

Wow! A Site to Behold



Photograph of waterspout over the Peace River,
at approximately 740 PM EDT July 15, 2005.
Courtesy of the Punta Gorda Police Department

Waterspout/Landspout settles near Peace River

Perhaps the most photographed waterspout (and landspout) in recent memory developed just north of Punta Gorda during the evening of July 15th. A wondrous natural site, the spout fortunately remained near or over water for most of its life. For the short period on land, only minor damage was reported, mostly to trees. One residence sustained minor damage. Power outages were also noted in the area; however, some of these may have been due to locally excessive cloud to ground lightning strikes.

The storm was notable for its duration; the spout was in contact with land or water for about 18 minutes (733 PM to 751 PM EDT), with the funnel visible by some for more than 20 minutes! The long duration allowed thousands of area residents to observe the phenomenon, which many called amazing. An immediate storm survey conducted by the Punta Gorda Police Department noted a slow, general southerly movement on the spout, briefly touching land once, then making a final landfall before dissipating. Figure 1 (right) shows the estimated track.

Meteorology

This event formed in the classic Florida landspout fashion. The combination of an outflow boundary moving north from a weakening cell near Fort Myers, a sea/harbor breeze from the Gulf and Charlotte Harbor, and outflow from a strengthening line of storms moving west from Desoto County produced a rapidly intensifying storm in western Charlotte County. Shortly after 730 PM EDT, the storm had excellent radar presentation (Figure 2, below), including a >60 dbZ reflectivity core (a), a high vertically integrated liquid

value (b), and even rotation at several levels (c). In addition to the spout, the storm produced penny sized hail and locally torrential rainfall.

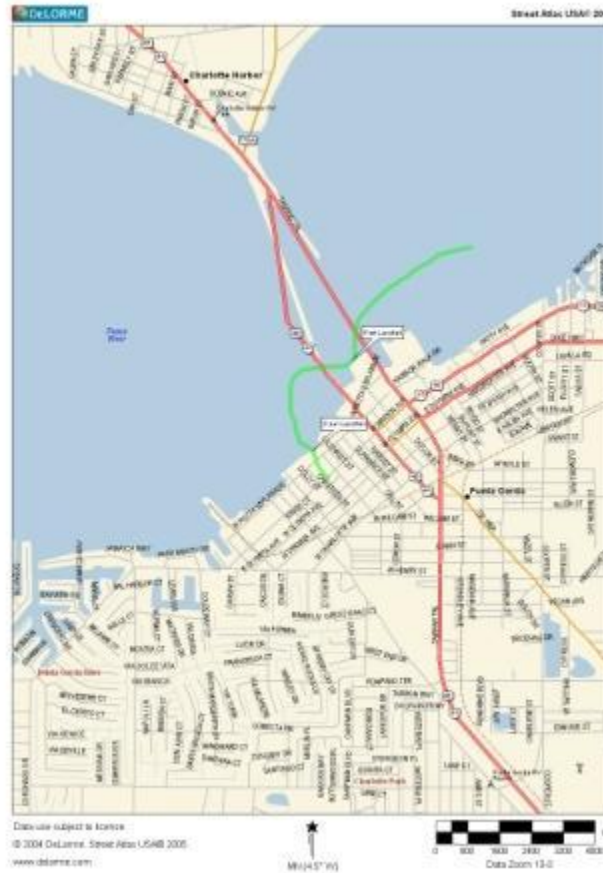


Figure 1. Estimated track (green) of waterspout/landspout along and over the Peace River.

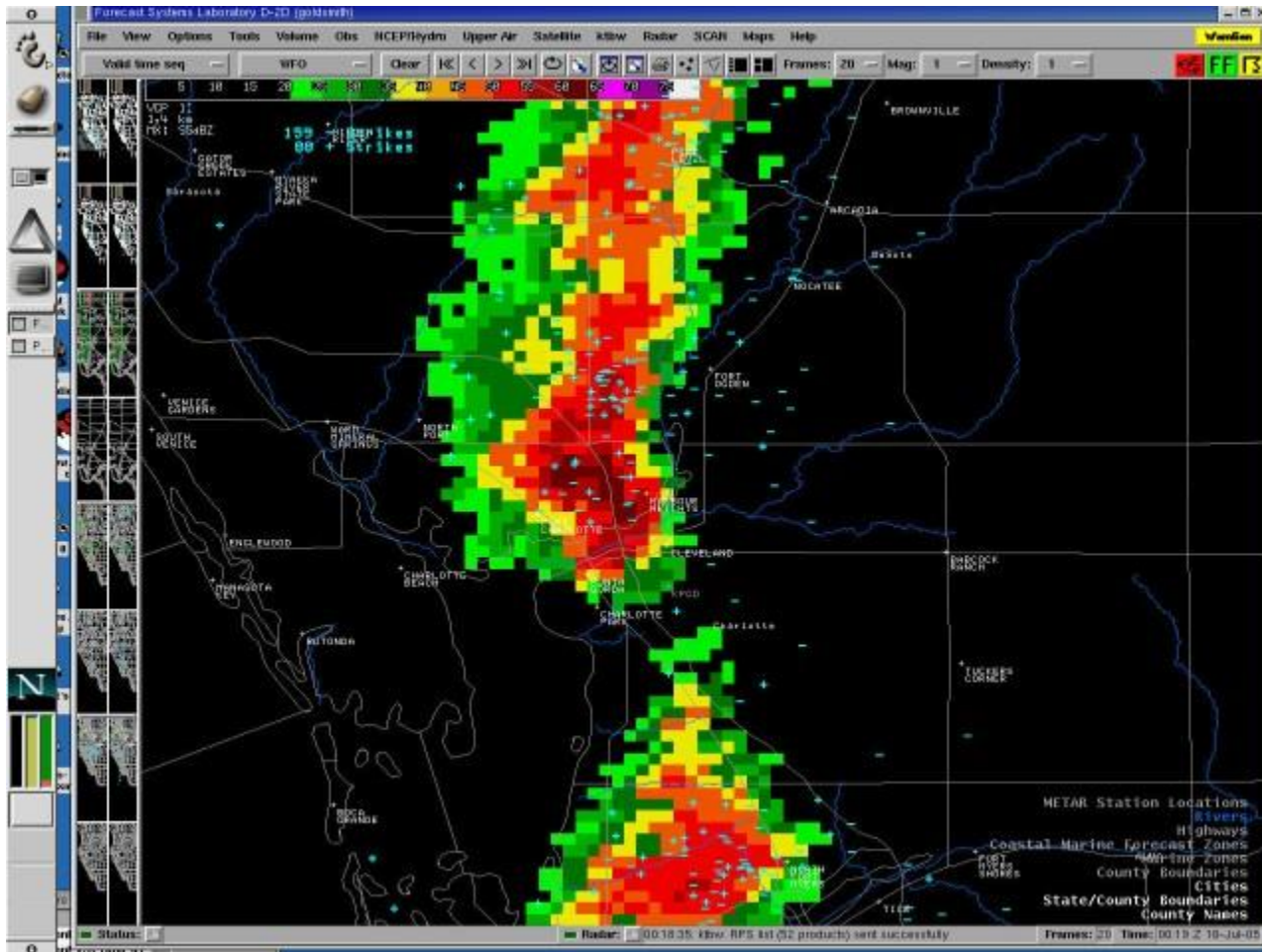
Punta Gorda Police Department NEWS RELEASE July 15, 2005

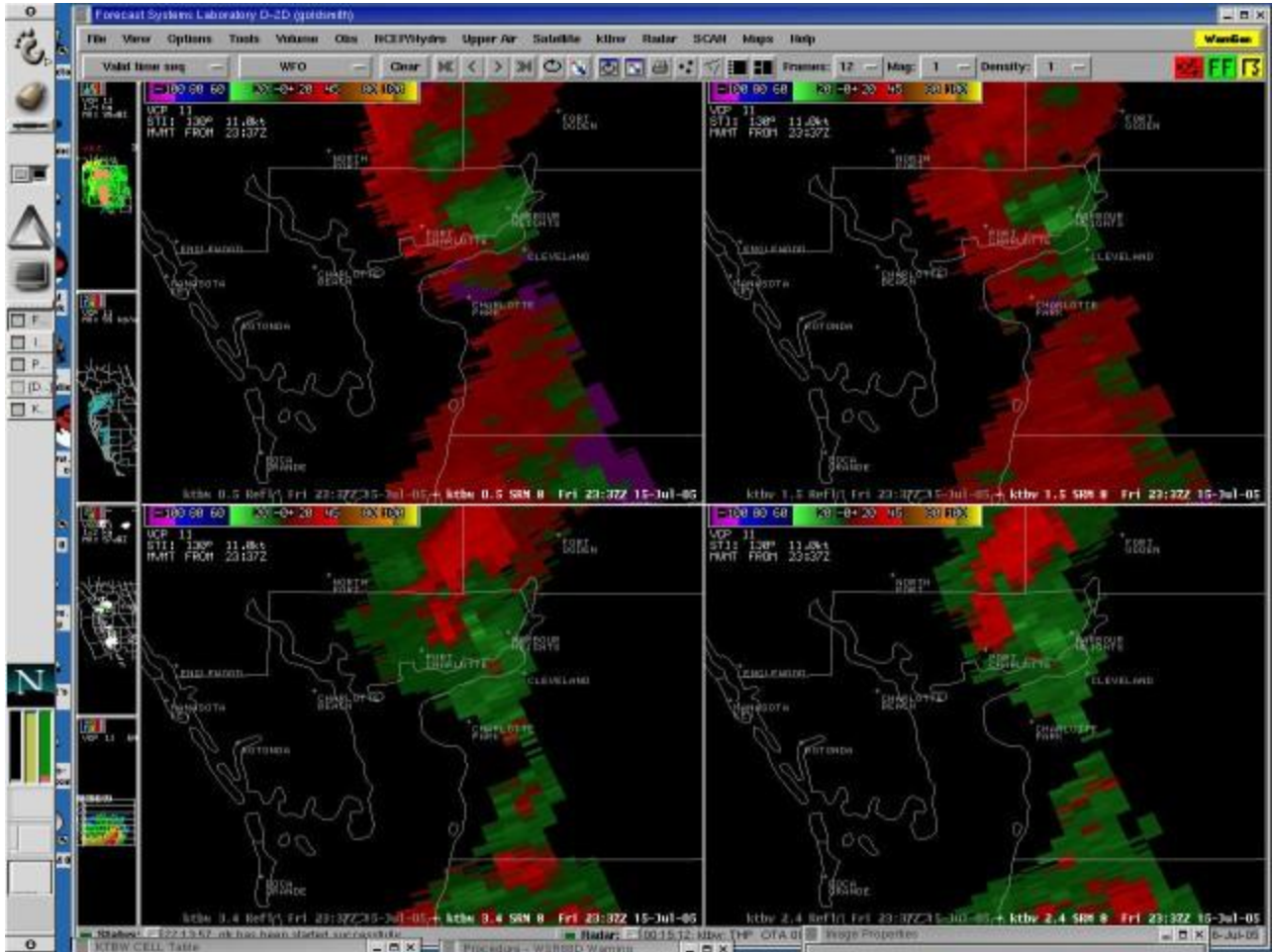
At approximately 7:30 p.m. this evening Punta Gorda Police Officers observed a tornado approaching the City of Punta Gorda in Charlotte Harbor on the city side of the harbor. The tornado approached from the area of I-75, crossed over the Barron Collier Bridge in the harbor, and made landfall in the City between the Barron Collier and Gilchrist Bridges. The tornado then moved back out into the harbor crossing the Gilchrist Bridge in the water. The tornado then made landfall again in the area of Gilchrist Park traveling south on land near Berry Street.

Punta Gorda Police Officers closed down both Bridges during the tornado and did their best to move civilians away from the area of the tornado during the approximately 20 minute event. At the time of this report only minor damage to a residence on Retta Esplanade along with other foliage damage have been located. There

are no reports of civilian injury.

At this time Punta Gorda Police have increased patrols and are preparing for localized flooding as thunderstorms continue in the area. We ask that civilians avoid the downtown Punta Gorda area at this time. Damage assessments are still underway.





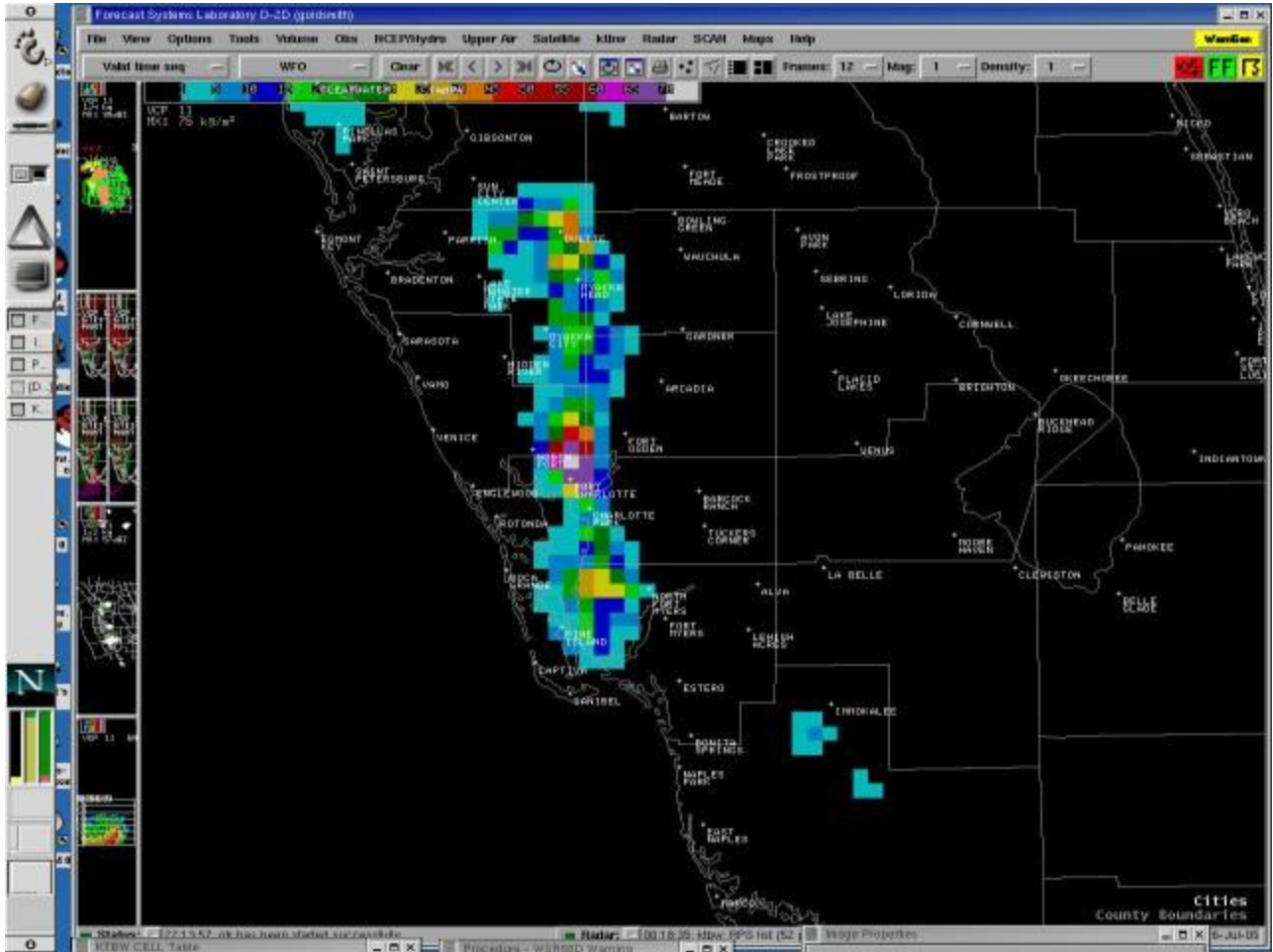


Figure 2, from top: (a) Composite reflectivity from parent thunderstorm, at peak intensity, 732 PM EDT. (b) Four-panel storm relative motion (velocity), just after onset of spout (737 PM EDT). Note weak but discernable couplet (green against red) near the Peace River. (c) Vertically integrated liquid just after peak intensity (737 PM EDT). Note the core (white pixel) along the Charlotte/Sarasota/Desoto county line.

July 15th Punta Gorda Photos

A few of the many land/waterspout photos from July 15th 2005 near Punta Gorda.
Thanks to residents, Skywarn spotters, and the Punta Gorda Police Department for providing these digital pictures in near real time!





