

Product Description Document
Proposal to Change Small Craft Advisory to Warning
March 2020

Part 1 – Mission Connection

a) Product Description: For decades, the National Weather Service (NWS) has used the Watch, Warning, and Advisory (WWA) system to alert users to expected weather and water hazards. Over the years, social science research has found that the headline terms can introduce confusion. Specifically, we have found that the "Advisory" headline is widely misunderstood and is often confused with "Watch". We have also found that "Watch" and "Warning" are also sometimes confused.

Based on the totality of the feedback, NWS is considering a major change to the Watch, Warning, and Advisory (WWA) system. The proposed new system would remove the term "Advisory," "Special Weather Statement," and "NOWcast" headline terms, and streamline all sub-Watch and sub-Warning information into a single plain-language headline "Statement", with a few exceptions, one being Small Craft Advisory (SCA).

The proposed new system would have only two flagship headline terms (Watch and Warning). The NWS would only "raise the flag" for events that require users to "Prepare" (Watch) or "Act" (Warning) for significant events that threaten life and/or property. Since a "Small Craft Advisory" requires vessels of a certain size to "Act", it would be upgraded to a "Small Craft Warning" under this new paradigm. The NWS uses regional criteria for issuing Small Craft Advisories, so the new Small Craft Warning product would use these same criteria.

b) Purpose/Intended Use: Currently, Small Craft Advisories are issued when sustained wind speeds or frequent gusts of 20 to 33 knots (regionally defined) and/or seas or waves 4 feet and greater and/or waves or seas are potentially hazardous. Wave period, steepness, or swell direction and/or waves in or near bars are hazardous to mariners due to the interaction of swell, tidal or river currents in relatively shallow water (regionally and locally defined). To see regional criteria check:

<https://www.weather.gov/marine/faq#13>.

When wind speeds are lower than Small Craft Advisory criteria, yet waves or seas are potentially hazardous due to wave period, steepness, or swell direction a Small Craft Advisory can be issued.

Small Craft Advisories can also be issued when waves in or near bars are hazardous to mariners due to the interaction of swell, tidal or river currents in relatively shallow water. Threshold

criteria are locally defined and are specific to local geographic areas, and are based upon parameters such as wave steepness, wind speed and direction, and local bathymetry. When wave heights and/or wave steepness are lower than Small Craft Advisory criteria, yet wind speeds are potentially hazardous, a Small Craft Advisory can also be issued.

As stated in this proposal, these criteria would now be used to justify issuance of a Small Craft Warning.

c) Audience/Users: Primarily recreational boaters, although this warning can be used by anyone in the marine community.

d) Presentation Format: Below is the standard Marine Weather Message Warning format:

Product Format

WHaaii cccc
ddhhmm
MWWxxx

URGENT - MARINE WEATHER MESSAGE

National Weather Service city state

time am/pm time_zone day mon dd yyyy

mmZxxx-xxx-xxx-ddhhmm-

/k.aaa.cccc.pp.s.####.yymmddThhnnZB-yymmddThhnnZE/

zone-zone-zone-

time am/pm time_zone day mon dd yyyy

...WARNING HEADLINE...

* WHAT

* WHERE

* WHEN

* IMPACTS

* ADDITIONAL DETAILS

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

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Name/Initials/Forecaster ID

Description of

Entry (WMO

Header)

(AWIPS ID)

(Product Name or

MND) (Issuing

Office) (Issuance

time/date)

(UGC: Z & expiration
time) (P-VTEC Line(s))

(Zone Names)

(Issuance

time/date)

(In bullet format)

Bullets should be one or

two sentences and used

to present critical

information.

(Optional)

(Start of CTA Marker)

(End of CTA Marker)

(UGC Delimiter)

Optional after last

segment)

e) Feedback Method: The NWS is accepting comments through xxx xx, 2020, on the proposal of changing a Small Craft Advisory product to a Small Craft Warning product.

Feedback for this proposal will be through the survey below:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VZGX6BF>

For further information, please contact:

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National Marine Program Leader

Silver Spring, MD 20910

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E-mail: darren.wright@noaa.gov

Part 2 – Technical Description

a) Format: For a complete before and after examples, see below.

Current (Gale and SCA)

URGENT - MARINE WEATHER MESSAGE

National Weather Service Jacksonville FL

858 AM EST Thu Feb 20 2020

AMZ450-470-210400-

/O.CON.KJAX.SC.Y.0016.000000T0000Z-200220T2300Z/

/O.CON.KJAX.GL.W.0004.200220T2300Z-200222T0800Z/

Coastal waters from Altamaha Sound to Fernandina Beach FL out 20 NM-

Waters from Altamaha Sound GA to Fernandina Beach FL from 20 to 60 NM-

858 AM EST Thu Feb 20 2020

...SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY REMAINS IN EFFECT UNTIL 6 PM EST THIS EVENING...

...GALE WARNING REMAINS IN EFFECT FROM 6 PM THIS EVENING TO 3 AM EST SATURDAY...

* WHAT...For the Gale Warning, north winds 25 to 35 kt with gusts around 40 kt and seas 10 to 17 feet with occasional seas to 22 feet expected. For the Small Craft Advisory, North winds around 20 knots with a few gusts to around 35 knots. Seas 5 to 7 feet with occasional seas to 9 feet expected.

* WHERE...Waters from Altamaha Sound GA to Fernandina Beach FL from 20 to 60 NM and Coastal waters from Altamaha Sound to Fernandina Beach FL out 20 NM.

* WHEN...For the Gale Warning, from 6 PM this evening to 3 AM EST Saturday. For the Small Craft Advisory, until 6 PM EST this evening.

* IMPACTS...Strong winds will cause hazardous seas which could capsize or damage vessels and reduce visibility.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Mariners should alter plans to avoid these hazardous conditions. Remain in port, seek safe harbor, alter course, and/or secure the vessel for severe conditions.

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Proposed

URGENT - MARINE WEATHER MESSAGE

National Weather Service Jacksonville FL

858 AM EST Thu Feb 20 2020

AMZ450-470-210400-

/O.CON.KJAX.SC.W.0016.000000T0000Z-200220T2300Z/

/O.CON.KJAX.GL.W.0004.200220T2300Z-200222T0800Z/

Coastal waters from Altamaha Sound to Fernandina Beach FL out 20 NM-

Waters from Altamaha Sound GA to Fernandina Beach FL from 20 to 60 NM-

858 AM EST Thu Feb 20 2020

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* WHERE...Waters from Altamaha Sound GA to Fernandina Beach FL from 20 to 60 NM and Coastal waters from Altamaha Sound to Fernandina Beach FL out 20 NM.

* WHEN...For the Gale Warning, from 6 PM this evening to 3 AM EST Saturday. For the Small Craft **Warning**, until 6 PM EST this evening.

* IMPACTS...Strong winds will cause hazardous seas which could capsize or damage vessels and reduce visibility.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Mariners should alter plans to avoid these hazardous conditions. Remain in port, seek safe harbor, alter course, and/or secure the vessel for severe conditions.

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Current (SCA)

URGENT - MARINE WEATHER MESSAGE
National Weather Service Baltimore MD/Washington DC
847 AM EST Thu Feb 20 2020

ANZ533-534-537-541>543-202200-
/O.CON.KLWX.SC.Y.0027.200221T0200Z-200221T2000Z/
Chesapeake Bay from North Beach to Drum Point MD-
Chesapeake Bay from Drum Point MD to Smith Point VA-
Tidal Potomac from Cobb Island MD to Smith Point VA-
Choptank River to Cambridge MD and the Little Choptank River-
Patuxent River to Broomes Island MD-
Tangier Sound and the inland waters surrounding Bloodsworth
Island-
847 AM EST Thu Feb 20 2020

...SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY REMAINS IN EFFECT FROM 9 PM THIS EVENING TO 3 PM EST
FRIDAY...

- * WHAT...North winds 10 to 20 kt with gusts up to 25 kt expected.
- * WHERE...Chesapeake Bay from North Beach MD to Smith Point VA, Tidal Potomac from Cobb Island MD to Smith Point VA, Choptank River to Cambridge MD and the Little Choptank River, Patuxent River to Broomes Island MD, and Tangier Sound and the inland waters surrounding Bloodsworth Island.
- * WHEN...From 9 PM this evening to 3 PM EST Friday.
- * IMPACTS...Conditions will be hazardous to small craft.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, should avoid navigating in hazardous conditions.

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Proposed

URGENT - MARINE WEATHER MESSAGE
National Weather Service Baltimore MD/Washington DC

847 AM EST Thu Feb 20 2020

ANZ533-534-537-541>543-202200-
/O.CON.KLWX.SC.W.0027.200221T0200Z-200221T2000Z/
Chesapeake Bay from North Beach to Drum Point MD-
Chesapeake Bay from Drum Point MD to Smith Point VA-
Tidal Potomac from Cobb Island MD to Smith Point VA-
Choptank River to Cambridge MD and the Little Choptank River-
Patuxent River to Broomes Island MD-
Tangier Sound and the inland waters surrounding Bloodsworth
Island-

847 AM EST Thu Feb 20 2020

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FRIDAY...

* WHAT...North winds 10 to 20 kt with gusts up to 25 kt expected.

* WHERE...Chesapeake Bay from North Beach MD to Smith Point VA, Tidal Potomac from Cobb Island
MD to Smith Point VA, Choptank River to Cambridge MD and the Little Choptank River, Patuxent
River to Broomes Island MD, and Tangier Sound and the inland waters surrounding Bloodsworth Island.

* WHEN...From 9 PM this evening to 3 PM EST Friday.

* IMPACTS...Conditions will be hazardous to small craft.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, should avoid navigating in hazardous
conditions.

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Current (SCA with definition in actions)

URGENT - MARINE WEATHER MESSAGE
National Weather Service Honolulu HI
315 AM HST Thu Feb 20 2020

PHZ110>118-122-210215-
/O.EXT.PHFO.SC.Y.0008.000000T0000Z-200221T1600Z/
Kauai Northwest Waters-Kauai Windward Waters-Kauai Leeward Waters-
Kauai Channel-Oahu Windward Waters-Oahu Leeward Waters-
Kaiwi Channel-Maui County Windward Waters-
Maui County Leeward Waters-Big Island Windward Waters-
315 AM HST Thu Feb 20 2020

...SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY NOW IN EFFECT UNTIL 6 AM HST FRIDAY...

- * WHAT...Northeast to east winds 20 to 30 kt, and seas 10 feet or higher.
- * WHERE...All Hawaiian waters, except the waters included above in the Gale Warning.
- * WHEN...Through early Friday morning.
- * IMPACTS...Conditions will be hazardous to small craft.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

A Small Craft Advisory means that wind speeds of 25 to 33 knots and/or seas 10 feet or greater are expected to produce conditions hazardous to small craft. Inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, should avoid navigating in these conditions.

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Proposed

URGENT - MARINE WEATHER MESSAGE
National Weather Service Honolulu HI
315 AM HST Thu Feb 20 2020

PHZ110>118-122-210215-
/O.EXT.PHFO.SC.W.0008.000000T0000Z-200221T1600Z/
Kauai Northwest Waters-Kauai Windward Waters-Kauai Leeward Waters-
Kauai Channel-Oahu Windward Waters-Oahu Leeward Waters-
Kaiwi Channel-Maui County Windward Waters-
Maui County Leeward Waters-Big Island Windward Waters-
315 AM HST Thu Feb 20 2020

...SMALL CRAFT **WARNING** NOW IN EFFECT UNTIL 6 AM HST FRIDAY...

- * WHAT...Northeast to east winds 20 to 30 kt, and seas 10 feet or higher.
- * WHERE...All Hawaiian waters, except the waters included above in the Gale Warning.
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Current (AR includes SCA in Coastal Waters Forecast not in a separate hazard product)

Coastal Waters Forecast
National Weather Service Anchorage Alaska
410 AM AKST Thu Feb 20 2020

Coastal Waters Forecast for the Northern Gulf of Alaska Coast up to 100 nm out including Kodiak Island and Cook Inlet.

Wind forecasts reflect the predominant speed and direction expected. Sea forecasts represent an average of the highest one-third of the combined wind wave and swell height.

PKZ139-210200-
Cook Inlet Kalgin Island to Point Bede-
410 AM AKST Thu Feb 20 2020

...SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY THROUGH FRIDAY...
.TODAY...NE wind 25 kt. Seas in ice free waters 8 ft. Freezing spray. Snow and rain.
.TONIGHT...SW wind 25 kt. Seas in ice free waters 4 ft building to 7 ft after midnight. Freezing spray.
.FRI...W wind 25 kt. Seas in ice free waters 7 ft.
.FRI NIGHT...W wind 25 kt. Seas in ice free waters 5 ft.
.SAT...NW wind 25 kt. Seas in ice free waters 6 ft.
.SUN...N wind 20 kt. Seas in ice free waters 4 ft.
.MON...NE wind 25 kt. Seas in ice free waters 9 ft.

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Proposed

Coastal Waters Forecast
National Weather Service Anchorage Alaska
410 AM AKST Thu Feb 20 2020

Coastal Waters Forecast for the Northern Gulf of Alaska Coast up to 100 nm out including Kodiak Island and Cook Inlet.

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.FRI...W wind 25 kt. Seas in ice free waters 7 ft.

.FRI NIGHT...W wind 25 kt. Seas in ice free waters 5 ft.

.SAT...NW wind 25 kt. Seas in ice free waters 6 ft.

.SUN...N wind 20 kt. Seas in ice free waters 4 ft.

.MON...NE wind 25 kt. Seas in ice free waters 9 ft.

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b) Training: No additional training is required for this product.

c) Availability: This product will continue to be available via the WFO issued Marine Weather Message and Coastal Waters Forecast (Alaska only) as described in NWS Directive 10-315.