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1-6-2004

# Inflow and Loadings from Ground Water to the Great Bay Estuary, New Hampshire

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Ballestero, Thomas P.; Roseen, Robert; and Brannaka, Larry K., "Inflow and Loadings from Ground Water to the Great Bay Estuary, New Hampshire" (2004). PREP Reports & Publications. 399. [https://scholars.unh.edu/prep/399](https://scholars.unh.edu/prep/399?utm_source=scholars.unh.edu%2Fprep%2F399&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages) 

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# **Inflow and Loadings from Ground Water to the Great Bay Estuary, New Hampshire**

**A Final Report Submitted to The NOAA/UNH Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology (CICEET)** 

**Submitted by** 

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 **January 6, 2004**



**This project was funded by a grant from NOAA/UNH Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology, NOAA Grant Number(s) NA87OR512 and NA07OR0351**





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#### **ABSTRACT**

This final report presents the results of a study to evaluate groundwater inflow and nutrient loadings to the Great Bay Estuary, New Hampshire. The evaluation of inflow was accomplished independently by two methods: one, used thermal imagery, and the other, piezometric mapping. The thermal imagery method assessed groundwater that was observed to discharge within the intertidal zone of an inland estuary. The groundwater piezometric mapping method used bedrock wells around the bay to create an overall piezometric map of the near-bay area. Groundwater discharge was evaluated with respect to flow, concentration, and ultimately nitrogen loading to coastal waters. The results represent a snapshot for these variables, examined by a thermal infrared aerial survey in the spring of 2000, and water quality, specific discharge, and piezometric surface maps in the summer of 2001. Monitoring wells upgradient of the Great Bay were analyzed for nitrogen as an indicator of potential discharge source waters. Total groundwater discharge to the estuary was calculated as 24.2 cubic feet per second (cfs) with an average of  $0.81 \pm 0.89$  mg dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN)/L, with a maximum value of 2.7 mg DIN/L (n=20). Nutrient concentrations, averaging  $0.83 \pm 1.34$  mg DIN/L, with a maximum value of 10.2 mg DIN/L, were observed in upgradient bedrock groundwater analyzed from 192 wells. Nutrient loading was calculated to be 19.3±21.2 tons of N per year for the total Great Bay Estuary, covering nearly 144 miles of shoreline. The groundwater derived nutrient loading accounts for approximately 5% of the total non-point source load to the estuary. The thermal imagery method was found to be an effective and affordable alternative to conventional groundwater exploration approaches.

**Keywords: Thermal Imagery, GIS, Groundwater Discharge, Contaminant Loading, Coastal Waters, Nutrient, Pollution, Coastal Management, Piezometric** 

## **INTRODUCTION**

## **OBJECTIVES**

The objective of this study was to evaluate the groundwater inflow and groundwater derived loadings to the Great Bay Estuary, New Hampshire. This evaluation entailed three major components: 1) the quantification of groundwater discharge to coastal waters via the construction of a groundwater surface map; 2) the quantification of groundwater discharge to coastal waters via thermal imagery; and 3) the calculation of annual estuarine nitrogen loading from groundwater. This research provided a first step in the methodology verification for the use of thermal imagery (TIR) and GIS analysis for quantifying groundwater discharge.

The importance of this research is made evident in that the amount of groundwater discharge and subsequent contaminant loading to coastal waters generally represents a significant unknown for regulators and resource managers. Current regulatory guidelines require states to develop Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) by 2015 for contaminants of all impaired waters. This research demonstrates that the groundwater component is a significant portion of the overall contaminant load. The ability to quantify this component will better enable regulators and resource managers to optimize the health, productivity, and ecological diversity of estuarine and coastal waters.

## **RESEARCH SUMMARY**

There are three major components of this study: 1) the quantification of groundwater discharge to coastal waters via the construction of a groundwater surface map; 2) the quantification of groundwater discharge to coastal waters via thermal imagery; and 3) the calculation of annual nitrogen loading from groundwater to the coastal waters of the Great Bay Estuary.

The first component of the study involved quantification of flow via groundwater mapping and entailed two years of field work to locate, survey, and monitor wells in the study area. Location of the wells began with determining the extent of municipal water supplies, beyond which homeowners would be on private wells. Public involvement was solicited and the resulting support was overwhelming, without which the mapping could not have been accomplished. Private wells were then located and evaluated for use. Spatial location of over 200 wells was accomplished by a combination of GPS and surveying. GPS was used to locate the X and Y coordinates. To determine elevation required greater accuracy. This required the use of mapping grade GPS, or Real Time Kinematic (RTK) GPS. Two depth-to-water monitoring events were performed: one during 2000 and one during 2001. Data from about 30 additional wells was used from Pease International Tradeport for the Newington area. Aquifer characterization was accomplished by the use of pump test data from multiple studies in the area. The piezometric map was then constructed and evaluated for regions of uniform piezometric gradient. Application of Darcy's Law was used to estimate flow.

The second component of this study was the quantification of flow via thermal imagery and GIS analysis. This was further subdivided into the following tasks: 1) identification and cataloguing of discharge zones by thermal imagery, 2) field investigations of groundwater discharge zones, 3) GIS analysis of thermal imagery, and 4) large-scale flow estimation.

The study area was surveyed from an elevation of 10,000 feet, during winter, at low tide, on a cool calm night. The thermal images were studied for thermal anomalies indicated by groundwater discharge. The winter survey maximized temperature differentials between surface features and groundwater. Suspected discharge zones were compiled and mapped to identify specific areas of interest. Field investigations were then performed to verify the presences of suspected discharge zones. Characterization included assessment of specific discharge, measurement of piezometric gradient, characterization of hydrogeology, surface area determination, and water quality sampling and analysis. Analysis of the thermal imagery was accomplished by a combination of GIS analysis and graphical analysis of pixel data. The analysis determined the seepage face surface area for groundwater discharge zones. Finally, the results of the field characterization and GIS analysis were applied to calculate flow for individual discharge zones. These same results were applied by factorial design to calculate groundwater discharge, on a larger scale, throughout the estuary.

The third component, calculation of annual nitrogen loading from groundwater to the Great Bay Estuary, was determined based on the results from sampling 20 groundwater discharge zones throughout the study area. The water quality data was combined with flow estimation from thermal imagery to determine loading. Additionally, water quality analyses were performed for the monitoring wells used in the construction of the groundwater map, to determine upgradient source water quality. Water quality and loading data were then reviewed and compared with published loading data for point, non-point, and atmospheric sources.

## **FLOW ESTIMATION FROM THE PIEZOMETRIC MAPPING METHOD AND THE THERMAL IMAGERY METHOD**

This report examines and compares two methodologies for assessing groundwater discharge to coastal waters. Specifically, it reports and compares the flow estimation by piezometric mapping and aquifer characterization compared with the innovative use of thermal imagery (TIR), Geographic Information System (GIS) based analyses, and limited field characterization. The piezometric mapping approach is presented first. The use of TIR, coupled with field characterization to assess groundwater discharge for individual zones is reported second, followed by the same approach applied to a regional scale with the use of a flow expression matrix.

Recent developments in thermal imagery have improved its accessibility and affordability for use in management of coastal resources. In April 2000, a series of TIR aerial surveys were flown over the Great Bay Estuary in coastal New Hampshire. This study delineated groundwater discharge throughout the ecosystem on a large scale. The aerial survey included nearly 50 miles of the Great Bay shoreline and four of the major contributing rivers. Each survey was completed in one night and the images were available shortly thereafter, with no need for corrective post-processing. The images were then studied for thermal anomalies that indicated a potential upwelling of groundwater.

TIR-identified discharge zones were catalogued and characterized as to size, type and intensity. A subset of suspected groundwater discharge zones were located in the field, characterized for hydrologic parameters, and sampled for water quality. The surface area of each individual groundwater discharge zone was computed by GIS analysis of the TIR. Finally, the GIS-derived surface area, combined with field-derived flow estimates, was used to determine the total groundwater flux and nutrient loading to the estuary.

The issue of groundwater discharge to coastal waters is of particular interest to scientists and resource regulators in the performance of a detailed accounting of significant contaminant sources. A body of emerging research has investigated and reported quantities of groundwater discharge that have the potential to represent a significant component of contaminant loading to coastal waters (Bokuniewicz, 1980; Johannes and Hearn, 1985; Giblin and Gaines, 1990; Reay et al., 1992; Moore, 1996; Burnett, 1999). Consequently, methodologies that can be used to assess the extent of groundwater flux and the resulting contaminant loading are of great interest. As detailed by Banks et al. (1996), "Airborne thermal-infrared imaging is an effective method to quickly assess large areas and acquire information about specific locations of groundwater discharge." The results of this study using GIS-based analyses of thermal imagery, combined with field characterization, increases the utility of thermal imagery beyond delineation capabilities and into the realm of quantitative assessments of groundwater discharge.

Groundwater is a uniquely difficult non-point source to assess and is commonly overlooked, as is evident by the lack of available data. TIR combined with field characterization is a powerful alternative to conventional approaches such as the use of piezometric surface maps to assess groundwater discharge and contaminant loading. TIR is ideal for locating specific concentrated discharge areas symptomatic of complex hydrogeology. Banks and others used TIR to determine the presence or absence of discharge as well as the manifestation of discharge zones as either concentrated or diffuse. However, TIR alone cannot be used to quantitatively assess flow, as can piezometric surface maps combined with aquifer characterization. Yet the coupling of GIS analyses and TIR can be used to determine the surface area of the seepage face of a discharge zone. The surface area of the seepage face combined with field measurements of specific discharge (such as those commonly obtained with seepage meters) can be used to estimate individual discharge zones.

Combined with water quality data, GIS-derived surface areas, and the fieldderived flow estimates, it is possible to estimate the total groundwater flux and nutrient loading from individual zones, or over an entire study area. The method can be applied to a large-scale investigation in which a representative subset of TIR-identified discharge zones are field investigated, and the results of which could be applied to the data set as a whole. Thus was the approach followed in this study.

Advances in thermal imaging in the past 10 years have improved temporal and spatial resolution as well as increases in camera affordability (Davis, 2001). Historically, access to thermal imaging capabilities was limited to large projects that could afford expensive thermal scanners. Private sector access was typically limited as most scanners were owned and maintained by federal agencies, some defense related. This research used modern staring array thermal imagers, also known as digital thermal cameras

(DTCs), for identifying groundwater discharge zones. DTCs have a distinct advantage over digital scanners in that they do not require expensive and time-consuming image correction. Aerial thermal image surveys can be flown for a little as \$6,000 with DTCs. As such, thermal imagery is becoming increasingly widespread and accessible by coastal regulators and scientists.

The temperature resolution of typical thermal imagers is 0.08 degrees Celsius. The cameras can be mounted on either fixed wing or non-fixed wing aircraft and can survey at elevations from just above tree line to roughly 10,000 feet, with a range of ground resolution from 16 square feet per pixel down to 0.2 square feet per pixel. The resolution is determined for a particular camera by flight altitude and field of view of the imaging device. Flight altitude and corresponding resolution can be adjusted based on the needs of the survey. For large areas encompassing many miles of shoreline, low altitude surveys provide high resolution, but also significantly more data to process and analyze. Affordability is expected to increase as the usage of the thermal image cameras increases. DTCs have been used in law enforcement, fire fighting, animal migration studies, industrial applications, resource management, and now increasingly with groundwater research. The present limitation to the latter application is in the GIS-based analyses applications of the thermal imagery.

The data of the thermal signature is based on a pronounced thermal gradient between the groundwater and the ambient surface conditions. For a typical winter survey in North America, there is a range of grayscale values from warmer subsurface groundwater to cooler ambient conditions at or near freezing (the opposite would be the case during warm summer months).The digital thermal imagery data is recorded in grayscale pixels. The pixel data can be analyzed by use of a query through GIS for determining the size of individual thermal signatures. A GIS query is a logically constructed search of a spatially organized dataset. However, the difficulty arises in obtaining a reliable and repeatable criterion on which to base the query.

Much of the use of thermal imagery for groundwater research began in the 1990's. A thermal scanner was used by Baskin (1990) for locating groundwater discharge zones, in the non-mixed quiescent environment of the Great Salt Lake. Baskin's study illustrated the utility of the thermal imagery for identifying the density stratification of freshwater over saltwater similar to what occurs in coastal systems. Delineation of groundwater discharge zones using thermal imagery was shown to be effective by Banks (1996) in coastal waters at the Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. Banks found that the thermal signatures in the surrounding waters influenced by groundwater could be interpreted to determine the extent of groundwater discharge. Similarly, Mustard et al (1999) used thermal imagery to quantitatively assess thermal effluent impacts in the waters of Narragansett Bay. Recently, Campbell and Keith (2001) used thermal imaging scanners combined with computer modeling using CORMIX to estimate groundwater flow rates from discharge zones. Their study had no field verification but represents an important transition of TIR from delineation to quantitative flow measurements. Satellite borne thermal imagery has been used to detect coastal storm water and sewage run-off (Svejkovsky and Jones, 2002). The present study has developed a GIS method for assessing seepage face surface area. This parameter is critical to estimating groundwater flow. Surface area estimates were combined with field-derived flow rate measurements to calculate the total flow from groundwater discharge zones.

#### **GROUNDWATER-DERIVED NITROGEN LOADING TO COASTAL WATERS**

Water quality sampling and analyses for nutrient concentrations were also performed. The nitrogen concentrations, combined with the groundwater discharge rates from either the piezometric or thermal method, provided an estimate of nitrogen loading.

The groundwater loading results can be compared with nutrient loading from nearby waste water treatment facilities (WWTF), surface water, and atmospheric inputs; all components required for Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs).

Effective development of TMDLs is predicated upon an accurate assessment of all significant sources of contamination for a particular water body. Typically, this would involve monitoring of surface waters, point sources (such as municipal and industrial waste water treatment facilities), atmospheric contribution, and groundwater. However, the loading from groundwater often remains unknown, due largely to the difficulty in measuring groundwater discharge. A body of research using a variety of approaches supports the contention that groundwater is a significant component of the total freshwater discharge and is capable of carrying a substantial contaminant load (Bokuniewicz, 1980; Johannes and Hearn, 1985; Simmons Jr., 1992; Moore, 1996; Burnett, 2002). In the coastal ecosystem of the Atlantic Bight located in the southeastern United States, Moore (1996) has estimated that 40% of the river water/freshwater resulted from groundwater discharge. In some cases, such as in the Perth Region of Australia, it has been demonstrated that nitrate loading from groundwater discharge is several times that of surface waters (Johannes, 1980). Our research in the Great Bay of coastal New Hampshire indicates that groundwater is a significant source of nitrogen. The loading from groundwater is nearly double that from a WWTF with primary and secondary treatment from a town with over 12,000 people. Loading from groundwater is roughly one third that of the major tributaries. The estimated total groundwater influx for the entire Great Bay Estuary (144 miles of shoreline) is nearly 24.2 cubic feet per second (cfs) with concurrent loading of around 20 tons of dissolved inorganic nitrogen per year. TIR has the potential to be a powerful and affordable tool for coastal regulators and scientists for evaluation of pollution from groundwater.

## **STUDY AREA**

The study was performed in the Great Bay Estuary, a drowned river valley, in coastal New Hampshire. The entire estuary is composed of seven contributing rivers, approximately 144 miles of shoreline, with tidal waters covering about 10,900 acres (Jones, 2002). The study area was limited to a more easily defined portion of the estuary, the Great Bay and the Little Bay, which includes 4 rivers and over 50 miles of shoreline. The study site includes portions of the Towns of Dover, Durham, Newmarket, Newfields, Stratham, Greenland, and Newington, NH next to the Pease International Development Tradeport (Figure 1), the former site of Pease Air Force Base. The mouth of the estuary is the Piscataqua River, which is the border of Maine and New Hampshire with an active port, and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. The daily tidal exchange is approximately 8 feet. At low tide, in the upper portions of the estuary, significant fringing salt marsh, large mudflats, and eelgrass beds are exposed. Tidal mixing due to strong currents



generally prevents vertical stratification and presumably obscures submerged groundwater signals.

**Figure 1: Map of Great Bay Study Area** 

The health and effective long-term management of the estuary is a major interest for New Hampshire as the estuary represents the majority of its marine shoreline. There are 11 cities and towns bordering the tidal portions of the estuary comprised of nearly 100,000 people. Within the estuary, 38% of the abutting lands are undeveloped (Rubin and Merriam, 1998). The estuary is used extensively for its natural resources, particularly commercial fishing and shellfish harvesting. Furthermore, a wide variety of research is conducted there due to the proximity to the University of New Hampshire and the location of a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) within the Great Bay Estuary.

The study area was chosen because of a broad interest in coastal research in the Great Bay estuary. The area has US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designation as a medium priority for assessment of TMDLs (USEPA, 1998). Coastal New Hampshire was uniquely suitable for such a study in that the majority of homeowners use private wells for water. As such, these private wells are all potential monitoring points for the construction of a piezometric groundwater map. In total, over 200 private wells were

surveyed and monitored and additional data from over 30 monitoring wells from Pease International Tradeport were used for the groundwater map produced in this report.

#### Hydrogeology

The geology of the Great Bay area is quite complicated and includes both unconsolidated surficial geology and occasional bedrock outcrops. The area is faulted and folded with a syncline extending from the northeast to the southwest (Novotony 1969).

Tightly folded metasedimentary rocks of the Merrimack group underlie the Great Bay area. The bedrock geology consists of Ordovian-Silurian metasedimentary rocks, Devonian intrusive igneous rocks, and Triassic or Jurassic aged dikes (Lyons et al. 1997). Two formations dominate the region: the Kittery and the Eliot. The centerline of the Great Bay is the contact zone between the Kittery (to the west) and the Elliot (to the East) and closely follows what some believe to be either a syncline (Novotony, 1969), or a fault line. The bedrock is typically highly fractured at the surface, with the depth of the fractured zone extending to greater than 10 feet in some areas (Weston, 1993). The two bedrock formations are very similar hydrogeologically, with low primary porosity and higher secondary porosity. The depth to bedrock varies from exposed outcrops to nearly 60 feet, and in most cases 20 feet. Exposure of bedrock is more prevalent along the northern shore of the Great Bay, on smaller headlands on the south shore, and along the narrower reaches of the rivers.

In a shallow bedrock system, it is likely that subsurface flow patterns are controlled by the bedrock topography. The shape and form of the bedrock topography was influenced by the preceding glaciations. The subsurface bedrock control and the subsequent varying depths of surficial materials may account for the observations of a large number of concentrated groundwater discharge zones within the study area. In an environment in which a transmissive surficial geology is the dominant factor (e.g. Cape Cod, MA), one might expect to see more diffuse discharge zones.

The surficial deposits in the Great Bay area are of glacial origin, which includes lodgment and ablation tills and stratified drift. Historic ocean basins, which flooded the region due to the depression of the land surface by the glacier, left a marine clay and silt deposit over much of the region. The stratified drift deposits are widely used and productive aquifers, composed of coarse grained materials (sands and gravels), which were sorted during the glacial retreat. This sorting resulted in the size-based layering of materials. In contrast, the till deposits are generally low transmissivity materials composed of unsorted clay, silt, sand and gravel (Moore, 1990). On a microscopic level, the mixture of stratified drift and tills suggest that the hydrogeology is complex and most likely indicative of discrete concentrated discharge zones. On a macroscopic level, the region can be generalized as a mixture of drift and tills with accompanying characteristics.

Geophysical surveys performed during the study support the presence of three distinct surficial hydrogeologic units. From top to bottom, these include a sand and gravel unit, a marine clay layer, and beneath the clay a glacial till layer. Investigations at the Pease International Tradeport show the presence of up to four surficial units, adding a lower sand layer immediately beneath the marine clay. Groundwater discharge zones have been identified in the tidal zone and in deposits of coarse sands and gravels. Below the tidal zone, significant accumulation of marine clays occurs acting as a confining unit.

Various hydrogeologic investigations have been, and are ongoing, at the previous site of Pease International Tradeport. An extensive network of monitoring wells exists for this site. The wells are monitored regularly. Data from some of the wells was used for the groundwater map of the Great Bay created for this report. The Town of Newington, NH (to the west) and the City of Portsmouth (to the east) rely upon a public reservoir, thereby limiting potential private monitoring wells.

## **GROUNDWATER DISCHARGE STUDIES**

Studies on groundwater discharge in coastal waters tend to use the following approaches: piezometric mapping (often associated with modeling efforts), seepage meters, tracers, and thermal imagery. Seepage meters, thermal imagery, and piezometric mapping are especially relevant to this research.

Johannes (1980) published a thorough review assembling a somewhat scattered body of research on the discharge of groundwater to coastal waters. The review tied together literature focusing on freshwater environments, brackish waters, and coastal waters. The review included the observations from multiple researchers, that in brackish waters (the freshwater and saltwater interface), groundwater discharge appeared limited to a narrow horizon at the perimeter of the water body. This was explained by the occurrence of a zone of diffusion at the interface between a seaward saltwater wedge and upgradient freshwater discharge. This phenomenon forces the exit of groundwater, called submarine groundwater discharge (SGD), below the high tide line and at the contact with saltwater wedge. Perhaps most importantly, Johannes reported that SGD has been shown to contribute many times the amount of nitrate to coastal waters as does river water. Burnett (2002) reviewed a large study by a working group of scientists established by the Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research (SCOR) and co-sponsored by the Land-Ocean Interaction in the Coastal Zone (LOICZ). The SCOR/LOICZ working group examined a variety of approaches for assessing groundwater discharges, including seepage meters, tracer studies, modeling, and seepage meters.

#### Groundwater Mapping and Flow Estimation

Piezometric mapping coupled with aquifer characterization can be used to estimate flow through homogenous isotropic flow tubes (Freeze and Cherry, 1979). This form of mapping is the basis for numerical groundwater modeling packages such as MODFLOW that are commonly used to estimate flow, flow paths, and residence time. It is important to recognize that groundwater models are driven by the imposed boundary conditions such as intertidal groundwater discharge. In areas that are neither homogenous or isotropic, useful approximations can be made by identifying relatively uniform regions within the flow domain. Uniform regions can then be treated as "flow tubes" for flow calculations. Hydrogeologically, the two primary bedrock units are very similar, with low primary porosity, and higher secondary porosity through fractures. The stratified drift aquifers are distributed throughout the study area. Aquifer characterization using pumping tests can evaluate the connectivity between an unconfined surface formation and an underlying bedrock formation (Kruseman and deRidder, 1994). A pump test run for 4-8 days typically entails a large radius of influence, in some cases nearly up to a

mile, over which the aquifer properties measured by the test are averaged. The pump test is useful for calculating large-scale formation transmissivity and storage coefficient for large regions with a mix of heterogeneous materials.

#### Seepage Meters and Nutrient Studies

Many studies have been performed using seepage meters (Lee, 1977) to estimate groundwater flux, particularly with respect to nutrient loading from areas below the high tide line to significant depths. Table 1 illustrates ranges of nutrient concentrations and Table 2 illustrates ranges of specific discharge reported from related studies.

## **Table 1: Groundwater Nitrate Concentrations Reported from Various SGD Studies**



### **Table 2: Specific Discharge Values Reported from Various SGD Studies**



Seepage meters function best when submerged and the majority of studies use that approach. Sewell (1982) and Giblin and Gaines (1990) documented elevated nitrate groundwater concentrations and subsequent SGD, in an area dominated by septic systems. Simmons (1992) reported discharge measurements for zones at depths of up to 130 feet and observed discharge variances in response to tidal action. Reay et al (1992) concluded that significant nutrient fluxes were increasing surface water nitrate concentrations in a coastal inlet by 20 times and summer rates of specific discharge 15

times  $\geq$  rates in winter. Staver and Brinsfield (1996) reported variations in response to tidal and recharge events with discharge rates being as much as 5 times greater in winter than summer. Research on seepage meters by Shaw and Prepas (1989) indicated that short-term anomalous influx of water was observed using seepage meters and could be corrected by pre-filling of the sampling bags. Significant advances in seepage meter technology were reported by Taniguchi and Fukuo (1993) with the development of an automated heat-pulse seepage meter. Recently, Burnett (2002) reported good agreement between manual, automated heat-pulse, and automated ultrasonic seepage meters. Ultrasonic seepage meters have the advantage that they function exposed in intertidal areas and submerged (Paulsen et al., 1997).

#### Thermal Imagery

The use of thermal imagery for groundwater research was reported in the 1990's. A thermal scanner was used by Baskin (1990) for locating groundwater discharge zones, in the non-mixed quiescent environment of the Great Salt Lake. This study illustrated the utility of the thermal imagery for identifying the density stratification of freshwater over saltwater much like what occurs in coastal systems. Delineation of groundwater discharge zones using thermal imagery was shown to be effective by Banks (1996) in coastal waters at the Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. Banks found that the thermal signatures in the surrounding coastal waters influenced by groundwater could be interpreted to determine the extent of groundwater discharge. Mustard et al. (1999) used thermal imagery to quantitatively assess thermal effluent impacts in the waters of Narragansett Bay. Recently, Campbell and Keith (2001) used thermal imaging scanners combined with computer modeling using CORMIX to estimate flow rates from discharge zones. Their study had no field verification but represents an important transition of TIR from delineation to quantitative flow measurements. Satellite-borne thermal imagery has also been used to detect coastal storm water and sewage run-off (Svejkovsky and Jones, 2002).

Our study examined groundwater flow estimates from thermal imagery and fieldderived flow measurements into the tidal waters of the Great Bay Estuary, New Hampshire. Estimates were also derived from piezometric mapping of the groundwater table surrounding the Great Bay Estuary. The conventional piezometric approach was used to compare and verify the thermal imagery procedures

#### Tracer Studies

Tracer studies are an exceptionally useful approach, especially for large-scale quantification and method inter-comparisons. One notable study included an evaluation of enrichment of coastal waters by  $226$ Ra (Moore, 1996). Moore concluded that groundwater flux constituted approximately 40% of the river water flux along the South Atlantic Bight, South Carolina. Moore et al  $(2000)$  also examined radioisotopes <sup>223</sup>Ra and  $224$ Ra to determine mixing rates of estuarine and near-coastal waters with the open ocean. In another study, Burnett et al (2001) used another conservative tracer, <sup>222</sup>Rn, enriched in coastal waters by higher concentration groundwater for estimating submarine groundwater discharge.

#### TMDL Regulation and Implementation

The evolution of regulatory practices associated with the 1972 Clean Water Act (CWA) has led to the realization that non-point source (NPS) contamination is now the leading concern for protection of water resources (EPA, 2000). With the implementation of the CWA, point source (PS) contamination from industry and municipalities was the primary focus and regulated through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). Effective regulation of point sources produced a marked improvement in water quality in many respects, however, much of the nations waters remain impaired, so non-point sources became the current focus. According to Saltman (2001) TMDLs are all inclusive such that impacts omitted by point source regulation will be considered in total loading. TMDLs, as described in section 303d of the CWA, are a pollutant budget intended to regulate based on the health and ecological function of a water body by determining a sustainable pollution load. The actual contaminant load from point, nonpoint, and atmospheric sources for an impaired water body is then to be regulated to meet the sustainable load.

Currently, the regulation of non-point sources rests with the state, primarily through the use of best management practices targeted for specific water quality impairments. The states have the responsibility to develop TMDLs through listing and assessment of impaired waters. It is up to the states to decide how to regulate the various sources. The US Environmental Protection Agency subsequently certifies that the TMDL will meet the necessary water quality and the regulation occurs for all sources. As of July 2000, states have up to 15 years to develop TMDLs for each impaired water body, with a requirement to update their list of impaired waters every 4 years, and no deadline for implementation (Saltman, 2001).

One of the leaders in the development of TMDLs in the Northeastern US is the Buzzards Bay Program (BBP) of Massachusetts. In 1999, the BBP proposed to use standards based on three factors: bay volume, flushing time, and depth. With these factors, unique standards can be developed for each water body that represents a sustainable level of pollution. The USEPA water classification scheme used by the BBP is based on a three tiered system (from high quality to low): Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW), resource waters with outstanding recreational or ecological significance; Shellfish Class A Waters (SA), waters used primarily for market shellfishing; Shellfish Class B Waters (SB), waters used primarily for recreation. Additionally, waters are further classified as shallow if they have an average mean low water depth of less than 6 feet, or have  $\geq 40\%$  of the bottom less than 6 feet deep (BBP, 1999).

#### Great Bay, NH Status

The 1998 listing of impaired waters for the Great Bay Estuary, NH included the Great and Little Bays, the tidal portion of all the estuary's major rivers (Salmon Falls River, Cocheco River, Lamprey River, Squamscott River, Bellamy River, Oyster River), and Hampton Harbor. All are listed as a medium priority for water quality impairments for pathogens and PCBs (EPA, 1998). Studies in 1976 and 1996 indicated a general decrease in the nutrient concentrations for most of the estuary, with the exception of the two largest surface water sources, the Cocheco and Salmon Falls Rivers, which have increased significantly (Loder et al, 1976; Jones and Langan, 1996; Langan, 2002). These reports identify seasonal nitrogen trends of highest dissolved inorganic nitrogen in the

late fall through early spring and longitudinal trends in which nitrogen concentration varied inversely with salinity and was highest at the upper reaches of the estuary.

## **METHODS**

#### **FLOW ESTIMATION VIA PIEZOMETRIC MAPPING METHOD**

The piezometric mapping and analysis yielded flow estimates for the areas immediately adjacent to the Great Bay. Nearly 200 wells were used to develop the piezometric map, most from private homes with an additional 34 wells at the Pease International Tradeport.

The piezometric map was based on measurements of water levels from all wells measured within a 3 day period. The resulting data was plotted and contoured. Aquifer characterization involved the geophysical analyses of suspected target areas, slug testing of monitoring wells, and analysis of historic pumping test data on some bedrock wells. Interpretation of slug tests and pumping tests provided aquifer parameters for comparison with the results of the geophysics analyses. Directions and estimates of total groundwater flow were derived from the piezometric maps.

The possible temporary drawdown of private wells was considered when developing the groundwater map. Based on calculations assuming standard minimum demand on domestic wells in these formations, drawdown was not a problem. The slowest wells would recharge nearly 40 feet of drawdown in 30 minutes. Prior to taking depth to water measurements, the homeowners were requested to limit major usage of water during the monitoring. Typically, houses were sampled in about 45 minutes (ample recovery time). During the synoptic monitoring events, most homeowners were not at home, therefore their wells were at or close to static water levels. This was also indicated by water level readings when the wells were originally surveyed at a different time.

In the summer of 2000, two synoptic data collection events occurred on all private wells: a monitoring well survey event, and a water level monitoring event. The first component of the monitoring well survey event took place over a single week using Real Time Kinematics (RTK) GPS. RTK is a mapping grade GPS system with vertical accuracy to within 2-3 cm.. Limitations with RTK (associated with satellite positions) required event planning. This involved selection of base stations, obtaining the necessary access for points around the bay, and scheduling teams of two to three people to survey throughout the day and night when satellite availability was optimal. The NH Geodetic Survey Office provided us with survey benchmarks from which to base the surveying efforts. The station at Cedar Point, Dover was used  $(43^{\circ}07^{\circ}39.69^{\circ}N, 70^{\circ}51^{\circ}27.05^{\circ}W$ {NAD 83/96}, 10.26 ft { NGVD29 & NAVD 88}), which is part of the national High Accuracy Reference Network (HARN) and has geodetic accuracy control with latitude, longitude and elevation of several millimeters. Base stations were selected at Cedar Point, Wagon Hill, the Durham Waste Water Treatment Plant, Stratham Hill, and Woodman Point in the Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Newington, NH. The base station located at Woodman Point proved to be the most effective location. The biggest problem encountered with this technique was the interference from tree cover, which blocked direct access to satellite signals. Woodman Point was the most effective base station, as much of the study area was directly across open water from Woodman Point. Signal range was nearly 6 miles from Woodman Point in some cases, whereas through dense trees, the range at Wagon Hill was limited to a mile and a half. RTK achieved an elevation accuracy of 2-3 cm, and greatly reduced well survey efforts. Following RTK, some "clean-up" survey activities were required to close survey loops not completed by

the RTK. This effort required only a few additional weeks. The RTK technology saved several months of conventional survey efforts.

The second Phase 2 task completed in early summer was a synoptic or measurement of the groundwater elevations. The depth-to-water measurement event took place in a single week. The results of the RTK survey were used to convert measured groundwater depth to elevations.

Aquifer characterization used several pumping tests to determine hydraulic characteristics of the bedrock aquifer. There is probably interconnectivity between the surficial aquifer and the bedrock, so multi-day pumping tests were used to account for interconnectivity. To obtain flow estimates from the piezometric map using Darcy's Law, it is necessary to have uniform isotropic flow tubes for piezometric gradients. The piezometric surface was analyzed and divided into regions of uniform piezometric gradient (Figure 5), and the flow was then calculated and summed for the entire study area.

#### **FLOW ESTIMATION VIA THERMAL IMAGERY METHOD**

The quantitative use of TIR for individual discharge zones was investigated, followed by its regional scale application using a flow expression matrix. Phase 1 involved four components: 1) delineation of groundwater discharge zones by thermal imagery, 2) GIS analysis of TIR to obtain seepage face surface area estimates, 3) field verification, and 4) development of a flow expression matrix.

#### Delineation of Groundwater Discharge Zones by Thermal Imagery

To delineate the groundwater discharge zones, a thermal infrared survey was flown over the study area. Delineation involved TIR surveys performed in April and August of 2000. The April survey was performed at 10,000 feet elevation and the August survey at 4,000 feet elevation. The April survey maximized temperature differentials in early spring after the ice had cleared from the Great Bay. Survey conditions were ideal for identifying discharge within the tidal zone: clear skies, low wind, ambient air temperature of 34ºF, and an expected groundwater temperature of 50ºF. The bay temperature was nearly 45ºF, which was less than ideal for locating deeper submarine discharge zones.

In August, a second, less successful survey was flown, despite weather related difficulties, including high winds and low cloud layers (4,500 feet and above). Due to the low cloud cover, the survey flight was forced down to 4,000 ft to obtain acceptable results. As a result, image resolution was improved from 15 to 2.5 square feet per pixel. Weather related difficulties prevent a heavy reliance upon the August survey data. When used in conjunction with the April data, the August data has utility. Warm surface temperatures provided a strong temperature gradient from which to identify discharge zones. Survey conditions for groundwater, surface water, and mudflats were approximately 48, 69, and 80 °F, respectively. Since this was the second survey, specific IGD identified from the previous (April) survey were monitored to determine their respective thermal signatures.

Each survey was recorded on digital video. Separate overlapping images are selected from the video to obtain complete ground coverage. Each image was tagged with latitude, longitude (from DGPS), elevation, date, and a time stamp. Each pixel is one of a 256-color gray-scale that is directly defined by temperature. Figure 2 illustrates a sample thermal image displaying groundwater discharge. The circled groundwater discharge zones shown as white (white is cold) are nearly  $47^{\circ}$ F. Black represents warm regions. The surrounding mudflats are nearly 70˚F. The white "cloud-like" feature at the bottom of the image is vegetation, and the bay is on the upper half of the image.

The images are useable immediately thereafter with out post-processing. After the images are reviewed, and a subsequent cataloguing of the suspected discharge zones, field investigations were undertaken to assess the reliability of TIR analysis for identifying groundwater discharge zones.

## **Figure 2: Thermal Imagery for Identifying Groundwater Discharge Zones, Great Bay Estuary, NH.**



Suspected discharge zones were compiled and mapped. The discharge zones were then characterized by size, shape, location, and intensity.

#### GIS Analysis Of TIR

Delineation of the thermal signature was accomplished by cropping the suspected discharge zone within the thermal image. The cropped image excluded false positiv e results, which were the dominant problem interfering with expeditious processing. False positives are anything that might have a thermal signal similar to the suspected groundwater discharge, such as ponded surface water, tree cover, and deep surface waters. Most are predictable and readily apparent to the trained observer, and can therefore be avoided using a cropped image.

Figure 3 illustrates false positives in thermal imagery. The sample thermal imagery is the product of an aerial survey flown in August 2000 over the Great Bay Estuary. The survey elevation was at 4,000 feet, resulting in a pixel resolution of 2.5 square feet. The images are standard polarity: the image grayscale spectrum of black to white represents hot to cold, respectively. Reverse polarity was used for the April winter survey. The results of switching polarity is that the summer and winter surveys are comparable. The darkest (warmest) objects in Figure 3 are the exposed mudflats at low tide, while the lightest (coolest) objects are generally the groundwater discharge areas and the tree canopy. This particular survey was flown at noon to minimize shadows and maximize temperature differentials of land surface features. The greater the temperature gradient between the groundwater and the surrounding landforms the easier it is to resolve the thermal signature.

## **Figure 3: Thermal Imagery for Displaying False Positives and Groundwater Discharge Zones**



Once the image was cropped around each discharge zone, it was then imported into Arc View and converted to a grid. This format provided temperature/grayscale data for each pixel. With the image in grid format, the pixel data could be directly queried with Arc View. With the known survey altitude and pixel resolution, the query was use d to determine the discharge zone flow area. Yet a reliable criterion had t o be developed from which to base the query. To accomplish this, the query criteria was developed from a graphical analysis of the grayscale data.

## Field Verification of the Thermal Imagery Method

Field verifications of TIR-identified groundwater discharge zones were perform ed using the thermal images and topographic maps. Field investigations typically involve d

characterizing the size of the discharge area, confirming an upward groundwater gradient, and quantifying the flow per unit area (spec ific discharge). The discharge water salinity was mo nitored to verify presence of groundwater rather than saltwater. Typical measured salinity was less than 16 parts per thousand. Seepage meters were used to measure specific discharge. Surface area of the seepage face was derived from TIR analysis by GIS. The two combined could calculate total flow per discharge zone.

Large seepage meters, with diameters of nearly 15 feet, were used to assess SGD. conditions. These variations in seepage meter design were necessary to obtain specific discharge measurements in highly porous, intermittently submerged discharge zones. The Standard seepage meters (Lee, 1977) were ineffective in these intermittently submerged alterations involved large strips of plastic edging (the kind used for lawn edging), that were depressed into the sediments, forming a circle. A V-notch weir was cut into the down-gradient side from which volumetric flow was measured. Seepage meters were deployed for the duration of the low tide.

Three sites were characterized for surface area. The limitation on the number sites verified was due primarily to the enormous amount of time required to field map the discharge zones, some in excess of 5,000 square feet. This entailed mapping a grid, and infrared gun, which measured surface temperature in the same fashion as was done by the thermal imagery. Bare feet also worked remarkably well for locating temperature differences. To delineate the seepage face from the discharge zone and surrounding mudflats, the hydrogeology and piezometric gradient were examined. The hydrogeology was identified using a soil auger to depths of 2 feet. Confining units were indicated by the presence of the surface accumulation of marine clays, which increased seaward and with taking surface temperature measurements cell by cell (typically in 10 foot by 10 foot cells). Field assessment of the thermal signature area was through the use of a thermal depth. Piezometric gradients were examined by use of mini-piezometers.

#### **Flow Estimation Of Groundwater Discharge Zones**

The product of GIS-derived surface area (A) and the field-derived specific discharge (q) was the flow (Q) from an IGD zone:  $Q = Aq$ . This method was applied to each of the 9 sites visited in the field for which field-derived specific discharge was measured. Flow was calculated for each of the 9 individual sites.

#### Regional-Scale Flow Estimation For Discharge Zones

developed to apply specific discharge and surface area to the complete set of TIR identified discharge zones. A method similar to Bricker et al. (1999) was tailored to apply that process data based upon multiple classifications, to obtain individual flow estimates A factorial design was used to determine SGD flow on a large scale. Approximately 10 % (n=9) of suspected groundwater discharge zones were field characterized for specific discharge. Approximately  $20\%$  (n=22) of these zones were analyzed by GIS for surface area. Based on these results, a classification scheme was sampling data of a subpopulation to produce estimates for large-scale characterization. This entailed use of a *flow expression matrix,* which is a series of *if/and/then* statements for a discharge zone.

#### Matrix Analyses of Regional-Scale Flow

The method developed was based on one used by Bricker et al. (1999) in whi ch an evaluation of discrete parameters was use d to assess water quality over a large-scale. This method used a scoring system, based on numerical ranges, applied to each of the parameters, to integrate a large data set that encompassed the nation's estuaries. A flow expression matrix was constructed to assess flow over large areas based on the classifi cation criteria for the discharge zone (e.g. surface area, specific discharge, and numerical ranges were applied based on field verification and GIS analysis for a subset of analyses of 22 discharge zones. The classes were then applied to the catalogued data set frequency of occurrence). Once the cataloguing of the discharge zones was completed, the 165 suspected discharge zones. Specific discharge classes were established for the range of measured values based on 9 sites. Surface area classes were based on GIS of IGD zones, which were classified into subcategories of size, type, and intensity to "…establish response ranges for each parameter to ensure discrete gradients among responses." (Bricker et al., 1999) This ensures a consistent qualitative data set from which flow measurements can be applied.

#### **Water Quality Sampling and Analysis**

Water quality samples were taken from 20 groundwater discharge zones and installed in the near surface (top 6 inches) of the discharge zones. The mini-piezometer connected to a vacuum pump. Approximately 500 ml were extracted and filtered using a 0.45 micron filter (GN-6 Metricel) and preserved by freezing for later bulk analysis by the method suggested by Avanzino (1993). The water was filtered for microbes that consume nitrogen and were frozen within 4 hours of sampling. Mini-piezometers were constructed using clear small diameter plastic tubing and screened using a geotextile to wrap small horizontal slots at the base of the piezometer. No adsorption or desorption was observed from flushing with 50 ppb nitrate and ammonia standards. Blind duplicates, duplica tes, and certified standards were used for quality control. analyzed for dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN = nitrate, nitrite and ammonia). Prior to sampling, salinity was checked to verify the presence of groundwater rather than saltwater storage. Sampling of discharge zones was accomplished using mini-piezometers was then connected by tubing (Precision Tygon tubing) to a filter flask, which was

Samples were also taken from a network of ~ 200 wells to determine potential upgradient source water quality. Wells were primarily limited to bedrock water because drinking water wells are normally constructed in bedrock. Because the wells were owned by private homeowners, it was assumed that the minimum household usage was conservatively 150 gallons per day for two people. This would imply that an average well of 80 feet deep was flushing at minimum one volume casing per day. Thus, minimal flushing (5 minutes) was performed directly at the outside tap with hose removed. Samples were not filtered but preserved immediately as previously indicated.

## **RESULTS**

## **FLOW ESTIMATION FROM PIEZOMETRIC METHOD**

Estimates of flow based upon the piezometric gradient and aquifer characterization were completed based on the June 2000 water level monitoring. A transmissivity average from several pumping tests was used for aquifer characterization. To obtain flow estimates from Darcy's Law using piezometric gradients, it was necessary to have regions of uniform gradient. The piezometric surface (Figure 4) was analyzed and divided into regions of uniform piezometric gradient (see Figure 5), in which flow was then calculated and summed for the entire study area. Because the source composition (relative percentage surficial and bedrock aquifer) of the SGD is unclear, no attempts were made to distinguish contributions. The multi-day pump-tests in fractured bedrock will draw from a connected surficial aquifer.



**Figure 4: Groundwater Map for the Great Bay Region**



**Figure 5: Regions of Uniform Piezometric Gradient** 

## **FLOW ESTIMATION VIA THERMAL IMAGERY METHOD**

Observations from thermal imagery combined with field investigations showed that the actual seepage face was somewhat indistinguishable from the resulting discharge plume because of similar thermal characteristics. This was a standard problem in determining the surface area of the thermal signature. Thus a reliable methodology for determining the surface area was necessary.

One primary issue was that areas down gradient of a seepage face, which did not contribute to flow, were covered with groundwater discharge running down the surface, and shared a similar thermal signature as areas that contributed to flow. Figure 6 illustrates an idealized cross-section of a typical groundwater seepage face and surface discharge plume. These normally occur at the free surface of the transmissive water bearing unit.

The overlapping seepage face and discharge plume (surface runoff) was more easily detected in the field, based primarily on hydrogeology, as the seepage face was often coincident with a marine clay aquitard. GIS analysis of the TIR imagery was easily performed, but absent of an easily definable seepage face, did not reliably reflect field observations of surface area. Two approaches were used to resolve the differences betwee n seepage face and surface runoff plume: the use of a qualitative visual cue provided by the type curve, and a direct measurement obtained in the field.





Figure 7 illustrates a TIR image in which the seepage face and the discharge plume are indistinguishable. The sample thermal imagery is the product of an aerial survey flown August 2000 over the Great Bay Estuary, New Hampshire. The survey elevation was 4,000 feet, resulting in a pixel resolution of 2.5 square feet. The images are standard polarity: the image spectrum of black to white is hot to cold, respectively.

## **Figure 7: Thermal Infrared Image of Groundwater Seepage Face and Discharge Plume**



GIS analyses of the imagery enabled the development of the characteristic type curve for each seepage face. Type curves for  $> 15$  discharge zones were examined and were found to have consistent and predictable characteristics. Comparisons of the type curve with field observations and subsequent GIS analyses revealed a plot with three significant slopes that could be used to distinguish the seepage face from the discharge plume. The many components of the type curve represent the features on the ground and captured by the TIR image (Figure 8). This curve was predictable and was the key to determining a repeatable area of the seepage face. The curve had two inflection points with three predominant slope components to it: the upper slope (slightly negative and bounded above by a horizontal asymptote); the middle slope (steeply negative); and a bottom slope (slightly negative, bounded below by a horizontal asymptote). The lower inflection point proved an indicator of the seepage face area.



**Figure 8: Thermal Image Features as Components of Type Curve** 

## **Procedure for Analysis of TIR**

By GIS analysis, the imagery was converted to a grid, a format in which the pix el data could be queried. The query function in GIS applications is one of the strengths of this technology in that it enables geospatial analysis (Figure 9). Unfortunately, the pixe l data did not have a consistent temperature equivalent from which to construct the query (e.g., based on the temperature of groundwater). The imaging device continually adjusts the intensity of the grayscale to maximize the effectiveness of the imagery to resolve temperature gradients. If this were not the case, and the imagery could be normalized, a universal query (a query applied uniformly to all the imagery) could be applied. Analysis of the field observations and the pixel data revealed a standard type curve from which to base the criterion.

The type curve was constructed by plotting the surface area of the discharge zone as a function of grayscale. The reasoning for this was to establish a relationship between the size of the discharge zone as it related to the intensity of subsurface discharge. The selection of the query criterion was based on the graphical analysis of the type curve produced. The results of the selected discharge area, for one such query, are highlighted in yellow in Figure 9. Field verification showed strong agreement between the field and GIS analysis of surface area. In future work, these limited results should be more rigorously tested by increasing the number of field verified sites.

## **Figure 9: Query and Location of Groundwater Discharge Zones by GIS Analysis**



Figure 10 illustrates the use of the type curve for estimating the middle and lower slopes and interpolating the lower inflection point. The lower slope was determined by first anchoring the line at the highest values of the grayscale corresponding with the lowest area values. This line had a slightly negative slope and ran fairly close to the xaxis. In some cases the tail of the lower slope is very short and the x-axis was a good approximation of the lower slope. The middle slope was determined by estimating the slope between the two inflection points. The two lines were extended, and at their intersection a line was drawn perpendicular to the curve. The intersection of this line and the cur ve is the criterion for determining seepage face surface area.



Figure 10: Interpolation of Inflection Point Using Standard Type Curve

The plot of the type curve was developed from tabulation of the pixel data: the number of occurrences (or count) and grayscale value. This was accomplished by exporting the tabular data associated with grid. The data was exported and opened in a spreadsheet. The cumulative area was then calculated for the sum of all pixels greater than or equal to each grayscale value. Table 3 depicts the tabular data used to develop Figure 6. The key to establishing the surface area of the plume was setting a cutoff point for the query of the grayscale value and the resulting cumulative area. The greater the temperature gradient between the groundwater and the surrounding landforms, the easier it was to resolve the thermal signature. The construction of the query depended on whether the groundwater was warmer or cooler than the surrounding landforms (winter to summer, respectively), and whether the image was reverse or standard polarity.



## **Table 3: Tabular Data for Plot of Standard Type Curve**

#### **Sample GIS Analysis**

An example analysis of a large well-defined groundwater discharge zone was performed for Fox Point, Newington, New Hampshire.

The images were analyzed for thermal anomalies which located suspected groundwater discharge zones. The image was cropped to avoid effects of false positives, as indicated in Figure 11.

## **Figure 11: Thermal Infrared Image of Groundwater Discharge Zones Indicating Cropped Area**



The cropped image was analyzed by GIS to produce the associated pixel data. The pixel data was then transformed into the type curve of surface area as a function of grayscale. The middle and lower slopes were estimated for the type curve, and the resulting inflection point was interpolated (Figure 12). A seepage face surface area o f 5,409 square feet was determined from the inflection point.





The resulting surface area was used to query the thermal image to observe the seepage face (Figure 13).

## **Figure 13: GIS Query of Cropped Thermal Image Indicating Seepage Face of Groundwater Discharge Zone**



Based on the type curve analysis, the resulting groundwater discharge zone was delineated within the discharge plume. These results, combined with specific discharge estimates made in the field, were used to calculate flow from the entire discharge zone.

## Delineation of Groundwater Discharge Zones by TIR

Analyses of the TIR imagery produced a catalogue of suspected groundwater discharge zones characterized by size, type, intensity, and coordinates. For the April survey, a total of 165 groundwater discharge zones were identified along the 51 miles of sh oreline surveyed. Table 4 lists some of the groundwater discharge zones and their classification characteristics and Figure 14 illustrates the locations.



## **Table 4: Sample Catalogue of Groundwater Discharge Zones**

Previous research has shown that the bulk of the SGD is expected within several meters of shore and within the tidal zone (Bokuniewicz, 1980; Johannes and Hearn,

1985; Giblin and Gaines, 1990). Because of this and intense tidal flushing, the aerial survey was performed at low tide to prevent obscuring of the groundwater thermal signatures at the seepage faces. Because of underlying saltwater and thickening clay below the low water elevation, the tidal zone represented the path of least resistance for upwelling groundwater, so the TIR should have recorded the majority of groundwater discharge in the bay, but would not have located deeper SGD correlated with bedrock fractures. Side scanning sonar was used to detect deeper SGD, but without success. Side scanning sonar has been used to effectively to locate riffles and pools in the sediments that are due to upwelling groundwater in quiescent lentic environments (Hay, 1984). This is due to the heavily mixed tidal environment in which upwelling features (e.g. riffles and pools) are washed away.

#### Field Verification

Groundwater discharge zones were characterized and classified over 2000 and 2001 through significant field efforts over two summers. These efforts, while instrumental for large-scale characterization of groundwater discharge zones, were insufficient for the verification of the type curve. The level of field effort required for type curve verification increased the field time at each site significantly. Thus, due to time and financial constraints, limited field verification were performed to test the use of the type curve. Future research should be performed to more rigorously substantiate the field verification of the type curve procedure by using a greater number of sites. Logistical difficulties were encountered simply due to the location of the discharge zones within the tidal zone, which limited the window of opportunity for investigating the exposed discharge zones. Additional constraints were posed by the need to access these locations by boat during the hours of operation of the University's Jackson Estuarine Laboratory, Durham, NH.

Three sites were verified successfully and are summarized in . A strong correlation, albeit for a limited number, was observed. Many of the sites were tested repeatedly to develop proper field procedures for ascertaining the surface area of the thermal signature. Field assessment using hand-held thermometers inserted in the soils was less successful than use of the handheld TIR gun, and as a result additional site data was not usable. This was attributed to the need for measuring precisely the surface temperature (the top millimeter) to correlate with the imagery. Temperature changed drastically with depth.

Other confounding factors were surface temperatures affected by shadows, wind, and time exposed by the tides. The hydrogeology of the seepage faces was coarse sand and gravels, highly transmissive materials. Lower limits of the discharge zone were often evident by the occurrence of seaward-thickening marine clays.

Mini-piezometers installed in the upper foot of surficial materials indicated strong piezometric gradients. Gradients ranged from over 12 inches in the center of the discharge zone to zero at the perimeter. The exception was at the seaward limit of the discharge zone, when limited by a marine clay confining unit, where the piezometric gradient persisted. This is consistent with the belief that discharge zones are occurring within only the tidal zone due to a confining unit and a saltwater wedge.


### Table 5: Correlation of Surface Areas Derived from Field Measurements Versus **GIS Analysis of Thermal Imagery**

Field verification of TIR-identified discharge zones resulted in about an 85% success rate (total field verified n=34), with 15% of the failures attributed to false positives. 11% percent of the zones could not be located, perhaps because they were ephemeral and there was a long time delay between surveying and field sampling in which they might have diminished or disappeared. The false positives included were pipe discharge, ponded waters within a salt marsh, or unique features similar in appearance to discharge zones. Some of these features include unique sandbars formed by tidal waters. The success rate increased with increasing familiarity with the characteristics of discharge zones therefore some false positives, such as ponded water, could be avoided.





Most of the groundwater discharge zones identified during the investigation originated from sand and gravel layers. In most cases, groundwater flowrate occurred inversely with increasing depth (or distance from shoreline) and incidence of marine clays. Marine clays are greatest at depth (low elevations) and pinch out at the high tide mark.

Significant field efforts over two summers characterized and classified groundwater discharge zones. These efforts, while instrumental for large-scale characterization of groundwater discharge zones, allowed insufficient time for many verifications of the type curve. The need to resolve the seepage face from the discharge plume was not recognized until late in the research and after the bulk of the field efforts were completed. Logistical difficulties were posed because the discharge zones were located within the tidal zone, which limited the window of opportunity during which the exposed discharge zones could be investigated. Additional constraints were posed by boat access an d availability.

Analysis of the type curve and field investigations showed that the seepage face could be readily and reliably determined. Field verification showed strong agreement between the field and GIS analysis of surface area (Table 6). Three sites were verified successfully with surface areas of 2,675, 3,772, 4,237 square feet respectively. Table 6 illustrates the strong correlation, albeit for a limited number of sites, between surface areas derived from field observations and the type curve. Many of the sites were tested repeatedly to develop proper field procedures for ascertaining the surface area of the thermal signature. Field assessment used thermal infrared temperature guns, which measure temperature by the same means as the aerial surveys. Field assessment using hand-held thermometers inserted in the sediments was less successful, and as a result additional site data was not useable. This was attributed to the need for precisely measuring the surface temperature (the top millimeter) to correlate with the TIR. Temperature changed drastically with depth. Other confounding factors were surface temperatures affected by shadows, wind, and time exposed by the tides. Because field measurements used similar means as did the surveys, adequate field characterization was needed to distinguish the seepage face from the discharge plume. The seepage face commonly occurred at the interface of the marine clay and the coarse sands and gravels.



### Table 6: Correlation of Surface Areas Derived from Field Measurements Versus **GIS Analysis of TIR**

Lower limits of the discharge zone were often evident by the occurrence of seaward-thickening marine clays. Mini-piezometers installed in the upper foot of surficial materials indicated strong piezometric gradients. Piezometric head ranged from over 12 inches above the ground surface in the center of the discharge zone to zero at the perimeter. When limited by a marine clay confining unit, the piezometric gradient persisted at the seaward limit of the discharge zone. This is consistent with the belief that

discharge zones occur due to a confining unit. Salinity was monitored during sampling of dischar ge zones, to assure presence of freshwater SGD rather than saltwater storage, and averaged 6.1  $\pm$ 6.5 ppt (n=19), which assured the assumption.

Matrix Analyses of Regional-Scale Flow

A subset of SGD zones were characterized and the results applied by matrix analyses to estimate regional-scale flow by use of a flow expression matrix. The population subset was about 5% of the total for specific discharge, and 3% for surface area. Surface area classes were calculated based on TIR analysis of 22 sites (Table 7). The specific discharge classifications were calculated from field measurements at nine sites (Table 8).



## **Table 7: Groundwater Discharge Zone Surface Area Classifications**

The flow regimes were divided into the following categories:

## **Table 8:Groundwater Discharge Zone Specific Discharge Classifications**



A *flow expression matrix* is a series of *if/and/then* statements that process data based upon multiple classifications, to obtain individual flow estimates for a discharge zone. Table 9 illustrates the full *flow expression matrix*. The application of the flow expression matrix in a GIS framework is used to estimate flow over a large scale. While applied to account for the large size and the low flow typically observed with a diffuse extreme flow ranges are possible within this matrix, from 3,252 to 393,329 gallons per day, not all expressions are necessarily observed. Flow was calibrated by multiplying the Table 7 values by the Table 8 values, then multiplying by an intensity coefficient (1.0 intense, 0.3-diffuse) and the correlated correction factor (0.6). The factor was based on the comparison of matrix flow estimates which showed a 40% overestimation. Figure 16 illustrates the fit as described with calibration coefficient. A diffuse coefficient (0.3) was

zone. The final 0.6 coefficient was a calibration factor based on a comparison of flows derived by the flow expression matrix. Flows derived from analysis individually by TIR and field data, are discussed in the following sections.





![](_page_41_Picture_288.jpeg)

A sample of the discharge flow estimates (Table 10) is the fulfillment of the *flow*  expression matrix (Table 9) using the catalogue (Table 4), the classification schemes for surface area (Table 7) and specific discharge(Table 8).

NAME	SIZE.	<b>TYPE</b>	<b>INTENSITY</b>	SGWD Flow
				(GPD)
4.1.1	Medium	linear	Medium/low	50,680
7.1.1	Small	linear	Medium/low	14,411
8.1.1	Small	diffuse	low	2,168
8.2.1	Small	diffuse	low	2,168
9.1.1	Small	diffuse	low	2,168
9.2.1	Small	point	Medium/high	28,778
16.1.1	Small	point	high	35,961
17.1.1	Medium	linear	Medium	75,942
17.3.1	Medium/ Large	dendritic	Medium/high	137,413

**Table 10: Discharge Zone Flow Estimates** 

The largest flow observed was medium/large (size), medium/high (intensity), at 257,570 gallons per day, and the lowest is small (size), low (intensity), diffuse (type) at 3,253 gallons per day.

Comparison of TIR Methods: Individual Discharge Zones Vs. Matrix Analyses Comparisons of the area determination methods (flow matrix versus TIR) resulted in a reaso nable correlation of slopes (not significantly different at 95%, Figure 15). Limitations to this approach were likely from human bias that occurs when analyzing TIR. Classification of the discharge zones is by the judgment of the analyst. The analyst reviews the entire set of images and sorts them into classes based on size, type, and intensity. Because of the difficulty of the GIS analysis of the TIR imagery, only a subset of the images is processed.

### **l Figure 15: Correlation of Seepage Face Surface Area Estimates Made for Individua Discharge Zones Using GIS Analysis of TIR Versus TIR and Flow Expression Matrix**

![](_page_43_Figure_2.jpeg)

This section discusses a comparison of the use of TIR and field-based measurements to assess flow for individual groundwater discharge zones in comparison with the estimates from the flow expression matrix (not to be confused with piezometric mapping). Both methods use TIR, however, use by the flow matrix is indirect. To calibrate the matrix method, field-verified values of groundwater discharge are needed. An initial comparison of the two methods showed a close correlation with slope (not significantly different at 95%), but a matrix overestimation of flow by about 40%. As a result, a calibration coefficient of 0.6 was included in the matrix calculations, which resulted in a reasonable correlation. (Figure 16). The flow expression matrix overestimated the discharge when compared with field characterization, however the fit is favorable. This correlation could be improved by increasing the number of sites examined (n=9), in the refinement of categorization/classification schemes of groundwater discharge zones, and performing field characterizations shortly after the TIR surveys are flown. This last point is a major issue which has not been adequately addressed. It may affect all of the comparisons as effects of seasonality are not currently well understood. This issue is currently under examination as long-term variations (over multiple seasons) of discharge zones are being monitored (Brannaka et al., 2001). Staver and Brinsfield (1996) reported that the size of the groundwater discharge zone varied with lateral distance from the shoreline, with winter discharge being as much as five times that during the dry summer months.

### **Figure 16: Correlation of Groundwater Discharge Estimates Made for Individual Discharge Zones Using GIS Analysis of TIR and Field Techniques Versus TIR and A Flow Expression Matrix**

![](_page_44_Figure_1.jpeg)

Comparisons of specific discharge measurement made in the field with those predicted by the matrix analyses showed a poor correlation (slopes significantly different at 95%). These results were not a problem with the flow expression matrix, but rather with the large amount of time elapsed between the thermal imagery survey and the field characterizations. For example, no correlation was observed between two adjacent discharge zones, one with an intense thermal signal, the other with a minor signal. The actual field measured specific discharge was the opposite of what was expected based on the signal intensity. For an intense signal, a large flux is expected, and for a diminished signal one would expect a smaller flux. The opposite was observed in some instances. A few possible explanations are possible. The first is that 18 months elapsed between survey and field characterization. Varying climate, precipitation, and evapo-transpiration no doubt cause seasonal variations in groundwater discharge zones. Another important influence is the effect of soil temperatures upon the temperature of groundwater discharge. In April, groundwater and soil temperatures to a depth of 12 feet may be as much as 3ºF colder, than deeper sourced waters (Hillel, 1982; Marshall and Holmes, 1988; Wu and Nofziger, 1999). The TIR imager can resolve temperature differences up to 0.15ºF. In the case of mixed or varying sources of groundwater, with contributions from surficial materials and bedrock materials, variations in thermal signals might parallel variations in composition. This may significantly confound the use of TIR for estimating flux based on signal intensity and should be explored in greater detail. Campbell and Keith (2001) used thermal signals to estimate flow from a modeling approach, which assume consistent thermal signals from waters with consistent source composition.

**F igure 17: Correlation of Specific Discharge Estimates Made for Individual Discharge Zones Using Field Techniques Versus TIR and A Flow Expression Matrix** 

![](_page_45_Figure_1.jpeg)

### **Comparison Of Methods: TIR and Piezometric Mapping**

Total flow estimates for the bay were developed for both TIR and piezometric mapping. The discharge estimates were 8.6 and 6.2 cubic feet per second per 51 miles of shoreline for the TIR and piezometric estimates, respectively. That is 0.17 and 0.12 cubic feet per second per mile of shoreline. For the total Great Bay estuary covering nearly 144 miles, thermal imagery and piezometric estimates are 24.2 and 17.4 cubic feet per second, respectively. These values represent substantial flow and are of particular interest when compared with flows from other known sources including surface waters, and waste water treatment plants (Figure 18).

### **Figure 18:Comparison of Annual Median Flows for Ground Water, Surface Water, and Waste Water Treatment Plants of the Great Bay Estuary**

![](_page_46_Figure_1.jpeg)

#### **GROUNDWATER-DERIVED NITROGEN LOADING TO COASTAL WATERS**

#### **Characteristics of Groundwater Discharge Zones**

Based on GIS analysis of TIR for 22 groundwater discharge zones, calculate d surface areas ranged from 2,066 to 15,065 square feet. The larger discharge zones were typically diffuse discharge zones.

There was an incidence of widespread elevated DIN concentrations in the groundwater discharge throughout the Great Bay Estuary (Figure 19). Nearly 99% o f the DIN was in the form of nitrate and nitrite for both the monitoring wells and SGD. Ammonium was usually absent. Groundwater dissolved inorganic nitrogen concentrations averaged  $0.81 \pm 0.89$  mg DIN/L, with a maximum value of 2.7 mg DIN/L (n=20). Nutrient contamination was observed in upgradient bedrock groundwater analyzed from 192 monitoring wells averaging  $0.83 \pm 1.34$  mg DIN/L, with a maximum value of 10.2 mg DIN/L. This data indicates that groundwater discharge is a substantial s ource of nutrient loading. Figure 19 illustrates the distribution of water quality data throughout the study area. Sampling of upgradient wells was more thorough than SGD zones. Major variations were observed spatially and often within short proximity. In two cases, within less than 20 feet, variations in discharge were seen from 0.55 to 1.51 and 0.28 to 2.59 mg N/L. There is no simple explanation for this other than to say subsurface flow is complex and correlated with hydrogeology.

The water quality results indicate the groundwater influx had elevated nitrate levels. This study did not include a thorough review of upgradient land use, however a cursory review was performed. The elevated DIN concentrations were found

downgradient of low-density residential areas where residences were predominantly on private septic systems, and farms where there were livestock and crop production.

#### **Loading Estimates**

The total calculated loading for the study area was  $6.8 \pm 7.5$  tons of N per year per 51 miles of shoreline. That is 0.13 tons of N per year per mile of shoreline. For the total Great Bay estuary, covering nearly 144 miles, the estimate is  $19.3 \pm 21.2$  tons of N per year. This was accomplished by scaling up the results from 51 miles of shoreline (from the Great Bay proper) to 144 miles of shoreline (for the entire estuary).

### **Comparison of Flow and Loading Data for Groundwater, Surface Water, and Wastewater Treatment Facilities**

The groundwater discharge to coastal waters was about 2.5% (24 cfs of a tota l 931 cfs) of the total average riverine freshwater flow to the bay. This number is significantly smaller than some reports using isotope geochemistry techniques. Th is difference is affect ed by the classification of water as surface water or groundwater. The total fre shwater flows in the study area are based on tributary flows measured at gauging accounting that differs, and either way the sum of the nutrient sources are all considered. However, this accounting difference is biasing to a very large extent the true groundwater loading, which could potentially be 4 or 5 times what was measured in this study if one were to consider groundwater influx above the tidal extent within the estuary. stations at the tidal extent of the estuary. As a result, groundwaters contributing to the hundreds of non-tidal river and stream miles would be considered surface waters. From a TMDL and nutrient budget standpoint, this is inconsequential because it is just the

known sources including surface waters (USGS, 2002), and wastewater treatment facilitie s (Jones and Langan, 1994; Mitnick, 1994) are illustrated in Figure 18. The watershed is 180 square miles. The flows from the WWTFs are from the towns of Durham (pop. 12,664), Newmarket (pop. 8,027), Exeter (pop. 14,058), and Portsmouth individual WWTFs and more than half of the total 39 cfs discharging from all WWTFs Flow estimates from groundwater discharge compared with flows from other Oyster River drains one of the smallest watersheds in the estuary at 30 square miles, and the Lamprey River drains the largest at 210 square miles (Brown and Arrelano, 1979) and represents the extremes of surface water flow in the estuary. The Cocheco River (pop. 20,784). Groundwater discharge is double that of the annual median flow of the smaller watershed and about 13% of the largest (Figure 20). SGD exceeds all of the combined into the estuary.

![](_page_48_Figure_0.jpeg)

Figure 19: DIN (mg/L) Distribution for Groundwater Discharge Zones and Monitoring Wells

## **Figure 20: Annual Median Flows for Ground Water, Surface Water, and Wastewater Treatment Plants Entering the Great Bay Estuary**

![](_page_49_Figure_1.jpeg)

Of particular interest are the loading estimates for groundwater compared with loading from surface water and WWTFs. However, comparison of these results is possibly underestimating total nitrogen from groundwater. The data from the surface waters and WWTFs is reported as total nitrogen. The water quality analyses for groundwater were for DIN (nitrate, nitrite, and ammonia), but did not include dissolved organic nitrogen (DON) or particulate nitrogen (PN). As a result, total nitrogen loading 80% of the total nitrogen and DON and PON the remaining 20% (Sharp, 1983). This may apply for SGD. Ongoing research is examining DON and PN concentrations in SGD for Hampton Harbor, New Hampshire (Ballestero and Roseen, 2002). from groundwater may be underestimated. In estuarine waters DIN accounts for nearly

The Oyster and Lamprey River sources are sampled at the limit of the freshwater extent (at dams) prior to mixing with the estuary and do not include large wastewater inputs. The Cocheco River is also sampled at a dam and point source contribution from upstream WWTFs has been deducted from fluvial loading (Langan, 2000). Loading from SGD is more than double that from the town of Newmarket (pop. 8,027) with primary and secondary wastewater treatment, and about 60% of the town of Exeter (pop. 14,058) with primary treatment and one combined sewer overflow and an emergency overflow lagoon system (Figure 21). SGD is nearly double the loading from the Oyster River (smallest watershed), 25% of the Lamprey River (largest watershed), and 14% of the single largest surface water source (Cocheco River).

![](_page_50_Figure_0.jpeg)

**Figure 21: Nitrogen Loading Values for Groundwater, Surface Water, and WWTFs**

A review of the total loading of all nutrient sources to the estuary, as is needed fo r TMDLs, includes point sources, non-point sources, and atmospheric contribution (Figur e 22). Groundwater is classified as a non-point source but is reported distinctly for comparative purposes. The point source contribution is the sum of the aforementioned WWTFs. The non-point sources (NPS) are measured as surface water concentrations at the limit of the freshwater extent (dams). Surface waters, at this point in the hydrologic cycle, harbor mobile non-point source contaminants within the watershed and thus represent a good measurement of NPS. Any point source contribution above the dams was subtracted from fluvial loading. Further clarification would be useful to resolve the component of surface water that is groundwater in the freshwater reaches. This would provide a clearer understanding of the role of groundwater in nutrient loading to all waters, freshwater and saltwater. Atmospheric contribution is in the form of NOx deposition on the water surface (Mosher, 1995). Including groundwater, non-point sources represent 49% of the total estuarine nitrogen loading. Groundwater is 3% of the total loading and 5% (19 tons  $N/yr$ ) of the total non-point sources (365 tons  $N/yr$ ) (data revised from Langan, 2002).

![](_page_51_Figure_0.jpeg)

**Figure 22: Nitrogen Loading To The Great Bay Estuary; \* Data revised from Langan 2002**

### **DISCUSSION**

Quantification of groundwater discharge by the two methods (TIR and piezometric mapping) proved successful. The two methods used entirely different approaches yet resulted in similar flows. The TIR method is a direct measurement that is in contrast with the more common approach to predict groundwater flow rates using piezometric mapping and aquifer characterization. Remote sensing enabled a large-scale evaluation of discharge zones over a short period of time. The entire survey was performed in a few hours. Months of preparation and monitoring of environmental conditions ensured optimal survey conditions. The primary difficulties to obtaining accurate flow measurements via the TIR method were: 1) the complicated and slow GISbased analysis of seepage face surface area, and 2) the nonuniformity within the discharge zones.

The use of TIR combined with GIS analysis and field techniques allowed for an expansion of capabilities for assessment of groundwater discharge in coastal waters. TIR is shown to be a powerful tool for delineation of groundwater discharge zones (Banks et al., 1996) however, it has not been used previously to quantify groundwater flow. GISbased analysis of TIR enabled the assessment of the seepage face surface area which, when combined with specific discharge measurements, can be used quantitatively to assess flow. The primary difficulty preventing the use of GIS was distinguishing the seepage face from the resulting discharge plume, without which there is an overestimation of flow. The characteristic type curve provided a reliable method to estimate seepage face surface area.

While the type curve has been observed for 22 discharge zones, the determination of the seepage face has limited field verification (n=3). Preliminary results suggested that there is a high correlation between GIS-derived and field-derived surface areas (Table 6).

Th ese conclusions will need to be rigorously tested with increased numbers of field ob servations.

One source of variability was due to the time lag between survey and field verification. These field verifications occurred around 18 months after the survey. Future efforts would ideally focus on examining the thermal signature either during the survey time or shortly thereafter. Logistically, this presents difficulties addressed either by multiple surveys or having some previous knowledge of a groundwater discharge zone. Multiple surveys can be difficult to coordinate within a short time frame because prime survey windows are limited by the need to coordinate maximum temperature gradient, low tide, clear sky, low wind, no (or low) moon, and darkness or high noon to minimize shadows. Performing field verifications within a short time after the surveys would rule out any seasonality or other influences that might cause variations in size or intensity of the SGDs. The importance of concurrent surveys and field verification presents logistical difficulties as surveys are ideally performed in the winter and fieldwork in the summer, as well as the additional time required for cataloguing SGD.

#### GIS Analysis Of TIR

The enormous efforts required for field characterization of groundwater discharge zones in coastal areas revealed the need for a GIS-based approach to determine the seepage face surface area. GIS analysis of TIR can be performed with relative ease compared to the actual field characterizations. Flow estimates for individual discharge zones were made using a GIS-derived surface area combined with the specific discharge obtained from the field. A standard problem in determining the surface area of the thermal signature was that the seepage face was indistinguishable from the resulting discharge plume because of similar thermal characteristics. The areas downgradient of a seepage face, but did not contribute to flow were covered with groundwater discharge, and shared a similar thermal signature as areas that contributed to flow. The overlapping seepage face and discharge plume were isolated and distinguished in the field, based primarily on hydrogeology and the presence of a piezometric gradient. GIS analysis of the TIR was easily performed, but without a readily definable seepage face may not reliably reflect field observations of surface area. Thus, a reliable methodology (e.g. type curve) for determining the surface area by GIS analysis was needed. The plot of the TIR image pixel data produced a reliable type curve that could be used to determine seepage face su rface area. The qualitative visual cue provided by the type curve compared favorably with direct measurements obtained in the field.

grayscale from image to image. This is a characteristic of the imaging device. The imager the scanned image can be very large. The DTC, instead uses many smaller images, each One unfortunate deficiency in the use of the DTC was the variation in the has a self-adjusting contrast that is designed to account for variations in surface features. Unfortunately, this varying grayscale intensity resulted in an inconsistency from image to image. Because of this inconsistency, a single criterion cannot be used for multiple images, thereby preventing batch analyses. This is a common problem with various types of remote sensing. One advantage of thermal scanners is that they can be used to measure actual surface temperatures and have the potential for large-scale queries. These scanners have a consistent grayscale throughout the image, as the scanner builds it line by line, so

of which may vary slightly. DTCs, however, do not require the costly image postprocessing to correct for image distortion.

#### Field Verification

The nonuniformity of the discharge zones presented a difficulty for determining specific discharge in the field. The discharge zones are often several thousand square feet and therefore it is unrealistic to assess flow throughout its entirety. To combat the variations, very large seepage meters (nearly 15 feet in diameter) were used for flow determination. The non-uniformity of piezometric gradient throughout a discharge z one was addressed by the use of a calibration factor for the flow matr ix that corrected for the overestimation of flow (Figure 16). Point measurements of piezometric head were taken throughout a discharge zone to verify discharge flow and support the observation of varying intensity. These large-scale operations are perfectly suited for GIS application. The challenge then becomes the verification and calibration of the data.

#### **Comparison of Methods: TIR and Piezometric Mapping**

The two methods have shown good agreement. Hydraulic conductivity commo nly varies over several orders of magnitude and the two estimates were less than an order o f magnitude different. Typically, piezometric derived flow estimates are usually very general. Thermal infrared has the advantage that it can be used to identify exact locations of groundwater discharge, which in some cases behave as point sources. Other flow assessment methods assume uniform diffuse discharge. However areas with a diverse stratigraphy and/or bedrock influence can exhibit a combination of concentrated and diffuse discharge zones. The accuracy of estimates from piezometric mapping suffers with complex subsurface conditions or limited site characterizations. In these locations thermal imagery can be especially useful as a direct assessment of groundwater discharge, and may provide more reliable estimates. With the thermal imagery, groundwater discharge is evaluated directly, without the need to evaluate or address upgradient factors. This is an especially pertinent point as large-scale aquifer characterization is a major endeavor, not to mention installation and monitoring of wells . Direct measurements such as TIR obviate the need for upgradient characterization. Where z ones of high nutrient loading or contamination are identified, then a detailed that can be tailored based upon demands for accuracy. These two methods provide a suite characterization of upgradient conditions or sources of contamination may ensue. The estimation of flow for individual discharge zones was shown to have good agreement (Table 6). The accuracy of flow estimations using the flow expression matrix is largely a function of the detail of study area characterization, as is true for any environmental assessment. The flow expression matrix provides a means to estimate large-scale SGD of resources with which to characterize groundwater discharge.

upper half of the tidal zone, it is likely that variations in flow due to tides are limited. It This is only speculation, but since the majority of SGD wass observed in the has been reported that for SGD in nearshore marine environments, the dominant influence is mostly upgradient flow, whereas in deeper marine locations, discharge is affected largely by tide and surge (Simmons Jr., 1992).

#### **FLOW ESTIMATION VIA THERMAL IMAGERY METHOD**

The use of thermal infrared imagery combined with GIS analysis and field techniques has expanded our capabilities to assess groundwater discharge to coastal waters. Thermal imagery has been shown to be a powerful tool for delineation of groundwater discharge zones (Banks, Paylor et al., 1996), however it has not been used, to date, in combination with field characterization to quantify groundwater flow . GISbased analysis of TI R enabled the assessment of the seepage face surface area which, when combined with specific discharge measurements, can be used quantitatively to assess flow. The primary difficulty preventing the use of GIS was distinguishing the seepage face from the resulting discharge plume (Figure 6).

Field verification and GIS analysis of the type curve revealed characteristics of the type curve that were indicative of discharge zone conditions (Figure 8). The cusp at the transition between the two slopes, when bifurcated, the upper portion represented the discharge plume and the lower portion the transition to the perimeter of the discharge zone. The lower portion reflects the variation of piezometric head within the discharge zone. As is evident with the imagery, the greatest intensity is in the center, decreasing to no flow at the perimeter of the discharge plume.

While the existence of the type curve was observed for more than 15 discharge zones, the evaluation procedure of the seepage face area had limited field verification performed. Preliminary results suggest that there is a high correlation between GISderived and field-derived surface areas (). These implications will need to be rigorously tested with increased numbers of field observations.

immediately recognized. This need only became apparent after field investigations of GIS difficulties addressed either by multiple surveys or having some previous knowledge of a Another weakness is the time lag between survey and field verification. These field verifications occurred approximately 18 months after the survey. The reason for the delay was that the need to separate the seepage face from the discharge zone was not analyses. Future investigatory efforts would ideally focus on examining the thermal signature either during the survey time or shortly thereafter. Logistically this presents groundwater discharge zone. Multiple TIR surveys can be difficult to coordinate within a short time frame because prime survey windows are limited by the need to coordinate maximum temperature gradient, low tide, clear sky, no (or low) moon, calm wind, and darkness or high noon to minimize shadows. Performing field verifications within a short time after the surveys would rule out any seasonality or other influences that might cause variations in size or intensity.

factors. The hydrogeology could be controlled in a laboratory environment such that the seepage face surface area would be known and the use of the type curve could be tested. Ongoing research will address the issue of seasonality in groundwater discharge through long-term monitoring of piezometric gradients (Brannaka et al., 2001). Future research efforts could focus on a laboratory-based analysis of the relationship of the thermal infrared signature, seepage face surface area, temperature gradient, and other

The use of a combination of remote sensing and field techniques provides a useful and affordable tool for quantitative assessments of groundwater discharge. The use of remote sensing combined with GIS can save large amounts of time that would otherwise be required for field characterization of discharge zones. This was particularly useful for discharge zones over several thousand square feet. This same approach can be used to

assess large numbers of discharge zones over many miles of shoreline and minimize time intensive field characterizations. The crucial function is the determination of surface area for the thermal signature of the groundwater discharge zone. Preliminary results suggest that a standardized approach using a characteristic type curve can be used to generate the necessa ry criteria to determine the seepage face surface area. Ongoing research to automate the process of interpreting the thermal imagery may simplify this methodology additionally (Rubin and Roseen, 2001).

#### **Groundwater and Water Quality Standards**

Development of water quality standards from TMDLs for water bodies are continually evolving. TMDLs are typically based on four factors: bay volume, flushing time, and depth as well as water classification based on use and ecological significance. Waters are further classified as shallow if they have an average mean low water depth of less than 2 meters, or have 40% or more of the bottom less than 2 meters (Buzzards Bay Program, 1999). Much of the Great Bay would be classified as shallow waters by this method.

ecological significance), and nutrient disposal needs. The standards are (high to low) at  $0.75$ ,  $0.5$ ,  $0.32$  mg N/ L. None of the six tributaries of the Great Bay Estuary exceeded the upper l imits, including the two largest sources, the Cocheco and Salmon Falls Rivers. budgets. However, in instances where high groundwater concentrations were observed (8.2 mg N/L), increases in surface water nitrate concentrations of up to 20 times have For comparative purposes, it is instructive to review water quality standards that were produced in 1994 for tidal water bodies by the town of Falmouth, MA. ( Langan, 2002) Understanding that concentration based standards are unique and based on bay volume, flushing time, and depth, these standards are useful to compare with surface waters and groundwater for the Great Bay (Figure 23). Standards were intended to balance nutrient concentrations with ecological health, resource use (e.g. shellfishing, Groundwater discharge at 0.81 mg N/L exceeded the highest standard. The distribution of SGD zones throughout the estuary may minimize any localized effects of nutrient contamination. Rather, it is the cumulative loading that need be considered in nutrient been observed (Reay et al., 1992).

**Figure 23: Comparison of Water Quality Standards From Falmouth, MA with Surface Water and Groundwater Concentrations of Nitrogen for the Great Bay Estuary (H=high, M=medium, L=low)**

![](_page_56_Figure_1.jpeg)

## **SUMMARY**

The total SGD flow observed in the Great Bay, representing 2.5% of the total freshwater in put (24.2 cubic feet per second estuary-wide), is lower than some reported values for other areas which showed as much as 40% of the total freshwater may be ground water derived (Moore, 1996). The difference may be explained by variations in subsurface conditions and seasonal variations in flow.

Extreme seasonal variations in flow have been reported with as much as 5 times more in winter than in summer (Staver and Brinsfield, 1996), and conversely, 15 times greater in the summer than winter (Reay, 1992). In this study it is possible that SGD flow may be underestimated for some of these reasons. Future ongoing research will examine Bay Estuary and 5% of the non-point source load, or  $19.3 \pm 21.2$  tons of N per year. seasonal variations in SGD for the Great Bay and will help clarify flow and loading estimates. SGD loading was calculated to be 3% of the total nitrogen loading to the Great Perhaps more importantly, changes in land use, as they relate to groundwater nitrogen contamination, have a large potential for increasing the overall groundwater load.

The specific discharge values (4.4-175 GPD/ft<sup>2</sup>) measured in this study are high com pared to much of the published data for groundwater discharge in coastal environments (0.005-2.2 GPD/ft<sup>2</sup>) (Table 2). This is a reflection of different subsurface SGD in shallow waters, rather than this study that analyzed SGD zones that were limited exp eriment only function while exposed in the intertidal areas. environments that control whether discharge is concentrated or diffuse. It is also due to the measurement location of the seepage meters. Most of the previous studies examined to the intertidal area. The newer ultrasonic seepage meters and the type used in this

The estimated flow and loading data suggested that groundwater is a potential con sidered for calculation of TMDLs. Review of current groundwater nitrate con centrations with respect to growth in the seacoast region surrounding the Great Bay estuary is instructive. Rockingham county grew  $\sim$ 13% from 1990 to 2000 with many of the towns around the bay growing 20-25%. Rubin and Merriam (1998) reported that land use with the estuary indicated 38% of the abutting lands are undeveloped. Additional nsewered developments would add to the total loading. Much of the development in u sys tems. Table 1 reviews groundwater nitrate concentrations from other locations that are in g eneral much higher than what was observed in this study area. An increase in groundwater nitrate concentrations of three times  $(\sim 3 \text{ mg N/L})$  would result in an annual loading of about 68 tons N to the estuary. This is on par with some of the largest sources. A s tudy in a sewered housing development reported average increases of groundwater nitrate concentrations of  $0.22 \text{ mg N/L}$  per year over an 8-year study, with concentrations having increased to an average of 3.3 mg N/L (Flipse et al., 1984). These rates did not fert ilizers. Areas without WWTFs would expect these rates to be even greater. Approximately 3 mg N/L was observed on Cape Cod in the Town of Orleans (Giblin and Gai nes, 1990) in an area serviced by septic systems. The town is similar to many small tow ns in the Seacoast, NH and may be a reasonable indicator of potential development affe cts. significant source of nitrogen loading to coastal waters, and one that needs to be these areas is beyond the extent of the WWTFs suggesting that many will be on septic include loading from septic systems but rather primarily from the household use of

resi dence time for groundwater is not well understood for the Great Bay. Lengthy res idence times (10+ years) would indicate that currently observed contamination reflects his toric activities and the current land use impacts are yet to be seen. At this point, we hav e not linked the groundwater discharge and nitrogen contamination with source waters, either bedrock waters or waters derived from unconfined formations. Detailed groundwater residence time, and isotope sampling will be necessary to conclusively link groundwater discharge with source waters. This research is ongoing (Brannaka et al., 2001). Another major factor to consider is the groundwater residence time. Currently, the characterization of the flow properties and contributing areas, determination of

Ultimately, this study concludes that assessing groundwater discharge is important when determining a nutrient or contaminant budget. The USEPA has identified agr iculture practices as the primary sources of groundwater contamination. In areas were nonpoint sources such as underground storage tanks, septic systems, landfills, and

these sources are prevalent, groundwater represents a potential source for contamination of coastal waters. Thermal infrared used in conjunction with field techniques is an effective tool for assessing groundwater interactions with coastal waters.

This research has shown that thermal imagery is an effective method for assessing gro undwater discharge to coastal waters. It has facilitated the advance of thermal infrared imagery from strictly delineation applications to the quantitative assessment of groundwater flow.

The method development for analysis of groundwater discharge zones enabled the powerful application of GIS for spatial analysis. GIS-based analysis of TIR enabled the assessment of the seepage face surface area which, when combined with specific dischar ge measurements, can be used to quantitatively assess flow. The primary difficulty plume, which is necessary to prevent overestimation of the seepage face surface area and subsequ ent overestimation of flow. Analysis of the seepage face revealed a characteristic type curve that was used to determine surface area. Further investigation is still required with the use of GIS was distinguishing the seepage face from the resulting discharge to verify these results.

locations and can vary over several orders of magnitude (Freeze and Cherry, 1979). diffuse discharge zones. This is true in inland or shallow estuaries where accumulation of measurements such as TIR obviate the need for costly upgradient characterization to The use of the two concurrent methods has shown good agreement. Typically, flow estimates derived from piezometric mapping do not indicate specific discharge Thermal infrared has the advantage that it can be used to identify exact locations of groundwater discharge, which in some cases behave as point sources. Other flow assessment methods assume uniform diffuse discharge. However, areas with a diverse stratigraphy and/or bedrock influence can exhibit a combination of concentrated and marine clays occurs. The accuracy of estimates from piezometric mapping suffers in complex subsurface conditions or smaller site characterizations with greater spatial resolution. In these locations thermal imagery can be especially useful as a direct assessment of groundwater discharge, and may provide more reliable estimates. Direct determine flow. A detailed characterization of upgradient conditions or sources of contamination may be warranted where zones of high nutrient loading or contamination are identified.

detail of the study area characterization, as is true for any environmental assessment. The flow expression matrix provides a means to estimate large-scale SGD that can be tailored The accuracy of flow estimations by matrix analyses is largely a function of the based upon demands for accuracy.

basis fo r a groundwater model for this region. The location map of groundwater The development of a detailed piezometric map for the Great Bay area will be useful for future research. This coverage provides a conceptual model which can be the discharge zones will be further utilized by current and future research examining the impacts of land use upon down gradient water quality. Long-term monitoring of discharge zones is being discussed with the Great Bay Coast Watch, a volunteer organization organized to monitor water quality parameters throughout the estuary.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The methods reported here would be useful to include in an inter-comparisons study such as performed by the SCOR/LOICZ (Burnett, 2002) studies.

Exploration of the seepage face surface area relationship to the type curve is needed. Limited field verification has been performed. This is important because estimation of seepage face surface area based on the type curve is on a region of the curve (

Figure 10) in which exponential change is occurring. This results in extreme variation based on interpolation.

Svejkovsky and Jones, 2002). Scanners, although they require immense corrective postprocessing, produce a single large contiguous image that conceivably could be analyzed by the procedures detailed in Chapter 2, on a large scale. Our current approach is on an image-by-image basis. This is because of variations in grayscale from one image to the next. If this variation could be addressed, it would dramatically speed up image analysis. One possible approach would be to apply an algorithm to translate the current grayscale to a reference grayscale. This would apply uniformity to the images enabling batch analysis. Another possible approach would be to prevent grayscale variation altogether. The scanner continuously calibrates line by line to a fixed reference. The DTC calibrates image by image, with one image per 17 milliseconds, but rather DTCs calibrate to optimize sensitivity to the ground features, not a reference. This might be adjustable. TIR can read surface temperatures directly (digital thermal cameras and scanners). There have been many studies in which scanners have been used for this purpose (Baskin, 1990, Banks et al, 1996, Mustard et al 1999, Campbell and Keith, 2001,

Long-term monitoring of water quality of groundwater discharge around the bay would be useful to identify the significance of land use impacts upon SGD. This needs to be further explored through examination of groundwater residence time. Use of isotope geochemistry and environmental tracers will be used to assess contaminant sources as well as travel time in ongoing research (Brannaka et al, 2001).

Long-term monitoring of SGD would provide useful information with respect to seasonal nutrient and contaminant fluxes. So called "snapshots" of SGD zones do not address this variability. Advances in automated monitoring of discharge zones have been made in recent years (Taniguchi and Fukuo, 1993, Paulsen et al, 1997) that can be used to address some of these issues. However in addition to variations in specific discharge, it is necessary to address variations in size of discharge zone. Regular periodic TIR surveys could address this.

### **TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND MANAGEMENT APPLICATION**

There exists some real management potential for the thermal imagery method for estimating groundwater discharge. A current example is of a related research project entitled *Characterization of Groundwater Discharge to Hampton Harbor, New*  Hampshire, funded by the New Hampshire Estuaries Project and the USEPA, 1/2002-1/2003 . This project used the TIR method to characterize nutrient loading from groundwater. The method found no groundwater discharge in an intertidal environment dominated by salt marsh. The results of this research will be used for strategic planning on nutrient management.

entitled *Development of GIS Application Extension for Use in Delineating Groundwater Discharge Zones* where resource managers at the National Estuarine Research Reserves and participants in the Protected Area GIS program will be provided with a package including a related instructional material covering the basic methodology in arranging for an aerial survey, how to analyze the data collected, field characterization procedures, and inst ructions on calculating contaminant loading. Additionally, the materials will cover event planning and environmental monitoring to optimize survey conditions. Finally, the materials will include lists of the necessary resources, both equipment and labor. Further efforts are being made for technology transfer through related research

## **TECHNOLOGY COMMERCIALIZATION**

No technology commercialization has come directly from this project. However a related project entitled *Development of GIS Application Extension for Use in Delineating* Groundwater Discharge Zones produced a freely available software extension for use with ArcView for delineating groundwater discharge zones. Discussions regarding com mercialization of this product concluded small potential markets did not warrant comme rcialization.

development of an automatic seepage meter. Discussions with the Office of Intellectual Property are ongoing, and to date are inconclusive. Some thought is being given to pursuing further product development and commercialization. Like the previous item, market share is thought to be quite small. Another potential product for commercialization is being considered with the

## **SCIENTIFIC AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

The products of this research include a doctoral dissertation, multiple publications in revie w, three related research projects, and numerous presentations at local and regional conferences.

*Imagery And Conventional Groundwater Exploration Techniques For Estimating The*  Nitrogen Loading To A Meso-Scale Inland Estuary was completed by Robert M. Roseen in M ay of 2002 as part of a Doctorate in Civil Engineering specializing in water resourc es, at the University of New Hampshire. The dissertation entitled *Quantifying Groundwater Discharge Using Thermal* 

### **Publications:**

- 1. Ros een R.M., J. Degnan, L.K. Brannaka, T.P. Ballestero, T. Mack, *Approximate Potentiometric of the Bedrock Aquifer at Great Bay, Southeastern New Hampshire, 001*. US Geological Survey Open File Report 03-278. *2*
- 2. Roseen, R. M., L. K. Brannaka, T. P. Ballestero. *Thermal Imagery for Evaluating* Coastal Groundwater Discharge and Its Significance in Nutrient TMDLs (In review, submitted 5/02 to Biogeochemistry)
- 3. Roseen, R. M., L. K. Brannaka, T. P. Ballestero. *Thermal Imagery Vs. Piezometric* sub mitted 6/02 to Ground Water) *Mapping For Assessing Ground Water Discharge To Coastal Waters* (In review,
- 4. (In preparation) Roseen, R. M., L. K. Brannaka, T. P. Ballestero. *GIS-Based Analysis f Thermal Imagery for Use in Characterizing Groundwater Discharge Zones in o* Coastal Waters. Anticipated submission to Photogrammetric Engineering and Remote Sensing in Winter 2003.

### **Selected Presentations:**

- 1. (Invited)Roseen, R. M, T.P. Ballestero, G. Bacca-Cortez, L.K. Brannaka, A Review of Methods and Limitations on the Use of Thermal Infrared Imagery for the Assessment Gro undwater Association Convention, Orlando, Fl. *of Inter-Tidal Groundwater Discharge*, presented in 12/2003 at the National
- 2. Roseen, R. M, T.P. Ballestero, G. Bacca-Cortez, W.G. McDowell, *Examination of* Inter-Tidal Groundwater Discharge in a Salt Marsh Ecosystem, Hampton Harbor, Con ference, 10/2003. *NH,* presented at the New Hampshire Estuaries Project State of the Estuaries
- 3. Roseen, R. M, T.P. Ballestero, G. Bacca-Cortez, L.K. Brannaka, *Limitations of the* Use of Thermal Infrared Imagery for the Assessment of Inter-Tidal Groundwater Technology Transfer Conference, Emerging Technologies, Tools, and Techniques, USEPA Office of Water, Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds, Oceans and *Discharge based on Land Use, Land Cover, and Hydrogeology*, presented at the Coastal Protection Division, 2/2002.
- 4. Ros een, R. M, T.P. Ballestero, L.K. Brannaka. Platform presentation on Methodology Verification for Assessing Groundwater Discharge to Coastal Waters, Geological Society of America, Boston, Massachusetts. Fall 2001Roseen, R. M, T.P. Ballestero, Gro undwater Discharge Into An Inland Estuary Using Airborne Thermal Imagery, Co astal Zone 2001, NOAA, Cleveland Ohio. Summer 2001. L.K. Brannaka. Poster presentation on Determination Of Nutrient Loading From
- 6. Roseen, R. M, T.P. Ballestero, L.K. Brannaka. Platform presentation on *Thermal Imagery and Field Techniques to Evaluate Groundwater Nutrient Loading to an Estuary*, American Geophysical Union, Boston, MA. Spring 2001.

### **Related Research Projects:**

*1. Land Use Influence on the Characteristics of Groundwater Input to the Great Bay Estuary, New Hampshire*, University of New Hampshire, The Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology, 8/2001-9/2004.

- 2. Characterization of Groundwater Discharge to Hampton Harbor, New Hampshire, In Coo peration with the New Hampshire Estuaries Project and the USEPA, 1/2002- 1/2 003.
- . *Development of GIS Application Extension for Use in Delineating Groundwater*  3 Discharge Zones, The Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Tec hnology, 8/2001-9/2002.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Funds for this research were provided by the Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology (CICEET), in cooperation with the National Oce anic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

We would like to thank the private homeowners who volunteered the use of their wells for developm ent of the groundwater map. This involved a good deal of trust to allow researchers to use their drinking water wells. Their names are too many to include here an d are listed in Appendix A.

This large project is the result of work from many people whose efforts included surveying, field investigating, database design, sampling, data analysis, mapping, ima gery analysis, organization and more organization, and last but certainly not least help with ta king care of my son Miles. I apologize to those that are not mentioned here.

We would like to thank Fay Rubin, Jen Merriam, Anne Deeley of the Complex Systems Resource Center at the University of New Hampshire for facilitating use of ima ging software, and for providing work space and technical assistance. I would especia lly like to thank Fay for her technical assistance with the use of Arc View; she could turn a day long project into 30 minutes.

Lab for their assistance with the use of boats and their insight as to navigation around the Great Bay. They were especially tolerant of our project which had many unusual requirem ents including taking the boats out off-season and after hours. We would like to thank Dave Shay and Deborah Lamson of the Jackson Estuarine

every aspect of this project including endless hot and cold days on the bay investigating groundwater discharge zones. Also notably, she was instrumental in the early success of the project by managing the well survey efforts and database design, which at many points was very overwhelming. I enjoyed her friendship. We would like to thank Melinda "The Feet" Bubier for her assistance on nearly

We would like to thank Ryan "Shaggy" McCarthy for his assistance on nearly every aspect of this project. Most notably Shaggy's efforts in field characterization and fam iliarity with this large complex project were extremely useful.

analytical method for seepage face d etermination. Billy's assistance and persistence was ins trumental in investigating the seepage face type curve. Also notably, Billy was incredi bly reliable with the enormous well survey database and required data transcription for hundreds of survey loops. We would like to thank Billy McDowell for his assistance in developing the

For the many hours and days of hot and cold field work, which generally did not stop throughout the year, I would like to thank Jason Clark, Chris MacDonald, Britt

Eck strom, John Richardson, Derek Robinson, Tara Farnsworth, Monica Peters, Kathleen Cairns, Steve Lopez, Ying Shi, and Joel Ballestero and co-conspirator Tory.

We would like to thank Bob Moynihan for his patience and training in the use of surveying and GPS equipment. His assistance was vital in the success of the groundwater map ping project.

We would like to thank Peter Wellenberger at the New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game for his assistance in the use and installation of monitoring wells around the bay.

We would like to thank Jim Degnan and Tom Mack of the US Geological Survey for their efforts in aquifer geophysical analyses. I would especially like to thank Jim for his help with the depth to water monitoring and RTK surveying events.

We would like to thank Dr. William McDowell and Jeff Merriam of The Water Quality Analysis Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire for the sample analyses and the ir help in QA/QC.

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# **MONITORING WELL DATABASE: PARTICIPANT HOMEOWNERS**

![](_page_70_Picture_202.jpeg)

![](_page_71_Picture_168.jpeg)








### **MONITORING WELL DATABASE: COORDINATE DATA**











### **APPENDIX C**

#### **MONITORING WELL DATABASE: WELL WATER QUALITY FROM SUMMER 2001 SAMPLING EVENT**













#### **GROUNDWATER DISCHARGE ZONE DATABASE: CLASSIFICATION AND COORDINATES FROM APRIL 2000 SURVEY**









### **APPENDIX E**

#### **GROUNDWATER DISCHARGE ZONE DATABASE: WATER QUALITY OF SGD ZONES**





### **APPENDIX F**

#### **GROUNDWATER DISCHARGE ZONE DATABASE: FLOW EXPRESSION MATRIX**











### **APPENDIX G**

#### **GROUNDWATER DISCHARGE ZONE DATABASE: THERMAL INFRARED IMAGES FOR APRIL 2000 SURVEY**

#### **KEYS TO SGD LOCATIONS**

Following are 5 keys to SGD locations around the bay: the Little Bay, the Oyster River, lower Little Bay and Upper Great Bay, Western Great Bay, and Eastern Great Bay. Most of the SGDs are located in the keys. The exceptions are high-density populations of discharge zones, in which overlapping labels are excluded. In all cases, SGDs can be located by coordinates and nearby labels.



## **Little Bay SGD Labels**



# **Oyster River SGD Labels**



## Lower Little Bay Upper Great Bay



## **Western Great Bay**



## **Eastern Great Bay**

**IMAGE FOUR** 



**IMAGE EIGHT** 





**IMAGE EIGHTEEN** 



**IMAGE TWENTY** 


**IMAGE TWENTY-EIGHT** 



**IMAGE THIRTY**   $-30.4.1$  $30.3.1$  $30.2.1$ о п 273 σ **IMAGE THIRTY-ONE**  1991 - 1991 - 1992 - 1993 - 1994 - 1994 - 1994 - 1994 - 1994 - 1994 - 1994 - 1994 - 1994 - 1994 - 19  $31.3.1$  $31.4.1$  $31.1.1$ **E** 00,  $\frac{6}{1}$  $\overline{\mathbf{0}}$ Ę 00 o F<br>6 Б

**IMAGE THIRTY-TWO** 







**IMAGE THIRTY-SIX** 



## **IMAGE THIRTY-EIGHT**



**IMAGE FORTY** 



**IMAGE FORTY-EIGHT** 





**IMAGE FIFTY-FOUR** 



## **IMAGE FIFTY-EIGHT**



**IMAGE SIXTY-SIX** 



**IMAGE SIXTY-NINE** 



**IMAGE SEVENTY-ONE** 





**IMAGE SEVENTY-SEVEN** 





**IMAGE EIGHTY-TWO** 



**IMAGE EIGHTY-FOUR** 

