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United States Department of the Interior

U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
Colorado Water Science Center
Box 25046 MS 415
Denver Federal Center
Denver, CO 80225

MEMORANDUM

November 9, 2017

To: Rural Water Authority of Douglas County

From: Suzanne Paschke, Ph.D., Associate Direction of Hydrologic Studies
U.S. Geological Survey, Lakewood, CO

Subject: Progress report on Douglas County groundwater-level monitoring network for July 2016 through June 2017

This memorandum from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to the Rural Water Authority of Douglas County (RWADC) reports progress and data for the period July 2016 through June 2017, from a groundwater-level monitoring program operated and maintained by the USGS in rural areas of Douglas County. In 2011, the USGS, in cooperation with the RWADC and the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), began a program to measure changes in groundwater levels (as depth to groundwater below land surface) in rural areas of Douglas County, herein labeled as the Douglas County groundwater-level monitoring network or program.

Purpose and Scope

This progress report was prepared to meet reporting requirements for the 2014-2017 Water-Supply Reserve Account grant received from CWCB. Data and interpretations for groundwater-level measurements from 2011 through 2013 were published as a USGS Scientific Investigations Report (SIR) in 2014 (Everett, 2014), and a second USGS SIR with data and interpretations from July 2013 through June 2018 is scheduled for completion in January 2019. This progress report contains text describing the setting, background, methods, and results of the Douglas County groundwater-level monitoring program. A list of 36 wells in the network (table 1) and a map of well locations (fig. 1) are provided along with hydrographs for each well. Water-levels are measured by hand using steel and/or electric tapes in 21 of the 36 wells. Fifteen of the 36 wells are equipped with vented pressure transducers that collect groundwater-level data on hourly intervals. All of the data are publically available through the USGS National Water Information System (NWIS web, <http://nwis.waterdata.usgs.gov/co/nwis/gwlevels>) and can be accessed using the USGS site identification numbers provided in table 1.

Table 1. Wells in the Douglas County groundwater-level monitoring network.

[shaded areas indicate wells with pressure transducers and continuous data loggers]

USGS site identification number	Station name	Common name	Latitude, in decimal degrees	Longitude, in decimal degrees	Land-surface altitude, in feet	Aquifer of completion	Continuous data and notes
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392856104424101	SC00606531CD UDAW 2	UDAW 2	39.48086667	-104.7116139	6284.27	upper Dawson	---
392412104434201	SC00706636AC UDAW 3	UDAW 3	39.40001944	-104.7281861	6414.87	upper Dawson	YES
392934104414901	SC00606532BB UDAW 4	UDAW 4	39.4913	-104.6961056	6267.98	upper Dawson	YES
392149104415501	SC00806517BB UDAW 5	UDAW 5	39.3619	-104.6981861	6501.66	upper Dawson	YES
392441104394901	SC00706528DA UDAW 6	UDAW 6	39.4098583	-104.6630028	6590.31	upper Dawson	---
391658104453101	SC00906610DA UDAW 7	UDAW 7	39.28083889	-104.7570472	6808.79	upper Dawson	---
393252104434701	SC00606612BD UDAW 8	UDAW 8	39.545725	-104.7279333	6195.89	upper Dawson	---
393226104394401	SC00606509DD UDAW 9	UDAW 9	39.5383833	-104.6692611	6285.29	upper Dawson	YES
392916104423601	SC00606531BD UDAW 10	UDAW 10	39.48629167	-104.7096056	6288.97	upper Dawson	YES
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390811104453801	SC01006634DA LDAW 3	LDAW 3	39.1348472	-104.7602389	7308.07	lower Dawson	---
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391143104482501	SC01006608CA LDAW 6	LDAW 6	39.1937972	-104.8063583	7085.07	lower Dawson	YES
391654104464501	SC00906609DA LDAW 7	LDAW 7	39.28015278	-104.7795944	6676.78	lower Dawson	YES
392949104523401	SC00606727DC LDAW 8	LDAW 8	39.4948083	-104.8759889	6235.80	lower Dawson	---
393239104452901	SC00606610DA LDAW 9	LDAW 9	39.5430222	-104.7594389	5908.71	lower Dawson	---
393021104533101	SC00606728AB LDAW 10	LDAW 10	39.5040583	-104.8918972	6324.88	lower Dawson	---
391257104530201	SC01006703BB LDAW 11	LDAW 11	39.21385	-104.8834861	6799.61	lower Dawson	---
393259104491001	SC00606607ABCA GRNDAW4	GRNDAW4	39.54989444	-104.8198333	5816.5	Dawson	YES
391656104473001	SC00906609CB DENV 1	DENV 1	39.27885278	-104.7912611	6783.59	Denver	YES
391929104574101	SC00806826DA DENV 2	DENV 2	39.32282778	-104.9611861	6268.94	Denver	YES
391245104525501	SC01006703BC DENV 3	DENV 3	39.21075556	-104.8824111	6822.46	Denver	---
392115104553501	SC00806718DA DENV 4	DENV 4	39.35262778	-104.9256778	6376.53	Denver	---
392235105003001	SC00806809BA DENV 5	DENV 5	39.37483889	-105.0084611	6317.29	Denver	YES
393040105003201	SC00606821CD DENV 6	DENV 6	39.50914167	-105.0091056	5716.55	Denver	YES
391212104473801	SC01006608AA DENV 7	DENV 7	39.2007583	-104.7941861	7003.66	Denver	---
390755104454001	SC01006634DC DENV8	DENV8	39.13059444	-104.7611833	7265.13	Denver	---
391936104570101	SC00806825DB DENV 10	DENV 10	39.32531389	-104.9501222	6410.74	Denver	---
393330104450701	SC00606602CB DENV 11	DENV 11	39.55622778	-104.7521278	6058.29	Denver	---
393252104492101	SC00606607BDAB GRNDEV3	GRNDEV3	39.54773056	-104.8230972	5864.18	Denver	YES
392853105015001	SC00606832CD ARAP 1	ARAP 1	39.47944444	-105.0302306	5789.08	Arapahoe	---
393120105003101	SC00606821BA ARAP 2	ARAP 2	39.52023056	-105.0083556	5750.03	Arapahoe	---
392522105015001	SC00706820CD LARA 1	LARA 1	39.42108889	-105.0303556	6169.43	Laramie-Fox Hills	---
392522105015401	SC00706820CC LARA 2	LARA 2	39.42088889	-105.0314389	6155.85	Laramie-Fox Hills	---

Also in Grandview Estates network

Also in Grandview Estates network

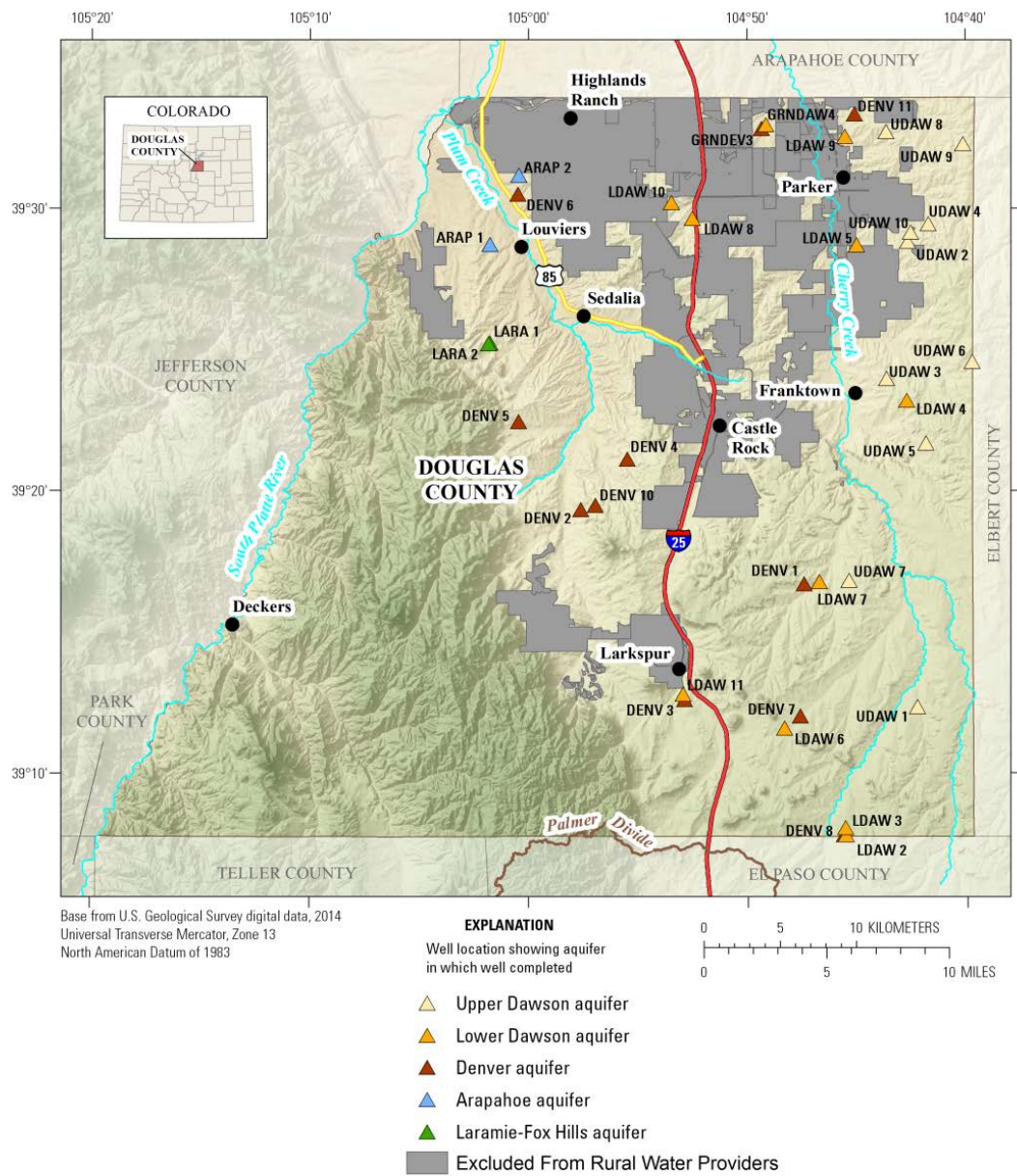


Figure 1. Location of wells in the Douglas County groundwater-level monitoring network.

Setting

Douglas County is located midway between Denver and Colorado Springs, and in 2010, it was the fastest growing county along the Front Range urban corridor of Colorado with a 62.4 percent population increase from 2000 to 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Land use in the county is diverse. Much of the county is still rural, although urbanized areas including Castle Rock, Parker, Highlands Ranch and many large suburban housing developments are expanding rapidly along with the population. Population growth is primarily in the eastern two-thirds of the county, which is located east of the Front Range in areas underlain by Cretaceous to Tertiary-aged sandstone and shale of the Denver Basin aquifer system. The western one-third of Douglas County is located in mountainous areas of the Rocky Mountain Front Range underlain by Precambrian granitic bedrock. Because surface-water supplies in the county are limited, about 70 percent of the municipal water supply is groundwater sourced from the Denver Basin aquifers, and rural areas depend on self-supplied groundwater for water supply (Paschke, 2011).

Because of substantial pumping from the Denver Basin aquifers, which are administered as a non-renewable source of water, groundwater depletion and water-level declines in the Denver Basin aquifers are of concern in Douglas County (Paschke, 2011). The RWADC was created in 2008 to assist rural county residents and small water districts (fewer than 500 taps) by evaluating water supplies and demand, determining appropriate services and/or facilities, and advising and assisting other agencies on rural water issues (<http://www.rwadc.org/home.html> accessed September 2012). In 2011, the USGS began working cooperatively with the RWADC and the CWCB to operate and maintain a groundwater-level monitoring network for Denver Basin aquifers in rural areas of Douglas County.

Background

This section describes the work scopes and funding to date (November 2017) for the Douglas County groundwater-level monitoring network.

In 2011, RWADC received a Water Supply Reserve Account grant from the CWCB for \$113,055. These funds were matched with USGS Cooperative matching funds of \$60,896, for a total budget of \$173,951 (State Contract C150473). The project with RWADC began in January 2011 in Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2011, with water-level monitoring scheduled to continue through September 2012 (FFY 2012), and SIR completion scheduled for December 2012.

In July 2011, the CWCB approved the use of \$20,000 from the Severance Tax Grant application process to extend the period of monitoring for the RWADC project. The USGS provided \$13,330 in matching funds, and bi-monthly and continuous water-levels were measured for the nine-month period from October 2011 through June 2012. This Severance Tax Grant extended the monitoring period for the entire project through March 2013. A USGS SIR presenting the data collected between June 2011 and June 2013 was published in 2014 (Everett, 2014).

In 2013, RWADC received a second Water Supply Reserve Account grant from the CWCB for \$50,000, with matching funds of \$16,913 from the USGS, and \$745 from the RWADC, for a total budget of \$67,658. These funds were used to continue bi-monthly and continuous water-levels measurements for a nine-month period from September 2013 through June 2014. These funds also included costs for the publication of a second SIR presenting the data collected between July 2013 and June 2014.

Also in 2013, the CWCB provided \$19,960, and with USGS matching funds of \$6,655, 15 pressure transducers and associated equipment were purchased for dedicated use in the Douglas County groundwater-level monitoring network.

In 2014, RWADC received a third Water Supply Reserve Account grant (Task 3) from the CWCB for \$13,977, with matching funds of \$27,956 from the USGS, and \$13,979 from the RWADC, for a total budget of \$55,912. These funds were used to maintain the 15 continuous groundwater-levels measurement sites with three visits per year and measure water levels in all of the network wells in February for the period from July 2014 through October 2016. As part of the agreement, the second SIR was delayed until June 2017 to include the data collected through June 2016.

In 2017, water-level measurements for February 2017 and June 2017 were funded by the RWADC (\$10,000) and USGS matching funds (\$2,500). A Severance Tax Grant award from the CWCB was awarded in July 2017 (\$49,500), and along with USGS matching funds (\$12,500), is being used to continue water-level monitoring through June 2018. Water-level measurements will be made in all 36 wells in February 2017 and February 2018 and in all 15 wells equipped with transducers in July 2017, October 2017, and June 2018. The publication of the planned SIR is being deferred until January 2019 to include the data collected between July 2013 and June 2018.

Monitoring network

The Douglas County groundwater-level monitoring network consists of 36 domestic wells (table 1) located in rural areas of Douglas County (fig. 1). Target areas for groundwater-level monitoring in Douglas County were identified on the basis of statistical analysis and simulation results from the Denver Basin groundwater flow model (Paschke, 2011) as well as anecdotal information provided by residents (Everett, 2014). Once areas of interest were identified, the Colorado Division of Water Resources (CDWR) online well records were used to select sites for field visits and to request landowner permissions. Wells were identified within areas of interest with a spatial and vertical distribution that represents the five aquifers of the Denver Basin aquifer system that underlie Douglas County. From youngest to oldest, the aquifers are: the upper Dawson aquifer, the lower Dawson aquifer, the Denver aquifer, the Arapahoe aquifer, and the Laramie-Fox Hills aquifer. Everett (2014) provides a detailed discussion of methods used to identify target areas for monitoring and well selection. This study is possible because of the willing participation by private well owners who allow access to their wells.

Target areas and aquifers for water-level monitoring were selected in February and March 2011, and individual domestic wells were selected for monitoring in April and May 2011. Bi-monthly water-level measurements in 32 wells began in June 2011 and have continued to date (November 2017). An additional 4 wells were added to the network in August, 2011, and one additional well was added in August 2012. Presently (2017), the network consists of 36 wells- 10 completed in the upper Dawson aquifer, 11 completed in the lower Dawson aquifer, 11 completed in the Denver aquifer, 2 completed in the Arapahoe aquifer, and 2 completed in the Laramie-Fox Hills aquifer (table 1).

Water-level Measurement Methods

Water-levels are measured by hand using steel tapes in 21 of the 36 wells (table 1), and the data are described as “discrete” water-level measurements. Water levels are measured and recorded

to within 0.01 feet (ft) by using a calibrated steel tape, whenever possible, following procedures outlined by Cunningham and Schalk (2011) (with the exception that a break-away weight was not used because of the concern the weight could become tangled in the pump wiring). When conditions such as inclement weather or the presence of condensation within the well casing prohibited the use of a steel tape, a calibrated electric tape is used instead. Depth-to-water measurements are made from the measuring point (MP), typically the top of the steel surface casing or well cap. To verify that the water level in the well is under static conditions, consecutive measurements are made until two measurements were within 0.02 ft of one another or the reason for lack of agreement was determined. If consecutive measurements indicate the water level is rising, or recovering, the shallowest measurement is used and remarked with a status of “R” for recently pumped. If consecutive measurements indicate the water level was slowly falling, or declining, the shallowest measurement is used and marked with a status of “S” for nearby pumping. If multiple measurements showed no trend but are within 0.1 ft of each other, the median of the measurements is used. If a pump is operated during a visit, the water level is allowed to recover for approximately 10 minutes until a measurement is made. If a pump is cycling during a visit, the tape is held in place during the recovery period until the pump turned on again, and this single shallowest level is recorded. Depth to water below land surface is calculated by subtracting the MP height above land surface from the depth to water below the MP. The tape is disinfected with Clorox wipes between wells.

Pressure-transducer instrumentation in 15 of the 36 wells (table 1) includes a vented 30 pound-per-square-inch pressure transducer and a built-in data logger. Water-levels from these transducer-equipped wells are described as “continuous” data. The transducers are suspended in the well on a vented communication cable that allowed downloading the data without disturbing the probe. Once the transducer was placed in the well, it was calibrated to a manual water-level measurement (depth below land surface) and programmed to record a water level every hour. The manual water-level measurements are used to calibrate the time-series water-level data and correct for instrument drift. Graphs of the continuous time-series data presented in this memorandum include the daily maximum groundwater elevation (Appendix 1), which is the highest groundwater-level elevation for a given day of 24 observations. The daily maximum groundwater-level elevation most often occurs when nearby pumping is at its lowest (usually during the early morning hours) and is most representative of the static water level. In some cases, the manual measurement (circle or triangle) plotted along with the time-series data is less than the time-series daily maximum value. This slight difference observed on the graphs occurs because the instantaneous manual measurement is not always the daily maximum observation recorded by the data logger.

Results

Site information and water-level data for all 36 domestic wells in the Douglas County groundwater-level monitoring network are accessible from the USGS National Water Information System (NWIS) database (<http://nwis.waterdata.usgs.gov/co/nwis/gwlevels>) by searching for data using the USGS site identification numbers listed in table 1. Hydrographs showing temporal changes in water levels for individual wells from 2009 through June 2017 are shown in Appendix 1, and for transducer-equipped wells, hydrographs for both the continuous and discrete water-level measurements are provided. Preliminary observations on hydrograph patterns are noted in the following paragraphs.

In general, groundwater levels in the monitored domestic wells display a seasonal pattern with the highest groundwater-level elevations occurring during the winter and the lowest groundwater-level elevations occurring during the summer. Minimum groundwater-level elevations (maximum depths to water) occur during the summer months because of increased groundwater pumping for lawn irrigation. Water levels typically recover during the winter months when pumping is less than during the summer. Many wells exhibit winter water levels that fully recover to those observed in previous years indicating that the depth to water is relatively consistent from year to year at these locations and not substantially affected by local pumping or recharge. Water levels in upper Dawson aquifer wells UDAW1, UDAW2, UDAW4, UDAW5, UDAW7, UDAW8, and UDAW10; lower Dawson aquifer wells LDAW5, LDAW8, and LDAW9; Denver aquifer wells DENV1, DENV5, DENV11, and GRNDEV3; and Laramie-Fox Hills well LARA1 all exhibit seasonal patterns that show little change or a slight rise in the highest groundwater-levels elevations since 2011. Groundwater levels in LDAW11 showed an overall rise in water level of about 4 feet from 2012 to 2017.

Other wells exhibit a consistent decline in the highest groundwater-level elevations since 2011 including upper Dawson aquifer wells UDAW3, UDAW6, and UDAW9; lower Dawson aquifer wells LDAW4, LDAW7, LDAW10; Denver aquifer wells DENV2, DENV3, DENV4, DENV6, DENV8, and DENV10; Arapahoe aquifer wells ARAP1; and Laramie-Fox Hills well LARA2. Two other notable patterns are observed in the hydrographs. Water levels in lower Dawson aquifer wells UDAW1, LDAW2, LDAW3, LDAW6, and GRNDAW4; Denver aquifer well DENV7; and Arapahoe aquifer well ARAP2 all exhibited a minimum (low) groundwater-level elevation in the summer of 2014 suggesting that a change in pumping or recharge conditions in 2014 affected groundwater levels at multiple locations. Water levels at these location declined prior to the summer of 2014 and began rising after 2014. Finally, water-level declines are noted in 2017 for several wells. The 2017 water-level declines were greater than previous declines or where declines were not previously observed at wells UDAW1, UDAW3, UDAW9, LDAW2, LDAW4, LDAW7, GRNDAW4, DENV1, DENV2, DENV4, DENV5, DENV6, DENV7, DENV8, GRNDEV3, and ARAP2 suggesting another change in recharge or discharge conditions in 2017. The USGS SIR scheduled for completion in January 2019 will contain an in-depth spatial and statistical analysis of the hydrographs and patterns noted herein. Ancillary information such as well location and construction, proximity to streams, pumping records, and precipitation data also will be considered and may provide additional evidence for understanding and explaining temporal changes in groundwater levels for Douglas County.

References

- Cunningham, W.L., and Schalk, C.W., comps., 2011, Groundwater technical procedures of the U.S. Geological Survey: U.S. Geological Survey Techniques and Methods 1–A1, 151 p.
- Everett, R.R., 2014, Groundwater levels in the Denver Basin bedrock aquifers of Douglas County, Colorado, 2011-2013: U.S. Geological Survey Scientific Investigations Report 2014-5172, 45 p., <http://dx.doi.org/10.3133/sir20145172>.
- In-Situ Inc., 2015a, Level TROLL 400, 500 & 700 data loggers: In-Situ Inc., 2 p., accessed January 16, 2014, at https://in-situ.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Level-TROLL-400-500-700-700h_Manual.pdf. [product description]

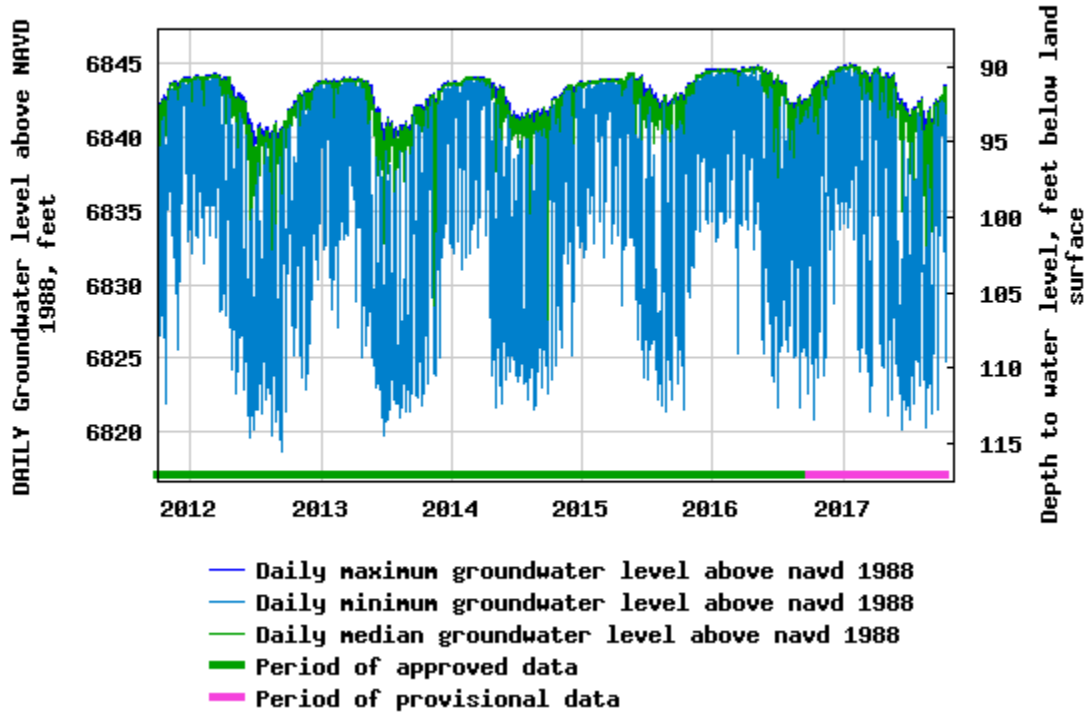
In-Situ Inc., 2015b, Aqual TROLL CTD Conductivity, Temperature Plus Water Level Logging: In-Situ Inc., 2 p., accessed January 16, 2014, at https://in-situ.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Aqua-TROLL-100-and-200-Data-Loggers_Specs.pdf. [product description]

Paschke, S.S., ed., 2011, Groundwater Availability of the Denver Basin Aquifer System, Colorado: U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 1770, 274 p.

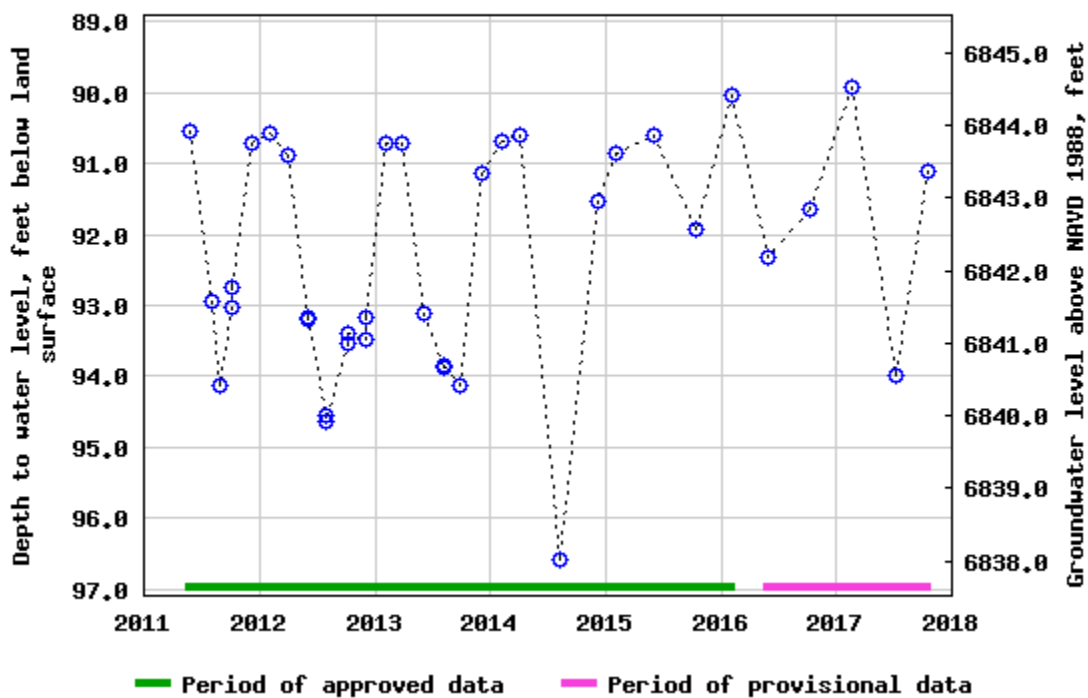
Appendix 1. Water-level hydrographs for monitored domestic wells in the Douglas County groundwater-level monitoring network. See Table 1 for well location information.



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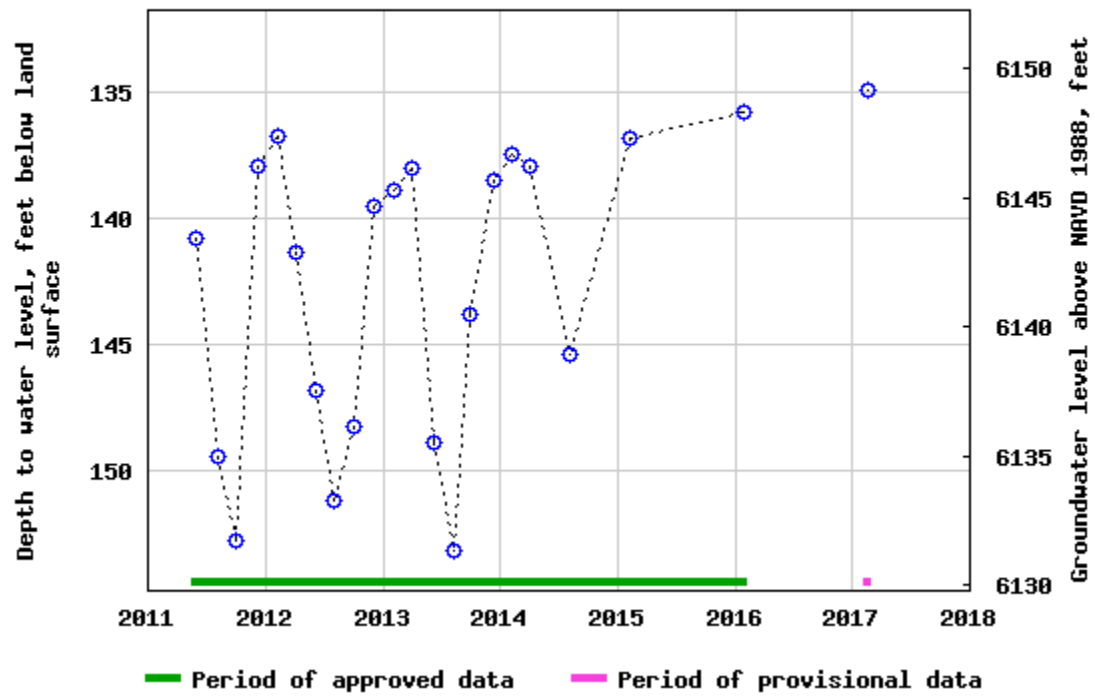


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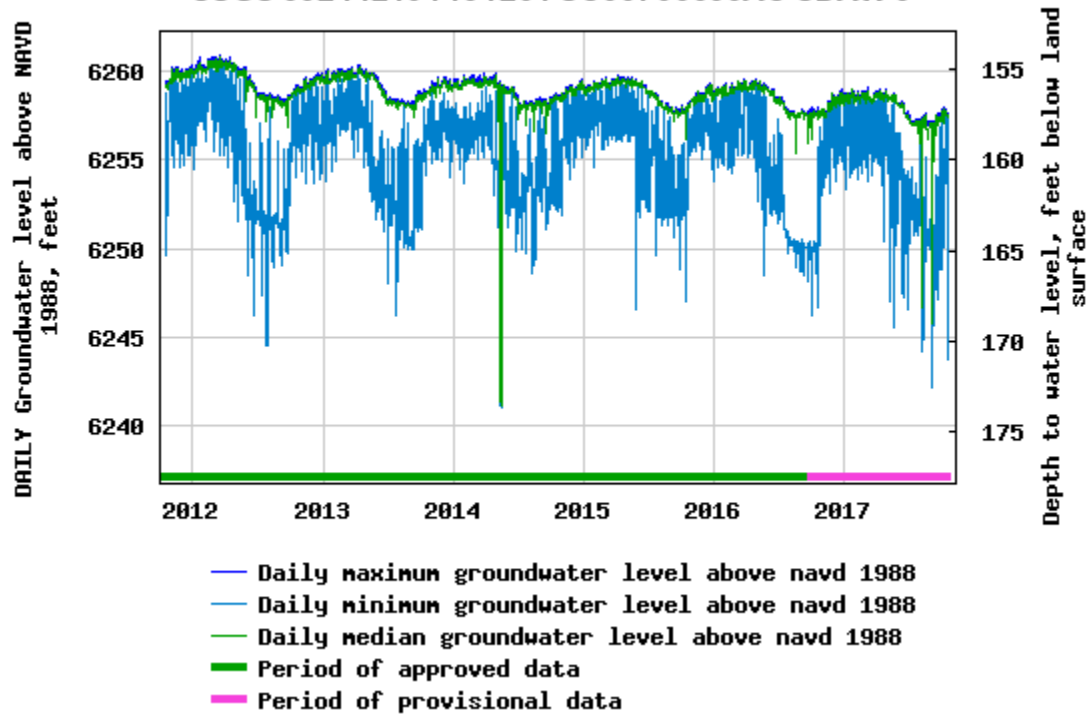


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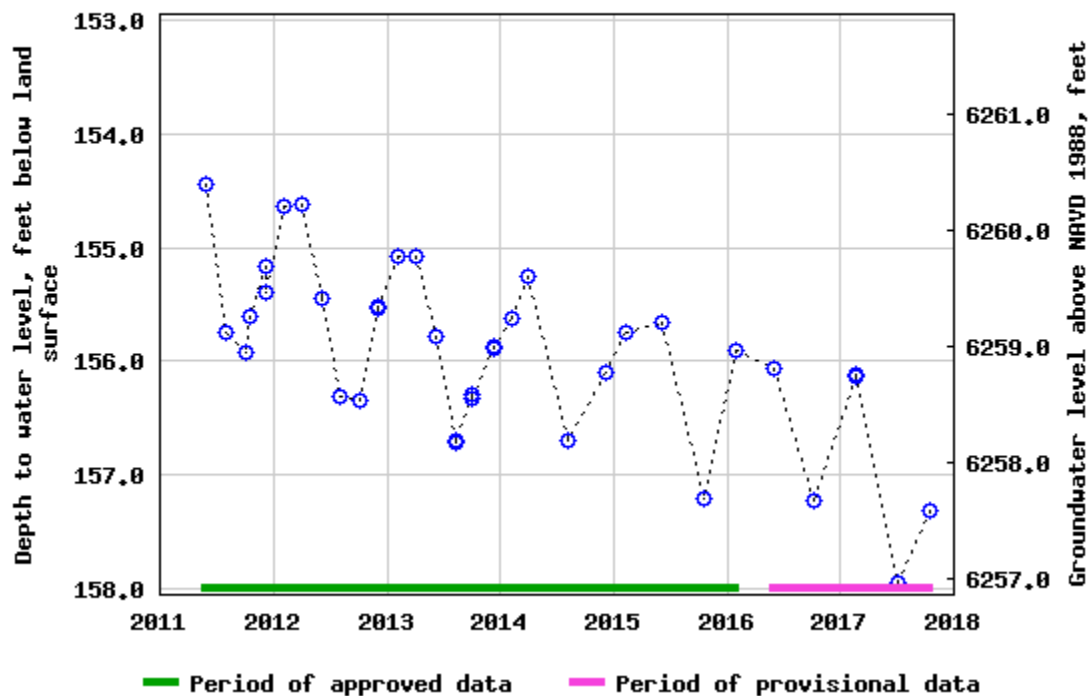




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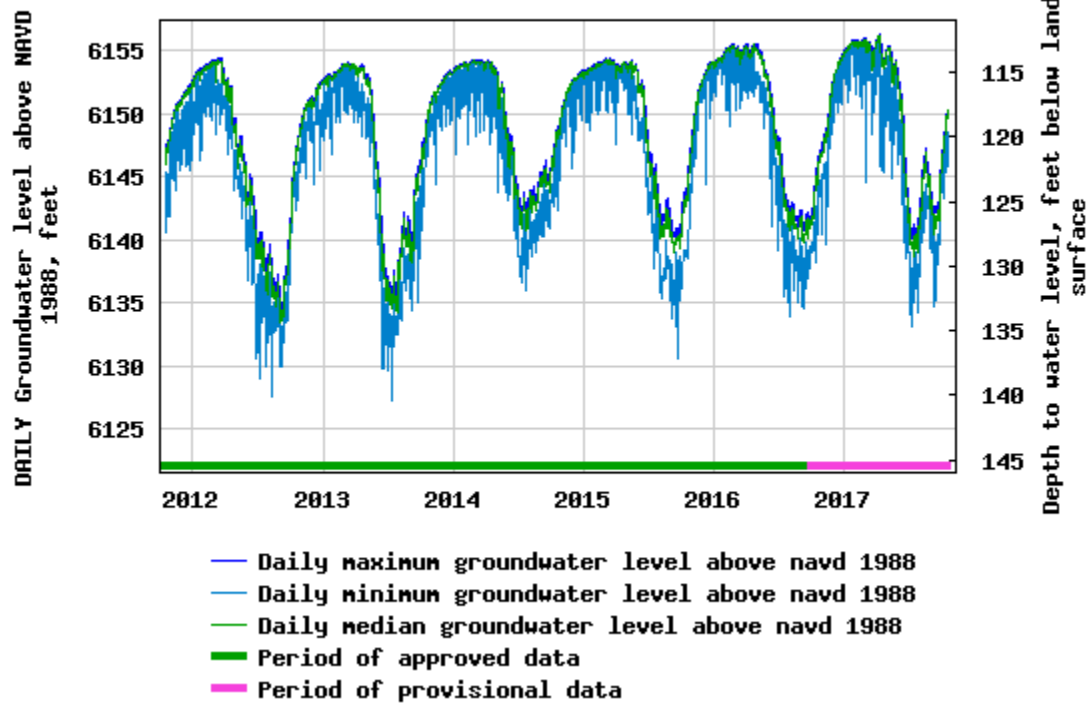


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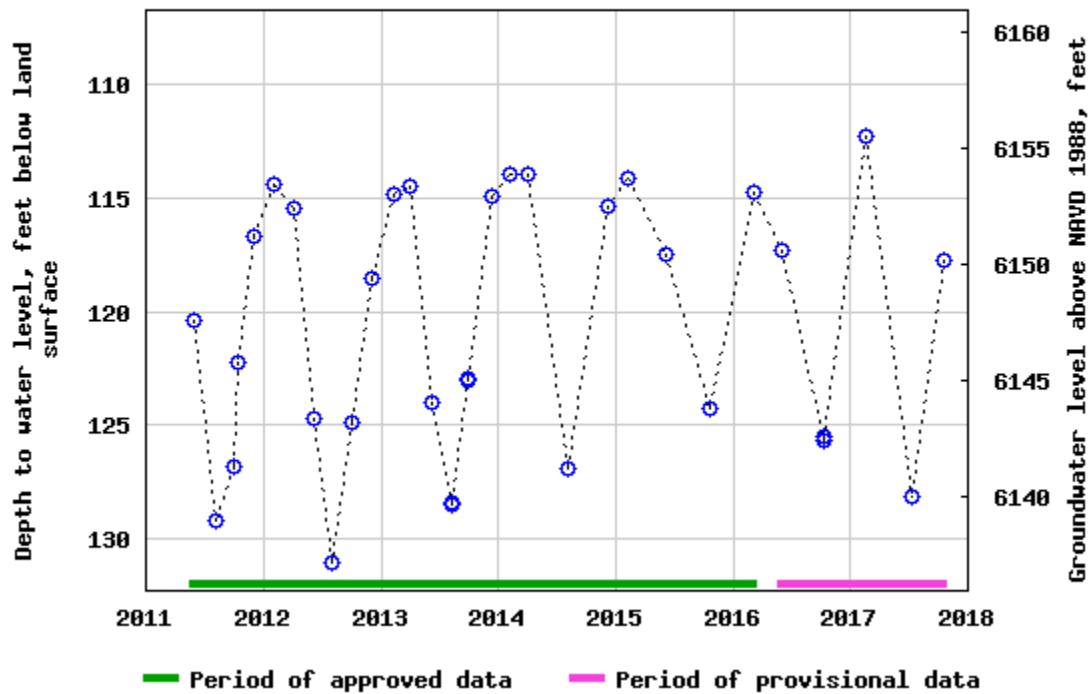




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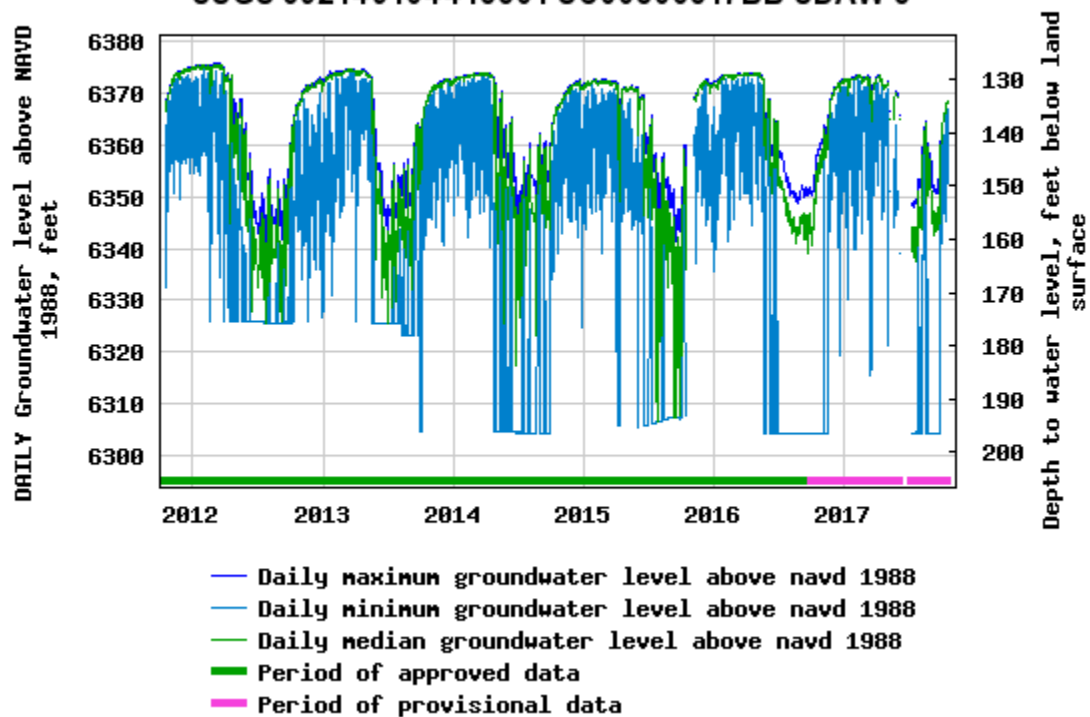


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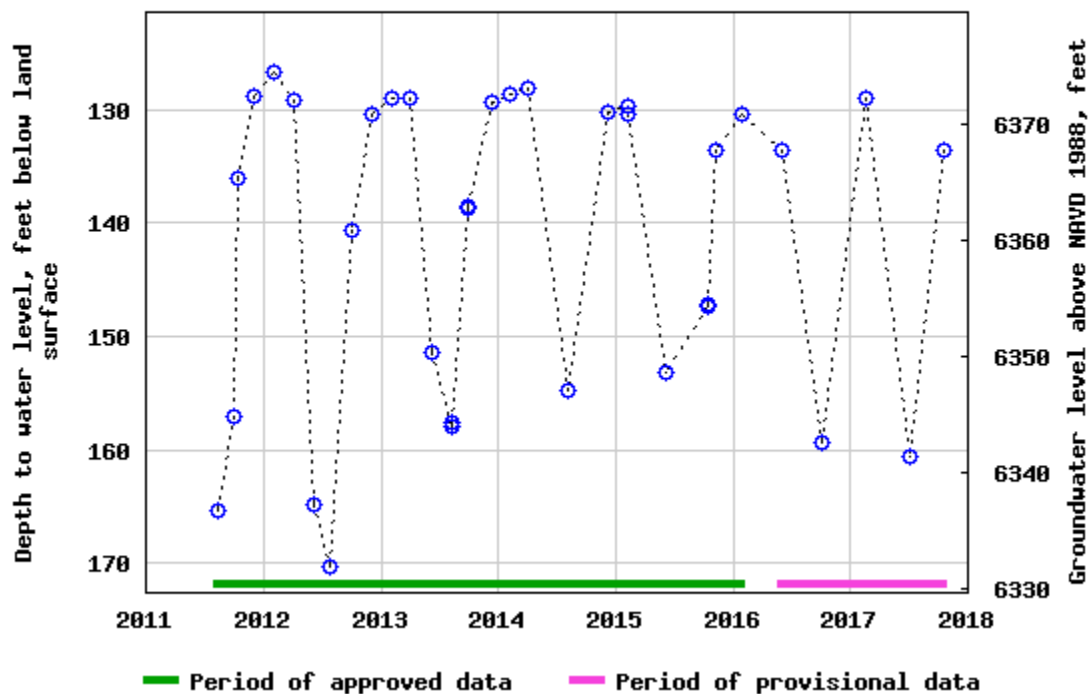




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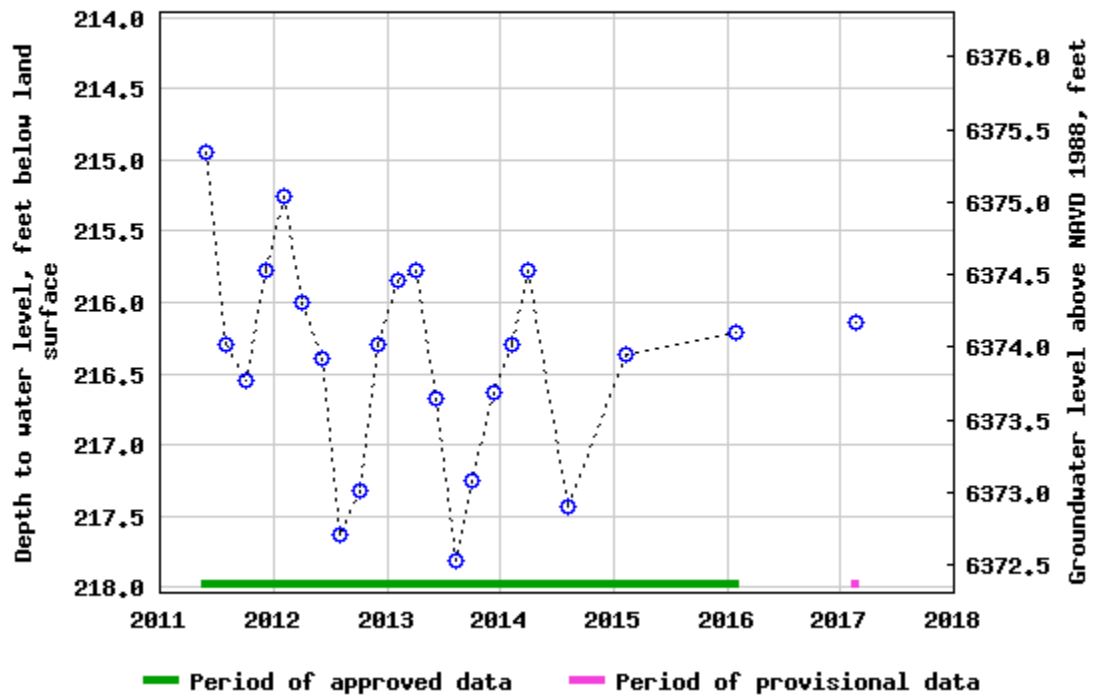


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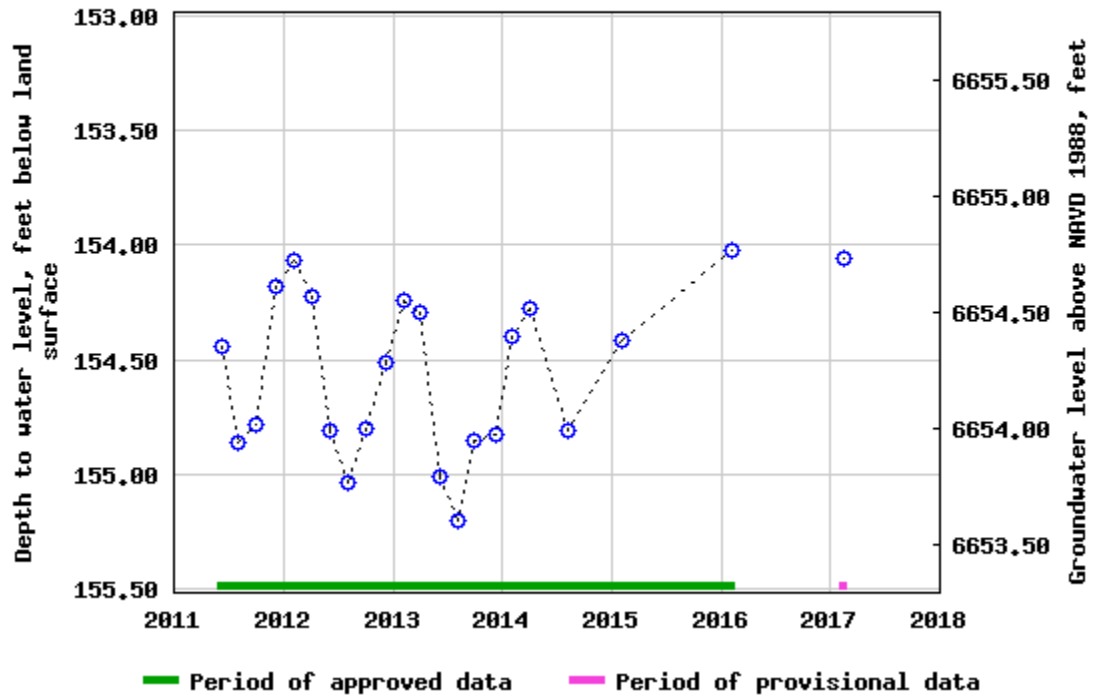




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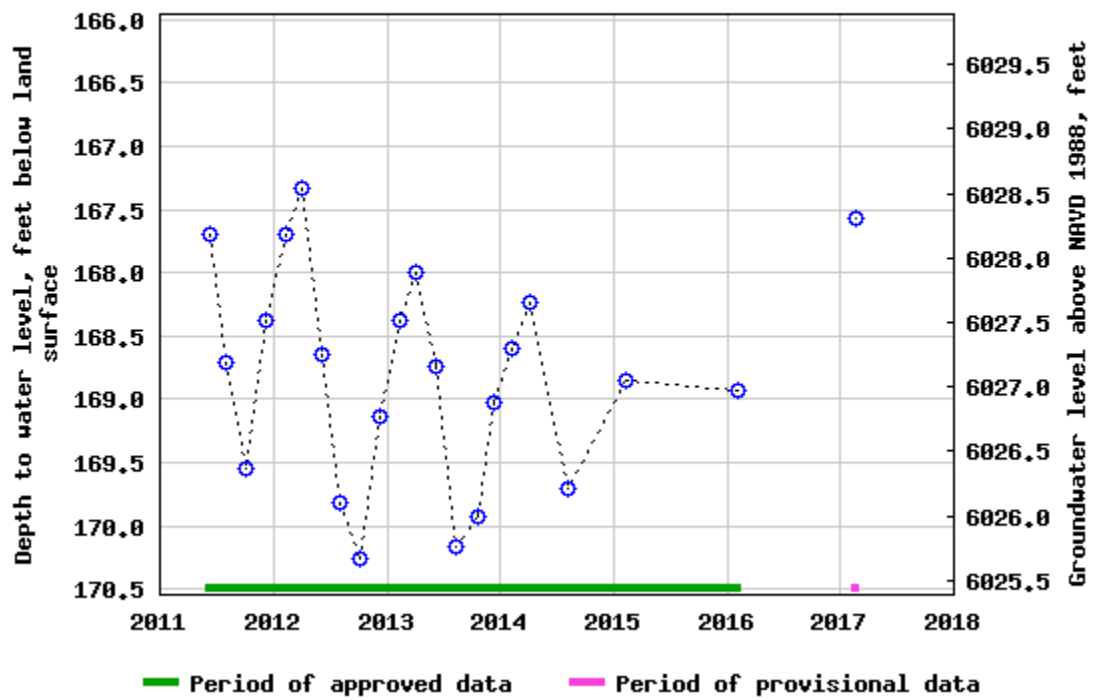


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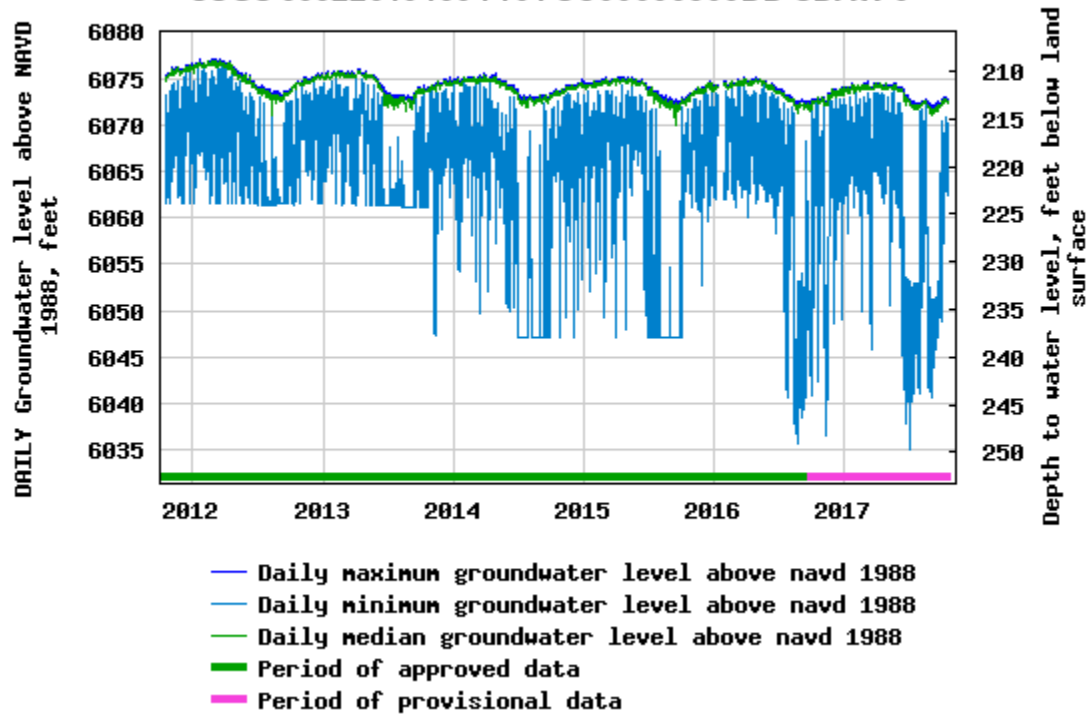


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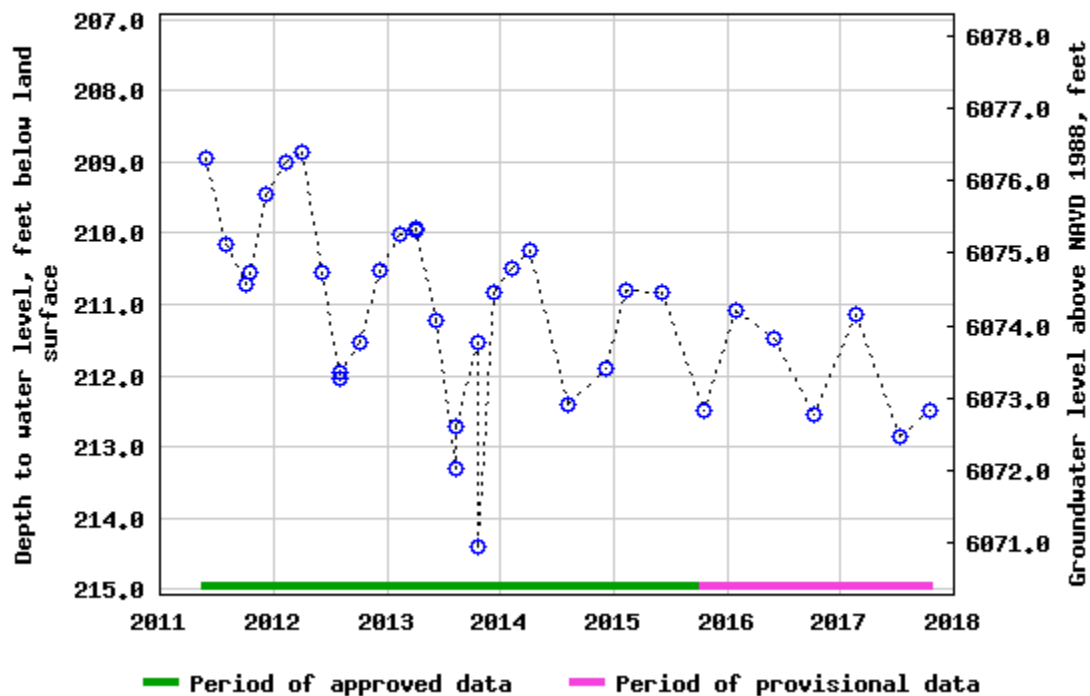




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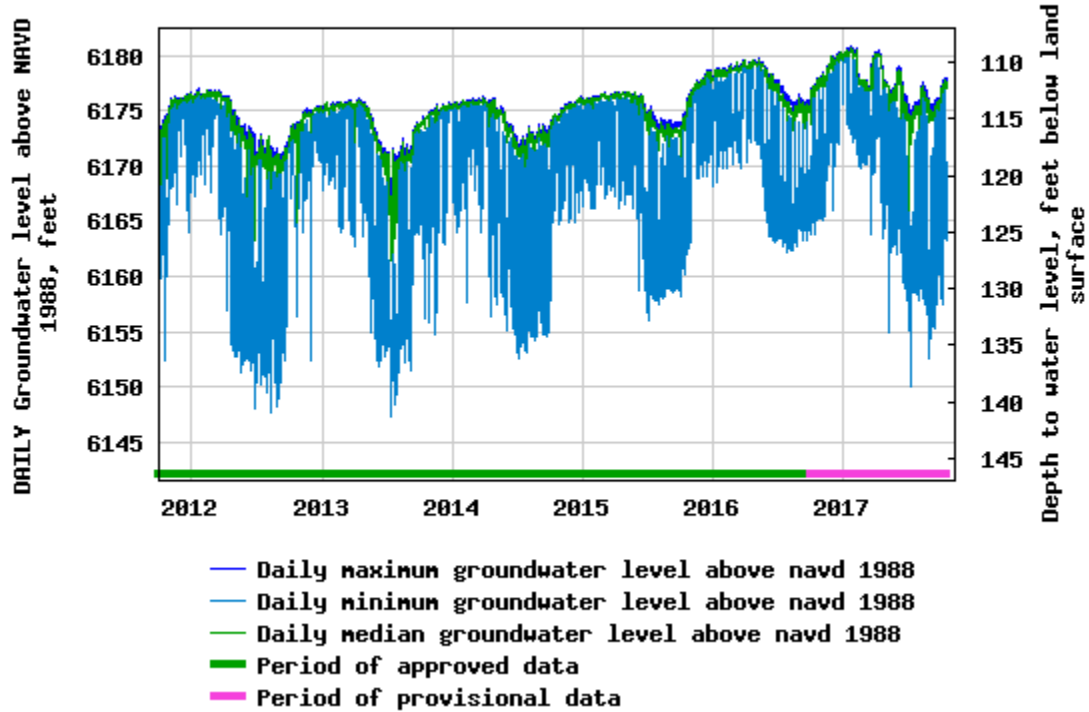


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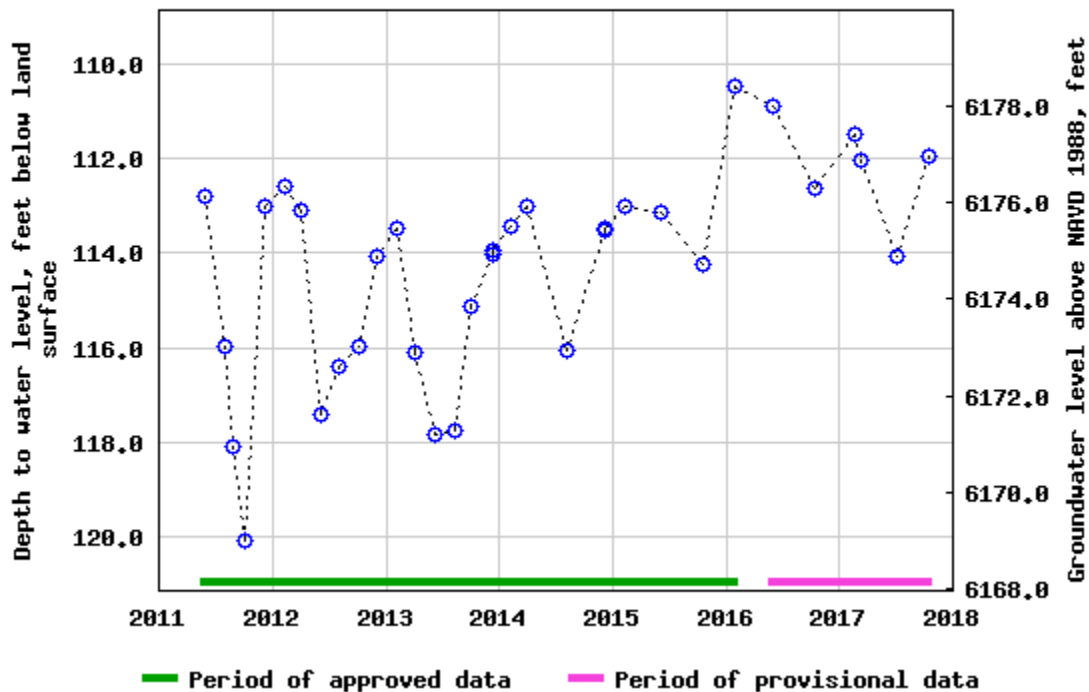




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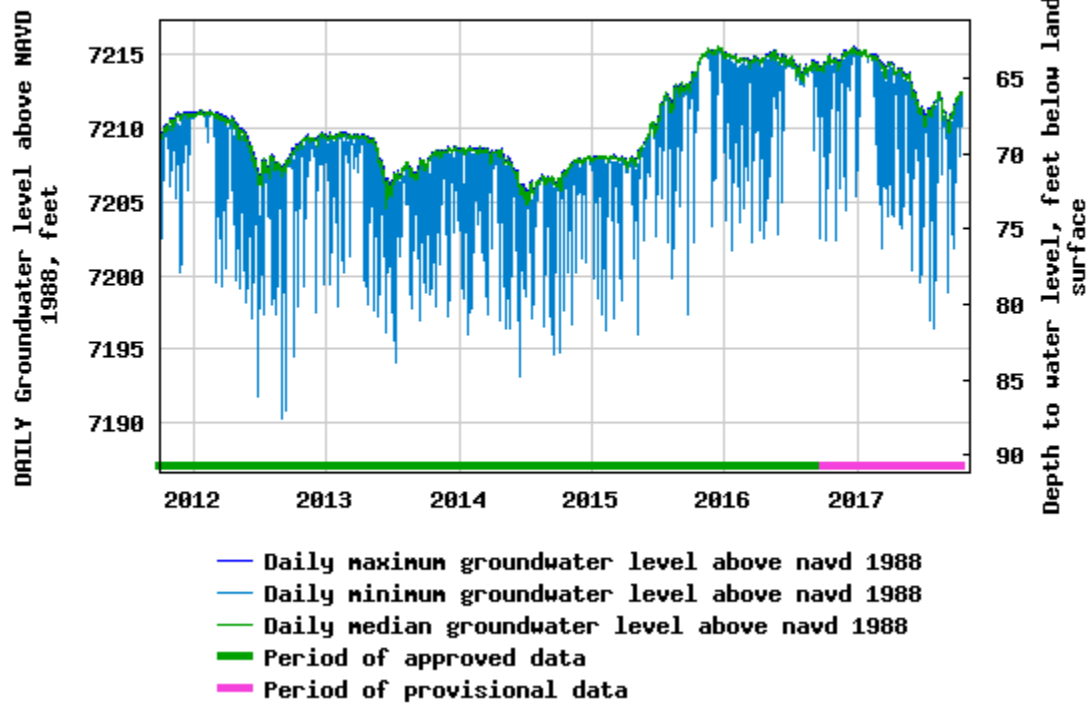


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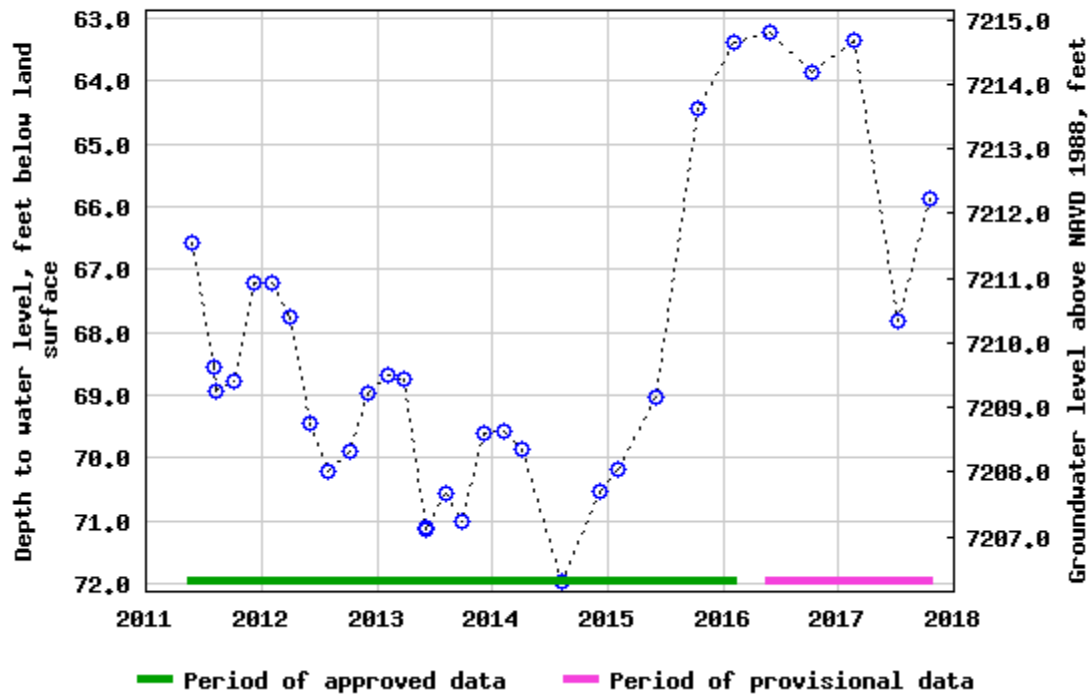




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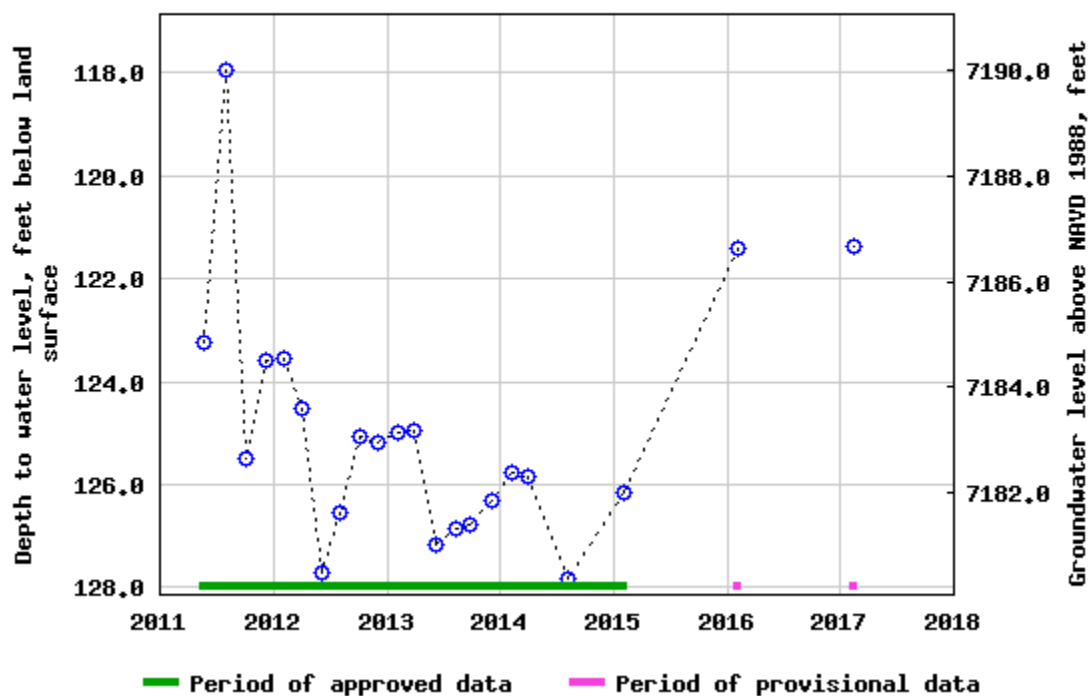


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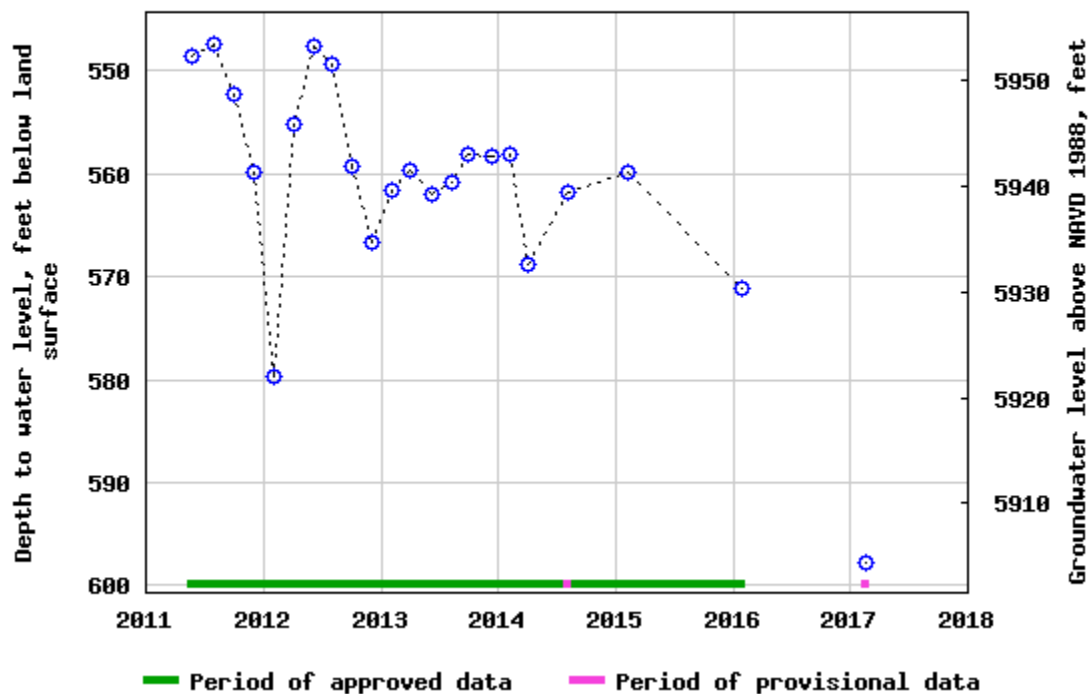




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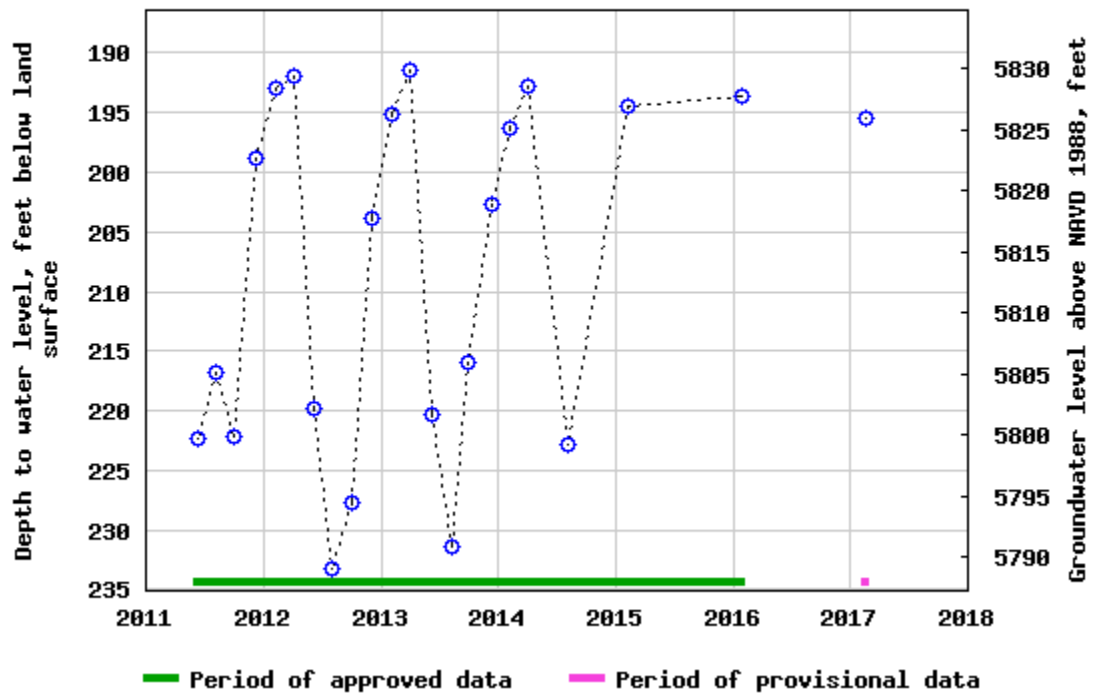


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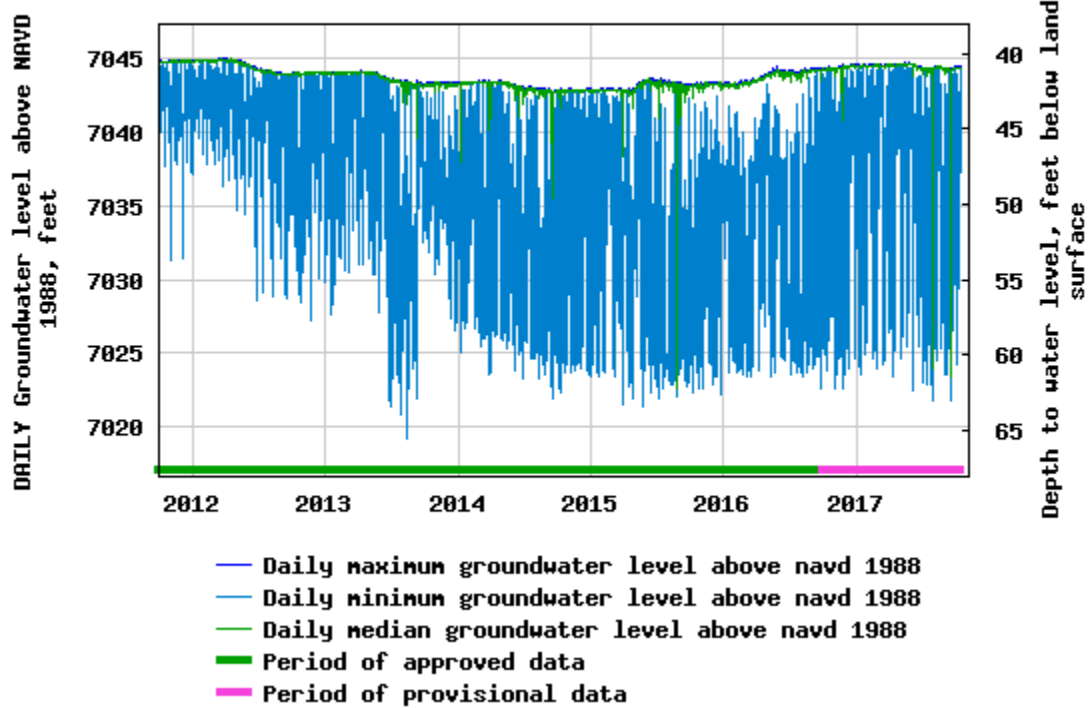


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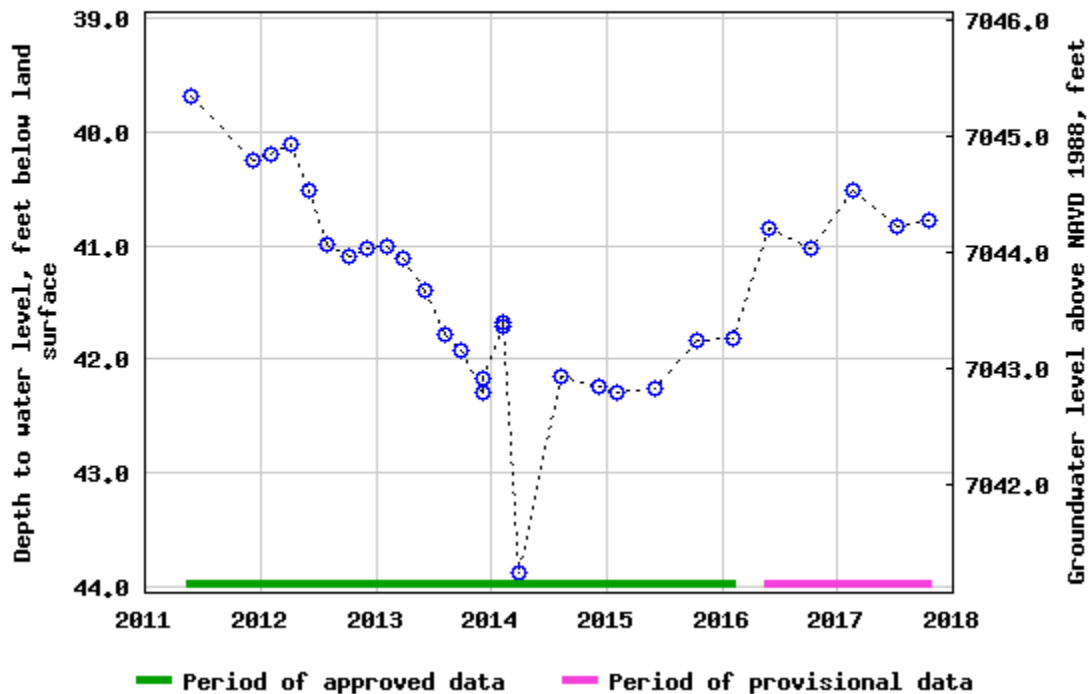




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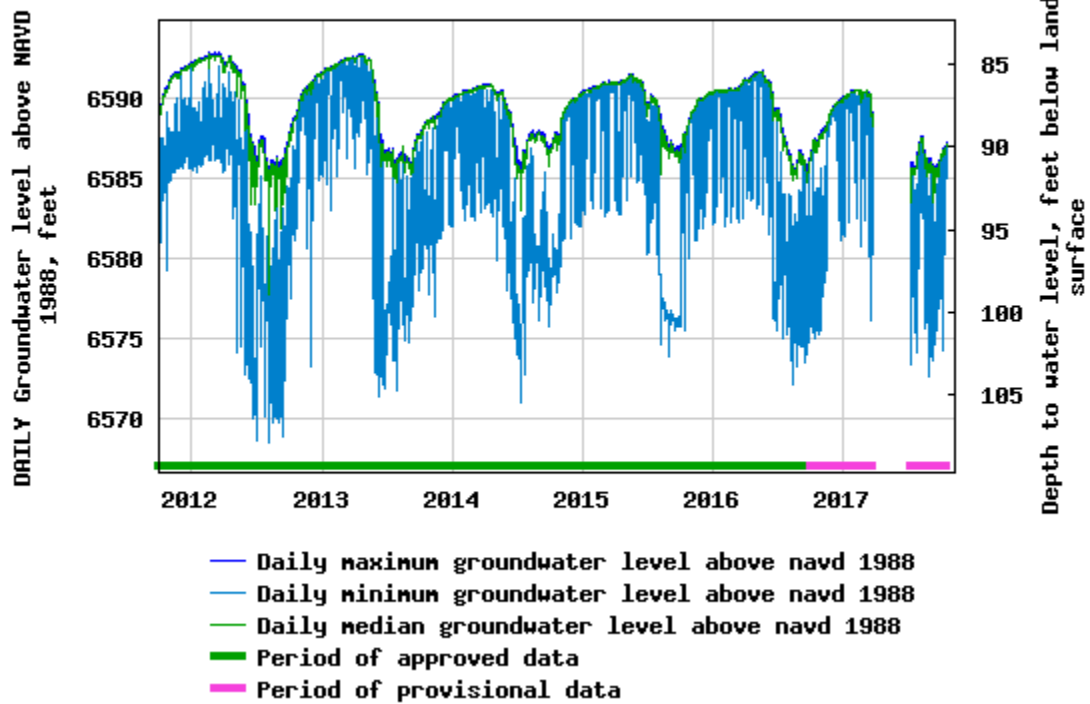


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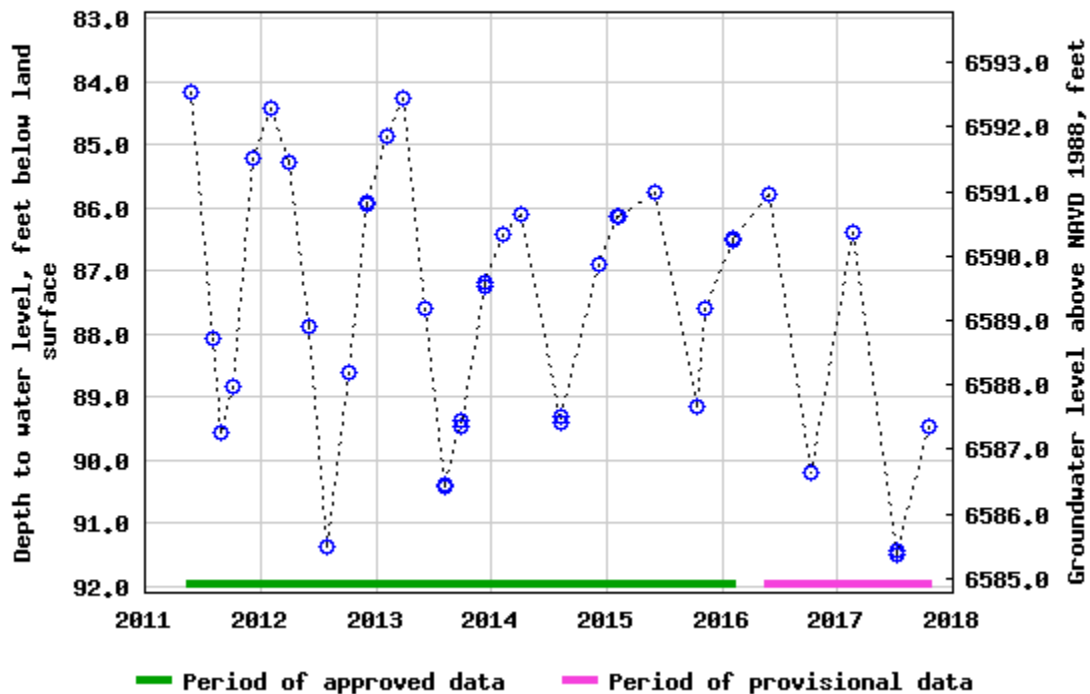




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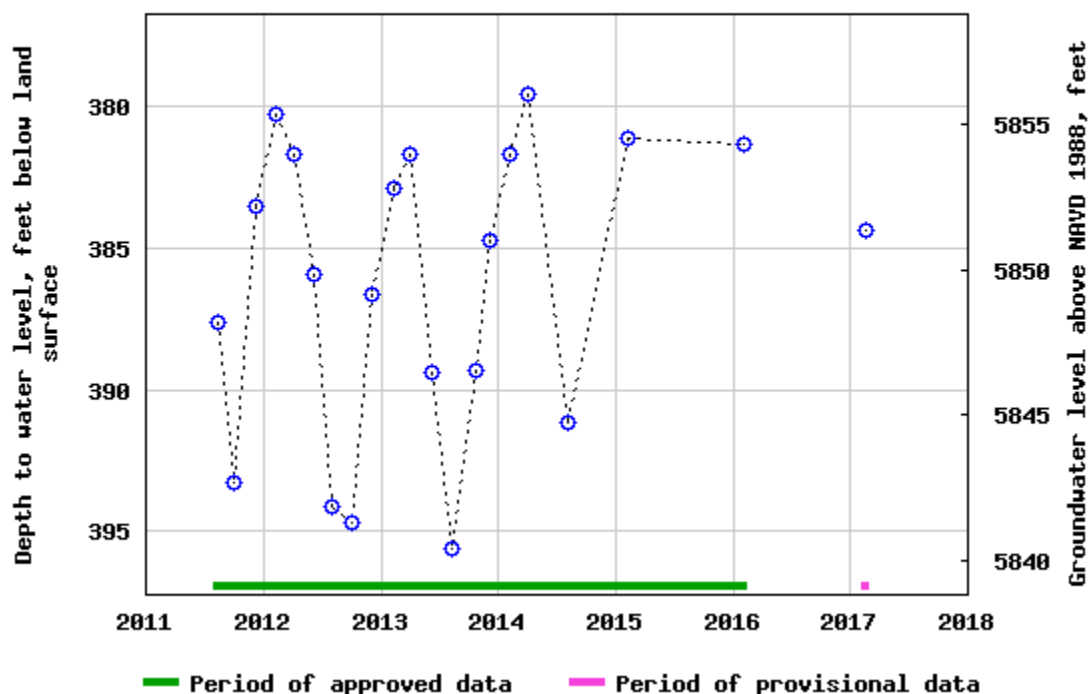


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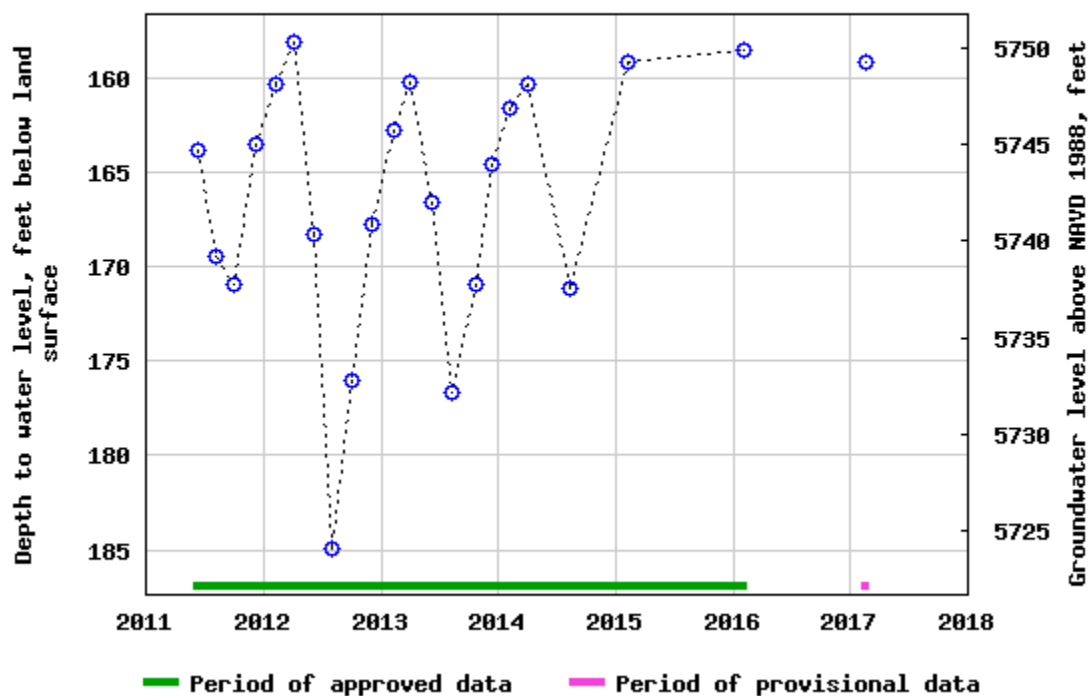




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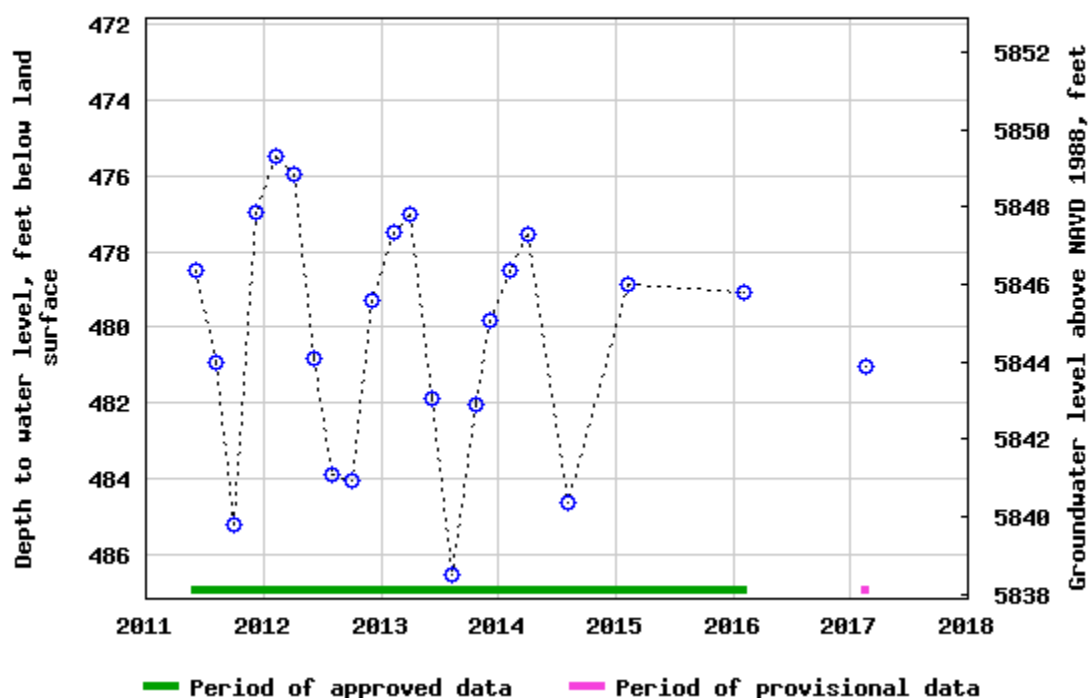


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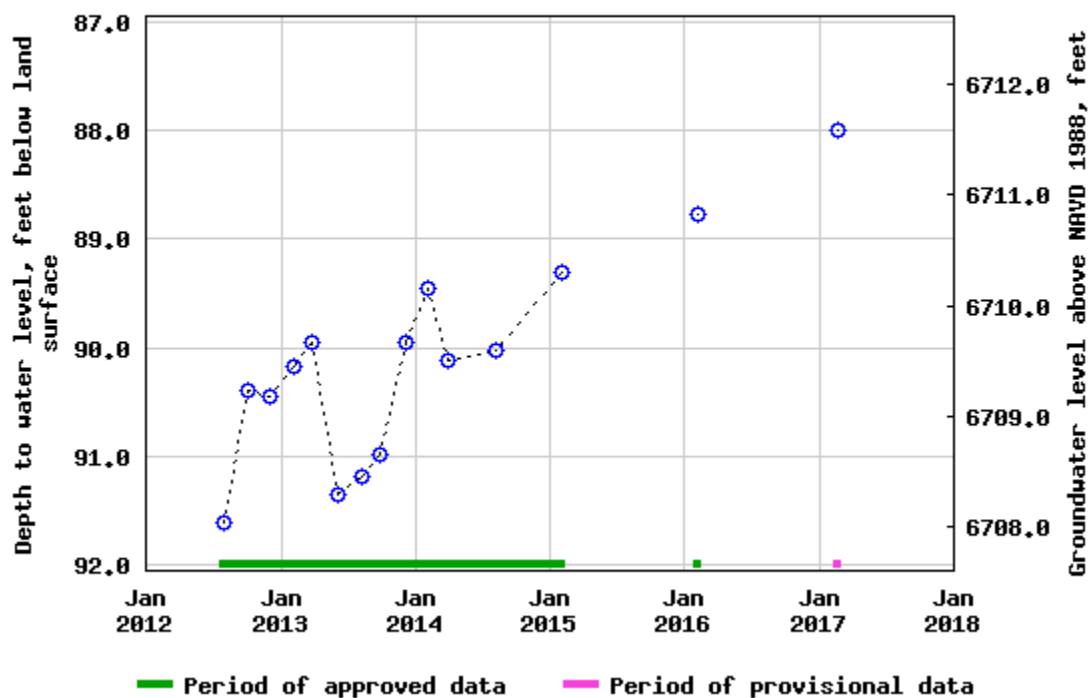


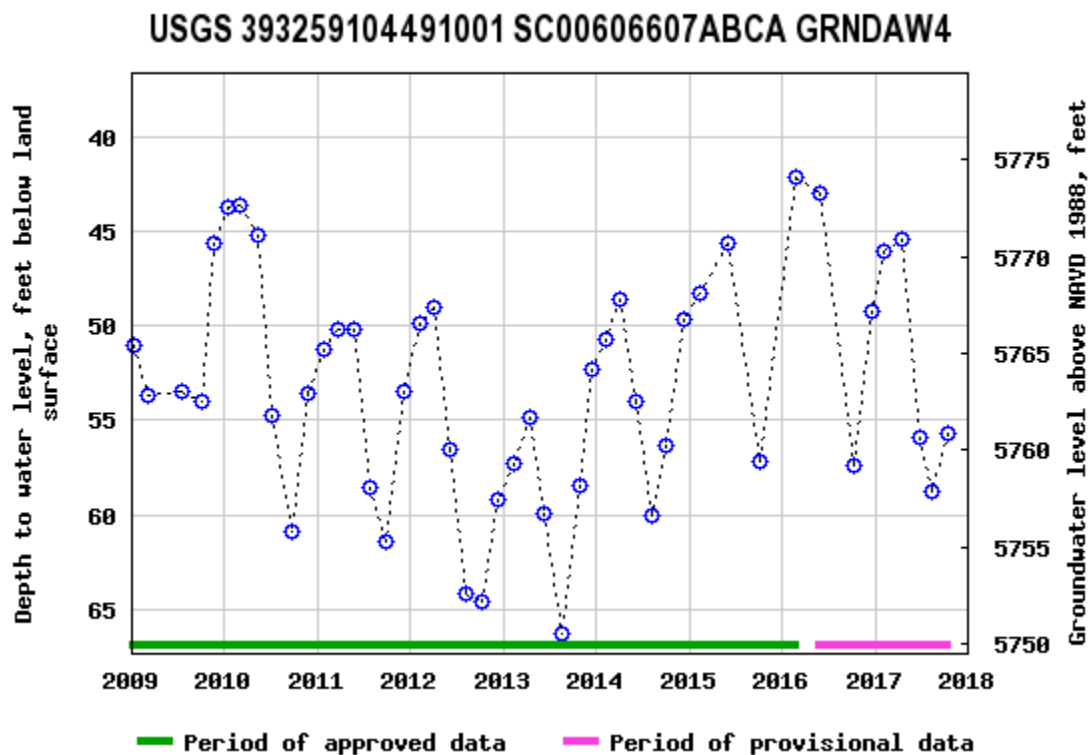
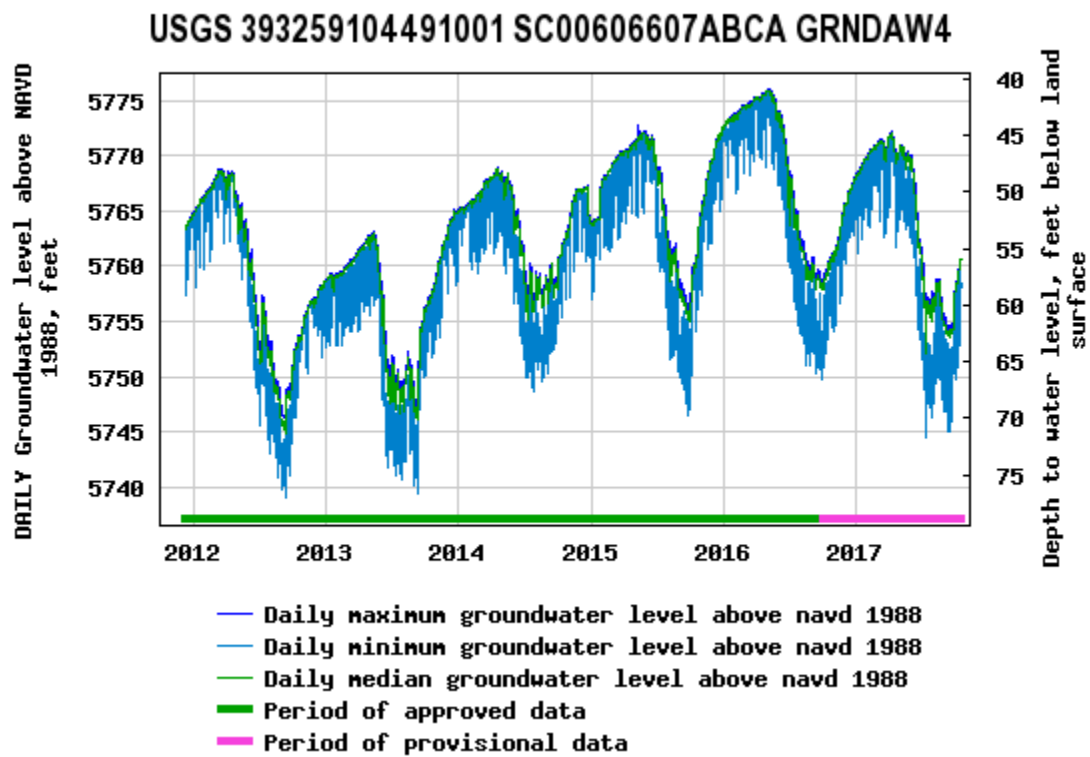


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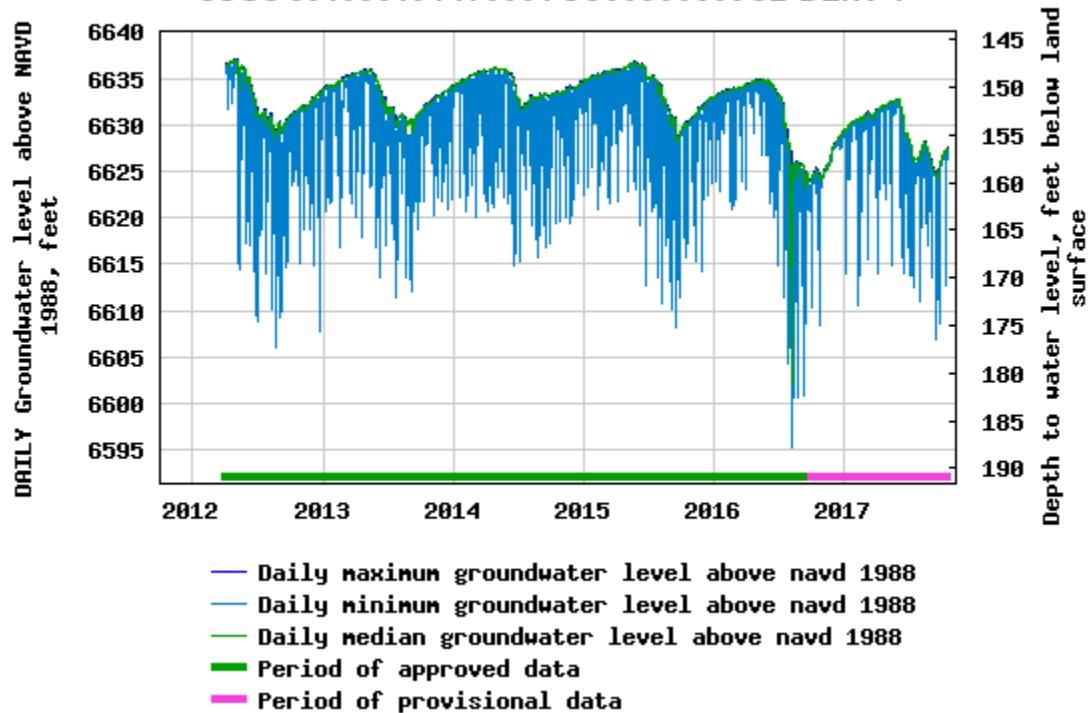
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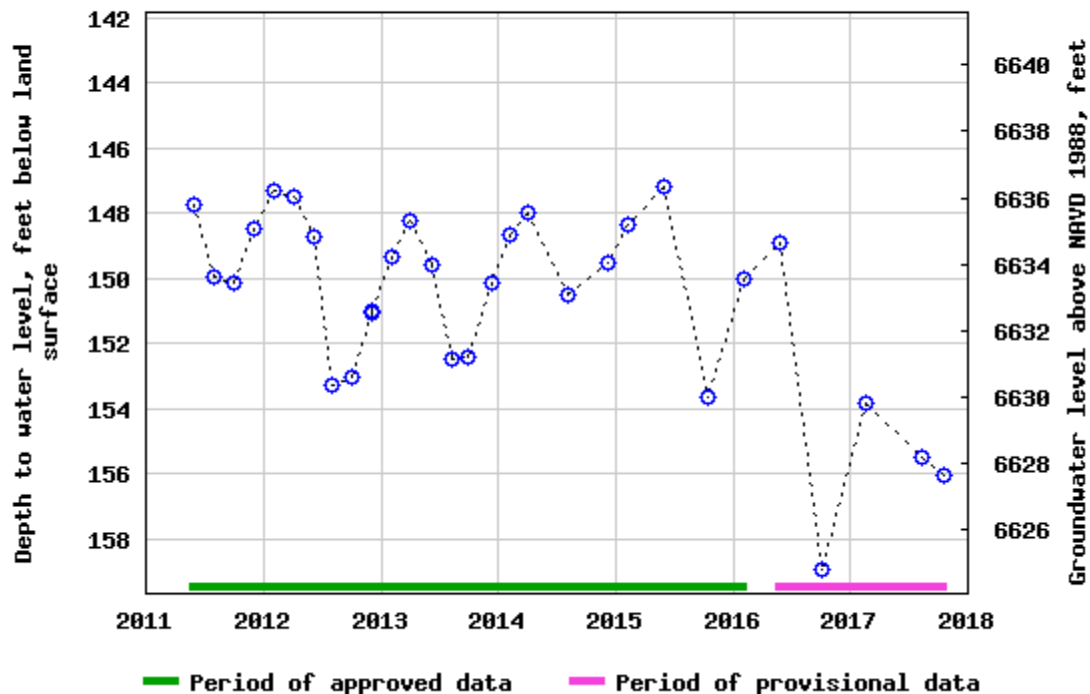




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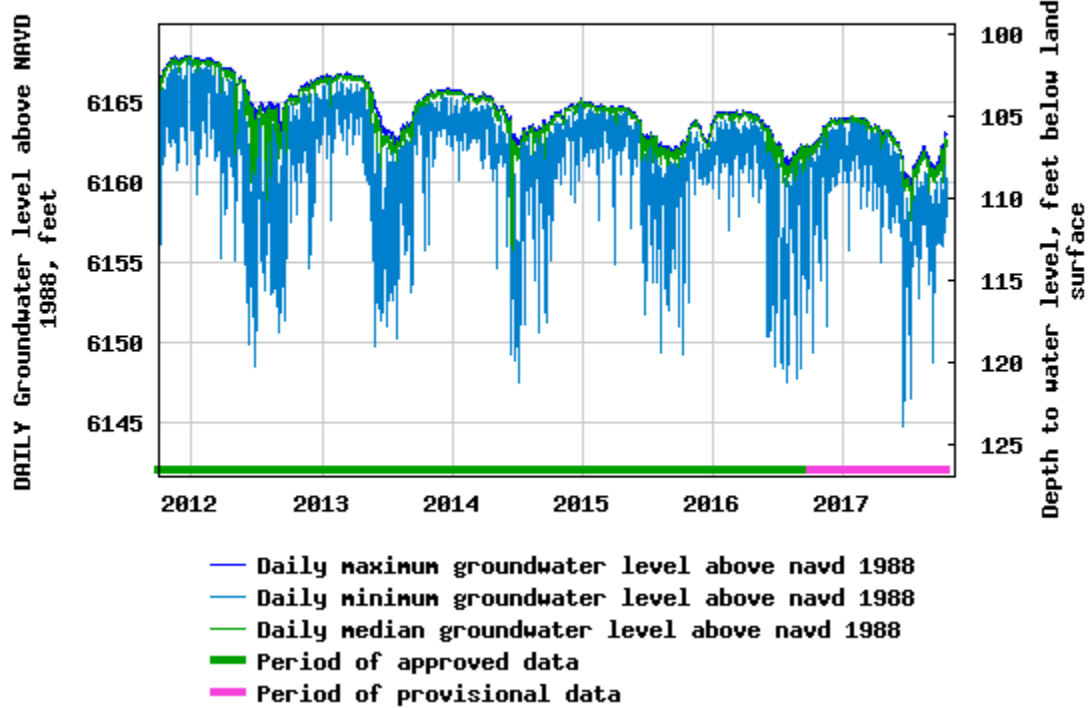


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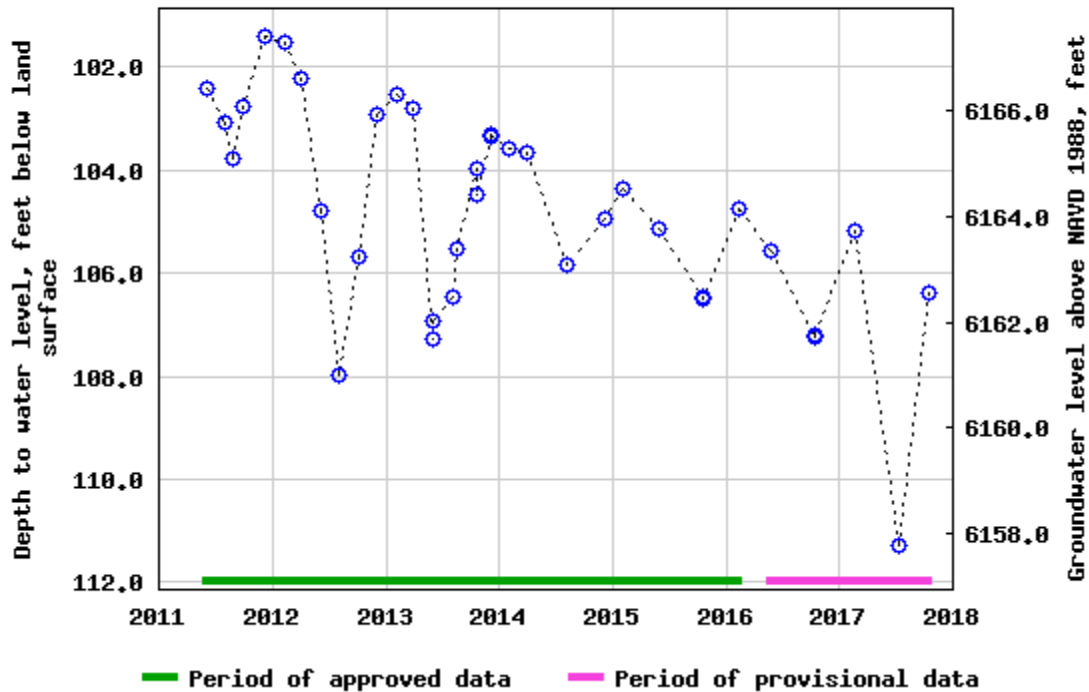




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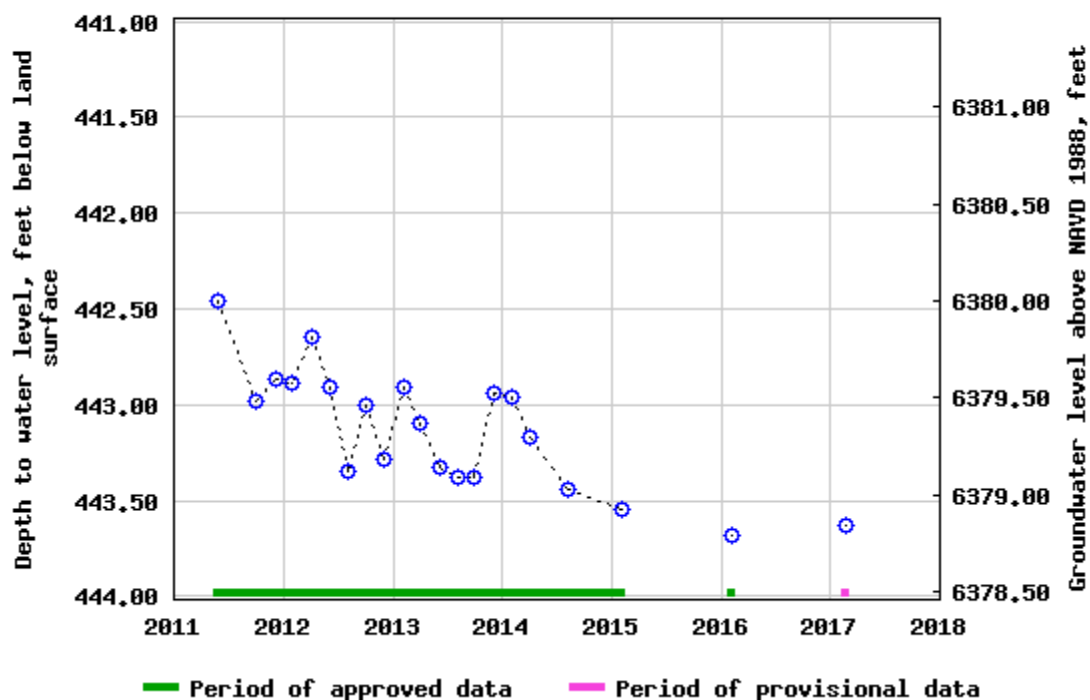


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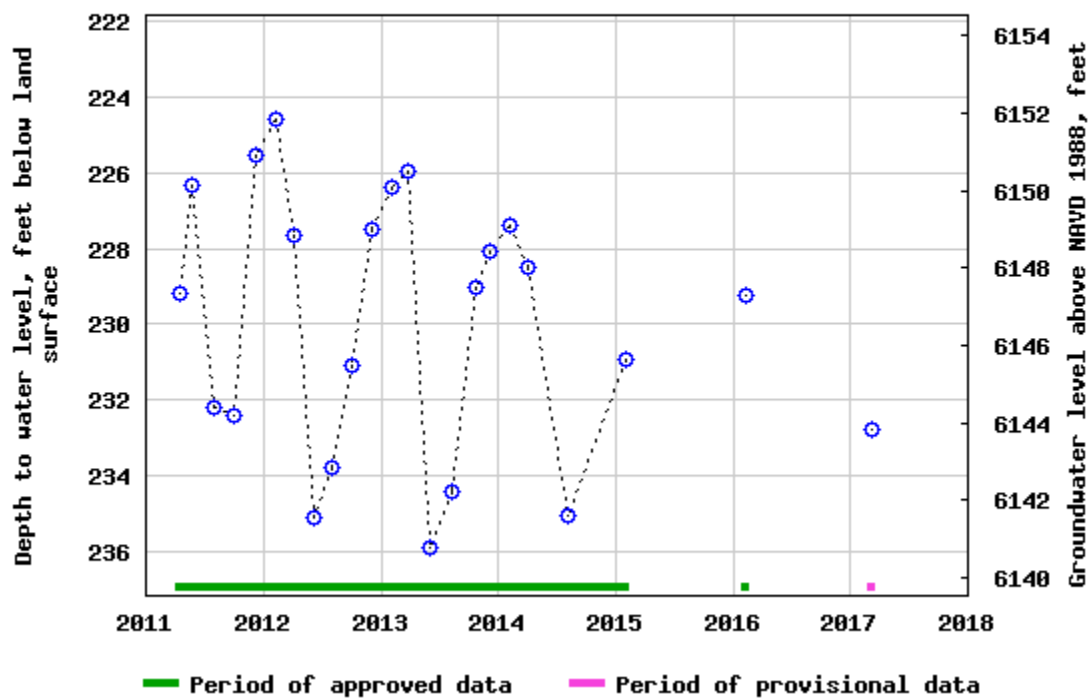




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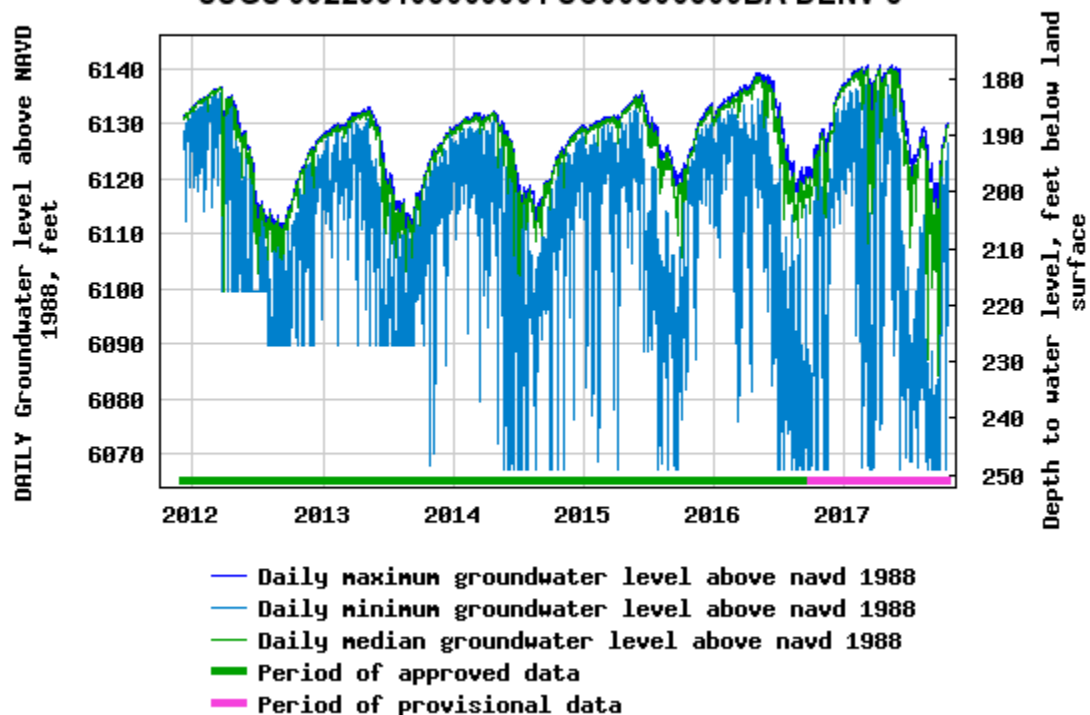


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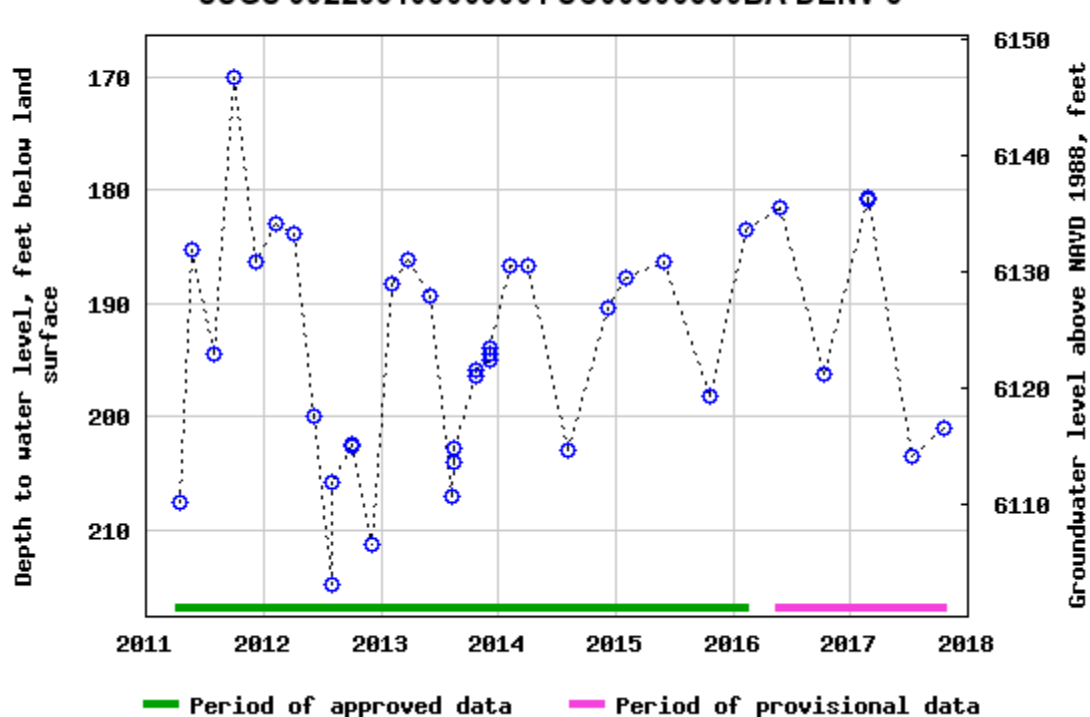




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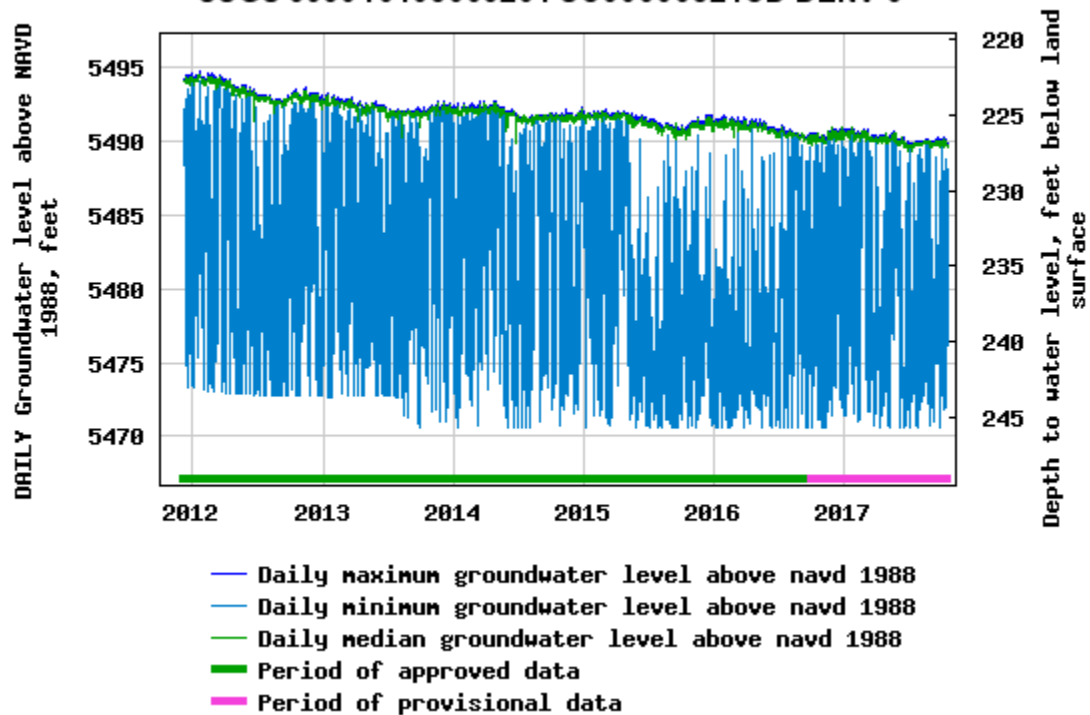


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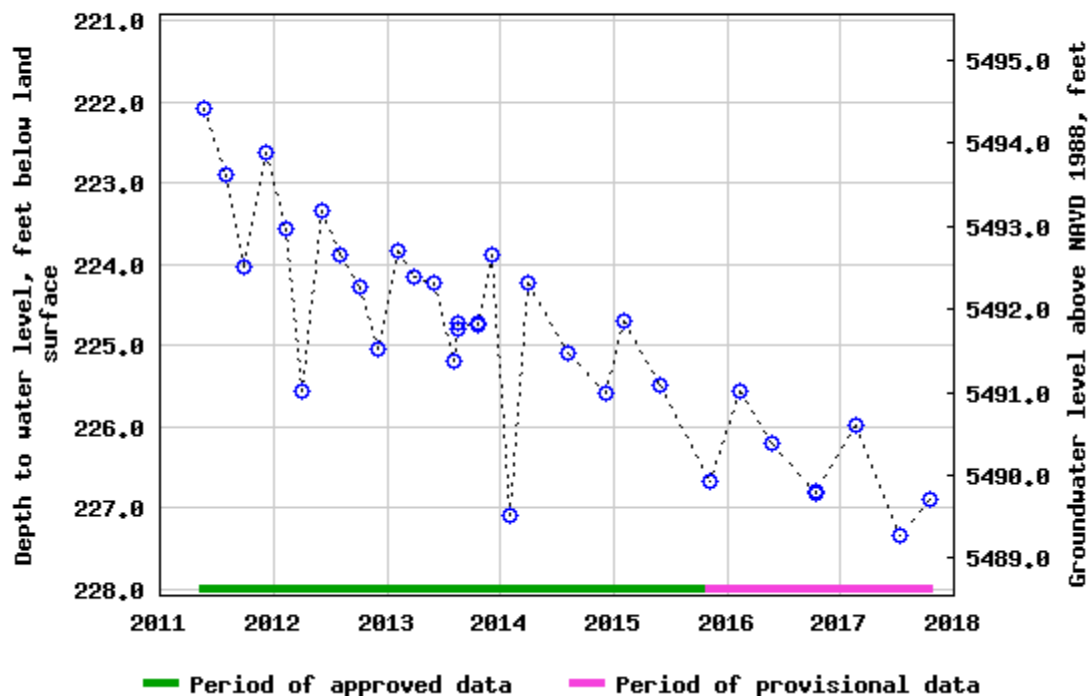




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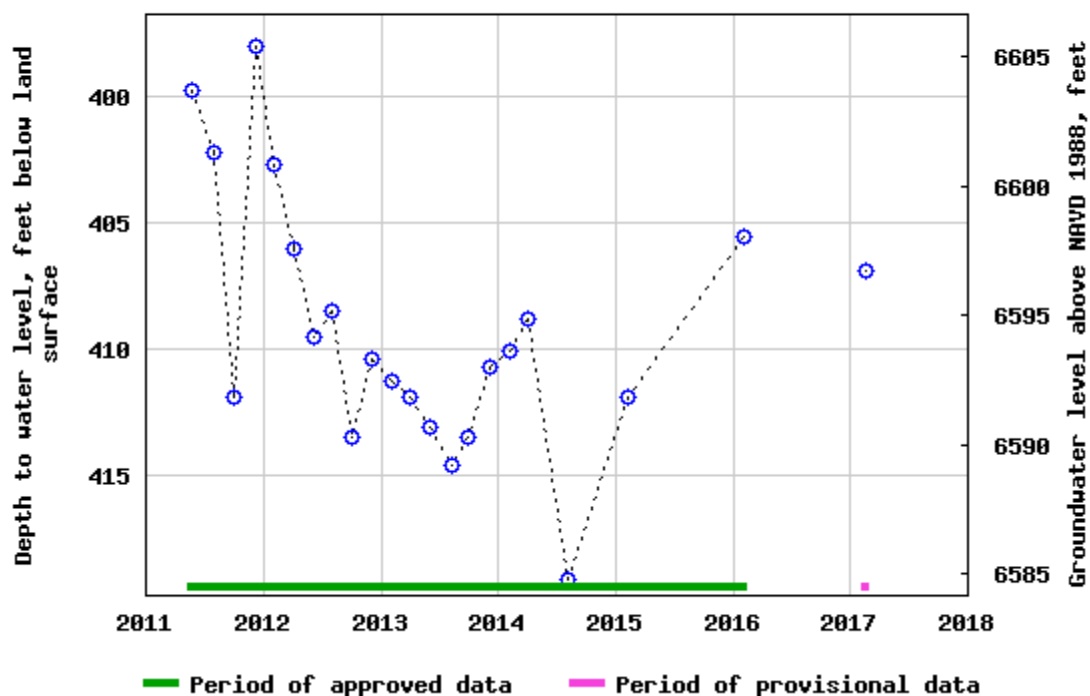


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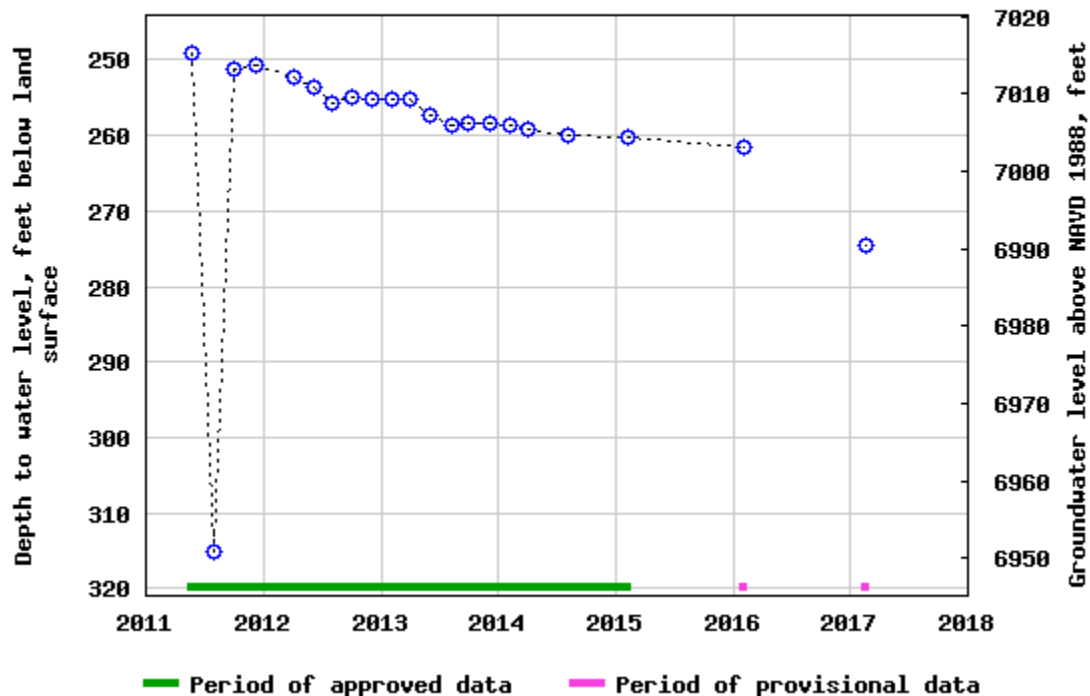




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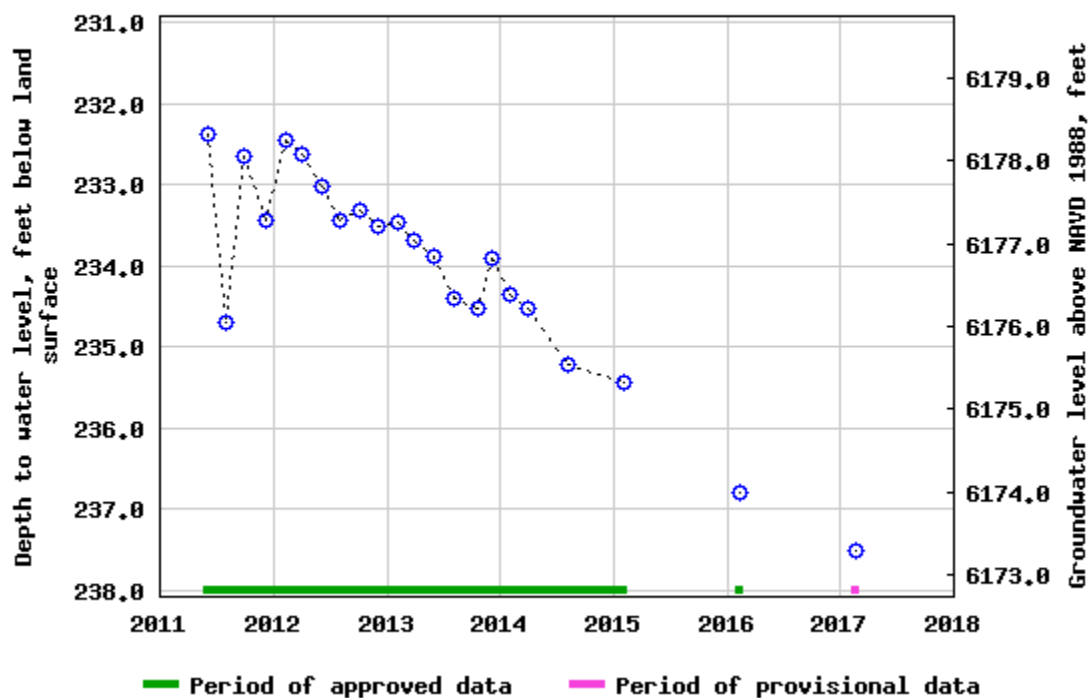


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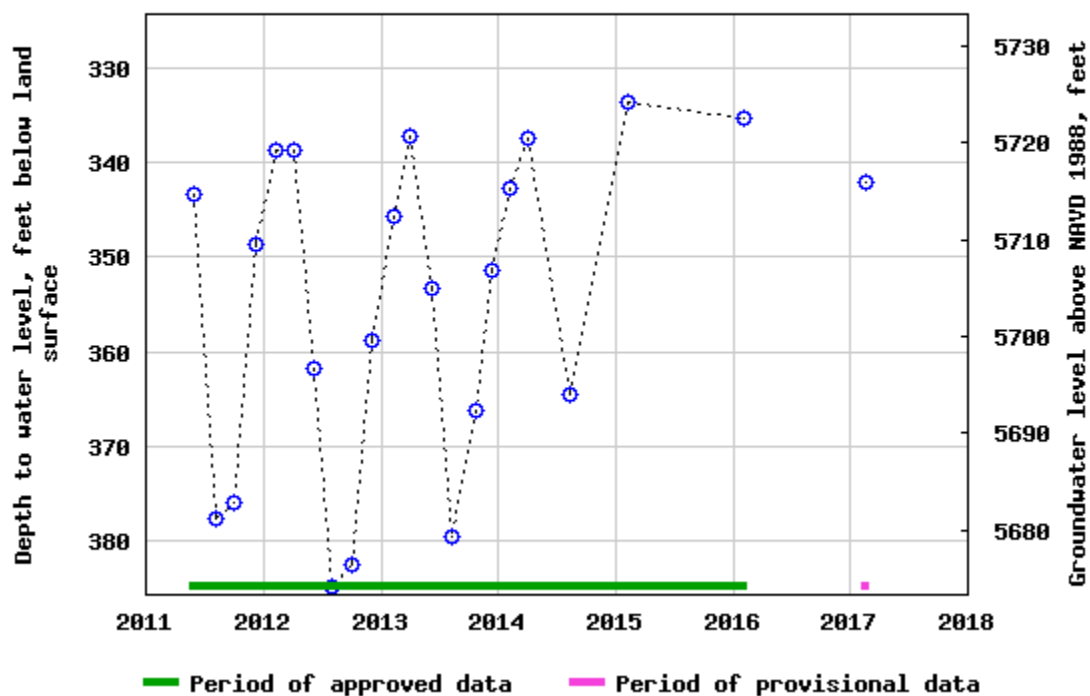




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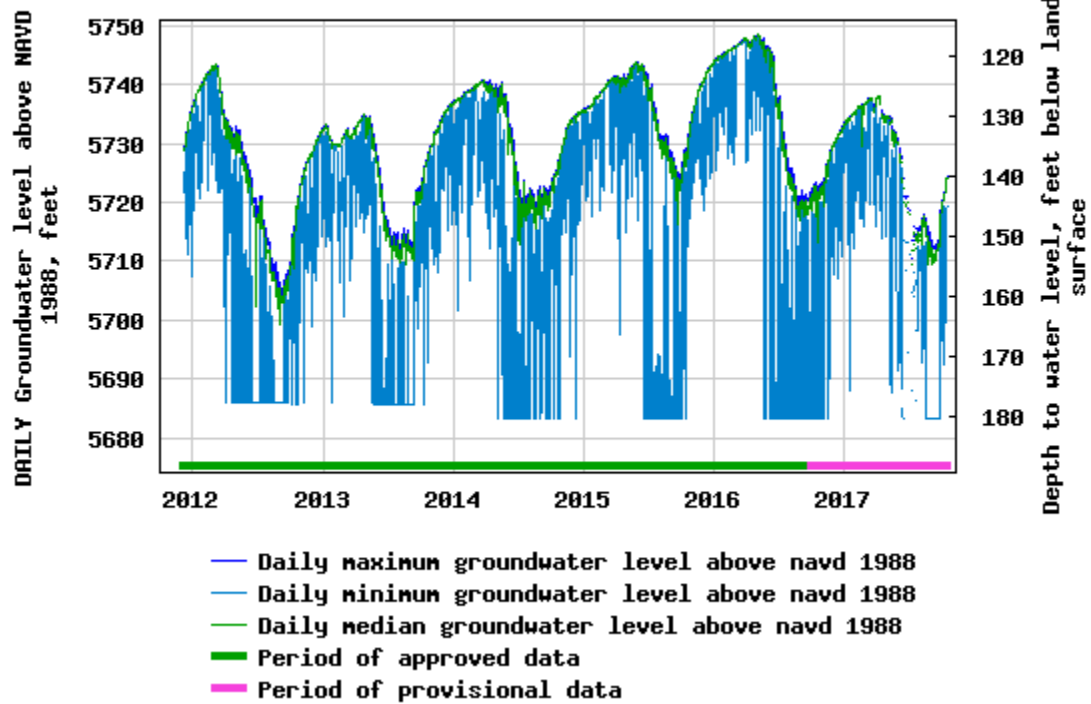


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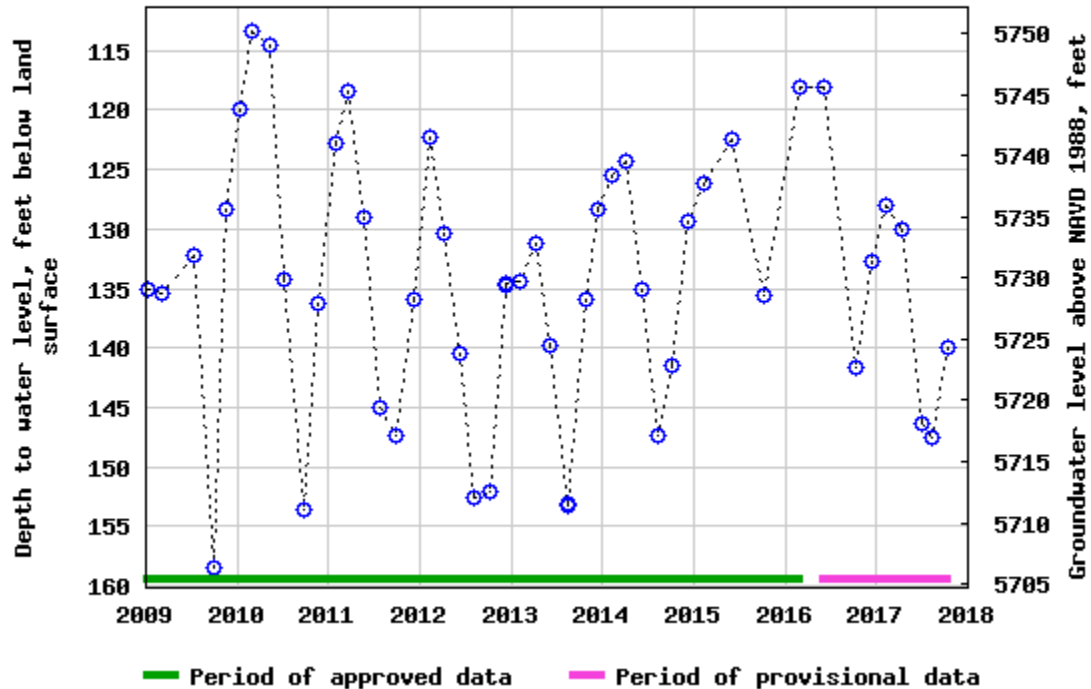




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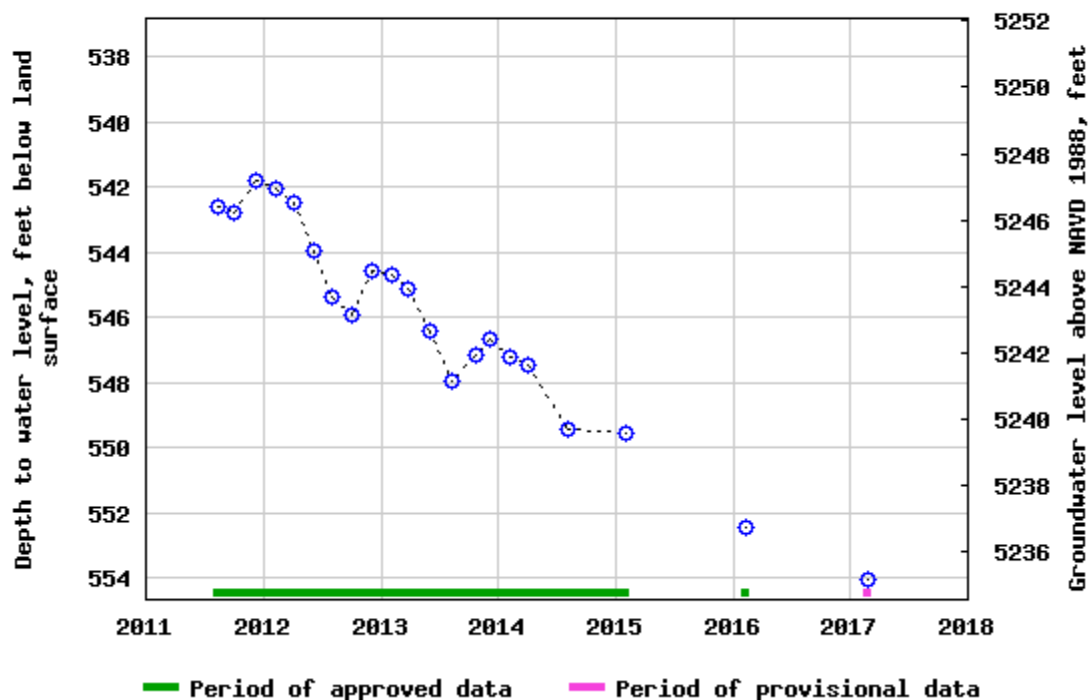


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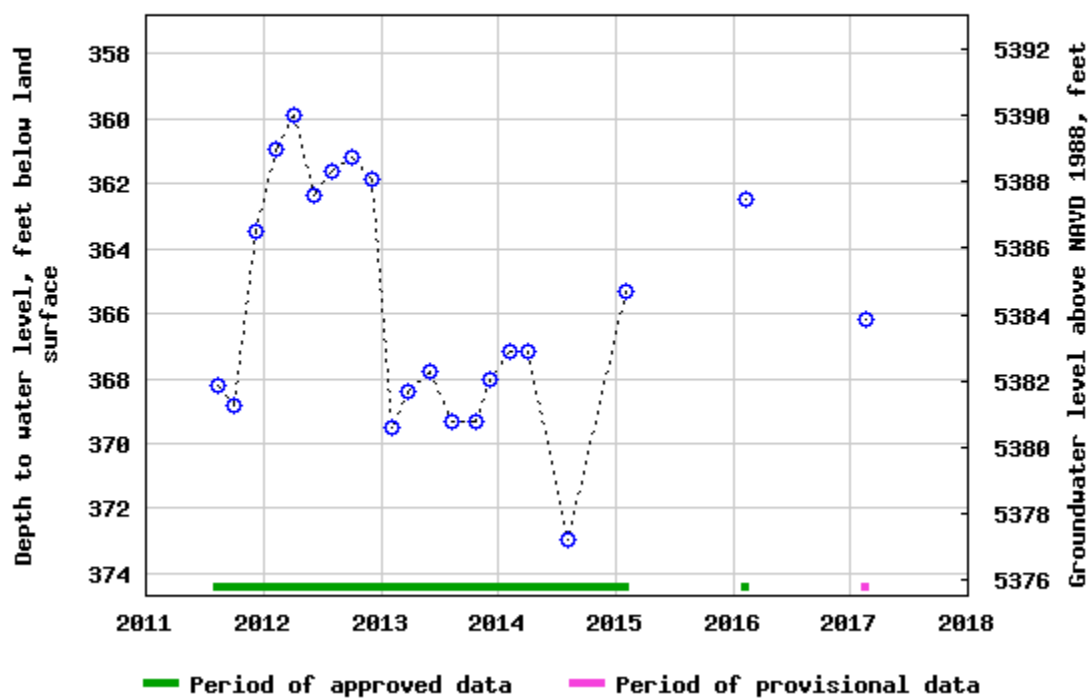




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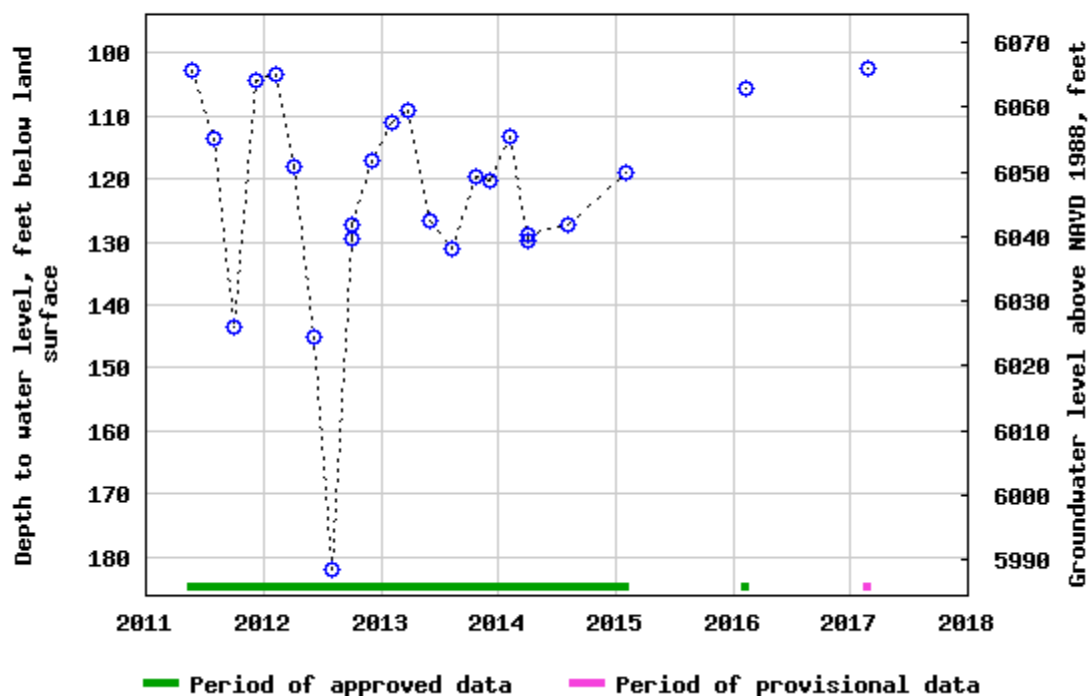


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USGS 392522105015001 SC00706820CD LARA 1



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