

<b>NWS FORM E-5</b> (11-88) (PRES. by NWS Instruction 10-924)	<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE</b> NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE	HYDROLOGIC SERVICE AREA (HSA)	
		<b>Tulsa, Oklahoma (TSA)</b>	
<b>MONTHLY REPORT OF RIVER AND FLOOD CONDITIONS</b>		REPORT FOR:	
		MONTH <b>December</b>	YEAR <b>2015</b>
TO: Hydrometeorological Information Center, W/OH2 NOAA / National Weather Service 1325 East West Highway, Room 7230 Silver Spring, MD 20910-3283		SIGNATURE <b>Steven F. Piltz</b> (Meteorologist-in-Charge)	
		DATE <b>January 29, 2015</b>	

When no flooding occurs, include miscellaneous river conditions, such as significant rises, record low stages, ice conditions, snow cover, droughts, and hydrologic products issued (NWS Instruction 10-924)

An "X" in the box indicates no flood stages were reached in this Hydrologic Service Area (HSA) during the month above.

Record rainfall, record flooding, and widespread major flooding devastated a large portion of eastern OK and northwest AR this month. December 2015 was the wettest on record for both Fort Smith and Fayetteville, AR. Much of the area received 3 to 5 times the normal December rainfall. Normal precipitation for December ranges from 1.5 inches in Pawnee County to 3.2 inches in Haskell County. Normal precipitation for the Ozark region of northwest Arkansas averages 3.2 inches for the month. This report, past E-5 reports, and monthly hydrology and climatology summaries can be found at <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/tsa/?n=hydro-monthly-summary>.

**Monthly Summary**

Using the radar-derived estimated observed precipitation from the RFCs (Fig. 1a), rainfall totals for December 2015 ranged from around 3" to 16". Most of the HSA received 6"-12" of rain this month (similar totals also occurred in Nov. 2015). This corresponds to 150% to around 500% of the normal December rain across eastern OK and northwest AR (Fig. 1b).

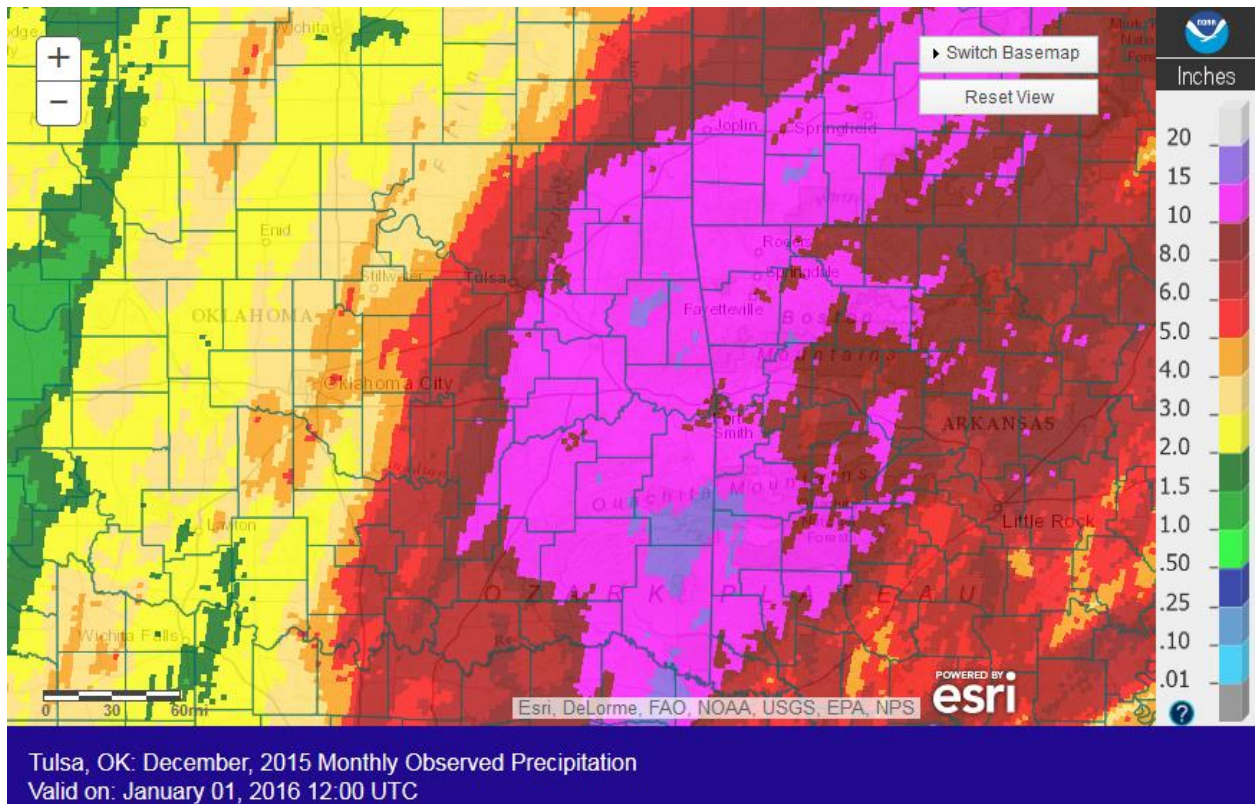


Fig. 1a. Estimated Observed Rainfall for December 2015

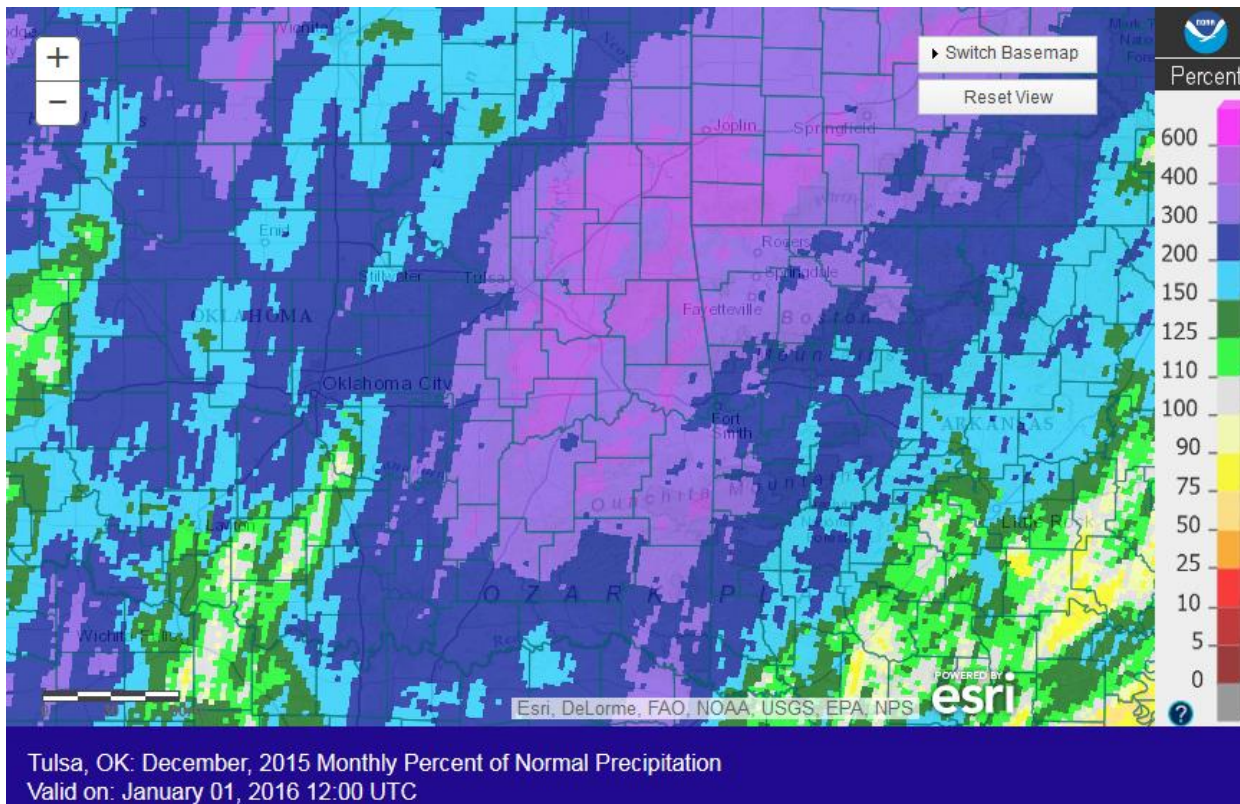


Fig. 1b. Estimated % of Normal Rainfall for December 2015

In Tulsa, OK, December 2015 ranked as the 3<sup>rd</sup> warmest December (46.7°F; since records began in 1905), the 2<sup>nd</sup> wettest December (8.60"; since records began in 1888), and the 49<sup>th</sup> least snowy December (0.5", tied 2007, 1918, 1912; since records began in 1900). Fort Smith, AR had the 2<sup>nd</sup> warmest December (49.3°F; since records began in 1882) and the **Record** wettest December (10.81"; since records began in 1882). The previous record December rainfall was 10.09" in 1971. Fayetteville, AR had the 3<sup>rd</sup> warmest (44.2°F) and the **Record** wettest (10.95") December since records began in 1949. The previous record December rainfall was 8.54" in 1982. For McAlester, OK (rainfall records began in 1953 though missing data from Aug. 1996-Dec. 1997), the **Record** highest rainfall for any day in December was set on 12/27/2015 with 4.68" (previous record 2.65" 12/27/1968) and the **Record** wettest December was reached in Dec. 2015 with 10.50" (previous record 8.34" 1987; 1981-2010 Normal December rainfall is 2.98"). Muskogee, OK (rainfall records began in 1905 though missing data from Oct. 1908-Dec. 1913) also measured its **Record** wettest December in 2015 with 13.40" (previous record 9.27" 1987; 1981-2010 Normal December rainfall is 3.04").

According to statistics from the [Oklahoma Climatological Survey \(OCS\) Mesonet](#):

Rank since 1921	December 2015	Last 60 Days (Nov 2 – Dec 31)	Water Year-to-Date (Oct 1 – Dec 31)	Cool Growing Season (Sep 1 – Dec 31)	Last 180 Days (Jul 5 – Dec 31)	Year 2015
Northeast OK	1 <sup>st</sup> wettest	1 <sup>st</sup> wettest	2 <sup>nd</sup> wettest	7 <sup>th</sup> wettest	2 <sup>nd</sup> wettest	4 <sup>th</sup> wettest
East Central OK	1 <sup>st</sup> wettest	1 <sup>st</sup> wettest	1 <sup>st</sup> wettest	1 <sup>st</sup> wettest	1 <sup>st</sup> wettest	1 <sup>st</sup> wettest
Southeast OK	1 <sup>st</sup> wettest	1 <sup>st</sup> wettest	1 <sup>st</sup> wettest	1 <sup>st</sup> wettest	3 <sup>rd</sup> wettest	1 <sup>st</sup> wettest
Statewide	1 <sup>st</sup> wettest	1 <sup>st</sup> wettest	1 <sup>st</sup> wettest	4 <sup>th</sup> wettest	2 <sup>nd</sup> wettest	1 <sup>st</sup> wettest

Some of the larger precipitation reports (in inches) for December 2015 included:

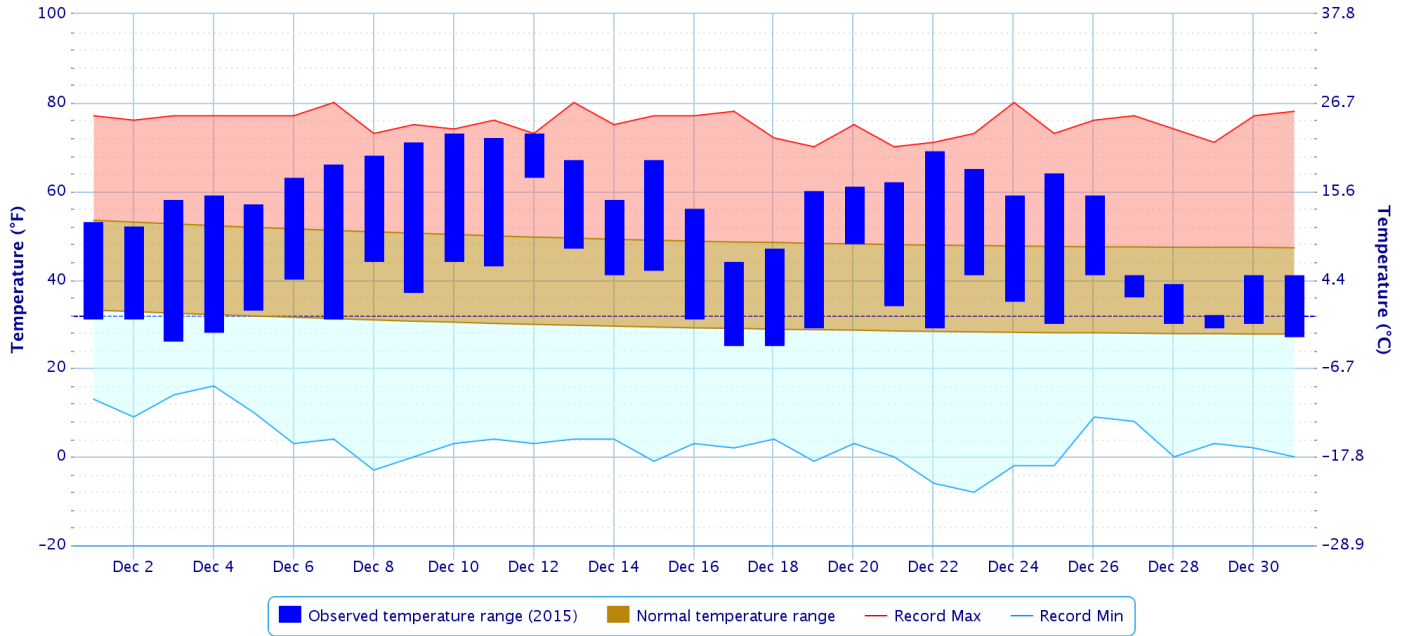
Tahlequah, OK (meso)	15.73	Wilburton 9.4N, OK (coco)	15.67	Elkins 10.6SSE, AR (coco)	15.64
Talihina, OK (meso)	15.16	Decatur 2.6ESE, AR (coco)	15.09	Wilburton, OK (meso)	14.98
Viney Grove 2.4NW, AR (coco)	14.89	Bunch 0.8N, OK (coco)	14.78	Winslow 7NE, AR (coop)	14.67

Some of the lowest precipitation reports (in inches) for December 2015 included:

Burbank, OK (meso)	3.73	Pawnee, OK (meso)	3.94	Copan, OK (meso)	4.82
Wynona, OK (meso)	5.44	Oilton, OK (meso)	5.44	Bartlesville, OK (ASOS)	5.65
Bartlesville, OK (coop)	5.93	Ochelata 5.6N, OK (coco)	7.21	Bristow, OK (meso)	7.64

Daily Temperature Data – Tulsa Area, OK (ThreadEx)

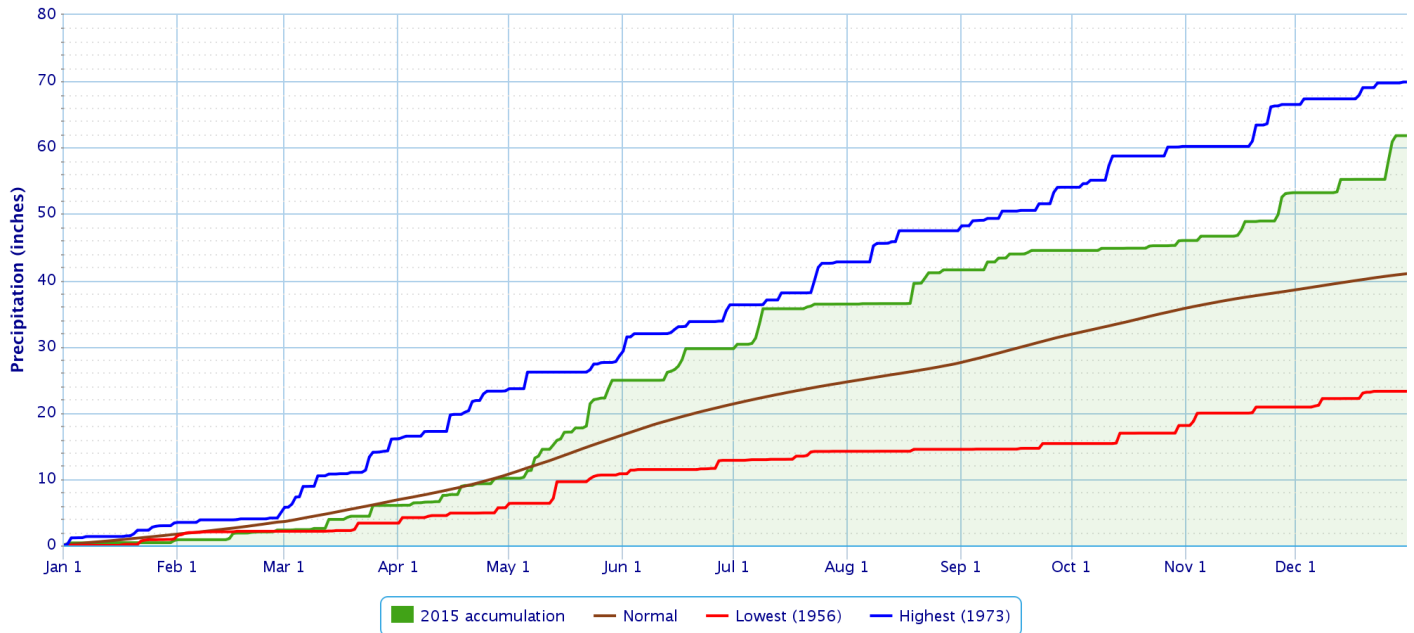
Period of Record – 1905-01-06 to 2016-01-04. Normals period: 1981-2010. Click and drag to zoom chart.



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Accumulated Precipitation – Tulsa Area, OK (ThreadEx)

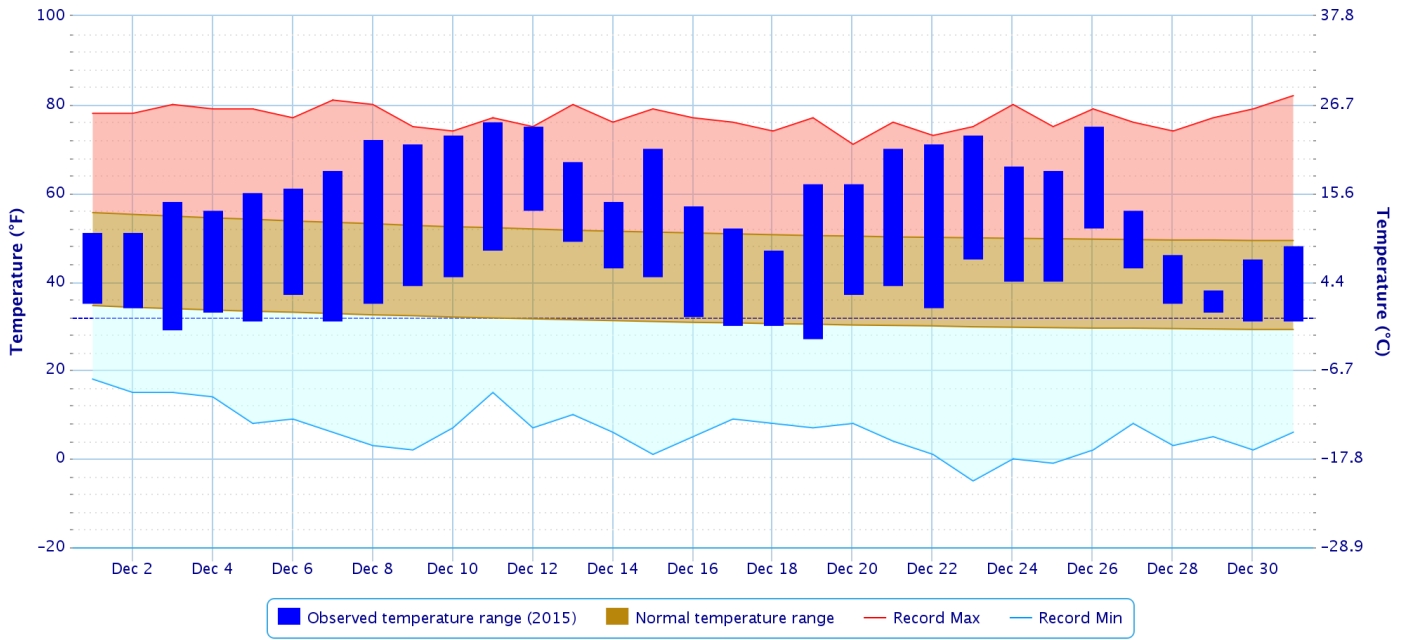
Click and drag to zoom to a shorter time interval; green/black diamonds represent subsequent/missing values



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### Daily Temperature Data – Fort Smith Area, AR (ThreadEx)

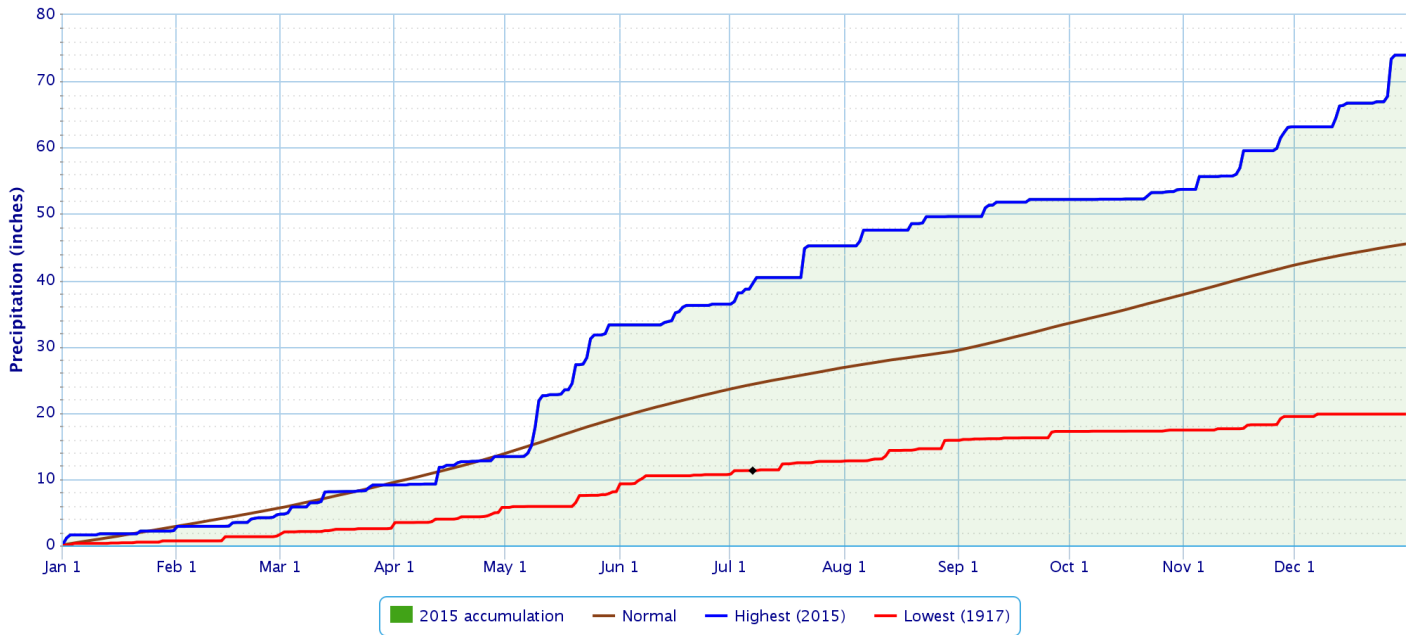
Period of Record – 1882-06-01 to 2016-01-04. Normals period: 1981-2010. Click and drag to zoom chart.



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### Accumulated Precipitation – Fort Smith Area, AR (ThreadEx)

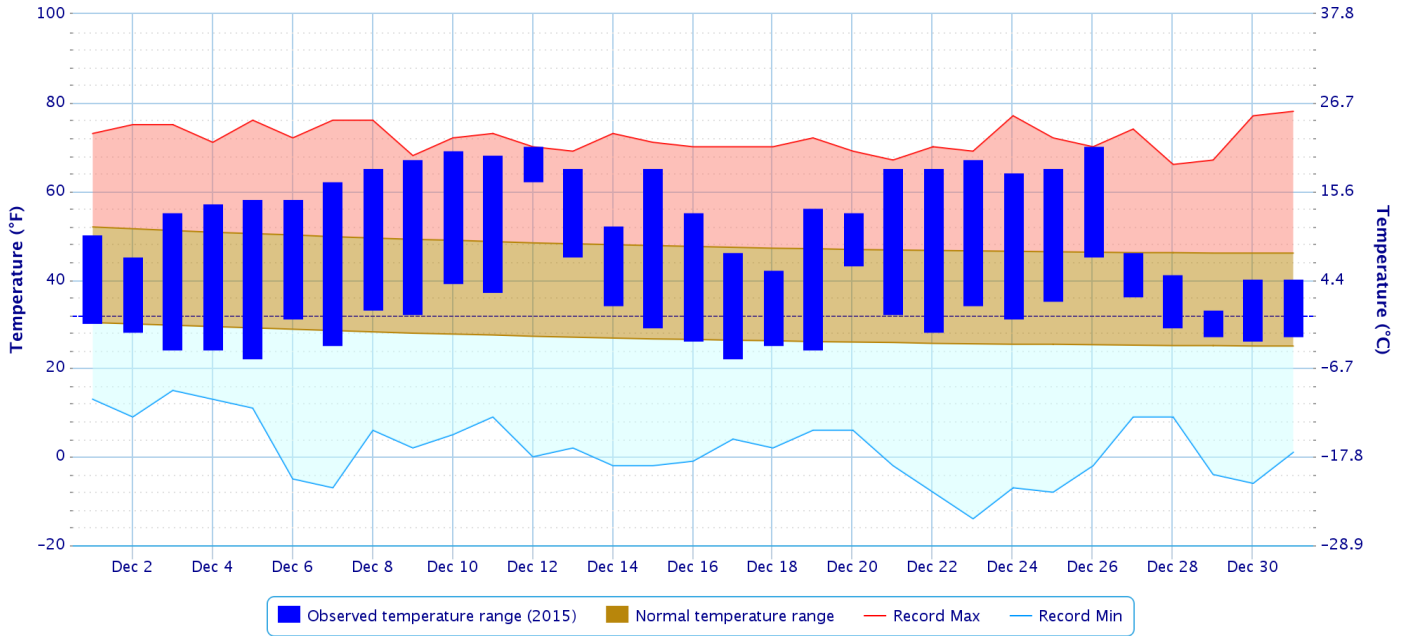
Click and drag to zoom to a shorter time interval; green/black diamonds represent subsequent/missing values



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### Daily Temperature Data – FAYETTEVILLE DRAKE FLD, AR

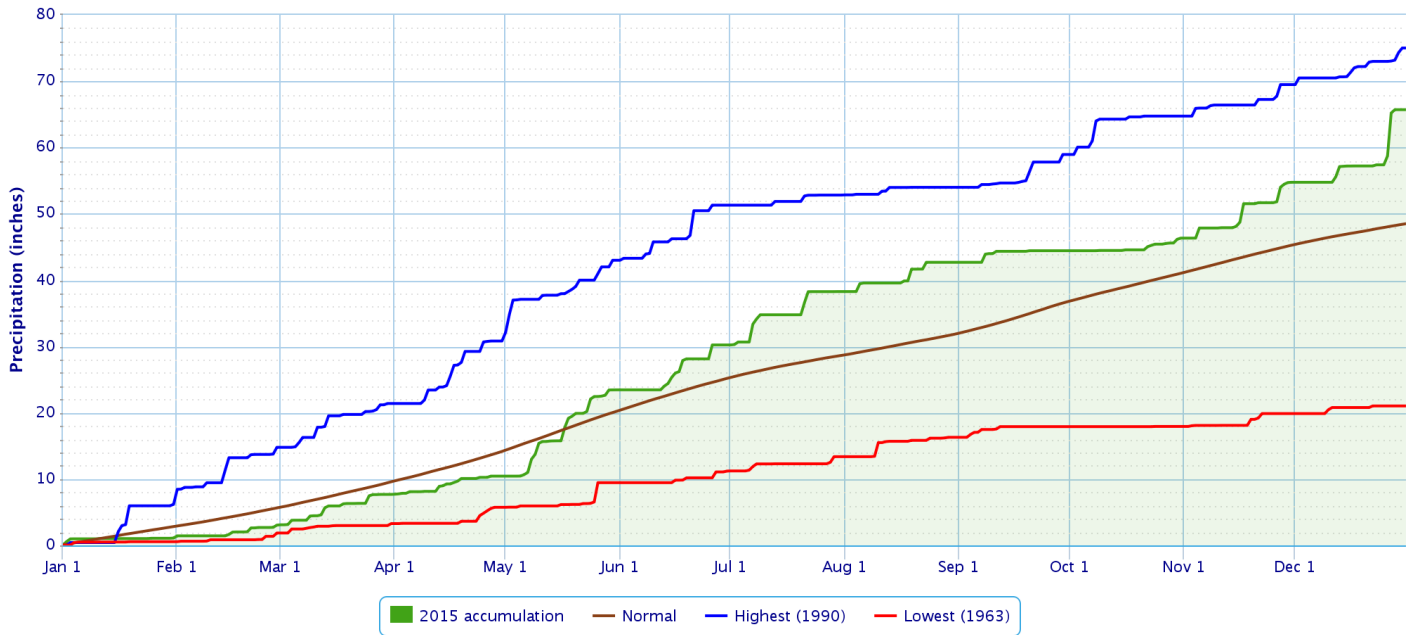
Period of Record – 1949-07-14 to 2016-01-04. Normals period: 1981-2010. Click and drag to zoom chart.



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### Accumulated Precipitation – FAYETTEVILLE DRAKE FLD, AR

Click and drag to zoom to a shorter time interval; green/black diamonds represent subsequent/missing values



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### Drought

According to the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) (USDM) from December 29, 2015, there were not drought or abnormally dry conditions present in eastern OK and northwest AR.

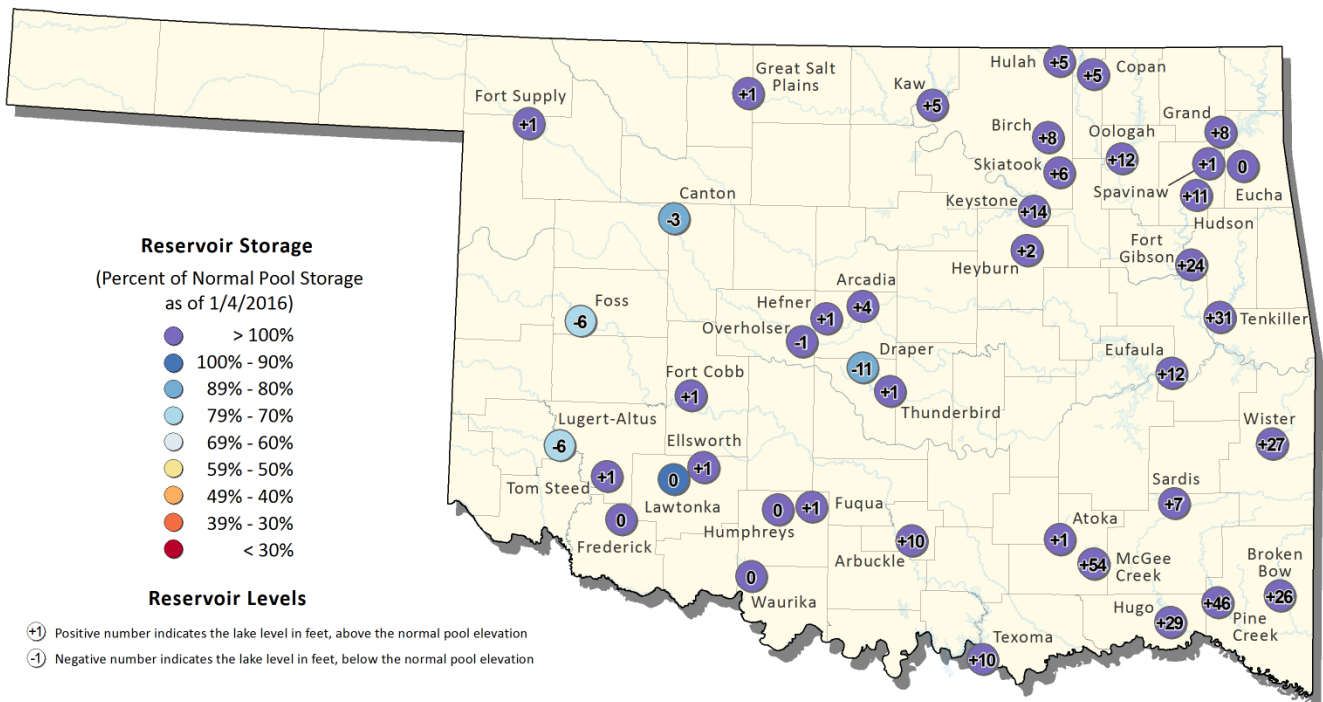
## Reservoirs

According to the USACE, all of the major reservoirs in the HSA were operating within their flood control pools due to the heavy rain at the end of the month. As of 12/31/2015, the percentage of the flood control pool used was: Wister Lake 125% (above top of flood control pool), Eufaula Lake 114% (above top of flood control pool), Sardis Lake 105% (above top of flood control pool), Ft. Gibson Lake 99%, Tenkiller Lake 96%, Grand Lake 92%, Hudson Lake 86%, Hugo Lake 80%, Oologah Lake 40%, Skiatook Lake 35%, Keystone Lake 28%, and Birch Lake 25%. As of 01/04/2016, Beaver Lake 90%. As of 01/07/2016, Copan Lake 15%, Kaw Lake 10%, and Hulah Lake 7%.

The USACE provided information on the following reservoir records set in December 2015:

Grand Lake/Pensacola Dam	record peak inflow 295,400 cfs Dec. 2015 (previous record 178,000 cfs Oct. 1986) record release 236,000 cfs Dec. 2015 (previous record 129,700 cfs Oct. 1986)
Hudson Reservoir	record peak inflow 247,900 cfs Dec. 2015 (previous record 140,000 cfs Oct. 1986) record release 241,500 cfs Dec. 2015 (previous record 135,300 cfs Oct. 1986)
Fort Gibson Reservoir	record release 183,000 cfs Dec. 2015 (previous record 137,000 cfs Oct. 1986)
Tenkiller Reservoir	record peak inflow 149,200 cfs Dec. 2015 (previous record 145,100 cfs Apr. 2011) record release 35,800 cfs Dec. 2015 (previous record 15,500 cfs May 2011)
Wister Reservoir	record peak inflow 144,200 cfs Dec. 2015 (previous record 103,000 cfs May 1990)
Beaver Reservoir	pool of record 1132.2' April 2008 (1132.0' Dec. 2015) record release 92,400 cfs April 2008 (92,300 cfs Dec. 2015)

## Oklahoma Surface Water Resources Reservoir Levels and Storage as of 1/4/2016



This map shows reservoir storage as a percentage of normal pool storage capacity. The source information was collected from real-time lake gages monitored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ([http://www.swt-wc.usace.army.mil/old\\_resvreprt.htm](http://www.swt-wc.usace.army.mil/old_resvreprt.htm)), and the U.S. Geological Survey ([http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ok/nwis/current/?type=lake&group\\_key=basin\\_cd](http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ok/nwis/current/?type=lake&group_key=basin_cd)) For more information please visit the OWRB's website at: (<http://www.owrb.ok.gov>)



## Outlooks

The [Climate Prediction Center](#) (CPC) outlook for January 2016 (issued December 31, 2015) indicates equal chances for above, near, and below normal temperatures and precipitation across eastern OK and northwest AR. This outlook is based on both short- and extended-range weather forecasts as well as strong El Niño influences. The Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) effect on the tropical convection implies a transition to a colder pattern over the CONUS. Shorter term outlooks also indicate an active southern stream, which is consistent with El Niño and MJO conditions.

For the 3-month period January-February-March 2016, CPC is forecasting an equal chance for above, near, and below normal temperatures across all of eastern OK and northwest. This outlook also indicates an enhanced chance for above median precipitation across central into southeast OK, with equal chances for above, near, and below median rainfall elsewhere (outlook issued December 17, 2015). According to CPC, strong El Niño conditions persist, and El Niño is likely at its peak. The ongoing El Niño is among the strongest on record and has tied the 1997-98 event as the strongest El Niño on record (using the Oceanic-Niño Index, ONI). This event is likely to transition to neutral conditions during the late spring or early summer 2016. Therefore, this outlook is based primarily on both statistical and dynamical forecast tools, as well as typical impacts resulting from El Niño conditions.

## Year 2015

Rainfall totals for the year 2015 ranged from 33" in northern Osage Co. to 88" in southeast and east central OK (Fig. 2a). Most locations along and south of I-44 in eastern OK and western AR had 20"-40" above the normal (1981-2010) annual rainfall amount (Fig. 2c). In fact, a large area received 1.5 to 2 times the normal annual rainfall in 2015 (Fig. 2b). Only northern Osage County ended the year with below normal rainfall, receiving 75%-90% of the normal annual rainfall, or 4"-8" below normal (Figs. 2b, c). Fort Smith, AR set a new annual record rainfall in 2015 with 73.93" of rain (records began in 1882). This exceeded the previous record of 71.81" set in 1945, and is 28.47" above the normal (163% of the normal) annual Fort Smith rainfall of 45.46". McAlester, OK also set a new annual record rainfall in 2015 with 78.65" (records began in 1954; data missing in 1996-98, 1953, 1955). The previous record was 66.40" in 1973 and the normal annual rainfall is 42.04". The 2015 rainfall was 36.61" above normal or 187% of normal annual rainfall in McAlester.

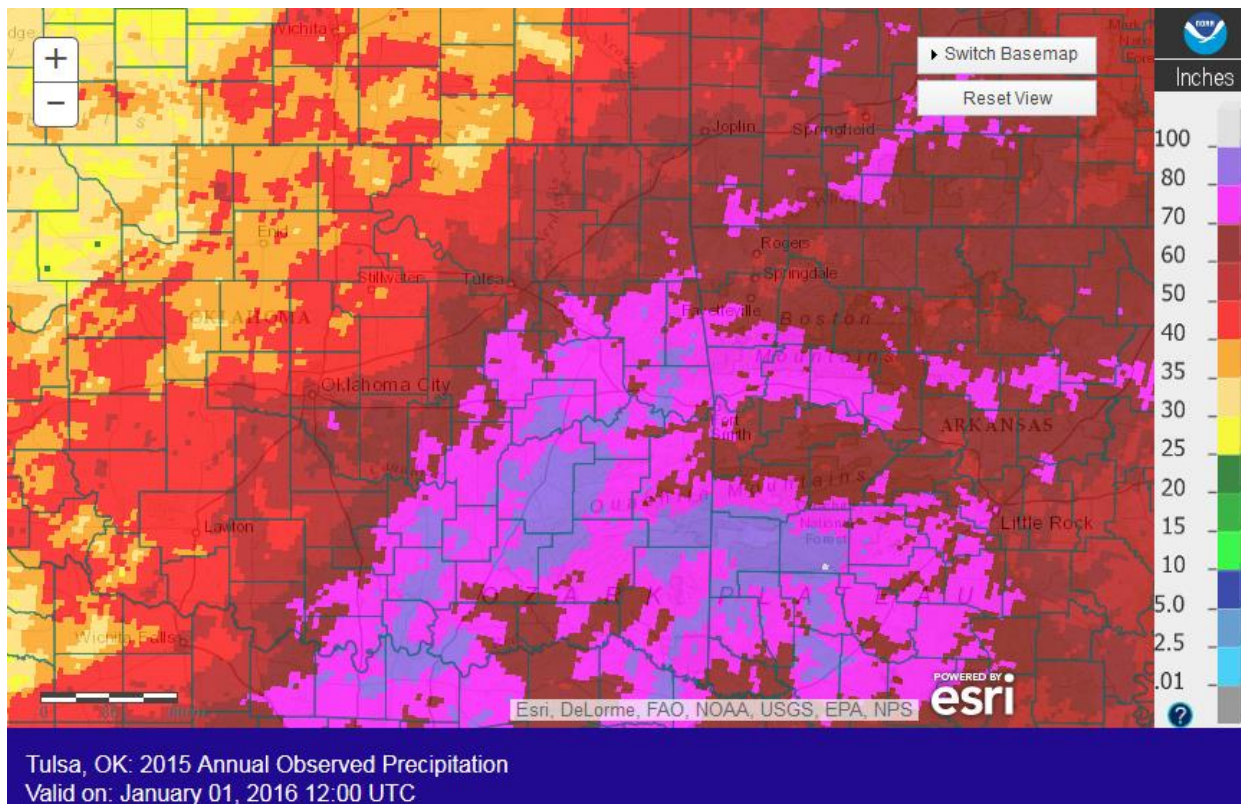


Fig. 2a. Estimated Observed Rainfall for 2015

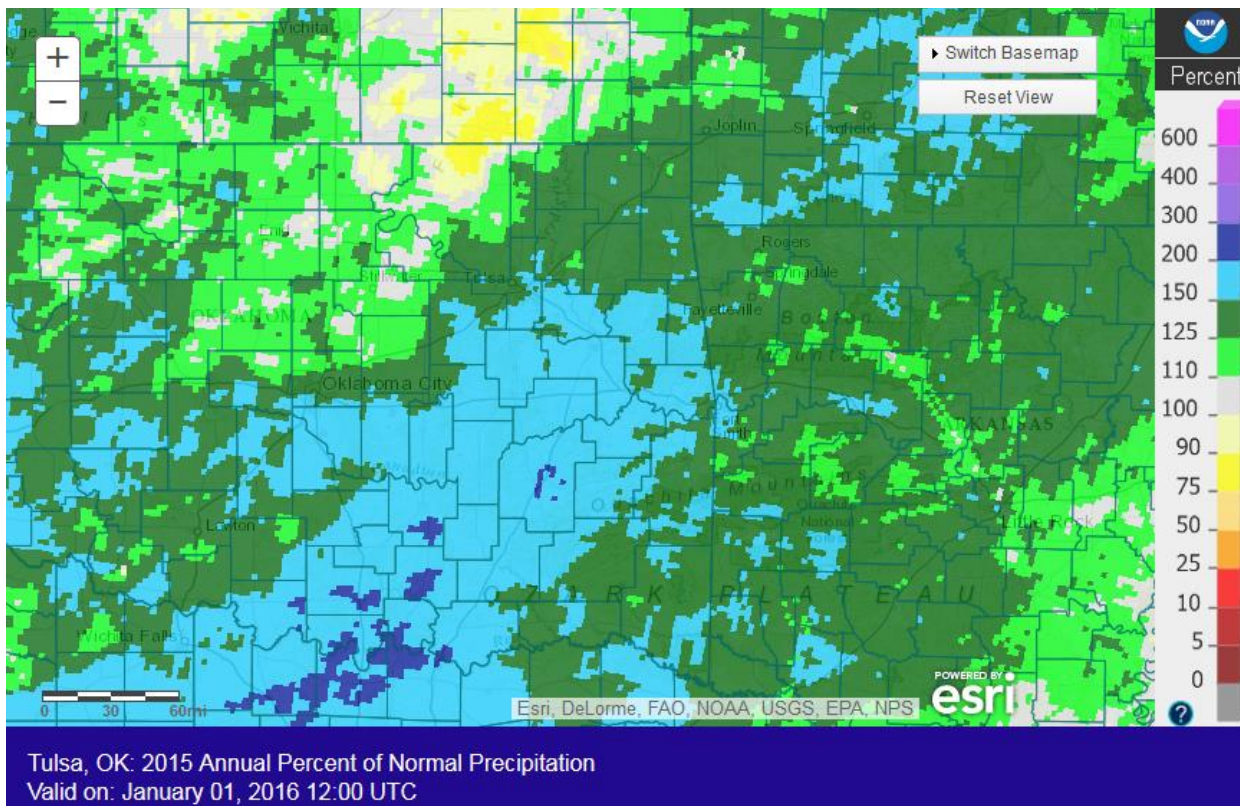


Fig. 2b. Estimated % of Normal Rainfall for 2015

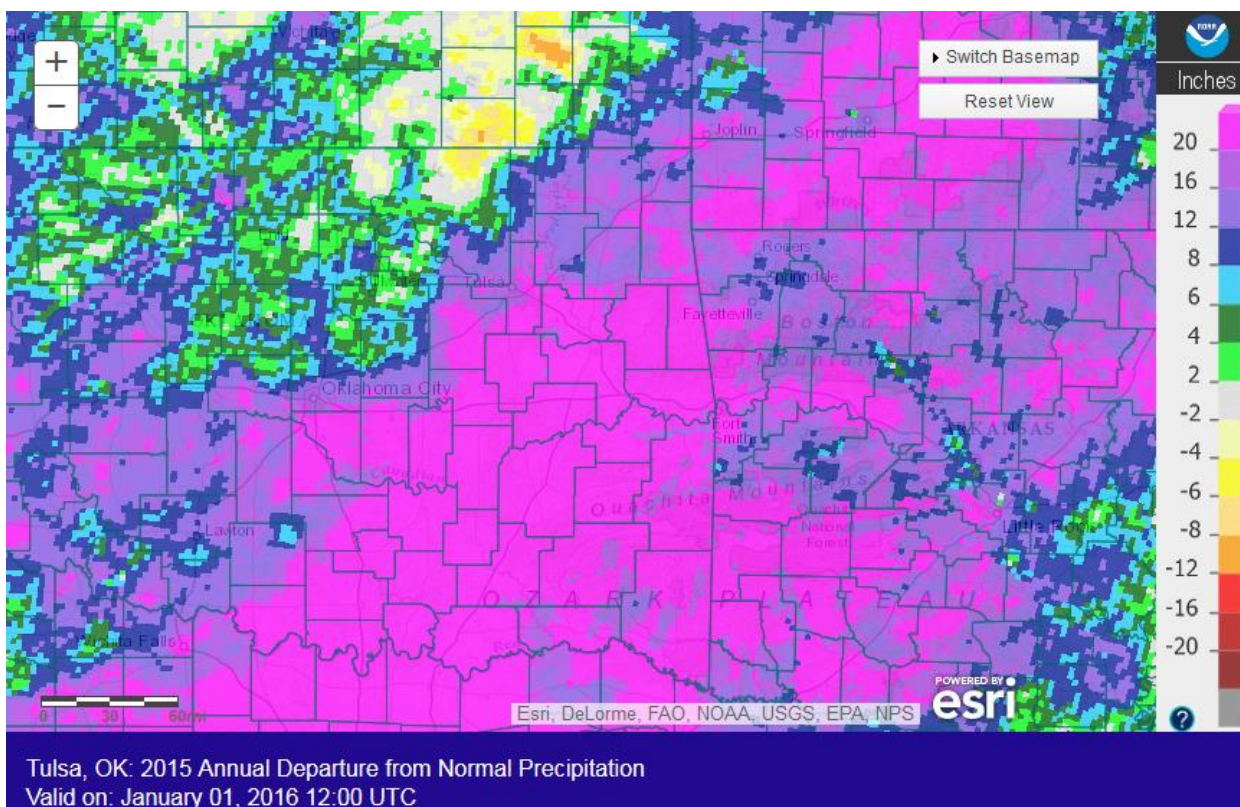


Fig. 2c. Departure from Normal Rainfall for 2015

The 2015 statewide average rainfall total for Oklahoma is 52.96" (from the National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) formerly NCDC). This sets a new annual rainfall record for the state of Oklahoma, besting the previous record of 47.88" in 1957. The majority of this rain fell in 6 of the 12 months in 2015, resulting in widespread flooding, especially in May and December. According to the OK Climatological Survey, this equates to 64.3 trillion gallons of water. Oklahoma Mesonet rainfall animation from 2015 as a series of 8,760 year-to-date rainfall maps: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtsfyNF2Mwl&feature=youtu.be>



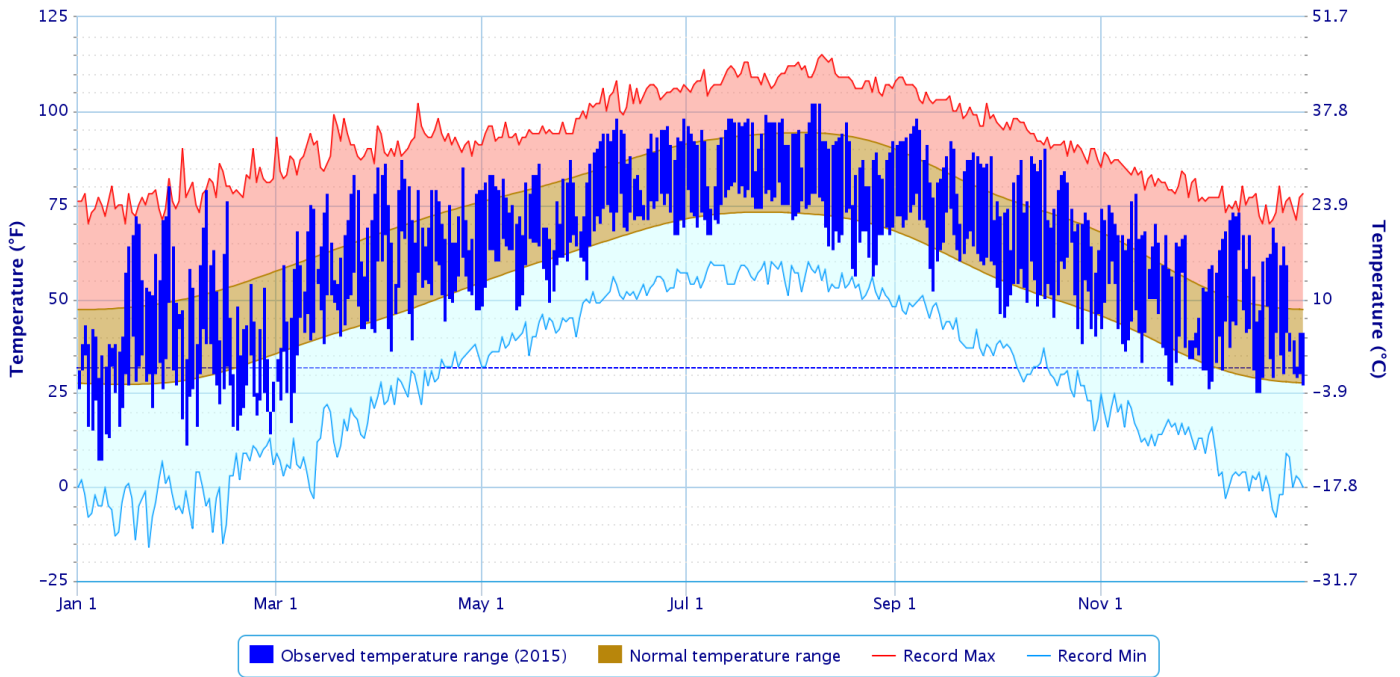
In Tulsa, OK, 2015 ranked as the 26<sup>th</sup> warmest year (61.8°F; since records began in 1905), the 3<sup>rd</sup> wettest year (61.79"; since records began in 1888), and the 53<sup>rd</sup> least snowy year (6.6", tied 1997; since records began in 1900). Fort Smith, AR had the 17<sup>th</sup> warmest year (63.1°F, tied 1936; since records began in 1883), the **Record** wettest year (73.93"; since records began in 1882), and the 41<sup>st</sup> snowiest year (6.6"; since records began in 1884). The previous record annual rainfall was 71.81" in 1945; normal annual rainfall is 45.46". Fayetteville, AR had the 28<sup>th</sup> warmest (57.6°F, tied 1982, 1992), the 4<sup>th</sup> wettest (65.71"), and 32<sup>nd</sup> least snowy year since records began in 1949.

Some of the larger precipitation reports (in inches) for 2015 included:

Stigler, OK (meso)	88.27	McAlester, OK (meso)	87.03	Cookson, OK (meso)	85.66
Eufaula, OK (meso)	85.26	Winslow 7NE, AR (coop)	84.81	Bunch 0.8N, OK (coco)	84.77
Wilburton, OK (meso)	84.39	Wilburton9.4N, OK (coco)	83.85	Sallisaw 1.0SE, OK (coco)	83.37

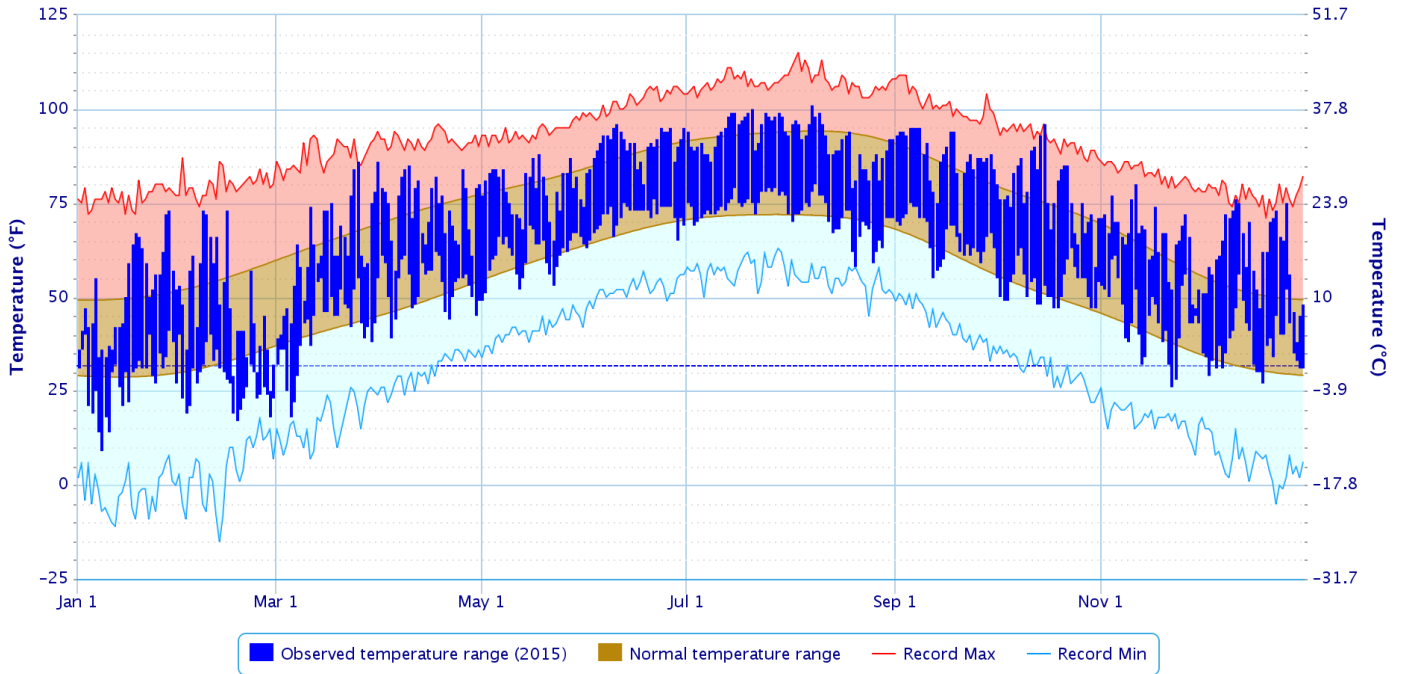
Daily Temperature Data – Tulsa Area, OK (ThreadEx)

Period of Record – 1905-01-06 to 2016-01-06. Normals period: 1981-2010. Click and drag to zoom chart.



### Daily Temperature Data – Fort Smith Area, AR (ThreadEx)

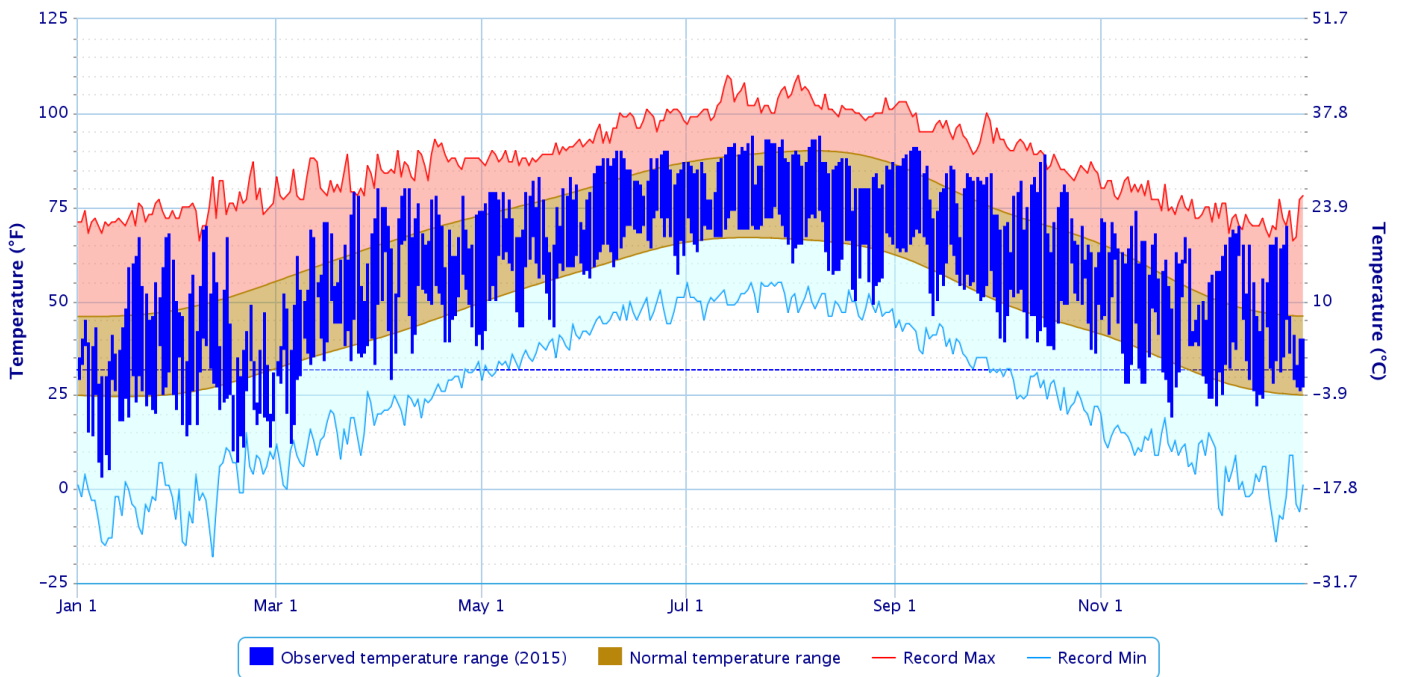
Period of Record – 1882-06-01 to 2016-01-06. Normals period: 1981-2010. Click and drag to zoom chart.



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### Daily Temperature Data – FAYETTEVILLE DRAKE FLD, AR

Period of Record – 1949-07-14 to 2016-01-06. Normals period: 1981-2010. Click and drag to zoom chart.



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**Summary of Precipitation Events** Daily quality controlled rainfall maps can be found at: [http://water.weather.gov/precip/index.php?location\\_type=wfo&location\\_name=tsa](http://water.weather.gov/precip/index.php?location_type=wfo&location_name=tsa)

**December 1-15**

An unseasonably warm and moist airmass covered most of the HSA by early morning of the 12<sup>th</sup>. Widespread showers lifted north northeast across eastern OK and northwest AR during the evening hours in response to a wave moving through New Mexico and a cold front located over western OK. Widespread showers and isolated thunderstorms continued through the night due to the strong forcing from an upper-level low near the TX panhandle. Moderate to heavy rain continued into the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup> before the bulk of the rain pushed east with the cold front. Some light wrap-around rain fell later on the 13<sup>th</sup> as the upper-low passed. Due to the abnormally moist atmosphere, the 2-day rainfall total was high (Figs. 6, 7), ranging from around 1" to around 4" for much of eastern OK and northwest AR. Higher totals of 4" to around 6" occurred over southern Le Flore County in southeast OK. The majority of the rain fell prior to 6am CST on the 13<sup>th</sup>, with 1.5"-6" reported over far eastern OK and far western AR (Figs. 3-5). This rainfall, on top of the heavy rain over the same area at the end of November, resulted in both flash flooding and river flooding. Moderate river flooding occurred along the Neosho River near Commerce, Lee Creek near Van Buren, and the Poteau River near Panama. Minor river flooding affected the Arkansas River at Van Buren and at Ozark Lock and Dam, the Illinois River near Watts and Tahlequah, the Poteau River near Poteau, and the Kiamichi River near Antlers (preliminary hydrographs available at the end of this report). In addition to the flooding, some wind damage was reported and an EF-1 tornado occurred in Raymond Gary State Park near Fort Towson in Choctaw Co. on the evening of the 12<sup>th</sup>.

Some of the highest 24-hr rainfall totals (inches) ending at 6am CST December 13, 2015:

Big Cedar 2E, OK	3.34	Wilburton 9.4N, OK	3.25	Daisy 4ENE, OK	3.00
West Siloam Springs, OK	2.95	Westville 3SSW, OK	2.86	Antlers 2NE, OK	2.82
Cloudy 6SSE, OK	2.78	Westville 0.2ENE, OK	2.75	Gentry 7NW, AR	2.58

Some of the highest 24-hr rainfall totals ending 6am December 14, 2015:

Talihina 3ENE, OK	2.10	Cloudy 5ENE, OK	2.04	Sallisaw 8S/L&D 15, OK	1.97
Poteau 1ENE, OK	1.93	Cloudy 6SSE, OK	1.87	Wilburton 2SW, OK	1.87

Some of the highest 2-day rainfall totals >4" ending 6am December 14, 2015:

Big Cedar 2E, OK	5.08	Cloudy 6SSE, OK	4.65	Poteau 1ENE, OK	4.30
Cloudy 5ENE, OK	4.29	West Siloam Springs, OK	4.24	Wilburton 2SW, OK	4.12
Westville 3SSW, OK	4.09	Clayton 4NNE, OK	4.04	Clayton 1SE, OK	4.03
Sallisaw 8S/L&D 15, OK	4.03	Sallisaw 0.3SE, OK	4.00		

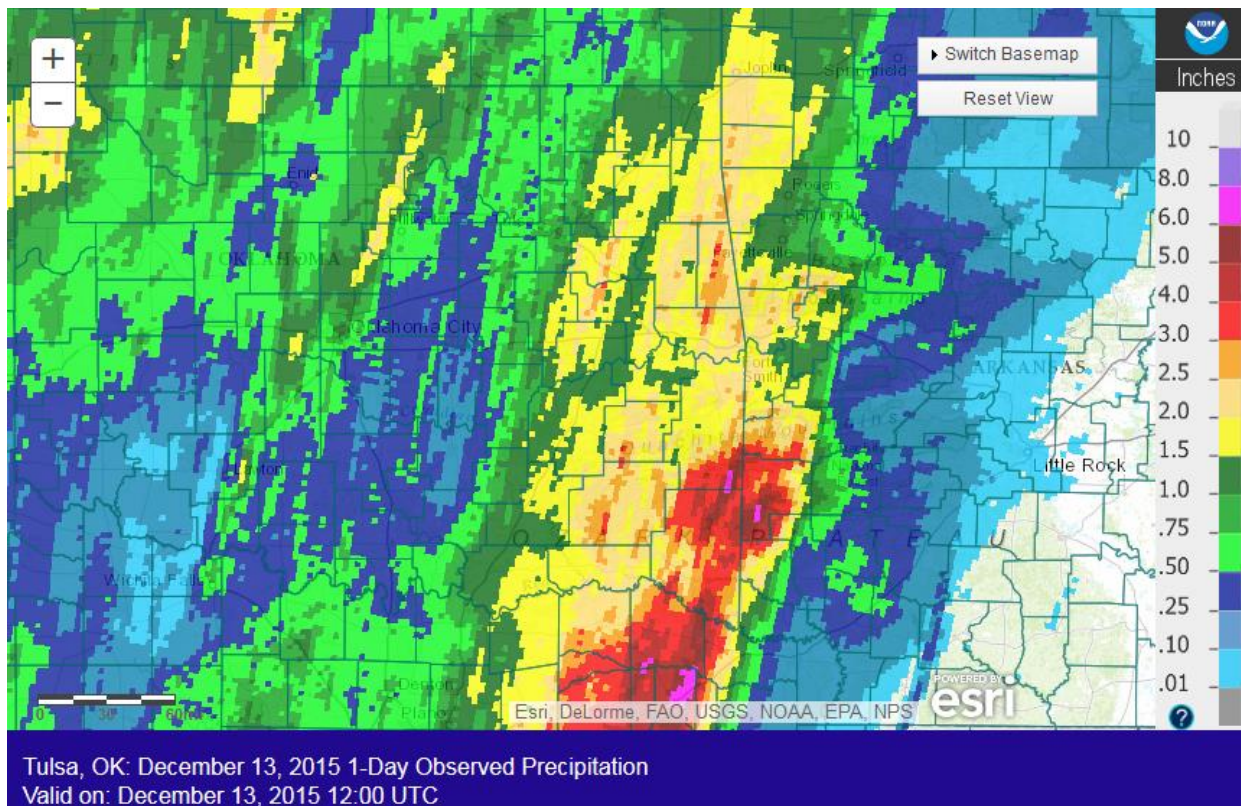
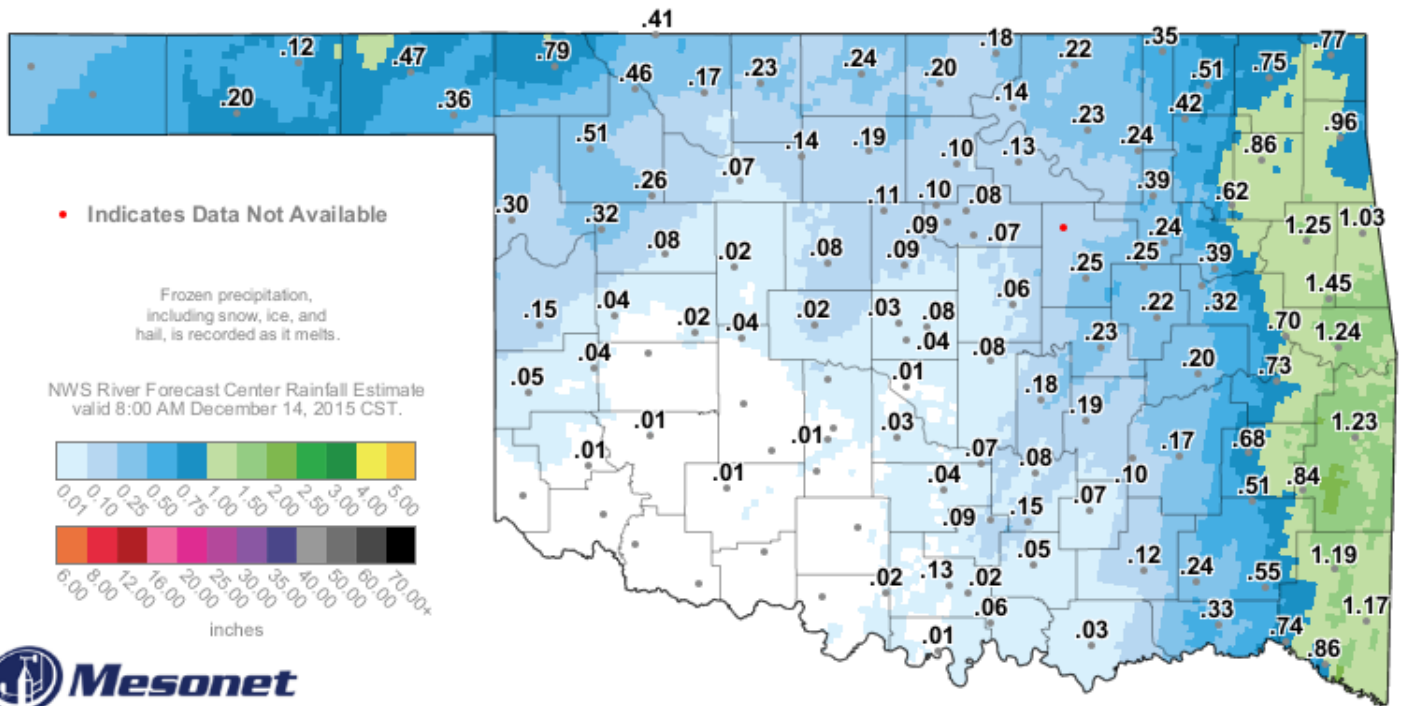


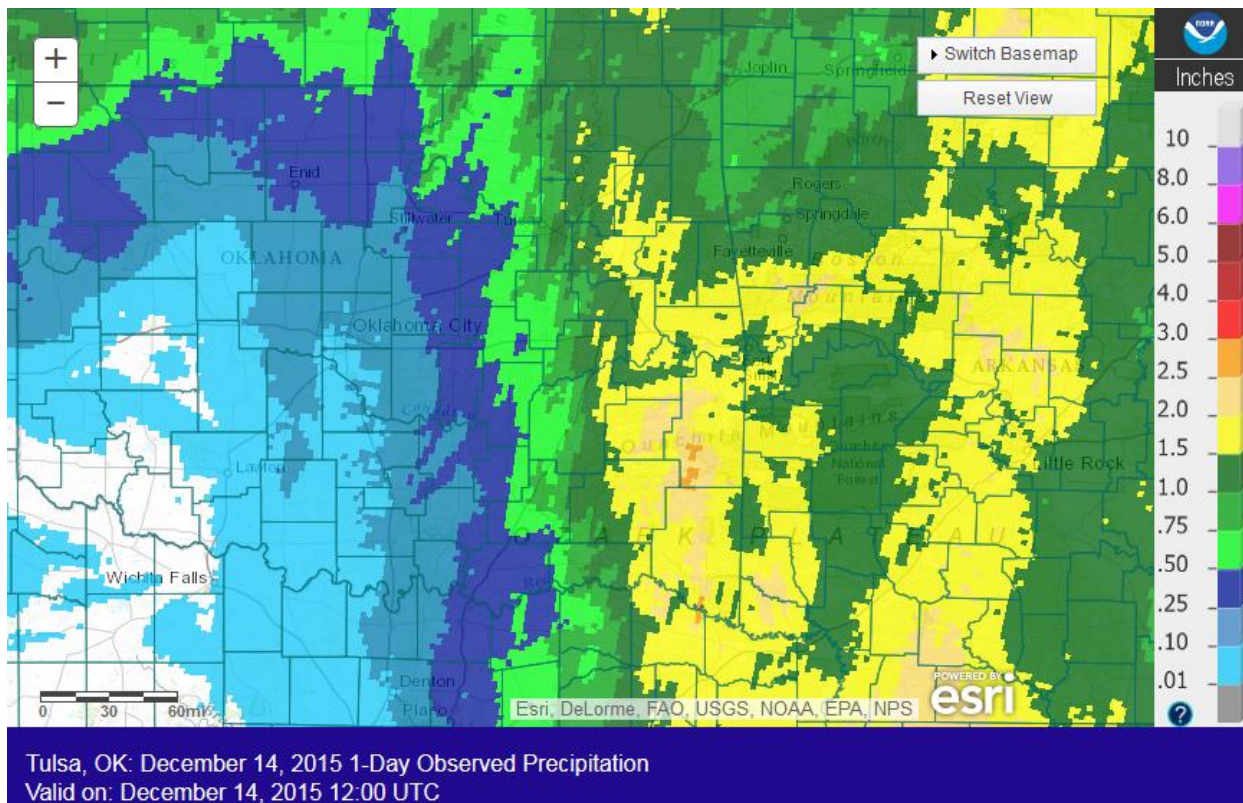
Fig. 3. 24-hour Estimated Observed Rainfall ending at 6am CST 12/13/2015.



8:45 AM December 14, 2015 CST

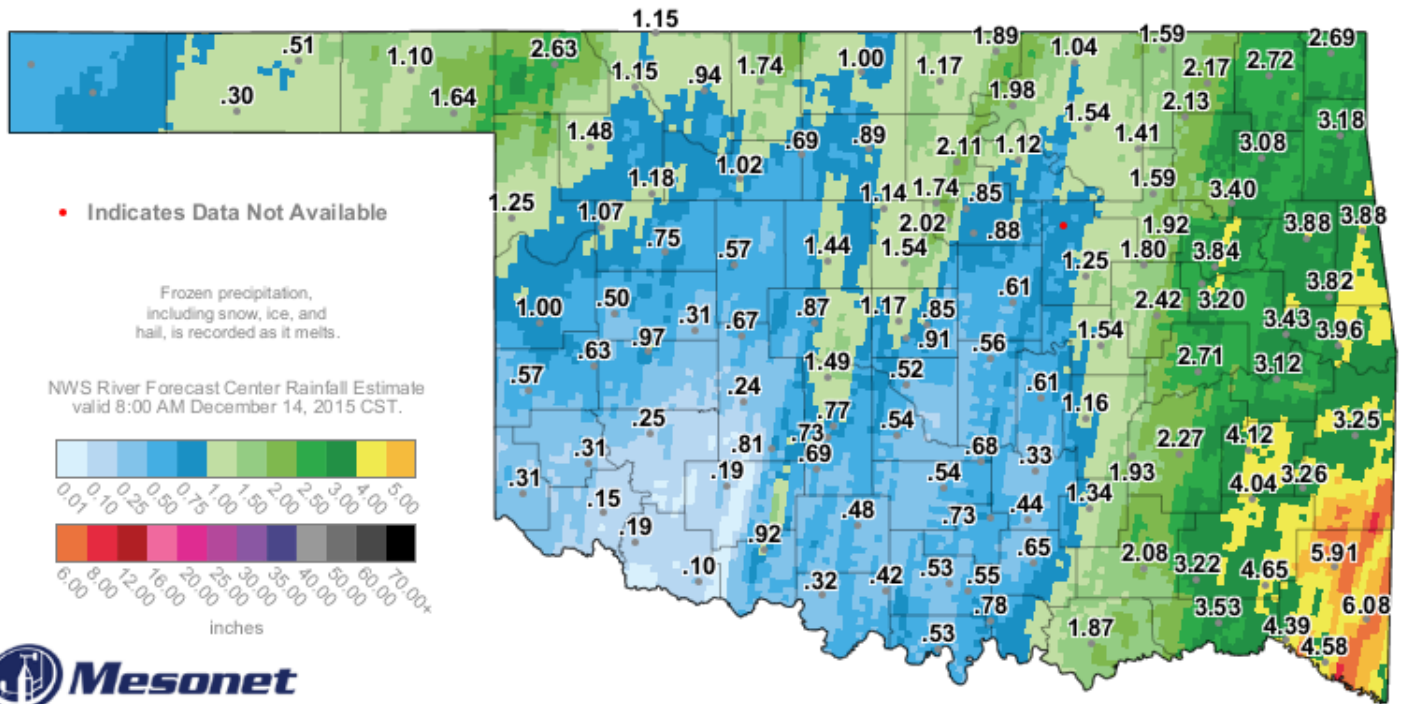
Created 8:49:31 AM December 14, 2015 CST. © Copyright 2015

Fig. 4. 24-hour Estimated Observed Rainfall (image) and OK Mesonet measurements ending at 8:45am CST 11/14/2015.



Tulsa, OK: December 14, 2015 1-Day Observed Precipitation  
Valid on: December 14, 2015 12:00 UTC

Fig. 5. 24-hour Estimated Observed Rainfall ending at 6am CST 12/14/2015.



## 2-Day Rainfall (inches)

8:45 AM December 14, 2015 CST

Created 8:49:31 AM December 14, 2015 CST. © Copyright 2015

Fig. 6. 48-hour Estimated Observed Rainfall (image) and OK Mesonet measurements ending at 8:45am CST 12/14/2015.

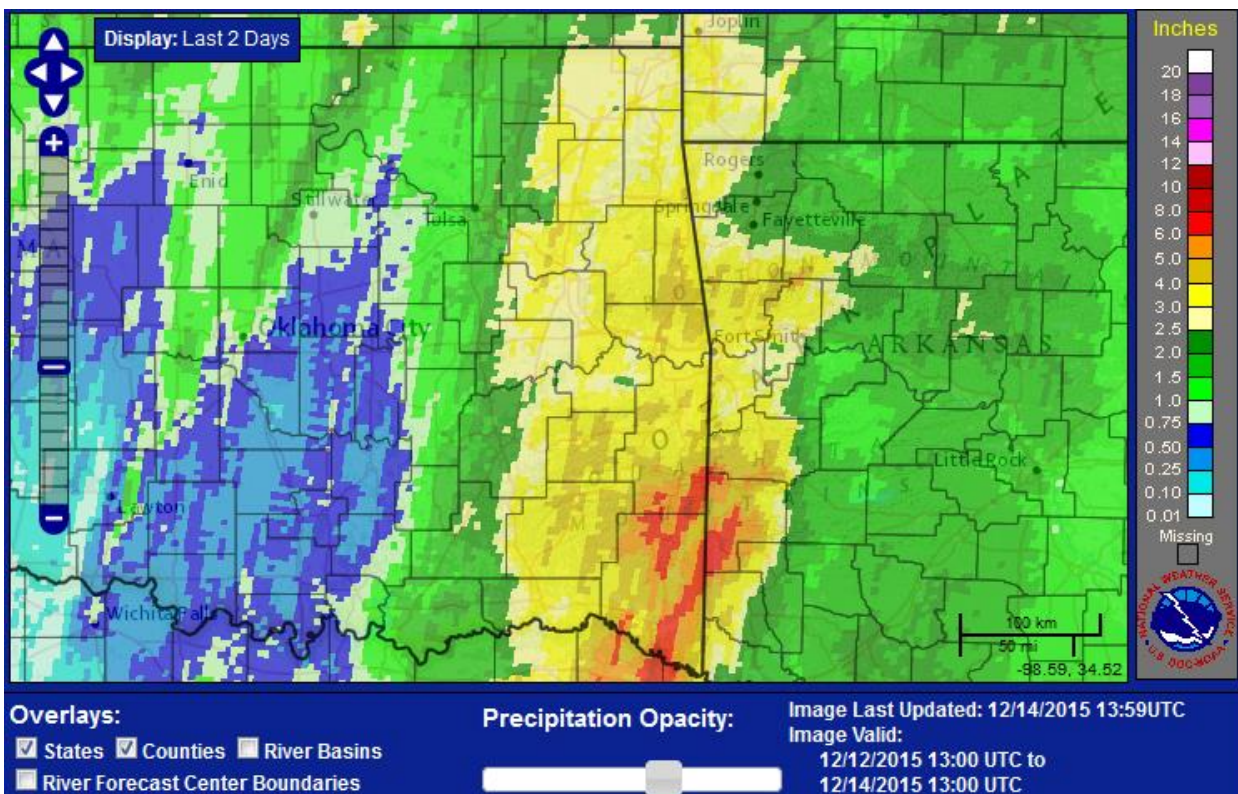


Fig. 7. 48-hour Estimated Observed Rainfall ending at 7am CST 12/14/2015.

## December 16-31

A weak disturbance brought some very light rain and snow flurries to northeast OK and northwest AR on the evening of the 17<sup>th</sup>. Little to no accumulation occurred. A few isolated showers also occurred on the 20<sup>th</sup> as a fast moving wave traversed the region. Rainfall totals in far northeast OK, far southeast OK, and northwest AR were less than 0.10".

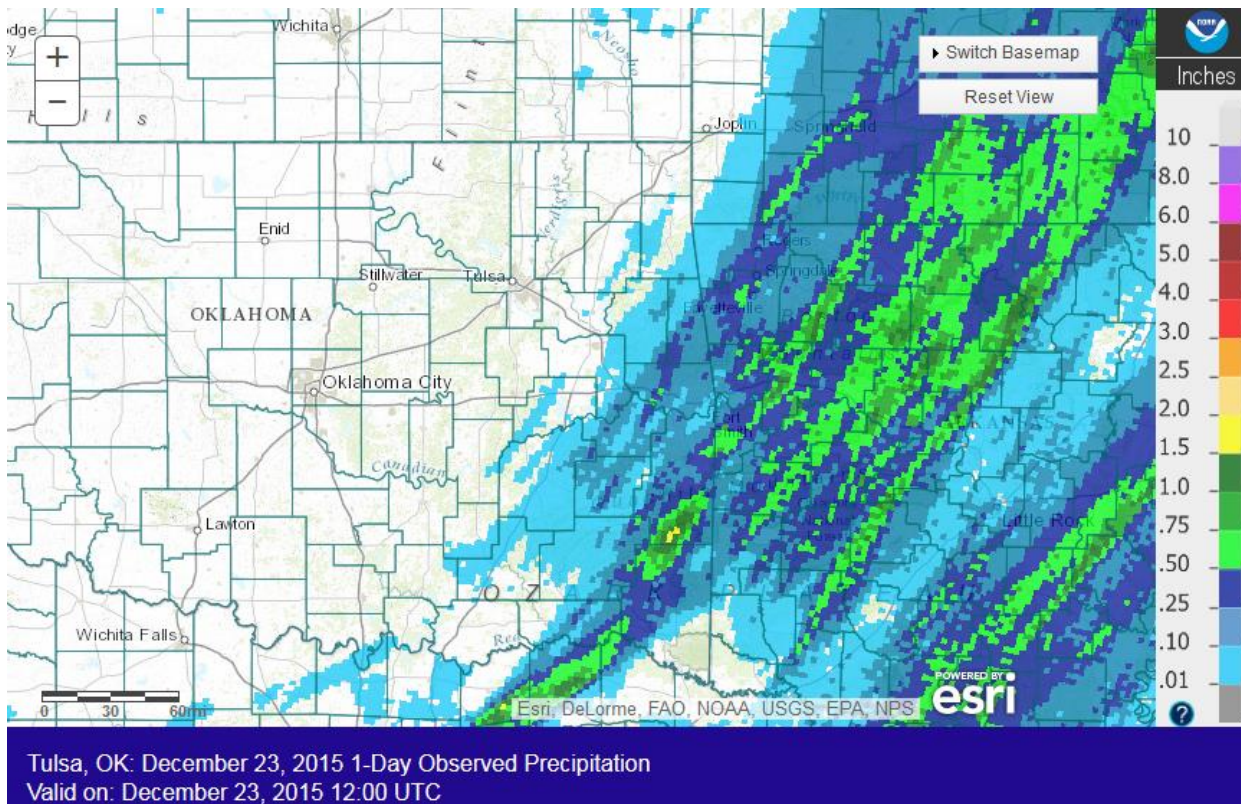


Fig. 8. 24-hour Estimated Observed Rainfall ending at 6am CST 12/23/2015.

A broad long-wave trough shifted out of the Intermountain West during the late afternoon and evening hours on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. In response, low-level moisture surged north as southerly winds increased. Elevated showers and thunderstorms developed across portions of southeast OK around midnight on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and spread into northwest AR through the pre-dawn hours. Rainfall totals ranged from around 0.10" to around 1" (Fig. 8).

### Christmas 2015 Flood

A devastating flash flood and river flood event occurred over the Christmas 2015 weekend as a strong upper-level low lifted northeast across western TX and approached eastern OK and western AR from the southwest. Tremendous lift in the diffluent region of the approaching low, along with precipitable water values near 1.5" (near record values for the end of December), resulted in an extended period of heavy rain. Bands of rain with embedded thunderstorms developed across northeast OK and northwest AR during the early morning hours of the 26<sup>th</sup> as a warm front lifted north. This activity increased across southeast OK and west central AR through the morning hours. By midday on the 26<sup>th</sup>, widespread showers and thunderstorms were affecting much of eastern OK northwest of a McAlester to Grove line. Moderate to heavy rain continued over this area through the afternoon and evening, while also spreading southeast (Fig. 9). By midnight on the 27<sup>th</sup>, the entire HSA was enveloped in rain. Primarily moderate rain then continued for the next 14 hours over all of eastern OK and northwest AR as the frontal boundary remained in the area (Fig. 10). Colder air began to filter into the back side of the system, bringing some reports of freezing rain and a quarter inch of ice accumulation to trees in northwest Osage County at noon on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Moderate to heavy rain continued generally across locations southeast of I-44, with the precipitation coming to an end during the evening hours northwest of I-44. The rain pushed east, finally coming to an end in eastern OK by midnight on the 28<sup>th</sup>, but continued across northwest and west central AR. However, additional bands of rain began to move north across eastern OK and northwest AR from midnight on the 28<sup>th</sup> through 1:30pm CST as the closed low moved east across central TX and then northeast along the OK/AR state line. Snow and sleet occurred across northeast OK and northwest AR during the morning hours of the 28<sup>th</sup> within this wrap around precipitation as the bands interacted with the colder airmass. Reports of 0.20"-1" of sleet accumulation were reported, along with a dusting to 1.5" of snow accumulation. All of the precipitation finally exited the HSA by 1pm on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Widespread 5"-12" of rain fell over most of eastern OK and northwest AR from the 26<sup>th</sup> through the 29<sup>th</sup>, with the majority of the rain occurring over the 2-day period from the 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> (Figs. 11-16). This amount of rain is

2-4 times the normal amount received during the entire month of December. According to NOAA Atlas 14 Point Precipitation Frequency Estimates, 11.9" of rain in a 2-day period for Tahlequah, OK is approximately a 0.5% annual chance of occurrence event (also referred to as a 200-year event). This means that every year there is a 0.5% chance of receiving 11.9" of rain in 48 hours in Tahlequah. 6.82" of rain fell in a 24-hr period 12/26-12/27 at Fayetteville, AR, which is between a 4% and 2% annual chance of occurrence (or between a 25- and 50-year event). All of this rain resulted in Record and Major river flooding for several river basins in the NWS Tulsa HSA, flash flooding. Two fatalities occurred during this event.

Widespread flooding affected most of the eastern third of OK and northwest AR, causing numerous road closures, including state highways, throughout the area. Roadways were damaged from the high, fast-moving water. Swift water rescues were necessary throughout the affected area. High river levels and very fast flows along the Arkansas River halted barge traffic on the McCellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System, causing significant financial impact to related commerce activities. This 445-mile navigation channel allows for commerce from the Mississippi River to eastern Oklahoma. Several reservoirs neared or exceeded the top of their flood control pools. Record reservoir releases may have resulted in damage downstream of Grand Lake and Hudson Lake. The Grand River Dam Authority notified residents of possible evacuation in these areas. Record releases from Tenkiller Reservoir on the Illinois River required evacuations of the campgrounds and resorts in the Gore, OK area (Sequoyah County). High river levels throughout eastern OK and northwest AR, as well as high releases from other reservoirs, impacted thousands of acres of agricultural lands.

Rainfall Records (set at the end of December):

Tulsa, OK (rainfall records began in 1888)

Daily Record: 12/26/2015 2.92" (previous record 0.97" 1987)

Daily Record: 12/27/2015 2.76" (previous record 1.62" 1943)

Record 24-hour Rainfall: 3pm 12/26/2015 – 3pm 12/27/2015 4.98" (previous record 3.27")

2nd wettest December on record with 8.60" (Record wettest December is 8.70" 1984; 1981-2010 Normal December rainfall is 2.49")

McAlester, OK (rainfall records began in 1953 though missing data from Aug. 1996-Dec. 1997)

Daily Record: 12/26/2015 2.98" (previous record 0.95" 1987)

Daily Record: 12/27/2015 4.68" (previous record 2.65" 1968)

Record highest rainfall for any day in December: 4.68" 12/27/2015 (previous record 2.65" 12/27/1968)

Record wettest December with 10.50" (previous record 8.34" 1987; 1981-2010 Normal December rainfall is 2.98")

Muskogee, OK (rainfall records began in 1905 though missing data from Oct. 1908-Dec. 1913; daily rainfall records unavailable)

Record wettest December with 13.40" (previous record 9.27" 1987; 1981-2010 Normal December rainfall is 3.04")

Fort Smith, AR (rainfall records began in 1882)

Daily Record: 12/27/2015 5.63" (previous record 2.55" 1968)

Record highest rainfall for any day in December: 5.63" 12/27/2015 (previous record 5.02" 12/13/1927)

Record wettest December with 10.81" (previous record 10.09" 1971; 1981-2010 Normal December rainfall is 3.29")

Fayetteville, AR (rainfall records began in 1949)

Daily Record: 12/26/2015 1.33" (previous record 0.99" 1987)

Daily Record: 12/27/2015 6.49" (previous record 3.14" 1954)

Record highest rainfall for any day in December: 6.49" 12/27/2015 (previous record 2.99" 12/16/2001)

Record wettest December with 10.95" (previous record 8.54" 1982; 1981-2010 Normal December rainfall is 3.24")

Record and Major Flooding in the NWS Tulsa HSA (River crests are preliminary pending USGS official numbers):

### Illinois River

Record flooding occurred along the Illinois River. The Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission reports water inundated numerous homes and businesses along the Illinois River (Delaware, Adair, and Cherokee Counties), and all secondary county roads in the immediate river area were damaged. State Highway 10 north of Tahlequah was closed during the flooding. Many cabin parks and permanent campgrounds were severely flooded or overtopped. River conditions were extremely dangerous for any recreational activities, affecting local commerce. See Figs. 18-21, 30-33.

*Illinois River near Watts, OK (WTTO2)* **Record Crest:** 28.64 feet 12/28/2015 2:00am CST  
Flood Stage 13' Major Flood Stage 23' Previous Record 28.60' 04/26/2011

*Illinois River near Tahlequah, OK (TALO2)* **Record Crest:** 30.69 feet 12/28/2015 1:00pm CST  
Flood Stage 11" Major Flood Stage 18' Previous Record 27.94' 05/10/1950

### Baron Fork

Major flooding occurred along the Baron Fork, impacting a large portion of the Camp Egan campgrounds and cabins.

*Baron Fork near Eldon, OK (ELDO2)* Major Crest 25.44' 12/27/2015 9:30pm CST

### Flint Creek

Major flooding occurred along Flint Creek, affecting campgrounds and recreation in that area.

*Flint Creek near Kansas, OK (KNSO2)* Major Crest 16.04' 12/27/2015 10:30pm CST (3rd highest crest on record)

### Lee Creek

Record flooding occurred along Lee Creek. The RV trailer park was inundated. Most residents evacuated their RVs, but two people remained and had to be rescued. Three residences were inundated by several feet of water. Two individuals remained in a 2-story residence while the first floor was inundated. After the crest, the river fell to near 411' and remained there for 4 days. This was due to back water from the major flooding along the Arkansas River. See Figs. 22, 23, 24.

*Lee Creek near Van Buren, AR Tailwater (VBRA4)* **Record Crest:** 417.5 feet 12/28/2015 1:45am CST  
Flood Stage 401' Major Flood Stage 405' Previous Record 408.2' 04/24/2004

### Poteau River

Major flooding occurred along the Poteau River (Le Flore County). Major flooding along the Arkansas River lead to additional backwater flooding along the Poteau River in northern Le Flore County, including the Arkoma area. Very severe flooding affected pasture lands and croplands and made county roads impassible. A water treatment plant near Panama was surrounded by water, and the berms around the treatment ponds were overtopped. An apartment complex in the Panama area was evacuated due to high water.

*Poteau River near Poteau, OK (PTAO2)* Major Crest 31.44' 12/28/2015 6:15am CST (3rd highest crest since completion of Wister Lake reservoir in Dec. 1949)

*Poteau River near Panama, OK (PANO2)* Major Crest 44.97'(estimated) 12/28/2015 12:15am CST (3rd highest crest since completion of Wister Lake reservoir in Dec. 1949; 5th highest on record)

### Arkansas River

Major flooding occurred along the Arkansas River (Muskogee, Haskell, Sequoyah, Le Flore Counties). Significant impacts occurred to navigation channel commerce along the McCellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System. An exit ramp between I-40 and the Muskogee Turnpike was threatened by high water (NWS Tulsa unsure if water eventually reached this junction). Significant flooding occurred in and around Webbers Falls, OK (Muskogee County). Many areas on the grounds of the OG&E power plant near Muskogee were flooded. Damaging flooding occurred along the Arkansas River floodplain, affecting agricultural land. Flooding likely occurred in Moffett, OK (Sequoyah Co.). Several suburban homes near the river were flooded in Fort Smith, and two other residences were flooded due to the Vache Grasse Creek backing up near the Arkansas River in Sebastian Co. See Figs. 25, 26, 27, 28. One home was flooded from the Arkansas River near Kibler in Crawford Co. A marina was washed out at the location of the VBUA4 river gage. The Arkansas-Red Basin River Forecast Center (ABRFC) ran their river computer models to simulate



what would have happened along the Arkansas River at Van Buren had none of the upstream USACE reservoirs been in place. They estimated the crest at VBUA4 would have been around 40' (about 5' higher than the actual crest) and the flow would have been near 1.1 million cfs (nearly three times the actual flow during the flood) (Fig. 17).

*Arkansas River near Muskogee, OK (MKGO2) Major Crest 35.41' 12/29/2015 5:45pm CST*

*Arkansas River at Van Buren, AR (VBUA4) Major Crest 34.63' 12/30/2015 4:45pm CST*

*Arkansas River at Ozark L&D Tailwater (OZGA4) Major Crest 369.07' 12/29/2015 5:00pm CST (second highest crest since navigation channel was completed)*

### Spring River

Major flooding occurred along the Spring River (Ottawa County). Homes near the river were isolated by high water and may have been flooded. Agricultural lands and county roads were flooded to a depth of several feet.

*Spring River near Quapaw, OK (QUAO2) Major Crest 39.77' 12/29/2015 1:00am CST (4th highest crest on record)*

### Deep Fork River

Major flooding occurred along the Deep Fork River (Okmulgee County). Severe agricultural flooding occurred. Local roads west and northwest of Okmulgee were closed and suburban homes were isolated by high water. Dentonville Road southwest of Beggs was closed due to high water.

*Deep Fork River near Beggs, OK (BGSO2) Major Crest 27.46' 12/29/2015 5:00am CST*

### Kiamichi River

Major flooding occurred along the Kiamichi River (Pushmataha County). Numerous permanent structures on the campgrounds along the west bank of the Kiamichi River near Moyers were flooded. The City of Antlers may have had backwater flooding that could close Ethel Road near Beaver Creek. Further upstream, flooding may have impacted roads near the Clayton area.

*Kiamichi River near Antlers, OK (ANTO2) Major Crest 37.39' 12/28/2015 12:00pm CST (3rd highest crest on record)*

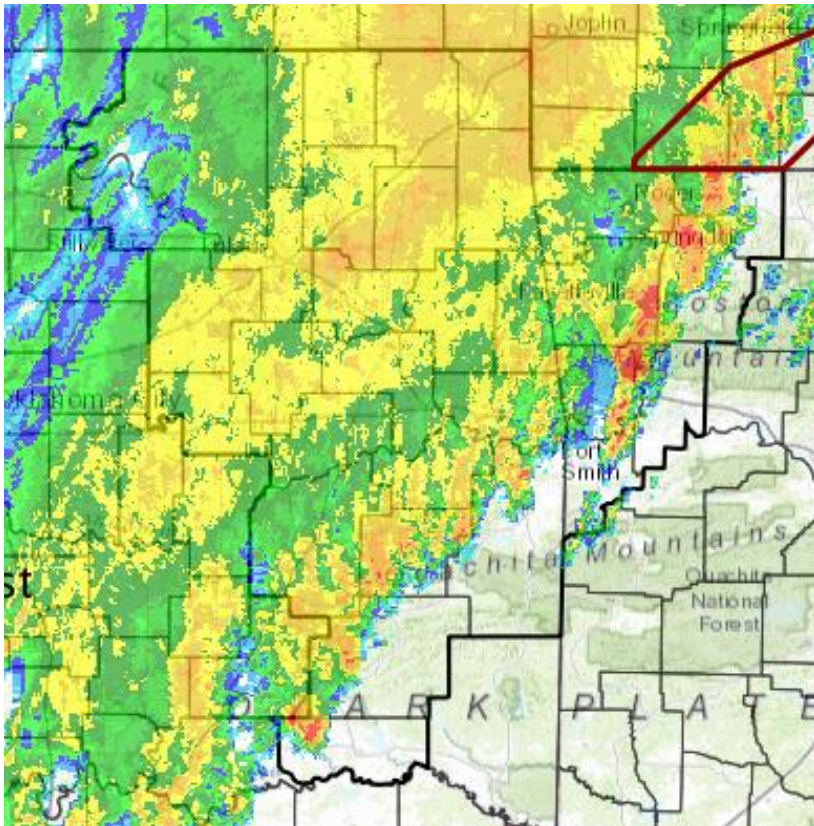


Fig. 9. Radar image at 10:00 pm CST 12/26/2015.

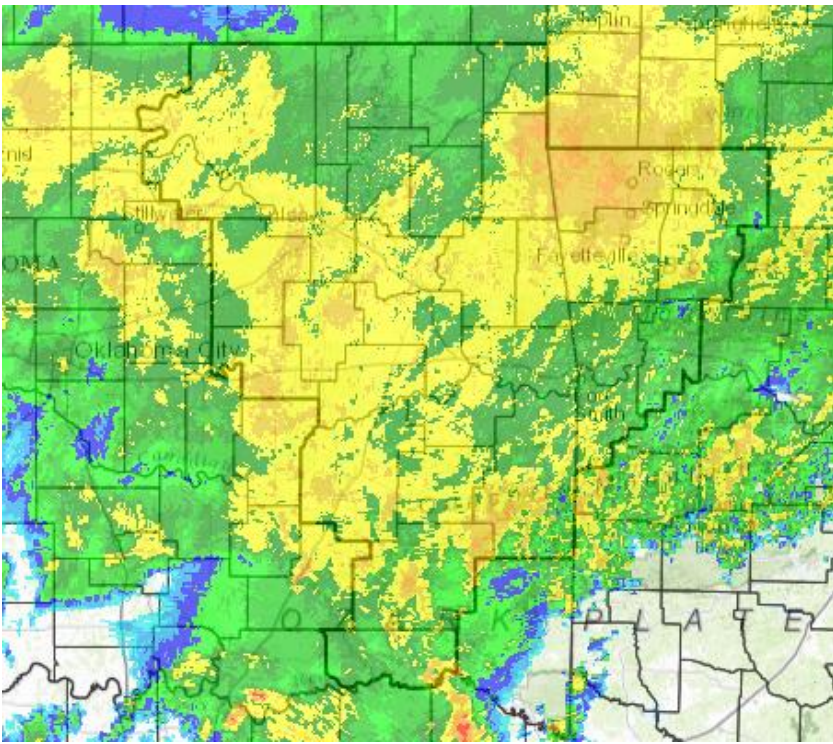


Fig. 10. Radar image at 10:10 am CST 12/27/2015.

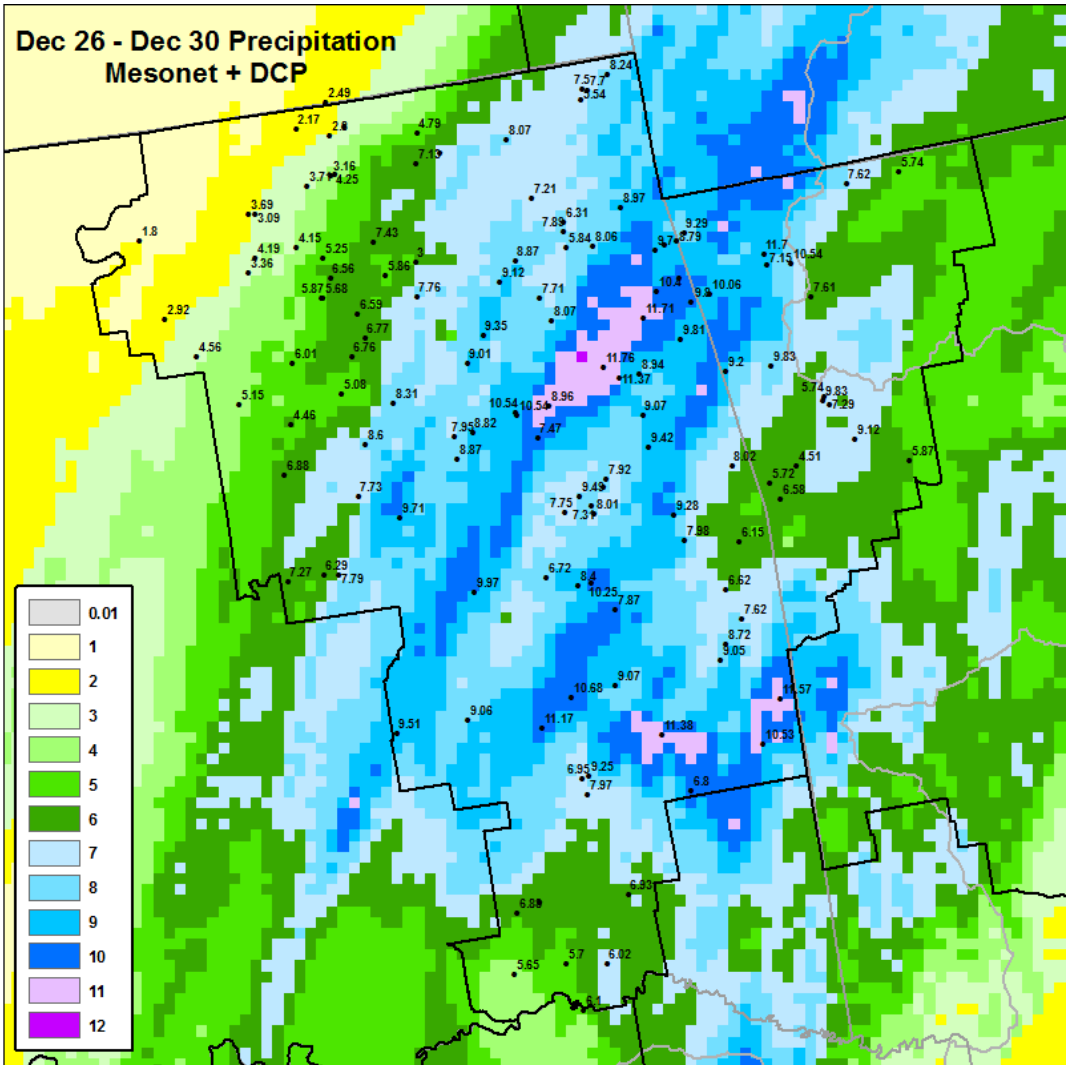


Fig. 11. Dec. 26-30, 2015 Estimated Observed Rainfall (image) and rainfall measurements from the OK Mesonet and automated (DCP) river gages.

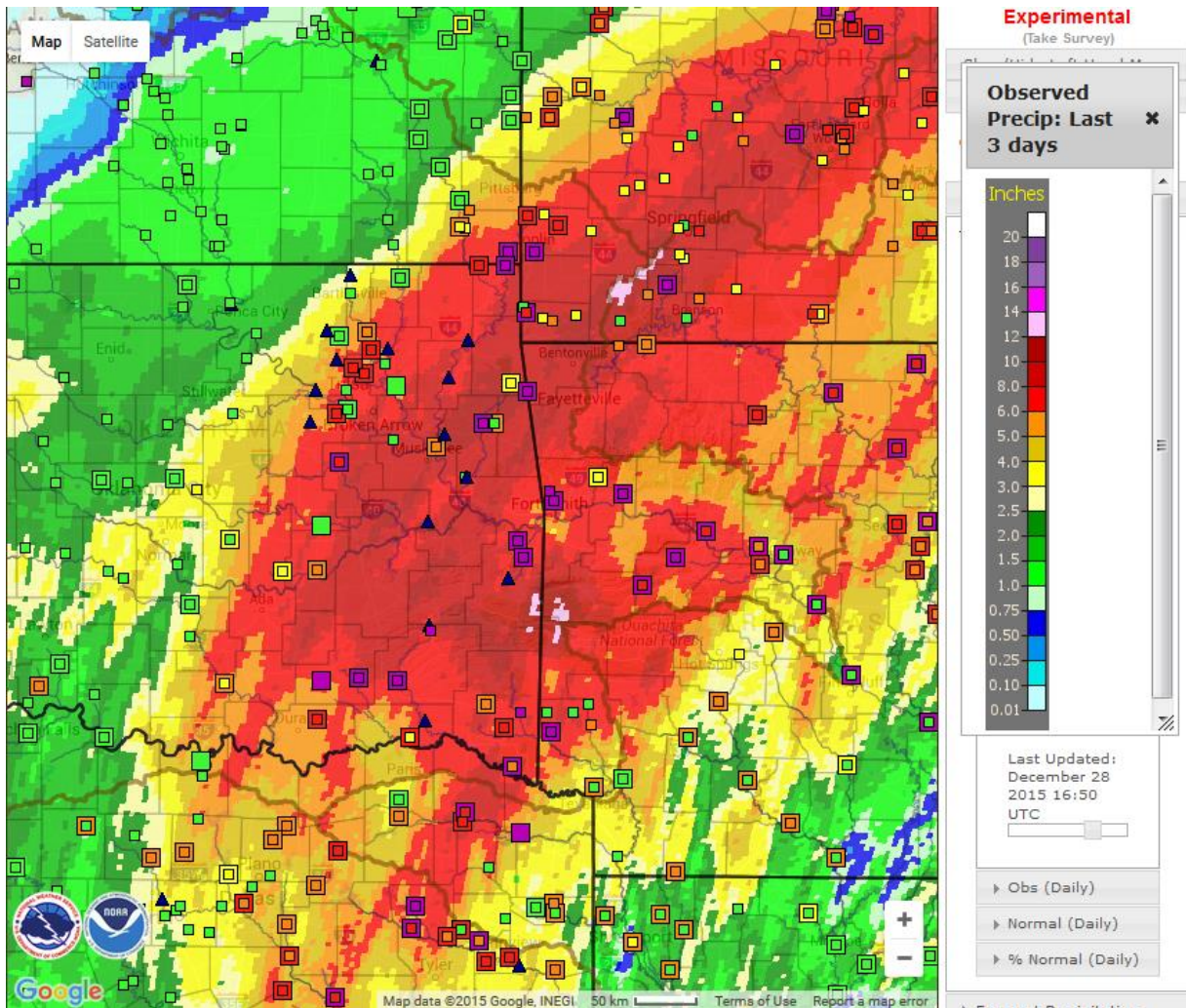


Fig. 12. 3-day Estimated Observed Rainfall and river stage levels (squares) ending at 4:50pm CST 12/28/2015.

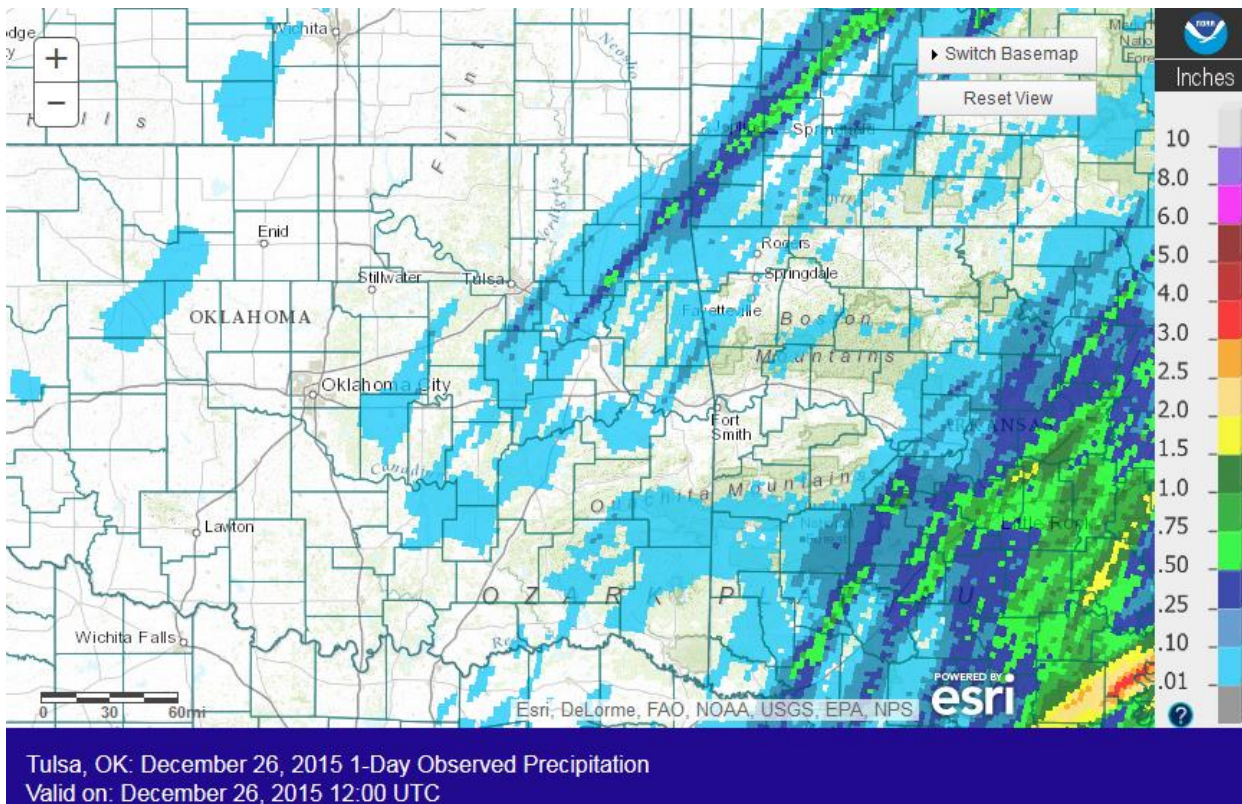
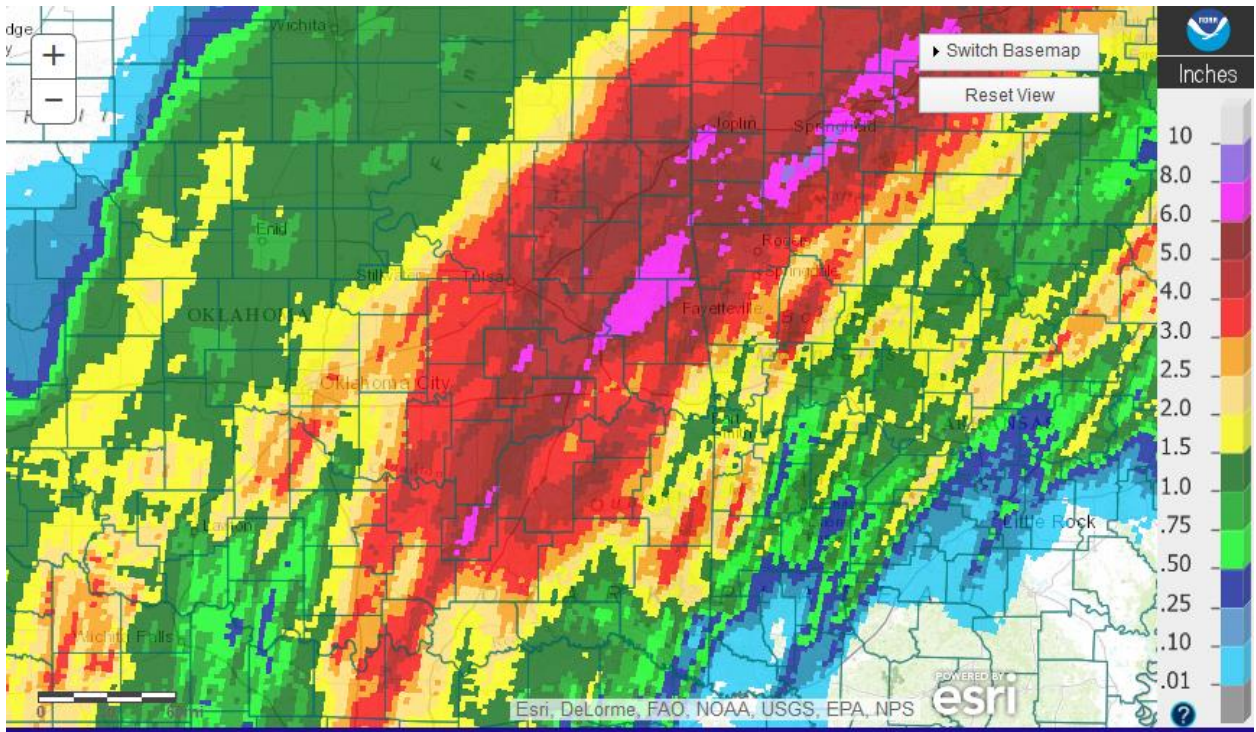
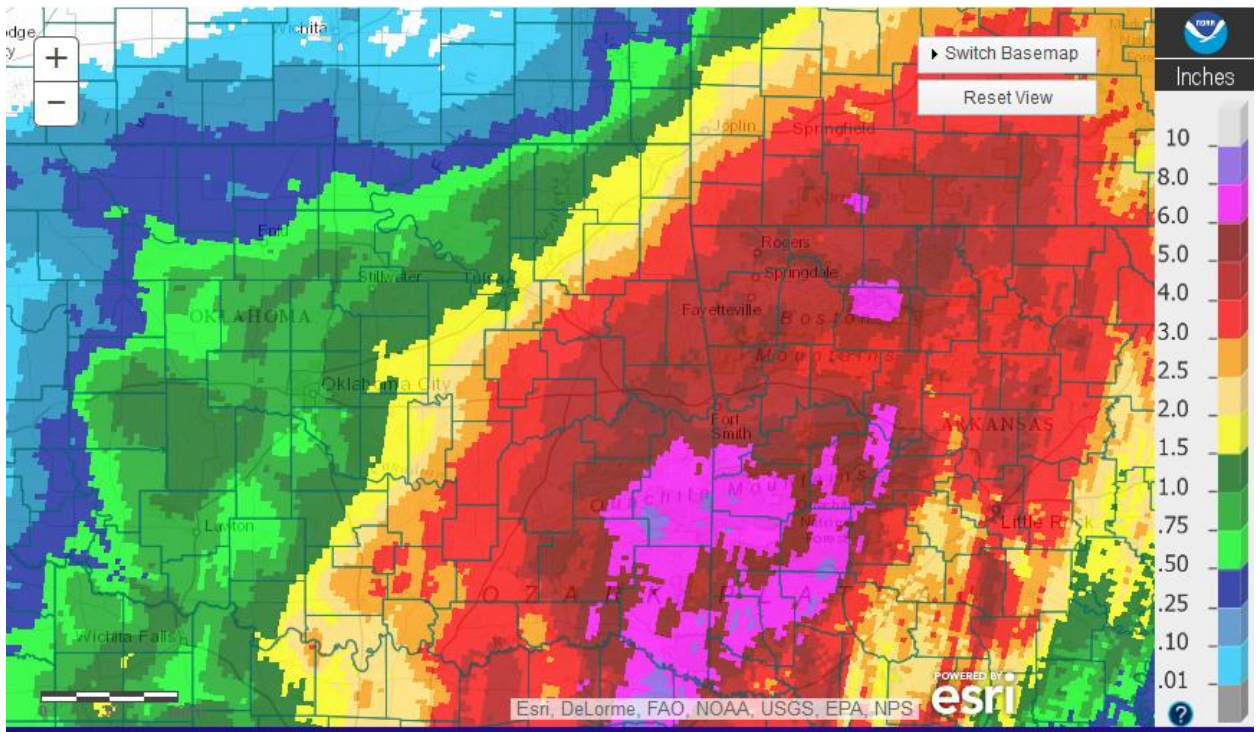


Fig. 13. 24-hour Estimated Observed Rainfall ending at 6am CST 12/26/2015.



Tulsa, OK: December 27, 2015 1-Day Observed Precipitation  
 Valid on: December 27, 2015 12:00 UTC

Fig. 14. 24-hour Estimated Observed Rainfall ending at 6am CST 12/27/2015.



Tulsa, OK: December 28, 2015 1-Day Observed Precipitation  
 Valid on: December 28, 2015 12:00 UTC

Fig. 15. 24-hour Estimated Observed Rainfall ending at 6am CST 12/28/2015.

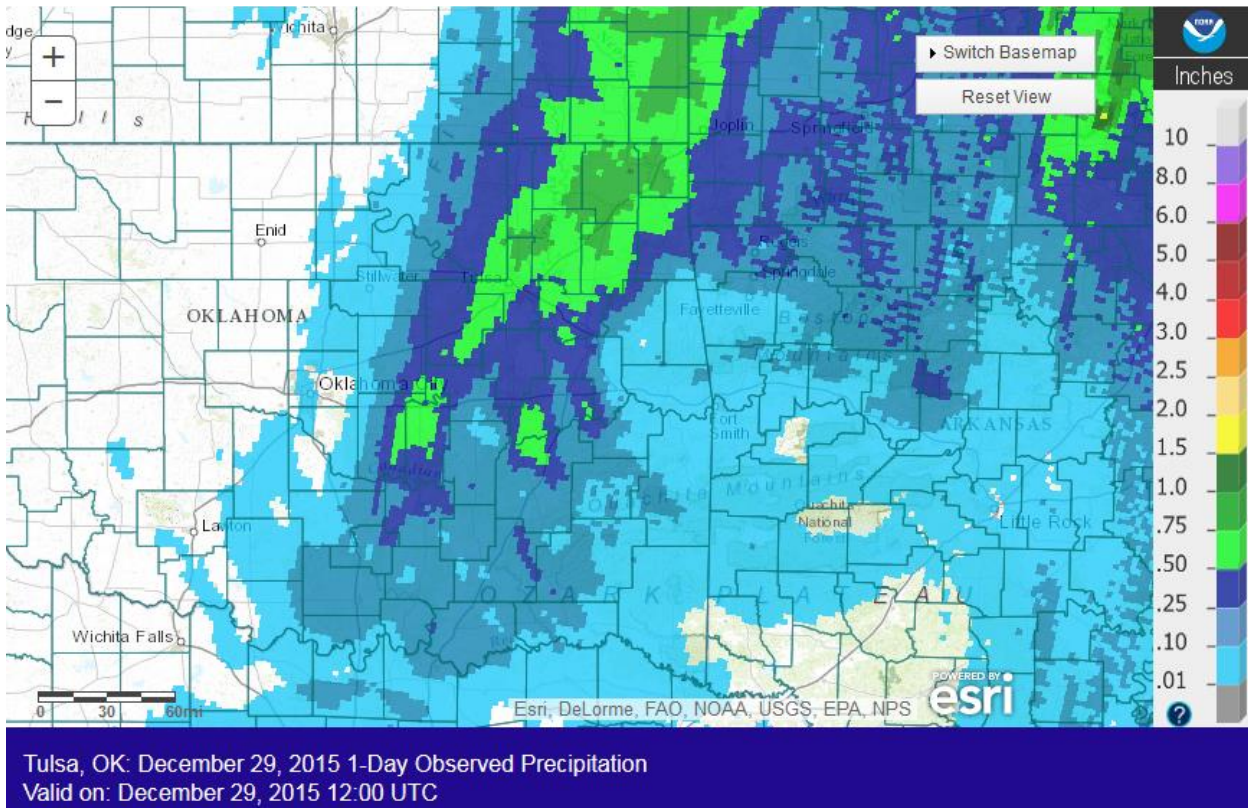


Fig. 16. 24-hour Estimated Observed Rainfall ending at 6am CST 12/29/2015.

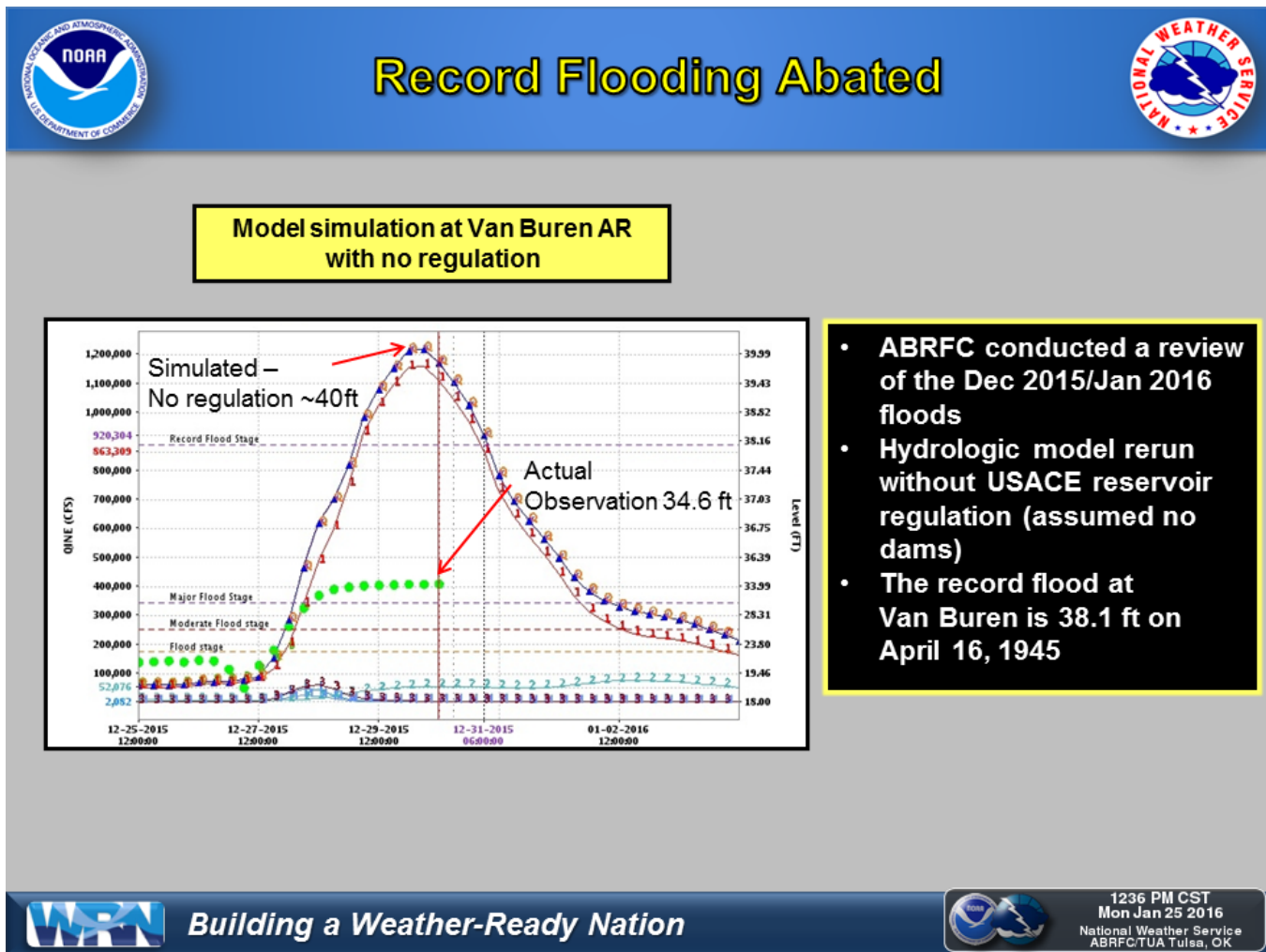


Fig. 17. ABRFC comparison of the actual (green circles) flood crest/flow and simulated crest/flow without USACE reservoir regulation (blue triangles) for the Arkansas River at Van Buren river gage.



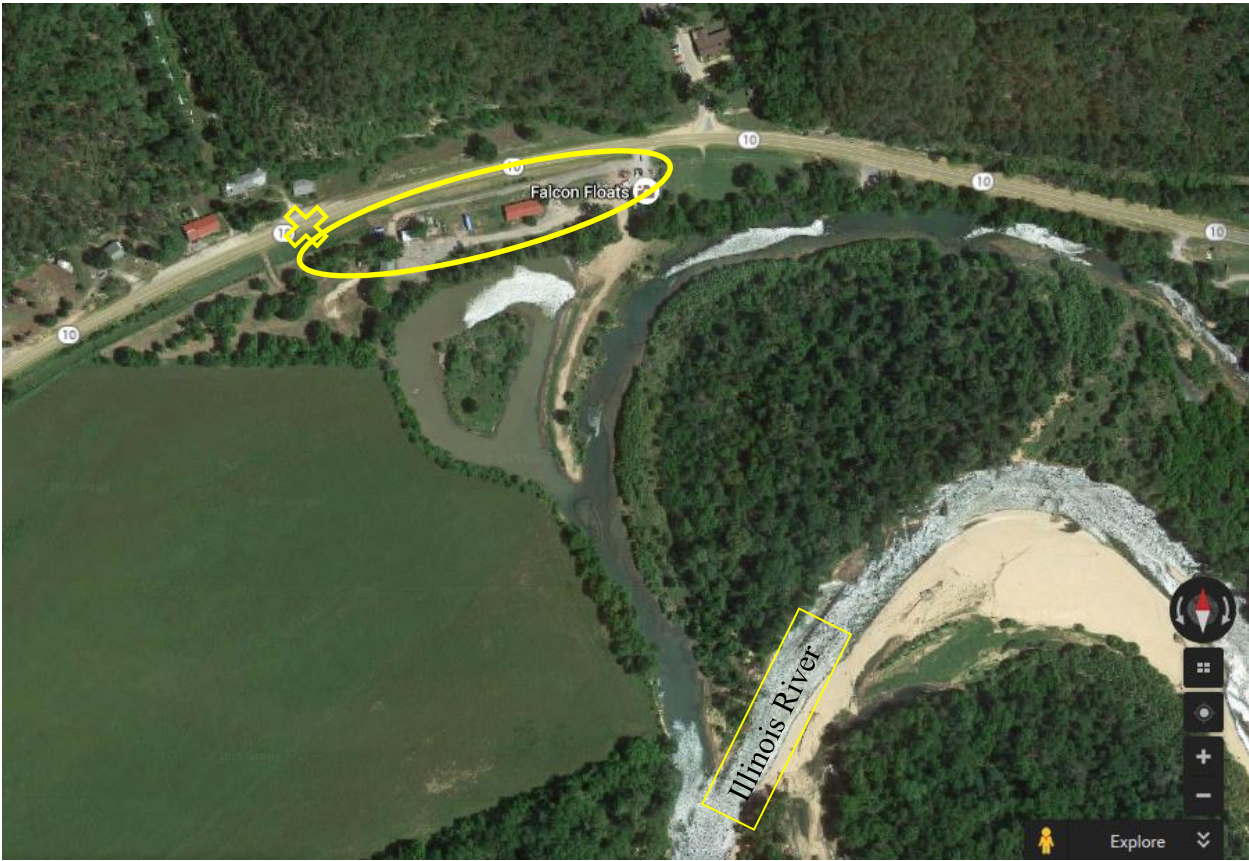


Fig. 18. Illinois River flooding at Falcon Floats (image courtesy Ed Fite, OK Scenic Rivers Commission) (top 2 images) and location of inundated area (bottom, GoogleMap). Yellow X indicates where images were taken; yellow circle are the buildings in flood image.



Fig. 19. Illinois River flooding (image courtesy Ed Fite, OK Scenic Rivers Commission)



Fig. 20. Illinois River flood damage. Lower canoe ~9' above ground level; higher canoe and hay bale 19'-20' above ground. Illinois River in background of each image (image: Nicole McGavock, NWS Tulsa; Ed Fite, Scenic Rivers Commission pictured).





Fig. 21. Illinois River flood damage at Spencer Ridge/Fidlers Bend area. Displaced cabins. (image: Nicole McGavock, NWS Tulsa)



Fig. 22. Debris 12'-13' in the trees just west of the river gage PANO2 on the Poteau River. (Image: Nicole McGavock, NWS Tulsa; Jeff McMurphy pictured)



Fig. 23. Lee Creek high water mark inside the Field of Dreams baseball complex indoor batting practice facility in Van Buren. (Image: Nicole McGavock, NWS Tulsa; Michael Lacy pictured)



Fig. 24. Lee Creek flooding. Old bridge immediately north of Rena Rd. was under water, but the river remained below the Rena Rd. bridge. (Image: Nicole McGavock, NWS Tulsa)



Fig. 25. Arkansas River high water marks at a Fort Smith residence. (Image: Nicole McGavock, NWS Tulsa; Michael Lacy pictured)



Fig. 26. Arkansas River flooding in Fort Smith residential neighborhood. Image from Facebook posted Dec. 28, 2015 when river was approximately 34' (above) Image appears to have been taken from neighbor across the street (see Fig. 27). View of the home from GoogleMaps during non-flood time (below).



Fig. 27. Arkansas River flooding in Fort Smith residential neighborhood taken Jan. 1, 2016. VBUA4 is approximately 32' at this time, about 2.5' below the crest. High water mark (based on discoloration on grass) indicated by yellow line. Circle indicates location of home from Fig. 26 as likely taken from yellow X location. Home in Fig. 25 is located to the left just outside of this image. Image courtesy Civil Air Patrol.



Fig. 28. Marina destroyed along the Arkansas River at Van Buren (location of VBUA4). (Image: Nicole McGavock, NWS Tulsa)

**Other Images from the Dec. 26-28, 2015 flooding:**



**NWADG**

War Eagle Mill this morning. Video from Jason Ivester, NWADG photographer.

Shared with: Public

68,526 Views

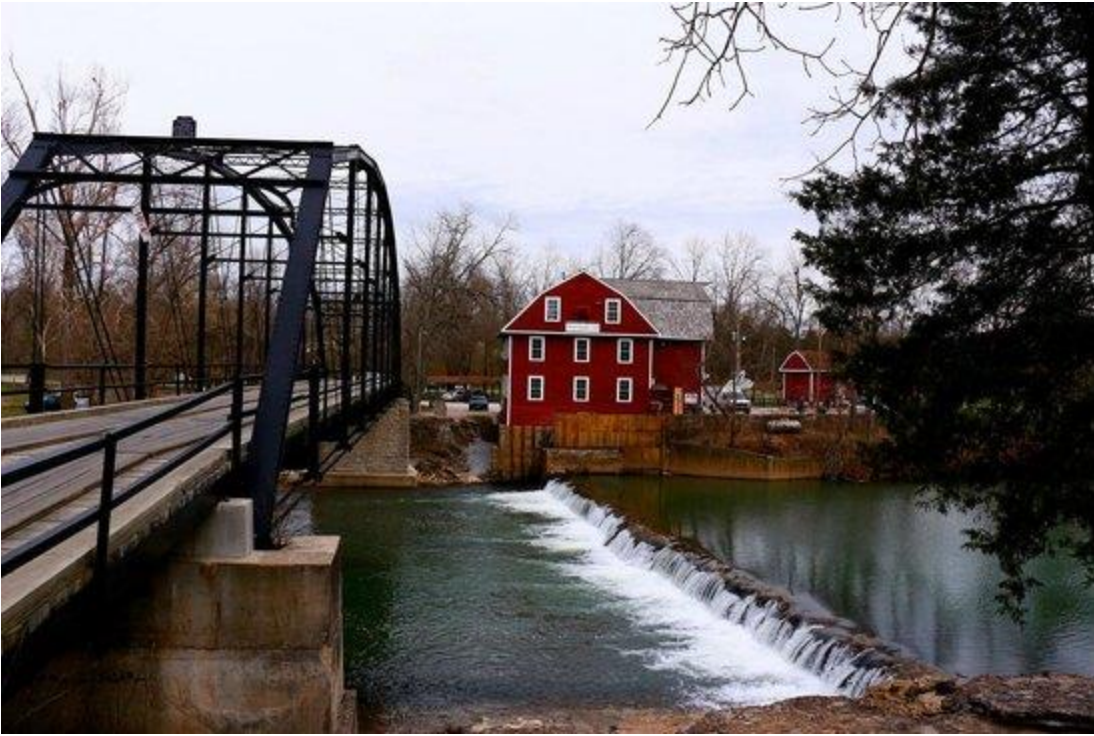


Fig. 29. Aerial view from 5News KFSM of War Eagle Mill showing flooding along War Eagle Creek (upstream of Beaver Lake) (top); video (posted on Facebook 8:14am CST 12/28/2015) by Jason Ivester, NWADG photographer (middle); and non-flood image from Tripadvisor.com taken March 2013 (bottom). A river gage on War Eagle Creek near Hindsville (about 5 miles upstream as the bird flies) rose approximately 24 feet in 26 hours, cresting at 9pm CST 12/27/2015. According to KFSM, “while the flood waters dumped debris in the area, they didn’t damage the structure of the more-than-100-year-old bridge, Benton County Road Department Director Jeff Clark said. The water that surrounded War Eagle Bridge also surrounded nearby War Eagle Mill. The flooding overtook the water wheel, basement, first floor and nearly reached the windows on the second floor.”



Fig. 30. Aerial view of the Illinois River courtesy Fox23.



Fig. 31. Illinois River flooding over Hwy 10 near US 62. Image: Tulsa World



Fig. 32. Illinois River flooding. Image: Tulsa World





Fig. 33. Illinois River flooding. Image: Tulsa World



Fig. 34. James Fork Creek water rescue (Le Flore Co.) on Dec. 29, 2015. Image: KF5M



Fig. 35. Lake Hudson on Dec. 28, 2015. Image: @yondib on Twitter



Fig. 36. Fort Gibson Dam. Image: Channel 6



Fig. 37. Van Buren train bridge posted by Jamie Lopez on Facebook Dec. 29, 2015 (top image is not hers).



Fig. 38. Muskegee County flooding on Dec. 29, 2015. Image: Von Castor



Fig. 39. 33<sup>rd</sup> W. Ave. south of 97<sup>th</sup> St. in Tulsa, OK Dec. 28, 2015. Image: Tulsa World



Fig. 40. 76<sup>th</sup> St. N. looking south at Mingo Rd. in Owasso, OK Dec. 28, 2015.

Written by:  
Nicole McGavock  
Service Hydrologist  
WFO Tulsa

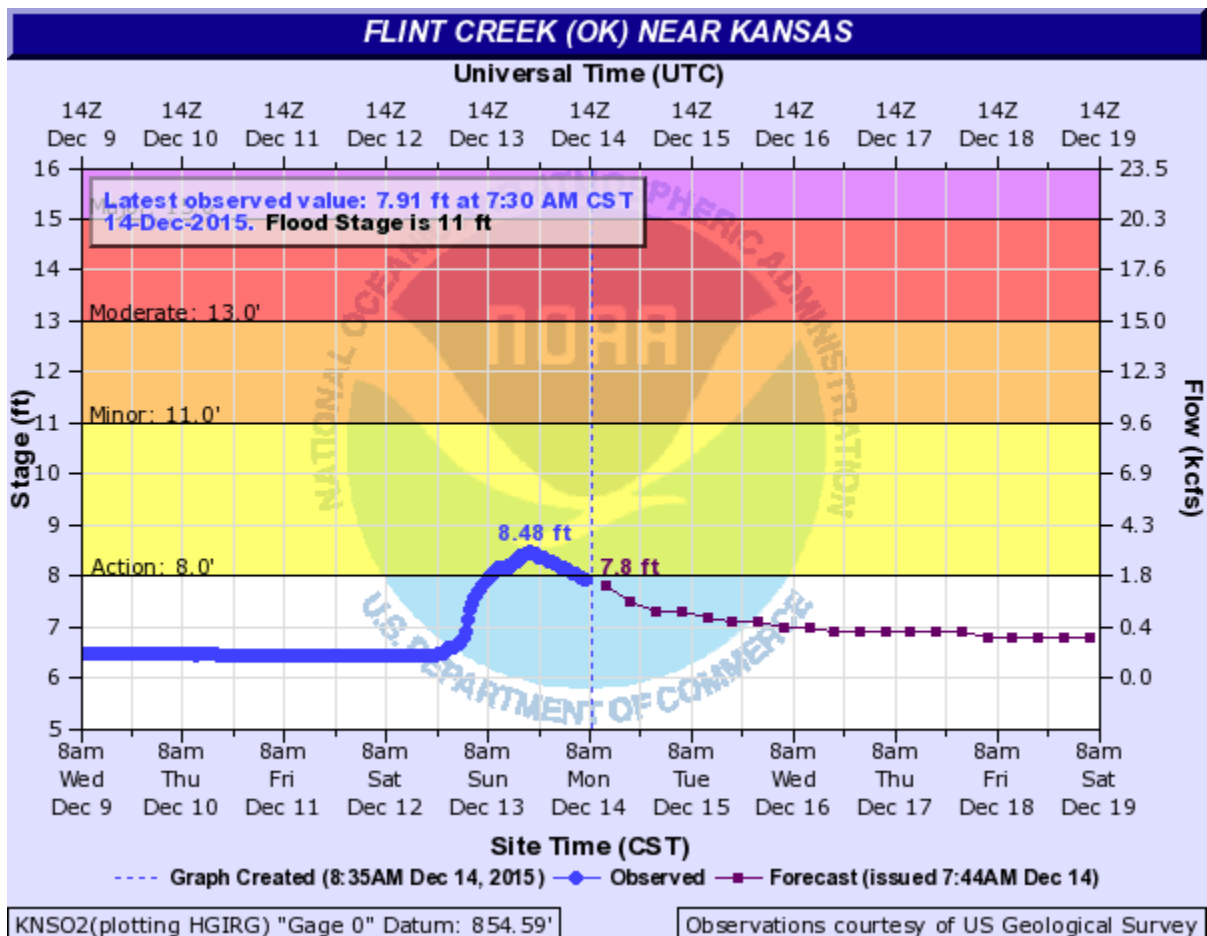
### Products issued in December 2015:

\*MLBA4 and OZGA4 transferred to NWS Tulsa HSA February 5, 2014

\*Mixed case River Flood products began July 31, 2013

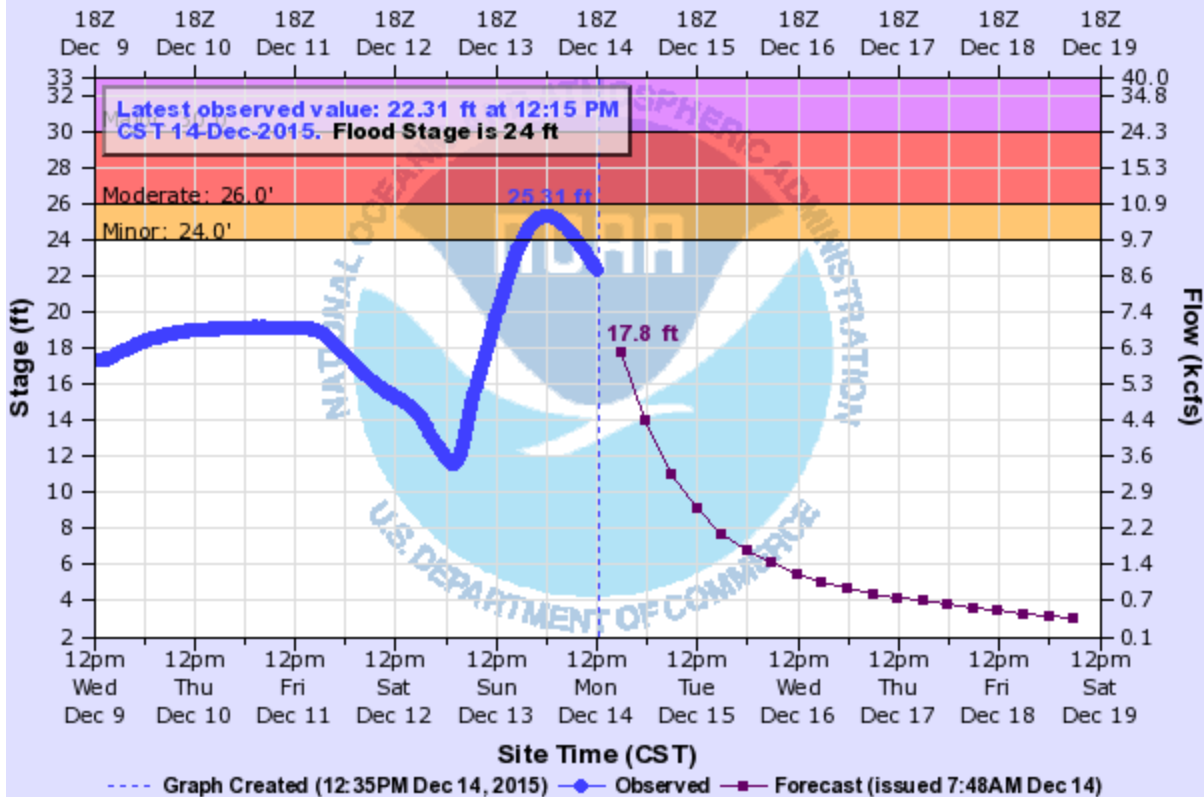
- 15 Flash Flood Warnings (FFW) (7 for Dam releases)
- 3 Flash Flood Statements (FFS)
- 2 Flash/Areal Flood Watches (FFA) (11 Watch FFA CON/EXT/EXA/EXB/CAN)
- 6 Urban and Small Stream Advisories (FLS)
- 16 Areal Flood Warnings (FLW)
- 3 Areal Flood Statements (FLS)
- 57 River Flood Warnings (FLW)
- 186 River Flood Statements (FLS)
- 3 River Flood Advisories (FLS) (12 Advisory FLS CON/EXT/CAN)
- 16 River Flood Watches (FFA) (16 Watch FFA CON/EXT/CAN)
- 0 River Statements (RVS) (some ROU segments were incl. with River Flood FLSs)
- 1 Hydrologic Outlooks (ESF)
- 0 Drought Information Statements (DGT)

### Preliminary Hydrographs:



## POTEAU RIVER NEAR POTEAU

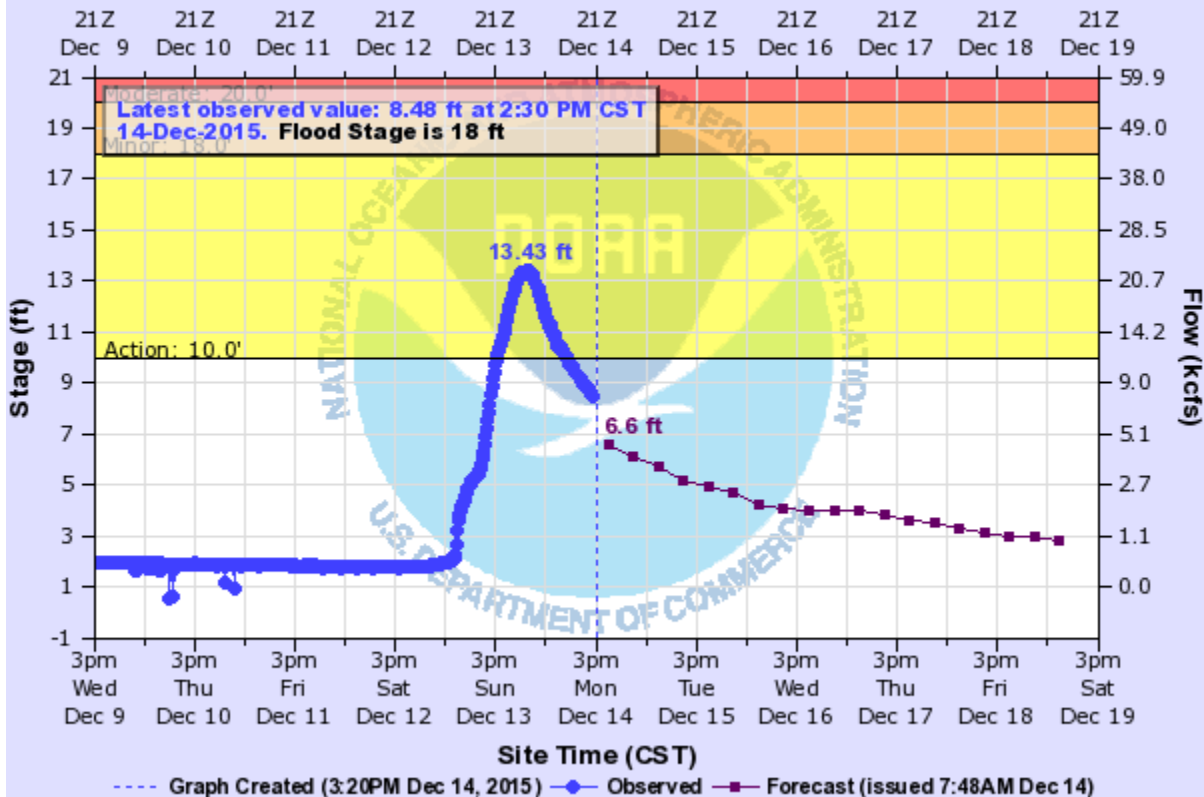
Universal Time (UTC)



PTAO2(plotting HGIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 409.4'

## MULBERRY RIVER (AR) NEAR MULBERRY

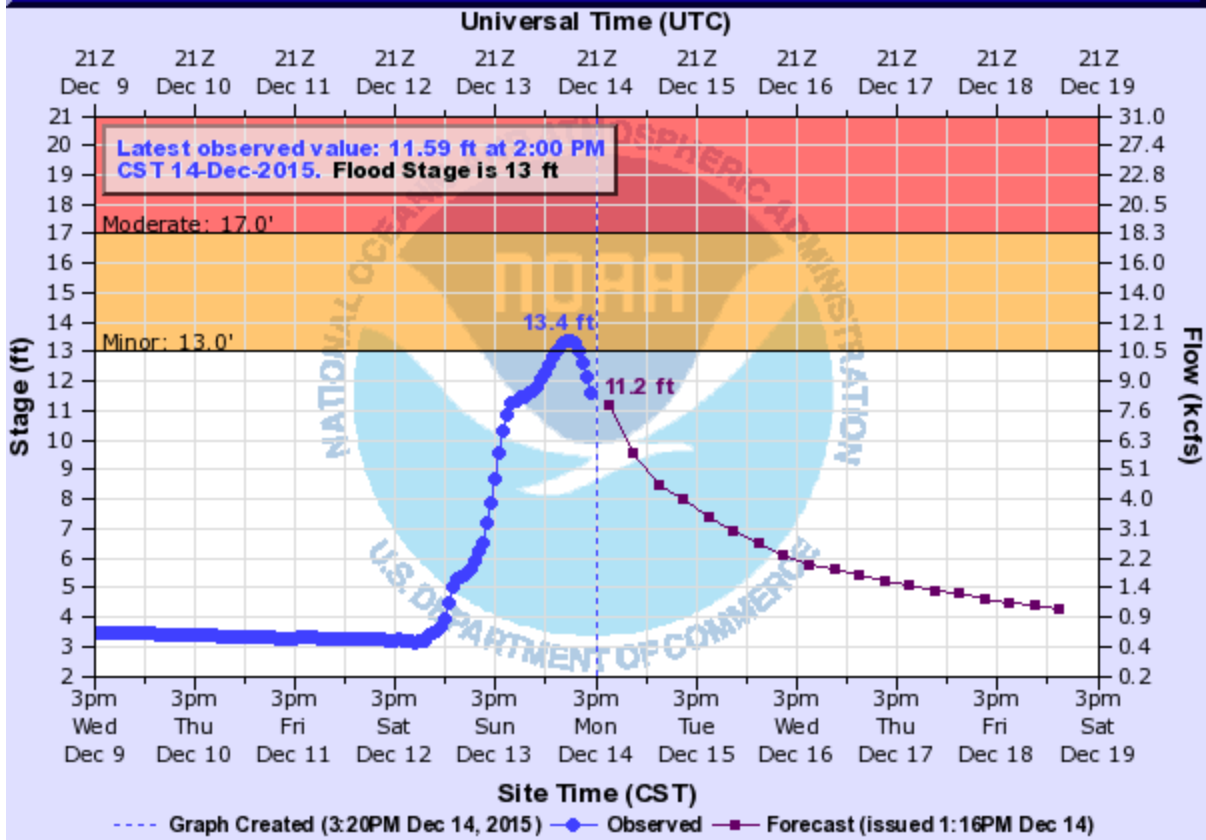
Universal Time (UTC)



MLBA4(plotting HGIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 432.75'

Observations courtesy of USGS/USACE/ADEQ

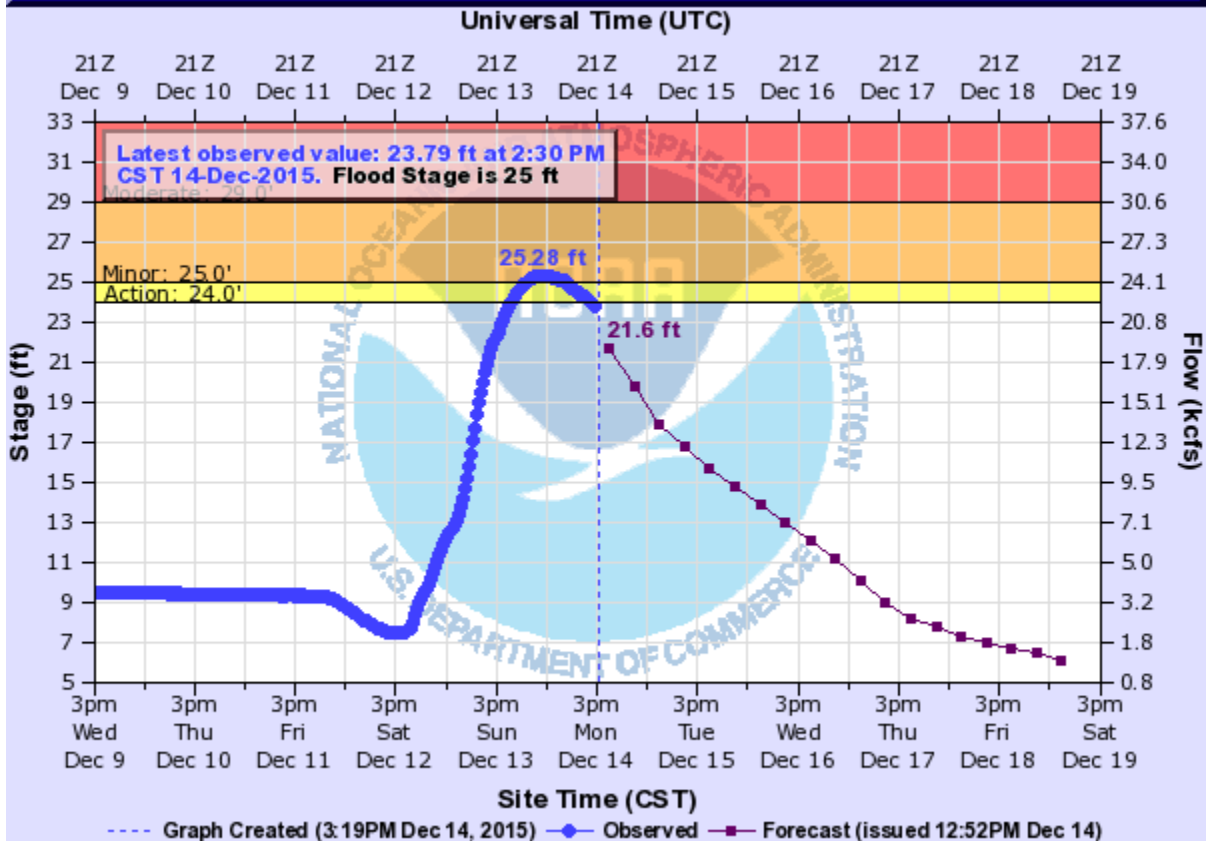
## ILLINOIS RIVER (AR OK) NEAR WATTS



WT02(plotting HGIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 893.77'

Observations courtesy of US Geological Survey

## KIAMICHI RIVER NEAR ANTLERS

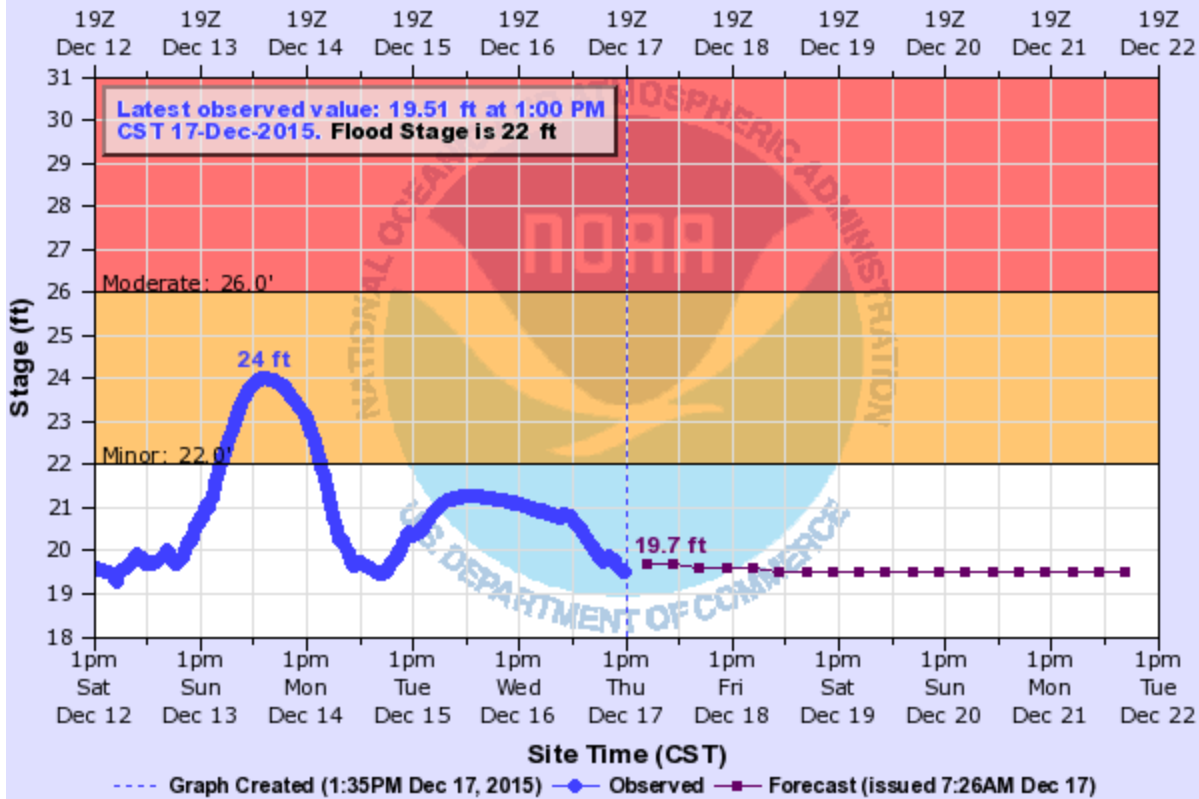


ANT02(plotting HGIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 419.82'

Observations courtesy of US Geological Survey

## ARKANSAS RIVER AT VAN BUREN

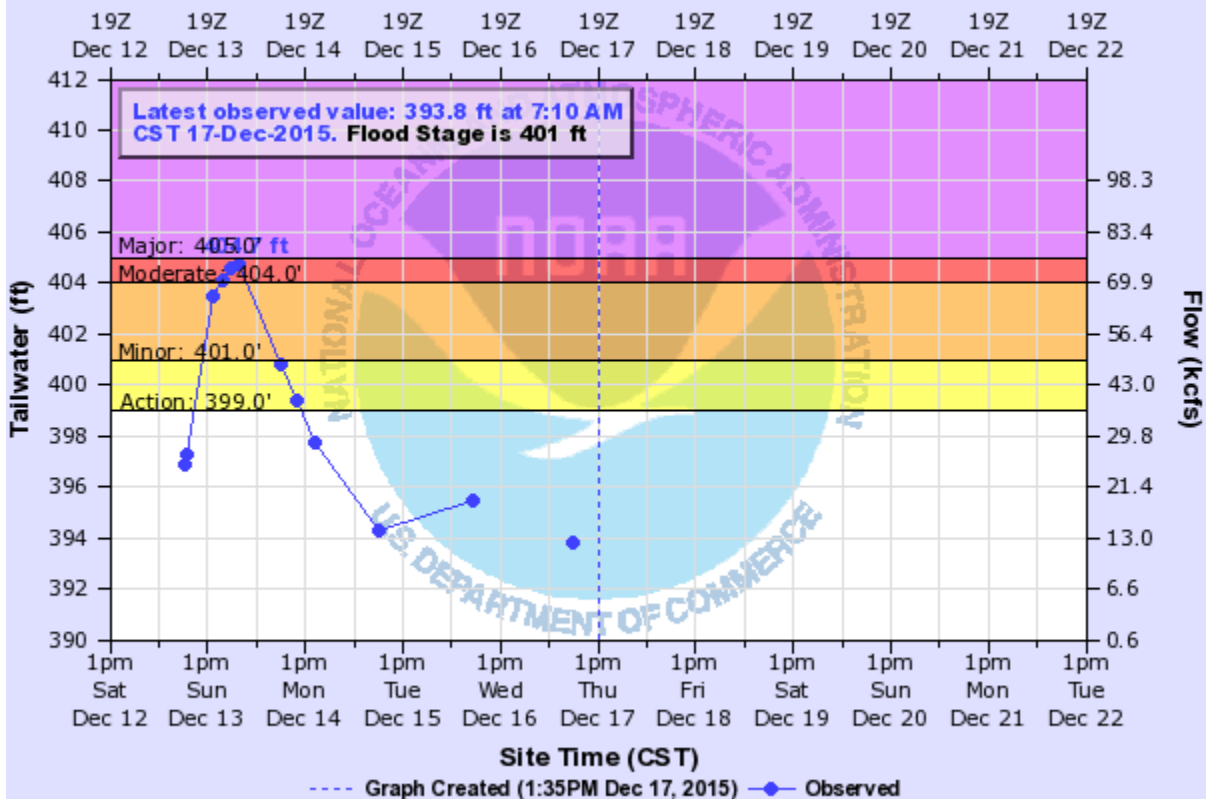
Universal Time (UTC)



VBUA4(plotting HGIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 372.36'

## LEE CREEK NEAR VAN BUREN LCR

Universal Time (UTC)

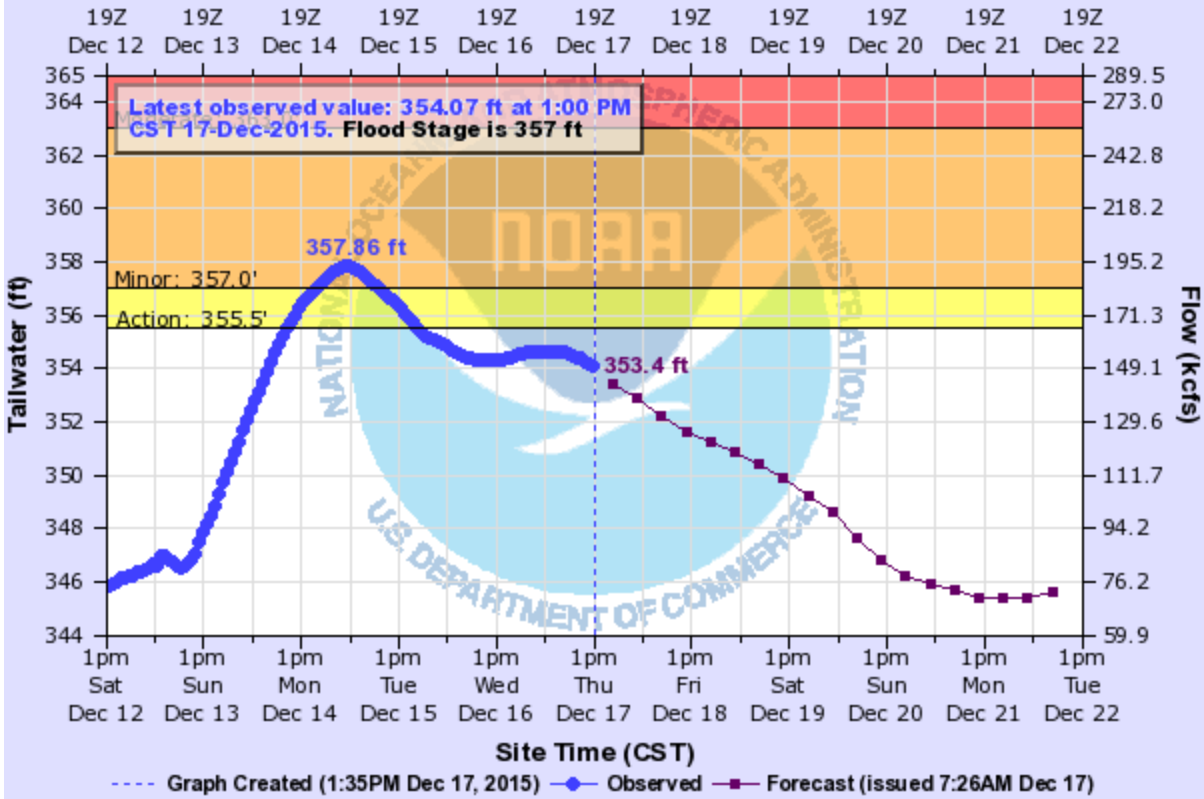


VBRA4(plotting HTIRZ) "Gage 0" Datum: 0'



## ARKANSAS RIVER AT OZARK L/D TAILWATER

Universal Time (UTC)

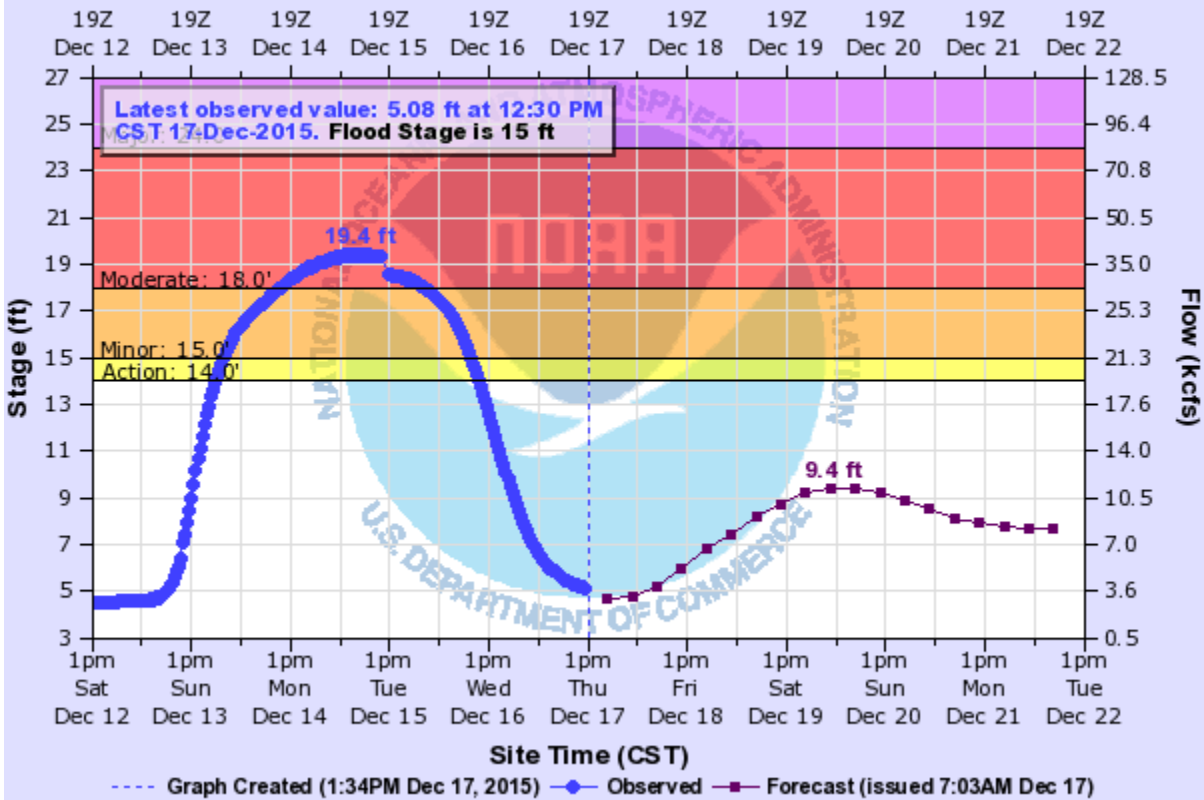


OZGA4(plotting HTIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 0'

Observations courtesy of US Army Corps of Engineers - LRD

## NEOSHO RIVER NEAR COMMERCE

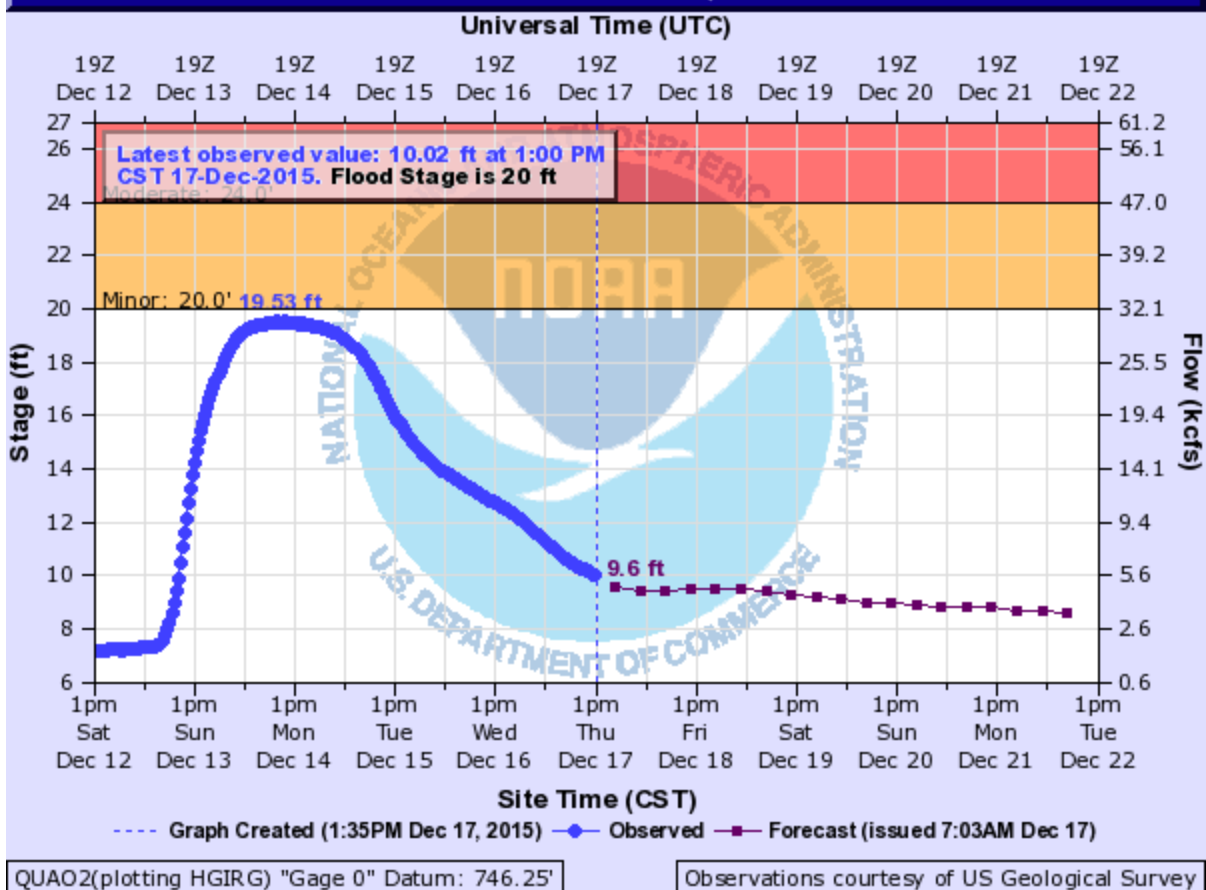
Universal Time (UTC)



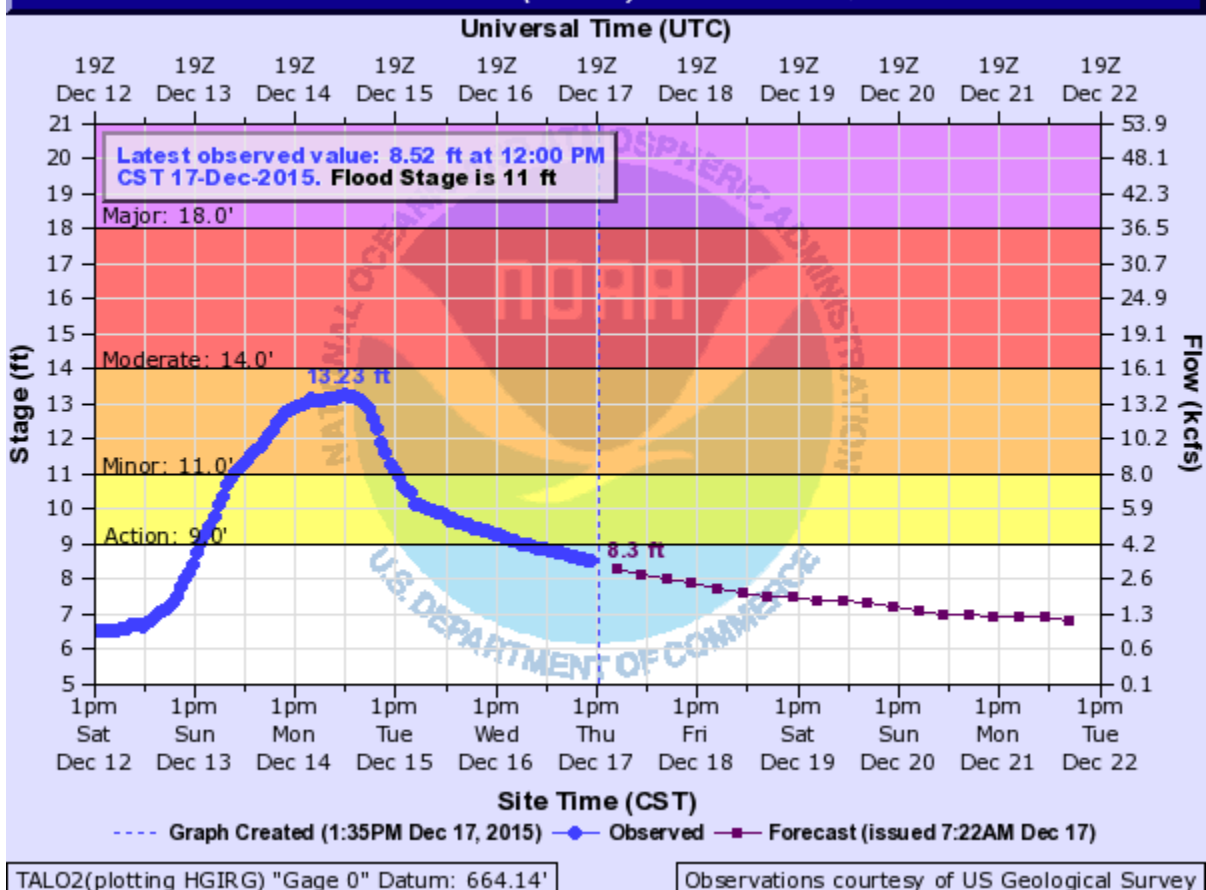
COMO2(plotting HGIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 748.97'

Observations courtesy of US Geological Survey

### SPRING RIVER NEAR QUAPAW

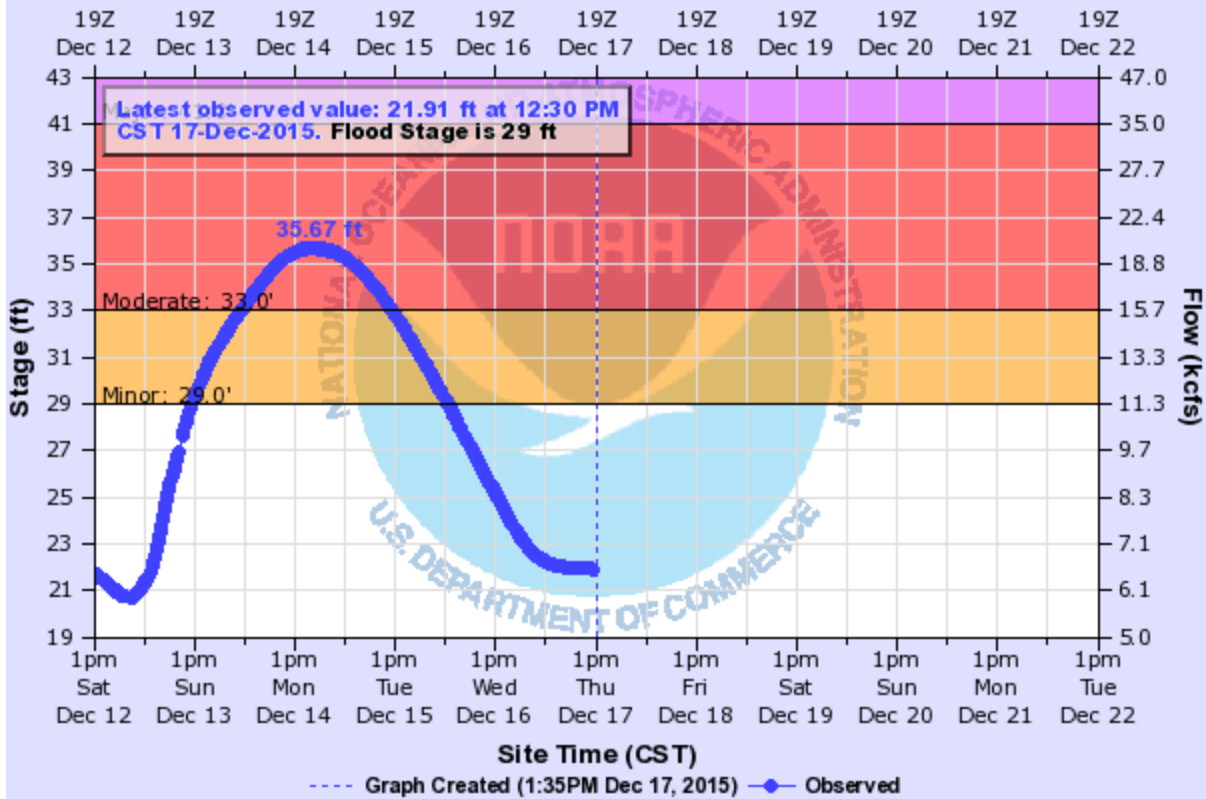


### ILLINOIS RIVER (AR OK) NEAR TAHLEQUAH



## POTEAU RIVER NEAR PANAMA

Universal Time (UTC)

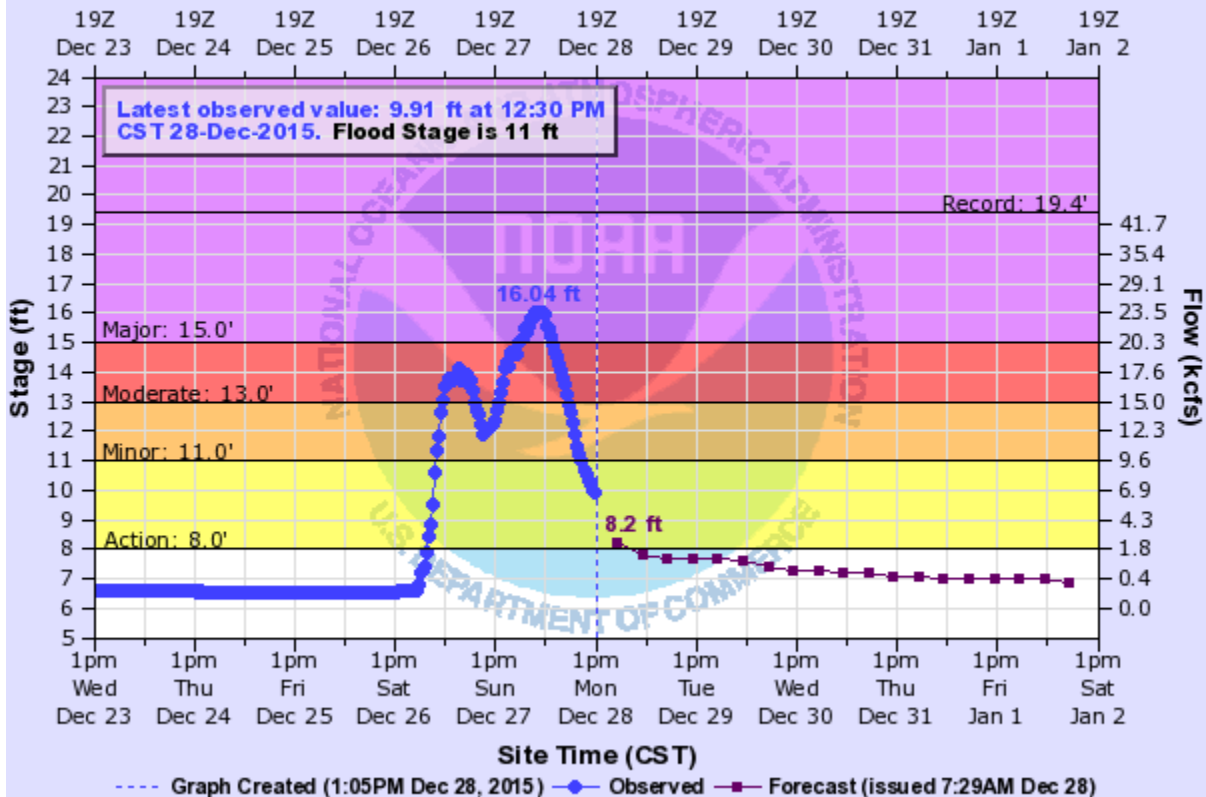


PANO2(plotting HGIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 387.97'

Observations courtesy of US Geological Survey

## FLINT CREEK (OK) NEAR KANSAS

Universal Time (UTC)

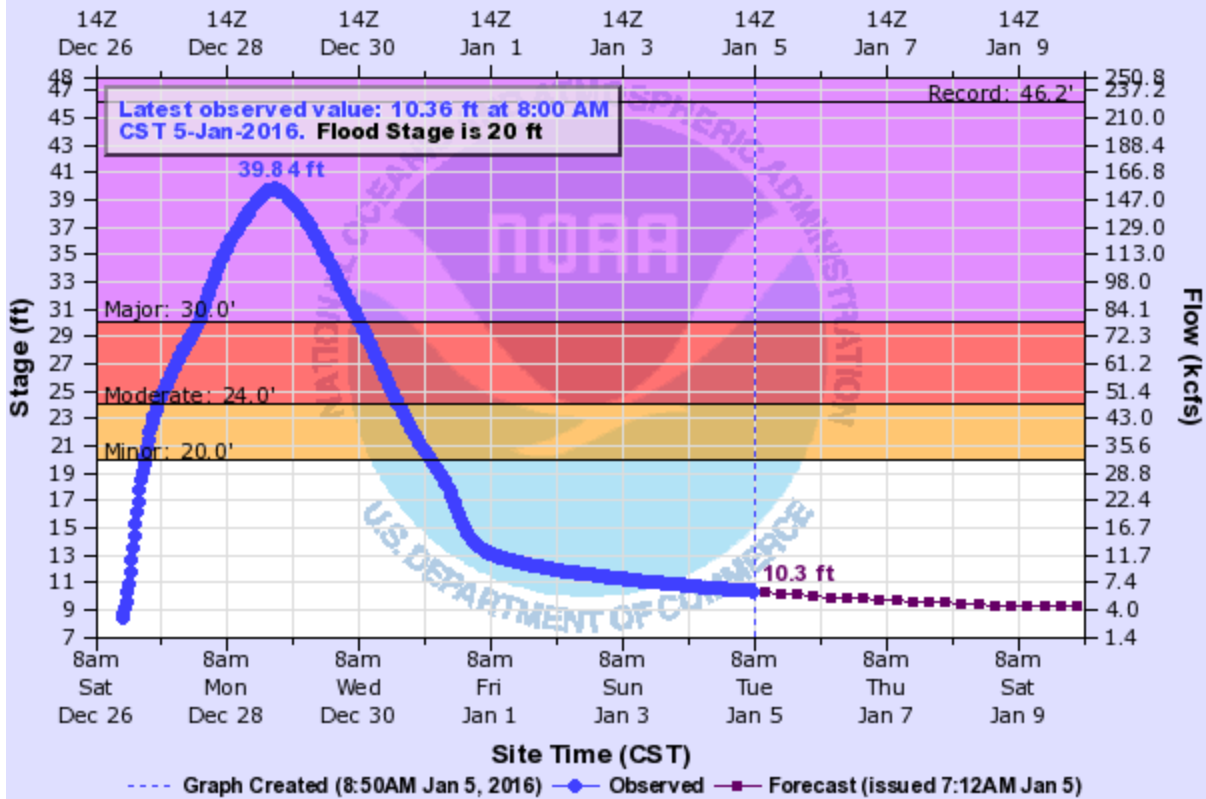


KNSO2(plotting HGIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 854.59'

Observations courtesy of US Geological Survey

## SPRING RIVER NEAR QUAPAW

Universal Time (UTC)

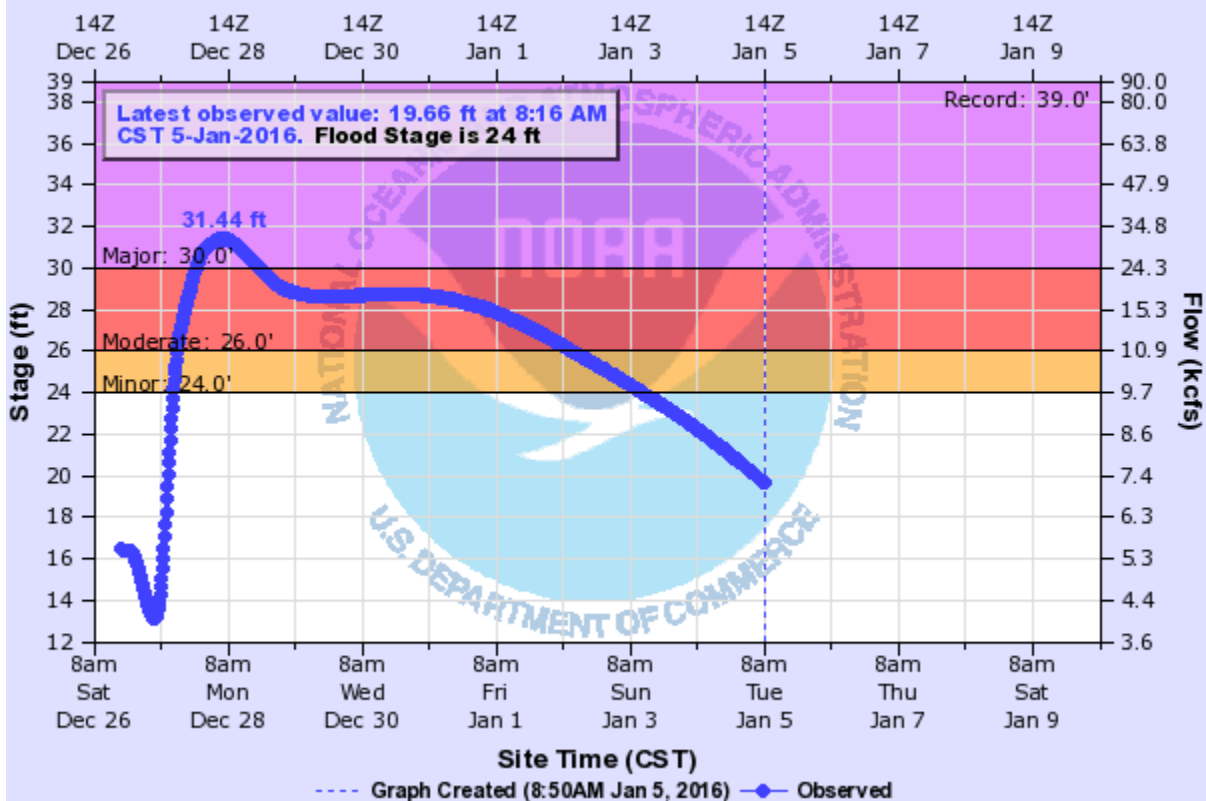


QUAO2(plotting HGIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 746.25'

Observations courtesy of US Geological Survey

## POTEAU RIVER NEAR POTEAU

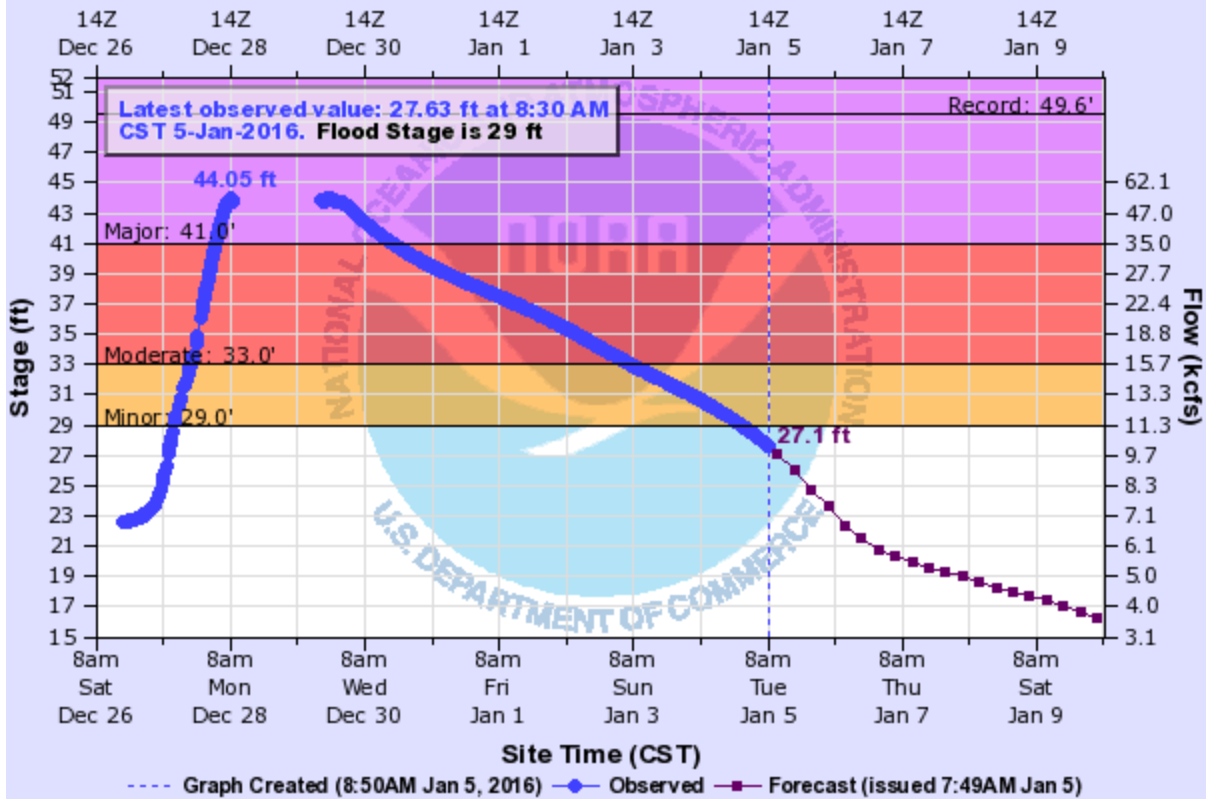
Universal Time (UTC)



PTAO2(plotting HGIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 409.4'

## POTEAU RIVER NEAR PANAMA

Universal Time (UTC)

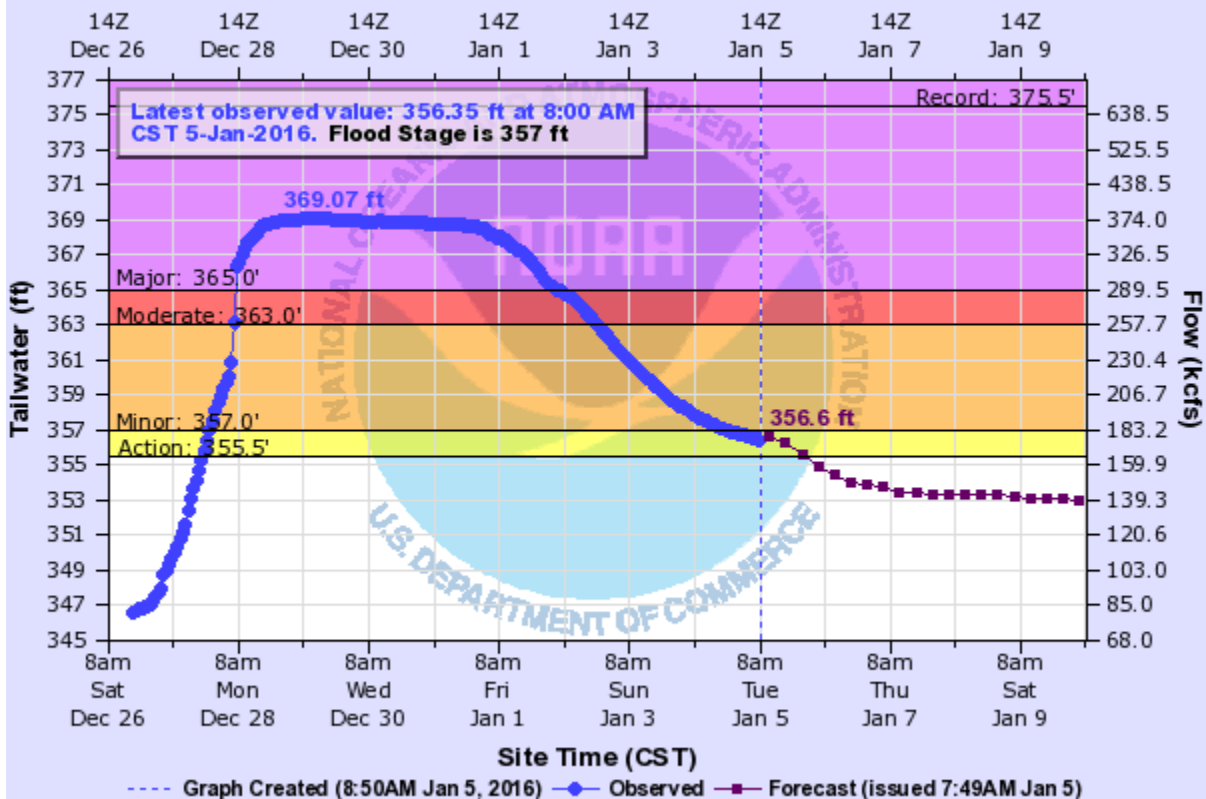


PANO2(plotting HGIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 387.97'

Observations courtesy of US Geological Survey

## ARKANSAS RIVER AT OZARK L/D TAILWATER

Universal Time (UTC)

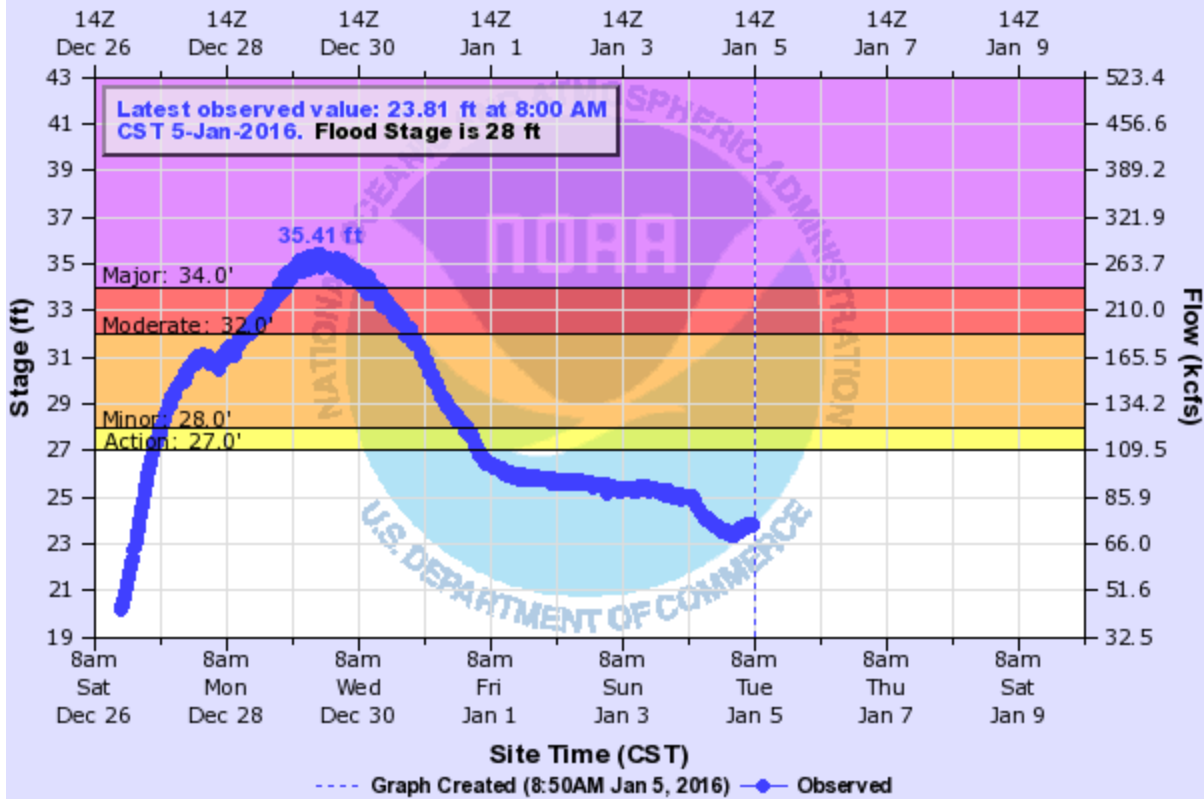


OZGA4(plotting HTIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 0'

Observations courtesy of US Army Corps of Engineers - LRD

## ARKANSAS RIVER NEAR MUSKOGEE

Universal Time (UTC)

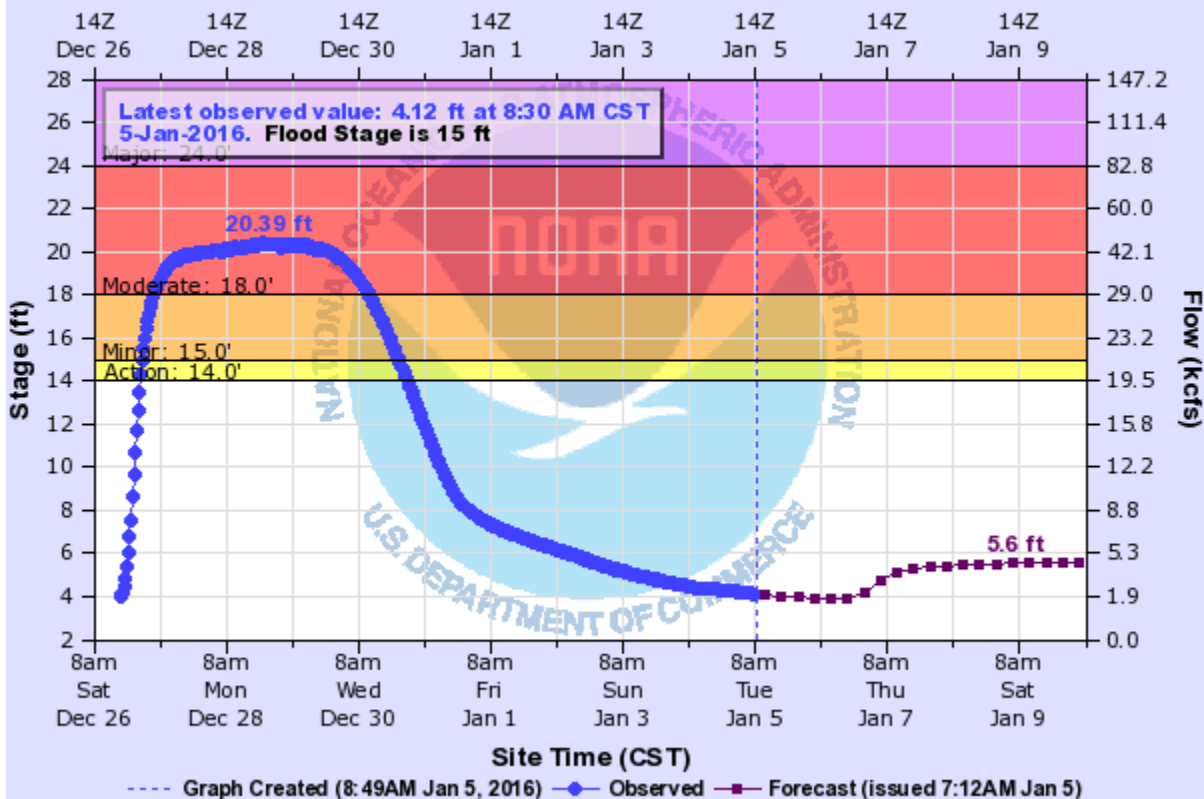


MKGO2(plotting HGIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 471.38'

Observations courtesy of US Geological Survey

## NEOSHO RIVER NEAR COMMERCE

Universal Time (UTC)

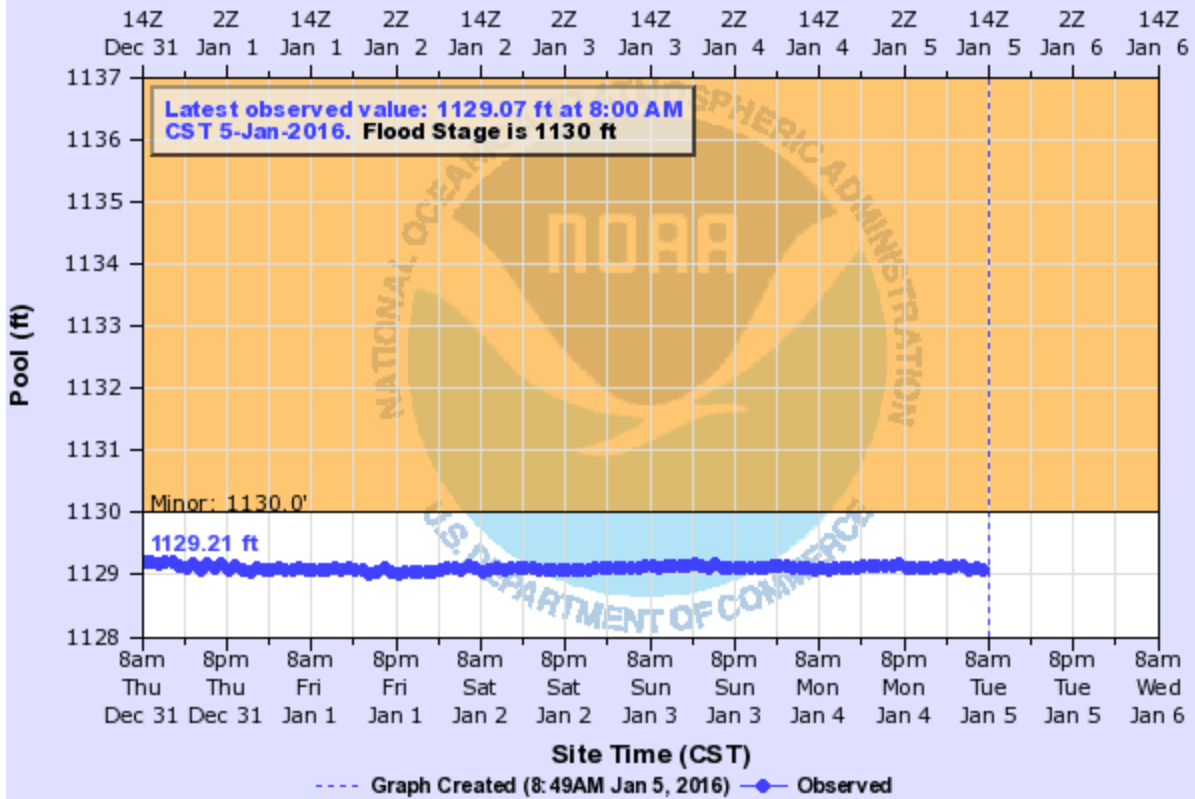


COMO2(plotting HGIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 748.97'

Observations courtesy of US Geological Survey

## NORTHWEST ARKANSAS LAKES AT BEAVER LAKE

Universal Time (UTC)

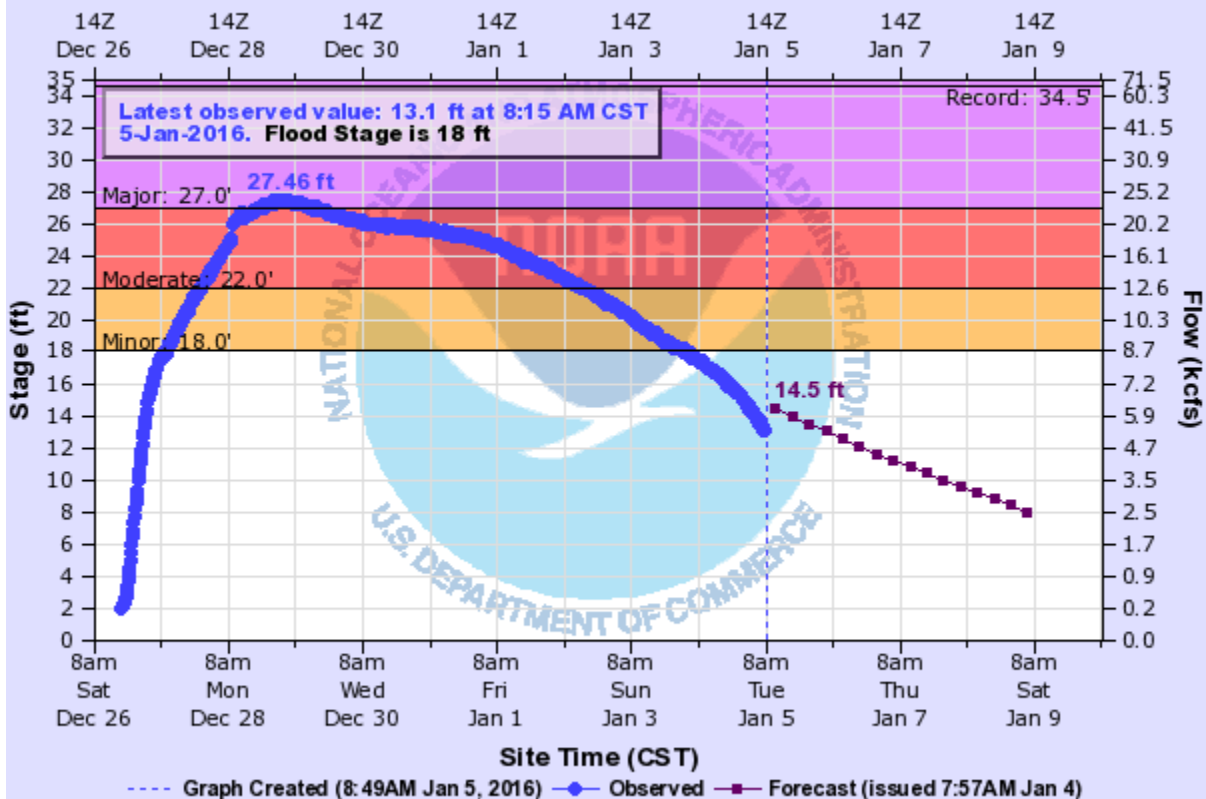


BVGA4(plotting HPIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: n/a

Observations courtesy of US Army Corps of Engineers

## DEEP FORK RIVER NEAR BEGGS

Universal Time (UTC)

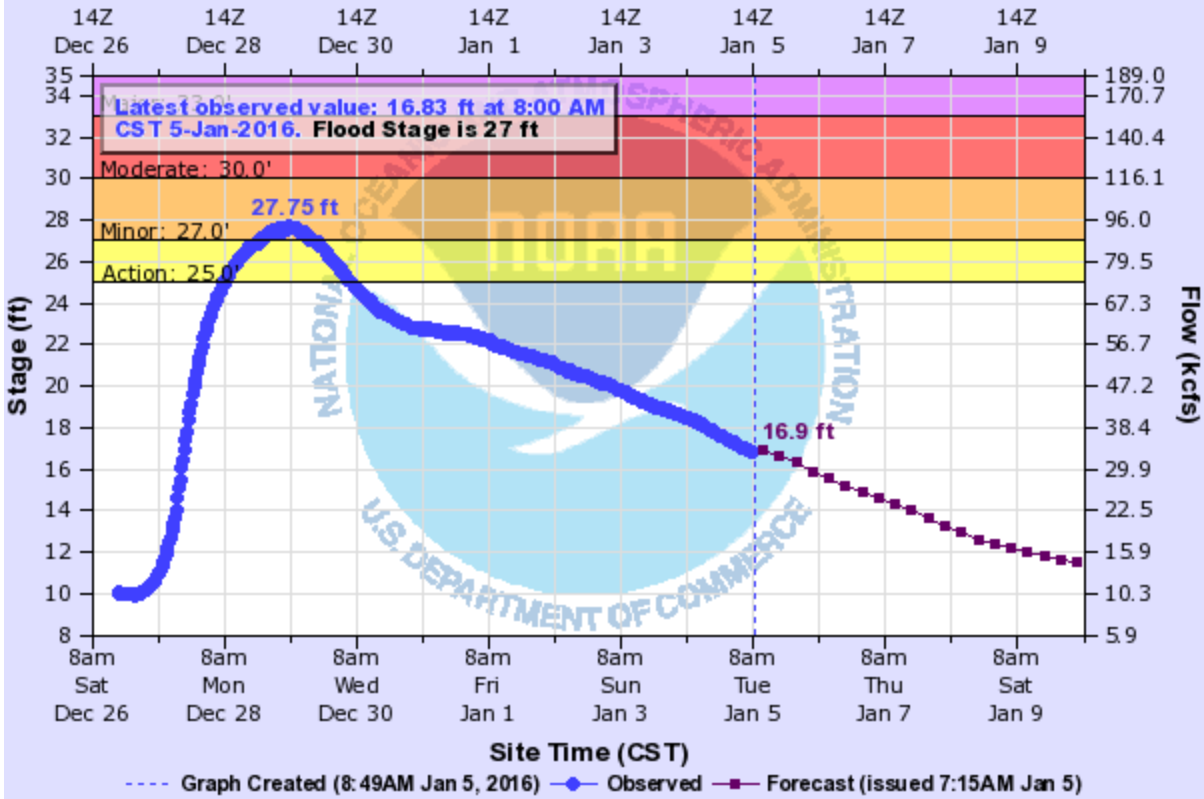


BGSO2(plotting HGIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 632.55'

Observations courtesy of US Geological Survey

## RED RIVER AT ARTHUR CITY

Universal Time (UTC)

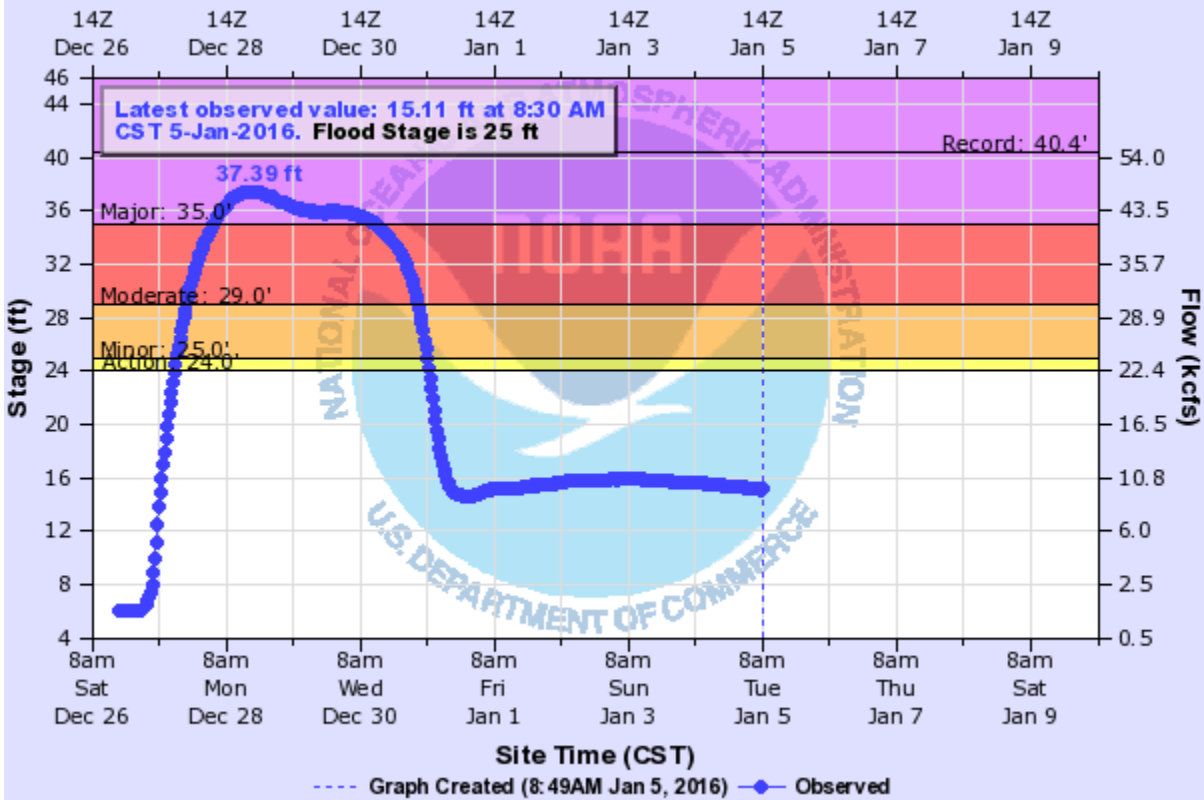


ARCT2(plotting HGIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 375.07'

Observations courtesy of US Geological Survey

## KIAMICHI RIVER NEAR ANTLERS

Universal Time (UTC)



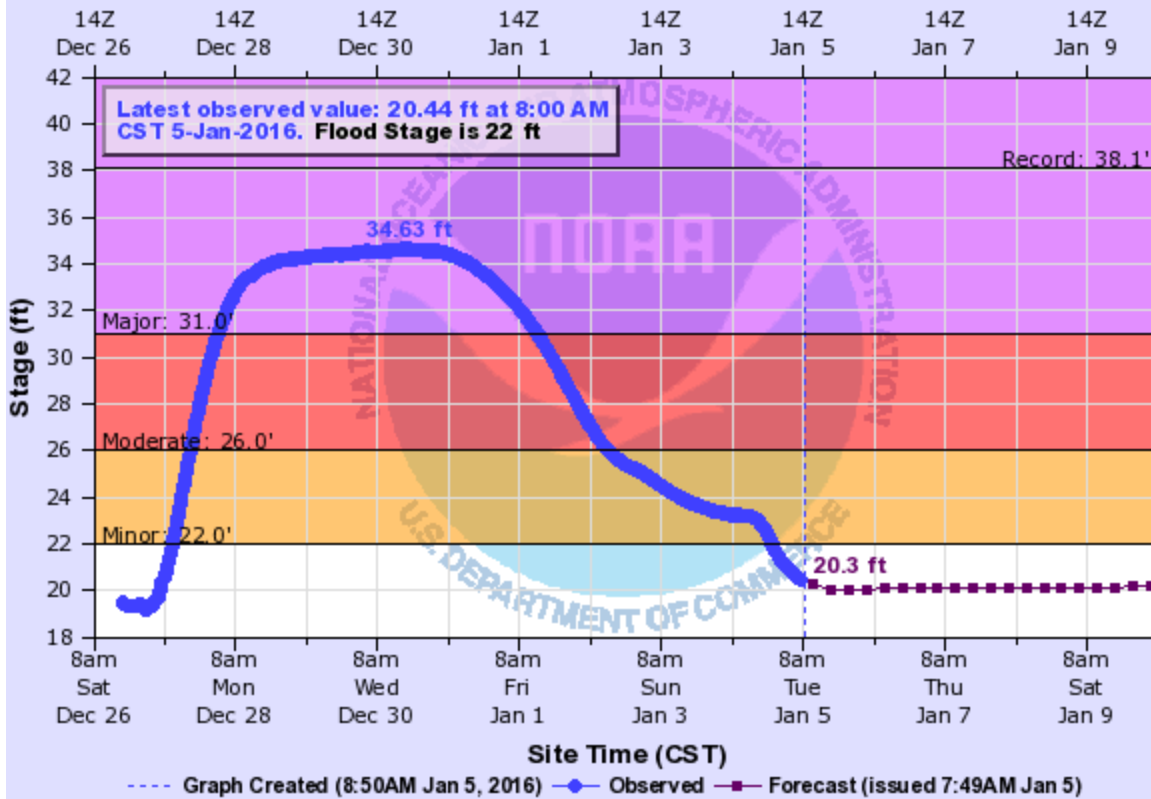
ANTO2(plotting HGIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 419.82'

Observations courtesy of US Geological Survey



## ARKANSAS RIVER AT VAN BUREN

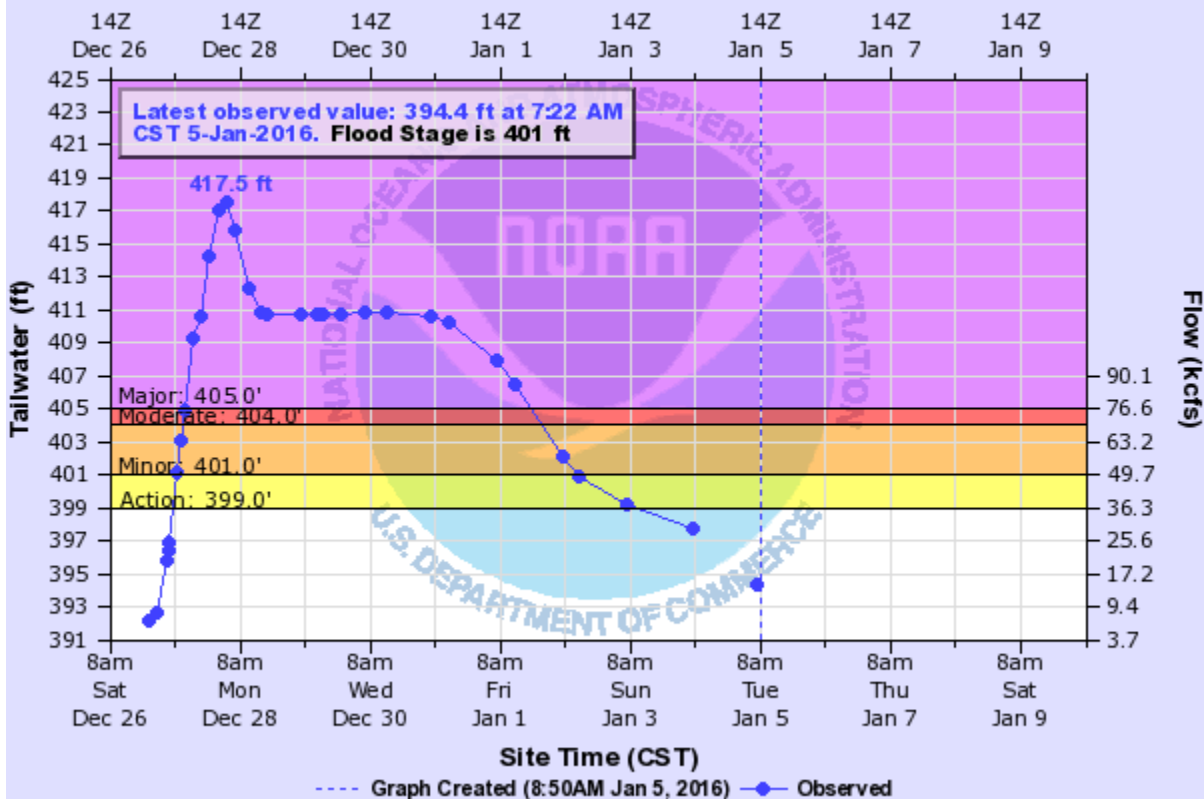
Universal Time (UTC)



VBUA4(plotting HGIRG) "Gage 0" Datum: 372.36'

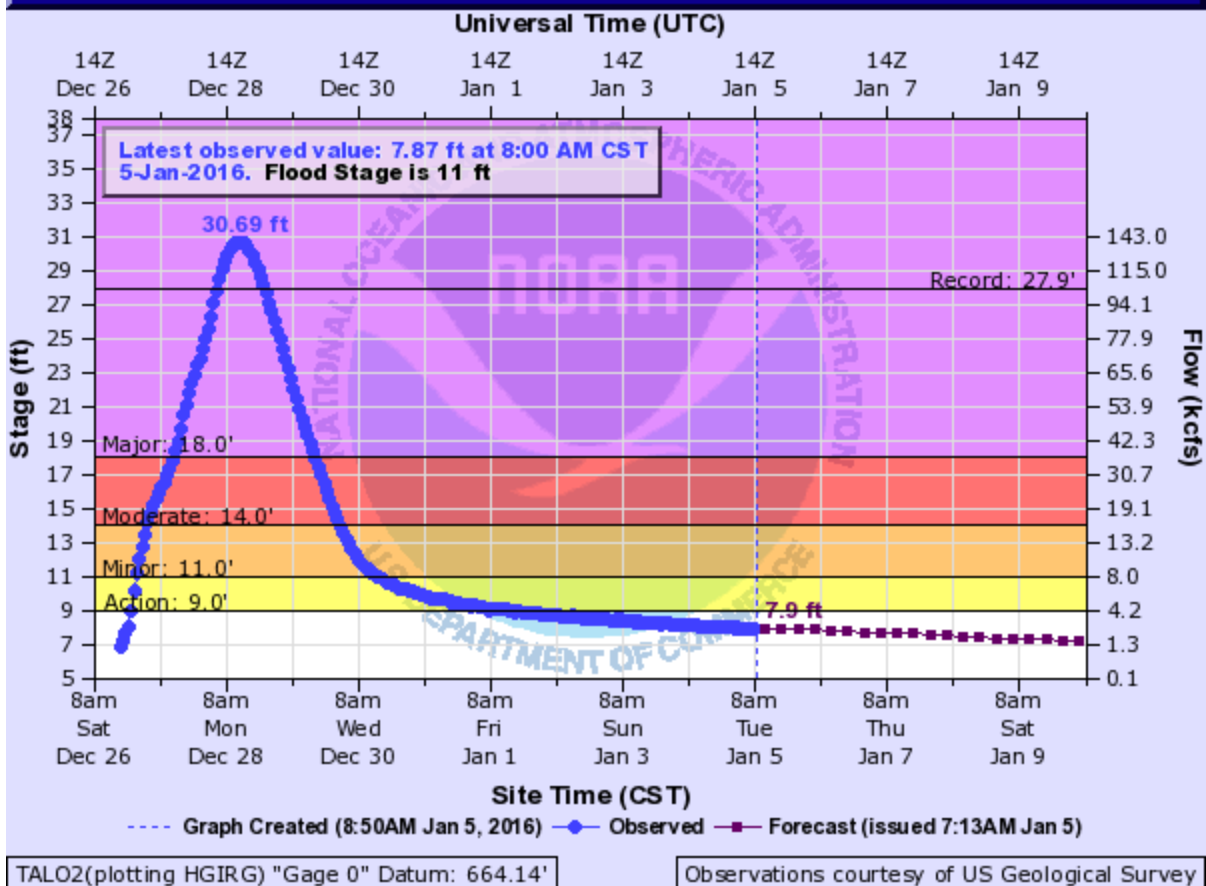
## LEE CREEK NEAR VAN BUREN LCR

Universal Time (UTC)



VBRA4(plotting HTIRZ) "Gage 0" Datum: 0'

## ILLINOIS RIVER (AR OK) NEAR TAHLEQUAH



## BARON FORK AT ELDON

