

TECHNICAL NOTES

US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
ENGINEERING – 05

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Albuquerque, New Mexico
April, 2012

ACQUISITION OF FLOOD INSURANCE RATE MAPS (FIRMS)

- **Introduction:** This technical note explains how NRCS employees and partners can obtain current floodplain maps. As part of its technical and financial assistance programs, NRCS provides leadership and takes actions to conserve, preserve and restore existing natural and beneficial functions and values within the 100-year floodplain.
- **Background:** NRCS policy on Floodplains is found in the General Manual (Title 190, Part 410.25). This policy reflects Executive Order (EO) 11988, May 24 1977. Floodplains are defined as lowlands or relatively flat areas adjoining inland or coastal waters, including at a minimum, areas subject to a one percent or greater chance of flooding in any given year. The EO requires that Federal agency decisions recognize that floodplains are unique and significant public values. Federal agencies must consider the natural and beneficial values of floodplains and the public benefits derived from floodplain preservation or restoration. The objectives of EO 11988 are to avoid, to the extent possible, long and short-term adverse impacts associated with occupancy and modification of floodplains and to avoid direct and indirect support of floodplain development where there is a practical alternative. Additional guidance on floodplain management is available in the National Environmental Compliance Handbook (NECH 190-610.29).

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) performs hydrologic and hydraulic studies (that is, Flood Insurance Studies [FIS]) that identify flood-prone areas and provide flood risk data. Using FIS results, FEMA prepares a Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) that depicts the spatial extent of Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) and other thematic features related to flood risk assessment. The FIRM is the basis for floodplain management, mitigation, and insurance activities of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). In addition to identifying SFHAs, the risk zones indicated on FIRMs provide a basis for establishing flood insurance coverage premium rates offered through the NFIP.

NRCS employees can now download FIRMettes (or purchase FIRMs) from the FEMA Map Service Center at:

<https://msc.fema.gov/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/FemaWelcomeView?storeId=10001&catalogId=10001&langId=-1>

A FIRMette is a full-scale section of a FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) that you create yourself online by selecting the desired area from an image of a Flood Insurance Rate Map. The FIRMette also includes the map title block, north arrow, and scale bar. **There is no charge for making a FIRMette.** And because a FIRMette is a full-scale section of an official FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map, it can be used in all aspects of the National Flood

Insurance Program (NFIP), including floodplain management, flood insurance, and enforcement of mandatory flood insurance purchase requirements.

An online tutorial with instructions for making a FIRMette is available at:

https://msc.fema.gov/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/info?storeId=10001&catalogId=10001&langId=-1&content=firmetteHelp_0&title=FIRMette%2520Tutorial

- **Step 1:** [Find your flood map](#)
- **Step 2:** [Make the FIRMette](#)

• **Procedure:**

For rural areas, (Step 1, Option B Product Catalog) is often the easiest way to find your flood map.

<https://msc.fema.gov/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/CategoryDisplay?catalogId=10001&storeId=10001&categoryId=12001&langId=-1&userType=G&type=1&dfirmCatId=12009&future=false>

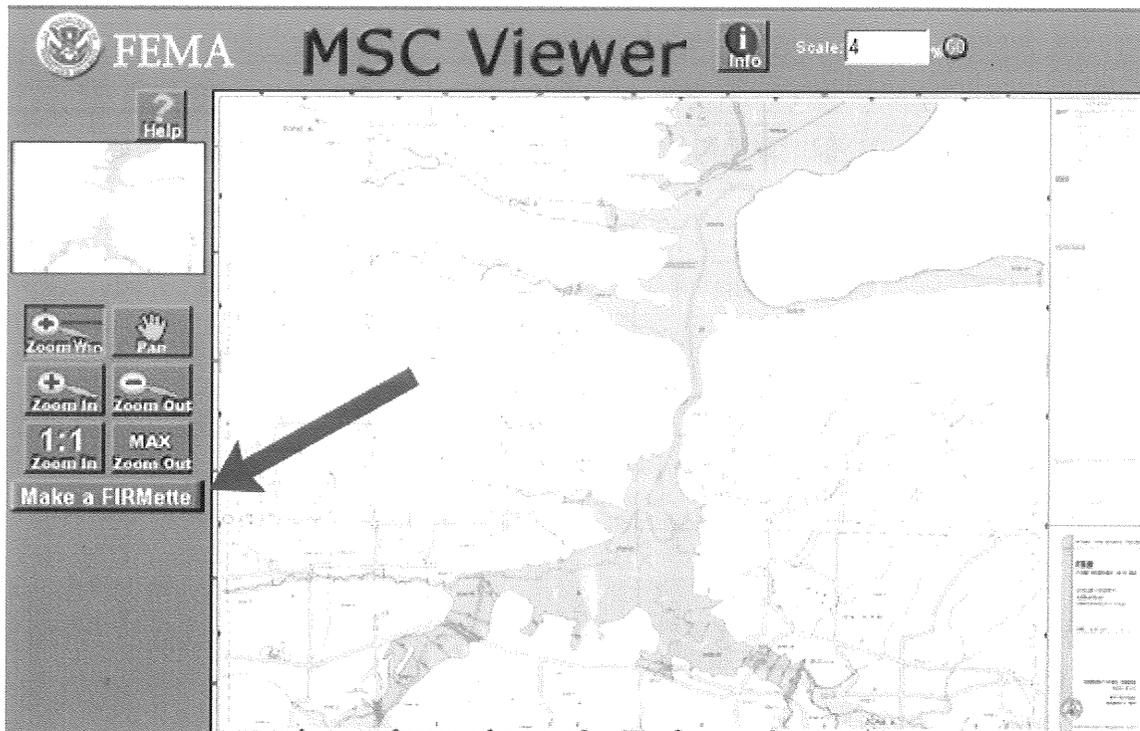
This option involves selecting your state, county, community, and flood map from a list. Most communities include an Index Map that you can view to determine the panel ID of your flood map.

Once the flood map has been located, use the following steps to make the FIRMette:

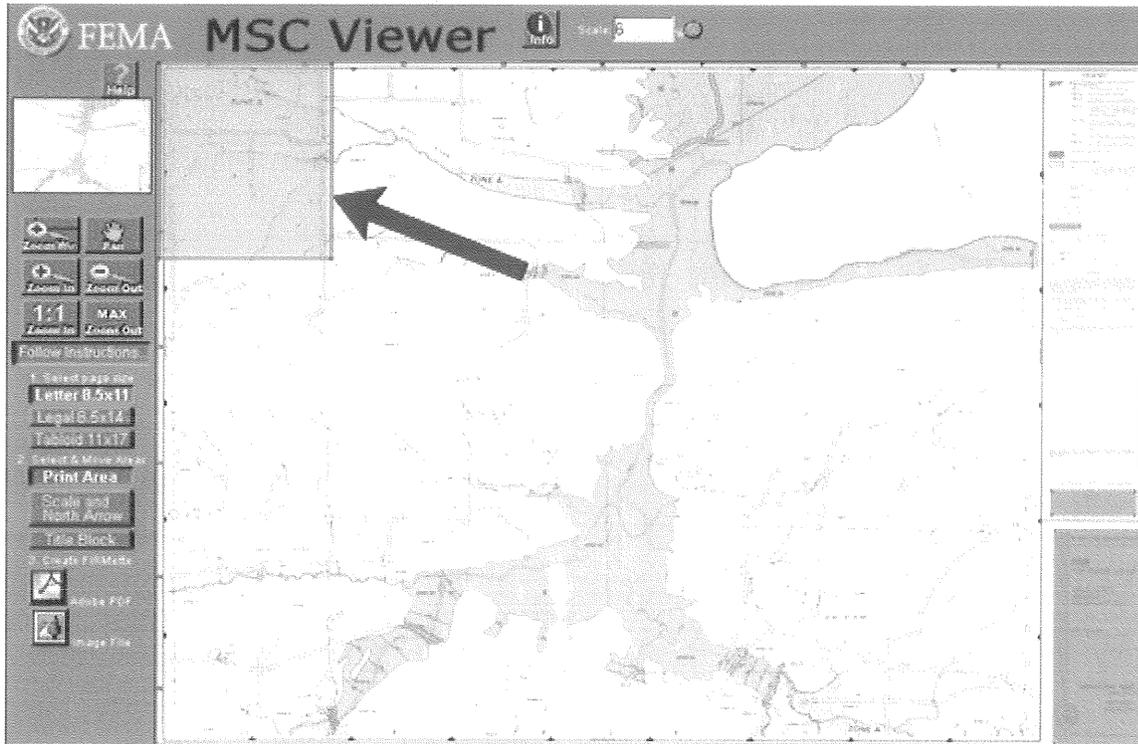
FIRMette Tutorial

STEP 2: Make the FIRMette

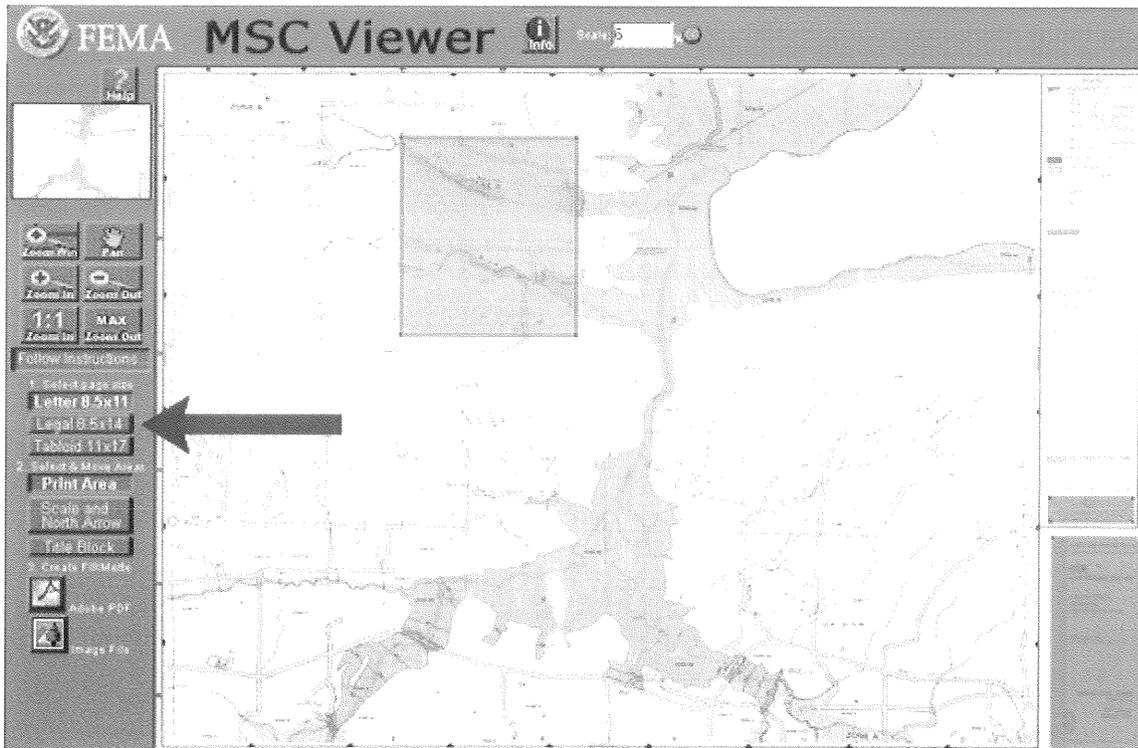
1. Click on the "Make a FIRMette" button:



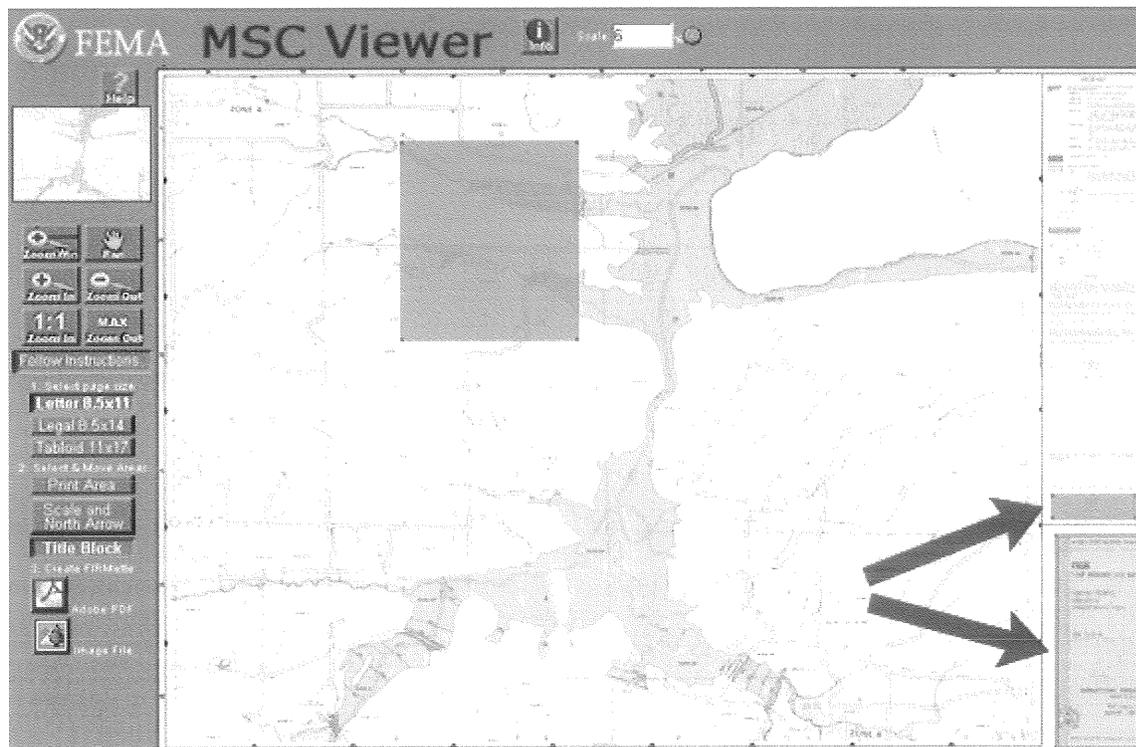
2. Click and drag the pink box to cover the area of the map that you want to be included in your FIRMette:



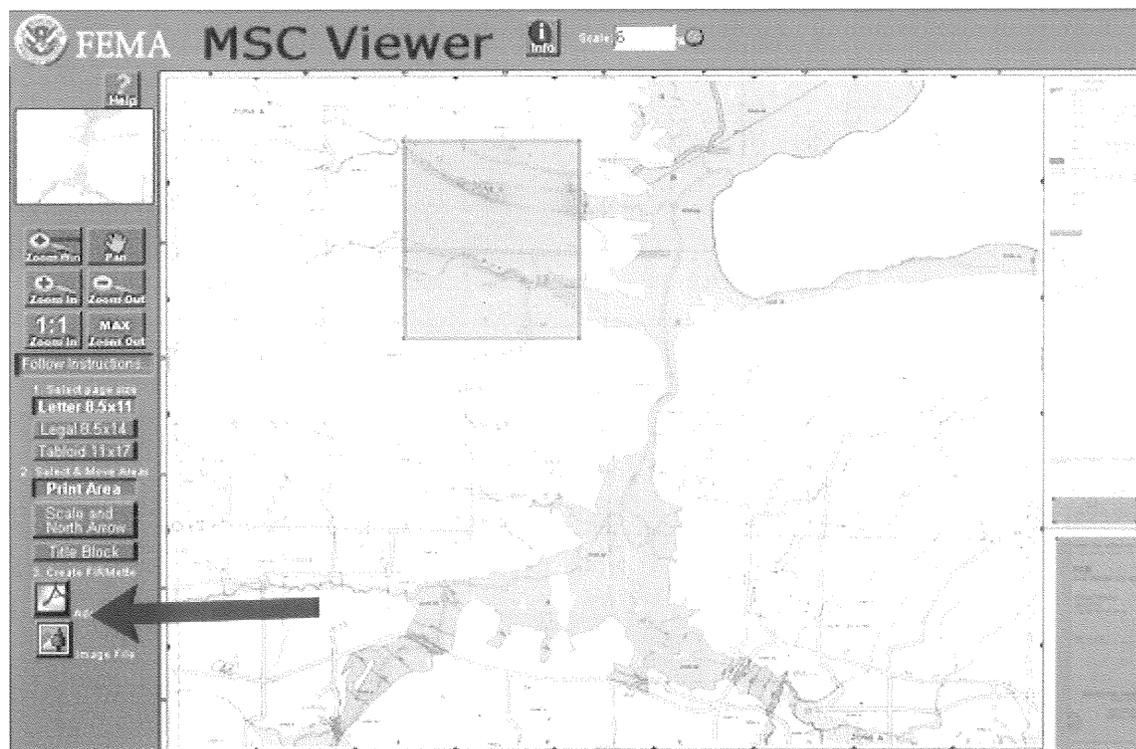
3. Select your paper size. (The default size is 8.5 x 11)



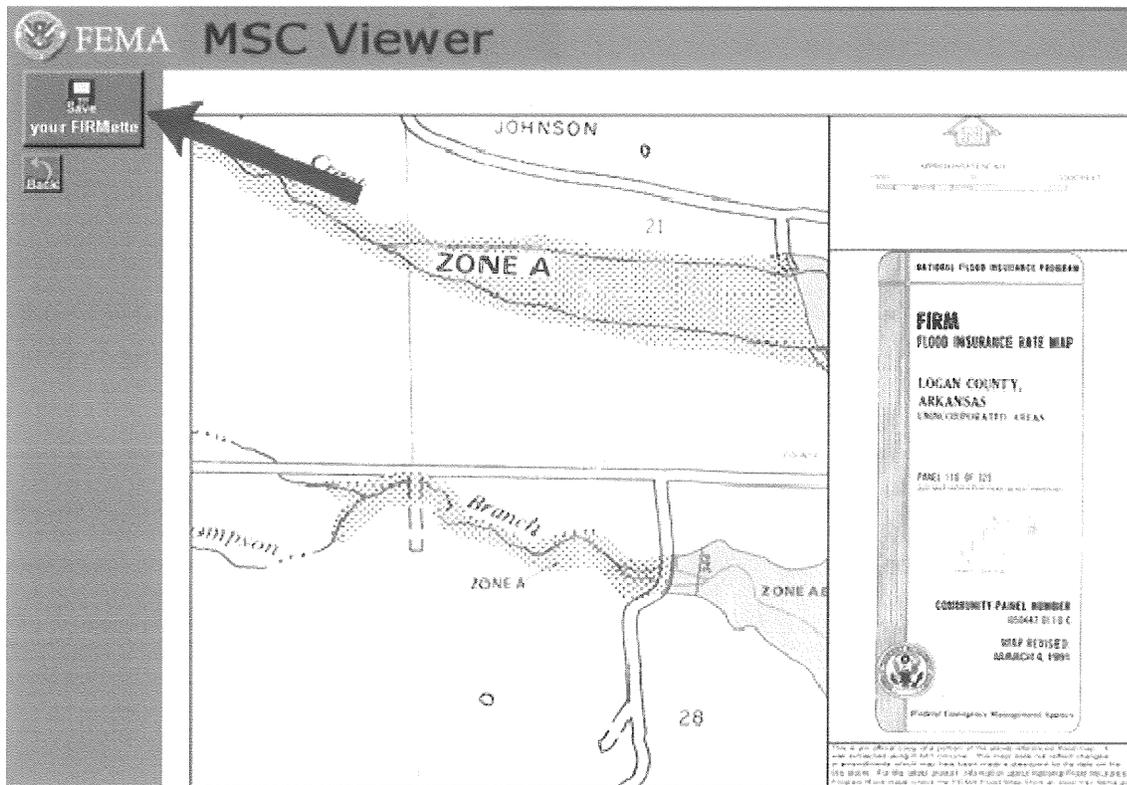
4. If you wish to reposition the title block or north arrow, click the appropriate button to the left and then drag the pink box to cover the area you want included. This is usually not necessary.



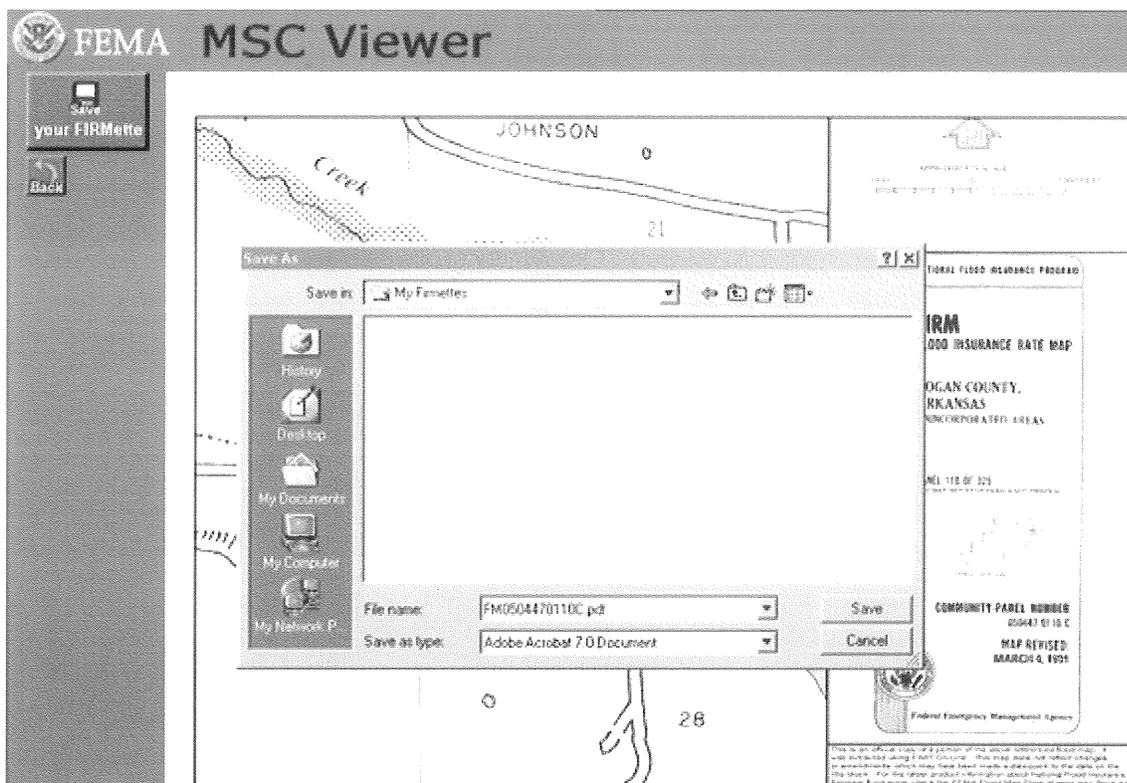
5. Select the format that the FIRMette will be saved as, either Adobe PDF or Tiff Image file.



6. Your FIRMette will be displayed. Click the “Save Your FIRMette” button to save the FIRMette to your computer. (Saving allows you to go back any time and print more copies without going through all of the steps again.)



7. In the “Save As” window, select the directory where your FIRMette will be saved, then click the Save button.



If you have any problems creating your FIRMette, please call MSC Customer Service at (877) 336-2627.

If necessary, a full panel of an official FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map can be purchased from the FEMA Flood Map Store. All customers wishing to make purchases at the FEMA Flood Map Store are required to register. Registering allows you to create an account that will store your address(es) so that you do not have to reenter this information on future visits. Registering also allows you easy access to previous orders in My Account and access to the Digital Post Office.

In registering, you are asked to provide your email address as a user ID and to provide a password for verification. The password is case sensitive. Please remember this information, as it is required for access to the Digital Post Office. After registration, you simply logon for future visits to the store.

If you already have a customer account at Map Service Center, your FEMA Store account is different. You will still need to register and keep track of your FEMA Store login ID and password. There is a place on the registration form where you can enter your current Map Service Center customer ID. Providing your current MSC customer ID will assist us in processing and referring to your order more quickly and will make sure we can associate your online purchases with your existing account.