UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

CHATS WITH THE WEATHER MAN. Friday, July 24, 1931.

ANNOUNCEMENT: And now let's have a chat with the weather man. As usual at this time, our old friend, Ob Server, will tell us more about the work of the United States Weather Bureau in keeping up with the weather, or a jump or two ahead of it ----- Well, Mr. Ob. Server? ------

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Mr. E. B. Calvert, chief of the forecast division of the United States Weather Bureau, has been telling me that the radio has become our chief means of getting weather warnings to farmers.

That used to be one of the big problems of the Weather Bureau; how to get weather news to the farmers. When the rural mail service was established, that helped. But until recent years, the most direct and successful way of getting weather information into the country has been our rural telephone systems.

In the past ten years, however, radio has taken a steadily increasing part. We now have about 300 broadcasting stations cooperating with the Weather Bureau. All parts of the United States are within the ranges of those stations. Each of them broadcast the daily weather forecasts at least once a day. Every agricultural community, however remote it may be from ordinary communication facilities is now on equal terms with populous centers in obtaining weather forecasts and warnings, thanks to radio.

And thanks also to the Weather Bureau officials having been quick to see the possibilities of radio for weather forecasting. A few months after Marconi, in March 1899, sent his first wireless message across the English Channel, our Weather Bureau began to investigate the possibilities of applying the new means of communication to its work.

But getting out the regular daily weather forecast is only one of the many phases of the work of the Weather Bureau. Of course, that is what you might call the back-bone of the weather service. Incidentally, Mr. Calvert says, that a careful comparison of the forecasts with the weather for the periods covered by those forecasts shows that they are right between 85 and 90 per cent of the time.

He makes that statement in a little pamphlet just issued which describes the work of the Weather Bureau in all its phases. Of course, we joke with the forecasters about his misses in those ten to fifteen per cent of the cases, but honestly we have to admit that 90 per cent hits is pretty good shooting.

As Mr. Calvert points out in his booklet, which is U. S. Department of Agriculture Miscellaneous Publication No. 114, it is essential that farmers, stock raisers, and all other folks interested in the important problem of supplying the Nation with food keep close contact with prevailing weather conditions and their effect on farming operation, the growth of crops in different sections of the country, and the condition of the range in our great western grazing areas.

The Weather Bureau maintains special weather and crop services, just to get that information. It has two services, a daily service and a weekly. A large number of special crop weather stations are maintained throughout the chief cotton and grain producing sections. Every day reports are received from those special station and bulletins are published containing that information at 53 central stations in different parts of the country.

The weekly service consists in the publication of that well-known weekly weather and crop bulletin issued every Wednesday at Washington. There is also a local weather and crop summary published at each State center which gives the information more in detail as to conditions in that State. Then there is a bulletin for the cotton region published at New Orleans and another for the corn and wheat region published at Chicago. The information used to make up those bulletins comes from a large number of cooperative weather observers and weather and crop correspondents covering practically every county in these United States.

In addition a weekly cattle-region bulletin is published at several central points in the western grazing country. When we mention the western range country, we are taking in a lot of territory. Some sections may be suffering from a severe drought while others may have plenty of moisture and enough feed for livestock and some to spare. In such cases, it sometimes becomes necessary to ship stock from unfavorable to more favorable regions, so it is important that livestock men know the weather and range conditions in all parts of the area. Again, bankers and others who lend money to livestock raisers need such information.

Another of the numerous Weather Bureau services Mr. Calvert mentions in his booklet is the fire-weather warning service by which the Bureau helps the Forest Service and owners of timber lands and forestry associations protect our great forests of California, Oregon, Montana, and Idaho, and Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, the New England States and the Adirondack and southern Appalachian regions. Numerous weather substations have been established in our forests and observers report by telegraph to district centers and their reports of conditions are used to prepare fire-weather forecasts and warnings. These warnings sent to forest supervisors and rangers enable them to make advance arrangements for putting out any fires that may start.

Then there is the river and flood service, with its 66 district centers and about 900 substations, located along our principal rivers to give warnings of floods and forecasts of river stages which are useful not only in case of danger from floods but for navigation and other interests in times of low water.

Fishermen in the Columbia River district claim, Mr. Calvert says, that the water stage has an effect on the entrance of salmon from the ocean. By watching the river forecasts they can predict a spurt in the run of salmon with a fair degree of accuracy.

When some rivers get low many water-power plants have their supply cut off. With ample notice from the river forecasts they get their auxiliary steam plants ready for use and so keep going without interruption.

In this talk I can't begin to mention all the different uses or even all the distinct services described by Mr. Calvert in that little Miscellaneous Publication No. 114. All in all, to run the regular Weather Bureau observation stations outside of Washington takes more than 1,000 employees. But the numerous offices of the bureau throughout the country are always open during business hours, and the public is cordially invited to visit them and avail itself of the information to be had there.

As Mr. Calvert says, the Weather Bureau is maintained and conducted in the interest of all the people, and the chief of the bureau earnestly desires that the greatest possible use be made of the very large amount of weather information collected by the bureau during the 60 years of its existence, and that the widest possible distribution be given to the daily weather forecasts and warnings.

That little Miscellaneous Publication No. 114 will give you some insight in the many and varied phases of the work, and the thousand and one uses to which the regular and special forecasts are put. Miscellaneous Publication No. 114 besides describing more fully the few services we have mentioned, also tells about the weather maps and bulletins, about the marine meterological service, the ship weather reports, the mountain snowfall measurements, frost and fruit warnings services, the aerological service, and about the instrument used in recording weather changes.

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ANNOUNCEMENT: Miscellaneous Publication No. 114 can be had either by writing to this Station _____or by writing direct to the United States Department of Agriculture, at Washington, D. C. It is free as long as the supply lasts.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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