NORTH Dakota | Environmental Quality

Be Legendary.™

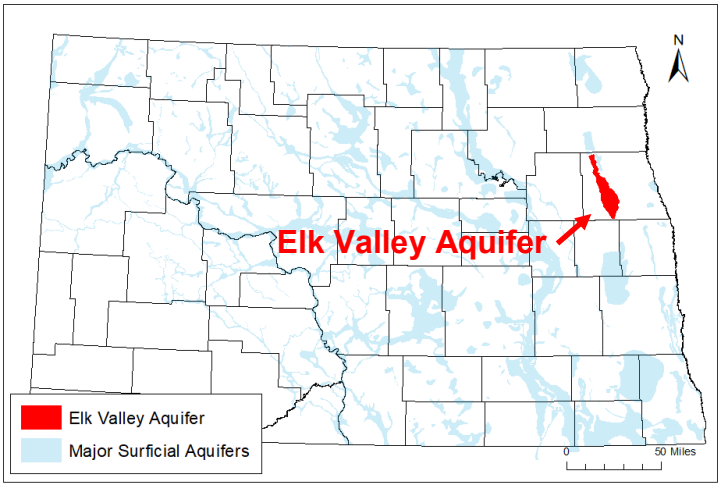
Agricultural Groundwater Monitoring Program

Elk Valley Aquifer

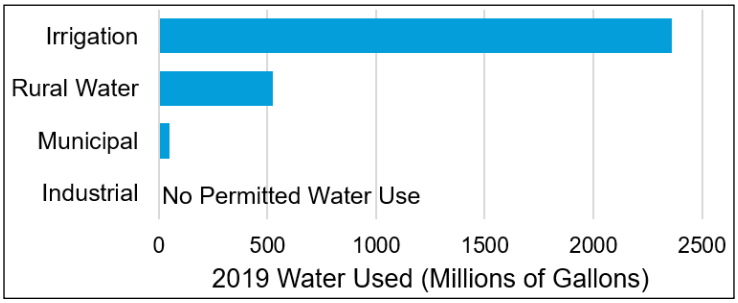
Grand Forks County

Aquifer At-a-Glance	
Area	178.9 square miles
Aquifer Type	Unconfined Surficial
Major Land Uses over Aquifer (percentage of aquifer area covered in 2017)[1]	Crops (82%) Forest (6%)
Depth to Water (2018)*	0.5-50 feet
Total Unique Wells Sampled	105
Wells Sampled in 2018	72
Samples Collected in 2018	110
Years Sampled	1993, 1998, 2003, 2008, 2013, 2018

*Depths to water may vary seasonally, year to year, and across the aquifer



2019 Elk Valley aquifer permitted water use (from North Dakota State Water Commission (swc.nd.gov))



- Aquifer materials trend from coarse sands and gravels in the north to fine sands and silts in the south. Aquifer materials were deposited as part of a delta for a river carrying meltwater away from glaciers during the last ice age.[2]
- The Elk Valley aquifer is up to 61 feet thick and averages about 34 feet thick.[2]
- Irrigation wells are common in the aquifer. A few domestic wells are also installed in the aquifer.
- The city of Larimore and the Grand Forks-Traill Water District and Tri-County Water District rural water systems draw water from the aquifer.
- In North Dakota, permits are required to withdraw large quantities of groundwater. In 2019, 2.9 billion gallons of permitted water were drawn from the aquifer; irrigation use consumed the largest quantity of water. For more information on water use and permits, contact the North Dakota State Water Commission (swc.nd.gov).

About the Agricultural Groundwater Monitoring Program

- The North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality monitors a network of wells in approximately 50 surficial aquifers that are at elevated risk of agricultural contamination.
- Aquifers are sampled on a 5-year rotation.
- Monitoring began in 1992.
- The vast majority of these aquifers are located in central and eastern North Dakota.
- Water is tested for 21 general chemistry parameters, eight trace metals, and 64 pesticides.

References

(1) US Department of Agriculture, 2017, National Agricultural Statistics Service Cropland Data Layer.

(2) Kelly, T.E. & Paulson, Q.F., 1970, Geology and Ground-Water Resources of Grand Forks County, North Dakota, North Dakota State Water Commission County Ground-Water Studies 13-Part 3, North Dakota Geological Survey Bulletin 53.

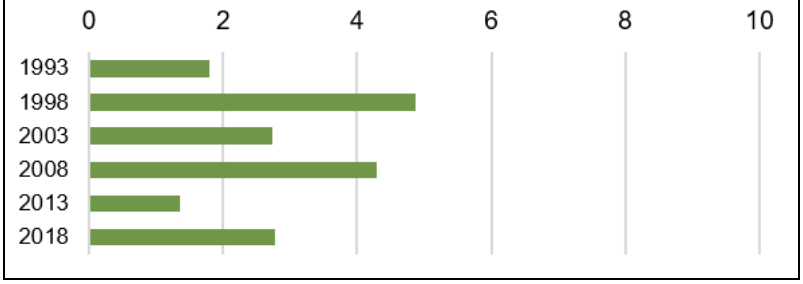
Water Chemistry

Is Aquifer Water High in…?	Analyte	Result	2018 Median Concentration	Potential Effects
	Arsenic	YES	0.019 mg/L	Skin or circulatory system damage, increased cancer risk
	Iron	YES	2.81 mg/L	Metallic taste/odor, discoloration of surfaces
	Manganese	YES	1.05 mg/L	
	Sodium	NO	20.7 mg/L	Taste, people with certain health conditions may need to limit intake
	Sulfate	NO	117 mg/L	Taste/odor, laxative effect for people not used to the water
	For more information about Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs), health effects, and treatment options for these contaminants and more, see the NDDEQ's fact sheets (deq.nd.gov/wq/1_Groundwater) or visit the US EPA website (epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water).			

Dominant Water Type	Water Hardness
Calcium-Bicarbonate	Very Hard

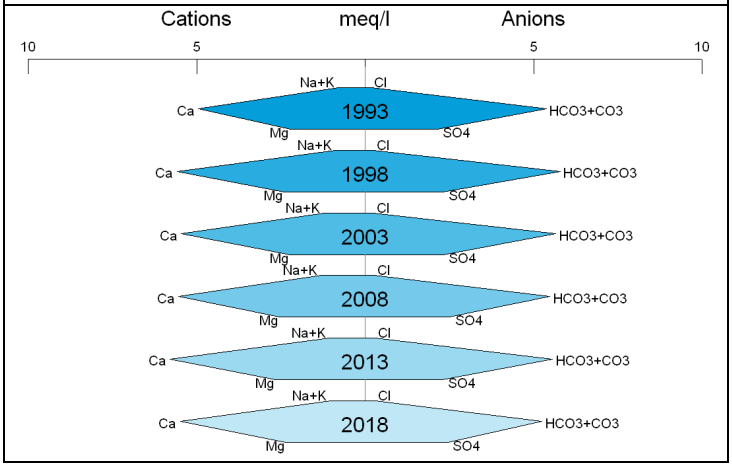
Nitrate

Percentage of Wells Exceeding the Nitrate Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) (10 mg/L as N).*



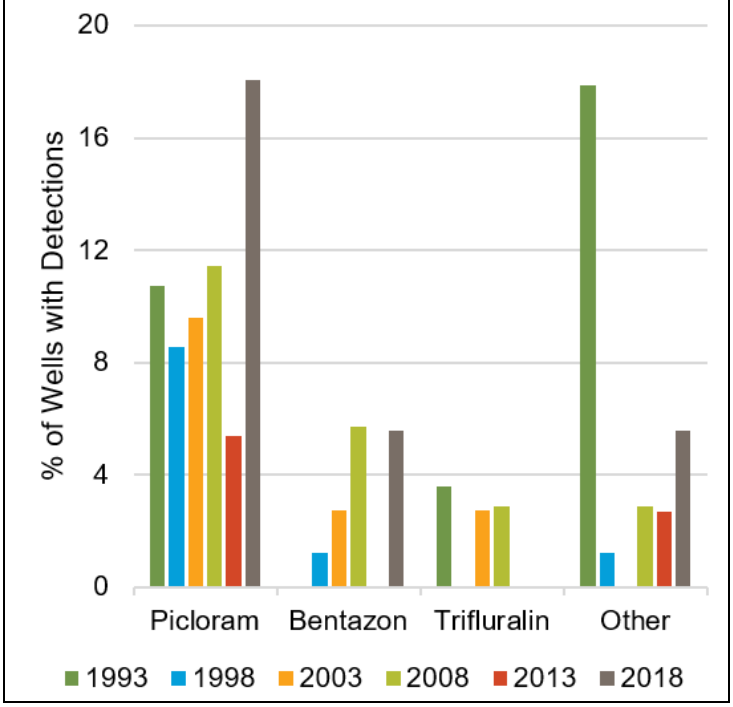
Stiff diagram of aquifer median general water chemistry.

Changes in diagram shape represent changes in general chemistry.



Pesticides

Percentage of wells with detections of each pesticide detected in the aquifer.



State Pesticide Management Plan

Agricultural Groundwater Monitoring Program aquifers are monitored as a part of the State Pesticide Management Plan. A Prevention Action Level (PAL) threshold of 25% of the pesticide's Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL)* or Health Advisory Level (HAL) is used to identify whether action is needed to prevent further contamination.

Prevention Action Level Exceedances	None
MCL or HAL Exceedances	None

Number of Unique Wells with Pesticide Detections since 1993	**35** of 105 Total Wells

2018 Pesticide Detections

Picloram	13 Wells	Herbicide applied to crops and roads/rights-of-way
Bentazon	4 Wells	Herbicide applied to crops
Dicamba	3 Wells	Herbicide applied to crops
2,4-D	1 Well	Herbicide applied to crops
Metribuzine	1 Well	Herbicide applied to crops

*Note that MCLs are for public drinking water systems; private wells are not regulated in North Dakota. MCLs still provide guidelines for drinking groundwater.