



CHEMICAL QUALITY OF GROUND WATER

Ground-water quality was evaluated by measuring specific conductance of water from pumping wells and springs and by analyzing water samples from selected wells and springs for chemical constituents. Specific-conductance data are plotted on the water-quality map, and chemical analyses are listed in the table. Also shown in the table of chemical analyses are drinking-water standards. Water-quality data are included from previous studies (Coffin, 1962; Boettcher, 1962) as well as the current study.

Specific conductance, measured in micromhos per centimeter (umho/cm) at 25° Celsius, is the ability of water to conduct an electrical current. Specific conductance is a useful indicator of ground-water quality because it is related to the dissolved-solids concentration of the water, measured in milligrams per liter (mg/L). The relationship between specific conductance and dissolved-solids concentration for ground-water samples collected in Kiowa County is shown in the graph.

If the specific conductance is known, the approximate dissolved-solids concentration can be determined using the graph or can be calculated using the equations shown on the graph, for example, the specific conductance in



CHEMICAL ANALYSES OF WATER FROM WELLS AND BIG SANDY CREEK

Table with columns: Well No., Local Identifier, Aquifer, Date, Specific Conductance, and various chemical constituents (Calcium, Magnesium, Sodium, Potassium, Chloride, Sulfate, Nitrate, Fluoride, Iron, Manganese, Selenium, etc.).

from well 7 in the chemical-analyses table is 715 umho/cm. Since the specific conductance is less than 1,250 umho/cm, the second equation should be used. Using the equation, an estimated dissolved-solids concentration of 465 mg/L results, which compares well with the actual value of 469 mg/L. Well 11 has a specific conductance of 3,100 umho/cm so the first equation should be used. The estimated value of 2,491 mg/L compares well with the measured value of 2,400 mg/L. This same type of calculation can be made for any of the specific-conductance data on the water-quality map or for any specific conductance measured in the future.

The dissolved-solids concentration may be used to make an initial evaluation of the suitability of a water supply for a specific use. Water with dissolved-solids concentrations greater than 500 mg/L are considered to be aesthetically unacceptable for drinking (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1977), although waters with larger concentrations are commonly used without obvious ill effects on human health (U.S. Public Health Service, 1962).

The suitability of water in different ranges of dissolved solids for irrigation use (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1976a) is summarized in the following table:

Table showing suitability of water for irrigation based on dissolved-solids concentration (mg/L). Categories include: No detrimental effects will be observed, Slightly saline, Moderately saline, and Very saline.

Although this classification does not consider water with dissolved-solids concentrations greater than 5,000 mg/L, water of this quality sometimes is used for irrigation of tolerant crops in many areas of the Arkansas River valley of Colorado (Wiles, 1977).

WATER QUALITY

Stock generally can tolerate very large concentrations of dissolved solids. Studies have shown that chickens, swine, cattle, and sheep can tolerate waters with dissolved-solids concentrations as large as 15,000 mg/L (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1976b). Based on dissolved-solids concentrations, water from all aquifers sampled during the study are suitable for stock watering.

In addition to specific conductance and dissolved solids, other water-quality constituents need to be determined when evaluating the suitability of water for a specific use. However, specific-conductance and dissolved-solids determinations may be used to provide a quick and inexpensive means of determining if further water-quality evaluations need to be made.

The specific-conductance data on the water-quality map indicate that the quality of ground water varies widely in the county. Much of the variation is related to different conditions in each aquifer, such as chemical composition of the aquifer materials and quality of water which recharges the aquifer.

Specific conductance of water from the Big Sandy-Rush Creek aquifer ranged from 1,080 to 6,500 umho/cm. Dissolved-solids concentrations were between 1,120 and 6,070 mg/L, exceeding the recommended limit for drinking water of 500 mg/L and indicating that careful management practices such as applying sufficient water to leach salts from the root zone or cultivating salt-tolerant crops may be necessary when using this water for irrigation. A further evaluation of water quality for irrigation use may be made on the basis of the sodium adsorption ratio (SAR) (U.S. Salinity Laboratory Staff, 1954). Most of the sampled wells tapping the aquifer produce water with the SAR indicating a medium to high sodium hazard, which is further indication that careful management practices may be required. Using the hardening classification below (Durrer and Beckert, 1964), all of the waters analyzed from this aquifer would be considered very hard.

Table showing water hardness classification based on calcium carbonate (mg/L) and magnesium (mg/L). Categories include: Soft, Moderately hard, Hard, and Very hard.

Sulfate concentrations of water produced from the aquifer exceeded the recommended limit of 250 mg/L (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1977) in all samples analyzed. The high sulfate concentrations may cause a laxative effect in users accustomed to drinking this water. Excessive concentrations of fluoride in drinking water can cause mottling of teeth, but an optimum concentration will help prevent dental cavities. The maximum allowable concentration and the optimum concentration are based on the average daily maximum air temperature. For Kiowa County the maximum allowable concentration is 1.8 mg/L and the optimum concentration is 0.9 mg/L. All water wells contained fluoride at concentrations greater than the maximum allowable. Concentrations of nitrate or nitrite plus nitrate greater than 10 mg/L as nitrogen may cause methemoglobinemia (blue-baby disease) in infants under 3 months of age who ingest the water (U.S. Public Health Service, 1962; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1976c). This concentration was exceeded in water from one well in the Big Sandy-Rush Creek aquifer. Selenium concentrations in drinking water should not exceed 10 µg/L (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1976a) due to

possible toxic effects which may occur. Water samples collected during this study were analyzed for selenium because relatively high concentrations have been observed in ground water in Crowley County to the west (Colorado Department of Health, written commun., 1978; Tsongas and Ferguson, 1977). Of six samples analyzed for selenium from the Big Sandy-Rush Creek aquifer, three exceeded the drinking-water standard and one of the three exceeded the standard by more than a factor of 10. This information suggests that selenium should be evaluated when considering water from this aquifer as a source of domestic or municipal supply. Chemical analyses of water samples collected in 1960-61 and 1979 from three wells in the aquifer indicate that while water-quality conditions have been generally stable, local degradation has occurred, resulting in increases in dissolved solids and in most major anions and cations.

Water from the Adobe Creek-Mustang Sand Arroyo aquifer had specific-conductance values ranging from 1,300 to 3,400 umho/cm, and dissolved-solids concentrations of four analyzed samples were between 1,300 and 1,890 mg/L. The water is generally hard to very hard. Sulfate and fluoride concentrations of four analyzed samples were between 1,300 and 1,890 mg/L. The water is generally hard to very hard. Sulfate and fluoride concentrations of four analyzed samples were between 1,300 and 1,890 mg/L. The water is generally hard to very hard.

Little water-quality data are available for the Pierre Shale, the Smoky Hill Shale Member of the Niobrara Formation, the Fort Hays Limestone Member of the Niobrara Formation, and the Codell Sandstone Member of the Carlisle Shale. The few available data indicate that water from these formations is generally high in specific conductance, dissolved solids, and hardness, and is likely to exceed drinking-water standards for sulfate and fluoride and possibly for selenium. One notable exception is well SC01704633ABC (site 16 in the table of chemical analyses), which is believed to be produced water from the Codell Sandstone Member of the Carlisle Shale and possibly also from dune sand. Water from this well is relatively low in dissolved solids, and sulfate and is the softest of any water analyzed in the county.

Water-quality data are available from only one well (SC015044402, site 31 in the table of chemical analyses) completed in the Dakota Sandstone in Kiowa County. Specific conductance and dissolved-solids concentrations are generally higher than the drinking-water standard (250 mg/L) except in the northern part of the Ogallala aquifer and in the Nussbaum aquifer. Concentrations of iron, manganese, fluoride, and nitrate exceeded drinking-water standards for these constituents locally in the county. Selenium exceeded the drinking-water standard of 10 µg/L in 19 of 26 samples analyzed for this constituent. Because of the high concentrations of selenium, nitrate, and fluoride, it is suggested that ground water used for human consumption in the county be evaluated for these constituents to determine suitability for this use.

Water produced from the Ogallala aquifer generally has the lowest specific conductance and dissolved-solids concentrations of any aquifer in the county. Specific conductances were between 343 and 3,650 umho/cm, with an average value of 1,250 umho/cm. Dissolved-solids concentrations determined on samples from 20 wells completed in the aquifer range from 256 to 2,560 mg/L. The smaller concentrations occur in the northern (T.17 S.) and southern (T.20 S.) parts of the aquifer while the larger concentrations are in the central part. Dissolved-solids concentrations and SAR indicate that the water generally is suitable for irrigation use, but careful management practices may be necessary in local areas. The water is hard to very hard, and sulfate concentrations exceed the drinking-water standard of 250 mg/L throughout most of the central and southern parts of the county and locally in the north. The mandatory limit of 1.8 mg/L for fluoride in drinking water was exceeded in only one water sample from the northern part of the county, but was consistently exceeded in concentrations of nitrate or nitrite plus nitrate ranging from 0.88 to 32 mg/L, with an average value of 6.4 mg/L. Selenium was found at concentrations exceeding the drinking-water standard of 10 µg/L in 11 of 19 samples analyzed for this constituent. These relatively high concentrations suggest that water from the Ogallala should be analyzed for nitrate and selenium before being used for domestic or municipal purposes. Iron may occur in ground water produced from the Ogallala aquifer at concentrations greater than the drinking-water standard (300 µg/L) locally, especially in the northern part of the county. Based on analyses from one well, selenium concentrations in drinking water should not exceed 10 µg/L (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1976a) due to

possible toxic effects which may occur. Water samples collected during this study were analyzed for selenium because relatively high concentrations have been observed in ground water in Crowley County to the west (Colorado Department of Health, written commun., 1978; Tsongas and Ferguson, 1977). Of six samples analyzed for selenium from the Big Sandy-Rush Creek aquifer, three exceeded the drinking-water standard and one of the three exceeded the standard by more than a factor of 10. This information suggests that selenium should be evaluated when considering water from this aquifer as a source of domestic or municipal supply. Chemical analyses of water samples collected in 1960-61 and 1979 from three wells in the aquifer indicate that while water-quality conditions have been generally stable, local degradation has occurred, resulting in increases in dissolved solids and in most major anions and cations.

CONCLUSIONS

Sufficient quantities of water for irrigation or municipal use are available from two aquifers in Kiowa County: The Big Sandy-Rush Creek alluvial aquifer in the east-central part of the county and the Ogallala aquifer in the eastern part of the county. Data from neighboring counties indicate that the Dakota Sandstone and Cheyenne Sandstone Members of the Purgatoire Formation, which underlie the entire county, may supply marginally adequate amounts for irrigation or municipal use.

Water quality, especially in the more developed northern and southern parts of the aquifer. Marked increases in specific conductance, dissolved solids, calcium, magnesium, hardness, sulfate, chloride, fluoride, and nitrate were noted in three wells in these areas for which data are available. Less change in water quality was noted for the one well with data available in the central part of the county.

Water produced from the minor surficial aquifers (dune sand, siltwash, and loess) is variable in quality. Specific conductances range from 580 to 8,500 umho/cm, and dissolved-solids concentrations range from 642 to 7,640 mg/L. Water produced from these aquifers is generally very hard, has sulfate concentrations greater than the standard for drinking water (250 mg/L) and is locally in excess of the maximum allowable drinking-water standards for selenium and fluoride. Where better quality water does not exist, water from these aquifers may be suitable locally for domestic use.

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REFERENCES

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HYDROLOGY AND CHEMICAL QUALITY OF GROUND WATER IN KIOWA COUNTY, COLORADO

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