Instructions for Web Graphicasts (Weather-at-a-Glance)

You may have noticed a new look to the front page of our website. Rather than showing the local point and click map right at the top, the graphicast is now highlighted. Unlike previous graphicasts, which were a single map graphic that was linked as a Weather Story, primarily for the short term (today and/or tonight), the new graphicast is more flexible. We eventually plan to provide continuous updates, as the weather situation dictates, day and night.

Why Change?

In 2008, the NWS field office serving the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex experimented with a new method to show end users surfing to their web site a quick glance at the weather. The National Weather Service in Norman, Oklahoma had also been experimenting with multiple graphics, as well as banner headlines, for several years. In each case, customer feedback was overwhelmingly positive. While the point and click forecast and hazards map remains a very important aspect for providing detailed, 7 day forecast information, the feedback indicated that a quick glance at the most critical weather for the day, week, weekend, etc., was helpful to provide an overview of the situation without having to initially sift through 7 days of icons and text.

What's New

Figure 1 is a screen capture of the front page, with instructions on how to retrieve more information. For a quick glance at upcoming weather conditions, click on any blue tab. Each graphic will be titled appropriately. We will provide at least two graphics every day. Typically, these will be "Today" and "Tonight" or "Tonight" and "Next Day (named)". Often, we will provide additional graphics, such as weekend outlooks starting around midweek, holiday outlooks, and special situations (such as rainfall, cold, thunderstorm, local tropical cyclones, etc.). There may also be times when we choose to animate several graphics to tell a story for an upcoming weather event.
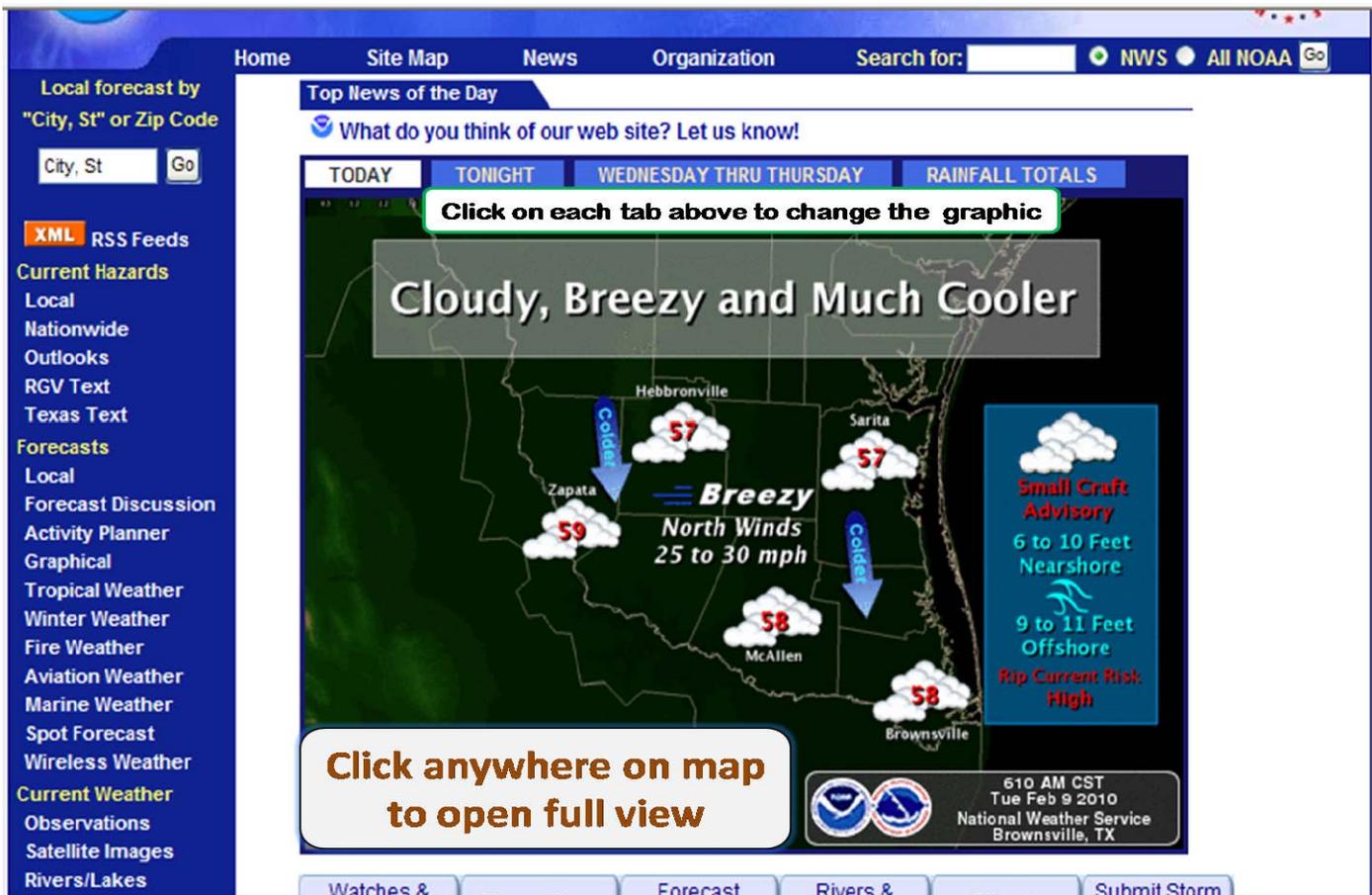
Figure 1. Screen Capture of the New NWS Brownsville home page, with graphicasts highlighted.

How to Use

Once you click on the front page graphic (no matter which tab you choose), a new page will open up (Figure 2). This page will contain all the graphics in the tabs shown on the front page. The main graphic will be that from the tab you clicked on last. Many graphics will show only the most critical text to describe the weather situation at a glance. Additional details, describing the weather story in one or two additional paragraphs, will be provided in the white space below the main graphic. Clicking on the main graphic on this page will provide a full-size image, which can be saved for your own personal use and distribution.

Figure 2. Graphicast ("weather at a glance") web page. This appears when the main graphic is clicked on the front page.

Where Has Point/Click Map Gone?

Not very far. Figure 3 is a screen capture of the front page, including the point/click and hazard map, now moved below the graphicast. What if hazardous weather is expected or underway? Not to worry. We will do our best to highlight the area of concern in the graphic, which can lead you to scroll down to the point/click and hazard map, or continue a quick glance at the weather situation by viewing additional graphics and a brief text summary simply by clicking on the graphic.

Figure 3. NWS Brownsville Front page, showing location of point/click and hazard map now moved down the web page. Scrolling may be needed at lower screen resolution to display the point/click and hazard map.

We hope you like our initial offering of graphical weather at a glance for Deep South Texas. In time, we plan to design a number of maps to best suit user needs, but we are welcome to any ideas! Please send your comments to sr-bro-webmaster@noaa.gov and will do our best to incorporate suggested changes!