SPECIAL WEATHER SUMMARY

Late on the 5th a major storm struck the area with effects continuing through the 9th. While of a fairly typical type, two unusual factors resulted in the greatest recorded damage to date along the Maryland-Delaware coast. The first was the slow movement of the storm and the resulting long duration of northeasterly gales. The second was the coincidence with spring tides.

On the 4th a wave formed on the polar front east of Florida and moved slowly northward as a weak center. At the same time another storm moved eastward across the center of the country. The surface low of the second storm dissipated along the mountains but the well developed upper air circulation continued eastward and intensified the low center moving up the coast. Such deep upper level lows are often slow moving as in this case. At the same time, a strong blocking high centered over southeastern Canada prevented the northward movement of the surface low center beyond the latitude of Maryland. The result is shown on the accompanying weather map for March 7th. Note the elongated low center and the large area of strong pressure gradient and gale force winds north of the center. The northeasterly winds blowing over a fetch of nearly 1000 miles piled up additional water on top of the normally high spring tides and created 20 to 30 foot waves which pounded the shore.

As might be expected from the dual origin of the storm, snow began first in western Maryland on the morning of the 5th and by the morning of the 7th 25 inches lay on the ground. A few showers fell on the southern Delmar Peninsula during the early afternoon of the 5th and by evening precipitation had spread throughout both states. The nature of the precipitation varied with the temperature being rain along the coast, snow in western Maryland, and mixed rain and clinging, wet snow in between. While the deep, drifting snow was an inconvenience in western Maryland as it blocked roads and isolated farms and towns, much more damage was done in central and southern Maryland where the heavy wet snow broke down trees and utility lines causing much hardship. Electric power was off a short time at most localities and up to a week in a few areas - this where electricity is depended upon for so many things from light and heat to pumping water and milking cows. Total precipitation was generally 1.5 to 2.5 inches except in northern Delaware and around Hagerstown where less than an inch fell. Minor flooding occurred as the heavy rains sent creeks over their banks.

The greatest damage was done along the coast. Although winds at Ocean City were 40 to 45 mph with gusts to 55 or 65 mph for about 18 hours, direct wind damage was light. Nearly all the loss was due to the high water and battering waves. Tides reached 4 to 6 feet above normal. Four or five high tides with 20 to 30 foot waves breaking against the coast caused serious beach erosion and destruction of shoreline property. The boardwalks and debris from buildings were tossed around like matchsticks. In some areas damage was confined to the ocean front and buildings half a block from the beach were undamaged. In other regions such as Assateague Island water poured completely across the island into the bay beyond. Sand dunes were leveled and the sand washed across the islands into the bays. In North Ocean City the ocean has encroached as much as 200 feet. Beach homes and commercial property were damaged or destroyed. While the damage

In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the great East Coast storm of March 5-9, 1962. I have reproduced a portion of the Maryland/Delaware CD (official NCDC Climatological Data publication) - March 1962

Special summary for the coastal storm of March 5-9, 1962, excerpted out of the free NCDC archives.

There is a great map of the storm at the end of the summary. I have also attached the CDs from NJ, VA, NY, and New England for March 1962 with special summaries near the front of each publication.

to buildings is a tragedy to the owners, of more importance is the loss of the beach itself where the sand was washed away. This may be a real handicap to the return of these beaches to their former high status as summer resorts. Three deaths were reported in Maryland and 7 in Delaware - 5 from one family.

Rainsoaked soils minimized salt damage on lowlands flooded by high tides on Chesapeake Bay, but damage was greater in northern Delaware where pre-flooding rainfall had been light. Losses of broiler chickens approached 1.5 million and an unknown number of incubator eggs were lost, due chiefly to power failures in the Delmarva production area.

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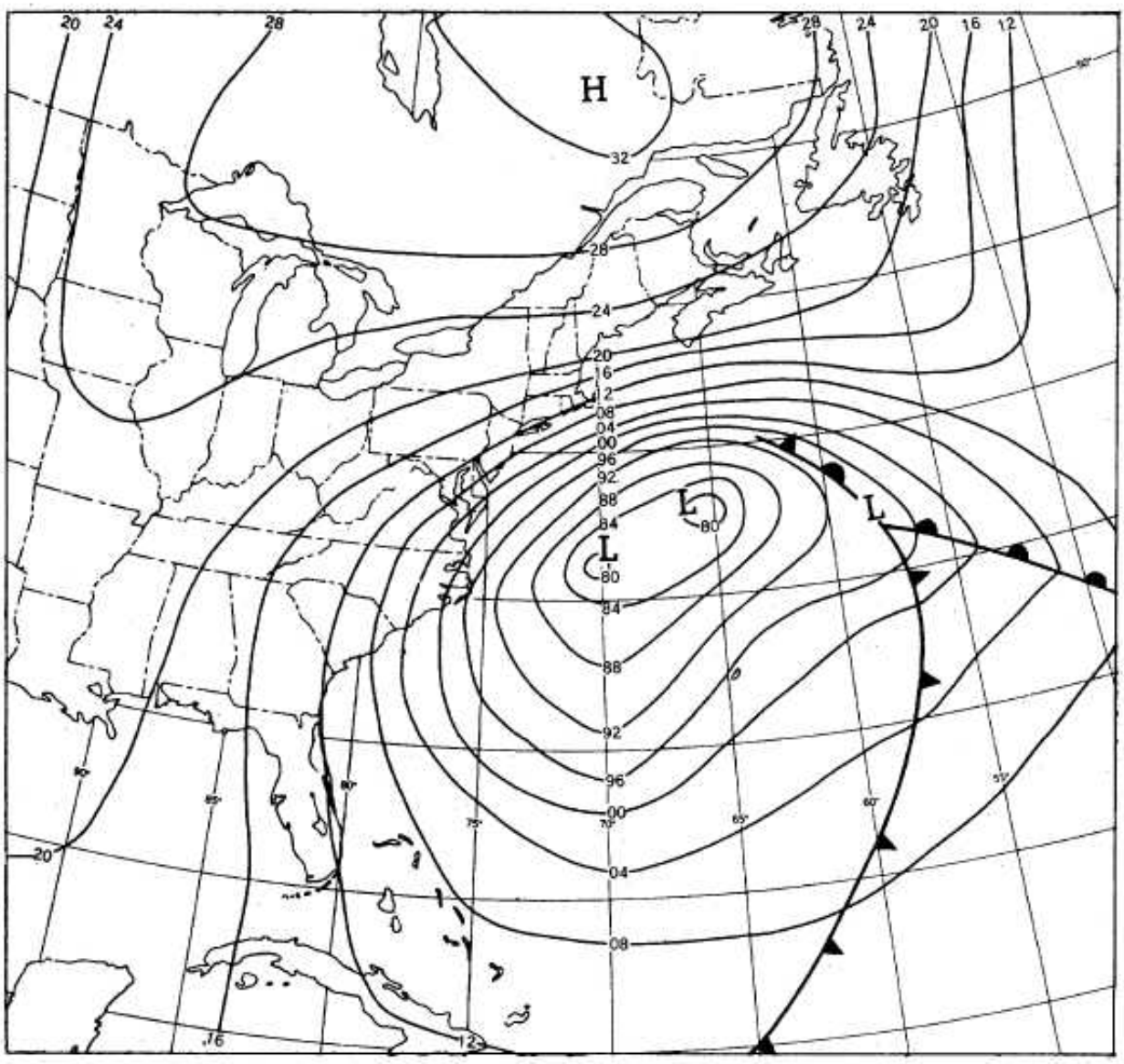

SYNOPTIC WEATHER MAP FOR 0700 E.S.T., MARCH 7, 1962.