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Public Information Statement 22-41
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From: Kate Abshire, Acting Chief
 Marine, Tropical, and Tsunami Services Branch

Subject: Experimental Surf Forecast Matrix: Soliciting Comments until
October 31, 2022

The NWS is excited to announce it is soliciting comments on an Experimental Surf Forecast Matrix product until October 31, 2022. This product will be implemented at two NWS Eastern Region Weather Forecast Offices (WFOs): Wilmington, NC (ILM) and Wakefield, VA (AKQ). The purpose of the Experimental Surf Forecast Matrix is to supplement the official Surf Zone Forecast (SRF) product by providing additional information on the timing and location of hazardous conditions to enhance public safety decision making.

Rip currents are one of the main weather-related causes of fatalities along the East Coast. In recent years, there has been tremendous effort by the NWS to increase awareness and provide vital forecast information to help mitigate this hazard. The SRF product issued by coastal and Great Lakes WFOs contains a full 2-day forecast, with only one forecast value provided for each day per coastal county. That forecast is based on the maximum threat expected during the day. However, the current SRF does not describe the timing or expected duration of the threat, nor does it provide detailed extended outlooks of beach threats at specific beaches. With recent improvements in wave modeling and rip current forecasting, including the Nearshore Wave Prediction System (NWPS) probabilistic rip current model, there is increased ability to add detail to the current SRF forecast method.

The Experimental Surf Forecast Matrix will provide a 6-day forecast, broken into 3-hourly and 6-hourly increments, and include similar forecast parameters as the operational SRF product, with an individual matrix for popular beaches in the Wilmington, NC and Wakefield, VA County Warning Areas. This product was developed in response to increased partner demands for additional forecast detail and is intended to meet those needs. It should not be substituted for the official SRF product.

The Experimental Surf Forecast Matrix and additional information about the project can be found here:

www.weather.gov/ilm/surfmatrix and
www.weather.gov/akq/surfmatrix

The Product Description Document for the Experimental Surf Forecast Matrix can be viewed here:

https://nws.weather.gov/products/PDD/PDD_ExpSurfForecastMatrixforER_2022.pdf

Feedback on this experiment will be solicited from the public and emergency management partners throughout the 2022 beach season. If feedback is positive, we will consider expanding this experimental product to additional forecast offices in the 2023 season. The link to the feedback survey is available at:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ExpSurfForecastMatrixforER_2022

If you have questions or comments, please contact:

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