Using the FEMA Flood Hazard Resources Map

Before Hurricane Sandy, FEMA had begun a coastal flood study to update Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) and Flood Insurance Study (FIS) reports for portions of New York and New Jersey using improved methods and data to better reflect coastal flood risk. After Sandy, FEMA released **Advisory Base Flood Elevation (ABFE) maps** for certain communities based on the partially completed flood study which were designed to help in rebuilding and recovery efforts. FEMA is now in the process of releasing **preliminary work maps** for certain communities which include the full results of the coastal flood study. **Preliminary FIRMs and FIS reports**, which will follow the release of the preliminary work maps for communities receiving those products, are also now in the process of being released.

This FEMA Flood Hazard Resources Map (accessible through FEMA's Region 2 Coastal Outreach website at http://www.region2coastal.com/bestdata) includes the following information:

- ABFE map data for communities in areas where preliminary work map or preliminary FIRM information has not yet been released.
- Preliminary work map data in areas where preliminary FIRM data has not yet been released.

Preliminary work map data will continue to be added to the FEMA Flood Hazard Resources Map as it becomes available. On the map, the symbology for the preliminary work map data is different than the ABFE information in order to distinguish between the two data sets.

The map will also indicate where preliminary FIRM information has been released, and include a hyperlink to the relevant Preliminary FIRM web viewer, so users may view this data. Preliminary FIRM information can also be viewed and downloaded through FEMA's Map Service Center, the official online source of preliminary and effective FIRMs.

This document provides step-by-step information on how to use the FEMA Flood Hazard Resources Map.

1. Map Overview

Once you are on the FEMA Flood Hazard Resources Map homepage, your screen should appear similar to Figure 1 below. Notice the three buttons at the top of the left hand "Details" panel which are circled in red below.

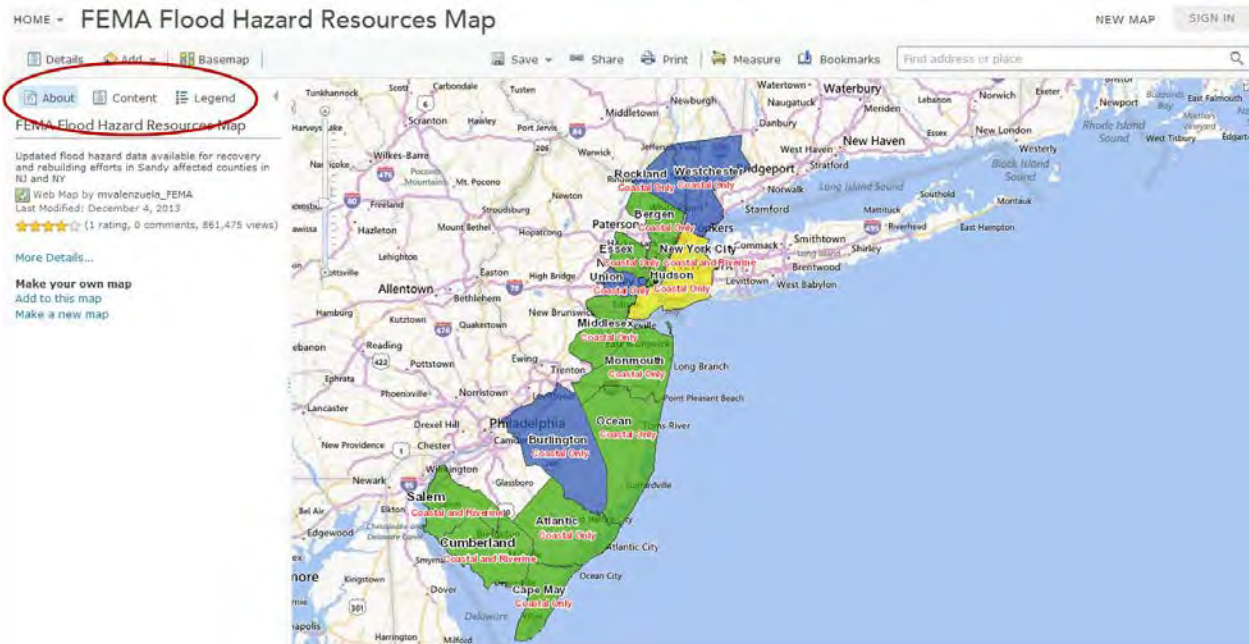Figure 1

You are currently on the default left hand "About" tab which provides additional details about the map. Click on the "More Details" link. Now you can view a description of the map and constraints on access and use. Experienced GIS users can view the map in ArcGIS desktop software by using the "Open" button above the map description. Metadata about data layers included on the map is also available on this page.

Click your browser's "Back" button or the "Map" button at the top of your screen to return to the map homepage.

2. Turning Map Layers On and Off

Once you are back on the map homepage, click the middle "Content" button at the top of the left hand panel (shown circled in red in Figure 2.)
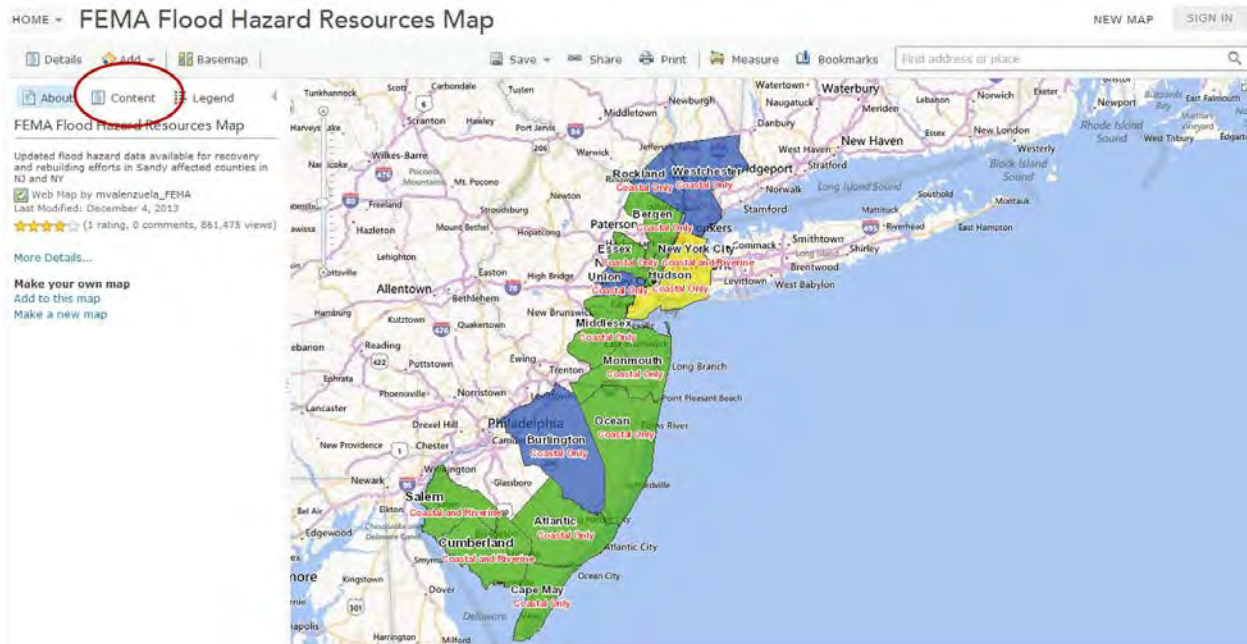
Figure 2

Here you can see the table of contents showing the datasets included in the map. Now click on the name of one of the datasets (Figure 3).

You will now see an expanded list of all map layers included in that dataset. You can check or uncheck the boxes to the left of each layer and dataset to turn the map layers on and off in the map. Keep in mind that even if there is a check mark next to a layer, it may not currently be visible in the map. This is because some layers are only visible if you have zoomed in or out to a certain level on the map.

Notice that there are separate datasets listed in the table of contents for preliminary work map data and for Advisory Base Flood Elevation (ABFE) data.

If you click on the map layer names within these datasets, the symbology for that map layer will appear underneath the name. Notice that the symbology used for the preliminary work map data is different than the ABFE data to distinguish the different data sets.
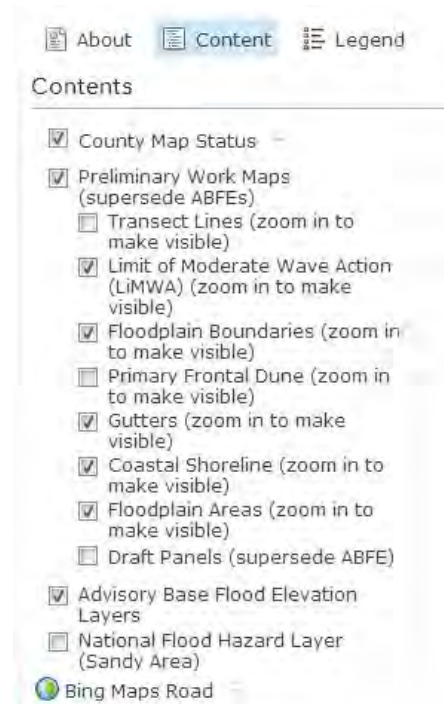

Figure 3

3. Viewing the Map Legend

Now click on the right "Legend" button at the top of the left hand panel, shown circled in red in Figure 4.

This is the map legend which shows all layers visible on the map. The map layers shown will change based on the layers turned on in the "Contents" tab and based on how much you have zoomed in or out on the map.

County Map Status Layer

Notice the colors that correspond to the type of data (e.g., ABFE, preliminary work map, or preliminary FIRM) and status of release as shown on the map and in the map legend. Click on a county or community you are interested in to get more information on the data available. For areas where a preliminary FIRM has been released, the pop up box will include a hyperlink to the relevant Preliminary FIRM Data Viewer. Preliminary FIRM data can also be accessed through FEMA's Map Service Center, the official source for preliminary and effective regulatory FIRMs.
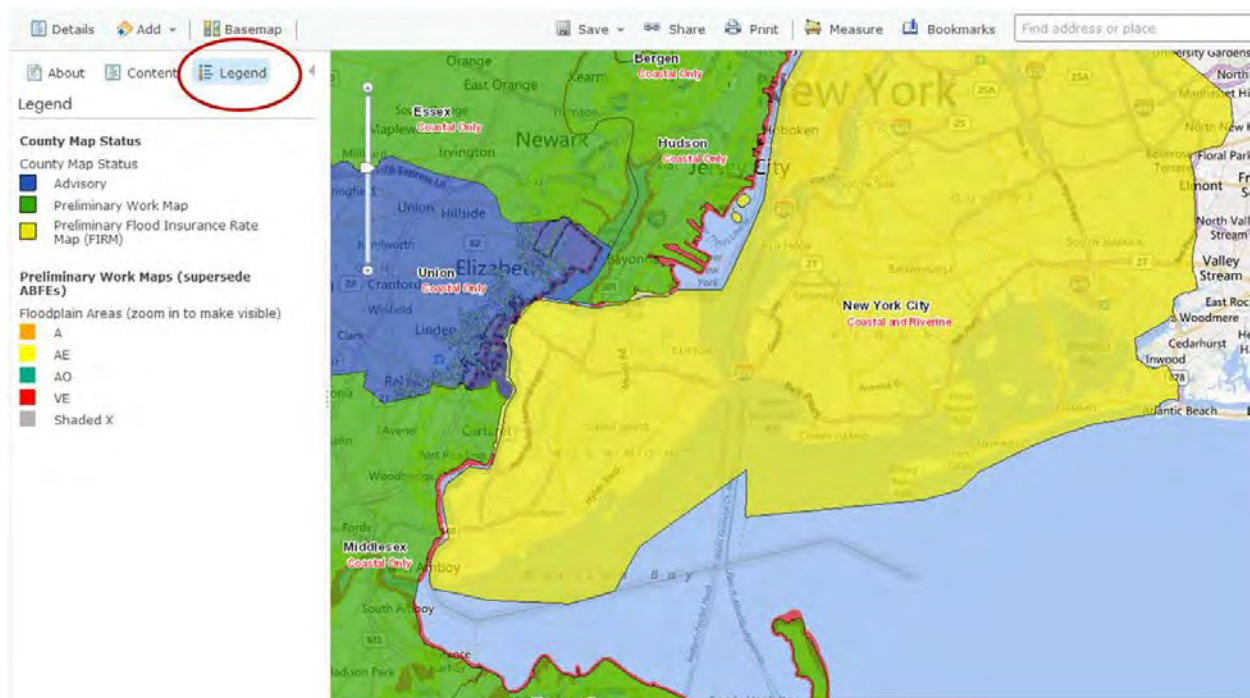

Figure 4

4. Find Your Location on the Map and Get FEMA Flood Hazard Information

To find a location of interest on the map, either zoom to the desired location using the zoom controls on the left side of the map and your left mouse button to pan, or type in an address in the upper right field (Figure 5).
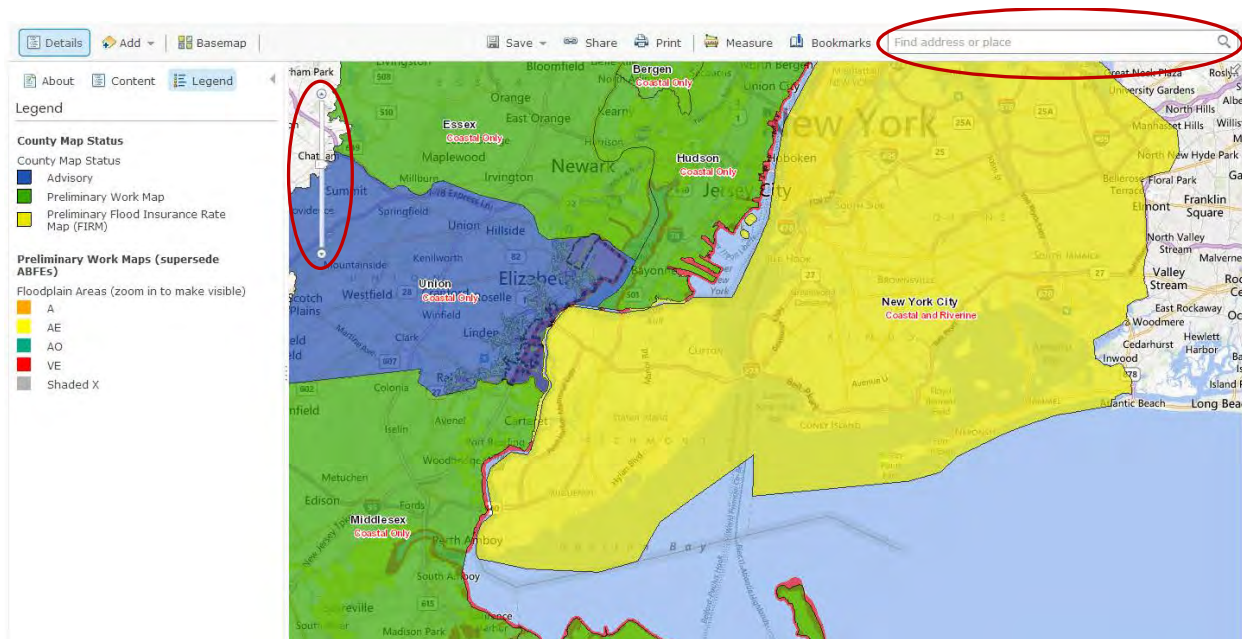
You should now be zoomed in to the map and be able to see your location of interest and the available flood hazard information for that location. Now, left click your mouse on the map at your location of interest. The layers selected will be highlighted in blue on the map.

A pop up window will appear which lists the updated flood zone and elevation information and other visible map layers for that location (Figure 6). Only layers that are turned on and currently visible in the map will appear in the pop up window.

In the pop up window, you will also see a hyperlink to view a Frequently Asked Questions document about the information shown. Additionally, to get more information about a specific layer shown, simply click on the hyperlinked layer name. This will take you to
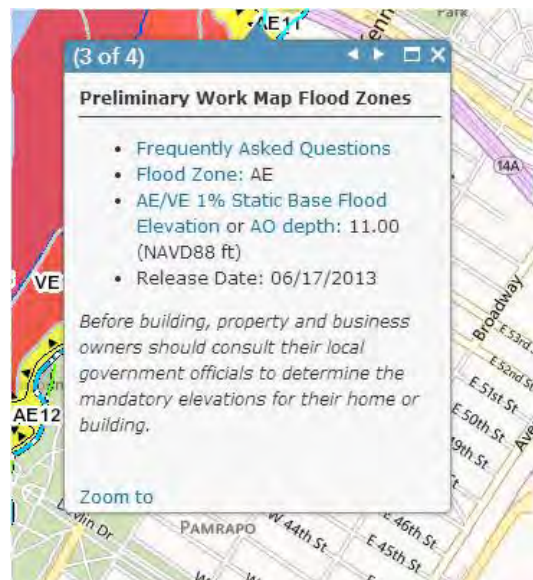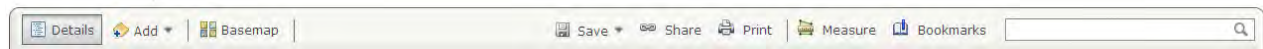
a glossary of layer descriptions and definitions for other important terms. Note that the pop up window may have more than one screen depending on the number of layers selected—use the arrows at the top right hand side of the pop up window to navigate through the screens.

You will also be able to download maps in .pdf format (with the exception of areas located in New York City) and GIS shapefiles from hyperlinks in the pop up window which include your location of interest. To download these files, the Map Panels layer must be visible in the map.

5. Other Features

The horizontal bar at the top of the map homepage has the additional features described below.

- The "Basemap" button allows you to select a different base map than the one currently shown on the map. You can choose different street maps, topographic data sets, or imagery.
- You can print the map using the "Print" option or by using your browser's "Print Screen" option and pasting into a separate document.
- The "Add" button allows users to add their own map layers to the map or create their own layers.
- The "Bookmarks" button allows you to remember specific locations on the map.
- You can measure distances or areas on the map by using the "Measure" tool.
- Options to share the map via link or embed the map into a webpage are also provided using the "Share" button.