

DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

This geologic map is one of a series of maps that summarize research investigations by the Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys in the eastern part of the upper Kuskokwim region during 1977-84. In addition to geologic maps (Gilbert, 1981; Bundtzen and others, 1982; Gilbert and others, 1982; Gilbert and Solie, 1982; Kline and others, 1984; Bundtzen and others, 1987; Gilbert and others, 1988), previous reports address the area's intrusive and stratigraphic relations (Potter and others, 1980; Solie and others, 1982; Blodgett and Gilbert, 1983; Bundtzen and Gilbert, 1983; Gilbert and Bundtzen, 1984; Kline, 1984; Savage and others, 1984; Solie, 1984; Dickey, 1984; Gilbert and Bundtzen, 1984; Hahn and others, 1985; Kline and Bundtzen, 1985); structure and tectonics (Bundtzen and Gilbert, 1983; Gilbert and Bundtzen, 1983; Gilbert and Bundtzen, 1984); and economic resources (Solie and Dickey, 1982; Bundtzen and Gilbert, 1983). Rocks in the McGrath B-3 Quadrangle range in age from Cambrian(?) to Holocene and display complex fault relations along the Farewell fault zone.

QUATERNARY GEOLOGY

About half of the McGrath B-3 Quadrangle is covered by unconsolidated Quaternary sediments that were deposited by glacial, glaciofluvial, fluvial, colluvial, and eolian processes. With the exception of the area of the Middle Fork Kuskokwim River and the Windy Fork Middle Fork Kuskokwim River (hereafter Middle Fork and Windy Fork), stream splays throughout the quadrangle contain little surficial material, due to rapid stripping and flushing of weathered bedrock onto the piedmont slope. Thick accumulations of alluvial fan, outwash, and till deposits, however, are ubiquitous north of the outer strand of the Farewell fault. Locally, accumulations of ice, eolian sand, and peat (not depicted on the map) blanket deposits of the piedmont.

Four major periods of glaciation are inferred from drift deposits in the McGrath B-3 Quadrangle: two are probably of pre-Wisconsinan age, one of early Wisconsinan age, and one of late Wisconsinan age. Bluff exposures of the older drift deposits just north of the Farewell fault system consist of tectonically deformed till-outwash sequences. The lower units of the sequences dip 35° NW; the middle and upper units dip 15° to 30° NW.

From at least mid-Quaternary time through the present, the area was tectonically active, as evidenced by tilted, dissected middle to late Quaternary units and high-level strath terraces, and sharply defined, 10-m-high fault scarps in late Wisconsinan and Holocene deposits. Fault-line scarps over 30 m high are several along segments of the outer strand of the Farewell fault system. Just west of the quadrangle, early Wisconsinan(?) moraines are vertically offset 20 m or more, and pre-Wisconsinan moraines are at least 30 m above the Quaternary (Bundtzen and Gilbert, 1983; Gilbert and Bundtzen, 1983; Gilbert and Bundtzen, 1984). A block of Tertiary sediments between the major strands of the Farewell fault system trended northeast-southwest across the 30 m above and flanking antecedent strath terrace. Some of the terrace tracts lie to the north-northwest.

Permafrost is discontinuous in the McGrath B-3 Quadrangle, occurring primarily on northerly slopes and in sediments with a high water content, such as organic silt and peat and locally in underlying gravel. Segregated ice and some massive ice were observed along the west bank of the Windy Fork 6.5 km down-stream from the Farewell fault system in a gravel and silt section that is 0.6 m (Fig. 3); however, radiocarbon ages indicate that the permafrost table is sagging as woody peat and loess accumulate at the surface. Test pits in peaty sand from the Windy Fork (Fig. 3) indicate that the peat accumulated at a rate of 1 in. (0.025 m) per year between 5,800 ± 120 B.P. and 2,510 ± 60 B.P. and 1 in. (0.025 m) per year between 2,510 ± 60 B.P. and the present. Test pits in peaty material overlying early Wisconsinan moraines on the piedmont showed that the permafrost table is 0.3 to 1 m below the surface. Local knobs of drift with little organic cover are thawed. East of the Windy Fork, talus has developed locally in silt peat on the early Wisconsinan moraines.

TERRANES

Paleozoic and Mesozoic rocks in the McGrath B-3 Quadrangle are part of three tectonostratigraphic terranes (Solie and others, 1981) (Fig. 1). The older Paleozoic rocks are assigned to the Dillinger terrane, and most of the younger Paleozoic and Triassic rocks are assigned to the Mytic terrane. These two terranes are now thought to form one continuous succession (Bundtzen and Gilbert, 1983; Gilbert and Bundtzen, 1984). Triassic limestones (T₁) along the Windy Fork is most likely a fragment of the Pigeon terrane, a continental terrane sequence unrelated to the Dillinger-Mytic succession (Gilbert and Bundtzen, 1983b).

STRUCTURE

FOLDS

A folding and low-grade dynamic metamorphic event deformed Paleozoic rocks in the McGrath B-3 Quadrangle, producing a series of subhorizontal, overturned folds (F₁) that range from outcrop to mappe scale (Fig. 5A). The largest F₁ fold recognized in the quadrangle is the Middle Fork anticline, whose axis crosses the southwestern part of the quadrangle (Fig. 1). Accompanying the major F₁ fold is a progressive axial-plunge foliation (F₂) that is subparallel to the axis of the fold (Fig. 5B). F₂ folds locally grade into or are superimposed by kink folds (F₃) and accompanying slip cleavage (S₃) (Fig. 5C and D), commonly a continuation of the Middle Fork anticline (Fig. 1D). Such geometry indicates that F₂ and F₃ folds are genetically related to the same folding event. The type of fold response (F₂ or F₃) may have depended on the stage of development or on structural position. F₂ folds likely formed during early stages of folding, whereas F₃ folds are a relatively deep structural position, whereas F₃ folds formed at shallow or at deep levels during and following tightening and dewatering of F₂ folds.

Between the two main strands of the Farewell fault zone, Tertiary conglomerate (Tc) is deformed by several open folds that plunge gently southwest (Dickey, 1984). Paleozoic rocks are also broadly warped by a large, open, northeast-plunging anticline (Fig. 5B). This fold may be either a large F₁ fold or may reflect the same shortening that affected the Tertiary conglomerate.

FAULTS

In the McGrath B-3 Quadrangle, the Farewell fault system forms a 5-km-wide zone of high-angle faults along the northwestern front of the Alaska Range (Fig. 1). These trend northeast and northwest and bound several north-trending structural basins. The active sense of the fault system shifts to a more southerly trend from west to east across the quadrangle. Although the quadrangle is bounded by these have been several tens of kilometers of pre-Quaternary right-lateral movement along the system (Blodgett and others, 1982). The sense of strike-slip movement was observed. Vertical offset in the Quaternary units and non-moraine recently active, north-facing fault scarps, however, do indicate recent faulting related to uplift of the Alaska Range. Further east, the sense of strike-slip movement was observed. Vertical offset in the Quaternary units and non-moraine recently active, north-facing fault scarps, however, do indicate recent faulting related to uplift of the Alaska Range. Further east, the sense of strike-slip movement was observed. Vertical offset in the Quaternary units and non-moraine recently active, north-facing fault scarps, however, do indicate recent faulting related to uplift of the Alaska Range.

ECONOMIC GEOLOGY

MINERALS

The Farewell region of the Alaska Range contains a large number of mineral occurrences south of the Farewell fault system. These are associated with Paleozoic strata and Cenozoic igneous complexes. At present most interest is directed to areas east and southeast of the McGrath B-3 Quadrangle.

COAL

Coal is present in Tertiary conglomerate (Tc) at several localities, but the most notable exposure is in a outcrop on Windy Fork (coal loc. 1). At this site, the outcrop is composed of nonmetamorphic sedimentary rocks that include 180 m of coal and carbonaceous shale (1). Coal-rich intervals, containing about 50 percent or more coal, consist of numerous seams that range from 1 cm to 1 m thick. Samples from one of the seams that contains abundant yellow amber were barren of pollen (Kear McFarland, oral comm., 1983); however, pollen has been obtained from Tertiary conglomerate in the Windy Fork area that yielded faunas of middle Oligocene age (Atlantic Richfield Company in-house report, 1980).

Eight coal samples from the Windy Fork section and one from a coal seam 17 km to the southwest (coal loc. 2) were submitted for laboratory analysis. The results are shown in tables 3 and 4. The samples range from lignite to a high volatile C bituminous when classified according to ASTM standards and are low-rank bituminous when based on vitrinite reflectance (Ting, 1978).

Other mid-Tertiary(?) coals are found discontinuously along the Farewell fault system (Sloan and others, 1979; Solie and Dickey, 1982). These include deposits in the McGrath B-4 Quadrangle along the Middle Fork Kuskokwim River, about 4 km west of the McGrath B-3 Quadrangle; deposits in the McGrath A-5 Quadrangle along the Chenevitch River, 7.5 km west of the McGrath B-3 Quadrangle; and deposits in the Talkeetna Quadrangle along the Little Tontona River, about 150 km northeast of the McGrath B-3 Quadrangle. Of these, the Middle Fork exposure is the most likely stratigraphic equivalent of the McGrath B-3 coals. The outcrop consists of at least 35 m of coal and carbonaceous shale in a conglomerate similar to that found in the McGrath B-3 Quadrangle (Solie and Dickey, 1982).

Table 1. Engineering properties of selected Quaternary units, McGrath B-3 Quadrangle, southeastern Alaska

Map unit	Description	Topography	Drainage	Permafrost	Frost susceptibility	Slope stability	Bearing strength	Possible uses	Avoidances
Alluvium, undifferentiated (Qa)	Poorly to well-sorted fluvial silt to small boulder gravel of fans, terraces, and trunk and tributary streams. May grade into distal outwash (Qda) deposits	Horizontal to gently sloping surface. Older surfaces may be dissected, and mantled with eolian and colluvial deposits. Older, uplifted, deformed, and terraced and pediment surfaces commonly consist of a thin veneer of alluvium only	Good in recently deposited alluvium above stream level; fair to poor in older alluvium where permafrost has developed and where covered by silty colluvium and peat	Absent in younger deposits; occasionally present in older deposits mantled with silt and peat	Minimal in well-sorted modern alluvium; may be moderate to intense in permafrost-bearing active layer mantled with silt and peat	Generally stable, except ice-rich permafrost-bearing deposits subject to low instability and areas adjacent to cutbanks or free faces, where sudden, rapid collapse may occur due to stream erosion or surface loading	Good to fair	Thawed: well to moderately sorted alluvium generated by larger streams useful as source of sand and gravel	Older terraces and fan deposits that contain permafrost and have significant cover of eolian, organic, or colluvial sediments
Terrace alluvium (Qat)	Poorly to moderately well sorted fluvial silt, sand, and gravel above flood plains of active streams	Horizontal to gently sloping surface, except for older deposits that have been tectonically deformed, resulting in exaggerated surface tilt. Older surfaces may be dissected, and mantled with eolian and colluvial deposits	Good in younger permafrost-free deposits without significant cover of organic silt	Present discontinuously in older deposits. May be ice rich in organic silt or where silt infiltrated into gravel by percolating ground water	Terrace gravels generally not susceptible to heave, but occur in organic silt that caps older terrace alluvium	Generally stable, except free faces and ice-rich permafrost-bearing deposits. Fill terraces may be subject to slumping along stream cuts and free faces; strath terraces may be susceptible to slumping along stream cuts	Good	Kravies along larger streams and rivers are generally the most productive materials sites	Large, ancient strath terraces in west-central part of quadrangle where streams breach foothills. These terraces have a much thinner veneer of gravel
Alluvial-fan deposits (Qaf)	Fluvial sediment that forms fan-shaped deposits. May be of two types: 1) poorly to moderately sorted and coarse-grained sediment interbedded with discontinuous beds of finer grained material. Deposited where steep low-order streams emerge into trunk valleys. Deposits subject to large, rapid fluctuations in stream discharge; and 2) moderately sorted, medium to coarse-grained material that becomes finer and better sorted distally. Deposited where mountain ephemeral streams merge to gentle piedmont slope	Mountain fans (type 1) slope 1.5° to 5° (average 2°) and are commonly poorly to moderately sorted; to highly active fans. Both stable and grading fans contain numerous abandoned channels. In places, fans are deeply dissected due to fluctuating base level or diminished sediment supply. Surface area of mountain fans generally less than 4 m ² (0.5 km ²). Piedmont fans (type 2) are broad and slope 2° or less. They are also scored by numerous abandoned channels. Some fans are boundary of quadrangle, loess, and peat. Surface areas of piedmont fans generally greater than 4 m ² (0.5 km ²)	May be inhibited in older, inactive fans	May be present in older, inactive fans at higher elevations or those mantled by appreciable thickness of silt and organic material	Frost stable, except silt and organic material on old fan surfaces, especially where shallow zones of permafrost inhibit drainage	Generally stable, except where overburden is susceptible to frost heaving. Permafrost-bearing, silt-mantled fans are stable where kept frozen, if excess ground ice is absent	Good	Younger fans are good source of aggregate sand and gravel. In general, fans are suitable construction sites, except where susceptible to mudflow or avalanche	Very steep, short tributaries, where potential for mudflow is greatest; and older fans mantled with silt and organic material, which may be frozen or have high interstitial fill content
Colluvial-alluvial deposits (Qca)	Poorly to moderately sorted, interbedded colluvial and alluvial material that forms steep fan and apron-shaped deposits. Generally found on valley floors and piedmont slopes, where steep gradient ephemeral streams merge with higher order streams	Similar to, but generally steeper and smaller than, alluvial fans	Moderate. Deposits subject to flooding and torrential flow during periods of snowmelt or heavy precipitation	Common along north-facing slopes, especially in older deposits. Percentage of segregate ice may be high where silt and organics are prevalent	High in deposits with high silt content and poor drainage	Thaw unstable where perennially frozen or where containing ice. Deposits of predominantly silty material susceptible to creep, especially where saturated by near-surface ground water, such as springs along faults	Variable, but generally fair to poor	Local pods or lenses in fans may be source of small quantities of moderately sorted, gravel-rich fluvial sand	Fan surfaces, which may be subject to avalanche, mudflow, subsidence, and local liquefaction. Caution should be exercised during excavation and construction activities
Colluvium, undifferentiated (Qc)	Generally unsorted, unstratified to crudely stratified debris derived from mass-wasting processes, such as solifluction and landslides. Include talus and mixed slope colluvium. Deposits that resulted from episodic mass movement may be interbedded with surface organics or thin layers of fluvial sediment	Variable, ranging from hummocky lobes (handlike debris) to very steep cones and aprons with smooth, convex-upward profiles (talus). Some cones have been channelized by mudflows	Variable, depending on percentage of silt to clay-sized material and stage of permafrost development	Present in toes of thick talus accumulations, sometimes with significant interstitial ice, and in talus that grades downward from the surficial permafrost; present discontinuously in deposits at lower levels of north-facing slopes	High in deposits that contain large proportions of silt or organic silt	Steep colluvial deposits, such as talus aprons at or near angle of repose, generally unstable. In addition, talus subject to snow avalanches, mudflows, and rock falls	Variable, but generally fair to poor	Generally unstable as materials source, although fine grained colluvium may be used as fill	Deposits that show signs of recent deposition or shifting. These should not be used as building sites
Till (Qt1)	Unsorted, unstratified drift deposited by glacial ice as ground, terminal, and lateral moraines. Cobble- and boulder-size clasts subangular to subrounded, polyhedral faceted, and lithologically varied, representing wide variety of sources up valley. Till units vary in composition, depth of weathering, and surface morphology because of age, aspect, elevation, exposure, vegetation, and dominant clast types, all of which control ratio and duration of surface modification. Thickness of unit ranges from few centimeters to greater than 60 m	Varies with age, slope, aspect, elevation, and vegetation; pre-Wisconsinan till; moderately integrated in early Wisconsinan till; poorly integrated in late Wisconsinan till	Integrated in pre-Wisconsinan till; moderately integrated in early Wisconsinan till; poorly integrated in late Wisconsinan till	Widespread in till covering foothills plateau in south-western part of quadrangle near Middle Fork. In areas with thick peat development, permafrost table lies about 1 m below surface of deposit; interstitial ground ice masses common throughout upper 5 m of deposit, especially in areas of thick peat and loess cover	Subject to moderate to intense seasonal frost heave. May be thaw unstable following surface disturbance if deposit contains ice-rich permafrost	Stable in permafrost areas if kept frozen. Subject to failure where saturated or where overtopped by stream erosion. Areas of recent forest fires show development of ponds and shallow depressions. Ponds especially pronounced 0.5 to 5 km east of Windy Fork on early Wisconsinan moraines	Good in permafrost-free till on low to moderate slopes with no appreciable peat and loess accumulation; poor in thawed, thick peat mantles along cutbanks and steep valley walls	Poor source of clean sand and gravel because of poor sorting and variable clay and silt content. Till commonly overlies outwash gravels, which may be extracted if shallow	
Outwash (Qdo)	Stratified drift deposited by glacial meltwater in channels and as large fans and terraces. Deposits include fine grained and better sorted with increasing distance from source, eventually becoming indistinguishable from nonlocal alluvium. Material proximal to source consists of cobbles and boulder gravel and stringers of silt and sand. Cut-and-fill structures and clast imbrication can be seen in cutbanks and test pits	Gently sloping, relatively flat surfaces that exhibit abundant braided channel scars, often accentuated by differences in vegetation. In north-west part of quadrangle, peat and near springs where water table is close to ground surface	Good where outwash gravels are at or near surface of deposit; very poor where overlying peat and silt promoted permafrost development and near springs where water table is close to ground surface	Spuradic, occurring where accumulations of peat and organic silt promoted development of segregated ice. Ice typically limited to fine-grained overburden	None, unless thickly mantled by silty organic material	Stable, except cutbanks along active streams	Good in gravel below peat and silt overburden	Good materials source, although may need mechanical sizing for some applications because of poor to moderate sorting. Provides good foundation where peat and silt overburden is stripped or absent	Cutbanks along active streams. These may be strong; thus are not recommended for structure sites

Table 3. Proximate and ultimate analyses for 1.6-specific-gravity float samples of coal and lignite from Tertiary conglomerate (Tc), McGrath B-3 Quadrangle, southeastern Alaska (Modified from Solie and Dickey (1982))

Map no.	Field no.	Base*	Heating value (Btu/lb)			Proximate analyses (%)				Ultimate analyses (%)				Caloric value (Btu/lb)	Rank ^b
			Moisture	Volatile	Fixed carbon	Ash	Carbon	Oxygen	Hydrogen	Nitrogen	Sulfur	Total			
1	81DB126	2	9.482	13.24	29.37	46.88	10.51	56.33	31.42	5.10	1.41	0.12	0.33	10,725.5	Subbituminous A or high volatile C bituminous
		3	10.929	--	33.85	54.04	12.11	64.93	20.85	4.77	1.62	0.14	0.38	--	--
		4	12.335	--	38.52	61.48	--	73.98	19.09	4.75	1.84	0.15	0.44	--	--
1	81DB135	2	8.912	10.77	31.18	39.96	16.09	51.69	27.57	4.90	1.93	0.15	0.72	11,135.9	Subbituminous A or high volatile C bituminous
		3	9.288	--	34.94	44.78	20.27	57.93	18.83	4.14	2.16	0.16	0.80	--	--
		4	12.567	--	43.83	56.17	--	72.66	18.83	5.19	2.71	0.21	1.01	--	--
1	81DB139C	2	9.841	11.48	32.08	45.54	10.90	57.39	29.46	5.28	1.64	0.23	0.61	11,189.4	Subbituminous A or high volatile C bituminous
		3	11.117	--	36.24	51.44	12.31	64.83	20.31	4.51	1.86	0.26	0.69	--	--
		4	12.039	--	40.16	58.84	--	73.64	18.02	5.15	2.12	0.20	0.79	--	--
1	81DB139D	2	9.990	12.79	30.72	46.87	7.62	58.87	31.19	5.28	1.61	0.24	0.51	10,910.0	Subbituminous A or high volatile C bituminous
		3	11.455	--	35.23	56.04	8.74	57.51	21.10	4.41	2.07	0.24	0.59	--	--
		4	12.552	--	38.60	61.40	--	73.97	18.29	4.83	2.27	0.25	0.65	--	--
1	81DB139F	2	10.808	9.58	33.16	49.41	7.85	62.46	27.81	5.32	1.37	0.04	0.51	11,826.1	High volatile C bituminous
		3	11.953	--	36.67	54.64	8.68	69.98	20.16	4.70	1.52	0.04	0.56	--	--
		4	12.039	--	40.16	58.84	--	73.64	18.02	5.15	1.66	0.04	0.62	--	--
2	81DB329A	2	6.709	26.42	30.99	32.09	10.50	52.27	45.25	5.66	1.65	0.06	0.33	7,887.9	Lignite A
		3	9.118	--	42.12	43.61	14.27	57.45	25.59	3.67	2.24	0.09	0.45	--	--
		4	10.636	--	49.13	50.87	--	67.01	25.57	4.28	2.61	0.10	0.52	--	--
1	DNS-1	1	5.771	8.39	21.69	23.52	46.40	32.05	16.61	3.60	1.06	0.14	0.28	--	--
		2	5.983	6.61	22.11	23.97	47.30	32.67	15.21	3.45	1.08	0.14	0.28	--	--
		3	6.279	7.58	23.68	25.07	50.65	34.99	12.90	2.90	1.16	0.15	0.30	--	--
1	DNS-2	1	6.415	12.65	47.98	52.02	--	70.89	20.25	5.89	2.35	0.31	0.12	--	--
		1	6.415	9.68	24.66	28.13	37.54	37.52	19.39	4.09	1.07	0.13	0.40	--	--
		2	6.584	7.30	25.21	28.87	38.53	38.51	17.56	3.90	1.10	0.13	0.41	--	--
1	DNS-3	1	6.170	7.54	24.80	26.40	41.26	36.76	16.49	3.96	1.22	0.17	0.38	--	--
		2	6.287	7.68	26.87	28.76	44.62	28.75	13.89	3.30	1.22	0.18	0.42	--	--
		4	12.051	--	48.43	51.57	--	71.78	19.12	5.96	2.38	0.33	0.75	--	--

*As received; 2 = equilibrium bed moisture; 3 = moisture free; and 4 = moisture and ash free.
^aAnalyses on moist, mineral-matter free basis.
^bBased on classification adopted by American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM).
^cNot determined.

Table 2. K-Ar analyses for selected rock samples, McGrath B-3 Quadrangle, southeastern Alaska

Map (field) no.	(18WG162)	(218DB337)
Map unit	Tva	Tia
Mineral dated	Whole rock	Whole rock
K (%)	2.25	1.65
Sample wt (g)	0.82381	0.58885
(mole/g) × 10 ¹⁰	0.1466	1.3178
40Ar	2.18	2.68
40Ar × 10 ⁻³	0.20	0.42
40Ar (total)	37.2 ± 2.9	45.3 ± 1.4

*Analyses by Daniel Krummacker and Donna Martin, San Diego State University, San Diego, California.
^aCorrected value for argon subsurface, λ_g = 0.581 × 10¹⁰ yr⁻¹.
^bλ_g = 4.962 × 10¹⁰ yr⁻¹; and ⁴⁰K_{total} = 1.167 × 10¹⁴ mole/mol.
^cObtained derivation.

Table 4. Float-and-sink analysis of raw coals from McGrath B-3 Quadrangle, southeastern Alaska. After Solie and Dickey (1982)

Map no.	Field no.	Product	Weight (%)	Moisture ^a (%)	Ash ^b (%)
1	81DB126	Float	75.26	2.79	11.65
		Sink	24.74	1.91	58.00
		Raw coal (calculated)	100.00	3.32	23.12
1	81DB135	Float	24.12	2.98	19.67
		Sink	75.88	2.26	58.15
		Raw coal (calculated)	100.00	2.43	48.87
1	81DB139C	Float	61.03	4.15	11.80
		Sink	38.97	2.51	60.15
		Raw coal (calculated)	100.00	3.51	30.64
1	81DB139D	Float	78.22	3.40	8.44
		Sink	21.78	1.64	58.65
		Raw coal (calculated)	100.00	3.02	19.38