

**City of River Falls  
North Kinnickinnic River Monitoring Project**

**2008 Summary**



**Report prepared by SEH Inc., for the  
City of River Falls Engineering Department  
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City of River Falls  
North Kinnickinnic River Monitoring Project**

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**Project Introduction:**

The Kinnickinnic River is one of the premier, naturally sustaining trout fisheries in the Upper Midwest, primarily producing brown trout. There has been a lot of concern about how new development in River Falls may affect the river, especially due to storm water runoff from impervious surfaces in these urbanizing areas. Not only can storm water runoff contribute chemicals from lawns, cars, etc., but the thermal impacts of untreated storm water are also a concern, as described on the North Kinnickinnic River Monitoring Project website (see “The Thermal Impacts of Storm Water”). In 2002, the City adopted a new [Storm Water Management Ordinance](#), which is designed to protect the Kinnickinnic River from the negative impacts of storm water runoff associated with new development. For new development and re-development projects, the City of River Falls Storm Water Management Ordinance requires that, for a 1.5-inch, 24-hour rainfall event, the post-development runoff volume and peak flow rate must not exceed the pre-development runoff volume and peak flow rate. To achieve this requirement, developers must provide on-site infiltration of storm water.

To take an active role in the river's health and well-being, the City of River Falls implemented the North Kinnickinnic River Monitoring Project in 2004. The goal of the project is to evaluate

the effectiveness of our Storm Water Management Ordinance for preventing degradation of the Kinnickinnic River due to new City development. The project scope includes four primary monitoring elements:

- Temperature Monitoring
- Water Quality Monitoring
- Base Flow Surveys
- Macroinvertebrate Monitoring

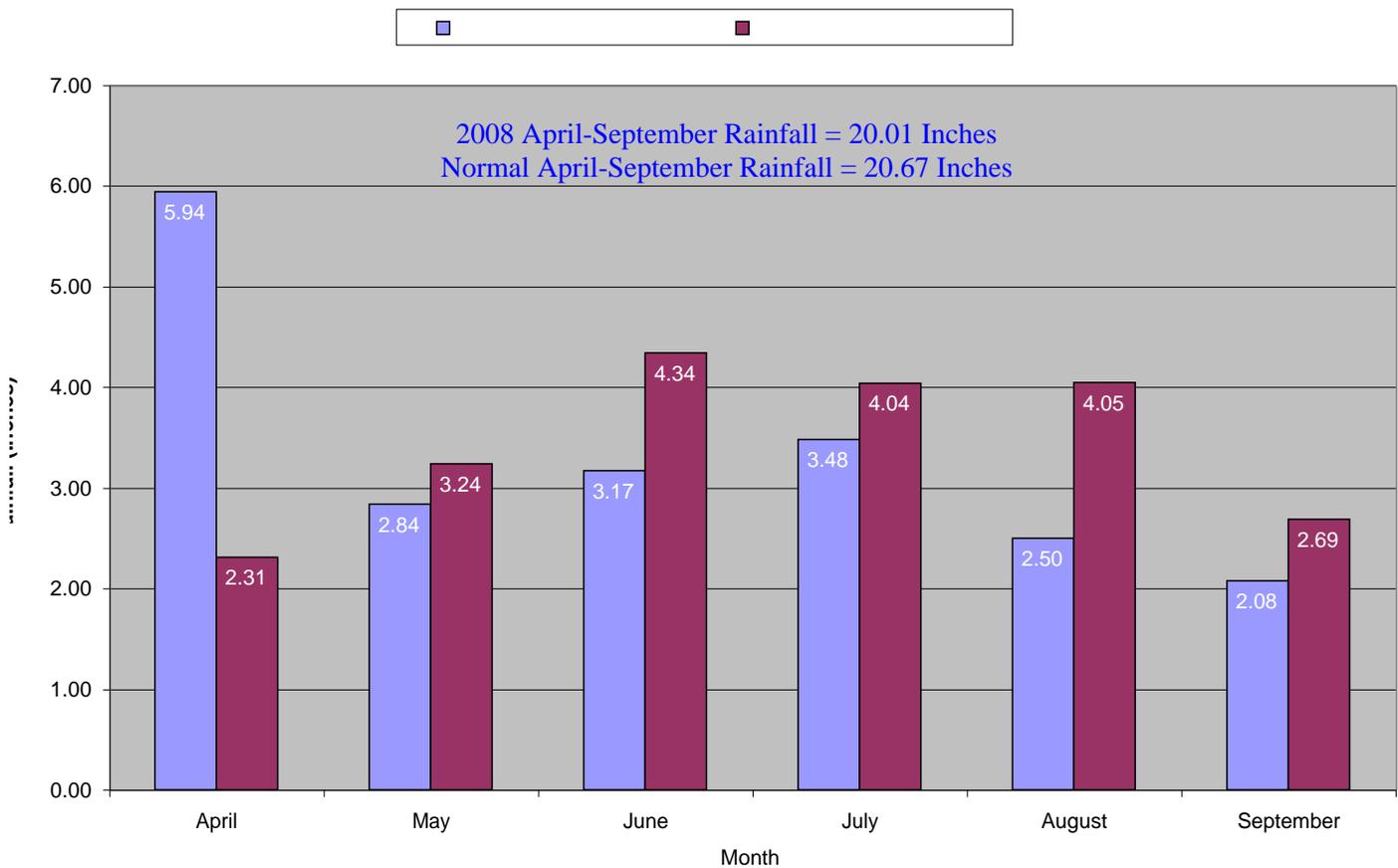
The City will examine the long-term results of each of these four monitoring elements to determine whether the storm water ordinance is protecting the river as new development occurs. The project will use an “upstream/downstream” approach to determine if storm water management practices in the Sterling Ponds subdivision protect downstream river conditions. We will also take a focused look at the performance of the on-site storm water management practices that are incorporated into new developments. Our hope is that, due to the ordinance requirements, the thermal, water quality, and biological impacts of new development will be undetectable or greatly reduced.

### **River Falls Precipitation:**

Due to the major influence of precipitation on river flow, temperature, and water quality, an analysis of seasonal precipitation is conducted as a part of this project. A total of 20.01 inches of precipitation was recorded in River Falls during the April-September 2008 period, only 0.66 inch less than the normal total of 20.67 inches for this time period. Rain fell on 64 days, or 35% of the April-September 2008 period.

Monthly rainfall amounts during the April-September 2008 period are presented in the figure below. April was the wettest month (5.94 inches), exceeding the normal monthly rainfall amount by 3.63 inches. All months during the May-September period were drier than normal, with monthly rainfall deficits ranging from 0.40 inch to 1.55 inches, and a total summer rainfall deficit of 4.29 inches. The greatest rainfall deficits occurred in June and August, and the lowest monthly rainfall amounts were recorded in August (2.50 inches) and September (2.08 inches). In April 2008, no drought conditions were apparent in the project area, but lower than normal summer rainfall resulted in abnormally dry conditions by late August 2008 and moderate drought conditions by mid-September 2008.

**River Falls Monthly Rainfall: April-September 2008**

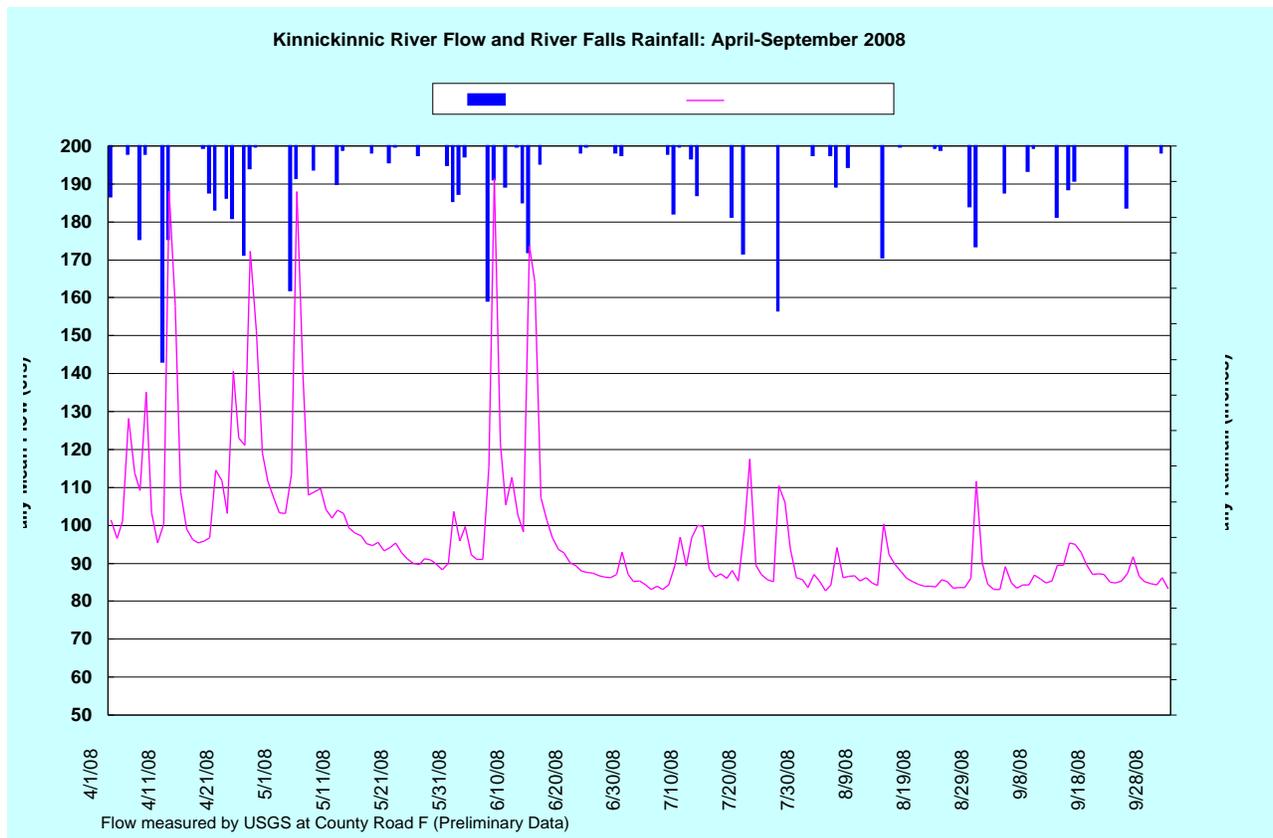


Besides being slightly drier than normal, the April-September 2008 monitoring period was slightly cooler than normal. The mean air temperature in River Falls during the April-September 2008 period was 62.5° Fahrenheit (F), 0.7° F lower than the normal mean of 63.2° F for this time period. The first half of the 2008 monitoring period was colder than normal, while the second half was warmer than normal. The months of April and May were nearly 4° F colder than normal, and the month of June was slightly colder than normal. The months of July, August, and September were all slightly warmer than normal, with September experiencing the greatest departure (2.1° F).

The City of River Falls Storm Water Management Ordinance would have provided infiltration of nearly 100% (19.99 inches) of the total rainfall (20.01 inches) that occurred during the April-September 2008 period. This percentage was determined using some conservative estimates further described in the 2008 technical report.

**Kinnickinnic River Flow:**

The flow of the Kinnickinnic River is a reflection of strong ground water contributions, as well as precipitation-induced storm water runoff from predominantly agricultural and urban land uses throughout the 165-square mile Kinnickinnic River Watershed. The daily mean (average) flow of the Kinnickinnic River at County Highway F during the April-September 2008 period is presented in the figure below. Daily rainfall, as measured in River Falls at Sterling Ponds, is also presented in the figure below.



The Kinnickinnic River hydrograph suggests that twelve significant runoff events occurred during the April-September 2008 period. Peak daily mean flows for all of these runoff events exceeded 110 cubic feet per second (cfs). Six of these twelve runoff events occurred in April, due to frequent rain events and above-normal precipitation. Three of the twelve runoff events occurred in early May and early-mid June. Large rain events on May 2 (1.02 inches), June 5 (1.09 inches), and June 11-12 (1.15 inches) produced significant increases in the Kinnickinnic River hydrograph, with peak daily mean flows of 188 cfs, 192 cfs, and 174 cfs, respectively. Three of the twelve runoff events occurred in July and August. Large rain events on July 19 (0.76 inch), July 25 (1.16 inches), and August 27-28 (1.14 inches) produced moderate increases in the Kinnickinnic River hydrograph, with peak daily mean flows of 118 cfs, 111 cfs, and 112 cfs, respectively. The six rainfall and runoff events in May, June, July, and August were the focus for evaluating possible storm water impacts in the North Kinnickinnic River Monitoring Project Area in 2008, and are further analyzed in the 2008 technical report. During dry periods between runoff events, the Kinnickinnic River maintained a base flow condition of approximately 83-95 cfs at County Highway F.

### **Temperature Monitoring:**

Information about the thermal impacts of untreated storm water runoff can be found in the “*Thermal Impacts*” section of the North Kinni Monitoring website.

The intent of the City of River Falls Storm Water Management Ordinance is to prevent storm water impacts on the Kinnickinnic River, including thermal pollution, in areas of the city with new development, such as the Sterling Ponds subdivision.



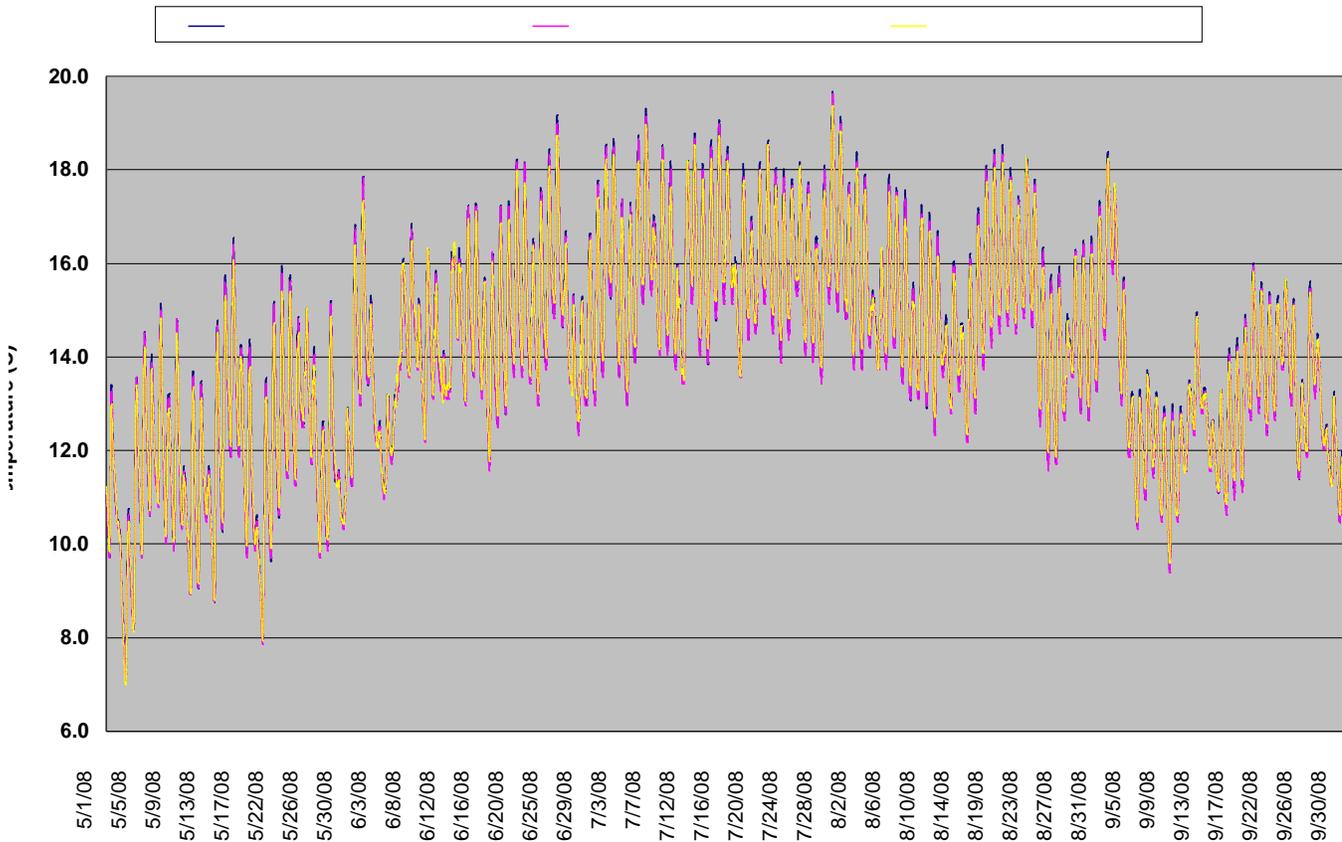
**A direct storm sewer discharge to the Kinnickinnic River at Division Street**

***Kinnickinnic River Temperature Monitoring Results:***

May-September (summer) 2008 temperature monitoring data were obtained for the Kinnickinnic River at Sites 1, 1A, 2, and 3. River temperatures at these four monitoring sites averaged 14.0° C and ranged from 6.9-19.7° C over the course of the summer. Lower-than-normal river temperatures probably prevailed in the North Kinnickinnic River Monitoring Project Area during the summer of 2008, since the 2008 summer average air temperature of 19.1° C (66.4° F) was slightly lower than the normal summer average air temperature of 19.2° C (66.5° F). The 2008 summer average air and river temperatures were the lowest summer average temperatures recorded in the North Kinnickinnic River Monitoring Project Area since the summer of 2004.

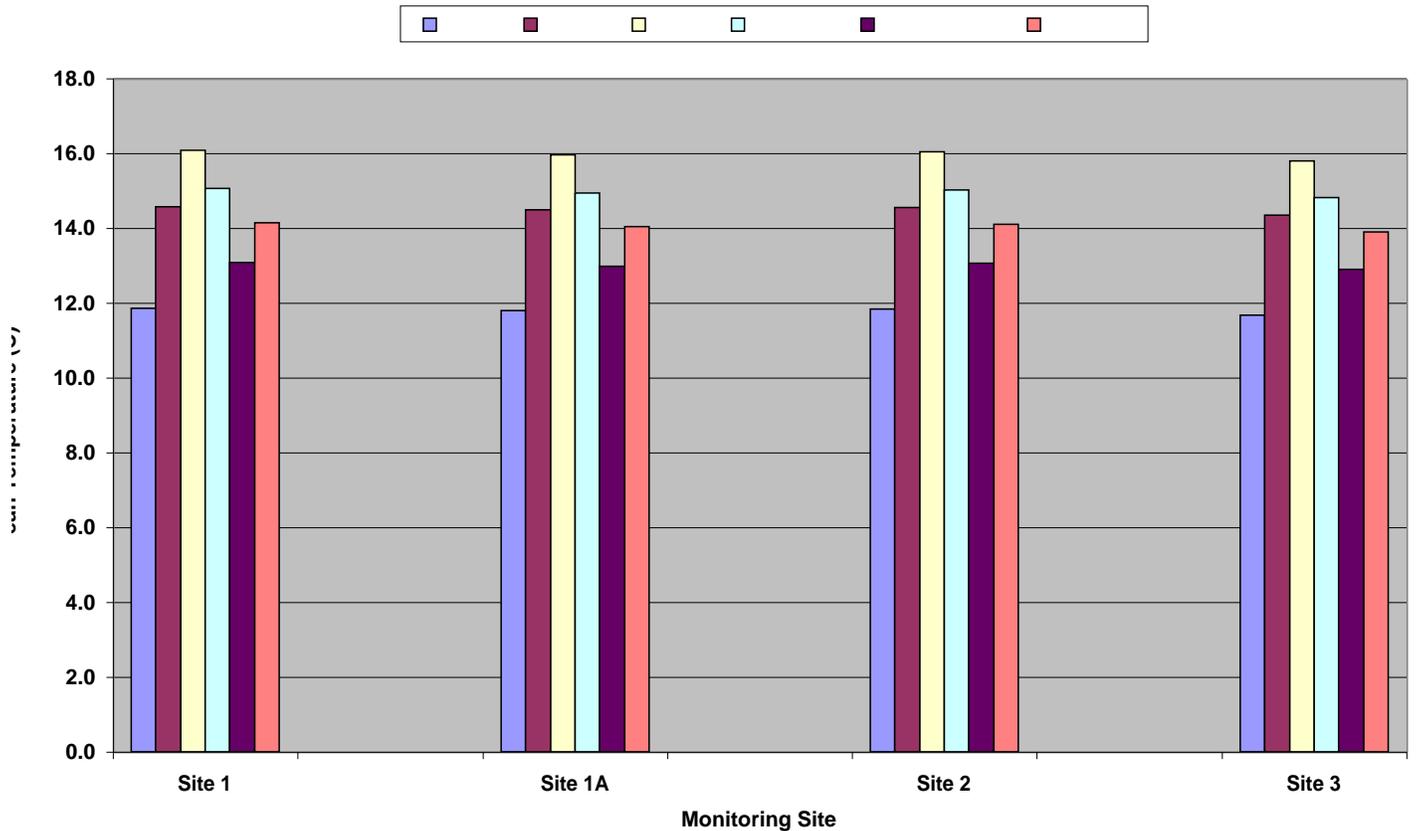
The most direct way to determine if any thermal impacts occurred in the Kinnickinnic River as a result of the Sterling Ponds subdivision is to compare the temperature monitoring data at Site 1, located immediately downstream from Sumner Creek, to the temperature monitoring data at Sites 1A and 2, located immediately upstream from Sumner Creek. In 2008, upstream summer temperatures at Sites 1A and 2 were nearly identical to downstream summer temperatures at Site 1, as shown below.

**Kinnickinnic River Temperatures at Sites 1, 1A, and 2: May-September 2008**



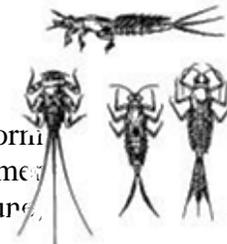
The 2008 monthly and summer mean (average) temperatures at Sites 1, 1A, 2, and 3 were also nearly identical, as shown below.

**Monthly and Summer Mean Temperatures at Kinnickinnic River Monitoring Sites:  
May-September 2008**



The summer 2008 temperature regime in the Kinnickinnic River at Sites 1, 1A, and 2 was excellent for coldwater macroinvertebrate and brown trout communities. Approximately 90% of all temperatures recorded at Sites 1, 1A, and 2 during the May-September 2008 period were less than or equal to ( $\leq$ ) 17° C, which is the top of the optimum temperature range for a healthy coldwater macroinvertebrate community. A temperature of 17° C is also considered to be the optimum for brown trout survival. Approximately 99% of all temperatures recorded at Sites 1, 1A, and 2 during the May-September 2008 period were  $\leq$  19° C, which is the top of the optimum temperature range for brown trout growth. One hundred percent (100%) of all temperatures recorded at Sites 1, 1A, and 2 during the May-September 2008 period were  $\leq$  20° C, which is the top of the optimum temperature range for brown trout survival. River temperatures exceeding 20° C were not recorded during the May-September 2008 period, a situation which has not occurred since the summer of 2004.

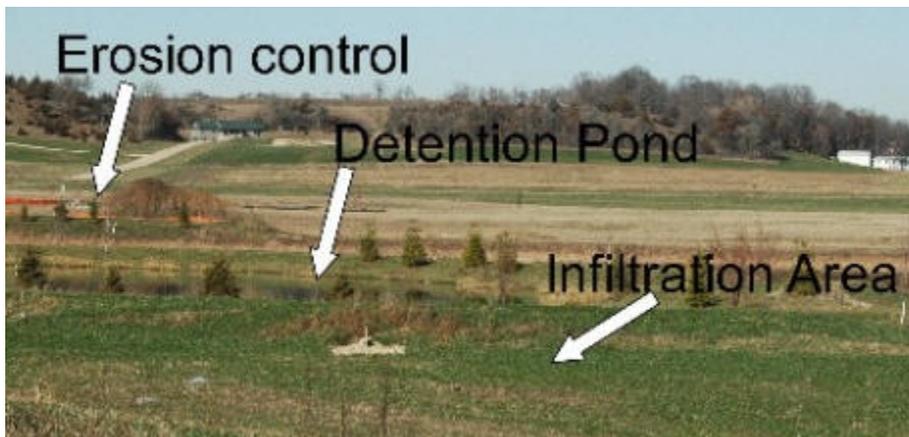
Downstream from Sumner Creek and Sterling Ponds, no storm water-related thermal impacts were apparent at Site 1 after summer rain events, including six significant rainfall events in May, June,



July, and August 2008.

***Sumner Creek and Sterling Ponds Temperature Monitoring Results:***

May-September (summer) 2008 temperature monitoring data were obtained for Sumner Creek at Site 6 (upstream from Sterling Ponds) and at Sites 4 and 4A (downstream from Sterling Ponds). Site 4 is located immediately downstream from Sterling Ponds, while Site 4A is located 1.5 miles downstream, near the mouth of Sumner Creek. Temperature monitoring data for the Sterling Ponds storm water management practices were obtained in the wet detention pond (Site 5P), at the wet pond discharge to the infiltration basin (Site 5IB), and at the wet pond discharge to Sumner Creek (Site 5MHW). The Sumner Creek and Sterling Ponds temperature monitoring results helped document the effectiveness of the City of River Falls Storm Water Management Ordinance in 2008.

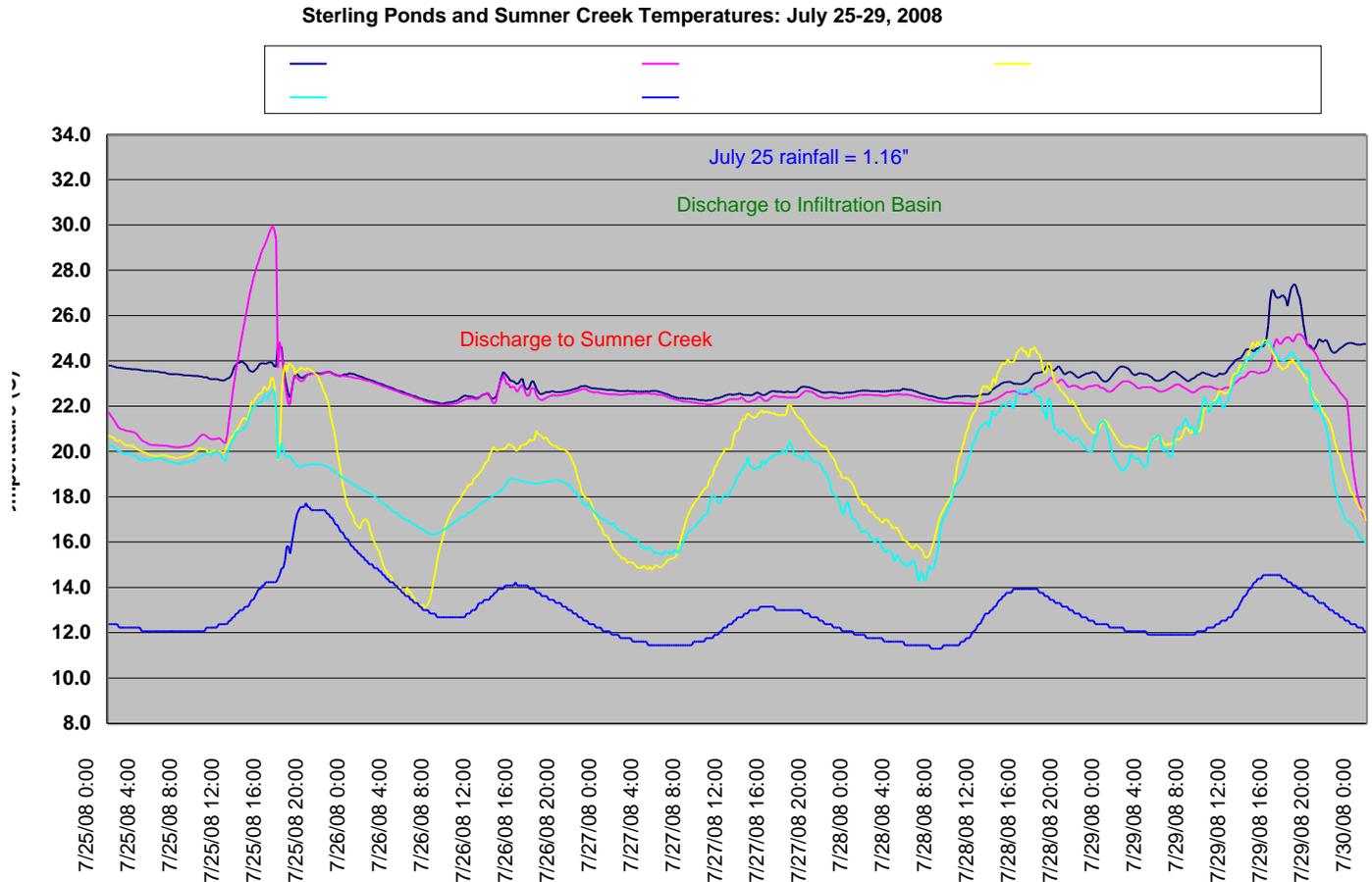


**Storm water best management practices in place at Sterling Ponds**

Temperature monitoring data indicate that the storm water management practices at Sterling Ponds prevented thermal impacts on the Kinnickinnic River during the May-September 2008 period. The summer mean temperature of the Sterling Ponds wet detention pond at Site 5P was 19.8° C (range = 9.1-27.4° C), but much of this warm storm water was effectively infiltrated in the wet pond and/or discharged to the adjacent infiltration basin. With the exception of a large rain event on July 25, all summer rainfall events were fully infiltrated, as required by the River Falls Storm Water Management Ordinance. These 49 rain events, ranging in magnitude from 0.01-1.09 inches, represent a total of 12.91 inches of precipitation, or 92% of the total summer rainfall amount (14.07 inches).

The Sterling Ponds wet detention pond only discharged to Sumner Creek after the largest rain event of the summer (1.16 inches), on July 25. During this event, the wet detention pond discharged warmer water (23.4-23.9° C) to the Sumner Creek drainage way, for an extended time period (3.3 hours). However, this warm storm water discharge did not cause a thermal spike in Sumner Creek at Site 4, and was not responsible for the thermal spike observed in lower Sumner Creek, at Site 4A. The wet pond discharge to Sumner Creek also had no thermal impacts on the Kinnickinnic River at Site 1. The duration of the July 25 discharge was relatively short (3.3

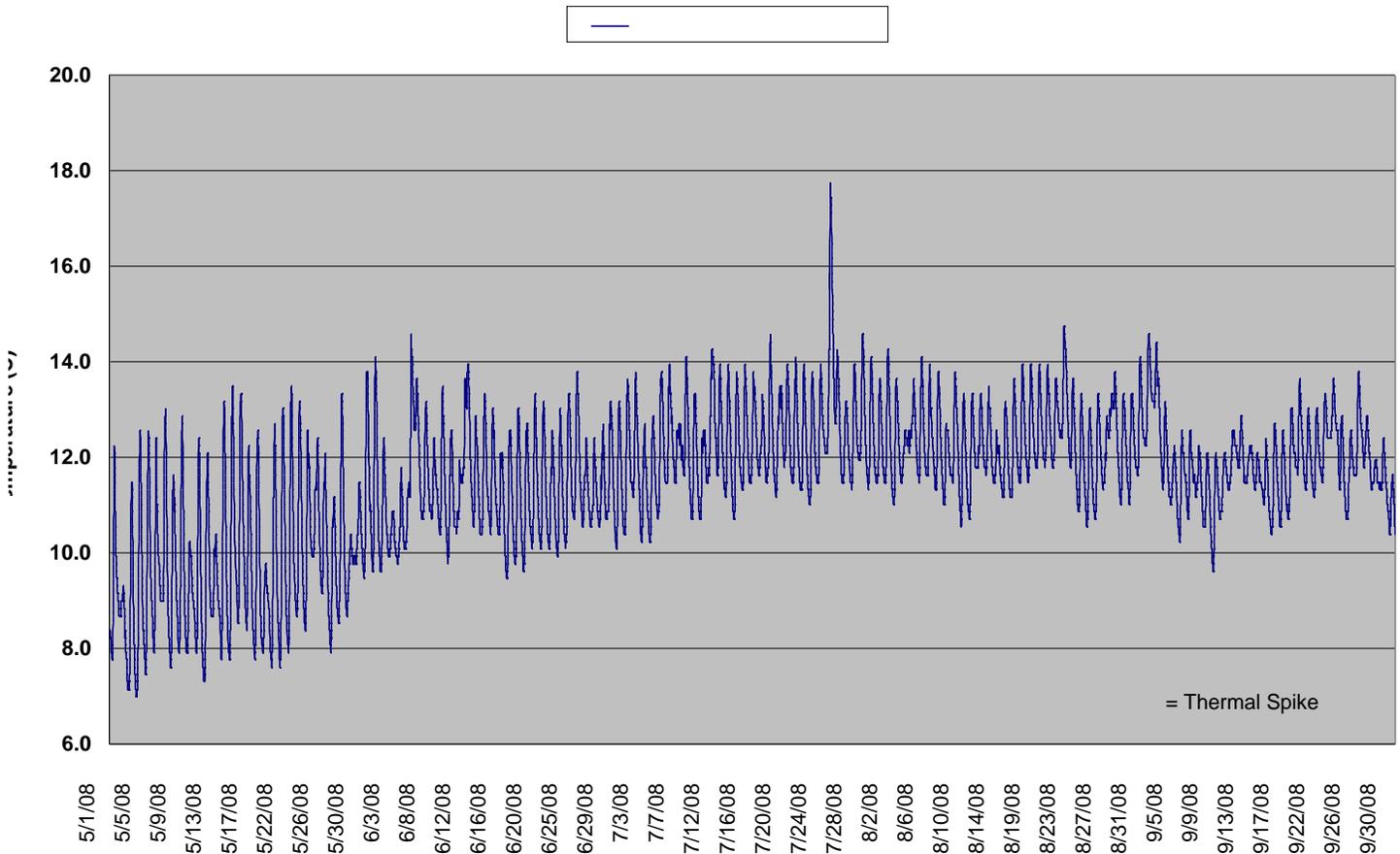
hours), compared to the duration of discharge to the Sterling Ponds infiltration basin (98 hours), suggesting that the majority of storm water from this event was infiltrated rather than discharged to the creek. The Sterling Ponds and Sumner Creek temperature monitoring results for the July 25 rain event are shown below.



Temperature monitoring of the Sterling Ponds storm water practices during the 2005-2008 period indicates that storm water discharges to Sumner Creek are common during rain events larger than 1.5 inches, during back-to-back rain events, when rainfall amounts exceed one inch and time periods between rain events are less than 48 hours, and during very intense rain events, when rainfall amounts exceed one inch. Modifications made to the control structure for the Sterling Ponds wet pond outlet in June 2007 seemed to improve infiltration capacity for these types of events in 2007 and 2008. Rain events larger than 1.5 inches exceed the intent of the River Falls Storm Water Management Ordinance, so storm water discharges to Sumner Creek might be expected. However, storm water discharges to Sumner Creek during back-to-back rain events, when rainfall amounts are less than the 1.5-inch ordinance requirement, may need further attention. More rapid delivery of storm water to the infiltration basin may be desirable between rain events, to ensure infiltration of the first rain event within a 24-hour period. Additional capacity in the Sterling Ponds wet pond may be helpful for capturing more storm water volume during very intense rain events, but the increased volume in the pond could require more infiltration time, which may prove problematic when large, back-to-back rain events occur.

Permanent flow occurred in lower Sumner Creek at Site 4A throughout the summer. The summer mean temperature (11.6° C) reflects strong spring flow. The creek potentially provides a good thermal environment for a brook trout fishery, and is an important contributor of cold water to the Kinnickinnic River. However, thermal spikes of notable magnitude (1.9-3.5° C) occurred at this location during three large summer rain events. These spikes (shown below) are unrelated to the storm water discharges at Sterling Ponds, and seem to have a more local cause that needs further investigation.

Sumner Creek Temperature at Site 4A: May-September 2008

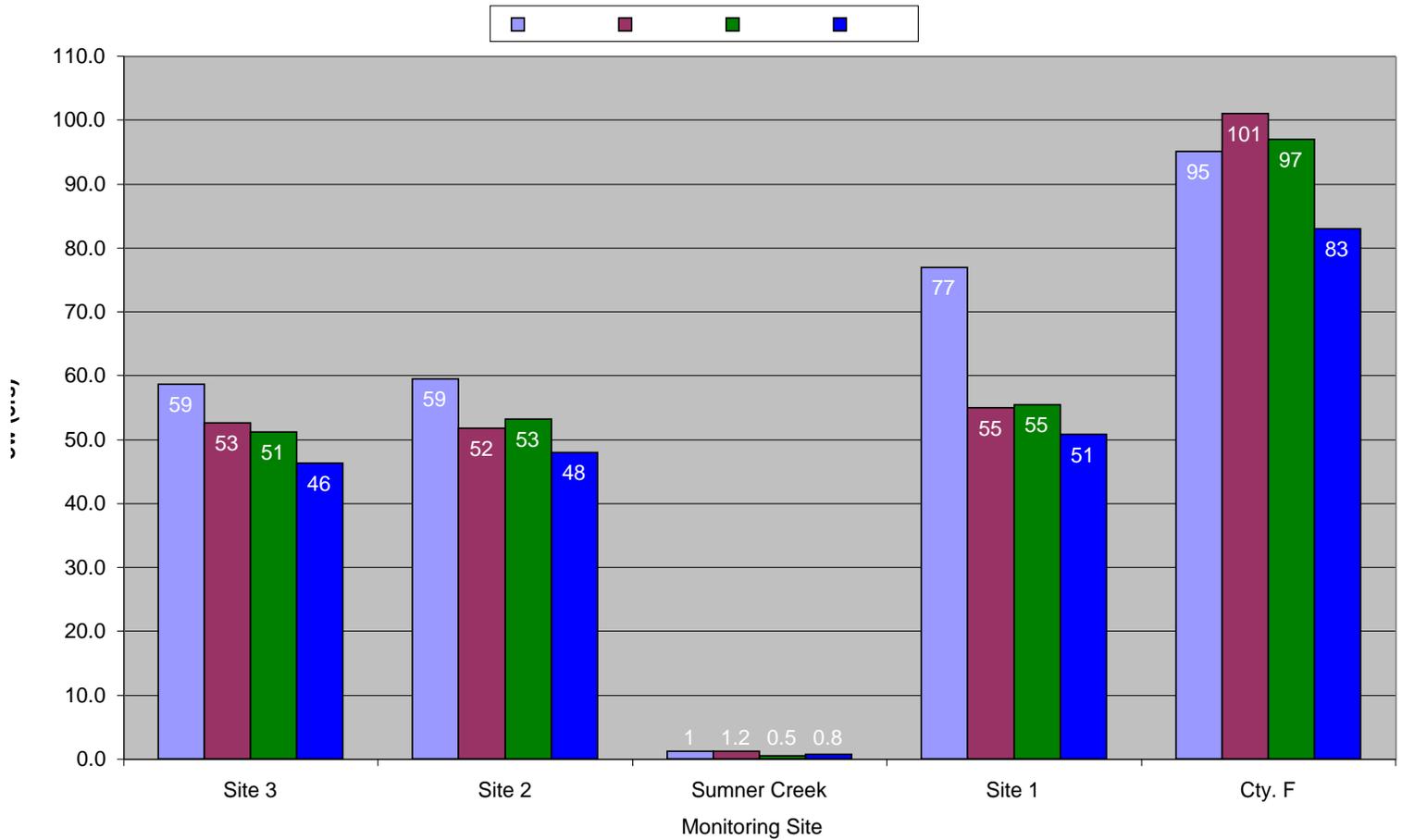


**Base Flow Surveys:**

In June (spring) and October (autumn) 2008, base flow surveys were conducted at Sites 1-3 in the Kinnickinnic River and at the mouth of Sumner Creek (Site 4A) within the North Kinnickinnic River Monitoring Project Area. The Kinnickinnic River was assumed to be in a base flow condition when 3-4 days of “flat-line” flow were observed at the USGS stream flow gauging station located at County Highway F (as described in the 2008 technical report). During the April-September 2008 period, the Kinnickinnic River generally maintained a base flow condition of approximately 83-95 cfs at County Highway F. Spring base flow surveys have been conducted for three consecutive years (2006-2008), while autumn base flow surveys have been conducted for four consecutive years (2005-2008).

The autumn 2008 base flow survey results are presented below, with a comparison to the autumn 2005-2007 survey results. In autumn 2008, Kinnickinnic River base flows increased slightly from upstream (Site 3) to downstream (Site 1), with Sumner Creek providing a small contribution upstream of Site 1. The autumn 2006-2008 Kinnickinnic River base flows in the project area (Sites 1-3) were markedly reduced compared to autumn 2005, likely due to below-normal precipitation during the summers of 2006-2008.

**Autumn Base Flow Conditions in the Kinnickinnic River and Sumner Creek:  
2005-2008**



More information on the spring and autumn base flow survey results can be found in the 2008 technical report. Based upon several years of base flow survey data, it seems apparent that climatic variability can cause significant annual changes in spring and autumn base flows within the North Kinnickinnic River Monitoring Project Area. One goal of the River Falls Storm Water Management Ordinance is to maintain strong base flow conditions in the Kinnickinnic River by requiring storm water management practices that promote infiltration of rainfall, thereby

maintaining shallow aquifer levels, as well as the springs that provide cold water for the river. Annual spring and autumn base flow surveys will provide a baseline for determining if base flow conditions will be sustained in the future as development progresses in the North Kinnickinnic River Monitoring Project Area.

**Macroinvertebrate Monitoring:**

Biological indicators such as macroinvertebrates (aquatic insects) are often used to complement physical and chemical measurements in stream monitoring programs. Because macroinvertebrates live in the stream environment for a year or more, they are excellent indicators of past as well as present water quality conditions. Annual macroinvertebrate samples are collected at Sites 1-3 within the North Kinnickinnic River Monitoring Project Area. Organisms are identified and counted in the laboratory, and various biological indices can then be calculated for each monitoring site. The index values are indicative of water quality, depending upon the pollution tolerances of the macroinvertebrates collected at the monitoring sites.

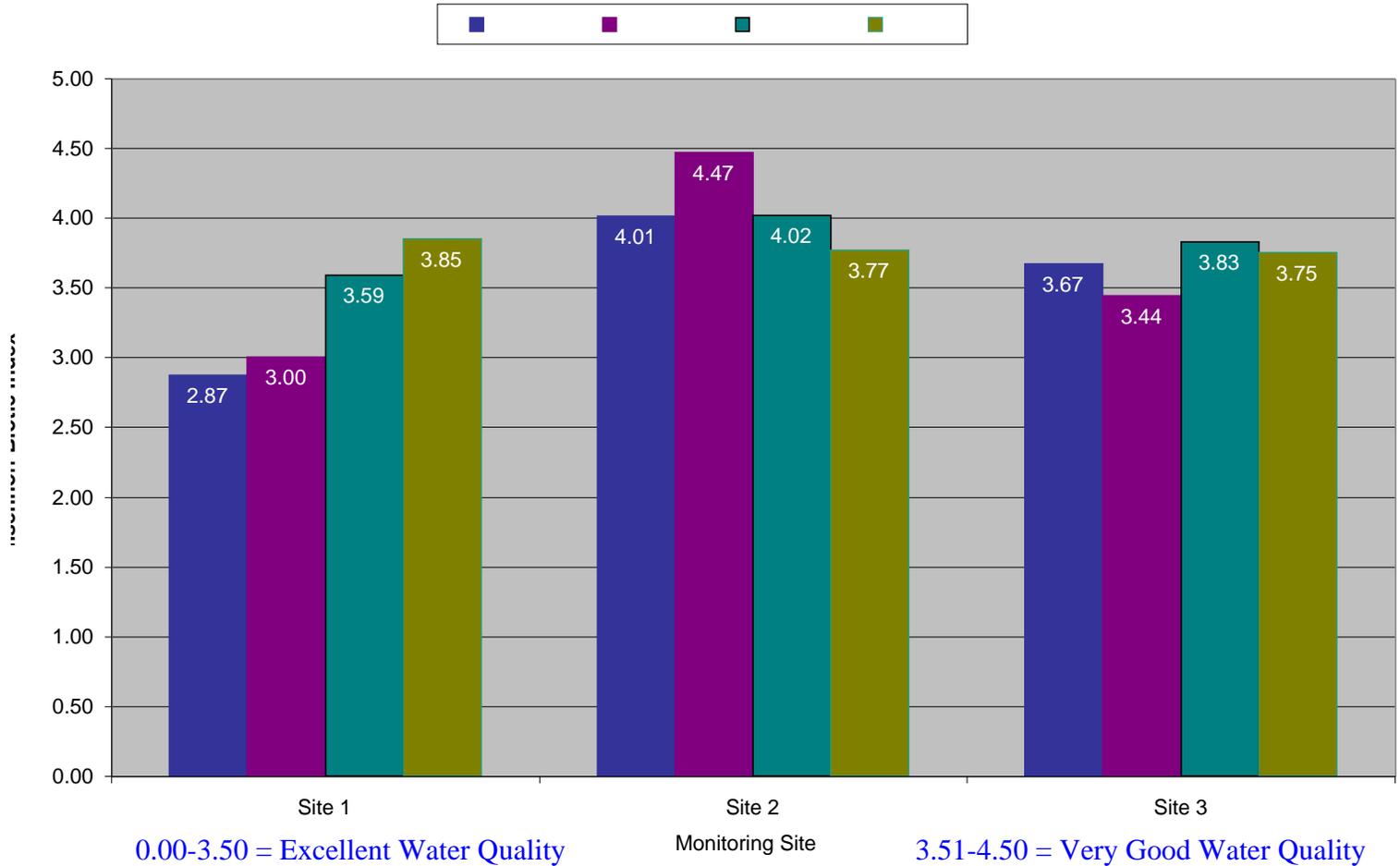
The Hilsenhoff Biotic Index (HBI) is particularly useful for determining the influence of organic pollution on macroinvertebrates. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has used this index for many years in long-term stream monitoring programs. Each macroinvertebrate taxon (genus and/or species) has been assigned a specific tolerance value, ranging from 0 (extremely intolerant of organic pollution) to 10 (extremely tolerant of organic pollution). The more intolerant taxa that are present, the lower the HBI value, indicating better water quality, as follows:

<b>HBI Value</b>	<b>Water Quality</b>	<b>Degree of Organic Pollution</b>
0.00-3.50	Excellent	No apparent organic pollution
3.51-4.50	Very Good	Slight organic pollution
4.51-5.50	Good	Some organic pollution
5.51-6.50	Fair	Fairly significant organic pollution
6.51-7.50	Fairly Poor	Significant organic pollution
7.51-8.50	Poor	Very significant organic pollution
8.51-10.00	Very Poor	Severe organic pollution

The 2004-2007 macroinvertebrate HBI values at Sites 1-3 in the North Kinnickinnic River Monitoring Project Area are presented below. The 2004-2007 data establish a baseline for assessing the long-term health of the macroinvertebrate community within the project area. During the 2004-2007 period, HBI values at Site 1 were indicative of very good-excellent water quality, HBI values at Site 2 were indicative of very good water quality, and HBI values at Site 3 were indicative of very good-excellent water quality. The annual HBI values at Site 1 are all

less than or comparable to the annual HBI values at Sites 2 and 3, indicating slightly better water quality at Site 1. The comparability of annual macroinvertebrate HBI values at Sites 1-3 during the 2004-2007 period indicates that no storm water impacts were apparent at Site 1, downstream from Sumner Creek and the Sterling Ponds subdivision.

**Kinnickinnic River Macroinvertebrates: Hilsenhoff Biotic Index**



Macroinvertebrate monitoring was again conducted in May 2008, but the sample analysis has not yet been completed by the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point laboratory. Annual HBI values and other macroinvertebrate indices will continue to be posted as they become available, and long-term trends in these indices will continue to be evaluated, to assess the ongoing health of the Kinnickinnic River macroinvertebrate community.

### **Water Quality Monitoring:**

No runoff event-based water quality monitoring was conducted in 2008. With below-normal precipitation during the summer (May-September) monitoring season and relatively dry conditions in July, August, and September, very few significant runoff events occurred in the North Kinnickinnic River Monitoring Project Area. Given more normal precipitation and runoff conditions, the water quality monitoring component of this project will be initiated in 2009.

Due to the difficulty of obtaining accurate samples on the river, this component of the project may be limited to analyzing the water quality of the Sterling Ponds wet pond discharges.

### **North Kinnickinnic River Monitoring Project Indicators:**

As a part of the North Kinnickinnic River Monitoring Project, key physical and biological indicators have been monitored to evaluate the effectiveness of the River Falls Storm Water Management Ordinance for preventing degradation of the Kinnickinnic River due to development-related storm water impacts. These key indicators, which have been monitored since the onset of the project in 2004, include:

- Total rainfall in River Falls during the April-September period
- % April-September rainfall infiltrated, per the River Falls Storm Water Management Ordinance
- Summer (May-September) average air temperature in River Falls
- Summer (May-September) average temperatures in the Kinnickinnic River and Sumner Creek
- % of the summer Kinnickinnic River temperatures favorable for biota
- % of the summer Sumner Creek temperatures favorable for biota
- Spring base flow conditions in the Kinnickinnic River and Sumner Creek
- Autumn base flow conditions in the Kinnickinnic River and Sumner Creek
- Kinnickinnic River macroinvertebrate HBI values

The North Kinnickinnic River Monitoring Project Indicators for the 2004-2008 period can be found on the project website. As monitoring continues in the future, these indicators can evaluate the annual effectiveness of the River Falls Storm Water Management Ordinance and track long-term trends that document protection of the Kinnickinnic River.