Peak to Valley Weather

Volume 1, Issue 5

Fall/ Winter 2011-2012

The Official Newsletter of the

National Weather Service Grand Junction

2844 Aviators Way

Jefferson and Holm Award Winners!

By John Kyle, Data Acquisition Program Manager

Mr. Lund receives the 2006 Holm award with the late Mrs. Lund

Congratulations go out to our 2011 cooperative observer award winners! Mr. Robert Lund of Paonia, Colorado, was the Thomas Jefferson award recipient, while Mr. Lewis Black of Blanding, Utah, was awarded the John Campanius Holm award.

Mr. Lund receives the most prestigious award given to cooperative observers, of which only five were awarded this year out of over 11,000 volunteer observers nationwide. He has been observing temperatures, precipitation and snow from his farm near Paonia since 1973. In support of U.S. Department of Agriculture activities, Mr. Lund's weather data has provided valuable information to federal land management agencies for use in evaluating and improving western Colorado grazing strategies. His observations have continued unfettered during extended periods of perilous weather, such as during a three day winter storm in March of 1985, when nearly 26" of snow fell.

Mr. Black, accompanied by his wife Claudia (center) receives the Holm award from Doug Crowley, MIC *(right)* and John Kyle, DAPM (*left*), from Grand Junction

Mr. Black receives the Holm award, the second highest award an observer can obtain. He has been observing weather from his home near Blanding since 1989. Along with his regular observations, Mr. Black takes and records aviation observations *every three hours*, and calls in these reports to the NWS, day or night. After more than 20 years of weather observing, Mr. Black has a very good idea of the effect that the surrounding terrain has on the local weather. This knowledge base actually predates his time with the NWS, in that he has been an avid hunter in the mountains of southeast Utah. His knowledge has been imparted to his children and others in the hunting community, some of which use it for better planning of guided hunting expeditions. His knowledge is not only useful to our forecast office and the hunting community, but by a wide range of local organizations and civic groups. When Major League Baseball built youth ball fields near his home, his data was tapped for proper design and construction of the facility.

What's in this issue?

- *Information Services Guide Now Available!*
- *Weather Ready Nation*
- *Join us on Facebook-->*
- *IMETs–Incident Forecasting*
- *Eagle NOAA Wx Radio Soon*

The National Weather Service's Cooperative Weather Observer Program has given scientists and researchers continuous observational data since the program's inception more than a century ago. Today, some 11,700 volunteer observers participate in the nationwide program to provide daily reports on temperature, precipitation and other weather factors such as snow depth, river levels and soil temperature.

"Cooperative observers are the bedrock of weather data collection and analysis," said Douglas Crowley, Meteorologist in Charge. "Numerous technological breakthroughs have brought great benefits to the Nation in terms of better forecasts and warnings. Without the century-long accumulation of accurate weather observations taken by volunteer observers, scientists could not begin to adequately describe the climate of the United States. We cannot thank Mr. Lund and Mr. Black enough for their years of service to America."

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Recognizing Valuable Service

By Jim Pringle, Warning Coordination Meteorologist

The past 12 months were very active for weather events in **western Colorado and eastern Utah**. During the cool season, there were 50 significant snowfall and winter storm events, as well as at least a dozen strong gradient wind events.

In the late spring and early summer, the abnormally heavy snowpack melted, causing many rivers and streams to flood. This summer there have been nearly two dozen life-threatening flash floods, as well as thunderstorms with strong damaging wind and hail up to quarter and golf ball size. A rare tornado occurred, along with a number of funnel clouds and wall clouds.

Roan Plateau Funnel, west of Rifle, CO
Photo: Todd Peters

Thanks to all of our National Weather Service (NWS) **volunteer storm spotters**, mobile **SKYWARN spotters, co-op observers, CoCoRaHS observers, law enforcement** personnel, **avalanche forecasters**, **emergency managers**, **DOT** personnel and many others, we were informed on a timely basis for most of the significant weather events that occurred during the past year.

The significant weather and precipitation reports from volunteers continue to be an essential part of our NWS weather warning program. **Timely volunteer weather reports** help our NWS forecasters make critical decisions which assist people in taking life saving and property protecting actions.

We particularly appreciate the photos and videos sent which help us document significant weather events. This documentation is then forwarded monthly to the National Climatic Data Center in Asheville, NC., location of the National Storm Data Archives.

Click on these links for more information about our volunteer NWS storm spotter and SKYWARN (mobile amateur radio storm spotter) programs.

More information about the COCORAHS program go to Community Collaborate Rain Hail & Snow Network.

We are always looking for additional volunteers in eastern Utah and western Colorado. It only takes a very small amount of time to participate as a **storm spotter** (including **SKYWARN**) or a **CoCoRaHS** precipitation observer.

Weather reports from our volunteers have resulted in timely NWS warning messages that have saved many lives and resulted in the protection of personal property throughout the United States, including Colorado and Utah.

Forecasting on a Whole Different Level

By Joe Ramey, Incident Meteorologist

Whenever an emergency arises that requires localized weather information, National Weather Service (NWS) Incident Meteorologists (IMETs) are ready to go. On a moment's notice, IMETs grab their camping gear, communication and weather equipment, and quickly deploy to an incident command site anywhere in the country.

IMETs monitor weather conditions and provide site specific forecasts to insure crew and public safety. Their weather forecasts are used to develop strategies to contain the incident. IMETs also provide briefings to work crews, planning personnel, local government officials, and the media.

IMET Joe Ramey provides a crew briefing on the Shanta Creek wildfire, Alaska 2009
Photo: Fire Information Officer

The vast majority of incidents have been wildland fires, and IMETs have assisted with wildfire suppression since 1914. Today, however, IMETs are also being used in other weather sensitive situations, such as oil and chemical spills, as well as national security and natural disaster relief efforts.

IMETs were called upon to provide onsite support for the September 11, 2001 cleanup operations, Columbia Space Shuttle recovery, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill cleanup, the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, and even the Super Bowl. IMETs provide critical and timely weather information anytime anywhere a disaster strikes.

There are over 50 IMETs at NWS offices across the country. The NWS Grand Junction office has two IMETs. Mike Chamberlain has been in the program since 1999 and has been on 34 wildfires earning him the prestigious IMET Ace award.

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Information Services Guide - One Stop for Weather Info!

By Dea Bridge, Administrative Support Assistant

September 2011, the Grand Junction weather office launched its first ever **Information and Services Guide**. This resource was designed to provide our partners and the public with material about our local history, organizational structure, forecasting information and resource contacts.

This comprehensive guide may be most useful to local Emergency Managers or those whose daily activities depend upon monitoring the weather, but anyone interested in weather -related information can take advantage of the resources within. It is a rather large document, so please be patient as it fully loads. For all things weather on a local, regional and national level, you'll want to keep this guide handy!

Winter Weather Preparedness

Designated Weeks

COLORADO

To be announced

UTAH

October 24-30

Find out why we need....

...a Weather Ready Nation

Rain Gauge Winterization, Precipitation Notifications

By Jim Pringle, Warning Coordination Meteorologist

WINTERIZING YOUR RAIN GAUGE

If you have a plastic **wedge-shaped** rain gauge, you will need to begin closely monitoring the temperature forecasts so that your gauge is brought indoors before freezing temperatures occur. Leaving the plastic wedge-shaped rain gauge outside during the winter can result in the collected water to freeze at the bottom, resulting in the gauge becoming cracked and unusable.

If you have the standard 4" cylindrical plastic rain gauge such as those used by CoCoRaHS observers (www.cocorahs.org), you can leave your gauge outside during the winter months. However, make sure you bring the inner cylinder and funnel indoors to avoid breakage from freezing water. The 4" gauge will be useful this winter for measuring snow water equivalent.

Make sure you have your yard stick handy for measuring snowfall, as the winter season is just around the corner! We very much appreciate and need your snowfall reports.

As a reminder, we would like you to notify us on a timely basis whenever you experience any **significant weather** as described on our spotter checklist. You might want to consider printing a few of these forms and keeping them in a handy place for timely and accurate recordings.

For rainfall notifications, please contact us as soon as possible when you experience a rainfall **rate** of an inch or greater within an hour. So, for example, you should call us if you have a storm that produces 0.25 of an inch or more within 15 minutes, or 0.50 inch or more within 30 minutes.

For snowfall notifications, we would like to hear from you as soon as possible whenever you receive the following snowfall accumulations and snowfall rates:

Lower elevations: 2 inches or more new snow within 2 hours

Mountains: 4 inches or more new snow within 2 hours

For every snowfall event, storm total snowfall reports would also be greatly appreciated.

New NOAA Weather Radio Broadcast Coming Soon

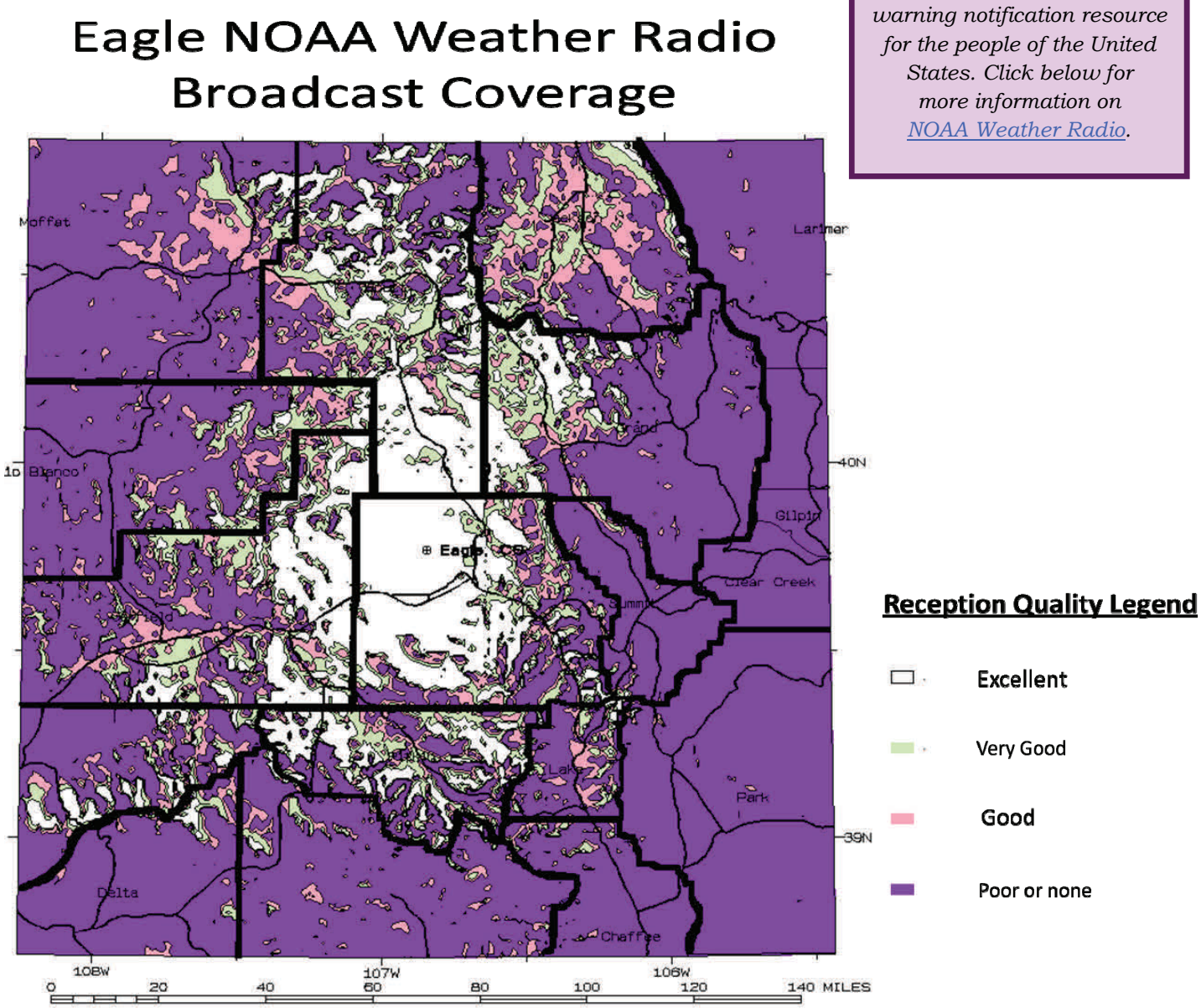
By Jim Pringle, Warning Coordination Meteorologist

The Eagle NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) transmitter will soon be broadcasting from the Upper Castle communication site in Eagle County, Colorado. We are hoping to have this new NWR station on the air before the end of October. The broadcast frequency will be 162.450 MHz and the station ID is WZ2518.

The Eagle NWR broadcast will cover much of Eagle County, including a significant section of Interstate 70, as well as much of southern Routt County and small portions of some adjacent counties. You can look at the computer-generated broadcast coverage map to get a perspective of the expected reception areas.

NOAA Weather Radio stations continuously broadcast the latest forecasts and weather observations for the listening area. Weather warnings preempt regular programming and continue to be broadcast until the warning has expired or been cancelled. Weather warnings for life-threatening events such as flash floods, tornadoes, and severe thunderstorms will automatically activate NWR receivers that contain an alert-alarm function.

NOAA Weather Radio *was recognized by the Department of Homeland Security, in 2004, as the primary* ***ALL HAZARDS*** *warning notification resource for the people of the United States. Click below for more information on NOAA Weather Radio.*



In the Social Scene

By Travis Booth, Meteorologist Intern

The NWS in Grand Junction is now on Facebook!

Late this past spring all NWS facilities (including our office) joined the social media age and opened Facebook pages. We will be using Facebook as a supplemental channel to disseminate environmental information and promote weather awareness activities including outreach and educational efforts. We hope to use Facebook to provide you with a "heads up" of pertinent weather information, but not as a way to disseminate short-fused warnings. The weather "heads up" will typically be the daily Graphicast, but additional information such as Public Information Statements, Record Event Reports, Skywarn training events, and interesting weather tidbits from both the local area and across the nation will also be posted.

Additionally, we hope to use our office Facebook page as a way to interact with our users, allowing us to improve our services. Fans of our site are encouraged to ask questions or write comments, post weather related pictures, and report significant weather. If you have a personal Facebook page you can FIND US, simply push the gray "Like" button near the top of the page to become a fan. You will then receive our posts and will be able to interact with us on our page. Without a Facebook account, you are still able to view our page from the above web address, but will not be able to interact with us and other fans via this medium.

Unfortunately, we may not always be able to immediately answer questions and comments due to significant weather or staffing considerations, so we do appreciate your patience. We will, however, be monitoring the page for weather reports or photos you post.

Currently, a few NWS offices are experimentally sending out some of their products via Twitter, which may become another form of Social Media used by all NWS sites in the future.

We look forward to talking with you on Facebook. Please join us in this exciting leap into the social media world!

Get Connected - It's Easy!

#1 Download any QR (Quick Response) reader application to your Smartphone.

#2 Scan this code with your phone.

#3 Link directly to the Grand Junction National Weather Service homepage!

How Prepared are You Really?

By Dea Bridge, Administrative Support Assistant

The theme for this year's National Preparedness Month was "A Time to Remember. A Time to Prepare." Now is the time for you and your family to prepare. To develop your own emergency plan, visit www.ready.gov, where you'll learn how to:

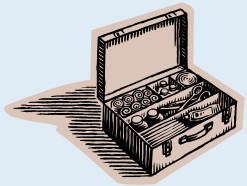
* Get a kit.
* Make a plan.
* Stay informed.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has extensive information on preparing for various disasters.

To get involved in your community's preparedness efforts, visit www.citizencorps.gov.

How do I prepare if I or someone in my family has a disability? There are numerous resources that provide guidance for those with a disability or who might need a special plan.

Being disaster-ready is more than just knowing what to do in case of a hurricane, earthquake, tornado, flood, or wildfire. It's also about:



! **preparing** a home 72-hour disaster supply kit;

! keeping an **emergency kit** at work;

! keeping **emergency supplies** in your car;

! developing and **practicing an emergency plan** for your family;

! **understanding** your community's **warning systems** and **evacuation routes**;

! **know**ing **who to contact** in your community for more information; and how to **get involved**.

When disaster strikes, don't be worried. Be ready!

Forecasting *continued from page 2....*

In addition, Mike has twice been deployed to Australia to help with wildfires 'down under.' Joe Ramey has been an IMET since 2003 and has been on 16 incidents. In addition to wildfires from Alaska to southern Arizona, Joe worked on the Greensburg, Kansas tornado cleanup in 2007, and the Kalamazoo River Michigan Oil Spill in 2010.

Big Fish Fire, Trapper Lake, CO
Photo: Chamberlain

COOP *continued from page 1....*

The first extensive network of cooperative stations was set up as a result of an 1890 act of Congress that established the U.S. Weather Bureau. Many of the stations have even longer histories. John Campanius Holm's weather records, taken without benefit of instruments in 1644 and 1645, are the earliest known recorded observations in the United States.

Many historic figures have maintained weather records, including Benjamin Franklin, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson kept an almost unbroken record of weather observations between 1776 and 1816, and Washington took weather observations until just a few days before he died. The Jefferson and Holm awards are named for two weather observation pioneers.