# ENVIRONMENTAL GEOLOGY and LAND USE-PLANNING in the SIOUX CITY REGION, IOWA 


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## CONTENTS



Bedrock type . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 1
Landslides . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 2
Water resources . . . . . . . . . . . . . 2
Economic products . . . . . . . . . . . . 2

## MAPS

Union Center - Southwest quadrangle
Land-use . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 13-A
Thickness of unconsolidated sediments . . . . . . 13-B
Elevation and lithology of bedrock . . . . . . . 13-C

James quadrangle
Land-use . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 14-A
Thickness of unconsolidated sediments . . . . . . 14-B
Elevation and lithology of bedrock . . . . . . . 14-C

Sioux City - North quadrangle
Land-use . . . . . . . . . . . . . . $15-\mathrm{A}$
Thickness of unconsolidated sediments . . . . . . $15-\mathrm{B}$
Elevation and lithology of bedrock . . . . . . . 15 -C

Jefferson quadrangle
Land-use . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 16-A
Thickness of unconsolidated sediments . . . . . . 16-B
Elevation and lithology of bedrock . . . . . . . 16-C

Elk Point - Northeast quadrangle
Land-use . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 17-A
Thickness of unconsolidated sediments . . . . . . 17-B
Elevation and lithology of bedrock . . . . . . . 17-C

Milnerville quadrangle
Land-use . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 18-A
Thickness of unconsolidated sediments . . . . . . 18-B
Elevation and lithology of bedrock . . . . . . . 18-C

Hinton quadrangle
Land-use . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 19-A
Thickness of unconsolidated sediments . . . . . . 19-B
Elevation and lithology of bedrock . . . . . . . 19-C

Union Center - Northwest quadrangle
Land-use . . . . . . . . . . . . . . $20-\mathrm{A}$
Thickness of unconsolidated sediments . . . . . . $20-\mathrm{B}$
Elevation and lithology of bedrock . . . . . . . $20-\mathrm{C}$

Union Center - Northeast quadrangle
Land-use . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 21-A
Thickness of unconsolidated sediments . . . . . . 21-B
Elevation and lithology of bedrock . . . . . . . 21-C

## INTRODUCTION

This Atlas of maps was compiled to assist planning boards, engineer and other individuals or organizations that are involved in making decisions which affect land use. Environmental planning is especially necessary in areas that are undergoing rapid urban-industrial and agricultural growth with accompanying modification of rural regions. It was with this consideration in mind that the Sioux City Region was selected as a pilot study area.

The maps generated for this study are based on extant data. Because
the amount of information available is limited and its distribution within the region is variable, the accompanying maps are very generalized. The control points are marked on the various maps. The maps should be used only as reconnaissance aids in the first stages of land-use planning. They do not obviate the need for site investigations. Elimination of investigations of high-risk regions can prevent unnecessary expenditures of money, time, and effort because they reduce the area of land to be considered during planning. It is to this purpose that this Atlas has been developed.

## INFORMATION SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Data from well records on file at the Iowa Geological Survey were used to prepare maps that show thickness of unconsolidated sediments, elevation of the bedrock surface, and type of bedrock. Aerial photographs were used for terrain analysis and to map distribution of unconsolidated surfical materials. These interpretations were field-checked. A few locations were selected for earth-resistivity investigations in an attempt to determine depth to bedrock where the overburden is relatively thin, and to determine locations where colluvial sediments on long, low slopes extend into stream
valleys and are underlain by porous and permeable stream-laid sediments. Data on soil associations is available from reports published by the Agricultural Experiment Station, Ames, Iowa and the appropriate surveys should be consulted for information on agronomy

The names within parentheses on the quadrangle index (cover page) indicate the principal investigator for each quadrangle. Raymond R. Anderson drafted camera-ready copies of the maps for publication.

## LAND-USE MAPS

Protection of water supplies from pollution should be a primary concern in a program of land-use planning. The color scheme employed on the land-use maps indicates the relative potential for pollution of surface water and groundwater supplies. Colors are used to indicate regions that have the highest potential for pollution (red), regions that have moderate pollution potential (yellow), and regions that have the least pollution potential (green).

Areas colored red mark stream valleys that contain deposits of silt, sand, and gravel, and/or regions where unconsolidated sediments above the bedrock surface are less than 75 feet in thickness. These regions are defi
nitely unfavorable for sanitary land-fill sites, large-scale feeder lots, sewage lagoons that lack effective basal seals, or other activities that produce relatively large volumes of pollutants unless those facilities are engineered to safeguard water resources. Caution is recommended in areas that are colored yellow where moderate to severe limitations may exist. A detailed drilling program may be necessary to define the composition, thickness and lateral continuity of sediments in these regions, especially on sites that are in close proximity to the red pattern. Except for loess-covered hills with steep slopes that are naturally prone to landslides, relatively few problems exist in the portions mapped in green. We believe that most of the problems that do exist there can be overcome by rather simple engineering methods.

## UNCONSOLIDATED SEDIMENTS

The unconsolidated sediments within the region studied consist of unsorted till and peat and sorted clay, silt, sand, and gravel. Thicknesses of the unconsolidated sediments are indicated using a 25 -foot contour interval in the eastern portion and a 50 -foot contour interval in the western portion of the region.

## Loess

Loess is a wind-blown deposit composed predominantly of silt with lesser amounts of clay and sand. A thick mantle of loess is present above till over most of the region. At a few locations along the bluffs of the Big Sioux River, loess is present immediately above Cretaceous rock units with no intervening till. Loess deposits from 75 to 100 feet in thickness are common on ridge tops for a distance of three to six miles east of the bluffs of the Big Sioux and Missouri Rivers. In the eastern portion of the region the mantle of loess generally is 30 to 60 feet in thickness.

Vertical joints (cleavage) are a characteristic feature of loess where steep slopes are present. Caves sometimes are developed within the loess by enlargement of the lower parts of joint openings.

## Till

Till is an unsorted mixture of clay, silt, sand, pebbles, cobbles and boulders. Clay usually forms the matrix of a till deposit and it is therefore usually a dense and only slightly permeable material. It is found beneath the loess mantle over most of the region discussed here. Small patches of till are exposed at the surface on a few sites in the Milnerville, Sioux CityNorth and Union Center-Northeast quadrangles. North of Riverside, along the bluffs of the Big Sioux River, the interval of till is very thin, and at a few locations loess can be observed directly overlying the bedrock. The till apparently increases in thickness a short distance east of the bluffs.

## Upland Sand and Gravel Deposits

Sand and gravel was deposited by meltwaters that flowed over the region during the period in which the last continental glacier melted from this part of the midwest. Much of the flow of water was channeled down pre-existing valleys. Some of the large sand and gravel deposits now exposed along the bluff line of the Missouri River probably are of this origin.

Drill cuttings from several water wells show localities where these coarse grain-sized deposits are indentifiable for long distances east of the
bluffs of the Missouri Valley. They occur between the overlying till and the underlying bedrock. The thickness of these sand and gravel deposits is greater than 50 feet at some locations. Elsewhere they are absent and till rests directly upon the bedrock surface.

Valley Clay, Silt, Sand, and Gravel Deposits (Alluvium)
Sediments deposited in extant stream channels and upon flood-plains are termed alluvium. Alluvial silt, sand, and gravel deposits are present within the valleys of the Missouri, Big Sioux, Floyd and Little Sioux Rivers. These deposits are an important source of water supply in the region.

Dredged and straightened segments of the channels of the Floyd River and Perry Creek have disrupted stream equilibrium. As a result, the channels have been deeply eroded upstream. Erosion of the channel of Perry Creek and its tributaries within the north one-half of Perry Township (James and Sioux City-North quadrangles) has exposed an interval of silty clay beds. These clay deposits appear to be laterally continuous in this area and tests to determine static load-bearing capacity will be necessary for heavy construction projects.

## Colluvium

Colluvium is an incoherent sediment that has been derived from deposits at higher elevations and has been deposited near or at a break in slope or at the base of a cliff largely by falling or being washed as sheet wash for only a short distance. These deposits are shown in yellow on the surficial materials maps. The colluvium on all of the slopes is loess or till derived material, but its structural characteristics differ from those of the parent material. The colluvium varies in thickness from very thin to several feet and is distributed as a wedge-shaped apron beneath its upland sources.

Peat
Peat is a deposit composed of vegetation matter and fine grain-sized clay and silt materials that accumulated in shallow, poorly drained depressions. The only peat deposit observed in the region discussed here is in the northwestern part of the Milnerville quadrangle. There the peat occurs on a hillside and is underlain by till and coincides with a number of small springs that emerge on the hillside at the contact between the loess and the till.

## BEDROCK TYPES

Rocks beneath the unconsolidated sediments consist of shale, sandstone, and limestone beds of Cretaceous age. On most of the bedrock maps, orange indicates areas where sandstone is known or thought to be the bedrock; blue is used where limestone is the expectable bedrock, and areas where shale is believed or known to be the bedrock are uncolored.

Rock exposures along the bluffs of the Sioux City-North quadrangle are indicated by a pattern of open squares. In the northern part of this quadrangle beds of limestone are present at the top of exposures with successive beds of shale and sandstone beneath; in the central and southern
portion of the quadrangle sandstone or shale is exposed at the bedrock surface with alternating beds of shale and sandstone below it. Within the upland areas the bedrock may consist of any one of these three rock types. Thickness of the various types of rock mentioned are poorly known and may range from a few to several tens of feet before another type is encountered. Because of these relationships and the sparsity or absence of drill holes, the Jefferson, the northeastern Sioux City-South and the southern portions of the Elk Point quadrangles are not mapped for the rock type that is to be expected beneath the surface sediments. The uncolored portions of these quadrangles do not imply that the bedrock is shale.

Although there is no map included in this atlas that is designed to show potential landslide areas, careful analysis of the local topography and composition of the sediments as they relate to landslide potential should be included in a regional planning program. Naturally occurring conditions within the Sioux City Region which should be evaluated as a part of an analysis of landslide potential include:

1) Thick loess deposits that overlie either till or shale units.
2) Steep loess or colluvium slopes.
3) The presence of seepage horizons along steep banks.

Where loess is underlain by either till or shale, water will move downward through the loess and then laterally along the contact with either the till or the shale. Where such a contact is exposed along a steep slope or where it is exposed by grading for a road or for building construction a condition may exist or be created that favors the occurrence of landslides.

Some factors that contribute to landslide development as an adjunct of construction are:

1) Derangement of groundwater flow by side-hill fill, diking or compaction.
2) Overloading of weak soils by fill, construction, etc.
3) Over-steepening of cuts in unstable materials. Most common is the
terracing of hillsides for residential construction. Backyard slump often results.
4) Exposure, by cut, of clay or silt that may fail as a result of wetting.
5) Removal of mantle of wet soil by hillside cut; loss of lateral support will cause the soil above the cut to slide.

Loess slopes can be calculated from the topographic quadrangles. According to Lohnes and Handy (1968) the loess along the Missouri River is stable on slopes up to $51^{\circ}$ from the horizontal. Eckel and others (1958) discuss recognition of potential landslide areas and methods of correcting them. These references should be consulted by the planners of the region.

Movement of water through the loess generally is indicated by the position of the headwaters of intermittent streams flowing out of the loess hills. The position of the water table varies from season to season. The limits of this variation are more or less within a zone extending from the headwaters of the intermittent streams to the position where these streams maintain a permanent flow.

Because the surface of bedrock and/or till underneath the loess deposits is very irregular and detailed geological data on this subject is lacking, a till thickness map is not provided. Soil borings will be needed to determine the loess-till contact at any planned construction site. For evaluations of the stability of till planners are referred to Handy (1968). In most circumstances till is a good foundation material.

## WATER RESOURCES

The largest source of water supply within the Sioux City Region is available from sand and gravel deposits adjacent to the Missouri River. Production will vary with thickness and grain-size of these alluvial deposits, but it is reasonable to anticipate production in excess of 1,000 gallons per minute from relatively shallow wells.

Alluvial deposits adjacent to the Floyd and Little Sioux Rivers and some of the larger creeks provide another important source of water. Many of the farms and some of the smaller communities obtain their water from these sources. Sand points often provide enough water for individual farm wells. Gravel-pack wells are constructed where larger water supplies are needed.

A third important source of water supply, not only within the Sioux City Region but throughout most of northwest Iowa, is the Dakota Sandstone. Depth to the Dakota is variable throughout the region. It's water-
bearing zones range in depth from less than fifty feet to over 400 feet. East of the Missouri River valley, production from wells completed in the Dakota Sandstone generally is ten to twenty gallons per minute. Thickness of the sandstone and the occurrence of interbedded shale affect yields significantly. Where the Dakota Sandstone is in hydraulic connection wth coarse grain-sized sediments of the Missouri River valley, production may be greater than 750 gallons per minute. Because of this occasional hydraulic connection between the sandstone and the alluvium the protection of both from sources of pollution is extremely important.

Intervals of sand and gravel within the till provide water for many farms. If these sources become polluted, deeper and more costly wells drilled into the Dakota Sandstone will be required to replace shallow supplies. In some areas the Dakota may be incapable of yielding the desired water quality and quantity, and it may be necessary to drill a well in excess of 500 feet.

## ECONOMIC PRODUCTS

There are several natural resources within the Sioux City Region that have potential for economic-industrial development. These resources include: (1) Cretaceous shale; (2) loess; (3) sand and gravel; and (4) limestone.

## Shale and Loess

For many years the Cretaceous shale, and to a more limited extent, loess deposits, have been utilized as raw materials for the manufacture of brick, tile and other industrial ceramic products. Currently, Cretaceous shale is the single source of raw material for this industry within the Sioux City Region. The shale is obtained from exposures along the Missouri River at Sergeant Bluff. Toward the upland areas the thickness of overburden above the Cretaceous shale increases rapidly. By studying the bedrock map in conjunction with the isopach map of unconsolidated materials, relatively shallow shale beds might be located that could be exploited economically.

## Sand and Gravel

Sand and gravel are an important raw material affecting the cost of road construction and maintenance. The floodplain of the Missouri River is underlain by large amounts of sand and gravel. Some of these deposits will provide an aggregate that meets specifications for local construction.

Sand and gravel currently are produced from deposits along the valley of the Floyd River, and more pits probably can be developed there. They are economically important to the metropolitan and rural roads program. The useable deposits in reserve should be explored. Restrictive land use or zoning should evaluate their long-term economic impact before they are eliminated as sources of aggregate.

A third potential source of gravel is from deposits within the till. Examples of these deposits are exposed along the road south of the West Fork of the Little Sioux River about one mile north of Climbing Hill, and in a pit about three miles southeast of Holly Springs. An area approximately two miles south of Moville, west of the Moville-Climbing Hill road may be a potential area for gravel exploration. Gravel deposits within the till will probably produce a material suitable only for road metal.

## Limestone

Limestone for road aggregate use is unavailable within the Sioux City Region. A lowgrade limestone, often referred to as marl, is found in the northern part of the region. If the demand for agricultural lime increases, this stone may become more widely marketable. Marl deposits have been worked in the past near Westfield, Akron and LeMars, and more recently, near Hinton.

## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

Eckel, Edwin B., et al, 1958, Landslides and engineering practice: Highway Research Board, Special Report 29, National Academy of Sciences National Research Council, p. 232.

Handy, R. L., 1968, The Pleistocene of Iowa - an engineering appraisal: Iowa Academy of Science Proc., v. 75, p. 210-226.

Lohnes, R. A., and Handy, R. L., 1968, Slope angles in friable loess: Journal of Geology, v. 76, p. 247-258.

## LEGEND

## LAND-USE MAPS

Alluvial sand and gravel and/or areas where unconsolidated sediments above bedrock are less than 75 feet in thickness. Groundwater aquifer throughout most of area. Unfavorable for sanitary landfill, sewage disposal, or large feeder lot operations.
Slopes covered with loess-derived colluvial silt. Thickness of colluvium and underlying material must be determined before land-use designation is made.

Loess-covered hills and upland slopes with thin to thick interval of loess overlying till. Those areas with moderate slopes and thick till favorable for sanitary landfill and feeder lot operations may require minor drainage control or other engineering modifications.

## BEDROCK MAPS

$\square$ Areas where the bedrock is predominantly shale.

Areas where the bedrock is predominantly sandstone; the sandstone may be an aquifer.
$\square$ Areas where the bedrock is predominantly limestone; limestone from exposure west of Hinton is used as a source of agricultural lime.

- Exposure of sandstone or limestone as denoted by color.
$\square$ Exposures along bluffs of Big Sioux River; thick sequence of sandstone and shale beds; limestone at top of outcrops north of Stone State Park.
- 1100 Contours on bedrock surface; all elevations refer to mean sea level datum.

1065
Well locations; drill cuttings available.
1045 。
Well locations; data from drillers' logs.
T Till exposed at land surface.
P Peat bog.
G Gravel exposed at land surface.
GP Gravel pit
C Clay pit.
A Earth resistivity station.

## ISOPACH MAPS

- 150 - Thickness of unconsolidated material (in feet)





















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SCALE
1:62500



THICKNESS OF UNCONSOLIDATED SEDIMENTS

CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET datum is mean sea level

UNION CENTER
SOUTHEAST, IOWA



SCALE
1:62500























0


SCALE


SCALE


1:62500


SCALE
1:62500

THICKNESS OF UNCONSOLIDATED SEDIMENTS

UNION CENTER NORTHEAST,

IOWA


SCALE

