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APPLICATION OF GIS TECHNOLOGY FOR RESTORATION OF GROUNDWATER RESOURCES: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Groundwater is a critical resource for sustaining ecosystems, agriculture, and human well-being, yet traditional monitoring methods such as well logging and piezometric measurements remain constrained by high costs, labour intensity, and limited spatial-temporal coverage. This study synthesizes recent advances in geospatial technologies, Machine Learning (ML), and cloud computing to address these limitations and enhance groundwater assessment and management. By integrating multi-source datasets including satellite imagery (Landsat, Sentinel), GIS layers, topographic maps, and in-situ measurements with advanced pre-processing, fusion, and statistical modelling techniques, a robust framework for groundwater monitoring can be established. The research highlights the transformative role of highresolution remote sensing, UAV photogrammetry, and IoT-enabled systems in capturing real-time dynamics and spatial variability. Furthermore, the incorporation of ML algorithms, such as Artificial Neural Networks (ANN), Support Vector Regression (SVR), and ensemble models, demonstrates significant improvements in forecasting groundwater levels, with case studies underscoring their predictive reliability across diverse hydro-geological settings. Cloud-based platforms, particularly Google Earth Engine (GEE), are identified as pivotal for large-scale & near-real-time analyses, even though challenges persist regarding data heterogeneity and computational demands. The findings underscore that geospatial big data, coupled with AI (Artificial Intelligence) driven analytics, can overcome the shortcomings of conventional methods by delivering accurate, timely, and actionable insights. This work not only advances methodological approaches for groundwater monitoring but also emphasizes interdisciplinary collaboration and capacity building as essential pathways for sustainable groundwater governance in the face of escalating environmental and agricultural pressures.

Keywords: AI, GEE, GIS, Groundwater, LiDAR, ML.

Introduction

Groundwater plays a crucial role in diverse sectors, and its monitoring is imperative for sustainable management. Conventional methodologies such as well logging and piezometric measurements are frequently employed to assess groundwater conditions. Well logging entails the acquisition of geophysical data within boreholes to elucidate subsurface strata and aguifer characteristics. Piezometric measurements, on the other hand, involve monitoring the pressure head in aquifers to determine water levels and gradients, which are critical for understanding flow patterns and the sustainability of groundwater resources (Espinoza Ortiz et al., 2023). Notably, while these methods demonstrate efficacy, they are susceptible to external influences such as barometric pressure fluctuations, may necessitate adjustments interpretation (Hussein et al., 2013). Furthermore,

advancements in technology, specifically the implementation of Internet of Things (IoT) devices, have facilitated real-time monitoring of groundwater levels and temperature, thereby providing valuable data for the management of water resources in rural communities (Espinoza Ortiz *et al.*, 2023).

In fact, traditional methods lack spatial coverage and precision, which hinders the accurate delineation of groundwater potential zones (GWPZs). So, incorporating remote sensing and GIS enables comprehensive mapping by integrating geospatial data for enhanced analysis (Prakash et al., 2024). Its significance is emphasized by its capacity to provide insights into environmental changes and support informed decision-making for the sustainable management of natural resources (Al-Yadumi et al., 2021). Remote sensing and Geographic Information System (GIS) technologies are instrumental in groundwater studies, providing spatially extensive, multi-temporal, and cost-effective data that facilitate surfaces the characterization of land hydrogeological processes. The integration of remote sensing with GIS enables groundwater mapping and the identification of potential groundwater targets, which is more efficacious and efficient compared to traditional invasive methods.

Geospatial big data encompasses large and complex datasets that have a geographic or spatial component, often characterized by the traditional 5V attributes of big data namely, volume, velocity, variety, veracity, and value along with a distinct location attribute (Li *et al.*, 2021). Geospatial data manifests in various forms, including satellite imagery, which provides a comprehensive view of the Earth's surface and it is utilized for land use extraction, environmental monitoring, and disaster assessment (Deng *et al.*,

2019). Among the geospatial tools, LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) data is a remote sensing methodology that employs light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure distances to the Earth, which provides high-resolution maps of land topography. Satellite imagery is predominantly provided by space agencies and commercial satellite operators, while LiDAR data can be obtained from airborne surveys conducted by governmental or private entities. Whereas, GPS (Global Positioning System) data is acquired via satellites and ground-based stations, offering precise location information that is essential for tracking human mobility and analysing human activity patterns (Deng et al., 2019). GPS data is acquired from devices such as smartphones and navigation systems (Amirian et al., 2014). The sources of these data types are diverse, encompassing government and public service platforms, private sector initiatives, and academic research projects. Nevertheless, the efficacy of these technologies is contingent upon the temporal and spatial resolution of the data collected. High-resolution satellite and unmanned aerial vehicle data are essential for within-field analysis in precision agriculture, which can be extrapolated to analogous requirements in groundwater studies. The spatial and temporal distribution of data affects the accuracy of groundwater withdrawal estimations, as demonstrated in the Mancha Oriental Aquifer System, where remote sensing and provided more precise information than conventional methods. Moreover, RS and GIS are critical tools in groundwater research, with their utility being significantly enhanced by the quality of temporal and spatial resolution of the data. These technologies enable the efficient mapping and management of groundwater resources, with the potential for highresolution data to offer detailed insights into groundwater systems.

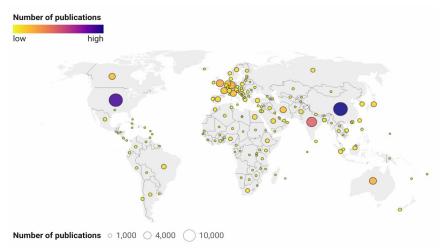


Fig. 1 : Country-wise research on Groundwater monitoring and assessment using Geospatial Technology with reference to the count of publications (Scopus Database)

Among the countries, China is undergoing major research on groundwater with an overall publication of 13,281 over 2000 to 2025, followed by United States (12,192). Across the world, 161 countries have recorded extensive research work on the Geospatial applications of Groundwater assessment, monitoring and prediction

Recent Developments

Recent advancements in geospatial technologies have been significant, particularly in the areas of higher resolution satellite imagery, drone-based data collection, and enhanced data processing algorithms. For instance, the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) has been explored for various applications, such as solar home system (SHS) detection, where UAV imagery offers a viable alternative to satellite imagery due to its higher resolution and costeffectiveness (Ren et al., 2022). The field of geospatial technologies has experienced notable progress, particularly in high-resolution satellite imagery, dronebased data gathering, and improved data processing algorithms. For example, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) have been investigated for various uses, including solar home system (SHS) detection, where UAV imagery presents a feasible alternative to satellite imagery due to its superior resolution and costefficiency (Ren et al., 2022). UAV photogrammetry has also been employed for three-dimensional building modeling, offering a more adaptable and economical source of spatial data compared to traditional aerial photogrammetry and airborne laser scanning (Drescek et al., 2020). In vegetation classification and recognition, UAV-based data recognition technology has been combined with satellite multispectral images to enhance classification accuracy through data fusion, despite UAV data typically having less comprehensive spectral information (Zou et al., 2018). Furthermore, advancements in digital photogrammetry have enabled the swift creation of high-resolution photogrammetric 3D models, although the quality of digital elevation models (DEMs) derived from UAV data can be affected by various factors during acquisition and processing (Rabiu and Ahmad, 2023). Research has focused on the accuracy of UAV-based geospatial mapping, particularly for slope analysis, investigating how flight altitude and ground control point quantity affect mapping precision (Yusoff et al., 2018). UAV technology has also been combined with IoT systems to enhance data gathering flexibility and mobility in smart farming applications (Kuang et al., 2021). In urban planning and construction monitoring, UAVs have been employed to generate precise 3D elevation models of buildings (Kaya and Erener, 2018).

Moreover, UAV-based agricultural spraying systems have been developed for crop protection, with studies concentrating on enhancing application efficiency and minimizing drift through the implementation of big data analytics and precision spraying techniques (Chen et al., 2021). These advancements support a wide range of applications, from urban planning and construction to agriculture and environmental monitoring, demonstrating the versatility and growing importance of geospatial technologies in various disciplines.

Research evidences infer that Gilbert et al., (2023) conducted groundwater level prediction studies, whereas Mishra et al., (2022) and Ntouskos et al. (2021) investigated the broader applications of ML in geospatial big data contexts, including urban feature extraction and seabed mapping. These applications demonstrate the versatility of ML approaches in addressing diverse geospatial datasets. Further, Aderemi et al., (2023) also emphasized the importance of ML and AI models in forecasting groundwater levels, using a variety of ML models and performance metrics to assess their predictive capabilities. The integration of geospatial big data with ML models have demonstrated efficacy in monitoring and predicting groundwater levels. These studies elucidate the successful application of diverse ML techniques to various datasets, thereby contributing to the sustainable management of groundwater resources. Further, these findings indicate a promising direction for future research in the field, with the potential for further advancements in ML applications for geospatial data analysis.

Contemporary groundwater research increasingly leveraging open-access geospatial data and cloud computing platforms like Google Earth Engine (GEE) to conduct innovative, large-scale analyses (Gorelick et al., 2017). It uses the Simple Non-Iterative Clustering (SNIC) algorithm to facilitate the efficient grouping of similar pixels identification of potential individual objects for classification and re-classification (Senapati et al., 2024; Parapurath et al., 2025). These technological advancements facilitate the handling of massive datasets and complex computations that were previously constrained by the limitations of desktop computing and traditional methodologies. The interdisciplinary collaboration is also a significant trend, as evidenced by the diverse applications of GEE across various fields such as hydrology, urban planning, natural disasters, and climate assessments. It is noteworthy that while GEE has been instrumental in advancing research in these areas, its full potential in groundwater studies specifically has not been comprehensively explored. The systematic review of GEE applications in disaster risk management, which encompasses groundwater-related disasters, indicates a growing but still emerging utilization of this platform in the field (Waleed and Sajjad, 2023). Furthermore, the bibliometric analysis of GEE's scientific production underscores its multidisciplinary nature and the increasing interest in its capabilities for processing and visualizing geospatial data (Velastegui-Montoya et al., 2023). The integration of open-access geospatial data, cloud computing via GEE, and interdisciplinary collaboration is shaping contemporary groundwater research. These trends are enabling researchers to overcome previous data and computational limitations, leading to more sophisticated and large-scale analyses. While the use of GEE in groundwater research is on the rise, there is potential for further exploration and application in this domain, which could significantly advance the field.

Groundwater research is confronted with several challenges, such as data heterogeneity, which refers to the diversity and complexity of data types and sources, which encompass the computational requirements needed to analyse large datasets. Innovations in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and cloud computing, along with targeted training programs, are instrumental in addressing these challenges. Therefore, AI-driven innovations offer predictive modeling and real-time monitoring capabilities that can effectively manage heterogeneous data. However, they necessitate specialized technical expertise and are constrained by data quality and quantity (Shaikh and Birajdar, 2024). Whereas, Cloud computing architectures, conversely, provide scalable solutions to address the computational demands of AI applications, albeit presenting challenges in terms of computational requirements, data management, and security. Training and collaborative platforms, such as those developed by the AI and Technology Collaboratories (AITC), are essential for addressing skill deficiencies, promoting stakeholder engagement, and ensuring the ethical implementation of AI in sensitive domains like older adult care (Battle et al., 2024). While the integration of AI and cloud computing presents a promising approach for overcoming the challenges in groundwater research. Therefore, it is imperative to address the associated technical and skill-related obstacles. Continuous innovation in AI and cloud computing, coupled with comprehensive training initiatives, is crucial for sustainable and resilient groundwater future of management practices. Hence, the groundwater research depends on the successful amalgamation of these technological advancements

and the development of a skilled workforce capable of leveraging them.

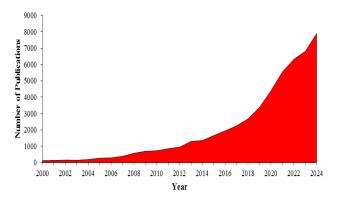


Fig. 2: The research progress in groundwater assessment using geospatial technology with reference to the yearly publication across the world (Scopus Database)

Rationale of the Study

limitations of traditional groundwater The monitoring methods, which are often labour-intensive, costly, and provide data with limited spatial and temporal resolution (Saha et al., 2020). These constraints underscore the necessity for more accurate and timely data acquisition, which can be facilitated by advanced geospatial methods. Remote sensing (RS) Geographic Information System (GIS) technologies have emerged as powerful tools for enhancing groundwater monitoring by offering extensive spatial coverage and the ability to integrate various data sources for comprehensive analysis (Ibrahim et al., 2024). Notably, while the integration of RS and GIS has significantly improved the characterization of groundwater resources, challenges persist. These include the coarse resolution of some remote sensing data, the propagation of uncertainties from sensor calibrations, and the need for systematic validation to achieve operational readiness (Ibrahim et al., 2024). Despite these challenges, the potential of geospatial technologies in overcoming the limitations of traditional methods is evident, with advancements in cloud computing and machine learning algorithms enhancing the accuracy and efficiency of groundwater quantification. These methods offer the potential for more accurate and timely data, which is crucial for sustainable water resource management. integration of RS and GIS, supported by the latest computational advancements, represents a promising approach to address the current limitations and improve the precision of groundwater monitoring.

The significance of groundwater is underscored by its critical role in supporting ecosystems, agriculture, and human well-being (Shaikh and

2024). Groundwater's contribution to Birajdar, ecosystems through base flow in rivers and sustenance of diverse habitats is essential for maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem functionality (Shaikh and Birajdar, 2024). In agriculture, sustainable groundwater management is pivotal for the future of farming, particularly in water-stressed regions, and is influenced by farmers' networks and information sources (Goldstein and Niles, 2023). The integration of local knowledge in natural resource conservation, as emphasized in environmental anthropology, can provide practical insights for sustainable groundwater use in traditional agriculture (Kamakaula et al., 2023). However, challenges exist in managing groundwater sustainably. The reliance on informal sources for groundwater policy information can adversely affect the adoption of conservation practices (Goldstein and 2023). Additionally, while conservation Niles, agriculture (CA) promotes sustainable use of natural resources and environmental quality, it faces issues such as potential yield reductions and increased labour requirements (Nawaz and Ahmad, 2014).

Therefore, this study is of critical importance for the management of groundwater resources, which are essential for ecosystems, agriculture, and human survival. It provides empirical data that can inform sustainable management practices, policy formulation, and the integration of traditional and scientific knowledge. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the necessity of addressing social and policy contexts to enhance the adoption of groundwater conservation practices. Effective management of groundwater resources necessitates a multifaceted approach that considers ecological, agricultural, and anthropogenic dimensions.

For instance, precision agriculture utilizes cuttingedge geospatial technologies, showcasing the capabilities of geospatial big data in environmental monitoring and mitigating agricultural disaster risks. While geospatial big data provides significant benefits, it also poses challenges for data management systems, which must strike a balance between operational efficiency and programming requirements for largescale data scenarios (Liu *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, the progression of geospatial data has transformed research methodologies from hypothesis-driven to data-driven approaches, highlighting the importance of data-centric geospatial research in fields such as spatial analytics and visualization (Liu *et al.*, 2016).

Materials and Methods

Data Sources

The study utilizes a combination of satellite imagery, GIS layers, topographic maps, and in-situ measurements to analyze groundwater levels effectively (Table 1). The combination of diverse data sources allows for a comprehensive analysis of groundwater levels and trends.

Table 1: Different satellite data types and its description

Data Type	Source	Description
Satellite Imagery	Landsat, Sentinel	Multi-temporal imagery for analyzing land cover and
		change
GIS Layers	Government and open-	Spatial data for hydrogeological mapping and analysis
	access portals	
Topographic Maps	USGS, Survey of India	Detailed elevation data for watershed and terrain
		analysis
In-situ Groundwater	Local groundwater agencies,	Direct measurements of groundwater levels for
Measurements	GRACE satellite data	validation

Data Processing

Handling geospatial big data for groundwater level analysis involves several key preprocessing steps to ensure data quality and consistency. These preprocessing steps are crucial for effectively leveraging geospatial big data in groundwater level analysis, enabling accurate and reliable results.

- **a. Data Cleaning**: Raw data is cleaned by removing errors, outliers, and inconsistencies. This step ensures that the datasets are accurate and ready for analysis.
- b. Georeferencing: All datasets, including satellite imagery and GIS layers, are georeferenced to a common coordinate system. This ensures spatial alignment across different data sources, crucial for accurate analysis.
- c. Data Fusion: Datasets from various sources (e.g., Satellite imagery, in-situ measurements) are integrated using data fusion techniques. This step combines different resolutions and data types into a unified dataset, enhancing the analysis' robustness.

- **d. Handling Different Data Formats**: The study utilizes tools to convert and manage various data formats, such as raster (e.g., Satellite imagery) and vector (e.g., GIS layers), ensuring compatibility across platforms.
- e. Resolution Management: Different data sources often have varying spatial and temporal resolutions. To address this, resampling techniques are applied, ensuring consistency and comparability across datasets.

Process Overview

The methodologies used for analysing the groundwater monitoring and assessment involves various techniques (Table 2) namely, RS & GIS, Statistical and ML. The basic steps involved in these methodologies are enlisted below:

- i. Data Acquisition: Collect information from diverse sources, such as satellite images, GIS datasets, and on-site measurements. Verify that all data is properly georeferenced and refined.
- **ii. Data Preparation:** Refine, georeferenced, and combine data to harmonize varying formats and

- resolutions. Address inconsistencies and merge datasets to ready them for examination.
- **iii. Satellite Image Examination:** Employ satellite imagery to evaluate land cover and water features, utilizing indices to identify changes and patterns pertinent to groundwater.
- iv. Geospatial Analysis with GIS: Employ GIS software to examine spatial connections and extract groundwater-related data, incorporating multiple GIS layers for comprehensive understanding.
- v. Statistical Evaluation: Implement statistical techniques to examine groundwater trends, associations, and relationships within the dataset.
- vi. Machine Learning Implementation: Develop and confirm machine learning models to forecast groundwater levels and recognize patterns. Utilize these models to improve comprehension and prediction of groundwater fluctuations.

These methodologies work together to create a robust framework for analysing groundwater levels, harnessing the advantages of each approach to generate precise and practical insights.

Table 2: Analytical methods to assess groundwater level using geospatial data

Analytical Method	Description	Workflow Steps
Remote Sensing Techniques	Utilizes satellite imagery to detect changes in land cover and water bodies	 Acquire satellite images Apply pre-processing (e.g., Atmospheric correction) Analyse changes using indices like Normalized Difference Moisture Index (Parapurath and Veluswamy, 2025), Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (Parapurath et al., 2020)
GIS-Based Spatial Analysis	Analyses spatial relationships and patterns using GIS layers	 Import and align GIS layers Perform spatial analysis - Buffer analysis, Overlay analysis, Kernal density analysis (Subba Rao <i>et al.</i>, 2025) Extract relevant groundwater data
Statistical Models	Employs statistical methods to analyses trends and correlations	 Prepare data sets for analysis Apply statistical tests (e.g., Correlation analysis) Interpret statistical results
Machine Learning Models	Applies machine learning algorithms for predictive analysis	 Prepare and preprocess data Train machine learning models (e.g., Regression analysis, and Supervised classification) Validate and test model performance

Tools and Software

There are various tools and software for analysing the satellite images. The software and tools used in this study, are detailed with their purposes and reasons for selection (Table 3).

Table 3: Different tools and their purposes in geospatial analysis

Tool/Software	Purpose	Reason for Selection
Google Earth	Large-scale data	Provides powerful cloud-based processing and access to vast
Engine	processing and analysis	geospatial datasets
QGIS	GIS-based spatial analysis	Open-source and versatile, offering robust tools for spatial
	and visualization	analysis and map creation
Python	Data processing, analysis,	Extensive libraries (e.g., Pandas, NumPy, and Scikit-learn) for
	and machine learning	handling data and applying machine learning models
R	Statistical analysis and	Offers advanced statistical packages and visualization tools,
	data visualization	ideal for analyzing complex datasets
ArcGIS	Advanced GIS analysis	Comprehensive suite for in-depth GIS analysis and high-quality
	and mapping	map production.

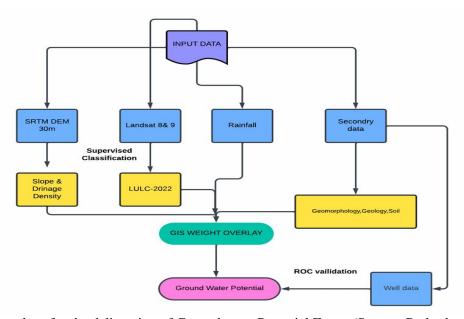


Fig. 3: Flowchart for the delineation of Groundwater Potential Zones (Source: Prakash et al., 2024)

Results and Discussion

Traditionally, the monitoring and management of groundwater have relied on techniques such as well logging and piezometric measurements to evaluate aguifer conditions and water levels (Espinoza Ortiz et al., 2023). While these conventional methods are effective, they often face limitations due to factors like barometric pressure variations, which can affect the accuracy of data (Hussein et al., 2013). With the introduction of technologies such as IoT devices for collecting data in real-time (Espinoza Ortiz et al., 2023), marked a notable shift from traditional approaches. These technologies offer continuous and dynamic data collection, and addressing some of the shortcomings of conventional monitoring methods. Furthermore, the availability of higher resolution satellite imagery, data collection using drones, and enhanced processing algorithms have contributed to improvements in both data quality and monitoring efficiency (Ren et al., 2022; Drešček et al., 2020).

Compared to conventional methods, the combination of geospatial big data and ML models offers a more comprehensive approach to groundwater management. Research has shown that ML techniques, including ANN and support vector regression, are adept at capturing water level trends and forecasting groundwater conditions (Gilbert et al., 2023; Kanyama et al., 2020). This study builds upon these findings, demonstrating how sophisticated data-driven approaches can yield more accurate and actionable Recent developments in groundwater research, such as the utilization of platforms like GEE, showcase the potential for large-scale analyses and innovative applications (Waleed and Sajjad, 2023). While GEE has enhanced research capabilities, its full potential in groundwater studies remains to be fully explored. The study's investigation of GEE and its integration with other geospatial technologies represents a promising avenue for future research. Previous studies have identified challenges such as data heterogeneity, processing demands, and skill gaps, highlighting the need for ongoing innovation in AI and cloud computing to effectively address these issues (Shaikh and Birajdar, 2024; Battle et al., 2024). In conclusion, this research expands the current understanding of groundwater monitoring incorporating advanced geospatial and ML techniques. A comparison of these findings with previous studies reveals that the shift from traditional methods to modern technologies enhances groundwater management capabilities, providing more accurate and data for sustainable water management.

Various studies support the effectiveness of specific geospatial methods in accurately forecasting groundwater levels, thus enhancing monitoring and management across diverse regions and circumstances. Saha et al., 2020 highlights the benefits of contemporary geospatial technologies, including RS & GIS, and GPS in efficiently managing groundwater resources. These approaches enable the surveying, analysis, and monitoring of groundwater, which is essential for sustainable agricultural growth. Gilbert et al., (2023) provides a comprehensive review of ML techniques for modeling and predicting groundwater levels (GWL), highlighting the use of historical GWL data and ANN as prevalent methodologies in the field (Gilbert et al., 2023; Kanyama et al., 2020). Further, kanyama et al. (2020) validated this by showcasing the successful implementation of data-driven predictive models, such as support vector regression and gradient boosting trees, to predict groundwater levels in the Grootfontein Aquifer. Nevertheless, RS data has certain limitations, including issues with spatial, spectral, and temporal resolution, which may occasionally impede the comprehension and evaluation of groundwater conditions (Saha et al., 2020). Despite these constraints, the significance of geospatial techniques is underscored, particularly in developing countries where data scarcity presents considerable challenges (Saha et al., 2020). The use of geospatial techniques has proven to be an effective approach for forecasting groundwater levels, playing a crucial role in the efficient supervision and control of water resources. The successful implementation of such techniques in diverse geographical areas, including Texas (Chaudhuri and Ale, 2014), Rajasthan (Machiwal and Singh, 2015), and South Africa (Kanyama et al., 2020), provides compelling support for the argument that geospatial approaches can be tailored to suit various environmental conditions and locations for the purpose of groundwater management.

Future Implications

The future implications of GIS in groundwater restoration are vast and promising. The development of integrated systems combining GIS with groundwater modeling programs like MODFLOW allows for comprehensive evaluation of aquifer systems and online display of calculated water levels and drawdown (Wang et al., 2008). Such systems can provide crucial decision support for sustainable groundwater exploitation. Furthermore, the application of GIS in environmental impact assessment and natural disaster protection is expected to play a significant role in addressing future challenges in groundwater management. As GIS technology continues to evolve, its integration with other technologies like remote sensing and GPS, as well as its application in precision agriculture and ecological monitoring, will likely lead to more efficient and effective groundwater restoration strategies.

Conclusion

Groundwater research is rapidly evolving, driven by advancements in geospatial technologies, AI, and cloud computing. While traditional methods remain valuable, their limitations necessitate innovative approaches that integrate remote sensing, GIS, and ML techniques. These technologies not only enhance the accuracy and efficiency of groundwater monitoring but also support sustainable management practices essential for addressing the growing demand for water resources. By fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and investing in skill development, the potential for these technologies to transform groundwater research and resource management is immense. Sustainable groundwater management, underpinned by robust technological and human resource frameworks, is vital for the future resilience of ecosystems, agriculture, and human populations.

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