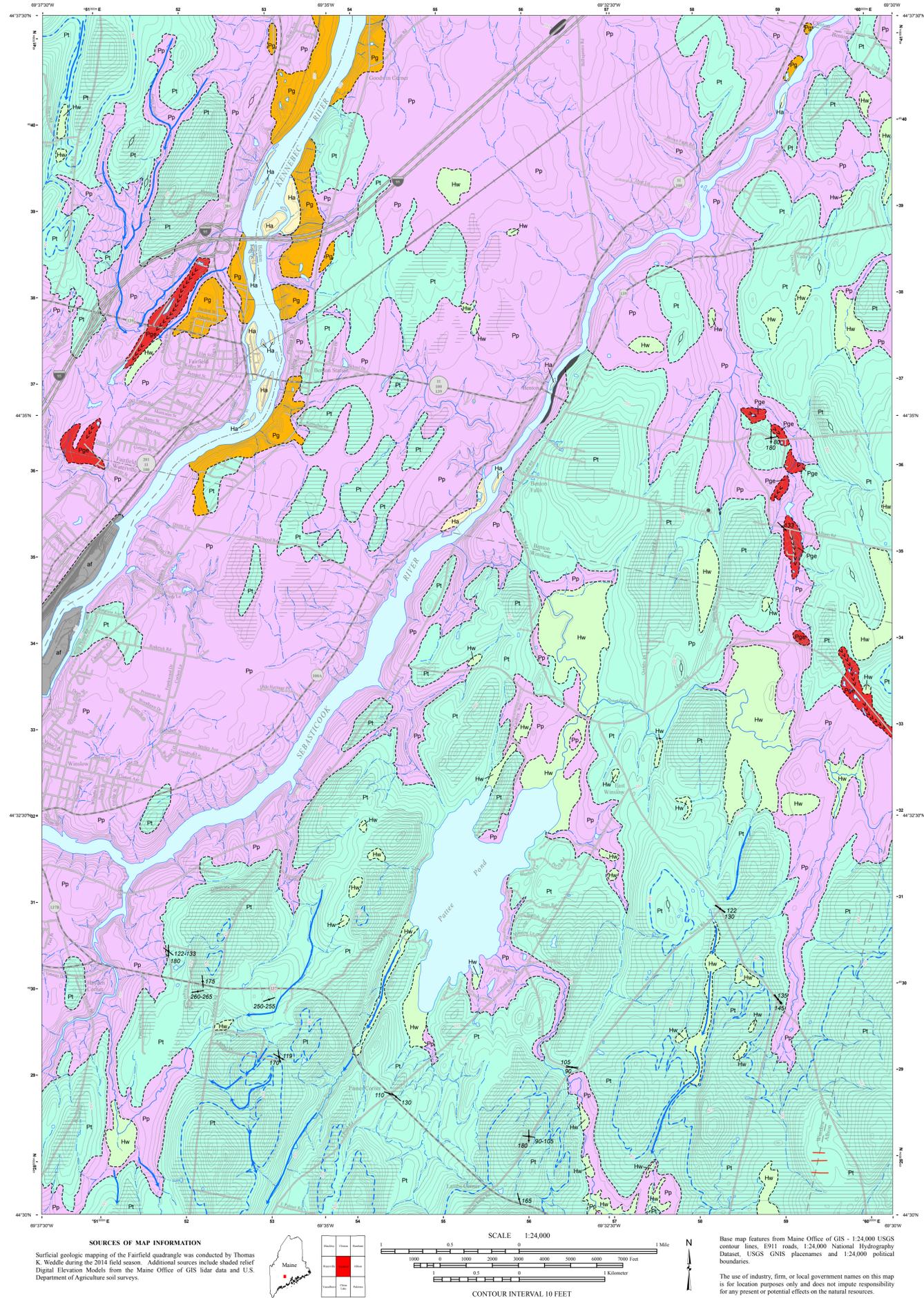


# Surficial Geology

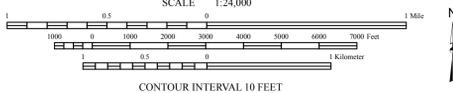


### SOURCES OF MAP INFORMATION

Surficial geologic mapping of the Fairfield quadrangle was conducted by Thomas K. Weddle during the 2014 field season. Additional sources include shaded relief Digital Elevation Models from the Maine Office of GIS, lidar data and U.S. Department of Agriculture soil surveys.



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Base map features from Maine Office of GIS - 1:24,000 USGS contour lines, 911 roads, 1:24,000 National Hydrography Dataset, USGS GNIS placenames and 1:24,000 political boundaries.

The use of industry, firm, or local government names on this map is for location purposes only and does not imply responsibility for any present or potential effects on the natural resources.

- Note:** The first letter of each map unit indicates the general age of the unit:  
**H** = Holocene (postglacial deposits formed during the last 11,700 years).  
**P** = Pleistocene (deposits formed during glacial to late-glacial time, prior to 11,700 yr B.P. [years before present]).
- al** Artificial fill - Variable mixtures of earth, rock, and/or man-made materials used as fill for roads. Usually shown only where large enough to affect the contour pattern on the topographic map.
  - Ha** Stream alluvium - Sand, gravel, and silt deposited on flood plains. May include organic wetland deposits or underlie some of the mapped wetland areas along streams.
  - Hw** Wetland deposits - Peat, muck, silt, and clay in poorly drained areas. Map unit may also include some alluvial sediments along stream valleys.
  - Pp** Presumpscot Formation - Glaciomarine silt, clay, and sand deposited on the late-glacial sea floor. This map unit commonly overlies the irregular surface of glacial till in a complex manner, so it is likely to include areas of till exposed at the ground surface.
  - Pg** Glacial deposits, undifferentiated - Sand and gravel deposited near the ice margin. Deposits include glacial marine fans, eskers, and marine deltas.
  - Pge** Esker - Ridges of gravel and sand deposited by meltwater streams in ice-walled tunnels at the base of the most recent glacial ice sheet.
  - Pt** Till - Loose to very compact, poorly sorted, massive to weakly stratified mixture of sand, silt, and gravel-size rock debris deposited by glacial ice. Boulders are commonly scattered across the ground surface. This map unit locally includes lenses of water-laid sand and gravel, as well as patches of overlying Presumpscot Formation (unit Pp).

- Bedrock outcrops/thin-drift areas** - Ruled pattern indicates areas where bedrock outcrops are common and/or surficial sediments are generally less than 10 ft thick. Mapped from air photos, lidar data, and ground observations. Actual thin-drift areas probably are more extensive than shown. Dots mark locations of individual outcrops.
- Contact** - Boundary between map units. Most contacts are approximately located and therefore indicated by dashed lines.
- Glacially streamlined hill** - Symbol shows long axis of hill or ridge shaped by flow of glacial ice, and which is parallel to former ice-flow direction.
- Marine limit** - Approximate elevation of high stand of sea level at approximately 13,000 years before the present.
- Meltwater channel** - Channel eroded by a glacial meltwater stream beneath the glacier. Arrow shows inferred direction of water flow.
- Axis of esker** - Alignment of symbols shows the trend of esker segments. Chevrons point in inferred direction of former glacial meltwater flow.
- Moraine** - Line shows crest of moraine ridge deposited along the retreating margin of the most recent glacial ice sheet. These moraines are composed mostly of till but may also include sand and gravel.
- Glacial striation locality** - Arrow shows ice-flow direction(s) inferred from striations on bedrock. Dot marks point of observation. Number is azimuth (in degrees) of flow direction. These striations are trending toward the west, possibly being influenced by the downdraw of the retreating ice sheet in the Sebasticook and Kennebec River Valleys.

### USES OF SURFICIAL GEOLOGY MAPS

A surficial geology map shows all the loose materials such as till (commonly called hardpan), sand and gravel, or clay, which overlie solid ledge (bedrock). Bedrock outcrops and areas of abundant bedrock outcrops are shown on the map, but varieties of the bedrock are not distinguished (refer to bedrock geology map). Most of the surficial materials are deposits formed by glacial and deglacial processes during the last stage of continental glaciation, which began about 25,000 years ago. The remainder of the surficial deposits are the products of postglacial geologic processes, such as river floodplains, or are attributed to human activity, such as fill or other land-modifying features.

The map shows the areal distribution of the different types of glacial features, deposits, and landforms as described in the map explanation. Features such as striations and moraines can be used to reconstruct the movement and position of the glacier and its margin, especially as the ice sheet melted. Other ancient features include shorelines and deposits of glacial lakes or the glacial sea, now long gone from the state. This glacial history of the quadrangle is useful to the larger understanding of past earth climate, and how our region of the world underwent recent geologically significant climatic and environmental changes. We may then be able to use this knowledge in anticipation of future similar changes for long-term planning efforts, such as coastal development or waste disposal.

Surficial geology maps are often best used in conjunction with related maps such as surficial materials maps or significant sand and gravel aquifer maps for anyone wanting to know what lies beneath the land surface. For example, these maps may aid in the search for water supplies, or economically important deposits such as sand and gravel for aggregate or clay for bricks or pottery. Environmental issues such as the location of a suitable landfill site or the possible spread of contaminants are directly related to surficial geology. Construction projects such as locating new roads, excavating foundations, or siting new homes may be better planned with a good knowledge of the surficial geology of the site.

### SOURCES OF RELATED INFORMATION

- Locke, Daniel B. and Weddle, Thomas K., 2015. Surficial materials of the Fairfield quadrangle, Maine: Maine Geological Survey, Open-File Map 15-11, map, scale 1:24,000.
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- Thompson, W. B., 2015. Surficial geology handbook for southern Maine: Maine Geological Survey, Bulletin 44, 97 p.
- Thompson, W. B., and Borns, H. W., Jr., 1985. Surficial geologic map of Maine: Maine Geological Survey, scale 1:500,000.

# Fairfield Quadrangle, Maine

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### SURFICIAL GEOLOGY OF MAINE

Continental glaciers like the ice sheet now covering Antarctica probably extended across Maine several times during the Pleistocene Epoch, between about 2.5 million and 11,700 years ago. The slow-moving ice superficially changed the landscape as it scraped over mountains and valleys (Figure 1), eroding and transporting boulders and other rock debris for miles (Figure 2). The sediments that cover much of Maine are largely the product of glaciation. Glacial ice deposited some of these materials, while others washed into the sea or accumulated in meltwater streams and lakes as the ice receded. Earlier stream patterns were disrupted, creating hundreds of ponds and lakes across the state. The map at left shows the pattern of glacial sediments in this quadrangle.

The most recent "Ice Age" in Maine began about 30,000 years ago, when an ice sheet spread southward over New England (Stone and Borns, 1986). During its peak, the ice was several thousand feet thick and covered the highest mountains in the state. The weight of this huge glacier actually caused the land surface to sink hundreds of feet. Rock debris frozen into the base of the glacier abraded the bedrock surface over which the ice flowed. The grooves and fine scratches (striations) resulting from this scraping process are often seen on freshly exposed bedrock, and they are important indicators of the direction of ice movement (Figure 3). Erosion and sediment deposition by the ice sheet combined to give a streamlined shape to many hills, with their long dimension parallel to the direction of ice flow. Some of these hills (drumlins) are composed of dense glacial sediment (till) plastered under great pressure beneath the ice.

A warming climate forced the ice sheet to start retreating as early as 21,000 calendar years ago, soon after it reached its southernmost position on Long Island (Ridge, 2004). The edge of the glacier withdrew from the continental shelf east of Long Island and reached the present position of the Maine coast by about 16,000 years ago (Borns and others, 2004). Even though the weight of the ice was removed from the land surface, the Earth's crust did not immediately spring back to its normal level. As a result, the sea flooded much of southern Maine as the glacier retreated to the northwest. Ocean waters extended far up the Kennebec and Penobscot valleys, reaching present elevations of up to 420 feet in the central part of the state.

Great quantities of sediment washed out of the melting ice and into the sea, which was in contact with the retreating glacier margin. Sand and gravel accumulated as deltas (Figure 4) and submarine fans where streams discharged along the ice front, while the finer silt and clay dispersed across the ocean floor. The shells of clams, mussels, and other invertebrates are found in the glacial-marine clay that blankets lowland areas of southern Maine. Ages of these fossils tell us that ocean waters covered parts of Maine until about 13,000 years ago. The land rebounded as the weight of the ice sheet was removed, forcing the sea to retreat.

Meltwater streams deposited sand and gravel in tunnels within the ice. These deposits remained as ridges (eskers) when the surrounding ice disappeared (Figure 5). Maine's esker systems can be traced for up to 100 miles, and are among the longest in the country.

Other sand and gravel deposits formed as mounds (kames) and terraces consisting of till or washed sediments (moraines) were constructed along the ice margin in places where the glacier was still actively flowing and conveying rock debris to its terminus. Moraine ridges are abundant in the zone of former marine submergence, where they are useful indicators of the pattern of ice retreat (Figure 6).

The last remnants of glacial ice probably were gone from Maine by 12,000 years ago. Large sand dunes accumulated in late-glacial time as winds picked up outwash sand and blew it onto the east sides of river valleys, such as the Androscoggin and Saco valleys (Figure 7). The modern stream network became established soon after deglaciation, and organic deposits began to form in peat bogs, marshes, and swamps. Tundra vegetation bordering the ice sheet was replaced by changing forest communities as the climate warmed (Davis and Jacobson, 1985). Geologic processes are by no means dormant today, however, since rivers and wave action modify the land (Figure 8), and worldwide sea level is gradually rising against Maine's coast.

### References

- Borns, H. W., Jr., Doner, L. A., Dorion, C. C., Jacobson, G. L., Jr., Kaplan, M. R., Kreutz, K. J., Lowell, T. V., Thompson, W. B., and Weddle, T. K., 2004. The deglaciation of Maine, U.S.A., in Ehlers, J., and Gibbard, P. L., eds., Quaternary Glaciations - Extent and Chronology, Part II: North America: Amsterdam, Elsevier, p. 89-109.
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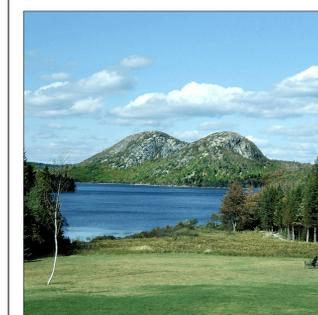


Figure 1: "The Bubbles" and Jordan Pond in Acadia National Park. These hills and valleys were sculpted by glacial erosion. The pond was dammed behind a moraine ridge during retreat of the ice sheet.

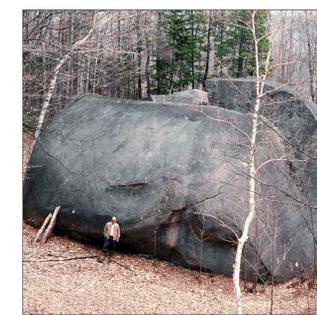


Figure 2: Duggett's Rock in Phillips. This is the largest known glacially transported boulder in Maine. It is about 100 feet long and estimated to weigh 8,000 tons.



Figure 3: Granite ledge in Westbrook, showing polished and grooved surface resulting from glacial abrasion. The grooves and shape of the ledge indicate ice flow toward the southeast.



Figure 4: Glaciomarine delta in Franklin, formed by sand and gravel washing into the ocean from the glacier margin. The flat delta top marks approximate former sea level. Kettle hole in foreground was left by melting of ice.

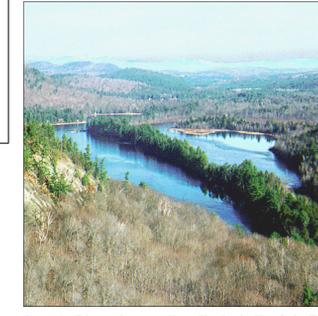


Figure 5: Esker cutting across Kezar Five Ponds, Watford. The ridge consists of sand and gravel deposited by meltwater flowing in a tunnel beneath glacial ice.



Figure 6: Aerial view of moraine ridges in blueberry field, Sedgwick (note dirt road in upper right for scale). Each bouldery ridge marks a position of the retreating glacier margin. The ice receded from right to left.



Figure 7: Sand dune in Wayne. This and other "deserts" in Maine formed as windstorms in late-glacial time blew sand out of valleys, often depositing it as dune fields on hillsides downwind. Some dunes were reactivated in historical time when grazing animals stripped the vegetation cover.



Figure 8: Songo River delta and Songo Beach, Sebago Lake State Park, Naples. These deposits are typical of glacial features formed in Maine since the Ice Age.