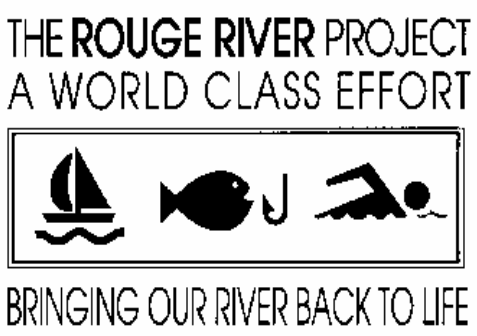

Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project

Wayne County, Michigan

2009 Rouge River Ecosystem Monitoring and Assessment Report

RPO-WMGT-TR72

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project is funded, in part, by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Grant Nos. XP995743-01, -02, -03, -04, -05, -06, - 08, -09 and C-264000-01. The views expressed by the authors of these documents are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of EPA. Mention of trade names, products, or services does not convey, and should not be interpreted as conveying, official EPA approval, endorsement, or recommendation.

Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project is to demonstrate effective solutions to water quality problems facing an urban watershed highly impacted by wet weather and develop potential solutions and implement projects which will lead to the restoration of water quality in the Rouge River. The project addresses both conventional and toxic pollutants to:

- provide a safe and healthy recreational river resource for present and future generations;
- re-establish a healthy and diverse ecosystem within the Rouge River Watershed;
- protect downstream water resources such as the Detroit River and Lake Erie; and
- help ensure compliance with federal, state and local environmental laws which protect human health and the environment.

This will be accomplished through the development, implementation and financial integration of technical, social and institutional frameworks leading to cost-efficient and innovative watershed-based solutions to wet weather problems. This watershed-based national demonstration project will provide other municipalities across the nation facing similar problems with guidance and potentially effective solutions.

PREFACE

In the year 2009, the Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project (Rouge Project) continued to restore and protect designated uses in the Rouge River system through a systematic watershed approach to pollution management. This cost-effective, holistic approach is also providing solutions to other urban watersheds throughout the country on how to restore a polluted urban waterway. The Rouge Project was initiated in 1992 by the Department of the Environment, Wayne County, Michigan. The Rouge River Watershed in Southeast Michigan is largely urbanized, spans approximately 466 square miles, is home to more than 1.4 million people in 48 communities and three counties, and is a tributary to the Detroit River. Multi-year federal grants from the United States Environmental Protection Agency and additional funding from local communities support this cooperative effort between federal, state and local agencies. These grants are managed by Wayne County.

The early focus of the Rouge Project was on the control of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) in the watershed. Although control of pollution from CSOs was identified as a major priority, it was determined that CSO control alone would not provide sufficient improvements to meet water quality standards in the watershed. This is because nonpoint source pollutants — such as storm water runoff, discharges from illicit connections, discharges from failed on-site septic systems, and other sources — would continue to degrade the river. In addition, it was determined that wetlands, habitat restoration, lake restoration, erosion and flow variability all needed to be controlled before full restoration of the river would be achieved throughout the watershed.

Based upon what was learned, the Rouge Project expanded to a holistic approach to consider the impacts from all sources of pollution and use impairments in receiving waters. In 1994, an ad hoc Rouge River Storm Water Advisory Group was formed to develop and guide the implementation of a cooperative strategy to restore the river throughout the watershed. In March of 1995, a storm water management strategy based on the application of watershed-wide management approaches for the Rouge River was developed and implemented. One element of the strategy was to develop a regulatory framework. To fulfill this goal, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), the Rouge Project and the communities in the Rouge Watershed worked jointly to develop a watershed based general storm water permit that was issued statewide in 1997 under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). This permit, and its successors, has been approved by EPA as meeting the requirements of the Phase II storm water regulations for municipal discharges issued under the Clean Water Act.

Because the Rouge watershed is so large and involves so many stakeholders, the communities chose to subdivide the watershed into seven subwatersheds. Subwatersheds give a means for focusing the local resources to address local problems due to the interest people have in their immediate surroundings. Watershed advisory groups were formed for each subwatershed to develop the watershed management plans required under the general storm water permit. These plans were completed in 2001 and were implemented through a unique partnership of local agencies and communities, state agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses and citizens. The seven subwatershed plans identified alternative steps needed to address remaining problems associated with storm water, combined and sanitary sewers overflows, failing septic systems, and

non-point sources. The goals, action steps, and measures tailored to individual subwatersheds established a strong foundation which guided cooperative efforts to fully restore the impaired uses of the river. Coordination of the efforts of the seven subwatershed groups was initially accomplished by a watershed-wide steering committee, which has since evolved into the new Alliance of Rouge Communities (ARC). In 2008 the ARC updated and consolidated the seven subwatershed management plans completed in 2001 into one sustainable Rouge River Watershed Management Plan (WMP). This plan builds on the successes of the past while laying the groundwork for the future. The plan was submitted for review to MDEQ in January 2009. The plan was reviewed by the MDEQ in May 2009 and the ARC is in the process of updating the plan in response to the comments made by the MDEQ.

On August 5, 2003, after nearly two years of discussion, the Rouge watershed communities and counties formed the *Rouge River Watershed Local Management Assembly (Assembly of Rouge Communities)* to guide the Rouge River restoration into the future as the federal grant funding diminishes. The Assembly of Rouge Communities (Assembly) was based on a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), signed by each local community, which outlined voting and funding shares for the new working arrangement. The Assembly successfully operated for 2.5 years, with 38 community members and three county (Wayne, Oakland and Washtenaw) members. The annual budgets, on the order of $600,000 per year, were used to fund: 1) watershed-wide monitoring; 2) sampling data analyses and reports; 3) the coordination of public education and involvement activities, all of which are required by local units of government under the Michigan watershed based storm water permit. In addition, the funds were used to provide technical guidance and facilitation for the Assembly, its committees and the seven Subwatershed Advisory Groups. Wayne County served as fiduciary for the Assembly during 2003-2005.

In December 2005, the Assembly formally became the ARC when 20 eligible members approved bylaws modeled after the former MOA for operation of the Assembly. The group now acts as a legal public entity under the new Watershed Alliance Act, Public Act 517 of 2004. There are 42 ARC members and one associate member that have approved the bylaws, including Wayne County. The annual budgets continue to fund watershed-wide activities such as public education, monitoring, and other technical activities. Much of the work of the ARC is happening through the standing committees: Finance, Technical, Public Involvement/Education, Executive and Organization.

Using the watershed approach requires a number of tools such as a comprehensive sampling and monitoring program, various types of water quality and water quantity modeling, and a geographic information system. The Rouge Project has aggressively invested in these tools and others in order to develop the necessary holistic watershed management strategy. These innovative, readily transferable tools are being shared with other cities and state agencies.

The Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project is an unqualified success, using any of several measures of achievement. Major progress has been made in the control of pollution being discharged to the Rouge River. For example, CSO pollutant loads to the river have been cut by 90 to 100 percent during most events. In previous years certain water quality standards were violated most of the time at many places in the watershed. Now, the majority of the waters in the Rouge River watershed meet many standards. Coupled with the water quality

improvements, the ecosystem health continues to improve as well. This is demonstrated by several measures such as increased sightings of fish and wildlife along the river since 1999. Improvements in the water quality and removal of contaminated sediment in Newburgh Lake resulted in the lifting of the fish consumption advisory for some species of fish in the lake. This is the first time fish caught in the Rouge River systems have been safe for consumption in decades. The Rouge Project has a very extensive web site that contains technical reports, maps, and other information about the details of the Rouge Project, available at www.rougeriver.com.

INTRODUCTION

A Five-Year Monitoring Plan conducted by the Alliance of Rouge Communities (ARC) was completed in 2007. Activities that were part of the Five-Year Monitoring Plan started in 2003 and included a rotational schedule of continuous (15 minute intervals) and intermittent water quality sampling through the seven Rouge River Watershed Storm Water Management Areas (SWMAs). Continuous monitoring was conducted for dissolved oxygen (DO), water temperature, and level and flow. Intermittent sampling included water quality parameters like carbonaceous biochemical oxygen demand ($CBOD_5$), ammonia (NH_3), total phosphorus (TP), total suspended solids (TSS) and *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*). Additional biological monitoring was also performed and included benthic macroinvertebrate and frog and toad surveys. In 2008 the ARC took a year off from monitoring to update and consolidate the seven subwatershed management plans which were previously prepared in 2001 into one integrated plan, the 2009 Rouge River Watershed Management Plan. This plan is still a draft and going through revision based on Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) comments.

The overall purpose of 2009 Rouge River Watershed Management Plan (WMP) by the ARC is to build on past successes and to continue to implement a cost-effective approach to improving water quality in the Rouge River as well as meet the requirements of the NPDES Phase II permit with which each ARC community must comply (Accessed website May 2010 at http://www.allianceofrougecommunities.com). The 2009 Rouge River WMP is a five-year plan which encompasses the years from 2009 through 2013. The plan includes the collection of several types of data throughout the watershed, which will be used to measure the improvements in water quality. Precipitation, streamflow, and biological health monitoring data will be collected each year. However, dissolved oxygen and temperature, bacteria, and nutrients will not be monitored in each year of the plan, but the collection of these data is planned during at least one year of the plan in each of the SWMAs. In 2009 the following monitoring data were collected:

- Precipitation data (15-minute totals) were collected in 2009 at 20 rain gage locations throughout the watershed. Six of the rain gages were operated by the Wayne County Department of the Environment (WCDOE), 11 rain gages were operated by the Oakland County Drain Commissioner's (OCDC) Office, and the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) operated three rain gages. Since all of the rain gages were heated, the recorded precipitation amounts include rainfall as well as hail, sleet and snow as equivalent inches of water. Additional precipitation data were also collected for the Detroit and Pontiac area by NOAA's National Weather Service Forecast Office.
- Continuous monitoring of level and flow was performed by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) at seven locations (US1 - US7) throughout the watershed in cooperation with Oakland County and the MDEQ.
- Wayne County Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Division collected instream samples for *E. coli* at eleven locations in the Middle Rouge River.
- Frog and toad surveys, benthic macroinvertebrate surveys, and winter stonefly searches were performed by Friends of the Rouge (FOTR) and Wayne County. Complete reports on these surveys can be accessed at http://www.therouge.org.

An on-line database is available which allows users to query sampling data collected since 1994 by site, date, and parameter. It allows for online data viewing or download and includes on-line help. The Rouge River Watershed sampling database is available at www.rougeriver.com/database.

A discussion of the data collected in 2009 follows as well as a brief review of the dissolved oxygen data that have been collected through 2008.

WATER QUALITY

A key element of a healthy river ecosystem is adequate DO. Instream DO concentrations (over 5 mg/L) are essential for healthy fish and other aquatic life. Even brief declines in DO concentrations to levels below 5 mg/L can have a detrimental effect on aquatic organisms. In general DO and temperature are in compliance with minimum water quality standards on a routine basis throughout the watershed and have remained fairly stable at most locations.

DO has been monitored in the river for over a decade now and is very useful in determining spatial and temporal water quality trends. Prior to 2006 there was at least one continuous DO and water temperature monitoring location in each of the seven SWMAs in the Rouge River watershed, and two in the Main 3-4 SWMA as shown in **Figure 1**. The last year continuous monitoring of DO and water temperature was in 2008, but it will resume in 2010 in the Upper Branch of the Rouge River. Monitoring in each of the other branches will follow in subsequent years. Monitoring of continuous DO and water temperature was performed at four locations in 2008, one location in each of the four branches of the Rouge River; Plymouth Road (US7), Telegraph Road (U05), Hines Drive/Ford Road (D06), and Military Road (L05D). **Figure 2** shows the percent of the time dissolved oxygen concentrations were in compliance with the minimum 5 mg/L warm water State standard from 1994 through 2005 and 2008 at these four locations in the watershed. The data show an upward trend and indicate that pollution control measures implemented through the Rouge Project have improved DO concentrations in the river. The improvement in dissolved oxygen is due in large part to the control of untreated sewage being discharged to the Rouge River. Further improvements are expected as the remaining combined sewer overflows, located primarily in Dearborn and Detroit, are controlled.

Based on a rating scale developed by the Rouge Project the DO data at the 2008 continuously monitored locations were all rated good ($DO \geq 5$ mg/L, $\geq 95\%$ of the time). These data represent the combined effect of dry and wet weather conditions as well as diurnal variations in the river.

Trend analyses performed on the historical continuous daily average DO data collected from 1994 to 2008 (data not collected at each location in all years) at the eight continuous monitoring locations in general show improvement or no significant trend (**Table 1**). Overall, these results indicate that pollution control measures implemented through the Rouge Project have improved DO concentrations in the river. Pollution sources that still exist should be addressed in the updated WMP.

Figure 1
Rouge River Watershed Dissolved Oxygen and Temperature Measurement Locations

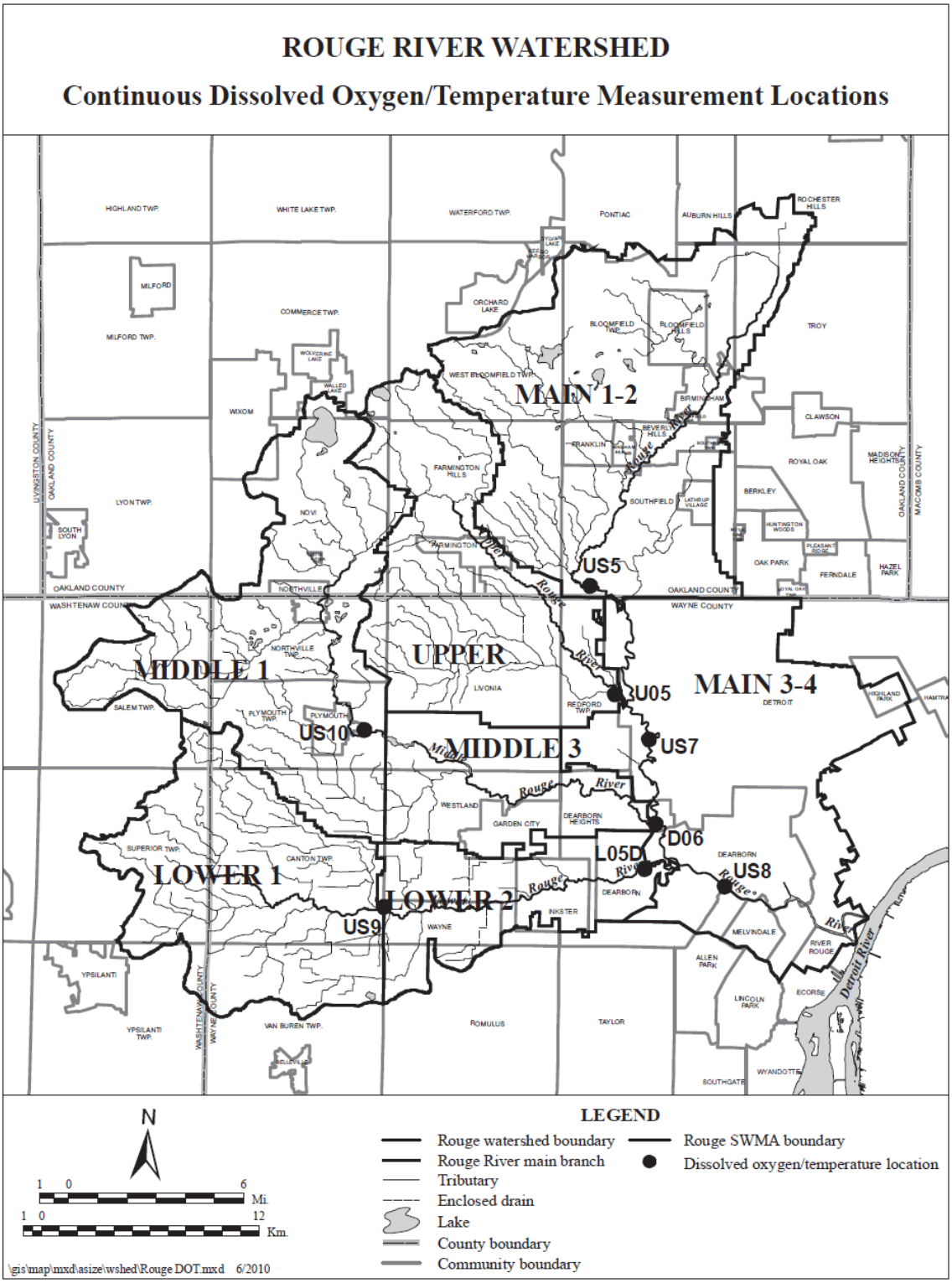
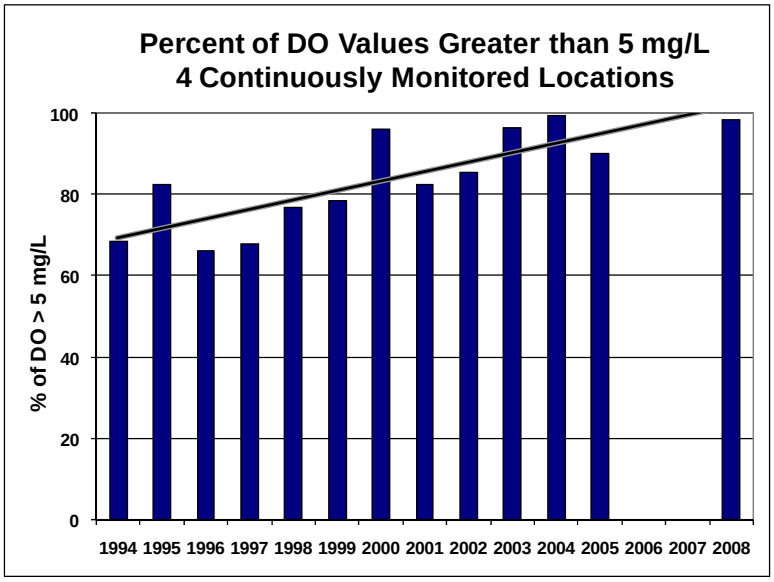


Figure 2
Percent of Time DO in Compliance with State Standard



Note: 4 locations include Plymouth Road (US7), Telegraph Road (U05), Hines Drive/Ford Road (D06) and Military Road (L05D).

Table 1
Trend Analyses: Rouge River Daily Average Dissolved Oxygen Concentrations

Daily Average DO Trend Analyses for the Rouge River Watershed			
SWMA	**Site ID**	**Period of Record**	**Trend**
Main 1-2	US5	1997-2005	Improvement of 0.15 mg/L/year
Main 3-4	US7	1994-2005, 2007, 2008	Improvement of 0.12 mg/L/year
Main 3-4	US8	2001- 2005, 2007	No significant trend
Upper	U05	1994-2005, 2008	Improvement of 0.11 mg/L/year
Middle 1	US10	2003-2005	No significant trend
Middle 3	D06	1994-2005, 2008	Improvement of 0.06 mg/L/year
Lower 1	US9	2002-2006	Degradation of 0.04 mg/L/year*
Lower 2	L05D	1994-2006, 2008	Improvement of 0.22 mg/L/year

*Since data collection began at US9 in 2001 (May – Oct) DO mean has been $\geq$7.7 mg/L and the percent $\geq$5 mg/L has been 100%.

HYDROLOGY

Moderate, stable streamflows are generally best for aquatic life and stream habitats. Extreme variation of flow rate and volume during storm events can result in severe bank erosion and sediment resuspension, which can significantly degrade game fish habitats. In 2009, continuous flow and level monitoring data were collected at seven locations throughout the watershed by the United States Geological Survey (USGS). Data were collected in cooperation with Oakland

County and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) at Maple Road (US4), Beech Road (US5), Evans Ditch (US6), Plymouth Road (US7), Shiawassee Road (US3), Inkster Road (US2), and John Daly Road (US1). The level and flow continuous monitoring locations, which include the 2009 locations, are shown in **Figure 3**. The 2009 continuous level and flow data along with historical data, which were used for trend detection, are summarized by SWMA (**Figure 4 through Figure 13**). A tabular summary by SWMA of the streamflow data for the period of record are shown in **Table 2** as well as the 2009 precipitation totals (as percent of long-term average from 1994 through 2008).

High streamflow variability continues to negatively impact the water quality and ecosystem health of the Rouge River Watershed. Trend analyses generally indicate that the frequency of high flow is holding steady in the Middle and Lower Rouge River. However, in the Main and Upper Rouge River a decrease in the frequency of high flow was indicated. Additionally, trend analyses of streamflow indicate a decrease in base flow rate throughout the watershed. A goal of the ARC in the updated WMP is to control the volume of urban storm water runoff as well as the flow rate. The ARC's next Five Year Monitoring Plan (2009-2013) includes monitoring of continuous river level and flow, which will be used to evaluate progress of the best management practices towards establishing stable streamflow and habitat conditions that are supportive of diverse aquatic life communities.

WAYNE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH, ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIVISION *E. COLI* IN THE MIDDLE ROUGE RIVER

Currently the MDEQ is using *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli)* as a human fecal indicator organism, and has established standards for body contact based on the level of *E. coli* present in water samples (MDEQ, 1994). The MDEQ's *E. coli* criteria for "Total body contact recreation" refers to any activities normally involving direct contact with the water to the point of complete submergence of the head, with considerable risk of ingesting water, including swimming. "Partial body contact" refers to any activities normally involving direct contact of some part of the body with the water, but not normally involving immersion of the head or ingesting water, including fishing, wading, hunting, and dry boating (MDEQ Administrative Rules, Part 4, Water Quality Standards). The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality General Rules, R 323.1062, Rule 62 states:

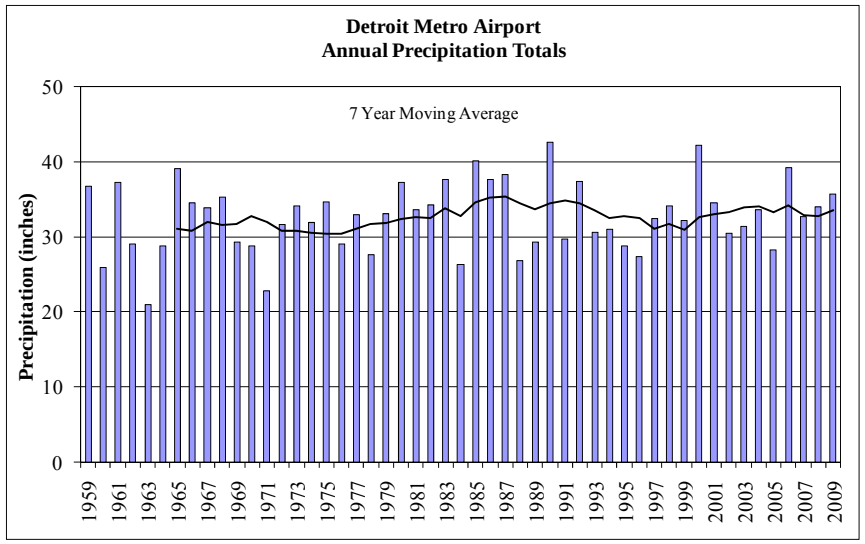
(1) All waters of the state protected for total body contact recreation shall not contain more than 130 *E. coli* per 100 milliliters as a 30-day geometric mean. Compliance shall be based on the geometric mean of all individual samples taken during five or more sampling events representatively spread over a 30-day period. Each sampling event shall consist of three or more samples taken at representative locations within a defined sampling area. At no time shall the waters of the state protected for total body contact recreation contain more than a maximum of 300 *E. coli* per 100 milliliters. Compliance shall be based on the geometric mean of three or more samples taken during the sampling event at representative locations within a defined sampling area.

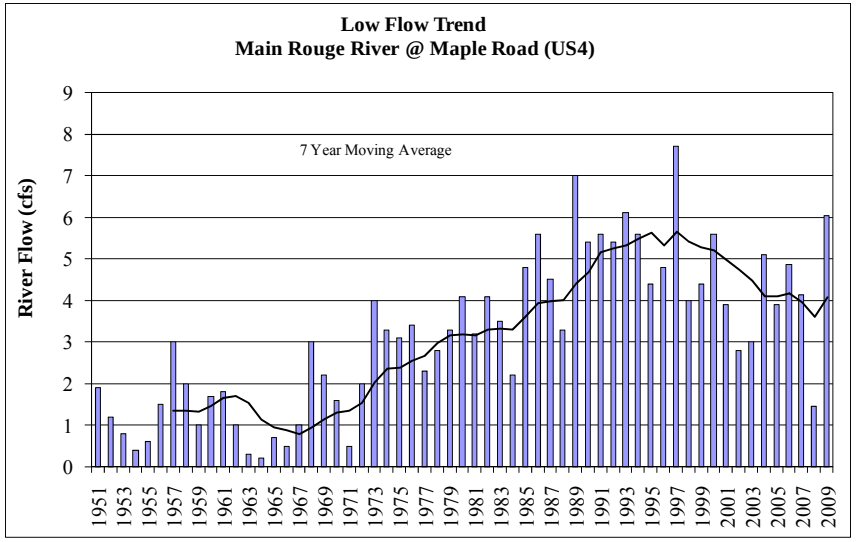
(2) All waters of the state protected for partial body contact recreation shall not contain more than a maximum of 1,000 *E. coli* per 100 milliliters. Compliance shall be based on the geometric mean of three or more samples, taken during the same sampling event, at representative locations within a defined sampling area.

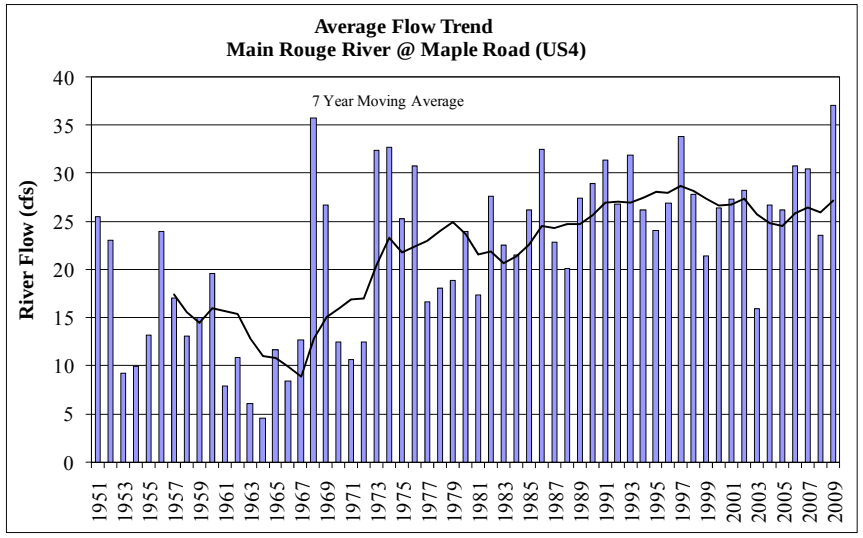
Wayne County Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Division, collected more than 150 instream samples for *E. coli* at eleven locations in the Middle Rouge from May through August in 2009 in dry and wet weather. These *E. coli* samples were collected to characterize the water body and not to determine compliance with the MDEQ *E. coli* total or partial body contact standards. **Figure 14** summarizes *E. coli* data collected from 2007 through 2009 and shows that the percentage of *E. coli* samples with concentrations less than 300 cfu/100ml. has been improving each year in both dry and wet weather.

Figure 3
Continuous Level and Flow Measurement Locations

Figure 4
Main 1-2 SWMA Maple Road (US4) Streamflow Data and Trends (1951-2009)







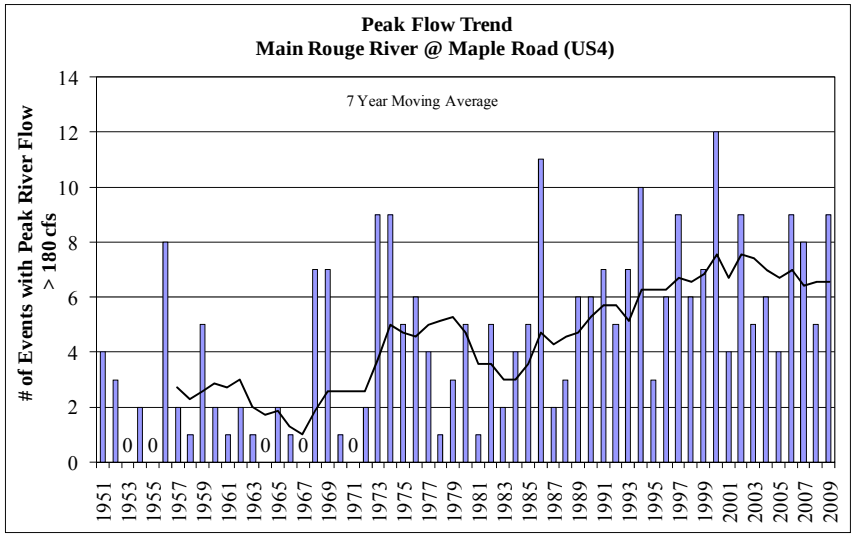
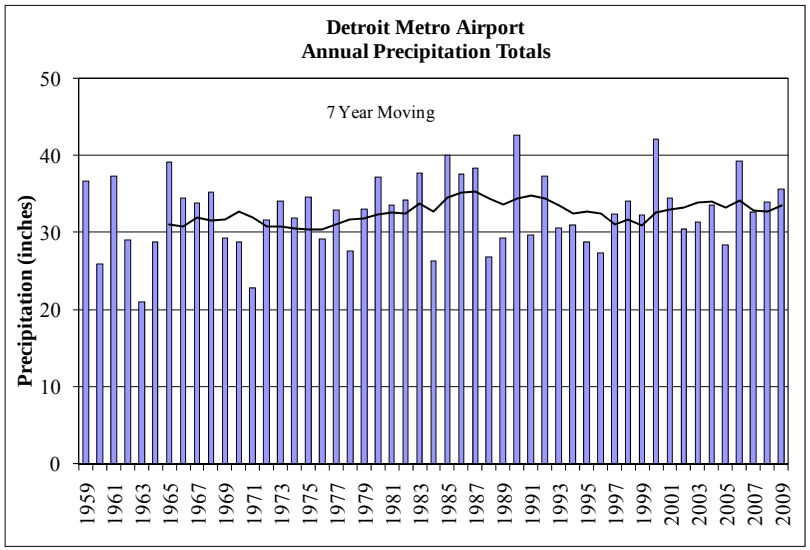
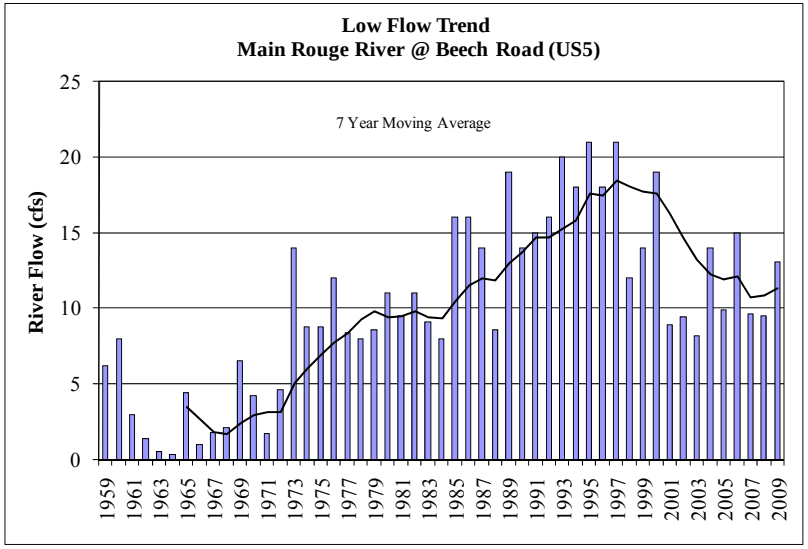
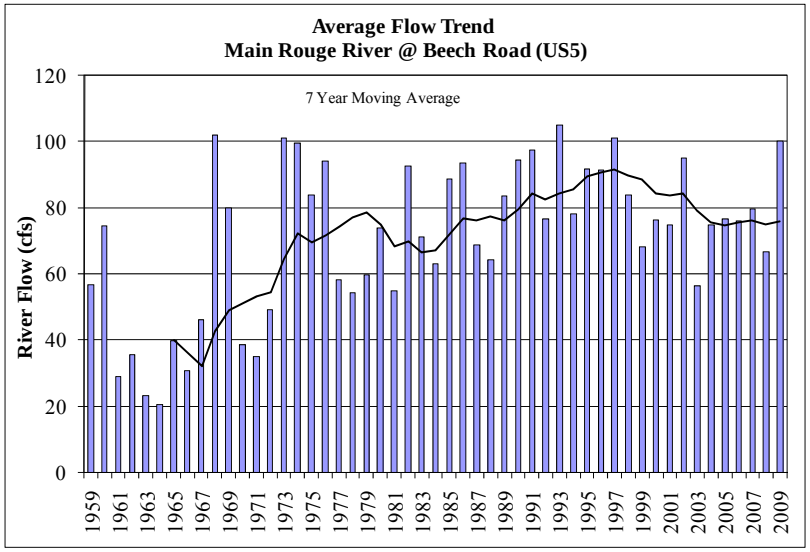


Figure 5
Main 1-2 SWMA Beech Road (US5) Streamflow Data and Trends (1959-2009)







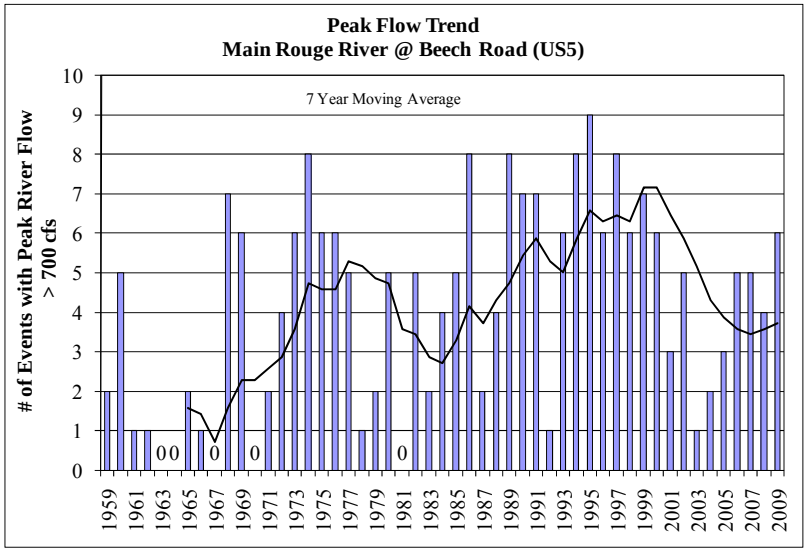
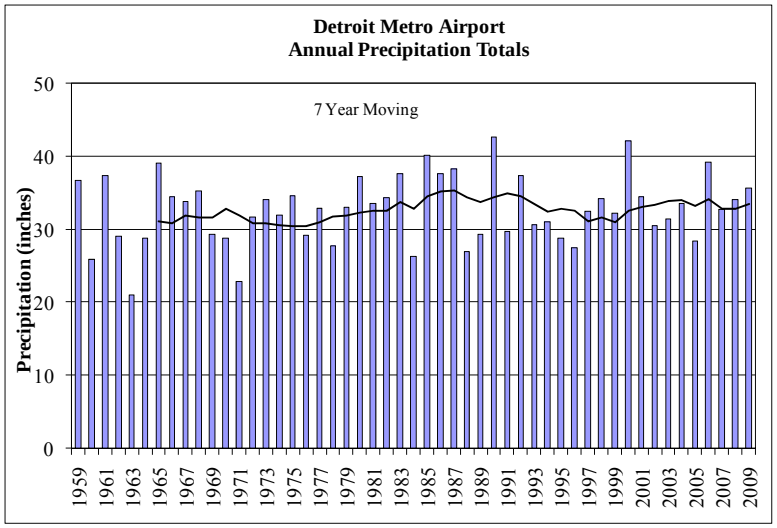
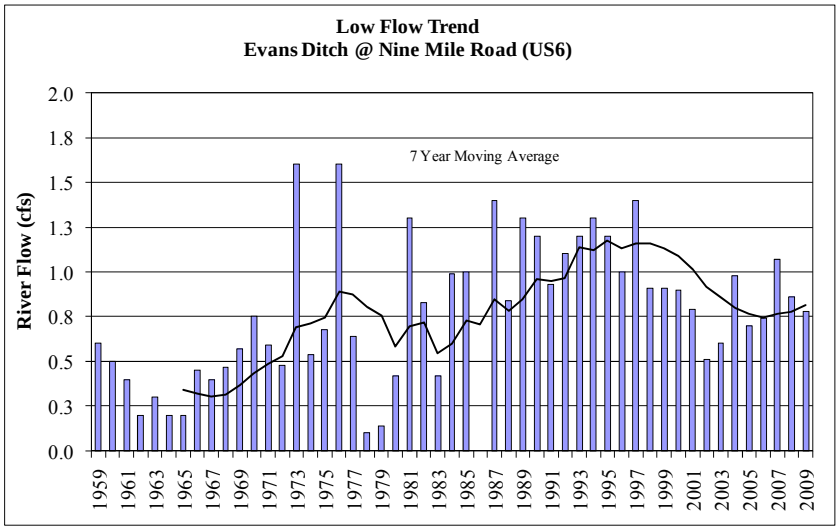
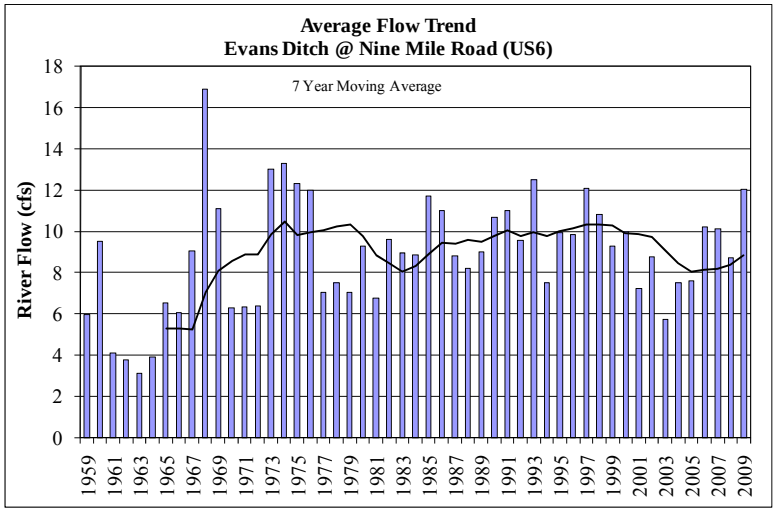


Figure 6
Main 1-2 SWMA Evans Ditch (US6) Streamflow Data and Trends (1959-2009)







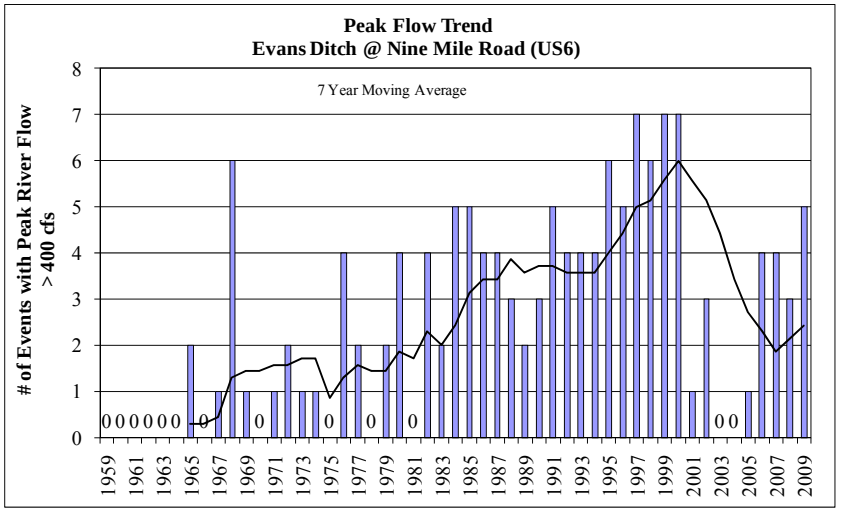
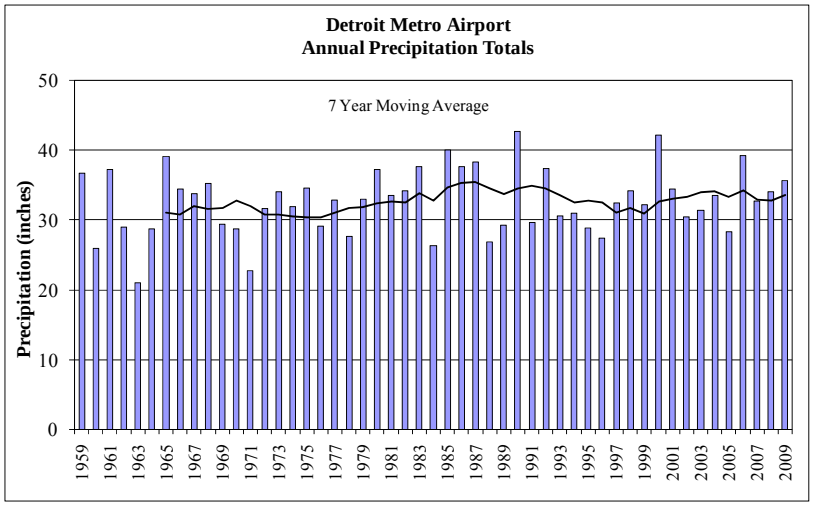
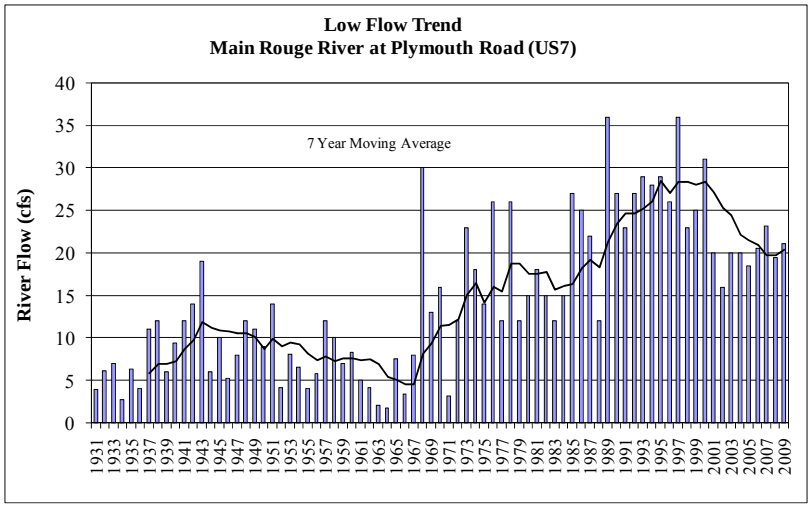
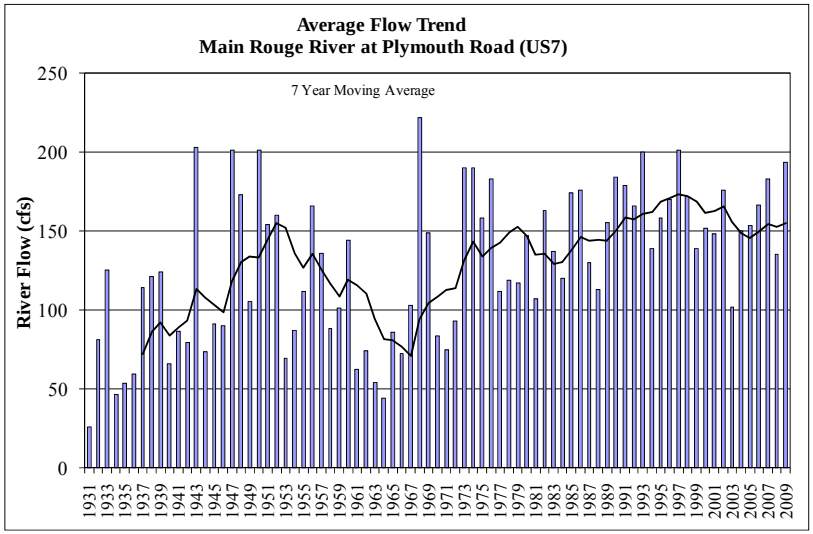


Figure 7
Main 3-4 SWMA Plymouth Road (US7) Streamflow Data and Trends (1931-2009)







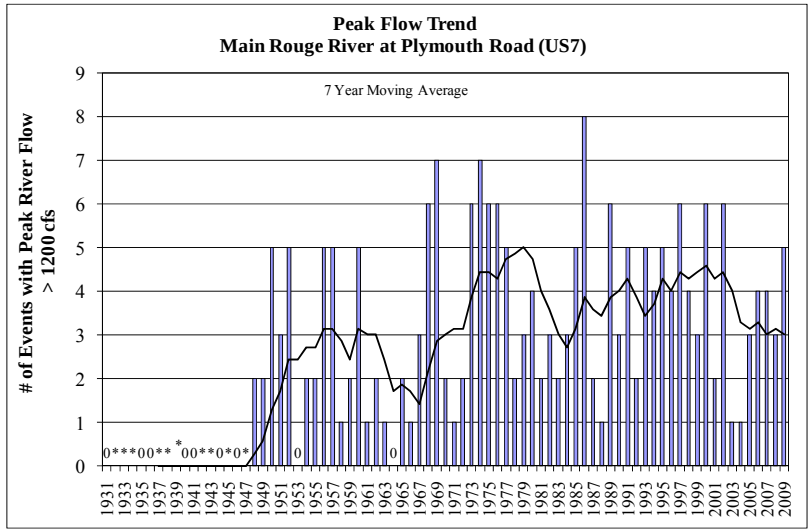
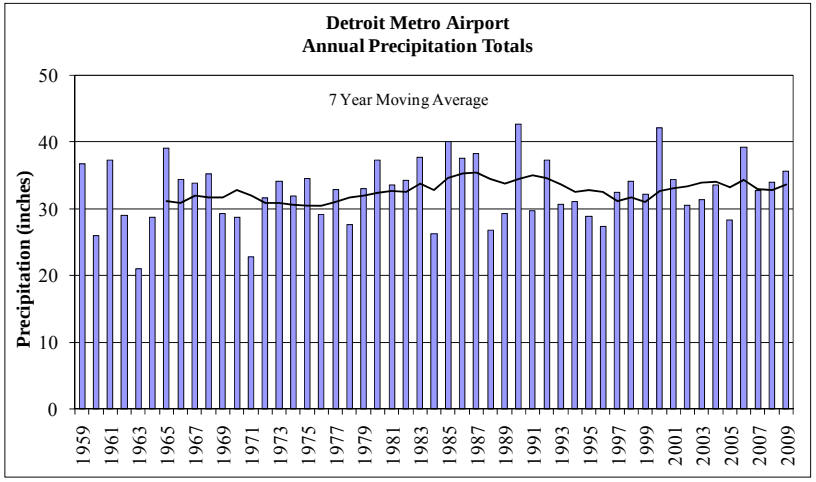
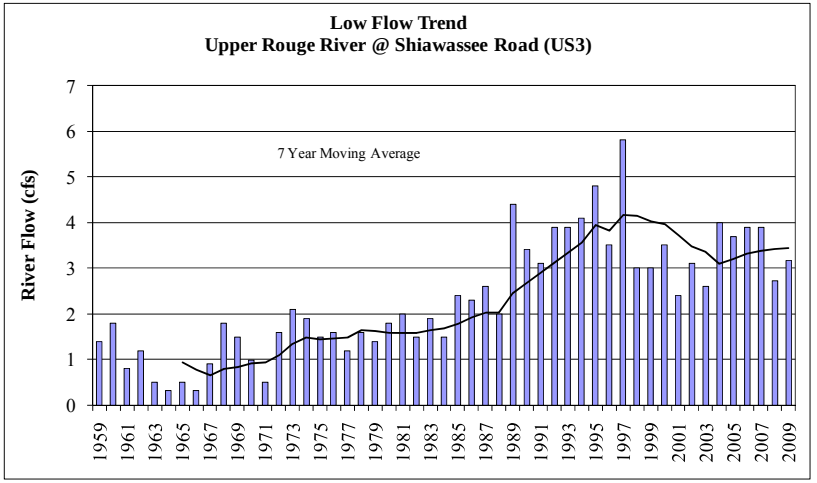
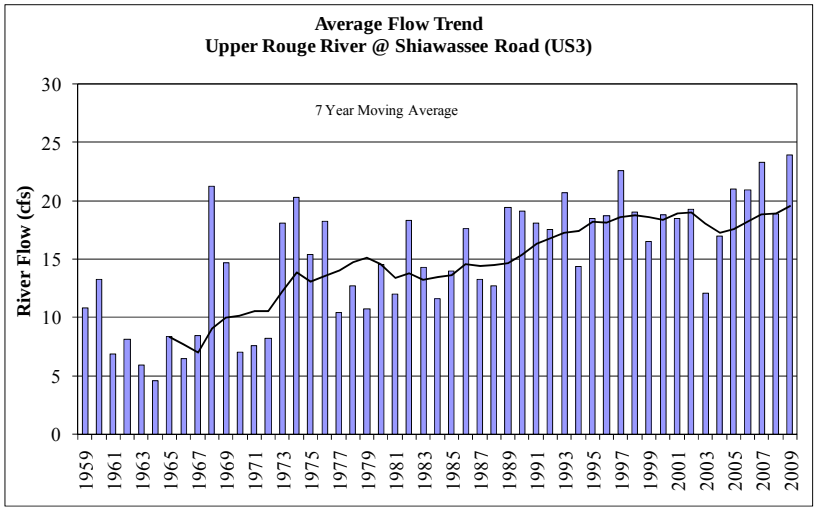


Figure 8
Upper SWMA Shiawassee Road (US3) Streamflow Data and Trends (1959-2009)







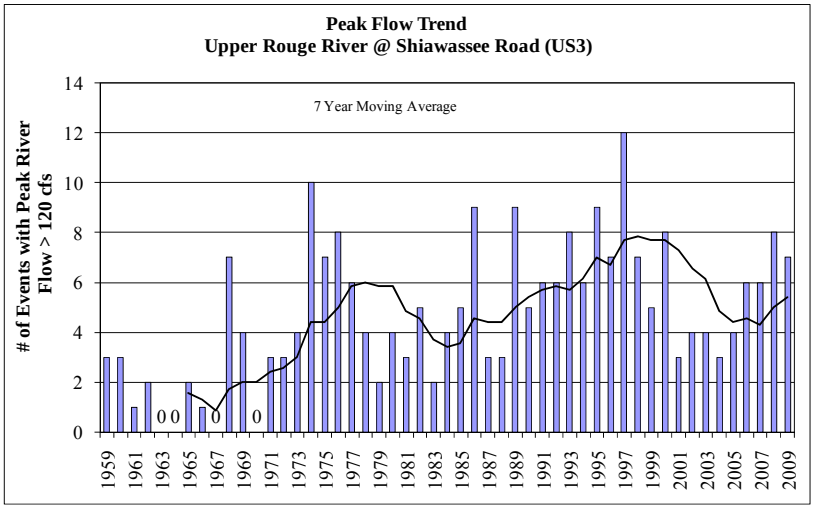
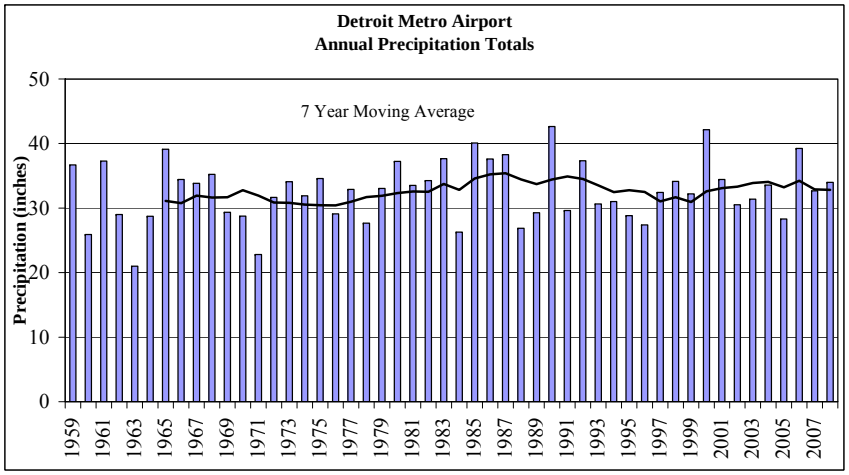
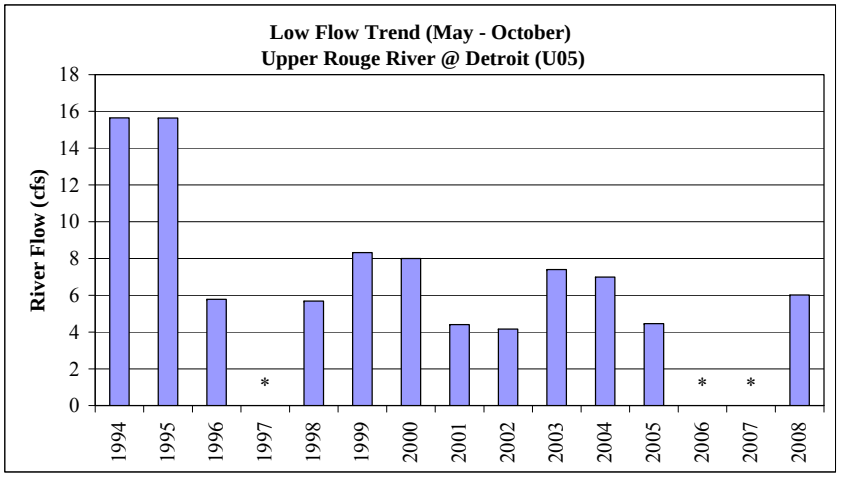
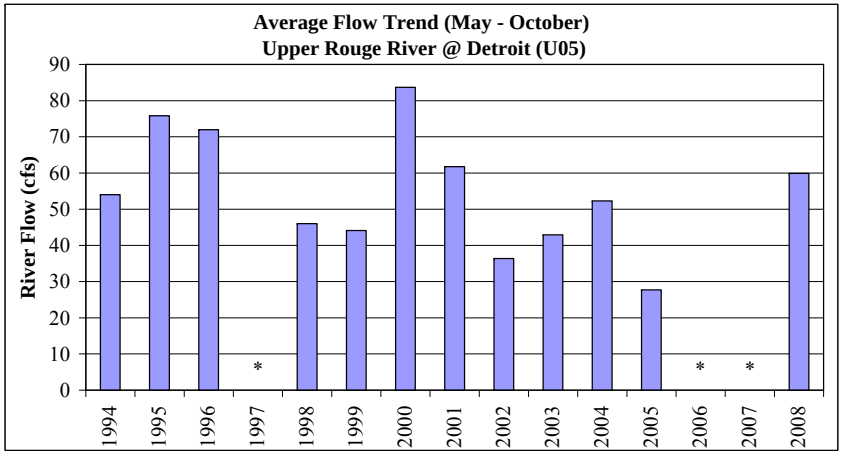
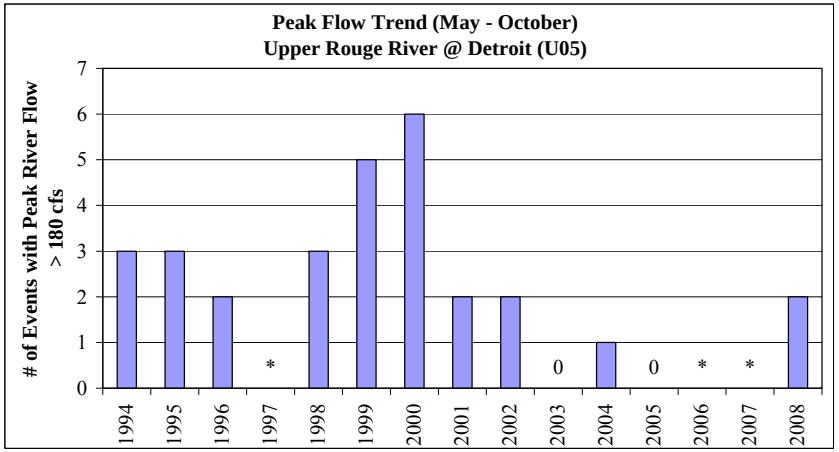


Figure 9
Upper SWMA Telegraph Road (U05)[1] Streamflow Data and Trends (1994-2008)









Notes: * Flow data not available in1997 due to an unstable rating curve (bridge construction).
[1] Level/flow data were not collected at U05 in 2006, 2007, or 2009.

Figure 10
Middle 3 SWMA Inkster Road (US2) Streamflow Data and Trends (1948-2009)

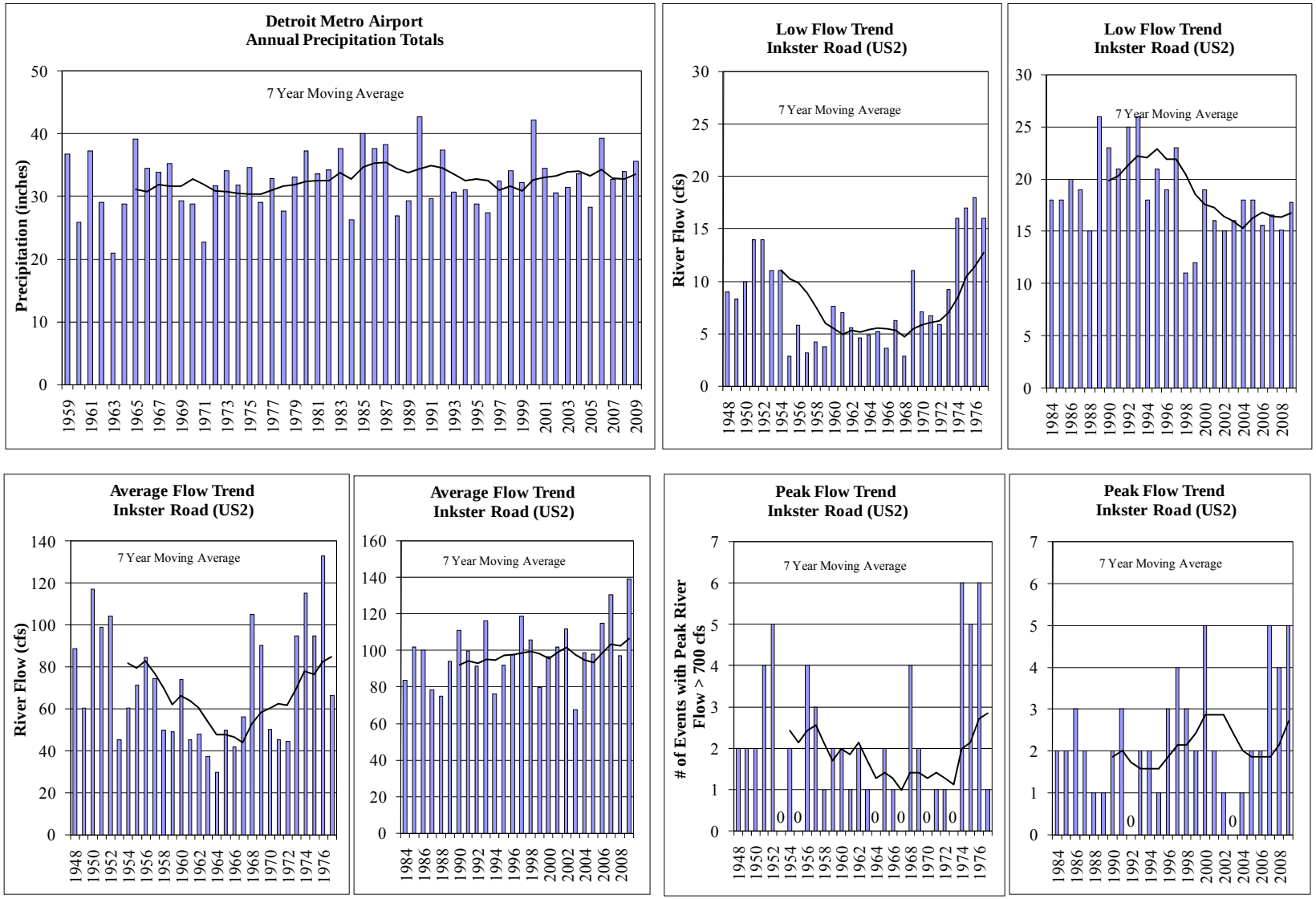
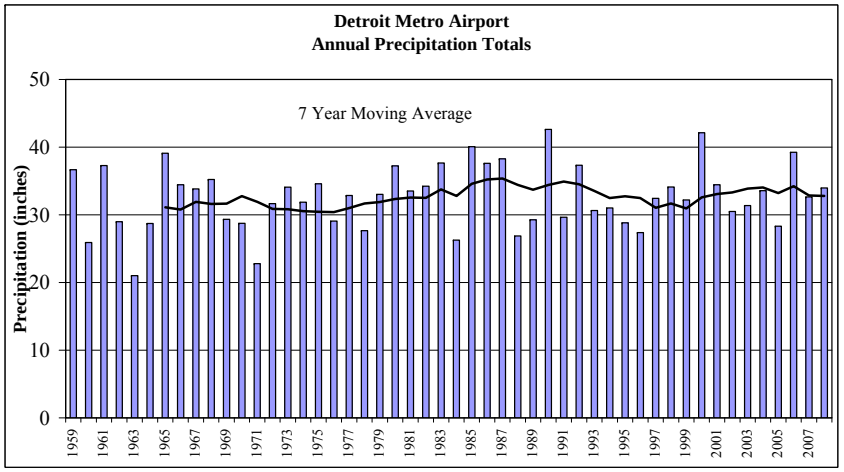
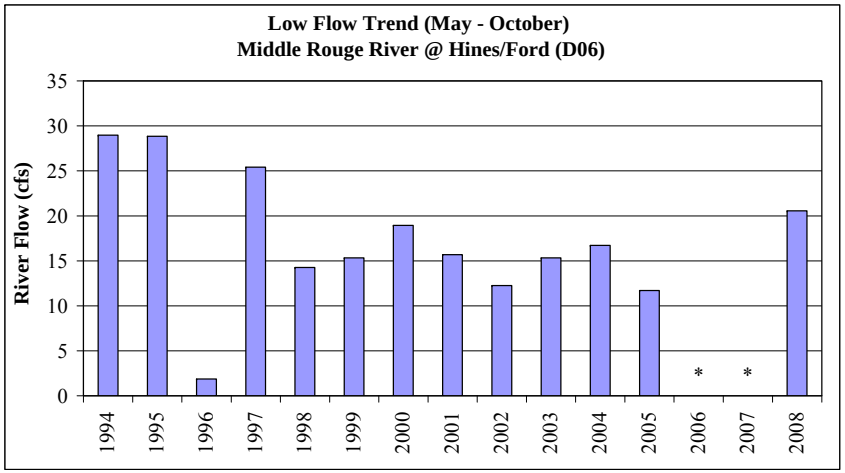
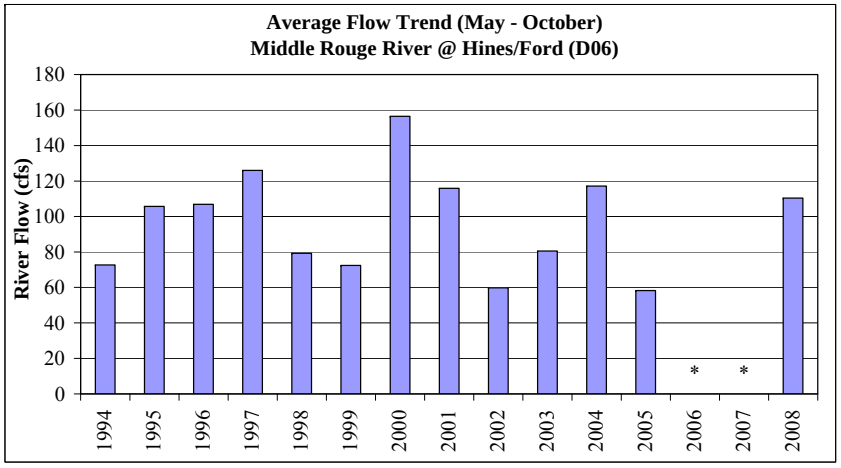
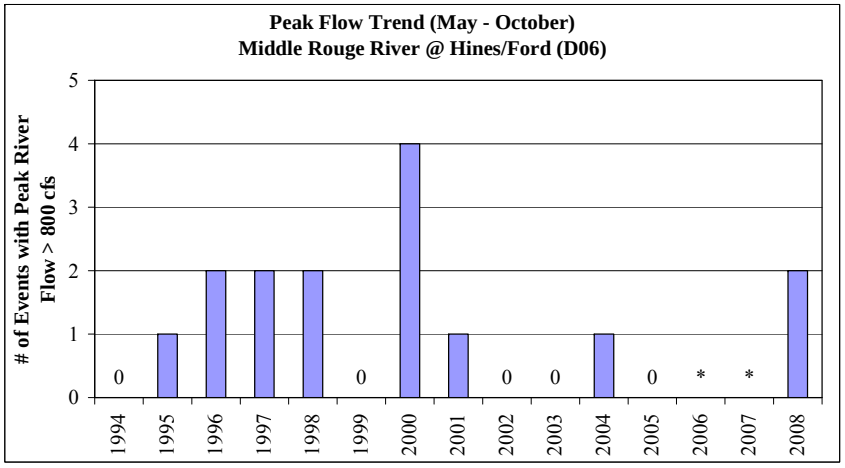


Figure 11
Middle 3 Hines/Ford Road (D06)[1] Streamflow Data and Trends (1994-2008)



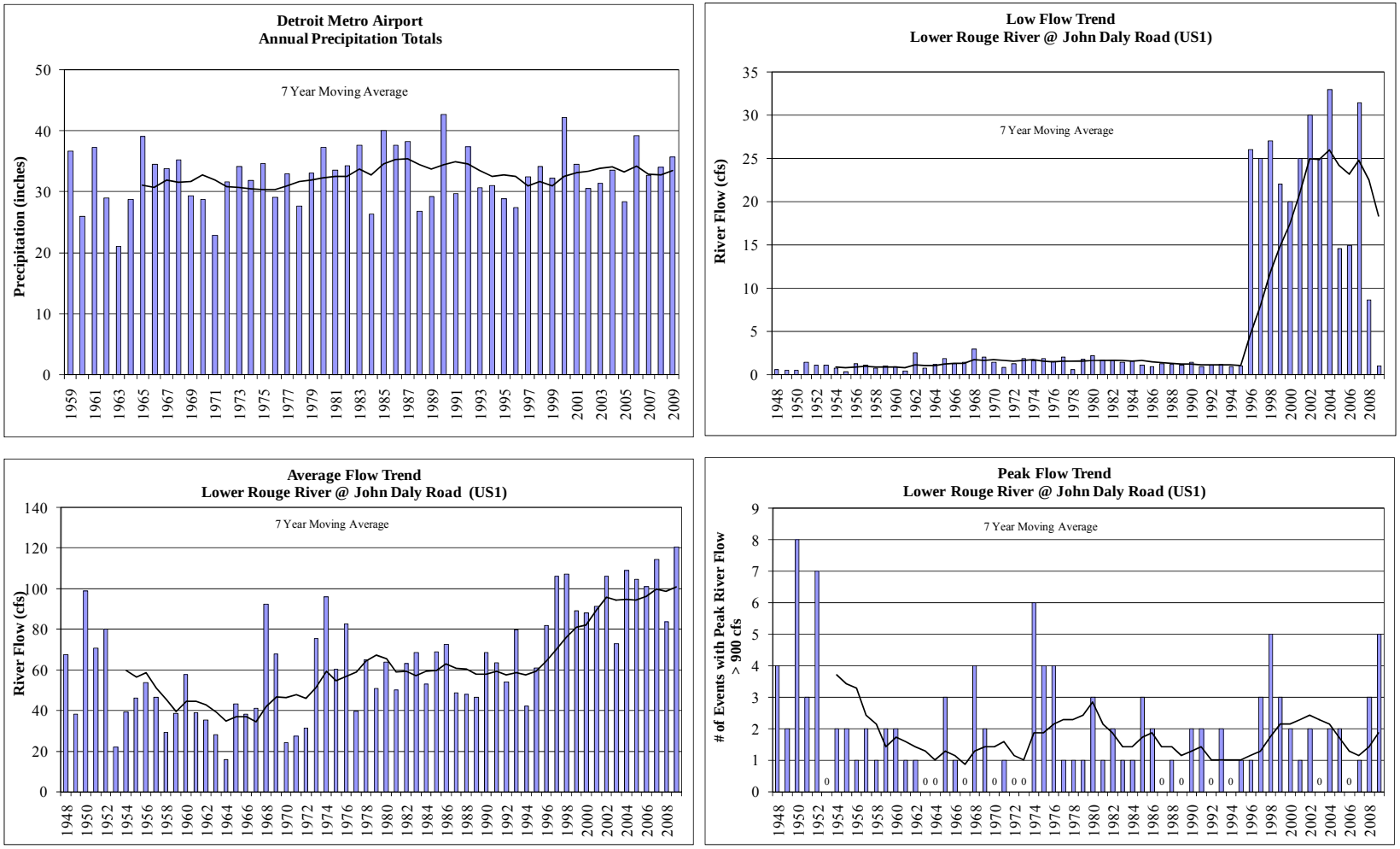






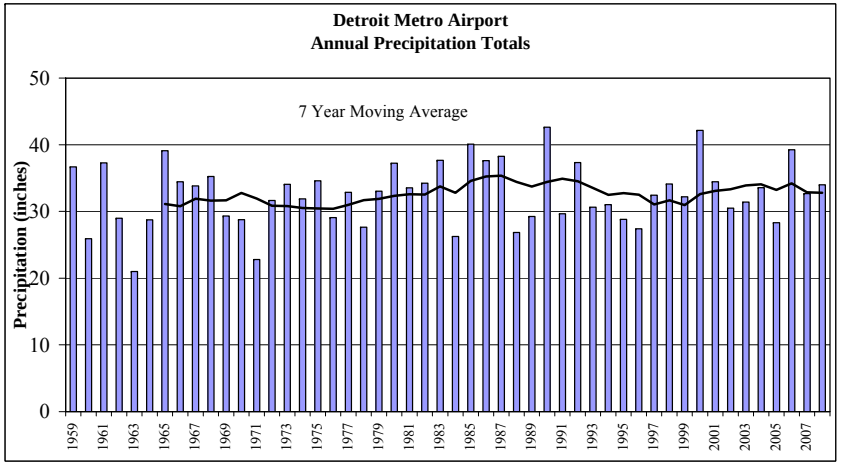
Note: [1] Level/flow data were not collected in 2006, 2007 or 2009 at this location in the Middle 3 SWMA.

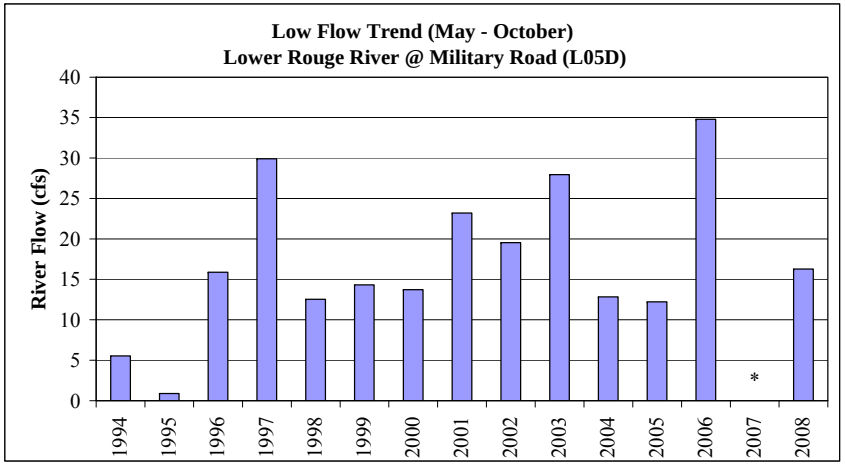
Figure 12
Lower 2 SWMA John Daly Road (US1) Streamflow Data and Trends (1948-2009)

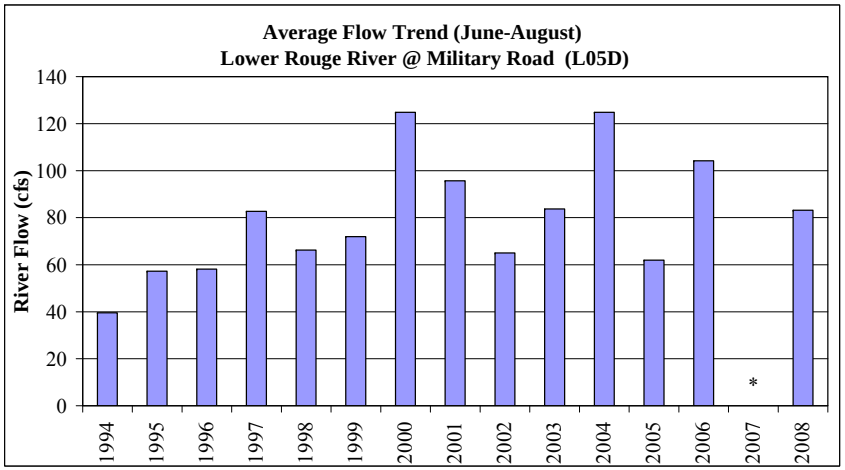


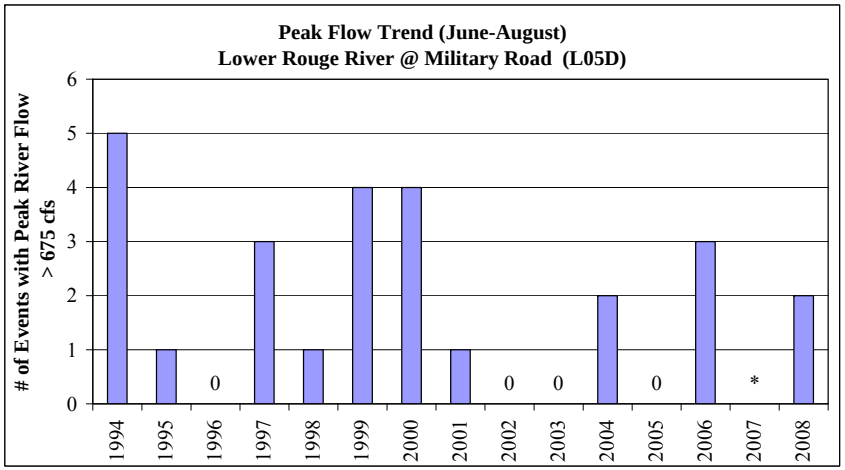
Note: YCUA discharge began in 1996.

Figure 13
Lower 2 SWMA Military Road (L05D) Streamflow Data and Trends (1994-2008)









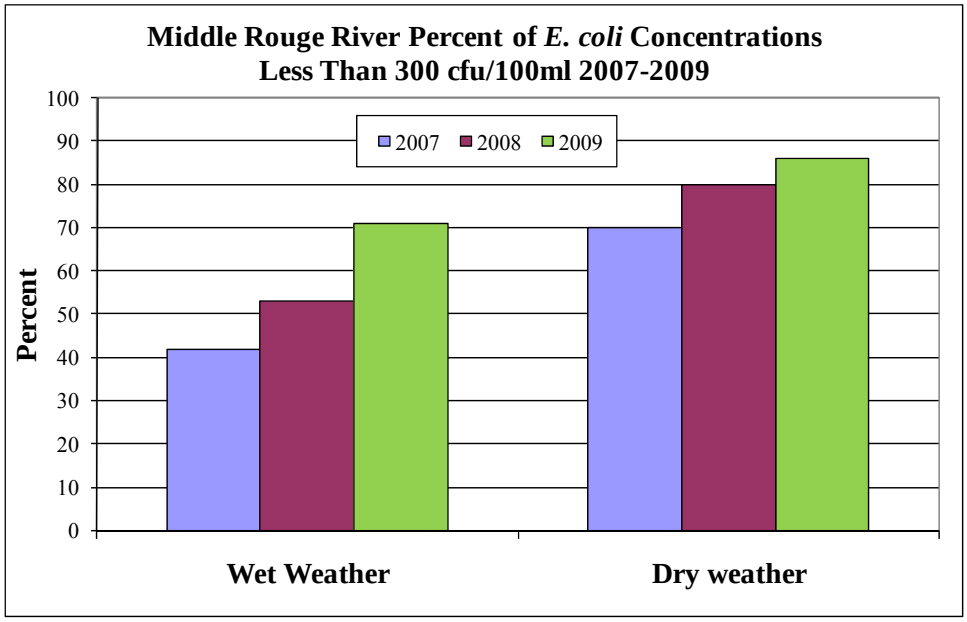
Note: YCUA discharge began in 1996. .Level/flow data were not collected at this location in the Lower 2 SWMA in 2007 or 2009.

Table 2
Streamflow Trend Analyses Summary and 2009 Precipitation Totals

Streamflow Trend Analyses Summary and 2009 Precipitation Totals for the Rouge River Watershed						
SWMA	**Site ID**	**Base Flow**	**Average Flow**	**Peak Flow Exceeding Gage-Specific Threshold**	**Streamflow Period of Record**	**2009 Precipitation Total (as percent of long-term average, 1994-2008)**
Main 1-2	**US4**	⇑ to mid 1990s, then ⇓	⇑ from mid 1960s to mid 1990s, then no change	⇑ from mid 1960s to mid 1990s, then no change	1951-2009	92.0%
	US5	⇑ to mid 1990s, then ⇓	⇑ from mid 1960s to mid 1990s, then no change	⇑ from mid 1960s to mid 1990s, then ⇓	1959-2009	
	US6	⇑ to mid 1990s, then ⇓	⇑ from mid 1960s to mid 1990s, then no change	⇑ from mid 1960s to mid 1990s, then ⇓	1959-2009	
Main 3-4	**US7**	⇑ from mid 1960s to mid 1990s, then ⇓	Cyclical, but no change in recent years	Cyclical, but no change in recent years	1931-2009	90.7%
Upper	**US3**	⇑ to mid 1990s, then ⇓	⇑ to mid 1990s, then ⇑	Cyclical, but no change in recent years	1959-2009	93.8%
	U05	⇓ since mid 1990s	⇓ since mid 1990s	⇓ since mid 1990s	1994-2008	
Middle 1	**US10**	No change	⇑	No change	2002-2005 (2002 partial year)	107.1%
Middle 3	**US2**	⇑ since mid 1980s to mid 1990s, then no change	No change to mid 1990s, then ⇑	No change since the mid 1980s	1948-1977 1984-2009	107.1%
	D06	No change since mid 1990s	No change	No change	1994-2008	
Lower 1	**US9**	No change	No change	No change	2001-2006* (2001 partial year)	98.3%
Lower 2	**US1**	1948 to 1995 ⇑, then ⇓	No change since 1948	⇓ 1948 to 1995, then no change	1948-2009*	98.3%
	L05D	No change since 1996	No change since 1996	No change since 1996	1994-2008*	

Note: ⇑=increasing trend, ⇓=decreasing trend, *YCUA WWTP began discharging in upstream end of Lower Rouge in 1996.

Figure 14
Middle Rouge River *E. coli*



Source: Dean Tuomari, Wayne County Department of Public Services

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE SAMPLING AND MONITORING.

Significant contributors to water quality and ecosystem health impairment in the Rouge River have included: uncontrolled CSOs, SSOs, polluted stormwater, illicit connections, failing OSDS, and increased runoff resulting in unstable and highly variable streamflow. In the Rouge River Watershed many of the CSOs have been controlled and the plans are underway to control the remaining CSOs. Similarly, those communities with SSOs are working toward their elimination. The new Watershed Management Plan (2009-2013) developed for each of the Rouge SWMAs identifies activities which are being implemented by communities and others to:

- Reduce pollutant loads and runoff volumes from stormwater
- Eliminate illicit connections and failing OSDS
- Restore and protect ecosystem health.

Monitoring and sampling of the river system is recommended into the future to assess progress of the best management practices toward meeting the goals for the Rouge River Watershed. These recommendations include:

- Monitor continuous river level and flow until established targets are met and stable stream habitat conditions that are supportive of diverse aquatic life communities are established
- Repeat the analyses comparing Rouge River flow to Wiley-Seelbach fish community flow targets developed for the Rouge when the next Five-Year Plan is complete
- Monitor continuous DO during the next Five-Year Plan to assess trends

- Water quality monitoring, in cooperation with the MDEQ, other agencies and organizations, and communities, to measure progress of the best management practices
- Periodic biological assessments of habitat, fish community and other aquatic populations should be continued in order to raise public awareness and help track improvements as pollution control activities are implemented. The continued collection and analysis of benthic macroinvertebrate and frog and toad data by County and FOTR staff and volunteers is encouraged

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