

# U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Maryland-Delaware-District of Columbia Monthly Water Conditions Summary

**May 2016 Highlights: Record high monthly mean streamflow in Queen Anne’s County, Maryland. Sixty-eight percent of groundwater levels and 61 percent of monthly mean streamflow were normal at sites monitored by the U.S. Geological Survey across Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia.**

## Why is it important for the USGS to collect and analyze water-resources data?

USGS water data are valuable to the public, researchers, water managers, planners, and agricultural users, especially during floods and droughts. These data can be used to assess how water resources respond to changes in climate. Scientists at the USGS have measured streamflow and groundwater levels to assess water resources for over 125 years.

In addition to providing the most extensive set of historical streamflow and groundwater data available to the public, the USGS continues to collect water data and quality--assures the data using standardized techniques across the country. The uniformity of the dataset enables multi-state comparisons and other comparative statistical analyses that better inform policy makers of the possible water-resources conditions they might encounter in the future.

The sites used in this water summary were carefully selected to show the response of streamflow and groundwater levels to weather conditions. Ideally, these sites will show no effects from human influences. The streamflow and groundwater data are ranked in comparison to the historical record and summarized. Precipitation and reservoir data are also presented to give a more complete picture of the region’s water resources.

## USGS May 2016 Water Conditions Summary

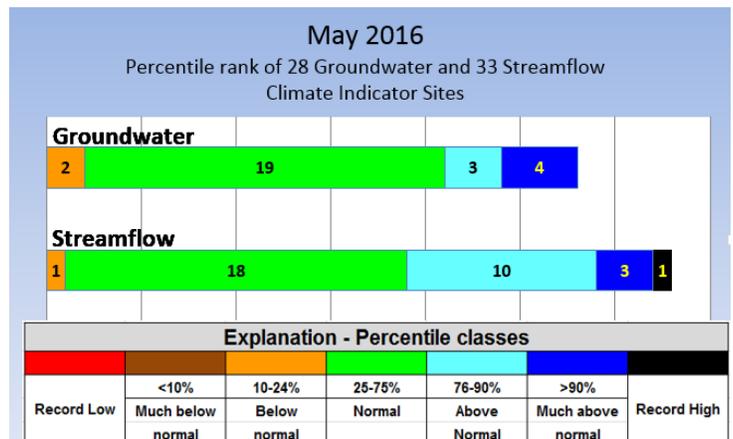
Many days of measurable precipitation led to above average precipitation throughout the Mid-Atlantic region and a record high monthly mean streamflow in Queen Anne’s County, Maryland. Precipitation also caused many groundwater levels and monthly mean streamflows to increase from the low April values.

In May, 68 percent (19 of 28 wells) of groundwater levels at USGS observation wells were normal (between the 25<sup>th</sup> – 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles) and 61 percent (18 of 33 sites) of the monthly mean streamflows were normal at sites used to monitor the

response of water resources to changes in climatic conditions in Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia.

Groundwater was above normal at seven USGS observation wells in Delaware and Maryland and below normal at two USGS observation wells--one in Harford County, Maryland and the other in Montgomery County, Maryland.

Monthly mean streamflow was at a record high at Sallie Harris Creek (Queen Anne’s County) in May and above normal in another 13 of the 33 streamgages used to monitor climatic conditions. Streamflow was below normal at a USGS streamgage in Prince George’s County.



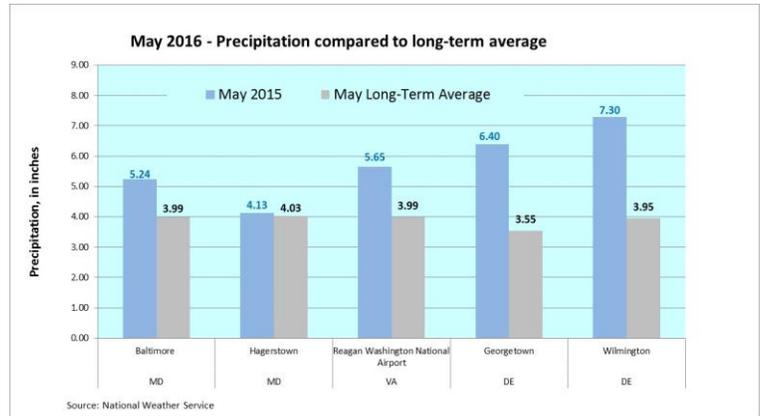
A **percentile** is a value on a scale from 0 to 100 that indicates the percent of a distribution that is equal to or below it. A percentile between 25 and 75 is considered normal. For example, a groundwater level in the 90th percentile is equal to or greater than 90 percent of the values recorded for that month.

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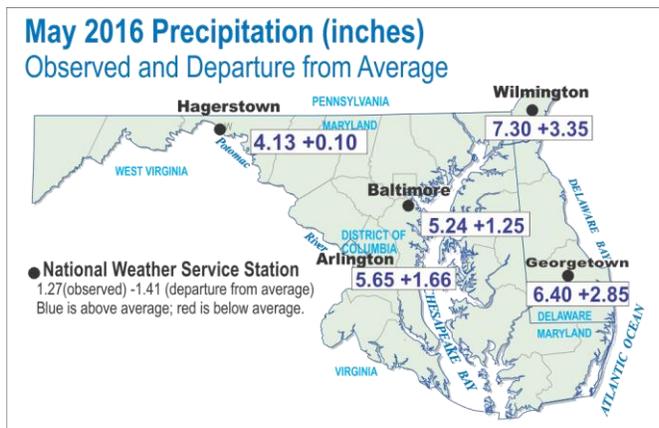
## May 2016 Precipitation and Weather

After a dry April with below average precipitation at four of the five National Weather Service (NWS) Mid-Atlantic weather stations, May precipitation was above the long-term average at all five weather stations.

The highest rainfall was in Wilmington, Delaware with 7.30 inches, which was 3.35 inches above the May average. The next highest rainfall was also in Delaware in Georgetown, with 6.40 inches. The lowest precipitation of the five Mid-Atlantic weather stations was in Hagerstown, Maryland with 4.13 inches, which was 0.10 inch above average.



In May in the Mid-Atlantic region, there were many days with a small amount of rainfall, which is not typical for the region, which resulted in above average precipitation for the month. For example, at the weather station in Baltimore, 18 days had measureable (0.01 inches) rainfall and 11 of those days had more than 0.10 inch. There was one day where the rainfall was over 1 inch and 3 days with more than 0.50 inch.



### National Weather Service Stations

- Baltimore** = Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI)
- Georgetown** = Georgetown, Sussex County Airport
- Hagerstown** = Hagerstown Regional Airport
- Arlington** = Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport
- Wilmington** = New Castle Airport

Above average precipitation in May along with the many days of measurable rainfall resulted in the NWS Middle Atlantic River Forecast Center's (MARFC) 365-day precipitation totals for the District of Columbia and all counties in Maryland and Delaware equaling or exceeding the long-term average. Precipitation had been below average in all counties in Maryland and Delaware in April.

The departure from average temperatures in May ranged from -2.1 to +0.6 degrees Fahrenheit at the five Mid-Atlantic NWS stations. The largest departure from average was 2.1 degrees below average at the weather station in Arlington, Virginia; however, this weather station had the warmest monthly average temperature at 63.9 degrees. The lowest average temperature was in Baltimore, Maryland at 61.4 degrees. Monthly average temperatures in Georgetown and Wilmington, Delaware were both 61.8 degrees, which is more than a degree below average.

Sources: National Weather Service and Middle Atlantic River Forecast Center (MARFC)  
MD and DC: <http://www.weather.gov/climate/index.php?wfo=lwx>  
DE: <http://www.weather.gov/climate/index.php?wfo=phi>  
MARFC: [http://www.weather.gov/marfc/Precipitation\\_Departures](http://www.weather.gov/marfc/Precipitation_Departures)

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## Groundwater

The USGS monitors groundwater levels in unconfined aquifers, providing observations that can be compared to both short-term and long-term changes in climatic conditions. The groundwater wells used for the monthly water summary were selected based on the following criteria:

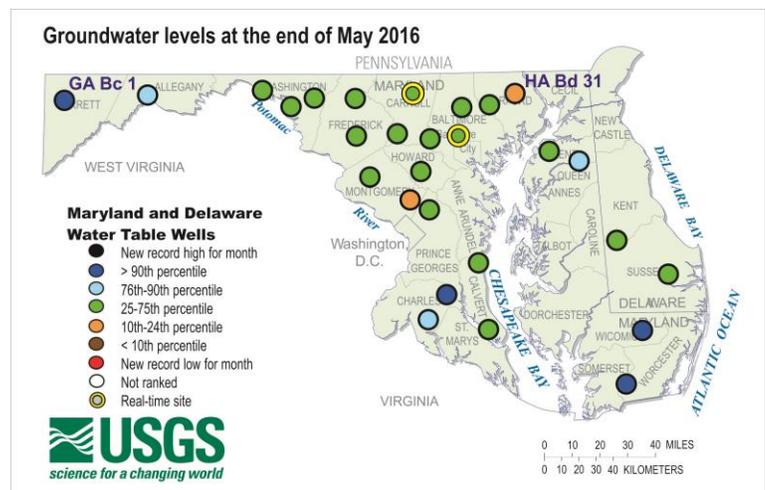
- Located in an unconfined (water-table) aquifer;
- Open to a single, known hydrogeologic unit/aquifer;
- Groundwater hydrograph reflects changes in climatic conditions;
- No indicated nearby pumpage and likely to remain uninfluenced by pumpage, regulated streamflow, or changes related to human activities;
- Minimum period of record is 10 years of continuous/monthly records;
- Minimally affected by irrigation, canals, drains, pipelines, and other potential sources of artificial recharge;
- Well has a casing – dug wells are generally not used;
- Water levels show no apparent hydrologic connection to nearby streams;
- Well has never gone dry; and
- Long-term accessibility likely.

## May 2016 Groundwater Levels

For the third consecutive month, groundwater levels ranged from the lowest 10<sup>th</sup> percentile to the highest 90<sup>th</sup> percentile in USGS wells used to monitor climatic conditions in Maryland and Delaware in May. Sixty-eight percent (19 of 28 wells) of the groundwater levels were normal (25<sup>th</sup>-75<sup>th</sup> percentiles) in May in Maryland and Delaware.

Groundwater levels were above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile at four USGS observation wells and three USGS observation wells had above normal groundwater levels in the 76<sup>th</sup>-90<sup>th</sup> percentiles.

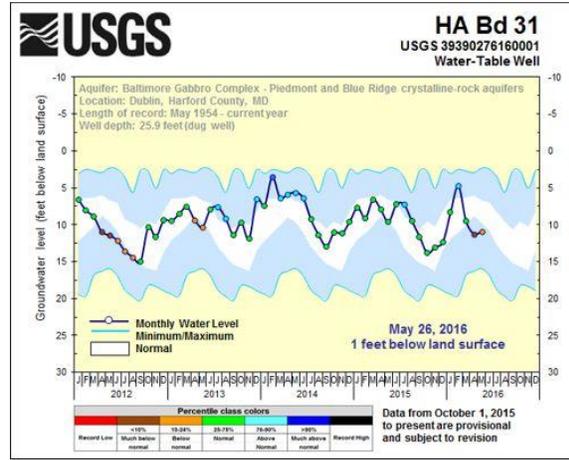
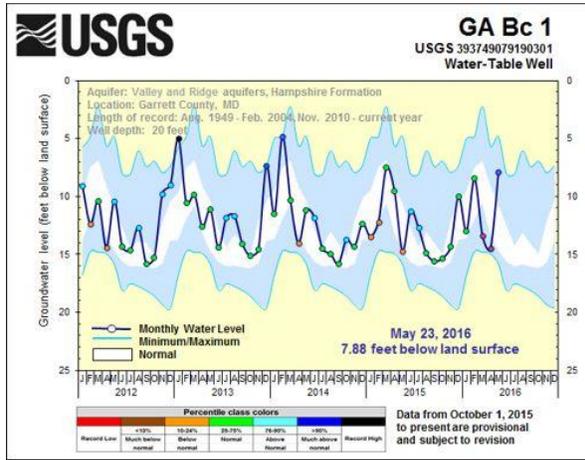
There were two USGS observation wells with below normal groundwater levels between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> percentiles. These data are provisional and subject to revision.



To access the clickable groundwater map, go to:  
[http://md.water.usgs.gov/groundwater/web\\_wells/current/water\\_table/counties/](http://md.water.usgs.gov/groundwater/web_wells/current/water_table/counties/)

## U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Maryland-Delaware-District of Columbia Monthly Water Conditions Summary

The groundwater level in USGS observation well GA Bc 1 in Garrett County, Maryland rose from below normal in April to above normal in May. At USGS observation well HA Bd 31 in Harford County, Maryland, the groundwater level also rose, but remained below normal in May.



Five-year groundwater hydrographs can be viewed at:

[http://md.water.usgs.gov/groundwater/web\\_wells/current/water\\_table/counties](http://md.water.usgs.gov/groundwater/web_wells/current/water_table/counties)

The 5-year hydrograph shows groundwater levels as a dark blue line, the minimum and maximum monthly values, and the normal range (between the 25<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles) as a white band based on the period of record. The maximum water level is at the top of the upper blue section and the minimum water level is at the bottom of the lower blue section in the graph. Each monthly measurement is colored according to the percentile rank in which it falls for the month.

# U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Maryland-Delaware-District of Columbia Monthly Water Conditions Summary

## Streamflow

Streamflow data are used for many purposes. A few of the most common uses are to assess water supply and the risk of droughts and floods. Streamflow data are also used to calculate loads of chemical constituents and assess how biological communities are affected by hydrologic conditions. The USGS operates the most extensive network of streamgages in the region.

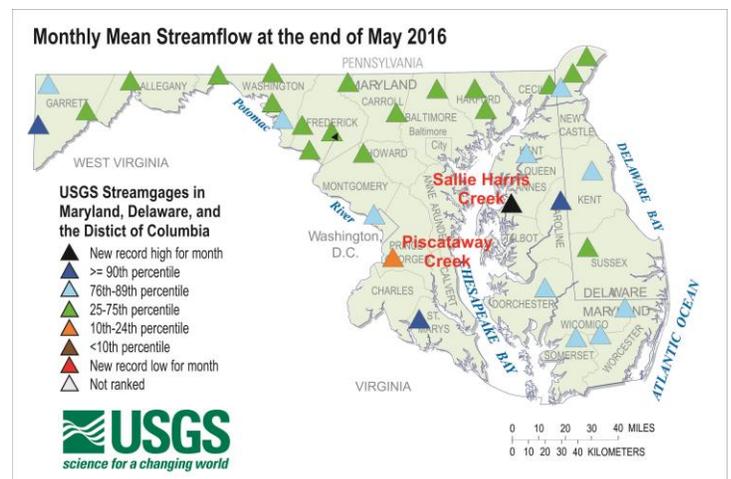
The streamflow locations chosen for the monthly water summary were selected based on the following criteria:

- Minimum period of record is 10 years of continuous data;
- Watershed areas greater than 5 square miles;
- Streamflow is not regulated, or has relatively natural flow;
- Streamflow data reflect climatic conditions; and
- The surrounding area and watershed are not urban.

## May 2016 Streamflow

At streamgages used to monitor climatic response in Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia, monthly mean streamflow ranged from below normal to a record May high monthly mean streamflow. This was a big change from having several streams at record lows in April.

There was one USGS streamgage in the 10<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> percentiles (orange on map) at Piscataway Creek in Prince George's County, Maryland.

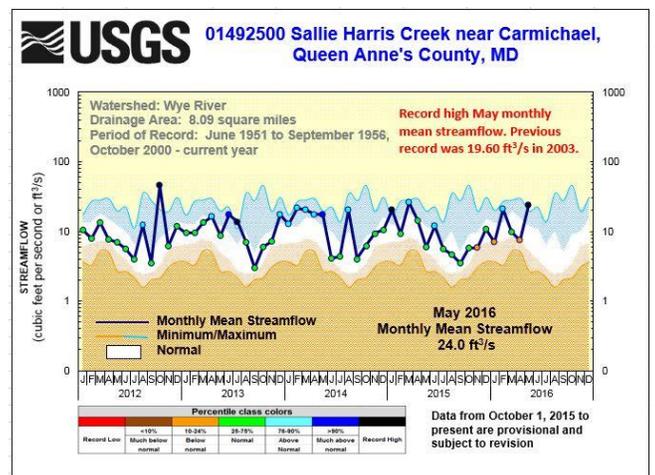
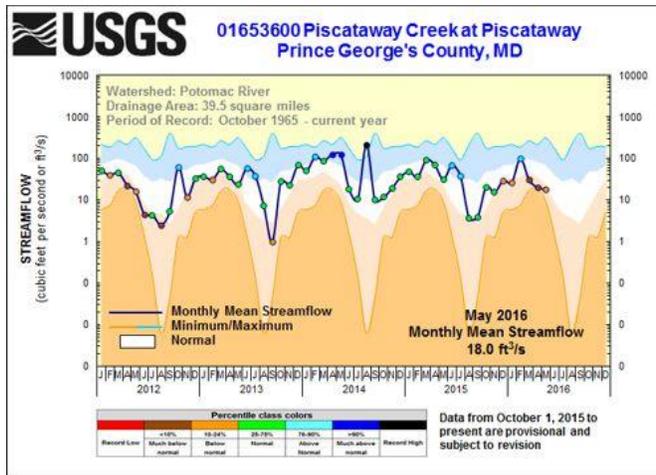


To access the clickable streamflow map, go to:  
<http://md.water.usgs.gov/surfacewater/streamflow/>

## U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Maryland-Delaware-District of Columbia Monthly Water Conditions Summary

On Piscataway Creek at Piscataway in Prince George's County, Maryland, monthly mean streamflow was below normal (10<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> percentiles) and less than in April, but the value moved closer to the normal range (shown as the white band). Streamflow had been below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile the previous 2 months.

On Sallie Harris Creek near Carmichael, in Queen Anne's County, Maryland, the monthly mean streamflow set a new record high for May. The previous record was set in 2003. Record-keeping began in 1951, but only continued for 5 years until it resumed in 2000.



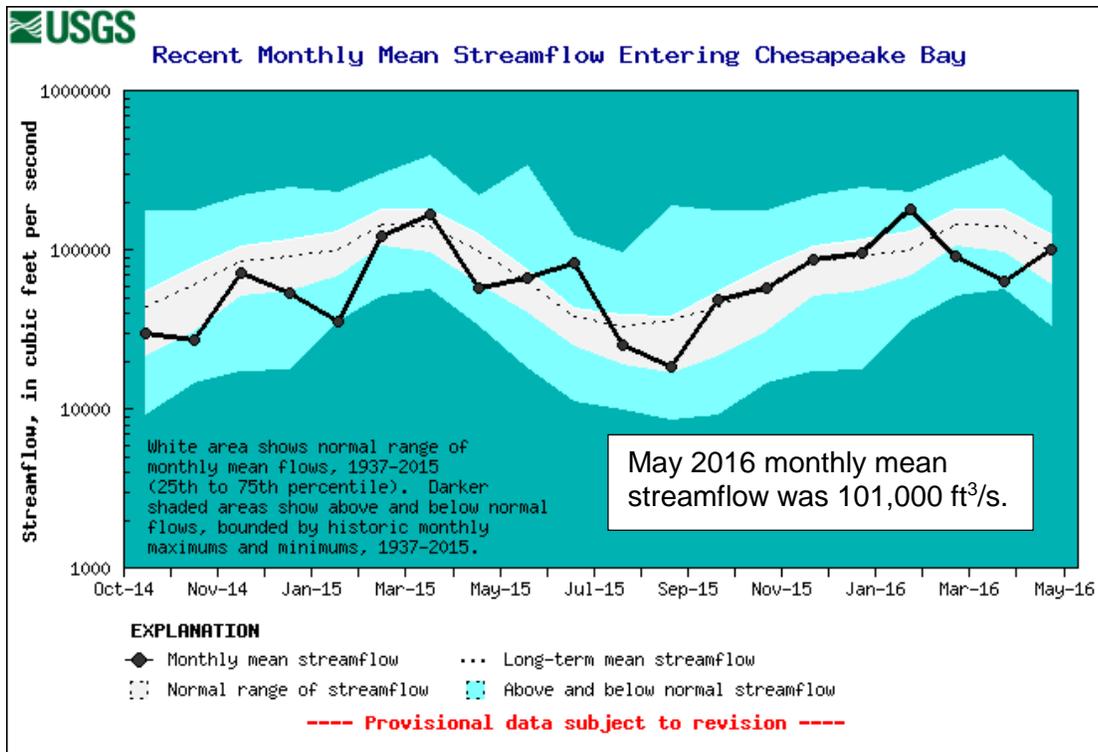
Five-year hydrographs can be viewed at:  
<http://md.water.usgs.gov/surfacewater/streamflow/>

The dark line in the 5-year hydrograph represents the monthly mean streamflow for this period and the white band shows the normal range (25<sup>th</sup>-75<sup>th</sup> percentiles) based on the period of record. The maximum monthly mean streamflow is at the top of the blue shaded section, and the lowest monthly mean streamflow is at the top of the dark orange area. Each monthly mean measurement is colored according to the percentile rank in which it falls for the month.

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## Estimated Streamflow to the Chesapeake Bay

The USGS estimates monthly mean freshwater streamflow to the Chesapeake Bay using streamflow measurements from the Susquehanna, Potomac, and James Rivers. In May 2016, the monthly mean freshwater flow to the Chesapeake Bay was 101,000 cubic feet per second (ft<sup>3</sup>/s; provisional, and subject to revision), which is in the normal range. The long-term May average (mean) is 98,700 ft<sup>3</sup>/s, and the normal range is between 61,500 ft<sup>3</sup>/s and 127,000 ft<sup>3</sup>/s, the 25<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles of all May values. These provisional statistics are based on a 79-year period of record.



Runoff in the Chesapeake Bay watershed carries pollutants, such as nutrients and sediment, to rivers and streams that drain to the Bay. The amount of water flowing into the Chesapeake Bay from its tributaries has a direct impact on how much pollution is in the estuary and it also affects the salinity levels that are important for fish, crabs, and oysters. Generally, as river flow increases, it brings more nutrient and sediment pollution to the Bay.

More information on freshwater flow to the Bay can be found here:  
<http://md.water.usgs.gov/waterdata/chesinflow/>

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### Reservoir Levels

Available reservoir storage at the end of May 2016 in the Baltimore reservoirs (Loch Raven, Liberty, and Prettyboy) was 99.91 percent of available storage capacity, or a total of 75.80 billion gallons of water. The Baltimore City Environmental Services Division manages the Baltimore reservoirs.

Total normal storage in the Triadelphia and Duckett Reservoirs, which serve parts of Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's Counties in suburban Maryland around the District of Columbia, was 99.59 percent of normal storage capacity at the end of May 2016, with 10.58 billion gallons of water.

Not all of the water in the Patuxent Reservoirs is usable; for operational purposes, percent of normal storage capacity is used, but this value can exceed 100 percent of the usable storage. In the graph below, 100 percent is the maximum. The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) manages the Patuxent reservoirs.

May 2016	Percent available/normal storage	Volume (billion gallons)
<b>Baltimore Reservoirs</b> <b>Baltimore City – Environmental Services Division</b>		
Liberty	100.00%	36.80
Loch Raven	100.00%	21.20
Prettyboy	99.72%	17.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>99.91%</b>	<b>75.80</b>
<b>Patuxent Reservoirs</b> <b>Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC)</b>		
Triadelphia	101.59%	5.69
Duckett	97.59%	4.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>99.59%</b>	<b>10.58</b>

