

GEOLOGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES MAP OF THE ELBOW QUADRANGLE, MALHEUR COUNTY, OREGON



of Years



Tkt

Tas

Tss.

Tss,

Alluvium (Holocene and Pleistocene)-Unconsolidated and generally poorly sorted deposits of gravel, sand, and silt along modern streams and flood plains andslide deposits (Holocene and Pleistocene)-Landslide and slump deposits of unconsolidated and unstratified soil and angular rock fragments formed as the result of bedrock failure Colluvial and alluvial fan deposits (Holocene, Pleistocene, and Pliocene?)-Alluvial fan

and slope deposits of unconsolidated coarse gravels and silts, colluvial deposits of scree and talus along slopes of ridges, and accumulations of windblown silt (loess) and sand, mostly of Holocene and late Pleistocene age. Possible Pliocene deposits include alluvial-fan and valley-fill deposits in secs. 22 and 23, T. 23 S., R. 44 E., that have been dissected by Cherry Creek Tuff of Kern Basin (middle Miocene)-Mainly nonwelded, fine-grained, white to pale-yellow lithic tuff containing clasts of basalt, banded rhyolite, and white pumice and crystals of biotite,

ornblende, quartz, and plagioclase. Includes as many as four nonwelded, light-gray to pale-yellow lithic tuffs interfingering with thin lenses of interbedded tuffaceous and arkosic sandstone and granite-clast conglomerate. Thickness of tuff units increases as thickness of interfingering lithologies ecreases from east to west. Lithic clasts, including basalt and flow-banded porphyritic decrease in abundance and diameter from west to east. Juvenile pumice contains biotite, hornblende, quartz, plagioclase, and an opaque iron oxide phase as phenocrysts. The same minerals occur with glass shards and small lithic clasts in the matrix. Tuff deposits include thinly bedded airfall tuffs, cross-bedded surge deposits, chaotically bedded tuff with slump structures, and massive-matrix-supported lithic tuff containing rhyolite and pumice clasts up to 50 cm in diameter. Reverse-graded bedding of pumice clasts and normally graded bedding of rhyolite clasts is apparent in some of the lithic tuffs, which contain pumice clasts as large as 12 cm in diameter. Unit Tkt grades upward from thinly bedded airfall tuffs that are locally chaotically bedded with slump structures near the base of the unit, through massive nonwelded lithic tuffs, and up into tuffaceous sandstones with 1-m-thick interbeds of arkosic sandstone and granite-clast conglomerate. Unit thickens to the northwest to a maximum thickness of 100 m on the south flank of Grassy Mountain. Age is middle Miocene, based on a Barstovian fossil (Ferns and Ramp, 1989) and a radiometric K-Ar age determination of 12.6

±0.6 Ma on a rhyolite clast (J.J. Rytuba, oral communication, 1990). The unit is interpreted by Storm (1975) as a series of nonwelded ignimbrite flows at the base of the Grassy Mountain Formation. Inconformably overlies unit Tas. Equivalent to the lower part of the Kern Basin Formation of Corcoran and others (1962) and the basal tuff breccia of the Grassy Mountain Formation of Kittleman and others (1965). Recognized as the base of the Grassy Mountain Formation by Cummings (1991) Arkose of Dry Creek Buttes (middle Miocene)-Mainly white to tan arkosic sandstones with minor amounts of granite-clast conglomerate. Includes 6-m-thick, massive beds of coarse, matrixsupported granite-clast conglomerate near exposed base of the unit along the Owyhee River in the Owyhee Dam quadrangle to the northeast (Ferns, 1989). Generally becomes finer grained upward

into medium- to coarse-grained micaceous (biotite and muscovite) arkosic sandstone. Locally includes thin interbeds of tuffaceous siltstone and bentonitic clay. Sandstones that cap Burnt Mountain and Nannys Nipple are medium-grained, well-sorted, muscovite-bearing arkose. A conglomerate layer up to 2 m thick and containing granite and gneiss cobbles is interbedded with the arkose near the top of Burnt Mountain. The conglomerate is both clast and matrix supported. Bed forms in the arkose include ripple marks and tabular and minor scour-and-fill cross sets. Arkose occurs in massive layers up to 2 m thick. Thickness of the unit is estimated at 110 m at Nannys Nipple. Low buttes in Oxbow Basin and at Burnt Mountain generally weather to shades of red and are made up of sandstones that have been silicified by introduction of hydrothermal fluids. Unit Tas is part of the Deer Butte Formation of Corcoran and others (1962) and Kittleman and others (1965, 1967) and constitutes the arkose of Dry Creek Buttes of the Deer Butte Formation (Cummings, 1991). Locally separated from underlying sequence of Oxbow Basin (units Tss1.8) by an angular unconformity (e.g. at Burnt Mountain)

Sequence of Oxbow Basin (middle Miocene)-A sequence of interbedded tuffaceous siltstones and sandstones (units Tss7, Tss6, Tss5, and Tss3), basalt tephra deposits (units Tss1, Tss4, and Tsss), and basalt flows (unit Tss2) named by Cummings (1991). Uppermost unit (Tss8) consists of thick proximal and vent facies deposits of basalt-palagonitic tephra that crop out near the top of Jannys Nipple and at the south end of Burnt Mountain. Complex dikes and sills and, possibly, small, vent-filling basalt flows occur in diatremes and craters in the vents. Finely laminated to massive, ight-colored tuffaceous siltstones and fine-grained sandstones of unit Tss7 that crop out north of Dry Creek Arm are lacustrine deposits marginal to the vents of unit Tsss. A shallow lacustrine depositional environment is indicated by fish scales and algal mats. Fluvial sediments (unit Tsse) underlie unit Tss7 north of Dry Creek Arm, where a coarse-grained arkose distinguished by large-scale scour-and-fill cross bedding forms a layer up to 4 m thick. Matrix-supported conglomerates with small pebbles of granite and quartz occur locally. Channel and sheet deposits of finegrained tuffaceous siltstones and coarse-grained sandstones (unit Tsss) crop out below unit Tsse east of Burnt Mountain and below the unit Tsss vent on Nannys Nipple. Unit Tss5 includes yellow-brown, fine-grained tuffaceous siltstones and sandstones and interbedded lithic-rich channel deposits of coarse sandstones. Moderately well-rounded, granule- to coarse-sand-sized, dark-gray to black clasts of multiply veined, hydrothermally silicified siltstones occur in the channel deposits. Well-sorted sheet sands, cross-bedded at low angle and containing silicified clasts, that occur north of Dry Creek Arm are interpreted to be beach deposits of unit Tss5 that grade laterally northward into lacustrine-facies, finely laminated tuffaceous siltstones, and fine-grained sandstones. Fish

scales and plant fragments occur in the lacustrine facies of unit Tss5. The base of unit Tss5 interfingers with proximal-facies palagonitic tephra deposits of unit Tss4. Unit Tss4 vent-facies deposits mark a well-exposed basalt tuff ring north of Dry Creek Arm and west of Burnt Mountain. A tuff cone in unit Tss4 is exposed on the south flank of Nannys Nipple. Unit Tss4 palagonite tephra deposits overlie light- to medium-gray, organic-rich siltstones of unit Tss3. Unit Tss3 includes seams of lignite, siltstones with abundant reed fossils, and fissile shales with interbedded, laminated to massive siltstones. Unit Tss3 siltstones lie conformably on basalt-palagonitic tephra deposits of unit Tss1 south of Nannys Nipple. The thin basalt flows of unit Tss2 (sample V, Table 3) that rest on unit

Tss1 in the extreme southwest corner of the quadrangle may be correlative with the unit Tbou flows exposed on the east side of Lake Owyhee. Unit Tss1, the stratigraphically lowest unit in the sequence of Oxbow Basin, includes (1) massive basaltic tephra deposits containing blocks of vesicular to massive basalt in a palagonite matrix and interbedded with tuffaceous siltstones and (2) moderately well-bedded tephra deposits containing palagonitized ash and lapilli, basalt lithic fragments, and accretionary lapilli. Proximal-, intermediate-, and vent-facies deposits are common (Cummings and Growney, 1988). Tephra deposits of units Tss1, Tss4, and Tss8 were formed during explosive interactions between basalt magma and surface or ground water. The sequence of Oxbow Basin (Cummings, 1991, and unpublished mapping, 1987-1988) is part of the Deer Butte Formation of

Corcoran and others (1962) and Kittleman and others (1965, 1967)





GMS-62

Geology and Mineral Resources Map of The Elbow Quadrangle, Malheur County, Oregon By M.L. Ferns and M.L. Cummings Funded jointly by the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries, the Oregon State Lottery, and the U.S. Geological Survey COGEOMAP Program, with

contributions from private mining companies to Portland State University, as part of a cooperative effort to map the west half of the 1° by 2° Boise sheet, eastern Oregon

Plate 1

MINERAL RESOURCES **Metallic mineral resources**

Gold resources may occur in the quadrangle. Anomalous concentrations of gold were detected in samples from both sides of Lake Owyhee. A sample of strongly silicified siltstones of unit Tss5 northeast of Burnt Mountain (sample 5, Table 1) contained 54 ppb Au. The sediments here are intruded by northeast-trending basalt dikes and sills that parallel one of the faults between units Tss5 and Tbo. Strongly silicified arkosic sandstones of unit Tas cap Burnt Mountain to the southeast Unit Tas conglomerate lenses on Burnt Mountain contain small, rounded sinter fragments. Anomalous concentrations of gold occur in the light-colored, siltstone-bearing matrix of a basalt-clast breccia along the footwall of a fault on the west flank of Nannys Nipple. The matrix contains 100 ppb Au

(sample OW-433, Table 3) and is interpreted to be the matrix in a diatreme of a basalt hydrovolcanic Large, multi-stage calcite vein systems crop out across the reservoir to the southeast. The northernmost vein, known as the old Calcite King prospect and located in sec. 15, T. 23 S., R. 44 E. is more that 5 m in thickness and can be traced for over 700 m along strike. A sample of calcite breccia from a much smaller, north-striking vein near here yielded 22 ppb Au (sample 12, Table 1) Two large, northwest-trending vein systems that crop out to the south in the N½ sec. 27, T. 23 S. R. 44 E., were located in the past as the Calcite Miner and Sheep Horn claims (Lowry, 1943). Both veins can be traced for over 700 m along strike. A narrow, discontinuous chalcedony vein that crops out east of the easternmost Sheep Horn calcite vein also contained anomalous concentrations of gold (33 ppb; sample 16, Table 1). Arkosic sandstones at the base of unit Tsat to the south and east are locally silicified and form the cap to mesas south of Iron Mountain Canyon in secs. 2 and 10, T. 24 S. R. 44 E.

Nonmetallic mineral resources The calcite veins have been prospected in the past for optical calcite. Bands with pockets of calcite crystals measuring from 1 to as much as 7 in. on a side have been found in the Calcite Miner vein (Lowry, 1943). The crystal surfaces are generally weathered, although clear cleavage fragments as much as 1 in² have been reported (Lowry, 1943).

Geothermal resources Geothermal resources may occur within the quadrangle. A hot spring is shown along the Owyhee River near the mouth of Dry Creek (NW¼SW¼ sec. 16, T. 22 S., R. 44 E.) on the 1921 30-minute topographic map of the Mitchell Butte quadrangle. This is presumably the same spring that is mentioned by Washburne (1909) as being located on the Owyhee River, 15 mi above Deer Butte. The temperature and flow rate of the spring is unknown as it is now covered by waters of Lake Owyhee.

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EXPLANATION

Basalt and basaltic andesite? flows (middle Miocene?) —Mainly gray to black, generally holocrystalline, aphyric and plagioclase-phyric basalt flows that fill paleocanyons eroded into the underlying basalt unit Tbo north of Lake Owyhee. The unit thins progressively southeastward from a maximum thickness of 100 m in the northwest corner of the quadrangle to a single flow on Sheephead Ridge. Includes a well-exposed pillow delta complex in the SE ¹ / ₄ sec. 34, T. 22 S., R. 44 E., where palagonitic rinds occur on pillows. Flows are pilotaxitic to ophitic and characterized by plagioclase phenocrysts less than 3 mm in length and microphenocrysts of clinopyroxene, orthopyroxene, and iddingsitized olivine. Distinguished from underlying flows of units Tbo and Tbou by a generally fresher appearance on weathered surfaces, thinner weathering rinds, commonly holocrysts. Samples A and P in Table 2 and samples from presumably correlative capping flows in the Owyhee Ridge quadrangle (Ferns, 1988), Owyhee Dam quadrangle (Ferns, 1989), and near Dry Creek to the south (Hart, 1981; Cummings, 1991) are calc-alkaline basalts and basaltic andesites. K-Ar age determinations for presumably equivalent flows in the Owyhee Dam and Grassy Mountain quadrangles (Ferns, 1989; Ferns and Ramp, 1989) range from 8.67 to 16.1 Ma (Fiebelkorn and others, 1982; Hart and Carlson, 1983). D. B. Vander Meulen (written communication, 1989) reports a K-Ar whole-rock age of 12.8 ± 0.4 Ma from the unit's basal flow on the east side of Owyhee Ridge in the Owyhee Ridge quadrangle to the northeast. Capping flow in sec. 19, T. 23 S., R. 45 E., has been dated at 10.3 ± 1.1 Ma (J.J. Rytuba, oral communication, 1990). Equivalent to the Blackjack Basalt of Bryan (1929) and Geldsetzer (1966) and the Deer Butte basalts and uppermost flows of the Owyhee Basalt as mapped by Kittleman and others (1965) and Corcoran and others (1962). Cummings (unpublished mapping, 1987-1988) refers to similar flows north of Dry Creek in the Twin Springs quadrangle as part of the	Tsv Tdr Tos
where palagonitic rinds occur on pillows. Flows are pilotaxitic to ophitic and characterized by plagioclase phenocrysts less than 3 mm in length and microphenocrysts of clinopyroxene, orthopyroxene, and iddingsitized olivine. Distinguished from underlying flows of units Tbo and Tbou by a generally fresher appearance on weathered surfaces, thinner weathering rinds, commonly holocrystalline groundmass, and relatively greater abundance of olivine and orthopyroxene phenocrysts. Samples A and P in Table 2 and samples from presumably correlative capping flows in the Owyhee Ridge quadrangle (Ferns, 1988), Owyhee Dam quadrangle (Ferns, 1989), and near Dry Creek to the south (Hart, 1981; Cummings, 1991) are calc-alkaline basalts and basaltic andesites. K-Ar age determinations for presumably equivalent flows in the Owyhee Dam and Grassy Mountain quadrangles (Ferns, 1989; Ferns and Ramp, 1989) range from 8.67 to 16.1 Ma (Fiebelkorn and others, 1982; Hart and Carlson, 1983). D.B. Vander Meulen (written communication, 1989) reports a K-Ar whole-rock age of 12.8 \pm 0.4 Ma from the unit's basal flow on the east side of Owyhee Ridge in the Owyhee Ridge quadrangle to the northeast. Capping flow in sec. 19, T. 23 S., R. 45 E., has been dated at 10.3 \pm 1.1 Ma (J.J. Rytuba, oral communication, 1990). Equivalent to the Blackjack Basalt of Bryan (1929) and Geldsetzer (1966) and the Deer Butte basalts and uppermost flows of the Owyhee Basalt as mapped by Kittleman and others (1965) and Corcoran and others (1962). Cummings (unpublished mapping, 1987-1988) refers to similar flows north of Dry Creek in the Twin Springs quadrangle as part of the sequence of Cummings and Growney (1988) in Ferns and Ramp (1989) are incorrect. The basalt of the 12-flow sequence of Cummings and Growney (1988) in theirite basalt rather than calc-alkaline basaltic andesite	
 Tuffaceous sandstones and siltstones (middle Miocene)—Mainly light-colored, thin-bedded, fine-grained tuffaceous siltstones with interbedded white tuffaceous sandstones. Includes thin-bedded, brown silty sandstones and interbedded gypsiferous bentonitic claystones. Also includes coaly shales and fine-grained volcanic sandstone. Crops out along the west side of Lake Owyhee between flows of units Tbb and Tbo Owyhee Basalt, upper flows (middle Miocene)—Basalt and basaltic andesite flows. Mainly flow-on-flow sequence of olivine-phyric basalt that caps ridges north and south of Cherry Creek. Includes plagioclase-phyric basaltic andesites and interbedded pyroclastic deposits. Separated from 	
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interpreted as being slightly younger than the type section. Chemically indistinguishable from the main section of Owyhee Basalt exposures, consisting of calc-alkaline basalts and basaltic andesites (samples F, H, J, K, L, M, and Q, Table 2). Discontinuous outcrop pattern and irregularly shaped lower contact suggest that the flows were deposited on an irregular surface. One probable vent area is delineated by the dike complex exposed on the northeast branch of Cherry Creek in sec. 13, T. 23 S., R. 44 E., where red scoria deposits in unit Tsu interfinger with unit Tbou flows. Equivalent to the upper part of the Owyhee Basalt as mapped by Corcoran and others (1962) and, in part, to olivine	1010
basalt flows in the Deer Butte Formation (Corcoran and others, 1962; Kittleman and others, 1967). May be equivalent to unit Tss ₂ flows in the southwest corner of the quadrangle	Ты
Owyhee Basalt, basalt, basaltic andesite, and andesite (middle Miocene) —Mainly dark- gray to black, fine-grained platy plagioclase-phyric lava flows and autoclastic breccias that weather to shades of red and brown. Includes generally thin, lenticular subaerial tuff, red and black scoria deposits, and orange-brown palagonitic tuff. In The Elbow quadrangle, unit consists mainly of distinct stacks of thin (1.5-m-thick) basalt flows and platy basaltic andesite flows (3-7 m thick). In thin section, pilotaxitic textures are predominant. Phenocryst assemblages are mainly plagioclase and plagioclase + olivine + clinopyroxene. Olivines are usually altered to iddingsite or to a bright- green mineral (bowlingite?). Chemically, mainly calc-alkaline basalts, basaltic andesites, and an- desites (Brown and Petros, 1985) (samples D, G, and I, Table 2). Radiometric K-Ar age determinations for the Owyhee Basalt range from 14.1 to 25.3 ± 1.8 Ma (Fiebelkorn and others, 1982; Brown and Petros, 1985). Field relations determined in this quadrangle suggest that the previous interpretation by Ferns (1988, 1989) and Ferns and Ramp (1989) that unit Tbo is older than the 15.5-Ma ash-flow tuffs in the Owyhee Ridge and Pelican Point quadrangles is in error	Tbi ₁
Owyhee Basalt, lower flows (middle Miocene) —Basalt and basaltic andesite flows. Includes uppermost flows of scoriaceous olivine basalt. Lowest exposed part of the unit consists of a 14-m-thick andesite flow that drapes around a constructional topography made up of hydrovolcanic vents of underlying unit Tos . Overlain by unit Tdr . Chemically and petrographically indistinguishable from flows in unit Tbo (samples A, B, and E, Table 2). Herein considered to be the lower part of the Owyhee Basalt of Bryan (1929)	÷
Sucker Creek Formation, undifferentiated (Miocene)—Mainly fine-grained, light-orange- brown, tuffaceous, palagonite-rich volcaniclastic silt- and sandstones and pale, yellowish-white zeolitized tuffs. Tuffs include white, zeolitic tuff breccias. Silt- and sandstones include yellowish- brown palagonitic sandstones and tuffaceous volcaniclastic conglomerates with scoriaceous clasts and yellow-white pumiceous lapilli tuffs. Unit also includes interbeds of (1) coarse-grained, felsic, light-colored lithic tuffs composed of white inflated pumice and aphyric black basalt clasts and (2) vent- and proximal-facies mafic lapilli tuffs, steeply dipping red scoria deposits, and yellow-brown palagonitic tuffs. Northernmost exposures interfinger with unit Thou flows near the head of Cherry Creek Generally becomes finer grained upsection and to the south. A white, pumiceous, nonwelded	
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Arkose and tuffaceous sandstones, siltstones, and tuff (middle Miocene)-Sedimentary sequence of channel-fill consisting of muscovite-bearing arkose and overlying white air-fall and water-lain zeolitized tuff. Includes interbedded lithic tuff and orange palagonitic siltstones. Conformably overlain by unit Tsu. Equivalent, in part, to arkosic sandstones mapped as unit Tp by Vander Meulen and others (1987) in the adjacent Pelican Point quadrangle to the south. Silica-cemented fine- to coarse-grained, channel-fill arkosic sandstones at the base of the unit form prominent outcrops east of Iron Mountain. Massively bedded, well-sorted, muscovite-bearing sandstones contain large wood fragments and rip-up clasts of underlying palagonitic siltstones





Map MF-1904, 1:24,000. Washburne, C.W., 1909, Gas and oil prospects near Vale, Oregon, and Payette, Idaho: U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 431, p. 26-55.



20-m-thick sequence of laminated, orange-brown palagonitic volcaniclastic sandstones. Unit to the west contains a 2-m-thick, nonwelded lapilli tuff with pumice clasts. Interbeds include coaly shales and channel-fills of coarse-grained, cross-bedded, muscovite-bearing arkose sandstones. Unconformably overlain in Iron Mountain Canyon by massive lahars of unit Tos Basalt, basaltic andesite, and andesite dikes, sills, and shallow intrusions (Miocene)-Basalt, basaltic andesite, and andesite plugs, sills, and dikes. Includes glassy, columnar-jointed,

glomeroporphyritic olivine basalts, such as the plug at Iron Mountain (sample U, Table 2), and large masses of platy-jointed, plagioclase-phyric basalts and basaltic andesites emplaced as irregular shaped dikes and sills in and adjacent to palagonite tuff units Tos (sample N, Table 2), Tss1, and Tsss (samples OW-603 and OW-1407, Table 3). Also includes coarse-grained, holocrystalline olivine basalt sills with ophitic textures that form poor exposures and weather to granular, orange-brown soils (samples O and T, Table 2). Coarse clots of ophitic clinopyroxene give weathered surfaces a mottled appearance. The intrusions are interpreted to have been feeders to hydrovolcanic deposits of units Tos, Tss1, Tss4, and Tsss and to various unit Tbo flows. Where determined, younger dikes that cut across older intrusions are identified as unit Tbi1. Dikes and small, irregularly shaped intrusive masses are concentrated in or adjacent to hydrovolcanic eruptive centers and are generally aligned along a north-northeast trend, parallel to regional faults, while the larger, more glassy

	MAP SYMBOLS
;	Contact — approximately located.
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	Fold axis
× 32	Strike and dip of beds
•••••	Trend of calcite vein
	Location of sample analyzed in Table 1
	Location of sample analyzed in Table 2
•	Location of sample analyzed in Table 3
•	Location of sample analyzed in Table 4
©	Vertebrate fossil locality

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intrusions appear to stretch out along a more northeasterly trend. Some of the sills along both sides of Lake Owyhee in the southeast corner of the quadrangle may be invasive unit Tbou flows