An Investigation of the Skill of GFS/GEFS Forecasts for Two Recent Extreme Weather Events

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18 February 2016

Motivation

One or several **extreme weather events (EWEs)** can have a substantial impact on seasonal temperature and precipitation statistics.

Jamie Henn - Twitter

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An increased understanding of **EWEs** has the potential to improve temperature and precipitation forecasts for the 8–10 day period.

Jamie Henn - Twitter

Objectives

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- **22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm**

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2) To evaluate the skill of operational GFS and GEFS forecasts for these events.

3) To outline a research plan that desires to systematically identify, classify, and evaluate EWEs.

22–24 January 2016 Blizzard

~1,125,000 km^2 affected.

24 million people resided in locations with **>50 cm** of snow.

~500,000 lost power along the East Coast.

55 fatalities attributed to the storm.

NOAA

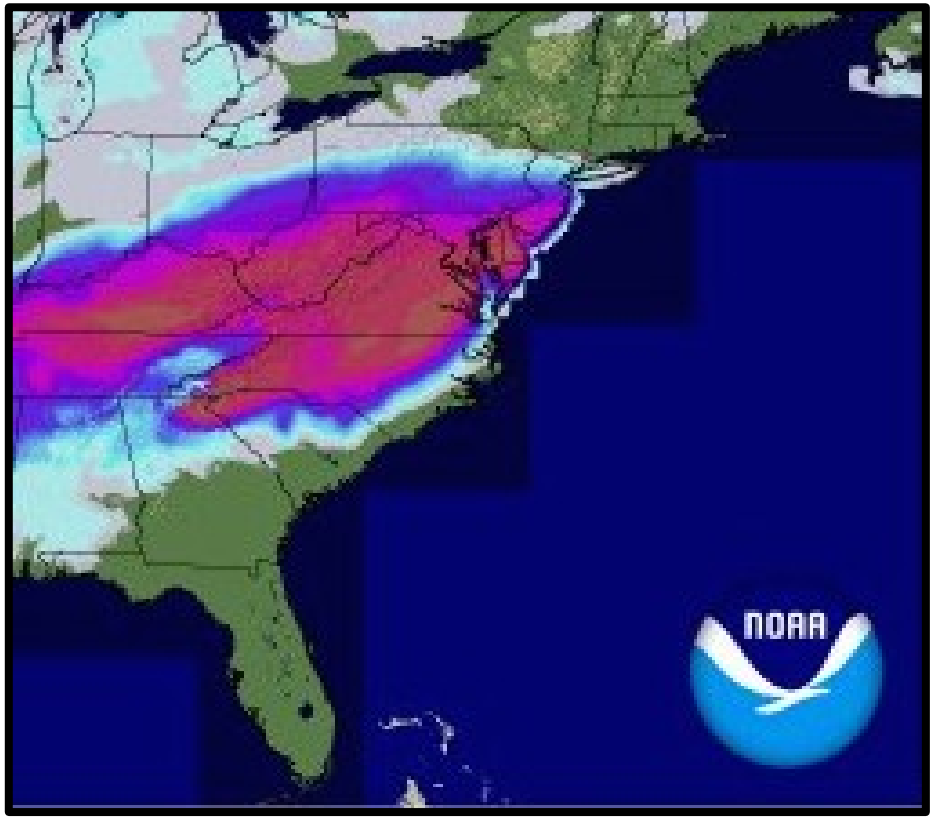
Jarekt

A. Hink

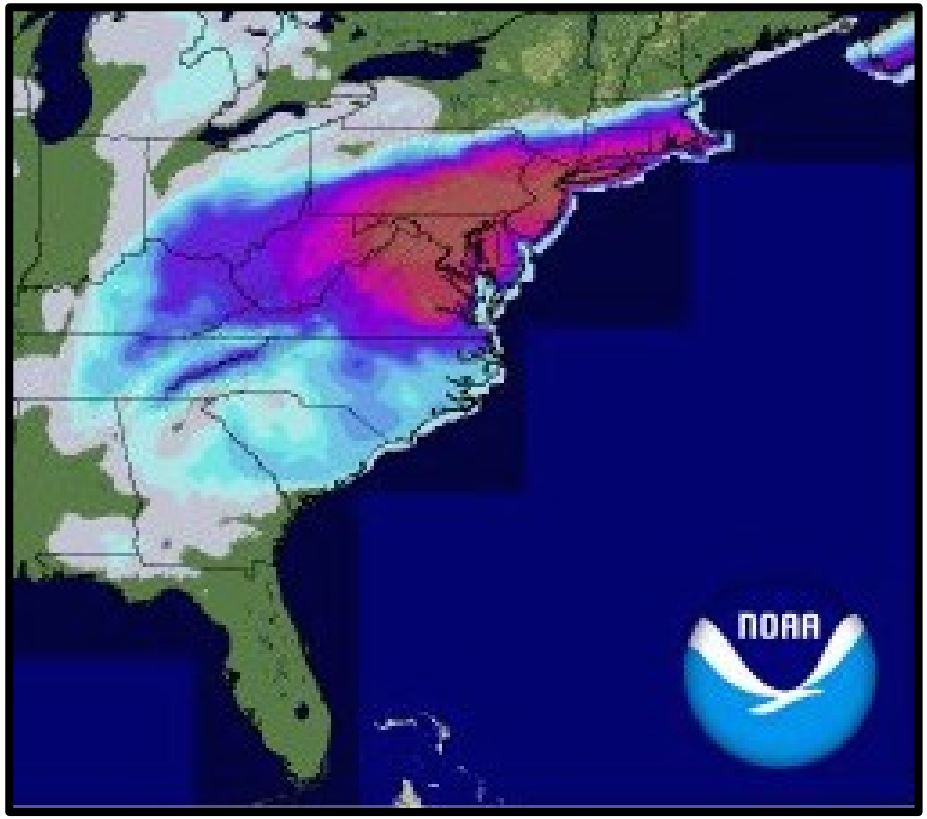
22–24 January 2016 Blizzard

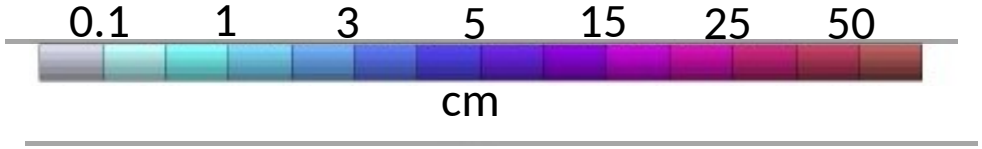
24-h Snow Accumulation

Ending: 0600 UTC 23 January 2016



Ending: 0600 UTC 24 January 2016





NOHRSC

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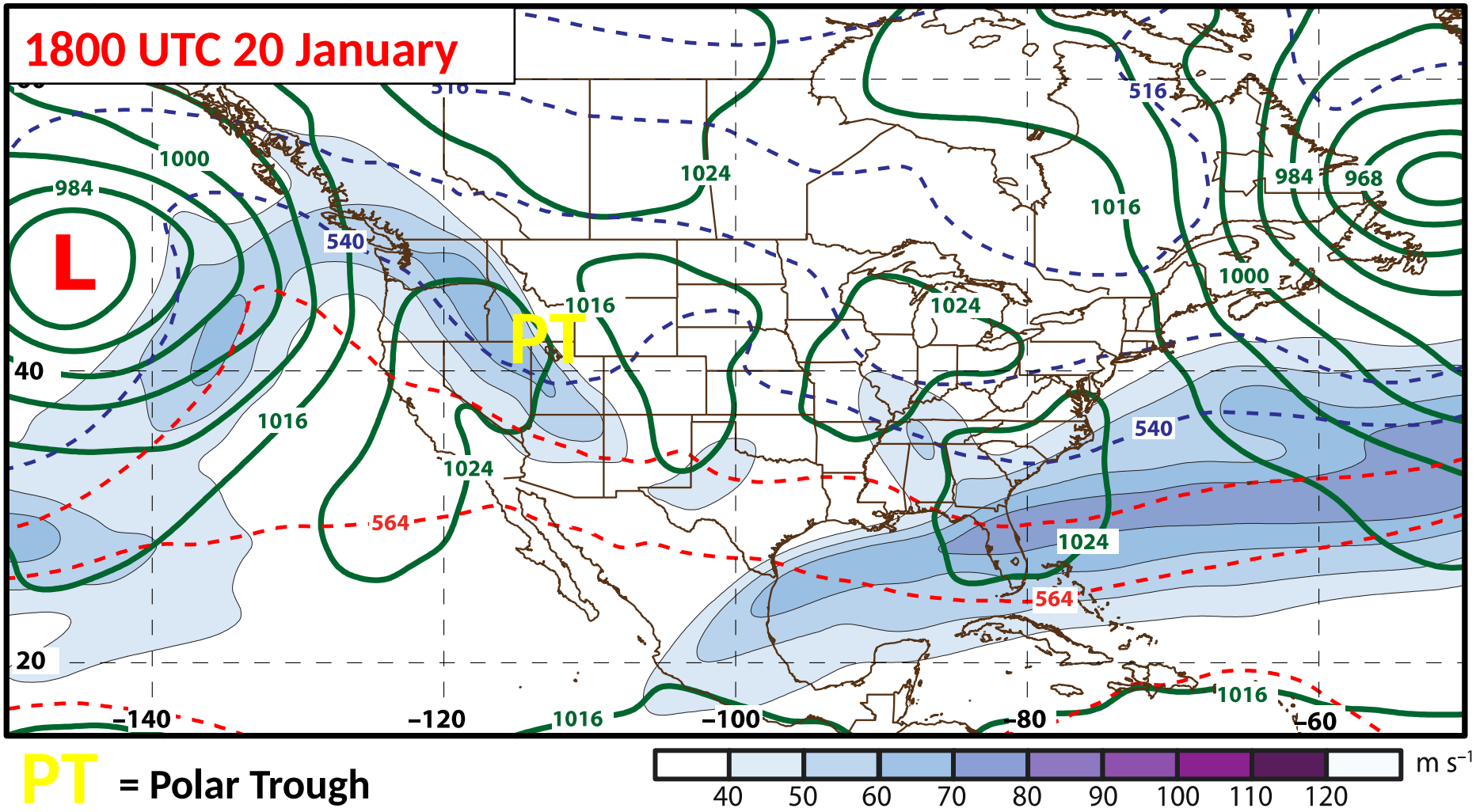

PT = Polar Trough

250 hPa Wind Speed (m s^{-1}; fill)
Mean SLP (hPa; green)
1000–500 hPa Thickness (dam; dashed)

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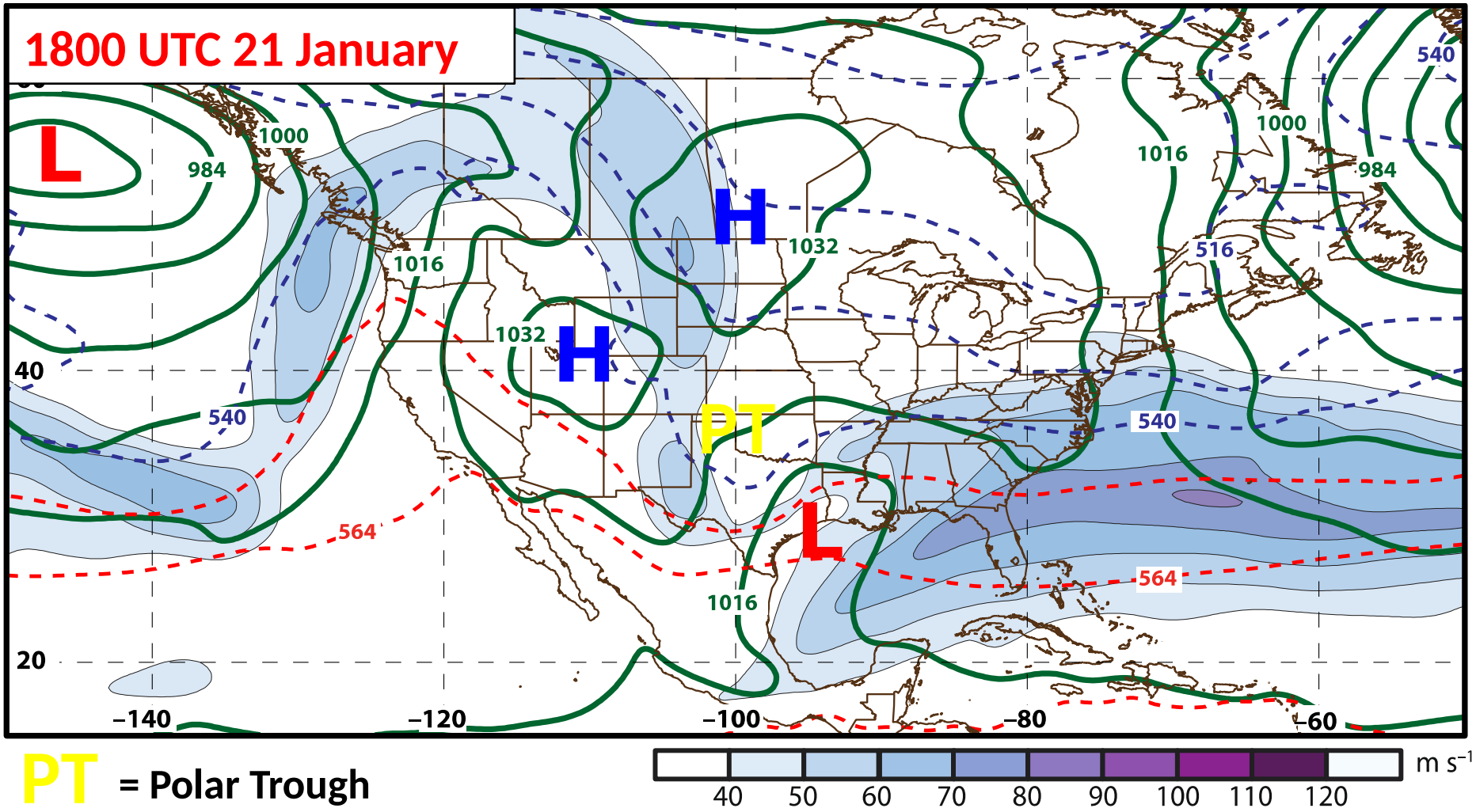

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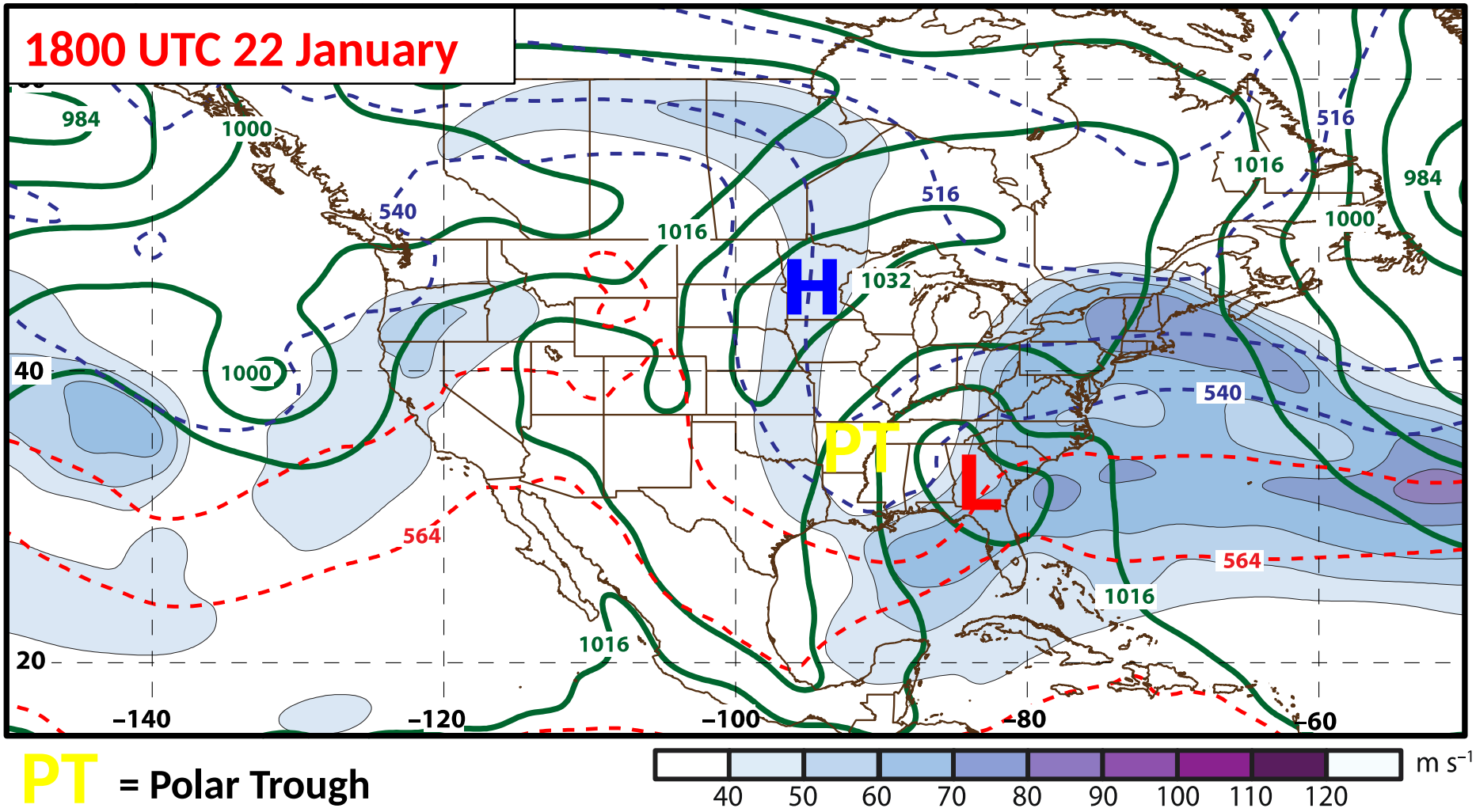

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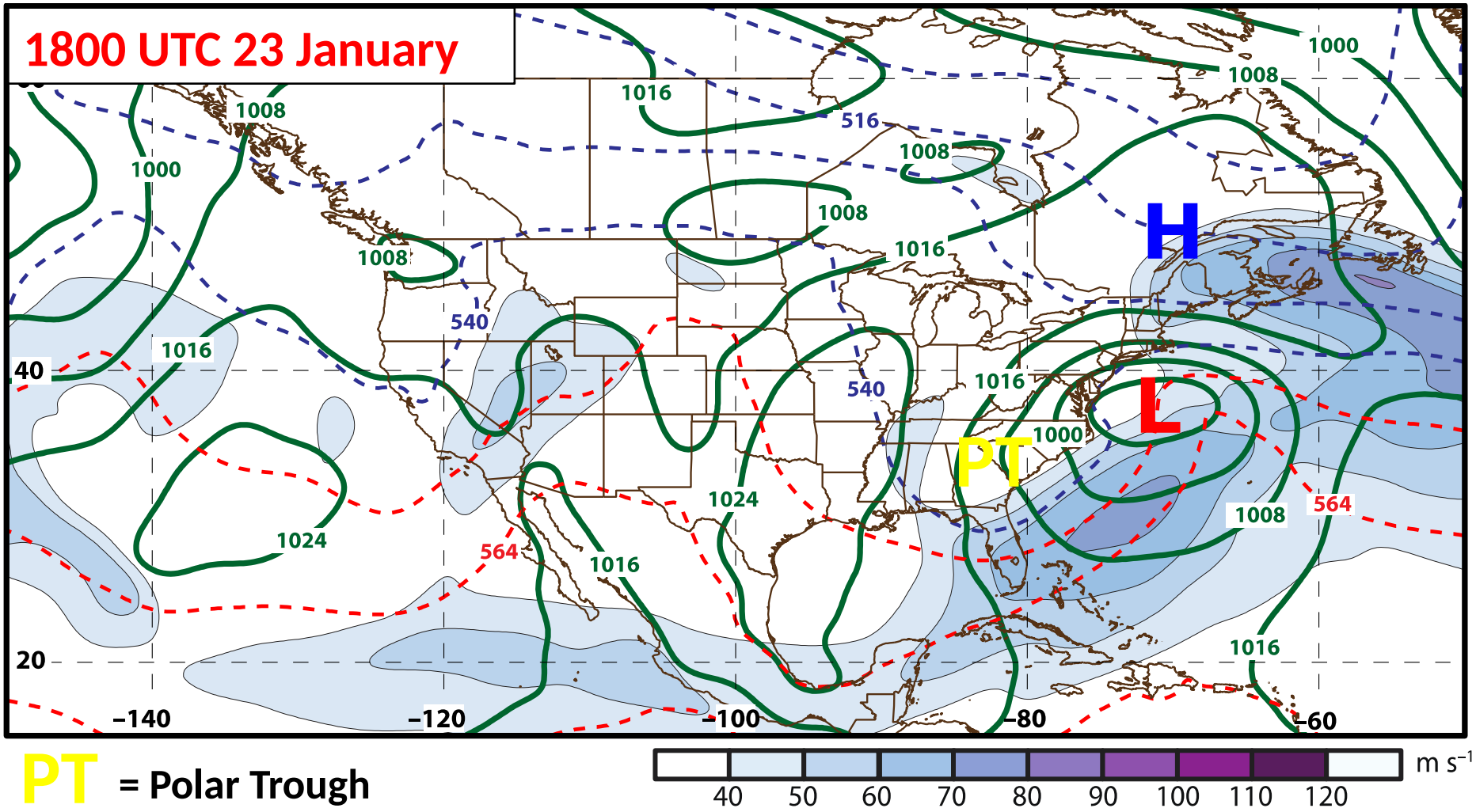

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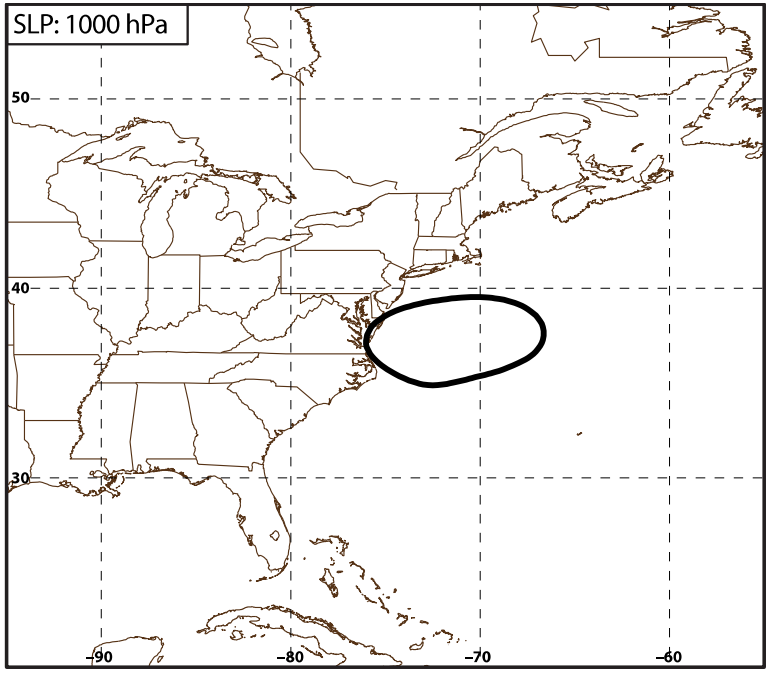
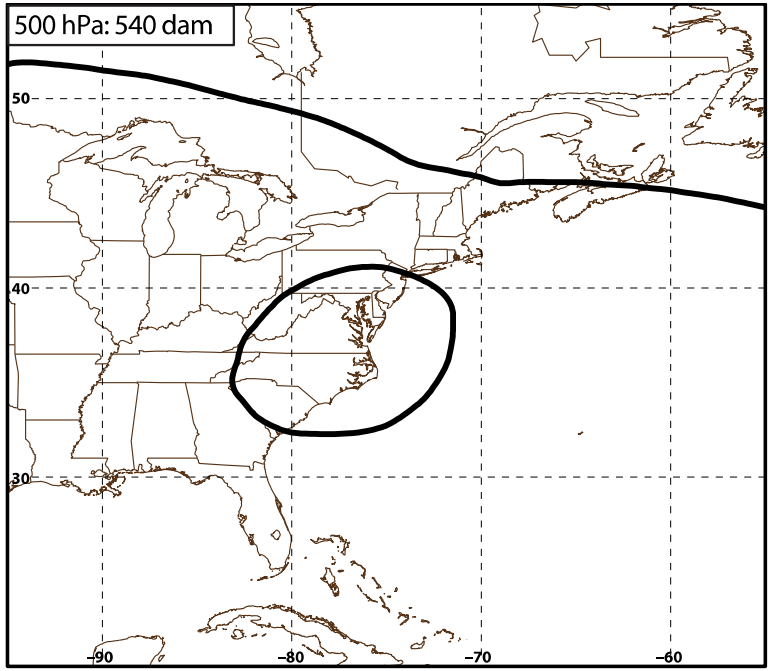
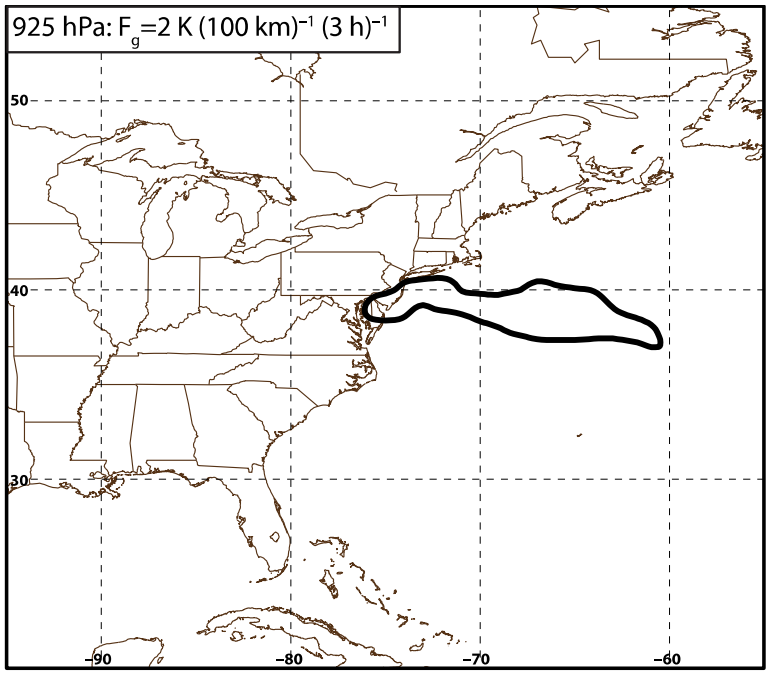
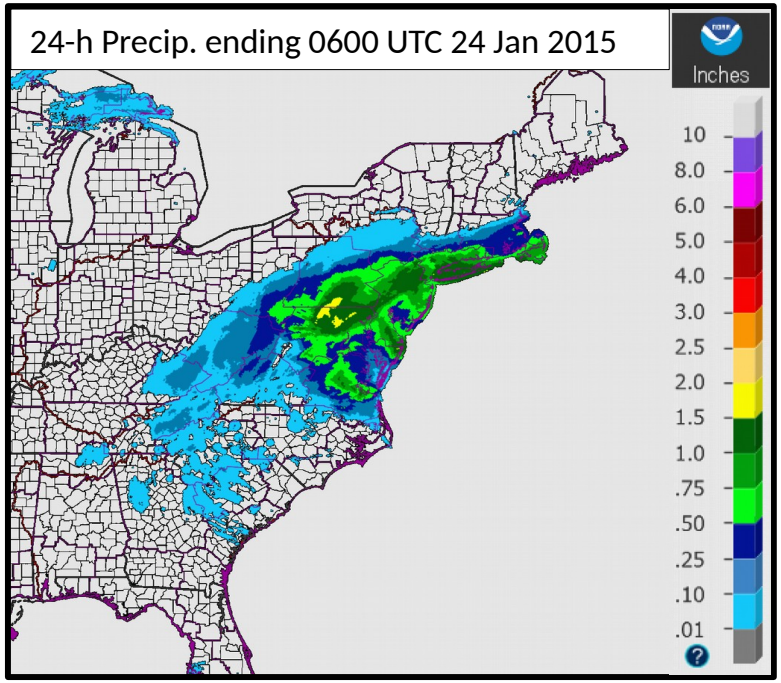
GFS Forecasts Verifying 1800 UTC 23 Jan 2016









00-h

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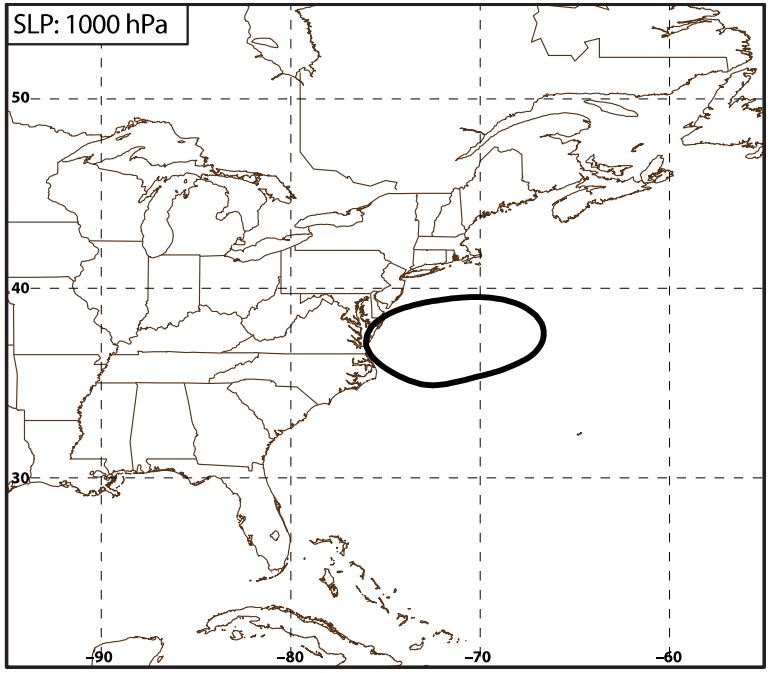
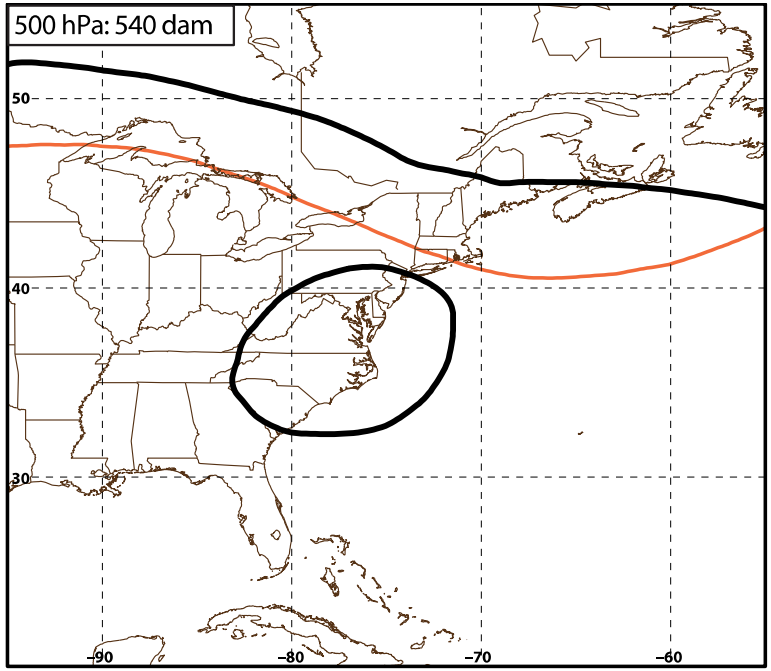
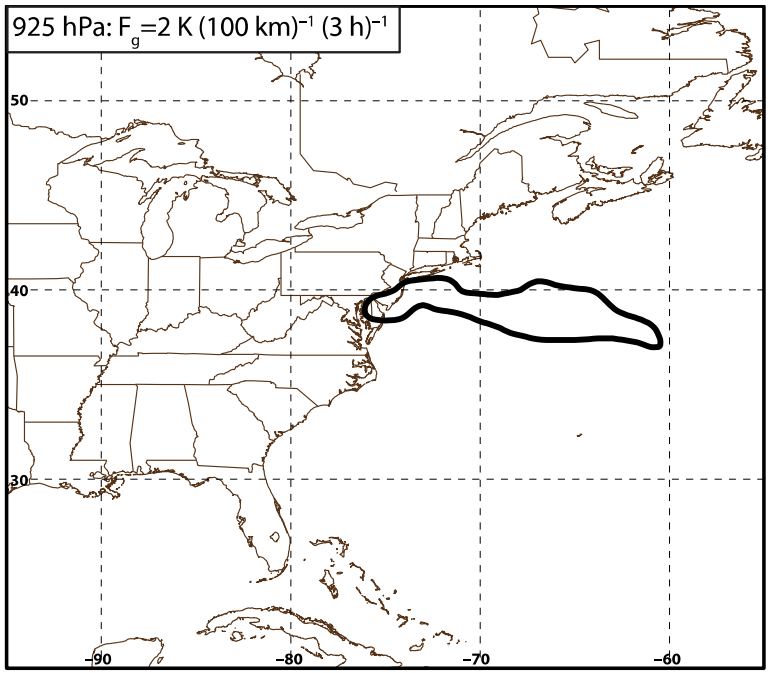
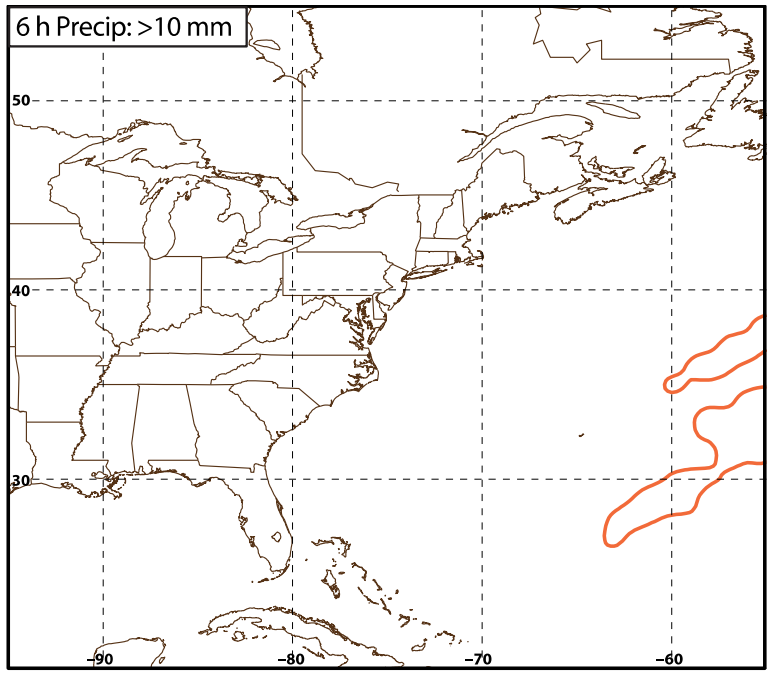
240-h

00-h









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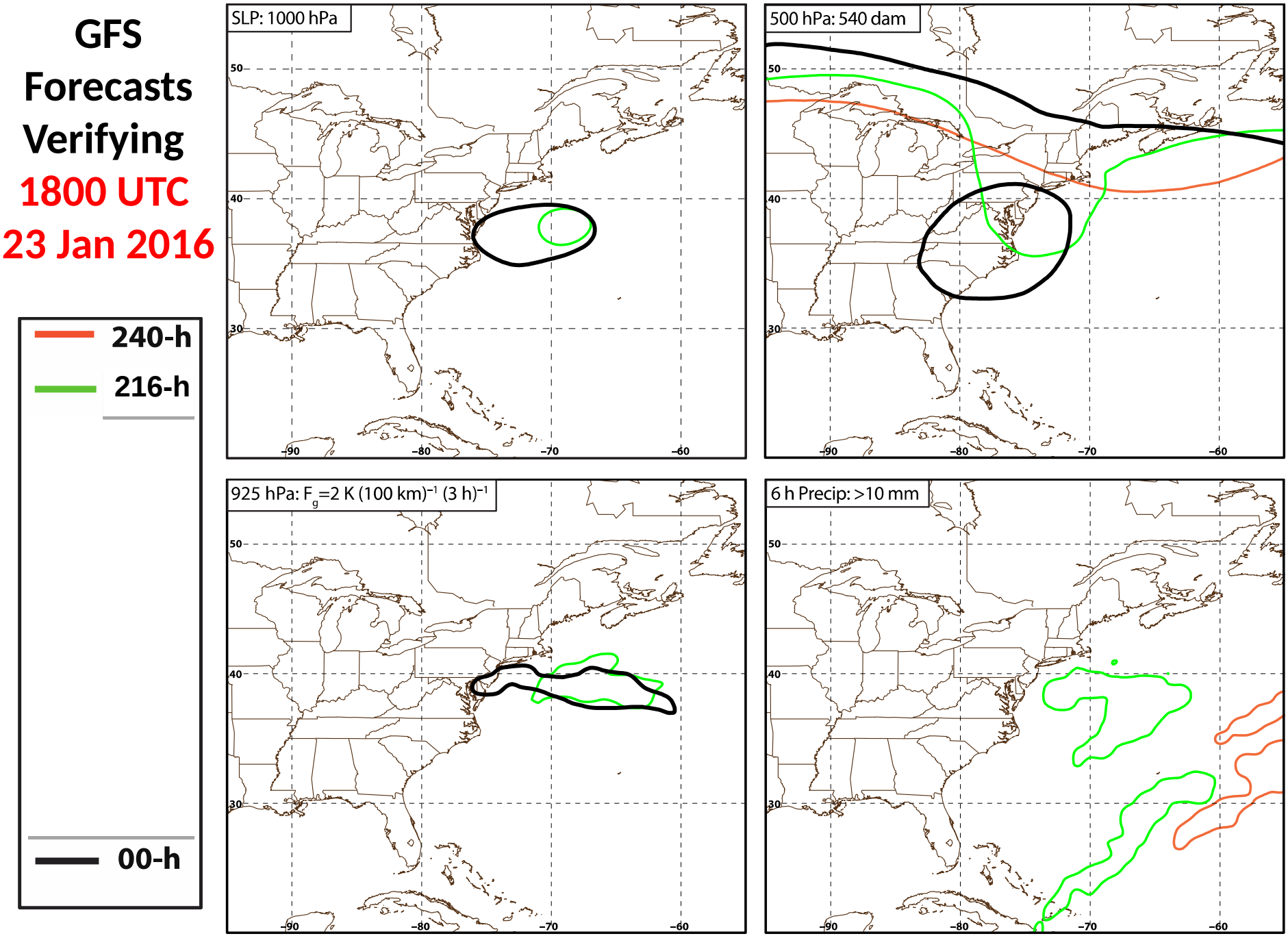

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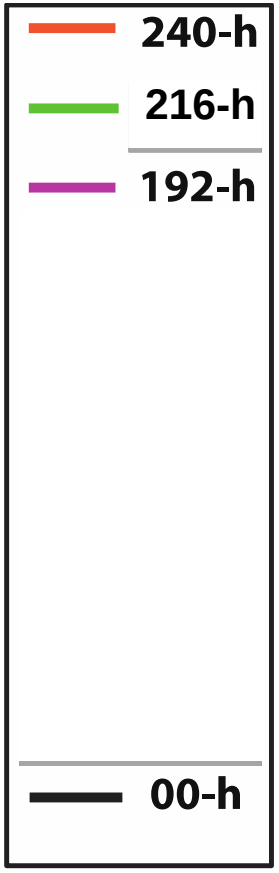

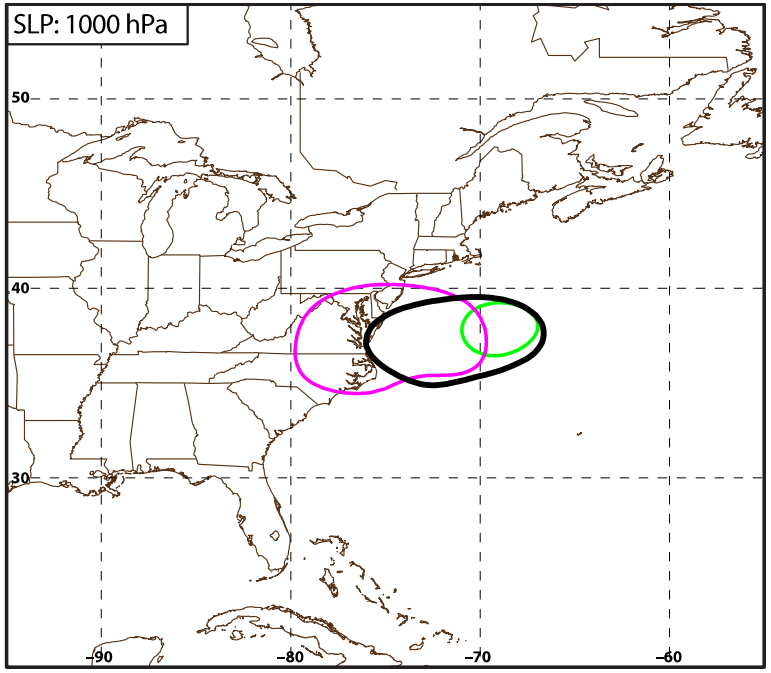

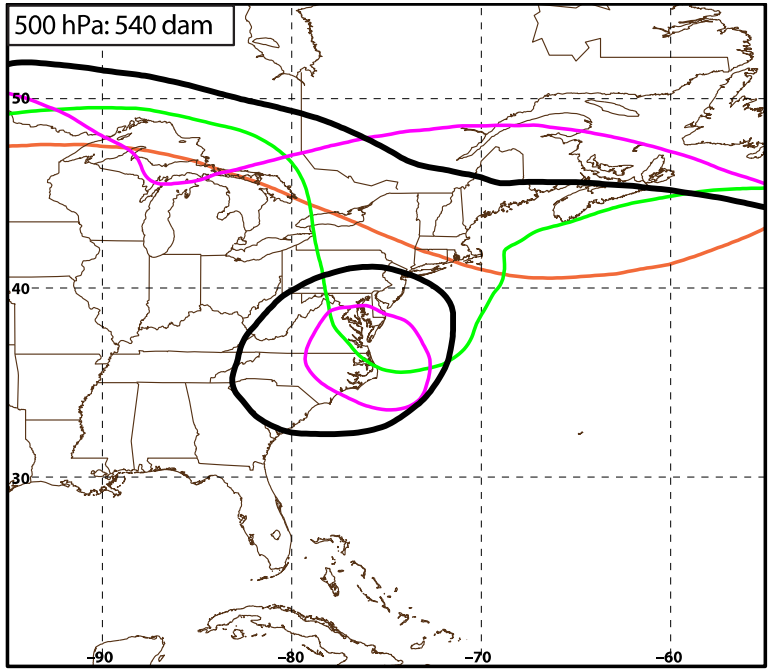

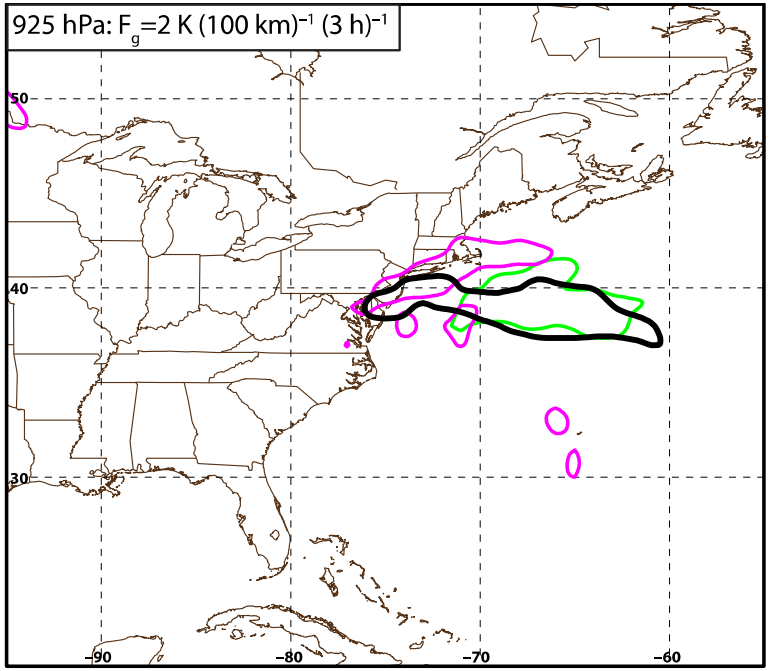

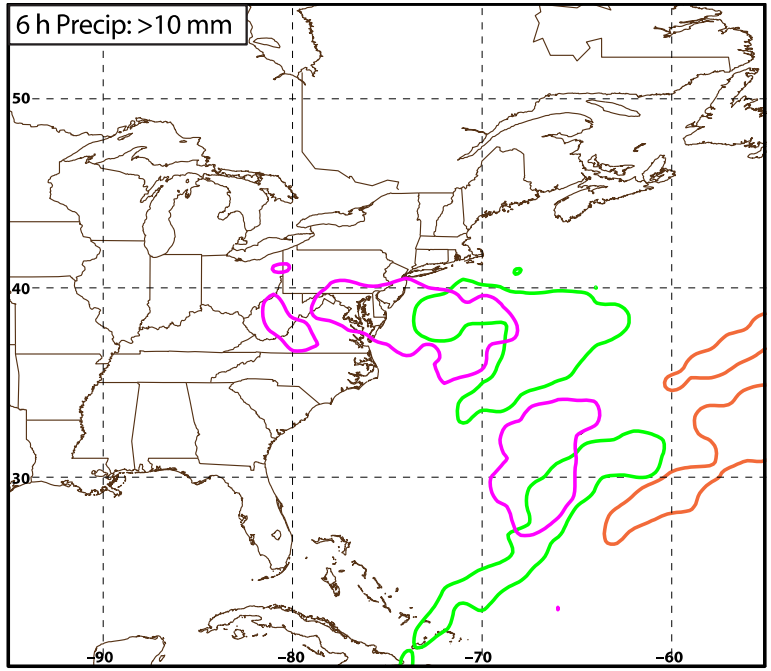

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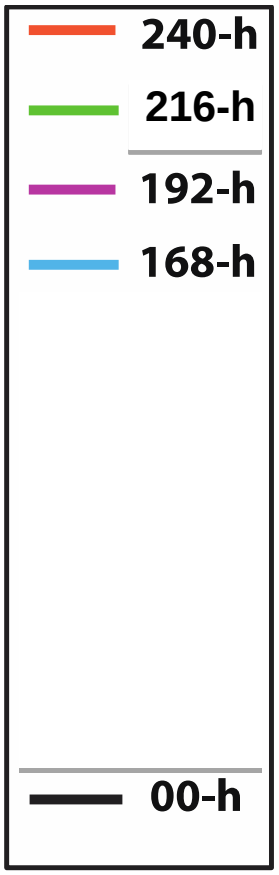

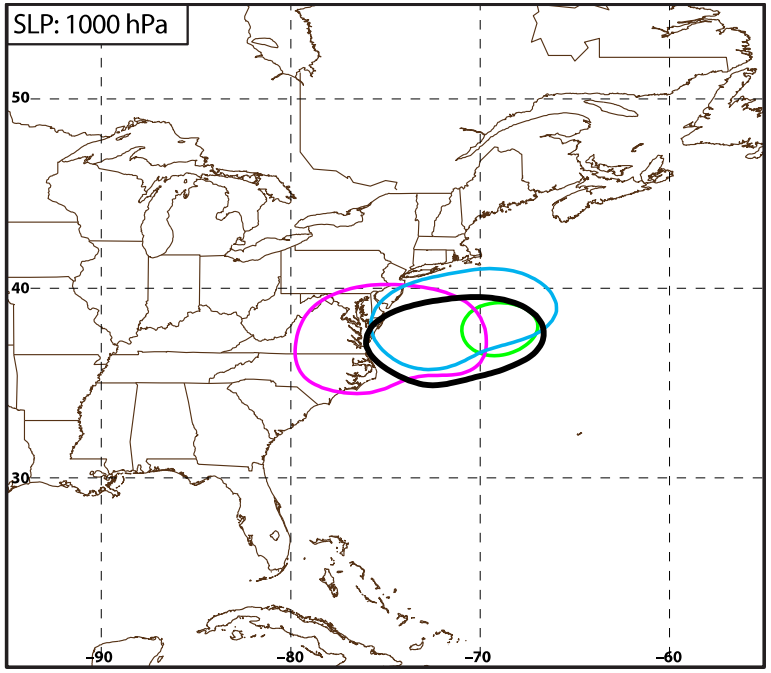

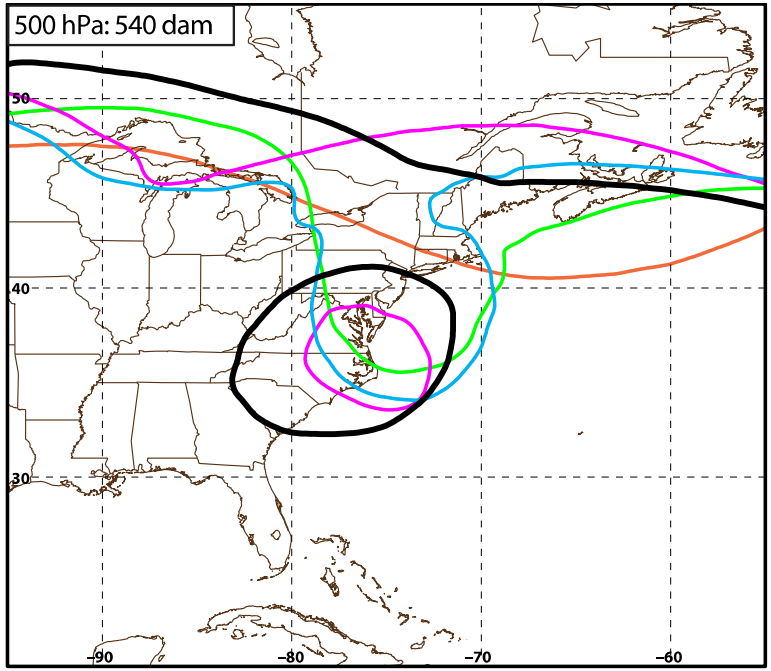

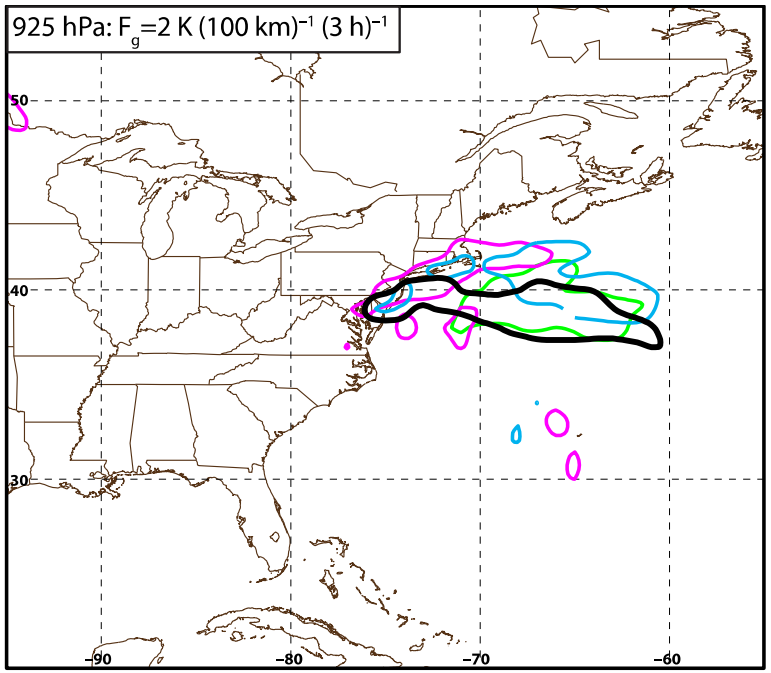

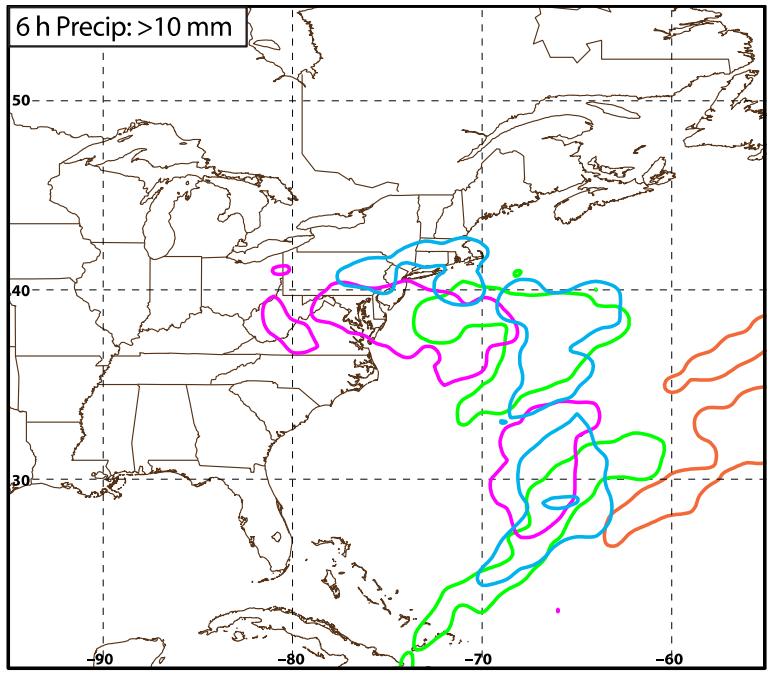

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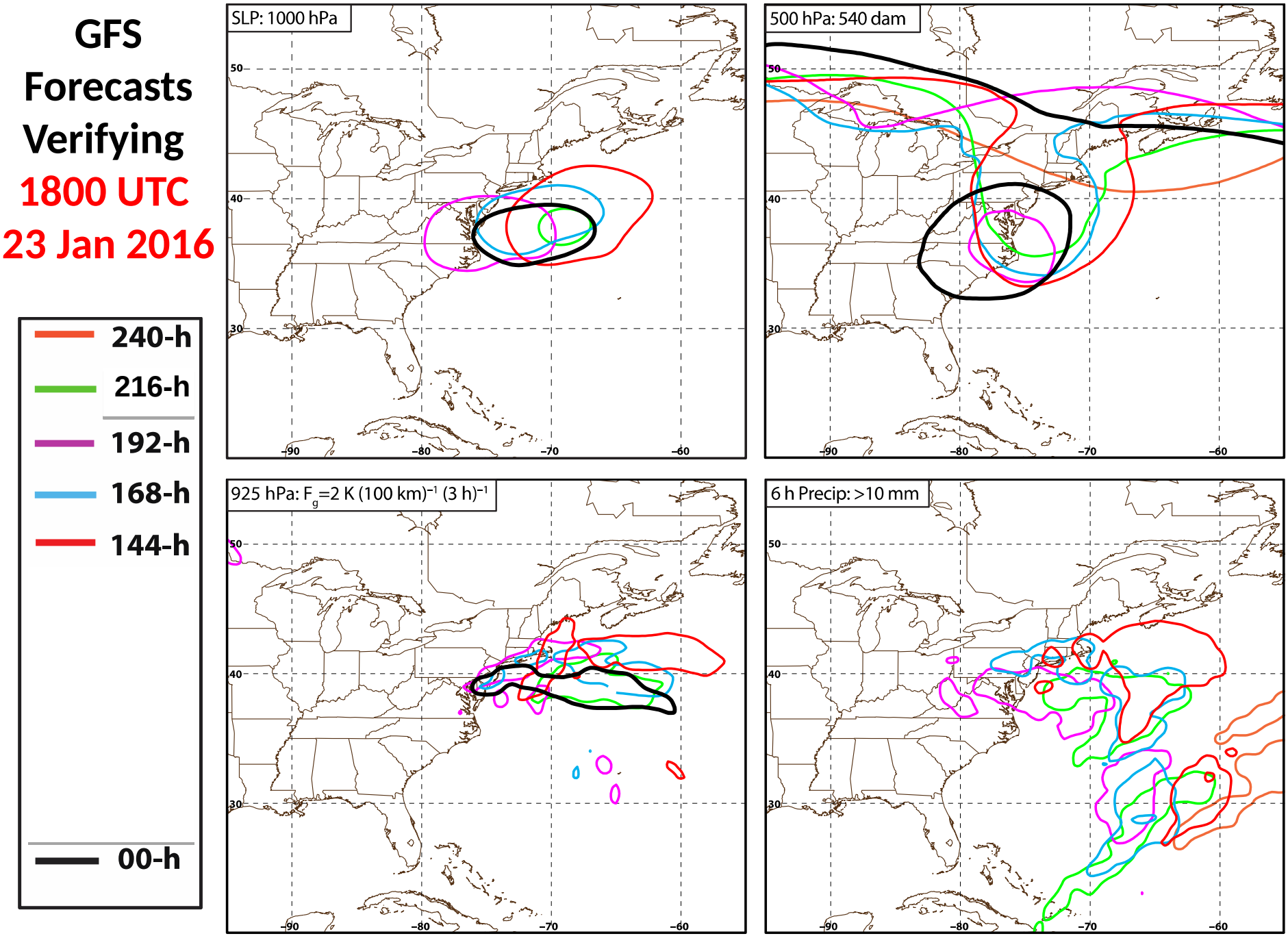

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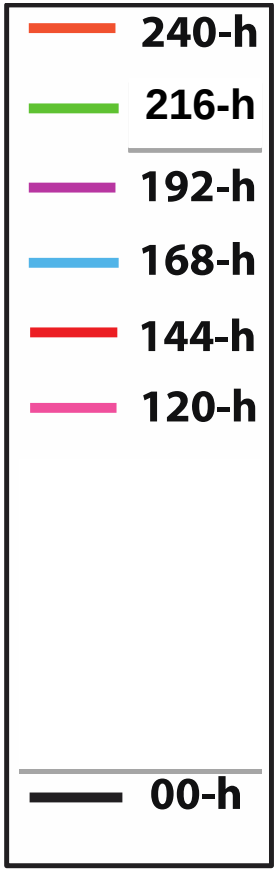

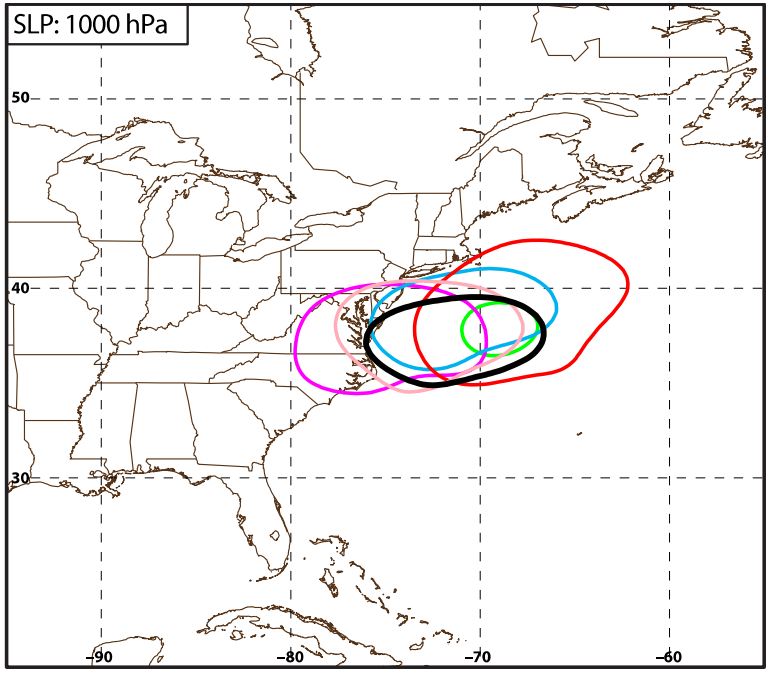

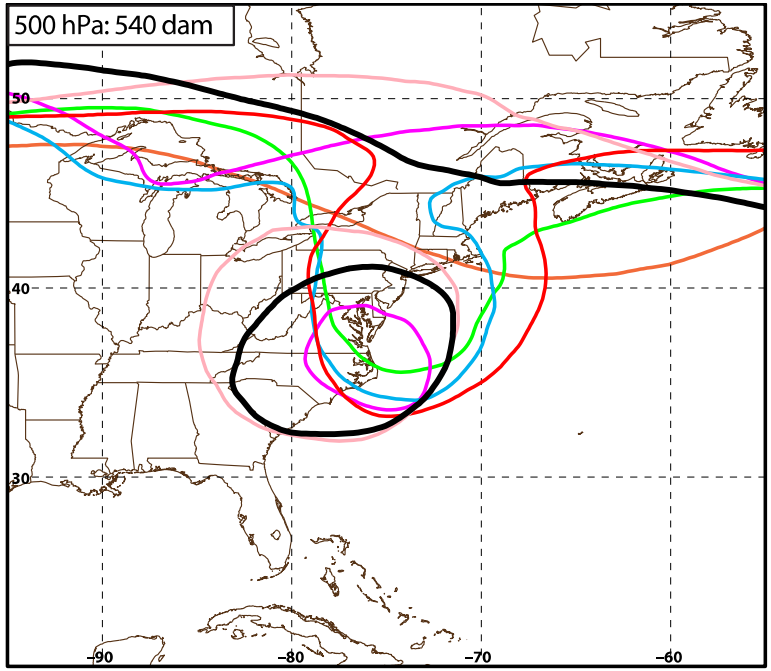

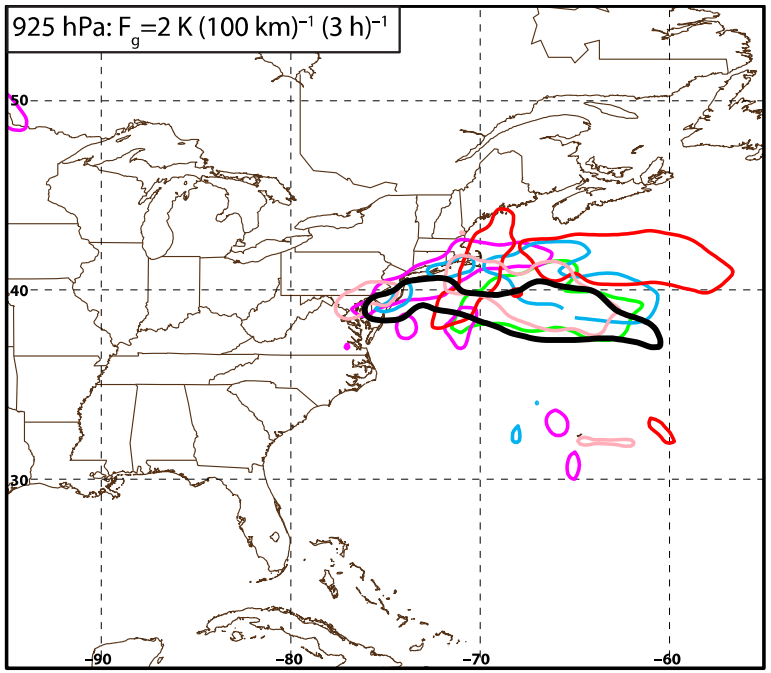

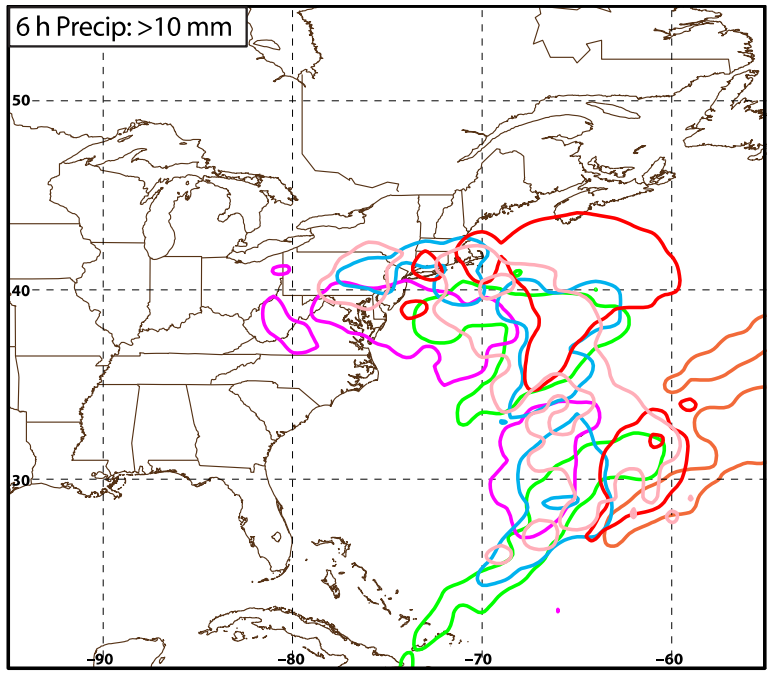

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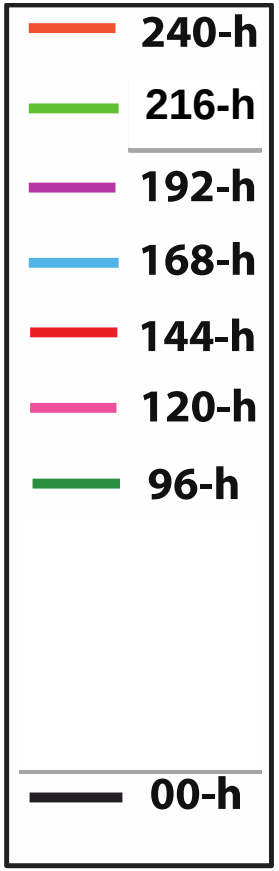

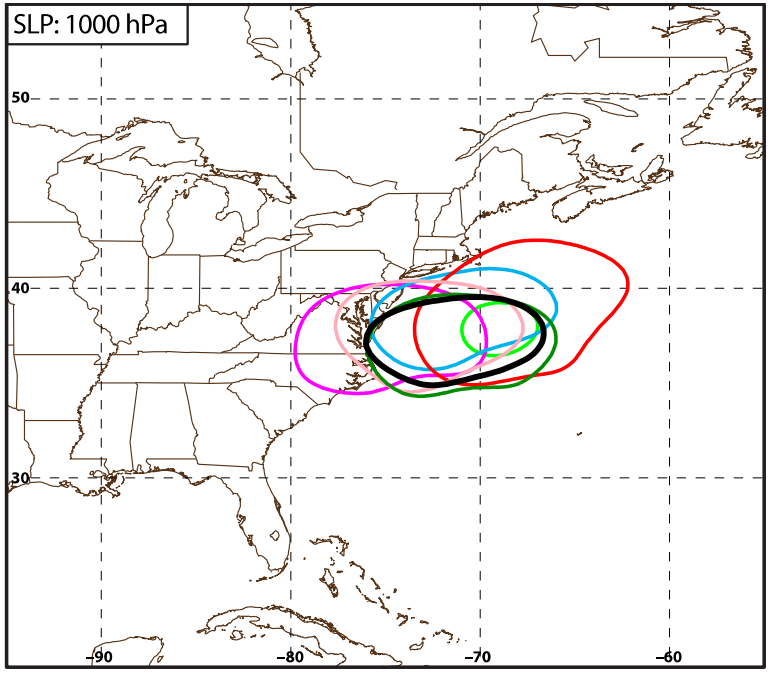

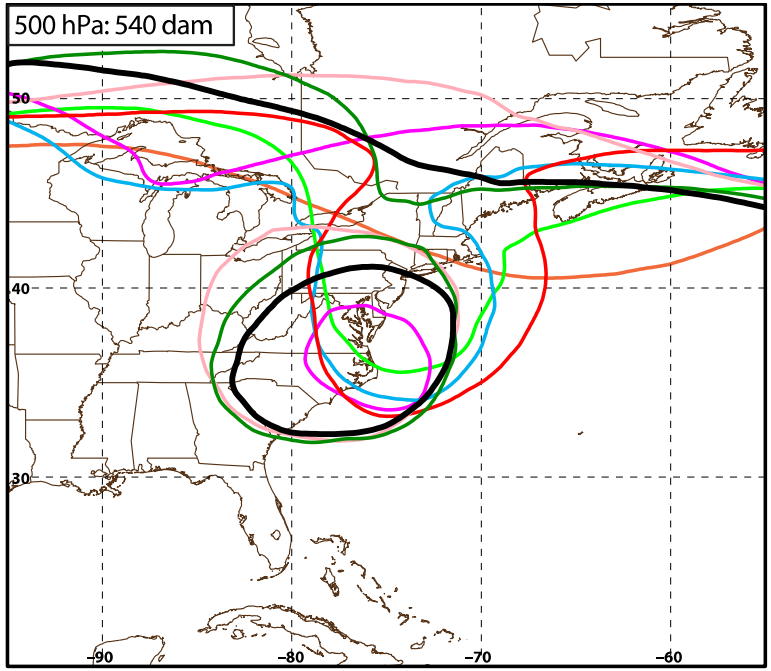

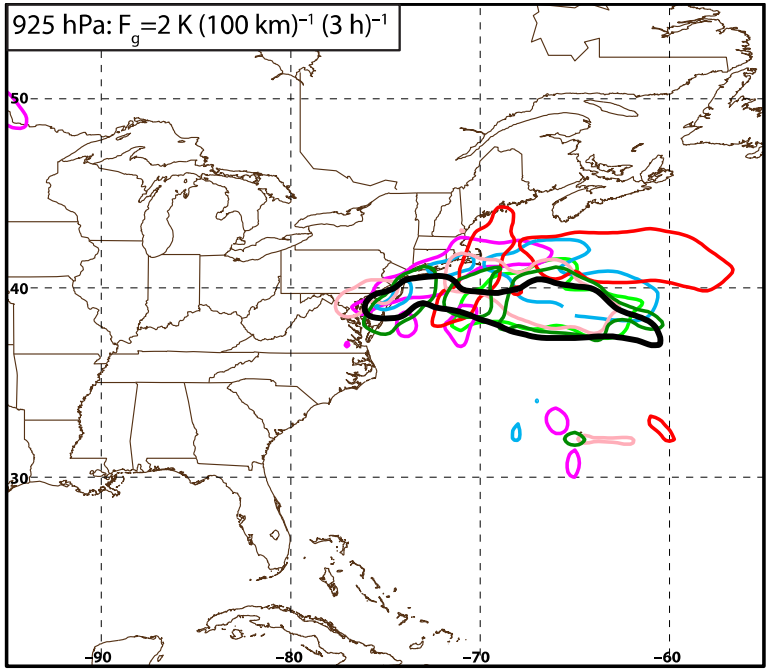

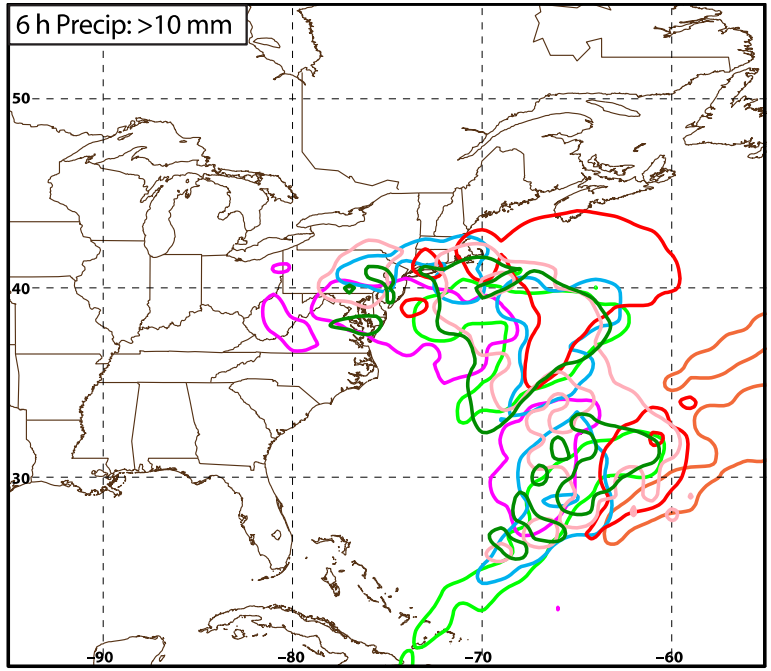

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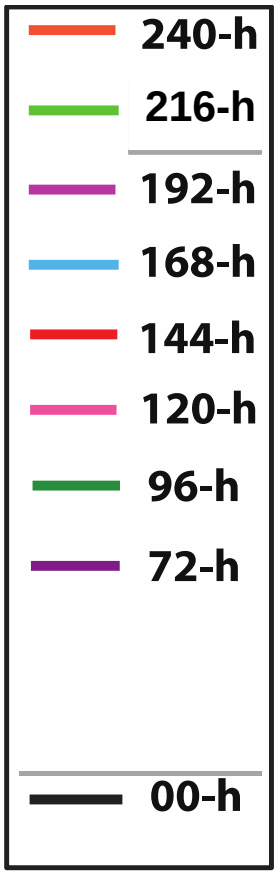

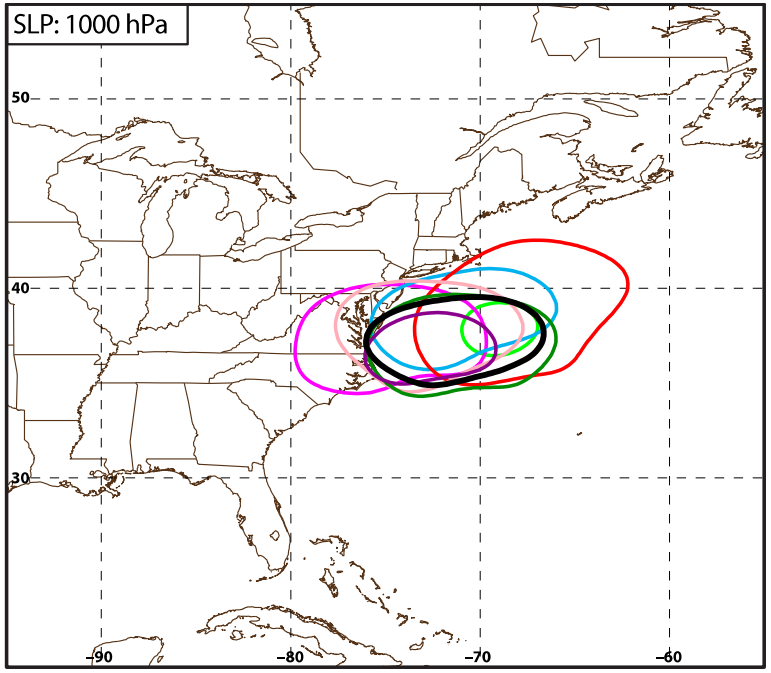

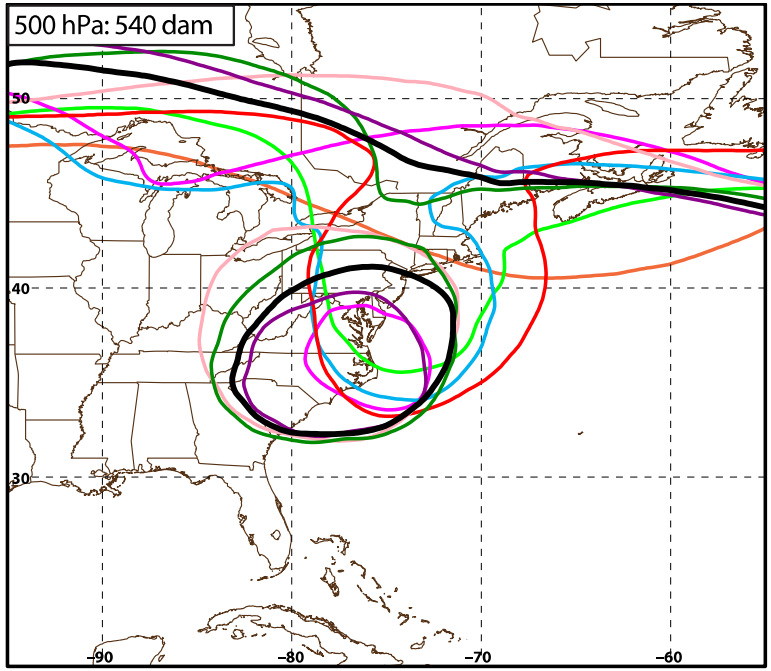

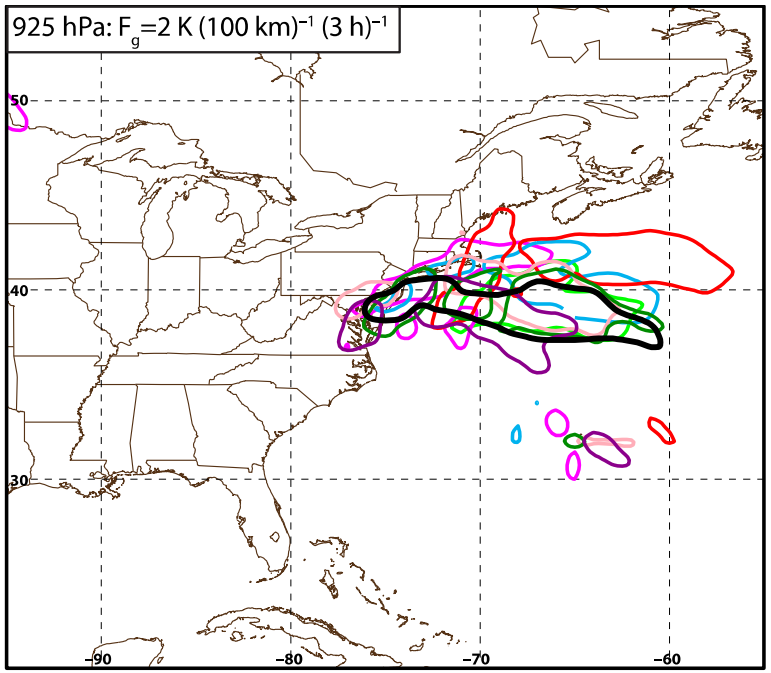

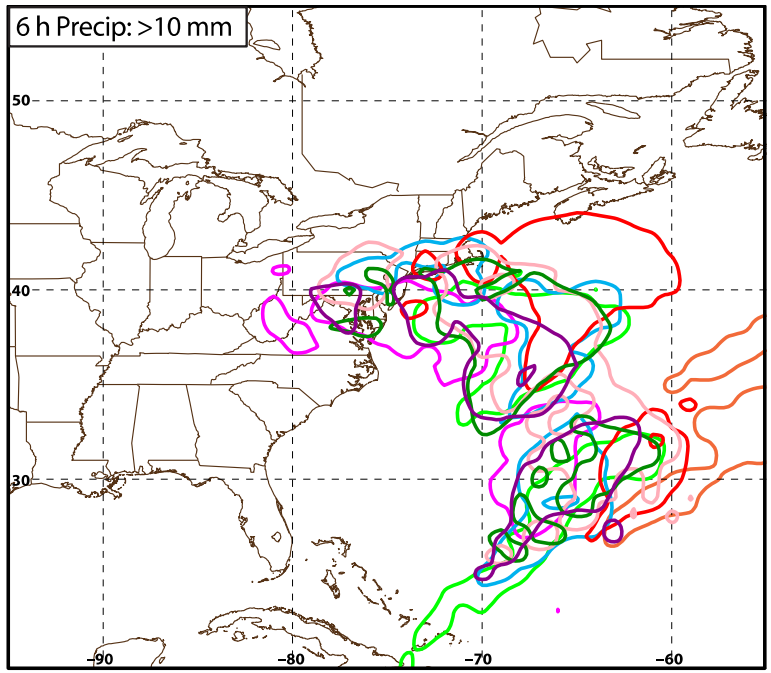

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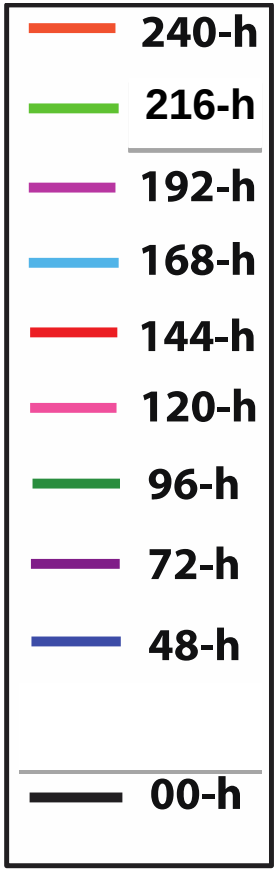

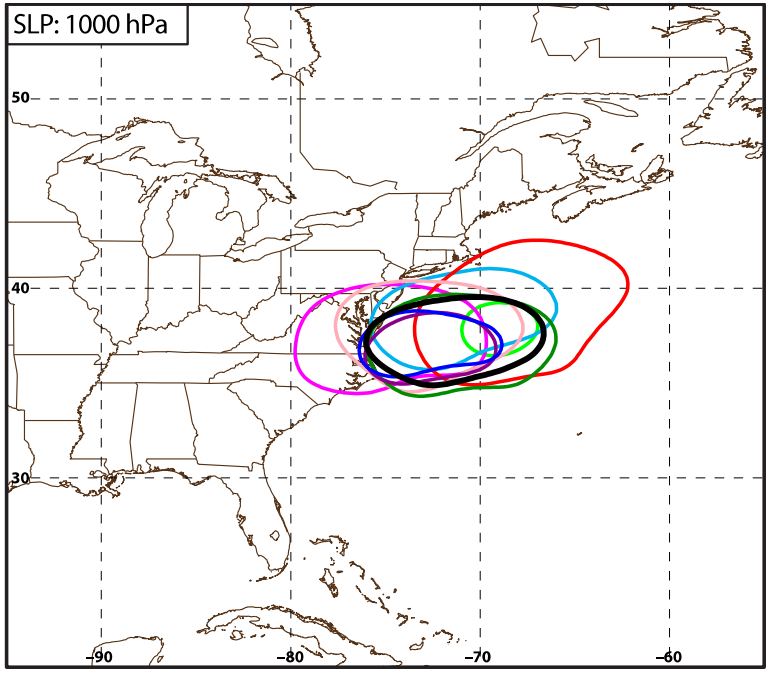

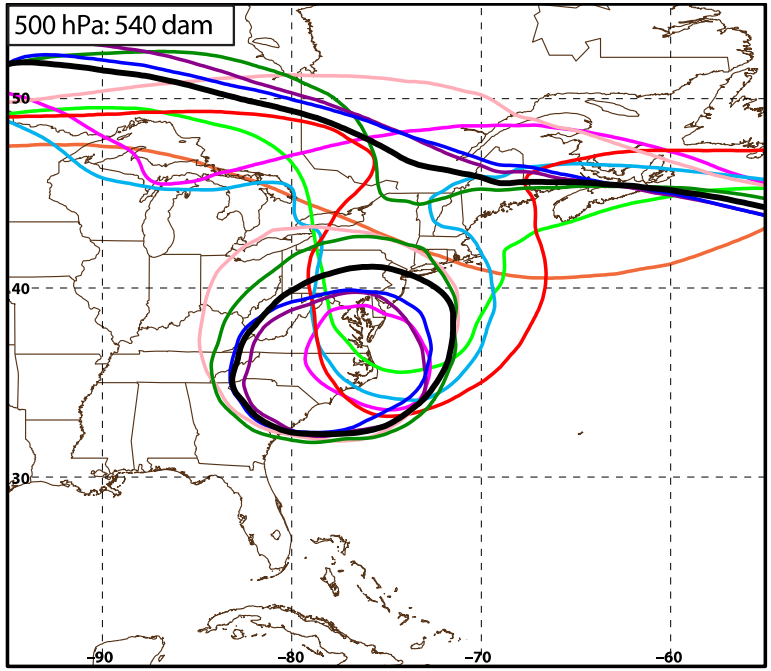

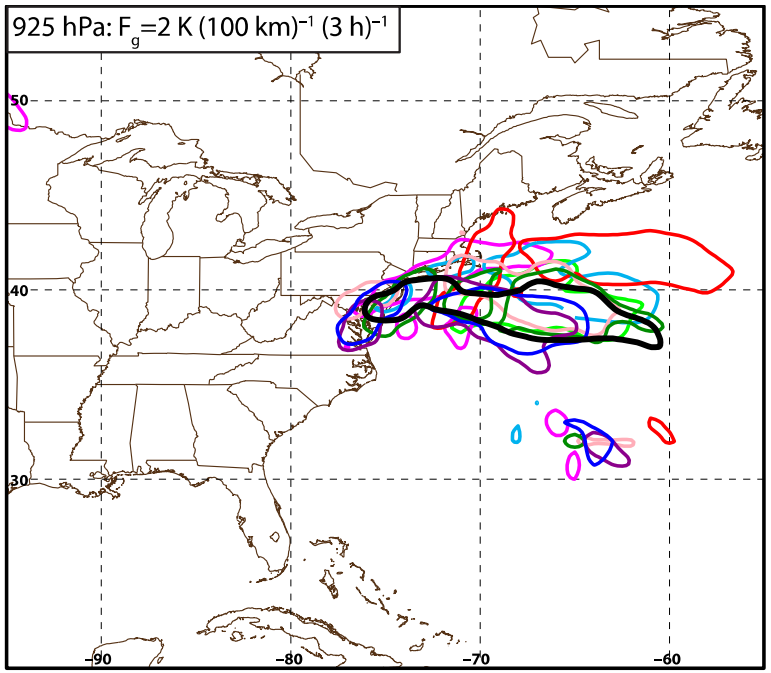

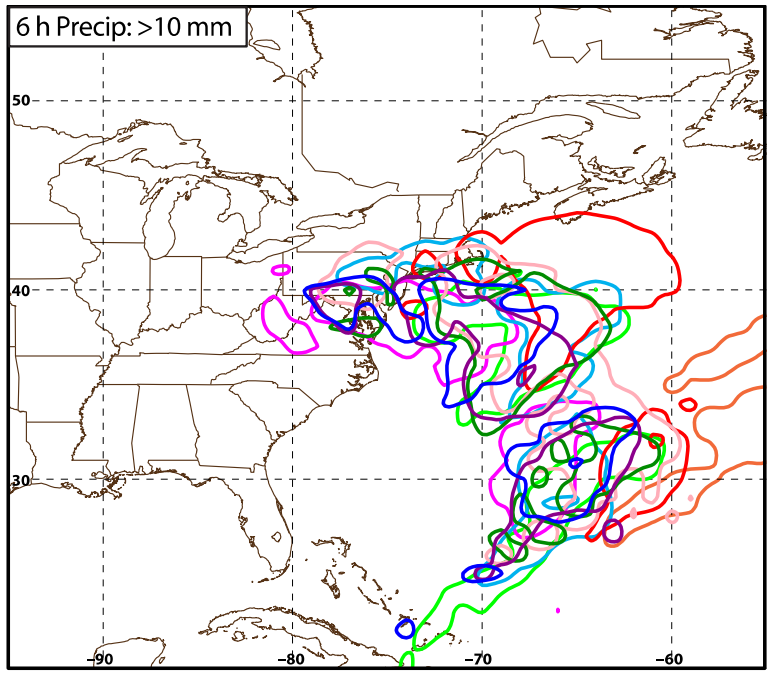

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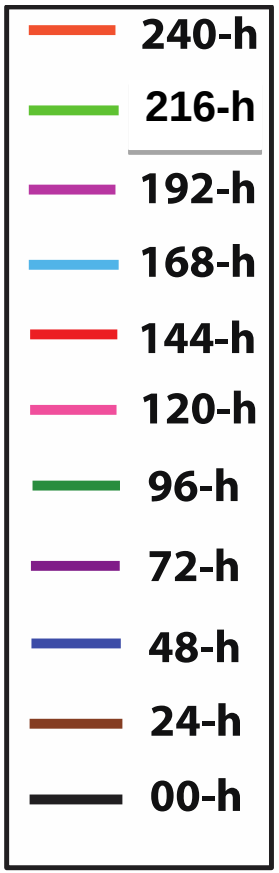
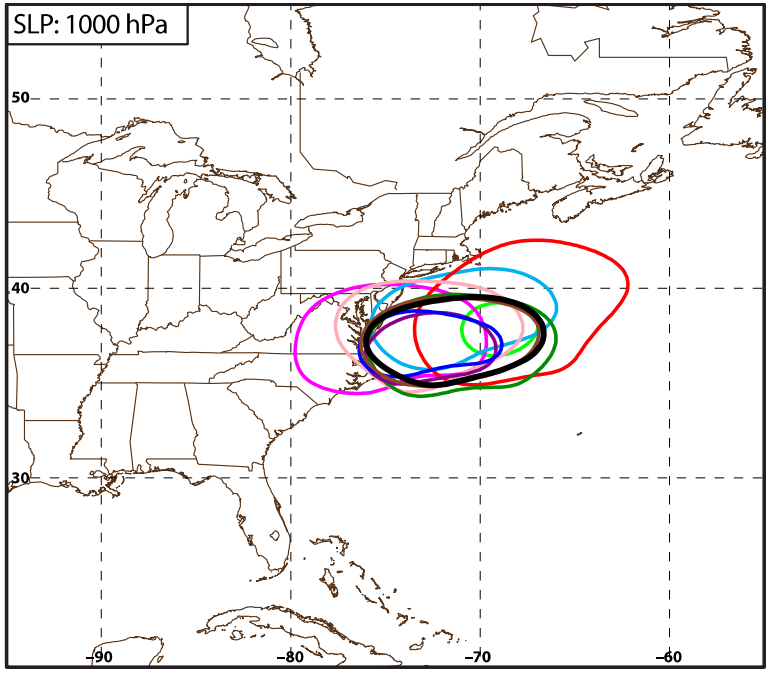
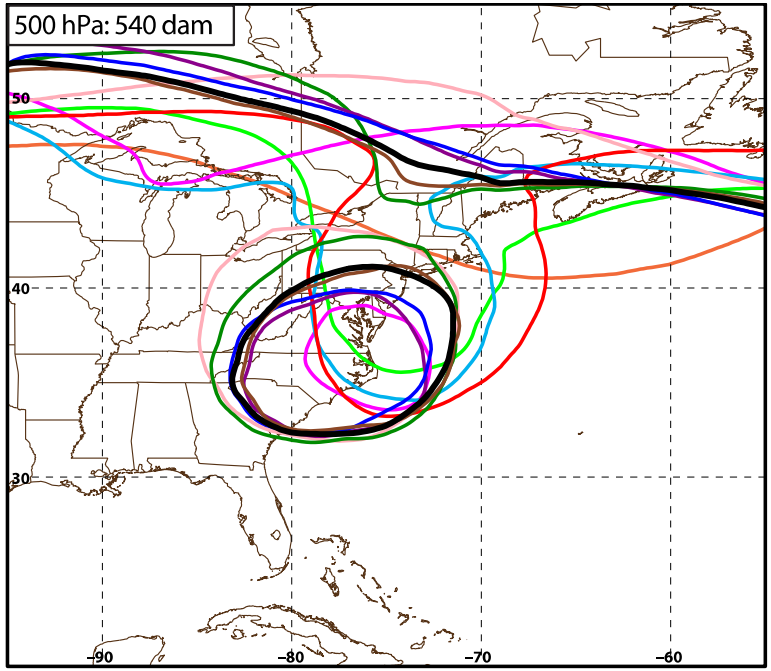
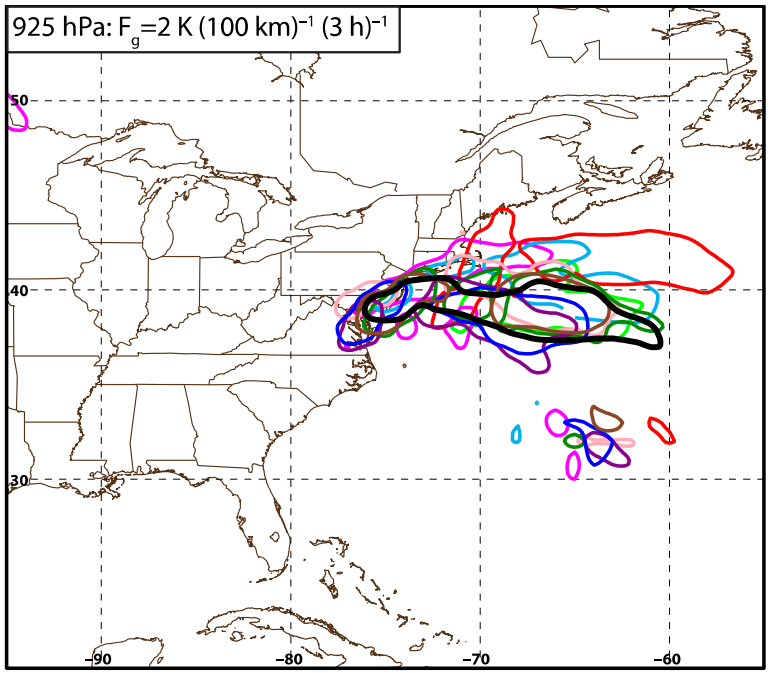
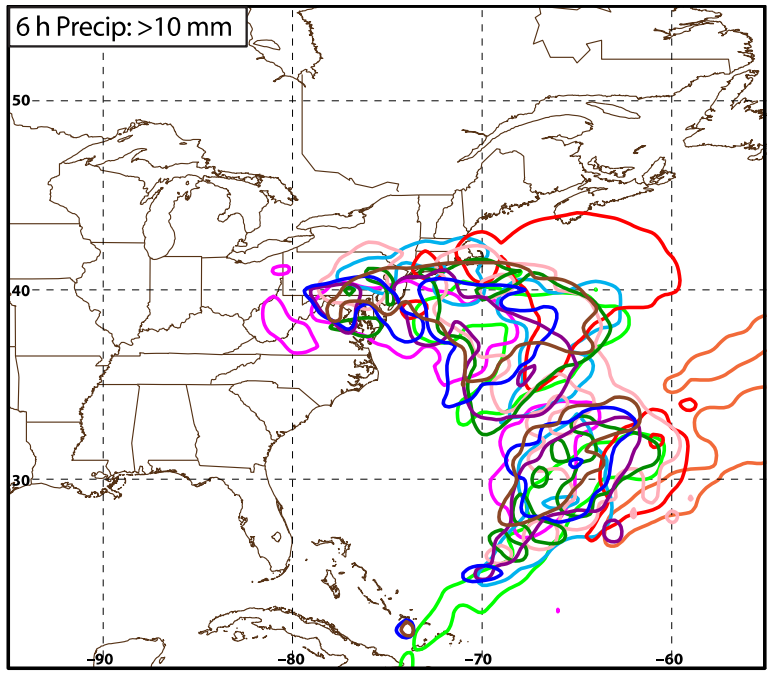








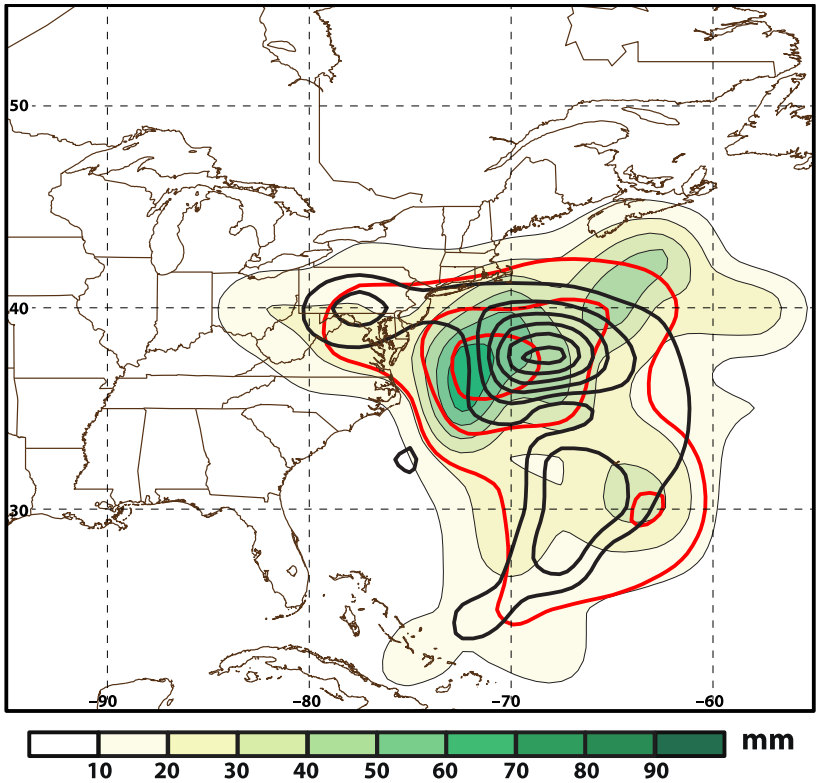


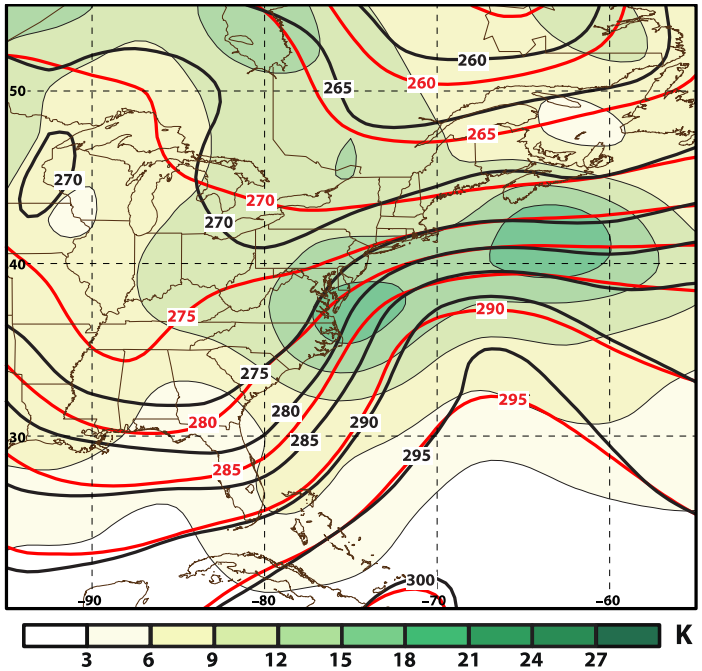
GEFS Forecasts Verifying

1800 UTC 23 Jan 2016

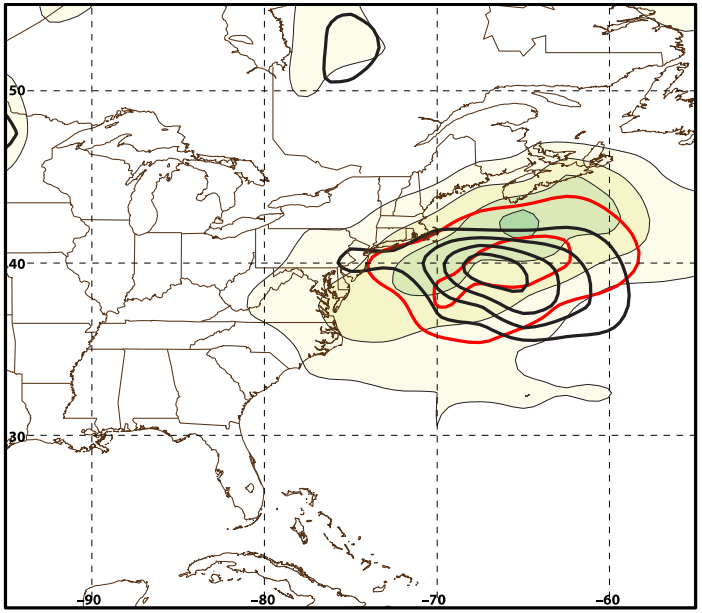
120-h Forecast

6-h Accumulated Precipitation; Every 10 mm





925 hPa Pot. Temp; Every 5 K



925 hPa Fronto-genesis; Every 0.5 K $(100\ km)^{-1}$ $(3\ h)^{-1}$

Ens. Mean — Analysis

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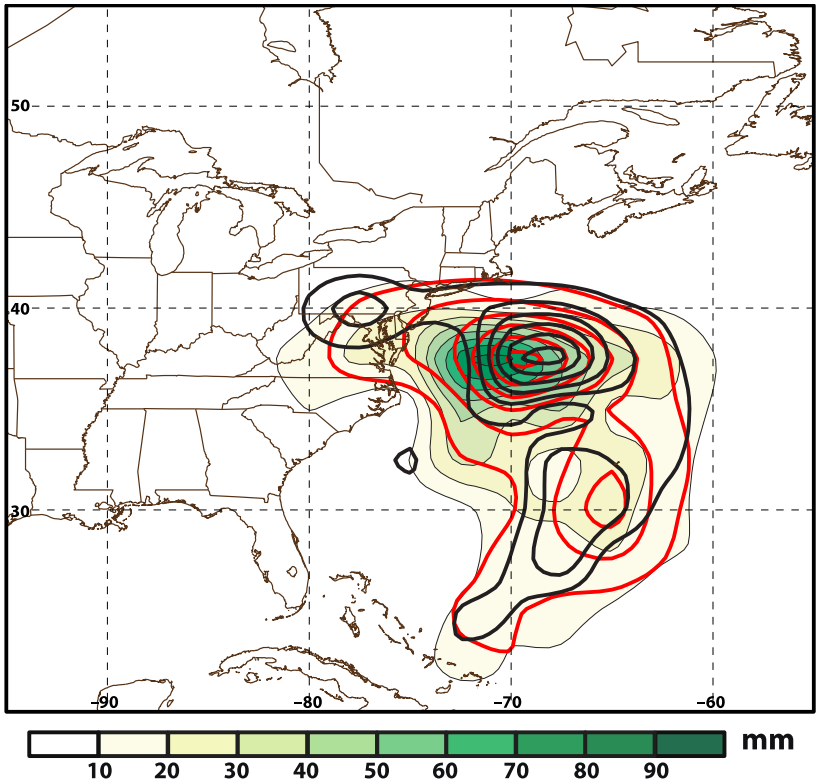
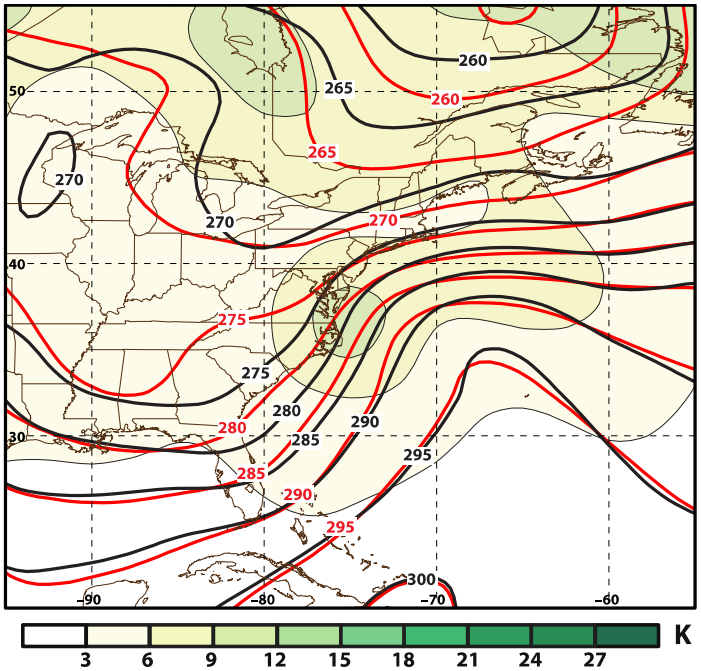
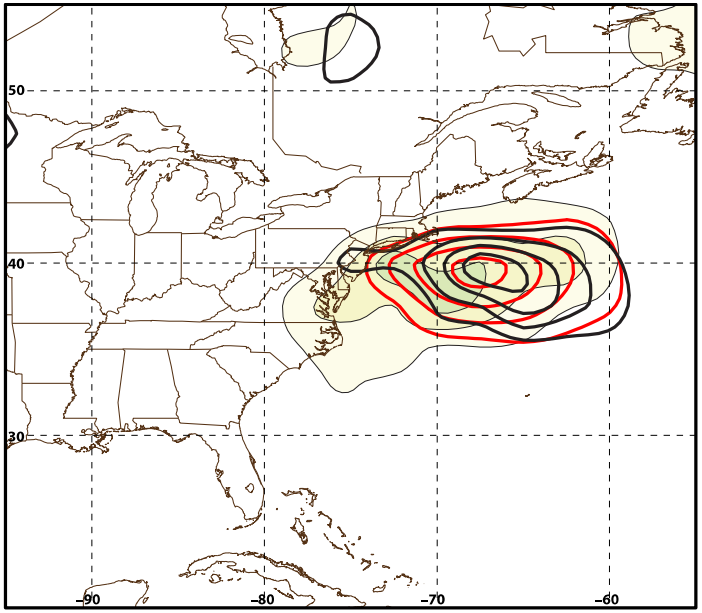
96-h Forecast

6-h Accumulated Precipitation; Every 10 mm





925 hPa Pot. Temp; Every 5 K



925 hPa Fronto-genesis; Every 0.5 K $(100\ km)^{-1}$ $(3\ h)^{-1}$

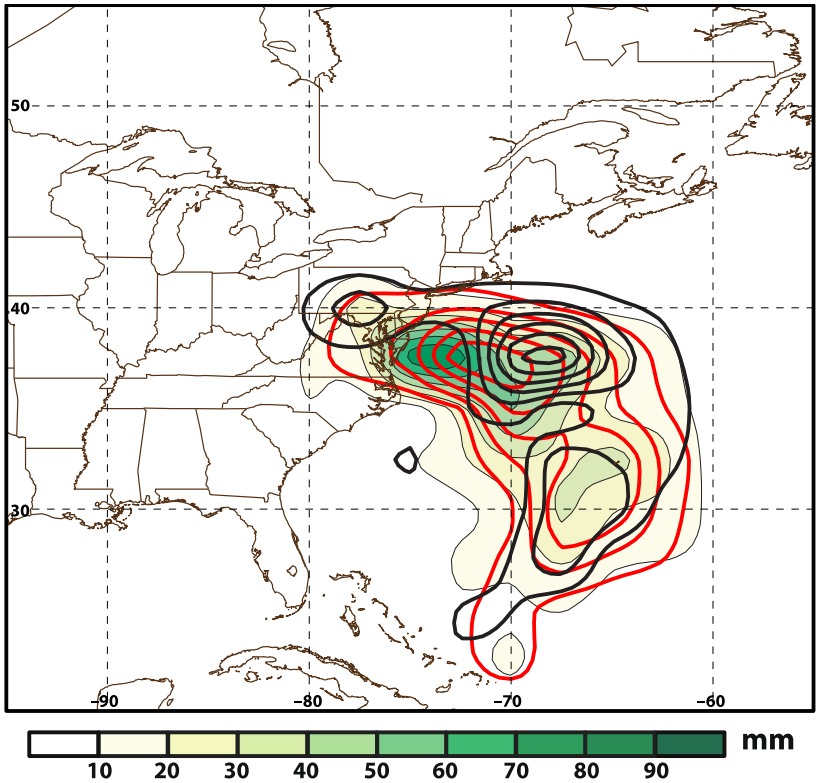
Ens. Mean — Analysis

GEFS Forecasts Verifying

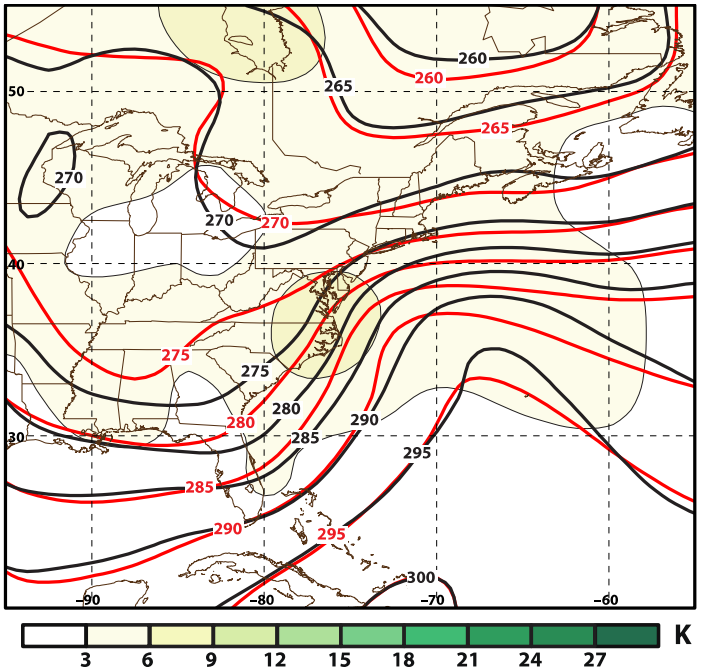
1800 UTC 23 Jan 2016

72-h Forecast

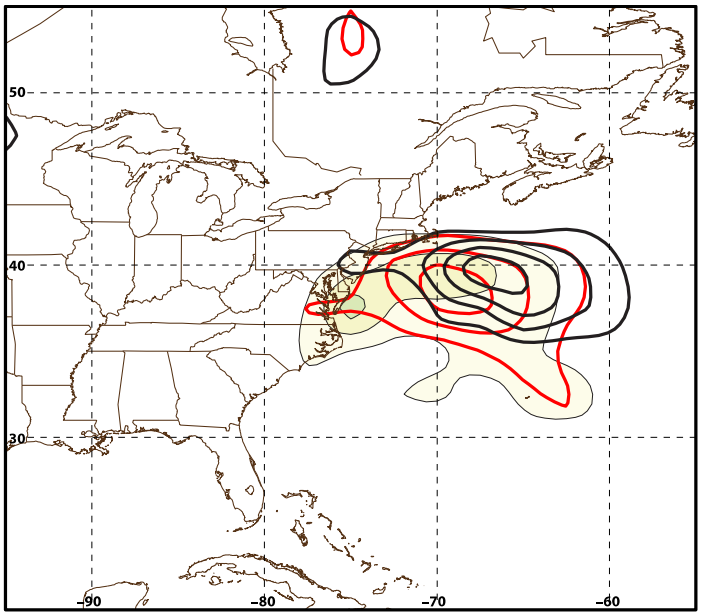
6-h Accumulated Precipitation; Every 10 mm



Ens. Mean — Analysis



925 hPa Pot. Temp; Every 5 K



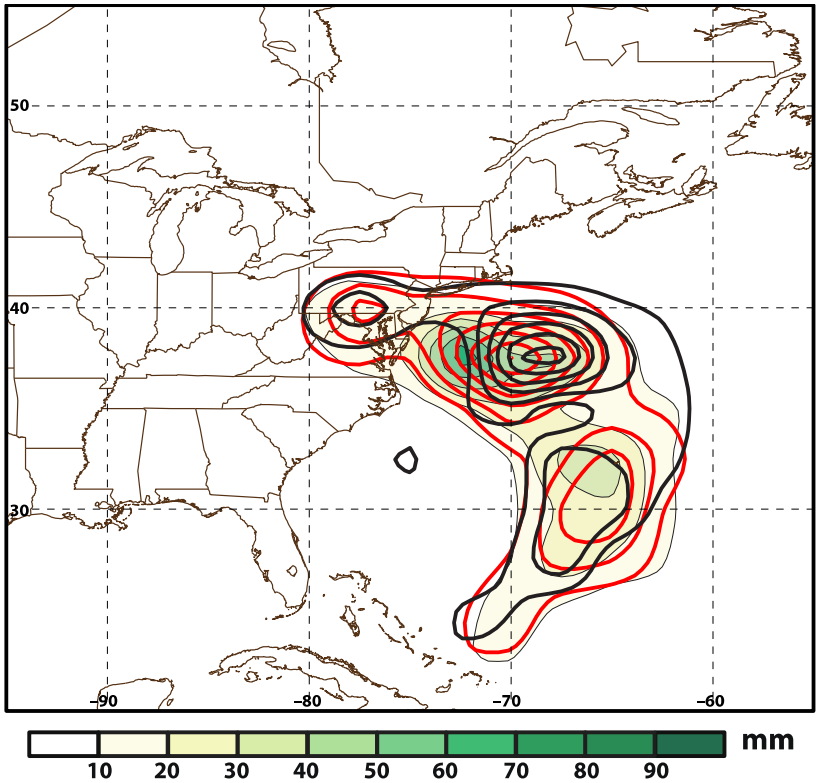
925 hPa Fronto-genesis; Every 0.5 K (100 km)$^{-1}$ (3 h)$^{-1}$

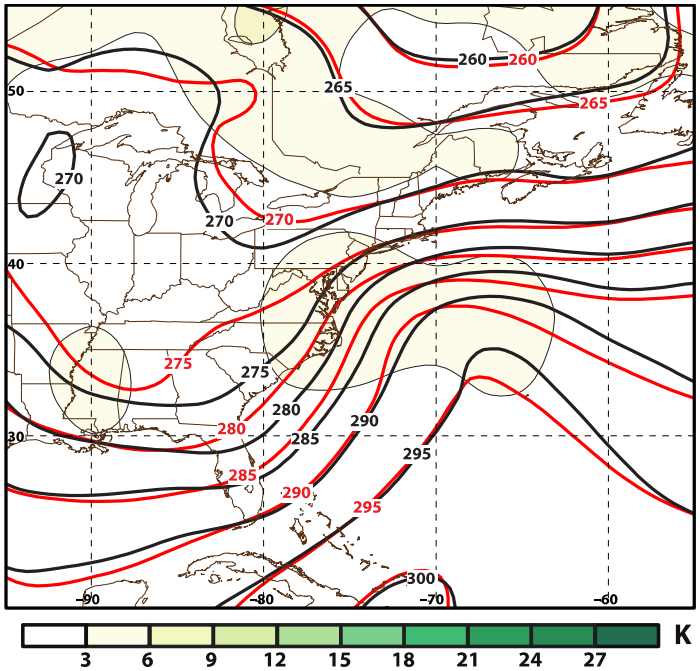
GEFS Forecasts Verifying

1800 UTC 23 Jan 2016

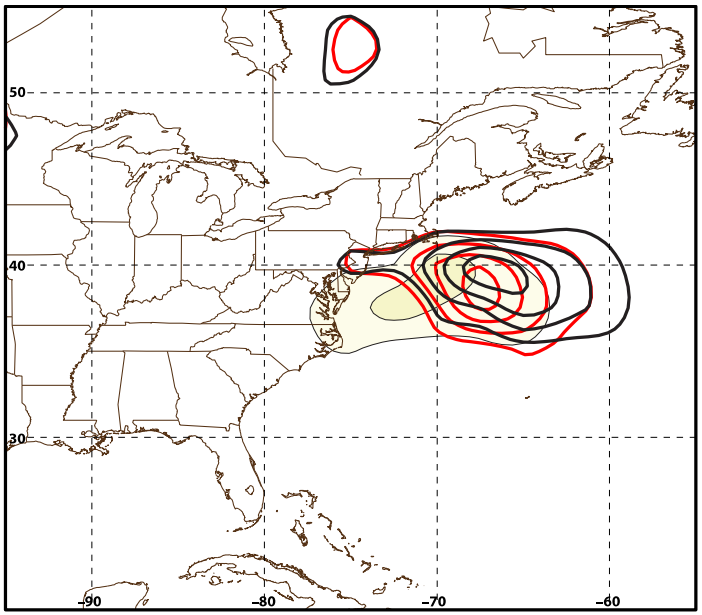
48-h Forecast

6-h Accumulated Precipitation; Every 10 mm





925 hPa Pot. Temp; Every 5 K



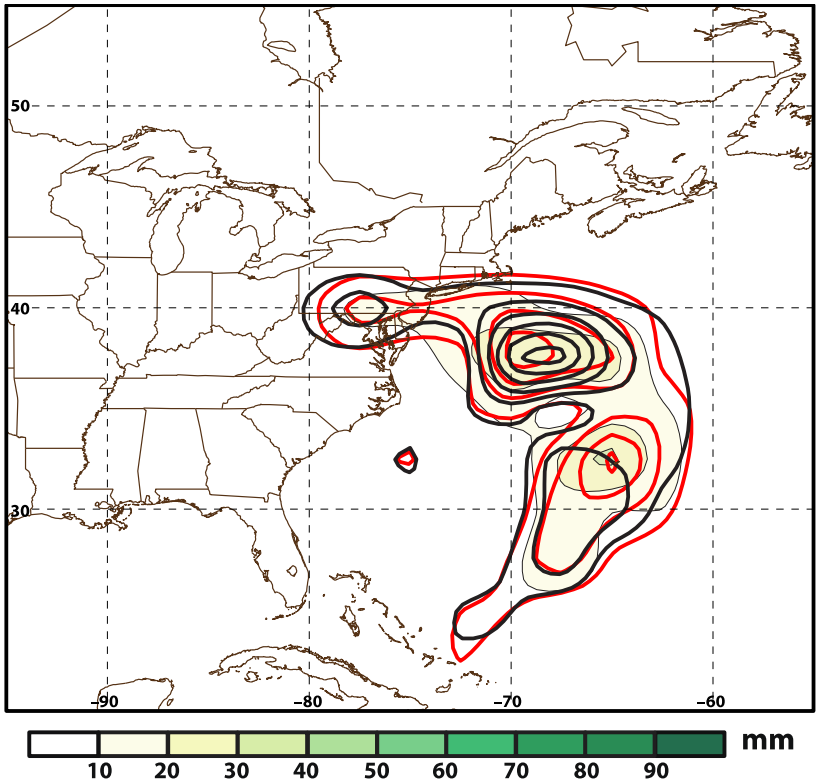
925 hPa Fronto-genesis; Every 0.5 K $(100\ km)^{-1}$ $(3\ h)^{-1}$

Ens. Mean — Analysis

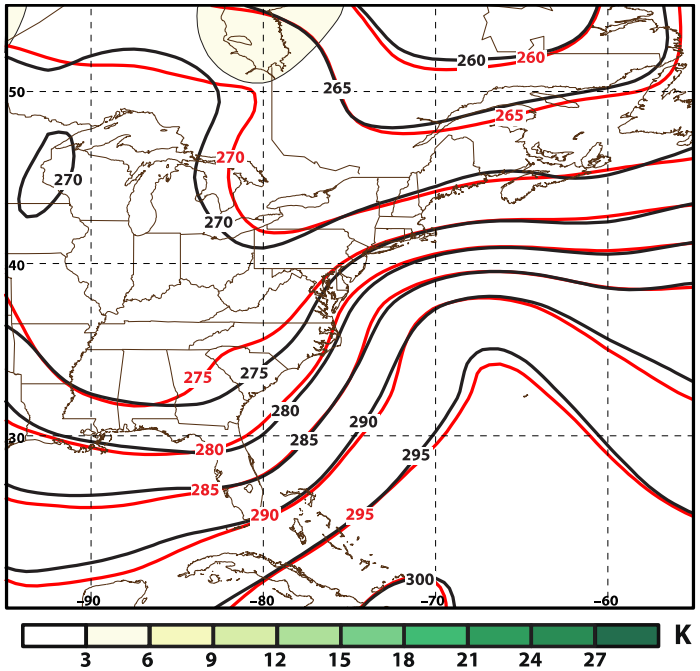
GEFS Forecasts Verifying
1800 UTC 23 Jan 2016

24-h Forecast

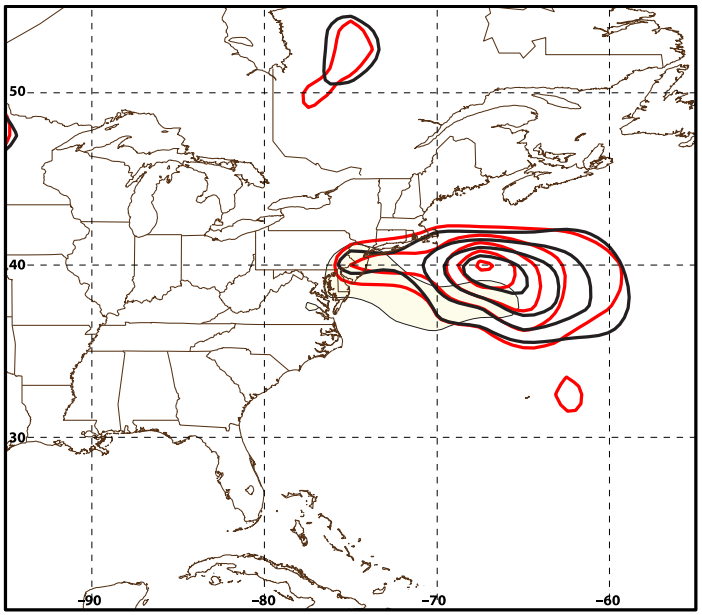
6-h Accumulated Precipitation; Every 10 mm



Ens. Mean — Analysis



925 hPa Pot. Temp; Every 5 K



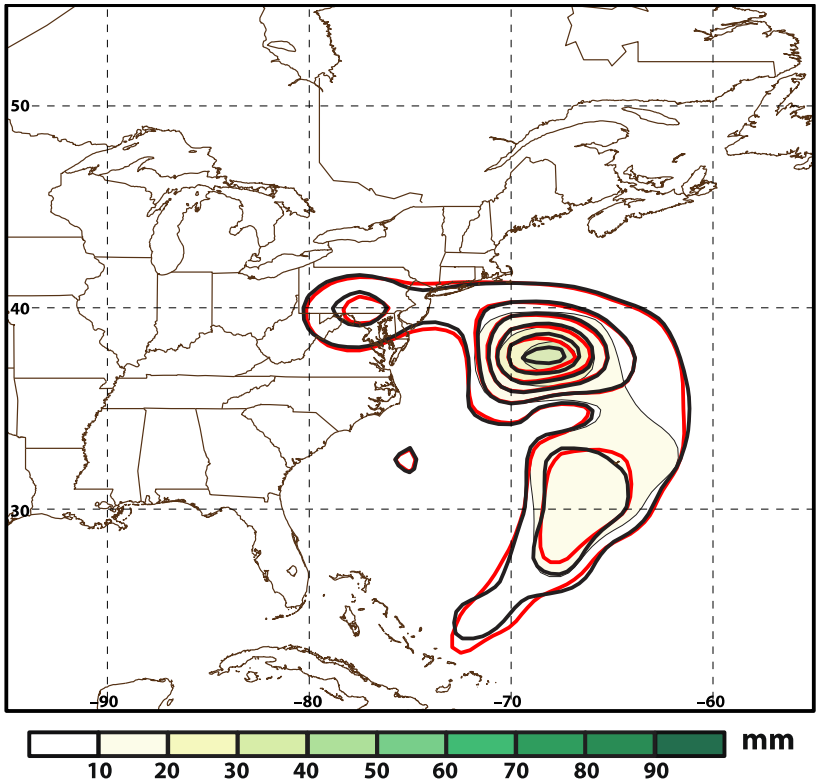
925 hPa Fronto-genesis; Every 0.5 K (100 km)$^{-1}$ (3 h)$^{-1}$

GEFS Forecasts Verifying

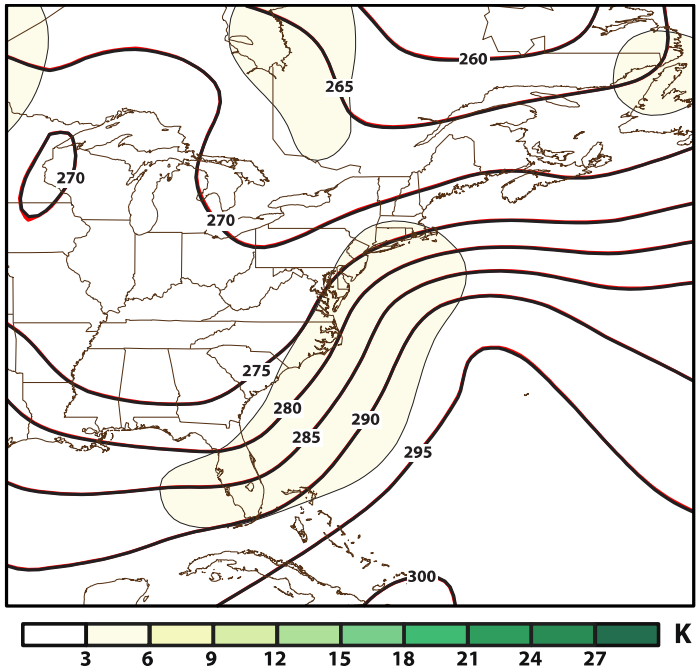
1800 UTC 23 Jan 2016

00-h Forecast

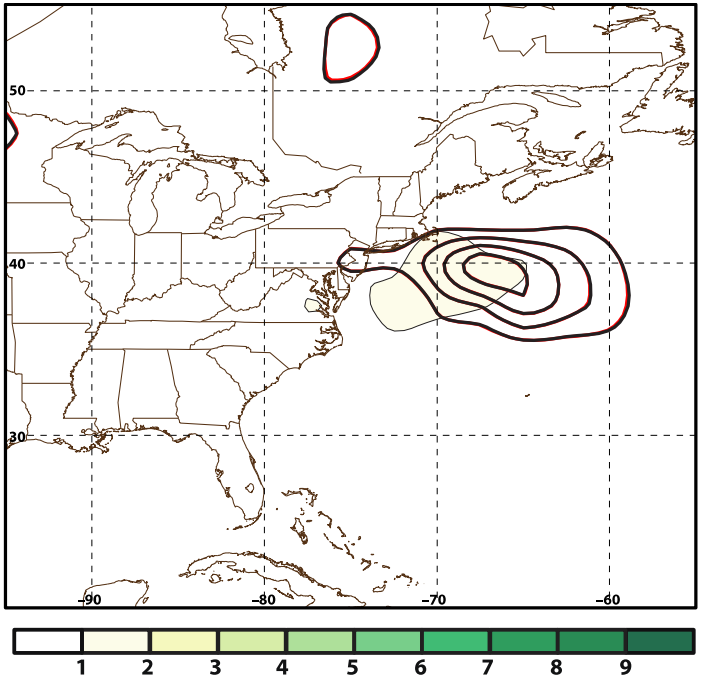
6-h Accumulated Precipitation; Every 10 mm



Ens. Mean — Analysis



925 hPa Pot. Temp; Every 5 K

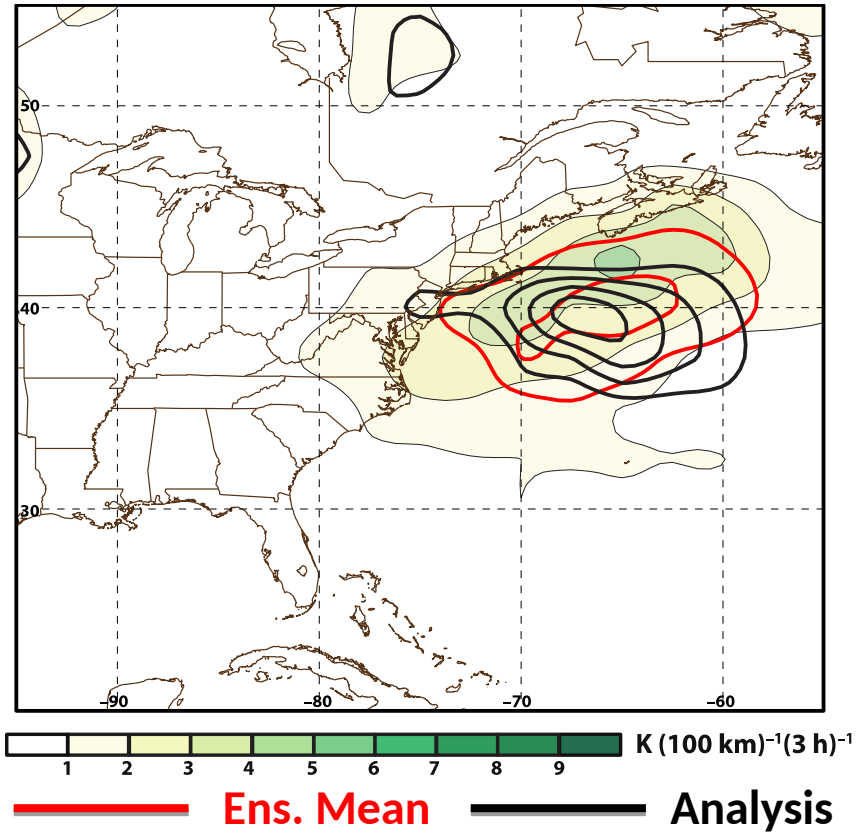


925 hPa Fronto-genesis; Every 0.5 K $(100\ km)^{-1}$ $(3\ h)^{-1}$

GEFS Forecasts Verifying
1800 UTC 23 Jan 2016

120-h Forecast

925 hPa Frontogenesis;
Every 0.5 K (100 km)$^{-1}$ (3 h)$^{-1}$



$$F_{2D} = \frac{|\nabla\theta|}{2}[E\cos(2\beta) - D]$$

$E = Total\ Deformation$

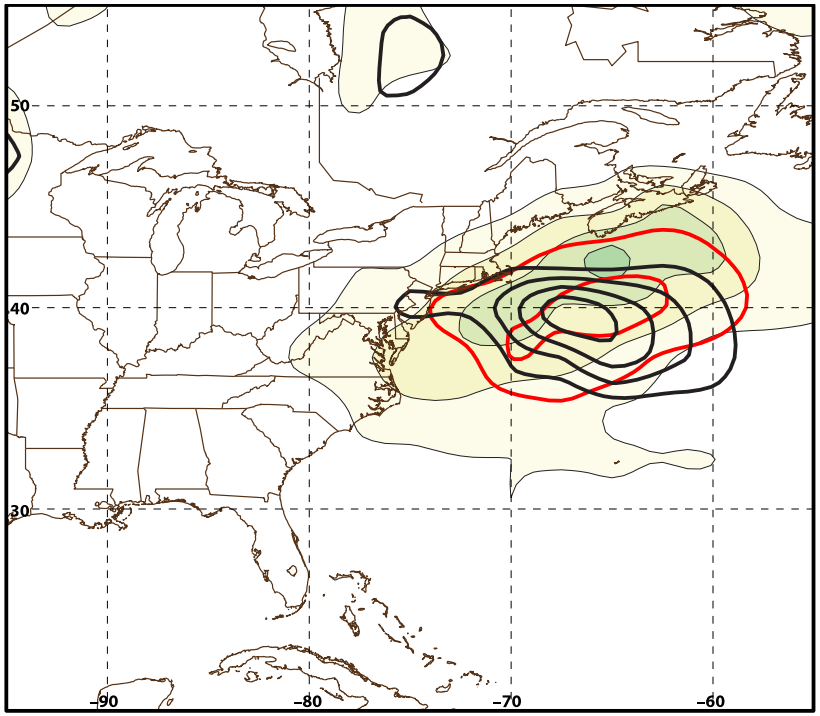
$D = Divergence$

$\beta =$ *Angle Betw. Isentropes and Axis of Dilatation*

GEFS Forecasts Verifying
1800 UTC 23 Jan 2016

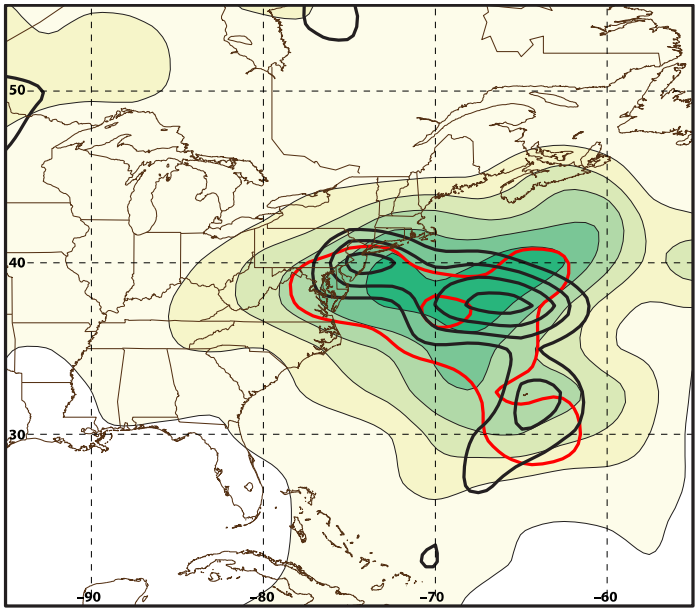
120-h Forecast

925 hPa Frontogenesis;
Every 0.5 K (100 km)$^{-1}$ (3 h)$^{-1}$

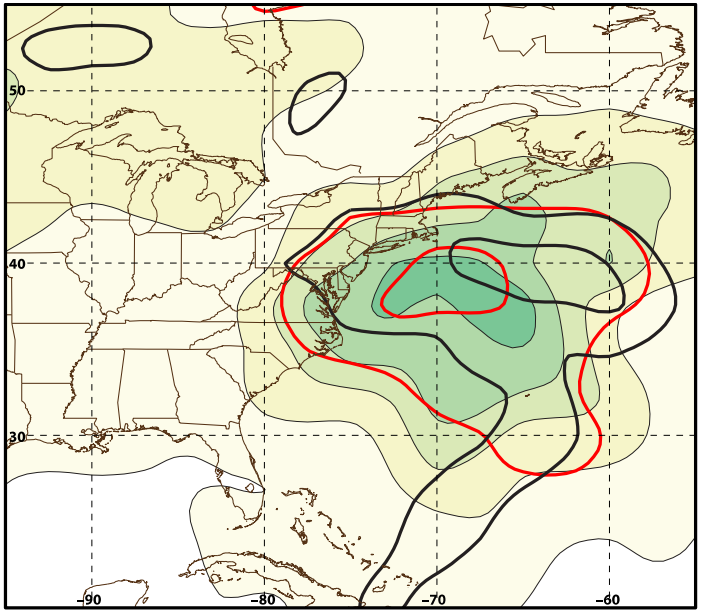


Ens. Mean Analysis

925 hPa Convergence;
Every
2×10^{-5} s^{-1}



925 hPa Deformation;
Every
2×10^{-5} s^{-1}

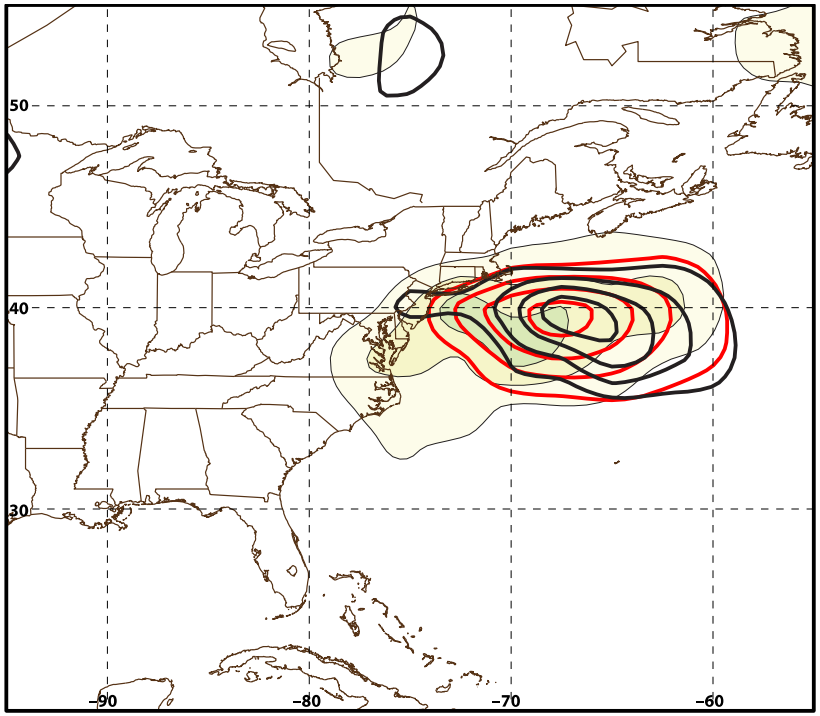


GEFS Forecasts Verifying

1800 UTC 23 Jan 2016

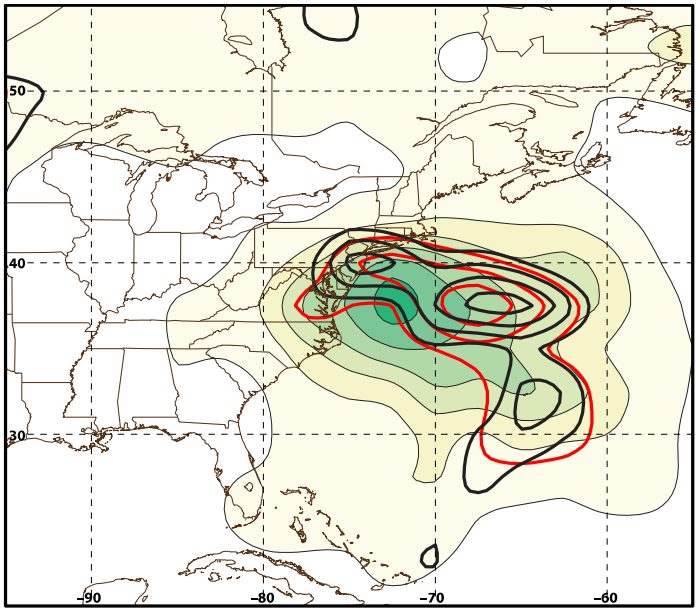
96-h Forecast

925 hPa Frontogenesis;
Every 0.5 K $(100\ km)^{-1}\ (3\ h)^{-1}$



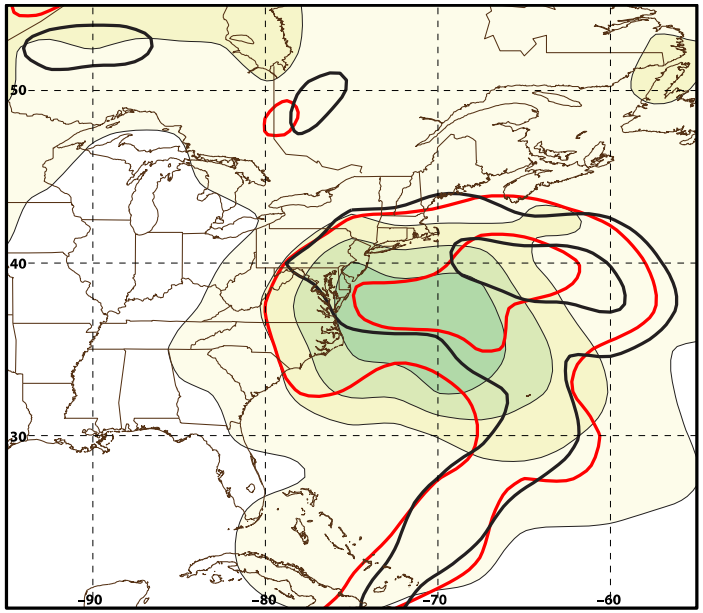
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 $K\ (100\ km)^{-1}(3\ h)^{-1}$

Ens. Mean Analysis



2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 s^{-1}

925 hPa Convergence; Every $2x10^{-5}\ s^{-1}$



2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 s^{-1}

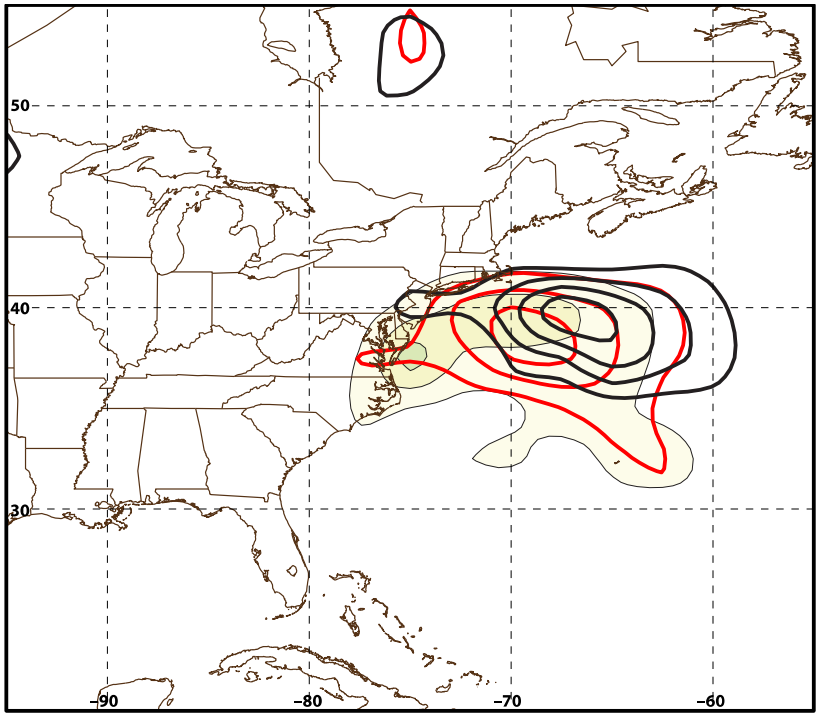
925 hPa Deformation; Every $2x10^{-5}\ s^{-1}$

GEFS Forecasts Verifying

1800 UTC 23 Jan 2016

72-h Forecast

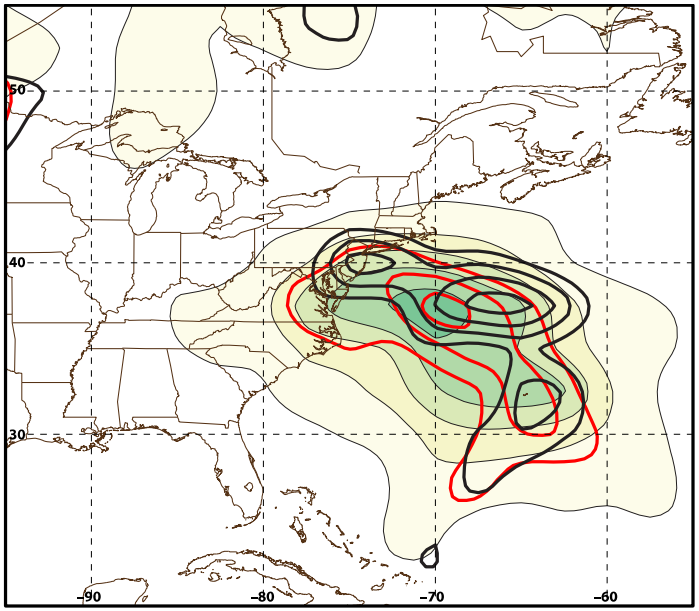
925 hPa Frontogenesis;
Every 0.5 K (100 km)$^{-1}$ (3 h)$^{-1}$



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 K (100 km)$^{-1}$(3 h)$^{-1}$

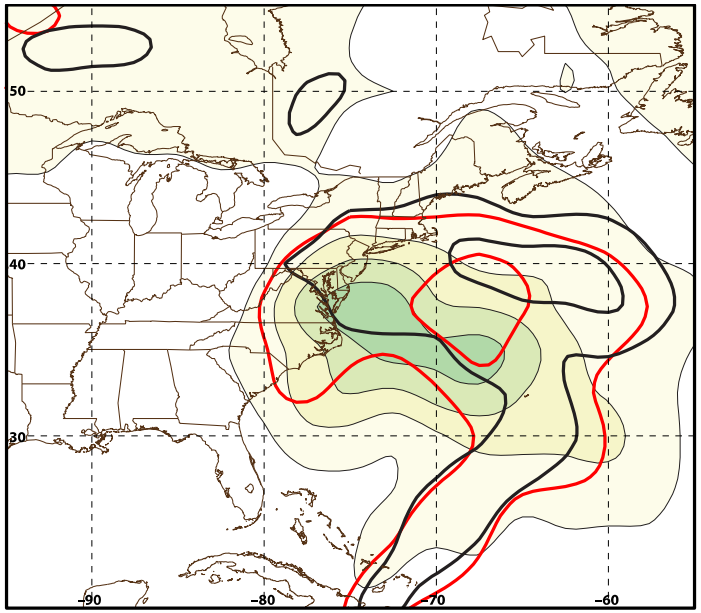
Ens. Mean Analysis

925 hPa Convergence; Every 2×10^{-5} s^{-1}



2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 s^{-1}

925 hPa Deformation; Every 2×10^{-5} s^{-1}

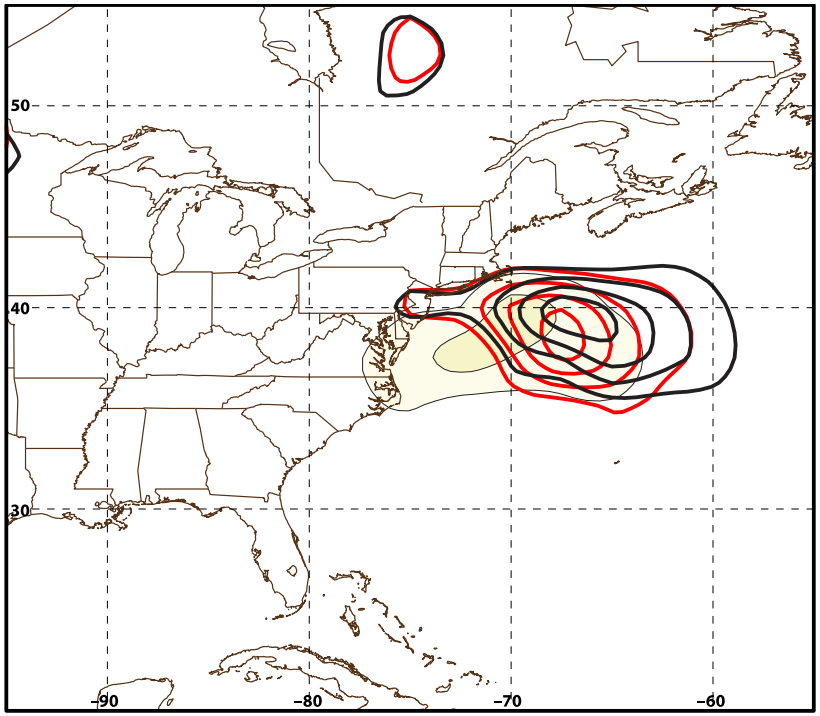


2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 s^{-1}

GEFS Forecasts Verifying
1800 UTC 23 Jan 2016

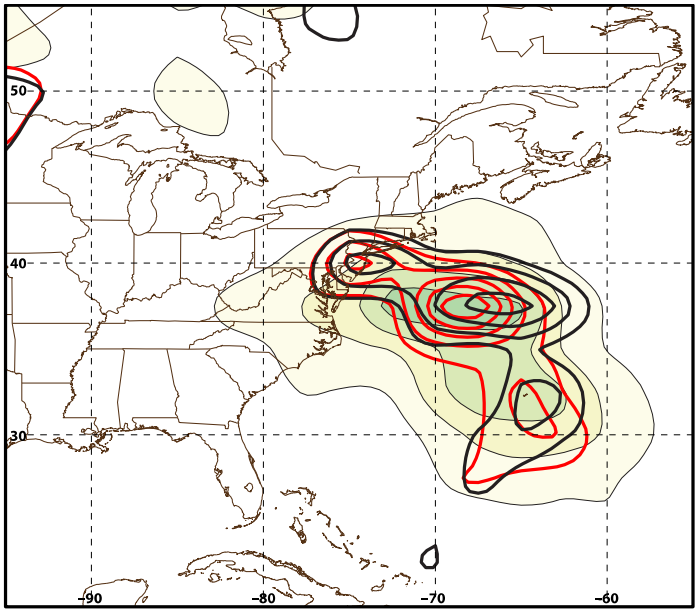
48-h Forecast

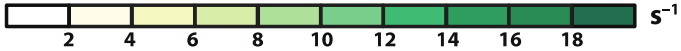
925 hPa Frontogenesis;
Every 0.5 K (100 km)$^{-1}$ (3 h)$^{-1}$



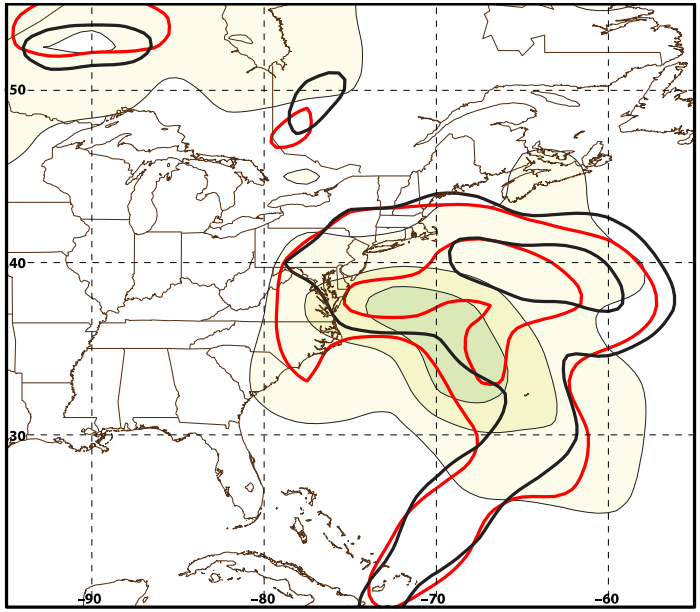
Ens. Mean Analysis

925 hPa Convergence;
Every
2×10^{-5} s^{-1}





925 hPa Deformation;
Every
2×10^{-5} s^{-1}

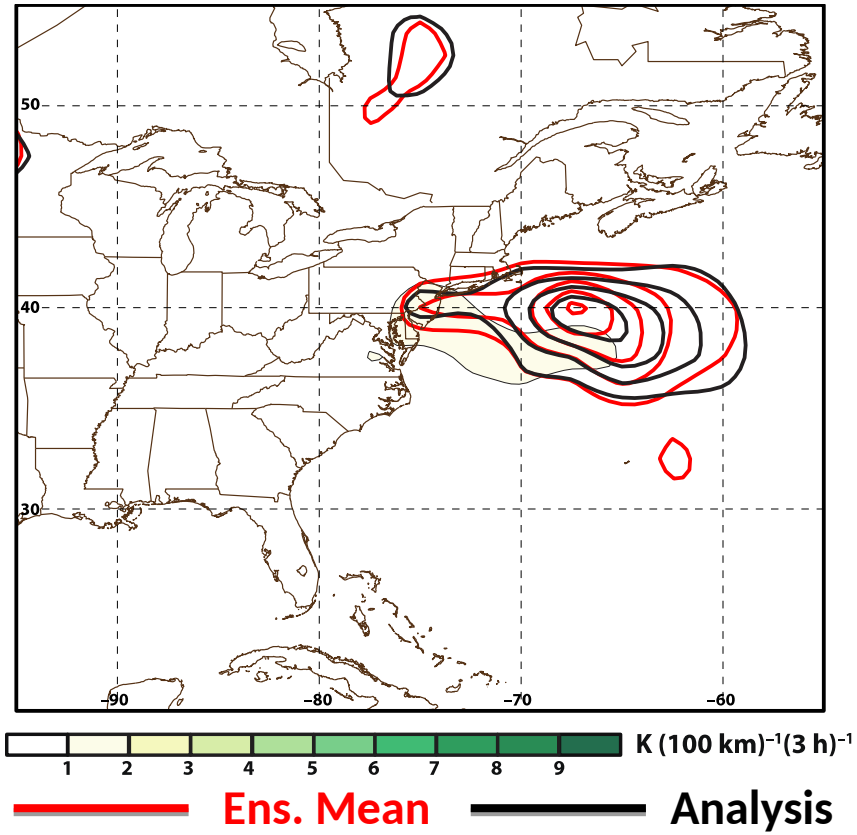


GEFS Forecasts Verifying

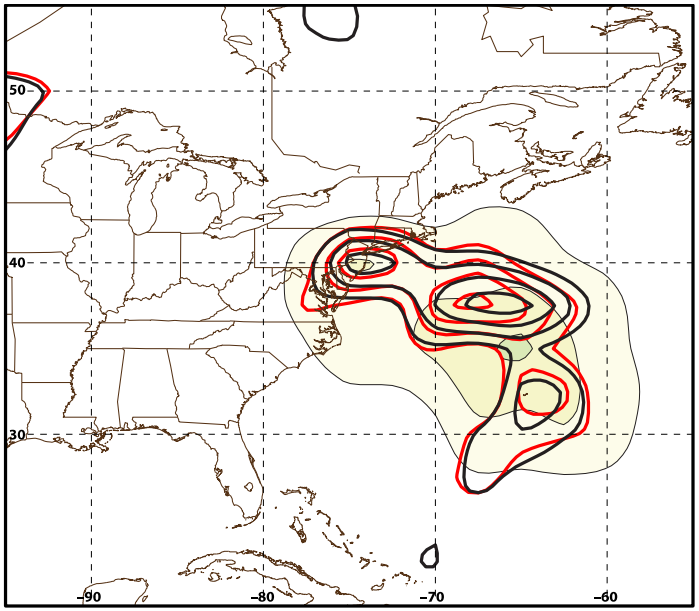
1800 UTC 23 Jan 2016

24-h Forecast

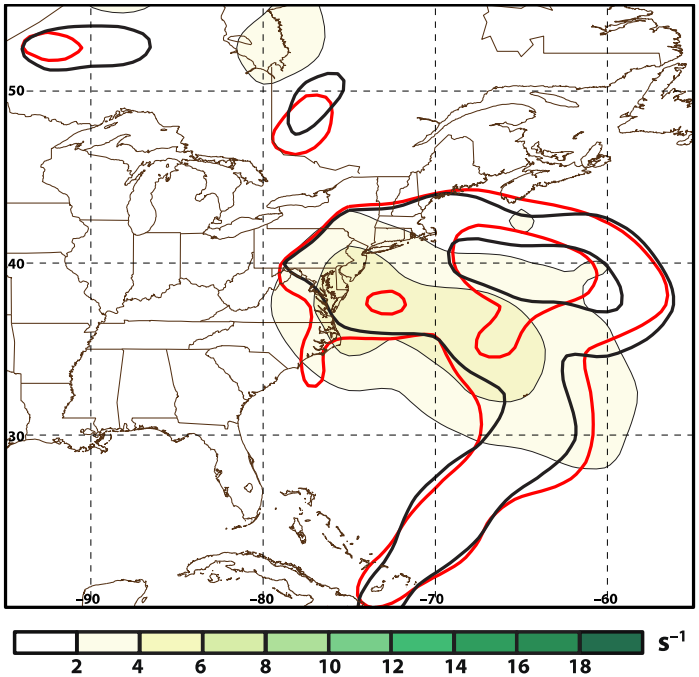
925 hPa Frontogenesis;
Every 0.5 K (100 km)$^{-1}$ (3 h)$^{-1}$



925 hPa Convergence; Every 2×10^{-5} s^{-1}



925 hPa Deformation; Every 2×10^{-5} s^{-1}

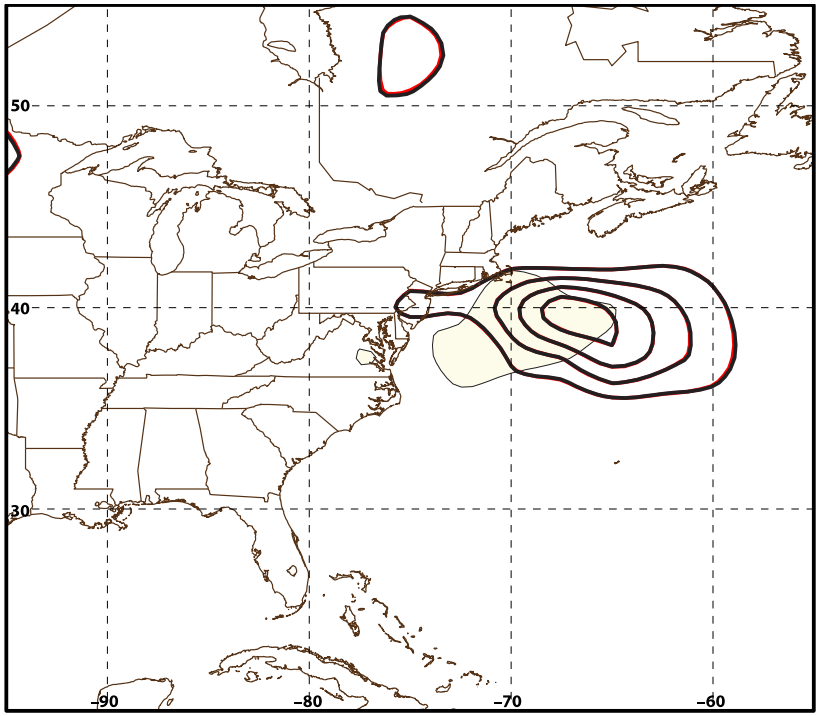


GEFS Forecasts Verifying

1800 UTC 23 Jan 2016

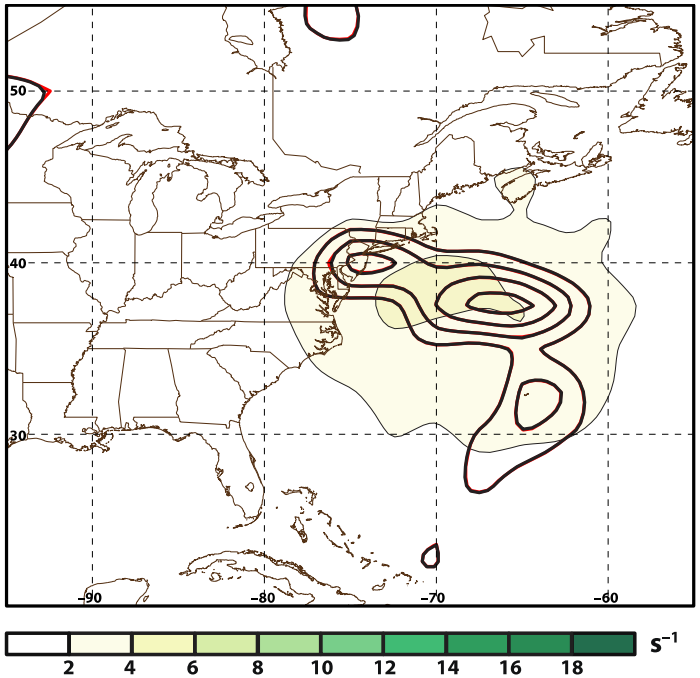
00-h Forecast

925 hPa Frontogenesis;
Every 0.5 K $(100\ km)^{-1}\ (3\ h)^{-1}$

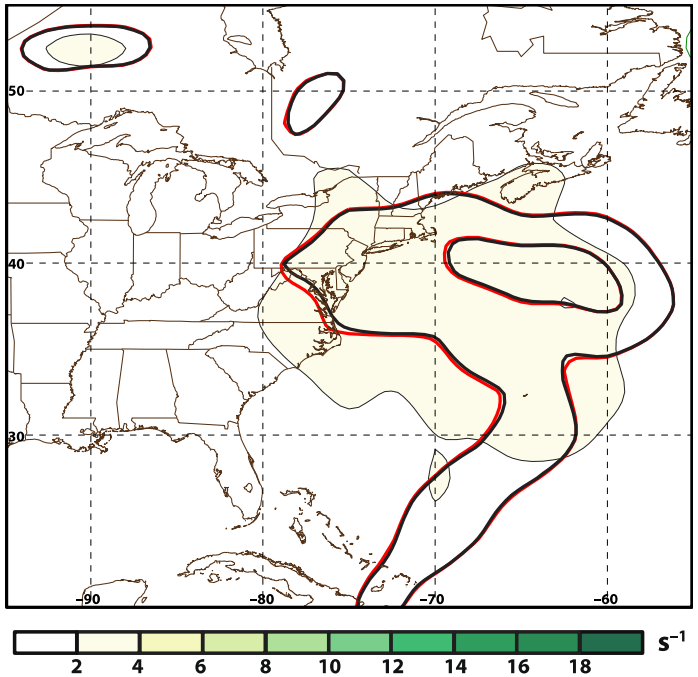


Ens. Mean — Analysis

925 hPa Convergence; Every $2x10^{-5}\ s^{-1}$



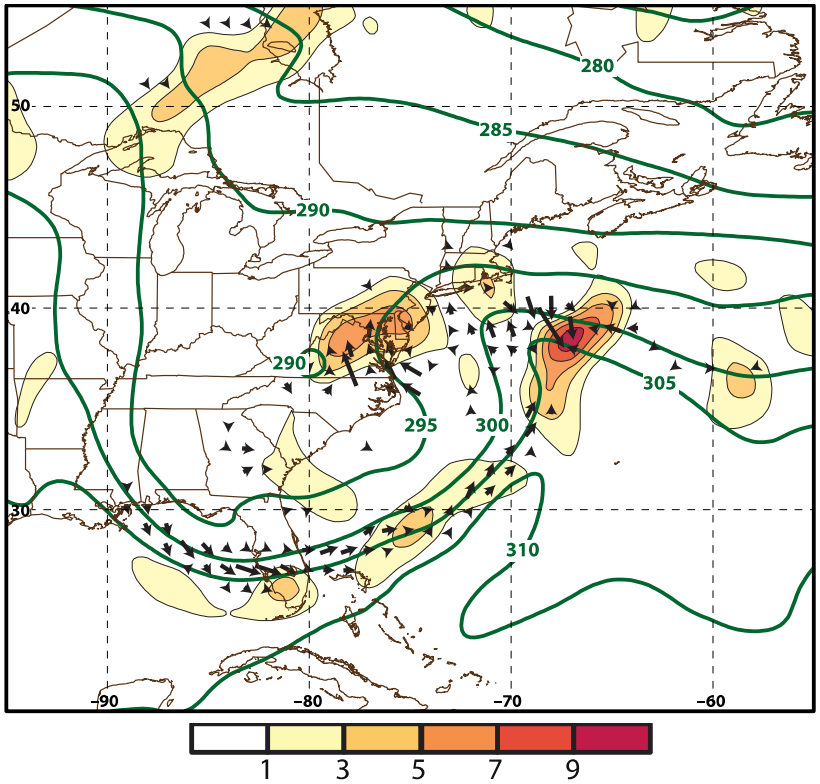
925 hPa Deformation; Every $2x10^{-5}\ s^{-1}$



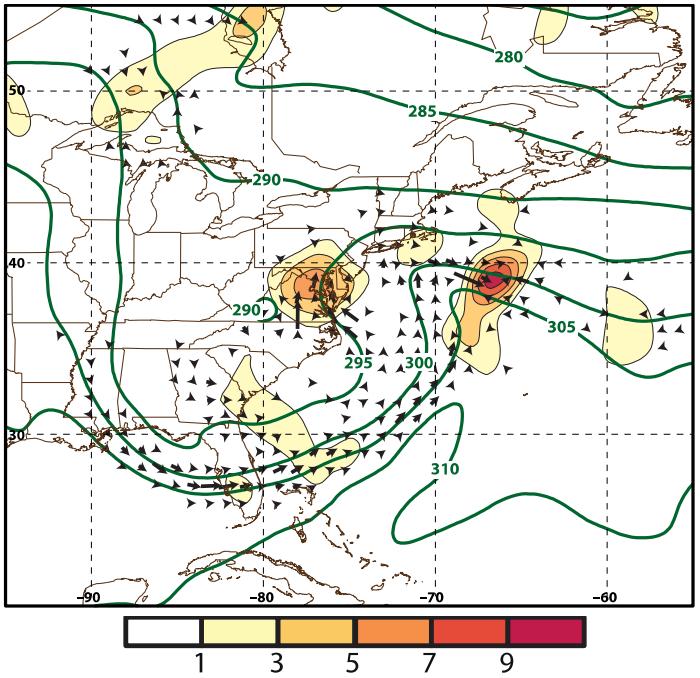
GFS Analysis

1800 UTC 23 Jan 2016

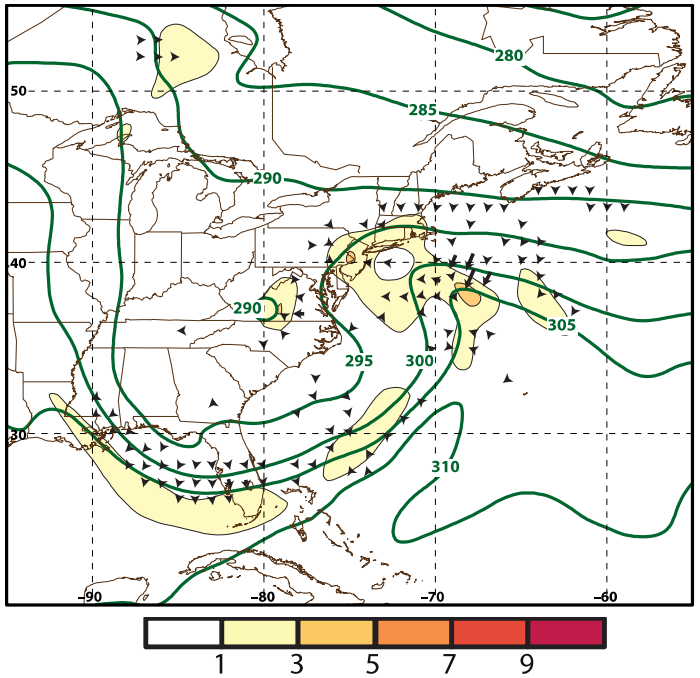
700 hPa Q-vector Convergence, Q-vectors, and Pot. Temp.



700 hPa Q_s Convergence, Q_s vectors, and Pot. Temp.



700 hPa Q_n Convergence, Q_n vectors, and Pot. Temp.



Case Summary

- The event was well-forecasted by the operational GFS as many as **9 days** prior to the event.
- Considerable uncertainty with respect to the **amount and location of precipitation** along the bent-back warm front lingered prior to the event.
- The **spread in several diagnostics for vertical motion** reflected the uncertainty in accurately forecasting total snow accumulations.

22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm

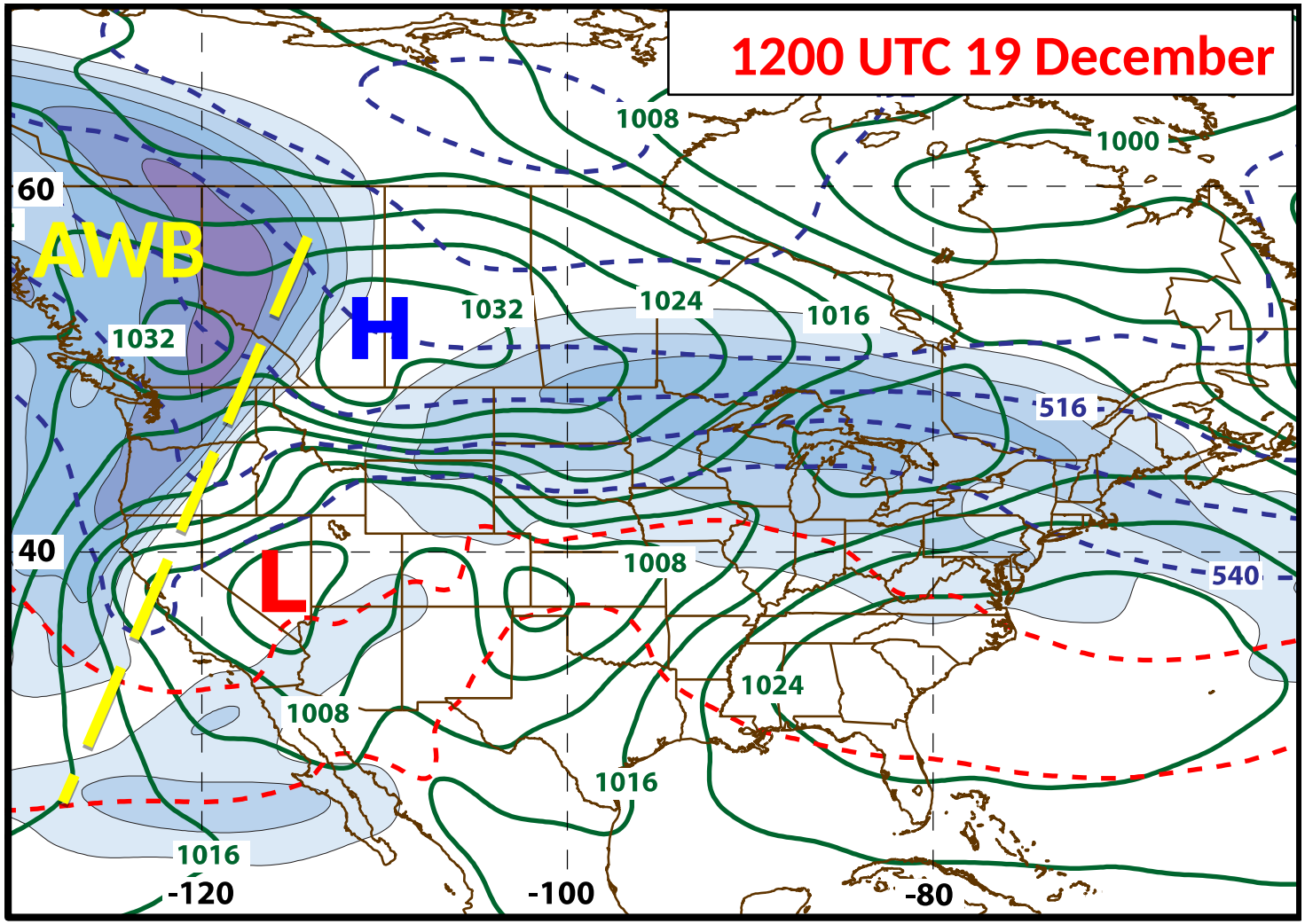
> 30 mm of ice in some locations.

> 400,000 lost power in Ontario, Quebec, and in the Canadian Maritimes.

Gusty winds in excess of **15 m s^{-1}**.

The Canadian Press

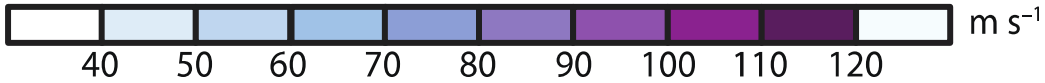
22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm



250 hPa Wind Speed (m s^{-1}; fill)

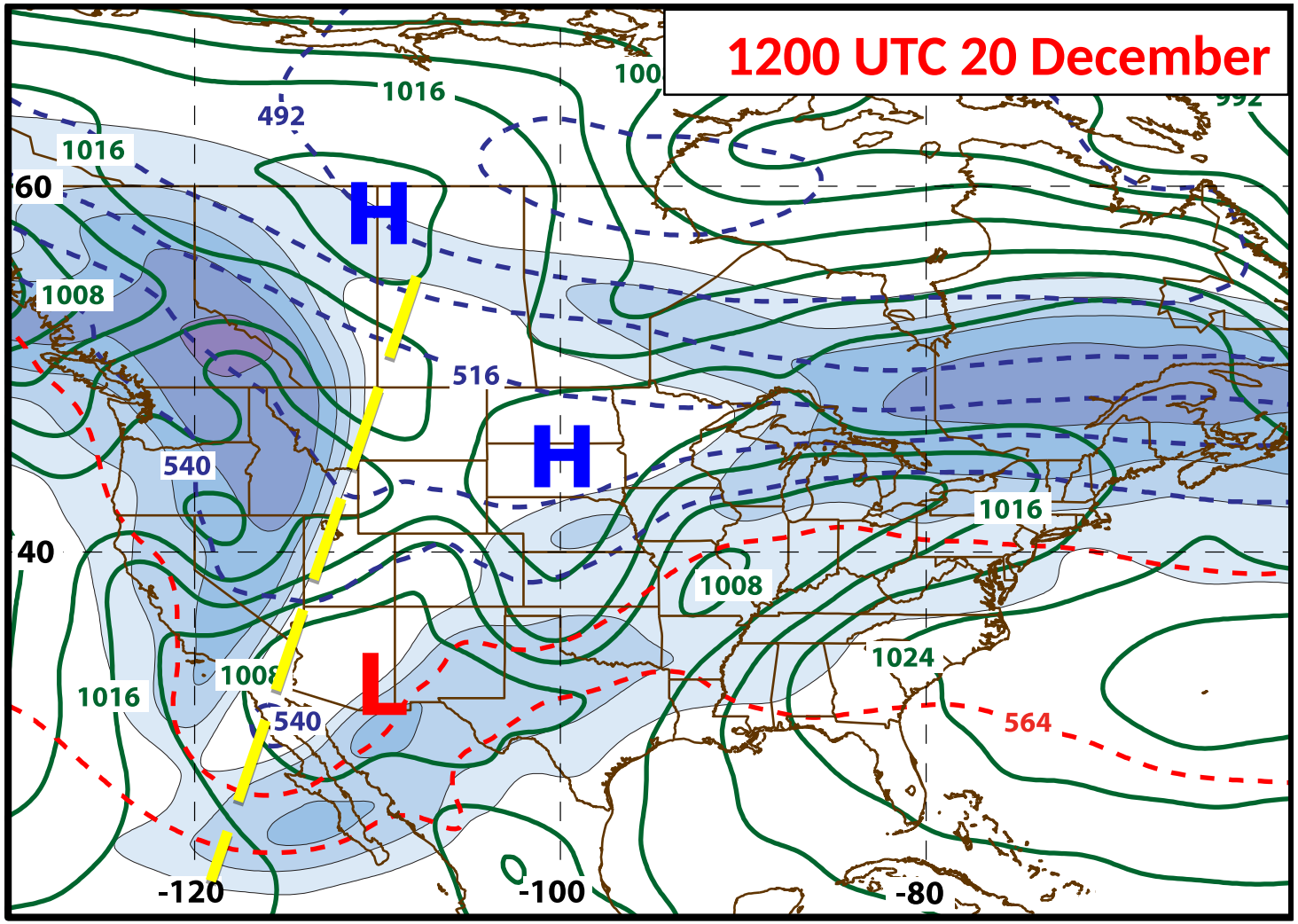
1000–500 hPa Thickness (dam; dashed)

Mean SLP (hPa; green)



Trough Axis

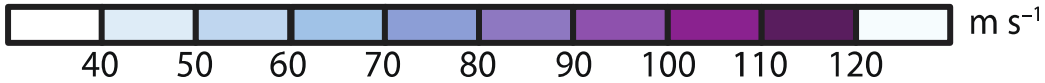
22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm



250 hPa Wind Speed (m s^{-1}; fill)

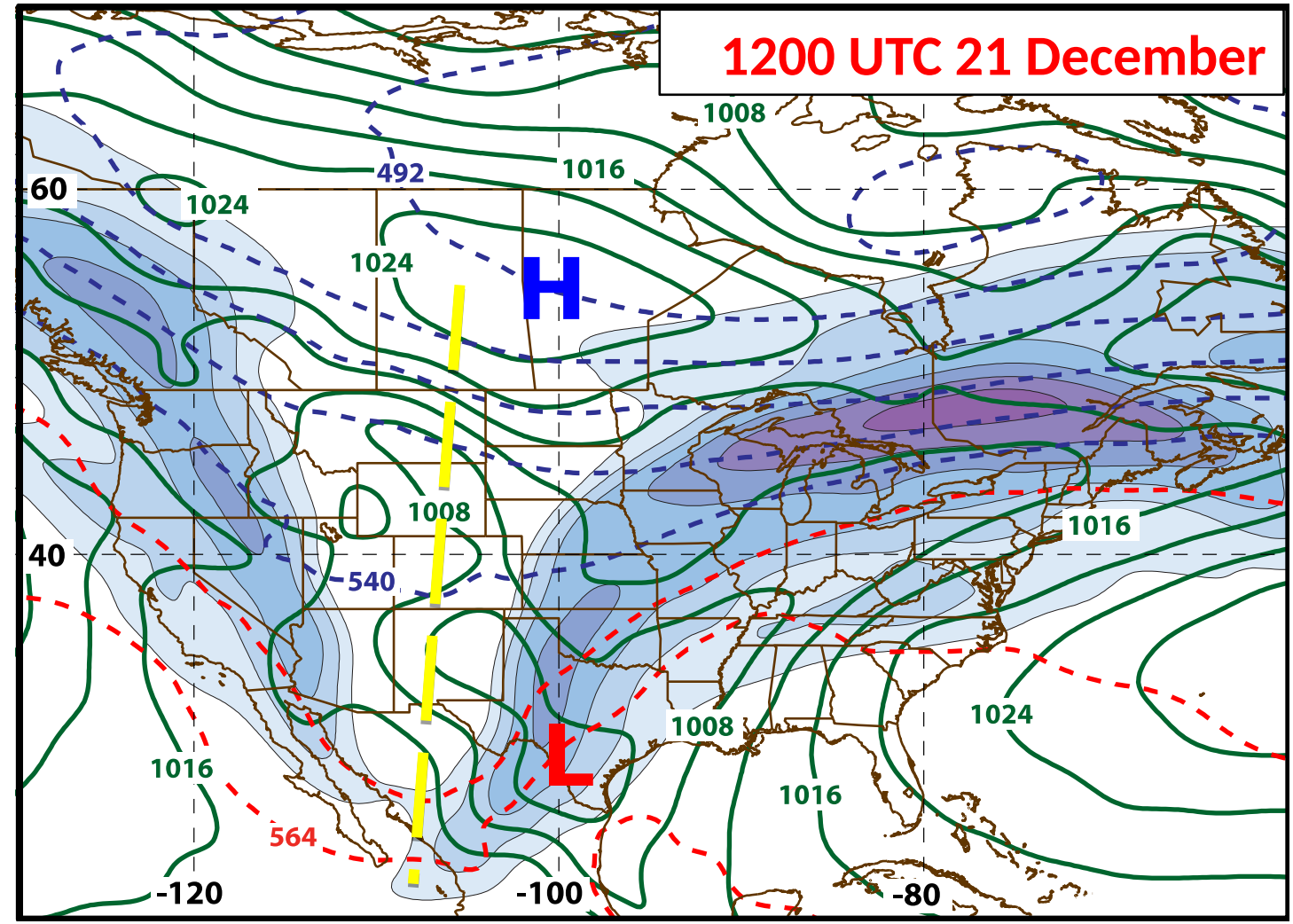
1000–500 hPa Thickness (dam; dashed)

Mean SLP (hPa; green)



Trough Axis

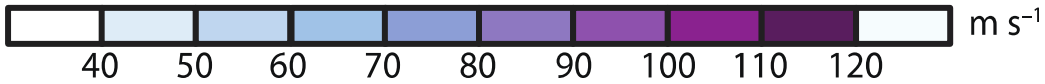
22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm



250 hPa Wind Speed (m s^{-1}; fill)

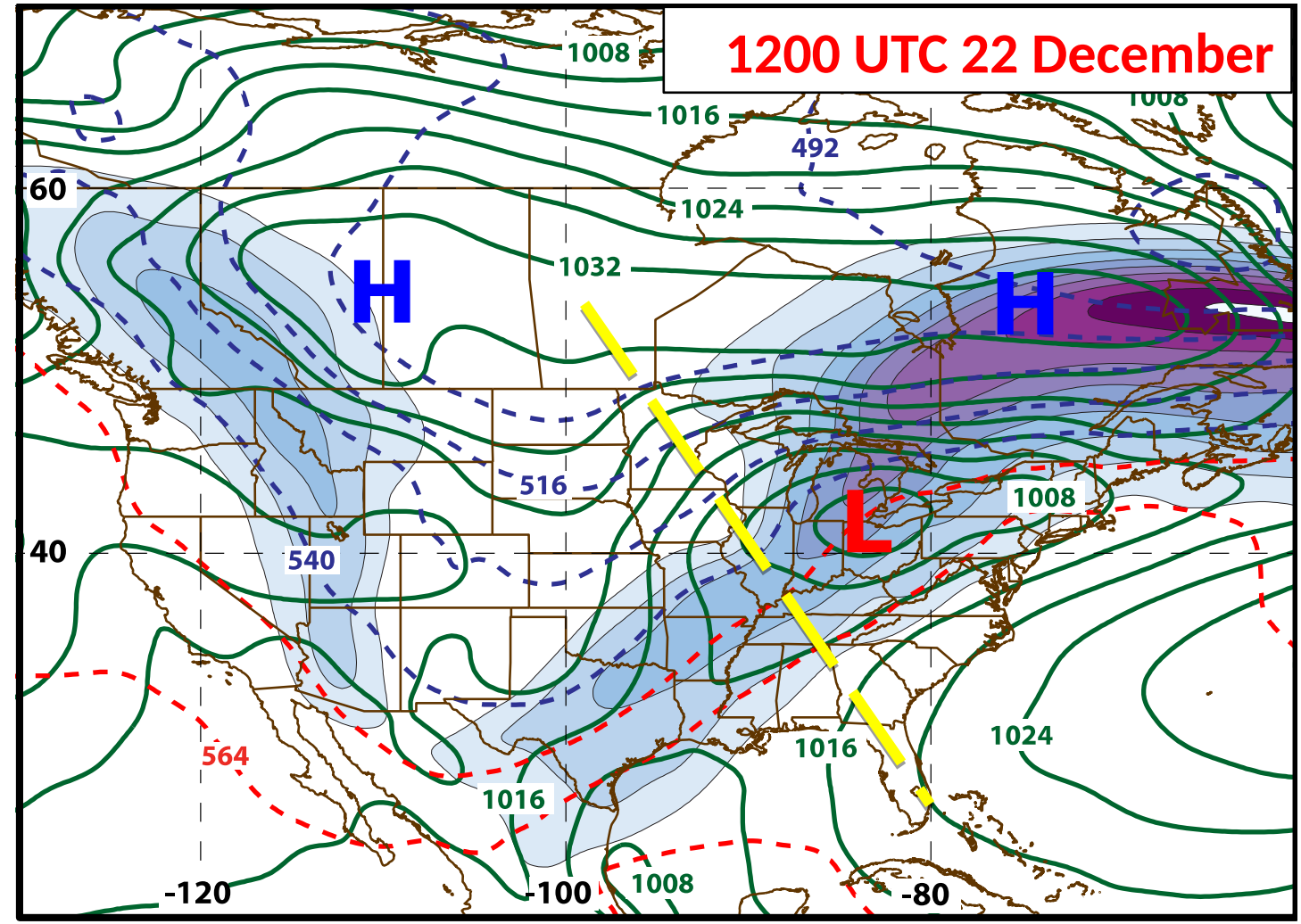
1000–500 hPa Thickness (dam; dashed)

Mean SLP (hPa; green)



Trough Axis

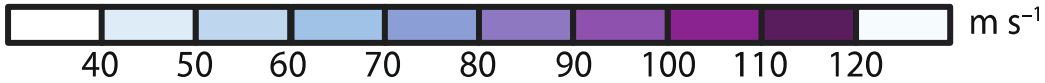
22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm



250 hPa Wind Speed (m s^{-1}; fill)

1000–500 hPa Thickness (dam; dashed)

Mean SLP (hPa; green)

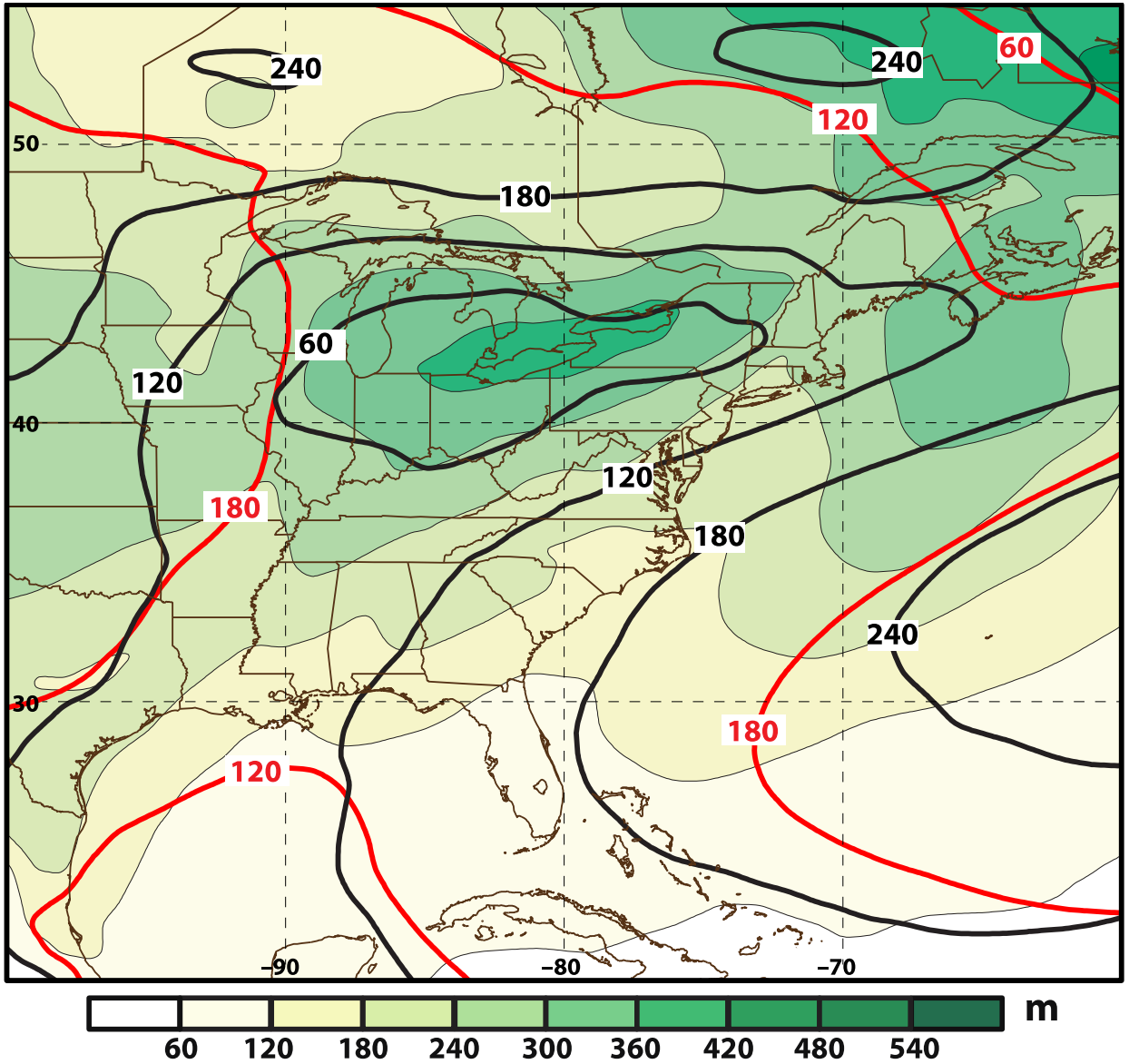


Trough Axis

22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm

240-h Forecast

1000 hPa Geo. Height (m)
Verifying
1200 UTC
22 December



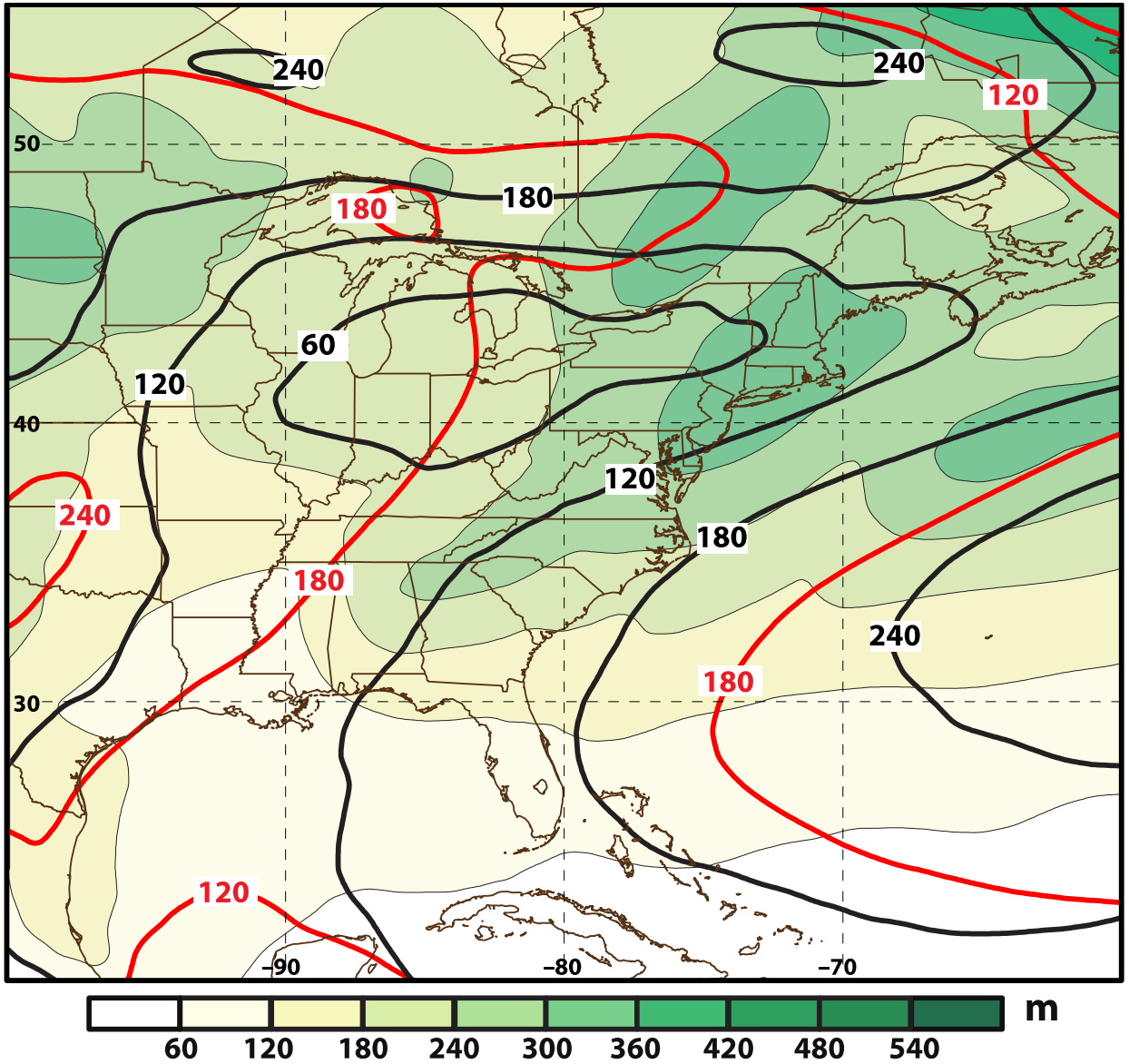
GEFS Ens. Mean

Analysis

22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm

216-h Forecast

1000 hPa Geo. Height (m)
Verifying
1200 UTC
22 December



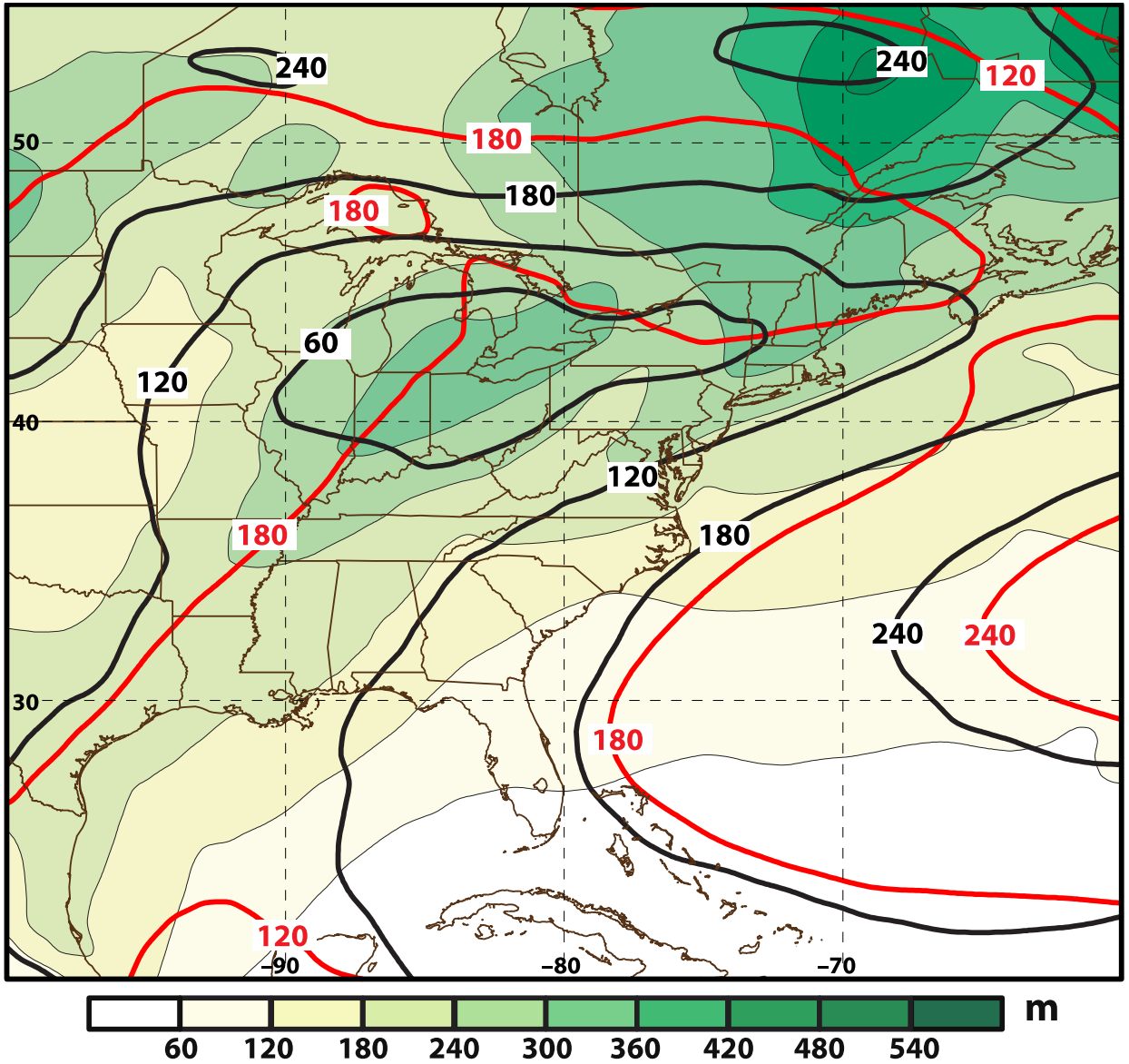
GEFS Ens. Mean

Analysis

22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm

192-h Forecast

1000 hPa Geo. Height (m)
Verifying
1200 UTC
22 December



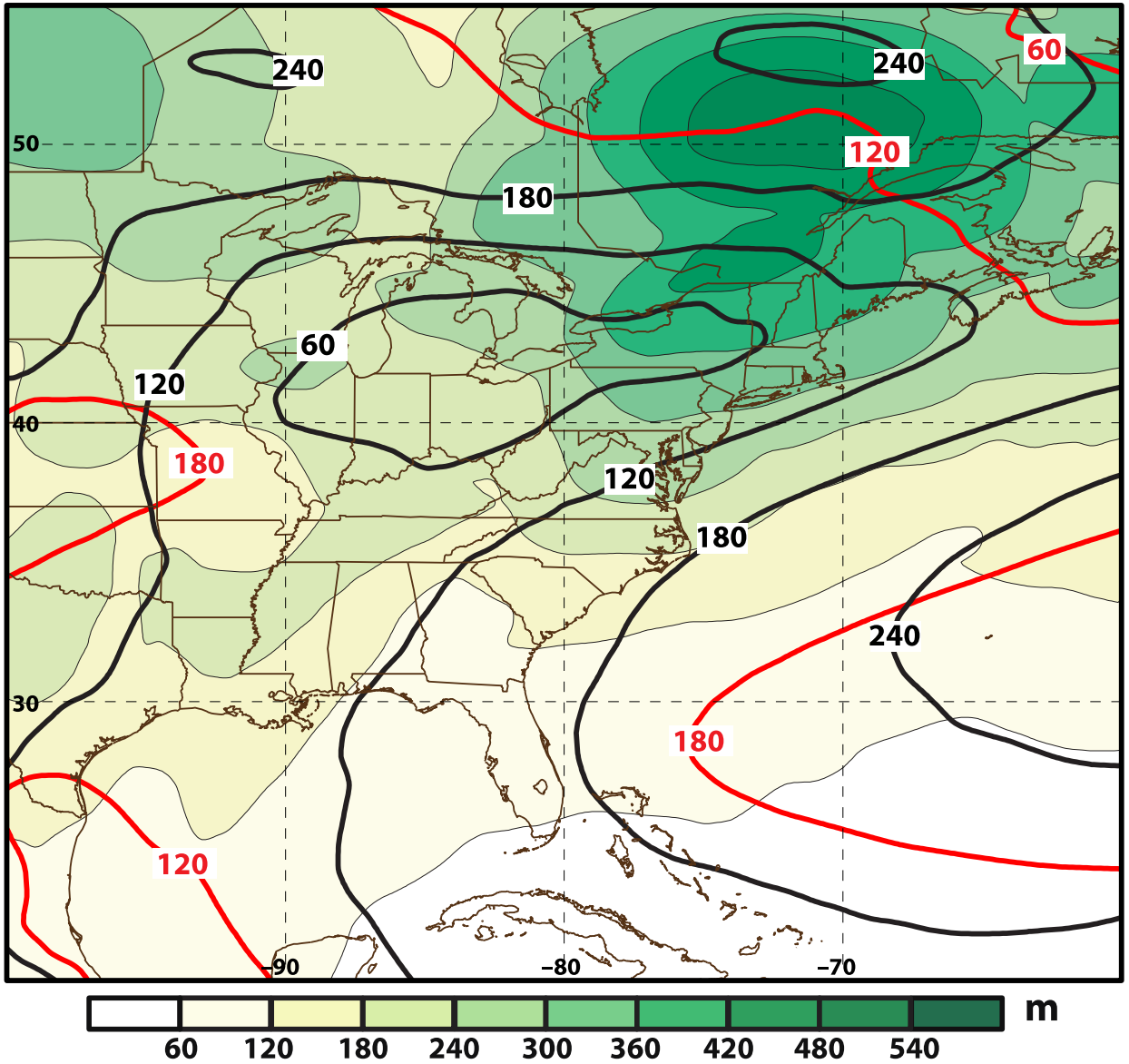
GEFS Ens. Mean

Analysis

22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm

168-h Forecast

1000 hPa Geo. Height (m)
Verifying
1200 UTC
22 December



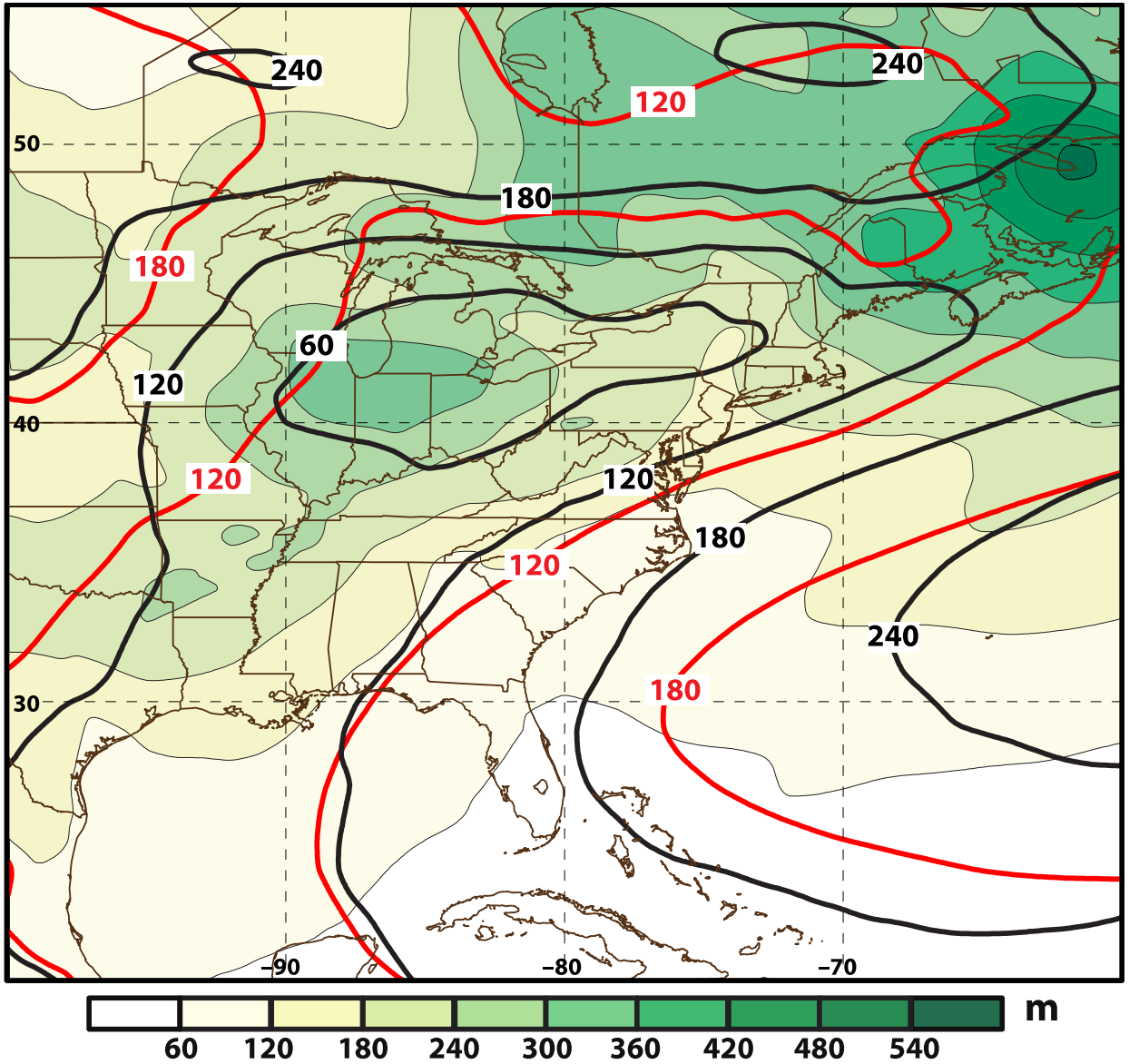
GEFS Ens. Mean

Analysis

22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm

144-h Forecast

1000 hPa Geo. Height (m)
Verifying
1200 UTC
22 December



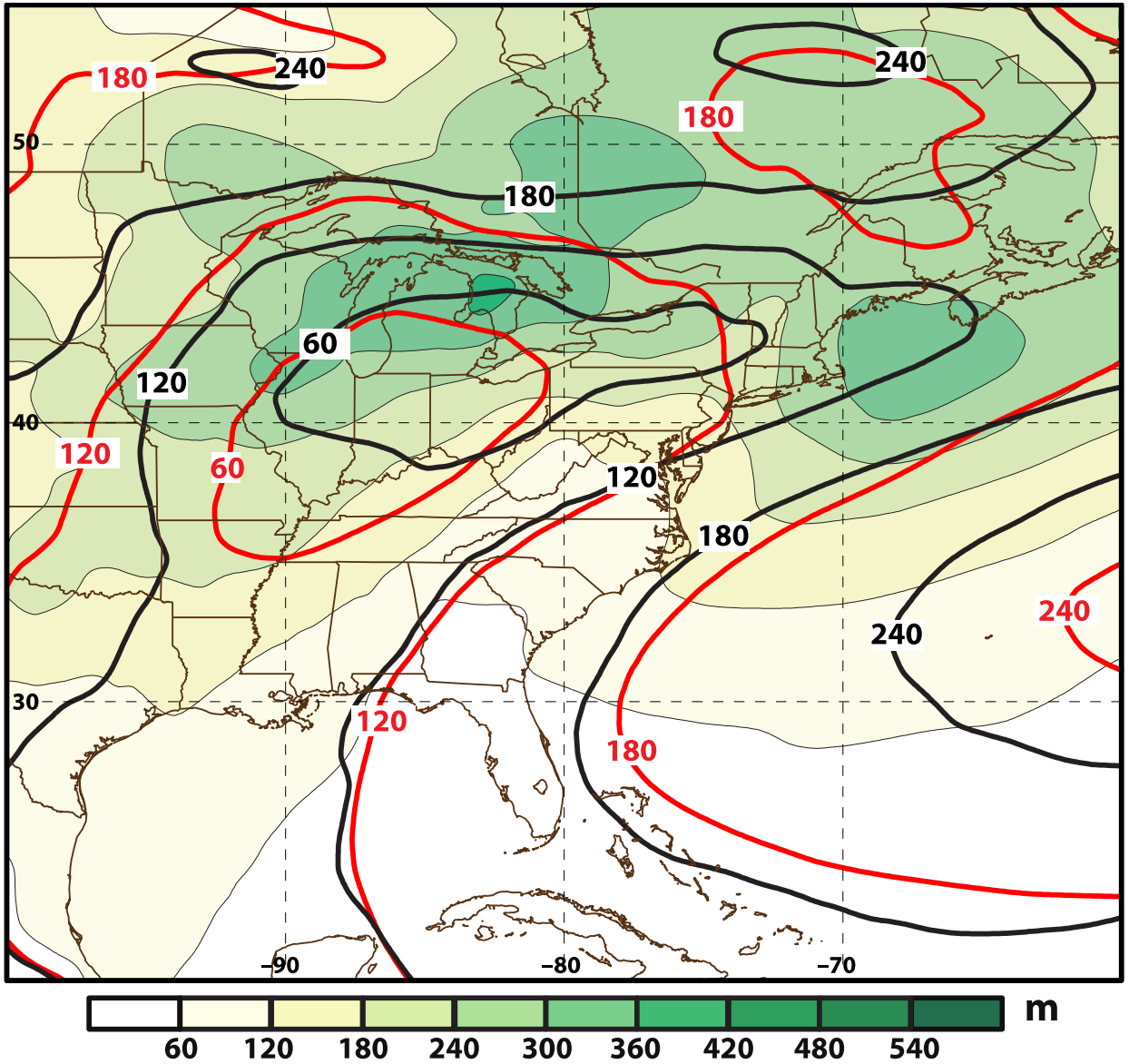
GEFS Ens. Mean

Analysis

22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm

120-h Forecast

1000 hPa Geo. Height (m)
Verifying
1200 UTC
22 December



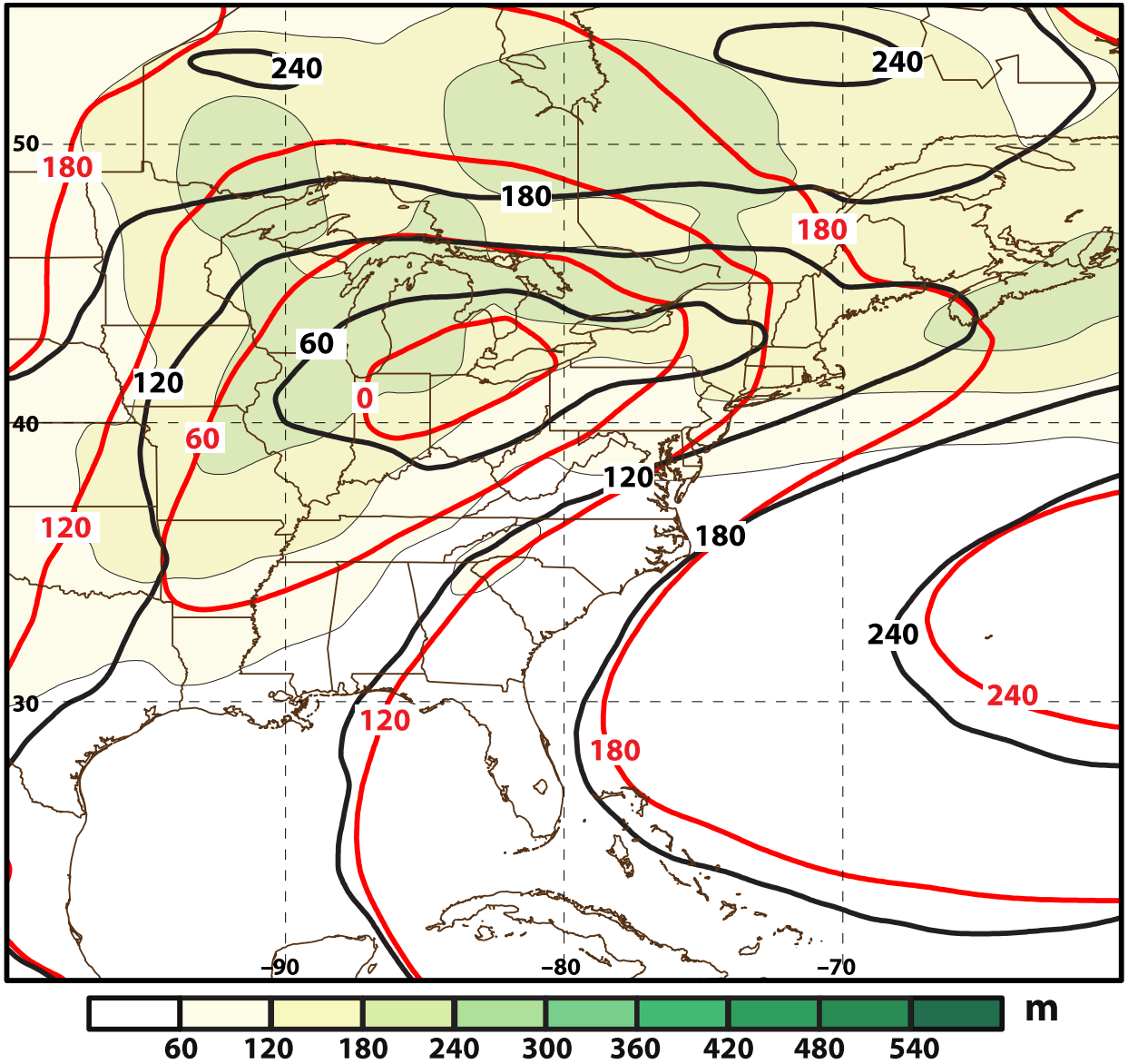
GEFS Ens. Mean

Analysis

22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm

96-h Forecast

1000 hPa Geo. Height (m)
Verifying
1200 UTC
22 December



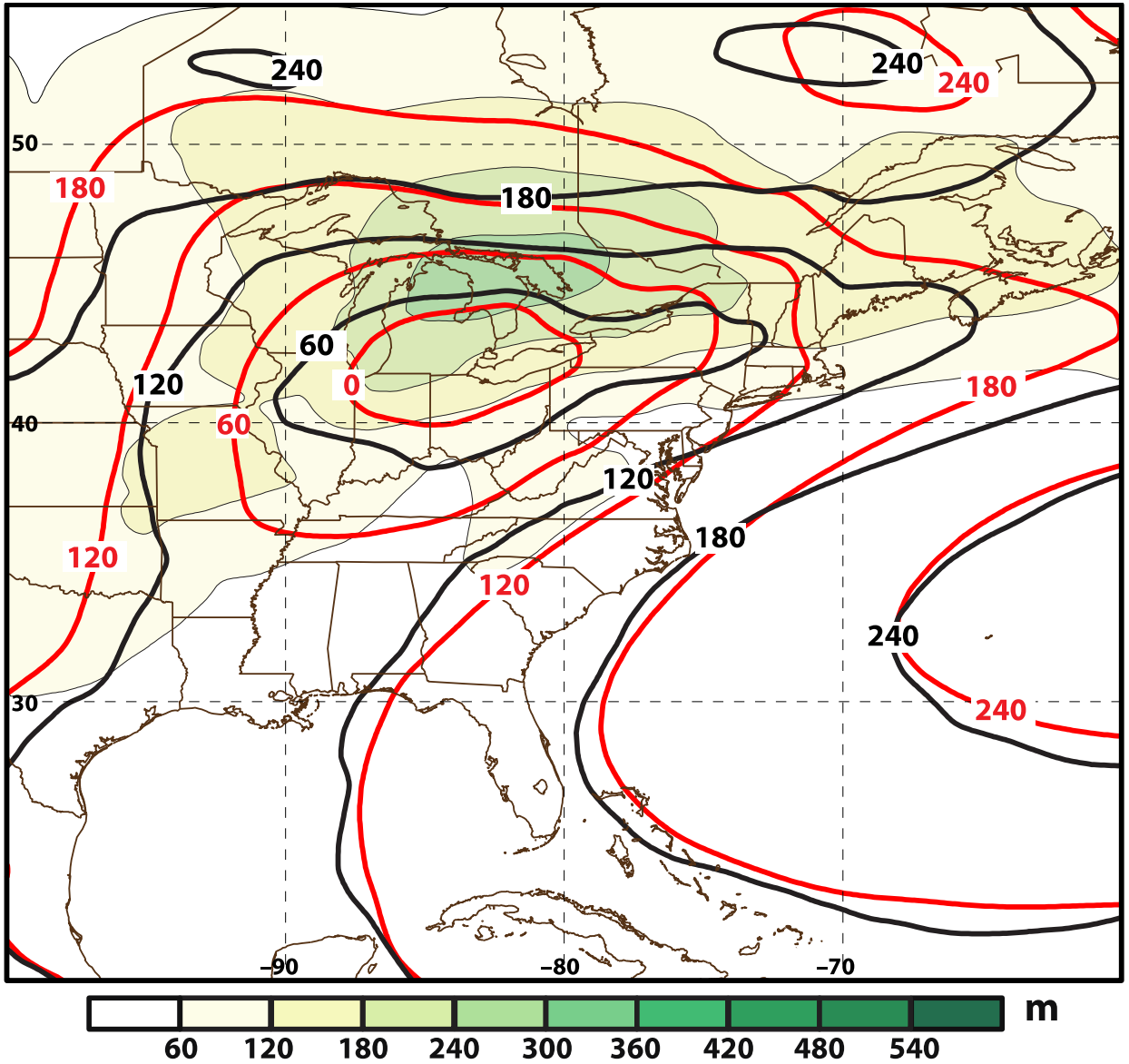
GEFS Ens. Mean

Analysis

22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm

72-h Forecast

1000 hPa Geo. Height (m)
Verifying
1200 UTC
22 December



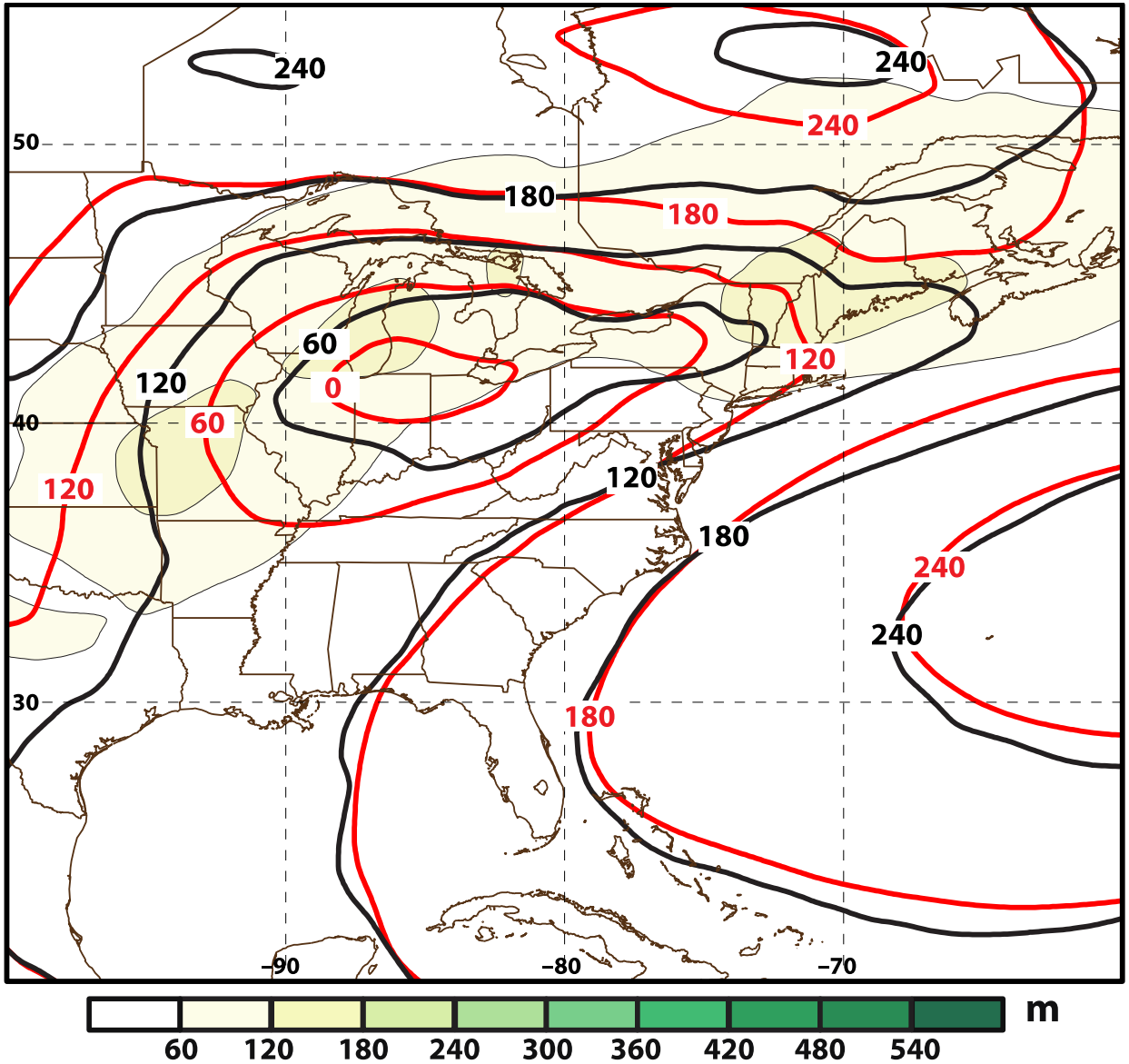
GEFS Ens. Mean

Analysis

22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm

48-h Forecast

1000 hPa Geo. Height (m)
Verifying
1200 UTC
22 December



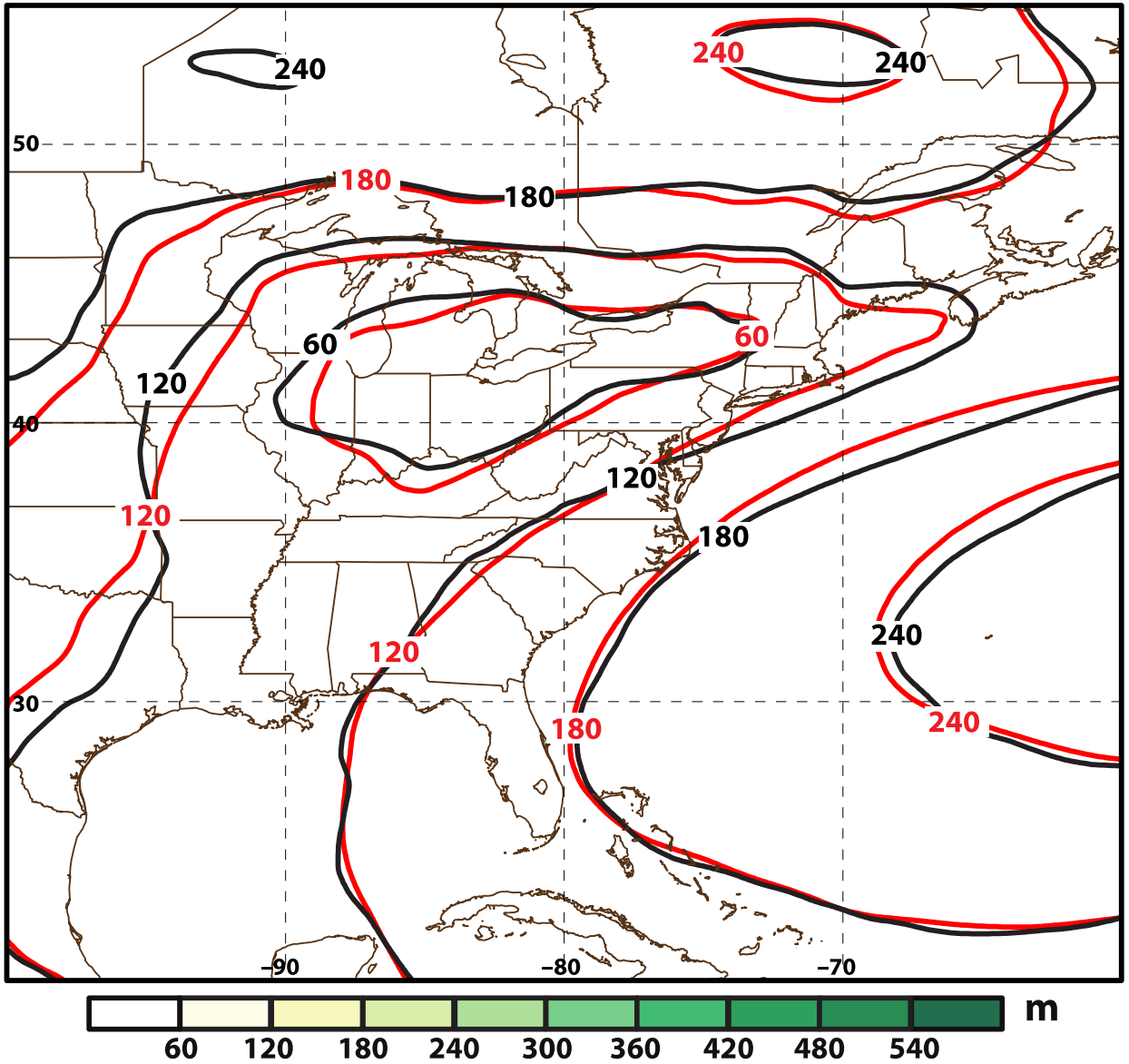
GEFS Ens. Mean

Analysis

22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm

24-h Forecast

1000 hPa Geo. Height (m)
Verifying
1200 UTC
22 December



GEFS Ens. Mean

Analysis

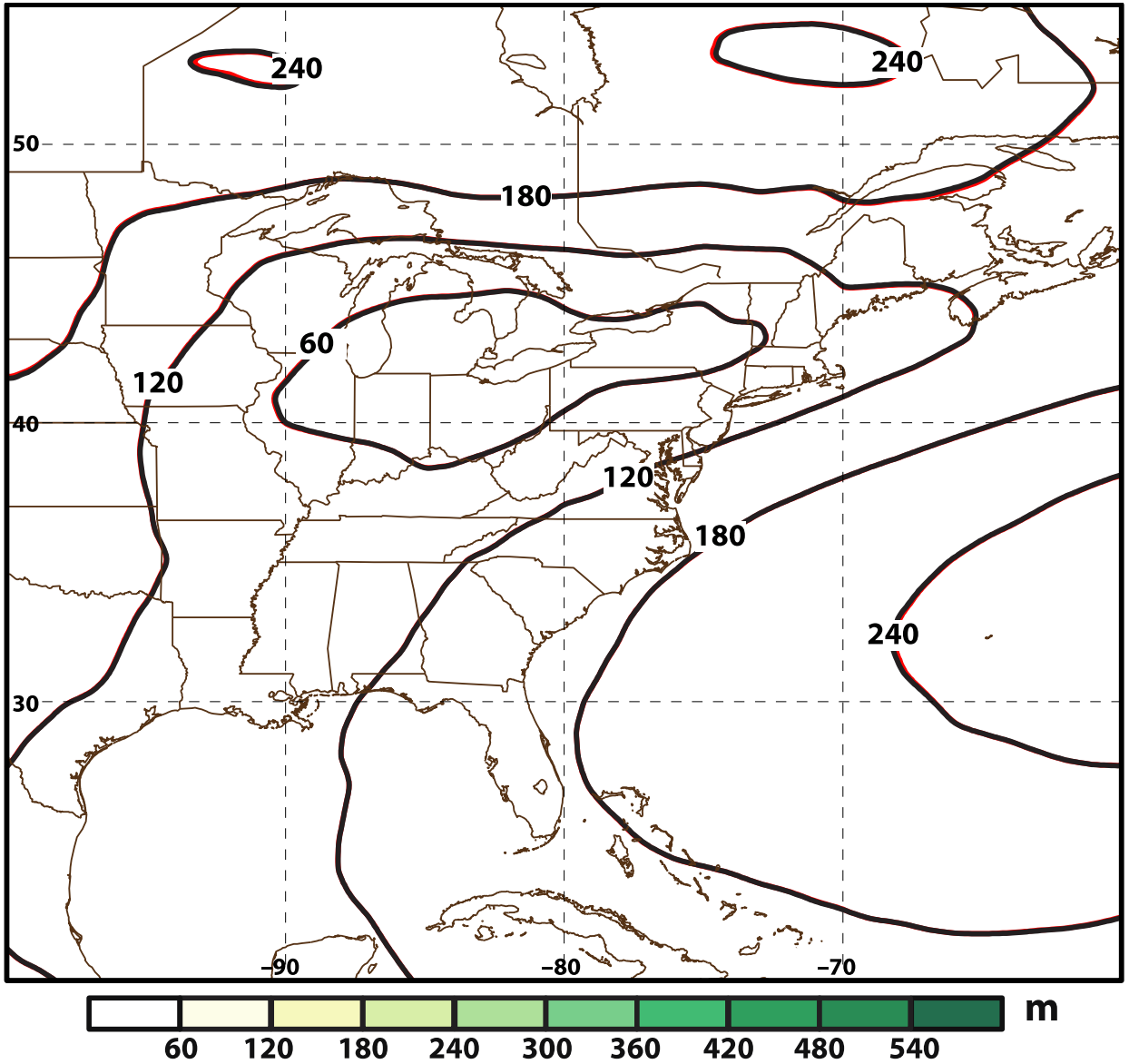
22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm

00-h Forecast

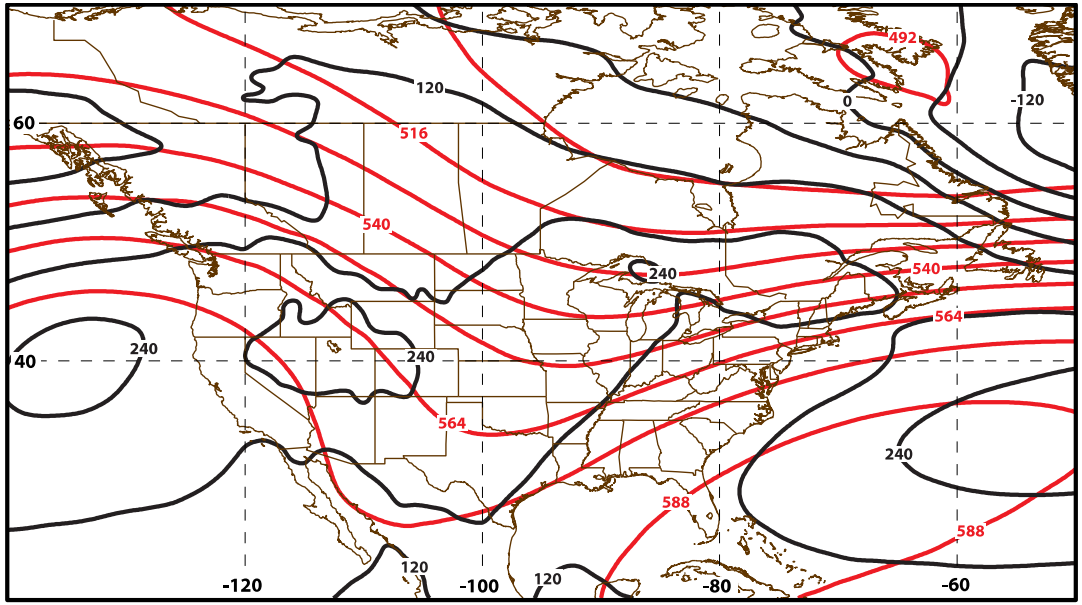
1000 hPa Geo. Height (m)
Verifying
1200 UTC
22 December

GEFS Ens. Mean

Analysis



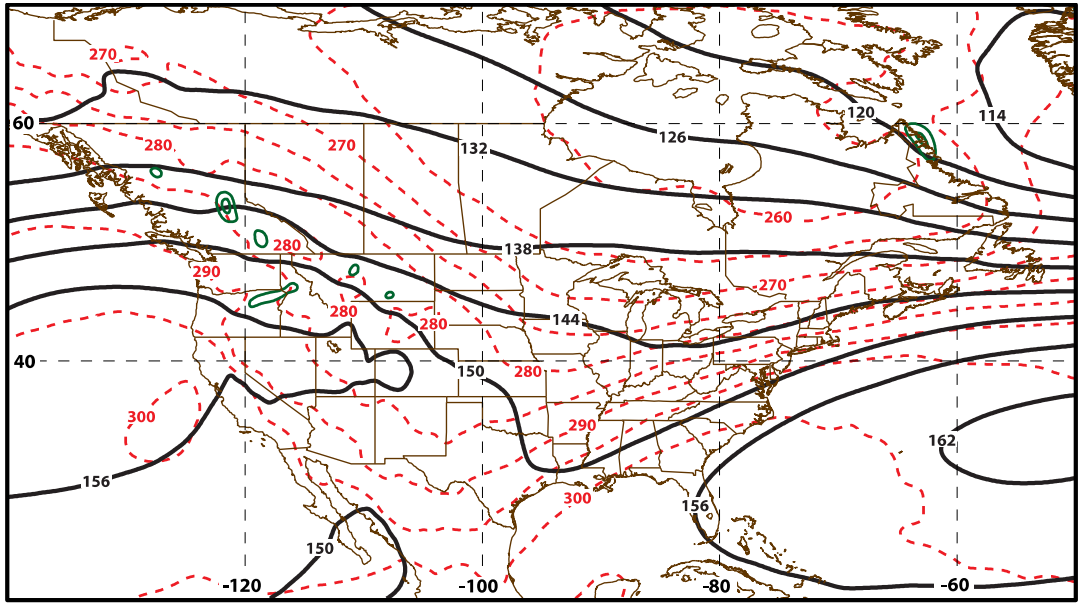
22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm



14 December – 192 h

1000 hPa Geo. Height (m; black)

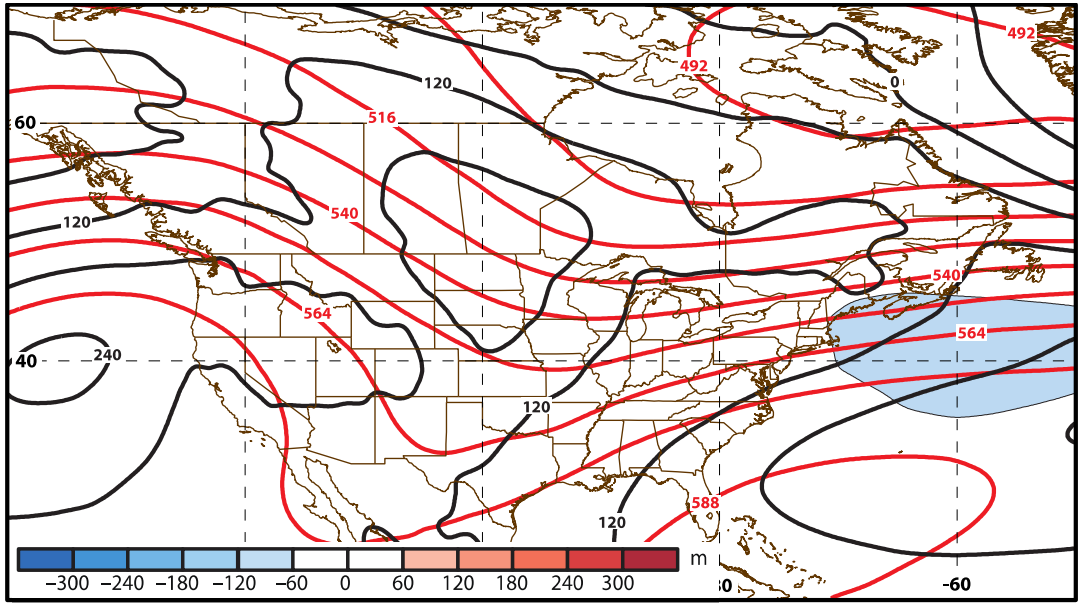
500 hPa Geo. Height (dam; red)

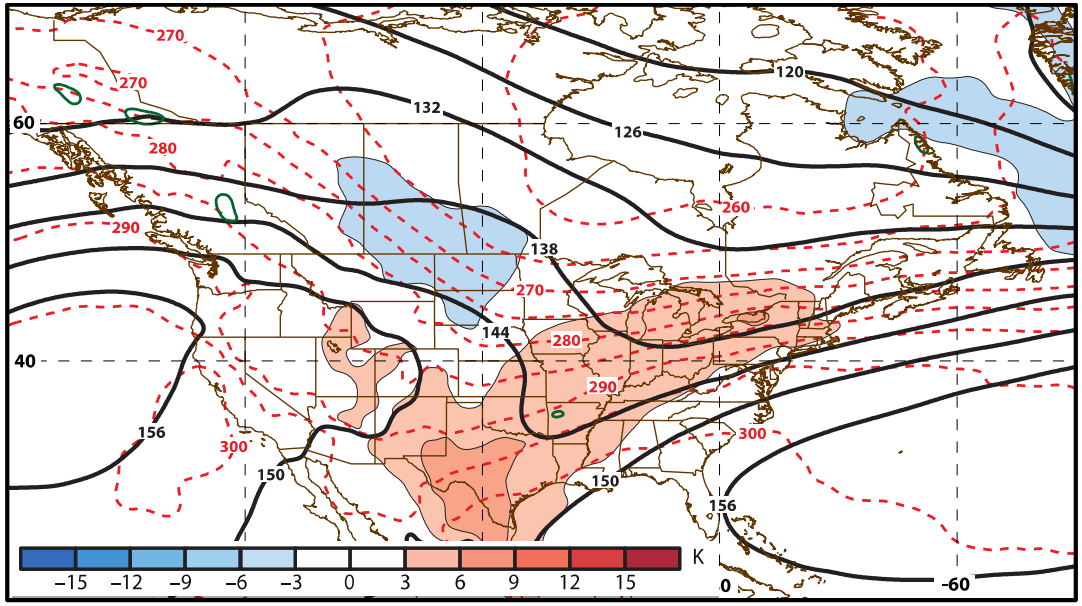


850 hPa Geo. Height (m; black)

850 hPa Pot. Temp. (K; red)

22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm





16 December – 144 h

1000 hPa Geo. Height (m; black)

500 hPa Geo. Height (dam; red)

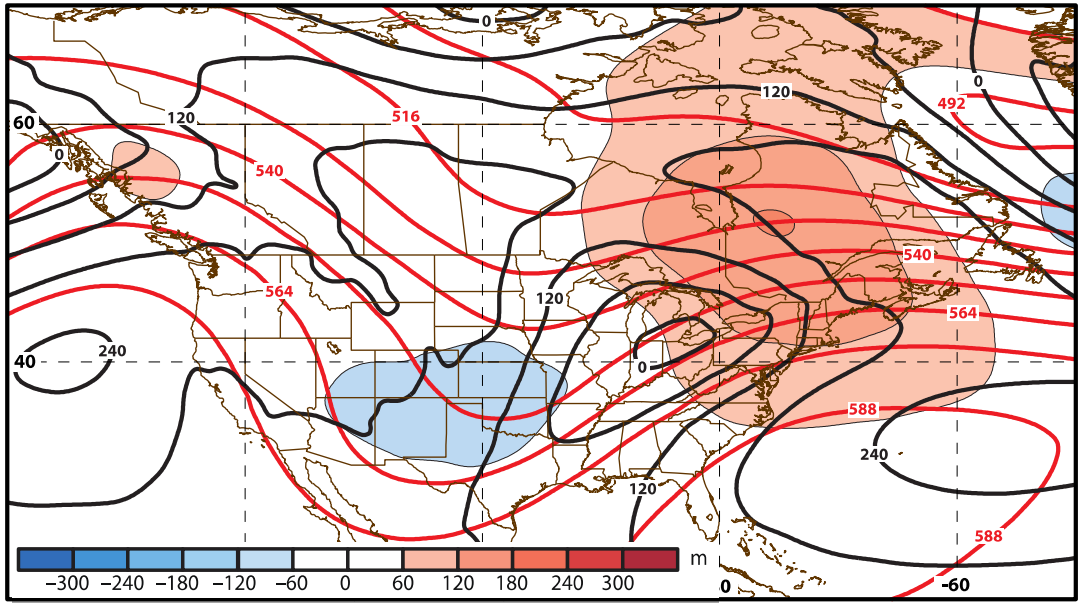
Difference in 500 hPa Geo. Height from forecast initialized 48-h earlier (m; shaded)

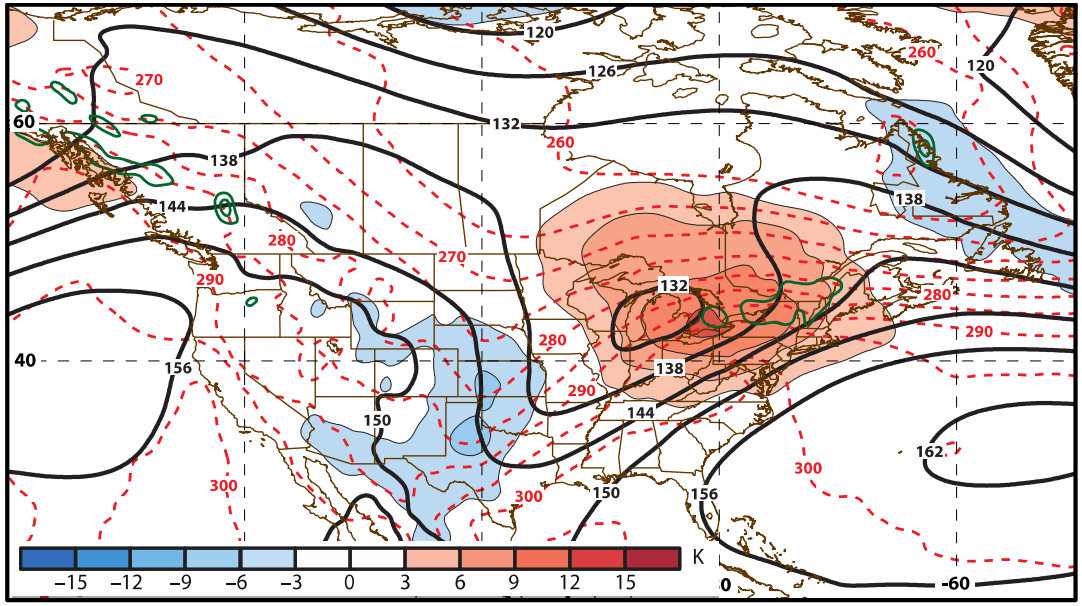
850 hPa Geo. Height (m; black)

850 hPa Pot. Temp. (K; red)

Difference in 850 hPa Pot. Temp. from forecast initialized 48-h earlier (K; shaded)

22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm





18 December – 96 h

1000 hPa Geo. Height (m; black)

500 hPa Geo. Height (dam; red)

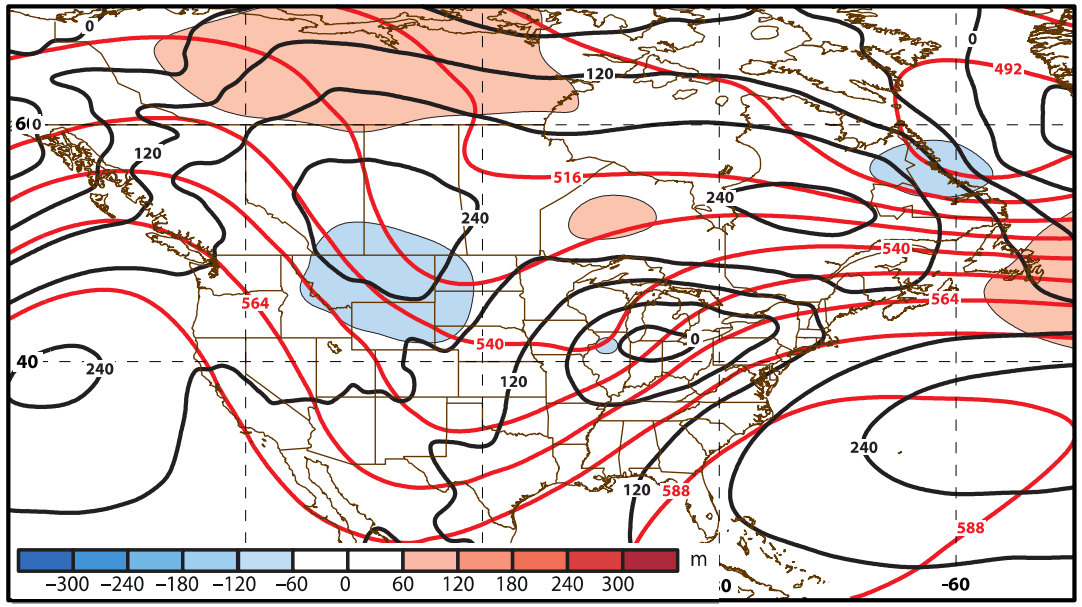
Difference in 500 hPa Geo. Height from forecast initialized 48-h earlier (m; shaded)

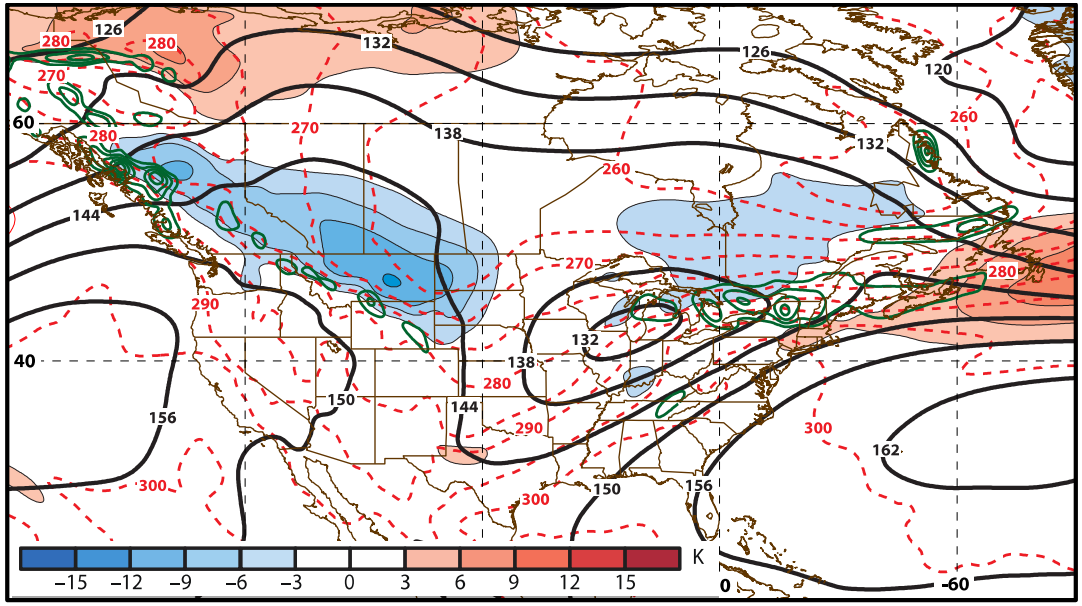
850 hPa Geo. Height (m; black)

850 hPa Pot. Temp. (K; red)

Difference in 850 hPa Pot. Temp. from forecast initialized 48-h earlier (K; shaded)

22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm





20 December – 48 h

1000 hPa Geo. Height (m; black)

500 hPa Geo. Height (dam; red)

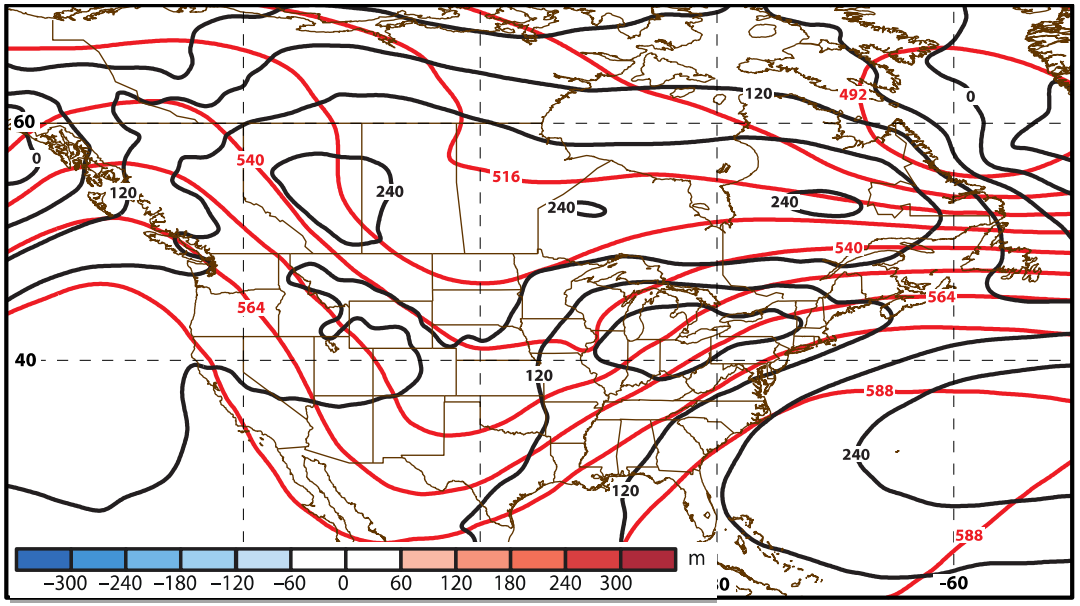
Difference in 500 hPa Geo. Height from forecast initialized 48-h earlier (m; shaded)

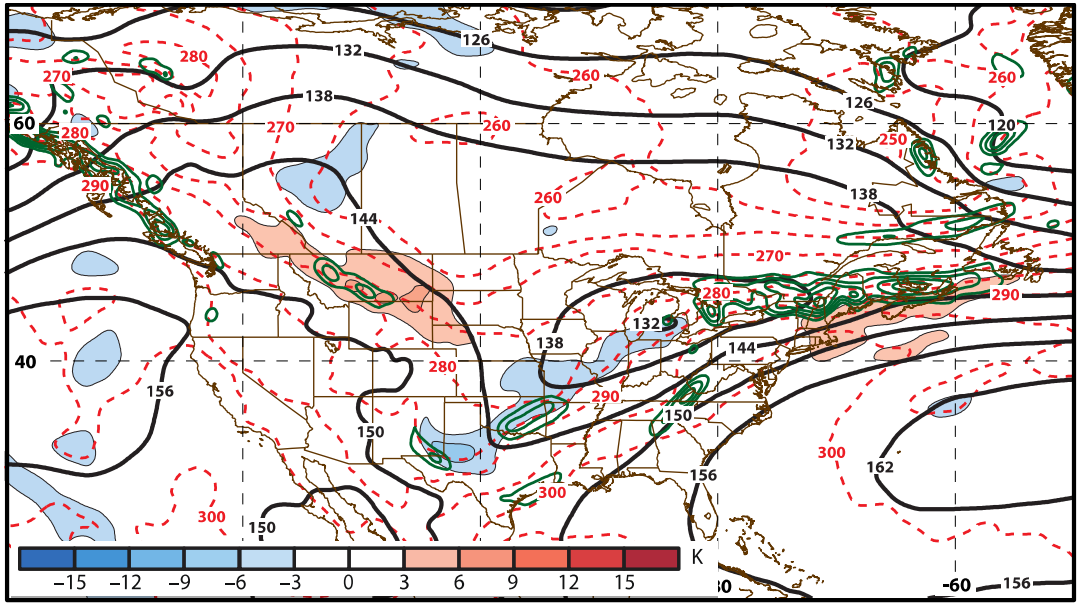
850 hPa Geo. Height (m; black)

850 hPa Pot. Temp. (K; red)

Difference in 850 hPa Pot. Temp. from forecast initialized 48-h earlier (K; shaded)

22–23 December 2013 Ice Storm





22 December – 00 h

1000 hPa Geo. Height (m; black)

500 hPa Geo. Height (dam; red)

Difference in 500 hPa Geo. Height from forecast initialized 48-h earlier (m; shaded)

850 hPa Geo. Height (m; black)

850 hPa Pot. Temp. (K; red)

Difference in 850 hPa Pot. Temp. from forecast initialized 48-h earlier (K; shaded)

Case Summary

- Forecast spread decreased sharply **96-h prior to the event** throughout the eastern United States.

- Forecasts with a lead time greater than 96-h exhibited considerable uncertainty in the **location and strength of the surface cyclone**.

- Forecasts exhibited uncertainty with respect to the **location, strength, and magnitude of frontogenesis** along the baroclinic zone as little as 48-h prior to the event.

Anticipated Research Efforts

Identify extreme **temperature**, **precipitation** events.

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Perform a composite analysis on each event type to determine the **antecedent environments** that favor the development of an EWE.

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Perform a composite analysis on each event type to determine the **antecedent environments** that favor the development of an EWE.

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Develop products that have the potential to provide a **"first-alert"** to the potential for EWEs.