

Instructions for Setting High Water Marks

Basically, the idea is to identify the peak elevation that a flood reached and to leave some mark that can later be tied in to the appropriate vertical datum. In order for that mark to be tied in later, a good description needs to be made of where that mark is and what kind of mark the surveyor should look for. That is the purpose of the High Water Mark form. More than one mark can be described on each page. Following is a description of some of the fields and abbreviations used on the form.

Field #: Choose a number to use as a reference. It is very helpful to also include a master map with the approximate location of each of the marks and their assigned Field #.

River Mile: If the river mile is known, use that. Otherwise, some other locator such as a street name or major landmark can be used.

Elev.: This number is added by a surveyor at a later date when the mark is located and tied in to the appropriate datum. (This can only be done if adequate description is provided to locate the mark at a later date.)

P.O.: Refers to Personal Observation.

Quality of Mark: Refers to whether or not it was faint, was accompanied by other marks at the same elevation, etc.

Reliability: Refers to how sure you are that this is the peak elevation of the flood. For example, mud lines are often good quality but are left after (and below) the peak when water stays at one level for a longer period of time.

Type of Mark: Mud line, seed line (often stuck in trees with rough bark), and drift lines are noted. Describe any other indication of the flood peak elevation.

Description: This is used later by a surveyor to locate the mark. Boxes are provided for commonly used terms in the description. Left and right banks refer to direction as you face downstream. U/S and D/S refer to upstream and downstream respectively. This could also include a description of the location of the high water in relation to some fixed feature such as a door threshold, porch floor, window sill, etc. Make sure an accurate description of the reference point and the distance from it is provided for accurate determination of the flood elevation at a later date.

20d: refers to the size of nail used to mark the elevation.

B.C.: This is the abbreviation for bottle cap. A nail is often placed thru a bottle cap and a ribbon tied around it to make it more easily located by a surveyor.

LWD and SWD: These are abbreviations for landward and streamward, respectively.