



**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**

**REPORT 265**

**ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE OGALLALA AQUIFER IN  
POTTER AND OLDHAM COUNTIES, TEXAS**

**Projections of Saturated Thickness, Volume of Water in Storage,  
Pumpage Rates, Pumping Lifts, and Well Yields**

By

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January 1982

# TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

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# ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE OGALLALA AQUIFER IN POTTER AND OLDHAM COUNTIES, TEXAS

## Projections of Saturated Thickness, Volume of Water in Storage, Pumpage Rates, Pumping Lifts, and Well Yields

### CONCLUSIONS

The Ogallala aquifer in Potter and Oldham Counties contained approximately 2.1 million acre-feet ( $2.6 \text{ km}^3$ ) of water in 1974. Historical pumpage has exceeded 50,000 acre-feet ( $0.06 \text{ km}^3$ ) annually, which is approximately twice the rate of natural recharge to the aquifer in the counties. This overdraft is expected to continue, ultimately resulting in reduced well yields, reduced acreage irrigated, and reduced agricultural production.

There is a very uneven distribution of ground water in the two counties. Some areas have ample ground-water resources to support current usage through the year 2020; whereas, in other areas, ground water is currently in short supply.

To obtain maximum benefits from the remaining ground-water resources, water users should implement all possible conservation measures so that the remaining ground-water supply is used in the most prudent manner possible and with the least amount of waste.

### INTRODUCTION

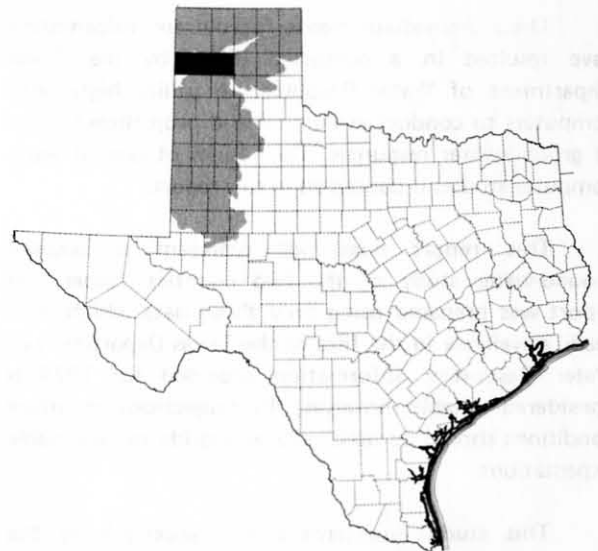
Potter and Oldham Counties are situated in the High Plains of Texas. Vega, the county seat of Oldham County, is located approximately 30 miles (48 km) west of Amarillo, the county seat of Potter County. The counties have a total population of approximately 96,200 and contain a total area of about 2,376 square miles ( $6,154 \text{ km}^2$ ), of which approximately 1,190 square miles ( $3,082 \text{ km}^2$ ) is underlain by the Ogallala Formation. This report deals only with that area of the counties where the Ogallala Formation occurs.

Potter and Oldham Counties produce a total farm income of over \$22 million annually (Texas Almanac

and State Industrial Guide 1978-79). Leading crops in these counties are grain sorghums and wheat. Livestock feeding accounts for two-thirds of the farm income, while other agribusinesses, including the sale of irrigation equipment supplies, feed and seed, and fertilizer, also make significant contributions to the total two-county income.

Ground water is extremely important to the economy of the area inasmuch as most of the crops are irrigated with ground water. Additionally, the water used by rural residents, municipalities, and local industries is mostly ground water.

The principal source of fresh ground water in the area is the Ogallala aquifer. During the past three decades, the withdrawal of ground water has greatly exceeded the natural recharge to the aquifer. If this



Location of Potter and Oldham Counties, and Extent of  
the Ogallala Aquifer in Texas

overdraft continues, the aquifer ultimately will be depleted to the point that it may not be economically feasible to produce water for irrigation.

This is one of numerous planned county studies covering the declining ground-water resource of the Ogallala aquifer in the High Plains of Texas. The report contains maps, charts, and tabulations which reflect estimates of the volume of water in storage in the Ogallala aquifer in Potter and Oldham Counties and the projected depletion of this water supply by decade periods through the year 2020. The report also contains estimates of pumpage, pumping lifts, and other data related to current and future water use in the counties. However, the report does not attempt to project that portion of the volume of water in underground storage which may be ultimately recoverable.

### PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF STUDY

This study resulted from an immediate need for information to illustrate to the High Plains water users that the ground-water supply is being depleted. It is hoped that this study will help persuade the water users to implement all possible conservation measures, so that the remaining ground-water supply will be used in the most prudent manner possible and with the least amount of waste.

The study was also conducted to provide information to local, State, and federal officials for their use in implementing plans to alleviate the water-shortage problem in the High Plains of Texas.

These immediate needs for current information have resulted in a concerted effort by the Texas Department of Water Resources to utilize high-speed computers to conduct evaluation and projection studies of ground-water resources. The results of one of these computer studies is contained in this report.

This report does not represent a detailed ground-water study of the two counties; rather, the report was prepared using only those data which were readily available in the files of the Texas Department of Water Resources. Information provided for 1974 is considered reliable; however, the projections of future conditions should be used only as a guide to reasonable expectations.

This study represents a new approach by the Department in making and presenting appraisals of ground-water resources. Consequently, a detailed explanation of the methods and assumptions used in the study is included. A complete set of tabulations and

illustrations resulting from this study is presented at the end of the report.

The illustrations were prepared to answer four questions believed to be of prime importance to the Potter and Oldham County landowners and water users. These questions, and methods by which a set of answers can be obtained from the illustrations, are as follows:

1. Question: How much water is in storage under any given tract of land and what is expected to happen to this water in the future?

Answer: First, determine the approximate location of the tract on the most current (1974) map of saturated thickness. Read the value of the contour line at this location (if midway between two contour lines, take an average of the two). This thickness value can then be converted to the approximate volume of water in storage, in acre-feet per surface acre, by multiplying it by the coefficient of storage of 0.15, or 15 percent. To obtain estimates of what can be expected in the future, the same procedure can be followed by using the maps which illustrate projected saturated thickness in the years 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020.

2. Question: What can be expected to happen to well yields if the saturated thickness diminishes as illustrated by the maps?

Answer: Well yields are expected to decline as the aquifer thins; therefore, a map of estimated well yields has been prepared for each year of the study. The landowner need only find the approximate location of his property on the well-yield map that applies to the year in question and read the well-yield estimates directly from the map.

3. Question: With energy cost increasing, pumping lifts (pumping levels) are becoming more and more important. What are the estimates of current pumping lifts and what are they expected to be in the future?

Answer: Contour maps depicting estimated pumping lifts have been prepared for each year of the study. These maps are contoured in feet below land surface. The landowner need only find the approximate location of his property on the map that applies to the year in question to read the pumping-lift estimates.



4. Question: If an all-out effort is made to conserve ground-water resources, how can landowners and water users determine how they are doing compared to the projections in the study?

Answer: Using the maps that show rates of water-level declines, the landowners and water users can determine what the changes in water levels are in their area and what they are projected to be in the future. This can be accomplished by finding the approximate location of their property on the map pertaining to the year in question and by reading the estimates of water-level changes which are recorded in feet. To determine how he is doing from year to year, the landowner or water user can make measurements of depth to water in his own wells or obtain copies of measurements made by the Department or the ground-water district for his area. These measurements can then be compared to the projected values on the map nearest to the year of interest to obtain an estimate of the effectiveness of the conservation efforts.

## NATURE OF THE OGALLALA AQUIFER

Because thorough understanding of the Ogallala aquifer is not necessary for the water user, the following discussion of aquifer geology and hydrology is rather general. Readers interested in pursuing the subject in more detail may do so from the numerous reports which have been published on the Ogallala. Many of these publications are included in the list of selected references of this report.

### General Geology

Fresh ground water in Potter and Oldham Counties is obtained principally from the Ogallala Formation of Pliocene age. Water in the Ogallala Formation is unconfined and is contained in the pore spaces of unconsolidated or partly consolidated sediments.

The Ogallala Formation principally consists of interfingering bodies of fine to coarse sand, gravel, silt, and clay—material eroded from the Rocky Mountains which was carried southeastward and deposited by streams. The earliest sediments, mainly gravel and coarse sand, filled the valleys cut in the pre-Ogallala surface. Pebbles and cobbles of quartz, quartzite, and chert are

typical of these early sediments. After filling the valleys, deposition continued until the entire area that is now the Texas High Plains was covered by sediments from the shifting streams.

The upper part of the formation contains several hard, caliche-cemented, erosionally resistant beds called the "caprock." A wind-blown cover of fine silt, sand, and soil overlies the caprock.

The Ogallala deposits overlie rocks of Triassic and Permian ages. These rocks, principally red shale, serve as a nearly impermeable floor for the aquifer. On a broad scale, the erosional surface at the top of the Triassic and Permian rocks dips gently (about 10 feet per mile [2 m/km]) toward the southeast, similar to the slope of the land surface. In general, however, this pre-Ogallala surface had greater relief than the present land surface. Low hills and wide valleys which contain deep, narrow stream channels are typical features of the Triassic and Permian erosional surfaces. Because the Ogallala was deposited on top of this irregular surface, the formation is very thin in some areas and very thick in others. Often this contrast occurs in relatively short distances.

The Canadian River has cut deeply through the Ogallala Formation in the northern part of the Texas High Plains area. The valley effectively separates the formation geographically into two units having little hydraulic interconnection. Erosion has also removed the Ogallala from much of its former extent to the east, and to the west in New Mexico. As a result, the Southern High Plains, although relatively flat, stands in high relief and is hydraulically independent of adjacent areas. For this reason, coupled with the scarcity of local rainfall, water that is being withdrawn from the aquifer cannot be replaced quickly by natural recharge and is in effect being mined.

### Storage Properties

The coefficient of storage of an aquifer is defined as the volume of water released from or taken into storage per unit surface area of the aquifer per unit change in the component of head normal to that surface. In water-table aquifers such as the Ogallala, the coefficient of storage is nearly equal to the specific yield, which is defined as the quantity of water that a formation will yield under the force of gravity, if it is first saturated and then allowed to drain, the quantity of water being expressed as a percentage of the volume of the material drained.

A coefficient of storage of 15 percent has been selected for use in this study based on past studies and the results of numerous aquifer tests published in Texas

Water Development Board Report 98 (Myers, 1969). The following chart shows the volumes of water corresponding to various amounts of aquifer saturated thickness, based on a storage coefficient of 15 percent. These are the approximate amounts of water that would drain from the aquifer material by gravity flow if the entire saturated thickness could be drained.

SATURATED THICKNESS (feet)	VOLUME OF WATER IN STORAGE (acre-feet, per surface acre)
25	3.75
50	7.50
75	11.25
100	15.00
150	22.50
200	30.00
250	37.50
300	45.00
400	60.00
500	75.00

### Natural Recharge and Irrigation Recirculation

Recharge is the addition of water to an aquifer by either natural or artificial means. Natural recharge results chiefly from infiltration of precipitation. The Ogallala aquifer receives natural recharge by precipitation that falls within the county boundaries and in adjoining areas.

The amount and rate of natural recharge from precipitation depend on the amount, distribution, and intensity of the precipitation; the amount of moisture in the soil when the rain or snowmelt begins; and the temperature, vegetative cover, and permeability of the materials at the site of infiltration. Because of the wide variations in these factors, it is difficult to estimate the amount of natural recharge to the ground-water reservoir. Estimates of annual natural recharge to the Ogallala aquifer made by Barnes and others (1949, p. 26-27) indicate only a fraction of an inch. Theis (1937, p. 546-568) suggested less than half an inch, and Havens (1966, p. F1), in a study of the Ogallala in New Mexico, indicated about 0.8 inch (2 cm) per year.

The authors of this report believe that recharge from precipitation may be more than these earlier estimates, due to changes in the soil and land surface that have accompanied large-scale irrigation development in the area. Some of the farming practices which are believed to have altered the recharge rate are: clearing the land of deep-rooted native vegetation; deep plowing of fields, which eliminates compacted zones in the soil

(locally called "hard pans"), and the plowing of playa lake bottoms and sides; bench leveling, contour farming, and terracing; maintaining a generally higher soil moisture condition by application of irrigation water prior to large rains; and increasing the humus level in the root zone by plowing under a large amount of foliage from crops grown under irrigation.

Obtaining a reliable estimate of the present recharge rate is further complicated by the consideration which must be given to irrigation recirculation. A substantial portion of the water pumped from the Ogallala for irrigation percolates back to the aquifer. This does not constitute an additional supply of water, but reduces the net depletion of the aquifer. As with natural recharge, many factors are involved in making estimates of recirculation. Some of these factors are the rate, amount, and type of irrigation application; the soil type and the infiltration rate of the soil profile in the root zone; the amount of moisture in the soil prior to the irrigation application; the type of crop being grown, its root development, and its moisture extraction pattern; and the climatic conditions during and following the irrigation application. Tentative estimates of the actual amounts of recharge and irrigation recirculation in Potter and Oldham Counties will be found in a subsequent section on "Calculating Pumpage."

## PROCEDURES USED TO OBTAIN PROJECTIONS

### Hydrologic Data Base

The Texas Department of Water Resources, the High Plains Underground Water Conservation District No. 1, and the Panhandle Ground Water Conservation District No. 3 cooperatively maintain a network of water level observation wells in Potter County, while the Department exclusively maintains a similar network in Oldham County. Records from these wells provided the principal data base used in this study. This data base was supplemented in some areas with records from water well drillers' logs collected by both the Districts and the Department.

The data base included: (1) measurements of the depth to water below land surface, which have been made annually in the wells in the observation network; (2) the dates these measurements were made; and (3) the depth from land surface to the base of the Ogallala aquifer (In many cases, this was identical to the well depth). To facilitate automatic data processing with modern, high-speed computers, the data base also

included a unique number for each well and the geographical coordinates of each well location.

Wells chosen from the data base for use in obtaining projections of future conditions were those in which depth to the base of the aquifer could be determined or estimated, and those needed to provide spaced data coverage in the two counties. Locations of the wells that were selected and used for control are shown on the various maps in this report.

### Projecting the Depletion of Saturated Thickness

The water-use patterns between 1960 and 1972 as reflected in the changes in water levels in wells measured in the High Plains of Texas were used as the principal data source for developing an aquifer depletion schedule. The depletion schedule generally reflects average precipitation and precipitation distribution in the area for the duration of the study period. Additionally, in developing and applying the depletion schedule, adjustments through time were made to reflect the effects of depletion of the aquifer on its ability to yield water. That is, as the aquifer's saturated thickness decreases, its ability to yield water to wells is reduced, the well yields decline, less water is pumped, and there results a lessened rate of further aquifer depletion.

The aquifer's hydraulics are such that if a well penetrates the total saturated section and the pump is sized to produce the maximum the aquifer will yield, the well yield will decline at a disproportionately greater rate than the reduction in saturated thickness. Actually, the remaining well yield expressed as a percentage of former yield will be only about half of the remaining saturated thickness expressed as a percentage of former thickness. For example, a well with 60 feet (18.3 m) of saturated section and a maximum yield of 900 gallons per minute (56.8 l/s) will probably yield only 225 gallons per minute (14.2 l/s) when the saturated section is reduced to 30 feet (9.1 m).

The depletion schedule for Potter, Oldham, and surrounding counties was developed in the following manner:

1. The records for all water level observation wells for the years 1960 through 1972 in Armstrong, Carson, Donley, Gray, Oldham, Potter, Randall, and Wheeler Counties were separated from the master file. These counties have similar soil types, cropping patterns, depths to water, saturated thickness, and climatic conditions.

2. These well records were then sorted into groups according to the saturated thickness in each well as of 1966 (the middle year). Each group included records of all wells in a 20-foot (6.1-meter) range of saturated thickness. (Ranges are shown in the tabulation below.)
3. The average decline in water level was calculated for each year for each well group, and these decline values were adjusted to remove the effects of each year's deviation from long-term average precipitation.
4. The average annual decline in water level for the total period (1960-72) was calculated for each well group, incorporating the adjustments for departure from average precipitation.

From the foregoing procedure, the following depletion schedule was developed (no depletion was allowed for areas with 10 feet or less of saturated thickness):

RANGE OF SATURATED THICKNESS (feet)	AVERAGE ANNUAL WATER-LEVEL DECLINE, 1960-72 (feet)
0 to 10	0.00
10 to 20	.40
20 to 40	.85
40 to 60	1.47
60 to 80	1.60
80 to 100	1.80
100 to 120	2.07
120 to 140	2.56
140 to 160	2.50
160 to 180	2.47
180 to 200	3.04
200 to 220	2.97
220 to 240	2.87
240 to 260	3.49
260 to 280	4.05

Based on this depletion schedule, a computer program was written to calculate future saturated thickness at individual well sites. The following problem is presented to show the computational procedures used.

**Problem:** A well has a saturated thickness of 110 feet in 1974 and one wants to project what the saturated thickness will be in this well for every year to the year 2020.

**Factors:** 1. The beginning saturated thickness is 110 feet in 1974.

2. The average decline rate is 2.07 feet per year for wells with saturated sections of 100 to 120 feet.
3. The average decline rate is 1.80 feet per year for wells with saturated sections of 80 to 100 feet.
4. The average decline rate is 1.60 feet per year for wells with saturated sections of 60 to 80 feet.
5. The average decline rate is 1.47 feet per year for wells with

saturated sections of 40 to 60 feet.

6. The average decline rate is 0.85 foot per year for wells with saturated sections of 20 to 40 feet.
7. The average decline rate is 0.40 foot per year for wells with saturated sections of 10 to 20 feet.
8. The time interval is 1974 through 2020.

The projected saturated thicknesses in the subject well are calculated and shown in the following table:

YEAR	SATURATED THICKNESS, BEGINNING OF YEAR (feet)	AVERAGE DECLINE RATE (feet)	SATURATED THICKNESS, END OF YEAR (feet)
1974	110.00	2.07	107.93
1975	107.93	2.07	105.86
1976	105.86	2.07	103.79
1977	103.79	2.07	101.72
1978	101.72	2.07	99.65
1979	99.65	1.80	97.85
1980	97.85	1.80	96.05
1981	96.05	1.80	94.25
1982	94.25	1.80	92.45
1983	92.45	1.80	90.65
1984	90.65	1.80	88.85
1985	88.85	1.80	87.05
1986	87.05	1.80	85.25
1987	85.25	1.80	83.45
1988	83.45	1.80	81.65
1989	81.65	1.80	79.85
1990	79.85	1.60	78.25
1991	78.25	1.60	76.65
1992	76.65	1.60	75.05
1993	75.05	1.60	73.45
1994	73.45	1.60	71.85
1995	71.85	1.60	70.25
1996	70.25	1.60	68.65
1997	68.65	1.60	67.05
1998	67.05	1.60	65.45
1999	65.45	1.60	63.85
2000	63.85	1.60	62.25
2001	62.25	1.60	60.65
2002	60.65	1.60	59.05
2003	59.05	1.47	57.58
2004	57.58	1.47	56.11
2005	56.11	1.47	54.64
2006	54.64	1.47	53.17
2007	53.17	1.47	51.70
2008	51.70	1.47	50.23
2009	50.23	1.47	48.76
2010	48.76	1.47	47.29
2011	47.29	1.47	45.82
2012	45.82	1.47	44.35
2013	44.35	1.47	42.88
2014	42.88	1.47	41.41
2015	41.41	1.47	39.94
2016	39.94	.85	39.09

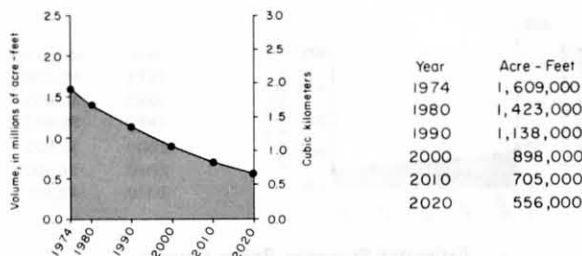


YEAR	SATURATED THICKNESS, BEGINNING OF YEAR (feet)	AVERAGE DECLINE RATE (feet)	SATURATED THICKNESS, END OF YEAR (feet)
2017	39.09	.85	38.24
2018	38.24	.85	37.39
2019	37.39	.85	36.54
2020	36.54	.85	35.69

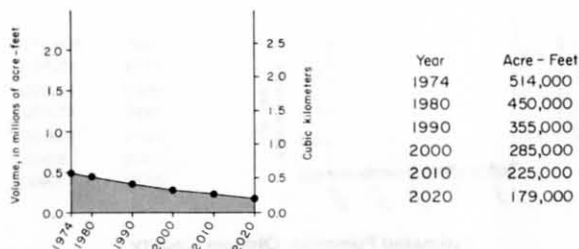
Similar computations were made for each of the selected data-control wells in Potter and Oldham Counties, and the saturated-thickness values for 1974, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020 were extracted from this data set for use in further calculations and mapping.

### Mapping Saturated Thickness, and Calculating Volume of Water in Storage

To obtain estimates of the volume of water in storage in the Ogallala aquifer, an electronic digital computer was used to construct maps which reflect the saturated thickness of the aquifer for those years included in the study. These maps were then refined by the computer to reflect the number of acres corresponding to each range of saturated thickness. The number of acres for each range was multiplied by the saturated thickness in feet for that range and then by the coefficient of storage (0.15 or 15 percent), to yield an estimate of the volume of water in storage in each saturated-thickness range. Totaling these volumes produced an estimate of the volume of water in storage in each county. The current (1974) and projected volume estimates are shown in the following graphs:



Estimated Volume of Water in Storage, Potter County



Estimated Volume of Water in Storage, Oldham County

Preparing a data base and writing the necessary programs for the computer to use in constructing the saturated-thickness maps and in making the necessary calculations is time consuming; however, once the data base is prepared and programs written, the computer can perform in a few hours calculations that would have required many years of manual effort.

A generalized description of the methodology used in mapping and in computing water volume follows: A base map with a scale of 1 inch equals 2 miles (1:125,000) was selected to prepare data for computer processing. All data points (observation wells) were plotted on these base maps by hand and assigned identifying numbers. A machine called a *digitizer* was then used to translate these mapped location data (well locations, county boundaries, etc.) into information processible by the computer. To accomplish this, a latitude and longitude coordinate was recorded on each base map as a central reference point, and all data points and county boundaries were then digitized; that is, measurements were made by the digitizer to reference these data points and boundaries to the initial latitude and longitude coordinate. Then the digitized information was processed by the computer and the maps were re-created by a computer-driven plotter. The computer-plotted image maps were ultimately checked against the hand-constructed maps to verify that the data were plotted accurately.

The assignment of a unique number to each data point (observation well) on the base maps made it possible to machine process the data related to these points and to plot these data back on the maps at the proper location.

To compute the volume of water in storage, the computer was instructed to subdivide the counties into squares measuring approximately 0.5 mile (0.8 km). The known saturated-thickness values obtained from the data points were filled into the squares in which the data points were located. Based on these known values, the computer filled in a weighted-average value for each remaining square, taking into consideration all known values within a radius of 7 miles (11 km). After this step was completed, the computer then counted the numbers of squares having equal values, thus obtaining the approximate area in square miles (later converted to

acres) corresponding to each range of saturated thickness. As previously stated, the number of acres in each 25-foot (7.6-meter) range of saturated thickness was multiplied by the corresponding saturated-thickness value and the storage coefficient (0.15 or 15 percent) to obtain the approximate volume of water in acre-feet in that saturated-thickness range.

Although the calculations were made by the computer from information stored in its image field, the data in the image field were printed out in the form of contoured saturated-thickness maps, which are reproduced in this report. Facing each saturated-thickness map in the report are corresponding tabulations of the approximate volume of water in storage in each county.

### Calculating Pumpage

Estimates of current pumpage were obtained in this study by calculating the storage capacity of the dewatered section of the Ogallala aquifer as reflected in changes in the annual depth-to-water measurements made in the water level observation wells. Factors for natural recharge and irrigation recirculation were then added to these volumetric figures to obtain more realistic pumpage estimates.

The step-by-step procedure involved in making pumpage estimates is similar to the procedures used in calculating the estimates of volume of water in storage; therefore, a more general explanation follows.

Change in water level (decline) maps for the aquifer were made by the computer for the years considered. From these maps, the volume of desaturated material was multiplied by the number of acres corresponding to each 0.25-foot (.076-meter) range of decline and then multiplied by the storage coefficient of the aquifer (0.15 or 15 percent), which resulted in an estimate of the volume of water taken from storage for each decline range. Estimates for natural recharge and irrigation recirculation were added to these values to obtain estimates of pumpage.

An attempt was made to obtain a reliable estimate of the natural recharge and recirculation for use in this study. This involved obtaining an estimate of the amount of water required by each of the major crops grown in the area. These values, generally referred to as "duty of water," were obtained from Texas Agricultural Experiment Stations located in the High Plains area. The duty of water figure for each major crop was multiplied by the number of crop acres, and the resulting numbers

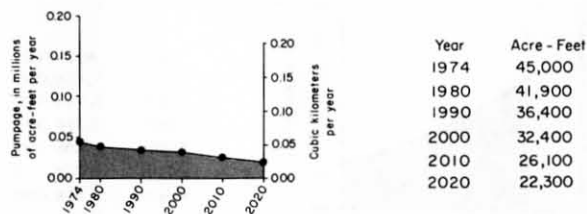
were added together to yield an estimate of the total crop water demand.

The amount of precipitation which fell just prior to and during the growing season was subtracted from the total water demand estimate. The difference between these values should equal that amount which would have been supplied by irrigation, which will be referred to as irrigation makeup water.

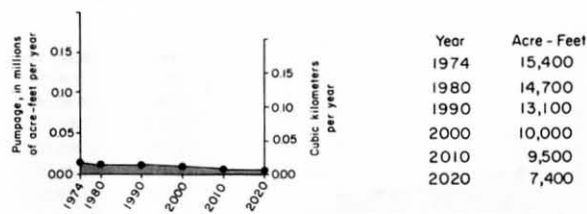
The volume figure represented by the dewatered section was then compared to the volume of water which should have been supplied to crops by irrigation makeup water. In all tests, the volume of water represented by the depletion of the aquifer was considerably less than the makeup water estimate. This difference was attributed to irrigation recirculation and natural recharge.

Various combinations of estimates for natural recharge and recirculation were added to the volume represented by aquifer depletion, in an attempt to obtain comparable values with the makeup water estimated for the test years. One-half inch (1.3 cm) per year of natural recharge added to the volume represented by the depletion of the aquifer, and then adding 10 percent of this for recirculation, most nearly equaled the makeup water estimated in the largest number of instances in Potter and Oldham Counties and in adjoining counties with similar conditions.

These amounts were added to the previously calculated storage capacity of the dewatered section to obtain estimates for current (1974) and future pumpage. The following graphs show the current and projected estimates of pumpage for each county:



Estimated Pumpage, Potter County



Estimated Pumpage, Oldham County

## Calculating Pumping Lifts

The pumping lift (pumping level) is the depth from land surface to the water level in a pumping well; it is equal to the depth of the static water level plus the drawdown due to pumping. The amount of pumping lift largely determines the amount of energy required to produce the water, and thus strongly affects the pumping costs.

In calculating pumping lifts, procedures were used that are similar to those used in making estimates of the volume of water in storage and the estimates of pumpage. Again, the computer and original data base were used as previously described.

In making estimates of pumping lifts, it was assumed (1) that the yield of each pumping well is 900 gallons per minute (56.8 l/s) except as limited by the capacity of the aquifer (this conforms with the historical trend of equipping new wells with 8-inch [20-centimeter] or smaller pumps), (2) that the specific well yield is 15 gallons per minute per foot of drawdown (3.1 [l/s]/m), and (3) that once the well yield equals the capacity of the aquifer, the well will continue to be produced at a rate near the capacity of the aquifer until pumping lifts are within 10 feet (3 m) of the base of the aquifer. After that time, it is assumed that the pumping lift will remain constant because of greatly diminished well yields. It should be noted that this 10-foot (3-meter) minimum is somewhat arbitrarily chosen, as one cannot predict accurately the minimum saturated thickness that will be feasible for producing irrigation water under future economic conditions.

The above assumptions restrict the drawdown in wells to a maximum of 60 feet (18.3 m); that is, the maximum well yield of 900 gallons per minute (56.8 l/s) divided by specific well yield of 15 gallons per minute per foot (3.1 [l/s]/m) equals 60 feet (18.3 m) of maximum drawdown.

Based on the above assumptions, pumping lifts were calculated separately for each of the selected data-control wells in the counties. The factors involved were the historical and projected saturated-thickness values, the historical and projected static water levels, and the drawdown value assigned to the Potter and Oldham County area.

In all areas where the aquifer's saturated thickness was 70 feet (21.3 m) or greater (areas where a well, pumped at full capacity, would be drawn down 60 feet [18.3 m] to yield 900 gallons per minute [56.8 l/s]), the computer was instructed to add 60 feet (18.3 m)—the drawdown—to the static water level to

determine pumping lift. For a well with a saturated thickness of less than 70 feet (21.3 m), the pumping lift was calculated by subtracting 10 feet (3 m) from the depth of the well (base of the aquifer). These calculations were made for each year of record to be reported (1974, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020) for each well. The pumping-lift values were stored in the computer and printed out in the form of contour maps. Additionally, the surface area corresponding to each interval between the mapped contours was calculated and printed out in tabular form.

## Well-Yield Estimates

Estimates of the rate, in gallons per minute, at which the Ogallala aquifer should be capable of yielding water to wells in various areas of the two counties are presented on maps for each year of record reported (1974, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020). These well-yield estimates are based on capabilities of the aquifer to yield water to irrigation wells of prevailing construction as reflected by the very large number of aquifer tests which have been conducted in various saturated-thickness intervals in the Texas High Plains. The estimates are adjusted to reflect the expected decreases in well yields through time due to the reduced saturated thickness as depletion of the aquifer progresses.

The well-yield estimates are subject to deviations caused by localized geological conditions. The Ogallala is not a homogeneous formation; that is, the silt, clay, sand, and gravel which generally comprise the formation vary from place to place in thickness of layers, layering position, and grain-size sorting. The physical composition of the formation material can drastically affect the ability of the formation to yield water to wells. As an example, in areas where the saturated portion of the formation is comprised of thick beds of coarse and well-sorted grains of sand, the well yields probably will exceed the estimates shown on the maps. In other localized areas, the saturated portion of the formation may be comprised principally of thick beds of silt and clay which can be expected to restrict well yields to less than those shown on the maps.

The following can be used as a general guide in Potter and Oldham Counties in estimating well yields based on saturated thickness:

SATURATED THICKNESS (feet)	WELL YIELD (gallons per minute)
Less than 20	Less than 100
20 to 30	100 to 250
30 to 40	250 to 500
40 to 60	500 to 800
60 to 80	800 to 1,000
More than 80	More than 1,000

The maps presented in this report are intended for use as general guidelines only and are not recommended for use in determining water availability when buying and selling specific tracts of land. Inasmuch as the availability of ground water constitutes a large portion of the price of land bought and sold in this area, it is recommended that a qualified ground-water hydrologist be consulted to make appraisals of ground-water conditions when such transactions are contemplated.

### **DISTINCTION BETWEEN PROJECTIONS AND PREDICTIONS**

The actions of the Potter and Oldham County water users will determine whether the projections of this study come to pass, as the rate of depletion of the ground-water resource is determined by the rate of water use. The authors have not made predictions of what will occur, but have furnished projections based on past trends and presently available information.

There are many unpredictable factors which can influence the future rates of withdrawal of ground water from the Ogallala aquifer for irrigation farming. These factors include: (1) the amounts and distribution of precipitation which will be received in the area in the future; (2) federal crop acreage controls or the lack of these; (3) the price and demand for food and fiber grown in the area; (4) the cost and availability of energy to produce water from the aquifer; (5) farm labor cost and availability of farm labor; (6) results of continuing research that seeks to develop more frugal water-application methods for irrigation, crops having less water demand, and methods for inducing clouds to yield more water as rain; and (7) most important, the degree to which feasible soil and water conservation measures are employed by the High Plains irrigator. Any of these factors could appreciably influence the rate of use of ground water in the future; however, the projections in this study provide a reasonable set of general expectations on the further depletion of the aquifer.



POTTER COUNTY

1974

Volume of Water in Storage Corresponding to Mapped Saturated Thickness Interval

(Coefficient of Storage: 15 percent)

VOLUME OF WATER IN STORAGE (acre-feet)	SURFACE AREA (acres)	MAPPED SATURATED THICKNESS INTERVAL (feet)
28,387	27,982	0-25
802,238	802,238	25-50
480,208	471,227	50-75
548,483	548,483	75-100
503,558	471,227	100-125
841,228	841,228	125-150
46,242	46,242	150-175
72,774	72,774	175-200
10,878	10,878	200-225
11,883	11,883	225-250
10,208	10,208	250-275
2,148	2,148	275-300
1,408,373	1,408,373	TOTAL

**SATURATED THICKNESS AND VOLUME OF WATER IN THE OGALLALA AQUIFER**

Volume of Water in Storage Corresponding to Mapped Saturated Thickness Interval

(Coefficient of Storage: 15 percent)

VOLUME OF WATER IN STORAGE (acre-feet)	SURFACE AREA (acres)	MAPPED SATURATED THICKNESS INTERVAL (feet)
81,248	81,248	0-25
103,272	103,272	25-50
141,228	141,228	50-75
102,784	102,784	75-100
14,288	14,288	100-125
1,408,373	1,408,373	TOTAL

POTTER COUNTY

1974

Volume of Water in Storage Corresponding  
to Mapped Saturated-Thickness Intervals

(Coefficient of Storage: 15 percent)

MAPPED SATURATED- THICKNESS INTERVAL (feet)	SURFACE AREA (acres)	VOLUME OF WATER IN STORAGE (acre-feet)
0- 25	83,486	33,397
25- 50	40,423	247,288
50- 75	51,331	480,309
75-100	34,632	449,493
100-125	12,278	203,992
125-150	4,588	93,144
150-175	1,886	46,293
175-200	512	13,774
200-225	342	10,948
225-250	343	11,882
250-275	342	13,230
275-300	129	5,563
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>230,292</b>	<b>1,609,313</b>

OLDHAM COUNTY

1974

Volume of Water in Storage Corresponding  
to Mapped Saturated-Thickness Intervals

(Coefficient of Storage: 15 percent)

MAPPED SATURATED- THICKNESS INTERVAL (feet)	SURFACE AREA (acres)	VOLUME OF WATER IN STORAGE (acre-feet)
0- 25	398,006	49,518
25- 50	23,997	132,879
50- 75	14,708	141,675
75-100	13,094	164,751
100-125	1,395	24,695
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>451,200</b>	<b>513,518</b>

POTENTIAL WELL YIELD OF THE  
OGALLALA AQUIFER

POTENTIAL WELL YIELD OF THE  
OAGLATA AQUIFER

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Additionally, appreciation is expressed to several individuals for consultation and for review and comment on the methodology and techniques employed in this study: Mr. Frank A. Rayner, former manager of the High Plains Underground Water Conservation District No. 1; Dr. Donald Reddell, associate professor of Engineering, Texas A&M University; Mr. Leon New, irrigation specialist, Texas Agriculture Extension Service, Lubbock, Texas; Mr. Shelby Newman, superintendent, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Stephenville, Texas; Dr. C. C. Reeves, Jr., professor of Geosciences, Texas Tech University; and Dr. James Osborn, former chairman of the Department of Agricultural Economics, Texas Tech University.

## STAFF INVOLVEMENT

This report is one of a series of county reports being published under the title "Analytical Study of the Ogallala Aquifer." Former staff member A. Wayne Wyatt was instrumental in initiating the study and coauthored a number of the previously published reports of this series.

The Potter and Oldham Counties report was prepared under the supervision of Bernard B. Baker, head of the Ground Water Data Unit in the Texas Department of Water Resources' Data Collection and Evaluation Section, Dr. Tommy R. Knowles, chief. Numerous staff members of this Section assisted the

authors in assembling and evaluating data and information. Overall technical supervision of the Ogallala study is exercised by C. R. Baskin, director, Data and Engineering Services Division. The Department's Information Systems and Services Office, David L. Ferguson, director, provided automated data processing and computational services, and prepared the manuscript copy of tabular and graphical displays.

## METRIC CONVERSIONS TABLE

For those readers interested in using the International System (SI) of Units, the metric equivalents of English units of measurement have been given in parenthesis in the text. The English units used in tables of this report may be converted to metric units by the following conversion factors:

MULTIPLY ENGLISH UNITS	BY	TO OBTAIN SI UNITS
inches	2.540	centimeters (cm)
feet	.3048	meters (m)
miles	1.609	kilometers (km)
square miles	2.590	square kilometers (km <sup>2</sup> )
gallons	3.785	liters (l)
gallons per minute	.06309	liters per second (l/s)
gallons per minute per foot	.207	liters per second per meter (l/s/m)
acres	.4047	square hectometers (hm <sup>2</sup> )
acres	.004047	square kilometers (km <sup>2</sup> )
acre-feet	1,233.	cubic meters (m <sup>3</sup> )
acre-feet	1.233 X 10 <sup>-6</sup>	cubic kilometers (km <sup>3</sup> )
million acre-feet	1.233	cubic kilometers (km <sup>3</sup> )

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Wynn, A. W., and A. C. ...  
Analytical ...  
County, ...  
volume ...  
file ...  
1912

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Analytical ...  
County, ...  
volume ...  
file ...  
1912

POTTER COUNTY

1974

Pumpage Computed to Pumping District Rate Interval

ESTIMATED PUMPAGE RATE INCLUDING NATURAL RECHARGE AND POTENTIAL REDUCTION (gallons per year)	STORAGE CAPACITY TO BE MAINTAINED (gallons)	MARKED DECLINE RATE INTERVAL (ft/yr)
455	100	0.00-0.25
855	200	0.25-0.50
1,255	300	0.50-0.75
1,655	400	0.75-1.00
2,055	500	1.00-1.25
2,455	600	1.25-1.50
2,855	700	1.50-1.75
3,255	800	1.75-2.00
3,655	900	2.00-2.25
4,055	1,000	2.25-2.50
4,455	1,100	2.50-2.75
4,855	1,200	2.75-3.00
5,255	1,300	3.00-3.25
5,655	1,400	3.25-3.50
6,055	1,500	3.50-3.75
6,455	1,600	3.75-4.00
6,855	1,700	4.00-4.25
7,255	1,800	4.25-4.50
7,655	1,900	4.50-4.75
8,055	2,000	4.75-5.00
8,455	2,100	5.00-5.25
8,855	2,200	5.25-5.50
9,255	2,300	5.50-5.75
9,655	2,400	5.75-6.00
10,055	2,500	6.00-6.25
10,455	2,600	6.25-6.50
10,855	2,700	6.50-6.75
11,255	2,800	6.75-7.00
11,655	2,900	7.00-7.25
12,055	3,000	7.25-7.50
12,455	3,100	7.50-7.75
12,855	3,200	7.75-8.00
13,255	3,300	8.00-8.25
13,655	3,400	8.25-8.50
14,055	3,500	8.50-8.75
14,455	3,600	8.75-9.00
14,855	3,700	9.00-9.25
15,255	3,800	9.25-9.50
15,655	3,900	9.50-9.75
16,055	4,000	9.75-10.00
16,455	4,100	10.00-10.25
16,855	4,200	10.25-10.50
17,255	4,300	10.50-10.75
17,655	4,400	10.75-11.00
18,055	4,500	11.00-11.25
18,455	4,600	11.25-11.50
18,855	4,700	11.50-11.75
19,255	4,800	11.75-12.00
19,655	4,900	12.00-12.25
20,055	5,000	12.25-12.50
20,455	5,100	12.50-12.75
20,855	5,200	12.75-13.00
21,255	5,300	13.00-13.25
21,655	5,400	13.25-13.50
22,055	5,500	13.50-13.75
22,455	5,600	13.75-14.00
22,855	5,700	14.00-14.25
23,255	5,800	14.25-14.50
23,655	5,900	14.50-14.75
24,055	6,000	14.75-15.00
24,455	6,100	15.00-15.25
24,855	6,200	15.25-15.50
25,255	6,300	15.50-15.75
25,655	6,400	15.75-16.00
26,055	6,500	16.00-16.25
26,455	6,600	16.25-16.50
26,855	6,700	16.50-16.75
27,255	6,800	16.75-17.00
27,655	6,900	17.00-17.25
28,055	7,000	17.25-17.50
28,455	7,100	17.50-17.75
28,855	7,200	17.75-18.00
29,255	7,300	18.00-18.25
29,655	7,400	18.25-18.50
30,055	7,500	18.50-18.75
30,455	7,600	18.75-19.00
30,855	7,700	19.00-19.25
31,255	7,800	19.25-19.50
31,655	7,900	19.50-19.75
32,055	8,000	19.75-20.00
32,455	8,100	20.00-20.25
32,855	8,200	20.25-20.50
33,255	8,300	20.50-20.75
33,655	8,400	20.75-21.00
34,055	8,500	21.00-21.25
34,455	8,600	21.25-21.50
34,855	8,700	21.50-21.75
35,255	8,800	21.75-22.00
35,655	8,900	22.00-22.25
36,055	9,000	22.25-22.50
36,455	9,100	22.50-22.75
36,855	9,200	22.75-23.00
37,255	9,300	23.00-23.25
37,655	9,400	23.25-23.50
38,055	9,500	23.50-23.75
38,455	9,600	23.75-24.00
38,855	9,700	24.00-24.25
39,255	9,800	24.25-24.50
39,655	9,900	24.50-24.75
40,055	10,000	24.75-25.00
40,455	10,100	25.00-25.25
40,855	10,200	25.25-25.50
41,255	10,300	25.50-25.75
41,655	10,400	25.75-26.00
42,055	10,500	26.00-26.25
42,455	10,600	26.25-26.50
42,855	10,700	26.50-26.75
43,255	10,800	26.75-27.00
43,655	10,900	27.00-27.25
44,055	11,000	27.25-27.50
44,455	11,100	27.50-27.75
44,855	11,200	27.75-28.00
45,255	11,300	28.00-28.25
45,655	11,400	28.25-28.50
46,055	11,500	28.50-28.75
46,455	11,600	28.75-29.00
46,855	11,700	29.00-29.25
47,255	11,800	29.25-29.50
47,655	11,900	29.50-29.75
48,055	12,000	29.75-30.00
48,455	12,100	30.00-30.25
48,855	12,200	30.25-30.50
49,255	12,300	30.50-30.75
49,655	12,400	30.75-31.00
50,055	12,500	31.00-31.25
50,455	12,600	31.25-31.50
50,855	12,700	31.50-31.75
51,255	12,800	31.75-32.00
51,655	12,900	32.00-32.25
52,055	13,000	32.25-32.50
52,455	13,100	32.50-32.75
52,855	13,200	32.75-33.00
53,255	13,300	33.00-33.25
53,655	13,400	33.25-33.50
54,055	13,500	33.50-33.75
54,455	13,600	33.75-34.00
54,855	13,700	34.00-34.25
55,255	13,800	34.25-34.50
55,655	13,900	34.50-34.75
56,055	14,000	34.75-35.00
56,455	14,100	35.00-35.25
56,855	14,200	35.25-35.50
57,255	14,300	35.50-35.75
57,655	14,400	35.75-36.00
58,055	14,500	36.00-36.25
58,455	14,600	36.25-36.50
58,855	14,700	36.50-36.75
59,255	14,800	36.75-37.00
59,655	14,900	37.00-37.25
60,055	15,000	37.25-37.50
60,455	15,100	37.50-37.75
60,855	15,200	37.75-38.00
61,255	15,300	38.00-38.25
61,655	15,400	38.25-38.50
62,055	15,500	38.50-38.75
62,455	15,600	38.75-39.00
62,855	15,700	39.00-39.25
63,255	15,800	39.25-39.50
63,655	15,900	39.50-39.75
64,055	16,000	39.75-40.00
64,455	16,100	40.00-40.25
64,855	16,200	40.25-40.50
65,255	16,300	40.50-40.75
65,655	16,400	40.75-41.00
66,055	16,500	41.00-41.25
66,455	16,600	41.25-41.50
66,855	16,700	41.50-41.75
67,255	16,800	41.75-42.00
67,655	16,900	42.00-42.25
68,055	17,000	42.25-42.50
68,455	17,100	42.50-42.75
68,855	17,200	42.75-43.00
69,255	17,300	43.00-43.25
69,655	17,400	43.25-43.50
70,055	17,500	43.50-43.75
70,455	17,600	43.75-44.00
70,855	17,700	44.00-44.25
71,255	17,800	44.25-44.50
71,655	17,900	44.50-44.75
72,055	18,000	44.75-45.00
72,455	18,100	45.00-45.25
72,855	18,200	45.25-45.50
73,255	18,300	45.50-45.75
73,655	18,400	45.75-46.00
74,055	18,500	46.00-46.25
74,455	18,600	46.25-46.50
74,855	18,700	46.50-46.75
75,255	18,800	46.75-47.00
75,655	18,900	47.00-47.25
76,055	19,000	47.25-47.50
76,455	19,100	47.50-47.75
76,855	19,200	47.75-48.00
77,255	19,300	48.00-48.25
77,655	19,400	48.25-48.50
78,055	19,500	48.50-48.75
78,455	19,600	48.75-49.00
78,855	19,700	49.00-49.25
79,255	19,800	49.25-49.50
79,655	19,900	49.50-49.75
80,055	20,000	49.75-50.00
80,455	20,100	50.00-50.25
80,855	20,200	50.25-50.50
81,255	20,300	50.50-50.75
81,655	20,400	50.75-51.00
82,055	20,500	51.00-51.25
82,455	20,600	51.25-51.50
82,855	20,700	51.50-51.75
83,255	20,800	51.75-52.00
83,655	20,900	52.00-52.25
84,055	21,000	52.25-52.50
84,455	21,100	52.50-52.75
84,855	21,200	52.75-53.00
85,255	21,300	53.00-53.25
85,655	21,400	53.25-53.50
86,055	21,500	53.50-53.75
86,455	21,600	53.75-54.00
86,855	21,700	54.00-54.25
87,255	21,800	54.25-54.50
87,655	21,900	54.50-54.75
88,055	22,000	54.75-55.00
88,455	22,100	55.00-55.25
88,855	22,200	55.25-55.50
89,255	22,300	55.50-55.75
89,655	22,400	55.75-56.00
90,055	22,500	56.00-56.25
90,455	22,600	56.25-56.50
90,855	22,700	56.50-56.75
91,255	22,800	56.75-57.00
91,655	22,900	57.00-57.25
92,055	23,000	57.25-57.50
92,455	23,100	57.50-57.75
92,855	23,200	57.75-58.00
93,255	23,300	58.00-58.25
93,655	23,400	58.25-58.50
94,055	23,500	58.50-58.75
94,455	23,600	58.75-59.00
94,855	23,700	59.00-59.25
95,255	23,800	59.25-59.50
95,655	23,900	59.50-59.75
96,055	24,000	59.75-60.00
96,455	24,100	60.00-60.25
96,855	24,200	60.25-60.50
97,255	24,300	60.50-60.75
97,655	24,400	60.75-61.00
98,055	24,500	61.00-61.25
98,455	24,600	61.25-61.50
98,855	24,700	61.50-61.75
99,255	24,800	61.75-62.00
99,655	24,900	62.00-62.25
100,055	25,000	62.25-62.50
TOTAL	1,000,000	

OLDHAM COUNTY

1974

Pumpage Computed to Pumping District Rate Interval

ESTIMATED PUMPAGE RATE INCLUDING NATURAL RECHARGE AND POTENTIAL REDUCTION (gallons per year)	STORAGE CAPACITY TO BE MAINTAINED (gallons)	MARKED DECLINE RATE INTERVAL (ft/yr)
492	100	0.00-0.25

## POTTER COUNTY

1974

### Pumpage Corresponding to Mapped Decline-Rate Intervals

MAPPED DECLINE- RATE INTERVAL (feet)	SURFACE AREA (acres)	STORAGE CAPACITY OF DEWATERED SECTION (acre-feet)	ESTIMATED PUMPAGE RATE, INCLUDING NATURAL RECHARGE AND IRRIGATION RECIRCULATION (acre-feet per year)
0.00-0.25	78,496	133	572
.25- .50	8,136	456	875
.50- .75	8,539	813	1,285
.75-1.00	10,668	1,414	2,044
1.00-1.50	38,365	7,504	10,013
1.50-2.00	67,519	17,279	22,101
2.00-3.00	17,224	5,865	7,241
3.00-4.00	1,053	500	597
4.00-5.00	292	198	230
TOTAL	230,292	34,162	44,958

## OLDHAM COUNTY

1974

### Pumpage Corresponding to Mapped Decline-Rate Intervals

MAPPED DECLINE- RATE INTERVAL (feet)	SURFACE AREA (acres)	STORAGE CAPACITY OF DEWATERED SECTION (acre-feet)	ESTIMATED PUMPAGE RATE, INCLUDING NATURAL RECHARGE AND IRRIGATION RECIRCULATION (acre-feet per year)
0.00-0.25	385,445	168	492
.25- .50	11,989	657	1,272
.50- .75	10,858	1,004	1,603
.75-1.00	8,126	1,068	1,547
1.00-1.50	12,004	2,329	3,112
1.50-2.00	22,778	5,787	7,406
TOTAL	451,200	11,013	15,432

POTTER COUNTY

1974

Surface Area Corresponding to Mapped  
Pumping-Lift Intervals

<u>MAPPED PUMPING-LIFT INTERVAL (feet)</u>	<u>SURFACE AREA (acres)</u>
0- 25	28,952
25- 50	3,922
50- 75	5,483
75-100	4,500
100-125	28,643
125-150	19,524
150-175	19,183
175-200	16,957
200-225	16,570
225-250	19,453
250-275	34,241
275-300	20,180
300-325	4,115
325-350	1,543
350-375	1,543
375-400	686
400-425	857
425-450	857
450-475	1,544
475-500	514
500-525	1,025
TOTAL	<u>230,292</u>

OLDHAM COUNTY

1974

Surface Area Corresponding to Mapped  
Pumping-Lift Intervals

<u>MAPPED PUMPING-LIFT INTERVAL (feet)</u>	<u>SURFACE AREA (acres)</u>
0- 25	329,558
25- 50	2,245
50- 75	3,327
75-100	3,757
100-125	4,899
125-150	35,125
150-175	24,943
175-200	3,630
200-225	3,071
225-250	2,789
250-275	7,184
275-300	11,531
300-325	19,141
TOTAL	<u>451,200</u>

