

HYDROGEOLOGY

The Wilcox Group and the overlying Carrizo Formation of the Claiborne Group form a hydraulically connected system known as the Carrizo-Wilcox aquifer. This aquifer extends from the Rio Grande in South Texas northeast-ward into Arkansas and Louisiana, providing water to all or parts of 60 counties. The Carrizo Sand and Wilcox Group crop out along a narrow band that parallels the Gulf Coast and dips beneath the land surface toward the coast, except in the East Texas structural basin adjacent to the Sabine Uplift, where the formations form a trough.

Municipal and irrigation pumpage account for about 35% and 51%, respectively, of total pumpage. The largest metropolitan areas dependent on ground water from the Carrizo-Wilcox aquifer are Bryan-College Station, Lufkin-Nacogdoches, and Tyler. Irrigation is the predominant use in the Winter Garden Region of South Texas.

The Carrizo-Wilcox aquifer is predominantly composed of sand locally interbedded with gravel, silt, clay, and lignite. Deposited during the Tertiary Period. South of the Trinity River and north of the Colorado River, the Wilcox Group is divided into three distinct formations: The Hooper, Simsboro, and Calvert Bluff. Of the three, the Simsboro typically contains the most massive water-bearing sands. This division cannot be made south of the Colorado River or north of the Trinity River due to the absence of the Simsboro as a distinct unit. Aquifer thickness in the downdip artesian portion ranges from less than 200 feet to more than 3,000 feet.

Well yields are commonly 500 gal/min, and some may reach 3,000 gal/min downdip where the aquifer is under artesian conditions. Some of the greatest yields (more than 1,000 gal/min) are produced from the Carrizo Sand in the southern, or Winter Garden, area of the aquifer. Yields of greater than 500 gal/min are also obtained from the Carrizo and Simsboro formations in the central region.

Regionally, water from the Carrizo-Wilcox aquifer is fresh to slightly saline. In the outcrop, the water is hard, yet usually low in dissolved solids. Downdip, the water is softer, has a higher temperature, and contains more dissolved solids. Hydrogen Sulfide and methane may occur locally. Excessively corrosive water with a high iron content is common throughout

much of the northeastern part of the aquifer. Localized contamination of the aquifer in the Winter Garden area is attributed to direct infiltration of oil field brines on the surface and to downward leakage of saline water to the overlying Bigford Formation.

Significant water-level declines have developed in the semiarid Winter Garden portion of the Carrizo aquifer, as the region is heavily dependent on ground water for irrigation. Since 1920, water levels have declined as much as 100 feet in much of the area and more than 250 feet in the Crystal City area of Zavala County. Significant water-level declines resulting from extensive municipal and industrial pumpage also have occurred in Northeast Texas. Tyler and the Lufken-Nacogdoches area have experienced declines in excess of 400 feet, and in a few wells, as much as 500 feet since the 1940's.