

National Weather Service
Annual Operating Plan
for Fire Weather Services for the
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

2014

This operating plan will be a semi-permanent document, specifying Fire Weather services provided by National Weather Service (NWS) offices serving Pennsylvania. The plan incorporates procedures detailed in the Interagency Agreement for Meteorological Services.

Acknowledgements

This statewide Annual Operating Plan for the state of Pennsylvania is based largely on those existing from the NWS offices currently serving the state, including WFO State College. It was augmented with help from several new state plans, namely those from Virginia, Ohio and Wisconsin, with much gratitude to the many hands that went into the formation of those documents.

I. Introduction

Purpose of the Annual Operating Plan (AOP)

This AOP for Fire Weather Services serves as the official document that governs and defines the interaction and relationship between the National Weather Service (NWS) and their partners in wildfire suppression and natural resource and land management agencies at the federal, state and local levels throughout the state of Pennsylvania (PA). These include, but are not limited to the following agencies:

United States Department of Commerce (DOC) /National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) /National Weather Service (NWS)

National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) - Eastern Area Coordination Center (EACC)

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources - Bureau of Forestry (BOF)

United State Department of Agriculture (USDA)/Forest Service - Allegheny National Forest (ANF)

Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC)

Pennsylvania Army National Guard - Fort Indiantown Gap (FIG)

The NWS Fire Weather program aims to provide forecast and warning services to the fire, land management and emergency response community to support the effective prevention and suppression of wildfires and management of forests. The major objective of the fire weather program is to provide a service which will meet the meteorological requirements of government and government associated agencies in the protection of life and property, promotion of firefighter and emergency responder safety, and stewardship of America's public lands.

Explanation of relationship between the AOP and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

The EACC will use this AOP with regards to its MOU for Meteorological Services contained in chapter 40 of its Geographic Area Mobilization Guide for use in Pennsylvania. The Eastern Area Mobilization Guide and the National Mobilization Guide further define the relationship between the natural resource agencies and the NWS Incident Meteorologist (IMET).

This AOP will be reviewed at the beginning of each year by all concerned parties for accuracy and continued relevance. Any changes will be noted, and an updated AOP will be made available to all partner agencies noted within the document before the onset of the Spring fire weather season.

This Operating Plan is issued in lieu of a formal MOU between the NWS, federal, state, and other agencies that rely on fire weather support. The plan will outline forecast operations and services available to users. This includes products and formats, dissemination and coordination, and the responsibilities of the partners.

This Operating Plan for Fire Weather Services conforms to the Interagency Agreement for Meteorological Services.

II. Pennsylvania Fire Weather Seasons

Climatologically, early Spring (March - May) is the most active time of year for wildfires in Pennsylvania, with a secondary maximum of occurrence in the Fall (October - December).

Prior to March 2007, the Pennsylvania fire weather forecast program was routinely activated in the Spring and Fall seasons. The exact dates for the beginning and ending of the issuance of fire weather product were determined by collaboration among the PA Bureau of Forestry, the Allegheny National Forest and NWS State College. NWS State College then notified the other NWS offices providing fire weather services to Pennsylvania of the dates to begin and end the fire seasons.

In March of 2007, fire managers from the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry and Allegheny National Forest requested that the daily Fire Weather Forecast (FWF) be issued year-round, citing less seasonality to wildfire activity and the usefulness of the product in all months of the year. Therefore, the FWF product is now issued at least once daily year-round by all offices serving Pennsylvania.

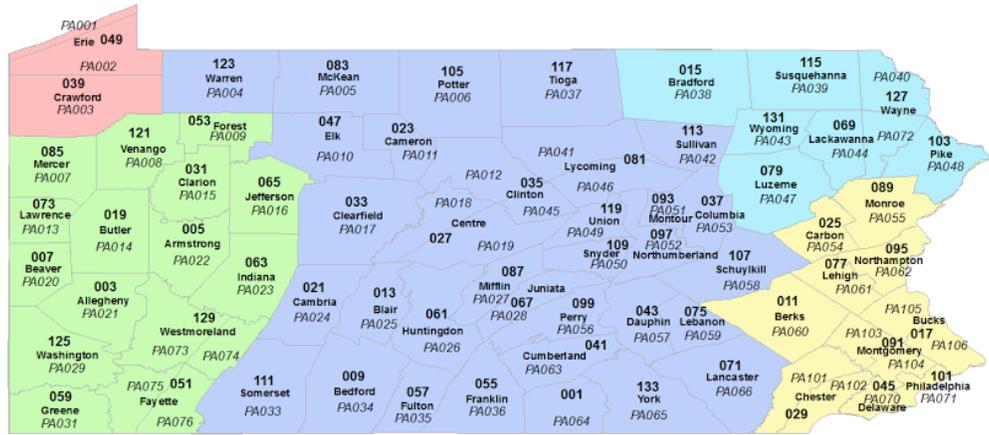
III. Service Area and NWS Organizational Structure

Service Area

Fire weather products and services are issued by the five NWS Weather Forecast Offices (WFOs) serving Pennsylvania. These include WFO Binghamton, NY - BGM, WFO Cleveland, OH - CLE, WFO Mt. Holly, NJ - PHI, WFO Pittsburgh, PA - PBZ, and WFO State College, PA - CTP. For their respective county warning and forecast areas see the map below and Appendix A.

Pennsylvania NWS Zone Numbers and FIPS Codes

State FIPS Code is 042 (Six letter for counties is 042+CCC, where CCC is the county FIPS code)



CWAs	
■ WFO Cleveland	■ WFO Pittsburgh
■ WFO Binghamton	■ WFO State College
■ WFO Philadelphia/Mt. Holly	

Last Updated: 02/07/2014

The forecast area for which each NWS office is responsible is generally tied to the "radar umbrella" of the WSR-88D Doppler Radar associated with each WFO. The "umbrella" is the area which is covered by the radar volume scan. This means that forecasts are not necessarily bound by state political borders, but county borders are observed. As a result of this configuration, the Allegheny National Forest, for example, is covered by more than one NWS Forecast Office.

WFO State College is the NWS designated state liaison office (SLO) for Pennsylvania and serves as the NWS state-level representative with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry, Allegheny National Forest and Pennsylvania Game Commission and other fire weather partners. However, all NWS offices are encouraged to communicate and collaborate as needed with partners and other customers to ensure adequate and appropriate provision of fire weather services.

NWS Organizational Structure

National Weather Service Headquarters

NWS Headquarters, located in Silver Spring, Maryland, establishes policies and coordinates the national Fire Weather program. The national program manager coordinates the program with the regional program managers. The national program manager also works with the national headquarters of the Federal forestry and other natural resource management agencies and the Association of State Foresters in determining overall requirements for meteorological support. The national program manager coordinates national training in forestry and fire weather for NWS forecasters.

National Weather Service Regional Headquarters

Regional Headquarters manage the technical operational aspects of the Fire Weather program within each region. They also provide guidance and assistance to meteorologists-in-charge on program operations and developing issues through Supplements to the National Directives System and conferences. Regional Headquarters advise National Headquarters on matters pertaining to technical planning and operations. The regional program managers coordinate the regions' Fire Weather programs and advise the Regional Directors on the operational and administrative aspects of the regions' programs. Pennsylvania is located within the National Weather Service's Eastern Region. Eastern Region headquarters is located on Long Island, NY.

Weather Forecast Offices (WFO)

Meteorologists at WFOs prepare and disseminate forecast products for all sectors of the population, including those for the Fire Weather program. WFOs are responsible for providing forecasts, watches and warnings for user agencies within their County Warning Area (CWA) 24-hour a day, 365 days a year. Most offices have a designated Fire Weather Program Leader or Focal Point.

Fire Weather Program Leaders (or Focal Points)

The Fire Weather Program Leader (FWPL), or Focal Point, is the "customer service representative" for the Fire Weather program at each WFO. Program leaders, as representatives of the MIC's, should be in regular contact with the partner agencies, helping them assess their meteorological needs, informing them of NWS products and services available to meet these needs, and educating them in the most effective use of the various NWS products and resources, including NOAA Weather Radio (NWR). Program leaders will work with users to utilize existing NWS products and services produced for other programs that could meet the requirements of natural resource management. Program leaders are also tasked with ensuring NWS staff meteorologists are trained and remain proficient in preparing forecast products for support of the fire weather program. Fire Weather program leaders can be reached via e-mail or through contact with their respective office. See APPENDIX B

Meteorologists-in-Charge

The Meteorologist-in-Charge (MIC) of each WFO is responsible for the provision of adequate weather services for the offices' assigned areas of program responsibility. The MIC will ensure that the focal points or program leaders are provided adequate time for user liaison and assistance activities. MICs can be reached via email or through contact with their respective office. See APPENDIX B

Warning Coordination Meteorologists

The Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM) assists the MIC and serves as the "customer service representatives" for all forecast programs of each WFO. They can serve as another Fire Weather customer/partner point-of-contact, especially during weekday hours as FWPLs generally work rotating shifts and are not always in the office during 'regular' business hours. See APPENDIX B

IV. Services Provided by the National Weather Service

NWS Directives

Details of NWS products and programs are specified within chapter 10 of the NWS Policy Directives. The structure of this chapter and associated links are as noted below: NDS 10-4 Fire Weather Services.

- 10-401 Fire Weather Services Product Specification
- 10-402 Fire Weather Services On-Site Support
- 10-403 Fire Weather Services Coordination and Outreach
- 10-404 Fire Weather Services Annual Operating Plan and Report
- 10-405 Fire Weather Services Training and Professional Development
- 10-407 Fire Weather Services Zone Change Process

Basic Services and Forecast Products

Fire Weather Planning Forecast (FWF)

The *Fire Weather Planning Forecast* (FWF) is a zone-type product used by fire control and natural resource management personnel for decision-making related to pre-suppression and other planning or resource management activities, as well as for determining general weather trends that might impact burning conditions and thereby fire behavior of wildfires and prescribed fires. Their decisions impact firefighter safety, public safety, public and private property, natural resources, and resource allocation.

Product Overview, Issuance and Update Criteria

The FWF is issued between 4 and 6 AM ET every day of the year by all five WFOs serving Pennsylvania. This morning FWF issuance provides a 36- hour period of detailed forecast information accompanied by a general extended forecast out to 7 days. An 8 to 14 day outlook of whether general temperature and precipitation trends will be above, at, or below normal is also included. The 36 hour forecast consists of three 12-hour periods (Today, Tonight, and Tomorrow).

Routine updates

A daily afternoon update of the FWF is issued by all five WFOs, generally between 2PM and 4PM ET. WFO CLE only provides this afternoon update during Daylight Savings Time. The afternoon FWF consists of four periods: "Tonight", "Tomorrow", "Tomorrow Night", and "the Next Day". This afternoon update is provided at the request of our partners citing its usefulness to fire managers as they 1) deal with ongoing fire activity at the end of regular daytime shifts and determine the need to keep personnel into the evening hours and 2) plan for personnel and equipment for the following day.

WFO BGM also issues an update in the late morning.

Non-routine updates

*Per NWS Directive 10-401, the FWF will be updated anytime the current forecast is not representative of current conditions, and when Fire Weather Watches or Red Flag Warnings are issued or canceled.

Content and Format of the FWF

See APPENDIX C

Fire Weather Watch and Red Flag Warning Program

Fire Weather Watches and Red Flag Warnings are the official NWS products used to inform firefighters and fire control agencies of the possibility of severe or critical fire weather conditions. The issuance of said watches or warnings normally require the combination of very high to extreme fire danger and critical weather conditions, see below, such as significantly increased winds and wind shifts, thunderstorm activity containing little or no rain, and significantly decreased humidity. More so than other NWS products, these issuances are coordinated with our fire weather partners and, generally, these Red Flag Warning criteria require advance coordination.

Note: Meeting or exceeding the necessary criteria for Red Flag warnings is considered a *rare event* in Pennsylvania.

Fire Weather Watch

A Fire Weather Watch will be issued, after coordination with the appropriate natural resource agencies, to advise of the possible development of a Red Flag event in the near future. It will be issued for all or part of the forecast area. A Fire Weather Watch is issued when the forecaster and appropriate natural resource agencies are reasonably confident that a Red Flag event will occur. A watch should be issued 12 to 48 hours in advance of, but not more than 72 hours in advance of, the expected onset of the critical weather conditions. The watch will remain in effect until either it is determined the Red Flag event will not develop, or that the watch should be upgraded to a warning. If conditions are not expected to occur as forecast, the watch will be canceled. The format of the Fire Weather Watch is specified in National Weather Service Directive 10-401.

Red Flag Warning

A Red Flag Warning will be issued, after coordination with the appropriate natural resource agencies, when a Red Flag event is occurring or is imminent. The warning will be issued for all or a portion of the forecast area. It will be issued immediately once the forecaster and the appropriate natural resource agency have determined that a Red Flag event is ongoing. Otherwise, it shall be issued for impending Red Flag conditions when there is a high degree of confidence that conditions will develop within 24 hours. The warning will continue until the conditions cease to exist or fail to develop as forecast. At such time, the warning will be canceled. The format of the Red Flag Warning is specified in National Weather Service Directive 10-401.

Definition of a Red Flag Event

A Red Flag event occurs when critical weather conditions develop which could lead to extreme wildfire behavior or to extensive wildfire occurrence. Red Flag events represent a threat to life and property, and may adversely impact firefighting personnel and resources. Critical weather conditions include combinations of the following: strong, gusty winds; very low relative humidity; high to extreme fire danger, very low fuel moisture. Historically, the highest risk of significant fire starts and blow-ups occur when fuels are sufficiently dry and dry cold fronts pass over the region. Dry cold fronts typically cause lower humidity levels and produce shifting and increasing wind.

In an effort to simplify the Red Flag Warning process, forecasters at the NWS offices in PA will mainly be concerned with the specific weather conditions and critical weather patterns necessary to produce Red Flag conditions. Tracking fuel moisture will be the responsibility of the PA Bureau of Forestry (BOF).

Generally, a Red Flag Warning will be issued when:

CRITERIA (must meet all 3)

1) 10-Hour fuel moisture is 10% or less...

2) Minimum relative humidity (RH) levels are expected to fall to 30% or lower...

AND

3) Surface winds sustained or frequently gusting at or above 20 mph for 2 or more hours.

Fuel Moisture collaboration procedure

When a NWS forecaster at any office serving Pennsylvania notices that 10 hour fuel moisture values are observed or forecast to equal or fall below 10%, and is concerned about other factors influencing fine fuel capacity to burn (e.g. elevated Fire Danger, lack of recent rainfall, etc.), and is forecasting significant winds and low relative humidity in the next 24 to 48 hours, they should initiate contact with WFO CTP regarding such concerns. WFO CTP as SLO will contact the officials with the BOF and/or ANF to obtain assessment of the fuel moisture status across the state. This fuel moisture assessment will then be communicated to all NWS offices serving PA. A first guess of 10 hour fuel moisture values from the WFAS website is available at this link: http://www.wfas.net/images/firedanger/fm_10.png.

WFO CTP will keep in contact with BOF and ANF as often as needed to adequately assess the fuel moisture situation.

To ensure adequate lead time of Fire Weather Watches and Red Flag Warnings, the preferred collaboration time is during the daytime administrative hours Monday through Friday, the day before a Fire Weather Watch or Red Flag Warning is expected to be needed.

Content and Format of the RFW

See Appendix D

Call-To-Action Statements

NWS warning products typically conclude with a Call-To-Action statement (CTA) to summarize the nature of the warning and provide concise, potentially life-saving action oriented information. CTAs approved for use in Red Flag Warnings by NWS offices in Eastern Region can be found in APPENDIX E.

Site-Specific (Spot) Forecasts

Content and Format of the RFW

See Appendix F

Criteria

Spot forecasts are non-routine, site - specific weather forecasts prepared upon request and issued by the National Weather Service in support of wildfire suppression and natural resource management (eg. prescribed burns). Spot forecasts are also issued for other emergency situations where public safety is involved, such as hazardous materials incidents and search and rescue operations. These forecasts aid the land management and fire control agencies in protecting life and property during wildland fires, hazardous fuels reduction, and rehabilitation and restoration of natural resources. In the event of an emergency which threatens life and/or property, Spot forecasts can also be provided to any federal, state, or local agency.

Spot forecast requests for wildfires and hazardous material emergencies are considered high priority, and can be obtained at any time. Spot forecasts may be obtained for prescribed burns; however, the response may be delayed due to higher priority responsibilities of the forecaster on duty.

Contents

Spot forecasts are highly detailed forecasts for a specific location within a WFOs CWA. The format of the spot forecast is specified in National Weather Service Directive 10-401. The forecasts will be headlined for a Red Flag Warning or Fire Weather Watch. The forecasts will begin with a discussion, and may contain any or all of the following weather elements: sky conditions; maximum and minimum temperatures, minimum and maximum relative humidity values, wind speed and direction; probability of precipitation; precipitation type, duration and amount; mixing heights; transport wind; inversion height; inversion onset and burn-off times or temperatures; ventilation and smoke management levels; wind profiles; stability indices (ie., Haines Index), and lightning activity levels (LAL). Since these are site specific and can be initiated because of critical circumstances, tailored products can be requested (e.g. temperature, relative humidity, and wind speed forecasts on a two hour incremental time period).

Procedures for Requesting a Spot Forecast

Spot forecasts will be prepared when requested by a user agency (see above). Due to the detailed and specific nature of this forecast product, it is imperative that the user provide the forecaster with necessary and sufficient information so that a reliable forecast can be prepared.

Requests for Spot forecasts should be made using the web based spot forecast request form. This form, along with instructions on how to use it, is available on the local NWS fire weather web pages (see links below). The web-based Spot forecast request form should be filled out as completely as possible, (required parameters are listed in red) by the requesting agency prior to submitting the request. Use the Latitude/Longitude for the incident location, and this should be entered in either decimal degrees, or degrees/minutes/seconds. If you are using decimal degrees enter as standard (e.g. 37.52). If degrees/minutes/seconds, use a second decimal (e.g. 37.31.12), or leave a space between each number (e.g. 37 31 12).

Direct links to the spot request/monitor page for each NWS office:

BGM <http://spot.nws.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/spot/spotmon?site=bgm>

CLE <http://spot.nws.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/spot/spotmon?site=cle>

CTP <http://spot.nws.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/spot/spotmon?site=ctp>

PHI <http://spot.nws.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/spot/spotmon?site=phi>

PIT <http://spot.nws.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/spot/spotmon?site=pbz>

At times when internet access is hindered or not possible, Spot forecasts may be requested and disseminated via fax or phone. If faxing a request, users should use the Fire Weather Special Forecast Request Form, WS Form D-1 (APPENDIX G). Section I of WS Form D-1 should be filled out as completely as possible by the user agency prior to submitting the request by the fax to the forecast office. If the request is made by phone, all information in Section I should be provided to the forecast office.

While there is generally no dedicated fire weather forecaster, the forecast office will give a high priority to Spot forecasts in the absence of weather phenomena in the CWA that pose a threat to life and property. To ensure that the request for a Spot forecast is handled properly and appropriately, users should adhere to the following guidelines:

- 1) Allow adequate time for the forecaster to prepare the forecast. This will normally be about 30 minutes. On particularly busy fire weather days, Spot forecasts will be handled on a first-come, first-serve basis, with wildfires or other life threatening events taking the highest priority.

- 2) Requesting agencies are should provide as much on-site or near-site weather information as possible. At a minimum, the user should provide at least one observation within an hour of the request. This observation should contain the following: location of the observation; elevation at the observation site; time of the observation; wind direction, speed, and level (eye or 20 foot); dry and wet bulb temperatures; any remarks about the state of the weather, particularly anything that may affect fire behavior. If possible, include some observations from the previous day that might give the forecaster an indication of daily trends.
- 3) As much as possible, specify the time period for which the forecast is needed.
- 4) As much as possible, specify the weather elements of most importance for which a forecast is needed, and/or critical values of these elements.
- 5) Provide a contact point name and phone number where the forecaster can call back, if necessary. (Also include a fax number for returning completed forecasts if the web-based Spot forecast form is not used).
- 6) In order to receive prompt attention for a fax request, please phone the office to let the forecaster know the request is on the way.
- 7) Natural resource agency personnel should contact the NWS forecast office for a Spot update if the forecast conditions appear unrepresentative of the actual weather conditions. Whenever possible, users should provide feedback, positive or negative, to the NWS forecast office concerning the performance of the Spot forecast during or shortly after an event. This will assist forecasters in subsequent forecasts for the same or similar conditions.

National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) Forecasts

Issuance

NFDRS forecasts will be issued for any predetermined site from which an NFDRS observation is received provided the observation is received on time, is complete, and is deemed accurate. The natural resource agencies will determine which observation sites (normally RAWS sites) will be NFDRS sites. Initiation of NFDRS forecasts for a new site will be coordinated with the NWS, and the agency requesting new NFDRS service will provide the NWS with information about the site location. Forecasts will not be provided for sites with bad data. The NWS will notify the owner agency when bad data is received from a RAWS station.

Contents

The NFDRS forecast will be a forecast of the next day observation at 1300 local time (LT). The format of the NFDRS forecast is specified in National Weather Service Directive 10-401.

Procedures

The land management agencies are responsible for taking, quality controlling, transmitting and archiving the NFDRS observations. Observations must be received at the NWS in a timely manner. Forecasts will only be prepared for predetermined sites, and only from those sites for which an observation has been received. The deadline for the land management agency for transmitting the observation is 1900 GMT (2:00 PM EST or 3:00 PM EDT). The NWS will prepare and transmit the NFDRS forecasts no later than 1945 GMT (2:45 PM EST or 3:45 PM EDT). Although the data cutoff time for ingest into the NFDRS software is 7 PM, preliminary calculations based on the forecast are used by the land managers to make staffing decisions at shift briefing time (4 PM).

Examples of these forecasts can be found in Appendix H.

Other WFO Fire Weather Forecasts Information

A variety of other NWS fire weather forecasts (graphical maps, hourly weather graphs, tabular forecasts, etc.) are available via the internet in several formats, generally graphical or a combination of graphical and worded. They are user-generated depending on time-frame, forecast parameter, and location desired. Forecasts are generated from the same database used to produce the FWF and Spot forecasts. Examples of these forecasts can be found in Appendix I.

Fire Weather Outlooks

The NWS's Storm Prediction Center (SPC) in Norman, OK issues forecasts of areas of significant threats for wildfires in the next eight (8) days. These forecasts can be found here:

http://www.spc.noaa.gov/products/fire_wx/

Other Services

Other fire weather services are those services that are uniquely required by our partners and customers and go beyond the normal weather forecast operations of the NWS. Special services include Incident Meteorologist (IMET) deployment, Decision Support Services, station visits, training, and other pertinent meteorological services that are designated as non-routine.

Typically, special services require NWS personnel to be away from the Forecast Office and, in some instances, be in overtime status. Generally, user agencies are responsible for covering the cost of NWS overtime, travel and per diem expenses. Reimbursement of costs for special services will be as outlined in the Interagency Agreement for Meteorological Services.

NWS meteorologists may also be asked to assist in other non-routine services (e.g. briefings or coordination calls) during periods of high fire danger or fire occurrence. MICs and Fire Weather Program Leaders are to ensure the natural resource agency needs are met with little expense to either agency.

Decision Support Services

Incident Support (e.g. IMETs)

On-site forecast service support is available for wildfires and prescribed burns. This includes the deployment of an Incident Meteorologist (IMET) and related service. The procedure for requesting IMETs will follow the guidelines outlined in the national MOA, the National Mobilization Guide, and the Eastern Area Interagency Mobilization Guide. Typically, the IMET nearest the incident will be deployed. However, during times of limited resources, IMETs from other areas of the country may be called.

Participation in Interagency Groups

At a minimum, one NWS representative (usually the State Liaison WFO Fire Weather Program Leader or MIC) will attend the State Interagency meetings or working groups where fire weather or smoke management policy is discussed as an integral part of the meeting. However, it is strongly recommended that all NWS offices with fire weather responsibility attend the meetings to ensure uniform representation.

Fire Weather Course Training

NWS meteorologists are available to assist in user-oriented training. This includes fire behavior courses, such as S-190, S-290 and S-390, where the meteorologist will serve as part of the cadre for that course. Requests for training assistance should be made through the WFO's FWPL or MIC. Sufficient advance notice should be given to allow for scheduling and proper preparation. Costs incurred by the NWS in providing training assistance will generally be borne by the requesting agency.

V. Partner Agency Responsibilities

Operational Support and Predictive Services

Program Management

The partner agencies will oversee the fire weather observation program, including the siting and maintenance of the observing equipment, fire weather training of their personnel, and the proficiency of their personnel in the use of the NWS Spot software.

Monitoring, Feedback and Improvement

Natural resource agencies will monitor the quality and timeliness of NWS fire weather products, and provide feedback to the NWS in order to improve services to the agencies.

Technology Transfer

The natural resource agencies may, from time to time, advise the NWS of new technologies being implemented to monitor meteorological or fuel parameters, or to improve communication, coordination, training or reference. Natural resource agency personnel may, with prior arrangement, visit an NWS office to acquire knowledge of NWS technologies used in the monitoring of weather, or the preparation of products.

Agency Computer Resources

The Internet appears to be the primary method that customers use to obtain Fire Weather forecast and warning products and for both requesting and receiving Spot forecasts. As a backup method, a request can be made to the NWS for a product to be faxed to the customer agency. NFDRS observations will be entered into WIMS, and forecasts and calculations based on these observations will be received by WIMS, or by internet via a WIMS website.

Fire Weather Observations

Fire weather observation stations provide the specialized weather observations for fire weather forecasts, wildfire control and suppression, and various other land management operations. These stations were selected carefully in each state and federal district. Sites were chosen to represent homogeneous weather conditions across a district. Stations may either be manned sites operated by land management agencies, or un-manned, Remote Automatic Weather Stations (RAWS) maintained by any of the federal or state land management agencies in the area.

As of the effective date of this AOP:

- There are eighteen (18) operational RAWS sites in Pennsylvania. See APPENDIX J for station location and information.

- The PGC operates four (4) mobile weather stations in Pennsylvania. See APPENDIX K for links to the station web sites.

Sensor failure will often result in erroneous or, at best, suspicious values. If the NWS becomes aware of such a situation, it is prudent to contact the station owner. Similarly, if a station owner becomes aware of a sensor failure, they should relay that information to the appropriate NWS office. It is that station owner's responsibility to make sure that their station is and remains in good working order and repairs are made in a timely manner. Owners of NFDRS stations can still (and should) correct any errors in their respective observations.

It is important to note, observations are the most important single effort the control agencies put into the fire weather program. Potential fire danger is derived from these observations. The Fire Danger Rating System is the guidance tool that, together with the weather forecast, is used to make a variety of management decisions. It is important that observers be well trained and informed of the necessity for accurate, timely, and representative observations.

On - Site Support

The user agencies are also responsible for maintaining observation site equipment. NWS personnel may accompany the user on maintenance trips or for annual inspection visits, which could also serve as liaison with the users.

Training

The responsibility of training natural resource agency employees will be that of the agencies themselves. However, the NWS will be available to assist when requested to do so. Any expenses incurred by the NWS will normally be charged to the user agency, unless other arrangements have been made.

VI. Miscellaneous

Joint Responsibilities

Joint responsibilities include the following:

Meetings between the NWS and our partner agencies

Fire weather program leaders from WFO State College, WFO Pittsburgh or both have attended the annual BOF-ANF COOP meeting held in northwest Pennsylvania for each of at least the last ten years.

They have provided a review of changes to the NWS Fire Weather program, Spring weather outlooks and participated in the training program.

WFO State College, with the support of all other PA WFOS has hosted several Pennsylvania Fire Weather workshops at WFO State College, most recently in October of 2012. Fire management officials from all primary partners were in attendance and have played a key role in determining changes in NWS Red Flag Warning criteria, and NWS forecast products through discussion and direct customer feedback.

It is the desire of the NWS to continue to participate in these workshops.

Maintenance and Revision of the Annual Operating Plan

The AOP should be revised each year by the end of February, with cooperation and participation from each NWS office and each partner agency. The NWS Office in State College, as the SLO, will be the custodian of the plan.

Notification of NWS Changes in Operating Procedures

From time to time, NWS headquarters, or NWS Eastern Region Headquarters, will send draft versions of future directives to their forecast offices for review and comment. To ensure that the partner agencies have an opportunity to review and comment on proposed changes, the NWS State Liaison Office in State College will forward a copy of draft directives to partner agencies when they are received. Comments and suggestions can be forwarded to the NWS State Liaison Office in State College, which will forward them to NWS Eastern Region Headquarters.

Agreements on Services Provided

Agreements on services and standards are normally reached at statewide meetings, but may be achieved at by a series of local meetings or by other means such as telephone or e-mail. NWS offices and land managers should be aware of the ripple effect an agreement might have on other NWS offices and their customers, particularly when service areas cross state lines.

Workplace Visits

Partner agencies and the NWS collaborate on familiarization of personnel in each other's fields of expertise, operations and equipment. Visits to offices and work centers, as well as field job sites can meet part of these requirements.

Service Evaluation

Services provided by the NWS and delivery of observations and information from the partner agencies to the NWS in support of these services shall be under constant evaluation by both parties.

Effective Dates on the AOP

The effective dates of this Annual Operating Plan will be from January 1 through December 31 of the current calendar year. This plan will be subject to review and revision by all signatory parties each year, or more frequently as operations warrant.

This plan will be available on the fire weather web page of each WFO. A copy of this plan will be sent to NWS Eastern Region Headquarters by January 31 of the current year. Eastern Region Headquarters will forward a copy of the plan to NIFC and NWS Headquarters.

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Signatory Page

The following signatories have agreed to the terms and conditions of this Annual Operating Plan, which is subject to revision on a least an annual basis, or more frequently as operations necessitate. Actual signatures are maintained on file.

Bruce Budd

Meteorologist-In-Charge

NWS State College, PA

_____/signed/_____ 2/1/2014

Randy White

Chief of Forest Fire Protection

Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry

_____ 2/1/2014

Peter To, Fire Program Manager

Allegheny National Forest

_____ 2/1/2014