

2008 Harding Reservoir Report

Rivers and Reservoirs Monitoring Program



Field Operations Division
Environmental Indicators Section
Aquatic Assessment Unit
December 2012

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2008

Harding Reservoir

Chattahoochee River Basin

**Alabama Department of Environmental Management
Field Operations Division
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

A&I	Agriculture and Industry water supply use classification
ADEM	Alabama Department of Environmental Management
AGPT	Algal Growth Potential Test
CHL <i>a</i>	Chlorophyll <i>a</i>
DO	Dissolved Oxygen
F&W	Fish and Wildlife
MAX	Maximum
MDL	Method Detection Limit
MIN	Minimum
MSC	Mean Standing Crop
NTU	Nephelometric Turbidity Units
OAW	Outstanding Alabama Waters
ONRW	Outstanding National Resource Water
PWS	Public Water Supply
QAPP	Quality Assurance Project Plan
RRMP	Rivers and Reservoirs Monitoring Program
S	Swimming and Other Whole Body Water-Contact Sports
SD	Standard Deviation
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
TEMP	Temperature
TN	Total Nitrogen
TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load
TP	Total Phosphorus
TSI	Trophic State Index
TSS	Total Suspended Solids
USACE	United States Army Corp of Engineers
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
USACE	United States Geological Survey

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INTRODUCTION

Originally constructed by Columbus Electric and Power Company in 1926, Harding Reservoir, also known as Bartlett's Ferry, was acquired by Georgia Power in 1930 and operated for hydropower ever since. The reservoir stretches from just north of Columbus, GA to Valley, AL and covers 5,850 acres along the Alabama/Georgia state line. Most of Harding's flow comes from upstream West Point Reservoir and three large tributaries, two in Alabama (Osanippa and Halawakee Creeks) and one in Georgia (Mountain Oak Creek).

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) monitored Harding Reservoir as part of the 2008 assessment of the Chattahoochee and Perdido-Escambia River Basins under the Rivers and Reservoirs Monitoring Program (RRMP). Implemented in 1990, the objectives of this program are to provide data that can be used to assess current water quality conditions, identify trends in water quality conditions, and to develop Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), and water quality criteria. Descriptions of all RRMP monitoring activities are available in ADEM's 2012 Monitoring Strategy.

In 2004, the ADEM implemented a specific water quality criterion for nutrient management at the forebay station of Harding Reservoir, which has been monitored by ADEM since 1990. This criterion represent the maximum growing season mean (April-October) chlorophyll *a* (chl *a*) concentration allowable while still fully supporting Harding Reservoir's Public Water Supply, Swimming, and Fish & Wildlife (PWS/S/F&W) use classifications.

The purpose of this report is to summarize data collected at four stations in Harding Reservoir during the 2008 growing season and to evaluate growing season trends in lake trophic status and nutrient concentrations using ADEM's ten-year dataset. Monthly and/or mean concentrations of nutrients [total nitrogen (TN); total phosphorus (TP)], algal biomass/productivity [chl *a*; algal growth potential testing (AGPT)], sediment [total suspended solids (TSS)], and trophic state [Carlson's trophic state index (TSI)] were compared to ADEM's historical data and established criteria.

METHODS

Sampling stations were selected using historical data and previous assessments ([Fig. 1](#)). Specific location information can be found in [Table 1](#). Harding Reservoir was sampled in the dam forebay and upper reservoir along with two tributary stations; Halawakee and Osanippa Creeks.

Water quality assessments were conducted at monthly intervals, April-October. All samples were collected, preserved, stored, and transported according to procedures in the ADEM Field Operations Division Standard Operating Procedures (ADEM 2008), Surface Water Quality Assurance Project Plan (ADEM 2005), and Quality Management Plan (ADEM 2003).

Mean growing season TN, TP, chl *a*, and TSS were calculated to evaluate water quality conditions at each site. Monthly concentrations of these parameters were graphed with the closest available USACE flow data and ADEM's previously collected data to help interpret the 2008 results.

Figure 1. Harding Reservoir with 2008 sampling locations.

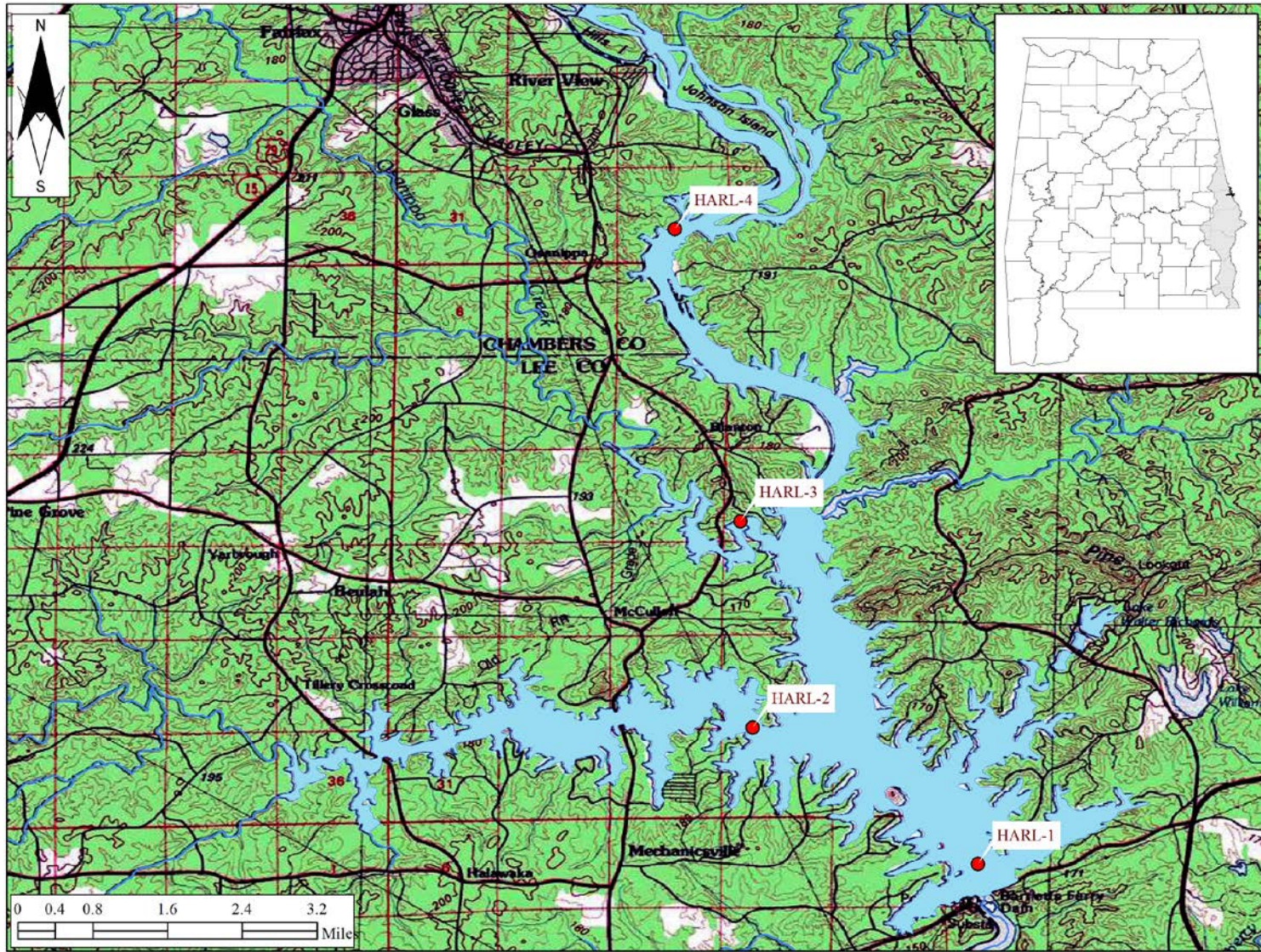


Table 1. Descriptions of the 2008 monitoring stations in Harding Reservoir.

HUC	County	Station Number	Report Designation	Waterbody Name	Station Description	Chl <i>a</i> Criteria	Latitude	Longitude
031300021109	Lee	HARL-1*	Lower	Chattahoochee R	Deepest point, main river channel, dam forebay.	15 µg/l	32.66763	-85.09190
031300021108	Lee	HARL-2	Halawakee Ck	Halawakee Ck	Deepest point, main channel, Halawakee Ck embayment.		32.68878	-85.12679
031300021105	Lee	HARL-3	Osanippa Ck	Osanippa Ck	Deepest point, main channel, Osanippa Ck embayment		32.72072	-85.12866
031300021109	Chambers	HARL-4	Upper	Chattahoochee R	Deepest point, main river channel, immediately downstream of Johnson Island.		32.76599	-85.13879

*Growing season mean chl *a* criteria implemented at this station in 2004.

RESULTS

Growing season mean graphs for TN, TP, chl *a*, and TSS are provided in this section (Figs. 2 and 3). Monthly graphs for TN, TP, chl *a*, TSS, DO, and TSI are also provided (Figs. 4-8, and 11). Mean monthly discharge is included in monthly graphs for TN, TP, chl *a*, TSS, and TSI as an indicator of flow and retention time in the months sampled. AGPT results appear in Table 2. Depth profile graphs of temperature, DO, and conductivity appear in Figs. 9-10. Summary statistics of all data collected during 2008 are presented in Appendix Table 1. The table contains the minimum, maximum, median, mean, and standard deviation of each parameter analyzed.

Stations with the highest concentrations of nutrients, chlorophyll, and TSS are noted in the paragraphs to follow. Though stations with lowest concentrations may not always be mentioned, review of the graphs that follow will indicate these stations that may be potential candidates for reference waterbodies and watersheds.

In 2008 the highest mean growing season TN value calculated among Harding Reservoir stations was in the upper station which is consistent with 1999 and 2004 ([Fig. 2](#)). Mean growing season TN values in the Halawakee Ck and lower stations increased 2003-2007 but decreased in 2008, while Osanippa Ck increased 1999-2008. Monthly TN concentrations decreased through the growing season until August or September in all Harding stations ([Fig. 4](#)). The upper and Osanippa Ck stations measured record highs in April and/or August while both the lower and Halawakee Ck stations were below historic means August-October.

Mean growing season TP values in 2008 were similar between the Halawakee Ck and the lower stations, while the highest mean TP value was in Osanippa Ck ([Fig. 2](#)). Mean growing season values at all stations decreased 2004 through 2008 ([Fig. 2](#)). Monthly TP concentrations in the upper, Halawakee Ck and lower stations were similar April-September, and were at or below historic means in almost all months ([Fig. 5](#)). Concentrations in Osanippa Ck were nearly double the other stations in August and September ([Fig. 5](#)).

A specific water quality criterion for nutrient management has been established for the lower station in Harding Reservoir. The growing season mean chl *a* concentration measured in

2008 was in compliance with the criteria limit ([Fig. 3](#)). The growing season mean chl *a* value in all but the Osanippa Ck stations in 2008 were the lowest of all seasons sampled (1999-2008). Both the Halawakee Ck and the lower station have decreased concentrations overall since 2002 while the upper and Osanippa Ck stations were similar to previous years sampled ([Fig. 3](#)). Monthly chl *a* concentrations in the riverine upper station were very low (<2.0 µg/l) April-October ([Fig. 6](#)). Halawakee Ck and the lower station were below historic means May-September, reaching historic low concentrations in May and/or July. Monthly concentrations in August and September in Osanippa Ck were over double the other stations and the highest on record ([Fig. 6](#)).

The mean growing season TSS values calculated in 2008 in all Harding Reservoir stations were the lowest of all years sampled ([Fig. 3](#)). This continues the trend, since growing season mean TSS concentrations have decreased since 2003. Monthly TSS concentrations measured in all stations were at or below historic means April or May through October ([Fig. 7](#)).

AGPT results at all stations in Harding have remained phosphorus limited since testing began in 1999 ([Table 2](#)). MSC results in the lower and Halawakee Ck stations have remained below 5 mg/L MSC all months monitored, the value that Raschke et al. (1996) defined as protective of reservoir and lake systems. The MSC for Osanipp Ck was >5 mg/L when sampled in June 1999. MSC results in the upper station are below 20 mg/L MSC, the value that Raschke et al. (1996) defined as protective of flowing stream and river systems.

Measurements of dissolved oxygen (DO) at all stations met the ADEM Criteria (ADEM Admin. Code R. 335-6-10-.09) limit of 5.0 mg/L at 5.0 ft (1.5 m) ([Fig. 8](#)) though concentrations at the lower, Halawakee Ck, and Osanippa Ck stations were below 6 mg/l in September. Based on monthly DO profiles, anoxic conditions existed during June and July in both the lower and Halawakee Ck stations at depths greater than 9.0m, as well as below 20.0 m in the lower station in May and September ([Figs. 9 & 10](#)). Highest temperatures were measured in July.

Monthly TSI values were calculated using monthly chl *a* concentrations and Carlson's Trophic State Index. TSI values calculated for the lower Harding Reservoir station were mostly mesotrophic while the upper station was oligotrophic in all months monitored ([Fig. 11](#)). Halawakee and Osanippa fluctuated between mesotrophic and eutrophic conditions with a drop to oligotrophic conditions in May ([Fig. 11](#)). Osanippa Ck TSI was highly eutrophic in August.

Figure 2. Mean growing season TN and TP measured in Harding Reservoir, April-October, 1999-2008. Stations are illustrated from upstream to downstream as the graph is read from left to right.

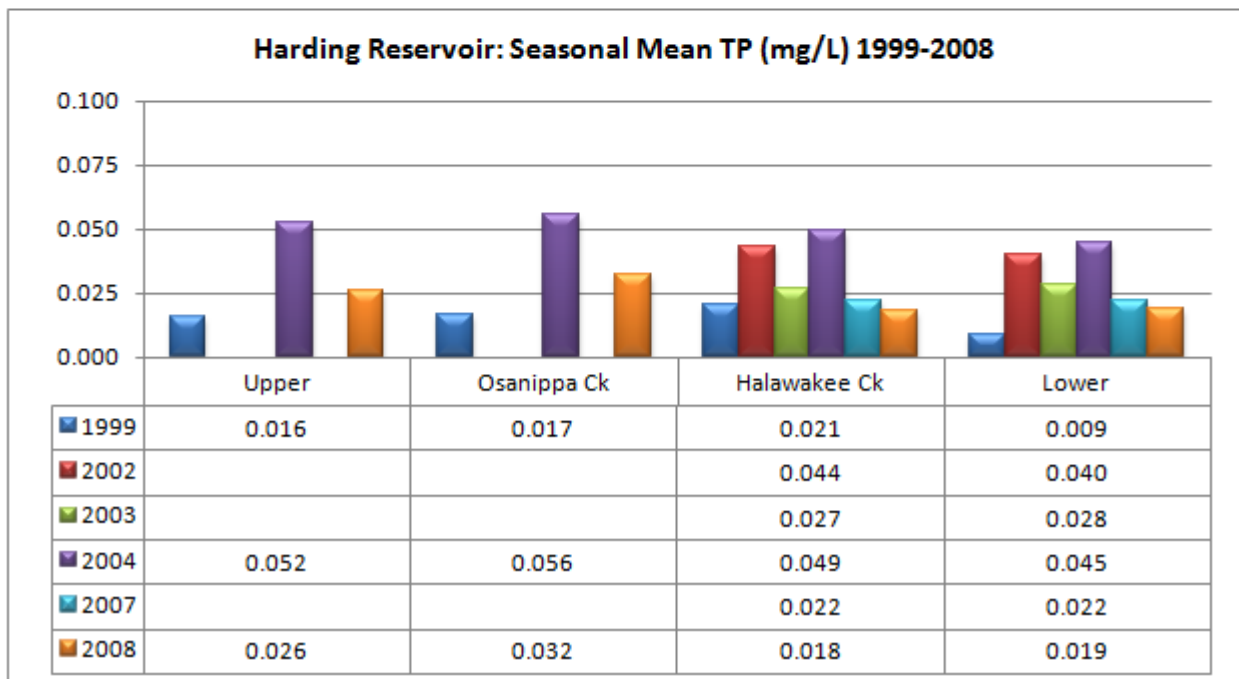
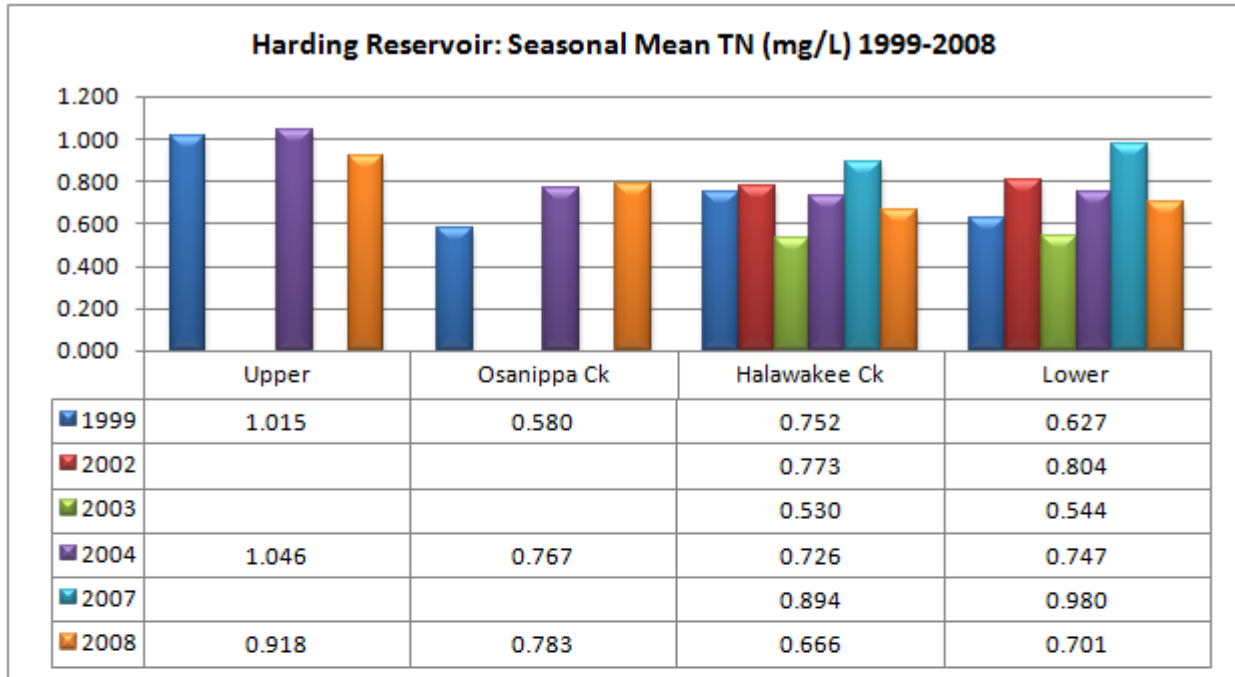


Figure 3. Mean growing season chl *a* and TSS measured in Harding Reservoir, April-October, 1999-2008. Stations are illustrated from upstream to downstream as the graph is read from left to right. Chl *a* criteria applies to the growing season mean of the lower station only.

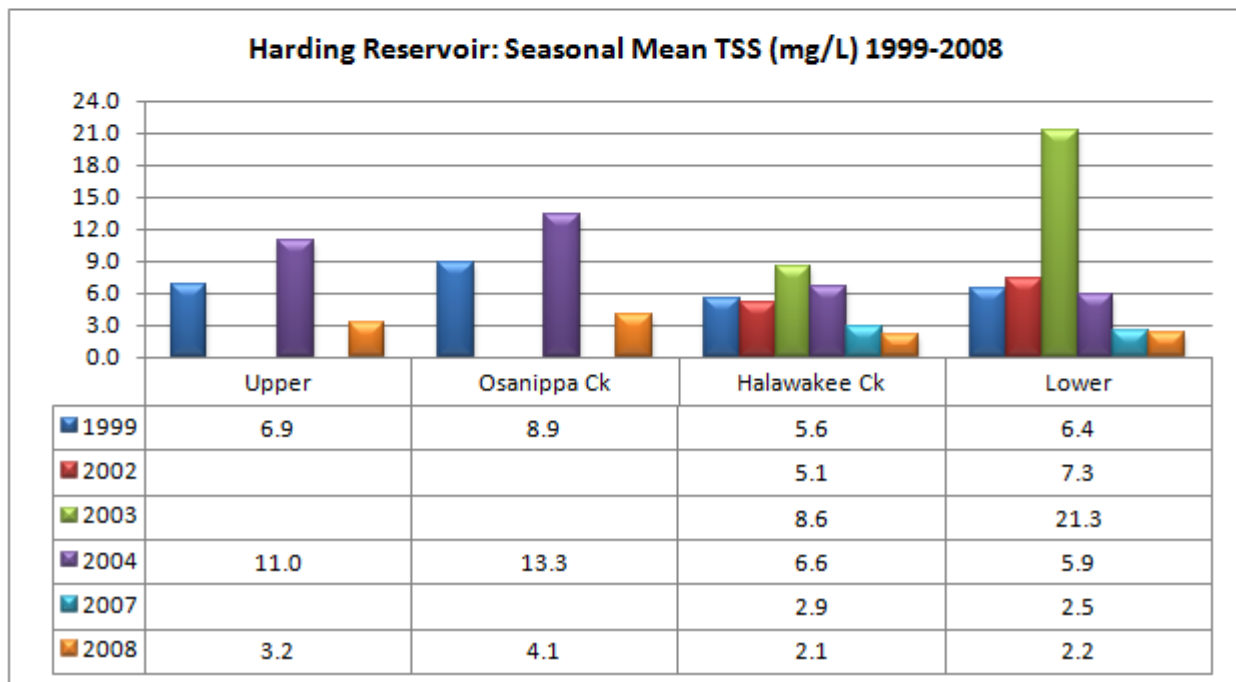
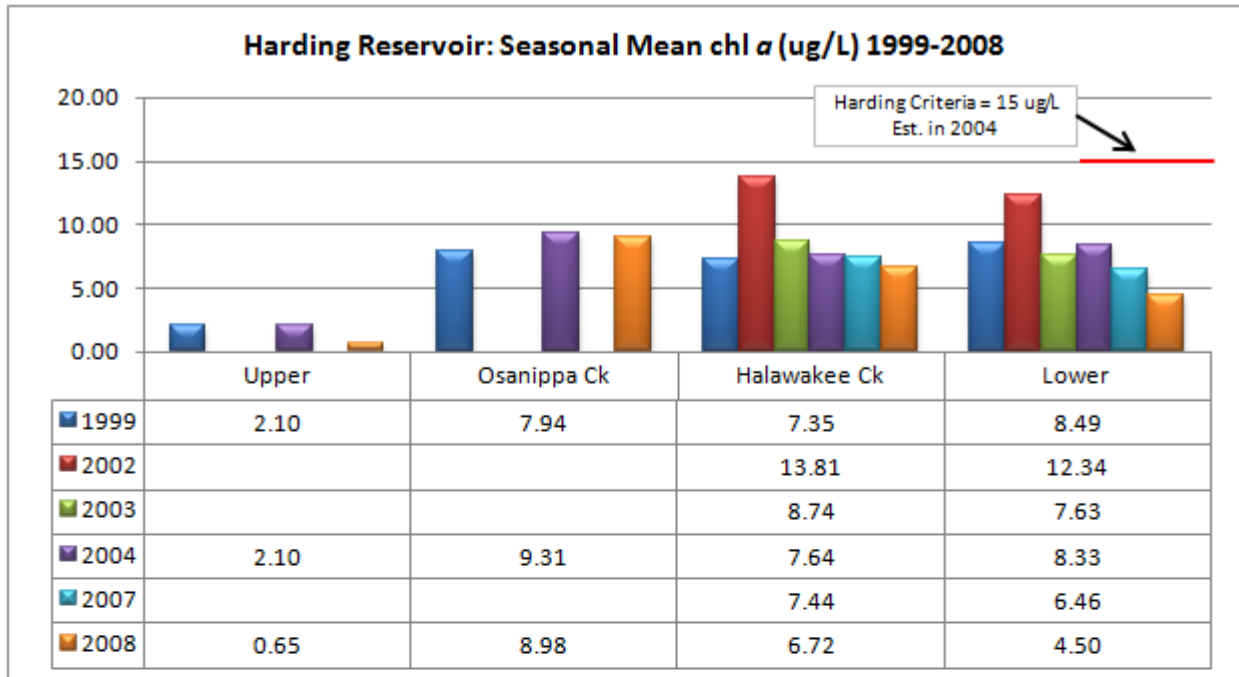


Figure 4. Monthly TN concentrations measured in Harding Reservoir, April-October 2008 vs. average monthly discharge. Monthly discharge acquired from USACE at West Point Dam. Each bar graph depicts monthly changes in each station. The historic mean (1990-2008) and min/max ranges are also displayed for comparison. The “n” value equals the number of datapoints included in the monthly historic calculations.

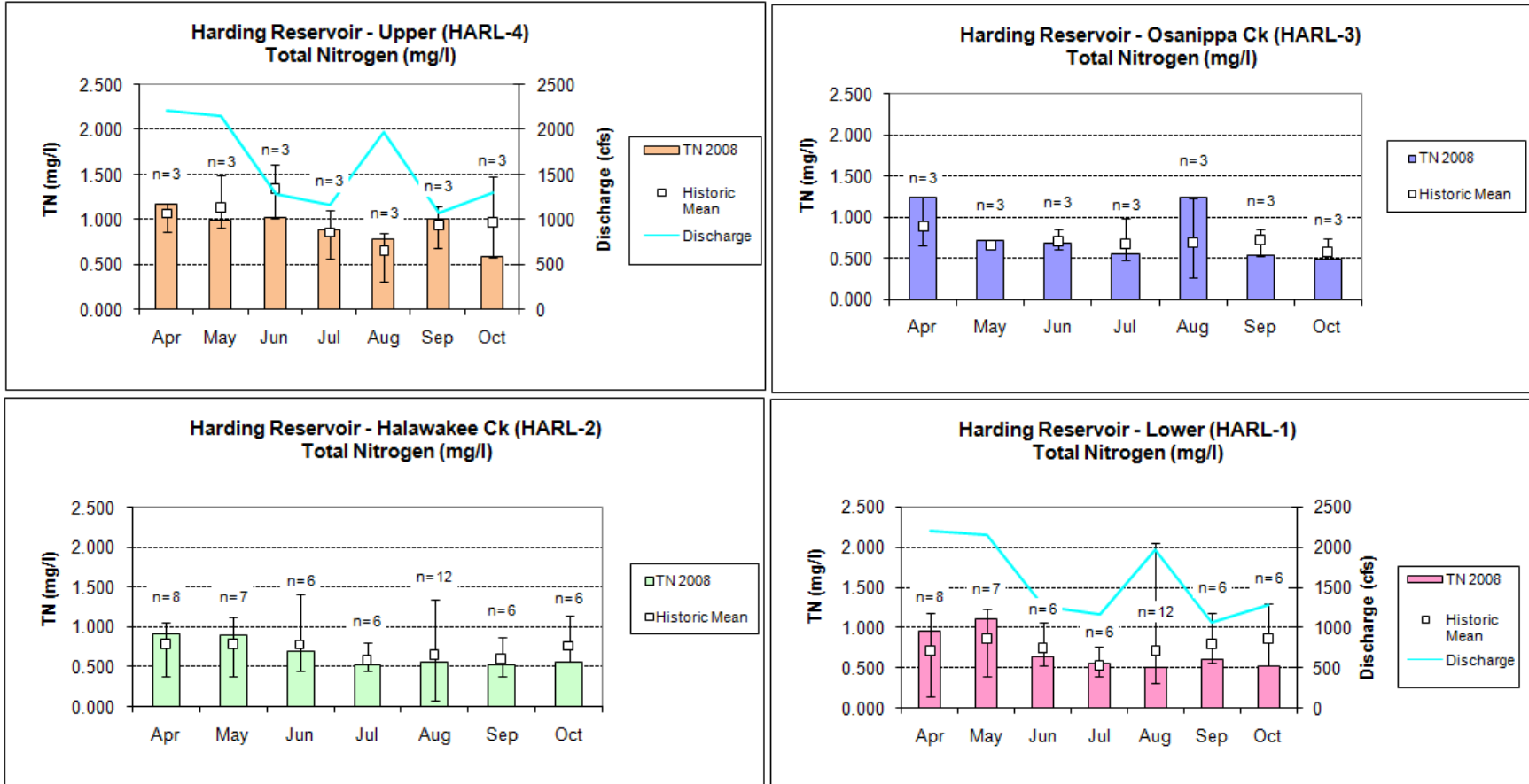


Figure 5. Monthly TP concentrations measured in Harding Reservoir, April-October 2008 vs. average monthly discharge. Monthly discharge acquired from USACE at West Point Dam. Each bar graph depicts monthly changes in each station. The historic mean (1990-2008) and min/max ranges are also displayed for comparison. The “n” value equals the number of datapoints included in the monthly historic calculations.

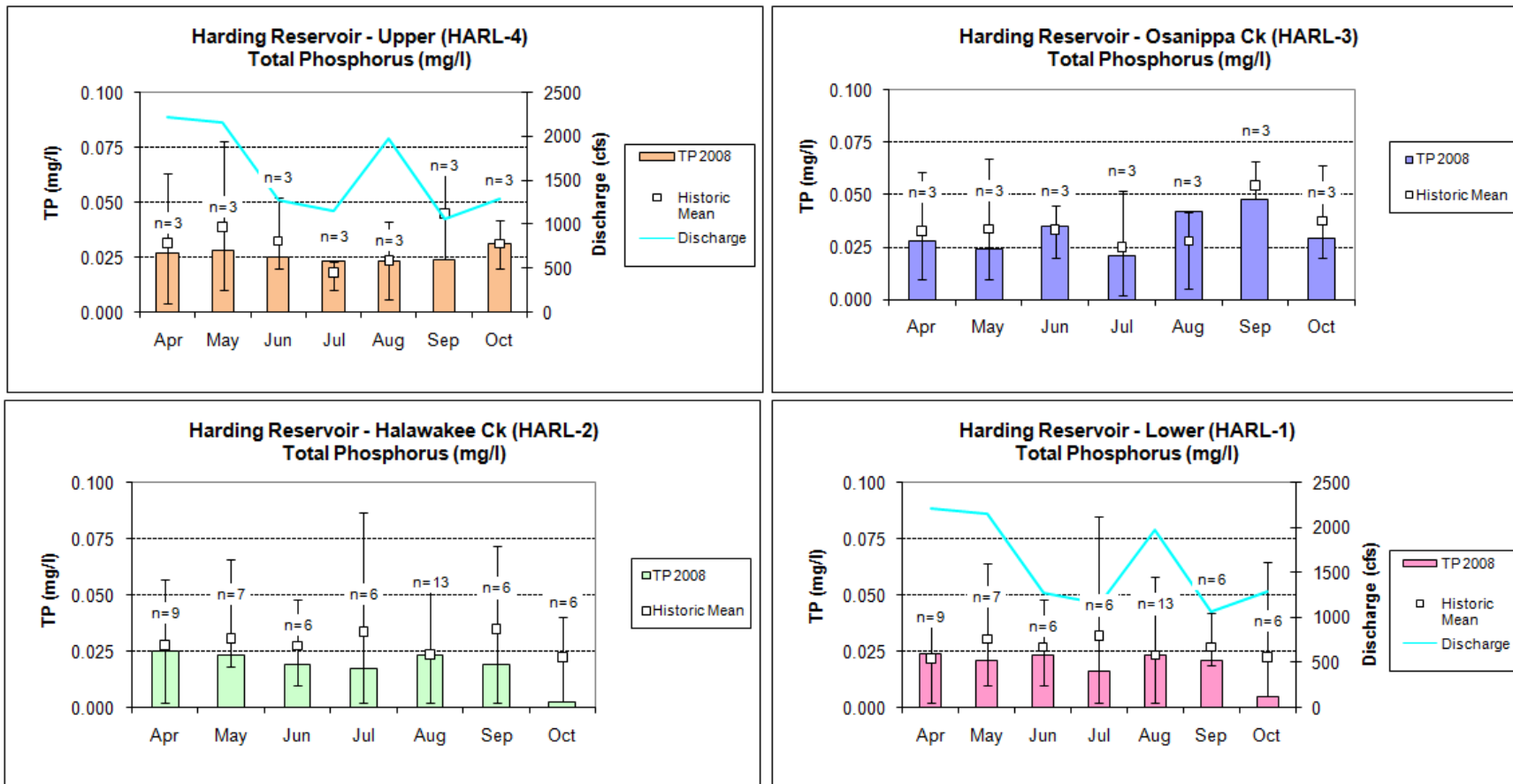


Figure 6. Monthly chl *a* concentrations measured in Harding Reservoir, April-October 2008 vs. average monthly discharge. Monthly discharge acquired from USACE at West Point Dam. Each bar graph depicts monthly changes in each station. The historic mean (1990-2008) and min/max ranges are also displayed for comparison. The “n” value equals the number of datapoints included in the monthly historic calculations. The scale of the vertical axis of the upper station is smaller than the other two stations to allow visibility of the results.

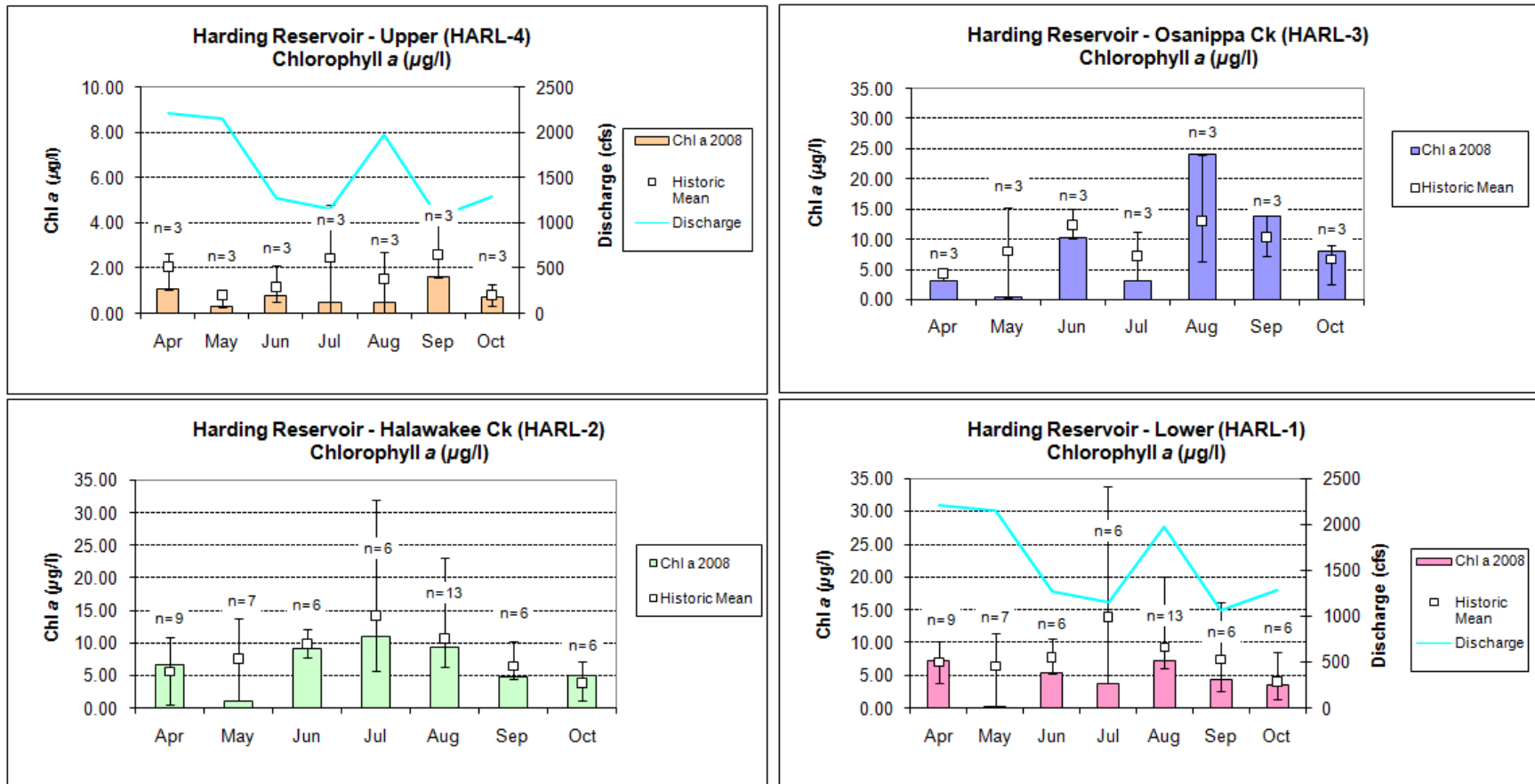


Figure 7. Monthly TSS concentrations measured in Harding Reservoir, April-October 2008 vs. average monthly discharge. Monthly discharge acquired from USACE at West Point Dam. Each bar graph depicts monthly changes in each station. The historic mean (1990-2008) and min/max range are also displayed for comparison. The “n” value equals the number of datapoints included in the monthly historic calculations.

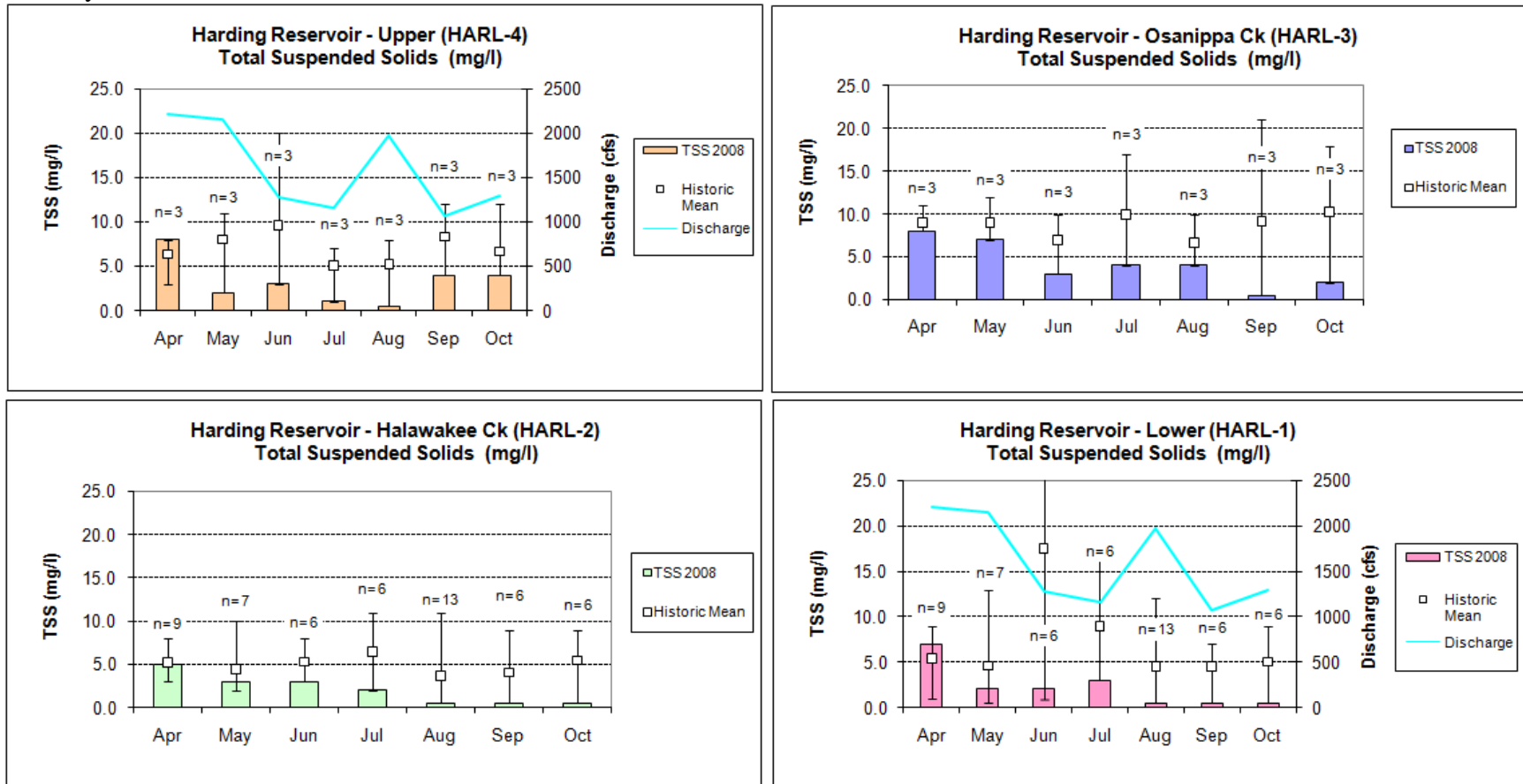


Table 2. Algal growth potential test results, Harding Reservoir, 1999-2008 (expressed as mean Maximum Standing Crop (MSC) dry weights of *Selenastrum capricornutum* in mg/L) and limiting nutrient status. MSC values below 5 mg/L are considered to be protective in reservoirs and lakes; values below 20 mg/L MSC are considered protective of flowing streams and rivers. (Raschke and Schultz 1987).

	Upper		Osanippa Ck		Halawakee Cr		Lower	
June 1999	5.18	Phosphorus	6.99	Phosphorus	1.57	Phosphorus	1.34	Phosphorus
July 1999	6.14	Phosphorus	2.74	Phosphorus	3.43	Phosphorus	2.48	Phosphorus
August 1999	2.62	Phosphorus	1.74	Phosphorus	1.51	Phosphorus	1.84	Phosphorus
August 2004	5.27	Phosphorus	---	---	2.47	Phosphorus	2.36	Phosphorus
August 2008	---	---	---	---	3.93	Phosphorus	3.59	Phosphorus

Figure 8. Monthly DO concentrations at 1.5 m (5 ft) for Harding Reservoir stations collected April-October 2008. ADEM Water Quality Criteria pertaining to reservoir waters require a DO concentration of 5.0 mg/L at this depth (ADEM 2005).

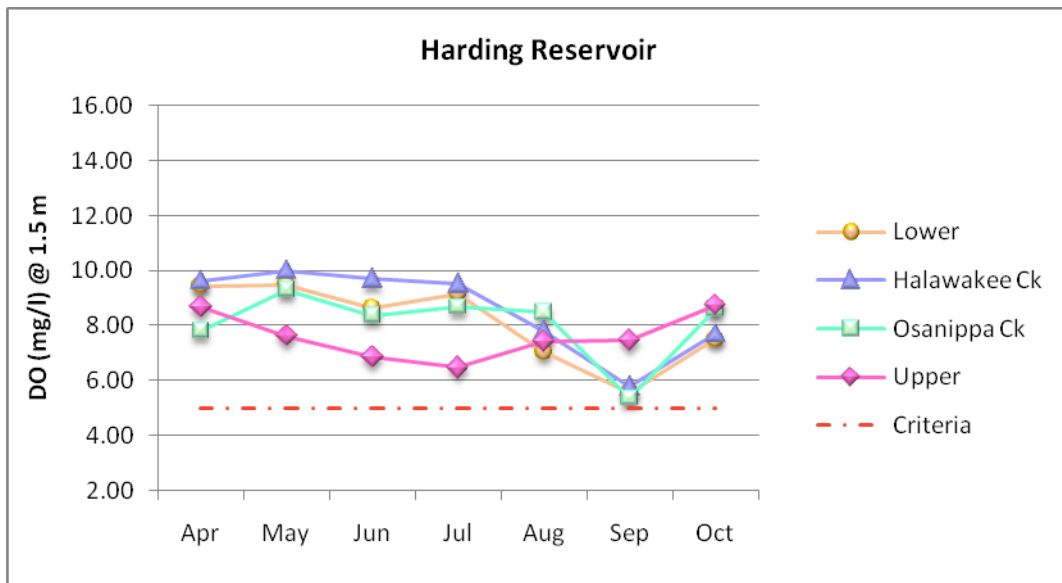


Figure 9. Monthly depth profiles of dissolved oxygen, temperature, and conductivity in the lower Harding Reservoir station, April-October 2008.

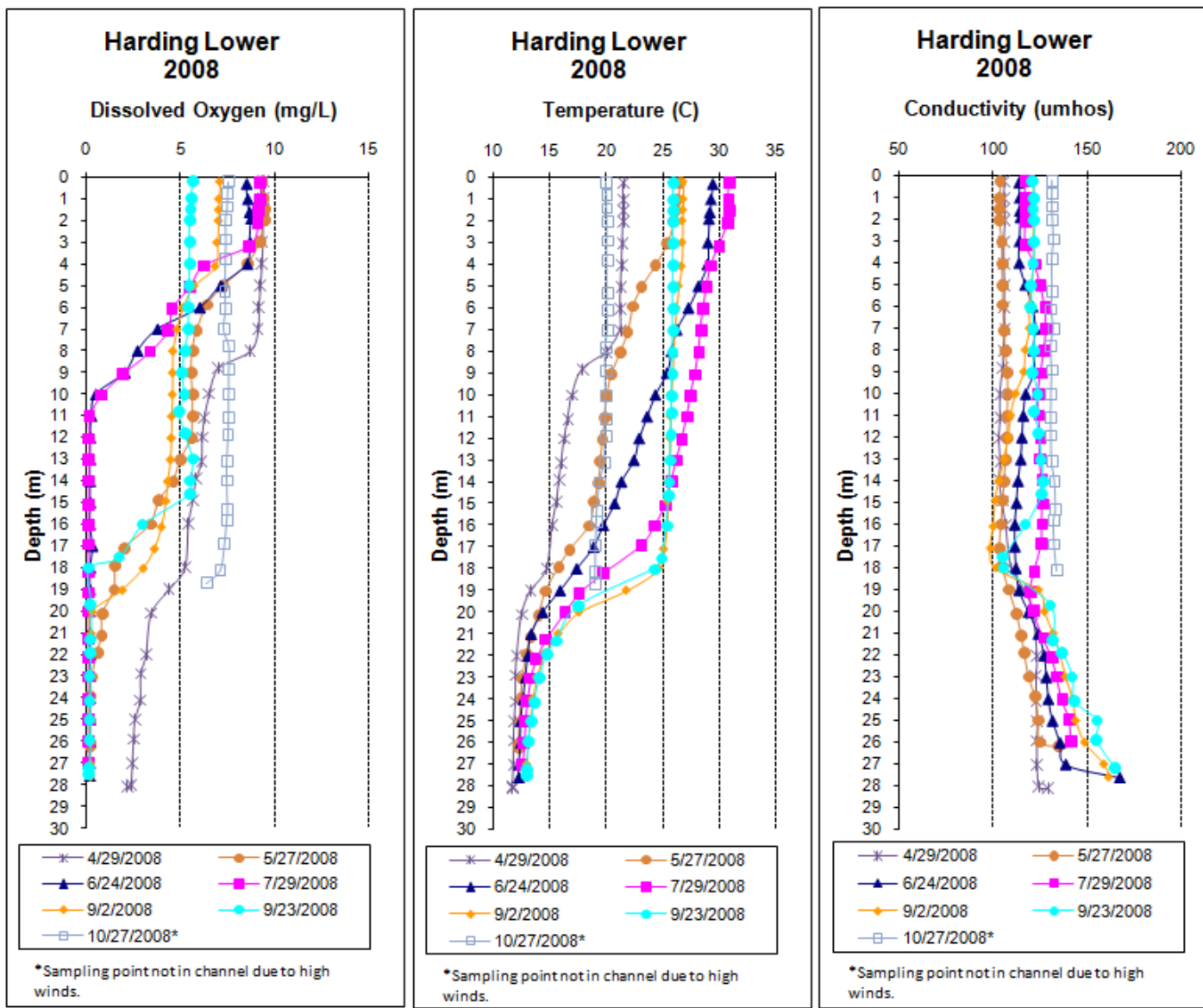


Figure 10. Monthly depth profiles of dissolved oxygen, temperature, and conductivity in the Halawakee Ck station, April-October 2008.

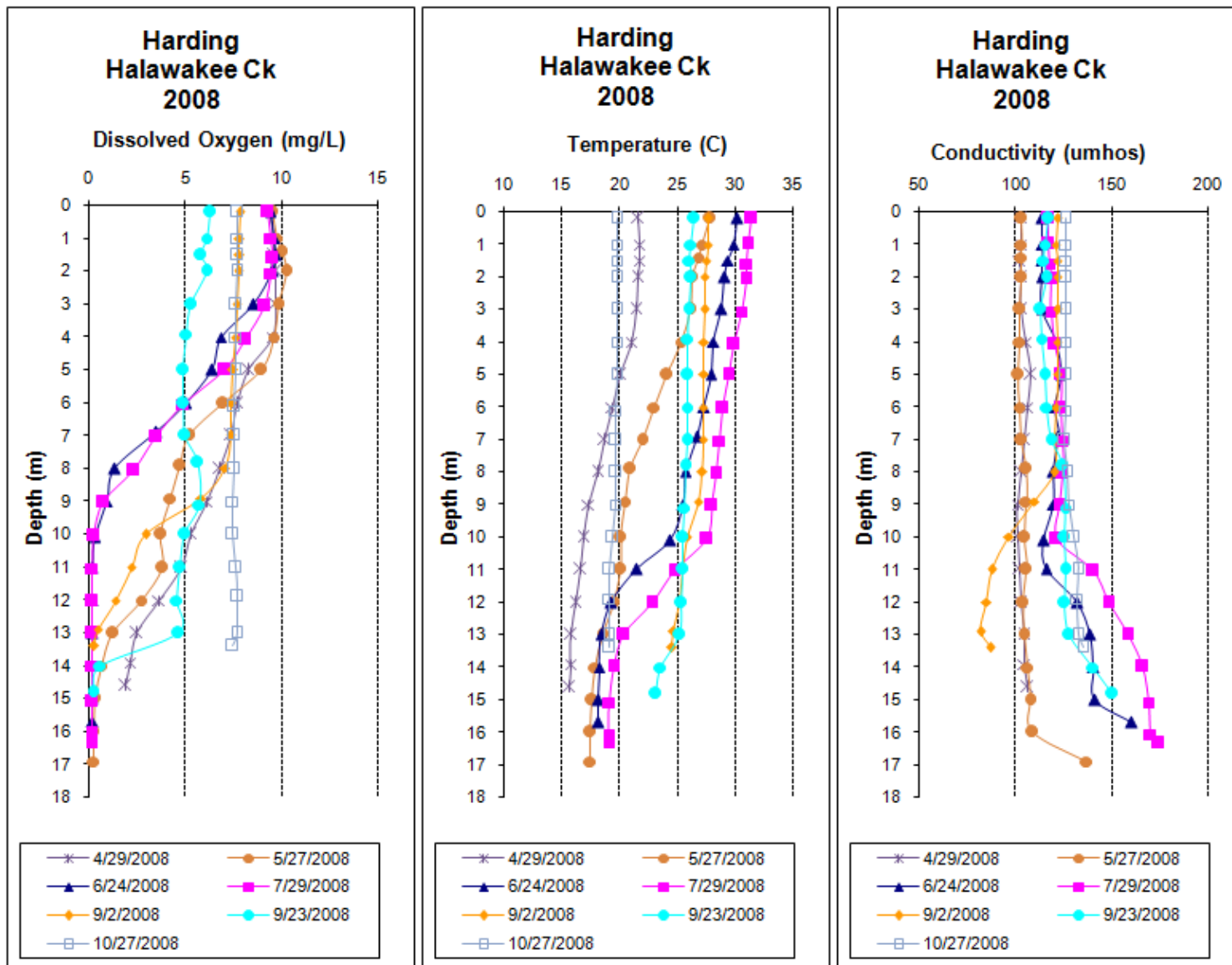
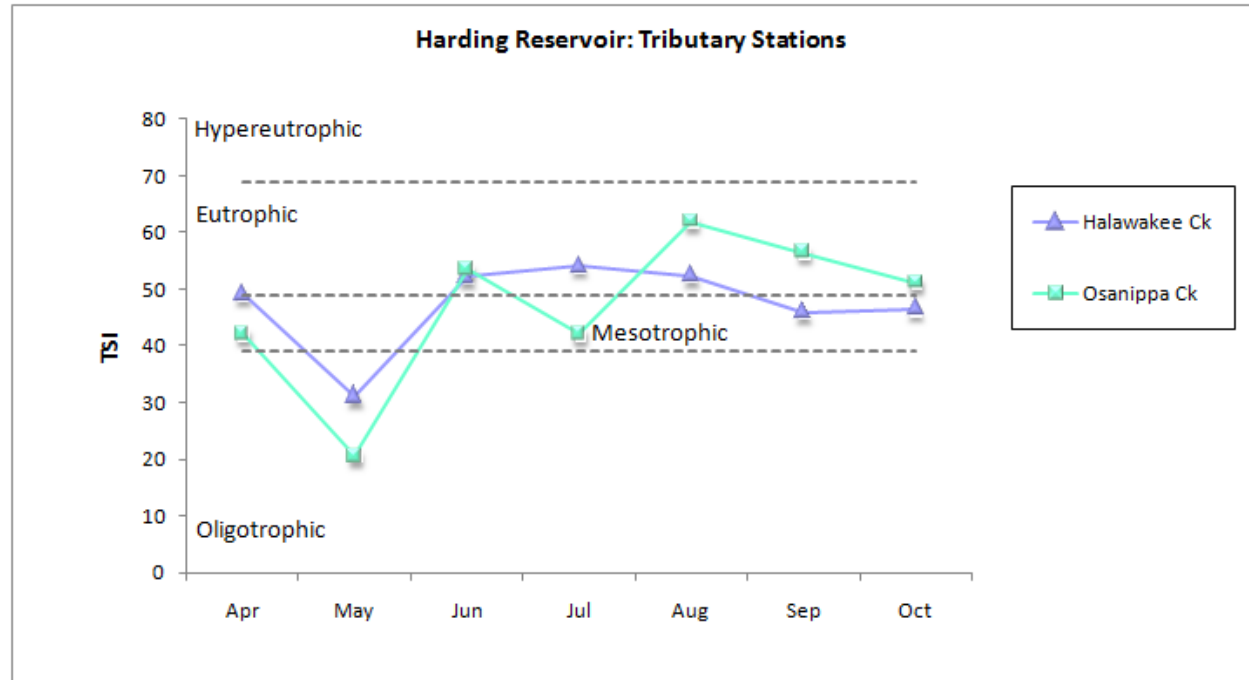
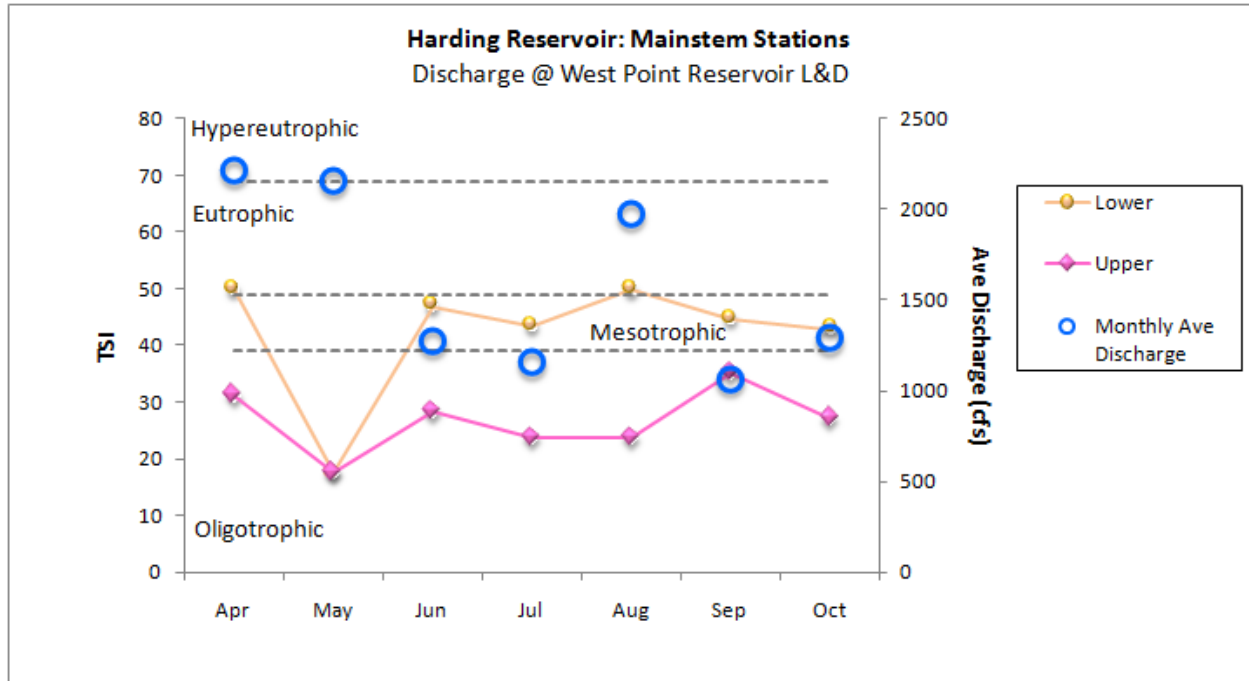


Figure 11. Monthly TSI values calculated for mainstem and tributary Harding Reservoir stations using chl *a* concentrations and Carlson's Trophic State Index calculation. Monthly discharge acquired from USACE at West Point Lock and Dam.



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APPENDIX

Appendix Table 1. Summary of Harding Reservoir water quality data collected April-October, 2008. Minimum (min) and maximum (max) values calculated using minimum detection limits when results were less than this value. Median (med), mean, and standard deviation (SD) values were calculated by multiplying the MDL by 0.5 when results were less than this value.

Station	Parameter	N	Min	Max	Med	Mean	SD
HARL-1	Physical						
	Turbidity (NTU)	7	1.9	4.3	2.4	2.7	0.8
	Total Dissolved Solids (mg/L)	7	52.0	88.0	62.0	62.9	13.1
	Total Suspended Solids (mg/L)	7	< 1.0	7.0	2.0	2.2	2.3
	Hardness (mg/L)	4	17.6	26.2	21.6	21.8	4.6
	Alkalinity (mg/L)	7	20.1	30.4	25.9	26.0	4.0
	Photic Zone (m)	7	3.65	6.86	6.25	5.84	1.11
	Secchi (m)	7	1.80	2.26	2.02	2.03	0.20
	Chemical						
	Ammonia Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	< 0.015	0.055	0.008	0.014	0.018
	Nitrate+Nitrite Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	0.276	0.693	0.453	0.459	0.156
	Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	< 0.150	0.487	0.230	0.242	0.128
	Total Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	< 0.506	1.113	0.611	0.701	0.239
	Dissolved Reactive Phosphorus (mg/L)	7	0.006	0.011	0.008	0.009	0.002
	Total Phosphorus (mg/L) ^j	7	0.005	0.024	0.021	0.019	0.007
	CBOD-5 (mg/L)	7	< 1.0	2.0	0.5	0.6	0.2
	Chlorides (mg/L)	7	2.4	11.6	9.1	8.5	2.9
	Biological						
	Chlorophyll a (ug/L)	7	0.27	7.21	4.27	4.50	2.39
	Fecal Coliform (col/100 mL) ^j	1				5	
HARL-2	Physical						
	Turbidity (NTU)	7	2.5	8.2	3.2	3.9	2.0
	Total Dissolved Solids (mg/L)	7	38.0	76.0	48.0	53.7	14.7
	Total Suspended Solids (mg/L)	7	< 1.0	5.0	2.0	2.1	1.7
	Hardness (mg/L)	4	17.8	25.8	21.0	21.4	4.1
	Alkalinity (mg/L)	7	20.1	29.1	25.6	25.5	3.5
	Photic Zone (m)	7	4.15	6.35	5.35	5.36	0.80
	Secchi (m)	7	1.49	2.18	1.73	1.79	0.21
	Chemical						
	Ammonia Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	< 0.015	0.045	0.008	0.015	0.014
	Nitrate+Nitrite Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	0.235	0.605	0.380	0.388	0.149
	Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	0.162	0.329	0.307	0.278	0.062
	Total Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	0.516	0.912	0.561	0.666	0.173
	Dissolved Reactive Phosphorus (mg/L)	7	0.006	0.011	0.008	0.008	0.002
	Total Phosphorus (mg/L) ^j	7	< 0.005	0.025	0.019	0.018	0.008
	CBOD-5 (mg/L)	7	< 1.0	2.0	0.5	0.6	0.2
	Chlorides (mg/L) ^j	7	7.2	12.2	9.0	9.1	1.6
	Biological						
	Chlorophyll a (ug/L)	7	1.07	11.04	6.68	6.72	3.39
	Fecal Coliform (col/100 mL) ^j	1				3	

Station	Parameter	N	Min	Max	Med	Avg	SD
HARL-3	Physical						
	Turbidity (NTU)	7	5.4	10.3	8.1	7.8	2.1
	Total Dissolved Solids (mg/L)	7	26.0	86.0	68.0	59.7	25.2
	Total Suspended Solids (mg/L)	7	< 1.0	8.0	4.0	4.1	2.6
	Hardness (mg/L)	4	15.5	26.2	22.6	21.7	5.3
	Alkalinity (mg/L)	7	21.9	29.2	27.4	26.4	2.9
	Photic Zone (m)	7	1.86	3.68	2.91	2.73	0.61
	Secchi (m)	7	0.78	1.42	1.05	1.10	0.22
	Chemical						
	Ammonia Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	< 0.015	0.026	0.008	0.010	0.007
	Nitrate+Nitrite Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	0.184	0.643	0.325	0.319	0.159
	Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	0.173	1.056	0.348	0.465	0.290
	Total Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	0.498	1.249	0.683	0.783	0.325
	Dissolved Reactive Phosphorus (mg/L)	7	0.008	0.011	0.011	0.010	0.001
	Total Phosphorus (mg/L)	7	0.021	0.048	0.029	0.032	0.010
	CBOD-5 (mg/L)	7	< 1.0	2.0	0.5	0.6	0.2
	Chlorides (mg/L) ^J	7	6.2	9.9	7.2	7.5	1.4
	Biological						
	Chlorophyll a (ug/L)	7	0.36	24.03	8.01	8.98	8.10
	Fecal Coliform (col/100 mL) ^J	1				20	
HARL-4	Physical						
	Turbidity (NTU)	7	3.2	8.9	3.9	4.6	2.0
	Total Dissolved Solids (mg/L)	7	40.0	90.0	66.0	62.9	17.4
	Total Suspended Solids (mg/L) ^J	7	< 1.0	8.0	3.0	3.2	2.5
	Hardness (mg/L)	4	21.0	28.4	24.5	24.6	4.0
	Alkalinity (mg/L)	7	22.6	34.1	29.0	28.5	4.3
	Photic Zone (m)	7	3.00	4.40	3.70	3.68	0.44
	Secchi (m)	6	1.15	2.61	1.88	1.86	0.48
	Chemical						
	Ammonia Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	< 0.015	0.155	0.008	0.034	0.054
	Nitrate+Nitrite Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	0.430	0.832	0.629	0.602	0.136
	Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	< 0.150	0.392	0.343	0.316	0.110
	Total Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	< 0.579	1.174	0.993	0.918	0.194
	Dissolved Reactive Phosphorus (mg/L)	7	0.010	0.013	0.012	0.012	0.001
	Total Phosphorus (mg/L) ^J	7	0.023	0.031	0.025	0.026	0.003
	CBOD-5 (mg/L)	7	< 1.0	2.0	0.5	0.6	0.2
	Chlorides (mg/L) ^J	7	2.4	12.6	10.3	9.3	3.3
	Biological						
	Chlorophyll a (ug/L)	7	< 0.10	1.60	0.71	0.65	0.57
	Fecal Coliform (col/100 mL) ^J	1				46	

^J=one or more of the values provided are estimated; < = Actual value is less than the detection limit