

Climate Service Activities in the National Weather Service Central Region

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In an effort to raise the level of climate services provided by its offices, the NOAA National Weather Service is developing climate services programs through each of its regional offices. Climate Services Program Manager (CSPM, Doug Kluck) manages the climate-related activities of the NWS Central Region Headquarters, which provides leadership, management and support to 38 weather forecast offices (WFOs), two river forecast offices, and five center weather service units (NWS aviation support offices for the FAA) within the 14-state region. The Regional headquarters is in Kansas City, Missouri, and manages NWS activities in Wyoming, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Kentucky (Figure 15a).

The CSPM in each region helps disseminate information from the national headquarters of the National Weather Services to the field units and vice versa related to climate services and facilitate partnerships with the Regional Climate Centers, State Climatologists, RISAs (of which WWA is one) and stakeholders. He also manages quality assurance of the climate data record from observations across the region, and he is responsible for feedback and dissemination of climate outlooks from the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) and providing material on climate change.

The NWS Central Region climate services program has developed a web page to provide its customers with useful resources to access climate information pertaining to the central part of the U.S. (<http://www.crh.noaa.gov/climate/>). This climate resource page is a gateway to access the many activities of and information from NOAA and other climate information providers. It provides up-to-date, reliable, and usable information through links, graphics, maps, and tables from local and national NWS offices, as well as their partners.

The web page is divided into four units: climate information, climate outlooks, science and education, and climate resources. The climate information unit provides data sources for observations, average conditions, and extreme weather events. It also has maps of climatological averages for temperature, precipitation, and snowfall for the region. The climate outlook unit has two-week outlooks for hazardous and severe weather (published every week) and drought for the next three-month period (published every month). Other outlooks available include the the Spring Water Resources Outlook (March and April) and the Winter Outlook (October-January). The science and education unit

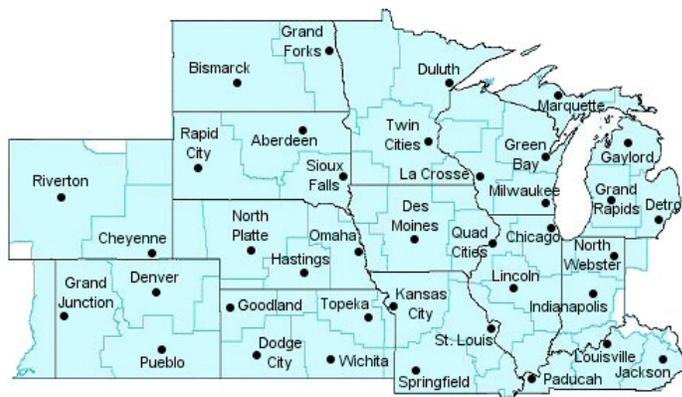


Figure 15a. Map of NWS Central Region showing locations of weather forecast offices (WFOs).

includes educational resources for teachers, and a “kid’s corner,” as well as links to a publication archive. Finally, the climate resources unit provides contacts to local WFOs, state climatologists, regional climate centers, and other climate information providers.

Another new on-line service provided by the NWS Central Region WFOs is the Weather Story. Links to Weather Stories are at: <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/crh/graphiccasts.php>, or you can access them from a link in the top-right corner of the WFO homepages. The Weather Story provides a graphical presentation of the most significant weather feature expected to impact the local area for the following seven days. It also highlights natural hazards such as severe thunderstorms, heavy rainfall, strong winds, fire danger and excessive heat (Figure 15b).

In striving to provide timely and relevant climate services to its users, the NWS Central Region continues to improve the accessibility of drought information. The WFOs issue drought statements once a month when any part of a forecast area is in the severe drought category (D2), according to the U.S. Drought Monitor (see page 7). These statements describe the drought status, potential impacts climate outlooks and river forecasts. These statements are written by the Drought Focal Point at each WFO, who often collaborates with state climate offices and other federal agencies (USDA, USGS) for information. At the bottom of the statement are links for further drought information. To access current drought statements, visit <http://www.weather.gov/hic/current/drought/index.shtml>.

Finally, the NWS Central Region is committed to maintaining the accessibility, quality control, and quality assurance of weather



information collected at thousands of sites. In 2007, NWS Central Region conducted three Data Stewardship Meetings across the region focusing on issues that relate directly to data collection and storage. These meetings provided information on various aspects of the data program within NOAA, and key stakeholders both internal and external to NWS were invited to all meetings to expand awareness and answer questions. Key findings include the need for quality assurance standards and a policy statement

on best practices for quality control so NWS Central Region can continue to deliver the most accurate and timely information to the public. Two more are scheduled for 2008: Madison, WI (May 21-22) and Kansas City, MO (July 29-30).

NWS is always looking for feedback from users. A customer survey link is provided on each forecast office site to collect user thoughts and comments.

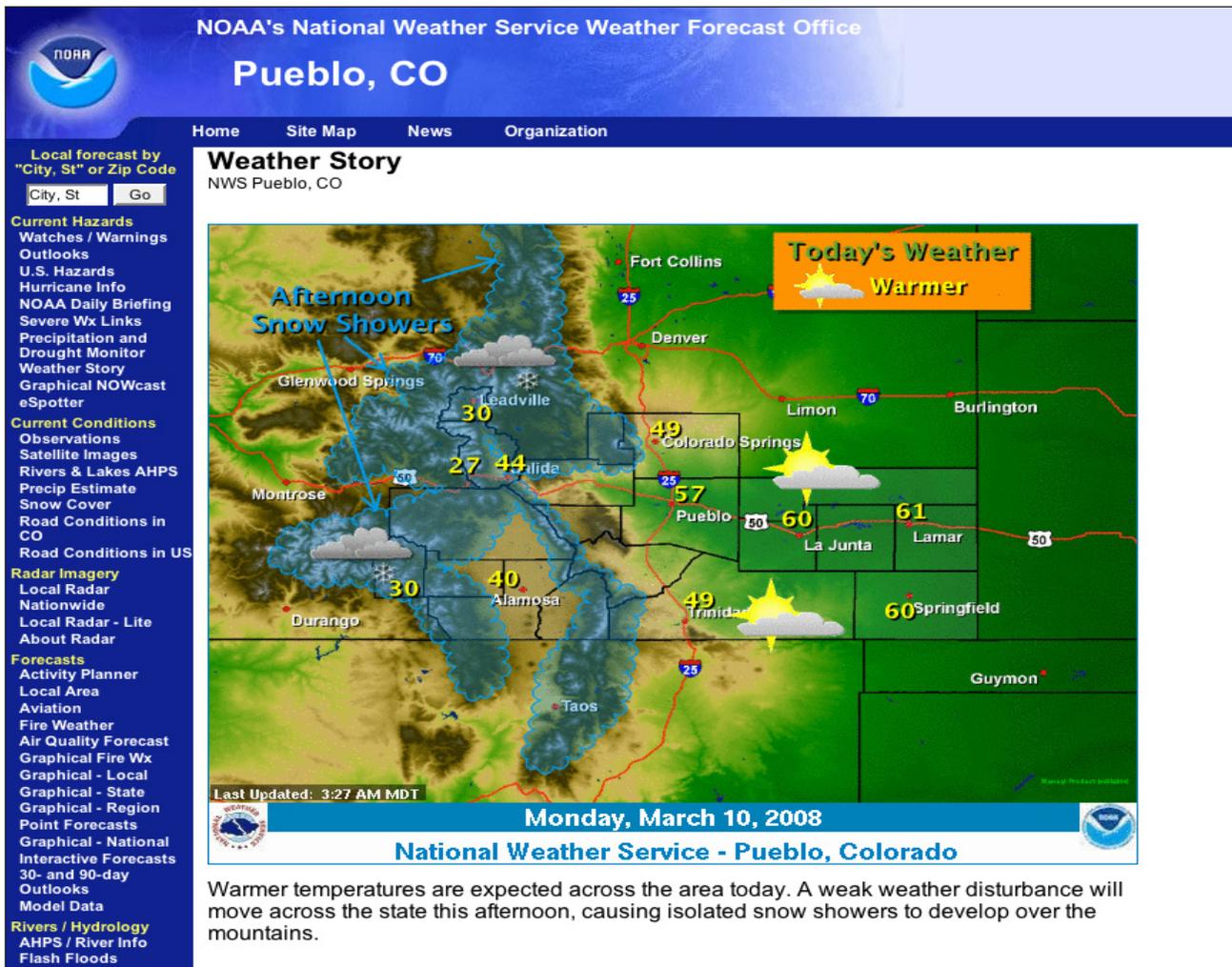


Figure 15b. Example of a Weather Story web page from the WFO in Pueblo, Colorado.

On the Web

- NWS Central Region climate resource page: <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/climate/>.
- Current drought statements for the whole U.S.: <http://www.weather.gov/hic/current/drought/index.shtml>.
- Weather stories for the NWS Central Region: <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/crh/graphiccasts.php>.
- Local weather forecast office web sites accessed either from the NWS Central Region: <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/> or from the National Weather Service homepage: <http://www.weather.gov> (click on desired location).

