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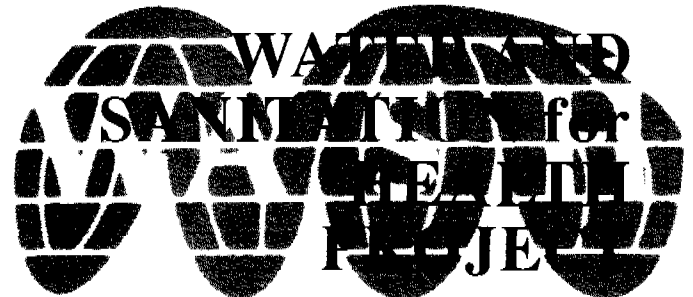
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES SULTANATE OF OMAN

TASK 5: WATER MANAGEMENT
TASK 6: TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND
Parts 1 & 2

MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES
SULTANATE OF OMAN
WATER SUPPLY AND
SANITATION PROJECT

WASH Field Report No. 353
December 1991



Sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development
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Part 1 & 2



**WATER AND SANITATION
FOR HEALTH PROJECT**

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19 October 1992

TAS 254 and 255

Dear Colleague:

On behalf of the WASH Project, I am pleased to provide you with WASH Field Report Number 353: *Task 5 Water Management and Task 6 Technology Development*, by Steve Luxton, Mitchell Heineman, Jonathan Hodgkin, Patrick Lang, Frederick Meyer, Ronald Miner, Peter Schwartzman, and Kendrick Taylor. This report was produced under WASH Tasks 254 and 255 as part of a Technical Assistance Program For the Ministry of Water Resources, Sultanate of Oman. The overall objectives of the technical assistance were to assist the Ministry of Water Resources to: 1) strengthen all aspects of its operations, 2) establish a strong technical base, and 3) develop policy and procedures.

If you have any questions or comments about the findings or recommendations contained in this report, we will be happy to discuss them. Please contact Phil Roark at the WASH Operations Center. Please let us know if you would like additional copies.

Sincerely,

J. Ellis Turner
WASH Project Director

WASH Field Report No. 353

Parts 1 & 2

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Prepared for the Omani-American Joint Commission
under WASH Tasks Nos. 254 and 255

by

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Proposed Hydrological Monitoring and Evaluation Unit for the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Aquifer Recharge Program (Oman). WASH Field Report No. 285. By Charles E. Fuller and John Kent Kane III. February 1990.

Technical Assistance Program for the Ministry of Water Resources, Sultanate of Oman. Task 3: Surface Water Data Collection. Task 4: Groundwater Data Collection and Management. WASH Field Report No. 332. By Steven S. Luxton et al. July 1991.

CONTENTS

PARTS 1 & 2

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xv
ABOUT THE AUTHORS	xvii
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	xix
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	xxiii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Project Introduction	1
1.2 Objectives of the Third Phase	1
1.3 Preparation for the Assignment	2
1.4 Scope of Work	2
1.5 Conduct of the Study	3
1.6 Report Contents	3
2. BACKGROUND	5
2.1 General Background and Information	5
2.2 Physiography and Regional Geology	5
2.3 Climate and Rainfall	6
2.4 National Water Policy	6

PART 3

ACRONYMS	iii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	vii
1. INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL OVERVIEW	1
2. SCOPE OF WORK	3
3. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS	5

4.	USES OF WADI FLOW DATA	7
4.1	Using Wadi Flow Data to Determine Groundwater Recharge	7
4.2	Using Wadi Flow Data to Define the Hydrology of Regions through Representative Basin Studies	9
4.3	Using Wadi Flow Data for Flood Studies and Dam Design	11
5.	OMAN'S HYDROGRAPHY	13
5.1	Oman's Natural Watercourses	13
5.2	The Nature of Runoff in Oman	15
6.	FLOW-MEASURING TECHNIQUES	19
6.1	Slope-Area Method	20
6.2	Flow Over Dams Method	25
6.3	Culvert Rating Method	26
6.4	Combined Culvert Flow and Flow Over Roadway	26
7.	WATER LEVEL RECORDING DEVICES	27
7.1	Float Gauges	27
7.2	Bubble Gauges	28
7.3	Dataloggers	28
8.	NETWORK EXPANSION AND UPGRADE	29
8.1	Suggested Locations for New Gauge Sites	29
8.2	Network Maintenance and Operation	32
8.3	Equipment Upgrade	32
8.4	Selected Representative Basin	33
9.	COST ANALYSIS	35
9.1	Costs and Benefits	35

10.	TRAINING	39
-----	----------------	----

	REFERENCES	41
--	------------------	----

APPENDIX

	Field Reconnaissance Notes	43
--	----------------------------------	----

FIGURES

3-1.	Recharge Estimation with Wadi Gauges	8
3-2.	Open Channel Flow Velocity Effects	22
3-3.	The Energy Principle Applied to Diverging and Converging Channel Sections	23

TABLES

3-1.	Wadis Investigated for Proposed Gauging Stations	30
3-2.	Gauge Sites Suggested for Investigation	31
3-3.	Capital Cost Schedule	36
3-4.	Long-term Recurrent Costs	37

PART 4

	ACRONYMS	v
	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ix

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
----	--------------------	---

2.	PURPOSE AND SCOPE	3
----	-------------------------	---

3.	SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS	5
----	------------------------------	---

4.	RECOMMENDATIONS	7
----	-----------------------	---

5.	EXISTING CONDITIONS	11
5.1	The Physical Situation	11
5.1.1	Batinah Area	12
5.2	The Informational Situation	15
5.3	The Institutional Situation	19
6.	ADDRESSING SALT WATER INTRUSION	21
6.1	Continuity Between Monitoring and Intervention	21
6.2	Suitable Interventions	21
7.	RECOMMENDED MONITORING PROGRAM	25
7.1	Locations and Requirements of the Monitoring Program	25
7.2	Technical Approach	27
7.2.1	Locations of Recommended Salinity Transects and Well Clusters	28
7.2.2	Well Construction	32
7.2.3	Monitoring Regime	36
7.2.4	Instrumentation	36
7.2.5	Data Management	38
7.3	Institutional Approach	39
7.3.1	Mode of Organization	40
7.3.2	Staffing	41
7.3.3	Training	42
7.3.4	Scheduling	43
7.4	Budget	43
7.4.1	Initial Costs	43
7.4.2	Contract Costs	44
7.4.3	Recurrent Costs	44
8.	ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS	45
8.1	Oil Exploration Drilling and Geophysics	45
8.2	Seeking Additional Assistance	45
8.3	Sample Library	45

FIGURES

4-1.	Principal Areas of Salt Water Intrusion	47
4-2.	Salt Water Intrusion Hydrodynamics	48
4-3.	Case 1—Schematic Cross Section of Salt Water-Intruded Coastal Aquifer at Various Times	49
4-4.	Case 2—Schematic Cross Section of Salt Water-Intruded Coastal Aquifers at Various Times	50
4-5.	The Batinah Area	51
4-6.	Generalized Cross Section Across the Batinah	52
4-7.	Hydrographs of Wells in Wadi Samail (ADG-15, RGS-2U) and Wadi Taww (NC-2)	53
4-8.	Hydrographs of Wells in Wadi Ma'awil (C-4, NC-5, NC-6, ADG-17)	54
4-9.	Hydrographs of Wells in Wadi Al Fara (ADG-25, ADG-26) and Wadi Bani Kharus (NC-7, ADG-23, ADG-24)	55
4-10.	Various Illustrations of Intra Bore Hole Flow	56
4-11.	Schematic of Cluster Wells Along Salinity Transect	57
4-12.	Wadi Samail Vicinity Map	58
4-13.	Cross Sections Wadi Samail Area	59
4-14.	Hydrographs of Selected KWD Wells in Wadi Samail	60
4-15.	Hydrographs of Selected RGS Wells in Wadi Samail	61
4-16.	Barka Area Map	62
4-17.	Salinity Profiles in the Barka Area	63
4-18.	Hydrographs of Wells OA-2 and Sohar Office	64
4-19.	Sohar Vicinity Map	65
4-20.	Wadi Hatta Vicinity Map	66
4-21.	Hydrographs of Wells HS-1 and Shinas No. 1	67
4-22.	Deep Piezometer Well Construction Sequence	68
4-23.	Deep Piezometer Completion Sequence	69
4-24.	Simple Well Water Sampler	70
4-25.	Ministry of Water Resources Project Implementation Process	71
4-26.	Proposed Structure of Salt Water Intrusion Program	72
4-27.	Illustrative Schedule for Program Implementation	73

TABLES

4-1.	Change in Size of Areas Affected by Sea Water Intrusion in Shallow Wells in the Eastern Batinah (Wadi Manumah to Suwayz) 1982/3 to 1988.	74
4-2.	Projected Cost Schedule for Salt Water Intrusion Program	75

PART 5

ACRONYMS	iii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	vii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE	3
3. CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY	5
4. HYDROGEOLOGIC SETTING AND BACKGROUND	7
5. SKIMMING TECHNOLOGIES AND THEIR APPLICATIONS	9
5.1 Horizontal Collection Galleries	9
5.2 Radial Collection Wells	12
5.3 Conventional Shallow Drawdown Wells	17
5.4 Scavenger/Production Well Couples	18
6. APPLICATIONS IN OMAN	29
7. CONCLUSIONS	33
REFERENCES	35

FIGURES

5-1. Details of Coastal Gallery Skimmer	10
5-2. Schematic Diagram of Radial Collector Well	15
5-3. Scavenger/Production Well Principle	20
5-4. Schematic Diagram of Scavenger/Production Well	23
5-5. Typical Schematic Scavenger/Production Well Couple	27

TABLES

5-1.	Cost Estimate for Coastal Gallery Construction	13
5-2.	Construction Cost Estimate for Conventional Shallow Drawdown Wells	19
5-3.	Cost Estimate for Typical Scavenger/Production Well	25

PART 6

	ACRONYMS	v
	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ix
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
	1.1 Background	1
	1.2 Scope of Work	1
	1.3 Program Planning Criteria	2
2.	SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS	3
3.	VISITS TO VILLAGES	5
	3.1 Water Delivery in Rural Communities	5
	3.2 Water Management Practices	7
	3.3 Community Diversity	10
	3.4 Community Knowledge	11
	3.5 Potential for Conflict	12
4.	CURRENT UPPER BASIN MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS	15
	4.1 Background	15
	4.2 National Involvement in Small Basin Management	16
	4.2.1 Ministry of Water Resources (MWR)	16
	4.2.2 Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF)	17
	4.2.3 Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW)	18
	4.2.4 Ministry of Housing (MOH)	18
	4.2.5 Ministry of Defense (MOD)	18
	4.3 The Role of Regional Institutions in Upper Basins	18
	4.4 Community Organization	19

5.	PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS IN SMALL BASIN MANAGEMENT	21
5.1	Potential for Intervention	21
5.2	Sociopolitical Considerations	21
5.3	Institutional Considerations	22
6.	A PLAN FOR MWR INVOLVEMENT	23
6.1	Introduction	23
6.2	The Basis of the Plan	23
6.2	The Proposed Plan	24
7.	IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN	25
7.1	Activities of the Small Basin Reconnaissance Section	25
7.1.1	Field Surveys	25
7.1.2	Technical Evaluations	26
7.1.3	Management	26
7.2	Schedule	27
7.3	Project Requirements	27
7.3.1	Staff	27
7.3.2	Equipment	30
7.4	Cost	30
8.	TRAINING NEEDS	33
8.1	Basic Skills	33
8.2	Specialized Skills	33
	PHOTOGRAPHS	35
	REFERENCES	45
APPENDIX		
	Persons Met	49

FIGURES

6-1.	Anatomy of a Small Falaj	6
6-2.	Classification of Catchment Villages	8
6-3.	Typical Small Falaj	9
6-4.	Small Basin Reconnaissance Section Schedule	28

TABLES

6-1.	Cost Estimate for Small Basin Reconnaissance Section	31
------	--	----

PART 7

	ACRONYMS	v
	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ix
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	SCOPE	3
3.	SUMMARY	5
4.	INTRODUCTION TO GEOPHYSICAL METHODS	7
4.1	Transient Electromagnetics (TEM)	7
4.2	Airborne Electromagnetics	7
4.3	Frequency Domain Electromagnetics	7
4.4	Induction Logging	8
4.5	Gravity Methods	8
4.6	Seismic Refraction	8
4.7	Seismic Reflection	9
4.8	Resistivity	9

5.	APPLICATIONS OF GEOPHYSICS TO SALT WATER INTRUSION STUDIES IN OMAN	11
5.1	Background	11
5.2	Methods for Salt Water Intrusion Investigations	12
5.2.1	Transient Electromagnetics	12
5.2.2	Frequency Domain Electromagnetics	12
5.2.3	Borehole Methods	12
5.3	Proposed Program for Salt Water Intrusion Monitoring	13
5.3.1	Surface Methods for Salt Water Intrusion Monitoring	13
5.3.2	Borehole Methods for Salt Water Intrusion Monitoring	15
6.	APPLICATIONS OF GEOPHYSICS TO THE WADI AL BATHA REGIONAL ASSESSMENT	19
6.1	Background	19
6.2	Geophysical Methods for Delineation of Unconsolidated Aquifers	19
6.2.1	Introduction	19
6.2.2	Gravity Methods	20
6.2.3	Seismic Refraction	20
6.2.4	Seismic Reflection	20
6.2.5	Transient Electromagnetics	20
6.3	Proposed Geophysics Program for Wadi al Batha	21
6.4	Application of Geophysics to Regional Assessments in Other Areas	23
7.	APPLICATIONS OF GEOPHYSICS TO WADI THROUGHFLOW STUDIES	25
7.1	Background	25
7.2	Determination of Wadi Cross-Section Geometry	25
7.2.1	Frequency Domain Methods	25
7.2.2	Transient Electromagnetics	26
7.2.3	Seismic Refraction	26
7.2.4	Seismic Reflection	26
7.2.5	Tracer Tests	26
7.3	Proposed Geophysics Program for Determining Wadi Throughflow	27
7.3.1	Determining Cross-Section Geometry	27
7.3.2	Determining Groundwater Velocity	28

8.	DEVELOPMENT OF GEOPHYSICAL CAPABILITIES IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES	29
8.1	Introduction	29
8.2	Staff Development	29
8.3	Interpretation Software	30
8.4	Instrumentation	30
8.5	Specific Geophysical Methods	30
8.5.1	Transient Electromagnetics	30
8.5.2	Frequency Domain Electromagnetics	31
8.5.3	Resistivity	31
8.5.4	Gravity	31
8.5.5	Seismic Refraction	31
8.5.6	Seismic Reflection	32
8.5.7	Borehole Geophysics	32
8.5.8	Airborne Electromagnetics	33
9.	PURCHASING RECOMMENDATIONS	35
10.	CONTRACT MANAGEMENT	37
11.	TRAINING OF OMANI MWR STAFF FOR GEOPHYSICS WORK	39
12.	SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED STEPS	41
	REFERENCES	43

FIGURES

7-1.	Possible Scenarios for TEM Response Model	16
7-2.	Examples of Modeled Responses	17

TABLES

7-1.	Recommended Computer Software for Geophysics	14
7-2.	Recommended Computer Hardware for Geophysics	36

PART 8

ACRONYMS	iii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	vii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. SUMMARY	3
2.1 Findings and Conclusions	3
2.2 Recommendations	3
3. METHODS	5
3.1 Introduction	5
3.2 Landsat and SPOT	6
3.3 Weather Satellites	9
3.4 Radar	9
3.5 Aerial Photography and Imagery	10
4. POTENTIAL APPLICATIONS	11
4.1 Land Use Assessment	11
4.2 Surface Water Hydrology	12
4.3 Groundwater Hydrology	12
4.4 Geographic Information Systems	13
5. PREVIOUS WORK	15
6. INSTITUTIONAL SETTING	17
6.1 MWR Mission	17
6.2 MWR Sections Interested in Remote Sensing	17
6.3 Remote Sensing Elsewhere in Oman	18

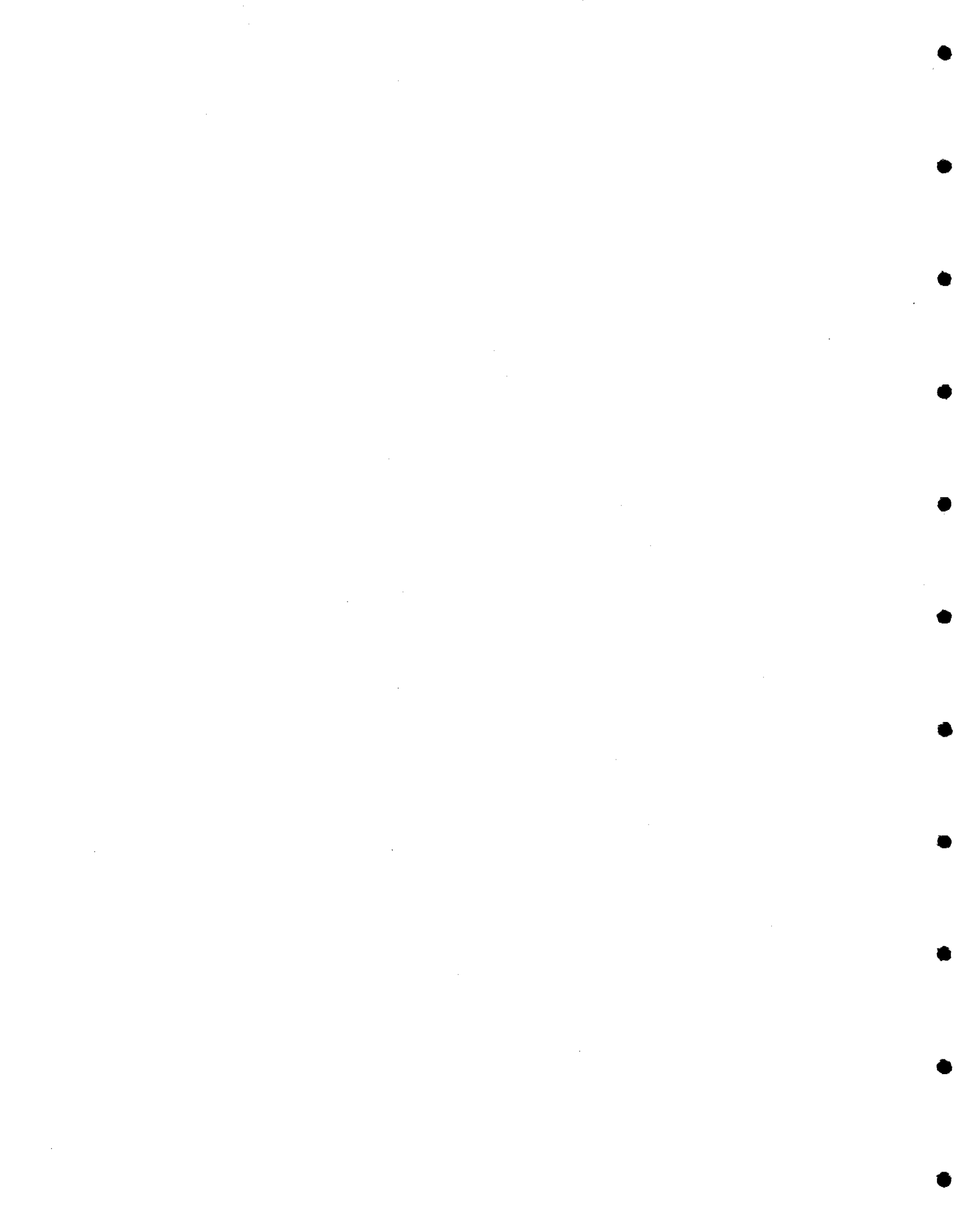
7.	AVAILABLE IMAGERY AND WARES	21
7.1	Imagery	21
7.2	Support Services	24
7.3	Requirements for In-House Development	24
8.	RECOMMENDATIONS	29
8.1	Programs	29
8.1.1	Water Use Monitoring Programs	31
8.1.2	Resource Assessment	32
8.1.3	Water Resource Management	32
8.1.4	Geographic Information Systems	33
8.2	Administration	33
8.3	Training	33
8.4	Contracts	33
8.5	Cooperation with Other Agencies	35
	REFERENCES	37
	PERSONS CONTACTED	41
	MATERIALS PROVIDED TO MWR	43

FIGURES

8-1.	The Electromagnetic Spectrum	5
8-2.	Photography versus Satellite Imagery	7
8-3.	Remote Sensing Work Station	25
8-4.	Flow Chart for Remote Sensing Programs	30
8-5.	Remote Sensing Planning Process	34

TABLES

8-1.	Characteristics of Landsat and SPOT Satellites	8
8-2.	Landsat Data Availability for Batinah Coast	22
8-3.	Data Acquisition Costs	23
8-4.	Cost Summary (R.O.) for Proposed Remote Sensing Projects	29
8-5.	Specifications for Remote Sensing and GIS Workstation	36



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Other persons and agencies who deserve thanks are too numerous to mention here, but their cooperation and support helped to make our work more complete.

During our stay here we made friends with many Omanis who welcomed us and gave us their friendship. We hope that our work may add to the efforts of the Ministry of Water Resources to create a better future for Oman.



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ACRONYMS

ASR	aquifer storage and recovery
cm	centimeter
CSR	center sampling rotary
EC	electrical conductivity
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
GIS	geographic information system
GPS	ground positioning system
H.E.	His Excellency
H.H.	His Highness
H.M.	His Majesty
in	inch(es)
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
km	kilometer(s)
l	liter(s)
l/s	liters per second
L.S.	lump sum
m	meter(s)
m ² /d	square meters per day
m ³ /d	cubic meters per day
m ³	cubic meters

MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
mcm	million cubic meters
mcm/yr	million cubic meters per year
MEW	Ministry of Electricity and Water
mm	millimeter
MM/WH	Mott MacDonald International, Limited in association with Watson Hawksley
MMP	Sir Mott MacDonald and Partners, Limited
MOC	Ministry of Communications
MOD	Ministry of Defense
MOH	Ministry of Housing
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MSS	multispectral scanner sensor
MWR	Ministry of Water Resources
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NSA	National Survey Authority
OAJC	Omani-American Joint Commission for Economic and Technical Cooperation
pop	population
PAWR	Public Authority for Water Resources
PVC	polyvinyl chloride
R.O.	Omani Rials
SCTP	Supreme Committee for Town Planning

SFWMD	South Florida Water Management District
tm	trademark
TEM	transient electromagnetics
TM	thematic mapper sensor
TPM	team planning meeting
uS/cm	micro Siemens per centimeter
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UTM	universal transverse mercator
WASH	Water and Sanitation for Health Project



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Omani-American Joint Commission (OAJC) and the newly established Ministry of Water Resources (MWR) of the Sultanate of Oman have a common interest in the water resources of the nation. Early in 1990, OAJC requested the Water and Sanitation for Health Project (WASH) to assist the fledgling Ministry in:

- Strengthening all aspects of its operations
- Establishing a strong technical base
- Developing policy and procedures

The WASH team worked in Oman and in the United States from May through August 1991 to complete Tasks 5 and 6 of the scope of work and also work under Tasks 3 and 4 that was interrupted by the Gulf War.

Following Parts 1 and 2, which provide a general introduction and background, each of the six parts of the report on Tasks 5 and 6 covers a different area of study and contains a summary of conclusions and recommendations to which the reader can refer for a quick review.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Part 3 ... Wadi Gauging Network Rationalization and Upgrade

More surface water gauging stations are needed in MWR's wadi gauging network to provide information on the process of groundwater recharge and the effectiveness of recharge enhancement schemes. But the expansion of the network should not delay the processing and publication of the large volume of data already in hand.

Surface water data collection is limited by various physical and practical constraints, and all users of these data would greatly benefit from an understanding of these limitations and of the methods employed by the Surface Water Department.

The department's effective relations with other agencies and private sector groups interested in surface water and floods should be cited as a model for other MWR departments.

Part 4 ... Salt Water Intrusion Monitoring and Remediation

MWR faces a serious problem of saline intrusion and upconing in the Batinah coast region. Past efforts at control have lacked a focus and a defined policy. Emphasis must now change from observation of the advancing intrusion to a detailed program designed to find a solution. This can begin with concentrated efforts to protect municipal and public water supply systems from upconing and lateral intrusion in areas where severe impacts and economic dislocations are expected.

MWR should set up a section to undertake this work urgently after reviewing and, if necessary, modifying the policy and goals recommended. Unless this is done, the saline intrusion program will continue to lack direction and purpose.

Part 5 ... Alternative Well Technologies for Use in Saline Groundwater Systems

The WASH team investigated several alternative well technologies to pump fresh water from saline aquifers. The separation of fresh water from saline groundwater is called skimming by some hydrologists. Of the methods investigated, three show the most promise in Oman:

- Conventional low-drawdown wellfields
- Scavenger wells
- Water collection galleries

Existing conventional wells with high drawdowns are prone to upconing and sea water intrusion, whereas low-drawdown wells can extract a similar amount of water without inducing salt upconing. MWR should enhance its capacity to advise others on the use of this technology.

Scavenger wells separate salt water and fresh water into two discharge streams. More work needs to be done to define their potential for specific sites in Oman.

Collection galleries may find some application in coastal areas to provide agricultural or potable water supplies. They must be operated with care and, to be most effective, should be pumped continuously at very low drawdowns.

MWR should work on these methods to provide a leadership role in their use. There are many opportunities for applying them as part of a broad regional water management strategy rather than to improve water quality in a few wells while the regional groundwater system deteriorates.

Part 6 ... Small Basin Management

The WASH team quickly discovered that the inhabitants of the upper basins and small catchments have a thorough understanding of the water resources that sustain them. Much of this knowledge has neither been recorded nor considered of any value in water resources management in these areas.

MWR should set up a Small Basins Reconnaissance Section to draw upon this knowledge in a collaborative plan for water resources development that would take the villagers' ideas into account.

Cultural, political, and human considerations are no less important than technical concerns in the planning and implementation of water related work. Although the guidelines provided relate to small basins, they can be profitably applied to many other MWR projects.

Part 7 ... Applications of Geophysics

There are several methods of geophysical exploration that could help MWR in its assessment work. However, many of these are expensive and, experience suggests, could lead to poor results unless they are properly utilized. Recommendations are offered on staff organization to develop the necessary skills and on appropriate training, equipment, and computer software.

The author of this part, Dr. Kendrick Taylor of the University of Nevada, is willing to sponsor one or more Omani students for graduate studies in the application of geophysics in Oman. The OAJC would finance these studies.

Part 8 ... Applications of Remote Sensing

Remote sensing has many useful applications but its products are expensive and MWR must be sure that they would advance its work. The range of available products, their costs, and their uses are discussed. A pilot project to test the technology in defining water use along the Batinah coast and an incremental process that moves ahead as useful results are obtained are suggested.

Working Paper ... Discussion Paper for a Staff Orientation Document

The WASH team worked with almost the entire MWR staff from August 1990 to August 1991. Although it noted much progress in that short time, it also observed that many new staff members knew very little about Oman and its water resources and had poorly formed ideas about the nature of MWR's work. In spite of the fact that most policies and

goals have been defined, the information has not yet filtered down to the rank and file of the organization. Given its rapid growth this is not surprising.

The discussion paper is an attempt to summarize important information that senior staff members should have as they begin their work. It reviews MWR's policies and approaches and explains what the Ministry is and why it was formed, what they should know about working in Oman, and how they can help the Ministry to reach the important goals ahead.

The paper is intended to fill an immediate need and should be followed by a similar document that is enlarged and refined as MWR gains knowledge and experience.

In Conclusion

To assist decision makers, the report on Tasks 5 and 6 provides the approximate capital and recurrent costs of the programs recommended. The earlier reports on Tasks 1 through 4 contain similar data.

OAJC and WASH hope that the information provided here will be useful to MWR in its important work in Oman. The OAJC staff and its managing director, H.E. Hamoud Halil al Habsi, are anxious to be of continuing support.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Introduction

In 1989, the Omani-American Joint Commission requested the Water and Sanitation for Health Project (WASH) to carry out a three-phase project of technical assistance to the newly established Ministry of Water Resources (MWR), which had been given responsibility for managing the water resources of the Sultanate of Oman. The project was executed in 1990 and 1991, part of it during the war in the Persian Gulf. This report presents the results of the third phase: Task 5, Water Management, and Task 6, Technology Development, and also the results of work originally scheduled for the second phase which was interrupted by military action in the region.

1.2 Objectives of the Third Phase

The third phase had the following objectives:

WATER MANAGEMENT

Wadi Gauging Network

- Establish a plan for rationalizing the existing network, including its equipment and its monitoring procedures

Saline Water Intrusion Monitoring and Remediation

- Establish programs for monitoring salinity intrusion in the Batinah and Salalah and assist MWR in developing a solution to the problem in the Sultanate as a whole

Alternative Well Technologies for Saline Aquifers

- Provide pre-feasibility data and cost analysis for alternative wells that might be used to skim fresh water from aquifers that produce saline water in deeper wells

Upper Basin Management

- Introduce suitable small-scale water management and conservation projects in upper basin villages, taking into account community concerns and the contribution of local labor to the degree possible

Regional Assessment

- Assist MWR in assessing the water resources of the country and identifying problems needing remedial action

TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

Geophysics

- Assist MWR in the organization and development of a capacity to undertake appropriate geophysical work

Remote Sensing

- Assess opportunities for MWR to use remote sensing in its work and provide guidance for the purchase and use of such data

1.3 Preparation for the Assignment

The scope of work was prepared by Robert Thomas of Camp, Dresser & McKee, International, who interviewed numerous MWR personnel in February 1990 to identify the key areas in which they needed assistance.

During a team planning meeting in Washington, D.C. from May 15-17, 1991, the team reviewed the scope of work, considered comments and suggestions from United States Agency for International Development (USAID) personnel, outlined a tentative work plan, and identified elements of technical support required from the Camp, Dresser & McKee offices in the United States.

1.4 Scope of Work

The scope of work for each assistance area is presented in the appropriate part of this report.

1.5 Conduct of the Study

Most of the team members began work in Oman on May 21, 1991, and remained there until early in August. The team included personnel who completed work on Tasks 3 and 4 that had been interrupted by the Gulf War.

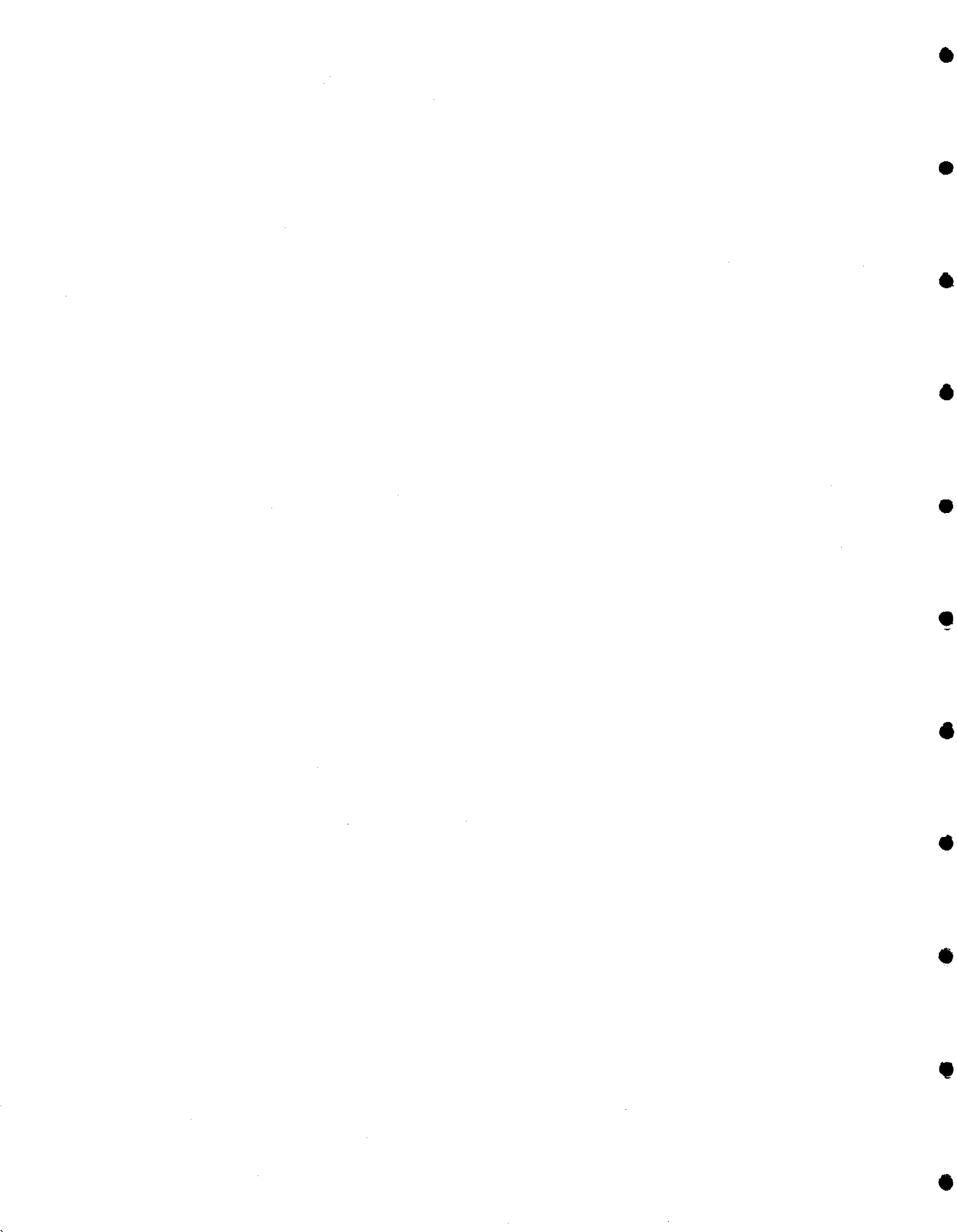
The team met weekly with OAJC to give an account of progress and to raise any problems that needed resolution. Interviews with personnel and officials of various Omani government agencies provided valuable information that helped in the preparation of this report.

The team prepared a preliminary draft of its findings late in July 1991, incorporating the comments and suggestions of key personnel in the OAJC and MWR. Formal presentations were made to the OAJC and MWR staffs and to MWR before the team's departure. After these presentations, some follow-up work to assist in implementation was carried out.

1.6 Report Contents

This report on the results of Tasks 5 and 6 has eight parts: an introduction (Part 1) and general background on Oman (Part 2); measures to expand and rationalize the existing surface water gauging network (Part 3); a program for salt water intrusion monitoring and remediation (Part 4); a summary of the alternative technologies available to draw fresh water from aquifers that have been invaded by saline groundwater (Part 5); a discussion of the opportunities for MWR to do useful work in the smaller basins and upper catchments of Oman (Part 6); an outline of some of the best geophysical techniques that MWR might use (Part 7); and information on the uses of remote sensing (Part 8). The report also offers a discussion paper to assist MWR in defining its goals and general policies that could serve to orient new staff.

Parts 3 and 4 are supplements to the report on Tasks 3 and 4 that could not be included in the earlier volume because of the interruption by war in the Middle East.



Chapter 2

BACKGROUND

2.1 General Background and Information

The Sultanate of Oman is highly dependent on groundwater for its domestic, agricultural, and industrial needs. Precipitation averages less than 100 mm per year in most areas of the country. For hundreds of years communities and villages have relied on dug wells to intercept shallow groundwater that is then transported through an extensive network of subsurface and above-ground aqueducts, or aflaj, to supply both potable water and the means to support a traditional and productive agricultural base.

This system has generally been in balance, with the demand not exceeding the supply naturally replenished by rainfall. However, rapid expansion of agriculture and a rising population during the last two decades have placed great pressure on the country's water resources. Explosive growth in the use of mechanical pumps and drilled wells to withdraw large quantities of groundwater from greater depths has compounded the problem. Some of the increased demand has been met by the construction of desalination plants. But these are capital-intensive and expensive to operate and maintain. The pressure on groundwater resources has caused serious decreases in water levels and the degradation of water quality in many areas. The water resources of many communities have been depleted, and many localities have declined as agricultural and population centers.

2.2 Physiography and Regional Geology

The geology of Oman consists of an almost featureless desert foreland in the southwest, a mountainous region in the north, and scattered narrow coastal plains. The desert foreland is a continuation of the gently undulating shelf that extends eastward from Saudi Arabia. The mountainous region, extending from the Musandam peninsula to Sur southwest of Muscat, forms a chain distinct from the rest of the Arabian peninsula. These mountains, ranging up to 10,000 feet in elevation, contain great thicknesses of shelf carbonate rocks. The presence of extensive uplifted folds of deep sedimentary deposits and rocks formed as part of the deep oceanic crust overlying the carbonate rocks is a geologic anomaly unique to the Arabian peninsula. Late Tertiary folding and subsequent erosion have exposed these rocks to reveal the total sedimentary section as well as the metamorphic basement. The interior valleys of the mountains generally are narrow, steep-sided, and alleviated with partially cemented sand and gravel.

The coastal plains run along the Batinah coast in the north and the Salalah coast in the south. The Batinah plain is a series of coalescing alluvial fans emanating from the wadis

(stream channels) along the mountain front. These fans are composed of materials ranging from silt to boulders, becoming finer graded with increasing distance from the mountain front. The alluvial materials, ranging up to 100 m or more in depth, are commonly cemented into a conglomerate.

2.3 Climate and Rainfall

Oman's climate and rainfall vary greatly. There are two seasons: winter, generally from November to April; and summer, from May to October. April and October are considered transitional months. Winter is the rainy season in the north but little rainfall occurs along the south coast during this period. The average annual rainfall at Seeb is 100 mm, but actual rainfall varies widely from year to year. In the years 1976-81, it varied from 3.7 mm to 182.6 mm. Rain can occur in the summer as a result of unsettled weather from a southwesterly airflow. Most of this rain falls on the inner side of the northern mountains. In the south, rainfall coincides with this southwesterly wind of the *kharif* monsoon. Rainfall on the southern coast averages about 100 mm, increasing to some 300 mm in the mountains. On the leeward side of the mountains rainfall drops to only 50 mm per year.

2.4 National Water Policy

In November 1988, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said issued Royal Decree Number 82/88 as the basis for conserving the nation's water resources. The decree stated that "the Sultanate's water reservoir is considered as (a) public national wealth to be exploited according to the Government's instruction," thus establishing that all groundwater and its extraction for any purpose could be regulated by the government.

In October 1989, His Majesty issued Royal Decree Number 100/89 creating the Ministry of Water Resources and appointing H.E. Khalfan bin Nasser Al Wahaibi as its Minister with authority to perform the tasks listed below:

- Formulate policies and regulations regarding water resources
- Monitor hydrologic systems
- Conduct surveys and perform water resources research
- Conduct hydrologic assessments
- Collect and analyze water samples

- Evaluate the potential for long-term, sustainable water resources supplies
- Establish and maintain a water resources database
- Manage and preserve the nation's water resources through long-term planning and administration

Before Royal Decree Number 100/89, water resources had been administered by various agencies and ministries—the Public Authority for Water Resources, the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, the Ministry of Electricity and Water—none of which was dedicated to water resources assessment and management. The creation of MWR established an entity dedicated solely to water resources, and since its inception, the Ministry has moved rapidly to fulfill its mission.