

Water-Table and Aquifer-Susceptibility Maps of Calumet County, Wisconsin

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Miscellaneous Map 56

INTRODUCTION
The Calumet County Board of Supervisors sponsored the Calumet County Groundwater Project to provide information pertinent to protecting the quality of groundwater resources in the county. These maps and figures are products of this project. They are based upon our compilation and analysis of geologic and hydrologic data. The maps illustrate significant characteristics of the regional groundwater flow system and its susceptibility to contamination from human activities. The information presented here indicates that large parts of the groundwater system in Calumet County currently used for drinking-water supplies are moderately or highly susceptible to contamination, underscoring the need for sound planning to maintain a safe drinking-water supply.

THE GROUNDWATER SYSTEM
The water cycle is a continuous recycling of water through the Earth's atmosphere, oceans, glaciers, lakes, rivers, soil, and rock (fig. 1). Precipitation that reaches the land surface can flow downhill as overland runoff, evaporate, transpire through plants, or infiltrate the ground. Water that infiltrates the ground percolates through pore spaces and cracks, or *fractures*, in soil and rock. Where these pores and fractures are completely filled with water, the material is *saturated*.

The *water table* is the surface formed by the top of the saturated zone, where hydraulic pressure in the pores is equal to atmospheric pressure. *Groundwater* is the water contained in the saturated zone beneath the water table. Above the water table, where pores and fractures are filled completely with air or with some air and some water, is the *unsaturated* zone. The amount of precipitation that infiltrates the soil and reaches the saturated zone is an important factor in determining the elevation of the water table, which fluctuates seasonally and from one year to another.

In Calumet County, 29 to 32 inches of precipitation fall on the ground surface during an average year. Approximately 70 to 75 percent of this amount cycles back to the atmosphere by evaporation and transpiration by plants (Hindall and Borman, 1974). The remainder either flows as runoff on the land surface to streams and lakes or infiltrates through soil or rock to the water table, where it recharges the groundwater system. Many factors, such as topography, vegetation, rainfall intensity, and soil and rock type, affect the amount of precipitation that reaches the groundwater system. For example, in areas where the land surface is covered extensively by pavement (such as parking lots and roadways), stormwater runoff to surface water is increased and groundwater recharge is decreased.

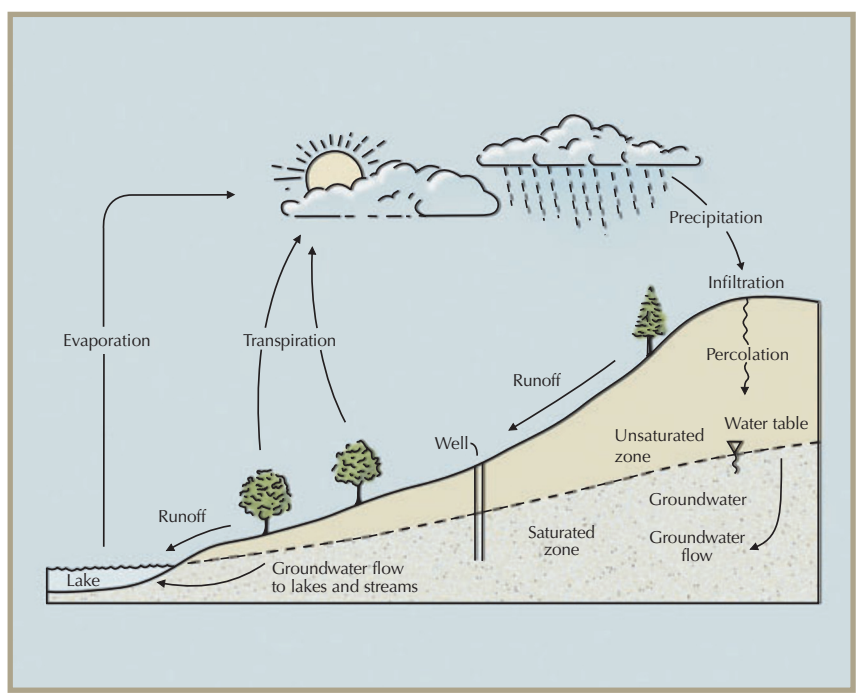


Figure 1. The water cycle (modified from Dunne and Leopold, 1978).

Groundwater flow and discharge
An *aquifer* is geologic material (such as sand and gravel deposits or a bedrock layer) that is saturated and yields water to wells. *Hydraulic conductivity* is a measure of an aquifer's ability to transmit groundwater; it is dependent on the nature of the material through which the water is flowing. Large pores or fractures can hold more water than small ones, but for water to flow effectively within an aquifer, those pores or fractures must be connected. An *aquiclude* is a rock or sediment layer consisting of low conductivity material (such as shale or clay) that restricts the flow of groundwater and yields very little water to wells. *Confined aquifers* underlie aquicludes; *unconfined aquifers* are, or close to, the ground surface. The *potentiometric surface* represents the water pressure in a confined aquifer; that is, the elevation to which water will rise in wells completed in that aquifer. The water in wells completed in an unconfined aquifer will rise to the elevation of the water table.

Each contour line on the water-table elevation map (shown right) connects points of equal water-table elevation. The natural direction of groundwater flow is in response to gravity, from areas of higher water-table elevation to lower water-table elevation, generally perpendicular to lines of equal water-table elevation. Arrows on the map indicate the general direction of shallow groundwater flow across the county, from high to low water-table elevation.

Groundwater flows through aquifers from recharge to discharge areas. The uplands, where the water-table elevation is higher, tend to be areas where water infiltrates the ground and recharges groundwater. In Wisconsin and other parts of the Midwest, surface-water bodies such as lowland streams, lakes, and wetlands are typically areas of groundwater discharge. Such discharge occurs when the nearby water-table elevation is higher than the elevation of the surface-water body, and groundwater flows into the surface water. Rivers and streams have water flowing in them even during extended periods of drought because they are fed by groundwater.

An example of flow from recharge to discharge areas can be seen on the map along the ridge northeast of Brotherton. There, the elevation of the water table is approximately 1,000 ft. Arrows on the map illustrate that shallow groundwater flows to the west, where glacial deposits discharge to Lake Winnebago, which has an elevation of 747 ft. The arrows on the water-table elevation map show that shallow groundwater also flows from the ridge top to the east, discharging to Stony Brook and the South Branch of the Manitowish River.

Springs are natural points of groundwater discharge. In western Calumet County, shallow groundwater discharging through fractures in the dolomite feeds the many springs found along the Niagara Escarpment (a steep bluff formed by the exposed edge, or *outcrop*, of Silurian dolomite).

Water wells are manmade points of groundwater discharge. Pumping lowers the water level in a well, inducing flow to the well from the surrounding aquifer. Pumping can cause a drop in the level of the water table, called a *cone of depression*, around the well. The relatively low volume of groundwater that is currently withdrawn from shallow wells in Calumet County does not cause cones of depression large enough to be seen at the scale of this water-table map. However, pumping from deep wells results in a cone of depression in the potentiometric surface of the sandstone aquifer in Calumet County, as discussed in the next section, *Geology and groundwater availability*.

A *surface-water divide* is a line of separation, commonly along a ridge or tract of high ground, that divides surface waters that flow naturally into one basin from those that flow naturally into a different basin. The major surface-water divides in Calumet County are shown on the water-table map. These divides separate the basins of Lake Winnebago, the lower Fox River, the Manitowish River, and the Sheboygan River.

A *groundwater divide* is similar to a surface-water divide; it is an imaginary line along the highest elevations of the water table. Shallow groundwater flows away from groundwater divides, toward groundwater discharge areas. Groundwater divides do not necessarily coincide with surface-water divides, although the major groundwater divides in Calumet County are along or relatively close to surface-water divides. The locations of groundwater divides on this map are approximate and may change as the water table rises and falls in response to periods of rainfall and drought. Significant amounts of groundwater pumping from wells drilled near divides may also cause a divide to shift.

The groundwater divides in Calumet County can be used to identify the areas in which shallow groundwater flows toward particular stream systems. For example, in northern Calumet County, groundwater flows toward the lower Fox River and its tributaries. In western Calumet County, a groundwater divide separates the area where groundwater flows toward Lake Winnebago from the area where flow is toward the Manitowish River and its tributaries, including the Kilbucke River, Stony Brook, and the North and South Branches of the Manitowish River. In the southeastern part of the county, the divide indicates the area where groundwater flows toward the Sheboygan River.

Geology and groundwater availability
The nature and extent of various geologic materials determine the types and thicknesses of aquifers and aquicludes in Calumet County. The uppermost geologic material consists of glacially deposited sediment that overlies bedrock, although in much of central and southern Calumet County, glacial deposits are very thin or absent, and the bedrock is close to the ground surface (fig. 2B). Across most of the county, Silurian dolomite forms the uppermost bedrock (fig. 3). Shale of the Maquoketa Formation is the uppermost bedrock in the Silurian dolomite; it is absent to the north and west. In the northwest corner of the county, where the Silurian dolomite and Maquoketa shale are absent, the dolomite of the Siniptee Group forms the uppermost bedrock. The thicknesses and depths of these units vary across the county, as illustrated in the cross sections shown in figure 2. The layers of bedrock dip to the east, toward Lake Michigan, and are truncated to the west.

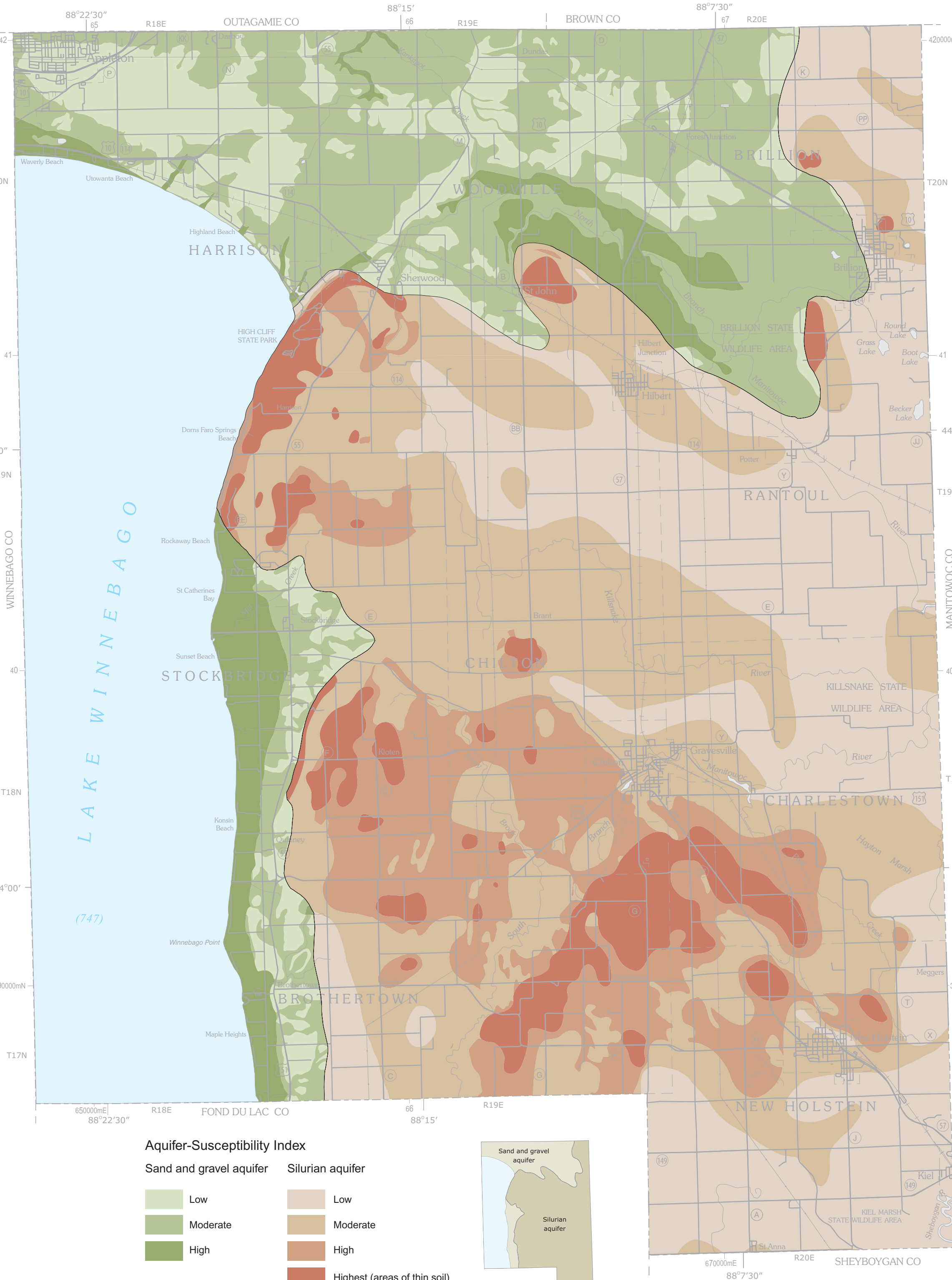
The units of hydrogeologic significance in Calumet County are as follows:
• **Sand and gravel aquifer.** In Calumet County, the glacial sediment is predominantly composed of silty sand and clayey, silty sand mixed with gravel and larger rock fragments. Lacustrine silt and clay (sediment deposited in lakes that were formed during the glacial period) and peat are at or near the land surface in many lowland areas (B.J. Socha, 2004, written communication).

Deposits of sand and gravel lie within these fine-grained materials in many areas of Calumet County. These deposits are typically well sorted and well connected. Pore spaces that have high hydraulic conductivity; these materials make prolific aquifers that readily yield water to wells. In parts of the county, the lenses of sand and gravel are small and discontinuous. However, in areas of northern and western Calumet County, such lenses are sufficiently thick and permeable to constitute the uppermost aquifer, and many domestic wells are completed in them.

In other areas of Calumet County, the glacial deposits consist of clay that has low hydraulic conductivity. Although the clay may be saturated, groundwater flows through the sandstone aquifer above. These units consist of low hydraulic conductivity peat and sand that does not readily yield water to wells and restricts the flow of groundwater to underlying bedrock.



Water-table elevation map of Calumet County, Wisconsin



Susceptibility map of the uppermost aquifers in Calumet County, Wisconsin

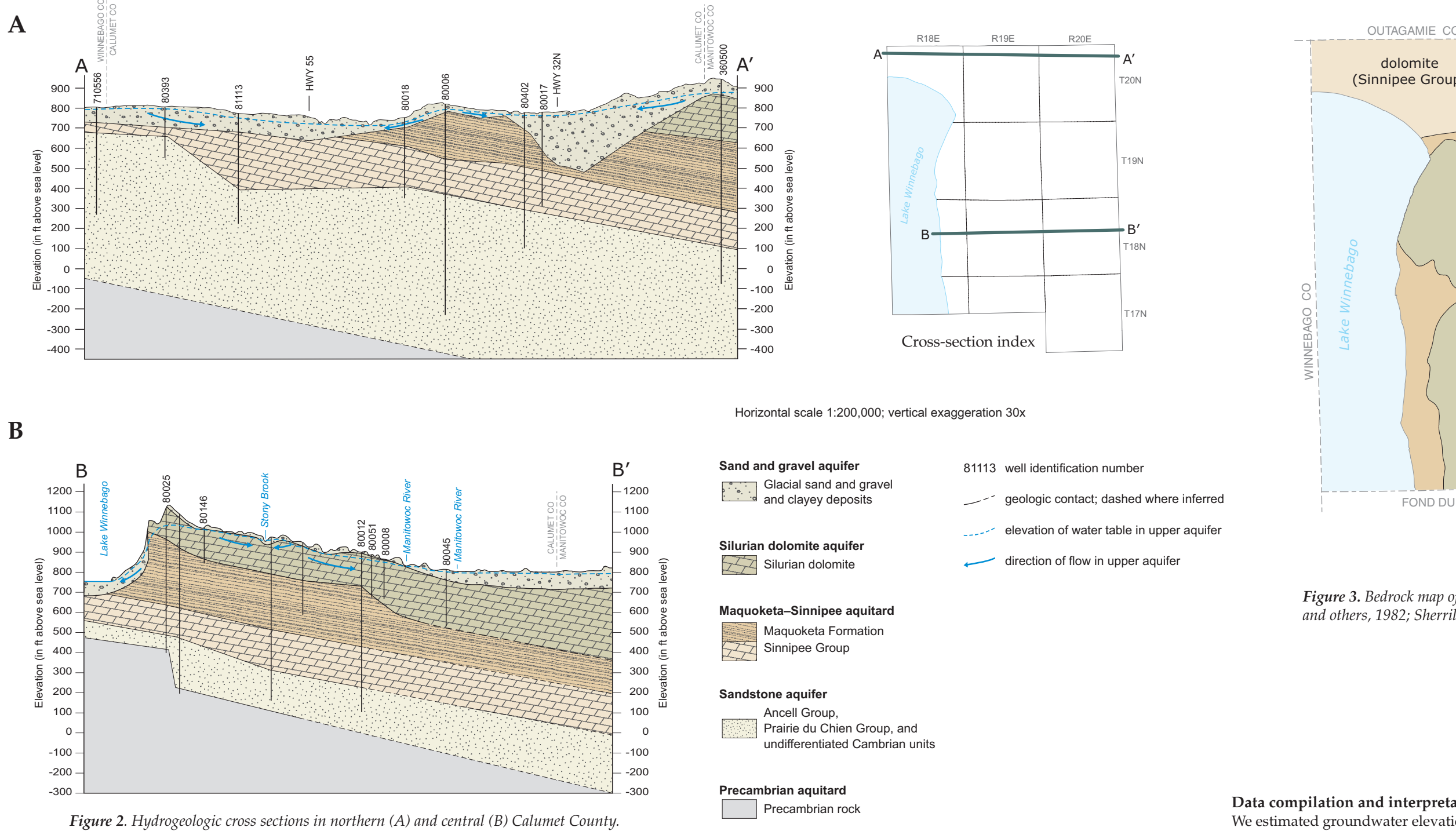


Figure 2. Hydrologic cross sections in northern (A) and central (B) Calumet County.

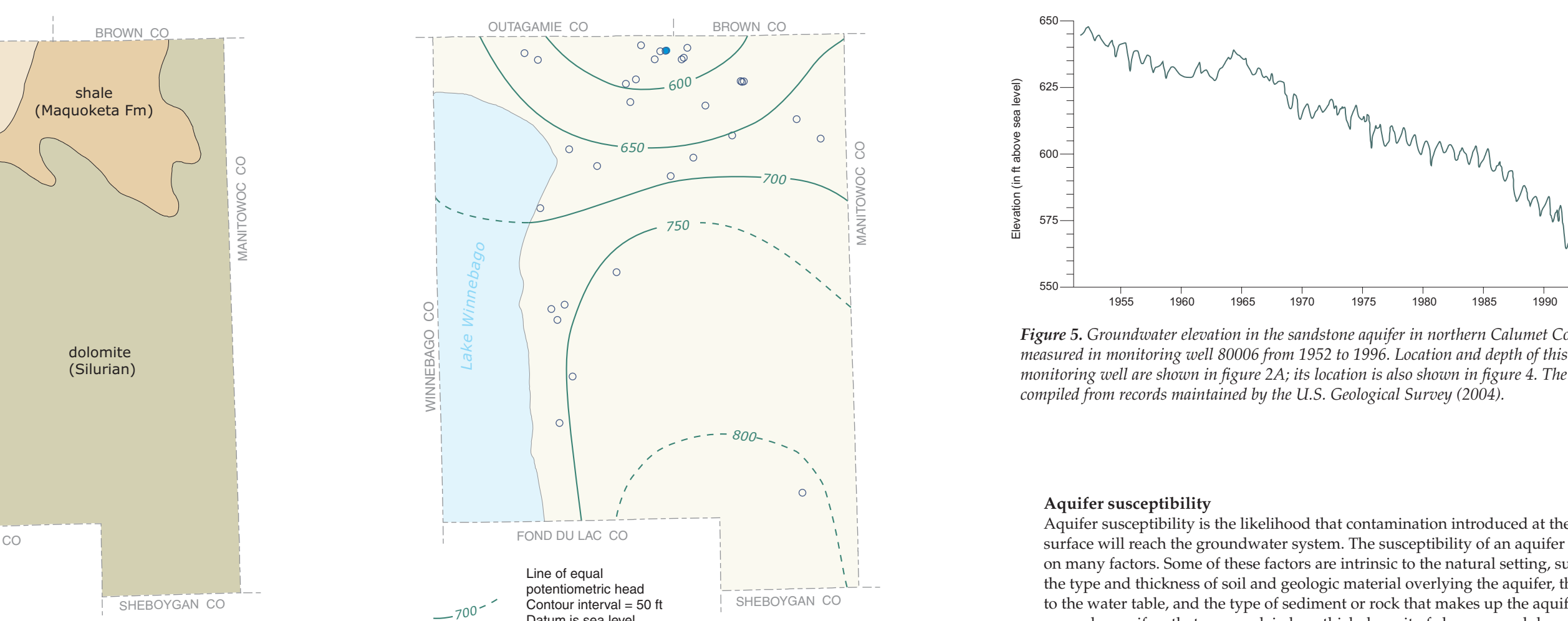


Figure 3. Bedrock map of Calumet County (adapted from Mudge and others, 1982; Sherrill, 1979).

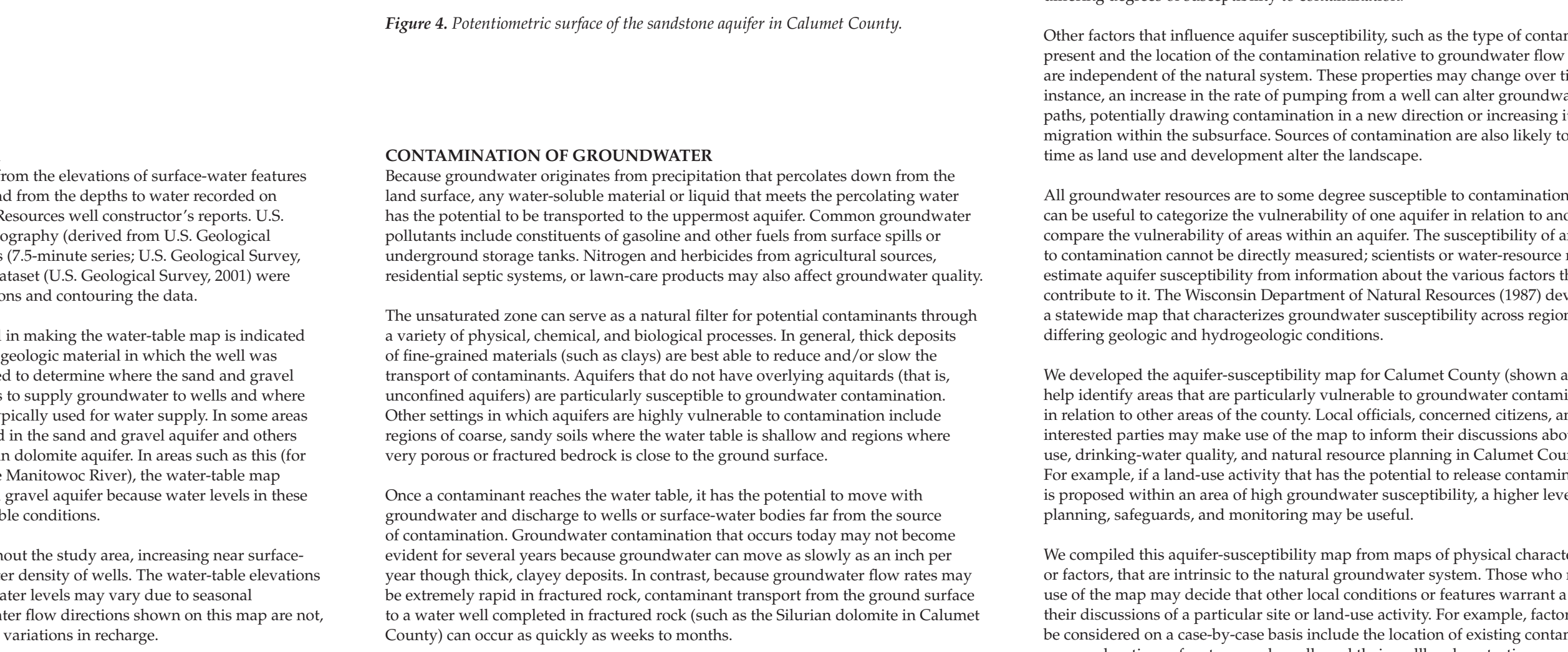


Figure 4. Potentiometric surface of the sandstone aquifer in Calumet County.

Data compilation and interpretation
We estimated groundwater elevations from the elevations of surface-water features such as streams, lakes, and wetlands and from the depths to water recorded on 250 Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources well constructor's reports. U.S. Geological Survey digital data for hydrography (derived from U.S. Geological Survey, 2001), topographic quadrangles (7.5-minute series; U.S. Geological Survey, 1996-97), and the National Elevation Dataset (U.S. Geological Survey, 2001) were used as aids in estimating these elevations and contouring the data.

The reported location of each well used in making the water-table map is indicated with a symbol representing the type of geologic material in which the well was completed. This information can be used to determine where the sand and gravel aquifer is present in sufficient thickness to supply groundwater to wells and where the Silurian dolomite aquifer is more typically used for water supply. In some areas of the county, some wells are completed in the sand and gravel aquifer and others are completed in the underlying Silurian dolomite aquifer. In areas such as this (for example, along the North Branch of the Manitowish River), the water-table map shows wells completed in the sand and gravel aquifer because water levels in these wells are more likely to reflect water-table conditions.

The accuracy of the map varies throughout the study area, increasing near surface-water bodies and where there is a greater density of wells. The water-table elevations shown on this map are approximate; water levels may vary due to seasonal fluctuations in recharge. The groundwater flow directions shown on this map are not, however, typically affected by seasonal variations in recharge.

The use of water levels recorded on well constructor's reports to create this map may also be a source of inaccuracy. Water-supply wells are not ideal measuring points for determining the water-table elevation because most of these wells are open to the aquifer over long intervals that extend far below the top of the saturated zone. This well design provides a good measurement of depth to groundwater in low-lying areas where groundwater flow is predominantly horizontal. At higher elevations and in areas of steep terrain, groundwater flow may have a significant vertical component. In such areas, the water level measured in a well may be lower than the water-table elevation. For this reason, it is difficult to determine accurately the water-table elevation on ridgelines.

Groundwater pumping from wells in northern Winnebago and Calumet Counties and southern Outagamie and Brown Counties affects groundwater levels in the sandstone aquifer in Calumet County. As shown in figure 4, groundwater withdrawals across the region cause a cone of depression in the potentiometric surface of this aquifer. Water levels reported in wells open to the sandstone aquifer results of regional groundwater flow modeling (Conlon, 1998), and an interpretation of the potentiometric surface in Fond du Lac County (K.R. Bradbury, 2003, written communication) were considered in constructing the map of the potentiometric surface. The uncertainty associated with this map is high because recent water-level data from deep wells in Calumet County are scarce, and the potentiometric surface changes as the large volume of pumping from the aquifer continues. Data collected from a monitoring well in northern Calumet County demonstrate that the sandstone aquifer is not sufficient to delineate the thickness and extent of these low hydraulic conductivity layers in the county.

• **Sandstone aquifer.** A series of permeable sedimentary bedrock units (the Ordovician Ancell and Prairie du Chien Groups and various Cambrian units) forms a sandstone aquifer underlying the Maquoketa-Siniptee aquifer. As shown in figure 2, this aquifer is encountered at depths ranging from 100 to 800 feet below ground surface across the county. Groundwater can travel at rates up to several feet per day through porous sandstone aquifers, and the sandstone and dolomite layers that constitute this aquifer yield large volumes of groundwater to wells. Detailed investigations of the hydrology of northeastern Wisconsin (Krohelski, 1986; Conlon, 1998) identified regionally extensive layers of silty, shaly dolomite that function as aquicludes within the more permeable sedimentary units of the sandstone aquifer. However, the data available for Calumet County are not sufficient to delineate the thickness and extent of these low hydraulic conductivity layers in the county.

• **Precambrian aquifer.** Relatively impermeable Precambrian rock underlies the sandstone aquifer and forms an aquitard that is a lower boundary to the groundwater system.

Groundwater pumping from wells in northern Winnebago and Calumet Counties and southern Outagamie and Brown Counties affects groundwater levels in the sandstone aquifer in Calumet County. As shown in figure 4, groundwater withdrawals across the region cause a cone of depression in the potentiometric surface of this aquifer. Water levels reported in wells open to the sandstone aquifer results of regional groundwater flow modeling (Conlon, 1998), and an interpretation of the potentiometric surface in Fond du Lac County (K.R. Bradbury, 2003, written communication) were considered in constructing the map of the potentiometric surface. The uncertainty associated with this map is high because recent water-level data from deep wells in Calumet County are scarce, and the potentiometric surface changes as the large volume of pumping from the aquifer continues. Data collected from a monitoring well in northern Calumet County demonstrate that the sandstone aquifer is not sufficient to delineate the thickness and extent of these low hydraulic conductivity layers in the county.

This map is intended for use at the scale of publication (1:100,000). It is a regional interpretation of the water table and may not be sufficient for use at site-specific scales. Information used from the well constructor's reports was not field verified.

Construction and interpretation of the aquifer-susceptibility map
We constructed an aquifer-susceptibility map for the uppermost aquifers in the county; we did not construct a susceptibility map for the sandstone aquifer because it is well protected from land-use activities by the Maquoketa-Siniptee aquifer. We considered the sand and gravel aquifer to be the uppermost aquifer where the Silurian dolomite aquifer is absent because most domestic water wells in these areas are completed in sand and gravel seams within the glacial deposits. We considered the Silurian dolomite aquifer the uppermost aquifer everywhere this dolomite is present in the county because most domestic water wells are completed in the dolomite. However, in a few areas of the county some domestic wells are completed in glacial deposits overlying the Silurian dolomite (for example, along the North Branch of the Manitowish River). In these areas, we mapped the susceptibility of the Silurian aquifer, rather than the overlying sand and gravel deposits, because many wells are completed in the dolomite. The extent of each aquifer shown on the susceptibility map is based on our interpretation of available well construction reports and geologic logs and the map of the Silurian aquifer presented by Sherrill (1979).

Susceptibility of the sand and gravel aquifer
We considered two factors in determining the susceptibility of the sand and gravel aquifer to contamination: the type of glacial deposits present (based on mapping by B.J. Socha, 2004, written communication) and the depth to the water table (derived from the water-table map). These factors are significant because fine-grained material (such as silt or clay) at the ground surface tends to reduce and/or slow the transport of contaminants through the subsurface. The depth to the water table is important because the greater the distance from the land surface to the water table, the longer the amount of time available for contaminants to degrade within the unsaturated zone. Areas of this aquifer mapped as having high susceptibility consist of relatively permeable deposits and shallow depths to groundwater. In areas mapped as having low susceptibility, the sand and gravel aquifer lies beneath finer-grained materials and the water table is deeper.

The thickness of the deposits overlying an aquifer is also a factor that affects the rate of contaminant transport to the aquifer. However, in Calumet County, some wells constructed in the sand and gravel aquifer are completed in shallow sand seams and some are completed deeper within the dolomite. In making this map, we did not consider the thickness of deposits overlying the sand or gravel because it is specific to each well and could not be mapped reliably for the purposes of this project.

In determining the sand and gravel aquifer susceptibility, we assigned the two factors an equal amount of importance. A grid of 10 meter by 10 meter cells was overlaid on the county map. Each cell was assigned a value of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most vulnerable, for each of the two categories. The values were summed for each cell; the higher scores indicated greater aquifer susceptibility. The edges of the resulting grid of susceptibility rankings were smoothed so that the regions of aquifer susceptibility were mapped at a level of detail similar to the level of accuracy of the inputs to this assessment.

Susceptibility of the Silurian dolomite aquifer
The susceptibility of the Silurian aquifer reflects the potential for rapid contaminant transport from the ground surface to wells through fractures in the dolomite. To construct the map of this aquifer, we considered two factors: the thickness of deposits overlying the dolomite aquifer and the type of glacial deposits overlying the aquifer. Fractures provide a direct and rapid pathway for contaminants to reach saturated bedrock. Natural attenuation of contaminants, which typically occurs in unsaturated materials above the water table, may not take place where fractures provide a pathway for rapid contaminant migration.

The depth to groundwater was not considered in constructing the susceptibility of this aquifer because of the extensive fractures present within the Silurian dolomite. Fractures provide a direct and rapid pathway for contaminants to reach saturated bedrock. Natural attenuation of contaminants, which typically occurs in unsaturated materials above the water table, may not take place where fractures provide a pathway for rapid contaminant migration.

In contrast to our determination of the susceptibility of the sand and gravel aquifer, we did not assign equal weight to the two factors considered in determining the susceptibility of the Silurian aquifer. For this aquifer, the thickness of materials overlying the dolomite was given twice as much weight as the susceptibility of the sand and gravel aquifer. Fractures provide a direct and rapid pathway for contaminants to reach saturated bedrock. Natural attenuation of contaminants, which typically occurs in unsaturated materials above the water table, may not take place where fractures provide a pathway for rapid contaminant migration.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
The Calumet County Board of Supervisors and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Drinking Water and Groundwater funded this work. Dan Cassidy and Kurt Zeiler compiled data for the project. Ken Johnson of the Calumet County Land Information Office, Eugene McLeod of Calumet County Land and Water Conservation Department, Kenneth R. Bradbury and John W. Atting of Wisconsin Geological and Natural History, and Jeffrey Helmuth of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources reviewed these maps and text. We thank them for their thorough assessments and suggestions, which helped to significantly improve these products.

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Digital cartography and editing by K.C. Roushaur

Base map constructed from U.S. Geological Survey Digital Line Graph files (1990, scale 1:100,000), modified by Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (1992) and Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey (2005). Wisconsin Transverse Mercator Projection 1991 adjustment to the North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83).

These maps are interpretations of the data available at the time of preparation. Every reasonable effort has been made to ensure that these interpretations conform to sound scientific and cartographic principles; however, the users should be used to guide site-specific decisions without verification. Proper use of the maps is the sole responsibility of the user.

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