RACC Meeting Minutes No. 200 (5/30/07)

1. Purpose: A regularly scheduled meeting of the RACC was held from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. EST in Room 3246 on Wednesday, May 30, 2007, to discuss and address national and regional AWIPS issues, problems and concerns.

2. Regions In Attendance: The following regions (and other NWS organizations outside of Silver Spring) participated in the conference call: **ERH**: Joe Palko, Josh Watson; **SRH**: Eric Howieson; **WRH**: Gar Nelson; **CRH**: Bill Gery, Greg Noonan; **ARH**: Duane Carpenter; **PRH**: Bill Ward; **GSD**: Joanne Edwards; **NWSTC**: Randy Schupbach; **ROC:** Mark Albertelly;

3. Discussion Items: The following topics were discussed/briefed at the meeting:

a. Status of OB8.1: Twenty two sites have installed OB8.1 to date. The approximate time to install the release on an RFC system is about 4 hours while it takes between 2.5 to 3 hours for a WFO system. The beta site Ohio River Forecast Center (TIR) installed the release on Wednesday, May 30, and WFO Gray, ME (GYX) will install on Thursday, May 31. Beta problems and issues are being tracked at the weekly beta teleconference calls routinely held on Mondays. The HPC QPF grids are scheduled to be activated on the SBN on May 30. The System Acceptance Test for AWIPS OB8.1 is scheduled for June 12 and 13. The System Verification Review (SVR) to determine if the release is ready for national deployment is scheduled for June 29. The national deployment of the release is expected to begin on July 16 depending upon the outcome from the SVR meeting.

The delta beta 6 version of the software includes enhancements for new IFPS Service Backup functionality. A test of these new enhancements will be completed when WFO Charleston, SC (CHS) now at 7.2.1, installs OB8.1 and site Wilmington, NC (ILM) backs them up as an OB8.1 site planned for June 5. Testing of the service backup enhancement is also planned between two OB8.1 sites, WFOs Taunton, MA (BOX) and Grey, ME (GYX) in early June.

During the beta test phase, we will track the official product generation. Mike Moss of the AWIPS SST has produced a script which will track the text product generation at the beta sites. We have also requested that beta test site representatives track the text, alphanumeric, gridded and graphical products generated using AWIPS after their installation of OB8.1. The list of products provided by the beta sites will be used to validate the automated list of generated text products prepared by the SST, to see if we can rely on the automated version alone for future AWIPS OB8.2 product tracking.

Over the next few weeks the OPS21 Installation Team will take over the coordination role for the review of the AWIPS O8.1 held defects which are documented in Discrepancy Reports (DRs) from the Discrepancy Report Team. The AWIPS Regional AWIPS Focal Points and Beta Site Representatives will be requested to assess these DRs to determine which should be fixed prior to the national deployment of the AWIPS OB8.1 Release.

Steven Taylor of CHS recently posted an AWIPS info listserver message regarding the inconsistency between the HLS products generated with the baseline OB7.2 formatter and the new Tropical Services Program policy for the HLS. In discussions with the Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Service's Tropical Program Manager, Scott Kiser, we determined that there is no nationally supported baseline formatter for the HLS on AWIPS now, so local and regional formatters will need to be modified to support the new policy standards. New functionality for a baseline formatter for nationally standard product generation of the HLS is expected in AWIPS Release OB8.2.

b. Status of Upcoming Software Releases: Karen Tepera of Raytheon briefed the group on the upcoming releases.

FFMP Emergency Release: This release corrects the tcl error that was observed from sites while using the FFMP application. It went out last week and so far, 80 sites have installed it.

OB8.1.1: So far, a total of 14 DRs have been included and the AWIPS Steering Committee will continue to evaluate the list of DRs.

OB8.2: The software development has been checked in for PIT testing. Forecasters are scheduled to come in the week of June 12 for testing and requirements are still being worked on.

c. Planned Phase Out of GRIB1 MRF/GFS Grids: Between 2004 and 2006, the set of NCEP GFS grids provided to AWIPS sites was extensively upgraded. The new grids were added to provide higher-resolution products, more-extensive geographical coverage, and to allow the phase out of obsolete/legacy grids. The final installment of new GFS grids was added in November/December 2006 (with the addition of GFS40 for OCONUS regions). As part of ongoing routine maintenance, the legacy "MRF" and GFS grids will be discontinued, probably later this year. The attachment ("Phase-Out of Obsolete GFS – June 2007") identifies the first phase of the effort to discontinue obsolete grids. New/replacement grids (already in place) are identified. If there are any WFO/RFC/NC local applications that rely on the SBN supply of obsolete grids, they should be migrated to use the newer grids.

The phase out of obsolete GFS grids will be done in several phases, as described in Brian Gockel's attachment. Phase I, the subject of today's discussion, focuses on the MRF grids. Note that the obsolete grids are formatted for dissemination in GRIB1. The newer GFS grids are all formatted in GRIB2 (which offers superior compression by a factor of three or more). The discontinuation of the GRIB1 grids will end the extraneous production, dissemination and decoding/storage of roughly 4500 grids (19MBytes) per distribution.

The SST took the action item and will check all sites to see who is storing these grids in a netCDF file.

There are approximately six sets of obsolete (GRIB1) GFS grids that have been superseded by the addition of GRIB2 GFS. These are also candidates for likely discontinuation. Information on these GRIB1/GFS disseminations will be developed and disseminated in June 2007. The plan is to begin removing these GRIB1 GFS grids in late 2007.

d. Status of Radar Service Backup: An action item was taken by a Radar Service Backup Group, which included the NCF, SST, OST and the field, at a previous RACC to determine how many sites on the network can perform service backup at the same time. The group analyzed a small group of sites for handling Service Backup during the install of ORPG Build 9. It was determined that up to 5 sites can do so without serious degradation of the WAN. Sites installing ORPG Build 9 will need to call the NCF to activate the Radar Service Backup functionality.

Mark Albertelly would like an analysis done to see whether this Radar Service Backup can be used for major AWIPS installations greater than 4 hours and possibly for site situational awareness. The NCF and OPS have determined that Ashley Kells of OPS will lead a new group to determine the maximum number of sites that can use this Service Backup functionality without serious degradation to the WAN. Once this analysis is complete, the team can then make a recommendation for the use of this Service Backup functionality (i.e., can it only be used in a very limited capacity).

e. SMTP Activation: The testing has gone okay for about a month with 27 sites running the SMTP. The readiness review is planned for June 1. Andy Nappi is planning on sending the readiness review documentation later today. Regional focal points are requested to recommend a go/no go decision for implementation beginning June 4. Deployment will be to ER, SR, CR & WR (in that order) from June 4 to 14. The National Centers will begin deployment around June 18. The NCF plans to call and activate around 10 to 20 sites per day. Due to failover testing on DX2, total switchover time from X.400 to SMTP is now estimated to be 20 to 30 minutes per site. The site will be unable to transmit for approximately 10 minutes while the switchover/activation is occurring.

f. Focal Point/Participants Reports, Problems and Concerns:

Ashley Kells: Ashley discussed the Quality Control in WarnGen at the text workstation. If the operator manually edits a county in use, the description of a county using the terms “north”, “east” or ***“southeast” (i.e., “Southeast Brewster County”)*** cannot not be used without getting a QC error flag. These descriptions of the counties must use the ending “ern” ***[“Southeastern Brewster County”]***. Ashley took the action item to send out a message describing this problem on the list server.

Alaska Region: nothing significant to report.

Central Region: nothing significant to report.

Eastern Region: nothing significant to report.

Pacific Region: nothing significant to report.

Southern Region: nothing significant to report.

Western Region: nothing significant to report.

GSD: nothing significant to report.

NWSTC: The OB7.2 training material is now posted on the web site and will remain there until the new LMS is up and running.

Warning Decision Training Branch: nothing significant to report.

The next RACC is scheduled for Wednesday, June 13, 2007. If you know of any agenda items you wish to be discussed at this RACC, please e-mail them to Jim Stenpeck and cc Frank Lucadamo. This is to ensure that all of the appropriate WSH personnel attend this RACC to address your issues.