

CANADA – BRITISH COLUMBIA

WATER QUALITY MONITORING AGREEMENT

WATER QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF Fraser River

AT HANSARD (1984 – 2004)

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and

Environment Canada

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Environment Environnement
Canada Canada



**Ministry of
Environment**

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 the 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.

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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.

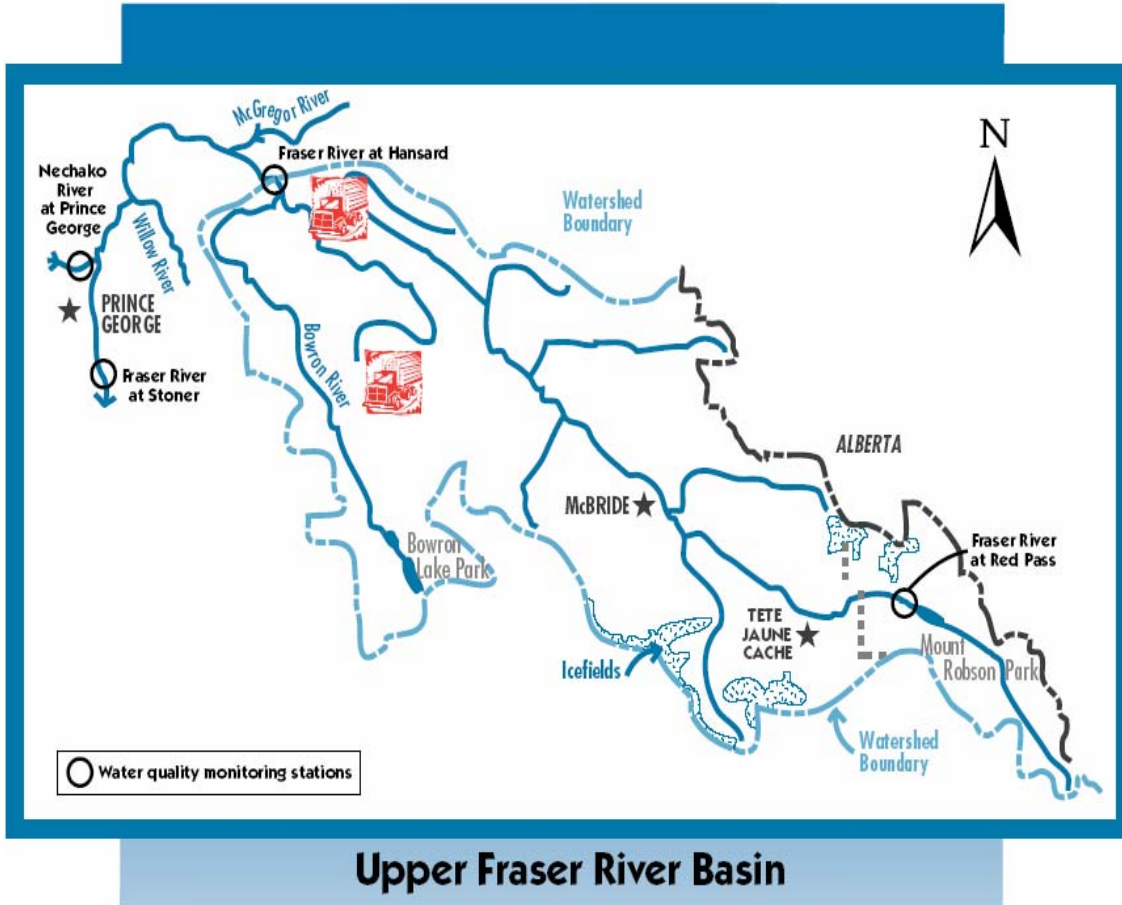
There are four long-term federal-provincial water quality monitoring sites on the Fraser River (Fraser River at Red Pass, Hansard, Marguerite, and Hope). Also, there are long-term sites on both the Nechako and Thompson rivers. This report deals with the site on the Fraser River at Hansard (see below). 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

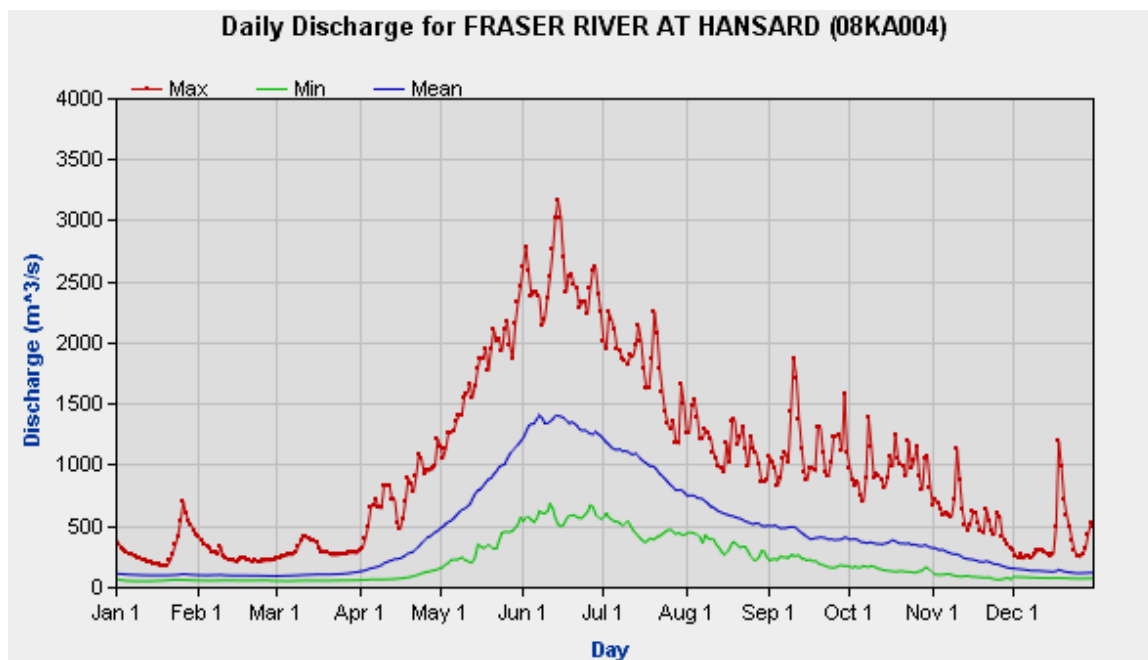
ensure that there are two periods when weekly samples are collected during five consecutive weeks to assess attainment of water quality objectives. In addition, quality assurance samples (blanks and replicates) are collected three times per year.

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 indicators 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 µg/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.

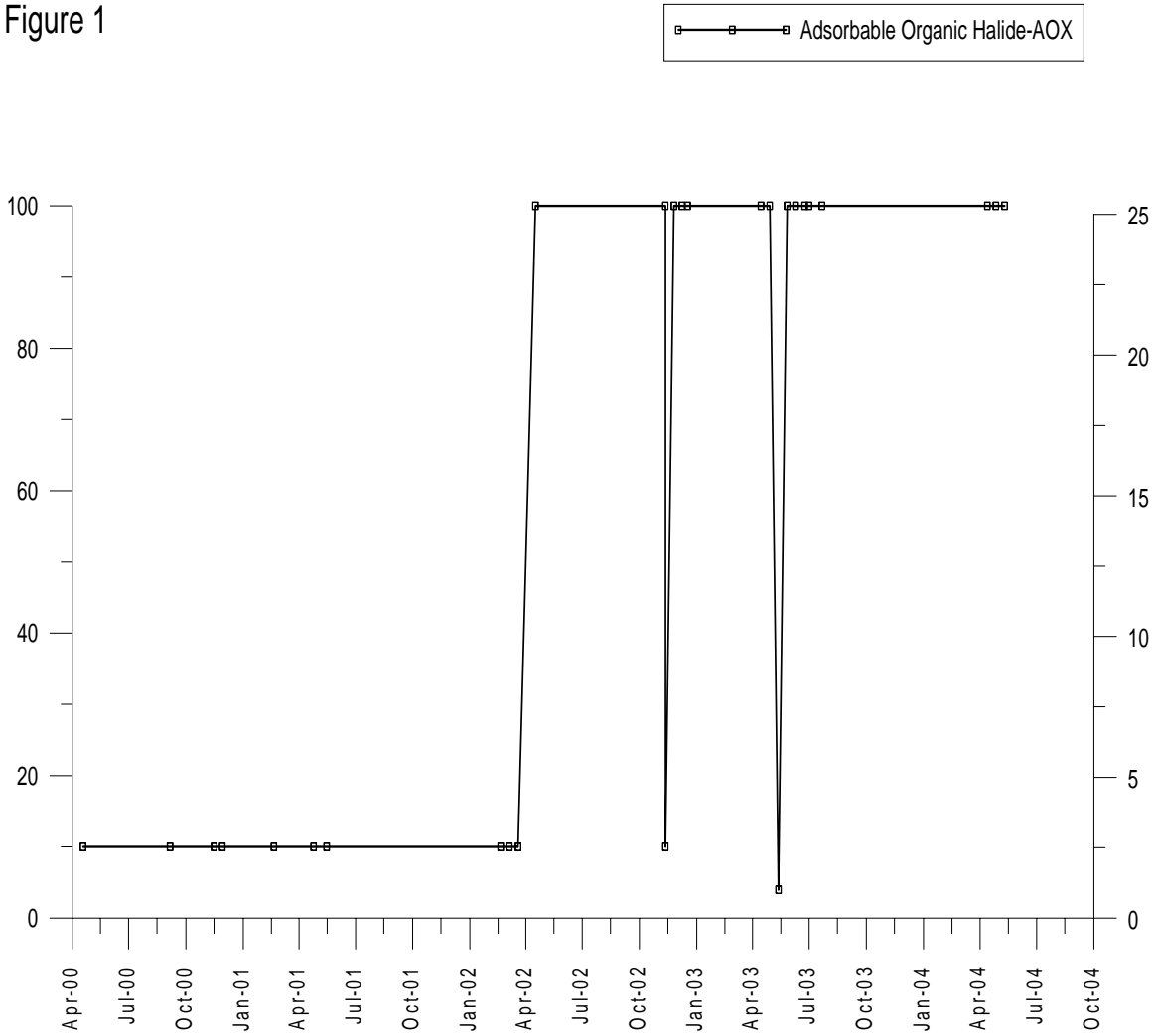
Turbidity (Figure 64): values regularly exceed the guideline for drinking water supplies. Partial treatment as a minimum would be required for solids removal if this water is to be used for a drinking water supply.

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.

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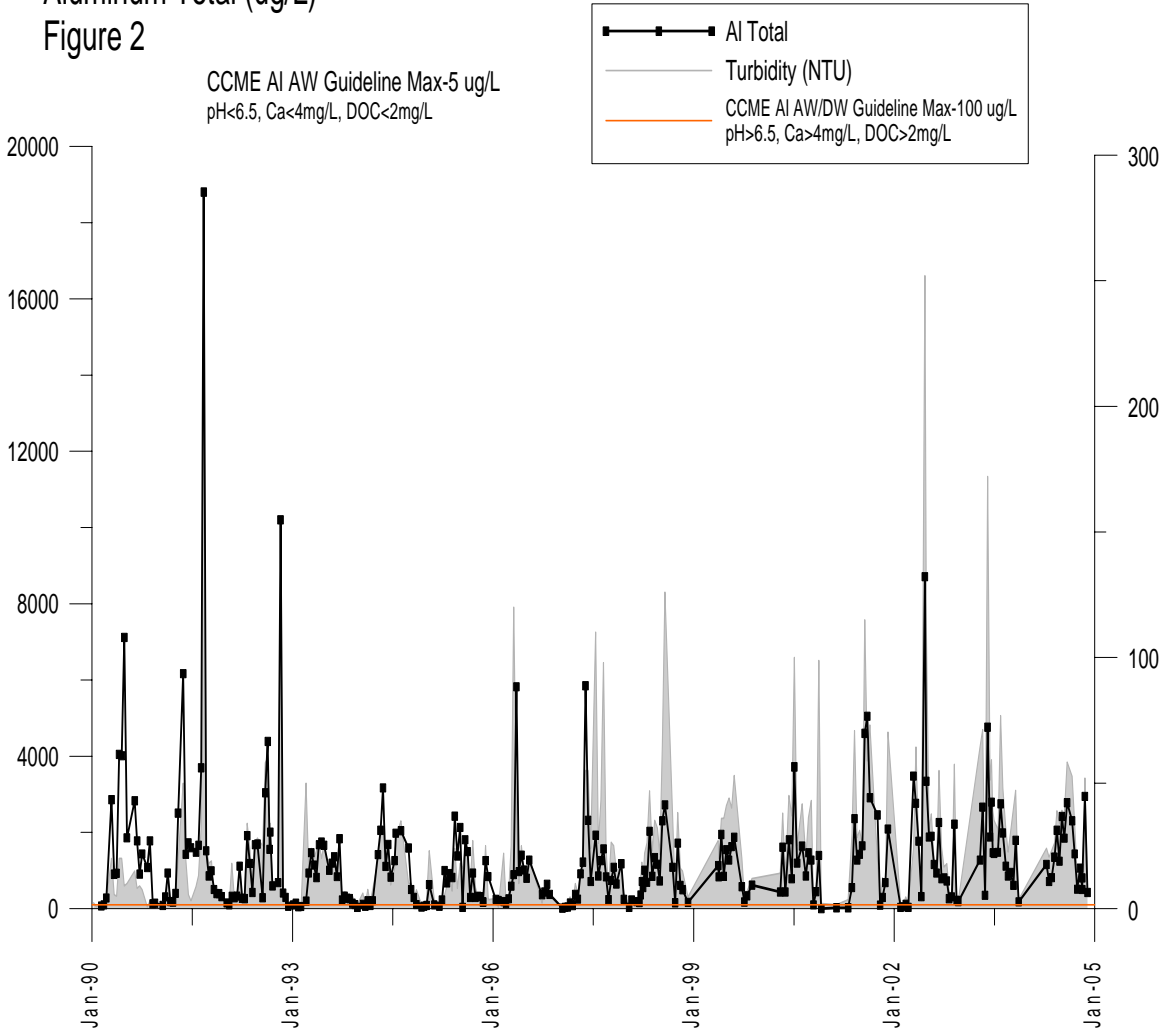
Fraser River at Hansard
Adsorbable Organic Halide-AOX (ug/L)
Figure 1

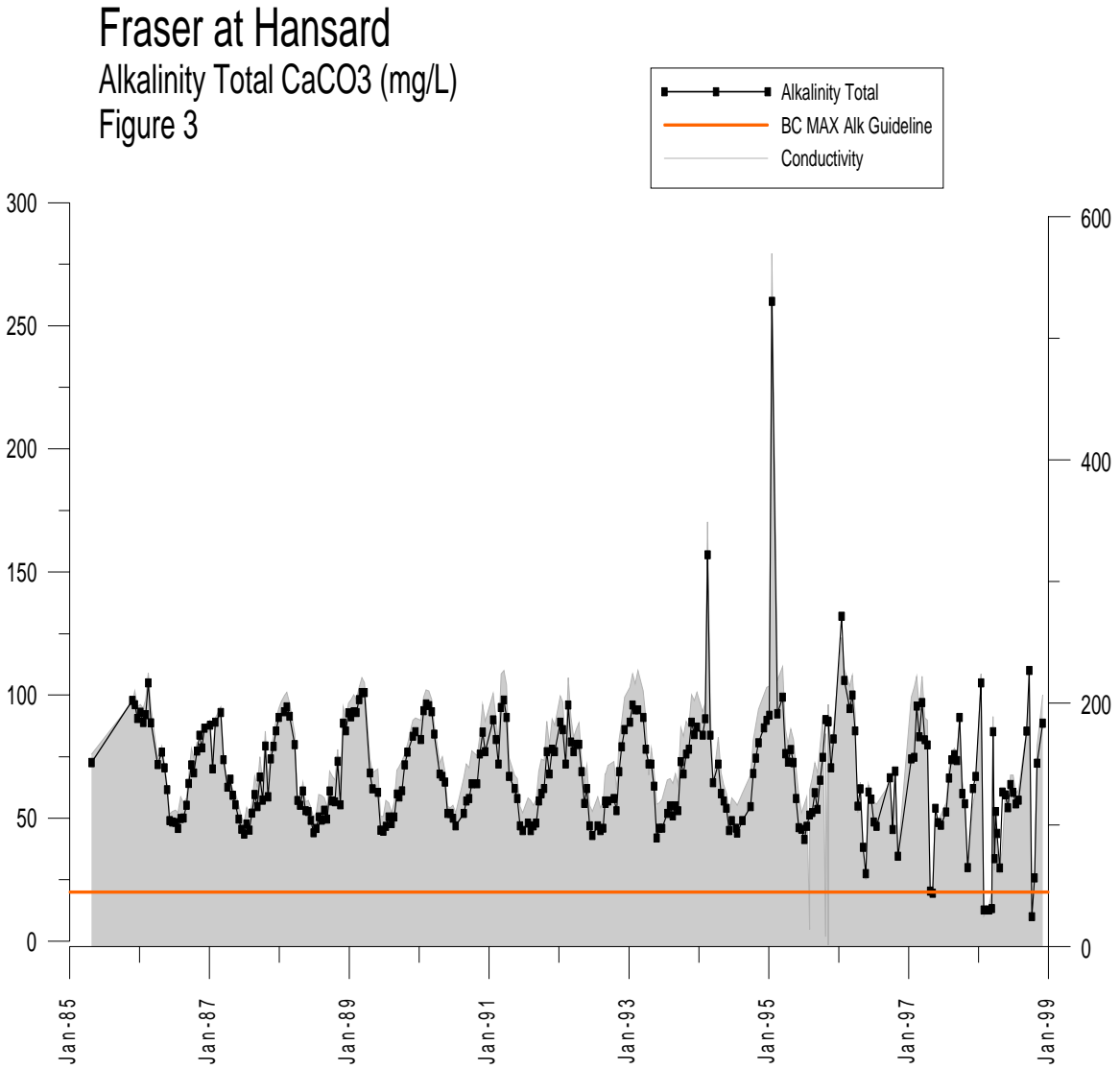


Fraser at Hansard

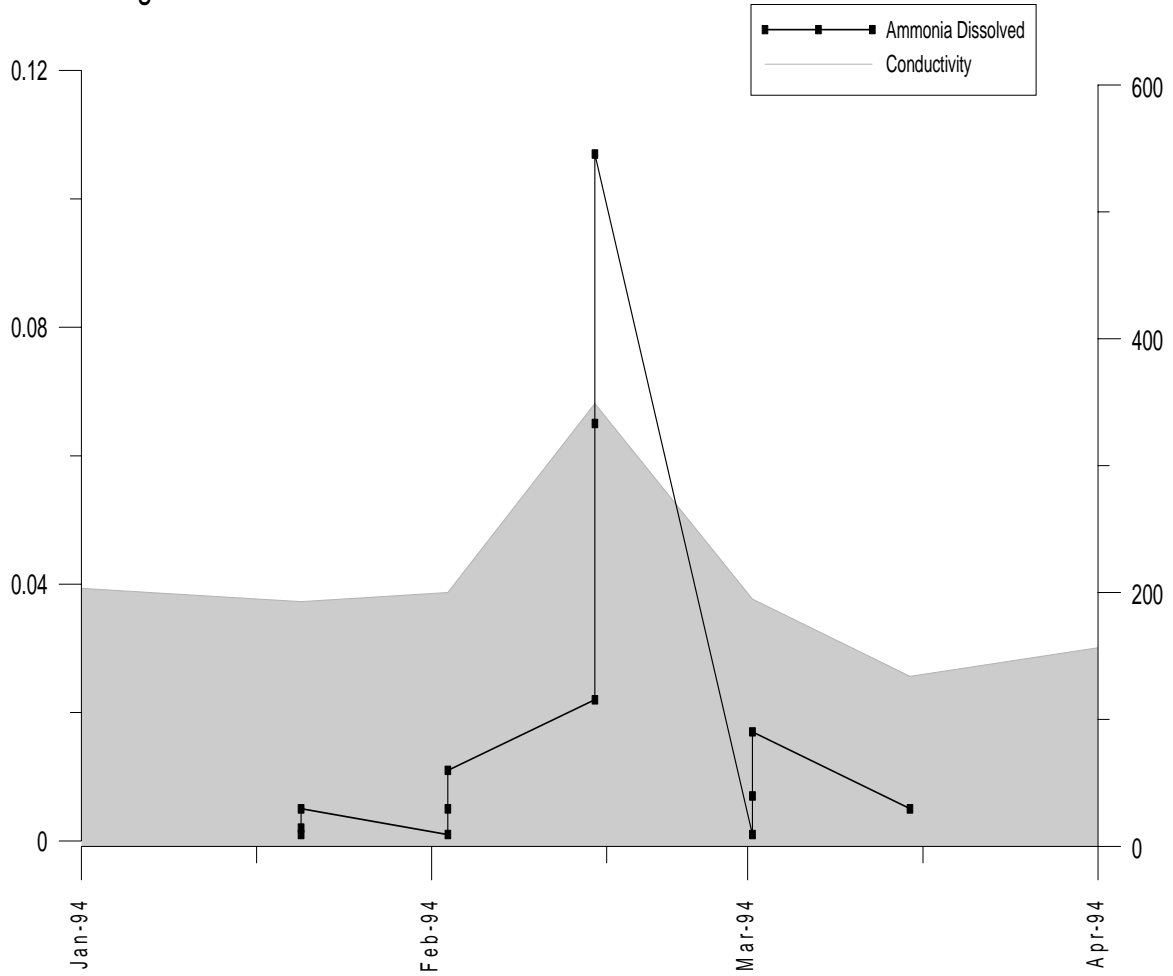
Aluminum Total (ug/L)

Figure 2





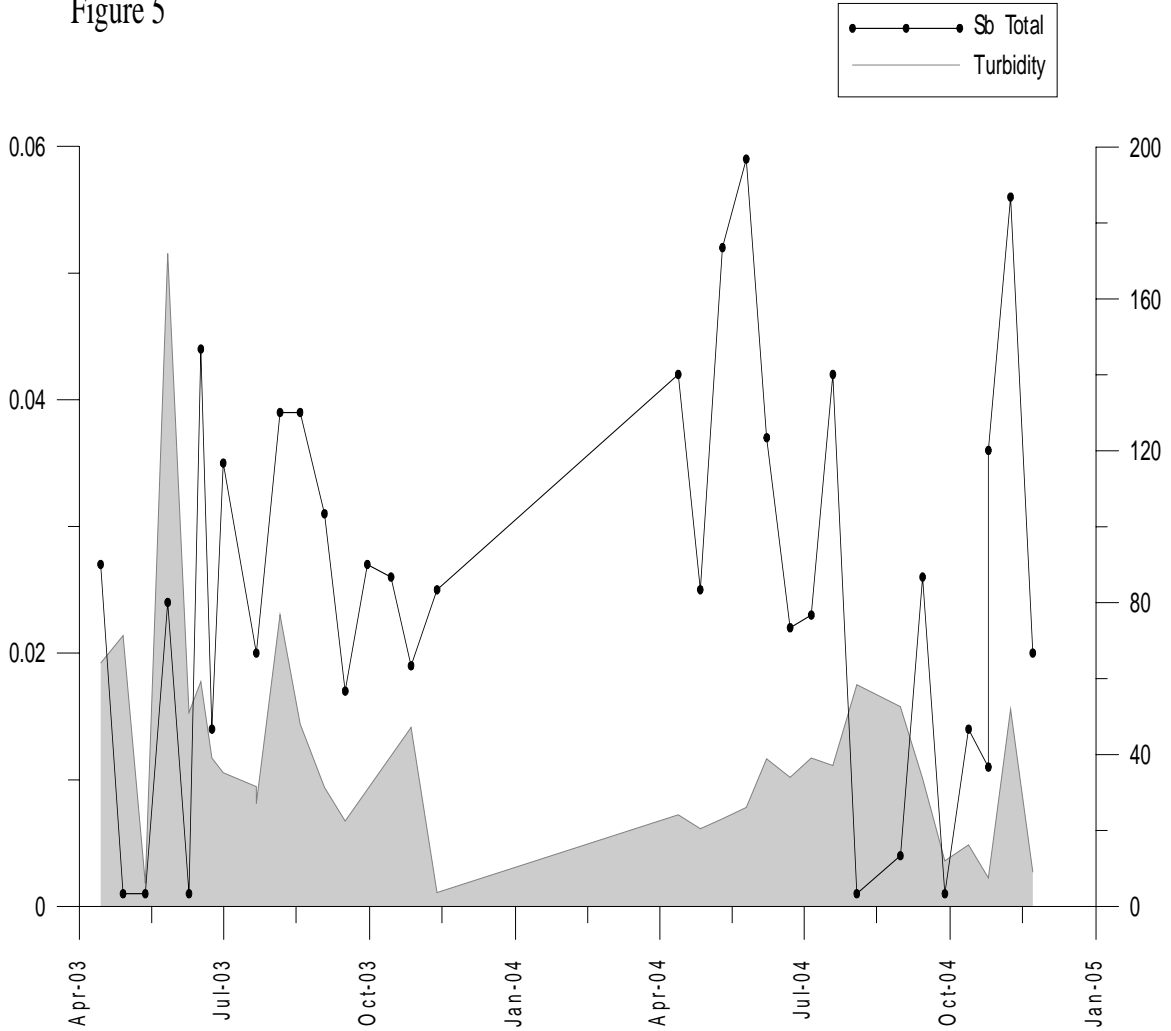
Fraser at Hansard
Ammonia Dissolved (mg/L)
Figure 4

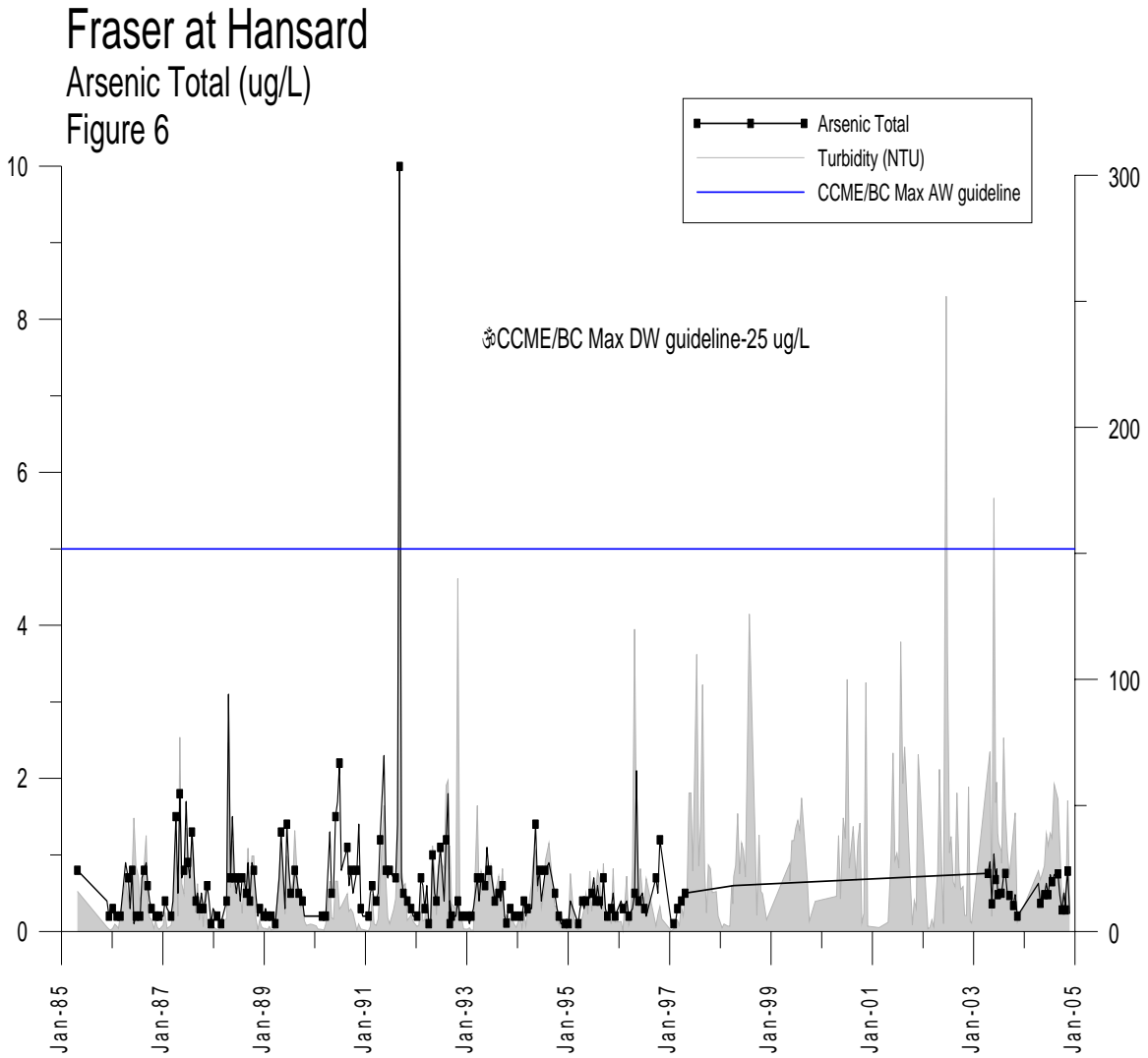


Fraser River at Hansard

Total Antimony (ug/L)

Figure 5

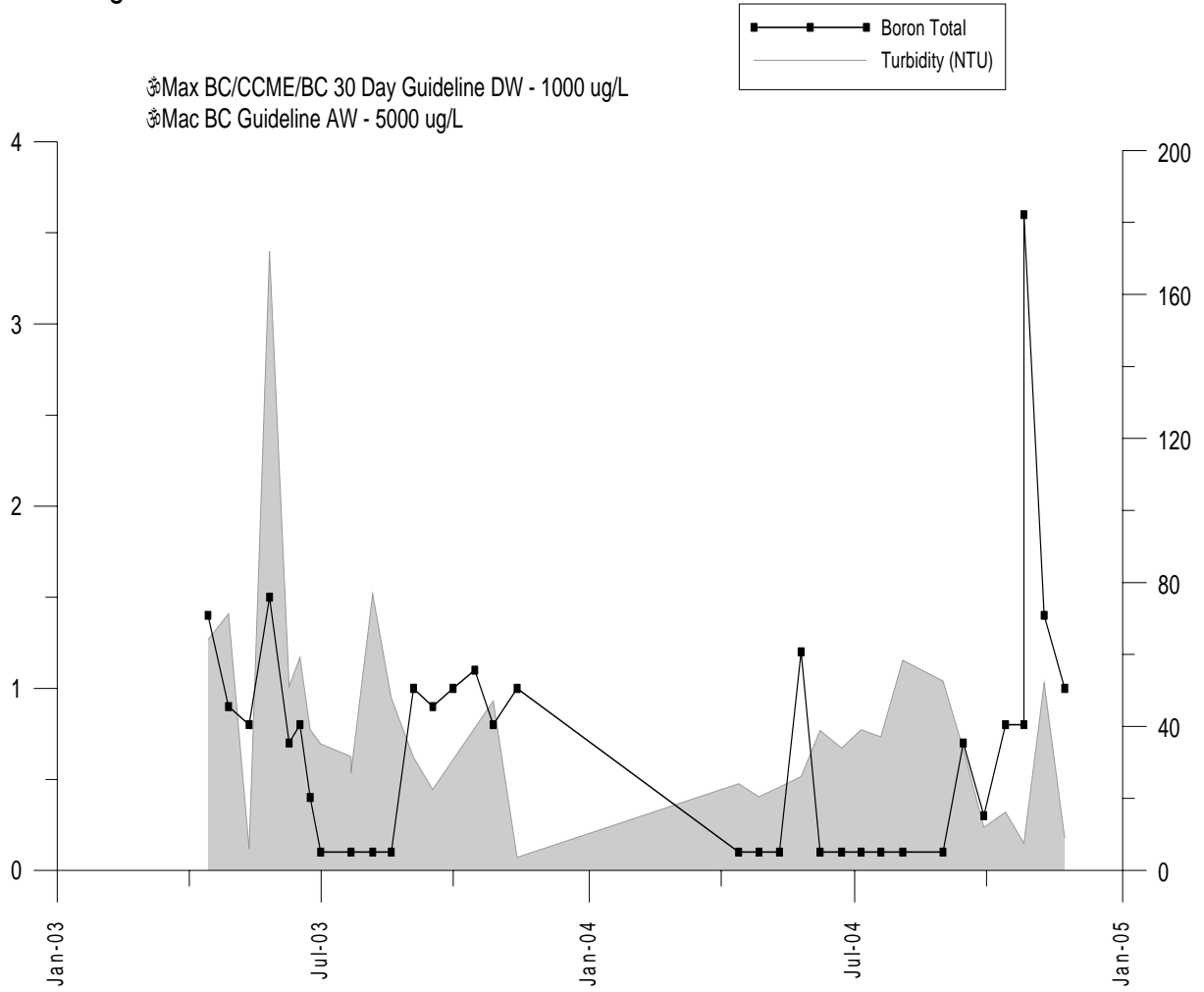




Fraser at Hansard

Boron Total (ug/L)

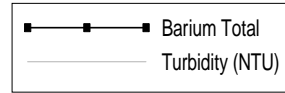
Figure 7



Fraser at Hansard

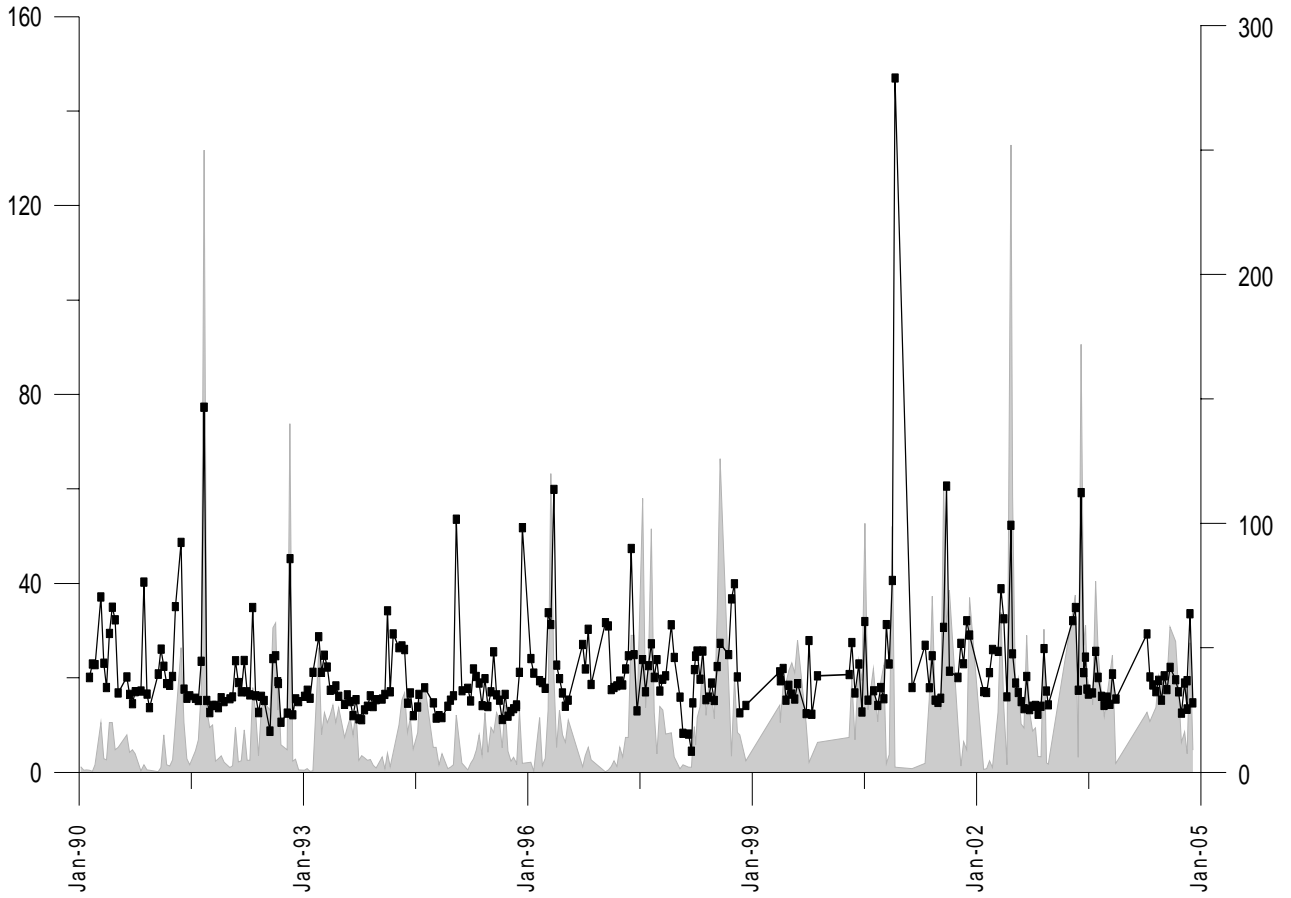
Barium Total (ug/L)

Figure 8



⊕ Max BC/CCME/BC 30 Day Guideline DW - 1000 ug/L

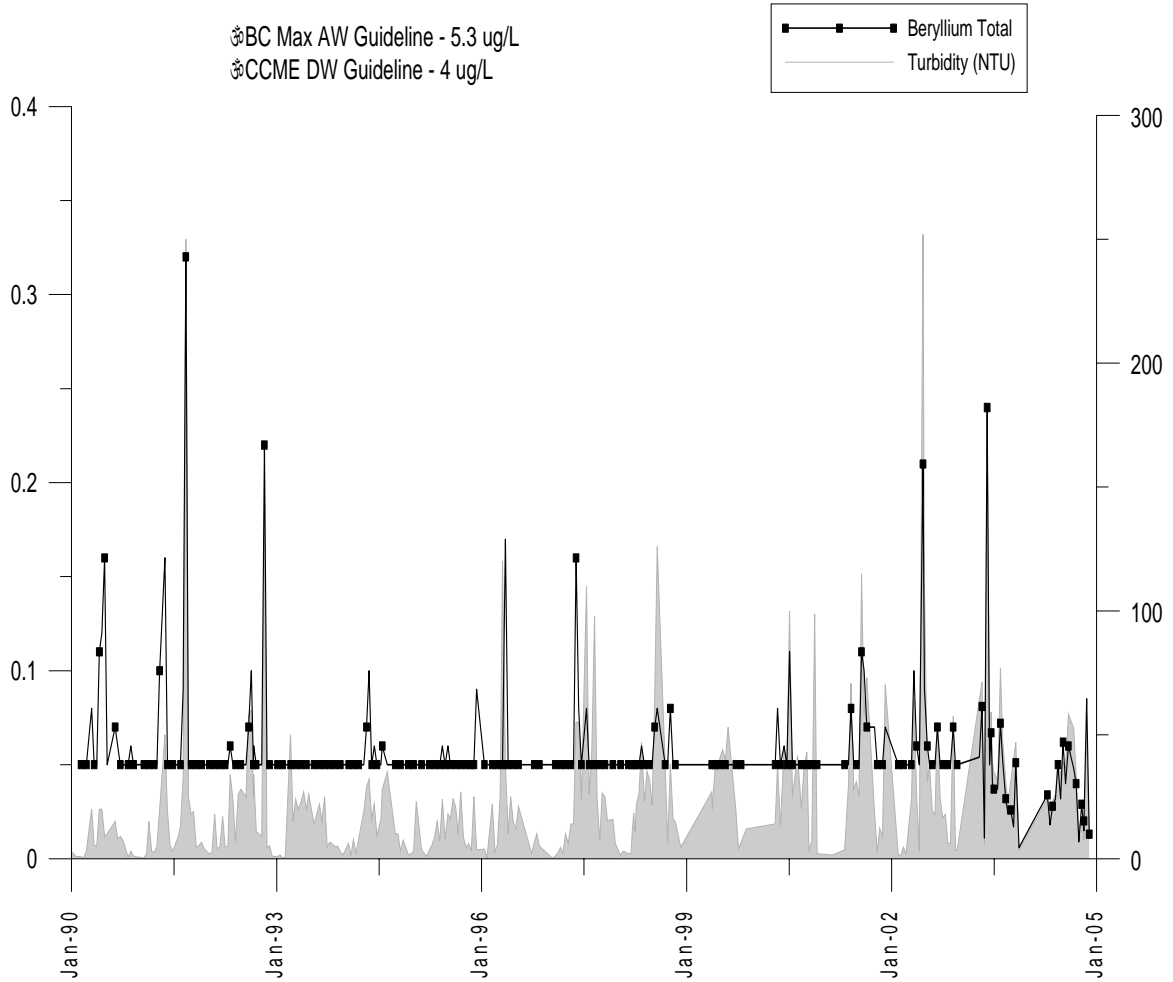
⊕ Mac BC Guideline AW - 5000 ug/L



Fraser at Hansard

Beryllium Total (ug/L)

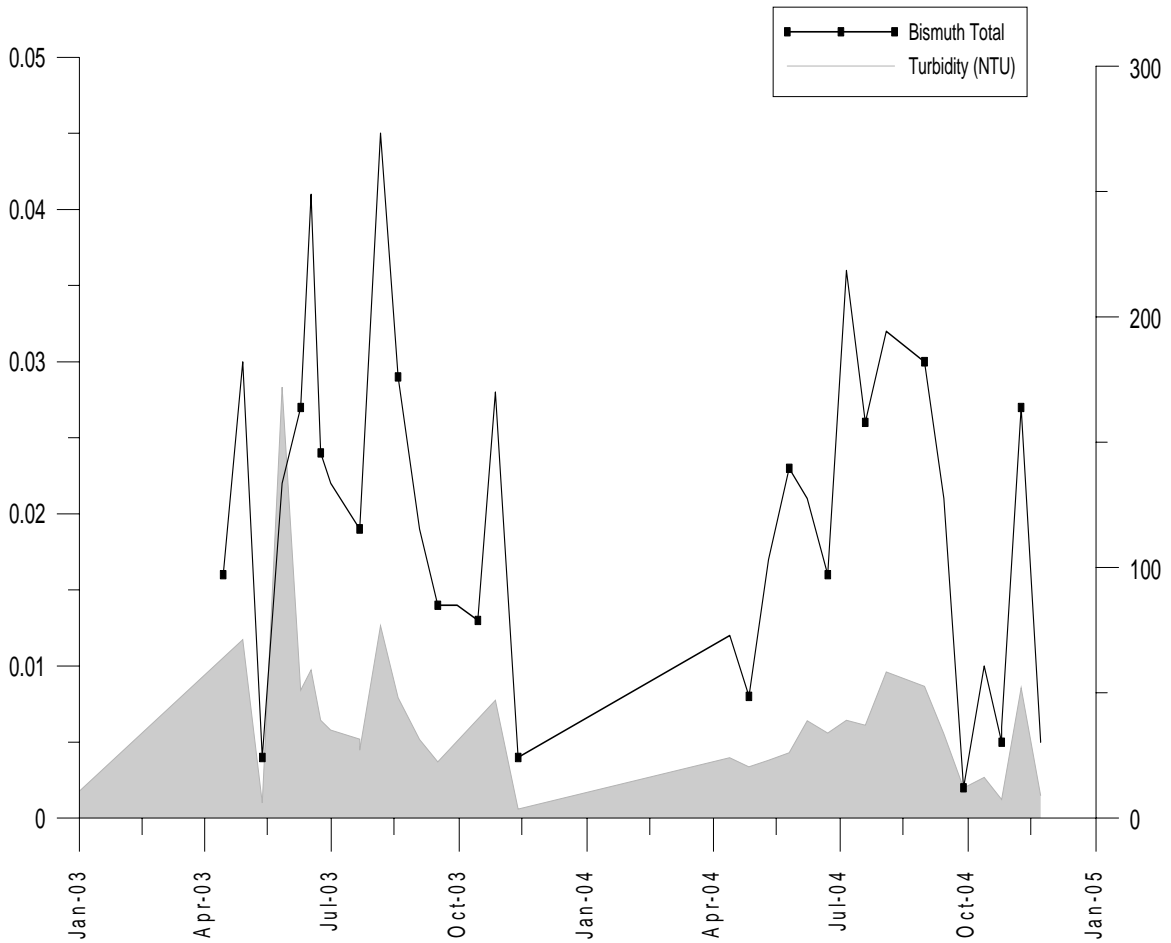
Figure 9



Fraser at Hansard

BismuthTotal (ug/L)

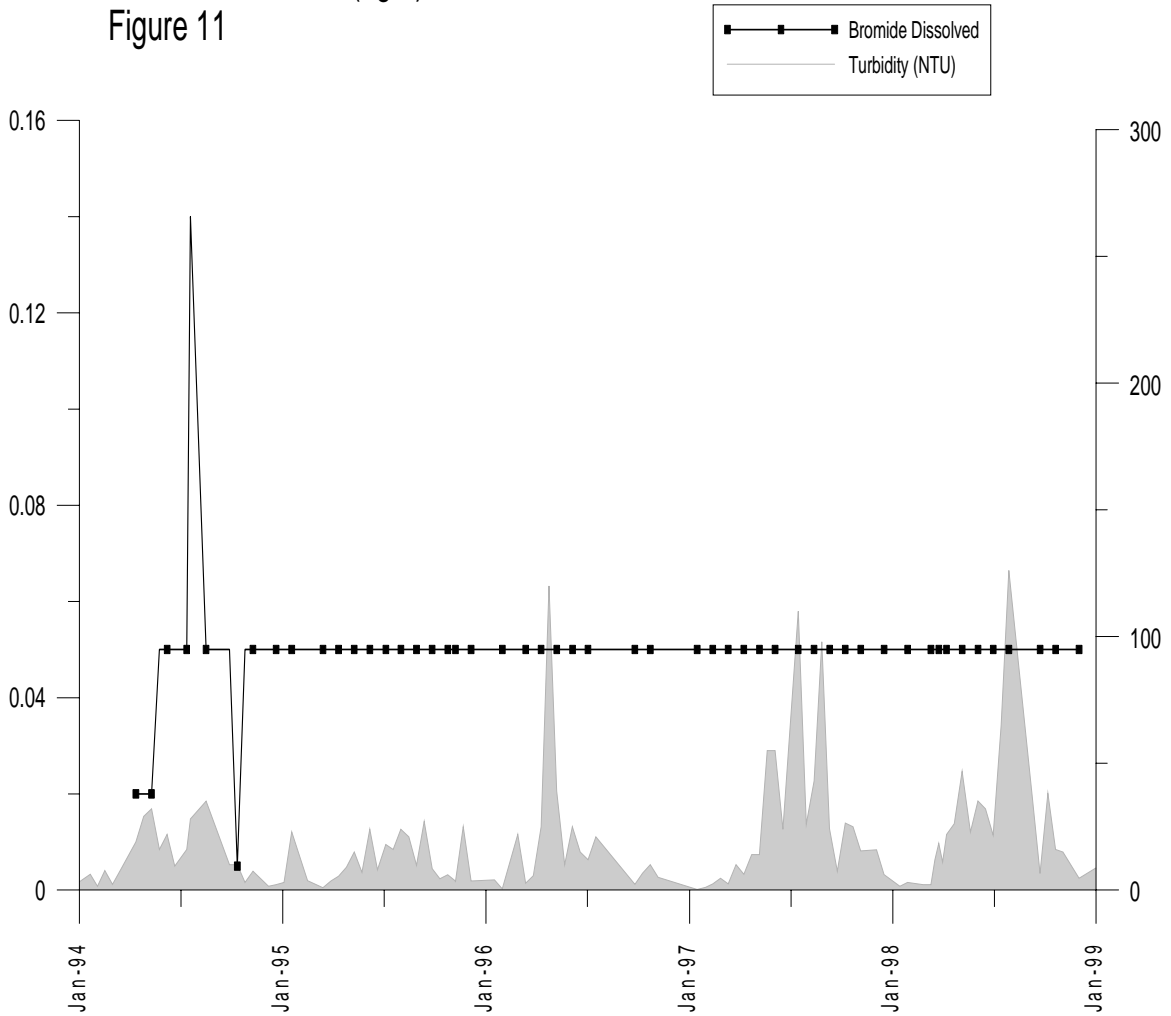
Figure 10



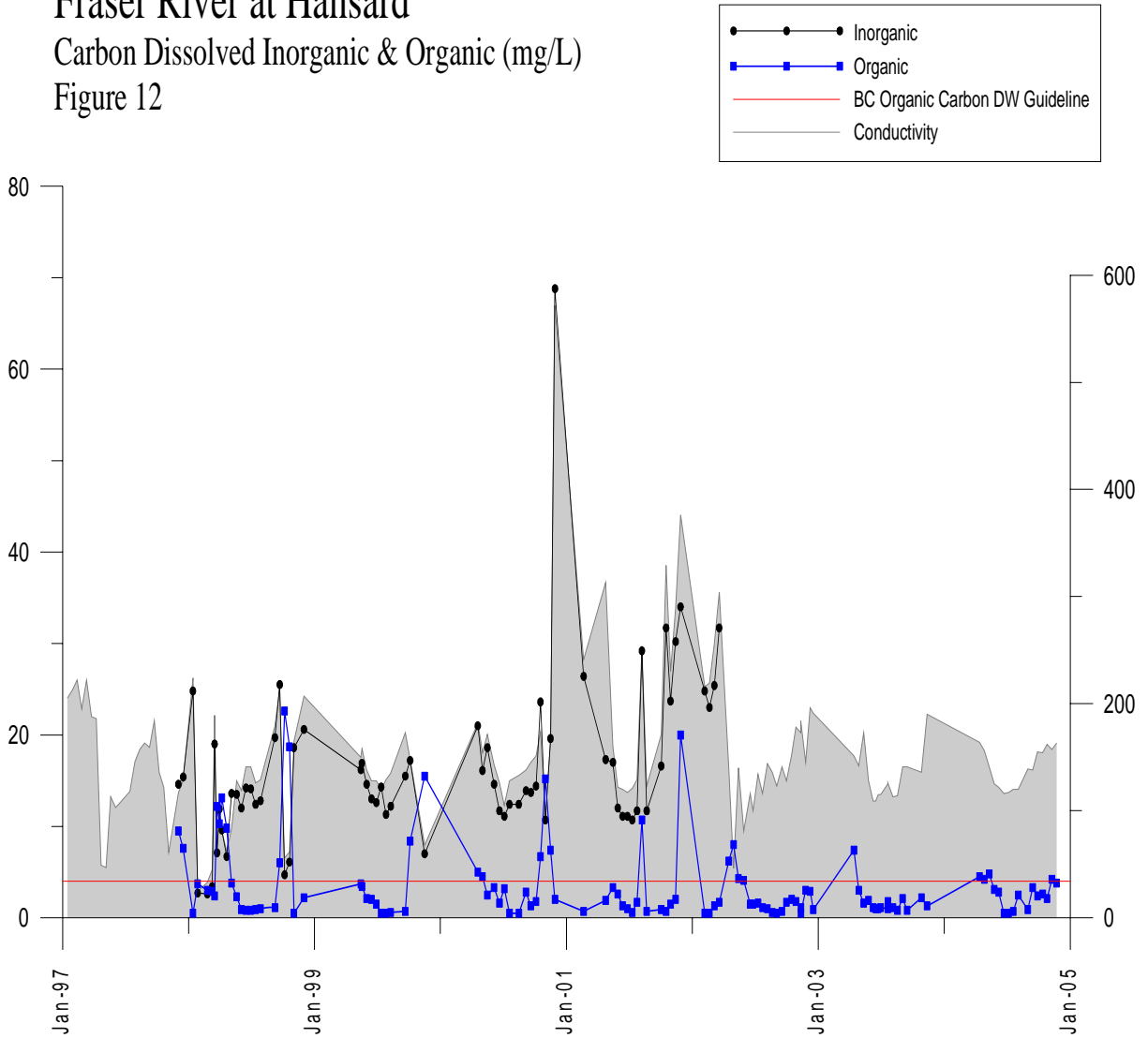
Fraser River at Hansard

Bromide Dissolved (ug/L)

Figure 11



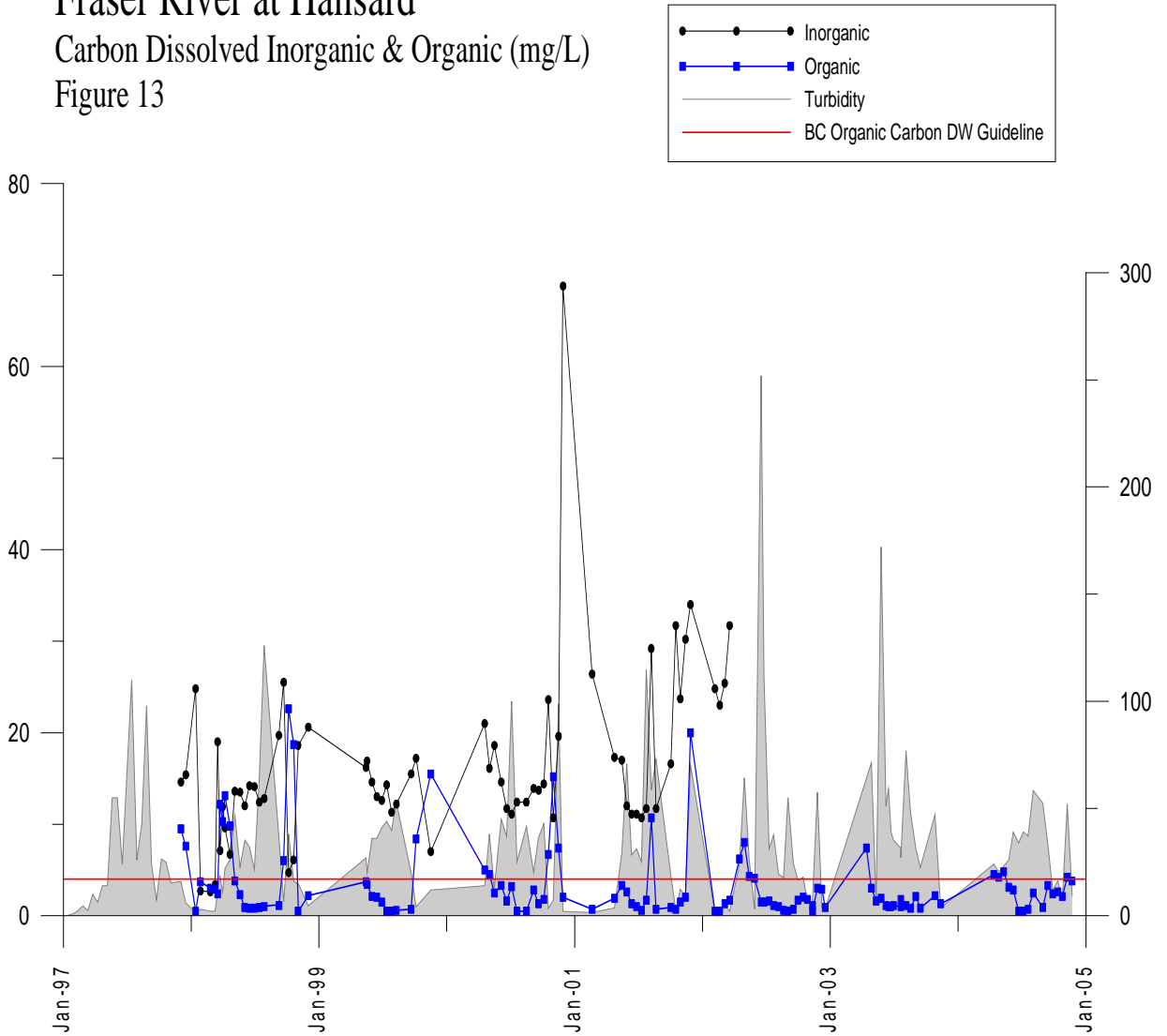
Fraser River at Hansard
Carbon Dissolved Inorganic & Organic (mg/L)
Figure 12



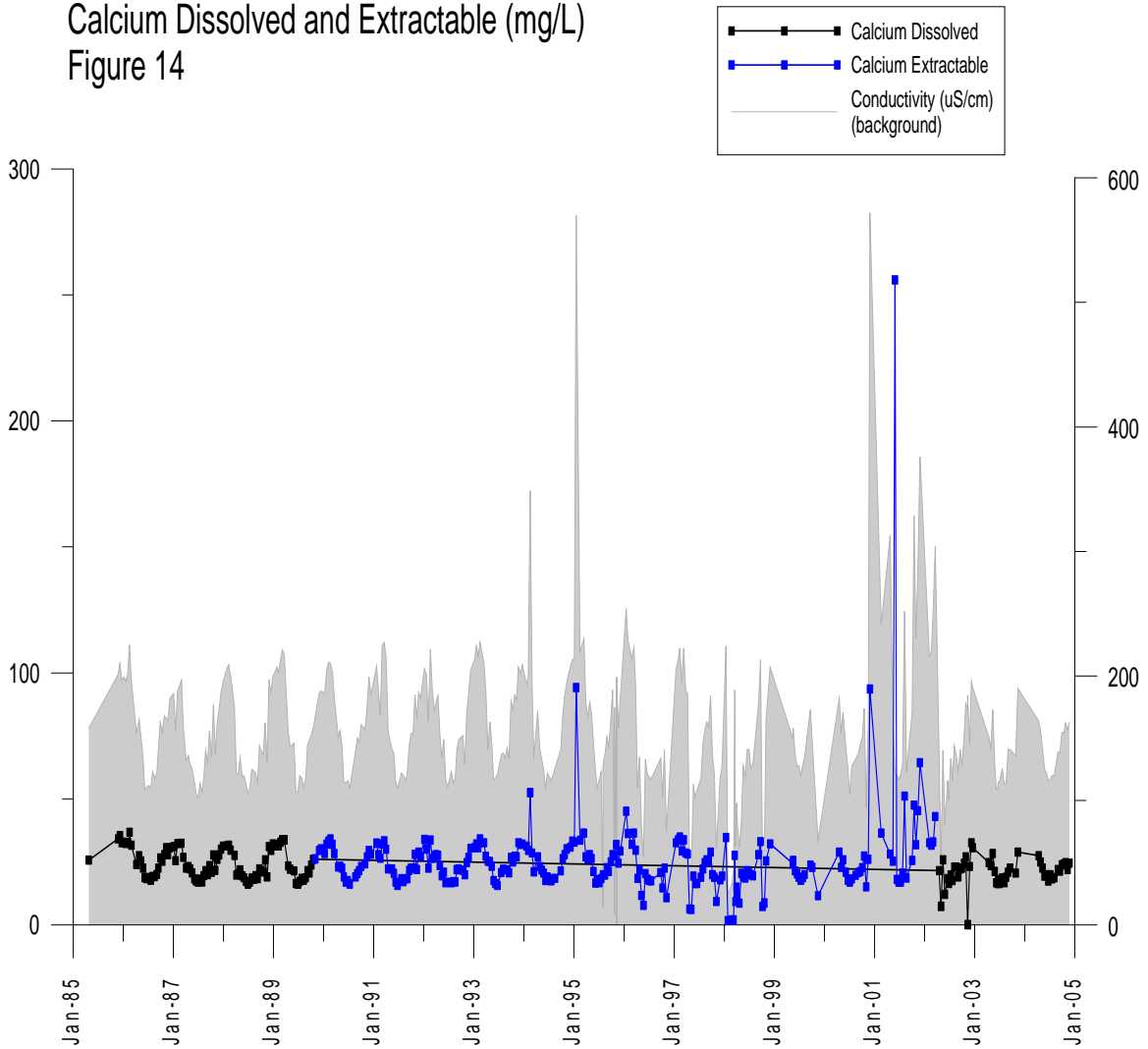
Fraser River at Hansard

Carbon Dissolved Inorganic & Organic (mg/L)

Figure 13



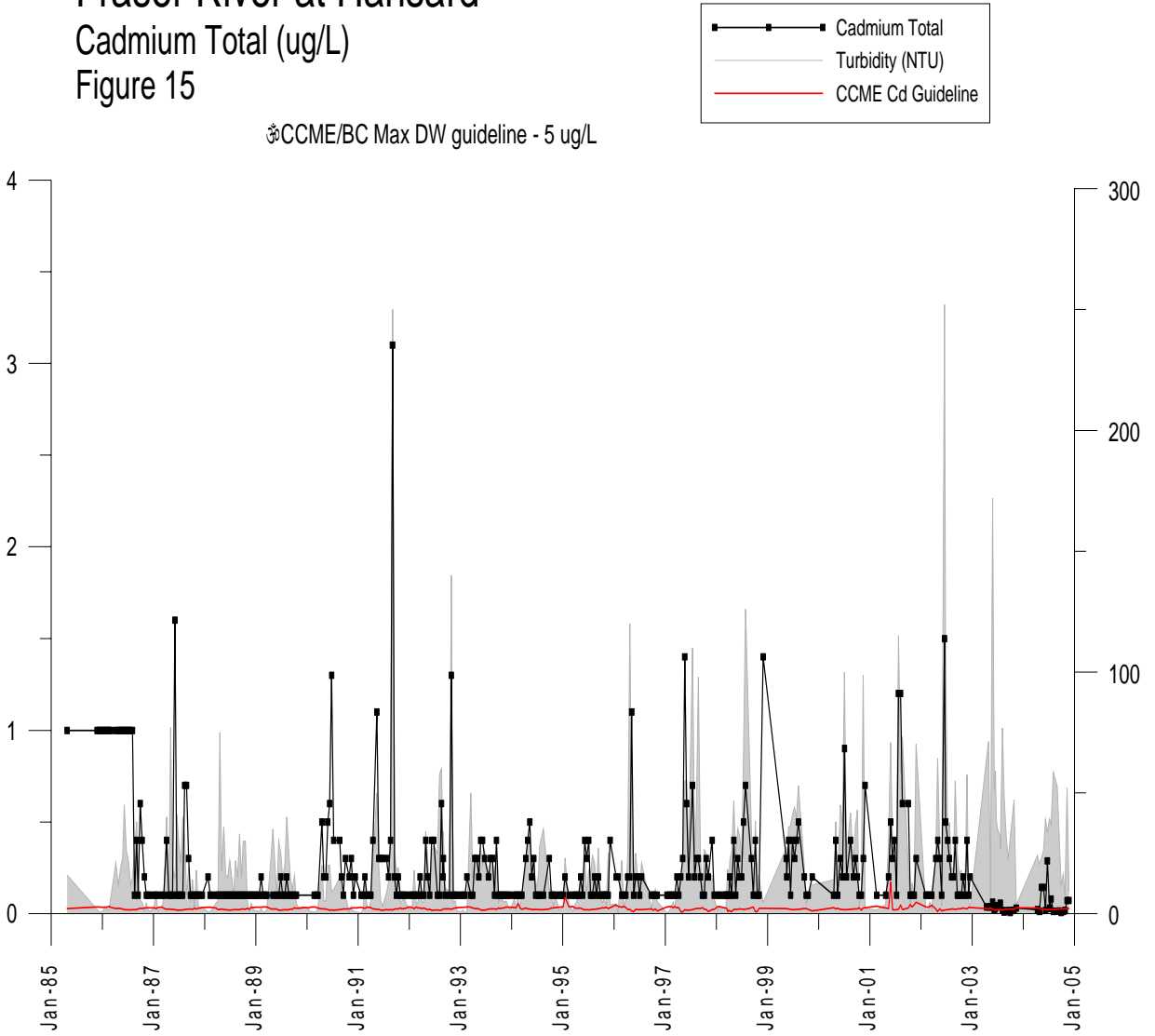
Fraser River at Hansard
Calcium Dissolved and Extractable (mg/L)
Figure 14



Fraser River at Hansard

Cadmium Total (ug/L)

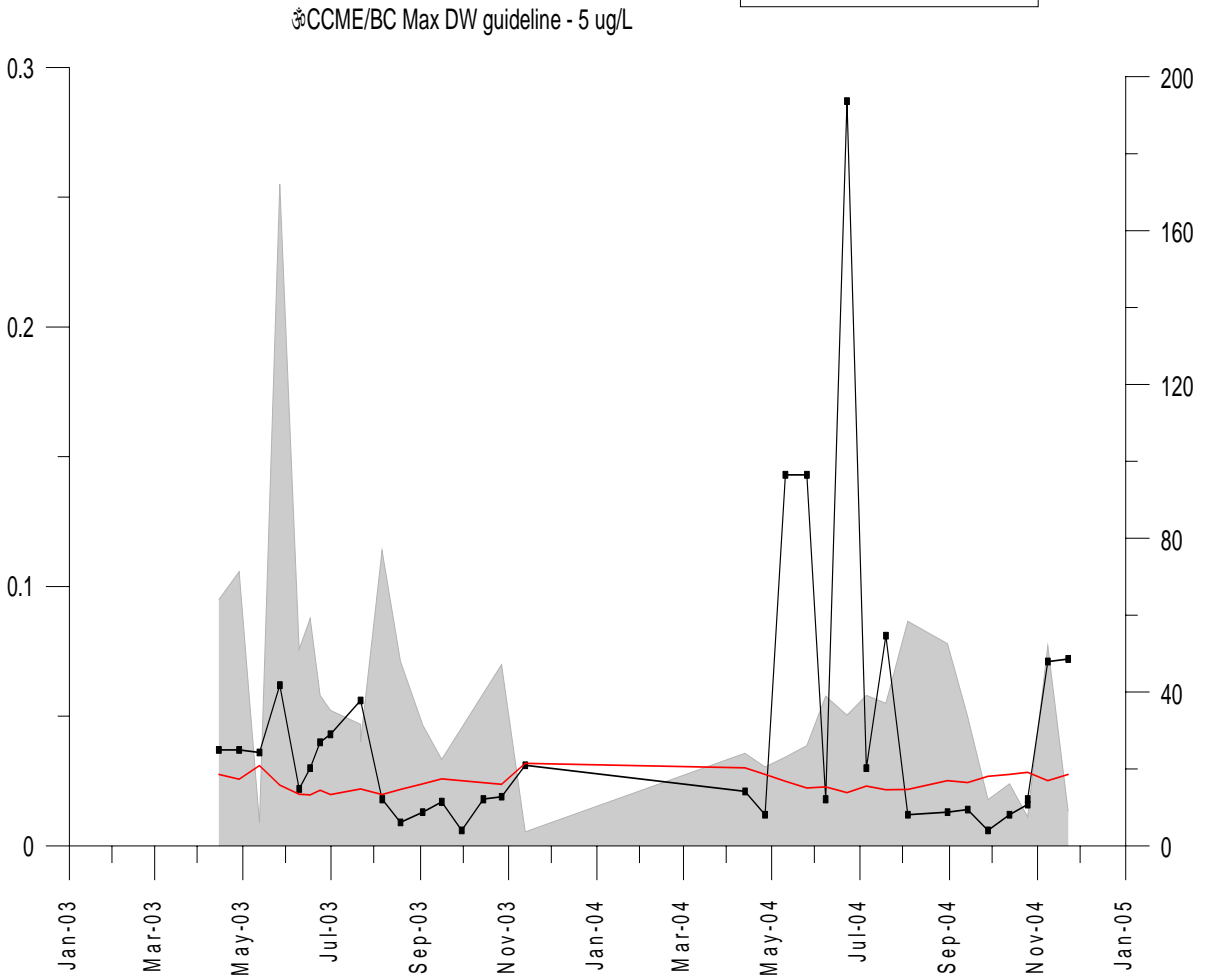
Figure 15



Fraser River at Hansard

Cadmium Total (ug/L)

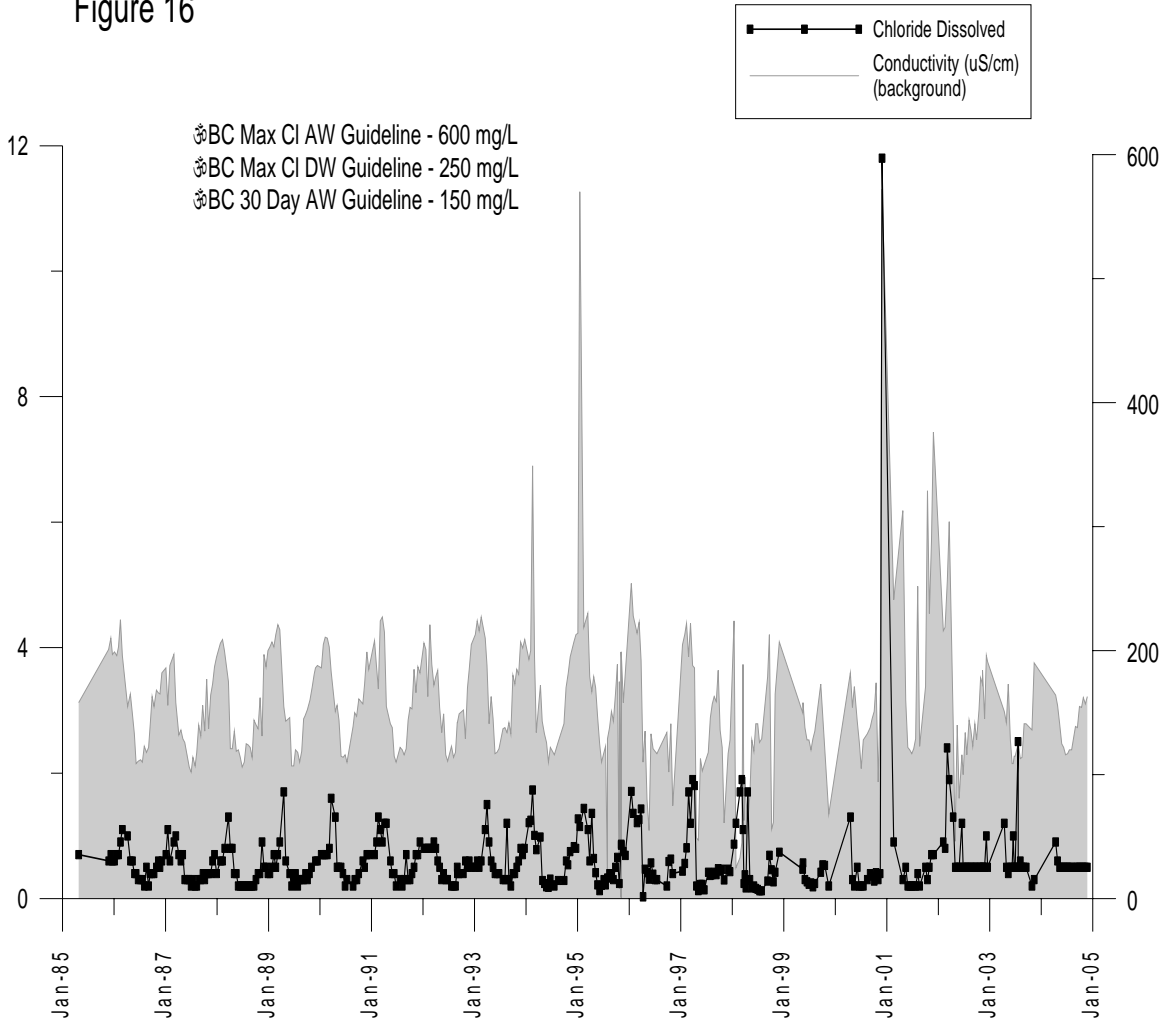
Figure 15 (a)



Fraser River at Hansard

Chloride Dissolved (mg/L)

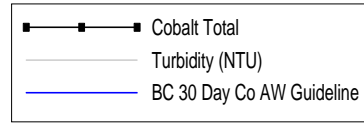
Figure 16



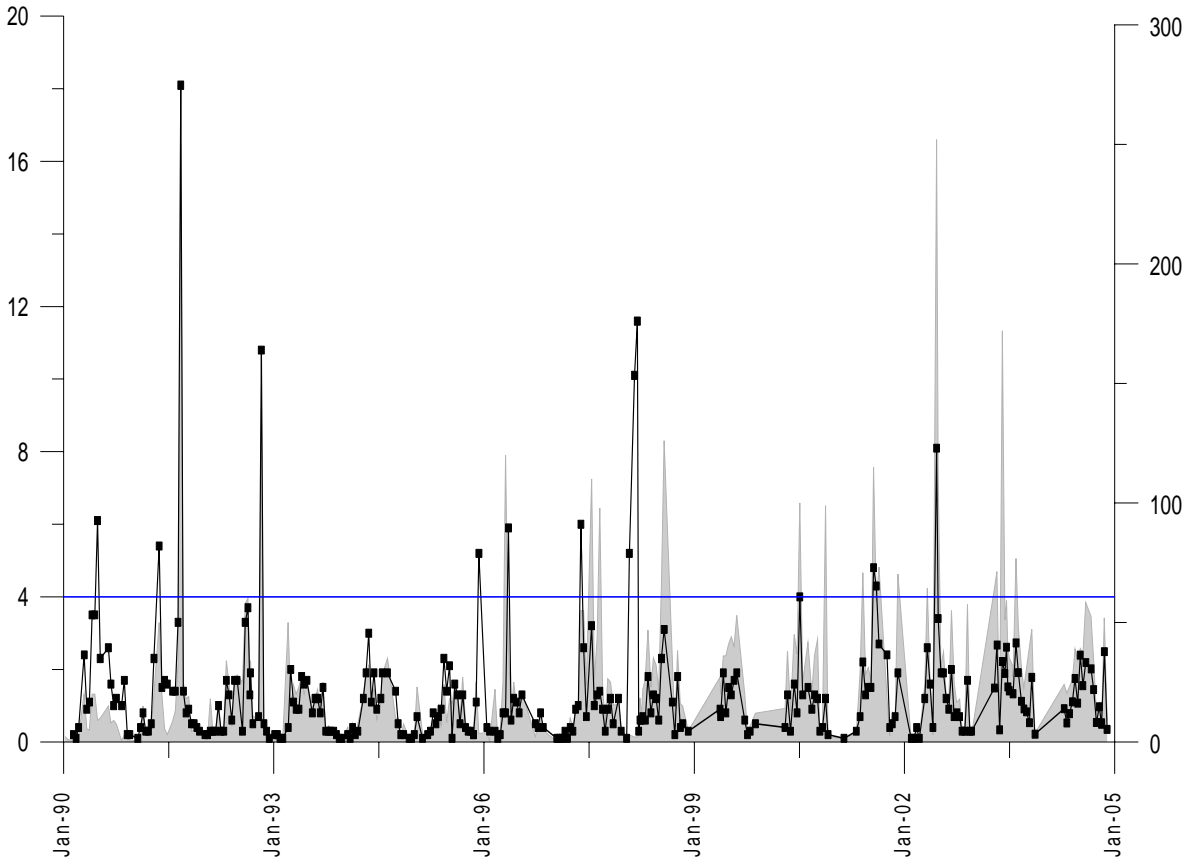
Fraser River at Hansard

Cobalt Total (ug/L)

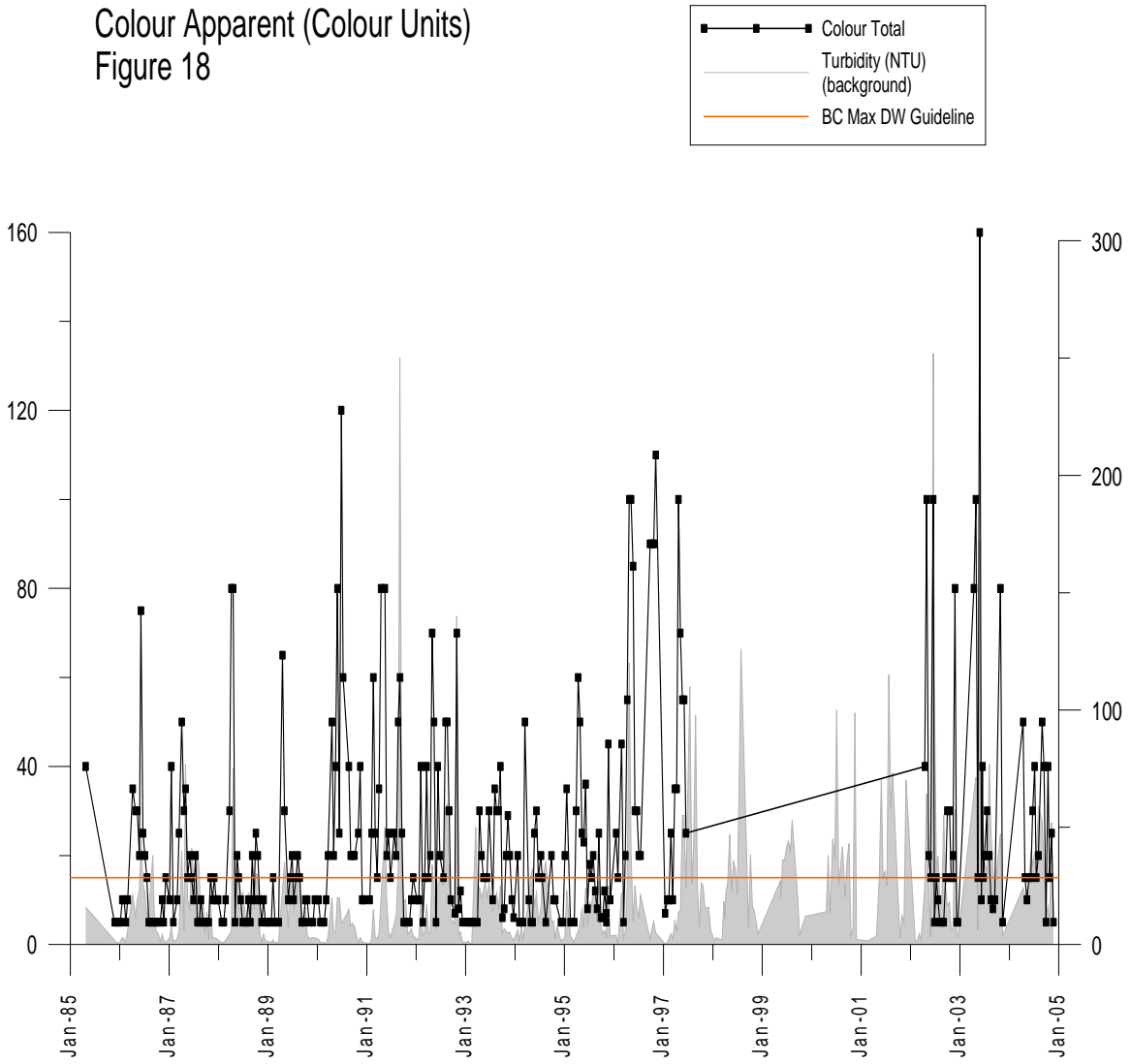
Figure 17



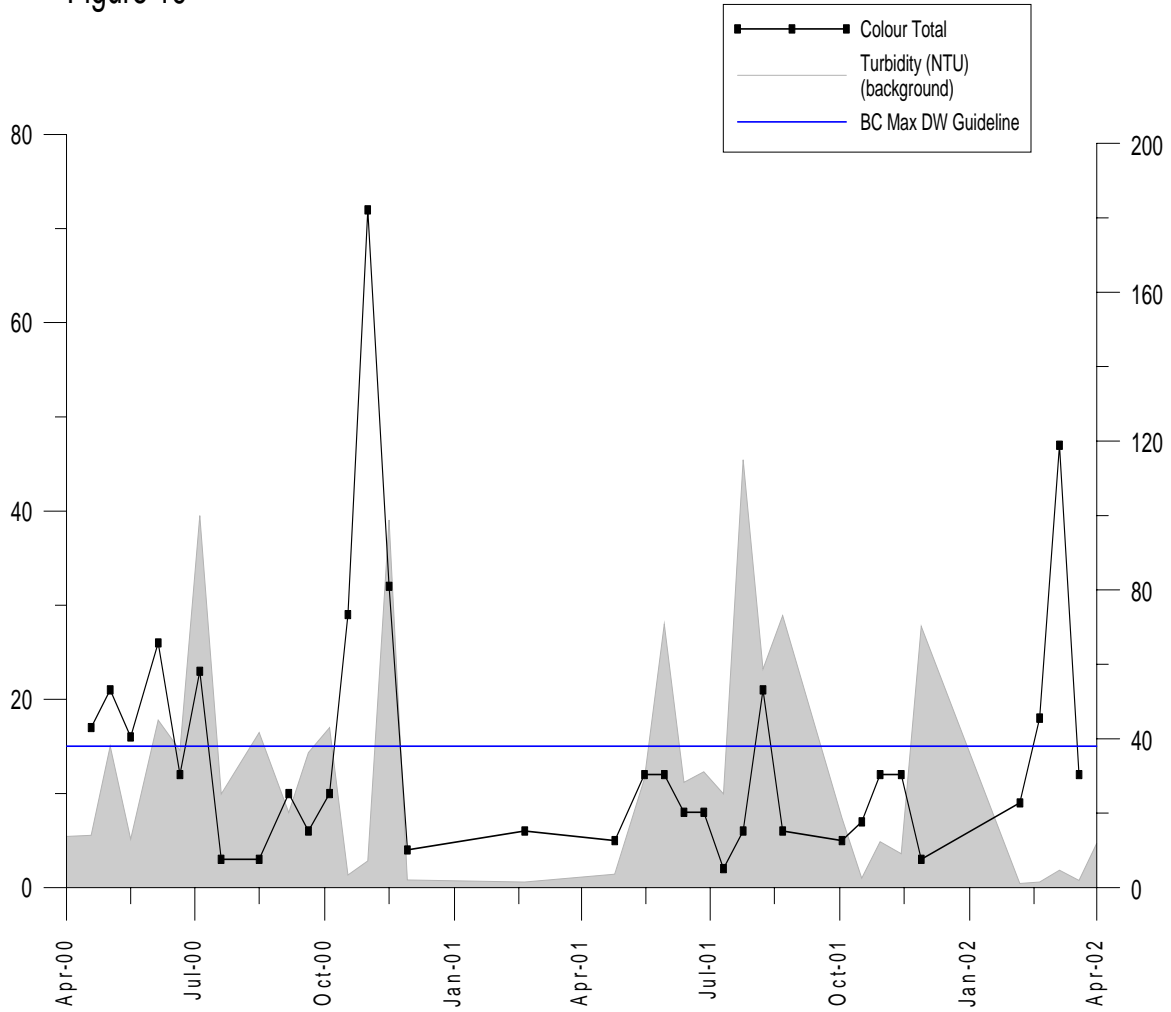
BC Max Co AW Guideline - 110 ug/L



Fraser River at Hansard
Colour Apparent (Colour Units)
Figure 18



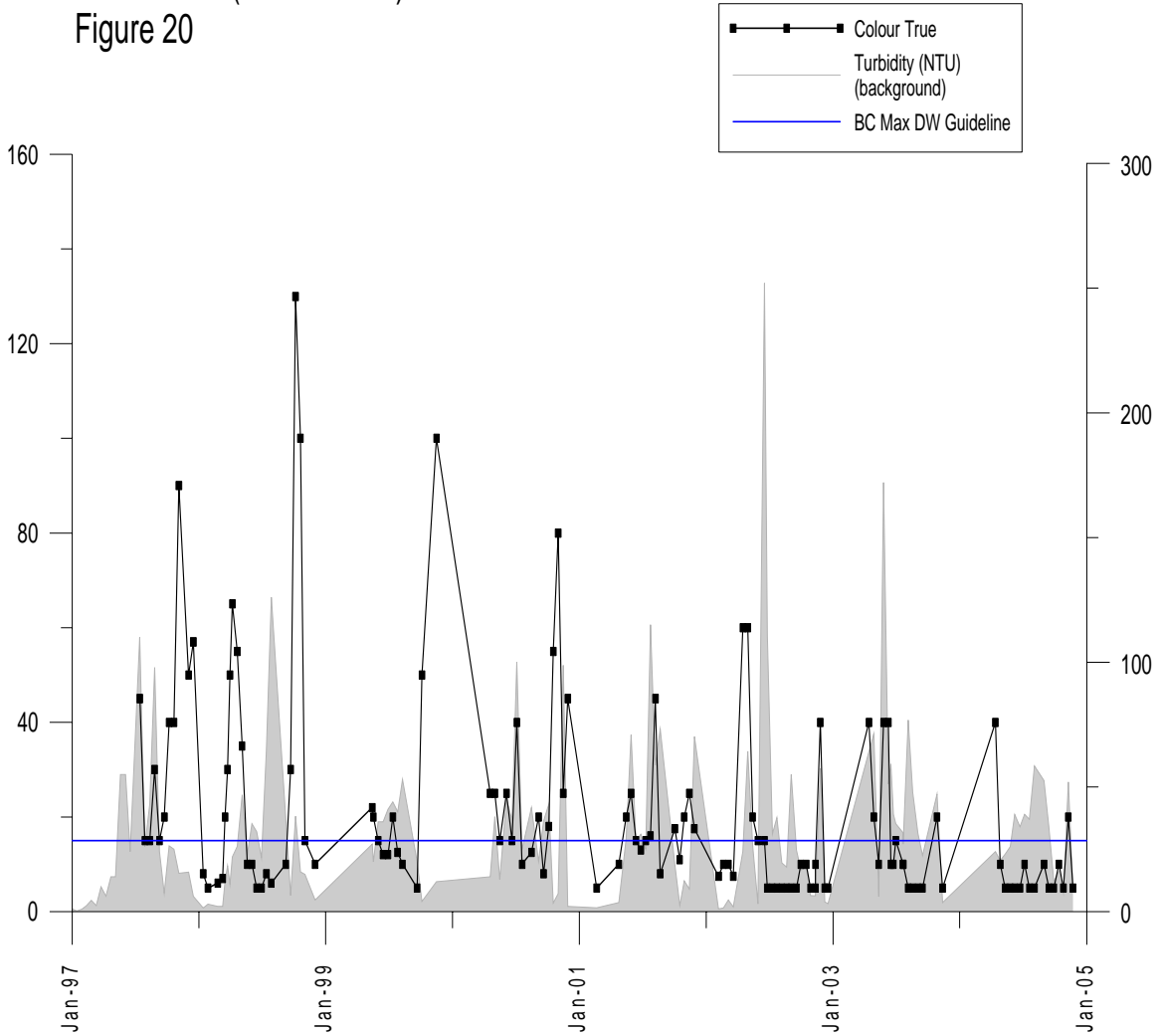
Fraser River at Hansard
Colour Total Absorbance (Colour Units)
Figure 19



Fraser River at Hansard

Colour True (Colour Units)

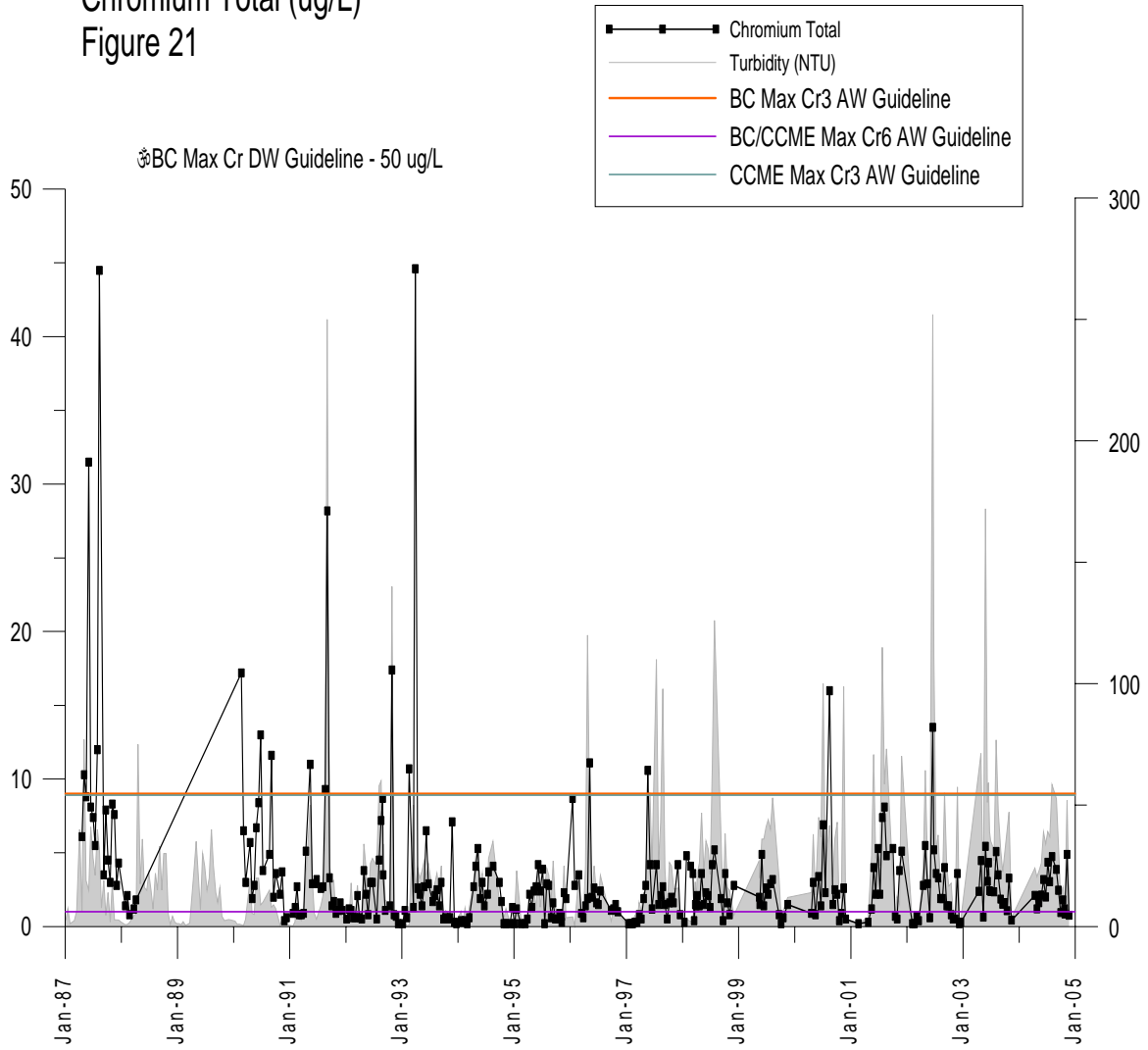
Figure 20



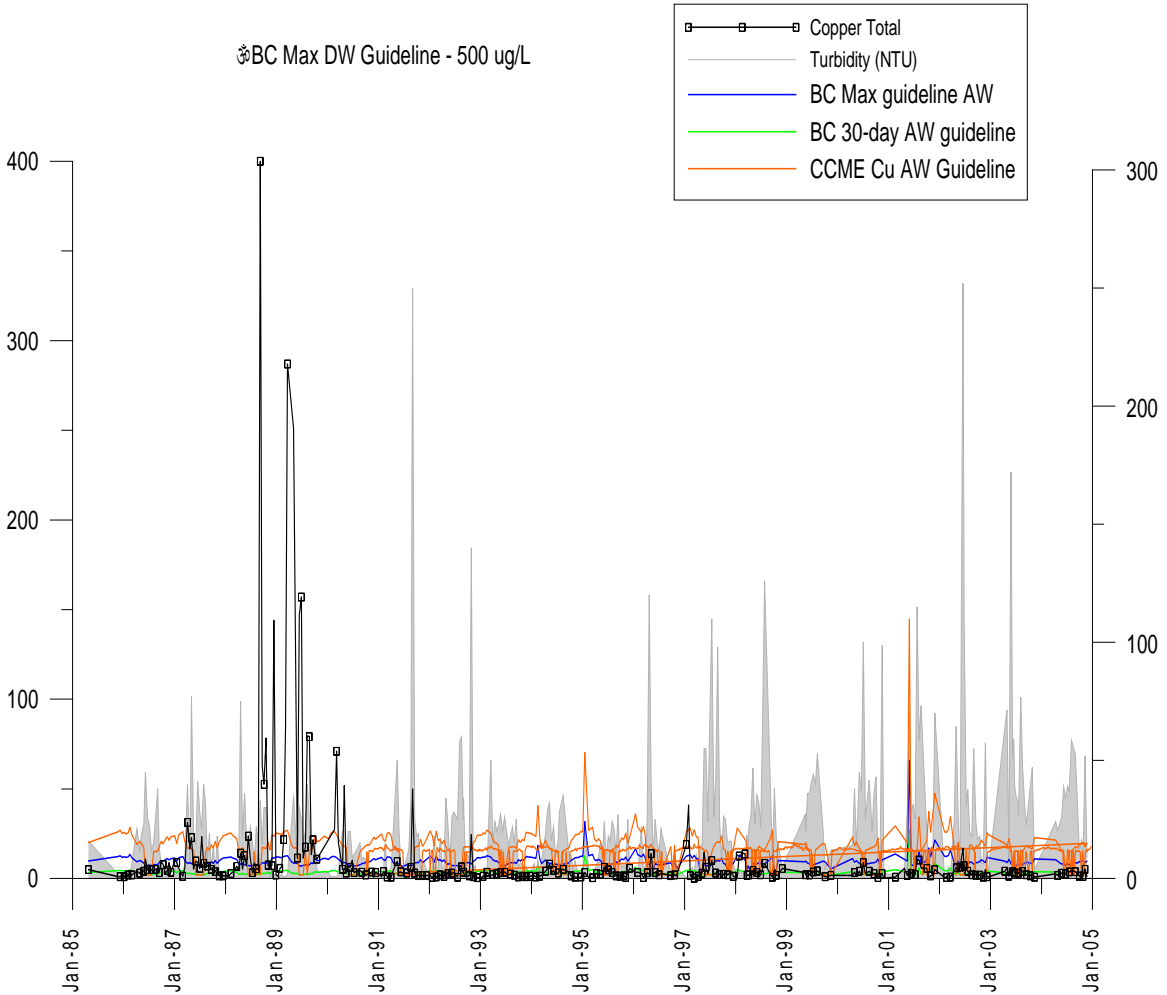
Fraser River at Hansard

Chromium Total (ug/L)

Figure 21



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

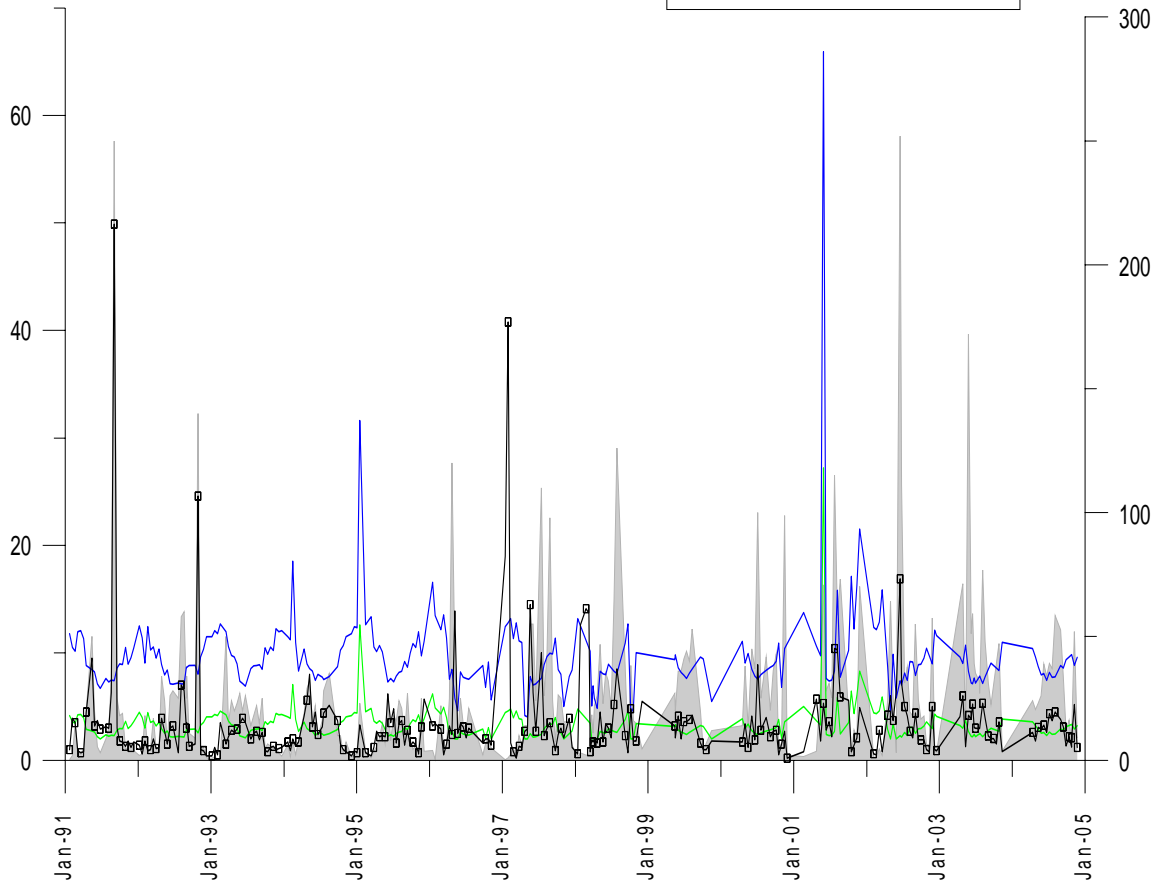
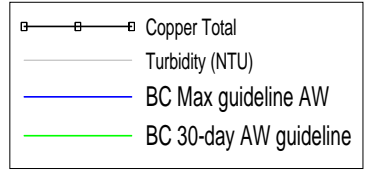


Fraser at Hansard

Copper Total (ug/L)

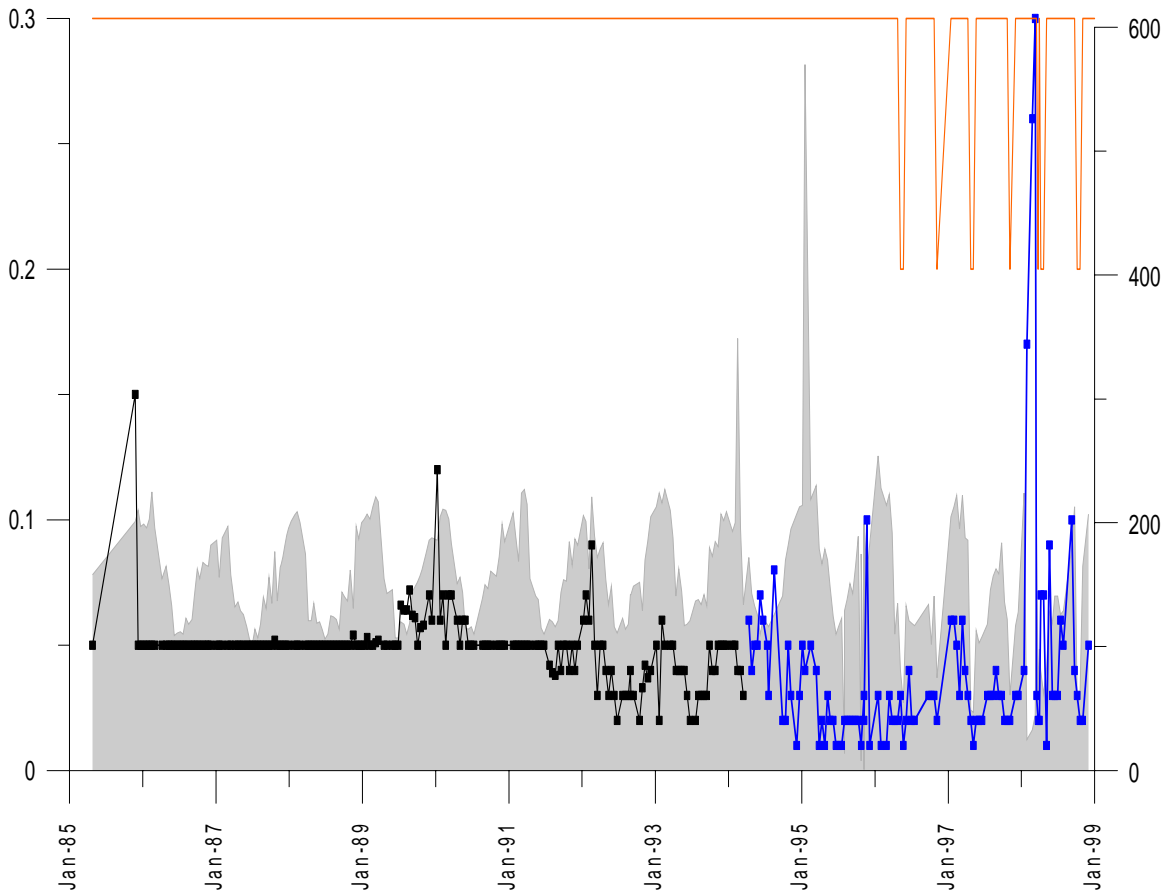
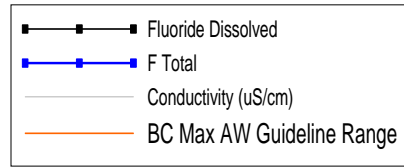
Figure 23

⊕ BC Max DW Guideline - 500 ug/L
⊕ CCME AW Guideline range 2 - 144.7 ug/L



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

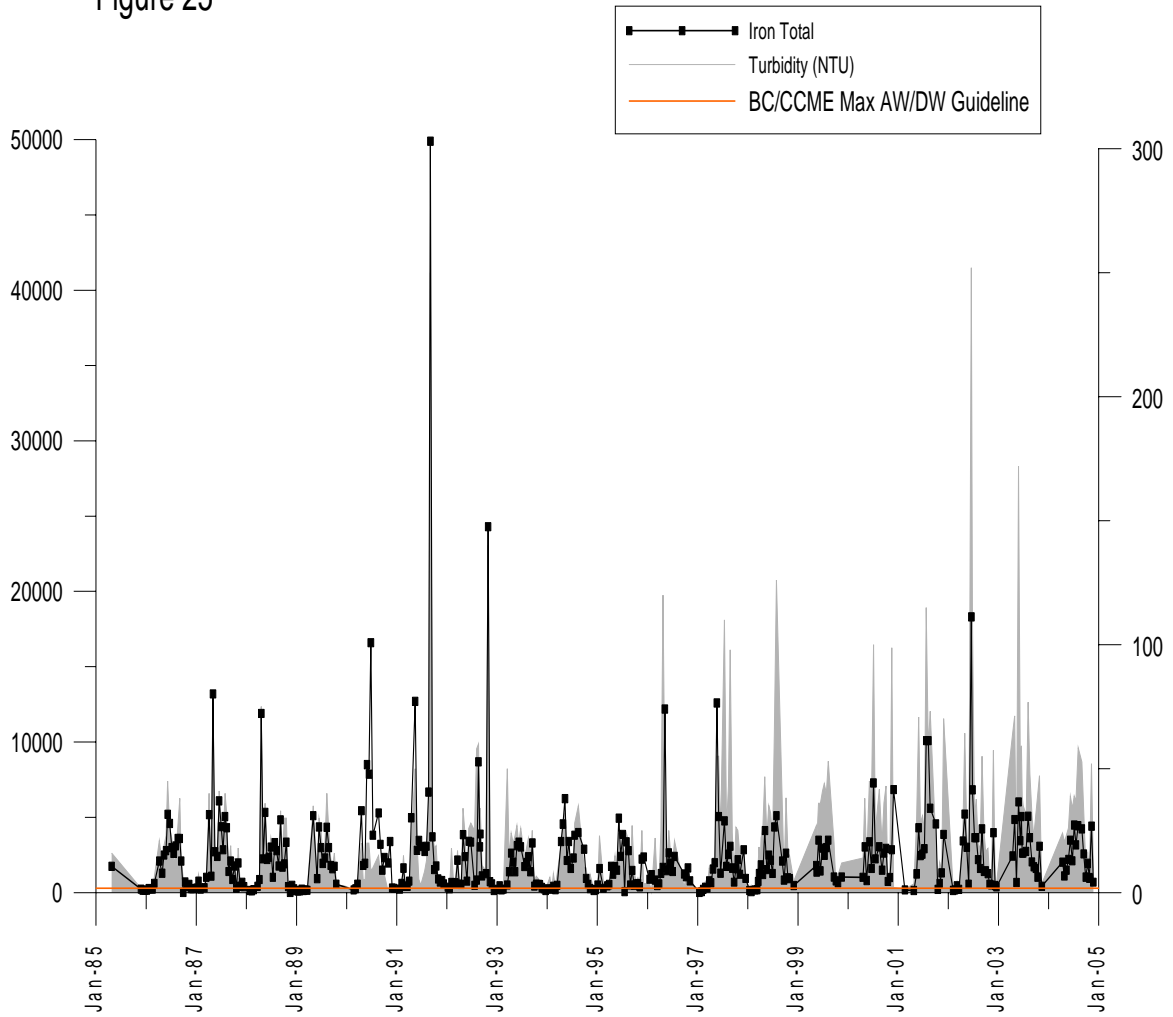
⊕ BC 30 Day DW Guideline - 1 mg/L
⊕ BC/CCME DW Guideline - 1.5 mg/L



Fraser River at Hansard

Iron Total (ug/L)

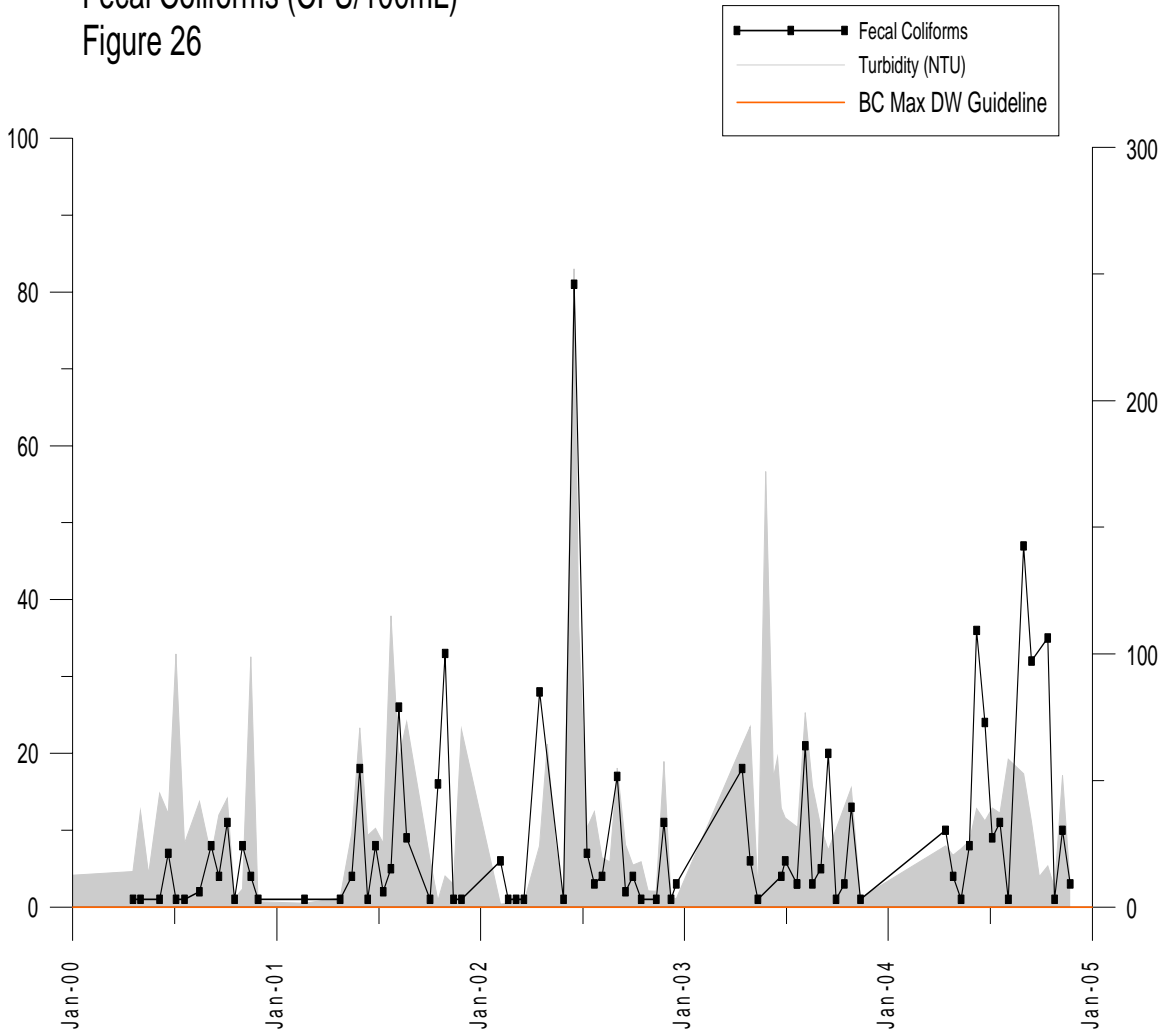
Figure 25

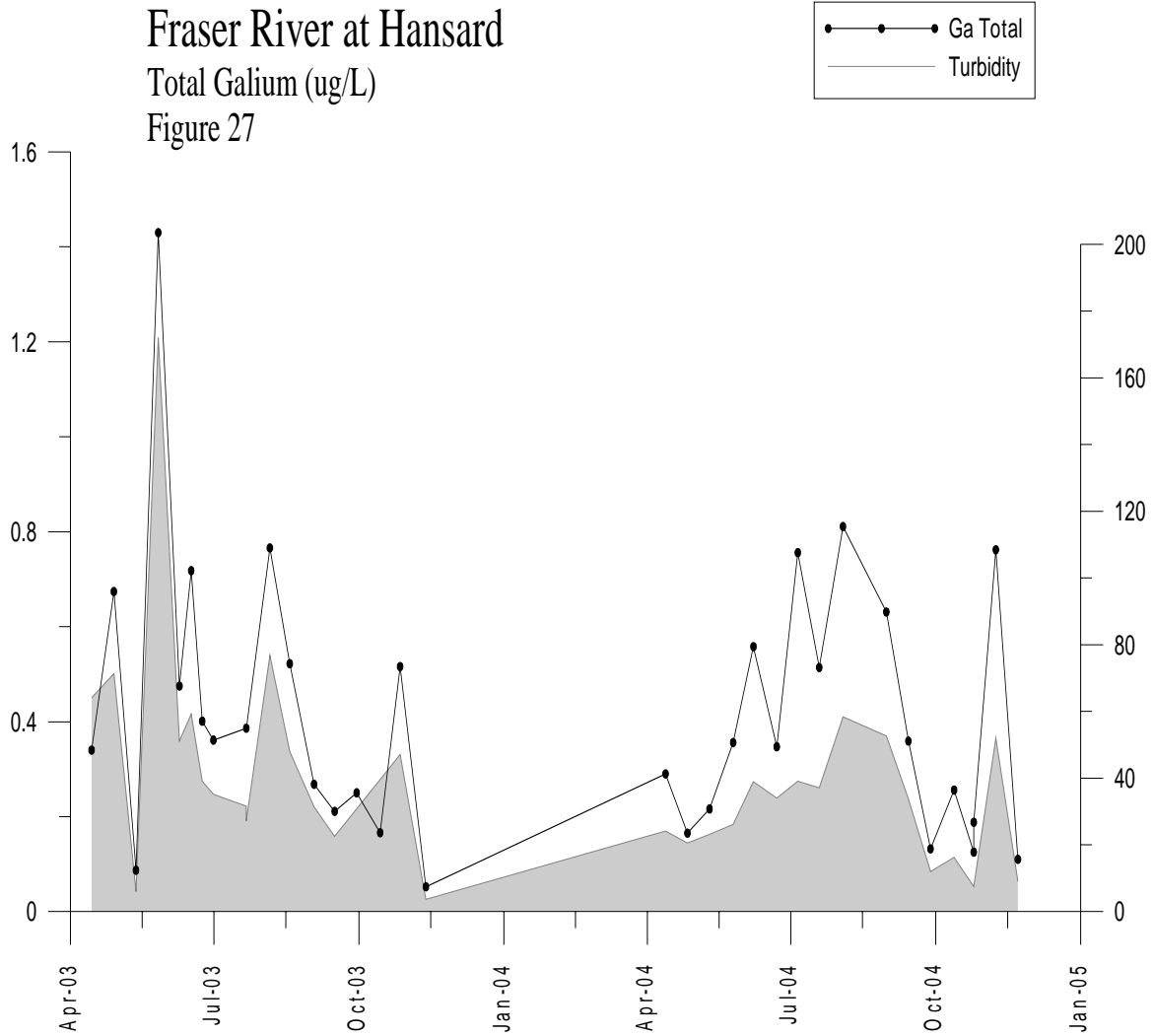


Fraser River at Hansard

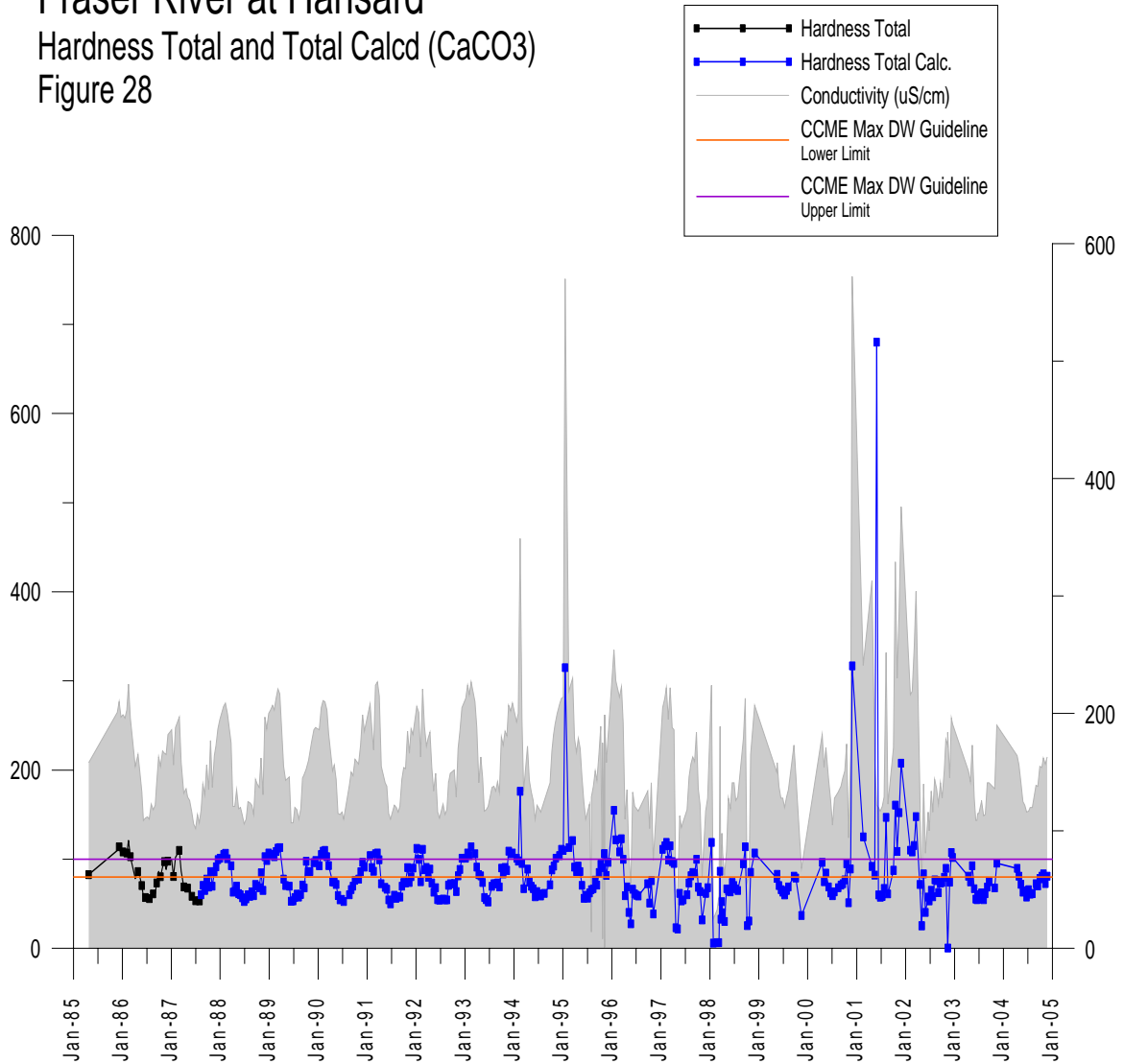
Fecal Coliforms (CFU/100mL)

Figure 26





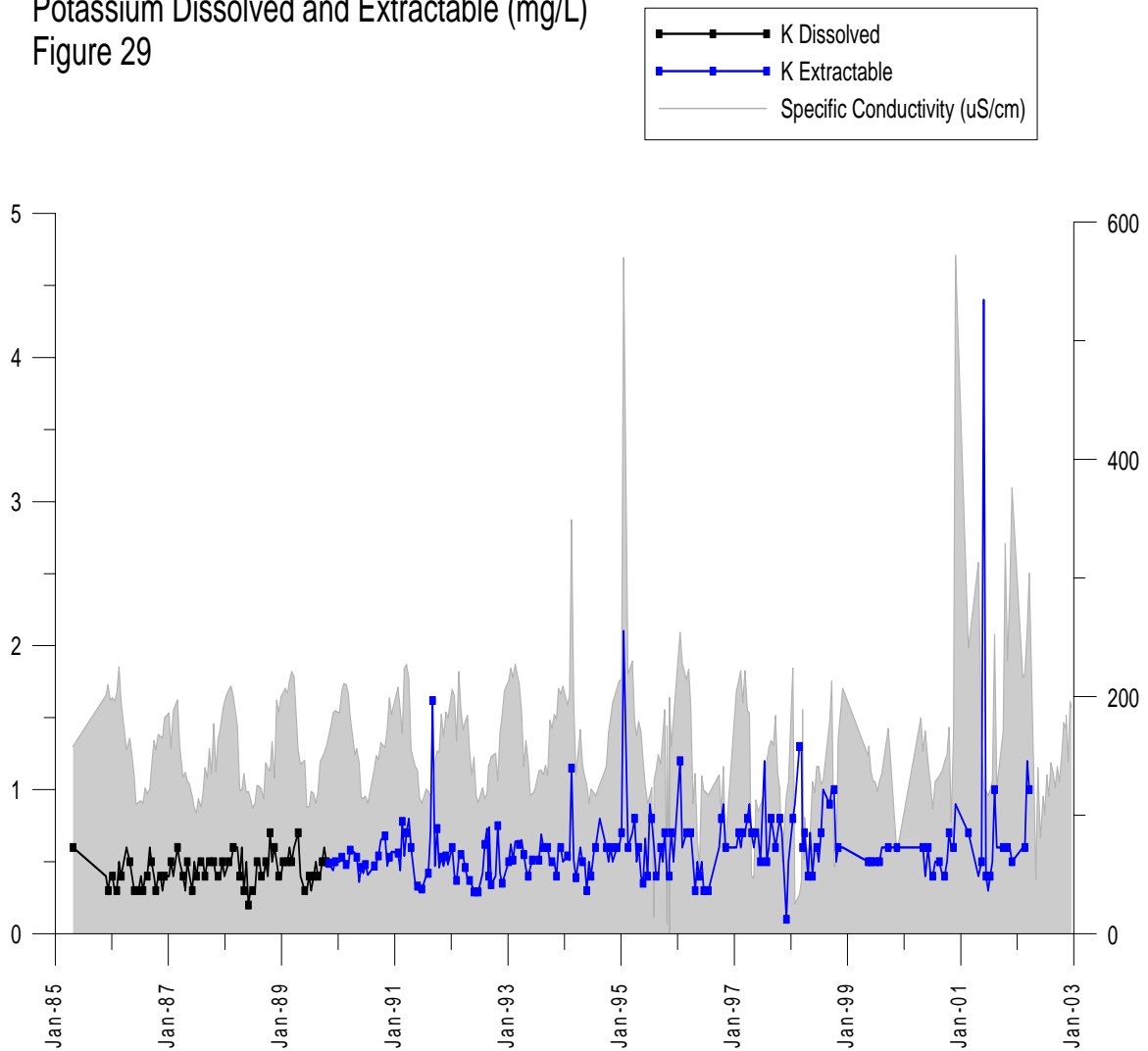
Fraser River at Hansard
Hardness Total and Total Calc (CaCO₃)
Figure 28

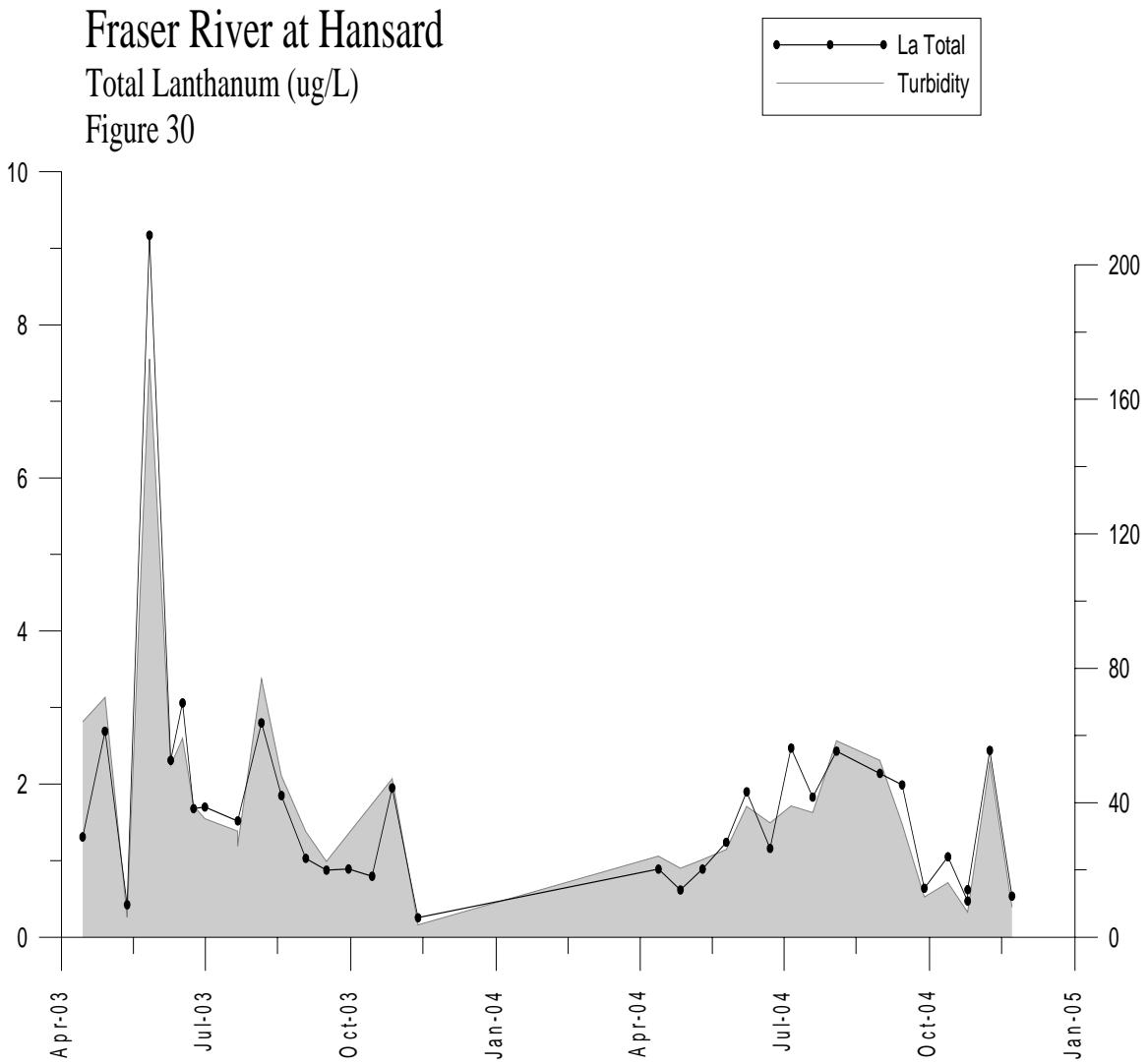


Fraser at Hansard

Potassium Dissolved and Extractable (mg/L)

Figure 29

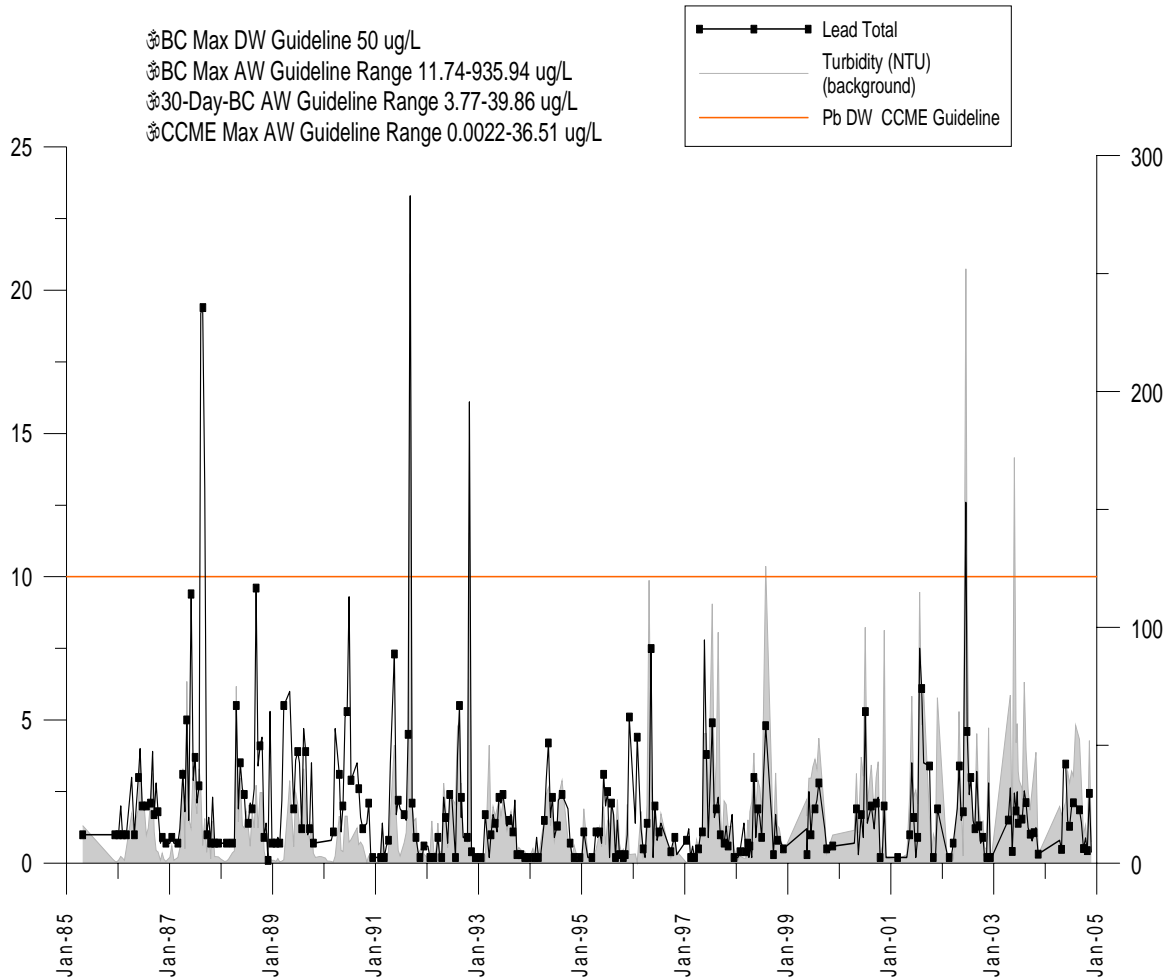




Fraser River at Hansard

Lead Total (ug/L)

Figure 31

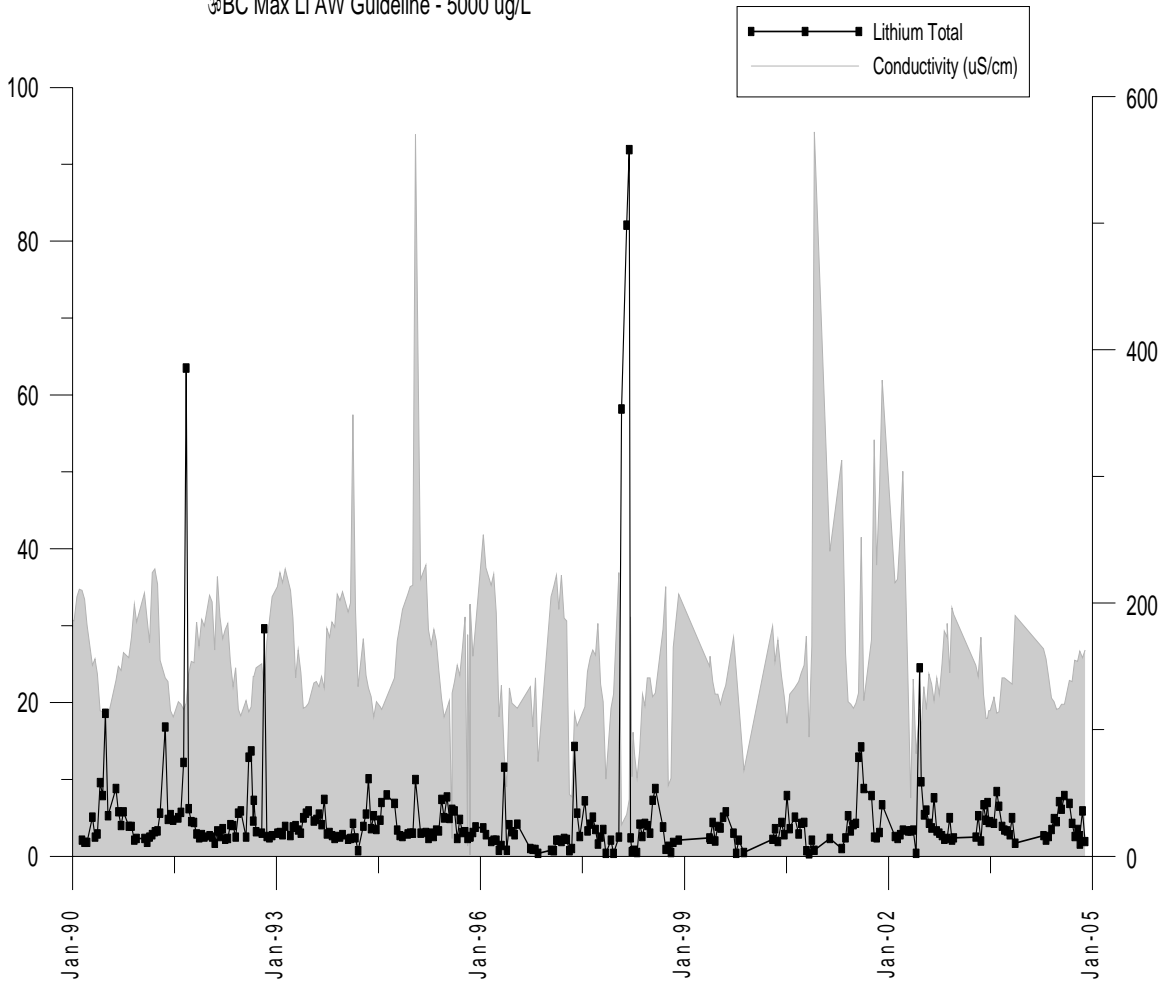


Fraser River at Hansard

Lithium Total (ug/L)

Figure 32

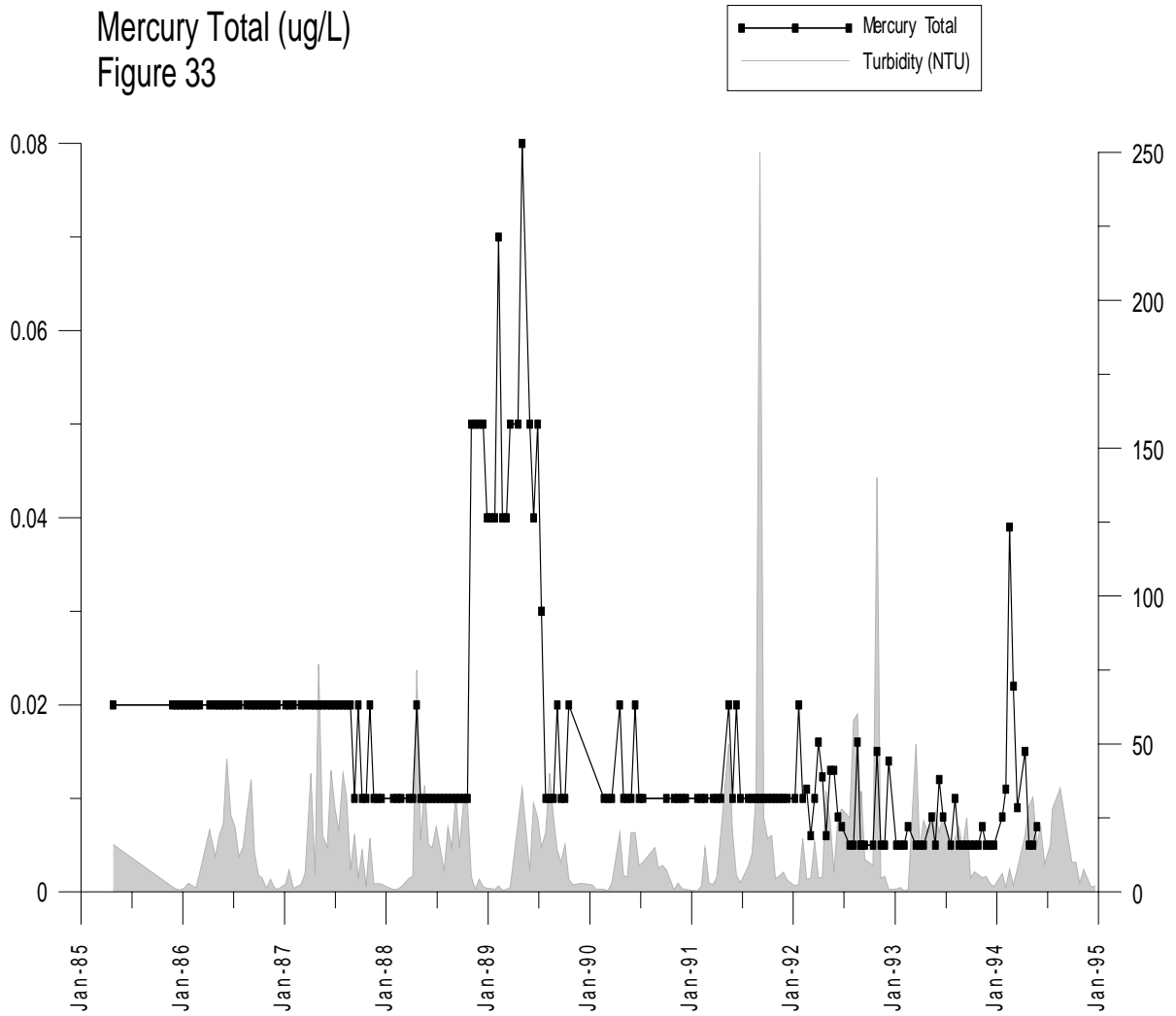
BC Max Li AW Guideline - 5000 ug/L



Fraser River at Hansard

Mercury Total (ug/L)

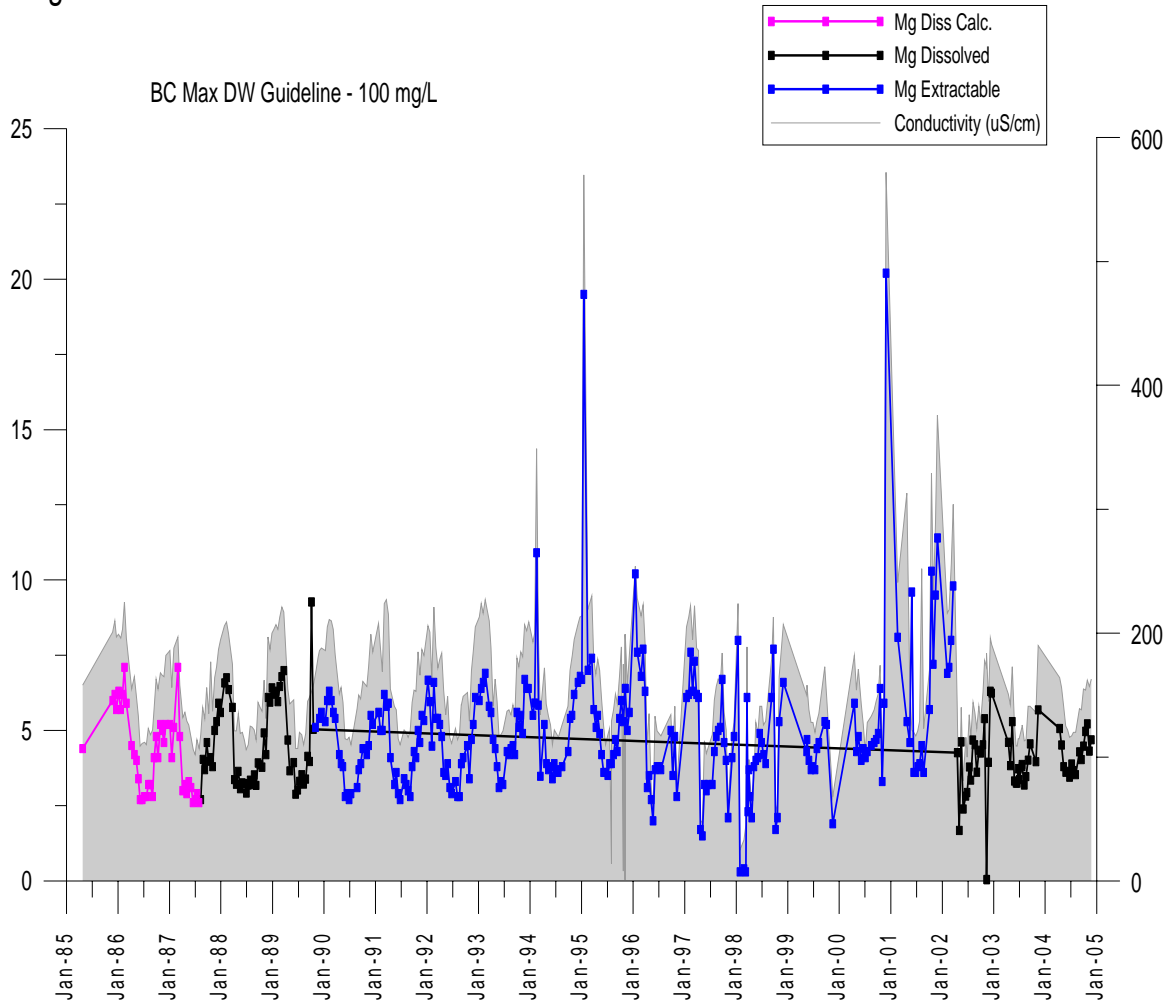
Figure 33



Fraser River at Hansard

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

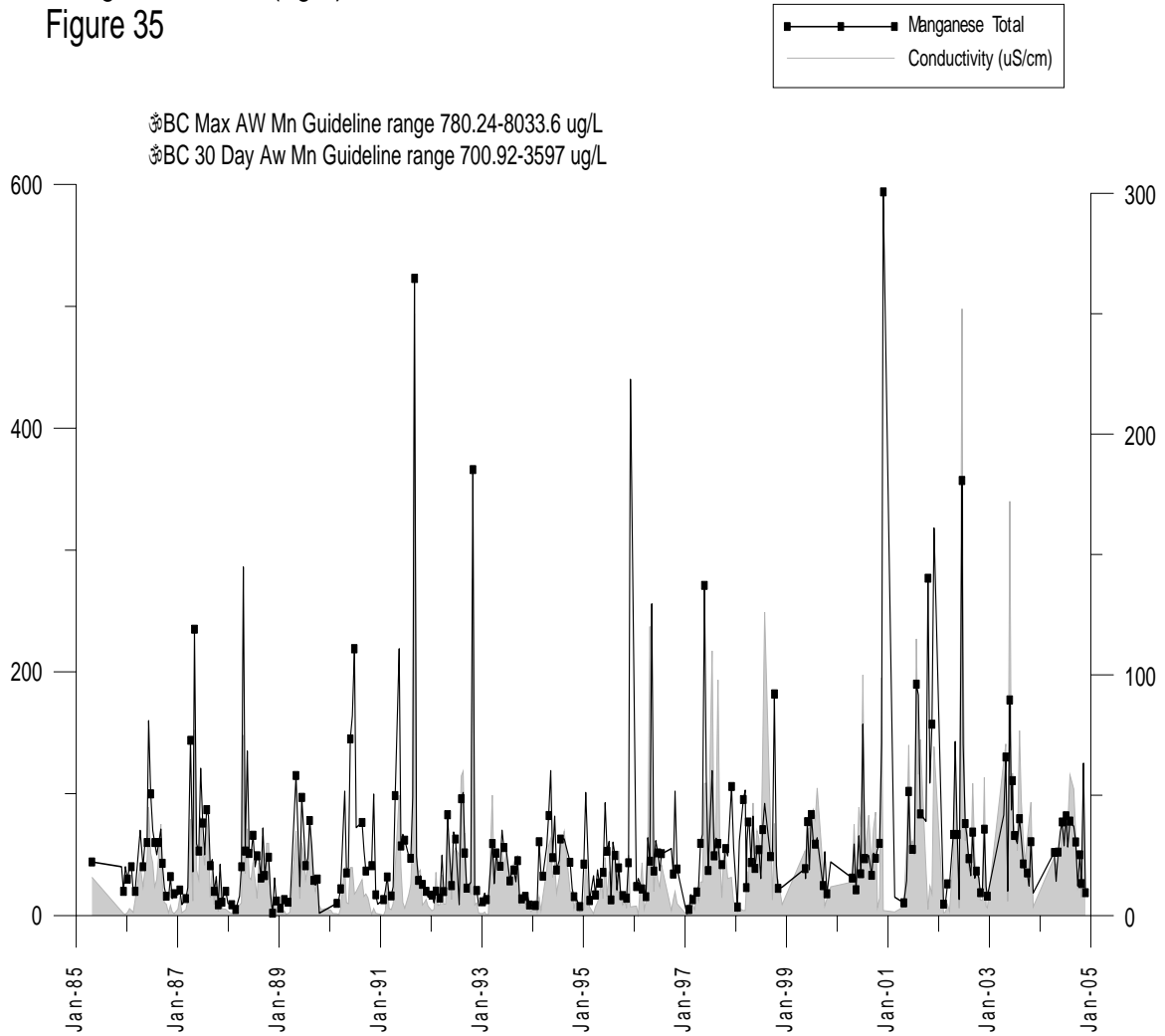
Figure 34



Fraser River at Hansard

Manganese Total (ug/L)

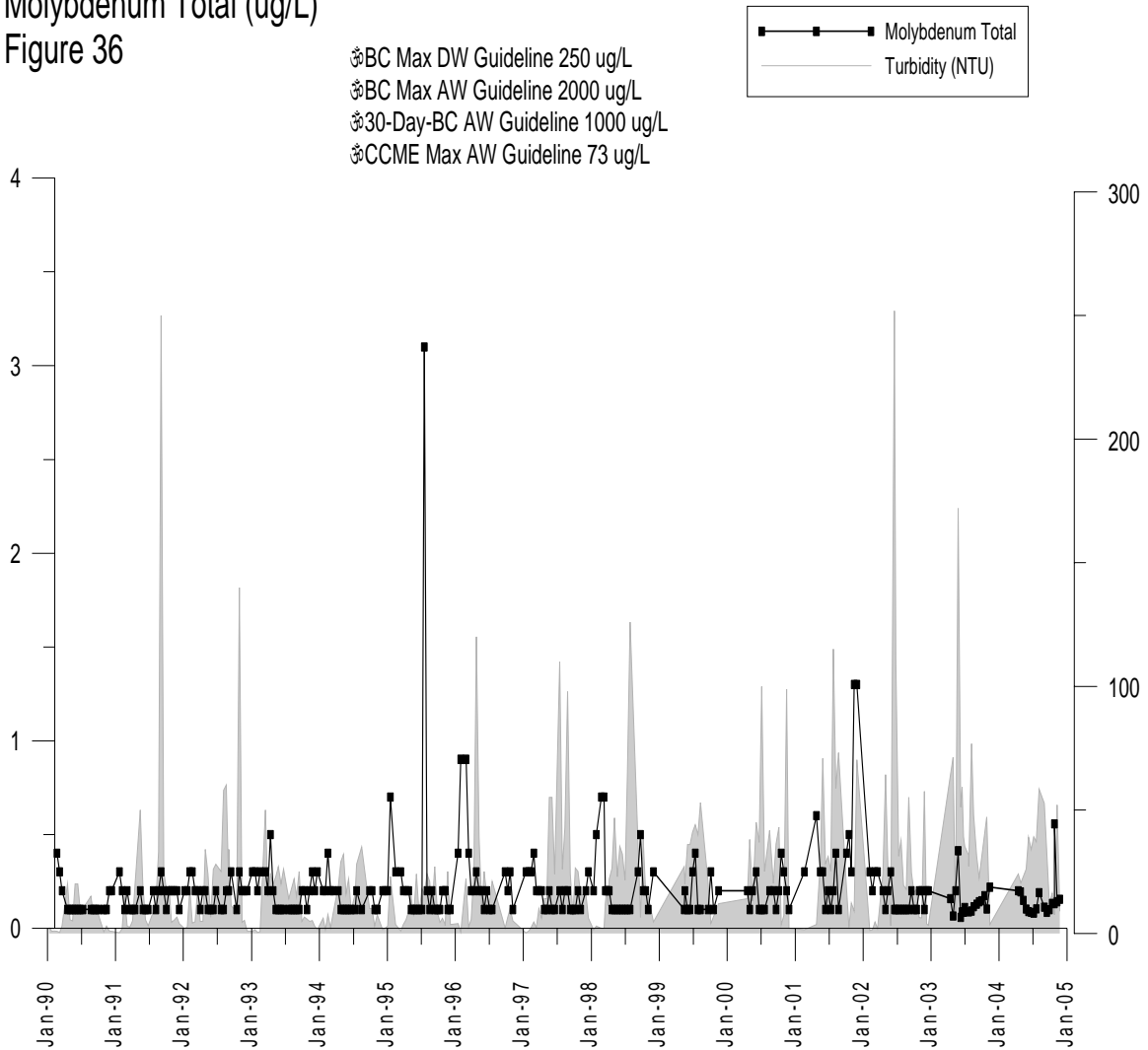
Figure 35



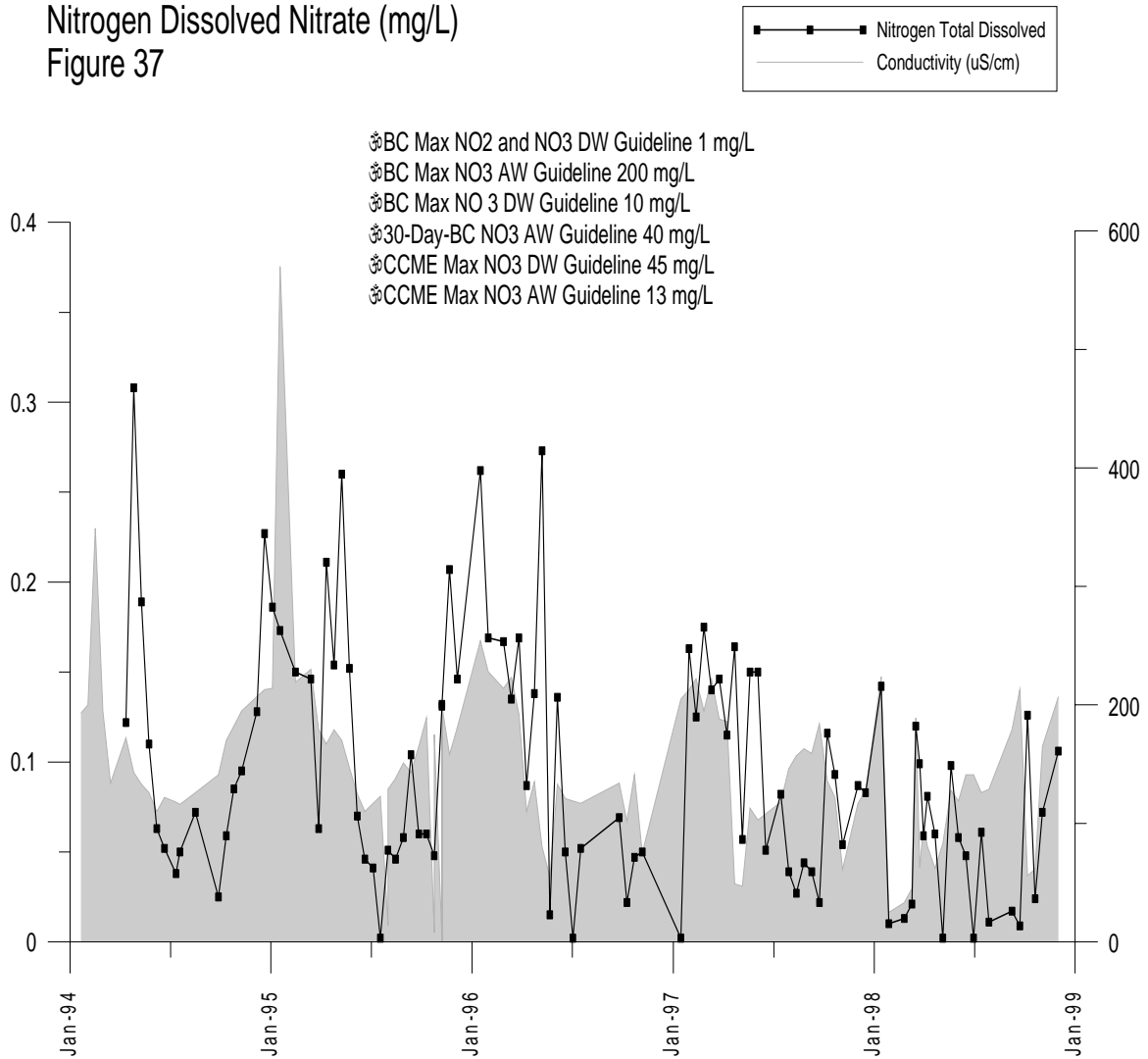
Fraser River at Hansard

Molybdenum Total (ug/L)

Figure 36

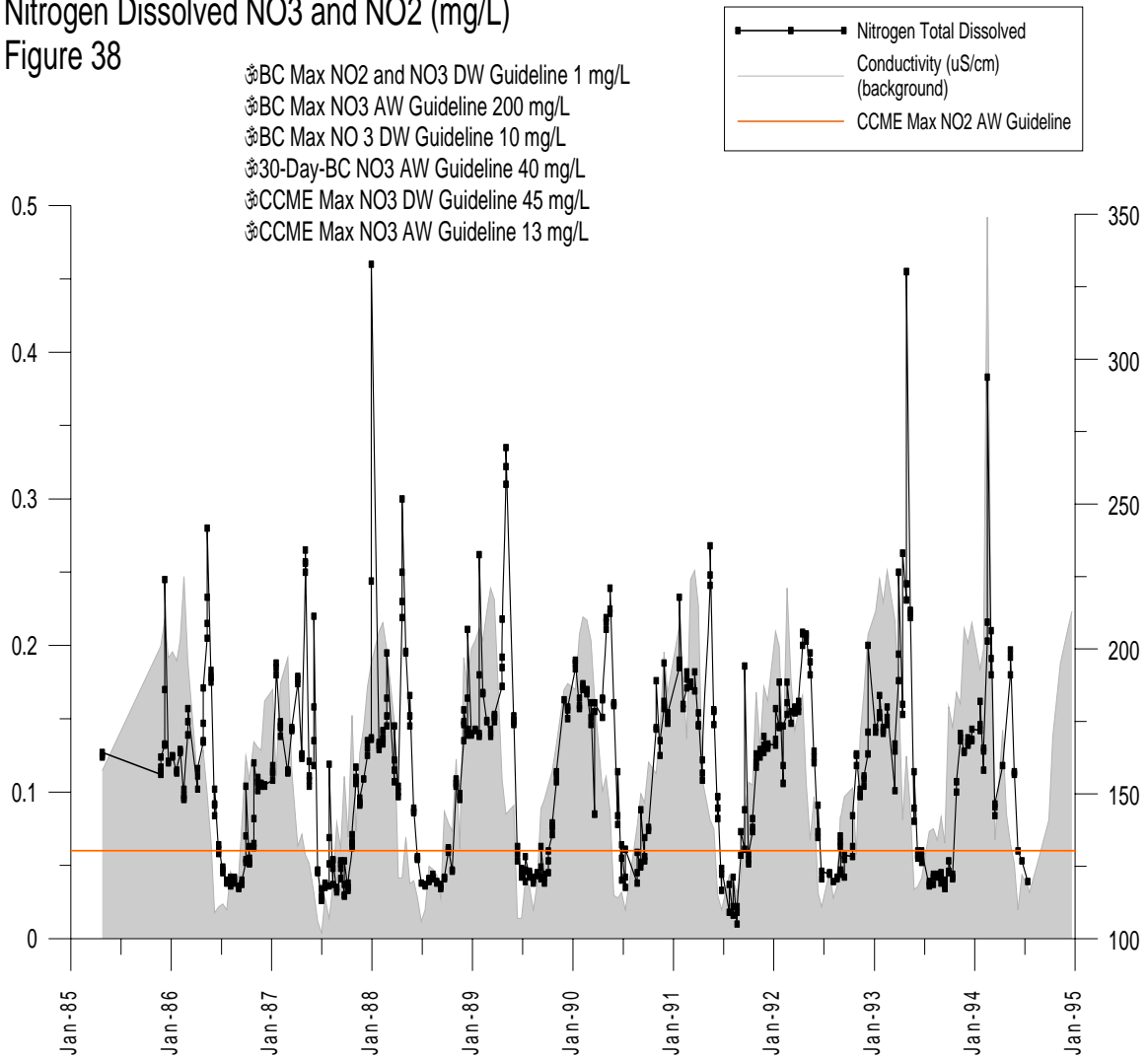


Fraser River at Hansard
 Nitrogen Dissolved Nitrate (mg/L)
 Figure 37



Fraser at River Hansard Nitrogen Dissolved NO₃ and NO₂ (mg/L)

Figure 38

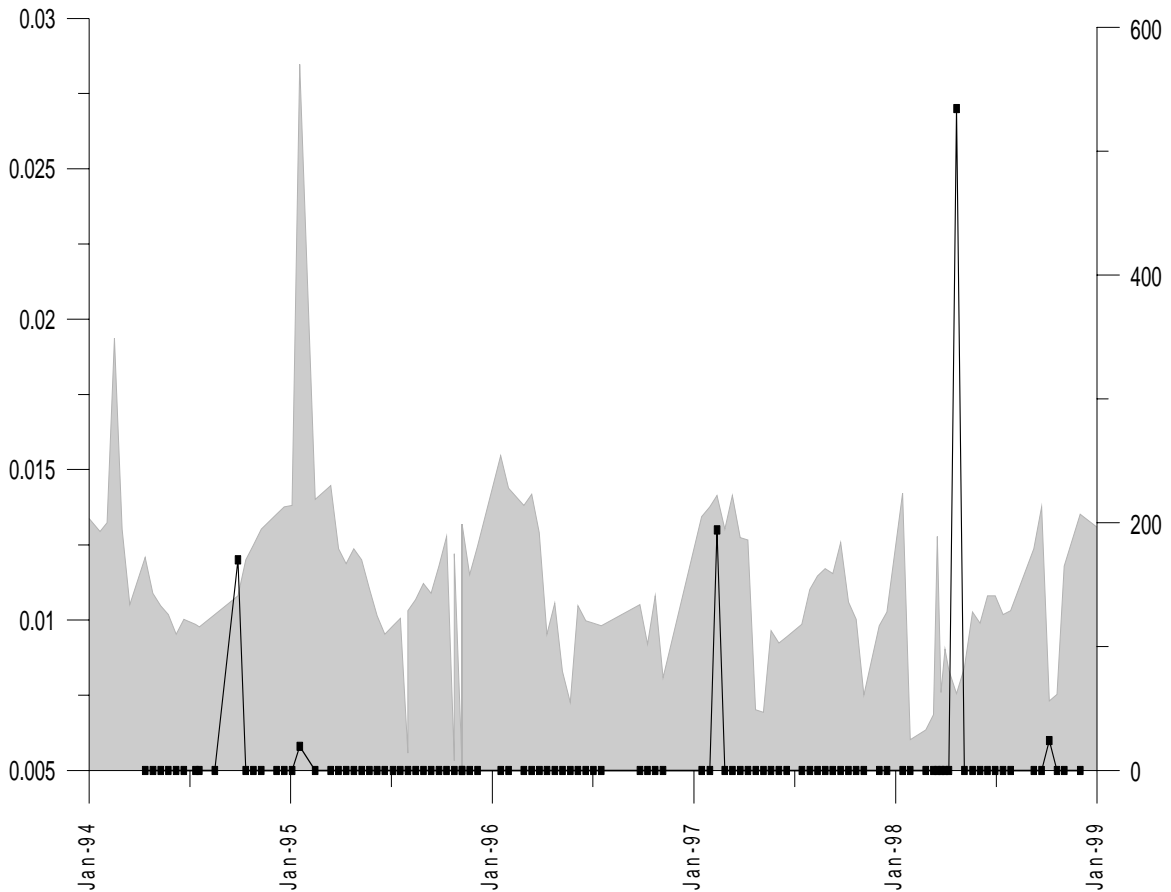
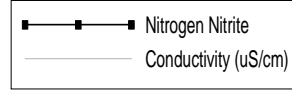


Fraser River at Hansard

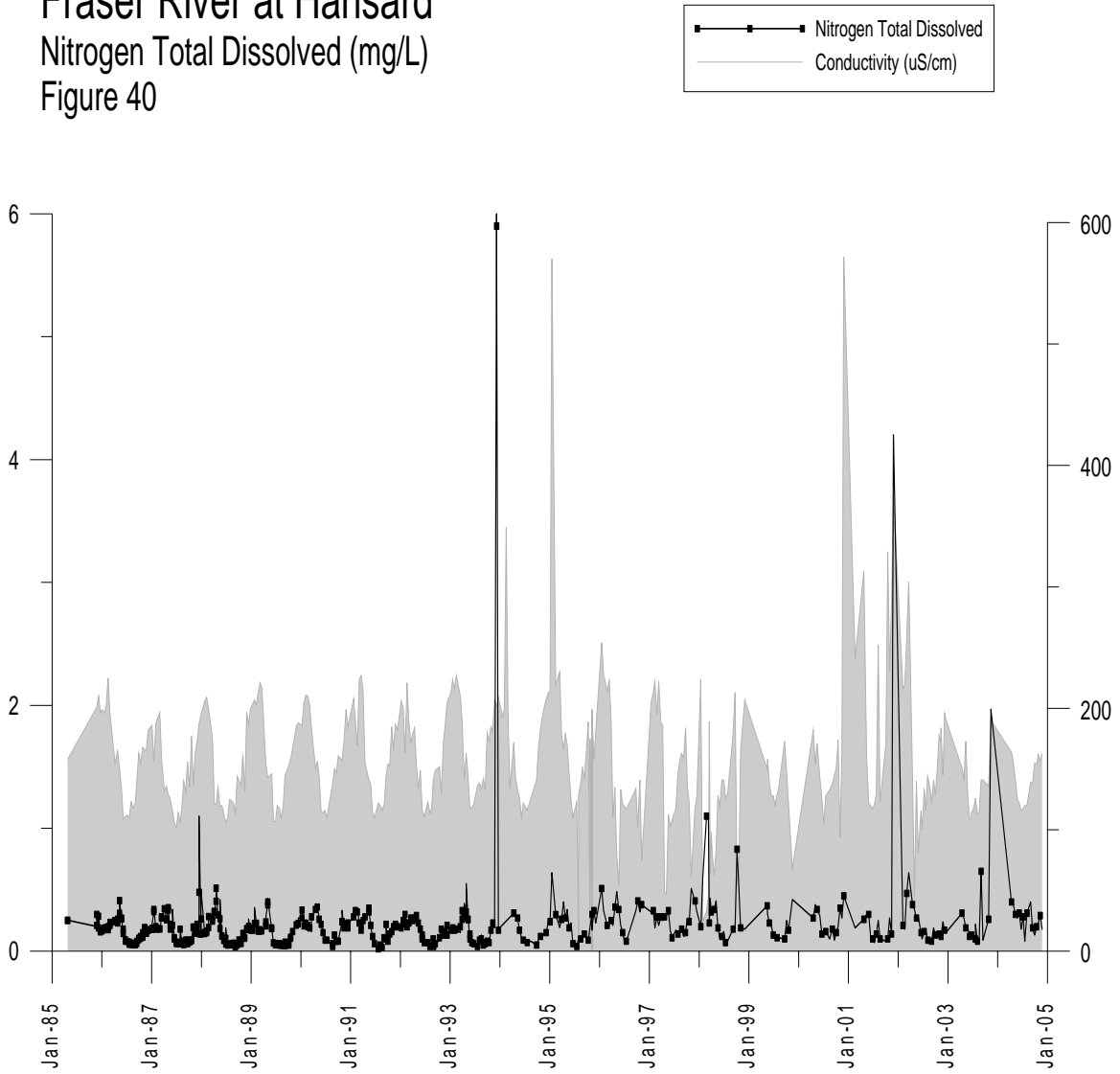
Nitrogen Nitrite (mg/L)

Figure 39

☼BC Max NO₂ and NO₃ DW Guideline 1 mg/L
☼CCME Max NO₂ AW Guideline 0.06 mg/L



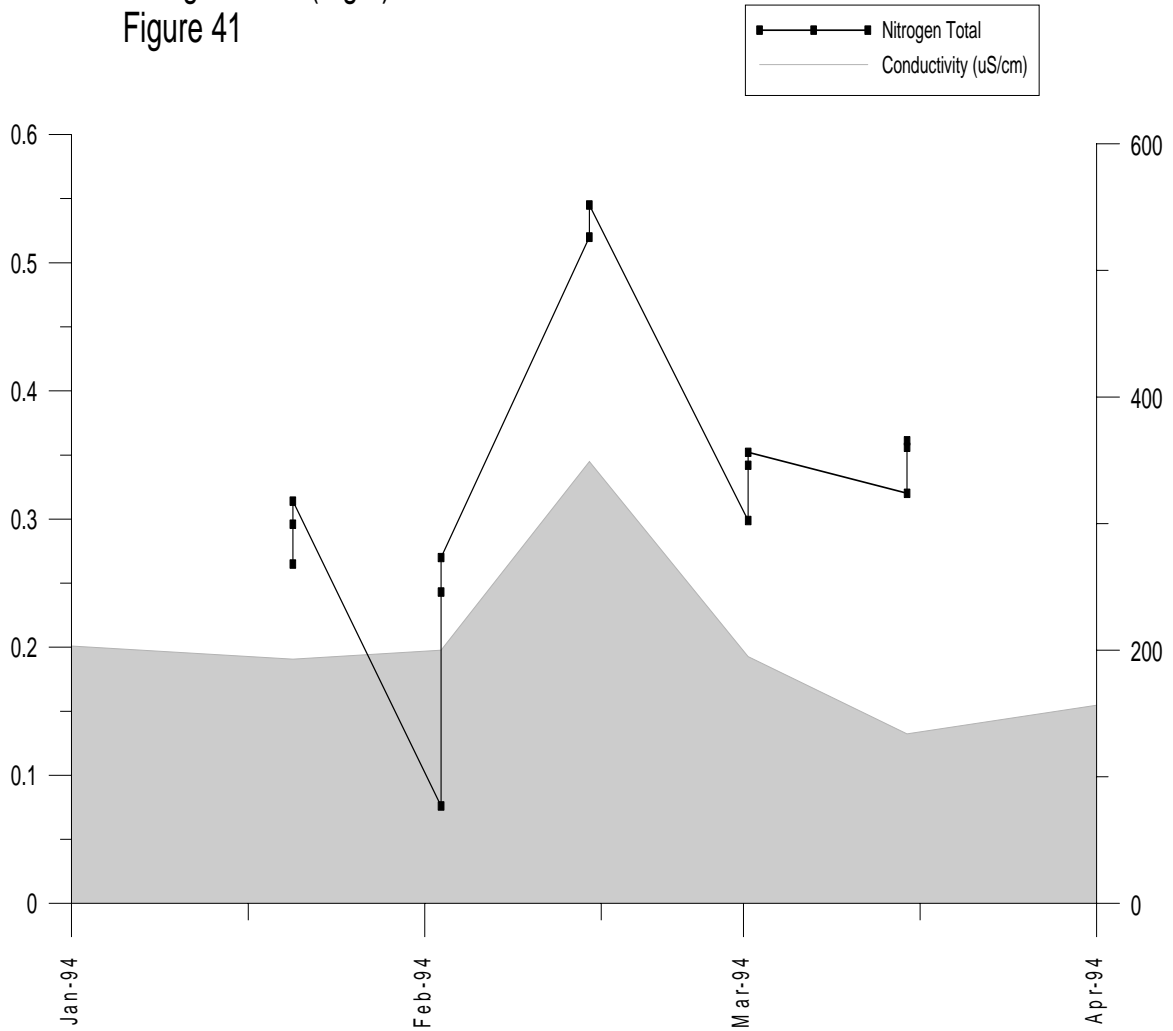
Fraser River at Hansard
Nitrogen Total Dissolved (mg/L)
Figure 40



Fraser River at Hansard

Nitrogen Total (mg/L)

Figure 41

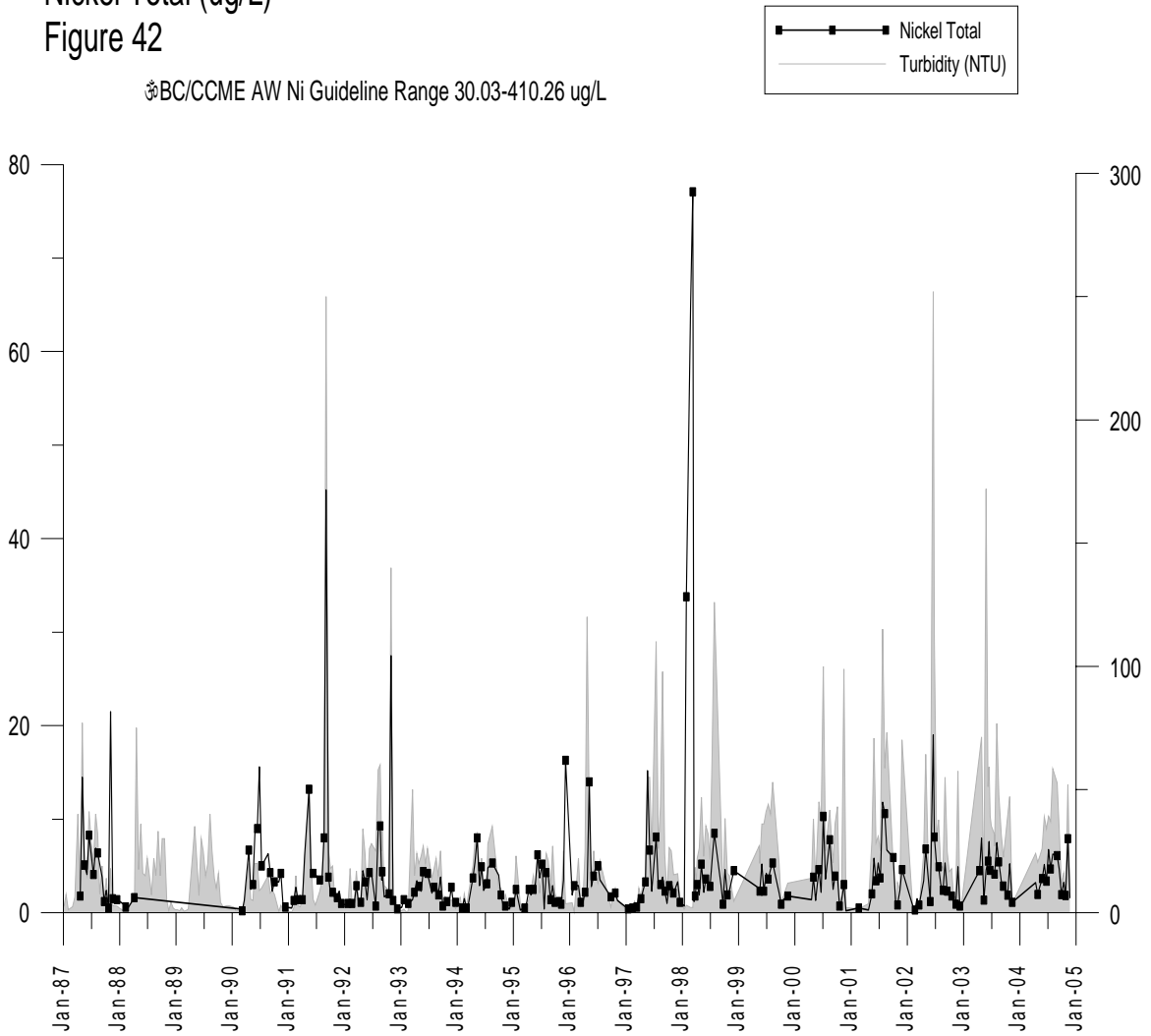


Fraser River at Hansard

Nickel Total (ug/L)

Figure 42

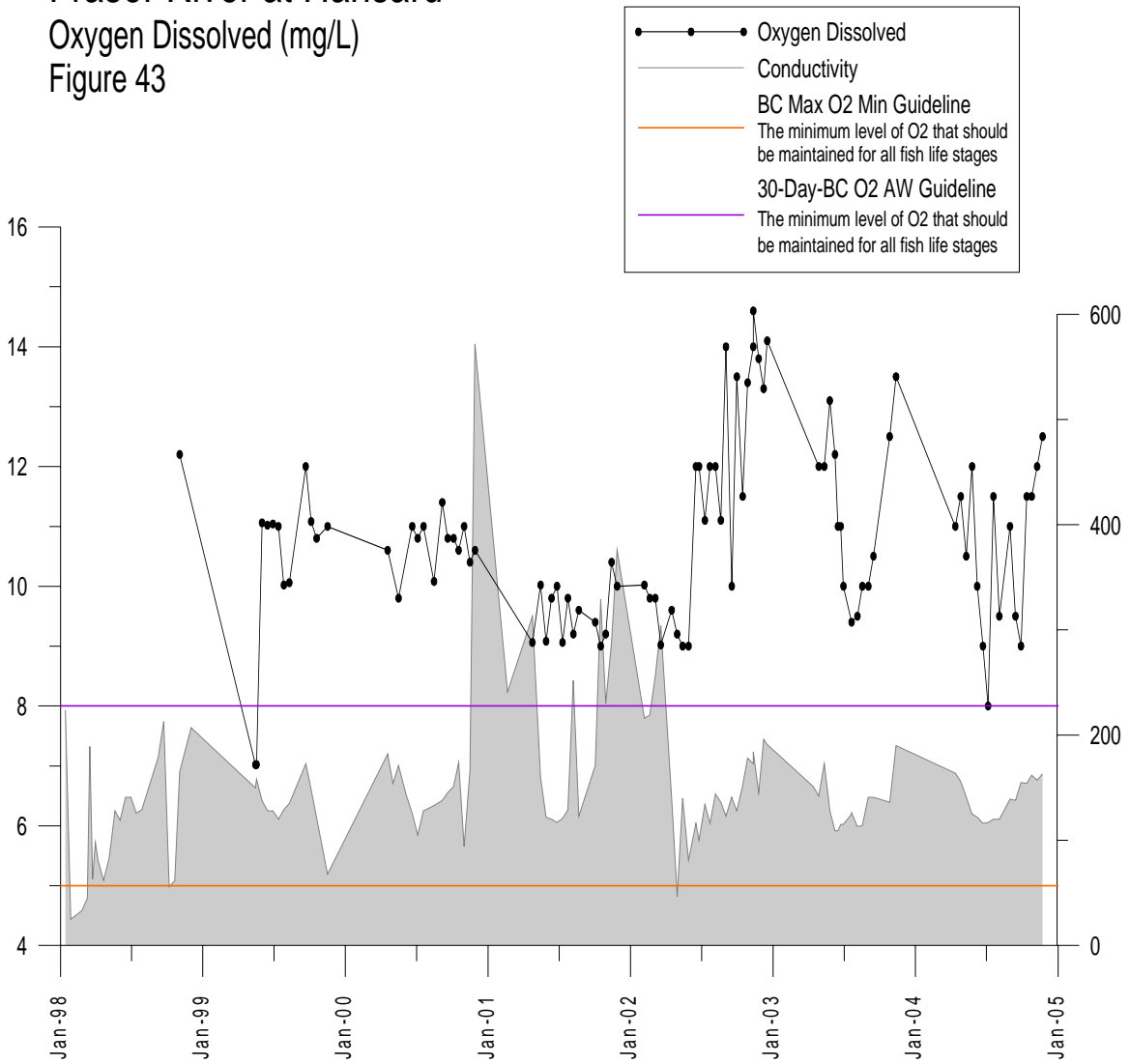
BC/CCME AW Ni Guideline Range 30.03-410.26 ug/L



Fraser River at Hansard

Oxygen Dissolved (mg/L)

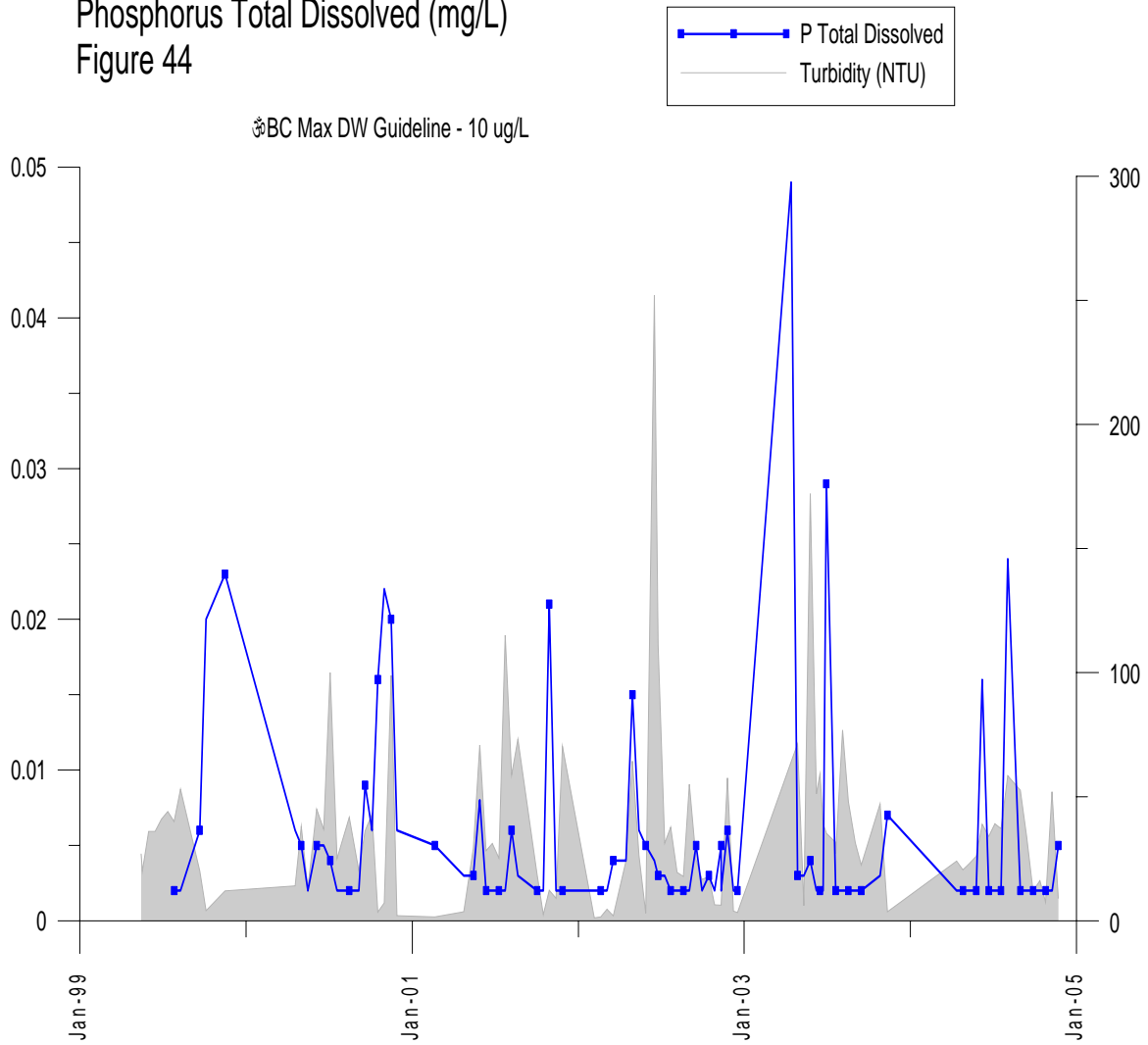
Figure 43



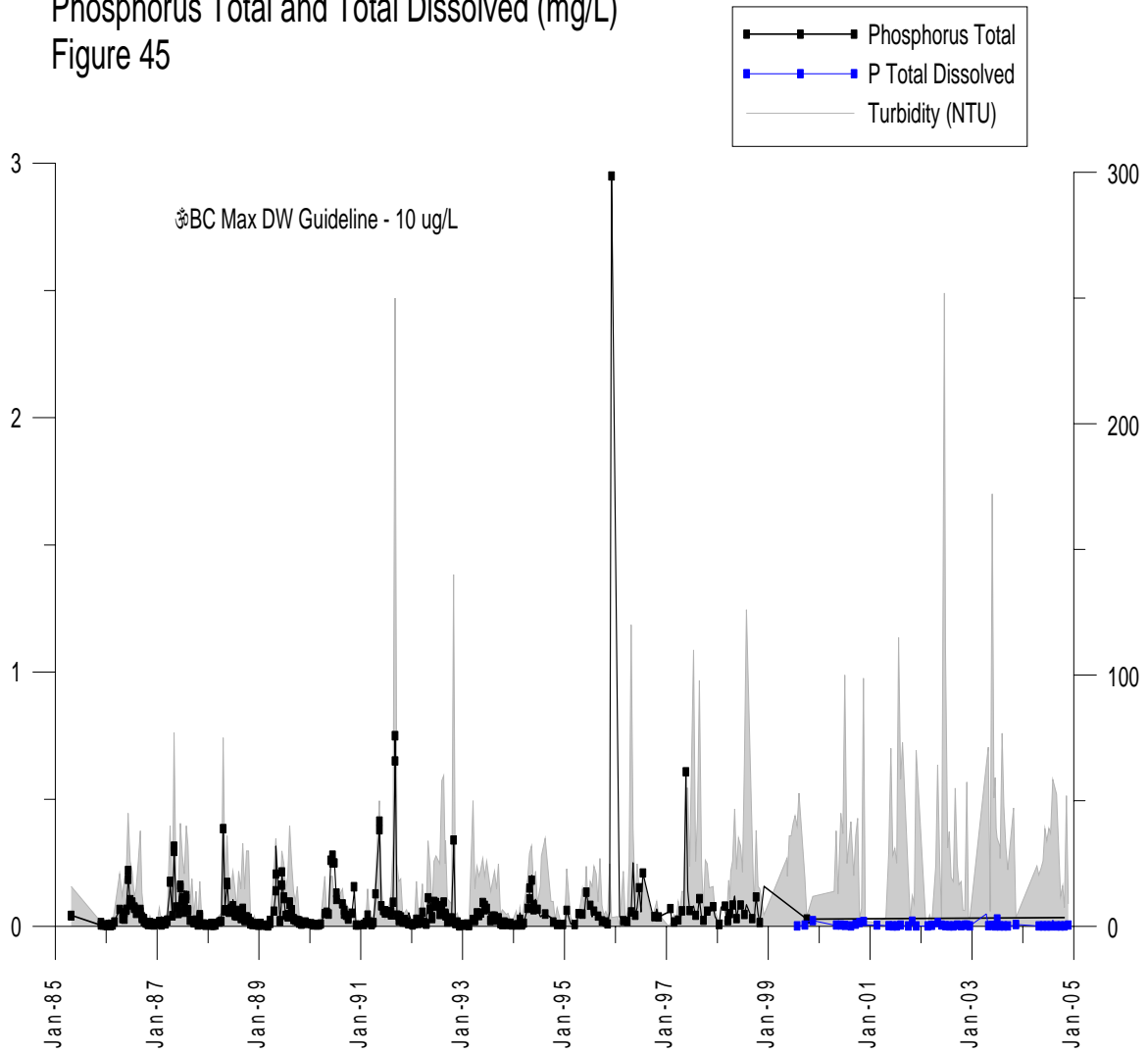
Fraser River at Hansard

Phosphorus Total Dissolved (mg/L)

Figure 44



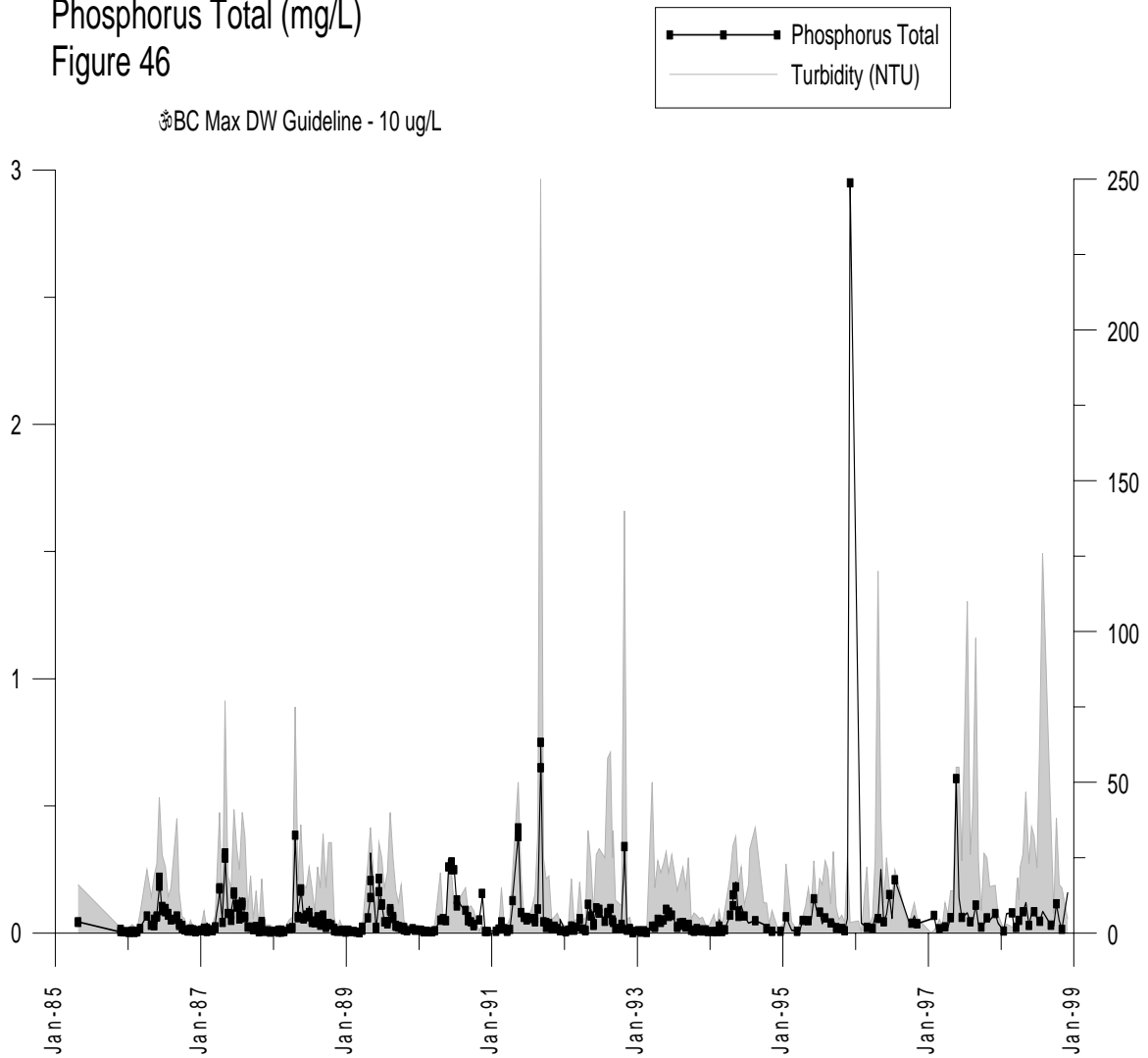
Fraser River at Hansard
Phosphorus Total and Total Dissolved (mg/L)
Figure 45



Fraser River at Hansard

Phosphorus Total (mg/L)

Figure 46

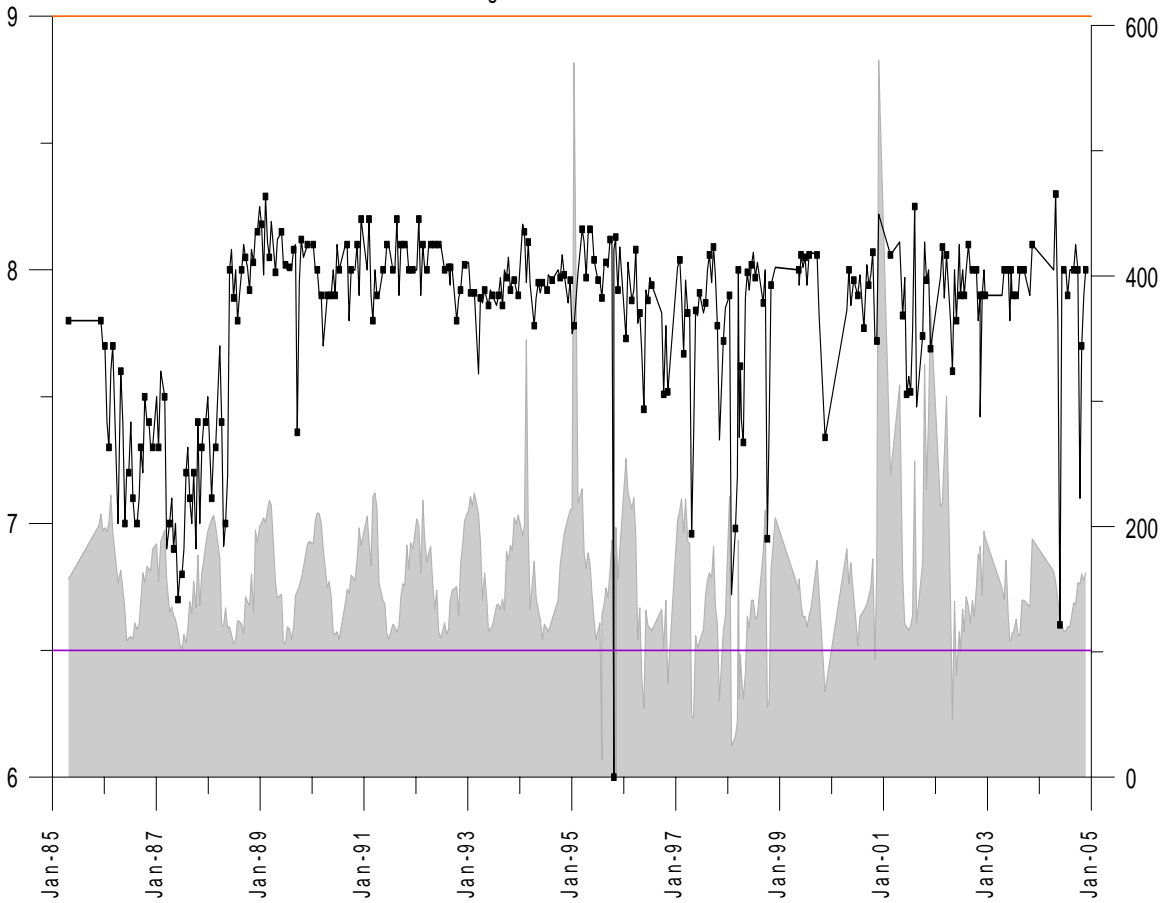
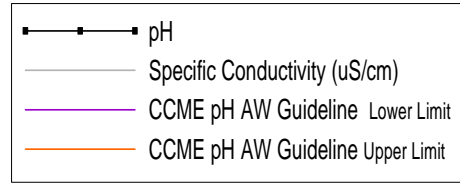


Fraser River at Hansard

pH (relative units)

Figure 47

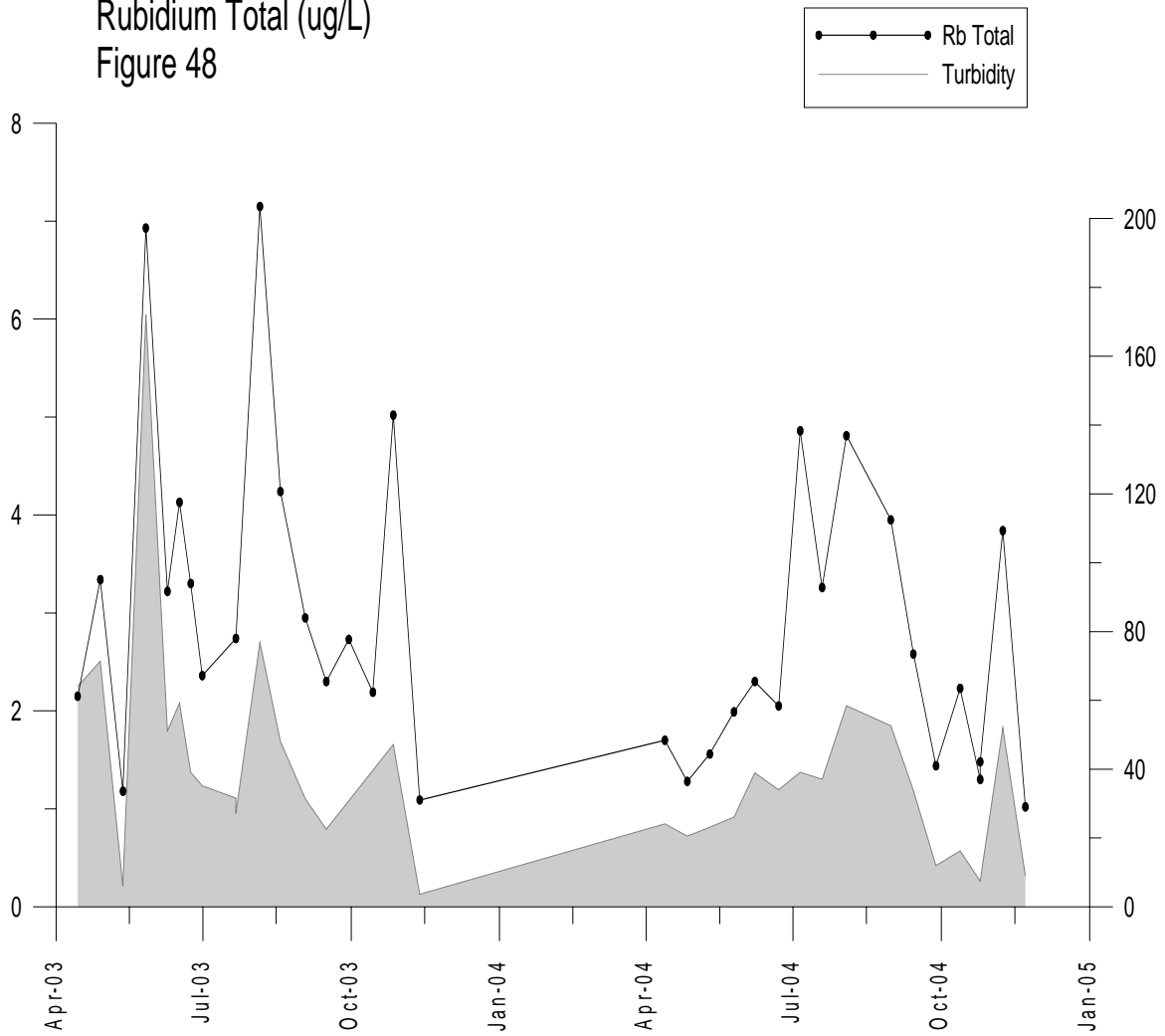
⊗ Outliers removed at 8/1/95 - 13 ug/L
11/7/95 - 0 ug/L



Fraser River at Hansard

Rubidium Total (ug/L)

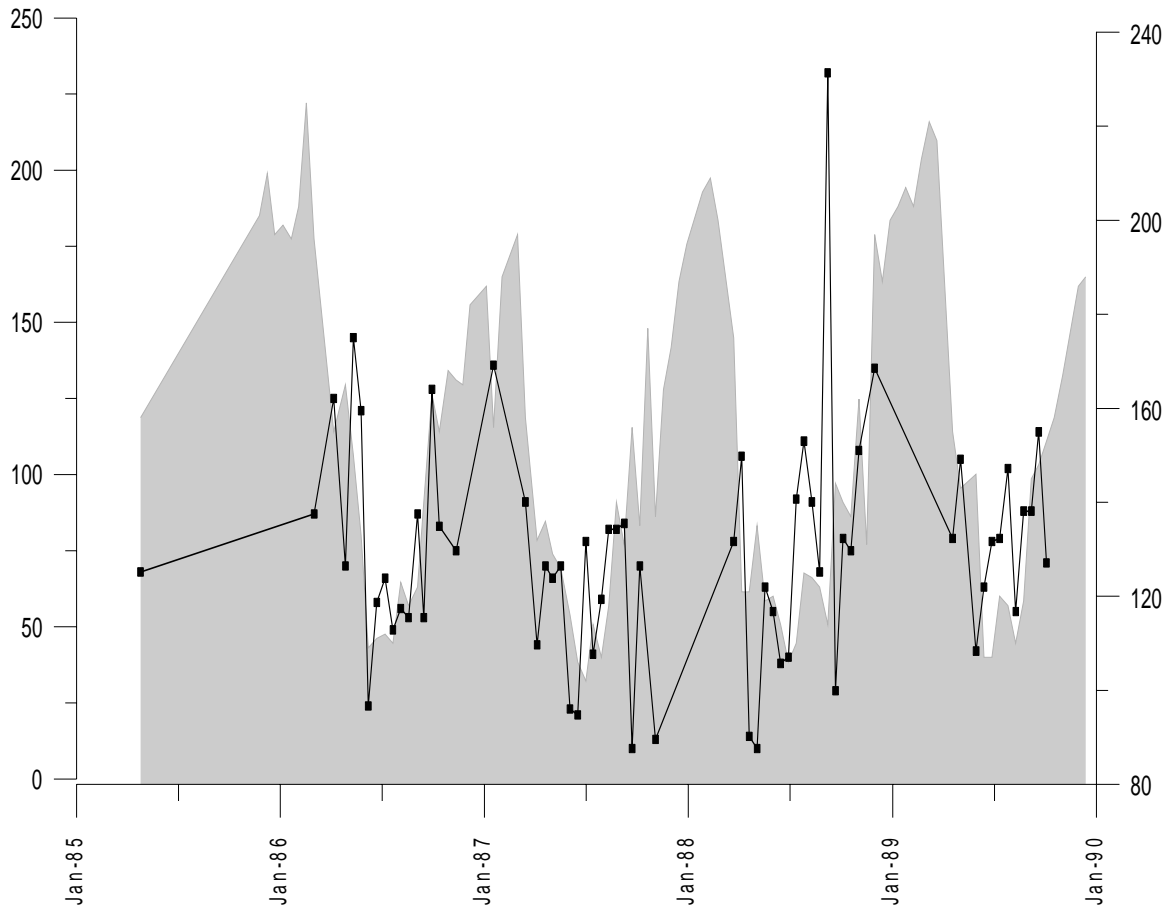
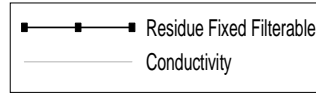
Figure 48



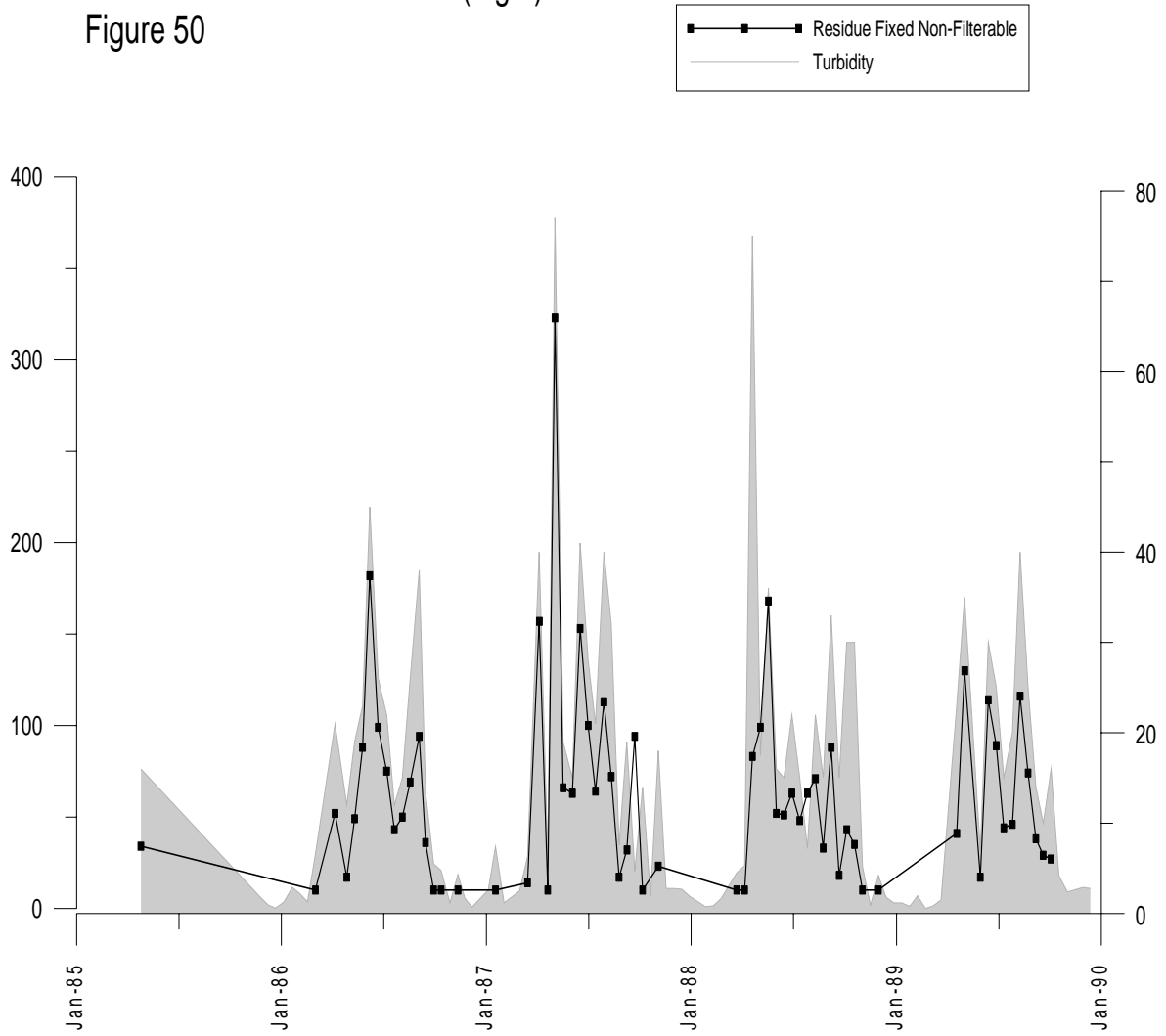
Fraser River at Hansard

Residue Fixed Filterable (mg/L)

Figure 49



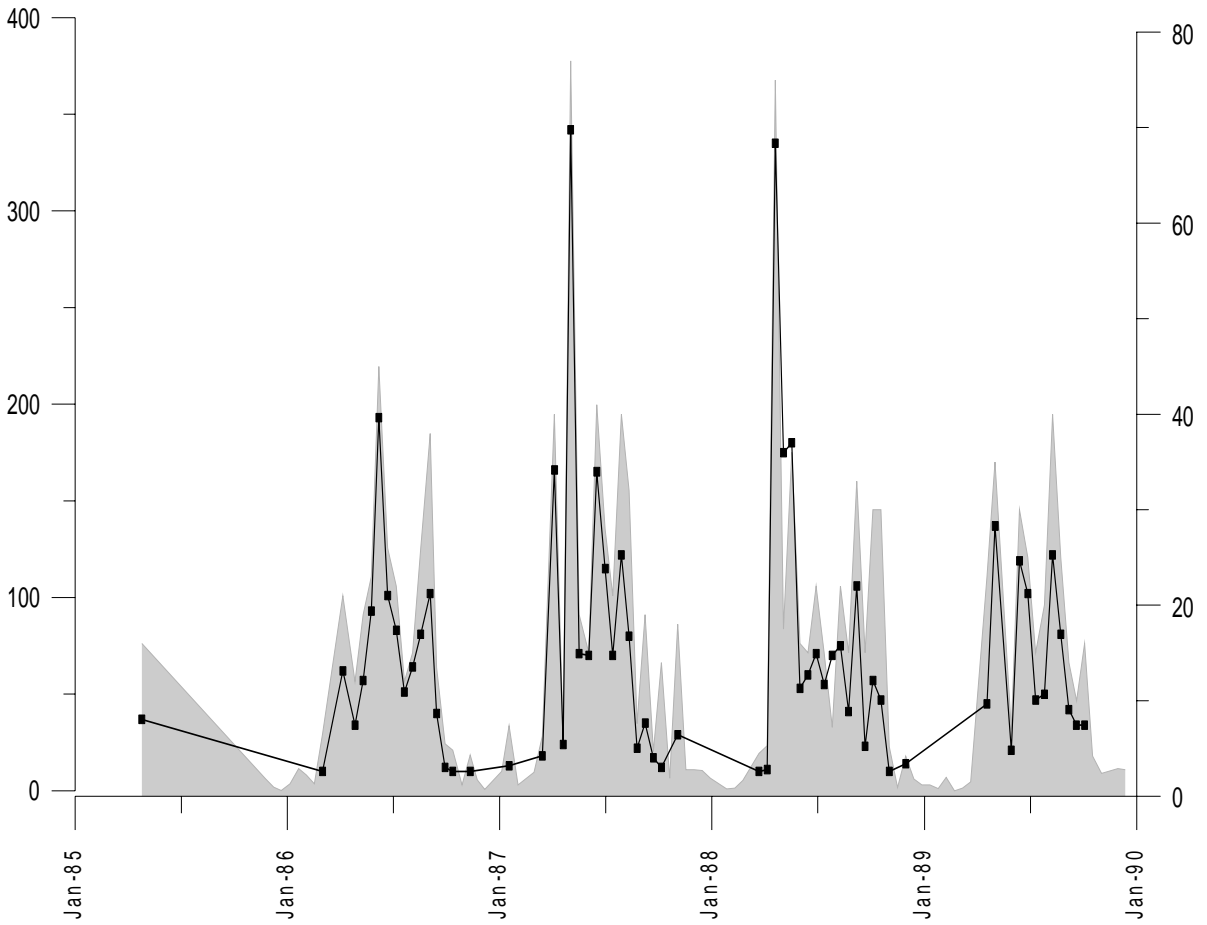
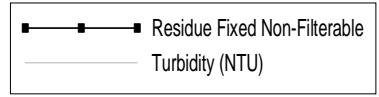
Fraser River at Hansard
Residue Fixed Non-Filterable (mg/L)
Figure 50



Fraser River at Hansard

Residue Non-Filterable (mg/L)

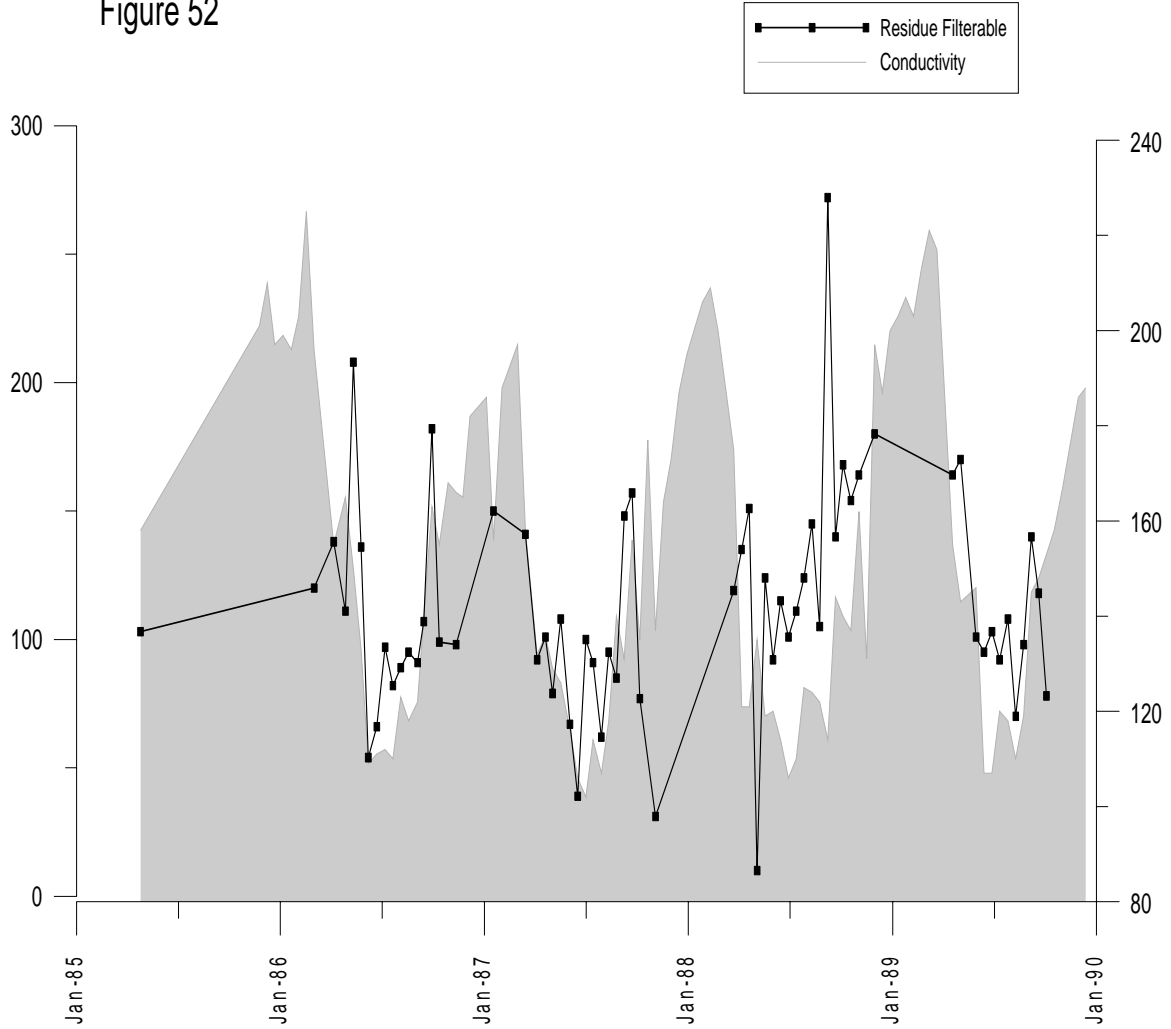
Figure 51



Fraser River at Hansard

Residue Filterable (mg/L)

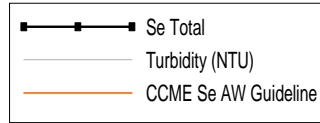
Figure 52



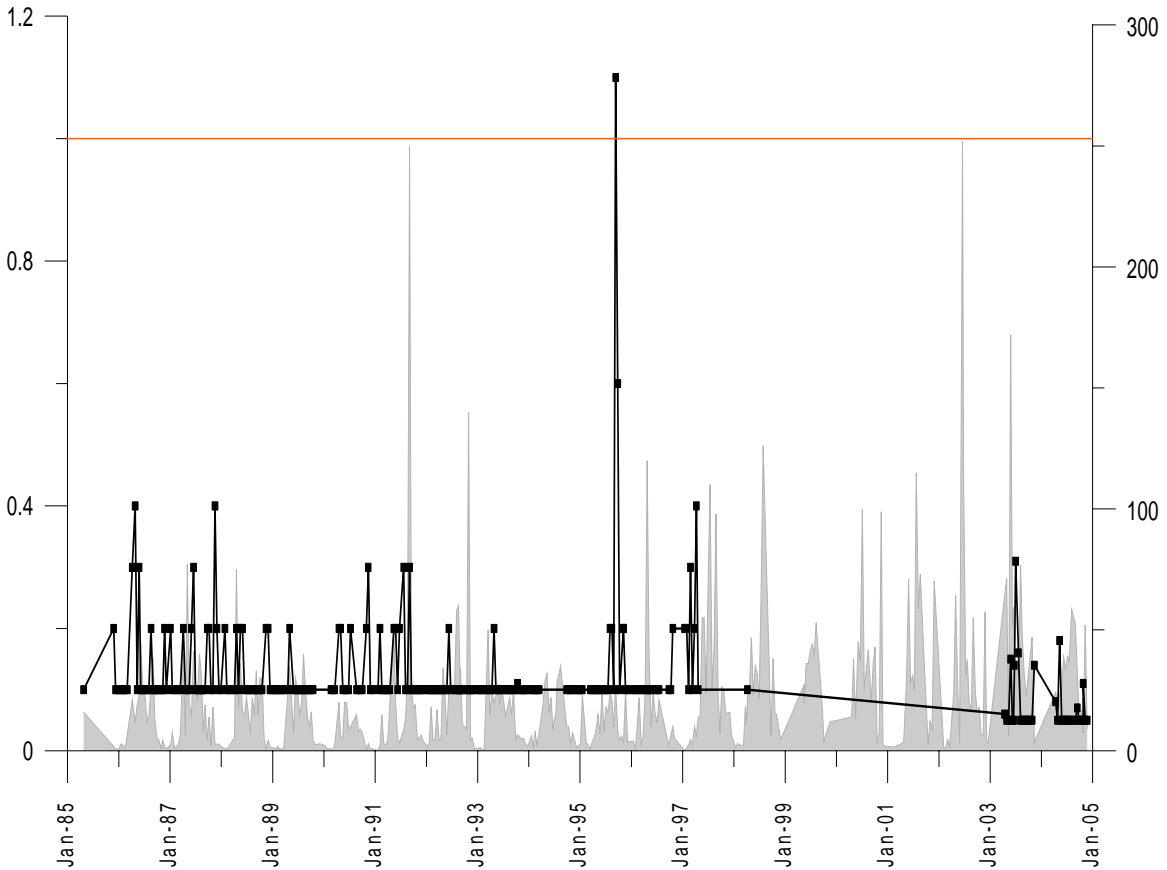
Fraser River at Hansard

Selenium Total (ug/L)

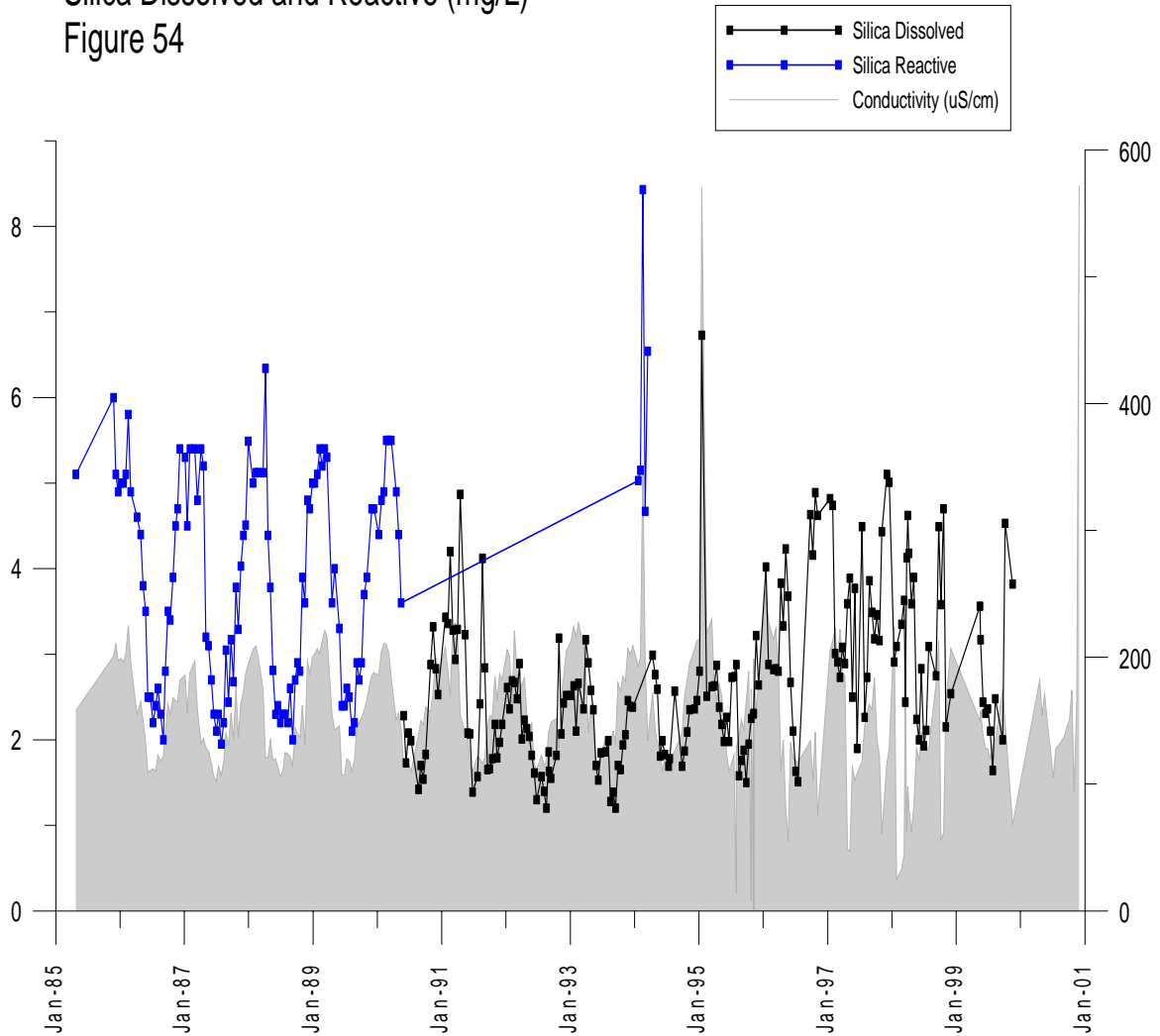
Figure 53



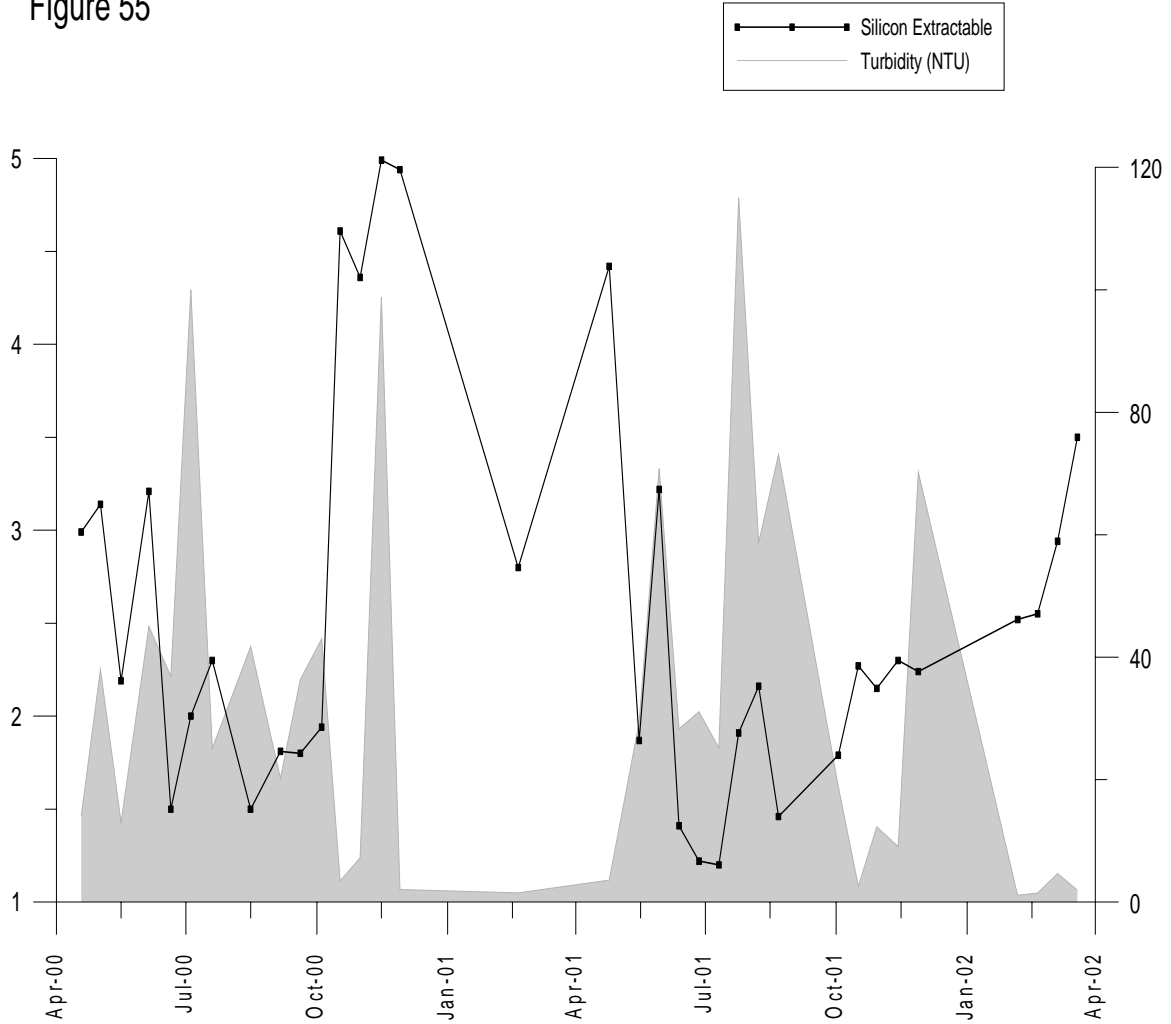
⊕ BC Max Se DW Guideline - 10ug/L
⊕ BC Max Se AW Guideline - 2 ug/L mean
⊕ 30 Day BC Se Aw Guideline - 2 ug/L



Fraser River at Hansard
Silica Dissolved and Reactive (mg/L)
Figure 54



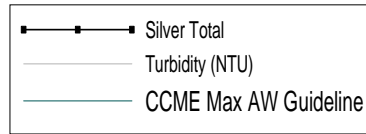
Fraser at Hansard
Silicon Extractable (mg/L)
Figure 55



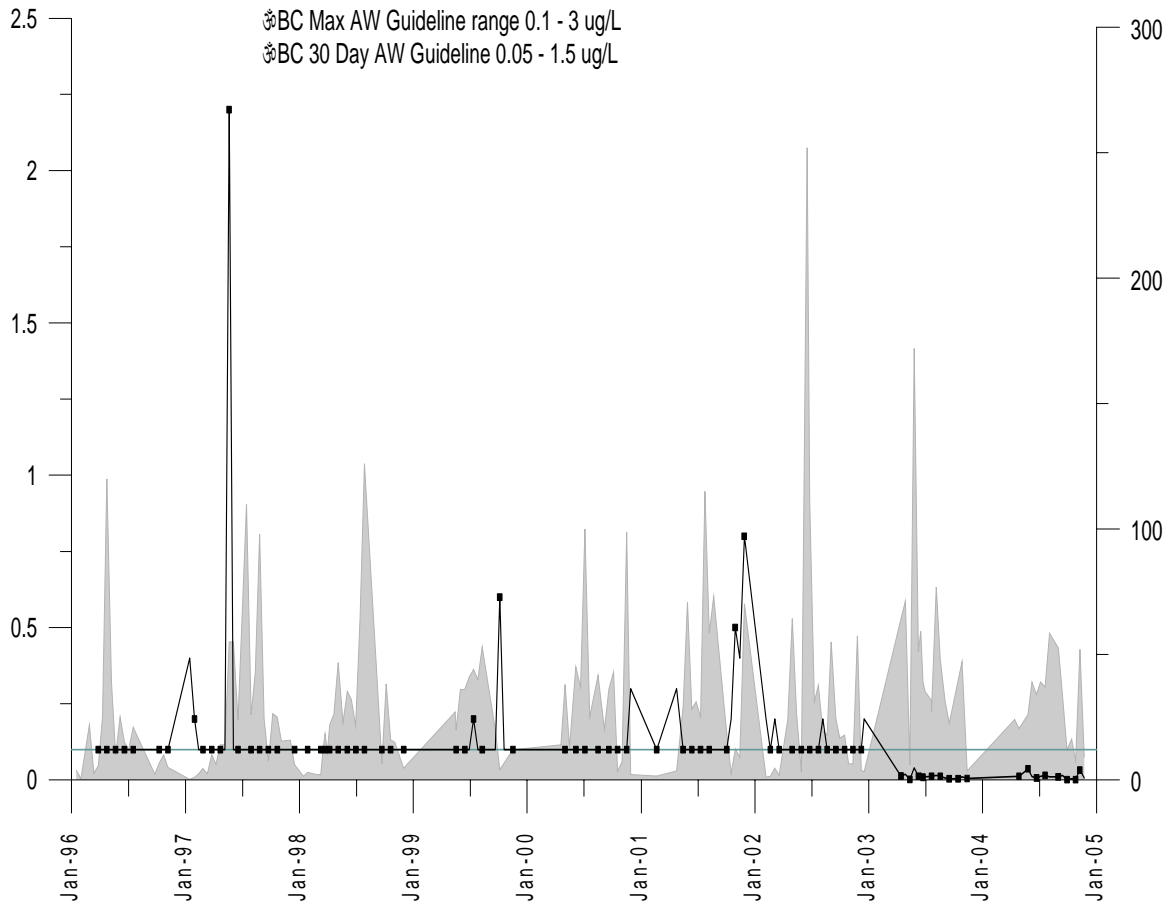
Fraser River at Hansard

Silver Total (ug/L)

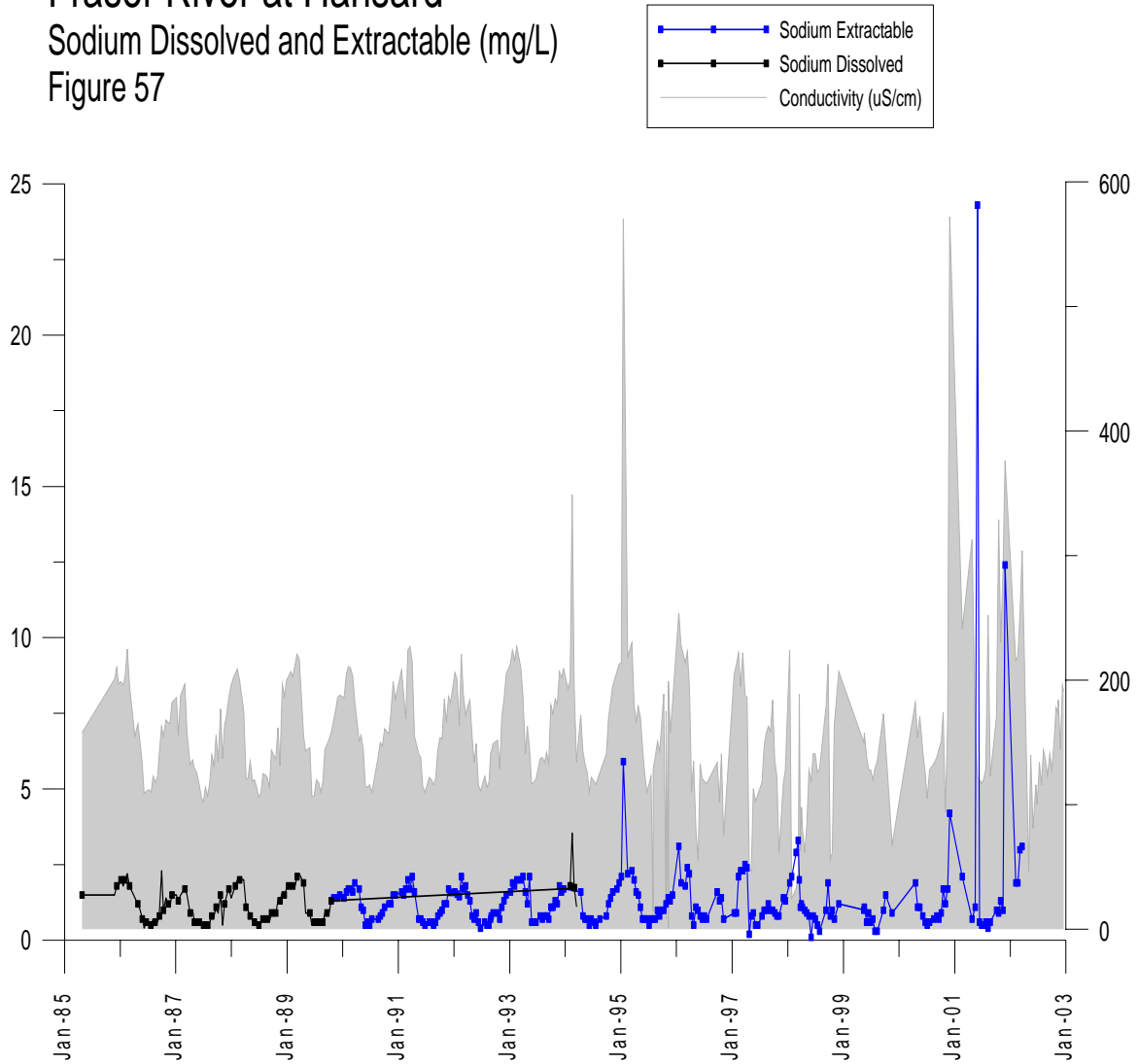
Figure 56



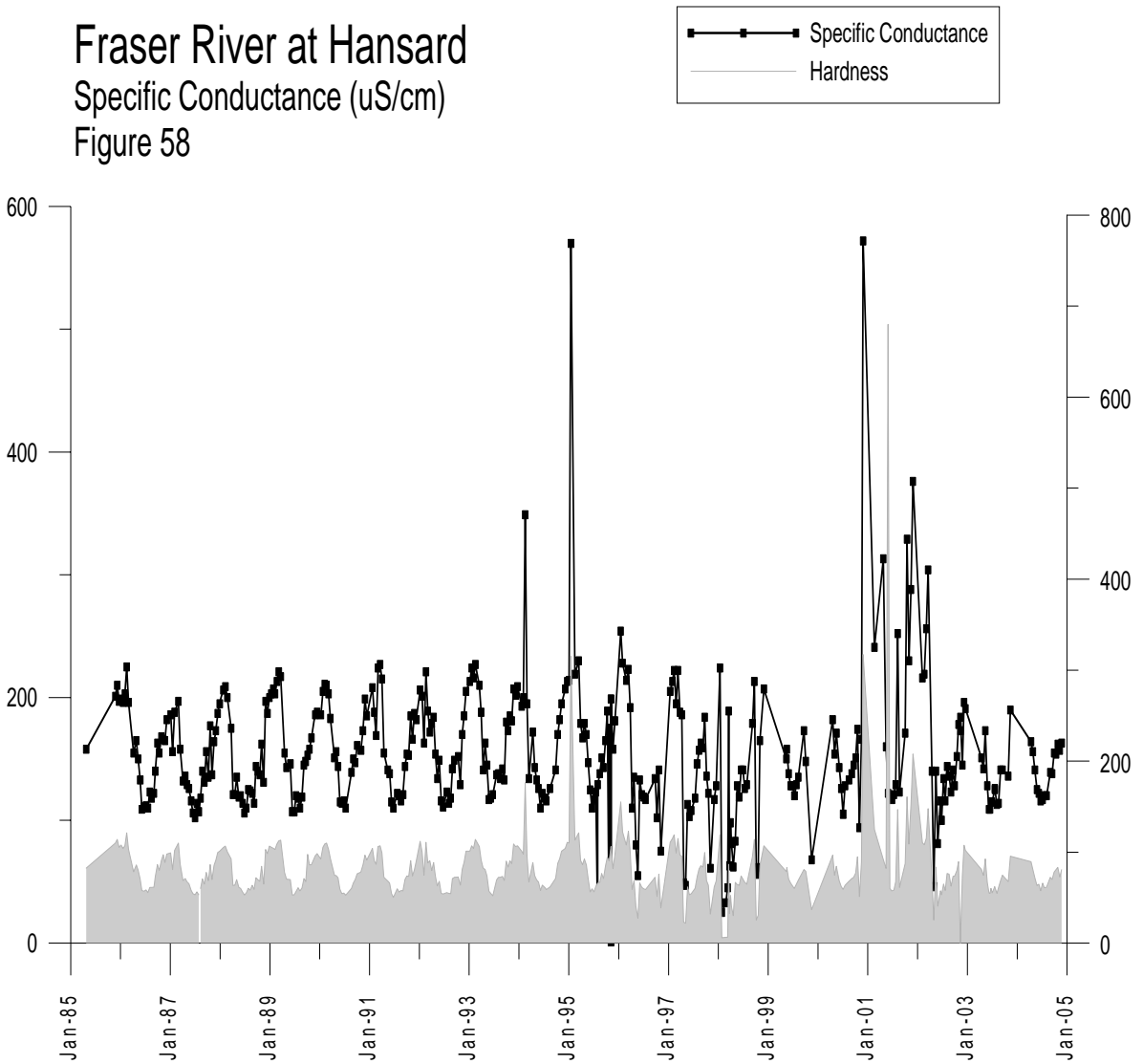
Outlier Removed at: 04/11/1997 9:30 - 9.8 ug/L



Fraser River at Hansard
Sodium Dissolved and Extractable (mg/L)
Figure 57



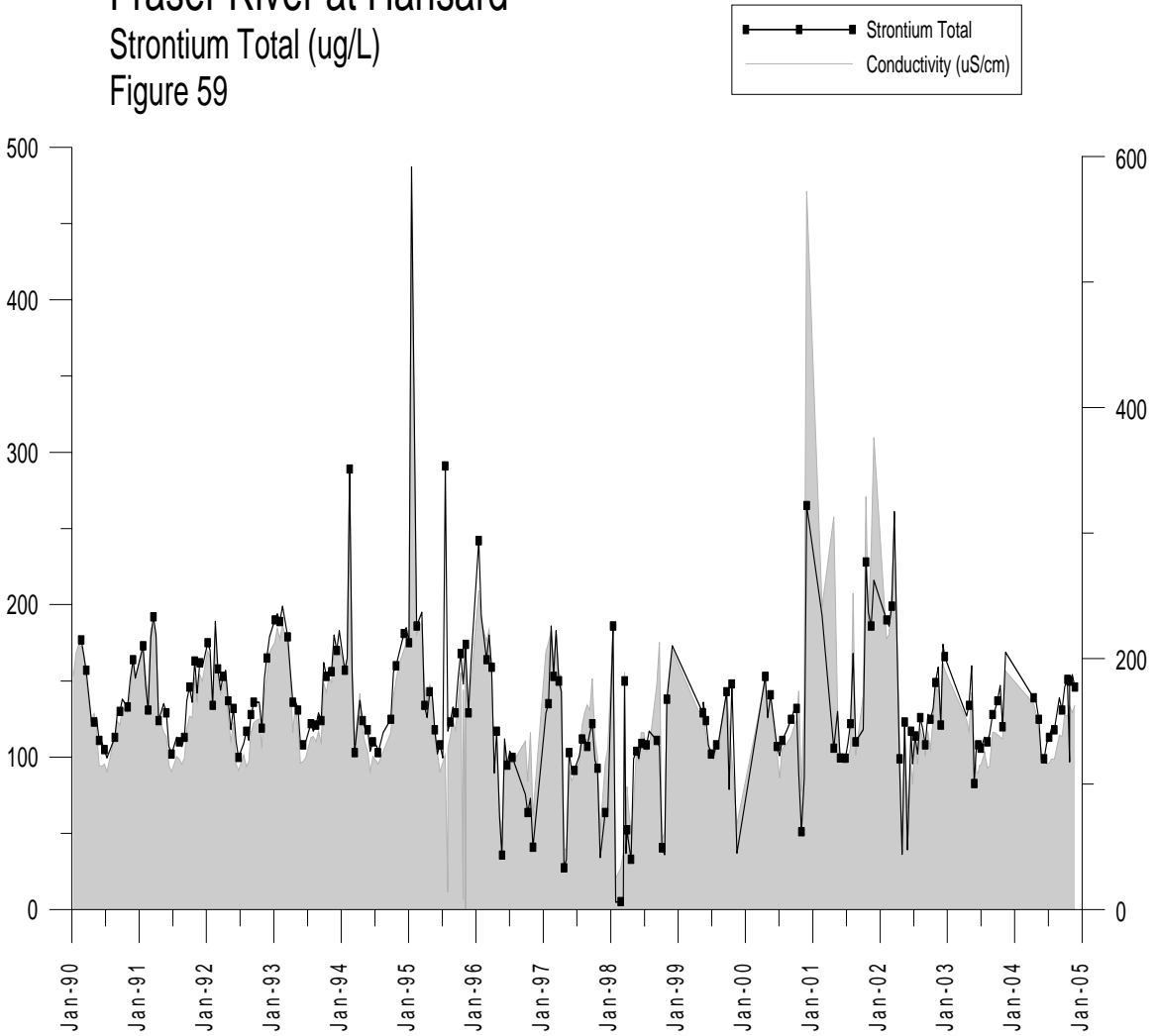
Fraser River at Hansard
Specific Conductance (uS/cm)
Figure 58



Fraser River at Hansard

Strontium Total (ug/L)

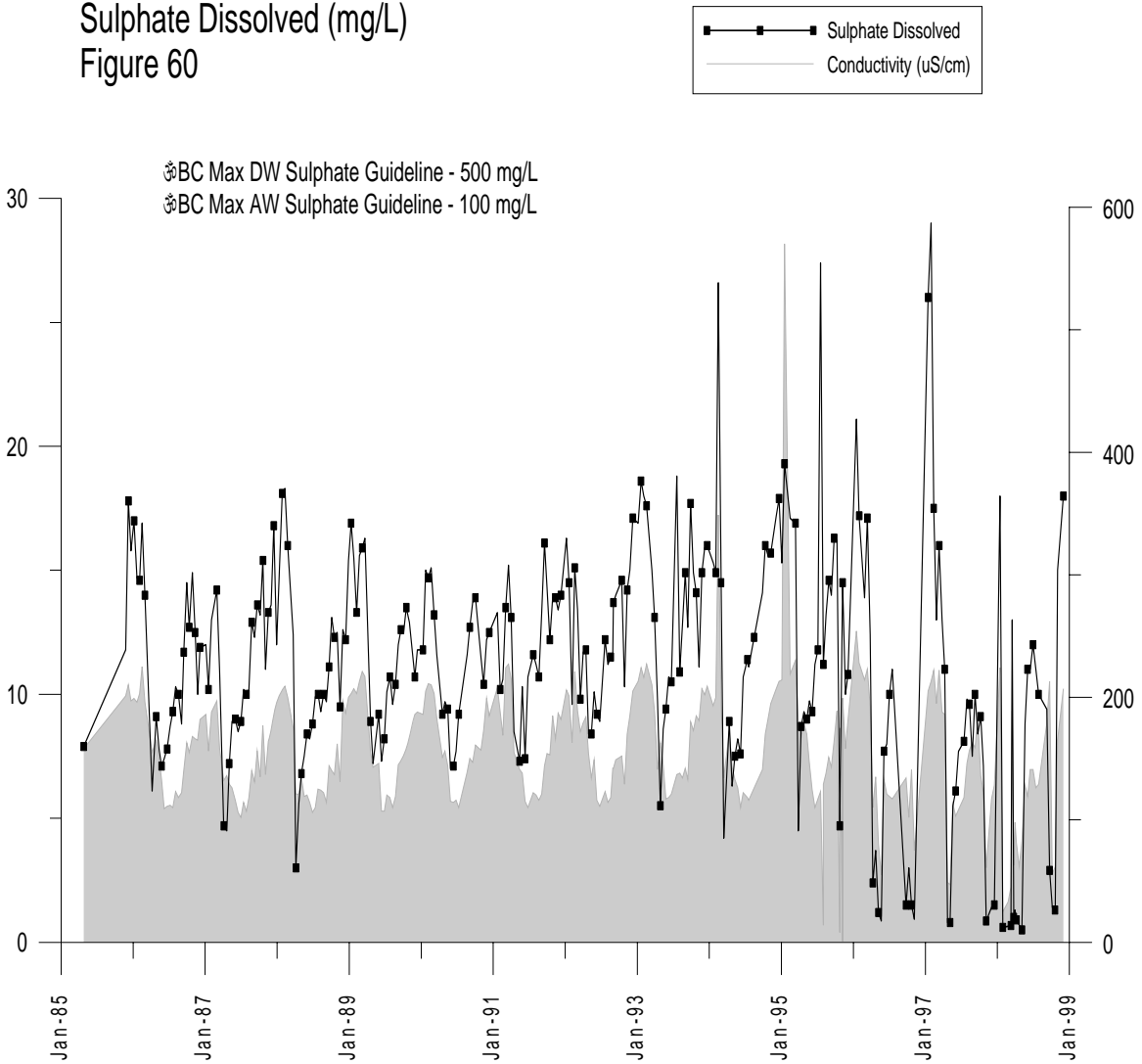
Figure 59

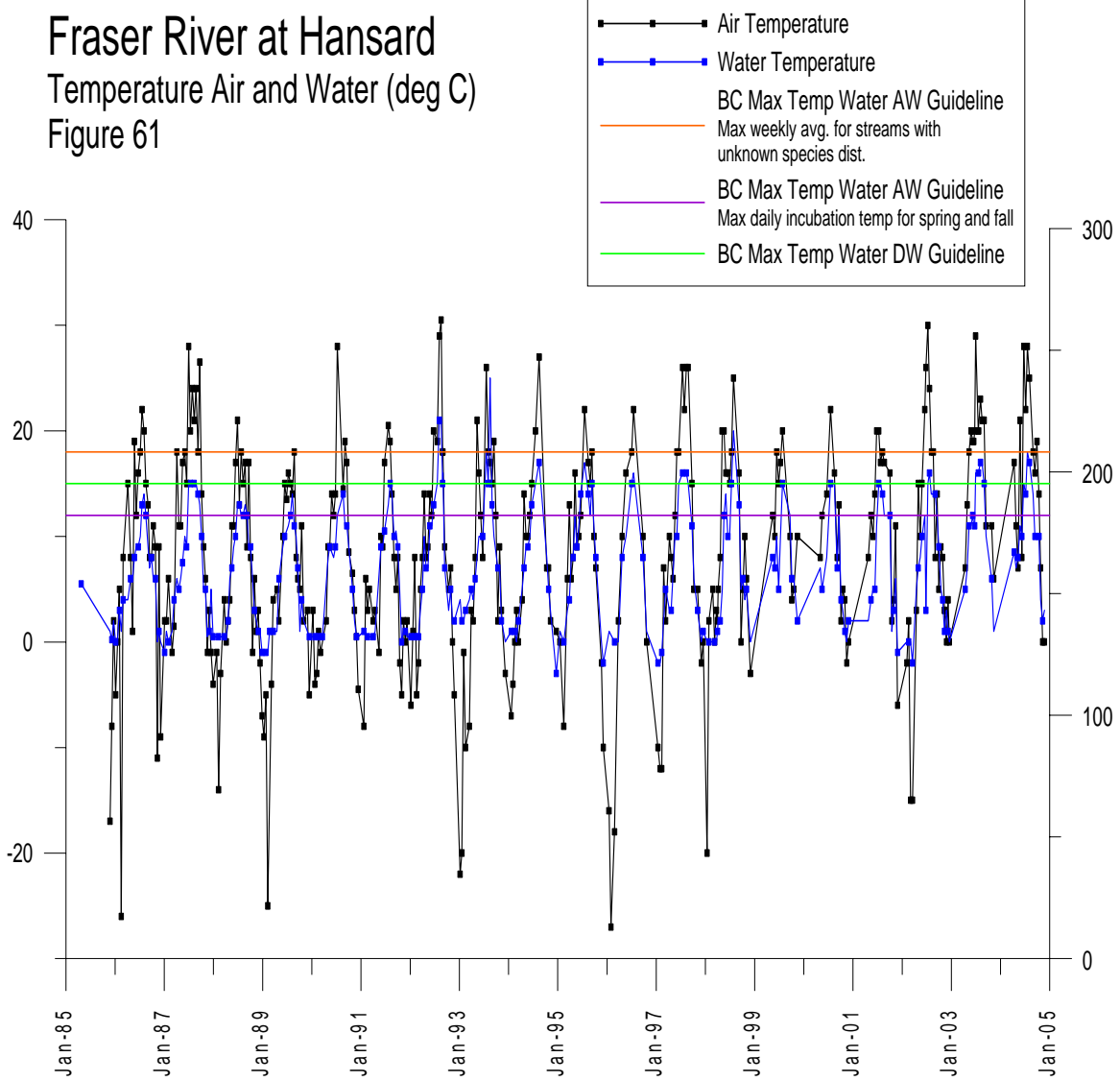


Fraser River at Hansard

Sulphate Dissolved (mg/L)

Figure 60

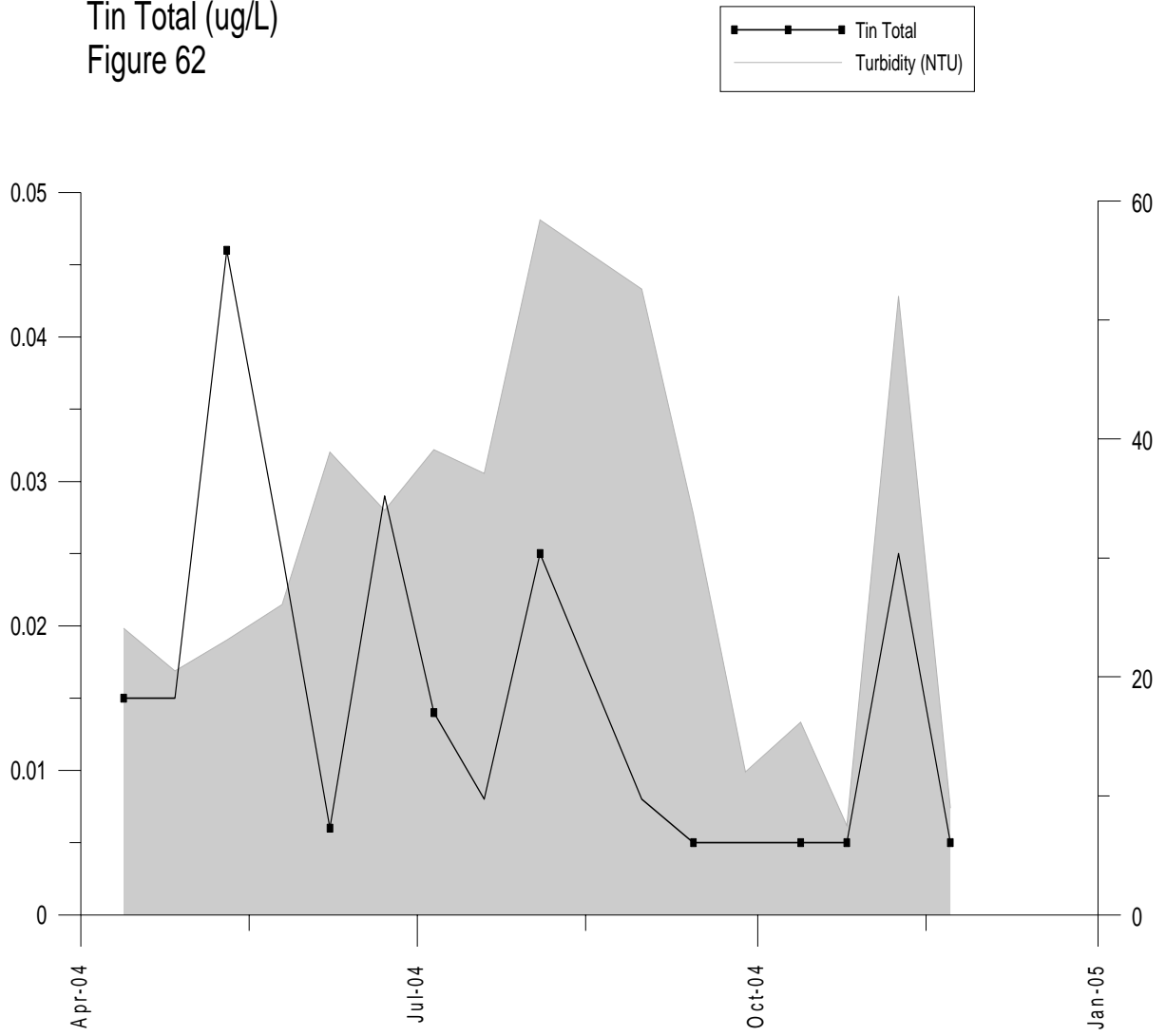




Fraser River at Hansard

Tin Total (ug/L)

Figure 62

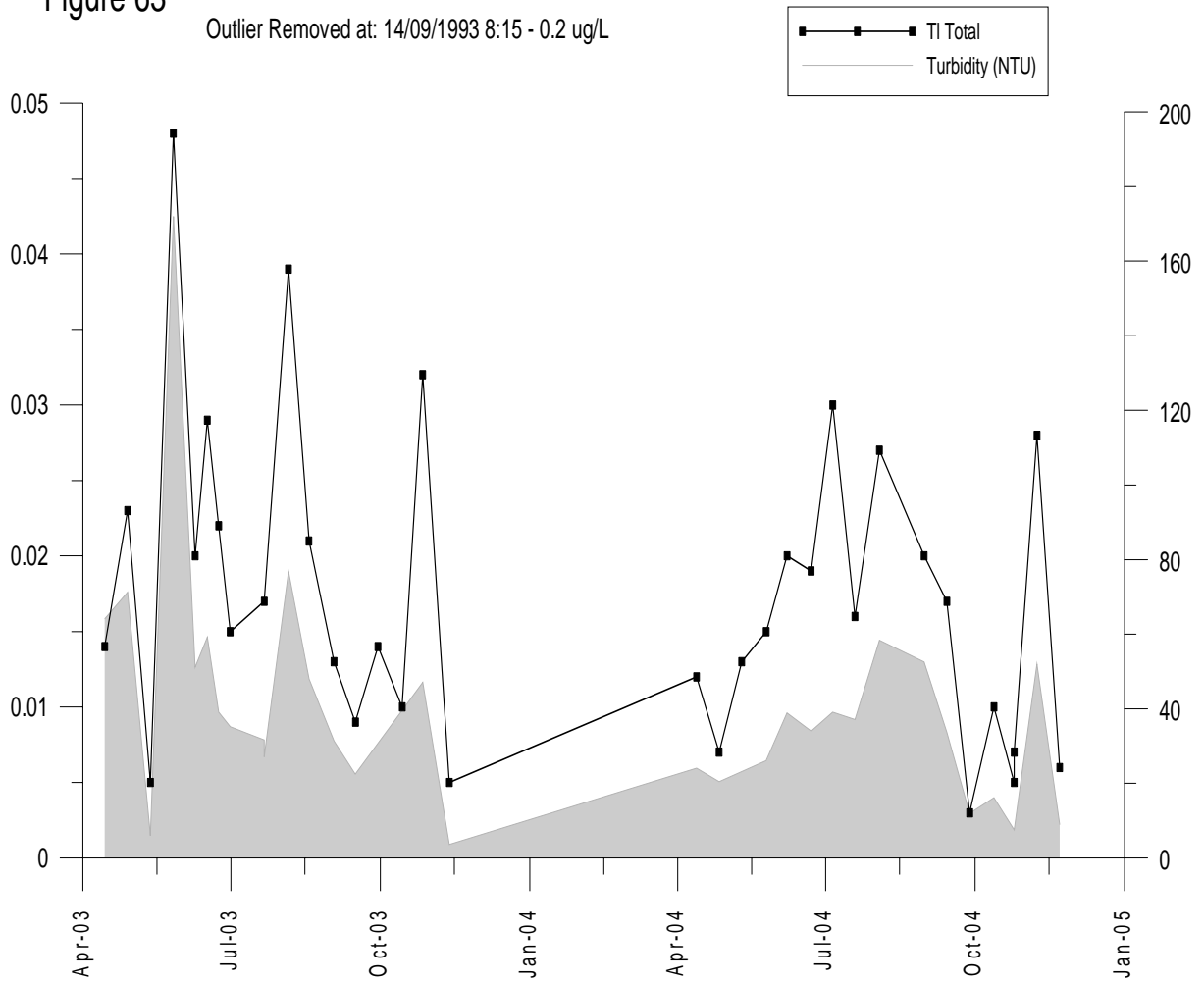


Fraser River at Hansard

Thallium Total (ug/L)

Figure 63

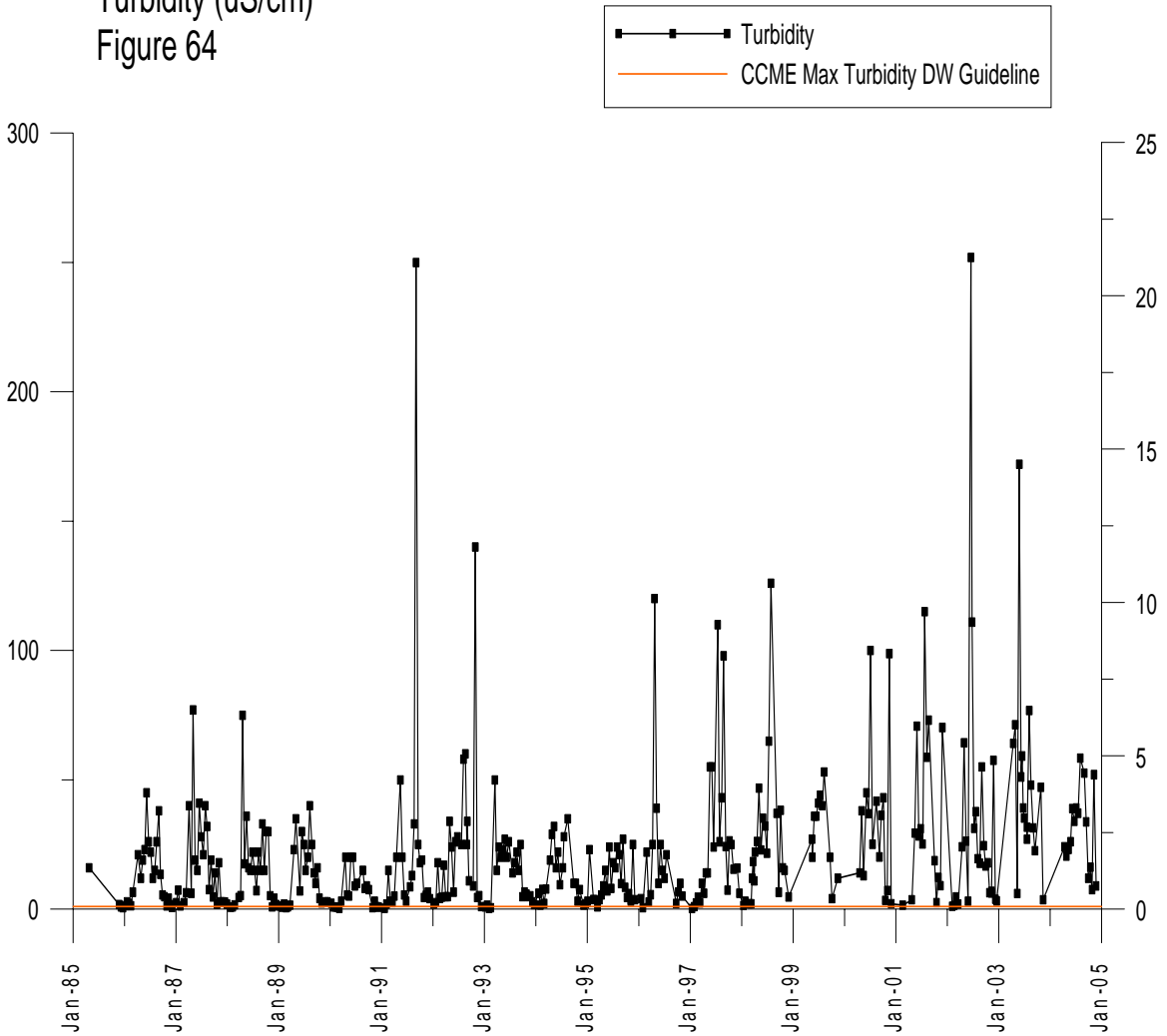
Outlier Removed at: 14/09/1993 8:15 - 0.2 ug/L



Fraser River at Hansard

Turbidity (uS/cm)

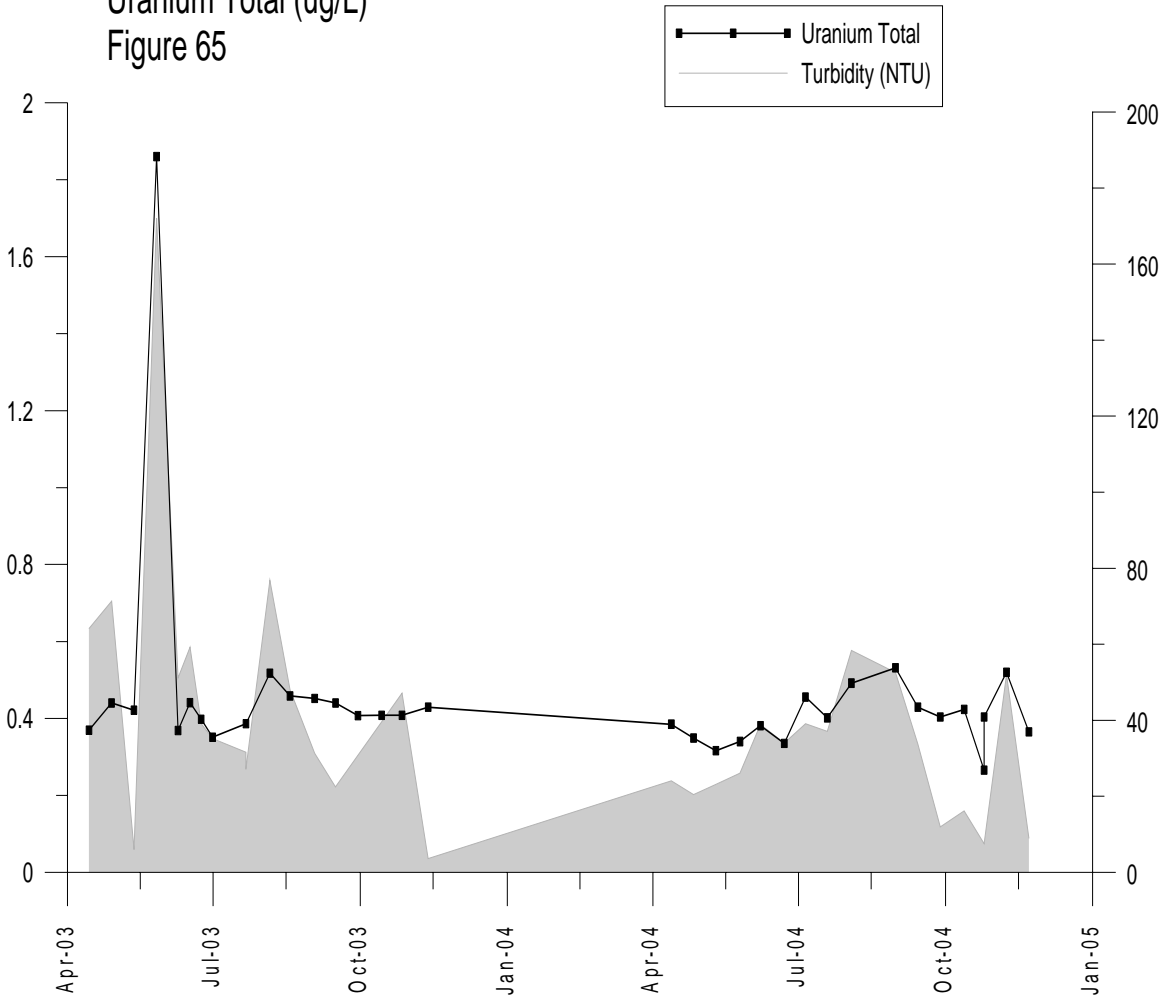
Figure 64

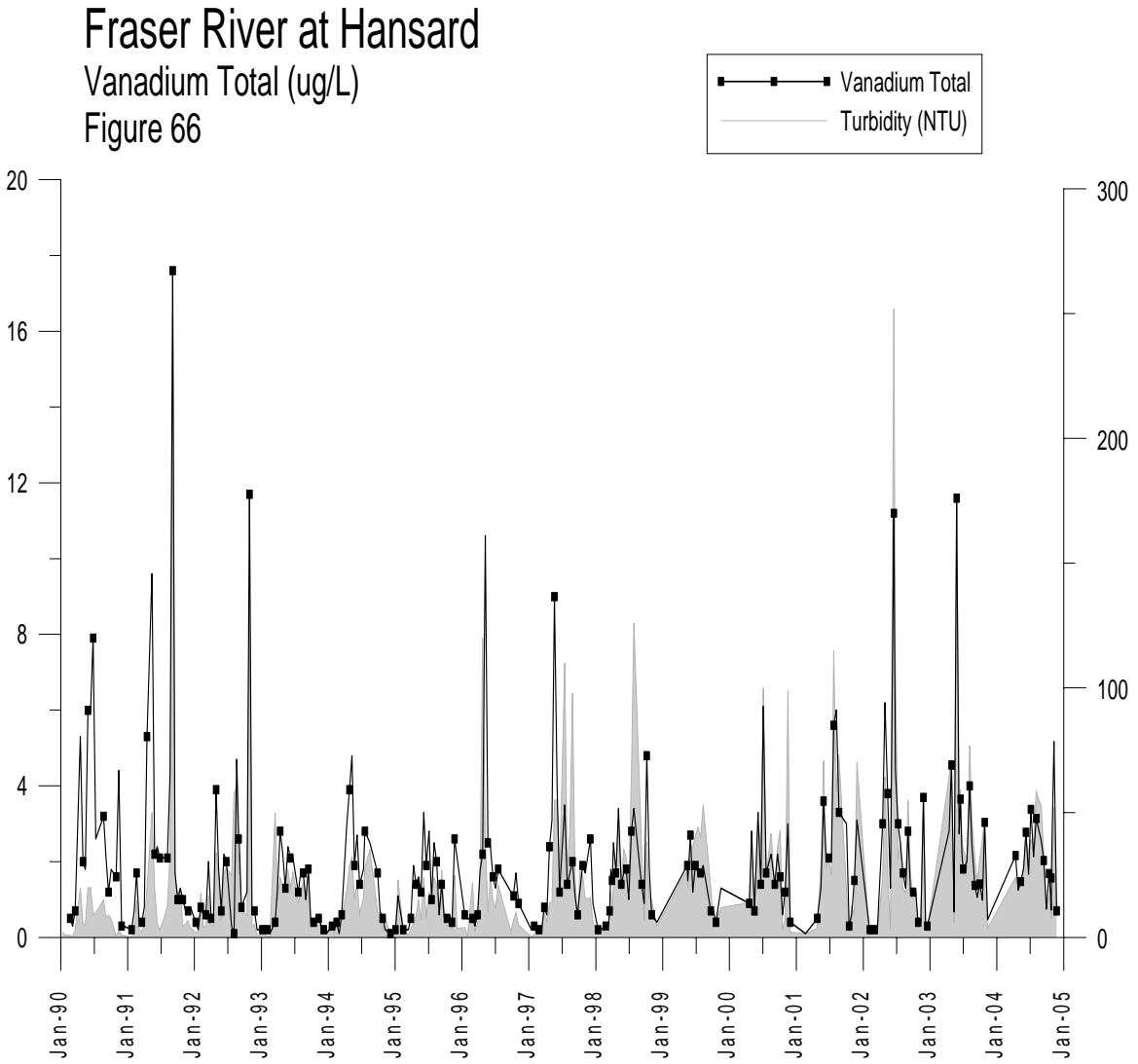


Fraser River at Hansard

Uranium Total (ug/L)

Figure 65





Fraser River at Hansard

Zinc Total (ug/L)

Figure 67

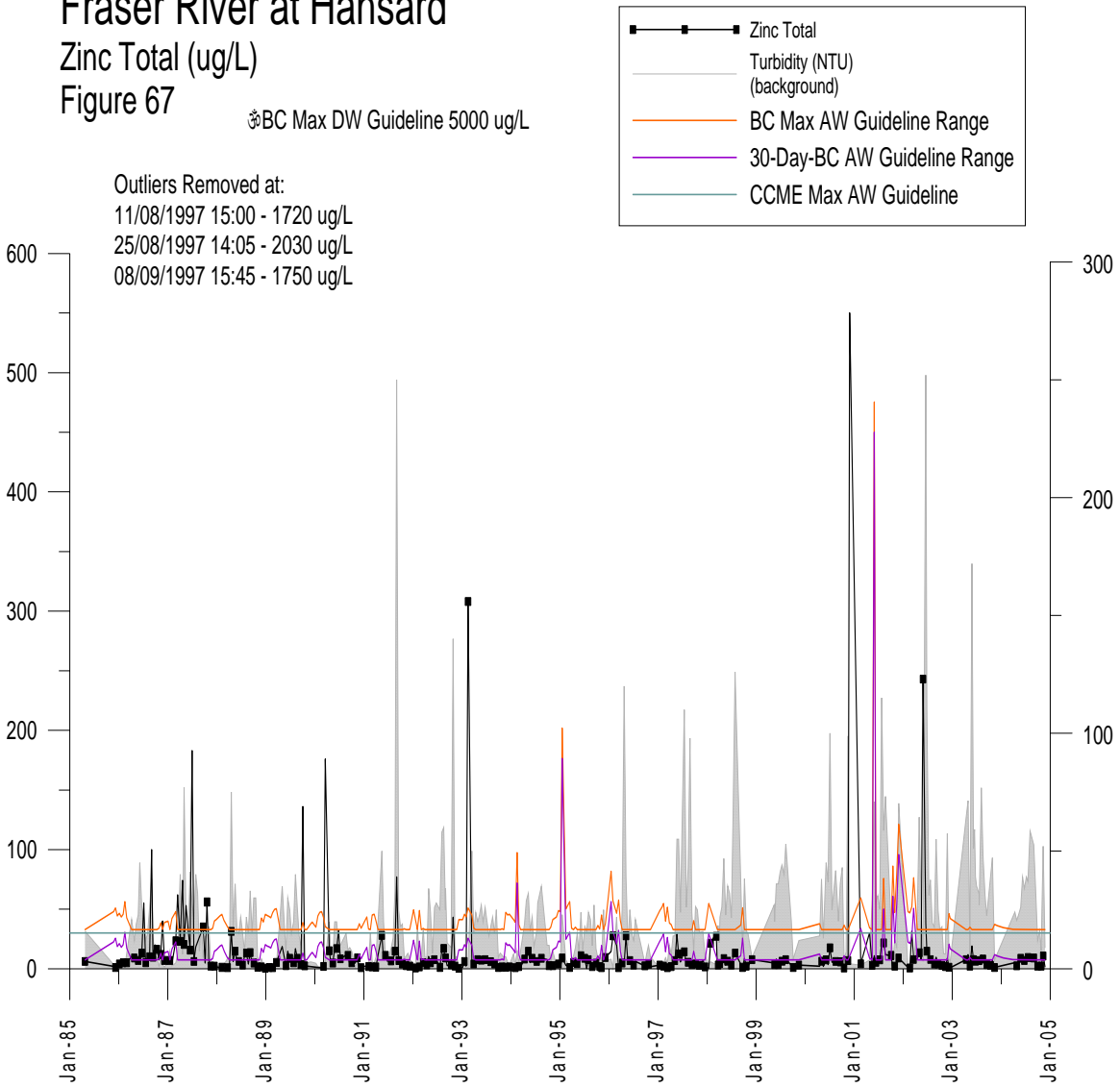
⊗ BC Max DW Guideline 5000 ug/L

Outliers Removed at:

11/08/1997 15:00 - 1720 ug/L

25/08/1997 14:05 - 2030 ug/L

08/09/1997 15:45 - 1750 ug/L

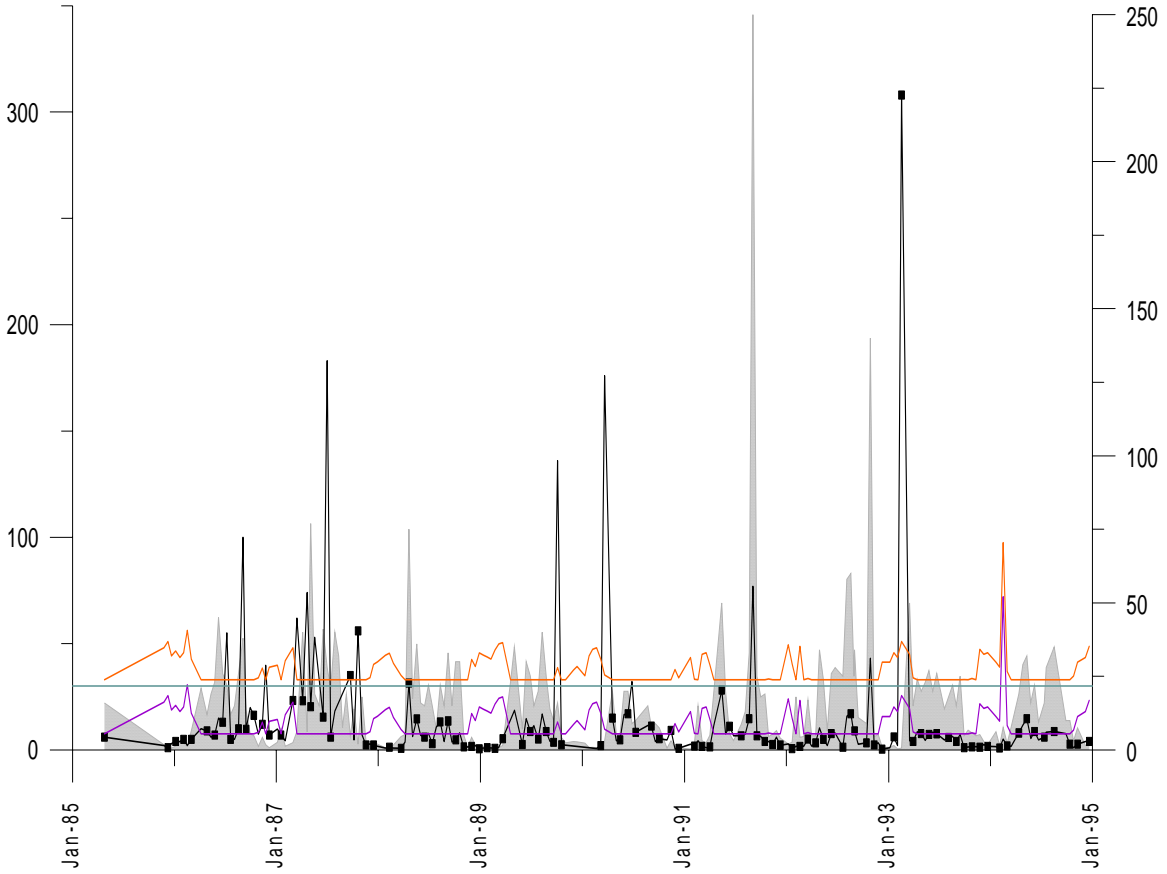
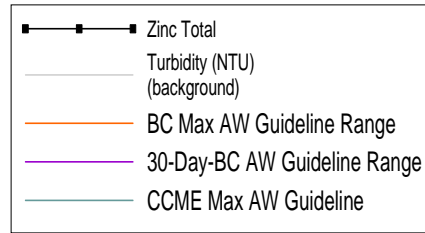


Fraser River at Hansard

Zinc Total (ug/L)

Figure 68

⊗ BC Max DW Guideline 5000 ug/L



Fraser River at Hansard

Zinc Total (ug/L)

Figure 69

⊕ BC Max DW Guideline 5000 ug/L

