

Keep An Eye on Your Rivers

Is the river near your house about to flood? If you're uncertain, find out by visiting the U.S. Geological Survey's Massachusetts/Rhode Island Current Streamflow information site on the World Wide Web at <http://ma.water.usgs.gov>. Follow the link "Real-Time Streamflow" and you'll find streamflow information for many of the rivers currently flooded or approaching flood conditions.

Once at the site, click on the station number for your neighborhood river. Here you'll see information on current conditions, such as data on streamflow, stage, and precipitation, which are continuously updated.

One way USGS personnel measure the amount of water in a river is by checking the river's stage. Stage is the height of the water surface above a specific point (datum) at a USGS gaging station; it is not the depth of the river.

For example, if you want to know if the Sudbury River at Saxonville is approaching flood stage, see if the line on the stage graph runs above or below the flood-stage line, such as on the graph at right. You can see how the river changes over a 7-day period.

The National Weather Service (NWS) determines flood stage and uses USGS streamflow information to predict flooding. According to the NWS, rivers reach flood stage when damage from high water begins downstream of the gage.

For more information contact:

Roy Socolow

• 508-490-5059

• rsocolow@usgs.gov

Linda Comeau

• 508-490-5058

• lcomeau@usgs.gov

As the Nation's largest water, earth and biological science and civilian mapping agency the USGS works in cooperation with more than 2000 organizations across the country to provide reliable, impartial, scientific information to resource managers, planners, and other customers. This information is gathered in every state by USGS scientists to minimize the loss of life and property from natural disasters, contribute to sound economic and physical development of the Nation's natural resources, and enhance the quality of life by monitoring water, biological, energy, and mineral resources.

