more of the following: hail that is quarter-size or larger (pictured at right), winds that are 58 mph or higher, or a tornado. The National Weather Service currently does not issue severe thunderstorm warnings for lightning. We have several different ways that you can report severe weather to us. One way is to simply call us at 850-942-8833. We also have an online form that you can fill out at <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/StormReport/SubmitReport.php?site=tac> that will automatically alert all of our workstations immediately after submission of your report. You may also post to our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/US.NationalWeatherService.Tallahassee.gov> or tweet us [@NWSTallahassee](https://twitter.com/NWSTallahassee). These reports are extremely valuable to us because they help confirm to us what is really happening out there. Most

of the time, we cannot know with absolute certainty what is really happening unless someone reports to us what they have seen. We normally issue severe thunderstorm, tornado, and flash flood warnings based on a combination of radar data and an analysis of the atmosphere currently in place. While this typically gives us reasonable confidence in what may be occurring, there is no replacement for eyewitness reports. We can then include these eyewitness reports of severe weather in our warnings, which adds additional credibility to the warnings for people downstream. After the event has ended, we always go back and review all of the reports that we have received while continuing to look for additional reports online or in the media that may not have been directly reported to us. Matching up these reports with radar signatures and environmental parameters can also help us to improve our warnings during future events. TAE strongly encourages the public to continue to enhance our mission by providing timely severe weather reports.



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What to Expect if El Niño Develops

By Alex Lamers & Mark Wool

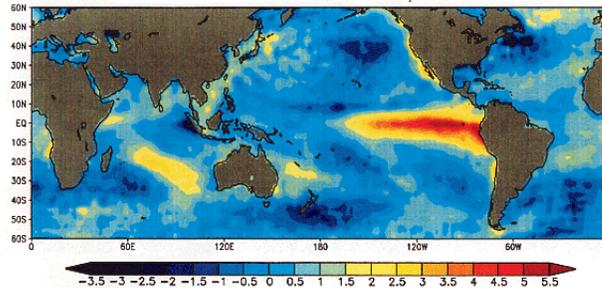
For much of north Florida, as well as southern parts of Alabama and Georgia, the past 1-2 years have featured a very wet pattern across the region. Above normal rainfall and soil moisture have been noted over that timeframe across much of the area. For the 2013 calendar year, several locations in southeast Alabama and the western Florida Panhandle received a tremendous amount of rainfall. For example, an observer west of Vernon, Florida received over 97 inches of rain in 2013, and observers in Geneva, Alabama and Inlet Beach, Florida received over 92 inches of rain for the year.

In general, soil moisture levels and the water table remained very high across the area as of May 2014. A USGS observation near Greenhead, FL measured record groundwater levels as of May 15, 2014. Basically, the wet ground conditions are limiting the amount of rain that can soak in, and increasing the amount of runoff and ponding of water – even with relatively average rainfall events.

Scientists believe that an El Niño may be developing this year. El Niño is a pattern that occurs when abnormally warm waters accumulate in tropical latitudes (near the equator) of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean. It is simply a warming of the waters, **NOT** a

specific storm that moves from place to place. An El Niño can influence weather patterns around the globe. Because El Niño has an effect on global weather patterns, it can have an influence in our local area too – especially in the winter months. There are well-established historical trends for what tends to happen in our area during an El Niño. El Niño typically features a more active southern jet stream in the winter months that produces wetter-than-normal conditions across much of the southern United States, including our area. Thus, the possibility of El Niño, combined with ongoing wet soil conditions and above normal stream flow, raises concern of a heightened risk of flooding and other hydrologic issues into the upcoming winter (2014-2015). The chances of an extremely wet fall or winter are about 2 times higher than normal during El Niño. (Extremely wet in this case means rainfall in top 20% of the record).

It is likely that El Niño will develop by the end of the year, but not completely certain. The Climate Prediction Center probability forecast suggests there is about a 70% chance of El Niño developing this summer, and an 80% chance during the fall and winter. The last El Niño ended in April 2010.



This Quarter's Focus:

Emergency Weather Support to Area Universities

By Ron Block

NWS Tallahassee has a very active emergency weather support program that focuses on the 48 counties in North Florida, South Georgia and Southeast Alabama. They also work closely with various state agencies. One lesser known, but very important, interaction is the topic of this article, the TAE support for the three area colleges and universities, Florida State University (FSU), Florida A&M University (FAMU), and Tallahassee Community College (TCC). Over 70,000 students are enrolled in total at the three campuses. Severe weather and student and staff safety is of paramount importance and there is an emergency manager (EM) at each institution who is tasked with the mission of protecting life and property. As David Bujak, FSU EM (pictured at right) relates, “weather hazards remain the single greatest threat to any college or university campus which functions like a city within a city. Therefore, a close relationship between a university and its local weather office is absolutely critical.”



University EMs take advantage of TAE's location both in the city and within the FSU College of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences to maintain close and frequent personal contact. For FSU, this includes not only the Tallahassee campus but also their Panama City location. EMs receive training from TAE on a number of relevant topics. This includes the preparation and coordination of severe weather exercises (e.g., hurricane drills) to insure that university staffs are prepared for any eventuality. All of this leads to StormReady status, a designation that signifies that the campus is prepared to deal with all weather possibilities. When it comes to active weather, EMs regularly coordinate with TAE via NWSchat, webinars and other technology to ensure the best real-time decision support information is received. This includes soliciting short-term weather forecasts, such as lightning activity, needed to determine if sporting events, graduation ceremonies or other outdoor activities need to be delayed or postponed. When TAE issues severe weather warnings, this triggers a message from the EMs to individuals on campus, via their cell phones and through alarms, to take immediate action. EMs in turn regularly contribute field reports via the mPING app, #TLHSpotter hashtag on Twitter, Facebook, and via NWSchat. This feedback helps the forecasters verify warnings and issue local storm reports.

TAE is very vigilant when it comes to the safety of area students. Bujak concurs. “In speaking with my peers across the nation, I get the impression that no one's relationship with their local NWS office is stronger than the one between FSU and TAE. The level of customer service provided by TAE is far beyond that afforded to any other campuses.”

Diversity & Outreach Efforts

By Ron Block

The office remains active in both Diversity/EEO and outreach activities. This issue marks the seventh publication of the *Tallahassee Topics*. We celebrated Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month on June 17th with a themed pot luck and a roundtable discussion with our ITO, Toan Tran, his wife Huyen Tran and son Alexander Tran; Hui Wang, a graduate student in meteorology at FSU; and Brian Nguyen, a student at Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine (ACOM).



During March, the office was very active in outreach activities. The highlight was the annual Springtime Tallahassee event where the office sponsored a booth. Jeff Evans, Ron Block, Katie Moore, and Mark Wool, aided by volunteers from the North Florida Chapter of the AMS/NWA, discussed weather safety, NWS as a career, and other topics with many of the thousands of participants. Ron, Emma Weston and Ryan Walsh served as judges at the Buck Lake School Science Fair. Ron hosted several Tallahassee Community College science classes for an orientation of the NWS mission and responsibilities. Jane Hollingsworth and Katie participated in a Women and Aviation Workshop. Tim Barry participated in the North Florida Prescribed Fire Council Meeting in Marianna. During April, Mark Wool interacted with the marine community at the Apalachicola Antique Boat Show.

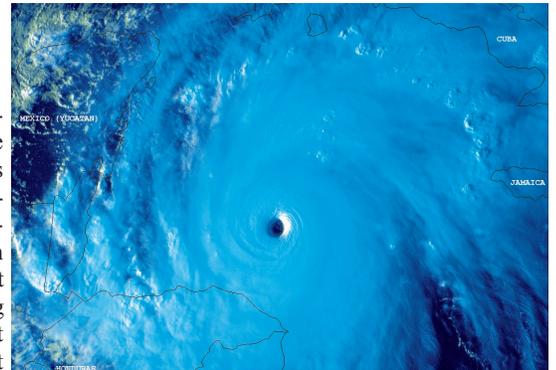
In May, Tim and Jim Bolden discussed weather safety at the NWS booth at the 4-H Ecology Day event in Tallahassee. Tim also discussed weather safety at Sabal Palm Elementary School. However, the largest event was the Hurricane Awareness Tour Event at the Tallahassee Regional Airport (pictured left). Highlights included an opportunity to tour the NOAA P3 Orion Hurricane Hunter aircraft (nicknamed "Miss Piggy," pictured far left) and the Air Force Reserve Hurricane Hunter C-130 aircraft (at right in photo). The NWS staff used a sophisticated model to demonstrate flood mitigation strategies, launched weather balloons, handed out literature and displayed our tornado simulator. Visitors at the event also had a chance to tour emergency management support vehicles, watch other weather and safety demonstrations from FSU's COAPS, state emergency officials, the forest service, and many others, and were given the opportunity to ask questions on a myriad of related topics.

The TAE staff continued teaching the Operational Meteorology course for FSU students. We also hosted 5 FSU graduate student volunteers who assumed increasing responsibilities while assisting the forecasters with their duties, some will be leaving us to begin their NWS careers.

Climate Recap for Spring

By Tim Barry

The climate for Tallahassee during the 3-month period of March through May saw temperatures that were slightly above normal. The maximum temperature recorded at the Tallahassee Regional Airport was 96 degrees on the 24th and 25th of May and the lowest was 33 degrees on March 14th. There were no temperature records tied or broken. The period was highlighted by our 5th wettest spring on record with 24.04" recorded at the airport, 11.33" above normal. While April is on average our driest month, four heavy rain events during the month contributed to our 3rd wettest April on record. Rainfall at the Tallahassee Regional Airport that month was 12.46", 9.40" above normal. The greatest amount in a 24-hour period during spring was 4.53" on March 16th, which also established a new daily rainfall record for that date. Another daily rainfall record was broken on April 30th with a measured rainfall amount of 2.28".



Climate Outlook for Summer

By Tim Barry

Looking ahead to summer (June through August), the Climate Prediction Center calls for an enhanced chance for experiencing above normal temperatures and equal chances for experiencing above, near normal, or below normal rainfall. The average temperature for Tallahassee during summer is 81.4 degrees and the average rainfall is 22.25 inches. On average, about 38% of Tallahassee's annual rainfall occurs during summer, which is Tallahassee's convective season.

June 1st marked the first day of hurricane season which runs through the end of November. The official outlook from NOAA calls for a 50% chance of a below-normal season, a 40% chance of a near-normal season, and only a 10% chance of an above-normal season. NOAA predicts a 70% likelihood of 8 to 13 named storms, of which 3 to 6 could become hurricanes, including 1 to 2 major hurricanes (Category 3, 4 or 5; winds of 111 mph or higher). The main reason for this year's reduced outlook is the anticipated development of El Niño this summer (see accompanying article on page 3). El Niño causes stronger wind shear, which reduces the number and intensity of tropical storms and hurricanes. El Niño can also strengthen the trade winds and increase the atmospheric stability across the Atlantic, making it more difficult for cloud systems coming off of Africa to intensify into tropical storms.

2014 Atlantic Tropical Storm Names

Arthur	Isaias	Rene
Bertha	Josephine	Sally
Cristobal	Kyle	Teddy
Dolly	Laura	Vickie
Edouard	Marco	Wilfred
Fay	Nana	
Gonzalo	Omar	
Hanna	Paulette	