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**Position Statement**

September 2025

**on the Flood Estimation Handbook (FEH) Statistical Method Update 2025**

# Background

The Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH) has updated the FEH Statistical Method along with four catchment descriptors used by the method. The new software version, WINFAP 5.3, will be launched in September 2025. The previous major update to the Statistical Method was in 2008.

The updated catchment descriptors describe annual rainfall (SAAR), urbanisation (URBEXT), baseflow (BFIHOST) and reservoir impact estimates (FARL) using new data sources, which include longer records and improved spatial data. The method development reports are available on the UKCEH website:

* [The FEH catchment descriptors 2025](https://www.ceh.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-07/ukceh_feh_catchment_descriptors_2025_v3.pdf)
* [The FEH 2025 Statistical Method update](https://www.ceh.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-07/ukceh_feh_2025_statistical_update_v1_3_0.pdf)

This position statement sets out advice to stakeholders who undertake hydrological modelling via the FEH methods, for the purposes of estimating design flows and assessing flood rarity.

# What has changed?

The 2025 Statistical Method updates include:

* Updated catchment descriptors: SAAR9120, FARL2015, URBEXT2015 and BFIHOST19SCALED.
* A recalibrated equation for estimating QMED from catchment descriptors, including urban adjustment.
* An updated equation and change to the recommended number of sites for donor transfer adjustment of QMED.
* An update to the pooling procedure for estimating flood growth curves:
  + A change to the descriptors used to select sites for the pooling group and to estimate the similarity distance metric.
  + Updated target length of record years for the pooling group.
  + Updated equations for pooled L-moments.
  + Removed the separate method for small catchments.
  + Updated urban adjustments for L-moments.
  + Updated weighting of subject site gauges in enhanced single site pooling.

# Implications for users

The updated methods are an improvement on the previous statistical method. We recommend they are used in all new flood risk/modelling studies following the release of WINFAP 5.3 in September 2025. We will however implement a 6-month grace period (from the date of launch) for ongoing projects and will accept them at face value within this timeframe.

We also note that the updated NRFA Peak Flows v14 dataset, that accompanies WINFAP 5.3, was released on 21 August 2025. [View the dataset](https://nrfa.ceh.ac.uk/data/peak-flow-dataset) on the UKCEH website.

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