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New inter-agency team starts work on innovative online flood mapping tool for Washington D.C.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A newly-formed inter-agency team started work on a \$291,000 online mapping tool project that will help government leaders, emergency managers, and the public better predict flood impacts during high-water events in the D.C. metropolitan area.

This tool will provide two sets of maps: one that shows predicted riverine flooding along the Potomac River, and another that shows predicted tidal/storm surge flooding along the Potomac and Anacostia rivers.

Contributing agencies include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), National Weather Service (NWS), Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Park Service, the District of Columbia Department of the Environment (DDOE), the District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management, and the National Capital Planning Commission.

The tool will be housed on USGS and NWS websites and is expected to go live for use in approximately one year. DDOE will use the tool to educate District residents and businesses about flood risks and steps to prepare for or reduce them.

“This tool will prove invaluable for predicting and displaying the extent and depth of flooding for impending storms, so we can better protect human lives and the critical infrastructure in this area,” said Stacey Underwood, USACE, Baltimore District, Silver Jackets program coordinator.

A model will use predicted tidal stage and river flow data to digitally display flood inundation throughout Washington, D.C, Northern Virginia and adjacent communities. This pilot project represents the first flood inundation mapping tool for this area tied to USGS gages.

The Potomac River riverine flood inundation maps will extend from the Little Falls gage (just north of the District of Columbia boundary), downstream to the confluence with Four Mile Run, for a distance of approximately 12 miles. The tidal/storm surge flood inundation maps will extend from the Potomac River District of the Columbia/Maryland border, downstream to the mouth of Cameron Run (near Alexandria, Va.), for a distance of approximately 15 miles. Tidal/storm surge maps will also be developed for the Anacostia River, from the District of Columbia/Maryland border, downstream to the confluence with the Potomac River, for a distance of approximately 10 miles.

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These contributing agencies are part of the newly-formed D.C. Silver Jackets team that aims to strengthen Federal and intergovernmental partnerships to develop and implement comprehensive, resilient, and sustainable solutions to D.C.'s flood-hazard challenges. In June 2014, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by 10 agency representatives to officially establish the team.

D.C. Silver Jackets' priorities include flood inundation mapping; flood emergency planning; levee certification and accreditation; and communication.

For more information on the D.C. Silver Jackets, visit: Bit.ly/DCsilverjackets.

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