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Sequence Stratigraphic Analysis of Marginal Marine Sabkha

Facies: Entrada Sandstone, Four Corners Region

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Sequence Stratigraphic Analysis of Marginal Marine Sabkha Facies:

Entrada Sandstone, Four Corners Region

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Kim, for encouraging me, to my mother, for teaching me how to wonder, and to my father, for always putting his family first.

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I would like to acknowledge the help of my supervisor, Gary Kocurek, without whom this study would have been impossible. Thank you to the Minerals department of the Navajo Nation for granting permits to access Navajo Nation land for this study. Thank you to ExxonMobil for funding field work, and to my father-in-law, David Hansen, who allowed me to use his truck. Also, thanks to Thomas Charles Brothers, Erin Eastwood, and Ryan Ewing for assistance in the field.

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Abstract

Sequence Stratigraphic Analysis of Marginal Marine Sabkha Facies: Entrada Sandstone, Four Corners Region

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Abstract: The Middle Jurassic Entrada Sandstone of the Four Corners region, USA, is composed predominantly of very fine-grained, red, silty sandstone with poorly defined sedimentary structures. The origin of this facies is enigmatic, even though it is common both on the Colorado Plateau and globally, and is spatially situated between deposits recording unambiguous marine and aeolian environments. Eleven sections were measured along an 85 km transect from the Blanding Basin in southeastern Utah to the San Juan Basin in northwestern New Mexico. Outcrop and laboratory analyses distinguish eight facies: (1) silty shale, (2) shallow subaqueous reworked, fine- to medium-grained sandstone, (3) brecciated, very fine-grained sandstone, (4) crinkly laminated, very fine-grained sandstone with preserved wind ripples and abundant silty laminae, (5) weakly laminated, fine-grained sandstone with occasional silty laminae, (6) planar-laminated, fine-grained, wind-rippled sandstone, (7) cross-stratified, fine- to medium-grained aeolian cross-stratified sandstone, and (8) micritic limestone. Lateral and vertical relationships of these facies show a proximal to distal transition from cross-bedded wind-lain facies to loess-dominated sabkha facies with increasing abundance of water-lain facies basinward. The well known Todilto Limestone (facies 8) is situated stratigraphically below loess-dominated sabkha facies (facies 4 and 5) within the Entrada

Sandstone, reinforcing previous interpretations that the unit represents a catastrophic flooding event and not a local groundwater flux.

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INTRODUCTION

A common facies that occurs between clear aeolian and marine sedimentary accumulations within Jurassic strata on the Colorado Plateau of the United States consists of a red, fine-grained sandstone with poorly defined sedimentary structures. This transitional facies has been described as “silty to massive” (O’Sullivan, 1978) and interpreted as representing “sabkha” deposition (Imlay, 1980; Kocurek and Dott, 1983; O’Sullivan and Pierce, 1983; Blakey et al., 1988; Peterson, 1988), but its exact origins remain unknown. This facies is volumetrically significant in the Middle Jurassic Entrada Sandstone (Kocurek and Dott, 1983; Blakey et al, 1988), especially in the area of the Four Corners of the United States, where it constitutes nearly the entirety of the formation. To first-order, the Jurassic red, fine-grained sandstones are similar to strata in the Pennsylvanian-Permian Maroon Formation of the Eagle Basin in northwestern Colorado, which have been interpreted as loess deposits (Johnson, 1987, 1989; Soreghan et al., 2008) and to the beds of the early Pennsylvanian-Permian Cutler Formation of the Paradox Basin in, Utah (Johnson, 1989). Loess is characterized by sediments finer than 62 μm , the cutoff for aeolian suspended sediment, and can be carried tens of kilometers from dune fields by normal winds (Tsoar and Pye, 1987; Pye, 1995). The amount of loess present within facies of enigmatic origin is used in its interpretation.

This study uses a combination of outcrop descriptions, regional stratigraphic relationships, and grain-size analysis to interpret the red, fine-grained sandstones of the Entrada Sandstones in the Four Corners area. Sedimentary structures and grain-size

analysis show that distinct subfacies can be recognized and traced laterally as coherent units. Interpretation of the depositional environments associated with these subfacies can be made by their placement within a regional stratigraphic framework that contains facies of known origins. In addition, the Todilto Limestone pinches out within the study area. The Todilto Limestone is a well known but enigmatic unit that has been interpreted to represent a catastrophic flooding of the Entrada Dune Field (Benan & Kocurek, 2000). This study demonstrates the environment in which this flooding event occurred and the timing of this event with respect to overall Entrada stratigraphy.

TECTONIC AND STRATIGRAPHIC SETTING

Deposition of the Entrada Sandstone in the Four Corners region was influenced by spatial variations in subsidence associated with the San Juan and Blanding Basins, the Uncompaghre Uplift, the Defiance-Zuni Arch, and the Monument Arch (Fig. 1A). These features developed during the Pennsylvanian-Permian with deformation associated with the formation of the Ancestral Rocky Mountains (Kelley, 1950; Mallory, 1958; Mallory, 1972; Kluth and Coney, 1981; Baars et al., 1988; Ye et al., 1996). The Blanding Basin is a sub-basin of the Paradox Basin, which is a structural depression associated with the formation of the adjacent Uncompaghre Uplift, an element of the Ancestral Rocky Mountains (Mallory, 1958; Wengerd and Matheny, 1958; Stevenson and Baars, 1986; Barbeau, 2003). The Blanding Basin is separated from the Henry Mountains Basin, another Paradox sub-basin, by the Monument Arch (Ohlen and McIntyre, 1965; Wengerd and Matheny, 1958), and from the San Juan Basin by the Defiance-Zuni Arch and a low platform in the Four Corners Region (Kelley, 1950; Huffmann and Condon, 1993). Regional facies relationships and stratigraphic thicknesses argue that these structural features were active during the Jurassic, and have been tectonically significant since at least Pennsylvanian-Permian time (Blakey, 1988). Within the study area, thickest Jurassic accumulations occur within the Blanding and San Juan Basins, with marked thinning over the Defiance-Zuni Arch along the Arizona-New Mexico boarder accompanied by facies change within Jurassic strata (Cooley et al. 1969; Figs. 1B, 2).

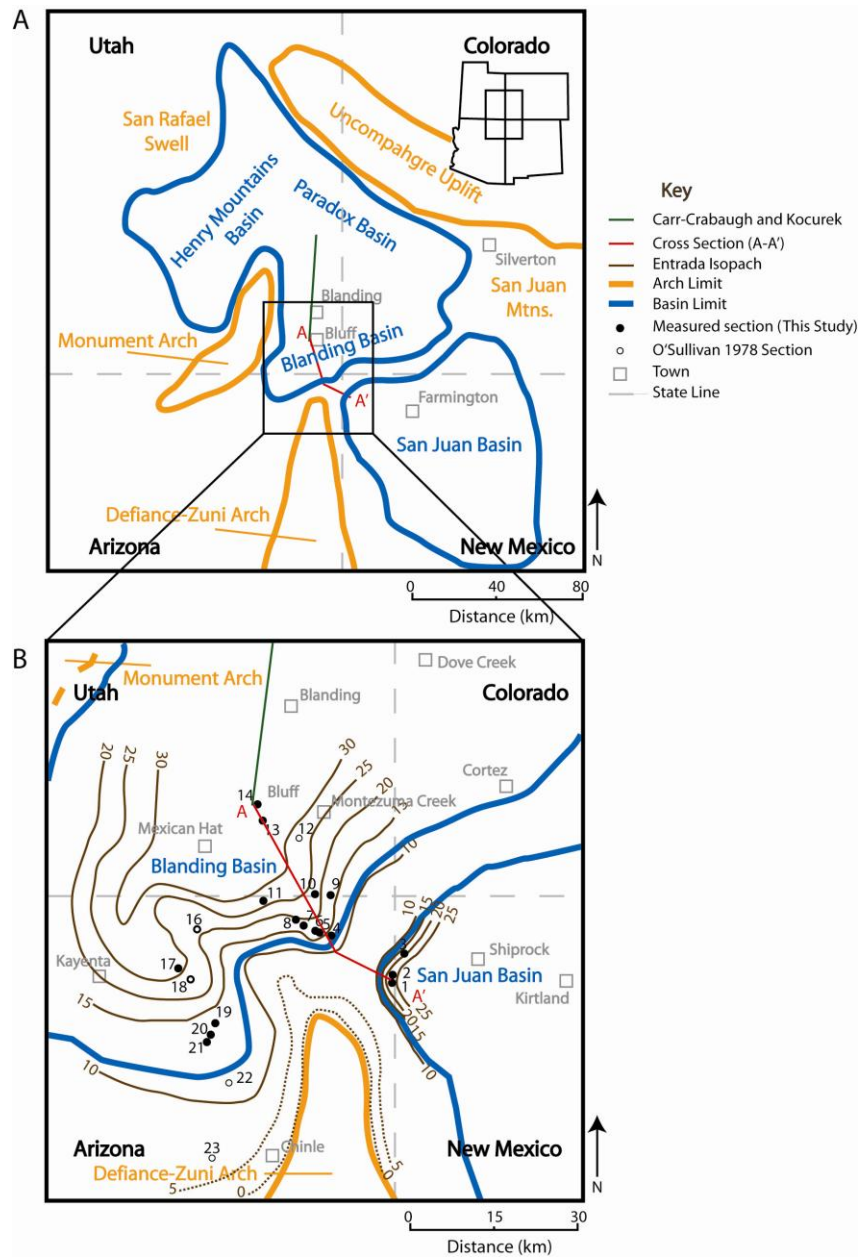


Fig. 1- (A) Paleo-structural elements of the Four Corners Region (USA), shows spatial distribution of elements affecting Middle Jurassic sedimentation and location of transects of this study and Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek (1998). Entrada thicknesses measured in this study are supplemented by additional sections from O'Sullivan (1978). (B) Measured section locations and Entrada Sandstone isopach in the Four Corners Region showing Entrada thickness in the Blanding and San Juan Basins with thinning across the Defiance Ridge from A-A'. Isopach measurements in meters. Modified from Woodward (1984), Blakey (1998), and Woodward et al. (1997).

The Entrada Sandstone is a Jurassic unit within the Bathonian-Late Callovian San Rafael Group, a sedimentary unit composed within the study area of southward prograding aeolian sands inter-tonguing with shallow marine deposits (Harshbarger et al., 1957; O’Sullivan, 1980; Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek, 1998). Within the study area, the San Rafael Group is bounded by the J2 and J5 unconformities (Pipringos and O’Sullivan, 1998). Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek (1998) described four sequences within the San Rafael group of eastern Utah that consist of basal sabkha-dominated depositional systems overlain by migrating cross-stratified dune and interdune facies and capped by polygonally fractured or featureless surfaces (Fig. 2). This study traces two sequences of Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek (1998) from the Blanding Basin near Bluff, Utah, across the Defiance-Zuni Arch into the San Juan Basin in northwestern New Mexico (Fig 2).

The “basal sabkha-dominated depositional system” of sequence I of Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek (1998) is the Carmel Formation, a succession of vertically stacked shallow marine and thin aeolian dune deposits that record the Carmel transgression and correlate laterally within the Dewy Bridge Member of the Entrada Sandstone (Peterson, 1986). These deposits are overlain by the basal member of the Entrada Sandstone, the Middle Sandstone/Lower Sandy Member, which is capped by a polygonal fracture surface. Sequence II is composed of the next two members of the Entrada Sandstone: the Rehoboth Member and the Upper Sandstone/Salmon Member, which is capped by another polygonally fractured surface. The Entrada Sandstone is overlain by the youngest unit of the San Rafael Group, the Wanakah Formation (or Summerville Formation), which is capped by the J5 unconformity (Harshbarger et al.,

1957; O'Sullivan, 1980; Fig. 2). The Wanakah Formation inter-tongues northward with the remainder of the Entrada Sandstone, the Slick Rock Member, Moab Tongue, and Black Steer Knoll Member (Fig. 2). The Todilto Limestone is a member of the San Rafael Group within the San Juan Basin of New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado, and its specific stratigraphic location will be discussed later in this paper.

While controversy surrounds correlation and naming of members within the Entrada Sandstone of the Four Corners area, stratigraphic nomenclature for the three members of the Entrada Sandstone that exist within this study area is adopted from most recent USGS publications (O'Sullivan, 1978; O'Sullivan, 1980; Robertson and O'Sullivan, 2000, 2001), and are, in order from oldest to youngest; Lower Sandstone or Middle Sandstone Member, Rehoboth Member, and Upper Sandstone or Salmon Member (Fig. 3). A change in nomenclature for the lower and upper members of the Entrada occurs at the border of the Navajo Nation in southern Utah, where the Upper Sandstone Member becomes the Salmon Member, and the Lower Sandy Member becomes the Middle Sandstone Member crossing the San Juan River from south to north (Figs. 2, 4). Alternative nomenclature, proposed by Lucas et al. (1998; Fig. 3), is rejected here because it fails to conform to stratigraphic units that are traceable in the field.

Age	Group	Harshbarger, Repenning, and Irvan, 1957	O'Sullivan 1978	O'Sullivan 1980	Robertson and O'Sullivan, 2001	Lucas, Heckert, and Anderson, 1998	This Study	
Lower Jurassic	Glen Canyon Group	Navajo Sandstone	Navajo Sandstone	Navajo Sandstone	Entrada Sandstone	Summerville Formation	Wanakah Formation	
		Kayenta Formation	Not Described			Entrada Sandstone	Upper Sandstone/ Salmon	Upper Sandstone/ Salmon
		Wingate Sandstone (Lukachikai Mbr.)					Rehoboth Member	Rehoboth Member
Middle Jurassic	San Rafael Group	Navajo Sandstone	Navajo Sandstone	Salmon	Entrada Sandstone		Slick Rock Member	Entrada Sandstone
		Carmel Formation	Upper Red	Upper Sandstone	Rehoboth Member	Dewy Bridge Member	Middle Sandstone/ Lower Sandy	
			Lower Sandy Member	Middle Member	Middle Sandstone/ Lower Sandy	J2 Unconformity	Carmel Formation	
			Not Described	Not Described	Not Described			Wingate Sandstone (Lukachikai Mbr.)
		J2 Unconformity		J2 Unconformity		J2 Unconformity		J2 Unconformity

Fig. 3- Summary of evolution of stratigraphic nomenclature for several Middle Jurassic Units in this study. This study adopts most recent USGS nomenclature (Robertson and O'Sullivan, 2001) because it conforms to stratigraphic relationships that are traceable in the field, and that are confirmed by sedimentologic analysis.

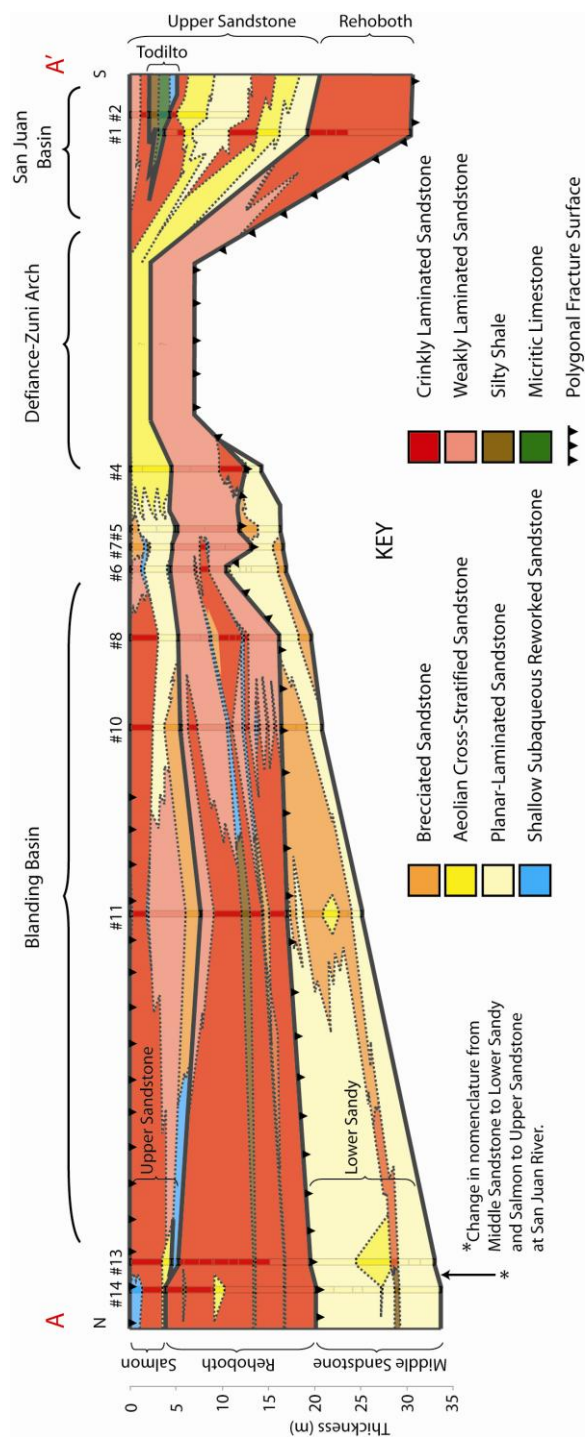


Fig. 4- A transect from A-A' (Fig. 1B) using 11 measured sections with the Blanding and San Juan Basins shows vertical and lateral relationships of 8 facies identified within the Entrada Sandstone as well as thinning and facies changes associated with the paleo-topography of the Defiance-Zuni Arch.

FACIES DESCRIPTIONS

Facies were distinguished in outcrop and in hand sample by subtle differences in sedimentary structures and grain size (Figs. 5, 6). These descriptive facies are separated into “facies of known origin”, representing units with recognizable environmental affinity, and “facies of unknown origin”.

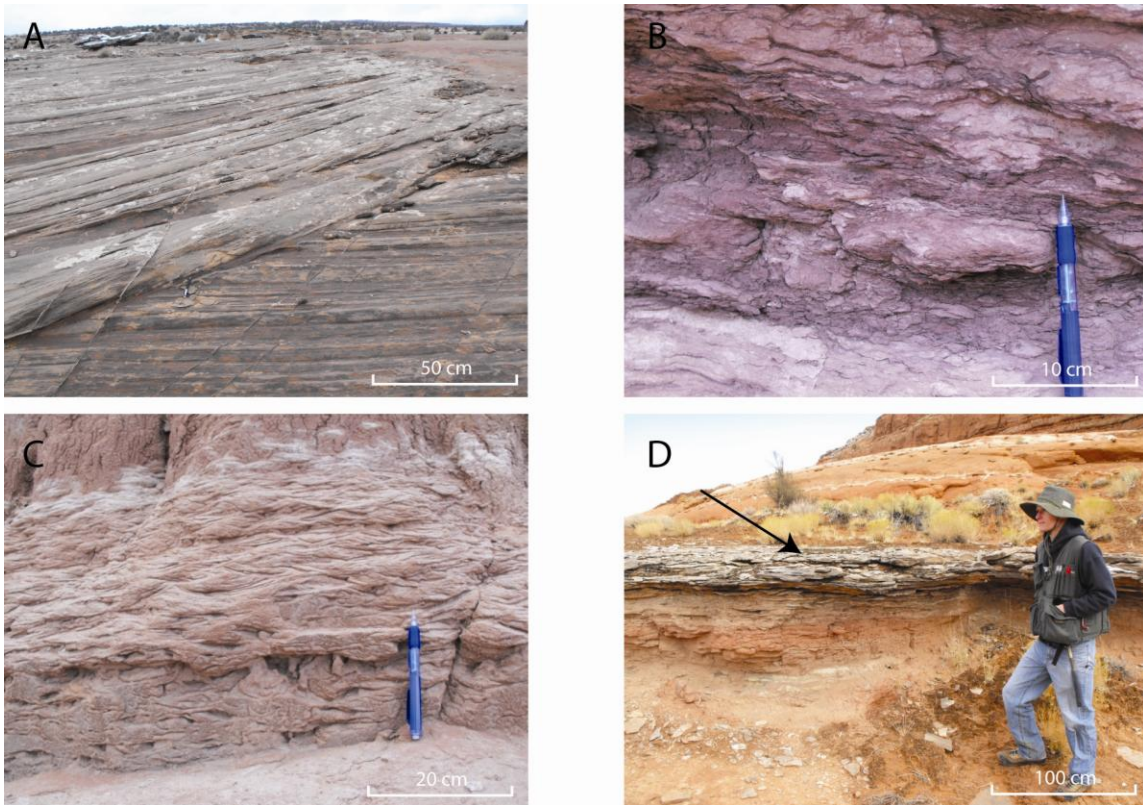


Fig. 5- Facies of known origin: (A) Aeolian Cross-Stratified Sandstone, (B) Silty Shale, (C) Shallow Subaqueous Reworked Sandstone, and (D) Micritic Limestone, with arrow pointing to limestone. Facies of unknown origin: (E) Planar-Laminated Sandstone, with arrows pointing to (a) coarse-grained laminations, interpreted as lag surfaces, and (b) inversely-graded laminations, interpreted as ripple laminae, (F) Brecciated Sandstone, with mm-scale euhedral salt dissolution vugs, (G) Weakly Laminated Sandstone, with arrows showing discontinuous silty red laminae, and (H) Crinkly Laminated Sandstone, with arrows showing laterally continuous red silty laminations.

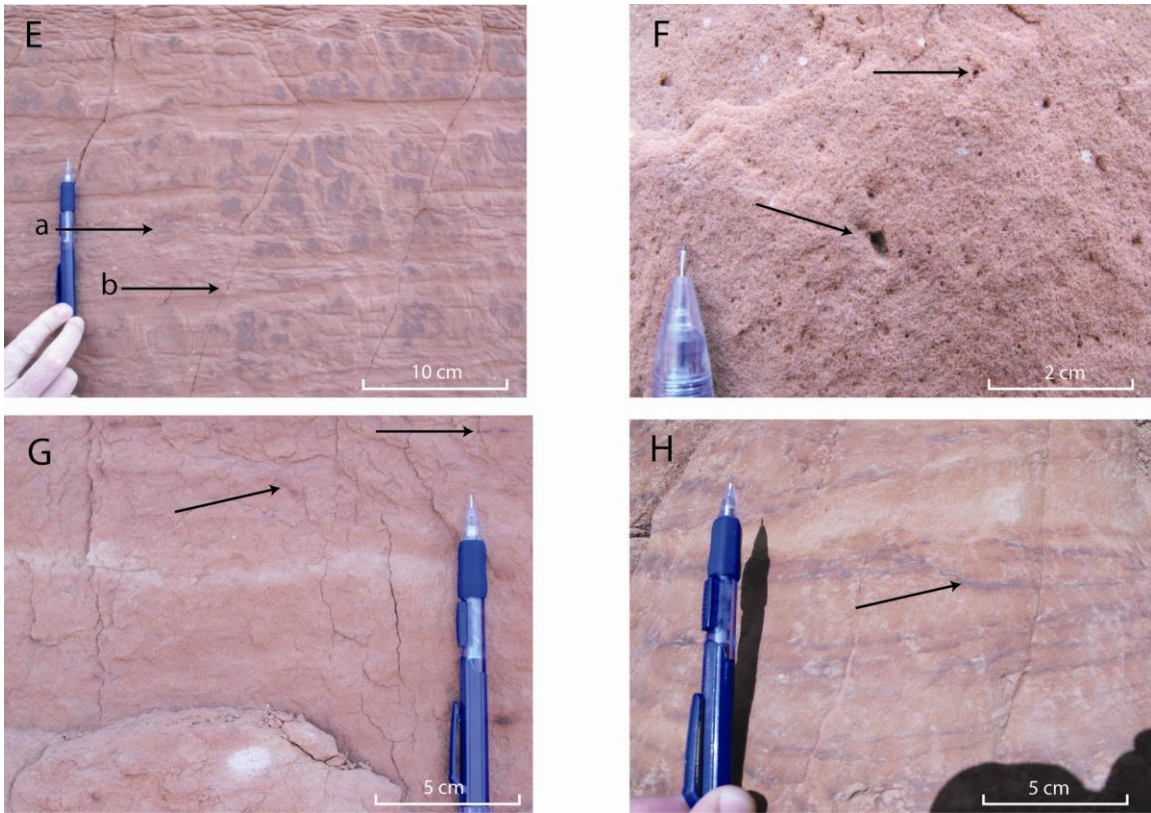


Fig. 5 cont.

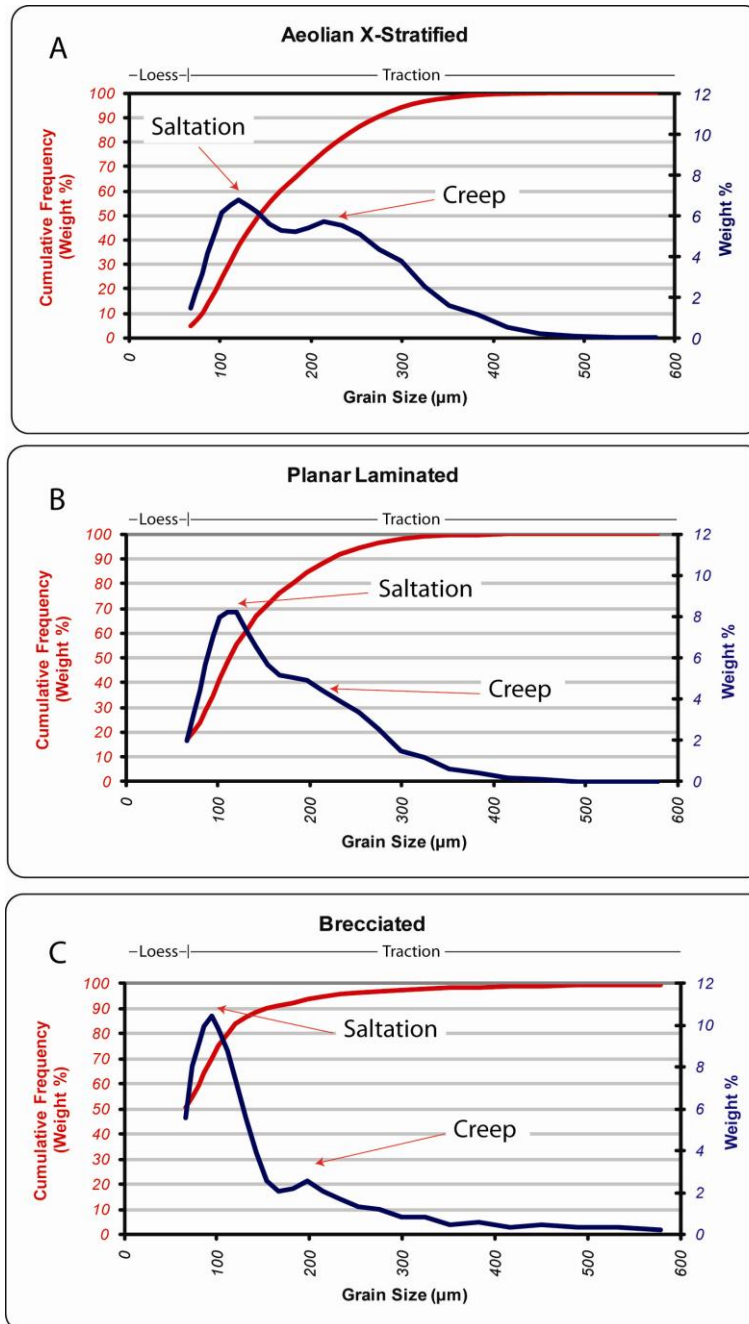


Fig. 6- Grain size analysis of (A) Aeolian Cross-Stratified Sandstone, (B) Planar Laminated Sandstone, (C) Brecciated Sandstone, (D) Weakly Laminated Sandstone, and (E) Crinkly Laminated Sandstone. Grain size distributions are reported as weight percent of only the sand fraction coarser than 62 μm for each sample, while the cumulative frequency curve includes weight percent of grains finer than 62 μm. Statistics are reported based on analysis of grains coarser than 62 μm only. For analysis, grains finer than 62 μm are considered suspended load, or “loess”, grains coarser than 62 μm are considered traction load (Pye and Tsoar, 1987). See text for analysis of grain size trends

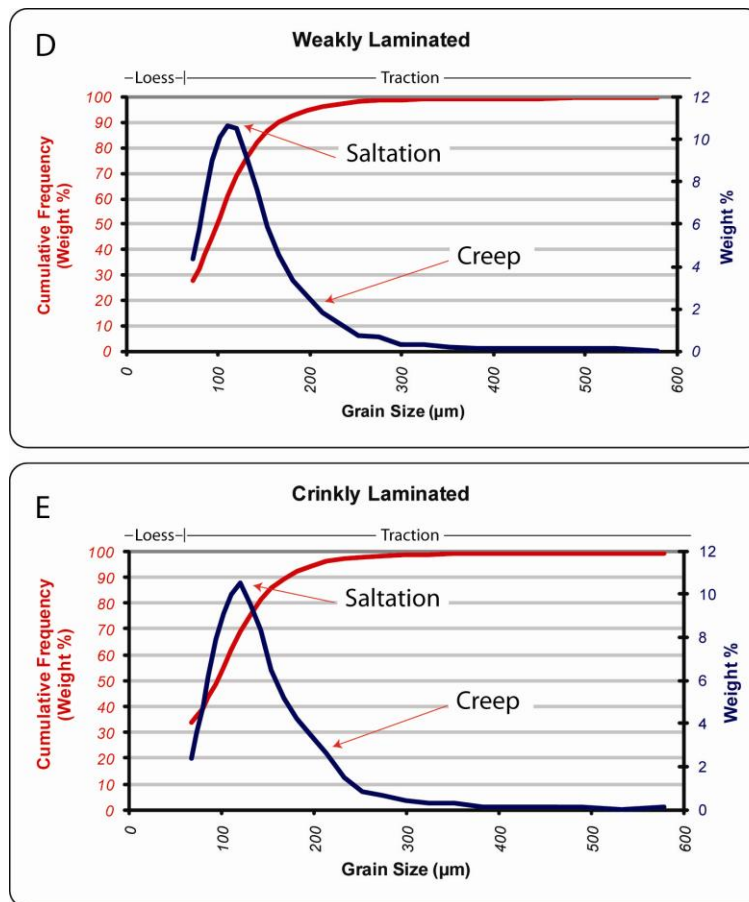


Fig. 6 cont.

Facies of Known Origin

FACIES 1: CROSS-STRATIFIED SANDSTONE

An aeolian cross-stratified sandstone forms resistant, tan-colored outcrops up to 5 m thick with sub-meter scale (10-30 cm), wind-rippled, resistive beds of cross-strata (Fig. 5A). Where the facies overlies silty units, the lower contact is undulating, interpreted as resulting from soft-sediment deformation, and the lower ~ 20 cm of the sand is typically marked by a concentration of coarse-grains, interpreted as a lag deposit similar to those commonly observed in modern environments (Kocurek and Nielson, 1986; Fryberger et al., 1992). Cross-strata show a general dip direction of 200°, corresponding with a regional southward dune migration for the Entrada (Peterson, 1988). Grains are well-rounded and frosted, and the sediment is fine-grained, moderately sorted, and coarse-skewed, with a distinct bimodal distribution thought to reflect sand transport by both saltation and creep processes (Tsoar and Pye, 1987; Fig. 6A). By weight, the potential suspended load, taken as silicate particles with nominal diameters < 62 µm, is less than 10%, which is typical of dune sand (Glennie, 1970).

The Aeolian Cross-Stratified Sandstone Facies occurs primarily within the Upper Sandstone Member of the Entrada Sandstone, specifically over the Defiance-Zuni Arch (Fig. 4). This facies is significant for the development of a framework for interpreting facies of unknown origin, because it is the only facies within the study area that represents aeolian dune-field accumulations. From the Defiance-Zuni Arch

northwestward into the Blanding Basin, the facies thickens somewhat, but terminates by inter-tonguing with the Planar-Laminated Facies (Fig. 4). The facies can be traced southwestward from the Defiance-Zuni Arch into the San Juan Basin, where it is underlain by the Planar-Laminated Facies and overlain by the Crinkly Laminated Sabkha Facies. Isolated pods of the Aeolian Cross-Stratified Facies are also found within the Blanding Basin, primarily within the Lower Sandy Member, encased within the Planar-Laminated or Brecciated Facies. These small pods of strata are interpreted as isolated dunes migrating across these other environments.

FACIES 2: SILTY SHALE

The Silty Shale Facies is composed of dark-red mudstone laminations of varying thickness that are intermixed with pink to red, very fine-grained to silty sandstone laminations. Sandstone laminations commonly contain critically climbing or bi-directional subaqueous ripple cross-strata. Laminations of sandstone and mudstone are 0 to 10 cm thick, laterally discontinuous and undulating. Biotite grains of very fine sand size are common within the dark red, muddy portion of this facies.

The Silty Shale Facies occurs as sub-meter thick, laterally continuous strata, and is found predominantly within the most distal portions of the Blanding Basin within the Rehoboth Member where it transitions to the Shallow Subaqueous Reworked Sandstone Facies. It is also observed within the Lower Sandy/Middle Sandstone Member where it laterally interfingers with Crinkly Laminated Sandstone Facies (Fig. 4). Within the San Juan Basin, the Silty Shale Facies overlies the Micritic Limestone Facies of the Todilto

flooding event. This study demonstrates that this unit of Silty Shale is included within the Upper Sandstone Member of the Entrada Sandstone, and does not represent the beginning of the Wanakah Formation. In both basins the Silty Shale Facies is interpreted as sediment accumulation in a shallow marine environment based on the mixture of mud and sand deposits and on its distal position relative to other subaqueous environments represented by the Shallow Subaqueous Reworked Sandstone Facies.

FACIES 3: SHALLOW SUBAQUEOUS REWORKED SANDSTONE

The Shallow Subaqueous Reworked Sandstone Facies is a composite facies that everywhere shows evidence for water reworking. The unit is typically less than 1 m thick, and consists of sub- to well-rounded sand, which varies in size from very fine- to coarse-grained sand. Bi-directional and mud-draped ripple cross-strata are common within this facies, as well as 10 cm thick subaqueous dune cross-strata that commonly contain 2 cm diameter concretions (Fig. 5C).

The Shallow Subaqueous Reworked Sandstone Facies occurs within the Rehoboth and Upper Sandstone Members and correlates basinward with the Silty Shale Facies or Crinkly Laminated Facies and landward with the Brecciated Facies or Weakly Laminated Facies that are characteristic of the Defiance-Zuni Arch (Fig. 4.). The Shallow Subaqueous Reworked Sandstone Facies, along with the Silty Shale Facies, is interpreted to represent shallow marine transgression of sabkha and aeolian environments. The varying grain size of this facies is thought to reflect shallow marine wave and current reworking of sediments previously deposited within a variety of environments.

FACIES 4: MICRITIC LIMESTONE (TODILTO LIMESTONE)

The Micritic Limestone Facies is composed of a dark-gray, massive- to wavy-bedded limestone (Fig. 5D). Within the study area this limestone is composed of a basal bi-directional ripple-laminated, calcareous silty sandstone that grades upward into more massive, wavy-bedded, ~ 1 m thick limestone. The Micritic Limestone Facies is found exclusively within the Upper Sandstone Member within the San Juan Basin, where it is the most proximal expression of the Todilto Formation. From the pinchout of the Todilto Limestone at the margins of the San Juan Basin in Beclabito Dome area of northwestern New Mexico, the unit thickens into approximately 15 m of gypsum and limestone in the central portions of the San Juan Basin (Benan and Kocurek, 2000). As discussed more fully below, the Micritic Limestone Facies and its associated Silty Shale Facies are enclosed within the Crinkly Laminated Facies.

Facies of Unknown Origin

FACIES 5: PLANAR-LAMINATED SANDSTONE

The Planar-Laminated Sandstone Facies forms tan to pink-colored, up to 8 m thick units, characterized by parallel to sub-parallel, inversely graded laminations. These are interpreted as wind-ripple laminae, with occasional coarse-grained surfaces that are interpreted as lag surfaces (Fig. 5E). The wind-ripple features occur as 2-10 mm thick,

very fine-grained laminations, and less common, 3-4 mm thick, coarse-grained laminations. Grains are well-rounded and frosted, identical to those in the Cross-Stratified Sandstone Facies, but the Planar-Laminated Facies shows a distinct fining, represented primarily by a decrease in the interpreted creep load, and a higher proportion (20%) of grains finer than 62 μm (Fig. 6B).

As described above, the Planar-Laminated Facies occurs basinward of the Cross-Stratified Facies, either inter-tonguing with or underlying the latter facies. Yet basinward in the Blanding Basin, the Planar-Laminated Sandstone Facies laterally transitions into the Brecciated or Weakly Laminated Sandstone Facies in the Upper Sandstone Member (Fig. 4). The Planar-Laminated Sandstone Facies is predominant in the Lower Sandy/Middle Sandstone Member within the Blanding Basin where it inter-tongues with the Brecciated Sandstone Facies.

Given the predominance of wind-ripple strata and lag deposits, the increase in proportion of suspended sediment, and its stratigraphic position, the Planar-Laminated Sandstone Facies is interpreted as sand sheet deposits that accumulated in a transitional environment between more proximal dune fields and more distal, subaqueous-dominated environments.

FACIES 6: BRECCIATED SANDSTONE

The Brecciated Sandstone Facies occurs as tan to red, 1-2 m thick sandstone intervals characterized by abundant millimeter-scale, euhedral rectangular vugs. Original sedimentary structures of this facies are difficult to interpret because of soft-sediment

deformation, which gives the sandstone a brecciated or contorted appearance (Fig. 5F). Grains are well- to sub-rounded, and very fine- to medium sand with a mode of 86-94 μm and a mean grain size of 106 μm . This facies is distinct from other facies in its high suspended load fraction (~50 % of deposits by weight is <62 μm in diameter) (Fig. 6C).

The Brecciated Sandstone Facies is common within the Middle Sandstone/Lower Sandy and Upper Sandstone Members of the Blanding Basin. It occurs in much smaller quantities within the Rehoboth Member, and is absent in the Upper Sandstone Member of the San Juan Basin. As indicated above, this facies laterally inter-fingers with Planar-Laminated Sandstone Facies of sand sheet origin in the vicinity of the Defiance-Zuni Arch, and inter-fingers basinward with the Shallow Subaqueous Reworked Sandstone or Crinkly Laminated Facies (Fig. 4).

The regional placement of the Brecciated Sandstone Facies within the greater study area is key to its environmental interpretation. Within the Lower Sandy/Middle Sandstone Member the Brecciated Sandstone Facies occurs as the distal expression of a southward prograding tongue of aeolian sand associated with Sequence I (Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek, 1998) and pinches out against the Defiance-Zuni Arch (Figs 2, 4). These aeolian strata seem best associated with extensive aeolian units in the Blanding Basin and to be N/NE in origin (see Blakey, 1988).

This facies is interpreted to represent the wettest environment within the Blanding Basin during Lower Sandy/Middle Sandstone time, and it became a trap for suspended sediments as described by Pye (1995). In contrast, within the Rehoboth Member and Upper Sandstone/Salmon Member the Brecciated Sandstone Member is

separated from prograding aeolian units in the Blanding Basin by extensive wetter facies (Crinkly Laminated Sandstone) within Sequence II (Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek, 1998). The positioning of the Brecciated Sandstone Facies distal to prograding aeolian tongues in both cases argues that it represents sediment accumulations on a wetter surface distal to drier sand-sheet environments. Based upon this stratigraphic relationship the euhedral vugs are interpreted as salt-dissolution features and the high concentration of suspended material within the Brecciated Sandstone Facies points toward deposition in an evaporitic sand flat situated between the dune/sand sheets and yet more distal sabkha and shallow subaqueous environments.

FACIES 7: WEAKLY LAMINATED SANDSTONE

The Weakly Laminated Sandstone Facies is expressed as tan to pink, massive, up to 10 m thick strata with weakly visible, laterally discontinuous, sub-centimeter-scale dark-red laminations, best interpreted as resulting from the collapse of salt blisters and cyanobacterial mats (Glennie, 1970; Blakey et al. 1988; Geredes, 2007; Fig. 5G). The sandstone is fine- to very fine-grained with abundant reduction spots and commonly contains randomly located coarse sand grains. This facies contains only 8% by weight grains coarser than 200 μm , and contains a significant amount of suspended load sediments (20%, Fig. 6D).

The Weakly Laminated Sandstone occurs predominantly within the Rehoboth Member of the Blanding Basin, with lesser amounts within the Upper Sandstone/Salmon Member within the Blanding Basin (Fig. 4). The Weakly Laminated Sandstone Facies

has its thickest accumulations proximal to the Defiance-Zuni Arch within the Rehoboth Member, and interfingers with Crinkly Laminated Sandstone Facies basinward. Within the Upper Sandstone/Salmon Member, the Weakly Laminated Sandstone Facies is found basinward of Planar-Laminated Sandstone Facies and inter-fingers with Crinkly Laminated Sandstone Facies.

Based on its stratigraphic position in relation to facies of aeolian dune and sand sheet origin and its inter-fingering relationship with Crinkly Laminated Sandstone Facies, along with the presence of cyanobacterial mats, the Weakly Laminated Sandstone Facies is interpreted as an occasionally wetted sabkha deposit distal to sand sheet and salt flat environments.

FACIES 8: CRINKLY LAMINATED SANDSTONE

The Crinkly Laminated Sandstone Facies forms dark-red to pink-colored units composed of abundant, laterally continuous, centimeter-scale laminations of dark-red, silty sand and pink, fine-grained sand (Fig. 5F). Abundant ~ 5 cm long, ~ 2 cm thick lenses of fine-grained sand with cryptic low angle foresets are interpreted as preserved ripple lenses. The ratio of dark-red, crinkly, silty sand laminations to pink, fine-grained laminations varies, with increasing abundance crinkly silty sand laminations corresponding with a more recessive weathering profile. This facies contains a high proportion (35%) of grains finer than 62 μm (Fig. 6E).

The Crinkly Laminated Sandstone Facies comprises the bulk of the Entrada Sandstone within the Blanding Basin, especially within the Rehoboth and Upper

Sandstone/Salmon members, as well as within the San Juan Basin, where the entire Rehoboth Member is composed of Crinkly Laminated Sandstone (Fig. 4). The Crinkly Laminated Sandstone Facies inter-fingers with and superimposes Weakly Laminated Sandstone Facies throughout the Blanding Basin, and completely encases the Todilto Member within the San Juan Basin.

Based on lateral relationships, as well as grain size analysis and the abundance of crinkly silty laminations, interpreted as salt blisters and cyanobacterial mats, the Crinkly Laminated Sandstone Facies is interpreted as frequently wetted sabkha deposit that occurred during wet periods within the study area resulting from either high water table or cyclic wetting from tidal influence.

Idealized Facies Profile and Facies Track

The lateral relationships discussed above correspond with three trends evident in grain size and sedimentary structure analysis: (1) an increase in possible loess fraction basinward, (2) a decrease in sand coarser than 200 μm basinward, and (3) an increase in waterlain sedimentary structures basinward (Figs. 4, 5, 6). Suspended load fraction increases and grain size becomes finer basinward due to down-wind sorting of grains away from the dune field, and this corresponds with an increase in waterlain sedimentary structures as shallow marine processes become dominant over aeolian processes. Lateral facies relationships allow for the construction of an “idealized” facies track and vertical

profile, although a complete vertical facies succession does not occur within the study area (Figs. 7, 8).

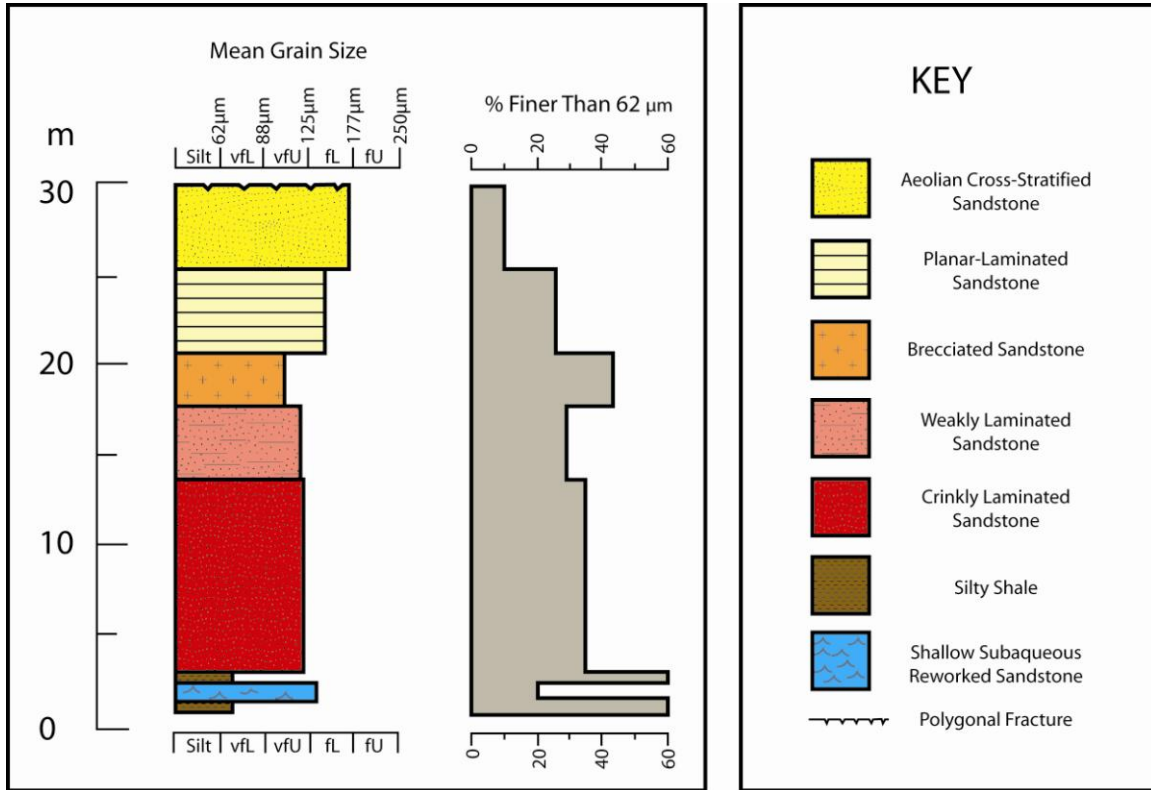


Fig. 7- Idealized vertical profile showing one sabkha and aeolian progradation over shallow marine environments with relative thicknesses for each facies and percent of each facies finer than 62 µm (suspended sediment- or loess-sized grains). Idealized profile created based on facies relationships observed in the field as well as lateral correlations interpreted in Figure 4 and sedimentary analysis displayed in Figure 6.

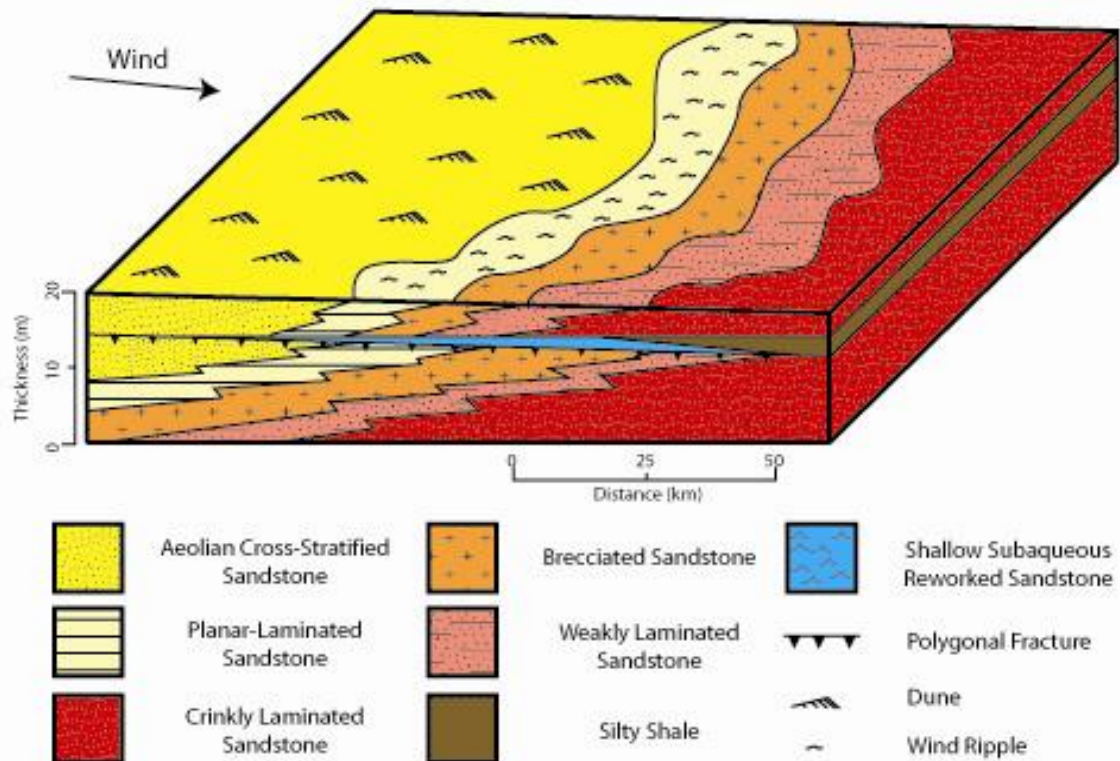


Fig. 8- A facies track diagram showing an idealized progradation of aeolian dune and sand sheet facies over sabkha facies, which is then truncated by a bypass surface marked by polygonal fracture, and transgressed by a marine flooding event and subsequent progradation. Accumulation is governed by a combination of sea level fluctuation and subsidence.

SEQUENCE STRATIGRAPHY

Strata of this study are a continuation of Sequences I and II of Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek (1998) highlighted in Figure 2. Sequences identified in the former study are evident here and show the response of costal facies to relative sea-level change (Figs. 9, 10). Sequences consist of basal sabkha and shallow marine facies superimposed by progradational aeolian cross-bedded sandstones, which are capped by surfaces of sediment bypass and erosion defined by polygonal fractures (Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek, 1998; Fig. 10). Accumulation and preservation of aeolian and sabkha sediment is governed by sediment flux, basin subsidence and water table, with a rising water table corresponding to increased accumulation and preservation. In aeolian and sabkha environments proximal to shallow marine environments, water table is largely a function of relative sea-level and serves as its inland proxy. Relative sea level is a function of subsidence, sediment flux, and eustatic sea level. Because there is no independent data on regional subsidence or sediment flux, Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek (1998) assumed these variables constant in order to constructed a relative sea-level curve from their interpreted sequences (Fig. 9). For this study, we follow this thinking and again assume constant subsidence and sediment flux and allow the water table curve to fluctuate to match the observed sequences.

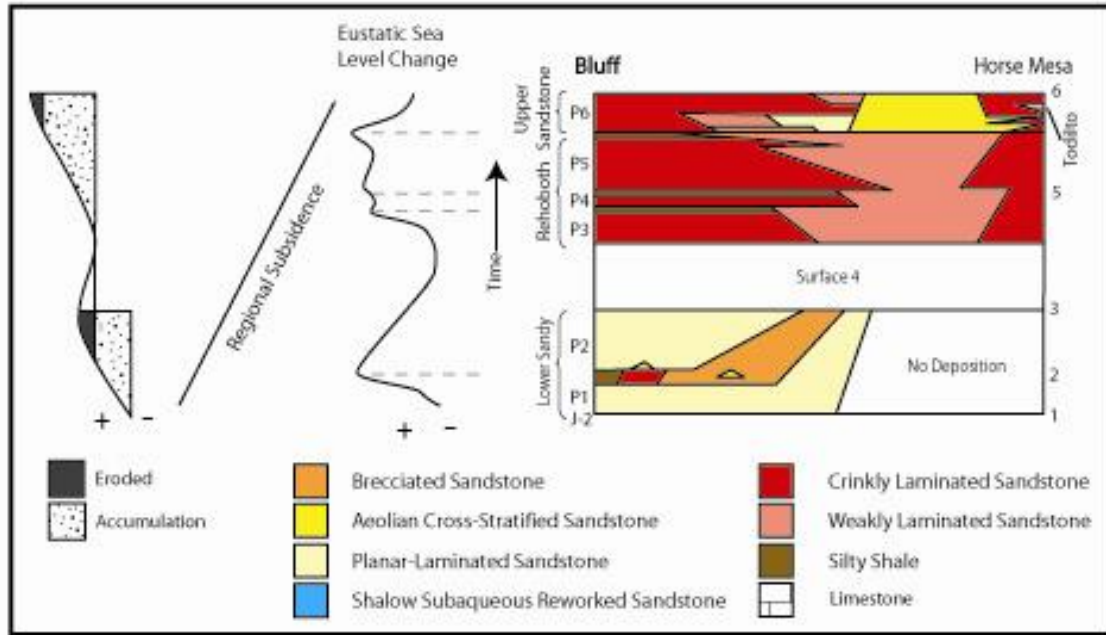


Fig. 10- A modified Wheeler diagram showing facies relationships and corresponding refined sea-level relationships for the Entrada Sandstone from Bluff, Utah, to Horse Mesa, New Mexico. Two sequences identified by Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek (1998) are traced from the terminus of their study in Bluff, Utah to Horse Mesa, New Mexico, and are subdivided into 6 parasequences. See text for sequence stratigraphic analysis.

Analysis of units in this study allow for a more detailed sea-level curve to be developed for the Entrada Sandstone (Fig. 10). The new curve confirms the general relative sea-level trends established by Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek (1998), and develops a more detailed understanding of relative sea-level fluctuations based on parasequences within the Entrada. We identify six parasequences, defined by shallow marine transgressions followed by progradation of aeolian dune and sand sheet environments over sabkha and shallow marine environments within the studied zone (Fig. 10).

Lower Sandy Member

The Lower Sandy Member (Middle Sandstone Member north of the San Juan River) of the Entrada Sandstone is the aeolian-dominated depositional system of Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek's "Sequence 1" (Fig. 2). Within the area of this study, the Lower Sandy Member is dominated by Planar-Laminated Sand and Brecciated Sandstone Facies that define two parasequences (P1 and P2) separated by a flooding surface marked by a thin, laterally continuous Silty Shale and Crinkly Laminated Sandstone Facies that transition laterally to Brecciated Sandstone Facies (Figs. 4, 10). Within this member, aeolian cross-stratified sands exist in the distal positions of the area in isolated pods, which represent isolated dunes migrating across the sand sheet as a down-wind representation of better established aeolian dune fields northward (Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek, 1998) that were driven southward by prevailing northeasterly winds as discussed previously (Blakey, 1988; Parrish and Peterson, 1988). The Lower Sandy Member thickens significantly northward of the Defiance-Zuni Arch, indicating active subsidence within the Blanding Basin during Lower Sandy Member deposition (Kelly, 1955). There is no correlative unit for the Lower Sandy Member within the study area in the San Juan Basin; however, the Middle Sandstone Member is equivalent to the Iyanbito Member of the Entrada Sandstone more distally within the San Juan Basin (Robertson and O'Sullivan, 2000). The Middle Sandstone Member is capped by a polygonally fractured surface across the entire study area where it is present.

Rehoboth Member

The Rehoboth Member is the basal sabkha dominated portion of “Sequence 2” of Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek (1998; Fig. 2). This member is represented within the southern Blanding Basin by three parasequences (P3-P5) composed of prograding tongues of drier sabkha (Weakly Laminated Sandstone Facies) interfingering with wetter sabkha (Crinkly Laminated Sandstone Facies) and separated by Silty Shale Facies and small amounts of Brecciated Sandstone Facies, which collectively represent a flooding surface (Figs. 4, 10). Within the San Juan Basin and study area the Rehoboth Member sits atop the J2 Unconformity and consists of a thick deposit of wet sabkha. The relatively constant thickness of the Rehoboth Member across the Blanding Basin confirms the interpretation that thickness of this member can be contributed to an increase in the rate of creation of accommodation caused by eustatic sea level rise during Rehoboth time (Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek, 1998).

Upper Sandstone Member

The Upper Sandstone/Salmon Member is the dune-interdune depositional system capping “Sequence 2” (Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek, 1998; Fig. 2). Aeolian sands within the Upper Sandstone Member of the San Juan Basin and along the Defiance-Zuni Arch within the southern Blanding Basin have different origins than similar sands found within the Lower Sandy/Middle Sandstone Member, as previously discussed. Aeolian sands within the Upper Sandstone Member were transported to the area from the northeast, not

from the north across the Blanding Basin. Within the southern Blanding Basin, this member is composed of an initial progradation marked by aeolian cross-stratified facies on the Defiance-Zuni Arch transitioning basinward into sand flat and dry sabkha facies (Fig. 4). This southwesterly-westerly prograding tongue of aeolian cross-stratified sand, and its distally correlative sand sheet deposits, is then transgressed by wet sabkha facies, marking the last parasequence within the Entrada (P6; Figs. 4, 10).

Within the San Juan Basin, the Upper Sandstone Member is composed of two parasequences marked by progradational tongues of aeolian cross-stratified sands over sand flat deposits separated by wet sabkha deposits (Fig. 4, 10). The second parasequence is transgressed by wet aeolian deposits, within which lies the Todilto Limestone. The upward-wetting trend seen in the Upper Sandstone Member is further evidence supporting the interpretation that the Upper Sandstone Member was deposited during relative sea-level rise as described in Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek (1998).

Todilto Limestone Member

The Todilto Limestone exists within the San Juan Basin of northeastern New Mexico, and pinches out against the Defiance-Zuni Arch within the eastern margins of the study area (Fig. 4). It was formed as a result of a catastrophic flooding event that covered the Entrada Sandstone of the San Juan Basin with as much as 90 meters of water (Kirkland et al. 1995). The Todilto Limestone is a member of a series of evaporate and evaporitic carbonate facies that has historically been included as the basal member of the

Wanakah Formation, or given formation status but correlated with the Lower Member of the Wanakah Formation in northwestern New Mexico (Wright and Becker, 1951; Anderson and Lucas, 1992), and has been interpreted by others as superimposing the Entrada at the J3 Unconformity (Lucas and Anderson, 1997). Based on the correlative framework of O'Sullivan (1978, 1980), these interpretations correlate the Todilto Limestone, and the catastrophic flooding event that formed it, within the base of the Moab Tongue of the Entrada within the Slick Rock Member (Fig. 2). Sedimentologic analysis and stratigraphic correlations of this study, however, demonstrate that the Todilto Limestone lies stratigraphically within the Upper Sandstone Member of the Entrada Sandstone along the margins of the San Juan Basin in western New Mexico, and not above the Upper Sandstone or within the basal member of the Wanakah formation (Fig. 4). This means that the catastrophic flooding event occurred much earlier during the Curtis Transgression, and that the Todilto Formation correlates well within the lower Slick Rock Member in the Paradox Basin, and not stratigraphically above the J3 Unconformity as previously suggested (Fig. 2).

Several causes for the flooding of the San Juan Basin are possible, including (1) an instantaneous breach that filled the San Juan Basin with no eustatic sea level rise, (2) a breach due to eustatic sea level rise that overtopped a ridge separating the San Juan Basin from open marine environments elsewhere, or (3) groundwater flux within the San Juan Basin with no connection to open marine environments elsewhere. The stratigraphic correlation of the Todilto Limestone within the upper portions of the Upper Sandstone Member of the Entrada Sandstone in the San Juan Basin ties the flooding of the San Juan

Basin to a wetting upward trend within the Blanding Basin that corresponds with a regional rise in relative sea-level. This evidence supports the conclusion that the flooding of the San Juan Basin occurred due to a breach during a regional sea level rise, and that it was not due to local ground water flux. The exact location of the breach that connected the San Juan Basin to open marine environments is unclear, but several possible locations have been suggested (Mckee et al., 1956; Harshbarger et al. 1957; Ridgely, 1977).

CONCLUSIONS

The origins of previously undifferentiated, very fine-grained, red, silty sandstone facies of the Entrada Sandstone within the Four Corners Region are interpreted using a combination of field observations, grain size analysis, and stratigraphic positioning relative to facies of known aeolian dune and shallow subaqueous environments. Correlation of measured sections along an 85 km transect spanning portions of the Blanding and San Juan basins highlights facies relationships which, combined with grain size analysis showing trends in proportions of traction load vs. suspended, lead to the differentiation of 8 facies within the study area: (1) Silty Shale, interpreted as a shallow marine transgressive unit, (2) Shallow Subaqueous Reworked Sandstone, interpreted as shallow marine current and wave reworking of previously deposited sediments, (3) Brecciated Sandstone, interpreted as salt flat deposits, (4) Crinkly Laminated Sandstone, interpreted as wet sabkha, (5) Weakly Laminated Sandstone, interpreted as dry sabkha, (6) Planar-Laminated Sandstone, interpreted as sand sheet deposits, (7) Cross-Stratified Sandstone, interpreted as aeolian dune deposits, and (8) Micritic Limestone, which represents the catastrophic flooding of the San Juan Basin.

Sequence stratigraphic analysis using the facies framework developed in this study builds on previous work by Carr-Crabaugh and Kocurek (1998) and increases the detail of understanding of relative sea-level fluctuations within the Blanding and San Juan Basins during Entrada deposition, defining six parasequences within two previously

identified sequences. This analysis supports the conclusion that the Entrada Sandstone was deposited as a wet aeolian system during a regional rise in relative sea-level.

The Todilto Limestone pinches out within the Upper Sandstone Member of the Entrada Sandstone within the San Juan Basin and correlates with a relative sea-level rise evidenced in the upper portions of the Salmon/Upper Sandstone Member within the Blanding Basin by a wetting upward cycle marked by Crinkly Laminated Sandstone Facies (frequently wet sabkha) superimposing Weakly Laminated Sandstone (occasionally wet sabkha) and Planar-Laminated Sandstone (sand sheet) Facies. This correlation establishes that the flooding of the San Juan Basin corresponds with a regional sea-level rise, thereby supporting the theory that the catastrophic flooding of the San Juan Basin occurred due to a breach caused by high sea-level. Also, this correlation demonstrates that the Todilto Limestone correlates with the Slick Rock Member of the Entrada Sandstone and not positioned above the J2 Unconformity as proposed by Wright and Becker (1951), Anderson and Lucas (1992), and Lucas and Anderson (1997).

APPENDIX 1: STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF GRAIN SIZE DATA

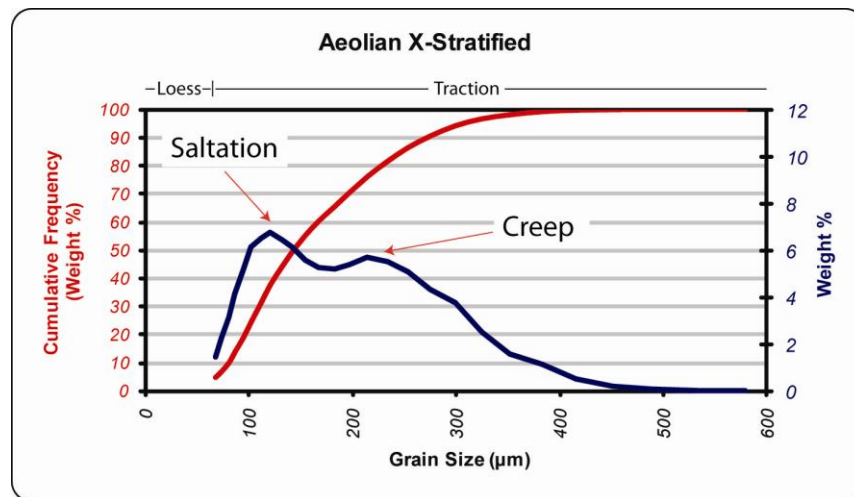
Statistical Analysis of Coarse Fraction (>32 μm)

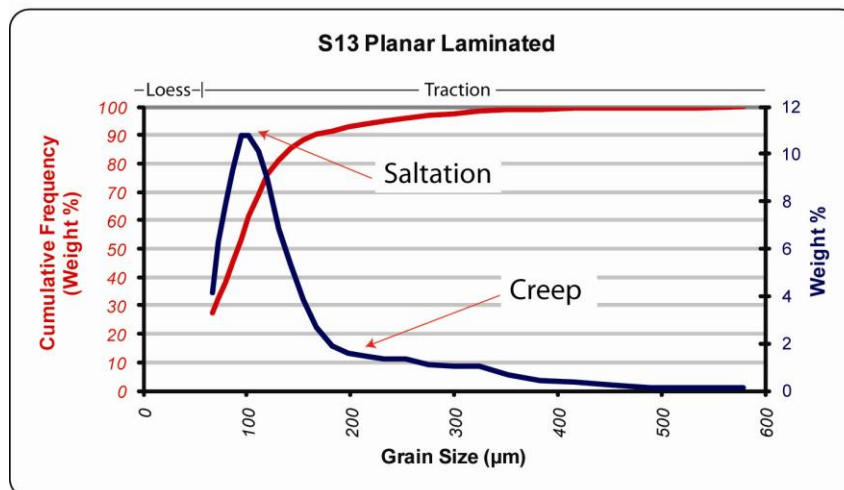
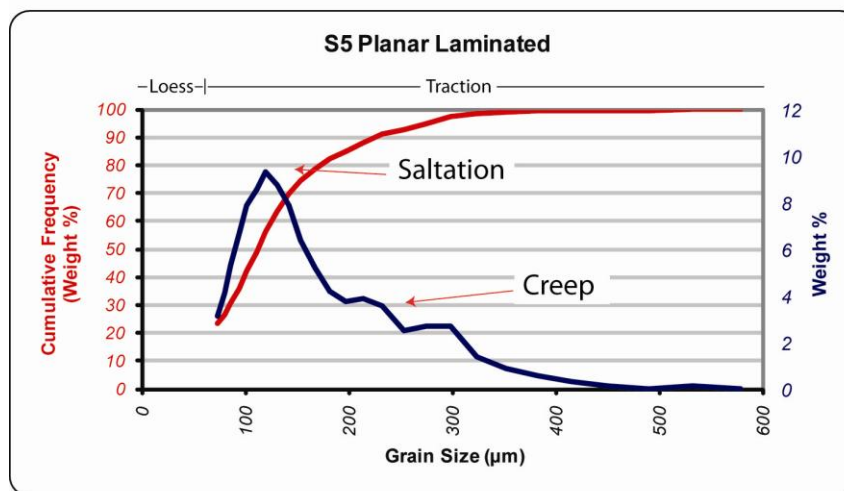
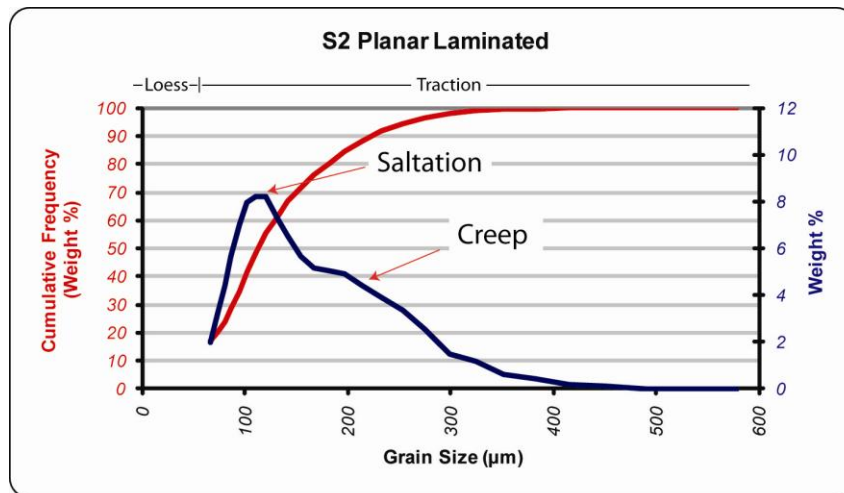
	Aeolian X-Stratified	Planar Laminated	Brecciated	Weakly Laminated	Crinkly Laminated
$\bar{x} (\mu\text{m})$	151	129	106	113	113
Median (μm)	144	124	99	111	113
Mode (μm)	111-120	111-120	86-94	102-111	111-120
<i>Sd (phi)</i>	0.62 Mod Well Std.	0.60 Mod Well Std.	0.59 Mod Well Std.	0.60 Mod Well Std.	0.53 Mod Well Std.
<i>K</i>	0.82 (Platykurtic)	0.89 (Platykurtic)	1.22 (Leptokurtic)	1.05 (Mesokurtic)	1.15 (Leptokurtic)
<i>S</i>	-0.07 (Near Symmetric)	-0.11 (Negative Skewed)	-0.28 (Negative Skewed)	-0.09 (Near Symmetric)	-0.36 (Strongly Negative Skewed)

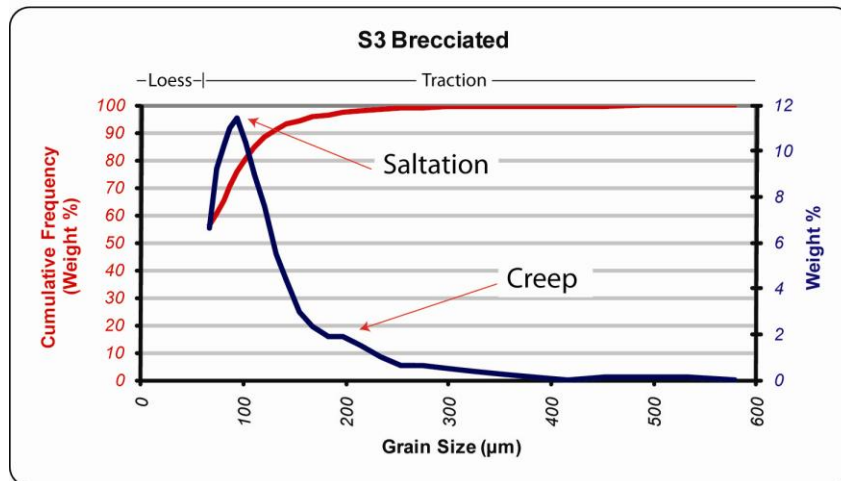
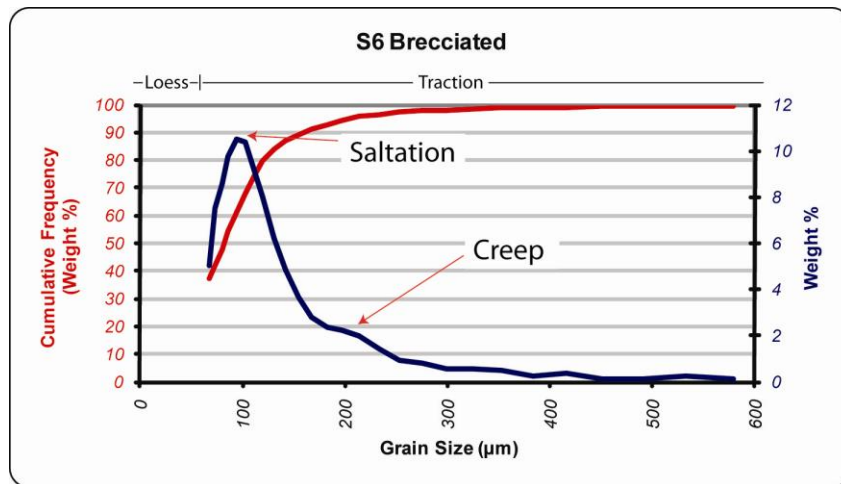
Statistical Analysis of Total Fraction

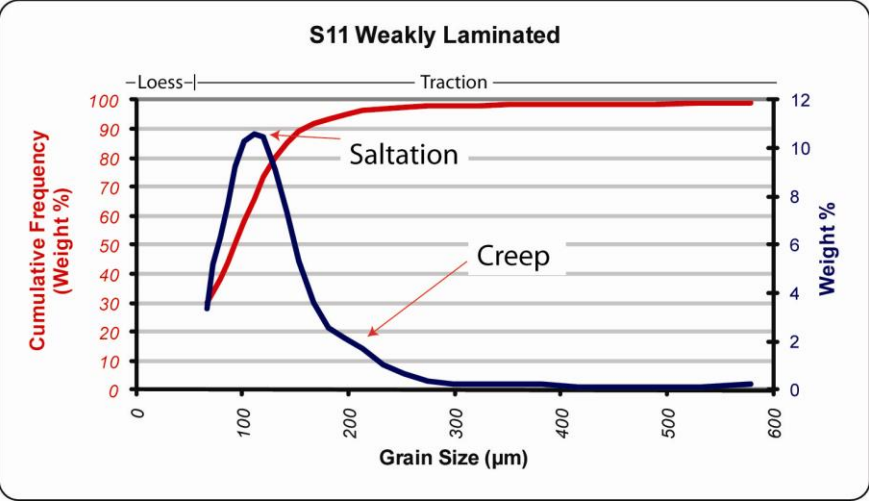
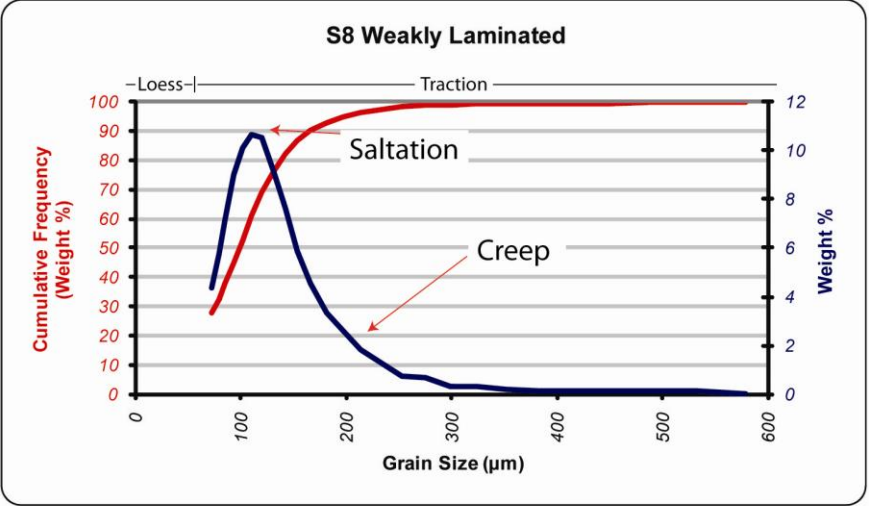
	Aeolian X-Stratified	Planar Laminated	Brecciated	Weakly Laminated	Crinkly Laminated
$\bar{x} (\mu\text{m})$	134	102	* 63	* 80	* 77
Median (μm)	134	* 112	* 66	* 99	* 95
Mode (μm)	111-120 <32	111-120 <32	86-94 <32	102-111 <32	111-20 <32
<i>Sd (phi)</i>	0.90 Moderate Std	* 0.99 Moderate Std.	* 0.90 Moderate Std.	* 0.91 Moderate Std.	* 0.96 Moderate Std.
<i>K</i>	16.60 (Extremely Leptokurtic)	* 1.23 (Leptokurtic)	* 1.29 (Leptokurtic)	* 1.16 (Leptokurtic)	0.54 (Very Platykurtic)
<i>S</i>	0.14 (Positive Skewed)	* 0.13 (Near Symmetric)	* -0.11 (Negative Skewed)	* 0.22 (Positive Skewed)	* 0.29 (Positive Skewed)

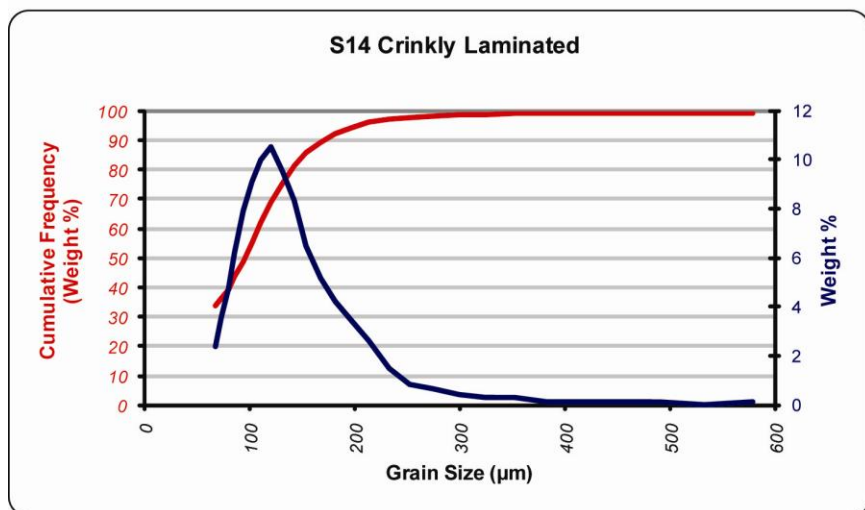
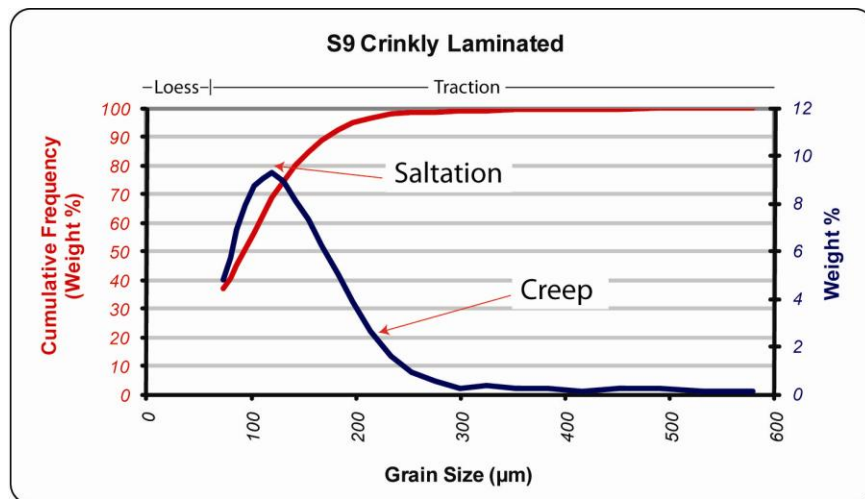
* Calculations affected by incomplete data within fraction <32 μm .





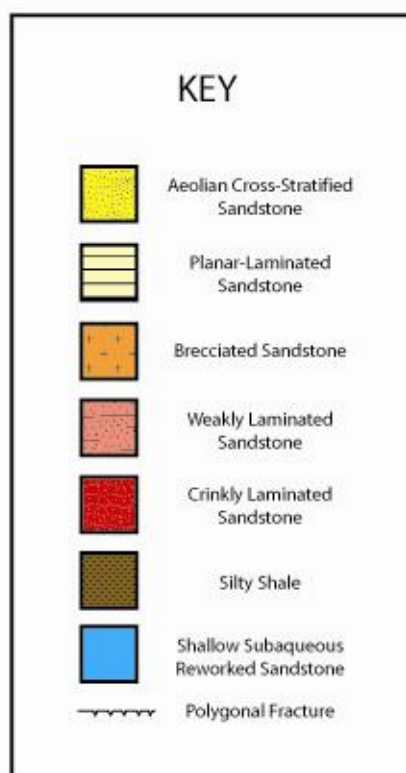


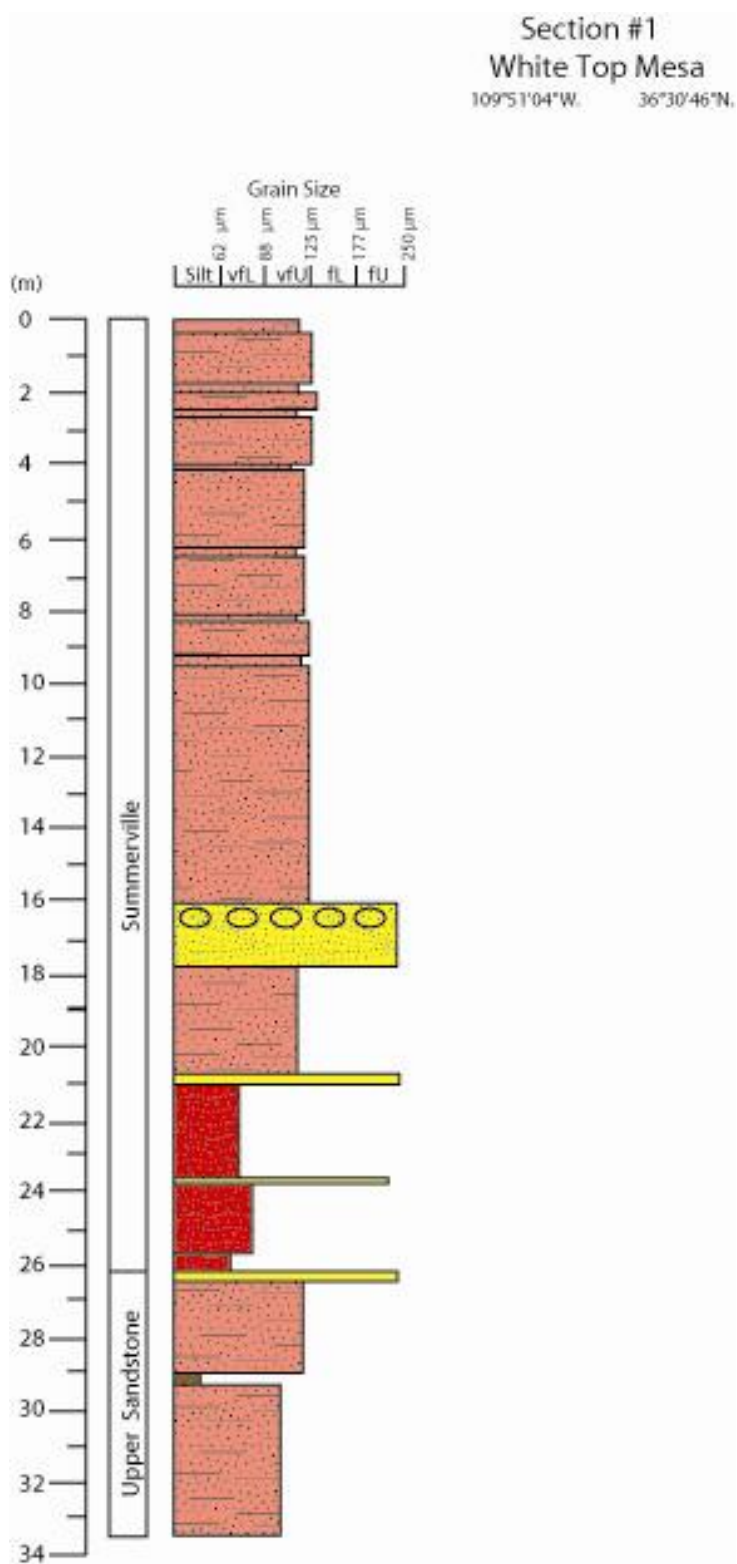




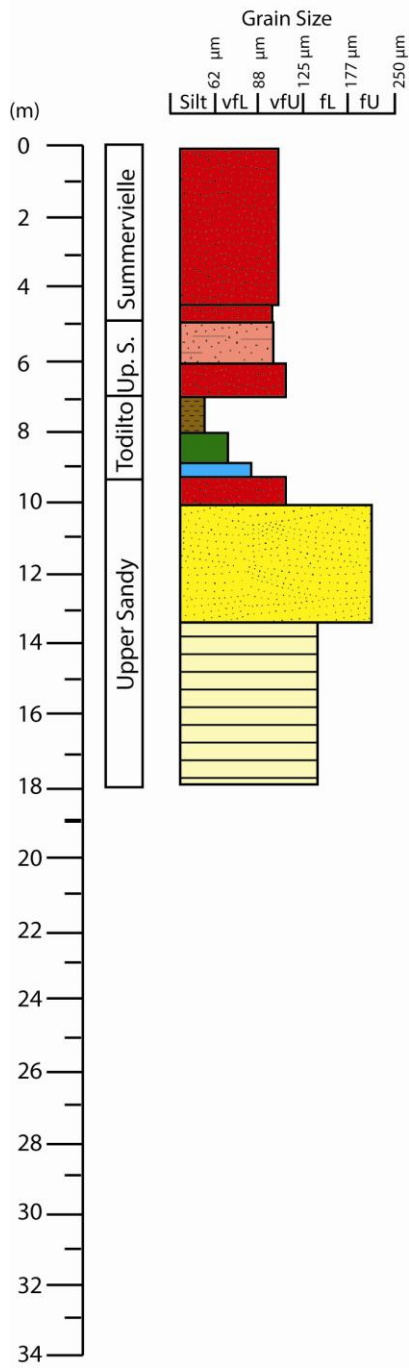
APPENDIX 2: MEASURED SECTIONS

No.	Section Name	Longitude	Latitude
1	Horse Mesa South	109°03'10"W.	36°40'57"N.
2	Horse Mesa North	109°03'05"W.	36°41'37"N.
3	Beclabito Dome	109°00'26"W.	36°48'09"N.
4	Carrizo West	109°18'03"W.	36°46'44"N.
5	Emanuel Mission East	109°22'16"W.	36°47'06"N.
6	Emanuel Mission West	109°23'05"W.	36°46'55"N.
7	Sweetwater Mesa East	109°25'58"W.	36°48'20"N.
8	Sweetwater Mesa West	109°28'48"W.	36°51'18"N.
9	Red Mesa East	109°16'55"W.	36°58'52"N.
10	Red Mesa West	109°20'45"W.	36°59'20"N.
11	Mexican Water	109°35'55"W.	36°58'54"N.
12	Tohonadla	109°30'14"W.	37°09'12"N.
13	White Rock Point	109°36'41"W.	37°14'00"N.
14	Butler Wash South	109°38'19"W.	37°16'33"N.
15	Garnet Ridge	109°50'02"W.	36°54'35"N.
16	Red Point	109°55'48"W.	36°47'24"N.
17	Red Point Mesa	109°54'51"W.	36°44'42"N.
18	White Top Mesa North	109°49'08"W.	36°34'55"N.
19	White Top Mesa	109°51'04"W.	36°30'46"N.
20	White Top Mesa South	109°52'33"W.	36°28'27"N.
21	White Top Mesa Southwest	109°55'41"W.	36°28'28"N.
22	White Hills	109°44'31"W.	36°25'44"N.
23	Lohali Point	109°47'51"W.	36°06'51"N.

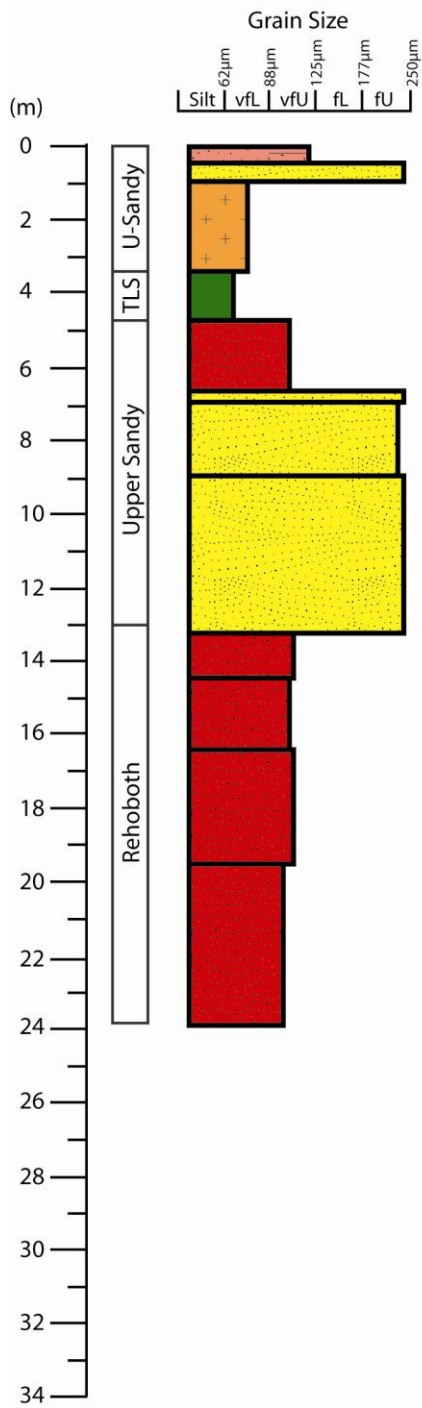




Section # 2
Horse Mesa North
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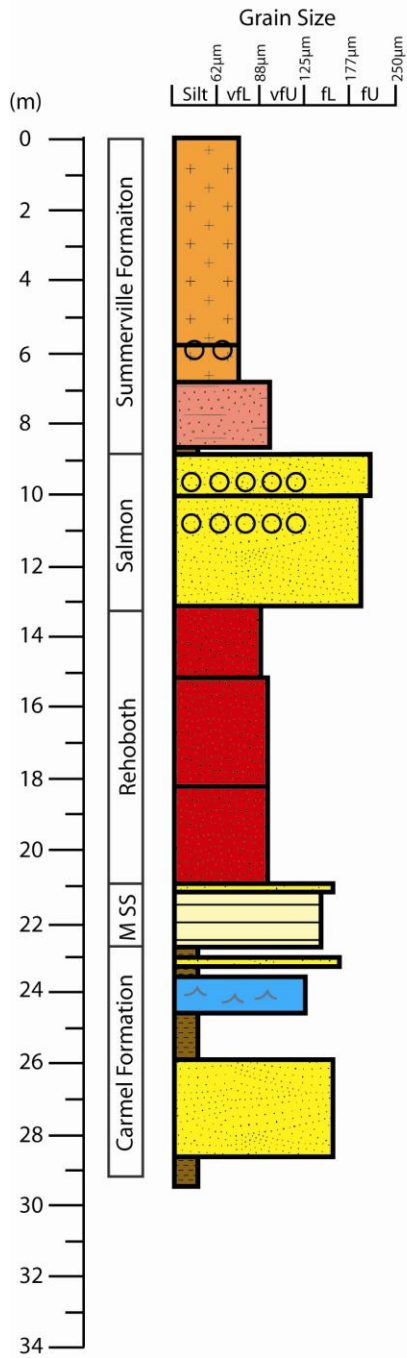


Section # 3
Beclabito Dome
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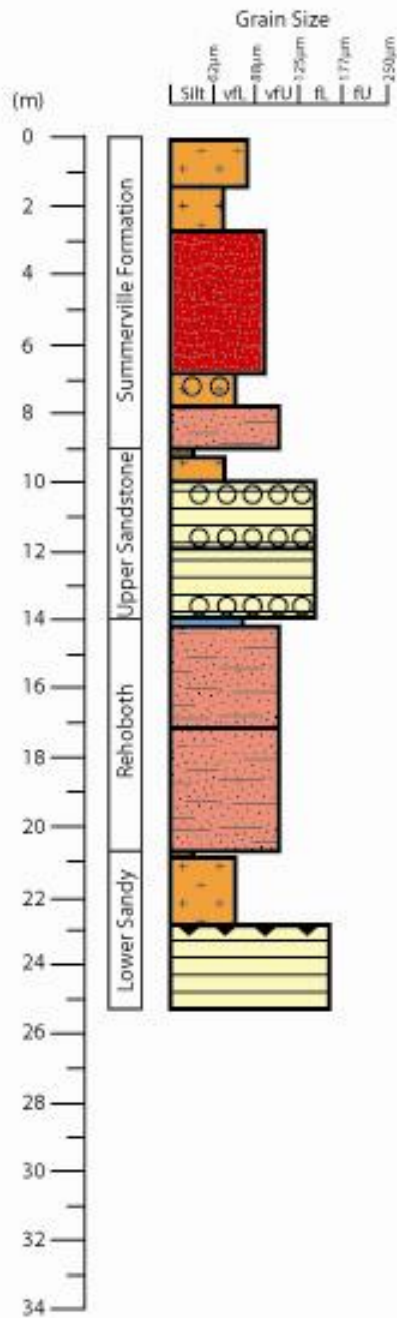
Section #4 Carrizo West

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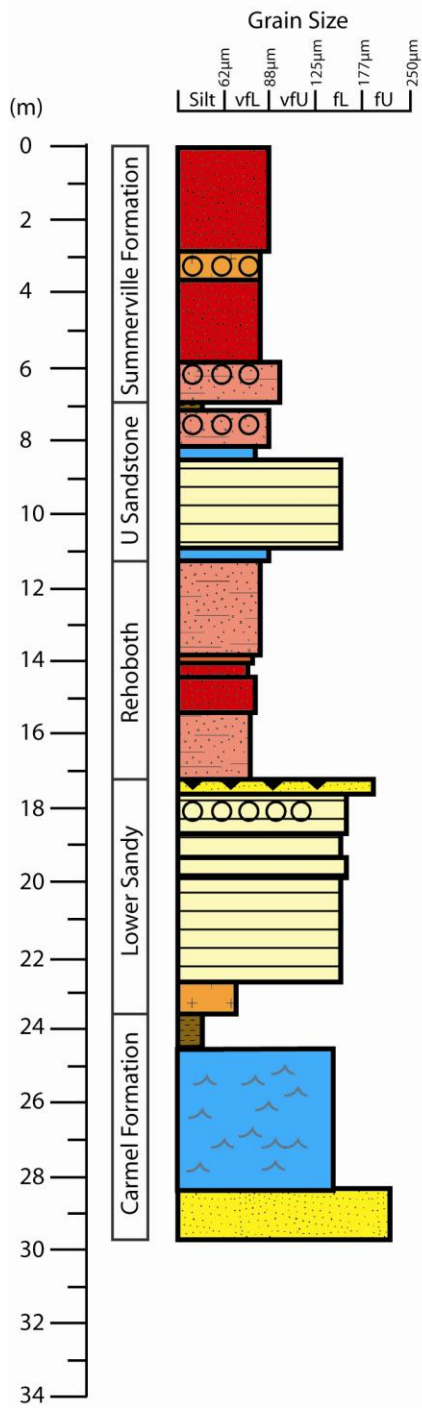
Section # 5 Emanuel Mission East

109°25'58"W. 36°48'20"N.



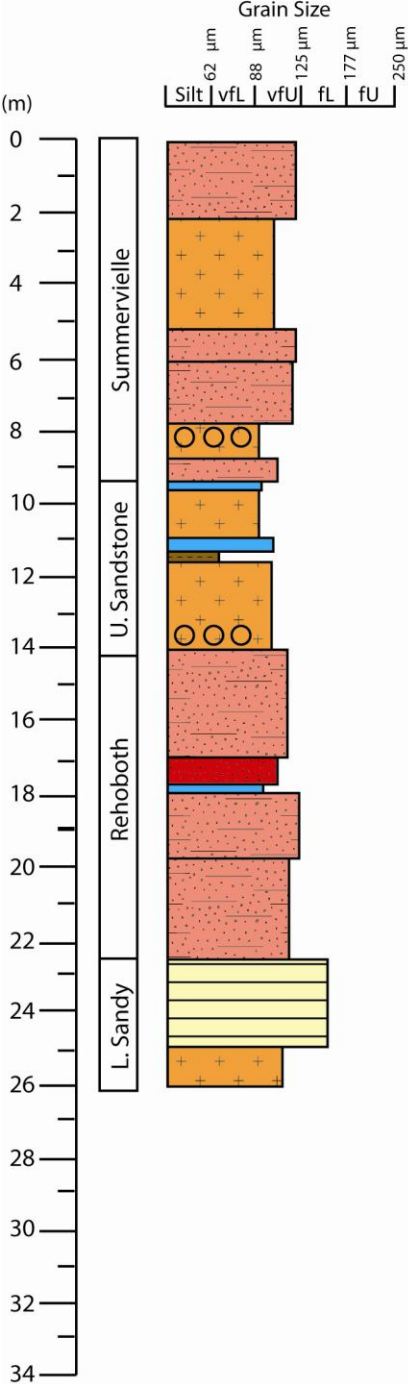
Section #6 Emanuel Mission East

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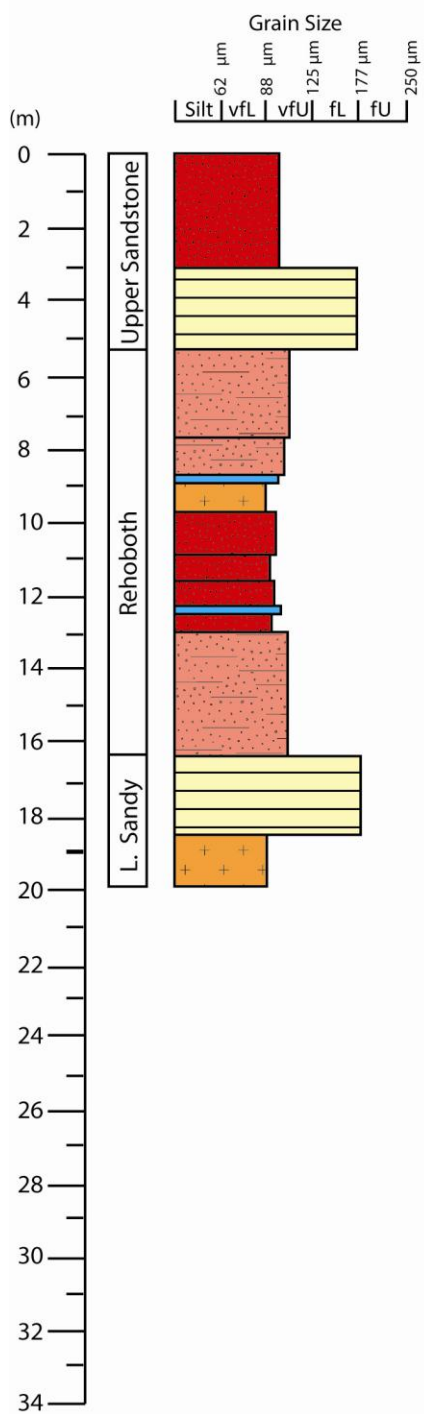
Section # 7
Sweetwater Mesa East

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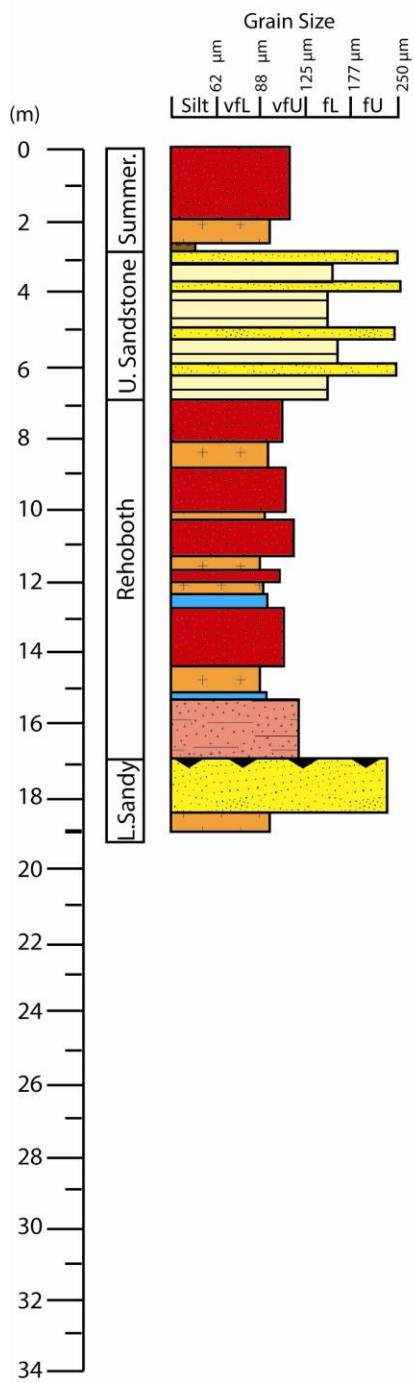
Section #8 Sweetwater Mesa West

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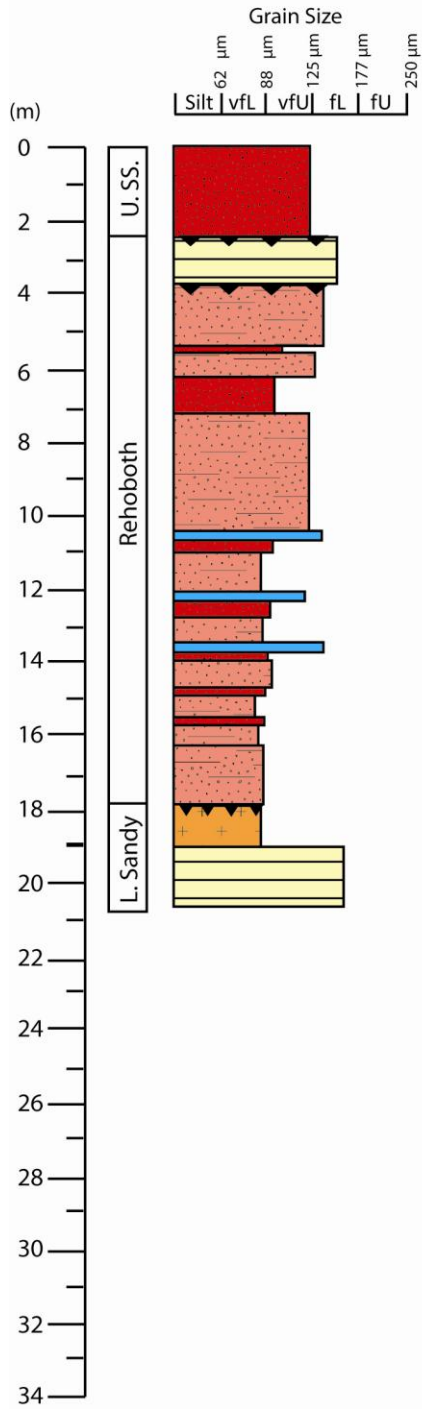
Section #9 Red Mesa East

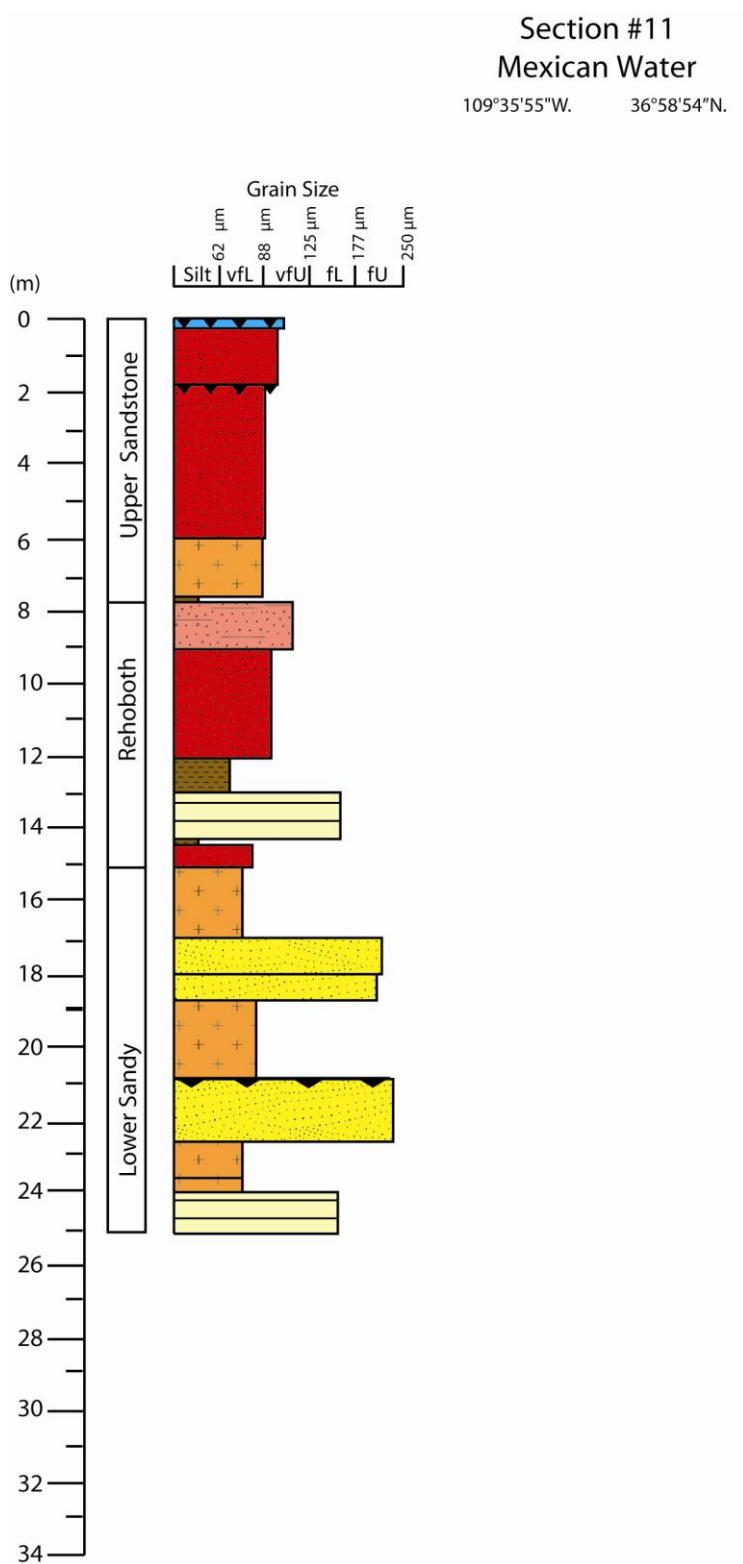
109°16'55"W. 36°58'52"N.



Section #10 Red Mesa West

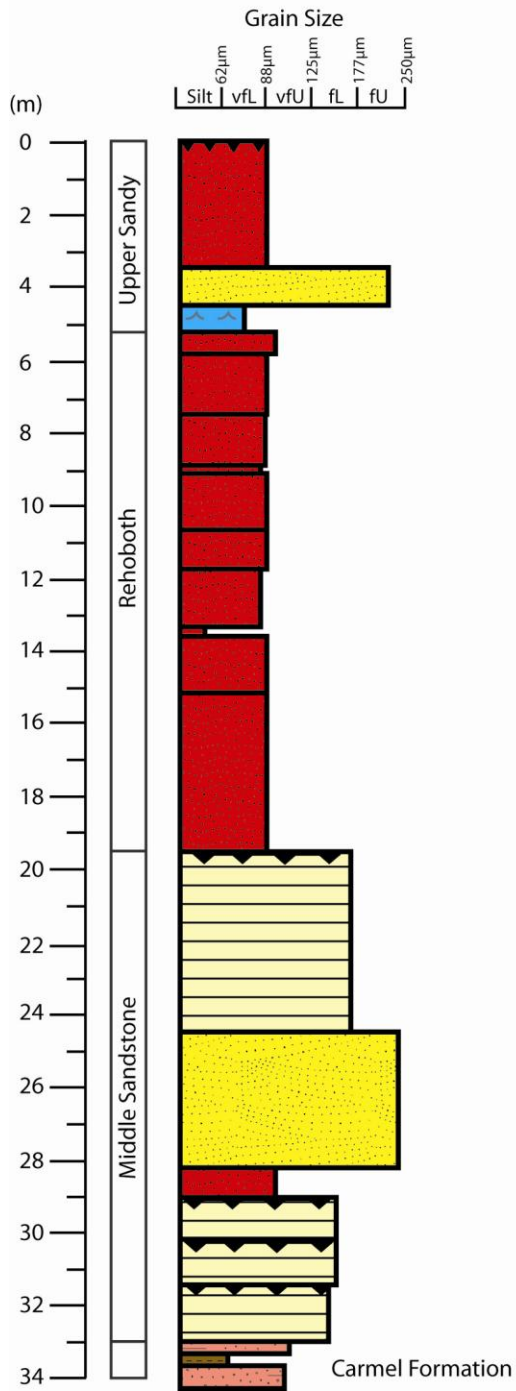
109°20'45"W. 36°59'20"N.



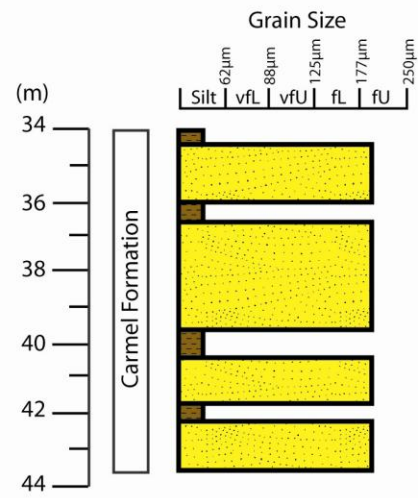
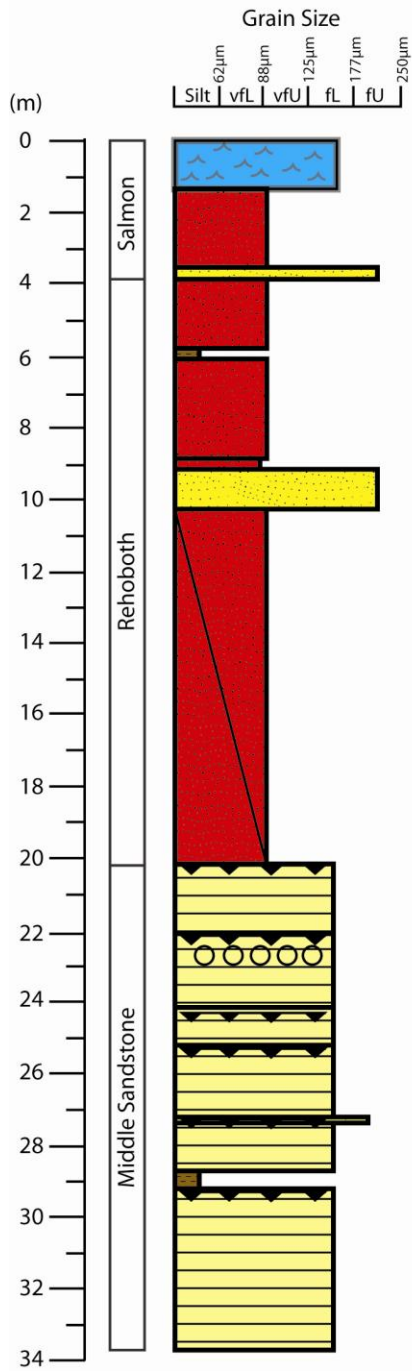


Section # 13 White Rock Point

109°36'41"W. 37°14'00"N.

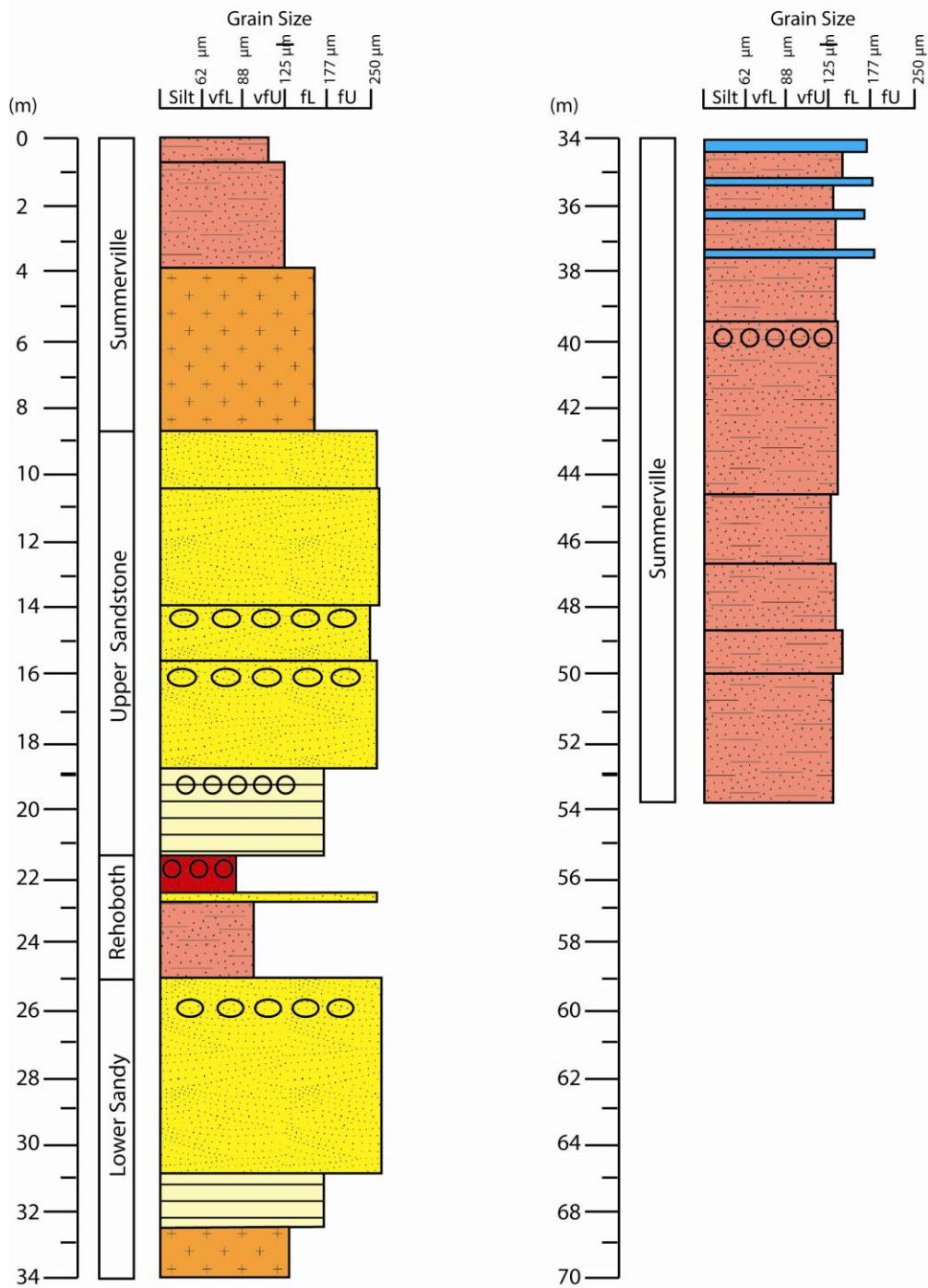


Section # 14
Butler Wash South
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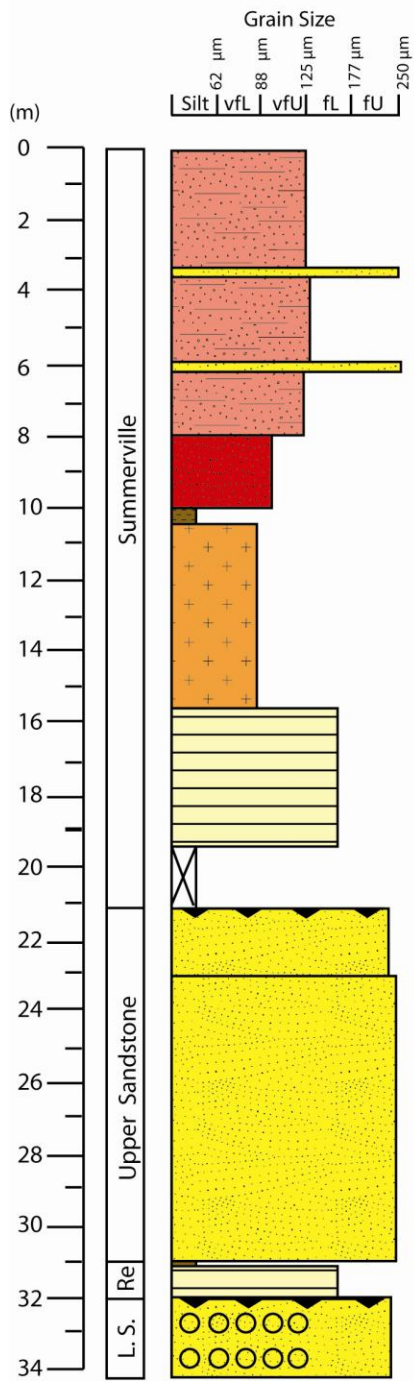


Section #16 Mexican Water

109°55'48"W. 36°47'24"N.

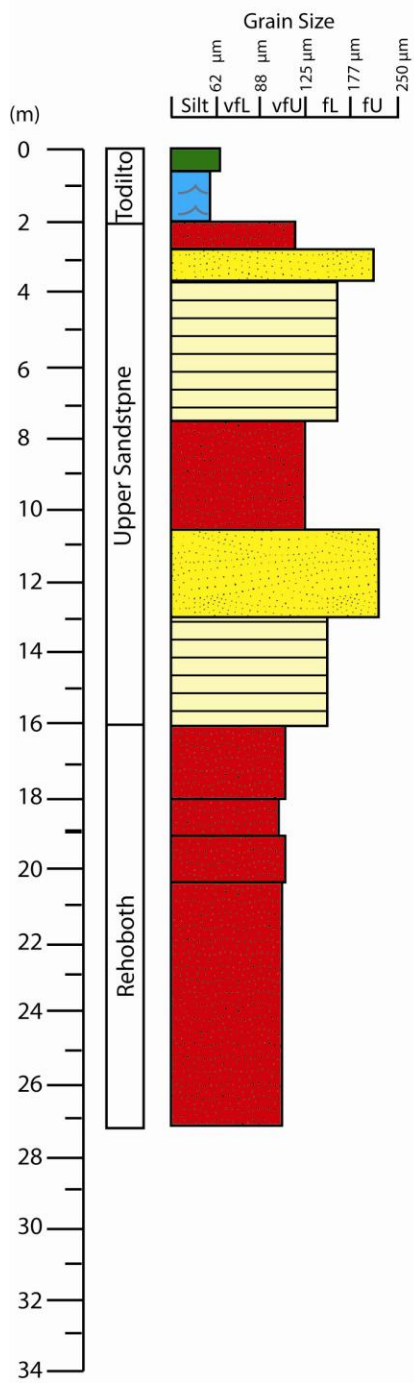


Section #18
 White Top Mesa North
 109°49'08"W. 36°34'55"N.



Section # 19 Horse Mesa South

109°03'10"W. 36°40'57"N.



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