

The Stanley River





Mt Beerwah to the east



bushfires in the Belthorpe State Forest

# The Stanley River, above Somerset Dam

What makes a river special? Whatever it is the Stanley River has got it. This small river starts on the slopes to the south east of Maleny, in the Sunshine Coast hinterland, and travels no more than 70 kilometers south west to the Somerset Dam.

It is the major tributary of the Brisbane River, and despite having a catchment area only a third the size of the Brisbane River, easily contributes half of the water saved in Lake Wivenhoe.

The Brisbane River usually doesn't flow, above Wivenhoe Dam, and would not below, if not for water released to flow to the Mt Crosby Water Treatment Plant.

Similarly, the Stanley River is usually still and standing water, backed up from the Somerset dam 38 km to the D'Aguilar Highway bridge, just outside of Woodford. Upstream of the highway bridge the river is frequently blocked by fallen trees.

There is only one place in south east Queensland where the hills sing, and that has to be Mt Archer as seen from the Neurum Road bridge over the Stanley River at Villeneuve. The hills look imposing from the road, but once you have a canoe out on the water, they are quite magical in their beauty.

Downstream from the Villeneuve bridge, the river spills out wide, but two kilometres above the bridge, stays within its original banks. Neurum Creek, on the eastern side of the Stanley, is encountered 2 kilometres upstream from the Villeneuve Bridge, and is worth exploring.

Upstream from the Villeneuve bridge (14 km west from Woodford on Neurum Road), a series of creeks join the Stanley from the north, the Sandy Creek about 2.5 km up, Mary Smokes Creek at 6 km., and Stoney Creek at 12 km.

It is possible to paddle the 18 km from the D'Aguilar Highway bridge at Woodford down to Villeneuve (locals say Villa new) when the Somerset Dam is 100%, and still at 90%, but as the level drops it becomes more chancy. The water in the upper sections gets a bit dirty and scummy at lower levels.

Sandy Creek, and Stoney Creek are not accessible from the Stanley for much distance, and the Mary Smokes creek quits on the exploring paddler, one kilometre upstream from the Stanley, right about under the D'Aguilar Highway.

It is a very pleasant paddle from the Villeneuve Bridge up to the confluence of the Stanley River and Stoney Creek, at 12km one way; all the exploration you need for a day paddle. There are occasional white sandy beaches on the way. In summer the grass flats will be burnt brown, the water level will drop, and cattle will churn the waters edge to a muddy bog, but, for a few brief springtime months, this looks so pretty.



Villeneuve bridge on Neurum Road, crossing the Stanley River, looking west towards Kilcoy. Launch sites (at higher water) are over clean sand, not mud.



Looking downstream under D'Aguilar Highway bridge over the Stanley River, half a kilometre west of Woodford, on the way to Kilcoy. One hundred metres upstream a large log blocks the river.



Mary Smokes Creek  
junction



river bank vegetation  
between Mary  
Smokes Creek  
junction and Stoney  
Creek junction