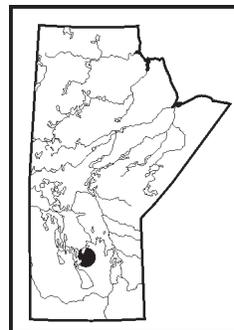


GS-29 Aggregate resources in the Rural Municipality of Grahamdale, Manitoba (NTS 62I13, 62J16, 62O1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16 and 62P4) by H.D. Groom



Groom, H.D. 2004: Aggregate resources in the Rural Municipality of Grahamdale, Manitoba (NTS 62I13, 62J16, 62O1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16 and 62P4); in Report of Activities 2004, Manitoba Industry, Economic Development and Mines, Manitoba Geological Survey, p. 301–308.

Summary

The Rural Municipality of Grahamdale covers 28 townships between Twp. 23 to 33 in Rge. 4 to 10, W1st Mer. in the Interlake area. The municipality is underlain primarily by Silurian and Devonian rocks. Quaternary sediments are very thin over most of the area and much of the bedrock is near surface (<3 m of overburden). Aggregate resources are derived from Paleozoic strata (crushed bedrock) and from Quaternary beach deposits (sand and gravel). Seven quarries are past or current producers of aggregate. They are all adjacent to Highway 6 and were opened in the late 1960s to provide material for the highway's construction. Pits in the beach deposits are commonly <2 m deep and most of the deposits have been mined to depletion. Only one deposit still has substantial reserves of gravel, although several deposits have sand reserves or minor amounts of gravel that are used for small-scale projects.

Introduction

An aggregate inventory of the Rural Municipality (R.M.) of Grahamdale was carried out this summer in order to provide information to the Western Interlake Planning District. The R.M. has recently been added to the district and a development plan for the municipality will be included as part of the five-year review of the planning district development plans. The aggregate information is also used for resource management within the MGS and is available to other government departments and outside clients on request.

The R.M. is located in the Manitoba Interlake area, adjacent to the northern portion of Lake Manitoba. The municipality covers 28 townships between Twp. 23 to 33 in Rge. 4 to 10, W1st Mer. and is located on NTS sheets 62I13, 62J16, 62O1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16 and 62P4. Provincial Highway 6, Provincial roads 237, 239, 325, 328 and 513 as well as a network of section roads give good access to most of the area. The major service centres are the towns of Ashern and Moosehorn (Figure GS-29-1).

The primary industry in the rural municipality is mixed farming. Resource-based industries are also important to the local economy. Industrial minerals such as gypsum, high-calcium limestone and dolomitic limestone, as well as stone for crushed aggregate, have been quarried from near-surface bedrock deposits. Graymont Western Canada Inc. (Graymont), which has a local lime producing operation, currently employs approximately 35 people. Hunting and fishing provide seasonal employment. Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin are fished commercially and there is some recreational development around the lakes. The municipality is sparsely populated and wildlife is plentiful. Several outfitters and guide services operate in the area.

Previous work

The bedrock of the municipality has been reported on by many authors, most notably Norris et al. (1982) for the Devonian strata and Bannatyne (1975, 1988) who studied the bedrock formations from an economic perspective, as sources of high-calcium limestone and high-purity dolomite. The bedrock geology, areas of near-surface bedrock and quarry locations in the municipality are included on the 1:250 000-scale maps that accompany Bannatyne's report on dolomite resources of southern Manitoba (Bannatyne, 1988). Descriptions of some of the quarries in the municipality are found in mineral inventory cards on file with MGS (Bannatyne, 1988) and in two fieldtrip guidebooks (McCabe and Barchyn, 1982; Bezys and Bamburak, 2004). C. Jones (1986) studied the aggregate potential of selected bedrock formations in Manitoba and two of the quarries sampled in this study are situated within this municipality.

The quaternary geology of the area is shown on a recent 1:500 000-scale compilation map (Matile and Keller, 2004a). Individual 1:250 000-scale maps, used to produce this compilation, were published in November 2004 (Matile and Keller, 2004b, c, d, e). The northern part of the municipality (Twp. 26 to 33) is included on a 1:100 000-scale quaternary geology map of the Gypsumville area (Nielsen and Matile, 1984). The map includes delineations of near-surface bedrock and gravel deposits as well as pit and quarry locations. Young (1984) mapped the sand and gravel of the southern portion of the municipality and discussed the deposits. Nielsen (1982, 1989) reported on till stratigraphy

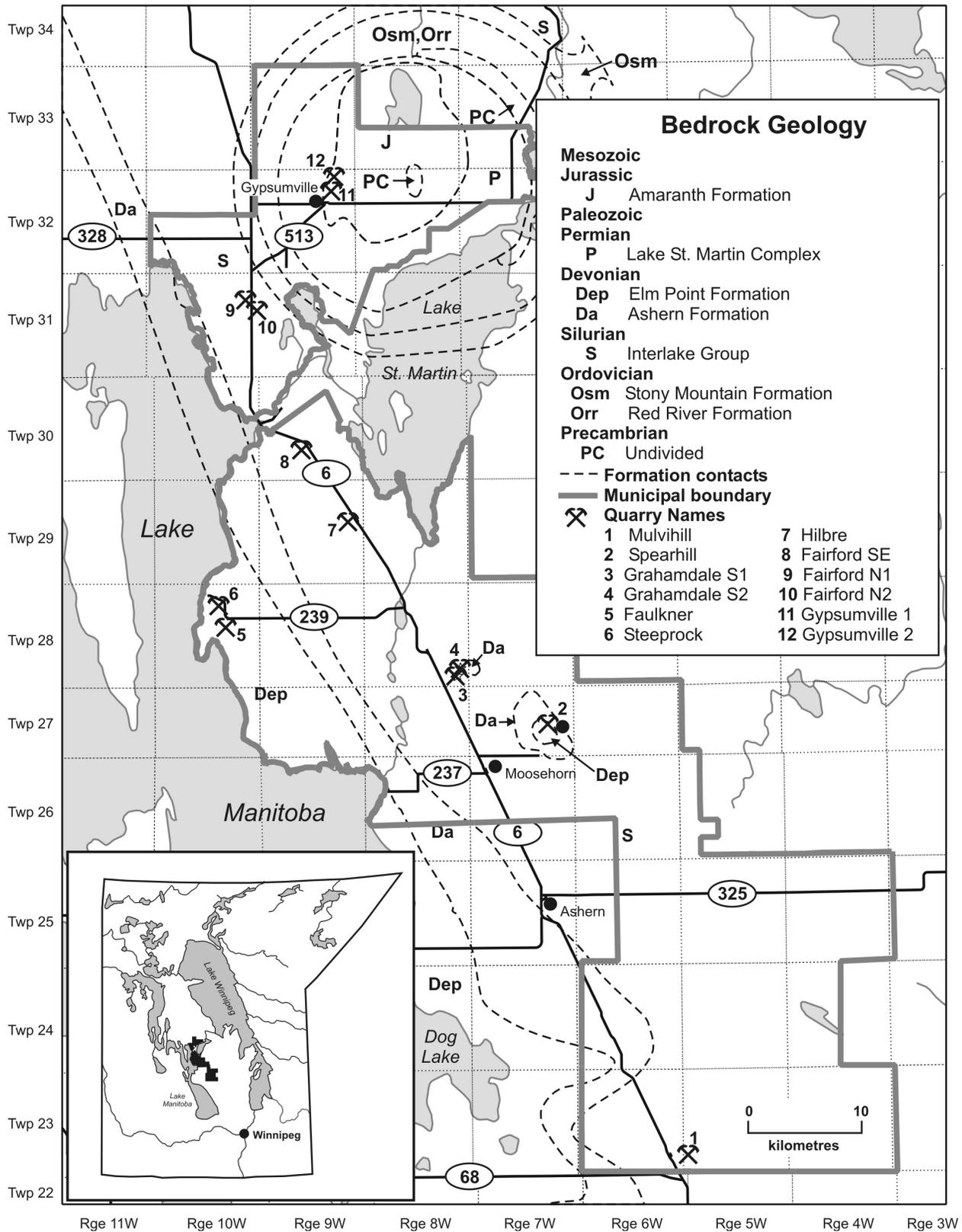


Figure GS-29-1: Location map and bedrock geology of R.M. of Grahamdale, also showing quarry locations (bedrock geology after Bannatyne [1988]).

exposed in backhoe testpits, which were part of a drift prospecting study in the Interlake area.

Geology

Bedrock geology

The municipality is underlain primarily by Paleozoic rocks of Silurian and Devonian age. However, within the Lake St. Martin crater area, rocks of Precambrian, Ordovician, Permian and Jurassic age occur (Figure GS-29-1).

The geology and possible origin of the Lake St. Martin crater is described by McCabe and Bannatyne (1970). The crater was probably formed by a meteorite impact in late Permian times, although it may have been the result of a volcanic explosion or a combination of both events. The structure consists of an outer uplifted rim of Precambrian and Paleozoic strata and an inner ring of gneissic rocks surrounded by rocks of the Permian St. Martin series. The gneissic rocks and the St. Martin series show strong shock metamorphism. Gypsum beds that maybe correlative to the Jurassic Amaranth Formation were deposited later within the crater. These gypsum deposits are described in Bannatyne (1959). Precambrian rock of the outer rim is exposed in the wall of a gravel pit in SW ¼, Sec. 10, Twp. 33, Rge. 7, W 1st Mer. (abbreviated SW-10-33-7-W1) (Figure GS-29-2); the gneisses of the inner core are less well exposed at the base of a gravel pit in NE-28-32-8-W1; and the gypsum beds are very well exposed in quarries in 26-33-9-W1, 35-33-9-W1 and 2-33-9-W1. Gypsum from this area was quarried from 1910 until the 1980s. Currently there is no extraction but there are several quarry leases for gypsum in good standing on these deposits.

Silurian rocks underlie the eastern part of the municipality. McCabe and Barchyn (1982) note that the rocks are primarily “micritic to intraclastic and stromatolitic dolomites with scattered fossil-fragmental interbeds...interrupted by a number of thin sandy argillaceous marker beds”. Several authors (McCabe and Barchyn, 1982; Bannatyne, 1988; Bezys and Bamburak, 2004) have commented on the relative uniformity of the Silurian strata and the difficulty in correlating formations from north to south in Manitoba. However, the Silurian rocks exposed in the quarries along Highway (Hwy.) 6 in the study area can clearly be assigned to the Cedar Lake Formation (Bannatyne, 1988), which forms part of the Silurian Interlake Group. McCabe and Barchyn (1982) described the Cedar Lake Formation as “dolomite, white to pale yellowish brown, microcrystalline dense sublithographic, thin bedded, in part stromatolitic; porous biostromal interbeds, possibly biothermal at top of unit”. The Cedar Lake Formation quarry at Hilbre (SW-24-29-9-W1) produces high-purity dolomite used for dolomitic lime production (Bannatyne, 1982).

The Devonian Elk Point Group strata underlie the western part of the municipality. The Elk Point Group consists of the basal Ashern Formation and the overlying Winnipegosis Formation. The Ashern Formation is composed of brick red to greyish orange dolomite, with some interbeds of green or red shale. Brecciated fragments in the lower Ashern beds are from the underlying Silurian strata. Iron sulphide is disseminated through the beds (Norris et al., 1982).

The Elm Point Formation is a facies equivalent of all or part of the Lower Member of the Winnipegosis Formation

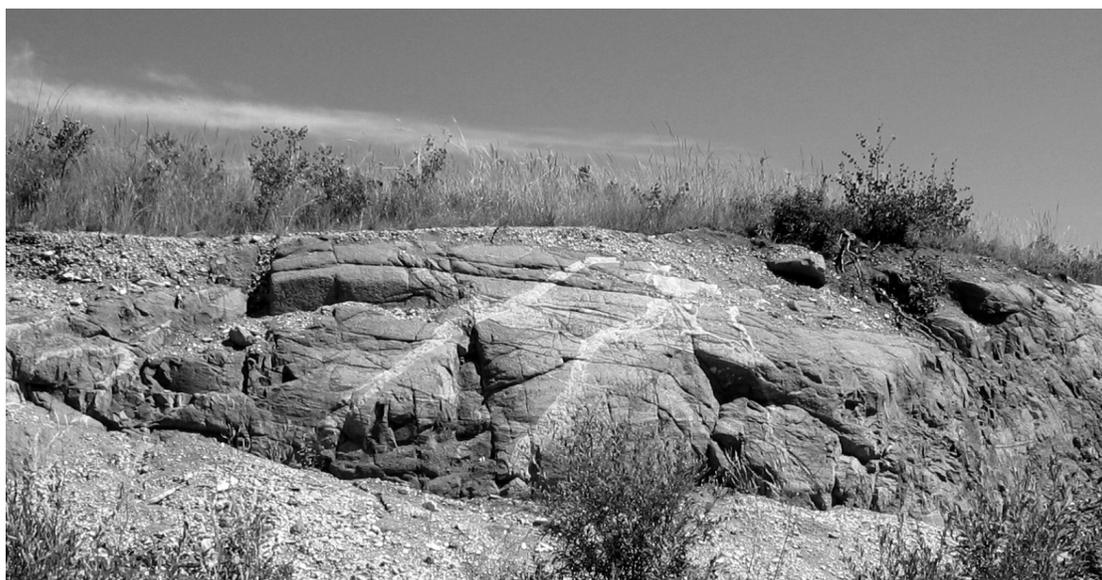


Figure GS-29-2: Precambrian bedrock exposed in gravel pit in SW-10-33-7-W1.

(Norris et al., 1982). Through most of its extent, the Lower Member of the Winnipegosis Formation is dolomite, however, the Elm Point Formation is primarily high-calcium limestone or partially dolomitized limestones. In the R.M. of Grahamdale, the Elm Point Formation has been quarried since 1913 for high-calcium limestone. The Spearhill, Steeprock and Faulkner quarries (Figure GS-29-1) have been the three major sources. Bannatyne (1975) describes the physical properties of the bedrock in each of the quarries and provides the results of a chemical analysis of samples from each of the quarries. The Spearhill quarry is in a topographic high formed by an outlier of Elm Point Formation limestone overlying Ashern Formation dolomite. The quarry is depleted of limestone and has been partially rehabilitated; the Whitetail and Walleye Association has a clubhouse on the quarry site. The huge quarry at Steeprock stopped production in the 1980s; currently there are tentative plans to transfer the land to the R.M. of Grahamdale and turn the quarry into a heritage site. The Faulkner quarry is still active and is owned and operated by Graymont. The plant adjacent to the quarry produces high-calcium lime and dolomite using raw material from the Faulkner and Hilbre quarries in the municipality (J. Bamburak, pers. comm., 2004).

Surficial geology

There has been very little work done on the surficial geology of the municipality. The northern part of the municipality was mapped at a 1:100 000 scale (Nielsen and Matile, 1984) and the till stratigraphy was described by Nielsen (1989). The surficial sediments are primarily till, organics and bedrock outcrop; there are minor amounts of clay and gravel deposits related to glacial Lake Agassiz.

The widespread occurrences of bedrock outcrop indicate surficial sediments are generally thin over most of the area. Striations on bedrock pavement and the orientation of flutes and drumlinoid ridges indicate that the last glacial ice flow to affect the municipality was from the northwest. Nielsen (1989) reports a two till sequence. Both are silty, carbonate-rich tills, reflecting the underlying bedrock. The lower Inwood till contains 84.2% carbonate pebbles and the upper Komarno till contains 85.9% carbonate clasts. The major distinguishing factor in the field is the relative hardness of the till; the Inwood till is an overcompacted basal till while the overlying Komarno till is softer. South of the R.M. of Grahamdale, the Komarno till often contains lake clay inclusions indicating it was deposited by ice flowing into glacial Lake Agassiz. There are few areas of clay in the municipality and the presence of glacial Lake Agassiz is primarily indicated by beach ridge deposits and areas of iceberg scour.

Aggregate inventory

Methodology

The aggregate inventory was carried out in two stages: office compilation followed by fieldwork. Previously mapped deposits were transferred onto 1:20 000 township photomosaics (1997 orthophotos). The township mosaics were used as a base on which to compile aggregate information from several sources:

- 1) active pit and quarry locations – Mines Branch quarry database
- 2) quarry lease and withdrawn locations – Mines Branch plat books
- 3) Crown vs. private ownership – Manitoba Crown Lands Branch database
- 4) pit and sample locations – Geological Survey Pleistocene database
- 5) pit and sample locations – Department of Highways block files
- 6) mineral inventory cards – Manitoba Geological Survey

Quarries, gravel pits, road cuts and natural exposures were examined during the first part of the field examination. Pits and quarries were examined for type of material, degree of depletion and active/inactive/depleted status. Unopened portions of deposits were inspected and land uses that would limit aggregate extraction noted. Site locations were taken by GPS using UTM coordinates, as well as by section-township-range notation. In addition, the GPS coordinates of bedrock outcrops were also recorded.

Representative samples from sand and gravel deposits were taken for processing by the Material and Research Branch of the Department of Transportation and Government Services (Highways) under the cooperative agreement initiated in 1998. Bedrock quarries were not sampled.

Aggregate resources

In the R.M. of Grahamdale aggregate is produced from quarries in Paleozoic bedrock and pits in Quaternary sand

and gravel deposits. The provincial crown owns the vast majority of the aggregate resources, although there are some deposits where the gravel is privately owned.

Quarries

There are 12 large quarries in the municipality. The locations are shown on Figures GS-29-1. For ease of discussion, the quarries are referred to by names assigned to them on the mineral inventory cards on file with MGS. Five of the quarries were opened to produce industrial minerals: Spearhill, Steeprock and Faulkner for high-calcium limestone and the two near Gypsumville for gypsum. These have been discussed in the bedrock section above. The remaining seven were opened to produce aggregate. As Figure GS-29-1 shows, they all are located very close to Hwy. 6 and in fact, except for one, they were opened in the late 1960s to the early 70s to provide the material to build the highway.

While the Spearhill quarry is depleted of high-calcium limestone and rock is no longer being blasted, there is a great deal of broken rock within the quarry. Small amounts of the bedrock are being removed annually under casual permit for local aggregate use.

The Mulvihill, Hilbre and the three Fairford quarries all occur in the Silurian Cedar Lake Formation. The rock is primarily a dense crystalline dolomite and was the major source of aggregate for Hwy. 6. Samples from the Mulvihill and FairfordN2 quarries were submitted for standard aggregate tests and chemical analysis; the results are presented in Jones (1986). The two GrahamdaleS quarries are in an outlier of the Devonian Ashern Formation, also a dolomite. The Hilbre and GrahamdaleS2 quarries are currently producing aggregate. Mulvihill, GrahamdaleS1 and FairfordN2 are flooded and have not been used recently. FairfordSE and FairfordN1 appear to have been inactive for a very long time.

All of the aggregate quarries, except FairfordSE, are held under quarry lease, most of them for aggregate production. The Hilbre quarry is held under two leases, one by an aggregate company and one by Graymont, which produces dolomite at their Faulkner plant. The Hilbre quarry was a past producer of high-purity dolomite and production was resumed in 2002 (J. Bamburak, pers. comm., 2004). Graymont also holds the quarry lease over the inactive GrahamdaleS1 quarry.

Sand and gravel pits

Sand and gravel reserves in the municipality are located in beach deposits formed along the shores of glacial Lake Agassiz. They are scattered throughout the area although most occur in the Spearhill vicinity (Figure GS-29-3). Most of the deposits have been mined in the past and many are depleted entirely or have only pebbly sand reserves left. Several of the pits shown as active on Figure GS-29-3 are actually old pits and the activity consists of minor amounts of the remaining material being removed for local use. In addition, the deposits were not very thick to begin with as most of the pits, including the depleted ones, are only 1 to 1.5 m deep. The gravel deposits in 24-24-6-W1 and 25-24-6-W1 were backhoe tested in 1998 (Groom, unpublished data, 1998) as part of a study of aggregate resources in Wildlife Management Areas; the deepest hole showed 1.4 m of gravel. The pit in NW-24-24-6-W1 is less than 1 m deep, yet it has been mined regularly for gravel. All of the gravel in these deposits has a high-carbonate lithology, reflecting the composition of the till they were derived from.

There is one large gravel deposit with high quality reserves remaining in the municipality. It is in 30-26-6-W1, 31-26-6-W1, 7-27-6-W1 and 18-27-6-W1. The deposit has been an aggregate source for over 20 years as pits are shown in it on Nielsen and Matile's map (Nielsen and Matile, 1984). The deposit is now almost one continuous pit with areas of depletion, stockpile areas and active working faces. Pit depths in the active areas are 1.5 to 2.5 m. The gravel is sandy fine pebble gravel with a maximum grain size of 5 to 8 cm. The pebbles are about 80% carbonates and the only deleterious factors are some weathered Precambrian clasts and carbonate encrustation. Except for the north end, where gravel is extracted under casual quarry permit, there are quarry leases covering all of the deposit. There appears to be a substantial amount of reserves remaining. Total depth of the deposit is not known. At the south end of the deposit, there is a very old pit that is 4 to 5 m deep, yet the active pit adjacent to it is 2 m deep, as are the other active pits. Backhoe testing would be required to know what reserves lie below the current pit floors.

There is an active pit in the beach ridge in NE-25-26-7-W1. The pit is 2.5 to 3 m deep and the material exposed is pebbly sand, although shallow exposures further along the deposit indicate that there may be gravel beds remaining in the deposit. The aggregate in this deposit is privately owned. The gravel in SW-10-33-7-W1 was deposited along a bedrock high. The bedrock knob stands 10 m above the surrounding terrain and is known locally as 'the big hill'. The bedrock is Precambrian (Figure GS-29-2) and is part of the outer rim of the Lake St. Martin crater. The gravel in the deposit is near depletion but there are reserves of sand and pebbly sand. The pit operator said the sand is too fine for his purposes but not fine enough for VMA (void matrix additive) sand. He also said the beach deposits in 7-33-7-W1 and

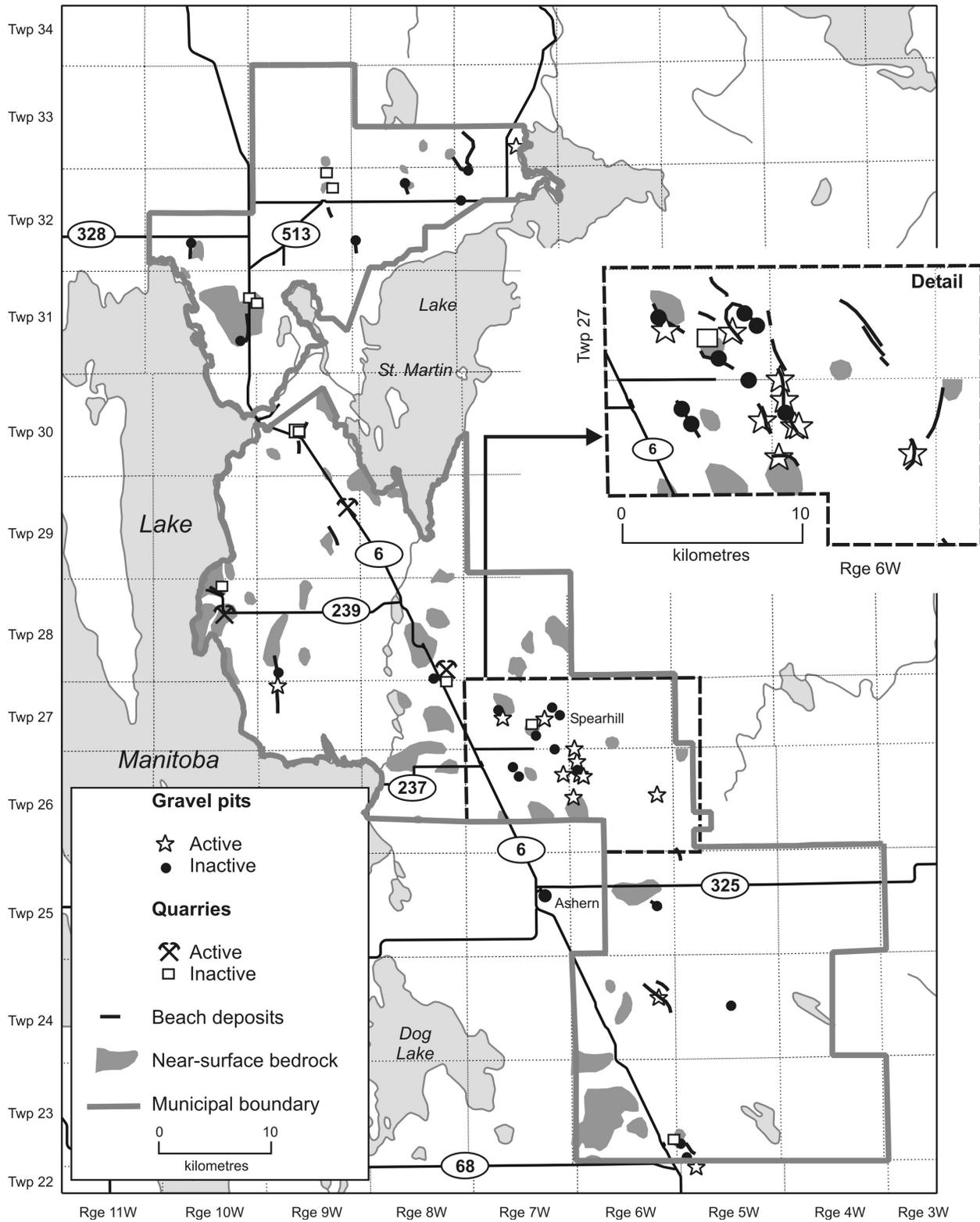


Figure GS-29-3: Location of sand and gravel deposits, near-surface bedrock and active and inactive pits and quarries in R.M. of Grahamdale.

18-33-7-W1 are nearly depleted of gravel, with mainly sand remaining. These deposits were inaccessible this year due to high water.

Economic considerations

Quarries in the Paleozoic formations produce good quality crushed aggregate and there is an abundance of near-surface bedrock suitable for future quarry sites. However, the complete range of granular sizes cannot be easily (or economically) produced from crushing. Sand and granule-size material from sand and gravel sources are often blended with crushed bedrock to meet the required grain-size specifications for some end uses. Therefore, while the municipality has a large volume of potential crushed bedrock resources, there is a scarcity of aggregate in certain sizes. In addition, most of the beach ridges are near depletion and the remaining large deposit is under quarry lease, so there is a shortage of material available to the small operator.

Aggregate is a high bulk, low value commodity so the haulage cost is often an important factor in the final aggregate cost of a project. As a rule of thumb, the average haulage rate is \$0.07/t/km. In general, the value of aggregate reserves in any specific area depends on the abundance of the resources and on the demand. Due to the haulage factor, the fewer the resources or the greater the demand, the more important it is to protect those resources from activities that would prevent them being used. Data collected this summer in Grahamdale will be submitted to the Western Interlake Planning District with appropriate recommendations for the zoning of the resources.

The municipality has a very low population (0.75 person/km²) and the major demand for aggregate is for road construction and maintenance. There is a very large volume of near-surface bedrock in the same formations that were quarried to provide the material for the building of Hwy. 6. There are very few sand and gravel deposits with remaining reserves and these will be recommended for protection from conflicting use until they are depleted.

Acknowledgments

J. Bamburak is thanked for providing information on the industrial mineral aspects of the limestone and dolomite strata.

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