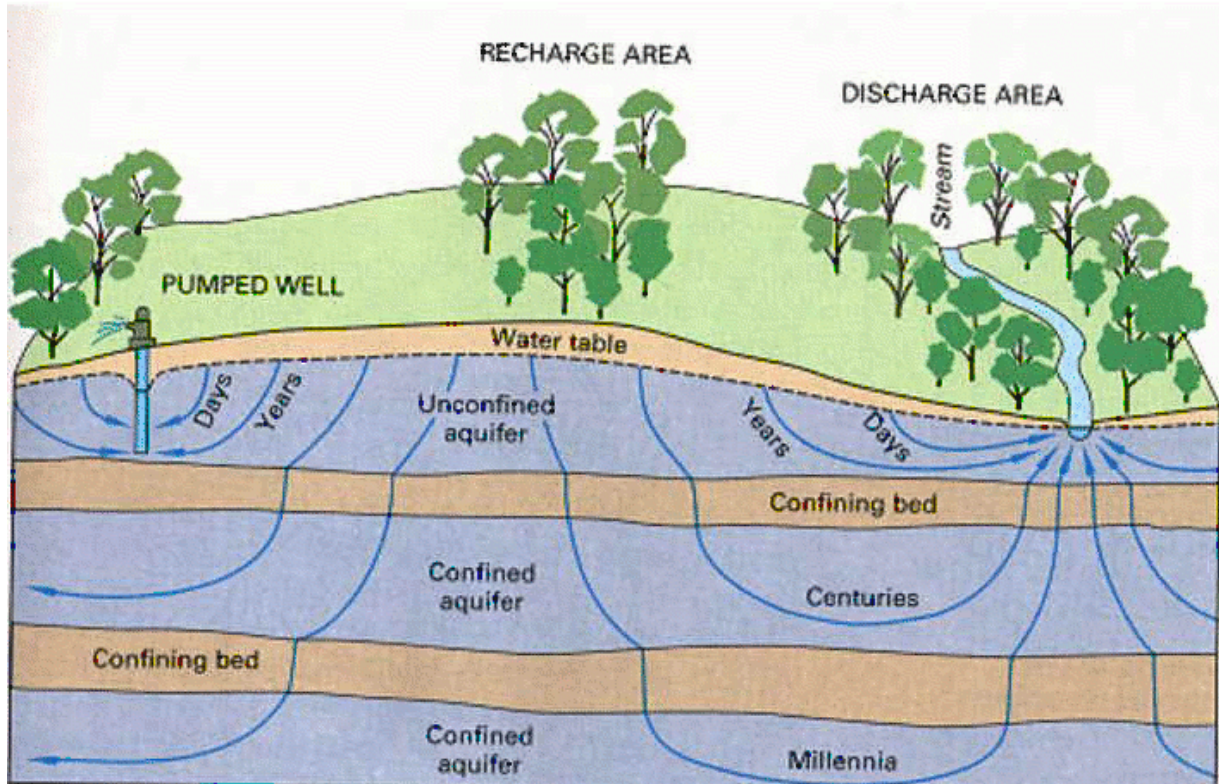


## GROUNDWATER TRAVEL TIMES



During the Water Cycle precipitation (rain, sleet, snow, hail) falls to the surface. This water flows across the surface and some, but not all, ends up in streams, rivers, lakes and oceans. Some of this water begins a journey through the soil and down into underground aquifers through [Recharge Areas](#).

An [Aquifer](#) is a porous, water-bearing geologic formation. The water that finds the way to an aquifer is called [Groundwater](#). Groundwater that's [Unconfined](#) moves down over a dense, solid layer of rock. [Confined](#) groundwater is contained by solid, impervious material from above and below ([Confining Bed](#)). The [Water Table](#) is the level to which groundwater rises beneath the surface. The water table can be shallow in some places and very deep in others. The groundwater eventually can push through the confining beds and deep into the surface of the Earth. Some groundwater may take hundreds to thousands of years to get to the deeper confined aquifers (see above figure). Groundwater that stays within an unconfined aquifer can only take years, or days to work its way to a [Discharge Area](#) or be pumped out of the aquifer through a well.