



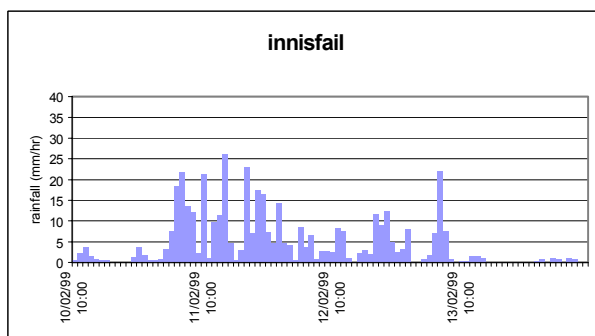
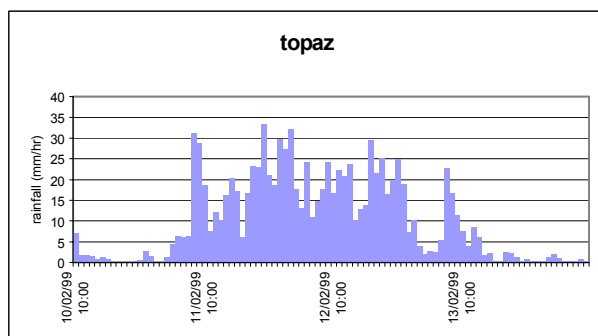
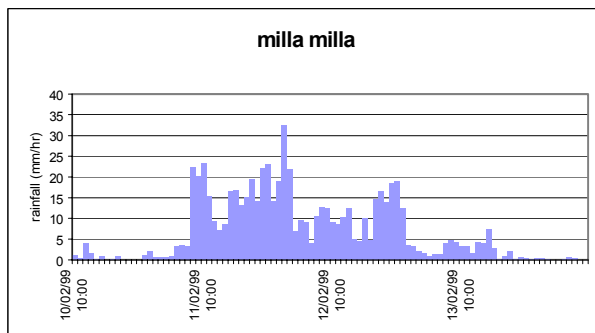
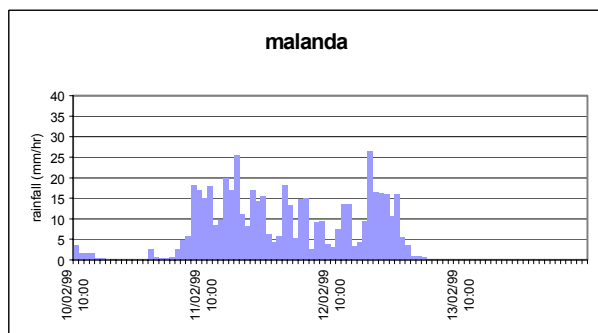
FLOOD IN THE JOHNSTONE RIVER

February 1999

This preliminary report only includes some observations on the flood in the Johnstone River which occurred on Friday 12 February and is subject to confirmation.

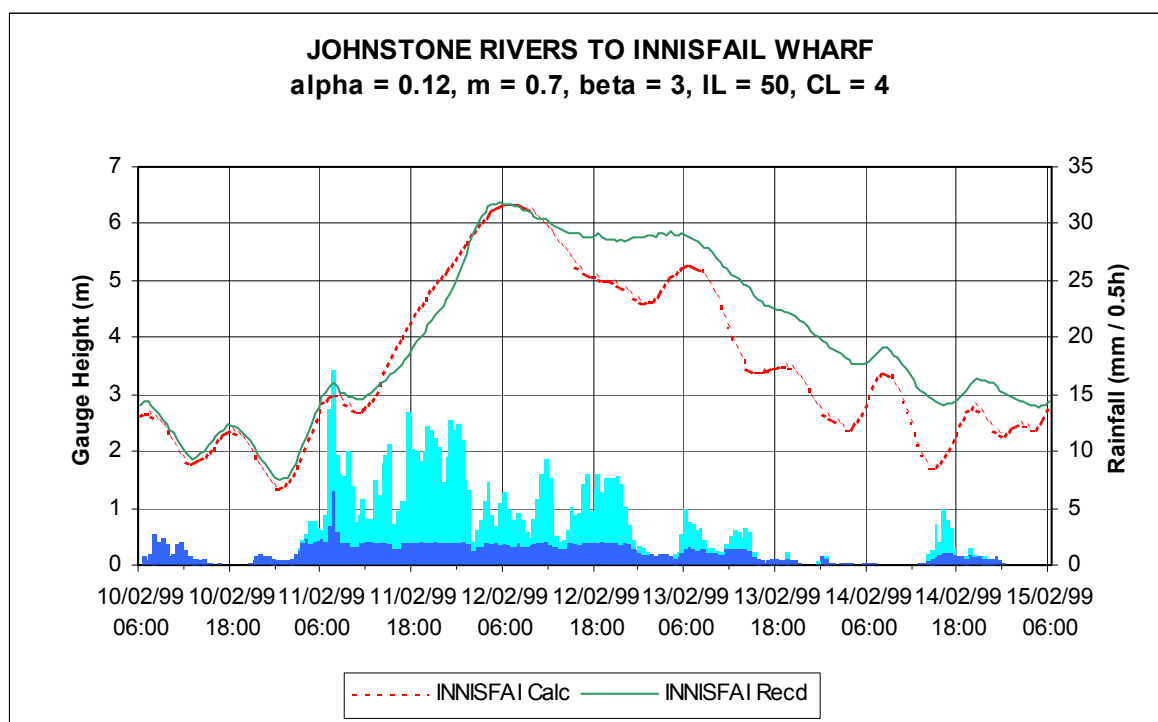
Rainfall

- Heavy rainfall commenced in the lower reaches of the Johnstone River at approximately 3am Thursday 11 February, but only really started in the upper reaches on the Tablelands later in the morning at 7am.
- Rainfall in the Tablelands continued incessantly for nearly 48 hours from the early morning on the Thursday to the early morning on the Saturday. Rainfall in the lower catchment was more intermittent during the Friday.
- Rainfall totals over the period 3am Thursday to 9am Sunday ranged from 949mm at Topaz in the Tablelands to 410mm at Innisfail.
- Rainfall totals were generally much greater in the Tablelands than in the lower Johnstone catchment.
- Most intense 1 hourly rainfalls:
 - 52 mm at Corsis ending 07:44am Thursday 11 Feb
 - 46mm at Nerada ending 07:59am Thursday 11 Feb
 - 39mm at Topaz ending 00:29am Friday 12 Feb



River Heights

- River levels commenced rising rapidly in the North Johnstone River and South Johnstone River upstream of Innisfail at approximately 7:30am on Thursday.
- Initial peaks, which were below the minor flood levels, were recorded on Thursday at Nerada and Central Mill between 10am to 12 am from the early morning rain. River levels then dropped briefly before the continuous rain resulted in further rises.
- River levels at Central Mill peaked at 9.7 metres at 1am Friday, a level that has been exceeded twice in the last 10 years. River levels at Nerada peaked at 11.15 metres at 2am Friday, the highest recorded in the last 10 years.
- The upstream rises coincided with the rising tide at Innisfail and a noticeable rise in river levels was not apparent until just after midday on Thursday.
- River levels rose steadily at Innisfail from 12:30pm on Thursday to peak at 6.37 metres at 5:30am on Friday, 3 to 4 hours after peaks were recorded upstream.
- This level is similar to the 1986 flood level (Cyclone Winifred)- at Innisfail, the second highest flood recorded this century.
- Reports indicated that over 100 houses were inundated in Innisfail.
- High river levels were maintained at Innisfail for about 24 hours due to the continuous rainfall in the upper catchment. A second peak of 5.82 metres was recorded at 3am on Saturday before the river levels started to fall significantly.



Flood Forecasts and Warnings

- Rainfall and river heights in the Johnstone River are primarily monitored by the ALERT system which instantaneously reports every 1mm of rainfall and every 50mm change in river level to base stations at Innisfail and the Bureau's Flood Warning Centre in Brisbane. With a few exceptions, the system performed very well.
- The primary forecast point for the Johnstone River is the gauge at Innisfail Wharf which has some records dating back to 1967.
- The automatic gauge readings at Innisfail were verified and found to be consistent

- with manual readings during the event.
- 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 Johnstone River was issued at 1615 on Thursday 11 February and then subsequently at 1946, 2246 on Thursday 11 February and 0403 and 0703 on Friday 12 February during the rise at Innisfail. Warnings were then issued at 3 to 6 hourly intervals until a final warning was issued on Saturday, 13 February at 2133.
- 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.
- River Height Bulletins on the www and Weather by Fax were updated every hour.

Further Information

- Contact Peter Baddiley (07 3239 8768) or Anna Molloy (07 3239 8769).