COMPREHENSIVE MISSISSIPPI RIVER STAGE CONDITIONS REPORT

May 1, 2026 • Big River Coalition • USACE / NOAA-NWS Data

Big River Members,

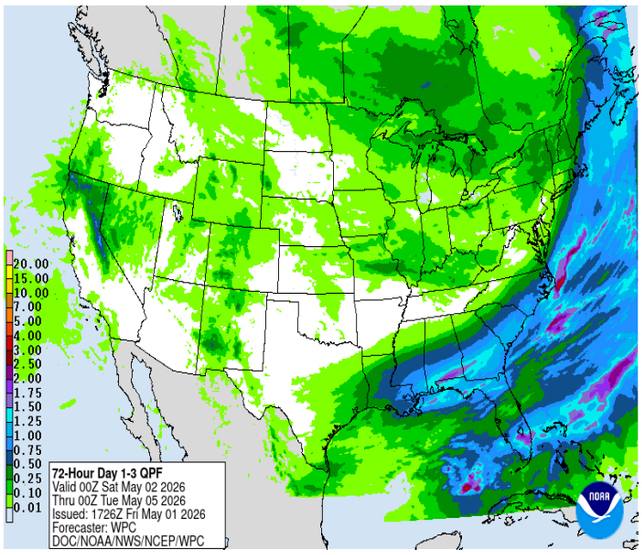
This comprehensive river-stage update was prepared with data made available by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The update details present river-stage forecasts with future precipitation from Cairo (IL) downriver to the Mississippi River Ship Channel (Baton Rouge to the Gulf). River stages are forecast to slowly fall at New Orleans with some minor fluctuations and small rises in the upper-river basin; stage forecasts could increase over the next few days based upon the precipitation forecasts (below).

The industry hopper dredge GLENN EDWARDS (Manson Construction) continues dredging in the vicinity of Cubits Gap. The hopper dredge NEWPORT (Manson Construction) will return to Southwest Pass when needed. The USACE hopper dredge WHEELER will conduct its first Readiness Exercise of FY 26 upon return from shipyard repairs. The industry cutterhead dredge TEXAS (Great Lakes Dredge & Dock) will resume dredging in the Hopper Dredge Disposal Area project at the Head of Passes next week.

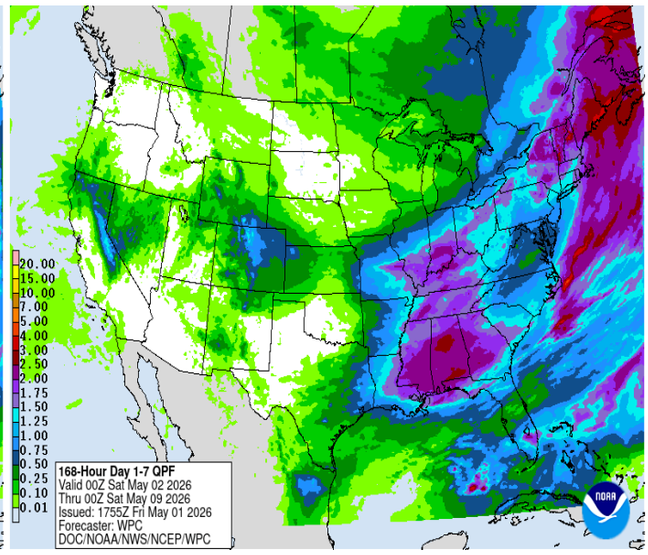
The link for the weekly Navigation Channel Conditions Status Report from the USACE St. Louis District issued April 29, 2026 is available at the following link: USACE St. Louis Weekly Nav Channel Status Report. The Report lists navigation restrictions, channel conditions, areas of shoaling, and present and future river stages at multiple navigation structures on the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers.

Below are the NWS Quantitative Precipitation Forecast (QPF) products: 72-hour QPF (3-Day) and 168-hour QPF (7-Day). The forecasts predict heavy to moderate precipitation across a large portion of the Mississippi and Ohio River Basins that could lead to higher stage forecasts.

72-Hour QPF Forecast

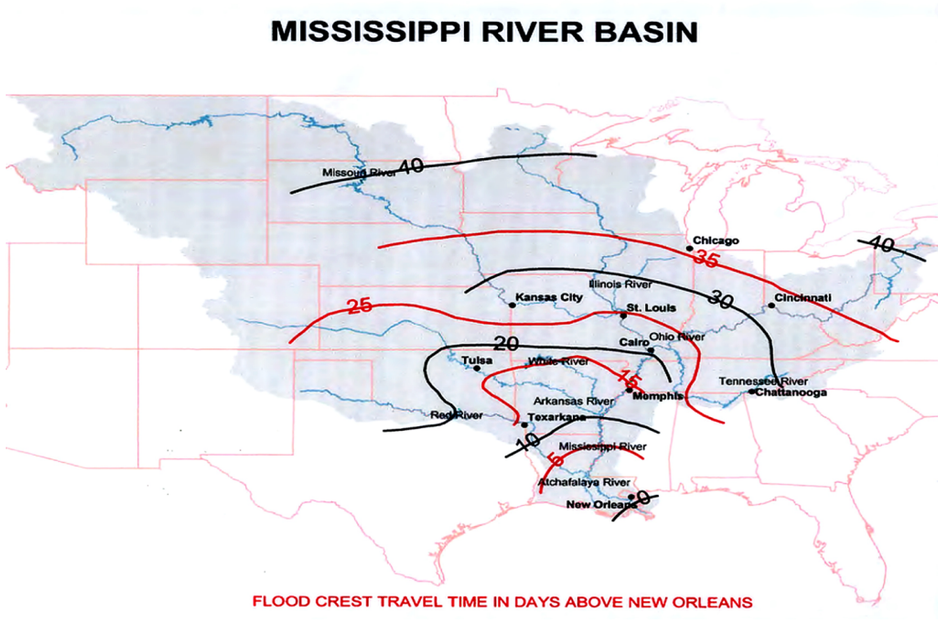


168-Hour QPF Forecast



The information below is reproduced from the NOAA and USACE websites and details the latest river-stage related forecasts for Cairo (IL), Memphis (TN), Vicksburg (MS), and New Orleans (LA). The diagram below indicates the approximate number of days for river stages to reach the New Orleans (Carrollton) Gage. Typically, the BRC focuses on the stage at Cairo and estimates 20 days for the stages to shift downriver to New Orleans; an approximation of the anticipated stage at the Carrollton Gage would be reduced by 25% of the stage at Cairo (as a ballpark estimate) three weeks later (20-days).

Mississippi River Basin — Flood Crest Travel Time to New Orleans



Flood-crest travel time (in days) above New Orleans. Numbers along the basin contours indicate approximate days for a crest to reach the Carrollton Gage from each upstream tributary.

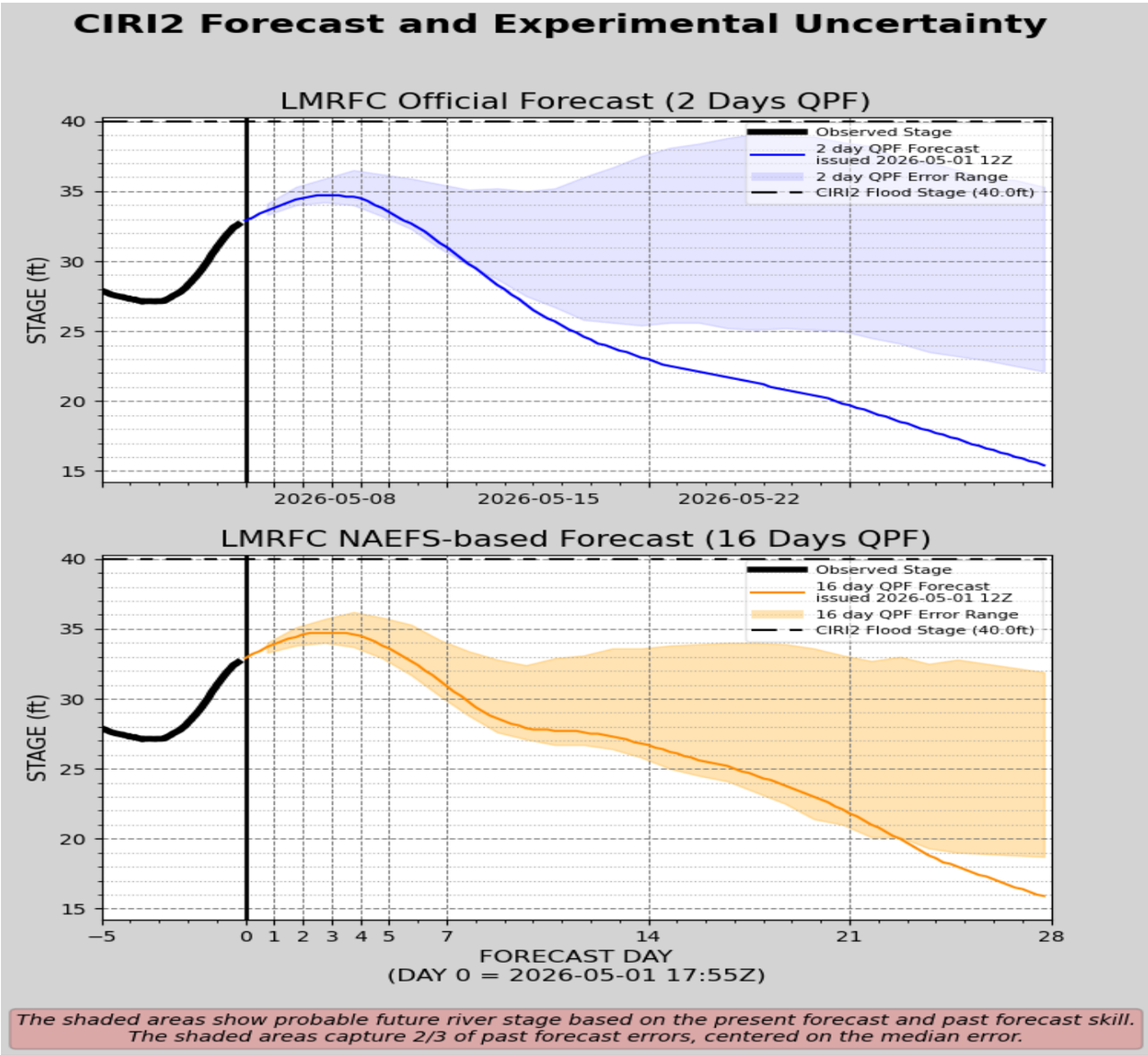
The 2- and 16-Day QPF products represent experimental products developed within the North American Ensemble Forecast System (NAEFS) computer model. They project stage levels based on expected precipitation for 2 days (top) and 16 days (bottom) and highlight Quantitative Precipitation Forecasts (QPF). A shaded band indicates uncertainty for each forecast day. These plots are experimental and not an official forecast product.

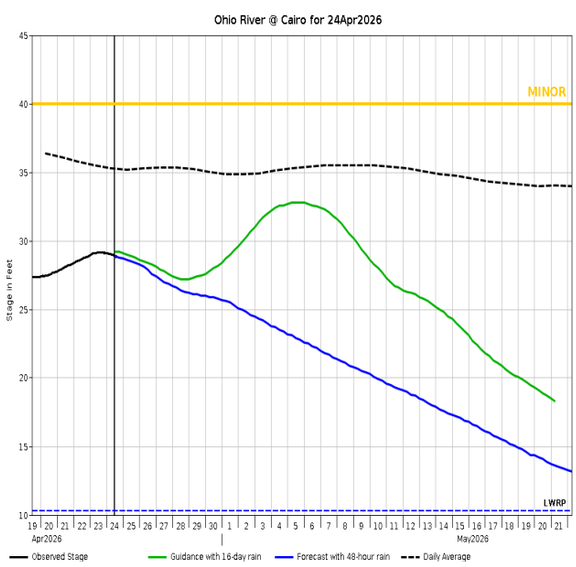
CAIRO (IL) — Stage Conditions & Forecast

Current stage. 28.86 feet at 1100 hours today, with a 24-hour change of −0.30 feet.

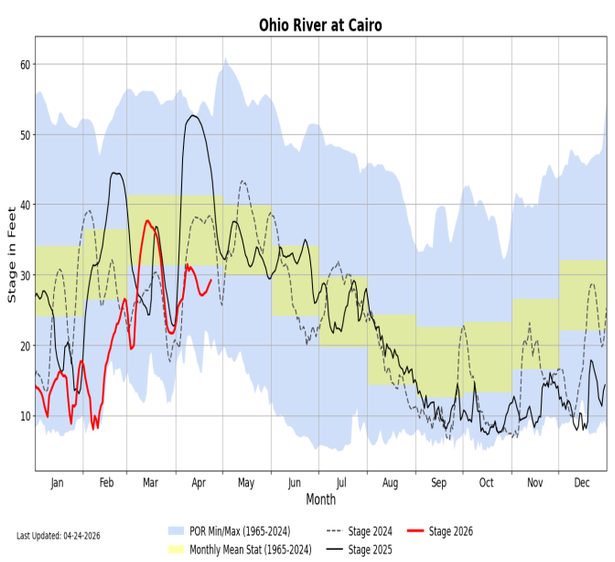
28-Day forecast. The National Weather Service (NWS) Extended Streamflow Prediction (28-Day forecast) issued today indicates the stages at Cairo will be 28.6 feet tomorrow and will then begin an extended fall to 13.2 feet on May 22, 2026.

The CAIRO (IL) 2- and 16-Day QPF Forecast (NAEFS — experimental product) is shown below; the Guidance Plot and Comparative Hydrograph follow side-by-side.





CAIRO (IL) — USACE Guidance Plot (observed stage vs. official 16-day guidance & 48-hour rain).



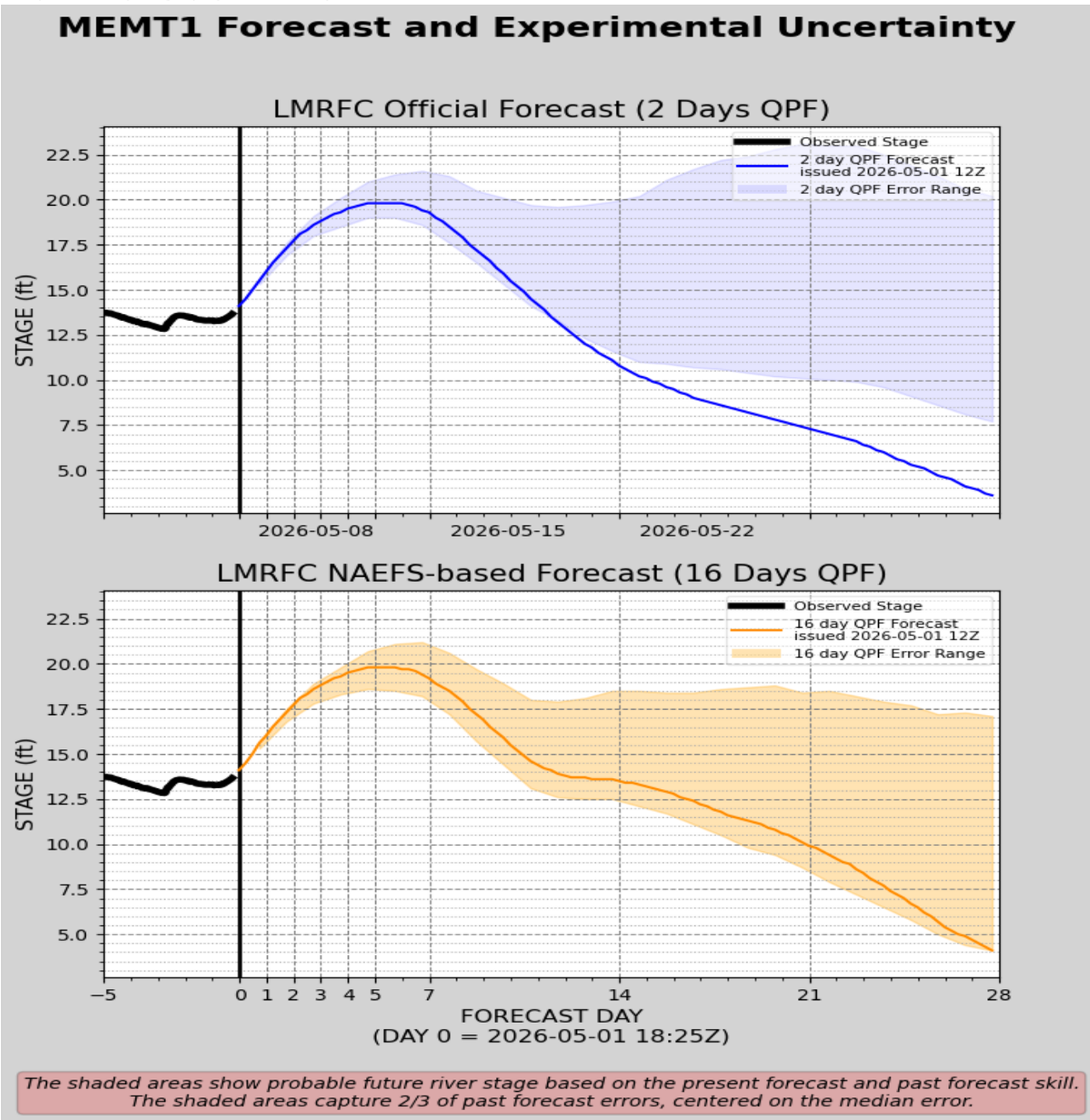
CAIRO (IL) — Comparative Hydrograph (POR min/max 1965-2024, monthly mean 1965-2024, Stage 2024, 2025, 2026).

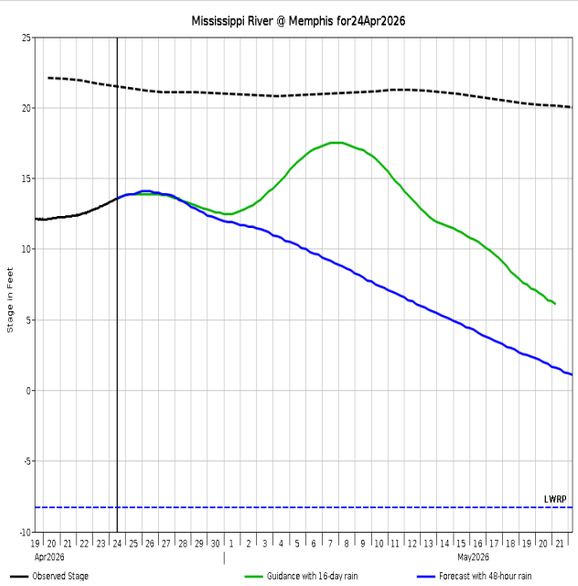
MEMPHIS (TN) — Stage Conditions & Forecast

Current stage. 13.74 feet on the Weather Bureau Gage at 1000 hours today, with a 24-hour change of +0.65 feet.**28-Day forecast.**

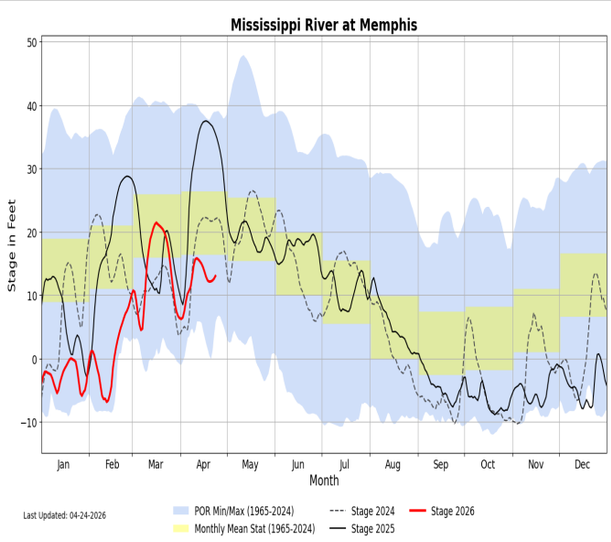
The NWS Extended Streamflow Prediction (28-Day forecast) issued today indicates the stages at Memphis will crest at 14.1 feet on April 26 and to then begin a slow fall to 1.1 feet on May 22, 2026.

The MEMPHIS (TN) 2- and 16-Day QPF Forecast (NAEFS — experimental product) is shown below; the Guidance Plot and Comparative Hydrograph follow side-by-side.





MEMPHIS (TN) — USACE Guidance Plot (observed stage vs. official 16-day guidance & 48-hour rain).



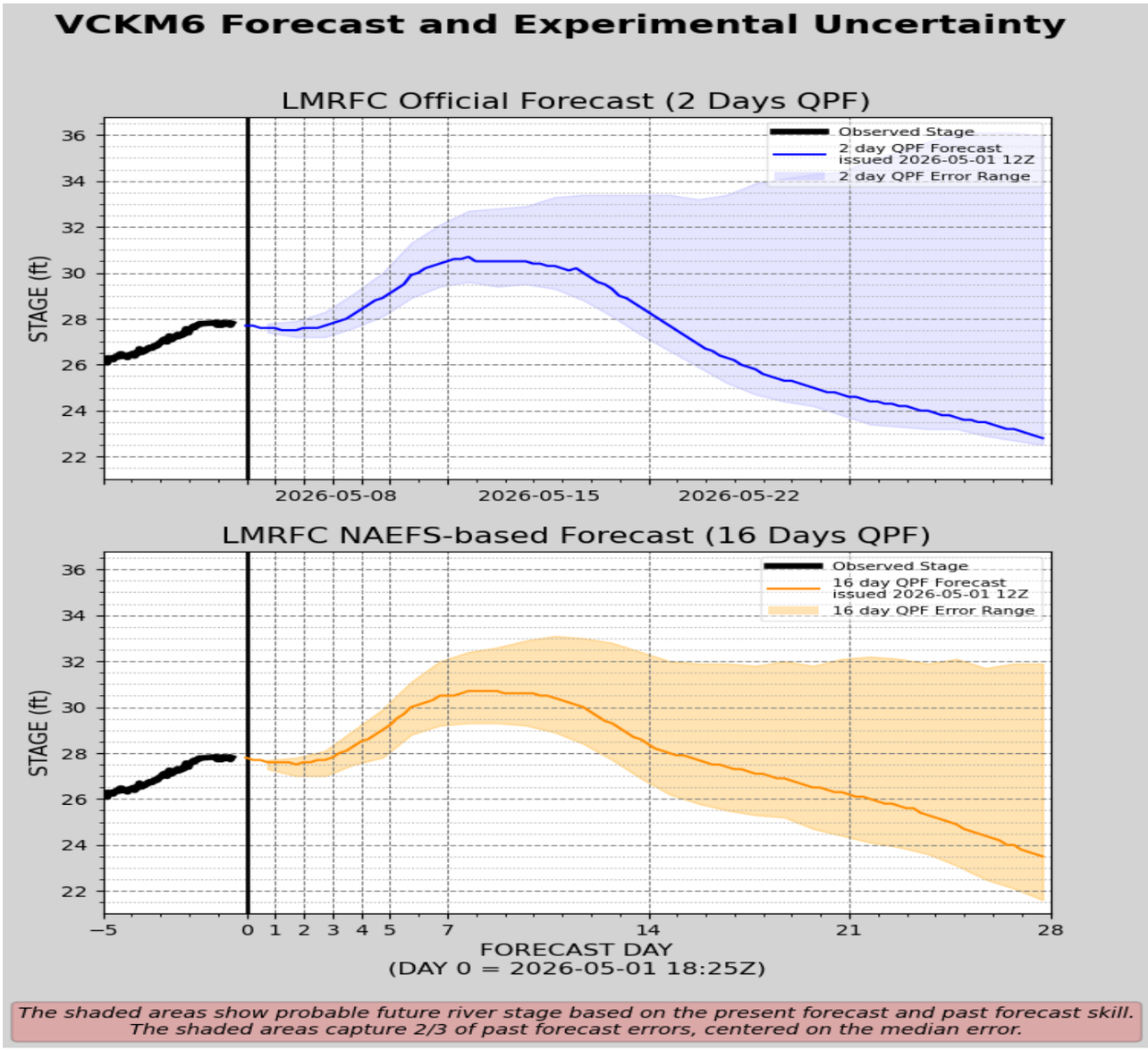
MEMPHIS (TN) — Comparative Hydrograph (POR min/max 1965-2024, monthly mean 1965-2024, Stage 2024, 2025, 2026).

VICKSBURG (MS) — Stage Conditions & Forecast

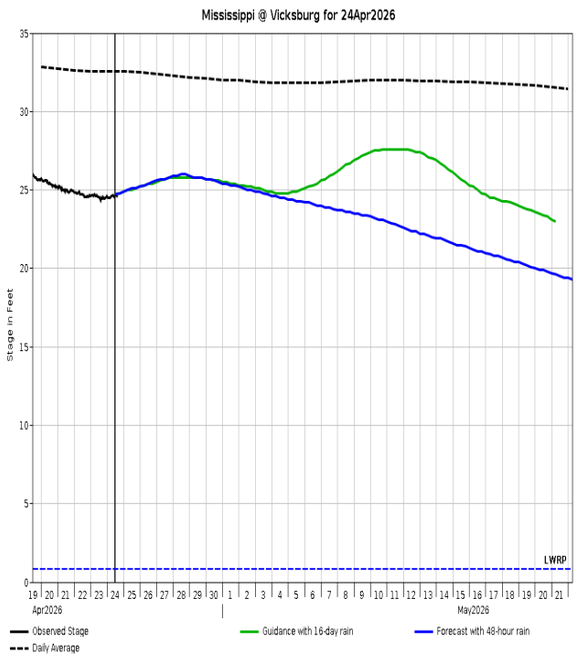
Current stage. 24.67 feet at 1000 hours today, with a 24-hour change of +0.15 feet.

28-Day forecast. The NWS Extended Streamflow Prediction (28-Day forecast) issued today indicates the stages at Vicksburg rise to a crest of 25.9 feet on April 28 and will then begin a slow fall to 19.3 feet on May 22, 2026.

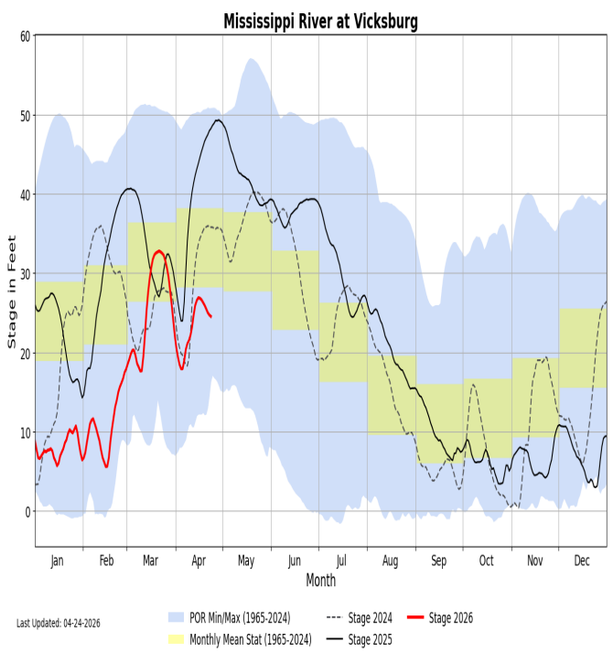
The VICKSBURG (MS) 2- and 16-Day QPF Forecast (NAEFS — experimental product) is shown below; the Guidance Plot and Comparative Hydrograph follow side-by-side.



VICKSBURG (MS) — 2- and 16-Day QPF Forecast (top: 2-day; bottom: 16-day; shaded band = uncertainty).



VICKSBURG (MS) — USACE Guidance Plot (observed stage vs. official 16-day guidance & 48-hour rain).



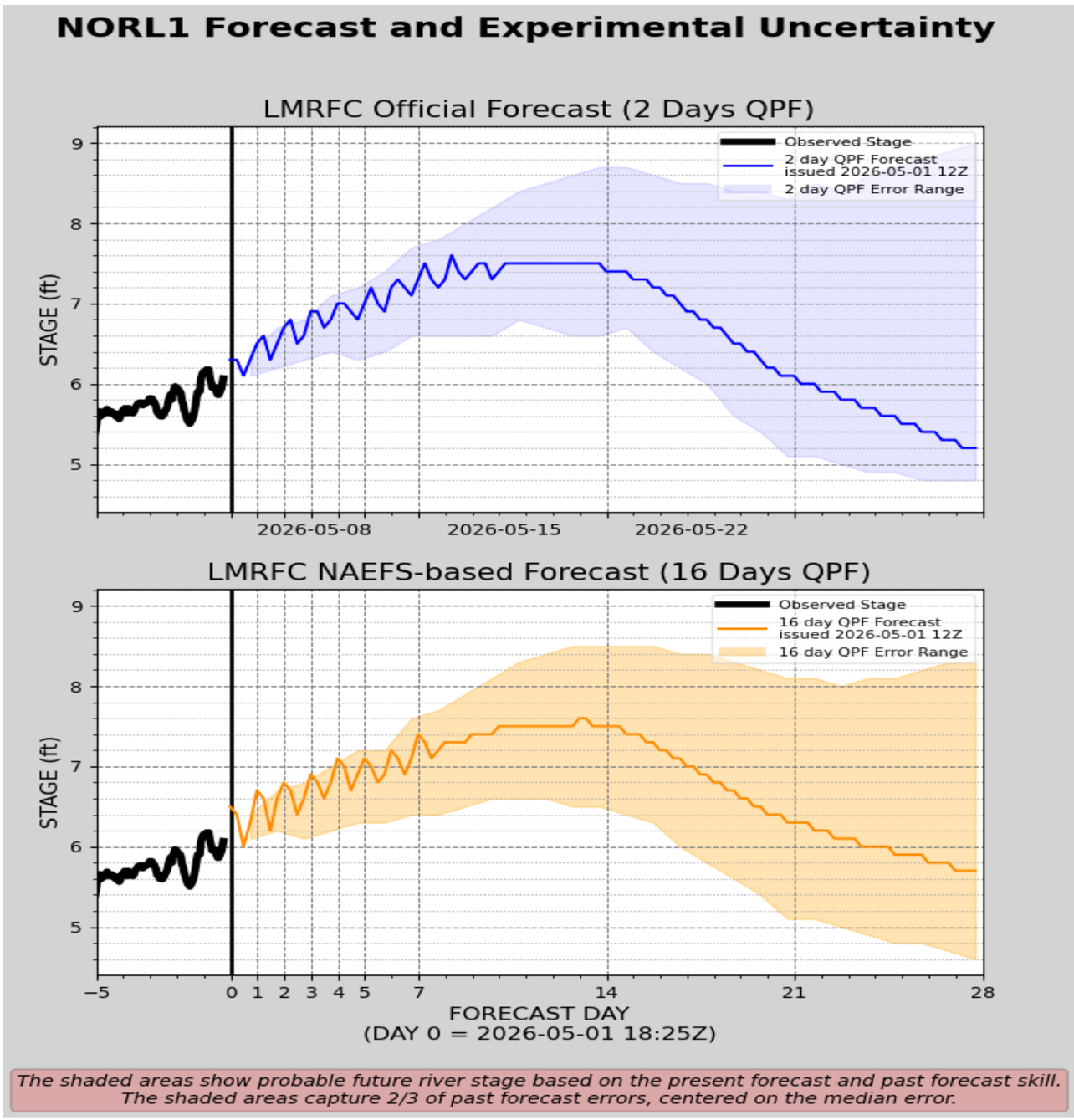
VICKSBURG (MS) — Comparative Hydrograph (POR min/max 1965-2024, monthly mean 1965-2024, Stage 2024, 2025, 2026).

NEW ORLEANS (LA) — Stage Conditions & Forecast

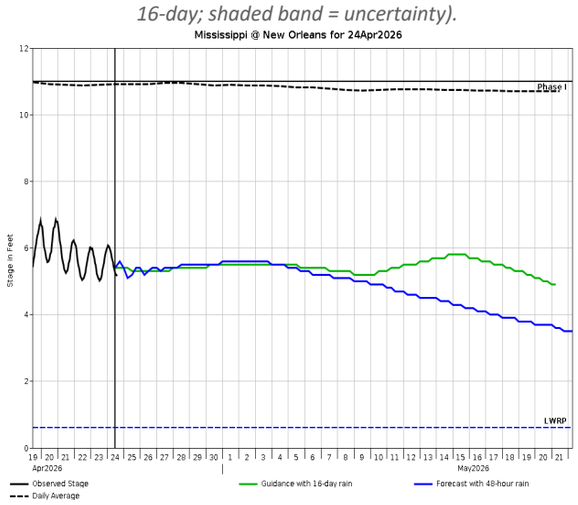
Current stage. 5.24 feet on the Carrollton Gage at 1000 hours today, with a 24-hour change of +0.13 feet.

28-Day forecast. The NWS Extended Streamflow Prediction (28-Day forecast) for the Carrollton Gage issued today forecasts that stages will continue to rise to 5.6 feet on May 1 and will then resume a slow fall to 3.5 feet on May 22, 2026.

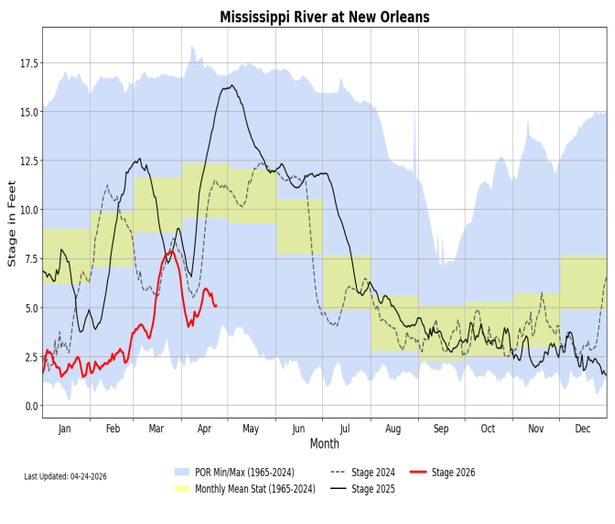
The NEW ORLEANS (LA) 2- and 16-Day QPF Forecast (NAEFS — experimental product) is shown below; the Guidance Plot and Comparative Hydrograph follow side-by-side.



NEW ORLEANS (LA) — 2- and 16-Day QPF Forecast (top: 2-day; bottom: 16-day; shaded band = uncertainty).



NEW ORLEANS (LA) — USACE Guidance Plot (observed stage vs. official 16-day guidance & 48-hour rain).



NEW ORLEANS (LA) — Comparative Hydrograph (POR min/max 1965-2024, monthly mean 1965-2024, Stage 2024, 2025, 2026).

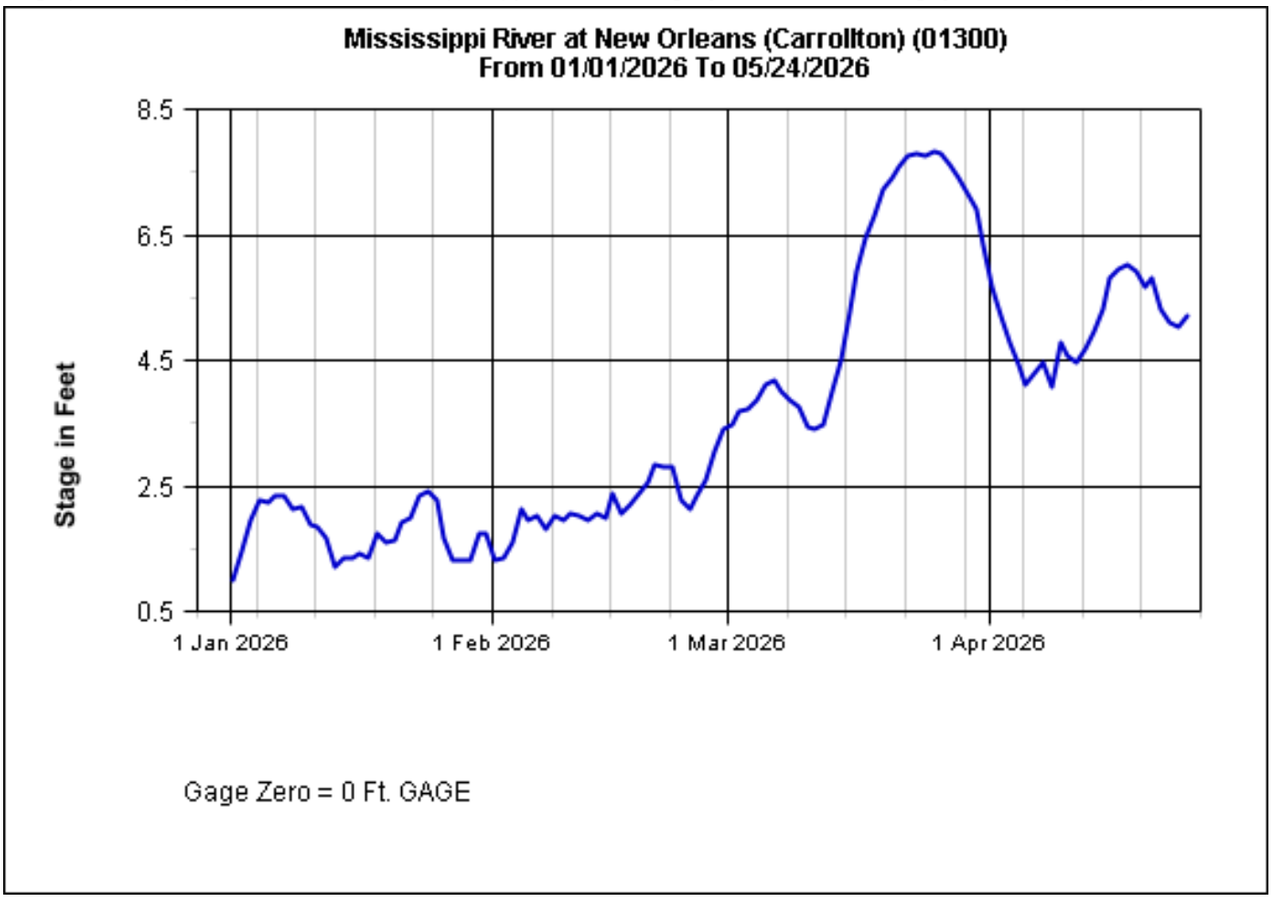
Tide & saltwater note. Quick spikes (up and down) in the 2- and 16-Day QPF and the forecast above are generated by the influences of tides and winds during extreme low-water events and are for the most part a recent development (climate variability).

Tarbert Landing. The Mississippi River discharge at Tarbert Landing (Mile 306.3 AHP) at 0800 hours today was 453,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), down from the year-to-date high of 644,000 cfs on March 22, 2026. The lowest discharge reading recorded in 2026 was 195,000 cfs on January 17, 2026. Tarbert Landing is just a few miles upriver from Red River Landing (Mile 302.4 AHP).

Historic context. The highest crest recorded on the Carrollton Gage in 2025 was 16.67 feet at 1800 hours on May 1, 2025, and the low of 0.97 feet occurred on New Year's Eve (December 31, 2025). Stages below 1.0 ft are rare; readings of less than 1.0 ft were recorded multiple times in 1988 (June to November) with the lowest stage recorded at 0.5 ft on September 28, 1988. The lowest stage in 2012 was 0.77 ft on December 13, 2012.

Carrollton Gage — Year-to-Date 2026 (Mississippi River at New Orleans)

The graph below represents the Year-to-Date (2026) plotted river stages for the Carrollton Gage from January 1 to April 24, 2026.



Carrollton Gage (01300) — Stage in feet, 1 Jan 2026 → 24 Apr 2026 (Gage Zero = 0 ft GAGE).

With You,

Big River

Sean M. Duffy, Sr.
President & CEO
Big River Coalition, LLC
BigRiver@BigRiverCoalition.org
Standing By Channel: (504) 338-3165

"Complaining about a problem without proposing a solution is called whining."
— Theodore Roosevelt