

MEMORANDUM FOR: The files

FROM: Edward Johnson [original signed 9/23/2005]
Director of Strategic Planning and Policy

SUBJECT: Decision on Termination of Listing of Commercial Weather Providers

On July 18, 2005, I initiated a public comment period on a proposed termination of a listing of commercial weather providers maintained by my office. The analysis of comments received over a two month period is attached.

The number of respondents was small (35 compared to over 450 providers on the NWS list), but most of those who did respond opposed terminating this service (24 opposed versus 4 supported termination, with the others noncommittal). Based on this response, there is little support for termination. The low response rate may also indicate little widespread support to continue the service either.

I have decided to continue the NWS listing service, but with some changes: We will re-design the web site to provide access to the commercial listing service (and any others which may come to our attention) on an equal basis with the NWS listing service. If the commercial listing service grows in popularity and usage, I may revisit the decision to continue the NWS listing service, but not for at least a year.

Attachment

**Analysis of Comments on
Termination of Listings of Commercial Weather Providers/Web Sites
September 23, 2005**

The listing of commercial weather service providers maintained by the National Weather Service (NWS) Office of Strategic Planning and Policy was proposed for termination in favor of a commercial “yellow pages” listing service. This proposed termination was subject to a public comment period from July 18 through September 18, 2005. An attempt was made to contact all who are listed directly (via email or regular mail), and the proposed termination was displayed prominently on the NWS listings web site. This paper is an analysis of the comments received during this period.

Comments Received: 35

Supporting Termination: 4

Opposing Termination: 24

(Some comments were duplicates or not directly related to the issue under consideration)

Below are the major reasons cited for opposing termination of the NWS listings:

1. Cost - NWS listings are provided free of cost, while listings on globalweatherpages.com are costly for other than a simple one-category listing with no links.
2. Links - NWS listings provide free links, while links are not available through globalweatherpages.com for a similar level of service (i.e., free).
3. Commercialization – A number of those opposing termination felt that the use of a commercial site to provide this list went against the spirit of the NOAA Partnership Policy. If the NWS list were terminated, the existing list would no longer be unbiased or “egalitarian.” The “big fish” would get bigger ads. Those holding these views expressed a desire to keep the list basic and free of commercialization.

None of the respondents appear to be members of the general public who are *using* the listing service to seek a provider of some weather service. However, a few of the responses provided some indication that the listing service has value in the sense of connecting those who seek services to potential providers. For example:

“At least three US citizens per day call us for our free weather services for Baja California, Mexico. Your listing has been an important point of reference for citizens seeking such service.” Response #8

“Personally, I'd like to see your page continue. We get a number of referrals from it every day.” Response #11