

Figure 2. Regional geology of the Siltstone and Big Creek areas.

REGIONAL VOLCANIC STRATIGRAPHY AND STRUCTURE

The Siltstone quadrangle is a small piece of the stratigraphically enigmatic and structurally cryptic area that is central Idaho. Figure 2 shows the surrounding area where regional structures and trends illustrate what we find at Siltstone, while at the same time findings from detailed work at Siltstone encourage speculation as to possible connections with what is found outside the confines of the quadrangle. The following discussion is based on work by Stewart and others (2011), Lewis and others (2012), Fisher and others (1992), Lund (2004), and our reconnaissance efforts.

THUNDER MOUNTAIN CALDERA COMPLEX

While the Thunder Mountain area east of the Siltstone quadrangle clearly contains collapse features such as normal faults and megabreccias, the Eocene volcanic field shown in Figure 2 is extremely large, too large to be a single caldera. It is perhaps for this reason that Fisher and others (1992) referred to the area as the "Thunder Mountain caldera." In this study we term the area a "caldera complex" and propose a possible sequence of events to produce the extensive and dominantly fault-bounded volcanic field that we see at present.

Previous mapping by Fisher and others (1992) has established that at least four of the ash-flow deposits associated with the Thunder Mountain vents were produced by large-volume explosive events. They also assigned informal names to these four units. The oldest is the dime and quarter tuff sequence (Tdq), followed by the Bull rhyolite (Tr), the lower Sunnyside tuff (Tsl), and finally the upper Sunnyside tuff (Tsu). While it is difficult to establish with precision where the collapse boundaries following the four explosive events might have been, this regional map presents a first attempt at postulating outlines for the linked calderas that may have produced the present caldera complex. These outlines are based primarily on where each ash-flow deposit is preserved and, in the case of the upper Sunnyside tuff, the presence of collapse-associated megabreccias (Mbr). Following the four eruptions, each forming its respective caldera, there was a fifth collapse event, the Big Creek graben collapse. This may have taken place soon after the latest caldera collapse, or over an extended period after volcanic activity ended.

The faults bounding the Big Creek graben extend into the Tertiary intrusive rocks (Ti) to the northeast and into Cretaceous batholith rocks to the southwest (Kb). Southwest of the upper Sunnyside (Tsu) caldera the graben has been down-dropped less and exposes a deeper crustal section containing dike and quarter tuff (Tdq) and other Tertiary intermediate intrusive rocks in which are exposed tabular, north-south striking intrusive bodies that comprise the Flat Creek dike swarm (Lund). This indicates that the Flat Creek dike swarm either post-dates the dime and quarter tuff and pre-dates the upper Sunnyside tuff, or, less likely, that the intrusive event is younger than the upper Sunnyside tuff but the dikes died at depth and did not penetrate the younger, higher level volcanics.

The faults that bound the caldera complex are not uniform in nature, reflecting the compositionally heterogeneous and structurally compromised crustal block in which the magma chambers that fed the Tertiary pyroclastic eruptions developed. Some segments of the caldera-bounding fault system are characterized by large (10 m) blocks of collapse debris such as those found in the Siltstone quadrangle north of Sugar Creek. Portions of the faults bounding the caldera complex have been intruded by mafic Eocene bodies north of Carr Creek (Plate 1), or are marked by abundant breccias and iron staining as is found west of Murphy Peak and south of the Pinacoid (Fig. 2). Local exposures of sediments rise unconformably on Tdq and contain internal angular unconformities, indicating that subsidence was a protracted process, at least during formation of the Tdq caldera. On the east edge of the Siltstone map a block of biotite granodiorite (G) on Fig. 2) 1 km across lies entirely surrounded by volcanics, with faults on its western and eastern margins; observations did not establish whether the block is rotated or if it is an extremely large slide block.

POSSIBLE EXTENSIONS OF SILTSTONE QUADRANGLE FAULTS

The Salt Creek fault was traced by the authors southwest up Salt Creek and off the quadrangle, where it oblique batholith rocks. The Salt Creek fault also likely continues to the northeast into the dime and quarter caldera near the confluence of Burn Creek with Tamarack Creek, based on linear north-south striking creek and alignment of scuffs. It does not appear to significantly displace the caldera-bounding fault, suggesting that post-Challis slip was insignificant.

In the Siltstone quadrangle the Meadow Creek-West End fault zone, predominantly a right-lateral strike-slip structure, offsets the trace of the Cinderbar Ridge fault and the Sugar Mountain fault by some 3.5 km (2.2 mi). This is assuming that the Cinderbar Ridge and Sugar Mountain are the same fault (see Structure section on Plate 1). In the Big Creek quadrangle 23 km (12 mi) to the north the Hogback fault, also a right-lateral strike-slip fault, displaces Neoproterozoic metamorphic rocks there by approximately 4 km (2.5 mi) (Lewis and others, 2012). This raises the possibility that these two faults are the same. The Hogback fault has been traced with confidence by the authors southwest to the northern edge of the dime and quarter caldera (Fig. 2). Recent mapping by the authors suggests that it may continue into the Eocene volcanic deposits as far as the ridge west of Cougar Peak in the central part of the dime and quarter caldera and on to near the confluence of Tamarack and Burn Creeks after which it may trend south-southeast and then southwest, defining the southern edge of the Thunder Mountain caldera complex as far as the saddle east of Sugar Mountain (Plate 1). Expression of the fault zone within the volcanics does not demonstrate post-Challis strike-slip movement but is indicated by abundant iron staining, brecciation, and by kilometers-long dikes that cut the volcanics and which are up to 50 m in width.

The northward extension of the Meadow Creek fault is not directly aligned with the most southward known extension of the Hogback fault. North of its intersection with the fault that bounds the caldera complex there is no expression of the Meadow Creek fault within the volcanics. Presumably the fault trace turns northwesterly, and provided the zone of weakness along which the segment of the caldera complex bounding fault southwest of Sugar Mountain activated following eruption of the Bull rhyolite (Tr). Alternatively, the Meadow Creek fault and the Hogback fault are not directly connected; they may be an extension right-lateral strike-slip faults that accommodated largely right-lateral strike-slip motion. The short eastward jog that the Meadow Creek fault takes along the caldera complex bounding fault may be due to strain refraction as the stress generated by the deep, north-south fault zone intersected and interacted with the northeast-southwest-trending folds of the root pond.

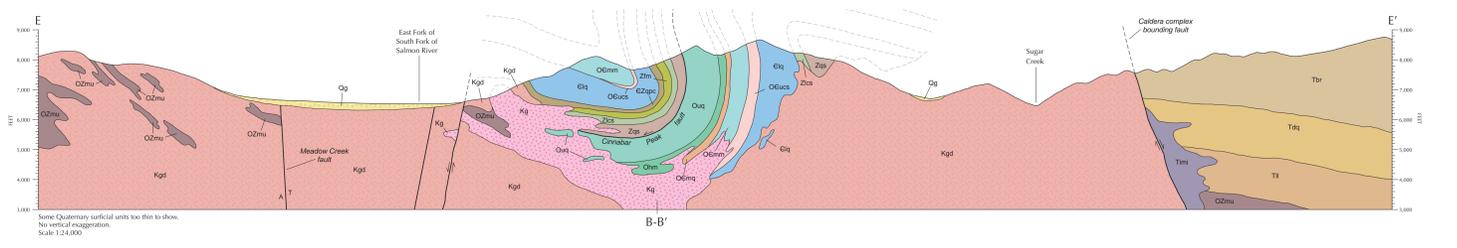
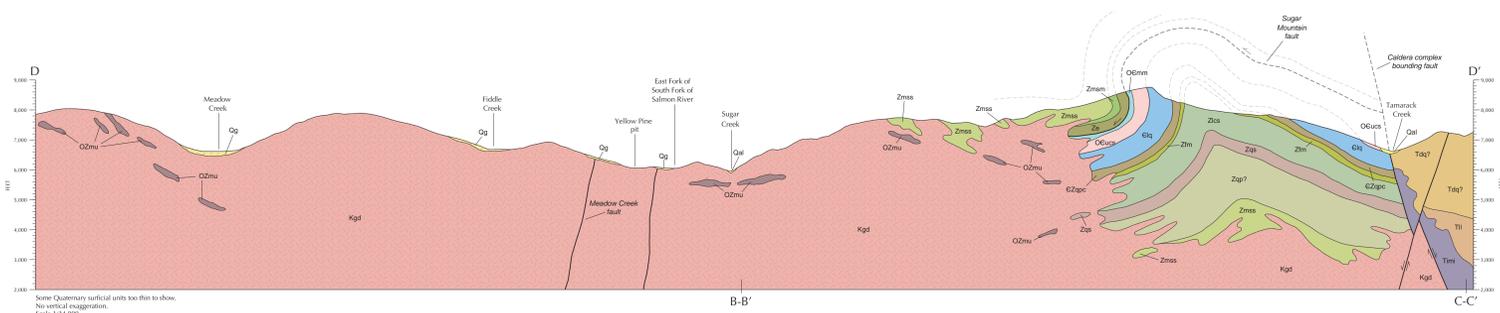
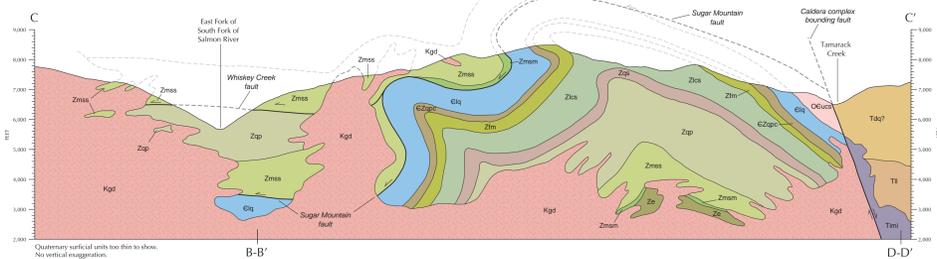
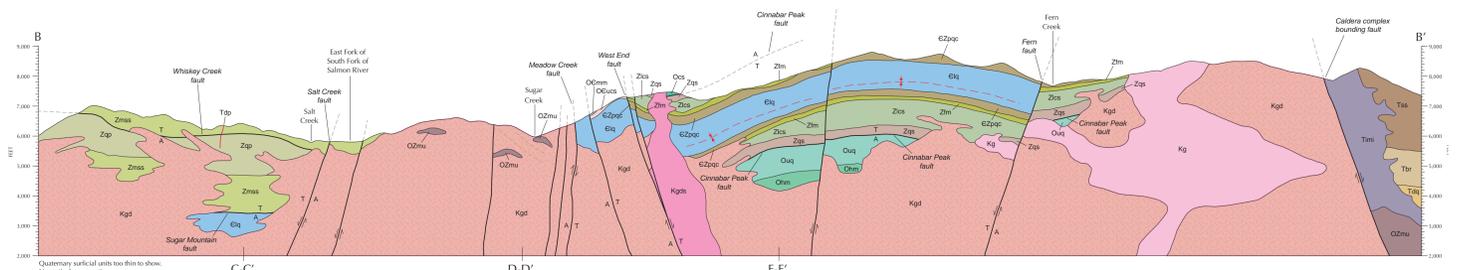
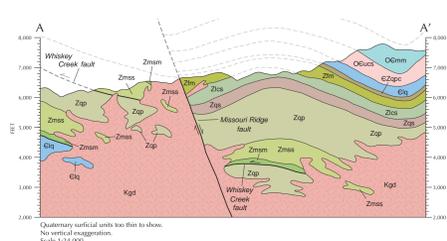


Table 2. Major oxide and trace element chemistry of samples collected in the Siltstone quadrangle.

Map Sheet	Sample number	Latitude*	Longitude*	Lithology	Unit name	Map unit	Major elements in weight percent														Trace elements in parts per million															
							SiO ₂	TiO ₂	Al ₂ O ₃	FeO	MgO	CaO	Na ₂ O	K ₂ O	P ₂ O ₅	Sum	LOI	Ni	Co	Sc	V	Ba	Bi	Sr	Zr	Nb	Cu	Zn	Pb	Li	Cd	Mn	U			
N	126152	44.892	-115.289	Shale	Conductite	Kgt	60.13	0.47	15.78	2.81	0.60	0.71	2.50	4.40	3.47	0.30	99.88	0.32	27	10	14	897	46	410	203	17	21.5	16	49	8	37	24	9			
N	126154	44.880	-115.284	Argillaceous Gneiss	Conductite	Kgt	60.13	0.47	15.78	2.81	0.60	0.71	2.50	4.40	3.47	0.30	99.88	0.32	4	3	4	400	144	204	124	61.3	16	3	17	20	12	10	10			
Q	126162	44.867	-115.110	Zoned granite	Gneiss	Kg	72.00	0.84	14.38	0.98	0.16	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	96.80	0.02	10	3	1	460	140	277	126	27	200	18	30	17	14	10	4		
Q	126164	44.867	-115.109	Zoned granite	Gneiss	Kg	72.00	0.85	14.32	1.04	0.06	0.20	1.04	3.07	4.31	0.81	97.60	0.02	10	3	1	460	140	277	126	27	200	18	30	17	14	10	4			
Q	126161	44.813	-115.273	Zoned granite	Gneiss	Kg	73.91	0.23	14.83	0.94	0.07	0.12	0.43	3.20	4.78	0.18	96.30	0.02	10	3	1	424	144	183	107	27	16.2	20	1	1	16	24	42	11	16	3
N	146015	44.872	-115.116	Dark granodiorite	Granite	Kgd	73.66	0.15	16.14	1.27	0.04	0.41	1.25	4.46	3.51	0.28	99.30	0.02	12	28	1	445	124	138	112	267	18	2	10	2	10	16	14	10	10	
S	125746	44.906	-115.245	diorite	Diabase	Kgd	63.07	0.73	13.43	4.72	0.06	2.11	4.25	3.16	0.28	97.04	0.02	17	14	14	166	105	470	210	217	16.5	22	14	71	17	16	16	47	3		
T	126204	44.824	-115.273	diorite	Diabase	Tsl	62.58	0.62	17.24	3.99	0.02	1.29	2.68	4.10	2.20	0.20	96.06	0.02	11	19	10	44	129	89	208	201	11.6	23	6	48	18	10	12	10	1	

*All analyses by X-ray fluorescence method.
 Samples 126154 and 146015 analyzed by Stanley Swanson of Franklin and Marshall B. Riley Laboratory, Lancaster, Pennsylvania; remainder of samples analyzed by Washington State University 95% Geochronology Laboratory, Pullman, Washington.
 *Latitude and longitude values listed are in NAD 83.
 *WSS reports total iron as FeO.