

G473 Environmental Geology
Lab 2 – Introduction to Flood Hazard Analysis

Part 1. Buffalo Creek, WV Case Study

On February 26, 1972, the most destructive flood in West Virginia's history swept through the Buffalo Creek valley in the southwestern Corner of the State, 40 miles south of Charleston (Figure 1). Shortly before 8:00 AM, a coal-waste dam collapsed on the Buffalo Creek tributary, releasing 17.6 million cubic feet (132 million gallons) of water. A 10 to 20 ft flood wave rapidly passed down the valley, killing 118 people, destroying 500 homes, leaving 4000 people homeless, and creating \$50 million dollars in damage to public infrastructure. The towns most directly affected by the flooding include Saunders, WV; Stowe, WV; Accoville, WV; and Man, WV (Figure 2).

Table 1 is a record of stream discharge data collected along Buffalo Creek on the day of February 26, 1972. Your task is to use the attached graph paper to plot a hydrograph (Discharge vs. Time) for Buffalo Creek. This data is also available as a Microsoft Excel worksheet file on the class website. Students are encouraged to use Excel to compute the results of this exercise. Complete the following tasks:

- (1) Using the answer sheet in Table 2, convert the discharges from cfs to cu. m/sec for each gauge station.
- (2) Using the answer sheet in Table 2, convert the "clock time" to time in minutes from the start of the observation period for each gauge station (e.g. the start time is 7:50 AM for each station, consider this as "0 min" since start, 7:55 AM = 5 min, 8:00 AM = 10 min, 8:05 = 15 min.... and so on).
- (3) Using the blank graph in Figure 3, plot a flood hydrograph for each station, using a different colored line for each (e.g. Saunders station = red, Stowe station = blue, etc.). Plot all four hydrographs on the same graph paper. Format your hydrographs with time (min) on the x-axis, and discharge (cu. ft /sec) on the y-axis.
- (4) On Table 3, compute the travel velocity of the peak flood wave as it progressed downstream.
 - A. Determine the distance along the stream course, in miles, between each of the stations (use Fig. 2),
 - B. Determine the travel time of the peak flood wave (in hours) between each station, by using your hydrograph,
 - C. Calculate the velocity of the peak flood wave between each station (in mi / hr using $V=d/t$),
 - D. Calculate the total distance, travel time, and average velocity between Saunders and Man, and
 - E. Convert the flood-wave velocity from mi/hr to ft/sec.
- (5) On Table 4, compute the cross-sectional area of peak flood flow at the Stowe, Accoville, and Man stations using the continuity equation: $Q = VA$, where Q = flood peak discharge, V = velocity of flood wave, and A = cross-sectional area of channel flow in the valley.
 - A. List the peak flood wave velocity in ft/sec, as calculated on Table 3.
 - B. From your hydrograph / discharge data, list the peak flood-wave discharge for each of the stations listed on Table 4.
 - C. Re-arrange the continuity equation and solve for cross-sectional area of flow in square feet.

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper, or with a word processor:

1. Describe what happens to the overall peak flood-wave discharge as the dam-burst event progresses downstream.
2. Describe what happens to the velocity of the peak flood-wave as it passes downstream.
3. Provide several hypotheses as to why you think the peak flood-wave discharge decreases so dramatically from Saunders (near the dam break) to the other stations? (think about what is happening to the river channel and the water in the channel).
4. Based on Table 3 and Table 4, why does the flood-wave travel velocity diminish so significantly between Accoville and Man? (look at the data and think about the continuity equation and valley geometry).
5. Which town along Buffalo Creek do you think sustained the most death and destruction? Explain your answer in detail (why?).

6. What would be the best way to save lives in Man, WV, compared to Saunders... again look at the data in Table 3.
7. Discuss what you know about flood hazards and how this catastrophe could have been avoided or otherwise mitigated.

Part 2. Flood Recurrence Interval Calculations

Table 5 lists 25 years (1971-1995) peak annual discharge data for Mission Creek, near Santa Barbara, CA. The stream is gauged and monitored for discharge. At the end of each water year, the highest discharge is selected and designated as the “peak annual”. Peak annual discharge analysis forms the framework for delineating Recurrence Intervals of maximum flood flow along streams and rivers. Your job is to calculate the “100 year Flood Discharge”, so that a flood hazards map can be prepared for home owners along Mission Creek. Since there is only 25 years of data, we will have to do a statistical analysis to project the magnitude of the “100-year flood”. We will use a technique developed by the U.S. Geological Survey referred to as the “Pearson Type III Distribution”. Complete the following steps.

- (1) Sort and rank the data in Table 5 according to discharge magnitude (M) from highest to lowest, e.g. for the highest discharge $M = 1$, for the lowest discharge $M = 25$ (since there are only 25 years worth of data). Place your data in the appropriate position on Table 6 (fill in columns 1 and 3).

NOTE: Tables 5 and 6 are available for download from the web site as Microsoft Excel Files. You are encouraged to use Microsoft Excel to work this problem, especially since I have the formulas for Table 6 already set up. If you use the Excel version, all you have to do is enter the data into Table 6, and it will automatically calculate all of the 100 year flood discharge parameters. Otherwise, you can use the paper version of Table 6 and calculate by hand with a traditional calculator.

- (2) Calculate the recurrence interval for the listed floods by using the formula:

$$R.I. \text{ (years)} = (N+1) / M$$

Where R.I. = recurrence interval, N = total no. of observations in the record, M = rank (1 = highest). Fill in column 4.

- (3) In Table 6, Calculate Q' by taking the “log” (to the base 10) of the peak annual discharge (Q_p – Column 3) for each year (fill in column 5).
- (4) Calculate the average Q' (calculate the average of all values in column 5). Enter your result in the space provided in the calculation box at the bottom of the table.
- (5) Systematically subtract the average Q' from each Q' and fill in column 6 ($Q' - Q_{avg}$).
- (6) In Column 7, calculate the square of ($Q' - Q_{avg}$) (i.e. take the square of column 6).
- (7) In Column 8, calculate the cube of ($Q' - Q_{avg}$) (i.e. take the cube of column 6).
- (8) Sum columns 6, 7 and 8, place in the appropriate box at the bottom of the columns.
- (9) In the Calculation Box
 - (A) Enter the total no. of observations.
 - (B) Enter the average of Q' from all readings in Column 5.
 - (C) Enter the standard deviation of Q' from all readings in Column 5.
 - (D) Calculate “G” by using the following formula:

$$G = \left(\frac{n}{(N-1)(N-2)} \right) \left(\frac{\sum (Q - \bar{Q})^3}{\sigma^3} \right)$$

Enter your result in the calculation box.

- (E) Use the G value and Table 5D to approximate a “K” value for the 100 year recurrence interval (i.e. find your G value in the first column by extrapolation, and look on Table 5D under the 100 R.I. column to find the value of “K”). Enter your result in the calculation box.
- (F) Calculate the log of the discharge for the 100 year flood by using the following formula:

$$\text{Log}Q_{100} = Q'_{\text{avg}} + K(Q'_{\text{stdev}})$$

Where Q_{100} = the discharge of the 100 year flood, Q'_{avg} is from the calculation box, K is derived from part E above, and Q'_{stdev} is from the calculation box.

- (G) Now that you have the $\text{Log}Q_{100}$, all you have to do to calculate the actual discharge for the 100 year flood is to take the “INV” of $\text{Log}Q_{100}$ on a calculator to determine your value. Or alternatively, take the value derived in F above, and use that as a power of 10 to determine the actual 100 year flood discharge:

$$100 \text{ year Flood } Q = 10^{(\text{the answer from "F"})}$$

Your answer should be in cubic feet per second, enter into the calculation box.

On a separate sheet of paper, or using a word processor, answer the following questions.

8. Based on Table 5, what climate conditions in Southern California are most commonly associated with the highest recorded flood events on Mission Creek.
9. What climate conditions are the lowest annual peak discharges associated with?
10. During the low peak-discharge years, the risk of flood hazard is minimized. Hypothesize what hazards you would face in coastal southern California during the low peak discharge years, other than flood.
11. What is the recurrence interval of the highest flood discharge recorded in the 25 year record? What is the R.I. of the lowest discharge recorded? Create a general statement regarding the magnitude of a flood event relative to it's frequency over time.
12. Based on the talk by Ann Beier from the State Dept. of Lands, discuss why the 100 year floodplain is important to the citizens of Oregon (What is the 100-yr floodplain and how is it delineated?).

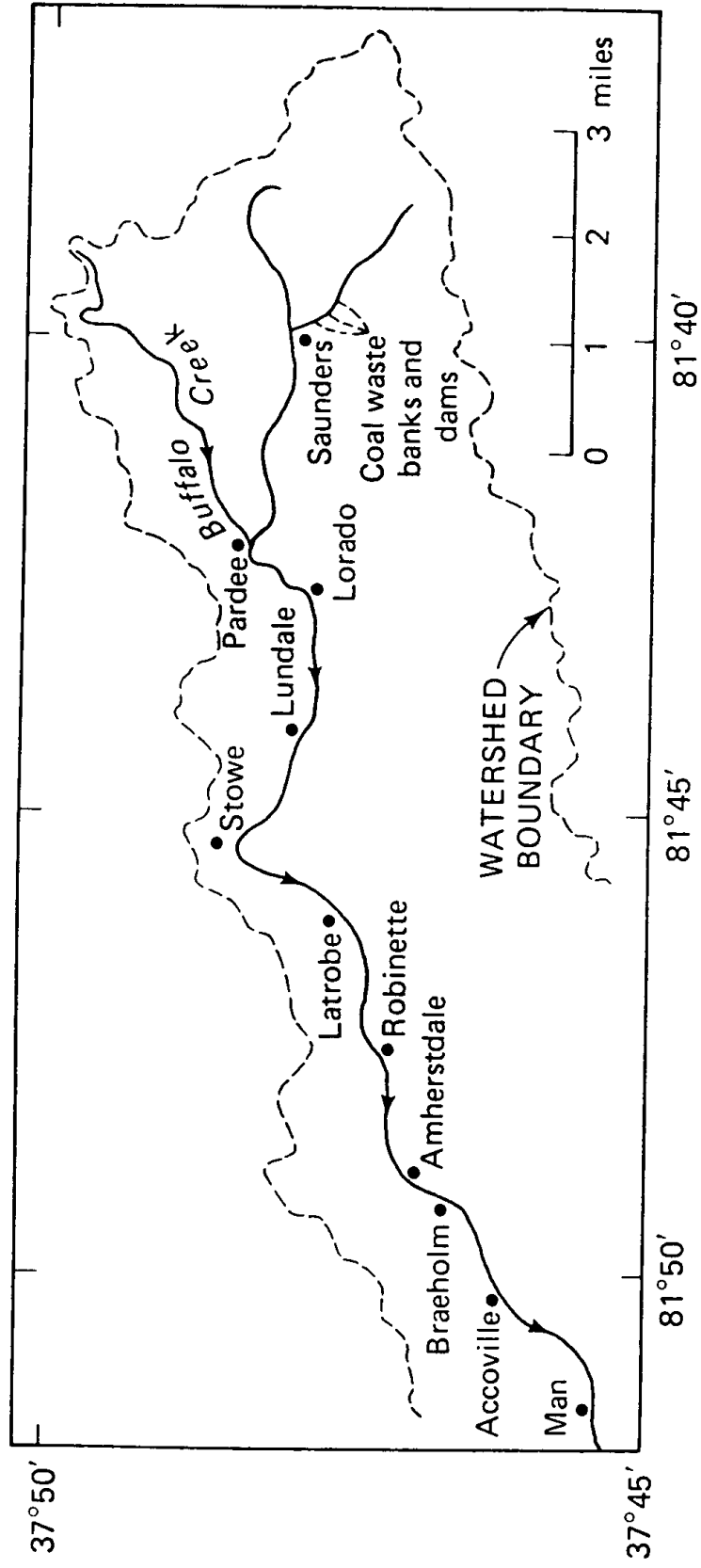


Figure 2. Map of the valley of Buffalo Creek, Latrobe County, West Virginia, showing locations cited in the text. (Davies, Bailey, and Kelly, 1972.)

Table 1. February 26, 1972 Buffalo Creek, WV Discharge Data

At Saunders WV			At Stowe, WV			At Accoville, WV			At Man, WV		
Q (cu. Ft/sec)	Clock Time		Q (cu. Ft/sec)	Clock Time		Q (cu. Ft/sec)	Clock Time		Q (cu. Ft/sec)	Clock Time	
	Hours	Minutes		Hours	Minutes		Hours	Minutes		Hours	Minutes
500	7	50	500	7	50	500	7	50	500	7	50
500	7	55	500	7	55	500	7	55	500	7	55
500	8	0	500	8	0	500	8	0	500	8	0
32000	8	5	500	8	5	500	8	5	500	8	5
50000	8	7	500	8	10	500	8	10	500	8	10
25000	8	10	500	8	15	500	8	15	500	8	15
3000	8	15	500	8	20	500	8	20	500	8	20
500	8	20	500	8	25	500	8	25	500	8	25
500	8	25	500	8	30	500	8	30	500	8	30
500	8	30	500	8	35	500	8	35	500	8	35
500	8	35	2000	8	40	500	8	40	500	8	40
500	8	40	3000	8	45	500	8	45	500	8	45
500	8	45	6000	8	50	500	8	50	500	8	50
500	8	50	9000	8	55	500	8	55	500	8	55
500	8	55	12000	9	0	500	9	0	500	9	0
500	9	0	9000	9	5	500	9	5	500	9	5
500	9	5	8000	9	10	500	9	10	500	9	10
500	9	10	5000	9	15	500	9	15	500	9	15
500	9	15	2000	9	20	1000	9	20	500	9	20
500	9	20	500	9	25	2000	9	25	500	9	25
500	9	25	500	9	30	3000	9	30	500	9	30
500	9	30	500	9	35	5000	9	35	500	9	35
500	9	35	500	9	40	6000	9	40	500	9	40
500	9	40	500	9	45	7000	9	45	500	9	45
500	9	45	500	9	50	9000	9	50	500	9	50
500	9	50	500	9	55	8000	9	55	500	9	55
500	9	55	500	10	0	7000	10	0	500	10	0
500	10	0	500	10	5	5000	10	5	600	10	5
500	10	5	500	10	10	3000	10	10	700	10	10
500	10	10	500	10	15	2500	10	15	800	10	15
500	10	15	500	10	20	2000	10	20	900	10	20
500	10	20	500	10	25	1500	10	25	1000	10	25
500	10	25	500	10	30	850	10	30	1100	10	30
500	10	30	500	10	35	500	10	35	1500	10	35
500	10	35	500	10	40	500	10	40	2000	10	40
500	10	40	500	10	45	500	10	45	2500	10	45
500	10	45	500	10	50	500	10	50	3000	10	50
500	10	50	500	10	55	500	10	55	5000	10	55
500	10	55	500	11	0	500	11	0	8000	11	0
500	11	0	500	11	5	500	11	5	7500	11	5
500	11	5	500	11	10	500	11	10	5500	11	10
500	11	10	500	11	15	500	11	15	4500	11	15
500	11	15	500	11	20	500	11	20	4000	11	20

$$1 \text{ cu. m} = 35.31 \text{ cu. ft}$$
[illegible]

Figure 3. Flood Hydrograph for the February 26, 1972
Buffalo Creek, WV Dam Break

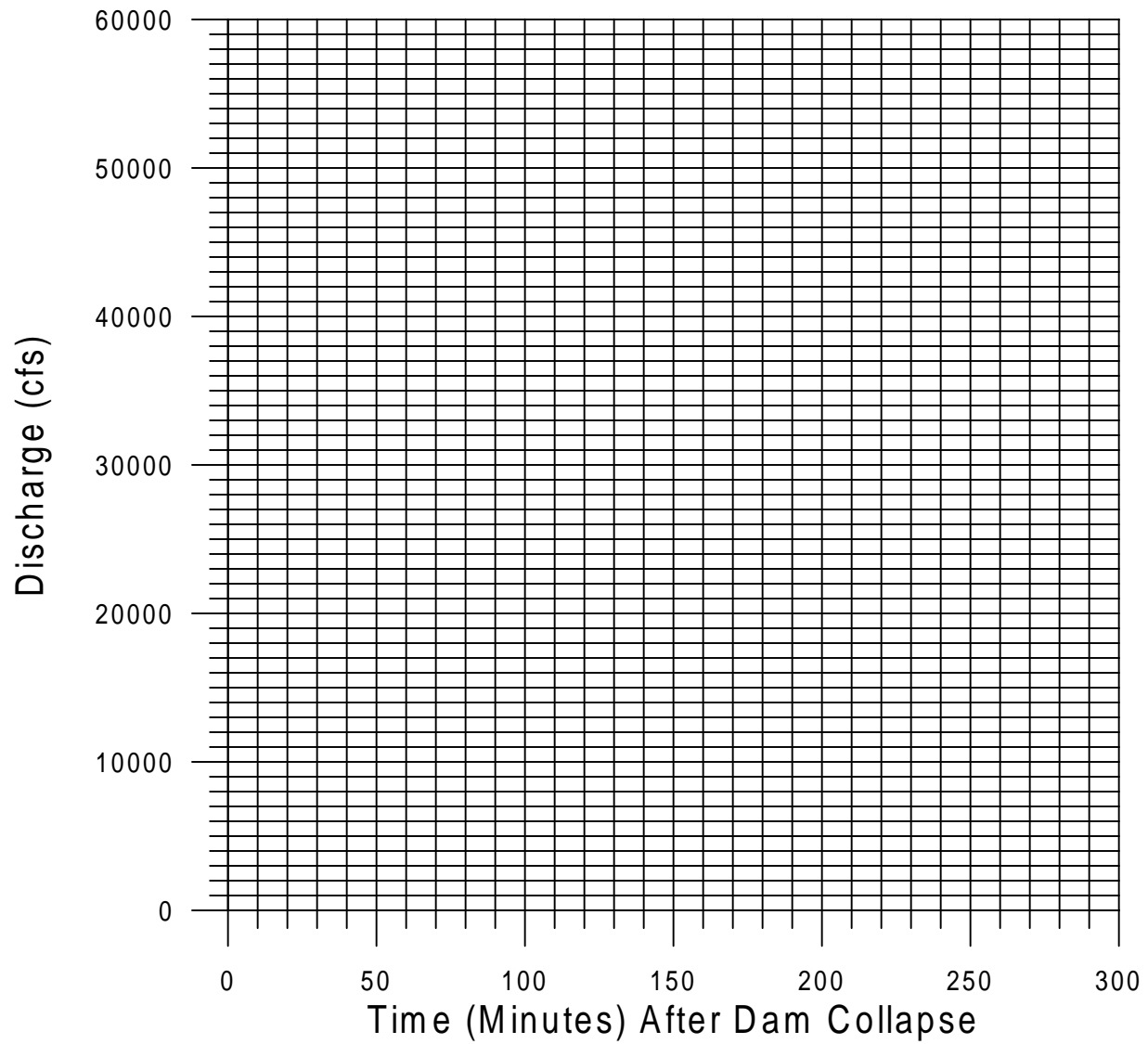


Table 3. Flood Wave Velocity Calculations

conversion factors: 1hr = 60 min, 1 mi = 1609 m

Stream Segment	Distance (mi)	Time (min)	Time (hr)	Velocity (mi /hr)	Velocity (ft/sec)
Saunders-Stowe					
Stowe-Accoville					
Accoville-Man					
Total Average: Saunders-Man					

Continuity Equation: $Q = AV$

Table 4. Cross-Sectional Flow Area Calculation.

Station	Velocity (ft /sec)	Peak Floodwave Q (cfs)	Cross-Sectional Area of Flow (sq. ft)
Stowe			
Accoville			
Man			

Table 5. Mission Creek at Santa Barbara, CA
Peak Annual Discharges (by year).

Year	Peak Q (cfs)	Comment
1971	360	
1972	1420	
1973	2580	
1974	519	
1975	1130	
1976	353	
1977	569	
1978	2500	El Nino Year
1979	667	
1980	1300	
1981	302	
1982	186	
1983	2300	El Nino Year
1984	681	
1985	128	
1986	626	El Nino Year
1987	625	El Nino Year
1988	139	Drought Year
1989	168	Drought Year
1990	115	Drought Year
1991	468	El Nino Year
1992	1129	El Nino Year
1993	838	El Nino Year
1994	207	El Nino Year
1995	3800	El Nino Year

Table 5.D Values of K for log-Pearson Type III Distribution

G	Return Period, Years						
	2	5	10	25	50	100	200
3.0	-0.396	0.420	1.180	2.278	3.152	4.051	4.970
2.8	-0.384	0.460	1.210	2.275	3.114	3.973	4.847
2.6	-0.368	0.499	1.238	2.267	3.071	3.889	4.718
2.4	-0.351	0.537	1.262	2.256	3.023	3.800	4.584
2.2	-0.330	0.574	1.284	2.240	2.970	3.705	4.444
2.0	-0.307	0.609	1.302	2.219	2.912	3.605	4.298
1.8	-0.282	0.643	1.318	2.193	2.848	3.499	4.147
1.6	-0.254	0.675	1.329	2.163	2.780	3.388	3.990
1.4	-0.225	0.705	1.337	2.128	2.706	3.271	3.828
1.2	-0.195	0.732	1.340	2.087	2.626	3.149	3.661
1.0	-0.164	0.758	1.340	2.043	2.542	3.022	3.489
0.8	-0.132	0.780	1.336	1.993	2.453	2.891	3.312
0.6	-0.099	0.800	1.328	1.939	2.359	2.755	3.132
0.4	-0.066	0.816	1.317	1.880	2.261	2.615	2.949
0.2	-0.033	0.830	1.301	1.818	2.159	2.472	2.763
0.0	0.0	0.842	1.282	1.751	2.054	2.326	2.576
-0.2	0.033	0.850	1.258	1.680	1.945	2.178	2.388
-0.4	0.066	0.855	1.231	1.606	1.834	2.029	2.201
-0.6	0.099	0.857	1.200	1.528	1.720	1.880	2.016
-0.8	0.132	0.856	1.166	1.448	1.606	1.733	1.837
-1.0	0.164	0.852	1.128	1.366	1.492	1.588	1.664
-1.2	0.195	0.844	1.086	1.282	1.379	1.449	1.501
-1.4	0.225	0.832	1.041	1.198	1.270	1.318	1.351
-1.6	0.254	0.817	0.994	1.116	1.166	1.197	1.216
-1.8	0.282	0.799	0.945	1.035	1.069	1.087	1.097
-2.0	0.307	0.777	0.895	0.959	0.980	0.990	0.995
-2.2	0.330	0.752	0.844	0.888	0.900	0.905	0.907
-2.4	0.351	0.725	0.795	0.823	0.830	0.832	0.833
-2.6	0.368	0.696	0.747	0.764	0.768	0.769	0.769
-2.8	0.384	0.666	0.702	0.712	0.714	0.714	0.714
-3.0	0.396	0.636	0.660	0.666	0.666	0.667	0.667

Source: U.S. Soil Conservation Service

Table 6. Mission Creek - Log-Pearson Type III Distribution Answer Sheet.

Column 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Year	M	Qp (annual peak)	Reccurence Interval (years)	$Q' = \log Q_p$	$(Q' - Q'_{avg})$	$(Q' - Q'_{avg})^2$	$(Q' - Q'_{avg})^3$
	1						
	2						
	3						
	4						
	5						
	6						
	7						
	8						
	9						
	10						
	11						
	12						
	13						
	14						
	15						
	16						
	17						
	18						
	19						
	20						
	21						
	22						
	23						
	24						
	25						
			SUM Columns				

Calculation Box

No. Obs. Total	
Q'_{avg}	
Q'_{stdev}	
G	
K_{100}	
$\log Q_{100}$	
Q_{100} (cfs)	

(by linear extrapolation)