

Radioactive Materials May Help Trace Water Course

Certain radioactive materials of possible use in helping geologists to trace underground water movement have been studied intensively by A&M University graduate student A. Ray Jennings. He hopes to complete shortly all requirements for the Doctor of

Philosophy degree. His dissertation is concerned with tracers and ground-water.

The use of minute amounts of radioactive materials to trace the flow of ground water is somewhat comparable to medicine's use of radioactive tracers in

treating patients.

The geologists' use of radioisotopes remains generally in the study stage, Jennings' survey of scientific literature showed.

"Underground water provides the largest available supply of fresh water and in parts of Texas

is the only dependable supply," he said.

This ground water moves at rates varying from five-feet daily to five-feet annually.

Dr. M. C. Schroeder of the geology faculty serves as Jennings' graduate committee chair-

man. The research was sponsored by the Texas Engineering Experiment Station and the Graduate College.

His laboratory study centered upon six radioisotopes of possible use as ground water tracers.

"It's a difficult problem to find

a tracer that will move with the water," Jennings pointed out.

"The big advantage of radioactive materials as tracers is that they can be used in very small amounts and won't modify any of the properties of the aquifer (the water-bearing bed of sand or

other material)," he continued.

Jennings is confident that isotopes can be used safely for ground water field studies by trained personnel "with a sound knowledge of geological formations."

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