



## CITY OF NEWMAN PUBLIC WORKS

### Historic Flood Information

In March 1995, Newman experienced the worst flood in its 107-year history. On March 10, 1995, the USGS gauge upstream of the California Aqueduct registered a peak flow of 12,000 cfs. On the same date, the USGS gauging station Orestimba Creek at River Road registered a peak flow of 2,650 cfs. This shows that significant flood volume was conveyed overland across agricultural fields with a portion of the flow inundating the City of Newman.

Structures within the town were flooded by over two feet of sediment-laden water. A convalescent hospital located on the north side of the city was entirely inundated by 2 feet of water in the building and 4 feet of water in the parking lot. Sixty five residents were evacuated by a Medi-Flight helicopter after a failed attempt to use two ambulances and a school bus. Many public streets and highways, including State Highway 33, were closed. These road closures limited or, in some cases, prevented access for emergency vehicles which resulted in diminished local and regional emergency response capabilities. Similar public health risks caused by area flooding included floodwater affected domestic water wells and individual septic systems, many of which were rendered unusable.

The February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1998 storm event produced the third largest peak runoff of the 1932 to 2007 record (Figure 1). The event had a peak flow of 9,470 cfs at the Orestimba Creek at Newman gage and peak flow of 2,340 cfs at the Orestimba Creek near River road gage. Similar to the 1995 event, this shows the substantial volume of floodwaters that was conveyed by the floodplain.

**Figure 1: March 1995 Flooding from Orestimba Creek**



There are three low water crossings of Orestimba Creek where the road dips down into the creek channel and only a small culvert allows the creek flow to pass under the road. When flow in the creek increases beyond what the culverts can contain, water flows up and over the road, easily reaching depths of several feet. These low water crossings at Bell, Jorgenson, and Eastin Roads were identified during the study process as having potentially high risk for anyone needing to cross the creek at these locations.

Tragically, in January 2006, a motorist was killed at one of these crossings when attempting to cross the road during high flows in the creek. Subsequently, Stanislaus County installed emergency road closure crossing guards to warn motorists of the danger of crossing the creek at these locations when the water is high.