Fifteen years of the Pacific International Training Desk: training impacts in the islands

Jennifer L.S. Strahl and H. Gingerlei Porter
Pacific International Training Desk, Honolulu, HI

Our Purpose
The purpose of the Pacific International Training Desk is to train and collaborate with 20 participants annually from across the South Pacific region and 15 participants annually from the US. The Institute for the Northwest Pacific to promote the international interest of the U.S. in atmospheric science and climate research community and improve the level of science, technology operations, and services worldwide.

Our Training Program
Pre-requisite: Learning Package
20-25 hours, self-paced COMET/MetEd modules
In home country, prior to arrival
Fundamental atmospheric/oceanic science
On-Site Training Program
4 weeks, 4-5 participants per cohort
WMO-Taipeh Forecast Office or Guam Forecast Office
More advanced atmospheric science
Classroom instruction, hands-on lab exercises and activities
Real-time weather analysis and forecast practice
Communication dissemination systems training
WMO, IAO, and IAP discussions
Visits to and presentations by region agencies
International collaboration
(Guangzhou, H.K., PRC, JAP, WMO-ASPC, NASA, VORTEX-2)
(Guam: DSGC, OSHEA, Emergency Mgmt. U.S. Military, etc.)
Collaboration with WMO, U.S. Atmospheric Science, PEC, etc.
Training Topics
Atmospheric/Oceanic Structure
Map interpretation
Introduction to Climatology
Introduction to Hydrology
Thermodynamics and Stability
Remote Sensing
Surface and Upper Air Analysis
General Circulation Patterns
Tropical Weather Phenomena
Forecast Philosophy and Practice
Numerical Weather Prediction
Forecast Verification
Tropical Cyclones
Weather Forecasting
Mesoscale Forecasting
Communication and Transportation
Japanese Weather
Our Participants
128 individuals from 20 countries

Our History
Pacific Island nations face many challenges to their NAMs, including isolation, large data voids, small bandwidth, lack of resources, and a lack of qualified meteorologists.

The Pacific Desk, as one of NOAA’s contributions to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Voluntary Coordination Program (VCP), is intended to provide training opportunities for participants from the WMO Regional Association V. Training is funded through NOAA’s WMO Office of International Activities. The program was originally managed by the Joint Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Research (JAMAR), the University of Hawaii (UH), and is now administered by the University of Hawaii’s Atmospheric Forecasting and Data Interactions (TAS) group.

Our Impact
Since 2001, 128 participants from 20 countries have been trained at the Pacific Desk. Following training, offices and individuals have experienced the following:

New NAMs offices have been created, staffed, and led by Pacific Desk participants
More NAMs offices now focus on issues not dependent on other countries’ products
More useful and localized public and marine forecasts
Increased forecast length and accuracy
Offices resumed or began map discussions and forecast verification
Collaboration between WFD-Honolulu, WFD-Guam, and University of Hawaii
Individual promotion from non-scientific to forecasting positions
Progression into NAM or governmental leadership
Qualification for more advanced training or degree programs
Demonstrated confidence in weather analysis and forecasting
Connection and communication of NAMs staff among isolated island groups
Increased distribution and use of RANET Chaffy Beetle across the Pacific

Our Future
Training cohorts for early 2017 have been selected.
A new curriculum for more advanced forecasting training is under development, with pilot cohorts to begin in late 2017.
In-Island training opportunities are being explored for shorter workshops on more specific topics of interest to individual NAMs offices.
Increasing collaboration with COMET/MetEd and Pacific partners such as the National Institute for Weather and Atmospheric Research (NIWA), NZ, and the Pacific Meteorological Council (PMC).

Our Partners
The Pacific Desk gratefully acknowledges the support of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Weather Service Pacific Region Headquarters (NWS-PH), and the University of Hawaii (UH).