Spot Page Usage Guide

Version 2.0 - 2/14/2019

Author: Dan Borsum dan.borsum@noaa.gov NWS Billings
Editing Assistance: Wright Dobbs wright.dobbs@noaa.gov NWS Tallahassee
Technical Advisor: Virgil Middendorf virgil.middendorf@noaa.gov NWS Billings

TIP: The table of contents below, and parts of this guide, have quick links so you can easily navigate to the part of this guide the link refers to. Simply click the link to be taken to that part of the guide.

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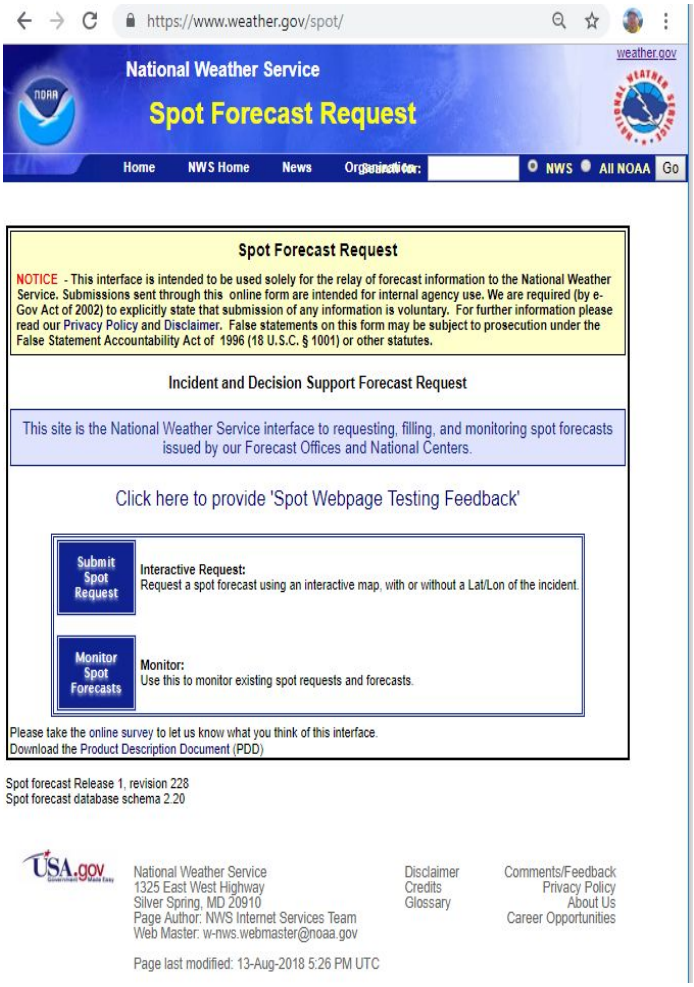
Introduction

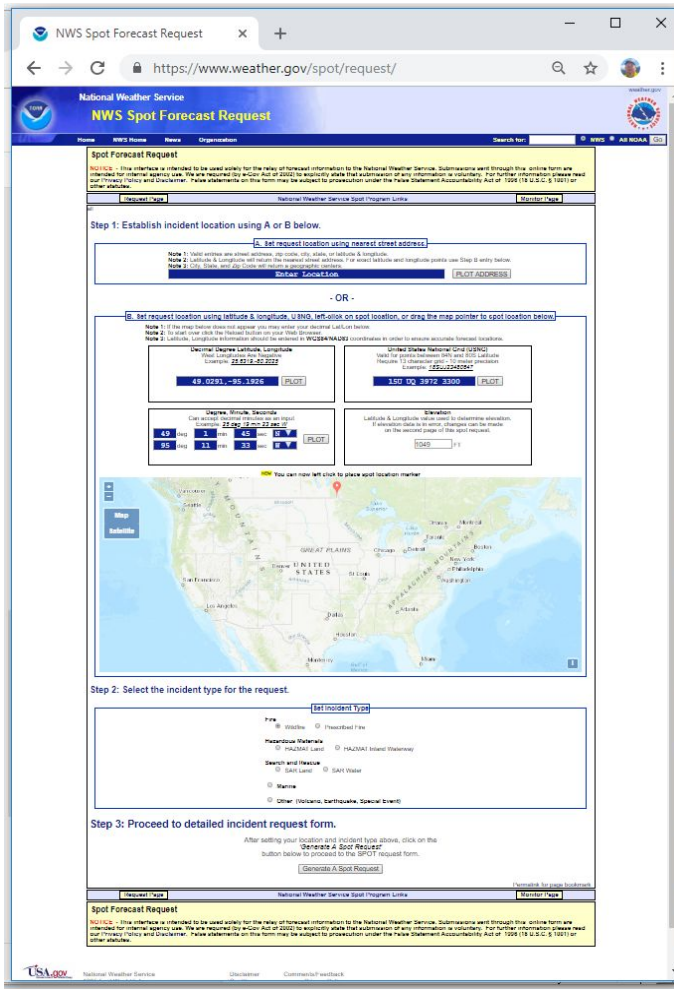
This document is a guide to the features of the weather.gov/spot website. It contains information useful for both users and National Weather Service employees. Some of the information provided is in depth, but this is intentional to assist with problem solving if a user encounters an unexpected result. For additional information or tutorials please contact your local National Weather Service office.

weather.gov/spot Website Overview

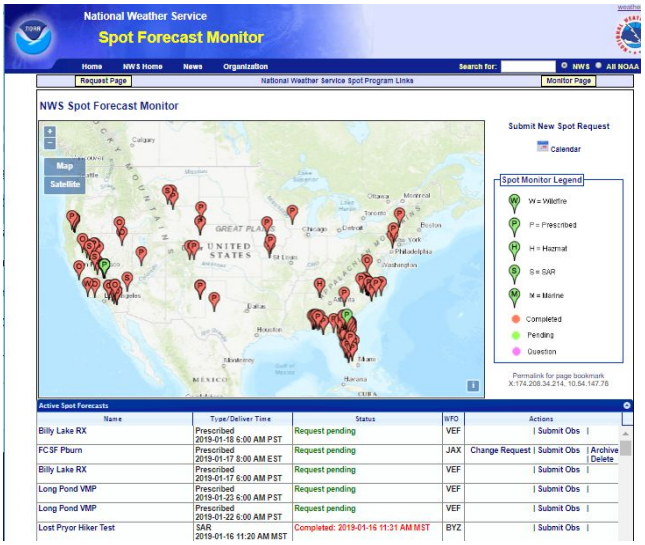
The weather.gov/spot website is separated into 2 portions, a Monitor Page, and a Request Page



Opening Page



Spot Request Initial Page



Spot Monitor Page

Using the Spot Monitor Page

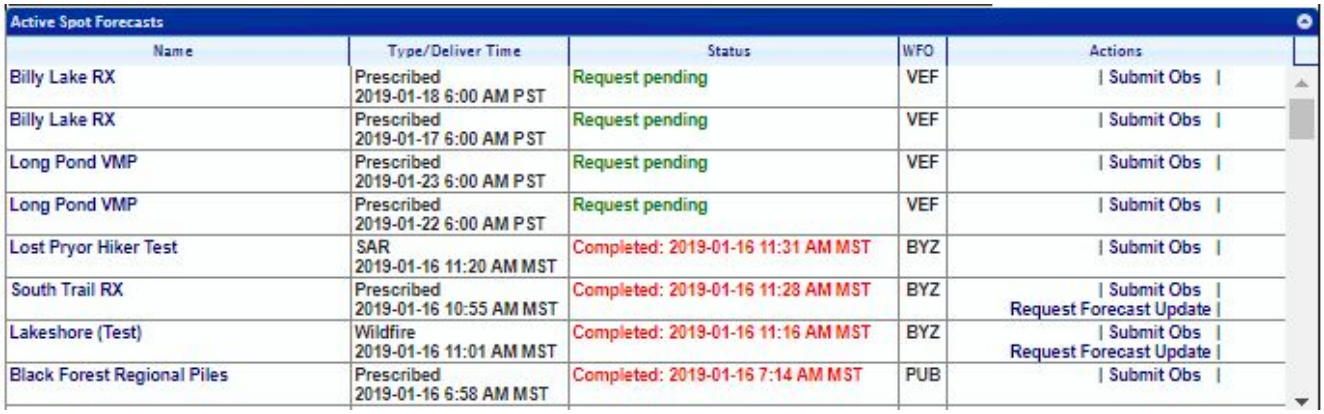
Your initial view will be of the entire CONUS, but you can set a Permalink to create a view you prefer. The map can be zoomed in and out and panned to see spot forecasts across a geographic area even if they are sent by multiple NWS offices. The spots on this page will also span a period of days, so the NWS works with Land Management Agencies to try and limit the number of spots displayed by **Archiving** Incidents

You can access a specific spot by either clicking on the pin, or clicking on the name of the spot from the table. An example of what the completed spot looks like is shown under **Viewing a Forecast.**

Permalink

Beneath the Spot Monitor Legend, there is an option to set a Permalink for page bookmark. This is useful to be able to have a view centered on your area of interest. It is recommended to zoom in far enough to cover your area of interest and then create the Permalink.

Active Spot Forecast Table



Active Spot Forecasts

Name	Type/Deliver Time	Status	WFO	Actions
Billy Lake RX	Prescribed 2019-01-18 6:00 AM PST	Request pending	VEF	| Submit Obs |
Billy Lake RX	Prescribed 2019-01-17 6:00 AM PST	Request pending	VEF	| Submit Obs |
Long Pond VMP	Prescribed 2019-01-23 6:00 AM PST	Request pending	VEF	| Submit Obs |
Long Pond VMP	Prescribed 2019-01-22 6:00 AM PST	Request pending	VEF	| Submit Obs |
Lost Pryor Hiker Test	SAR 2019-01-16 11:20 AM MST	Completed: 2019-01-16 11:31 AM MST	BYZ	| Submit Obs |
South Trail RX	Prescribed 2019-01-16 10:55 AM MST	Completed: 2019-01-16 11:28 AM MST	BYZ	| Submit Obs | Request Forecast Update |
Lakeshore (Test)	Wildfire 2019-01-16 11:01 AM MST	Completed: 2019-01-16 11:16 AM MST	BYZ	| Submit Obs | Request Forecast Update |
Black Forest Regional Piles	Prescribed 2019-01-16 6:58 AM MST	Completed: 2019-01-16 7:14 AM MST	PUB	| Submit Obs |

- The content of this table will be driven by the geographic view in the map, but heads up, there may be a lag in the syncing of the displays (just wait a few seconds if need be).
- You can access a spot by clicking a pin on the map or the name of a spot from the table.
- The tops of the columns can be clicked to allow you to sort the spots by name, type and start time, status, or which WFO is handling the spot.
- To see a previous forecast for a given spot, you will have to use the Calendar function (However, it is possible to have multiple forecasts for the same incident show up on this page, depending on how the requests were initiated. See **Appendix A** for more information)
- This page will only show active incidents. If an incident has been Archived you will have to use the calendar feature to find it. (Please use the **Use of the Calendar** section)

Clicking on the name of one of the spots above, you will be sent to the Spot Forecast page. If you click on a pin on the map for a spot, it looks like this:

Clicking on the name of the spot will take you to the Spot Forecast page. Also, note there are a number of links below the request information, which are the same as the links on the far right hand side of the table. These options are called **Actions.**

Actions

On the far right column of the Active Spot Forecasts table, you can see a number of different Actions.

Active Spot Forecasts

Name	Type/Deliver Time	Status	WFO	Actions
Lakeshore (Test)	Wildfire 2019-01-16 12:01 PM MST	Request pending	BYZ	Change Request | Submit Obs | | Delete
Lost Pryor Hiker Test	SAR 2019-01-16 11:20 AM MST	Completed: 2019-01-16 11:31 AM MST	BYZ	| Submit Obs |
South Trail RX	Prescribed 2019-01-16 10:55 AM MST	Completed: 2019-01-16 11:28 AM MST	BYZ	| Submit Obs | Request Forecast Update |

Change Request

If you need to change any information associated with the request (except location), this is the link to use. Examples: incident name, when the forecast starts, when the forecast should be sent to the customer, etc. This link disappears when the forecast is posted against the request.

Request Forecast Update

Use this link to quickly submit a request for a forecast update. Also can be used to submit a new request for the next day after the forecast has been posted for the current request. (User must change dates)

Submit Obs

Use this interface to send observations to the WFO. More information in Submitting Weather Observations.

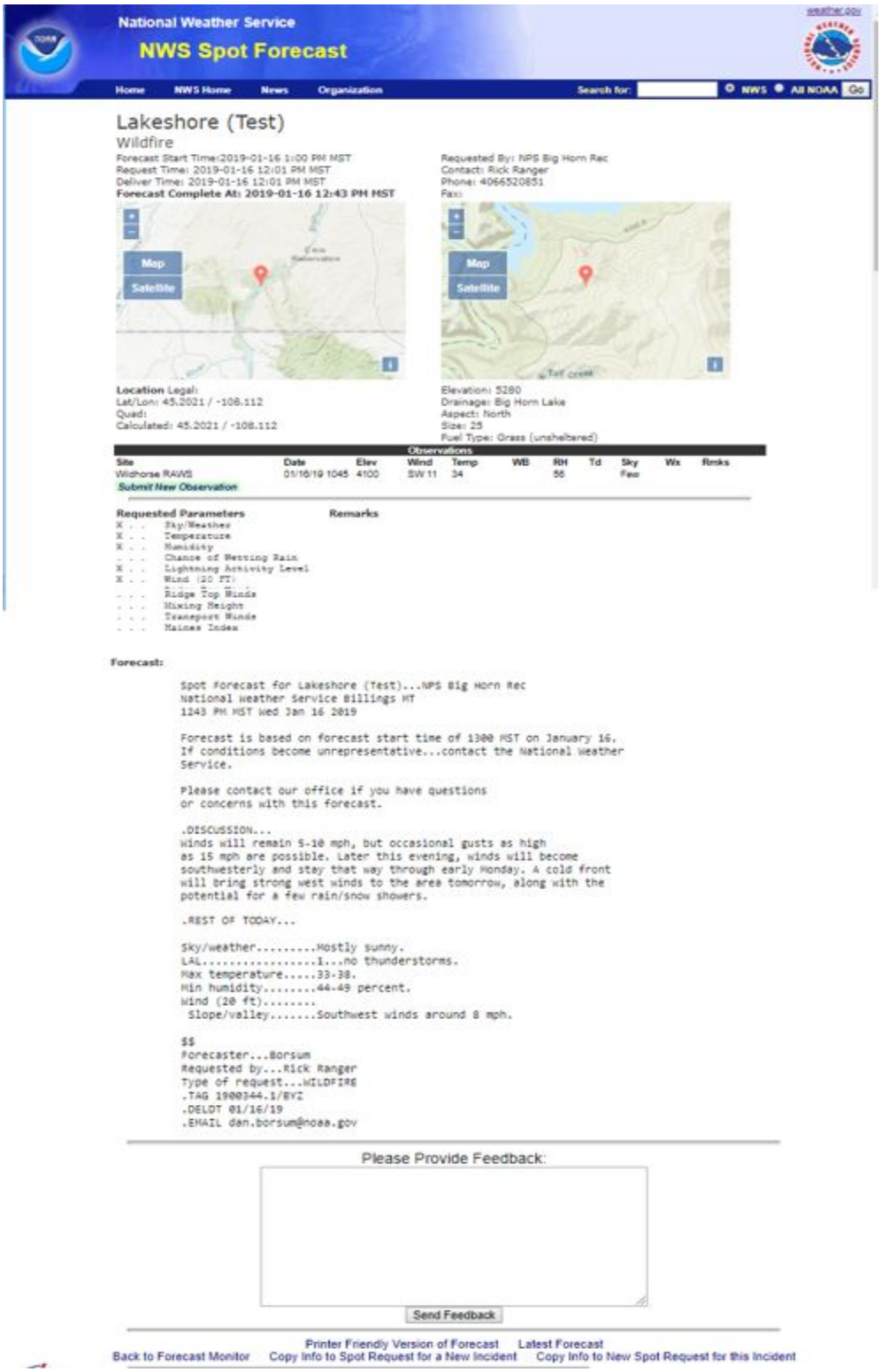
Delete

This is a function the NWS can use to manage the Spots that are submitted on the page especially if erroneous spot requests are made or managing other problems. Please leave the use of this link to NWS employees only. If you feel a request should be deleted, please contact the NWS.

Archive (NWS offices only and not visible to land management agencies)

This feature is used to manage the number of spots that show up on the website. An NWS office may contact you to determine whether a spot forecast should be archived, which would then make it accessible through the **Calendar** function.

Viewing a Forecast



This is what a forecast looks like when you click on the spot name. One thing to note is if the maps do not reflect the correct location of the incident, you need to contact the NWS office to discuss getting a new forecast. Note the **Feedback** box and **links** at the bottom of this page.

Feedback Box

Feedback is critical to let the forecasters know about the accuracy of the forecast and and supplemental information you think would be useful. Combined with providing weather observations, it is a good way to ensuring you receive a spot forecast that meets your needs. Examples of supplemental information that could be included in a feedback box is information on wind shifts, impacts of changing sky cover, smoke behavior and time of the inversion break up. (It is best to enter weather observations using the Weather Observations interface.

Copy Info to Spot Request for a **New Incident**

- Customers use this link to retain all of the their contact information for a specific incident type, but request a spot for a new and separate incident. This does allow for a different location to be entered.
- It sends the user to the location selection page, but when they generate the spot request, all the contact information is retained (top of the request form part 2)

Copy Info to New Spot Request for **this Incident**

- The user will use this link to get another forecast for the same incident. This link sends the user to Page 2 of the request process. Weather elements can be adjusted and the forecast delivery date/time can be changed, etc.
- This allows customers to easily schedule the next needed forecast for an incident without having to re-enter most of the information.
    - Allows new observations submitted to remain with the request.
    - The lat/lon of the incident cannot be changed with this option.

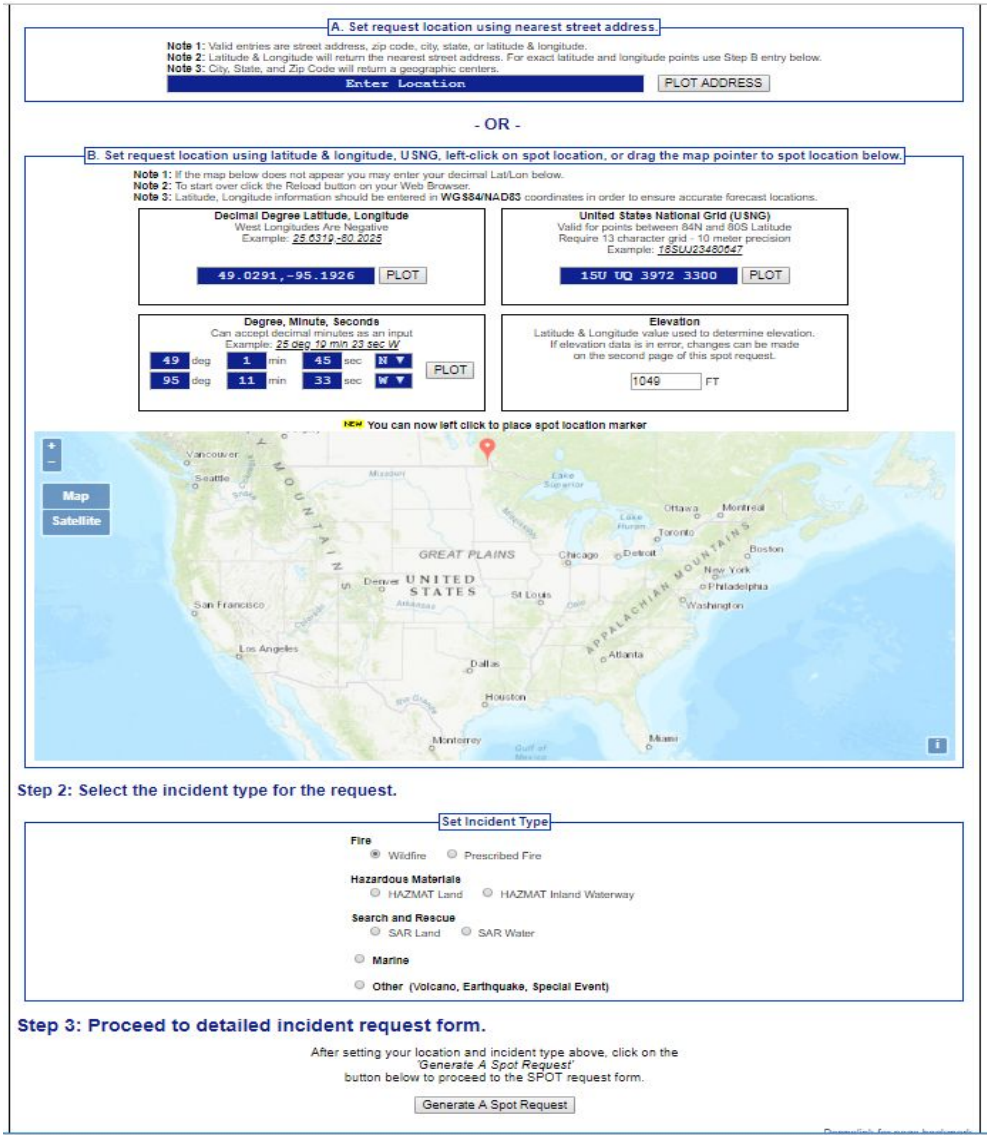
Tip: For users on large prescribed or wildfires where the location of interest may be shifting around the perimeter, they will be required to use the Copy info into Spot Request for a New Incident to change the lat/long.

Completing the Spot Request Form

There are two main ways to begin initiating a spot forecast request: starting from the Spot Request Page or selecting a link from a pre-existing spot forecast.

It is useful to think of the spot request form as two parts: Part 1 establishes the incident location and the incident type, Part 2 provides the remainder of the incident information and allows the user to specify their request needs.

Part 1 of Spot Request Form (This is the interface you encounter when you start a brand new request)



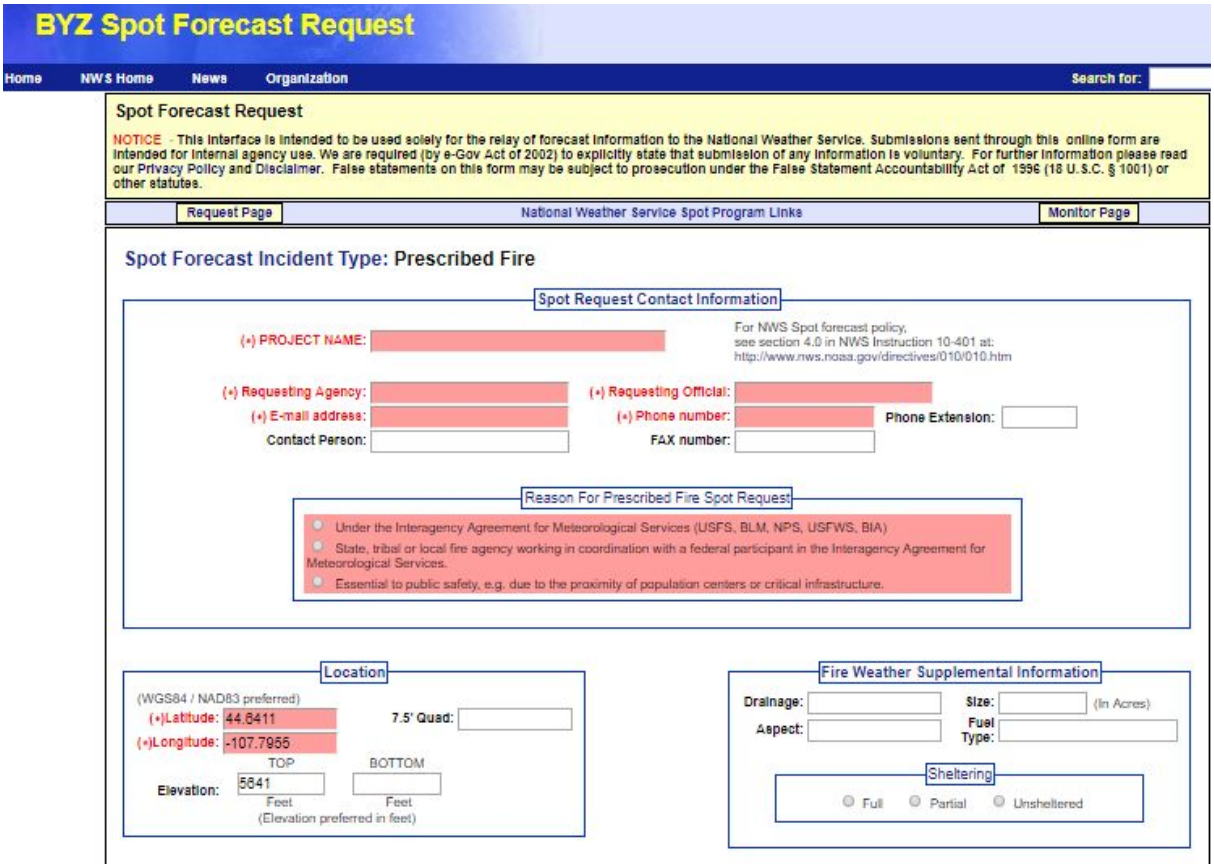
This page has 3 steps.

1. The first step allows you to select the incident location, and verify its accuracy via map interface. Users can provide a street address, a digital lat long, lat long in degrees minutes and seconds **(tip: degrees and decimal minutes work as well),** the United States National Grid, or just by moving the pin on the map.
    a. **Tip: The program does not support Township/Range/Section - use lat long**
2. The second step allows you to select the incident type. This interface helps set up the second page of the request process by tailoring the information to the incident type. (For more information about selecting the different incident types and how this can even impact which office your request is sent to, see **Appendix B**)
    a. **Tip: If you realize you submitted the wrong type of spot (i.e. prescribed when you meant wildfire) the page does not have memory, so if you hit the back arrow you will have to reenter the incident location information.**

3. The third step is to click Generate a Spot Request to go to the next step. (In the example provided this is a Prescribed Fire request for Lat/Long at 44.6411,-107.7955.)

Part 2 of Spot Request Form Page 2

Top of Page 2



This is the top half of the spot request page. This request is for a Prescribed fire at Lat/Long 44.6411,-107.7955 which is in the WFO BYZ service area. Any areas that are colored in salmon must be filled out for the spot request to be processed.

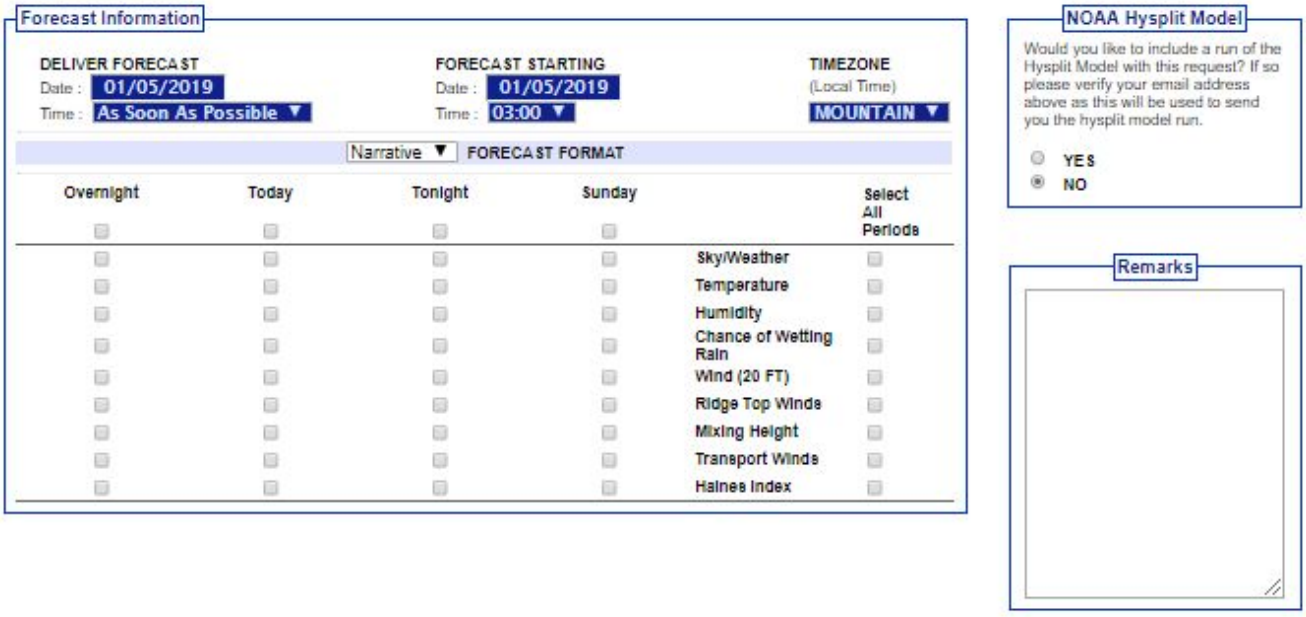
Tip: You can enter multiple email addresses, separated by commas in the E-mail address box.

Tip: The lat/long box is not editable, you have to initiate a new request if you need to change the locations.

Though optional, the Drainage, Size, Aspect, Fuel Type and Sheltering are all important pieces of information that forecasters use to convert onsite eye level or IRAWS observations to 20 foot wind estimations.

The box “Reason for Prescribed Fire Spot Request” will not appear on the Wildfire Spot request page.

Middle of Page 2



This is the middle section where the user can tailor their request.

The top portion contains two boxes for selecting the time related aspects of the forecast. The Deliver Forecast setting is used to determine if you want to receive the forecast immediately or have it delivered at a later time, like for the next morning if you have submitted a spot the night before.

Tip: When a time is set in the future (example 12 hours) the office may not receive notification about the request until 4 to 6 hours after you submit the request. This is an intentional setting, but just be aware if you submit a spot for a delayed time and you call to discuss the spot with the NWS office.
The second box is used to set the start time for the forecast. This feature is useful if you submit a request at midday and you want the forecast to start for a period the next day.

Next there is a small dialogue box beneath the time selection boxes which allows you to request a combined, narrative or tabular forecast. **These settings may be different from one NWS office to another (local office discretion, if you have concerns contact the NWS)**, but the options are:

- Narrative: a forecast which lists ranges for 12 hour forecast windows
- Tabular: a forecast which lists all the elements on an 1 or 2 hour interval
- Combined: a forecast which represents a combination of the above 2 options

Appendix E has a bigger discussion of the different types of forecasts and examples.

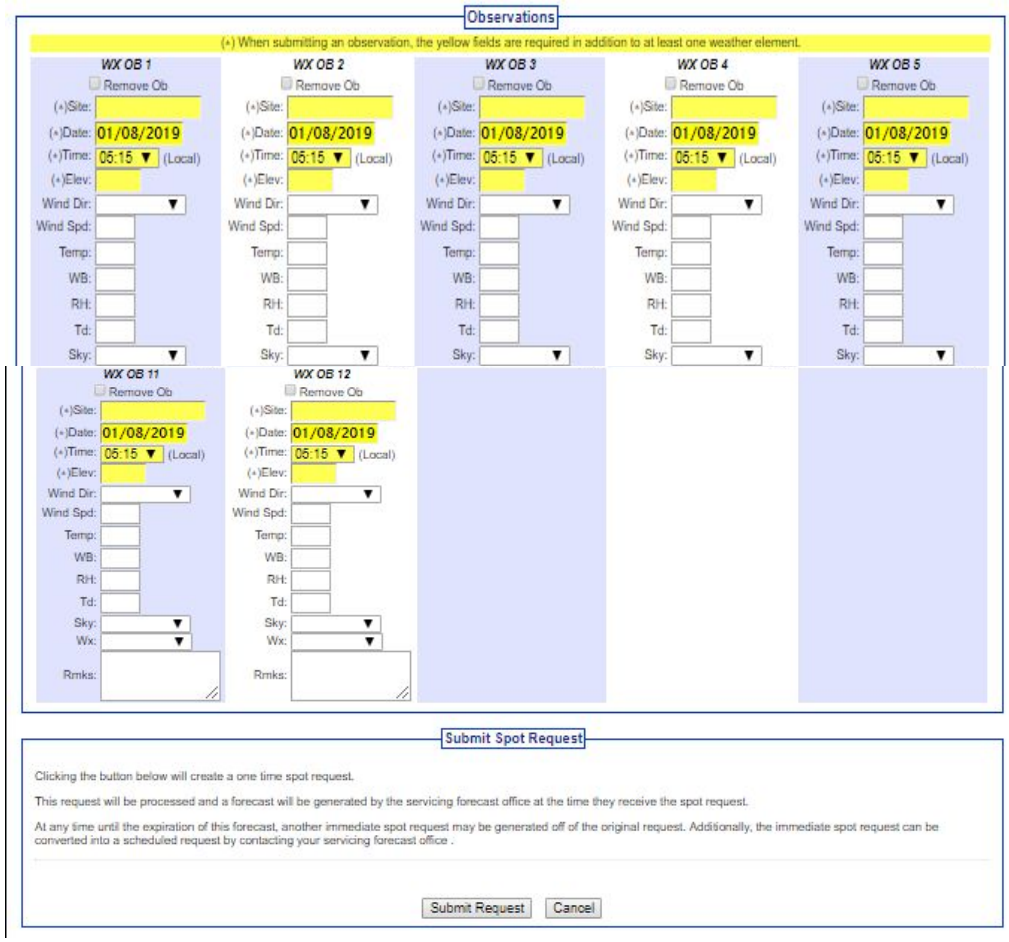
There is an option to request a Hysplit request. Hysplit is a computer model that is used to compute air parcel movement. This is frequently used to determine smoke dispersion. The Hysplit output is only trajectory based. If you want “Dispersion” based output, you must contact the forecast office, so they can submit manually from the NOAA Hysplit website. The trajectory based Hysplit product will be delivered to the emails listed in the Spot Request Contact Information Box. An example of the Hysplit product and information on interpretation is in **Appendix F**.

The Remarks box is a location for supplemental information which will aid the forecaster in the development of a forecast tailored specifically to your needs. Among the different types of information that can be included (but not limited to) here are:

- Specific forecast needs, such as cold front timing, moisture amounts
- Information for the forecaster, such as the best weather station to use or information why a weather station may not be representative
- Feedback from a previous forecast
- If the word “extended” (in any case or mixed) is put in the remarks, then the forecast office software that generates the forecast will include a 3-7 day extended forecast.
- If the word “outlook” (in any case or mixed) is put in the remarks, then the forecast office software that generates the forecast will include a 8-14 day outlook.

Bottom of Page 2

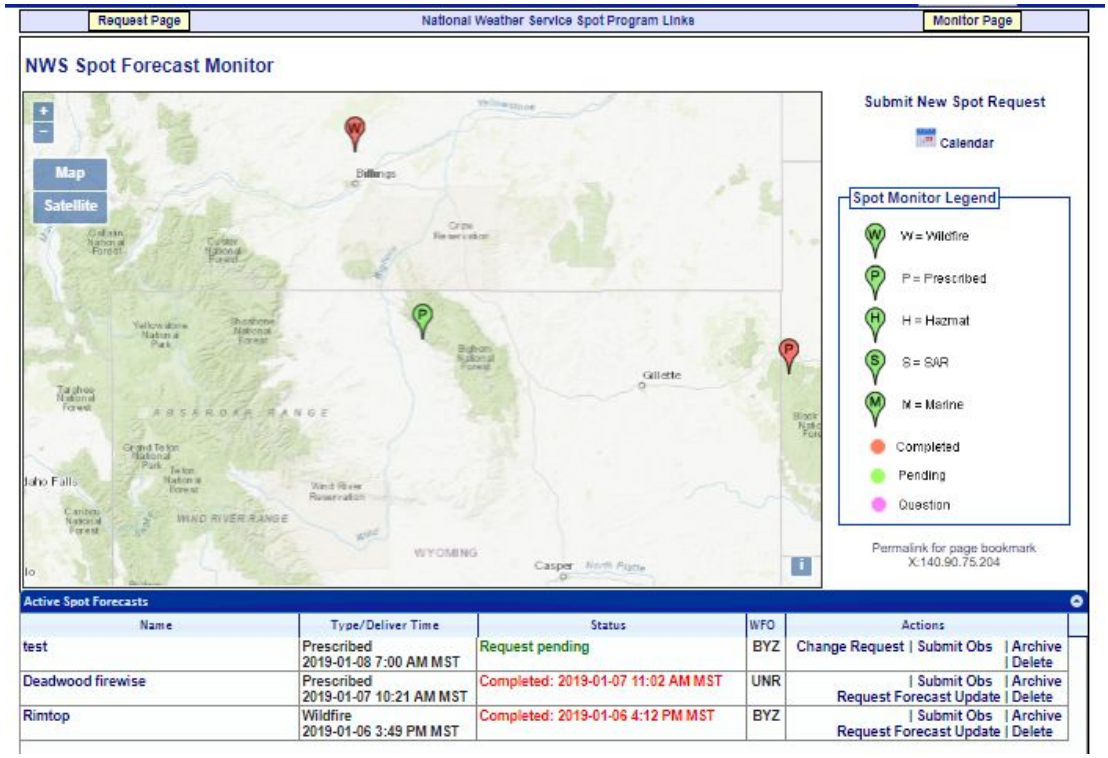
There are spots to enter weather observations. Weather observations are critical to help the forecasters diagnose how local terrain and vegetation may be causing local weather impacts. Observations to provide feedback after the forecast is provided are important to help meteorologists ensure they are capturing these local effects.



At the very bottom of the page there is the button to submit request.

After you submit your spot request

Your spot forecast request will be visible on the NWS Spot Forecast Monitor showing a map centered on the location of your request with a green pin, indicating it has not yet been filled.



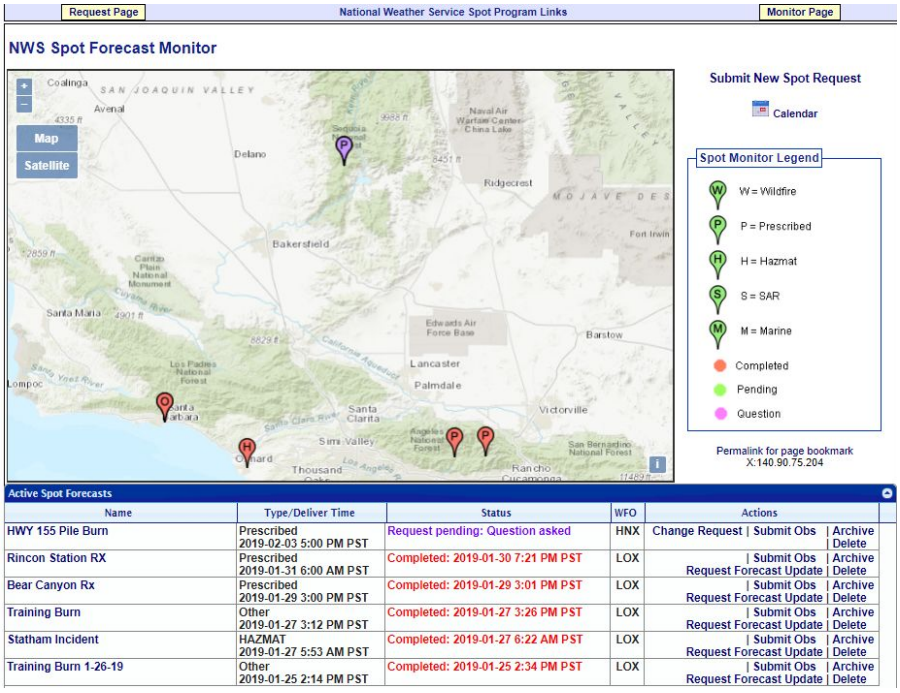
An alert will be triggered at the NWS Office, which will be completing the spot, if you are requesting the forecast in the next 6 hours. If you are requesting the forecast to be delivered to you beyond 6 hour time frame, the alert message for the NWS office may be delayed. Note the name of the office under the column WFO to make sure the request is being sent to the office you expected it to.

Changing a Spot Forecast Request

This option allows you to change elements you are requesting, but you will not be able to change the geographic location of the spot forecast.

Questions

There is a feature which allows a NWS Forecaster to ask you a question about your spot request. (NWS forecaster refer to **Appendix F** for more information). This will cause the pin associated with the spot, and the listing in the Spot Table to turn purple. **The only way you will know there is a question is by monitoring the spot page. The only way to contact the NWS office to respond to a question is to call them.**



Name	Type/Deliver Time	Status	WFO	Actions
HWY 155 Pile Burn	Prescribed 2019-02-03 5:00 PM PST	Request pending: Question asked	HNX	Change Request | Submit Obs | Archive | Delete
Rincon Station RX	Prescribed 2019-01-31 6:00 AM PST	Completed: 2019-01-30 7:21 PM PST	LOX	| Submit Obs | Archive Request Forecast Update | Delete
Bear Canyon Rx	Prescribed 2019-01-29 3:00 PM PST	Completed: 2019-01-29 3:01 PM PST	LOX	| Submit Obs | Archive Request Forecast Update | Delete
Training Burn	Other 2019-01-27 3:12 PM PST	Completed: 2019-01-27 3:26 PM PST	LOX	| Submit Obs | Archive Request Forecast Update | Delete
Statham Incident	HAZMAT 2019-01-27 5:53 AM PST	Completed: 2019-01-27 6:22 AM PST	LOX	| Submit Obs | Archive Request Forecast Update | Delete
Training Burn 1-26-19	Other 2019-01-25 2:14 PM PST	Completed: 2019-01-25 2:34 PM PST	LOX	| Submit Obs | Archive Request Forecast Update | Delete

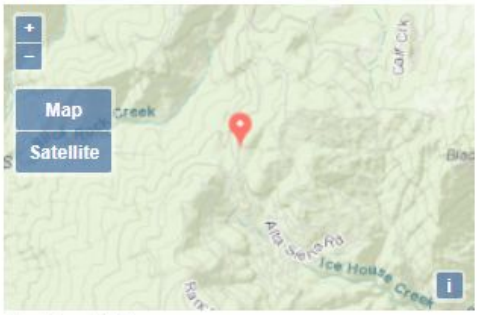
If you click on the spot you will see a Question entry to the right of where Feedback would be listed:

HWY 155 Pile Burn

Prescribed Fire

Forecast Start Time:2019-02-03 5:00 PM PST
Request Time: 2019-01-31 11:41 PM PST
Deliver Time: 2019-02-03 5:00 PM PST
Forecast Complete At:

Requested By: USFS
Contact: Geoffrey Gillespie
Phone: 7603763781 ext 626
Fax:



Location Legal:
Lat/Lon: 35.7392 / -118.556
Quad:
Calculated: 35.7392 / -118.556

Elevation: 6131
Drainage:
Aspect:
Size:
Fuel Type:

Observations

Site	Date	Elev	Wind	Temp	WB	RH	Td	Sky	Wx	Rmks
Wofford Heights RAWS	01/30/19 1500	3150	SE 7	63	47	30				Weather was taken from a RAWS site at 3150. The Project Area is approximate ly 6800 feet.
Wofford Heights RAWS	01/30/19 1200	3150	SE 7	59	48	49				Weather was taken from a RAWS site at 3150. The Project Area is approximate ly 6800 feet.
Wofford Heights RAWS	01/30/19 0900	3150	SE 3	48	43	72				Weather was taken from a RAWS site at 3150. The Project Area is approximate ly 6800 feet.

Submit New Observation

Requested Parameters

```
. X X   Sky/Weather
. X X   Temperature
. X X   Humidity
. X X   Wind (Eye Level)
. X X   Surrounding Ridge Winds
. X X   Mixing Height
. X X   Transport Winds
```

Remarks

```
Weather was
taken from a
RAWS site at
3150. The
Project Area is
approximately
6800 feet.
```

Question

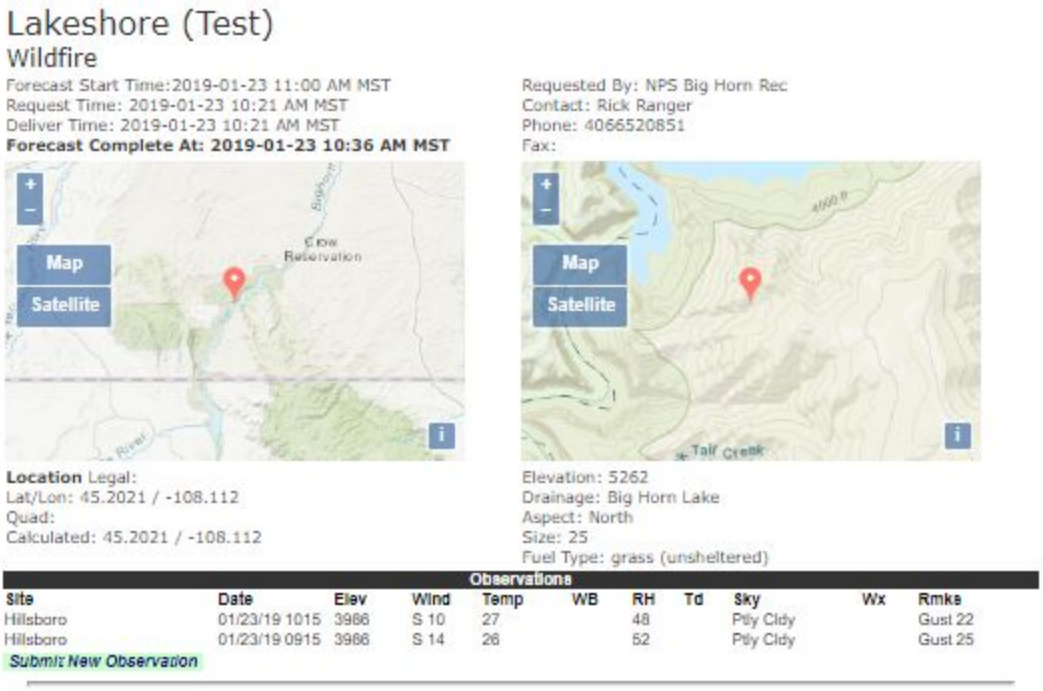
```
I have a question about the time you actually need this
forecast. You requested it 4 days in advance which we
cannot do with any accuracy. We tried to reach you by
phone but got no answer. I have moved the deliver date
to Sunday afternoon. If that does not work for you,
please call us at 559-884-9505. Thanks.
```

Submitting Weather Observations

Weather observations are critical to help the forecasters diagnose how local terrain and vegetation may be causing local weather impacts. Observations to provide feedback after the forecast is provided are important to help meteorologists ensure they are capturing these local effects.

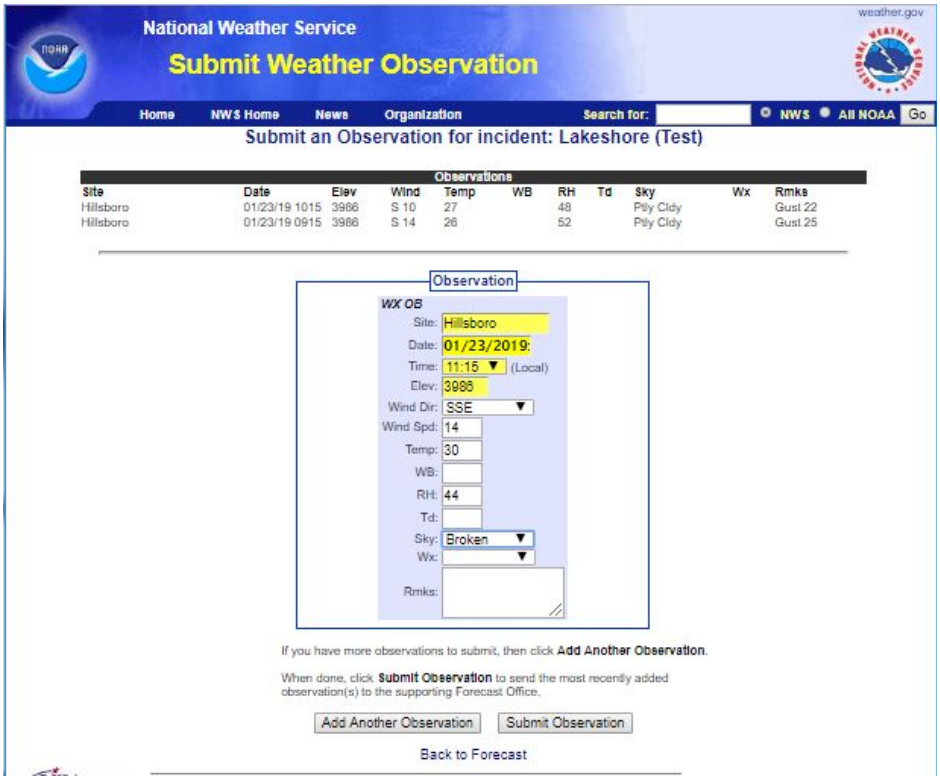
There are 4 ways to get to the weather observation forms.

1. They are available at the bottom of a spot request form
2. There is a link on the spot forecast page which shows the actual forecast or request after it has been submitted



3. It is an option under the actions from the Active Spot Forecasts table
4. It is an option on the conversation window that pops up when you click on a spot on the map.

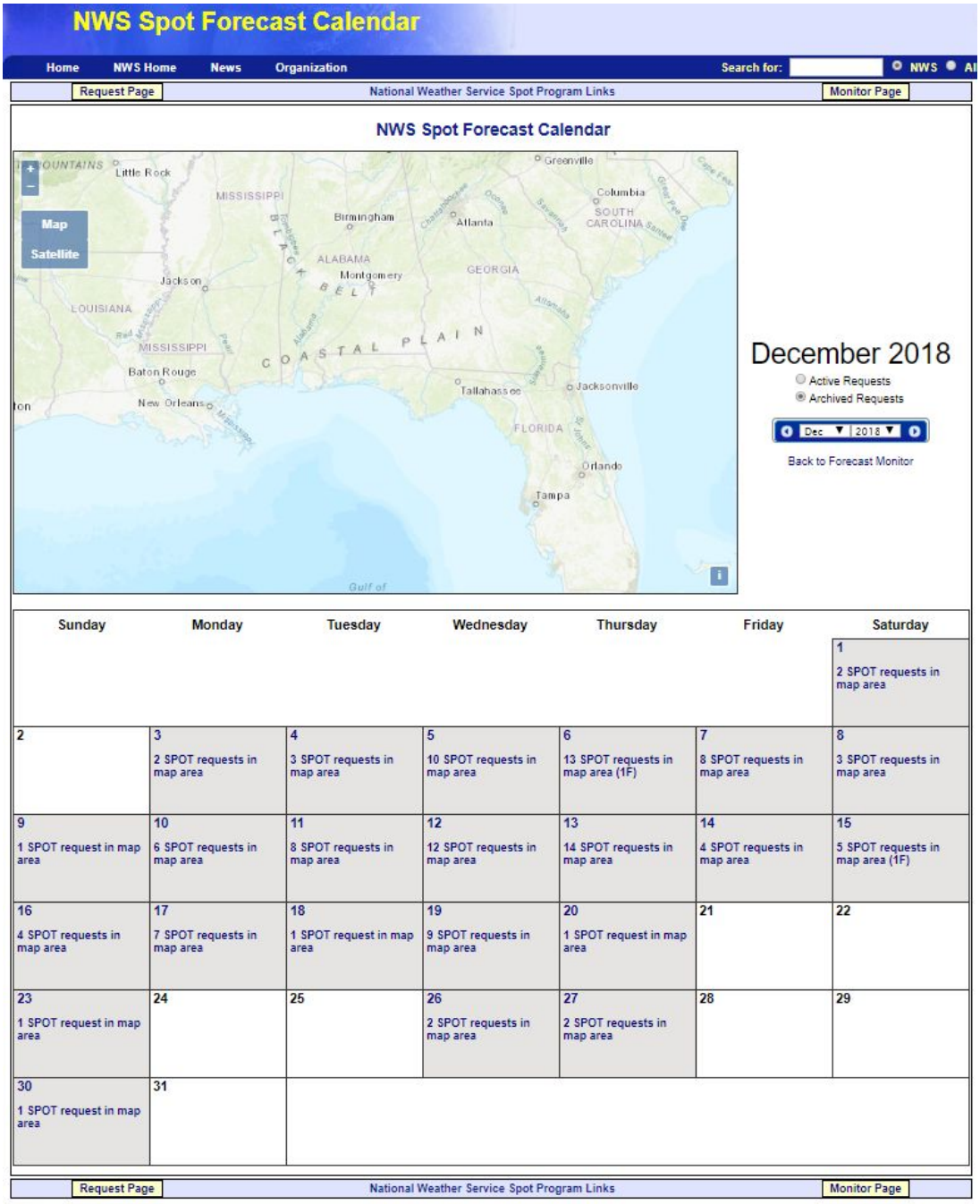
#1 allows for entry of multiple observations at once. The other paths support entry of observations 1 at a time, with an observation to submit the observation or to add another observations:



If you are submitting a spot request and you have more observations to provide than locations to put them, they can submit the request and then click on the pin to submit an additional observation or the incident name in the list.

All of the observations submitted with an incident are available to view with this incident, even if additional forecasts have been issued, as long as Copy Info to New Spot Request for this Incident is used.

Use of the Calendar Function



When you click on the Calendar link from the Spot Forecast Monitor page, it takes you to a screen with a map above a calendar for the current month. Initially it does not display any incidents.
It is possible to navigate the map in this interface to change the area of interest.

There is an option to select either Active or Archived Requests.

- An “**Active**” request means the forecasts are still visible on the main Monitor Page

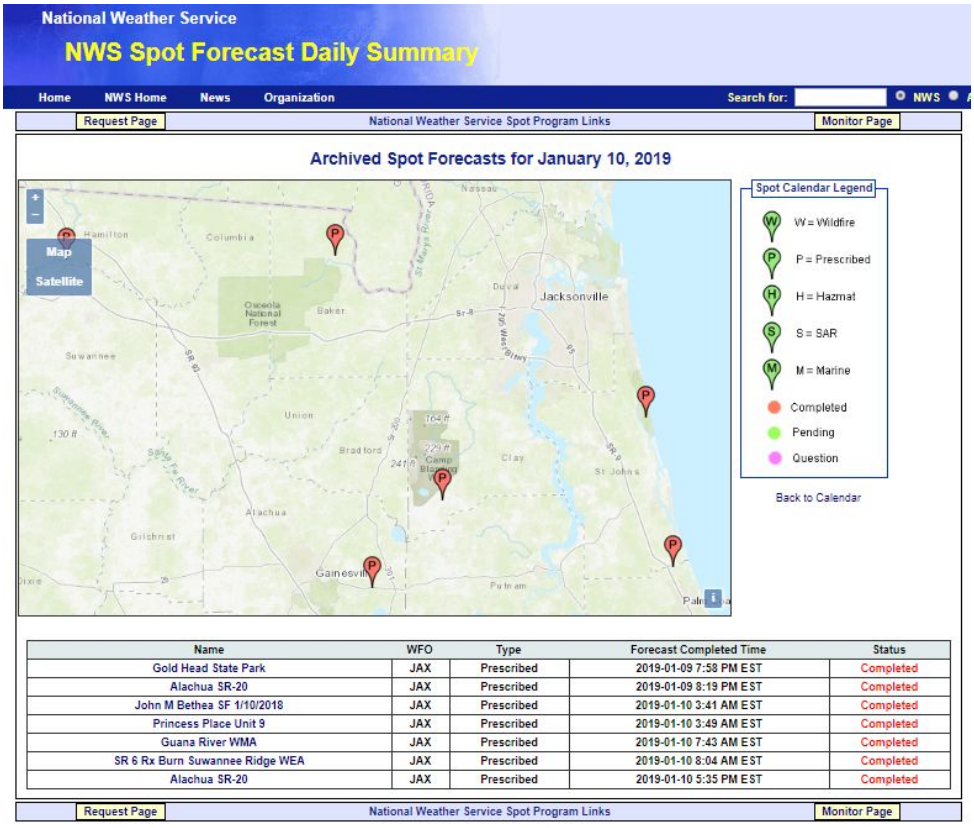
- An “**Archived**” request means the incident has been Archived by the NWS office and is not visible on the Monitor Page (this is done to limit the number of incidents visible on the page to keep it easier to use)

You can navigate to previous months using the dialog below the request selections. The program only contains spot forecasts from October 2016 or later, depending on the NWS office. For spot forecasts you cannot locate through the Calendar interface, contact your NWS office.

In the blocks of the Calendar, it will say how many Spot Forecasts were provided in that area on that day. If it has a number followed by the letter F in parentheses, it means feedback was provided on that request.

Note: this is a different behavior than the **Monitor Page.** The Monitor Page only shows the most recent spot forecast provided for a given location, where as the **Calendar** will show every forecast written on that day for that location. (This can vary depending on how users request spot forecasts. For more information see **Appendix C: Overview of Spot Forecast Website Data Management**.)

If you click on the date of interest you get the following screen.



You can click on either the name of the spot or the pin to pull up information about the spot.

Notice how the Alachua SR-20 spot shows up in this list twice. If you had been using the Spot Forecast Monitor January 10th instead of the Calendar, you would have only seen one listing for this incident. See **Appendix C** for more information.

The retrieved forecast looks similar to a forecast retrieved via the Spot Forecast Monitor. However, you do not have the ability to Submit Observations, Copy Info into New Request for this Incident or Copy Info to Spot Request for New Incident.

Appendix A: The impacts of different methods used to request subsequent spots for an incident.

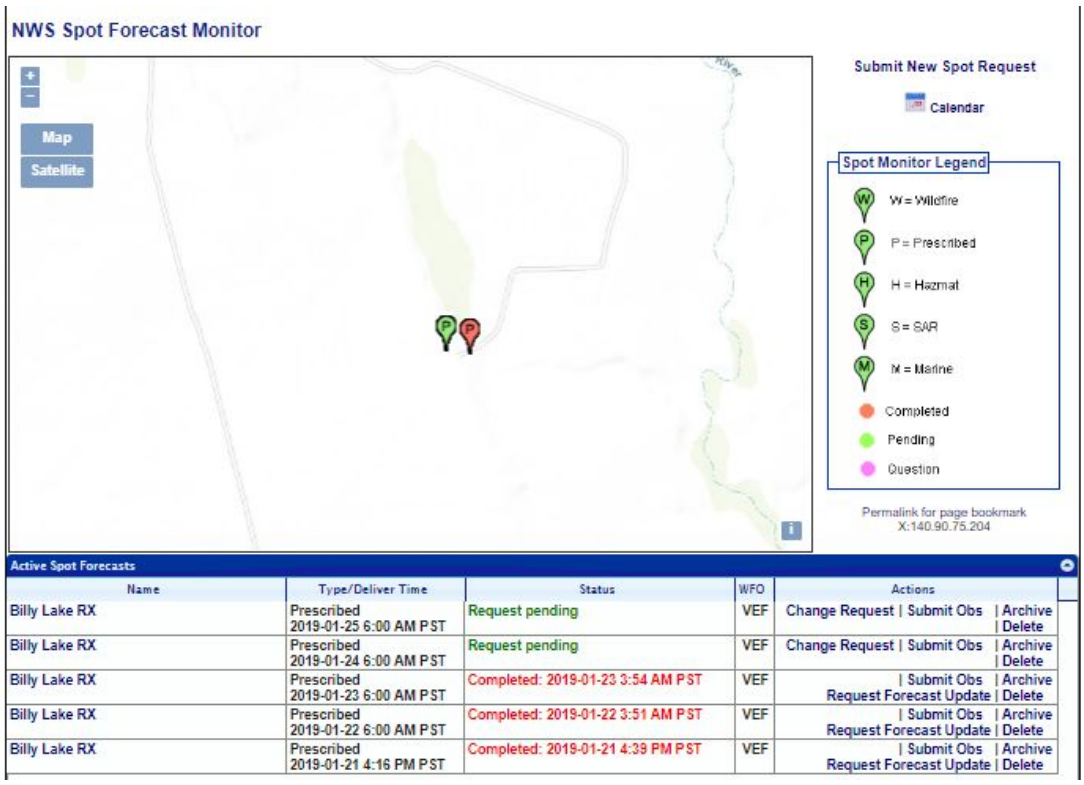
There are 4 ways a follow-up spot request can be generated:

1. Using Copy Info to New Spot Request for this Incident option at the bottom of the spot forecast
2. Using Request Forecast Update from the conversation window that appears when you click a pin on the Spot Monitor map.
3. Using Copy Info to Spot Request for a New Incident option at the bottom of the spot forecast
4. Using the initial NWS Spot Forecast Request Page

Option 1 or 2 are the preferred options. There a number of benefits to using these methods, such as keeping track of observations provided for the request over multiple days and keeping the Spot Monitor Page clean by not having multiple entries for the same spot. However there are times it may not be the most appropriate.

- Using this option does not allow you to change the lat/long of the incident.
- If the area of focus has shifted enough (enough to change elevation or aspects) then it is better to use option 2 which allows you to change the lat/long.

If you cannot use option 1 or 2, then using Option 3 or Option 4 will result in multiple spots with possibly the same name displaying on the monitor page.



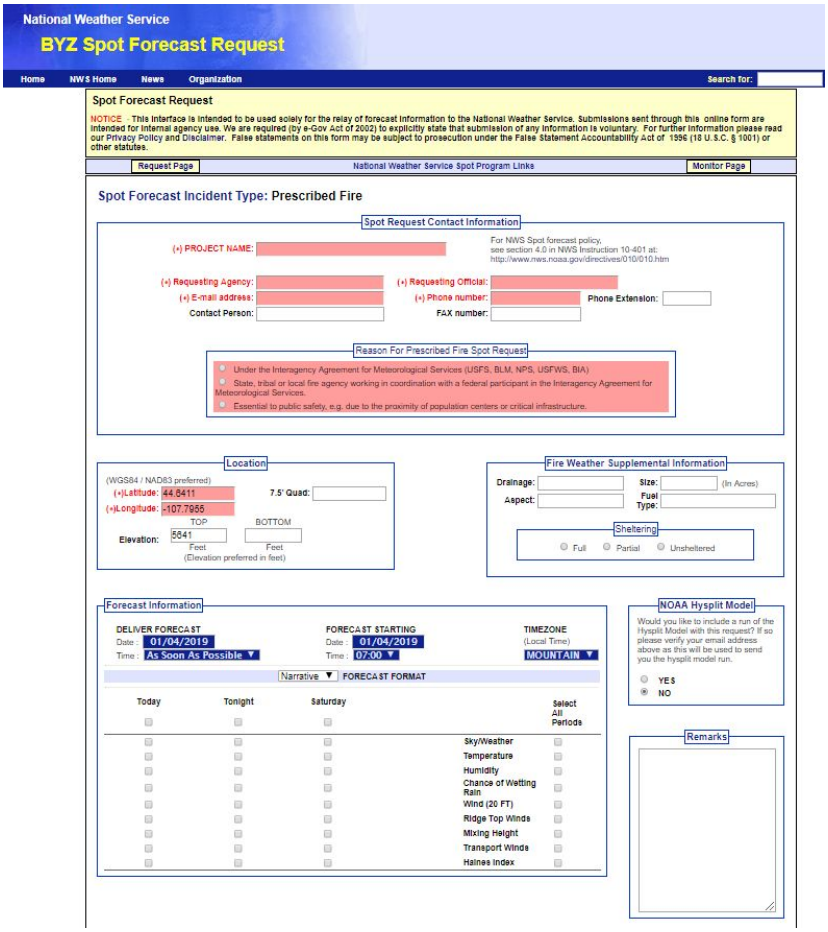
To prevent confusion about which is the latest spot forecast written for the incident, consider having the National Weather Service Forecast Office consider archiving the previous forecast. At this point,

clicking on the pins may not yield the most recent forecast, so selecting the forecast from the table is the only option.

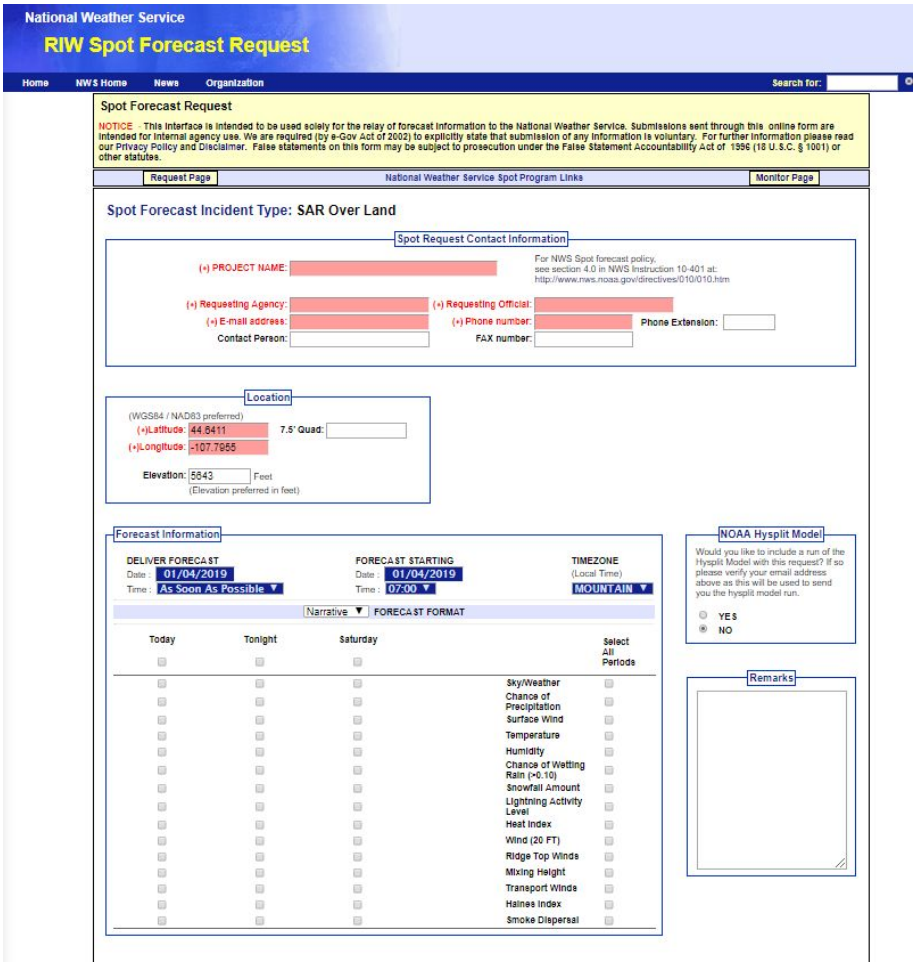
Appendix B: Setting the Incident Type and information about how this sets up the second part of the request page (and the office the request gets sent to)

Different requests may direct the requests to different National Weather Service Forecast Offices

This is the same page from the request made in **Part 1 of Spot Request Form** which was a prescribed fire request at Lat/Long of 44.6411,-107.7955



Notice that at the very top of the request, it says: BYZ Spot Forecast Request meaning it is a request that will be directed to National Weather Service Forecast Office in Billings, Montana. However if the request for 44.6411,-107.7955 is changed to a Search and Rescue Land

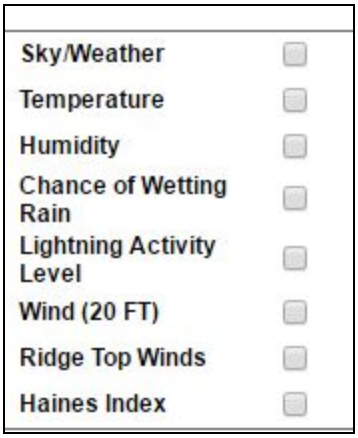


At the top of the page BYZ has been replaced by RIW meaning this request for the same location will go to the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Riverton, Wyoming. The reason this can occur is that the Fire Weather service areas do not always align with the counties served by a National Weather Service office. NWS offices coordinate to make sure both offices are aware of the support being provided in these situations.

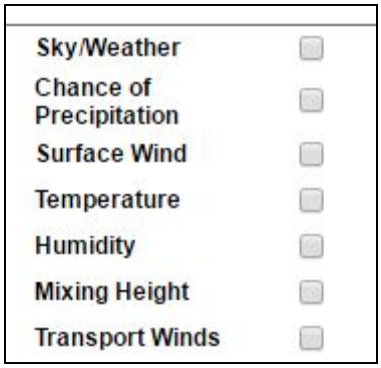
Different configurations of the spot request page based on Incident Type

- Wildfire and Prescribed fire give you the option to include the fire weather supplemental information (drainage, aspect, size and fuel types). These options do not show up in the other types.
- Selecting between the different types will change the Forecast Elements you can choose to have included in the forecast. This may vary by forecast office as they have the option to select which elements could be made available. See a comparison below:

Wildfire Elements



HazMat Land



- The observation page will also change so certain information that is pertinent to the type of incident can be included, such as wave height for water HAZMATs.
- Practice using the different options before you actually need to make spot requests so you can become familiar with the system, especially if you work with multiple forecast offices, because there will be differences.

Appendix C: Overview of Spot Forecast Website Data Management

The weather.gov/spot website gives a unique identifier to each spot forecast to ensure when forecasters issue the forecasts it is "tagged" to the correct request on the webpage. Depending on different links used through the website, it can cause differing results. It should be stressed that none of these results are an error: this information is only provided to explain the different outcomes.

If you examine a URL from a forecast, you will notice the following link (the example is the URL for the Kanarraville Piles):

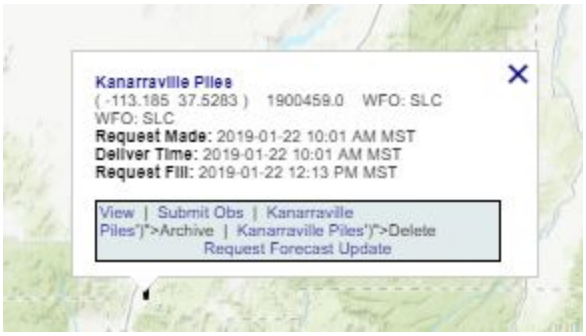
https://www.weather.gov/spot/php/forecast.php?snumunum=**1900459.0**&lat=40.11225659810805&lon=-104.0449381876109&z=5

The portion highlighted in **red** is known as the Tag assigned to the spot forecast.

You can also see this number at the end of a forecast:

```
Forecaster...Traphagan
Requested by...Ryan Riddle
Type of request...PRESCRIBED
.TAG 1900459.0/SLC
```

Or when you go to click on a pin on a spot on the map



Now each time **Copy Info to New Spot Request for this Incident** or **Request Forecast Update** are utilized, the Tag # increases by an increment of 1, starting with 0, so using the above example:

https://www.weather.gov/spot/php/forecast.php?snumunum=**1900459.3**&lat=40.11225659810805&lon=-104.0449381876109&z=5

Would be the 4th forecast written for the Kanarraville Piles, as long as **Copy Info to New Spot Request for this Incident** or **Request Forecast Update** are used.

It is possible to submit multiple spot forecasts using the same name, but they can lead to confusion as to which is the most recent spot forecast written for the incident. (See **Appendix A** for more information) This is mitigated by carefully looking at the dates at times the forecasts were provided.

Appendix D: Different types of forecasts and examples

- You can select either a Narrative forecast or a Combined forecast (other offices may have additional options).
- A Combined forecast includes a table of the weather elements broken down in shorter time durations.
- Be aware that forecast offices can limit forecast types available to customers in their forecast areas. In most areas in the Western United States, forecast offices will only have the narrative forecast as an option. Only a few offices in the Southern United States allow the “Tabular Only” option.

A Narrative forecast would only contain the top section, a Combined forecast contains both

```
.SATURDAY...

SKY/WEATHER.........MOSTLY SUNNY.
CWR.................7 PERCENT.
LAL.................1...NO THUNDERSTORMS.
MAX TEMPERATURE.....68-73.
MIN HUMIDITY........23-28 PERCENT.
WIND (20 FT)........
 SLOPE/VALLEY.......SOUTH WINDS 5 TO 15 MPH.
 RIDGETOP...........WEST 5 TO 15 MPH.
HAINES INDEX........2.

TIME (MDT)      1PM 2PM 3PM 4PM 5PM
SKY (%).........44  44  44  44  44
WEATHER COV.....
WEATHER TYPE....
TSTM COV........
TEMP............65  67  67  65  62
RH..............35  32  33  35  38
20 FT WIND DIR..SW  SW  S   S   S
20 FT WIND SPD..8   8   7   7   7
20 FT WIND GUST.10  10  10  10  10
RIDGE WIND DIR..W   W   W   W   W
RIDGE WIND SPD..10  10  10  10  10
```

Appendix E: Summary of tips provided in this document

Tip: The program does not support Township/Range/Section - use lat/long

Tip: You can enter multiple email addresses, separated by commas in the E-mail address box.

Tip: The lat/long box is not editable, you have to initiate a new request if you need to change the locations.

Tip: Providing feedback is done through a link on each forecast

Tip: For users on large prescribed or wildfires where the location of interest may be shifting around the perimeter, they will be required to use the Copy info into Spot Request for a New Incident to change the lat/long.