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**NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE**  
NWS IMPACT-BASED DECISION SUPPORT SERVICES PHILOSOPHY

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**NWS is evolving to build a Weather-Ready Nation**, where communities are ready, responsive, and resilient to increasing vulnerabilities from extreme, weather<sup>1</sup>, water, and climate events. To build a Weather-Ready Nation, we are committed to providing the science, analysis, forecasts and partnership in a consistent way across the agency to effectively deliver accurate and timely weather, water and climate information to decision makers.

A **first major step** for NWS to evolve started with examining how NWS functions - gathering a **baseline assessment** of our operations, the organizational structure that supports it, and our workforce, which we've done through a project called the "Operations and Workforce Analysis" or OWA. As part of this process, NWS has interviewed or surveyed many of our internal and external stakeholders.

The NWS identified some **key findings** about how we deliver Impact-Based Decision Support Services (IDSS)<sup>2</sup> including that we know **how important IDSS is to our core partners** and how strong the stakeholder support for IDSS is, but we also have found that there is **confusion internally and externally** about IDSS's definition and scope.

**To respond** to these findings, the NWS **developed various IDSS operating model philosophy ideas** based on several models currently operating in the field. We have elected to prioritize an IDSS philosophy that focuses on creating even **deeper and stronger relationships** with a subset of our core partners, and prioritizes services to these core partners to create a more Weather-Ready Nation.

We want to ensure we fully understand **what our core partners need to make sound decisions** including: improved forecast messaging and recurring IDSS for an event, preparation, response, and recovery.

**No decisions on changes** to the NWS have been made; we have just started this process and are opening up a public comment period to gather your input on an IDSS Philosophy focused on deep relationships with our core partners starting with a core service level.

As part of our process to evolve, NWS is committed to gathering feedback and input from key stakeholders in an ongoing and collaborative way helps us refine our ideas in the best way possible.

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<sup>1</sup> "Weather" is used generally to mean all service areas which the NWS supports, including space weather, tsunamis, aviation, fire, marine, etc.

<sup>2</sup> "The provision of relevant information and interpretative services to enable core partners' decisions when weather, water, or climate has a direct impact on the protection of lives and livelihoods." From WRN Roadmap: [http://www.nws.noaa.gov/com/weatherreadynation/files/nws\\_wrn\\_roadmap\\_final\\_april17.pdf](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/com/weatherreadynation/files/nws_wrn_roadmap_final_april17.pdf)

Let us start this engagement by sharing some of the definitions and concepts we want your feedback to consider:

## Definition of Core Partner

The National Weather Service (NWS) has defined a classification of its users which it terms “core partners.” This class of users is defined as:

“Government and non-government entities which are directly involved in the preparation, dissemination and discussions involving hazardous weather<sup>3</sup>, water, or climate related National Weather Service information that supports decision making for routine or event-driven, high impact events. These entities have a unique need for increased interaction with NWS personnel for provision of Impact Based Decision Support Services (IDSS) or to facilitate their role in supporting the NWS mission.”

While there are a large number of individuals who contribute to the overall services provided by NWS, all of whom play key roles in providing quality services to the public, this “core partner” designation is meant to identify those entities which have a unique need for assured access to unaltered NWS information because of the level of critical public services they provide and the interaction they have with NWS personnel.

**NWS “core partners” consist of the following three groups of individuals<sup>4</sup>:**

- 1) **Member of the emergency management community.** Public safety officials who serve as employees or contract agents of a government agency at the federal<sup>5</sup>, state, local, tribal, or territorial level and are charged with protecting the public from hazards that are influenced by weather or weather-related events. Occasionally, organizations with large populations which are not formally government agencies employ personnel who routinely exercise authorities similar to the public safety officials described above and should be afforded similar support by NWS. With approval of the next highest management level (e.g., Regional management approval for local WFOs/RFCs or NCEP headquarters for NCEP Centers), NWS offices providing IDSS, may extend support to these organizations. Other members of this community include SKYWARN® Net Control Operators, such as Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) and Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES).
- 2) **Government partners.** Federal<sup>4</sup>, state, local, tribal, or territorial government partners who have missions that require close coordination with the NWS. Government partners

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<sup>3</sup> “Weather” is used generally to mean all service areas which the NWS supports, including space weather, tsunamis, aviation, fire, marine, etc.).

<sup>4</sup> Note: Individuals, companies, or other entities involved in ‘chasing’ weather events and posting or streaming video or pictures of the event, but do not otherwise have a need to communicate with NWS do not meet the “core partner” standard. In addition, NWS spotters, while playing a key role in providing information to our forecast offices are not included in the “core partner” classification as they do not routinely require assured access to unaltered NWS products to fulfill their function as a spotter.

<sup>5</sup> To honor agreements with contiguous countries and territories and the terms of other international agreements, the term “federal” within this document encompasses international governments and organizations supported by NWS.

include (but are not limited to) the FAA, FEMA, and water and land management officials.

- 3) Members of the electronic media.** Members of the electronic media are parties, and contract agents of parties, who have a need to actively participate in discussions with NWS forecast offices on imminent weather or other hazards, and operate systems that routinely and rapidly relay weather and water watches, advisories, warnings and forecast information to a significant part of the population served by an NWS office. Electronic media includes providers of weather content through electronic information distribution such as radio, television, internet, cellular, and other wireless means.

### **Definition of Impact-Based Decision Support Services**

The provision of relevant information and interpretative services to enable core partners' decisions when weather, water, or climate has a direct impact on the protection of lives and livelihoods.

- *Episodic IDSS* is defined as the provision of information and interpretative services to directly support an event or incident involving or impacted by hazardous weather conditions. Examples include event-related webinars; NWSChat, iNWS, on-site or remote interaction.
- *Recurring IDSS* is defined as the provision of ongoing support to (a subset of) core partners throughout the year to improve partner mitigation, preparation, response, and recovery to event/incidents involving or impacted by hazardous weather conditions. Examples include joint training, Integrated Warning Team interactions, table-top exercises used to plan actions and procedures addressing these events or incidents.
- NWS IDSS for the EM community includes support to government emergency operations at the federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial levels (e.g., Incident Command Posts, Emergency Operations Centers, etc.), including support to government operations of Emergency Support Functions (ESF), described in the National Response Framework, for which NOAA has been identified as playing a federal support role.

NOTE: IDSS is a specialized service for core partners, however not all core partners are the recipient of IDSS. For example, members of the media may be an active participant in some NWS IDSS activities because of the unique role they play in communicating critical public safety information; however NWS does not provide decision making support for the media.

### **Concept of a Deep Relationship Philosophy for IDSS**

- NWS may provide IDSS to any NWS core partner, providing direct, interactive support for a weather-related event or for an event or incident which may be impacted by hazardous weather (i.e., episodic IDSS).

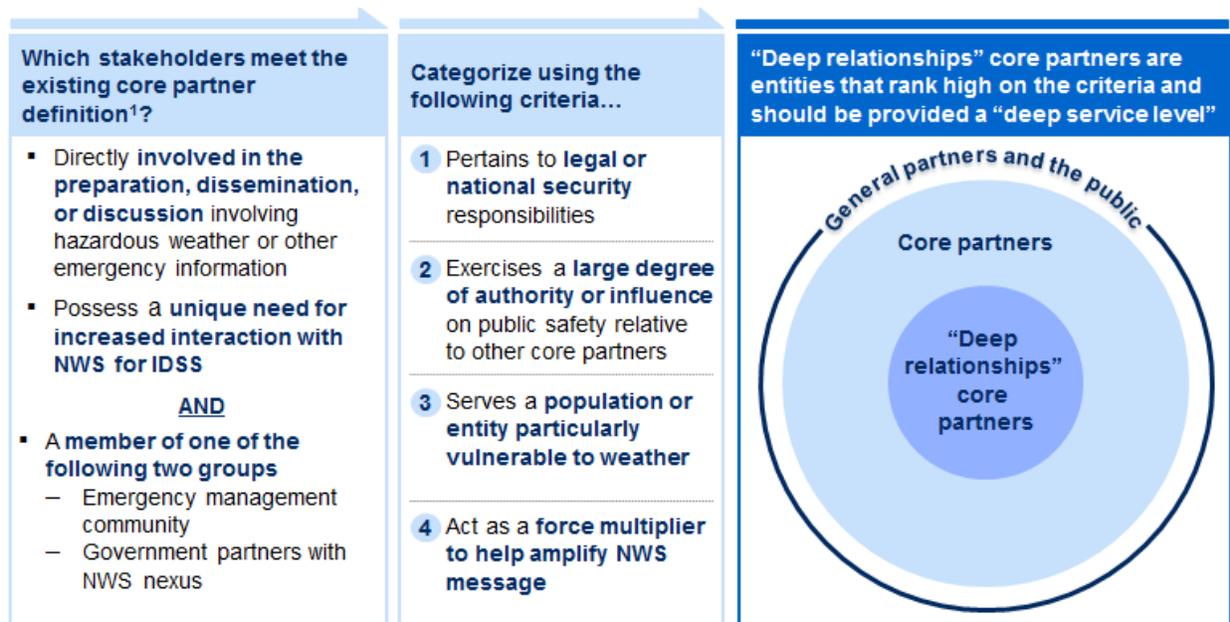
- Allows for the creation of information<sup>6</sup> for specific core partners in providing that IDSS. For a subset of core partners, involves performing recurring IDSS for an event, preparation, response, and recovery.
- Provides a broad range of services to support core partners with greater focus on on-site support (e.g., embedding) to a subset of core partners.

### Concept of a “core service level” for IDSS

- Offices define core partners, and subset of deep relationship core partners with similar criteria allowing IDSS to be more consistently offered throughout the organization.
- Partners have more clarity on when NWS will provide recurring or episodic IDSS
- NWS is able to predict and track IDSS events better
- Core partners know what standard products and services are offered by NWS offices
- Additional information is provided to core partners
- NWS staff understand what will be expected during IDSS and are properly trained for it, improving the office’s “situational awareness”

### How can deep relationships core partners identified?

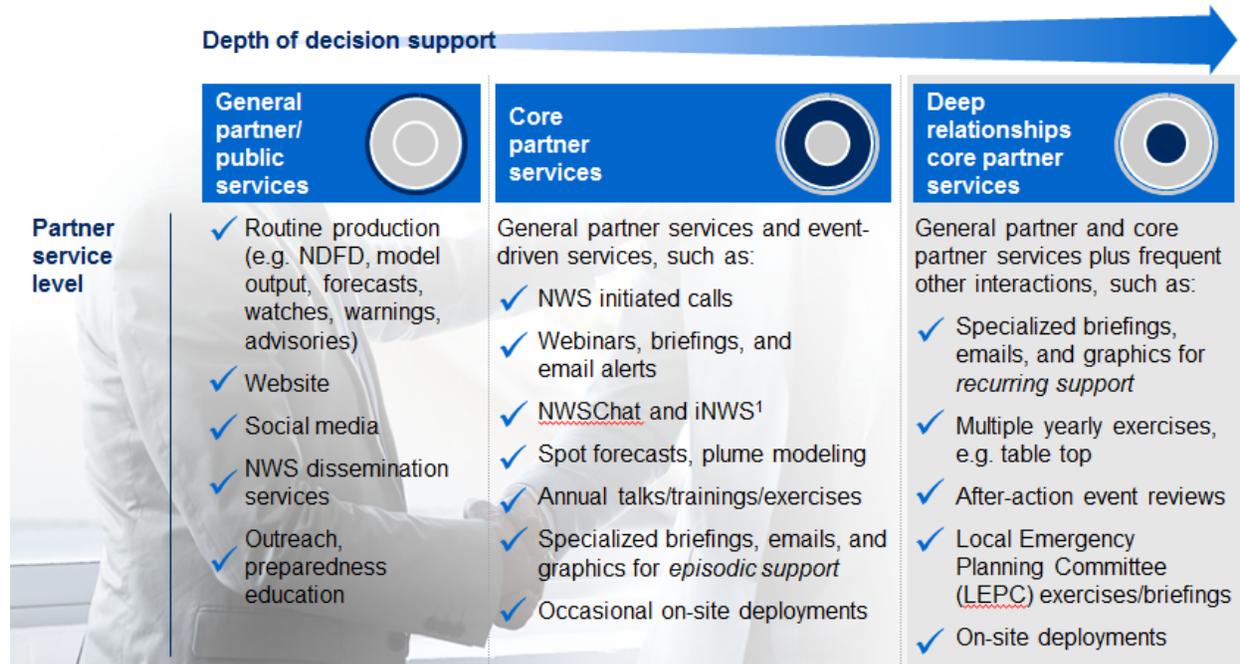
Each NWS field office identifies core partners<sup>7</sup> receiving IDSS and applies consistent criteria for identifying which of these core partners to designate as “deep relationship core partners.”



<sup>6</sup> Examples: Specialized webinars, briefings, graphics; IDSS web briefing page; Spot forecasts; plume modeling.

<sup>7</sup> Electronic media support is limited to coordination, not decision making. However, NWS includes media in our IDSS coordination activities, (e.g., webinars, iNWS, NWSChat) for consistency of messaging and to amplify NWS ability to communicate hazardous weather information to the public. Additionally, all media outlets should receive equal access to NWS services.

Specific examples of partner services include:



<sup>1</sup> Media should only receive general partner services plus first three listed core partner services

Proposed NWS guidance for identifying core partners for IDSS by NWS staff:

**Overarching guidance for IDSS**

- When making a decision on who is or is not core, **consider the decision making authority of the entity with respect to public safety** (e.g., EM function of school, hospital)
- **Not all .gov are core partners.** To be considered core, they need a NWS Nexus (allied mission, e.g., public safety, water resource managers, FAA)
- **Electronic media support is limited to coordination and consistency in messaging**, not decision making. Include media in IDSS coordination activities, (e.g., webinars, iNWS, NWSChat) for consistency of messaging and to amplify NWS ability to communicate hazardous weather information to the public, but not in other core partner services
- **If a deep relationships core partner indicates** the need to serve an entity (in writing), **then they should be** provided the service, but are not necessarily considered a core partner
- **NWS does not intend to provide IDSS to:**
  - General public
  - Private businesses (e.g. department stores, farmers, amusement parks, ski or beach resorts, transportation/shipping companies, cruise lines)
  - Storm Chasers
  - SKYWARN® spotters
  - Non-government partners of other NOAAline offices
- Once identified as core, **partners are assessed** on standard criteria to determine **if they are a deep relationships core partner**

## **OWA BACKGROUND:**

**Project Overview** – NWS launched the OWA in May of 2015 with McKinsey & Co and has included the following steps:

1. Baseline Assessment of Organizational Structure, Operating Model and Workforce was conducted. Method: internal and external surveys, interviews, site visits, data collection and analysis was completed by McKinsey. As part of that assessment process, NWS interviewed or surveyed many stakeholders
2. Identified key trends from baseline assessments and identified alternative ideas for Organizational Structure, Operating Model and Workforce. Method: Internal discussion with focus groups on each element. Groups were comprised of field and program management, as well as NWS Senior Executive Service leadership.
3. Refining Ideas (Ongoing): Prioritized and determined new approaches to ideas. Method: Engaging workforce and external customers for feedback on new philosophies, approaches and options.

## **NEXT STEPS:**

We are not at the roll out stage; **we are in the engagement stage** as we refine ideas into alternatives and options. You will be part of this process at various points along the way.

As we move forward we hope to incorporate more detail in our vision and plans for providing IDSS. These details will include the role that NWS plays in providing IDSS in the context of the larger weather enterprise, what products and services are included in IDSS that are most useful to our core partners, and more details on who would directly receive NWS's IDSS.