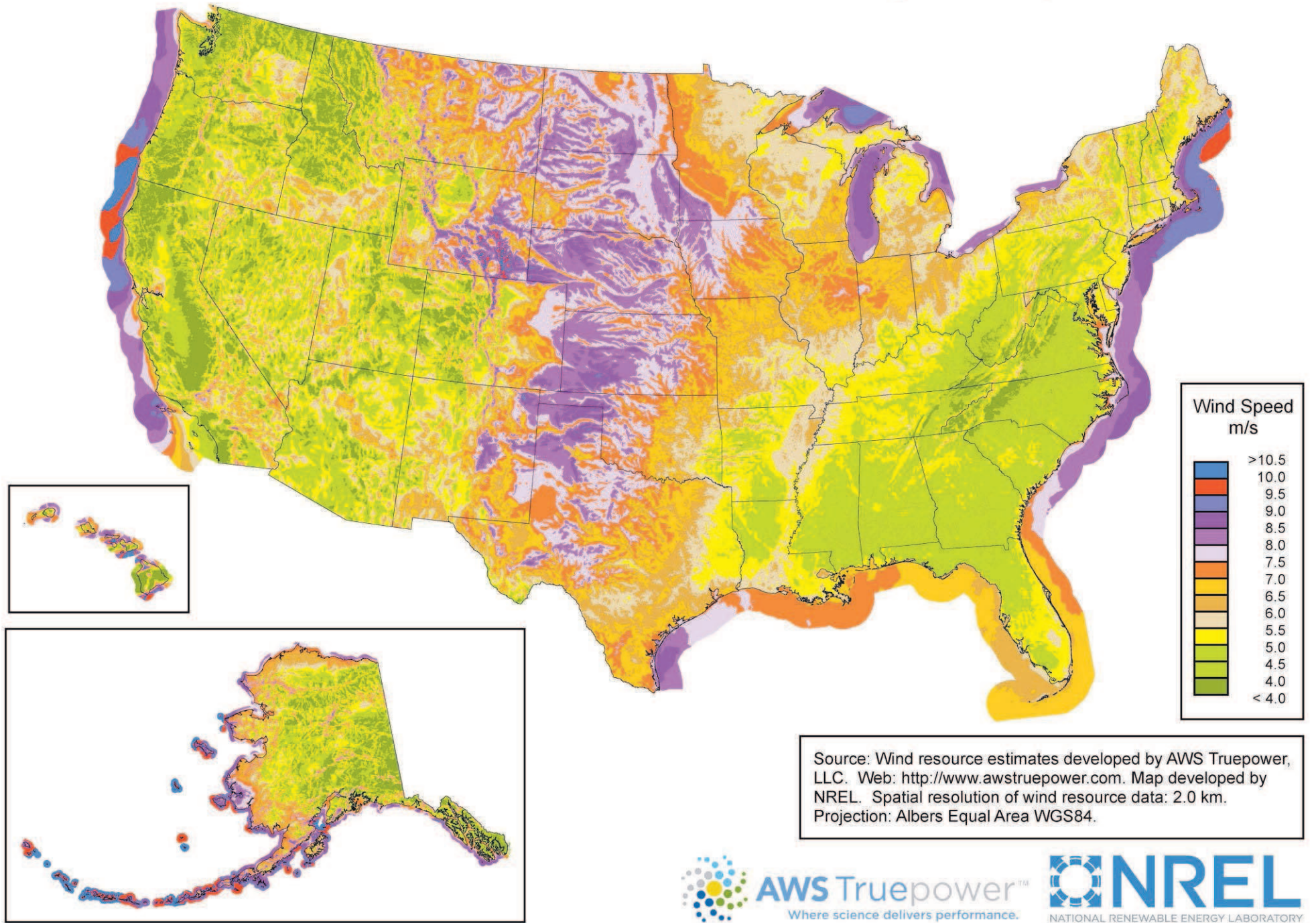


United States - Land-Based and Offshore Annual Average Wind Speed at 80 m



Purples and reds indicate intense winds, with the West's near-shore waters and the downward east slopes of the Rocky Mountains being especially prone to consistent strong breezes.

Storms, my dangerous addiction

Different winds were once identified with gods and goddesses, and imbued with personalities.

The seafaring Greeks paid particular heed, with their still-surviving Tower of the Winds in Athens dedicated to the eight greater and lesser wind deities — the west wind Zephyr, Skiron (NW), Boreas (N), Kaikias (NE), Eurus (E), Apeliotes (SE), Notos (S) and Lips (SW).

The messenger of spring, Zephyr is the husband of the rainbow goddess Iris in classical mythology, but was re-imagined as a pretty and deceptively powerful girl in Robert Jackson Bennett's 2012 Vaudevillian horror story, *The Troupe*. (I talk more about books in today's Friday Extra section. Though I didn't mention Bennett there, his more recent *City of Stairs* is a mutual favorite of mine and NPR librarian Nancy Pearl.)

Notos, bringer of storms and destroyer of crops, was our hard-charging visitor Wednesday night — though I suppose any truly local mythology based here would more properly assign dangerous properties to the southwest wind, Sou'wester — deliverer of glass balls.

Considering our Scandinavian heritage — even I'm part Norse — maybe we should pay local tribute to that culture's god of the wind, Njord, father of Freyja — after whom we named Friday.

The Chinook people, whose whole existence forms a tapestry with the natural world, surely must have created personifications of the wind spirits. But the dictionaries at my disposal — for the Chinook jargon trade language rather than formal Chinook — says the tribe's word for wind was, simply, wind, adopted from English.

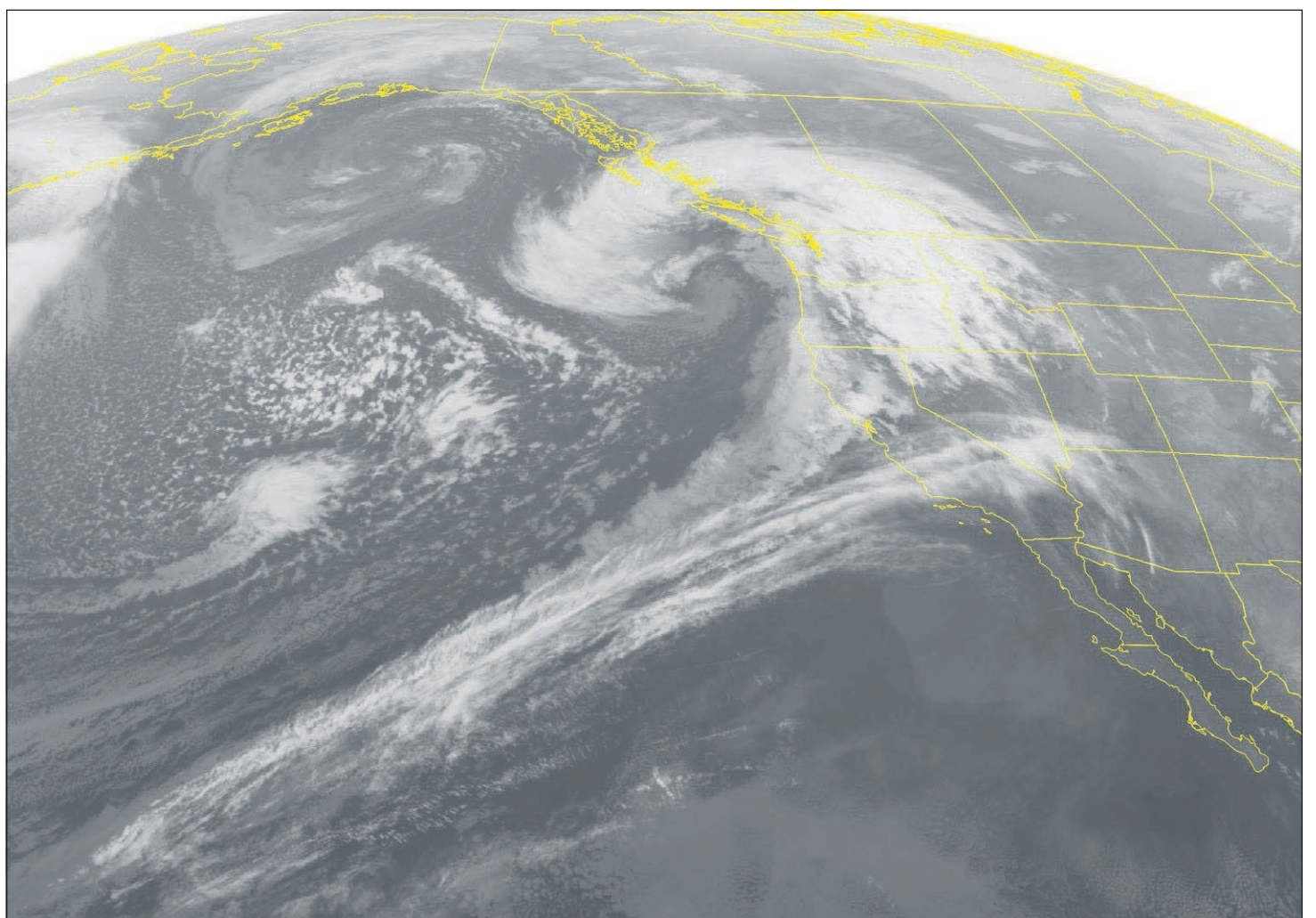
Long before learning of the Chinook Tribe, my family welcomed the wind named for them. Though sometimes violent, a chinook brings sudden relief from the aching cold of winter on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains in Montana and Wyoming. It is a sometimes-deceptive first taste of spring, capable of melting a foot of snow in an hour or two.

In the isolated mountain valley where I spent my childhood, my mother complained the winter air was so stagnant that the tops of fenceposts accumulated evergrowing stalagmites of undisturbed snow from October to April. Getting a chinook was like being blessed by the warm breath of a friendly genie, transforming icicles into crocuses.

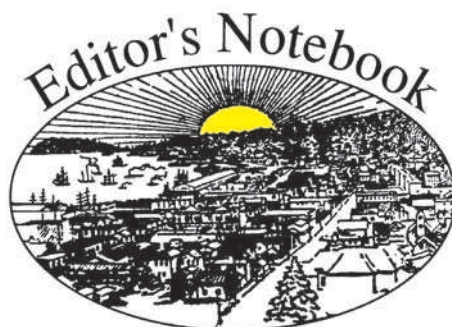
Besides rare, sheltered Shangri-Las like



Matt Winters



This NOAA satellite image taken Wednesday at 10 p.m. shows a strong area of low pressure bringing rain to the Pacific Northwest and northern California along a cold front that is moving east.



I've been hooked on storms like our kitty is hooked on albacore.

Rocky Mountain winter. ... The wind outside is frightening, but it's kinder than the lightning life in the city. It's a hard life to live but it gives back what you give."

Wednesday night, as it often does, the North Pacific storm wind played a demonic symphony, sometimes dropping nearly beyond the range of hearing only to come roaring back like an angry swarm of winged lions clawing against the windows of our south-facing house.

Watching government wind gauges on my computer, I could visualize the physical form of each house-shaking blast as it bounded through the forests. At about 8:45 p.m. as a bomb-like gust gripped and released us, I thought "This might be the one," and about 10 minutes later it slammed into Radar Ridge, pushing Bonneville Power Administration's instrument above 100 mph, to 104 — the symbolic milestone I'd been awaiting.

This proved to be the storm's crescendo, though the finale was still several hours away.

About my second winter here, I walked out to the tip of North Head during a ferocious storm much like the one this week. Probably the only person crazy enough to visit that 50-million-year-old basalt cliff the whole riotous day, I was witness to the wind taking the rock by the throat and shaking it like a terrier killing a black rat.

A thousand railroad locomotives crashing at full speed into a building-sized block of solid steel could not have expended more naked energy than the waves torpedoing the bottom of North Head, smashing towering shards of sea foam straight up into my streaming eyes. Only the rusting chain-link fence circling the lighthouse kept me from being hurled from the precipice. Ever since, I've been hooked on storms like our kitty is hooked on albacore.

Storms — my dangerous addiction.

— M.S.W.

Matt Winters is editor and publisher of the *Chinook Observer* and *Coast River Business Journal*.



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