

Surficial Geology

Pushaw Lake Quadrangle, Maine

Surficial geologic mapping by

Alice R. Kelley
Lynn Caron

Digital cartography by:
Robert A. Johnston

Robert G. Marvinney
State Geologist

Cartographic design and editing by:
Robert D. Tucker

Funding for the preparation of this map was provided in part by the U.S. Geological Survey STATEMAP Program, Cooperative Agreement No. 08HQAG0050.



Maine Geological Survey

Address: 22 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333
Telephone: 207-287-2801 E-mail: mgs@maine.gov
Home page: http://www.maine.gov/doc/nrmc/nrmc.htm

Open-File No. 09-18
2009

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 1.5 million and 10,000 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 were 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 the Pushaw Lake quadrangle.

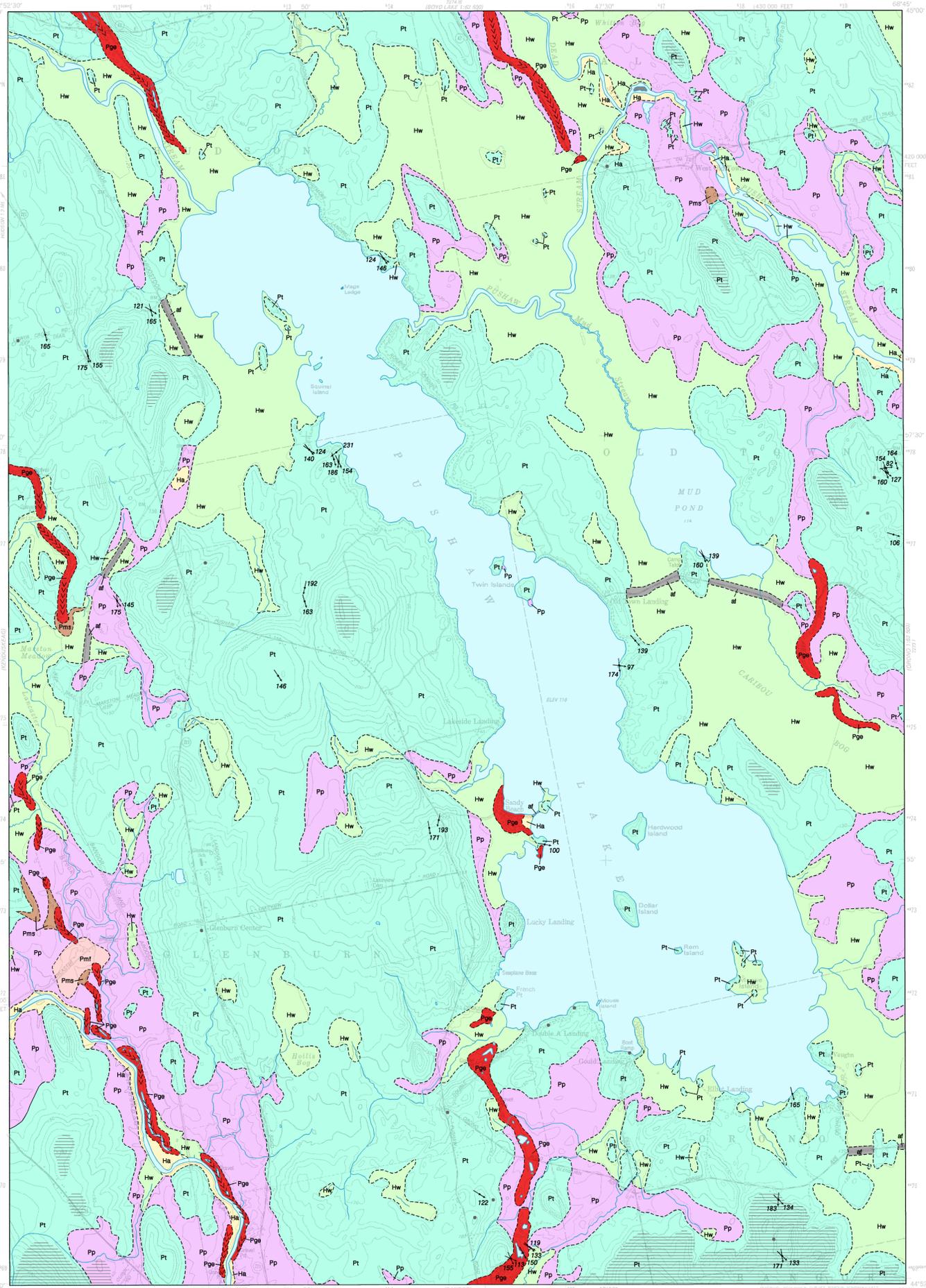
The most recent "Ice Age" in Maine began about 30,000 years ago when an ice sheet spread southward over New England (Stone and Borns, 1986). During its peak, the ice was several thousand feet thick and covered the highest mountains in the state. The weight of this huge glacier actually caused the land 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.

References Cited

- 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.
- Davis, R. B., and Jacobson, G. L., Jr., 1985. Late-glacial and early Holocene landscapes in northern New England and adjacent areas of Canada: *Quaternary Research*, v. 23, p. 341-368.
- Ridge, J. C., 2004. The Quaternary glacial history of western New England with correlations to surrounding areas, in Ehlers, J., and Gibbard, P. L., eds., *Quaternary Glaciations - Extent and Chronology, Part II: North America*, Amsterdam, Elsevier, p. 169-199.
- Stone, B. D., and Borns, H. W., Jr., 1986. Pleistocene glacial and interglacial stratigraphy of New England, Long Island, and adjacent Georges Bank and Gulf of Maine, in Sirova, V., Bowen, D. O., and Richmond, G. M., (editors), *Quaternary glaciations in the northern hemisphere: Quaternary Science Reviews*, v. 5, p. 39-52.

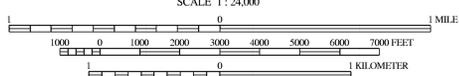


SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Surficial geologic mapping of the Pushaw Lake quadrangle was conducted by Alice R. Kelley and Lynn Caron during the 2008 field season. Funding for this work was provided by the U.S. Geological Survey STATEMAP program and the Maine Geological Survey, Department of Conservation.



SCALE 1:24,000



Topographic base from U.S. Geological Survey Pushaw Lake quadrangle, scale 1:24,000 using standard U.S. Geological Survey topographic map symbols.

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

- | | |
|--|---|
| Ha Stream alluvium - Sand, gravel, and silt deposited on banks of modern streams. | Bedrock outcrops/thin-drift areas - Ruled pattern indicates areas where outcrops are common and/or surficial sediments are generally less than 10 ft thick. Thin drift more extensive than shown, particularly on topographic highs. |
| Hw Wetland deposits - Peat, muck, silt, and clay. Deposited in poorly drained areas on valley floors. Unit may grade into or include areas of stream alluvium. | af Artificial fill - Earth, rock, and/or man-made fill along roads. |
| Pms Marine shoreline deposit - Waves-worked, fine-very fine sand. Locally covered with eolian deposits with hummocky topography. | Contact - Boundary between map units. Dashed where approximately located. |
| Pp Presumpscot Formation - Fine-grained marine silts and clays. Locally fossiliferous. | Glacial striation locality - Symbol shows trend of glacial ice-flow inferred from striations on bedrock. Dot marks point of observation. Number is azimuth (in degrees) of flow direction. |
| Pmf Glaciomarine fans - Sand and gravel deposited as submarine fans. | Crest of esker - Shows trend of esker ridge. Chevrons point in direction of glacial meltwater flow. |
| Pge Eskers - Sand and gravel deposited in tunnels in ice. Chevrons show inferred direction of water flow. Esker deposits draped with fine-grained glaciomarine deposits. Regressive phase, reworked sand deposits commonly associated with esker crests and upper slopes of esker flanks. | |
| Pt Till - Loose to compact and poorly sorted to weakly stratified clay, silt, sand, and gravel. Boulders may be present on the surface. Upper portions of till deposits are brown and weakly to moderately stratified as a result of regressive marine phase. Lower portions of till seen in deep cuts or bore logs are stiff, gray, and compact. | |

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 geologic 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. Refer to the list of related publications below.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Kelley, A. R., Caron, L., and Doughty, D. F., 2009. Surficial materials of the Pushaw Lake quadrangle, Maine: Maine Geological Survey, Open-File Map 09-19.
- Foster, L. E., and Smith, T. T., 2009. Significant sand and gravel aquifers of the Pushaw Lake quadrangle, Maine: Maine Geological Survey, Open-File Map 09-54.
- Thompson, W. B., 1979. Surficial geology handbook for coastal Maine: Maine Geological Survey, 68 p. (out of print).
- Thompson, W. B., and Borns, H. W., Jr., 1985. Surficial geologic map of Maine: Maine Geological Survey, scale 1:500,000.

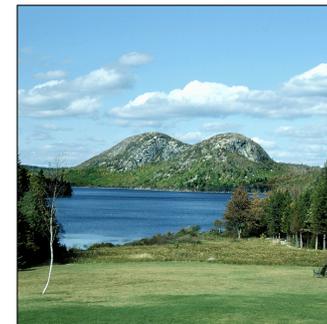


Figure 1: "The Bubbles" and Jordan Pond in Acadia National Park. These hills and valleys were sculpted by glacial erosion. The pond was dammed behind a moraine ridge during retreat of the ice sheet.



Figure 2: Dagget'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 ice.

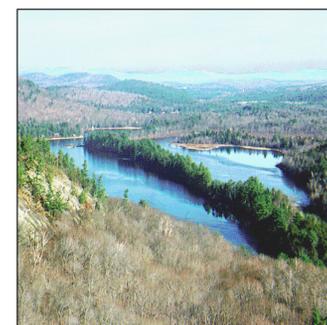


Figure 5: Esker cutting across Kezar Five Ponds, Watford. The ridge consists of sand and gravel deposited by meltwater flowing in a tunnel beneath glacial ice.



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.

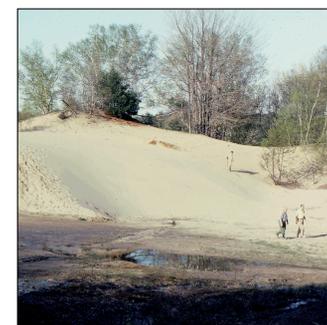


Figure 7: Sand dune in Wayne. This and other "deserts" in Maine formed as windblown in late-glacial time blow sand into valleys, often depositing it as dune fields on hillsides downwind. Some dunes were reactivated in historical time when grazing animals stripped the vegetation cover.



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