

Unconsolidated Aquifer Systems of Kosciusko County, Indiana

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Six unconsolidated aquifer systems have been mapped in Kosciusko County: the Auburn/Bluffton/Warsaw Till; the Nappanee; the Auburn/Bluffton/Warsaw Complex; the Natural Lakes and Moraines; the Natural Lakes and Moraines Subsystem; and the St. Joseph and Tributary Valleys/Wabash River and Tributaries Outwash. The northern portion of the county has been described and mapped in two previously published regional basin study reports (Water Resource Availability in the St. Joseph River Basin, Indiana, 1987 and Water Resource Availability in the Kankakee River Basin, Indiana, 1990).

Kosciusko County has a very complex glacial history as it was subjected to multiple glacial advances from the north, northeast and east. The county lies in an interlobate area that was affected by the Saginaw lobe and Huron-Erie lobes. The dynamic interaction of the lobes resulted in a complex overlap and cross-cutting of glacial terrains. The resulting glacial landscape includes moraines, ground moraines, outwash channels, tunnel valleys (subglacial drainage channels) and outwash plains. In southeastern Kosciusko County a well developed moraine exists around the town of Packerton. The Packerton Moraine reaches an elevation of over 960 feet mean sea level (msl) and rises over 175 feet above adjacent valleys of the Tippecanoe River and the Eel River. Outwash channels and/or tunnel valleys trend to the northwest off the flank of the Packerton Moraine where they intersect a broad outwash plain. This broad valley is currently occupied by the Tippecanoe River which trends west to southwest across the center of Kosciusko County. This outwash plain broadens to more than five miles wide, where it is intersected by a north-south trending outwash plain in the north-central part of the county (around Leesburg). Due to the area's complex glacial history, the boundaries between the systems are gradational and individual aquifers may extend across aquifer system boundaries.

The thickness of unconsolidated sediments in Kosciusko County is quite variable, ranging from around 150 feet in small areas along the north-central border, western border and southeastern border of the county, to in excess of 350 feet in the central part of the county. Elsewhere in Kosciusko County, unconsolidated deposits are commonly 200 to 300 feet thick. Almost all the domestic wells are completed in unconsolidated deposits in the county.

Regional estimates of aquifer susceptibility to contamination from the surface can differ considerably from local reality. Variations within geologic environments can cause variation in susceptibility to surface contamination. In addition, man-made structures such as poorly constructed water wells, unplugged or improperly abandoned wells, and open excavations can provide contaminant pathways that bypass the naturally protective clays.

Auburn/Bluffton/Warsaw Till Aquifer System

The Auburn/Bluffton/Warsaw Till Aquifer System is mapped in the southeastern corner of the county along the Whitley County line and primarily consists of thick clay with intratill sand and gravel layers. In Kosciusko County, this system ranges in thickness from about 150 feet to more than 250 feet. Saturated aquifer materials include sand and/or gravel layers that commonly range from 5 to 10 feet thick and are typically overlain by 80 to 120 feet of till.

This system is generally capable of meeting the needs of most domestic and some high-capacity users. Wells producing from the Auburn/Bluffton/Warsaw Till Aquifer System range from 68 to 225 feet deep. Domestic well capacities are commonly 15 to 60 gallons per minute (gpm) and static water levels range from flowing to 92 feet below the surface.

The Auburn/Bluffton/Warsaw Till Aquifer System has a low susceptibility to surface contamination because intratill sand and gravel units are commonly separated from the surface by thick till layers.

Nappanee Aquifer System

In Kosciusko County, the Nappanee Aquifer System is mapped along the northwestern and southwestern portions of the county. This system typically consists of thick clay with intratill sand and gravel deposits. In places the system can be 250 feet in total thickness. Aquifer sand and gravel layers are commonly less than 10 feet but isolated thicknesses up to 20 feet have been reported.

Well depths commonly range from 50 to 200 feet below the surface. Potential aquifer layers include sand and/or gravel that typically range from 5 to 15 feet thick. Aquifer materials are generally overlain by 40 to 80 feet of clay and can include intratill sand and gravel deposits ranging from 3 to 9 feet thick.

The Nappanee Aquifer System is capable of meeting the needs of domestic and some high-capacity users. Domestic well capacities commonly range from 12 to 30 gpm. Static water levels range from 10 to 30 feet below the surface. There are seven registered significant groundwater withdrawal facilities (9 wells) in the Nappanee Aquifer System in Kosciusko County. Reported yields for high-capacity wells in this aquifer system range from 200 to 1200 gpm. This aquifer system is generally not very susceptible to surface contamination because intratill sand and gravel units are overlain by thick till deposits.

Auburn/Bluffton/Warsaw Complex Aquifer System

The Auburn/Bluffton/Warsaw Complex Aquifer System is mapped along the southeastern and southwestern portions of Kosciusko County. This aquifer system is characterized by deposits that are quite variable in materials and thickness. A thick till commonly overlies the sand and gravel aquifer deposits. This system generally has multiple layers of intratill sand and/or gravel

of various thickness and lateral extent. The main aquifer deposits are typically deeper, thicker, and more continuous than the shallower sand and gravel layers in this system. In Kosciusko County, this system is more than 300 feet thick in places. Saturated aquifer materials in this system are commonly 10 to 25 feet thick and are overlain by a till cap that is generally 60 to 130 feet thick.

This system is capable of meeting the needs of domestic and some high-capacity users in Kosciusko County. Wells in this system are typically completed at depths of 70 to 170 feet. Domestic well yields are commonly 15 to 50 gpm and static water levels are generally 15 to 65 feet below the surface. There is only one registered significant ground-water withdrawal facility (2 wells) utilizing this system. The individual wells have a reported capacity of 70 gpm. The Auburn/Bluffton/Warsaw Complex Aquifer System is not very susceptible to contamination because thick clay deposits overlie the aquifer materials.

Natural Lakes and Moraines Aquifer System

The Natural Lakes and Moraines Aquifer System in Kosciusko County is mapped over much of the county and is a complex aquifer system typically with multiple intratill sand and gravel seams. Unconsolidated deposits range in thickness from about 150 feet to over 325 feet. Thick surficial clays predominate and are generally 80 to 150 feet thick. A few localized surficial sand and gravel deposits are reported and range from 20 to 50 feet thick; however, the static water levels are commonly deep and these deposits are seldom used.

This system is capable of meeting the needs of domestic and most high-capacity users in Kosciusko County. Wells completed in this aquifer system range in depth from 35 to 305 feet deep. However, the wells are typically 70 to 150 feet deep. The primary aquifer is generally between 15 and 30 feet thick. In addition, many areas have several shallower aquifers that range in thickness from 5 to 15 feet. Domestic well yields are commonly 10 to 50 gpm and static water levels are typically 10 to 45 feet below the surface. There are 36 registered significant ground-water withdrawal facilities (64 wells) utilizing this system with reported yields up to 1450 gpm for individual wells.

The Natural Lakes and Moraines Aquifer System is generally not very susceptible to surface contamination because thick clay deposits overlie intratill sand and gravel seams. Wells producing from shallow aquifers are moderately to highly susceptible to contamination.

Natural Lakes and Moraines Aquifer Subsystem

The Natural Lakes and Moraines Aquifer Subsystem in Kosciusko County is primarily mapped in the central and north-central part of the county where a relatively thin layer of outwash overlaps morainic topography. This subsystem is typically transitional between the large outwash areas in the central portion of the county and the Natural Lakes and Moraines Aquifer System. The subsystem is a complex sequence of glacial deposits ranging in thickness from around 200 feet to over 300 feet. It generally consists of continuous surficial sand and gravel

deposits that vary in thickness from 20 to over 60 feet thick but are commonly 30 to 50 feet thick. Below the surficial sand and gravel deposits, thick clays predominate. The clay layers are typically 50 to 110 feet thick. Most areas have two or more intratill sand and gravel aquifers. The deeper sand and gravel deposits tend to be thicker and more continuous and are commonly between 15 and 25 feet thick. Most wells are completed in the deeper aquifers. However, some wells use the surficial sand and gravel deposits.

This subsystem is capable of meeting the needs of domestic and most high-capacity users in Kosciusko County. Wells completed in this aquifer system range in depth from 27 to 260 feet deep. However, the wells are generally 60 to 150 feet deep. Domestic well yields are commonly 10 to 50 gpm and static water levels are typically 5 to 30 feet below the surface. There are 16 registered significant ground-water withdrawal facilities (21 wells) utilizing the Natural Lakes and Moraines Aquifer Subsystem with reported well yields of 68 to 1250 gpm.

Wells that utilize the surficial sand and gravels in this subsystem are highly susceptible to contamination. However, wells that produce from the deeper aquifers in the Natural Lakes and Moraines Aquifer Subsystem are generally not very susceptible to surface contamination because thick clay deposits overlie intratill sand and gravel seams.

St. Joseph and Tributary Valleys/Wabash River and Tributaries Outwash Aquifer System

The St. Joseph and Tributary Valleys/Wabash River and Tributaries Outwash Aquifer System is mapped primarily along the Tippecanoe River and some tributaries of the St. Joseph River along the central, north-central and northeast portions of Kosciusko County. This system is also mapped along former outwash channels and/or tunnel valleys on the flanks of the Packerton Moraine that are occupied by present day streams. Large amounts of outwash sand and gravel from the melting glaciers were deposited in the stream valleys making this the most productive aquifer system in the county. The coarser sediments tend to be deeper while the finer sands were generally deposited higher in the sequence as the ice front receded. In some areas this system exceeds 150 feet in thickness with over 100 feet of continuous sand and gravel. However, the outwash is typically 35 to 75 feet thick with the thickness of saturated sands and gravels commonly ranging from 30 to 60 feet. In some areas 10 to 45 feet of sandy clay or silt lies at the surface or below the surficial sand and gravels.

These sand and gravel deposits have adequate potential for domestic and most high-capacity users. Well depths are typically 60 to 130 feet. Domestic well yields are commonly 15 to 60 gpm and static water levels are generally 3 to 30 feet below the surface. Seventy-nine registered significant ground-water withdrawal facilities (133 wells) are in the St. Joseph and Tributary Valleys/Wabash River and Tributaries Outwash Aquifer System in Kosciusko County. Reported yields for high-capacity wells in this aquifer system range from 75 to 2250 gpm.

This aquifer system is highly susceptible to contamination from surface sources in areas that lack overlying clay layers. The system is only moderately susceptible where it is overlain by relatively thick clay or silt deposits.

Registered Significant Ground-Water Withdrawal Facilities

There are 126 registered significant ground-water withdrawal facilities (229 wells) using unconsolidated aquifers in the county. These wells utilize the Nappanee Aquifer System, the Auburn/Bluffton/Warsaw Complex Aquifer System, the Natural Lakes and Moraines Aquifer System, the Natural Lakes and Moraines Aquifer Subsystem, and the St. Joseph and Tributary Valleys/Wabash River and Tributaries Outwash Aquifer System. Reported yields for individual wells range up to 2250 gpm. Uses for these facilities are public water supply, irrigation, industry, energy production, rural uses and miscellaneous uses. Refer to the table for details on the wells and to the map for facility locations

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