Ozark Plateau

2009 Field Analysis Summary

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Basin Management Team

Division of Water Resources
Kansas Department of Agriculture
109 SW Ninth Street – 2nd Floor
Topeka, KS 66612-1283
785-296-6087

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I. Introduction

The Ozark Plateau is a four-state region located primarily in southern Missouri and northern Arkansas, and includes smaller areas in northwest Oklahoma and southeast Kansas (Figure 1). The Ozark Plateau consists of four physiographic regions: the Springfield Plateau, Salem Plateau, Saint Francois Mountains and Boston Mountains. Of these four regions only a small portion of the Springfield Plateau extends into the far southeastern corner of Kansas. Under this corner of Kansas lies the Ozark Plateau aquifer.

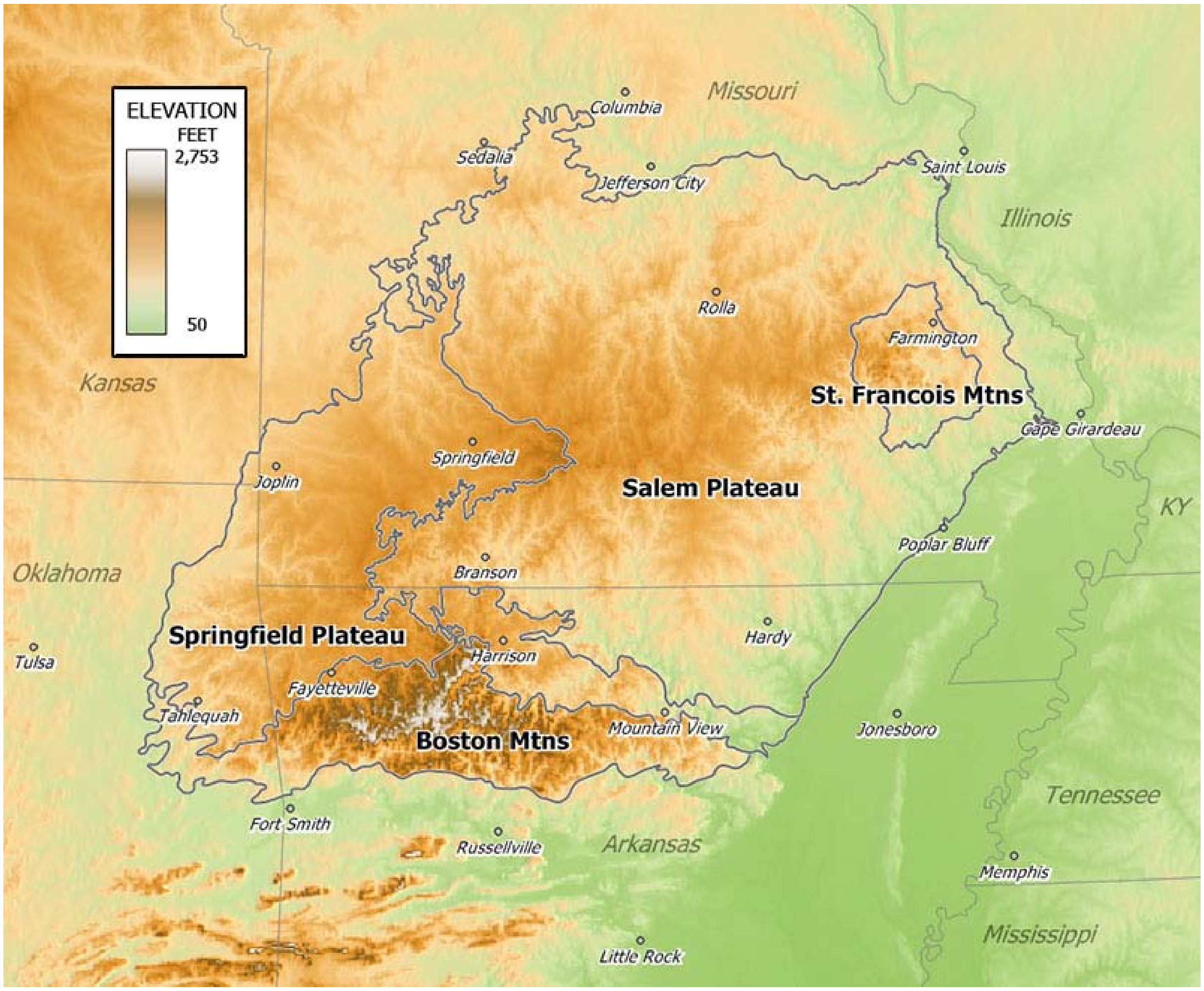

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Figure 1: Ozark Plateau

The Ozark Plateau aquifer is an important source of water for the quad-state region of southeast Kansas, southwest Missouri, northeastern Oklahoma and a small portion of northwest Arkansas. The Ozark Plateau aquifer consists of two aquifers, a deep aquifer and a shallower aquifer, both with discontinuous confining layers. The upper aquifer is the Springfield Plateau aquifer, the lower is the Ozark aquifer (Figure 2).

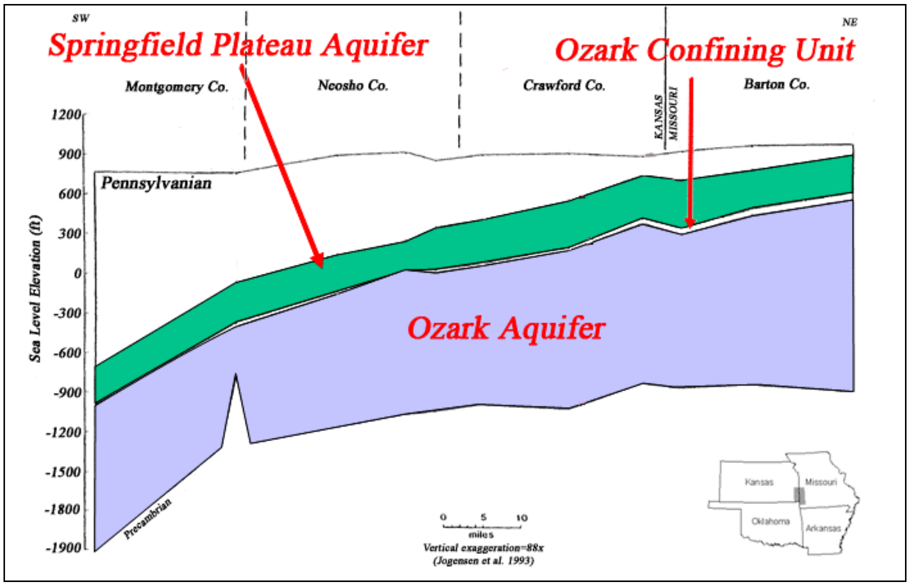

Figure 2: Ozark and Springfield Plateau Aquifer

Figure taken from Kansas Geological Survey Open File Report 2007-20 *The Southeast Kansas Ozark Aquifer Water Supply Program*.

The Springfield Plateau aquifer contains fresh water in southwest Missouri and northeast Oklahoma, where it is shallow and can produce water sufficient for domestic purposes. Water quality of the Springfield Plateau aquifer in Kansas is poor and may be unfit for domestic use due to the prior extensive lead and ore mining in the area. Mining shafts have allowed contaminated water to move from the surface into the aquifer.

The Ozark aquifer contains usable water in southeast Kansas and is the source for most of the groundwater supplied to area municipalities and rural water districts. At the bottom of the Ozark aquifer is a brine layer (salt water) that is moving west to east across Kansas. There is concern that significant groundwater pumping in areas could potentially cause upwelling of brines within the aquifer and adversely impact water quality.

Due to uncertainty about the available water supply in the Ozark aquifer, as well as water quality concerns, in 2004 the Kansas Department of Agriculture's Division of Water Resources (KDA-DWR) established a moratorium on new appropriations from the aquifer in Kansas, except for some specified exceptions. The moratorium referenced a study of the Springfield Plateau aquifer and Ozark aquifer to be completed by December 31, 2010 (K.A.R. 5-3-29). The study by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), with state and local involvement, has been ongoing for several years and was completed in August 2009.
(http://ks.water.usgs.gov/Kansas/studies/OzarkAquifer/index.html).

In 2004, a groundwater well monitoring network was re-established for the Ozark aquifer moratorium area. The network consists of 27 wells. Of these 27, there are 24 that are screened within the Ozark aquifer or both aquifers (referred to as the Ozark Plateau aquifer), and are measured on a quarterly basis. The other three wells are dedicated wells that have been drilled for continuous monitoring. Two of the dedicated wells are located in the Ozark aquifer at McCune and Pittsburg and one is located in the Springfield Plateau aquifer, also located at Pittsburg. All three wells have transducers installed and are equipped with satellite telemetry capabilities. In addition, in order to detect the potential eastward movement of salt water, a network consisting of 12 wells has been established within the existing network from which water quality samples are taken quarterly.

II. Precipitation

Precipitation in the Ozark Plateau area in Kansas historically averages 41 inches per year based on six precipitation stations. Figure 3 shows the annual variation in precipitation. This chart was derived from National Climatic Data Center (NCDC) stations located in Columbus (Cherokee County), Erie (Neosho County), Fort Scott (Bourbon County), Moran (Allen County), Parsons (Labette County) and Pittsburg (Crawford County). The data is downloaded then averaged to create the following chart. The highest precipitation total occurred in 1985 with 59 inches. The lowest precipitation occurred in 1963 with 22 inches. In 2008, the precipitation total was 54 inches, which is above average. Annual precipitation data for these NCDC stations is currently available through 2008.

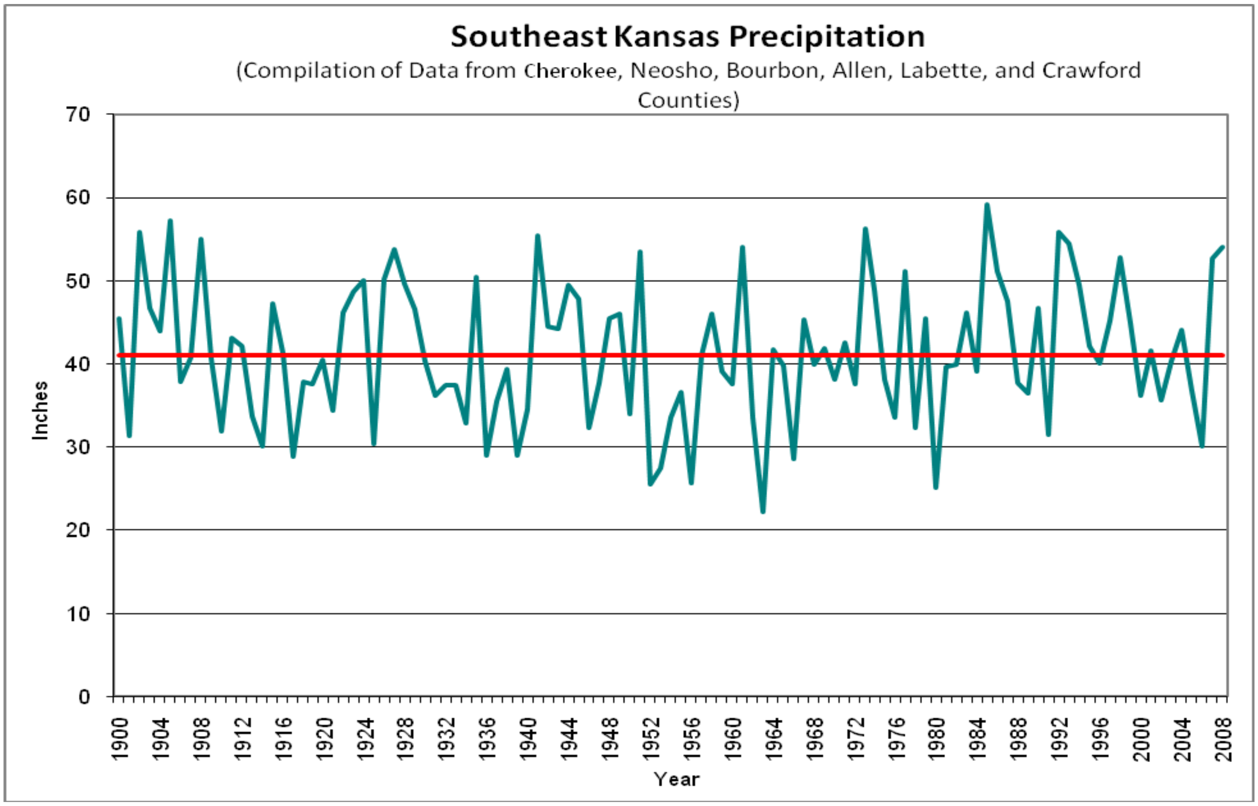

Figure 3: Average Ozark Precipitation 1900-2008

Figure 4 shows the preliminary monthly precipitation for 2009 from January to November. With these measurements the subbasin experienced an average of 50 inches in 2009. This is 9 inches above the annual average. September had the highest average with 9.7 inches while January had the lowest precipitation average with 0.2 inches. Some of the stations had datasets that were incomplete for 2009, so this data serves as only an estimate.

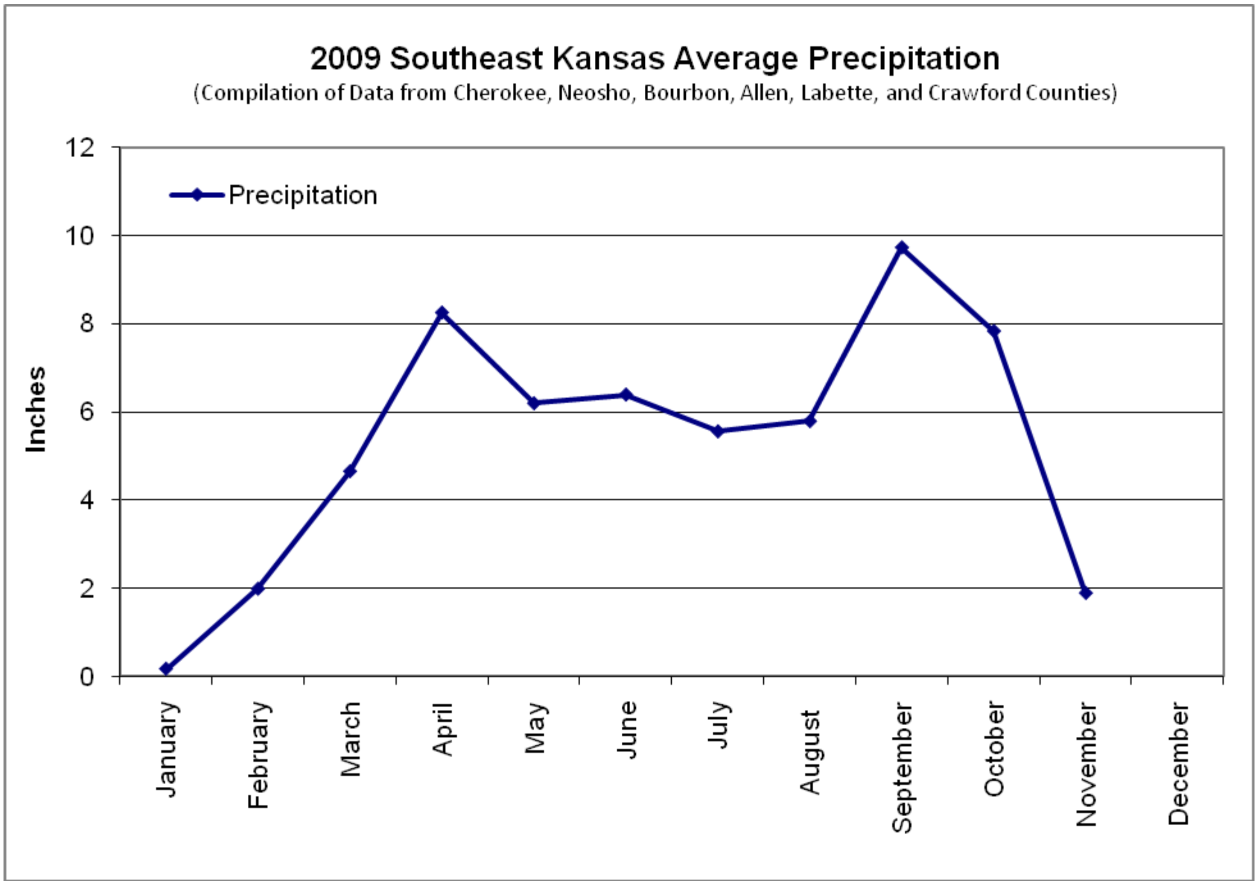

Figure 4: 2009 Average Monthly Precipitation

III. Surface Water

The Neosho River and the Spring River are the two major river systems that cut through the regulation area boundary of the Ozark Plateau aquifer (Figure 5). The lower Neosho River flows through Neosho and Labette counties, and briefly flows through the southwest corner of Cherokee County before flowing out of Kansas into Oklahoma. The Spring River enters Kansas from Missouri on the eastern side of Cherokee County, flows through Cherokee County, and exits the state at the southern part of the county into Oklahoma.

Both river systems are monitored by the USGS and have streamflow gages positioned near Parsons, Kansas on the lower Neosho River and near Baxter Springs, Kansas and Quapaw, Oklahoma on the Spring River (Figure 5). In addition, the USGS Spring River gage near Waco, Missouri is shown, as well as the USGS Shoal Creek gage near Joplin, MO (Figure 5). These gages measure flow entering Kansas since the water systems flow East over the state line from Missouri. Shoal Creek is the tributary to the Spring River, meeting it at the Empire District Lake.

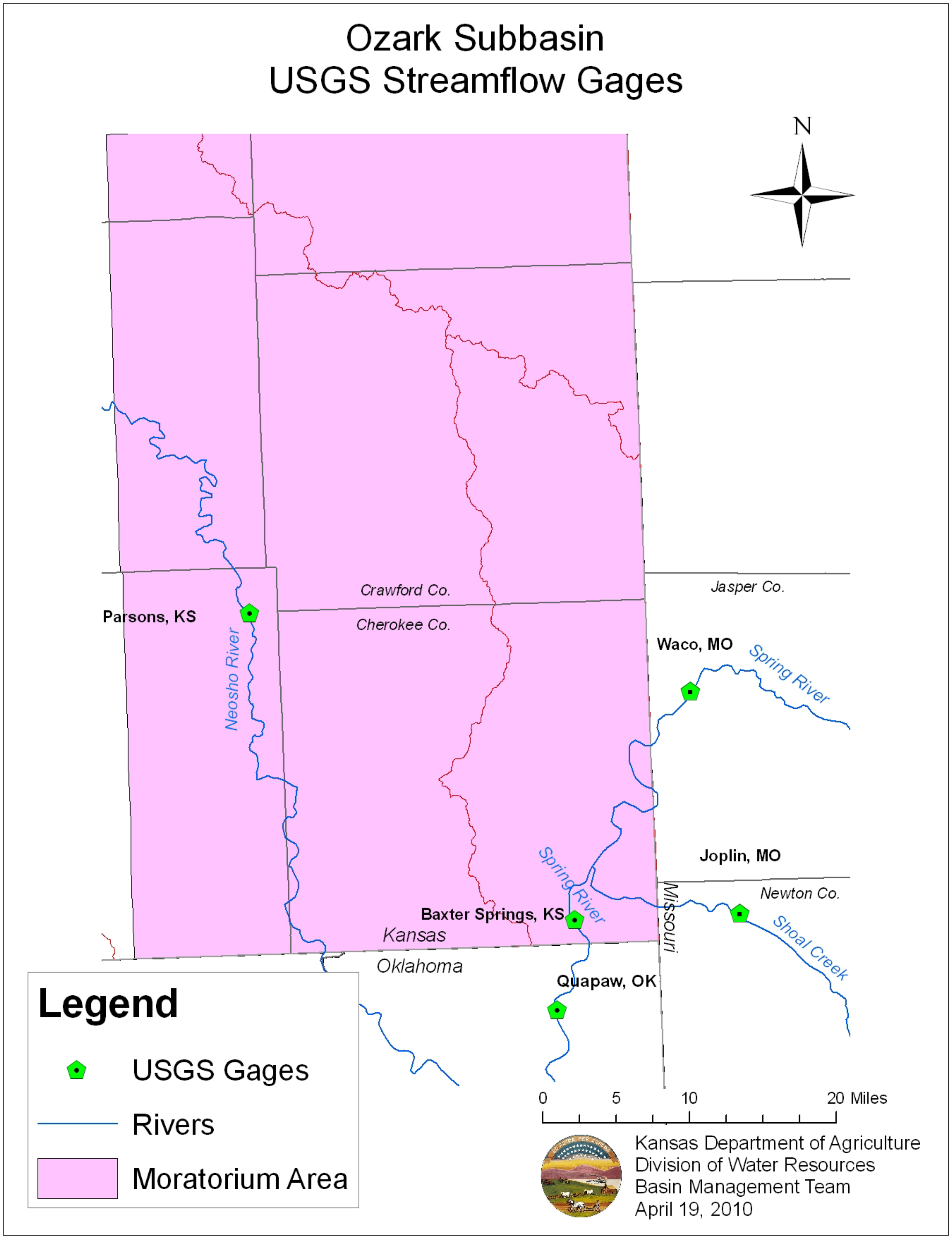

Figure 5: Neosho River and Spring River USGS streamflow gage

Figure 6 was derived from the Parsons, Kansas, Quapaw, Oklahoma, Joplin, Missouri, and Waco, Missouri USGS gages and demonstrates how flow can vary each year. The Baxter Springs gage was installed in 2009, and will be included in subsequent reports. Following the 1951 flood the Neosho River reached periods of little to no flow during the subsequent drought.

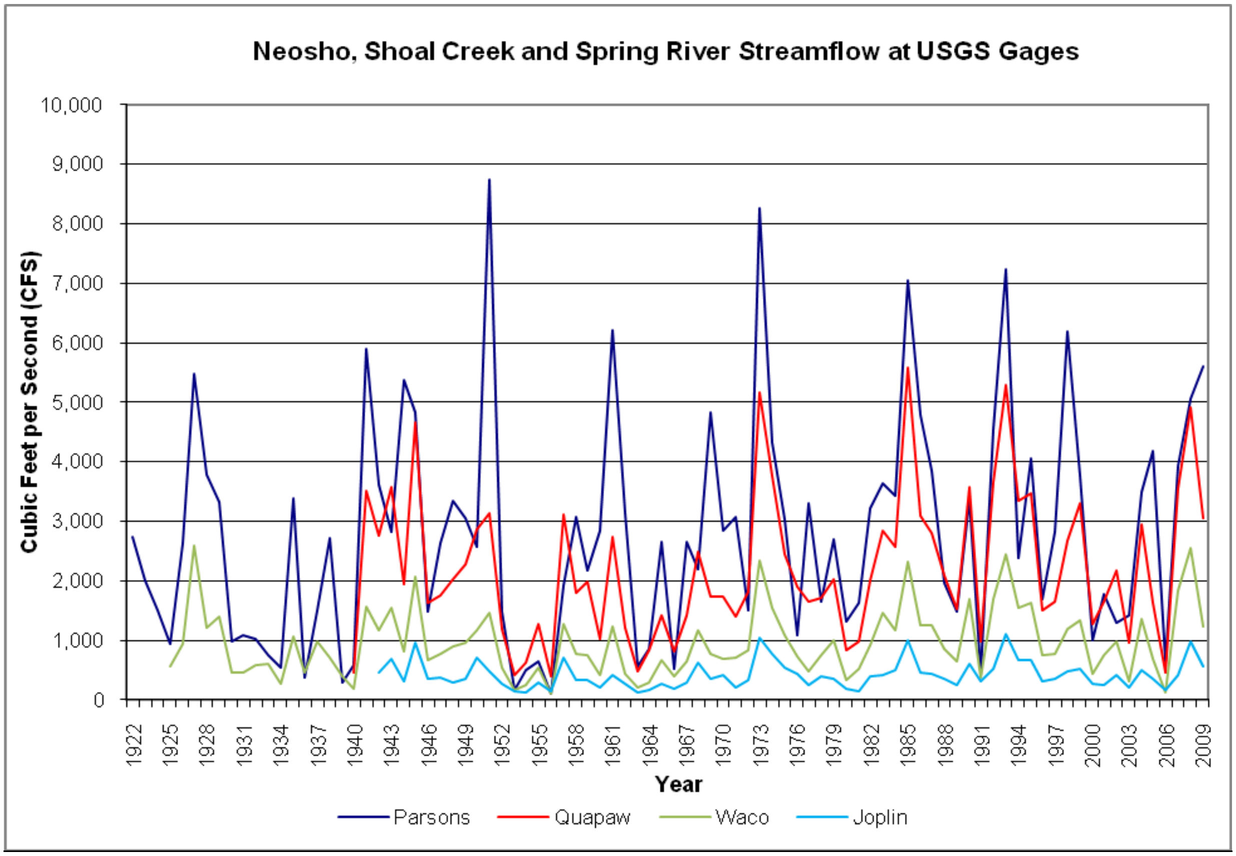

Figure 6: Streamflow at USGS Gages 1921-2009

The Waco gage has streamflow history from 1925, while the Joplin gage has a record dating back to 1942. Over the period of record, the average streamflow at the Waco gage on the Spring River was about 954 cfs. On the Joplin gage, the average flow over the period of record was about 422 cfs for Shoal Creek, which is a tributary to Spring River. During the 1990s, the flow averaged 1,348 cfs on the Waco gage and 551 cfs on the Joplin gage. From 2000 to 2008, the Waco and Joplin gages averaged lower streamflows with Waco at 1,002 cfs, and Joplin averaging 399 cfs when compared to average streamflow from the 1990s.

The Parsons gage on the Neosho River has a longer record dating back to 1922, while recording on the Spring River at the Quapaw gage started in 1940. Over the periods of record, the average streamflow at the Parsons gage on the Neosho River was 2,761 cfs and 2,212 cfs at the Quapaw gage on the Spring River. During the 1990s, the Parsons gage averaged 3,649 cfs, while the Quapaw gage averaged 2,948 cfs. From 2000 to 2008 the Parsons and Quapaw gages are averaging lower streamflows with 2,537 cfs at Parsons and 2,177 cfs at the Quapaw gage when compared to average streamflow from the 1990s.

In 1984, the Kansas legislature amended the Kansas Water Appropriation Act to establish Minimum Desirable Streamflows (MDS) on certain watercourses in Kansas. The statutory provision provided for the establishment of MDS flow criteria to be designated on a number of Kansas streams prior to a 1990 deadline. MDS flow criteria was established on the Neosho and Spring Rivers at specific USGS streamflow gages. Table 1 represents the MDS values for the lower Neosho River and the Spring River USGS streamflow gages.

Figure 7 shows the streamflow measurements for 2009, which were above MDS levels. The lower Neosho River gage is located near Parsons, Kansas and is used in administering MDS between the Iola, Kansas USGS gage and the Parsons, Kansas USGS gage. The Spring River gage near Quapaw, Oklahoma is used in administration of MDS at Baxter Springs, Kansas. The MDS values for the Neosho River near Parsons in parenthesis in Table 1 represent the spawning flows that are managed if the reservoir is in flood pool.

Table 1: Minimal Desirable Streamflow (MDS)

River	Gage	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Neosho	**Parsons**	50	50	50	50 (100)	50 (300)	50 (300)	50	50	50	50	50	50
Spring	**Quapaw**	175	200	250	300	450	350	200	160	120	120	150	175

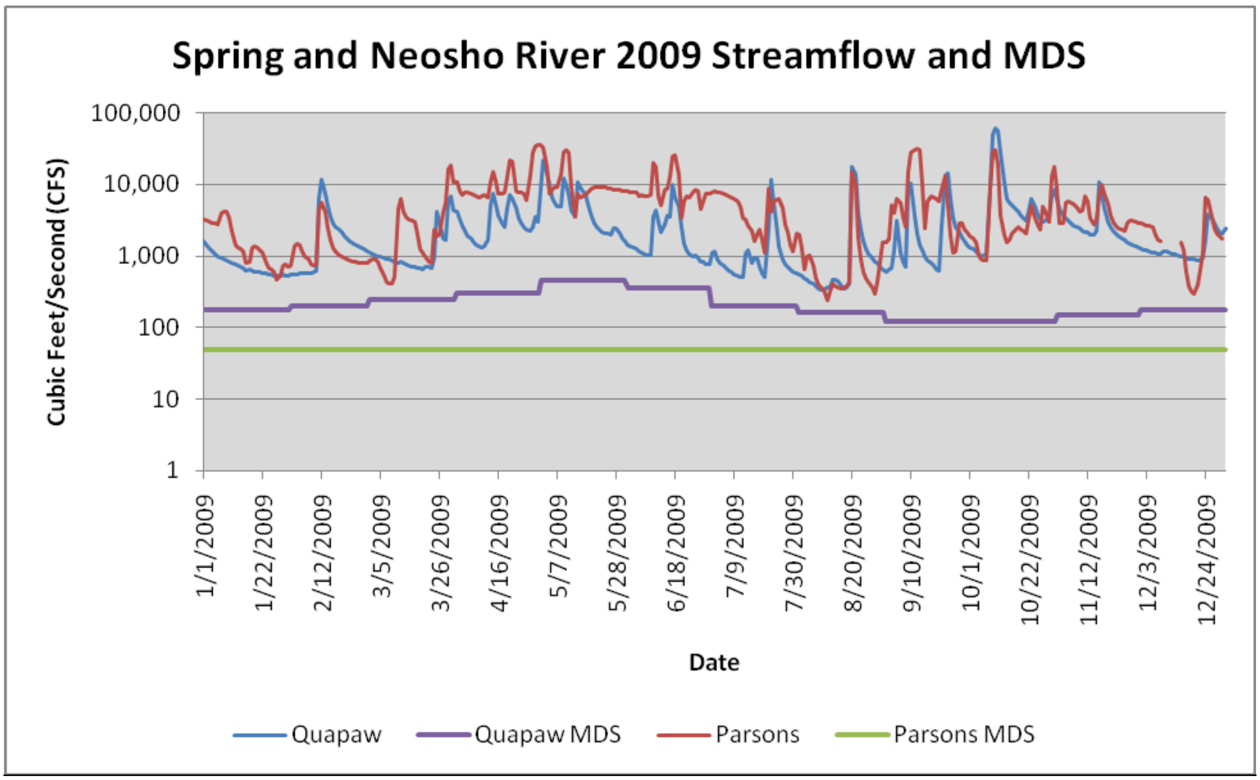

Figure 7: Daily Streamflow and MDS for 2009

Figure 8 charts the days in which MDS criteria are not met at the lower Neosho River gage and Spring River gage. Since the establishment of MDS in 1984, the frequency of streamflow below the MDS criteria has been less at the Quapaw gage than at the Parsons gage. This is partly due to the fact that streamflows on the lower Neosho River are affected by operations of three federal reservoirs located within the basin (Marion, Council Grove, and John Redmond Reservoirs). The lower Neosho has a greater potential for flows below MDS criteria for consecutive years, resulting in the administration of MDS on the Neosho River in 2002, 2003, 2006, and 2007. MDS administration occurred for the first time on the Spring River in 2006.

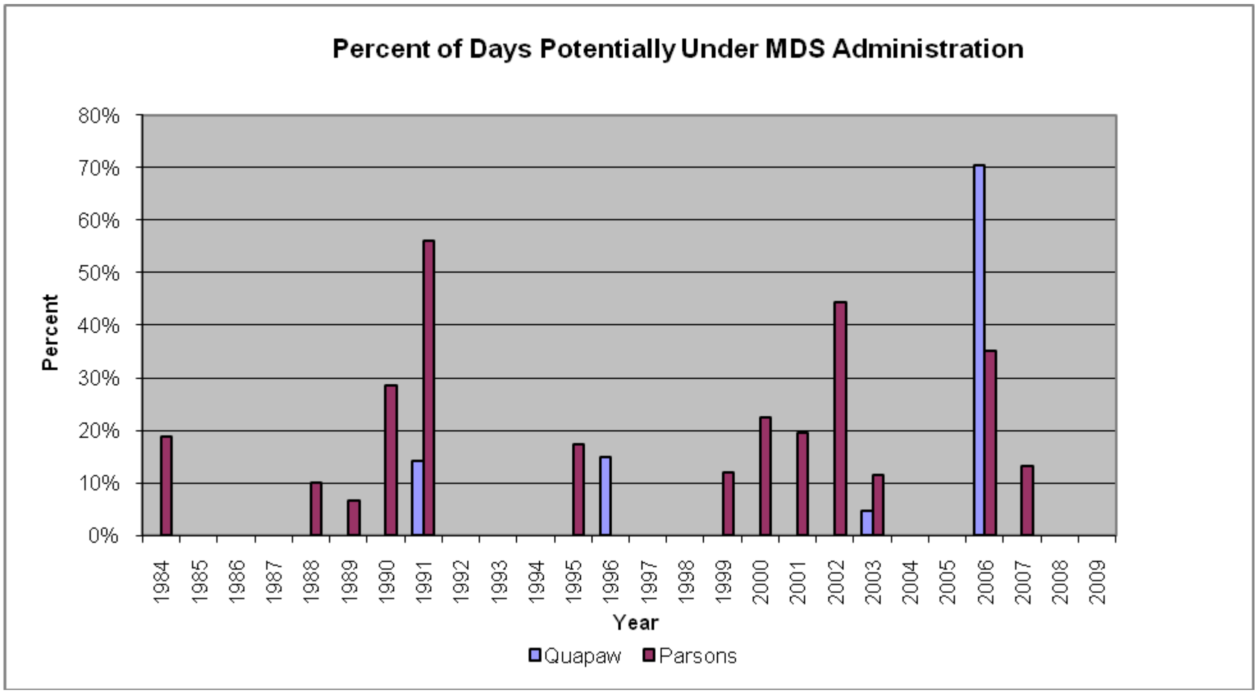

Figure 8: Percent of days MDS is not met at USGS gages

IV. Groundwater

Monitoring wells used in this report are located in the Ozark aquifer and what we refer to as the Ozark Plateau aquifer (wells believed to be screened in both the Ozark and the Springfield aquifers). There are no known monitoring wells solely screened in the Springfield Plateau aquifer besides the dedicated observation well at Pittsburg, Kansas, which is shown in Figure 14. For this fieldwork summary, groundwater data was grouped by aquifer source and geographic location. The monitoring well network is shown in Figure 9 and indicates which wells measure water quality, as discussed in section V. Water Quality, in addition to groundwater levels. Figure 10 through Figure 14 chart the groundwater levels in the Ozark and the Ozark Plateau aquifer by location. Well depths and water level trends vary between individual wells, which are partly due to the majority of the well network consisting of active municipal wells.

There is little historical water level data to compare to current water levels. In the future, five-year rolling averages will be prepared. The KDA-DWR measures a total of 27 wells in the Ozark Plateau region, including the dedicated monitoring wells. Generally, winter (December, January and February) measurements are used for the Basin Management Team field analysis summary as this is a period in which irrigation wells are usually not pumping and recovery of the water table is occurring. Historically, in this area, spring, summer and fall were the common times to measure groundwater level data. Since the wells monitored are mostly municipal wells that pump year-round, capturing a period of recovery would be difficult. In reviewing the data, fall measurements (September, October, and November) seemed to be the most consistent time in which groundwater levels were taken; therefore, they were used for this analysis. The dedicated wells are shown in Figure 14. Legal descriptions and names for monitoring wells are available in the appendix.

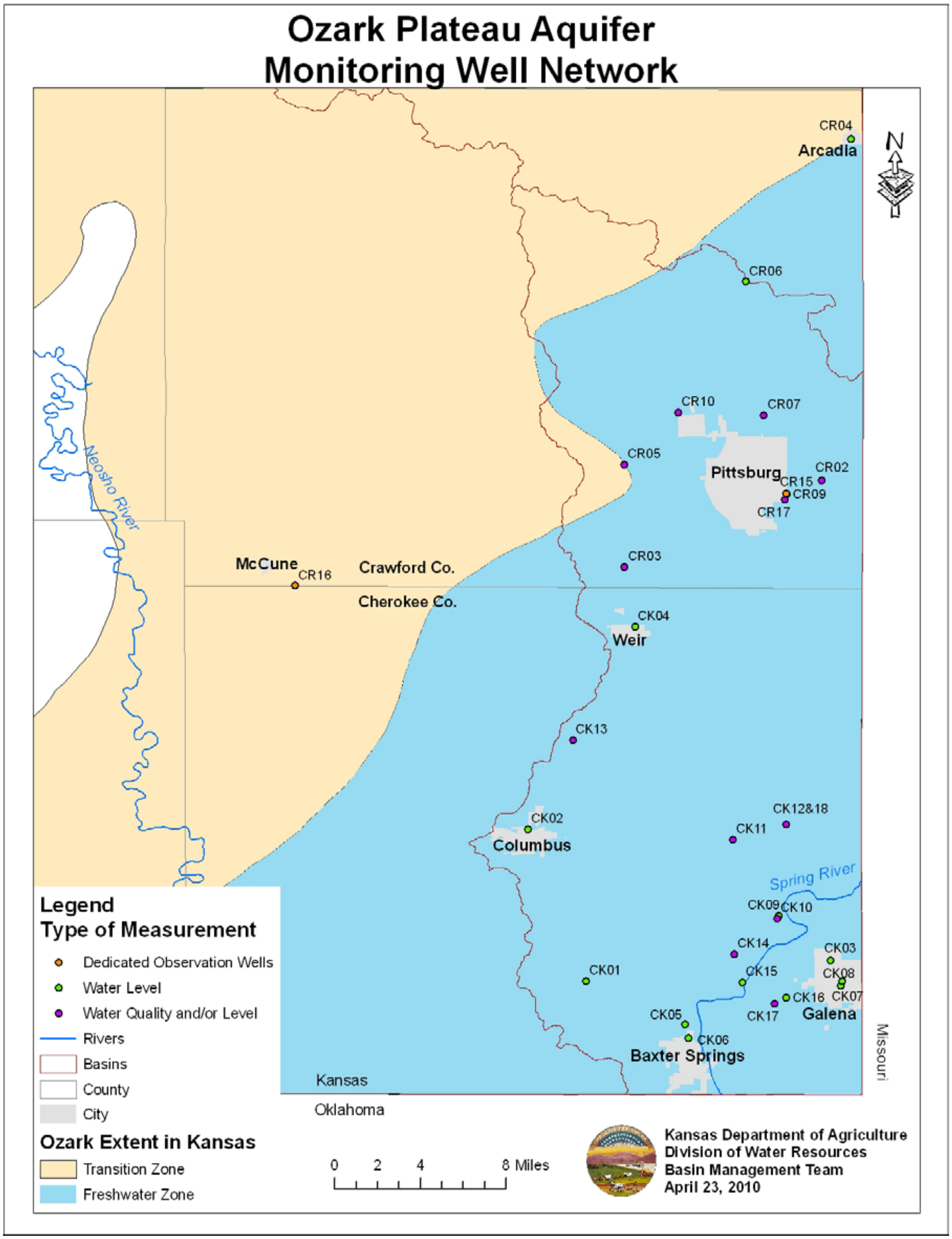

Figure 9: Ozark Monitoring Wells

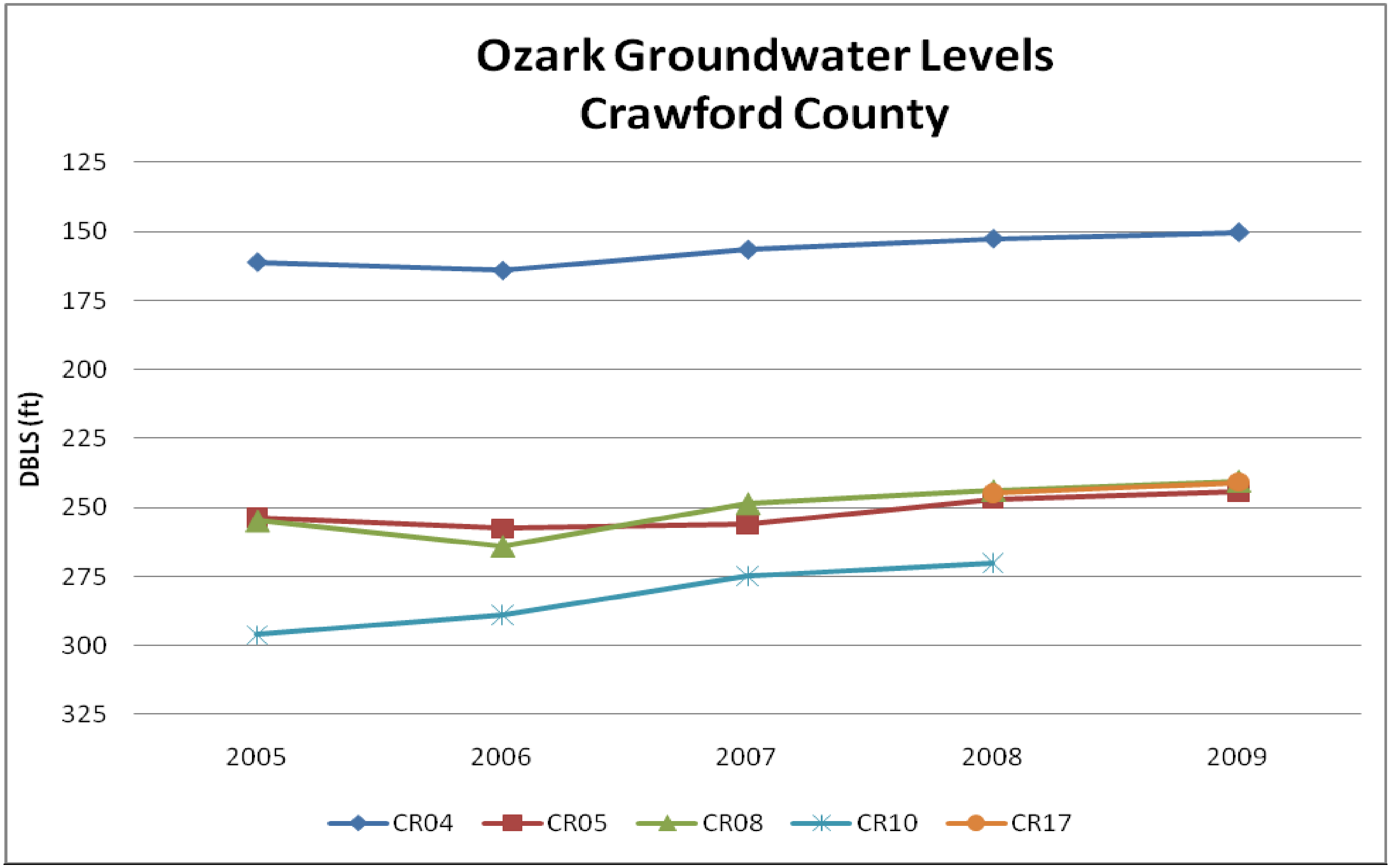

Figure 10: Ozark Groundwater Levels in Crawford County

In the Ozark aquifer, there are 21 monitoring wells, which are identified by the Kansas Geological Survey well ID numbers as shown in Figures 10-14. Figure 10 shows that the groundwater levels for the Ozark aquifer in Crawford County overall had decreased an average of 2 feet from 2005 to 2006 but have increased an average of about 17 feet from 2006 to 2009. CR17 is now measured in place of CR08 in the monitoring well network.

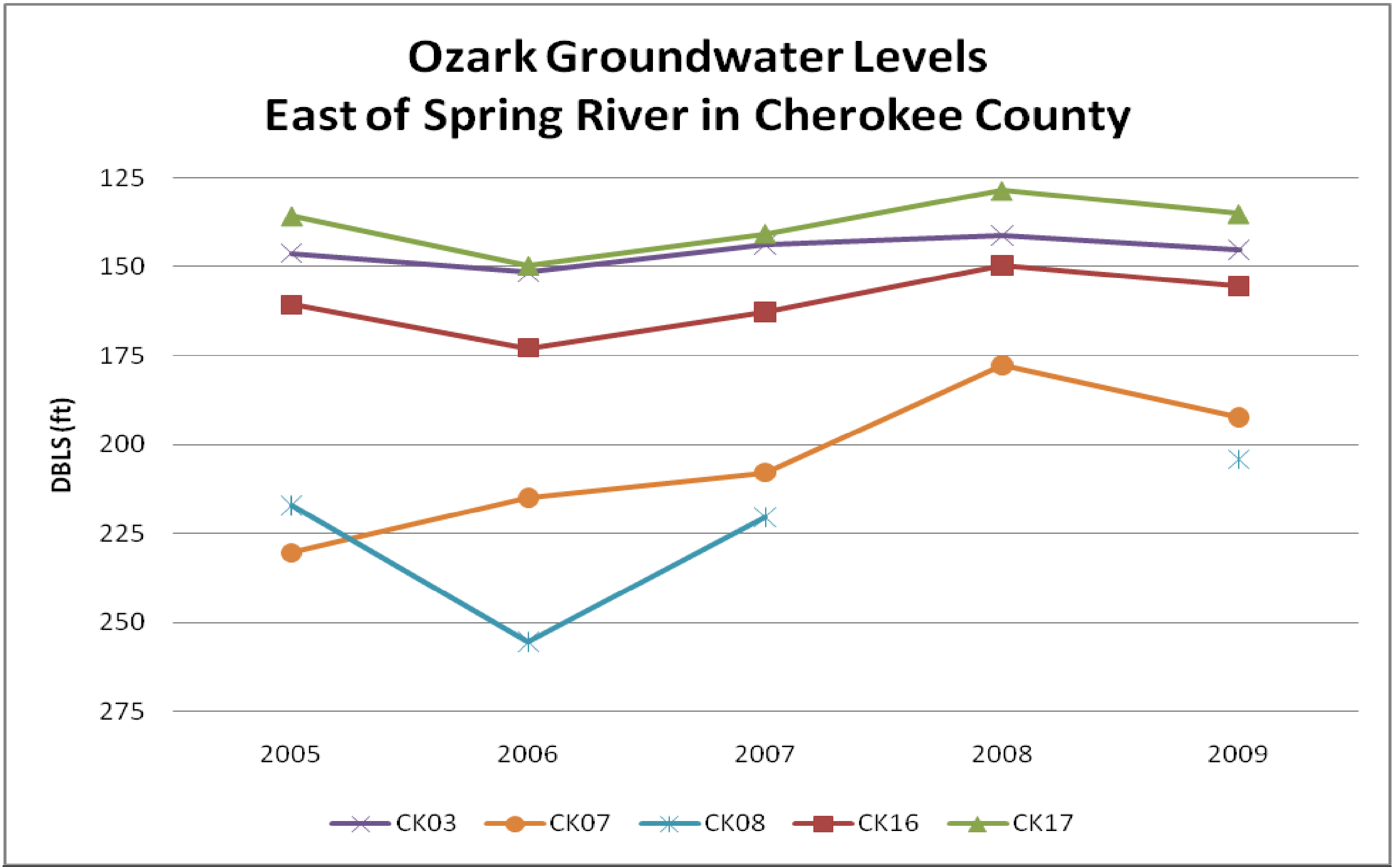

Figure 11: Ozark Groundwater Levels East of the Spring River in Cherokee County

Figure 11 shows groundwater levels in Cherokee County that are east of the Spring River. From 2008 to 2009, the wells decreased an average of about 8 feet. However, the wells have had a net increase of about 4 feet since 2005. Overall, CK08 has increased about 13 feet from 2005 to 2009 with fluctuations of nearly 40 feet. Since CK08 is a pumping well, the data may represent pumping levels as opposed to a static water level.

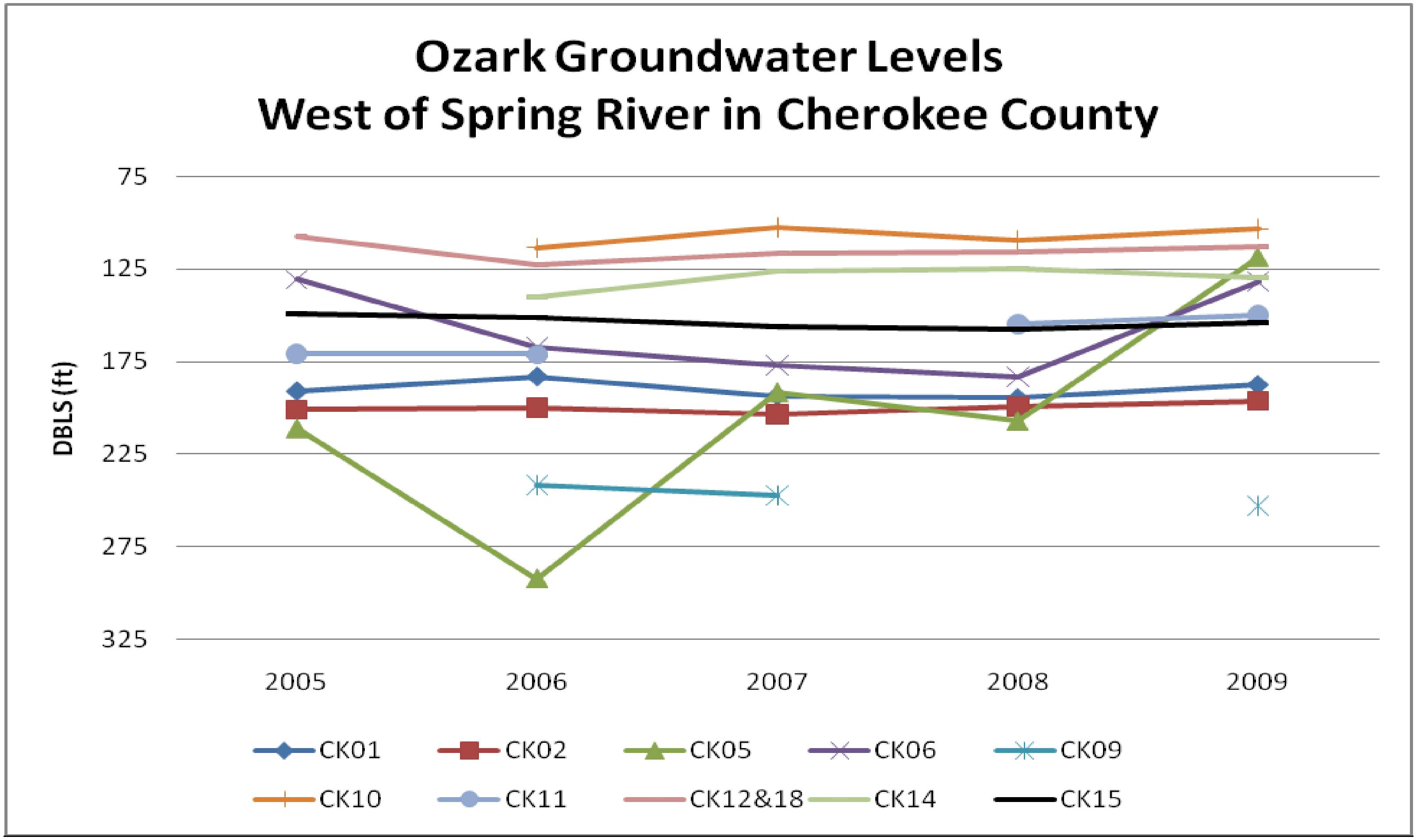

Figure 12: Ozark Groundwater Levels West of the Spring River in Cherokee County

Figure 12 shows the Ozark groundwater levels for wells that are west of the Spring River in Cherokee County. Overall, the majority of well levels have increased by about 4 feet from 2005 to 2009. Since CK05 and CK06 have wide yearly fluctuations likely attributed to variations in resting time since pumping, they were not included in the overall analysis above. CK05 has declined approximately 3 feet from 1988 to 2009 with fluctuations sometimes as great as 100 feet yearly. CK06 has an overall decline of about 1 foot from 2005 to 2009 with yearly fluctuations of up to 50 feet. CK12/CK18 has declined about 36 feet from 1975-2009. Since these are pumping wells, some data is representative of pumping levels instead of static water levels.

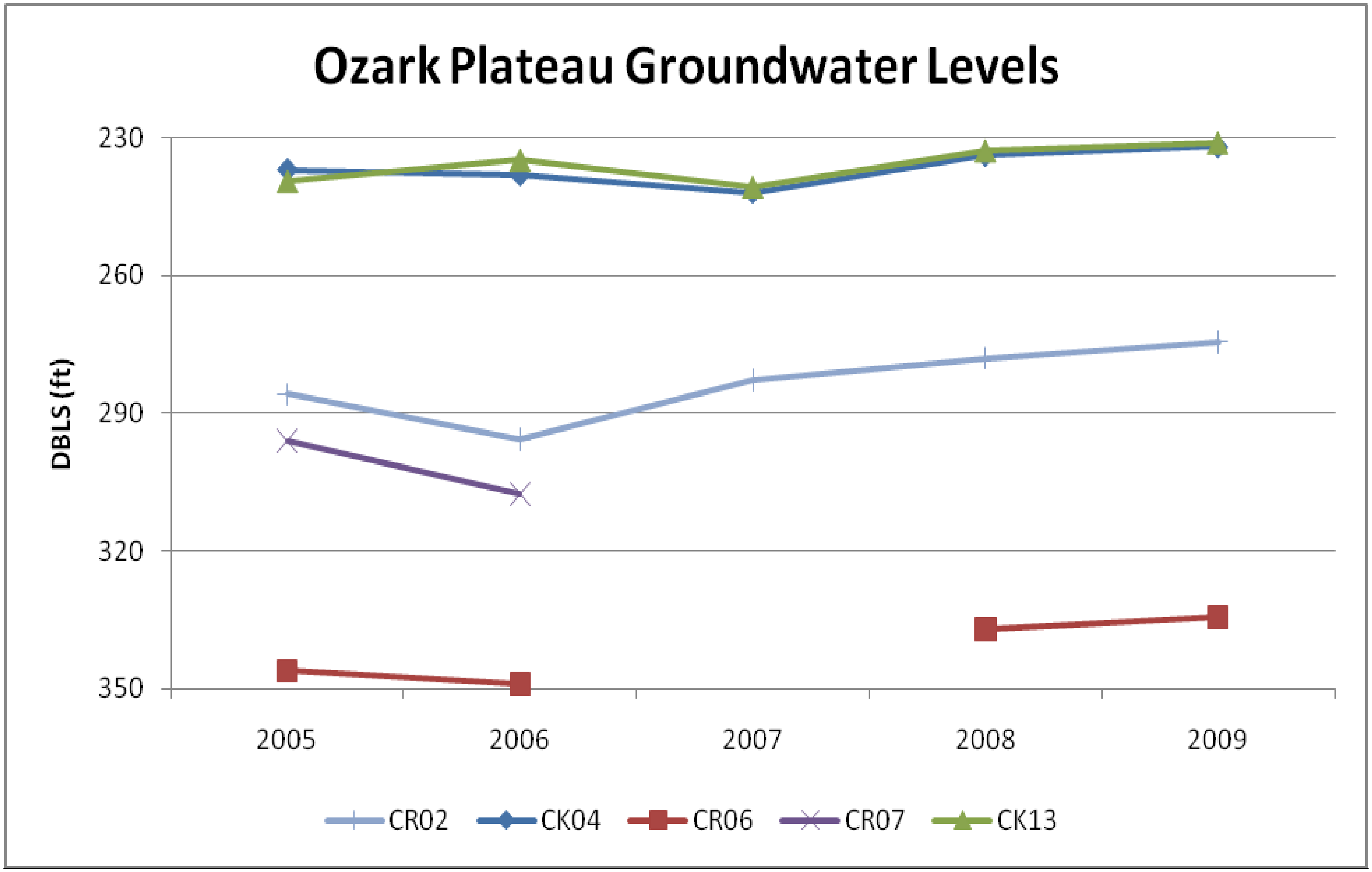

Figure 13: Groundwater Levels in the Ozark Plateau aquifer

In the Ozark Plateau aquifer, there are five monitoring wells (Figure 13). Overall, from 2005 to 2006 water levels declined by about 3 feet but increased nearly 11.5 feet from 2006 to 2009. CR07 has not been measured for the past three years due to sludge.

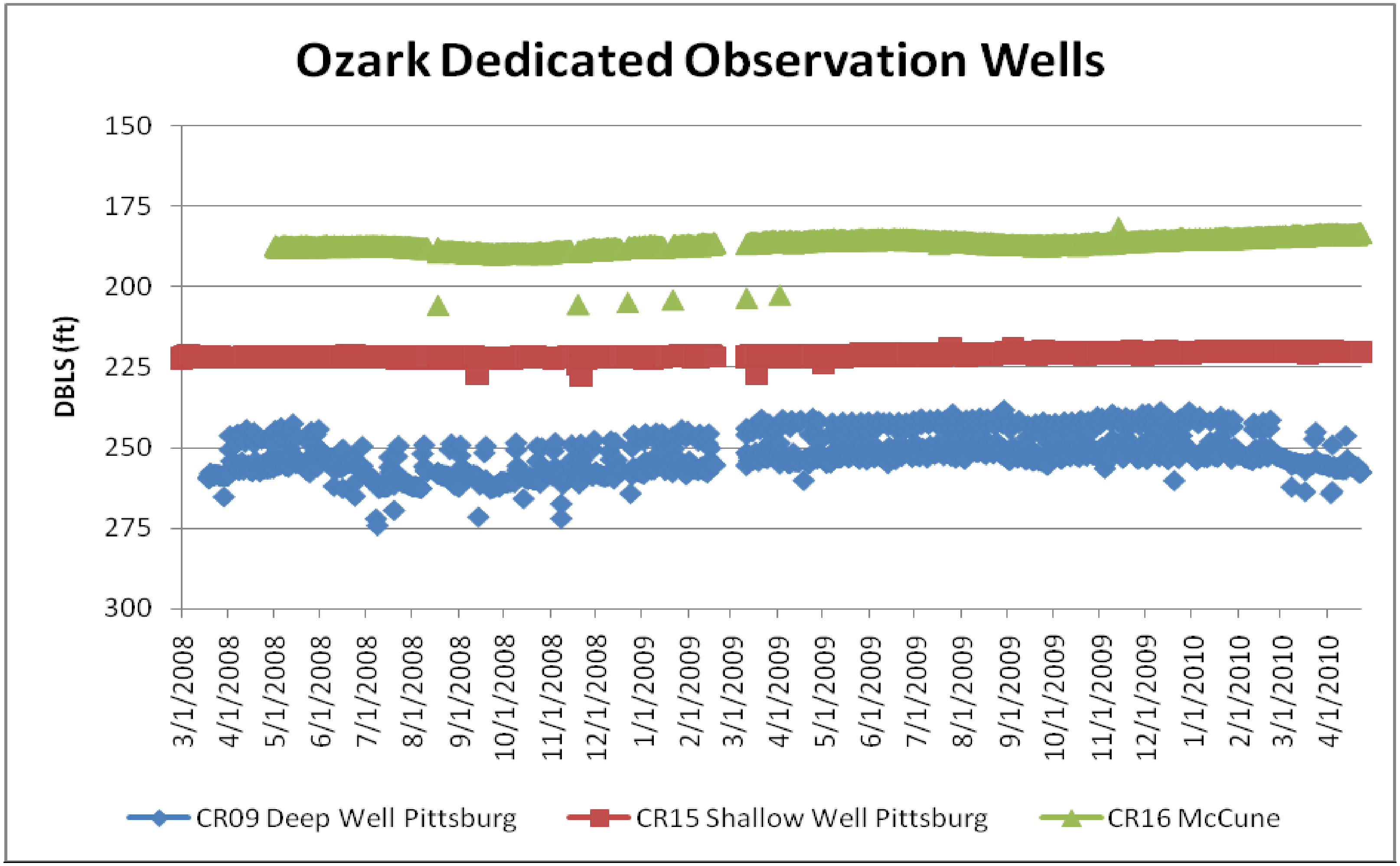

Figure 14: Groundwater Levels from Dedicated Observation Wells

Figure 14 shows the three dedicated observation wells. CR09 and CR16 are measured in the Ozark aquifer, while CR15 is measured in the Springfield Plateau aquifer. Each well has a measurement recorded every 24 hours. The above graph shows daily measurements starting from March 2008. CR09 shows the most significant daily fluctuations, with an overall increasing trend. CR15 and CR16 have remained relatively stable but also show a slight increasing trend since June 2008.

V. Water Quality

Figure 15 to Figure 18 chart salinity and conductivity values in the Ozark aquifer and Ozark Plateau aquifer from March 2007 to September 2009. Figure 15 and Figure 16 show salinity levels have remained fairly consistent throughout the network. Figure 15 charts a range in salinity from 200 to 600 parts per million (ppm) in the Ozark aquifer, while the Ozark Plateau aquifer (Figure 16) has a range from 300 to 600 ppm. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) secondary drinking water standard for chloride is 250 ppm.

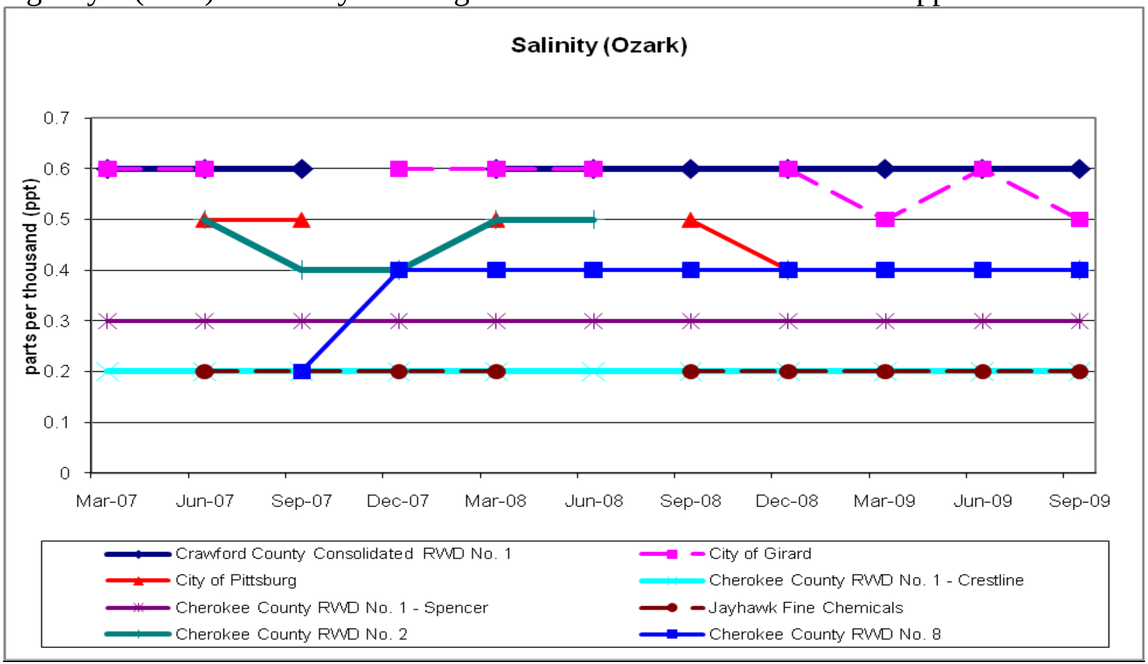

Figure 15: Ozark Aquifer Salinity

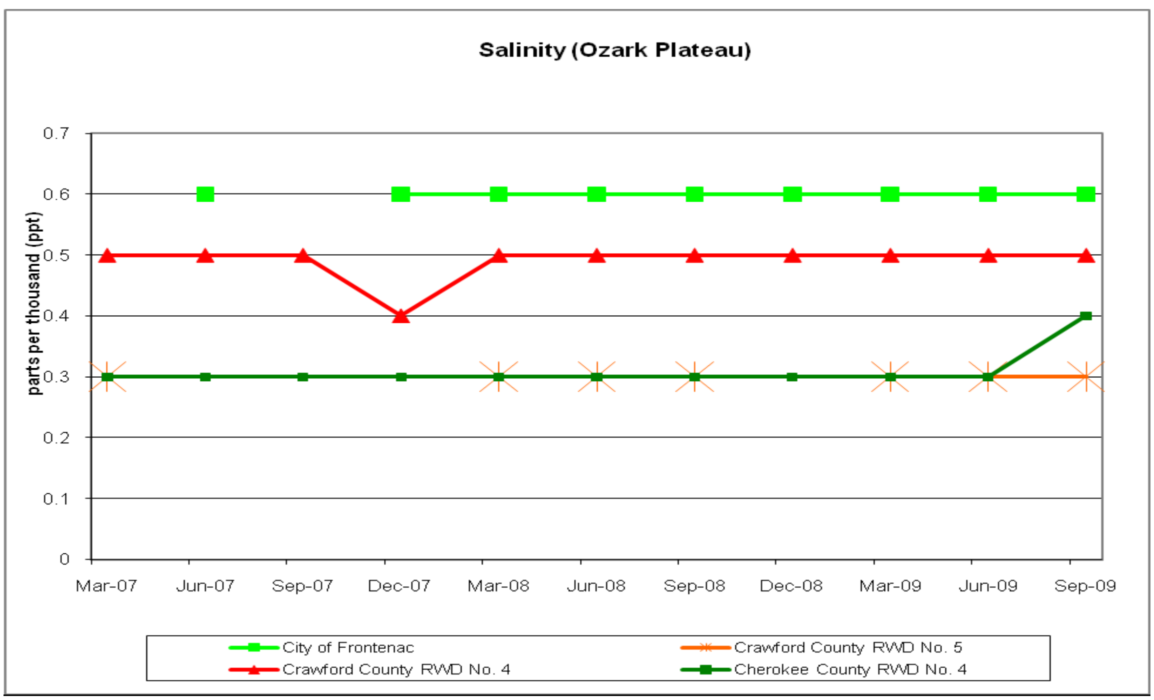

Figure 16: Ozark Plateau Aquifer Salinity

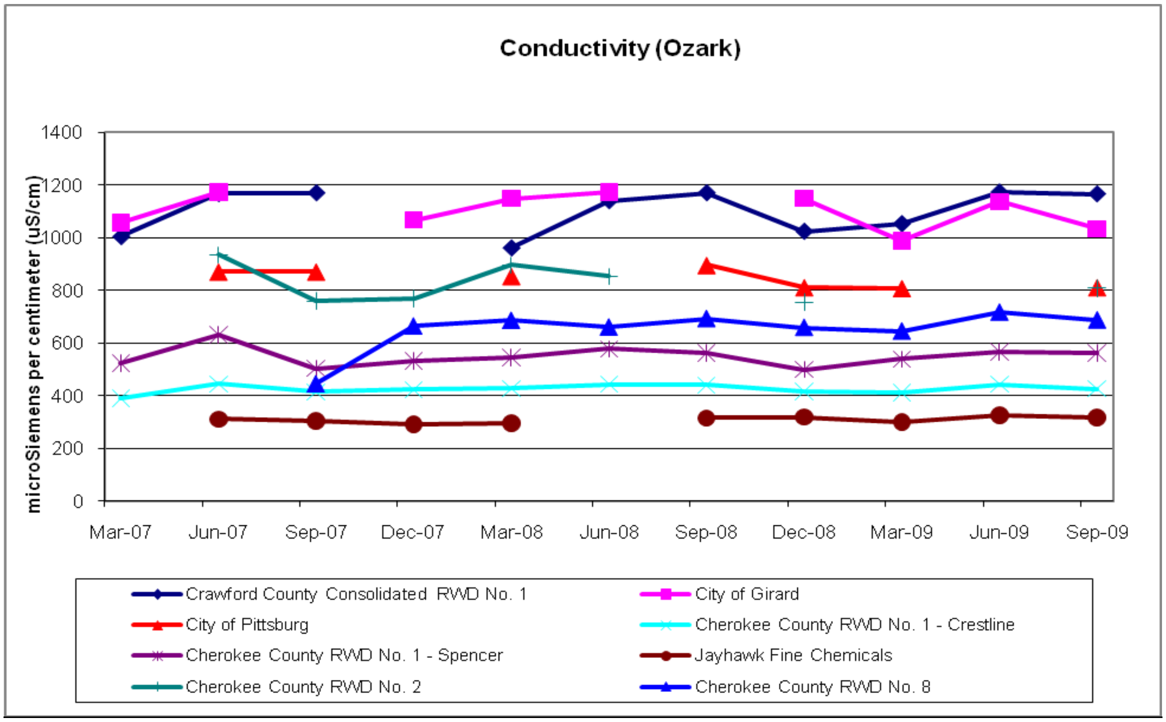

Figure 17: Ozark Aquifer Conductivity

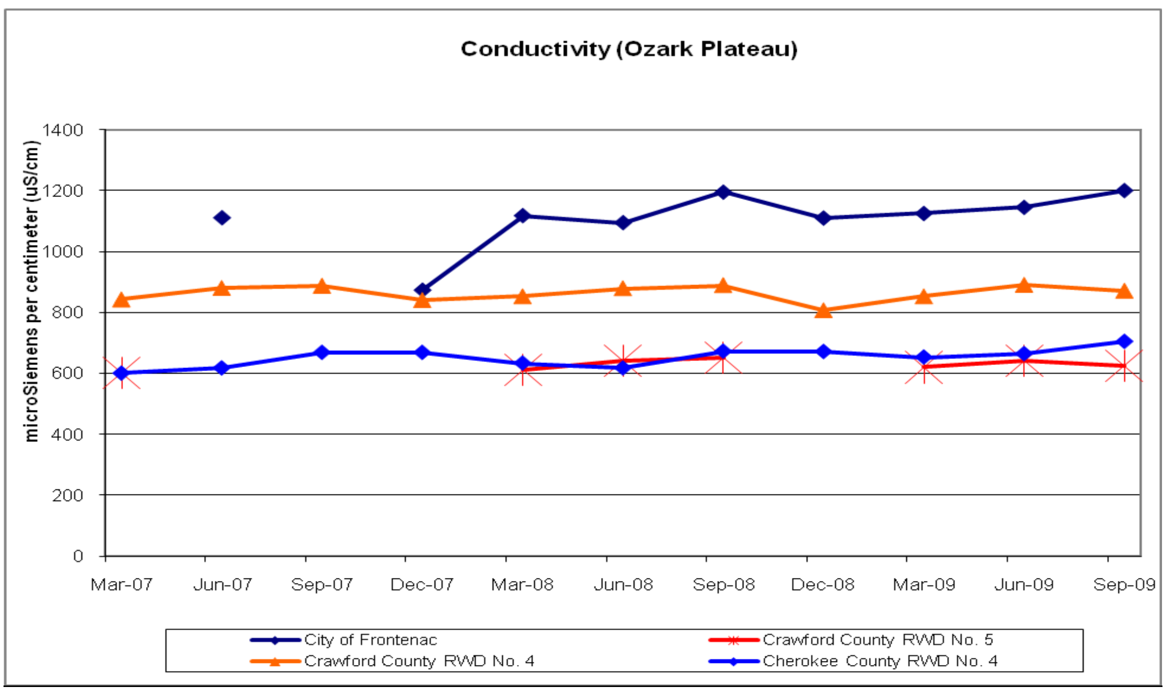

Figure 18: Ozark Plateau Aquifer Conductivity

Figure 17 and Figure 18 chart conductivity values for the Ozark aquifer and the Ozark Plateau aquifer. As with the salinity values, conductivity values remain fairly consistent with a range in the Ozark aquifer of 200 microsiemens/centimeter (µS/cm) to 1200 µS/cm (Figure 17) and a range in Ozark Plateau aquifer from 600 µS/cm to 1200 µS/cm (Figure 18). The electrical conductivity of water is directly related to the concentration of dissolved solids in the water.

However, in order to determine the relationship laboratory tests are needed to correlate conductivity with total dissolved solids. The EPA secondary drinking water standard for total dissolved solids is 500 ppm; without knowing the correlation factor for these groundwater sources it is unknown at this time whether the range of conductivity measured in these aquifers is above or below the secondary drinking water standard. It is important to note that these samples were taken prior to any potential water treatment.

VI. Water Use

The portion of the Neosho River basin and Spring River basin within the Ozark Plateau moratorium region has a total of 234 water rights with an authorized quantity of 259,689 acre-feet. These water right numbers are for the following counties: Neosho, Crawford, Labette and Cherokee. The source of supply is groundwater for 106 water rights, or 45 percent of the total rights (Table 2). This analysis includes all water rights authorized for irrigation, municipal, recreation, industrial, domestic and stock water uses and includes moratorium term permits within the Ozark Plateau moratorium region.

Table 2: Water Rights in the Neosho and Spring River Subbasin[1]

Type	Source	Number of Rights	Authorized Quantity
Vested	Surface Water	12	156,960 AF
Appropriated	Surface Water	116	88,968 AF
Vested	Groundwater	14	2,111 AF
Appropriated	Groundwater	80	10,361 AF
Term	Groundwater	12	1,289 AF
Total		**234**	**259,689 AF**

The points of diversion associated with these water rights are shown in Figure 19. One water right may have multiple points of diversion. In the Neosho River basin, some municipal and industrial users obtain some of their water supply from federal reservoirs through Water Marketing contracts. Since Marketing Program contracts do not require water appropriation permits, diversions under contract are not reflected in Table 2. Additionally, all municipal and industrial users who divert surface water in the Neosho River basin are required to be members of the Cottonwood and Neosho River Basins Water Assurance District No. 3, which supports diversions of its members from a dedicated pool in Assurance reservoirs.

[1] The authorized acre-feet of usage for surface water include the amount of water that is diverted within the Spring River basin for industrial use by the Empire District Electric Company. Operations at the plant are largely flow-through cooling and a large portion of this water is discharged back into the Spring River. The Empire District Electric Company has three water rights; one of these rights is vested and the other two are appropriated. The total combined maximum authorized acre-feet for this company’s rights totals to 177,794 acre-feet.

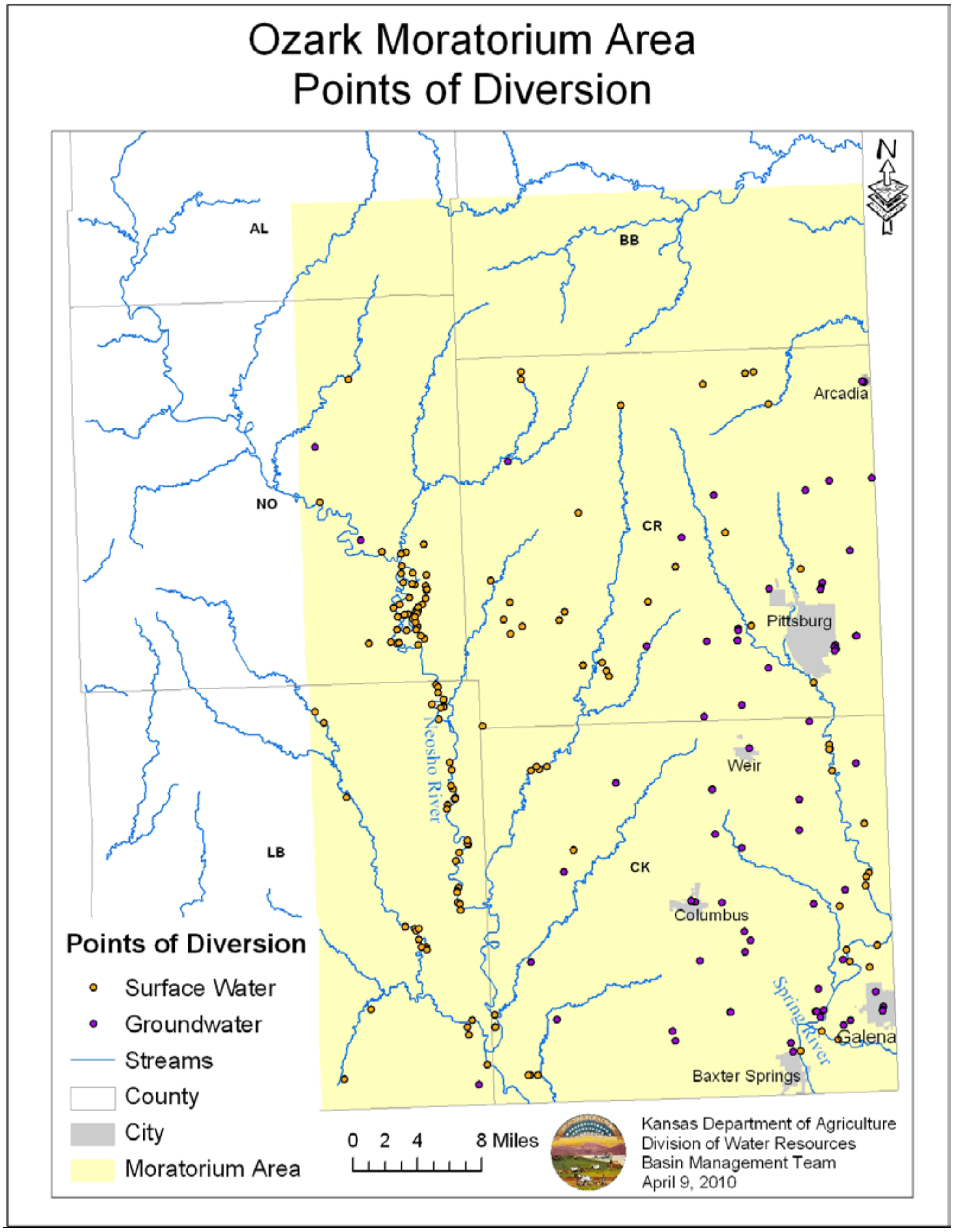

Figure 19: Points of Diversion within the Ozark Moratorium Area

Moratorium area water use tends to fluctuate per year largely due to varying surface water diversions within the Spring River basin used in cooling for the Empire District Electric Company. Usage ranges from 113,601 acre-feet in 2003 to 130,149 acre-feet in 1996. The total average water use over the twenty-year span was 122,506 acre-feet (Figure 20). Groundwater usage averages 7,807 acre-feet per year from 1990-2008, which is at 63 percent of authorized quantities. Groundwater use in 2008 was about 6,869 acre-feet, which is below average. Average Spring River basin surface water use is 108,377 acre-feet, which is 48 percent of authorized quantities, whereas average Neosho River basin surface water use is 6,305 acre-feet, or 33 percent of authorized quantities.

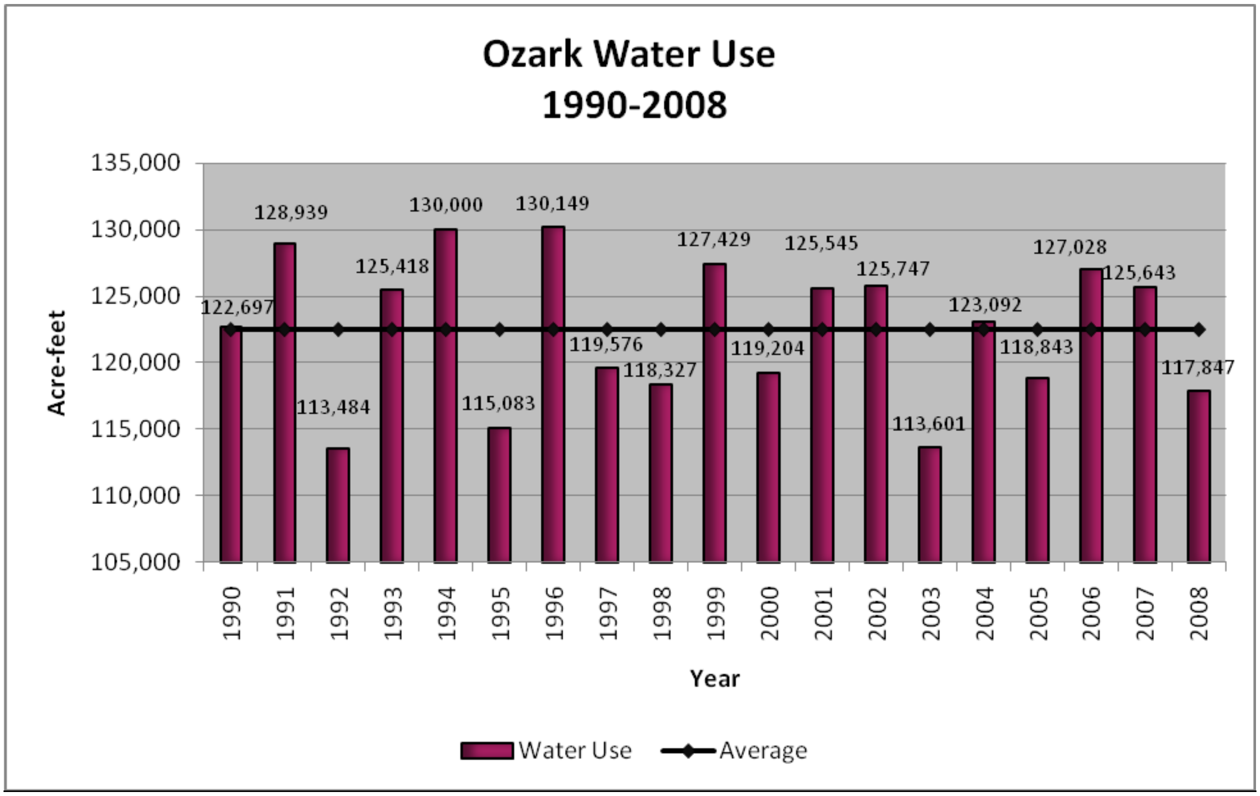

Figure 20: Ground and Surface water use 1990-2008

VII. Conclusions

In conclusion, precipitation in the regulated boundary area during 2008 averaged 54 inches and preliminary 2009 data averaged 50 inches, which are well above the normal average of 41 inches per year. Groundwater usage was 6,869 acre-feet in 2008, which has declined 1,422 acre-feet since 1999. Total surface water use was 110,927 acre-feet in 2008, which is below average. With above average precipitation in 2008 and 2009, streamflow levels improved and remained above MDS levels for 2009. Salinity and conductivity levels for both the Ozark aquifer and Ozark Plateau aquifer remained fairly consistent from March 2007 to September 2009.

In general, the Ozark aquifer and the Ozark Plateau aquifer water levels have increased from 2008 to 2009. The wells east of Spring River in Cherokee County declined an average of 8 feet from 2008 to 2009; however, they have an overall net gain of about 4 feet since 2005. With the release of the groundwater model, water quantity, recharge, and water movement are better understood. It is important to continue to increase our understanding of the impacts of pumping, how fast the system recovers after recharge events, and other characteristics of the hydrologic system in order to evaluate the long-term effects of water usage on this subbasin, protect property rights, and ensure the benefits of these water resources to future generations.

VIII. Appendix

Name	Well ID	Aquifer	Legal	Level	Quality	Latitude	Longitude
Cherokee Co. RWD 2	CK14	Ozark	34S25E08SWNWSW	Yes	Yes	37.0930	-94.7040
Cherokee Co. RWD 9	CK15	Ozark	34S25E20NWNENW	Yes	No	37.0741	-94.6983
Cherokee Co. RWD 8	CK16	Ozark	34S25E21NWNESE	Yes	No	37.0640	-94.6690
Cherokee Co. RWD 8	CK17	Ozark	34S25E28NWNWNW	Yes	Yes	37.0600	-94.6770
Galena	CK07	Ozark	34S25E23SENENE	Yes	No	37.0720	-94.6320
Galena	CK08	Ozark	34S25E13SWSWSW	Yes	No	37.0750	-94.6310
Galena	CK03	Ozark	34S25E14NWNWNE	Yes	No	37.0890	-94.6390
Baxter Springs	CK05	Ozark	34S24E36NENWNW	Yes	No	37.0460	-94.7370
Baxter Springs	CK06	Ozark	34S24E36NWNWSW	Yes	No	37.0370	-94.7350
Cherokee RWD 3	CK01	Ozark	34S24E17SWSWSE	Yes	No	37.0750	-94.8040
Jayhawk Fine Chemicals	CK09	Ozark	34S24E04NENWNE	Yes	No	37.1190	-94.6740
Jayhawk Fine Chemicals	CK10	Ozark	34S25E04NENWNE	Yes	Yes	37.1170	-94.6750
Cherokee RWD 1	CK11	Ozark	33S25E18NENESE	Yes	Yes	37.1700	-94.7050
Cherokee RWD 1	CK12&18	Ozark	33S25E09SENESE	Yes	Yes	37.1800	-94.6690
Columbus	CK02	Ozark	32S23E13NENENW	Yes	No	37.1770	-94.8430
Cherokee Co. RWD 4	CK13	Ozark Plateaus	32S24E29NWNWNW	Yes	Yes	37.2370	-94.8130
Weir	CK04	Ozark Plateaus	31S24E27NWSESW	Yes	No	37.3130	-94.7710
Arma	CR06	Ozark Plateaus	29S25E05SESESW	Yes	No	37.5446	-94.6962
Frontenac	CR07	Ozark Plateaus	20S25E04NESWSW	Yes	Yes	37.4550	-94.6840
Girard	CR05	Ozark	30S24E21NESENE	Yes	Yes	37.4218	-94.7784
Arcadia	CR04	Ozark	28S25E01NESWNE	Yes	No	37.6404	-94.6250
Crawford Co. RWD 1C	CR10	Ozark	30S24E02SESESE	Yes	Yes	37.4568	-94.7419
Pittsburg	CR17	Ozark	30S25E28NESESE	Yes	Yes	37.3980	-94.6700
Crawford Co. RWD 4	CR03	Ozark Plateaus	31S24E16NENENE	No	Yes	37.3530	-94.7780
Crawford Co. RWD 5	CR02	Ozark Plateaus	30S25E23SESWSW	Yes	Yes	37.4111	-94.6449
Pittsburg DWR	CR09	Ozark	30S25E28NENESE	Yes	No	37.4021	-94.6685
McCune	CR16	Ozark	31S22E16SESESW	Yes	No	37.3404	-95.0004
Pittsburg	CR15	Springfield	30S25E28SENESE	Yes	No	37.4021	-94.66876