

**APPENDIX F**  
**AQUIFER TESTS**

## AQUIFER TESTS

Aquifer tests are conducted to determine the hydraulic properties of an aquifer system such as hydraulic conductivity, transmissivity and yield. These properties are also useful in determining fate and transport of contaminant plumes and in designing effective groundwater remediation systems.

Since a pumping test and a slug test evaluate a much larger volume of the aquifer, they are the most commonly accepted methods for determining representative aquifer properties at sites with groundwater monitoring wells. If a site does not have groundwater monitoring wells present, the aquifer properties may be estimated by methods discussed in this section. Other aquifer evaluation methods may be used following prior approval by the Department.

It is essential to have a basic understanding of groundwater hydraulics and the effects an aquifer test will have on the aquifer system. It is not the intent of this section to give a detailed explanation of every aquifer test and its limitations, but rather to review basic terminology and provide the fundamental concepts for conducting an aquifer test. A general discussion of pumping tests and slug tests is presented in this section. The reader is directed to the references in this section for more detailed procedures in conducting the aquifer tests.

## AQUIFER DETERMINATION

The type of aquifer must be determined as unconfined, confined or leaky confined. An **unconfined** aquifer is defined as an aquifer where the groundwater is exposed to the atmosphere through openings in the overlying materials or above which a low permeable confining layer or aquitard is absent. An unconfined aquifer is often referred to as a water table aquifer. In an unconfined aquifer, the water level in wells or piezometers is free to rise and fall under the influence of atmospheric pressure and may typically have a static level below the upper stratigraphic boundary of the aquifer.

A **confined** aquifer is defined as an aquifer in which the groundwater is isolated from the atmosphere at the point of discharge by impermeable geologic formations. In a confined aquifer, the water level rises in wells or piezometers to some static level above the upper stratigraphic boundary of the aquifer. Occasionally, a less permeable confining layer will allow surrounding formation water to slowly seep through to the aquifer. This is often referred to as a semi-confined or **leaky confined** aquifer.

An **aquitard** is a less permeable formation that transmits water very slowly from one aquifer to another. An **aquifer system** consists of the aquifer and any aquitards.

The **hydraulic head**,  $h$ , is defined as the total mechanical energy per unit weight of water. Hydraulic head has the units of length and is given by the relationship:

$$h = z + h_p$$

where:

h - hydraulic head (ft.)

z - elevation head (ft.)

$h_p$  - pressure head (ft.)

In a confined aquifer, the pressure head of the groundwater at the top of the aquifer is always greater than zero. The hydraulic head in a confined aquifer is typically characterized as the vertical distance by which the static water level in a well or piezometer exceeds the upper stratigraphic boundary of the aquifer.

Since an unconfined aquifer is free to rise and fall in response to atmospheric pressure, the pressure head is zero.

## AQUIFER PROPERTIES

### *Hydraulic Conductivity (K)*

**Hydraulic conductivity**, or “coefficient of permeability” is a measure of the capacity of a porous medium to transmit water. It is defined as the volume of water that will move in a unit time under a unit hydraulic gradient through a unit area measured at right angles to the direction of flow. The dimensions of hydraulic conductivity are length per time or velocity. Hydraulic conductivity is governed by the size and the shape of the pores, the effectiveness of the interconnection between pores, roughness of mineral particles, degree of soil saturation, and the physical properties of the fluid.

### *Saturated Thickness (b)*

The **saturated thickness** of the aquifer can be determined from published reference data or lithologic logs. The saturated thickness of the aquifer has the dimensions of length. For confined units, the saturated thickness will correspond to the thickness of the aquifer. For unconfined units, the saturated thickness represents the vertical distance from the mean annual static water level elevation to the base of the aquifer. For multi-layered or interconnected units, the saturated thickness of each sub-unit should be determined separately.

### *Transmissivity (T)*

**Transmissivity** is defined as the rate at which water can be transmitted through a vertical strip of aquifer one unit wide, extending the full saturated thickness of the aquifer, under a unit of hydraulic gradient.

$$T = K * b$$

where:

T - transmissivity (ft<sup>2</sup>/day)

K - hydraulic conductivity (ft/day)

b - saturated aquifer thickness (ft)

### *Specific Yield (S<sub>y</sub>)*

**Specific yield** is defined as the percent ratio of the volume of water that an unconfined aquifer will yield by gravity to the unit volume of the unconfined aquifer. As the water level falls in an unconfined aquifer, water is drained from the pore spaces. Specific yields cannot be determined for confined aquifers because the aquifer materials are not drained during pumping (ie. the aquifer remains saturated). Specific yield is given by the relationship:

$$S_y = \frac{\text{Vol. of water an unconfined aquifer will yield by gravity}}{\text{Unit Vol. of the unconfined aquifer}}$$

### *Specific Storage (S<sub>s</sub>)*

**Specific storage** is defined as the volume of water that is stored or released from the aquifer by the expansion of water and compression of the soil or rock. The dimensions for specific storage are 1/length or length<sup>-1</sup>.

### *Storativity (S)*

**Storativity**, or coefficient of storage, is a dimensionless coefficient defined as the volume of water that a permeable unit will release from storage per unit surface area per unit change in head. In an unconfined unit, the level of saturation rises or falls with changes in the amount of water in storage due to specific yield. Storativity for an unconfined aquifer is expressed by the following relationship:

$$S = S_y + S_s b$$

where:

S - storativity (dimensionless)

S<sub>y</sub> - specific yield (%)

S<sub>s</sub> - specific storage (ft<sup>-1</sup>)

b - saturated aquifer thickness (ft)

In a confined aquifer, the aquifer remains saturated during pumping and specific yield is zero. The storativity for a confined aquifer is given by the relationship:

$$S = S_s b$$

where:

S - storativity (dimensionless)

$S_s$  - specific storage ( $\text{ft}^{-1}$ )

b - saturated aquifer thickness (ft)

### ***Porosity (n)***

**Porosity** is defined as the percent ratio of the volume of voids in a rock or sediment to the total volume of the rock or sediment. The voids in the rock or sediment include all pore spaces that are liquid or air filled and not available to conduct flow because of discontinuities. The void spaces that are connected and available to conduct flow are termed **effective porosity**.

## **DETERMINING AQUIFER PROPERTIES BY DIRECT MEASUREMENT**

One criterion for determining groundwater classification is to estimate the maximum sustainable well yield of an aquifer. **Maximum sustainable well yield** is defined as the maximum sustainable volume of water that a well will discharge over a given period of time. It has the dimensions of volume per time. All water wells used to estimate maximum sustainable yield shall be designed, constructed and developed in accordance with the latest editions of the *Construction of Geotechnical Boreholes and Groundwater Monitoring Systems Handbook* and the *Louisiana Water Well Rules, Regulations, and Standards*.

For sites with groundwater monitoring wells, aquifer properties such as hydraulic conductivity, transmissivity, and storativity can be measured by two common methods, pumping tests and slug tests, which are discussed below.

## **PUMPING TESTS**

In a pumping test, groundwater is extracted from a pumping well with water level measurements observed in the pumping well and in one or more observation wells. Pumping tests can be performed within an aquifer to collect information relative to the aquifer in which the pumped well and observation wells are located. In addition, a **stress pumping test** can be performed to determine the transmissivity or degree of leakage between an unconfined aquifer and a deeper leaky confined aquifer. In this test, the pumped well is located in the lower aquifer while the observation wells are located in the overlying aquifer which is separated by a less permeable aquitard layer.

The difference in hydraulic head in the pumped well or in the observation wells at the start of the test and at some time after the test begins is referred to as **drawdown, s**, and has the dimensions of length. The distance from the center of the pumping well to the point where drawdown is zero is referred to as the **radius of influence, R**, and has the dimensions of length. The depressed

area of influence around the pumped well is referred to as a **cone of depression** because it is shaped like an inverted cone. As pumping continues, drawdown increases and the cone of depression expands. If the pumping rate is constant and sustained over a sufficient time period, the drawdown and radius of influence become constant referred to as an **equilibrium** or **steady state** condition. Non-steady state conditions are referred to as **transient** flow. The rate of change in hydraulic head per unit of distance of flow in a given direction is the **hydraulic gradient,  $i$** , and has the dimensions of length per length. Groundwater velocities are highest near the pumped well due to the increase in hydraulic gradient, and decrease radially away from the well.

There are basically two types of pumping tests: a constant-rate pumping test and a step-drawdown pumping test. A **constant-rate pumping test** is performed by pumping the well at a constant rate for the duration of the test. It is most often used to obtain aquifer properties such as transmissivity and storativity as well as specific capacity of the well. Depending on the type of aquifer, the well is pumped at a constant rate for an extended period of time. During this time, periodic drawdown measurements are taken in the pumped well and observation wells. Upon completion of the test, the recovery data is often collected to check the results against the data collected from the actual test. The aquifer performance can be predicted by plotting the drawdown data versus the time the data was collected and evaluating the transmissivity and storage coefficients.

Another type of pumping test is the **step-drawdown pumping test** in which the pumping rate is increased in steps at regular intervals. Again, the drawdown data is collected in both the pumped well and the observation wells and plotted versus time to obtain the transmissivity and storage coefficients. This test is primarily used to determine the reduction in specific capacity with increasing yields.

## CONCEPTUAL DESIGN OF A PUMPING TEST

### *Determine Site Constraints*

During the subsurface site assessment, soil data should be collected to help one determine the site's geologic and hydrologic characteristics. The logging of the borehole and soil physical testing should be conducted in accordance with the *Construction of Geotechnical Boreholes and Groundwater Monitoring Systems Handbook*. The geologic log should include, but not be limited to, soil descriptions, approximate formation thicknesses, identification of aquifers and water levels, and also any aquitards encountered.

During the subsurface site assessment phase, consideration of well placement should not only be given to the complete vertical and horizontal delineation of the contaminant, but also for well placement in conducting an aquifer test. One should consider well design (ie. partially penetrating wells, fully penetrating wells, etc.) and well location (ie. recharge zones, lateral discontinuities in an aquifer, etc.) which may place additional complexities in evaluating the aquifer test data.

Existing groundwater monitoring wells may be used to conduct the aquifer test provided the wells were constructed in accordance with the latest editions of the *Construction of Geotechnical Boreholes and Groundwater Monitoring Systems Handbook* and the *Louisiana Water Well Rules, Regulations, and Standards*.

### ***Determine Appropriate Conceptual Model***

The single most important step in the analysis of aquifer test data is the selection of an appropriate conceptual model. Each conceptual model has a set of assumptions about the geometry and hydraulic behavior which one must determine appropriate for the study site. Based on the observed site constraints, a conceptual model or models must be selected to determine the aquifer properties.

The conceptual model is usually based on geologic and hydrologic data generated during the subsurface site assessment, design of monitoring wells, the drawdown data obtained during the aquifer test, and the set of assumptions for the study site.

A list of several conceptual models and references are provided in Table E-1 to direct the reader to a more detailed description of the mathematical models and assumptions. Other conceptual models may be used following prior approval by the Department.

## **SLUG TESTS**

An alternate method of aquifer testing is the slug test. A **slug test** involves either injecting or withdrawing a known volume of water into or out of a well and immediately measuring the rate at which the water level falls or rises back to static conditions. For wells that are partially penetrating, the withdrawal slug test is recommended to overcome the affects of the filter pack. For fully penetrating wells where the well screen remains completely saturated, either the injection or withdrawal slug test is appropriate.

The flow of water into or out of the well is governed by the formation characteristics. The water level in the well is measured prior to and immediately after the abrupt injection or withdrawal of water. The subsequent water levels are immediately measured until the water level returns to static or equilibrium conditions. In aquifers with high permeability, recovery may occur so rapidly that the use of a pressure transducer is required. The pressure transducer measures the pressure changes in the well as the water level changes and stores the data in the recording equipment. The data is plotted as a change in water level versus time from which aquifer properties such as hydraulic conductivity, transmissivity, and storage coefficients are estimated.

Several methods used to evaluate data from slug tests are presented in Table E-2. Other conceptual models may be used following prior approval by the Department.

## **DETERMINING AQUIFER PROPERTIES BY ESTIMATION**

In some instances, groundwater monitoring wells may not be present on-site in which to conduct pumping or slug tests. In these situations, it is acceptable to obtain an estimate of the aquifer properties based on engineering and geological material descriptions as well as from correlation's between these descriptions and some commonly measured soil properties. Guidelines for estimating these aquifer properties are provided below.

### ***Hydraulic Conductivity (K)***

#### **Published References**

Many references are available which give a generic range of values for hydraulic conductivity, or coefficient of permeability, for various types of soil media. First, the soil media from the aquifer must be analyzed for Atterberg limits (ASTM D-4318) and particle size distribution (ASTM D-422) in order to properly classify the soil in accordance with the Unified Soil Classification System (ASTM D-2487). Once the soil has been properly classified, a hydraulic conductivity value corresponding to the type of soil media may be selected from a published reference. The selected hydraulic conductivity value is subject to Departmental approval. If multiple soil types are encountered within an aquifer, the predominant soil type should be used for the Unified Soil Classification System.

#### **Laboratory Procedures**

Hydraulic conductivity for a soil type can be determined from two standard laboratory testing procedures. In these tests, an undisturbed sample of the aquifer material is used in either a constant head (ASTM D-2434) or falling head (ASTM D-5084) permeability test. Typically, the constant head test is used for sands and gravels while the falling head is used for fine grained soils.

#### **Field Procedure**

The single boring method provides a quick estimate of hydraulic conductivity for sites without groundwater monitoring wells. In this method, a boring is advanced into the aquifer with the water level in the boring allowed to reach static or equilibrium conditions. Water is then quickly removed by bailing with water level versus time measurements collected in a similar method as the rising head slug test. The data is then evaluated using the Ernst or Hooghoudt equations to provide a quick estimate of hydraulic conductivity.

### ***Aquifer Thickness (b)***

If the thickness of an aquifer is unknown, an estimated value for aquifer thickness can often be obtained from many published references or well logs. This information may be available through the United States Geological Survey (U.S.G.S.), the Louisiana Geological Survey (L.G.S.), the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (L.D.N.R.), or the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (L.D.O.T.D.) Water Resources Section.

***Specific Yield ( $S_y$ ) and Specific Storage ( $S_s$ )***

Many published references are available which give generic values for specific yield and specific storage in various types of soil media. Prior to selecting a generic value for these parameters, the soil must be classified in accordance with the Unified Soil Classification System (ASTM D-2487). The selected values for specific yield and specific storage are subject to Departmental approval.

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**Table F-1**  
**Conceptual Pumping Test Models**

<b>Aquifer Type</b>	<b>Flow Condition</b>	<b>Aquitard Leakage</b>	<b>Aquitard Storage</b>	<b>Well Storage</b>	<b>Partial Well Penetration</b>	<b>Anisotropic Properties</b>	<b>References</b>
Confined	Equilibrium	No	No	No	No	No	Thiem (1906)
Unconfined	Equilibrium	No	No	No	No	No	Thiem (1906)
Confined	Transient	No	No	No	No	No	Theis (1935)
Confined	Transient	Yes	No	No	No	No	Hantush & Jacob (1955)
Confined	Transient	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Hantush (1964)
Confined	Transient	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Hantush (1964)
Confined	Transient	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Hantush (1964)
Confined	Transient	No	No	Yes	No	No	Papadopoulos & Cooper (1967)
Confined	Transient	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Lai & Su (1974)
Confined	Transient	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Boulton & Streltsova (1977)
Confined	Transient	No	No	No	No	Yes	Papadopoulos (1965)
Confined to Unconfined	Transient	No	No	No	No	No	Moench & Prickett (1972)
Unconfined	Transient	No	No	No	No	Yes	Neuman (1972)
Unconfined	Transient	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Neuman (1974)
Unconfined	Transient	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Boulton & Streltsova (1976)
Unconfined	Transient	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Boulton & Streltsova (1975)

**Table F- 2**  
**Conceptual Slug Test Models**

<b>Aquifer Type</b>	<b>Flow Condition</b>	<b>Aquitard Leakage</b>	<b>Aquitard Storage</b>	<b>Partial Penetration</b>	<b>Anisotropic Properties</b>	<b>References</b>
Confined	Transient	No	No	Yes	Yes	Hvorslev (1951)
Confined	Transient	No	No	No	No	Cooper et al. (1967)
Unconfined or Leaky	Transient	Yes	No	Yes	No	Bouwer & Rice (1976)

(After Dawson and Istok, 1991)