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Eel River Examination II

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Eel River Examination

Plymouth South Middle School

Overview

The purpose of our study was to measure and observe the changes in the profile, flow, and chemical composition of Plymouth's Eel River over the course of the school year from October 2004 to April 2005.

Who Participated?



7th and 8th Grade
students from
Plymouth South
Middle School

Why the Eel River?

The Eel River is Plymouth's largest River. It had been the center of population and business growth until the 20th century. It has played an important role in history. The Pilgrims chose wisely to make their town on the banks of this river like the Native Americans who were already there.

The river is fed mostly by water seeping through coarse sand and gravel from kettle ponds that have no river connections. The Plymouth-Carver Aquifer, a "sole source" aquifer, is the water supply for the entire SE MA region. Plymouth alone withdrew 59.6 million gallons per day in 1985 and the population has increased significantly.

Why the Eel River?

The Eel river watershed has had cranberry bogs in it for decades. The chemicals used on the bogs filter through to the groundwater and then end up in the river. Some of these chemicals contain nitrogen and phosphorus.

There are currently 5 golf courses in the watershed. These impact the water with chemical pollution from maintaining the greens, but they also place large demands on our water supply, which shows up in lowered river water.

Why the Eel River?

The town's new wastewater treatment plant, which began operation in 2002, was constructed within the watershed. It was projected that the plant would introduce at least .75 million gallons of treated effluent every day into filtering beds. The water will then flow underground and seep into the Eel River.

Since the Eel River gives us a visual idea of what is happening to our water supply we decided to study what it "looked" like this year.

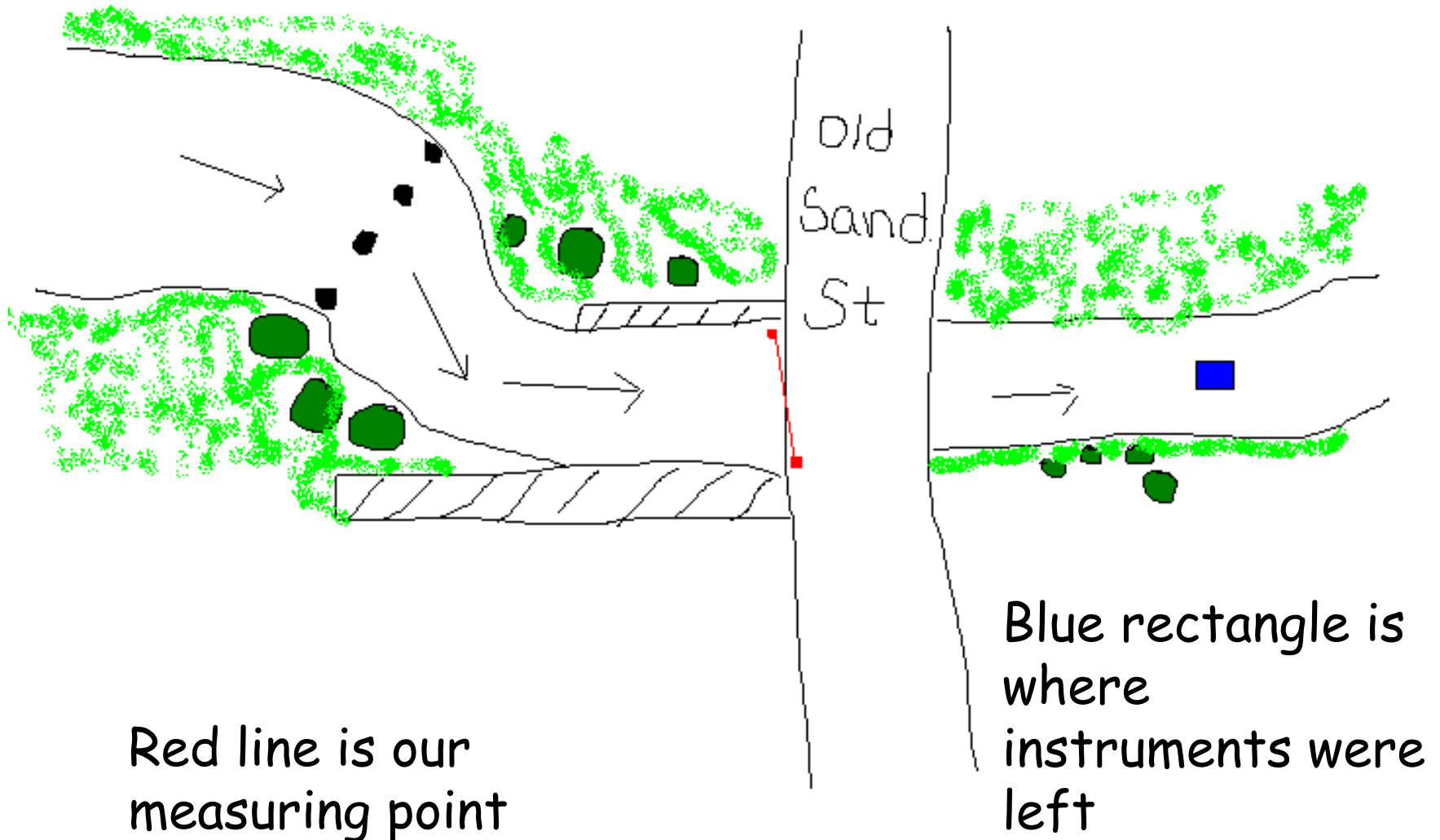
Where did we go?

Our studies were conducted near the bridge on Sandwich Rd.

The instruments for chemical analysis were deployed on the ocean side of the bridge.

Our physical and flow measurements were taken on the other side of the bridge. We used 2 posts previously imbedded in the sand under the bridge as our measuring spot.

Surroundings are grasses, low bushes and a number of large trees (dark green)



Eel River Bridge



The upstream side on Sandwich Rd

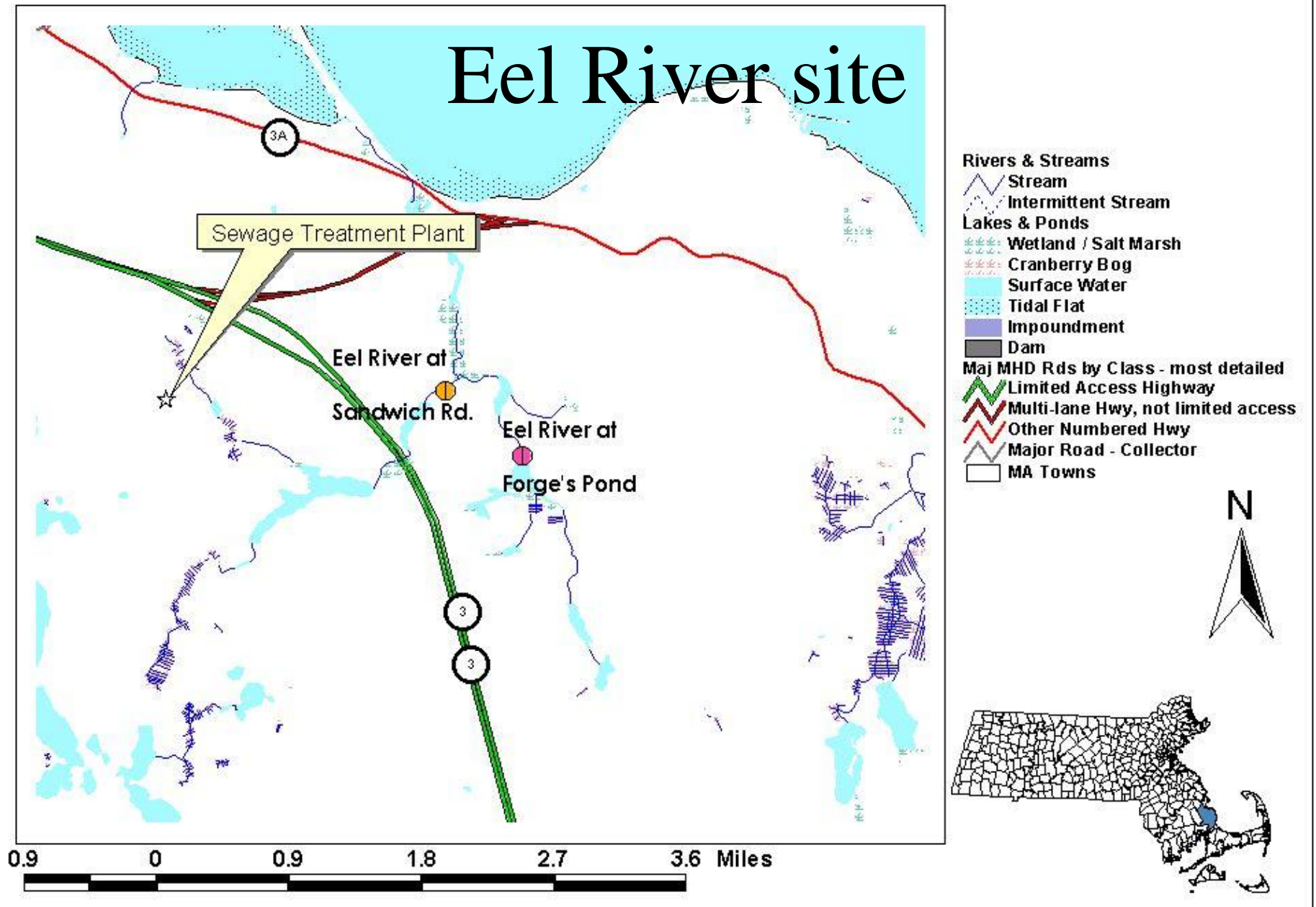
Upstream



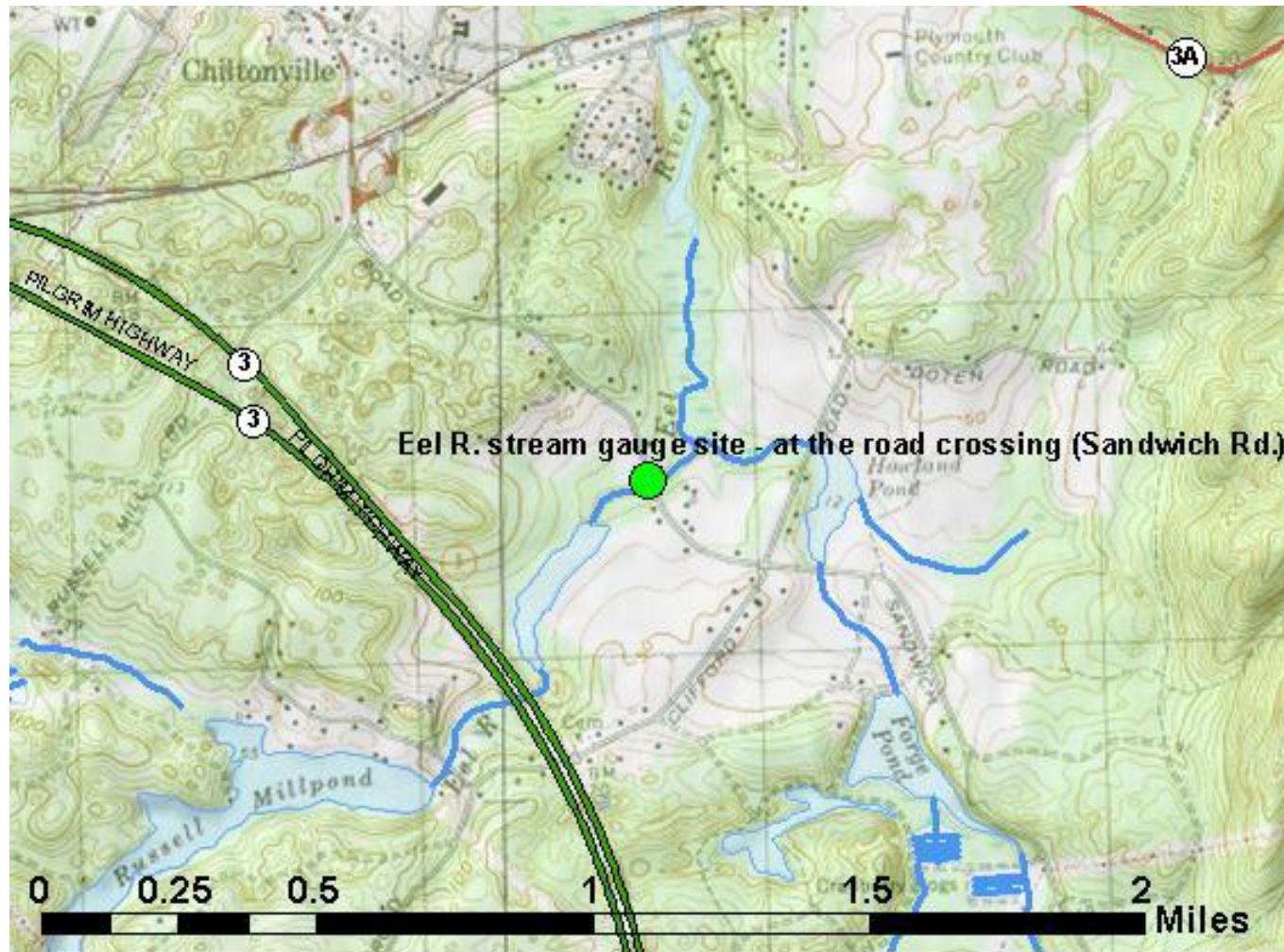
There are 3 piling for an old dam.

Eel River Sites Judy Bradley & Sharon Jeffery

Eel River site



USGS Topographic Map

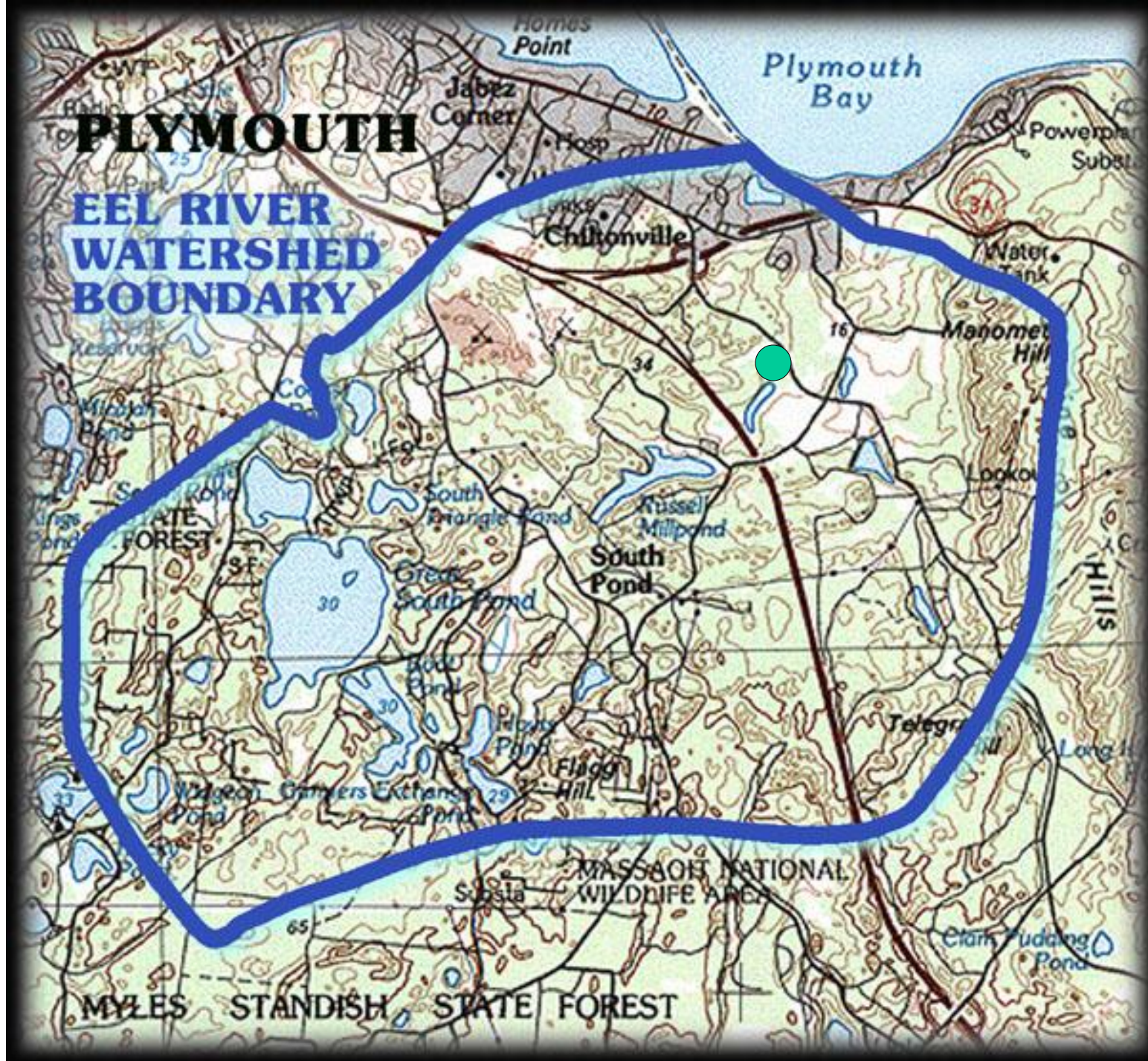


Ortho Map



PLYMOUTH

EEL RIVER WATERSHED BOUNDARY



About the Watershed:

The Eel River watershed contains 78% undeveloped forest. The rest is residential dwellings and cranberry bogs.

Housing growth in the last decade has increased the number of septic systems and the amount of impervious land.

New golf courses too!

About the Watershed:

The Eel River is a biologically rich ecosystem. It is home to many wild animal and plant species, some of which are endangered.

Some examples of the animals are eagles, mink, eels, herring, trout, painted and red-bellied turtles, kingfishers, osprey, and many more.

Oh yeah, and Ghengis Swan!



What we did at the Eel River

Measured the width of
the river at the bridge

Measured the depth of
the river at 2 foot
intervals

Measured the flow of
the river using a
Marsh-McBirney Flo-
Mate



What we did at Eel River

We left a programmed Sigma 900 Sampler to draw samples of water every hour for 24 hours.

The next day we removed and filtered the water and bottled it. The samples were frozen and sent to the WAL lab to be analyzed.



Product Specifications 

What we did at Eel River

A Mini-Sonde device with probes was left floating in the river. Temperature, pH, and dissolved oxygen were measured every hour for 24 hours.

The readings are retrieved with a computer at the WAL.









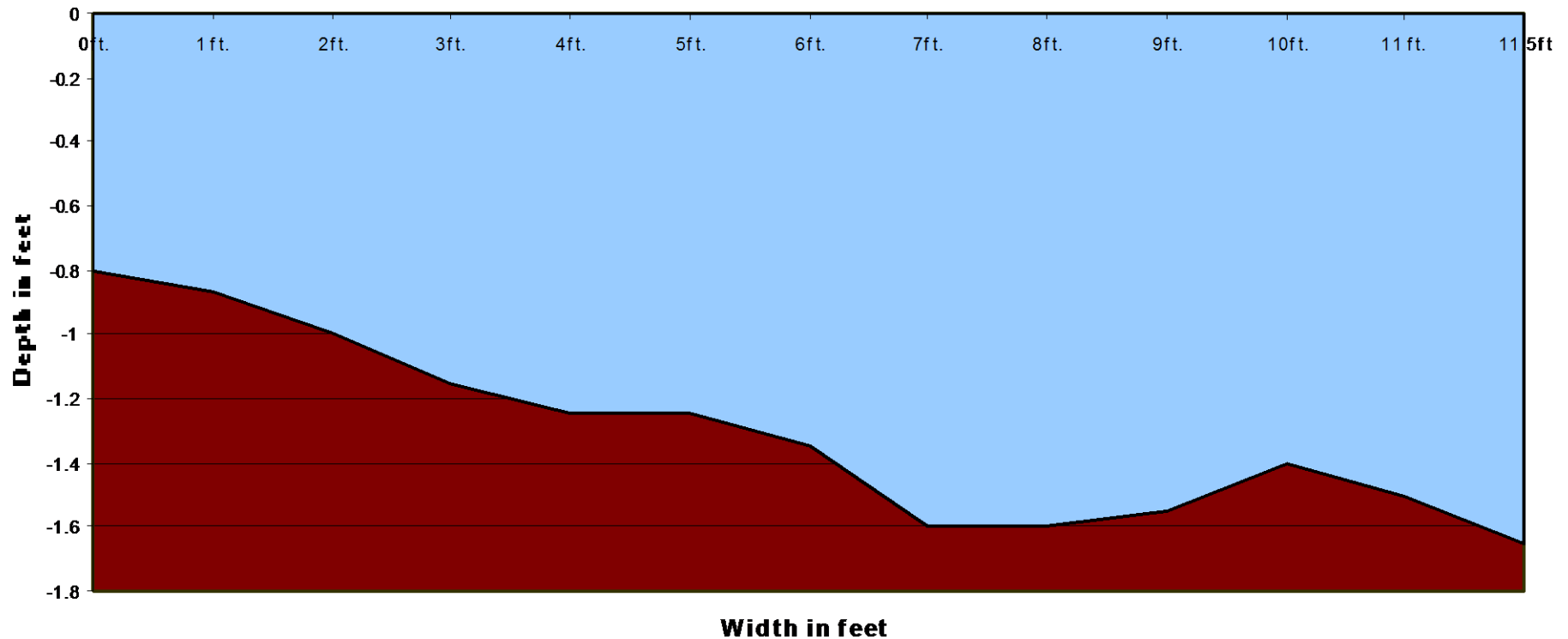


What we did at Eel River

On her way to school on February 3, 2005 Mrs. Bradley got a grab sample of water from the river. At the BSC Watershed Access Lab we conducted Fecal Coliform tests on the water.

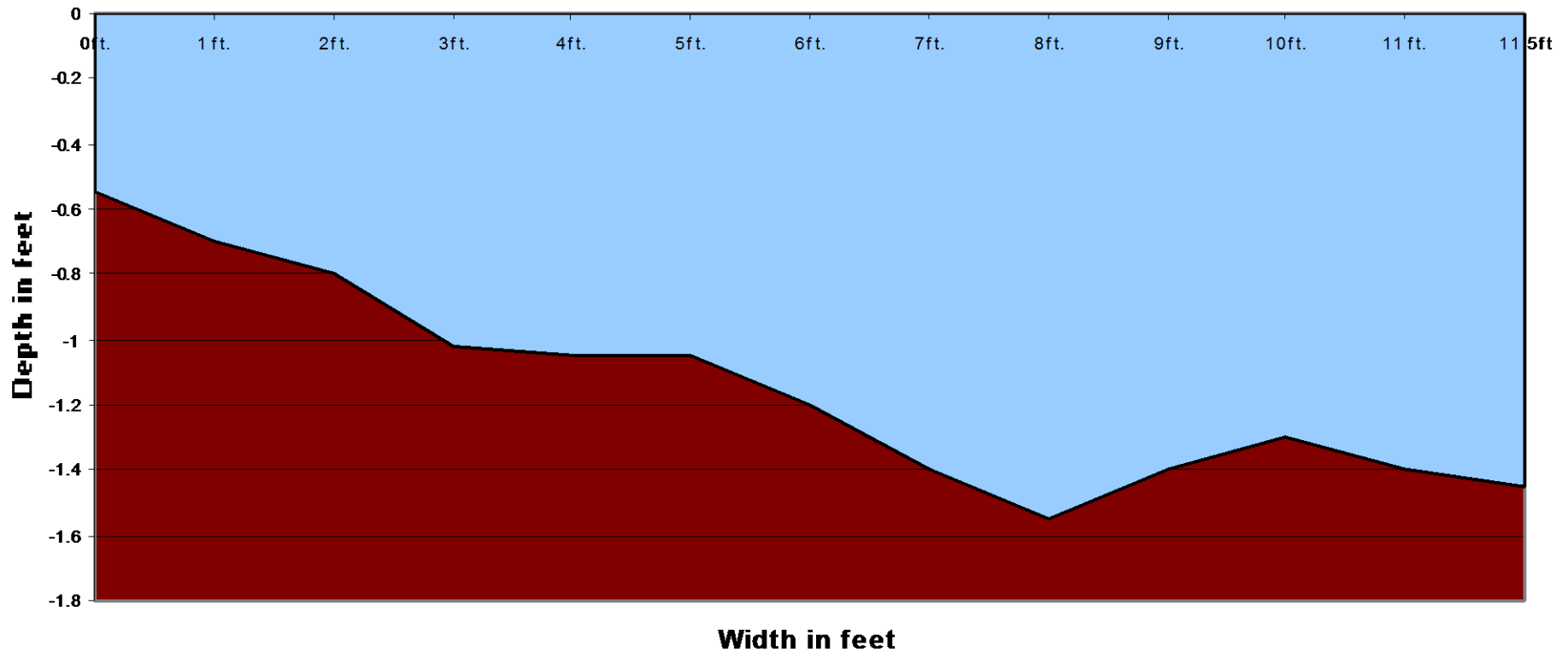
November, 2003 River Profile

Profile of Eel River November 7, 2003

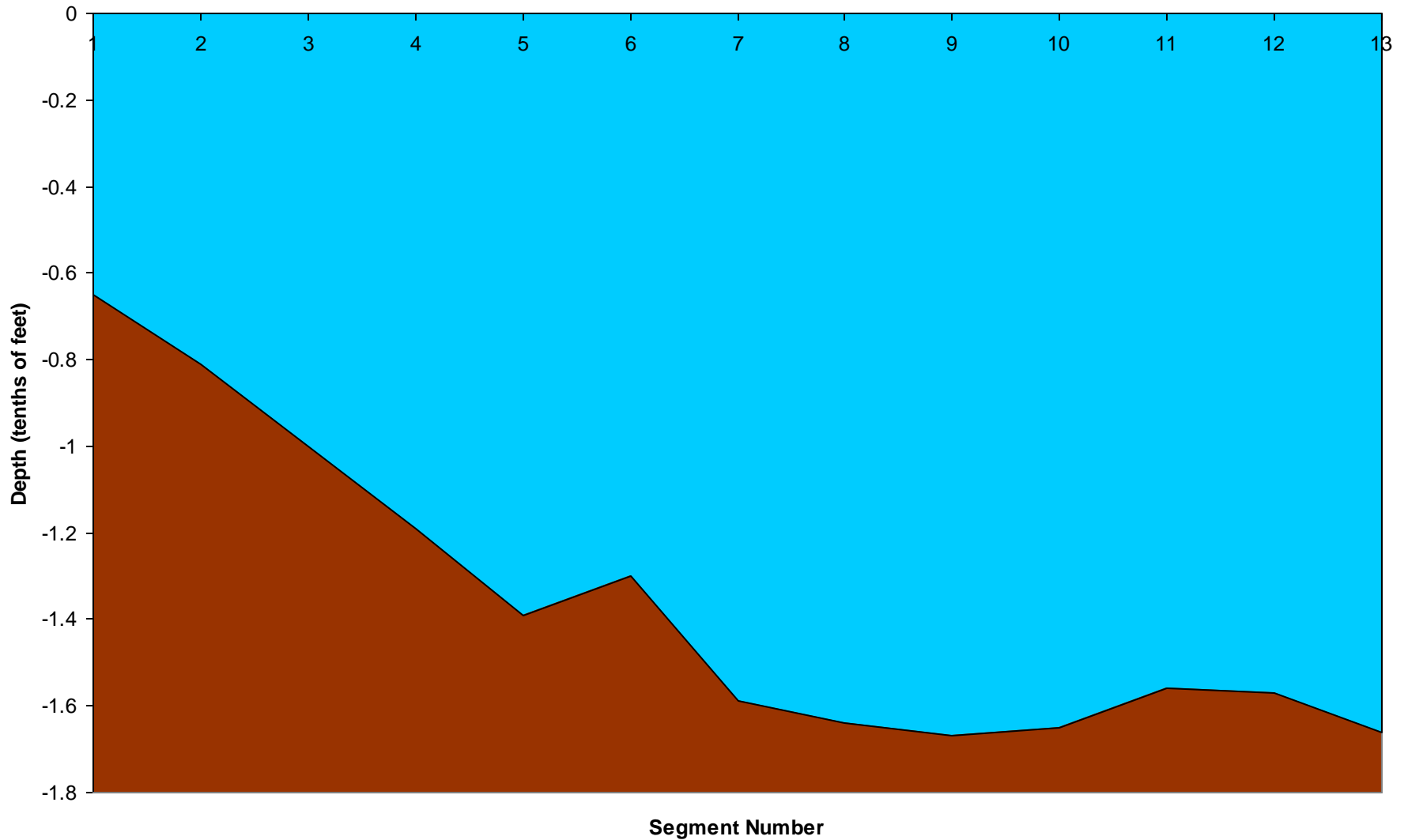


April, 2003 River Profile

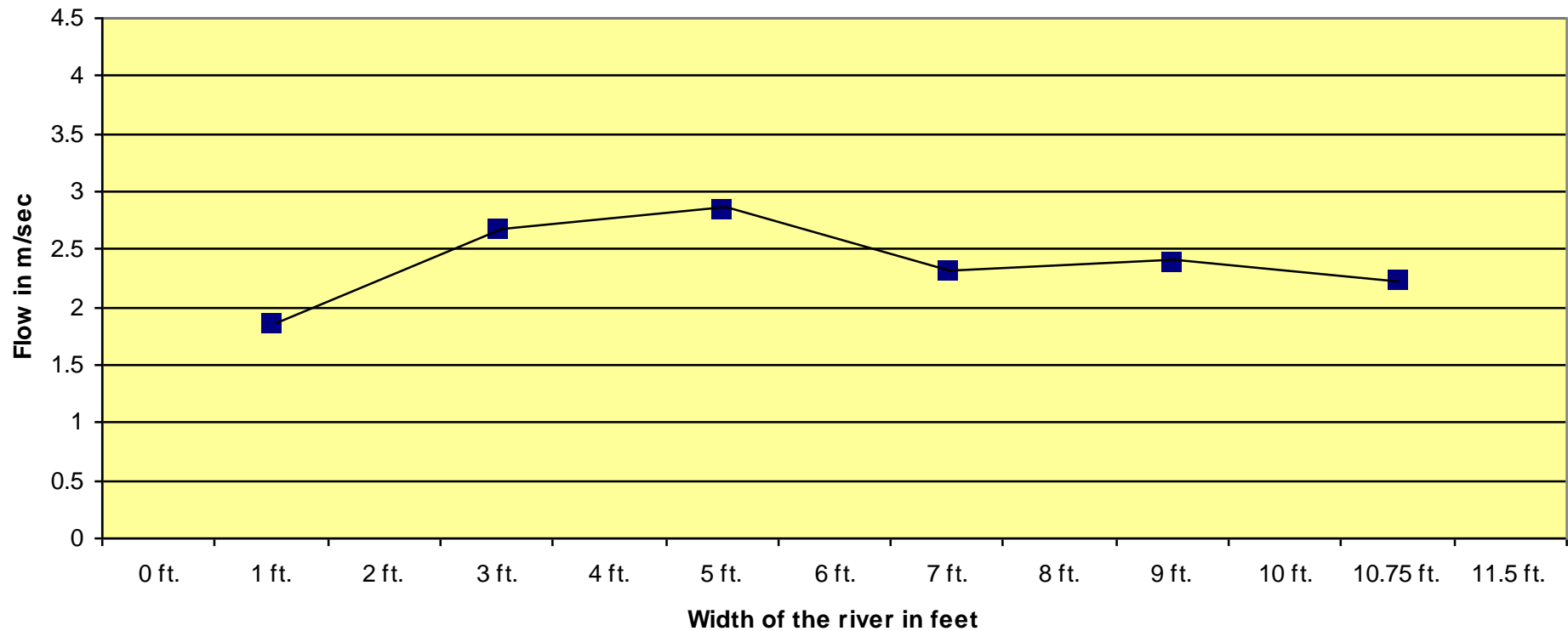
Profile of Eel River in April 13, 2004



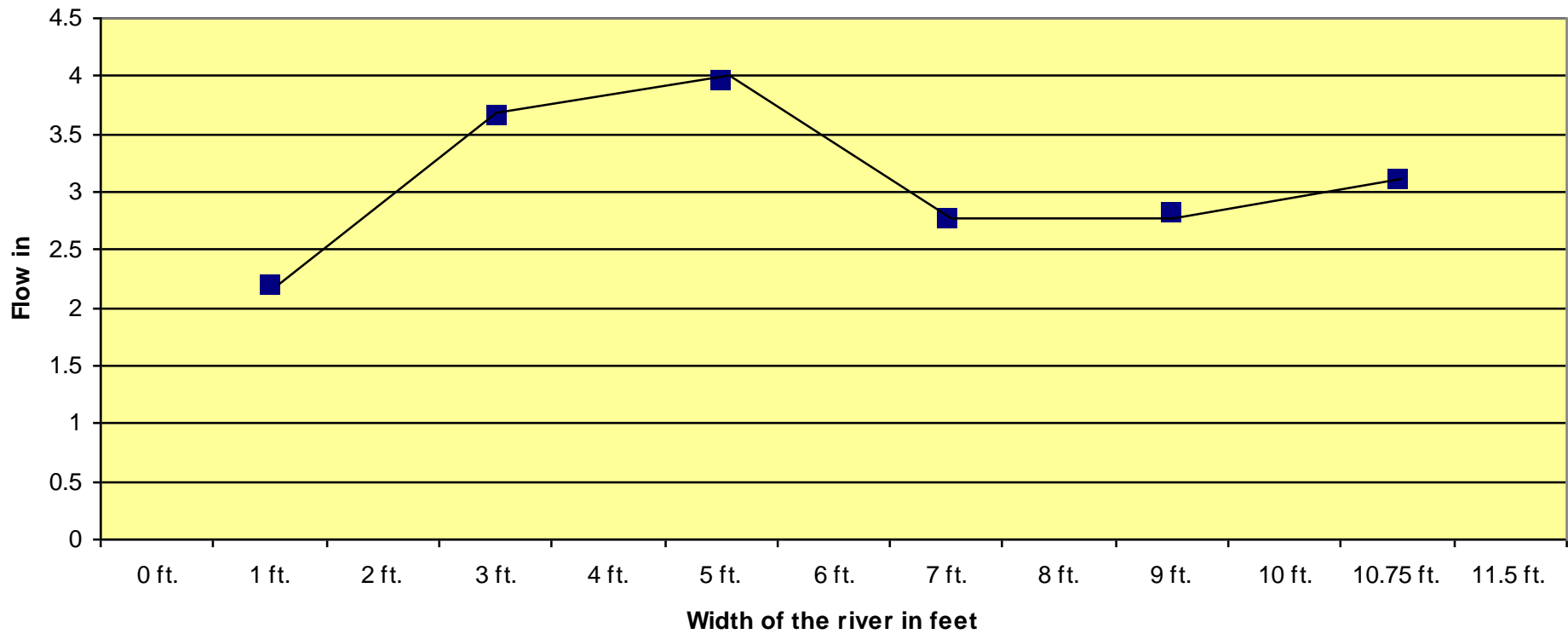
Eel River Profile April 05



River Flow November 7, 2004



River Flow April 13, 2004



Environmental Dangers

The major fear of the town officials is eutrophication. This occurs when there is the introduction of nitrogen and phosphorus compounds. These chemicals act as fertilizers for algae and other plants. The plants flourish and bloom and choke out light and use up oxygen leading to the death of the animals in the water body.

It has been classified as a Nitrogen Limited river. Town Engineers fear that even 1 mg/L will lead to uncontrolled growth of algae and eventual death of the river.

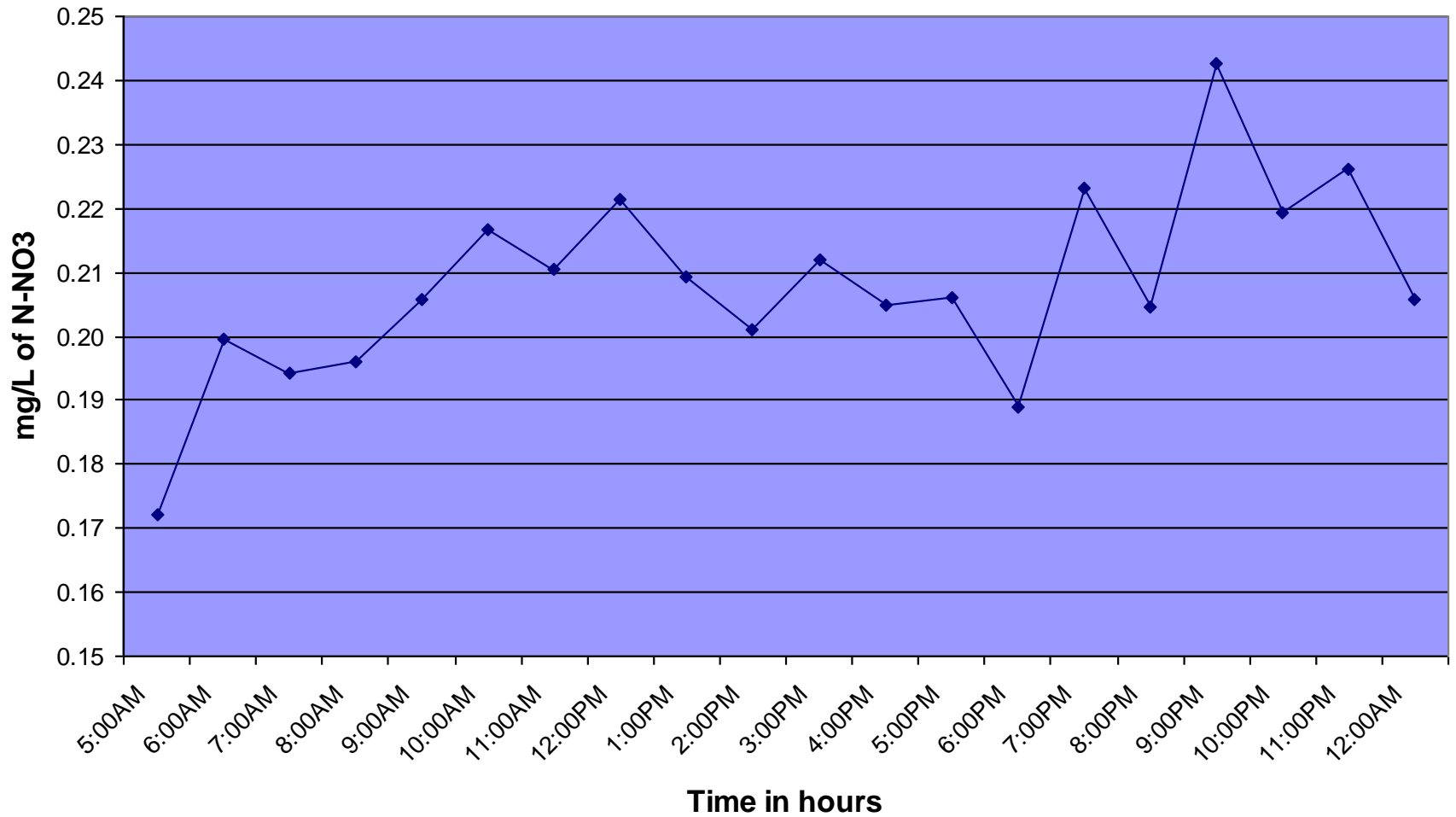
How Do Nitrates Get Into the River?

- Fertilizers- from golf courses, bogs, and lawns
- Failing Septic Systems
- Animal waste- from farms
- Untreated human waste from treatment plants

How Does Phosphorus Get Into the River?

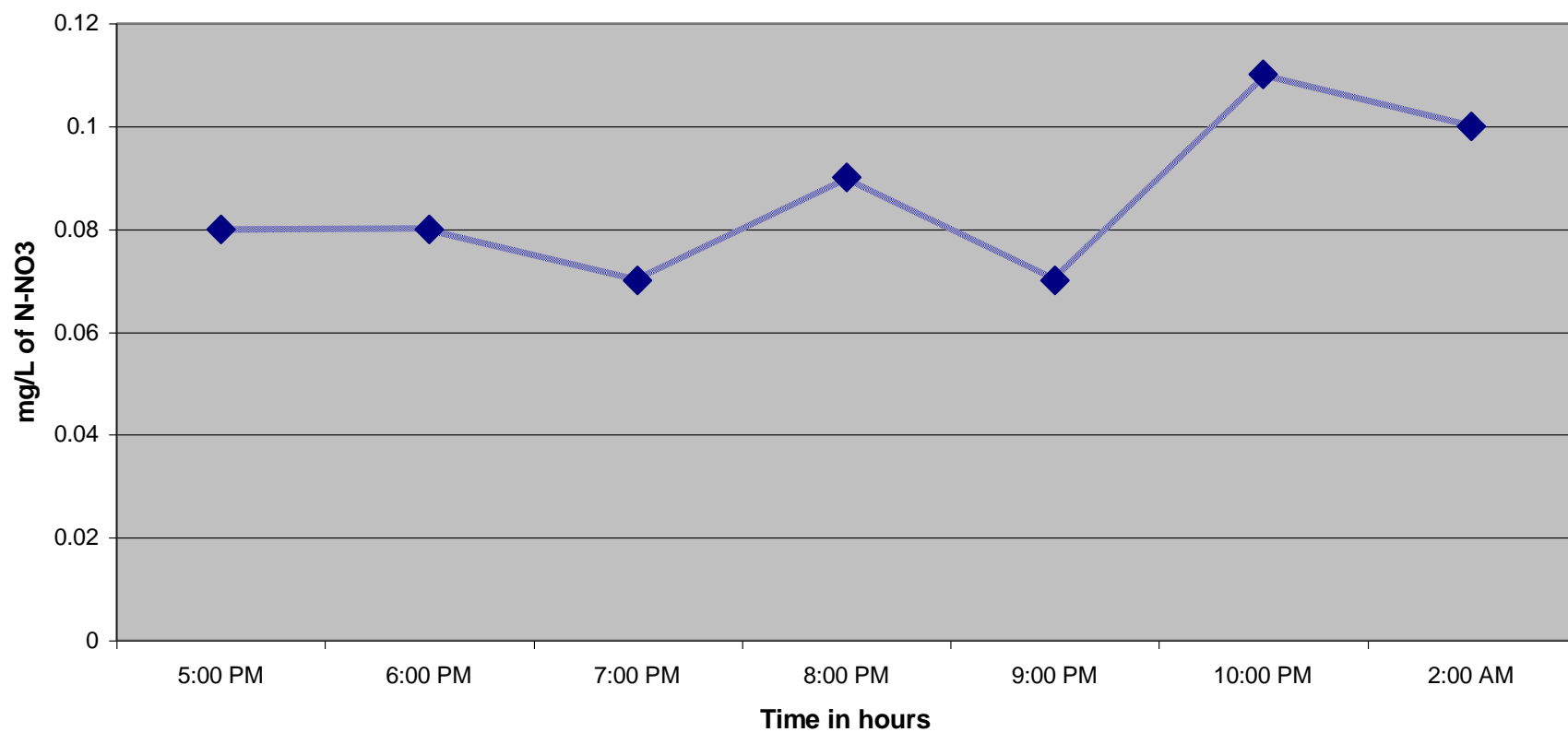
- Fertilizers- from golf courses, lawns and bogs
- Detergents - from leaking septic systems
- Animal waste - from farms

Nitrogen and Nitrate Levels Nov. 2003

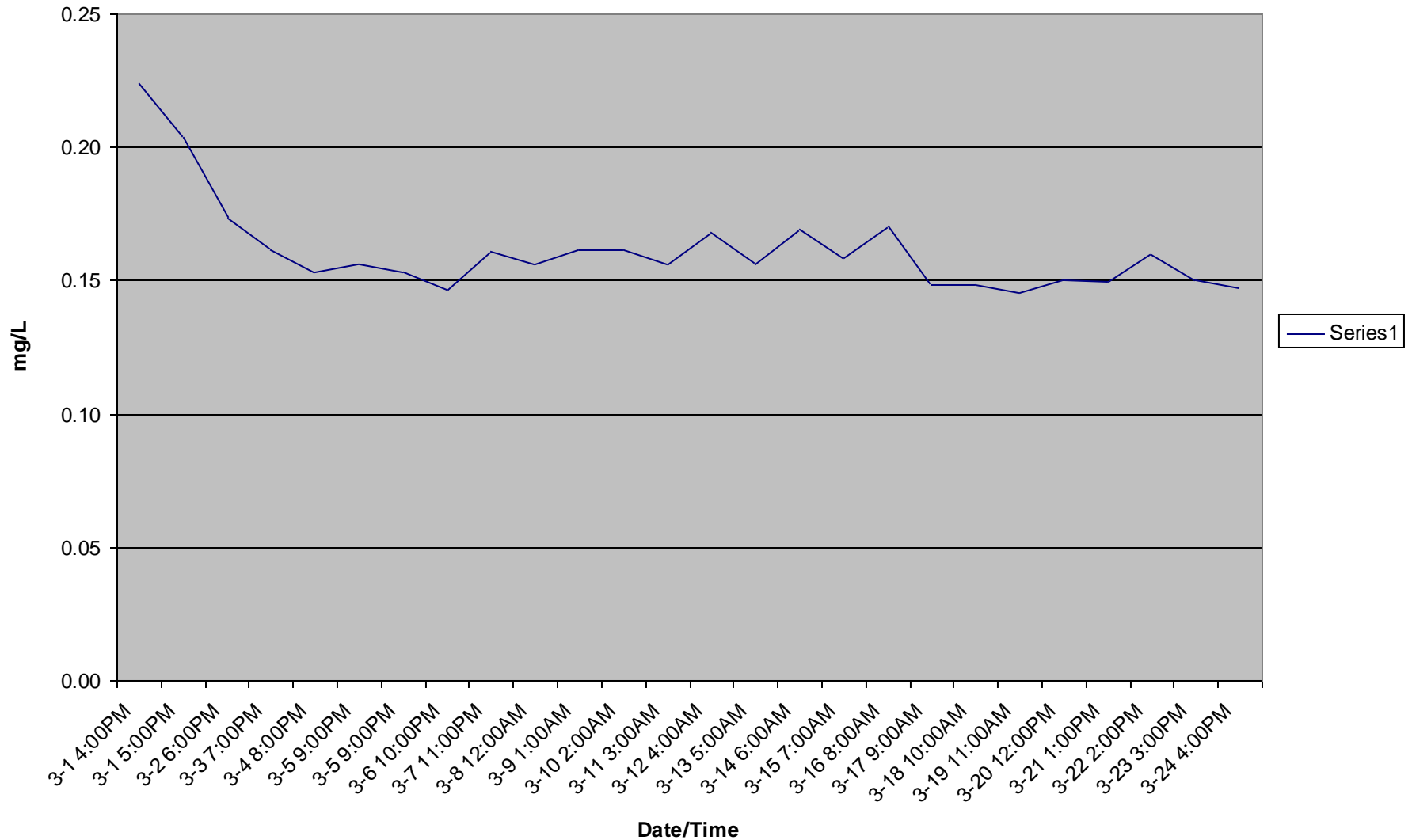


N-NO₃ Levels April 13, 2004

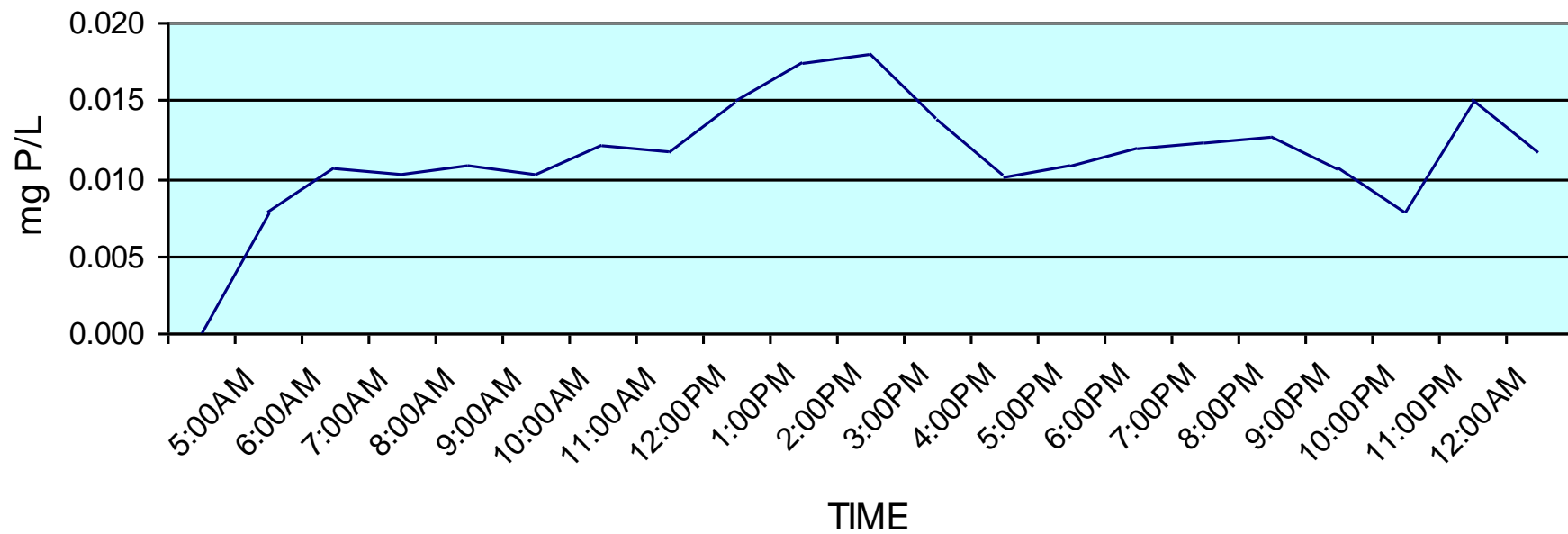
N - NO₃ April 13, 2004



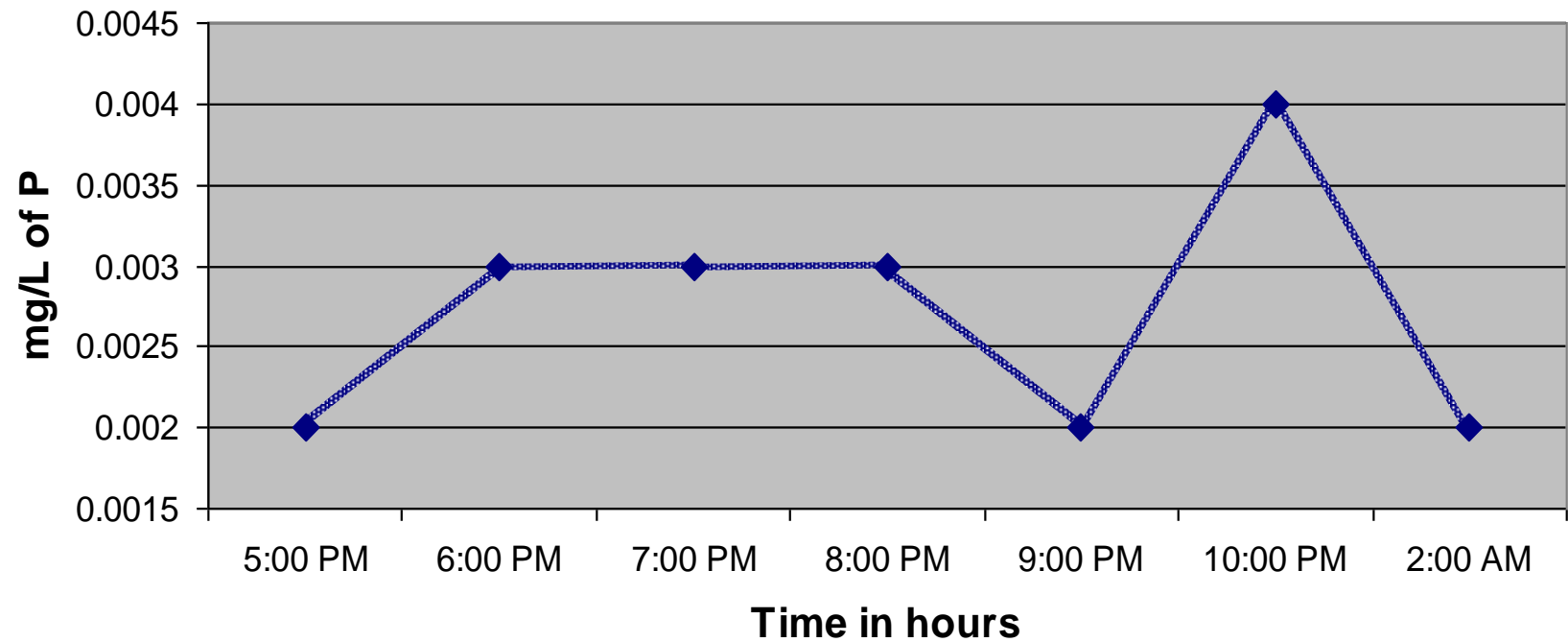
Nitrates April 2005



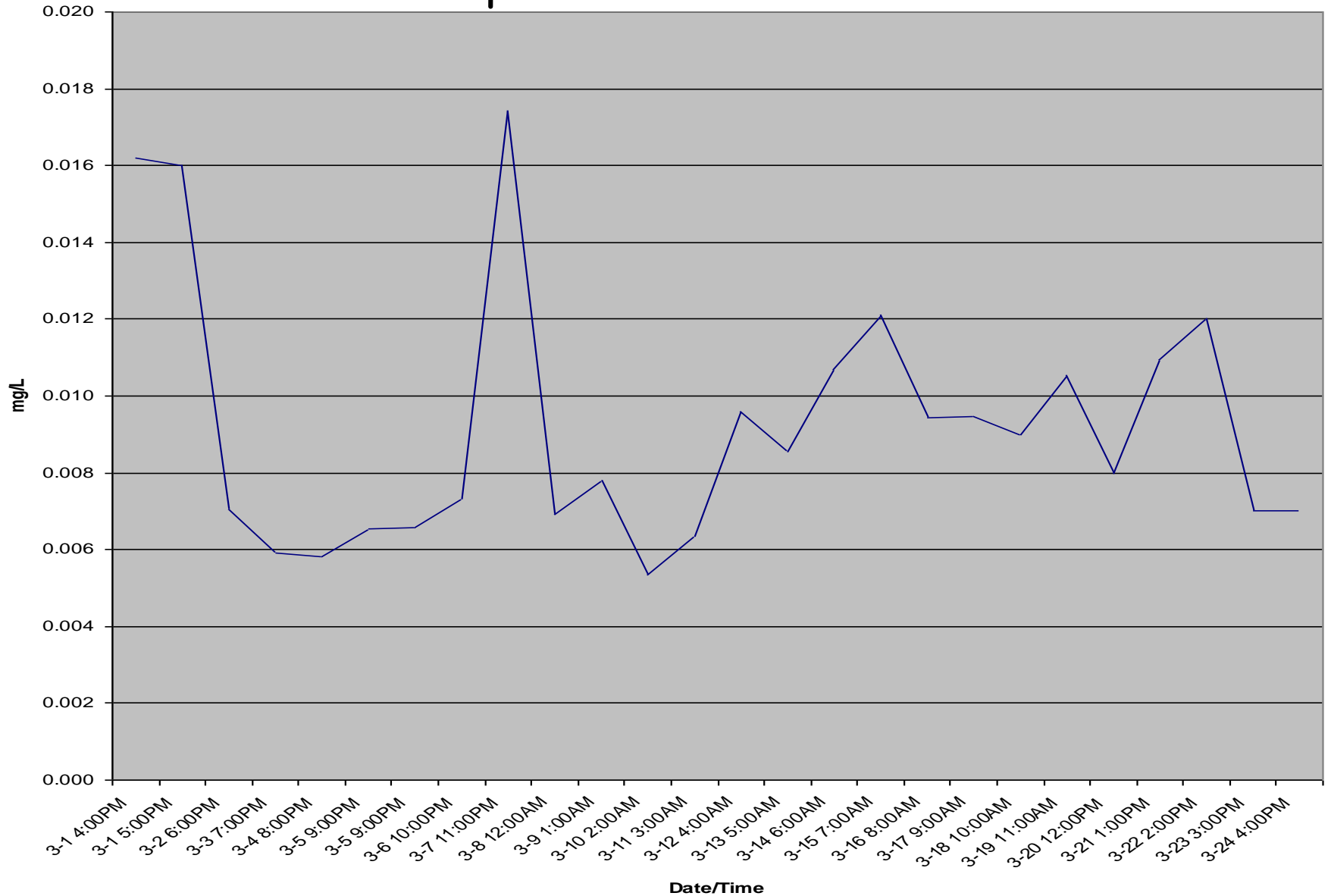
Phosphorus in mg/L Nov. 2003



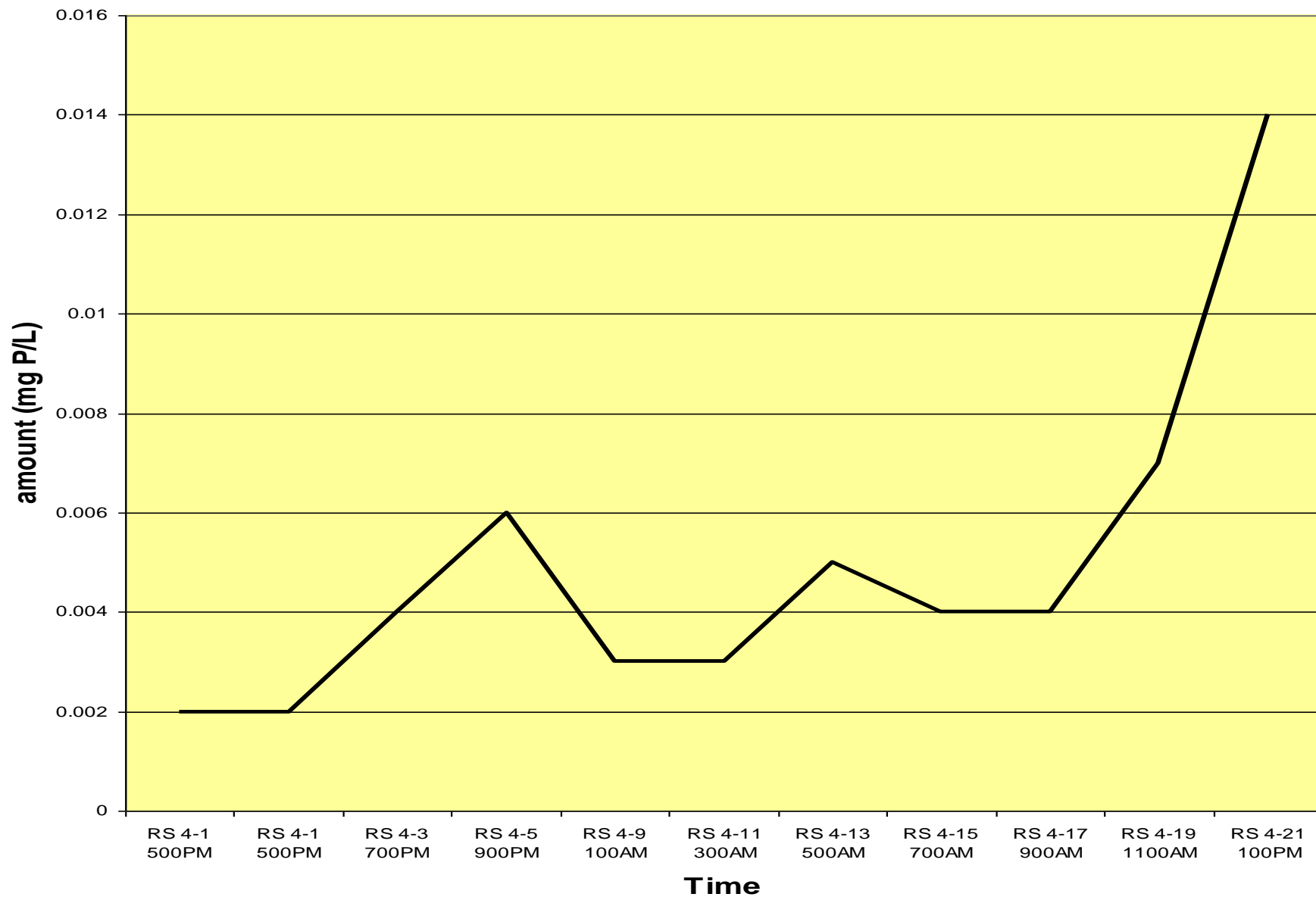
Phorphorus April 13, 2004



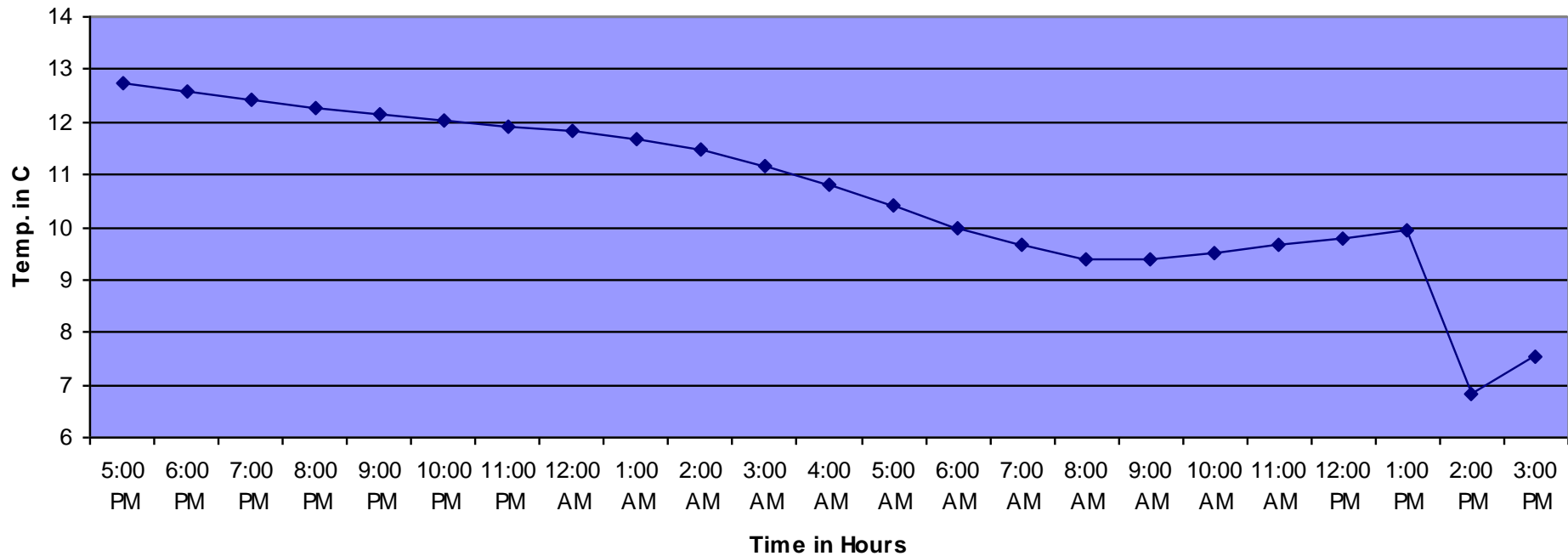
Phosphates Nov. 2004



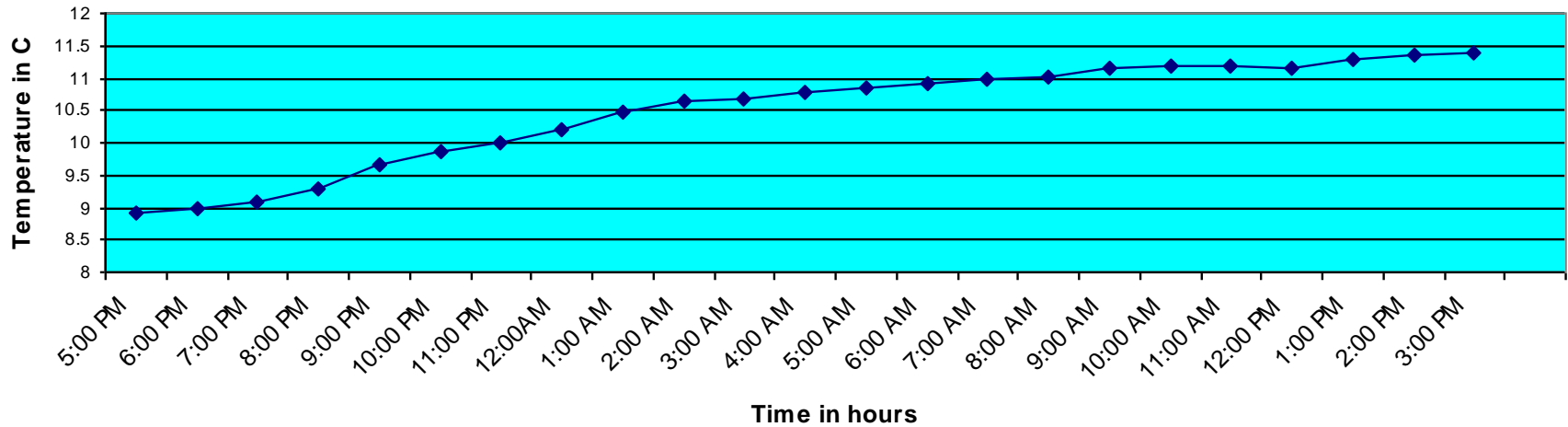
Phosphates April 2005



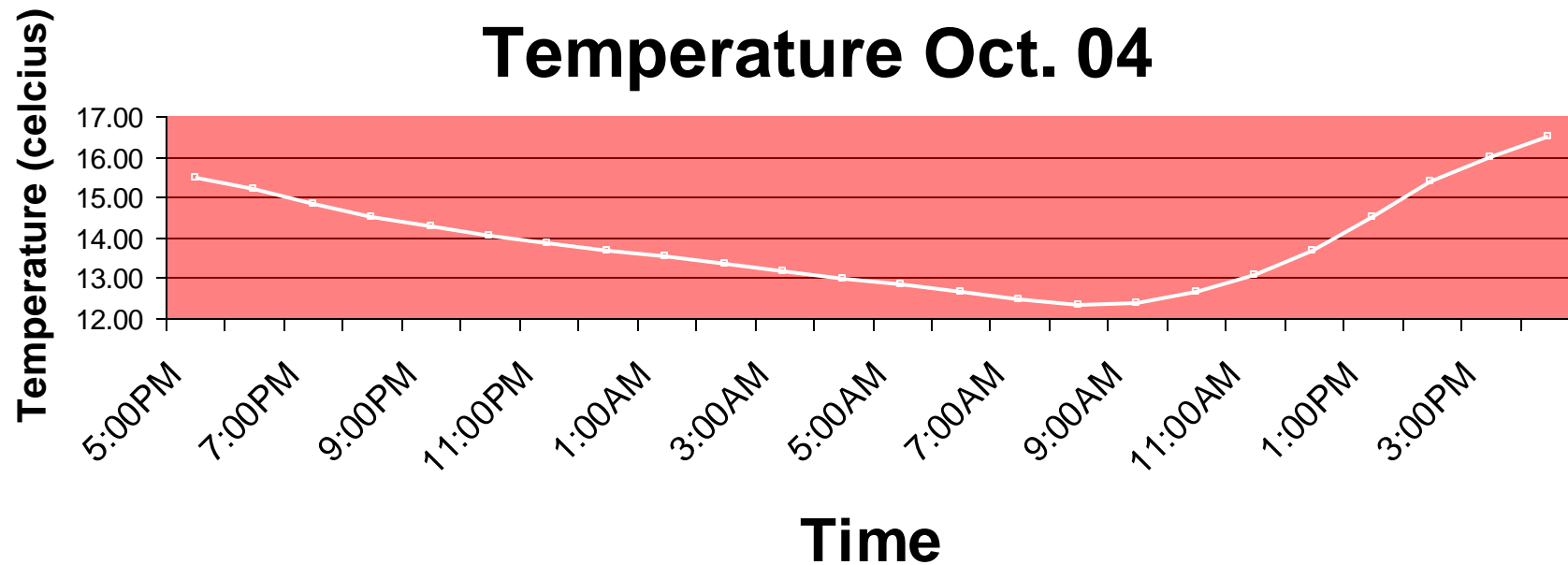
Temperature November 7, 2003



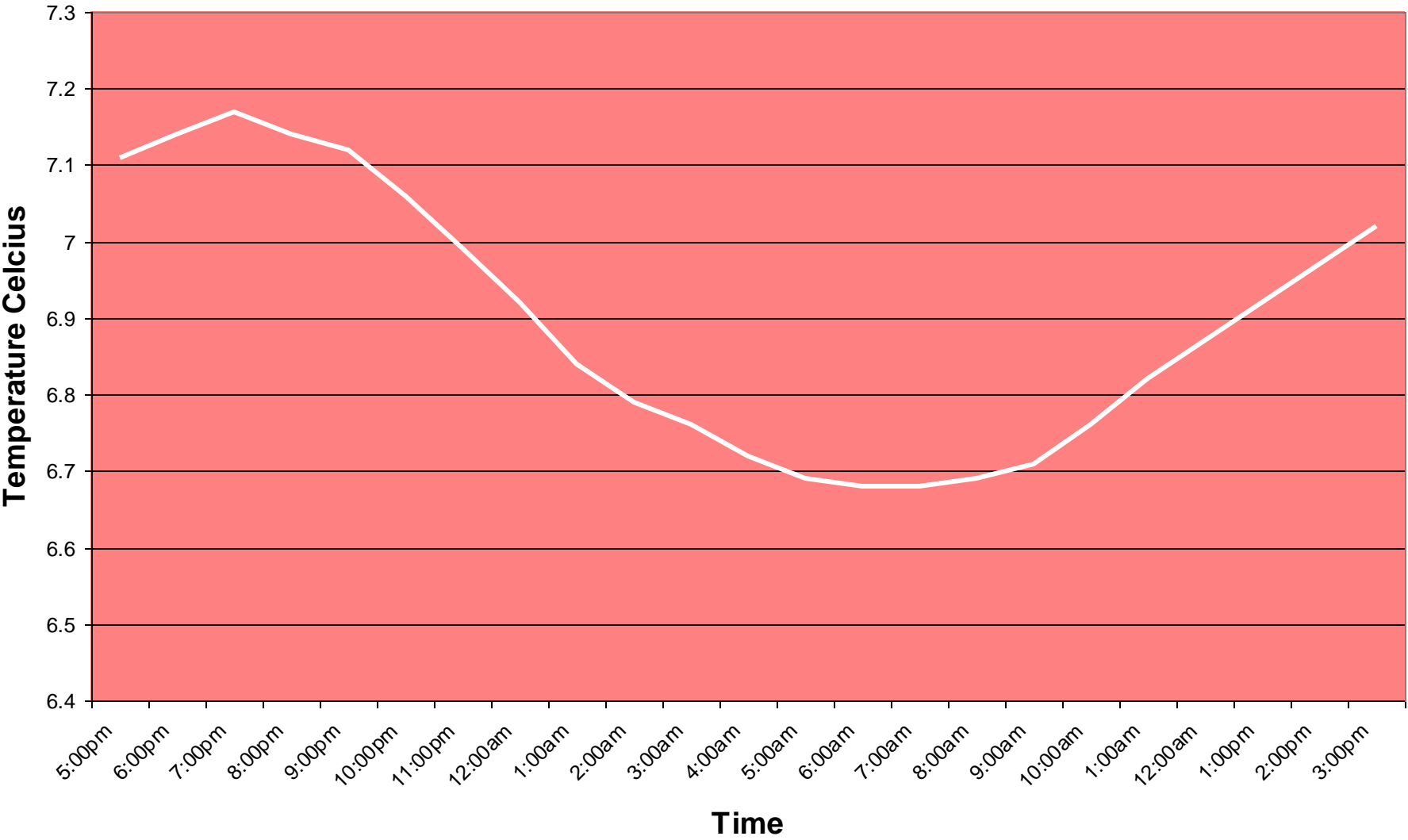
Temperature April 13, 2004



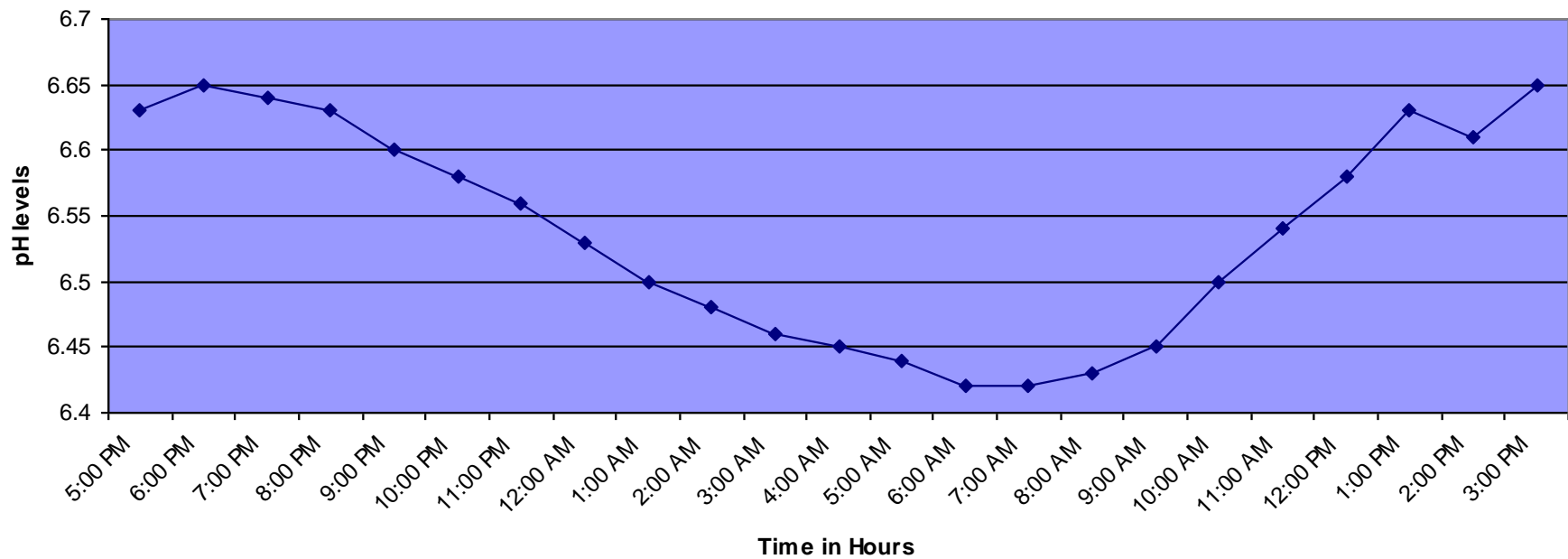
Temperature Oct. 04



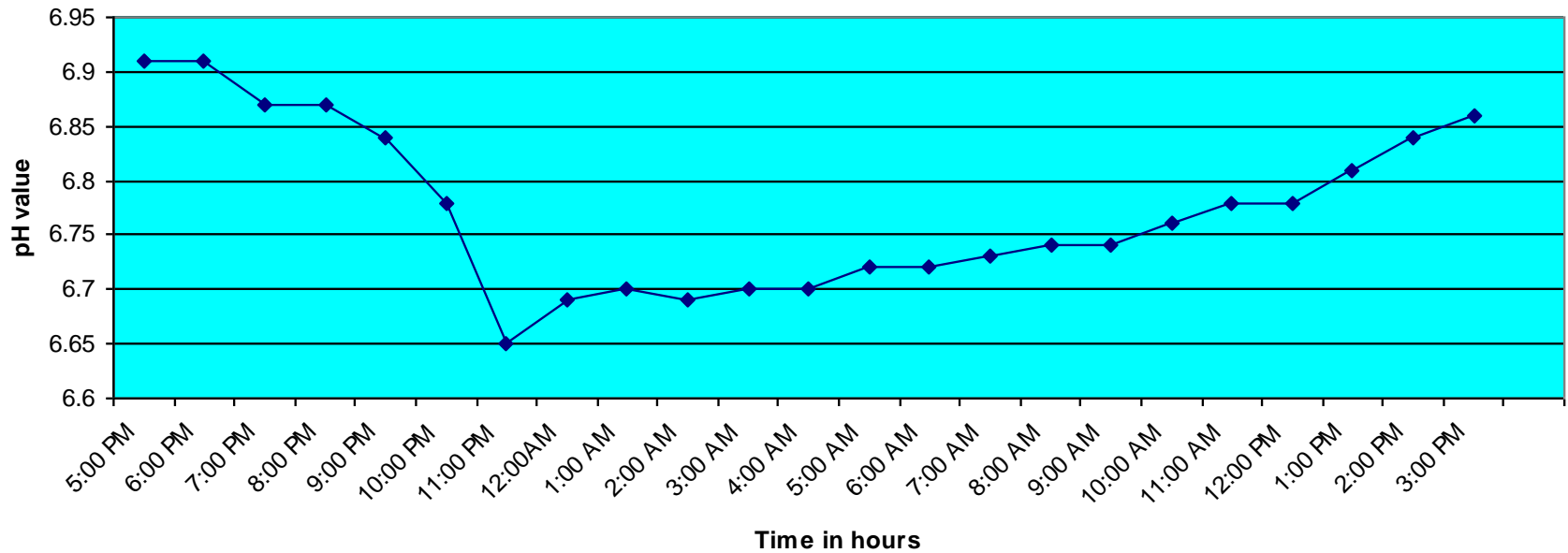
Eel River Temperature April 05



pH Levels November 7, 2003

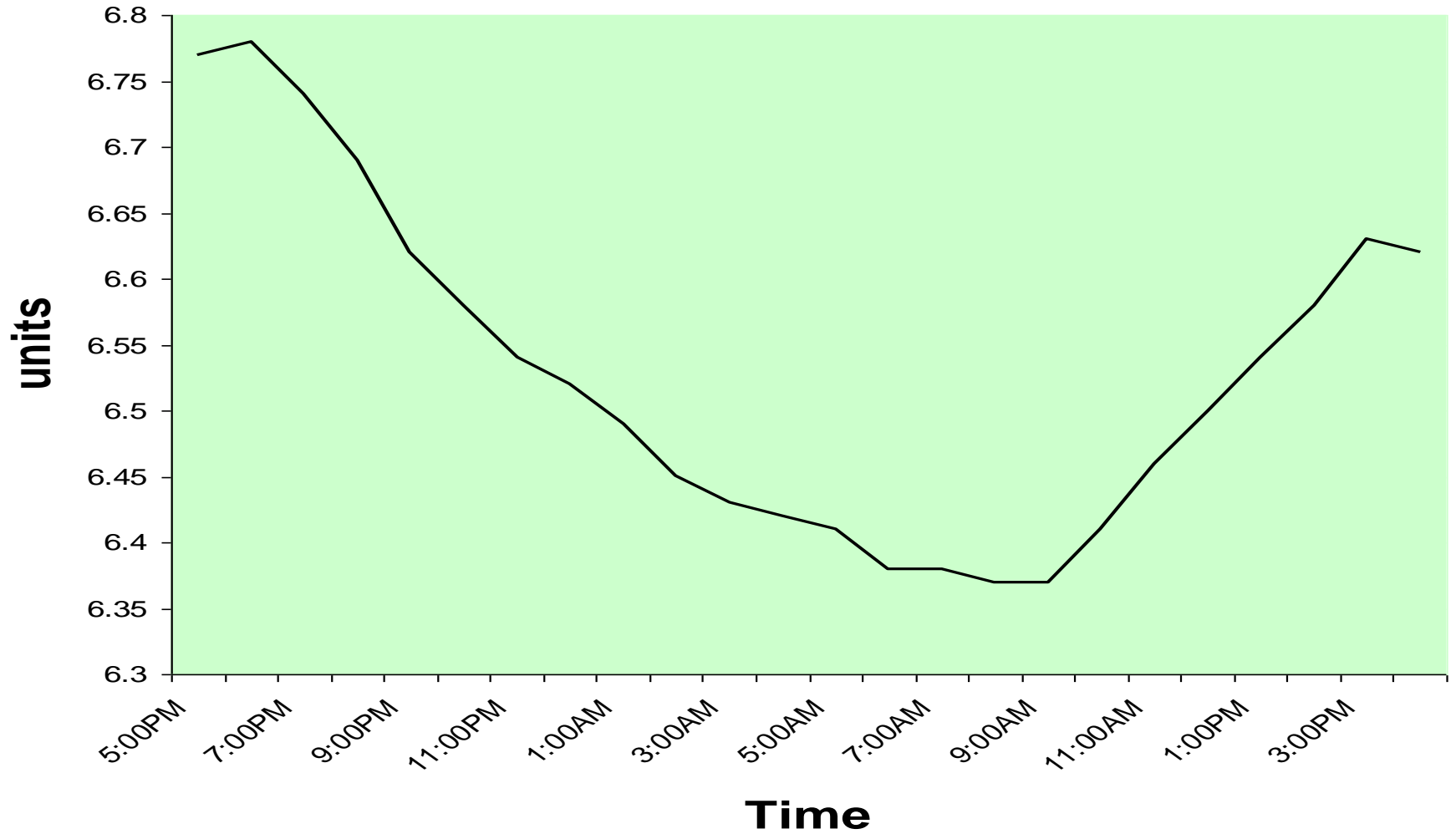


pH April 13, 2004

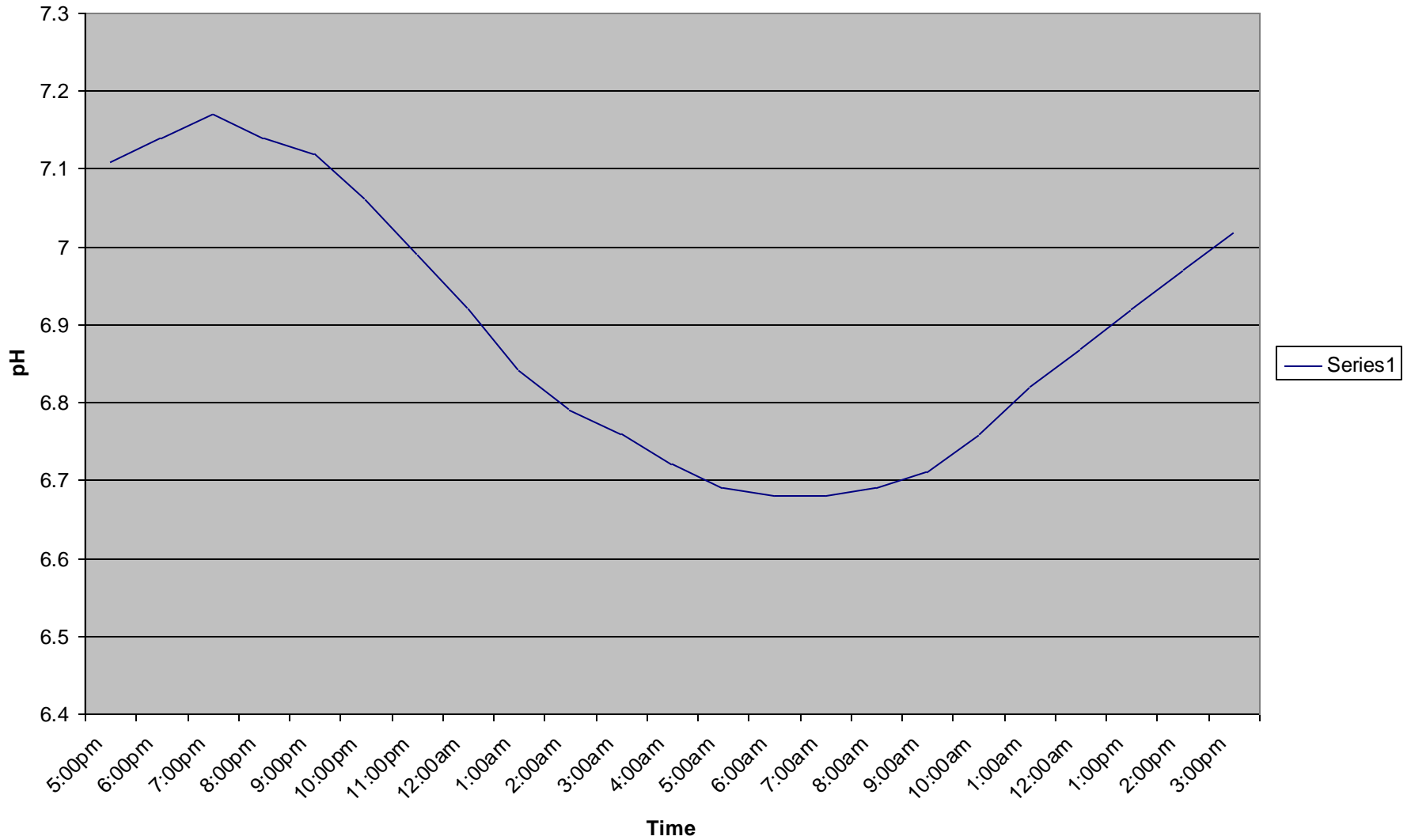


pH

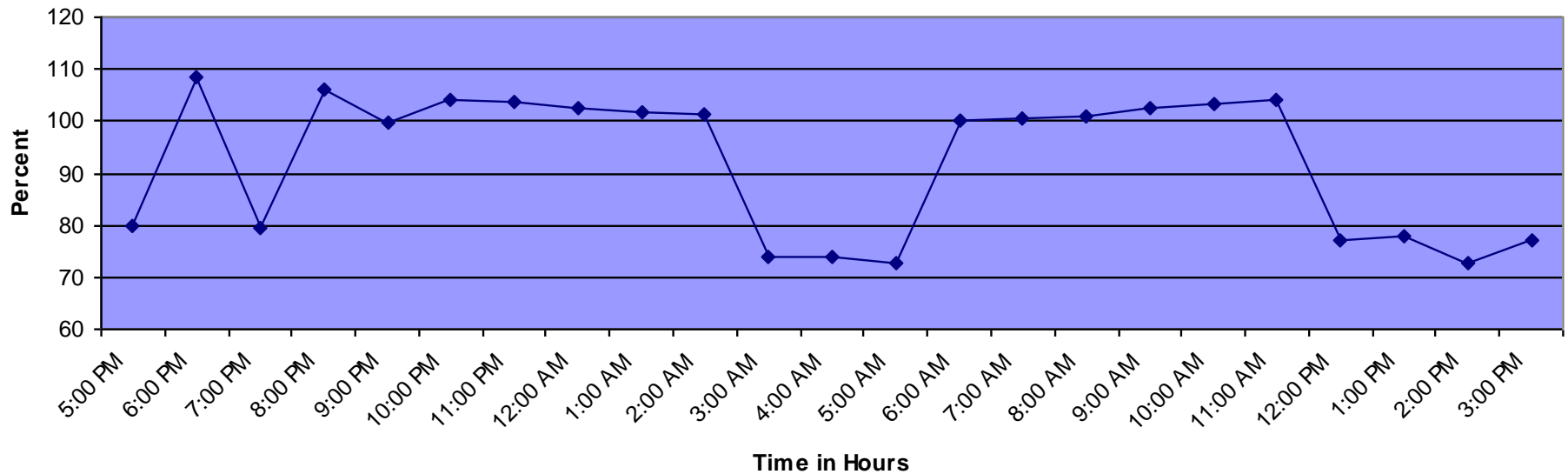
October 2004



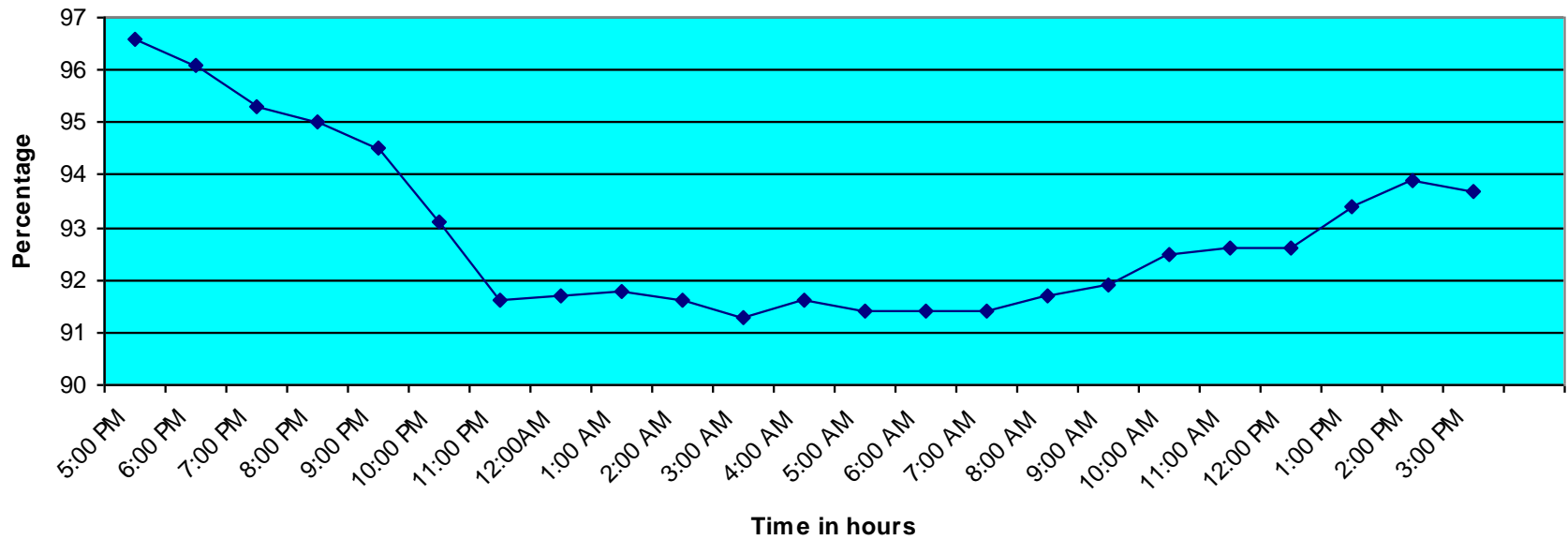
Eel River pH -April 05



Percent of Dissolved Oxygen November 7, 2003

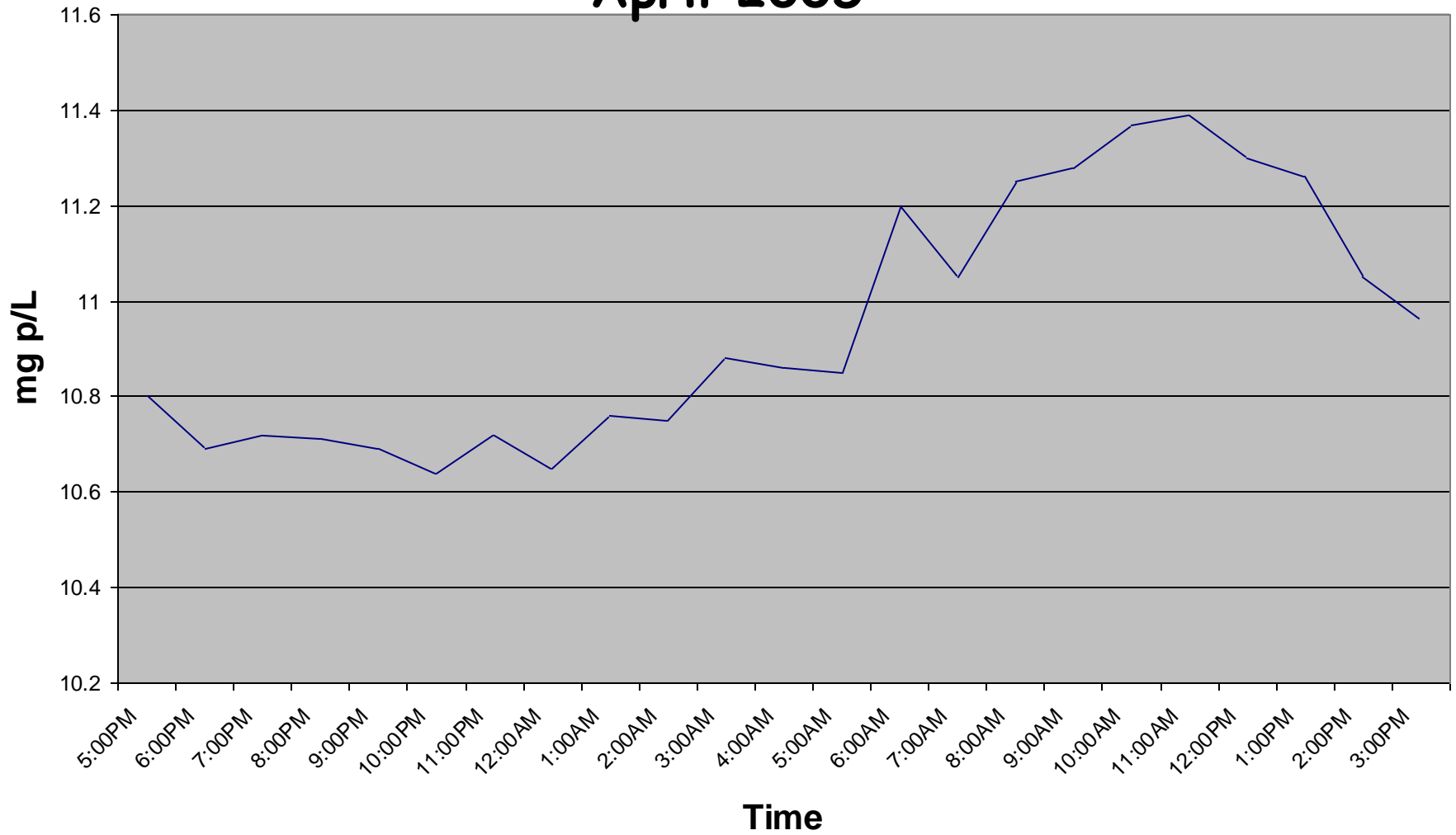


% of Dissolved O April 13, 2004



Dissovled Oxygen

April 2005



Eserichia coli

This bacteria, also known as fecal coliform, is commonly found in the solid waste of humans and animals. When ingested by humans disease can result.

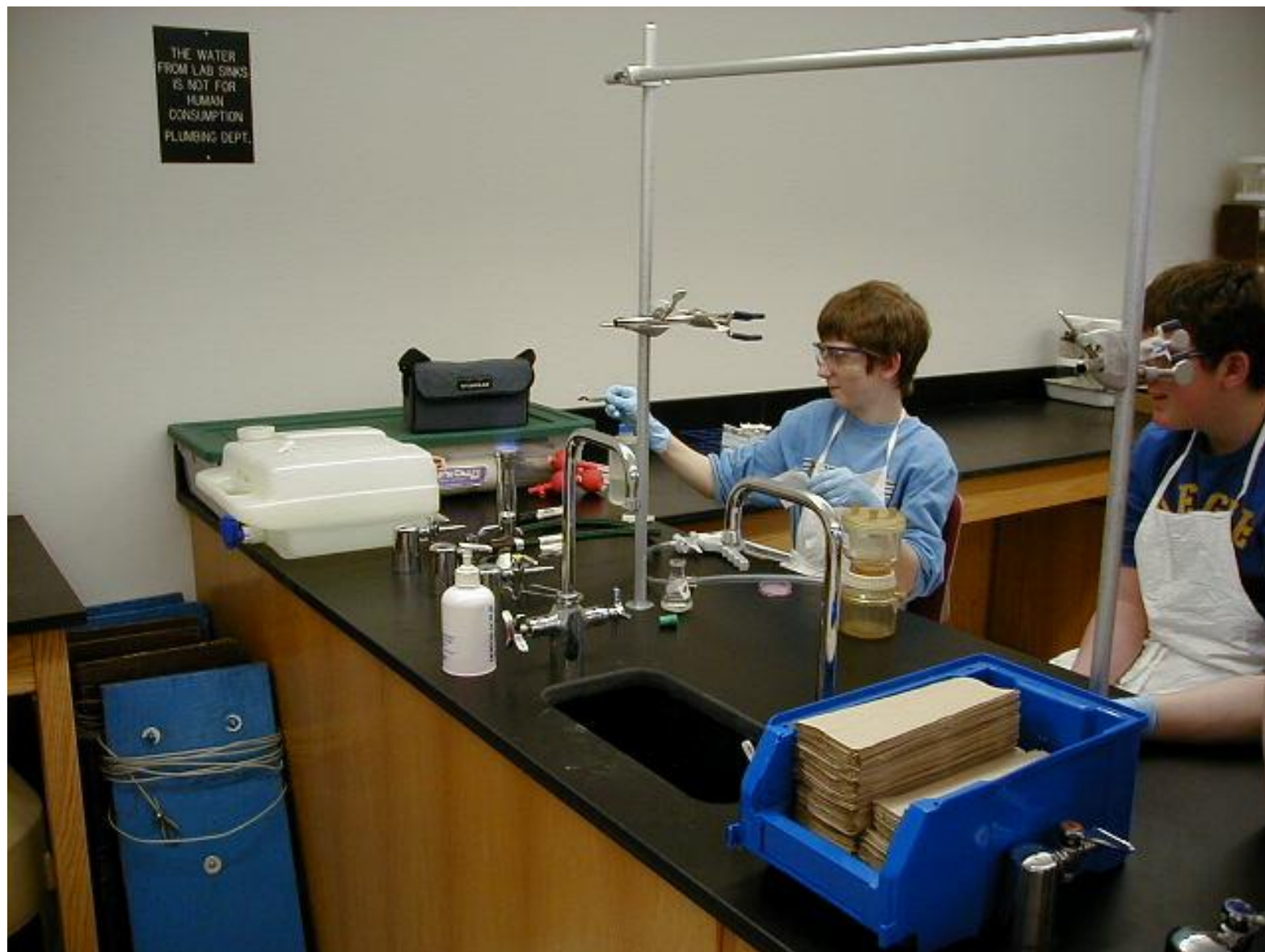
The common sources are untreated effluent from wastewater treatment plants, failing septic systems, and large farms.

Preparing the Samples



Our water samples were filtered through sterile membranes and placed in Petri dishes with mFC broth.

After 24 hours in an incubator the dishes were viewed under a microscope and a colony count was taken.





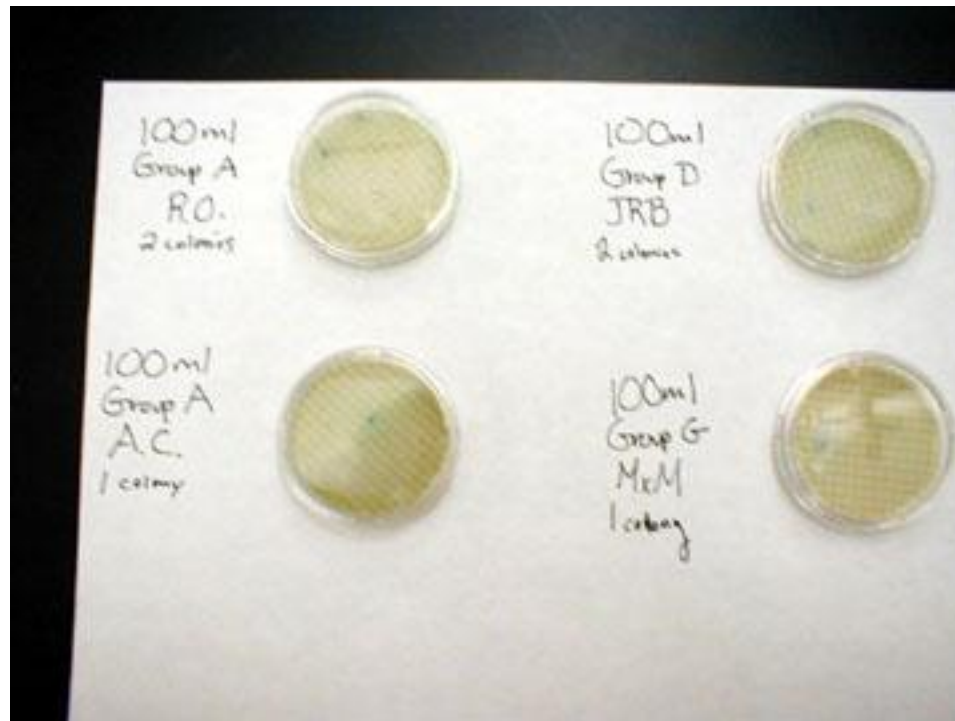








Fecal Coliform Results



100ml
Group A
R.O.



100ml
Group D
JRB



100ml
Group A
A.C.



100ml
Group G
MxM



Bibliography

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http://www.state.ma.us/dfwele/RIVER/rifls/Sites/EelRiver222/RIFLS_Site_Page.html

The Eel River Watershed Study Proposal, MIT Eel River Investigation Team, December 7, 2001

TEAM

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