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March Brings Heightened Awareness of Flood Risks — Iowa Flood Center Stands Ready to Help

Record-breaking autumn rainfall in 2018, combined with near record-high snowfall amounts this winter, have put many Iowa rivers and streams at a 50 percent chance for moderate to major flooding this spring (NWS Spring Outlook). Fortunately, the Iowa Flood Center's (IFC) tools and resources provide Iowans with information to help them prepare when waters begin to rise.

With the 2019 flood season only weeks away—Flood Awareness Month began on March 1—now is the time for Iowa communities to begin thinking about how to prepare for flooding.

The IFC's Iowa Flood Information System (IFIS) (http://ifis.iowafloodcenter.org/ifis/en) is a free online suite of tools that allows all Iowans to access the latest local flood information. This user-friendly system displays up-to-the-minute community-specific information on rainfall, stream levels, and more, including:

- Current flood warnings and stream forecasts
- Real-time rainfall maps displaying current conditions and past accumulations
- Real-time and historical stream-level data
- Interactive visualizations

IFIS also provides flood inundation maps for 26 flood-prone communities across Iowa. These maps allow users to see what a forecasted flood crest would mean for their home or business. Maps are available for Ames, Cedar Rapids, Charles City, Clarksville, Columbus Junction, Des Moines, Elkader, Fort Dodge, Hills, Humboldt, Independence, Iowa City, Kalona, Lake Red Rock, Manchester, Maquoketa, Mason City, Monticello, Ottumwa, Red Oak, Rock Rapids, Rock Valley, Spencer, Waterloo/Cedar Falls, and Waverly. The IFC develops new inundation maps every year, including Greene and Plainfield coming in 2019.

In addition, IFIS includes data from HAZUS, which allows users to estimate the cost of damage to buildings under various flooding scenarios. Developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), HAZUS models the effects of natural hazards such as flooding on structures in a given area, and then quantifies the total damage in dollars. HAZUS data is currently available for seven Iowa communities: Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, Iowa City, Independence, Kalona, Rock Rapids, and Rock Valley. The IFC is working to expand the service to other Iowa communities.

Iowa
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"Iowa is our home. With extreme weather and flooding trends on the rise worldwide, we are committed to serving Iowans by expanding our flood forecasting and resilience efforts," says Witold Krajewski, co-founder and director of the IFC.

"Better to invest money up front in flood control and mitigation rather than face economic loss, clean-up, and devastation that occurs as a result of a flood," says Krajewski. "At the Iowa Flood Center, we believe in being proactive to reduce the overall cost of flooding for Iowans across the state—in cities, towns, and rural areas alike."

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