

News Release

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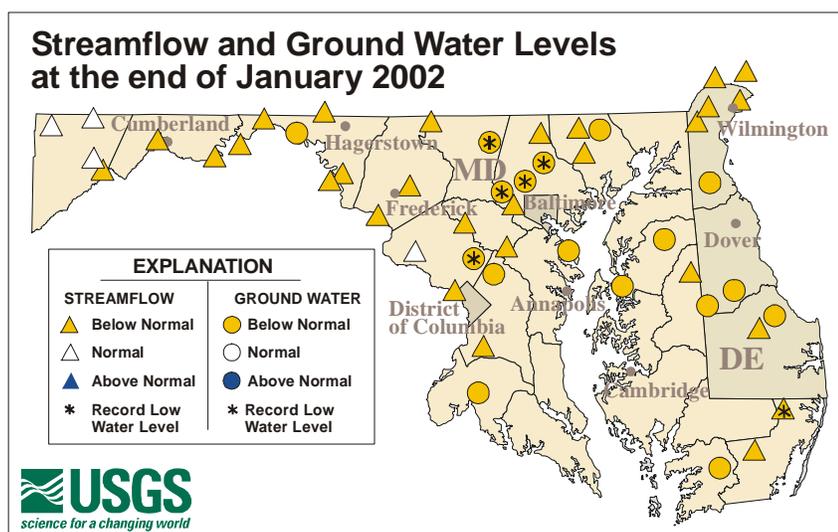
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Drought Results in Second Lowest January Streamflow to the Bay

Five months of below normal rainfall have led to record low monthly streamflow and ground-water levels in some areas of Maryland and Delaware, according to hydrologists at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in Baltimore, Maryland. Streamflow was below normal at 87 percent of the real-time USGS gaging stations and 100 percent of the USGS observation wells across Maryland and Delaware at the end of January. Only Garrett County, Maryland had normal streamflow conditions at the end of January.

Streamflow entering the Chesapeake Bay averaged 16.8 bgd (billion gallons per day), which was 71 percent below the long-term average; the second lowest January streamflow since records began in 1937. Streamflow has been below average since January 2001, except during April (see graphs at <http://md.water.usgs.gov/monthly/bay.html>). The low flow caused higher salinity levels during 2001, which resulted in higher incidence of oyster disease. This situation could occur again if low-flow conditions persist.

Record low streamflow levels for January were set at the Pocomoke River on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Streamflow levels at Winters Run and Deer Creek in Harford County, Maryland have frequently set new record daily lows for the last 5 months (see real-time graphs at <http://md.water.usgs.gov/realtime/>). Streamflow was also below normal at Antietam Creek, Choptank River, Conococheague Creek, Nassawango Creek, Patapsco River, Gunpowder River, Patuxent River, Piscataway Creek, Monocacy River, and Potomac River in Maryland, and Christina River and White Clay Creek in Delaware. The monthly streamflow in the Potomac River near Washington, D.C. was 84 percent below normal in January.



For news release and images, go to http://md.water.usgs.gov/publications/press_release/2002/2002-01/2002-02-06.html

Ground-water levels were below normal across Maryland and Delaware at the end of January. Record low ground-water levels for January were set at five water-table observation wells in the Piedmont area of Baltimore, Carroll, and Montgomery Counties in Maryland (see graphs at <http://md.water.usgs.gov/groundwater/>). Ground-water levels in this central Maryland area are now lower than they were during the drought of 1999.

Storage in the Baltimore Reservoir system decreased to 59 percent of capacity in January. Rainfall has been below normal since September 2001, except in western Maryland. In north central Maryland, rainfall was more than 10 inches below normal for the last year, according to the Middle Atlantic River Forecast Center. Above-normal rain or snow is still needed during the next few months to replenish low streamflow and ground-water levels in order to avoid drought conditions this spring and summer.

As the Nation's largest water, earth and biological science, and civilian mapping agency, the USGS works in cooperation with more than 2,000 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 the sound conservation and the economic and physical development of the Nation's natural resources, and enhance the quality of life by monitoring water, biological, energy, and mineral resources.

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In-depth information about USGS programs may be found on the USGS home page at <http://www.usgs.gov> and <http://chesapeake.usgs.gov/> for Chesapeake Bay activities. To receive the latest USGS news releases automatically by e-mail, send a request to <mailto:listproc@listserver.usgs.gov>. Specify the listserver(s) of interest from the following names: water-pr; geologic-pr; hazards-pr; biological-pr; mapping-pr; products-pr; lecture-pr. In the body of the message write: subscribe (name of listserver) (your name). Example: water-pr joe smith.