

**National Weather Service
NOAA Weather Radio Podcasts
Product Description Document (PDD)**

Part 1 – Mission Connection

1. Product Description:

The NWS is responsible for making its weather, water and climate information widely available to taxpayers using commonly accepted standards and technologies. Currently, the NWS provides only limited audio broadcasts of their NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards (NWR) via the Internet.

The Voice Improvement Program (VIP) software on the NWR is able to convert the text transmitted to the Console Replacement System (CRS) into MPEG audio Layer-3 (MP3) files. Southern Region NWS offices are making these MP3 files available on the Internet as “podcasts”. Podcasting allows for publishing of audio programs to the internet and subsequent downloading of these programs to a personal computer or MP3 device. Users subscribe to the NWR podcast by using a freely available podcasting application that downloads the MP3 file automatically using an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed. Podcasting applications typically check for new content (new MP3 files) at user defined intervals. Once downloaded, the user can then listen to the podcast at his/her leisure (versus a radio broadcast of NWR).

2. Purpose/Intended Use:

The purpose of the podcasts is to provide NWR products and weather information to people who either do not have access to a weather radio or do not live close enough to a transmission tower to receive an NWR audio signal. Podcasting has the benefit of allowing automatic download of NWR broadcasts and the convenience of allowing people to listen to these broadcasts on their own time.

3. Audience:

This service is available to anyone with a computer connected to the Internet, a device that can play MP3 files, and a podcasting subscription (free) service.

4. Presentation:

Podcasts are available in the commonly-accepted compressed audio format of MP3. Virtually all desktop computers can play MP3 files. In addition, stand-alone MP3 players are widely available on the market and, just recently, many cell phones and car radios are being outfitted to accept and play MP3 files.

Podcasts can be retrieved manually. However, a benefit to using podcasting applications is the ability to receive podcasts automatically via a subscription to an RSS feed. This software is widely available on the Internet. The podcasting software will periodically check for new podcasts and subsequently download them to a designated computer or MP3 device. For example, podcasting software could be configured to check for and automatically download an NWR broadcast of a specific zone forecast product. Once

downloaded, the broadcast would be available to listening at the subscriber's convenience.

5. Feedback Method:

We are always seeking to improve the availability and quality of NWS products and services based on customer feedback. Comments regarding the podcast service should be e-mailed to the National Weather Service Southern Region webmaster at: SR-SRH.Webmaster@noaa.gov. The feedback period for this experimental service will extend from October 19, 2005 through April 19, 2006.

Part 2 – Technical

1. Format and Science Basis:

The MP3 files for the podcasts will be generated with the VIP on the NWR CRS for subsequent transfer to the NWS office's Local Data Acquisition and Dissemination (LDAD) system. Once on LDAD, a PERL script will take the MP3 file and give it a unique file name based on the product and time the MP3 was created. Then, the script file will produce the RSS file and transfer the MP3 and RSS file to the website. During access from the website, a PHP script dynamically reads each RSS file and creates a table for each geographic location with the latest time stamp for each MP3 file.

2. Availability:

This service will be available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Availability of broadcast information may differ from site to site.