CANADA – BRITISH COLUMBIA WATER QUALITY MONITORING AGREEMENT

WATER QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF Fraser River AT HANSARD (1984 – 2004)

Prepared by:

L. G. Swain, P. Eng.

B.C. Ministry of Environment

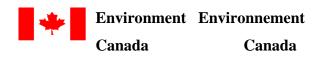
Prepared for:

B.C. Ministry of Environment

and

Environment Canada

March 2007





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fraser River flows through a vast portion of the southern half of British Columbia, from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. The water quality monitoring site at Hansard, located on a sparsely populated stretch of the Fraser River northeast from Prince George, is the second of five long-term monitoring stations on the Fraser River. Of the remaining four sites, one is upstream, at Red Pass, and the other three are located downstream, at Stoner, Marguerite, and Hope. Water quality indicators measured at this site are compared with those at the nearest upstream site, located at Red Pass.

The water in this reach of the river is used for drinking, irrigation, recreation and industry, and sustains significant fish and wildlife resources. The Fraser River from Tete Jaune Cache to Greater Vancouver has been designated a B.C. and Canadian Heritage River. Human activities occurring upstream from this site that could impact water quality include the Yellowhead Highway and the Canadian National Railway, which run alongside the river most of the way from the headwaters to Hansard, forestry, mining, and agricultural activities, as well as the discharge of treated municipal effluent from McBride. The water quality trends identified below have not yet been confirmed by statistical analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

- Flows are typical of water bodies in the plateau area of British Columbia, with peaks occurring during the Spring through Summer periods and low flows taking place during the winter.
- Several metals had occasional values that exceeded the guidelines for the
 protection of aquatic life, but also appeared to be correlated with turbidity and
 were likely not of biological concern. These included aluminum, arsenic,
 cadmium, chromium, cobalt, copper, iron, silver and zinc.
- Total alkalinity has on one occasion been below the guideline that indicates that there is low sensitivity to acidic inputs.

- Increasing trends through time were not noted for any variables.
- Apparent colour values seem to fluctuate with turbidity and regularly exceeded
 the drinking water guideline for true colour; however, this is to be expected since
 true colour is measured on a filtered sample (i.e., turbidity removed). True colour
 values were lower than apparent colour values, as expected; however, values
 seem to fluctuate with turbidity and regularly exceeded the drinking water
 guideline.
- Turbidity levels and fecal coliform concentrations would require that drinking
 water supplies should as a minimum perform partial treatment of the supply. If
 this level of treatment is applied, Trihalomethane formation should be minimized
 in thee finished water.
- Dissolved oxygen levels were generally acceptable; however, some extremes in temperature above guidelines have been recorded. These generally last for only short periods of time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Monitoring should be continued for the Fraser River at Hansard. It is the control station upstream from the first major population centre (Prince George) and industrial waste discharges (pulp mills) on the Fraser River. Water quality indicators that are important for future monitoring are:

- flow, water temperature, specific conductivity, pH,
- total dissolved phosphorus, total dissolved nitrogen, periphyton chlorophyll-a,
- dissolved oxygen, fecal coliforms, adsorbable organic halides (AOX), chloride,
- colour (true and total absorbance), turbidity, hardness, dissolved aluminum, total and dissolved or extractable cobalt, copper, lead, nickel, and zinc.
- Low-level cadmium, hexavalent and trivalent chromium, and silver.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pag	зe
Executive Summaryi	
Conclusionsi	
Recommendationsii	
Table of Contentsii	i
List of Figuresii	i
Introduction1	
Water Quality Assessment	
References	
LIST OF FIGURES	
Pag	ţе
Fraser River at Hansard	2
Water Survey of Canada Flow Data for Fraser River at Hansard	3
Figure 1. Adsorbable Organic Halide (AOX)	9
Figure 2. Aluminum	10
Figure 3. Total Alkalinity	11
Figure 4. Ammonia	12
Figure 5. Total Antimony	13
Figure 6. Total Arsenic	14
Figure 7. Total Boron	15
Figure 8. Total Barium	16
Figure 9. Total Beryllium	17
Figure 10. Total Bismuth	18
Figure 11. Dissolved Bromide	19

LIST OF FIGURES

(CONTINUED)

	Page
Figure 12. Dissolved Inorganic and Organic Carbon (with Conductivity)	20
Figure 13. Dissolved Inorganic and Organic Carbon (with Turbidity)	
Figure 14. Dissolved and Extractable Calcium	
Figure 15. Total Cadmium	
Figure 15 (a). Total Cadmium – 2003 to Present	
Figure 16. Dissolved Chloride	
Figure 17. Total Cobalt	
Figure 18. Apparent Colour	
Figure 19. Total Absorbance Colour	
Figure 20. True Colour	
Figure 21. Total Chromium	
Figure 22. Total Copper (1985 to 2005)	
Figure 23. Total Copper (1991-2005)	32
Figure 24. Dissolved and Total Fluoride	
Figure 25. Total Iron	34
Figure 26. Fecal Coliforms	35
Figure 27. Total Galium	36
Figure 28. Total Hardness	37
Figure 29. Dissolved and Extractable Potassium	
Figure 30. Total Lanthanum	
Figure 31. Total Lead	40
Figure 32. Total Lithium	
Figure 33. Total Mercury	
Figure 34. Dissolved and Extractable Magnesium	
Figure 35. Total Manganese	
Figure 36. Total Molybdenum	

LIST OF FIGURES

(CONTINUED)

		Page
E: 27	D' 1 1N' .	4.0
C	Dissolved Nitrate	
Ü	Dissolved Nitrate/Nitrite	
Figure 39.	Nitrite	48
Figure 40.	Total Dissolved Nitrogen	49
Figure 41.	Total Nitrogen	50
Figure 42.	Total Nickel	51
Figure 43.	Dissolved Oxygen	52
Figure 44.	Total Dissolved Phosphorus (1999-2005)	53
Figure 45.	Total and Total Dissolved Phosphorus	54
Figure 46.	Total Phosphorus	55
Figure 47.	pH	56
Figure 48.	Total Rubudium	57
Figure 49.	Fixed Filterable Residue	58
Figure 50.	Fixed Non-Filterable Residue.	59
Figure 51.	Non-Filterable Residue.	60
Figure 52.	Filterable Residue	61
Figure 53.	Total Selenium	62
Figure 54.	Dissolved and Reactive Silica	63
Figure 55.	Extractable Silicon.	64
Figure 56.	Total Silver	65
Figure 57.	Dissolved and Extractable Sodium	66
Figure 58.	Specific Conductance	67
Figure 59.	Total Strontium	68
Figure 60.	Dissolved Sulphate	69
Figure 61.	Temperature, Air and Water	70
Figure 62.	Total Tin	71

LIST OF FIGURES

(CONTINUED)

		Page
Figure 63.	Total Thallium	72
Figure 64.	Turbidity	73
Figure 65.	Total Uranium	74
Figure 66.	Total Vanadium	75
Figure 67.	Total Zinc (1985-2005)	76
Figure 68.	Total Zinc (1985-1995)	77
Figure 69.	Total Zinc (1995-2005)	78

Introduction

The Fraser River basin is one of British Columbia's most valued ecosystems, draining fully one quarter of the province. Its headwaters are located in the Mount Robson Provincial Park near Moose Lake in the Rocky Mountains. The northern part of the river follows a northwest path before heading south, starting just north from Prince George. The Fraser River then flows 1,200 km before turning to the west, near Hope, and continues for about 150 km before entering the Pacific Ocean at Vancouver. The river has two very important tributaries which affect both flow and water quality. They are the Nechako River, which merges with the Fraser River at Prince George, and the Thompson River, which flows into the Fraser River at Lytton.

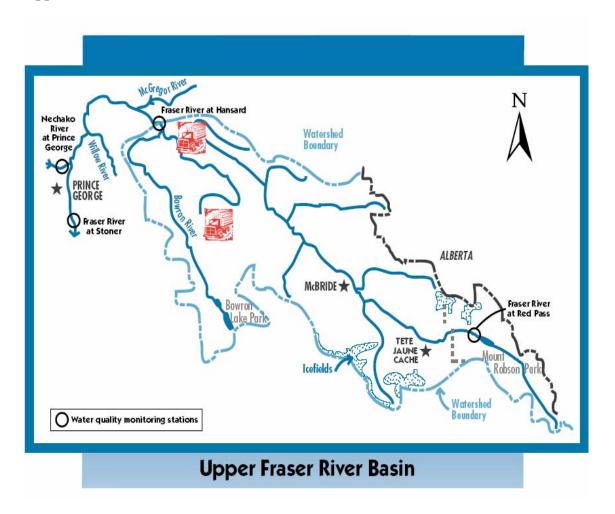
There are four long-term federal-provincial water quality monitoring sites on the Fraser River (Fraser River at Red Pass, Hansard, Marguerite, and Hope). Also, there are long-term sites on both the Nechako and Thompson rivers. This report deals with the site on the Fraser River at Hansard (see below). The water quality monitoring site at Hansard, located on a sparsely populated stretch of the Fraser River northeast from Prince George, is the second of four long-term monitoring stations on the Fraser River.

The Fraser River supports commercial and recreational fisheries of all five salmon species, and salmon runs on the Fraser River are among the largest in the world. Forestry, agriculture, and mining activities occur upstream of this water quality monitoring site (Wipperman and Holms, 1996). Also, treated municipal sewage from McBride is discharged into the Fraser River upstream from this site (Swain *et al.*, 1997). The drainage area above the site is approximately 18,000 km², and there are seven active water licenses between Moose Lake and Hansard. Water uses for this reach include irrigation, domestic consumption, secondary-contact recreation (e.g., boating) and industrial uses, as well as aquatic life and wildlife.

Data for the Fraser River at Hansard have been collected on a frequency of about once every two weeks. As well, twice per year, two additional samples are collected in order to

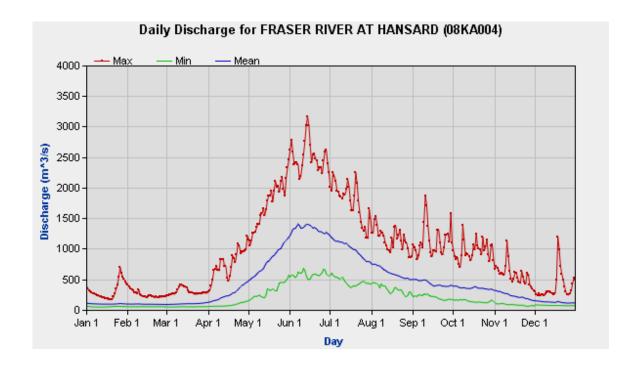
ensure that there are two periods when weekly samples are collected during five consecutive weeks to assess attainment of water quality objectives. In addition, quality assurance samples (blanks and replicates) are collected three times per year.

Upper Fraser River – Fraser River at Hansard



This report assesses twenty-one years (1984 – 2004) of water quality data collected by Environment Canada and B.C Environment. The data are stored in the Environment Canada ENVIRODAT database (station BC08KA0001) and the B.C. Environment EMS database (site E206580), and are available at www.waterquality.ec.gc.ca. Water quality data are plotted in Figures 1 to 69.

Flow data for the Fraser River at Hansard (station no. BC08KA004), collected by the Water Survey of Canada, are plotted below for 1984-2004.



WATER QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The status and trends of various water quality indictors were assessed by plotting the indicators over time and comparing the values to the water quality objectives for this reach of the Fraser River (Swain *et al.* 1997) or to the Province's approved and working water quality guidelines (Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, 2001a & 2001b). Any levels or changes of the indicators over time that may have been harmful to sensitive water uses, such as drinking water, aquatic life, wildlife, recreation, irrigation, and livestock watering, are described below in alphabetical order.

Water quality indicators were not discussed if they were in no danger of exceeding water quality objectives or guidelines, had no guidelines or objectives, or showed no harmful trends. These include: AOX, ammonia, antimony, boron, tin, and uranium.

The following water quality indicators seemed to fluctuate through the year according to turbidity concentrations, but were below guideline values and had no other trends: barium, beryllium, bismuth, organic carbon, gallium, lanthanum, lead, lithium, manganese, molybdenum, nickel, total phosphorus, rubidium, fixed non-filterable and non-filterable residue, selenium, silicon, thallium, vanadium, and zinc.

Other water quality indicators seemed to fluctuate through the year according to the specific conductivity of the water. For dissolved forms of many of these indicators, they would be a part of the measured conductivity, and this is to be expected. These types of indicators that were not measured above guideline values included: bromide, dissolved inorganic carbon, calcium, chloride, fluoride, hardness, potassium, magnesium, nitrate/nitrite, dissolved nitrogen, fixed filterable and filterable residue, silica, sodium, strontium, and sulphate.

Aluminum (Figure 2): values (total) exceeded the dissolved aluminum guideline for drinking water. High aluminum concentrations coincided with high turbidity, which means that the aluminum is in particulate form and not likely biologically available.

Alkalinity(Figure 3): values fluctuated with specific conductivity and were generally above the guideline indicating low sensitivity to acidic inputs. Exceptions occurred during 1998 at times of low conductivity in the river. There do not appear to be any trends in the data through time.

Arsenic (**Figure 6**): values were generally below guidelines and fluctuated with turbidity, meaning that at higher concentrations, arsenic would be in particulate form and not biologically available. Only one value in 1991 exceeded the guideline, likely due to acid vial contamination at that. There do not appear to be any trends in the data.

Carbon (Figures 12 and 13): values on occasion exceeded the guideline to protect drinking water supplies from the formation of trihalomethanes. Values seem to be related to turbidity. There do not appear to be any trends in the data through time.

Cadmium (Figures 15 and 15 (a)): values have exceeded guidelines on occasion, usually when turbidity was high and the cadmium would be in particulate form and not biologically available. Although values appear to be decreasing in recent years, this is an anomaly related to the use of lower detection limits.

Cobalt (Figure 17): values often exceed the guideline for drinking water supplies when turbidity is high. The cobalt would be removed from the water with partial or complete treatment since it is related to particulate matter. There do not appear to be any trends in the data through time.

Colour (Figures 18 - 20): apparent colour (Figure 18) values seem to fluctuate with turbidity and regularly exceeded the drinking water guideline for true colour; however, this is to be expected since true colour is measured on a filtered sample (i.e., turbidity removed). True colour values (Figure 20) were lower than apparent colour values, as expected; however, values seem to fluctuate with turbidity and regularly exceeded the drinking water guideline.

Chromium (Figure 21): values fluctuate with turbidity values, and as a result the guidelines for hexavalent and on occasion trivalent chromium are exceeded during periods of high flow and turbidity. We recommend that either trivalent and hexavalent forms of chromium be measured in the future, or guidelines be developed for total chromium values.

Copper (Figures 22 and 23): values regularly exceed the BC guidelines for 30-d mean concentrations but only on occasion exceed the guideline for maximum concentrations.

As well, values varied in relation to turbidity values, meaning that the higher copper values are likely in particulate form and not biologically available.

Iron (Figure 25): values exceeded the drinking water and aquatic life guideline of 300 μ g/L frequently. Iron concentrations vary in relation to turbidity, so that the iron is likely in particulate form and not biologically available.

Fecal coliform (Figure 26): values often exceed the guideline of 10 CFU/100 mL for waters that are disinfected only but have met the level of 100 CFU/100 mL where at least partial treatment is used. Solids concentrations in the river would require a minimum of partial treatment for solids removal prior to use for drinking.

Hardness (Figure 28): values are regularly above or below the range of 80 to 120 mg/L that is ideal for water supplies. Hardness fluctuates with conductivity, which fluctuates with river flow. There does not appear to be a trend in values through time.

Nitrate/Nitrite (Figure 38): Values for the combined form often exceeded the guideline for nitrite alone; however, due to the good oxidation available, the nitrogen would be converted quickly from nitrite to nitrate and would not be a concern in the river (if ever present as nitrite).

Dissolved Oxygen (Figure 43): values are above the guideline for a minimum concentration, except for one value in 1999. Values cycle annually, and appear to be lowest during periods of peak flows and lowest specific conductivity values.

pH (Figure 47): values were below the minimum guideline once in 1995. All other values were within the acceptable ranges for aquatic life and drinking water sources. There was no apparent relationship between specific conductivity values and pH. There was no trend through time for pH.

Silver (Figure 56): values prior to 2003 on occasion exceeded the guideline that is at the former detection level. Since 2003 when detection levels were lowered, no values have exceeded the guideline. Values that were higher seemed to be correlated to higher turbidity values.

Water Temperature (Figure 61): values exceed guidelines regularly, likely during hotter periods of the year. There do not seem to be any adverse effects to aquatic life taking place due to these extremes that are relatively short in duration.

Turbidity (Figure 64): values regularly exceed the guideline for drinking water supplies. Partial treatment as a minimum would be required for solids removal if this water is to be used for a drinking water supply.

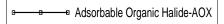
Zinc (Figure 68): values on occasion exceed guidelines at times of high turbidity. This means that the zinc is likely in particulate form and not biologically available. There does not appear to be a trend in values through the period of record.

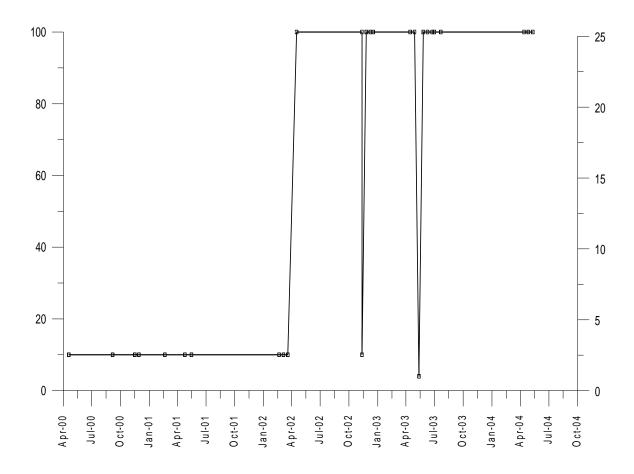
REFERENCES

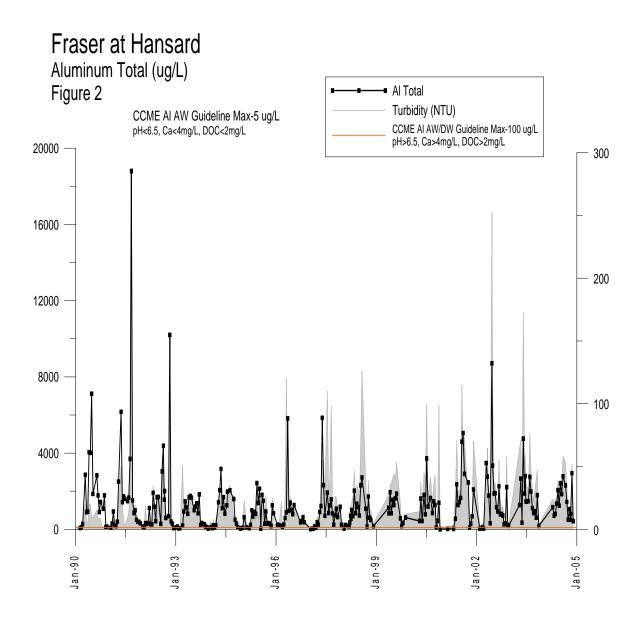
- Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. 2001a. British Columbia Approved Water Quality Guidelines (Criteria). Water Quality Branch, Environmental Protection Department, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Victoria, B.C.
- Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. 2001b. A Compendium of Working Water Quality Guidelines for British Columbia. Water Quality Branch, Environmental Protection Department, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Victoria, B.C.
- Swain, L.G., D. Walton and W. Obedkof. 1997. Water Quality Assessment and Objectives for the Fraser River from Moose Lake to Hope. Water Quality Branch, Environmental Protection Department, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Victoria, B.C.
- Wipperman, B. and G.B. Holms. 1996. State of Water Quality of Fraser River at Hansard (1984-1995). *Canada British Columbia Water Quality Monitoring Agreement*. Water Quality Section, Water Management Branch, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Victoria, B.C.

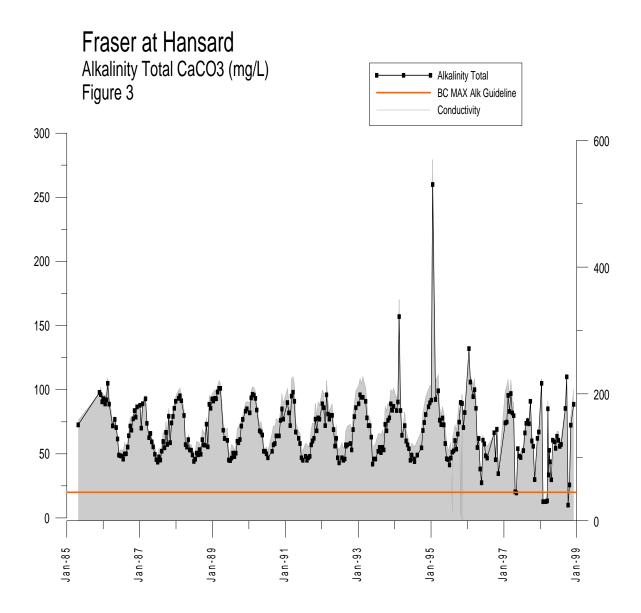
Fraser River at Hansard

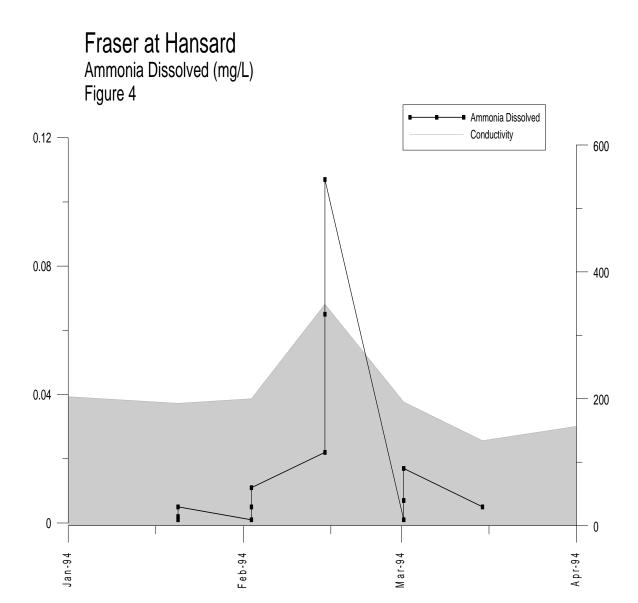
Adsorbable Organic Halide-AOX (ug/L) Figure 1

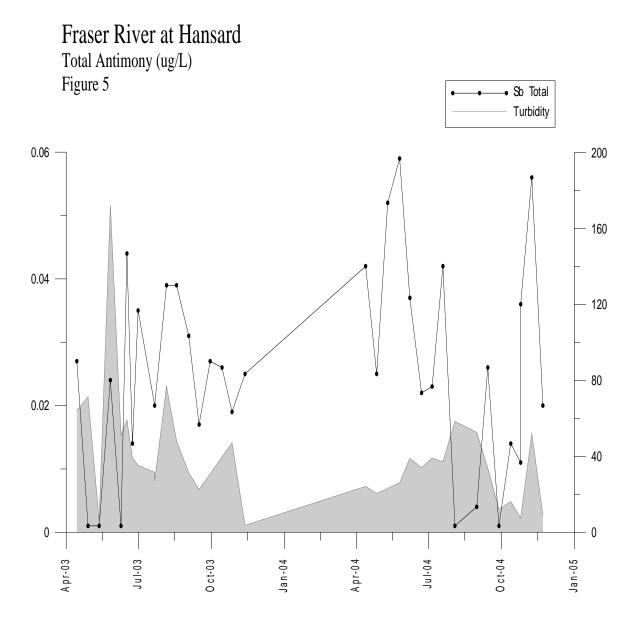


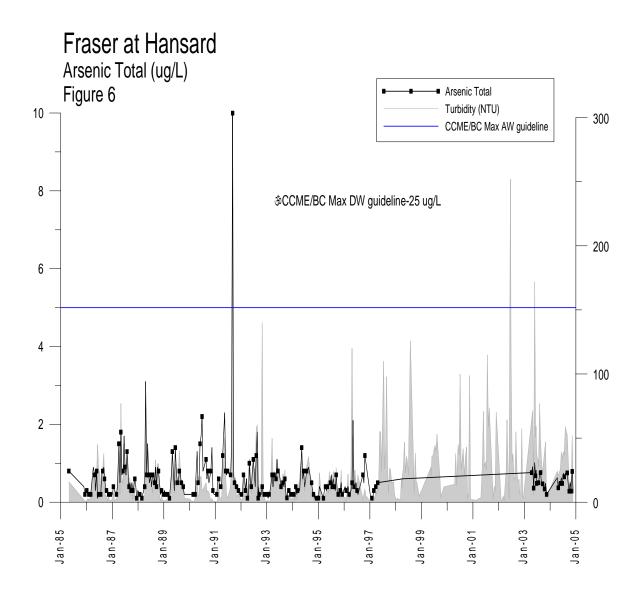


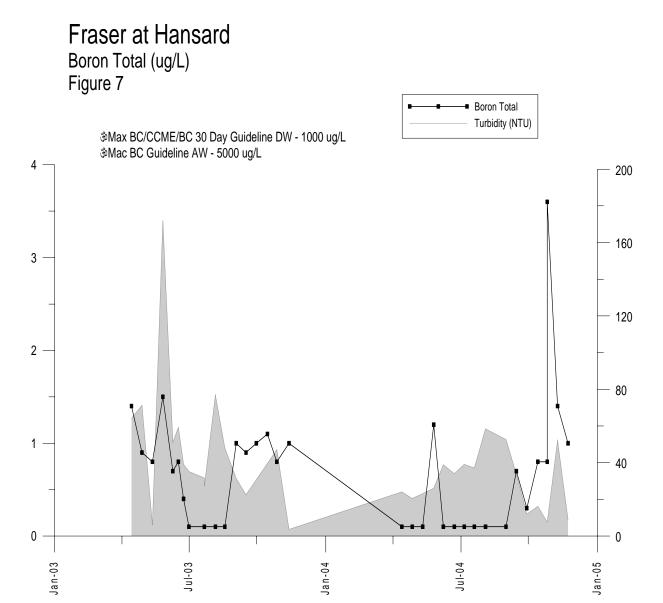


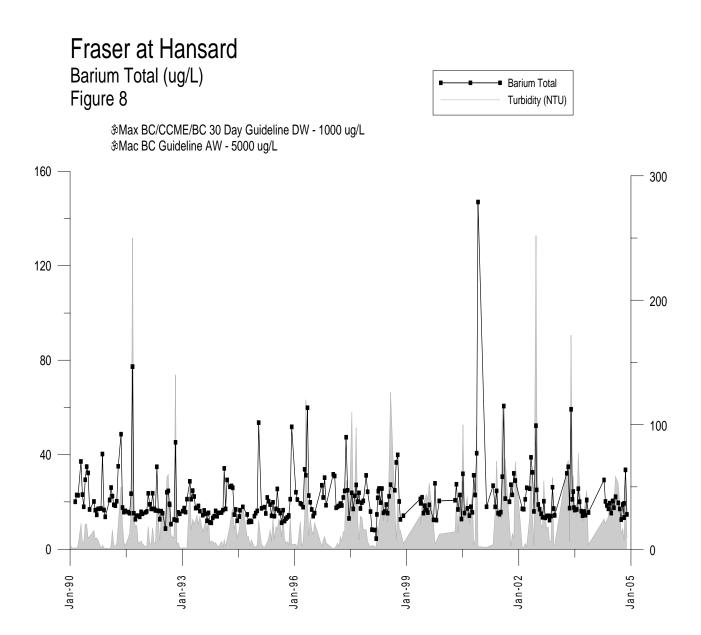




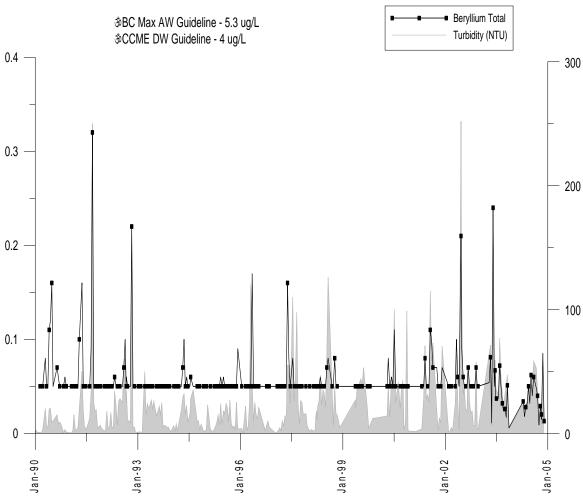




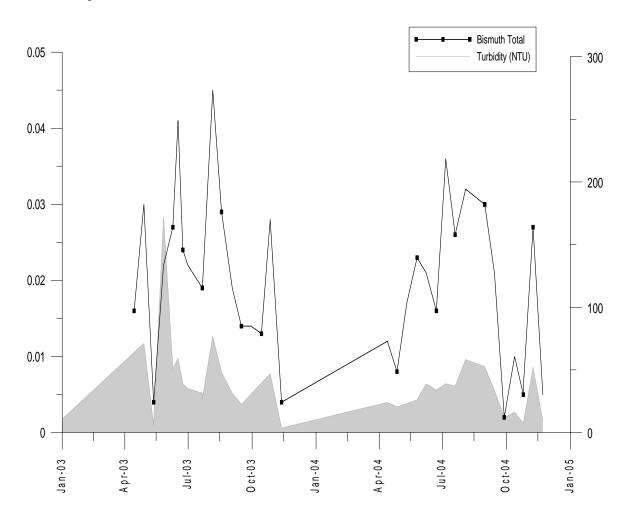


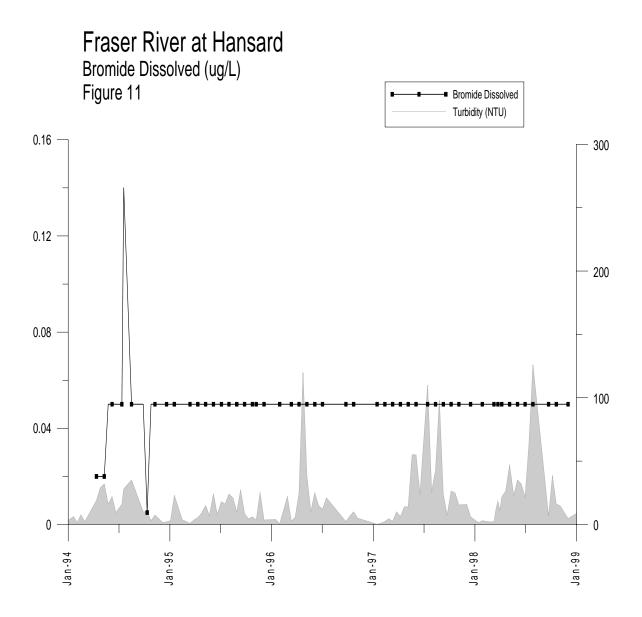


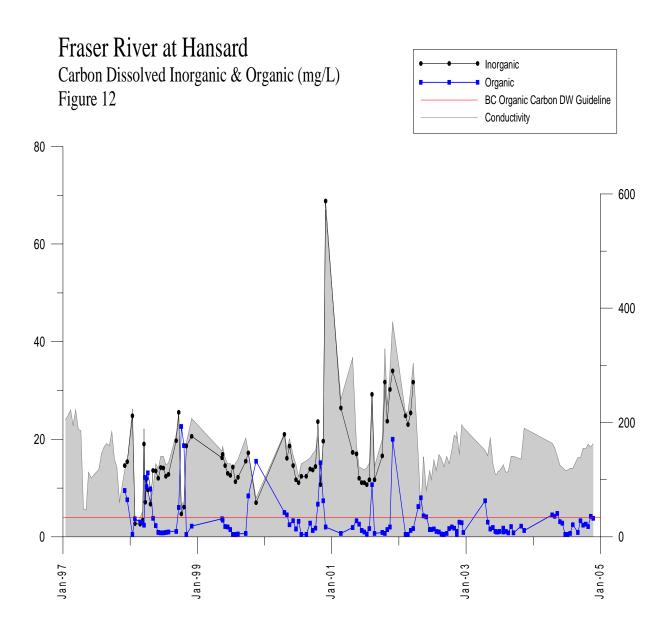


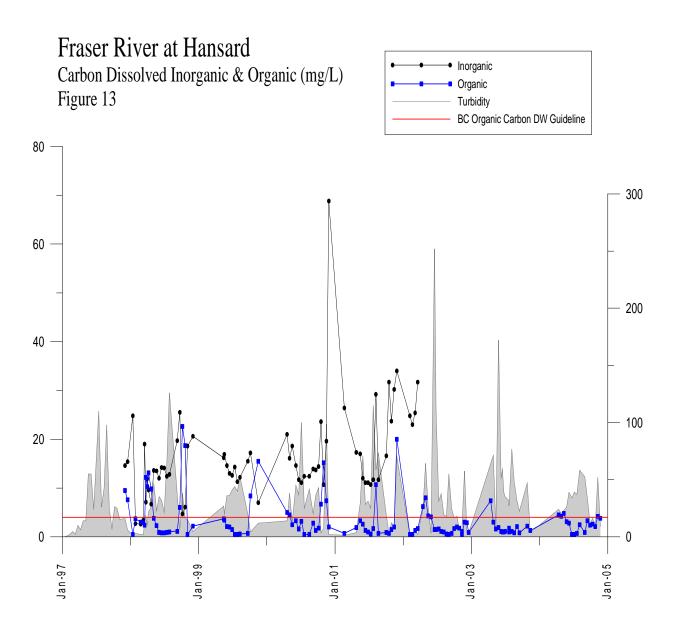


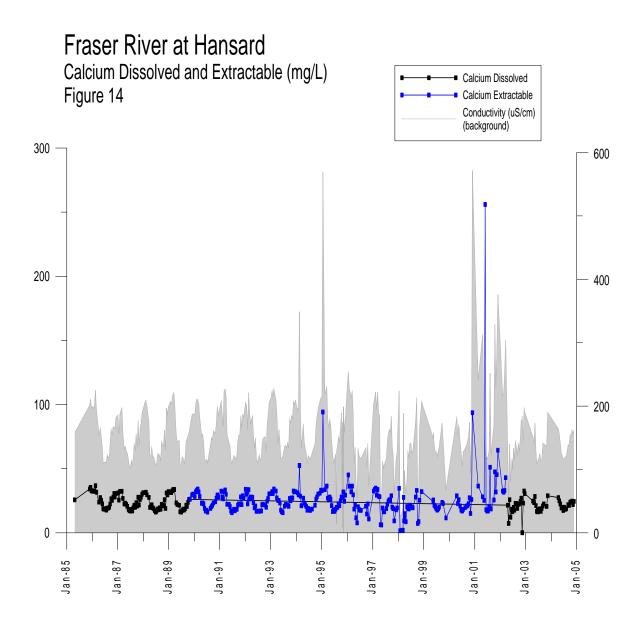
Fraser at Hansard BismuthTotal (ug/L) Figure 10

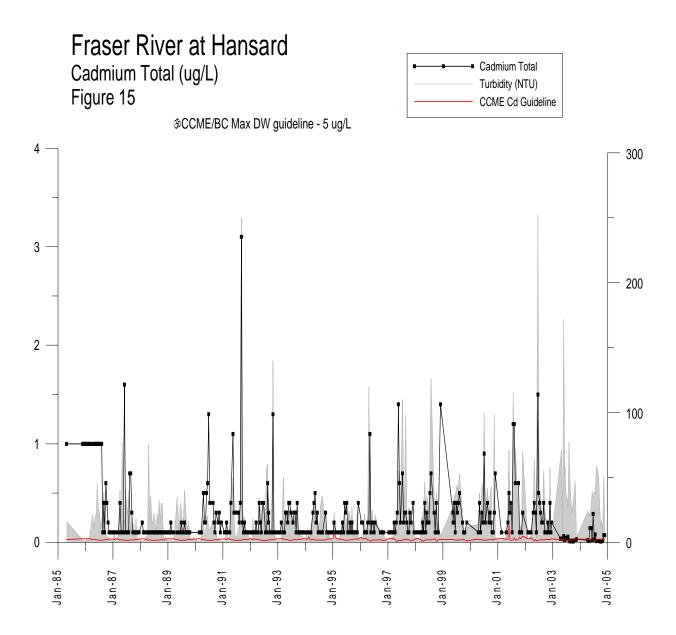


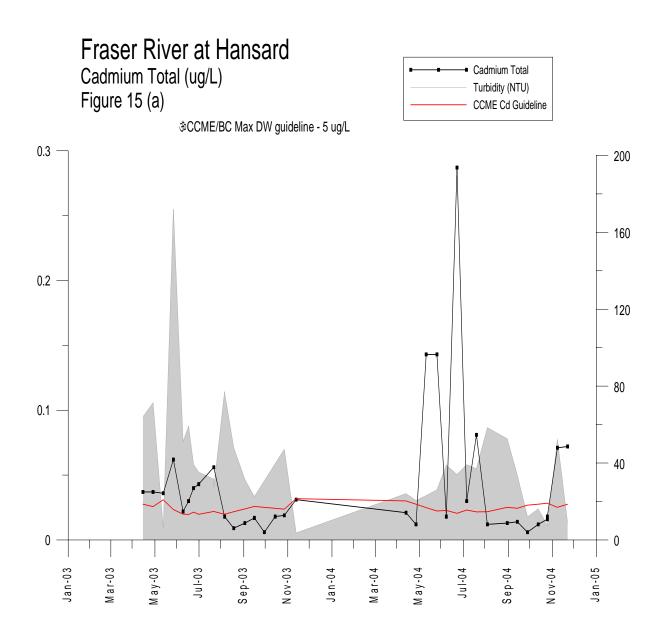




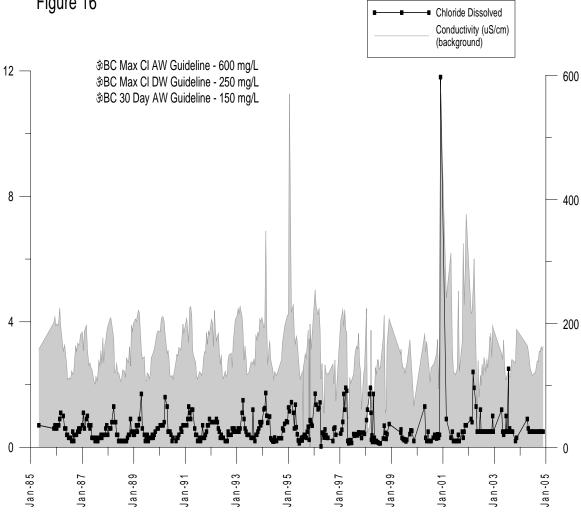








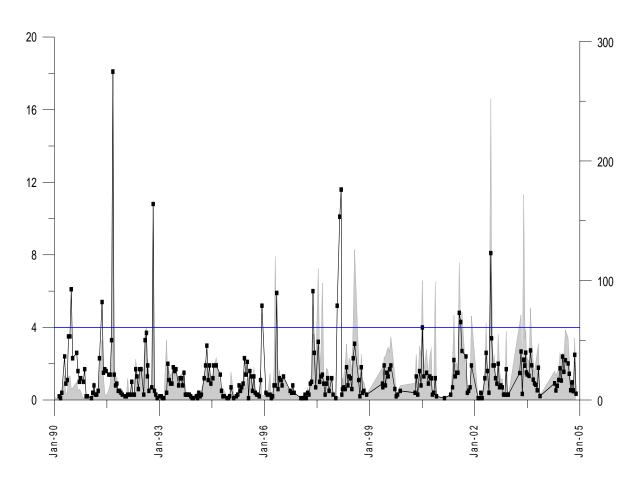


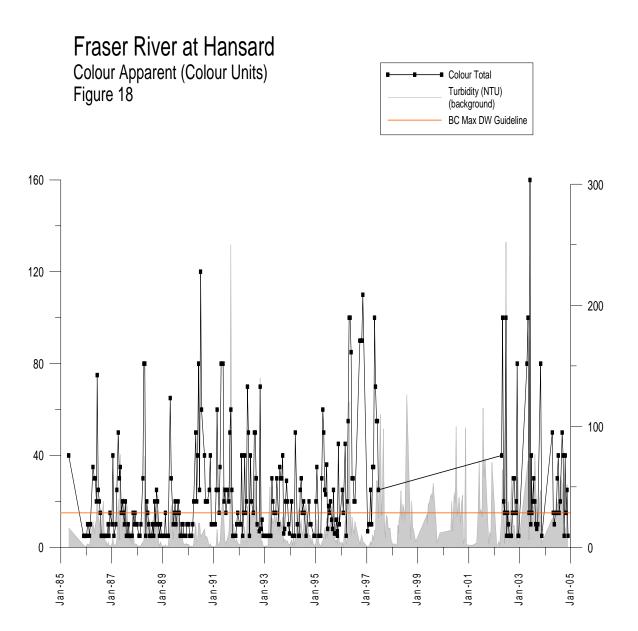


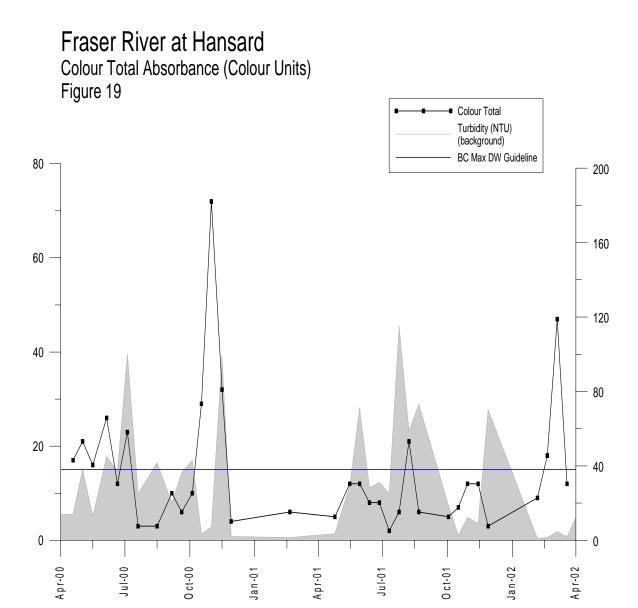
Fraser River at Hansard Cobalt Total (ug/L) Figure 17

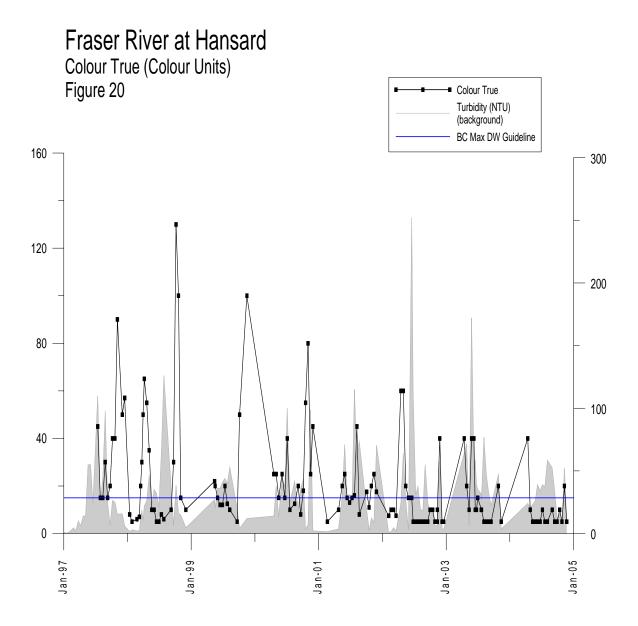
Cobalt Total
Turbidity (NTU)
BC 30 Day Co AW Guideline

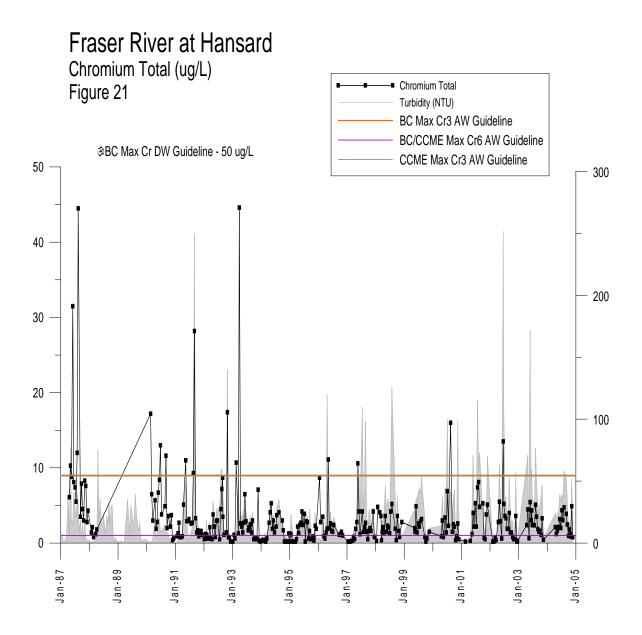
BC Max Co AW Guideline - 110 ug/L



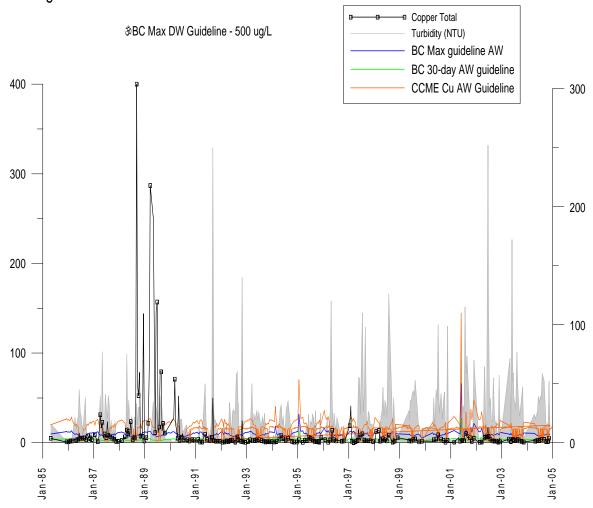


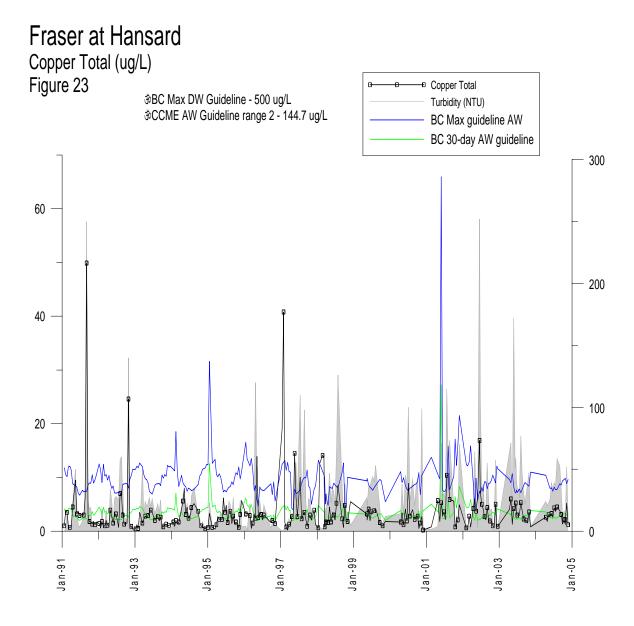




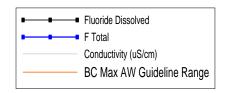


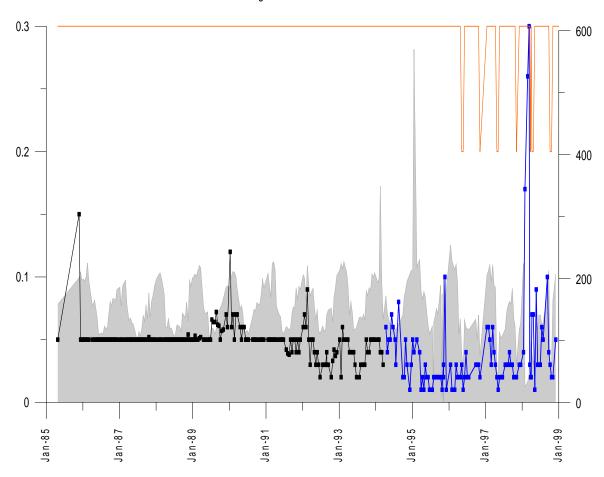
Fraser at Hansard Copper Total (ug/L) Figure 22

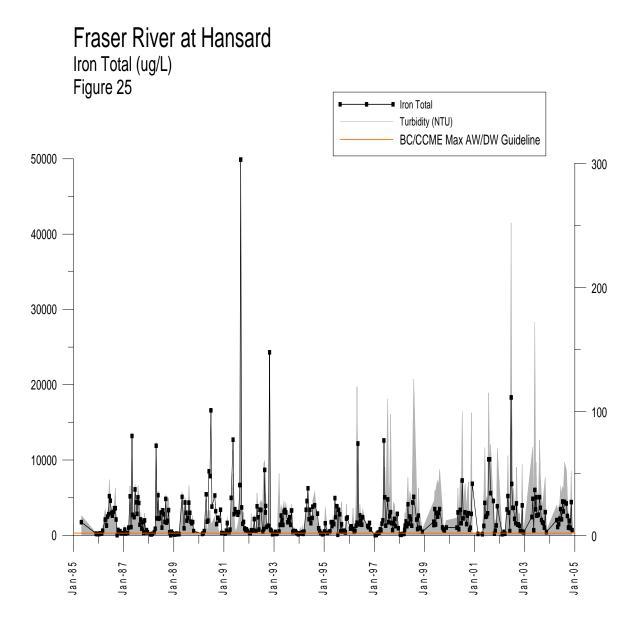


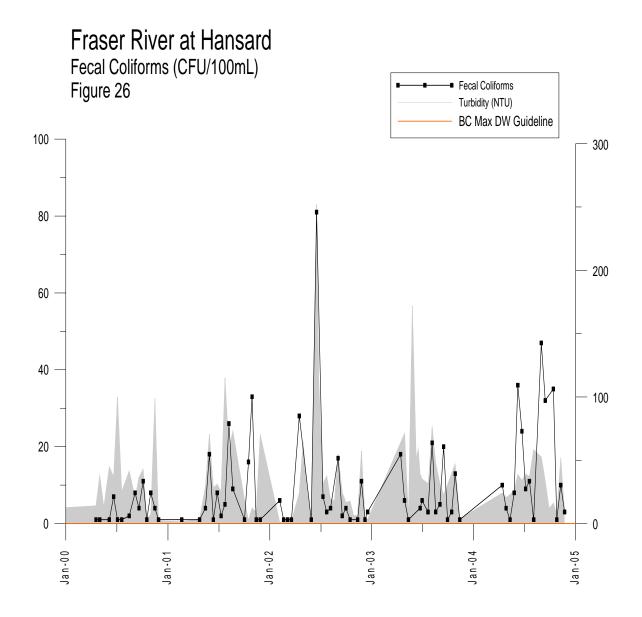


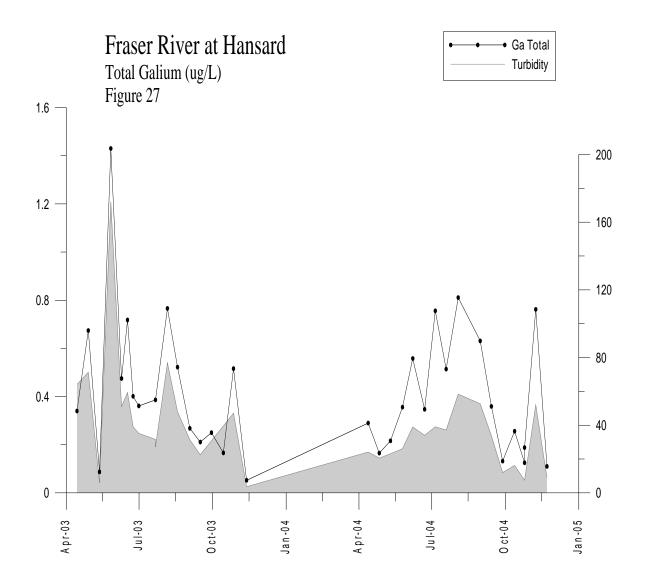
Fraser River at Hansard Fluoride Dissolved and Total (mg/L) Figure 24

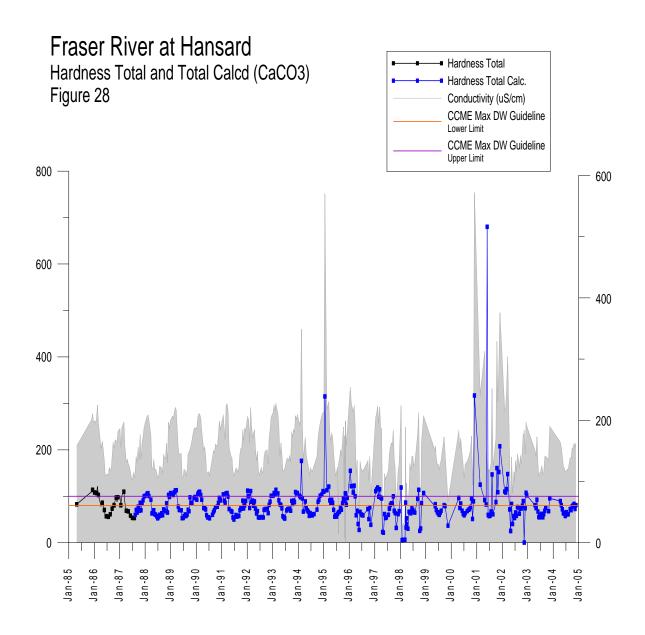






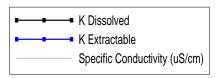


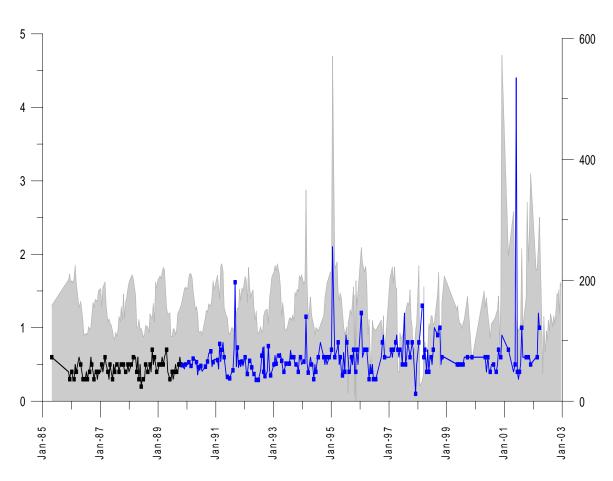


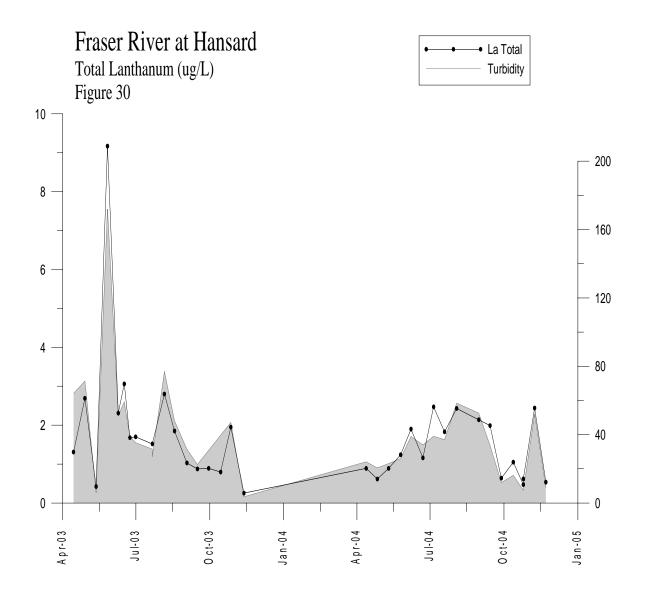


Fraser at Hansard

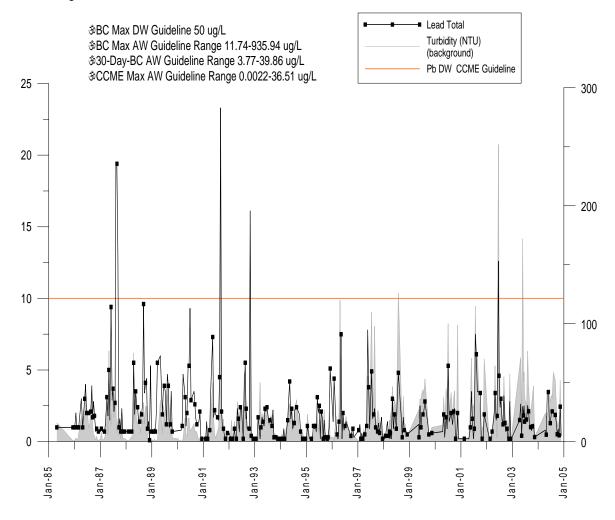
Potassium Dissolved and Extractable (mg/L) Figure 29



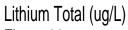


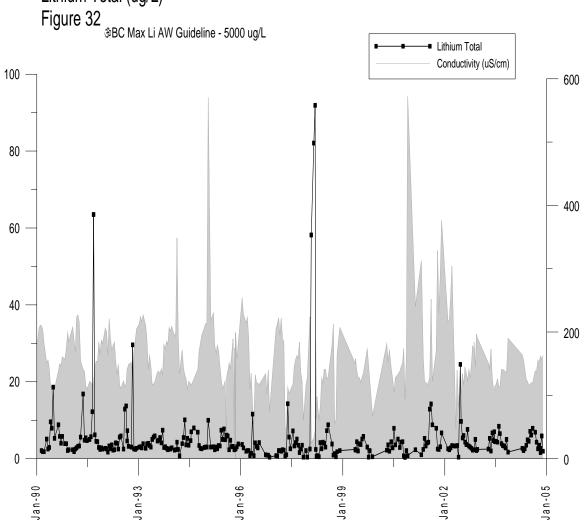


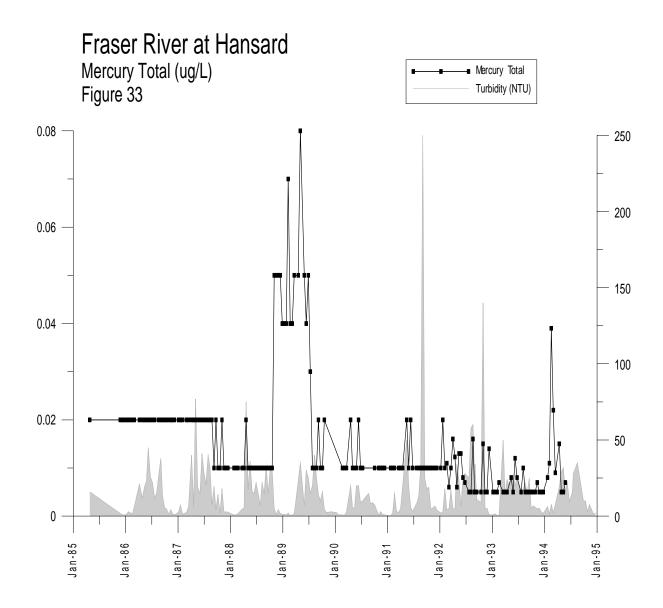
Fraser River at Hansard Lead Total (ug/L) Figure 31



Fraser River at Hansard

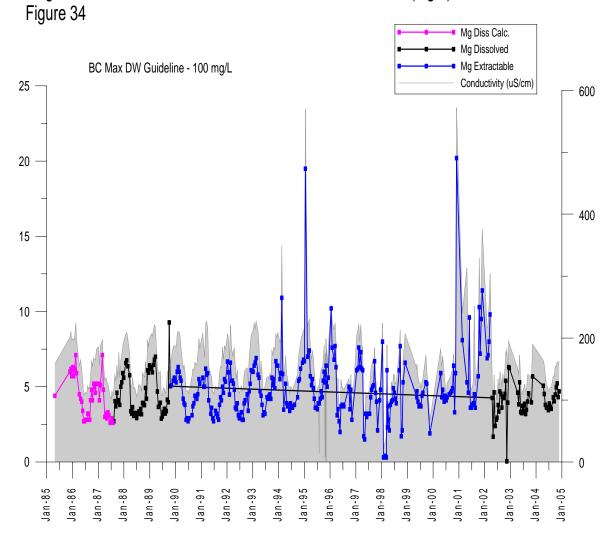






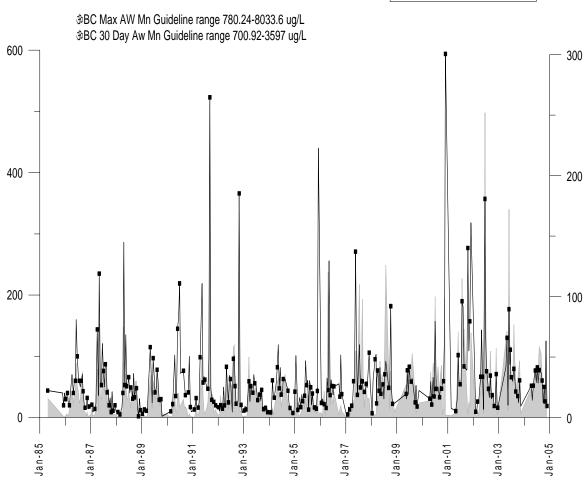
Fraser River at Hansard

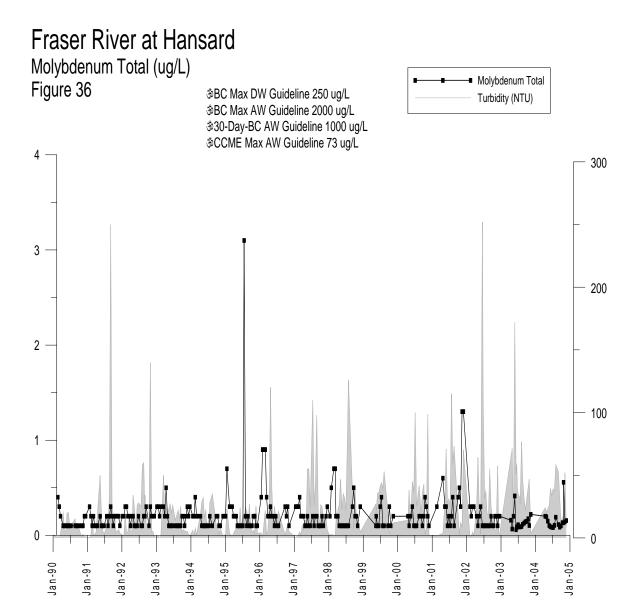
Magnesium Dissolved, Dissolved Calculated and Extractable(mg/L)

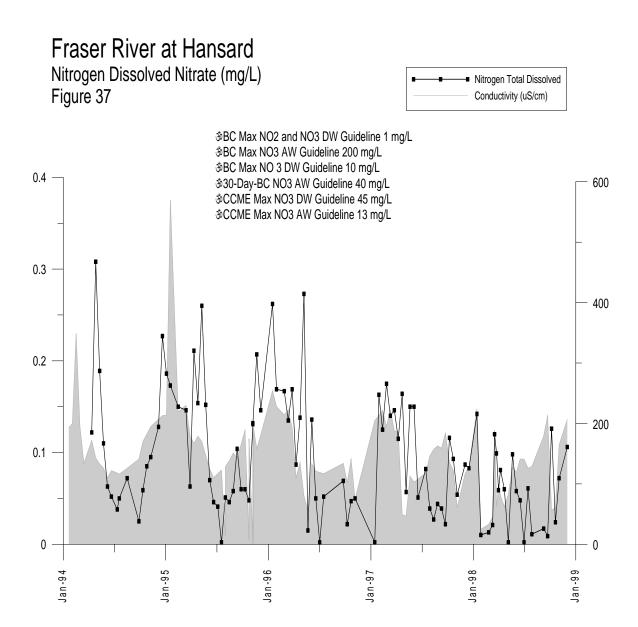


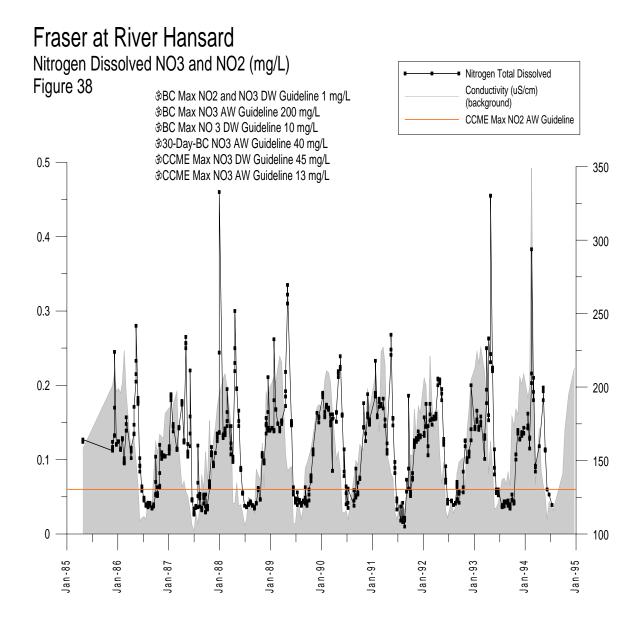
Fraser River at Hansard Manganese Total (ug/L) Figure 35

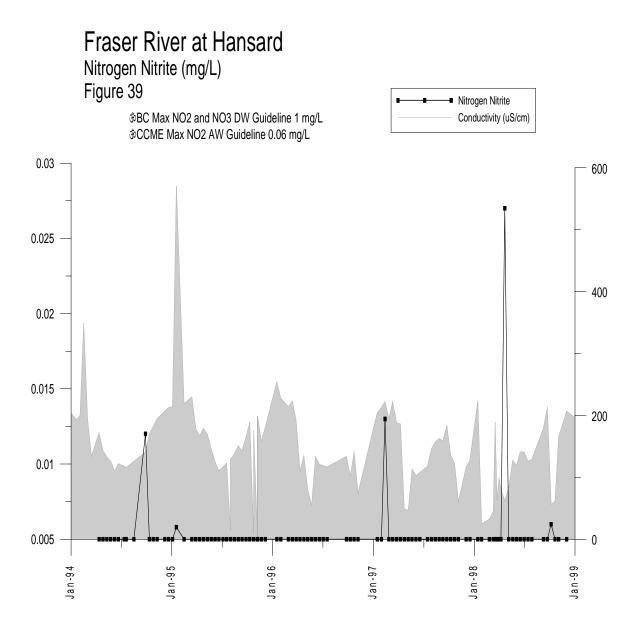


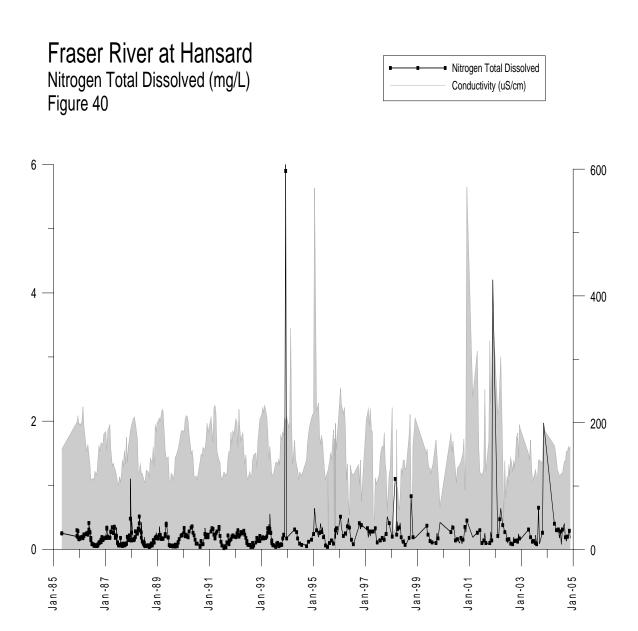


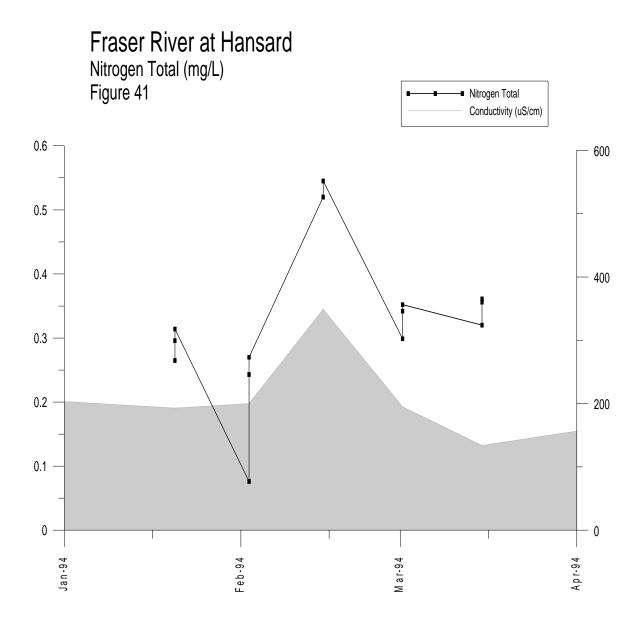






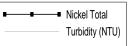


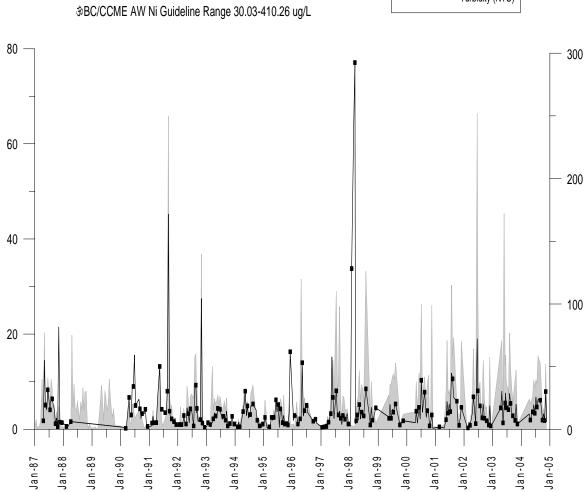


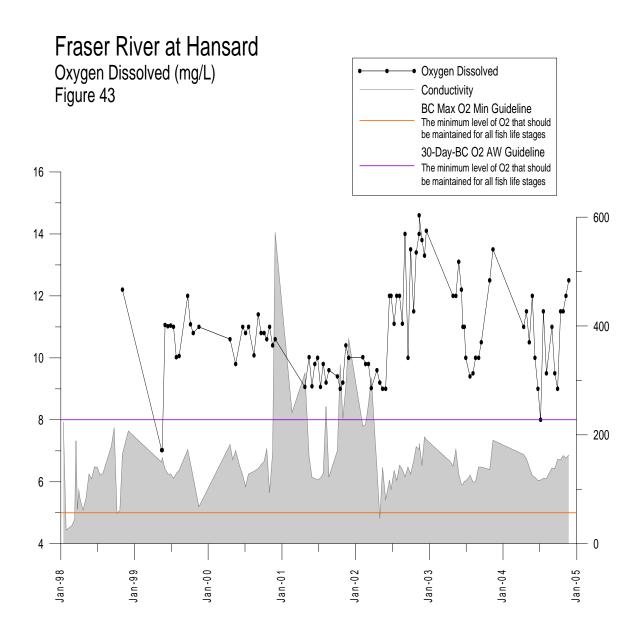


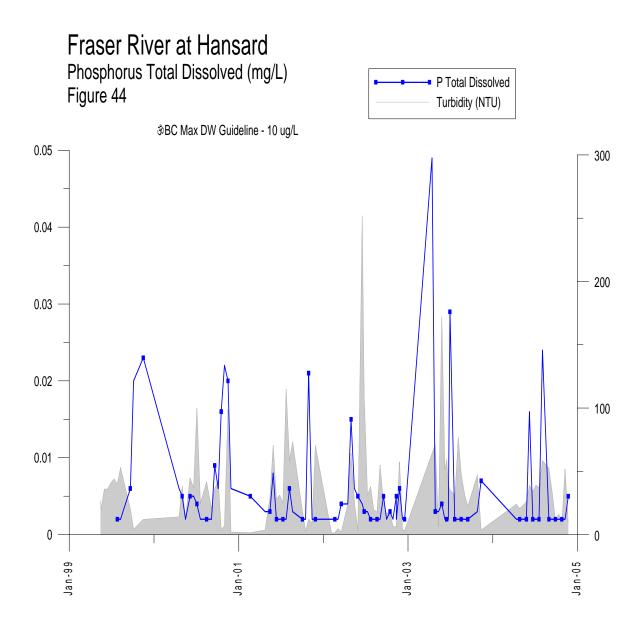
Fraser River at Hansard

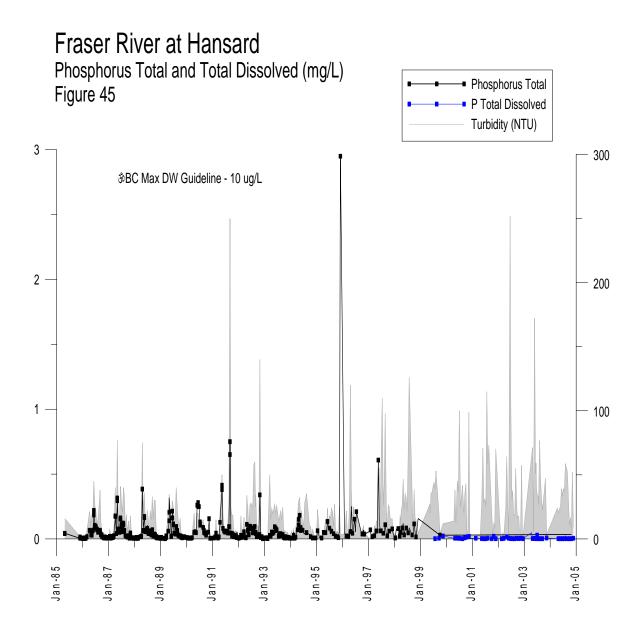
Nickel Total (ug/L) Figure 42

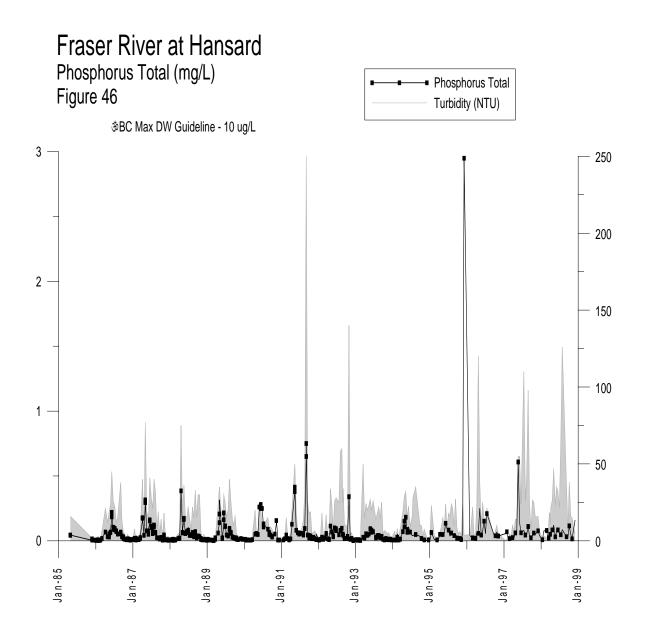


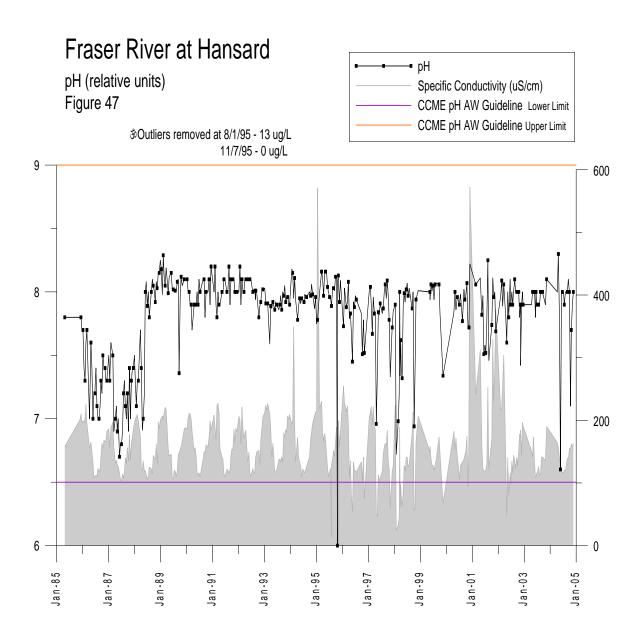


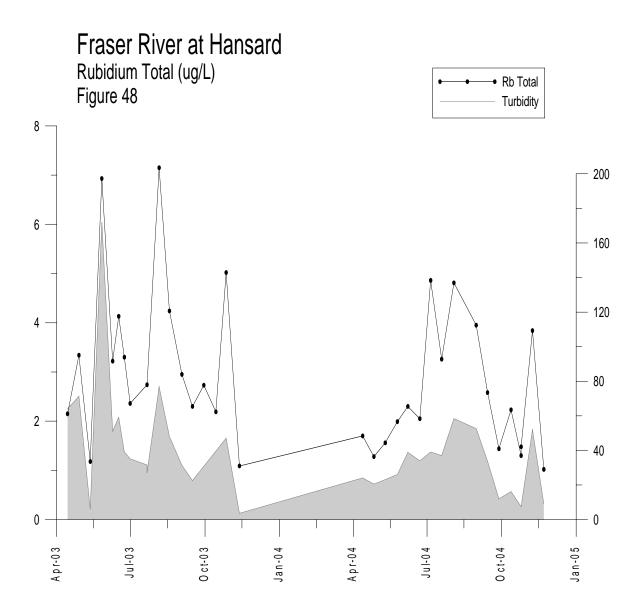


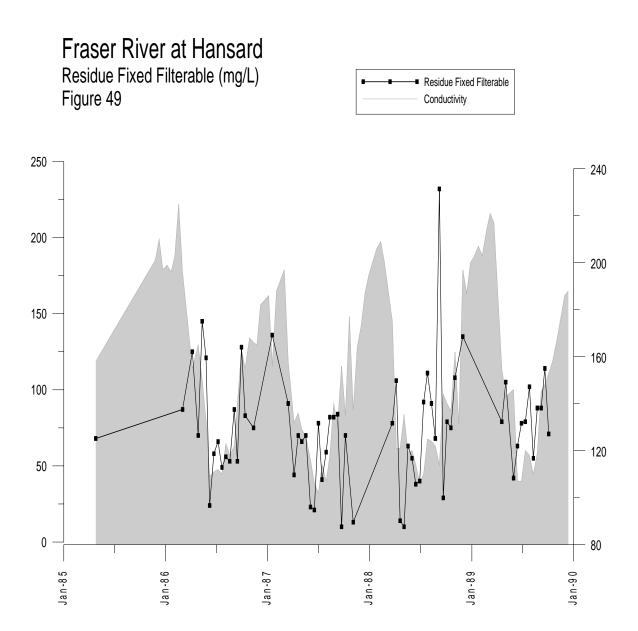


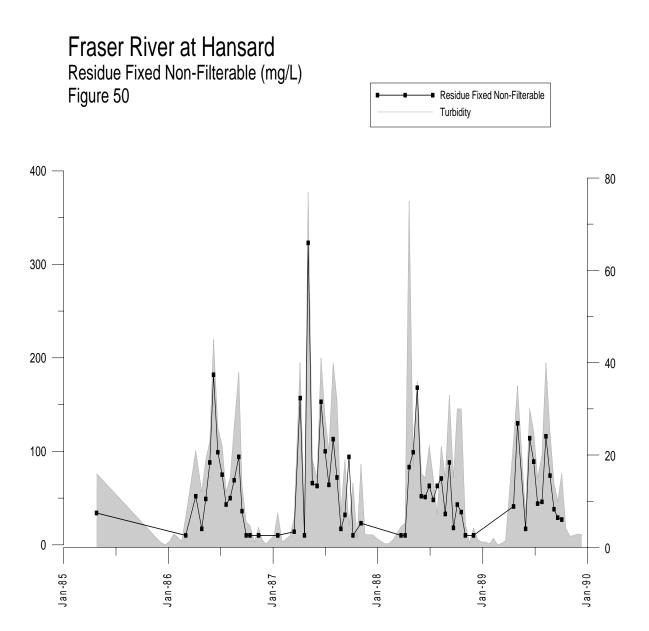


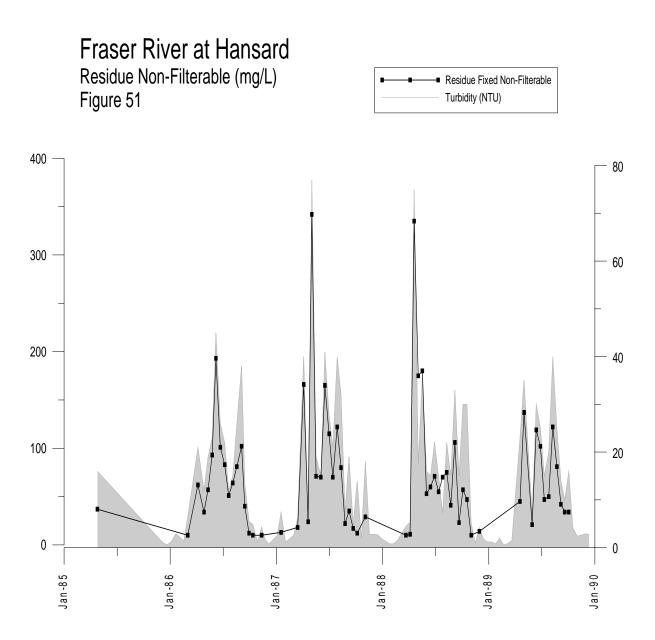


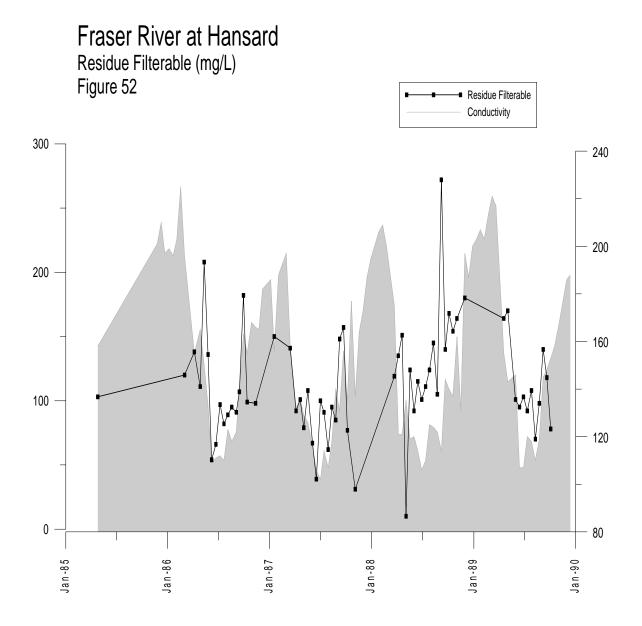




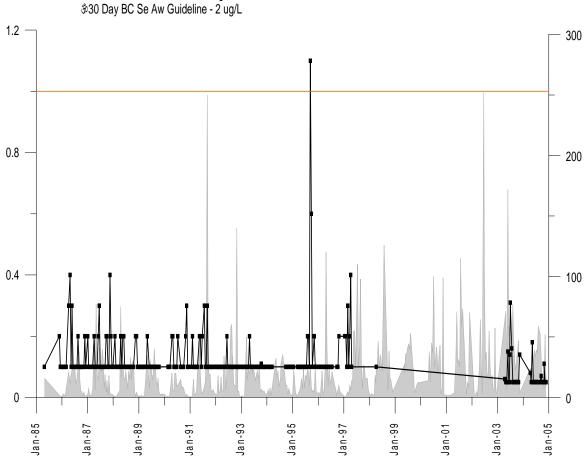


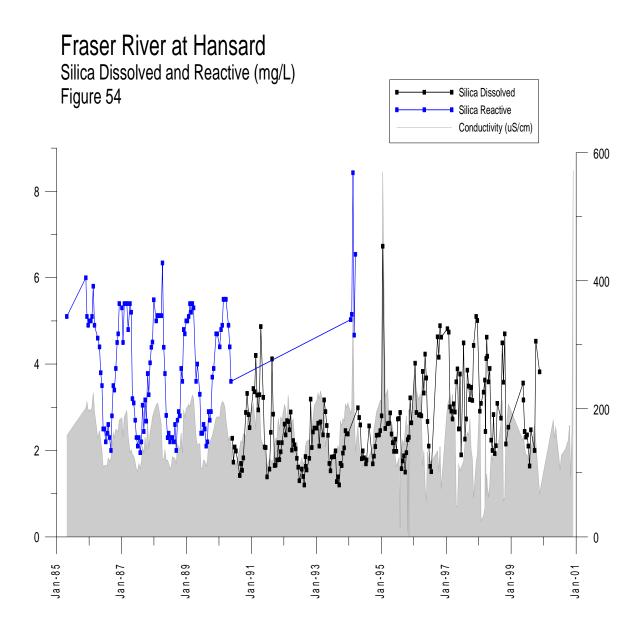


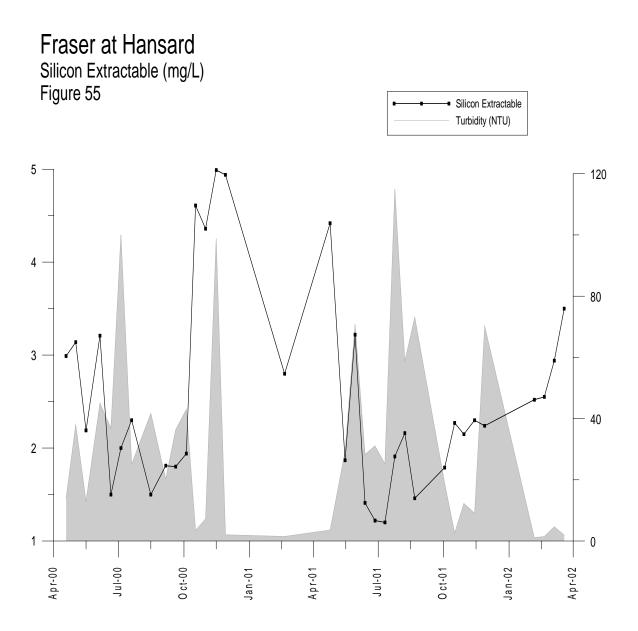




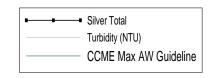








Fraser River at Hansard Silver Total (ug/L) Figure 56



Outlier Removed at: 04/11/1997 9:30 - 9.8 ug/L

