



## FLOOD IN THE HERBERT RIVER

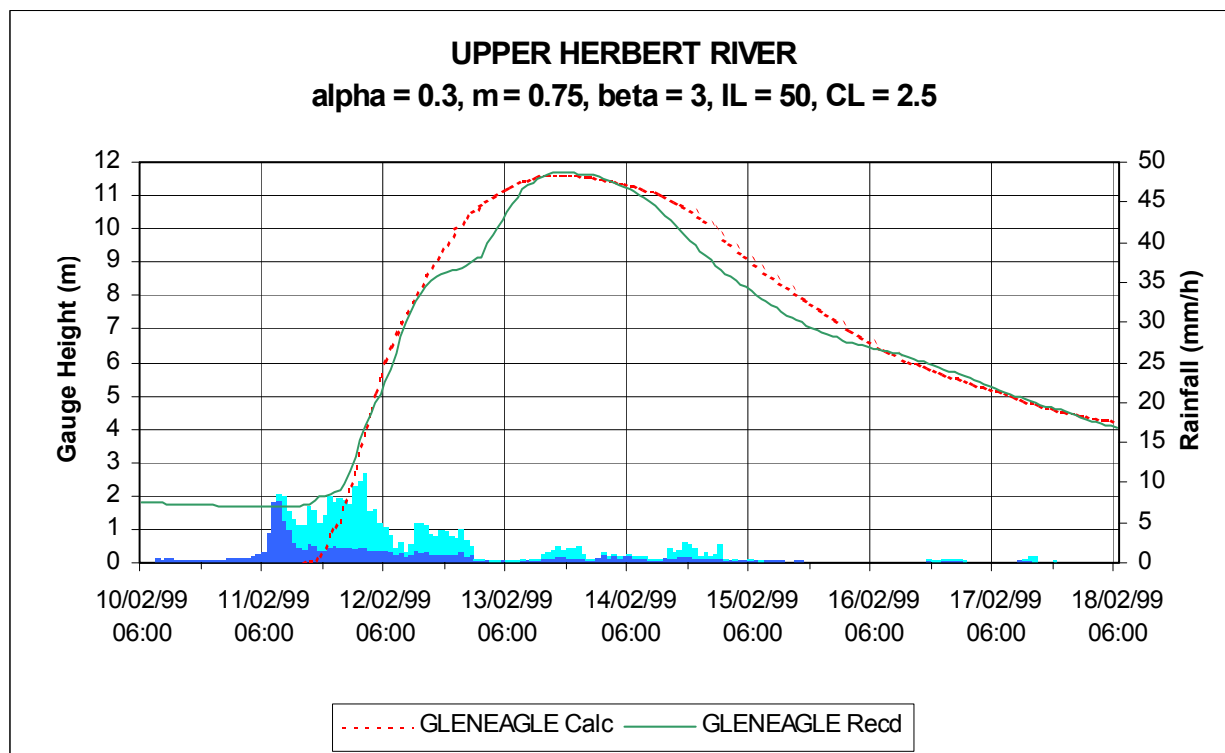
February 1999

*This preliminary report only includes some observations on the flood in the Herbert River which commenced on Thursday 11 February and is subject to confirmation.*

### Rainfall

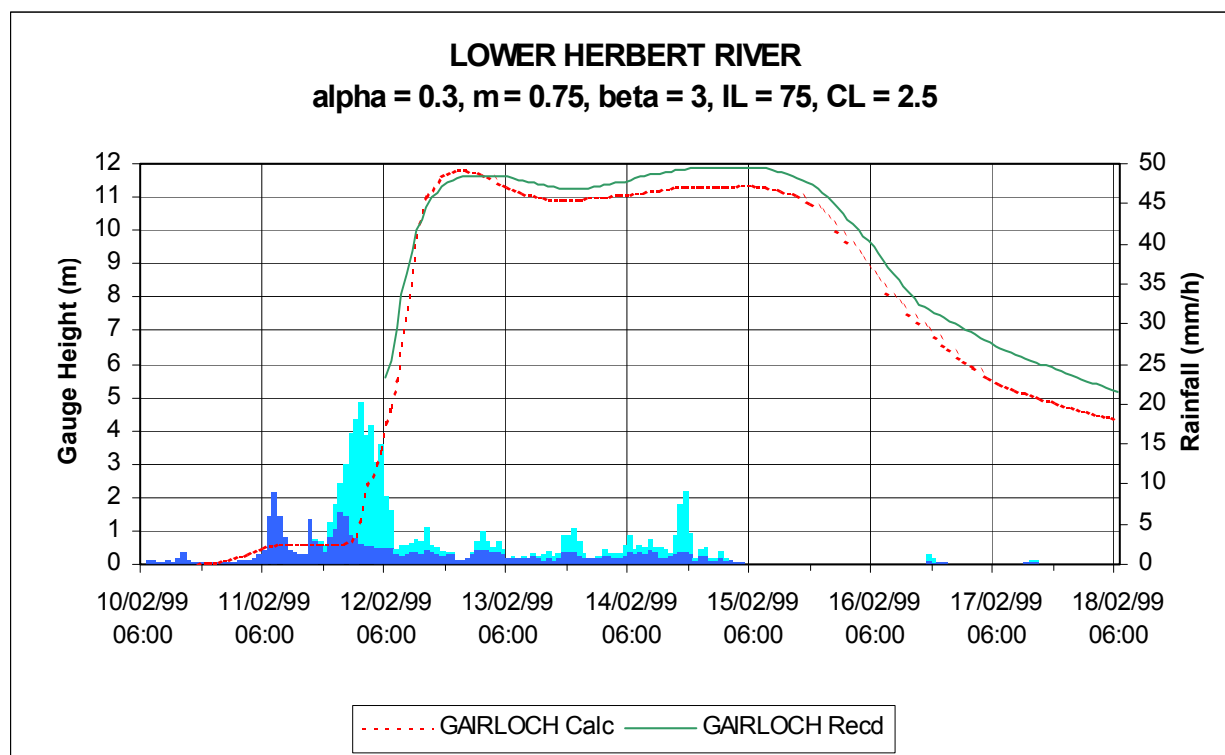
- Heavy rain commenced in the northern side of the upper Herbert River on the morning of Thursday 11 February and fell almost continuously through until late Friday night. In the middle reaches of the Herbert River, the heavy rain fell for about 12 hours from late Thursday morning to about 9am Friday. Rainfall in the lower part of the Herbert was only intermittently heavy during the period.
- Rainfall totals over the period 9am Wednesday to 9am Sunday ranged from just under 100mm at Poverty Hill in the lower catchment to over 550 mm in the Herberton and Ravenshoe areas.
- Highest rainfall totals were recorded in the upper part of the catchment around Herberton and Ravenshoe and in the middle catchment around Nash's Crossing with markedly lower falls in the Rudd Creek area in the upper catchment and in the Stone River catchment.
- Most intense 3 hourly rainfalls:

84mm at Greenhaven	ending 01:10am Friday 12 Feb
34mm at Mt Garnet	ending 03:00am Friday 12 Feb
103mm at Nash's Crossing	ending 02:40am Friday 12 Feb
50mm at Ingham	ending 02:30am Friday 12 Feb



## River Heights

- River levels commenced to rise throughout the catchment from about 9am Thursday morning in the upper catchment but did not commence to rise until about 12 hours later in the lower catchment.
- At Gleneagle (ALERT), the river rose quickly from less than 2 metres at 4pm Thursday and climbed steadily until it reached about 8.5 metres at 4pm Friday. At this time the rate of rise slowed for about 6 hours before it commenced to rise again, eventually peaking at 11.7 metres at 4pm Saturday. (This level is the highest since Feb 1986.)
- The flood levels in the lower Herbert commenced to rise early Friday morning and an initial peak at stations between Nash's Crossing and Gairloch was reached late Friday night. Major flood levels were maintained in the lower Herbert River over the weekend of the 13/14 February as the flood waters from the upper Herbert arrived.
- At Gairloch, the river reached an initial peak of 11.65 at midnight Friday, fell to 11.25 metres by 9pm Saturday but rose to a second higher peak of 11.90 metres at 6am Sunday. It stayed above the 11 metre level until 9pm Monday before quickly falling during Tuesday 16 February.



## Flood Forecasts and Warnings

- Rainfall and river heights in the Herbert River are primarily monitored by the ALERT system which instantaneously reports every 1mm of rainfall and every 50mm change in river level to a base station at Hinchinbrook Shire Council (Ingham) and the Bureau's Flood Warning Centre in Brisbane. With a few exceptions of rain stations in the upper catchment, the system performed very well.
- The primary forecast point for the Herbert River is the gauge at Gairloch which has some records dating back to 1967.
- A Preliminary Flood Warning for Coastal Rivers between Cairns and Townsville was issued at 1031 on Thursday 11 February.

- A specific Flood Warning for the Herbert River was issued at 6am on Friday 12 February and regularly updated until the final warning was issued at 10am 17 February.
- Flood warnings were issued directly to Council, QES, Police and media via fax.
- River height bulletins, containing the latest river heights, were also issued directly to Council, QES, Police and media via fax.
- Flood Warnings and River Height Bulletins were also available via Weather by Fax and at the Bureau's Web site [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au).
- River Height Bulletins on the www and Weather by Fax were updated every hour.
- As well as being contained in warnings, height predictions for Gairloch were regularly discussed with staff from Hinchinbrook Shire Council.

**Further Information**

- Contact Peter Baddiley (07 3239 8768) or Terry Malone (07 3239 8765).
- A report will be prepared by the Bureau.