

Surficial Materials



Sebec Lake West Quadrangle, Maine

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SURFICIAL MATERIALS

Uses of Materials Maps

Geologic processes such as weathering and erosion break bedrock down into smaller particles of sediment. Sediments such as clay, silt, sand, gravel, and other loose deposits which lie on top of bedrock are grouped together in the general category of "surficial materials." These materials are not soils; they are the deeper earth materials that lie between the soil zone and the underlying bedrock. Soils commonly develop by weathering of the uppermost part of these materials.

Mapping Surficial Materials

When mapping the surficial geology or the extent of sand and gravel aquifers in a quadrangle, a geologist first makes observations about the surficial materials at a network of points throughout the area. These points of observation may be auger holes, road cuts, gravel pits, stream cuts, or other places where sediments are visible. The geologist describes the materials at each location using the size abbreviations shown in the explanation below the map at left. Sedimentary materials range in particle size from clay (<0.002 mm) to boulders (>256 mm or 10"). The observation points are plotted on the quadrangle and the resulting surficial materials map shows what is known about the distribution, thickness, and texture of sediments in the area.

By combining materials data with well and test hole data, seismic studies, other published information, and analysis of aerial photographs, the geologist then interprets the pattern of these materials to create a geologic map.

Photographs

The photos below are examples of the various material sizes as they are observed in the field. The photo captions describe the materials and give the abbreviations used to represent them on the map at left. Inspection of the photos will give the map user a better sense of what the map units mean. Note especially the photos at the bottom of the page. These photos show interbedded layers of materials as they may often be seen in the field. Materials in a gravel pit are rarely all a single size, and these examples show their possible complexity.



Till over bedrock: d(t)/rk -- Road cut on Route 17 in Township D, showing thin layer of till overlying glacially eroded bedrock. Dark streaks on the rock face are wet areas.



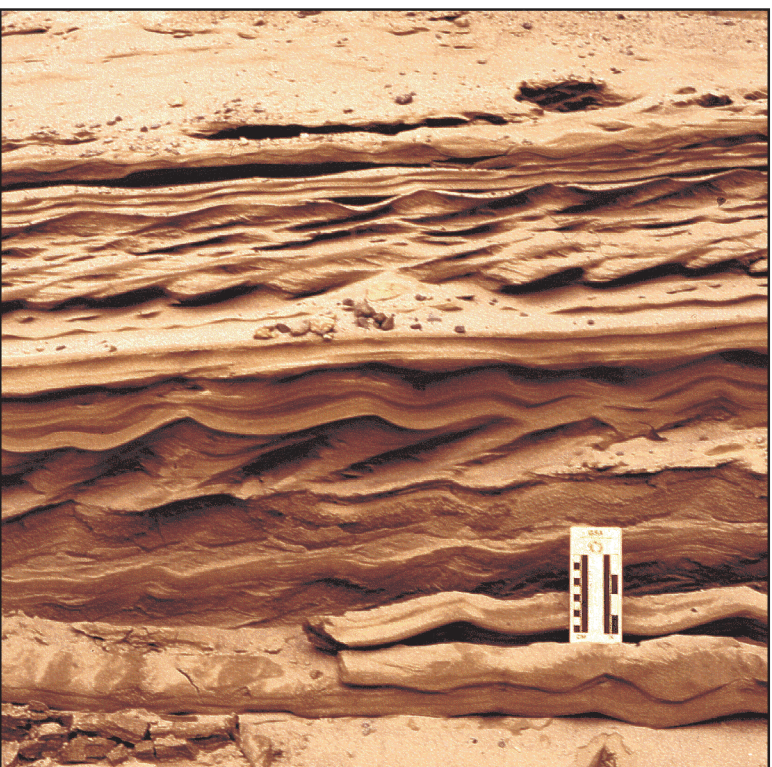
Till: ds(t) -- Borrow pit near Millinocket, exposing sandy, bouldery till. This stony till commonly occurs in areas of granitic bedrock.



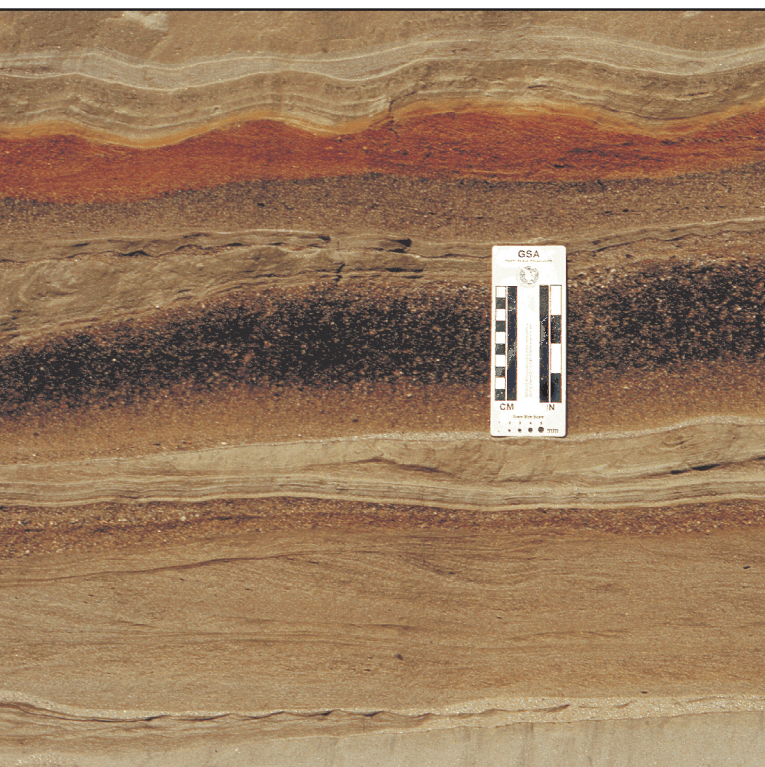
Clayey silt over sand with pebble-cobble gravel: st,cy/s,p,c -- Borrow pit in Kennebec River valley, Pittston, showing glaciomarine seal-floor mud (Presumpscot Formation) overlying sand and gravel deposited in submarine fan at glacier margin.



Clay-silt: cy-st -- Coastal bluff in Brunswick, exposing a thick section of well-stratified glaciomarine seal-floor mud (Presumpscot Formation).



Sand: s -- Close-up of pit face in glaciomarine delta west of Dolby Pond, Millinocket, showing current ripples in sandy delta foreset beds. Scale card is graduated in centimeters and inches.



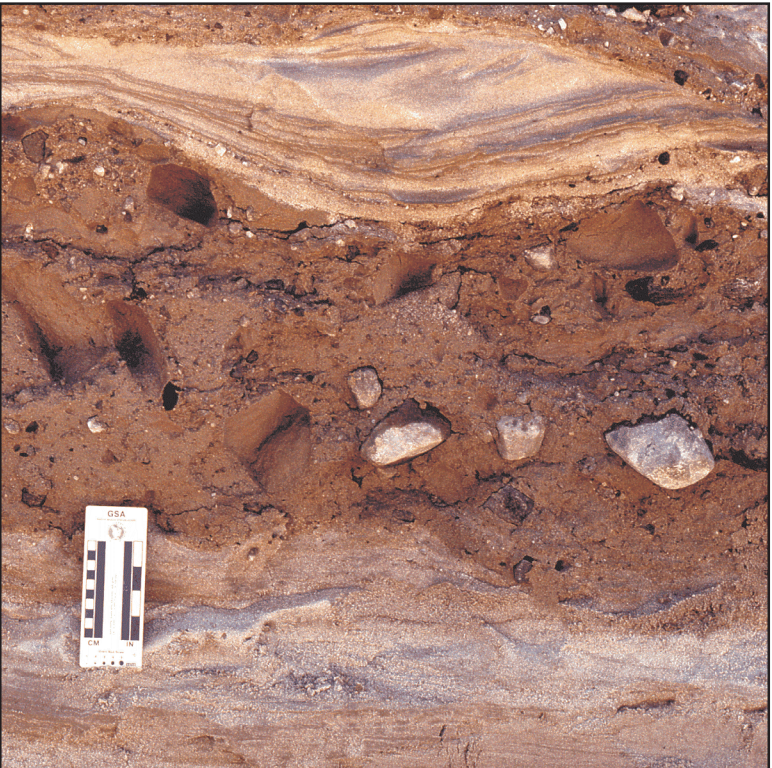
Sand (ranging from very fine-grained to very coarse): vfs-vcs -- Close-up of pit face in well-stratified sand beds deposited in glacial lake at lower end of Bear River valley, Newry.



Pebble to cobble gravel: p-c -- Pit in upper part of glaciomarine delta in Norridgewock, Kennebec River valley, showing massive gravel deposited by meltwater streams flowing across delta top.



Pebble to boulder gravel (fossiliferous) over gravelly sand: p-b(f)/gs -- Close-up of pit face in marine nearshore deposit with fossil shells and barnacle-encrusted stones.



Sand with interbedded flowtill: s±ds(tf) -- Close-up of pit face in an end-moraine, Westbrook, showing part of a stony flowtill lens (center) deposited where glacier margin terminated in the sea.



Gravel over sand over gravel: p-c/s/p-c -- Close-up of pit face showing intertidal(?) sand unit between pebble-cobble gravel beds in upper part of glaciomarine delta, Columbia Falls.

This map shows the textures of surficial sediments in the quadrangle, independent of interpretations regarding their origin. For example, poorly sorted sediments deposited directly from glacial ice are shown here as "diamiction," although they may be genetically classified as "till."

The symbols listed below indicate materials observed in borrow pits and other surface exposures, as well as subsurface data from various sources. Where more than one textural class is present, materials are separated by commas and listed in decreasing order of abundance (e.g., s, st, cy). Individual materials may occur in distinct layers, or they may be mixed. Hyphens show the ranges of particle sizes present where their relative abundances are uncertain (e.g., st-c). Slash marks indicate superposition of materials. Numbers are observed thicknesses in feet (e.g., 10s/3cy) and in many cases do not indicate the thickness of surficial materials that may exist at greater depths. "±" indicates a significant stratigraphic sequence of interbedded materials. Not all symbols will necessarily be found on the map.

GRAVEL	g	Undifferentiated gravel, used as a general term. Can be subdivided by size as follows:	
		b	Boulder gravel >256 mm (10")
		c	Cobble gravel 64-256 mm (2.5-10")
		p	Pebble gravel 2-64 mm (0.125-0.125")
MIXED UNITS	gs	Gravelly sand (this is a special case for sand with lesser amounts of intermixed gravel, i.e. pebbly sand, cobbly sand, or bouldery sand)	
		sg Sand and gravel (used only to describe slumped face or other site where relative abundances of sand vs. gravel are unknown)	
SAND	s	Undifferentiated sand, used as a general term. Can be subdivided by size as follows:	
		vcs	Very coarse sand (1-2 mm)
		cs	Coarse sand (0.5-1 mm)
		ms	Medium sand (0.25-0.5 mm)
SILT	st	fs	Fine sand (0.125-0.25 mm)
		vfs	Very fine sand (0.0625-0.125 mm)
CLAY	cy	Clay (<0.002 mm)	

DIAMICTON	d	Undifferentiated diamiction (poorly-sorted sediment in which particle sizes may range from clay to boulders). Used as a general term or subdivided as follows:	
		dg	Gravelly-matrix diamiction
		ds	Sandy-matrix diamiction
		dy	Clayey-matrix diamiction
OTHER MATERIALS	af	Artificial fill (e.g. road fills, building sites, dumps)	
		bd	Scattered boulders; interpreted as till where followed by (t)
		rk	Bedrock (observed in pit floor, boring, or natural exposure)
		rs	Rottenstone, disintegrated or weathered bedrock, saprolite
ORGANIC MATERIALS	og	Organic-rich sediment (can be any organic material, including forest litter, wood, shells, etc.)	
		pt	Peat (reserved for actual fibrous peat)
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