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High Plains Aquifer Could Be Dry In 50 Years

A new study forecasts that 69 percent of the water in the High Plains Aquifer in Kansas will be depleted within 50 years at current usage rates.

The paper by researchers at Kansas State University was published Monday in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America. It focuses on the Ogallala aquifer in western Kansas.

The study estimates that 30 percent of the aquifer was depleted by 2010 and an additional 39 percent is expected to disappear by 2060.

The researchers found that natural recharge accounts for just 15 percent of the pumping rate. Once the water is gone, the study projects it will take between 500 and 1,300 years to refill it.

Researchers say water savings now could prolong the aquifer through 2110.

Associated Press