

Huntington River Water Quality Study – 2016

Summary of Findings

The summer of 2016 marked the 10th year of Huntington River Conservation Partnership (HRCP) water quality monitoring, and the 12th year on the Huntington portion of the river. With laboratory support from a Vermont Dept. of Environmental Conservation Larosa Grant, a large number of volunteers from Huntington and Richmond sampled specified locations along the length of the Huntington River on a weekly basis for bacterial contamination by *E. coli*.

- The number of samples above Federal Standard (pink) and the old State Standard (pink plus yellow) and their clustering were within the observed historic range and pattern. Results remained consistent with runoff being a major contributor to contamination.
- Contamination for a given date was variable with no consistent pattern as one moved down stream. Occasional, inconsistent spikes leaves room for possible sporadic point sources of contamination, as found before.
- The daily pattern of peaks and valleys generally was similar to that in past years, again suggesting runoff as a key contributor.
- There was no obvious relationship between 12 and 24 hour rainfall prior to sampling and overall Geomean. A strong relationship was found using rainfall over the 48 hr. before sampling due to significant rainfall occurred in the 24-48 hr. window. This result is different from that which generally has been observed in prior years, where the 0-24 hr. relationship has been stronger.
- Any relationship between rate of change in water level compared with overall river Geoman was all but entirely due to a single pair of high values. No noteworthy relationship existed when the comparison was with *E. coli* contamination at Horseshoe where water level was measured.
- Results for 8/17 were noteworthy, with an 8-fold change in river level over the 12 hr. prior to sampling. The River was running very high and with high turbidity due to significant upstream rainfall. However, though there was significant rainfall as well in the Huntington – Richmond area, most feeder streams were clear and not over-flowing. A possible explanation is the recharging of severely depleted groundwater from summer drought conditions.
- Tributary Hollow Brook was sampled weekly based high values in previous years. High values were recorded on all but one date with the overall season Geomean exceeding Standard. Parallel samples taken on two occasions upstream recorded lower values, suggesting a point source for contamination. More study is required.

The recommendation from past results remains in place, to avoid river use after major rainfall.

Overall Results

What follows is a summary of the results from the 2016 Huntington River Water Quality study. The reader is encouraged to review the 2006 and 2007 Reports for discussion of definitions, methods, Standards and other background material. Past Reports can be found at: www.huntingtonriver.org

E. coli is considered a sentinel for fecal contamination, indicating the possible presence of human pathogens. The presence of pathogenic *E. coli* itself or other human pathogens has not been observed to date.

Funding constraints meant that the weekly sampling sites along the River were reduced to twelve. Monthly samples continued to be taken from feeder streams on a rotating basis, excepting Hollow Brook, a River feeder, which was sampled weekly. As for 2015, samples were taken over ten weeks as compared to 13 weeks in prior years for studies of the Huntington plus Richmond segments of the River.

Figure-1 shows the sampling locations for the main study sites. One site, Hollow Brook, was added based on assessment in 2015 indicating very high values and suggesting a possible point source(s).

Table 1 presents the complete 2016 data set. Data entries are color-coded indicating values exceeding the Federal Standard (pink: 235, measured as *E. coli* / 100 ml). Beginning in 2012, the State standard was adjusted upwards from 77, to the Federal Standard of 235. Values between 77 and 235 are colored in yellow to allow comparisons with years past when that was the State Standard. **Tables 2 and 3** provide yearly comparisons with results from previous years.

Similar to past years, samples above Standard mostly were clustered (7/19, 8/17) with some clustering on a third (8/2). A potential cause based on results from past years was significant rainfall the 48 hr. period before samples were taken (see below). The total number of samples above the Federal Standard (pink) and the old State Standard (pink plus yellow) was close to the average since the study began, bearing in mind there were fewer sampling sites (**Table 3**). The Geomean for a given date was above the Federal / current State Standard on two occasions (7/19, 8/17, **Table-1**). The overall Geomean for each weekly site exceeded the Federal / new State Standard for one site (Hollow Brook) (**Table 1**).

No samples taken on a rotating monthly basis were above current Standard (**Table 1**).

Quality Assurance

For 2016, 113 regular *E.coli* samples were submitted. Twelve additional samples (10.6%) were taken as quality assurance field duplicates (**Table 4**). The VTDEC Laboratory quality assurance objectives for *E. coli* on Quanti-tray are the following: <25 colonies, 125% relative percent difference (%RPD); >25 colonies, 50% RPD. Overall, the mean %RPD was 26.8%. This is within VTDEC objectives for QA duplicates, though one individual duplicate comparisons exceeded the QA objectives (Hollow Brook).

Figure 2 examines contamination by date. (Hollow Brook was excluded as a feeder stream.) Geomean values by-in-large were below Standard for most days (enlarged red symbols for those

above Standard). The exceptions were 7/19 and 8/17, where above Standard were measured in most (7/19) or all (8/17) samples.

The patterns for a given date were highly variable. In some cases, there was a trend towards increasing values as one moved down stream (e.g. 7/19, 8/2, 8/17) though that pattern was not consistent through the sampling season. There were occasional high value peaks (e.g. 7/12, 8/9, 8/23, 8/30). Again, however, no seasonal consistency for a given site, leaving the possibility of sporadic point sources unresolved. Such spikes have been observed in the past and may illustrate how dilution, bactericidal activity and / or other, unknown factors cause significant reductions in contamination further down river. The short life-span of viable *E. coli* once it leaves the animal digestive tract is well-known.

Excepting the overall Geomean value for Carse Bridge, there was no indication of increasing values as one moved down river **Figure 3.1**. Indeed, it is difficult to recognize a specific pattern when previous results are compiled (**Figure 3.2**).

Figure 4.1 examines each dates at individual sites. **Figure 4.2** shows the same on a contracted scale to allow comparison of the pattern of low values. Again, larger, red triangles indicate values above Standard. Generally speaking, the pattern of peaks and valleys was similar in between-site comparisons. This suggests that some general contributor such as runoff was affecting each site.

Figure 4.3 presents the data for Hollow Brook, a tributary sampled weekly, high values having been observed in previous years with monthly sampling (**Figure 4.4**). High values were recorded on all but one occasion (8/30) with the result that the overall season Geomean for that site exceeded Standard. Noteworthy, parallel samples taken on two occasions upstream on Hollow Brook recorded low values, suggesting a point source for contamination (235.9 vs 488.4 for 7/12; 178.5 vs 261.3 for 8/23). More study is required to confirm this conclusion.

Past results have suggested that high levels of contamination follow heavy rains, interpreted to indicate contamination from runoff. This was based on significant rain in the hours before sampling and the co-occurrence of high levels of contamination at multiple sites along the river. As shown in **Figure 5**, there was no obvious relationship between 24 hour rainfall and overall Geomean for the day in 2016. At the same time, a strong relationship was calculated using rainfall over the 48 hr. before sampling. This was because of the several cases in which significant rainfall occurred in the 24-48 hr. window prior to sampling (see below). This pattern was different from what has been observed in prior years, where the 0-24 hr. relationship was better. As before, interpretation is confounded by the number of observations where there was little or no rainfall.

As shown in **Figure 6.1**, an apparent strong relationship between river level and overall Geomean contamination was dependent on an extreme value for both water level and Geomean and hence untrustworthy. Indeed, the correlation was weak at best when it was made between water level and *E. coli* contamination both measured at Audubon Horseshoe, even when all values were included.

Half hourly measurement of water level were made for the fourth year running, made possible by a donation of continuous data-logging equipment by the US EPA. **Figure 6.2** shows the pattern of change in river level the 48 hours before sampling (RED triangles indicate 48, 24, 12 hr. prior to sampling, plus sampling time). The curves were flat on several dates, notable exceptions being 7/19, 8/23 and 8/17. Most or all samples were above Standard for 7/19 and 8/17.

The 8/17 contour was most unusual. Note the change in the vertical scale in **Figure 6.2**. River level changed 8-fold over the 12 hr. prior to sampling. The Huntington River was running very high and with high turbidity. Road washouts had occurred in Hanksville and to the east in Duxbury. Though there was significant rainfall as well in the Huntington – Richmond area the day before samples were taken, most feeder streams were clear and not over-flowing. Related, no meaningful change occurred in the Gillett Pond water level. Unfortunately, no samples were taken in feeder streams on that date. A possible explanation is that severely depleted groundwater from summer drought conditions meant insignificant local runoff.

The apparent relationship between rate of change in water level when water level was compared with overall river Geoman, once again, was due to a single pair of high values (**Figure 6.3.1** - Red symbols indicate when water level was falling – see **Figure 6.2**). The relationship was poor when E. coli contamination at Horseshoe, where water level was measured, was the metric rather than overall River Geomean.

A factor to bear in mind when interpreting results based on water level change is that the amount of level change often was been small (**Figure 6.2**) as also has been the case in past years. More data are required to strengthen the view that a true relationship exists when level change is substantial.

As shown in **Figure 6.3.2**, the relationship for 12 hr. and 24 hr. compiled over all of the years measurements have been made (2014-2016) for Overall Geomean vs Water Level is dependent on a single high pair of values. The correlation for 48 hr. is more robust, being determined by a more complete range of values.

Shown in **Figure 6.3.3**, the relationship between E. coli contamination and Water Level change, both measured at Audubon Horseshoe, was dependent on a limited number of high values, as for the Geomean comparison, with no meaningful relationship at 24 hr. and nonexistent at 48 hr.

Though it is true that levels were falling a number of the times, there was no obvious difference between the impact of rising vs falling levels (not shown). Presumably, a recent runoff event is signified in both cases.

Box Plots - Variability

Geomeans again were computed for data analysis, because of the wide range of values and the fact the data are not normally distributed (see 2006 and 2007 Reports for further explanation). The spread of values is illustrated by the use of “box plots” (**Figure 7**). Box plots are often used to assess the variability in the data. The intent is to compare values for a specific site and not to make comparisons between sites. Hence the vertical axis scale is not the same for each site: using the same scale makes it difficult to observe the data distribution in certain cases.

All but two River sites (Audubon Horseshoe, Cochran Bridge) had one outlier. Past results, as well, have been characterized in general by a preponderance of sites with outliers. Caution must be exercised in interpreting results from a statistical point of view.

Hollow Brook had no outliers, though the high E coli counts and range of values should be noted.

Thanks to all the volunteers

Many thanks to all the volunteers whose efforts made the study possible. It was their effort over the years that caused the Huntington River to have continued to be chosen to be surveyed by the State and to be supported through State and Federal funding. All should be proud of the effort and result.

***Those interested in learning more about the Huntington River project should go to:
<http://www.huntingtonriver.org>***

HUNTINGTON RIVER E. COLI STUDY RESULTS - 2016

Table 1

	6/28/2016	7/5/2016	7/12/2016	7/19/2016	7/26/2016	8/2/2016	8/9/2016	8/17/2016	8/23/2016	8/30/2016	GEOMEAN	Mean	Median
Carse Bridge	21.33	9.79	49.59	108.6	41.65	53.92	7.45	344.11	25.9	11.99	33.91	67.4	33.78
Shaker Mtn	179.34	131.35	122.29	178.9	54.48	53.71	25.21	325.54	53.71	17.31	80.87	114.3	88.39
Spence Bridge	146.72	67.66	260.25	235.93	153.86	93.26	24.91	290.93	44.34	24.91	100.97	132.2	119.99
Bridge Street	166.95	61.98	248.9	248.9	129.63	238.22	101.93	648.82	39.31	18.69	125.96	191.5	148.29
Audubon Horseshoe	95.9	65.65	101.44	410.58	40.2	114.46	156.48	920.84	48.08	53.81	92.35	120.7	95.90
Audubon Hemlock	81.62	40.77	67.01	461.11	42.57	101.44	325.54	>2419.6	275.51	32.67	128.19	234.9	91.53
Hollow Brook	2419.57	488.44	488.44	517.21	517.21	1986.29	325.54	114.46	261.25	178.53	622.76	897.4	502.83
Moultrop Bridge	98.54	38.25	172.33	517.21	52.01	193.49	325.54	1299.55	40.2	48.74	119.45	172.3	114.46
Yaggy	44.12	86	95.94	488.44	63.14	307.59	39.86	1299.55	32.25	78.8	113.36	251.4	74.57
Triple Buckets	63.14	131.35	73.28	313.01	44.55	248.9	34.51	1203.33	41.65	46.22	85.77	119.6	76.04
Chalet Trail	98.67	98.67	83.61	461.11	79.76	186	15.79	2419.57	34.54	307.59	112.60	227.9	81.69
Cochran Bridge	60.86	65.65	82.61	235.93	75.41	201.42	10.78	721.80	59.0	44.8	113.53	349.4	79.01
GEOMEAN	110.4	76.4	109.5	312.18	75.7	175.0	48.8	3.381	1.102	0.693			
Water level	0.819	0.837	1.039	1.122	0.856	0.864	0.754						
Values are mpn / 100 ml	Above State Level (77)												
	Richmond										114	106	

Monthly Samples	25-Jun	12-Jul	9-Aug
Texas Hill Brook	108.00	49.59	17.31
Fargo Brook	107.00		9.79
Brushy Brook	105.00		
Carpenter Brook	104.00		
Cobb Brook	103.00		
7 Falls	1.00		

Duplicates	6/28/2016	7/5/2016	7/12/2016	7/19/2016	7/26/2016	8/2/2016	8/9/2016	8/17/2016	8/23/2016	8/30/2016
Carse Bridge	14.8									
Shaker Mtn		201.42								
Spence Bridge			344.8							
Bridge Street					152.86					
Audubon Horseshoe							230.98			
Audubon Hemlock								1119.87		
Moultrop Bridge			160.71							
Yaggy										
Gorge					76.55					
Triple Buckets										
Chalet Trail										
Cochran Bridge							11.99			
Texas Hill Brook								1203.33		
Fargo Brook										
Hollow Brook									178.53	
Brushy Brook										
Carpenter Brook										
Cobb Brook										
7 Falls										
Floating										
Hollow Brook Culvert 2	16	20.11								
Gorge		81.62								
			36.84							

Huntington River Study - 2016: Year-by-Year Comparisons*

Table 3

	2004**	2005**	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015****	2016
Overall Geomean	58	110	64	88	103	57	65	61	105	53	87	114
Overall Geomean: Huntington	58	110	59	75	99	63	65	60	106	48	71	114
Overall Geomean: Richmond	Not done	Not done	72	102	85	49	66	56	98	61	112	106
Days when overall Geomean for the day > Federal	2	3	1	3	3	0	2	2	3	1	0	2
Days when overall Geomean for the day > State	4	10	6	6	9	4	5	3***	4***	2***	9***	5***
Total samples > Federal	20	48	19	39	61	12	25	27	48	11	16	32
Total samples > State***	40	98	58	94	137	58	79	37	75	35	47	59
Overall Geomean for any site over season > Federal	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Overall Geomean for a site over season > State***	0	12	5	12	14	4	2	2	14	1	6	11

*Winooski River samples not included

**Huntington Segment only was studied

*** State Standard became Federal Standard in 2012. Indicated number based on old State Standard = 77, for purposes of comparison with previous years.

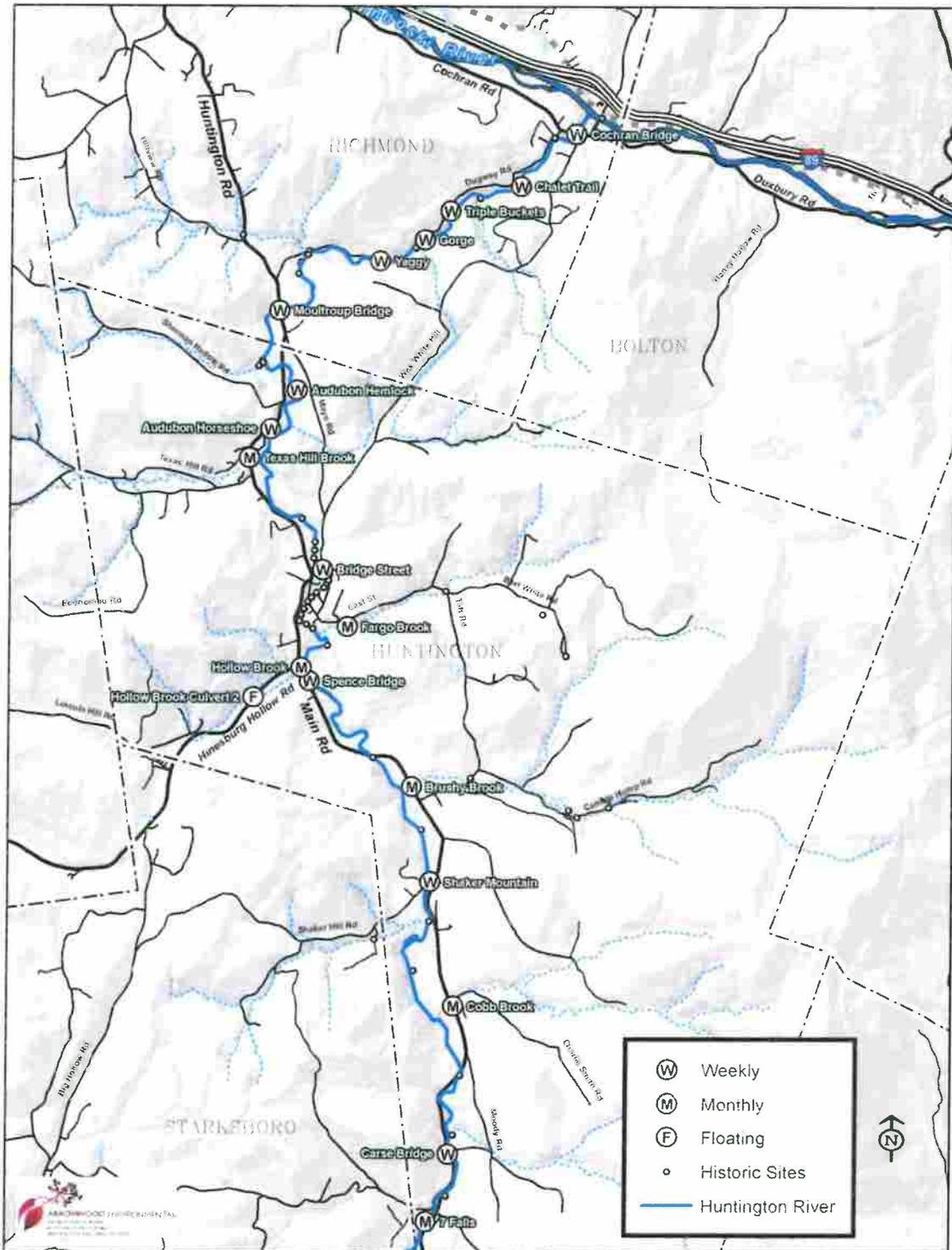
****Two fewer sites

2016 Huntington River E. coli Field Duplicates

Table 4

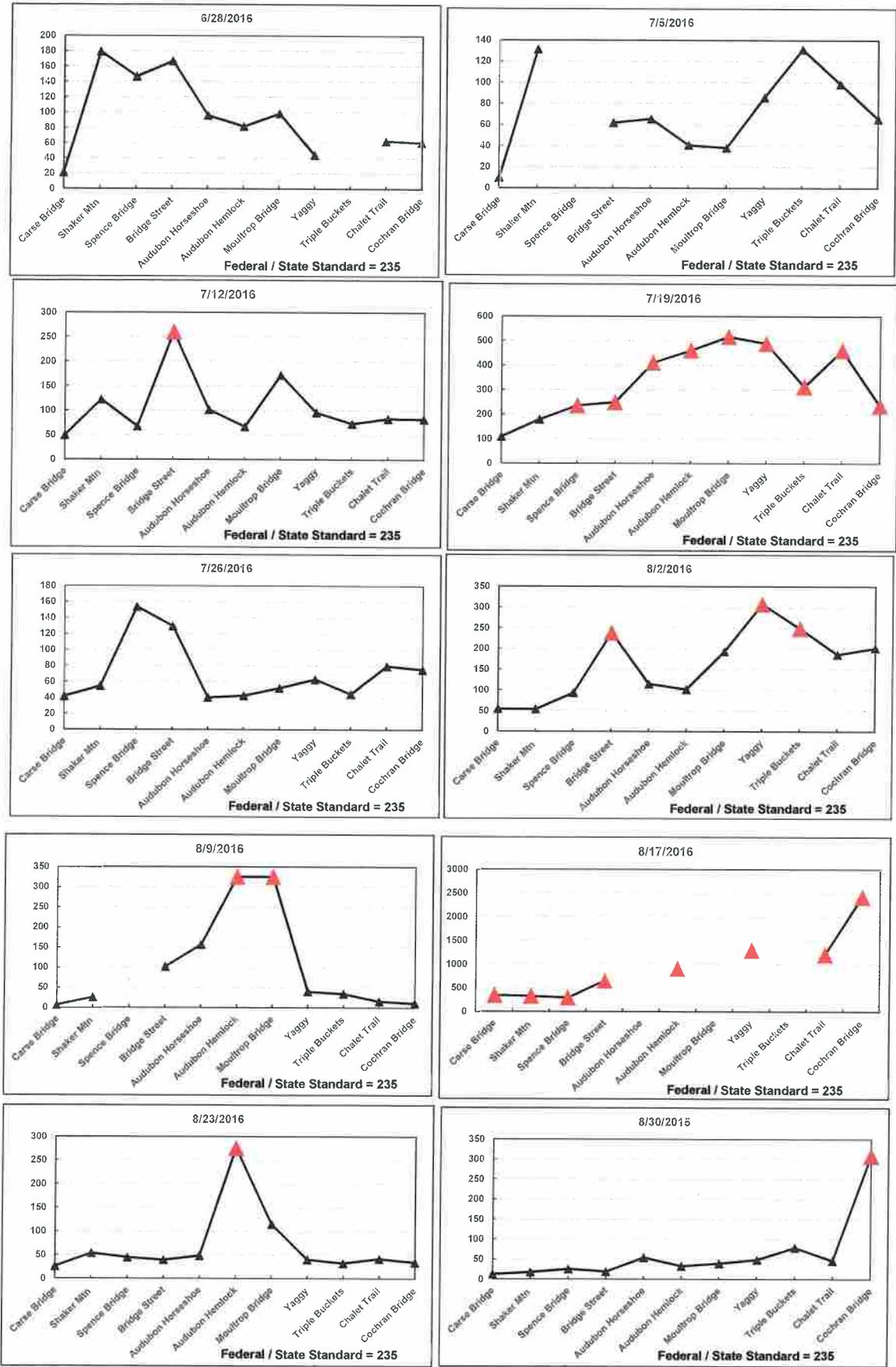
Date	Location	Results		Relative Percent	Absolute Difference
		A	B		
6/28/2016	Carse	21.33	14.8	36.1%	6.5
7/5/2016	Shaker	131.35	201.42	42.1%	70.1
7/12/2016	Hollow Brook	488.44	235.93	69.7%	252.5
7/12/2016	Moultroup	172.33	160.71	7.0%	11.6
7/19/2016	Spence	235.93	344.80	37.5%	108.9
7/26/2016	Bridge	129.63	152.86	16.4%	23.2
7/26/2016	Yaggy	63.14	76.65	19.3%	13.5
8/9/2016	Audubon Horse	156.48	230.98	38.5%	74.5
8/9/2016	Chalet	15.79	11.99	27.4%	3.8
8/17/2016	Audubon Hemlock	920.84	1119.87	19.5%	199.0
8/17/2016	Chalet	1203.33	1203.33	0.0	0.0
8/30/2016	Hollow Brook	178.53	178.53	0.0	0.0
		Mean		26.1%	

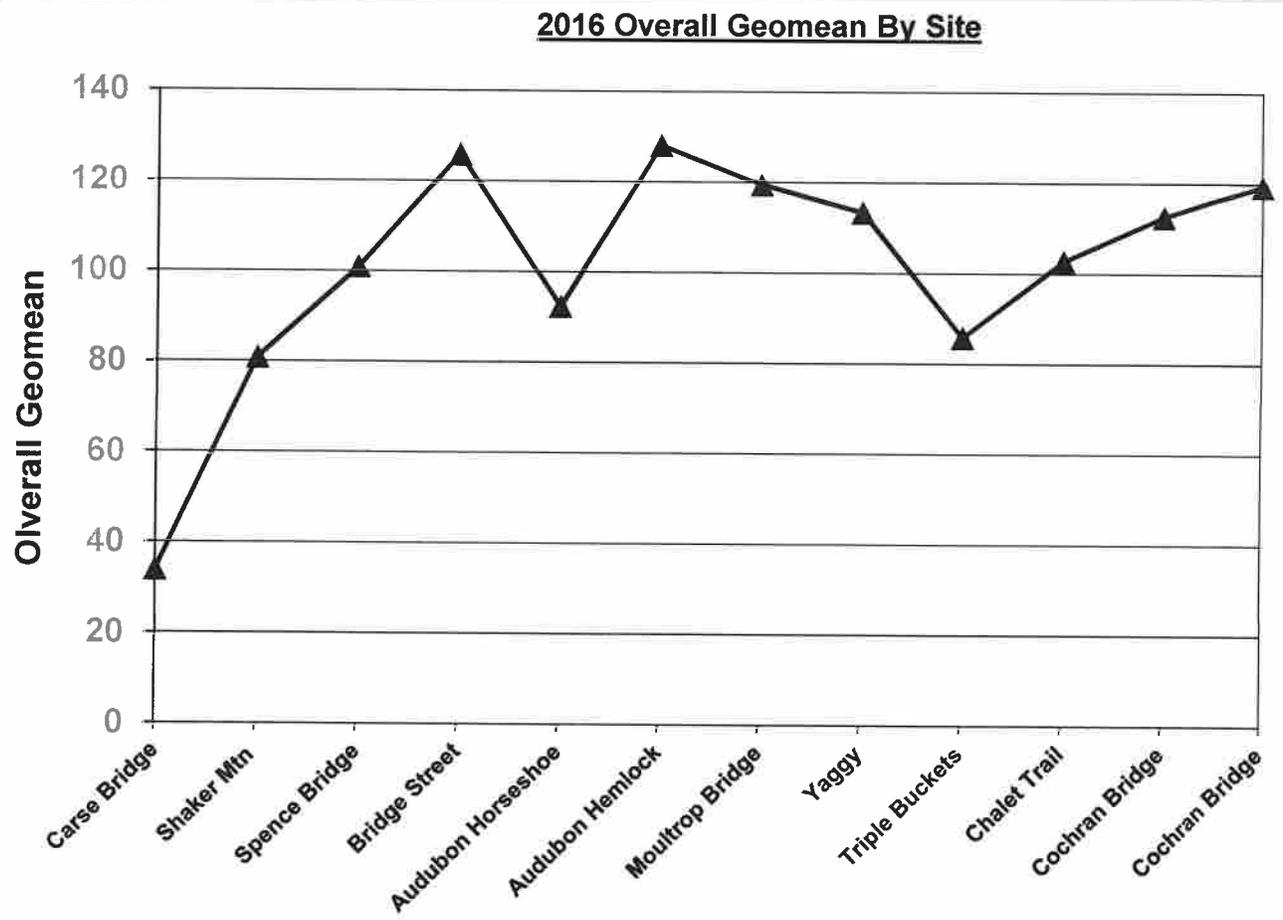
Figure 1 – Site Map



HUNTINGTON RIVER E. COLI STUDY RESULTS - 2016

Figure 2





Compiled Results - Geomean per Site - All Years
Federal/State Standard = 235

Figure 3.2

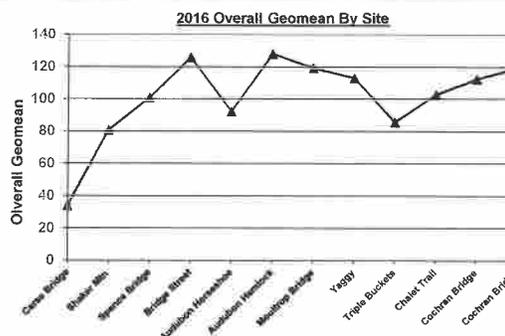
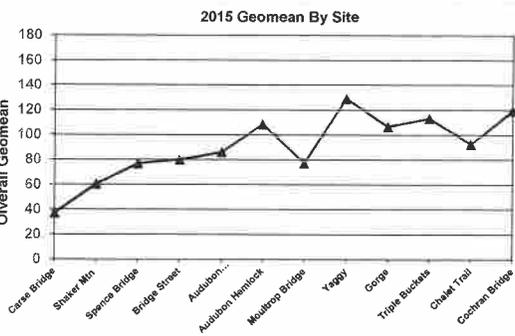
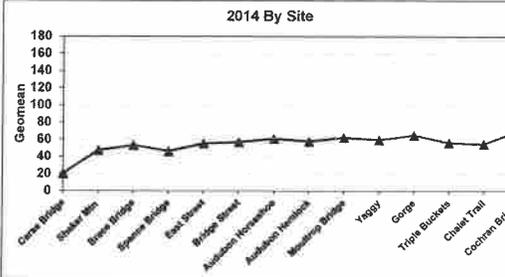
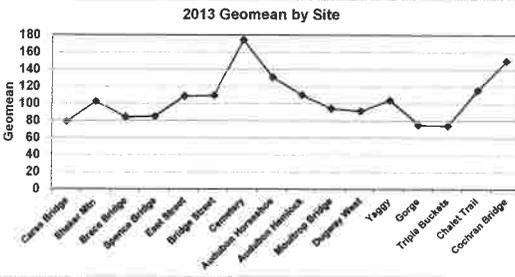
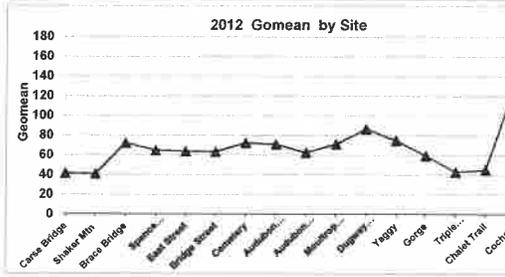
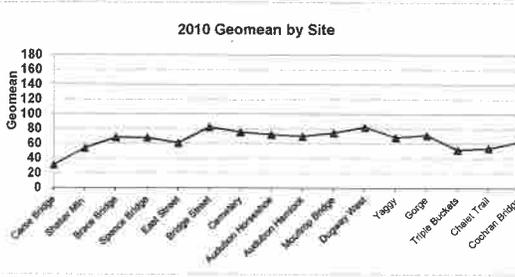
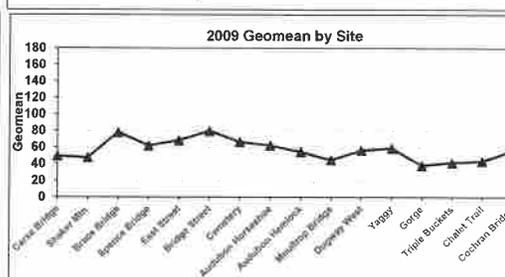
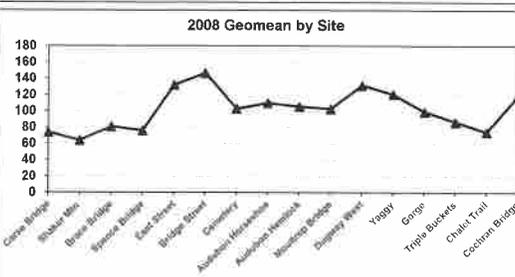
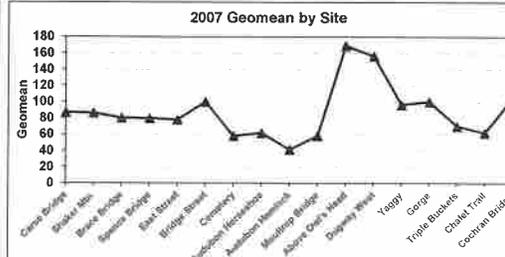
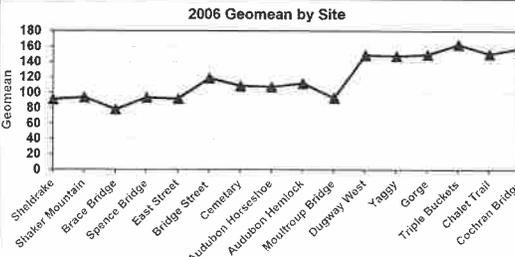
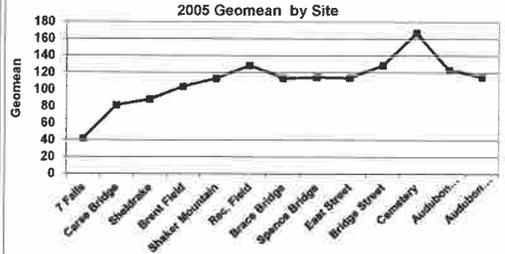
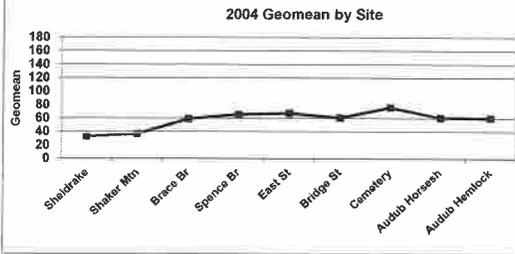


Figure 4.1: Scale 2500

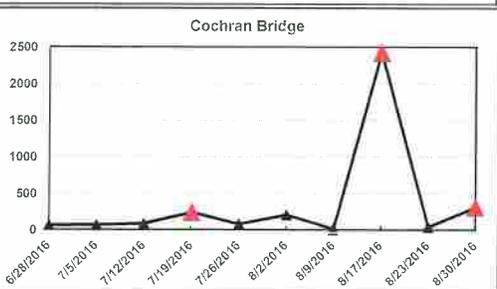
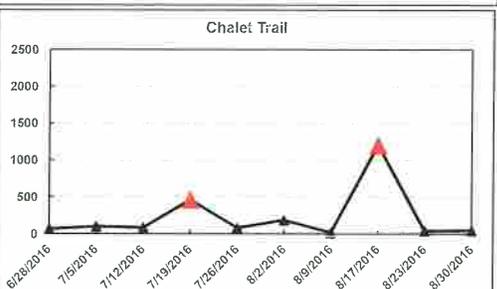
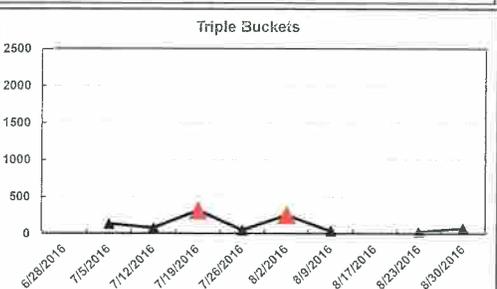
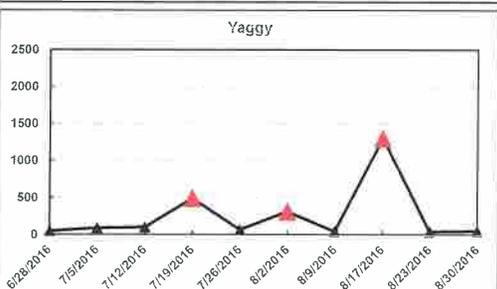
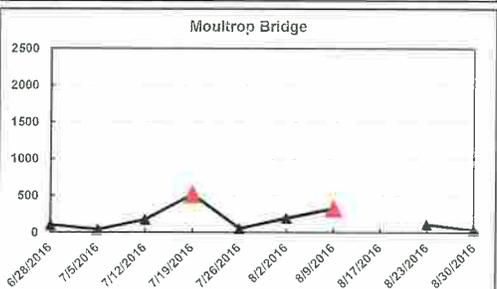
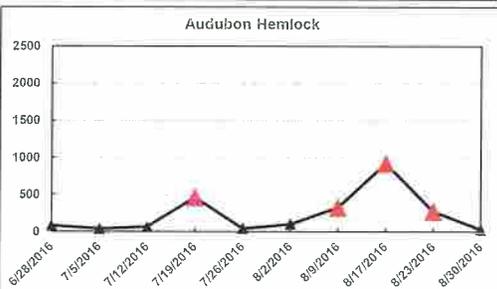
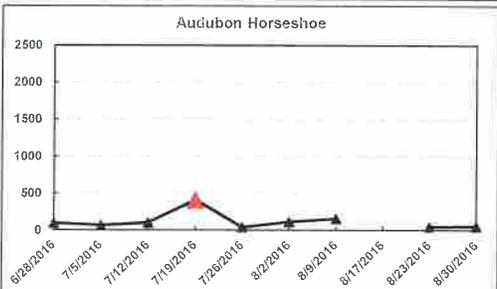
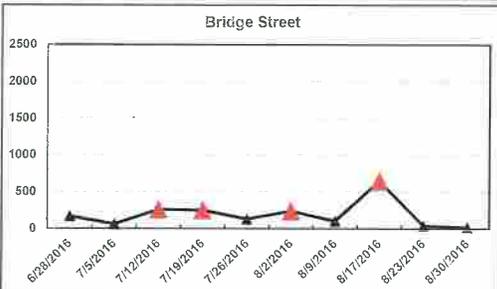
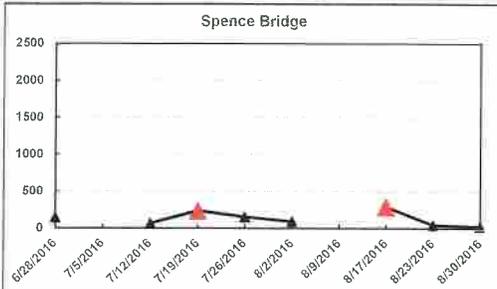
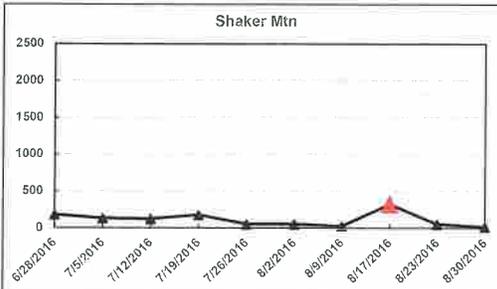
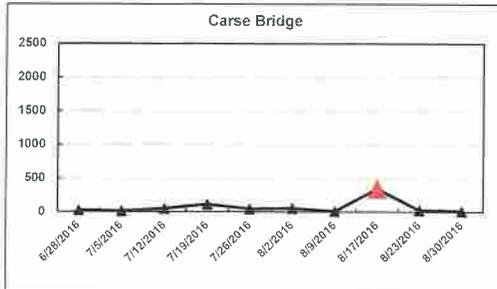
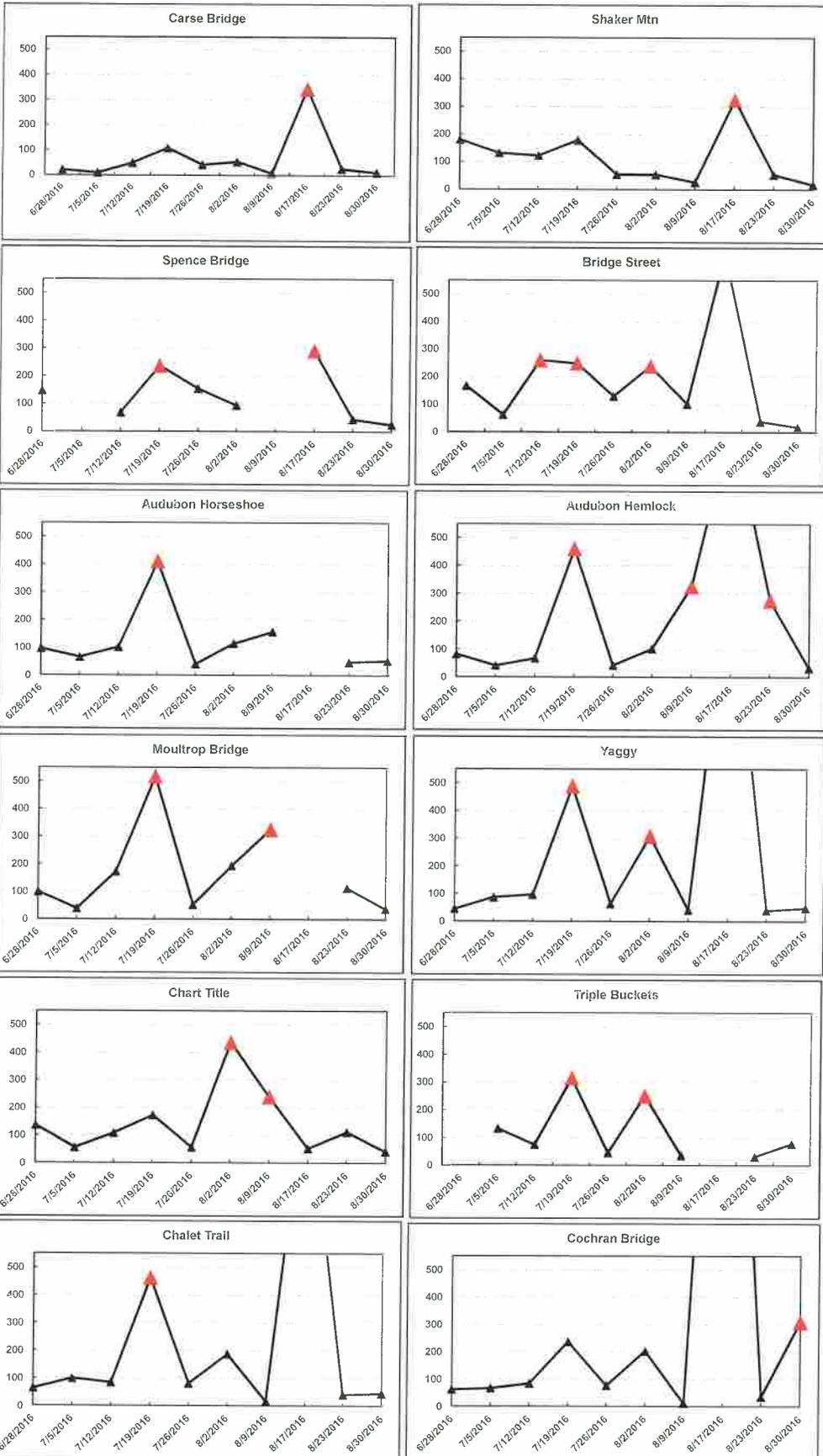
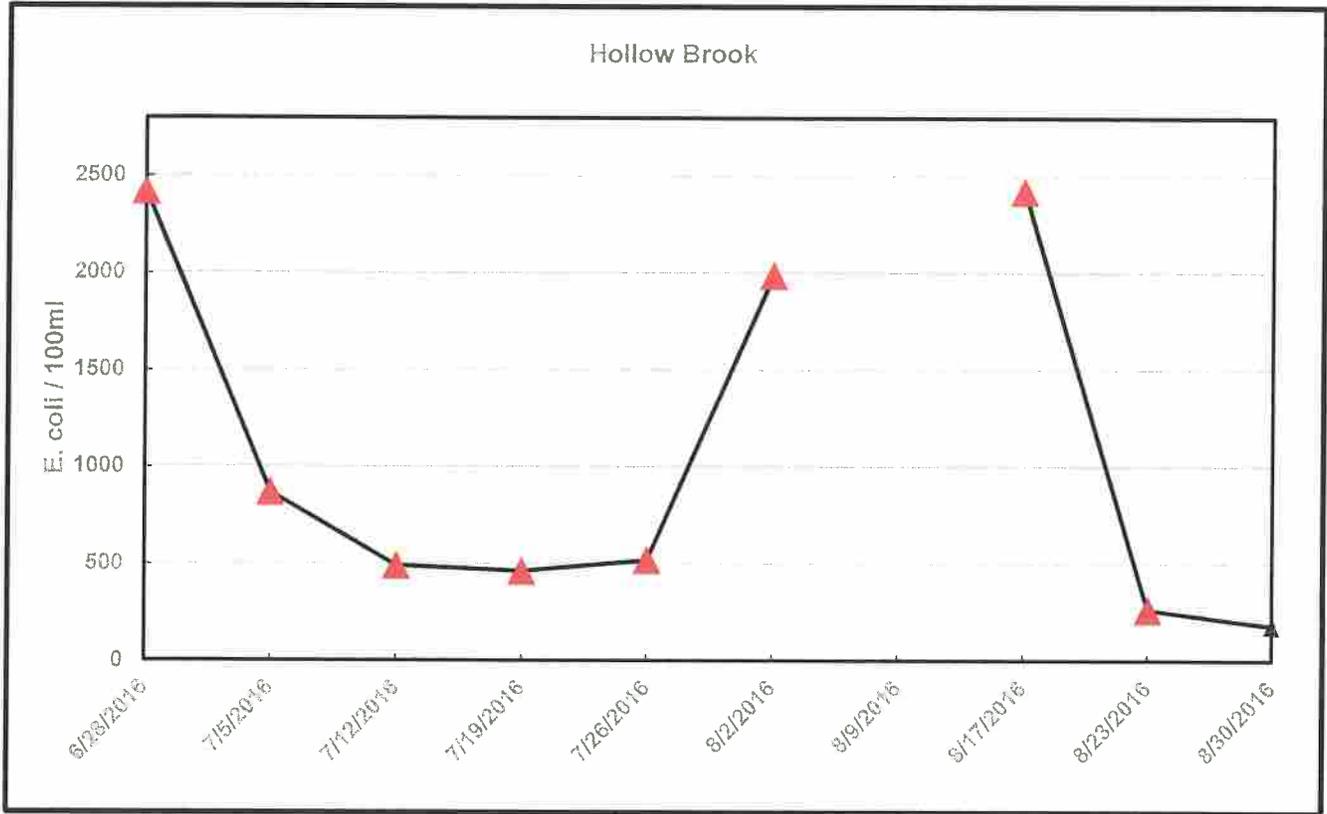


Figure 4.2: Scale 500





Federal / State Standard = 235

Correlation: Precip vs. Geoman

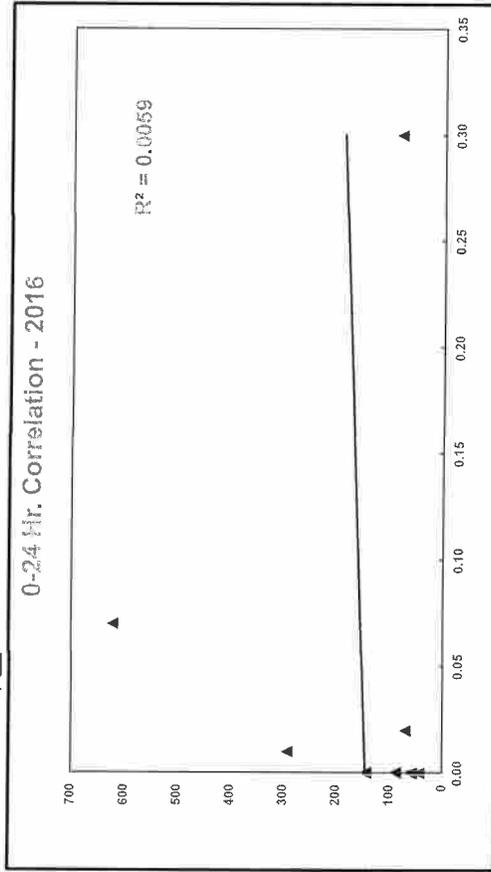
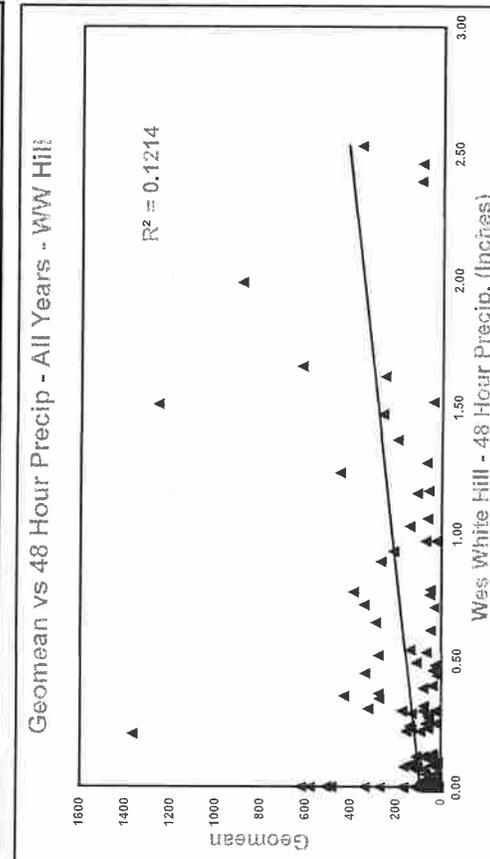
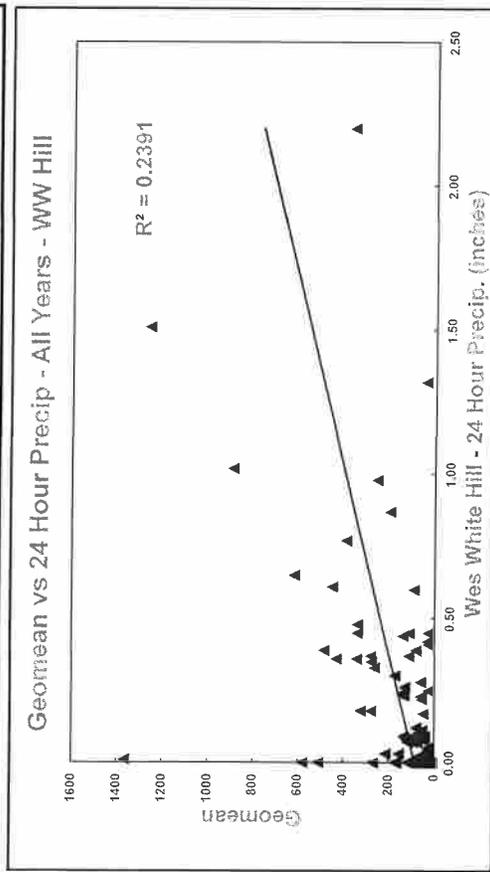
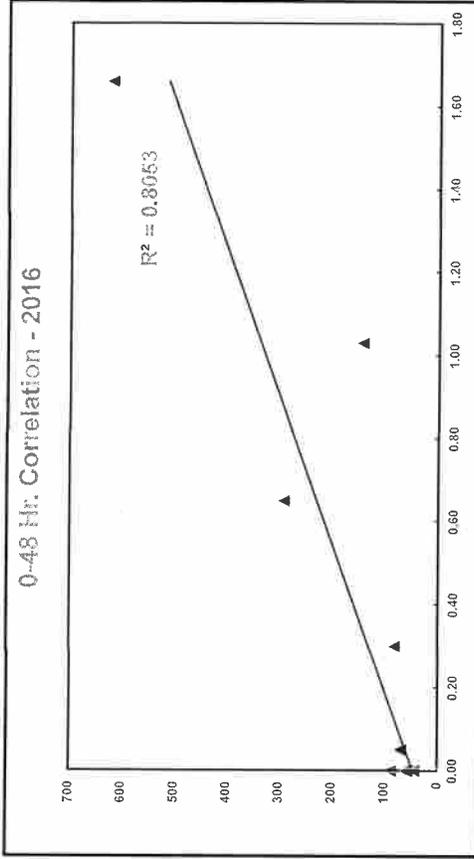
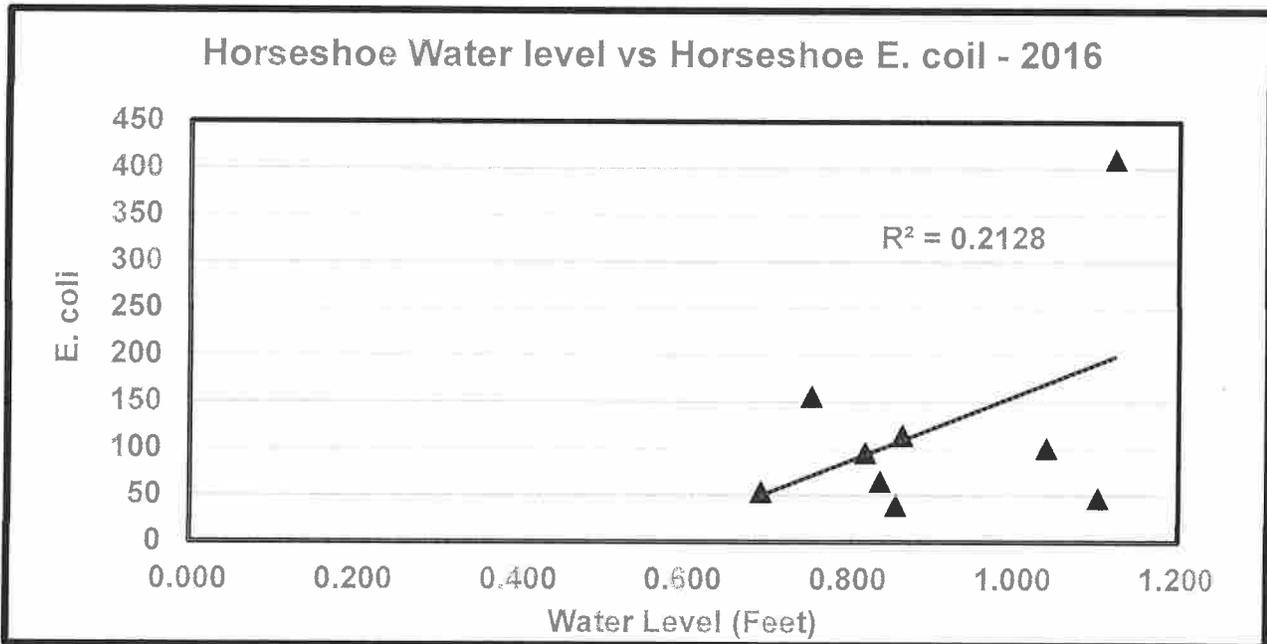
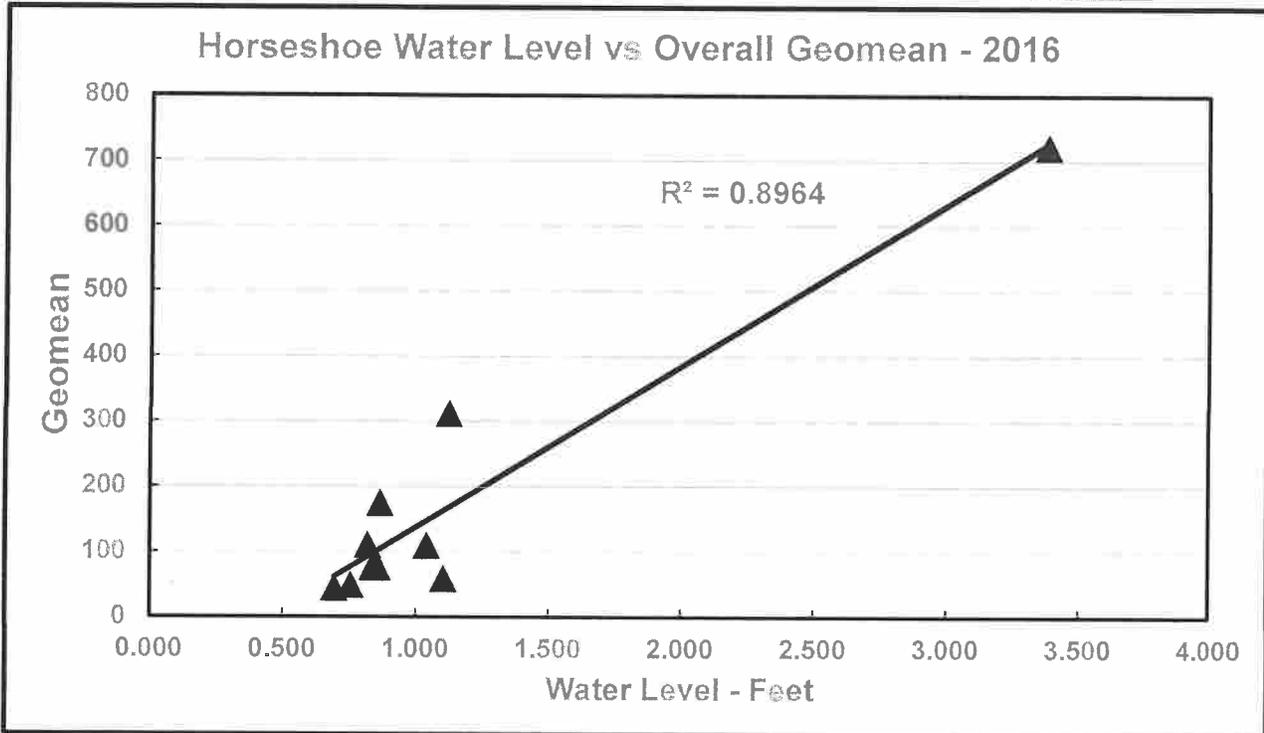
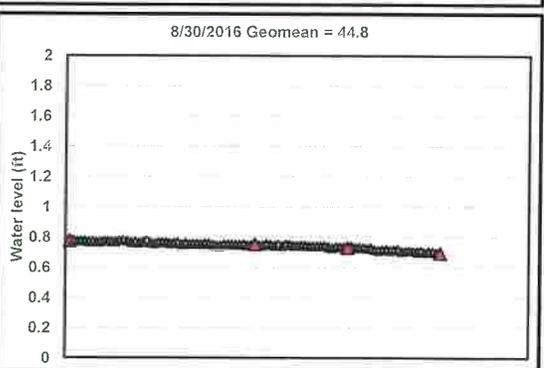
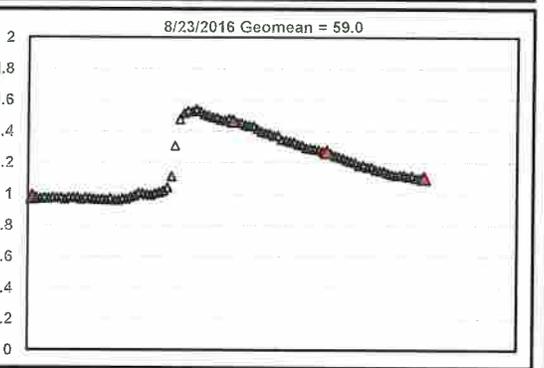
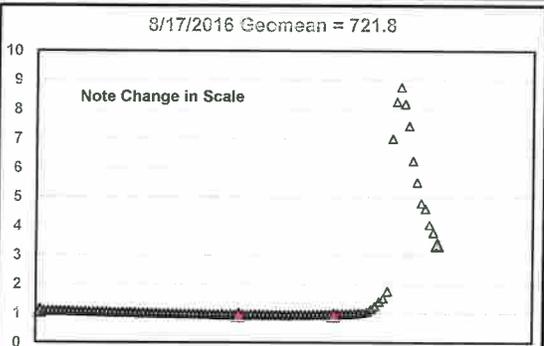
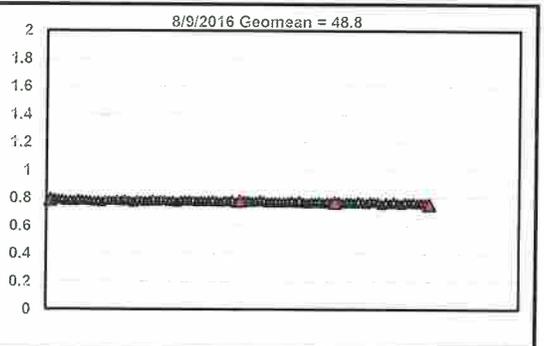
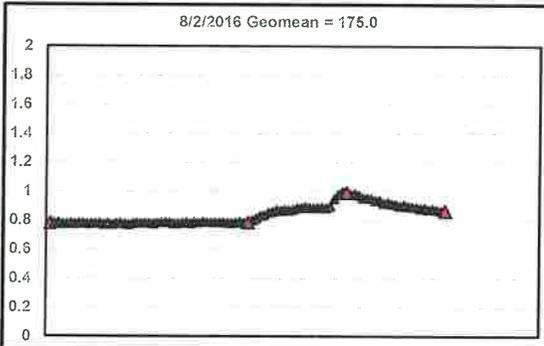
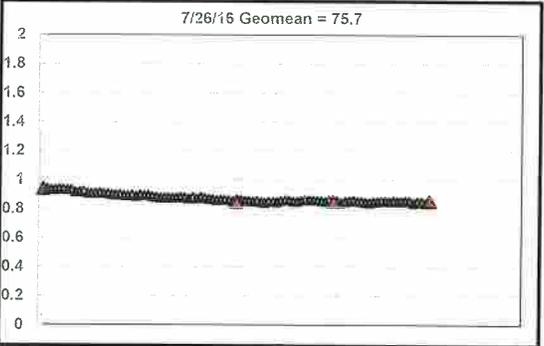
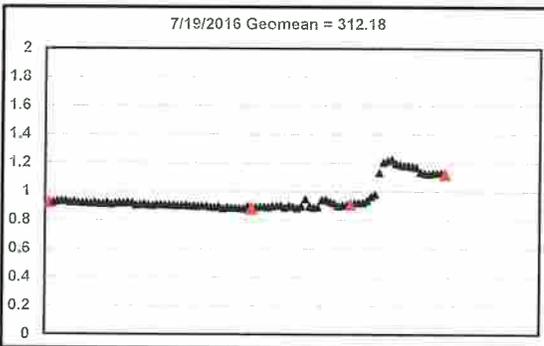
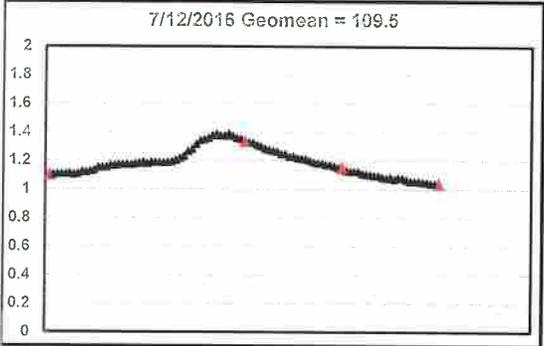
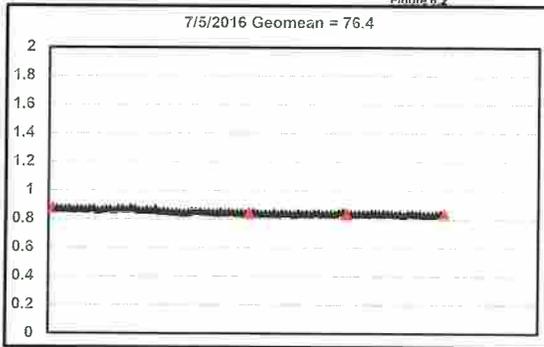
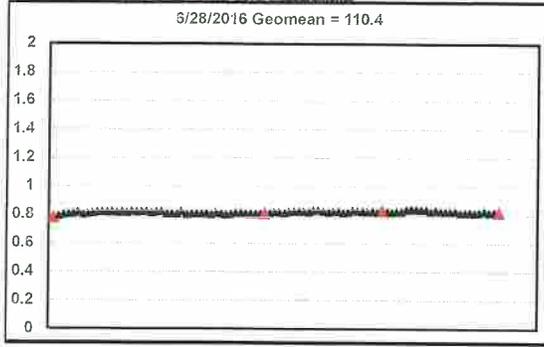


Figure 5







Huntington River Study - 2016- Water Level Change

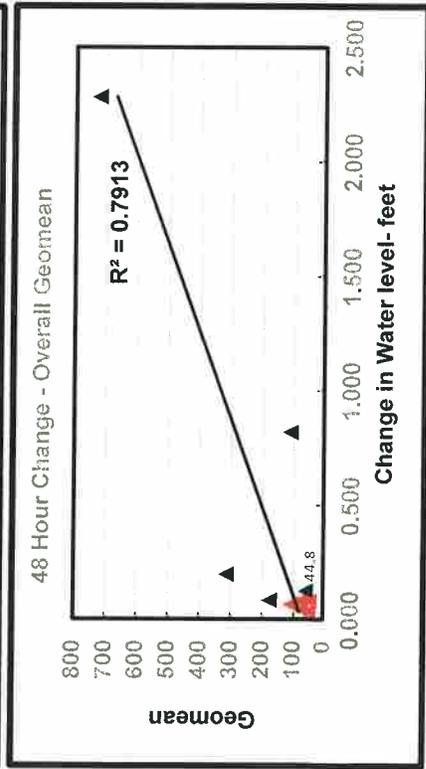
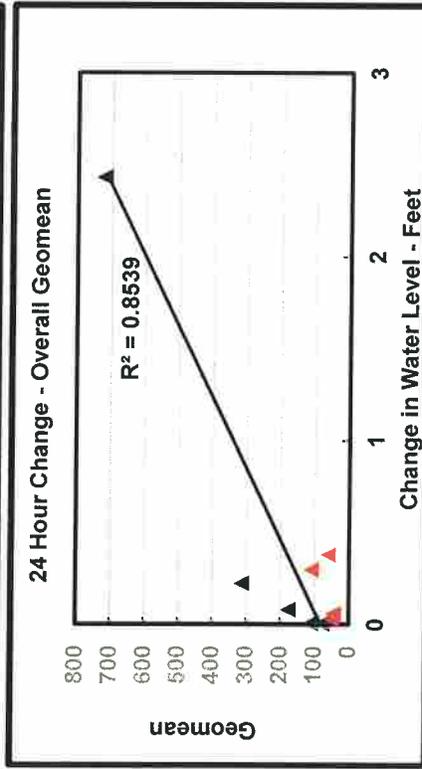
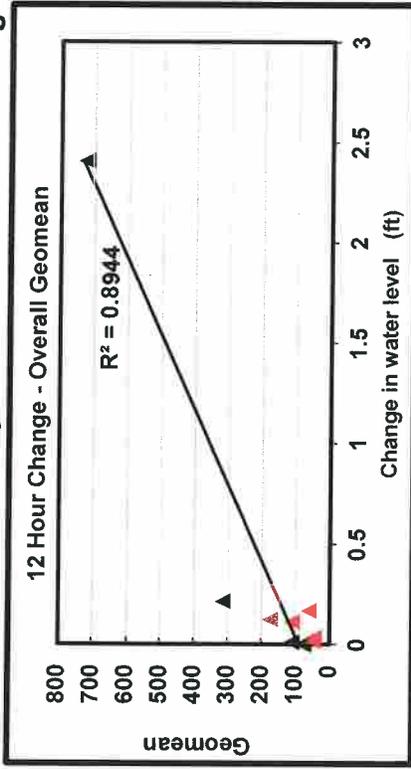
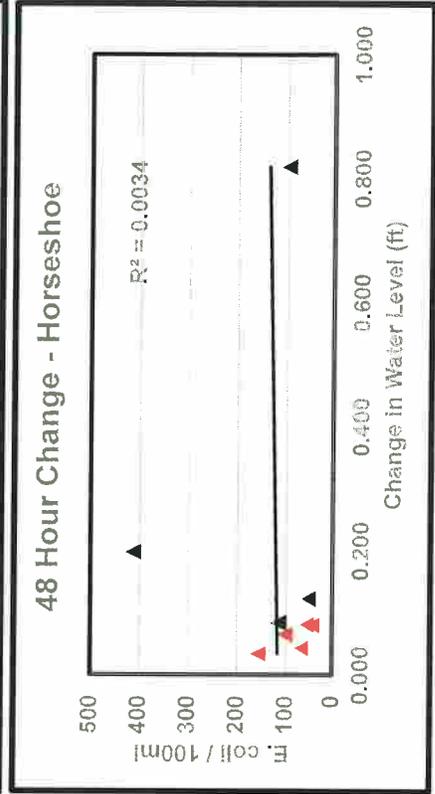
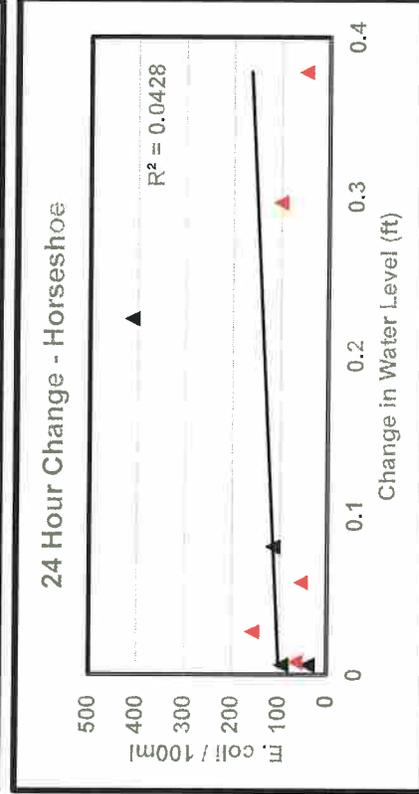
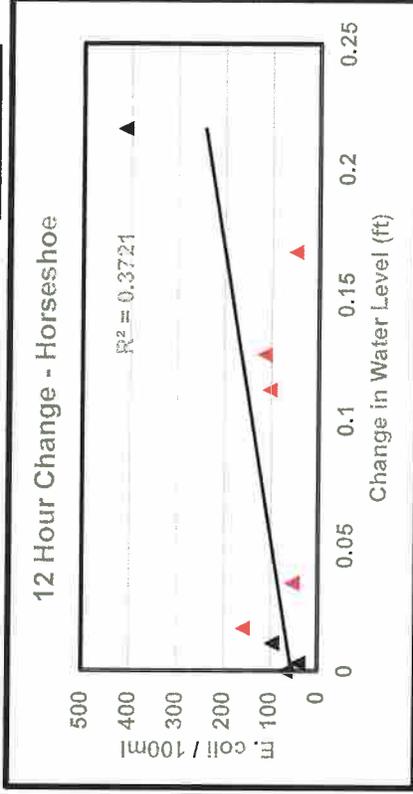
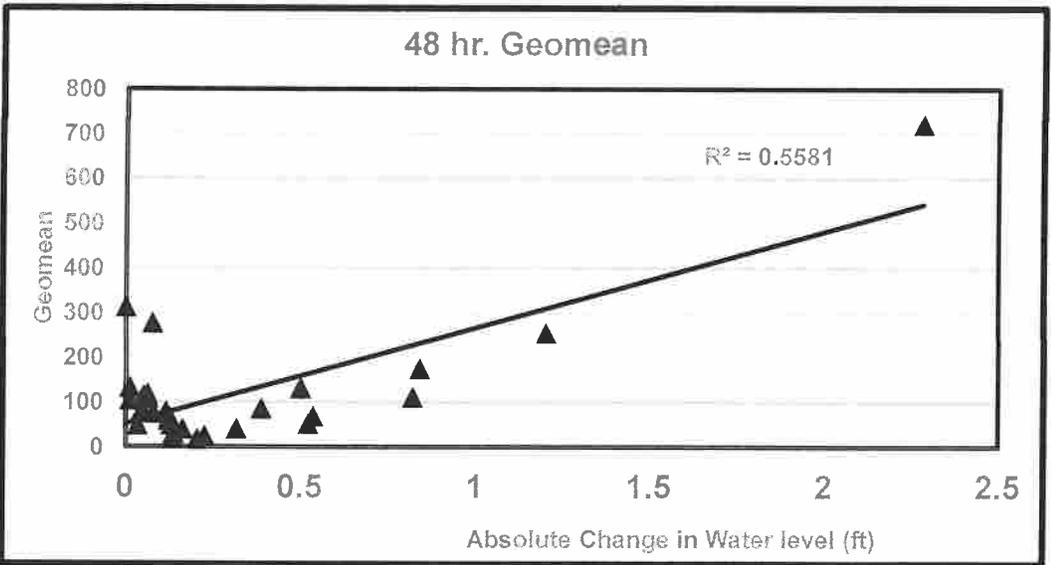
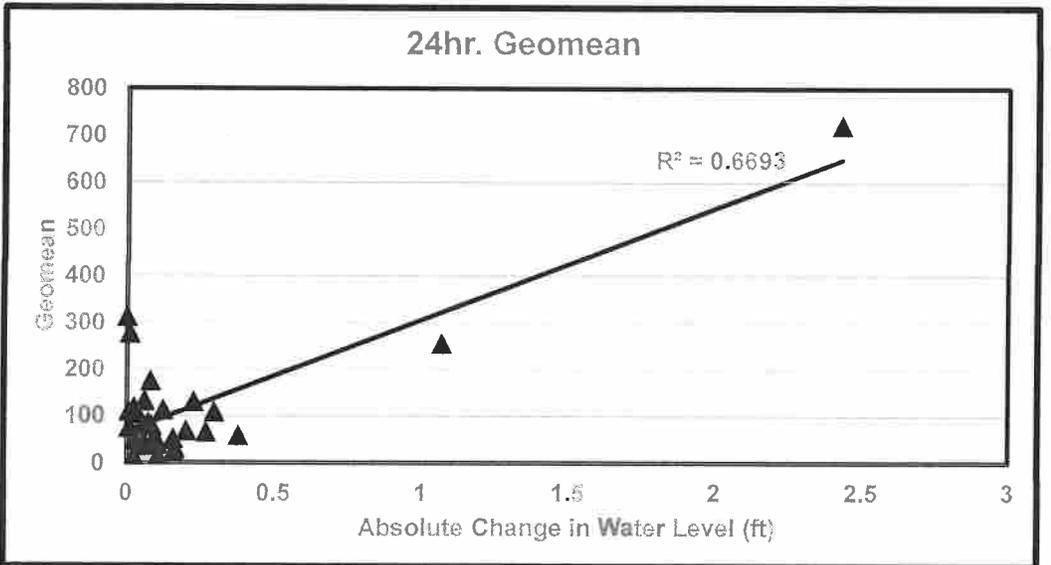
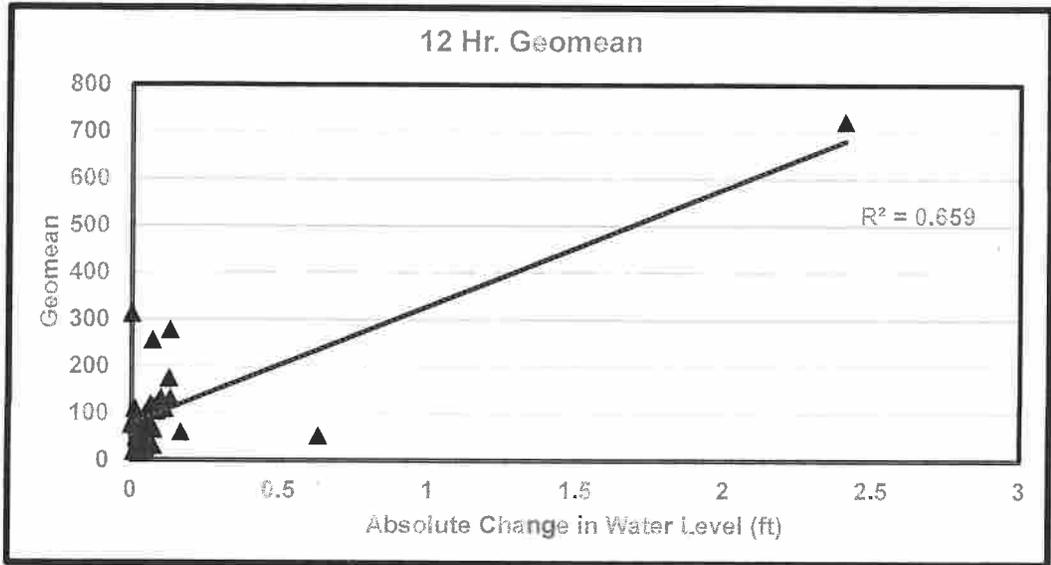
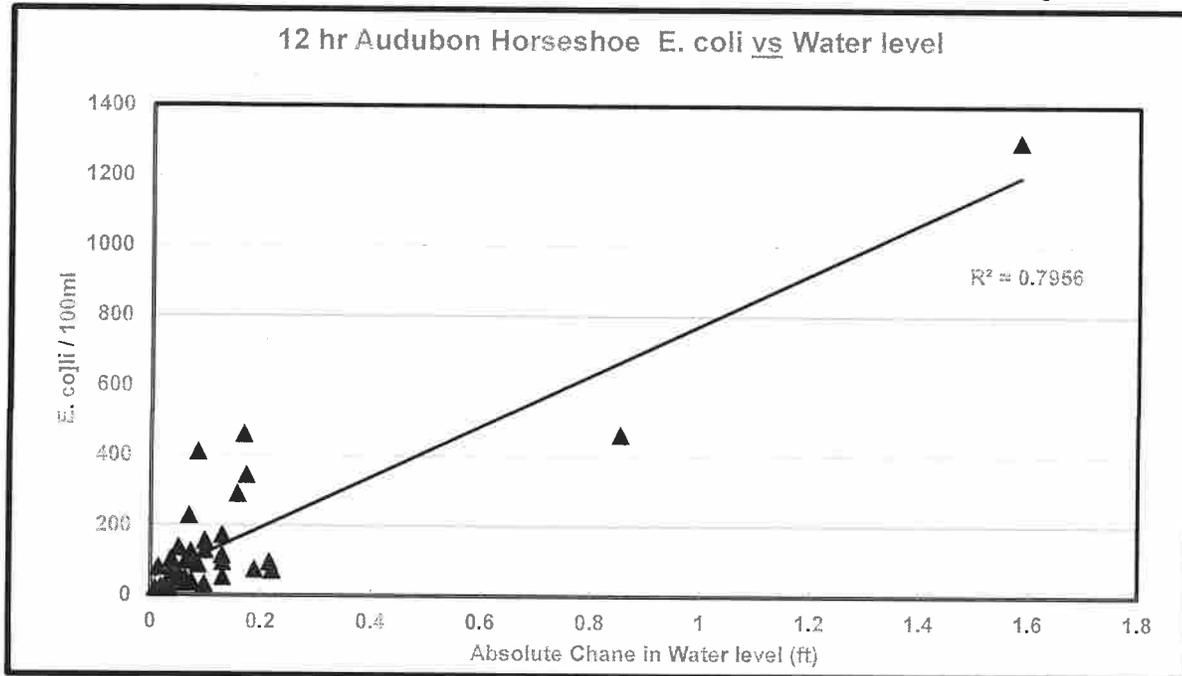


Figure 6.3.1







Huntington River Study - 2016: Box Plots

Figure 7

