02.12 Groundwater Levels of the Main Aquifer and Panke Valley Aquifer (2012 Edition)

Overview

Exact knowledge of the current ground-water levels, and hence also of groundwater stocks, is imperative for the State of Berlin, since 100% of the drinking-water supply (approx. 202 million cu.m. in 2011) is obtained from groundwater. This groundwater is pumped at nine waterworks, almost entirely within the territory of the city. Only the Stolpe Waterworks on the northern outskirts obtains water from Brandenburg, but also supplies Berlin with approx. 9 % of the city's total intake (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Location of the nine waterworks which supply Berlin with drinking water, as of May 2012

Moreover, groundwater reserves are tapped for individual use and for process water, as well as for major construction projects, groundwater rehabilitation measures and heating-related purposes. Numerous instances of soil and groundwater contamination are known in Berlin, and they can only be rehabilitated on the basis of exact knowledge of groundwater conditions.

For this reason the Geology and Groundwater Management Working Group produces a map of ground-water levels every month. The map from may, the month with normally the highest groundwater level, is published in the Environmental Atlas.

Definitions Regarding Groundwater

Groundwater is underground water (DIN 4049, Part 3, 1994) which coherently fills out cavities in the lithosphere, and the movement of which is caused exclusively by gravity. In Berlin, as in the entire North German Plain, the cavities are the **pores** between the soil particles in the loose sediments. Precipitation water which percolates (infiltrates) into the ground first fills these pores. Only that part of the percolating water which is not bound as adhesive water in the non-water-saturated soil, nor used up by evaporation, can percolate to the **phreatic surface** and form groundwater. Above the phreatic surface, capillary water is present within the unsaturated soil zone; it can rise to various heights, depending on the type of soil (Fig. 2).

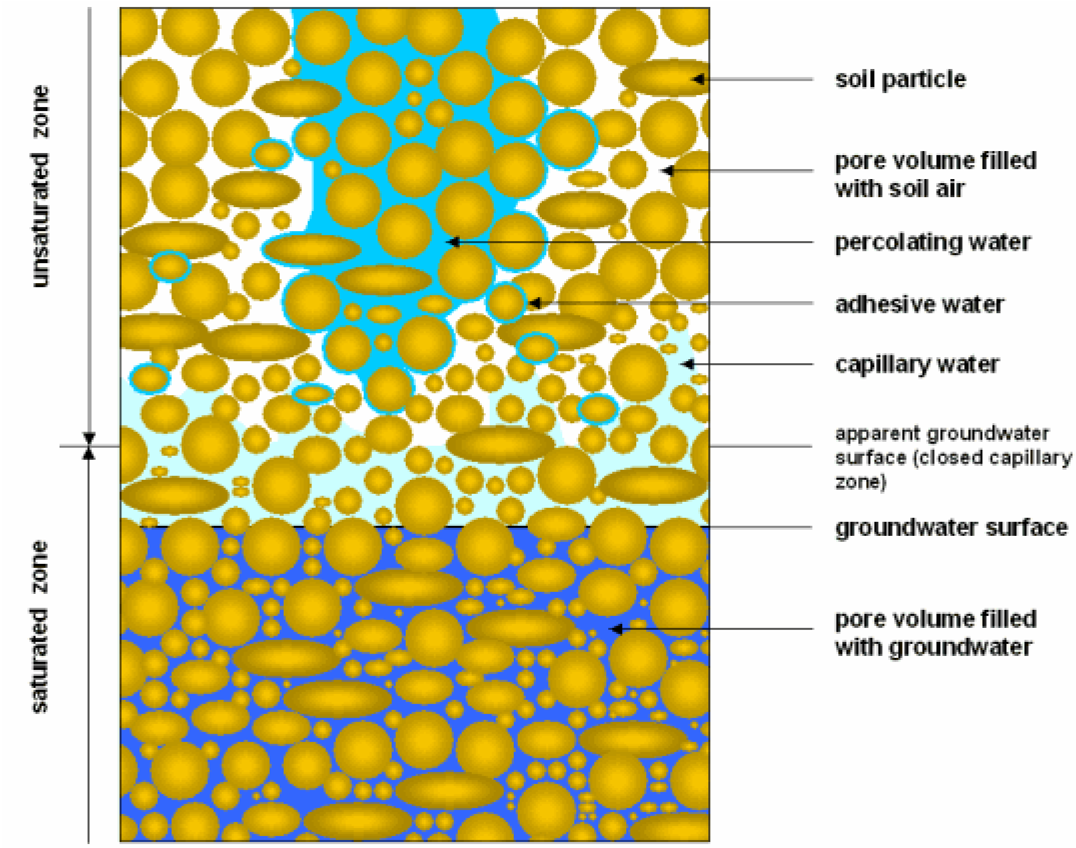

Fig. 2: Phenomenology of Underground Water (from Hölting 1996)

Aquifers are made of sands and gravels, and, as incoherent material, make the storage and movement of groundwater possible.
Aquitards consist of clay, silt, gyttja and glacial till and, as cohesive material, hinder water movement.
Aquicludes are made of clay which is virtually impermeable to water.

Groundwater the phreatic surface of which lies within an aquifer is known as **free** or **unconfined groundwater**, i.e., the phreatic and piezometric surfaces coincide. In cases of **confined groundwater** however, an aquifer is covered by an aquitard so that the groundwater cannot rise as high as it might in response to its hydrostatic pressure. Under these conditions, the piezometric surface is above the phreatic surface (Fig. 3).

If an aquitard, such as a glacial till, is located above a large coherent aquifer (main aquifer), surface-proximate groundwater may develop in sandy segments above the aquitard and in islands within it, as a result of precipitation. This is unconnected with the main aquifer, and is often called **stratum water**. If an unsaturated zone is located below the glacial till, it is called **floating groundwater** (Fig. 3).

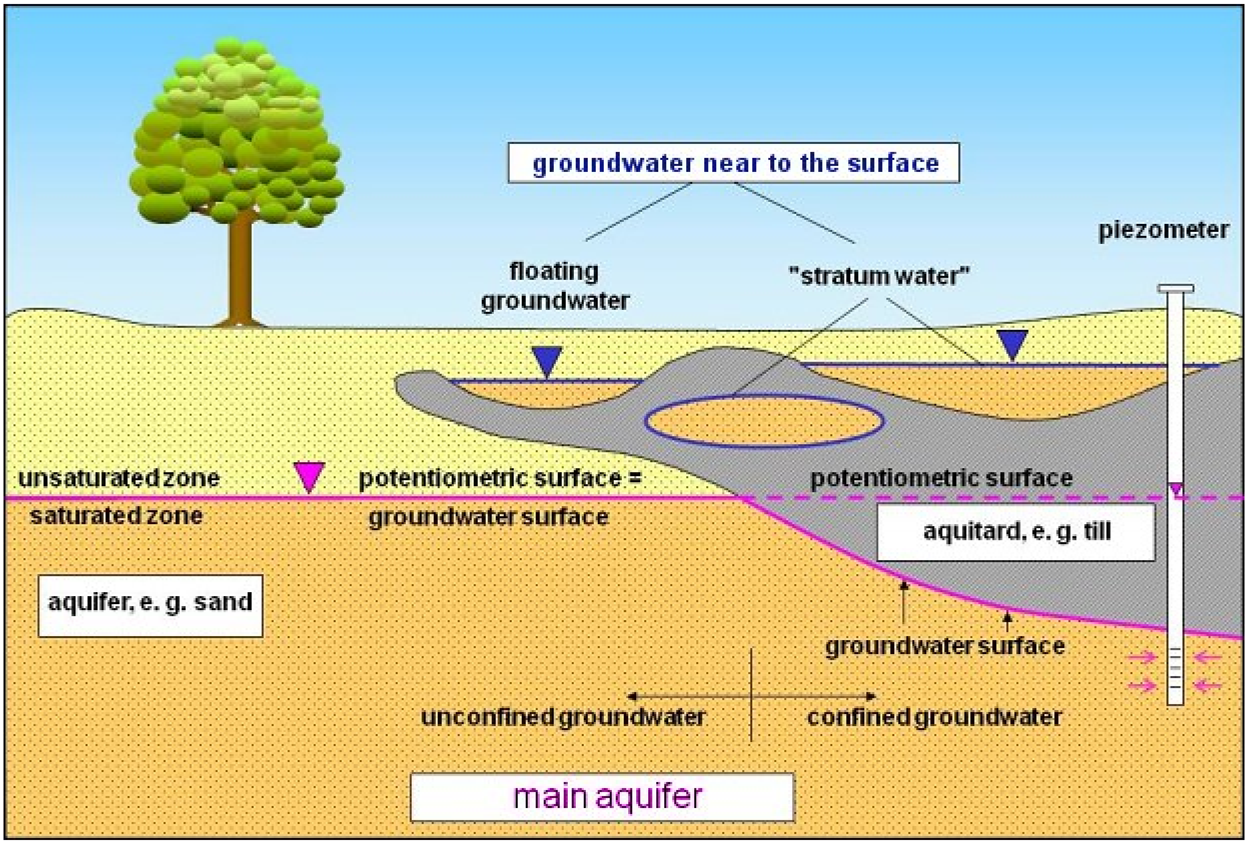

Fig. 3: Hydrogeological Terms

As a rule, groundwater flows at a slight incline into rivers and lakes (receiving bodies of water) and infiltrates into them (**effluent conditions**; Fig. 4a).

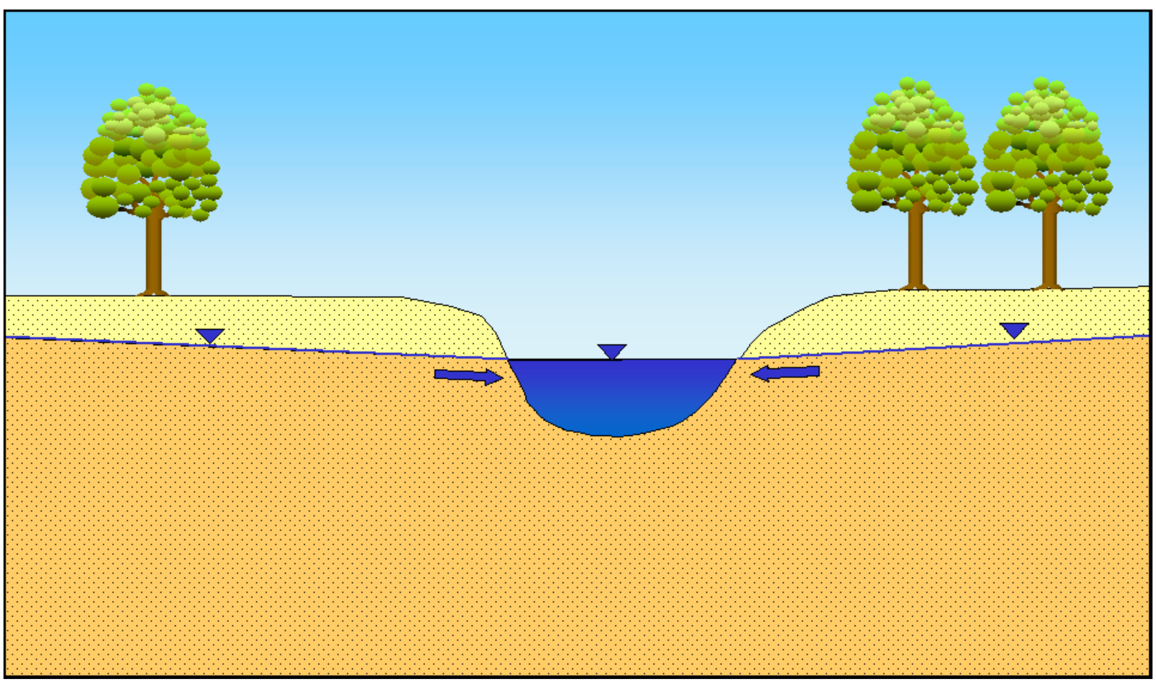

Fig. 4a: Groundwater infiltrates into bodies of water

In times of flood, the water surface is situated higher than the groundwater surface. During such periods, surface water infiltrates into the groundwater (**influent condition**). This is known as **bank-filtered water** (Fig. 4b).

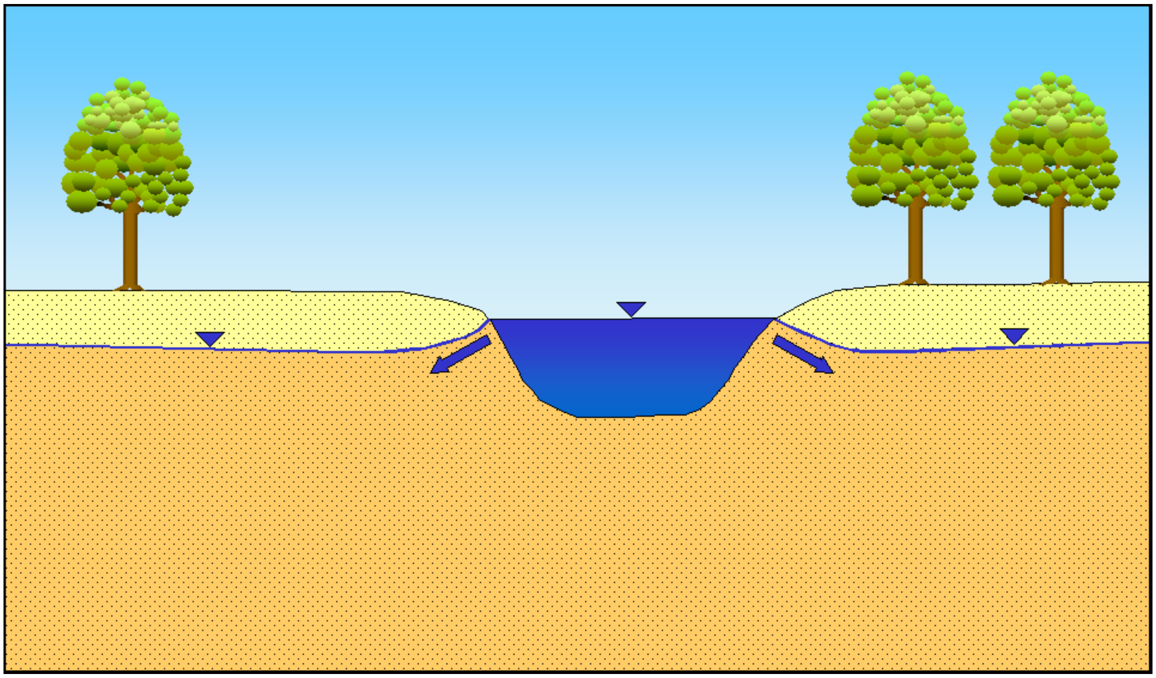

Fig. 4b: Bank-filtered water caused by flood water: surface water infiltrates into groundwater

If in the neighborhood of these surface waters, groundwater is discharged, e.g. through wells, so that the phreatic surface drops below the level of that body of water, the body of water will also feed bank-filtered water into the groundwater (Fig. 4c). The amount of bank filtration is 50 to 80 % in Berlin, depending on the location of the wells.

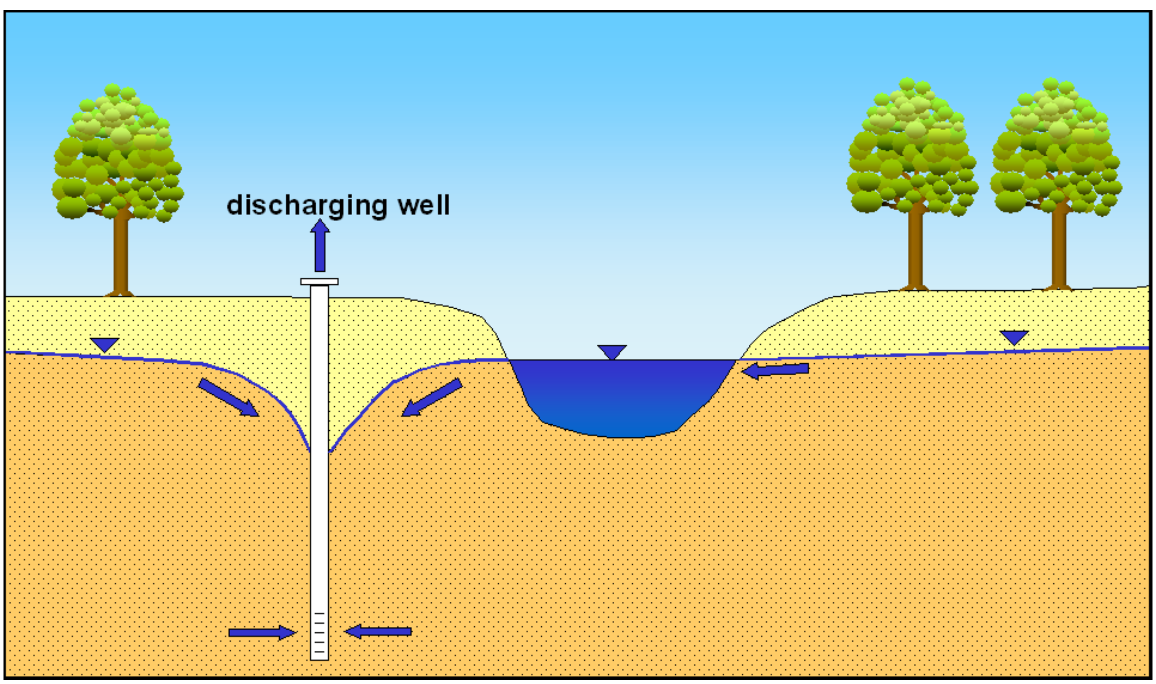

Fig. 4c: Bank-filtered water caused by discharge of groundwater: due to the drop in the groundwater caused by wells, surface water infiltrates into the groundwater

The **groundwater velocity of flow** in Berlin is approx. 10 to 500 m p/a, depending on the groundwater incline and the permeability of the aquifer. However, near well facilities, these low-flow velocities can increase significantly.

Morphology, Geology and Hydrogeology

The present shape of the earth's surface in Berlin was predominantly the result of the Vistula Ice Age, the most recent of the three great quaternary inland glaciations. This glaciation has determined the morphology of the town (Fig. 5): The low situated Warsaw-Berlin Glacial Spillway with its Panke Valley branch, consisting predominantly of sandy and gravelly deposits; the neighboring Barnim Plateau to the north; and the Teltow Plateau with the Nauen Plate to the south. Both plateaus are covered in large parts by the thick glacial till and boulder clay of the ground moraines (Fig. 6).

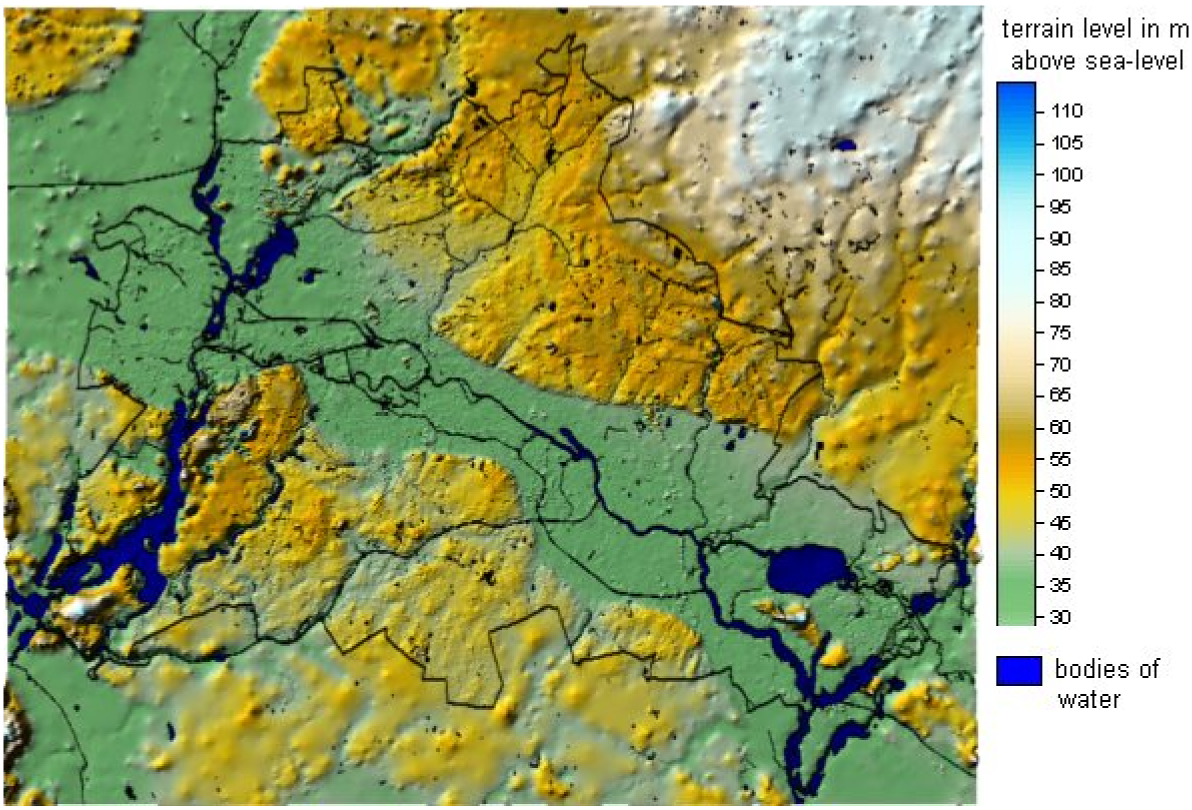

Fig. 5: Morphological Outline Map of Berlin

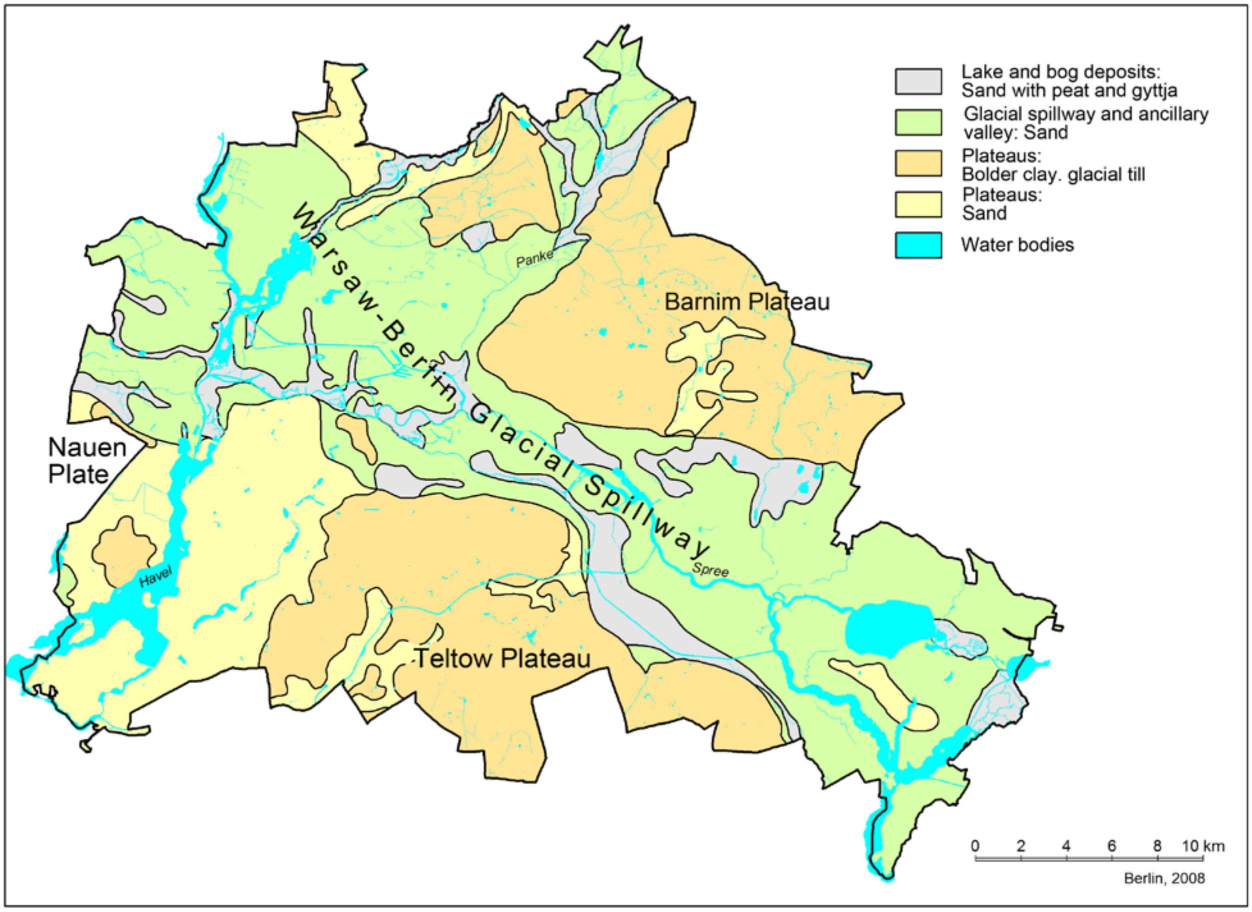

Fig. 6: Geological Outline Map of Berlin

The loose sediments dating from the quaternary and tertiary, and averaging approx. 150 m in thickness, are of special significance for the water supply and for foundation of buildings. They form the freshwater stock from which Berlin draws all the drinking water and a large part of the process water. Numerous waterworks an other pumping facilities have lowered the groundwater in Berlin partly since more than 100 years.

The tertiary rupelium layer in a depth of 150 to 200 m is about 80 m thick, and constitutes a hydraulic barrier against the deeper saltwater tier (Fig. 7).

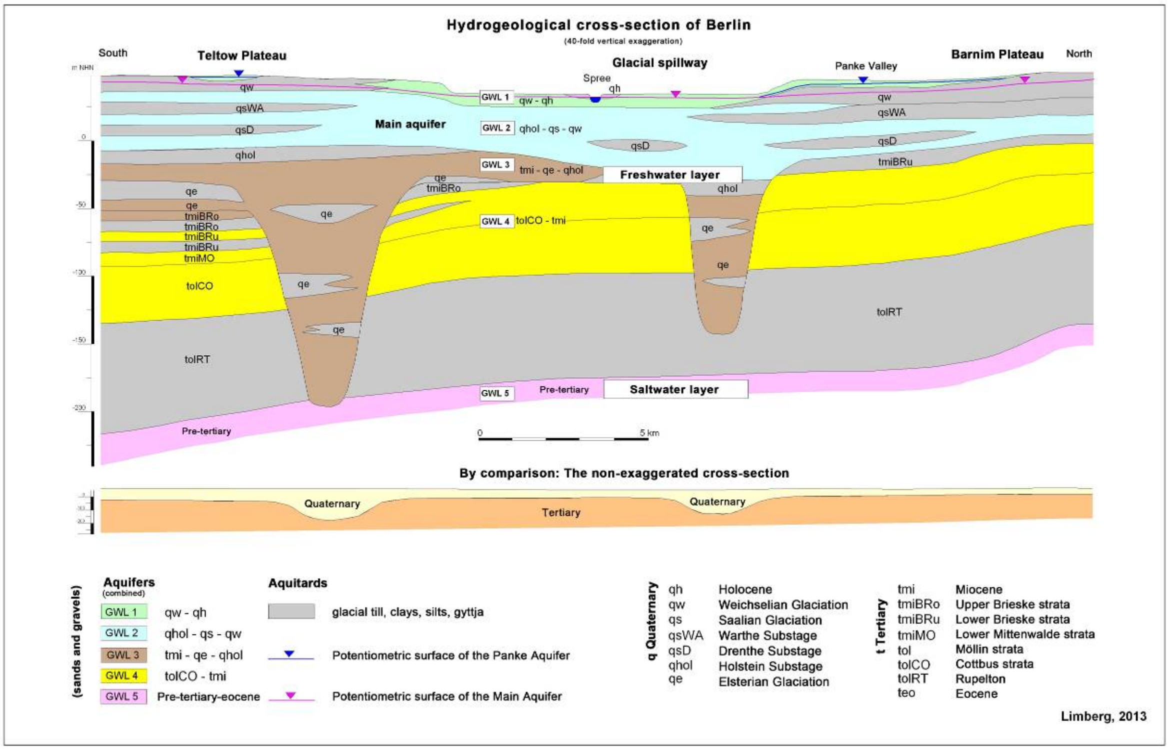

Fig. 7: Schematical Hydrogeological Cross-Section of Berlin from South to North

Due to the alternation of aquifers (green, blue, brown and yellow in Fig. 7) and aquitards (grey in Fig. 7), the freshwater stock in the Berlin area is broken down into four separate hydraulic aquifers (Limberg, Thierbach 2002). The second aquifer, which is largely a Saale-glaciation-era aquifer, is known as the **main aquifer**, since it supplies the predominant share of the drinking and process water. The fifth aquifer is in the saltwater tier under the rupelium.

The groundwater conditions of the main aquifer (Aquifer 2) are shown in the groundwater contour map in violet; in the Panke Valley aquifer (Aquifer 1) in the northwestern area of the Barnim Plateau, they are shown in blue. Here, the Panke Valley aquifer is situated above the main groundwater aquifer, separated from it by the glacial till of the ground moraine (Fig. 7 and 8).

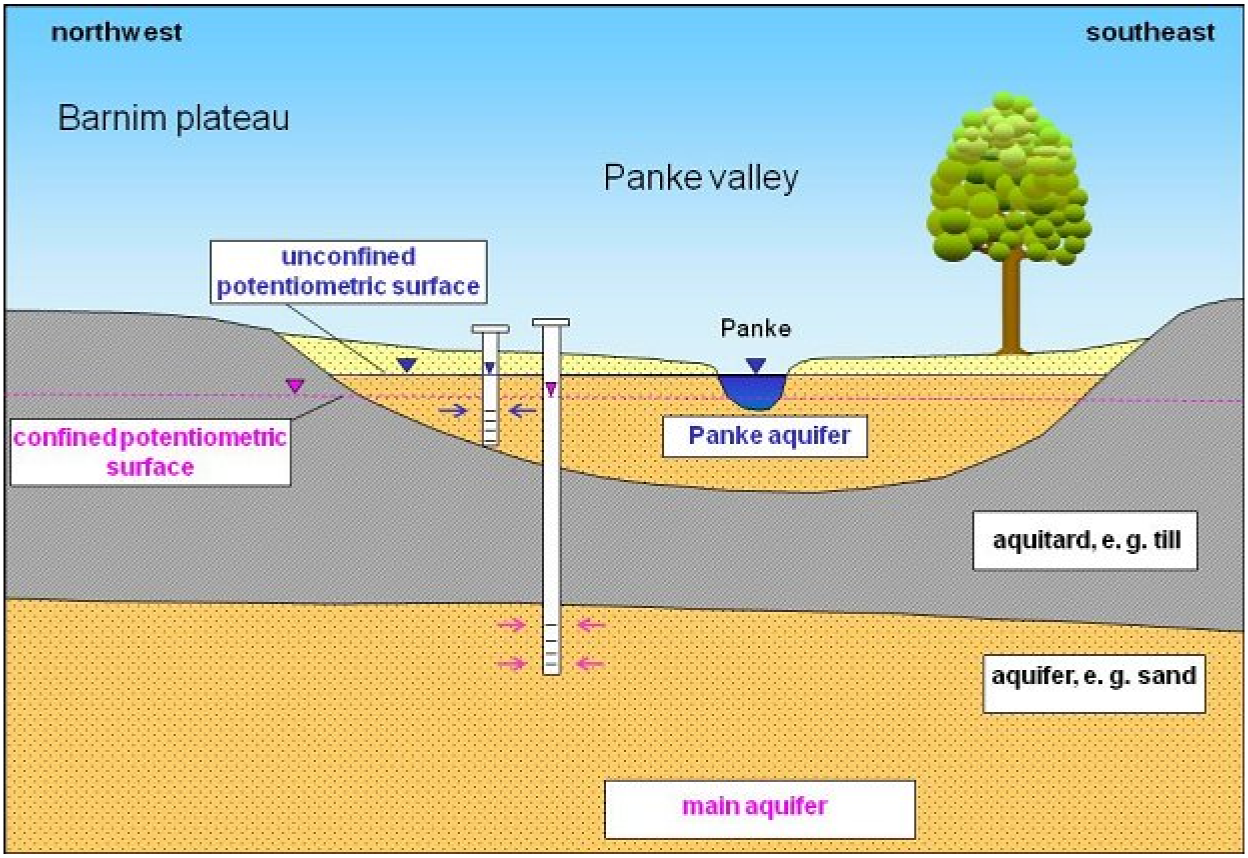

Fig. 8 The unconfined Panke Valley aquifer (Aquifer 1) in the northwestern area of the Barnim Plateau is situated above the main aquifer (Aquifer 2), which is confined in this area

In the northwestern area of the Barnim Plateau, the ground moraines are so thick that no main groundwater aquifer exists, or occurs only in isolated places, with a thickness of a few meters. For those areas of the Berlin city area, no groundwater contours can be shown.

Statistical Base

The basic data for the preparation of the groundwater contour map are provided by the Geology and Groundwater Management Working Group of the Senate Department for Urban Development and the Environment.

The first regular recording of phreatic levels and their development was initiated in Berlin as early as in the year 1869, at 27 groundwater measurement points (Fig. 9).

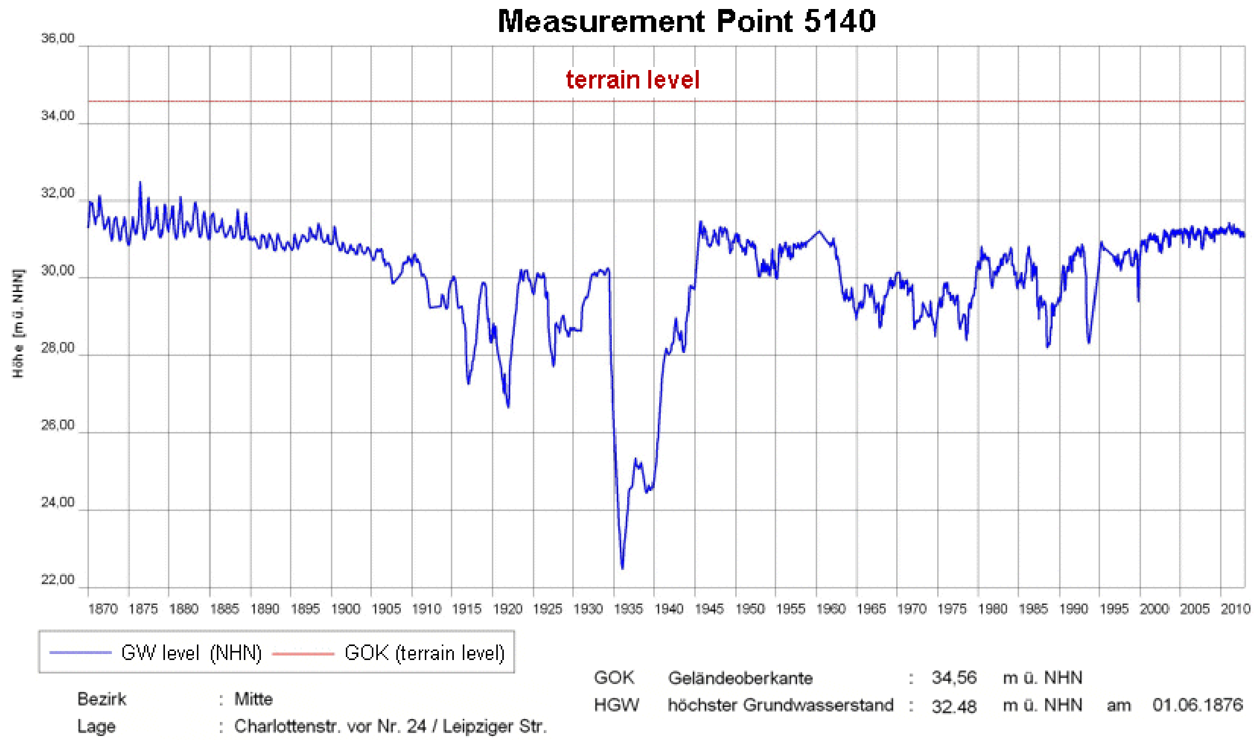

Fig. 9: Hydrographic Curve of Groundwater Levels at a Measurement Point in the Borough of Mitte, since 1870
(The highest groundwater level(HGW) was here measured on June 1st, 1876. Since 1905 the groundwater level temporary is heavily affected by numerous drawdowns.)

The Berlin groundwater measurement network grew rapidly: By 1937, there were already more than 2000 measurement points. At present, following an optimization of the measurement network in the city, the State Groundwater Service operates approx. 1000 measurement points which are installed into the five different aquifers. The measurement points are equipped with automatic data loggers, and provide daily measurements. Meantime the data base contains more than nine million measured values.

In addition, the Berlin Water Utility and the Brandenburg state Environmental Agency as well as other waterworks operators in Brandenburg provide groundwater level measurement data for the Berlin area and the surrounding areas, for the most part monthly. If the groundwater has a direct connection to surface water (effluent situation, Fig. 4a), additional level data from surface-water measurement points are used.

The present map incorporates measurements from 1,690 groundwater measurement points and 25 surface-water measurement points for the main aquifer (Aquifer 2), and from 36 groundwater measurement points and seven surface-water measurement points for the Panke Valley groundwater aquifer (Aquifer 1) on the Barnim plateau. At the measurement points which are measured daily, the value of May 15, 2012 was used; for the others, the value taken during the month of May which was closest to this date.

The distribution of the measurement points is irregular: The measurement network is densest in the city center and in the immediate intake areas of the waterworks, and less dense at the outskirts of the city, especially in the surrounding areas in Brandenburg.

Methodology

The groundwater contours of the main aquifer as well as the Panke Valley aquifers were calculated using an interpolation method (point-kriging). In order to obtain information about the interrelation between the measuring points, concerning their spatial distribution and groundwater level, data were first analyzed by variogram analysis.

The geo-statistical parameters ascertained by variogram analysis for the main groundwater aquifer and the Panke Valley aquifer are listed in Table 1.

Geostatistical parameter	**Main aquifer**	**Panke Valley aquifer**
Soldner easting (min./ max.)	-5600 / 56,800	22,000 / 35,000
Soldner northing (min./ max.)	-3200 / 48,000	25,000 / 38,000
Spacing	400 m	400 m
Number of grid lines	x = 157 / y = 129	x = 34 / y = 34
Variogram model	linear	linear
Slope	0.00109	0.001615
Anisotropic ratio	2	2
Anisotropic angle	141.4°	128.6°
Kriging type	point	point
Drift type	none	none
Interpolation type	linear	linear
Number of sectors	4	no search (use of all data)
Max. no. of data in all sectors	128	no search (use of all data)
Max. no. of data per sector	32	no search (use of all data)
Min. number of data in research area	2	no search (use of all data)
Number of max. free sectors	3	no search (use of all data)
Search ellipse, radius	R1=10,000 / R2=5000	no search (use of all data)
Search ellipse, angle	141.4°	no search (use of all data)

Tab. 1: Interpolation inputs for the Kriging method

The irregularly distributed groundwater and surface measurement data were transformed into an equidistant grid with a spacing of 400 m, with the aid of a program for the calculation and graphic representation of surfaces (Surfer 8.0, by Golden Software). This was accomplished by interpolation according to the Kriging method. The groundwater contours were represented on the basis of this grid, after smoothing.

An groundwater contour map with a grid width of 200 m, updated monthly, has been prepared for internal official use (Hannappel & et al. 2007).

Map Description

The present groundwater contour map describes the groundwater situation of the main aquifer with violet groundwater isolines and the Panke Valley aquifer in northeastern Berlin with blue isolines. The distance of the groundwater isolines is 0.5 m. These show the piezometric surface area of the unconfined and confined groundwater, respectively (see also Fig. 3). In areas of the main aquifer with confined groundwater, the groundwater contours are displayed in broken lines. In areas with no main groundwater aquifer or with an isolated main groundwater aquifer of low thickness, no groundwater isolines are displayed. Those areas are shown with black dots.

The map is based on the topographical General Map of Berlin, 1:50,000, in grid format, and the geological outline for the Berlin state area 1:50,000 (2007), that was derived from the geological General Map of Berlin and Surrounding Areas, 1:100,000. In addition, the appropriate support points (groundwater measurement points and surface-water levels) as well as the individual waterworks are indicated, with their active wells and water conservation areas.

Differing regulations exist in the water conservation area Johannisthal fixed in January 18 2013. You will find the respective regions in the map Water Conservation District Johannisthal (Preliminary Order).

Hydrogeological Situation

On the plateaus, the main aquifer is extensively covered by the glacial till and bolder clay (aquitards) of the ground moraines. Wherever the piezometric surface of the main aquifer lies within this aquitard, groundwater conditions are confined. In sandy segments above the till, the periodic formation of perched groundwater is possible, which can, after extreme precipitation, rise to the surface. The groundwater levels of these locally highly differentiated areas have not been separately ascertained and portrayed. Within the till, sandy islands may become filled with groundwater, or so-called stratum water (see also Fig. 3).

In the Panke Valley, on the northern side of the spillway, the Barnim Plateau, a major independent coherent aquifer has developed. It is located above the main aquifer, which is covered by the glacial till of the ground moraine (see also fig. 7 and 8). On the present map, this aquifer is indicated by separate blue groundwater isolines. A spur of the glacial till toward the Warsaw-Berlin Glacial Spillway creates an interlock of the Panke Valley aquifer with the main aquifer there.

For more information, see the Groundwater Brochure:

http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/umwelt/wasser/wasserrecht/grundwasserbroschuere.html (only in German)

Current Situation in May 2012

As a rule in Berlin, the groundwater incline, and hence, too, the flow direction, is from the Barnim and Teltow Plateaus and the Nauen Plate toward the receiving bodies, the Spree and Havel Rivers. Depression cones have formed around the wells at those waterworks in operation during the measurement period, and have sunk the phreatic surface below the level of the neighboring surface waters. Thus, in addition to inflowing groundwater from the shore side, the water pumped here also includes groundwater formed by infiltration (bank-filtered water) from these surface waters (see also Fig. 4c).

In May 2012, too, the potentiometric surface, which has been lowered in Berlin by drinking-water discharge over the past hundred years, was at a relatively high level compared to 1989 (Limberg et al. 2007: pp. 76 et seq.). The groundwater rise in the glacial valley of more than half a meter resp. more than one meter for this period of time is shown on the map (Fig. 10).

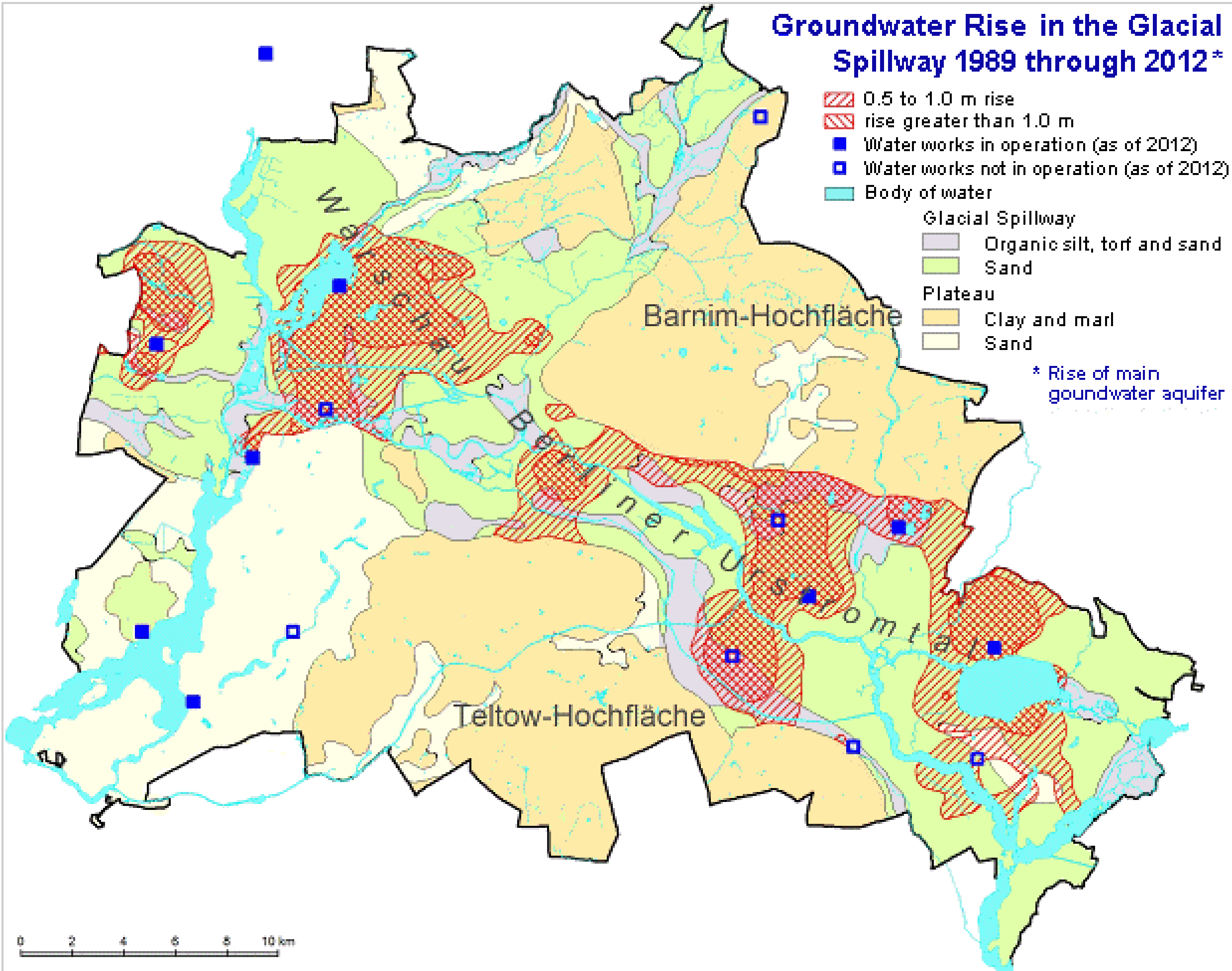

Fig. 10: Groundwater Rise in the Glacial Spillway between 1989 and 2012: The rise is more than half a meter in the hatched area and more than one meter in the crosshatched area.

The since 1989 reduced raw-water discharge by the Berlin Water Utility as a result of the falling needs of drinking and industrial water is responsible for the constant increase of groundwater. Five of the smaller Berlin waterworks (Altglienicke, Friedrichsfelde, Köpenick, Riemeisterfenn and Buch) were shut down altogether between 1991 and 1997. In addition, drinking water production at the two waterworks Johannisthal and Jungfernheide has been discontinued temporarily since September 2001; at the latter, the same has been true for artificial groundwater recharging. However, under the immediate water management measures of the Senate Department for Urban Development and the Environment, groundwater is still being discharged at the Johannisthal location, so as not to endanger current local waste disposal and construction measures. Likewise at the Jungfernheide location, groundwater was discharged by the Department through the end of 2005. Since January 2006, a private company has continued this work temporarily.

The Water Conservation Districts of the waterworks Buch, Jungfernheide und Altglienicke were canceled April 2009.

The overall discharge of raw water by the Berlin Water Utility for public water supply dropped by almost half (47 %) in Berlin during a period of 23 years. In 1989, 378 million cu.m. were discharged, as opposed to 219 million cu.m. in 2002. In 2003, the discharge briefly increased slightly to 226 million cu.m. due to the extremely dry summer, but then dropped again by 2011, reaching 202 million cu.m. (Fig. 11).

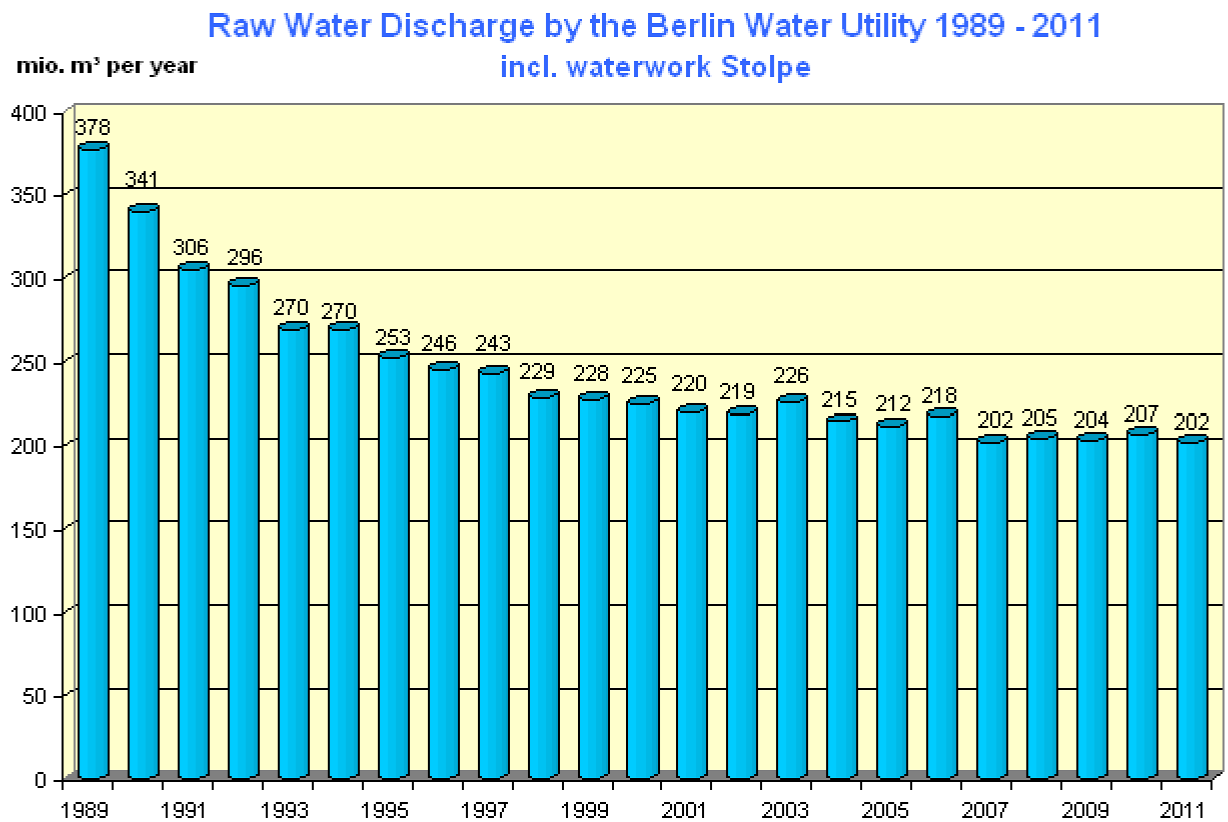

Fig. 11: Drop in raw-water discharge by the Berlin Water Utility over 23 year period

The development of the groundwater levels from May 2011 to May 2012 can be seen in an exemplary manner at four measurement points which are largely unaffected by the withdrawal of water by the waterworks (Fig. 12).

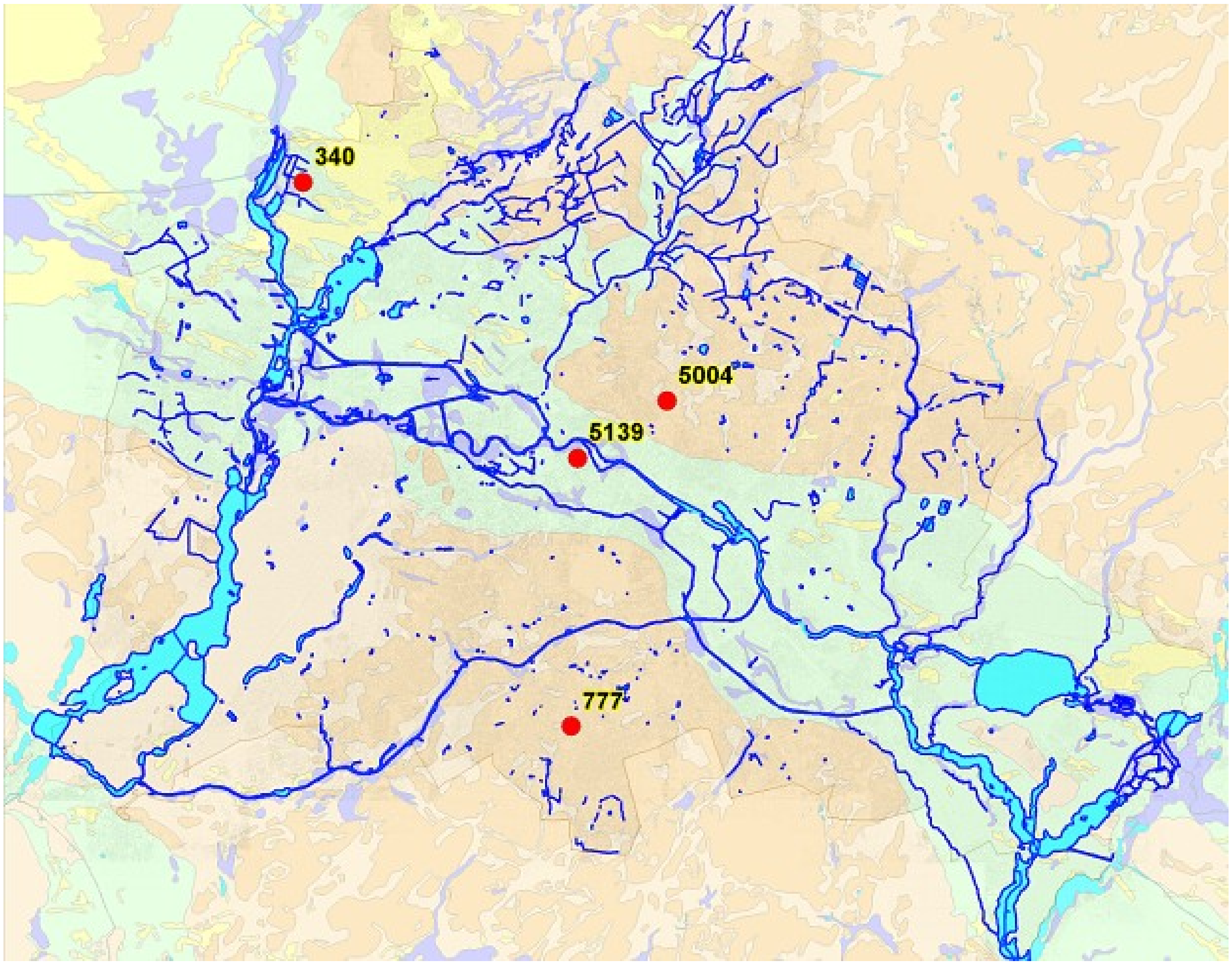

Fig. 12: Four measurement points in an exemplary manner:
340 und 5139 in the glacial spillway , 777 on the Teltow Plateau und 5004 on the Barnim Plateau

The groundwater levels at two measurement stations in the glacial spillway, in the unconfined aquifer, were on May 15, 2012 nearly unchanged. The groundwater level was seven centimeters lower at the measurement point 5139 and five centimeters higher at the measurement point 340 than they had been on May 15 the previous year (Fig. 13).

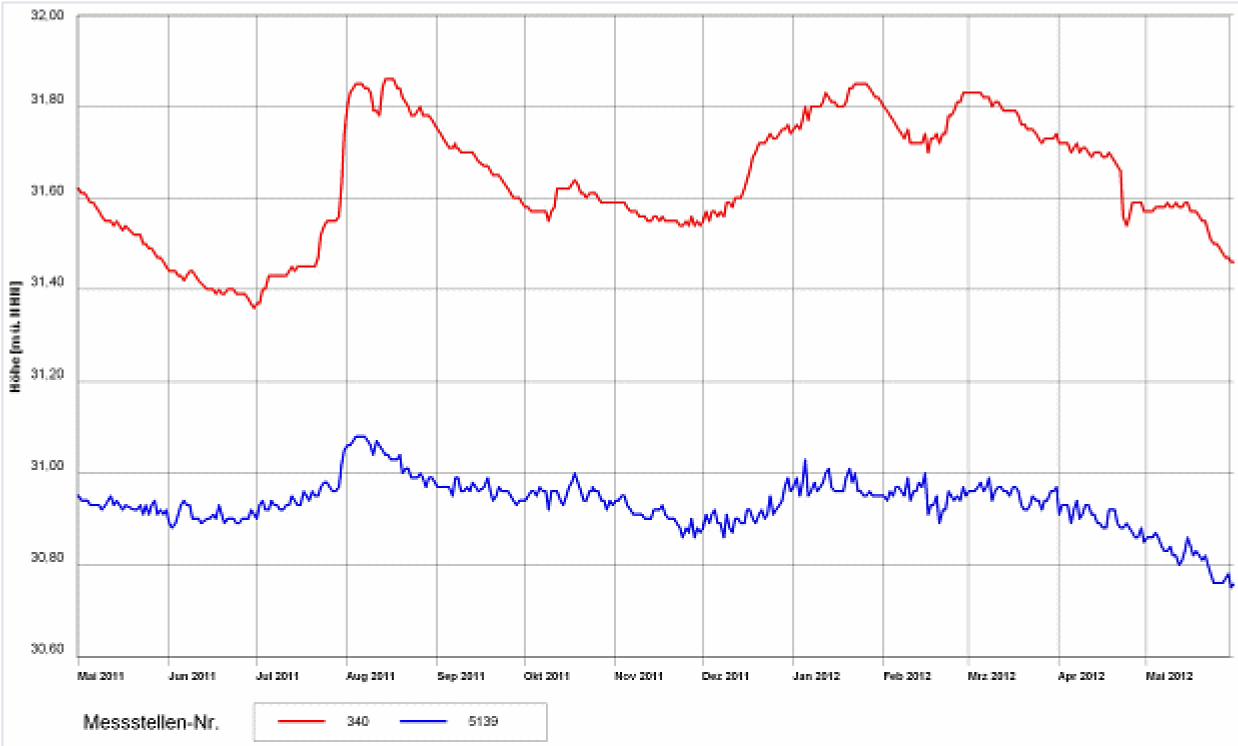

Fig. 13: The groundwater levels at two measurement stations in the glacial spillway on May 2011 to May 2012

On the Teltow Plateau, the groundwater level at the measurement points in the covered, confined aquifer dropped by 18 cm during the same period (Measurement Point 777), and rose by 10 cm (Measurement Point 5004) on the Barnim Plateau (Fig. 14).

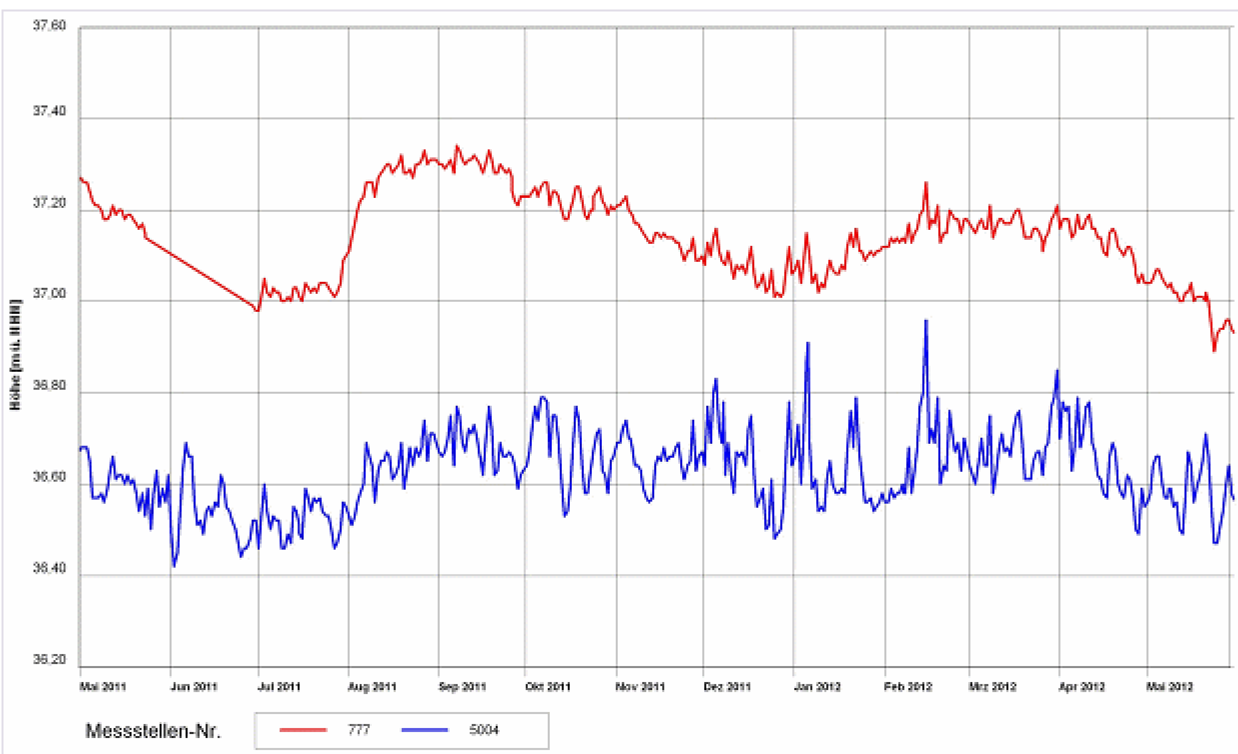

Fig. 14: Groundwater level at two measurement points in an exemplary manner on the plateaus on May 2011 to May 2012

From June 2011 through May 2012 the precipitation at the Berlin-Tempelhof Measurement Point was 39 mm below the long-term mean (1960 to 1990). Above-average precipitation during July 2011 (Fig. 15) caused the groundwater level to rise considerably, which is strongest at the observation point 344 due to the low depth to the water table and low sealing. The higher precipitation in December and January are clearly visible in the glacial valley, where low depths to the water table generally occur (Fig. 13 and 14).

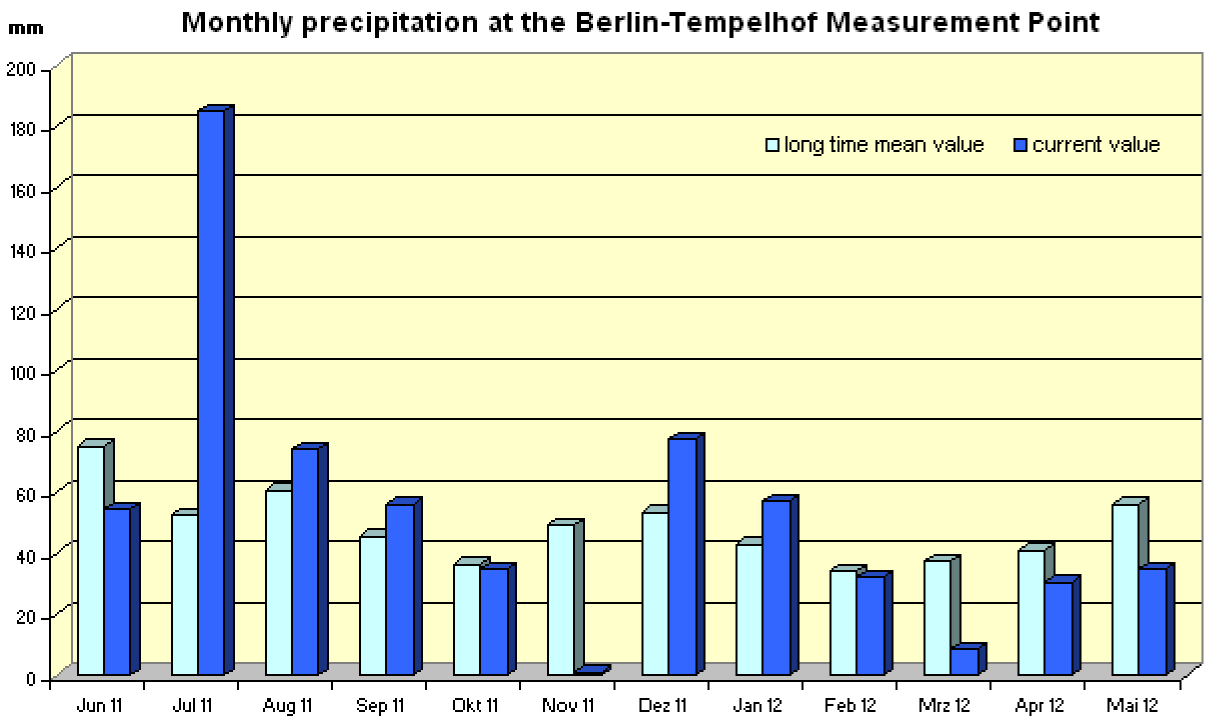

Fig. 15: Monthly precipitation between June 2011 and May 2012 at the Berlin-Tempelhof Measurement Point, compared with the long-term mean, 1961 through 1990.

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to the Download of the Brochure (in German):
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Digital Maps

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