

Gilbert River

This brochure describes the flood risk and previous flooding in the Gilbert River catchment, last updated in July 2025.

Flood Risk

The Gilbert River catchment is located in northwest Queensland and covers an area of approximately 47,000 square kilometres. The river rises in the Great Dividing Range approximately 150 kilometres southeast of Georgetown. The river flows in a northwesterly direction and is joined by its major tributary, the Einasleigh River, downstream of Strathmore, before finally entering the Gulf of Carpentaria in a river delta 100 kilometres wide. The other main tributary, the Etheridge River, joins the Einasleigh River downstream of Georgetown, which is the only town in this vast catchment. Smaller settlements can be found at Forsayth, Mt Surprise and Einasleigh. Floods normally develop in the headwaters of the Gilbert and Einasleigh Rivers, however general heavy rainfall situations can develop from monsoonal and cyclonic influences which can result in widespread flooding, particularly in the lower reaches below Strathmore.

Flash flooding is possible at many locations with impacts generally along Gulf Development Road.

Previous Flooding

Previous flood information for the Gilbert River is rather limited. Peak flood heights are available from the early 1970's, including the major events recorded in 1974, 1991, 2009, 2018, and 2021.

The record major flood of January 1974 and the floods of February 1991 and in January and February 2009, caused widespread road closures, isolation of communities and inundation of properties throughout the catchment.

Major flood event occurred in January 2021, when tropical cyclone Imogen moved inland across the southern Cape York Peninsula after crossing the coast just north of Kurumba as a category 1 system. Major flood levels were also observed in Feb 2025 due to tropical weather systems.

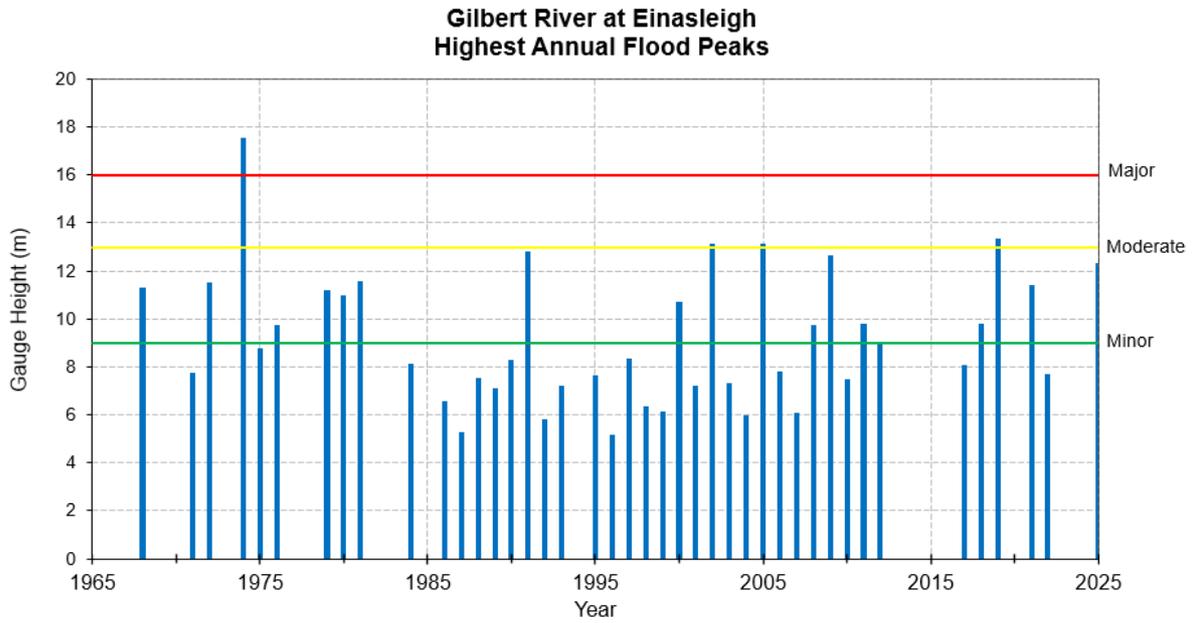
The table below summarises the flood history of the Gilbert River catchment - it contains the flood gauge heights of the more significant recent floods.

Flood Event	North Head	Green Hills	Riverview	Rockfields	Georgetown	Einasleigh	Eveleigh	Van Lee
Jan 1956	6.92	-	-	-	7.50	-	-	12.55
Jan 1974	10.94	13.45	9.83	12.75	6.50	17.53	-	12.19
Jan 1991	7.12	8.19	6.67	-	-	12.83	-	8.97
Feb 1991	-	-	-	-	-	11.24	-	-
Mar 1995	5.30	6.20	4.50	-	-	7.67	-	4.10
Feb 2002	8.25	8.70	5.90	-	6.30	-	-	7.00
Jan 2009	9.00	10.45	7.90	10.45	5.50	12.64	7.55	9.25

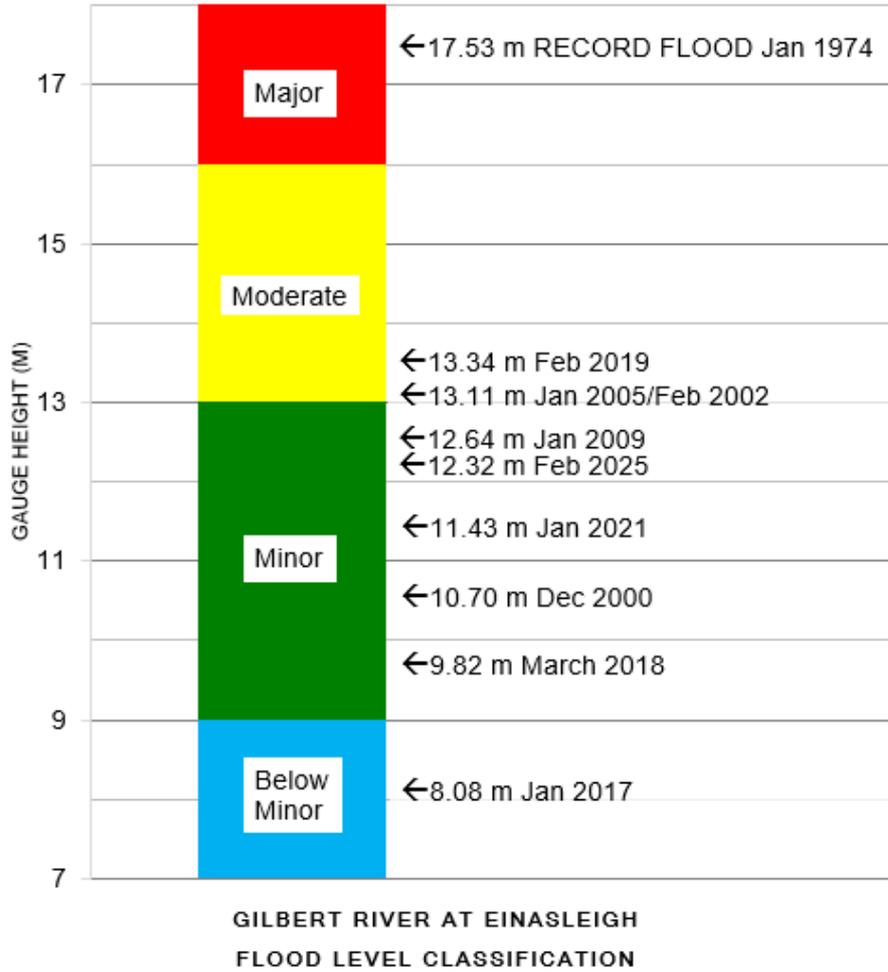
Flood Event	North Head	Green Hills	Riverview	Rockfields	Georgetown	Einasleyh	Eveleigh	Van Lee
Feb 2009	6.50	-	5.00	8.20	7.70	11.19	6.60	-
Mar 2018	-	5.15	4.5	7.36	-	9.82	-	-
Feb 2019	6.20	6.00	-	7.8	-	13.34	-	-
Jan 2021	-	5.15	3.4	8.82	-	11.43	-	-
*Feb 2025				9.70		12.32		

All heights are in metres on flood gauges.

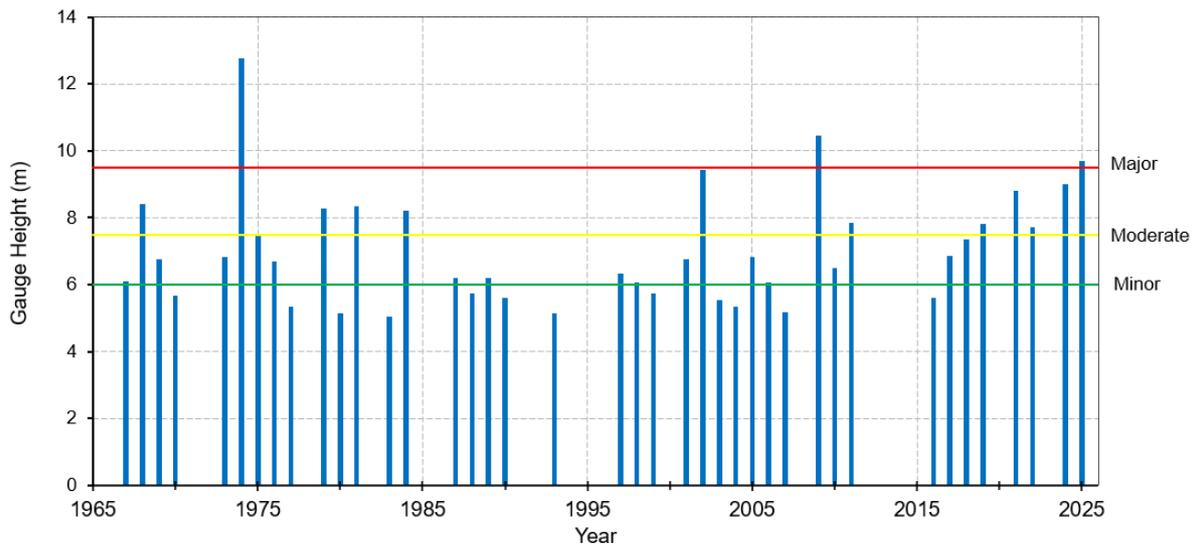
*Preliminary values subject to quality control.



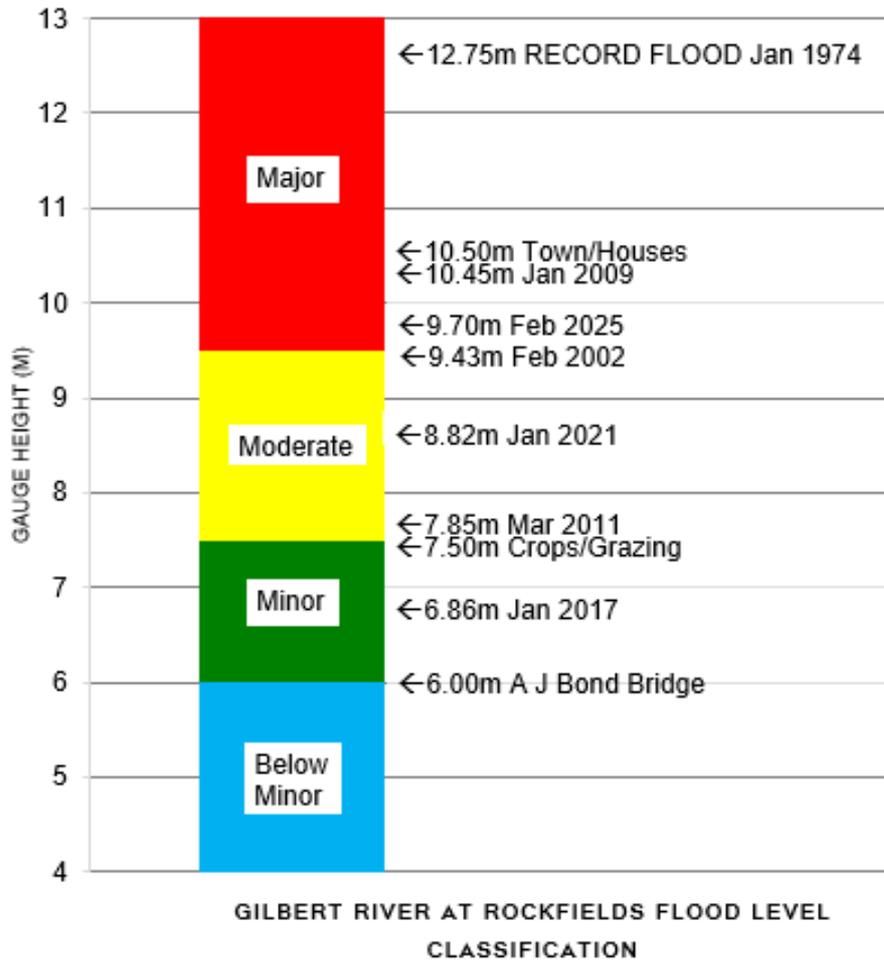
Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology



Gilbert River at Rockfields Highest Annual Flood Peaks



Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology



Further Information

- [Latest rainfall and river heights](#)
- For information on the flood warning service for the Gilbert River: [Queensland Service Level Specification](#)
- Catchment map: [Queensland Gilbert, Norman Rivers map](#)
- [National Arrangements for Flood Forecasting and Warning](#)