

7 POTENTIAL FOR GROUNDWATER CONTAMINATION

The most common sources of contaminants that can impact groundwater originate on or near the ground surface. The contaminant sources can include leachate from landfills, effluent from leaking lagoons or from septic fields, and petroleum products from storage tanks or pipeline breaks. The agricultural activities that generate contaminants include spreading of fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and manure. The spreading of highway salt can also degrade groundwater quality.

When activities occur that do or can produce a liquid which could contaminate groundwater, it is prudent (from a hydrogeological point of view) to locate the activities where the risk of groundwater contamination is minimal. Alternatively, if the activities must be located in an area where groundwater can be more easily contaminated, the necessary action must be taken to minimize the risk of groundwater contamination.

The potential for groundwater contamination is based on the concept that the easier it is for a liquid contaminant to move downward, the easier it is for the groundwater to become contaminated. In areas where there is groundwater discharge, liquid contaminants cannot enter the groundwater flow systems to be distributed throughout the area. When there are groundwater recharge areas, low-permeability materials impede the movement of liquid contaminants downward. Therefore, if the soils develop on a low-permeability parent material of till or clay, the downward migration of a contaminant is slower relative to a high-permeability parent material such as sand and gravel of fluvial origin. Once a liquid contaminant enters the subsurface, the possibility for groundwater contamination increases if it coincides with a higher permeability material within one metre of the land surface.

To determine the nature of the materials on the land surface, the surficial geology map prepared by the Alberta Research Council (Shetsen, 1990) has been reclassified based on the relative permeability. The classification of materials is as follows:

1. high permeability - sand and gravel;
2. moderate permeability - silt, sand with clay, gravel with clay, and bedrock; and
3. low permeability - clay and till.

To identify the areas where sand and gravel can be expected within one metre of the ground surface, all groundwater database records with lithologies were reviewed. From a total of 2,101 records in the area of the County with lithology descriptions, 418 have sand and gravel within one metre of ground level. In the remaining 1,683 records, the first sand and gravel is deeper or not present. This information was gridded to prepare a distribution of where the first sand and gravel deposit could be expected within one metre of ground level.

7.1.1 Risk of Contamination Map

The information from the reclassification of the surficial geology map is the basis for preparing the initial risk map. The depth to the first sand and gravel is then used to modify the initial map and to prepare the final map. The criteria used for preparing the final Risk of Groundwater Contamination map are outlined in the adjacent table.

Surface Permeability	Sand or Gravel Present Top Within One Metre Of Ground Surface	Groundwater Contamination Risk
Low	No	Low
Moderate	No	Moderate
High	No	High
Low	Yes	High
Moderate	Yes	High
High	Yes	Very High

Table 3. Risk of Groundwater Contamination Criteria

The Risk of Groundwater Contamination map shows that, in 40% of the County, there is a high or very high risk of the groundwater being contaminated. These areas would be considered the least desirable ones for a development that has a product or by-product that could cause groundwater contamination. However, because the map has been prepared as part of a regional study, the designations are a guide only; detailed hydrogeological studies must be completed at any proposed development site to ensure the groundwater is protected from possible contamination. At all locations, good environmental practices should be exercised in order to ensure that groundwater contamination would not affect groundwater quality.

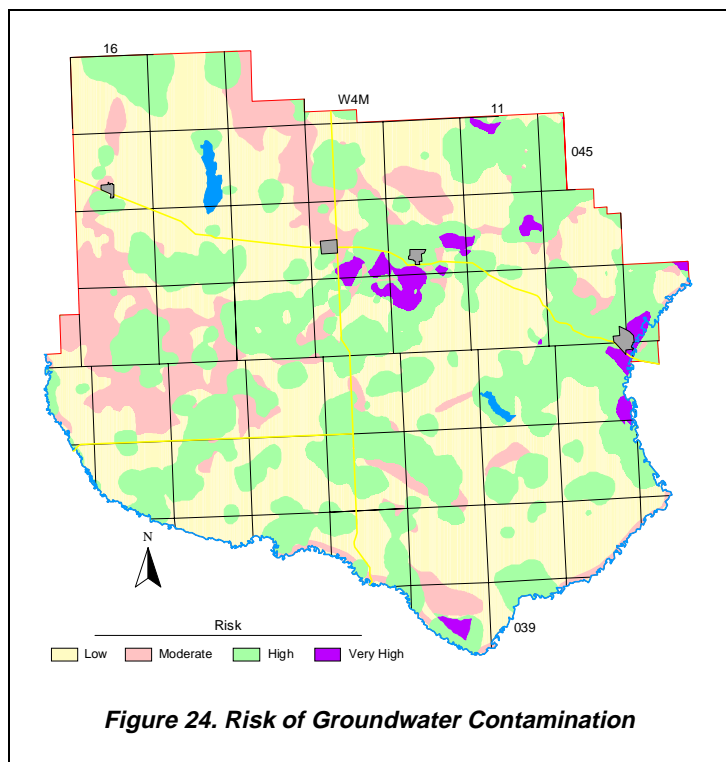


Figure 24. Risk of Groundwater Contamination

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study has been based on information available from the groundwater database. The database has three problems:

- 1) the quality of the data;
- 2) the coordinate system used for the horizontal control; and
- 3) the distribution of the data.

The quality of the data in the groundwater database is affected by two factors: a) the technical training of the persons collecting the data; and b) the quality control of the data. The possible options to upgrade the database include the creation of a "super" database, which includes only verified data. The level of verification would have to include identifying the water well in the field, obtaining meaningful horizontal coordinates for the water well and the verification of certain parameters such as water level and completed depth. An attempt to update the quality of the entire database is not recommended.

The main sources of groundwater are in the eastern part of the County. However, in this area there is a very poor understanding of the local hydrogeology. The bedrock surface cannot be defined with confidence, water well yields are significantly different than in other parts of the County, and the groundwater contains fewer dissolved minerals. In order to understand the local hydrogeology in townships 040 to 043, ranges 10 and 11, W4M, it will be necessary to conduct a detailed groundwater study in the area. The program would need to verify as much of the existing data as possible, synthesize the data to determine locations for the drilling of water test holes, and conduct the necessary drilling.

Another area where insufficient data are available is for the determination of a groundwater budget. There are only seven observation water-well data sources in the County from which to obtain water levels for the groundwater budget. One method to obtain additional water-level data is to solicit the assistance of the water well owners who are stakeholders in the groundwater resource. In the M.D. of Rocky View, water well owners are being provided with a tax credit if they accurately measure the water level in their water well once per week for a year. A pilot project indicated that approximately five years of records are required to obtain a reasonable data set. The cost of a five-year project involving 50 water wells would be less than the cost of one drilling program that may provide two or three observation water wells.

In general, for the next level of study, the database needs updating. It requires more information from existing water wells, and additional information from new ones.

Before an attempt is made to upgrade the level of interpretation provided in this report and the accompanying maps and groundwater query, it is recommended that all water wells for which water well drilling reports are available be subjected to the following actions:

1. The horizontal location of the water well should be determined within 10 metres. The coordinates must be in 10TM NAD 27 or some other system that will allow conversion to 10TM NAD 27 coordinates.
2. A four-hour aquifer test (two hours of pumping and 2 hours of recovery) should be performed with the water well to obtain a realistic estimate for the transmissivity of the aquifer in which the water well is completed.

3. Water samples should be collected for chemical analysis after 5 and 115 minutes of pumping, and analyzed for major and minor ions.

In addition to the data collection associated with the existing water wells, all available geophysical logs should be interpreted to establish a more accurate spatial definition of individual aquifers.

There is also a need to provide the water well drillers with feedback on the reports they are submitting to the regulatory agencies. The feedback is necessary to allow for a greater degree of uniformity in the reporting process. This is particularly true when trying to identify the bedrock surface. The water well drilling reports should be submitted to the AEP Resource Data Division in an electronic form. The money presently being spent by AEP and Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) to transpose the paper form to the electronic form should be used to allow for a technical review of the data and follow-up discussions with the drillers.

An effort should be made to form a partnership with the petroleum industry. The industry spends millions of dollars each year collecting information relative to water wells. Proper coordination of this effort could provide significantly better information from which future regional interpretations could be made. This could be accomplished by the County taking an active role in the activities associated with the construction of lease sites for the drilling of hydrocarbon wells and conducting of seismic programs.

Groundwater is a renewable resource and it must be managed.

9 REFERENCES

- Alberta Environmental Protection. June 1979. Hardisty, Groundwater Study. Report Prepared by Environmental Protection Services.
- Carrigy, M. A. 1971. Lithostratigraphy of the Uppermost Cretaceous (Lance) and Paleocene Strata of the Alberta Plains. Research Council of Alberta. Bulletin 27.
- Catuneanu, Octavian, Andrew D. Miall and Arthur R. Sweet. 1997. Reciprocal Architecture of Bearpaw T-R Sequences, Uppermost Cretaceous, Western Canada Sedimentary Basin. Bulletin of Canadian Petroleum Geology. Vol. 45, No. 1 (March, 1997), P. 75-94.
- Associated Engineering Services Ltd. April 1967. Town of Killam Water Supply Study. Unpublished Contract Report.
- Geoscience Consulting Ltd. March 1976. Evaluation of Water Supply. Daysland, Alberta. Prepared for Alberta Environment.
- Geoscience Consulting Ltd. April 1976. Evaluation of Water Supply. Killam, Alberta. Prepared for Alberta Environment.
- Hackbarth, D. A. 1975. Hydrogeology of the Wainwright area, Alberta. Earth Sciences Report No. 75-1. Alberta Research Council.
- Le Breton, E. G. February 1961. Groundwater prospects of the Killam area. Research Council of Alberta.
- Le Breton, E. Gordon. 1971. Hydrogeology of the Red Deer Area, Alberta. Research Council of Alberta. Report 71-1.
- Mossop, G. and I. Shetsen (co-compilers). 1994. Geological Atlas of the Western Canada Sedimentary Basin. Produced jointly by the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geology, Alberta Research Council, Alberta Energy, and the Geological Survey of Canada.
- Ozoray, G., M. Dubord and A. Cowen. 1990. Groundwater Resources of the Vermilion 73E Map Area, Alberta. Alberta Environmental Protection.
- Pettijohn, F. J. 1957. Sedimentary Rocks. Harper and Brothers Publishing.
- Shetsen, I. 1990. Quaternary Geology, Central Alberta. Produced by the Natural Resources Division of the Alberta Research Council.
- Thorntwaite, C. W. and J. R. Mather. 1957. Instructions and Tables for Computing Potential Evapotranspiration and the Water Balance. Drexel Institute of Technology. Laboratory of Climatology. Publications in Climatology. Vol. 10, No. 3, P. 181-289.

10 GLOSSARY

Apparent Yield	a regional analysis term referring to the rate a properly completed water well could be pumped, if fully penetrating the aquifer.
Aquifer	a formation, group of formations, or part of a formation that contains saturated permeable rocks capable of transmitting groundwater to water wells or springs in economical quantities.
Aquitard	a confining bed that retards but does not prevent the flow of water to or from an adjacent aquifer.
Available Drawdown	<p>in a confined aquifer, the distance between the non-pumping water level and the top of the aquifer.</p> <p>in an unconfined aquifer (water table aquifer), two thirds of the saturated thickness of the aquifer.</p>
Deltaic	a depositional environment in standing water near the mouth of a river.
Facies	the aspect or character of the sediment within beds of one and the same age (Pettijohn, 1957).
Fluvial	produced by the action of a stream or river.
Hydraulic Conductivity	the rate of flow of water through a unit cross-section under a unit hydraulic gradient; units are length/time.
Kriging	a geo-statistical method for gridding irregularly-spaced data.
Lacustrine	fine-grained sedimentary deposits associated with a lake environment and not including shore-line deposits.
Surficial Deposits	includes all sediments above the bedrock.
Transmissivity	<p>the rate at which water is transmitted through a unit width of an aquifer under a unit hydraulic gradient: a measure of the ease with which groundwater can move through the aquifer.</p> <p>Apparent Transmissivity: the value determined from a summary of aquifer test data, usually involving only two water-level readings.</p> <p>Effective Transmissivity: the value determined from late pumping and/or late recovery water-level data from an aquifer test.</p> <p>Aquifer Transmissivity: the value determined by multiplying the hydraulic conductivity of an aquifer by the thickness of the aquifer.</p>

FLAGSTAFF COUNTY

Appendix B

MAPS AND FIGURES ON CD-ROM

CD-ROM

- A) Database
- B) ArcView Files
- C) Query
- D) Maps and Figures

1) General

- Index Map
- Location of Water Wells
- Depth of Existing Water Wells
- Depth to Base of Groundwater Protection
- Bedrock Topography
- Bedrock Geology
- Cross-Section A - A'
- Cross-Section B - B'
- Geologic Column
- Generalized Cross-Section (for terminology only)
- Risk of Groundwater Contamination
- Relative Permeability
- Hydrographs - AEP Observation Water Wells

2) Surficial Aquifers

a) Surficial Deposits

- Thickness of Surficial Deposits
- Non-Pumping Water-Level Surface in Water Wells Shallower than 15 metres
- Total Dissolved Solids in Groundwater from Surficial Deposits
- Sulfate in Groundwater from Surficial Deposits
- Chloride in Groundwater from Surficial Deposits
- Fluoride in Groundwater from Surficial Deposits
- Total Hardness of Groundwater from Surficial Deposits
- Piper Diagram - Surficial Deposits
- Amount of Sand and Gravel in Surficial Deposits
- Thickness of Sand and Gravel Aquifer(s)
- Apparent Yield for Water Wells Completed through Sand and Gravel Aquifer(s)

b) First Sand and Gravel

- Thickness of First Sand and Gravel
- First Sand and Gravel - Saturation

c) Upper Sand and Gravel

- Thickness of Upper Surficial Deposits
- Thickness of Upper Sand and Gravel Aquifer (not all drill holes fully penetrate surficial deposits)
- Apparent Yield for Water Wells Completed through Upper Sand and Gravel Aquifer

d) Lower Sand and Gravel

- Structure-Contour Map - Top of Lower Surficial Deposits
- Depth to Top of Lower Sand and Gravel Aquifer
- Thickness of Lower Surficial Deposits
- Thickness of Lower Sand and Gravel Aquifer (not all drill holes fully penetrate surficial deposits)
- Apparent Yield for Water Wells Completed through Lower Sand and Gravel Aquifer
- Non-Pumping Water-Level Surface in Lower Sand and Gravel Aquifer

3) Bedrock Aquifers

a) General

- Apparent Yield for Water Wells Completed in Upper Bedrock Aquifer(s)
- Total Dissolved Solids in Groundwater from Upper Bedrock Aquifer(s)
- Sulfate in Groundwater from Upper Bedrock Aquifer(s)
- Chloride in Groundwater from Upper Bedrock Aquifer(s)
- Fluoride in Groundwater from Upper Bedrock Aquifer(s)
- Total Hardness of Groundwater from Upper Bedrock Aquifer(s)
- Piper Diagram - Bedrock Aquifer(s)
- Recharge/Discharge Areas between Surficial Deposits and Upper Bedrock Aquifer(s)
- Non-Pumping Water-Level Surface in Upper Bedrock Aquifer(s)