

# **Curragh Camp Water Supply**

**Extracted from:  
County Kildare Groudwater Protection Scheme,  
Volume II: Source Protection Zones**

# County Kildare Groundwater Protection Scheme

## Volume II: Source Protection Zones

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**John Lahart**  
Director of Services  
Housing and Water Services  
Kildare County Council  
St. Mary's, Naas,  
County Kildare

**Coran Kelly and Vincent Fitzsimons**  
Groundwater Section  
Geological Survey of Ireland  
Beggars Bush  
Haddington Road  
Dublin 4



## **Authors**

Coran Kelly, Groundwater Section, Geological Survey of Ireland

Vincent Fitzsimons, Groundwater Section, Geological Survey of Ireland

**in partnership with:**

Kildare County Council

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*- Overall conclusions are contained within Volume I -*

## 10 Curragh Camp Water Supply

### 10.1 Introduction

The objectives of the report are as follows:

- To delineate source protection zones for the Curragh Camp (McDonagh & Hare Park) supply boreholes.
- To outline the principal hydrogeological characteristics of the surrounding area.
- To assist Kildare County Council in protecting the water supply from contamination.

The protection zones are delineated to help prioritise certain areas around the source in terms of pollution risk to the well. This prioritisation is intended to provide a guide in the planning and regulation of development and human activities. The implications of these protection zones are further outlined in 'Groundwater Protection Schemes' (DELG/EPA/GSI, 1999).

The report forms part of the groundwater protection scheme for the county. The maps produced for the scheme are based largely on mapping techniques which use inferences and judgements based on experience at other sites. As such, the maps cannot claim to be definitively accurate across the whole county covered, and should not be used as the sole basis for site-specific decisions, which will usually require the collection of additional site-specific data.

### 10.2 Summary of Borehole Details

	McDonagh Deep Well	Hare Park Deep Well
<b>GSI no.</b>	2621SEW436	2621SEW208
<b>Grid ref. (1:25,000)</b>	278829 216604	277130 211600
<b>Townland</b>	Curragh	Curragh
<b>Source type</b>	Borehole	Borehole
<b>Drilled date</b>	Pre 1940	Pre 1940
<b>Owner</b>	Dept. of Defence	Dept. of Defence
<b>Elevation (ground level)</b>	~110 m O.D.	~110 m O.D.
<b>Depth</b>	Approximately 70 m	Approximately 70 m
<b>Depth of casing</b>	Assumed to be screened to full depth	Assumed to be screened to full depth
<b>Diameter</b>	300 mm (12")	350 mm (14")
<b>Depth to rock</b>	Approximately 70 m	Approximately 70 m
<b>Water level</b>	15.92 m below ground 30/10/02 (not pumping at the time of measurement)	18.45 m below ground 30/10/02 (not pumping at the time of measurement)
<b>Maximum drawdown</b>	Not available	0.66 m (Ball, 1995)
<b>Consumption (Water Works Personnel)</b>	800 m <sup>3</sup> d <sup>-1</sup>	1100 m <sup>3</sup> d <sup>-1</sup>
<b>Yield:</b>	1010 m <sup>3</sup> d <sup>-1</sup>	2765 m <sup>3</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> (Ball, 1995)

	McDonagh Shallow Well	Hare Park Shallow Well
<b>GSI no.</b>	2621SEW028	2621SEW247
<b>Grid ref. (1:25,000)</b>	27850 21160	27702 21160
<b>Townland</b>	Curragh	Curragh
<b>Source type</b>	Dug Well	Dug Well
<b>Drilled</b>	Pre 1940	Pre 1940
<b>Elevation (ground level)</b>	~110 m O.D.	~110 m O.D.
<b>Depth</b>	~33 m	~22 m
<b>Depth of casing</b>	Brick lined	Brick lined
<b>Diameter</b>	4.5 m	4.5 m
<b>Depth to rock</b>	~70 m	~70 m
<b>Static water level</b>	15.67 m below ground 30/10/02	18.45 m below ground 30/10/02
<b>Consumption</b>	Intermittent usage	Intermittent usage



## 10.3 Methodology

### 10.3.1 Desk Study

Details about the borehole such as depth, date commissioned and abstraction figures were obtained from the caretaker and County Council personnel; geological and hydrogeological information was taken from GSI records and from Ball (1995).

### 10.3.2 Site visits and fieldwork

This included the following:

- Preliminary meeting with the Department of Defence on 25/1/02 to gather basic information on the supply.
- Interview with the caretaker 29/10/02.
- Raw Water sampling on 25/6/02.

### 10.3.3 Assessment

Analysis of the data utilised field studies and previously collected data to delineate protection zones around the source.

## 10.4 Borehole Location & Site Description

The McDonagh "deep" borehole is situated at the north-eastern side of the Curragh Camp. The borehole is housed in a concrete floored large building named the "McDonagh Waterworks". The well head comprises a 1 m<sup>2</sup> x 7.8 m deep brick lined chamber capped with a galvanised cover. The well casing is completed at the base of this chamber and there is a ladder allowing access to the top of the borehole. The rising main exits the chamber close to the top and goes to a series of small reservoirs that provides water to the camp. The McDonagh "shallow" well is located approximately 150 m to the east of the "deep" borehole, housed inside a red-bricked building. The well head is covered by wooden planks.

The Hare Park supply borehole is situated at the western end of the Curragh Camp. The borehole is located in a modern concrete floored building known as the "Hare Park Waterworks". The borehole is inside a chamber 1 m<sup>2</sup> x 3 m deep and has a galvanised cover. The pump is set at approximately 64 m below ground level. The Hare Park "shallow" well is located approximately 12 m east of the deep borehole housed in the same building. It is covered by galvanised plates. Inside the chamber there are ladders allowing access to inside of the well. The building is fenced off.

## 10.5 Topography, Surface Hydrology and Land Use

A broad ridge running roughly east-west occupies the area on which the Curragh Camp is located. The highest point on the ridge is 159 m O.D. The general altitude of the Curragh Camp area is 110-120 m O.D.

There are no surface water features in the vicinity of Curragh Camp. The nearest water features are the Tully stream, 3.5 km to the west of the Hare Park supply borehole and the River Liffey, 3.5 km to the east of the McDonagh supply borehole. After heavy rain there is localised ponding.

The land is used by the military and for sheep farming and for exercising horses. The Curragh Camp village and barracks occupies approximately 2 km<sup>2</sup> between the two waterworks. To the north of the Curragh Camp there is the Curragh race course. The rest of the area is predominantly grassland used for sheep farming. Immediately to the north of the Hare Park Waterworks there is a disused landfill filling an old sand/gravel pit. Curragh Camp staff have estimated that tipping had ceased in the mid 1990's. The staff also indicated that the fill mostly comprised builders rubble and that tipping was carried out for at least twenty years. There are two sewerage works in the vicinity of the boreholes.

## 10.6 Geology

### 10.6.1 Introduction

This section briefly describes the relevant characteristics of the geological materials that underlie the supply boreholes. It provides a framework for the assessment of groundwater flow and source protection zones that will follow in later sections.

Geological information was taken from a desk-based survey of available data, which comprised the following:

- Bedrock Geology 1:100,000 Map Series. Geological Survey of Ireland. (Mc Connell *et al*, 1994)
- Information from geological mapping in the nineteenth century (on record at the GSI).
- Report on the drilling and testing of a trial recharge well at the Curragh, Co. Kildare. (Cullen & Co. Ltd, 1982).
- Wright (1988) The Mid-Kildare sand/gravel Aquifer. Geological Survey of Ireland.
- Glanville (1997) The quaternary geology of Co. Kildare, map descriptions for relevant 1:25,000 sheets. GSI report.
- Hayes (2001). Curragh Aquifer - Current Conceptual Understanding and Numerical Modelling.

### 10.6.2 Bedrock Geology

The Rickardstown Limestone Formation occupies the area around the Hare Park source and the Ballysteen Limestone Formation occupies the area around the McDonagh source. These formations are described in more detail in Sections 2 Volume 1 and their distribution is shown on Map 1.

### 10.6.3 Subsoil (Quaternary) Geology

The main subsoil in the vicinity of the sources is sand/gravel (the distribution is shown on Map 2) and is the dominant subsoil around the Curragh. The deposit is one of the most extensive sand/gravel bodies in Ireland. It is classed as a **Regionally Important Sand/gravel aquifer (Rg)** and is discussed in more detail in Section 4 of Volume I. In the vicinity of the supply boreholes the sand/gravel is approximately 65 m thick, consisting primarily of coarse sand and fine sand/gravel. Two till horizons in the order of 2-5 m thick are reported in a geological log of a well drilled close to the two supply boreholes. The tills are generally interspersed with the sand/gravel throughout the thickness of the sand/gravel aquifer. They are not mapped as an aquifer and will serve to impede the flow of groundwater contaminants through the aquifer.

## 10.7 Groundwater Vulnerability

Groundwater vulnerability is dictated by the nature and thickness of the material overlying the uppermost groundwater 'target'. The uppermost aquifer is mapped as a **Regionally Important Sand/gravel aquifer (Rg)**. Therefore the target and considerations of groundwater vulnerability concern the depth to the water table within the sand/gravel and the thickness of the tills overlying the sand/gravel.

The permeability of the till is thought to be moderate to low and the permeability of the sand/gravel is thought to be high. White Young Green (2002) indicate that the thickness of the tills is generally less than 3 m and the static water level is generally greater than 3 m in the vicinity of the supply wells. Consequently, the vulnerability of the groundwater in the sand/gravel is mapped as 'high' (refer to Maps 6 and 8 of Volume I).

The vulnerability mapping provided will not be able to anticipate all the natural variation that occurs in an area. The mapping is intended only as a guide to land use planning and hazard surveys, and is not a substitute for site investigation for specific developments. Classifications may change as a result of investigations such as trial hole assessments for on-site domestic wastewater treatment systems. The potential for discrepancies between large scale vulnerability mapping and site-specific data has been anticipated and addressed in the development of groundwater protection responses (site suitability

guidelines) for specific hazards. More detail can be found in ‘Groundwater Protection Schemes’ (DELG/EPA/GSI, 1999).

## **10.8 Hydrogeology**

### **10.8.1 Introduction**

This section presents our current understanding of groundwater flow in the area of the source.

Hydrogeological and hydrochemical information for this study was obtained from the following sources:

- GSI files and archival Kildare County Council data.
- White Young Green (2002). Curragh Aquifer - Current Conceptual Understanding and Numerical Modelling.
- Hydrogeological work by White Young Green and commissioned by the GSI (2002).
- Report on the drilling and testing of a trial recharge well at the Curragh, Co. Kildare. Cullen, K.T., 1982.
- Wright (1988) The Mid-Kildare sand/gravel Aquifer. Geological Survey of Ireland.
- Kildare County Council drinking water returns (2000, 2002).
- Hydrogeological mapping carried out by GSI on 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> May 2002 and 30<sup>th</sup> October 2002.
- A drilling programme carried out by GSI to ascertain depth to bedrock and subsoil permeability (2 holes in the vicinity of the source).

### **10.8.2 Rainfall, Evaporation and Recharge**

The term ‘recharge’ refers to the amount of water replenishing the groundwater flow system. The recharge rate is generally estimated on an annual basis, and generally assumed to consist of an input (i.e. annual rainfall) less water losses prior to entry into the groundwater system (i.e. annual evapotranspiration and runoff). The estimation of a realistic recharge rate is critical in source protection delineation; along with the rate of abstraction at the source it will dictate the size of the zone of contribution to the source.

Detailed recharge estimates have been modelled for the Mid-Kildare Aquifer as part of the hydrogeological investigation for the Kildare bypass and are in the order of 415 mm per year for the area of the Curragh Camp (White Young Green, 2002).

### **10.8.3 Groundwater levels, Flow Directions and Gradients**

Groundwater levels across the Mid-Kildare Aquifer are monitored regularly as part of the work on the Kildare By-pass. Earlier monitoring data is available for two wells situated in the aquifer and these are referred to in section 4 of the report. Hydrographs are presented in Section 4 Volume I. The monitoring data shows that the seasonal variation is in the order of 1.25-2.5 m, with the lowest levels occurring in October and the highest in February (Hayes, 2001). Groundwater levels in the McDonagh and Hare Park wells were approximately 15.7 m and 18.5 m below ground level respectively on the 30/10/02. In June 1995 the water level in Hare Park was 16.8 m below ground level.

Regional groundwater flow directions estimated by Wright (1988) suggest that groundwater in the area of the Curragh Camp flows northwest and north towards Pollardstown Fen. This concurs with the current conceptual understanding of the aquifer developed by White Young Green whom also show that groundwater in the area of the Camp flows toward and discharges at Pollardstown Fen.

Static water gradients are estimated from the water table contours produced by Wright (1988) and from contours produced by White Young Green (2002) to be in the order of 0.002.

#### 10.8.4 Hydrochemistry and Water Quality

Data for the two supply boreholes are summarised graphically in the figures below and the following key points are identified from the data.

- The analyses for hardness indicate a hard to very hard water for both supply boreholes (251-350- $>350$  mg l<sup>-1</sup>).
- Nitrate levels for both supply boreholes is consistently in the order of 20-25 mg l<sup>-1</sup> and there doesn't appear to be a trend in the data.
- From the two raw water samples available at each source there are no reported faecal coliforms and ammonia levels are low at both supply boreholes.
- The most recent sampling at Hare Park reports a chloride level of 53 mg l<sup>-1</sup>, a sodium level of 22.2 mg l<sup>-1</sup> and an iron level of 0.49 mg l<sup>-1</sup> all of which are higher than the GSI threshold levels. The data for Hare Park are sparse and definitive conclusions cannot be drawn. However, the landfill or the sewerage works near the Hare Park supply borehole may be contributing to these apparently anomalous levels (refer to Section 10.12).

Figure 10-1 Hare Park - Key Indicators of agricultural and domestic groundwater contamination

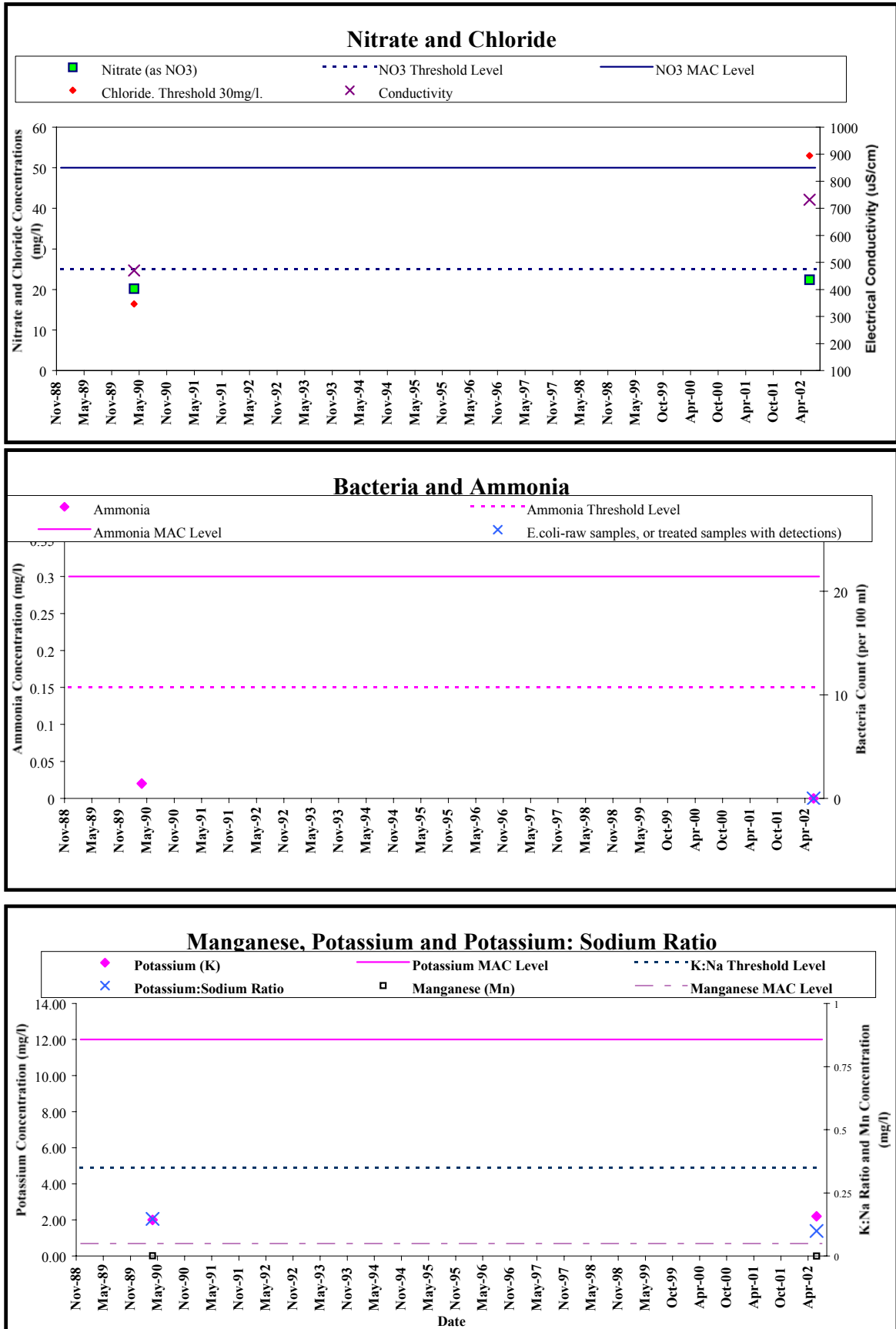
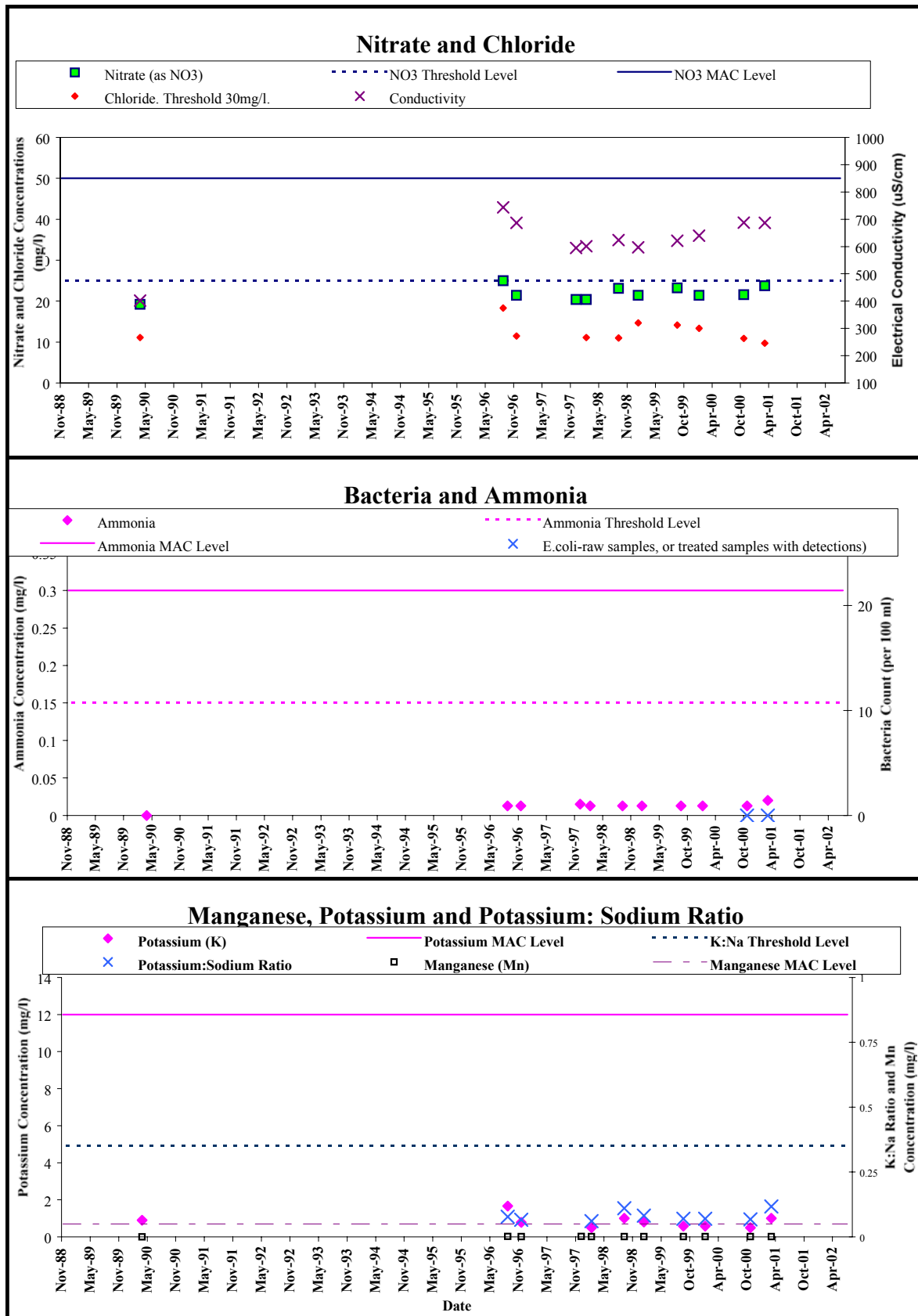


Figure 10-2McDonagh Key Indicators of agricultural and domestic groundwater contamination



### 10.8.5 Aquifer Characteristics

The characteristics of the Mid-Kildare sand/gravel aquifer are discussed in detail in Section 4 of the main report. The supply boreholes are located in the central portion of the aquifer where saturated thicknesses are in the order of 50 m. The aquifer parameters have been modelled for the aquifer as part of the hydrogeological investigations for the Kildare bypass and the figures used are in Table 9 (White Young Green, 2002).

**Table 9 Aquifer parameters for the Mid Kildare sand/gravel Aquifer**

<i>Parameter</i>	<i>Mid Kildare sand/gravel Aquifer</i>
Permeability (m d <sup>-1</sup> )	4-300
Porosity	13%

### 10.9 Conceptual Model

- The Curragh Camp supply boreholes extract up to 2000 m<sup>3</sup> d<sup>-1</sup> from the Mid-Kildare sand/gravel Aquifer which is classed as a **Regionally Important Sand/gravel aquifer (Rg)**.
- The aquifer is considered to be unconfined. Groundwater levels fluctuate 1-3 m annually, and the water table generally lies between 15 and 19 m below ground in the vicinity of the supply boreholes.
- Groundwater from the aquifer in the vicinity of the two supply boreholes discharges to the north at Pollardstown Fen.
- Diffuse recharge occurs over most of the land surface through the permeable sand/gravel & till.

### 10.10 Delineation of Source Protection Areas

#### 10.10.1 Introduction

This section delineates the areas around the source that are believed to contribute groundwater to it, and that therefore require protection. The areas are delineated based on the conceptualisation of the groundwater flow pattern, and are presented in. A groundwater numerical model has been developed by White Young Green and Entec (UK) Ltd. for the Mid-Kildare sand/gravel aquifer to enable an assessment of impacts of proposed road designs on the groundwater regime across the area. White Young Green were commissioned to use the model in the area of the two supply boreholes to predict the extent of the Source Protection Areas.

Two source protection areas are delineated:

- ◆ Inner Protection Area (SI), designed to give protection from microbial pollution;
- ◆ Outer Protection Area (SO), encompassing the zone of contribution (ZOC) to the borehole.

#### 10.10.2 Outer Protection Area

The Outer Protection Area (SO) was bounded by the complete catchment area to the source, i.e. **the zone of contribution (ZOC)**, which is defined as the area required to support an abstraction from long-term recharge. The ZOC is controlled primarily by (a) the pumping rate, (b) the groundwater flow direction and gradient, (c) the subsoil and rock permeability and (d) the recharge in the area.

The ZOC for the Curragh Camp sources was delineated as follows:

- 1) An estimate of the area size was obtained by balancing the average recharge with the abstraction rate.
- 2) The basic boundaries of the ZOC were derived from numerical modelling of the Curragh aquifer. This model had been developed for the Kildare Bypass project (White Young Green, 2002).
- 3) These basic boundaries were expanded by varying the main axis of each ZOC through  $\pm 20^\circ$  to allow for errors in the modelled flow direction.

- 4) The area of the resulting ZOC was compared with the area required to balance the abstraction with diffuse recharge.

The average abstraction is reported by Curragh Camp staff to be 1100 m<sup>3</sup> d<sup>-1</sup> for the Hare Park borehole and 800 m<sup>3</sup> d<sup>-1</sup> for the McDonagh borehole. For the purposes of modelling the sources, the average yields were increased by 50% to 1650 m<sup>3</sup> d<sup>-1</sup> and 1200 m<sup>3</sup> d<sup>-1</sup>. This was to account for increased water demand at certain times of the year or in the future due to possible expansion in the Curragh Camp.

Taking the recharge to be 415 mm, the area required to supply a pumping rate of 2850 m<sup>3</sup> d<sup>-1</sup> was calculated to be approximately 2.5 km<sup>2</sup>. This compares with the ZOC area of 4 km<sup>2</sup> derived from the modelling and subsequent adjustments to the model output.

### 10.10.3 Inner Protection Area

According to “Groundwater Protection Schemes” (DELG/EPA/GSI, 1999), delineation of an Inner Protection Area is required to protect the source from microbial and viral contamination and it is based on the 100-day time of travel (ToT) to the supply. Estimations of the extent of this area cannot be made by hydrogeological mapping and conceptualisation methods alone. The numerical model used to derive the extent of the inner protection zone at both supply wells. A figure of 200 m was derived for both wells. Given the generally deep and flat nature of the water table, and the generally high permeability of the aquifer, it was considered reasonable to extend this distance to the modelled downgradient (as well as the modelled upgradient) side of the sources.

## 10.11 Groundwater Protection Zones

The groundwater protection zones are obtained by integrating the two elements of land surface zoning (source protection areas and vulnerability categories) – a possible total of 8 source protection zones. In practice, the source protection zones are obtained by superimposing the vulnerability map on the source protection area map. Each zone is represented by a code e.g. **SI/H**, which represents an Inner Protection area where the groundwater is highly vulnerable to contamination.

The final groundwater protection zones are shown on Map 8. The matrix of source protection zones is given in Table 10.

**Table 10 Matrix of Source Protection Zones for Curragh Camp.**

VULNERABILITY RATING	SOURCE PROTECTION	
	<i>Inner</i>	<i>Outer</i>
<i>Extreme (E)</i>	Not present	<b>SO/E</b>
<i>High (H)</i>	<b>SI/H</b>	<b>SO/H</b>
<i>Moderate (M)</i>	Not present	Not present
<i>Low (L)</i>	Not present	Not present

## 10.12 Potential Pollution Sources

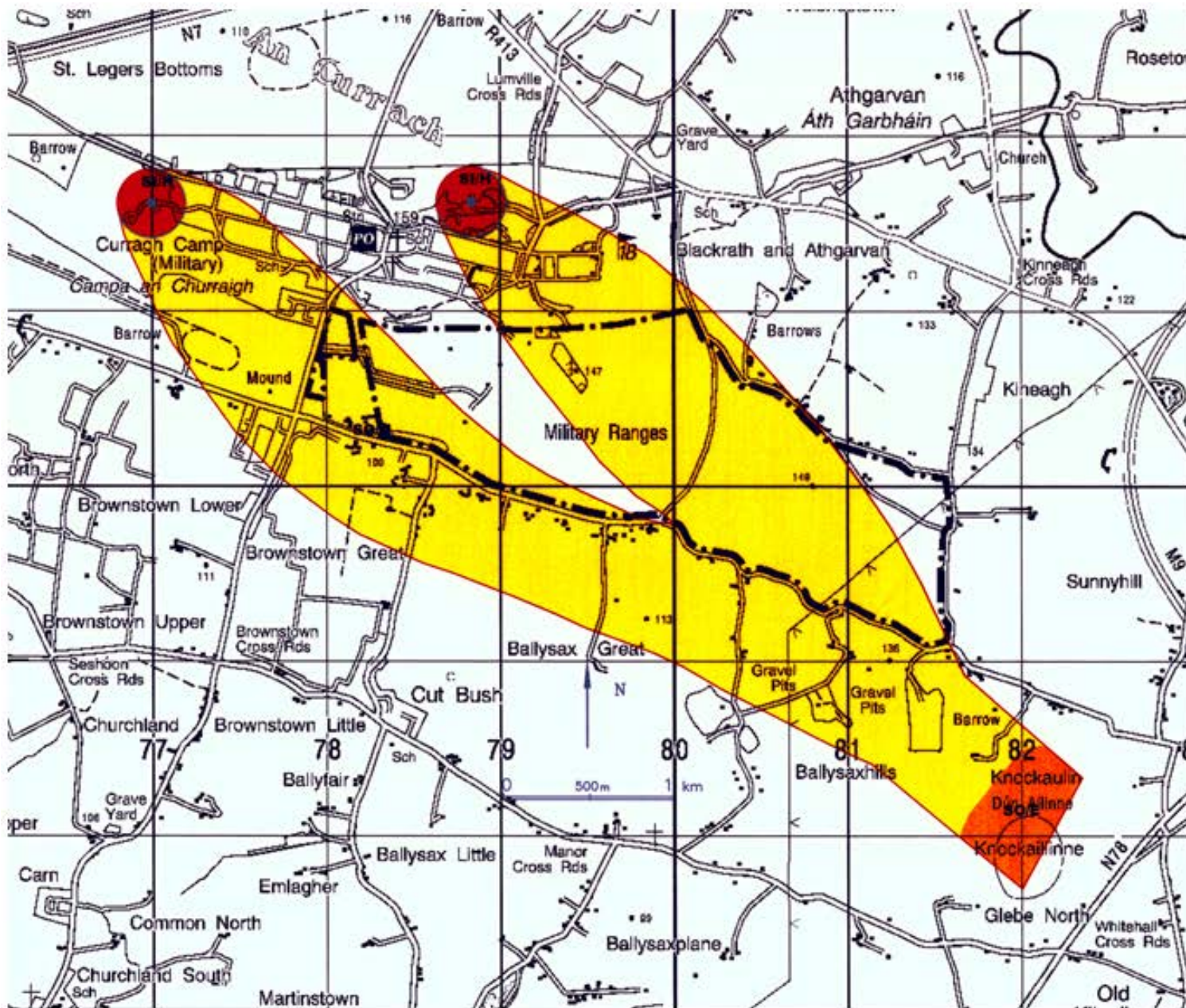
Leaky sewer pipes, the landfill at Hare Park, the sewerage works and road spillages are the main potential sources of contamination to the boreholes. Sewage after undergoing the first two stages of treatment is spread on irrigation plots which are prone to flooding during heavy rainfall events. Between the samples taken from the Hare Park borehole in 1990 and 2002 (See ) the chloride level has doubled from normal levels to over 50 mg l<sup>-1</sup>. These levels are not high enough to affect human health but they may indicate the presence of other contaminants. Though none of the other contaminant indicators are elevated, it should be remembered that these indicators relate primarily to domestic and agricultural contaminants. If not derived from salt softener, the elevated chloride could indicate that contaminants from the landfill have reached the well. Curragh Camp staff have indicated that tipping mainly comprises builders’ waste which would not normally constitute an groundwater quality hazard. However, there may be a possibility that occasional containers of waste oils, cleaning solvents, pesticides, etc., also occur in the fill. Many of the associated contaminants from these materials have



not been analysed for in available sample results. As such, the available data cannot be used to state that the supply is uncontaminated by materials from the landfill.

### 10.13 Conclusions and Recommendations

- ◆ The source comprises two production boreholes abstracting approximately 2000 m<sup>3</sup> d<sup>-1</sup> which is located in a regionally important sand/gravel aquifer (Rg).
- ◆ The groundwater in the vicinity of the supply boreholes is highly vulnerable to contamination.
- ◆ Leakage from sewerage pipes, the landfill at Hare Park, the sewerage works and runoff/spillages from the roads are the main potential pollution sources. Available data cannot be used to adequately assess the potential impact from the landfill.
- ◆ The protection zones delineated in the report are based on our current understanding of groundwater conditions and on the available data. Additional data obtained in the future may indicate that amendments to the boundaries are necessary.
- ◆ It is recommended that:
  1. Frequent sampling is undertaken at Hare Park of the full list of drinking water parameters including hydrocarbons, pesticides, polyaromatic hydrocarbons, etc., until it can be established that the landfill has not impacted on the well water quality.
  2. A study of the materials within the landfill be carried out. This could range from interviews with Curragh staff to excavations and sampling within the fill. Depending on the findings, the list of parameters analysed in (1) could be expanded or reduced.
  3. Other potential hazards in the ZOC should be located and assessed, particularly in relation to underground structures such as sewers and fuel storage tanks.
  4. A full chemical and bacteriological analysis of the **raw** water of each separate borehole is carried out on a regular basis.
  5. Particular care should be taken when assessing the location of any activities or developments which might cause contamination at the well, particularly in relation to underground structures such as sewers and fuel storage tanks.



## Curragh Camp PWS

### COUNTY KILDARE GROUNDWATER PROTECTION SCHEME

#### SOURCE PROTECTION ZONES

VULNERABILITY RATING	SOURCE PROTECTION ZONES	
	Inner (SI)	Outer (SO)
Extreme (E)	S1/E	SO/E
High (H)	S1/H	SO/H
Moderate (M)	S1/M	SO/M
Low (L)	S1/L	SO/L

- Public Supply Well
- Zone of Contribution of Wells (SO)
- Inner protection area (SI)
- K.T. Cullen & Co. Ltd. GSI Sources

This Source Protection Zone map is designed for general information and strategic planning usage. The boundaries are based on the available evidence and local details have been generalised to fit the map scale. Evaluation of specific sites and circumstances will normally require further and more detailed assessments and will frequently require site investigations to determine the risk to groundwater.

The map is intended for use in conjunction with groundwater protection responses for potentially polluting activities, which lists the degree of acceptability of these activities in each zone and describes the control measures necessary to prevent pollution.

Project Hydrogeologist: Coran Kelly  
Project Manager: Vincent Fitzsimons  
Digital Map Production: Sinead Smyth & Denise Taylor

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KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL  
Corinthians Charities Club Data



Mr. John Langan  
Director of Public Services  
St. Mary's, Naas, Co. Kildare

GSI - SOURCE PROTECTION ZONES		GSI - SOURCE PROTECTION ZONES	
Year	Scale	Year	Scale
2002	1:50,000	2002	1:50,000
2003	1:50,000	2003	1:50,000
2004	1:50,000	2004	1:50,000
2005	1:50,000	2005	1:50,000
2006	1:50,000	2006	1:50,000
2007	1:50,000	2007	1:50,000
2008	1:50,000	2008	1:50,000
2009	1:50,000	2009	1:50,000
2010	1:50,000	2010	1:50,000
2011	1:50,000	2011	1:50,000
2012	1:50,000	2012	1:50,000
2013	1:50,000	2013	1:50,000
2014	1:50,000	2014	1:50,000
2015	1:50,000	2015	1:50,000
2016	1:50,000	2016	1:50,000
2017	1:50,000	2017	1:50,000
2018	1:50,000	2018	1:50,000
2019	1:50,000	2019	1:50,000
2020	1:50,000	2020	1:50,000

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF IRELAND

Barrington's Crossroads, Dublin 4

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01-452 4010

01-452 4011

01-452 4012

01-452 4013

01-452 4014

01-452 4015

Map 8 Curragh Camp Source Protection Zones

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## Appendix IV: Discussion Of the Key Indicators of Domestic and Agricultural Contamination of Groundwater

### A.1 Introduction

This appendix is adapted from Daly, 1996.

There has been a tendency in analysing groundwater samples to test for a limited number of constituents. A "full" or "complete" analysis, which includes all the major anions and cations, is generally recommended for routine monitoring and for assessing pollution incidents. This enables (i) a check on the reliability of the analysis (by doing an ionic balance), (ii) a proper assessment of the water chemistry and quality and (iii) a possible indication of the source of contamination. A listing of recommended and optional parameters are given in Table A1. It is also important that the water samples taken for analysis have not been chlorinated - this is a difficulty in some local authority areas where water take-off points prior to chlorination have not been installed.

The following parameters are good contamination indicators: E.coli, nitrate, ammonia, potassium, chloride, iron, manganese and trace organics.

**TABLE A1**

<b>Recommended Parameters</b>		
Appearance	Calcium (Ca)	Nitrate (NO <sub>3</sub> )*
Sediment	Magnesium (Mg)	Ammonia (NH <sub>4</sub> and NH <sub>3</sub> )*
pH (lab)	Sodium (Na)	Iron (Fe)*
Electrical Conductivity (EC)*	Potassium (K)*	Manganese (Mn)*
Total Hardness	Chloride (Cl)*	
General coliform	Sulphate (SO <sub>4</sub> )*	
E. coli *	Alkalinity	
<b>Optional Parameters (depending on local circumstances or reasons for sampling)</b>		
Fluoride (F)	Fatty acids *	Zinc (Zn)
Orthophosphate	Trace organics *	Copper (Cu)
Nitrite (NO <sub>2</sub> )*	TOC *	Lead (Pb)
B.O.D.*	Boron (B) *	Other metals
Dissolved Oxygen *	Cadmium (Cd)	
<b>* good indicators of contamination</b>		

### A.2 Faecal Bacteria and Viruses

*E. coli* is the parameter tested as an indicator of the presence of faecal bacteria and perhaps viruses; constituents which pose a significant risk to human health. The most common health problem arising from the presence of faecal bacteria in groundwater is diarrhoea, but typhoid fever, infectious hepatitis and gastrointestinal infections can also occur. Although *E. coli* bacteria are an excellent indicator of pollution, they can come from different sources - septic tank effluent, farmyard waste, landfill sites, birds. The faecal coliform : faecal streptococci ratio has been suggested as a tentative



indicator to distinguish between animal and human waste sources (Henry *et al.*, 1987). However, researchers in Virginia Tech (Reneau, 1996) cautioned against the use of this technique.

Viruses are a particular cause for concern as they survive longer in groundwater than indicator bacteria (Gerba and Bitton, 1984).

The published data on elimination of bacteria and viruses in groundwater has been compiled by Pekdeger and Matthess (1983), who show that in different investigations 99.9% elimination of *E. coli* occurred after 10-15 days. The mean of the evaluated investigations was 25 days. They show that 99.9% elimination of various viruses occurred after 16-120 days, with a mean of 35 days for Polio-, Hepatitis, and Enteroviruses. According to Armon and Kott (1994), pathogenic bacteria can survive for more than ten days under adverse conditions and up to 100 days under favourable conditions; enteroviruses can survive from about 25 days up to 170 days in soils.

Bacteria can move considerable distances in the subsurface, given the right conditions. In a sand and gravel aquifer, coliform bacteria were isolated 100 ft from the source 35 hours after the sewage was introduced (as reported in Hagedorn *et al.*, 1981). They can travel several kilometres in karstic aquifers. In Ireland, research at Sligo RTC involved examining in detail the impact of septic tank systems at three locations with different site conditions (Henry, 1990; summarised in Daly, Thorn and Henry, 1993). Piezometers were installed down-gradient; the distances of the furthest piezometers were 8 m, 10 m and 9.5 m, respectively. Unsurprisingly, high faecal bacteria counts were obtained in the piezometers at the two sites with soakage pits, one with limestone bedrock at a shallow depth where the highest count (max. 14 000 cfu's per 1000 ml) and the second where sand/gravel over limestone was present (max 3 000 cfu's per 100 ml). At the third site, a percolation area was installed at 1.0 m b.g.l; the subsoils between the percolation pipes and the fractured bedrock consisted of 1.5 m sandy loam over 3.5 m of poorly sorted gravel; the water table was 3.5 b.g.l. (So this site would satisfy the water table and depth to rock requirements of S.R.6:1991, and most likely the percolation test requirement.) Yet, the maximum faecal coliform bacteria count was 300 cfus per 100 ml. Faecal streptococci were present in all three piezometers. It is highly likely that wells located 30 m down gradient of the drainage fields would be polluted by faecal bacteria.

As viruses are smaller than bacteria, they are not readily filtered out as effluent moves through the ground. The main means of attenuation is by adsorption on clay particles. Viruses can travel considerable distances underground, depths as great as 67 m and horizontal migrations as far as 400 m have been reported (as reported in US EPA, 1987). The possible presence of viruses in groundwater as a result of pollution by septic tank systems is a matter of concern because of their mobility and the fact that indicator bacteria such as faecal coliforms have been found not to correlate with the presence of viruses in groundwater samples (US EPA, 1987).

The natural environment, in particular the soils and subsoils, can be effective in removing bacteria and viruses by predation, filtration and absorption. There are two high risk situations: (i) where permeable sands and gravels with a shallow water table are present; and (ii) where fractured rock, particularly limestone, is present close to the ground surface. The presence of clayey gravels, tills, and peat will, in many instances, hinder the vertical migration of microbes, although preferential flow paths, such as cracks in clayey materials, can allow rapid movement and bypassing of the subsoil.

### **A.3 Nitrate**

Nitrate is one of the most common contaminants identified in groundwater and increasing concentrations have been recorded in many developed countries. The consumption of nitrate rich water by young children may give rise to a condition known as methaemoglobinaemia (blue baby syndrome). The formation of carcinogenic nitrosamines is also a possible health hazard and epidemiological studies have indicated a positive correlation between nitrate consumption in drinking

water and the incidence of gastric cancer. However, the correlation is not proven according to some experts (Wild and Cameron, 1980). The EC MAC for drinking water is 50mg/l.

The nitrate ion is not adsorbed on clay or organic matter. It is highly mobile and under wet conditions is easily leached out of the rooting zone and through soil and permeable subsoil. As the normal concentrations in uncontaminated groundwater is low (less than 5 mg/l), nitrate can be a good indicator of contamination by fertilisers and waste organic matter.

In the past there has been a tendency in Ireland to assume that the presence of high nitrates in well water indicated an impact by inorganic fertilisers. This assumption has frequently been wrong, as examination of other constituents in the water showed that organic wastes - usually farmyard waste, probably soiled water - were the source. The nitrate concentrations in wells with a low abstraction rate - domestic and farm wells - can readily be influenced by soiled water seeping underground in the vicinity of the farmyard or from the spraying of soiled water on adjoining land. Even septic tank effluent can raise the nitrate levels; if a septic tank system is in the zone of contribution of a well, a four-fold dilution of the nitrogen in the effluent is needed to bring the concentration of nitrate below the EU MAC (as the EU limit is 50 mg/l as NO<sub>3</sub> or 11.3 mg/l as N and assuming that the N concentration in septic tank effluent is 45 mg/l).

The recently produced draft county reports by the EPA on nitrate in groundwater show high levels of nitrate in a significant number of public and group scheme supplies, particularly in south and southern counties and in counties with intensive agriculture, such as Carlow and Louth. This suggests that diffuse sources – landspreading of fertilisers – is having an impact on groundwater.

In assessing regional groundwater quality and, in particular the nitrate levels in groundwater, it is important that:

- (i) conclusions should not be drawn using data only from private wells, which are frequently located near potential point pollution sources and from which only a small quantity of groundwater is abstracted;
- (ii) account should be taken of the complete chemistry of the sample and not just nitrate, as well as the presence of *E. coli*;
- (iii) account should be taken of not only the land-use in the area but also the location of point pollution sources;
- (iv) account should be taken of the regional hydrogeology and the relationship of this to the well itself. For instance, shallow wells generally show higher nitrate concentrations than deeper wells, low permeability sediments can cause denitrification, knowledge on the groundwater flow direction is needed to assess the influence of land-use.

#### **A.4 Ammonia**

Ammonia has a low mobility in soil and subsoil and its presence at concentrations greater than 0.1 mg/l in groundwater indicates a nearby waste source and/or vulnerable conditions. The EU MAC is 0.3 mg/l.

#### **A.5 Potassium**

Potassium (K) is relatively immobile in soil and subsoil. Consequently the spreading of manure, slurry and inorganic fertilisers is unlikely to significantly increase the potassium concentrations in groundwater. In most areas in Ireland, the background potassium levels in groundwater are less than 3.0 mg/l. Higher concentrations are found occasionally where the rock contains potassium e.g. certain granites and sandstones. The background potassium:sodium ratio in most Irish groundwaters is less than 0.4 and often 0.3. The K:Na ratio of soiled water and other wastes derived from plant organic



matter is considerably greater than 0.4, whereas the ratio in septic tank effluent is less than 0.2. Consequently a K:Na ratio greater than 0.4 can be used to indicate contamination by plant organic matter - usually in farmyards, occasionally landfill sites (from the breakdown of paper). However, a K:Na ratio lower than 0.4 does not indicate that farmyard wastes are **not** the source of contamination (or that a septic tank is the cause), as K is less mobile than Na. (Phosphorus is increasingly a significant pollutant and cause of eutrophication in surface water. It is not a problem in groundwater as it usually is not mobile in soil and subsoil).

## **A.6 Chloride**

The principle source of chloride in uncontaminated groundwater is rainfall and so in any region, depending on the distance from the sea and evapotranspiration, chloride levels in groundwater will be fairly constant. Chloride, like nitrate, is a mobile anion. Also, it is a constituent of organic wastes. Consequently, levels appreciably above background levels (12-15 mg/l in Co. Offaly, for instance) have been taken to indicate contamination by organic wastes such as septic tank systems. While this is probably broadly correct, Sherwood (1991) has pointed out that chloride can also be derived from potassium fertilisers.

## **A.7 Iron and manganese**

Although they are present under natural conditions in groundwater in some areas, they can also be good indicators of contamination by organic wastes. Effluent from the wastes cause deoxygenation in the ground which results in dissolution of iron (Fe) and manganese (Mn) from the soil, subsoil and bedrock into groundwater. With reoxygenation in the well or water supply system the Fe and Mn precipitate. High Mn concentrations can be a good indicator of pollution by silage effluent. However, it can also be caused by other high BOD wastes such as milk, landfill leachate and perhaps soiled water and septic tank effluent.

**Box A1 Warning/trigger Levels for Certain Contaminants**

As human activities have had some impact on a high proportion of the groundwater in Ireland, there are few areas where the groundwater is in a pristine, completely natural condition. Consequently, most groundwater is contaminated to some degree although it is usually not polluted. In the view of the GSI, assessments of the degree of contamination of groundwater can be beneficial as an addition to examining whether the water is polluted or not. This type of assessment can indicate where appreciable impacts are occurring. It can act as a warning that either the situation could worsen and so needs regular monitoring and careful land-use planning, or that there may be periods when the source is polluted and poses a risk to human health and as a consequence needs regular monitoring. Consequently, thresholds for certain parameters can be used to help indicate situations where additional monitoring and/or source protection studies and/or hazard surveys may be appropriate to identify or prevent more significant water quality problems.

Parameter	Threshold mg/l	EU MAC mg/l
Nitrate	25	50
Potassium	4	12
Chloride	30 (except near sea)	250
Ammonia	0.15	0.3
K/Na ratio	0.3-0.4	
Faecal bacteria	0	0

**Box A2 Summary : Assessing a Problem Area**

Let us assume that you are examining an area with potential groundwater contamination problems and that you have taken samples in nearby wells. How can the analyses be assessed?

***E. coli present*** ⇒ organic waste source nearby (except in karst areas), usually either a septic tank system or farmyard.

***E. coli absent*** ⇒ either not polluted by organic waste or bacteria have not survived due to attenuation or time of travel to well greater than 100 days.

***Nitrate > 25 mg/l*** ⇒ either inorganic fertiliser or organic waste source; check other parameters.

***Ammonia > 0.15 mg/l*** ⇒ source is nearby organic waste; fertiliser is not an issue.

***Potassium (K) > 5.0 mg/l*** ⇒ source is probably organic waste.

***K/Na ratio > 0.4 (0.3, in many areas)*** ⇒ Farmyard waste rather than septic tank effluent is the source. If < 0.3, no conclusion is possible.

***Chloride > 30 mg/l*** ⇒ organic waste source. However this does not apply in the vicinity of the coast (within 20 km at least).

In conclusion, faecal bacteria, nitrate, ammonia, high K/Na ratio and chloride indicate contamination by organic waste. However, only the high K/Na helps distinguish between septic tank effluent and farmyard wastes. So in many instances, while the analyses can show potential problems, other information is needed to complete the assessment.

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## APPENDIX V: Laboratory analytical results

