

Currents

New Web Site Helps Managers Deal with Nor'easters

Hurricanes may get more press and attention, but winter storms known as northeasters (or nor'easters) have a greater impact on New York's coast. They are more frequent, last longer and are usually much larger in size than hurricanes. To help coastal communities better deal with these storms, **Jay Tanski**, New York Sea Grant Coastal Processes specialist has been working with **Dr. Arthur DeGaetano**, Director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Northeast Regional Climate Center (NRCC) and professor at Cornell University, to develop the East Coast Winter Storm Climatological and Forecasting Data Web site <http://nywinterstorm.org>. Funded by NOAA's Climate Program, the site was designed in consultation with local coastal managers and emergency personnel to provide them with the real time and historical data on nor'easters along with tools to help them better use this data.

The site provides seasonal forecasts of storm activity, historical climatological data and a "one stop" compilation of sites providing real time weather and oceanographic data in the region. The 2009-2010 seasonal forecast by the NRCC indicated that storm activity this winter will be higher than normal in both number and strength of storms.

One of the features local managers are finding most useful on the site is the Analogue Storm Track tool. When an East Coast Winter Storm is forecast by the NOAA Global Forecast System (GFS) model, the Web site compares the forecasted storm to a historical data base of over 700 storms from 1950 to 2007 and automatically selects the five most similar storms (analogue storms) based on forecasted positions and pressures. In addition to displaying the tracks and associated pressures for both the analogue and forecast storm, the site allows the user to view actual measurements of storm surge levels associated with

the analogue storms at different tide gauge locations as the storm moves up the coast.

"We were surprised at how well the site worked during the past northeasters. It is being put to good use," said **John Baroni**, emergency manager from the Village of East Rockaway on Long Island's south shore referring to the early 2010 storms that brought record snows to the northeast. Baroni was involved in the development of the web site and is showing others how to use it to better assess the possible impacts of approaching storms.

—Jay Tanski