

# POTENTIOMETRIC SURFACE OF THE MIDDENDORF AQUIFER IN SOUTH CAROLINA NOVEMBER 2001

by  
**Brenda L. Hockensmith**

## ABSTRACT

The potentiometric surface of the Middendorf aquifer for November 2001 shows that the generally southeastward ground-water flow is affected by several potentiometric lows. These cones of depression have developed because of ground-water pumping in the Florence-Hemmingway area, around Mount Pleasant and around Kiawah Island.

Comparing the November 2001 data with historical data shows that water levels near the outcrop areas of the Middendorf aquifer have declined as a result of the drought conditions that have persisted in South Carolina since 1998. In areas influenced by pumping, water levels have declined 47 to 267 feet during various periods of record.

## INTRODUCTION

The Middendorf aquifer is the source of water for many public, industrial, and agricultural supplies in much of the Coastal Plain of South Carolina. This important water resource is monitored by regularly measuring the static (nonpumping) water levels in wells. The potentiometric surface of an aquifer is defined by the elevations at which water stands in tightly cased wells completed in the aquifer. This map of the potentiometric surface of the aquifer was prepared by the Land, Water and Conservation Division of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR), using data collected during late 2001. For selected wells (indicated by \*), trends in the ground-water levels are shown by hydrographs.

## METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

The boundaries of the Middendorf aquifer used in this investigation are those defined by Aucott, Davis and Speiran (1987), who delineated the aquifer on the basis of geologic data (primarily geophysical well logs), water-level data, water-chemistry data, and previous investigations. They acknowledged that the complex deposition of sediments in the Coastal Plain makes aquifer delineation problematic. This aquifer has been studied extensively by Cooke (1936), Siple (1957), Colquhoun and others (1983), Renken (1984), Aucott and Speiran (1985a, and 1985b), Stringfield and Campbell (1993), Aucott (1988 and 1996), and Hockensmith and Waters (1998).

The potentiometric map presented here was constructed by using water levels measured in 130 wells in November and December 2001 (see table). Water-level measurements made during this period are likely to be representative of median aquifer conditions, whereas other periods, such as late winter and midsummer, would represent maximum and minimum levels, respectively. Data were collected by DNR, the Environmental Protection Department of Westinghouse Savannah River Company, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), and U.S. Geological Survey. Wells used by Aucott and Speiran (1985b), Stringfield and Campbell (1993), and Hockensmith and Waters (1998) were used, where possible, to facilitate comparing the potentiometric maps made in 1982, 1989, 1996, and 2001. Data from additional wells also were used.

The hydrographs were constructed from data collected by DNR and U.S. Geological Survey personnel. Where continuous records were available, daily mean water levels were plotted.

## HYDROGEOLOGIC FRAMEWORK

The Coastal Plain formations of South Carolina compose a wedge of sediments that thickens from 0 ft at the Fall Line to more than 4,000 ft (feet) at Hilton Head Island on the coast. These sediments consist of sand, clay, and limestone of Late Cretaceous and younger ages that were deposited on a pre-Cretaceous basement complex of metamorphic, igneous, and sedimentary rock.

The Middendorf Formation lies between the Black Creek Formation and the Cape Fear Formation, the latter the oldest of the Cretaceous formations in the region. The Middendorf aquifer is composed mostly of permeable sediments of the Middendorf Formation (hence its name), but locally it includes sediments from underlying or overlying formations. In the uppie areas, the aquifer is composed of sand interbedded with clay lenses deposited in an upper delta plain environment. Toward the coast, the aquifer is composed of thin to thick-bedded sand and clay that were deposited in a marginal-marine or lower delta plain environments. In general, the Middendorf aquifer has coarser sand and less clay in the western part of the Coastal Plain than in the eastern part.

The Middendorf crops out along the Fall Line through Chesterfield County to Edgefield County, except for some areas in Aiken County where it is not exposed. Its outcrop is narrowest in southwestern Edgefield County and widest in Chesterfield County. The dip of the aquifer is southeastward in much of the Coastal Plain, becoming southward along the coastline. The top of the aquifer is at elevation 100, -700, and -1,700 ft msl (referenced to mean sea level) at Aiken, Little River, and Charleston, respectively. Thickness ranges from 0 ft at the Fall Line to more than 300 ft in Dorchester County.

## GROUND-WATER FLOW SYSTEM

The potentiometric surface of the Middendorf aquifer generally slopes toward the coast, thus the direction of ground-water flow is southeasterly. In areas where the aquifer crops out, it is recharged directly by precipitation. In the upper part of the Coastal Plain where the aquifer is not exposed, it is recharged through the overlying aquifers having low hydraulic head or overlying pumping wells.

The potentiometric surface has been affected by ground-water withdrawal in Berkeley, Charleston, Colleton, Florence, Sumter, and Williamsburg Counties, resulting in cones of depression in the potentiometric surface. The two lowest points on the potentiometric map, with water levels below -115 ft msl, are near Kiawah Island and Mount Pleasant.

## HISTORICAL TRENDS

The potentiometric levels of the Middendorf aquifer have been recorded since 1917 or earlier (Cooke, 1936). Aucott and Speiran (1985a and b) compared estimates of the predevelopment surface with November 1982 water levels and determined that Middendorf aquifer water levels had declined throughout the northeastern two-thirds of the Coastal Plain. Stringfield and Campbell (1993) published November 1989 water levels and observed that levels in Berkeley, Charleston, Dorchester, Kershaw, and Williamsburg Counties had further declined since 1982. Hockensmith and Waters (1998), using November 1996 data, showed additional declines and a generally southeasterly ground-water flow influenced by large cones of depression in the Florence-Hemmingway area and around Mount Pleasant. Historical water-level trends in eight Middendorf aquifer wells are shown on the hydrographs.

Drought conditions have persisted in South Carolina since 1998 and caused water-level declines in this aquifer throughout the State. The diminished recharge from precipitation directly resulted in declines in areas near the outcrop, where the aquifer is sensitive to meteorological events. The drought indirectly caused additional declines where ground-water withdrawals increased to mitigate surface drought conditions.

A comparison of the 2001 surface with the November 1996 surface indicates that water levels have declined in Chesterfield, Kershaw, Lee, and Marlboro Counties. In Chesterfield County (CTF-46), water levels were 115 ft msl in November 2001, 2 ft lower than November 1996 but within the 113 to 117 ft msl range reported between 1972 and 1996. Kershaw County (KCR-82 and 87) showed a decline of 1 ft since 1996. Water levels in Marlboro County wells (MLB-112\* and 110) have declined 4 and 5 ft, respectively, since 1996. The November 2001 water level at LEE-23 was 189 ft msl, 3 ft lower than the November 1996 water level also within the 188 to 195 ft msl range recorded since 1980.

Water levels in central Dillon County have declined from predevelopment levels. Southeast of Dillon, water levels were at 69 and 16 ft msl in 2001, respectively (DIL-121). Predevelopment levels were estimated near 75 ft msl for this well. Water levels at DIL-79, in the eastern part of the county, have declined little since 1982.

Potentiometric contours in Aiken County and western Barnwell County show ground-water flow toward, and discharge into, the Savannah River. This is consistent with previous investigations (Aadland and others, 1995; Aucott and Speiran, 1985a and b; Clark and West, 1997; Siple, 1957; Stringfield and Campbell, 1993; and Hockensmith and Waters, 1998). An average of 15 mgd (million gallons per day) of ground water was pumped from the Middendorf and overlying waters in Aiken and Barnwell Counties during 2000 (J.E. Castro, DNR, written communication, 2002), but the extent to which pumping affects water levels is not discernible from the 2001 data, owing to the high transmissivity of the Middendorf aquifer, the distribution of monitoring wells, and the effects of natural discharge to the Savannah River.

Wells in this region are likely to be sensitive to meteorological events, in addition to pumping (Clark and West, 1997). Water levels in AIK-817\* and AIK-430\* have shown declines of 1.6 and 6.7 ft per year since January 1999. AIK-817 had a water level of 235 ft msl in late August 2001, equal to the minimum for the period of record. The minimum water level of 196 ft msl for AIK-430 occurred in late October 2001. These hydrographs reflect the effects of the drought conditions and related increases in pumping.

In eastern Barnwell County, the direction of ground-water flow is to the south-southwest. In comparison with the western part of the county, water levels are more likely to be affected by ground-water use than by rainfall variations (BRN-349\*) (Clark and West, 1997) because the Middendorf is well confined in this area (Aadland and others, 1995). Water levels in BRN-349 have declined nearly 8 ft since November 1996.

Middendorf aquifer waters in Calhoun and Richland Counties reflect both geologically influenced discharge to streams and pumping-influenced discharge by industry. The upper and middle reaches of the Congaree and Wateree Rivers are incised into the Middendorf aquifer and are overlying confining beds. Potentiometric contours generally parallel these stream sections and indicate discharge to streams and pumping-influenced discharge to streams.

Water-level declines in Sumter County are a result of pumping in and around the city of Sumter. According to Aucott and Speiran (1985a), predevelopment levels in the area exceeded 125 ft msl. November 2001 data (SUM-161) indicate that water levels have declined more than 37 ft, to 88 ft msl in this area. Average ground-water pumping in 2000 exceeded 15 million gallons per day for the city and nearby Shaw Air Force Base (Newcomb, 2000), most of this is from the Middendorf aquifer. Because the median transmissivity of the Middendorf aquifer is two and a half times as great in Sumter County as in Florence County where a large cone of depression has developed, and the pumping near Sumter is greater than at Florence, it would be expected that a broad but shallower cone of depression exists at the city of Sumter, but it is not apparent from the distribution of data.

Ground-water levels have declined in southern South Carolina. Water levels in ALL-17\* and LKS-426 have declined 6 and 7 ft, respectively, since 1996. Near Beaufort, BFT-10 and BFT-11 had declines of less than 4 ft since 1996, to water levels of 146 and 132 ft msl, respectively, in 2001. The discrepancy between the two wells may be a result of the difference in well construction (BFT-10 is screened in a deeper zone). Wells BFT-454 (open to both the Middendorf and Cape Fear aquifers) and BFT-2055 (open only to the Cape Fear) on Hilton Head Island had similar water levels, 163 and 162 ft msl, respectively, in 2001 but were several feet lower than 1996 levels. They are probably influenced by the pumping from BFT-2155 on southern Hilton Head Island that began in October 2001 and averaged between 1.5 and 2.0 mgd (Kelley Ferda, South Island Public Service District, oral communication, 2002). Water levels in the Middendorf aquifer are probably lower than those of the Cape Fear aquifer in this area. In view of these data, the 150-ft potentiometric contour is drawn near Beaufort. This would indicate that ground-water flow becomes easterly or northeasterly in Jasper and Beaufort Counties.

Water levels in FLO-128\* declined from 61 ft msl in 1959 (Aucott and Speiran, 1984) to 5 ft msl in August 1993 and fluctuated between 34 and 4 ft msl from September 1993 to November 2001. This well is likely to have well-interference effects as a result of the nearby industrial pumping of 0.13 mgd (J.E. Castro, DNR, written communication, 2002). Until the public utility supplements with surface water in late 2002 (Forest Whittington, City of Florence, oral communication, 2002), the cone of depression about Florence will continue to expand.

The cone of depression centered at Mount Pleasant, Charleston County, has expanded since 1996. Water levels in CHN-14\* show a decline of more than 65 ft between June 1991 and August 1995, with some seasonal variations caused by pumping at Summerville. Mount Pleasant, Sullivans Island and Isle of Palms. Several area water utilities began using surface-water sources during the mid-1990's. Summerville and Sullivans Island ceased pumping Middendorf wells in 1994 and early 1996, respectively. Isle of Palms and Mount Pleasant began supplementing public supplies with surface water in December 1996 and August 1997, respectively. By March 1998, water levels in CHN-14 had recovered to -36 ft msl but have since declined at an average rate of 11 ft per year.

Other wells in this cone of depression also show water-level declines since 1996. The hydrograph for BRK-431\* shows the effects of pumping from Summerville prior to November 1994, when water levels declined to a minimum of 38 ft msl at an average rate of 5.5 ft per year. From November 1994 through August 1996, water levels recovered at a rate of 2.2 ft per year to a maximum of 42 ft msl. Since August 1996, water levels have been declining at a rate of 3.8 ft per year to a minimum of 22 ft msl. Water levels in BRK-444, which is closer to the major centers of pumping, declined 28 ft between November 1996 and November 2001. In CHN-2, water levels declined from 28 to -43 ft msl between 1989 and 2001.

The center of this cone of depression in Mount Pleasant is likely to be deeper than suggested by the -116 ft msl measured in CHN-185. CHN-185 was the only Mount Pleasant well available for measurement during the data collection period. Ground-water withdrawals by Mount Pleasant Waterworks (MPW) increased from an average of 3 mgd in 1995 (Newcomb, 1995) to 6.2 mgd in 2001 (Greg Hill, MPW, written communication, 2002). Further, industrial pumping of west-central South Carolina: South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Water Resources Report 5, 200 p., 47 plates.

Aucott, W.R., 1988, Predevelopment ground-water flow system and hydrologic characteristics of the Coastal Plain aquifers of South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Water Resources Investigations Report 86-4347, 66 p.

Aucott, W.R., Davis, M.E., and Speiran, G.K., 1987, Geologic framework of the Coastal Plain aquifers of South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 85-4271, 7 sheets.

Aucott, W.R., and Speiran, G.K., 1984, Water-level measurements for the Coastal Plain aquifers of South Carolina prior to development: U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 84-803, 36 p.

Clark, J.S., and West, C.T., 1997, Ground-water levels, predevelopment ground-water flow, and stream-aquifer relations in the vicinity of the Savannah River Site, Georgia and South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 97-1497, 120 p., 1 sheet.

Clark, J.S., and West, C.T., 1997, Ground-water levels, predevelopment ground-water flow, and stream-aquifer relations in the vicinity of the Savannah River Site, Georgia and South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 97-1497, 120 p., 1 sheet.

Colquhoun, D.J., Woolfen, I.D., VanNieuwenhuis, D.S., Padgett, G.G., Oldham, R.W., Boylan, D.C., Bishop, J.W., and Howell, P.D., 1983, Surface and subsurface stratigraphy, structure and aquifers of the South Carolina Coastal Plain: Columbia, S.C., University of South Carolina, Department of Geology, 78 p.

Cooke, C.W., 1936, Geology of the Coastal Plain of South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 867, 196 p.

Hockensmith, B.L., and Waters, K.E., 1998, Potentiometric surface of the Middendorf aquifer in South Carolina, November 1996: Water Resources Report 19, 1 sheet.

Newcomb, Roy, Jr., 1995, The 100 largest public water supplies in South Carolina - 1995: South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Water Resources Report 3, 42 p.

Stringfield, W.J., and Campbell, B.G., 1993, Potentiometric surfaces of November 1989 and declines in the potentiometric surfaces between November 1982 and November 1989 for the Black Creek and Middendorf aquifers in South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 92-4100, 2 sheets.

Renken, R.A., 1984, The hydrologic framework for the sand aquifer of the Southeastern United States Coastal Plain: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 84-243, 30 p., 8 sheets.

Siple, G.E., 1957, Ground water in the South Carolina Coastal Plain: Journal of the American Water Works Assoc., v. 49, no. 3, p. 283-300.

Cooke, C.W., 1936, Geology of the Coastal Plain of South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 867, 196 p.

Hockensmith, B.L., and Waters, K.E., 1998, Potentiometric surface of the Middendorf aquifer in South Carolina, November 1996: Water Resources Report 19, 1 sheet.

Newcomb, Roy, Jr., 1995, The 100 largest public water supplies in South Carolina - 1995: South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Water Resources Report 3, 42 p.

Stringfield, W.J., and Campbell, B.G., 1993, Potentiometric surfaces of November 1989 and declines in the potentiometric surfaces between November 1982 and November 1989 for the Black Creek and Middendorf aquifers in South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 92-4100, 2 sheets.

Aadland, R.K., Gellicie, J.A., and Thayer, P.A., 1995, Hydrogeologic framework of west-central South Carolina: South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Water Resources Report 5, 200 p., 47 plates.

Aucott, W.R., 1988, Predevelopment ground-water flow system and hydrologic characteristics of the Coastal Plain aquifers of South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Water Resources Investigations Report 86-4347, 66 p.

Aucott, W.R., Davis, M.E., and Speiran, G.K., 1987, Geologic framework of the Coastal Plain aquifers of South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 85-4271, 7 sheets.

Aucott, W.R., and Speiran, G.K., 1984, Water-level measurements for the Coastal Plain aquifers of South Carolina prior to development: U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 84-803, 36 p.

Clark, J.S., and West, C.T., 1997, Ground-water levels, predevelopment ground-water flow, and stream-aquifer relations in the vicinity of the Savannah River Site, Georgia and South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 97-1497, 120 p., 1 sheet.

Clark, J.S., and West, C.T., 1997, Ground-water levels, predevelopment ground-water flow, and stream-aquifer relations in the vicinity of the Savannah River Site, Georgia and South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 97-1497, 120 p., 1 sheet.

Colquhoun, D.J., Woolfen, I.D., VanNieuwenhuis, D.S., Padgett, G.G., Oldham, R.W., Boylan, D.C., Bishop, J.W., and Howell, P.D., 1983, Surface and subsurface stratigraphy, structure and aquifers of the South Carolina Coastal Plain: Columbia, S.C., University of South Carolina, Department of Geology, 78 p.

Cooke, C.W., 1936, Geology of the Coastal Plain of South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 867, 196 p.

Hockensmith, B.L., and Waters, K.E., 1998, Potentiometric surface of the Middendorf aquifer in South Carolina, November 1996: Water Resources Report 19, 1 sheet.

Newcomb, Roy, Jr., 1995, The 100 largest public water supplies in South Carolina - 1995: South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Water Resources Report 3, 42 p.

Stringfield, W.J., and Campbell, B.G., 1993, Potentiometric surfaces of November 1989 and declines in the potentiometric surfaces between November 1982 and November 1989 for the Black Creek and Middendorf aquifers in South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 92-4100, 2 sheets.

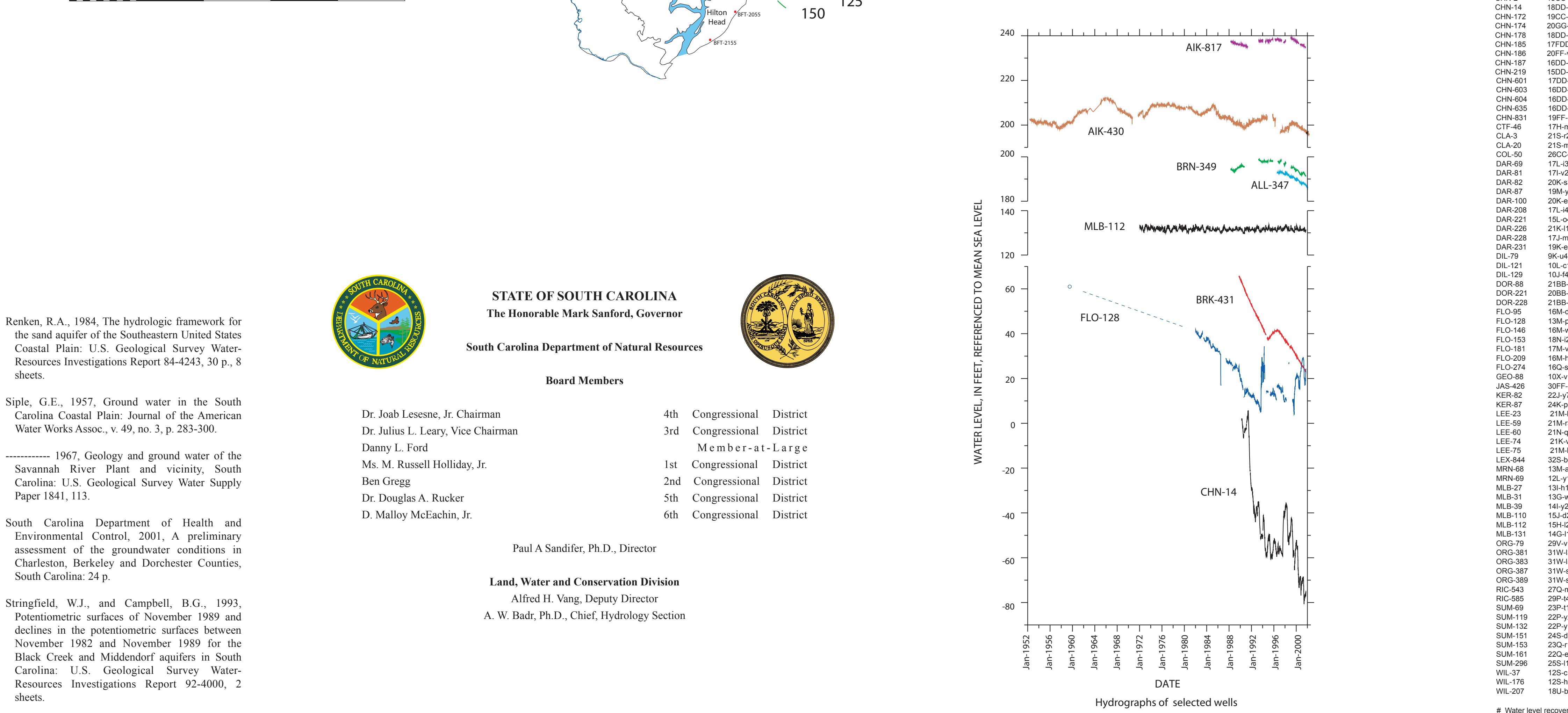
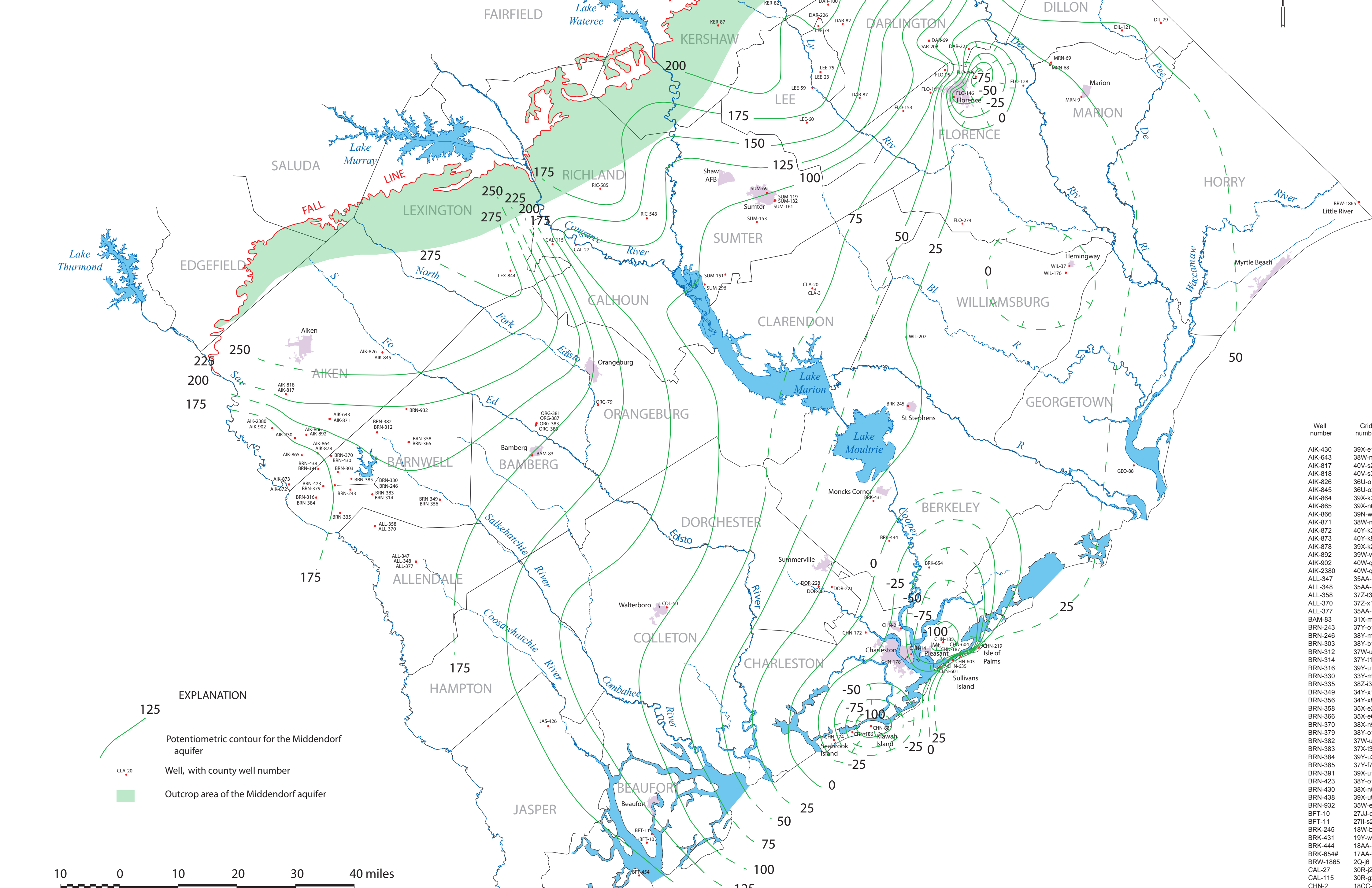
Aadland, R.K., Gellicie, J.A., and Thayer, P.A., 1995, Hydrogeologic framework of west-central South Carolina: South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Water Resources Report 5, 200 p., 47 plates.

Aucott, W.R., 1988, Predevelopment ground-water flow system and hydrologic characteristics of the Coastal Plain aquifers of South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Water Resources Investigations Report 86-4347, 66 p.

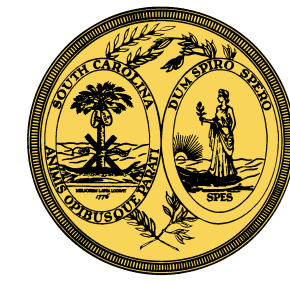
Aucott, W.R., Davis, M.E., and Speiran, G.K., 1987, Geologic framework of the Coastal Plain aquifers of South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 85-4271, 7 sheets.

Aucott, W.R., and Speiran, G.K., 1984, Water-level measurements for the Coastal Plain aquifers of South Carolina prior to development: U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 84-803, 36 p.

Clark, J.S., and West, C.T., 1997, Ground-water levels, predevelopment ground-water flow, and stream-aquifer relations in the vicinity of the Savannah River Site, Georgia and South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 97-1497, 120 p., 1 sheet.



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
The Honorable Mark Sanford, Governor



South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

### Board Members

Dr. Joab Lesesne, Jr. Chairman	4th Congressional District
Dr. Julius L. Leary, Vice Chairman	3rd Congressional District
Danny L. Ford	Member-at-Large
Ms. M. Russell Holliday, Jr.	1st Congressional District
Ben Gregg	2nd Congressional District
Dr. Douglas A. Rucker	5th Congressional District
D. Malloy McEachin, Jr.	6th Congressional District

Paul A. Sandifer, Ph.D., Director

### Land, Water and Conservation Division

Alfred H. Wang, Deputy Director  
A. W. Badr, Ph.D., Chief, Hydrology Section

Stringfield, W.J., and Campbell, B.G., 1993, Potentiometric surfaces of November 1989 and declines in the potentiometric surfaces between November 1982 and November 1989 for the Black Creek and Middendorf aquifers in South Carolina: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 92-4100, 2 sheets.

\* Water level recovering in well