

South Sauty Creek Embayment
Guntersville Reservoir
Intensive Basin Survey 2009

GUNM-6: South Sauty Creek immediately upstream of CR 67 bridge (Jackson Co 34.51917/-86.10389)

BACKGROUND

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) began monitoring lake water quality statewide in 1985, followed by a second statewide survey in 1989. In 1990, the Reservoir Water Quality Monitoring Program (now known as the Rivers and Reservoirs Monitoring Program (RRMP) was initiated by ADEM.

The current 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 (ADEM 2012).

In 2009, ADEM monitored the South Sauty Creek tributary embayment of Guntersville Reservoir as part of the intensive basin assessment of the Tennessee River under the RRMP. This site was selected using historical data and previous assessments. The purpose of this report is to summarize data collected at the South Sauty Ck embayment (GUNM-6) during the 2009 growing season (Apr-Oct). This is the second intensive basin assessment of the Tennessee River since ADEM began sampling on a basin rotation. Monthly and/or mean concentrations of nutrients [total nitrogen (TN); total phosphorus (TP)], algal biomass/productivity [chlorophyll *a* (chl *a*); algal growth potential testing (AGPT)], sediment [total suspended solids (TSS)], and trophic state [Carlson’s trophic state index (TSI)] from 2009 were compared to ADEM’s 2003 data and established criteria.



Figure 1. Photo of South Sauty Ck at GUNM-6

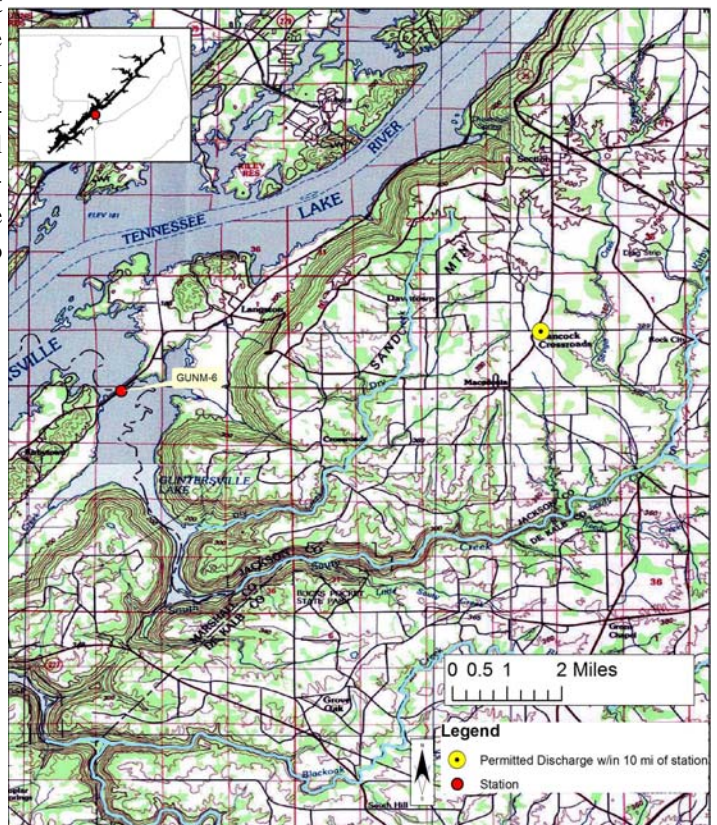


Figure 2. Map of South Sauty Ck Embayment of Guntersville Reservoir. Though additional permits may occur in the watershed (Table 1), only permitted discharges within 10 miles upstream of the station are displayed on the map.

WATERSHED CHARACTERISTICS

Watershed land uses are summarized in Table 1. South Sauty Ck is classified as a *Swimming/Fish & Wildlife (S/F&W)* stream located in the Sequatchie Valley ecoregion (68b). Based on the 2006 National Land Cover Dataset, land use within the 165 mi² watershed is predominantly agriculture [hay/pasture (38%) and cultivated crops (12%)](Fig. 3). As of October 1, 2013, ADEM has issued a total of 16 NPDES permits within the watershed. One of those permits is located within 10 mi upstream of the station (Fig. 2).

SITE DESCRIPTION

Following through the heart of Sand Mountain, the South Sauty Ck embayment is located near Langston, AL. It has a median bottom depth of 9.2 m (Table 2) at the sampling location. The headwaters of South Sauty originate near Henagar, Al and wind down through Bucks Pocket State Park before flowing into the Tennessee River at river mile 372.

METHODS

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 2009), Surface Water Quality Assurance Project Plan (ADEM 2008a), and Quality Management Plan (ADEM 2008b).

Mean growing season TN, TP, chl *a*, and TSS were calculated to evaluate water quality conditions. Monthly concentrations of these parameters were graphed with ADEM's previously collected data to help interpret the 2009 results. Carlson's TSI was calculated from the corrected chl *a* concentrations.

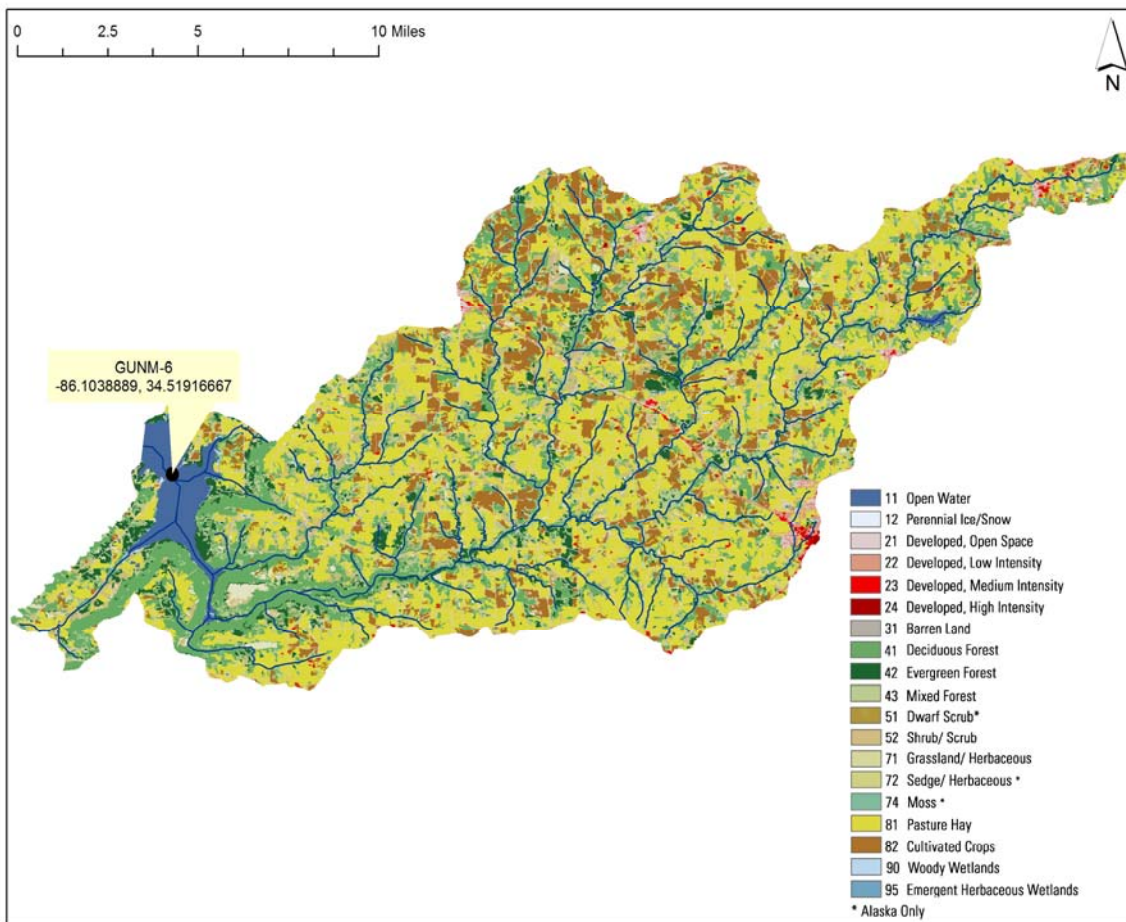


Figure 3. Landuse within the South Sauty Creek watershed at GUNM-6.

RESULTS

The following discussion of results is limited to those parameters which directly affect trophic status or parameters which have established criteria. Results of all water chemistry analyses are presented in Table 2. The axis of the graphs in Fig. 4 were set to maximum values reservoir wide so all embayment reports on the same reservoir could be compared.

The mean growing season TN value was higher in 2009 than in 2003 (Fig. 4). The highest monthly TN concentration was measured in April and generally declined through September.

Contrary to mean TN concentration, the mean growing season TP concentration was lower in 2009 (Fig. 4). Monthly TP concentrations were similar April through October.

In 2009, the growing season mean chl *a* value was lower than 2003 (Fig. 4). Monthly chl *a* concentrations peaked in July and September.

Mean TSI remained highly eutrophic in 2009 (Fig. 4). Monthly TSI in South Sauty Ck was eutrophic April through October.

The mean growing season TSS value was lower in 2009 than 2003 (Fig. 5). Monthly TSS concentrations were highest in August and lowest in July.

AGPT results show that GUNM-6 was nitrogen limited in 2009 (Table 3). The mean maximum standing crop (MSC) value was 3.20 mg/L, which is below the 5.0 m/L value that Raschke and Schultz (1987) defined as protective of reservoir and lake systems. The previous MSC value for South Sauty Ck at GUNM-6 was also below 5 mg/L but the embayment was determined to be co-limiting.

The DO concentration in the GUNM-6 station increased April-July, then sharply dropped Aug-Sept. Concentrations above the ADEM criteria limit of 5.0 mg/l at 5.0 ft throughout the growing season (1.5 m)(ADEM Admin. Code R. 335-6-10-.09) (Fig. 6).

Table 1: Summary of Watershed GUNM-6

Basin	Tennessee R
Drainage Area (mi ²)	165
Ecoregion ^a	68b
% Landuse	
Open Water	3%
Developed	Open Space 4%
	Low Intensity <1%
	Medium Intensity <1%
	High Intensity <1%
Barren Land	<1%
Forest	Deciduous Forest 19%
	Evergreen Forest 5%
	Mixed Forest 10%
Shrub/Scrub	5%
Herbaceous	2%
Hay/Pasture	38%
Cultivated Crops	12%
Wetlands	Woody 0%
	Emergent Herb. <1%
# NPDES Permits ^b	TOTAL 16
Construction Stormwater	6
Industrial General	6
Industrial Individual	1
Municipal Individual	2
Underground Injection Control	1

a. Sequatchie Valley

b. #NPDES permits downloaded from ADEM's NPDES Management System database, Oct 1, 2013.

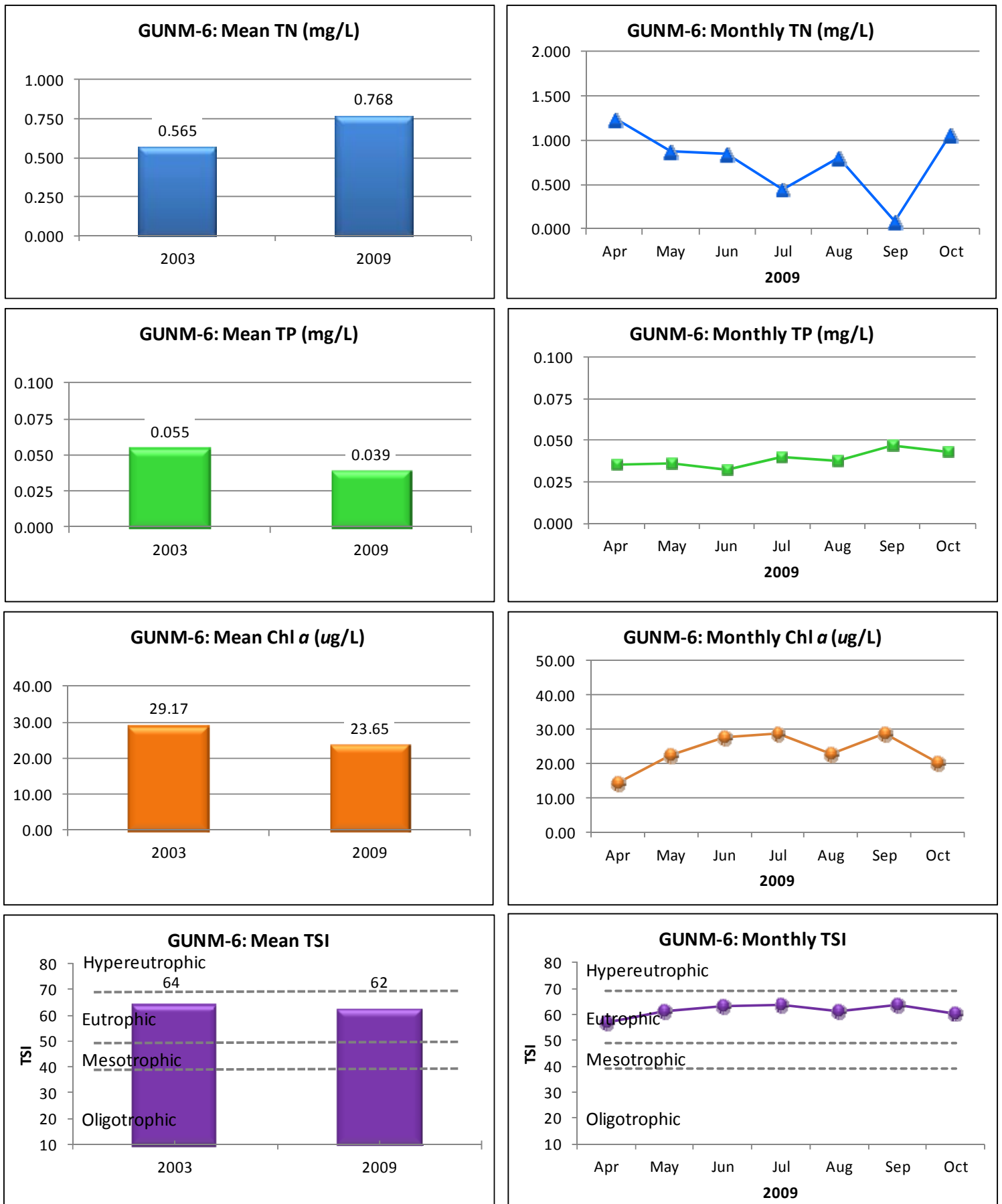


Figure 4. Mean growing season (2003-2009) and monthly (April-October, 2009) TN, TP, chl a and TSI measured in the South Sauty Creek embayment of Guntersville Reservoir. Vertical axis ranges are set to maximum values reservoir-wide for comparability between embayment reports within the same reservoir.

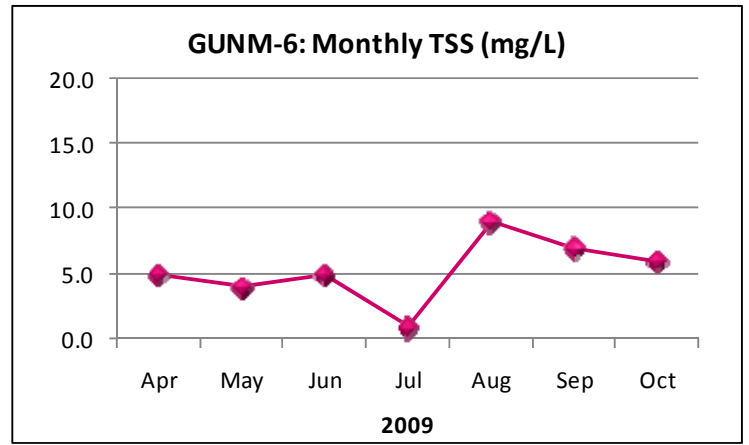
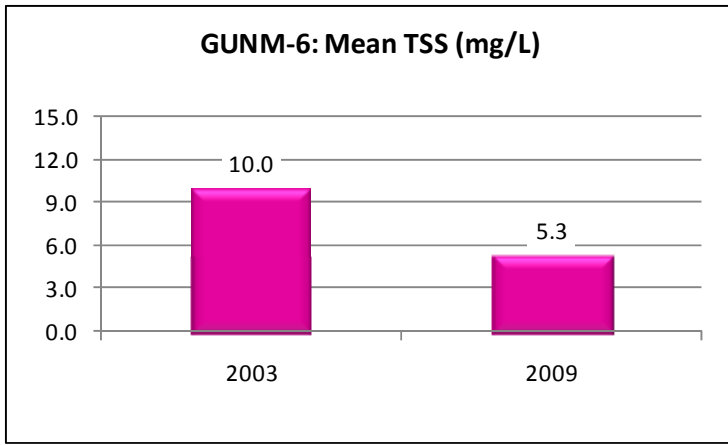


Figure 5. Mean growing season and monthly TSS measured in the South Sauty Creek embayment of Guntersville Reservoir.

Table 2. Summary of water quality data collected April-October, 2009. Minimum (Min) and maximum (Max) values calculated using minimum detection limits. Median (Med), average (Avg), and standard deviations (SD) values were calculated by multiplying the MDL by 0.5 when results were less than this value.

GUNM-6	N	Min	Max	Med	Avg	SD
Physical						
Turbidity (NTU)	7	4.6	8.3	7.2	6.6	1.3
Total Dissolved Solids (mg/L) ^J	7	36.0	130.0	102.0	90.9	34.5
Total Suspended Solids (mg/L)	7	1.0	9.0	5.0	5.3	2.5
Hardness (mg/L)	3	41.8	74.8	64.5	60.4	16.9
Alkalinity (mg/L)	7	34.7	104.0	59.8	64.1	21.7
Photic Zone (m)	7	1.99	3.64	3.03	2.85	0.66
Secchi (m)	7	0.85	1.26	1.01	1.02	0.15
Bottom Depth (m)	8	7.00	9.90	9.20	8.81	0.93
Chemical						
Ammonia Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	< 0.006	0.030	0.007	0.013	0.011
Nitrate+Nitrite Nitrogen (mg/L) ^J	7	< 0.004	0.656	0.044	0.207	0.264
Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	< 0.089	0.842	0.590	0.561	0.288
Total Nitrogen (mg/L) ^J	7	< 0.088	1.246	0.849	0.768	0.389
Dissolved Reactive Phosphorus (mg/L) ^J	7	0.004	0.012	0.005	0.006	0.003
Total Phosphorus (mg/L)	7	0.032	0.047	0.038	0.039	0.005
CBOD-5 (mg/L)	7	< 2.0	2.1	1.0	1.2	0.4
Chlorides (mg/L)	7	4.4	7.7	6.0	5.9	1.2
Biological						
Chlorophyll a (ug/L)	7	14.42	28.84	22.96	23.65	5.31
Fecal Coliform (col/100 mL) ^J	3	< 1	1	1	1	0

^J= one or more of the values is an estimate; N= # samples.

Table 3. Algal growth potential test results (expressed as mean 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 (Raschke and Schultz 1987).

Year	Mean MSC	Limiting Nutrient
8/19/2003	2.93	CO-LIMITING
8/17/2009	3.2	NITROGEN

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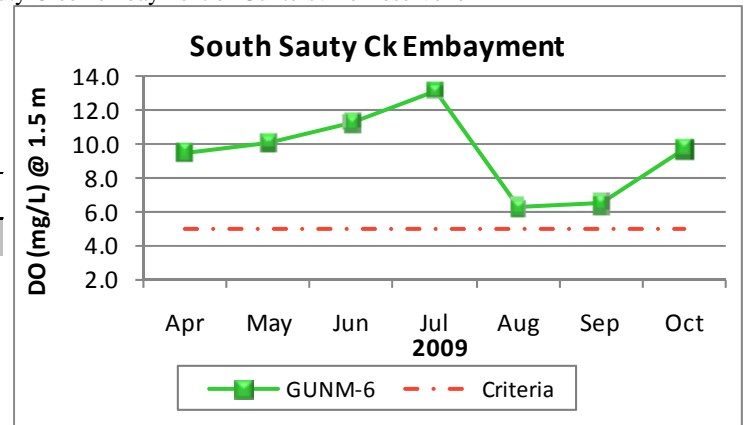


Figure 6. Monthly DO concentrations at 1.5 m (5 ft) for South Sauty Ck embayment station of Guntersville Reservoir collected April-October 2009. ADEM Water Quality Criteria pertaining to reservoir waters require a DO concentration of 5.0 mg/L at this depth.

REFERENCES

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