

High Water Mark Sign Guide

Planning

- **Coordinate with local government officials** to see if they would like a sign in their community. A sign may be a sensitive issue in some locations due to concerns about property values, etc. Typically, your first point of contact will be the local Emergency Manager. He/she will coordinate with other city and county officials as appropriate. Provide him/her with a sample high water mark sign graphic to show other decisionmakers.
- **Find a high-visibility location for the sign.** It may have more of an impact if it's on the side of a building rather than a signpost near the riverbank. If a building is chosen, consult with the building owner about sign installation. It may be simplest to choose a city or county government building.
- **Consult with the USGS about sign placement.** Was the record stage based on their measurements, and if so, could they assist in surveying from a benchmark?
- **Discuss with other interested entities such as the COE.**

Design

- Choose sign template based on the height of the high water mark. Try to place the wording as close to eye level as possible. If the high water mark is well above or below eye-level, you could even have a separate sign with just the high water mark itself, and then install a separate sign at eye level which contains the event description.
- The first signs were 18" high by 24" wide, but they could be oriented vertically, or could be a different size to best accommodate your situation.
- SERFC ordered the first HWM signs from Oklahoma Correctional Industries. The typical cost for signs from OCI has been \$40-60, including shipping. The more similar a sign is to previous signs, the lower the cost. You may find a local provider who can make the signs for you at a similar rate, but be aware that there may be additional setup fees.
- OCI doesn't require you to submit a camera-ready graphic. They will prepare their own, and their graphic may differ slightly from yours (font, etc.) Other suppliers may have different procedures.
- Consider where holes are needed in the sign for mounting purposes. Ask the sign company if there's an additional charge for drilling the holes.
- Attached to this document are two templates that may aid you in creating your sign. [One template has the high water mark line near the top of the sign](#), and [the other has it near the bottom](#). These are .pdf files that are set up as forms, so you can replace the text as needed to fit your site.

Ordering

- If you choose to order from OCI, call first to let them know you're sending a graphic for a sign order: Oklahoma Correctional Industries (405) 962-7007
- Ask for customer service representative Dalyua, who has dealt with the high water mark sign orders before. SERFC's customer number is # 21-0299; you may refer them to this number for consistency with past orders (logos, etc), but please specify your own shipping address and billing information.
- Turnaround time for OCI to produce a layout is generally a few days. They will need you to approve their layout before they can begin the manufacturing process. Ask them to email you a graphic of their layout for proofreading rather than sending you a fax. In the past, they have used incorrect colors for the NWS logo, and this sort of error can't be caught in a fax.
- Once you have approved the layout, you will typically receive the sign in 3-4 weeks.
- Check over the sign for any misspellings or other flaws, and correct if possible. Loose edges on logo stickers and the high water line decal may need to be further secured with glue.

Unveiling

- Invite local dignitaries and government officials to the sign unveiling several weeks in advance. Issue a press release about two weeks in advance of the event, making sure to include local/smaller media outlets. Follow up with a phone call to the media outlets that would have the most interest a few days prior to the event. Media response to these events has varied widely – some unveilings have been covered by major regional TV stations, while others have rated a picture on the front page of the local newspaper.
- Pre-install the sign a week or so before the event, allowing time to work out any last-minute issues, then remove the sign. Early on the day of the unveiling, put the sign back up and cover it with a drape.
- Consider having a survivor of the flood tell their story at the unveiling. Also, since the unveiling will likely attract passersby, think about creating a handout on the flood event. Copies of the press release may suffice.