

2026 FLOOD GUIDE FOR RIVERS STATE

EDITORIAL NOTE

Every year, flooding reshapes life across Nigeria — flooding farmlands, endangering agricultural yield, displacing communities, closing schools, and cutting off roads. The Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA) has mapped what 2026 will look like, and the picture is clear: with the right preparation, communities can absorb what is coming without catastrophe. We know this because 2025 proved it. Early warning and organised community action reduced flood fatalities by 76% and displaced persons by 84% compared to 2024 (ref). The goal for 2026 is to go further.

The flood year follows a predictable rhythm, and that predictability is a gift. The early rains of April through June give communities a window to act — clearing drainage channels, reinforcing riverbanks, and registering households for alerts — before the peak season intensifies in July, August, and September. By the time October and November arrive, the heaviest rains may have eased, but water that fell months earlier in Adamawa and Cameroon is still travelling downstream toward the delta states. Communities in Anambra, Delta, Bayelsa, and Rivers need to stay vigilant well into November, long after they might assume the danger has passed.

The Communities That Need the Most Support:

Ten states face the sharpest risk in 2026: Kogi, Niger, Delta, Anambra, Benue, Kebbi, Rivers, Bayelsa, Adamawa, and Cross River but the threat is not abstract. Across Nigeria, 30,707 communities are at risk, along with 4,792 health facilities and 10,684 schools. When a health centre floods, patients lose access to care. When a school fills with water, children lose months of learning. These are the human costs that preparation can prevent.

In Kogi, where the Niger and Benue rivers meet at Lokoja, riverine flooding can isolate entire communities for weeks. Local governments there should be identifying high ground now,

designating safe assembly points, and making sure every community has a marked escape route. In Benue, the low-lying areas around Makurdi need the same attention before the Benue River crests. In Port Harcourt and other urban settings, where poor urban drainage compounds river and tidal flooding, the single most impactful community action is also the simplest — keeping drains clear of refuse.

With 4.2 million hectares of farmland at risk, agriculture sits at the centre of the 2026 challenge. Planting early-maturing crop varieties and using ridges or mounds instead of flat planting beds reduces both waterlogging damage and the risk of a total harvest loss. Staggered planting — sowing in batches rather than all at once means that if one batch is hit by flooding, others survive. Harvesting before October, and storing produce in elevated spaces away from floodwater, protects what has already been grown.

For northern farming communities, the challenge runs deeper, because the flood season is immediately followed by a severe dry period from December through February. The practical response is to treat flood season not only as a threat but as an opportunity — storing water in tanks, drums, and ponds during the wet months to carry livestock and households through the drought that follows.

The infrastructure of flood resilience is not complicated. It is community flood wardens who know which households have elderly or disabled residents and can reach them first. It is local radio stations broadcasting NIHSA alerts in local languages so that fishermen and farmers in remote areas receive warnings in time to act. It is traditional rulers and community leaders who have identified, in advance, which road out of the community stays passable longest. It is households that keep a small emergency kit — water purification tablets, key documents, basic medicine — packed and accessible before the rains arrive.

None of this requires waiting for government. Communities that prepare themselves reduce their own losses and make it easier for relief to reach those who need it most when flooding does occur.

Where local government is active and well-coordinated, the difference in outcomes is measurable.

The priorities for 2026 are straightforward: clear primary drainage channels before April, pre-position food and medical supplies in high-risk areas before July, and ensure that development permits are not issued for floodplain land. These are not expensive interventions. They are largely organisational — a matter of doing in advance what would otherwise be done in crisis.

Nigeria has 30,707 communities, 10,684 schools, and 4,792 health facilities in the path of the 2026 flood season. Each one is also a community that has survived flooding before, that has knowledge of its own landscape, and that can act. The science has been done. The warnings have been issued. What happens next depends on what communities, local governments, and individuals choose to do with this information — starting now, while there is still time.

Source: Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA) 2026 Annual Flood Outlook

UNDERSTANDING WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN RIVERS IN 2026

Rivers State is one of the most flood-vulnerable states in all of Nigeria. The government has listed Rivers among the **Top 10 States at High Risk** for flooding in 2026.

Why is Rivers so vulnerable? Three big reasons:

First, Rivers is in the heart of the Niger Delta. The Niger River splits into many creeks, streams, and waterways as it approaches the Atlantic Ocean. All the water that falls in northern Nigeria and flows down the Niger River eventually passes through Rivers State on its way to the sea.

Second, Rivers faces THREE types of flooding. The AFO identifies Rivers as having **riverine flooding** (from rivers overflowing), **tidal backwater** (from ocean tides pushing water inland), and **poor drainage** (urban flooding). Very few states have all three.

Third, Rivers has Port Harcourt, a major coastal city with serious drainage problems. The AFO lists Port Harcourt as the **number two** Urban Flood Hotspot in Nigeria. The city's drainage system is overwhelmed, and natural waterways have been blocked by development.

The Three Flood Periods for Rivers:

When?	What to Expect	How Serious?
April, May, June (Early rains)	Rains intensify. Creeks and waterways begin to rise. Urban areas with blocked drains see flash floods. Coastal areas see tidal influences.	Low to Medium
July, August, September (Peak rainy season)	This is very dangerous. Heavy rains fill up all waterways. Rivers overflow. Tidal backwater pushes water inland. Urban flooding worsens.	Medium to High
October, November (Late flooding - VERY DANGEROUS FOR RIVERS)	This period is critical. Recession flooding from the upper Niger and Benue basins arrives in the delta. Water that fell in Adamawa months ago finally reaches Rivers.	Medium to High

RESOURCE CENTRE

WHICH PARTS OF RIVERS ARE AT RISK

Rivers State falls within **Hydrological Area V (Niger Delta)** and **Hydrological Area VII (Eastern Littoral)** .

By the numbers (from NIHSA for HA-V):

Season	Risk Level	Number of Communities (across HA-V which includes Rivers)	What This Means for Rivers
AMJ (April-May-June)	High	531 communities	Early flooding begins. Creeks and waterways rise.
JAS (July-August-September)	High	863 communities	This is peak flooding. Widespread inundation across the state.
ON (October-November)	High	587 communities	Recession flooding arrives. Communities that thought the danger was over get flooded.

From the AFO's HA-VII tables (Eastern Littoral, for parts of Rivers):

Season	Risk Level	Number of Communities (across HA-VII which includes parts of Rivers)
AMJ	High	1,190 communities
JAS	High	1,433 communities
ON	High	1,216 communities

Annual total for Rivers: Rivers is among the **Top 10 High Risk States** in Nigeria. Most communities across the state will see flooding in 2026.

For roads: Rivers has **97 road sections** identified as at risk of flooding in 2026 (Table 4.26 of the AFO). This is the 4th highest in Nigeria (tied with Kebbi).

THE URBAN FLOOD HOTSPOT: PORT HARCOURT (NUMBER 2 IN NIGERIA)

The AFO lists Port Harcourt as the **number two** Urban Flood Hotspot in Nigeria.

Rank	State	Specific Location	Main Flood Cause	Risk Level
2	Rivers	Port Harcourt	Riverine flooding; tidal backwater; poor drainage	High

What this means for Port Harcourt:

- **Riverine flooding:** The rivers and creeks around Port Harcourt will overflow their banks
- **Tidal backwater:** Ocean tides push water into the creeks and rivers, causing water levels to rise even without rain
- **Poor drainage:** The city's drainage system is overwhelmed. Drains are blocked with garbage. Many areas have no drains at all

If you live in Port Harcourt, especially in low-lying areas near creeks or with poor drainage, you must take flooding extremely seriously in 2026. This is the second most flood-prone urban area in Nigeria.

THE THREE TYPES OF FLOODING IN RIVERS

Type 1: Riverine Flooding (from rivers and creeks)

The Niger Delta has a network of rivers and creeks. When heavy rains fall upstream (as far away as Adamawa and even Cameroon), water levels rise. Eventually, this water reaches Rivers State and spills over riverbanks and creek banks.

When this happens: JAS (July-September) and ON (October-November)

Type 2: Tidal Backwater (from ocean tides)

The Atlantic Ocean tides push water into the creeks and rivers of Rivers State. During high tides, water levels rise. During spring tides (when the tide is highest), water can flow onto land. This can happen even when it is not raining.

When this happens: Year-round, but worse during JAS and ON when river levels are also high

Type 3: Poor Drainage (Urban Flooding)

Port Harcourt and other towns have drainage systems that are blocked, broken, or non-existent. When heavy rain falls, water has nowhere to go. It pools on roads and enters homes and businesses.

When this happens: Any time there is heavy rain, especially during JAS

WHEN IS THE WORST TIME FOR RIVERS?

The **JAS period (July, August, September)** is very dangerous. But the **ON period (October, November)** is equally dangerous — and maybe more dangerous because people do not expect it.

The AFO says this clearly:

"The delayed flood pulse in October-November can catch delta communities off guard after the perceived peak of the JAS period."

What this means in simple words:

Many people think flooding only happens when the rains are heavy. In Rivers, flooding can happen in October and November even when the rains have reduced. This is because water that fell in Adamawa, Taraba, Benue, and Kogi months ago is slowly moving down the river system and finally arriving in Rivers.

Do not put away your emergency kit in September. Stay alert through November.

ABOVE-NORMAL RAINFALL WARNING FOR RIVERS

The PRESAGG 2026 forecast (from AGRHYMET, cited in the AFO) predicts **above-normal river flows** for coastal basins in southern Nigeria.

What this means for Rivers:

- You will likely receive **more water than usual** during the 2026 rainy season
- Rivers and creeks will carry higher volumes of water
- Low-lying coastal communities face higher risk of inundation

The AFO states:

"Above-normal river flows forecast for coastal basins confirm the High Flood Risk classification for South-South and coastal communities in Bayelsa, Delta, Rivers, and Cross River states."

Rivers is specifically named. Take this seriously.

WHAT CROPS ARE AT RISK IN RIVERS

Rivers State's agriculture includes crops that can tolerate wet conditions, but even these have limits.

The state is also a major producer of oil palm and cassava.

Crop	When It Is Most at Risk	What to Do
Cassava	Year-round but worse in JAS and ON	Plant on mounds or ridges. Cassava does not like wet feet. With above-normal rainfall and tidal flooding, ridges are essential. Choose early to medium-maturing varieties (8-12 months).
Oil Palm	Year-round	Oil palm can tolerate wet conditions, but young seedlings can be drowned. Ensure drainage

Crop	When It Is Most at Risk	What to Do
		channels are clear in oil palm plantations. Harvest fruit bunches before they rot in wet conditions.
Rice (lowland and swamp rice)	JAS (July-September) and ON (October-November)	Rice can handle water, but too much will drown it. Plant with first rains in March-April. Clear drainage channels so water flows through. Plant early-maturing varieties that can be harvested before the October peak.
Plantain and Banana	Year-round	These crops can tolerate wet conditions but do not like standing water. Ensure good drainage around the base of each plant. In flood-prone areas, plant on raised mounds.
Vegetables (waterleaf, fluted pumpkin (ugwu), okra, pepper)	JAS and ON	Use raised beds. Waterleaf and fluted pumpkin can handle wet conditions but still need good drainage. During heavy rain, watch for fungal diseases.
Yam	JAS (July-September)	Plant on mounds in March-April. Harvest before October if possible. In low-lying areas, consider moving yam farms to higher ground.
Cocoyam	JAS and ON	Cocoyam does well in wet conditions but still needs good drainage. Plant on mounds.

WHAT LIVESTOCK AND FISH FARMERS IN RIVERS MUST DO

For all livestock owners:

Action	When to Do It	Why
Vaccinate all animals	February-March (before rains start)	Wet ground spreads diseases faster
Deworm all animals	Start of rains, then again mid-season	Worms and parasites increase in wet conditions
Provide raised housing	Before April - THIS IS CRITICAL	Animals must have dry ground to stand on. Wet ground causes foot rot, pneumonia, and death.
Have an evacuation plan for animals	Before flood season	Where will you take your animals when water rises?
Identify high ground for animals	Before April	In Rivers, "high ground" may be relative. Find the highest spots in your area.

For poultry farmers in Rivers:

- **Raised housing is essential.** Build your poultry house on stilts if possible.
- Reduce the number of birds per cage. Do not overcrowd.
- Open the sides of your poultry house for ventilation.
- Feed birds early in the morning and late in the evening (cooler hours).
- Add vitamins and electrolytes to drinking water.
- Never leave birds without water. Check twice every day.
- During flooding, be prepared to move birds to higher ground or even into canoes if necessary.
- Watch for **coccidiosis** — wet litter increases this disease. Keep litter dry.

For goat and sheep farmers in Rivers:

- **Raised housing is essential.** Do not let animals sleep on wet ground. Build platforms or stilts.
- Watch for foot rot. If an animal starts limping, treat immediately.
- Cut and store grasses in the drier months (January-March) before the rains start. Use these during flood season when grasses may be underwater.

- During flooding, move animals to the highest ground available. If necessary, tie them on raised platforms.

For pig farmers in Rivers:

- Pigs must have **dry sleeping areas**. Wet conditions cause pneumonia.
- Provide shaded mud holes for pigs to cool themselves (pigs do not sweat — they need mud or water to cool down).
- During flood season, have a plan to move pigs to higher ground.
- **Critical warning for Rivers pig farmers:** Flooding can rise quickly in the delta. Do not wait. Move pigs early.

For fish farmers in Rivers (VERY IMPORTANT for this state):

Fish farming is a major livelihood in Rivers. Flooding is both a blessing (more water for ponds) and a curse (ponds can overflow and fish can escape). Tidal flooding can also bring saltwater into freshwater ponds.



Action	When to Do It	Why
Strengthen pond walls and embankments	Before heavy rains (March-June)	Floodwaters can wash away weak walls. Your fish will escape.
Clear drainage channels	Before April	Prevent overflow into your ponds from surrounding water
Install screens or netting at water inlets	Before April	Stop debris from entering and stop fish from escaping
Raise pond walls higher than normal	Before flood season	With above-normal rainfall, water levels will be higher than usual
Have harvest nets	Before JAS	If flooding threatens, you may need to harvest

Action	When to Do It	Why
ready	period	quickly
Monitor water salinity	Continuously (for coastal areas)	Tidal flooding can bring saltwater into freshwater ponds. Most freshwater fish cannot survive in saltwater.
Consider cage culture	Before flood season	Cages in protected creeks may be safer than ponds during extreme flooding

Special warning for fish farmers in coastal Rivers: Tidal flooding and storm surges can push saltwater into your ponds. Have a plan to protect your ponds from saltwater intrusion. If you see salinity rising, harvest your fish quickly before they die.

THE ROAD DISRUPTION WARNING

Rivers has **97 road sections** at risk of flooding in 2026. This is the 4th highest in Nigeria (tied with Kebbi).

What this means:

- Many roads will become impassable during the flood season
- Major roads in and around Port Harcourt will be affected
- Roads connecting Rivers to Bayelsa, Delta, and Imo may be affected
- You may not be able to travel between communities
- Markets may become inaccessible
- Emergency services may not reach you quickly

What you should do:

- Stock up on essential supplies (food, medicine, fuel) before the flood peak (by late September)

- If you need to travel for work or market, plan your trips before September
 - Identify alternative routes (including water routes) if roads are flooded
 - Keep your canoe or boat ready for transportation
 - Listen to NIHSA and NEMA warnings about road closures
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THE FERRY AND WATERWAY DISRUPTION WARNING

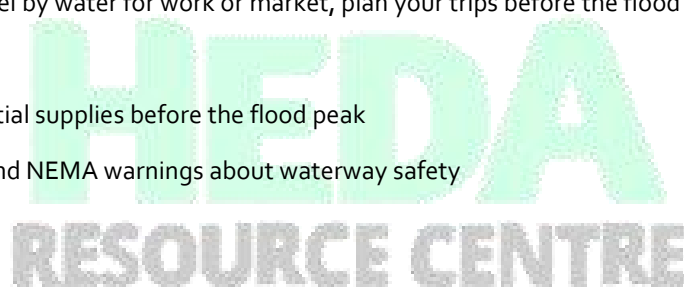
Rivers State depends heavily on waterways for transportation. The AFO warns that the Niger Delta region will face **ferry and waterway disruption** during flooding.

What this means:

- Ferries and boats may stop operating
- Water levels may be too high or currents too strong for safe travel
- You may not be able to cross between communities that are separated by water

What you should do:

- If you need to travel by water for work or market, plan your trips before the flood peak (before September)
- Stock up on essential supplies before the flood peak
- Listen to NIHSA and NEMA warnings about waterway safety



WHAT TO DO IF FLOODING COMES

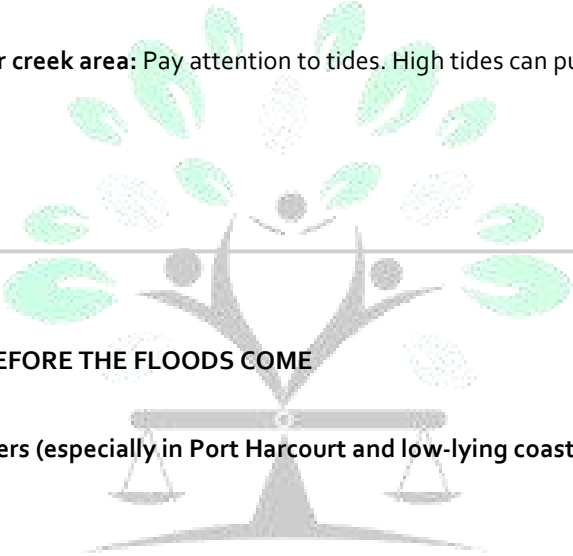
When NIHSA or NEMA sends a High Flood Risk warning:

1. **Leave immediately.** Do not wait to see the water.
2. Move to the designated safe place in your community (the highest ground you can find).
3. **Do not try to walk through moving floodwater.** It can sweep you away.
4. If it is safe, switch off electricity at the mains before leaving.

5. Take your emergency kit, important documents, and any medicines you need.
6. Make sure all family members are accounted for — especially children and elderly people.
7. Report to your local government flood officer or community flood warden.
8. **For livestock:** Move animals to higher ground before the water arrives. Do not wait.
9. **Do not assume that because September has passed, you are safe.** Stay alert through November.

If you are in Port Harcourt: Pay attention to local flooding. If you see water pooling on roads, do not attempt to drive through it. Six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet. One foot of moving water can sweep away a car.

If you are in a coastal or creek area: Pay attention to tides. High tides can push water inland even when it is not raining.



WHAT TO PREPARE BEFORE THE FLOODS COME

Every household in Rivers (especially in Port Harcourt and low-lying coastal areas) should prepare:

- An emergency kit containing: water purification tablets, first aid supplies, copies of important documents (in a waterproof bag), and enough food for at least three days.
- Know your escape route. Where is the nearest high ground? In Rivers, "high ground" might be a road embankment, a raised building, or a community shelter.
- Register with your local government flood officer to receive alerts by phone or radio.
- Raise important belongings (mattresses, electronics, food stores) above the expected flood level. In Rivers, raise everything as high as you can.
- Clear the drainage channels around your home before the rains begin.
- Keep your canoe or boat ready for emergency use. Have life jackets if possible.

For farmers: Store harvested crops in elevated storage. Do not keep bags of grain on the floor.

For fish farmers: Strengthen pond walls. Raise walls higher than normal. Monitor water salinity. Have harvest nets ready.

For livestock owners: Have a plan to move animals to higher ground quickly. Identify the highest spots in your area now, before the flood comes.

THE GOOD NEWS FOR RIVERS

Unlike northern states, Rivers does not face severe drought during the dry season.

Dry season outlook (October 2026 - March 2027):

Zone	Forecast	What This Means
South-South (including Rivers)	Slightly Wet to Moderately Wet	You will have water throughout the dry season. No drought vulnerability.

This means you do not need to worry about rivers stopping or severe water scarcity.

However, note that the ON period (October-November) is still part of the dry season outlook. This means during the early dry season, conditions will be Slightly Wet to Moderately Wet — enough water to cause flooding from recession flows.



WHO TO CALL FOR HELP IN RIVERS

Agency	What They Do	Contact
NIHSA	Issues flood warnings	0800-NIHSA-NG
NEMA	Disaster response and relief	0800-NEMA-NG

Agency	What They Do	Contact
Rivers State SEMA	State-level emergency response	Contact your LGA Agriculture Officer or LGA Chairman for local numbers
NiMet	Weather forecasts	www.nimet.gov.ng

THE BOTTOM LINE FOR RIVERS

- **You are one of the Top 10 most flood-vulnerable states in Nigeria.** Take this seriously.
- **You have THREE types of flooding:** Riverine (from rivers and creeks), tidal backwater (from ocean tides), and poor drainage (urban flooding). Pay attention to all three.
- **The worst months are July, August, and September (JAS).** But October and November are also very dangerous due to recession flooding.
- **Port Harcourt is the number two Urban Flood Hotspot in Nigeria** — only behind Lagos. The city has riverine flooding, tidal backwater, and poor drainage.
- **97 road sections in Rivers are at risk of flooding** — the 4th highest in Nigeria. Stock up on supplies before the flood peak.
- **Above-normal river flows are predicted.** This means more water than usual. Prepare for a worse-than-normal year.
- **Farmers:** Plant on mounds or ridges. Clear drainage channels. Watch for saltwater intrusion in coastal areas.
- **Fish farmers:** Strengthen pond walls. Raise walls higher than normal. Monitor water salinity. Have harvest nets ready.
- **Livestock owners:** Raised housing is essential. Have a plan to move animals to higher ground.
- **The good news:** You do not face severe drought like northern states. Your dry season will have Slightly Wet to Moderately Wet conditions.
- **Do not wait until water arrives.** Prepare your emergency kit, know your escape route, and stay alert through November.

This information comes directly from the NIHSA 2026 Annual Flood Outlook.

PREPARE NOW. DO NOT WAIT.

