NOAA's Weather Prediction Center: Part 1: "Quick" Overview with a Deeper Dive into Heavy Rainfall (QPF) Products



Gregg Gallina – "Metwatch" Forecaster (WPC) CoCoRaHS WxTalk Webinar #69 April 30, 2020

Please sign up for Part 2: WPC Winter Weather Wonderland*

Joshua Weiss - Winter Weather Forecaster WxTalk Webniar #74 December 10, 2020 1pm EDT

* Not actual title. May cause increased heart rate, excitement, and winter weather superiority complex and weather weenie-itus. Your experience may vary. Contact your local or national CoCoRaHS coordinator if you wish this experience to continue. or signup via the website (<u>https://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=wxtalk</u>)



The Overview:

Historical Roots:

- March 16, 1942 Rooted in Analysis Center as the Forecast Operations Branch (FOB) of National Weather Bureau located downtown Washington, DC
 - Produced CONUS Analysis and Forecast Products (1 to 3 days)
 - Though surface analysis maps are archived as far back as 1871!
- January 1958 Merged with Joint Numerical Weather Prediction Unit (Suitland, MD)
 - Named National Meteorological Center (NMC)
 - First Global Weather Model output June 1966
- October 3, 1970 Weather Bureau becomes National Weather Service (NOAA created)
- January 1975 Moved to World Weather Building in Camp Springs MD
- October 1, 1995 NMC was reorganized into National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP)
 - HPC (Hydrometeorological Prediction Center) is a subunit
 - Includes: AWC, CPC, EMC, NHC/TAFB, OPC, SPC, SWPC, and Central Operations



NOAA Center for Weather and Climate Prediction - NCWCP College Park, Maryland (M Square @ Univ. of Maryland) August 2012

 March 5, 2013 - Renamed Weather Prediction Center

World Weather Building 1975-2012

> March 2020





Aviation Wx Center Kansas City MO

SWPC

Space Wx Pred. Center

Boulder CO



SPC Storm Prediction Center Norman OK



EMC Environmental Modeling Center <u>National</u> <u>Centers</u> for <u>Environmental</u> <u>Prediction</u>

NCEP C

Central Operations



NHC Climate Prediction Center Miami, FL



Weather Prediction Center



Located @ NCWCP

National Centers:

Provide specialized overview with daily national-level expertise

WPC's expertise being broader: Model Preference, Heavy Rain, Winter Weather, Pressures/Fronts Hence : <u>WEATHER</u> Prediction Center (even though every other Center is Predicting Weather)



WPC has a total of 9 specialized desks staffed at any given time, plus the International Desks, Developers, as well as, backup responsibilities to the National Hurricane Center. 32 Forecasters, 2 International Experts, 6 Managers, 3 Admin, 15 Developers (incl. contracts), 1 MetTech





Large Domain

- CONUS: multitude of forecasts
- OCONUS: Alaska medium range grids and Hawaii forecast discussion
- Tropical cyclone rainfall statements with NHC and CPHC
- International Desk trains forecasters from Central and South America and the Caribbean





WPC's International Desks



- Train visiting scientists from Caribbean and Latin America on numerical weather products and forecasting techniques
- Visitors come for 4 month visits
- Started in 1988, hosted over 350 total visitors
- 2 desks (non-operational):
 - <u>Tropical</u>
 - Forecast Bulletin (English)
 - QPF Charts for days 1-3
 - QPF for Puerto Rico
 - South America
 - Forecast Bulletin (in English, Español, and Português)
 - Surface Analysis Chart
 - Upper Jet Analysis Chart
 - QPF Charts for days 1-6





WPC Missions

National situational awareness and readiness for hazardous weather. Providing actionable information that is scientific, probabilistic, & impact-based.



(CONUS)

Surface Analysis: Fronts and Pressures









- WPC is responsible for surface analysis over most of North America north of 30N.
- Ocean Prediction Center (OPC), Tropical Analysis and Forecast Branch (TAFB), and NWS Honolulu (HFO) also have surface analysis responsibility.
- These are collaborated and combined into the Unified Surface Analysis, which covers most of the Northern Hemisphere from East Asia to Europe and Africa.





Records Monitoring, Analysis and Tracking

WPC is frequently asked about records and context for precipitation, temperature and pressure extremes. We maintain some records and have other tools and products to add context and monitor records in real time.

Facebook: /NWSWPC

Many of these graphics show up in social media:







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Twitter: <u>@NWSWPC</u>

Short Range Forecasting 1 to 3 Days or 6 to 84 Hours

Decisions on large-scale patterns...

...influence numerous products



PMDHMD **Model Diagnostics Determination and Discussion**

The short range is highly collaborated! Both internally between forecasters and Local Forecast Offices and Nat'l Centers

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≥ 24" Map Overlays State Boundari

Quantitative **Precipitation**

Forecast

Medium Range Forecasting 3.5 to 8 Days or 72 to 204 Hours

Less forecast certainty... ...even more fcst products!!!



Model Diagnostics **PMDEMD** Determination and Discussion



- The medium range forecasts are sent to local forecast offices (including AK) and are highly influential
- Are collaborated but less frequently/specific as shorter range → Focus on nearest term hazard
- Daily video collaboration call with NHC for potential tropical cyclones (maps/charts)



Graphical Hazards Depictions -- Our most viewed products



- Hatched areas are increased threats (Snow, Freezing Rain, Heavy Rain (ERO) and Severe
- Slight Risk or above
- SPC Fire Outlook added April 7, 2020
- Started Jan 2001 & only CONUS



- Transferred from Climate Prediction Center 25 Feb 2019
- Includes Alaska but not Hawaii
- Includes a Discussion
- <u>https://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/threats/threats.php</u>

www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov





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Rainfall Extremes are a Big Issue



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Numbers of people affected by weather-related disasters (1995-2015) (NB: deaths are excluded from the total affected.)







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Six Separate Billion Dollar Flooding Disasters in FY16 \$17.5 Billion in losses 124 Fatalities





WPC has a 60 year legacy of Quantitative Precipitation Forecasting and over 30 years of Excessive Rainfall Outlooks







Quantitative Precipitation Forecasts (QPF)

- Two desks for both QPF and ERO: Day 1 and Day 2 & 3
 - (Days 4 -7 QPF are done in Medium Range)
- Generate areal-averaged 5km grids, downscaled to 2km QPF
 - Analyze environmental parameters such a temp, moisture, winds, instability, etc
 - Assess trends, skill, uncertainty and biases of all available numerical computer models (GFS, ECMWF, scores more)
 - Blend best models and enhance/remove precip totals
 - Liquid-equivalent precipitation amount including: rain, snow, sleet, freezing rain, hail
- 6-hour increments, 2x per day
 - Combined to produce 24, 48...7 day total graphics, etc
 - Deterministic (Specific/exact value)
 - Probabilistic (Range of possibilities)
- Drives the generation of the ERO Day 1, 2, & 3 (12z to 12z)
- Sent to winter weather forecaster to generate: (see Dec talk) Snow, Freezing Rain Products incl. Probabilities







Gridded Forecast Editor (GFE) in AWIPS



Precipitation Forecasting Expertise at WPC

WPC QPF Continues to Get Better





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...and Improves Upon Models



Florence 1-day rainfall forecasts at days 3, 2, 1, and obs



Evolution of a rare 10-inch forecast from 72h to 24h lead.



WPC Mission Shifting Toward Decision Support Services: Example: Flow of Flash Flood Forecast Information



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Excessive Rainfall Outlooks





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| Understanding WPC Excessive Rainfall Risk Categories | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| No Area/Label | MARGINAL (MRGL) | SLIGHT (SLGT) | MODERATE (MDT) | HIGH (HIGH) |
| Flash floods are generally not expected. Probability <5 % | Isolated flash floods possible 5 -10% Localized and primarily affecting places that can experience rapid runoff with heavy | Scattered flash floods possible 10 -20% Mainly localized. Most vulnerable are urban areas, roads, small streams and washes. Isolated significant | Numerous flash floods likely 20 -50% Numerous flash flooding events with significant events possible. Many streams may flood, | Widespread flash floods expected >50% Severe, widespread flash flooding. Areas that don't normally experience flash flooding, could. Lives |
| @NWSWPC | rainfall. | flash floods possible. | potentially affecting larger rivers. | and property in greater danger. |
| flooding near me? NO Flash Flooding | | $(1, 1) \in \mathbb{R}^{n}$ | C-574353 | |
| WEATHER PREDICTION CENTER | | | | |

Characterizing High Risk Days



Based on records over the past 9 years, we can say:

WPC High Risks are a strong indicator of a potentially deadly and damaging flash flood day

51% have at least 1 fatality or injury

Compared to 23% for Moderate Risk Days

68% have at least \$1 million in damages

Compared to 34% for Moderate Risk Days



ERO Calibrated to Impacts on High End

High Risks are only issued by WPC on ~4% of days, but "High Risk Days" have accounted ¹ for:





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ERO Relevance to your Area

*(From 2015 thru all of 2019)



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ERO by Season

*(From 2015 thru all of 2019)





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Mesoscale Precipitation Discussions (MPD)



- Technical description of <u>near-term</u> environment and forecast regarding Flooding, emphasis on rapid-rise or "Flash" Flooding to aid local forecast office warning decisions
- Accompanying MPD graphic via WPC website or Twitter
- Fills the information "Gap" between ERO and Warnings



MESOSCALE PRECIPITATION DISCUSSION 0253 NNS WEATHER PREDICTION CENTER COLLEGE PARK MD 1233 AM EDT SUN SEP 15 2013

AREAS AFFECTED...FAR SE AZ...FAR SW CO...SW AND CNTRL NM

CONCERNING...HEAVY RAINFALL...FLASH FLOODING POSSIBLE

VALID 150432Z - 150832Z

SUMMARY...UPPER SUPPORT REMAINS EFFICIENT ENOUGH TO SUSTAIN CLUSTERS OF THUNDERSTORMS OVERHIGHT. SLOW MOVEMENT MAY RESULT IN 1-2 INCH RAINFALL IN SPOTS AND LOCAL FLASH FLOODING.

DISCUSSION...THMURERSTORMS HAD SURVIVED ALEADY A FEW HOURS INTO THE MILTH. RADES INDECATED HE SUBFACE MOULD EDCOUPLE RATHER BASILY...SUP GIVEN THE PERSISTENCE OF CONVECTION IN SUM HAD SU ELEVATORIS OF SEA AT 402...TA PREAST THAT YOU LIVEL MOISTURE...MORGARELY STEPL LAPSE RATES...AMD SUBTLE UPPER FORCING COLUD SUISTAIN THANDERSTORMS AND/THE FEM MOUST.

LEAN MARY ADVECTION MASS OSSERVED IN THE 700-600 HB LAYER...CONTLOOPEN WITH SOME OF THE MODE UNSTALLE PARCELS IN THE OSSERVED AND FORECAST SOMDINGS...RAP AND MAY. THE SHEP MEAN OSSERVED AND FORECAST SOMDINGS...RAP AND MAY. THE SHEP MEAN EXCOSS THIS SECTION...AS THE LONGWIDD LEVE MAN ADVECTION AND WEAKLY DIFFLUENT UPPER LIVEL FLOW IS SUSTAINED AMEAD OF A 45-50 KT 15T STREAK AT 200 HB.

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ATTN...WFO...PUB...ABQ...EPZ...GJT...TWC...FGZ...

Duration: 2-6 hours Goal: 1-3 hours prior to flooding onset

Categories: Possible, Likely, Heavy Rainfall

Familiarity: Use similar format/style as SPC MCD - WPC started issuing April 10, 2013

Size: Generally half of KS , Multiple NWSFOs

Event Driven: This is a unique style of product within WPC's schedule based routine

MPD Trend - When Should I expect them?



MPD Trend - When should I expect them?



This atmospheric river MPD was issued as "Flash flooding possible" Rates over .75-1"/hr are good sign

This atmospheric river MPD was issued as "Heavy Rainfall" Longer duration of .1-.25"/hr total 10 hrs to get same 1-3"

Special MPDs -- Atmospheric River

- Stream of Tropical or Sub-Tropical Moisture
 - Pineapple express
- Prolonged Light to Moderate Rains (days)
- Enhanced by Coastal Topography
- No FFG values "It doesn't Flash Flood here"
- Atmospheric River MPDs ~ 223 total or about 50-60/yr since starting in Sept 2016

Challenges for the Future

2019 Annual Total Precipitation

2019 Precipitation - Departure from Normal

Annual Total Precipitation and Rank*

* Based on 10-inch isohyet coverage

How Much Above Observed 50y Max?

* Ranks based on 10-inch isohyet coverage

Challenges of Scale (ex: Tropical Cyclone)

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The **Expanding Bullseye** Effect

We are changing the land surface and this has implications in relation to extreme rainfall events

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Questions?

NCEP

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Webpage: https://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.govFacebook: /www.wpc.ncep.noaa.govFacebook: /www.wpc.ncep.noaa.govFacebook: /www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov

Extra Slides

Annual CONUS Mean Precipitation, 1895-2019

@GCarbin based on concept from Prof. Ed Hawkins (https://www.climate-lab-book.ac.uk/) using PRISM data, Oregon State Univ.

Collaboration: Major Precipitation Events

WPC engages entire NWS field structure including Forecast Offices, River Forecast Centers, National Water Center

Higher outlook probabilities drive conference calls — Excessive Rainfall Outlook and Winter Storm Outlook

Near-term Flash Flooding Risk drive -Mesoscale Precipitation Discussions (MPDs) w/ Graphic

Annual Precipitation NCEI State Rankings

2017 (3)*

* Ranks based on 10-inch isohyet coverage

Mean Annual Total Precipitation

* Based on mean inches over entire domain

Tropical Cyclones: Prolific Rainfall Machines

Operation Sierra Storm January 28, 2020 | South Lake Tahoe, CA

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Evolution of NWS Forecasts for April 19-20, 2020 Hvy Rain/Flooding

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72h Lead QPF

24h Lead QPF

Observed, April 20

Weather-Ready Nation

ERO Verification (reports) and Practically Perfect w/Forecast ERO

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WPC MPDs for Flash Flooding, April 19-20, 2020

NOAA Turns 50 and NWS Turns 150! Where does the Weather Prediction Center fit?

Operation Sierra Storm January 28, 2020 | South Lake Tahoe, CA

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Rainfall Forecasts Continue to Improve

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1-inch Threat

Excessive Rainfall Outlook Verification

- Outlook areas must account for uncertainty. Flash flooding is often difficult to pinpoint.
- WPC tends to be fairly well calibrated. Example: flash flooding tends to occur over about 45% of the Moderate Risk areas.
- Some users with a low risk tolerance may find Marginal or Slight Risks more meaningful in preparation.

WPC Excessive Rainfall Outlooks, Days 1,2,3

Increasing Impacts and Hazards Focus

- Increasing focus on forecast methods that can add important impact information, scaled across the country
- Leveraging WPC forecaster expertise and the full suite of ensemble models
- WPC Development and Training Branch (DTB) working closely with forecasters
- Potential for future collaborations across the NWS and with key partners on impact-based forecasts and the best ways to deliver that information

Mesoscale Precipitation Discussion - the "Gap" filler between ERO and Warning

- Mesoanalysis...
- Full suite of hi-res guidance...
- Dual Pol QPE Discussion...
- Satellite perspective...
- Event totals...
- Timing & evolution...
- Worst case scenarios expressed

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AREAS AFFECTED...FAR SE AZ...FAR SW CO...SW AND CNTRL NM

CONCERNING...HEAVY RAINFALL...FLASH FLOODING POSSIBLE

VALID 1504322 - 1508322

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DISCUSSION...THHORESTORIES HAD SURVIYED ALREADY A FEH HOURS INTO THE NIGHT, ARGOS INDICATED THE SURFACE NOULD DECUPIE HARHER EASILY...BUT GIVEN THE PERSISTENCE OF CONVECTION IN SN NN AND SN CO...AND NEN DEVELOPHENT HEAN ARG AND ALSO OFF THE HIGHER ELEVATIONS OF SA ZA TAG'...TI APPEARS THAT NOL LEVEL NOISTURE...NODEARTELY STEEP LAPSE RATES...AND SUBTLE UPPER FORCING COLLD SUSTAILT HUNDERSTORMS ANOTHER FEN HOURS.

HEAK WAMP ADVECTION HAS OBSERVED IN THE 700-600 HB LAVER., COLTUCENT WITH SOME OF THE MORE WISTABLE PARCELS IN THE OBSERVED AND FORECAST SOUNDINGS., RAP AND NAM. THE SREF HEAN PREDICTS MAINTENANCE OF MUCAPE AT LEAST 500-750 J/KG THADUGH 09Z ACROSS THIS SECOND., AS THE LOWER/IDL LEVEL MARY ADVECTION AND WEAKLY DIFFLUENT UPER LEVEL FLOW IS SUSTAINED AHEAD OF A 45-50 KT JET STREAK AT 120 HB.

SUSPECT DUAL DOL ESTIMATES ARE UNDERSTIMATING IN THE CONVECTIVE LINE APPROACHING SOCCORAG NUM..GYEVI THE DISTANCE FROM RABAR..AND PLACEMENT OF ALL THE BASE ELEVATION ECHOES AT RANGE BEVOND THE NELTING LAYER. LEGAXY ESTIMATES SUGGEST RATES CLOSER TO 1.5.2. INICH PER HOUR IN ISOLATED SPOTS. NOULD NOT EXPECT ANYTHING MUCH HEAVIES HANN THIS UNITH FLASH FLOOD GUIDANCE VALUES VERY LON...ESPECIALUIT IN M...FLASH FLOOD GUIDANCE VALUES VERY DOM...ESPECIALUIT IN M...FLASH FLOOD GUIDANCE SCHRIMILY A POSSIBILITY. ACTIVITY MAY PERSIST EVEN BEVOND 092...ESPECIALLY TOGARD SOMTHEST CO WHERE UPPER LIFT BECOND 095 CONCENTRATED. INTENSIST IS LIKELY TO DECREASE DIUMNALLY..BUT SOME AREAS COLD SET MULTIPE LANDS OF MODERALE RAIL ADDING UP OVER THE.

BURKE

ATTN...WFO...PUB...ABQ...EPZ...GJT...TWC...FGZ...PSR...

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