

## 2016 Wisconsin Flooding Events

The summer of 2016 was the 4<sup>th</sup> wettest summer in Wisconsin in the last 122 years, since the National Weather Service has kept official records. Heavy rains, thunderstorms and a total of 16 tornadoes statewide caused millions of dollars in damage to homes, businesses and public infrastructure. Below is an overview of the northern Wisconsin major flood event. (["State of the Climate: National Overview for November 2016,"](#) National Atmospheric and Oceanic Association, 9/16; Danielle Kaeding and Haleema Shah, ["Northern Wisconsin Flood Damage Estimate Climbs to \\$30M,"](#) Wisconsin Public Radio 7/18/16)

- **Multiple rounds of severe storms in northern Wisconsin on July 11, 2016, caused major flash flooding across the region.** Rainfall amounts of 8 to 12 inches occurred with much of it falling during an eight hour period. ([Press Release](#), "Guard engineers assessing northern Wisconsin flood damage," Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs, 7/18/16)
  - **The significant flooding and storms forced evacuations, downed trees and power lines and damaged hundreds of miles of roads. Four people were killed during the event.** (Scott Walker, Governor of Wisconsin, [Letter to President Barack Obama](#), 8/3/2016)
- **This event impacted over 350 homes and left behind more than \$25 million in public sector damage.** Many of the area's state highways, county highways, and local roads were inundated with water and debris and had to be closed. Culverts and bridges were washed out, resulting in long detour routes. (Scott Walker, Governor of Wisconsin, [Letter to President Barack Obama](#), 8/3/2016)
- **Multiple harbors and marinas on Lake Superior received significant damage. In particular, Saxon Harbor in Iron County was hit particularly hard with many boats and campers damaged or destroyed.** The fish hatchery and wild rice operations of the Bad River Tribe also sustained major damage. ([Press Release](#), "Governor of Wisconsin declares state of emergency after deadly flooding," United Press International, 7/13/16)
- **The State Emergency Operations Center was elevated to a Level 1, with agency personnel from the Department of Administration, Department of Transportation, Department of Natural Resources and other state, federal and volunteer agencies to coordinate resources such as providing additional sandbags, aerial flights to survey damage and National Guard assistance.** In addition, Wisconsin Department of Tourism worked closely with local tourism officials to encourage travelers to not cancel northern Wisconsin vacations. Tourism businesses remained open to visitors as the area continued to cleanup and make road repairs. ([Press Release](#), "Northern Wisconsin tourism is open for business," Wisconsin Department of Tourism, 7/14/16)
- **Immediately following the storm many volunteer organizations and private sector partners provided assistance to residents impacted by the flooding.** The American Red Cross opened and managed a multi-agency resource center to provide services to flooding victims and to distribute flood clean-up kits and meals. Shelters were open in Ashland and on the Bad River Reservation. (Scott Walker, Governor of Wisconsin, [Letter to President Barack Obama](#), 8/3/2016)
- **In addition to the American Red Cross response, volunteers from local fire departments, AmeriCorps, Team Rubicon, statewide tribal organizations, and Civil Air Patrol assisted residents in the affected areas.** Businesses including Kwik Trip, Wal-Mart, and Verizon stepped up to provided needed resources and supplies to flood victims. (Scott Walker, Governor of Wisconsin, [Letter to President Barack Obama](#), 8/3/2016)
- **On July 12, Governor Walker issued a State of Emergency for these flood impacted counties.** The Governor directed all state agencies to assist those counties as appropriate to support response and recovery efforts. (Governor Scott Walker, [Executive Order 202](#), 7/12/16; [Press Release](#), "Governor Walker Directs State Agencies to Assist in Northern Wisconsin Flooding Situation," Office of the Governor, 7/14/16)

- **The Wisconsin National Guard mobilized 133 Soldiers and 20 Airmen in a Joint Task Force effort to provide response and recovery missions.** Based out of the Ashland, WI armory, the Service Members formed into response teams to support response and recovery operations through September 10. They provided in total approximately \$700,000 worth of support and services. The Guard formed eight teams to conduct Preliminary Damage Assessments for the affected area. These teams, each with an embedded Department of Transportation engineer and Department of Natural Resources warden, conducted over 190 site assessments. The Guard also assisted with road repair and debris removal. In total, the Guard hauled 231 dump truck loads of debris, 220 trees from public roads and easements, resources to the Saxon Harbor area to remove debris and conduct road repair to open the only access road into the harbor, and specialized equipment to assist Ashland County in recovering a washed out bridge and place back into position. ([Press Release](#), "Governor Walker Declares State of Emergency in Response to Damaging Floods in Eight Counties," Office of the Governor, 7/12/16) ([Press Release](#), "Governor Walker Seeks Federal Damage Assessment for Flood Damage," Office of the Governor, 7/18/16)

- **In August, the Governor received approval from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for a major disaster declaration.** The counties named in the declaration for public assistance were Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Florence, Iron, Sawyer and Washburn Counties and the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa Tribe. ([Press Release](#), "Governor Walker Announces Federal Disaster Declaration for July Floods," Office of the Governor, 8/9/16)
- **Severe storms and flooding in July also left many farm fields under water or with saturated soil.** The result was destroyed crops or sharply reduced yields. The United States Department of Agriculture approved an agricultural disaster area after the flooding destroyed more than 30 percent of crops in Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, Iron, Price, Sawyer, Vilas and Washburn Counties. ([Press Release](#), "July Flooding Leads to Agriculture Disaster Declaration in Northern Wisconsin," Office of the Governor, 9/30/16)
- **Photo of Severson Road over Little Balsam Creek** (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 7/18/16)

