

Big River Coalition Members,

This comprehensive river stage update was prepared with data made available by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the collective 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 have all crested and are forecast to continue a slow fall from Cairo on down with New Orleans (Carrollton Gage) showing a slight rise tomorrow and then resuming a slow fall to 2.4 feet on August 28, 2026. The Carrollton Gage year-to-date high of 9.26 feet was recorded on July 11 (2026). The USACE has not measured the saltwater wedge since March but if the conditions do fall below 3.0 feet as forecasted the USACE would most likely resume tracking the wedge's location.**

The first attachment to this update is the weekly Navigation Channel Conditions Status Report from the USACE St. Louis District issued on July 29, 2026. 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.

The below is reproduced from the National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center:

“Synopsis: El Niño conditions are present and expected to strengthen into the Northern Hemisphere winter 2026-27.”

The significance of El Niño for the Mississippi River Ship Channel is that the weather phenomenon usually leads to elevated river stages. The historic floods of 1927, 1973 and 2011 followed “El Niño Southern Oscillation” (ENSO) events and the largest flood by volume in 2019 followed a weak El Niño period that was followed by the wettest metrological winter in modern history.

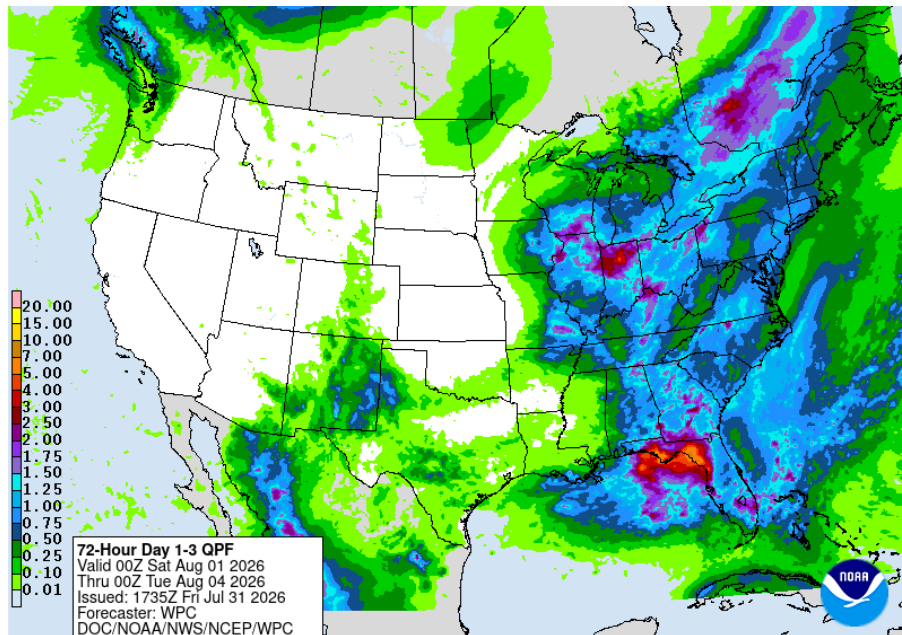
Mississippi River Ship Channel Dredging:

The industry dustpan dredge WALLACE McGEORGE and the government dustpan dredge JADWIN continue working on the Crossings. The industry hopper dredges FREDERICK PAUP and NEWPORT both of Manson Construction continue working in the area of Southwest Pass. The hoppers have spent considerable time preforming agitation dredging to try and disperse the severe flocculation that has moved above the Head of Passes (HOP). The USACE added “Fluff Thickness” in feet to channel surveys with the worst areas now indicating there is 12 feet of material Above the Head of Passes. Pilots refer to this material as flocculation, but the USACE uses the term fluff to describe the same material that is a mass of suspended material above hard bottom. Prior to 2026 flocculation has never been reported above the HOP.

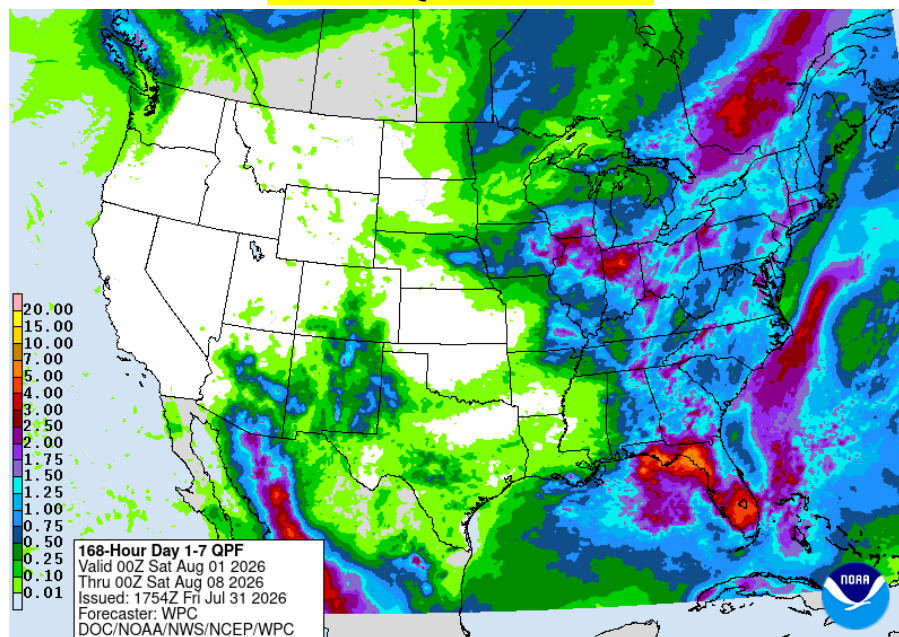
The fluff thickness has gone down with the lower river stages, but the Flocculation Based Transit Recommendation from the Bar Pilots remains in effect. The severe flocculation led to the Bar Pilots implementing a revised draft restriction on June 30, 2026, for inbound vessels with a draft of 40 feet or greater to move on a rising forecasted high tide (Official Notice attached).

Below are the NWS Quantitative Precipitation Forecast (QPF) the first forecast is the 72-hour QPF (3-Day) and the 168-hour QPF (7-day). The 168-Hour QPF forecast predicts heavy to moderate precipitation across a large portion of the central Mississippi and Ohio River Basins that could lead to higher stage forecasts in future 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).

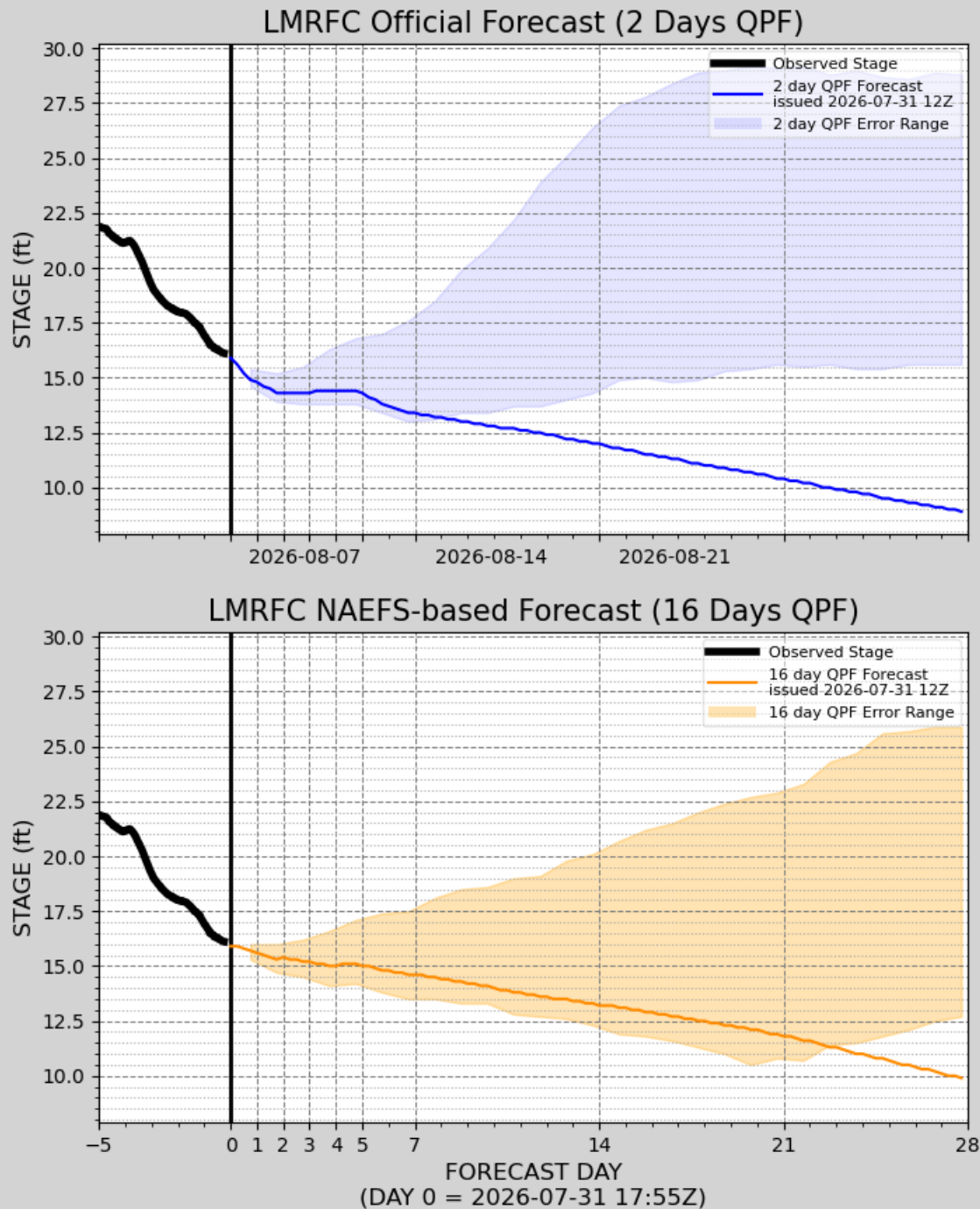
The diagram below is one used for reference that indicates the approximate number of days for river stages to reach the New Orleans Gage (Carrollton Gage). Typically, the BRC focuses on the stage at Cairo and estimates 20 days for the stages to shift downriver to New Orleans typically approximating the stage would be reduced by approximately 25% of the flow at Cairo (as a ballpark estimate).



The following 2- and 16-Day QPFs represent experimental products to account for the complexity of accurately predicting long-range precipitation. These forecast projects stage levels based on expected precipitation for 2 days (top) and 16 days (bottom) and was developed within the North American Ensemble Forecast System (NAEFS) computer model and highlights Quantitative Precipitation Forecasts (QPF). Along with the forecasts, a shaded area is also provided to indicate uncertainty for the forecast each day in the future. These plots are experimental and not an official forecast product.

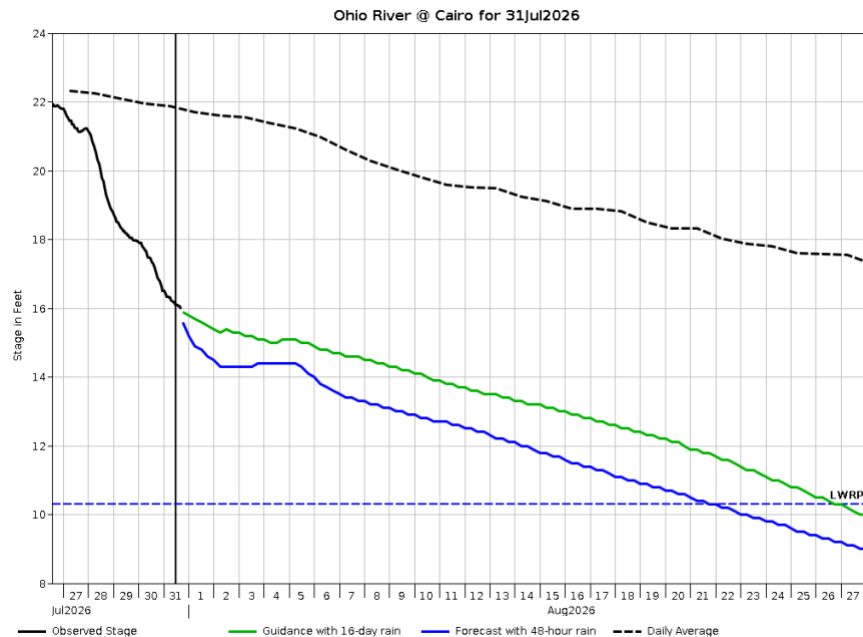
CAIRO 2- and 16-Day QPF FORECAST:

CIRI2 Forecast and Experimental Uncertainty

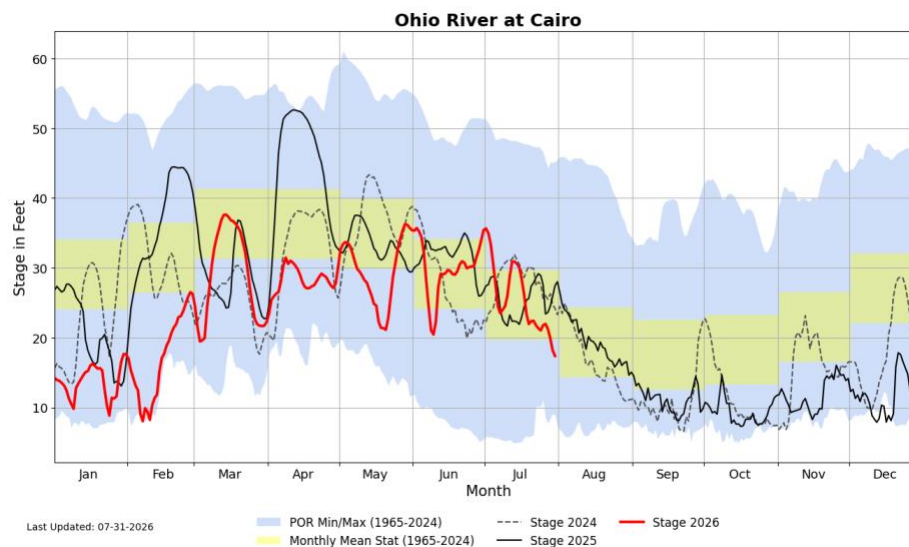


The shaded areas show probable future river stage based on the present forecast and past forecast skill. The shaded areas capture 2/3 of past forecast errors, centered on the median error.

The following Guidance Plot detailing various stage predictive forecasts is provided by the USACE and details the projections for Cairo based on the latest forecasts:



The diagram below from the USACE details a Comparative Hydrograph for Cairo that documents stages from present to 1965 for comparisons or to note potential trends:



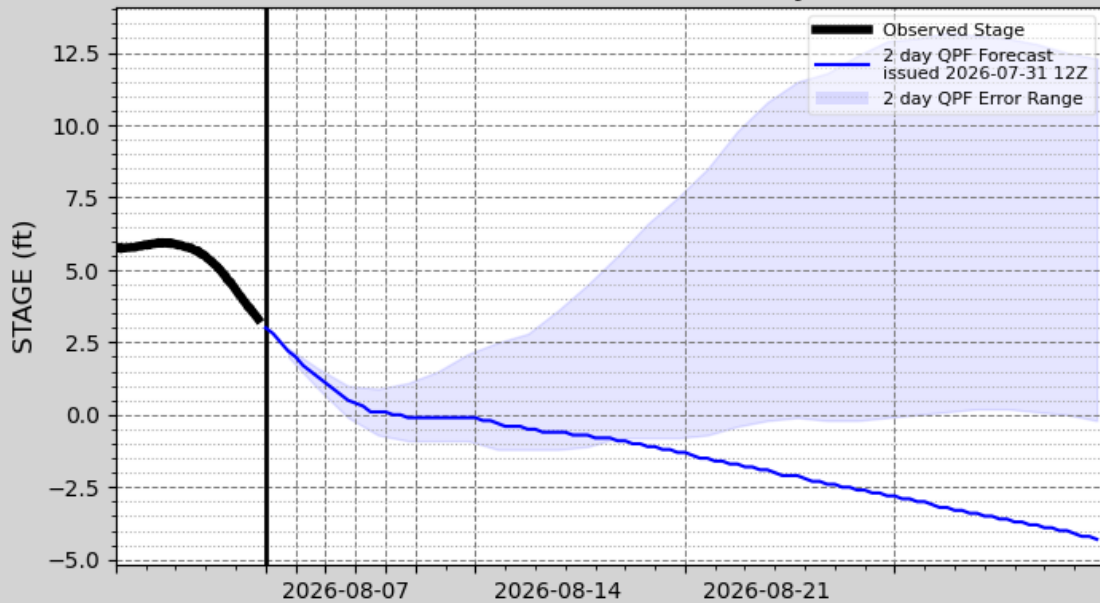
The stage at Cairo (IL) at 1300 hours today was 15.97 feet with a 24-hour change of -0.94 feet.

The National Weather Service's (NWS) Extended Streamflow Prediction (28-Day forecast) issued today indicates the stages at Cairo will continue a slow fall to 8.9 feet on August 28 (2026).

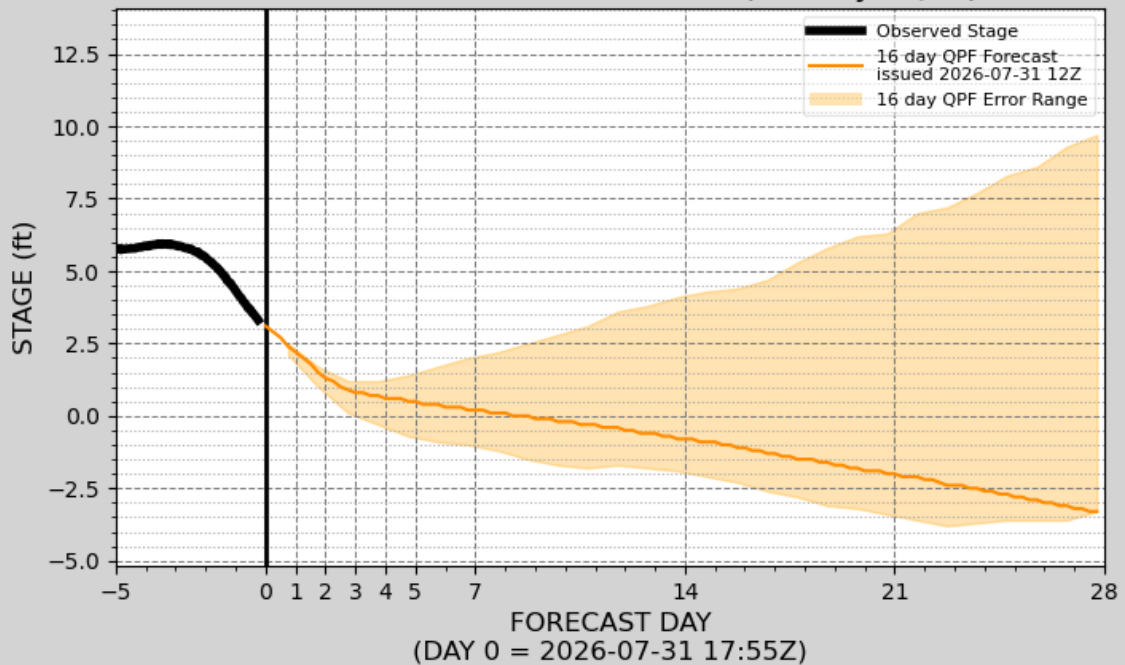
MEMPHIS 2- and 16-Day QPF FORECAST:

MEMT1 Forecast and Experimental Uncertainty

LMRFC Official Forecast (2 Days QPF)

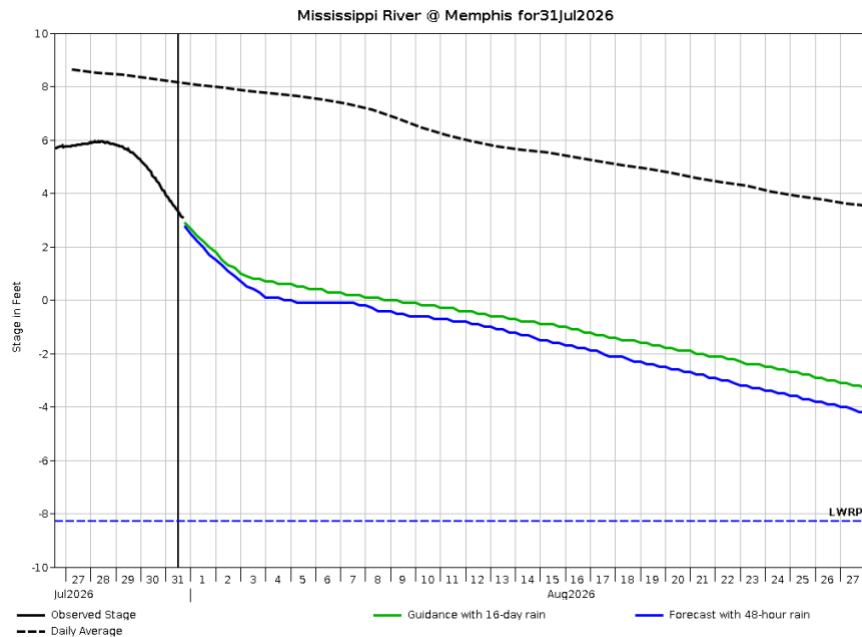


LMRFC NAEFS-based Forecast (16 Days QPF)

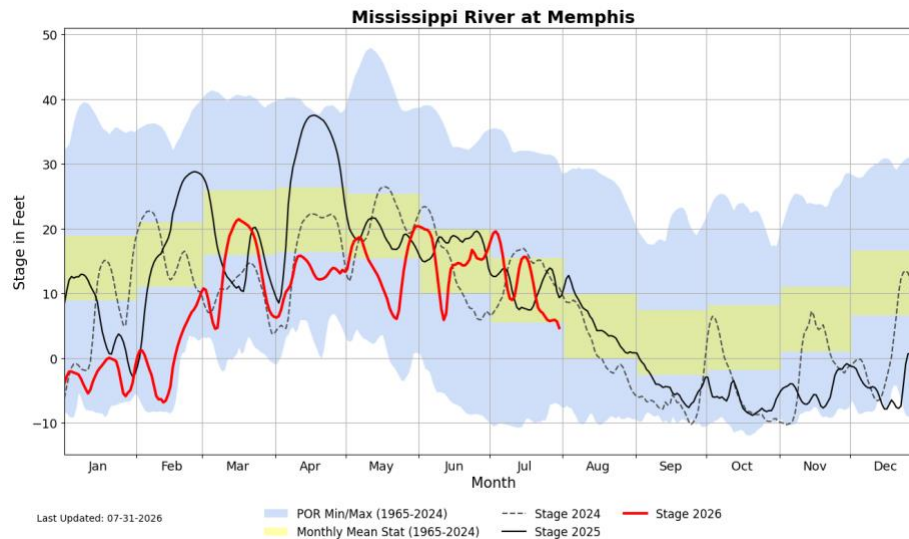


The shaded areas show probable future river stage based on the present forecast and past forecast skill. The shaded areas capture 2/3 of past forecast errors, centered on the median error.

The following Guidance Plot detailing various stage predictive forecasts is provided by the USACE and details the projections for Memphis based on the latest forecasts:



The diagram below from the USACE details a Comparative Hydrograph for Memphis that documents stages from present to 1965 for comparisons or to note potential trends:

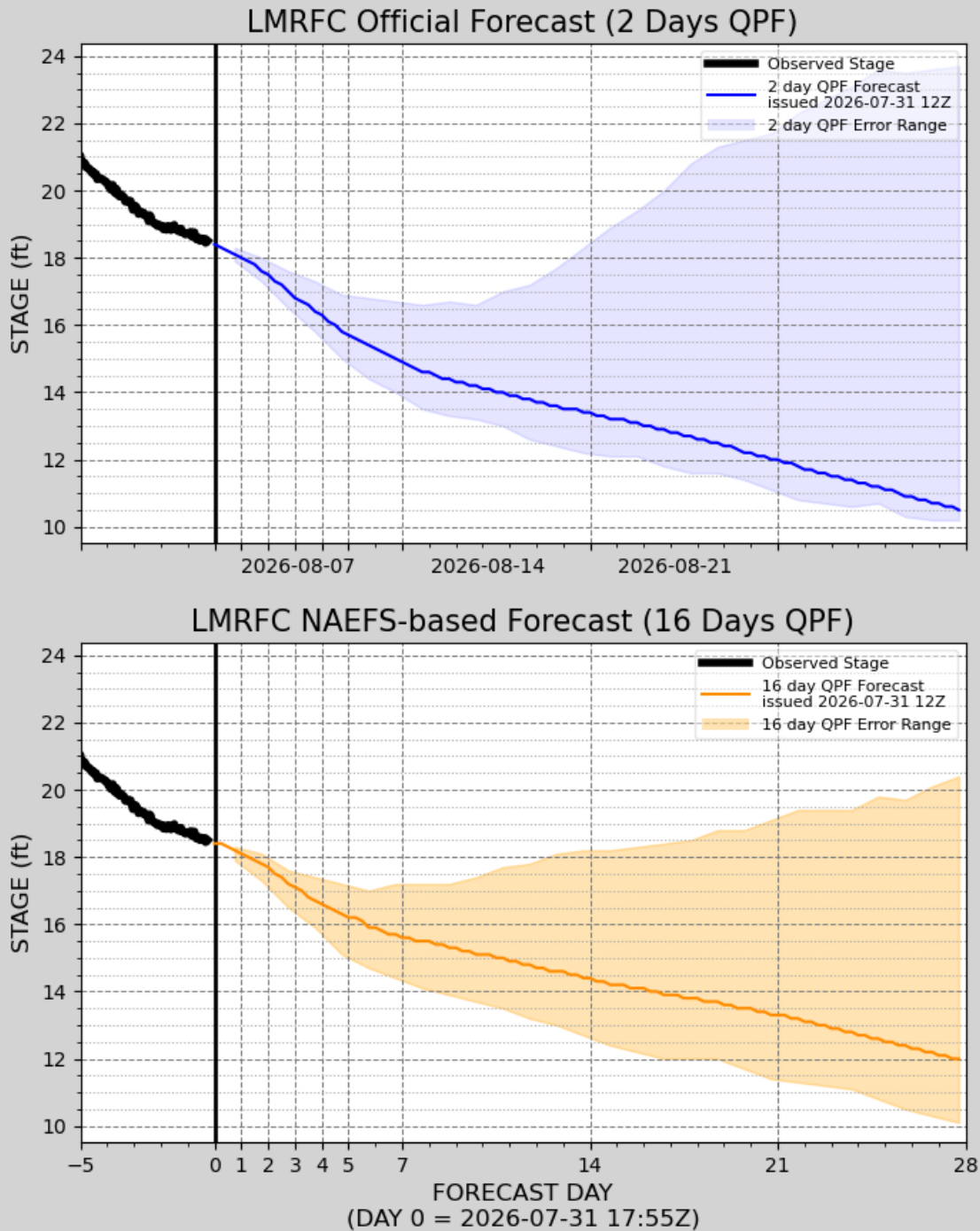


The stage at Memphis (TN) on the Weather Bureau Gage at 1300 hours today was 3.0 feet with a 24-hour change of - 1.31 feet.

The National Weather Service's (NWS) Extended Streamflow Prediction (28-Day forecast) issued today indicates the stages at Memphis will continue a slow extended fall to - 4.3 feet on August 28 (2026).

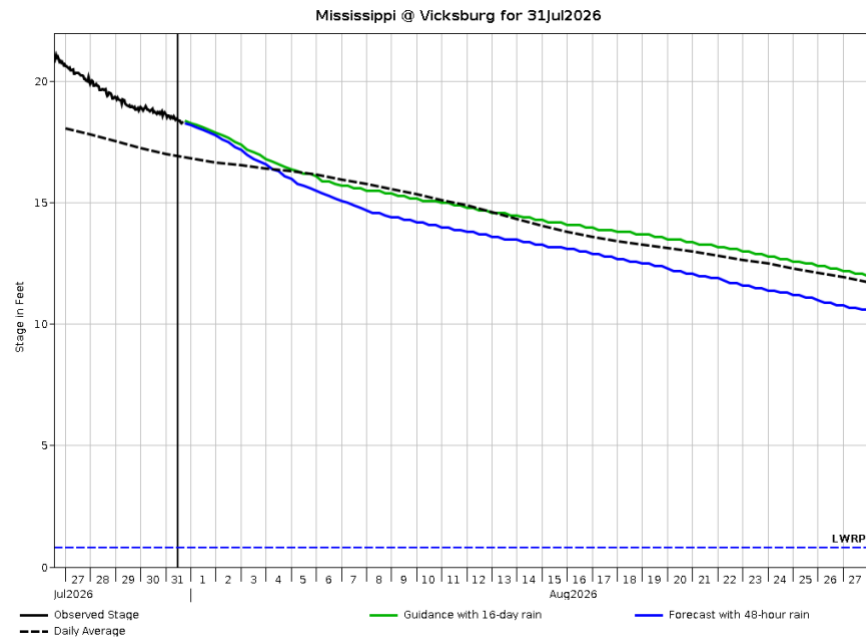
VICKSBURG 2- and 16-Day QPF FORECAST:

VCKM6 Forecast and Experimental Uncertainty

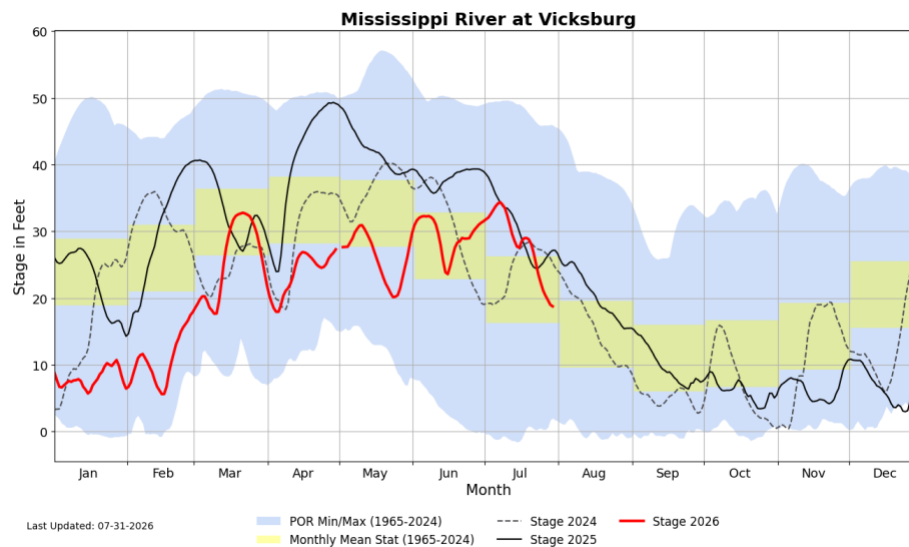


The shaded areas show probable future river stage based on the present forecast and past forecast skill. The shaded areas capture 2/3 of past forecast errors, centered on the median error.

The following Guidance Plot detailing various stage predictive forecasts is provided by the USACE and details the projections for Vicksburg based on the latest forecasts:



The diagram below from the USACE details a Comparative Hydrograph for Vicksburg that documents stages from present to 1965 for comparisons or to note potential trends:



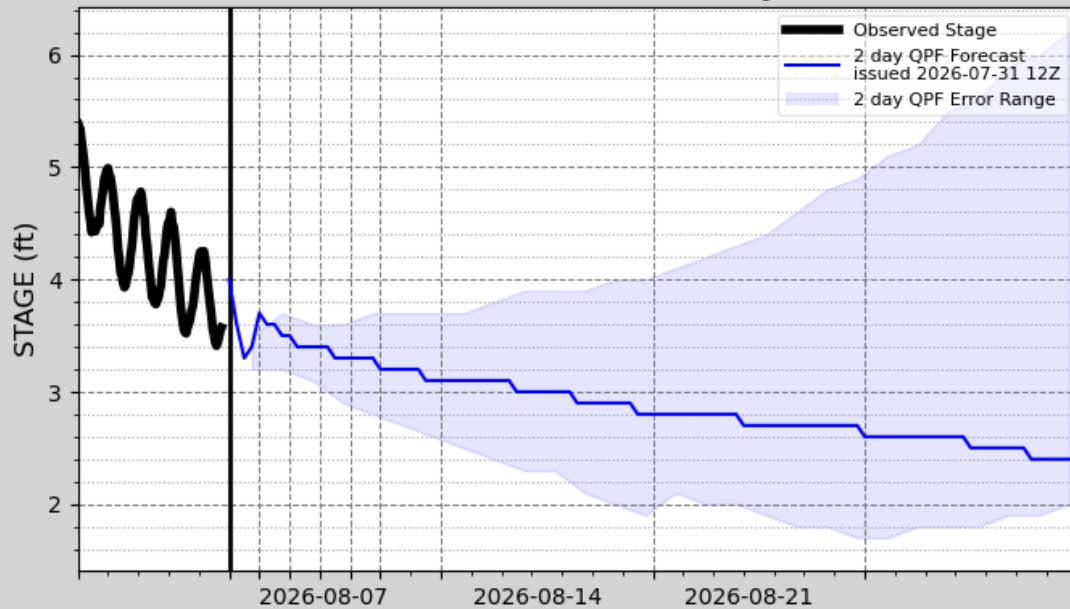
The stage at Vicksburg (MS) at 1300 hours today was 18.32 feet with a 24-hour change of - 0.43 feet.

The National Weather Service's (NWS) Extended Streamflow Prediction (28-Day forecast) issued today indicates the stages at Vicksburg will continue a slow fall to 10.5 feet on August 28 (2026).

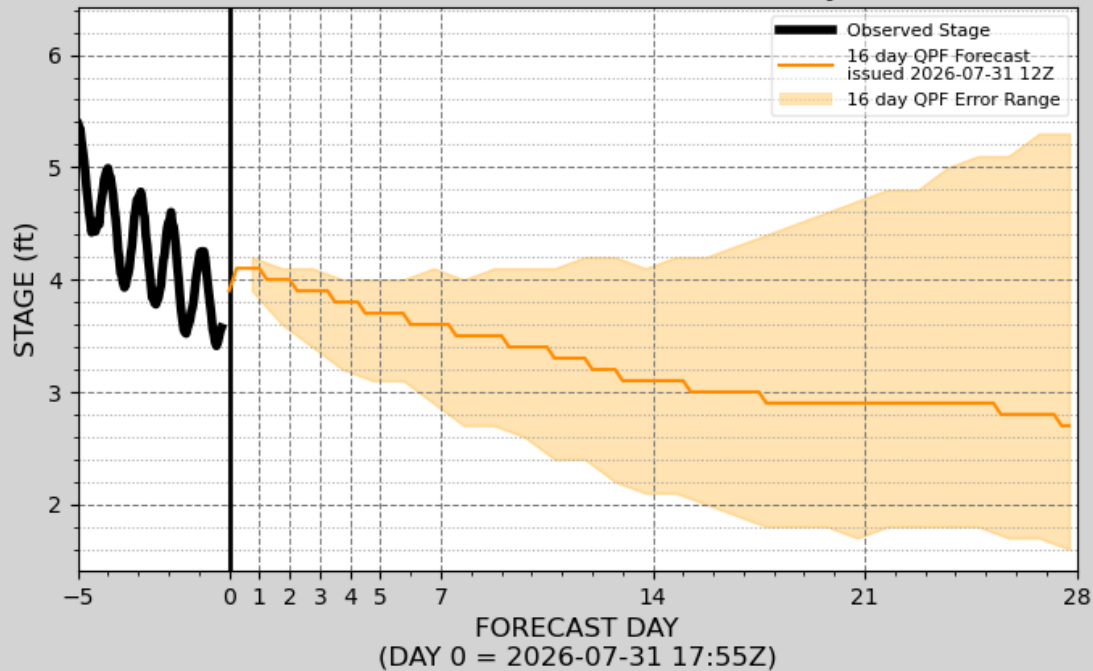
NEW ORLEANS 2- and 16-Day QPF FORECAST:

NORL1 Forecast and Experimental Uncertainty

LMRFC Official Forecast (2 Days QPF)

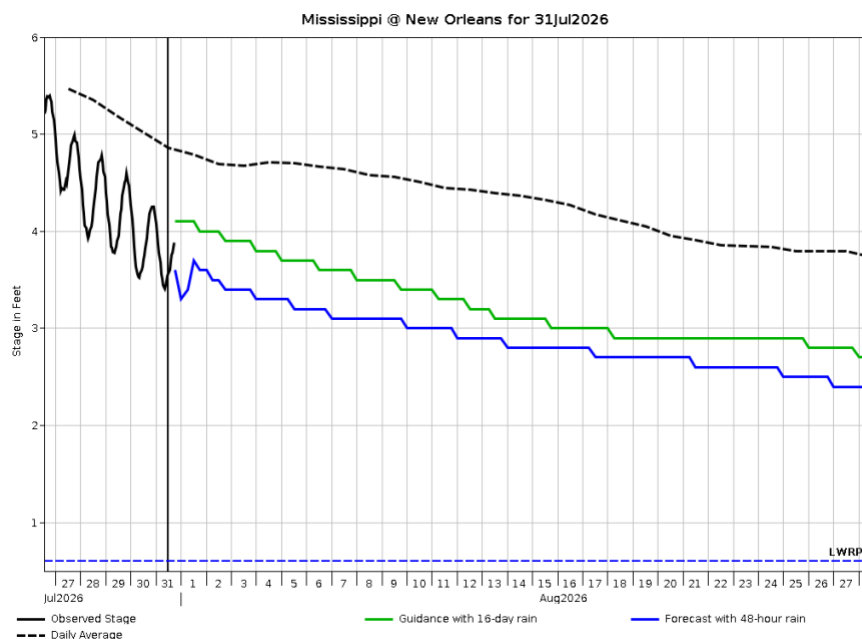


LMRFC NAEFS-based Forecast (16 Days QPF)

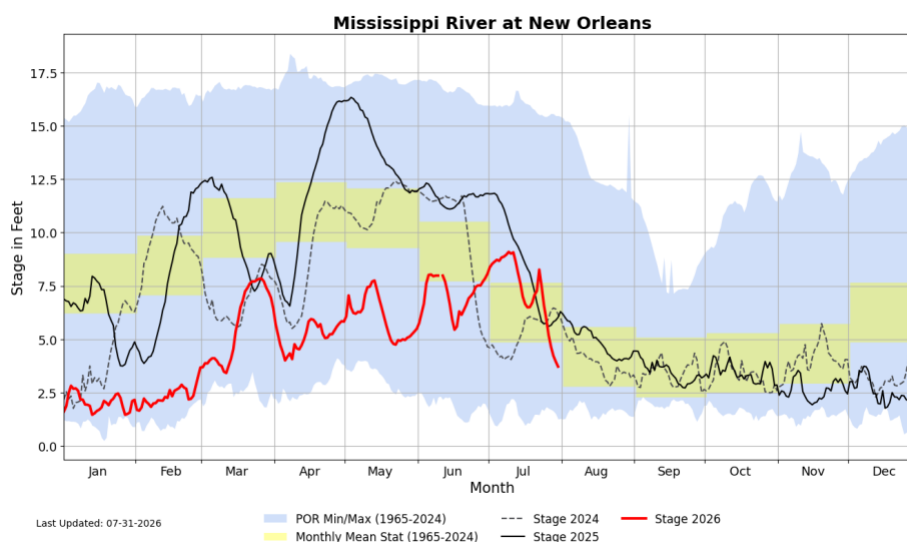


The shaded areas show probable future river stage based on the present forecast and past forecast skill. The shaded areas capture 2/3 of past forecast errors, centered on the median error.

The following Guidance Plot detailing various stage predictive forecasts is provided by the USACE and details the projections for New Orleans based on the latest forecasts:



The diagram below from the USACE details a Comparative Hydrograph for New Orleans that documents stages from present to 1965 for comparisons or to note potential trends:



The Carrollton Gage (New Orleans) reading at 1200 hours today was 3.88 feet with a 24-hour change of - 0.22 feet.

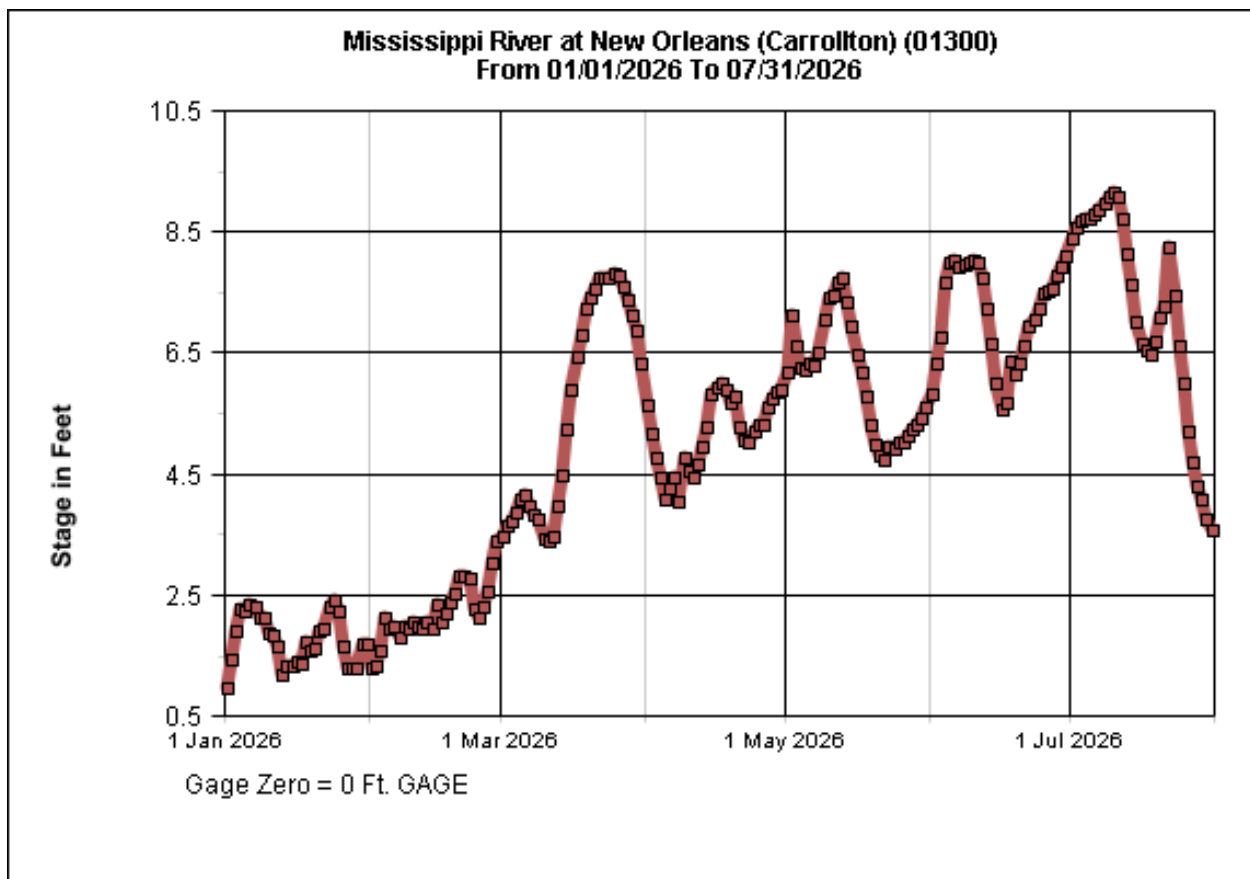
The National Weather Service's (NWS) Extended Streamflow Prediction (28-Day forecast) for the Carrollton Gage issued today forecasts that stages will continue a slow extended fall to 2.4 feet on August 28 (2026).

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 feet are rare for multiple reasons including the impacts of winds and tides as the Gulf of America invades the river and injects saltwater into the veins of the Big River during these low water periods. Readings of less than 1.0 feet were recorded multiple times in 1988 (June to November) with the lowest stage recorded at 0.5 feet on September 28, 1988. The lowest stage in 2012 was 0.77 feet, the lowest reading recorded in 2012 was 0.77 feet on December 13, 2012.

The Mississippi River Discharge at Tarbert Landing (Mile 306.3 AHP) at 0800 hours today was 345,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) down from the highest flow of 678,000 cfs on July 8, 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).

The graph below represents the Year-to-Date (2026) plotted river stages for the Carrollton Gage from January 1 to July 31 (2026):



With You,

Big River

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“Complaining about a problem without proposing a solution is called whining.”

Teddy Roosevelt

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