

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

**LITHOLOGIC DESCRIPTION OF A SEDIMENT CORE FROM
BUTTE VALLEY, SISKIYOU COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

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U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OPEN-FILE REPORT 94-593

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Introduction

As part of a series of investigations designed to study the Quaternary climatic histories of the western U.S. and the adjacent northeastern Pacific Ocean, a 102-meter sediment core was collected from Butte Valley, Siskiyou County, California, in the fall of 1991. This report presents basic data concerning the Butte Valley site, as well as lithologic descriptions of the recovered sediments. The drilling methods, core sampling, and curation techniques used are described by Adam (1993).

Acknowledgement

Coring at Butte Valley was made possible by the cooperation of the U.S. Forest Service, which manages the Butte Valley National Grassland.

Site description

Butte Valley, a broad open valley about 25 km long and 8-15 km wide, lies at an elevation of about 1290 meters just south of the California-Oregon border (Figure 1). The basin is topographically closed but would overflow to the northwest once water reached a depth of 8-9 meters. Regional bedrock consists of basalt and basaltic andesites of Pliocene and upper Miocene age (Williams, 1949; Wood, 1960). The eastern rim of the basin consists of a prominent linear horst oriented NNW-SSE and referred to by Wood (1960) as the Mahogany Mountain ridge. To the north and west, the basin is bounded by older [Pliocene to Pleistocene?] volcanic rocks of the "High Cascades" (Wood, 1960). The southeastern edge of the basin is formed by the Butte Valley basalt of Wood (1960), who mapped a lobe of the basalt beneath the valley floor on the basis of well logs.

The basin is tectonically active. Prominent fault scarps, generally parallel to the Mahogany Mountain ridge, are common throughout the area, and many of these features offset not only the younger volcanic rocks around the margins of the basin, but also the lacustrine deposits.

Portions of the upper Butte Creek drainage were glaciated at times during the Pleistocene (Williams, 1949), and outwash from the glaciers flowed into Butte Valley. Well logs reported by Wood (1960) indicate a thick sequence of lacustrine deposits beneath the present valley floor.

Northwest of the basin, the Klamath River has incised a youthful gorge about 500 meters into the underlying volcanic rocks (Figure 1). Landslide scarps are common along the steep walls of the canyon, and it is likely that the deepening of the canyon through time has affected the regional groundwater table in the Butte Valley area.

Private land in Butte Valley is primarily used for farming and ranching; in addition, a large part of the valley bottom around Meiss Lake is occupied by the Butte Valley National Grassland.

Drilling operations

The core location (Figure 1) was selected to be away from the edge of the basin, and also far enough north to avoid the subsurface tongue of Butte Valley basalt mapped by Wood (1960, Pl. 2). One core was drilled from October 13-18, 1991. Drilling was halted because of lack of funds to drill deeper.

Core description

The core reached a maximum depth of 101.82 meters. Shelby tubes were used to sample the top 4.88 meters of the core. Below 4.88 meters, cores were taken using a conventional rotary drill rig and drilling mud, as described by Adam (1993). Each trip of the coring device down

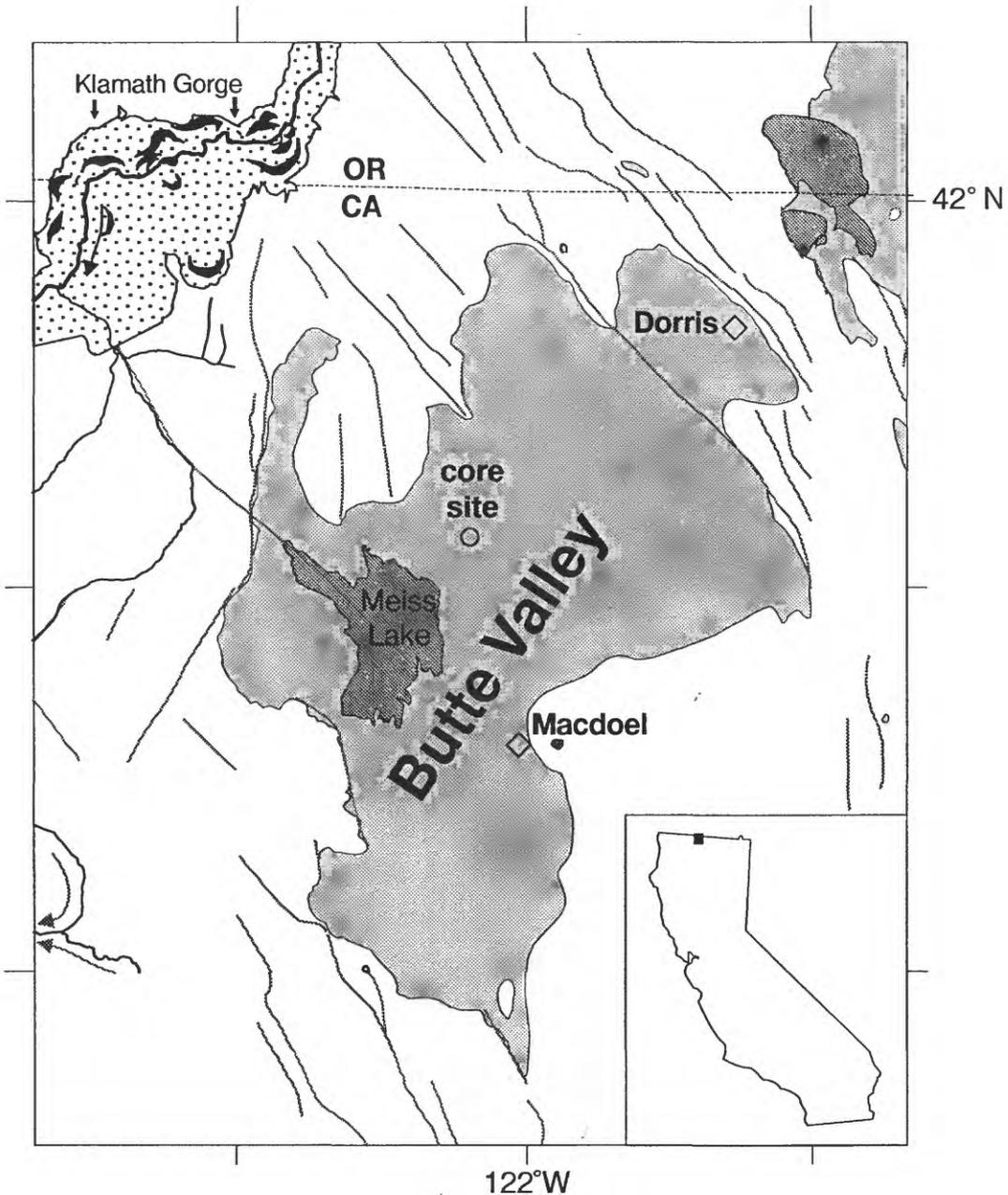


Figure 1.--Map showing Butte Valley and vicinity. Light gray pattern shows distribution of valley-bottom lake sediments; dark gray shows lakes. Coarse pattern shows Klamath River gorge, with landslide scarps shown by arcs. Streams are shown in black; lighter lines are lineaments interpreted from topographic maps.

the hole is referred to below as a *drive*; drives were numbered sequentially from top to bottom. Each drive was packaged for storage as one or more *slugs*; slugs were designated A, B, and C from top to bottom within each drive.

Core recovery and depth adjustments

The depth interval drilled for each drive and the percent recovery are shown in Figure 2 and Table 1. The two left-hand columns of Figure 2 show a graphical representation of the interval cored for each drive, how much sediment was recovered, how the drive was split into slugs, and the effect of any necessary depth corrections (explained below). Even-numbered drives are shown on the left and odd-numbered drives on the right to minimize overlap. Each drive is represented by a three-part symbol. The left-hand box contains the drive number; the vertical extent of that box represents the driller's depths for the interval penetrated during the drive. The shaded box immediately to the right of the numbered box represents the amount of core recovered during the drive, plotted using the convention that a short recovery represents the top part of the cored interval. The labeled boxes (A, B, C) at the right side of the symbol show how the recovered interval was split into slugs for storage after correcting the depths (if necessary) to adjust for drilling irregularities such as >100% core recovery. Corrected depths for drives are plotted using a vertical offset that compensates for apparent overlap between drives. The data used, including any offsets, are shown in Table 1.

The third column in Figure 2, labeled "Drives", shows an unlabeled, shaded box for each drive recovered. The upper and lower boundaries represent the depths at which drilling began and ended for that drive as reported by the driller. These boxes are offset in an alternating pattern to facilitate comparison of the bottom of one drive with the top of the next drive. The data are the same as for the numbered boxes in the first two columns. Immediately to the right of the "Drives" column, the "Slugs" column displays similar but labeled boxes that identify the drive and the slugs (A, and sometimes B and C) into which the drive was divided for storage. The depths plotted in the "Slugs" column include the depth corrections shown as "Offset" in Table 1.

As an example, consider drives 58 and 59. Drilling for drive 58 extended from 79.34 to 83.61 m, or a total of 3.27 m, but only 1.30 m of sediment was recovered. Drive 59 was drilled from 83.61 m (the base of the previous drive) to 85.14 m, or a total of 1.53 m, but core recovery was 3.3 m. The simplest explanation is that part of drive 58 stayed in the hole when we attempted to remove it at the end of drive 58 but was recovered along with the depth interval sampled by drive 59. The depth offset used for drive 59 (-2.97 m, Table 1) was calculated so as to place the top of the interval recovered as drive 59 at the base of the interval recovered as drive 58. It is apparent from Figure 2 that not all of the interval sampled by the two drives was recovered; a smaller offset could have been used to place drive 59 anywhere within the available interval.

Dating

Age control for the cores is derived from the tephra layers identified in Table 2 and from paleomagnetic reversal data (Roberts and others, 1993; Table 3). The section extends from the present back into the Jaramillo Subchron, with an apparent maximum age of about 1 million years.

Lithology

A very generalized lithology of the section is shown in Figure 3; detailed lithologic logs

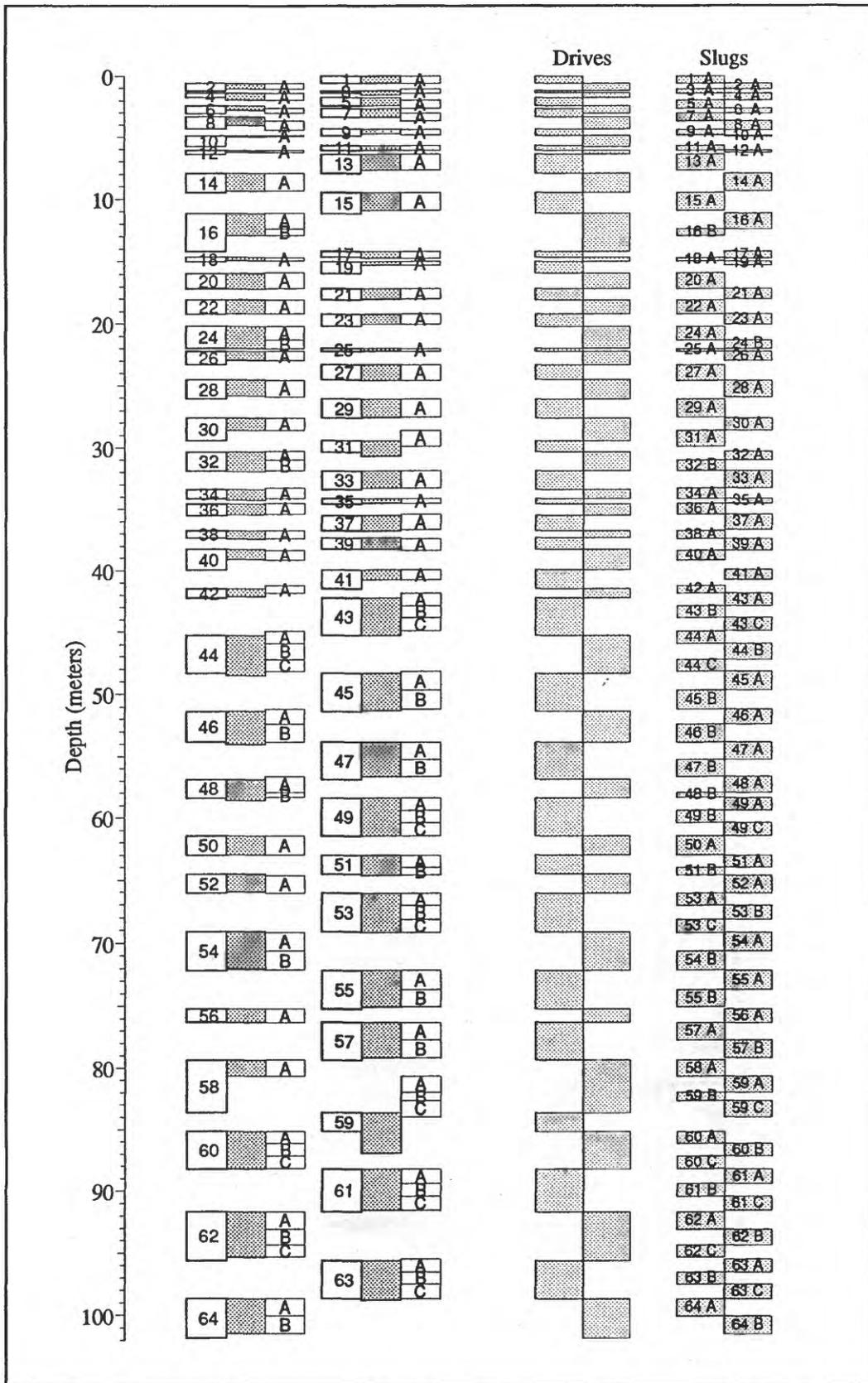


Figure 2.--Graphical representation of core recovery for Butte Valley Core 1. See text for explanation.

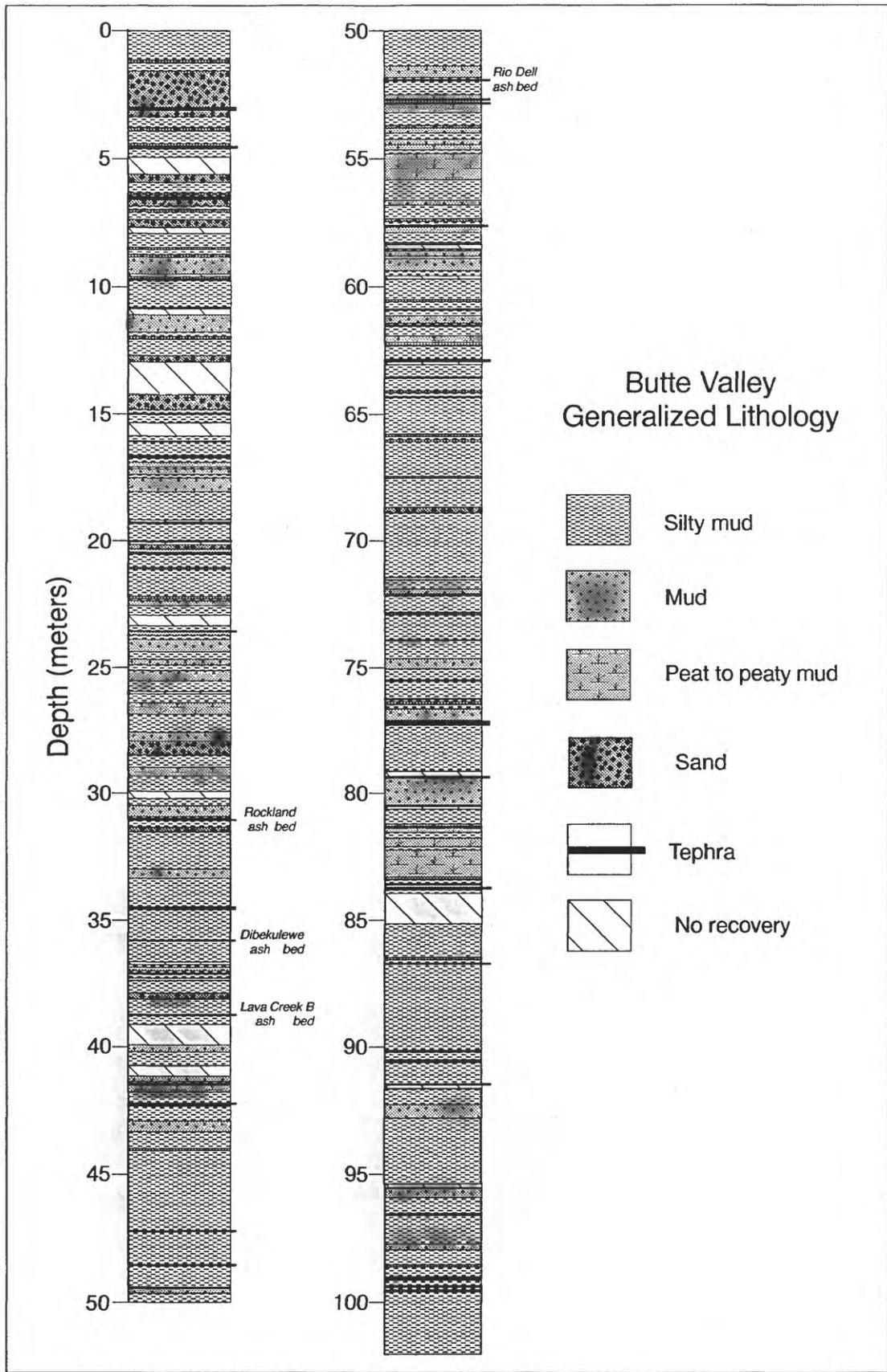


Figure 3.--Generalized lithology for Butte Valley Core 1.

are shown in Appendix B, using the patterns shown in Appendix A. Depths are shown in meters from the ground surface. Each stratigraphic unit is described to the right of the stratigraphic column. Most descriptions were taken from the fresh cores in the field, but some further descriptions were done in the laboratory. Color codes are taken from the Rock Color Chart distributed by the Geological Society of America (Rock Color Chart Committee, 1948).

Discussion

The Butte Valley core provides an opportunity to document the past one million years of environmental changes at a site presently in the rain shadow of the southern Cascades. The generalized lithologic section (Figure 3) indicates that long-term open-water lake conditions were more common prior to about 400 ka (the age of the Rockland ash bed) than they have been since that time. Possible causes of the observed changes include global climate changes associated with the waxing and waning of glacial conditions, changes in the rain shadow effect resulting from volcanic and tectonic processes in the southern Cascade Range, and long-term drawdown of the Butte Valley water table as a result of the incision of the Klamath River gorge. Detailed study of the Butte Valley core and comparison with nearby long records to the north and east may help to resolve these questions.

Table 1.--Drive data for Butte Valley Core 1

Drive Number	Driller's Depth (m)		Recovery		Offset	Calculated depth for top of drive (m)
	Top	Bottom	meters	percent		
1	0.00	0.61	0.60	98.4	0.00	0.00
2	0.61	1.22	0.47	77.1	0.01	0.62
3	1.22	1.40	0.34	191.2	-0.13	1.09
4	1.40	1.75	0.55	154.6	0.03	1.43
5	1.75	2.44	0.69	100.6	0.23	1.98
6	2.44	3.05	0.36	59.0	0.23	2.67
7	2.69	3.35	0.66	99.9	0.34	3.03
8	3.33	4.34	0.74	72.8	0.36	3.69
9	4.34	4.88	0.40	75.0	0.07	4.41
10	4.88	5.79	0.09	9.8	0.00	4.88
11	5.72	6.10	0.37	97.1	0.00	5.72
12	6.10	6.40	0.15	49.2	0.00	6.10
13	6.40	7.93	1.27	83.8	0.01	6.41
14	7.93	9.45	1.42	93.2	0.00	7.93
15	9.45	11.13	1.44	85.9	0.00	9.45
16	11.13	14.18	1.76	57.7	0.00	11.13
17	14.18	14.63	0.53	115.9	0.00	14.18
18	14.63	14.99	0.28	78.7	0.03	14.66
19	14.99	15.93	0.28	29.8	0.00	14.99
20	15.93	17.15	1.27	104.1	-0.05	15.88
21	17.15	18.06	0.87	95.1	0.00	17.15
22	18.06	19.21	1.12	98.0	0.01	18.07
23	19.21	20.20	0.82	82.8	0.00	19.21
24	20.20	21.95	1.78	101.5	0.00	20.20

Table 1.--Drive data for Butte Valley Core 1

Drive Number	Driller's Depth (m)		Recovery		Offset	Calculated depth for top of drive (m)
	Top	Bottom	meters	percent		
25	21.95	22.21	0.23	90.6	0.03	21.98
26	22.21	23.30	0.75	68.6	0.00	22.21
27	23.30	24.52	1.29	105.8	0.00	23.30
28	24.52	26.07	1.3	83.9	0.07	24.59
29	26.07	27.59	1.47	96.4	0.00	26.07
30	27.59	29.42	1.00	54.7	0.00	27.59
31	29.42	30.34	1.26	137.8	-0.83	28.59
32	30.34	31.86	1.60	105.0	-0.08	30.26
33	31.86	33.38	1.40	91.8	0.00	31.86
34	33.38	34.15	0.90	118.1	-0.12	33.26
35	34.15	34.58	0.36	83.4	0.01	34.16
36	34.58	35.52	0.90	95.7	-0.06	34.52
37	35.52	36.74	1.25	102.5	-0.10	35.42
38	36.74	37.35	0.70	114.8	0.00	36.74
39	37.35	38.26	0.90	98.4	0.09	37.44
40	38.26	39.94	0.83	49.5	0.08	38.34
41	39.94	41.46	0.79	51.8	0.00	39.94
42	41.46	42.23	0.65	85.3	-0.26	41.20
43	42.23	45.27	3.07	100.7	-0.38	41.85
44	45.27	48.32	3.25	106.6	-0.35	44.92
45	48.32	51.37	3.00	98.4	-0.15	48.17
46	51.37	53.81	2.64	108.2	-0.20	51.17
47	53.81	56.86	2.82	92.5	0.00	53.81
48	56.86	58.38	1.72	112.8	-0.23	56.63

Table 1.--Drive data for Butte Valley Core 1

Drive Number	Driller's Depth (m)		Recovery		Offset	Calculated depth for top of drive (m)
	Top	Bottom	meters	percent		
49	58.38	61.43	3.04	99.7	0.00	58.38
50	61.43	62.98	1.53	98.7	0.00	61.43
51	62.98	64.51	1.61	105.6	0.00	62.98
52	64.51	66.06	1.45	93.6	0.10	64.61
53	66.06	69.11	3.11	102.0	0.00	66.06
54	69.11	72.15	2.93	96.1	0.06	69.17
55	72.15	75.20	2.90	95.12	0.00	72.15
56	75.20	76.27	1.09	102.1	0.00	75.20
57	76.27	79.34	2.86	93.0	0.02	76.29
58	79.34	83.61	1.30	30.4	0.00	79.34
59	83.61	85.14	3.30	216.5	-2.97	80.64
60	85.14	88.21	3.05	99.2	0.00	85.14
61	88.21	91.64	3.32	96.8	0.00	88.21
62	91.64	95.6	3.68	92.9	0.00	91.64
63	95.60	98.65	3.17	104.0	-0.12	95.48
64	98.65	101.83	2.82	88.8	0.00	98.65

Table 2.--Tephra from Butte Valley core.

Sample number	Tephra layer	Depth (m)	Age (kyr)
3517	Paoha Island sample 3A	8.69 - 8.76	155 - 160
3522	Rockland Ash bed	31.00 - 31.03	400 - 470
3523	Correlates with Tulelake sample T1240, which occurs interbedded with the Dibekulewe ash bed	34.47 - 34.52	?
3524	Dibekulewe ash bed	35.83 - 35.84	470 - 665 (best guess, ~500)
3525	Lava Creek B ash bed	38.73 - 38.75	665
3526	Lava Creek B ash bed	39.17 - 39.20	665
3527	not yet analysed	42.32 - 42.35	?
3528	not yet analysed	42.35 - 42.37	?
3529	Resembles the andesite tuff of Medicine Lake, but is stratigraphically too low	47.23 - 47.24	
3530	Resembles Mazama Ash, but stratigraphically too low	47.24 - 47.26	
3531	no good correlatives	48.54 - 48.56	
3533	Correlates with Sample 3536 at Buck Lake, Oregon	51.92 - 51.96	
3534	No clear correlatives. May be a match for ASW-61086-10, in the upper section at the south side of Lower Klamath Lake	52.65 - 52.67	
3343	no clear correlatives	52.82 - 52.84	
3401	May correlate with sample ASW-61085-19 at the south side of Lower Klamath Lake	77.21 - 77.22	

3402	Resembles Mazama Ash, but presumably is much older	77.22 - 77.23	
3407	Correlates with Samples 3A and 3B from Lake Britton	91.50 - 91.53	
7567	Similar to Bend Pumice/Loleta ash bed (300-400 ka) and to the Lawlor Tuff (4.1 Ma), but unlikely to be either one	92.14 - 92.15	?

Table 3.--Magnetic polarity intervals in the Butte Valley core		
Interval	Depth Range (m)	Age Range (ka)
Brunhes Normal Chron	0 - 65	0 - 780
Matuyama Reversed Chron	65 - 88	780 - 984
Jaramillo Normal Subchron of the Matuyama Reversed Chron	88 - 102	984 - 1049

References Cited

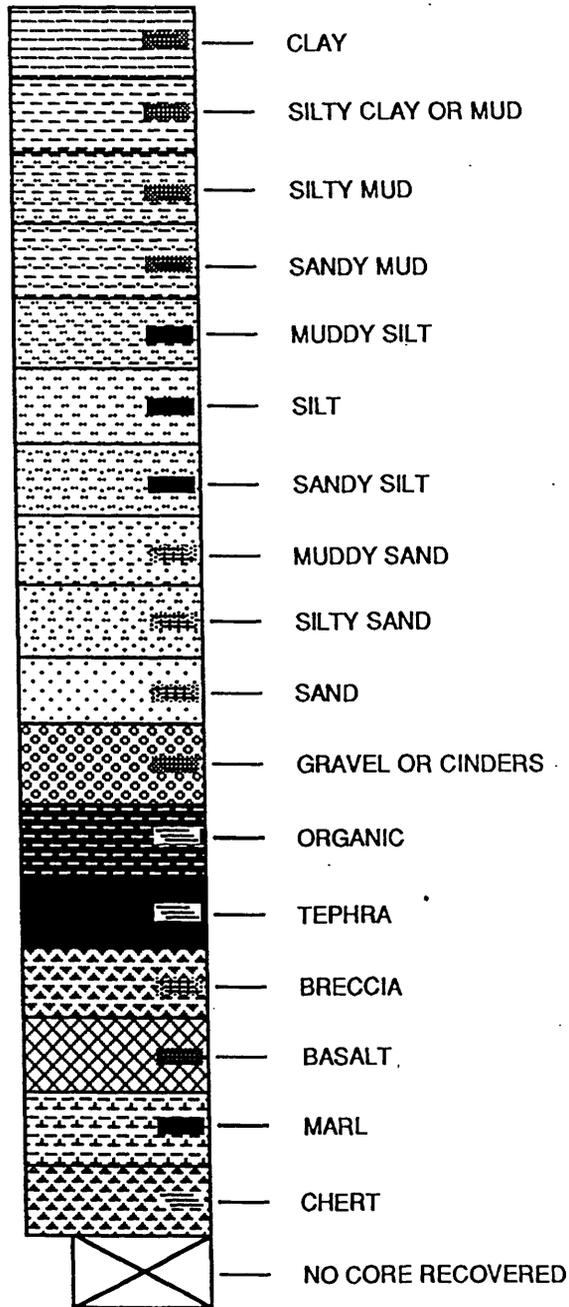
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Appendix A

Legend showing patterns used for Lithologic Logs

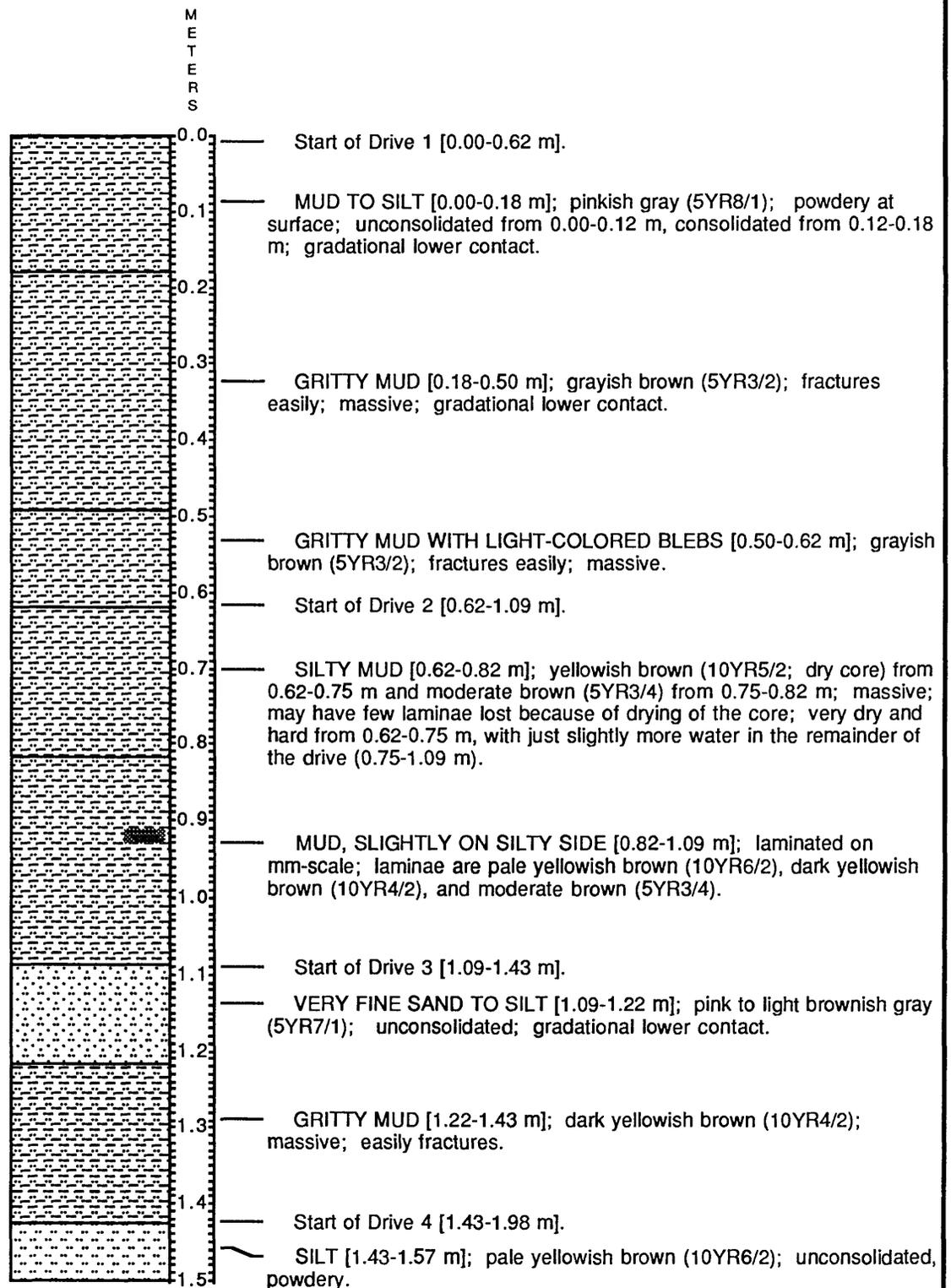
Small box inset within each pattern is used to indicate laminations within the unit (see written descriptions for more detail).

KEY TO LITHOLOGIES AND LAMINATION SYMBOL

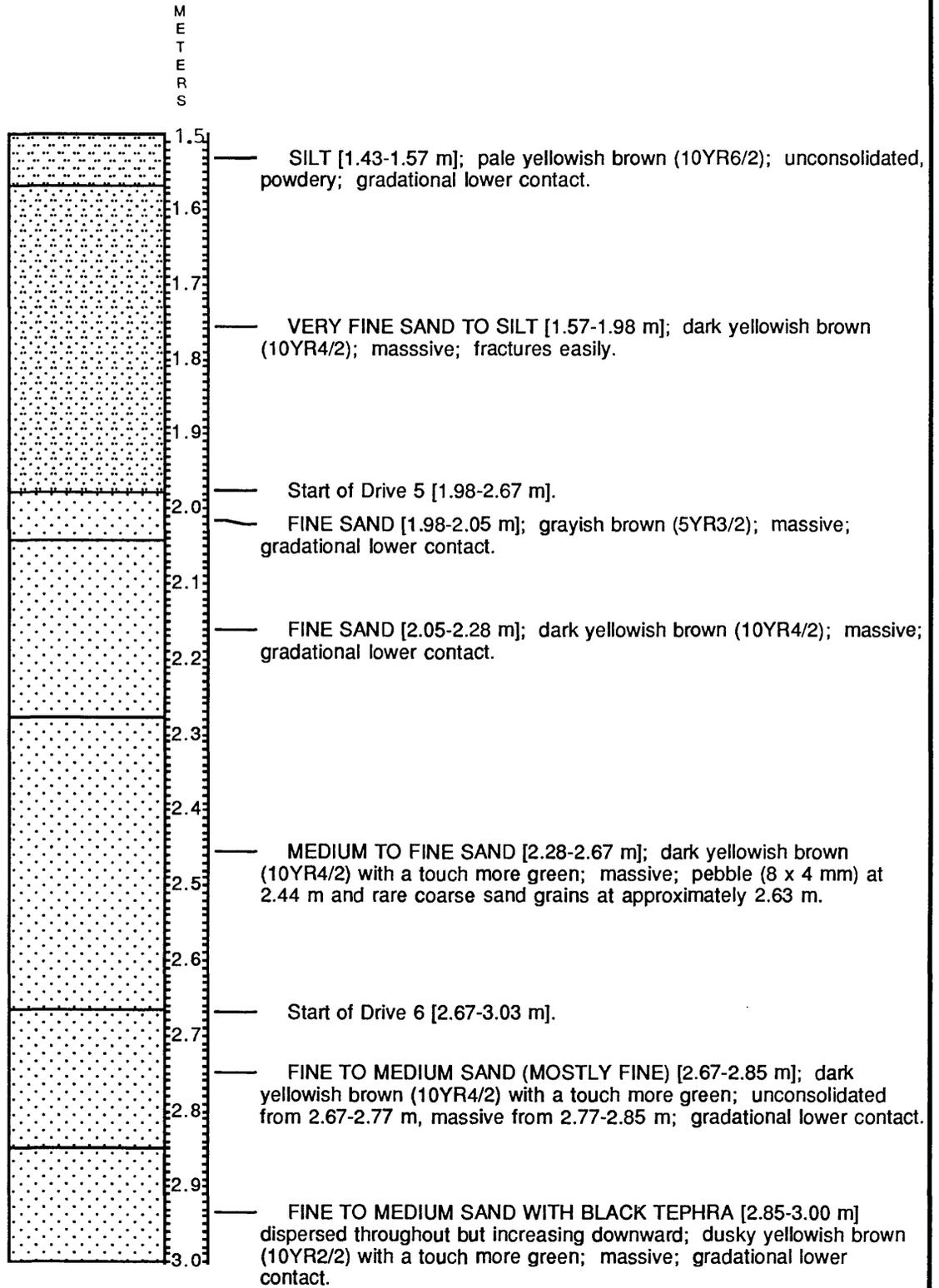


Appendix B
Core 1 Lithologic Log

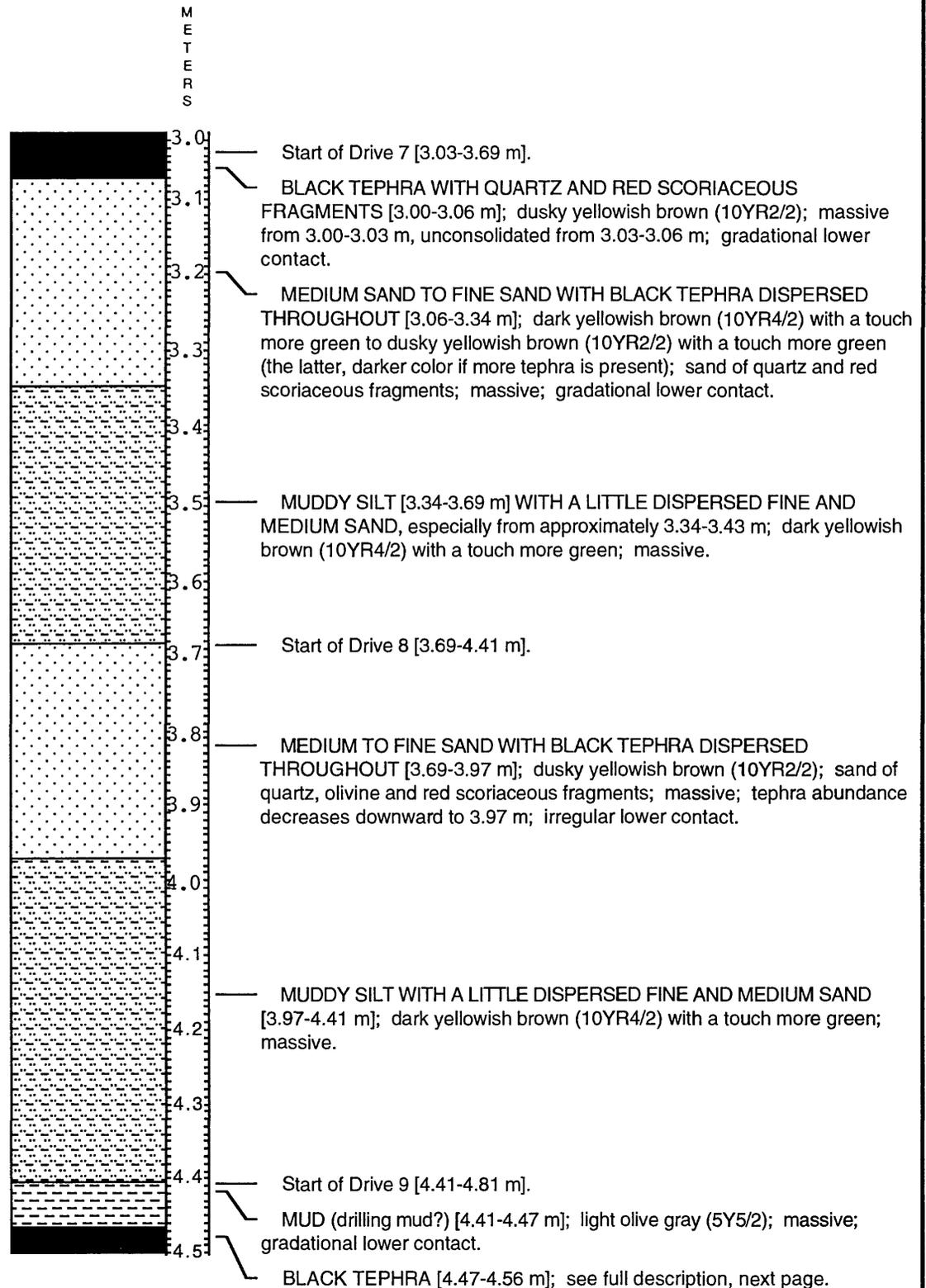
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Siskiyou County, California**



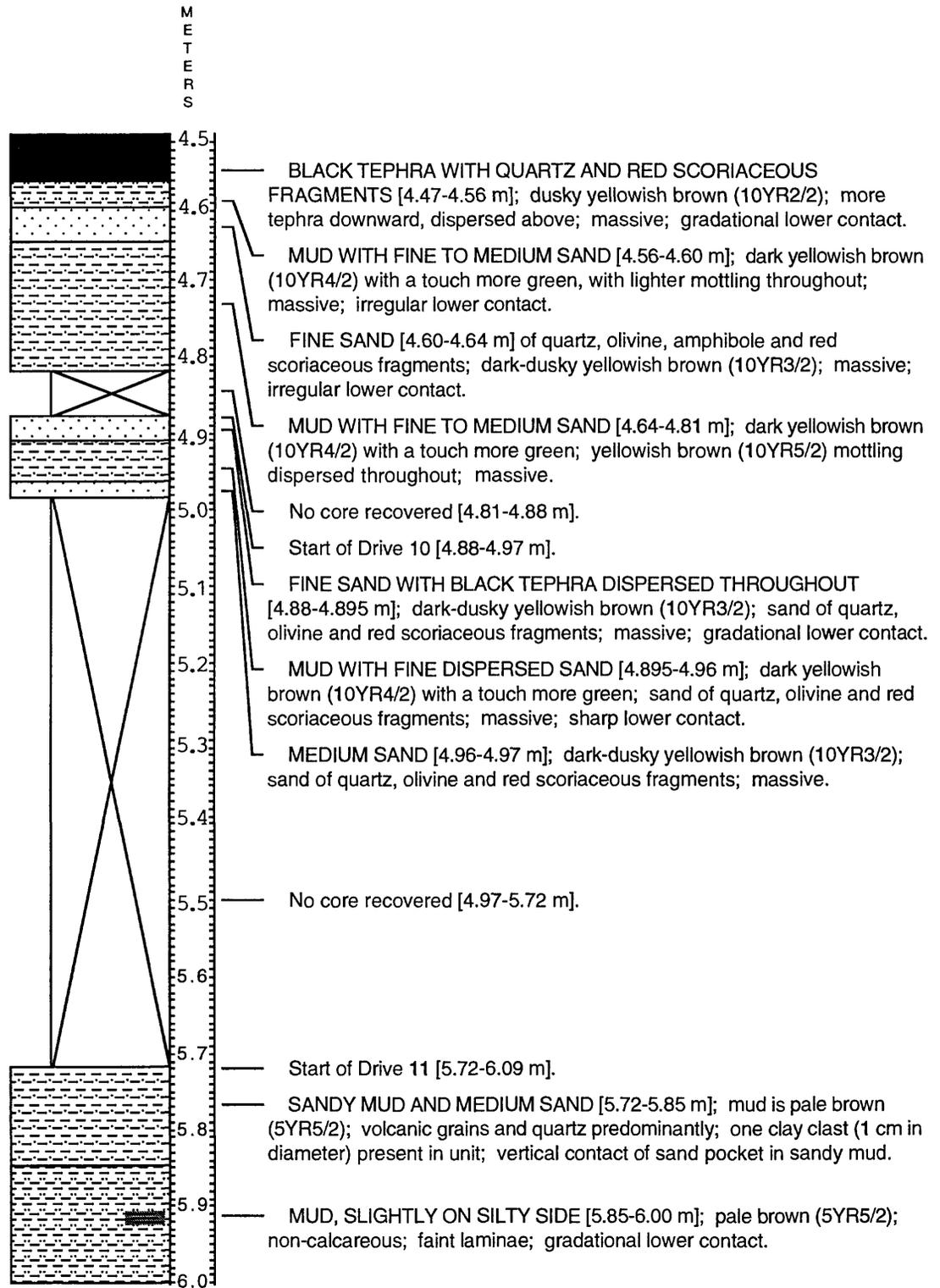
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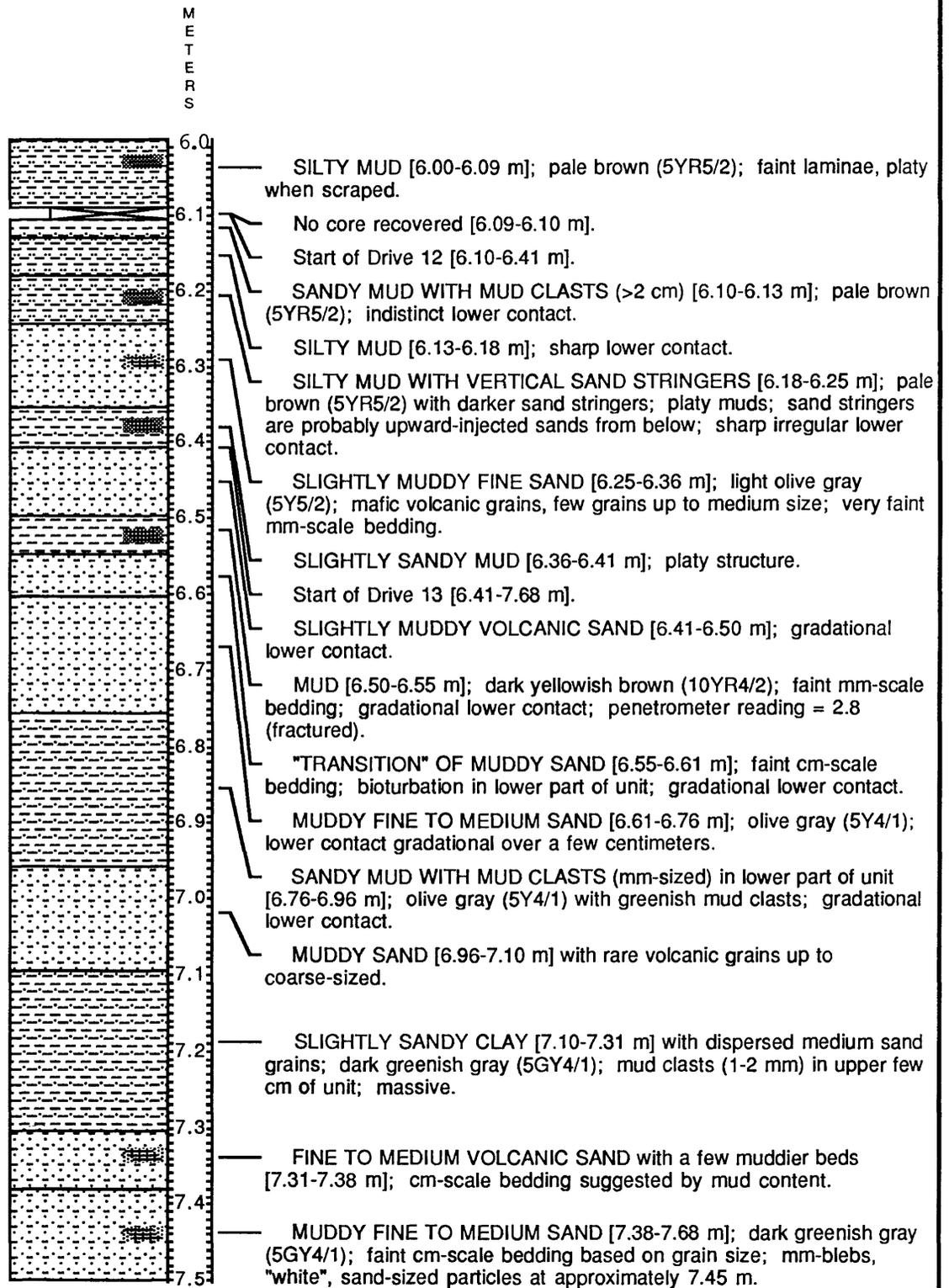
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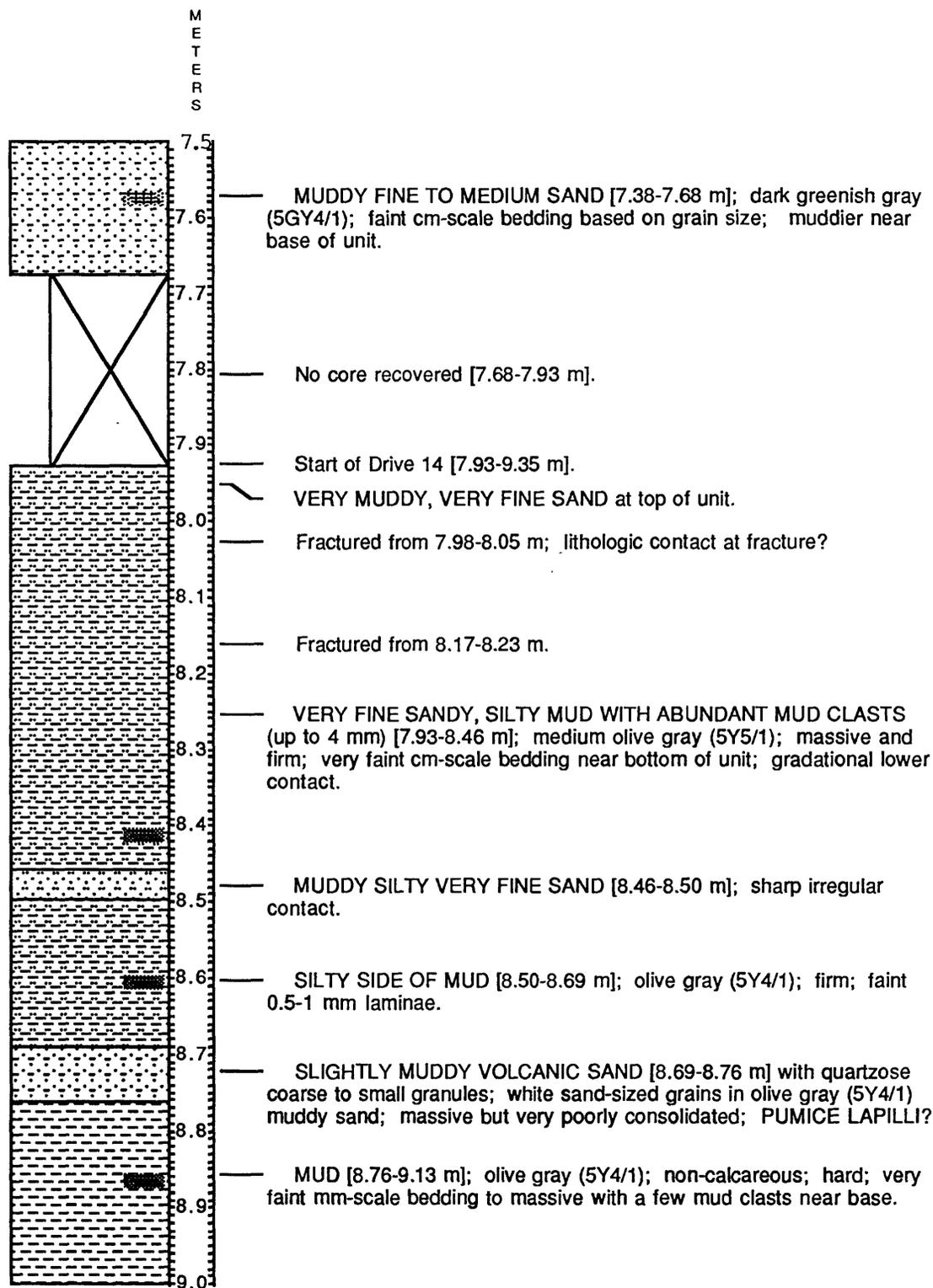
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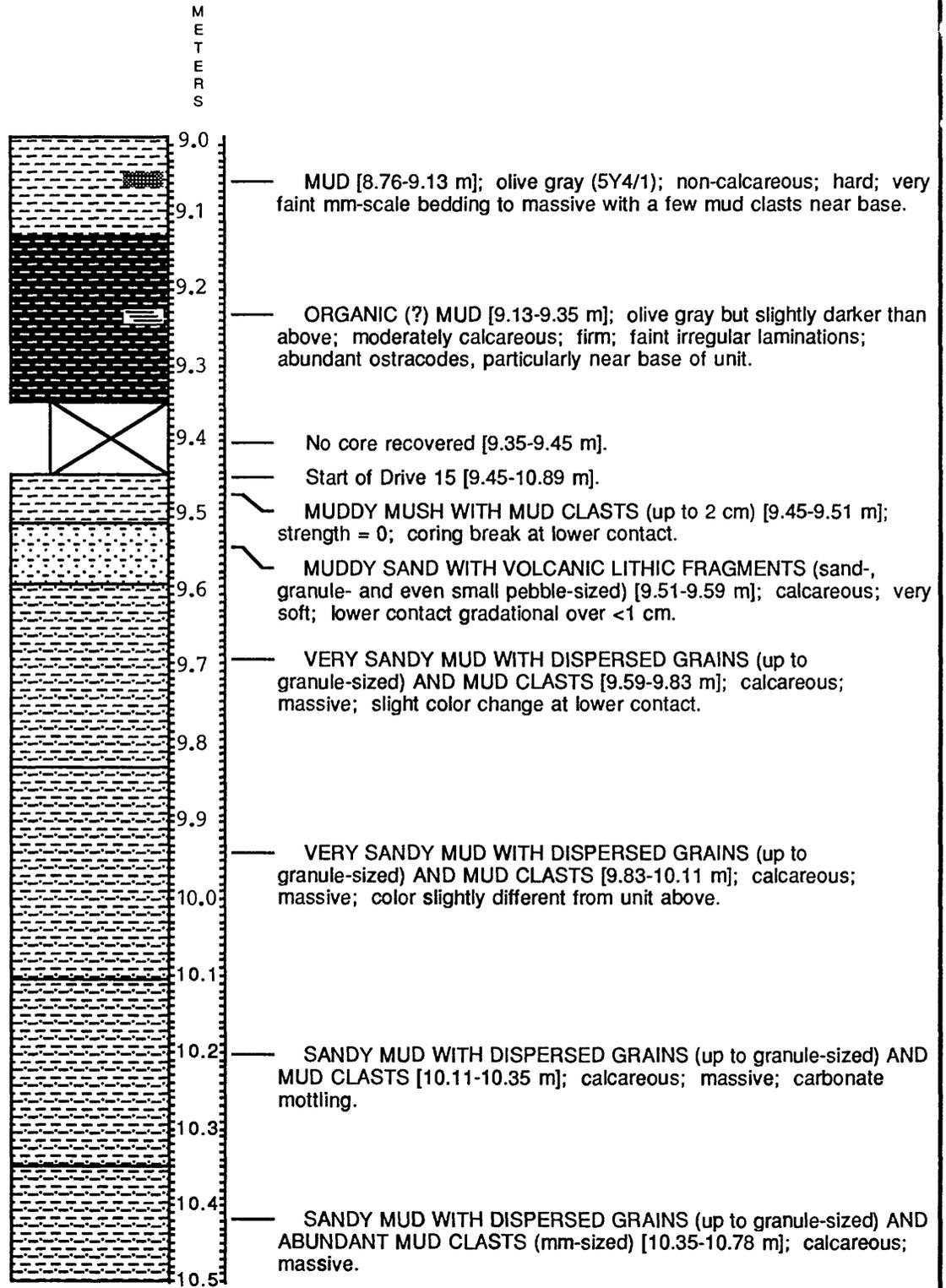
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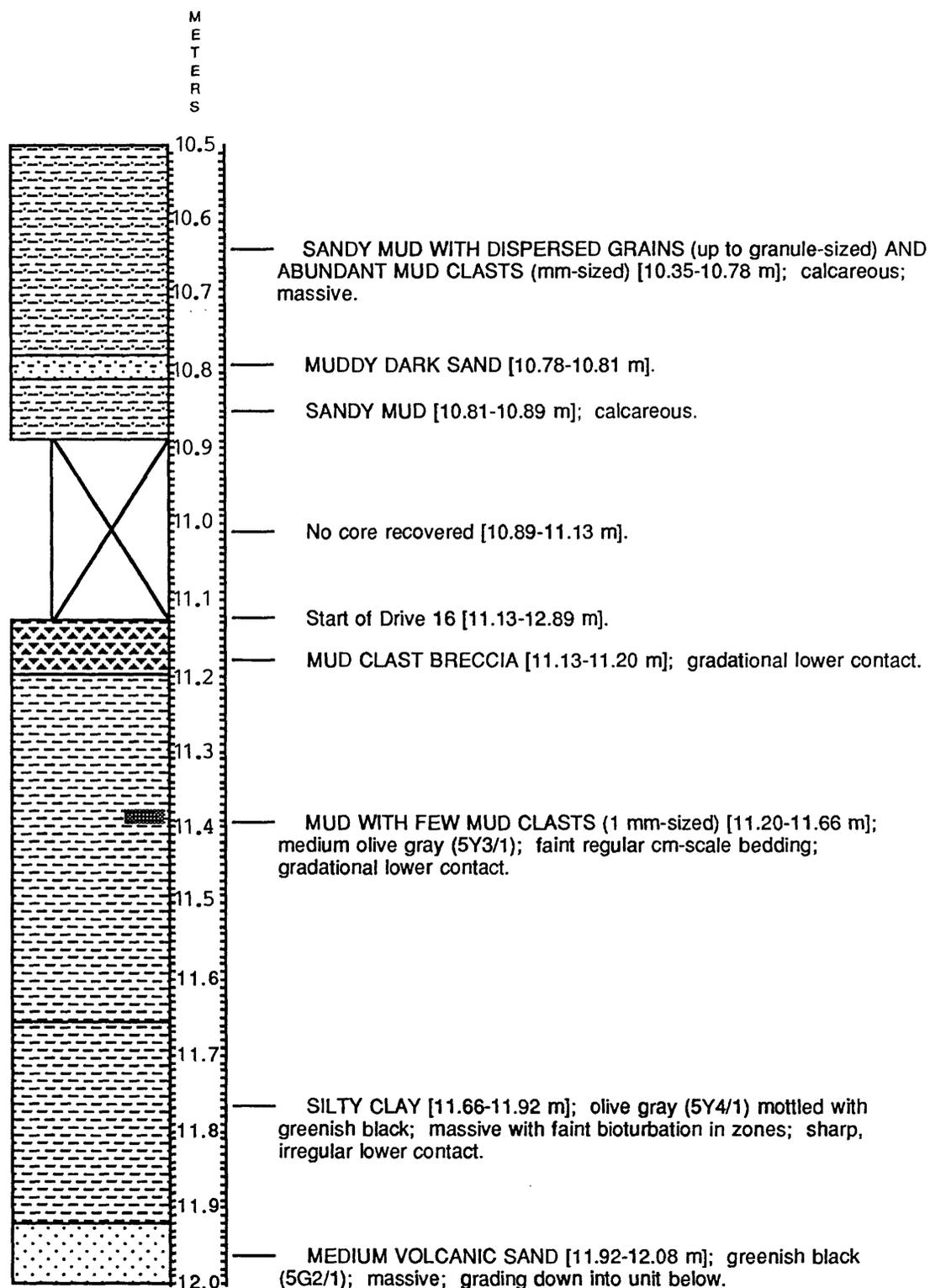
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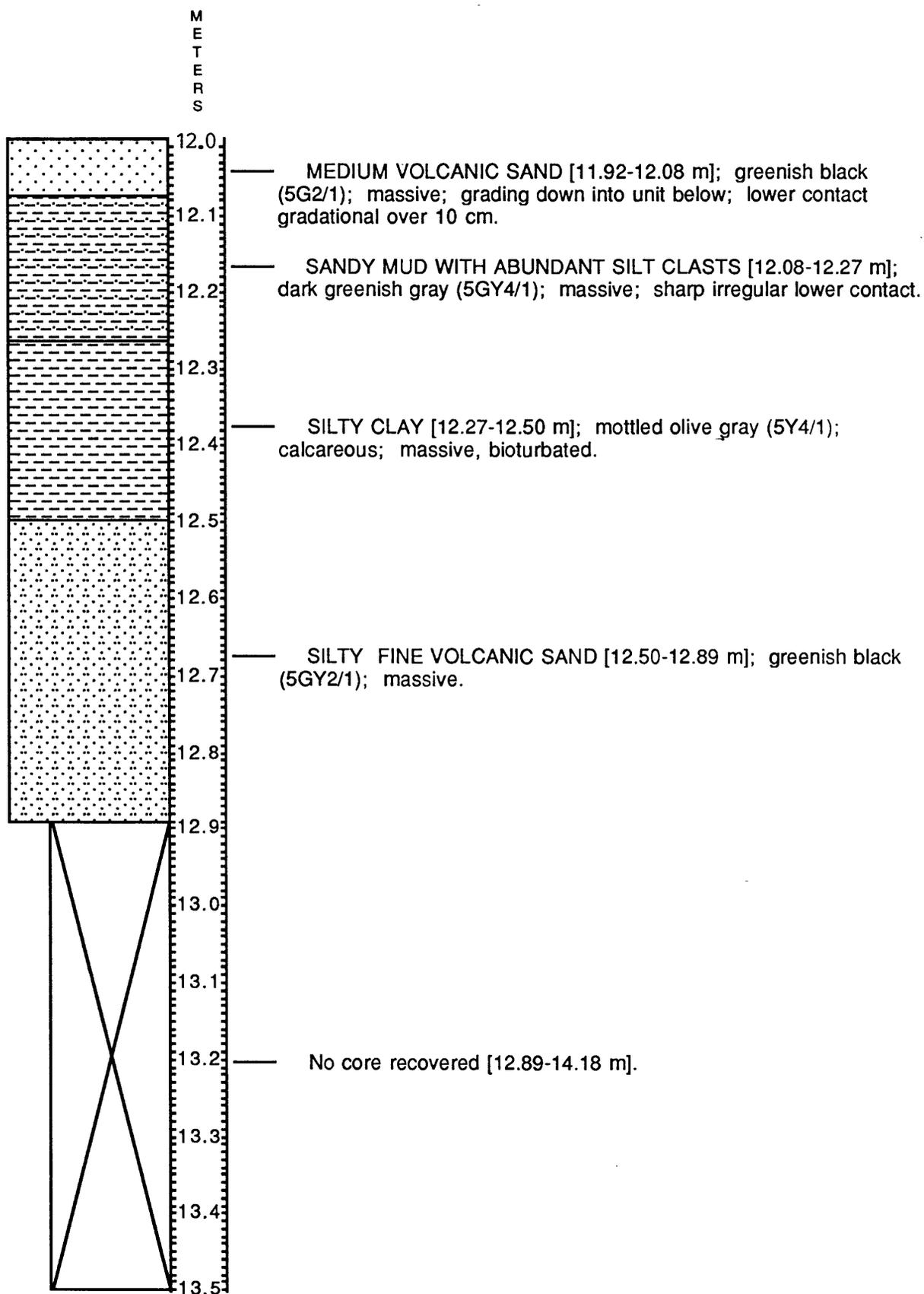
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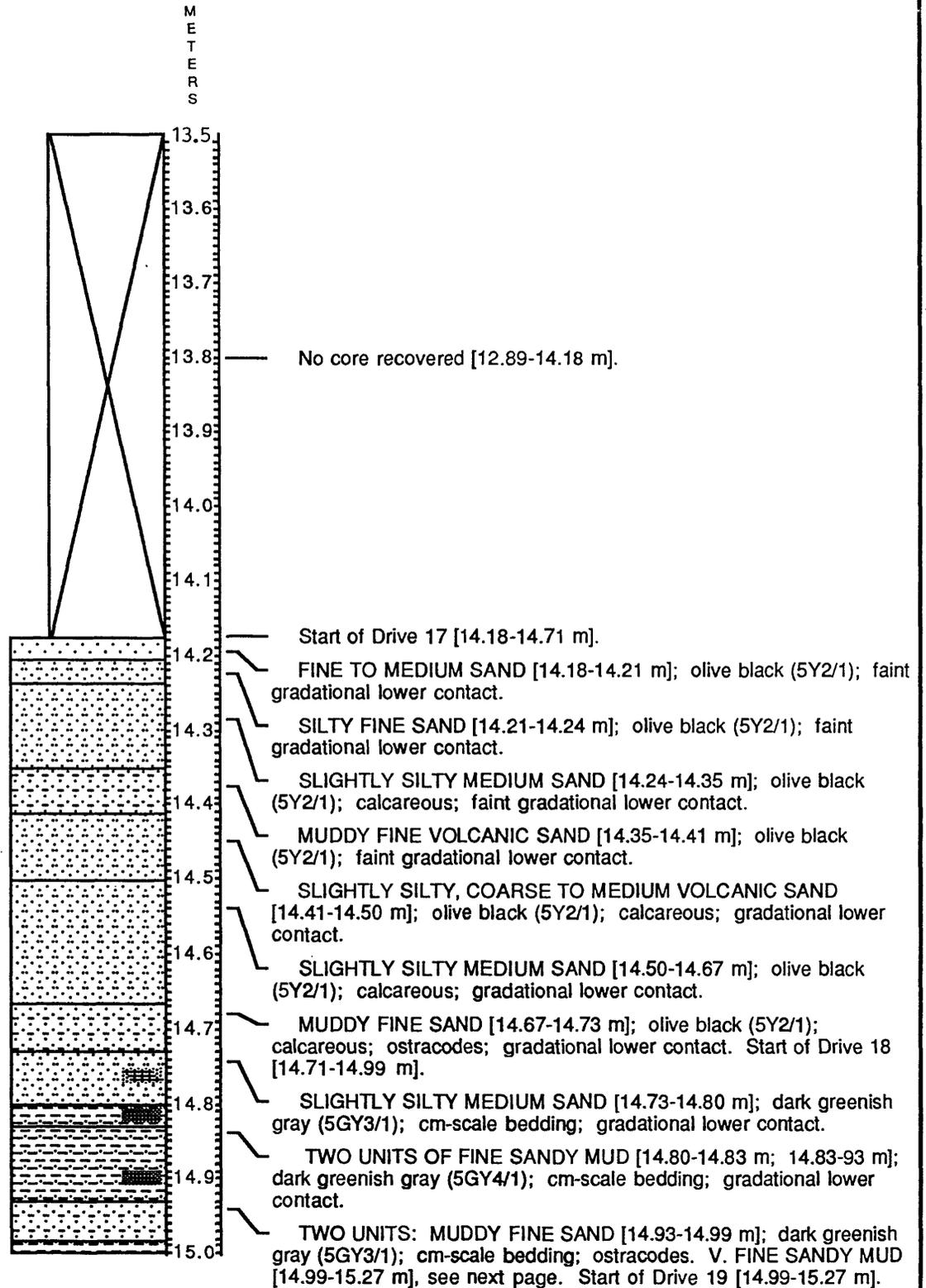
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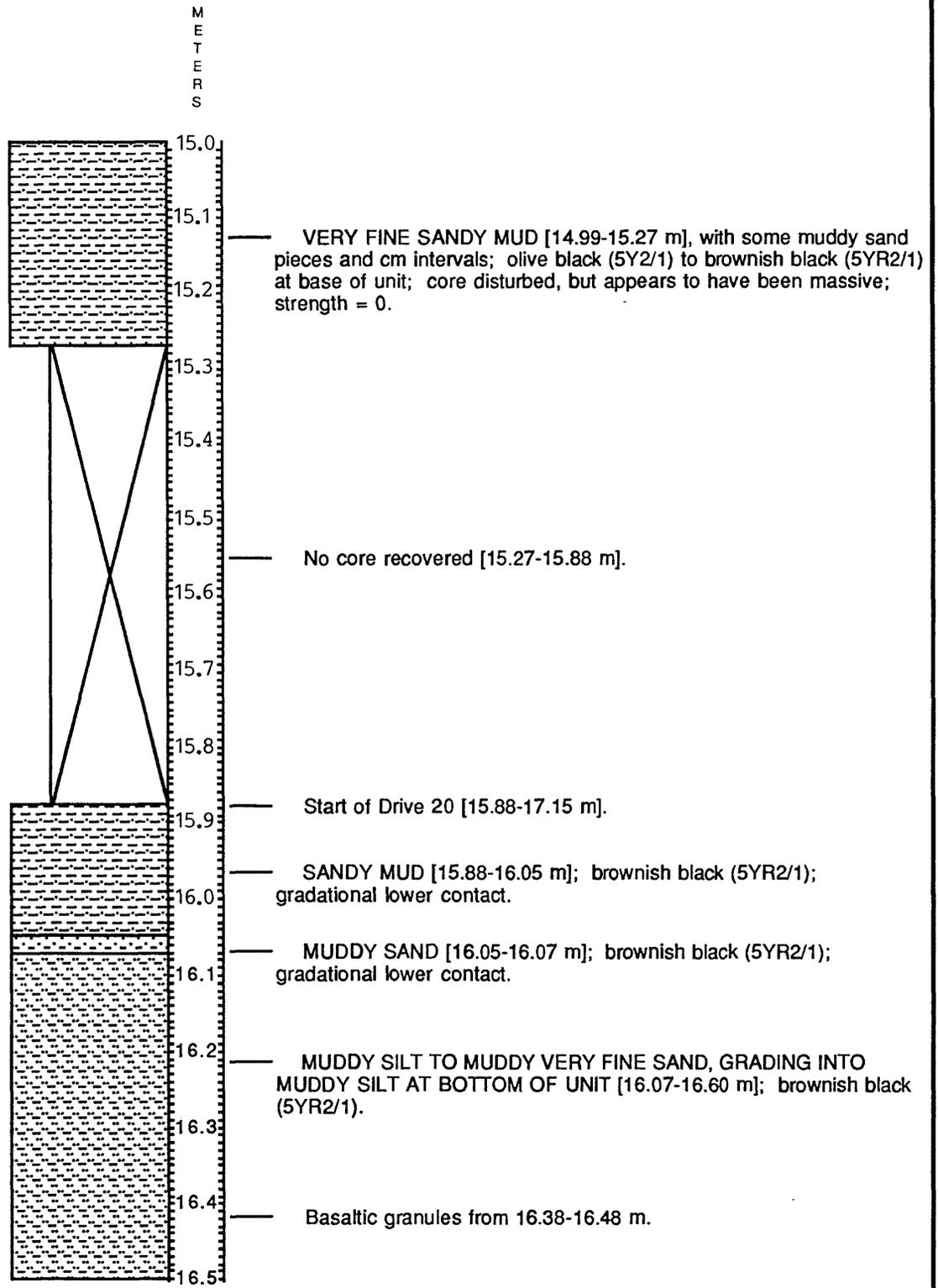
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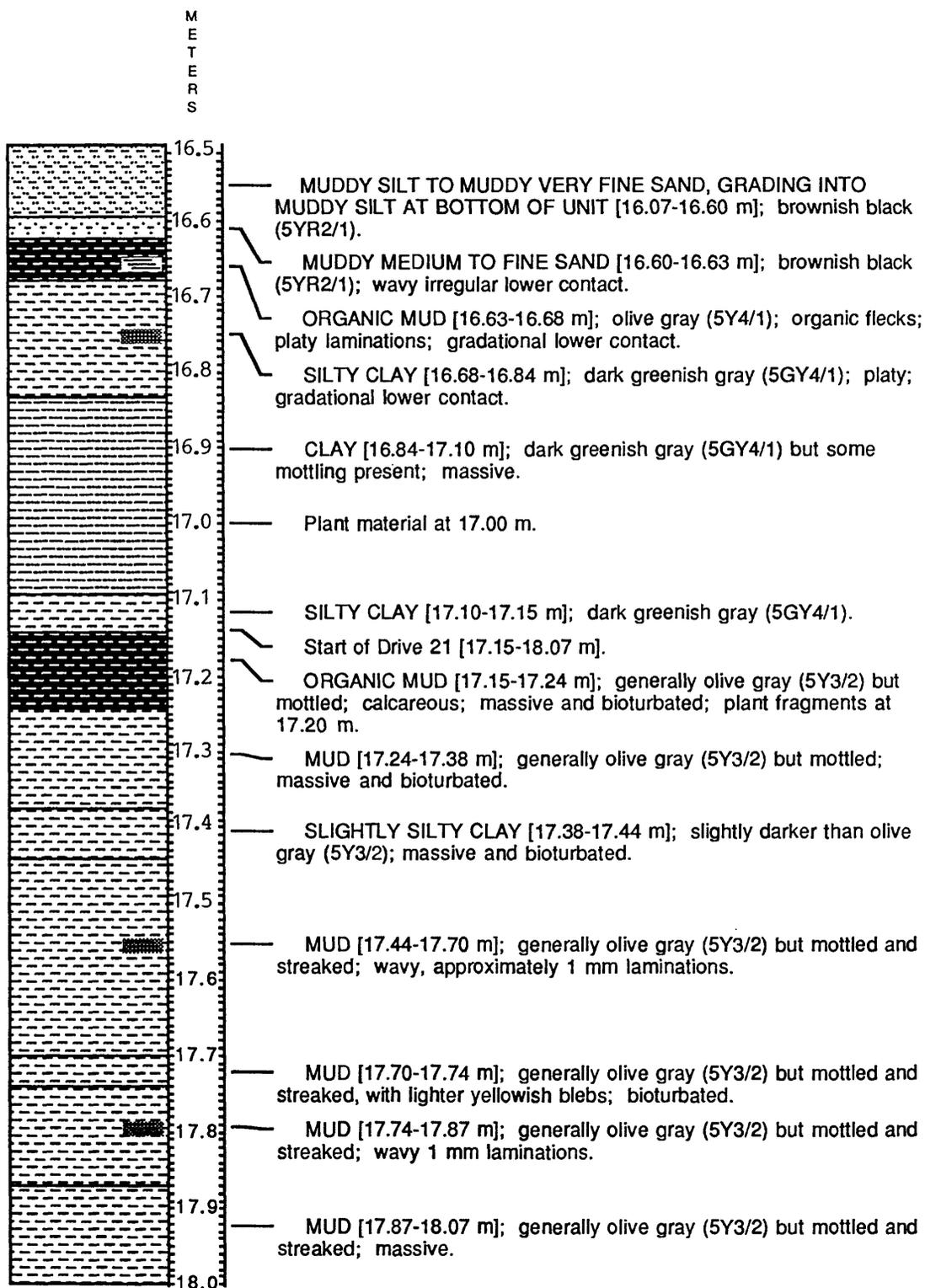
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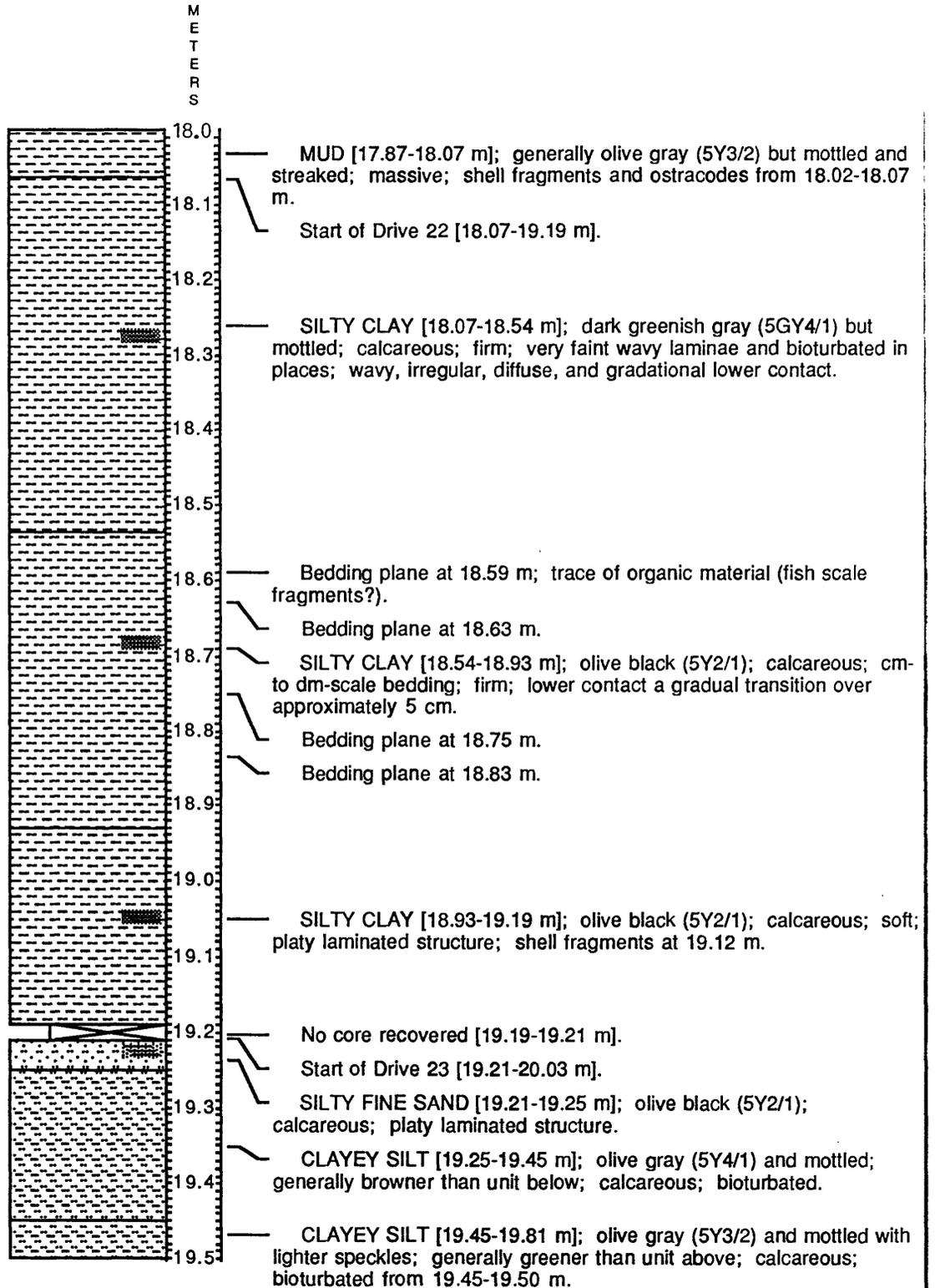
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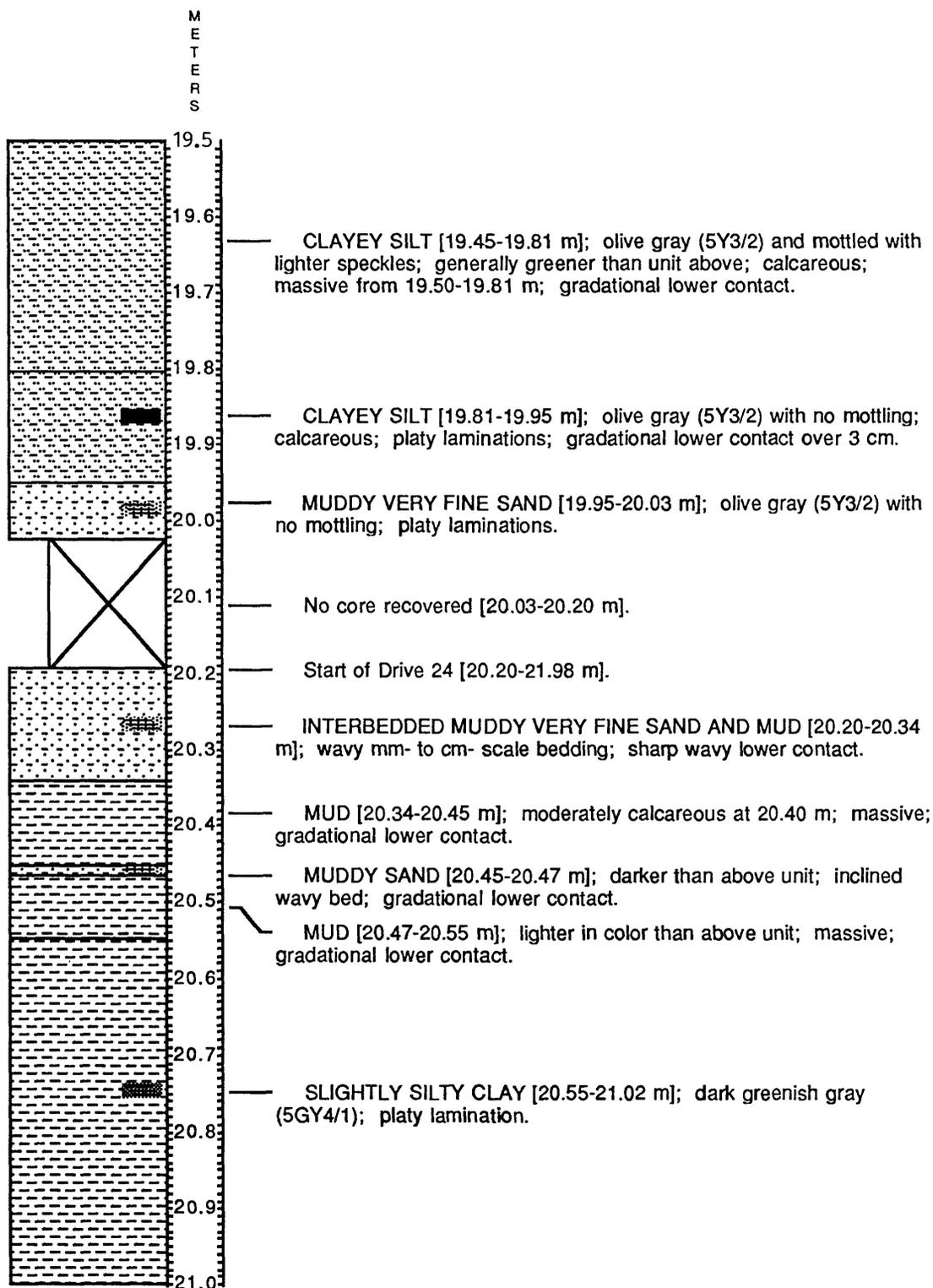
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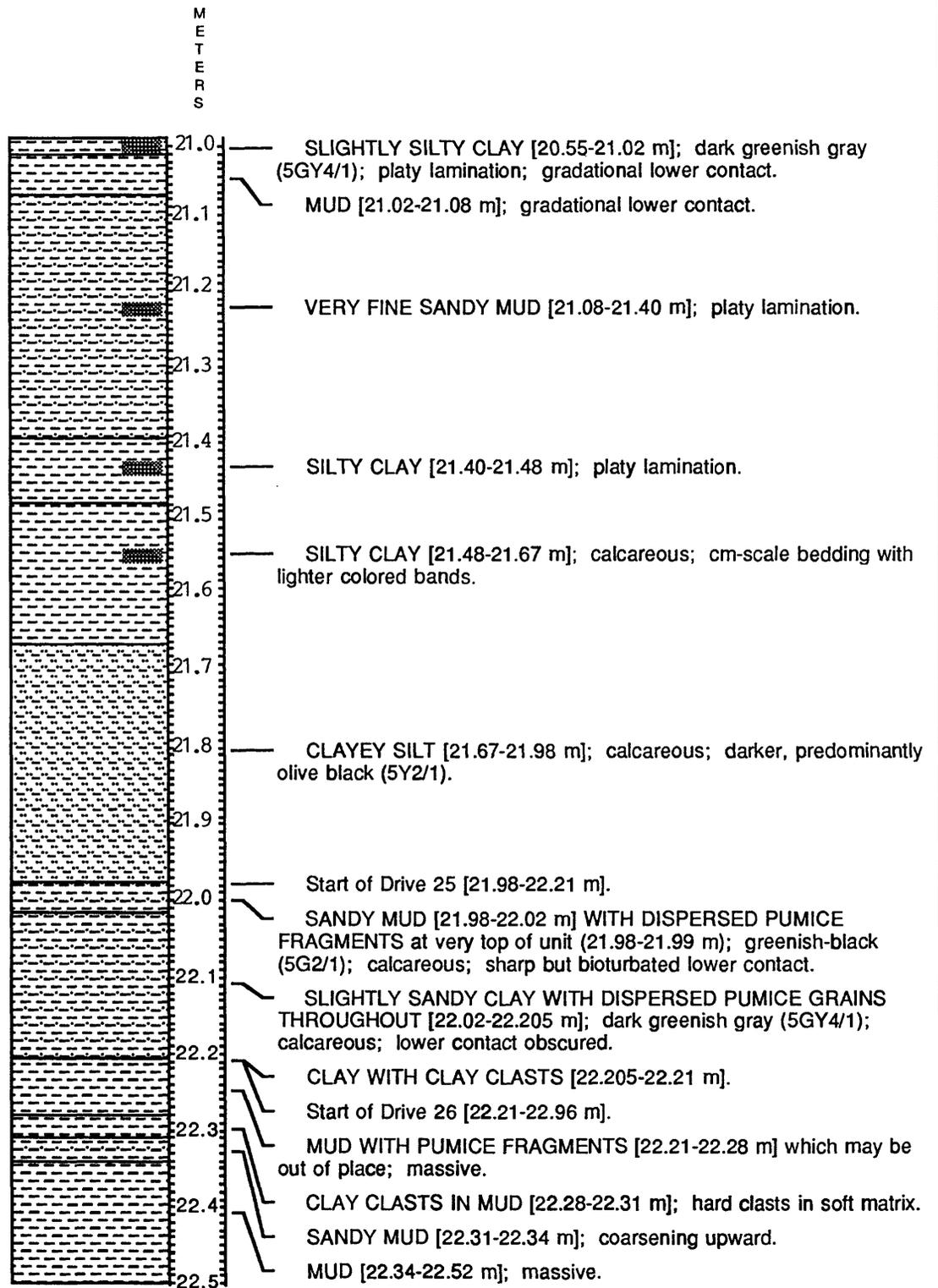
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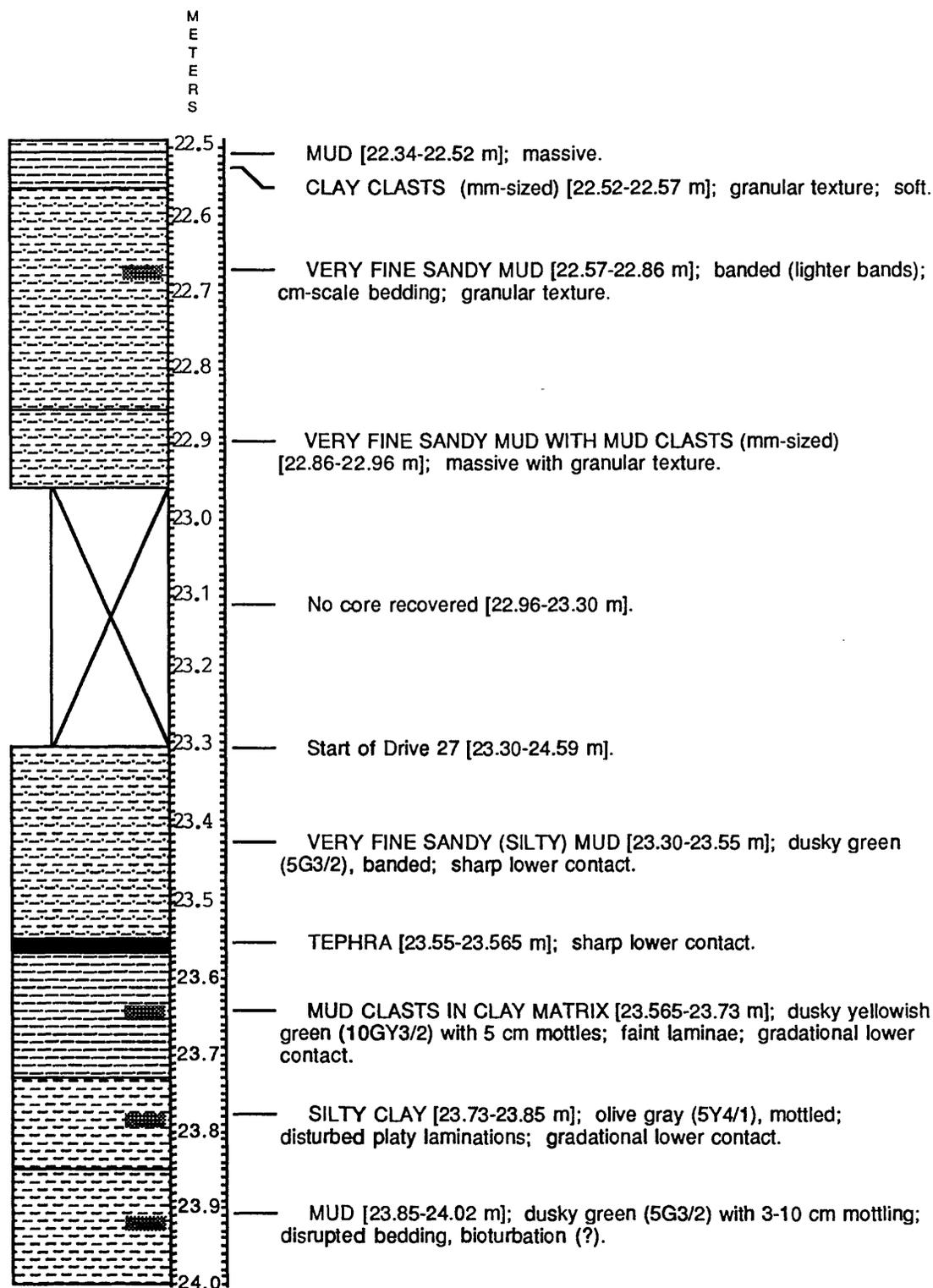
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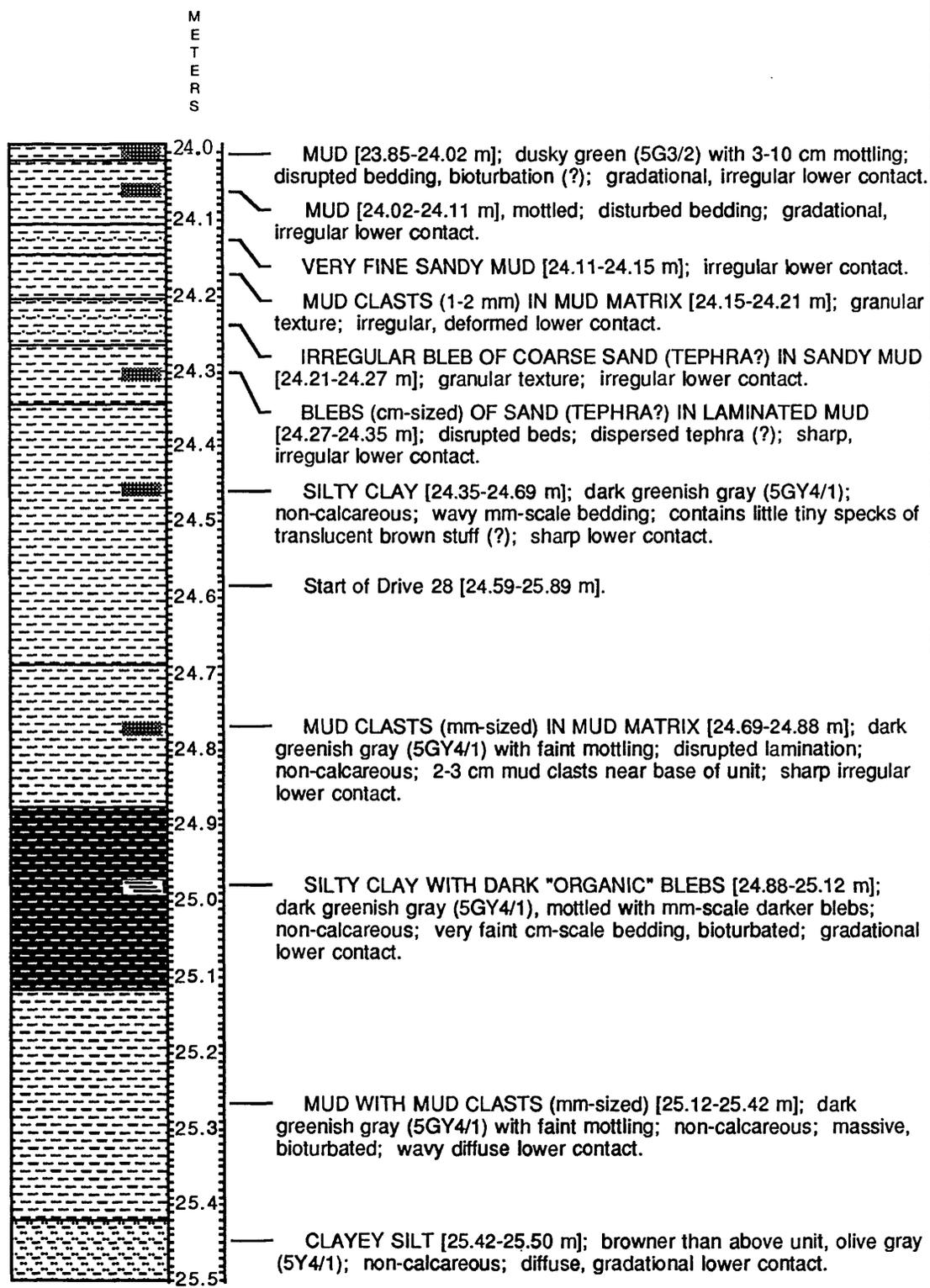
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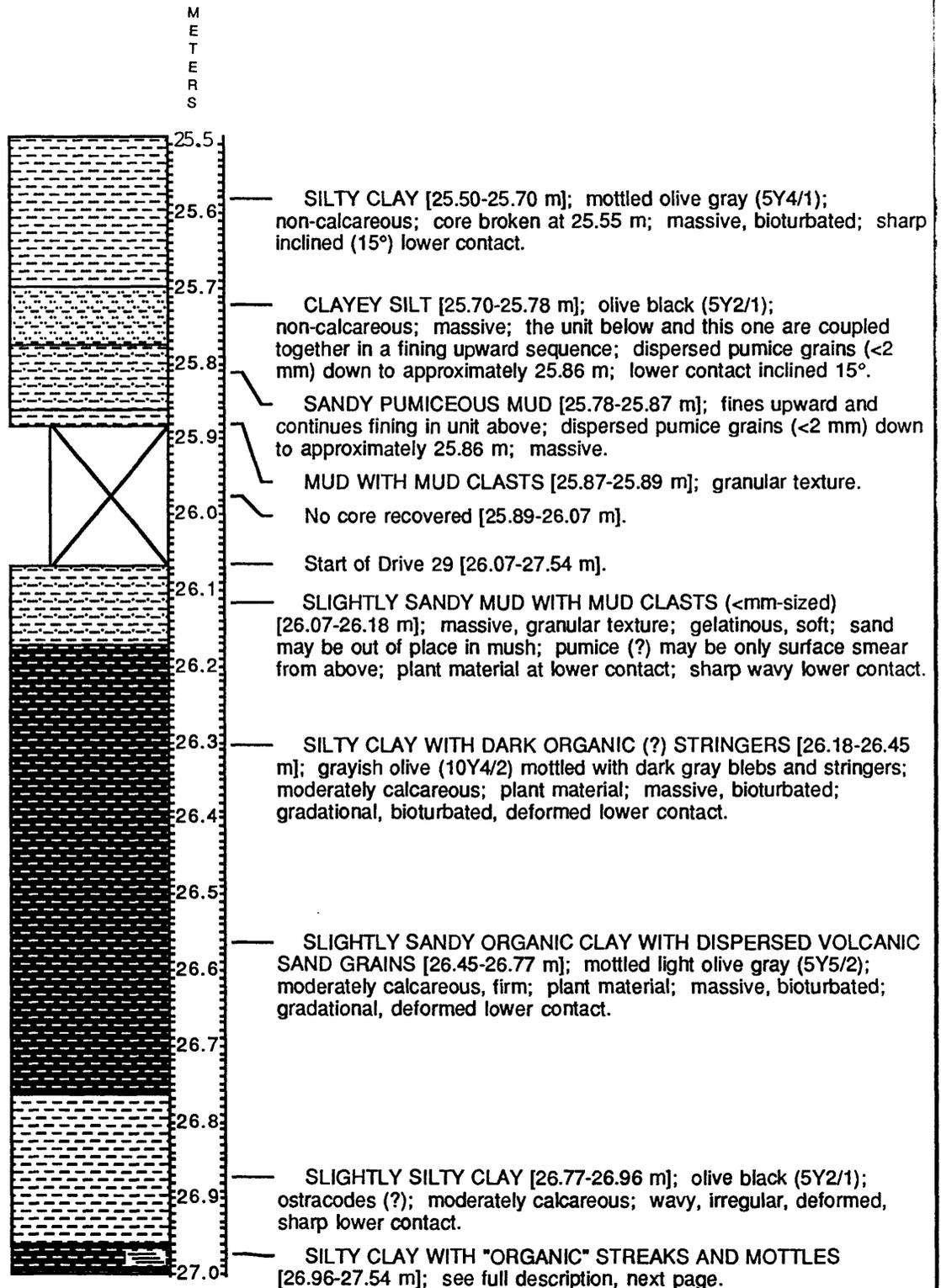
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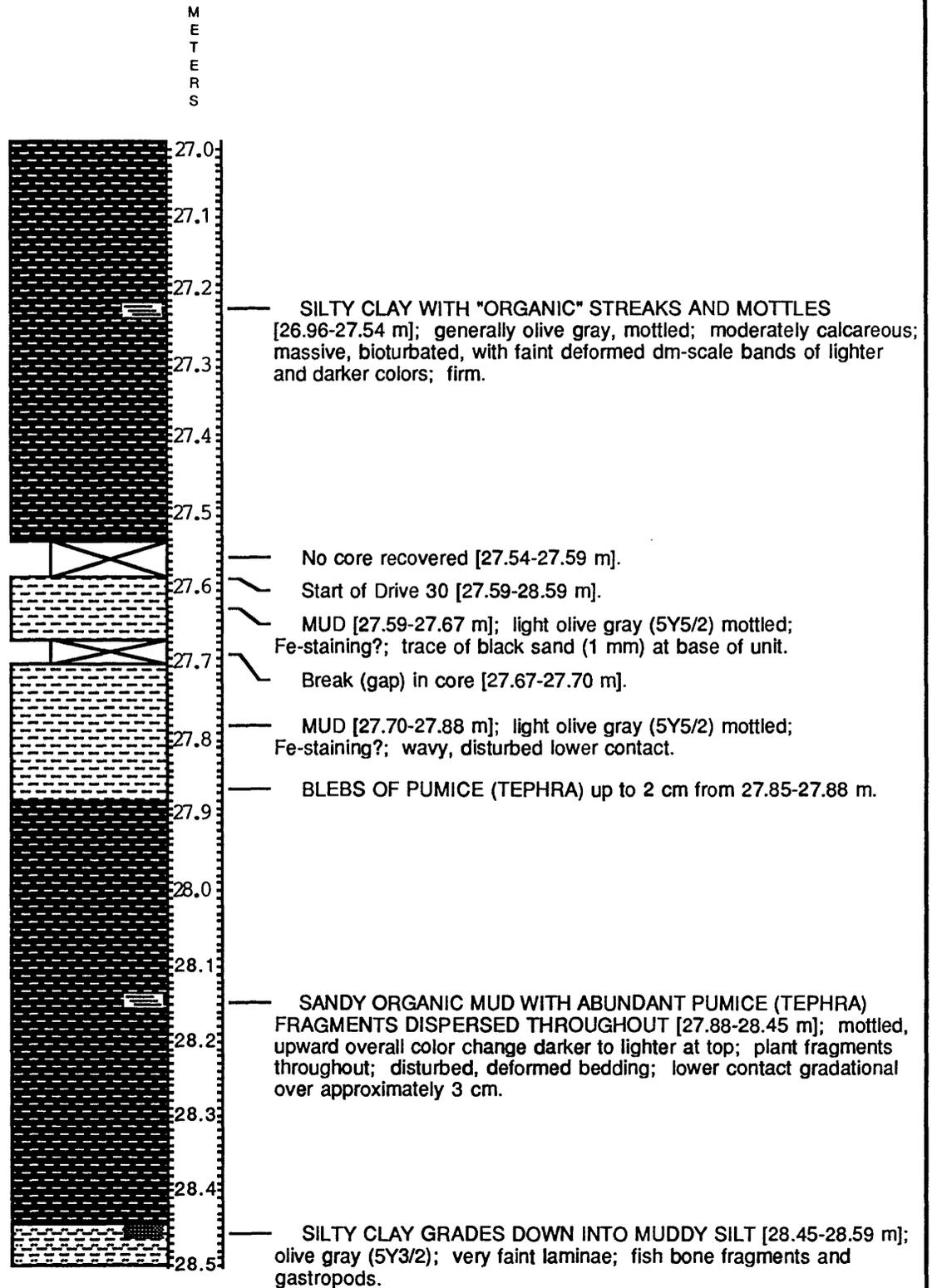
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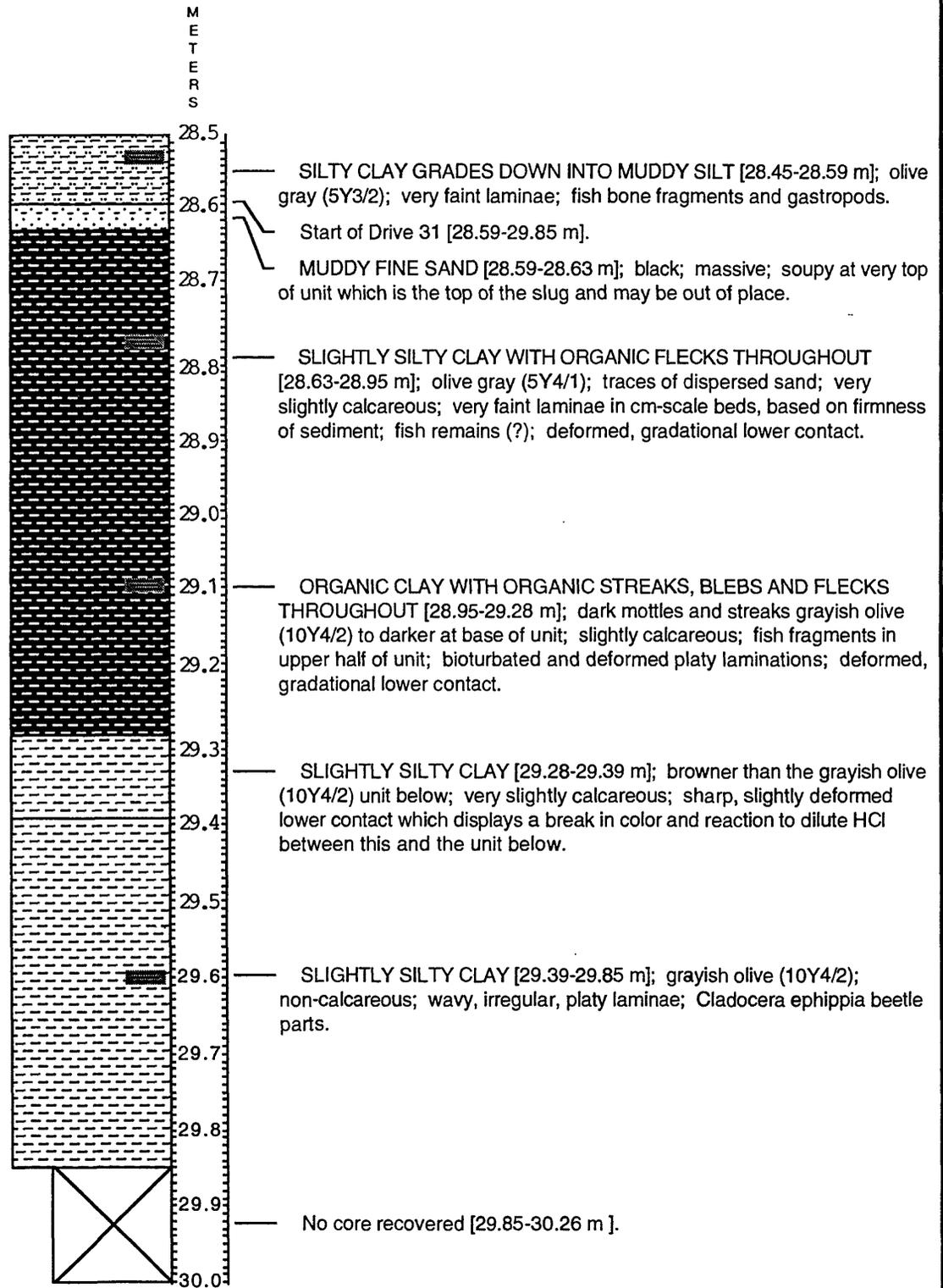
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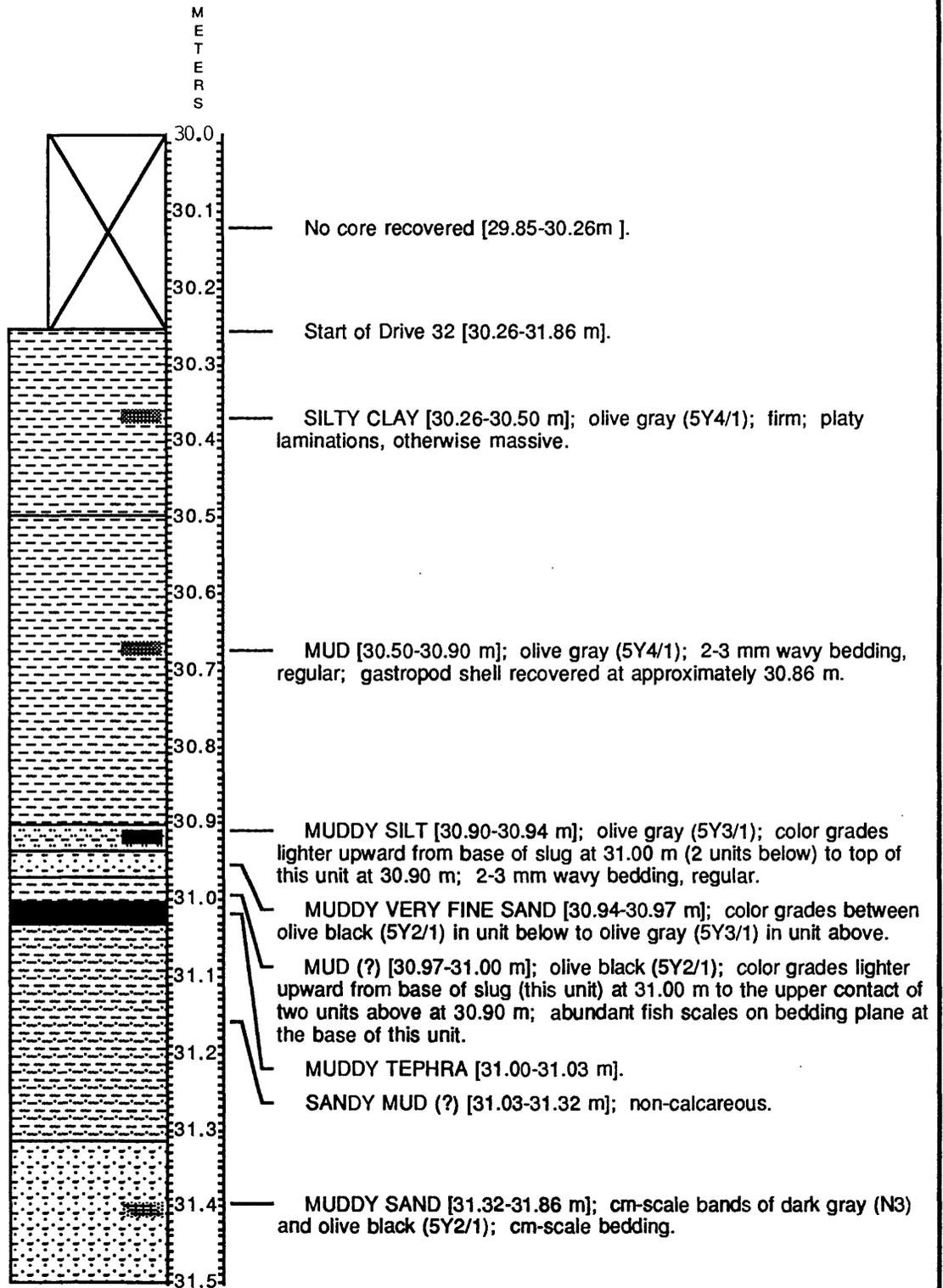
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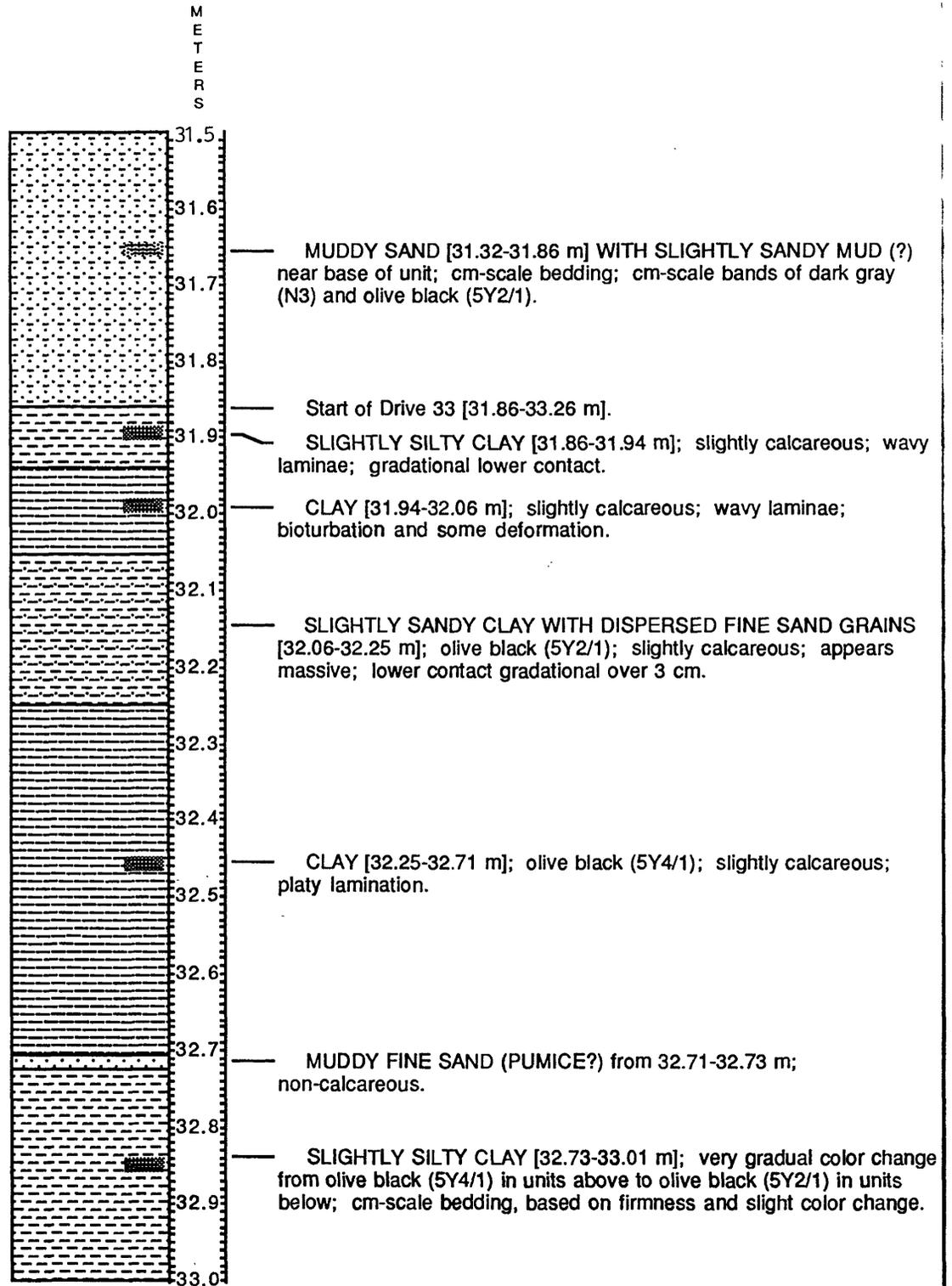
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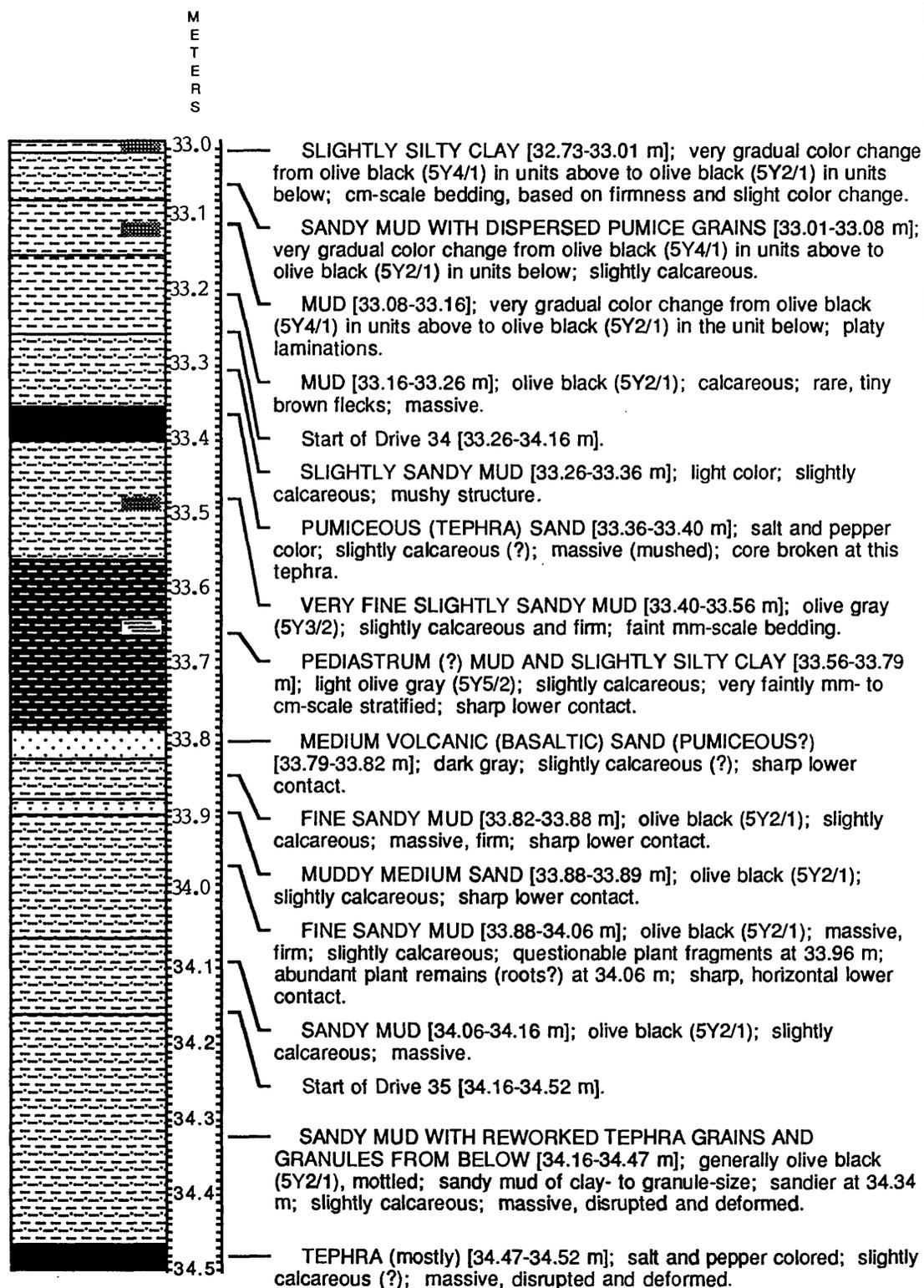
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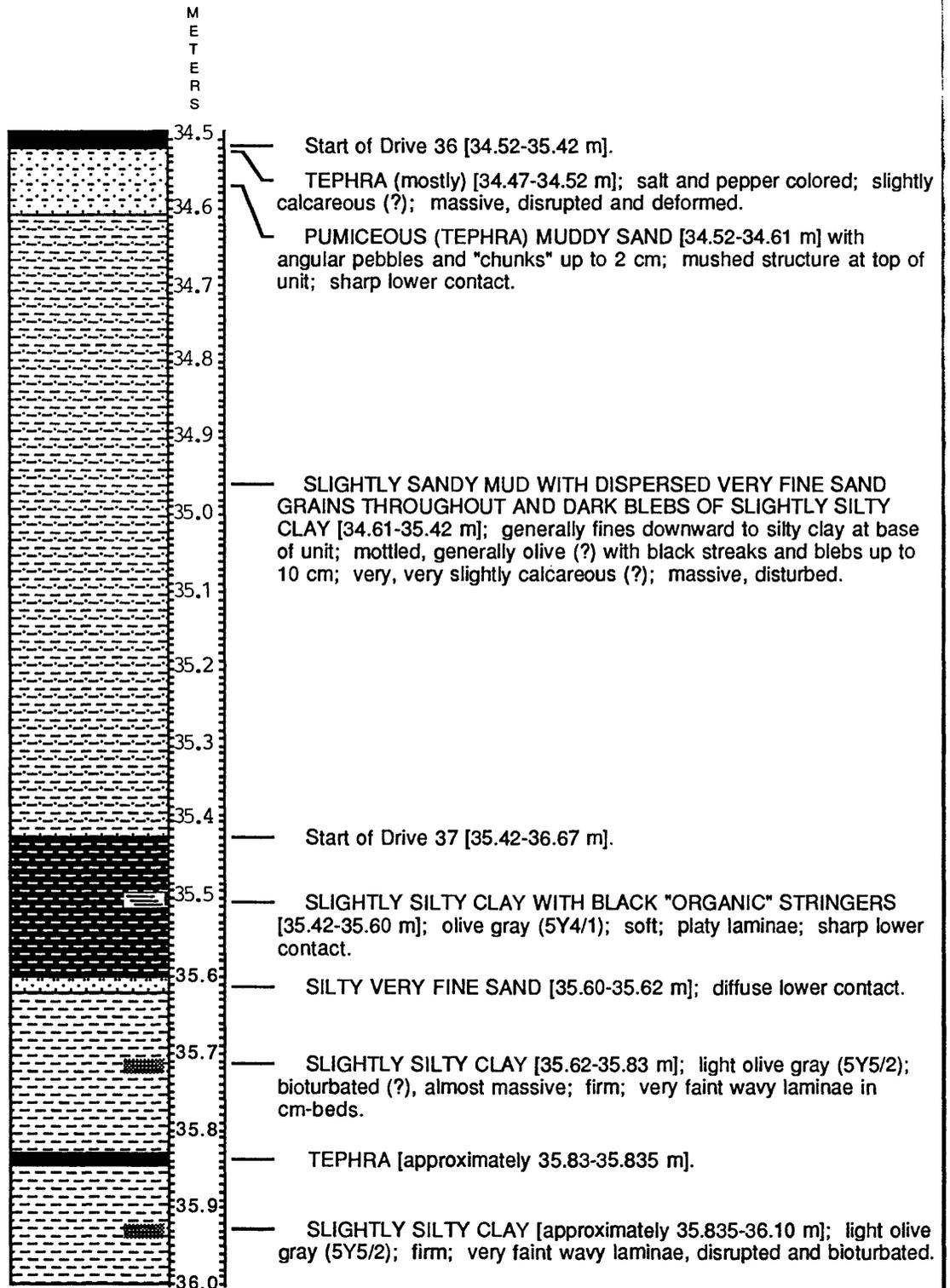
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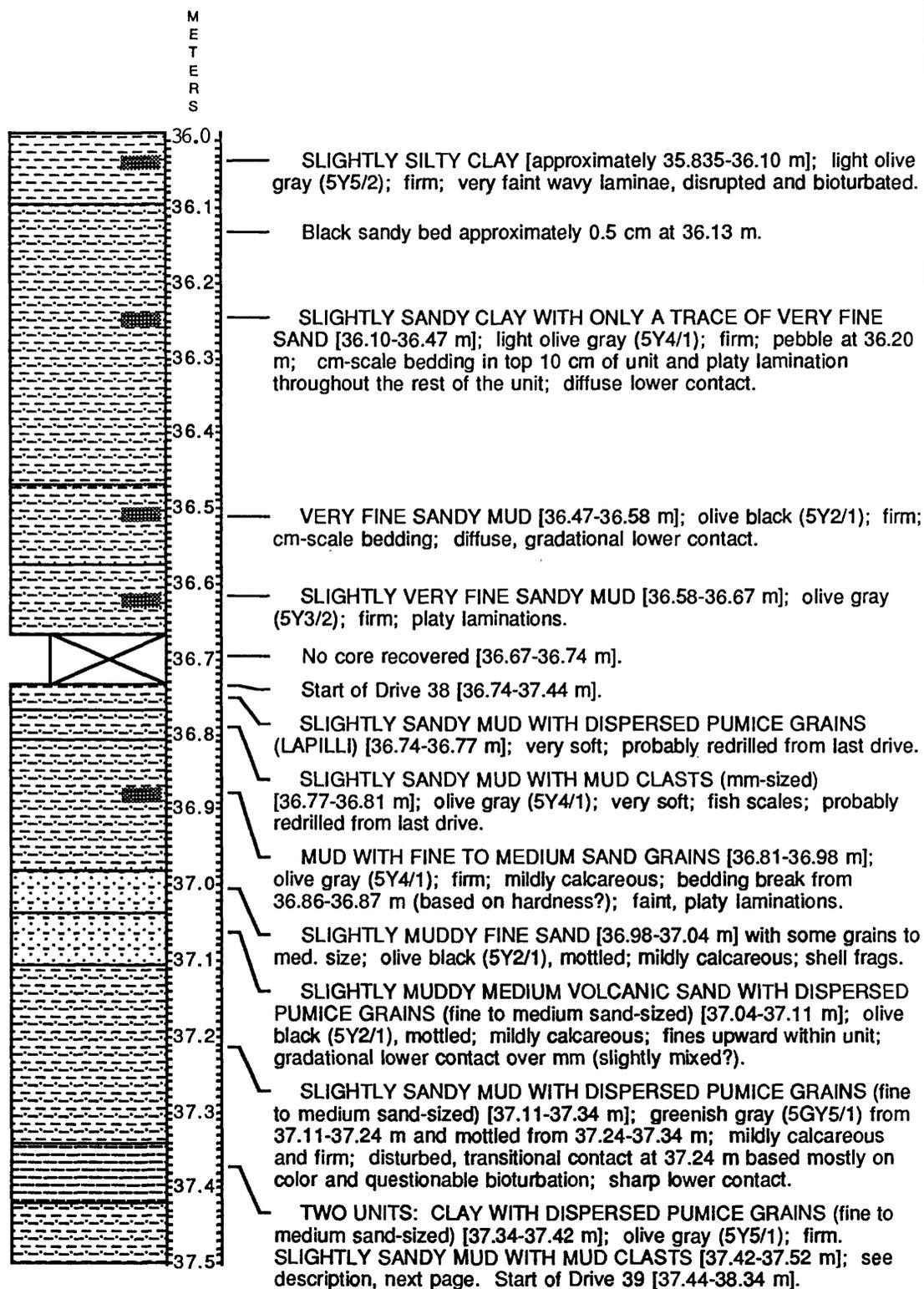
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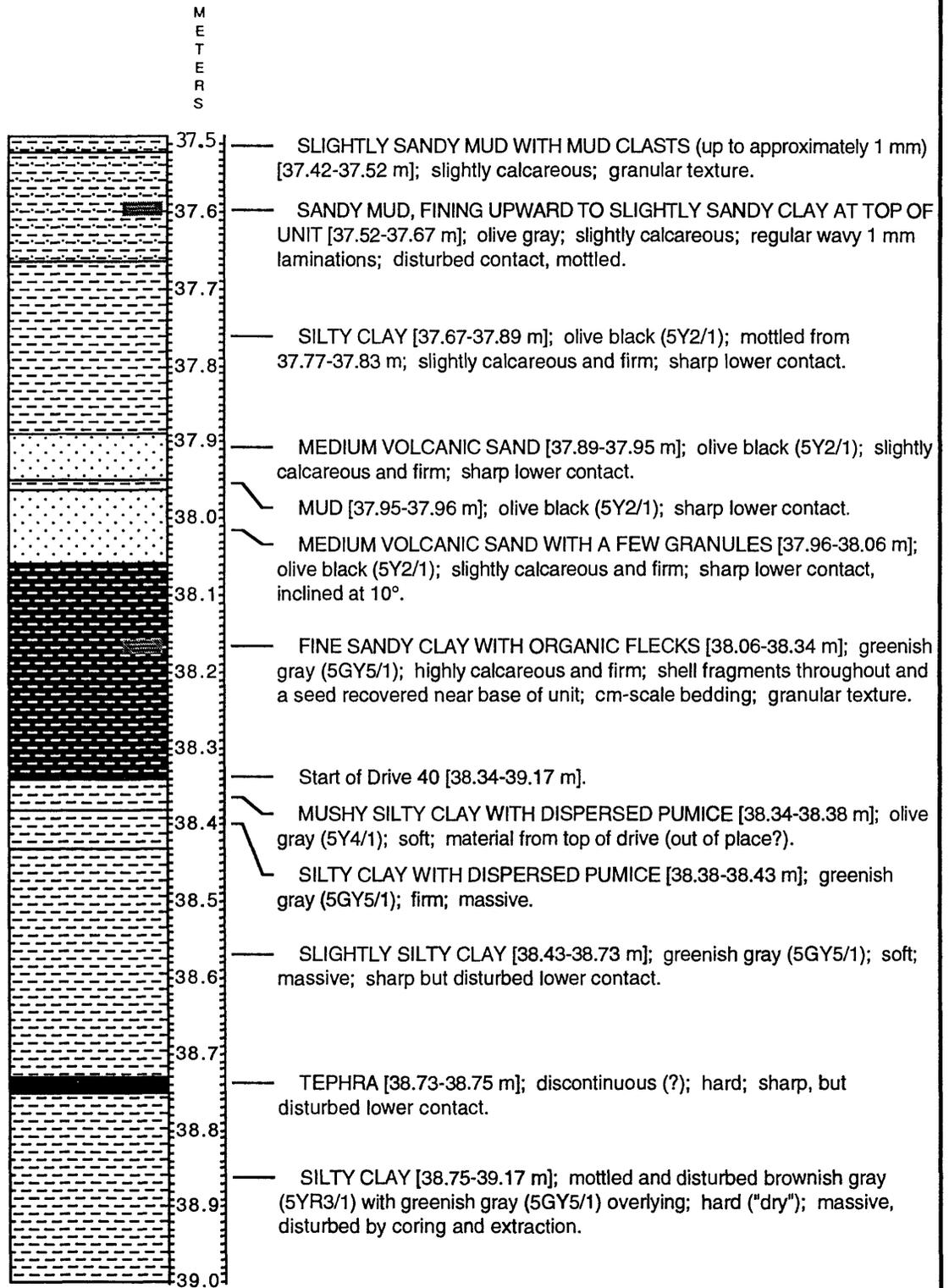
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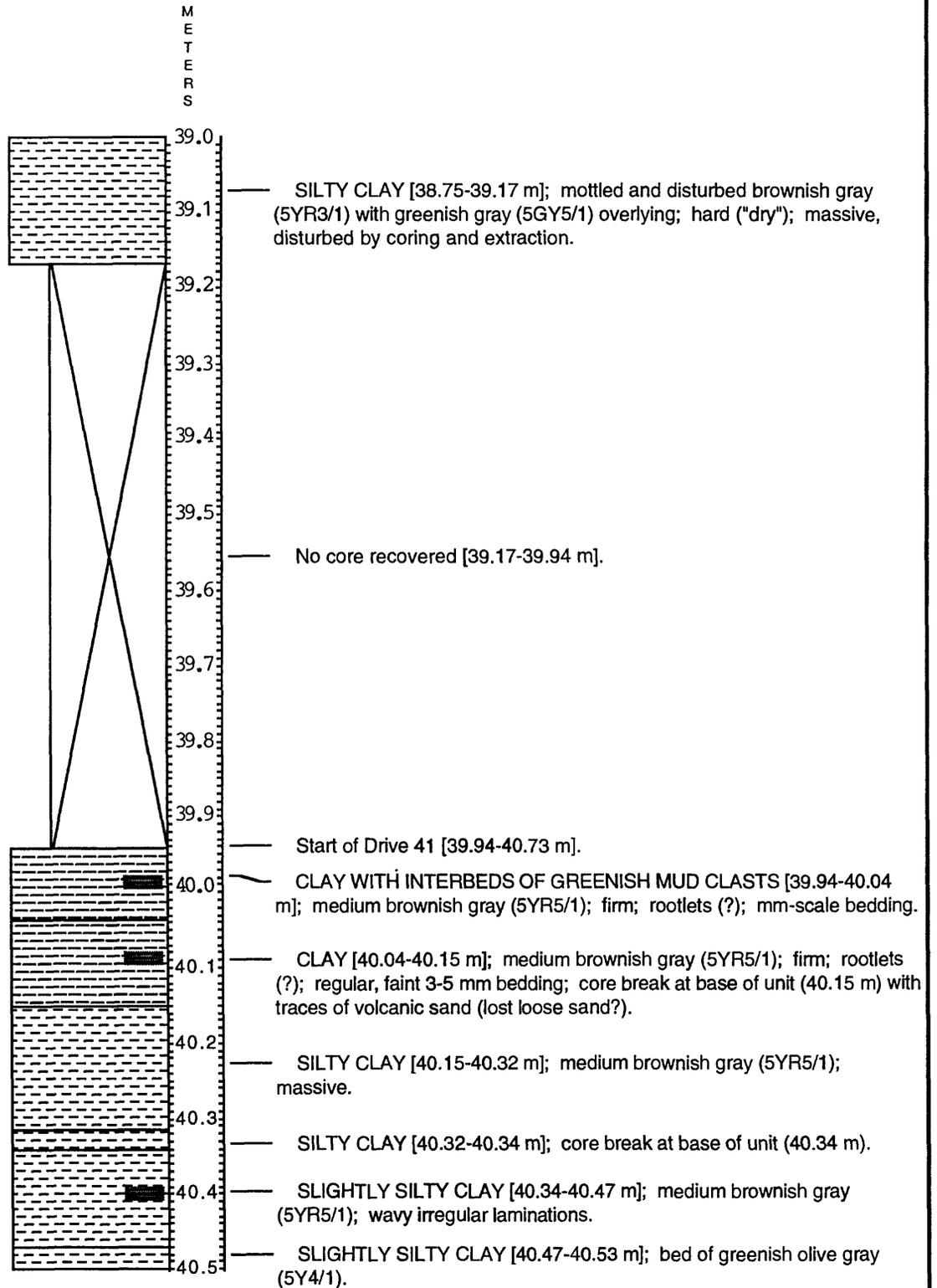
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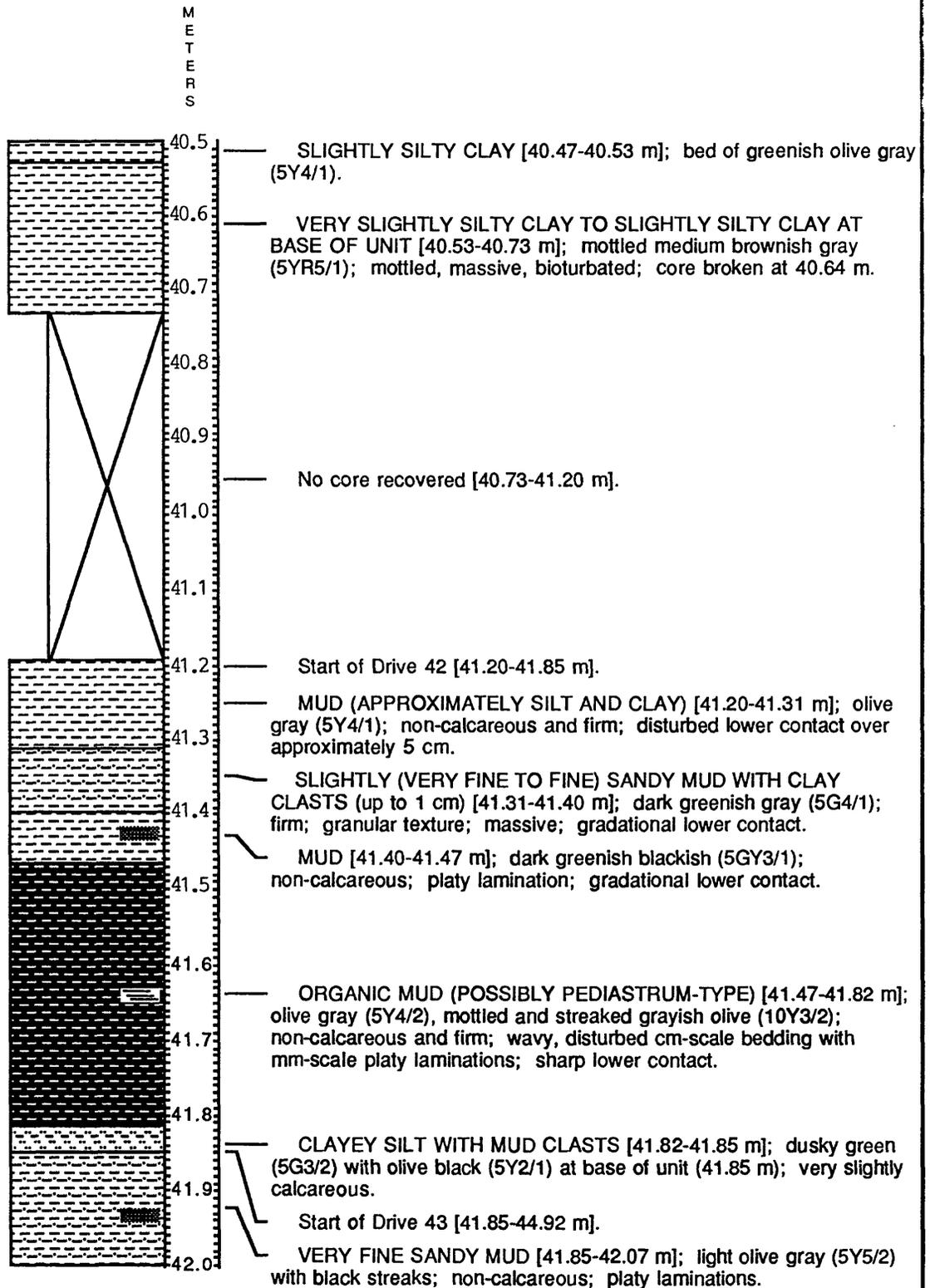
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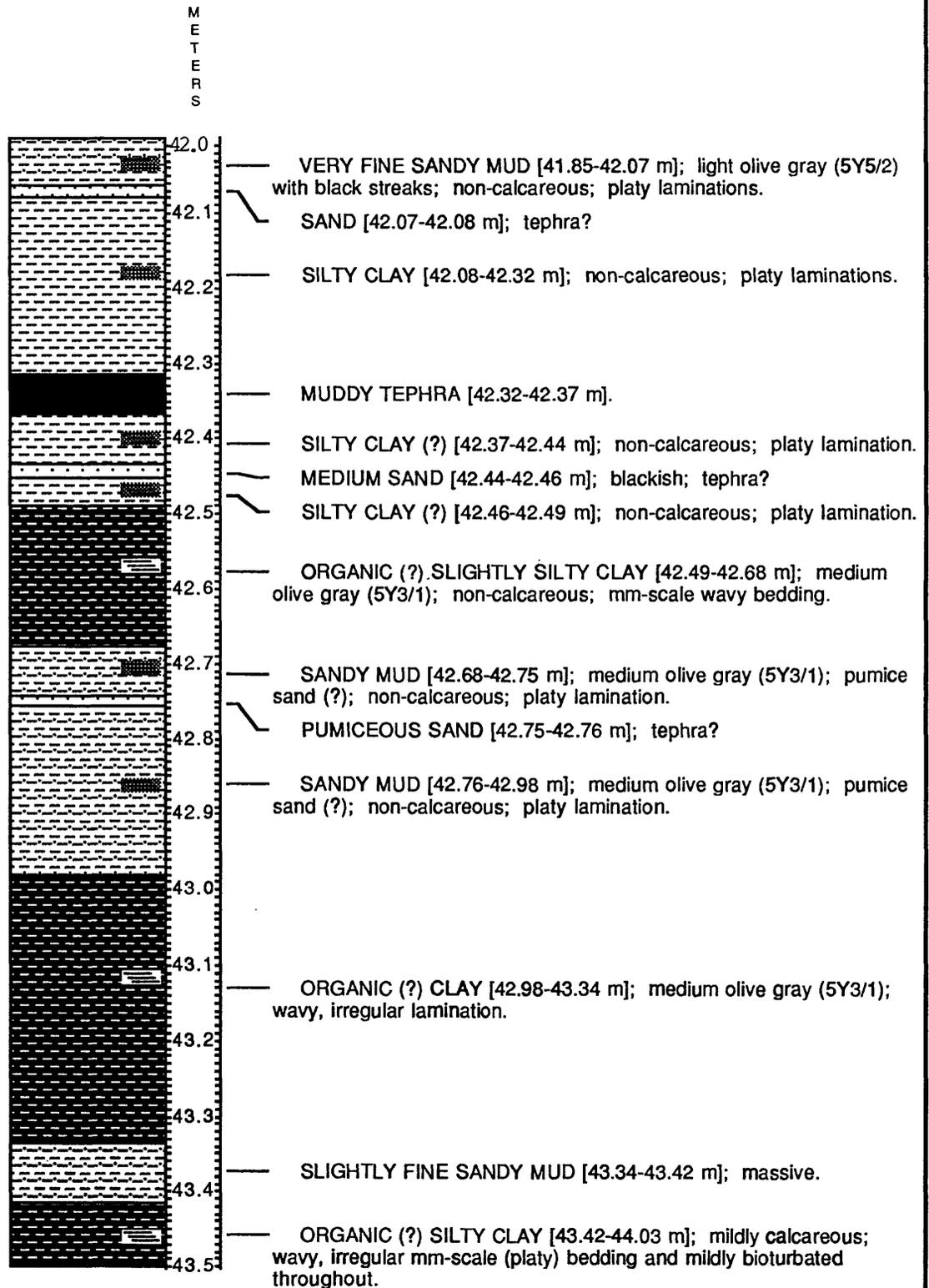
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Siskiyou County, California**



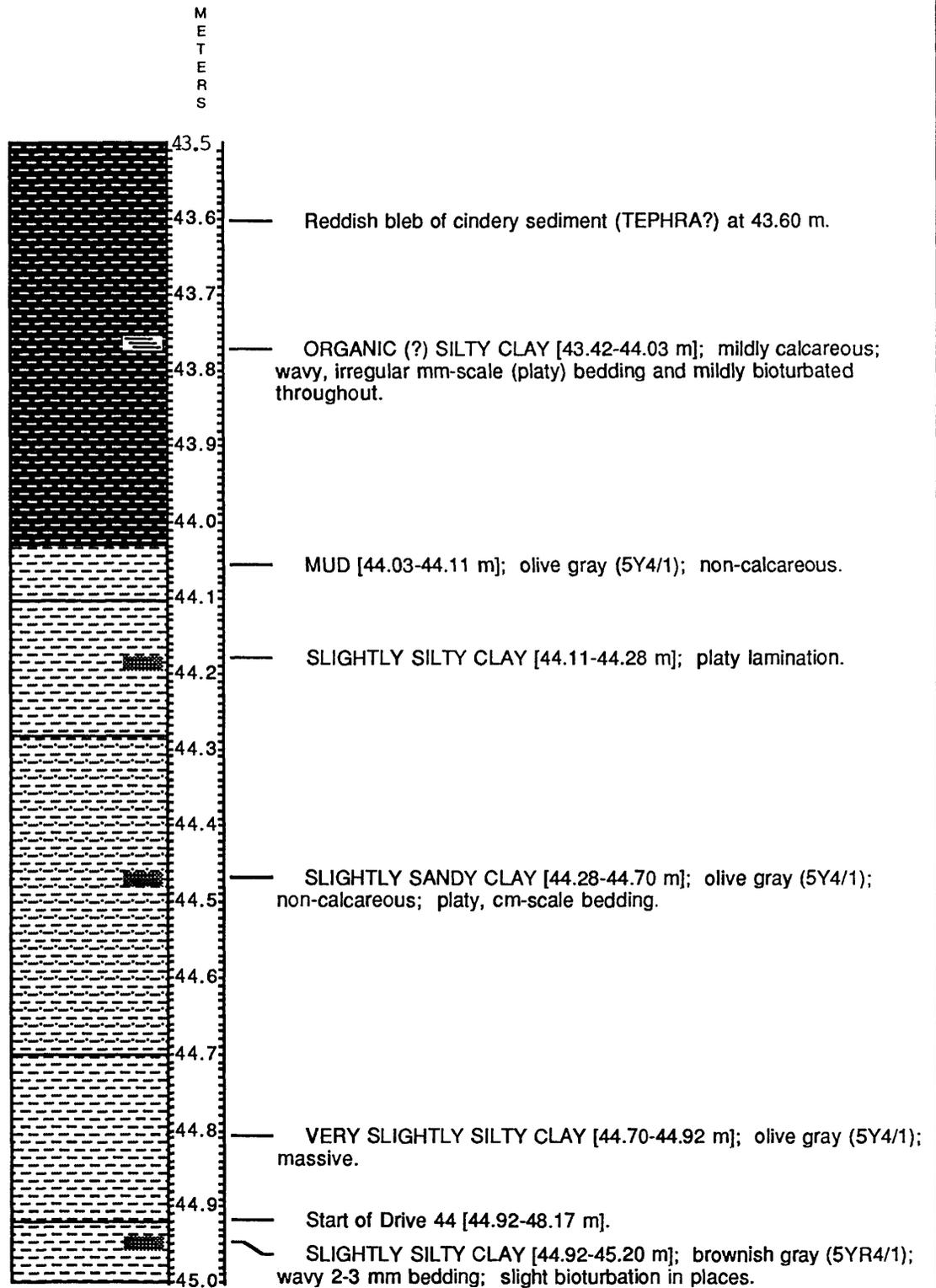
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Siskiyou County, California**



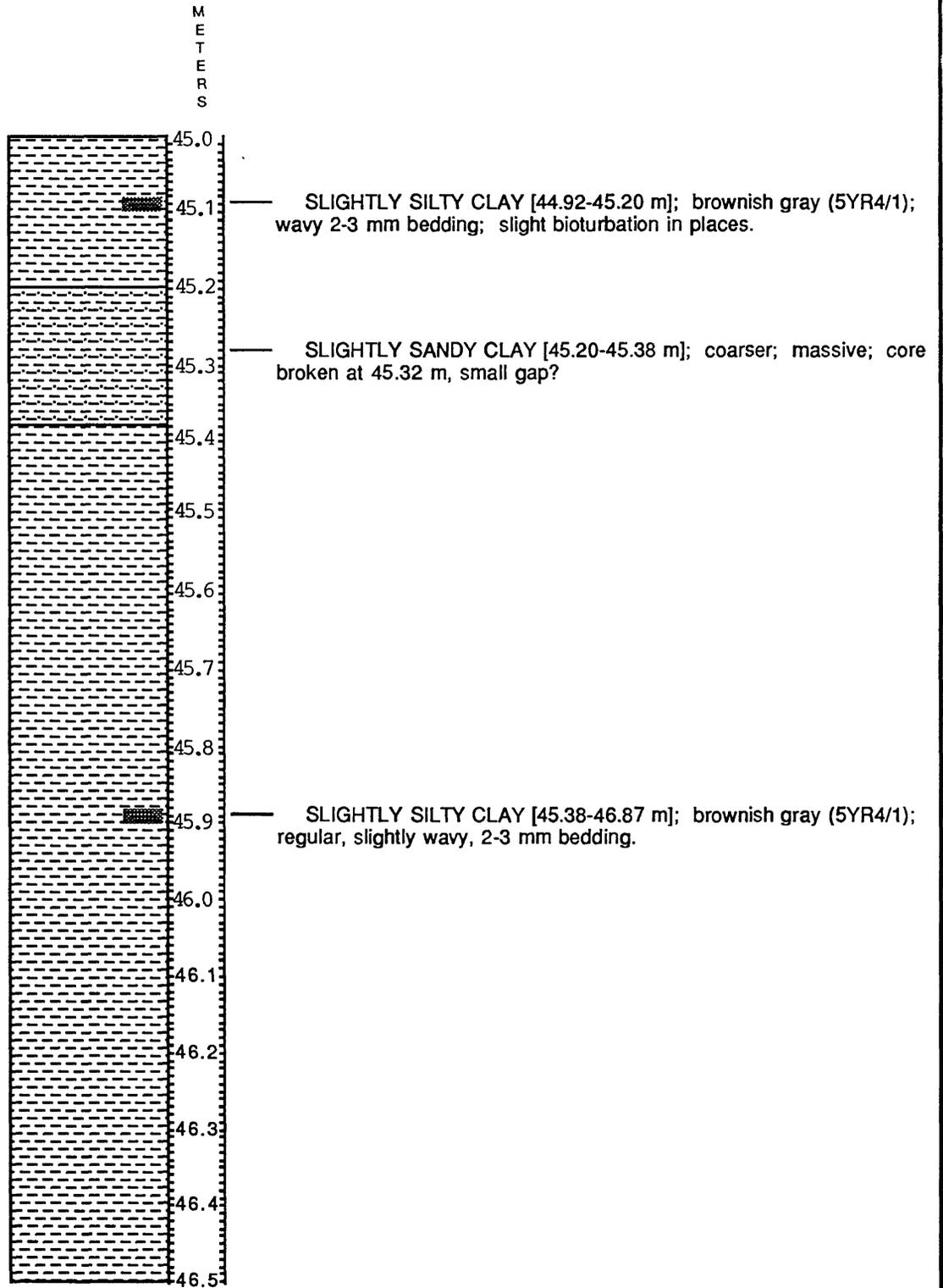
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Siskiyou County, California**



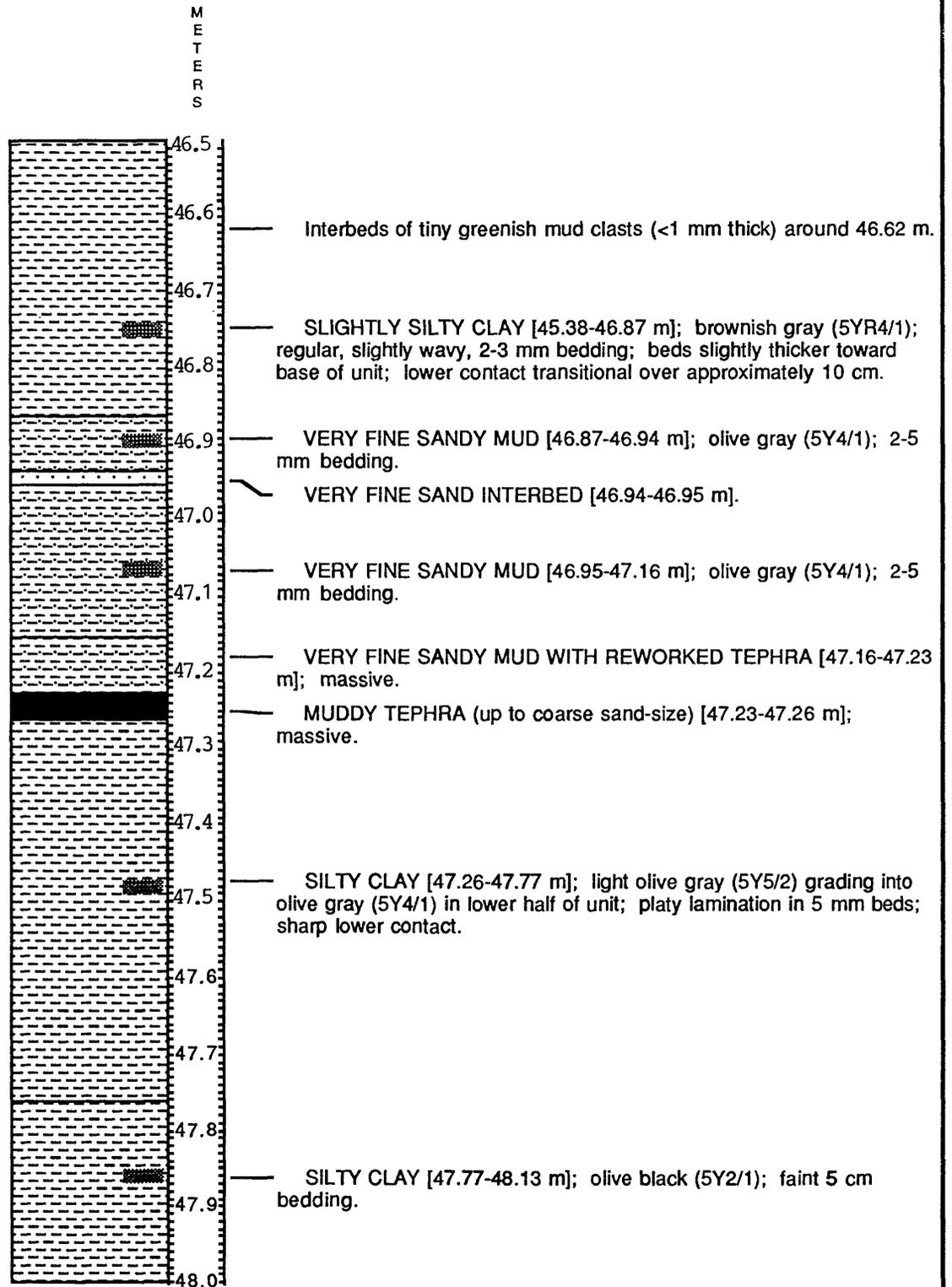
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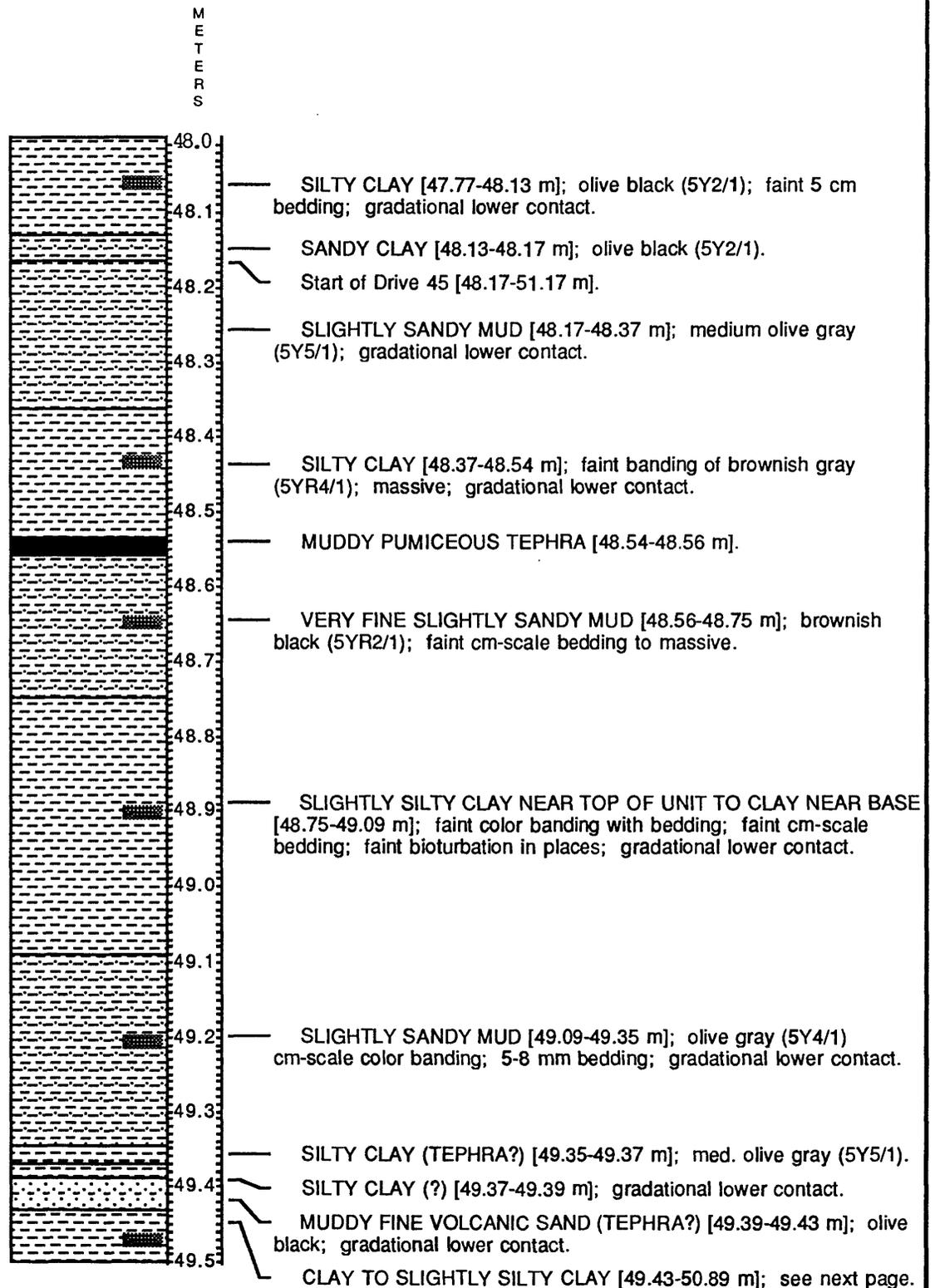
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Siskiyou County, California**



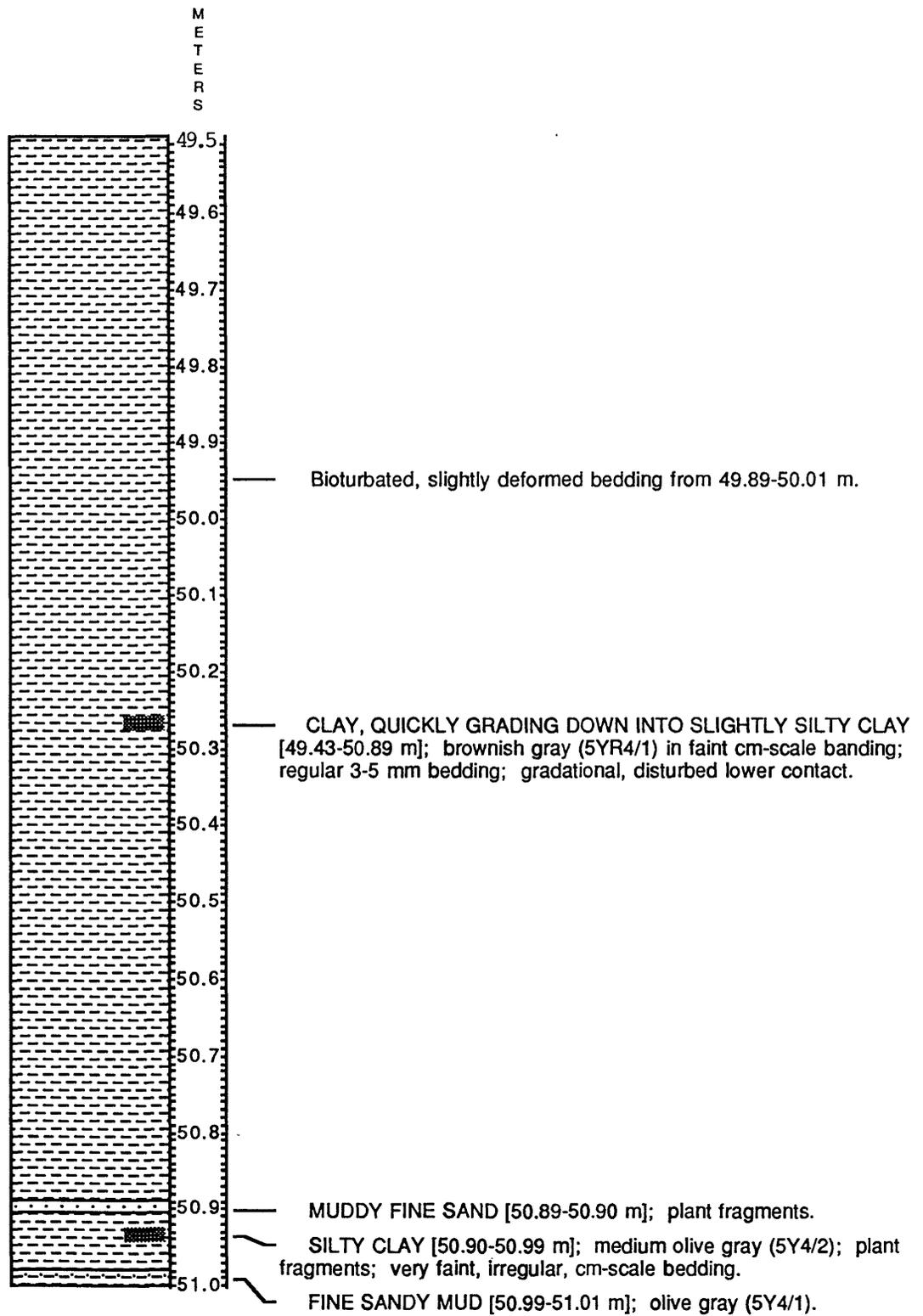
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Siskiyou County, California**



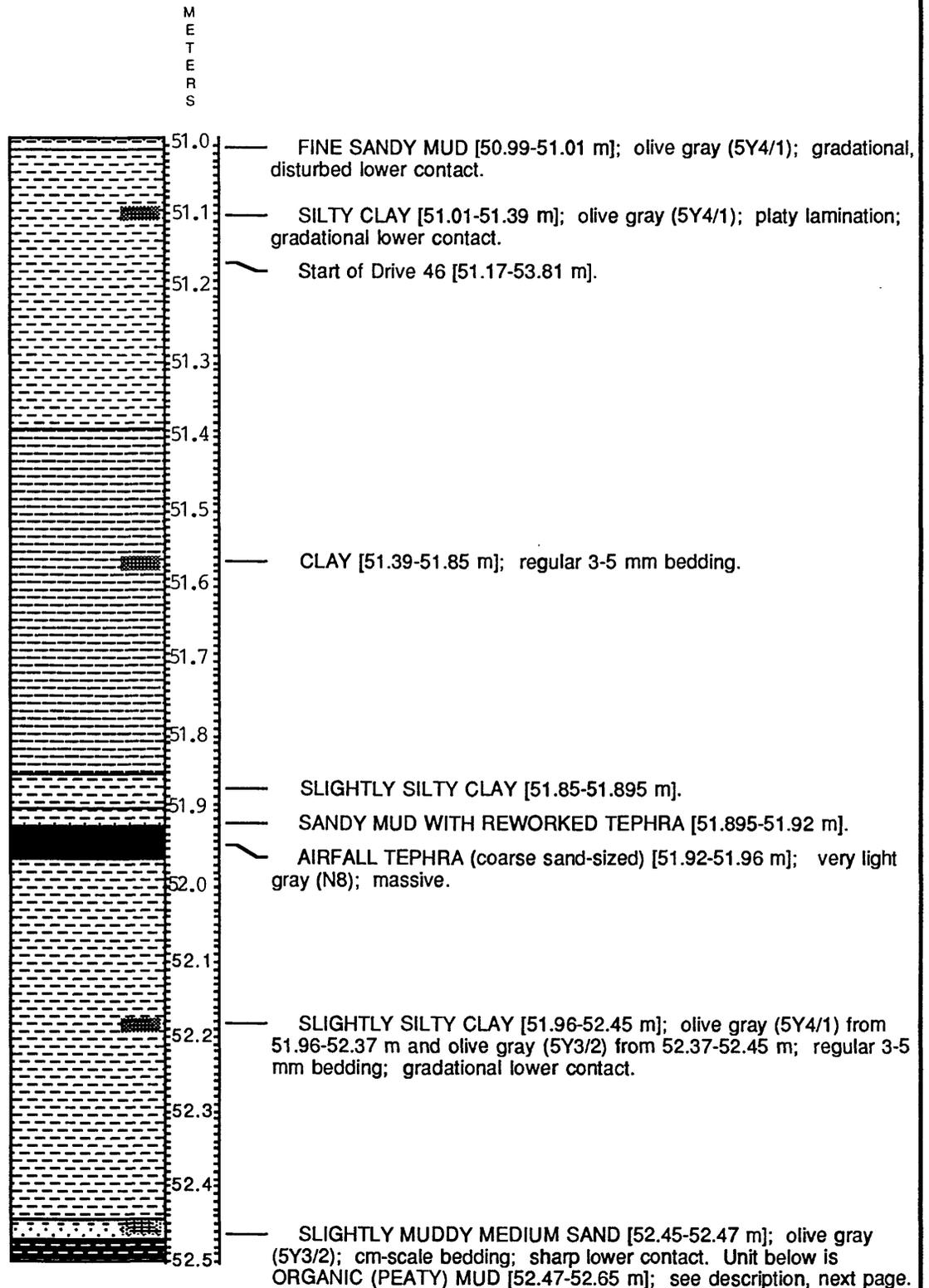
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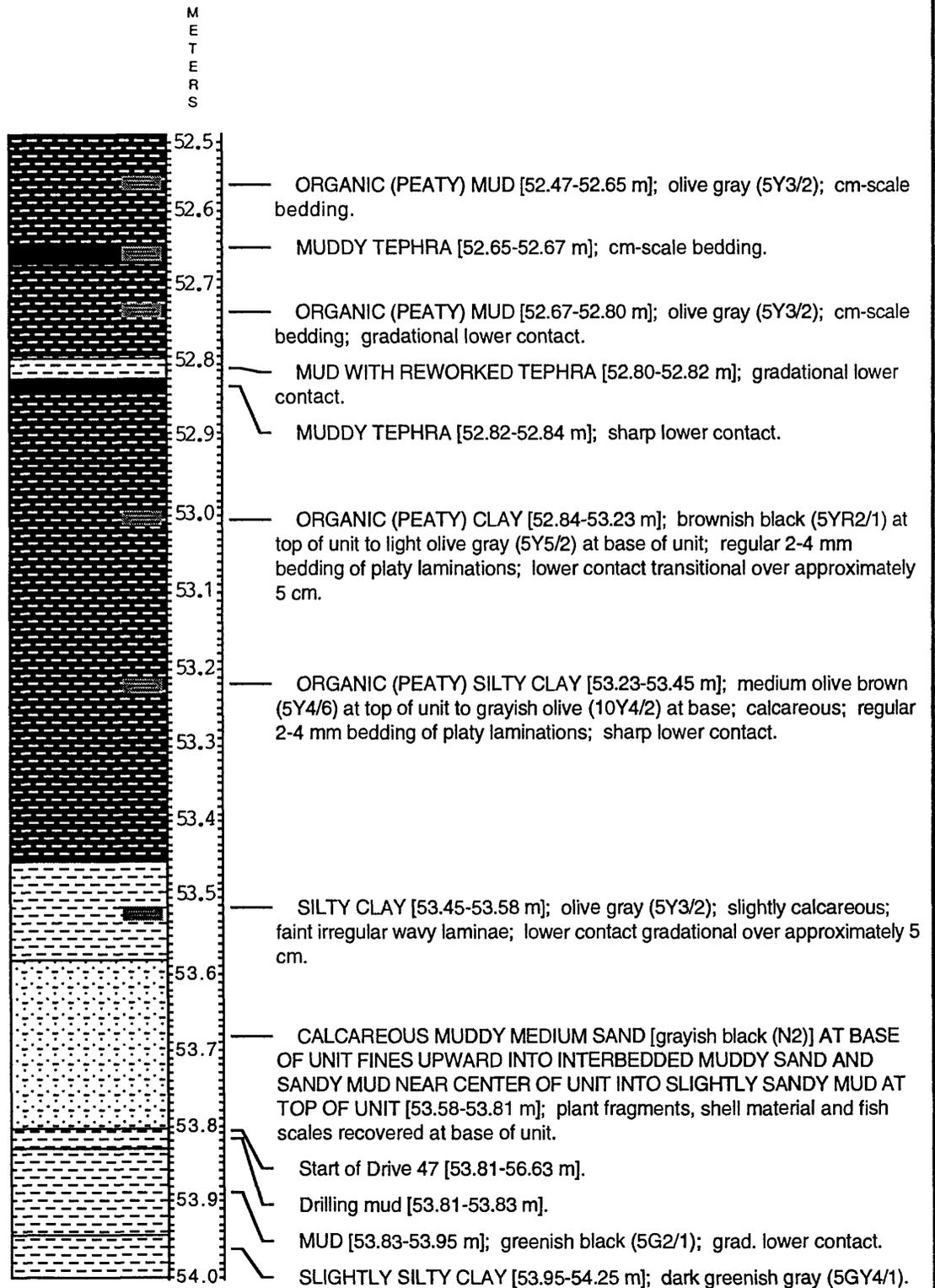
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Siskiyou County, California**



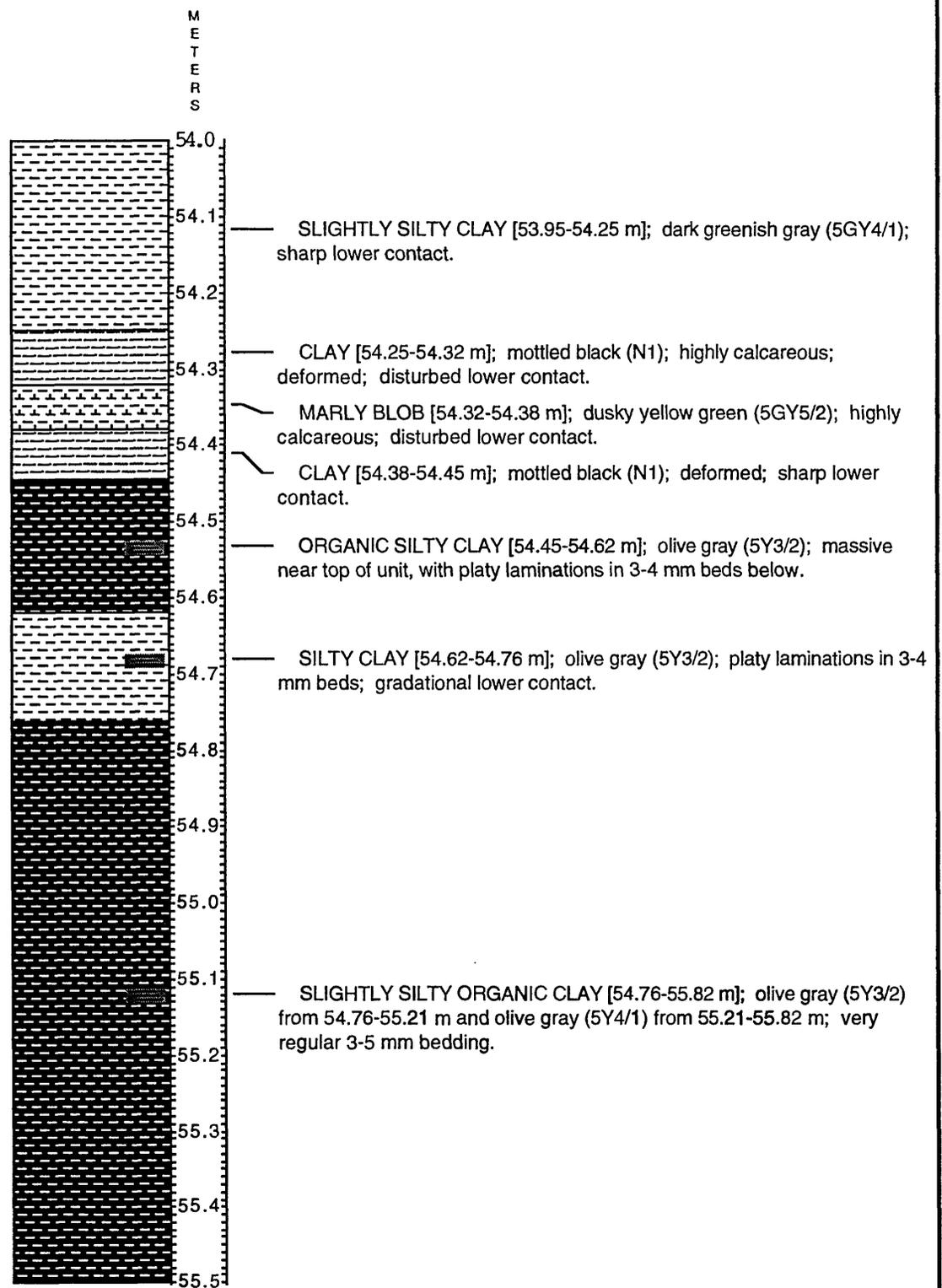
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Siskiyou County, California**



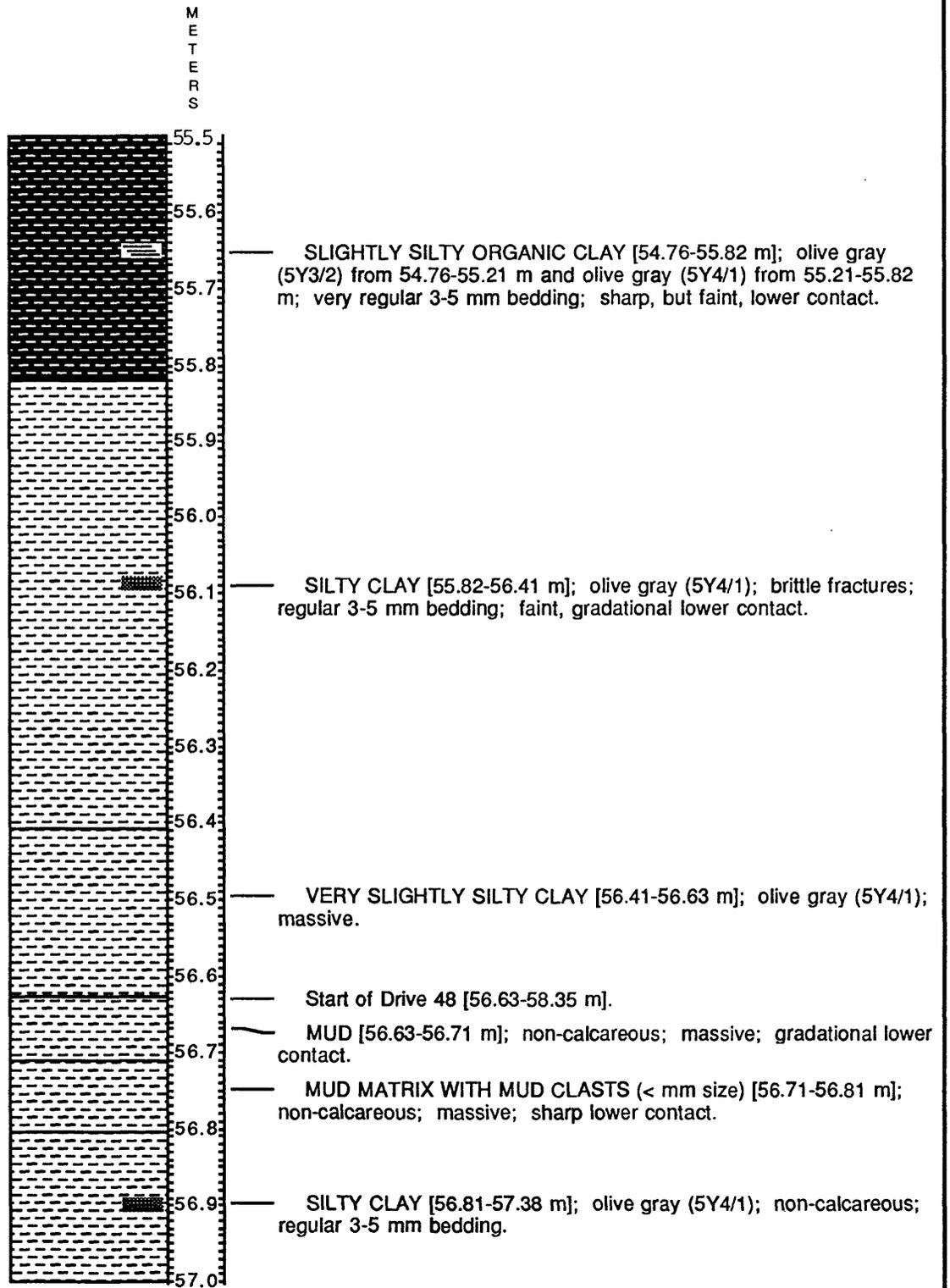
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Siskiyou County, California**



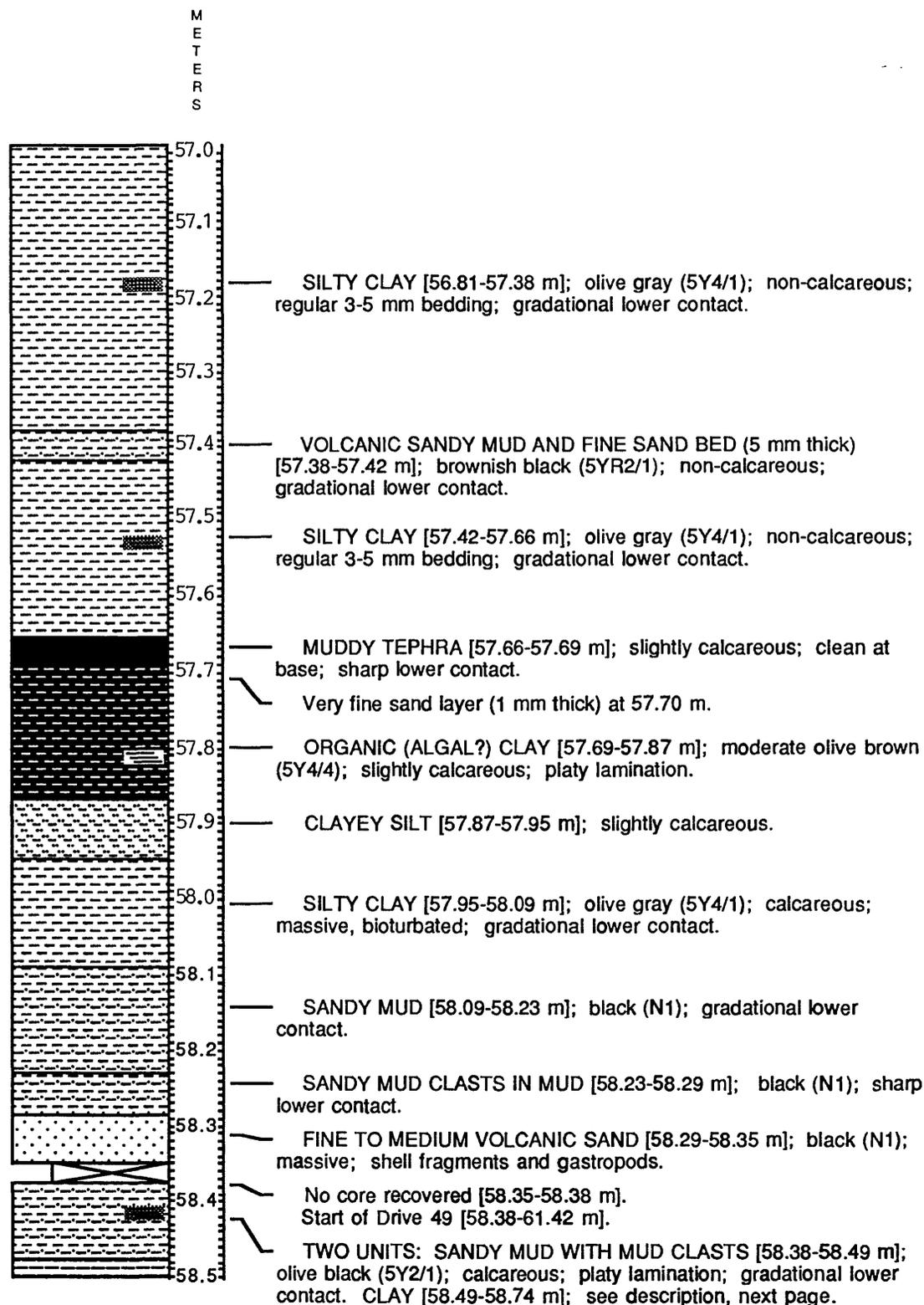
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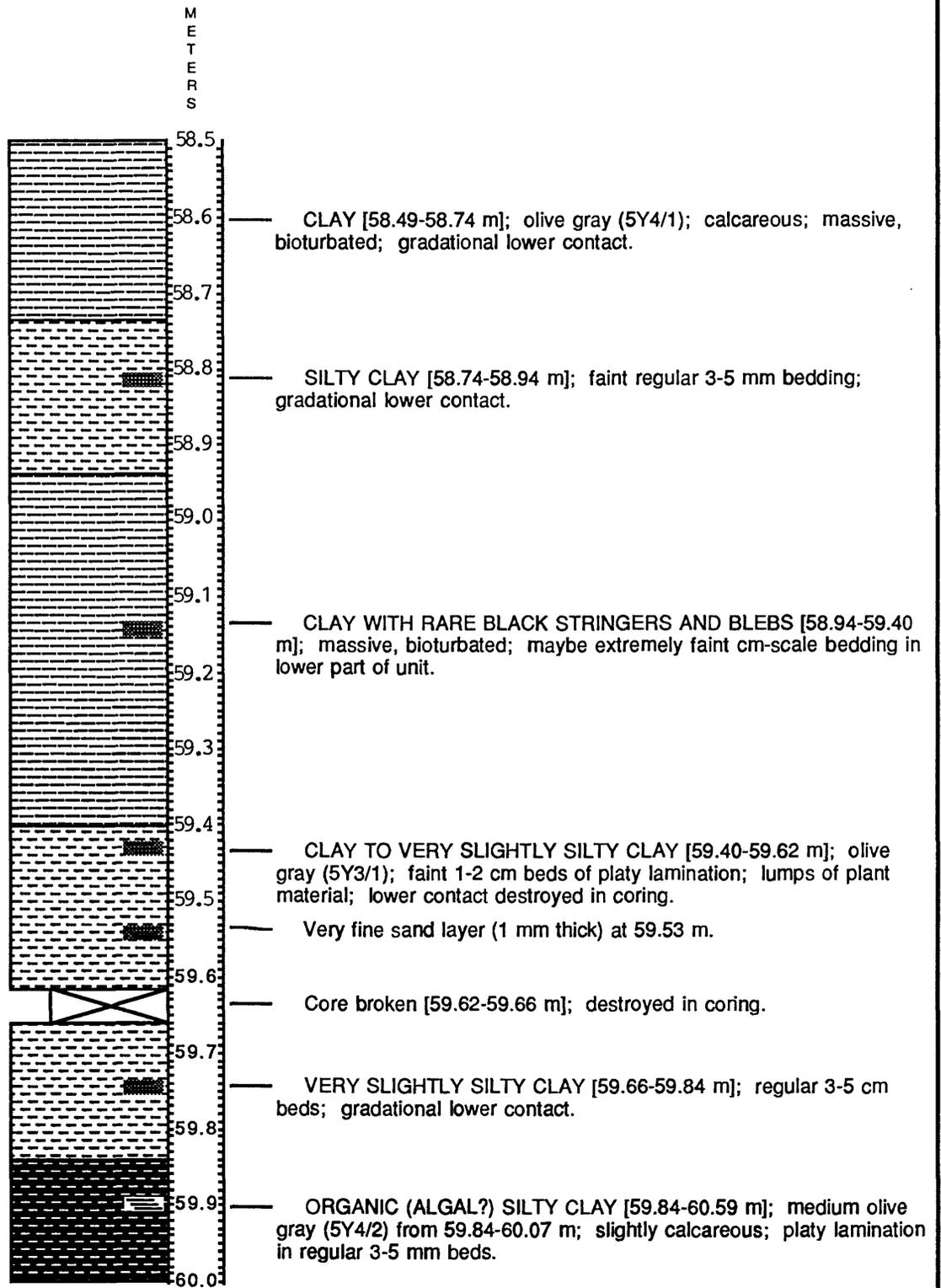
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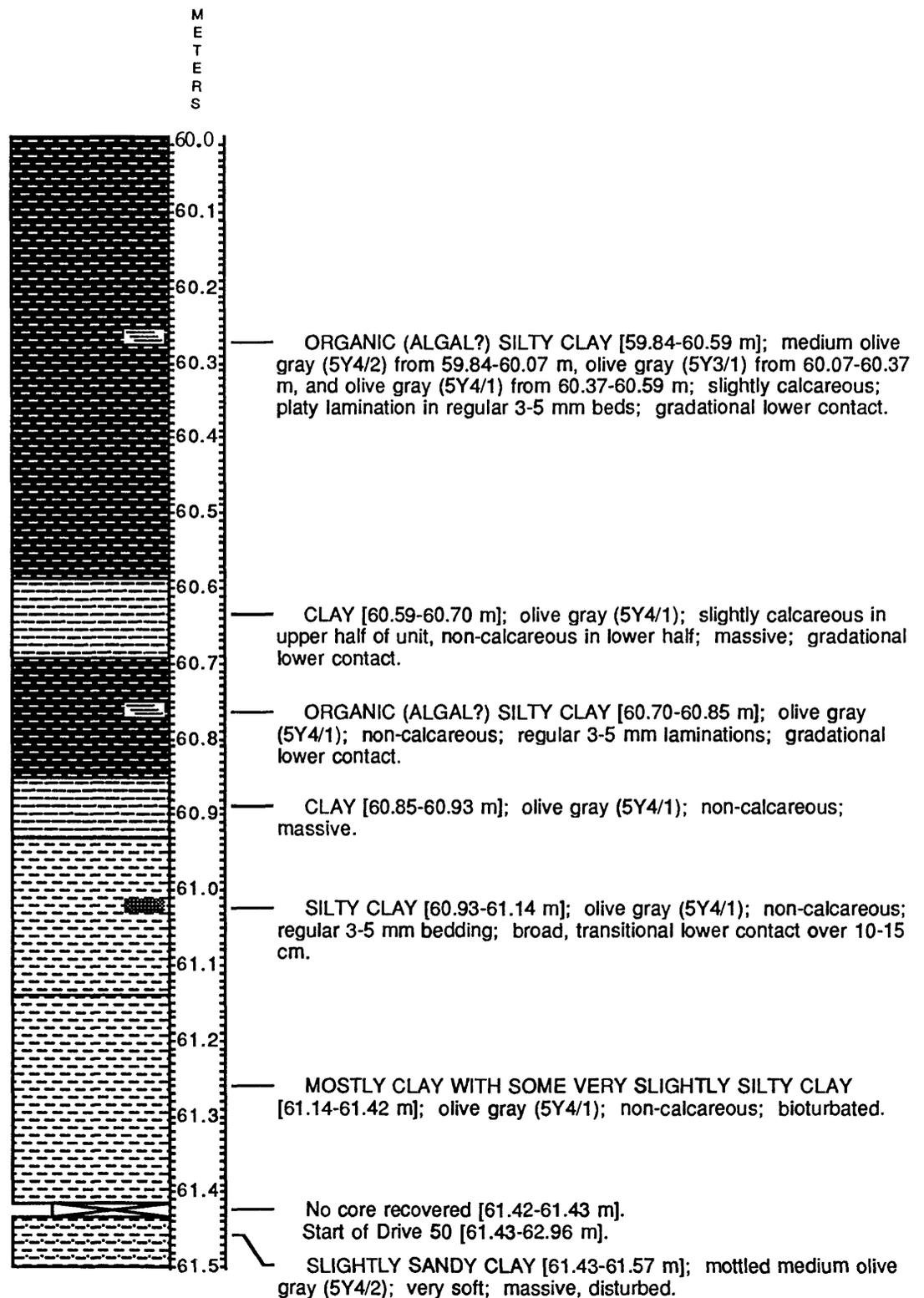
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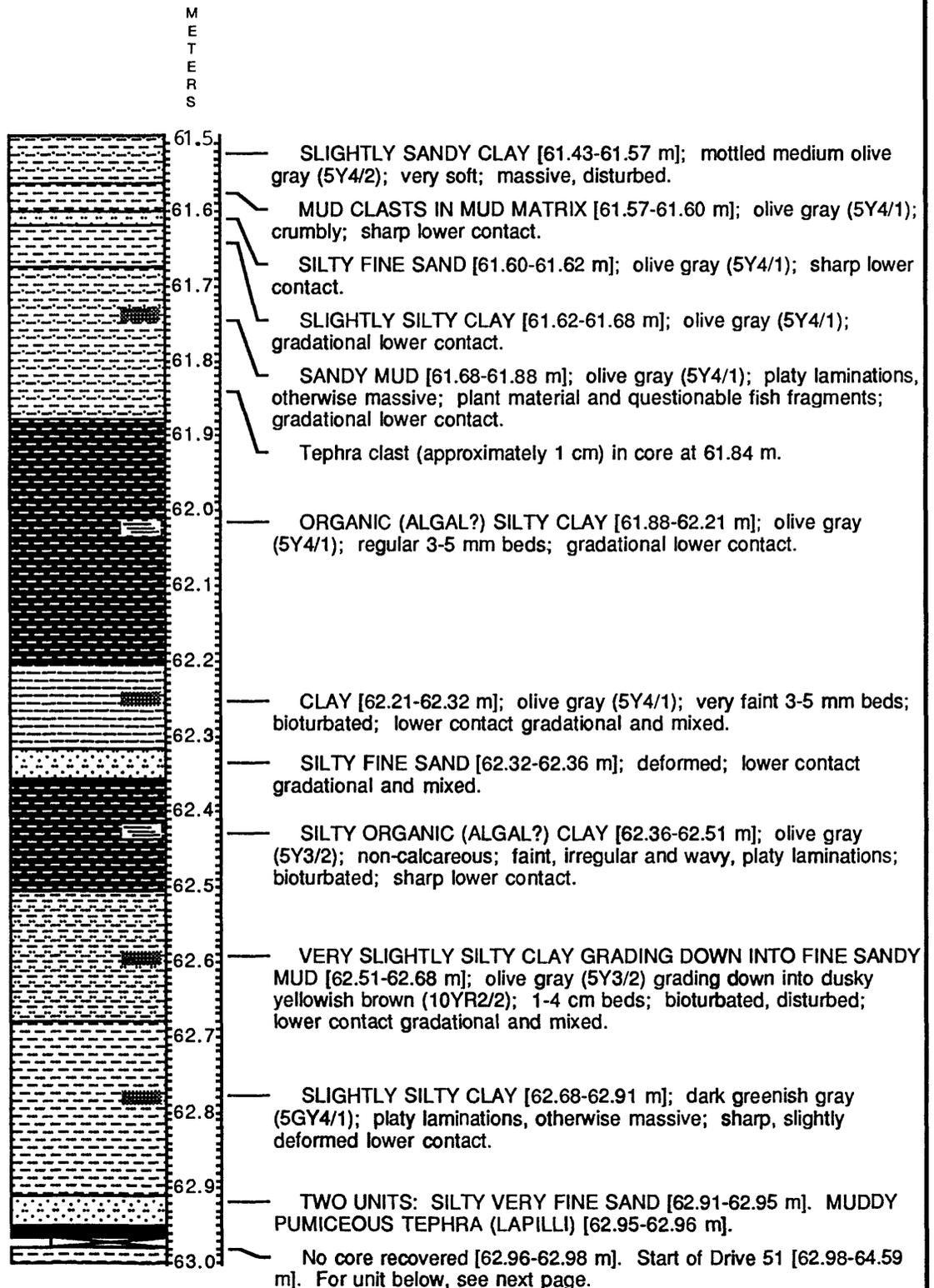
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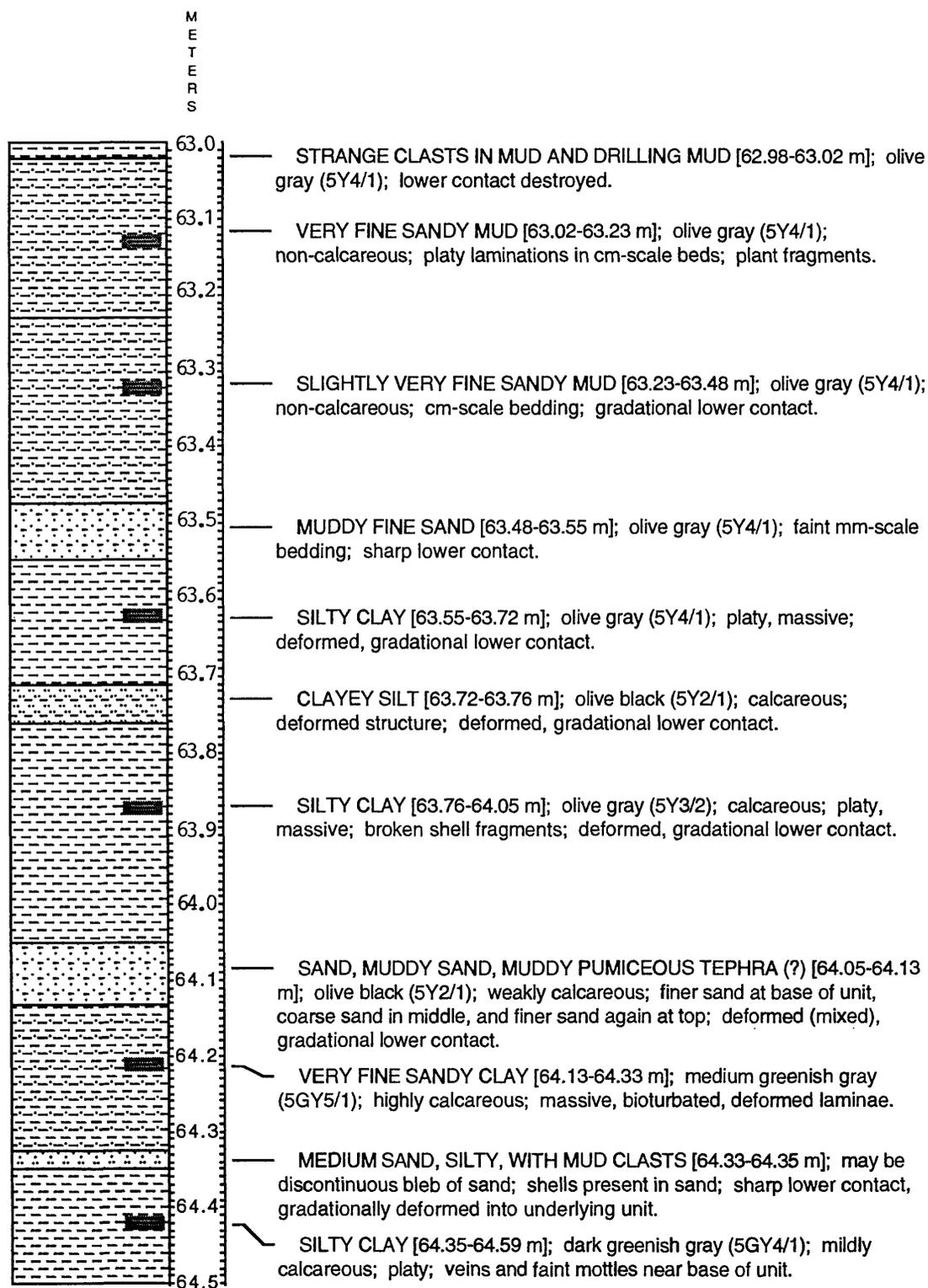
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Siskiyou County, California**



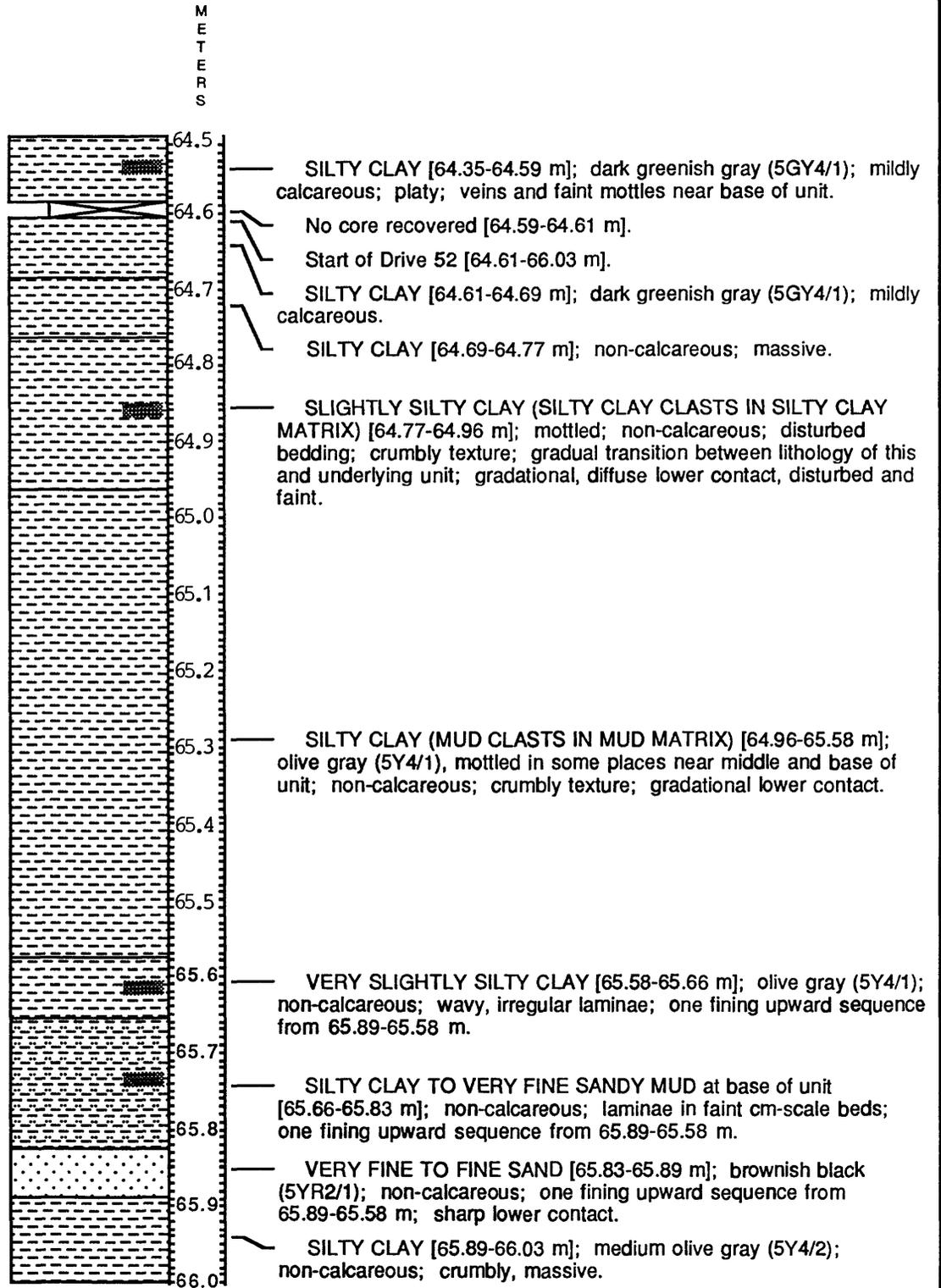
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Siskiyou County, California**



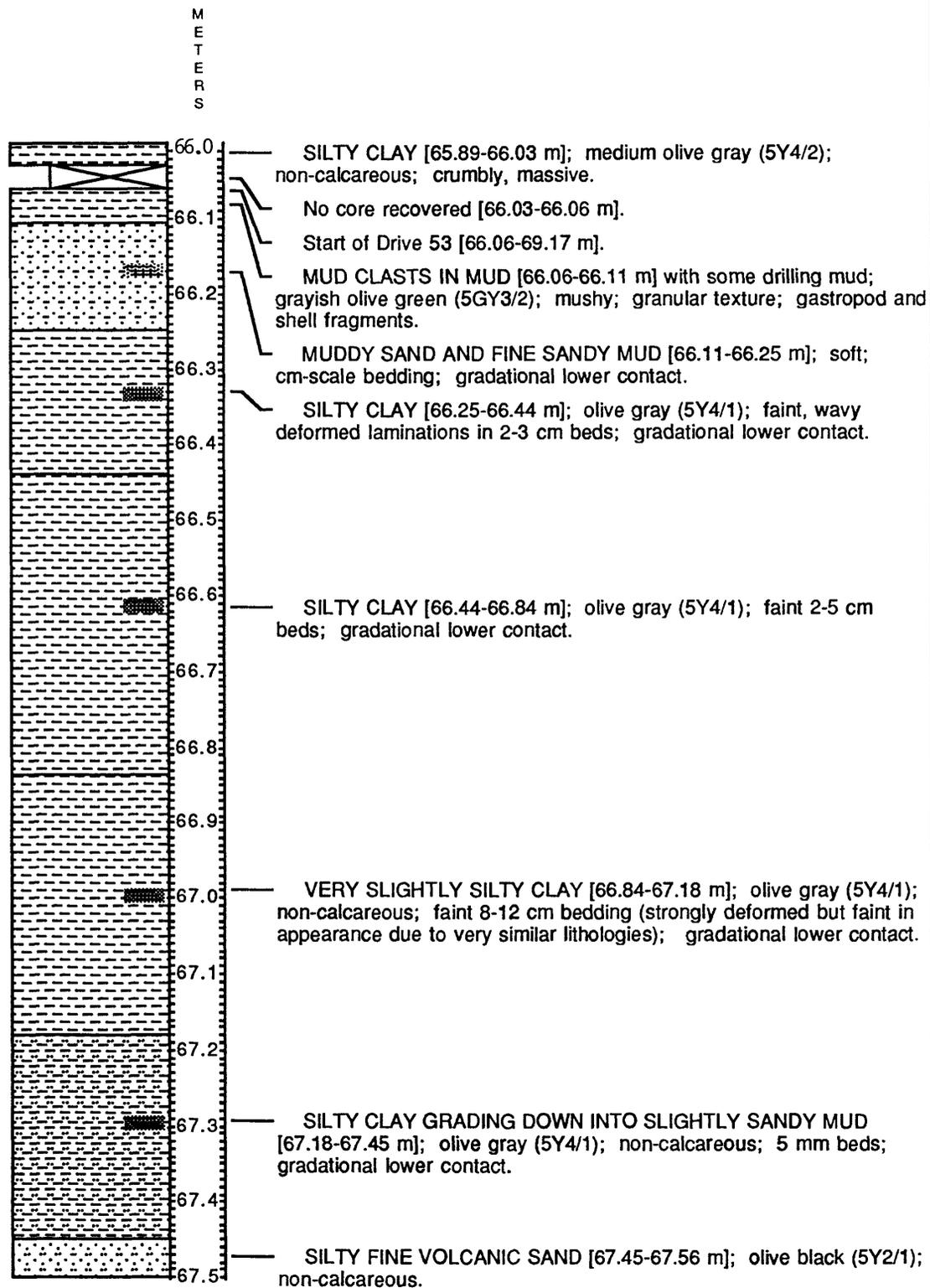
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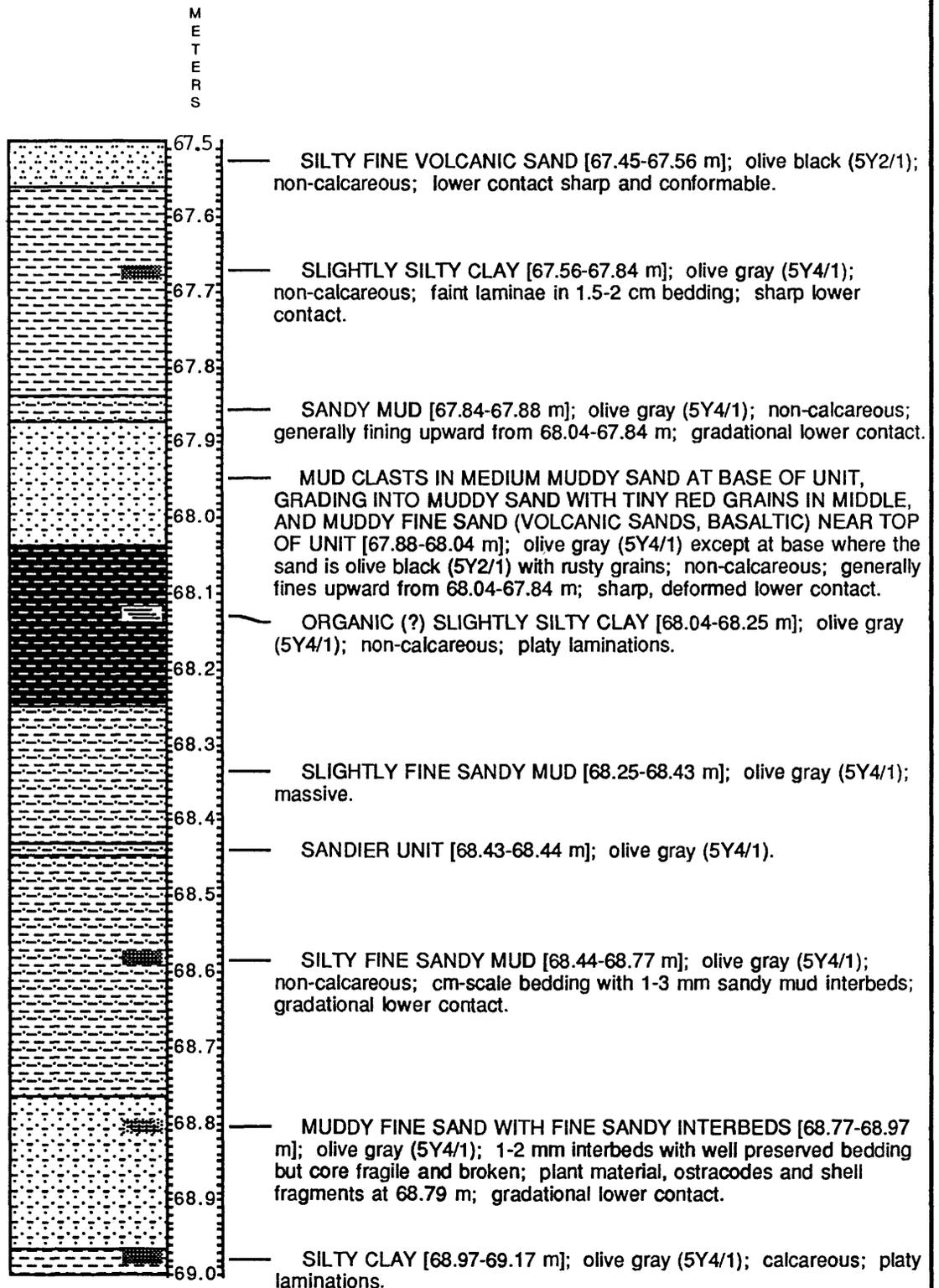
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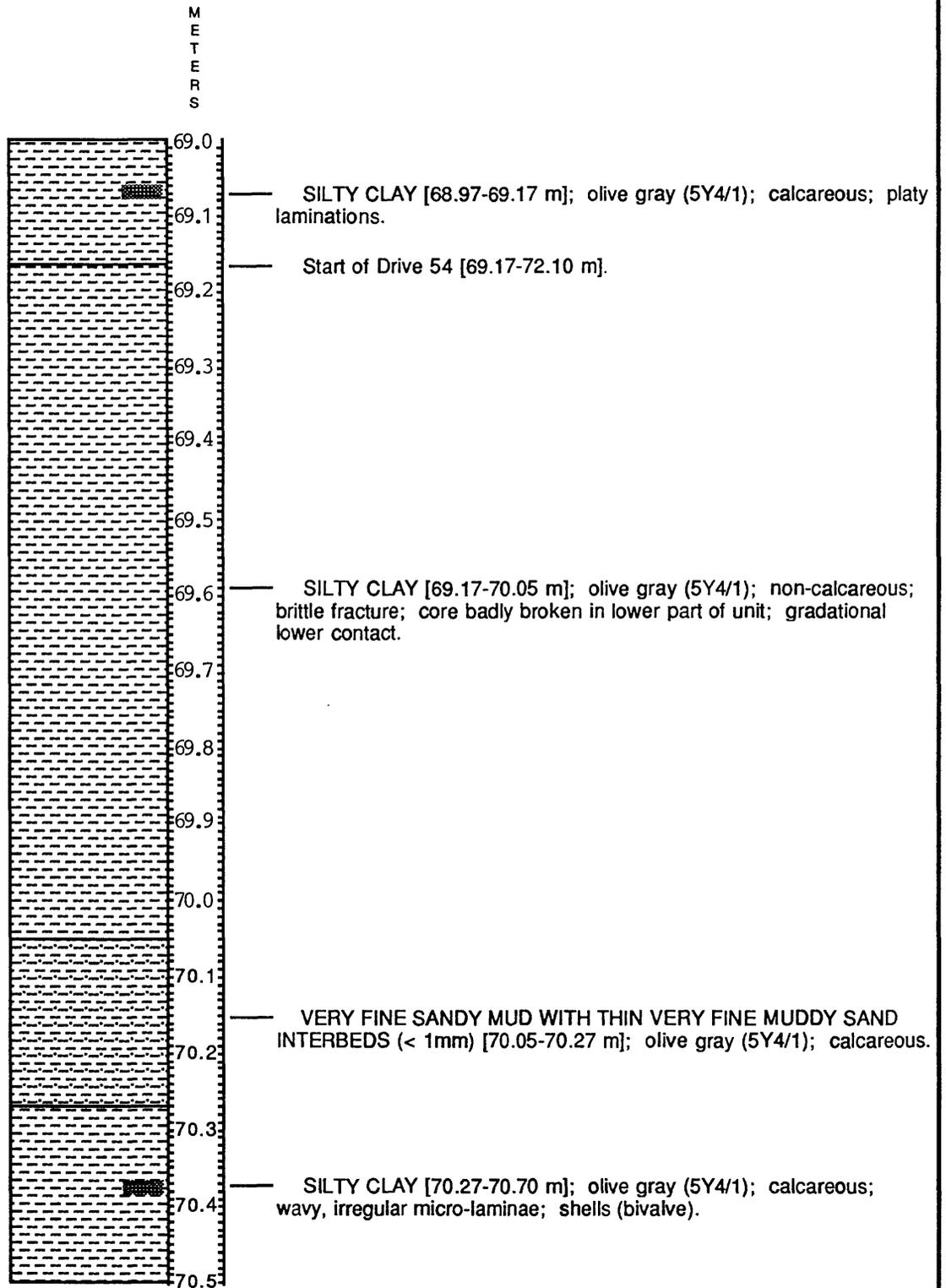
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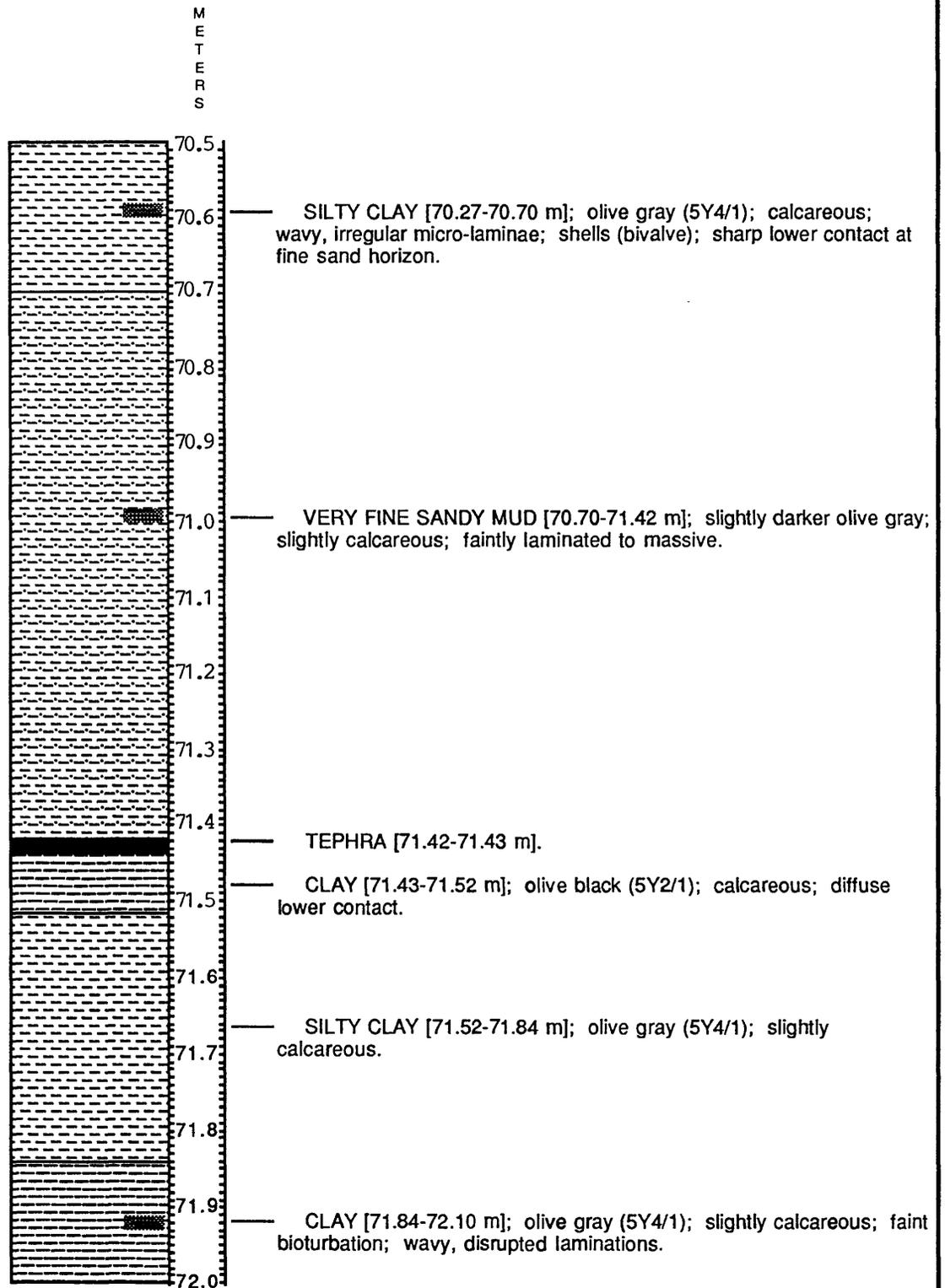
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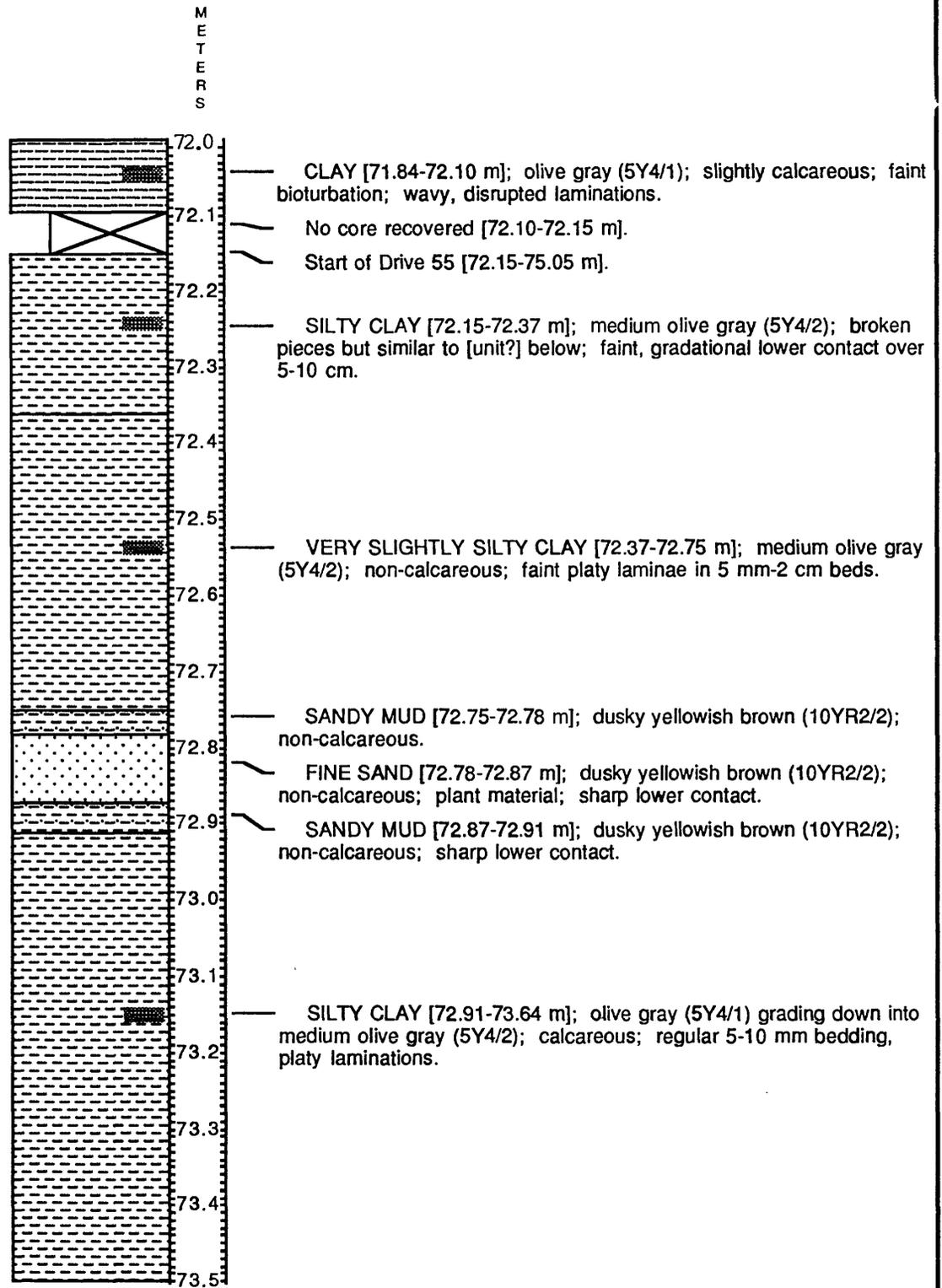
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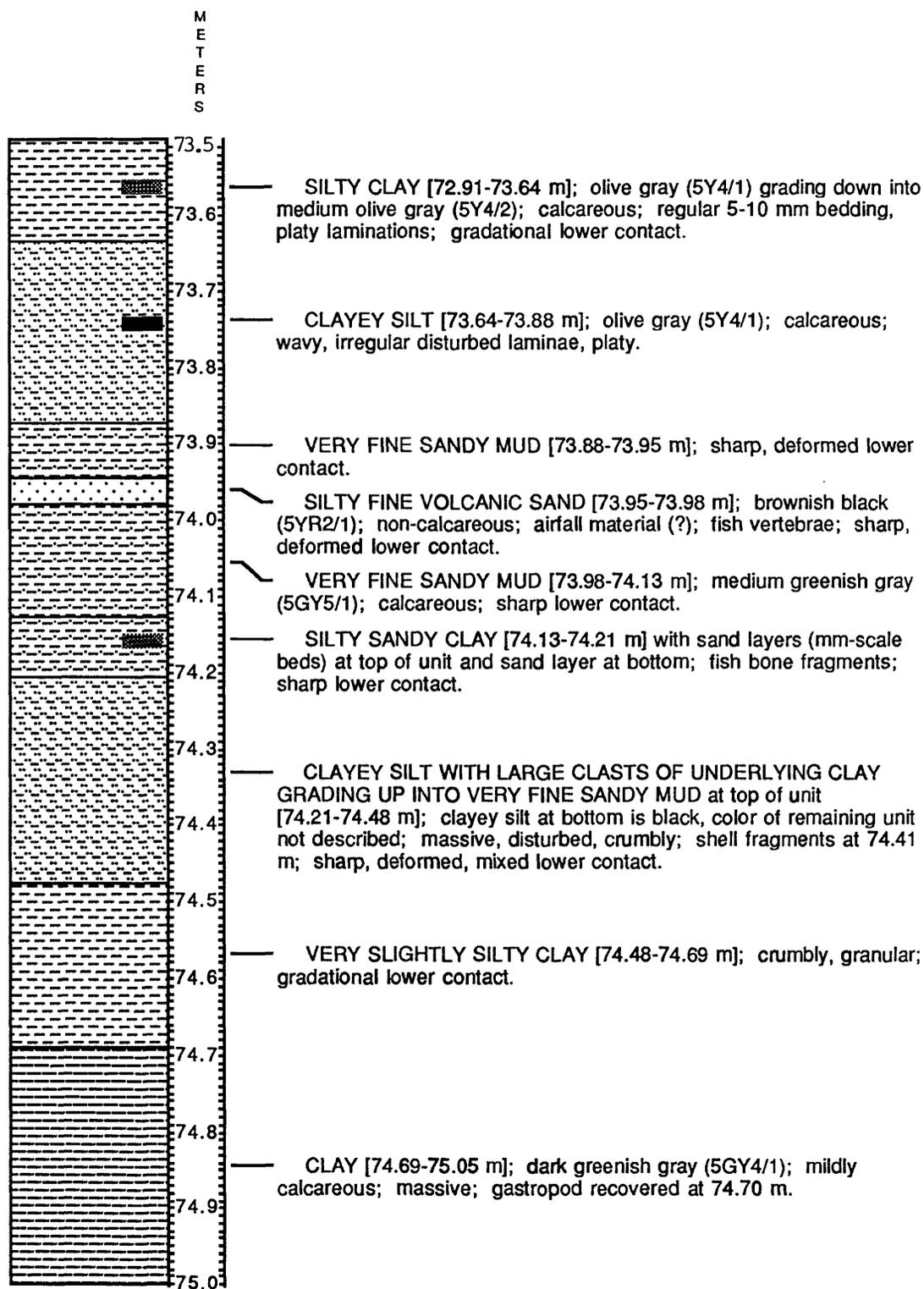
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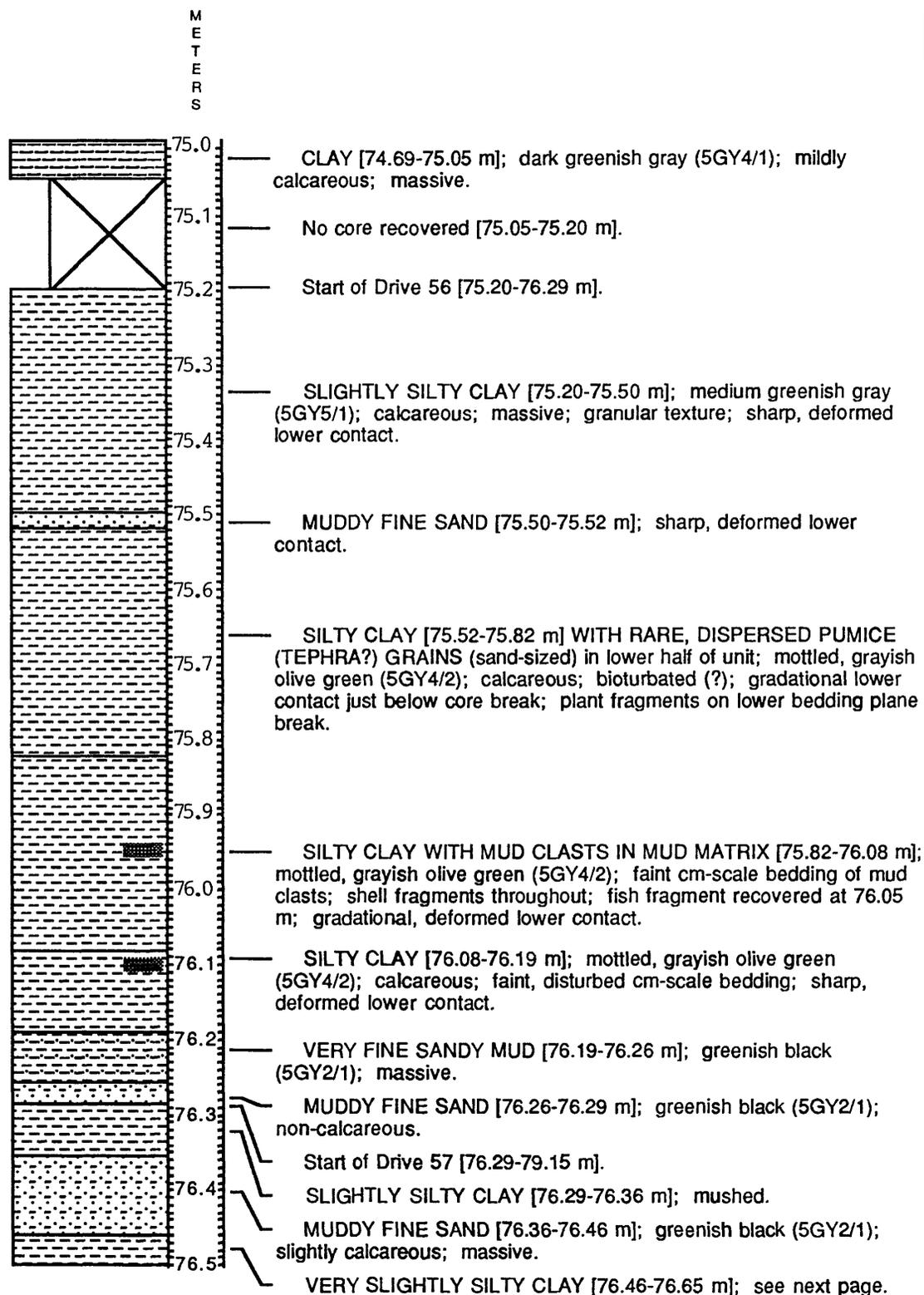
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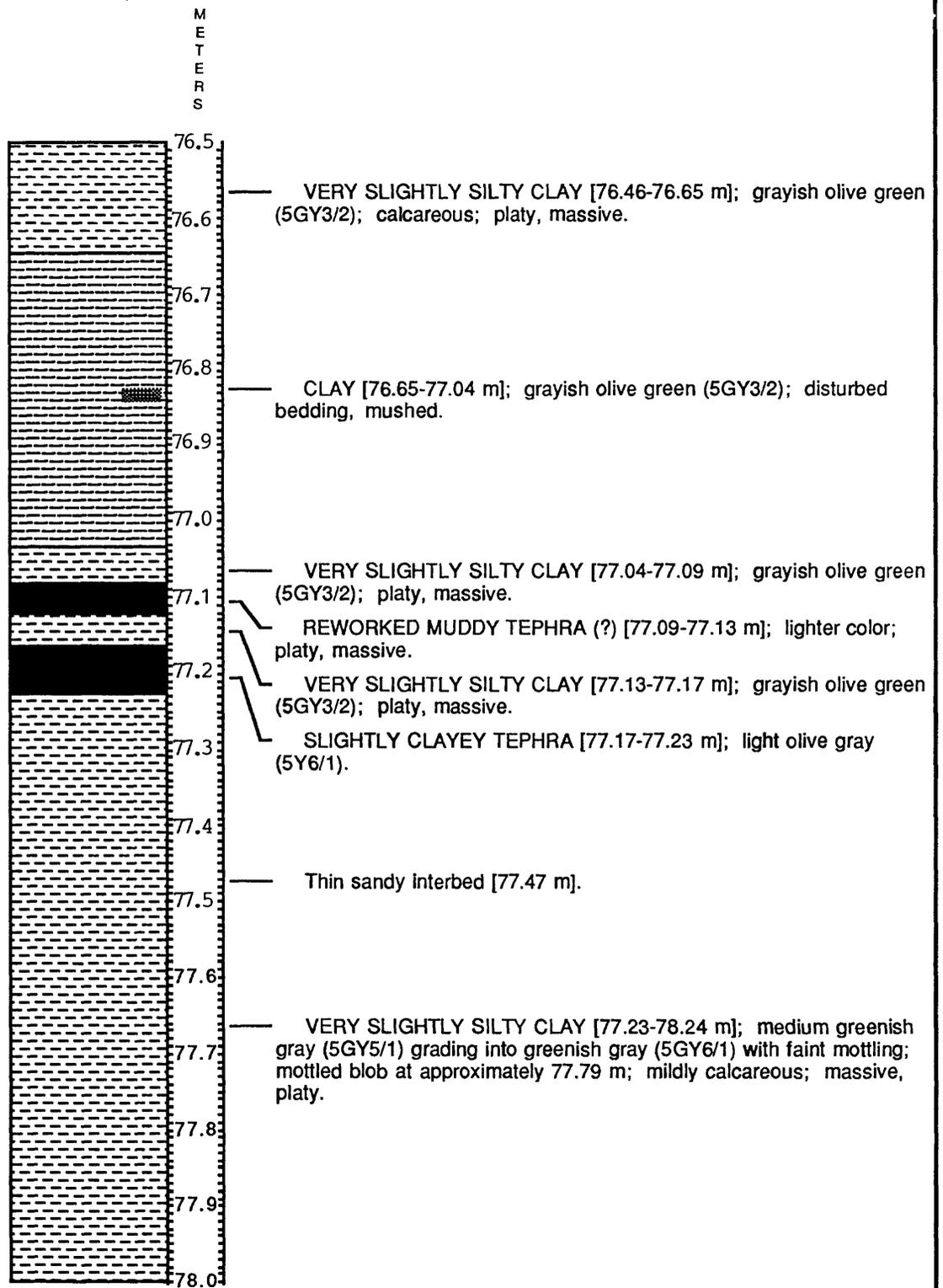
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Siskiyou County, California**



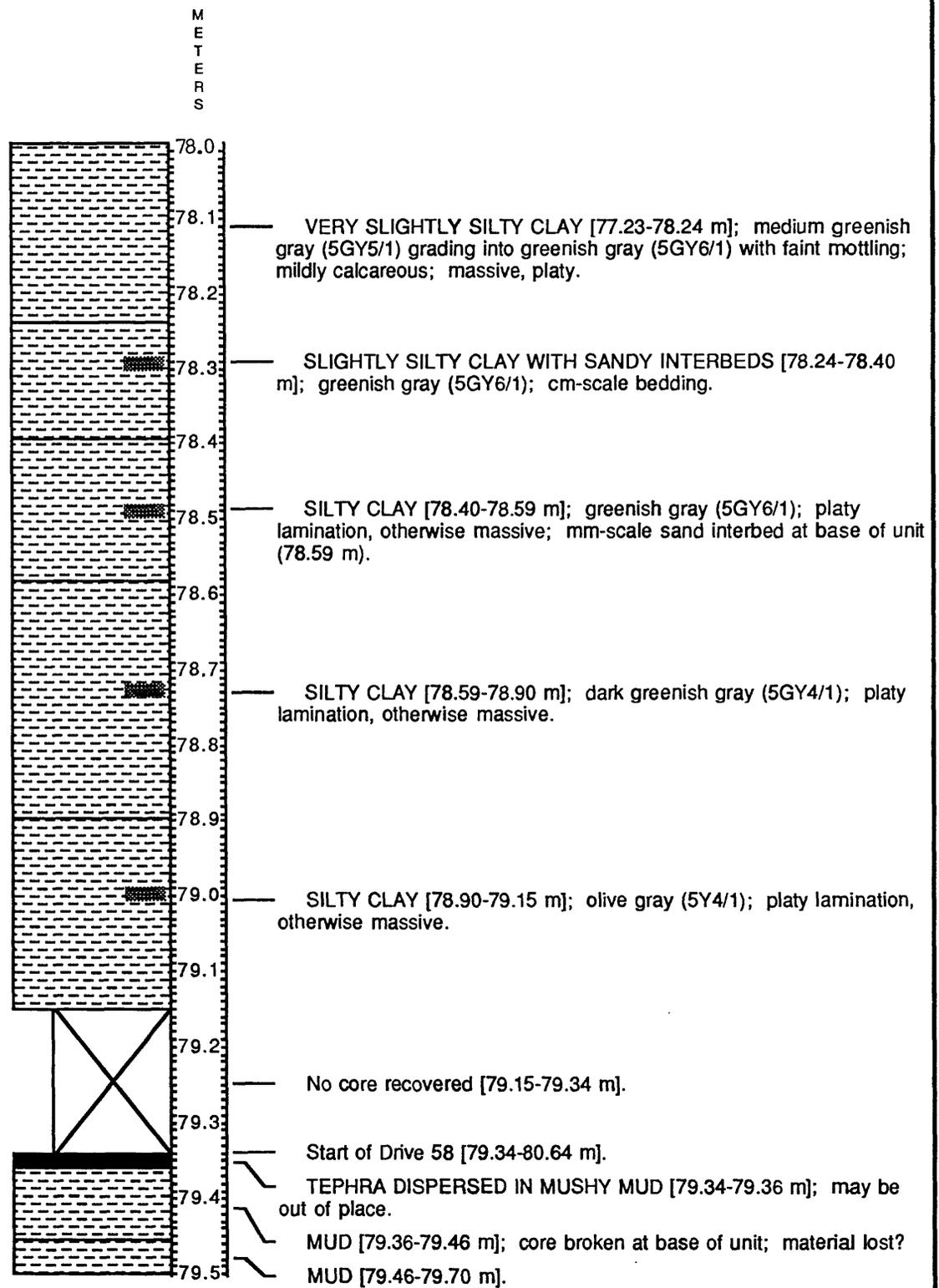
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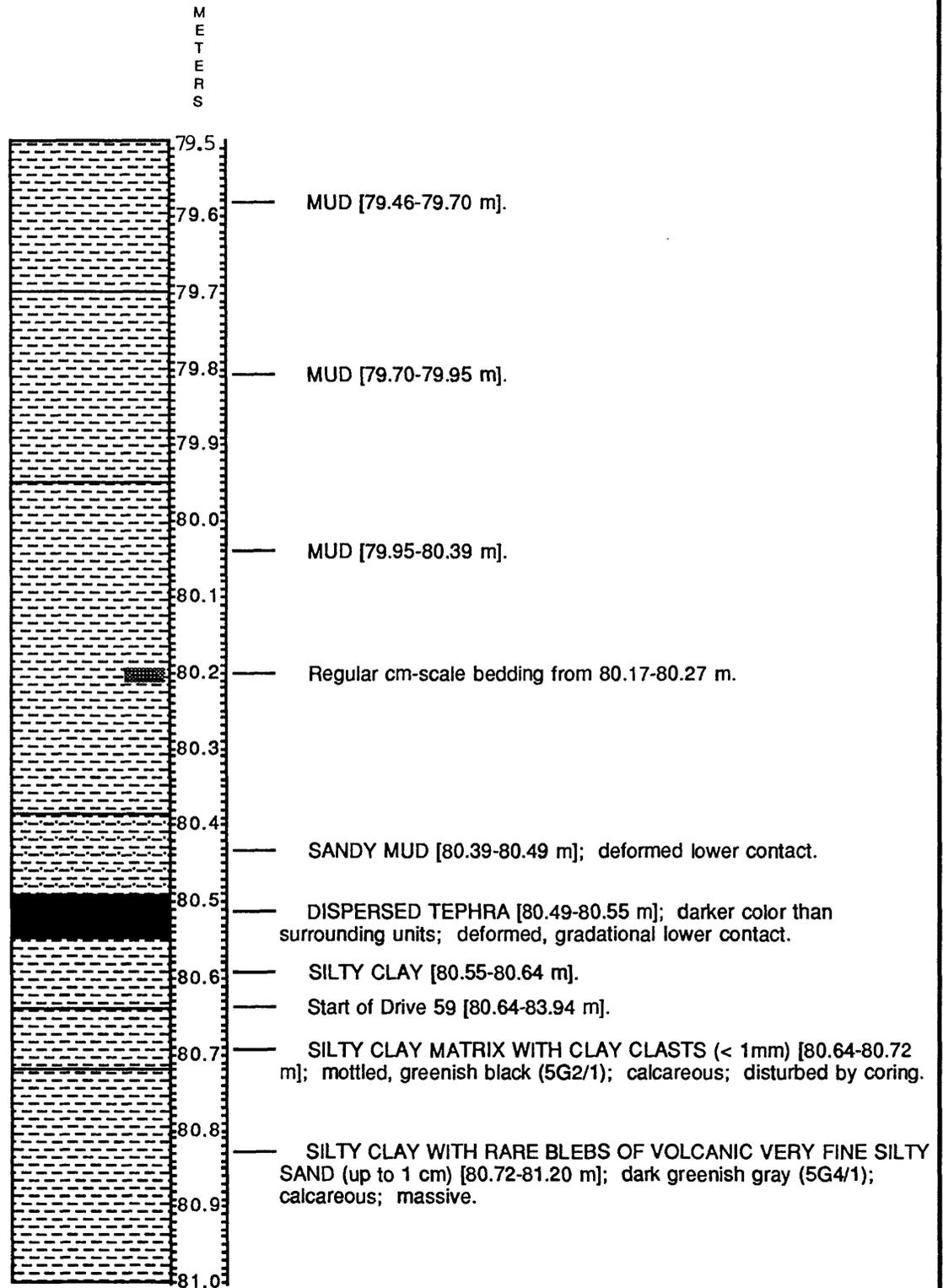
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Siskiyou County, California**



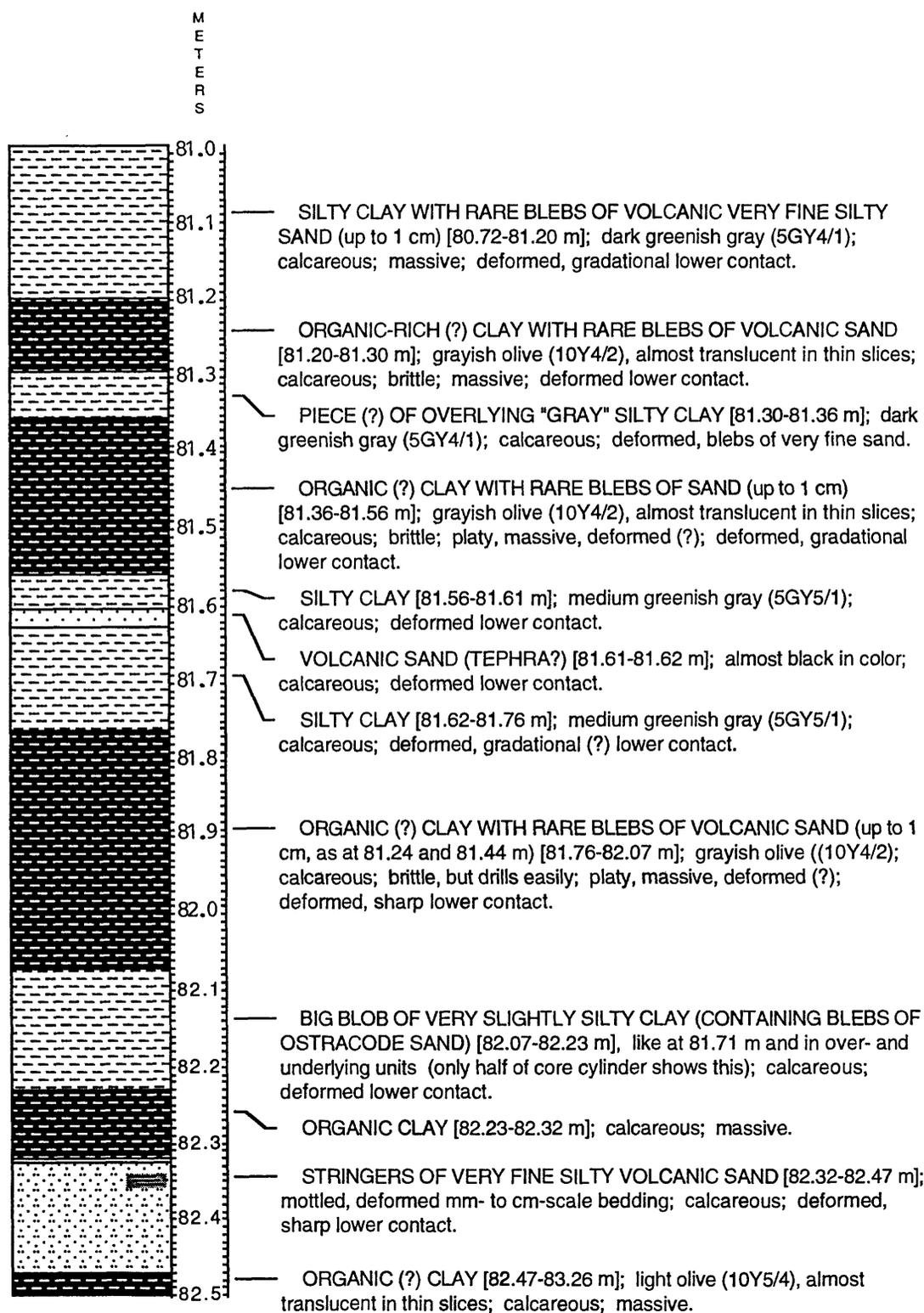
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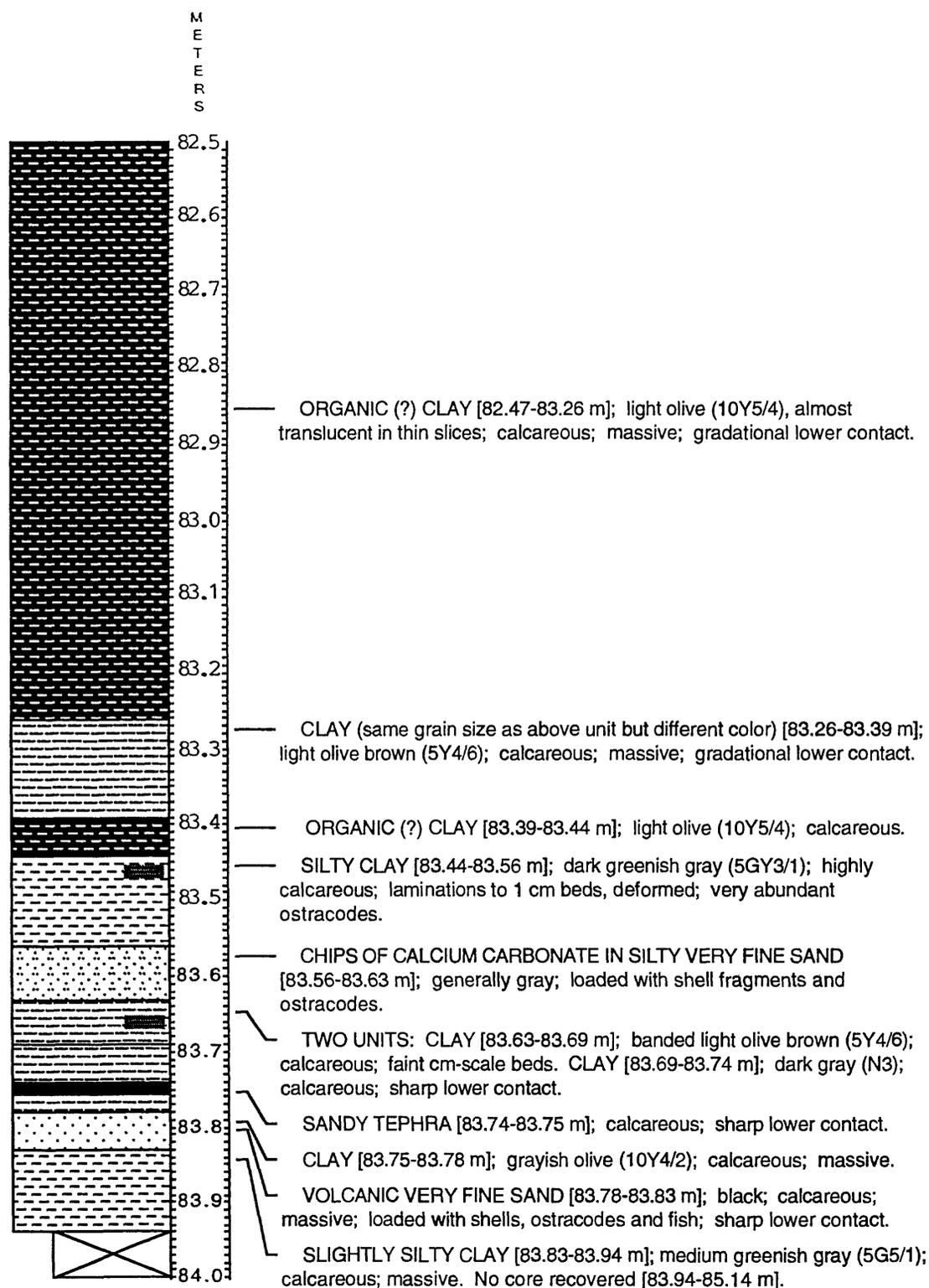
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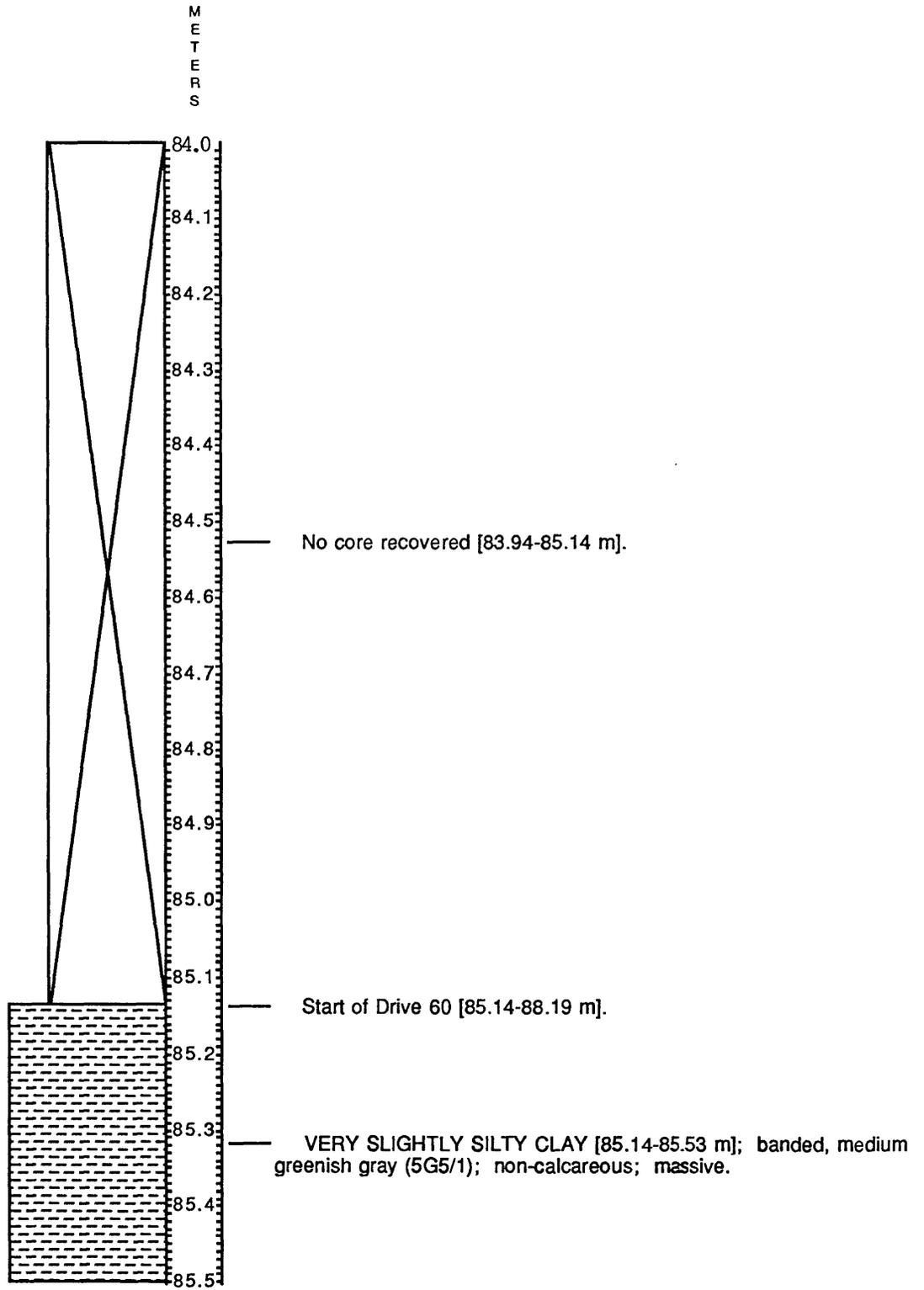
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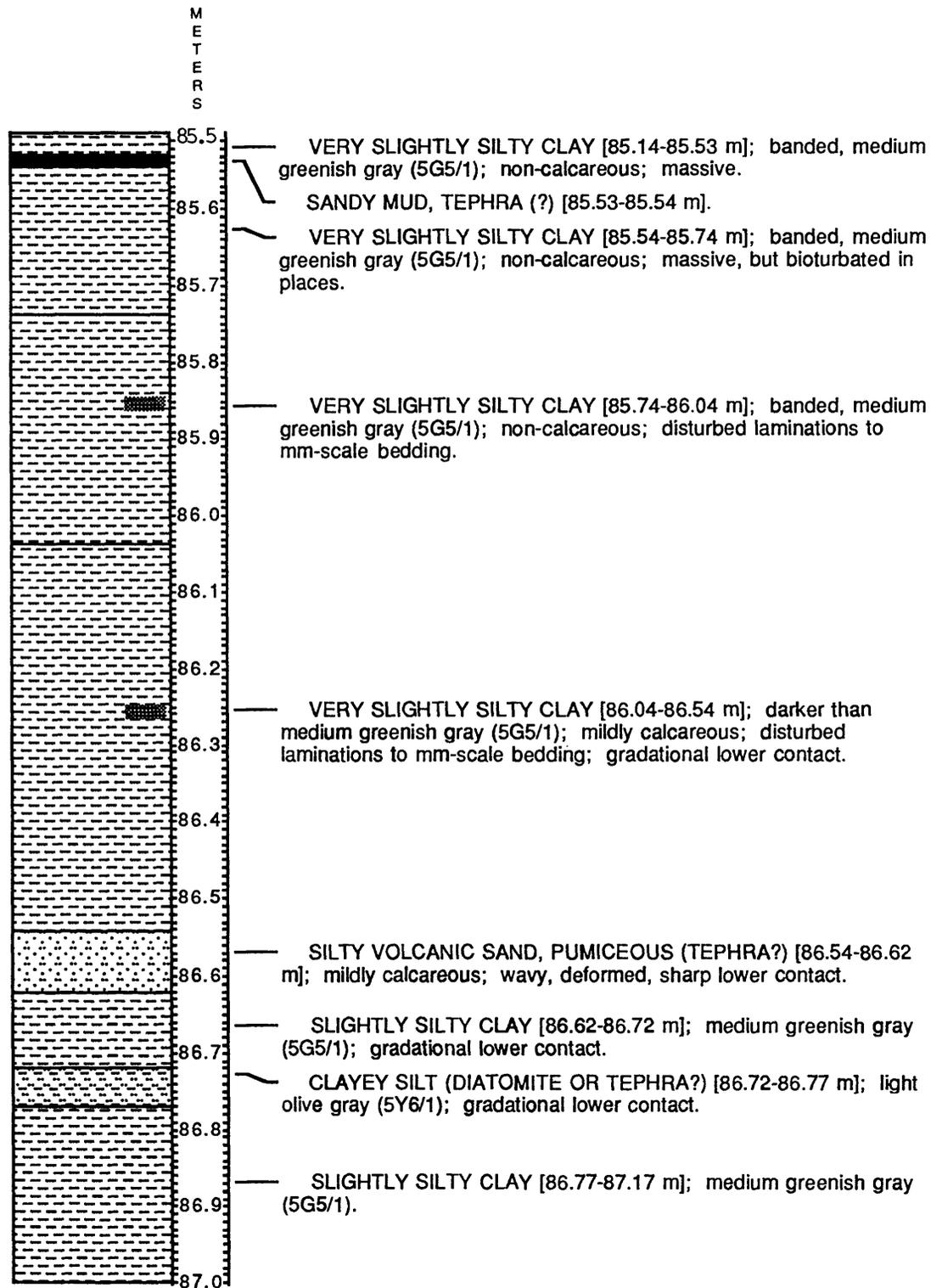
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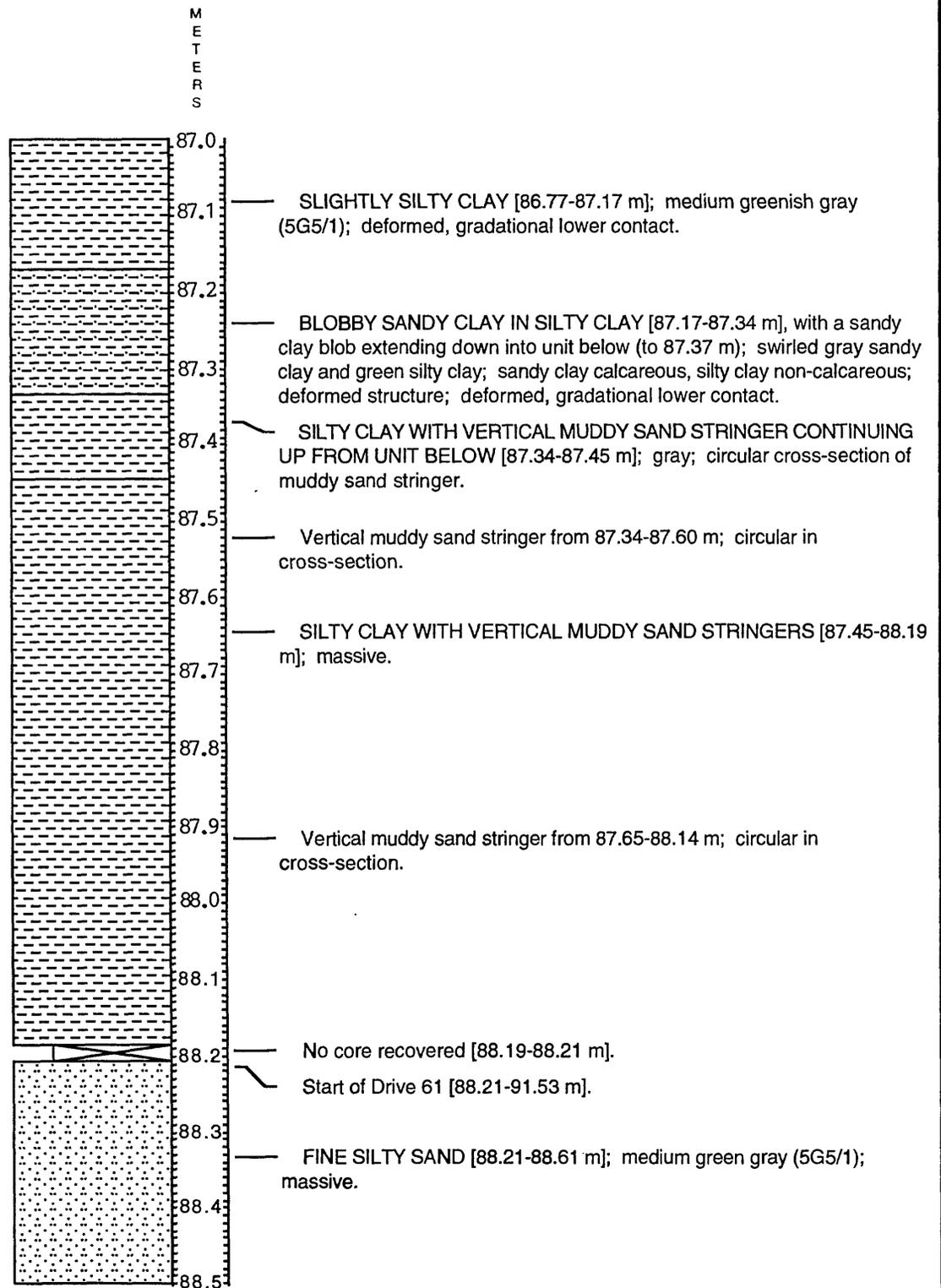
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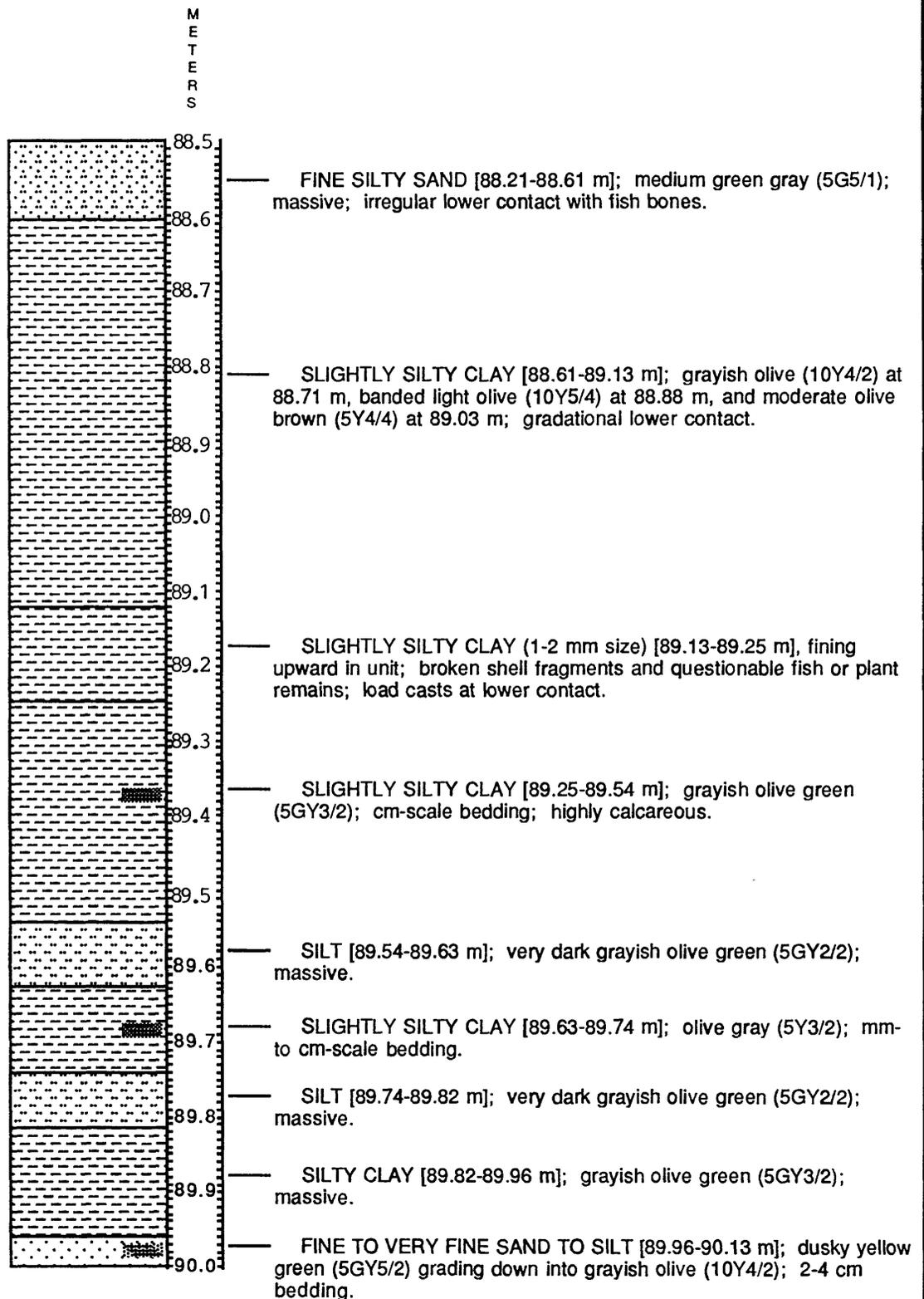
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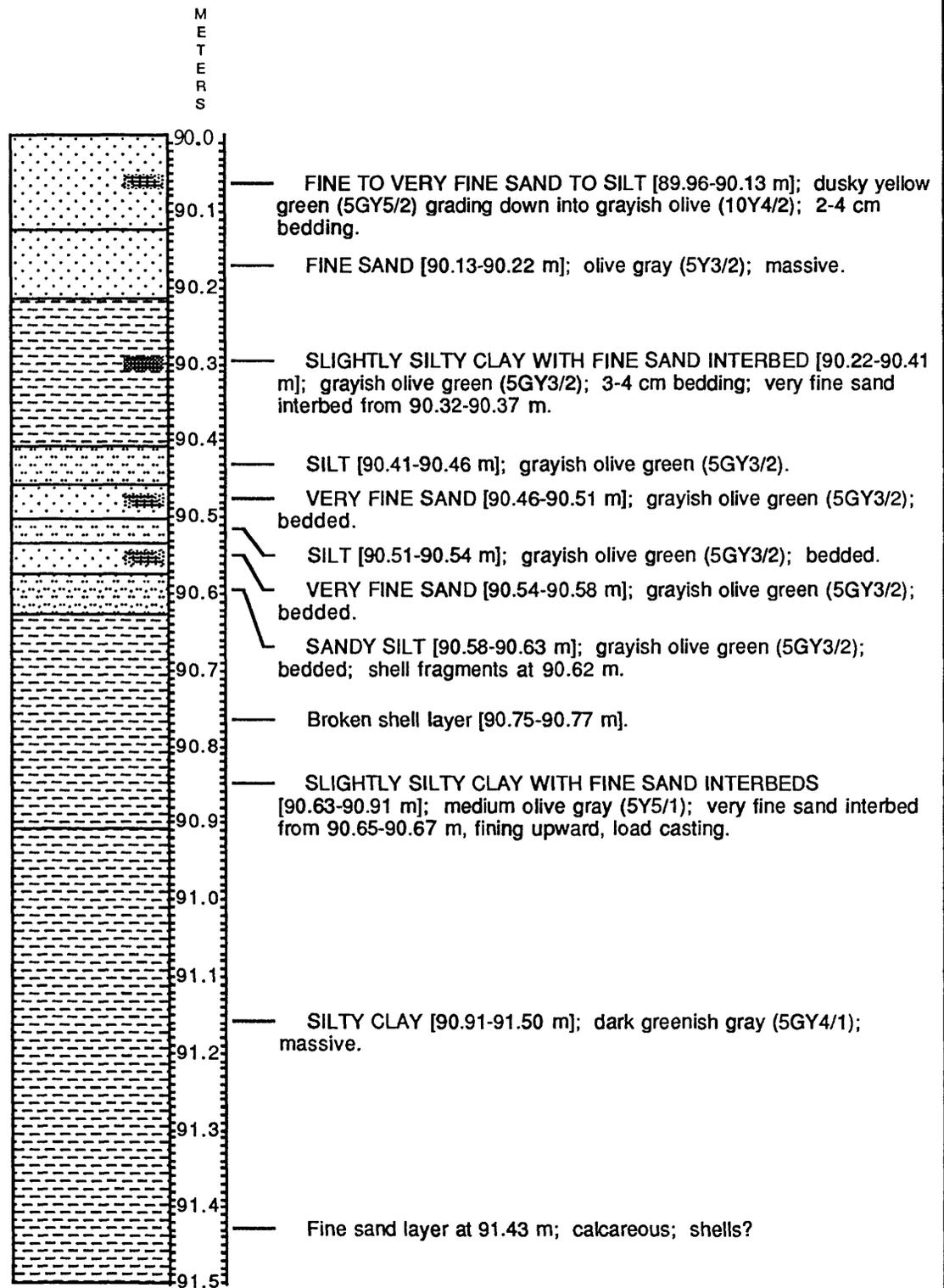
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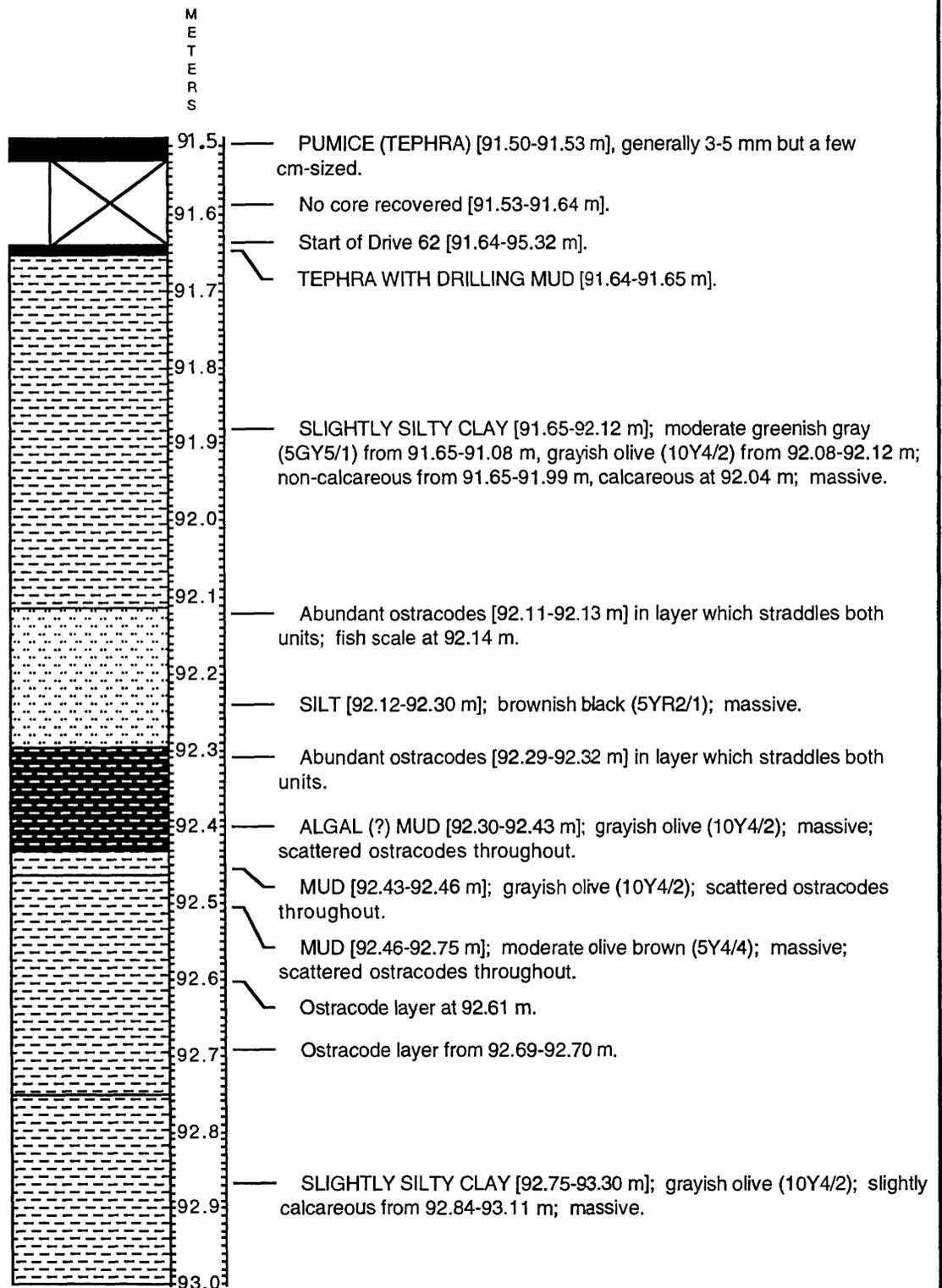
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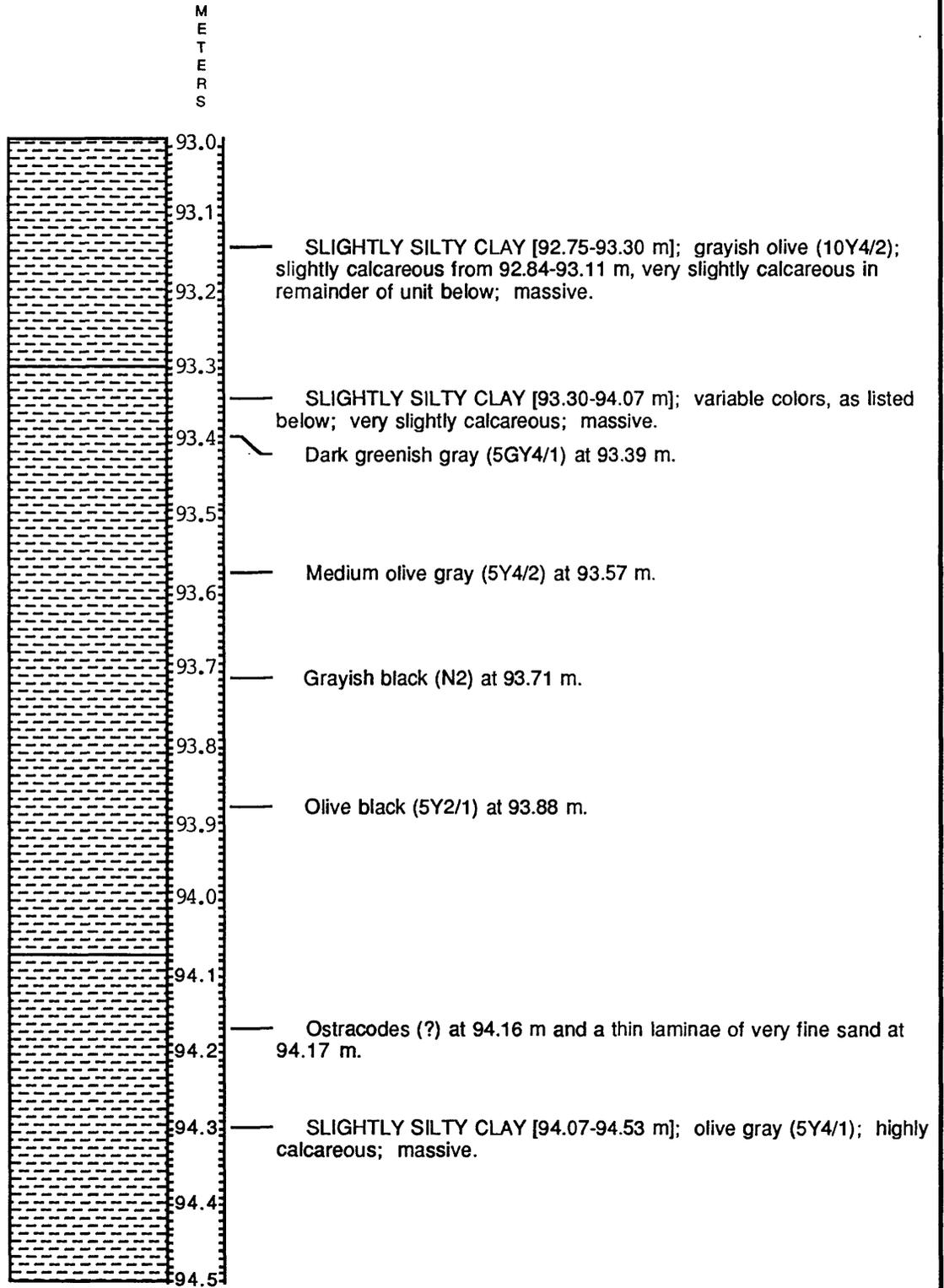
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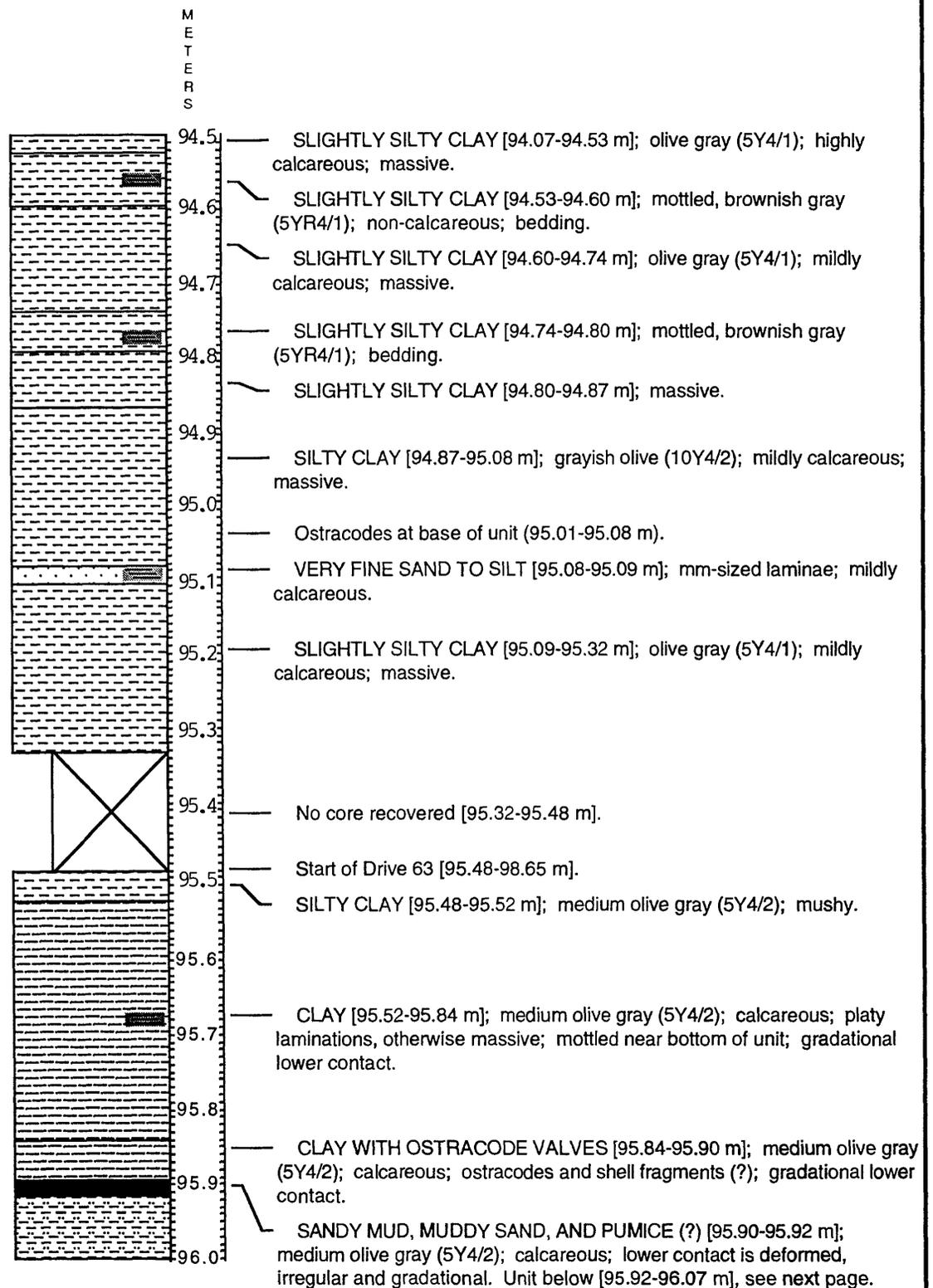
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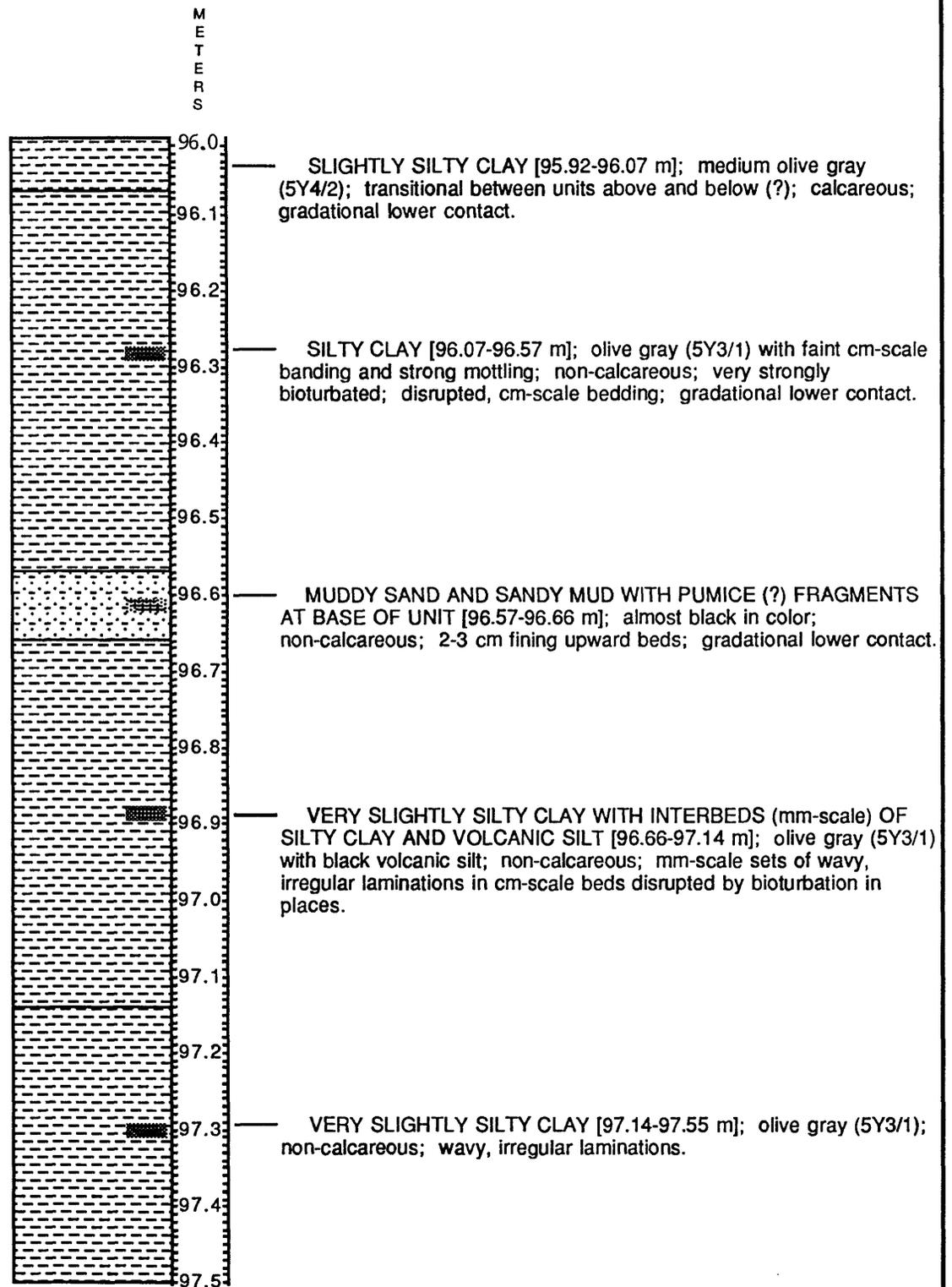
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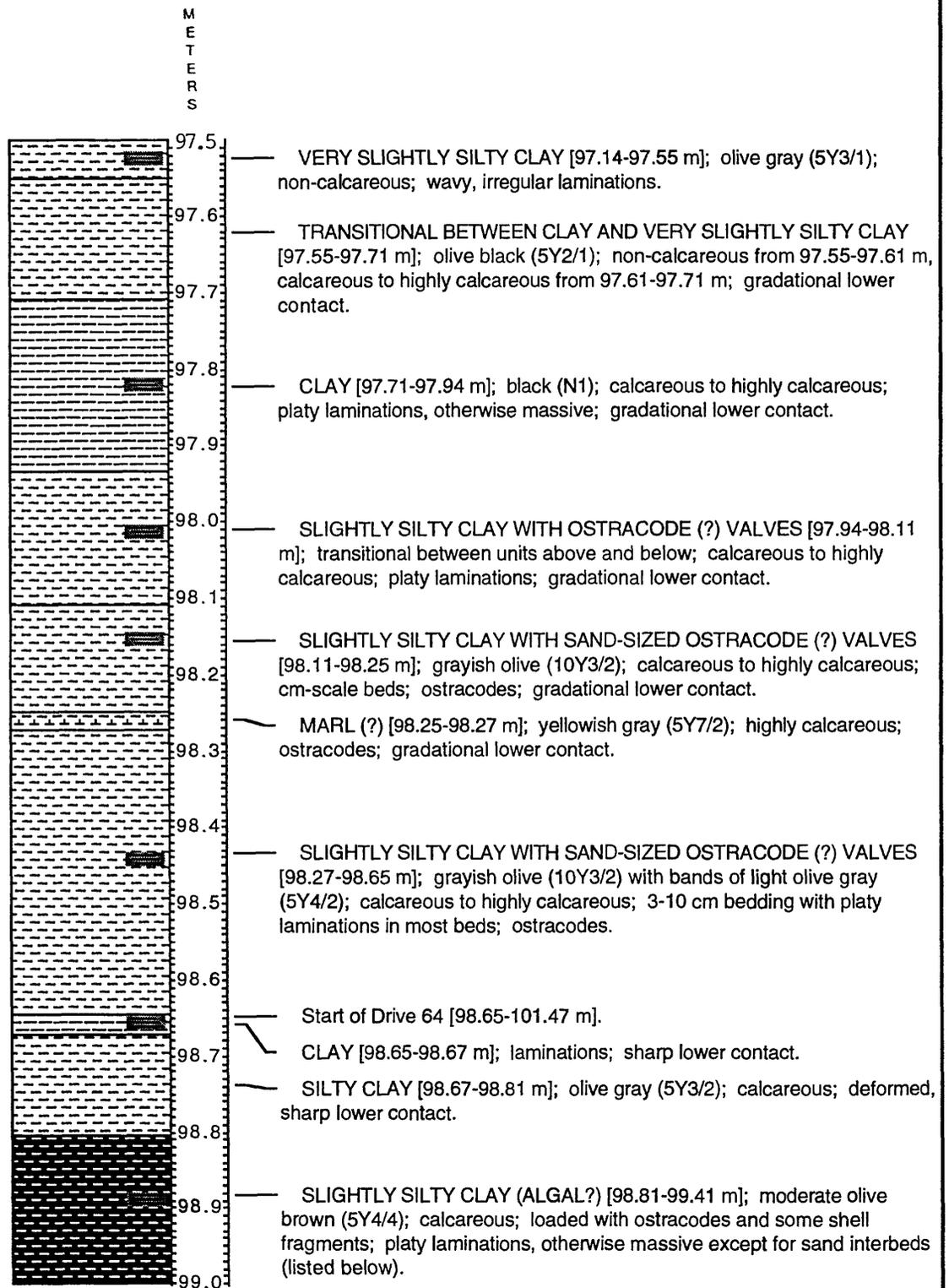
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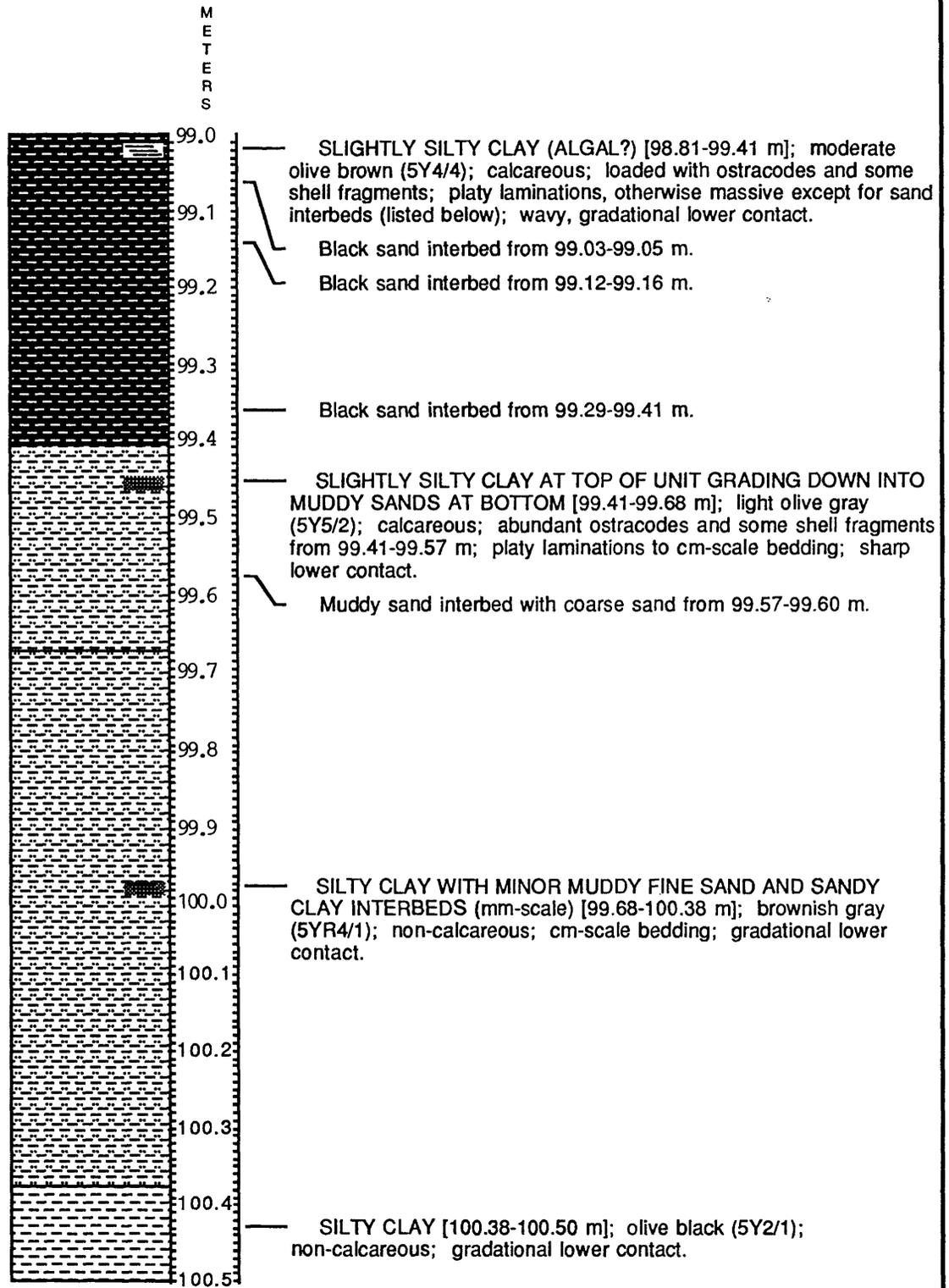
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