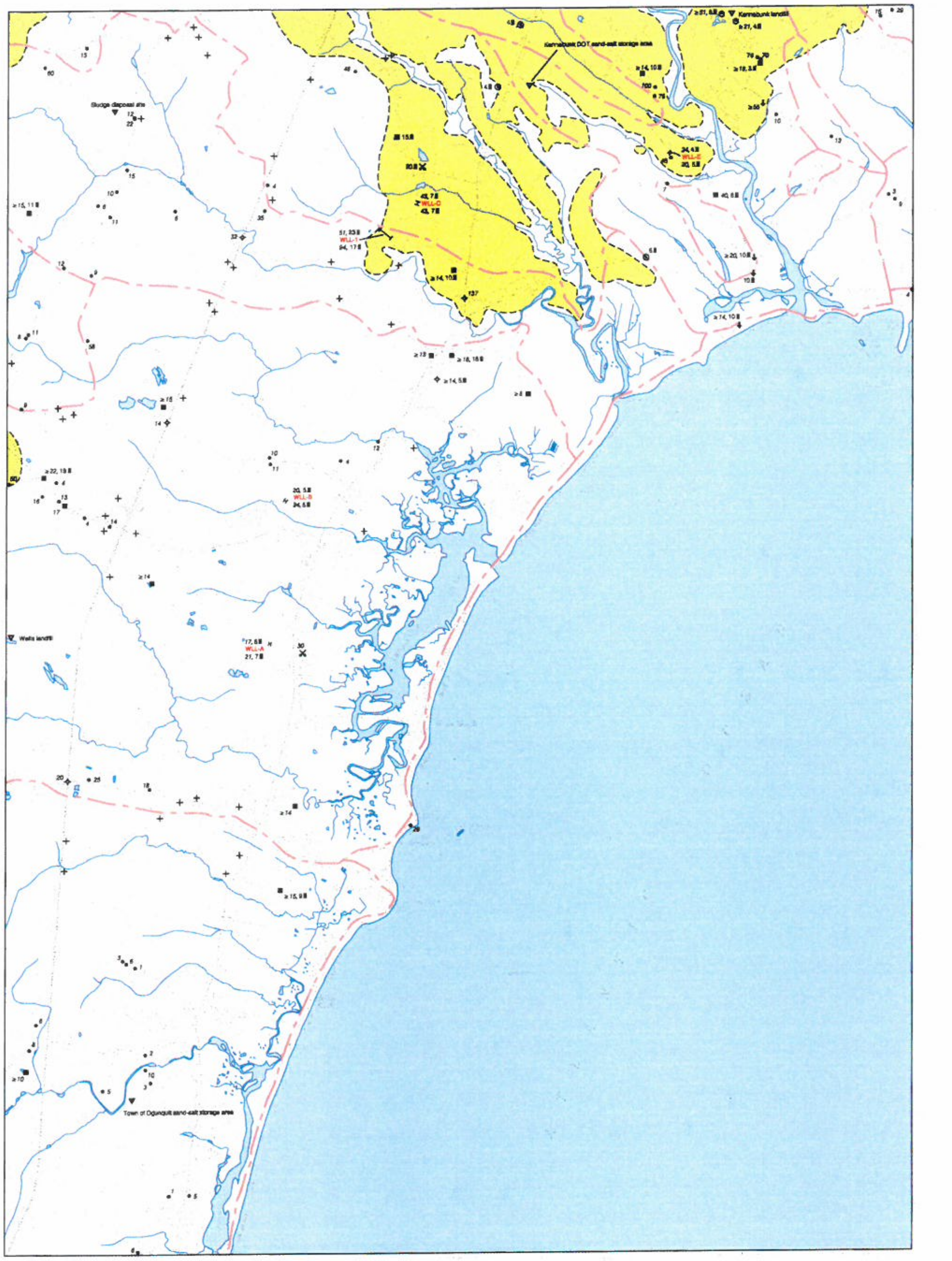
XII. Significant Sand and Gravel Aquifers Map

Significant Sand and Gravel Aquifers



Aquifer boundaries modified from: Lanctot, E. M. and Tolman, A. L., 1985, Hydrogeologic data for significant sand and gravel aquifers in part of York County, Maine: Map 2: Maine Geological Survey, Open-File Map 85-91, scale 1:50,000.

Well inventory data from U.S. Geological Survey Basic-Data Reports and additional data collected by Maine Geological Survey field assistants during the 1978-1984, and 1995 field seasons.

Drainage basin boundaries compiled by U.S. Geological Survey, Water Resources Division, Augusta, Maine, with funding from the Maine Low-Level Radioactive Waste Authority.

Quadrangle Location

SCALE 1:24,000

1 MILE

1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 FEET

1 KILOMETER

CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET

TRUE NORTH

Topographic base from U.S. Geological Survey Wells quadrangle, scale 1:24,000 using standard U.S. Geological Survey topographic map symbols.

The use of industry, firm, or local government names on this map is for location purposes only and does not impute responsibility for any present or potential effects on the natural resources.

SIGNIFICANT SAND AND GRAVEL AQUIFERS
(yields greater than 10 gallons per minute)

Approximate boundary of surficial deposits with significant saturated thickness where potential ground-water yield is moderate to excellent.

Surficial deposits with good to excellent potential ground-water yield: yields generally greater than 50 gallons per minute to a properly constructed well. Deposits consist primarily of glacial sand and gravel, but can include areas of sandy till and alluvium; yield zones are based on subsurface data where available, and may vary from mapped extent in areas where data are unavailable.

Surficial deposits with moderate to good potential ground-water yield: yields generally greater than 10 gallons per minute to a properly constructed well. Deposits consist primarily of glacial sand and gravel, but can include areas of sandy till and alluvium; yields may exceed 50 gallons per minute in deposits hydraulically connected with surface-water bodies, or in extensive deposits where subsurface data are available.

SURFICIAL DEPOSITS WITH LESS FAVORABLE AQUIFER CHARACTERISTICS
(yields less than 10 gallons per minute)

Areas with moderate to low or no potential ground-water yield (includes areas underlain by till, marine deposits, eolian deposits, alluvium, swamps, thin glacial sand and gravel deposits, or bedrock); yields in surficial deposits generally less than 10 gallons per minute to a properly constructed well.

SEISMIC-LINE INFORMATION

Profiles for selected 12-channel seismic lines are shown on Plate 2 of Open-File Report 83-1 (Tolman and others, 1983). Length of 12-channel and single-channel seismic lines as shown on the map is to scale.

63 Depth to bedrock, in feet below land surface.

≥63 Depth to bedrock exceeds depth shown (based on calculations).

12 Depth to water level, in feet below land surface.

MAP-7 131, 23 Twelve-channel seismic line, with depth to bedrock and depth to water shown at the midpoint of the line, in feet below land surface.

69, 12 MAP-E 72, 12 Single-channel seismic line, with depth to bedrock and depth to water shown at each end of the line, in feet below land surface. Unless otherwise indicated, data shown above the line-identifier box refers to the northern end of the seismic line.

The 3-letter identifier for a line is an abbreviation for the topographic quadrangle. If the 3-letter identifier for the line is followed by a number (ex: MAP - 7, MAP - 4), the line is a 12-channel line. If the identifier is followed by a letter (ex: MAP - E, MAP- P), the line is a single-channel line. Seismic interpretations by C. D. Neil and D. H. Tepper.

GEOLOGIC AND WELL INFORMATION

50 Depth to bedrock, in feet below land surface

≥13 Penetration depth of boring; ≥ symbol refers to minimum depth to bedrock based on boring depth or refusal

6 Depth to water level in feet below land surface (observed in well, spring, test boring, pit, or seismic line)

Gravel pit (overburden thickness noted in feet, e.g. 5-12')

Quarry

4 GPM Yield (flow) of well or spring in gallons per minute (GPM)

Spring, with general direction of flow

Drilled overburden well

Dug well

Observation well (project well if labeled; nonproject well if unlabeled)

Test boring (project boring if labeled; nonproject boring if unlabeled)

Driven point

Test pit

Drilled bedrock well

Potential point source of ground-water contamination

Bedrock outcrop

Surface-water drainage-basin boundary; surface-water divides generally correspond to ground-water divides. Horizontal direction of ground-water flow generally is away from divides and toward surface-water bodies.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

1. Tolman, A. L., Tepper, D. H., Prescott, G. C., and Gammon, S. O., 1983, Hydrogeology of significant sand and gravel aquifers, northern York and southern Cumberland Counties, Maine: Maine Geological Survey, Open-File Report 83-1, 4 plates.
2. Smith, G. W., 1998, Surficial materials of the Wells quadrangle, Maine: Maine Geological Survey, Open-File Map 98-164.
3. Smith, G. W., 1999, Surficial geology of the Wells quadrangle, Maine: Maine Geological Survey, Open-File Map 99-104.
4. Caswell, W. B., 1987, Ground water handbook for the state of Maine, Second Edition: Maine Geological Survey, Bulletin 39, 135 p.
5. Thompson, W. B., 1979, Surficial geology handbook for coastal Maine: Maine Geological Survey, 68 p. (out of print)
6. Thompson, W. B., and Borns, H. W., Jr., 1985, Surficial geologic map of Maine: Maine Geological Survey, scale 1:500,000.

Wells Quadrangle, Maine

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WHAT IS AN AQUIFER?

Ground water, as the name implies, is water found below the land surface in the pore spaces between sand grains and in fractures in the bedrock (see diagrams below). An *aquifer* is a water-bearing geologic formation capable of yielding a usable amount of ground water to a well. In Maine there are two types of aquifers: loose soil materials (such as sand, gravel, and other sediments) and fractured bedrock. A sand and gravel deposit is considered a *significant aquifer* when a well in that deposit is capable of being continuously pumped at a rate of 10 gallons per minute (gpm) or more. To sustain a yield of 10 gpm or more, a deposit must be permeable enough for water to flow readily into the well as it is pumped (see section on *porosity* and *permeability* below), and there must be a sufficient depth of water in the well so that it will not be pumped dry.

The diagram below shows a schematic cross section of a sand and gravel aquifer in Maine. The symbols above the diagram correspond to the well symbols shown on the map at left. Information typically shown for these wells includes type of well, depth to bedrock, depth to water, and well yield. The blue line in the diagram is the *water table*. The area below the water table is called the *saturated zone*, where all pore spaces between the sediment particles are filled with water. In order to yield water, a well must extend below the water table into the saturated zone. Notice that the water table corresponds to the water level in most wells and in the stream.

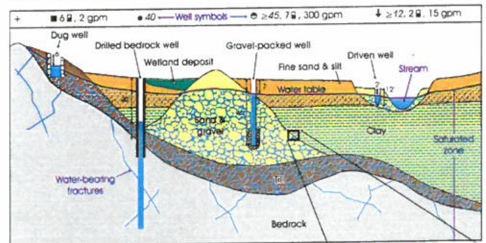
Several types of wells, common in Maine, are shown in the diagram. A *dug well* is a large diameter hole excavated by hand or backhoe. The hole is kept from caving in by installing a lining that may be stone, tile, or cement blocks. The hole must be deep enough to extend below the water table. The shallow dug well in the diagram has a yield of 2 gpm. Although the yield is often low, dug wells generally supply enough ground water for a household because of the large amount of water stored in the well.

A *gravel-packed* well is usually installed into coarse-grained sediment and is drilled with a much larger diameter than the final casing and screen diameter. To increase the yield and pumping efficiency of the well, the space around the well screen is filled with selected gravel that increases the permeability in the immediate vicinity of the well. The gravel-packed well in the diagram has a high yield of 300 gpm. Such high-yielding gravel-packed wells are commonly drilled for municipal or industrial water systems.

A *driven well* or *well point* can be installed into sand and gravel where the water table is within about 20 feet of the ground surface. A 2 to 3 inch diameter pipe, equipped with a well screen at its lower end, is driven into the deposit until the screen is below the water table. This pipe acts as a casing, and water is pumped directly from the aquifer. The driven well in the diagram has a significant yield of 15 gpm. Although the yield is relatively high, driven wells generally only supply a single household because very little water is stored in the well casing.

Wells of any type constructed in the other sediments shown in the diagram (clay or fine sand and silt) would yield some water, but yields would be lower than for wells in coarse-grained sand and gravel deposits.

Another type of well common in Maine is the *drilled bedrock well*. This well is drilled into the underlying rock with steel casing to isolate the well from potential surface-water contamination. In this type of well, water is found when the well hole intersects water-bearing fractures in the bedrock. Notice how the water level in this well is not the same level as the water table. The well casing isolates the bedrock well from the overlying sediments. The water level is controlled by water pressure in the fractures in the bedrock and is not related to the water table in the overlying materials.

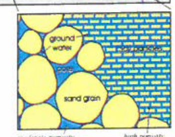


POROSITY AND PERMEABILITY

The diagram at right is an enlarged view of a section of the diagram above. Note that the section shown is below the water table and that ground water completely fills the pore spaces between the sediment grains. In an aquifer, the more pore space there is, the more water the aquifer can hold. This is called the *porosity* of a deposit. *Permeability* refers to the ability of a surficial deposit to transmit water. Permeability depends on the size of the spaces between the sediment grains.

Permeability is related to porosity, but is not the same. Porosity determines the capacity of the material to hold water. Permeability determines its ability to yield water. For example, clay is made of tiny particles with a large amount of pore space between them. However, the pore spaces are so small that they create a resistance to flow which reduces ground water permeability. Sand and gravel may not be as porous as clay, but the pore spaces are larger and better connected and the materials are much more permeable.

Permeability is an important characteristic since it determines whether ground water can actually be drawn into a pumping well.



moderate porosity, high permeability *high porosity, low permeability*

HOW ARE AQUIFERS MAPPED?

Operating a twelve-channel seismograph, Piscataquis County, Maine.

When mapping sand and gravel aquifers, geologists visit gravel pits, stream banks, road cuts, and other surface exposures to describe materials and identify deposits. This surficial geology mapping is supplemented with seismic-refraction studies and the installation of observation wells and test borings. In addition, much information about an aquifer may already be available from water-company exploration, large construction projects, town well inventories, and other sources. This information, along with aerial photographs and previously published maps, allows the geologist to define the boundaries of favorable surficial deposits and estimate how well the deposits will yield water to a well.

The boundaries of favorable surficial deposits do not necessarily coincide with the aquifer boundaries. In some areas, a thin cover of favorable coarse-grained material may overlie fine-grained sediments, till, or bedrock. A well in that material would not be able to sustain a yield of 10 gpm, so the area would not be mapped as an aquifer. In other areas, fine-grained sediments or till may overlie favorable coarse-grained sediments and the subsurface deposit may not be recognized as an aquifer.

Single- and 12-channel seismic-refraction studies are conducted to determine the saturated thickness of a deposit by establishing the depth to water table and bedrock surface. The 12-channel seismic survey has the additional advantage of providing the topography of the buried bedrock surface at a site.

Installing monitoring wells and drilling test borings provide direct information about the aquifer characteristics of a deposit. This work provides information on the depth to water table and bedrock surface, water quality, and how easily the sediment transmits water.

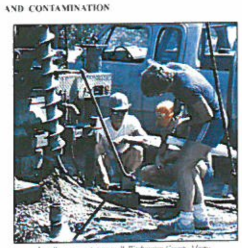
GROUND-WATER FLOW AND CONTAMINATION

Ground water is replenished or *recharged* by rainwater and melting snow that soak into the soil. This water percolates downward and eventually reaches the water table. When recharge is high during spring snowmelt and fall rains, the amount of ground water increases and the water table rises. When recharge is low during the late summer or when the ground is frozen during the winter, the water table becomes lower.

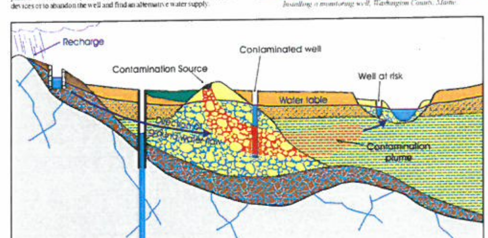
Notice in the diagram below that ground water is not static: it flows. This concept is very important, especially when ground water becomes contaminated. Once in the ground-water system, contaminants usually travel along the paths followed by ground water and are sometimes able to migrate considerable distances over time.

In the diagram below, a plume of contamination originates at the source in the sand and gravel deposit. This source could be a landfill, a leaking fuel storage tank, or an accidental spill. As the contaminant seeps into the subsurface system and enters the aquifer, it flows with the ground water. In the diagram, the plume contaminated the gravel-packed well as it passed by. The driven well near the stream is not contaminated, but is at risk since the plume is flowing in that direction. The dug well on the hillside, however, is not affected because it is upgradient of the source, hence the contaminated ground water flows away from this well.

Once ground water is contaminated, it is very difficult and expensive to correct. To design a clean-up plan, monitoring wells are installed under the direction of a hydrogeologist or other specialist. These wells define the three-dimensional extent of the affected area. Sometimes it is possible to pump contaminants to the surface using remediation wells within the plume. Often the only solution for a homeowner is to install filtering devices or to abandon the well and find an alternative water supply.



Installing a monitoring well, Washington County, Maine.



HOW TO USE THIS MAP

__Types of Information Shown on this Map:__ The yellow and red colored areas on the map indicate significant aquifers, zones where ground-water yield is estimated to be 10 gpm or greater. The boundaries of the aquifers are drawn by a geologist based, in part, on the well data shown on the map. Areas not mapped as aquifer may be thin or unsaturated sand and gravel deposits, surficial deposits other than sand and gravel, or bedrock.

The well data on the map provide information about the type of well, depth to water table, depth to bedrock, and yield of the wells in the area. This information is useful when making decisions about water supply, a drainage plan, or the need for blasting.

Information from seismic refraction studies also is shown on the map. Seismic studies give detailed information about depth to water table and depth to and shape of the bedrock surface. Geologic cross sections generated from seismic information are shown in associated reports listed in the references below the map at left.

Surface-water drainage-basin boundaries are also shown on the map. Horizontal direction of ground-water flow generally is away from drainage divides and toward surface-water bodies.

__Uses of this Map:__ Sand and gravel aquifer maps are useful in two major categories of decision-making: ground-water supply and ground-water protection. For ground-water supply, these maps are useful in locating areas favorable for developing water supplies for municipal, industrial, or residential use. Information on the map, such as depth to bedrock and well yield, indicate the potential for ground-water production.

Ground-water protection is another important function of these maps. Knowledge of the location and extent of sand and gravel aquifers is critical when siting potential contamination sites such as landfills and salt storage facilities. When used in conjunction with other geologic information, this map can help planners and municipal officials make much more informed decisions to guide industrial growth or residential development.

If ground-water contamination occurs, the general trend of the plume migration can be deduced from these maps by analyzing the drainage basin boundaries and the local surface water bodies.

For further assistance in interpreting this map, contact a geologist at the Maine Geological Survey.