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Groundwater Prospecting and Management

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Groundwater Prospecting and Management

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Preface

Several books are available in the market on various groundwater development and management issues. The need for a comprehensive book on different practical aspects of groundwater studies has long been felt by geologists, geophysicists, civil and agricultural engineers with an eye to understand the groundwater system and targeting the aquifers under different geologic, terrain and geomorphic conditions.

Use of remote sensing data for a reconnaissance survey for groundwater is almost a routine now. Vertical electrical sounding and seismic refraction surveys in geophysics are used for recommendation of drilling points followed by electrical logging of the boreholes for exact lowering of strainers and subsequent groundwater development. Pumping test after the completion of the well leads to the determination of aquifer parameters and refining assessment of necessary input for design of wells (wells, tube wells and radial collector wells) and yield-drawdown relation. Collection of water samples and its chemical analysis are essential components to understand hydrogeochemistry of groundwater and contamination studies. Further, management of resource, artificial recharge and regulatory legislations are important from the viewpoint of sustained supply of water from aquifers.

Accordingly, Chap. 1 of the book provides introductory aspects of groundwater geology and geophysics followed by remote sensing application in Chap. 2. Chapter 3 extends a brief outline of the concepts, definitions and formulae for use in later chapters (Chap. 6) in determination of aquifer parameters and calculation of yield. Geophysical prospecting methods for groundwater survey are dealt with in Chap. 4, dealing with principles, interpretation and applications of the most useful and relevant techniques. Chapter 5 deals with geophysical well logging techniques and their applications in water wells including some case studies. Chapter 6 gives the procedure to conduct pumping test, interpretation of pumping test data for computation of aquifer parameters, yield and for design of radial collector well followed by an actual case study. Groundwater quality and contamination aspects are discussed in Chap. 7; Chap. 8 deals with groundwater management, its sustainability and regulation.

Although this book is meant for students, in general, professionals involved in groundwater, engineering geology and environmental science will find it quite useful.

While attempting to incorporate varied topics on each of which books can be written, the present volume renders all aspects of groundwater investigations and management under one cover. In doing so, there may be errors of omission on the part of the author, and therefore, constructive comments and suggestion for improving the value and the utility of the work will be highly appreciated. I am thankful to co-authors S. Kunar, Member, CGWB, and Dr. S.K. Adhikari Scientist, CGWB, for contributing various case studies for different hydrogeological conditions along with present scenario of groundwater legislation and management in India. I am indebted to Prof. Amitabha Chakraborty, Prof. Shankar Kumar Nath and all other members of the staff of the Department of Geology and Geophysics for their interest and support needed for the work.

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Kharagpur, India
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Abstract To have a reasonable equitable water distribution of groundwater, a planned approach for exploration, exploitation and management of water is required. General groundwater geology also must be well understood for exploration and exploitation in a particular area. The exploration is mainly done by geophysical investigation which is based on the physical properties of the earth formations. The electrical method of prospecting is most useful process for surface groundwater exploration. For subsurface, geophysical well-logging technique is very much useful because the data are closed to the borehole wall. For designing a well, the aquifer characteristics are required to be known with the help of pump tests. The water quality should be studied with different analysis before drinking. Though there is plenty of water in global scale, the shortage of water is observed in local scale. Hence, management planning of water in respect of demand and supply is very much important to meet the water requirement for present generation and future generation.

Keywords Groundwater · Exploration · Planned approach · Electrical method · Geophysical logging · Water quality · Management planning

1.1 Surface Water and Groundwater

At present (year 1999), the world's annual water requirement is more than 4500 km³ (Wolff 1999). The total renewable water resource of the world is about 39,000 km³ annually. Thus, there cannot be any water shortage on a global basis as the water is replenished through annual precipitation. The available resource is unevenly distributed, and therefore, sufficient water is not necessarily available in populated areas. Accordingly, water shortage does occur alarmingly depending on regional water balance, controlled largely by climate, altitude, soil composition and vegetation and mainly by precipitation. In order to have a reasonably equitable distribution, groundwater is used in conjunction with surface water. While surface water is easily available, groundwater needs a planned approach for exploration, exploitation and management for a sustained supply for proper utility.

1.2 Groundwater Geology

Groundwater geology must be well understood for economic exploitation of subsurface water. Various aspects of groundwater have been treated in all textbooks on hydrology. The objective of this section is only to mention some useful factors needed for groundwater exploitation programmes. The programme comprises surface and subsurface investigations. Surface investigations are primarily used for establishing the geology of the area, giving distribution of geological formation on a map. The present approach is to prepare the map from satellite imagery data followed by essential ground checks. Once the geological map of the area is available, subsurface data regarding existence of sandy zones at different depths are collected from existing boreholes, if any. From the borehole samples, then, an idea can be made about porosity and permeability of the sands and their utility as an aquifer, in sedimentary areas. In hard rock areas, joints, fractures, fissures and cracks are to be located on the map after a study of lineation and fault traces. The background information obtained for groundwater geology is utilized in planning the prospecting programmes for groundwater.

1.3 Groundwater Geophysics

One has to depend on exploration geophysics for identification of different geological formations expected to be encountered in the subsurface. The subsurface lithology inferred through geophysics is controlled largely by the physical properties of the earth formations. The physical properties, e.g. density, conductivity and seismic wave velocity, of a water-saturated formation are dependent on distribution of grain size and quality of the water saturating the formation (e.g. sand or clay). In case of electrical conductivity or resistivity of a formation, electrolytic property of water plays an important role. The resistivity of the unit helps in the recognition of sand or clay from the likely formations.

This differentiation is possible through geophysical measurements from the surface (see, Chap. 4). Identification of formations can also be made through geophysical logging within the borehole (see, Chap. 5).

1.4 Groundwater Exploration

Of the various surface geophysical methods of prospecting, namely gravity-magnetic, seismic and electrical methods, only electrical method, based on the measurement of the electrical resistivity of subsurface formation, is most useful for exploring groundwater.

Electrical exploration for groundwater is based on the flow of direct current introduced into the earth and subsequent measurement of potential distribution on the surface. This gives an apparent resistivity, analysis of which gives resistivities of various layers leading to identification of the formations with depth. This is known as electrical resistivity method universally accepted as an ideal geophysical tool for groundwater exploration.

The theoretical aspects mainly of electrical resistivity method giving its principles, interpretation approaches and applications under varying geological situation are given, in detail, in Chap. 4.

1.5 Groundwater Development

Subsurface geophysical methods referred to as well-logging methods (Chap. 5) are essential tools in groundwater development. Surface geophysical method helps in locating the point suitable for drilling. Once the borehole is drilled, a suitable sensor is lowered to the bottom of the borehole and certain physical properties are recorded during upward uniform run of the sensor. The record of any characteristic physical property of the formations is known as geophysical log. Geophysical logs help in understanding the hydrology of the area clearly as the strata chart prepared from mixed-up drilling samples is not sufficiently reliable. While the logs are used for stratigraphic correlation from well to well, these may be used for the detection of bed boundaries, porous and permeable zones and saline water-bearing zones, having a strong bearing in groundwater supply and development. The thickness of porous and permeable zones and their lateral extent obtained from geophysical logs help in fixing spacing of wells and subsequent yield of wells.

1.6 Aquifer Parameters

The various important aquifer characteristics must be known for design of wells, tube wells and radial collector wells. These parameters are as follows: permeability (measure of hydraulic conductivity), transmissibility (transmissivity) and storage coefficient (storativity). In order to evaluate these parameters, pumping test is to be carried out after the completion of the tube well. Pumping test data are processed through different available methods (compatible to the geological conditions), and the values of transmissivity, hydraulic conductivity and storativity are estimated. Recovery test data also give transmissivity.

The values are utilized in the design of wells and in computation of yield from the wells. Aquifer parameters and their utility are outlined in Chap. 6.

1.7 Groundwater Quality and Contamination

1.7.1 Groundwater Quality

It is well known that the vast groundwater resource available on global basis is more than sufficient for providing good quality water to the world community. But for the want of even distribution, shortages do occur locally and seasonally, controlled largely by precipitation.

Besides, due to dissolved minerals present in the groundwater, it is sometimes brackish or saline and rich in iron content (more than 0.3 ppm). Such a water is of bad quality for drinking purposes.

For water to be suitable for drinking, a routine physical, chemical and biological analysis should be made. The water quality parameters which should be studied are as follows: pH, total dissolved salt (TDS), total hardness, turbidity; iron, arsenic, fluoride, calcium, magnesium, nickel, copper, lead and chloride; nitrate besides coliform bacteria. The parameters should be well within the prescribed international standards (see Todd 1995, pp. 277–282).

1.7.2 Groundwater Contamination

Our natural groundwater resources of mostly high quality are being contaminated gradually with time through domestic, agricultural and industrial pollutants releasing wastewater. Groundwater pollution is caused by human use of water and disposal of wastes into the ground. Without population and pollution control, the amount of per capita safe water available for use is gradually reducing with time. Although groundwater is replenishable, it is not inexhaustible.

Recently, arsenic contamination of groundwater has been detected around various parts of the world. World Health Organization (WHO) has compiled reports on cases of arsenic in drinking water in countries, e.g. Argentina, Bangladesh, China, Chile, Ghana, Hungary, India, Mexico, Thailand and USA. Arsenic is referred to as a toxic material and of environmental concern along with other three big metals, namely lead, mercury and cadmium. The presence of fluoride in groundwater is harmful due to its toxicity.

Attention should, therefore, be drawn to all such harmful contaminants in order to protect the environment.

1.8 Groundwater Management and Legislation

Statistics show the existence of sufficient amount of fresh groundwater resources on global scale. Depending on rainfall, climate, altitude, vegetation, etc., however, there is a large-scale shortage of water on regional and/or local scale. Without population