

## Bluewater Creek Embayment Wilson Reservoir Intensive Basin Survey 2009

**WILL-2:** Bluewater Creek approx 1 mi upstream of confluence with TN River (Lauderdale Co 34.82273/-87.40888)

### 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 Bluewater Creek tributary embayment of Wilson 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 in the Bluewater Creek embayment (WILL-2) 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.

### WATERSHED CHARACTERISTICS

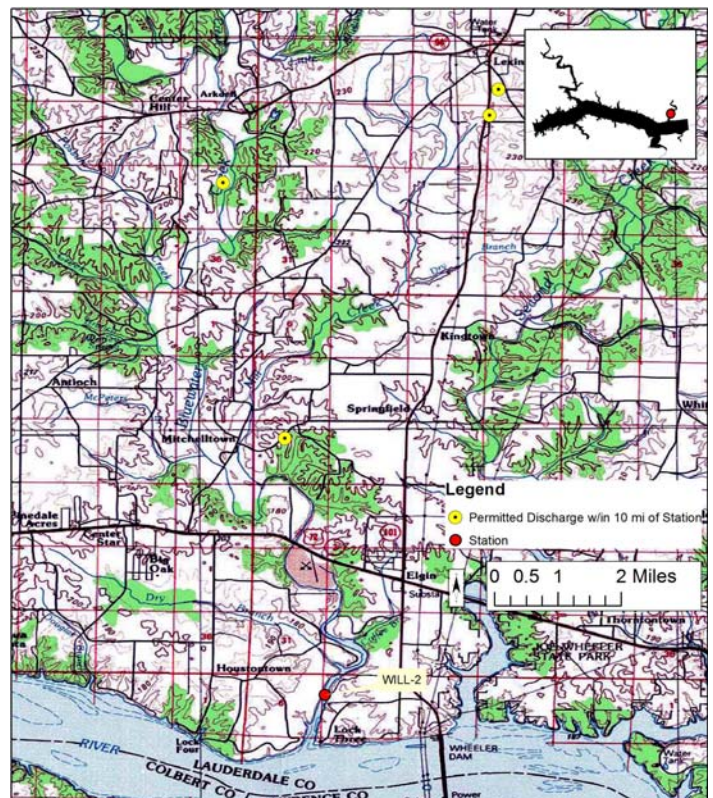
Watershed land uses are summarized in Table 1. Bluewater Creek is classified as a *Swimming/Fish & Wildlife (S/F&W)* stream located in the Interior Plateau ecoregion (71f). Based on the 2006 National Land Cover Dataset, land use within the 139 mi<sup>2</sup> watershed is predominantly agriculture [hay/pasture (45%) and crops (8%)] (Fig. 3). As of October 1, 2013, ADEM has issued a total of 13 NPDES permits within the watershed. Four of those permits are located within 10 mi of the station (Fig. 2).

### SITE DESCRIPTION

The Bluewater Creek embayment at WILL-2 is located just south of Elgin, AL, on the northern side of the Tennessee River just downstream of the Joe Wheeler Reservoir Dam. WILL-2 has a mean bottom depth of 5.22 m (Table 2) and is surrounded by residential houses.



**Figure 1.** Photo of Bluewater Creek at WILL-2



**Figure 2.** Map of Bluewater Creek embayment of Wilson 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.

## 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.

## RESULTS

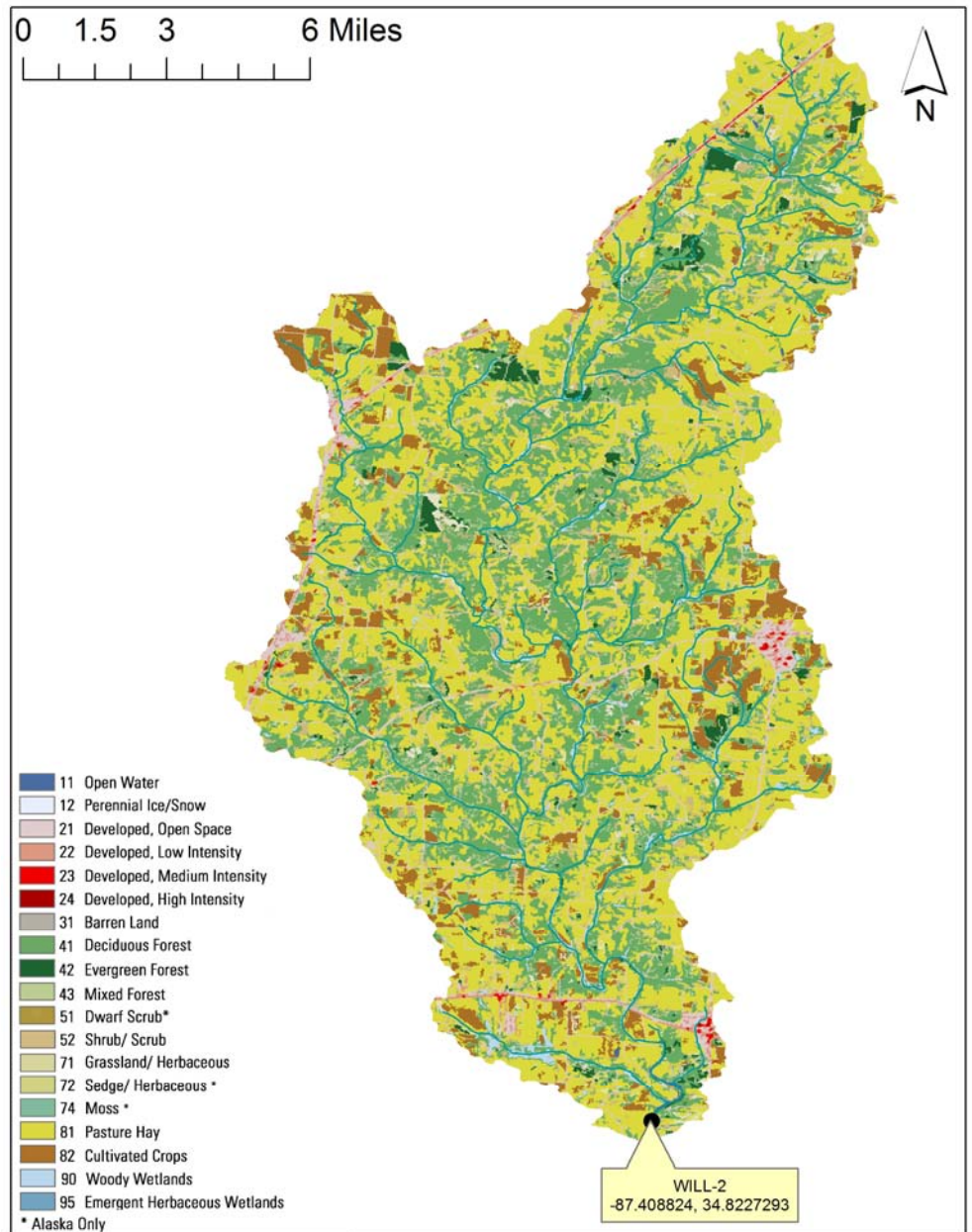
The following discussion of results is limited to those parameters which directly affect trophic status or parameters which have established criteria. Results of all water chemistry analyses are presented in Table 2. The axis ranges of the graphs in Figs. 4-6 were set to maximum values reservoir-wide so all embayment reports on the same reservoir could be compared.

**Table 1: Summary of Watershed WILL-2**

Basin		Tennessee R
Drainage Area (mi <sup>2</sup> )		139
Ecoregion <sup>a</sup>		71f
% Land use		
Open Water		<1%
Developed	Open Space	6%
	Low Intensity	1%
	Medium Intensity	<1%
	High Intensity	<1%
Barren Land		<1%
Forest	Deciduous Forest	27%
	Evergreen Forest	2%
	Mixed Forest	4%
Shrub/Scrub		5%
Herbaceous		1%
Hay/Pasture		45%
Cultivated Crops		8%
Wetlands	Woody	2%
	Emergent Herb.	<1%
# NPDES Permits <sup>b</sup>		TOTAL
Construction Stormwater		7
Industrial General		3
Industrial Individual		1
Underground Injection Control		2

a. Interior Plateau

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



**Figure 3.** Land use within the Bluewater Creek watershed at WILL-2.

The mean growing season TN value was higher in 2009 than in 2003 (Fig. 4). Monthly TN concentrations generally declined April-August.

Contrary to mean TN concentration, the mean growing season TP concentration was lower in 2009 (Fig. 4). Monthly TP concentrations generally increased April-September.

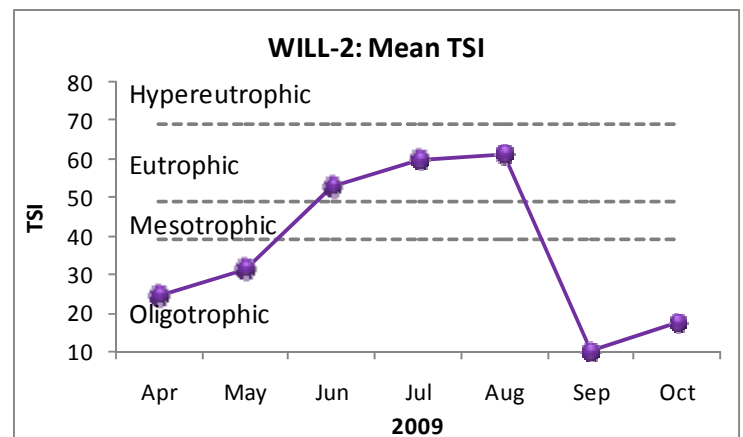
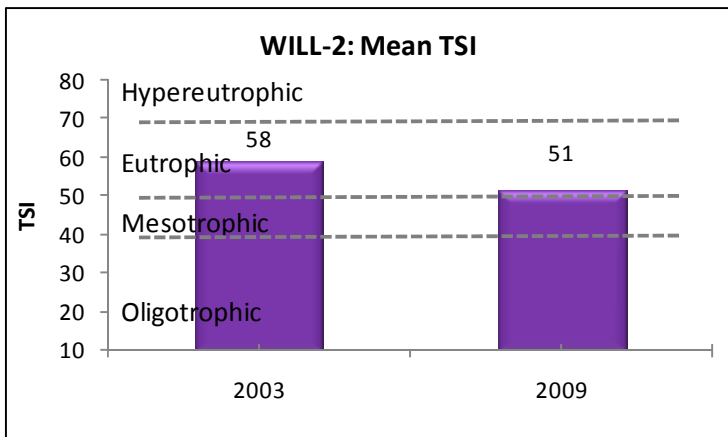
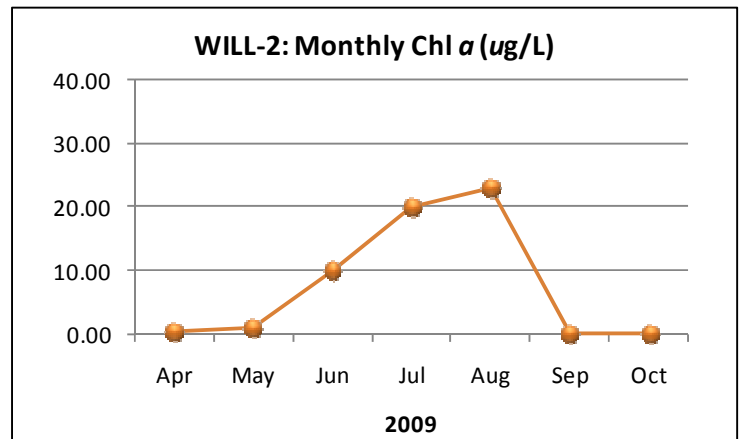
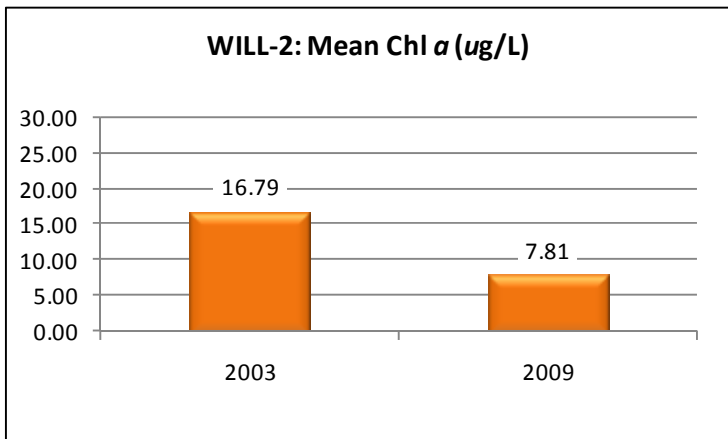
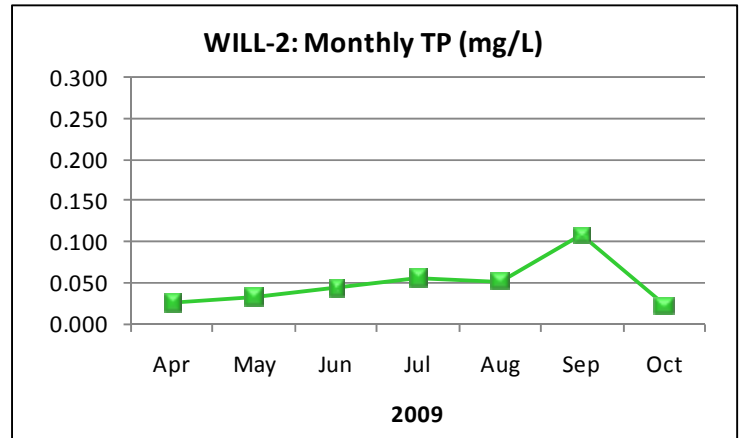
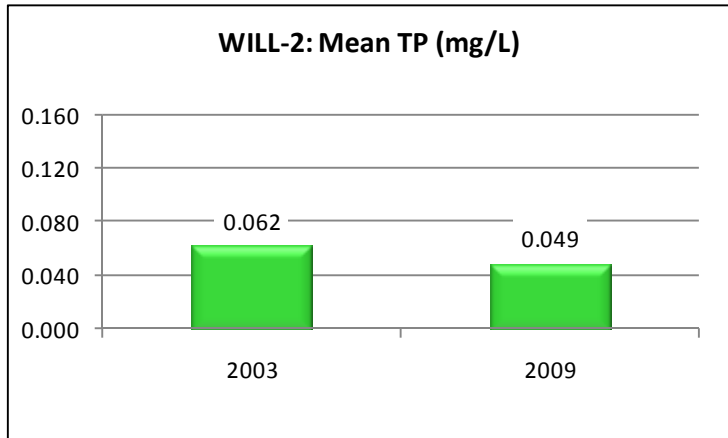
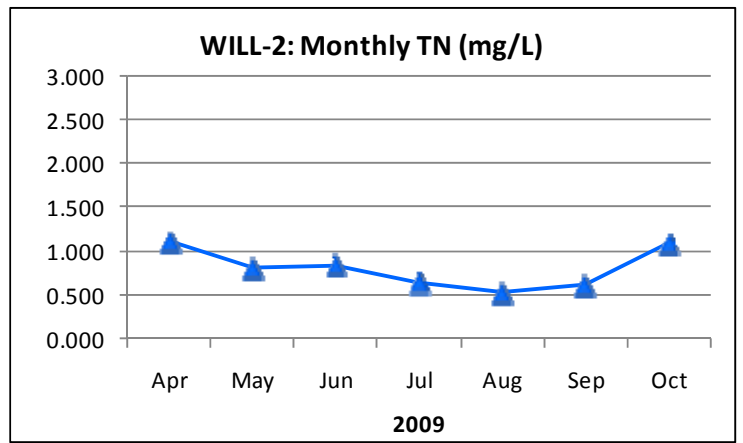
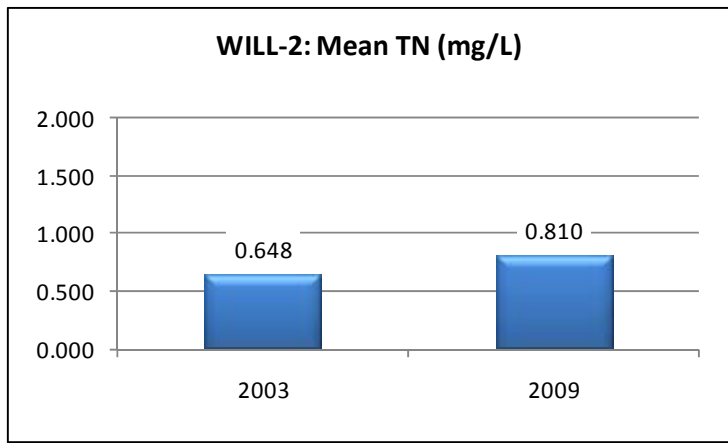
In 2009, the growing season mean chl *a* value was lower than 2003 (Fig. 4). Monthly chl *a* concentrations peaked in August then dropped sharply in September.

Mean TSI was eutrophic in both 2009 and 2003. Monthly TSI in Bluewater Creek was eutrophic Jun-August and oligotrophic all other months (Fig. 4).

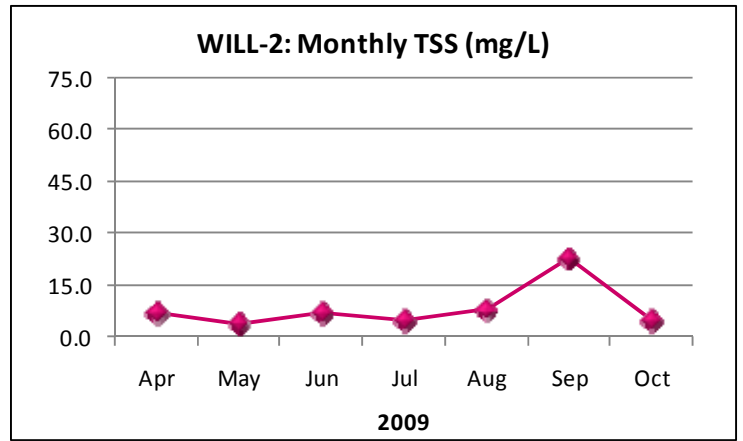
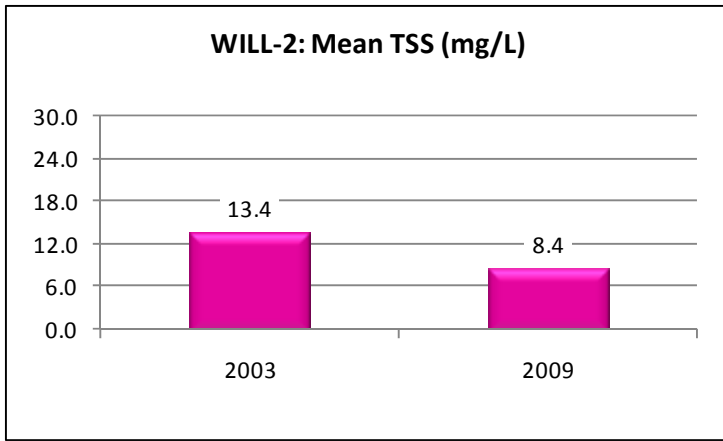
The mean growing season TSS value was lower in 2009 than 2003 (Fig. 5). Monthly TSS concentration was highest in September and low most other months sampled.

AGPT results show that WILL-2 was nitrogen limited in 2009 and co-limiting in 2003 (Table 3). The mean maximum standing crop (MSC) value from both years were above the 5.0 mg/L value that Raschke and Schultz (1987) defined as protective of reservoir and lake systems.

The DO concentration in the WILL-2 station was above the ADEM criteria limit of 5.0 mg/l at 5.0 ft (1.5 m) in all months (ADEM Admin. Code R. 335-6-10-.09) (Fig. 6).



**Figure 4.** Mean growing season (2003-2009) and monthly (April-October, 2009) TN, TP, chl a and TSI measured in the Bluewater Creek embayment of Wilson 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 Bluewater Creek embayment of Wilson 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), Mean, and standard deviations (SD) values were calculated by multiplying the MDL by 0.5 when results were less than this value.

WILL-2	N	Min	Max	Med	Mean	SD
<b>Physical</b>						
Turbidity (NTU)	7	7.9	39.2	8.5	13.0	11.6
Total Dissolved Solids (mg/L) <sup>J</sup>	7	11.0	96.0	54.0	57.6	32.6
Total Suspended Solids (mg/L) <sup>J</sup>	7	4.0	23.0	7.0	8.4	6.6
Hardness (mg/L)	3	36.5	63.8	43.6	48.0	14.2
Alkalinity (mg/L)	7	40.3	65.8	56.0	53.7	10.6
Photic Zone (m)	7	1.22	4.70	3.08	3.12	1.06
Secchi (m)	7	0.30	1.16	0.88	0.86	0.29
Bottom Depth (m)	7	4.90	5.59	5.16	5.22	0.30
<b>Chemical</b>						
Ammonia Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	< 0.006	0.033	0.007	0.014	0.013
Nitrate+Nitrite Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	0.134	0.840	0.577	0.513	0.282
Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	< 0.089	0.488	0.402	0.297	0.178
Total Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	< 0.536	1.116	0.814	0.810	0.228
Dissolved Reactive Phosphorus (mg/L) <sup>J</sup>	7	0.007	0.063	0.014	0.019	0.020
Total Phosphorus (mg/L)	7	0.023	0.108	0.043	0.049	0.029
CBOD-5 (mg/L)	7	< 2.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	0.0
Chlorides (mg/L)	7	2.4	5.3	3.2	3.7	1.2
<b>Biological</b>						
Chlorophyll a (ug/L)	7	< 0.10	22.89	1.07	7.81	9.97
Fecal Coliform (col/100 mL) <sup>J</sup>	3	7	>870	20	299	495

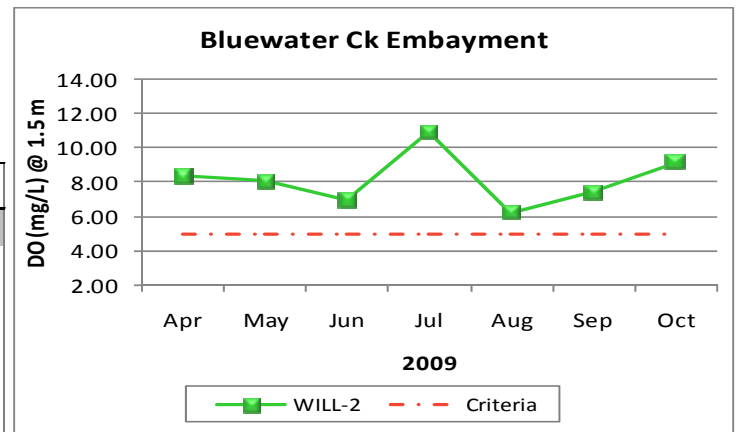
J= one or more of the values is an estimate; N= # samples.

**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
8/20/2003	29.8	CO-LIMITING
8/19/2009	8.34	NITROGEN

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**Figure 6.** Monthly DO concentrations at 1.5 m (5 ft) for Bluewater Creek embayment station of Wilson 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

- ADEM. 2008a. Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) for Surface Water Quality Monitoring in Alabama. Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM), Montgomery, AL. 78 pp.
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