News Release

June 11, 2014	Jeff Zogg	515-270-4501	jeff.zogg@noaa.gov
	Nathan Young	319-384-1732	nathan-young@uiowa.edu
	Jamie Knutson	319-291-4312	jamie.knutson@waterloo-ia.org

New Flood Preparedness Tool Available for Waterloo

A dynamic, new online flood preparedness tool which will help emergency managers improve flood warnings and response has been developed for the Cedar River at Waterloo, Iowa.

The National Weather Service collaborated with the Iowa Flood Center to develop a library of flood inundation maps. The final version of these flood inundation maps are the culmination of a partnership between the Iowa Flood Center (IFC), the City of Waterloo, the NOAA Central Region – Regional Collaboration Team and the National Weather Service (NWS). This capability will help communicate the residual flood risks for areas behind the city's levee and the additional flooding from Black Hawk Creek, a tributary to the Cedar.

Because this new tool is so critical during floods, it is available from two sources. The first source is the NWS Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service (AHPS) Web site. On the AHPS page for the Cedar River at Waterloo, click on the tab near the top of the page named "Inundation Mapping." The direct link is http://water.weather.gov/ahps2/inundation/inundation_google.php?gage=aloi4 . The second source is the Iowa Flood Center's Iowa Flood Information System (IFIS). The direct link is http://ifis.iowafloodcenter.org/ifis/en/ . Go to the Flood Maps section on the right hand side of the page and select Waterloo.

Flood inundation maps help people visualize the potential extent of flooding at various river levels. This information can assist in planning and mitigation decisions.

Dr. Nathan Young, Associate Director of the Iowa Flood Center, said the IFC has been developing flood inundation maps since the IFC's inception in 2009. "This is an opportunity for us to apply research that is useful and meaningful for Iowans," he said. "These detailed maps demonstrate the extent of the flooded landscape with every twelve-inch rise in the flood level. We believe this information will empower communities and individuals to make informed decisions about their flood risks."

Jeff Zogg, Senior Hydrologist for the National Weather Service in Des Moines, said the development of the Waterloo flood inundation maps was a team effort which resulted in valuable tools for people in the Waterloo area. "Many people worked together to make these maps available. We especially appreciate the involvement of local community officials in Waterloo. These maps will help the NWS provide enhanced decision support services to people there."

Jamie Knutson, Waterloo Flood Engineer said that the flood inundation maps will be valuable for multiple reasons. "The flood inundation maps will allow for better long range planning and allow for better decision making early on in the flood for which areas may need to be evacuated. This will be a nice addition to our flood fighting tools."

The National Weather Service is the primary source of weather data, forecasts and warnings for the United States and its territories. The National Weather Service operates the most advanced weather and flood warning and forecast system in the world, helping to protect lives and property and to enhance the national economy. The NWS provides decision support services as well as enhanced services to local, state, and regional decision makers. For other locations where flood inundation maps are available see the National Weather Service AHPS Web site.

The Iowa Flood Center is part of IIHR—Hydroscience & Engineering, a research institute based at the University of Iowa's College of Engineering. The IFC provides accurate, state-of-the-science-based information to help Iowans better understand their flood risks. It is the nation's first academic center devoted solely to the study of floods. Additional IFC resources—including flood inundation maps for other Iowa communities—can be found on the Iowa Flood Center Web site.

The City of Waterloo has 20 miles of levees and flood walls to help protect its citizens from the Cedar River. In order to operate the levee system, a number of different City departments are involved during a flood including Engineering, Public Works, Waste Management, Leisure Services, Police and Fire. More information about the City of Waterloo and its departments can be found on the City of Waterloo Web site.

The Waterloo flood inundation maps are based on observations and forecasts involving readings from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) stream gage along the Cedar River at Waterloo. More information about USGS streamgaging in Iowa is available on the USGS Iowa Water Science Center Web site.

The National Weather Service is working with its partners to build a Weather-Ready Nation to support community resilience in the face of increasing vulnerability to extreme weather. Visit http://www.weather.gov/desmoines, and follow us on Twitter @NWSDesMoines and on Facebook.

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