

# **PS Geologic Factors Controlling Production in the Codell Sandstone, Wattenberg Field, Colorado\***

**Stephen A. Sonnenberg<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

The Upper Cretaceous Codell Sandstone is a major pay in the giant Wattenberg Field of the Denver Basin. Vertical well completions in the Codell date back to 1981. The vertical wells have a history of successful hydraulic fracturing. New horizontal wells (2011 to P) with initial production of 100 to 700 BOPD (GOR ~10,000 cf/bbl) indicate substantial remaining reserves in the formation. Geologic factors important for production include: proximity to thermally mature source beds; thickness; geothermal gradients; pressure gradients; fault bounded reservoir compartments; gas-oil ratios; sufficient reservoir quality (phi-h). The Codell in Wattenberg is characterized by low porosity (<10%) and permeability (< 0.1 md). The Codell is 5 to 20 ft thick across the Wattenberg Field and has formation pressure gradients that range from 0.45 to 0.66 psi/ft. Geothermal gradients range from 1.8 to 2.5°F/100 ft. The highest GORs in the field correspond to the highest geothermal gradients. The sandstone is very fine to fine grained and bioturbated. Thin (< one ft thick) hummocky cross stratified beds are present in the Codell. Depositional environment is interpreted to be a shallow marine shelf setting. Clay content within the pay interval is approximately 20% and consists of 40–45% mixed layer illite-smectite, 30–40% illite, 10–30% chlorite, and up to 7% glauconite. The Codell is a low-resistivity, low-contrast pay. The fault-bounded reservoir compartments form mainly from a well-developed polygonal fault system. Polygons are generally about 1.5 square miles in size. The orientation of the polygons is influenced by pre-existing basement fault systems. The Codell unconformably overlies the Fairport chalk member of the Carlile Formation and is unconformably overlain by either the Juana Lopez or the Fort Hays Limestone Member of the Niobrara Formation.



# Geologic Factors Controlling Production in the Codell Sandstone, Wattenberg Field, Colorado

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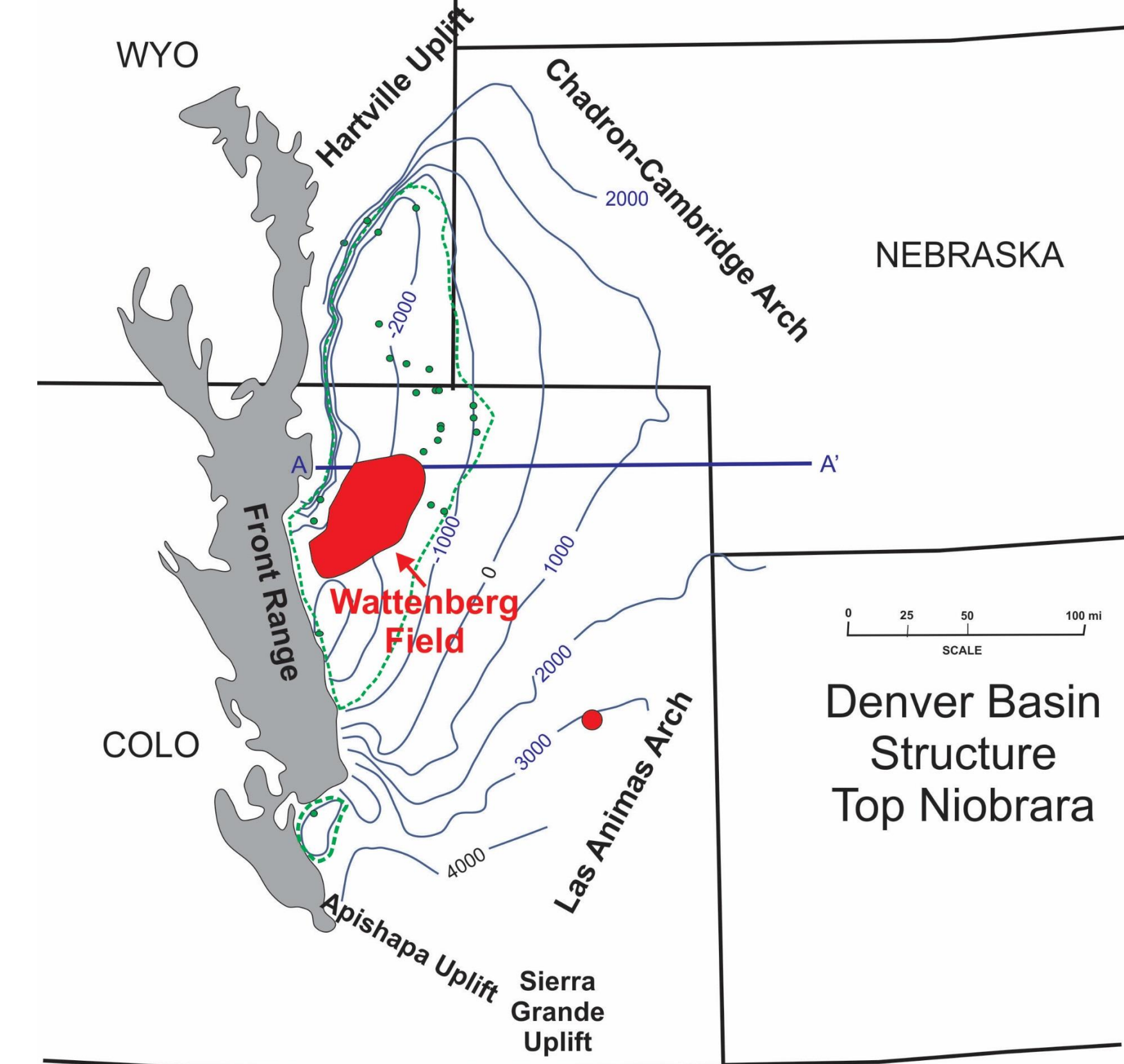
## ABSTRACT

The Upper Cretaceous Codell Sandstone is a major pay in the giant Wattenberg Field of the Denver Basin. Vertical well completions in the Codell date back to 1981 and were hydraulic fracture stimulated. The vertical wells have a history of successful hydraulic refracturing. New horizontal wells (2011 to P) with initial production of 100 to 700 BOPD (GOR ~10,000 cf/bbl) indicate substantial remaining reserves in the formation.

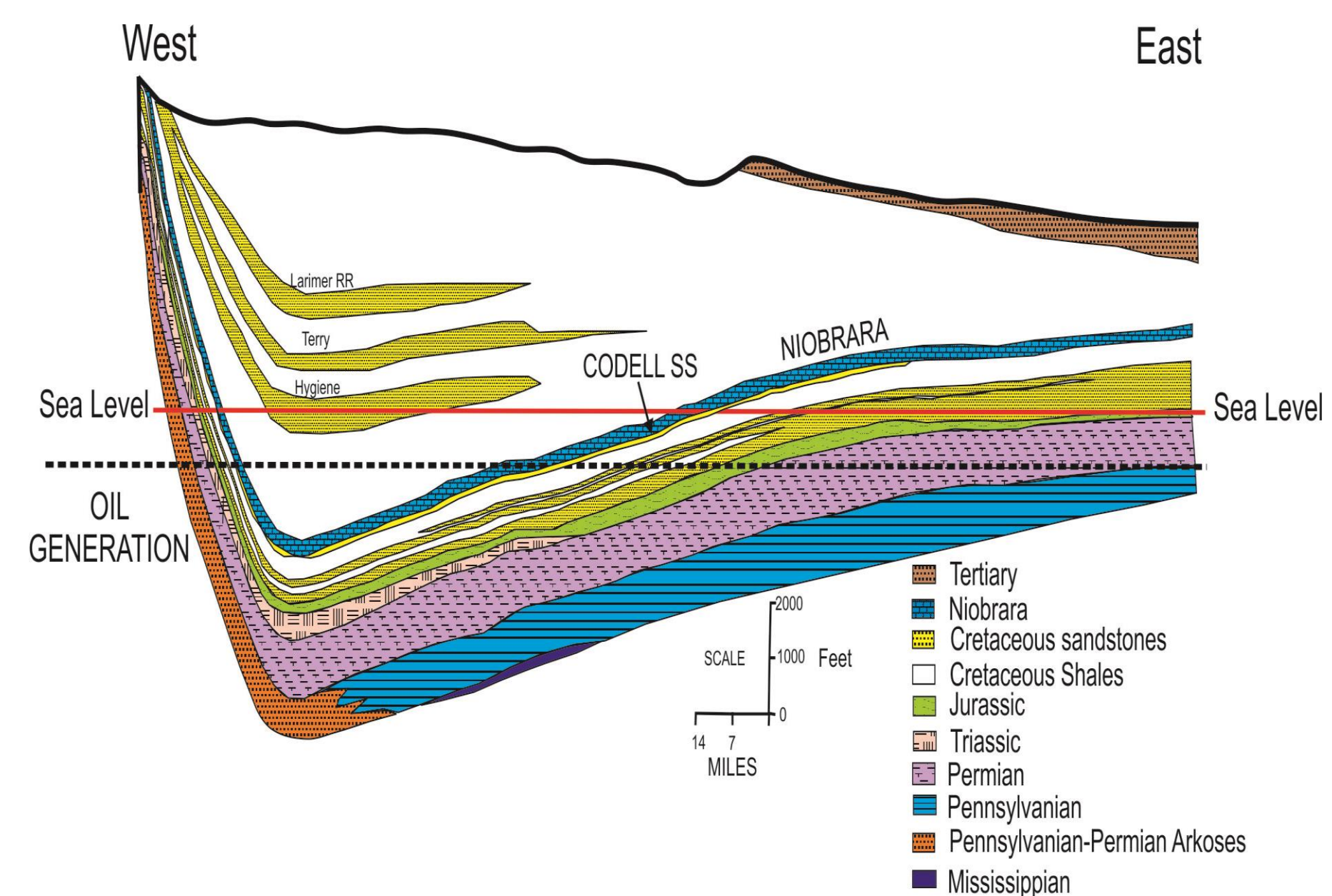
Geologic factors important for production include: proximity to thermally mature source beds; thickness; geothermal gradients; pressure gradients; fault bounded reservoir compartments; gas-oil ratios; sufficient reservoir quality (phi-h). The Codell in Wattenberg is characterized by low porosity (<12%) and permeability (< 0.1 mD). The Codell is 5 to 20 ft thick across the Wattenberg Field and has formation pressure gradients that range from 0.45 to 0.66 psi/ft. Geothermal gradients range from 1.8 to 3°F/100 ft. The highest GORs in the field correspond to the highest geothermal gradients. The sandstone is very fine to fine grained and bioturbated. Thin (< one ft thick) hummocky cross stratified beds are present in the Codell. Depositional environment is interpreted to be a shallow marine shelf setting. Clay content within the pay interval is approximately 20% and consists of 40-45% mixed layer illite-smectite, 30-40% illite, 10-30% chlorite, and up to 7% glauconite. The Codell is a low-resistivity, low-contrast pay.

The fault-bounded reservoir compartments form mainly from a well-developed polygonal fault system. Polygons are generally about 1.5 square miles in size. The orientation of the polygons is influenced by pre-existing basement fault systems.

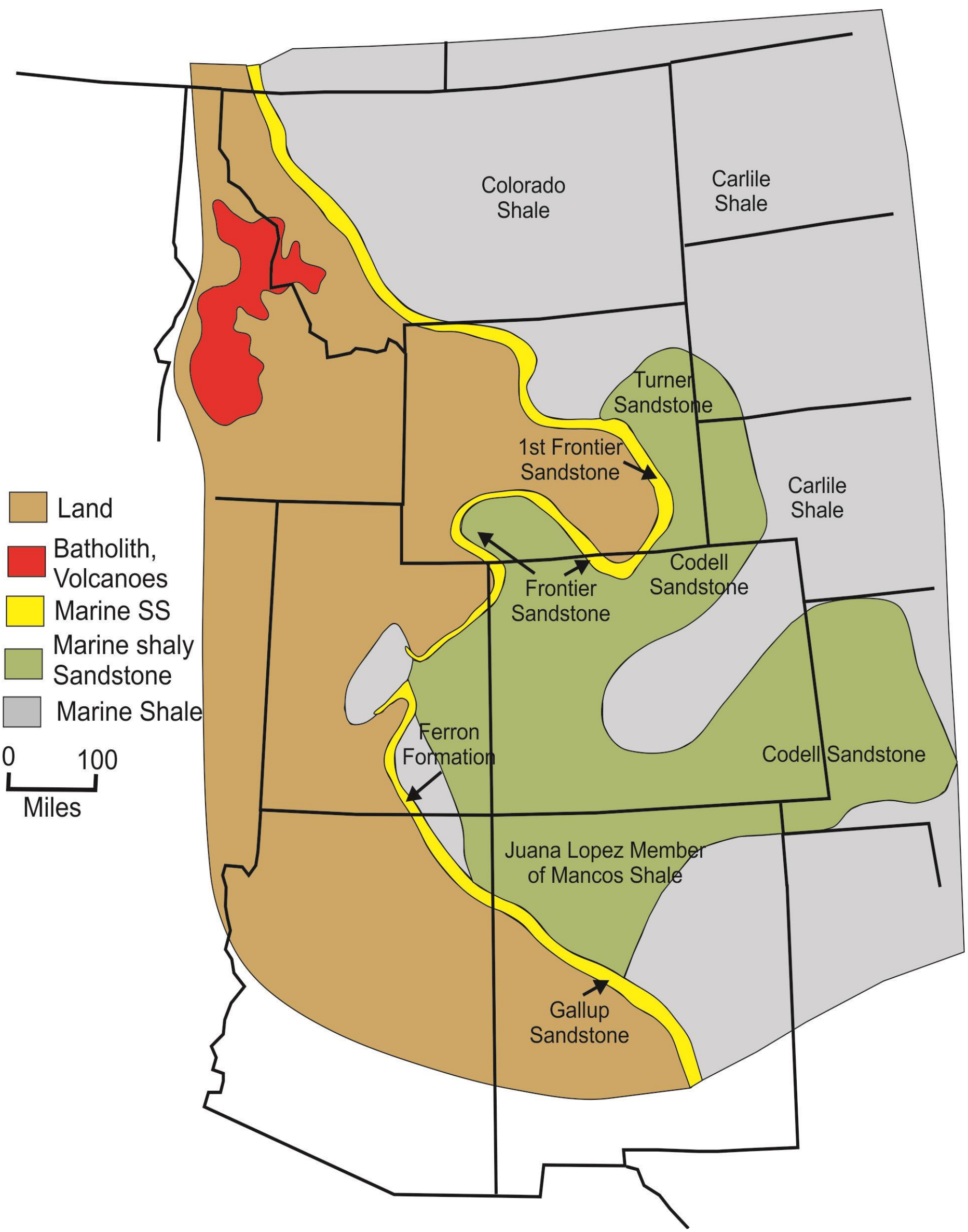
The Codell unconformably overlies the Fairport chalk member of the Carlile Formation and is unconformably overlain by either the Juana Lopez or the Fort Hays Limestone Member of the Niobrara Formation.



Structure map top Niobrara and current areas of Codell production (red – gas, green – oil). The dashed green line indicates areas where source rocks are thought to be thermally mature.



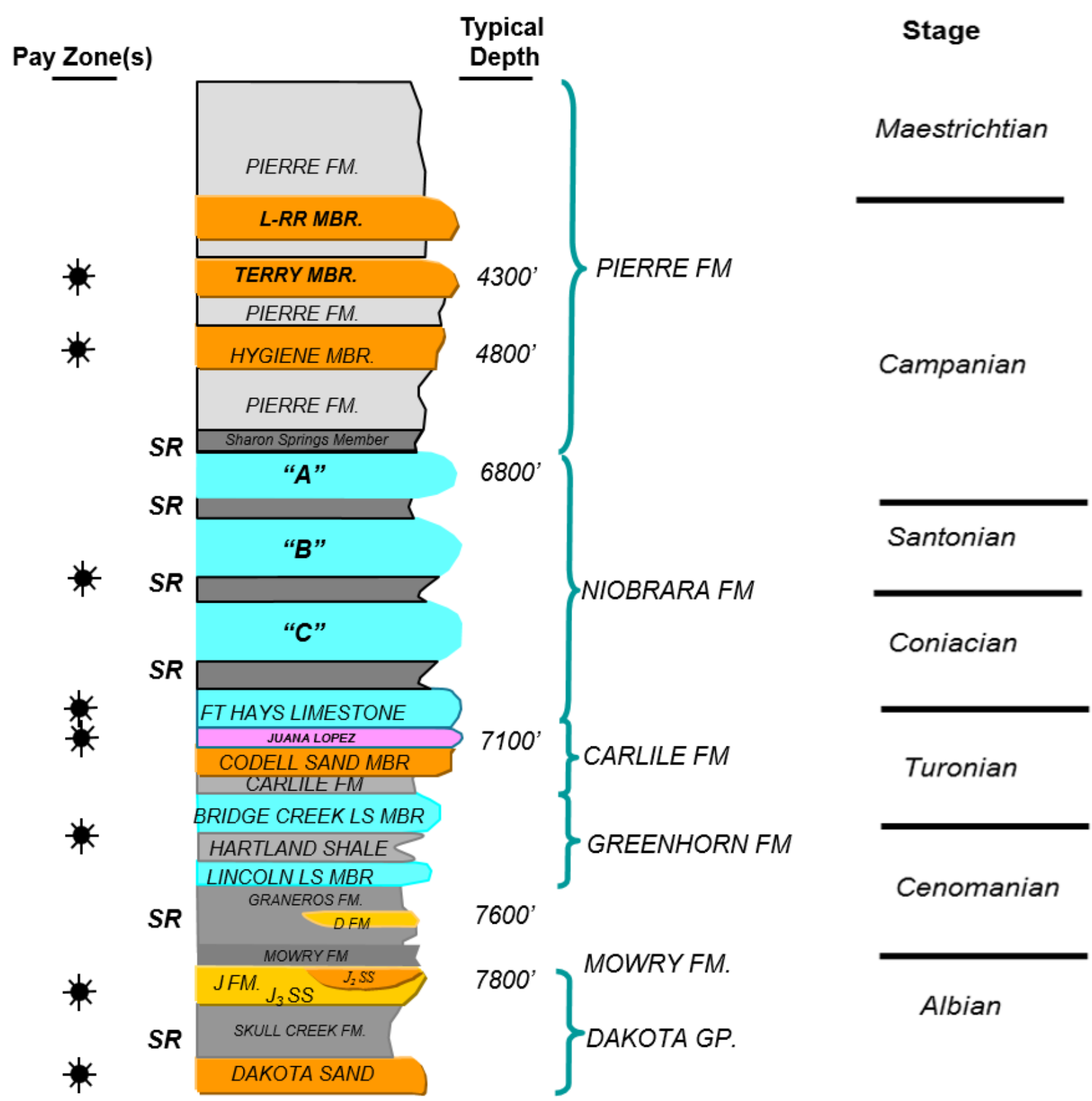
Diagrammatic cross section A-A' (west to east) illustrating the asymmetric nature of the Denver Basin and the occurrence of the Codell Sandstone beneath the Niobrara Formation.



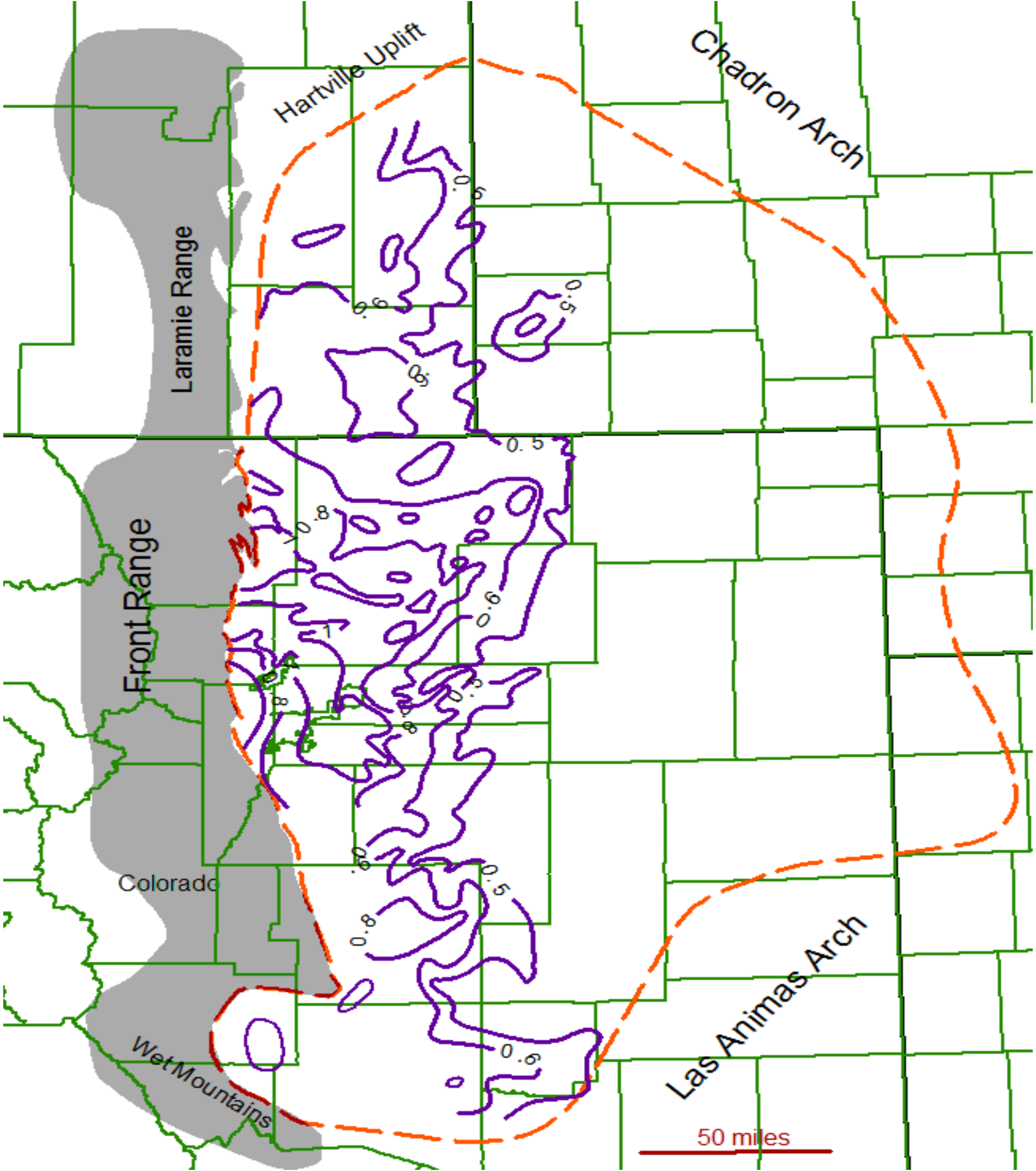
Paleoenvironment map for Middle Carlile time (modified Mallory, 1972).

CENTRAL WYOMING		NORTHEAST WYOMING		SOUTHEAST COLORADO/ NORTHEAST NEW MEXICO		CENTRAL KANSAS		SOUTHEAST SOUTH DAKOTA/ NORTHEAST NEBRASKA	
SERIES	FORMATIONS	MEMBERS	FORMATIONS	MEMBERS	FORMATIONS	MEMBERS	FORMATIONS	MEMBERS	FORMATIONS
UPPER CRETACEOUS (PART)	Cody Shale (part)	Steele (part)	Pierre Shale (part)	Gammon	Pierre Shale (part)	Sharon Springs Shale	Sharon Springs Shale	Sharon Springs Shale	Sharon Springs Shale
	Niobrara	Niobrara	Niobrara	Smoky Hill	Niobrara	Smoky Hill Shale	Smoky Hill Shale	Smoky Hill Shale	Smoky Hill Shale
	Sage Breaks	Sage Breaks	Sage Breaks	Sage Breaks	Montezuma Valley Shale	Fort Hays Limestone	Fort Hays Limestone	Fort Hays Limestone	Fort Hays Limestone
	Wall Creek	Wall Creek	Turner	Turner	Codell Sandstone	Codell Sandstone	Codell Sandstone	Codell Sandstone	Codell Sandstone
	Frontier Formation (part)	Emigrant Gap	Carlile Shale	Pool Creek	Carlile Shale	Juana Lopez	Blue Hill Shale	Blue Hill Shale	Blue Hill Shale
	Belle Fourche (part)	Greenhorn Formation (part)	Greenhorn (part)	Greenhorn (part)	Greenhorn (part)	Bridge Creek Limestone	Pleifer Shale	Bridge Creek Limestone	Bridge Creek Limestone

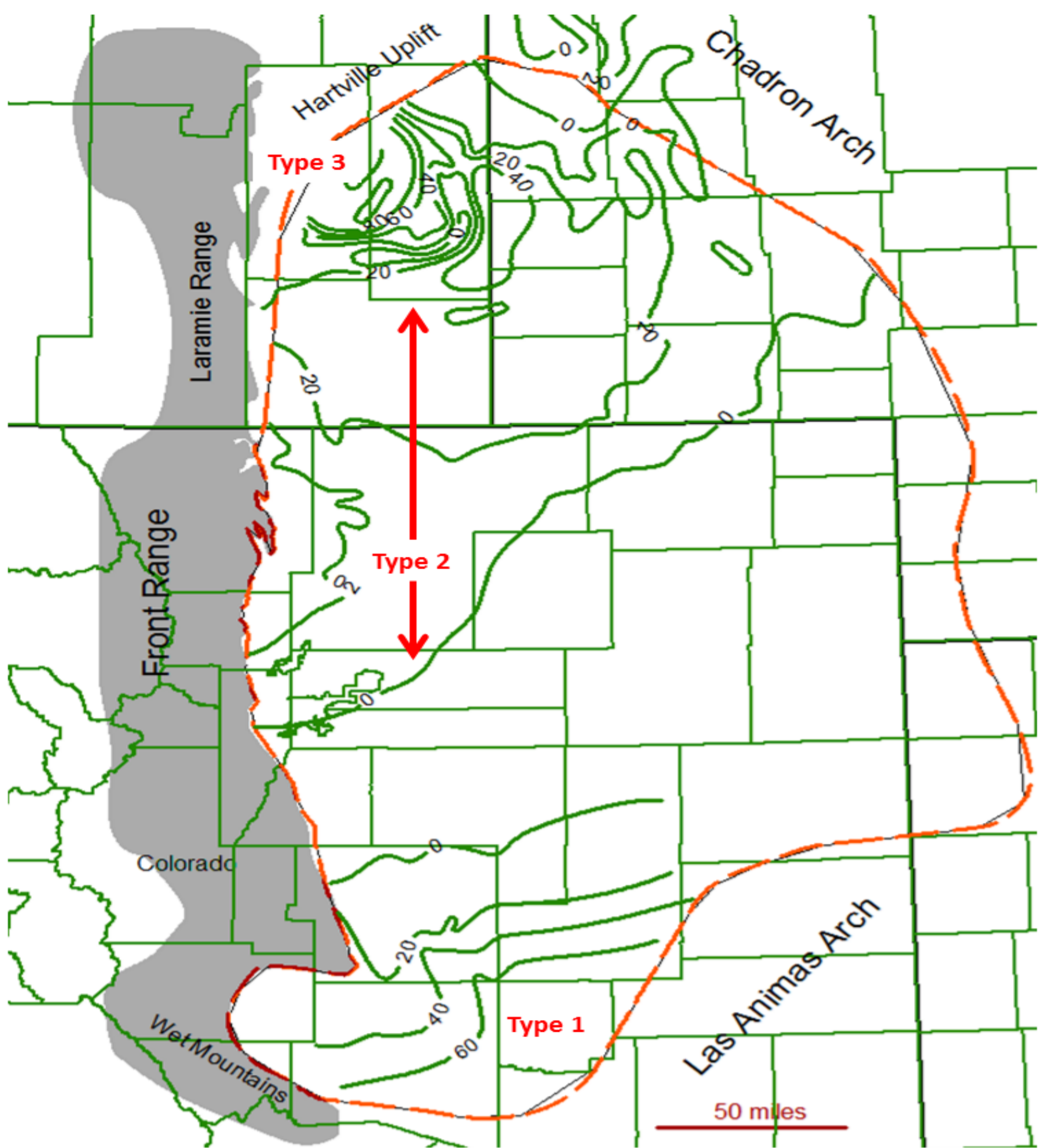
Correlation chart for Codell Sandstone, from Merewether 2007



Stratigraphic column for producing Cretaceous reservoir rocks in the greater Wattenberg area. Source beds for reservoir rocks are indicated by the SR symbol. The oil and gas symbols indicate producing horizons.



Source rock maturity map for the Niobrara Formation from Smagala et al., 1984. Ro values greater than 0.6 indicate probable areas of mature source rocks.

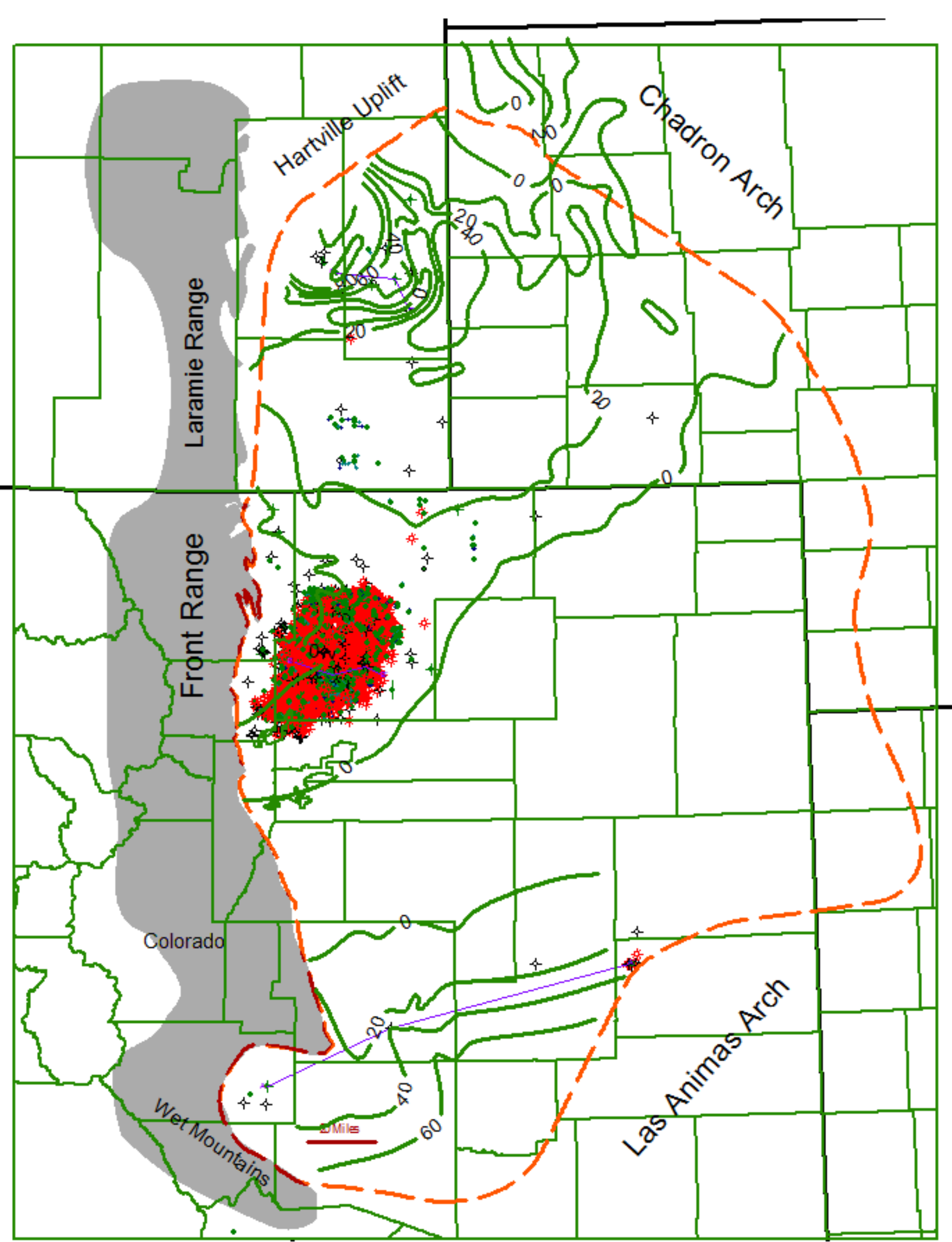


Isopach of the Codell Sandstone, Denver Basin (modified from Weimer and Sonnenberg, 1983).

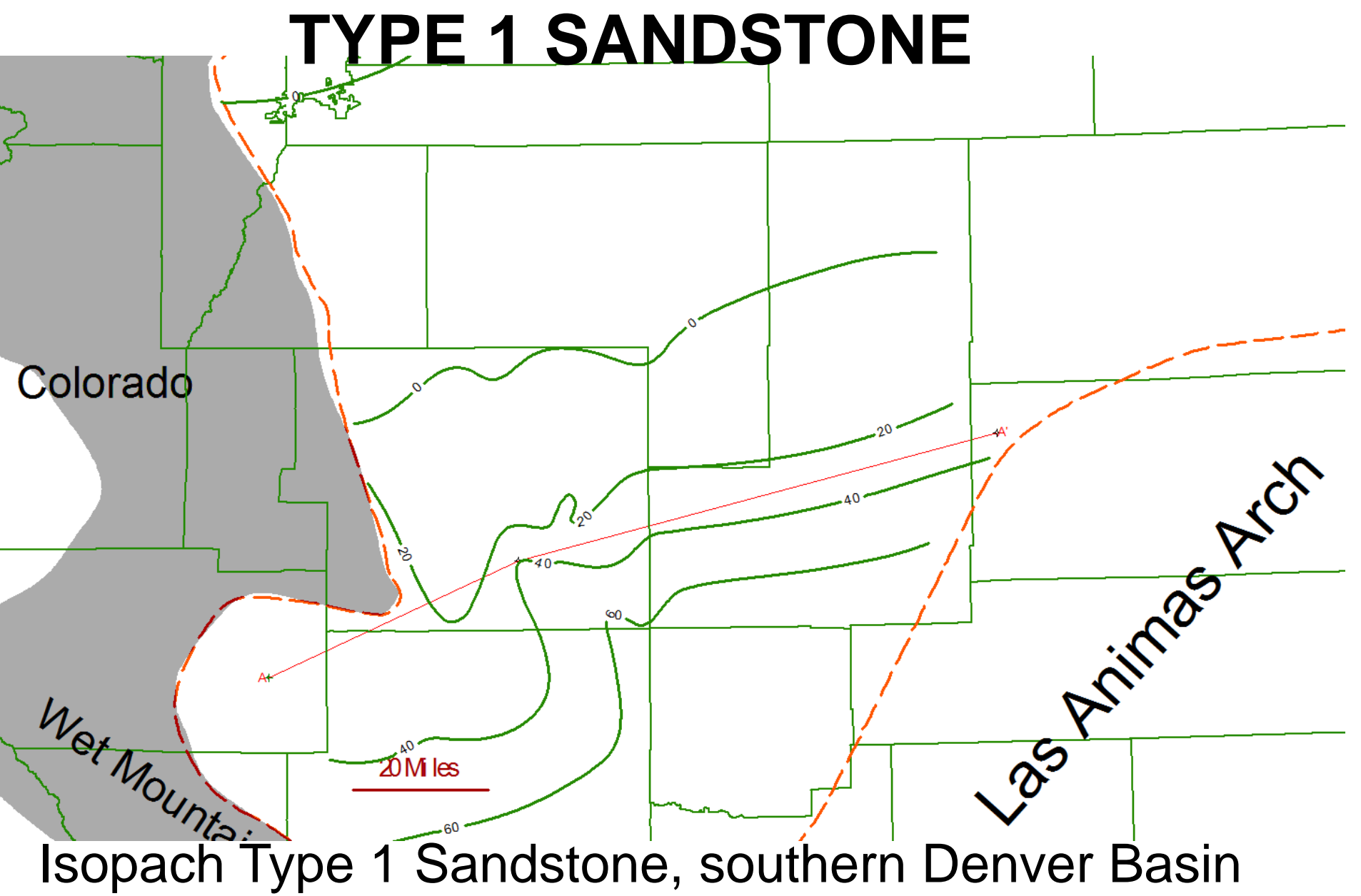
**Type 1 Sandstone:** Marine shelf or shoreline bars; good porosity and permeability; sheet-like distribution

**Type 2 Sandstone:** impermeable, bioturbated, fine-grained marine shelf sandstone; contains thin hummocky cross stratified beds; no central bar facies present (eroded?); most of the existing production comes from this sandstone type

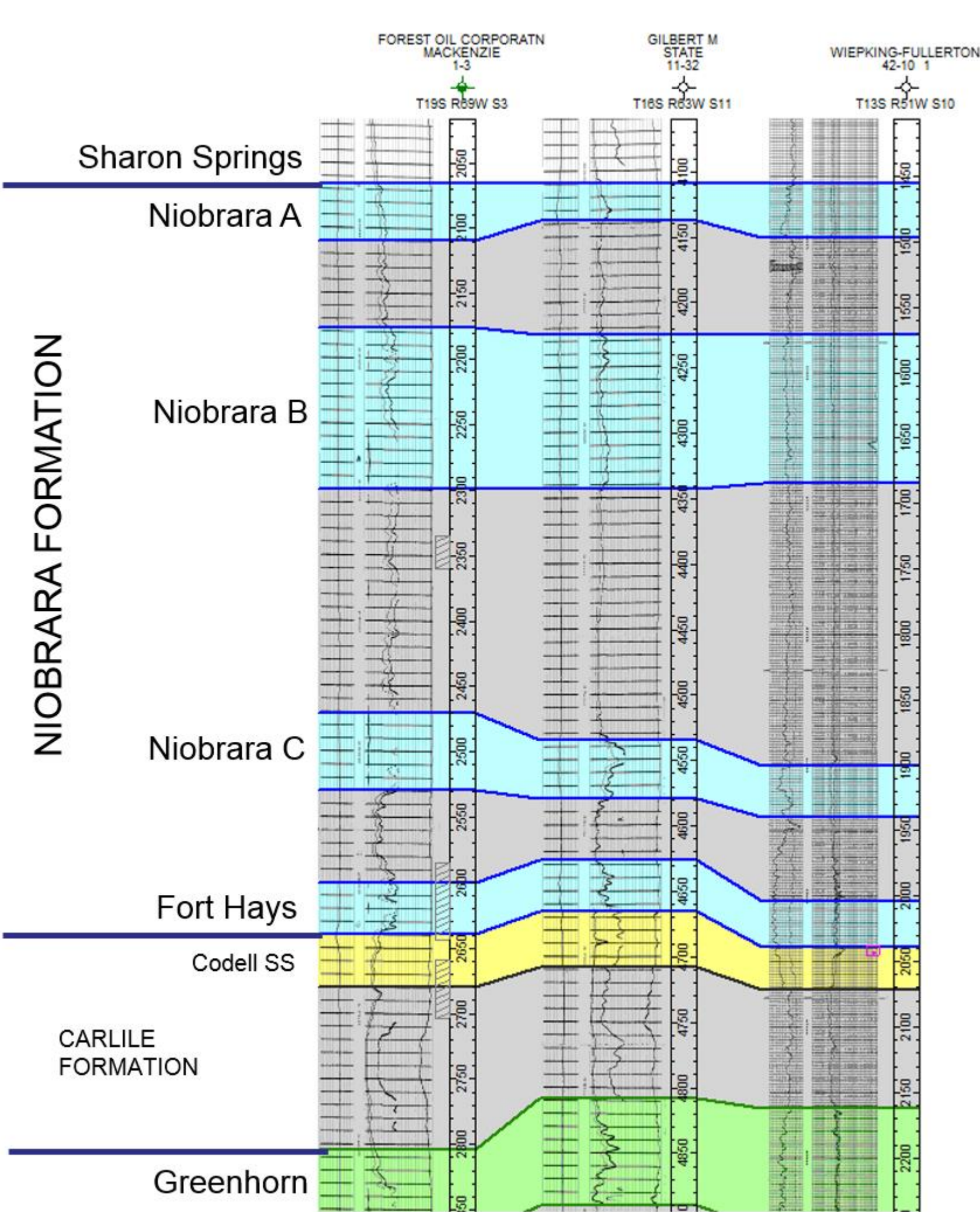
**Type 3 Sandstone:** fine-grained, parallel to cross stratified to ripple cross stratified; contains sparse burrows; deposited in intertidal to marine environments, contains abundant authigenic clays that reduce porosity and permeability



Isopach of the Codell Sandstone, Denver Basin (modified from Weimer and Sonnenberg, 1983). Map shows current Codell producers.



Isopach Type 1 Sandstone, southern Denver Basin



Cross-section Type 1 Sandstone, southern Denver Basin



# 2

The map shows the Front Range area with the proposed rail alignment highlighted in red. The alignment runs north-south, starting near the city of Denver and extending towards the north. The Front Range mountains are shown to the west, and the city of Denver is to the east. A scale bar indicates 20 miles.

T8N R64W S22  
SE NW

CLAY %  
50  
50  
TCC  
GRS  
LD  
DPI  
RHS  
QUARTZ  
SD  
DPI  
CARBONATE  
TOC  
G

Stages

81 Ma  
Campanian  
84 Ma

Santonian  
86 Ma

Coniacian  
89 Ma

Turonian

Cenomanian  
93 Ma

Sharon Springs Mbr.  
Upper (A) Chalk  
Middle (B) Chalk  
Lower (C) Chalk  
Fort Hays LS Mbr.  
Codell SS Mbr.

Pierre Shale Formation  
Niobrara Formation  
Carlisle FM.  
Aechison FM.

**BASS ENTRAPPS PROD CO**  
BASS M O GERTZ  
30-42

**LAKOTA PETROLEUM**  
O GERTZ  
1

**WEBB RESOURCES INC**  
O GERTZ  
23-5

**Well Specific Markers:**  
 - BASS: T23N R65W S30  
 - LAKOTA: T22N R62W S6  
 - WEBB: T21N R62W S23

**Stratigraphic Units (from top to bottom):**  
 Sharon Springs  
 Niobrara A  
 Niobrara B  
 Niobrara C  
 Fort Hays  
 Codell SS  
 Greenhorn

**Depth Scales (feet):**  
 - BASS: 0-200, 200-400, 400-600, 600-800, 800-1000, 1000-1200, 1200-1400, 1400-1600, 1600-1800, 1800-2000, 2000-2200, 2200-2400, 2400-2600, 2600-2800, 2800-3000, 3000-3200, 3200-3400, 3400-3600, 3600-3800, 3800-4000, 4000-4200, 4200-4400, 4400-4600, 4600-4800, 4800-5000, 5000-5200, 5200-5400, 5400-5600, 5600-5800, 5800-6000, 6000-6200, 6200-6400, 6400-6600, 6600-6800, 6800-7000, 7000-7200, 7200-7400, 7400-7600, 7600-7800, 7800-8000, 8000-8200, 8200-8400, 8400-8600, 8600-8800, 8800-9000, 9000-9200, 9200-9400, 9400-9600, 9600-9800, 9800-10000  
 - LAKOTA: 0-200, 200-400, 400-600, 600-800, 800-1000, 1000-1200, 1200-1400, 1400-1600, 1600-1800, 1800-2000, 2000-2200, 2200-2400, 2400-2600, 2600-2800, 2800-3000, 3000-3200, 3200-3400, 3400-3600, 3600-3800, 3800-4000, 4000-4200, 4200-4400, 4400-4600, 4600-4800, 4800-5000, 5000-5200, 5200-5400, 5400-5600, 5600-5800, 5800-6000, 6000-6200, 6200-6400, 6400-6600, 6600-6800, 6800-7000, 7000-7200, 7200-7400, 7400-7600, 7600-7800, 7800-8000, 8000-8200, 8200-8400, 8400-8600, 8600-8800, 8800-9000, 9000-9200, 9200-9400, 9400-9600, 9600-9800, 9800-10000  
 - WEBB: 0-200, 200-400, 400-600, 600-800, 800-1000, 1000-1200, 1200-1400, 1400-1600, 1600-1800, 1800-2000, 2000-2200, 2200-2400, 2400-2600, 2600-2800, 2800-3000, 3000-3200, 3200-3400, 3400-3600, 3600-3800, 3800-4000, 4000-4200, 4200-4400, 4400-4600, 4600-4800, 4800-5000, 5000-5200, 5200-5400, 5400-5600, 5600-5800, 5800-6000, 6000-6200, 6200-6400, 6400-6600, 6600-6800, 6800-7000, 7000-7200, 7200-7400, 7400-7600, 7600-7800, 7800-8000, 8000-8200, 8200-8400, 8400-8600, 8600-8800, 8800-9000, 9000-9200, 9200-9400, 9400-9600, 9600-9800, 9800-10000

Harville Uplift

Chadron Arch

Laramie Range

Front Range

Circle 230 BOPD  
KT 595 BOPD  
Circle 17 BOPD  
SM 355 BOPD  
ESD 664 BOPD

Whiting 456 BOPD

**New Codell Wells,  
Northern Denver Basin**

20 MI less

The map displays the Wattenberg Field with various structural features and elevation contours. Key locations marked include Fort Collins, Loveland, Boulder, and Quantaville. A red dashed line represents the 1000-foot elevation contour. The map also shows a scale bar from 0 to 6 miles.

**Greater Wattenberg Area**

Greeley

Boulder

Denver

Seismic Line 1

20 km

This map shows the Greater Wattenberg Area, a large oil and gas field. The area is outlined by a red rectangle. Within this area, a black square marks the location of Greeley. To the west of the main area, a black square marks the location of Boulder. Further south, the city of Denver is shown with its characteristic irregular boundary. A red vertical line segment, labeled 'Seismic Line 1', is positioned to the east of the main area. A scale bar at the bottom right indicates a distance of 20 km. The background of the map is a light brown color with a grid of small black squares.

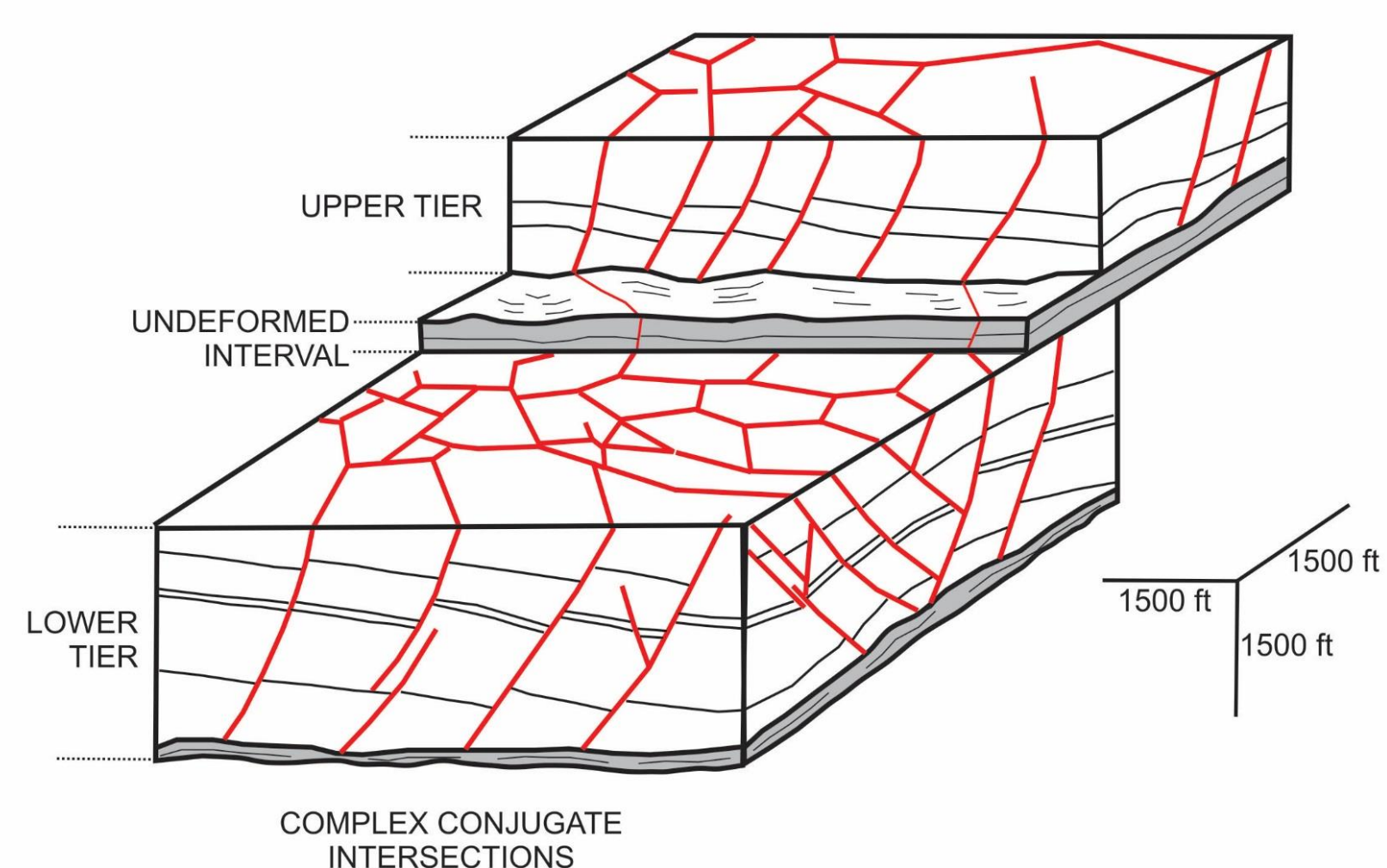
Figure 1 is a seismic profile labeled "Line 1". The vertical axis on the right indicates depth in kilometers, with labels Kp, Kn, and Kd. The horizontal axis at the top indicates distance in kilometers, ranging from 0 to 3. The profile shows various seismic layers and structures, with red lines highlighting specific features or boundaries.

2-D seismic line with interpreted faults. Kn = Niobrara;  
Kd = Dakota Sandstone; Kp = Pierre marker.



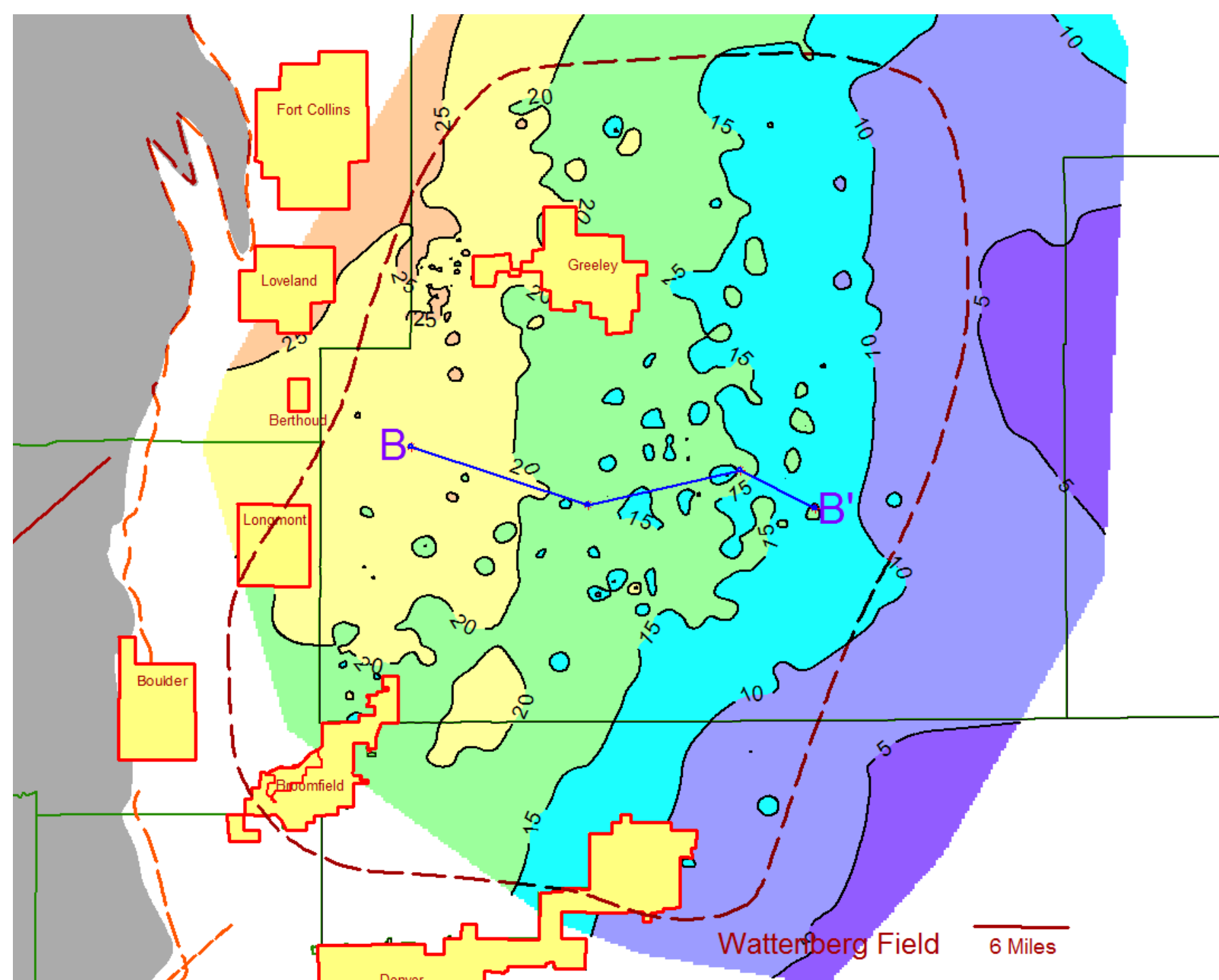
# Codell Sandstone, Denver Basin

## 3

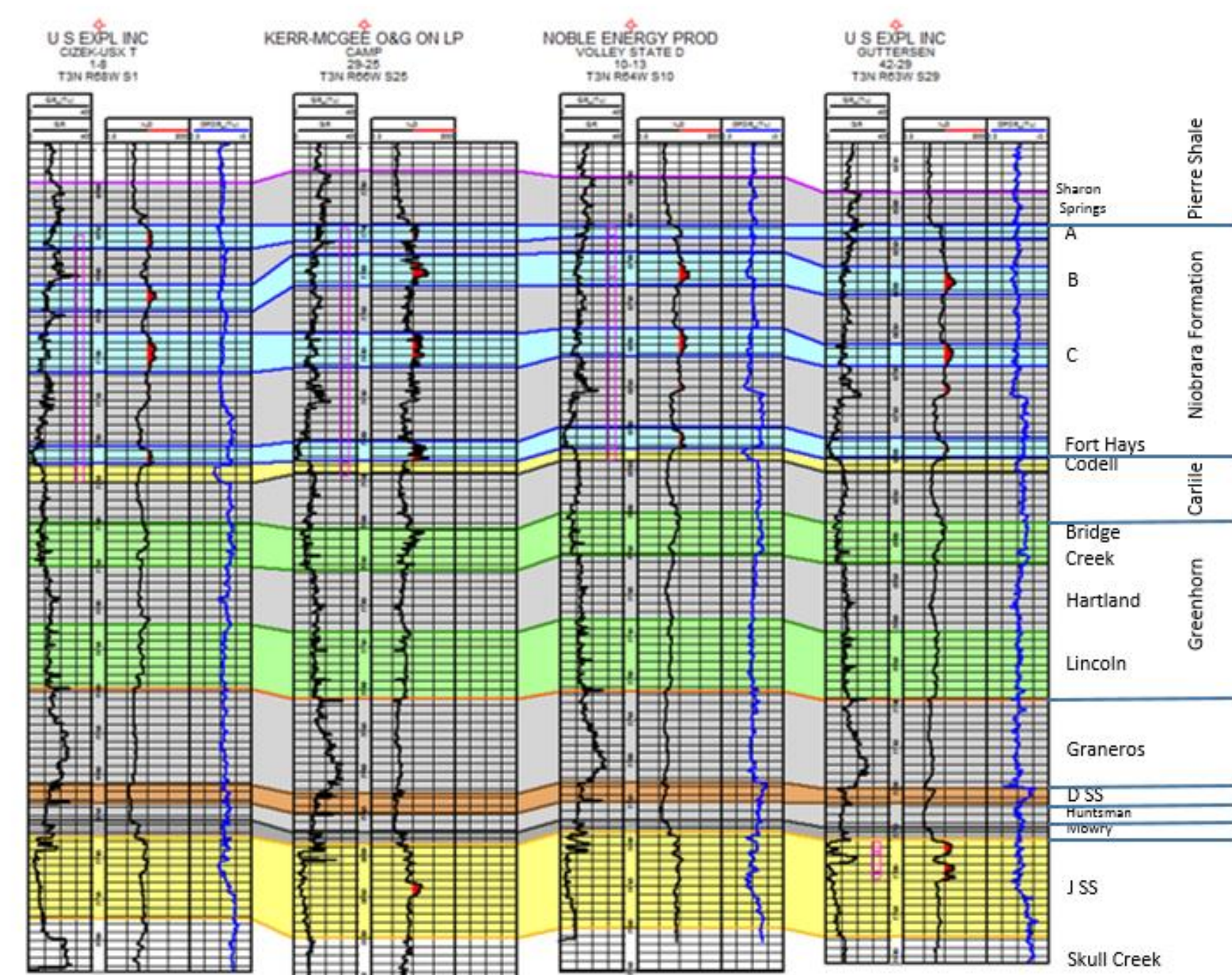


Model illustrating polygonal fault model, from Cartwright, 2013.

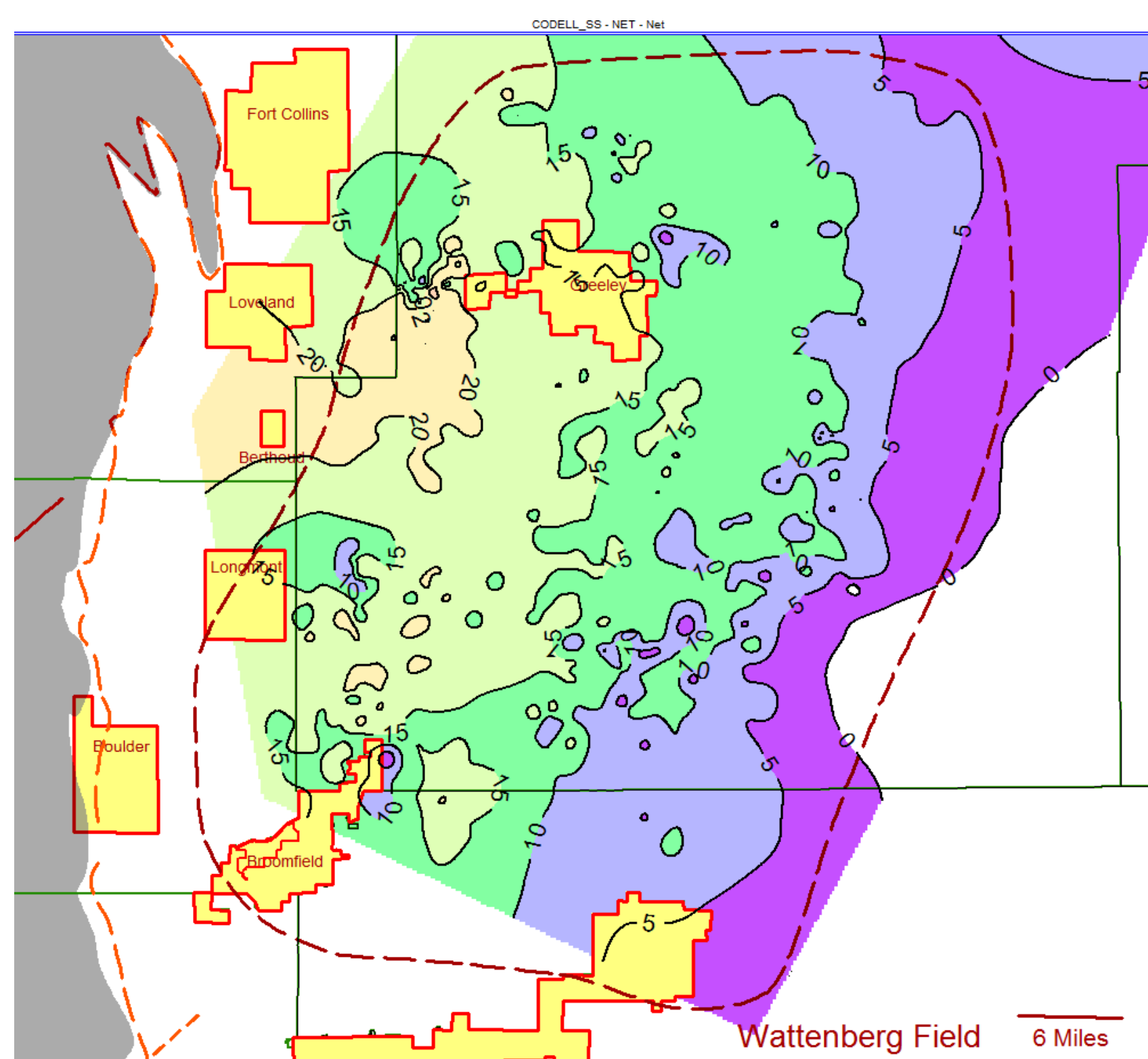
### Wattenberg Field Stratigraphy



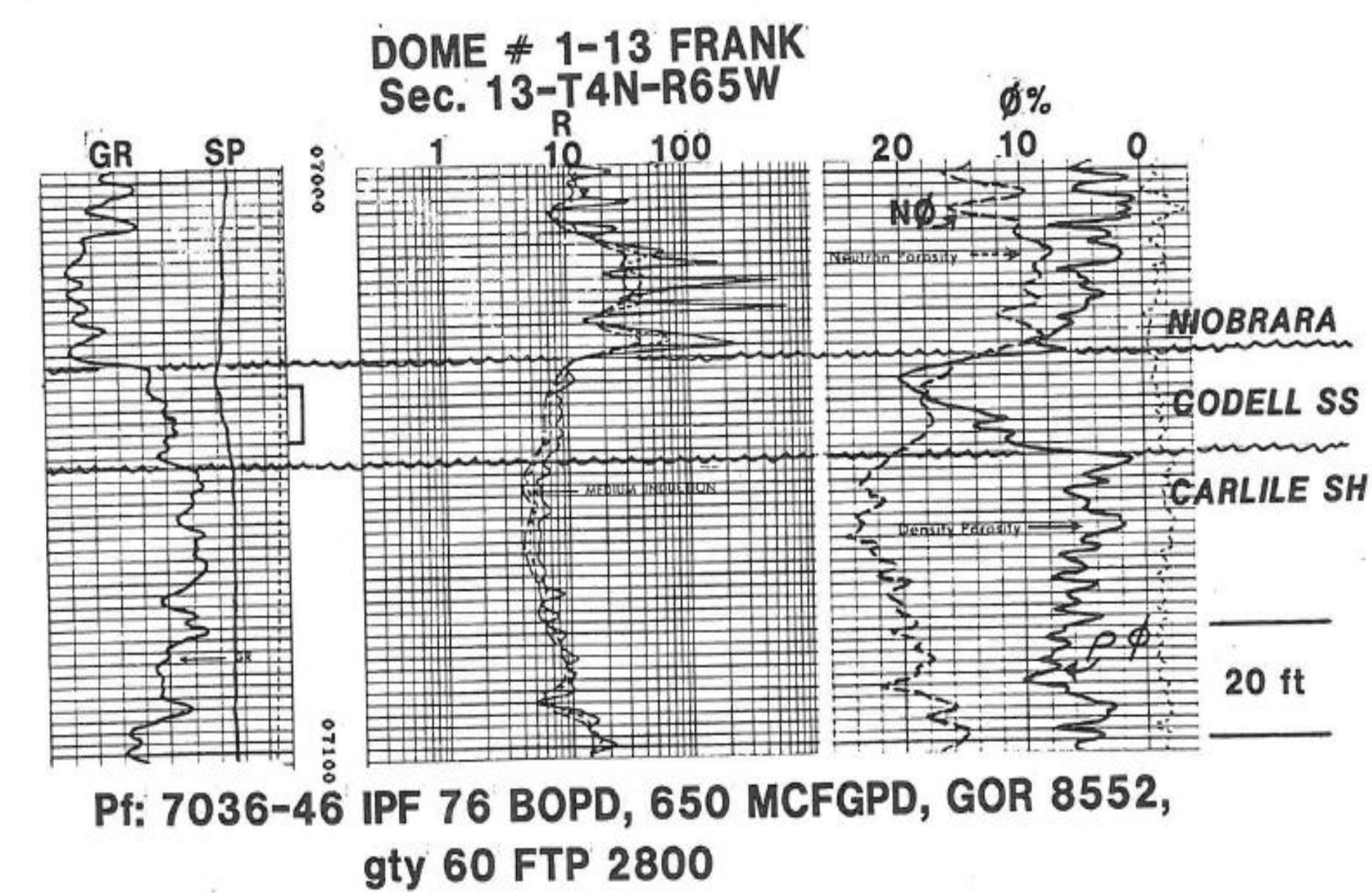
Isopach map of Codell Sandstone, Wattenberg Field. Contour interval is 5 feet.



West to east cross section across Wattenberg Field showing the Codell Sandstone and adjacent units.



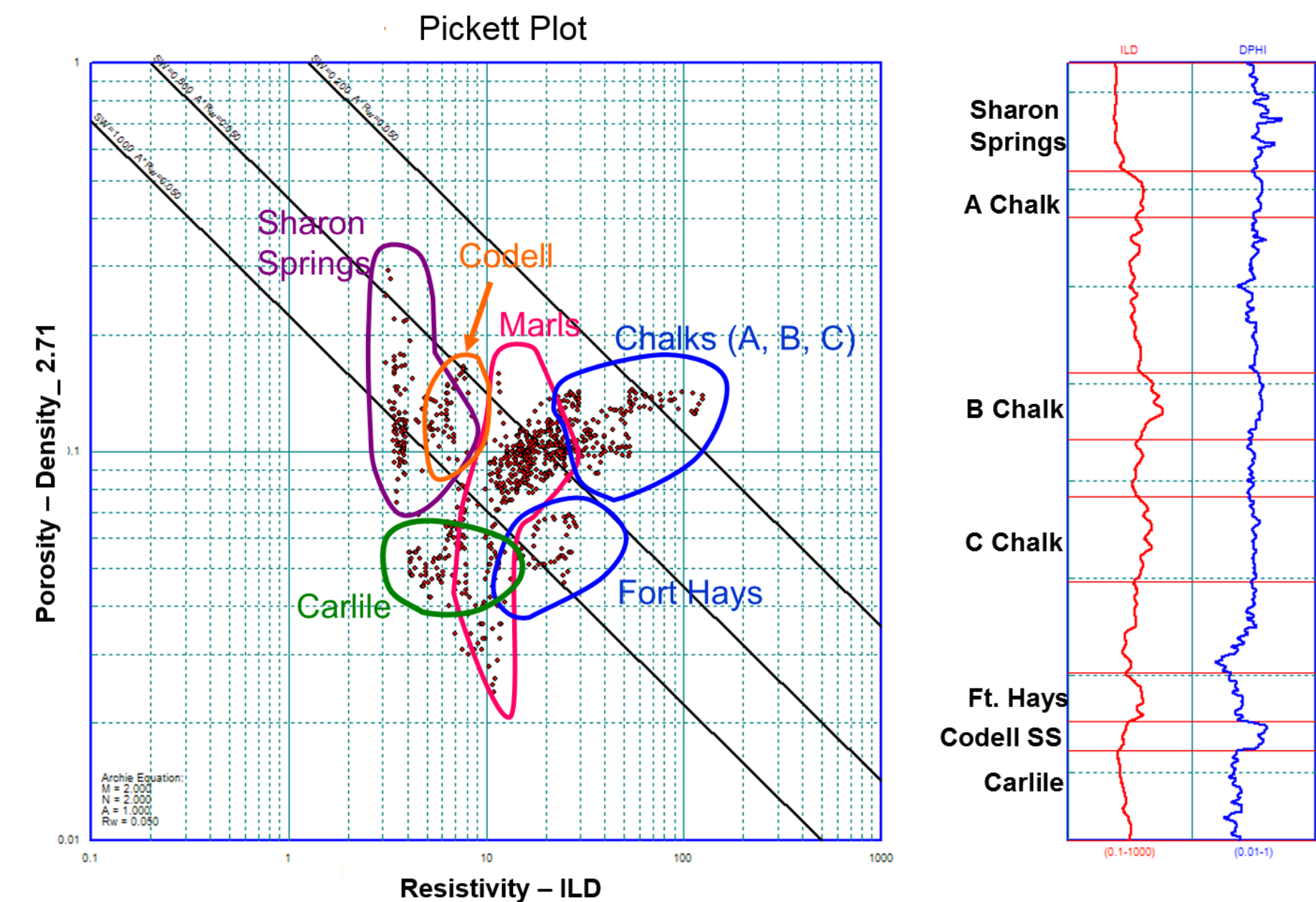
Isopach map of net sandstone in Codell interval defined by porosity greater than 10 percent. The highest net values occur on west side of map area.



Well log for the Codell Sandstone interval from a typical well in Wattenberg Field. The Codell Sandstone is a low resistivity, low contrast pay because of the clay and pyrite content of the sandstone.

Well Number:	Dome Franks #1-13		
Sample Depth:	7030'	7031.5'	7037'
Whole Rock Mineralogy			
Quartz	77	69	75
Potassium Feldspar	-	-	-
Plagioclase	6	7	7
Calcite	4	9	5
Siderite	-	-	tr
Pyrite	tr	tr	-
Illite-Smectite	11	12	9
Illite+Mica	2	2	2
Kaolin	tr	tr	tr
Chlorite	1	2	2
Relative Clay Abundance			
Illite-Smectite	77	75	70
Illite	11	14	15
Kaolin	2	1	-
Chlorite	9	11	14
% Smectite in Illite-Smectite	25-30	25-30	20-25

XRD analysis of the Codell Sandstone from the Dome # 1-13 Frank well (see figure 7). The Codell is a clay-rich, highly quartzose, bioturbated sandstone in the Wattenberg area. From USGS CRC.



Pickett plot of Niobrara and Codell illustrating petrophysical analysis suggesting that Codell is wet.

Dome Frank  
13-T4N-R65W  
Permeability Data  
2700 psi  
Net Effective Stress

Depth:	Perm (md)
7030	0.000661
7031.5	0.000299
7037	0.000779

USGS CRC DATA

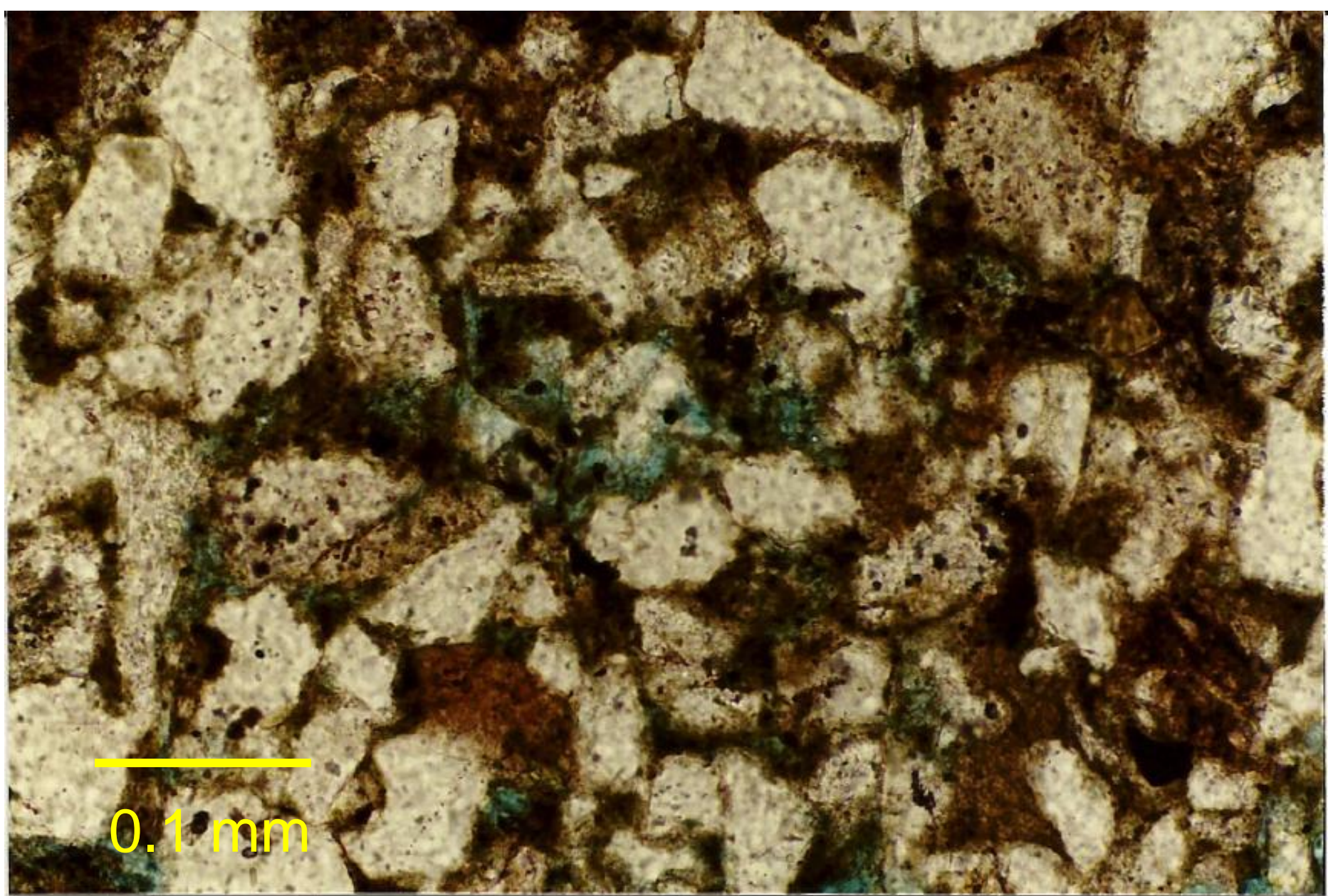
Permeability data from Codell Sandstone, Dome Frank well.



Core photos of from the Dome #1-13 Frank core. The Codell Sandstone is a bioturbated, silty, clay-rich sandstone. From USGS CRC, 2013.

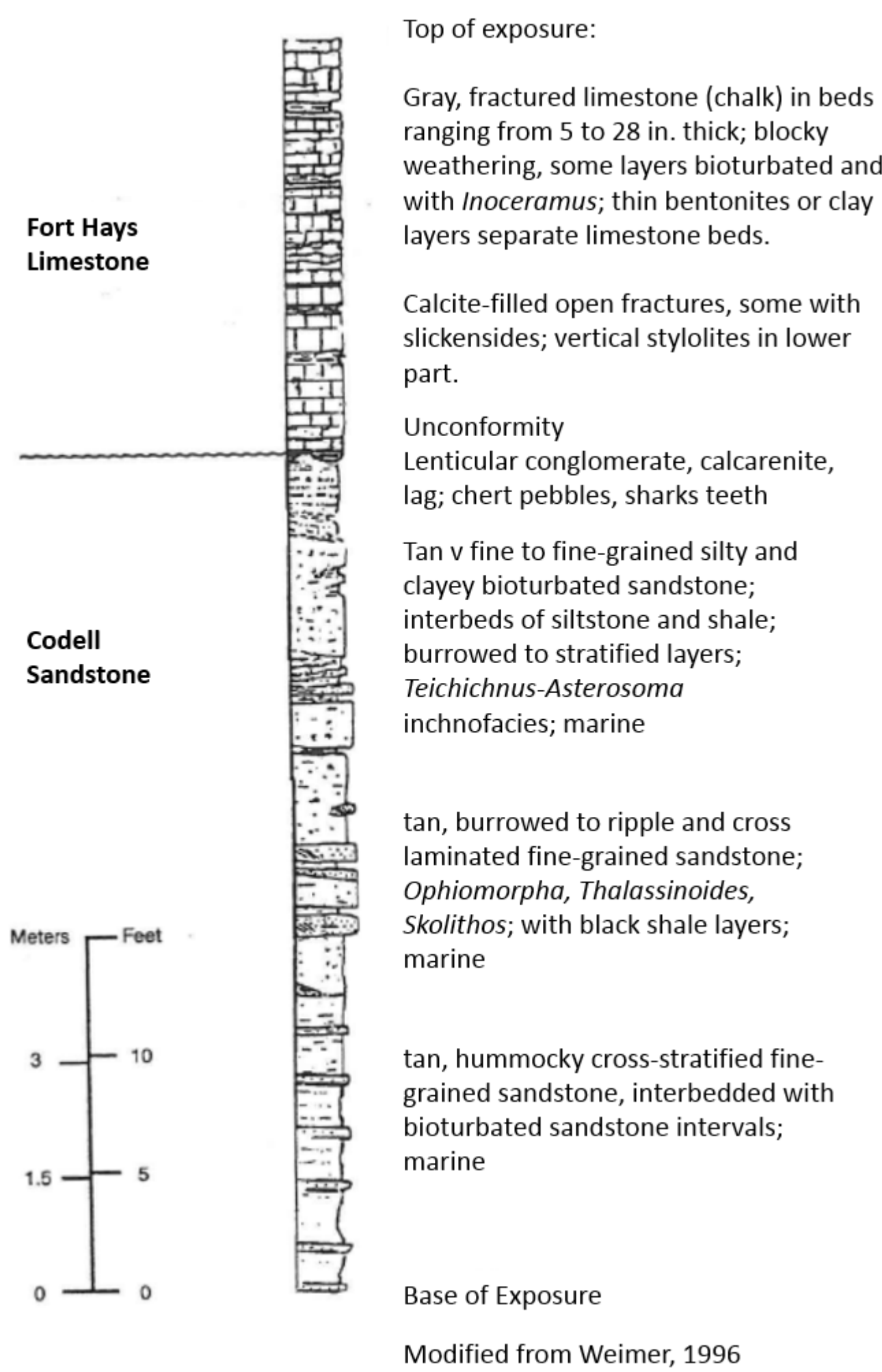
### Petrographic Analysis

- Moderately well sorted, very fine- to fine-grained sublitharenites and subarkose
- Slight to moderate compaction
- Ductile deformation of incompetent grains
- Partial dissolution of chert, and mica
- Porosity and permeability inhibiting cements include: Mixed layer illite/smectite, illite, chlorite, quartz overgrowths, and calcite



Plain polarized light photomicrograph, Codell Sandstone. Note fine-grained nature of sandstone, and porosity development in blue.

*"More than 80% of the porosity has pore throats smaller than 0.25  $\mu$ m in diameter, which by all standards, is a micro-sized pore throat. Traditional sandstone pore throats are larger than 5  $\mu$ m, while siltstone pore throats are larger than 2  $\mu$ m" Pagano, 2006*

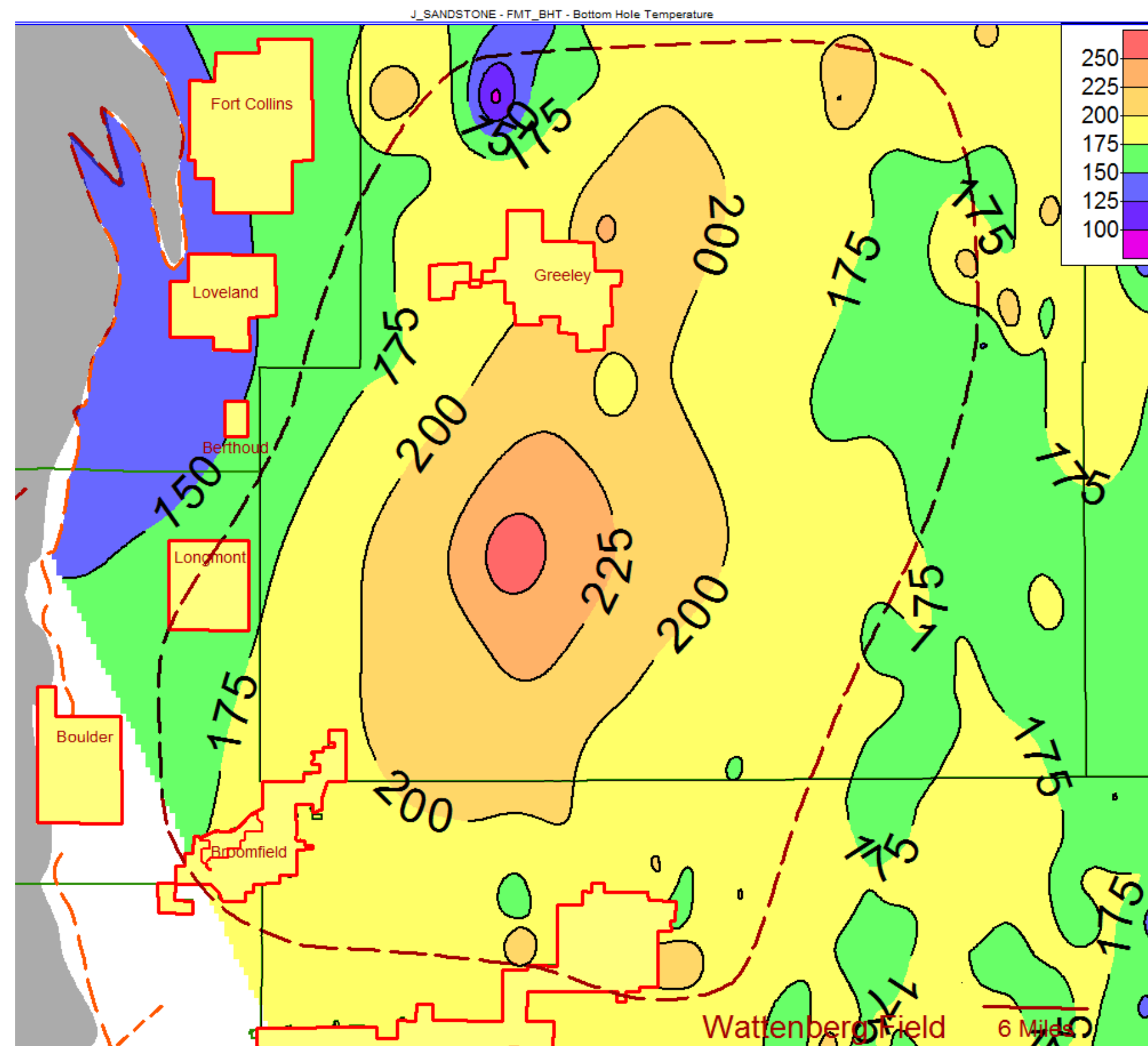


Outcrop description of Codell Sandstone, HW 36, north of Boulder, CO.

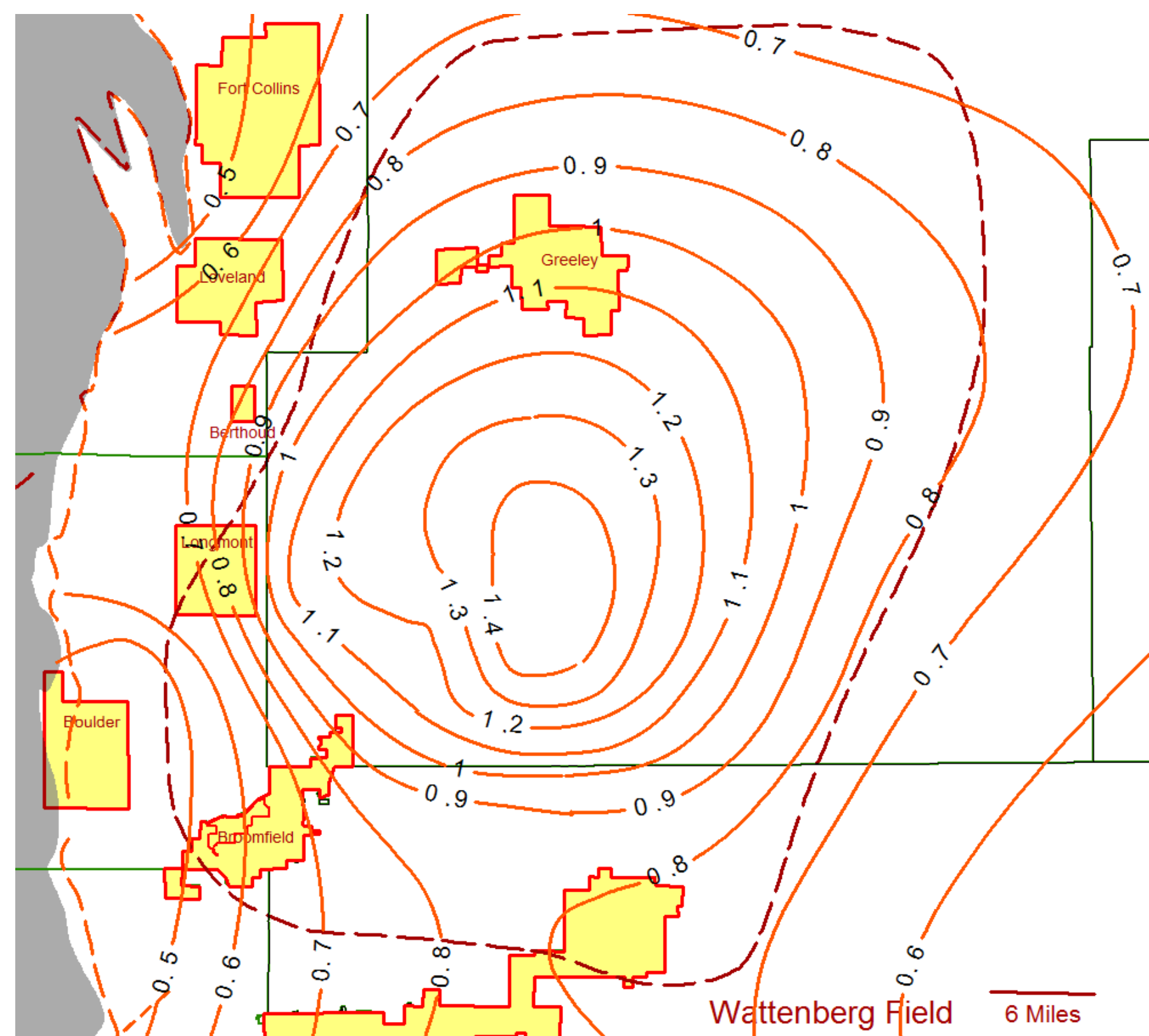


# Codell Sandstone, Denver Basin

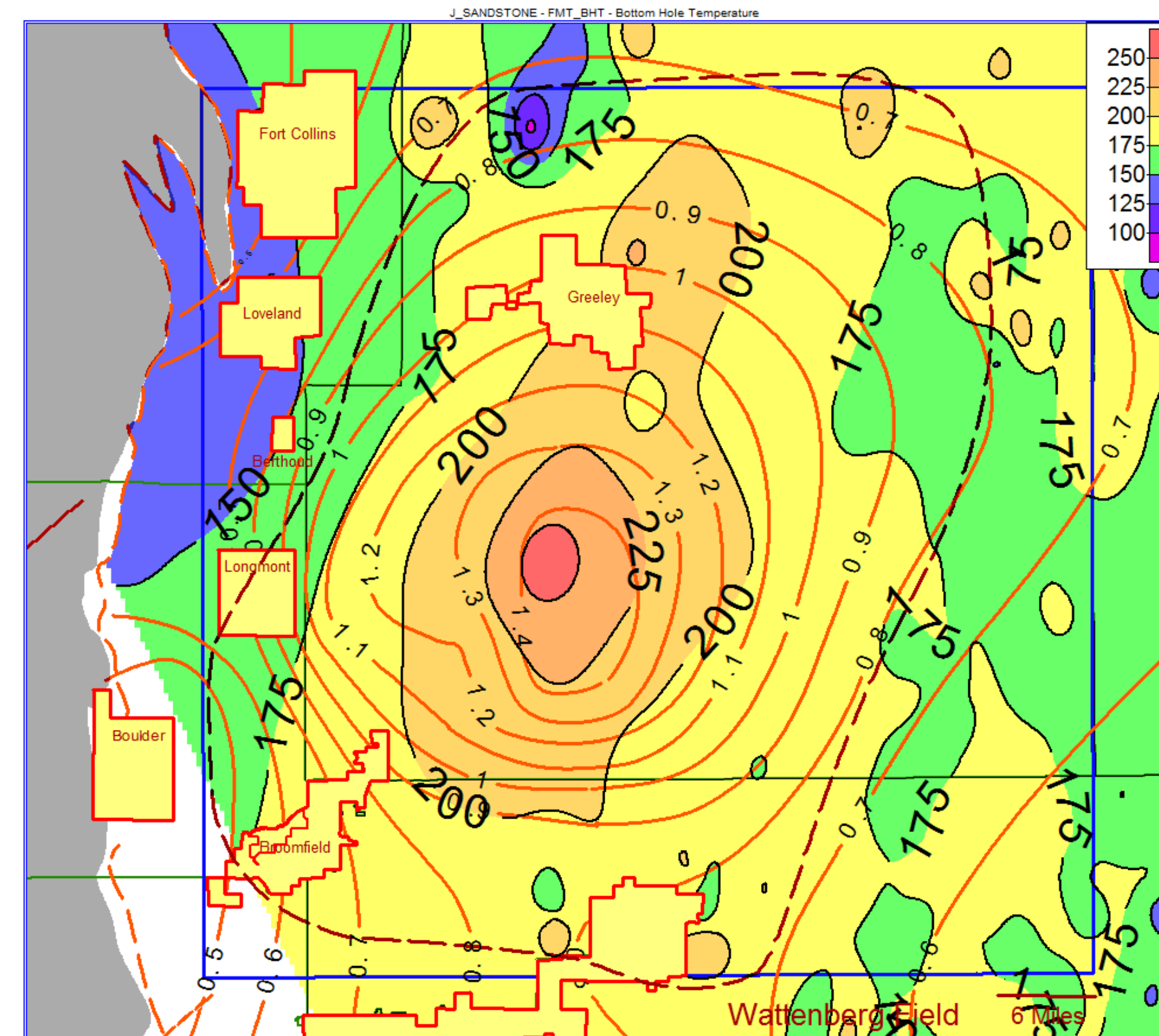
## 4



Bottom hole temperature map, J Sandstone, Wattenberg Field.



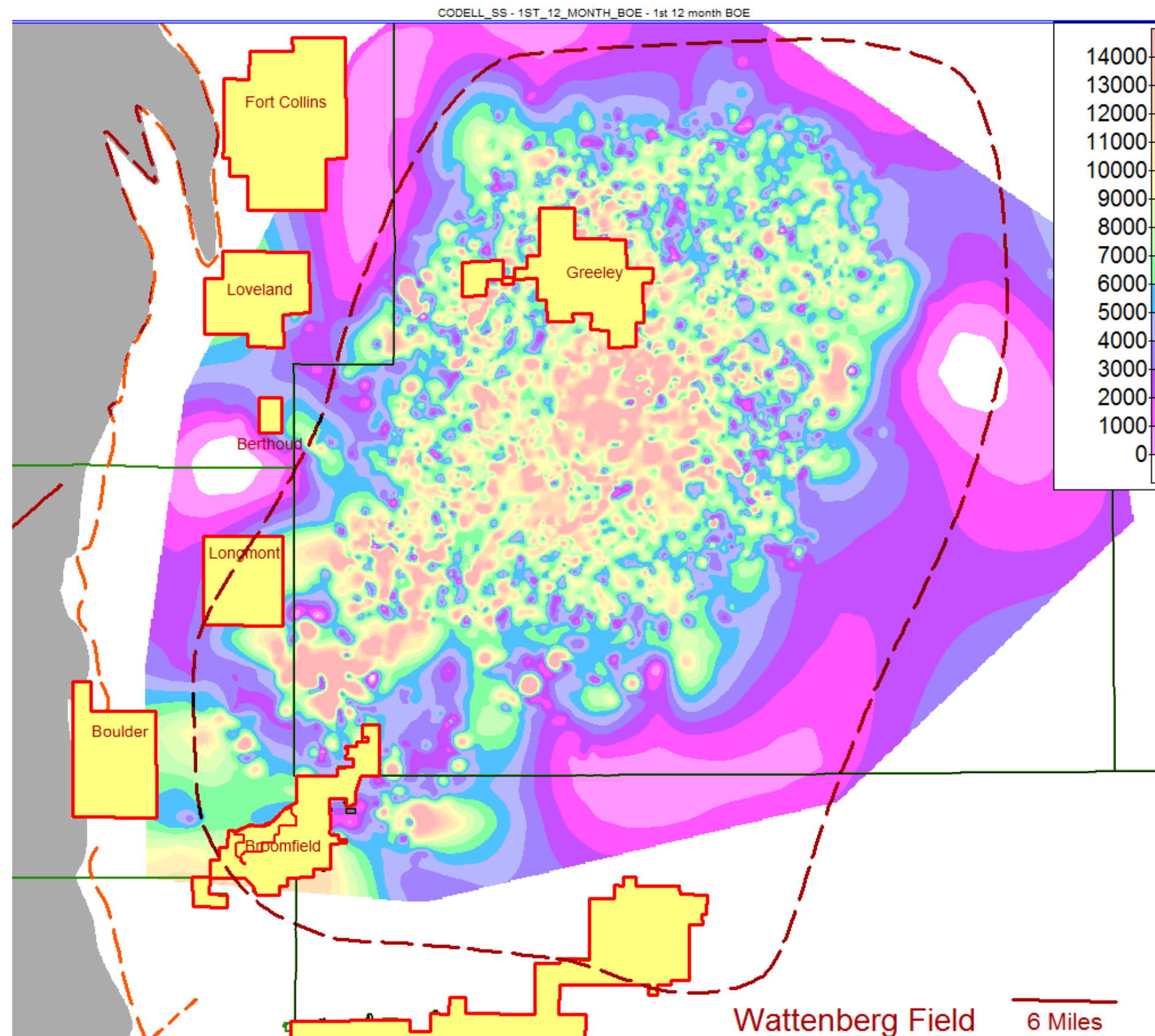
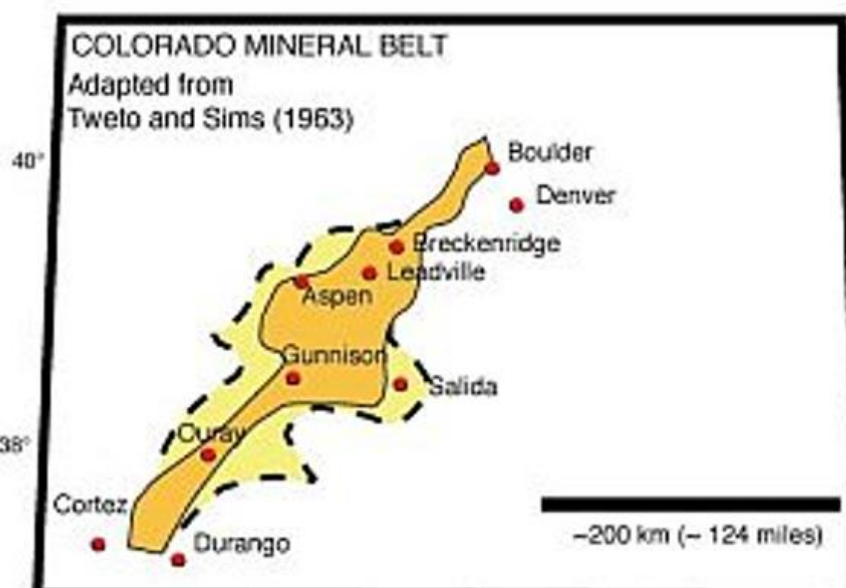
Vitrinite reflectance map, J Sandstone, from Higley and Cox, 2007



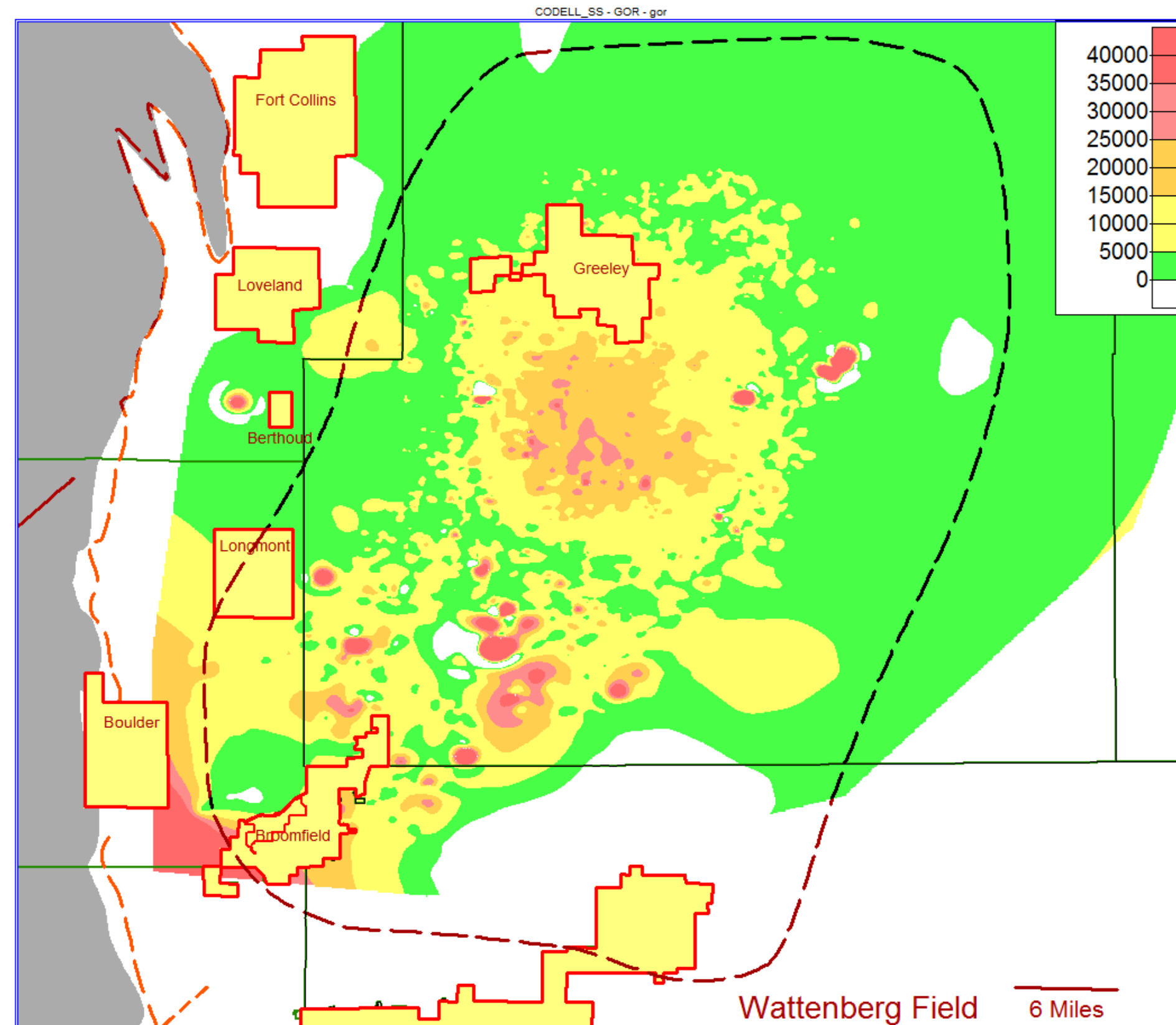
Iso-temperature from J Sandstone DST's and vitrinite reflectance contours for J Sandstone. Temperatures range from less than 175 °F to over 250 °F. Contour interval for bottom hole temperatures is 25 degrees. Vitrinite reflectance contours range from 0.5 to 1.4 percent. Contour interval for vitrinite reflectance 0.1.

## Wattenberg Thermal Anomaly

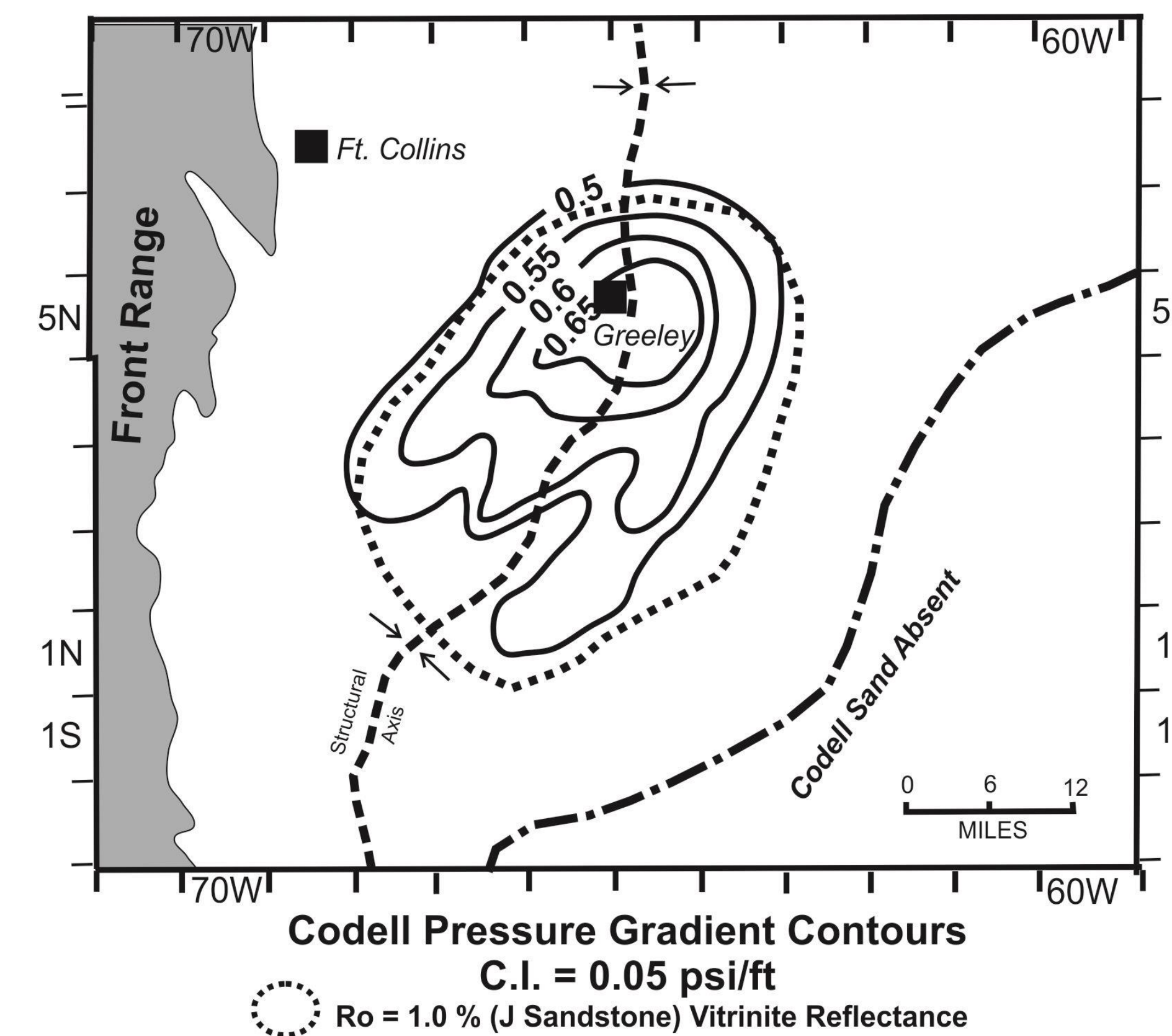
- Related to igneous masses in basement (?)
- Located where CMB intersects Denver Basin
- Direct temperature measurements
- Ro values
- GORs



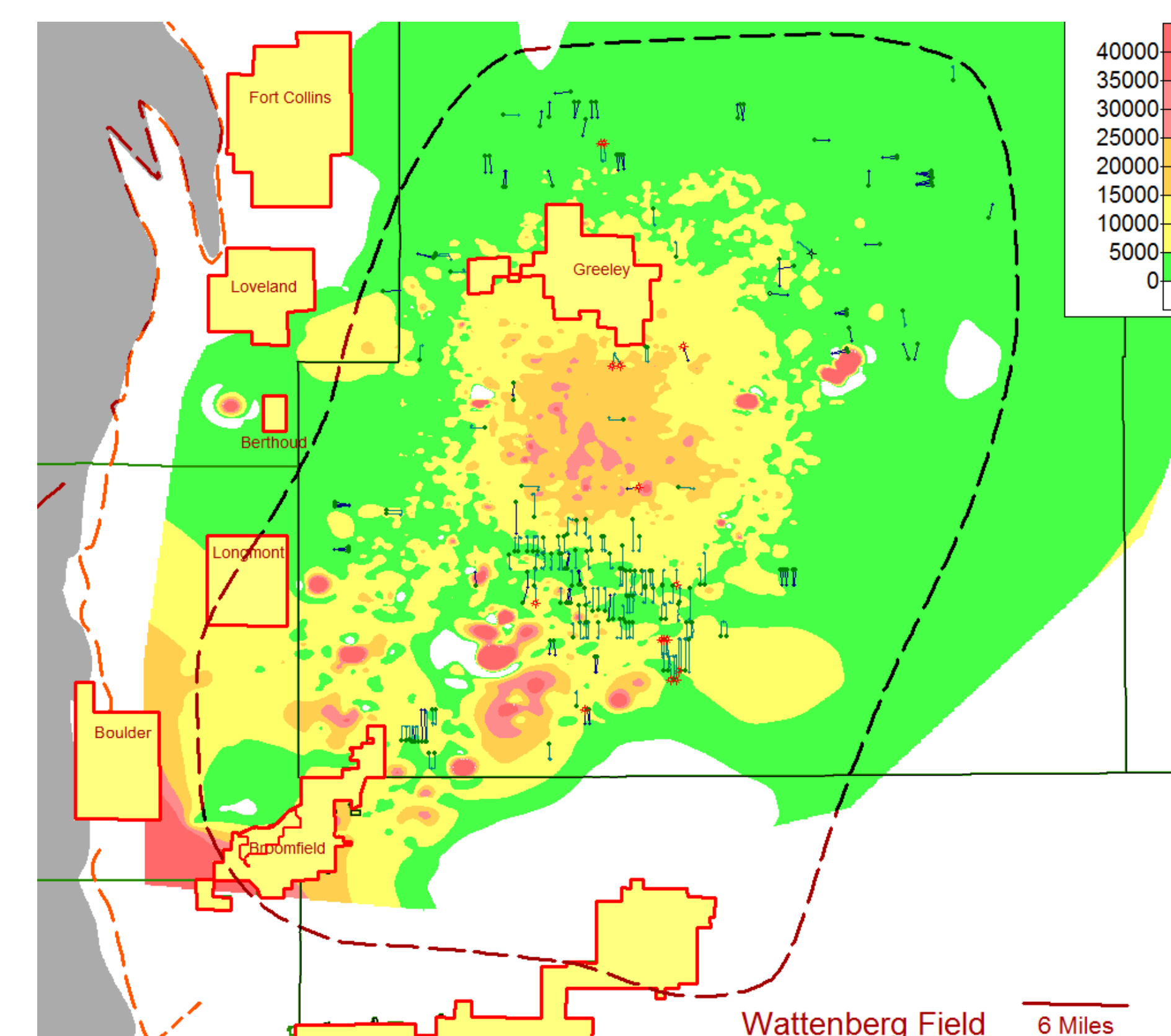
Barrels of oil equivalent production map for Codell Sandstone for first 12 months production. The production sweet spot areas are shown by yellow and red colors.



Gas oil ratio map for Codell producers. Note the high GOR area south of Greeley.



Codell pressure gradient contour map for Wattenberg Field (from Birminham, 2001). Highest pressures coincide with highest temperatures and highest GOR areas.



Location of some of the new horizontal Codell wells drilled from 2011 to P. Most wells are located in liquid-rich areas or areas flanking the high GOR area.

## SUMMARY

The Codell Sandstone in the Wattenberg Field is a tight unconventional reservoir.

Geologic factors important for production include: proximity to thermally mature source beds; geothermal gradients; pressure gradients; fault bounded reservoir compartments; gas-oil ratios; sufficient reservoir quality (phi-h).

Drainage areas for Codell wells is quite small. Refracs of the Codell have proven to be highly successful in many areas of Wattenberg Field. Horizontal drilling and multistage fracture stimulation is now being utilized in Wattenberg development.

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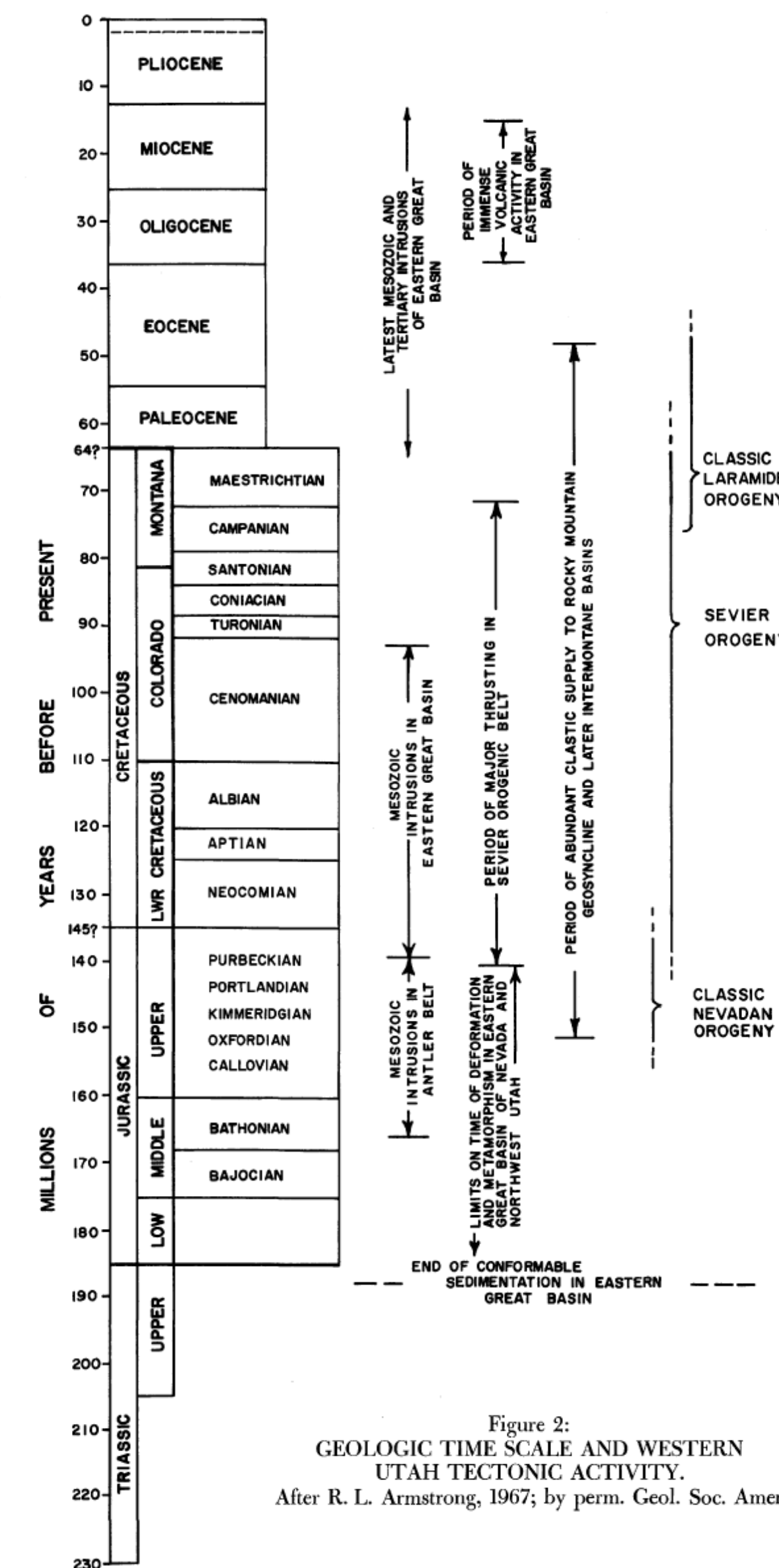
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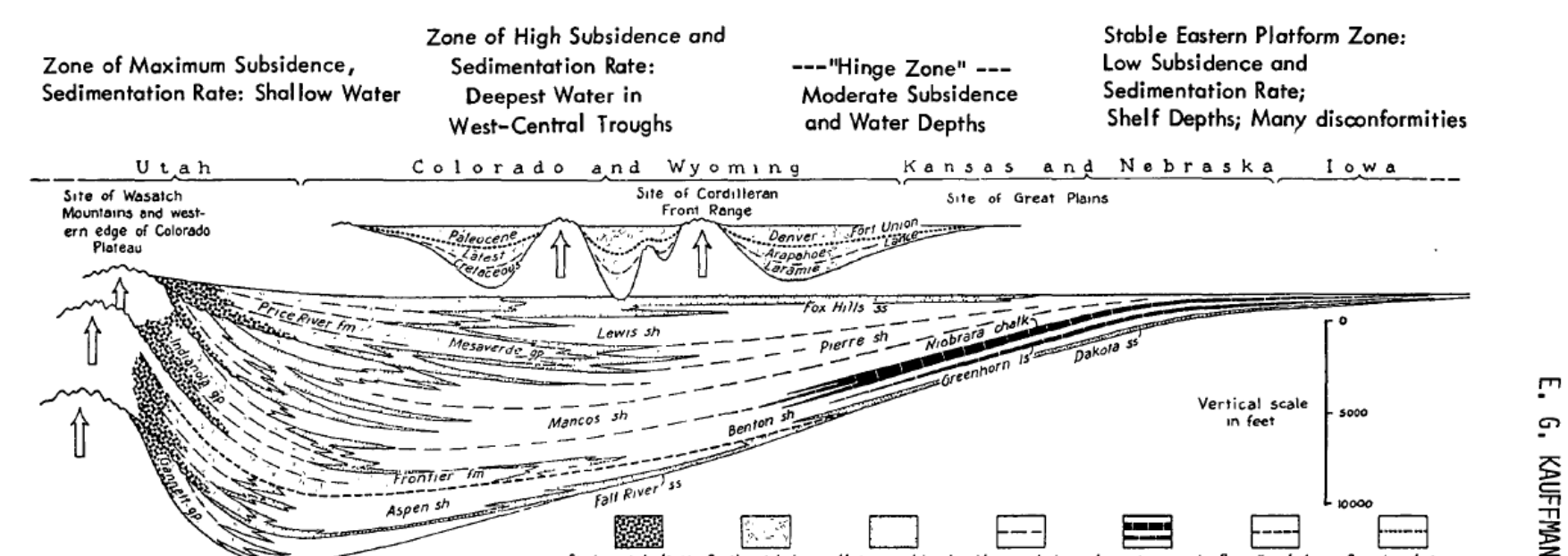
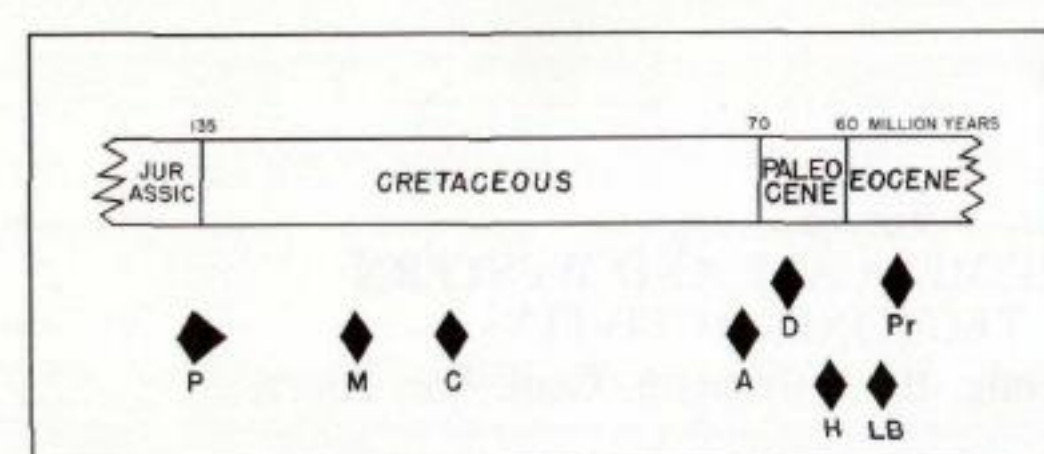
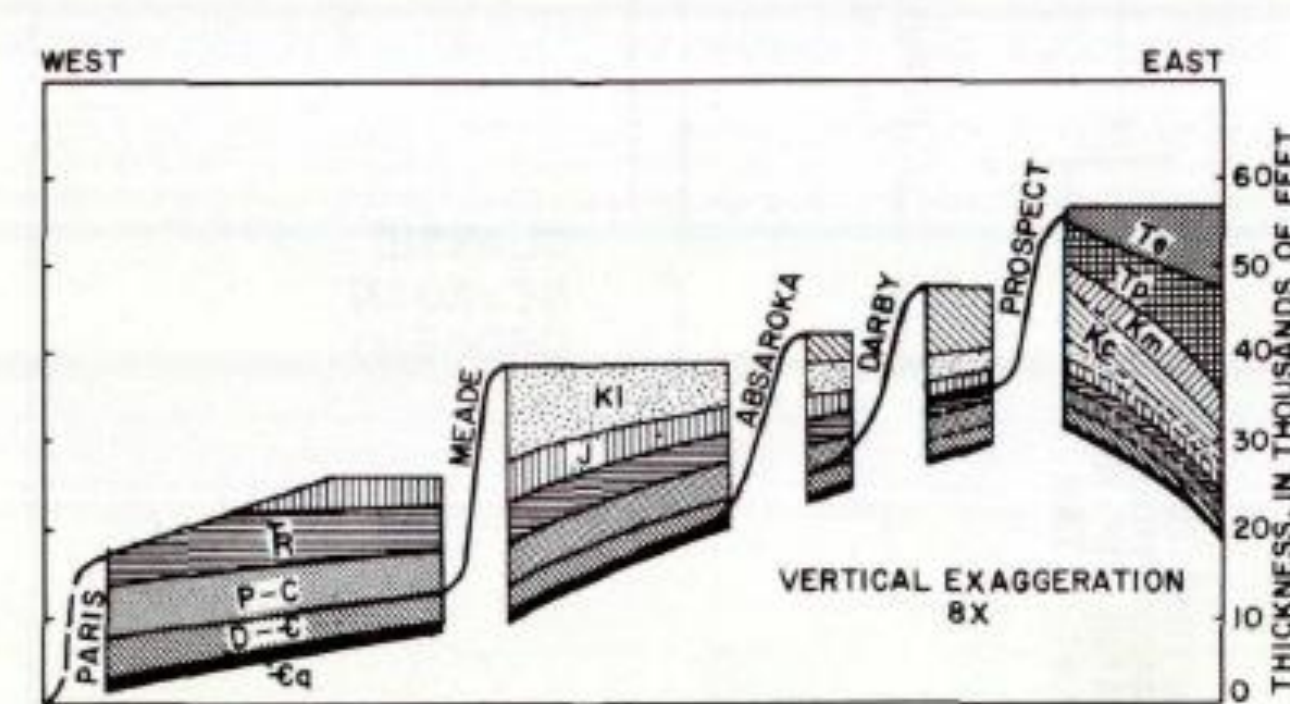
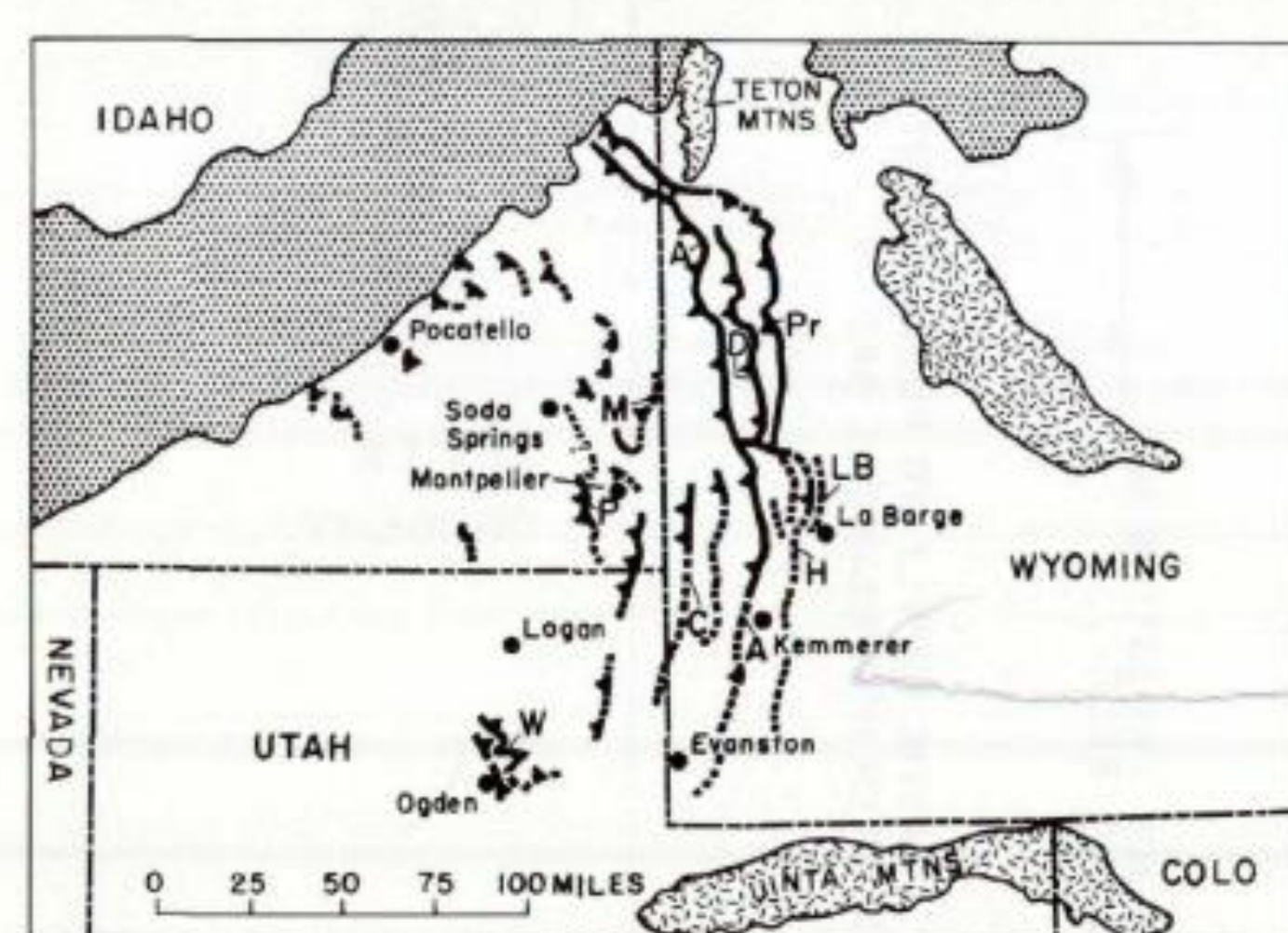
# The Codell Regressive Sandstone Event

## Thrust belt movement, sea level changes, paleogeography diagrams

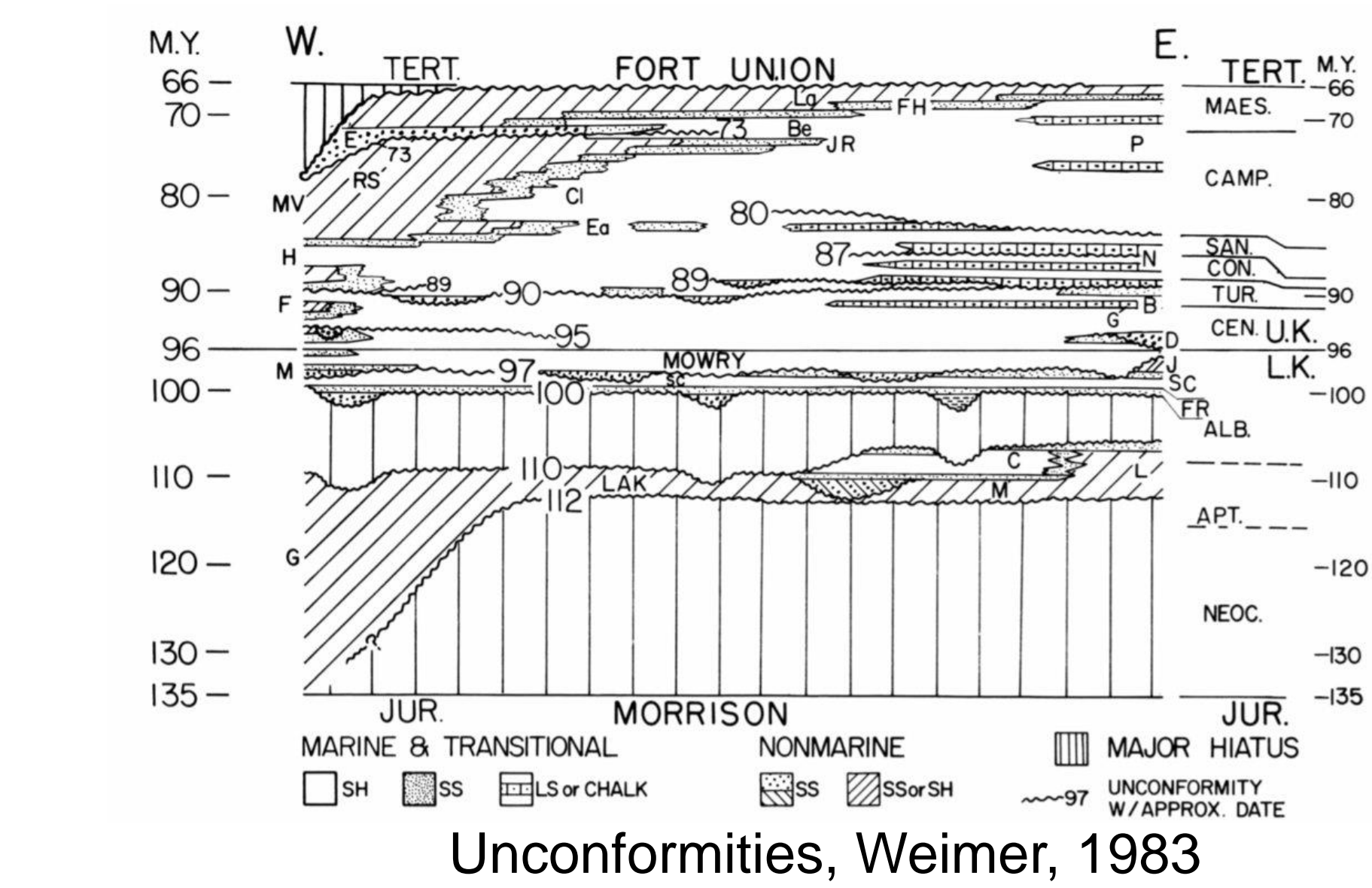
### Thrust Belt Tectonics



RMAG, 1972

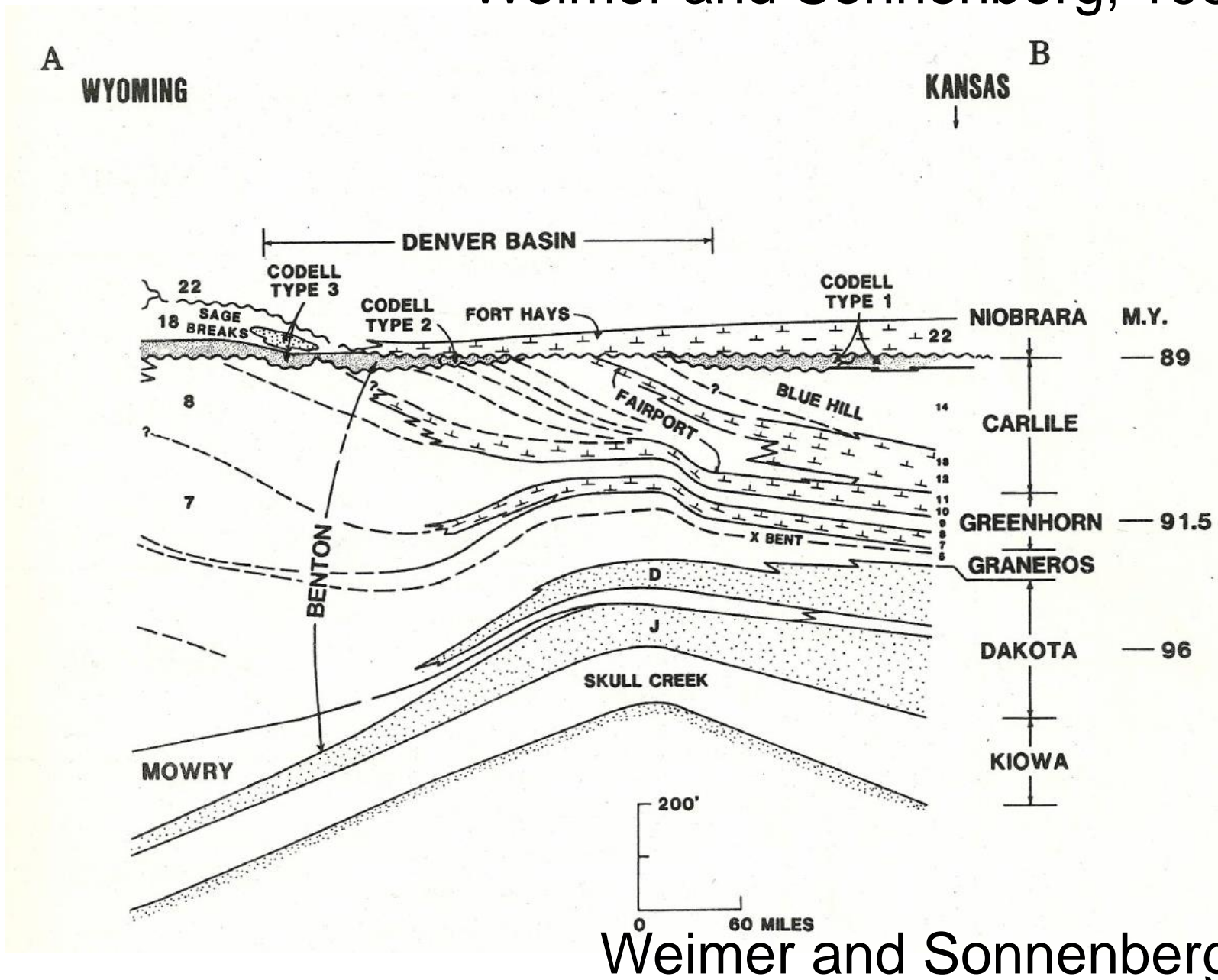
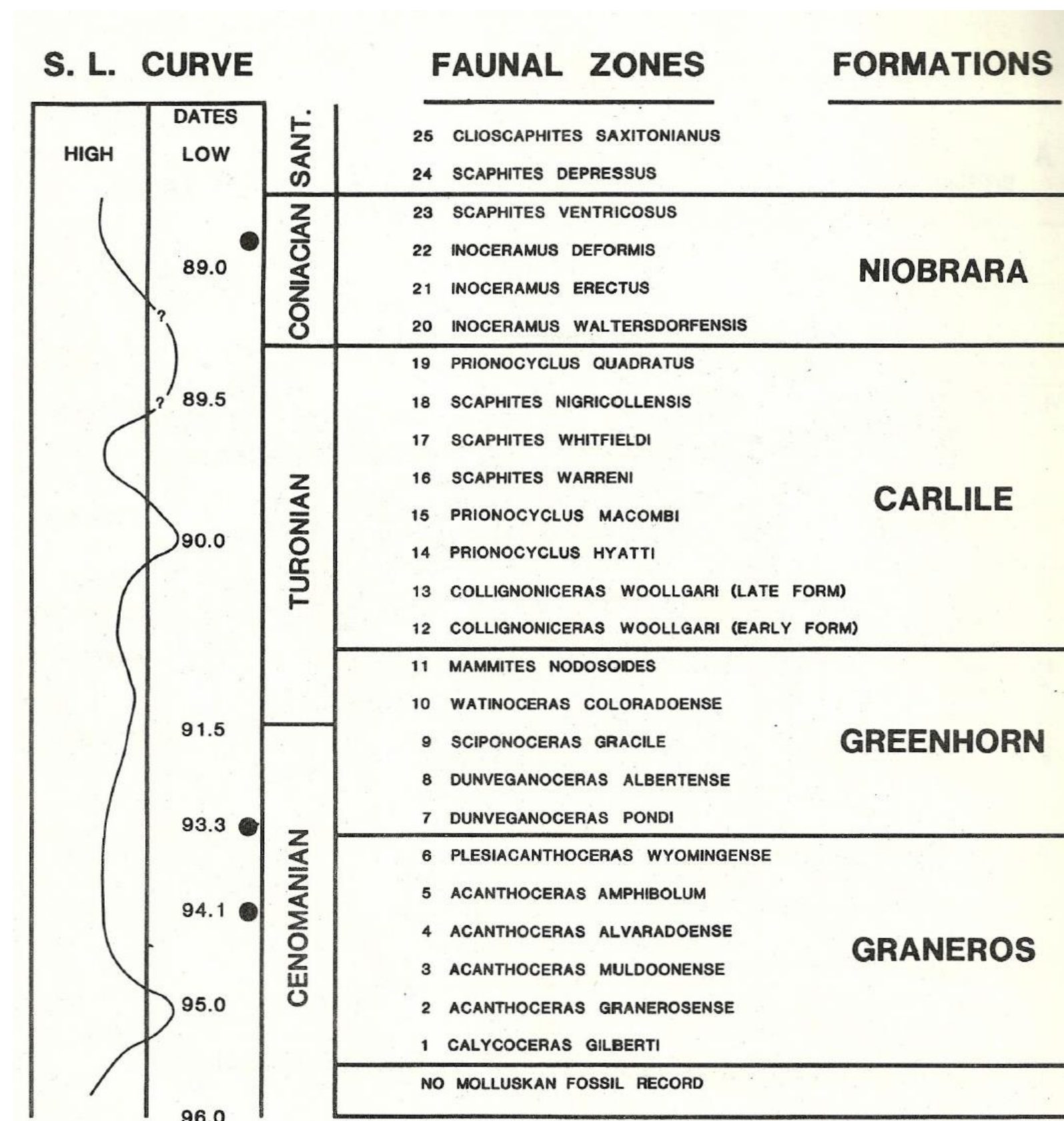


### Unconformities and Sea Level Changes

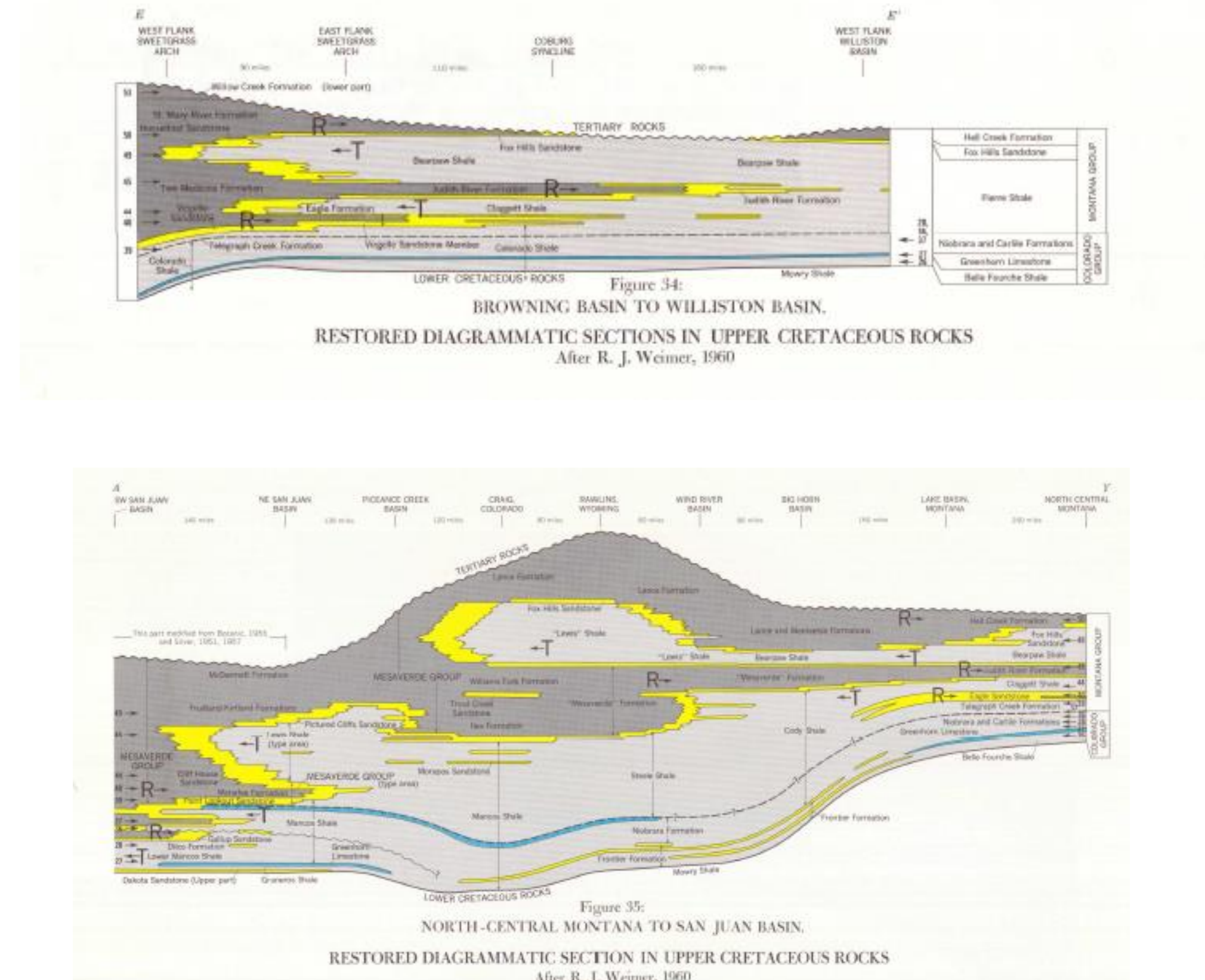
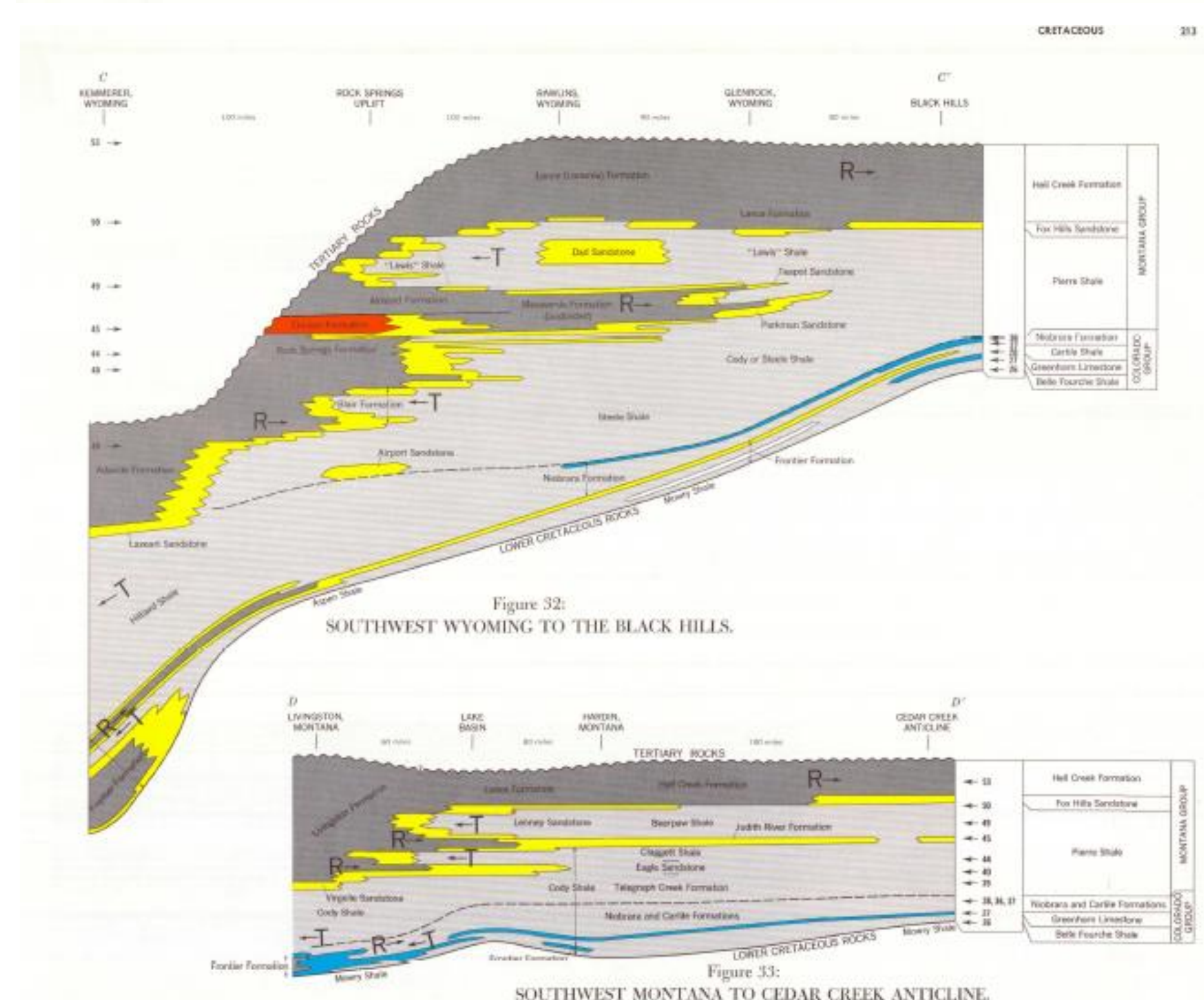
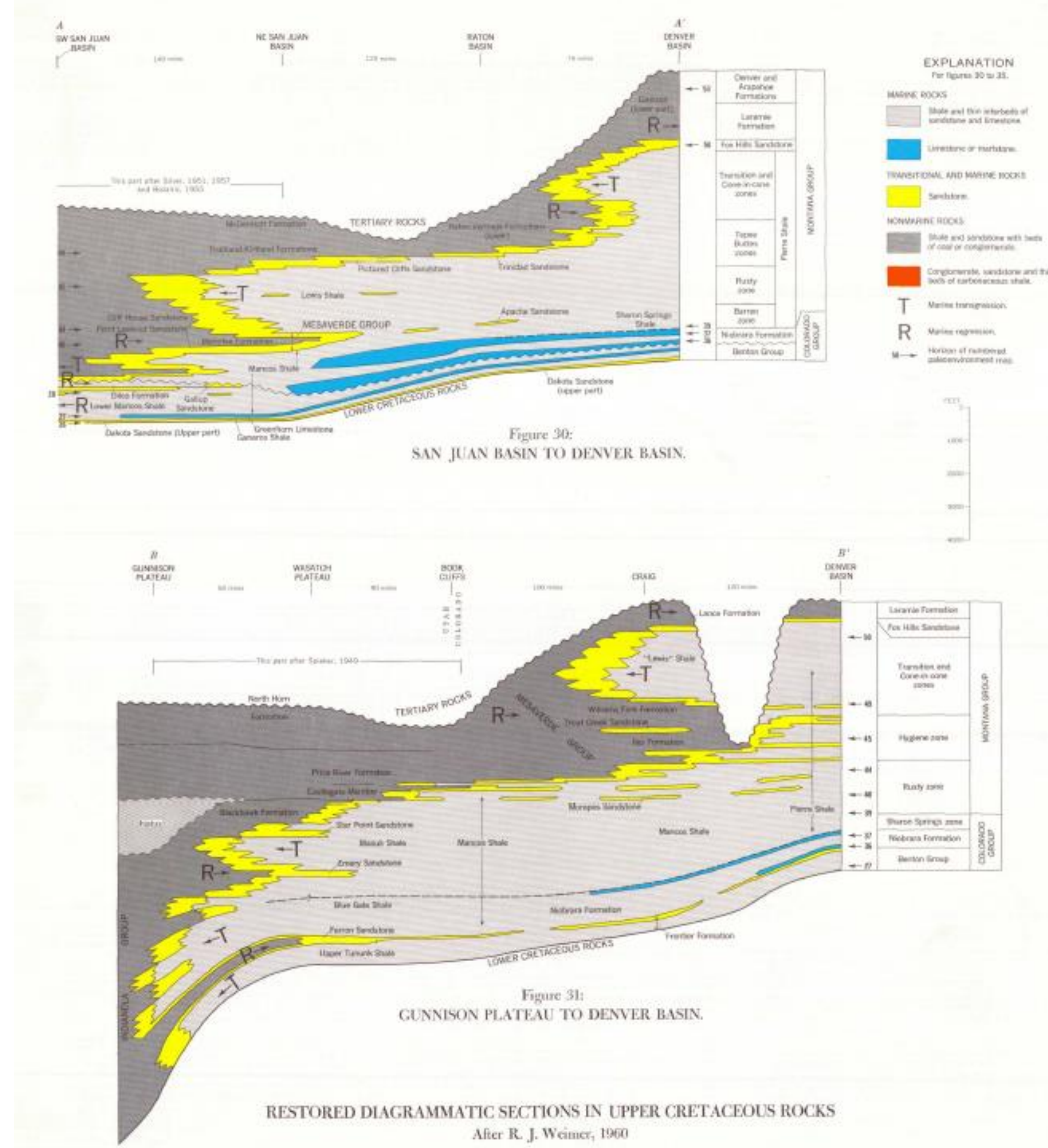


Niobrara  
Codell  
Greenhorn

Transgressions and regressions, from Longman et al., 1998 after Kauffman & Caldwell, 1993

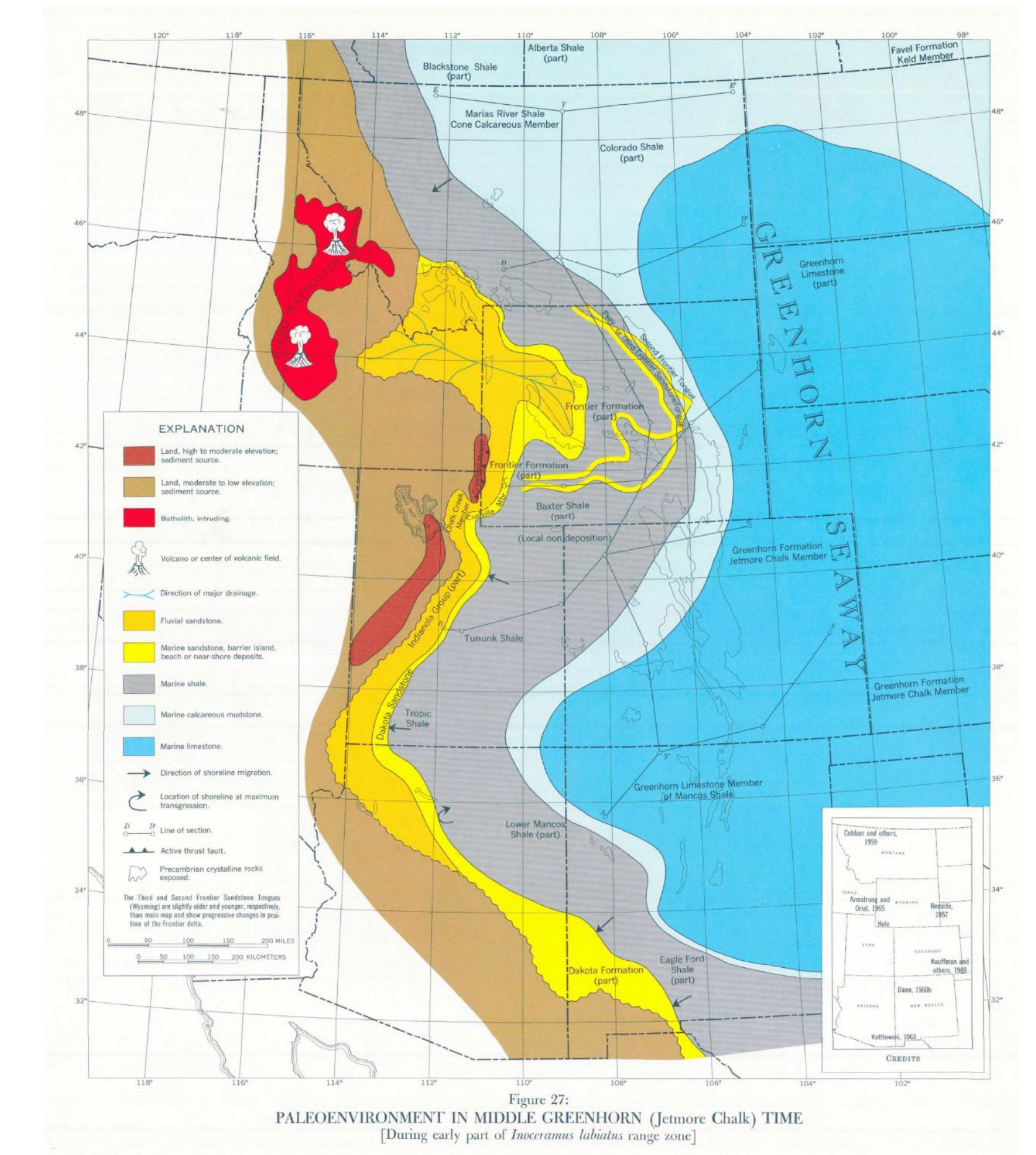


### Weimer Cross Sections, from RMAG Atlas, 1972

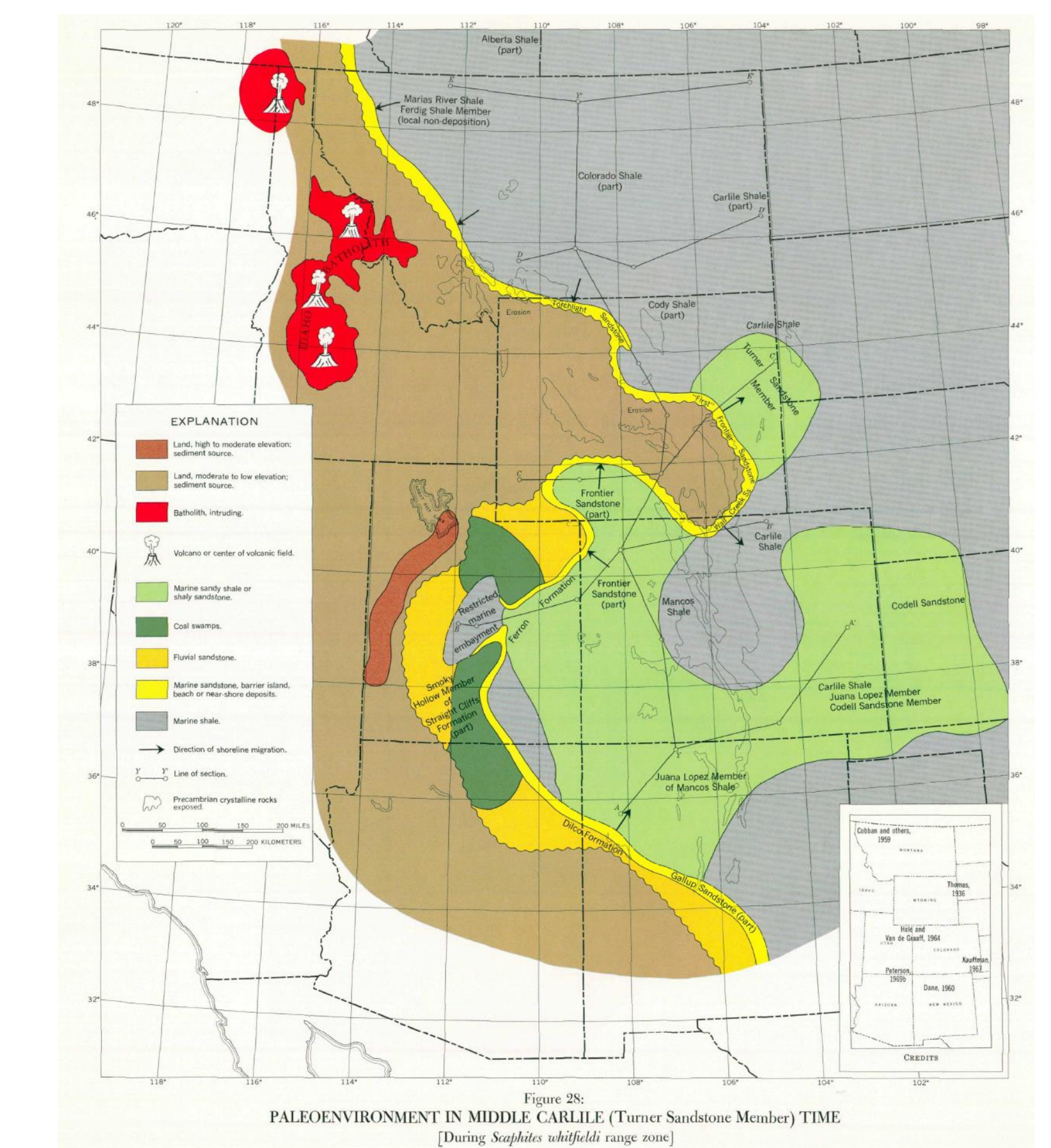


RMAG, 1972

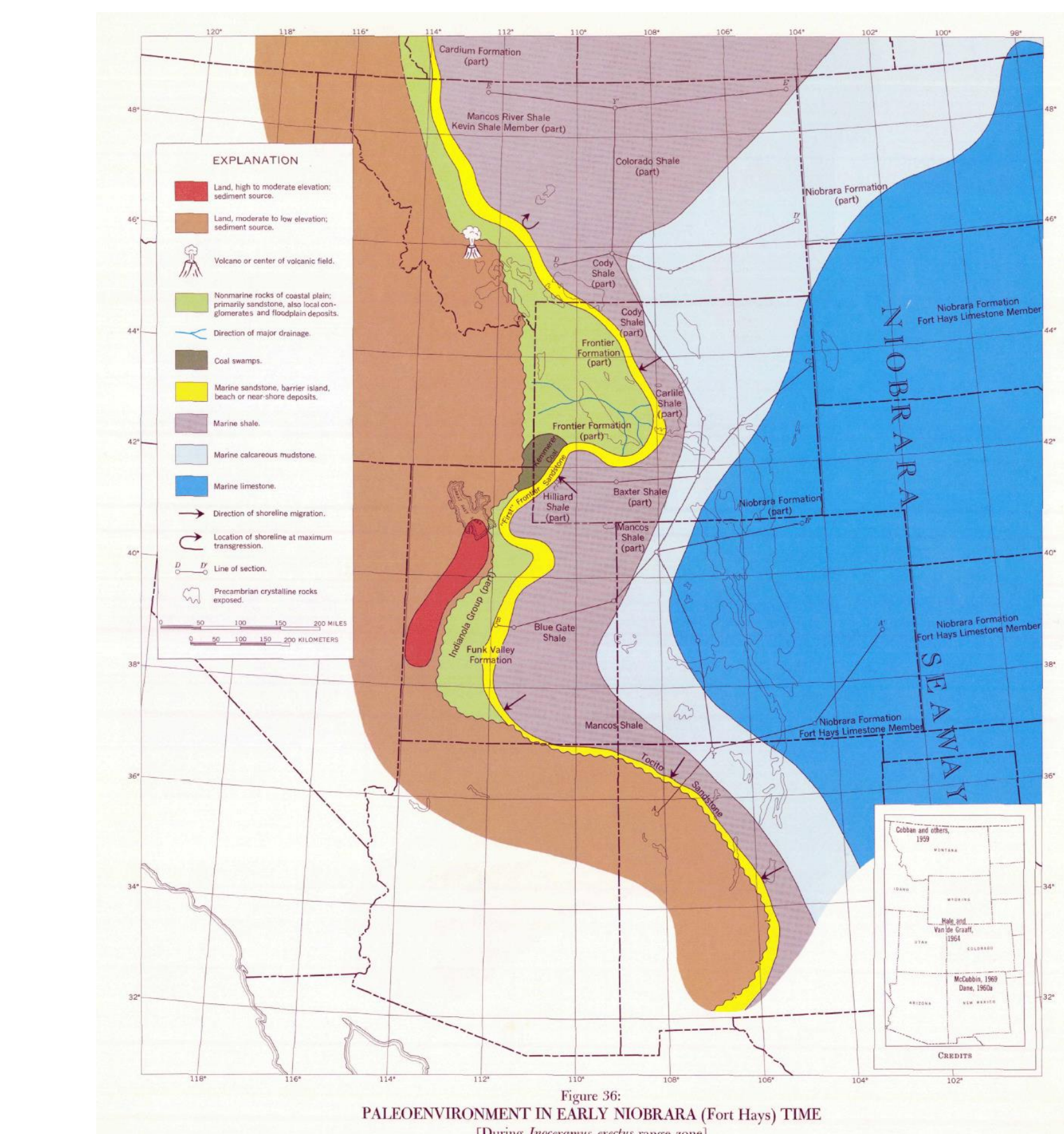
### Paleogeography diagrams, from RMAG Atlas, 1972



RMAG, 1972



RMAG, 1972



RMAG, 1972



# Codell Refracs

## Over 4,000 in Wattenberg Field

### REFRACS

Concepts advanced to why refracs work in the Codell

1. Improved completion and stimulation practices
2. Extension of existing fracture half-lengths leading to increased reservoir drainage
3. Reorientation of hydraulic fractures leading to increased reservoir drainage
4. Combination of 2 and 3 above

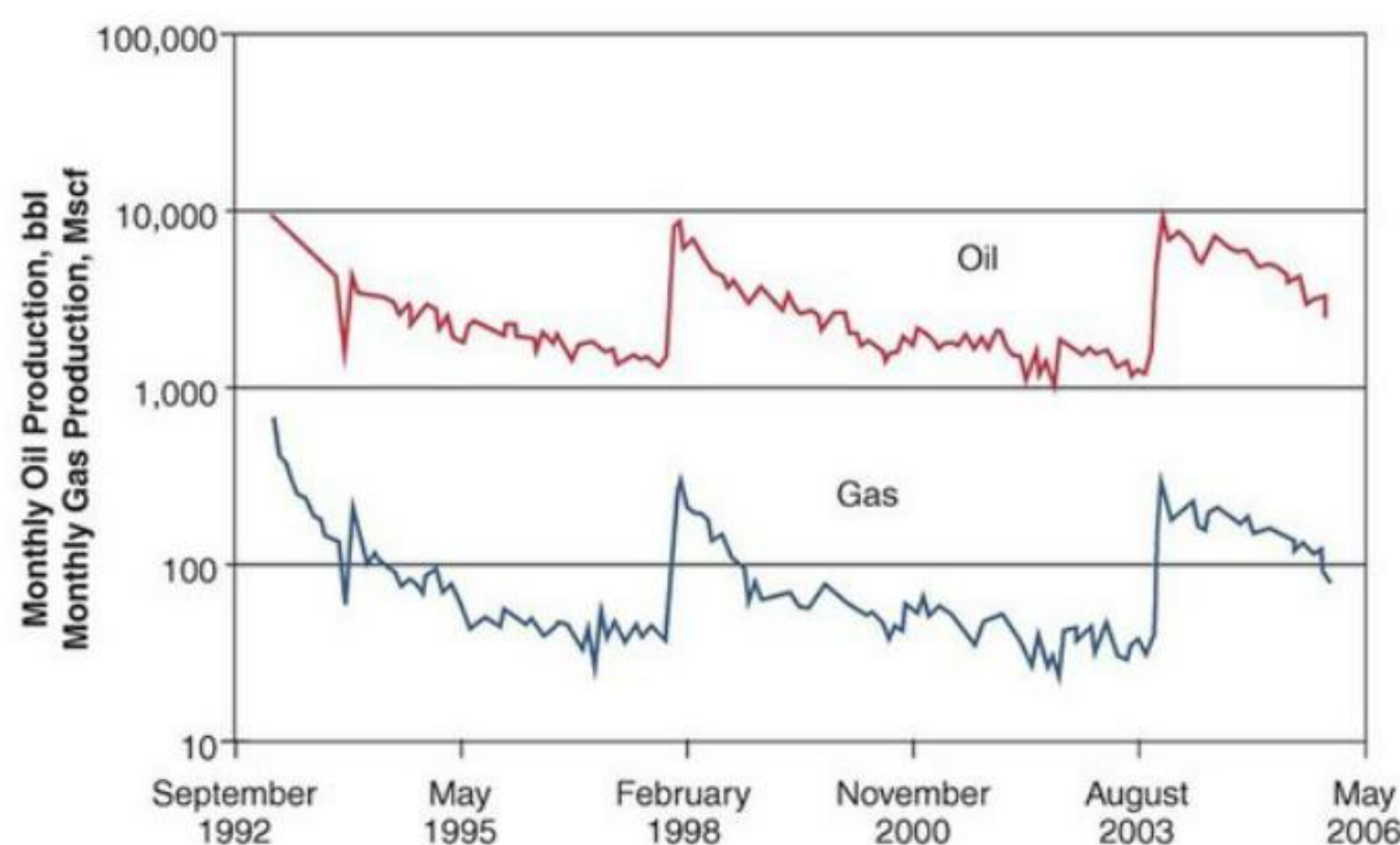
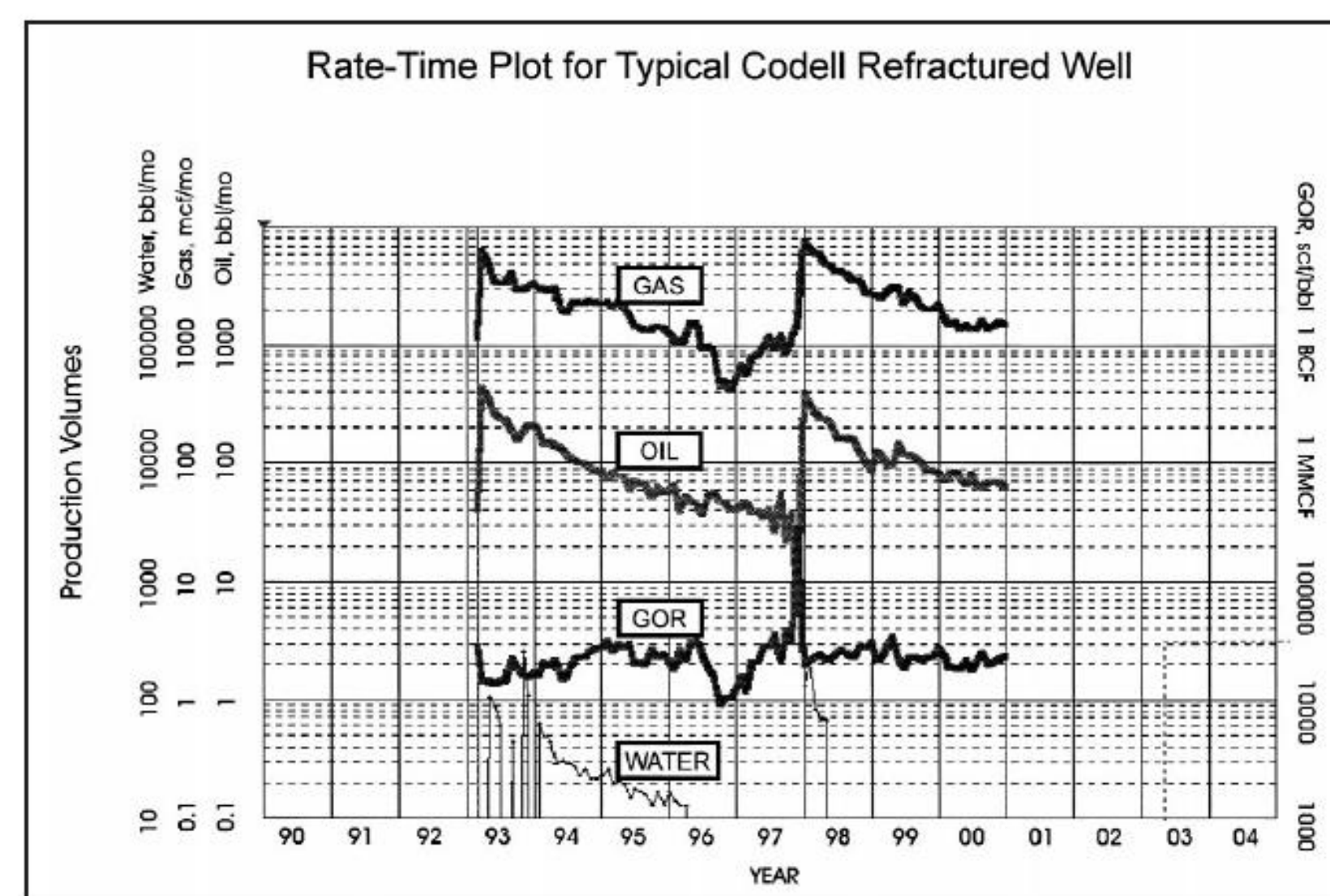


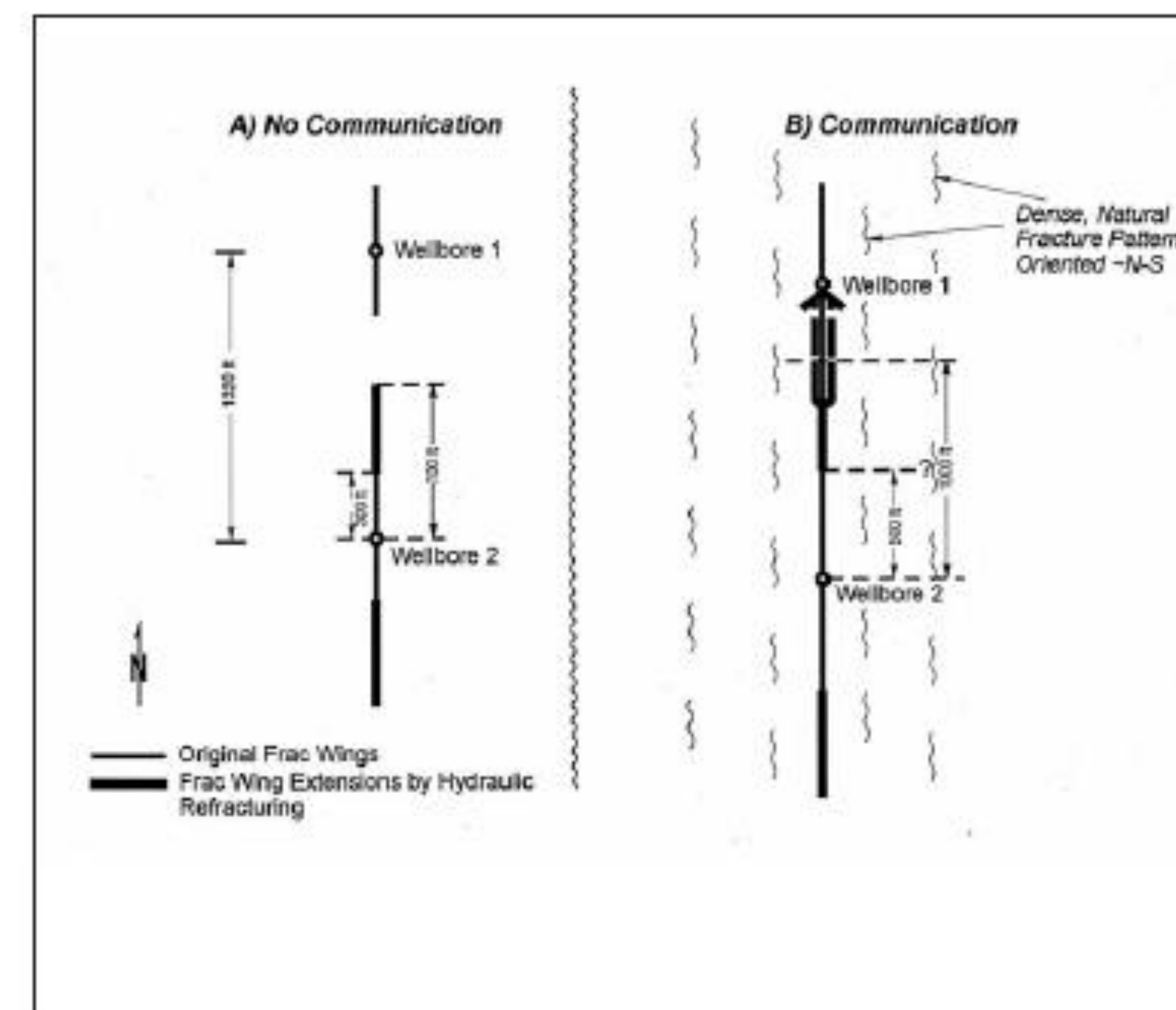
Fig. 4—Production after initial treatment, refracture, and trifracture of Codell interval (Pagano 2006).

Why do refracs work? (mechanisms)  
From Vincent, 2014

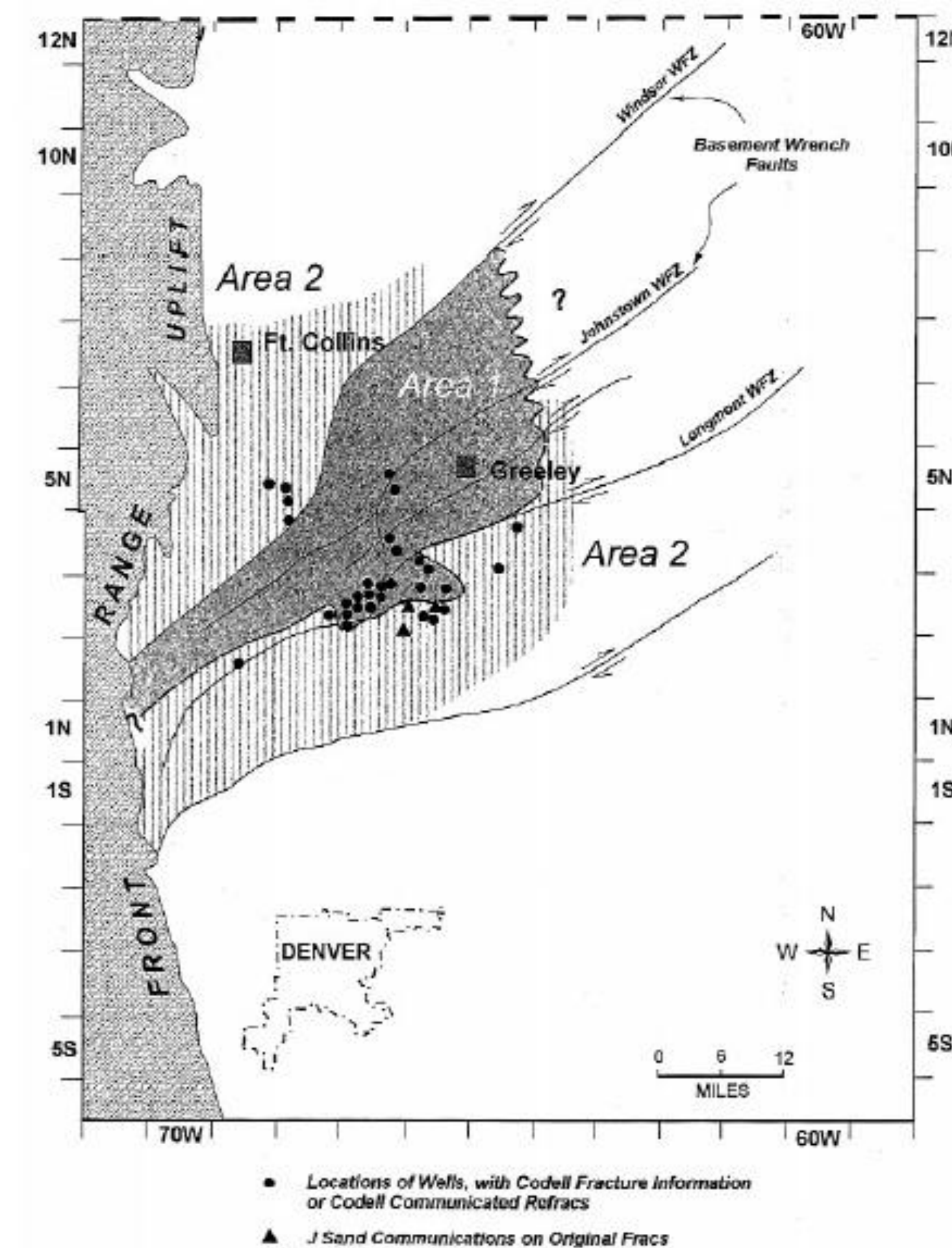
- Enlarged frac (more reservoir contact)
- Improved pay coverage in vertical wells
- Better lateral coverage in horizontal wells
- Increased frac conductivity
- Restore conductivity lost – frac degradation
- Address unpropped poorly propped portions
- Improved wellbore-to-frac connection/conductivity
- Reorientation
- Use of more suitable frac fluids
- Re-energizing natural fissures
- Other mechanisms

### Extension of existing fracture half-lengths

Typical refrac design: 260,000 lbs proppant and 135,000 gals cross-linked gel performed to reduce screen-out risk and maximize fracture half-length; From Birmingham et al., 2001



Hydraulic fracture and refracture wing diagram for Codell reservoir (Birmingham et al., 2001)



Hydraulic fracturing and refracturing communication directions between wells parallel natural fracture orientations. Data for Codell (based on FMS information and communicated wells) and J Sandstone (communicated wells only). Area 1 N-S orientation; Area 2 E-W orientation. From Birmingham et al., 2001

### Reorientation of hydraulic fractures

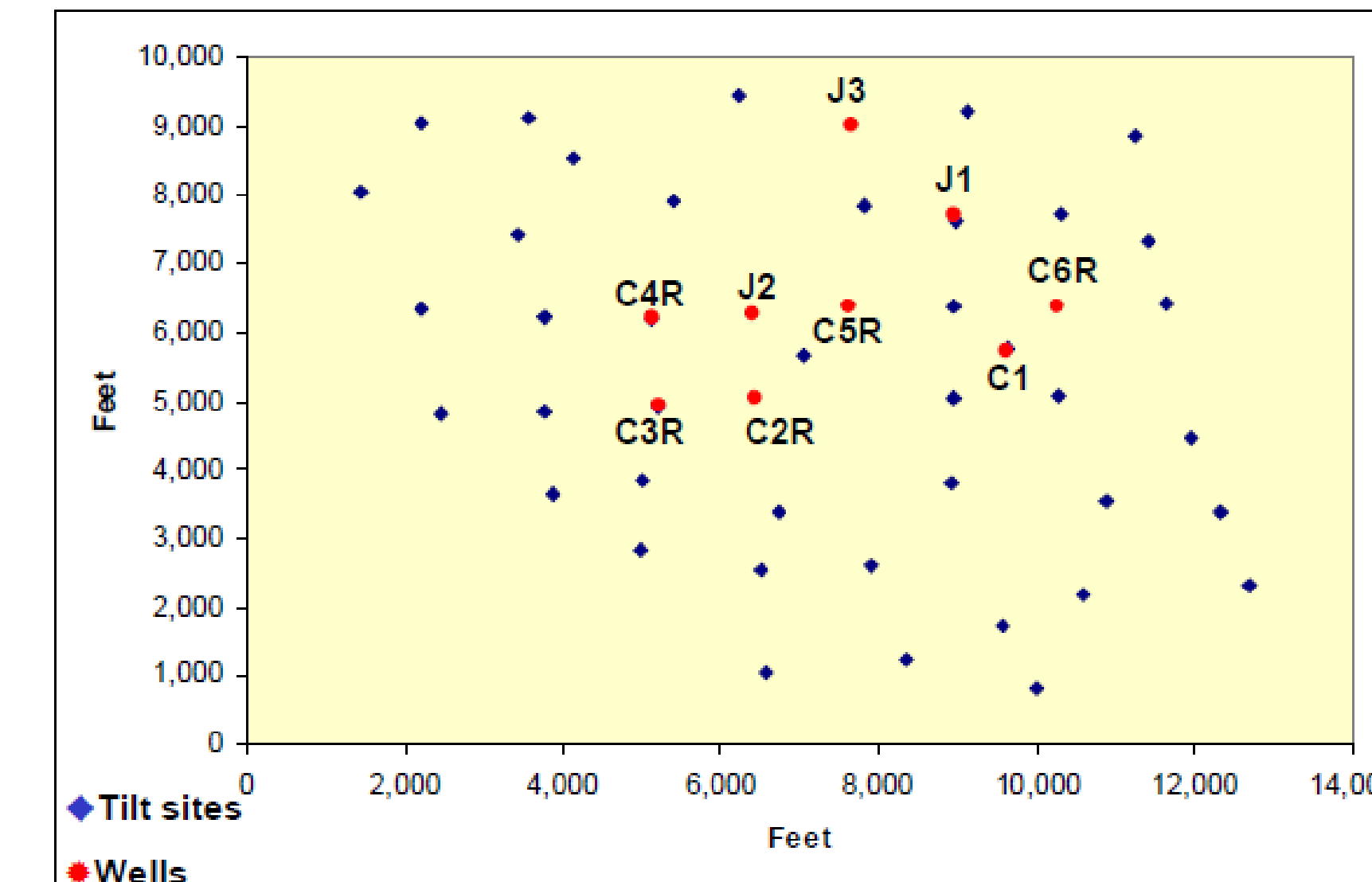


Figure 3. Surface tiltmeter array and treatment wells.

Wolhart et al., 2007

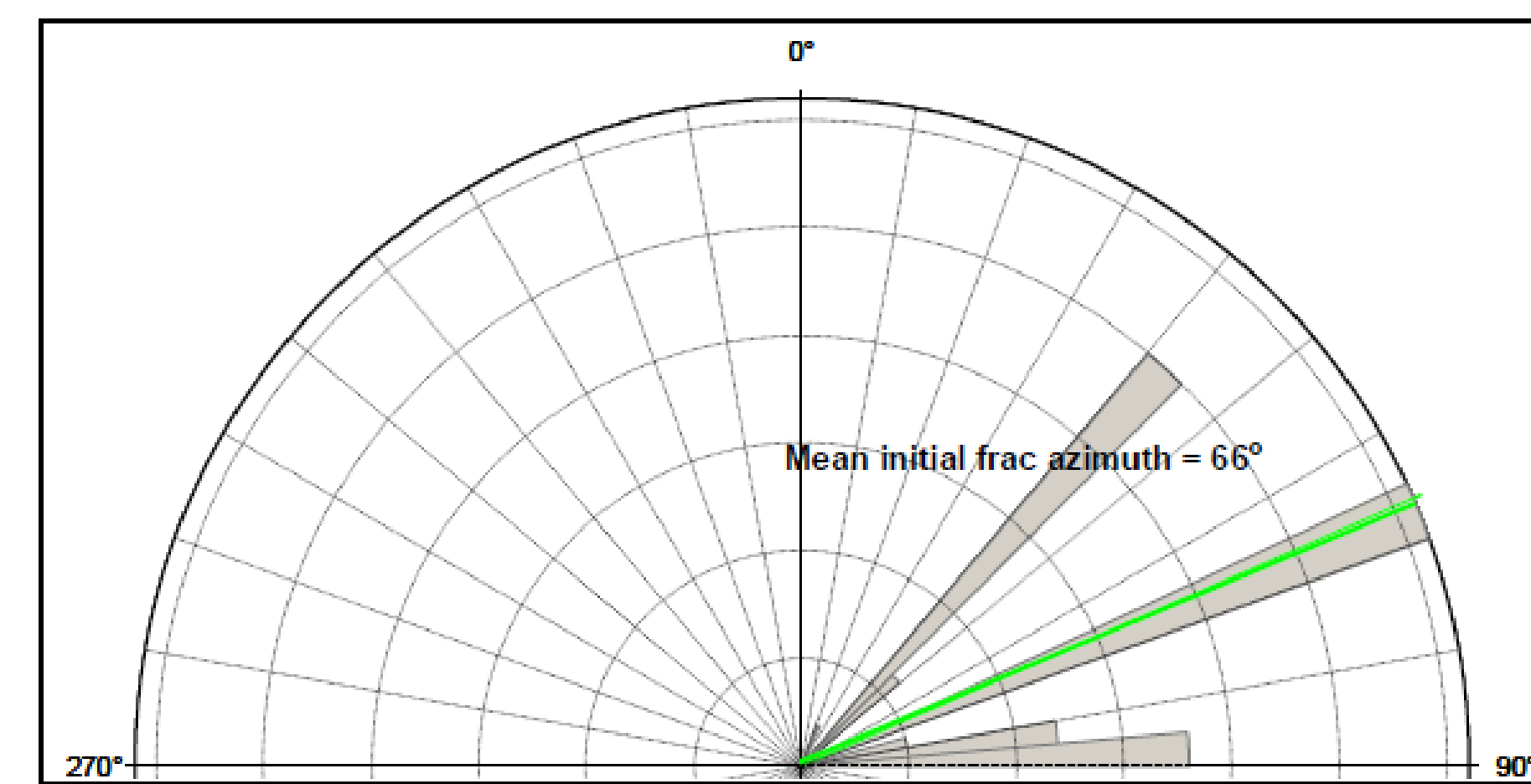


Figure 4. Rose diagram showing fracture azimuth from initial fracture treatments in the J-Sand and Codell.

Wolhart et al., 2007

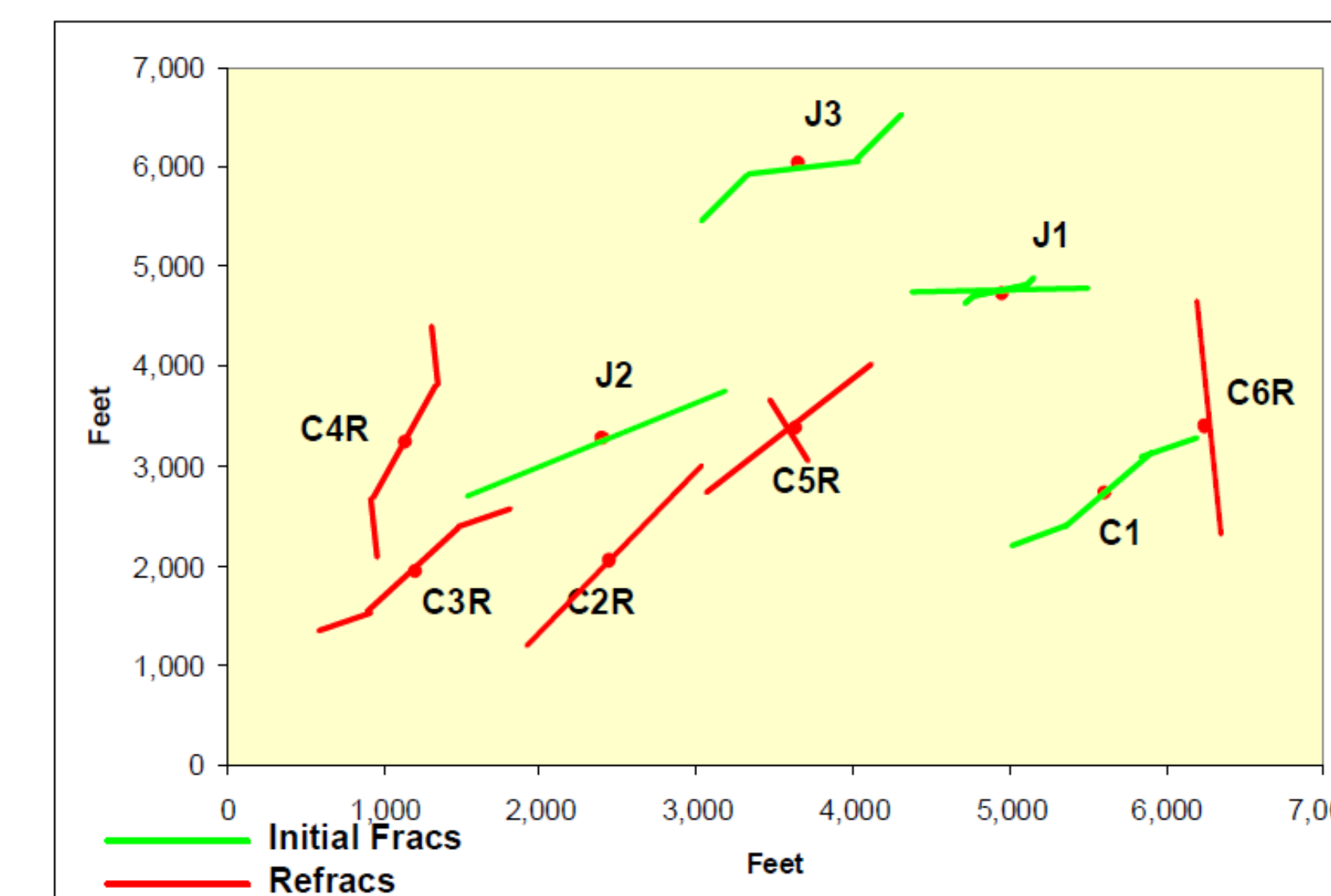


Figure 6. Plan view showing fracture azimuth results from surface tiltmeter mapping.

Wolhart et al., 2007

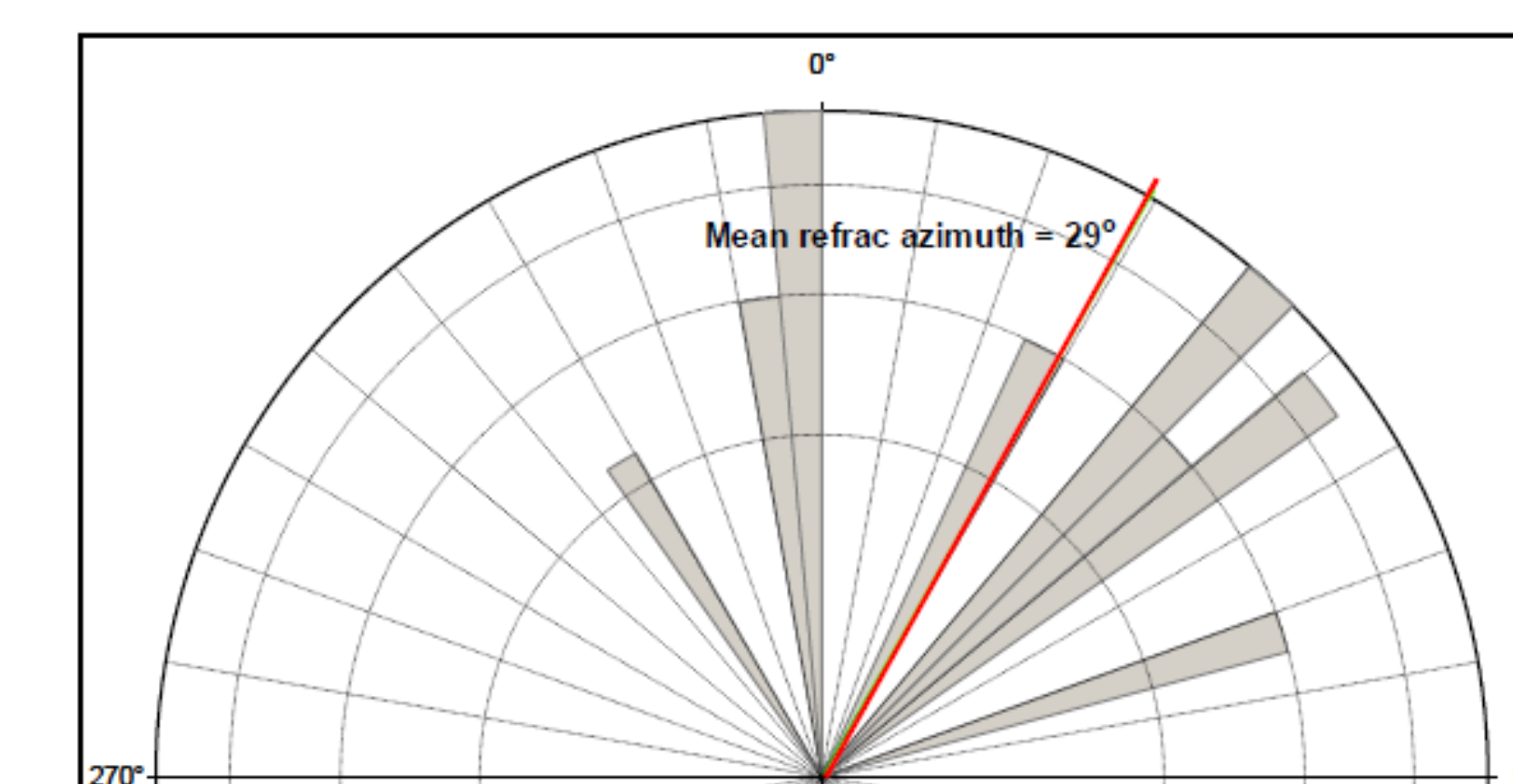


Figure 5. Rose diagram showing fracture azimuth from refracture treatments in the Codell.

Wolhart et al., 2007

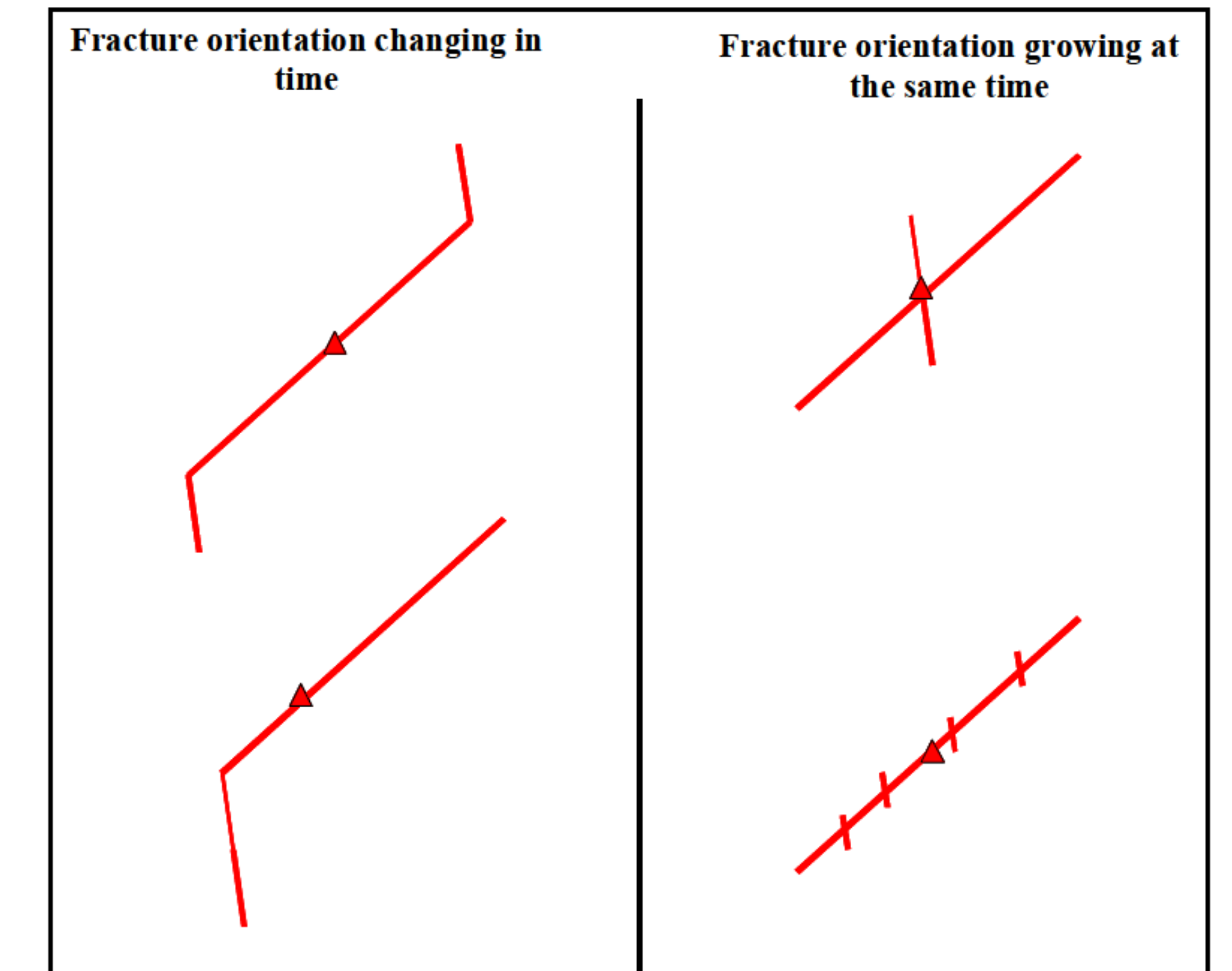


Figure 7. Possible orientation for multiple fracture azimuths for a well.

Wolhart et al., 2007

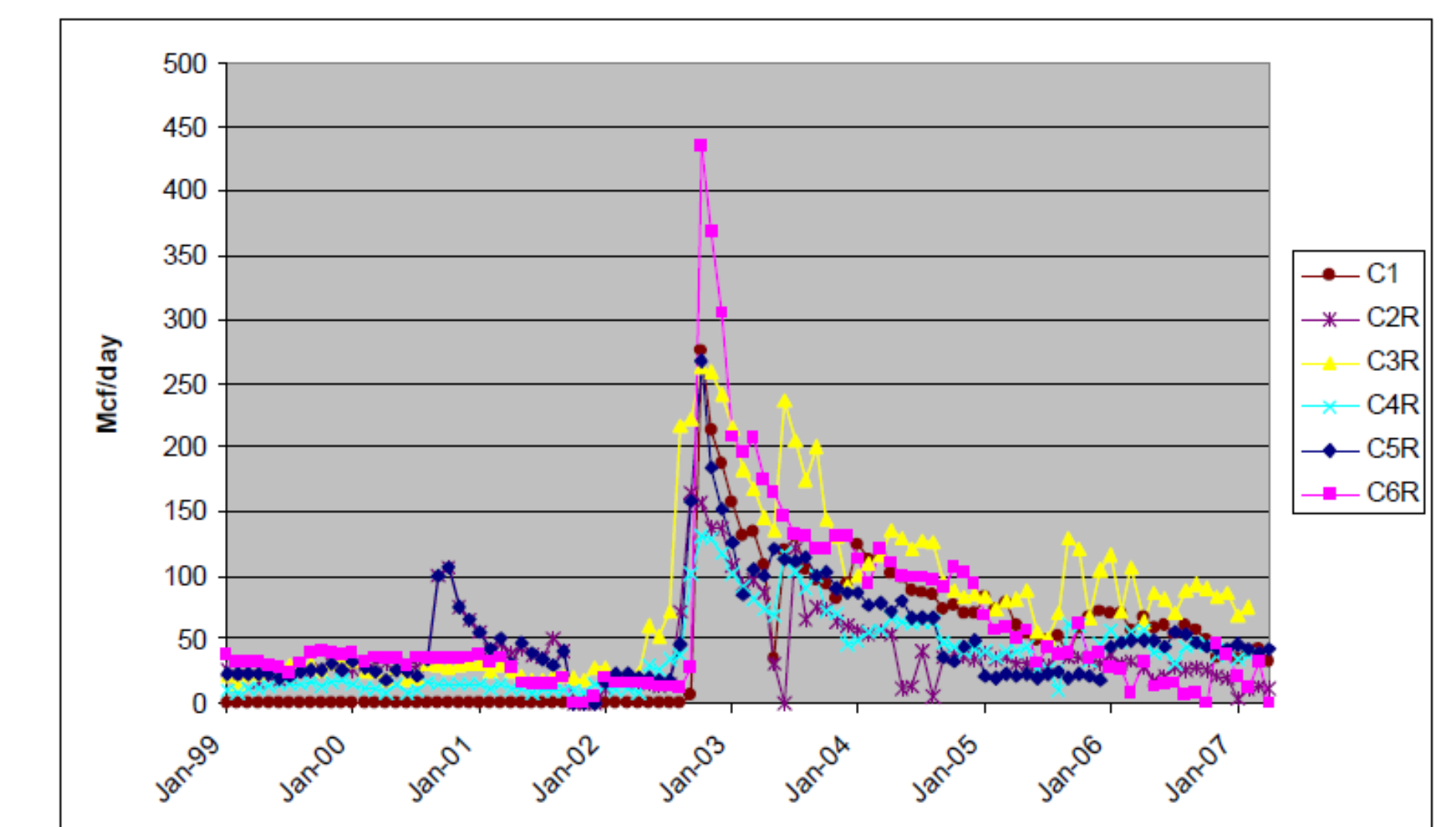


Figure 8. Production results for Codell wells.

Wolhart et al., 2007

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