1983

Ground-Water Hydrology and Projected Effects of Ground-Water Withdrawals in the Sevier Desert, Utah

United States Geological Survey

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Most values in this report are given in inch-pound units followed by metric units. The conversion factors are shown to four significant figures. In the text, however, the metric equivalents are shown only to the number of significant figures consistent with the accuracy of the value in inch-pound units.

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Chemical concentrations are given only in metric units. Chemical concentration is given in milligrams per liter (mg/L) or micrograms per liter (µg/L). Milligrams per liter is a unit expressing the concentration of chemical constituents in solution as weight (milligrams) of solute per unit volume (liter of water). One thousand micrograms per liter is equivalent to 1 milligram per liter. For concentrations less than 7,000 mg/L, the numerical value is about the same as for concentrations in parts per million.

National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929 (NGVD of 1929): A geodetic datum derived from a general adjustment of the first-order level nets of both the United States and Canada, called NGVD of 1929, is referred to as sea level in this report.

GROUND-WATER HYDROLOGY AND PROJECTED EFFECTS OF GROUND-WATER WITHDRAIWALS IN THE SEVIER DESERT, UTAH

By Walter F. Holmes

ABSTRACT

The principal ground-water reservoir in the Sevier Desert is the unconsolidated basin fill. The fill has been divided generally into aquifers and confining beds, although there are no clearcut boundaries between these units—the primary aquifers are the shallow and deep artesian aquifers. Recharge to the ground-water reservoir is by infiltration of precipitation; seepage from streams, canals, reservoirs, and unconsommed irrigation water; and subsurface inflow from consolidated rocks in mountain areas and from adjoining areas. Discharge is by wells, springs, seepage to the Sevier River, evapotranspiration, and subsurface outflow to adjoining areas.

Changes in ground-water withdrawals, water levels, and quality of water occurred in the artesian aquifers of the Sevier Desert, Utah, during 1963-81. Ground-water withdrawals increased from an average of 9,500 acre-feet (11.7 cubic hectometers) per year between 1951 and 1963 to an average of 27,900 acre-feet (33.9 cubic hectometers) per year between 1964 and 1981. Most of the increased withdrawal was from the deep artesian aquifer.

Water levels declined as much as 19 feet (5.8 meters) in the deep artesian aquifer and as much as 13 feet (4.0 meters) in the shallow artesian aquifer between 1963 and 1981. The declines probably are due to increased ground-water withdrawals for irrigation and municipal use.

Concentrations of dissolved constituents in water in the shallow artesian aquifer are increasing in an area near Leamington and Lyndyl. This change probably is the result of more mineralized water entering the shallow artesian aquifer from the underlying water-table aquifer.

Water-level changes resulting from changes in recharge to and discharge from the aquifers were simulated using a digital-computer model of the aquifer system. Ground-water withdrawals for 20 years (1981-2000) were simulated at one-half, one, and two times the 1977-79 average rate. Water-level declines of more than 50 feet (15 meters) were projected in the deep artesian aquifer with withdrawals twice the 1977-79 average, declines of more than 40 feet (12 meters) if withdrawals were equal to the 1977-79 average, and declines of more than 15 feet (4.6 meters) if withdrawals were one-half the 1977-79 average. Computed water-level declines after 20 years in the shallow artesian aquifer were more than 50 feet (15 meters) at all times the 1977-79 average rate, more than 15 feet (4.6 meters) at the 1977-79 average, and less than 4 feet (1.2 meters) at one-half the 1977-79 average.

Changes in locations of ground-water withdrawals related to the Intermountain Power Project would cause water-level declines in the deep artesian aquifer of more than 15 feet (4.6 meters), but only small changes in
water levels in the shallow artesian aquifer after 20 years. These changes are in addition to changes computed for 20 years of withdrawals at the pre-project 1977-79 withdrawal rate.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose, Scope, and Methods

The U.S. Geological Survey evaluated the ground-water reservoir of the Sevier Desert, Utah, during 1979-82, in cooperation with the Utah Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water Rights. The objectives of the study were to add to the understanding of the area's ground-water hydrology, to determine changes in ground-water conditions since the 1961-64 study by Hower and Felts (1966), and to project the effects on water levels in the artesian aquifers of potential future ground-water withdrawals.

Information collected and methods used to collect it during the study included discharge from wells and springs, water levels in wells, drillers' and geophysical logs of wells, water samples which were analyzed chemically, seepage losses from or gains to canals and streams from measurements of surface-water flow, hydraulic properties of aquifers from aquifer tests, and changes in areas of phreatophyte growth. A digital-computer model of the ground-water system was constructed on the basis of this and other information.

Previous Studies and Acknowledgments

Previous studies of the ground-water hydrology of the Sevier Desert or some aspect of it include those by Meinzer (1911), Nelson (1952), Nelson and Thomas (1953), Hower (1961, 1963, and 1967), Hower and Felts (1968), Bandi and others (1969), Hower and Felts (1974), and Holmes and Wilberg (1982). Previously published compilations of basic data for the Sevier Desert include those by Hower and Felts (1964) and Enright and Holmes (1982). Other data on changes in water levels and ground-water withdrawals in Utah are in a series of annual ground-water reports prepared by the U.S. Geological Survey, the most recent being that by Appel and others (1980). Many of the conclusions in this report are based on the results of the digital-computer model used in this study, but the details of its design, construction, and calibration are given by Holmes (1983). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (1969) published a water budget for the Sevier River basin. Information on seepage losses from or gains to canals and streams in the area were collected by Herbert and others (1982).

This study could not have been completed without the cooperation of local well owners, and personnel of irrigation companies, municipalities, industrial water users, utility companies, and the Utah Division of Water Rights. The access to wells and data granted by these people is appreciated.
Description of the Study Area

Physiography

The study area encompasses approximately 2,800 square miles (7,300 km²) of the Sevier Desert in west-central Utah (fig. 2). The study area coincides with the area studied by Mower and Feltis (1968, pl. 1), excluding the Old River Bed area, east of the Keg Mountains, which drains north toward Dugway Valley (pl. 1) and then to the Great Salt Lake Desert. The study area is bounded on the north by the West Tintic, Sheeprock, and Keg Mountains, and Desert Mountain; on the east by the East Tintic, Gilson, and Canyon Mountains; on the south by latitude 39° N; on the southeast by Favant Valley; and on the west by the Drum Mountains, Topaz Mountain, and the House Range (pl. 1).

The Sevier Desert is a large basin surrounded by steep, rugged mountains reaching altitudes of more than 9,700 feet (3,000 m). The topography generally slopes to the southwest toward the Sevier Lake playa, a remnant of ancient Lake Bonneville. Other prominent topographic features of Lake Bonneville include spits, bars, and other shoreline deposits.

Geology

The rocks in the study area range in age from Precambrian to Holocene (Recent) (Mower and Feltis, 1968, pl. 2). The surrounding mountains are composed of a variety of consolidated sedimentary, metamorphic, and igneous rocks (Stokes (1964) and Mower and Feltis (1968, table 2)).

The basin area is underlaid by deposits consisting primarily of semiconsolidated to unconsolidated sediments of Tertiary and Quaternary age, but outcrops of consolidated igneous rocks, primarily basalt flows, are scattered over the basin floor (Mower and Feltis, 1968, pl. 2) and basalt and tuff are interbedded with the sediments. The basin-fill sediments consist of unconsolidated clay, silt, sand, gravel, and boulders, and semiconsolidated to consolidated conglomerates and fanglomerates deposited in alluvial, lacustrine, and aeolian environments. Additional information on the basin-fill deposits is in reports by Mower (1961 and 1963), Mower and Feltis (1968), Gilbert (1890), Humber and Pitzer (1978, p. 3-3 to 3-6), and Holness and Wilberg (1982).

Climate

The climate of the study area ranges from semiarid on the basin floor to subhumid at higher altitudes in the surrounding mountains. Daytime temperatures on the basin floor during summer months may exceed 40°C and minimum temperatures during winter months may be less than −20°C. The mean annual temperature at Deseret is about 10°C (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 1982).

Average annual precipitation ranges from less than 6 inches (152 mm) on the basin floor to more than 25 inches (635 mm) in the Sheeprock and Canyon Mountains (Mower and Feltis, 1968, pl. 4). The cumulative departure from...
average annual precipitation at Oak City for 1935-81 is shown in figure 3. Precipitation generally was less than average during 1948-63 and 1972-77, and more than average during 1935-47, 1964-71, and 1978-81.

Estimated annual evaporation for 1931-70 from freshwater lakes was 69.52 inches (1,766 mm) at Milford, Utah, about 70 miles (110 km) south of Delta, and 52.54 inches (1,335 mm) at the Sevier Bridge Dam, about 30 miles (50 km) east of Delta (Naddell and Fields, 1977, table 12). Based on these estimates, annual evaporation from fresh bodies of surface water at Delta, Utah, is estimated to be about 60 inches (1,524 mm).

Vegetation

The most common native plants in the mountains of the study area are juniper (Juniperus sp.), pinyon pine (Pinus edulis), Douglas fir (Pseudotsuga menziesii), spruce (Picea sp.), and quaking aspen (Populus tremuloides).

Common native plants on the basin floor include sagebrush (Artemisia sp.), greasewood (Sarcobatus vermiculatus), saltgrass (Distichlis spicata var. scabra), rabbitbrush (Chrysothamnus nauseosus), and saltbush (Atriplex confertifolia). Saltcedar (Tamarix gallica), a phreatophyte, probably was introduced into the area prior to 1950 (Mower and Feltis, 1968, p. 14), and has since become established along the Sevier River; around Fool Creek Reservoirs; along major canals, ditches, and drains; and in lowland parts of the area. Mower and Feltis (1968, pl. 7) show the areas of phreatophyte growth in 1963. Field checks made during this study show no significant change in phreatophyte areas since 1963.

Irrigated crops include alfalfa hay, alfalfa seed, and grain with minor amounts of corn and pasture. About 65,000 acres (26,000 ha) of cropland are under irrigation in the study area, excluding Tintic Valley (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1969, p. 26 and 28). Tintic Valley was estimated to have fewer than 1,000 acres (400 ha) of irrigated farmland.

Surface Water

The Sevier River is the major stream in the area. The river enters the study area through Leamington Canyon, travels southwest across the southern part of the area, and discharges into Sevier Lake playa during infrequent periods of very high flow. During normal runoff years, the water entering the study area in the Sevier River is completely diverted for irrigation and does not reach Sevier Lake playa. The average flow to the study area in the Sevier River is 167,980 acre-feet (201 km³) per year (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1969, p. 63).

Several perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral streams originate in the study area. Perennial streams include Oak and Cherry Creeks, and Pole Creek (perennial in some reaches); major intermittent streams include Road, Birch, Hop, and Fool Creeks; and major ephemeral streams are Tanner Creek and Swasey Wash.
Records from continuous-recording gaging stations were used along with estimates of annual runoff derived from channel-geometry measurements for perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral streams (using techniques of Redman and Eastman, 1977; and Fields, 1975) to estimate runoff from areas above an altitude of about 6,000 feet (1,830 m) in the eastern and northern parts of the study area. Measurements of runoff from representative areas or estimates based on channel geometry were related to drainage area, and the relationship was used to estimate runoff from areas with no runoff records or channel-geometry measurements. The results indicate an annual runoff of about 11,090 acre-feet (14 hm³) from the Canyon Mountains and about 13,600 acre-feet (15.2 hm³) from the Gilson and Sheeprock Mountains. The combined annual runoff from all other areas on the south and west sides of the study area was estimated to be 8,000 acre-feet (9.9 hm³) per year.

GROUND-WATER HYDROLOGY

Ground water in the Sevier Desert is present in both consolidated rocks and unconsolidated basin fill. The principal ground-water reservoir in the Sevier Desert is the unconsolidated basin fill, but consolidated rocks in the mountains and in some local areas on the basin floor are important sources of water.

Consolidated Rocks

Consolidated rocks yield water to springs in the mountains and to a few wells along the margins of the basin. The largest known yield from consolidated rocks is at Clear Lake Springs, (C-20-7)36-5, where the average annual discharge during 1960-64 was 14,900 acre-feet (184 hm³). The springs discharge from basalt of the Pavant Flow of late Pliocene or early Pleistocene age (Hower, 1967, p. E9). Other large springs discharging from consolidated rocks are Bakers Hot Springs, (C-14-B109ac-61), with a discharge of about 2,000 acre-feet (2.5 hm³) per year from volcanic rocks; and Indian Springs, (C-12-3)16ac-61, which discharges about 800 acre-feet (1.0 hm³) per year from the Salt Lake(?), Formation of Pliocene(?), age (Enright and Holmes, 1982, table 2).

Wells completed in consolidated rocks have variable yields. Conglomerates of Tertiary age yield water to wells near Oak City, and the Salt Lake(?) Formation of Pliocene(?), age yields water to a well in Tintic Valley (Hower and Feltis, 1964, table 2). A deep oil-test hole in sec. 23, T. 15 N., R. 7 W. flowed 800 to 1,200 gallons per minute (50 to 76 L/s) of water from Tertiary sediments and volcanics at a depth of about 10,000 feet (3,000 m) (Hamer and Fitzner, 1978, fig. 6). Wells south of the study area near Pioview in Pavant Valley (27 mi or 43 km south of Delta) obtain large yields from fractured basalt aquifers (Hower, 1965, table 8 and p. 40), and might yield substantial amounts of water to wells in the Sevier Desert, although more test drilling will be necessary to verify this possibility. In general, consolidated rocks consisting of conglomerate of Tertiary age yield water to wells on the basin floor, and Pre-Cenozoic sedimentary and metamorphic rocks yield water to springs in the mountains.
Unconsolidated Basin Fill

The principal aquifers of the Sevier Desert are within the unconsolidated basin fill, although in the extreme southeastern part of the area, basalt may yield large quantities of water to wells as it does in the adjacent Pavan Valley (Hower, 1965, table 8). The unconsolidated basin fill, as identified in drillers’ logs of wells (C-15-S-33dc-1) and (C-16-S-3aa-1) (Enright and Holmes, 1982, tables 1 and 5), is at least 1,300 feet (396 m) thick and may be as thick as 2,140 feet (652 m) (Hower and Felts, 1968, p. 13).

The basin fill generally consists of alluvial-fan and aeolian deposits along the edges of the basin and fluviatile deposits of the Sevier River interbedded with lacustrine deposits of Lake Bonneville and probably older lakes in the center of the basin. The fluviatile deposits become finer grained from the eastern side of the basin toward the west and southwest, until southwest of Delta, the fluviatile deposits cannot be distinguished from the fine-grained lacustrine deposits. In general, the fluviatile deposits consist of sand and gravel, and the lacustrine deposits consist of clay, silt, sand, and gravel.

Hower and Felts (1968, p. 23) divided the ground-water reservoir in most of the Sevier Desert into upper and lower artesian aquifers, a lower-permeability zone (or confining bed) between them, and a water-table aquifer, except along the western, eastern, and northeastern margins of the basin fill where there is only a single aquifer under water-table conditions. In this report, the upper and lower artesian aquifers are termed the shallow and deep artesian aquifers, following the usage of Hower (1961 and 1963) and Holmes and Wilberg (1982), and the basin aquifer in the extreme southeastern part of the study area is included in the water-table aquifer. A generalized geologic section near Lyndyl, Utah (fig. 4) shows lithology and divisions of the ground-water reservoir; and an idealized cross section east-west across the Sevier Desert (fig. 5) shows the various elements of the ground-water system.

At most locations, there are no clear-cut boundaries between the aquifers and confining beds. The estimated thickness of the water-table aquifer in the center of the basin is 50 feet (15.2 m); but the water-table aquifer near the mountain fronts, where it includes beds that are laterally equivalent to those of the artesian aquifers, may be several hundred feet thick. The water-table aquifer in the center of the basin consists of predominantly fine-grained sediments.

The shallow and deep artesian aquifers are easily identified near Lyndyl, but as the unconsolidated deposits become coarser grained toward the Canyon Mountains on the east, or become finer grained toward the center of the basin near Delta, the separation of the aquifers becomes difficult (fig. 4, and Hower and Felts, 1968, p. 3). The thickness of the confining layer between the shallow and deep artesian aquifers ranges from about 400 to 500 feet (120–150 m) near Lyndyl to about 100 to 175 feet (30–53 m) near Sugarville (Hower and Felts, 1968, p. 30). The layer consists of beds of clay and silt with some sand and gravel. West of Sugarville, the sediments of the confining bed may become more coarse grained, and the aquifers and

Figure 4.—Generalized geologic section near Lyndyl, Utah, showing lithology and divisions of the ground-water reservoir (modified from Holmes and Wilberg, 1982).
Figure 5.—Idealized east-west cross section of the Sevier Desert showing the elements of the ground-water system.
confining bed may coalesce into a single somewhat fine-grained, artesian aquifer. The confining bed may pinch out near the mountain fronts where the entire ground-water reservoir is under water-table conditions.

The depth to water in the unconsolidated basin fill ranges from several hundred feet in the water-table aquifer near the mountains surrounding the basin to several feet above land surface in the artesian aquifers in the center of the basin. The altitude of water levels in the unconsolidated basin fill locally varies with depth. Mower and Feltis (1968, p. 30) reported that in 1964 water levels in the deep artesian aquifer were about 20 to 30 feet (6.1-9.1 m) higher than water levels in the shallow artesian aquifer along a line extending through Delta and Sugarville near the center of the basin. The difference in water levels resulted from the sharp gradient between the water-table aquifer and the artesian aquifer. No differences in water levels, however, were observed between the shallow and deep artesian aquifers in the Leamington-Lyndyl-Oak City area on the eastern side of the basin. Water-level measurements made in March 1981 near Lyndyl show water levels in the shallow artesian aquifer about 10 to 20 feet (3.0-6.1 m) higher than water levels in the deep artesian aquifer (Enright and Holmes, 1982, table 1, wells C-15-30364c-1 and C-1-53646c-2). The difference probably is caused by pumping from the deep artesian aquifer that has lowered water levels in that aquifer more than in the shallow artesian aquifer.

Recharge

Recharge to the unconsolidated basin fill is by seepage from streams along the mountain fronts, canals, reservoirs, and from unconsolidated irrigation water; subsurface inflow from consolidated rocks of the mountain areas; precipitation and concentrated outlet from adjoining areas. Most of the recharge to the unconsolidated basin fill is to the water-table aquifer near the mountain fronts and it then moves directly into the artesian aquifers.

Seepage from streams.—Seepage from streams is a major source of recharge to the unconsolidated basin fill. This recharge occurs mostly in the northern and eastern parts of the study area, where streams originating in the mountains flow across permeable alluvial-fan or alluvial deposits at an altitude of about 5,000 feet (1,500 m). Recharge from streams in the southern and western parts of the study area probably is small because of the small annual precipitation and resultant lack of streamflow in these areas.

Recharge from streamflow is estimated to be about 27,000 acre-feet (33 km³) per year. This recharge is 78 percent of the available streamflow (excluding the Sevier River) estimated in the study area from streamflow and hydrography measurements (see page 18). The technique used in the figure was derived by assuming that all the water in streams originating in the mountains in the northern and eastern parts of the study area infiltrates before reaching the basin floor, and that evapotranspiration losses are insignificant in these northern and eastern upland beach areas.

Mower and Feltis (1968, p. 25-26) reported that the Sevier River is a major source of recharge to the Sevier Desert. More detailed recent studies by Herbert and others (1982, p. 4-5) show that the Sevier River in 1960 had a net gain of about 9 cubic feet per second (0.25 m³/s) in a section of the river near Leamington, although the upper part of the reach studied in Leamington Canyon did have a loss of 4 cubic feet per second (0.11 m³/s). During periods of large ground-water withdrawals and resulting water-level declines, some water from the Sevier River probably infiltrates the upper part of the ground-water reservoir.

Seepage from canals.—Recharge from canal seepage was estimated using the results of seepage and infiltration studies. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Palmer B. Delong, written commun., December 8, 1970, and February 24, 1971) conducted a seepage and infiltration study on the Central Utah Canal between a point 100 feet (30 m) downstream from the feeder canal turnout for Foul Creek Reservoir No. 1 to a point 200 feet (61 m) south of State Highway 26. Only 1.8 miles (29.8 km) of the 26.4 miles (42.4 km) of the canal that are within the study area (pl. 1) were included in Delong’s study. The U.S. Geological Survey (Herbert and others, 1982) conducted seepage studies in 1980 on the Leamington and McIntyre Canals, Part of the difference in the central Utah Canal. The section of the Central Utah Canal was not previously studied by the Bureau of Reclamation and includes that part of the canal between the diversion on the Sevier River and the feeder canal turnout for Foul Creek Reservoir No. 1.

Results of the seepage and infiltration studies indicate an average annual loss of about 12,000 acre-feet (14.6 km³) from the Central Utah and McIntyre Canals. This figure consists of about 10,500 acre-feet (12.9 km³) per year determined from the data of Palmer B. Delong (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, written commun., December 8, 1980, and February 24, 1971) and about 1,500 acre-feet (1.9 km³) per year based on the study of Herbert and others, 1982 (5 percent of annual diversion of 30,000 acre-feet (37 km³)). The largest losses occur near Oak City where infiltration rates of about 47 feet (14.3 m) per day when the canal was empty and 7 feet (2.1 m) per day when the canal was full were measured by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation using a pipe driven about 8 to 12 inches (203-305 mm) into the sand and gravel underlying the Central Utah Canal. The infiltration rate measured at this site was more than 10 times greater than rates measured at four other sites along the canal.

Seepage from canals in the irrigated areas around Delta probably is small. Fine-grained deposits at or near the land surface and an extensive program of canal lining that began in the 1960’s probably limit recharge from canal seepage in this area to a small amount. The small amount of recharge that does occur probably moves to drains in the immediate vicinity of the canals.

Some recharge by seepage from canals that collect the discharge from drainage at or near the land surface may occur northeast of Delta. The upper part of the unconsolidated basin fill may be lower than the bottom of the canals. Canal discharge in this area was measured and estimated on July 30, 1981, to be about 6 cubic feet per second (0.17 m³/s) (Roger Walker, Sevier River Water
Commissioner, written commun., August 2, 1981). For this report, it was estimated that 15 percent or about 700 acre-feet (0.66 hm³) per year of the flow in the canals recharges the unconsolidated basin fill northwest of Delta.

Seepage from reservoirs.—Reservoir seepage recharges the unconsolidated basin fill at Fossil Creek Reservoirs Nos. 1 and 2, about 4 miles (6.4 km) south of Lyndyl (pl. 1). Seepage from the two reservoirs was estimated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (1969, p. 63) to be about 2,000 acre-feet (3.5 hm³) per year. Delta and Gunnison Bend Reservoirs along the Sevier River in the study area are underlain by fine-grained sediment and any seepage from them probably returns to the river within a short distance and does not contribute significant amounts of recharge.

Seepage from unconsolidated irrigation water.—Most of the seepage from unconsolidated irrigation water occurs along the mountain front betweenSeleccione and Oak City, where infiltration rates in the sand and gravel deposits probably are large. Hower and Feltis (1968, p. 27-28) estimated seepage losses to be in excess of 25 percent of the water diverted for irrigation. Assuming a 30 percent seepage loss, and an estimated average annual application of about 12,000 acre-feet (14.8 hm³) of water from the Central Utah Canal (Roger Walker, verbal commun., Jan. 19, 1982), 3,500 acre-feet (6.8 hm³) from Oak Creek (estimated from U.S. Geological Survey gage-station records), 9,600 acre-feet (11.8 hm³) from the McIntyre and Limington Canals (estimated from data from the seepage studies by Herbert and others, 1982), and 2,400 acre-feet (3.0 hm³) from ground-water withdrawals, the estimated recharge from unconsolidated irrigation water is about 9,000 acre-feet (11 hm³) per year.

In the irrigated farmland around Delta, where fine-grained deposits are at or near the surface, the seepage losses from unconsolidated irrigation water probably are small. The unconsolidated irrigation water that does infiltrate to the water table probably moves short distances and discharges to a complex system of drains and some of this water is rediverted for irrigation on lower lying lands. Most of the drain water, however, eventually ponds in large unvegetated areas and evaporates.

If water levels were to decline by an estimated 10 feet (3.0 m) in the irrigated areas near Delta, an estimated 10,000 acre-feet (12.3 hm³) per year of water might not be discharged by drains and would add to the total recharge.

Subsurface inflow from consolidated rocks along the mountain fronts.—Hower and Feltis (1969, p. 28) suggested that subsurface inflow to the unconsolidated basin fill in the Sevier Desert from consolidated rocks in the mountains may be an important source of recharge. Data collected during this study were insufficient to calculate the amount of recharge from this source.

Precipitation on basin outcrops.—Recharge by precipitation on the aquifer is probably limited to areas where highly fractured basalt is covered by thin deposits of soil or sand. Hower (1967, p. 227) estimated that about 1 inch (25.4 mm) of precipitation on the basin fill near Pavant Butte recharges the aquifer. Using this estimate, recharge from about 80,000 acres (32,000 ha) of basin in the study area (Hower and Feltis, 1968, pl. 2) is about 1,000 acre-feet (6.6 hm³) per year. This assumes that all the basin is permeable and water in it is in hydraulic connection with the rest of the ground-water system.

Recharge from precipitation in the remainder of the Sevier Desert is small. Hower and Feltis (1968, p. 24-25) estimated that from 1949-64 recharge from precipitation totaled 17,000 acre-feet (21 hm³) or 1,100 acre-feet (1.4 hm³) per year and occurred only in the winter and spring of 1951-52 and 1961-62 when the December 1 to March 31 precipitation exceeded 6 inches (152 mm). During years of normal precipitation, recharge from precipitation, with the exception of that on basin outcrops, is small.

Subsurface inflow from adjoining areas.—Subsurface inflow from adjoining areas is an important source of recharge along the southern and southeastern borders of the Sevier Desert. Hower (1965, p. 54) estimated the total subsurface inflow from the Sevier Desert to the Sevier Desert in 1959 to be 10,000 acre-feet (17.3 hm³). Later studies by Hower (1967, p. E27) indicate that earlier estimates of subsurface outflow from the four southern ground-water districts were underestimated by the same percentage, the total flow from Pavant Valley to the Sevier Desert during 1959 would be about 16,000 acre-feet (22.2 hm³). Hower and Feltis (1968, p. 28) estimated subsurface flow from the Beaver River valley (including inflow from the Milford area) to be 2,000 acre-feet (1.2 hm³) per year.

Movement

Ground water in the unconsolidated basin fill in the Sevier Desert generally moves from recharge areas near the mountains on the northeast and east toward discharge areas in the western part of the study area. Near the Sevier River, and in the southeastern part of the study area, ground water generally moves west or northwest from Pavant Valley toward Clear Lake Springs (Hower, 1967, p. 815). Plate 1 shows the potentiometric surface of the shallow artesian aquifer in March 1981, and the altitude of the potentiometric surface in the deep artesian aquifer at wells where water levels could be measured. Small anomalies in the potentiometric surface near Delta are caused by withdrawals of water for irrigation or municipal use. Data were not available to construct a map showing the altitude of the potentiometric surface in the water-table aquifer.

Discharge

Discharge from the unconsolidated basin fill in the Sevier Desert is from Clear Lake Springs, seepage to the Sevier River, evapotranspiration, subsurface flow to adjoining areas, and wells.
Clear Lake Springs.—Host of the ground water entering the Sevier Desert from Fawant Valley discharges at Clear Lake Springs (Hover, 1967, p. E15). Hover (1967, p. B44) reported an average discharge at Clear Lake Springs of 14,900 acre-feet (18.4 ha³) per year during 1960-64. Measurements of discharge during 1969-81 by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (Carl Lind, written commun., Aug. 19, 1982) show a variation in annual discharge from a maximum of about 19,000 acre-feet (23 ha³) in 1974 to a minimum of about 13,000 acre-feet (16 ha³) in 1978, and an average of about 16,000 acre-feet (20 ha³) per year.

Seepage to the Sevier River.—Known discharge from the unconsolidated basin fill to the Sevier River occurs primarily near and up to about 5 miles (8 km) below the mouth of Leaming Canyon where water levels in the unconsolidated basin fill locally are higher than the altitude of the Sevier River. Seepage studies during 1980 showed a net gain of about 9 cubic feet per second (0.25 m³/s) to the river (Herbert and others, 1982, p. 4-5). In the reach of the river from about 5 to about 9 miles (8 to about 14 km) below the mouth of Leaming Canyon no gains to or losses from the river were observed (Herbert and others, 1982, p. 5). The seepage studies in 1980 were conducted at the end of the irrigation season when discharge to the river derived from seepage from canals, reservoirs, and unconfined irrigation water would be greater than at other times of the year. Therefore the 6,500 acre-foot per year (80 ha³) figure may be more than the actual average seepage to the river in this area.

Downstream from the reach of the river studied by Herbert and others (1982), little is known about seepage to the Sevier River. Southwest of Delta the river flows through an area of ground-water discharge by evapotranspiration where the water table is at shallow depths. In this area the river may also receive seepage locally from the ground-water reservoir.

Evapotranspiration.—Discharge by evapotranspiration was estimated by Hover and Feltis (1968, p. 52) to be between 135,000 and 175,000 acre-feet (186 and 216 ha³) per year. The estimate by Hover and Feltis includes 3,000 to 8,000 acre-feet (3.7 to 9.9 ha³) in the Old River Bed, which is not part of the area of this report. The average evapotranspiration rate derived from the data of Hover and Feltis (1968, table 7) was between 0.30 and 0.39 foot (0.09 and 0.12 m) per year.

Recent studies by Van Bylckama (1974, figs. 34-35) in Arizona indicate that both depth to water and soil-water salinity have substantial effects on evapotranspiration rates of other phreatophytes. Hover and Feltis (1968, p. 32-39) did not specifically base their estimates of evapotranspiration rates on depth to water and did not include the effect of water quality in their methods of estimation. Data collected from test holes in the Sevier Desert indicate that water levels in and near some of the phreatophyte areas mapped by Hover and Feltis in the northern and western parts of the study area (1968, pl. 7) exceed 50 feet (15.2 m) (Enright and Holmes, 1982, table 1, wells C-13B and C-13D) and that shallow ground water has a specific conductance exceeding 20,000 microhos per centimeter (or a dissolved-solids content of more than 10,000 mg/l) (Enright and Holmes, 1982, table 5, wells C-15-73366-C-1 and C-17-930A-1). Some phreatophytes in these areas may be transpiring soil moisture derived from precipitation that is perched or retained in sandy soils and may not receive additional water from the ground-water system. In addition, evapotranspiration rates may be lower than estimated by Hover and Feltis because of the high salinity of the water.

Recent estimates of evapotranspiration based on streamflow losses in the southeastern Uinta Basin of eastern Utah (Holmes and Kimball, 1983, p. 41) yield a rate of 0.05 foot (0.015 m) per year from grasssever-covered alluvial valleys with vegetation densities (10 percent) and water quality similar to that of the Sevier Desert. Based on this rate, the amount of ground-water discharge by evapotranspiration from 40,680,000 acres (165,000 ha) of phreatophytes (Hover and Feltis, 1968, table 7) may be as small as 20,000 acre-feet (25 ha³) per year.

Subsurface outflow to adjoining areas.—Discharge by subsurface outflow to adjoining areas probably occurs along the western boundary of the study area. An approximate ground-water gage of 0.25 acre-feet (0.31 ha³) per year of ground-water flow in that direction. Holmes (1983, table 1) estimated 8,600 acre-feet (10.9 m³) per year of subsurface outflow to adjoining areas west of the Sevier Desert.

The eventual discharge point for the outflow is unknown, but Rolje and Suneson (1976, p. 13) estimated that about 31,000 acre-feet (38.7 m³) per year enters the Fish Springs Flat area, northwest of Sevier Desert, by inflow from adjoining basins; a study by Stephens (1977, p. 21) also indicated subsurface inflow to Tule Valley, west of the Sevier Desert. Both areas may receive subsurface inflow from the Sevier Desert. Gates and Kruer (1981, p. 31-38) summarized the hydrology of west-central Utah and discussed the considerable body of evidence that suggests flow in carbonate rocks between basins northwest and southwest of the Sevier Desert. They mentioned the possibility of subsurface flow from the Sevier Desert to basins to the west, but because they lacked water-level data and because they believed the Sevier Lake playa was the ultimate discharge point for ground water in the Sevier Desert, they concluded the flow was not large.

Wells.—The estimated withdrawal from wells in the study area in 1981 was 18,000 acre-feet (22.2 m³) (Enright and Holmes, 1982, table 7). Areas of major ground-water use include Leamington, Lynndyl, Oak City, Delta, and Sugarville. Most of the water withdrawn is for irrigation or municipal use, with smaller quantities for industry, domestic, and stock uses. The 1951-81 ground-water withdrawals in the Sevier Desert are shown in figure 6.

Ground-water withdrawals in a given year are related primarily to the availability of surface water. During water years 1980 and 1981, the supply of surface water and the Sevier River discharged 102,560 acre-feet (39,000 ha³) to the Sevier Desert. The 1980-81 water year average of 135,000 acre-feet (167 m³) for these years. This excess supply of surface water resulted in a reduced withdrawal of ground water in 1980-81—an average of 15,500 acre-feet (19.4 m³) per year.
Figure 6.—Ground-water withdrawals from the Sevier Desert, 1951-81.

Hydraulic properties

Hydraulic coefficients of the artesian aquifers in the unconsolidated basin fill in the Sevier Desert were reported by Nelson and Thomas (1953, table 3), Nover and Feltis (1968, table 8), Nover (1963, p. 2-4), and Nover (1961, p. C94). Additional values of hydraulic coefficients computed from test data collected during this study are shown in table 1, some of which differ from previously reported values computed from data collected during past tests at the same wells. The primary reason for these differences is the methods used in the analysis of the test data. During this study the Hantush modified method (Lohman, 1972, p. 32) and the ratio method (Neuman and Witherspoon, 1972) for determining hydraulic coefficients of leaky confined aquifers were used for aquifer tests when enough data were available. These methods generally give lower values of transmissivity and coefficient of storage than the Theis curve-matching procedure (Lohman, 1975, p. 34).

The transmissivity of the shallow artesian aquifer, as estimated from data of aquifer tests, ranges from a high of about 0.3,000 feet squared per day (4,400 m²/d) [Nover and Feltis, 1968, table 6, well (C-15-5-2dd-d-1) on the east side of the study area near Lyndyl, to a low of about 0.3,000 feet squared per day (4,400 m²/d) in the central part of the area west of Sugarville (Nelson and Thomas, 1953, table 3, well (C-16-819dd-d-1). The transmissivity of the deep artesian aquifer ranges from about 27,000 feet squared per day (2,500 m²/d) near Lyndyl to about 2,000 feet squared per day (190 m²/d) south of Delta [Nover and Feltis, 1968, table 8, wells (C-16-5-32nas-a-1 and (C-17-6)28ac-b)]. The decrease in transmissivity in both aquifers from east to west probably is related to the deposition of more permeable alluvial gravels and sands in the eastern and central part of the study area compared with the deposition of fine-grained alluvial and lacustrine deposits in its southwestern and western parts (Nover and Feltis, 1968, p. 15). There is no major change in thickness of the aquifers related to this change in transmissivity.

The hydraulic conductivity of the water-table aquifer is estimated to range from about 1,000 feet (460 m) per day in the basin aquifer in the extreme southeastern part of the study area (Holmes, 1983, p. 8) to about 1 foot (0.3 m) per day in the central part of the basin. The estimates of hydraulic conductivity in the central part of the basin are based on descriptions of material in drillers' logs (Nover, 1978, p. 16, and Enright and Holmes, 1982, table 3). The hydraulic conductivity of the water-table aquifer generally is greater near the mountain fronts and decreases toward the center of the basin.

Holmes and Wilberg (1982, p. 11) determined the vertical hydraulic conductivity of the confining bed between the shallow and deep artesian aquifers near Lyndyl to be 6 x 10⁻² foot per day (1.8 x 10⁻² m/d). No tests

(fig. 6) one-half of the 1971-80 average annual rate of 31,000 acre-feet (38.2 km³) (Holmes and others, 1982, table 2). Industrial and municipal uses probably will increase, irrigation use decrease, and domestic and stock uses remain unchanged in the future.
Table 1.—Hydraulic coefficients of artesian aquifers in the Sevier Desert

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pumped well</th>
<th>Observation well or wells</th>
<th>Aquifer or confining bed tested</th>
<th>Transmissivity (feet squared per day)</th>
<th>Storage coefficient</th>
<th>Vertical hydraulic conductivity of confining beds (feet per day)</th>
<th>Method of analysis or reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(C-15-4)19ccc-1</td>
<td>(C-15-4)20cc-1</td>
<td>deep artesian aquifer</td>
<td>12,700</td>
<td>$6.4 \times 10^{-5}$</td>
<td>$6 \times 10^{-3}$</td>
<td>Hantush modified method (Loehman, 1972, p. 32); Ratio method (Reeman and Witherspoon, 1972); Holmes and Wilberg (1982)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C-15-5)15dad-1</td>
<td>26ba-1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27dec-1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33deb-1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C-16-5)9aaa-1</td>
<td>1Faa-1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19cbb-1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C-15-4)19cbb-1</td>
<td>do.</td>
<td>do.</td>
<td>12,900</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Straight-line method (Loehman, 1972, p. 23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C-15-5)15dad-2</td>
<td>26aaa-2</td>
<td>between deep and shallow artesian aquifer</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>$6 \times 10^{-3}$</td>
<td>Ratio method (Reeman and Witherspoon, 1972); Holmes and Wilberg (1982)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27dec-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33deb-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C-15-4)26dec-1</td>
<td>(C-15-4)26dec-1</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>23,300</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Straight-line method (Loehman, 1972, p. 23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36aaa-1</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>24,900</td>
<td>$1.2 \times 10^{-3}$</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Hantush modified method (Loehman, 1972, p. 32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C-15-5)33deb-1</td>
<td>(C-15-5)33deb-1</td>
<td>deep artesian aquifer</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C-15-6)1Faa-1</td>
<td>(C-15-6)1Faa-1</td>
<td>do.</td>
<td>(1)5,400</td>
<td>(1) $2 \times 10^{-3}$</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Modified Christesen non-equilibrium method (Intermountain Power Project, 1981, p. 15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C-15-7)13cbb-1</td>
<td>do.</td>
<td>do.</td>
<td>8,500</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Straight-line method (Loehman, 1972, p. 23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C-15-6)29cbb-1</td>
<td>do.</td>
<td>do.</td>
<td>7,700</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C-16-6)9aaa-1</td>
<td>19cbb-1</td>
<td>do.</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C-17-6)29ccc-1</td>
<td>do.</td>
<td>do.</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1Average of results derived from all observation wells.
were made that yielded a value for the vertical hydraulic conductivity of the material overlaying the shallow artesian aquifer.

The storage coefficient of the artesian aquifers estimated from aquifer tests ranges from about 2 x 10⁻² (Nelson and Thomas, 1953, table 3) to about 6 x 10⁻⁸ (Holmes and Wilberg, 1982, table 2). The specific yield of the water-table aquifer is estimated to range from about 0.27 near the mountain fronts to about 0.02 in the center of the basin. These values are based on estimates of specific yield from other studies tabulated by Johnson (1967, table 29) and descriptions of material in drillers’ logs (Enright and Holmes, 1982, table 3).

Storage

The amount of recoverable water in storage in the unconsolidated basin fill is estimated to be about 200 million acre-feet (250,000 km³). The estimate is based on an area of 2,000 square miles (5,180 km²), an average saturated thickness of 1,000 feet (305 m), and an estimated average specific yield of 0.15. The estimate of saturated thickness is higher than the 775 feet (236 m) reported by Nover and Feltis (1968, p. 36). Drilling since 1963 has indicated that saturated deposits containing fresh water extend to a depth of about 1,300 feet (400 m) near Lynndyl (Holmes and Wilberg, 1982, tables 1 and 5). Thus, an average saturated thickness (including confining beds) of 1,000 feet (305 m) was assumed.

The estimate of water in storage was made assuming that water levels will be drawn down enough so that the artesian aquifers are dewatered, and that a specific yield typical of water-table conditions will govern the amount of water released from storage, rather than an artesian coefficient of storage. Most of this stored ground water is fresh, but some is of poor quality, especially that in the water-table aquifer in the central part of the study area.

WATER QUALITY

The chemical quality of samples of water collected from wells and springs in the Sevier Desert is reported in Enright and Holmes (1982, table 5). Dissolved solids in spring water ranged from 3,710 milligrams per liter at (C-14-D100ca-SI to less than 100 milligrams per liter at spring (C-14-3)h sbd-S1. In general, the two springs discharging from basalt flows of Late Pliocene or early Pleistocene age contained larger concentrations of dissolved solids than springs discharging from other consolidated rocks or unconsolidated basin fill. Data on specific conductance of water from springs (Enright and Holmes, 1982, table 2) indicate that water discharged from alluvium of Quaternary age generally had a lower dissolved-solids concentration than water from consolidated rocks.

Dissolved solids in water from wells ranged from about 200 milligrams per liter for well (C-14-D100ca-S1 to about 49,000 milligrams per liter for well (C-20-12)asa-c-1. The smallest concentrations were in water from wells perforated deeper than 500 feet (152 m) between Lynndyl and Delta. The largest concentrations were in water from wells perforated above 200 feet (61 m) in the southwestern part of the study area, where dissolved-solids concentrations can exceed 10,000 milligrams per liter. These large concentrations probably result from evapotranspiration which has concentrated salts in the water-table aquifer; or in the case of water from well (C-20-12)asa-c-1, the large concentration of dissolved solids may reflect the movement of shallow ground water from Sevier Lake plays toward the northwest (pl. 1). The large concentrations of sodium (13,000 mg/L) and chloride (28,000 mg/L) in this sample, which are products of evaporation, seem to support this contention.

Extremely large concentrations of arsenic have been found in water from some wells in the Sevier Desert. The arsenic concentrations in water samples from the artesian aquifers are shown in figure 7. The largest observed concentrations are in the south-central part of the study area and may be related to the volcanic deposits in the Black Rock Desert.

Concentrations of nitrate plus nitrite (reported in mg/L as N) in water from some large-discharge irrigation wells in the Oak City-Fool Creek area range from about 4 to 22 milligrams per liter (Enright and Holmes, 1982, p. 51, 53). These large concentrations may be the result of downward leakage of unconsumed irrigation water contaminated with material dissolved from fertilizer, animal waste, or septic-tank effluent.

CHANGES IN GROUND-WATER CONDITIONS, 1963-81

Changes in ground-water conditions since 1963 include increased ground-water withdrawals, declines in water levels, and deterioration of water quality.

Ground-Water Withdrawal

Ground-water withdrawals during the 18-year period from 1964 to 1981 averaged about 27,500 acre-feet (33.9 km³) per year, almost three times the 13-year period from 1951 to 1963 average of about 9,600 acre-feet (11.8 km³) per year (fig. 6). Most of the increased withdrawals were from the deep artesian aquifer for irrigation.

Since 1963, annual withdrawals from wells have been as low as 13,000 to 18,000 acre-feet (16-22 km³) during years when surface water for irrigation was plentiful (such as 1970, 1971, and 1980); and as high as 40,000 to 49,500 acre-feet (49-61 km³) during years when surface water was in short supply (such as 1977, 1978, and 1979).

Water Levels

Water levels generally have declined in the area since 1963. Areas of significant water-level change in the shallow artesian aquifer during the 18-year period from March 1963 to March 1981 are shown in figure 8. Maximum decreases of 10 feet (3 m) to 20 feet (6 m) occurred over several square miles of the study area about 4 miles (6 km) west of Delta. Water-level changes in the parts of the study area not shown in figure 8 were less than 5 feet (1.5 m).
Figure 7.—Arsenic concentrations in water in the artesian aquifers, 1979-81.
Figure 8.—Areas of significant water-level change in the shallow artesian aquifer, March 1963 to March 1981.
Water-level changes in the deep artesian aquifer, as measured in 13 wells, are shown in figure 9. Water levels declined by as much as 19 feet (5.8 m) about 2 miles (3.2 km) south of Delta.

The water-level declines in the deep artesian aquifer south of Delta probably are due to increased ground-water withdrawals for irrigation and municipal use. The water-level declines in the shallow artesian aquifer west of Delta also may be related to increased ground-water withdrawals from the deep artesian aquifer. Lower levels in the deep aquifer either have caused downward leakage from the shallow to the deep artesian aquifer or less upward leakage, which has in turn lowered water levels in the shallow aquifer. The area of greatest decline in the shallow aquifer does not coincide with the area in which wells completed in the deep aquifer show large declines. This may be due mostly to a lack of data from both aquifers in the same areas.

One well near Oak City had a water-level rise of about 5 feet (1.5 m) (fig. 8). The water-level rise in this area may be related to a rise of up to 17.2 feet (5.24 m) in this area that occurred between March 1980 and March 1981 and that was caused by above average precipitation and a decrease in the withdrawal of ground water for irrigation from March 1980 to March 1981 (Herbert and others, 1981, p. 10).

The decline in water levels over most of the area caused some of the wells reported as flowing in March 1964 to cease flowing by March 1981 (Mower and Feltis, 1964, pl. 1, and Enright and Holmes, 1982, pl. 1). The area in which wells flowed in 1981, however, is only slightly smaller than the area in which wells flowed in 1964.

Water Quality

Handy and others (1969) documented the deterioration of ground-water quality in the shallow artesian aquifer in the Leamington-Lyndyl area of the Sevier Desert during 1958-68. Since 1968, quality of ground water has continued to deteriorate in the area near Leamington and Lyndyl, as illustrated in figure 10 by measurements of specific conductance of water from four wells, and by increases in sodium and chloride ions in water from wells (Enright and Holmes, 1982, table 5). At well (C-15-4)8cba-1, the concentration of sodium and potassium (as Na) in water increased from 241 milligrams per liter in 1967 to 316 milligrams per liter in 1980, and the concentration of chloride increased from 665 milligrams per liter in 1967 to 690 milligrams per liter in 1980 (Enright and Holmes, 1982, p. 48-49). The actual area of deterioration probably includes wells farther west than those shown by Handy and others (1969, fig. 6), as shown by increasing specific conductance in water from wells (C-15-5)2ddc-1 and (C-15-5)13bbc-1 (fig. 10).

The deterioration of water quality in the area probably results from poor-quality water recharging the ground-water system. Much of the recharge to the unconsolidated basin fill in the Leamington-Lyndyl area is from unconsented irrigation water, seepage from canals and reservoirs, and possibly some infiltration from the Sevier River during periods of large ground-water withdrawals resulting water-level declines. This recharge has a
Figure 9.—Water-level changes in wells in the deep artesian aquifer, March 1963 to March 1981.
relatively large concentration of dissolved minerals (Handy and others, 1969, p. D-231). Deterioration of water quality probably will continue in the future under present hydrologic conditions.

DIGITAL-COMPUTER MODELING

General Description of Model

The digital-computer model described by Holmes (1983) was used to simulate potential future ground-water withdrawals and their effects on water levels, recharge, and other forms of discharge. The model is a three-dimensional finite-difference model developed by Treccott (1975), and modified by Treccott and Larson (1976) and Torsvik (1982). The principal ground-water reservoir of the Sevier Desert was divided into six model layers. Nodes around the boundary of the entire modeled area and along the Sevier River were held at constant head during steady-state calibration. The model simulated recharge from stream infiltration (this figure also includes subsurface inflow from consolidated rock); subsurface inflow from adjoining areas; precipitation; and seepage from canals, reservoirs, and unconfined irrigation water. Simulated discharge included that to the Sevier River, Clear Lake Springs, evapotranspiration, and subsurface outflow to adjoining areas. Holmes (1983) gives details of the design, construction, and calibration of the model.

Steady-state calibration of the model involved comparing computed water levels in the shallow artesian aquifer to water-level measurements in selected wells during the late winter and early spring of 1952. Transient-state calibration consisted of simulating two approximately 30-day aquifer tests and comparing computed water-level declines or recovery to observed values; and simulating ground-water withdrawals from 1952-81 and comparing the computed water-level changes for 1952-82 with observed water-level changes. The ground-water budgets for steady-state conditions (1952) and final transient-state conditions (1980-81) are shown in table 2.

Subsurface inflow from Pavant Valley and the Reaver River valley computed by the model is about 11,000 acre-feet (13.6 \( \text{m}^3 \)) per year higher or 60 percent higher than previously estimated (see page 24). Data are insufficient to verify that model-computed values of inflow are an improvement over previous estimates. Because most of the inflow from Pavant Valley and the Beaver River valley is discharged at Clear Lake Springs and nearby phreatophyte areas before it reaches the main area of ground-water withdrawals in the Sevier Desert, and because water levels along the southern boundary of the modeled area are not significantly affected during transient-state simulations, the results of these simulations probably are not dependent on the accuracy of the subsurface inflow simulated by the model along its southern and southeastern border.

The total evapotranspiration computed by the model, 45,000 acre-feet (35.5 \( \text{m}^3 \)) per year under steady-state conditions, is one-quarter to one-third of the previous estimate of 131,000 to 166,000 acre-feet (162-205 \( \text{m}^3 \)) per year (not including evapotranspiration in the Old River Bed area) by Hover.
Table 2.—Steady-state (1952) and transient-state (1980–81) ground-water budgets for the Sevier Desert, computed by the digital model, in acre-feet per year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget element</th>
<th>Steady state (1952)</th>
<th>Transient state (end of 1980–81 pumping period)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Steady state (1952)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recharge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stream infiltration along mountain fronts and subsurface inflow from consolidated rocks of the mountain areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canyon Mountains</td>
<td>9,300</td>
<td>9,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheeprock and Gilson Mountains</td>
<td>17,300</td>
<td>17,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsurface inflow from adjoining areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavant Valley</td>
<td>26,800</td>
<td>26,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaver River valley (including some from Milford area)</td>
<td>3,400</td>
<td>3,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sevier Lake area (including Cricket Mountains)</td>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>3,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precipitation on basalt outcrops</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seepage from canals, reservoirs, and unconsumed irrigation water</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Utah Canal</td>
<td>11,900</td>
<td>11,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canals west of Sugarville</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fool Creek Reservoirs</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>2,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconsumed irrigation water on eastern boundary</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>8,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (rounded)</strong></td>
<td>92,000</td>
<td>(1) 92,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transient state (end of 1980–81 pumping period)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recharge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seepage to Sevier River</td>
<td>18,500</td>
<td>3,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear Lake Springs</td>
<td>19,500</td>
<td>19,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evapotranspiration</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>42,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsurface outflow to adjoining areas on western boundary</td>
<td>8,800</td>
<td>8,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wells</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (rounded)</strong></td>
<td>92,000</td>
<td>(1) 88,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The difference between recharge and discharge for the transient-state ground-water budget is because part of the recharge (about 4,000 acre-feet per year) is going into ground-water storage because the amount of water pumped from wells decreased between 1977–79 and 1980–81, resulting in rises in water levels.
and Felts (1986, table 7). Recent studies indicate the previous average rates of evapotranspiration, 0.30 and 0.39 foot (0.09 and 0.12 m) per year, may be too large (see page 25). The model computes evapotranspiration in relation to depth to water, by assuming a rate of about 0.3 foot (0.09 m) per year when the water level is at the land surface (this figure was derived from the model calibration process) and a linear decrease in the evapotranspiration rate until it is zero at a depth to water of 30 feet (9.1 m). The average rate computed by the model is 0.12 foot (0.04 m) per year over the area covered by phreatophytes. It is likely that the total evapotranspiration computed by the model is closer to the true value than the estimate made by Hower and Felts.

The digital model developed in this study has some limitations. The simplified boundary conditions do not automatically allow changes in inflow to or outflow from the modeled area due to changes in hydraulic gradients; and recharge is constant for all simulations regardless of actual variations in recharge, precipitation, and irrigation. In addition, head-dependent discharge from the water-table aquifer to drains in the irrigated areas around Delta was not incorporated into the model of the water-table aquifer and because of the difficulty of simulating the network of closely-spaced drains using the model grid with its minimum node spacing of 1 mile (1.61 km). If water levels in the water-table aquifer were to decline by 10 feet (3.0 m), an estimated 10,000 acre-feet (12.3 hm³) per year of water discharged to drains might remain in the water-table aquifer, but this potential "source" of water cannot be accounted for by the model as it is presently designed. Also, discharge by subsurface outflow to adjacent areas is assumed to occur only in the water-table aquifer. Despite these limitations, the model reproduced observed water-level changes between 1952 and 1982 reasonably well (Holmes, 1983, fig. 7), and should make satisfactory projections of the effects of future ground-water withdrawals on ground-water levels.

Projected Effects of Future Ground-Water Withdrawals

The digital-computer model was used to project the effects on water levels of future ground-water withdrawals over a 20-year simulation period with water levels computed by the model for 1981 as a starting point. The 1977-79 average withdrawal rate of 43,400 acre-feet (53.5 hm³) per year and the 1977-’79 well locations were used as a standard for all simulations. About 60 percent of the withdrawals during 1977-79 were from the deep artesian aquifer and about 40 percent were from the shallow artesian aquifer. The following ground-water withdrawal rates were simulated for 20-year periods: (1) ground-water withdrawals approximately equal to the standard (1977-79 average rate of 43,400 acre-feet (53.5 hm³) per year); (2) ground-water withdrawals at approximately one-half the standard—21,700 acre-feet (27 hm³) per year; (3) ground-water withdrawals at approximately double the standard—68,000 acre-feet (84.4 hm³) per year; and (4) ground-water withdrawals at the 1977-79 seasonal average rate with changes in the locations of withdrawals associated with the Intermountain Power Project including reductions in withdrawals from wells for which water rights have been purchased by the Project.

In the first three simulations, water-level-change maps were prepared that represent the difference between the computed water levels at the end of each simulation and the 1981 water levels. In the fourth simulation, withdrawals simulated were equal to the 1977-79 average rate plus 5,400 acre-feet (6.7 hm³) at the site of the Intermountain Power Project minus withdrawals from wells for which water rights have been purchased by the Project (Jerry Olds, Utah Division of Water Rights, written comm., Aug. 16, 1983). The water-level changes computed for the fourth simulation are only those caused by changes in the locations of withdrawals associated with the Intermountain Power Project, including reductions in withdrawals from wells for which water rights have been purchased by the Project.

Water-level-change maps were not prepared for the water-table aquifer. Water-level and other data for the water-table aquifer were insufficient to design and calibrate the model in terms of this aquifer, and projected levels for the water table may not be reliable. In general, changes in water levels in the water table near the mountain fronts were about the same as changes in water levels in the shallow artesian aquifer, and in the center of the basin changes in water levels in the water table were less than those in the shallow artesian aquifer.

Ground-Water Withdrawals Equal to the 1977-79 Average Rate

Ground-water withdrawals equal to the 1977-79 average rate over a period of 20 years (1981-2000) would cause water-level declines of more than 40 feet (12 m) in the deep artesian aquifer near Lynndyl (fig. 11), and water-level declines of more than 15 feet (4.6 m) in the shallow artesian aquifer near the Pool Creek Reservoir (fig. 12). The 1977-79 average withdrawal of 43,400 acre-feet (54 hm³) per year is the highest 3-year average on record (fig. 6), and therefore, this simulation represents the worst possible case based on previous history.

At the end of the 20-year period, the Sevier River will no longer be a line of net discharge, but instead will be recharging the ground-water reservoir at a net rate of about 6,900 acre-feet (11 hm³) per year. Evapotranspiration also will decrease, due to declining water levels, to about 39,000 acre-feet (49 hm³) per year.

Ground-Water Withdrawals One-Half the 1977-79 Average Rate

Ground-water withdrawals at one-half the 1977-79 average rate for 20 years (1981-2000) would cause water-level declines of more than 15 feet (4.6 m) near Lynndyl and rises of more than 3 feet (1.5 m) near Delta in the deep artesian seaway (fig. 13). Here, too, the water levels will continue to decline even if withdrawals were only one-half the 1977-79 average rate. Near Delta, however, a reduction in withdrawals would allow water levels in the deep artesian aquifer to recover. Ground-water withdrawal at
Figure 11.—Projected water level declines in the deep artesian aquifer for the period 1981-2000, assuming ground-water withdrawals equal to the 1977-79 average rate.
Figure 12.—Projected water-level declines in the shallow artesian aquifer for the period 1981-2000, assuming ground-water withdrawals equal to the 1977-79 average rate.
Figure 13.—Projected water-level changes in the deep artesian aquifer for the period 1981-2000, assuming ground-water withdrawals one-half the 1977-79 average rate.
one-half the 1977-79 average rate would cause water-level declines of up to 4 feet (1.2 m) in the shallow artesian aquifer in most of the Sevier Desert, and rises of more than 5 feet (1.5 m) near Fool Creek and less than 5 feet (1.5 m) near Delta and Sugarville in this aquifer (fig. 14).

At the end of the 20-year period, discharge to the Sevier River will decrease from 3,600 acre-feet (4.4 hm³) per year in 1981 (table 2) to 2,600 acre-feet (3.2 hm³) per year in the year 2000. Evapotranspiration also will decrease from about 42,300 to about 41,800 acre-feet (52.1 to 51.5 hm³) per year.

**Ground-Water Withdrawals Double the 1977-79 Average Rate**

Ground-water withdrawals at double the 1977-79 average rate for 20 years (1981-2000) would cause water-level declines of more than 80 feet (24 m) in the deep artesian aquifer near Lynndyl (fig. 15), and declines of more than 50 feet (15 m) in the shallow artesian aquifer near Oak City (fig. 16).

At the end of the 20-year period, recharge to the ground-water reservoir from the Sevier River would be about 31,900 acre-feet (39 hm³) per year. This is 23 percent of the 42-year average discharge of 134,000 acre-feet (165 hm³) per year at gaging station 10224000 (Sevier River near Lynndyl, Utah) located about 2.8 miles (4.5 km) southwest of Lynndyl, Utah. It is not known if the material beneath the streambed is permeable enough to transmit this much water to the ground-water reservoir, or if flow downstream from the gaging station, after diversion for irrigation, is sufficient to allow this much seepage. Evapotranspiration also decreased to about 35,500 acre-feet (44 hm³) per year.

**Changes in the Location of Ground-Water Withdrawals Related to the Intermountain Power Project**

Changes in the location of ground-water withdrawals related to the Intermountain Power Project would cause water-level declines of more than 15 feet (4.6 m) at the site of the Intermountain Power Project and rises of more than 5 feet (1.5 m) near Oasis in the deep artesian aquifer (fig. 17) over the 1981-2000 period. These changes are in addition to the changes computed assuming withdrawals at the 1977-79 average rate for 20 years. The water-level declines are due to withdrawals of about 5,400 acre-feet (6.7 hm³) per year for the 20-year period from the deep artesian aquifer at the site of the Intermountain Power Project, and the rises are due to the reduction of withdrawals from wells for which water rights have been purchased by the Project and transferred to the Project site.

Only small changes in water levels were projected in the shallow artesian aquifer (fig. 18) due to changes in the locations of ground-water withdrawals related to the Intermountain Power Project. Changes in seepage to or from the
Figure 14.—Projected water-level changes in the shallow artesian aquifer for the period 1981-2000, assuming ground-water withdrawals one-half the 1977-79 average rate.
Figure 15.--Projected water-level declines in the deep artesian aquifer for the period 1981-2000, assuming ground-water withdrawals double the 1977-79 average rate.
Figure 16.—Projected water-level declines in the shallow artesian aquifer for the period 1981-2000, assuming ground-water withdrawals double the 1977-79 average rate.
Figure 17.—Projected water-level changes in the deep artesian aquifer resulting from changes in the location of ground-water withdrawals related to the Intermountain Power Project for the period 1981-2000.
Figure 18.—Projected water level changes in the shallow artesian aquifer resulting from changes in the location of ground-water withdrawals related to the Intermountain Power Project for the period 1981-2000.
Sevier River and discharge by evapotranspiration caused by changes in groundwater withdrawals related to the Project would be less than 500 acre-feet (0.6 hm³) per year.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Ground water in the Sevier Desert occurs in both consolidated rocks and unconsolidated basin fill. Consolidated rocks yield water to springs in the mountains and to a few wells along the margins of the basin, and unconsolidated basin-fill deposits yield water to numerous wells on the basin floor.

The principal aquifers of the Sevier Desert are within the unconsolidated basin fill. The thickness of the basin fill is at least 1,300 feet (400 m) and may be as thick as 2,140 feet (650 m). The ground-water reservoir in most of the Sevier Desert has been divided into shallow and deep artesian aquifers, a confining layer between them, and a water-table aquifer.

Recharge to the basin fill is from seepage from streams, canals, reservoirs, and of unconsumed irrigation water; subsurface inflow from consolidated rocks of the mountains; precipitation on basin outcrops; and subsurface inflow from adjoining areas. Ground water generally moves from recharge areas near the mountains on the northeast and east toward discharge areas in the western part of the study area. Discharge from the unconsolidated basin fill is from springs, seepage to the Sevier River, evapotranspiration, subsurface flow to adjoining areas, and wells.

The transmissivity of artesian aquifers in the Sevier Desert, estimated from aquifer tests, ranges from about 47,000 feet squared per day (4,400 m²/d) in the shallow artesian aquifer on the eastern side of the basin near Oak City to about 7,000 feet squared per day (186 m²/d) in the deep artesian aquifer south of Delta. The storage coefficient of artesian aquifers ranges from 2 x 10⁻³ near the site of the Intermountain Power Project to 6.4 x 10⁻³ near Lyndyl.

The amount of recoverable water in storage in the unconsolidated basin fill is estimated to be about 200 million acre-feet (250,000 hm³). Most of this stored ground water is fresh, but some is of poor quality, especially that in the water-table aquifer in the central part of the study area.

The dissolved solids in spring and well water ranges from less than 100 milligrams per liter to about 49,000 milligrams per liter. In general, the smallest concentrations were in water from springs in the mountains and from wells between Lyndyl and Delta perforated below 500 feet (152 m), and the largest concentrations were from wells perforated above 200 feet (61 m) in the southwestern part of the study area. Water samples from some wells in the south-central part of the study area contained large concentrations of arsenic, and water samples from some large-yield irrigation wells in the Oak City-Fool Creek area contained large concentrations of nitrate plus nitrite.

Ground-water withdrawals have increased from a 1951 to 1963 average of 9,400 acre-feet (11.8 hm³) per year to an average of 27,500 acre-feet (33.9 hm³) per year from 1964 to 1981. During 1963-81, water levels declined 19 feet (5.8 m) in the deep artesian aquifer south of Delta and 10 to 13 feet (3.0-4.0) in the shallow artesian aquifer west of Delta, probably because of increased ground-water withdrawals for irrigation and municipal use.

Ground-water quality in the shallow artesian aquifer in the Leamington-Lyndyl area has continued to deteriorate since 1964. The deterioration probably is the result of water of poor quality (unconsumed irrigation water, seepage from canals and reservoirs, and possibly some infiltration from the Sevier River) recharging the unconsolidated basin fill in this area.

A digital-computer model was used to project the effects of future ground-water withdrawals on water levels, recharge, and discharge. The 1977-79 average withdrawal rate of 43,600 acre-feet (53.5 hm³) over a simulation period of 20 years was used as a standard. Maximum water-level declines of up to 40 feet (12 m) were projected if ground-water withdrawals are equal to the 1977-79 average rate, maximum declines of up to 15 feet (4.5 m) if ground-water withdrawals are one-half the 1977-79 average rate, and maximum declines of up to 80 feet (24 m) if ground-water withdrawals are double the 1977-79 average rate. Projected maximum water-level declines due to changes in the location of ground-water withdrawals related to the Intermountain Power Project are 15 feet (4.5 m).

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