



Designation: D 4448 – 85a (Reapproved 1992)

Standard Guide for Sampling Groundwater Monitoring Wells¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D 4448; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope

1.1 This guide covers procedures for obtaining valid, representative samples from groundwater monitoring wells. The scope is limited to sampling and “in the field” preservation and does not include well location, depth, well development, design and construction, screening, or analytical procedures.

1.2 This guide is only intended to provide a review of many of the most commonly used methods for sampling groundwater quality monitoring wells and is not intended to serve as a groundwater monitoring plan for any specific application. Because of the large and ever increasing number of options available, no single guide can be viewed as comprehensive. The practitioner must make every effort to ensure that the methods used, whether or not they are addressed in this guide, are adequate to satisfy the monitoring objectives at each site.

1.3 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety problems, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Summary of Guide

2.1 The equipment and procedures used for sampling a monitoring well depend on many factors. These include, but are not limited to, the design and construction of the well, rate of groundwater flow, and the chemical species of interest. Sampling procedures will be different if analyzing for trace organics, volatiles, oxidizable species, or trace metals is needed. This guide considers all of these factors by discussing equipment and procedure options at each stage of the sampling sequence. For ease of organization, the sampling process can be divided into three steps: well flushing, sample withdrawal, and field preparation of samples.

2.2 Monitoring wells must be flushed prior to sampling so that the groundwater is sampled, not the stagnant water in the well casing. If the well casing can be emptied, this may be done although it may be necessary to avoid oxygen contact with the groundwater. If the well cannot be emptied, procedures must be established to demonstrate that the sample represents groundwater. Monitoring an indicative parameter such as pH during flushing is desirable if such a parameter can be identified.

2.3 The types of species that are to be monitored as well as the concentration levels are prime factors for selecting sampling devices **(1,2)**.² The sampling device and all materials and devices the water contacts must be constructed of materials that will not introduce contaminants or alter the analyte chemically in any way.

2.4 The method of sample withdrawal can vary with the parameters of interest. The ideal sampling scheme would employ a completely inert material, would not subject the sample to negative pressure and only moderate positive pressure, would not expose the sample to the atmosphere, or preferably, any other gaseous atmosphere before conveying it to the sample container or flow cell for on-site analysis.

2.5 The degree and type of effort and care that goes into a sampling program is always dependent on the chemical species of interest and the concentration levels of interest. As the concentration level of the chemical species of analytical interest decreases, the work and precautions necessary for sampling are increased. Therefore, the sampling objective must clearly be defined ahead of time. For example, to prepare equipment for sampling for mg/L (ppm) levels of Total Organic Carbon (TOC) in water is about an order of magnitude easier than preparing to sample for $\mu\text{g/L}$ (ppb) levels of a trace organic like benzene. The specific precautions to be taken in preparing to sample for trace organics are different from those to be taken in sampling for trace metals. No final Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) protocol is available for sampling of trace organics. A short guidance manual **(3)** and an EPA document **(4)** concerning monitoring well sampling, including considerations for trace organics, are available.

2.6 Care must be taken not to cross contaminate samples or monitoring wells with sampling or pumping devices or materials. All samples, sampling devices, and containers must be protected from the environment when not in use. Water level measurements should be made before the well is flushed. Oxidation-reduction potential, pH, dissolved oxygen, and temperature measurements and filtration should all be performed on the sample in the field, if possible. All but temperature measurement must be done prior to any significant atmospheric exposure, if possible.

2.7 The sampling procedures must be well planned and all sample containers must be prepared and labeled prior to going to the field.

¹ This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D34 on Waste Management and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D34.01.02 on Sampling Techniques.

Current edition approved Aug. 23 and Oct. 25, 1985. Published May 1986.

² The boldface numbers in parentheses refer to a list of references at the end of this guide.

3. Significance and Use

3.1 The quality of groundwater has become an issue of national concern. Groundwater monitoring wells are one of the more important tools for evaluating the quality of groundwater, delineating contamination plumes, and establishing the integrity of hazardous material management facilities.

3.2 The goal in sampling groundwater monitoring wells is to obtain samples that are truly representative of the aquifer or groundwater in question. This guide discusses the advantages and disadvantages of various well flushing, sample withdrawal, and sample preservation techniques. It reviews the parameters that need to be considered in developing a valid sampling plan.

4. Well Flushing (Purging)

4.1 Water that stands within a monitoring well for a long period of time may become unrepresentative of formation water because chemical or biochemical change may cause water quality alterations and even if it is unchanged from the time it entered the well, the stored water may not be representative of formation water at the time of sampling, or both. Because the representativeness of stored water is questionable, it should be excluded from samples collected from a monitoring well.

4.2 The surest way of accomplishing this objective is to remove all stored water from the casing prior to sampling. Research with a tracer in a full scale model 2 in. PVC well (5) indicates that pumping 5 to 10 times the volume of the well via an inlet near the free water surface is sufficient to remove all the stored water in the casing. The volume of the well may be calculated to include the well screen and any gravel pack if natural flow through these is deemed insufficient to keep them flushed out.

4.3 In deep or large diameter wells having a volume of water so large as to make removal of all the water impractical, it may be feasible to lower a pump or pump inlet to some point well below the water surface, purge only the volume below that point then withdraw the sample from a deeper level. Research indicates this approach should avoid most contamination associated with stored water (5, 6,7). Sealing the casing above the purge point with a packer may make this approach more dependable by preventing migration of stored water from above. But the packer must be above the top of the screened zone, or stagnant water from above the packer will flow into the purged zone through the well's gravel/sand pack.

4.4 In low yielding wells, the only practical way to remove all standing water may be to empty the casing. Since it is not always possible to remove all water, it may be advisable to let the well recover (refill) and empty it again at least once. If introduction of oxygen into the aquifer may be of concern, it would be best not to uncover the screen when performing the above procedures. The main disadvantage of methods designed to remove all the stored water is that large volumes may need to be pumped in certain instances. The main advantage is that the potential for contamination of samples with stored water is minimized.

4.5 Another approach to well flushing is to monitor one or more indicator parameters such as pH, temperature, or conductivity and consider the well to be flushed when the indicator(s)

no longer change. The advantage of this method is that pumping can be done from any location within the casing and the volume of stored water present has no direct bearing on the volume of water that must be pumped. Obviously, in a low yielding well, the well may be emptied before the parameters stabilize. A disadvantage of this approach is that there is no assurance in all situations that the stabilized parameters represent formation water. If significant drawdown has occurred, water from some distance away may be pulled into the screen causing a steady parameter reading but not a representative reading. Also, a suitable indicator parameter and means of continuously measuring it in the field must be available.

4.6 Gibb (4,8) has described a time-drawdown approach using a knowledge of the well hydraulics to predict the percentage of stored water entering a pump inlet near the top of the screen at any time after flushing begins. Samples are taken when the percentage is acceptably low. As before, the advantage is that well volume has no direct effect in the duration of pumping. A current knowledge of the well's hydraulic characteristics is necessary to employ this approach. Downward migration of stored water due to effects other than drawdown (for example density differences) is not accounted for in this approach.

4.7 In any flushing approach, a withdrawal rate that minimizes drawdown while satisfying time constraints should be used. Excessive drawdown distorts the natural flow patterns around a well and can cause contaminants that were not present originally to be drawn into the well.

5. Materials and Manufacture

5.1 The choice of materials used in the construction of sampling devices should be based upon a knowledge of what compounds may be present in the sampling environment and how the sample materials may interact via leaching, adsorption, or catalysis. In some situations, PVC or some other plastic may be sufficient. In others, an all glass apparatus may be necessary.

5.2 Most analytical protocols suggest that the devices used in sampling and storing samples for trace organics analysis ($\mu\text{g/L}$ levels) must be constructed of glass or TFE-fluorocarbon resin, or both. One suggestion advanced by the EPA is that the monitoring well be constructed so that only TFE-fluorocarbon tubing be used in that portion of the sampling well that extends from a few feet above the water table to the bottom of the borehole. (3,5) Although this type of well casing is now commercially available, PVC well casings are currently the most popular. If adhesives are avoided, PVC well casings are acceptable in many cases although their use may still lead to some problems if trace organics are of concern. At present, the type of background presented by PVC and interactions occurring between PVC and groundwater are not well understood. Tin, in the form of an organotin stabilizer added to PVC, may enter samples taken from PVC casing. (9)

5.3 Since the most significant problem encountered in trace organics sampling, results from the use of PVC adhesives in monitoring well construction, threaded joints might avoid the problem (3,5). Milligram per litre (parts per million) levels of compounds such as tetrahydrofuran, methyl-ethyl-ketone, and toluene are found to leach into groundwater samples from

monitoring well casings sealed with PVC solvent cement. Pollutant phthalate esters (8,10) are often found in water samples at ppb levels; the EPA has found them on occasion at ppm levels in their samples. The ubiquitous presence of these phthalate esters is unexplained, except to say that they may be leached from plastic pipes, sampling devices, and containers.

5.4 TFE-fluorocarbon resins are highly inert and have sufficient mechanical strength to permit fabrication of sampling devices and well casings. Molded parts are exposed to high temperature during fabrication which destroys any organic contaminants. The evolution of fluorinated compounds can occur during fabrication, will cease rapidly, and does not occur afterwards unless the resin is heated to its melting point.

5.5 Extruded tubing of TFE-fluorocarbon for sampling may contain surface traces of an organic solvent extrusion aid. This can be removed easily by the fabricator and, once removed by flushing, should not affect the sample. TFE-fluorocarbon FEP and TFE-fluorocarbon PFA resins do not require this extrusion aid and may be suitable for sample tubing as well. Unsintered thread-sealant tape of TFE-fluorocarbon is available in an "oxygen service" grade and contains no extrusion aid and lubricant.

5.6 Louneman, et al. (11) allude to problems caused by a lubricating oil used during TFE-fluorocarbon tubing extrusion. This reference also presents evidence that a fluorinated ethylene-propylene copolymer adsorbed acetone to a degree that later caused contamination of a gas sample.

5.7 Glass and stainless steel are two other materials generally considered inert in aqueous environments. Glass is probably among the best choices though it is not inconceivable it could adsorb some constituents as well as release other contaminants (for example, Na, silicate, and Fe). Of course, glass sampling equipment must be handled carefully in the field. Stainless steel is strongly and easily machined to fabricate equipment. Unfortunately, it is not totally immune to corrosion that could release metallic contaminants. Stainless steel contains various alloying metals, some of these (for example Ni) are commonly used as catalysts for various reactions. The alloyed constituents of some stainless steels can be solubilized by the pitting action of nonoxidizing anions such as chloride, fluoride, and in some instances sulfate, over a range of pH conditions. Aluminum, titanium, polyethylene, and other corrosion resistant materials have been proposed by some as acceptable materials, depending on groundwater quality and the constituents of interest.

5.8 Where temporarily installed sampling equipment is used, the sampling device that is chosen should be non-plastic (unless TFE-fluorocarbon), cleanable of trace organics, and must be cleaned between each monitoring well use in order to avoid cross-contamination of wells and samples. The only way to ensure that the device is indeed "clean" and acceptable is to analyze laboratory water blanks and field water blanks that have been soaked in and passed through the sampling device to check for the background levels that may result from the sampling materials or from field conditions. Thus, all samplings for trace materials should be accompanied by samples which represent the field background (if possible), the sampling equipment background, and the laboratory background.

5.9 Additional samples are often taken in the field and spiked (spiked-field samples) in order to verify that the sample handling procedures are valid. The American Chemical Society's committee on environmental improvement has published guidelines for data acquisition and data evaluation which should be useful in such environmental evaluations (10,12).

6. Sampling Equipment

6.1 There is a fairly large choice of equipment presently available for groundwater sampling from single screened wells and well clusters. The sampling devices can be categorized into the following eight basic types.

6.1.1 Down-Hole Collection Devices:

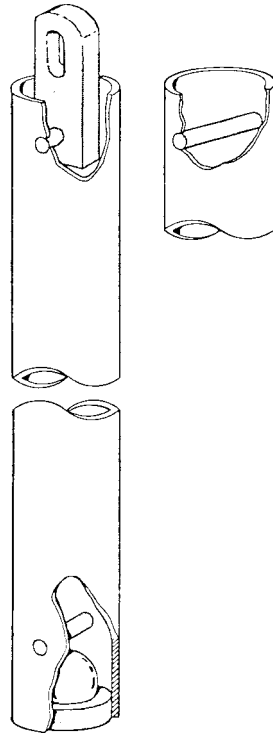
6.1.1.1 Bailers, messenger bailers, or thief samplers (13,14) are examples of down-hole devices that probably provide valid samples once the well has been flushed. They are not practical for removal of large volumes of water. These devices can be constructed in various shapes and sizes from a variety of materials. They do not subject the sample to pressure extremes.

6.1.1.2 Bailers do expose part of the sample to the atmosphere during withdrawal. Bailers used for sampling of volatile organic compounds should have a sample cock or draft valve in or near the bottom of the sampler allowing withdrawal of a sample from the well below the exposed surface of the water or the first few inches of the sample should be discarded. Suspension lines for bailers and other samplers should be kept off the ground and free of other contaminating materials that could be carried into the well. Down-hole devices are not very practical for use in deep wells. However, potential sample oxidation during transfer of the sample into a collection vessel and time constraints for lowering and retrieval for deep sampling are the primary disadvantages.

6.1.1.3 Three down-hole devices are the single and double check valve bailers and thief samplers. A schematic of a single check valve unit is illustrated in Fig. 1. The bailer may be threaded in the middle so that additional lengths of blank casing may be added to increase the sampling volume. TFE-fluorocarbon or PVC are the most common materials used for construction (15).

6.1.1.4 In operation, the single check valve bailer is lowered into the well, water enters the chamber through the bottom, and the weight of the water column closes the check valve upon bailer retrieval. The specific gravity of the ball should be about 1.4 to 2.0 so that the ball almost sits on the check valve seat during chamber filling. Upon bailer withdrawal, the ball will immediately seat without any samples loss through the check valve. A similar technique involves lowering a sealed sample container within a weighted bottle into the well. The stopper is then pulled from the bottle via a line and the entire assembly is retrieved upon filling of the container (14,16).

6.1.1.5 A double check valve bailer allows point source sampling at a specific depth (15,17). An example is shown in Fig. 2. In this double check valve design, water flows through the sample chamber as the unit is lowered. A venturi tapered inlet and outlet ensures that water passes freely through the unit. When a depth where the sample is to be collected is reached, the unit is retrieved. Because the difference between each ball and check valve seat is maintained by a pin that blocks vertical movement of the check ball, both check valves



NOTE 1—Taken from Ref (15).

FIG. 1 Single Check Valve Bailer

close simultaneously upon retrieval. A drainage pin is placed into the bottom of the bailer to drain the sample directly into a collection vessel to reduce the possibility of air oxidation. The acrylic model in Fig. 2 is threaded at the midsection allowing the addition of threaded casing to increase the sampling volume.

6.1.1.6 Another approach for obtaining point source samples employs a weighted messenger or pneumatic change to “trip” plugs at either end of an open tube (for example, tube water sampler or thief sampler) to close the chamber (18). Foerst, Kemmerer, and Bacon samplers are of this variety (14,17,19). A simple and inexpensive pneumatic sampler was recently described by Gillham (20). The device (Fig. 3) consists of a disposable 50 mL plastic syringe modified by sawing off the plunger and the finger grips. The syringe is then attached to a gas-line by means of a rubber stopper assembly. The gas-line extends to the surface, and is used to drive the stem-less plunger, and to raise and lower the syringe into the hole. When the gas-line is pressurized, the rubber plunger is held at the tip of the syringe. The sampler is then lowered into the installation, and when the desired depth is reached, the pressure in the gas-line is reduced to atmospheric (or slightly less) and water enters the syringe. The sampler is then retrieved from the installation and the syringe detached from the gas-line. After the tip is sealed, the syringe is used as a short-term storage container. A number of thief or messenger devices are available in various materials and shapes.

6.1.2 Suction Lift Pumps:

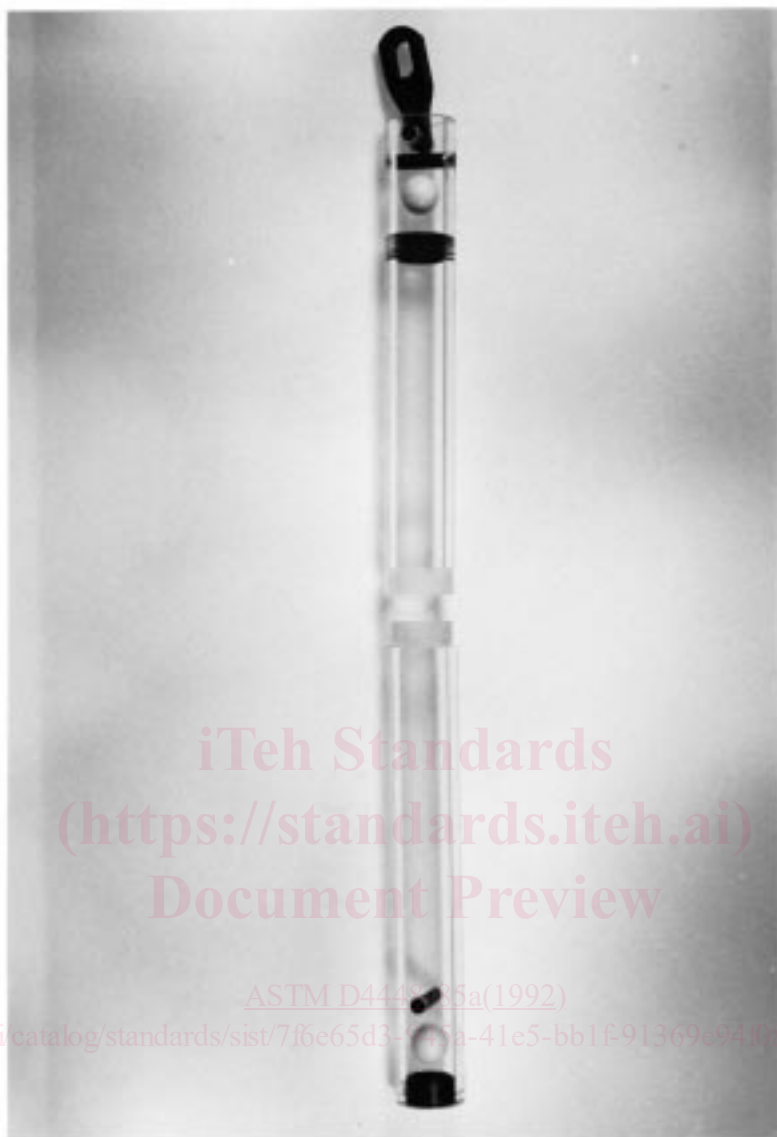
6.1.2.1 Three types of suction lift pumps are the direct line, centrifugal, and peristaltic. A major disadvantage of any suction pump is that it is limited in its ability to raise water by

the head available from atmospheric pressure. Thus, if the surface of the water is more than about 25 ft below the pump, water may not be withdrawn. The theoretical suction limit is about 34 ft, but most suction pumps are capable of maintaining a water lift of only 25 ft or less.

6.1.2.2 Many suction pumps draw the water through some sort of volute in which impellers, pistons, or other devices operate to induce a vacuum. Such pumps are probably unacceptable for most sampling purposes because they are usually constructed of common materials such as brass or mild steel and may expose samples to lubricants. They often induce very low pressures around rotating vanes or other such parts such that degassing or even cavitation may occur. They can mix air with the sample via small leaks in the casing, and they are difficult to adequately clean between uses. Such pumps are acceptable for purging of wells, but should not generally be used for sampling.

6.1.2.3 One exception to the above statements is a peristaltic pump. A peristaltic pump is a self-priming, low volume suction pump which consists of a rotor with ball bearing rollers (21). Flexible tubing is inserted around the pump rotor and squeezed by heads as they revolve in a circular pattern around the rotor. One end of the tubing is placed into the well while the other end can be connected directly to a receiving vessel. As the rotor moves, a reduced pressure is created in the well tubing and an increased pressure (<40 psi) on the tube leaving the rotor head. A drive shaft connected to the rotor head can be extended so that multiple rotor heads can be attached to a single drive shaft.

6.1.2.4 The peristaltic pump moves the liquid totally within the sample tube. No part of the pump contacts the liquid. The sample may still be degassed (cavitation is unlikely) but the



NOTE 1—Taken from Ref (17).

FIG. 2 Acrylic Point Source Bailer

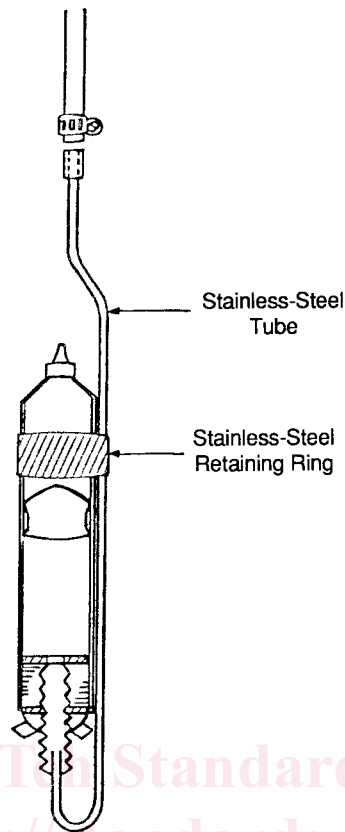
problems due to contact with the pump mechanism are eliminated. Peristaltic pumps do require a fairly flexible section of tubing within the pumphead itself. A section of silicone tubing is commonly used within the peristaltic pumphead, but other types of tubing can be used particularly for the sections extending into the well or from the pump to the receiving container. The National Council of the Paper Industry for Air and Stream Improvement (22) recommends using medical grade silicone tubing for organic sampling purposes as the standard grade uses an organic vulcanizing agent which has been shown to leach into samples. Medical grade silicone tube is, however, limited to use over a restricted range of ambient temperatures. Various manufacturers offer tubing lined with

TFE-fluorocarbon or Viton³ for use with their pumps. Gibb (1,8) found little difference between samples withdrawn by a peristaltic pump and those taken by a bailer.

6.1.2.5 A direct method of collecting a sample by suction consists of lowering one end of a length of plastic tubing into the well or piezometer. The opposite end of the tubing is connected to a two way stopper bottle and a hand held or mechanical vacuum pump is attached to a second tubing leaving the bottle. A check valve is attached between the two lines to maintain a constant vacuum control. A sample can then be drawn directly into the collection vessel without contacting the pump mechanism (5,23,24).

6.1.2.6 A centrifugal pump can be attached to a length of

³ Viton is a trademark of E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., Wilmington, DE 19898 and has been found suitable for this purpose.



NOTE 1—Taken from Ref (21).

FIG. 3 Schematic of the Inverted Syringe Sampler

plastic tubing that is lowered into the well. A foot valve is usually attached to the end of the well tubing to assist in priming the tube. The maximum lift is about 4.6 m (15 ft) for such an arrangement (23,25,26).

6.1.2.7 Suction pump approaches offer a simple sample retrieval method for shallow monitoring. The direct line method is extremely portable though considerable oxidation and mixing may occur during collection. A centrifugal pump will agitate the sample to an even greater degree although pumping rates of 19 to 151 Lpm (5 to 40 gpm) can be attained. A peristaltic pump provides a lower sampling rate with less agitation than the other two pumps. The withdrawal rate of peristaltic pumps can be carefully regulated by adjustment of the rotor head revolution.

6.1.2.8 All three systems can be specially designed so that the water sample contacts only the TFE fluorocarbon or silicone tubing prior to sample bottle entry. Separate tubing is recommended for each well or piezometer sampled.

6.1.3 Electric Submersible Pumps:

6.1.3.1 A submersible pump consists of a sealed electric motor that powers a piston or helical single thread worm at a high rpm. Water is brought to the surface through an access tube. Such pumps have been used in the water well industry for years and many designs exist (5,26).

6.1.3.2 Submersible pumps provide relatively high discharge rates for water withdrawal at depths beyond suction lift capabilities. A battery operated unit 3.6 cm (1.4 in.) in diameter and with a 4.5 Lpm (1.2 gpm) flow rate at 33.5 m (110 ft) has

been developed (27). Another submersible pump has an outer diameter of 11.4 cm (4.5 in.) and can pump water from 91 m (300 ft). Pumping rates vary up to 53.0 Lpm (14 gpm) depending upon the depth of the pump (28).

6.1.3.3 A submersible pump provides higher extraction rates than many other methods. Considerable sample agitation results, however, in the well and in the collection tube during transport. The possibility of introducing trace metals into the sample from pump materials also exists. Steam cleaning of the unit followed by rinsing with unchlorinated, deionized water is suggested between sampling when analysis for organics in the parts per million (ppm) or parts per billion (ppb) range is required (29).

6.1.4 Gas-Lift Pumps:

6.1.4.1 Gas-lift pumps use compressed air to bring a water sample to the surface. Water is forced up an eductor pipe that may be the outer casing or a smaller diameter pipe inserted into the well annulus below the water level (30,31).

6.1.4.2 A similar principle is used for a unit that consists of a small diameter plastic tube perforated in the lower end. This tube is placed within another tube of slightly larger diameter. Compressed air is injected into the inner tube; the air bubbles through the perforations, thereby lifting the water sample via the annulus between the outer and inner tubing (32). In practice, the eductor line should be submerged to a depth equal to 60 % of the total submerged eductor length during pumping (26). A 60 % ratio is considered optimal although a 30 % submergence ratio is adequate.