In June 1972, torrential storms caused severe flooding in northeastern and southern New York. The floods on many major streams were the highest known since the river valleys were settled. Extreme discharges were as much as twice the discharge of a 10-year flood. In southern New York, large areas in Cattaraugus, Allegany, Orleans, Schuyler, and Erie counties were inundated to depths of several feet. Levels of all the bigger streams rose higher than any previous record, and some minor streams were also flooded.

The extent of flooding shown on the map was determined by the U.S. Geological Survey from field surveys made immediately after the flood.

The investigation was conducted in cooperation with the State of New York and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.