

**TRAINING COURSE  
ON  
APPLICATIONS OF REMOTE SENSING AND GIS  
IN WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

**ORGANISED UNDER  
HYDROLOGY PROJECT PHASE II**

**AT  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HYDROLOGY, ROORKEE**

**MARCH 08-12, 2010**

**LECTURE NOTE**

**APPLICATION OF REMOTE  
SENSING IN GROUND  
WATER STUDIES**

**By**

**SUDHIR KUMAR  
NIH, ROORKEE**

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HYDROLOGY  
JALVIGYAN BHAWAN  
ROORKEE – 247 667 (UTTARAKHAND)**

# APPLICATION OF REMOTE SENSING AND GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM IN GROUNDWATER STUDIES

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Water is an extremely important resource. Life on the planet Earth, evolved in aquatic environment, depends on water for sustenance. However, distribution of this resource is highly uneven. About 97.41% of water on the Earth is saline and is contained in oceans, and the balance 2.59% water is fresh, which is distributed in glaciers (1.95%), groundwater (0.62%), and surface water (0.02%). Thus only 0.02% of the total water available on the Earth, which is contained in rivers, lakes and atmosphere etc., is easily available to mankind.

Because of the uneven distribution, the requirement of the water can be met either by transporting water from reservoirs, lakes, rivers etc., or from withdrawal of subsurface water. Fortunately, groundwater is a fairly widely distributed natural, renewable resource, which gets replenished almost regularly by precipitation.

Groundwater is a very important natural resource and is widely used for different purposes like drinking, irrigation etc. However, it can only be used if it is available in good amount and is of good quality. The occurrence and movement of groundwater in any terrain is mainly controlled by geology, topography, landuse, soil, geomorphology and structures. Depending on the terrain characteristics, one or several of these parameters contribute to the localization of groundwater.

In India groundwater is used both for drinking as well as irrigation purposes. The status of groundwater availability and development is given below.

**Dynamic Groundwater Resources of India (2004)**

1.	Annual Replenishable Groundwater Resources	433 BCM
2.	Net annual Groundwater Availability	399 BCM
3	Annual Groundwater Draft for Irrigation, domestic and Industrial Use	231 BCM
4	Stage of Groundwater Development	58%

Source: CGWB, 2006

Remote sensing data provides surface information, whereas groundwater occurs at depth and may be a few meters or several tens of meters deep. Therefore, remote sensing data are unable to provide any direct information on groundwater in most cases. However, the surface morphological – hydrological – geological regime, which primarily governs the subsurface water conditions, can be well studied and mapped on remote sensing data products. Therefore, remote sensing acts as a very useful guide and efficient tool for regional and local groundwater exploration, particularly as a fore runner in a cost effective manner.

The results of groundwater studies are traditionally presented in the form of thematic maps, tables etc. This type of data representation however, has its own limitations as often these maps give information of a certain point or location and that too is of limited type.



Moreover, it is time consuming and cumbersome to derive various derivatives from these maps and at the same time it is difficult to draw significant inferences based on number of maps. In this context, Geographic Information System (GIS) can be used, which is a computer based system designed to accept large volume of spatial data derived from a variety of sources. GIS can efficiently store, retrieve, manipulate, analyze and display various data according to the user defined specifications.

Remote sensing data can provide information to GIS, where it can be combined with other spatial data. Therefore, the two technologies are complementary to each other and if used in conjunction can provide excellent results. Remote sensing analyses are improved by the verification of data retrieved from the GIS, and application of GIS can greatly benefit from the information that remote sensing data contain. Often the image data are the most current spatial information available for an area. The use of digital image data offers the additional advantage of a computer compatible format that can be input directly to a GIS.

In the present lecture, application of remote sensing and geographical information system in groundwater studies will be discussed.

## **2. APPLICATION OF REMOTE SENSING IN GROUNDWATER STUDIES**

Groundwater resource estimation needs knowledge of the areal extent of the related factors. Remote sensing data have proven their importance as an additional tool in groundwater prospecting by outlining geology, structures, surface anomalies, drainage and geomorphic indicators for location of recharge and discharge sites. Features associated with groundwater related phenomenon can be recognised in the satellite data due to their spectral characteristics and spatial association.

Remote sensing is an extremely invaluable tool for mapping landuse, landcover categories and geomorphic elements needed for water resources planning and management. The importance and use of remote sensing data in geohydrological application is based on the fact that the images aid the investigator in locating morphological and structural features that may influence groundwater flow.

Appropriate compilation of (i) fractures, (ii) geology, (iii) geomorphology, (iv) landuse and (v) drainage results in location of groundwater exploratory targets, recharge and discharge sites.

The conventional approaches for groundwater investigation, which are ground based field surveys and exploratory drilling, are time consuming and uneconomical. The remote sensing technique provides temporal and spatial information on geological and hydrological parameters required for groundwater studies. Repetitive coverage of the earth provides temporal and real time information on static and dynamic resources. The geological and hydrologic information can be inferred by analysis and interpretation of remote sensing data. Hence, remote sensing technique provides vital information on groundwater, which can be supplemented and verified by other field techniques like detailed ground survey, geophysical resistivity survey and shallow seismic survey.

For groundwater exploration, the various surface features amenable to observation on remote sensing data products can be grouped into two categories:



- (i) First - order or direct indicators, i.e. those ground parameters that are directly related to groundwater occurrence, (e.g. springs, canals, ponds, lakes, rivers and soil moisture etc.)
- (ii) Second - order or indirect indicators, i.e. those hydrogeological parameters which regionally affect and therefore reflect the groundwater regime, e.g. drainage characteristics fracture systems, soil/rock type, structure, landform etc.

A list of features which can be extracted from satellite data include landforms, drainage characteristics, landuse / land cover, soils, and lineaments and are given in Table 1. The landuse / landcover reflect the availability of groundwater in a particular area. Vegetation indicates the availability of adequate water where the groundwater may be close to the surface. The remotely sensed drainage information indicates the presence or absence of groundwater as the surface and subsurface drainage are inversely related. For instance, absence of a well-defined drainage network over large areas subject to good rainfall may indicate occurrence of groundwater. The lineaments are straight to slightly curvilinear features formed in many different types of landscapes. In hard rock terrain lineaments have considerable bearing on subsurface water resources. Faults, fractures and lineament intersection can be mapped using remotely sensed data. Information on soils and topography gives idea on groundwater replenishment by rainfall. The infiltration of rainwater and evaporation are greatly influenced by permeability of the soil.

**Table 1: Important indicators of groundwater on remote sensing data products**

<p><b>(a) First-order or direct indicators</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Features associated with recharge zones: rivers, canals, lakes, ponds, etc.</li> <li>2. Features associated with discharge zones: springs and other sites of effluent seepage</li> <li>3. Soil moisture</li> <li>4. Anomalous vegetation</li> </ol>
<p><b>(b) Second - order or indirect indicators</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Topography</li> <li>2. Landforms</li> <li>3. Weathering</li> <li>4. Type of rocks - hard rock (igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic) and soft rock areas</li> <li>5. Regional structural features</li> <li>6. Vegetation</li> <li>7. Soil type</li> <li>8. Soil moisture</li> <li>9. Drainage density</li> <li>10. Fracture systems in hard rock areas</li> <li>11. Special geological features like sink holes, alluvial fans, dykes, faults, shear zones, buried channels etc., which may have unique bearing on groundwater occurrence and movement</li> <li>12. Extra-hydraulic continuity of formations - surface and sub-surface water divides vis-a-vis recharge and discharge zones from synoptic overviews.</li> </ol>



### 3. APPLICATION OF REMOTE SENSING IN GROUNDWATER MODELING

Groundwater resources assessment, modeling and management are hampered considerably by a lack of data. Usually, only a limited number of point measurements are available, while groundwater models need spatial and temporal distributions of input and calibration data. If such data are not available, models cannot play their proper role in decision support as they are notoriously underdetermined and uncertain. Recent developments in remote sensing have opened new sources for distributed spatial data. As the relevant entities, such as water fluxes, heads or transmissivities cannot be observed directly by remote sensing, indirect methods are employed to link the observable quantities to input data required by the model. An overview of the possibilities for employing remote-sensing observations in groundwater modeling is discussed below. The main possibilities are: (1) use of remote-sensing data to create some of the spatially distributed input parameter sets for a model, and (2) constraining of models during calibration by spatially distributed data derived from remote sensing. In both, models can be improved conceptually and quantitatively.

The term remote sensing should not be confined to Earth observation systems with sensors measuring in the visible, infrared and radio wave regions of the electromagnetic radiation spectrum. It also includes geophysical surveys of gravity, magnetic, and electromagnetic. Only the geophysical surveys offer the possibility of exploring the subsurface. Remotely sensed data can be obtained from various platforms such as satellites, airplanes, drones, blimps and masts. The ways in which remote sensing can contribute to groundwater modeling are so numerous that this lecture can by no means cover all aspects.

Regional hydrological models such as groundwater models require distributed input data. Classical hydrological measurements provide only point data obtained for example at a weather station, a gauging station, or a borehole. One of the main problems in hydrological research today is how to pass from point information to regional distributed information. Remote sensing offers a possibility to do this for certain parameters required in groundwater modeling. In principle, the patterns from remote sensing can be translated into a deterministic distribution of input data on a cell-by-cell basis or in the form of zones. Even if absolute values of these data are uncertain, they still reduce the degrees of freedom of the model and thus lead to a better posed inverse problem and a robust solution. Remote sensing is, therefore, an extremely useful tool in the acquisition of spatially distributed data for modeling. All raw remote-sensing data present spatial patterns which can be related to features or processes above the surface (such as clouds), on the surface (such as evapotranspiration), or in the shallow subsurface (such as electrical conductivity). However, the parameters directly accessible by remote sensing are often not the ones required in groundwater models. This means that the utilization of remote-sensing data requires another modeling step to convert them to data usable as input data or verification data in spatially distributed models (e.g. Kemna et al. 2002). It is the combination of the pattern information with the point information at ground observation stations that allows spatial distributions of the parameter in question to be obtained. The correlations between ground measurements and remote-sensing data are subject to noise. Such stochastic relationships can, however, still be utilized in the conditioning of stochastic models and data assimilation.

Take precipitation as an example for a distributed data set. From remote-sensing data such as cloud temperature distributions (e.g. Herman et al. 1997) or weather radar data (e.g. Collier 2002) on drop spectra, estimates of precipitation can be derived through a model. The resulting distribution of precipitation is uncertain as far as absolute values are concerned,



while the relative intensities are much more reliable. If the resulting distribution is scaled with precipitation measurements obtained at stations on the ground, a map of absolute precipitation quantities results which is superior to maps obtained from the mere mathematical interpolation of station data.

In regions where spatial observation networks are extremely dense, remote sensing may be of less interest. However, the main water problems of today are in developing regions of the world with weak infrastructure, low accessibility, and data scarcity. It is in such cases that remote sensing can develop its largest use for water resources management. Combined with traditional methods remote sensing has a great potential in improving the quality of modeling work.

### ***What information contained in remote-sensing images is of potential use in groundwater modeling?***

Airborne geophysical surveys allow for the identification of faults and dikes, changes in lithology and the depth of magnetic features (e.g. Danielsen et al. 2003). This information is helpful in constructing more realistic conceptual models of aquifers. An aquifer that is compartmentalized by dikes and faults will behave differently from an aquifer without such flow guides.

Lineaments on the surface have been identified early as conduits for groundwater flow in fractured aquifers and hence targeted for locating production wells. Their use in geology is already widespread (e.g. Lattmann 1958; Meijerink 1996; Tam et al. 2004).

The overlaying of lineaments mapped from conventional remote-sensing techniques (aerial photographs and satellite images) and those derived from airborne geophysical methods can be implemented using geographical information systems (GIS) at both local and regional scales. Some lineaments detectable by airborne geophysics may be due to deep-seated sources (up to several tens of kilometers) and hence have no effect on groundwater flow in aquifers of interest, which are mostly within a few hundreds of meters below the ground surface. Therefore, the depths to magnetic sources must be estimated in order to retain only lineaments that are deemed relevant to groundwater flow. On the other hand, lineaments identified with conventional methods give only information on structures with surface expression and no information on depth and vertical continuity of the structures.

Space-borne gravitational surveys such as the Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment (GRACE) mission can be used to detect temporal changes in the total water storage (surface water, soil water and groundwater). A 2-cm thick, infinitely extended layer of pure water located at any depth below a gravimeter generates an incremental gravitational acceleration of  $1 \times 10^{-8} \text{ m/s}^2$  or 1  $\mu\text{Gal}$  (microgal). The temporal change in total water storage (TWS) in the Earth system is therefore directly proportional to the temporal change in the measured gravitational acceleration. The potential of time-lapse gravity surveys to monitor the status of water resources systems has been recognized for a long time. Ground-based time-lapse gravity surveys have been used successfully to determine alluvial aquifer storage and specific yield, which is a key parameter for the sustainable management of groundwater resources (Pool and Eychaner 1995). The GRACE twin satellites have dramatically improved the accuracy and resolution of regional observations. This satellite mission delivers an accuracy of 0.4  $\mu\text{Gal}$  or 1 cm of groundwater on spatial scales larger than 1,300 km (Andersen and Hinderer 2005; Andersen et al. 2005) and delivers reliable observations of the regional part of the global hydrological cycle. Although the spatial resolution is still less than



the size of typical groundwater systems, the prospects of this method for future use in verification of models, especially for the determination of the storage coefficient, are bright. For a phreatic aquifer, the surface of the terrain is also the upper boundary of the aquifer and constrains the groundwater levels. Surface elevations can be determined by various remote-sensing techniques, from airborne platforms (e.g. light detection and ranging LIDAR (Bufton et al. 1991), interpretation of stereo orthophotos (Kaab 2002), or satellite platforms using, for example, radar interferometry (Madsen et al. 1993; Rabus et al. 2003; Slater et al. 2006; Zebker and Goldstein 1986). In the latter case, the phase differences in pixels seen from different points in orbit allow a translation into differences in elevation. To obtain absolute elevation data and to verify their relative distribution, accurate elevation data at ground control points are required. These can be obtained, for example, with differential GPS (global positioning system). In many applications, the depth to groundwater is of importance for environmental reasons, including water supply to vegetation or salinization by phreatic evaporation. This distance is the difference between the surface elevation given by the digital elevation model (DEM) and the groundwater level.

Several preprocessed DEMs are available. A recent one is the shuttle radar topography mission (SRTM) data set, a DEM covering all land areas between 60°N and 56°S latitude at a 90-m pixel resolution and a vertical accuracy of at best 5 m (Rodriguez et al. 2005; Slater et al. 2006). While the spatial resolution is sufficient for most groundwater applications, the vertical accuracy is not. Only LIDAR can presently supply a sufficient vertical accuracy and spatial resolution to determine reliable depths to groundwater.

High-precision measurements of the surface elevation changes can reveal regional subsidence caused by piezometric depression around well fields or seasonal variations of the groundwater level. Once a relation is given between subsidence and drawdown, a spatial distribution of drawdown can be obtained from the amount of surface subsidence observed. Differential GPS can also serve the purpose of determining temporal variations in the ground level related to groundwater pumping or recharge. This information is, however, again point like.

Finally, river and lake levels can be determined by using radar satellites. Such data are available close to real time. Lake and river levels can be of relevance for subsurface hydrology if they are indicative of groundwater levels.

The bulk of remote-sensing data relevant for groundwater modeling are data that allow for quantification of the distribution of recharge or discharge. Recharge is one of the most important quantities for sustainable groundwater management. In dry regions, its estimation has been, up to today, a challenge, as it may occur only sporadically at intervals of several years. It may also be spatially very heterogeneous due to the distribution of precipitation, soil properties, water use by plants or runoff processes. One of the earliest applications of remote-sensing relevant in hydrology was the characterization of vegetation type, density and its status (e.g. Fensholt et al. 2006). This information is also of interest as a proxy for evapotranspiration (e.g. Loukas et al. 2005). Vegetation may be an indicator for the presence of water and the depth to groundwater level.

For flat terrain, the groundwater recharge potential over long time intervals is the long-term average residual between precipitation  $P$  and evapotranspiration  $ET$ . Both quantities can be estimated from remote-sensing data. The precipitation can be estimated from cloud temperature data in combination with precipitation data from meteorological stations on



the ground. The Famine Early Warning Systems Network offers such data at a 10-day temporal resolution for all of Africa. Evapotranspiration can be derived from multispectral satellite data via a surface energy balance. To put it simply, a dry pixel will heat up to higher temperatures than a pixel which has a large amount of water available for evaporative cooling. In this sense, radiation data can be related to evapotranspiration. The fraction of net radiation energy consumed by evaporating water can be estimated with different methods. In SEBAL (surface energy balance algorithm for land), the energy fluxes in the surface energy balance are calculated explicitly, while in a simplified method described by Roerink et al. (2000), this fraction is determined from a pixel-wise plot of surface temperature versus albedo. Other methods use different dimensions of the feature space instead, e.g. the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI), which is a measure of the vigor of vegetation growth (Sandholt and Andersen 1993).

Unfortunately, both ET and P obtained from remote sensing are inaccurate. Calculating the difference,  $P-ET$ , leads to error propagation, especially when both quantities are of similar magnitude. This is often the case in semiarid and arid areas. Still, the spatial patterns of  $P-ET$  may be of help in regionalization of traditional point measurements of recharge, e.g. obtained with the chloride method (Brunner et al. 2004).

The spatial distribution of recharge may be very heterogeneous even if the distribution of precipitation is homogeneous. If water collects and infiltrates in depressions, those may dominate the total recharge of an area. This process has been documented in Niger (Leduc et al. 2001). Water surfaces forming in the landscape and their temporal behavior can be identified by remote sensing, e.g. via radar or multi-spectral characterization (e.g. McCarthy et al. 2003; Roshier and Rumbachs 2004). Their density and distribution are indicative of the spatial distribution of recharge.

In wetlands, the interaction between surface water and groundwater is crucial for the understanding of the wetland behavior. The development of water surfaces and flooding patterns over time is, in this case, a valuable data set for model calibration (Bauer et al. 2006).

Groundwater recharge from rivers, streams and wetlands, under certain circumstances, can also be inferred from remote sensing through anomalies in temperature or electrical conductivity. In arid environments, evaporation is mostly through plants in the form of transpiration. This increases salinity in groundwater and hence electrical conductivity. The freshly infiltrated water beneath a stream, in contrast, has a low electrical conductivity. The varying electrical conductivity of the underground can be detected by airborne electromagnetic methods (e.g. Paine and Collins 2003). Such characteristic has been observed on the fringes of the Okavango Delta, Botswana, where the variations in groundwater salinity could be seen clearly from an airborne electromagnetic survey. Further, the data was validated by ground geoelectrical methods and drillhole information.

Salt crusts indicate high water tables with phreatic evaporation. They can be mapped by multispectral satellite data and used as an indicator for phreatic fluxes and depth to groundwater.

Soil-water balance calculations as a function of time require data in addition to average ET and P to account for water storage in the soil. A soil-water balance model requires some information on the field capacity of a soil which could be estimated on the basis of the



soil type. Researchers have used gamma radiation counts from airborne platforms to estimate the clay content (e.g. Rainey et al. 2003). Soil moisture itself and its temporal variation may in the future be accessible from passive and active microwave sensors.

The vegetation vigor derived from multi-spectral satellite data can be used as an indicator for irrigation and can, therefore, be employed as a relevant parameter in monitoring the irrigated areas and for timing of irrigation. The main application of remote sensing of hydrological variables already in operative use today is the scheduling of irrigation.

### **General process of applying remote-sensing data in groundwater modeling**

Groundwater models are based on the flow equation

$$S_0 \frac{\partial h}{\partial t} = \nabla(K \nabla h) + w$$

Where,  $S_0$  is the storativity,  $h$  the hydraulic head,  $t$  is time,  $K$  the hydraulic conductivity tensor and  $w$  the distribution of sources and sinks. Together with boundary conditions in space and time, the flow problem is uniquely defined. The equation and boundary conditions contain the spatially distributed functions of hydraulic conductivity, storativity, and recharge. Via those distributions as well as the boundary conditions, the geometry of the aquifer is defined.

In general, only limited information on the spatial distribution of these input parameters is available. Yet, a model computation needs a complete set of parameters. There are different ways to determine or estimate those. In traditional model calibration, the aquifer is divided into a limited number of zones. Within these zones, aquifer properties are assumed to be constant. This means a strong reduction in degrees of freedom. The zonation should be such that the parameters are expected to show little spatial variation within the defined zones. Remote sensing can play a role in the definition of these zones. For subsurface features, structural elements as seen in areal geophysical surveys together with point data from drillings and pumping tests allow zoning. So the first main use of remote-sensing data is seen in the spatial modulation and interpolation of input data, where otherwise a homogeneous value or a purely mathematical interpolation function would have to be used. During the process of model calibration, updated estimates of the missing parameters such as hydraulic conductivity (for the defined zones), are obtained such that a historical record of head and/or flux observations can be reproduced. This process is non-unique.

Piezometric head data do not reduce the uncertainty of the estimated parameters of storativity, hydraulic conductivity and recharge, in case those parameters are only known within large error intervals. If, however, the spatially distributed input data can be constrained, the calibration problem stabilizes. Let us assume the spatial distribution of relative recharge can be estimated from land use and soil type. And let us further assume that the yearly regional variation can be estimated from local lysimeter data. Then the total function of recharge in space and time  $R(x,t)$  could be reconstructed as the product of the temporal-spatial average of recharge  $R_{av}$ , a weighting factor  $f(x)$  expressing the relative values on areas with different land use and a weighting factor  $g(t)$  expressing the relative proportion of recharge in a certain time interval, i.e.

$$R(x,t) = R_{av} f(x)g(t)$$

If  $f(x)$  can be obtained from remote-sensing data and  $g(t)$  can be determined from point data at a few lysimeters there is only one unknown parameter left and the large number



of degrees of freedom residing in a temporal-spatial distribution collapses into one single number, the temporal-spatial average value  $R_{av}$ .

Alternatively, remote-sensing information on properties such as recharge could also be introduced in the traditional model calibration in the form of prior knowledge. As Carrera and Neuman (1986) show, ill-posedness of the model calibration can be mitigated by prior knowledge about the parameters to be estimated. Remote sensing can even be introduced as a kind of soft (not exact) information into the traditional zone based model calibration strategy.

#### **4. APPLICATION OF GIS IN GROUNDWATER STUDIES**

An effective and integrated utilization of remote sensing and other data requires an efficient spatial data processing system which can handle both spatial and non-spatial data. GIS is rapidly evolving technology that consist of computer based programs containing specialized algorithms and associated data base management structures, frequently in an integrated package. The accuracy of classification of groundwater potential zones can be improved by using the remotely sensed data along with ancillary data like topographical, meteorological and geophysical data.

The increasing volume of available spatial and non-spatial data with all its complexity and subsequent demand for the storage, analysis and display of these voluminous data has led in recent years, to the use of computer for data handling and creation of sophisticated information systems. Effective utilization of large volumes of spatial data depends upon the existence of efficient systems that can transform these data into usable information.

For the evaluation of groundwater potential of a basin, extensive exploration and management studies are carried out. This involves hydrogeological and hydrogeochemical studies of the basin. The result of such studies is usually been presented in the form of various maps, tables, graphs and data such as:

- Contour maps
- Lithological maps
- Geological and structural maps
- Soil and Landuse / land cover maps
- Drainage maps
- Tables of varying data/observations
- Point data (rainfall, chemical characteristics, hydraulic conductivity, etc.)

The application of GIS for groundwater exploration and management is basically for mapping, analysis, predicting and modelling. With the use of Digital Elevation Model (DEM) geomorphic characteristics of an area can be analyzed and classified according to ground conditions and project requirements.

In the context of groundwater studies, GIS technology is considered useful as it facilitates handling of diverse type of spatial information, e.g. topographic maps, landform maps, geological maps, various contour maps of water table and water quality etc. and offers flexibility of operation, speedy proceeding and higher accuracy. The evaluation of the groundwater potential of a basin involves extensive exploration and management studies to be carried out. This incorporates hydrological and hydrogeochemical studies of the basin.



GIS represents a new, powerful set of tools that can significantly improve the usefulness of results obtained during the groundwater modeling process. Bridging the disciplines of groundwater modeling, computer graphics, cartography, and data management, it represents a computer-based set of tools to display and analyze spatial data (e.g., water level elevations, groundwater quality data, modeling results, groundwater pollution potential). GIS can be defined as a computer-assisted system for the efficient acquisition, storage, retrieval, analysis, and representation of spatial data. Most GIS platforms consist of numerous subsystems that perform the listed tasks (Ross and Beljin, 1994).

Preliminary work in ground water modeling requires the translation and transform of information on maps, charts, and tables into computer readable form. The work is lengthy, tedious, and error prone. Changes required in the data sets during the model calibration often involves sifting through thousands of numbers (data) to make what often turned out to be minor modifications to the input data sets.

The specification of hydrological information such as rainfall, parameter information such as hydraulic conductivity, design parameter specification such as well locations and discharge values, and auxiliary conditions such as boundary conditions all involve the organization and manipulation of enormous quantities of data. Virtually all of this information is spatially, and in some instances temporally distributed. Much of it is available in computerized database either as maps in raster or vector format or as data tables. Due to advantages in computer-graphical technology, the information in such database is now accessed most efficiently through GIS systems.

Using the GIS approach, the analyst works with the original spatial information: for example, in formation provided on maps. Such information is generally accessible and is normally cataloged and presented in commonly understood terminology rather than in the more specialized vocabulary of the groundwater modeling professional. A visually based, computer-graphical approach, this method of data organization and analysis is much more intuitive than cumbersome utilization of numerical arrays.

Collection of large volumes of geographical data required for ground water modeling is very laborious if done by hand. For both the pre processing as well as the post processing stage, the use of the GIS saves much time and becomes possible to improve more results. In general the input parameters for existing hydrologic models are prepared in the GIS and passed on to the model via an interface.

During the compilation of the model parameters, for example, the configuration of the aquifer bottom may be estimated by interpolation of data from bore holes and other data sources. The permeability values may also have to be interpolated. There could be interactions between GIS and hydrologic model at various stages of the modeling if the model produces spatial output, such as groundwater flow model.

## 5. **GIS APPLICATIONS IN GROUNDWATER MODELING**

A mathematical model is a representation of the real world in terms of mathematical equations. A series of mathematical formulas are linked together to explain the workings of a particular phenomenon. A good model has the ability to predict the outcome of a set of inputs, as they would affect the real world. Groundwater models are generally of two types:

A **simulation model** is used to analyze the known information about a data feature.



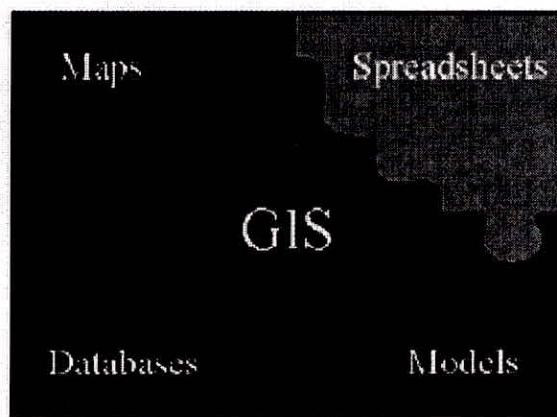
This type of model uses information from the data table associated with the object, plugs that information into a formula, and creates a new result based on the information from one or more variables.

A **predictive model**, on the other hand, is used to predict how a change in a variable will affect other conditions. Once again, this can be applied to any data feature, but it applies more to the attributes of a feature than the feature itself.

One area that has made good use of models is groundwater pollution. There are many models that deal with groundwater flow and the transport of pollutants in groundwater. The models can predict the groundwater flow rate, direction, and volume, based on inputs like precipitation, porosity of certain layers of rock, and other variables. Knowing the behaviour of certain pollutants, pollution modellers can predict the plume of a chemical spill and how it will affect groundwater. One of the most common examples is when a subterranean gasoline tank leak causes a plume that floats along the top of the water table. Using a model, analysts can predict the extent of the plume.

Linking models to a GIS makes the model easier to interpret. In the example above, users can graphically display a pollution plume and analyze its extent. This could be combined with population data to show what population could be affected by the leak. This is just one example of how GIS and models can work collectively.

One of the advantages of a GIS such as ArcView is its ability to connect with many different applications in a PC-based environment (Figure 5.1).



**Figure 5.1: GIS Application in PC-Based Environment**

(Source: Hay Wilson, 1998)

### **GIS/Model integration**

There is a spectrum of methods for joining GIS to analytical models. This is done by developing interface processes that generate model input or output in a format that is easily uploaded in GIS, or transformed from GIS to the model. The GIS-Model interface consists of a series of computer program that transfer the database to model and from model to GIS data base. Integration of GIS and model consists of four levels (Figure 5.2) which are described bellow:

**Lowest Level of Integration** consists essentially of using the GIS as an aid in developing the input data file for the model. A user then takes the preliminary data file and modifies it to produce a complete input file in the format required by the model.

**Second Level of Integration** uses an interfacing program specifically written to communicate



between the GIS and the model. The interface program may serve as a control program issuing commands to the GIS and the model output from the GIS is converted into the proper input format for the model and then read in to the model output from the model may likewise be converted to a GIS format and then displayed by the GIS. All of these operations are carried out under control of the interface program.

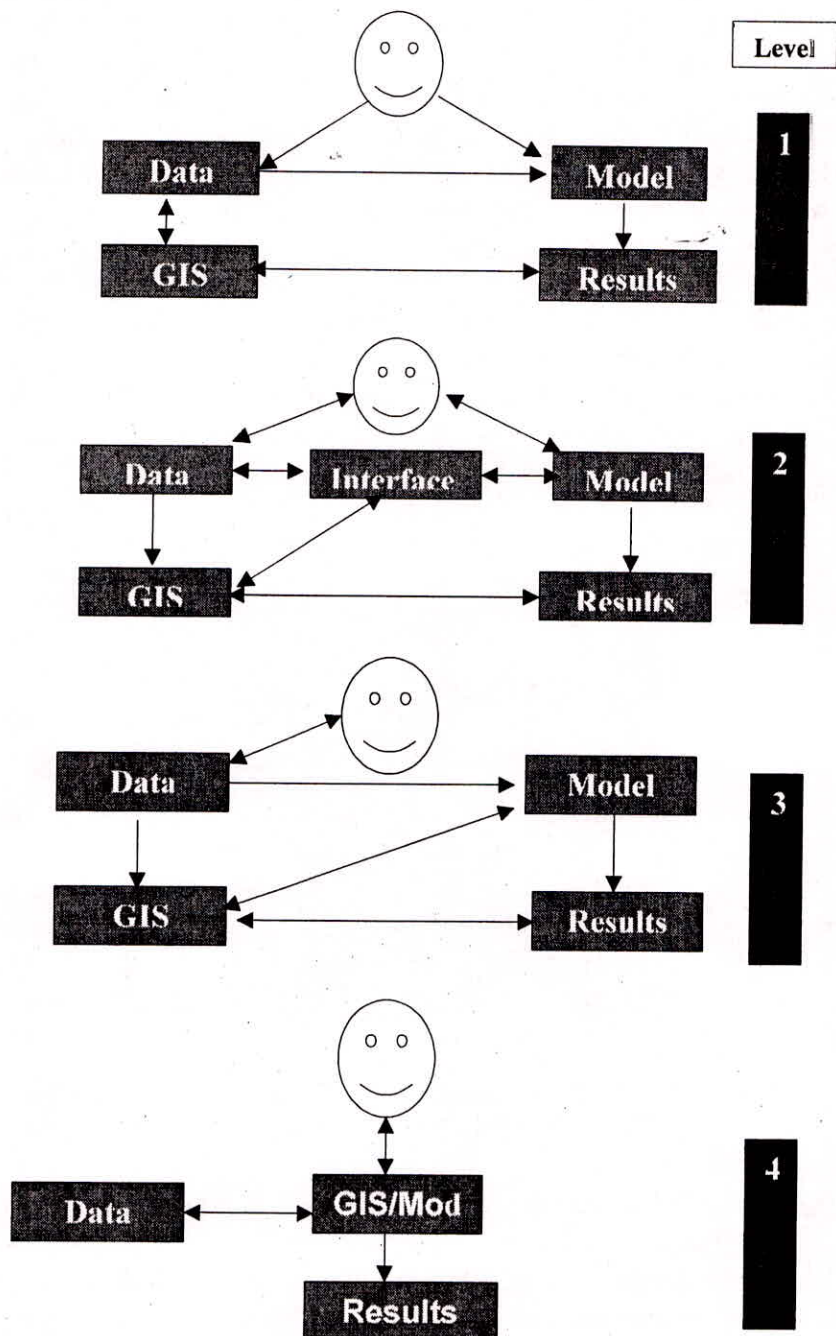


Figure 5.2: Interface between GIS and groundwater model (after Singh *et al.*, 1996).

**Third Level of Integration** occurs when the interface program is incorporated into the model. This requires modification to the input/output routines of existing models or developing special input/output routines for new models. Some programming may also be done within



the GIS to alter its input/output structure to make it more compatible with that of the model. If one is making extensive changes to a model or developing a new model, this level of integration would be appropriate.

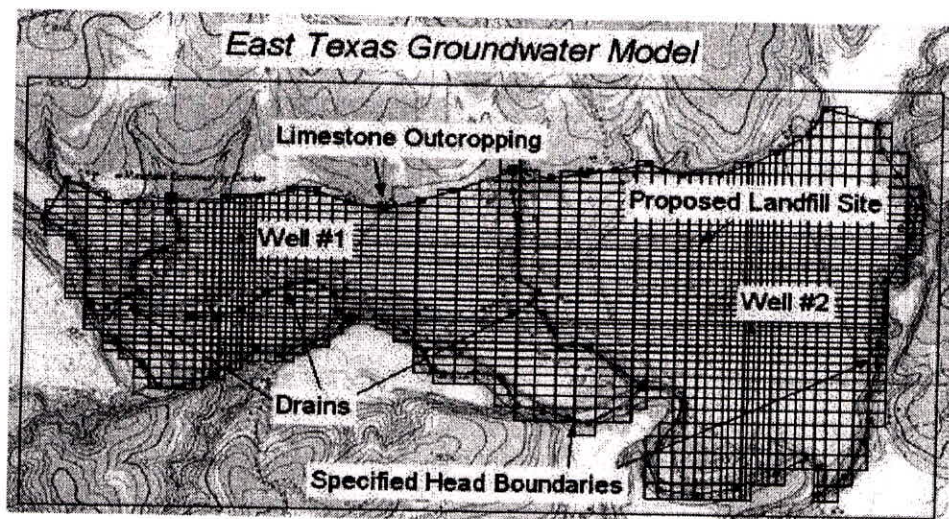
**Highest Level of Integration** occurs when the model and the GIS is essentially a single, integrated unit. One way of achieving this is by programming the model using the program language appropriate to the GIS being employed.

#### **How GIS is used in Modeling?**

**Background Images:** GIS generated maps of simulation results with relevant background information are an integral part of the key project decisions made with the ground model. GIS can view the model result on its background image or information (such as roads and other key features of the study area). This ensures the proper location and also helps to relate the model results to the other key features of the study area.

**GIS Based Model Conceptualization:** Conceptual model development is necessary precursor to groundwater model development. One of GIS's (as for example GMS's) greatest strengths traditionally have been the conceptual model approach. With this approach, a conceptual model is created using GIS objects (points, arcs, and polygons) and elevation data (solids, scatter points, or boreholes). The conceptual model is constructed independently of a grid or mesh. The conceptual model defines the boundary conditions, sources/sinks, and material property zones for a model.

**Grid/Mesh Creation:** Once the conceptual model is created, a grid or mesh can be automatically generated by GIS from the conceptual model. The grid is fit to the model boundary and refined around wells or other user-specified refine points.



**Figure 5.3:** Finite Element Grids created by GMS

**Model Conceptualisation:** GIS presents new and improved tools for the creation of complex 3D stratigraphy models and the ability to translate that 3D object directly to a finite-difference grid model or finite-element mesh model. The "Horizons" of GMS approach allows creating complex solids from borehole and cross section data quickly and easily. These tools allow creating solids with complex stratigraphy such as pinch out zones, truncations, and outcroppings.



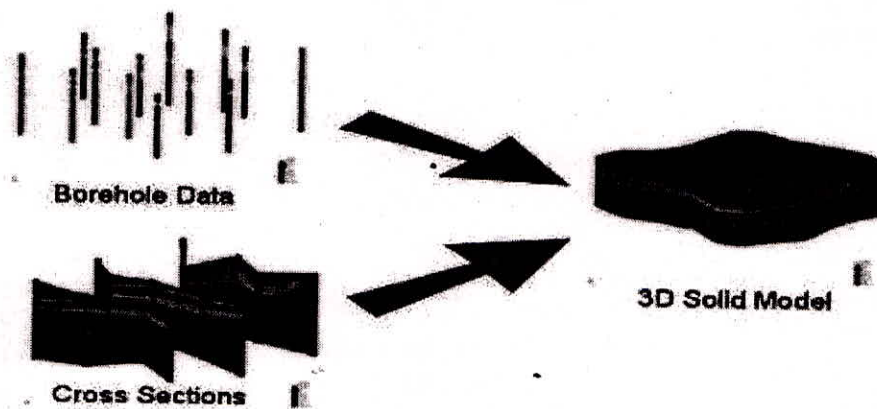
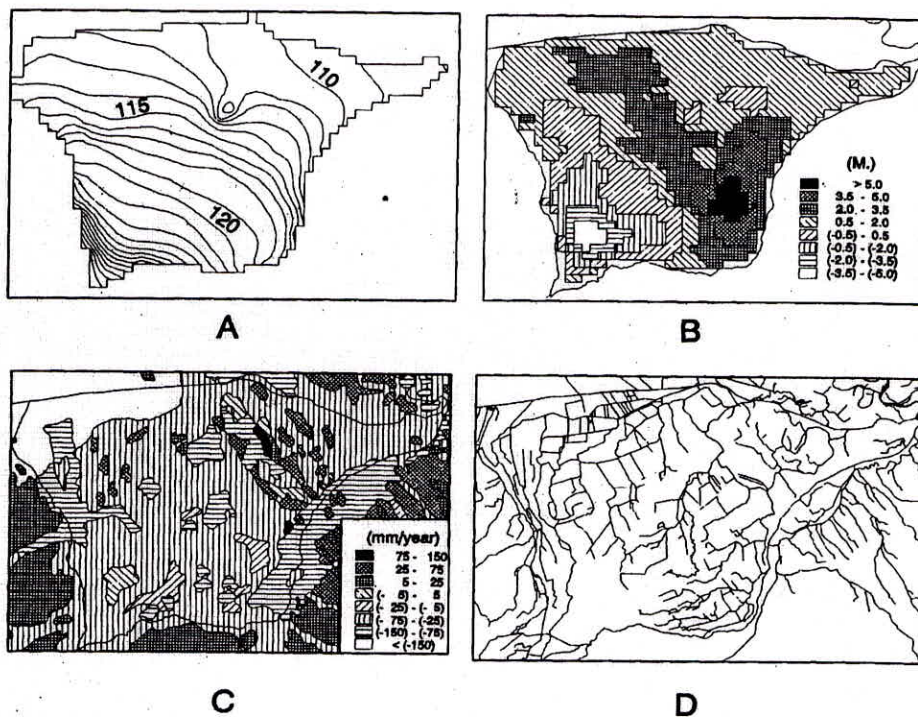


Fig. 5.4: construction of 3D Solid model By GIS

We can transfer the results (material properties) of a solid model directly to a numerical model such as a MODFLOW grid or a FEMWATER mesh.

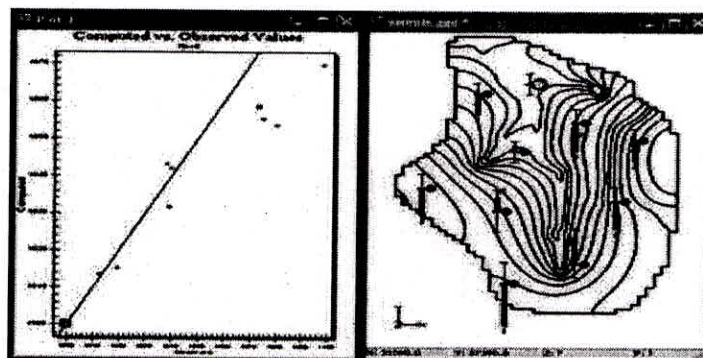
**Calibration of Groundwater Model by GIS:** During the calibration of groundwater model, GIS can play a very effective and crucial role. An example may illustrate the strength of rapidly comparing the patterns of modeled results with the patterns of ancillary data for the calibration processes. A map of the observed heads has been made by using the well data and an interpolation procedure in the GIS (Figure 5.5 A). By subtracting the two maps (one based on observed data and other based on model results), the difference map can be generated (Figure 5.5 B). As can be seen from the figures, there are regions with significant deviations which need to be refined and the input parameters have to be changed. In the present case, recharge was estimated independently from soil and climatic data using a simple budget model. Based on the soil map the estimated recharge map was prepared (Figure 5.5 C). As can be noted from the patterns, however only minor or no improvements can be expected by changing this input in the groundwater model. Comparison of the patterns on map (B) and the drainage map (D) reveals that the model predicts outflow areas but the result are exaggerated. Possibly the denser drainage reflects the need to drain the surface and thus outflow resistance has to be interpolated in the model.





**Figure 5.5:** Use of GIS for groundwater model calibration (after Meijerink *et al.*, 1994). (A) The results of the model heads within the alluvial region before calibration. (B) Difference of heads between observed heads and heads interpolated from GIS. (C) Estimated recharge map. (D) Drainage map.

**Automated Model Calibration:** Calibration is the process of modifying the input parameters to a groundwater model until the output from the model matches an observed set of data. Some GIS package (e.g. GMS) includes a suite of tools to assist in the process of calibrating a groundwater model to point and/or flux observations. When a computed solution is imported to GIS, the point and flux residual errors are plotted on a set of calibration targets and a variety of plots can be generated showing overall calibration statistics. Most of the calibration tools can be used with any of the models in GIS (Figure 5.6).



**Figure 5.6:** Automated model calibration by Groundwater Modelling System.



**Presentation of Model Results:** Model results can be displayed in a graphical manner using GIS. A few examples are given below:

- (1) **Displaying Isosurfaces:** An isosurface is a 3D planar surface defined by a constant parameter value in 3D space and is easily created by GIS. Isosurfaces are typically used for demonstrating the spatial distribution of a selected parameter. For groundwater modeling purposes, isosurfaces are generally used for represent heads, drawdowns and concentrations
- (2) **Displaying Color Maps:** A colour map is used to display the spatial distribution of a parameter on a planar surface. The GIS allows creating colour maps on multiple horizontal and vertical slices for almost any combination of model elements. The colour maps of the output elements (heads, water table, drawdowns and concentration species) will plot distributed colours according to the calculated value of the element in each grid cell of the model. A customisable colour legend will automatically be generated for each colour map.
- (3) **Displaying Contour Maps:** Contour lines, or isolines as they are sometimes referred to, are a set of lines plotted on a surface defined by points having equal values of a given parameter.
- (4) **Animation:** Both steady-state and transient solutions can be displayed in an animated format (as if viewing a movie) using vector, iso-surface, color fringe, or contour animation. For example, animation of a transient solution allows the user to observe how head, drawdown, velocity, and contaminate concentration vary with time. Creating 3-D animations and "fly-by's" as well as time-varying simulations allow to clearly communicate complex subsurface conditions, temporal variations and trends to the entire project team, in an intuitive and easy-to-understand visual format.

## 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The potential of remote sensing for improving models is considerable and still to a large degree untapped. The range of applications is substantial as the introductory examples from literature show. They are even wider if more qualitative results of purely visual interpretations are considered, which were not discussed here. With all justified optimism, expectations for the easy use of remote-sensing data in groundwater modeling should not be exaggerated. The defaults of any single method can be counteracted by combining several methods. As in the case of environmental tracers, it is the combination of methods that makes information conclusive. The remotely sensed data unfold their usefulness usually in combination with a model in which even noisy or correlated data can be used for conditioning. Finally, it should be remembered that the largest and most costly effort in applying remote sensing data to groundwater models lies in the field work necessary to obtain a sufficient data base of ground truth.

The concept, to integrate GIS and numerical groundwater models for development of decision support tools for groundwater management, has several advantages. GIS provide a considerable number of components that support efficient groundwater modeling and the application of the results. Following are the major points that are concluded from the study:

- a) GIS may be characterized by efficient display and query capabilities. By seamlessly integrating the functionality of each, the superior qualities of GIS and a sophisticated groundwater model code are married to provide a powerful analysis tool.
- b) Conceptual model development is necessary precursor to groundwater model development. A well-organized data base in GIS assists in use of available data, and fosters development of a well-founded conceptual model.



- c) GIS capabilities are efficiently used to process spatial data, generate input data files for simulations, and makes maps of inputs and model result. Processing of spatial data may consist, for example, of compilation of hydraulic conductivity data at wells, and estimating aeriually averaged hydraulic conductivity values across the model area from the point measurements at wells. Preprocessors integrate the GIS-generated information, such as the elevations for each unit, groundwater levels, and hydraulic properties, with the groundwater simulation model.
- d) GIS capabilities also provide an efficient means to assist with model calibration. GIS capabilities are also routinely used for elegant display of groundwater simulation results (e.g. simulated heads, concentration distributions, and particle traking results). GIS generated maps of simulation results with relevant background information are an integral part of the key project decisions made with the ground model.
- e) The data base tools in GIS include the capability to import and export information from diversified sources. The data from different diverse data sources provide data in varying coordinate systems and scale. GIS capabilities provide an easy means to convert available information into a consistent format.
- f) Both steady-state and transient solutions can be displayed in an animated format (as if viewing a movie) by GIS using vector, iso-surface, color fringe, or contour animation. Creating 3-D animations and "fly-by's" as well as time-varying simulations allow to clearly communicating complex subsurface conditions, temporal variations and trends to the entire project team, in an intuitive and easy-to-understand visual format.

\*\*      \*\*\*      \*\*