

Dataset Documentation

Historic Flood Map

February 2024

This document will help you understand and use the Historic Flood Map.

Dataset description

- This dataset is a GIS layer showing the maximum extent of individual Recorded Flood Outlines from river, the sea and groundwater springs that meet a set criteria, see below. It shows areas of land that have previously been subject to flooding in England. This excludes flooding from surface water, except in areas where it is impossible to determine whether the source is fluvial or surface water, but the dominant source is fluvial. The majority of records began in 1946 when predecessor bodies to the Environment Agency started collecting detailed information about flooding incidents, although we may hold limited details about flooding incidents prior to this date.
- This dataset contains flood outlines from the Recorded Flood Outline dataset that are 'considered and accepted' if the following criteria are met:
 - outlines are substantiated by supporting evidence; the evidence will vary depending on the age of the outline.
 - where possible outlines reflect the maximum extent of the flood and the time of peak water level substantiated by evidence (for example date / time stamped photo). However, it is not always possible to capture floods at their peak and other outlines may be included.
 - evidence that the source of flooding is from rivers, the sea or groundwater **and not surface water/overland runoff**. Or evidence that the dominant source is fluvial flooding where it is not possible to determine whether the source is fluvial or surface water.
 - From 2020, where a Recorded Flood Outline's data quality flag is Very Poor or Poor; this will not be included in the Historic Flood Map. Historically some data in this category was deemed fit to include in the Historic Flood Map.

The dataset consists of spatial data only.

Difference between the Recorded Flood Outlines dataset

- Recorded Flood Outlines contain all records we have confirmed are true events of historic flooding from rivers, the sea, groundwater and surface water, unlike the Historic Flood Map that excludes surface water flooding.
- Recorded Flood Outlines can contain some data that is not of sufficient quality to be included in the Historic Flood Map or Flood Map for Planning. In some instances, this may be a circle indicating that we hold a record of flooding in that area, but do not have sufficient information to allow an outline of the flood to be recorded.
- Recorded Flood Outlines show the individual flood event outlines whereas the Historic Flood Map is a merged outline showing the maximum extent of flooding in an area.
- Recorded Flood Outlines contain more information about the individual flood event in the attributes table.

Update frequency

The dataset is updated every three months. It may not change quarter to quarter if no significant flooding incidents have occurred in the preceding period; or no Recorded Flood Outlines have been accepted using the criteria outlined in the dataset description.

This year's planned publication dates* are:

- 2nd May 2024
- 1st August 2024
- 7th November 2024
- 6th February 2025

* please note that these dates are subject to change

We have paused the updates of Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3, which are related datasets within the Flood Map for Planning and are usually updated alongside this dataset. The last update was in November 2023. The pause is in advance of publishing the first outputs from our new National Flood Risk Assessment. These outputs will be published by the end of 2024 and will include a new version of the Flood Zones. Please visit the [“Pause to Updates of Flood Risk Maps” announcement](#) on the Defra Data Services Platform support pages for further information. You can also contact us for the latest information about these changes at fcrm_risk_assessment@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Related datasets

Other datasets you may want to use to get a more complete picture of national flood risk include:

1. Recorded Flood Outlines
2. Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea) Flood Zone 2
3. Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea) Flood Zone 3
4. Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea) Flood Storage Areas
5. Reduction in Risk of Flooding from Rivers and Sea due to Defences
6. Risk of Flooding from Rivers and Sea datasets
7. Risk of Flooding from Surface Water datasets

Common questions & known issues

- The Historic Flood Map shows flooding to the land and does not necessarily indicate that properties within the Historic Flood Map were flooded internally.
- In addition, absence of coverage by the Historic Flood Map for an area does not mean that the area has never flooded, only that we do not currently have records of flooding in this area.
- The Historic Flood Map will take into account of the presence of defences, structures, and other infrastructure where they existed at the time of flooding. It will include flood extents that may have been affected by overtopping, breaches or blockages.
- The Historic Flood Map may be used to identify whether land has flooded in the past. It will not show how frequently land has been subjected to flooding, the depth of flooding or its effect on individual properties.
- It is also possible that the pattern of flooding in this area has changed and that this area would now not flood, if a flood defence has been built, or flood under different circumstances.
- This information is not suitable for identifying if an individual property will flood as the map shows flooding to the land and does not necessarily indicate that properties within the historic flood extents were flooded internally.
- To find out if you are in an area at risk of flooding, please go to [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) to complete a search.

Dataset content

This dataset is not attributed.

Note: We do our best to avoid quality problems, but this dataset reflects the data we hold. Our datasets may contain errors.