# National Water Prediction Service (NWPS) Web Site Resources & FAQs

NWS Des Moines, Iowa

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# Resources

- **NWS Des Moines main NWPS Web Page**: http://www.weather.gov/dmx/water.
- **NWS Des Moines NWPS Information Page**: https://www.weather.gov/dmx/nwps_info.
- If you have a question and it is not on the list, contact our **Webmaster** at w-dmx.webmaster@noaa.gov.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## How do you get to the Web page for a specific gage?

From the NWPS main page click on the circle/square to bring up a splash page for that particular gage. Click on the Full Information link near the top of the page to see all of the information for that gage.

## What are the differences between the circles and squares on the NWPS main page? Why are they different colors?

Circles represent locations for which observations are available. Squares represent locations for which forecasts are available too. The color of the circle or square corresponds to the max flooding category:

- **Light blue** means no flood categories are defined.
- **Green** means no flooding.
- **Yellow** means high water (i.e., at or above action stage).
- **Orange** means minor flooding.
- **Red** means moderate flooding.
- **Purple** means major flooding.

## How do you display the long-range probabilistic forecasts?

There are a couple ways to display them. The first way is from the NWPS main page. Click on a gage of interest then go to the Full Information page. Scroll down about three-fourths of the way and you can scroll between different images including the long-range forecasts. Another way is from the NWPS main page, in the Layers section select “Long Range Flood Outlook.”

## Why does my city not have a gage with observations and forecasts?

There may not be a streamgage in or around your town. If you are curious, contact the National Weather Service at the Webmaster e-mail address.

## My city has a gage with observations. Why is there no forecast provided?

Some streamgages are forecast points while others are data points. Only forecasts are provided for forecast points. If you feel your data point deserves forecasts, contact the National Weather Service at the Webmaster e-mail address.

## How often are river forecasts issued when there is expected or ongoing flooding? How often are they issued when there is no flooding expected?

When there is expected or ongoing flooding, the river forecasts are typically updated at least twice a day--in the morning and evening. They may be updated more often--perhaps in the afternoon or overnight--depending on conditions. When no flooding is expected, they may be daily river forecast points. In that case, river forecasts are updated in the morning.

## How are the river categories (e.g. minor, moderate, major) defined?

River categories are defined as follows:

- **Action Stage** - high water. It is the trigger for river forecasts for high water-only river forecast points (i.e. locations that do not receive routine river forecasts). The NWS will provide river forecasts for river forecast points when either the observed or forecast stage reaches or exceeds action stage. Action stage is typically around the bankfull stage.
- **Minor Flooding** - minimal or no property damage, but possibly some public threat.
- **Moderate Flooding** - some inundation of structures and roads near the stream. Some evacuations of people and/or transfer of property to higher elevations.
- **Major Flooding** - extensive inundation of structures and roads. Significant evacuations of people and/or transfer of property to higher elevations.

## How often are the flood impacts updated? What if I notice an error or something that should be included? (my note: I realize it says to contact the webmaster, but might be another opportunity to get additional impacts)

Flood impacts are typically updated based on feedback from emergency managers and other local officials during and after flood evenings. If you notice errors or something that should be included, contact the National Weather Service at the Webmaster e-mail address.

## How often are the graphics updated? For example, the observed or forecast stages?

The NWPS graphics are updated dynamically – that is, as we receive information. Note that there may be a lag from the time that an observation is made or a forecast is issued until it appears on NWPS due to various reasons including streamgage reporting intervals and computer processing load. For forecasts, they typically update on NWPS within 15 minutes after we issue them.

## Do the forecasts take into account forecast rainfall?

Typically they do. The river forecasts take into account observed rainfall, plus typically forecast rainfall. During the warm season (i.e., April 1st through September 30th), river forecasts typically take into account 24 hours of forecast rainfall from the forecast generation time. During the cool season (i.e., from October 1st through March 31st), river forecasts typically take into account 48 hours of forecast rainfall from the forecast generation time. Note, however, that those time periods may change. For example, during the warm season, the river forecast may take into account more than 24 hours of forecast rainfall -- it may take into account 48 or more (or less) hours.

## I noticed the observed data does not match up with the forecast data. What do I do?

The National Weather Service tries to monitor all of the data and make adjustments as necessary. Sometimes the observed and forecast data may not match up. If it is a big difference, contact the National Weather Service at the Webmaster e-mail address or call your

local National Weather Service office.  The phone number for your local National Weather Service office should be on the main Web page for that office.

## Do the forecasts take into account any water management practices (e.g. reservoir releases)?

Yes they do.  The National Weather Service is in contact with reservoir owners to determine reservoir releases and include them in the forecasts.

## What is the Zero Datum?

The Zero Datum is the elevation above sea level where the zero elevation for the gage exists. This Zero Datum allows the gage to report the stage in a local value -- say 22 feet, for example. If the Zero Datum did not exist, then the stage would be reported relative to sea level.  For example, if the Zero Datum of the gage referenced above was 900 feet but did not actually exist, then the stage would be reported as 922 feet.  This value is much harder to understand than 22 feet.  Thus the Zero Datum allows for more understandable stage values.

## Where can I find more information on NWPS?

You can refer to the NWS Des Moines NWPS Information Page for more information.  You can also contact our Webmaster if you wish.

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