

Meeting Summary – NWS Baltimore/Washington Aviation Users Forum

Nov 17, 2022 1:00-3:00 PM

Attendees

Aviation Partners: Richard Allabaugh (Manassas Airport Ops), Nikolaus Wagenfeiler (Martin State Airport ATCT), Nathan Polderman (United Airlines), Paul Suffern (NTSB), Ashley Morley (Andrews AFB ATCT), Atsuko Ashley (ANA), Sandra Park (Mesa Airlines), Jeff Meadows (ANA), Kory Gemplar (FedEx)

National Weather Service Headquarters: Bruce Entwistle, Mike Graf, Lora Wilson

NWS Eastern Region Headquarters: Melissa DiSpigna

Washington CWSU: Rick Winther, Todd Baker, Michael Mathews

NWS Baltimore/Washington Forecast Office: Jim Lee, Chris Strong, Steve Zubrick, Andrew Snyder, Jeremy Geiger, Connor Belak, Brendon Rubin-Oster, Erik Taylor, Cody Ledbetter

Action Item Summary

- Andrew will follow up with Nikolaus Wagenfeiler and Mike Graf to further investigate the reliability of MTN AWOS observations transmitting overnight

Meeting began with WFO/LWX MIC *James E. Lee* offering a welcome to all participants, followed by participant introductions

Andrew reviewed the operations of WFO Sterling in regards to providing Aviation Services, including TAFs, Area Forecast Discussion, and Digital Aviation Services

Review of past meeting action items

- None from 2021
- Several items from 2019 are receiving current attention from a regional perspective. Eastern Region Headquarters is leading discussion between the high traffic coastal offices (Baltimore/Washington, Philadelphia, New York City, Boston, and associated CWSUs) to address the following in addition to other collaborative efforts:
 - Request for TAF consistency from WFO-to-WFO, especially in regard to thunderstorms and use of VCTS
 - Stress collaboration among AWC, NAMs@ATCSCC, CWSUs, and WFOs, particularly with thunderstorm forecasting (TCF)
 - Update ER WFO/CWSU Aviation Best Practices
- Also from 2019: *Place aviation digital grids on all ER WFO websites.* A national initiative is being led to add aviation grids to the publicly-distributed National Digital Forecast Database (NDFD).

FY22 TAF Performance Review (IFR and below)

- WFO LWX barely met national goals of 0.65 POD and 0.38 FAR. Eastern Region as a whole had slightly better scores. These were some of the poorest scores in the past decade, but highly variable from year to year.

- DCA was worst performing airport. Have contacted LAMP model developers to see if recent poor trends in guidance FAR are situational or a flaw in the model.

MTN TAF Service

- AMD NOT SKED when tower is closed (10P-6A); has always been part-time TAF
- Obs change from augmented to AWOS when tower is closed; in theory could make it a full-time TAF. However METAR availability (comms) has been inconsistent.
- *Nik*: after the tower closes, they get a lot of medical flights from PIH, Maryland State Police-realtime Medivac, Grandview Aviation which provides services to Johns Hopkins
- *Nik*: AWOS obs are routed through University of Maryland DNS server which has not been reliable
 - *Mike Graf*: we don't ask WFOs to keep a TAF going if there's no observation; using the Total Obs Concept we can keep the TAF going (or NIL it if forecaster doesn't feel comfortable providing a reliable TAF during hazardous weather)
 - **ACTION: send email to Mike Graf about DNS server issue at KMTN so he can ask his NWS/SR contact to explore possible solutions to comms issues**

Outreach

- Increasing activities post-pandemic restrictions. ATCTs, TRACON, public events.
- *Jim* invited all in attendance to come to WFO Sterling to tour and further build relationships.

CWSU Presentations

- *Michael Mathews*
 - Briefed out latest updated daily recorded pilot briefing and other information provided on the individual tower webpages
 - <https://www.weather.gov/aviation/pdwb> to access individual tower pages
- *Rick Winther*
 - Provided a brief history of CWSU/ZDC operations and reviewed the various products available to aviation users, including MIS, ZDC SWAP Statement (2013), Day 2 convective forecast (PERTI), Intl Departure Gate Forecast, DCA Gate Forecast, TCF history

Update on Digital Aviation Services (*Melissa DiSpigna*)

- In late 2020, NWS received requirements letter from FAA on providing gridded/point-n-click products. NWS created a "DAS Document" on meeting FAA requirements.
- Gridded aviation data available experimentally: <https://digital.MDL.nws.noaa.gov>

Potential TAF changes (*Mike Graf*)

- NWS currently taking steps to allow for use of PROB30 in first 9 hours of TAFs
 - Allows US TAFs to align with ICAO Annex 3
 - Allows NWS to take advantage of existing probability of precip grids
 - Better alignment with airline TAFs
 - Eliminates some ambiguity with VCTS use

- NWS forecasters use VC as a hedge to introduce possibility of convection in first 9 hrs, since PROB30 was not allowed
 - Will look to “lock down” the VCTS use
 - Goal is to become available summer 2023
 - In 2029/30 timeframe, IWXXM format will take over, with ability to include more information (e.g., PROB40).
 - NIL TAF use will be less restrictive; with Total Obs Concept still being aggressively used for keeping TAFs going.
 - Comments
 - *Sandra*: Need to have something in TAF to alert dispatchers to TS potential
 - *Jim*: VC is a very definitive forecast of something that will be near the airport vs PROB30 is more likely to convey the proper threat. At some point in short range you need to transition to a definitive forecast though.
 - *Mike*: Trying to untie WFO hands to use more probabilistic values for convection
 - *Nathan*: Is it possible to have grids with a convective parameter/thunderstorm probability so NDFD could serve as one-stop shop? *Response*: Thunder tied into Weather grids, not expressed numerically. NBM offers Probability of Thunder grids which some may use/modify as part of forecast process, but not officially published to NDFD.
 - *Mike*: If TRACON approaches aren't represented in TAF (why some use VCTS), who is responsible for providing that service? (rhetorical question)
 - *Kory*: Their dispatchers plan for thunderstorms 1 hour on each side of TEMPO. Recommend keeping TEMPOs as short as possible.
 - *Nathan*: Reiterate importance of AFD. Dispatchers taught to read AFD to understand uncertainty information.

Open Forum

- *Bruce Entwistle* discussed how NWS HQ wants to address unmet needs and services
- *Nathan*: At the A4A meeting, some airline partners are seeing “wonky” TAFs being pushed from the digital data base without proper QC.
 - *Jim*: Please contact the NWS office directly 571-888-3501 if the TAFs are not representative of the situation, and/or if you wish to collaborate. If after repeated issues, please contact me directly.

Convective Forecasting Interactive Exercise

- Multiple rounds of scattered storms. Maybe a case to incorporate PROB30?
- Model disagreement on when scattered/numerous storms would affect area. Suggestion to use VCTS with TEMPO TSRA. Turned out to be training/widespread convection later in evening than model average, would probably require longer period of prevailing.
- Additional cases will be provided in slide deck.

Don't hesitate to contact us with questions/concerns. 571-888-3501 will bypass phone tree.

Adjourn at 3:00 PM.

Appreciation extended to Steve Zubrick for taking notes.