Recommendations & Comments for the IFPS Science Steering Team (ISST)
Best Way toward Producing a Near-Seamless NDFD
Western Region Team

Scope: What is the best way to minimize discrepancies and produce a near-seamless NDFD while not sacrificing accuracy or efficiency?

Recommendations

- Recommendation 1: A robust gridded verification system must be developed in order to determine the best grid editing methodologies.

-- Comments:

- Current IFPS environment is very conducive to local office development of SmartTools, smartInits, methodologies, as well as local data sources.
- This environment is not conducive to office coordination. There are too many degrees of freedom.
- Some restrictions or standardization of field tools and methodologies is needed to improve office coordination.
- It is recognized that due to the wide variation of climatological regimes across the U.S., no single tool or method will always meet all WFO needs.
- Any such standardization needs to be based on a robust gridded verification system. Tools or methods which are found to produce the best results should be encouraged, while other tools which are not scientifically sound and/or produce poor results should be discouraged or eliminated. When a verification system becomes available, a group such as the SmartTool/SmartInit Team should periodically conduct such a review of tools and methods.

- Recommendation 2: Deadlines for Preliminary Grids should be established.

-- Comments:

- Times in which grid editing is performed vary from office-to-office, person-to-person, and even day-to-day.
- While NDFD in theory is a continually updated database, the reality is that we currently still operate under a "2 issuances per day" paradigm. This helps facilitate inter-office collaboration. However, it is recognized that short range (e.g. 0-36 hour) updates can and should be made at any time of the day if needed.
- During the typical editing times, late grid editing by one office has a detrimental affect on neighboring offices. For example, grids which were in collaboration earlier in the shift may now be uncollaborated.

- Forecasters rely on the ISC edit times to determine if a neighboring grid is old (i.e. from a previous shift) or if it has been edited by the current shift.
- Establishing deadline times for preliminary grids would allow forecasters to see discrepancies early in the grid editing process and thus work out differences via phone or chat.
- These deadlines should be well in advance of other product deadlines. For example, preliminary grids should be finished by 100 pm and 100 am.
- It is recognized that problems arise for offices with neighbors in another time zone. In such cases, offices in the later time zone should be encouraged to try to meet the deadlines of the offices in the earlier time zone. For example, PST offices with MST neighbors should attempt to have their grids done by the MST deadlines.

- Recommendation 3: Forecaster exchange programs between neighboring offices should be made routine and frequent.

-- Comments:

- Coordination between forecasters in different offices is typically more difficult than between forecasters in the same office. The reason for this is familiarity on a personal level, as well as a familiarity of the meteorology.
- Conference phone calls helped to foster the personal familiarity between offices. Chatting via 12Planet is very impersonal.
- Some offices can have up to 8 neighbors making exchange programs difficult. However, focus can be placed on office pairs where coordination has been a problem in the past, or where long borders exists, or where meteorological differences are large.
- Routine sub-regional (e.g. state or multi-state) meetings involving both management and forecasters should also be encouraged.

- Recommendation 4: Rewards program should be established to recognize offices which excel at collaboration.

-- Comments:

- Current collaboration environment is driven more by fear of falling behind (e.g. frowny faces, yellow or red CWA, etc) instead of encouragement to excel.
- It is difficult to establish what defines “good collaboration”. Offices can use non-meteorological tools that ensure collaborated borders, but still result in a poor quality or unrealistic forecast. Thus, measures of good collaboration need to be coupled with a measure of grid accuracy.

- Recommendation 5: NWS WFO and Regional Management need to not only focus on serving local customers, but also consider the needs of regional and national customers when making local office digital services decisions.

-- Comments:

- One of the strengths of the NWS is the relationship between the WFO and the local customers. There is a long standing history of ensuring the local customer's needs are served.
- IFPS/NDFD has introduced an increasing need for WFOs to also focus on regional and national customers.
- WFO and Regional management have a history of accommodating the needs of the WFO in order to best serve the local customer. Sometimes these decisions are a hindrance to IFPS collaboration.
- Strong leadership at the WFO and Regional level is needed at times to make tough decisions for the good of the NWS as a whole.