

**EXPLANATION**

WELL IN WHICH DEPTH TO WATER WAS MEASURED IN FALL 1993—Upper number, 133, is depth to water, in feet, below land surface. Lower number, 645, is the altitude of the water level, in feet, above mean sea level.

WELL IN WHICH ANOMALOUS DEPTH TO WATER WAS MEASURED IN FALL 1993—Upper number, 240, is depth to water, in feet, below land surface. Lower number, 600, is the altitude of the water level in feet.

APPROXIMATE STREAM CHANNEL OF THE GILA RIVER

APPROXIMATE AREA SUBJECT TO PERIODIC INUNDATION BY PAINTED ROCK RESERVOIR

ALLUVIUM—Consists of semi-consolidated to poorly consolidated sand, silt, clay, and gravel and conglomerate.

HARDROCK (IGNEOUS, METAMORPHIC, OR VOLCANIC ROCK)—Water may occur in weathered, fractured or faulted joint systems, or fluvial deposits overlying bedrock.

BOUNDARY OF GILA BEND BASIN

**INDEX MAP SHOWING AREA OF REPORT (SHADED)**

**WELL FOR WHICH A WATER SAMPLE WAS COLLECTED IN 1991-1993—Upper number, 3490, is specific conductance in microsiemens per centimeter at 25°C. Lower number, 1.6, is the fluoride concentration in milligrams per liter.**

**WELL FOR WHICH A HYDROGRAPH DEPICTING CHANGES IN DEPTH TO WATER IS SHOWN**

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**BOUNDARY OF GILA BEND BASIN**

**CHEMICAL QUALITY DIAGRAM—Shows major constituents in milligrams per liter. The diagrams are in a variety of shapes and sizes, providing a means of comparing, correlating, and characterizing similar or dissimilar types of water. 1991, below diagram, indicates year in which sample was collected.**

**MILLIEQUIVALENTS PER LITER**

20	10	10	10
SODIUM	CALCIUM	MAGNESIUM	CHLORIDE
TOTAL ALKALINITY			SULFATE
1991			

**INTRODUCTION**

The Gila Bend basin is located in western Maricopa County in the Sonoran Desert section of the Basin and Range physiographic province in Arizona (Fenneman, 1931, p. 367-77). The basin is bounded by the Buckeye Hills and the Gila Bend Mountains on the north, the Maricopa Mountains on the east, the Sand Tank Mountains on the southeast, the Saucedo Mountains on the south, the White Hills on the southwest, and the Painted Rock Mountains on the west. The basin consists of parts of two northwest-trending structural troughs separated by the Gila Bend and Sand Tank Mountains (Johnson and Cahill, 1955, p. 7), and encompasses approximately 1,284 square miles. Surface elevations range from 1,085 feet near the Painted Rock Mountains to 524 feet in the bed of the Gila River at Painted Rock Dam.

Paloma Ranch, located west of the Town of Gila Bend, is the largest agricultural operation in the basin. This farm accounts for approximately three-quarters of all acre under cultivation in the Gila Bend basin. The total area currently under irrigation in the basin is about 45,000 acres and the primary crop grown is cotton (Steve Smarick, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Jake Stephens, Paloma Ranch, personal commun., 1995).

Precipitation in the Gila Bend basin averages about 6 inches annually as recorded at Gila Bend, which is located near the center of the basin. The maximum recorded temperature at Gila Bend is 112°F and the minimum is 10°F. The mean daily maximum temperature is 72.4°F (National Weather Service, personal commun., 1995).

The major natural surface-water feature in the Gila Bend basin is the Gila River. Associated manmade features include Gillespie Dam, the Gila Bend Canal, the Enterprise Canal, Painted Rock Dam and Painted Rock Reservoir. The Gila River, which traverses the basin, enters from the north at the site of Gillespie Dam, bends around the Gila Bend Mountains and exits at Painted Rock Dam in the Painted Rock Mountains. The flow of Gila River at Gillespie Dam is perennial, predominantly due to a constant discharge from the City of Phoenix. The City of Phoenix, through the Avenue Water Treatment Facility, return flow of agricultural irrigation water and groundwater pumped into the river for drainage purposes by the Buckeye Irrigation Company. Gillespie Dam is a concrete gravity dam with a spillway. The flow of the Gila River entering the basin to the Gila Bend and Enterprise Canals. These canals supply water to most of the farmland in the Gila Bend basin (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1994, p. 91). Along its entire length, the Gila River is a perennial stream. The Gila Bend Canal for use on Paloma Ranch. Painted Rock Dam was completed in 1960 to control all upstream floods up to approximately 300,000 ft<sup>3</sup>/sec peak flow, and has a maximum controllable discharge of 22,500 ft<sup>3</sup>/sec (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1962, p. 3). Painted Rock Reservoir, created by the dam, inundates approximately 53,200 acres and has a capacity of approximately 2,476,300 acre-feet at the dam spillway crest, which is 661 feet above mean sea level (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1994, p. 67). The operational maximum flood release was exceeded for the first time in February 1993 at a peak outflow of 25,600 ft<sup>3</sup>/sec (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1994, p. 61).

Most of the previous groundwater studies of the Gila Bend basin were based on data collected following a major flood. This study is no exception. Heavy rains from December 1992 to February 1993 resulted in the highest recorded discharge in the history of the basin, and record to near record flows occurred along the Gila River. The total annual flow of the Gila River below Gillespie Dam in 1993 (as measured at USGS station 09519000) was over 5.172 million acre-feet (Smith and others, 1995, p. 247). This was the highest discharge recorded for a single calendar year at this location. As a result of this flooding, Gillespie Dam was breached in January 1993, effectively eliminating surface-water diversions to the Gila Bend Canal. Pumps have subsequently been installed just below the breach to pump surface water from behind a diversion dike into the Gila Bend Canal. These pumps have a maximum capacity of approximately 600 ft<sup>3</sup>/sec (Jake Stephens, Paloma Ranch, personal commun., 1995).

**GEOLOGY**

The fault-block mountain ranges of the Gila Bend basin are the result of tilting and faulting of the existing rocks which probably occurred during the Tertiary Period (Babcock and Kendall, 1948, p. 4). The geologic history of the Gila Bend basin since the Tertiary is the result of alluvial deposition and volcanic activity. Periodic volcanic eruptions produced lava flows and cones that temporarily dammed the Gila River. One volcanic cone in the northern part of the Painted Rock Mountains, the Painted Rock Mountain, was a cinder cone that dammed the Gila River at the present site of Gillespie Dam, which may have diverted the river through the Gila Bend Mountains (Babcock and Kendall, 1948, p. 5).

**Hardrock**

The Gila Bend basin is enclosed by hardrock except for an area on the southwest between the Painted Rock and Saucedo Mountains (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, 1977a, p. 69). Volcanic outcrops between the Saucedo and Painted Rock Mountains are probably remnants of the Sentinel Lava flow. The lava flow consists of Quaternary basalt and occupies about 225 square miles of southwestern Maricopa County to the west of the Gila Bend basin (Oxford and Bender, 1976, p. 3). Basalt, probably from the Gila Bend Mountains, is also present in the basin at shallow depths between 80 and 150 feet below land surface.

Other igneous rocks are found in the mountains surrounding the basin. These include Precambrian granites of varying ages found in all the mountains except the Saucedo and Painted Rock Mountains. Younger granites formed during the Laramide Orogeny crop out in the Buckeye Hills and the White Hills. The White Hills are composed of basalt and Cretaceous andesite occur in the Gila Bend, Sand Tank, Saucedo and Painted Rock Mountains. Metamorphic rocks include older Precambrian gneiss found in the southeastern part of the basin. The gneiss is a variety of schist in the Sand Tank Mountains, Maricopa Mountains and the White Hills. Sedimentary rocks composed of Tertiary sand, gravel and conglomerates are found mainly in the Sand Tank Mountains. A 200-foot cliff of steeply tilted sandstone beds occurs in the extreme southwestern part of the Gila Bend Mountains (Johnson and Cahill, 1955, p. 11).

**Alluvium**

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation divided the alluvium of the Gila Bend basin into three units identified as the upper alluvial unit, the middle fine-grained unit and the lower conglomerate. The composition of the upper alluvial unit is not defined by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, but is reported to range in thickness from 0 to 1,000 feet (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, 1977a, p. 69-70). Approximately 300 to 500 feet of coarse- to fine-grained deposits overlie the locally named S19 Murk Formation in the upper alluvial unit south of the Gila Bend Mountains (Heindl and Armstrong, 1963, p. 431). These deposits were laid down from the late Tertiary to the early Quaternary Period when the main surface-water drainage from the basin was probably around the south end of the Painted Rock Mountains (Heindl and Armstrong, 1963, p. 430-31). The middle fine-grained unit includes the S11 Murk Formation. The middle fine-grained unit ranges in thickness from 700 feet and is found primarily in that part of basin west of Gila Bend but may extend further east (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, 1977a, p. 69-70). The S11 Murk Formation is comprised mainly of pebbles to boulders of granites with thin interbedded volcanics near the top (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, 1977a, p. 70), and is probably late middle Tertiary in age (Heindl and Armstrong, 1963, p. 420). The top of S11 Murk Formation marks an old erosional surface which the upper alluvial unit is deposited. This surface dips gently to the west and south and more steeply to the east away from the Gila Bend Mountains (Heindl and Armstrong, 1963, p. 427). The surface of the lower conglomerate unit ranges from about 600 feet above sea level in the northern part of the basin to over 600 feet below sea level near Paloma Ranch. The age of the lower conglomerate is unknown. Locally, it may exceed 1,000 feet in thickness (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, 1977a, p. 69-70).

For this study, terms proposed by Anderson, Freethey and Tucci (1990, p. 20-26) to describe the fill of alluvial basins in south-central Arizona are used. Stream alluvium refers to the unconsolidated deposits along the Gila River and its tributaries. It ranges in age from late Pliocene to Holocene. Upper basin fill refers to those alluvial deposits that are unconsolidated to moderately consolidated and includes most of the upper alluvial unit identified by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Lower basin fill refers primarily to weakly to highly consolidated gravel, sand, silt and clay which includes most of the middle fine-grained unit, the S11 Murk Formation and lower conglomerate unit identified by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. In general, lower basin fill represents deposition in topographically closed basins with interior drainage and upper basin fill represents deposition during a transition period from a closed- to integrated-drainage basin.

The basin fill north of Gila Bend is relatively thin due to the presence of pediments, and locally contains interbedded volcanics (Holcott, 1953, p. 2). Driller's logs show extensive pediments on the eastern part of the basin north of Gila Bend but virtually none on the west where the basin fill is up to 1,480 feet thick. On the east side of the Gila River the basin fill is generally not much thicker than 1,000 feet and decreases in thickness to the east as the pediments are encountered. Driller's logs show the upper basin fill near Gila Bend is at least 1,622 feet thick. The lower basin fill is at least 160 feet thick near Gila Bend. East of Gila Bend the upper basin fill is at least 2,158 feet thick. The thickness of the lower basin fill in this area is unknown.

**GROUNDWATER**

The upper and lower basin-fill units comprise the principal aquifer of the Gila Bend basin. Groundwater in the upper basin fill is generally unconfined to semi-confined. Perched, semi-perched, or confined conditions occur locally (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, 1977a, p. 69). Groundwater in the Gila Bend basin is primarily recharged by infiltration of surface flows of the Gila River and its tributaries. Other sources of recharge include infiltration of surface water applied to agricultural land and underflow from the Hassayampa sub-basin to the Phoenix Active Management Area north of Gillespie Dam. Changes in water levels throughout the Gila Bend basin are governed by complex interactions of groundwater surface water. Water-level declines occur primarily in response to the pumping of wells during periods of low flow of the Gila River. During periods of high flows, water levels may rise despite large withdrawals of groundwater from wells.

**Occurrence**

West of Gila Bend, on Paloma Ranch, groundwater in the lower basin fill is primarily unconfined except possibly where fine-grained deposits are present causing the groundwater to be locally semi-confined to confined conditions locally (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, 1977a, p. 76). Water-level altitudes in four wells measured in 1993 on Paloma Ranch are 40 to more than 100 feet higher than those of surrounding wells. The depth to water in these four wells range from 65 to 109 feet below land surface. The vertical head differences observed in these wells are probably the result of the heterogeneous nature of the regional aquifer in this area combined with specific well depth and perforated interval of the individual wells rather than the existence of an areally extensive separate aquifer. All four driller's logs of these wells show significant clay layers ranging from 150 to 500 feet thick at various depths. West of Gila Bend under unconfined conditions, depth to water increases southward and ranges from 125 to 323 feet below land surface.

North of Gila Bend, unconfined groundwater occurs primarily in the sand and gravels of the basin fill and may occur in the interbedded volcanics. No extensive clay layers occur in this area to produce confined conditions (White, 1963, p. F21). Water levels north of Gila Bend are shallower west of the Gila River and generally increase in depth toward the east side of the basin. Depth to water ranges from 32 feet below land surface west of the river to 351 feet below land surface about 5 miles east of the river. Depth to water ranges from 31 to over 400 feet below land surface near Gila Bend. Depth to water generally increases with increasing distance from the river due primarily to rising land-surface altitude.

According to Heindl and Armstrong (1963, p. A14) the S11 Murk Formation is one of the principal water-bearing formations of the area of the Gila Bend basin. This formation is part of the lower basin fill and is interconnected with the upper basin fill. It does not constitute a separate aquifer. Heindl and Armstrong (1963, p. A29) believed the S11 Murk Formation extends under the upper basin fill from the northwest toward Gila Bend and possibly beyond. Driller's logs from wells in sec. 33, T. 5 S., R. 3 E., localities 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

**Well Yields**

Historical records and recent data provided by Paloma Ranch show most agricultural well yields in the Gila Bend basin range from 1,000 to 5,000 gal/min. Well yields north of Gila Bend average 2,200 gal/min. West of Gila Bend, well yields average more than 2,400 gal/min.

**Recharge and Movement**

Streamflow in the Gila River and its tributaries varies greatly from year to year. Johnson and Cahill (1955, p. 15) estimated that at least half of the total flow of the Gila River is lost to evaporation. Other factors that affect recharge to the reservoir. Turner (1956, p. 10-11) suggested that approximately 28,000 acre-feet of surface water is recharged annually to the groundwater reservoir of the basin during the average or dry years (1955-1960), and that recharge during years with greater than normal flow could greatly exceed this amount. Overall, since 1976, net surface-water flow into the basin (inflow minus outflow) has been greater than total groundwater pumping (See Fig. 1). Total surface water recharge calculated by combining U.S. Geological Survey stream-gage data from the Gila River below Gillespie Dam, station no. 09519000, and diversions for the Gila Bend and Enterprise Canals, stations 09518500 and 09519000, respectively, (David Aning, U.S. Geological Survey, written communication, 1995). Stream-gage data for the Gila River below Painted Rock Dam, station no. 09519800, was used to calculate the total surface flow out of the basin (David Aning, U.S. Geological Survey, written communication, 1995). Net surface water into the Gila Bend basin from 1976 to 1993 was 6,203,000 acre-feet. Groundwater pumping from the basin was 3,917,000 acre-feet over this time period. Therefore, there was a maximum gain to the aquifer of approximately 2,286,000 acre-feet from recharge. However, evaporation of water temporarily stored in Painted Rock Reservoir following flood periods could greatly diminish this value depending on the length of storage, water-surface area and time of year. Figure 1 shows that pumping has not exceeded net surface water into the basin for a period longer than years since 1976.

Maximum potential recharge from agricultural irrigation for the Gila Bend basin from 1993 is calculated at 57,400 acre-feet. This value was calculated using an average irrigation efficiency of 60 percent and a combined total of 143,548 acre-feet of groundwater pumped and surface water diverted for use on agricultural land in the basin. However, many factors affect infiltration of applied water to diminish the amount of actual recharge. Evapotranspiration, or water use, varies considerably for different plant types, and greatly affects potential groundwater recharge (Dugan and Penckaupt, 1985, p. 9). Other factors that may also affect recharge are the vertical permeability of the soil, the presence of soil layers in the vadose zone, limiting layers, such as clay at depth and physical, chemical and bacteriological processes which occur during infiltration (United Nations, 1975, p. 78). Water containing silt or clay will also tend to reduce infiltration rates as will the quality of the water applied. A high sodium content in recharging water tends to hinder infiltration (Todd, 1980, p. 473-4).

Seepage from the Gila Bend Canal is not believed to be significant because the canal was lined with concrete in the mid 1970's (Jake Stephens, personal commun., 1995). Prior to its lining, Turner (1956, p. 10) reported seepage losses as high as one-third of all water transported by the canal.

Approximately 600 acre-feet per year of underflow to the Gila Bend basin from groundwater flowing beneath lava in the vicinity of Gillespie Dam from the Hassayampa sub-basin to the north. This value was calculated using data collected by Turner (1956, p. 12-13, appendix, p. 7). Turner (1956, p. 12) estimated that an additional 2,500 acre-feet per year of groundwater enters the Gila Bend basin here as underflow in the stream alluvium above the lava. However, the presence of the dam would suggest that most of this water probably enters the basin as surface water. Therefore, the total amount of groundwater underflow to the basin from the Hassayampa sub-basin is probably less than 1,000 acre-feet per year.

Wolcott (1953, p. 3) identified bedrock at shallow depths in the vicinity of the divide separating the Gila Bend basin from the Hassayampa sub-basin. He identified the Gila Bend basin and he excluded the possibility of groundwater movement between the two basins. However, geophysical surveys made in this area suggest water-bearing material down to 1,000 feet below land surface may be present which could allow for some underflow into the Gila Bend basin (Turner, 1956, p. 13).

As groundwater is recharged to the northern part of the basin by surface flows of the Gila River, it generally moves in an easterly direction as a result of heavy pumping east of the river. Contributing to this flow pattern, hardrock, to the west of the river acts as a barrier to groundwater flow. As the water moves eastward around the southern tip of the Gila Bend Mountains, groundwater flow continues in an east-southeasterly direction before turning sharply to the southwest. The overall flow direction of groundwater south of Gila Bend is to the southwest.

Groundwater is forced to the surface by the mountains and rock outcrops in the river channel at Painted Rock Dam. No groundwater flows through the volcanic rocks of the Painted Rock Mountains (Johnson and Cahill, 1955, p. 25). Prior to construction of Painted Rock Dam the amount of groundwater forced to the surface at the Painted Rock Mountains was estimated at less than 6 acre-feet per year during the average or dry years (Johnson and Cahill, 1955, p. 25). It was also estimated that when the river channel was fully saturated, underflow at the narrows could be as much as 30,000 gallons (0.092 acre-feet) per day. If the river channel were fully saturated all year, less than 34 acre-feet of underflow would be forced through the narrows to exit as surface water.

**Cahill and Wolcott (1955, p. 4, pl. 2)** were the first to suggest groundwater principally flowed out of the Gila Bend basin south of the Painted Rock Mountains. No estimate of outflow was made at that time. There is also evidence that the Gila Bend basin is presently moving south through this area after a lava flow dammed its path through the Painted Rock Narrows (Turner, 1956, p. 3-4). Contours of groundwater-surface altitude suggest that most the groundwater in the western part of the Gila Bend basin presently moves south away from the Painted Rock Reservoir area and exits the basin south of the Painted Rock Mountains. Lava flows associated with the Sentinel Plain lava flow in this area lay on alluvium, and are too thin and occur at depths too shallow to act as barriers to groundwater flow.

**MATERIALS**

The earliest comprehensive sampling of groundwater in the Gila Bend basin was done by the U.S. Geological Survey in 1946. Results of analyses from that time showed the quality of groundwater throughout the basin was poor and would be classified as unsatisfactory for most agricultural uses. Groundwater throughout the basin was found to have a high dissolved-solids concentration consisting mostly of large amounts of sodium and chloride. Groundwater to the north of Gila Bend had even higher concentrations of dissolved solids. There were higher amounts of calcium and magnesium and lower amounts of fluoride than groundwater to the south and west (Hem, in Babcock and Kendall, 1948, p. 15). Groundwater samples for this study were collected from 1991 to 1993 (map 2) and, with few exceptions, analyses show that water quality conditions have not changed since 1946.

**FLUORIDE CONCENTRATIONS**

Fluoride concentrations in groundwater from wells sampled for this study range from 0.2 to 5.9 mg/L. Fluoride from wells to the north of Gila Bend average 2.0 mg/L. Samples from wells to the south and west average 4.8 mg/L of fluoride. The dividing line between the north and south and west parts of the basin is arbitrarily drawn diagonally from the northwest corner of T. 5 N., R. 4 W. to the center of T. 6 S., R. 3 W. though Gila Bend is located south of this line. The maximum contaminant level (MCL) for fluoride is either 4.0 or 6.0 mg/L. The MCL is an enforceable standard set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for drinking water. The fluoride level allowed for most municipal and lower amounts of fluoride than groundwater to the south and west (Hem, in Babcock and Kendall, 1948, p. 15). Private domestic wells and wells used for agriculture are exempt from state and Federal regulations of water quality. Analyses of samples collected between 1991 and 1993 show sulfate, alkalinity and specific-conductance values are higher north of Gila Bend than elsewhere in the basin.

**GROUNDWATER SAMPLES**

Groundwater samples from four wells sampled for this study exceed the MCL for nitrates (NO<sub>3</sub> + NO<sub>2</sub>, dissolved) of 10 mg/L as N. Samples from two of these wells also exceed the MCL for nitrate as nitrogen. The maximum concentration of nitrates in

HYDROGRAPHS OF THE WATER LEVEL IN SELECTED WELLS  
(Dashed lines indicates inferred water level)

WATER LEVEL, IN FEET, BELOW LAND SURFACE

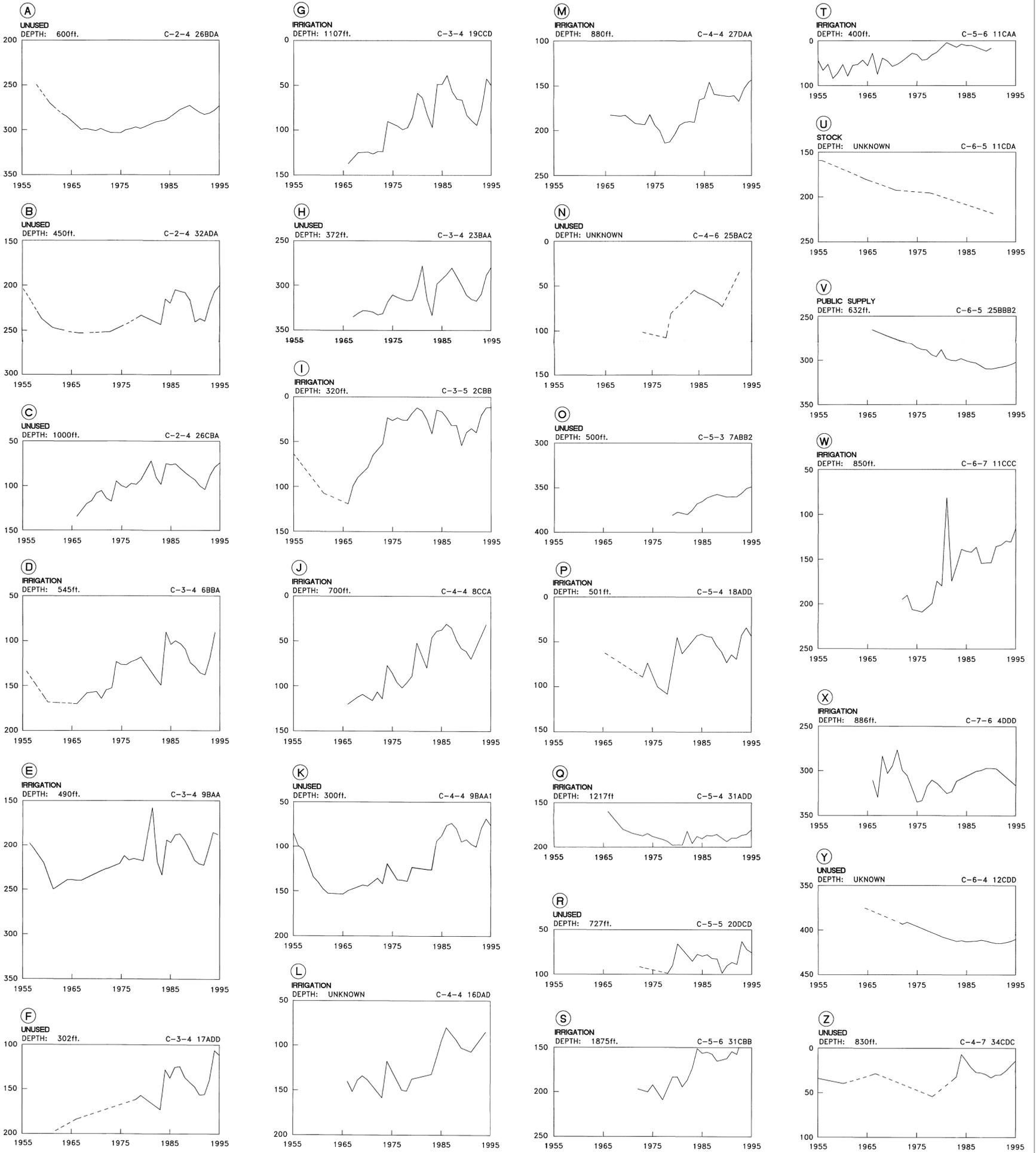
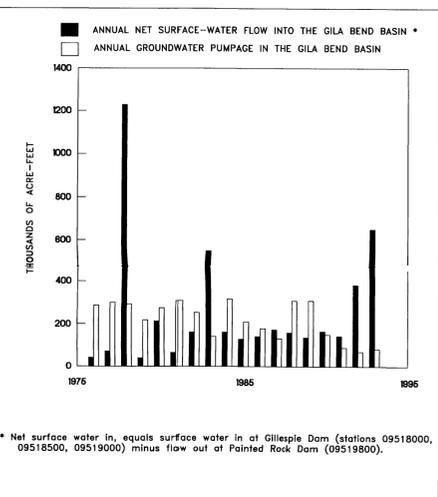
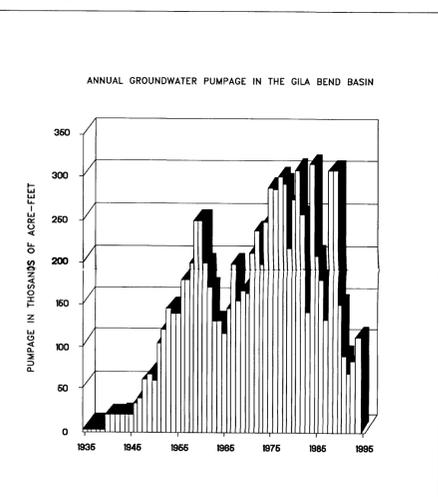


FIGURE 1



\* Net surface water in, equals surface water in at Gillespie Dam (stations 09518000, 09518500, 09519000) minus flow out at Painted Rock Dam (09519800).

FIGURE 2



Water-Level Change

Hydrographs of wells with water-level data prior to 1966 show that water levels declined in most of these wells up to the mid-1960's while pumpage exceeded potential recharge. In the 5 years prior to 1966, the total flow of the Gila River below Gillespie Dam was only 30,168 acre-feet (David Anning, U.S. Geological Survey, written commun., 1995). Groundwater pumpage from the basin over this same time period was estimated at approximately 745,000 acre-feet (Anning and Duet, 1994, sheet 1).

From 1966 to 1976, significant recharge was limited to the northern part of the basin. Depth to water in the northern part of the basin decreased during this period, primarily due to high flows in 1966 and 1973. However, depth to water increased in the central part of the basin during this same time period as pumpage throughout the basin increased dramatically. (See fig. 2.)

FIGURE 3

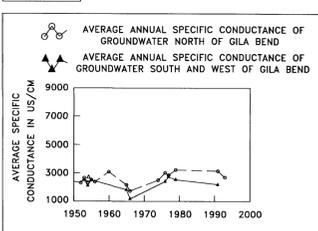


FIGURE 5

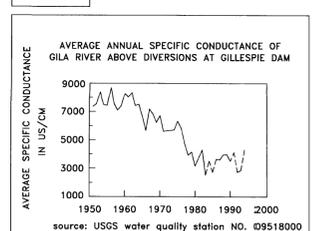
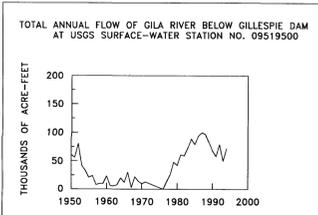


FIGURE 4



Depth to water has decreased since 1976 throughout most of the basin and has nearly recovered to at or above the first recorded measurement for individual wells. Recharge to the groundwater reservoir, primarily by surface flows of the Gila River, is the principal cause of this overall rise in static water levels. Few water levels declined from 1976 to the present. These declines are limited mainly to the area southwest of Gila Bend where there is a high concentration of large-capacity irrigation wells. Eight of these wells were drilled in 1977 and have been pumped extensively. Declines in this area southwest of Gila Bend are the result of heavy sustained pumping by these and other large-capacity wells. (See hydrographs U and V, sheet 3.)

No significant coalescing cones of depression or groundwater mounds discussed in previous reports were observed during this study. A slight depression in the groundwater surface south of Gila Bend may become more pronounced during prolonged dry periods.