

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

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Geology and Mineral Resources Map of The Elbow Quadrangle, Malheur County, Oregon

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Plate 1

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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 Tss 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 Tss and Tbo. Strongly silicified arkosic sandstones of unit Tas crop Burnt Mountain to the southeast. Unit Tas conglomerate lenses on Burnt Mountain contain small, rounded siltstone fragments. Anomalous concentrations of gold occur in the light-colored siltstones bearing thin basalt breccia along the footwall of a fault on the west flank of Nanny's Nipple. The matrix contains 100 ppb Au (sample OW-433, Table 3) and is interpreted to be the matrix in a reservoir of a basalt hydrovolcanic deposit.

Large, multi-stage calcite vein systems crop out across the reservoir to the southeast. The northernmost vein, known as the old Caliche King prospect and located in sec. 15, T. 22 S., R. 44 E., is more than 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 3). Two large, northwest-trending vein systems that crop out to the south in the N44 sec. 27, T. 22 S., R. 44 E., were located in the past as the Caliche Miner and Sheep Horn claims (Lowry, 1943). Both veins can be traced for over 700 m along strike. A narrow, easterly, discontinuous shallowly vein that crops out east of the easternmost Sheep Horn claim vein also contained anomalous concentrations of gold (33 ppb, sample 16, Table 1). Arkosic sandstones at the base of unit Tss to the south and east are locally silicified and form the cap to the mesa 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 Caliche Miner vein (Lowry, 1943). The crystal surfaces are generally weathered, although clear cleavage fragments as much as 1 in. 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. 15, T. 22 S., R. 44 E.) on the 1923 30-minute topographic map of the Mitchell Butte quadrangle. This is presumably the same spring that is mentioned by Washburn (1900) as being located on the Owyhee River, 15 mi above Deer Butte. The temperature and flow rate are not known, as it is now covered by waters of Lake Owyhee.

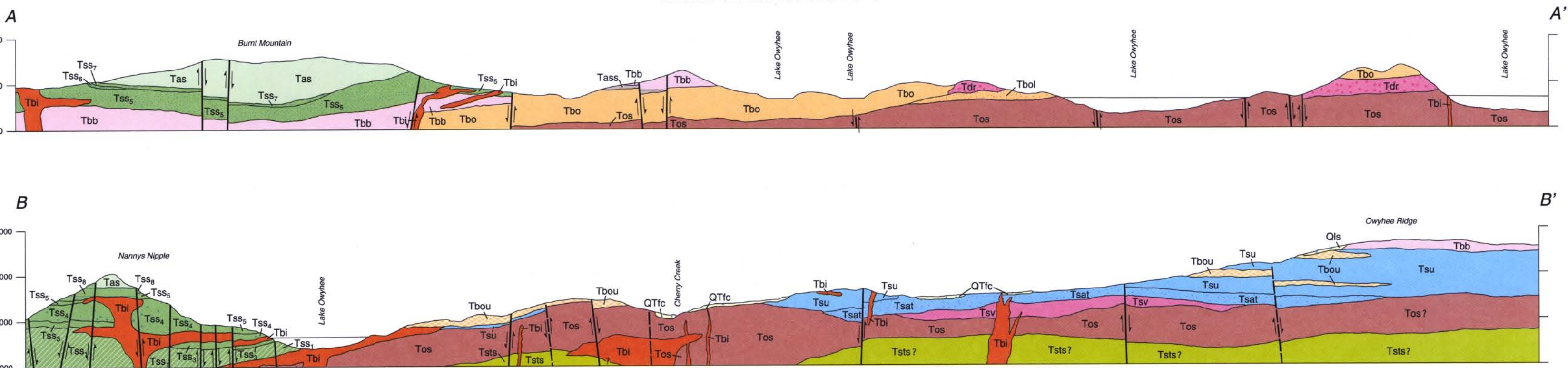
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EXPLANATION

- Basalt and basaltic andesite flows (middle Miocene)**—Mainly gray to black, generally holocrystalline, aphyric and plagioclase-phyric basalt flows that fill palaeochannels eroded into the underlying basalt unit Tbo north of Lake Owyhee. The unit thins progressively southward 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 SE¼ sec. 34, T. 22 S., R. 44 E., where palaeoglaciers eroded into the flows. Flows are pillared by ophiolite and characterized by where palaeoglaciers eroded into the flows. Flows are pillared by ophiolite and characterized by where palaeoglaciers eroded into the flows. Flows are pillared by ophiolite and characterized by where palaeoglaciers eroded into the flows.
- Basaltic andesite (middle Miocene)**—A single intracanyon flow of gray to bluish-gray, aphyric, platy basaltic andesite with a well-preserved cap of red scoria. Fills a topographic depression cut into underlying unit Tss and is conformably overlain by unit Tss. Chemically a calc-alkaline basaltic andesite (samples 8 and T, Table 2). Dated at 15.8 ± 0.5 Ma (J.J. Rybala, oral communication, 1990).
- Plagioclase rhyodacite (middle Miocene)**—Flow-foliated, red, plagioclase-phyric rhyodacite flow of variable thickness. The massive portion of the flow is as much as 120 m thick in the quadrangle. Massive parts of flow are commonly vertically jointed. The rhyodacite locally has a vitrophyre base and a rubby cap of vitrophyre blocks in an ash matrix. Petrographically, a glassy rhyodacite with about 2 percent embayed plagioclase phenocrysts and small, partially resorbed orthopyroxene phenocrysts. An analysis of the vitrophyre base (sample C, Table 2) indicates a rhyodacite composition. A K-Ar age determination of 13.5 ± 3.4 Ma (J.J. Rybala, oral communication, 1990) better agrees with the observed stratigraphy than the 22.8 ± 2.6-Ma K-Ar age determination by Brown and Petro (1985). The rhyodacite underlies flows of the Owyhee Basalt (unit Tbo) and overlies volcaniclastic deposits (unit Tss) at the Owyhee Reservoir and the lower 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. 17, T. 23 S., R. 45 E., has been dated at 13.2 ± 1.1 Ma (J.J. Rybala, oral communication, 1990). Equivalent to the Blackhawk Basalt of Bryan (1929) and Geldetzer (1966) and the Deer Butte Basalt and uppermost flows of the Owyhee Basalt as mapped by Kittelman and others (1985) and Corcoran and others (1982). Cumming's (unpublished mapping, 1987-1988) refers to similar flows north of Dry Creek in the Twin Springs quadrangle as part of the sequence of Freshout Creek. New analytical data indicate that previous correlations with the 12-flow sequence of Cummings and Grosvenor (1988) in Ferns and Ramp (1988) are incorrect. The basalt of the 12-flow sequence of Cummings and Grosvenor (1988) is tholeiitic basalt rather than calc-alkaline basaltic andesite.
- Tuffaceous sandstones and siltstones (middle Miocene)**—Mainly light-colored, thin-bedded, fine-grained tuffaceous sandstones with interbedded white tuffaceous sandstones. Includes thin-bedded, brown siltstone and interbedded gypsiferous bentonitic claystones. Also includes only shales and arkosic sandstones from underlying unit Tss. Unit varies in thickness with a maximum thickness estimated at about 135 m at vent areas. The top of the unit locally interfingers with the base of units Tss and Tbo. Correlative with unit Tss as mapped in the Owyhee Ridge and Owyhee Dam quadrangles (Ferns, 1988, 1989) and the lower part of the Sucker Creek Formation (Corcoran and others, 1962; Kittelman and others, 1965, 1967).
- 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 the type section of Owyhee Basalt by tuffaceous sediment (unit Tss) north of Cherry Creek and 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. 15, T. 22 S., R. 44 E., where red scoria deposits in unit Tss interfinger with unit Tss. Equivalent to the upper part of the Owyhee Basalt as mapped by Corcoran and others (1982) and, in part, to olivine basalt flows in the Deer Butte Formation (Corcoran and others, 1962; Kittelman and others, 1967). May be equivalent to unit Tss flows in the southwest corner of the quadrangle.
- 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 palaeoglaciers. In the Elbow quadrangle, unit consists mainly of distinct clasts (thin 1.5-m-thick basalt flows and platy basaltic andesite flows (3-7 m thick). In this section, plagioclase textures are predominant. Phenocryst assemblages are mainly plagioclase and plagioclase + olivine + clinopyroxene. Olivines are usually altered to iddingsite or to a bright-green mineral (bowlite?). Chemically, mainly calc-alkaline basalts, basaltic andesites, and andesites (Brown and Petro, 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 (Fidellier and others, 1982; Brown and Petro, 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.
- Owyhee Basalt, lower flows (middle Miocene)**—Basalt and basaltic andesite flows. Includes uppermost flow of coarse-grained 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 Tss. Overlain by unit Tss. Chemically and petrographically indistinguishable from flows in unit Tss (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, palaeoglaciers, volcaniclastic siltstone, and sandstone and pale yellowish-white zeolitized tuffs. Tuffs include white, zeolitic tuff breccias. Silt and sandstones include yellowish-brown palaeoglaciers and tuffaceous volcaniclastic conglomerates with coarse-grained clasts and yellowish-white pumiceous lapilli tuffs. Unit also includes interbeds of (1) coarse-grained, light-colored lithic tuffs composed of white inflated pumice and aphyric black basalt clasts and (2) vent and proximal-facies mafic lithic tuffs, steeply dipping red scoria deposits, and yellow-brown palaeoglaciers. Northmost exposures interfinger with unit Tss flows near the head of Cherry Creek. Generally becomes finer grained upsection and to the south, a white, pumiceous, nonvolcanic ash-flow tuff with petrified wood crops out near the top of the section south of Board Corner Springs. Considered part of the Sucker Creek Formation (Kittelman and others, 1965, 1967) and equivalent to unit Tss as mapped by Ferns (1988) in the Owyhee Ridge quadrangle to the northeast. May in part be equivalent to unit Tss.
- 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 palaeoglaciers. Conformably overlain by unit Tss. Equivalent, in part, to arkosic sandstones mapped as unit Tss by Vander Meulen and others (1987) in the adjacent Pelican Point quadrangle to the south. Siliceous, medium-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 palaeoglaciers.

GEOLOGIC CROSS SECTIONS



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Field work conducted in 1988-1989

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