# Using the FEMA GeoPlatform Preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) Data Viewer

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FEMA

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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 coastal 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. After the completion of the ABFE maps, FEMA released (and continues to release) 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.

The Preliminary FIRM Data Viewer allows users to view preliminary FIRM and FIS report data for individual coastal New York and New Jersey communities as it becomes available. The viewer also include hyperlinks to GIS data and PDF map panels and reports available through FEMA's Map Service Center, the official source for preliminary and effective regulatory FIRMs. Online tutorials are available from FEMA which provide assistance in using both the FIRM and FIS Report.

## 1.    MAP OVERVIEW

Once you are on the View Preliminary FIRM Data page of the Region 2 Coastal website, select the Preliminary FIRM Data Viewer link on the page for your desired community. Your screen should now appear similar to Figure 1 below. Notice the three buttons at the top of the left hand panel, which are circled in red below.
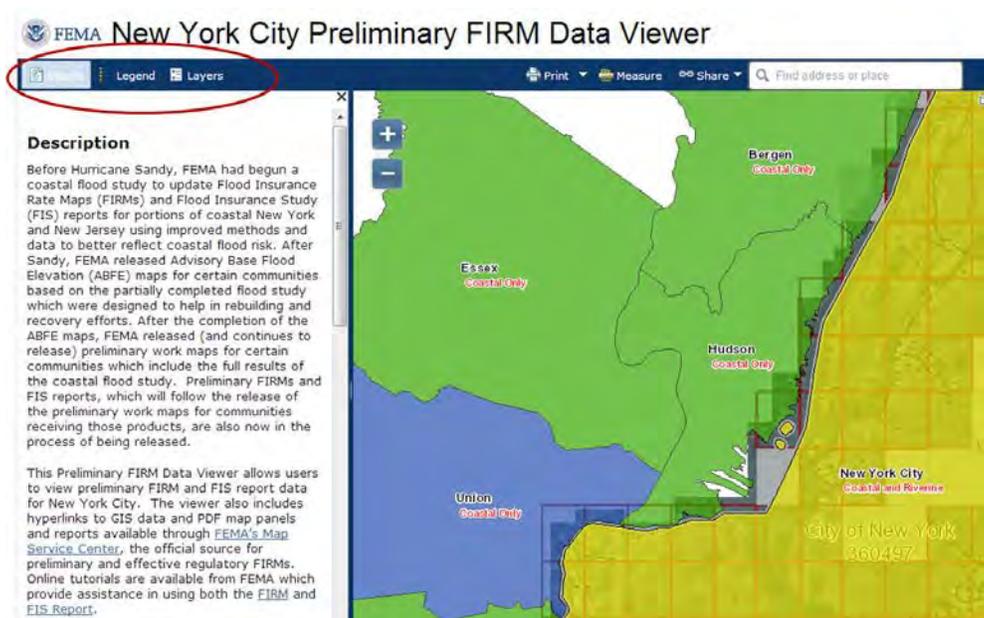


**Figure 1**

You are currently on the default "Details" tab, which provides additional details about the map. On this page you can view a description of the map and constraints on access and use.

## 2.    VIEWING THE MAP LEGEND

Click on the "Legend" button at the top of the left hand panel, shown circled in red in Figure 2. 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 "Layers" tab (See next section) 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 currently available.
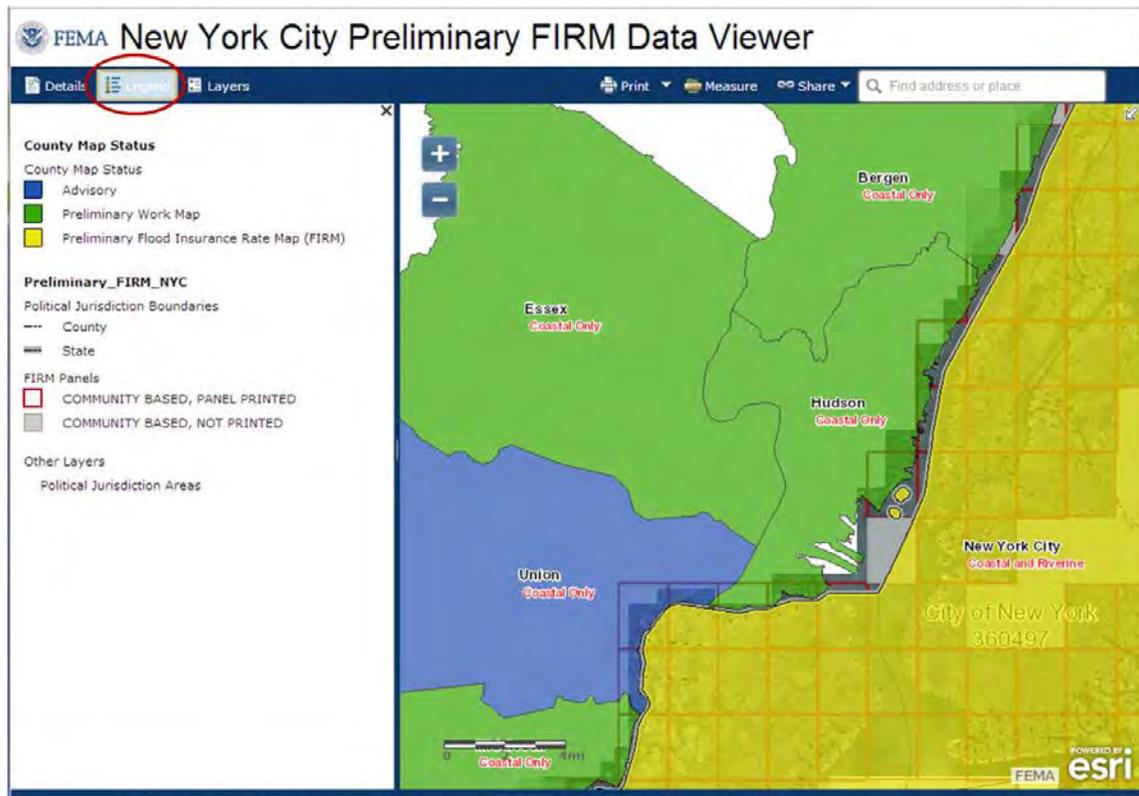


**Figure 2**

## 3.    TURNING MAP LAYERS ON AND OFF

To turn map layers on and off, click the "Layers" button at the top of the left hand panel (shown circled in red in Figure 3.)
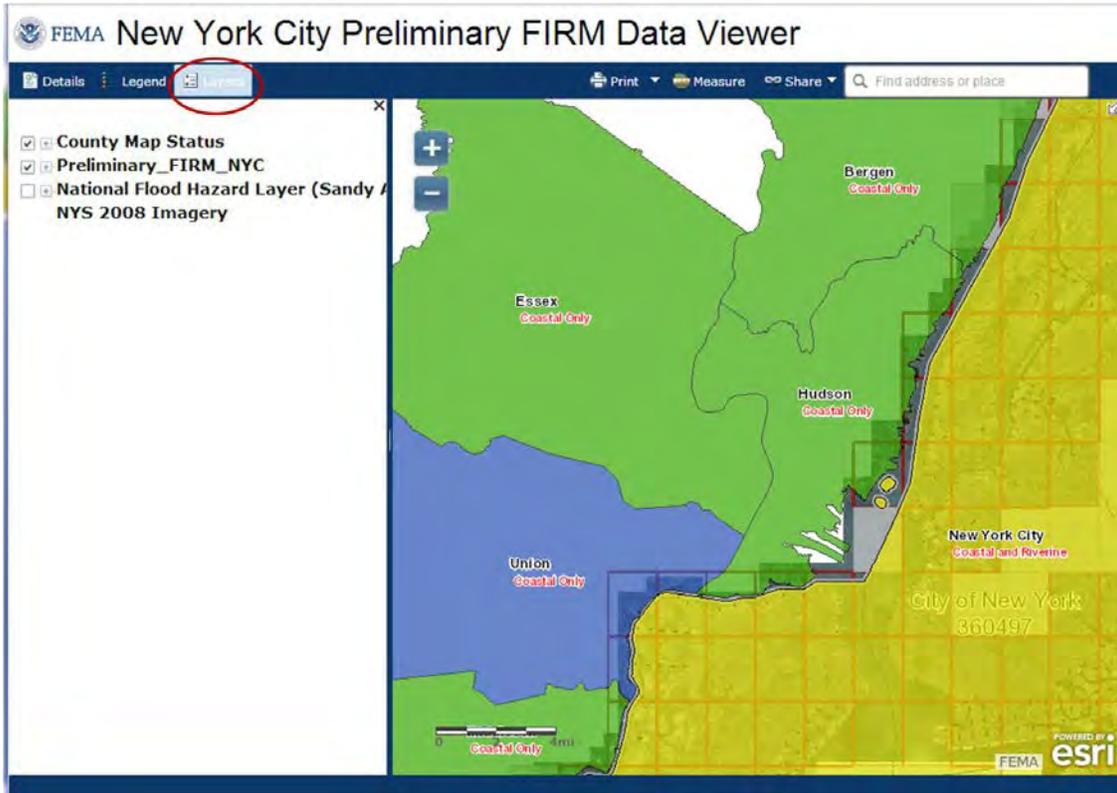


**Figure 3**

Here you can see the table of contents showing the datasets included in the map. You can see that by default, only certain layers are turned on in the map: those with a checkmark in the box to the left of the layer name. You can check or uncheck the boxes to hide or make visible the layers. You can also expand or collapse the categories in a layer by clicking the "+" or "-" sign to the right of the checkbox. (Figure 4)

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.
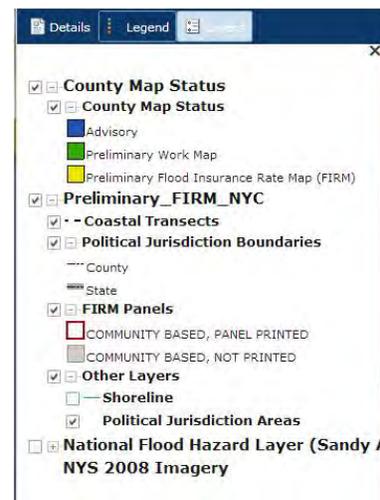


**Figure 4**

# 4. FIND YOUR LOCATION ON THE MAP TO VIEW PRELIMINARY FIRM 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).
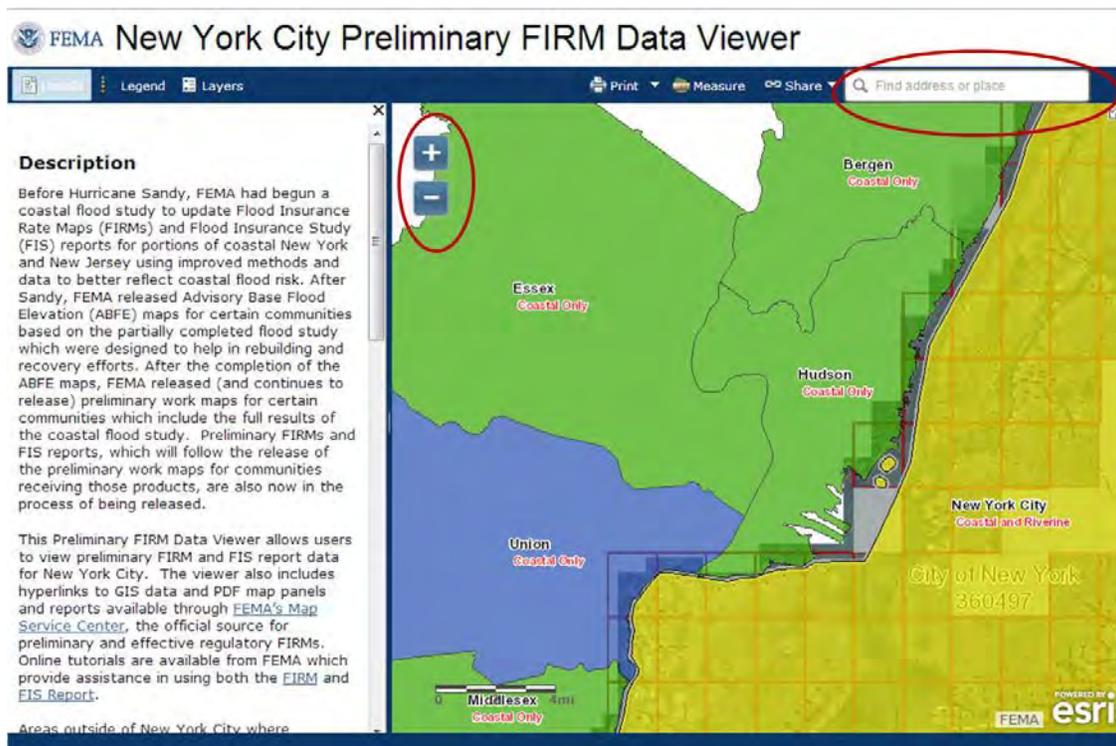


**Figure 5**

You should now be zoomed in to the map and be able to see your location of interest and the preliminary FIRM data 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, and a pop up window will appear (Figure 6). The pop up window includes the preliminary FIRM flood zone and elevation information for the location, in addition to other visible map layers. You will also see a hyperlink to a FAQ document about the information shown. Additionally, to get more information about a specific layer shown, click on the hyperlinked layer name. This will take you to a glossary of definitions for key terms. Note that the pop up window may have more
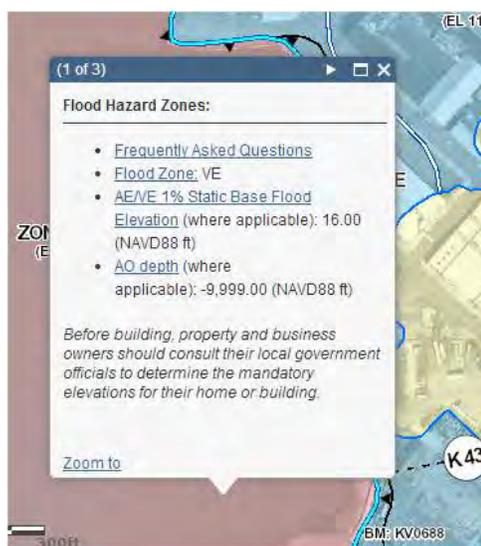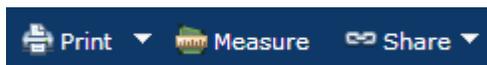


**Figure 6**

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.

Also included in the pop up window are hyperlinks to the official copies of the preliminary FIRM panels, the Flood Insurance Study report, and the GIS-compatible FIRM database available through FEMA's Map Service Center.  Note that the "FIRM Panels" layer in the viewer must be turned on in order for these hyperlinks to appear in the pop up window.

## 5.    OTHER FEATURES

The additional features described below are accessible from the top right side of the map page.



- You can print the map using the "Print" option or by using your browser's "Print Screen" option and pasting into a separate document.
- You can measure distances or areas on the map by using the "Measure" tool.
- Options to share the map via email, Facebook, or Twitter are provided using the "Share" button.