UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Radio Service
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

PROGRAM..... RELEASE.....

CHATS BY THE WEATHER MAN. Wed. Nov. 2/27.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

ANNOUNCEMENT: Fire-weather warnings is the subject of today's CHATS BY THE WEATHER MAN released through Station _____ by the United States Department of Agriculture. The Weather Bureau is doing certain valuable work in cutting down forest fire damage to America's forests and this CHAT tells how . . . .

---ooOoo---

---Sound of a telephone bell ringing---

"Hello", answered the Weather Man, and then---"I beg your pardon. Why yes, I suppose you may if you want to". . . .

I waited, sensing something interesting.

There was some more talking which, naturally, I did not hear. The Weather Man listened, smiling. Then he hung up the receiver and turned to me, sitting near his desk in his office in the town hall.

"A lady wanted to know if she might safely wash her hair today", he said.

"Rather an unusual request, isn't it?" I asked. "Seems to me that's rather out of your line of duty".

"Not so much as you might think", my friend said. "You see, she thought I'd know if it will be dry enough to properly finish the operation. I told her that rain is unlikely today and she seemed satisfied, thanked me, and said good bye".

"Do you get many questions like hers?" I wanted to know.

"More than the average man suspects", the Weather Man replied. "Last week a young lady enlisted my assistance in setting a favorable date for a wedding. She told me that she wasn't in the habit of getting married very often and she wanted to be sure the weather would be favorable when the occasion came up. Oh, our duties aren't confined to predicting frost, floods, and dry weather for forest fires".

"I suppose not", said I innocently. "By the way, I came up here today to find out what the Weather Bureau is doing toward preventing forest fires. I understand that direct damage to our forests by forest fires amounted to more than 26 million dollars last year alone. I read that this damage was the result of more than 90 thousand fires which burned over about 24 million acres of land in the United States and that more than 72 per cent of these fires were caused by man".

"The damage was really greater than that", the Weather Man added. "You see,

fires caused immense loss to watersheds, scenery in natural parks, grasslands, and recreational grounds in the forest regions. It's practically impossible to estimate the money damage to these things. Americans should pay special attention to preventing this huge fire menace to our national forests".

"I can easily understand that", I agreed. "Of course I know that folks should be more careful with matches, camp fires, and so on. But it seems to me that the most damaging forest fires must occur in certain seasons when the weather is favorable".

"I congratulate you on your insight", the W. M. said rather ironically. "Make yourself comfortable for a few minutes and I'll tell you about the Weather Bureau's fire-weather warning service as it directly affects the forests.

"Now to begin with, all intelligent people accept the fact that a knowledge of coming weather changes is vital to the conduct of practically all industries. It follows logically enough, that efforts to prevent and suppress fires in our public and private forests can be influenced by knowing what the weather will be today and tomorrow. The Weather Bureau has had a good opportunity to demonstrate that fact conclusively in the Far Western States during the past few years through the cooperative work of the Bureau with the Forest Service, state foresters and forestry associations. Everyone who has anything to do with forestry problems--- especially forest fire fighting--- knows very well that there are times when the fire hazard is low and other times when the hazard is high and the number of destructive fires large. We have learned that these differences in fire hazard are largely due to differences in the drying power of the air", and to the force and direction of the winds.

"What's <u>that</u>?" I asked.

"Well, in simple words, the quantity of moisture in the air, or the humidity of the air", explained the W. M. "Furthermore", he continued, "this drying power of the air has a marked effect on the ease and rapidity with which trees, brush, and other forest materials burn. Now, don't you see that if we can determine in advance this degree of humidity of the air which affects the inflammability of materials, we can take steps to control forest fires? In other words, we can make special preparations to prevent the occurrence of forest fires, or to control them if they once get started. The importance of the winds as a factor in spreading the fires is too well known to say much more about it.

"All right. Knowing these things, the next step was to organize fire-weather warning service to meet the demands for information concerning the changing weather conditions in the forested regions of the United States. It was not so long ago when the Congress of the United States appropriated funds so that the Weather Bureau could organize this service. The Bureau did organize the work and established a special fire-weather warning service in the far Western States, the upper Lake regions and in New England. Soon after the work was organized, the officials of the Western Forestry and Conservation Association stated that they regarded the organization of that service as the most notable step of the year in forest conservation in the Pacific Coast States".

"Didn't the Weather Bureau organize a fire-weather warning service in any

other parts of the country?" I asked. "There are certainly very valuable forest areas in the South, in the Appalachian region. I should think these forests deserve protection, too."

"I can explain that this way", the Weather Man said. "The issuing of forecasts as an aid to the protection of forests against fires isn't exactly new. At first, the regular daily forecasts were applied in the main incidentally by forest interests in the Pacific Coast States, but there were so many advantages in the service that soon other Western States were asking for the service and then came requests from other sections as well. This led to the organization of a special forecast project, known as the fire-weather warning service, in many parts of the United States but it was not possible with the facilities at hand to extend the work to all sections. Today, the issuing of fire-weather warnings is a separate forecasting service of the Weather Bureau with scores of stations in all of the important forest regions cooperating."

"How are these fire-weather warnings issued?" I asked.

"Well", said the Weather Man, "first of all, they are based on the daily weather charts which are prepared in the various State centers where the fire-weather studies and services are centralized. These charts are made after weather information is received by wire from numerous weather observers at widely scattered stations out in the field and they show wind velocity and direction of the wind--- the temperature--- humidity--- rainfall--- air pressure, and other things. When experienced observers have these charts, prepared from information furnished by observers on land and sea, there's every reason to believe that they will be highly successful in giving timely warnings of nearly all weather changes that go to increase or decrease the forest-fire hazard. The Weather Bureau is localizing these forecasts and warnings in important forest areas by having many stations in those areas. This system makes it all the easier to issue warnings and forecasts for large forest areas as well. We know that this warning service is working out successfully. It will grow better and better as we are able to extend the service to larger and larger forest regions.

"By the way", the Weather Man added, "if you are especially interested in this work, you ought to write to the Weather Bureau office nearest you for still more information. You know, the same conditions that lead to dangerous fires in the forests also contribute to destructive fires in the cities. That brings all of us in, doesn't it? It's just possible that you may remember the fire in Berkeley, California, in September, 1923. That fire occurred under very unusual conditions. On that day, the humidity at San Francisco was the lowest during the entire summer of that year and the wind was a gale out of the northeast. In order to conserve our forests, and save our cities, we must protect them from fires. When you hear a fire-weather warning broadcast by radio, better take heed for it is telling you that weather conditions are coming that make fires easy to start and hard to stop".

---ooOo---

ANNOUNCEMENT: Another timely CHAT BY THE WEATHER MAN will be broadcast by this Station on Wednesday, November 16.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

ERRATA NOTICE

One or more conditions of the original document may affect the quality of the image, such as:

Discolored pages
Faded or light ink
Binding intrudes into the text

This has been a co-operative project between the NOAA Central Library and the Climate Database Modernization Program, National Climate Data Center (NCDC). To view the original document, please contact the NOAA Central Library in Silver Spring, MD at (301) 713-2607 x124 or Library.Reference@noaa.gov

HOV Services
Imaging Contractor
12200 Kiln Court
Beltsville, MD 20704-1387
July 23, 2010