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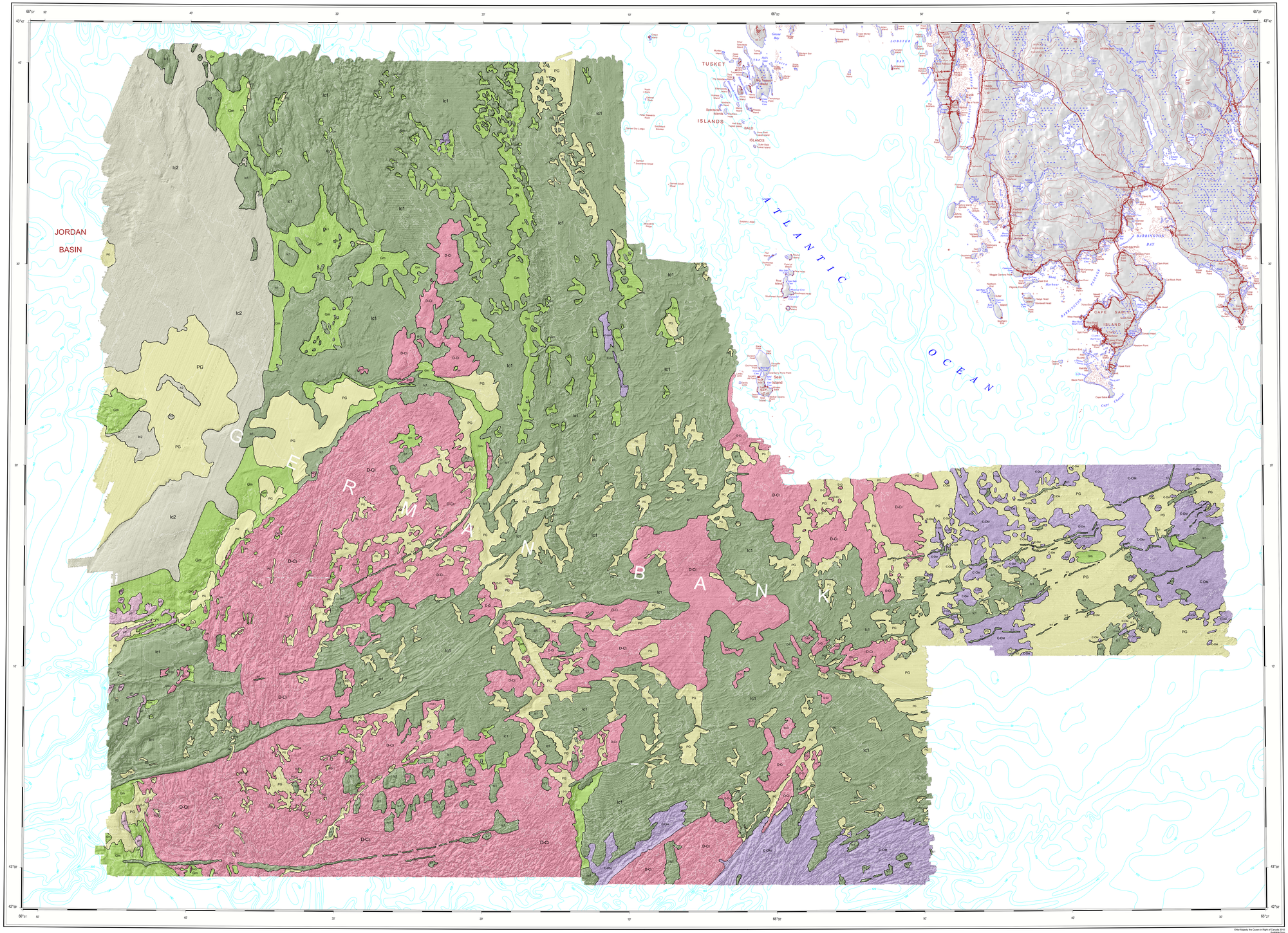

GERMAN BANK

SCOTIAN SHELF
OFFSHORE NOVA SCOTIA

Scale 1:100 000/Echelle 1/100 000

Kilometres 2 0 2 4 6 8 Kilomètres

Universal Transverse Mercator Projection
North American Datum 1983

Projection transverse universelle de Mercator
Système de référence géodésique nord-américain, 1983

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This map was produced by Natural Resources Canada in co-operation with Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Geological compilation by B.J. Todd, Geological Survey of Canada and P.C. Valentine, U.S. Geological Survey

Geology by B.J. Todd, 2006–2008

Geological compilation by B.J. Todd, S.E. Hayward, W.A. Rainey, and R.G. Miller, 2007–2008

Digital cartography by P. O'Regan, Data Dissemination Division (DDD) and S. Hayward, GSC (Atlantic)

LOCATION MAP

Canada

OPEN FILE 6124

SHADED SEAFLOOR RELIEF, BACKSCATTER STRENGTH, AND SURFICIAL GEOLOGY

Any revisions or additional information known to the user would be welcomed by the Geological Survey of Canada

Digital base map (land area) from data compiled by Geomatics Canada, modified by GSC (Atlantic)

Digital bathymetric contours in metres supplied by the Canadian Hydrographic Service and GSC (Atlantic)

Mean magnetic declination 2010: 17° 19'W, decreasing 8.0' annually. Readings vary from 16°59'W in the SW corner to 17°37'W in the NE corner of the map

Depth in metres below mean sea level

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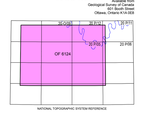

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2010
SHEET 3 OF 3
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Sheet 3 of 3, surficial geology

Recommended citation:
Todd, B.J. and Valentine, P.C., 2010. Shaded seafloor relief, backscatter strength, and surficial geology, German Bank, Scotian Shelf, offshore Nova Scotia; Geological Survey of Canada, Open File 6124, scale 1:100,000.

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES

INTRODUCTION

This map is part of a three-map series of German Bank, located on the Scotian Shelf offshore southern Nova Scotia. It is the product of a number of surveys (1997–2002) that used a multibeam-sonar system to map 5321 km² of the seafloor. Other surveys collected geological data for scientific interpretation. This map integrates the multibeam and geological data, and presents a surficial geology map that shows the geological units at a scale of 1:100 000. Topographic contours generated from the multibeam data are shown (in white) on the surficial geology at a depth interval of 20 m. Bathymetric contours (in blue) outside the multibeam survey area, presented at a depth interval of 10 m, are from the Natural Resource Map series (Canadian Hydrographic Service, 1967, 1971a, 1971b, 1972). Sheet 1 shows colour-coded seafloor topography in shaded-relief view. Sheet 2 shows coloured backscatter strength in shaded-relief view.

GEOLOGICAL HISTORY

The Scotian Shelf is a formerly glaciated continental margin characterized by a topographically rugged inner shelf. The inner shelf area constituting German Bank is dominated by outcropping bedrock consisting of Cambro–Ordovician metasedimentary rocks (Meguma Group) intruded by Late Devonian granitoid plutons (Clark, 1993; Keppie, 2000; Reynolds et al., 2000; Ketchum et al., 2002; Culshaw and Lorcarzyk, 1998; Pe-Piper and Jansa, 1999; McCall, 2002). Bedrock has been modified by glacial erosion and is separated from the discontinuous and thin overlying unconsolidated Quaternary sediments by a rugged erosional surface.

At the last glacial maximum of the Late Wisconsinan substage of the Quaternary period, approximately 18 ka (Kipp and Fader, 1986; Shaw et al., 2006), ice flowed from the northeast across the regional ice sheet that terminated to the south on the Scotian Slope (Schnitker et al., 2001; Dyke et al., 2002; Hundert, 2003; Stea, 2004). The glacial maximum was followed by a multiphased retreat of the ice sheet, which was characterized by a series of ice-flow directions and ice-marginal positions. Deglaciation and glaciomarine deposition began as early as 18 ka with grounded ice absent from the Gulf of Maine by approximately 14 ka (King and Fader, 1986; Schnitker et al., 2001).

The landforms and deposits of the German Bank seafloor provide evidence of the pattern of Late Wisconsinan glacial-dynamic events in the Gulf of Maine offshore southern Nova Scotia. Interpretation of the landforms and deposits is based on their morphology, primarily based on regional bathymetry (Todd et al., 2007) formed below the ice sheet (drumlins and megaflutes) and at its margins (regional-scale moraines >10 km long and De Geer moraines <10 km long).

GEOSCIENTIFIC DATA

In order to provide groundtruth for the multibeam data, and to complement the historical geoscientific information in the area, high-resolution geophysical profiles were collected over German Bank in 2000, 2002, 2003, and 2004 (Todd et al., 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004). The geophysical data consist of Huntec Deep Tow Seismic (DTS) boomer, a single-channel sleeve-gun seismic-reflection system, and a Simrad MS992 sidescan sonar (120 kHz and 330 kHz). The geophysical surveys investigated different seafloor types and features identified using the multibeam-bathymetric and backscatter data. In total, 2658 km of geophysical profiles were used in the interpretation of the German Bank surficial geology.

In 2000, 2002, 2003, and 2004, seafloor sediments were collected using a Smith-MacIntyre sediment sampler. Sediment samples were collected at strategic sites interpreted from geophysical profiles and multibeam sonar imagery (see Fig. 1). The sites were chosen to collect seafloor sediment samples representative of broad areas sharing common geomorphology and acoustic backscatter response. In regions of soft sediment, the grab sampler was able to penetrate the seafloor to a depth of 0.5 m and, when recovered, preserve the sediment–water interface. Sediment samples were described and subsampled, and the samples adhere to the Wentworth size class scheme for clastic sediments (Wentworth, 1922).

With locations chosen from the multibeam-bathymetric data and the geophysical profiles, 94 seafloor photographic sites were occupied using Camprod, an instrumented towpod equipped with oblique- and downward-oriented video and still cameras (Gordon et al., 2007). Camprod was deployed while the ship was underway at speeds of approximately 1 knot, and navigation was recorded at 1 s intervals. A total of 3 photographs, thereby collecting transects of high-resolution imagery. Transect duration was 30 minutes with transect lengths ranging up to 1000 m, depending on the speed of drift. About 10 still images were acquired per transect. The still photographic images represent a seafloor area of 0.96 m².

SURFICIAL GEOLOGY

Syvitski (1991) showed that a complete deglacial sequence consists of some or all of the following: ice-contact sediments, glaciomarine sediments, ice-rafted debris, and postglacial sediments, including postglacial sediments. The Quaternary stratigraphy of German Bank described here follows this deglacial sequence scheme. The formation names corresponding to the deglacial sequence names are listed here as the legend. Earlier interpretations of surficial geology and local formations on German Bank were based on a regional understanding of the Gulf of Maine and Scotian Shelf (Drapeau and King, 1972; Fader et al., 1977; Fader, 2004).

GLACIAL SEDIMENTS

Ice-contact till

Ice-contact till (units lc1 and lc2), equivalent to Scotian Shelf Drift (Drapeau and King, 1972; Fader et al., 1977), is widespread on German Bank. On the eastern flank of Jordan Basin, unit lc2 is exposed on the seafloor and overlies unit lc1. Unit lc2 pinches out to the east. In places, it grades laterally downslope into unit lc1. Unit lc1 is exposed on the seafloor in the northeastern part of German Bank and is overlain elsewhere by unit lc2. Unit lc1 is interpreted as till, with interbedded areas deeply shaped by stratified sediment characterized by continuous, coherent reflections, and interpreted as glaciomarine sand and silt. The true height of the partly buried mounds is 20–30 m. The mounds are interpreted to be drumlins with their long axes parallel to the direction of ice flow.

The drumlins on German Bank do not display the typical drumlin morphology of unequivocal stoss (steep, blunt) and lee (gentle, pointed) sides, as defined by Menzies (1979). That would provide further evidence of ice-flow direction; however, the long axis orientation of the drumlins is consistent with an ice-flow direction from northwest to southeast. The drumlins on northern German Bank sometimes have medial ridges, measuring 3–6 m in height and 30–70 m in width, oriented roughly parallel to the drumlin long axis.

The drumlins on southwestern German Bank are interpreted to be megaflutes. The distinction between drumlins and megaflutes is based on length, *l*, width, *w*, and elongation ratio, *E*, of the bedform (Rose, 1987); *E* = *l*/*w*. With an increasing elongation ratio, drumlins grade into megaflutes. The average elongation ratio for drumlins on northern German Bank is about three. In comparison, some markedly elongated features are up to 1200 m in length with widths of approximately 100 m, giving an elongation ratio of 12. These features are interpreted to be megaflutes (Rose, 1987).

Former ice-sheet margins on German Bank are demarcated by regional (i.e. >10 km in length) moraines formed by deposition of sediment at the leading edge of the active ice sheet. The regional moraines on German Bank are recessional (Bern and Evans, 1998), formed during overall glacial retreat even though they were deposited during minor readvances or stillstands. The maximum seaward limit of the ice sheet is interpreted to be represented by RM1, which is located on the Scotian Shelf edge, 150 km to the southeast (Schnitker et al., 2001; Dyke et al., 2002; Hundert, 2003; Stea, 2004).

Four regional moraines (RM) are identified on southwestern German Bank (Fig. 2). Morphologically, these moraines are composed of 20–40 km long curved segments concave to the northwest. RM 1 is the longest regional moraine and can be traced along segments for approximately 105 km from the southeastern flank of Jordan Basin to the southwestern flank of German Bank. Segments of RM 1 have a regional southeast-northeast orientation, and traverse a wide range of water depths. For example, the western end of RM 2 is at a depth of 160 m and rises to 57 m on central German Bank. Sections of some regional moraines rise to 34 m at the eastern edge of the German Bank map area.

Regional moraines display variable heights and widths and both dimensions are consistently larger than the associated smaller moraines. Regional moraines are commonly asymmetrical in cross section, with the apparent heights. For example, RM 2 rises 10 m above the surrounding seafloor. However, including the portion of the moraine buried under the flanking glaciomarine sediment, the true height of this moraine is 40 m, four times the apparent height. The exposed moraine with at the seafloor is about 400 m wide whereas the width at the buried moraine base is approximately 600 m.

De Geer moraines are small, but numerous, transverse moraines formed at or close to the grounding lines of water-terminating glaciers (Bern and Evans, 1998). De Geer moraines are the most ubiquitous glacial landforms on German Bank (Fig. 2). Topographic highs on southern German Bank are marked by De Geer moraines. The De Geer moraines are commonly asymmetrical in cross section, with steeper but in some areas the crests are complex with bifurcating crest lines and (or) short, an echelon crest segments. The orientation of the moraine crests is generally west-southwest–east-northeast. Individual De Geer moraines are commonly curved in plan view, concave to the northwest (Fig. 2). Individual moraine crests are formed of multiple curved sections 2–5 km in length that link crests from one toward the southeast. Individual moraines traverse bathymetric ranges of up to 25 m. In the seabed lows between the topographic highs, the De Geer moraines are subdued in relief or even absent, resulting from partial to complete burial by sediment transported from glacial fronts and/or reworked during sea-level transgression (Syvitski, 1991). Where moraines are buried, they are detected in the subsurface by seismic. In some areas, well-defined parallel moraines have a roughly regular spacing of approximately 150 m to 200 m. In other areas, sub-parallel ridges are as closely spaced as 30 m to 50 m. The De Geer moraines vary in height and width. Moraines displaying a subtle appearance on the map (e.g. 43°6' N, 66°17' W) are approximately 1.5 m high and 40 m wide. The more prominent De Geer moraines (e.g. 43°5' N, 66°12' W) are approximately 5-6 m high and 150–320 m wide.

Ice-distal silt

Ice-distal glaciomarine sediments result from fallout of sediment from glacial meltwater plumes and ice-rafted debris.

Glaciomarine silt (unit Gm) is equivalent to Emerald Silt (Drapeau and King, 1972; Fader et al., 1977) and is exposed at the seabed in small basins across German Bank.

POSTGLACIAL SEDIMENTS

Postglacial sediments (unit PG) are derived from current and wave reworking of glaciogenic deposits and are equivalent to Sable Island Sand and Gravel (Drapeau and King, 1972; Fader et al., 1977). The morphology and extent of postglacial sediments are interpreted from the topographic map and the backscatter strength map, on which the low backscatter strength areas are interpreted as predominantly sand with minor gravel; seafloor sediment samples and sidescan sonograms confirm this interpretation (Todd et al., 2002, 2003, 2004). Sediment waves are commonly developed in sand and gravel and are in elongated deposits oriented southeast-northwest with the current flow direction. Although typically a few metres thick, these deposits reach 17 m thick in places. In deeper water (>100 m) on western German Bank, sand is deposited in broad sheets up to 20 m thick.

Postglacial deposits adjacent to expanses of outcropping bedrock, for example at 43°24.4' N, 66°17.5' W, are thin (<1 m) and patchy, and commonly occupy depressions in the irregular bedrock surface. Winnowing of fine-grained sediment by currents produced this lag deposit, effectively armouring the underlying postglacial material against erosion.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

German Bank geoscientific data were collected during four expeditions of the CCGS Hudson (1976-016, 2000-047, 2002-026, 2003-054) and during 2000 on the MV Anne S. Pierce. O. Longva (Geological Survey of Canada, Quaternary Geology) and D.J.W. Piper (Geological Survey of Canada, Atlantic) collaborated at sea and in the elucidation of the deglacial history of German Bank. Multibeam sonar data were collected and processed by the Canadian Hydrographic Service, Geographical Information Systems and cartographic support was provided by S.E. Hayward, W.A. Rainey, S. Hynes, and P. O'Regan. J. Shaw and R.A. Pickrill reviewed the map.

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LEGEND

QUATERNARY

POSTGLACIAL SEDIMENTS

Postglacial sediments result from reworking by ocean processes of earlier glaciogenic sediments — principally till and glaciomarine silt — and from modern sediment transport and deposition. Postglacial sediments are commonly denoted as Sable Island Sand and Gravel.

PG — ***Postglacial sand and gravel:*** *well sorted sand, grading to rounded and subrounded gravel, with characteristic parallel to subparallel, low-amplitude reflections. Sand bodies form as mounded form and reach up to 20 m thick.*

GLACIAL SEDIMENTS

Ice-distal glaciomarine sediments result from fallout of sediment from glacial meltwater plumes and ice-rafted debris. On the Scotian Shelf these fine-grained sediments mirror ice-in basins as deposits outcropping at the seabed, but occur on some banks as well. Glaciomarine sediments are commonly denoted as Emerald Silt.

Ice-contact sediments were deposited directly by and underneath the ice sheet and are commonly referred to as subglacial sediments. Acoustic-reflection character: the ice-contact sediments are ascribed to the Scotian Shelf Drift. This till was deposited directly by ice on bedrock during the Wisconsinan Stage of the Pleistocene Epoch.

Gm — ***Ice-distal glaciomarine silt:*** *poorly sorted clayey and sandy silt with some gravel. This unit exhibits a characteristic parallel to subparallel seismic reflection configuration; the reflectors conformably drape the irregular top of the underlying ice-contact sediment (unit lc1) and bedrock. In places interbedded with the underlying ice-contact sediment (unit lc1).*

lc2 — ***Ice-contact sediments (till):*** *unsorted, unstratified and unconsolidated drift, with characteristic transparent seismic-reflection configuration, consisting of a heterogeneous mixture of clay, sand, gravel, and boulders varying in size and shape. The till is exposed on the eastern flank of Jordan Basin, reaching 60 m in thickness. The till is absent from the eastern portion of the map area. A surficial gravel lag commonly overlies these sediments.*

lc1 — ***Ice-contact sediments (till):*** *unsorted, unconsolidated drift with characteristic chaotic seismic-reflection configuration, with evidence of internal reflections suggesting stacked tills, probably consisting of a heterogeneous mixture of clay, sand, gravel, and boulders varying in size and shape. The till is exposed on the map region and is thickest on the eastern flank of Jordan Basin where it is commonly 20 m to 40 m thick, buried beneath unstratified ice-contact sediment (unit lc2). Elsewhere, the outcropping till typically displays an array of glacial landforms including moraines, drumlins, and megaflutes.*

PRE-QUATERNARY

Bedrock is exposed on much of German Bank and mainly consists of Cambro-Ordovician metasedimentary rocks (Meguma Group) intruded by Late Devonian granitoid plutons. Bedrock is separated from overlying unconsolidated Quaternary sediments by a rugged erosional surface.

DEVONIAN–CARBONIFEROUS

MEGUMA TERRANE PLUTONS

D-Cl — *Acoustic basement: undifferentiated Late Devonian–Carboniferous igneous rocks cutting the Cambro–Ordovician Meguma Group.*

CAMBRO–ORDOVICIAN

MEGUMA GROUP

C-Om — *Acoustic basement: metasedimentary rock, Cambrian quartzite, greywacke and slates.*

PRECAMBRIAN TO MISSISSIPPIAN

UNDIFFERENTIATED

pM – M — *Undifferentiated acoustic basement: comprises instrusive, volcanic, and metasedimentary rocks.*

Geological contact (map unit boundaries are interpreted from multibeam sonar bathymetry and geophysical seismic profile data and are inferred contacts that may be gradational or conceptual in nature)

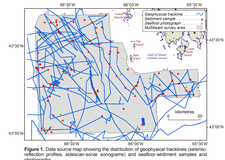

Figure 1. Data source map showing the distribution of geophysical tracklines (seismic-reflection profiles, sidescan-sonar sonograms) and seafloor-sediment samples and photographs.

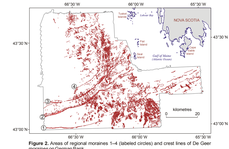

Figure 2. Areas of regional moraines 1–4 (labeled circles) and crest lines of De Geer moraines on German Bank.