Jefferson Groundwater Investigation Greene County, Iowa

Iowa Geological and Water Survey Technical Information Series 56

Iowa Department of Natural Resources Chuck Gipp, Director December 2013

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INTRODUCTION

The Iowa Source Water Protection (SWP) program, funded by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, provides an established method for a community water supply to take action in protecting their source of drinking water before water quality or quantity issues arise (Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 2012). Communities that take preventive measures through this voluntary program can have health and financial benefits for their citizens by ensuring that naturally safe, minimally treated drinking water is readily available.

To become successful in SWP a community must: 1) know the source of its drinking water, 2) have an accurate inventory of potential contaminant sources and pathways to the source water area, and 3) proactively address potential drinking water issues of concern. The Iowa SWP program strives to protect all public drinking water from contamination. The program also provides focused assistance to many Iowa communities.

To aid communities in SWP efforts, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Iowa Geological and Water Survey (IGWS) utilizes computer models and established methods to characterize the source water areas for all active community water supplies in the state. Groundwater SWP areas in Iowa are commonly characterized by aquifer with, in decreasing order of use, Silurian-Devonian, alluvial, Cambrian-Ordovician, buried sand and gravel, Dakota, and Mississippian aquifers supplying water to Iowa citizens (Table 1). The SWP program annually updates assessments on all public water supplies that have drilled a new well, significantly changed pumping, or discontinued an active well. Additionally, the SWP program annually updates geospatial inventories of known contaminants, wells, land use, and nitrate-nitrogen (N) trends to help willing communities rank and address their unique source water concerns.

Fourth in use among groundwater community supplies, "Buried Sand and Gravel" (formerly referred to as "Pleistocene" by the Iowa SWP program) source aquifers account for approximately 12 percent of community source water areas in Iowa and provide roughly 230,000 Iowans in communities with a source of drinking water (Groundwater Capture Zones - DNR Geological Information Systems Library). Despite its extensive use as a source of drinking water, SWP delineations for buried sand and gravel systems have historically been of limited use as an accurate estimate of a community's source of drinking water. Due to limitations of data, methodology, and models, many buried sand and gravel systems have imprecise 2,500 ft. setback distances or concentric "time-of-travel" circle delineations. Conversely, the five other major aquifers typically have established aquifer dimensions which give greater confidence in the capture zone and reduce the area needed for a community to implement source water protection practices.

BACKGROUND

The City of Jefferson, Iowa, obtains its water from six active wells in a buried sand and gravel aquifer. The wells vary in depth from 150 to 180 ft. below the ground surface. Many buried sand and gravel aquifers, like the aquifer that Jefferson uses, are remnants of historic river deposits covered by glacial till or interbedded sand and gravel within till layers. The Iowa DNR IGWS initiated a geologic, geophysical, and hydrogeologic investigation to gather and summarize aquifer characteristics for the buried sand and gravel aquifer near Jefferson.

This report details the scientific work completed by Iowa DNR IGWS and delineates the source water capture zones for the City of Jefferson. These areas were created to assist with best management practices to protect the quality of groundwater and reduce the potential for surface contamination that could impact groundwater supplies.

The objective of this investigation is to refine source water capture zones, a computermodeled source water area, typically using 2-, 5- and 10-yr. time-of-travel periods, for the City of Jefferson. A source water assessment, completed in 2012 for the City of Jefferson, contained fixed radius circle capture zones due to a lack of aquifer information. Unlike regional bedrock aquifers that have had published studies summarizing aquifer characteristics, published studies on sand and gravel aquifers are limited. Lessons learned after completion of the Jefferson investigation will be used to direct work on other buried sand and gravel aquifers, which account for approximately 11 percent of active public wells in Iowa (Public Wells – DNR GIS Library). The investigation will inventory prior published and unpublished reports, all available geologic and hydrologic data, as well as prompt the collection of new geologic and geophysical data to refine capture zones. Alongside refined capture zones, a detailed well inventory within the capture zones can be determined.

Jefferson was chosen for this study for several reasons. The city expressed interest in completing a SWP plan, requiring refined capture zones and aquifer characteristics. The study area contained a relatively high concentration of geologic data from well records when compared to other buried sand and gravel aquifer sites. Additionally, involvement from city and county leaders allowed for a collaborative effort. The investigation was focused near Jefferson wells 7 and 8 to provide more aquifer information in that area. Investigation results are intended to provide aquifer information to guide Jefferson's Source Water Plan and its implementation.

SCOPE OF WORK

This groundwater investigation will:

- a) Collect, assess, and improve available geospatial information in the area, including information from the Iowa DNR Private Well Tracking System and GEOSAM databases, as well as add to existing information through paper records existing in Greene County office records.
- b) Use lithologic and stratigraphic data collected from above sources to interpret local bedrock elevation with the extent and thickness of buried sand and gravel in the area immediately surrounding Jefferson.
- c) Use electrical resistivity (ER) geophysical imaging to interpret buried sand and gravel extent and thickness in the region near Jefferson wells 7 and 8.
- d) Estimate the local dimension of the buried sand and gravel aquifer using information from b) and c).
- e) Estimate groundwater direction and properties of the buried sand and gravel aquifer using local observation well water levels and a pump test.
- f) Use information from d) and e) to more accurately model the capture zone for the City of Jefferson's SWP planning and implementation efforts.

Results from the Jefferson investigation will be compiled to improve SWP program methods

Figure 1. Des Moines Lobe landform region and associated glacial advances and moraines. A red circle around Jefferson represents the four mile study area.

and modeling for all communities that choose to enter the SWP program and currently use buried sand and gravel aquifers as a water source.

GEOLOGIC HISTORY AND SETTING

The Jefferson study area is located on the Des Moines Lobe (DML), the most recently glaciated area of the state. The DML is the product of a Late Wisconsin lobate extension of the Laurentide Ice Sheet that flowed down a regional topographic low into Iowa approximately 15,000 years ago. The study area is bounded by the Bemis Moraine, the terminal moraine of the DML dated approximately 14,500 to 14,000 years ago, and the slightly younger Altamont Moraine Complex dated approximately 13,500 years ago.

Jefferson lies on the Bemis till plain. The Bemis Moraine is approximately fifteen miles southwest of Jefferson and the slightly younger Altamont I Moraine is approximately four miles to the north (Figure 1). The DML landform is bounded by pre-Wisconsin topographic highs on the east (Mississippian bedrock) and west (pre-Wisconsin glacial deposits comprising the Prairie Coteau).

In the study area, bedrock consists of Pennsylvanian-age sedimentary rocks belonging to the Lower and Upper Cherokee Groups (Figure 2) that consist of interbedded shale, coal, and limestone. Cretaceous rocks belonging to the Windrow Formation occasionally overlie Pennsylvanian rocks, and can be found beneath surficial material approximately three miles

Figure 2. Map showing first bedrock units encountered underlying surficial geologic material near Jefferson.

west and south of town. Exposed bedrock is uncommon in the Jefferson area.

Surficial deposits that overlie bedrock consist of Pre-Illinoian and Wisconsin-age glacial and glaciofluvial sediments that range from less than 150 ft. to greater than 170 ft. in thickness. In the study area, the Late Wisconsinage glacial and glaciofluvial sediment package can vary in thicknesses, and is underlain by the much older and undifferentiated Pre-Illinoianage glacial, fluvial or colluvial sediments.

BURIED SAND AND GRAVEL AQUIFERS

Many buried sand and gravel aquifers, like the aquifer that is used by the City of Jefferson, are remnant deposits from historic rivers

that were covered by glacial till or consist of interbedded sand and gravel within till layers. Physical aquifer information such as thickness, extents, and variability of coarse deposits is often limited in sand and gravel aquifers. Unlike alluvial aquifers where well-defined valleys can delineate aquifer extents, many buried sand and gravel aquifers do not have a valley or depression visible from the land surface and can be laterally discontinuous. Much of what is known of these systems is obtained from the drilling of water wells. Similar to alluvial aquifers, buried sand and gravel aquifers can have widely variable water production and quality characteristics. Depositional variability can be associated with the historic river's previous course or other depositional characteristics associated with glacial outwash.

Prior publications mention buried sand and gravel aquifers but efforts to map boundaries, determine water quality characteristics, or the like have not been completed in Iowa. Iowa's Groundwater Basics, (Prior, et al., 2003) discusses two types of buried sand and gravel aquifers: buried valley aquifers and glacial drift aquifers. A figure within the publication shows a statewide map of potential buried valley aquifers that is a good reference on a statewide scale. The figure loses application potential on a local scale such as the Jefferson study area. Ground-Water Data for Alluvial Buried Channel, Basal Pleistocene and Dakota Aquifer in West-Central Iowa (Hunt and Runkle, 1985) summarized a comprehensive study on water quality, production, and lithology for an eight county area that includes Greene County. The study contained several well logs but did not map buried sand and gravel aquifer boundaries.

GEOLOGIC SITE ASSESSMENT

A study radius of four miles around city wells 7 and 8 was chosen to focus the investigation. Geologic information was gathered from the IGWS GEOSAM database, the DNR Private Well Tracking System database, and from several well logs provided by Greene County. Appendix A lists well information gathered from GEOSAM for use in this assessment. Locations of utilized well points were updated based on well records and county assessor parcel data, and LiDAR elevations were derived. Data from the geophysical investigation were factored into the geologic site assessment.

Well records were analyzed to determine the extent of the buried sand and gravel aquifer within the four mile study area. Figure 3 shows the distribution of data points utilized in the study along with sand and gravel thickness and bedrock surface interpretations. All data in Figure 3 contain at least a lithologic formation log from the drilling process; several contain rock chip samples and a detailed lithologic and stratigraphic log. A buried sand and gravel isopach map was generated based on all available data and is shown in Figure 4. The isopach map shows where major aquifer boundaries may be located and how aquifer thickness appears to vary within the Jefferson area. It appears the thickest sand and gravel in the aquifer may trend in a north-south direction though Jefferson and may trend east to the north of town. Thinner sands and gravels may be connected immediately west and northwest of town but were either not thick enough or there were insufficient data to incorporate these into the aquifer isopach. This figure does not show where absolute boundaries are but provides an interpretation based on geologic data at the time of this publication. For example, Figure 3 shows an area immediately east of town that contained very few data points. Additional geologic data obtained in areas lacking sufficient data will help update and refine aquifer extent and thickness interpretations.

GEOPHYSCIAL INVESTIGATION

Field Data Collection

A geophysical investigation was conducted to gather additional information related to aquifer characteristics near city wells 7 and 8. An Advanced Geosciences Inc. SuperSting R8, 8-channel ER meter was used to collect all geophysical measurements. Field measurements were obtained by introducing a direct current into the ground through current electrodes and measuring resulting voltages through multiple potential electrodes. An array of 56 stainless steel electrode stakes were spaced approximately 20 ft. apart, driven approximately one ft. into the ground, and connected via electrode cables and a switch box to a central ER meter.

Two surveys were completed April 16, 2013 (Figure 5). One transect was completed in an east-west orientation and one in a north-

Figure 3. Location of geologic data points used. Labels indicate sand and gravel thickness in feet and bedrock surface elevation in feet above mean sea level.

south orientation; a total of 7,603 individual resistivity measurements were collected. Transect locations were chosen based on their proximity to wells 7 and 8 so that geophysical interpretations could be made in conjunction with exist-

ing geologic data. Transects were oriented in a perpendicular arrangement to determine how geologic materials vary in either direction.

Field data were obtained using dipoledipole configurations; chosen to maximize data

Figure 4. Interpreted aquifer boundary and sand and gravel thickness map.

collection by utilizing all channels to acquire data. Measure time was set at 3.6 seconds and measurements were stacked (averaged) twice, unless the standard deviation of all channels was less than 2 percent. In that case, a third or fourth measurement was taken and included in the average. To quantify error, overlapping data were collected in areas already covered by normal measurement. Reciprocal data were collected to further quantify error. Data were collected in "roll-along" fashion, resulting in a single data set along an entire transect.

Figure 5. Map showing ER transect locations.

Data Inversion

Data were processed using AGI EarthImager 2D version 2.4.0 software. A smooth model inversion method was used. The inversion mesh was fine for the near-surface region in each transect and coarsened with depth. Resistivity values below 1 Ohm-m or above 10,000 Ohm-m were removed as these values are typically representative of erroneous data. Inversion was stopped after four iterations as root mean square (rms) values were below 5 percent, and L2 norm ratio values were close to 1 .

Models provide an interpretation of how the subsurface responds to electrical influence. Model results can be indicative of a number of variables including, but not limited to, mineralogy, water saturation, compaction and available pore space, dissolved ions in pore fluid, as well as other geologic, biologic, and chemical factors. Interpretation of these data must be in the context of additional site information.

Data Synthesis

Electrical resistivity tomography uses direct current as a means of modeling the subsurface. Generally, coarse grained material is more resistive to electrical charge than fine grained material. Drilling log records and rock chip samples from city wells 7 and 8 were analyzed and used in the interpretation of the geophysical data.

Figure 5 shows the two geophysical transect locations near wells 7 and 8. The final geophysical models for the east-west transect and north-south transect are shown in figures 6 and 7, respectively. Models were corrected for land surface elevation using LiDAR elevation data. Approximate locations for wells 7 and 8 are indicated on the East-West Model with solid lines marking the known contacts of geologic units associated with the buried sand and gravel aquifer. The known contacts correlate well to the geophysical model results. Variability in the

upper aquifer surface is evident in the profiles. Dashed lines show interpreted contacts between key lithologic units.

The geophysical models suggest that a consistently thick sequence of glacial till (>100 ft. thick) is protecting the aquifer in the study area. Aquifers overlain by thicker confining layers are less susceptible to surface-sourced contamination than aquifers overlain by thin confining layers. Areas of higher resistivity may suggest a higher concentration of coarse grained gravels. The variability of resistivity values in the two models is indicative of modern river systems or glacial outwash as sediment deposition is largely dependent on the river's course through time. Geophysical data collected at the north-south model suggests that coarse-grained alluvium is present just below the land surface, likely representing deposits associated with nearby Hardin Creek. A thick unit of glacial till separates this alluvium from the buried sand and gravel, making hydraulic connection between the two unlikely. Model resolution and data quality diminish exponentially with depth so it is difficult to determine where the buried sand and gravel aquifer may be in contact with the bedrock surface. The Pennsylvanian bedrock contact was interpreted based on the occurrence of shale in Jefferson Well 7, at 175 ft. below the ground surface, which is consistent with geologic logs from nearby wells.

HYDROGEOLOGIC ANALYSES AND GROUNDWATER MODELING

Hydrogeologic data were obtained from two separate aquifer pump tests using city wells 7 and 8 and three nearby observation wells. A pressure transducer was placed in each of the three observation wells, and water level data was collected every 15 minutes over the course of approximately 13 days.

Based on aquifer pump test results, the transmissivity of the buried sand and gravel

Figure 6. ER model results for the east-west transect. Dashed lines indicate interpreted geologic contacts. Jefferson wells 7 and 8 are drawn to show their approximate location. Known geologic contacts from well records ar **Figure 6.** ER model results for the east-west transect. Dashed lines indicate interpreted geologic contacts. Jefferson wells 7 and 8 are drawn to show their approximate location. Known geologic contacts from well records are shown by a solid line.

aquifer was found to range from $9,130$ ft.²/ day near observation well 2 (Well 8) to 14,700 ft.2 /day near observation well 3 (Well 8). The arithmetic mean transmissivity value is 12,000 ft.2 /day. Results and data from the two separate pump tests are shown in Appendix B.

Hydraulic conductivity can be calculated by dividing the transmissivity by the overall aquifer thickness. Hydraulic conductivity was found to range from 183 to 293 ft./day, with an arithmetic mean of 240 ft./day.

The model Visual MODFLOW version 2011.1 was used to simulate the groundwater flow in the buried sand and gravel aquifer in the proposed study area. A three-layered model was used for the simulation. The borehole logs were obtained from the GEOSAM database, and the elevation data was obtained from LiDAR (two-foot contour interval).

The model boundary conditions and inputs include the following:

- Layer 1 is assumed to be primarily silty clay. The horizontal hydraulic conductivity was assigned a value of 0.03 ft./day. The vertical hydraulic conductivity value was assigned a value 1/10 of the horizontal hydraulic conductivity.
- Layer 2 is the buried sand and gravel aquifer. The horizontal hydraulic conductivity values were assigned based on the pump test results. These were modified slightly in the transient model to fit the model results to observed values. The vertical hydraulic conductivity values were assigned values 1/10 of the horizontal hydraulic conductivity values.
- Layer 3 is assumed to be primarily shale. The horizontal hydraulic conductivity was assigned a value of 0.03 ft./day. The vertical hydralic conductivity value was assigned a value 1/10 of the horizontal hydraulic conductivity.
- The lateral limits of the sand and gravel were considered no-flow boundaries. This was represented by deactivating the grids

outside the buried sand and gravel aquifer boundary.

- General head boundaries were used to represent flow through conditions within the buried sand and gravel.
- The pumping stress caused city wells 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 were simulated in the transient model. Annual usage was obtained from the City of Jefferson for year 2012.
- Storativity values ranged from 0.00019 to 0.00035, and were based on the pump test results.
- The total number of rows and columns were 300 by 300.

The model was initially run to simulate non-pumping conditions. The non-pumping or steady-state model was calibrated using static water levels measured in the three observation wells and the six city production wells.

The pumping or transient model calibration was performed using pump test results from City of Jefferson wells 7 and 8. Hydraulic conductivity and storativity values were adjusted until the simulated water levels matched the observed values from the three observation wells.

A source water assessment, completed in 2012 for the City of Jefferson, contained fixed radius circle capture zones due to a lack of aquifer information. Through the use of information obtained from this investigation and the particle tracking module in Visual MOD-FLOW, groundwater movement or travel time was simulated for the public wells. The particle tracking results can be used to evaluate the source water capture zones. Revised 2-, 5-, and 10-yr. capture zones were evaluated for the in-town well field (wells 4, 6, 9, and 10) and the out-of-town well field (wells 7 and 8), and shown in Figure 8. The original capture zones are also shown in Figure 8 to provide context to the revisions. The revised capture zones significantly focus the footprint to reflect new gradient, boundary, and other aquifer information. SWP can use these capture zones to prioritize

Figure 8. Original and revised 2-, 5-, and 10-yr. capture zones for the City of Jefferson active wells. The revised capture zones contain a significantly smaller and targeted footprint when compared to the original.

potential point and non-point sources of contamination and implement best management practices. These best management practices have the potential to improve and protect an aquifer's long-term water quality. The entire source water capture zone was considered to

have low susceptibility to contamination from the surface based on an interpretation of more than 100 ft. of a cumulative confining layer such as till, clay, and shale between the source water aquifer and land surface. While the thick confining layer near Jefferson limits the possibility of surface contamination, it also limits recharge to the aquifer. While the potential for surface water and contamination to enter the aquifer through the confining layer is low, the potential exists for surface contamination to reach the aquifer through improperly constructed or abandoned wells.

CONCLUSIONS

The Iowa DNR initiated a geologic, geophysical, and hydrogeologic investigation to gather and summarize aquifer characteristics for the buried sand and gravel aquifer near Jefferson. The City of Jefferson expressed interest in completing a SWP plan which required the investigation to refine capture zones and gather additional aquifer information. The investigation was focused near Jefferson wells 7 and 8 to provide more aquifer information in that area.

The buried sand and gravel aquifer is most likely Wisconsinan in age associated with the advance of the Des Moines Lobe ice sheet. Geophysical surveys were completed to gather information on the variability and characteristics of the aquifer in the surveyed area. Geophysical models suggest a continuous, thick confining layer of glacial till overlies the buried sand and gravel aquifer in the surveyed area. Water, potential contaminants, and elements move very slowly through glacial till, offering good protection from surface contaminants. Areas of higher resistivity may suggest a higher concentration of coarse grained sands and gravels. The variability of resistivity values in the two models is indicative of modern river systems or glacial outwash as sediment deposition is largely dependent on the river's course through time.

A geologic site assessment was completed, including data from wells within four miles of Jefferson wells 7 and 8. Well data were used to create a geologic interpretation of the aquifer boundaries and thicknesses of the sand and

gravel. It appears the thickest sand and gravel in the aquifer may trend in a north-south direction though Jefferson before trending east-north of town.

A hydrogeologic assessment was completed for the aquifer. Pressure transducers were installed and pumping data were collected from city-owned and other nearby wells. Results from these tests show hydraulic connection between three different observation wells and city production wells. Aquifer parameters were gathered and used to create refined 2-, 5-, and 10-yr. source water capture zones. Capture zones are intended to assist in the identification of point and non-point aquifer contamination sources.

FURTHER STUDIES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Geologic knowledge was gained from varying sources in this groundwater investigation. Lessons learned from this study can assist further investigations in this or other buried sand and gravel aquifer settings. Reviewing the relevance and limitations of each source will assist future buried sand and gravel aquifer investigations.

The quality, quantity, and geographic distribution of driller's logs are directly related to the success of accurately delineating buried sand and gravel aquifer dimensions. Striplogs produced by geologists may not serve as vital a role in delineating buried sand and gravel aquifers as they do in bedrock aquifers. Bedrock aquifer studies rely on striplogs for stratigraphic information while buried sand and gravel aquifer studies can benefit from either driller's logs or striplogs.

ER tomography proved valuable in finding contacts between the aquifer and confining units of contrasting resistivity. It was less successful in differentiating between the aquifer and underlying bedrock at depth. In future studies, ER might be best suited to locating lateral boundaries of buried sand and gravel aquifers. Future studies incorporating geophysical surveying techniques should also incorporate forward modeling. Forward modeling is a method used in ER surveys to create an initial model based on interpretations. Forward modeling before field data collection can provide insight into whether the equipment and inversion software is able to define aquifer boundaries as needed.

As a direct result of this investigation, Jefferson's source water capture zones decreased by approximately 90 percent. A significant reduction in capture zones allows municipalities a better opportunity to implement SWP practices. While it may be unusual for other investigations to decrease capture zones as significantly as Jefferson, future studies may benefit from a similar reduction.

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APPENDIX A

WELLS USED

APPENDIX B

PUMP TESTS

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