

#### INTRODUCTION

The study area, which coincides with the Mississippi Alluvial Plain section of the Coastal Plain physiographic province in Arkansas, is bounded on the north by the Missouri State line, on the south by the Louisiana State line, and on the east by the Mississippi River. The Fall Line (the physiographic boundary between the Coastal Plain and the Interior Highlands), the Monticello Ridge, and the Crowley River Basin form the western boundary of the study area.

The predominant land use in the study area is agriculture. Rice and soybeans, the principal crops, are dependent on large quantities of fresh water for irrigation. The main source of irrigation water in the Mississippi River Valley alluvial aquifer, herein referred to as the alluvial aquifer. Approximately 4,576 Mgal of water were withdrawn from the alluvial aquifer in 1990 (Holland, 1993), most of the use is for agricultural irrigation and the predominant crop type is rice.

The U.S. Geological Survey, in cooperation with the Arkansas Geological Commission, has been monitoring water levels for 48 years in a network of wells completed in the alluvial aquifer to determine the effects on water levels of large withdrawals for irrigation. In 1984, this network was enlarged by adding wells for which water levels are measured by personnel of the local districts of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. Water-level measurements made in more than 700 wells in both wet works in 1992 were used to prepare the water-level maps presented in this report. This report was prepared in cooperation with the Arkansas Geological Commission, the Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission, local conservation districts, and the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, and is intended to document the effects of withdrawals on water levels in the alluvial aquifer.

Maps shown in this report were prepared from data collected by the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. The map report shows the potentiometric surface in the alluvial aquifer before (spring) the 1992 pumping season, the change between the spring 1987 and the spring 1992 potentiometric surfaces, and the depth to water in the spring of 1992. Hydrographs show water-level changes from spring 1963 to spring 1992 in Arkansas, Chicot, Crittenden, Lonoke, and Poinsett Counties. Water-level measurements made by U.S. Geological Survey personnel in 257 wells completed in the alluvial aquifer are included in table 1. Water-level measurements made by personnel of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service are available in a separate report (Westerfield and Trencher, 1993).

#### AQUIFER DESCRIPTION

The Mississippi River Valley alluvium is composed of flood-plain and terrace deposits of Quaternary age. The flood-plain deposits generally grade from gravel and coarse sand in the lower part to silt and clay in the upper part. Lithology of the terrace deposits is similar to that in the flood plain (Bowwell and others, 1968). The total thickness of the alluvium ranges from near zero along the Fall Line to a maximum of about 250 ft. The upper silt and clay layer varies in thickness from a few feet to more than 75 ft and forms a confining layer for the underlying alluvial aquifer. The alluvial aquifer generally is 100 to 150 ft thick. Intensive ground-water withdrawals in some areas have resulted in the long-term decline of water levels below the top of the aquifer. Yields of wells generally range from 1,000 to 3,000 gal/min (Peterson and others, 1985). The alluvium is discontinuous at Crowley Ridge, an erosional remnant of deposits of Tertiary age that extends from north of the Missouri-Arkansas boundary southward to Helena, Arkansas. These Tertiary deposits are much less permeable than the alluvial aquifer (Bowwell and others, 1968).

#### POTENTIOMETRIC-SURFACE MAP

The potentiometric-surface map indicates the altitude in which water levels would rise in tightly cased wells completed in the alluvial aquifer. A potentiometric-surface map is shown for spring 1992. This map reflects conditions prevailing the seasonal withdrawals for irrigation and is based on water-level measurements made in 717 wells between March and June 1992. The potentiometric-surface map includes stage measurements at gauging stations on streams and rivers. Stage data are used to assess the relation between streams and the aquifer.

The potentiometric-surface map reflects the areal ground-water flow patterns within the alluvial aquifer, with movement generally being perpendicular to the contour in the direction of the hydraulic gradient. The regional direction of ground-water flow is to the south and southeast except where affected by intensive ground-water withdrawals and near rivers that are in hydraulic connection with the alluvial aquifer. In parts of Arkansas, Lonoke, and Poinsett Counties, and from Monroe County to western Craighead County are large areas where the potentiometric surface has been depressed by large withdrawals of ground-water for irrigation.

Water levels are highest in the spring when water levels have recovered from the previous year's withdrawals and lowest in the fall at the end of the irrigation season. Water levels average about 2.6 ft lower in the fall than the spring (Westerfield and Trencher, 1993).

#### FIVE-YEAR WATER-LEVEL CHANGE MAP

The 5-year water-level change map reflects the difference between the spring 1987 and spring 1992 potentiometric surfaces. Declines of more than 1 ft occurred in many areas primarily as a result of ground-water withdrawals for irrigation. The largest areas of decline were noted west of Crowley Ridge in Craighead and Poinsett Counties, and in three other areas extending from northern Arkansas County into Lonoke, Prairie and White Counties. Withdrawals from the alluvial aquifer during 1990 totaled 441 Mgal in Craighead and Poinsett Counties and 847 Mgal in Arkansas, Lonoke, Prairie, and White Counties (Holland, 1993). Withdrawal totals for 1992 were not available but probably were similar to those in 1990. In many areas, water levels rose 5 ft or more in response to higher stream stages or reduced ground-water withdrawals.

#### DEPTH-TO-WATER MAP

Water levels in the alluvial aquifer are shallowest near the Fall Line and near large streams, such as the Arkansas, Mississippi, and White Rivers, that are in hydraulic connection with the aquifer. The water levels are shallow (less than 20 ft below land surface) along the Fall Line because the aquifer is water the surface in this area. Water levels are shallow near large streams for two reasons: (1) the decreased use of ground water due to the availability of surface water, and (2) recharge to the aquifer by water from the stream. Water levels more than 100 ft below land surface occur in two areas: the first area is located in Arkansas, Lonoke, and Prairie Counties and the second area is in Cross and Poinsett Counties west of Crowley Ridge. Both of these areas have large ground-water withdrawals.

#### LONG-TERM HYDROGRAPHS

Hydrographs for wells in the alluvial aquifer in Arkansas, Chicot, Crittenden, Lonoke, and Poinsett Counties (figure 1) show water-level changes from spring 1963 to spring 1992. The wells in Lonoke and Poinsett Counties are in areas of large withdrawals, and the respective hydrographs show nearly continuous water-level declines that average 1.4 ft/yr. The well in Arkansas County also is in an area of large ground-water withdrawal and its hydrograph shows declines that average 0.6 ft/yr. The hydrographs for the wells in Chicot and Crittenden Counties indicate no long-term change or trend in water levels for the last 20 years, but show small yearly fluctuations that probably are influenced by the stage in the Mississippi River.

#### WELL-NUMBERING SYSTEM

Maps shown in this report were prepared from data collected by the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. The map report shows the potentiometric surface in the alluvial aquifer before (spring) the 1992 pumping season, the change between the spring 1987 and the spring 1992 potentiometric surfaces, and the depth to water in the spring of 1992. Hydrographs show water-level changes from spring 1963 to spring 1992 in Arkansas, Chicot, Crittenden, Lonoke, and Poinsett Counties. Water-level measurements made by U.S. Geological Survey personnel in 257 wells completed in the alluvial aquifer are included in table 1. Water-level measurements made by personnel of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service are available in a separate report (Westerfield and Trencher, 1993).

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CONVERSION FACTORS AND VERTICAL DATUM		
Multiply	By	To obtain
feet (ft)	0.3048	meter
foot per year (ft/year)	0.3048	meter per year
gallons per minute (gal/min)	0.003785	liter per second
million gallons per day (Mgal/d)	0.0438	cubic meter per second

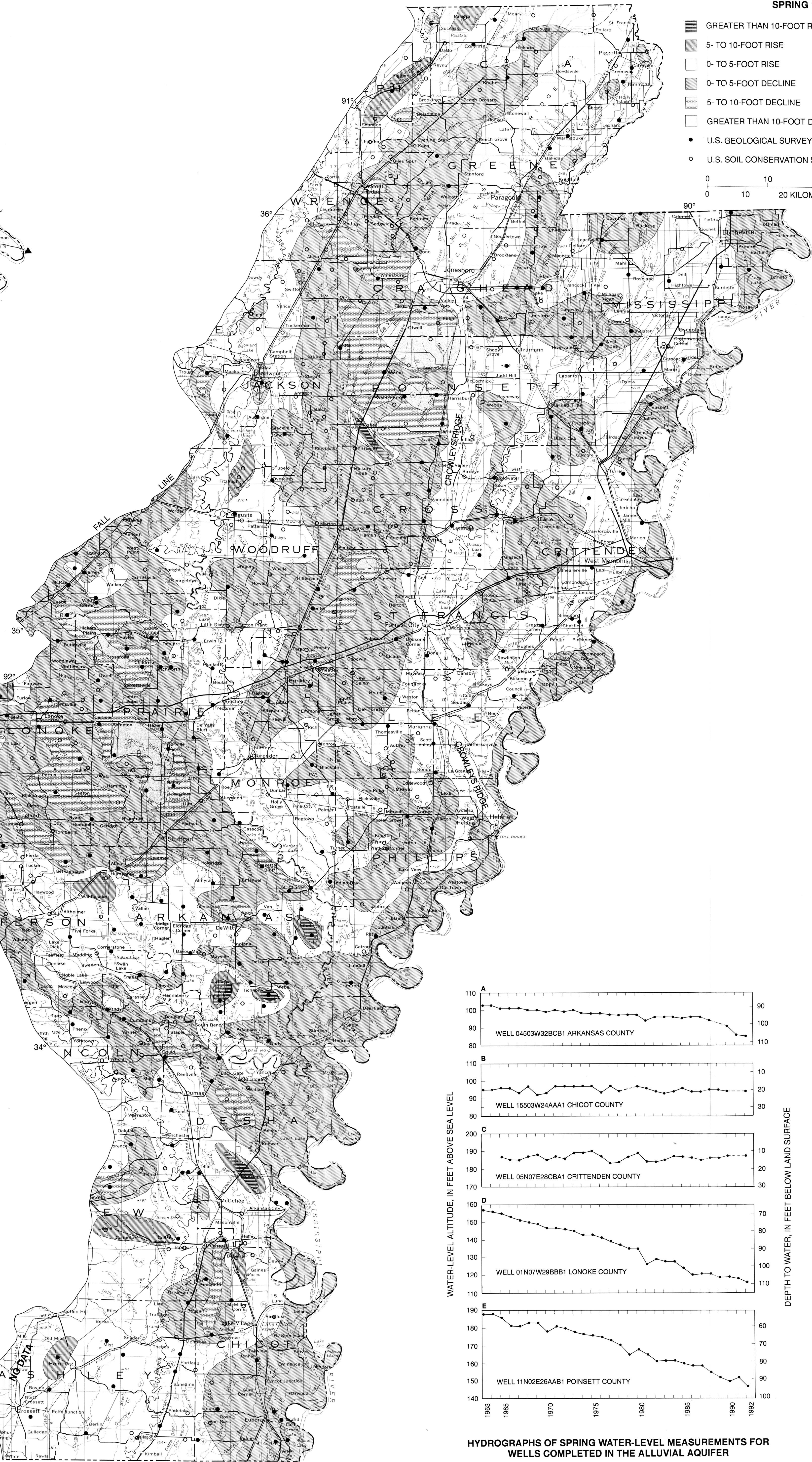
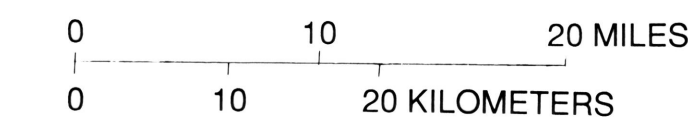
Note: In this report, "sea level" refers to the National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929 (NGVD of 1929), a geoid datum derived from a general adjustment of the first-order level nets of the United States and Canada, formerly called Sea Level Datum of 1929.

#### LOCATION OF STUDY AREA IN EASTERN ARKANSAS



#### POTENTIOMETRIC SURFACE OF THE ALLUVIAL AQUIFER, SPRING 1992

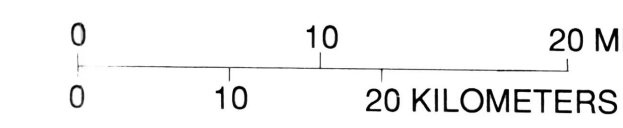
- 120 — POTENTIOMETRIC CONTOUR—Shows altitude at which water level would have stood in tightly cased wells. Dashed where approximately located. Hatchures indicate depression. Contour interval 10 feet. Datum is sea level.
- U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OBSERVATION WELL—Letter when present, corresponds with hydrograph
- U.S. SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE OBSERVATION WELL
- ▲ GAUGING STATION



Base from U.S. Geological Survey  
State base map, 1967

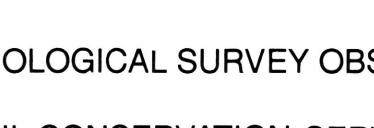
#### CHANGE IN THE POTENTIOMETRIC SURFACE OF THE ALLUVIAL AQUIFER, FROM SPRING 1987 TO SPRING 1992

- GREATER THAN 10-FOOT RISE
- 5- TO 10-FOOT RISE
- 0- TO 5-FOOT RISE
- 0- TO 5-FOOT DECLINE
- 5- TO 10-FOOT DECLINE
- GREATER THAN 10-FOOT DECLINE
- U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OBSERVATION WELL
- U.S. SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE OBSERVATION WELL

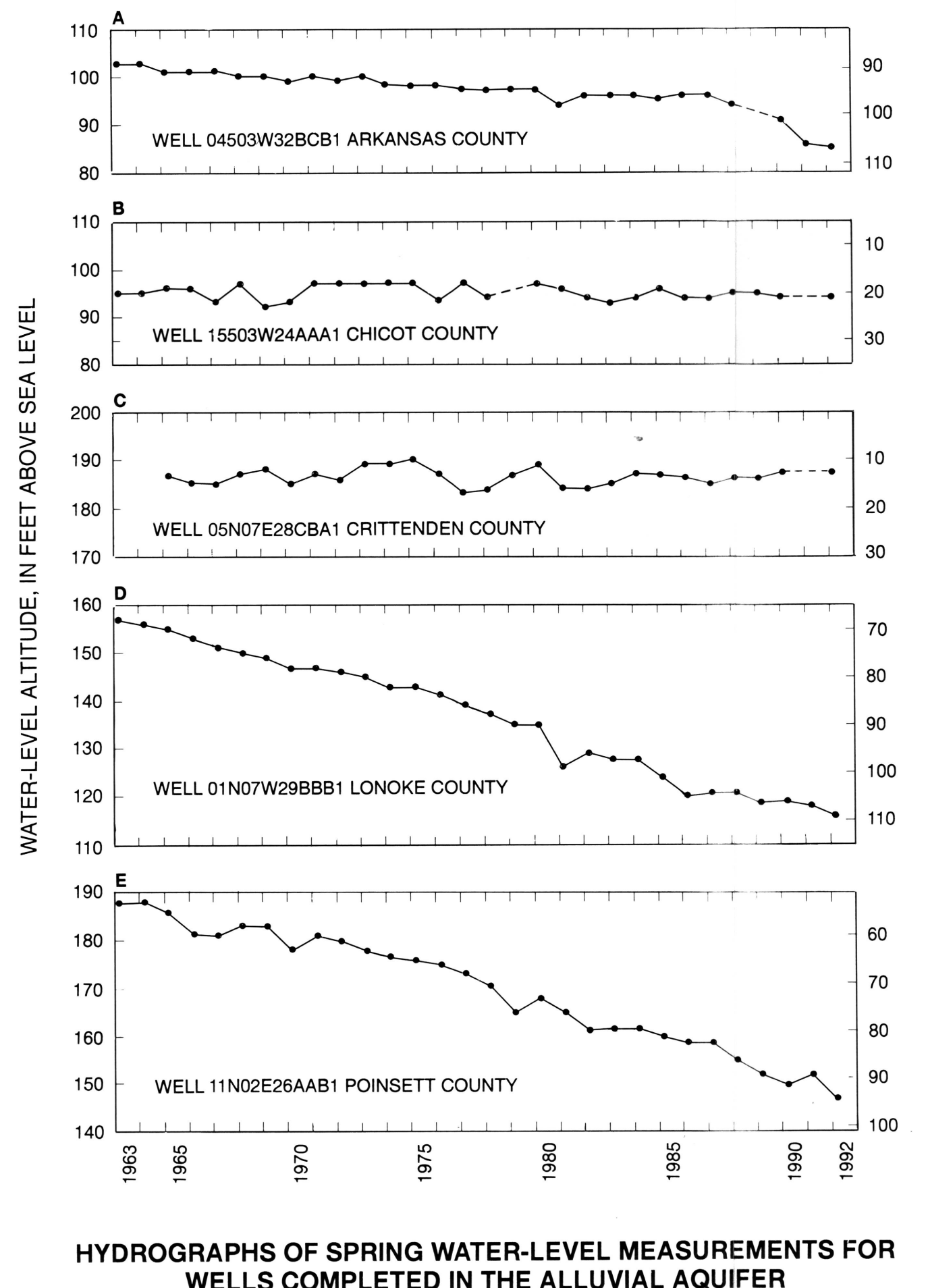


#### DEPTH-TO-WATER MAP, SPRING 1992

- LINE OF EQUAL DEPTH-TO-WATER—Dashed where approximately located. Hatchures indicate depression. Contour interval 20 feet. Datum is land surface.
- U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OBSERVATION WELL
- U.S. SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE OBSERVATION WELL



Base from U.S. Geological Survey  
State base map, 1967



#### HYDROGRAPHS OF SPRING WATER-LEVEL MEASUREMENTS FOR WELLS COMPLETED IN THE ALLUVIAL AQUIFER

### WATER-LEVEL MAPS OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER VALLEY ALLUVIAL AQUIFER IN EASTERN ARKANSAS, SPRING 1992