

### INTRODUCTION

Ground-water withdrawals in southwest Florida are increasing because of urban growth, industrial expansion, and increased agricultural irrigation. As a result, the potentiometric surface of the Floridan aquifer has been lowered in some areas, allowing seawater to encroach into the aquifer and threaten the freshwater resources of the area. Effective management of ground water is needed to control this encroachment and protect the freshwater aquifer.

Because of increased interest in the occurrence and changes of chloride concentration in ground water along the coast, the U.S. Geological Survey, in cooperation with the Southwest Florida Water Management District, began a program in 1977 to study the saltwater-freshwater transition zone along coastal southwest Florida from Levy County southwest to Charlotte County (fig. 1). The continuing program includes evaluation of various methods used for locating the saltwater-freshwater transition zone and selection of monitor sites to determine location and movement of the transition zone.

All elevations in this report are referenced to NGVD of 1929 (National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929), a geoidetic datum derived from a general adjustment of the first-order level nets of both the United States and Canada, formerly called "mean sea level." NGVD of 1929 is referred to as sea level in this report.

The purpose of this report is to show the general location of the 250-milligram-per-liter (mg/L) line of chloride concentration in that part of the Floridan aquifer tapped by the majority of wells along the coast. This zone, referred to as the upper producing zone of the Floridan aquifer, produces most of the water used in coastal southwest Florida. The zone occurs near the top of the Floridan aquifer and increases in depth and thickness from north to south. The 250-mg/L line of equal chloride concentration in 1979 (fig. 1) is used in this report to represent the transition from saltwater to freshwater in the upper part of the Floridan aquifer.

The line was mapped from results of previous investigations and interpretation of chloride concentration data in the files of the U.S. Geological Survey. The 250-mg/L line is used because the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (1977) recommends that chloride concentrations not exceed 250 mg/L in public water supplies in areas where more suitable supplies are available.

### HYDROGEOLOGY

Southwest Florida is underlain by a thick sequence of sedimentary rocks that are generally grouped into four hydrogeologic units (fig. 2): (1) surficial unconsolidated sand and gravel; (2) the Hawthorn Formation; (3) the Floridan aquifer; and (4) lower confining bed and limestone.

The surficial aquifer is composed predominantly of fine sand and clayey sand with extensive areas of shell beds, marl, and limestone. Along the coast, the aquifer ranges in thickness from zero in the north to 50 feet in the south. Water in the aquifer is generally unconfined. The surficial aquifer is usually a minor source of freshwater for private domestic or small irrigation wells. However, in the southern part of the study area, the aquifer is a major source of water because in many places the water is more readily available and less mineralized than water from the Floridan aquifer.

The upper confining bed for the Floridan aquifer consists of relatively impermeable, interbedded limestone, dolomite, and clay. The upper confining bed is absent in much of the northern part of the study area where the surficial and Floridan aquifers are hydraulically continuous. Thickness of the confining bed increases from less than 25 feet in Pasco County to 400 feet in southern Sarasota County and dips to 700 feet below sea level along the Charlotte-De Soto County line. Chloride concentration data used to define the position of the 250-mg/L line were collected during 1954-78 from wells open to the Tampa Limestone, or the lower part of the Hawthorn Formation, or both. In some cases, the only well-construction information available was well depth. Hence, some samples may represent water from shallower zones as well as the upper Floridan aquifer (D.P. Brown, written commun., 1979).

The depth represented by the 250-mg/L line is considered to be related to the deepest part of the aquifer to which the well is open, based on the assumption that most yield to the wells originates from the deepest zones penetrated. The depths below sea level at which the 250-mg/L line of equal chloride concentration occurs are approximately 400 to 600 feet in Manatee County, 600 feet in Sarasota County, and 600 to 900 feet in Charlotte County.

### SUMMARY

The U.S. Geological Survey began a program in 1977 in cooperation with the Southwest Florida Water Management District to determine the location of the transition zone between freshwater and saltwater. The purpose of the program was to locate the transition zone of the Floridan aquifer, which extends downward from the top of the persistent limestone sequence to the top of the persistent evaporite. It consists of a thick sequence of limestone and dolomite that dips and thickens southward (fig. 3). The aquifer yields water from permeable zones in the carbonate. Segments of the line were interpolated from nearby data because of sparse information in many areas. Chloride data for the line were taken at wells having known depths, but many wells are probably open to more than one producing zone. This would tend to give a chloride concentration value that is slightly lower than a value obtained from a representative sample from the base of the well.

In the northern counties, the 250-mg/L line is 100 to 200 feet below sea level in the Ocala Limestone and Avon Park Limestone. In the southern counties, the line is in the Tampa Limestone or the lower part of the Hawthorn Formation. The line is in the upper part of the Floridan aquifer in coastal Pasco County. The line is in the upper part of the Floridan aquifer in coastal Pasco County. The line is in the upper part of the Floridan aquifer in coastal Pasco County.

### SELECTED REFERENCES

- Buono, Anthony, and Rutledge, A.T., 1978, Configuration of the top of the Floridan aquifer, Southwest Florida Water Management District and adjacent areas: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations 78-34.
- Buono, Anthony, Speckler, R.M., Barr, G.L., and Wolansky, R.M., 1979, Generalized thickness of the confining bed overlying the Floridan aquifer, Southwest Florida Water Management District: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations 79-117.
- Cooper, H.H., Jr., Kohout, F.A., Henry, H.R., and Glover, R.E., 1964, Sea water in coastal aquifers: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Supply Paper 1613-C, 84 p.
- Heath, R.C., and Smith, P.C., 1964, Ground water resources of Pinellas County, Florida: Florida Geological Survey Report of Investigations 12, 139 p.
- Joyner, B.F., and Stettin, H., 1976, Water resources of the Myakka River basin area, southwest Florida: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations 76-58, 87 p.
- Mills, L.R., and Ryder, P.D., 1977, Saltwater intrusion in the Floridan aquifer, coastal Citrus and Hernando Counties, Florida: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations 77-100.
- Parker, G.G., Ferguson, G.E., Love, S.K., and others, 1965, Water resources of southeastern Florida, with special reference to the geology and ground water of the Miami area: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Supply Paper 1255, 960 p.
- Reichenbach, R.C., 1972, Sea-water intrusion in the upper part of the Floridan aquifer in coastal Pasco County, Florida, 1968: Florida Bureau of Geology Map Series 47.
- Stringfield, V.T., 1960, Artesian water in Tertiary limestone in the southeastern states: U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 517, 226 p.
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1977, National secondary drinking water regulation: Federal Register, v. 42, no. 60, Thursday, March 31, 1977, Part 1, p. 1743-1747.
- Vernon, R.O., 1951, Geology of Citrus and Levy Counties, Florida: Florida Geological Survey Bulletin 53, 209 p.
- Wolansky, R.M., Barr, G.L., and Speckler, R.M., 1979, Configuration of the bottom of the Floridan aquifer, Southwest Florida Water Management District: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations 79-140.
- Yobbi, D.K., Woodham, W.M., and Schiner, G.R., 1980, Potentiometric surface of the Floridan aquifer, Southwest Florida Water Management District, May 1980: U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 80-587.

### FRESHWATER-SALTWATER RELATION

Freshwater in the Floridan aquifer is underlain by saltwater throughout the peninsula of Florida. In coastal parts of the aquifer, chloride concentrations grade from less than 25 mg/L to 10,000 mg/L, forming a zone of transition between the freshwater and saltwater as opposed to a sharp contact between the two fluids. The size and shape of this zone of transition is influenced by variations in thickness and permeability of stratified beds forming the aquifer and by the hydraulic gradient. The transition zone typically slopes landward with the result that saltwater wedges beneath freshwater and extends farther landward with increasing depth.

Seawater moving inland from the sea floor introduces salt ions into the overlying freshwater system. Upon losing these ions, the seawater becomes less dense and rises. The flow of freshwater carries salts back to the sea. This process limits the extent to which saltwater can infiltrate the aquifer (Cooper and others, 1964).

Both convection and molecular diffusion are important parts of this dispersion process. Convection is the mechanical process responsible for transferring one fluid into the other as a result of ocean tides and the rise and fall of the potentiometric surface. Blending of the two fluids is then completed by molecular diffusion.

The potentiometric map of the Floridan aquifer can be used to indicate the general direction of flow within the aquifer. Freshwater in the aquifer moves from areas of high potential where recharge occurs through percolation, sinks, and streambeds to areas of low potential where discharge occurs through wells, springs, seeps, and direct flow to the sea. In southwest Florida this movement is generally westward toward the coast where the potentiometric surface approaches sea level.

The likelihood of seawater intrusion is greatest in the dry season when water levels are low and pumping rates are high. High pumping rates often reverse the hydraulic gradient. The potentiometric surface in May (fig. 5) generally depicts aquifer conditions near the end of the dry season when the aquifer is under maximum stress. Overdevelopment of coastal aquifers by pumping water in excess of recharge reduces the freshwater head and induces inland migration of seawater.

### POSITION OF THE 250-MILLIGRAM-PER-LITER LINE OF EQUAL CHLORIDE CONCENTRATION

The transition zone between freshwater and saltwater in the upper part of the Floridan aquifer is bounded on the coastal side by chloride concentrations of 19,000 mg/L, and on the landward side by chloride concentrations of 25 mg/L (fig. 6). The zone is depicted in this report as the approximate position of the 250-mg/L line of equal chloride concentration. The surface delineation of the 250-mg/L line is intended to depict the position of the line where it intersects the base of the upper producing zone of the Floridan aquifer. In this report, the upper producing zone is described as being that upper part of the aquifer which contains most of the production wells (fig. 3). Thus, the bottom of the zone is defined by use, in the form of production well depth, and not by descriptive hydrogeologic characteristics.

The position of the 250-mg/L line of equal chloride concentration (fig. 1) was determined by the interpretation of chloride concentration data for wells (table 1) open within the upper producing zone of the Floridan aquifer (fig. 2). In areas where data were minimal, the position of the line was interpolated on the basis of available hydrogeologic data for the aquifer. In previous studies where the chloride concentration line has been determined, these interpretations were used as a basis for determining the present position, using current data to adjust the position of the line.

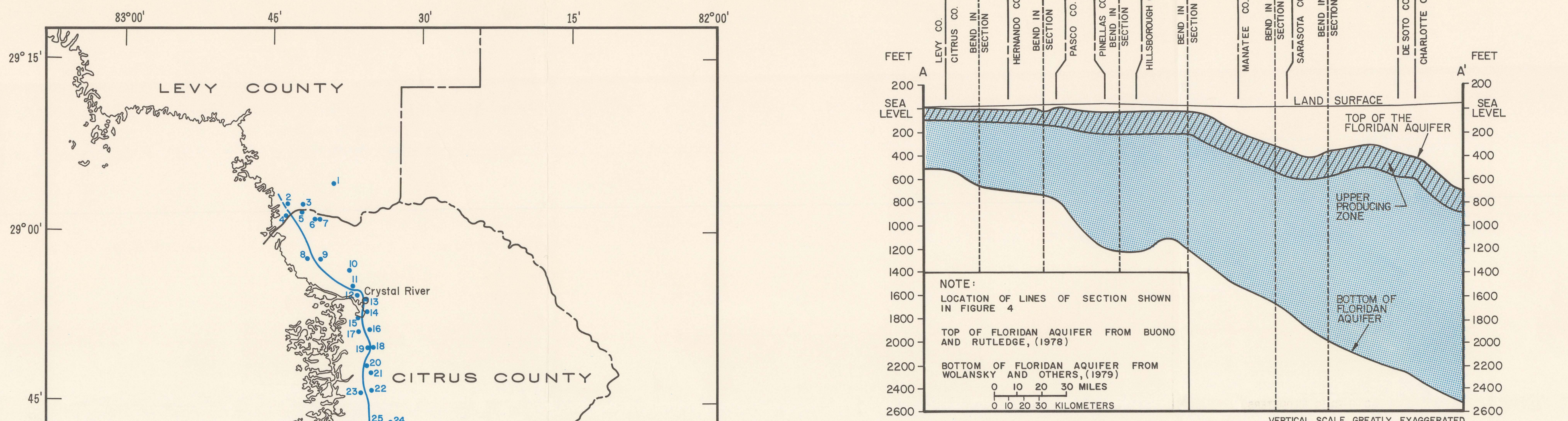


Figure 3.—Generalized geologic section along coastal southwest Florida.

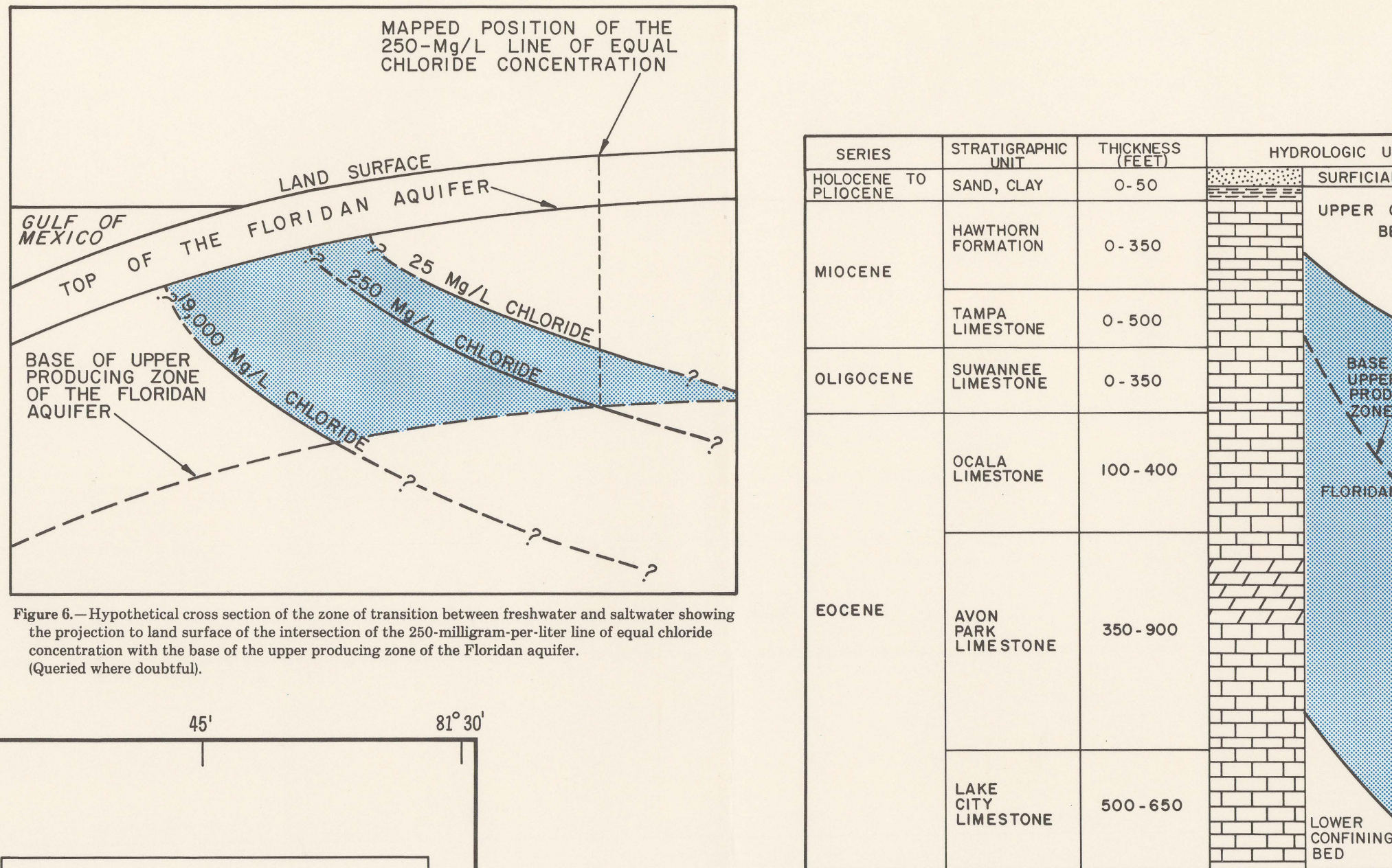


Figure 4.—Hypothetical cross section of the zone of transition between freshwater and saltwater showing the projection to land surface of the intersection of the 250-milligram-per-liter line of equal chloride concentration with the base of the upper producing zone of the Floridan aquifer. (Quoted where doubtful).

Figure 2.—Generalized hydrogeologic column along coastal southwest Florida.

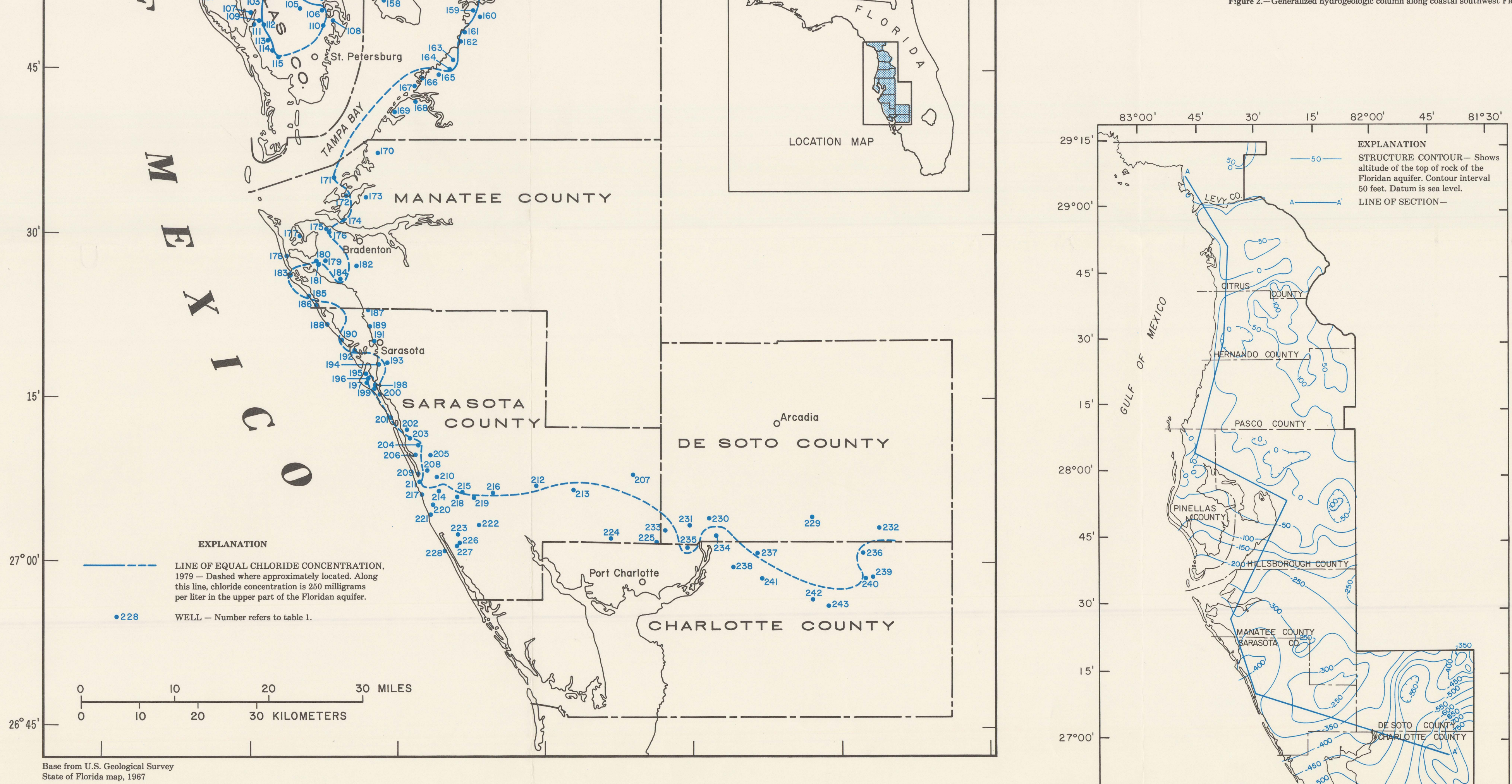


Figure 1.—Position of 250-milligram-per-liter line of equal chloride concentration in the upper part of the Floridan aquifer along the southwest coast of Florida.

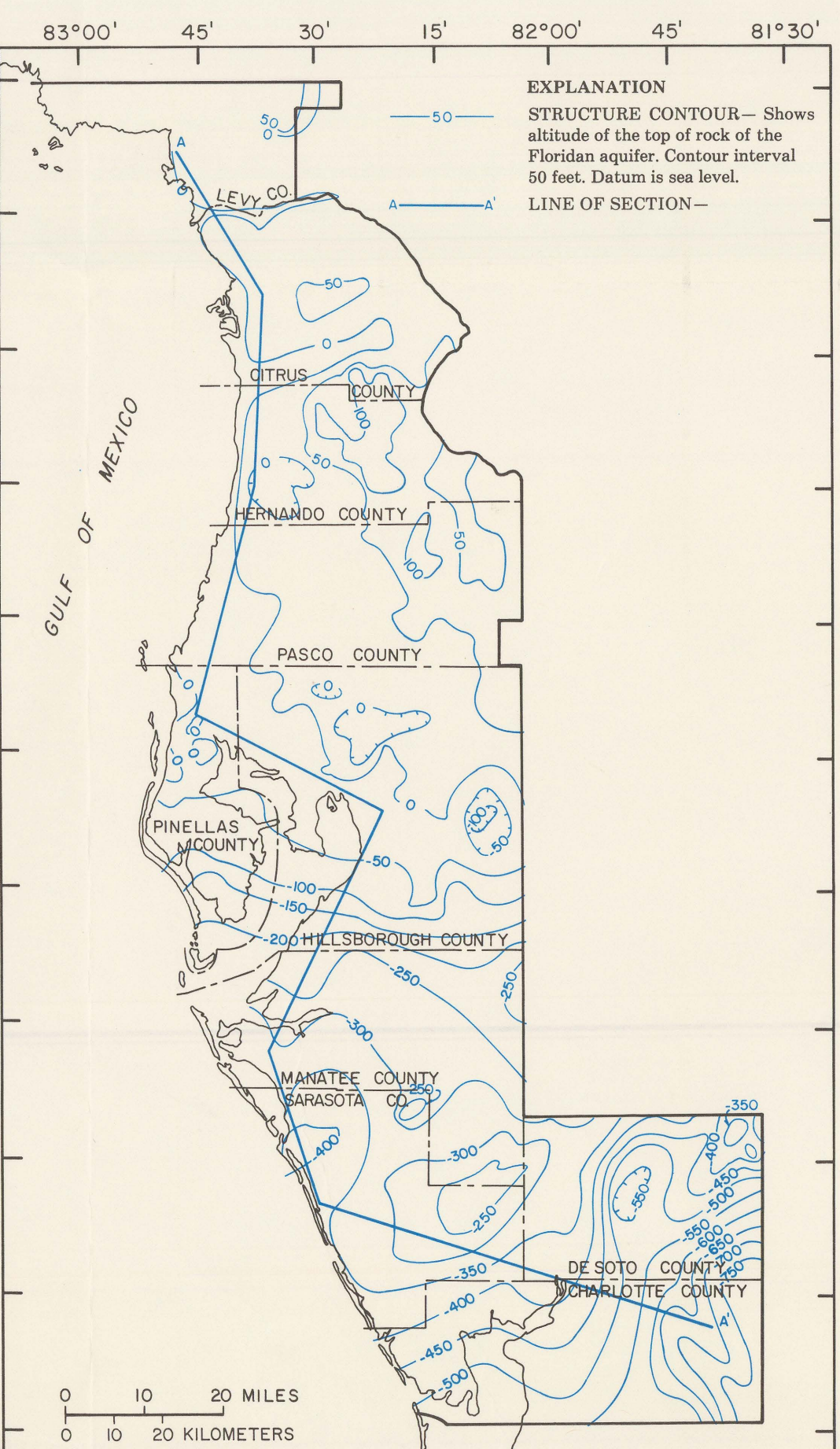


Figure 4.—Configuration of the top of the Floridan aquifer from Buono and Rutledge, 1978.

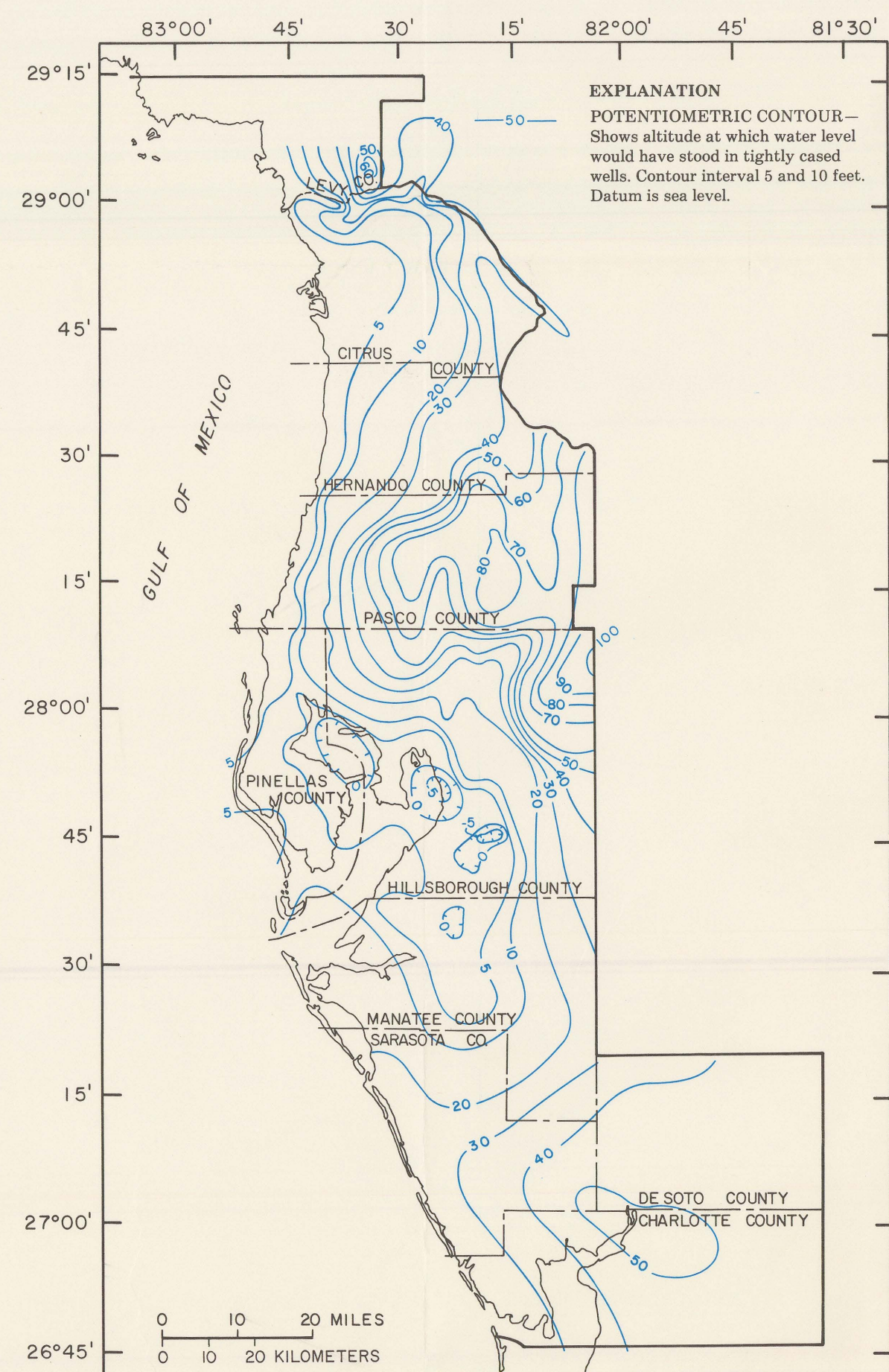
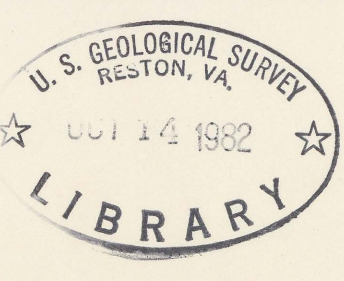


Figure 5.—Potentiometric surface of the Floridan aquifer, May 1980 from Yobbi and others, 1980.

## POSITION OF THE SALTWATER-FRESHWATER INTERFACE IN THE UPPER PART OF THE FLORIDAN AQUIFER, SOUTHWEST FLORIDA, 1979

By  
K.W. Causseaux and J.D. Fretwell  
1982



M(834)49  
1982  
C1  
M(200)  
R290  
82-90  
C1