Alabama Department of Environmental Management

Tennessee River Basin

Rivers and Reservoirs Monitoring Program

Crow Creek Embayment
Guntersville Reservoir
Intensive Basin Survey 2013

GUNM-1: Crow Creek approx. 1/2 mi downstream of US Hwy 72 (Jackson Co 34.83665/-85.82496)

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 2013, ADEM monitored the Crow 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 in the Crow Ck embayment (GUNM-1) during the 2013 growing season (Apr-Oct). This is the third 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 2013 were compared to ADEM's historical data and established criteria.

WATERSHED CHARACTERISTICS

Watershed land uses are summarized in Table 1. Crow Creek is classified as a *Public Water Supply/Swimming/Fish & Wildlife (PWS/S/F&W)* stream located in the Sequatchie Valley ecoregion (68b). Based on the 2006 National Land Cover Dataset, land use within the 266 mi^2 watershed is predominantly forest (80%) (Fig. 3). As of October 1, 2013, ADEM has issued a total of 7 NPDES permits within the watershed. Two of those permits are located within 10 mi of the station (Fig. 2).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Crow Ck embayment is located just south of Stevenson, AL and flows into Guntersville Reservoir near river mile 401. It is a shallow embayment with a mean bottom depth of 4.16 m (Table 2) at the sampling location. Although the channel is clear, most of the embayment is covered with thick mats of aquatic vegetation.

Figure 1. Photo of Crow Ck at GUNM-1.

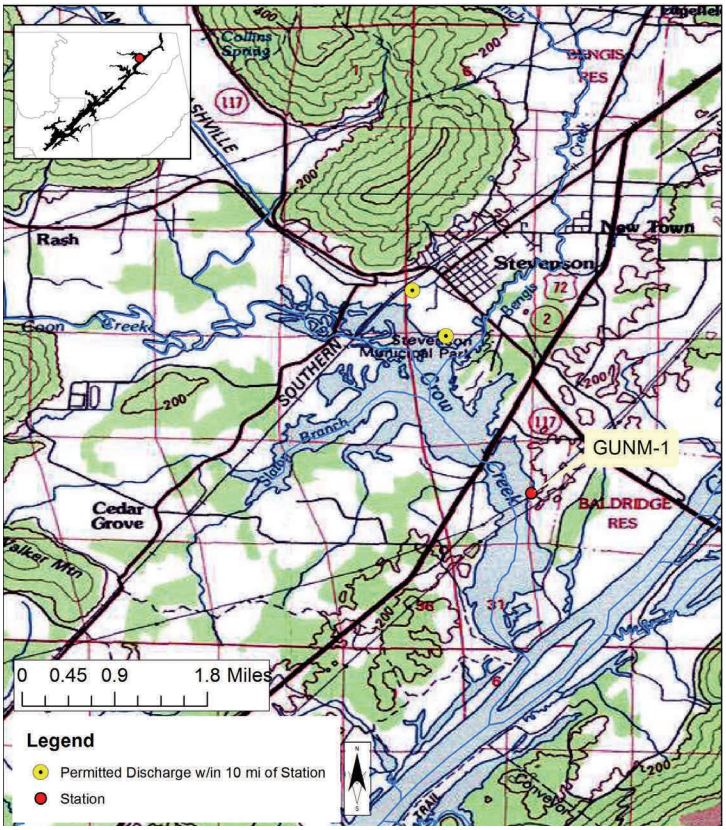


Figure 2. Map of the Crow Ck embayment of Guntersville Reservoir. Though additional discharges may occur in the watershed (Table 1), only permitted discharges within 10 miles of the station are displayed on the map.

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 2013b), Surface Water Quality Assurance Project Plan (ADEM 2012), and Quality Management Plan (ADEM 2013a).

Mean growing season TN, TP, chl *a*, and TSS were calculated to evaluate water quality conditions. Monthly concentrations of these parameters were graphed with discharge data, if available, and ADEM's previously collected data to help interpret the 2013 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 **GUNM-1**

Basin		Tennessee R
Drainage Area (mi^2)		266
Ecoregion[a]		68b
% Landuse		
Open Water		1%
Developed	Open Space	2%
	Low Intensity	<1%
	Medium Intensity	<1%
	High Intensity	<1%
Barren Land		<1%
Forest	Deciduous Forest	75%
	Evergreen Forest	1%
	Mixed Forest	4%
Shrub/Scrub		3%
Herbaceous		2%
Hay/Pasture		7%
Cultivated Crops		3%
Wetlands	Woody	1%
	Emergent Herb.	<1%
#NPDES Permits	**TOTAL**	7
Construction Stormwater		4
Mining		1
Industrial General		1
Municipal Individual		1

a. Sequatchie Valley

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

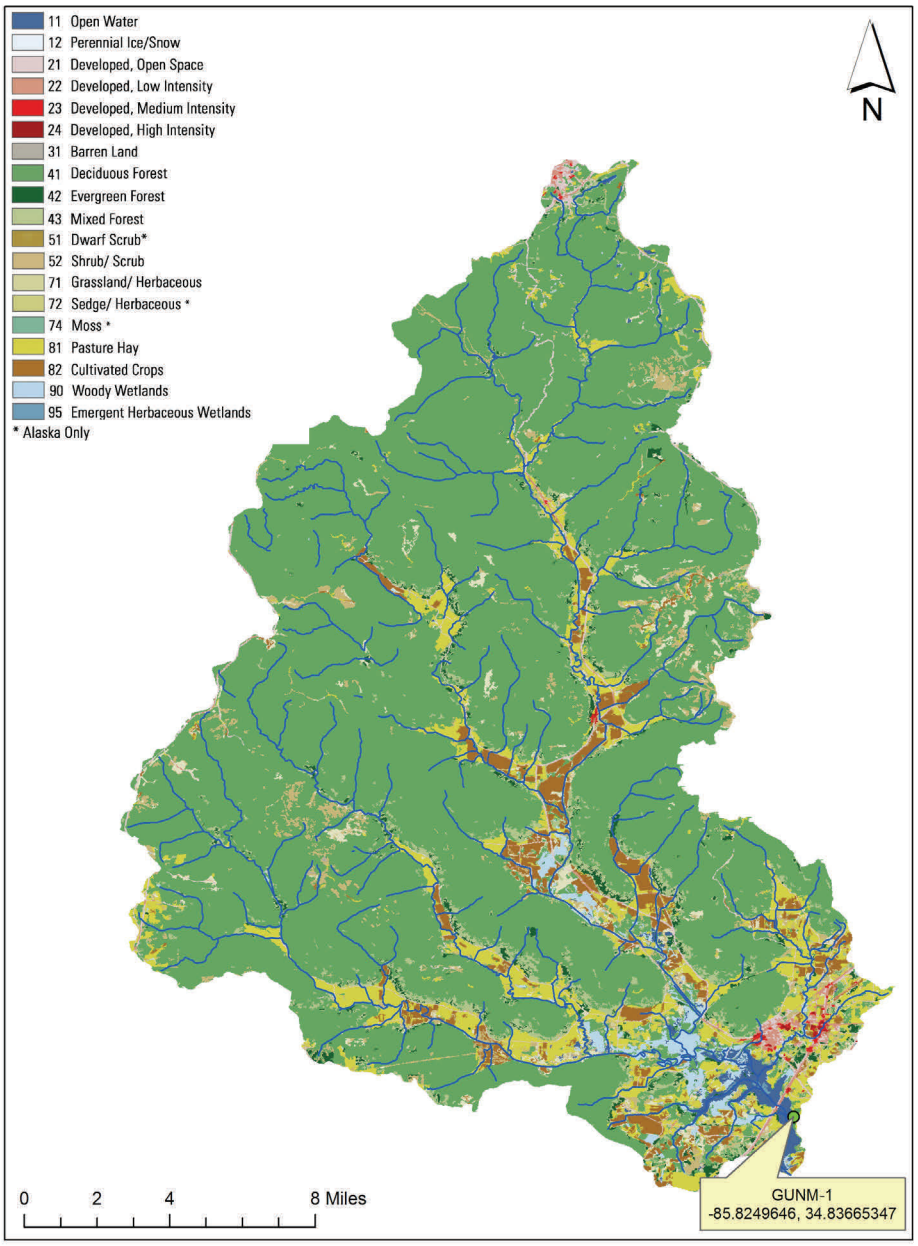


Figure 3. Land use within the Crow Creek watershed at GUNM-1.

The mean growing season TN value increased 2003-2013 (Fig. 4). Monthly TN concentrations were highest in May and decreased through August.

The mean growing season TP concentration decreased 2003-2013 (Fig. 4). The highest monthly TP concentration was measured in June.

In 2013, the mean growing season chl *a* value decreased 2003-2013 (Fig. 4). Monthly chl *a* concentrations were generally low and similar April-October.

Mean TSI decreased slightly since 2009 and remained mesotrophic. Monthly TSI in Crow Ck was oligotrophic or mesotrophic each month. Near eutrophic levels were reached in June (Fig. 4).

The mean growing season TSS value was lower in 2013 than 2003 but slightly higher compared to 2009 (Fig. 5). Monthly TSS concentrations peaked in May and September.

AGPT results show that Crow Ck was phosphorus limited 2003-2013 (Table 3). The 2013 mean maximum standing crop (MSC) value was 2.12 mg/L, which is below the 5.0 mg/L value that Raschke and Schultz (1987) defined as protective of reservoir and lake systems. Both previous MSC values for Crow Ck were also below 5.0 mg/L.

The DO concentration at the Crow Ck station was below the ADEM criteria limit of 5.0 mg/L at 5.0 ft (1.5 m) in September and near the limit in August and October. (ADEM Admin. Code R. 335-6-10-.09) (Fig. 6).

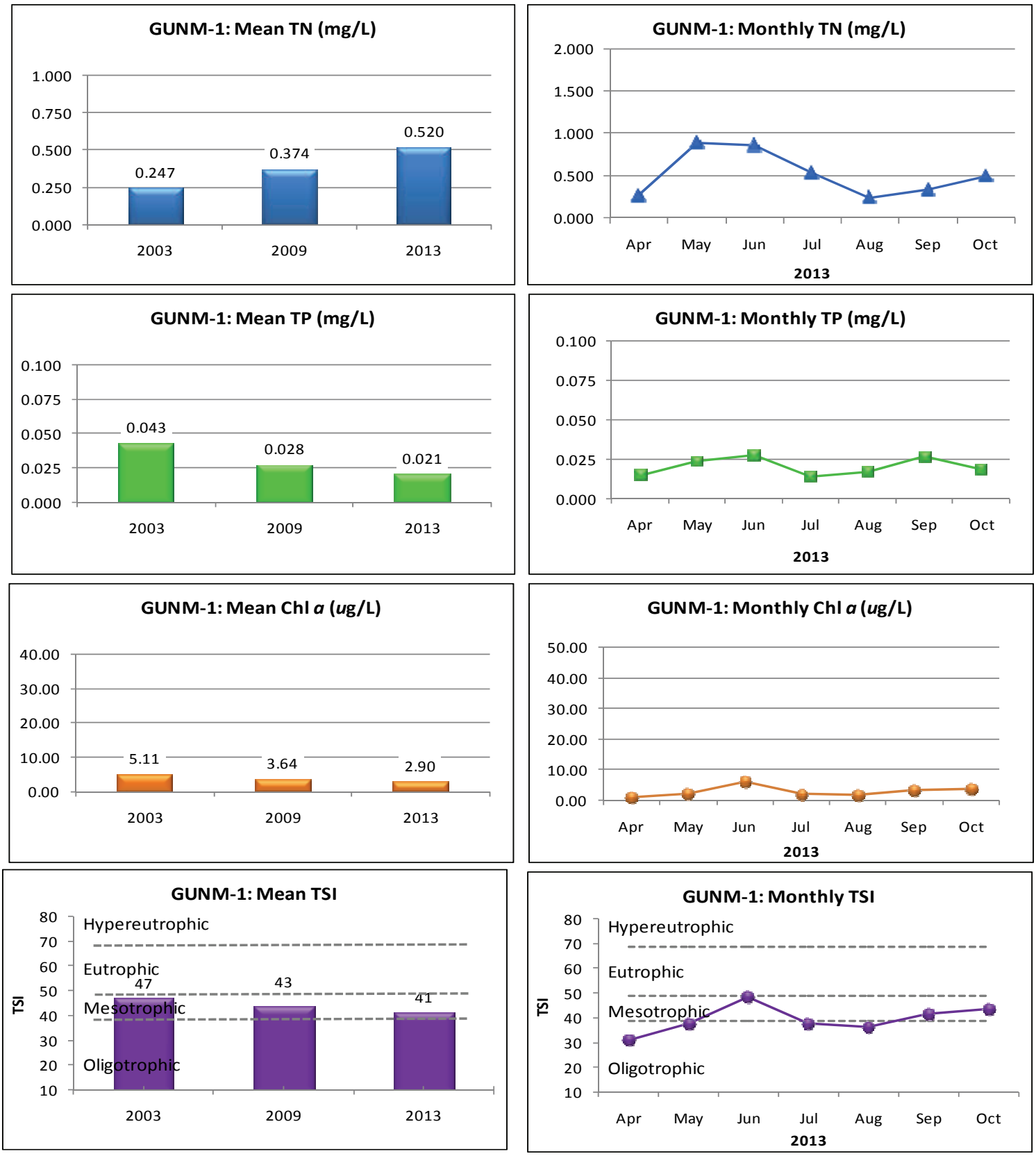
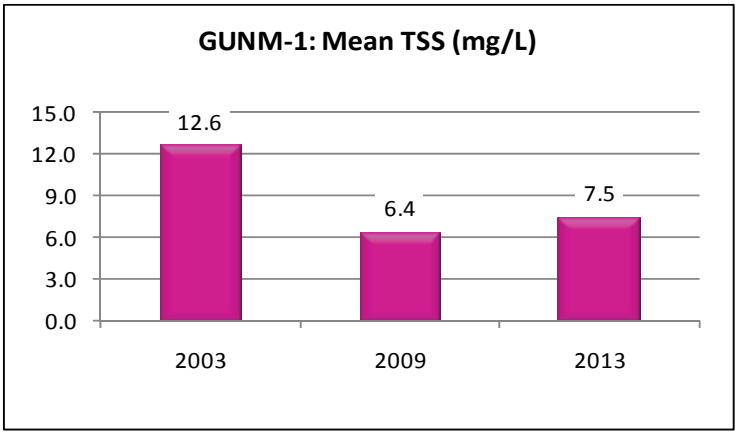


Figure 4. Mean growing season (2003-2013) and monthly (April-October, 2013) TN, TP, chl a and TSI measured in the Crow Creek embayment of Guntersville Reservoir**.** Vertical axis ranges are set to maximum values reservoir-wide for comparability between embayment reports within the same reservoir.



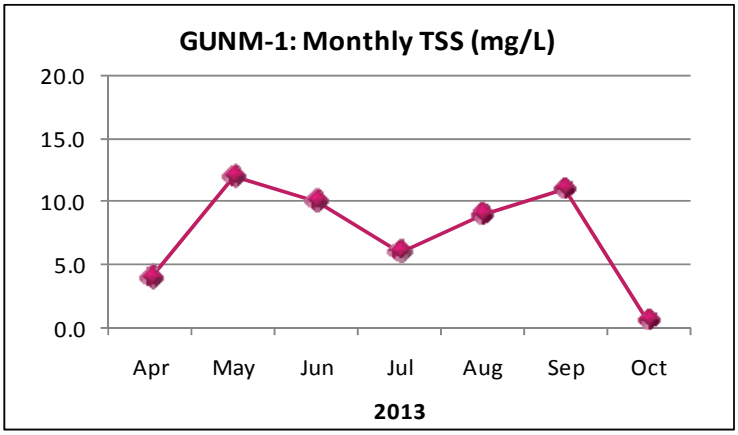


Figure 5. Mean growing season and monthly TSS measured in the Crow Creek embayment of Guntersville Reservoir**.**

Table 2. Summary of water quality data collected April-October, 2013. 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.

GUNM-1	N		Min	Max	Med	Mean	SD
Physical							
Turbidity (NTU)	7		4.3	14.2	7.0	7.9	3.3
Total Dissolved Solids (mg/L)[J]	7		74.0	146.0	121.0	116.1	24.2
Total Suspended Solids (mg/L)[J]	7	<	1.0	12.0	9.0	7.5	4.2
Hardness (mg/L)	4		96.3	113.0	106.0	105.3	6.9
Alkalinity (mg/L)	7		95.8	116.0	111.0	107.1	7.3
Photic Zone (m)	7		2.35	4.60	4.00	3.76	0.71
Secchi (m)	7		0.71	1.93	1.14	1.15	0.42
Bottom Depth (m)	7		3.90	4.60	4.20	4.16	0.31
Chemical							
Ammonia Nitrogen (mg/L)	7	<	0.004	0.032	0.009	0.011	0.010
Nitrate+Nitrite Nitrogen (mg/L)[J]	7		0.017	0.253	0.111	0.120	0.080
Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen (mg/L)[J]	7		0.071	0.742	0.430	0.400	0.234
Total Nitrogen (mg/L)[J]	7		0.243	0.894	0.498	0.520	0.269
Dissolved Reactive Phosphorus (mg/L)[J]	7	<	0.004	0.008	0.006	0.006	0.002
Total Phosphorus (mg/L)	7		0.014	0.028	0.019	0.021	0.006
CBOD-5 (mg/L)	7	<	2.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	0.0
Chlorides (mg/L)	7		1.2	3.7	1.6	1.9	0.9
Biological							
Chlorophyll a (ug/L)	7		1.07	6.23	2.14	2.90	1.72
E. coli (col/100mL)[J]	3		1	88	6	32	49

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
2003	0.98	Phosphorus
2009	1.33	Phosphorus
2013	2.12	Phosphorus

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
Scott Hicks, ADEM Environmental Indicators Section
1350 Coliseum Boulevard, Montgomery, AL 36110
(334) 260-2786, shicks@adem.state.al.us

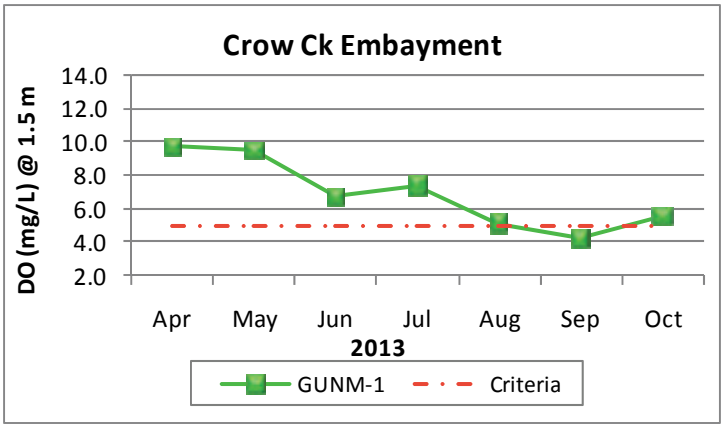


Figure 6. Monthly DO concentrations at 1.5 m (5 ft) for Crow Ck embayment station of Guntersville Reservoir collected April-October 2013. ADEM Water Quality Criteria pertaining to reservoir waters require a DO concentration of 5.0 mg/L at this depth.

REFERENCES

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