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Recharge to the Edwards Aquifer in the San Antonio Area, Texas, 2003

The Edwards aquifer is one of the most permeable and productive carbonate aquifers in the United States and is the major source of public water supply for more than 1 million people in Bexar, Comal, Hays, Medina, and Uvalde Counties. The Edwards aquifer also supplies large quantities of water to agriculture, business, and industry in the region; the major artesian springs of the Edwards aquifer provide water for recreational activities, businesses, and downstream users and provide habitat for several threatened or endangered species.

The Edwards aquifer area includes the associated catchment area of the Edwards aquifer and the Edwards aquifer recharge zone (fig. 1). The catchment area lies in the southern part of the Edwards Plateau and includes the watersheds of the major streams that recharge the Edwards aquifer.

The recharge zone is located on the southern and southeastern margins of the Edwards Plateau within the Balcones Escarpment and includes areas of Edwards outcrop as well as areas adjacent to and that drain to the outcrop. Recharge to the Edwards aquifer is derived mainly from streams that originate in the catchment area and cross the recharge zone, infiltrating the unconfined Edwards aquifer through the porous Edwards limestone and through the caves, faults, fractures, and sinkholes within the recharge zone.

Method of Determining Recharge

Annual recharge estimates (table 1) are based on data collected from a network of streamflow- and rainfall-gaging stations (operated by the U.S. Geological Survey and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) and on assumptions that the runoff characteristics of gaged areas relate to ungaged areas (Puente, 1978). The watershed areas are based on surface- and ground-water divides. The annual compilation of estimates of recharge to the Edwards aquifer is part of a continuing program of the U.S. Geological Survey in cooperation with the Edwards Aquifer Authority.

The estimated annual recharge for 2003 is 669,000 acre-feet (table 1). The estimated annual recharge for 1934–2003 ranges from 43,700 acre-feet in 1956 to 2,486,000 acre-feet in 1992. The average and median estimated annual recharge for 1934–2003 are 689,500 and 559,400 acre-feet, respectively.

References

Puente, Celso, 1978, Method of estimating natural recharge to the Edwards aquifer in the San Antonio area, Texas: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 78–10, 34 p.

Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, 2001, Documentation for the Edwards aquifer recharge zone geospatial data layer: accessed September 11, 2003, at URL http://www.tnrcc.state.tx.us/gis/metadata/edwards_met.html/

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This document available from World Wide Web: http://tx.usgs.gov/reports/dist/dist-2004-01/

Information on technical reports and hydrologic data related to this and other studies can be obtained from:

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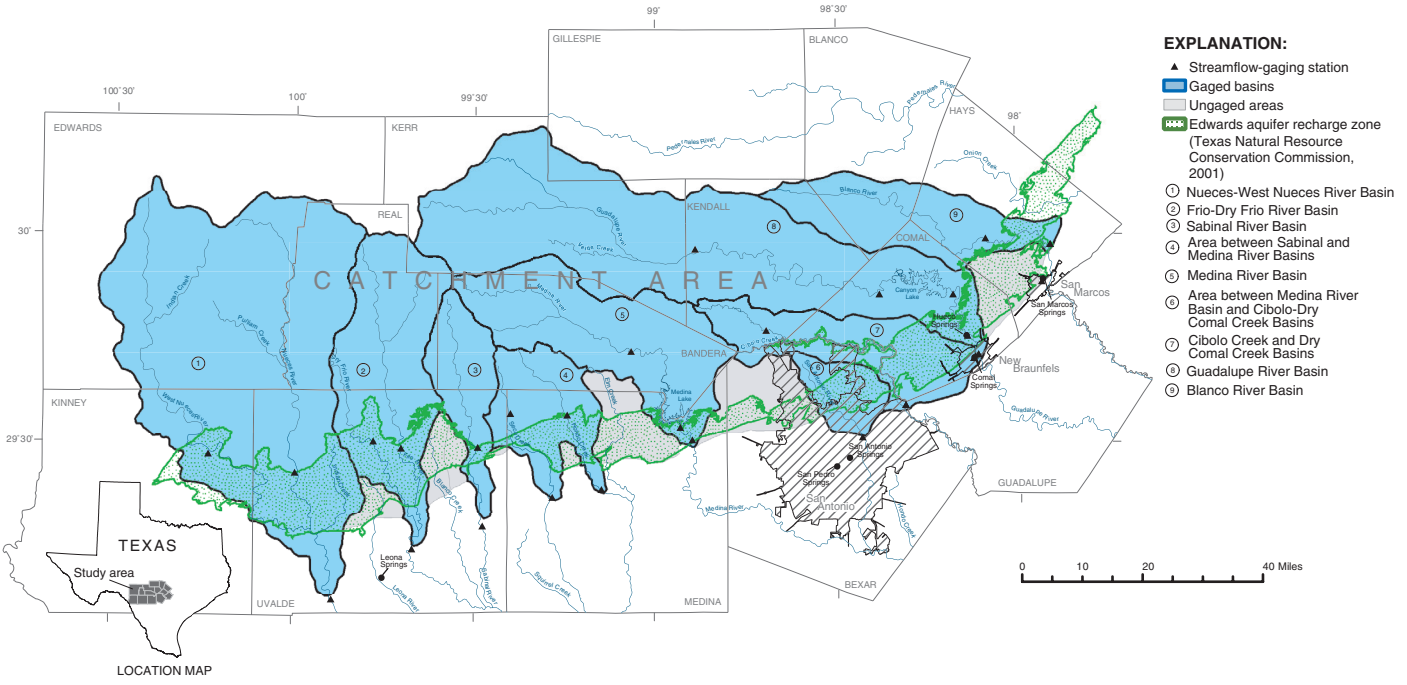

Figure 1. Gaged basins and ungaged areas (modified from Puente, 1978, fig. 1).

Table 1. Estimated annual recharge to the Edwards aquifer by basin, 1934–2003

[thousands of acre-feet]

Calendar year	Nueces-West Nueces River Basin	Frio-Dry Frio River Basin[1]	Sabinal River Basin[1]	Area between Sabinal and Medina River Basins[1]	Medina River Basin[2]	Area between Medina River Basin and Cibolo-Dry Comal Creek Basins[1]	Cibolo Creek and Dry Comal Creek Basins	Blanco River Basin[1]	Total[3]
1934	8.6	27.9	7.5	19.9	46.5	21.0	28.4	19.8	179.6
1935	411.3	192.3	56.6	166.2	71.1	138.2	182.7	39.8	1,258.2
1936	176.5	157.4	43.5	142.9	91.6	108.9	146.1	42.7	909.6
1937	28.8	75.7	21.5	61.3	80.5	47.8	63.9	21.2	400.7
1938	63.5	69.3	20.9	54.1	65.5	46.2	76.8	36.4	432.7
1939	227.0	49.5	17.0	33.1	42.4	9.3	9.6	11.1	399.0
1940	50.4	60.3	23.8	56.6	38.8	29.3	30.8	18.8	308.8
1941	89.9	151.8	50.6	139.0	54.1	116.3	191.2	57.8	850.7
1942	103.5	95.1	34.0	84.4	51.7	66.9	93.6	28.6	557.8
1943	36.5	42.3	11.1	33.8	41.5	29.5	58.3	20.1	273.1
1944	64.1	76.0	24.8	74.3	50.5	72.5	152.5	46.2	560.9
1945	47.3	71.1	30.8	78.6	54.8	79.6	129.9	35.7	527.8
1946	80.9	54.2	16.5	52.0	51.4	105.1	155.3	40.7	556.1
1947	72.4	77.7	16.7	45.2	44.0	55.5	79.5	31.6	422.6
1948	41.1	25.6	26.0	20.2	14.8	17.5	19.9	13.2	178.3
1949	166.0	86.1	31.5	70.3	33.0	41.8	55.9	23.5	508.1
1950	41.5	35.5	13.3	27.0	23.6	17.3	24.6	17.4	200.2
1951	18.3	28.4	7.3	26.4	21.1	15.3	12.5	10.6	139.9
1952	27.9	15.7	3.2	30.2	25.4	50.1	102.3	20.7	275.5
1953	21.4	15.1	3.2	4.4	36.2	20.1	42.3	24.9	167.6
1954	61.3	31.6	7.1	11.9	25.3	4.2	10.0	10.7	162.1
1955	128.0	22.1	.6	7.7	16.5	4.3	3.3	9.5	192.0
1956	15.6	4.2	1.6	3.6	6.3	2.0	2.2	8.2	43.7
1957	108.6	133.6	65.4	129.5	55.6	175.6	397.9	76.4	1,142.6
1958	266.7	300.0	223.8	294.9	95.5	190.9	268.7	70.7	1,711.2
1959	109.6	158.9	61.6	96.7	94.7	57.4	77.9	33.6	690.4
1960	88.7	128.1	64.9	127.0	104.0	89.7	160.0	62.4	824.8
1961	85.2	151.3	57.4	105.4	88.3	69.3	110.8	49.4	717.1
1962	47.4	46.6	4.3	23.5	57.3	16.7	24.7	18.9	239.4
1963	39.7	27.0	5.0	10.3	41.9	9.3	21.3	16.2	170.7
1964	126.1	57.1	16.3	61.3	43.3	35.8	51.1	22.2	413.2
1965	97.9	83.0	23.2	104.0	54.6	78.8	115.3	66.7	623.5
1966	169.2	134.0	37.7	78.2	50.5	44.5	66.5	34.6	615.2
1967	82.2	137.9	30.4	64.8	44.7	30.2	57.3	19.0	466.5
1968	130.8	176.0	66.4	198.7	59.9	83.1	120.5	49.3	884.7
1969	119.7	113.8	30.7	84.2	55.4	60.2	99.9	46.6	610.5
1970	112.6	141.9	35.4	81.6	68.0	68.8	113.8	39.5	661.6
1971	263.4	212.4	39.2	155.6	68.7	81.4	82.4	22.2	925.3
1972	108.4	144.6	49.0	154.6	87.9	74.3	104.2	33.4	756.4
1973	190.6	256.9	123.9	286.4	97.6	237.2	211.7	82.2	1,486.5
1974	91.1	135.7	36.1	115.3	96.2	68.1	76.9	39.1	658.5
1975	71.8	143.6	47.9	195.9	93.4	138.8	195.7	85.9	973.0
1976	150.7	238.6	68.2	182.0	94.5	47.9	54.3	57.9	894.1
1977	102.9	193.0	62.7	159.5	77.7	97.9	191.6	66.7	952.0
1978	69.8	73.1	30.9	103.7	76.7	49.6	72.4	26.3	502.5
1979	128.4	201.4	68.6	203.1	89.4	85.4	266.3	75.2	1,117.8
1980	58.6	85.6	42.6	25.3	88.3	18.8	55.4	31.8	406.4
1981	205.0	365.2	105.6	252.1	91.3	165.0	196.8	67.3	1,448.4
1982	19.4	123.4	21.0	90.9	76.8	22.6	44.8	23.5	422.4
1983	79.2	85.9	20.1	42.9	74.4	31.9	62.5	23.2	420.1
1984	32.4	40.4	8.8	18.1	43.9	11.3	16.9	25.9	197.9
1985	105.9	186.9	50.7	148.5	64.7	136.7	259.2	50.7	1,003.3
1986	188.4	192.8	42.2	173.6	74.7	170.2	267.4	44.5	1,153.7
1987	308.5	473.3	110.7	405.5	90.4	229.3	270.9	114.9	2,003.6
1988	59.2	117.9	17.0	24.9	69.9	12.6	28.5	25.5	355.5
1989	52.6	52.6	8.4	13.5	46.9	4.6	12.3	23.6	214.4
1990	479.3	255.0	54.6	131.2	54.0	35.9	71.8	41.3	1,123.2
1991	325.2	421.0	103.1	315.2	52.8	84.5	109.7	96.9	1,508.4
1992	234.1	586.9	201.1	566.1	91.4	290.6	286.6	228.9	2,485.7
1993	32.6	78.5	29.6	60.8	78.5	38.9	90.9	37.8	447.6
1994	124.6	151.5	29.5	45.1	61.1	34.1	55.6	36.6	538.1
1995	107.1	147.6	34.7	62.4	61.7	36.2	51.1	30.6	531.3
1996	130.0	92.0	11.4	9.4	42.3	10.6	14.7	13.9	324.3
1997	176.9	209.1	57.0	208.4	63.3	193.4	144.2	82.3	1,134.6
1998	141.5	214.8	72.5	201.4	80.3	86.2	240.9	104.7	1,142.3
1999	101.4	136.8	30.8	57.2	77.1	21.2	27.9	21.0	473.5
2000	238.4	123.0	33.1	55.2	53.4	28.6	48.6	34.1	614.5
2001	297.5	126.7	66.2	124.1	90.0	101.5	173.7	89.7	1,069.4
2002	83.6	207.3	70.6	345.2	93.7	175.5	539.3	150	1,665.2
2003	149.8	112.2	31.7	67.4	86.8	56.2	105.0	59.9	669.0
Average	121.1	134.9	42.4	110.1	62.7	71.2	111.3	44.9	698.5

[1] Includes recharge from ungaged areas (fig. 1).

[2] Recharge to Edwards aquifer from the Medina River Basin consists entirely of losses from Medina Lake (Puente, 1978, p. 23).

[3] Total might not equal sum of basin values due to rounding.