



Geochemical Results from Stream-Water and Stream-Sediment Samples Collected in Colorado and New Mexico



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U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Geological Survey



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By Philip L. Hageman, Andrew S. Todd, Kathleen S. Smith, Ed DeWitt, and Mathew P. Zeigler

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Cover. View of Mount Elbert, Colorado.

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Abstract

Scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey are studying the relationship between watershed lithology and stream-water chemistry. As part of this effort, 60 stream-water samples and 43 corresponding stream-sediment samples were collected in 2010 and 2011 from locations in Colorado and New Mexico. Sample sites were selected from small to midsize watersheds composed of a high percentage of one rock type or geologic unit. Stream-water and stream-sediment samples were collected, processed, preserved, and analyzed in a consistent manner. This report releases geochemical data for this phase of the study.

Introduction

In a natural setting, the geochemical characteristics of stream water are determined by the terrain through which the water flows (Miller, 2001). Further, it is understood that the mineralogic composition of the rocks in a watershed is a fundamental factor in determining the chemical makeup of the water emanating from such a watershed (Miller, 1999). However, the specific characteristics of water chemistry produced by interaction of stream water with particular rock types are not well defined. Understanding the rock/water relationship is important because water dissolves and incorporates the soluble components of the rocks, minerals, soil, and biota it comes into contact with both overland and as groundwater. Subsequent changes to stream-water or groundwater chemistry as a result of these interactions can influence, modify, or control important stream-water characteristics such as pH, specific conductance, and the concentration of dissolved constituents. Fluctuation or changes in one or more of these key parameters may result in significant impacts to the viability or health of biota in an ecosystem. Because of the significance of these potential effects, it would be useful to be able to predict lithologically induced changes to stream-water chemistry.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to collect and analyze stream-water and stream-sediment samples from watersheds that are dominated by distinct or specific rock types to determine if unique relationships are expressed between rock type and stream-water chemistry. This publication releases geochemical data from this study to other project scientists and to the public. Data included in this report consist of sample site coordinates, geologic detail for major rock types, and analytical results for stream-water and stream-sediment samples. The data are released without interpretation. Please note that data for water temperature and baseflow discharge for many of the streams included in this study can be found in Zeigler and others (2013).

Study Area

Samples were collected from a variety of watersheds in the central and southern Rocky Mountains in Colorado and New Mexico (fig. 1). The study area encompasses a large, geologically diverse region, and because of its large size, the climate, vegetation, and topography of the sampling sites vary widely. In general, the summertime climate in the study area ranges from cool and humid in the high mountain areas to semiarid to arid at lower elevations. The natural vegetation in the area is diverse and strongly zoned according to elevation. It ranges from tree-free, alpine areas above the timberline to spruce, fir, and pine forests with some aspen and grassy meadows at middle to high elevations. Ponderosa, pinyon pine, and juniper dominate sites at lower elevations, with the lowest and most arid sampling sites dominated by a variety of shrubs, grasses, cacti, and yucca.

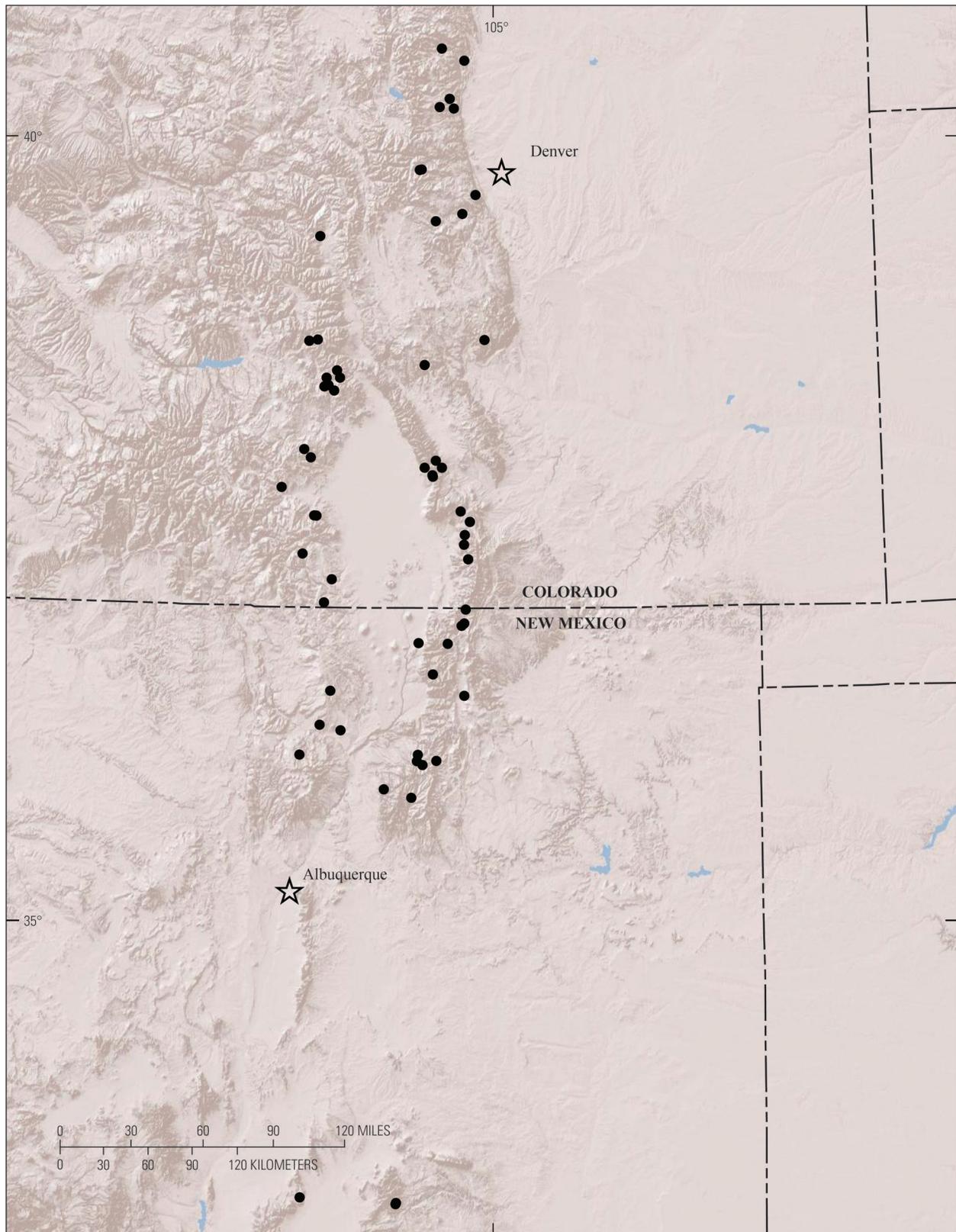


Figure 1. Distribution of sample sites included in this study.

Sampling Strategy

A team of U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) personnel used geologic maps and geographic information systems (GIS) to select sampling sites that were determined to be in watersheds dominated by one rock type, lithology, or geologic unit. Selected sites were plotted on hard-copy topographic maps (1:24,000), and the coordinates were entered into a commercial, hand-held global positioning system (GPS) unit. The sampling plan was to collect both a stream-water sample and corresponding stream-sediment sample from each location. However, because of onsite conditions, stream-sediment samples were not available at all sampling locations, so not all stream-water samples have corresponding stream-sediment samples. In addition, two stream-sediment samples do not have corresponding stream-water samples because of dry conditions at those sampling sites. Most samples were collected during base flow in the late summer or early fall of 2010 and 2011.

Sampling and Analytical Methods

Stream-water samples were collected from small to midsize streams at 60 sites in Colorado and New Mexico. Corresponding stream-sediment samples were collected from a total of 43 sites as noted in table 1.

Table 1. Sample details for stream-water and stream-sediment samples collected for this study.

[pp, private property; SW, stream water collected; SS, stream sediment collected; ?, unsure or unknown; ft, feet; Ma, mega-annum; NM, New Mexico; CO, Colorado. Major rock type (fx): percentage of major rock type present in the drainage above sampling site (1=100%). Mineral age: for plutonic and metamorphic rocks the mineral age will be equal to the rock age; for sedimentary rocks the mineral age will be greater than the rock age and will reflect the age of the protolith from which the grains were derived. Named unit: name of unit if a known name exists]

Sample	State	Latitude	Longitude	Elevation (ft.)	SW	SS	Major rock type(s)	Major rock type (fx)	Mineral age (Ma)	Formation age	Rock type* (chemical)	Named unit	Stream or site
ALA	NM	36.055	-105.468	9,608	X	X	mixed clastic	1	1,600	Permian-Pennsylvanian	psammite	Sandia?	Alamitos Creek
Aud	CO	40.090	-105.596	10,771	X	X	syenite	1	68	Cretaceous	syenite	Audubon	Audubon
CAB-L	NM	36.736	-105.508	8,537	X	X	andesite, felsic, and aphanitic volcanic rocks	0.2	20	Tertiary-Proterozoic mix	dacite mix	unnamed	Cabresto, lower site
CAB-U	NM	36.772	-105.386	10,129	X		andesite, felsic volcanic rock	0.2	20	Tertiary	dacite mix	unknown	Cabresto, upper site
CaC	CO	37.908	-106.449	9,085	X	X	andesite	1	20	Tertiary	andesite	unknown	Cave Creek
CAN-U	NM	36.087	-106.502	8,360	X	X	felsic volcanic rocks, rhyolite	1	20	Tertiary	rhyodacite	Jemez	Canones Creek, upper site
CC-A	CO	39.876	-105.300	7,176	X		quartzite	1	1,700	Proterozoic	quartzite	Coal Creek	Coal Creek-A
COS	NM	pp	pp	10,250	X	X	basalt, clastic	0.7	20	Tertiary	basalt-sedimentary mix	Costilla Creek?	Costilla Creek
DOR	CO	38.396	-106.336	9,291	X	X	dolomite, sandstone	1	440	Devonian-Ordovician	dolomite-sandstone	Parting-Manitou	Indian Creek
ELR	NM	36.481	-106.273	8,399	X	X	mixed clastic	0.8	1,200	Tertiary	psammite	unknown	El Rito Creek
EMC	CO	38.320	-106.276	9,957	X	X	andesite, ash-flow tuff	1	20	Tertiary	andesite	unknown	East Middle Creek
ESB	NM	36.030	-105.574	10,335	X	X	mixed clastic	1	1,600	Permian-Pennsylvanian	psammite	Sandia?	Santa Barbara Creek, east fork
Fair-A	CO	38.621	-106.475	9,696	X	X	granodiorite	1	1,690	Proterozoic	granodiorite	Fairview Peak	Fairview-A
FRJ	NM	36.271	-105.408	9,620	X		clastic	1	1,600	Permian-Pennsylvanian	psammite	Sandia?	Frijoles Creek
HM-1	CO	38.636	-105.107	8,732	X		granite	1	1,700	Proterozoic	granite	Brind Mountain	Henry Mountain-1
HM-2	CO	38.636	-105.107	9,175	X		granite	1	1,700	Proterozoic	granite	Henry Mountain	Henry Mountain-2
IND	NM	36.091	-105.608	8,914	X	X	sandstone	1	1,600	Permian-Pennsylvanian	psammite	Sandia?	Indian Creek
ITA	NM	36.585	-105.497	8,723	X	X	plutonic rock (phaneritic)	0.2	1,500	Proterozoic-Tertiary mix	mixture	unnamed	Itallianos Creek
JAC-L	NM	35.828	-105.657	8,302	X	X	mixed clastic	1	1,600	Permian-Pennsylvanian	psammite	Sandia?	Jacks Creek, lower site
JAC-U	NM	35.875	-105.648	9,985	X	X	mixed clastic	1	1,600	Permian-Pennsylvanian	psammite	Sandia?	Jacks Creek, upper site
JSA	CO	40.111	-105.387	6,998	X		quartz monzonite	1	74	Cretaceous	monzodiorite	Jamestown	Jamestown Stock, site A
Kno-A	CO	39.144	-106.457	10,778	X		granodiorite	1	1,690	Proterozoic	granodiorite	Kroenke	Kroenke-A
LFC	CO	37.318	-106.501	9,664	X	X	andesite	0.9	25	Tertiary	andesite	unknown	Conejos, Lake Fork
LM-1	CO	37.804	-105.512	8,550	X		gneiss	0.9	1,700	Proterozoic	meta-psammite	unnamed	Little Medano Creek
LMC	CO	37.796	-105.504	8,453	X		felsic gneiss, conglomerate, granite	0.5	1,600	Proterozoic mix	meta-psammite	unnamed	Medano Creek, lower site
LTR	NM	36.044	-105.672	8,984	X	X	meta-sedimentary, plutonic rocks	0.8	1,690	Proterozoic	meta-psammite	unnamed	Rio de las Trampas
MCCRY	NM	36.778	-105.099	8,008	X		sandstone, landslide deposits and colluvium, piedmont alluvial deposits	0.8	900?	Tertiary?	siltstone	?	McCrystal
McI	CO	38.573	-105.588	8,970	X	X	mix: metabasalt, metadacite, metagabbro	1	1,700	Proterozoic	diorite-metabasalt	unnamed	McIntyre Gulch
ME-1	CO	39.676	-105.609	9,585	X		granodiorite-diorite	1	1,440	Proterozoic	granodiorite	Mount Evans	Chicago Creek
ML-A	CO	38.740	-106.431	11,007	X		metabasalt, meta-andesite, minor granodiorite	1	1,750	Proterozoic	metabasalt	Ohio	Mirror Lake-A
Mon-A	CO	39.602	-105.822	10,840	X	X	granodiorite	1	40	Tertiary	granodiorite	Montezuma	Montezuma-A
Mpr	CO	38.629	-106.406	10,800	X	X	granodiorite-tonalite	1	37	Tertiary	granodiorite	Mount Princeton	Mount Princeton
MRR	NM	pp	pp	7,535	X	X	felsic volcanic rocks, plutonic rock (phaneritic)	0.5	40	Tertiary	syenite	Sierra Blanca	Rio Ruidoso
MSB	NM	36.053	-105.615	9,348	X	X	mixed clastic	1	1,600	Permian-Pennsylvanian	psammite	Sandia?	Rio Santa Barbara, middle fork
NRR	NM	pp	pp	7,595	X	X	granite, andesite	0.6	40	Tertiary	syenite	Sierra Blanca	Rio Ruidoso, north fork
NTR	CO	pp	pp	8,791	X	X	felsic gneiss	1	1,730	Proterozoic	granodiorite	Trinchera?	North Trinchera Creek
OC	CO	38.397	-106.230	10,625	X	X	metabasalt, meta-andesite, metadacite	0.9	1,700	Proterozoic	meta-andesite	unnamed	Ouray Creek
OSI	CO	37.020	-106.333	9,776	X	X	ash-flow tuff, mixed clastic (volcanic), landslide deposits	0.6?	25	Tertiary	quartz latite	unknown	Osier Creek
PC	CO	37.957	-106.500	9,857	X	X	andesite	1	25	Tertiary	andesite	unnamed	Prong Creek
Pee-D	CO	39.584	-106.996	7,051		X	evaporite	1	300	Permian-Pennsylvanian	evaporite	Eagle Valley	Eagle Valley evaporite
Pet-B	CO	40.577	-105.461	8,258	X	X	metagraywacke	1?	1,700	Proterozoic	metawacke	unnamed	Petite-B
PLAC	CO	pp	pp	8,569	X	X	felsic gneiss, sandstone, plutonic rock (phaneritic)	0.6	1,500?	Proterozoic mix?	granite?	North Russell?	Placer Creek
Pmb-A	CO	39.441	-106.672	9,816	X	X	black shale, sandstone	0.8	300	Pennsylvanian?	C-rich pelite	Belden?	Crooked Creek
PNL	NM	33.626	-105.245	6,317	X	X	plutonic, sedimentary	1	40	Tertiary	syenite	El Capitan	Pinelodge
PPww	CO	39.616	-106.996	7,420		X	sandstone	0.9	1,500	Permian-Pennsylvanian	psammite	Minturn?	Red beds
Raw	CO	40.701	-105.761	7,820	X	X	granite	1	1,720	Proterozoic	granite	Rawah	Rawah
Roos-A	CO	38.584	-106.539	9,088	X		granite	1	1,760	Proterozoic	alkali granite	Roosevelt	Roosevelt-A
SC	CO	37.851	-105.571	8,299	X		granite, felsic gneiss, conglomerate	0.6	1,500	Proterozoic mix	granite-gneiss	Music Mountain?	Sand Creek
SC-1	CO	39.675	-105.622	9,627	X		mix: granodiorite, metagraywacke	1	1,500	Proterozoic	granodiorite-metawacke mix	Mount Evans--unnamed	South Chicago Creek
SF-U	CO	37.551	-106.398	9,751	X	X	andesite, ash-flow tuff	0.8	25	Tertiary	andesite	San Juan--name?	San Francisco Creek, upper site
SPA	CO	39.681	-105.477	9,749	X		mix: metagraywacke, mafic metavolcanic rocks	1	1,700	Proterozoic	metawacke-metabasalt	unnamed	Squaw Pass-A
SS-C	CO	40.060	-105.469	8,209	X		syenite	1	55	Tertiary	syenite	Sunset	Sunset Stock-C
TRIUP	CO	pp	pp	10,260	X	X	felsic gneiss, siltstone, glacial drift	0.5	1,500	Proterozoic-Pennsylvanian mix	granite mix	unknown	Trinchera, upper site

Table 1. Sample details for stream-water and stream-sediment samples collected for this study.—Continued

[pp, private property; SW, stream water collected; SS, stream sediment collected; ?, unsure or unknown; ft, feet; Ma, mega-annum; NM, New Mexico; CO, Colorado. Major rock type (fx): percentage of major rock type present in the drainage above sampling site (1=100%). Mineral age: for plutonic and metamorphic rocks the mineral age will be equal to the rock age; for sedimentary rocks the mineral age will be greater than the rock age and will reflect the age of the protolith from which the grains were derived. Named unit: name of unit if a known name exists]

Sample	State	Latitude	Longitude	Elevation (ft.)	SW	SS	Major rock type(s)	Major rock type (fx)	Mineral age (Ma)	Formation age	Rock type* (chemical)	Named unit	Stream or site
TWO-L	NM	36.898	-105.261	9,436	X	X	plutonic rocks, clastic	0.4	1,700	Proterozoic-Tertiary	granite mix	granite--name?	Casius Creek, lower site
TWO-U	NM	36.884	-105.279	9,455	X	X	plutonic rocks, clastic	0.5	1,700	Proterozoic-Tertiary	granite mix	granite--name?	Casius Creek, upper site
UMC	CO	37.852	-105.438	9,650	X		conglomerate, felsic gneiss	0.7	1,500	Permian-Pennsylvanian	sandstone mix	Sangre de Cristo mix	Medano Creek, upper site
USC	CO	37.889	-105.502	9,706	X	X	granite, conglomerate, arkose	0.7	1,400	Proterozoic	granite	Music Mountain	Sand Creek, upper site
WCR	CO	pp	pp	8,674	X	X	conglomerate, sandstone	0.8	1,500	Permian-Pennsylvanian	conglomerate	Madera?	Wagon Creek
WCr	CO	37.018	-106.461	8,650	X	X	andesite, unconsolidated	0.9	25	Tertiary	andesite	unknown	Wolf Creek
WFA	CO	37.723	-106.670	8,700	X		volcanics	0.9	25	Tertiary	dacite?	unknown	Alder Creek, west fork
WHA	CO	37.925	-106.698	10,312	X	X	volcanics	1	25	Tertiary	latite	unknown	Whale Creek
WIC	CO	pp	pp	8,559	X	X	sandstone, felsic gneiss, conglomerate	0.4	1,500	Proterozoic-Pennsylvanian mix	granite mix	unknown	West Indian Creek

*Igneous rocks classified using De la Roche and others (1980), metasedimentary rocks classified by Ed DeWitt (U.S Geological Survey, unpub.data, 2012).

Collection and Analysis of Stream-Water Samples

At each sampling location, coordinates and site details were logged and a stream-water sample was collected midstream using a pre-cleaned 500-milliliter (mL) high-density polyethylene (HDPE) plastic bottle that was rinsed three times with site water. Immediately following collection of the stream-water sample, pH and specific conductance (SC) were determined on unfiltered subsamples using calibrated, hand-held meters. Next, the stream-water samples were filtered and preserved using the procedures listed in table 2.

Table 2. Details for collection of stream-water samples.

[FU, filtered, unacidified; FA, filtered, acidified; RA, unfiltered, acidified; Hg, mercury; Fe, iron; DOC, dissolved organic carbon; cm³, cubic centimeter; μm, micrometer; mL, milliliter; HDPE, high-density polyethylene; °C, degree Celsius; <, less than]

Sample split	Analyte(s)	Filtration details	Bottle type	Preservation
FU	Chloride, fluoride, nitrate, and alkalinity	60-cm ³ syringe and a 0.45-μm nylon capsule filter	60-mL HDPE	Refrigeration at 4°C until analyzed
FA	Cations and sulfate	60-cm ³ syringe and a 0.45-μm nylon capsule filter	30-mL acid-washed HDPE	Acidify to pH <1.7 with ultra-pure nitric acid (2 or 3 drops/30 mL)
RA	Cations and sulfate	60-cm ³ syringe, no filtration	30-mL acid-washed HDPE	Acidify to pH <1.7 with ultra-pure nitric acid (2 or 3 drops/30 mL)
Hg	Mercury	60-cm ³ syringe and a 0.45-μm nylon capsule filter	30-mL acid-washed flint glass bottle with Teflon-lined lid	Acidify with ultra-pure hydrochloric acid (1 mL/30 mL)
Fe ²⁺	Ferrous iron	60-cm ³ syringe and a 0.45-μm nylon capsule filter	60-mL amber HDPE	Acidify with ultra-pure concentrated hydrochloric acid (3 drops/60mL)
DOC	Dissolved organic carbon	60-cm ³ syringe and a 0.45-μm polyethersulfone (PES) capsule filter	125-mL pre-baked amber glass bottles	Acidify with ultra-pure hydrochloric acid (5 drops/125 mL)

Upon return from the field, all water samples were submitted to the USGS Central Region Mineral and Environmental Science Center (CRMESC) laboratories in Lakewood, Colorado, for log-in and analysis. Pertinent sample information was entered into the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS), and each sample was given a unique laboratory identification number. The samples were then distributed to the laboratories for chemical analyses using the following methods:

- FU (filtered, unacidified) samples were analyzed for chloride (Cl⁻), fluoride (F⁻), and nitrate (NO₃⁻) using ion chromatography (IC) (Theodorakos and others, 2002); a separate split of this sample was analyzed for alkalinity by titration (Theodorakos, 2002a).
- Both the FA (filtered, acidified) and RA (unfiltered, acidified) samples were submitted for cation and sulfate analysis by inductively coupled plasma–atomic emission spectrometry (ICP–AES)

(Briggs, 2002a) and inductively coupled plasma–mass spectrometry (ICP–MS) (Lamothe and others, 2002).

- Ferrous iron (Fe^{2+}) was determined by spectrophotometry (Theodorakos, 2002b).
- Dissolved mercury (Hg) was determined using cold vapor–atomic fluorescence (CVAFS) (Hageman, 2007).
- Dissolved organic carbon (DOC) was determined by combustion–infrared detection (Shimadzu Corporation, 1997).

Collection and Analysis of Stream-Sediment Samples

For this study, stream-sediment samples were collected (when present) from active streambed alluvium within 10 meters (m) of the plotted sample locality. The samples were composited by taking increments of material from several streambed locations using a plastic scoop. If limited stream sediment was available, a single bulk sediment sample was collected from bed-load material. Sample size for most sites was approximately 1 kilogram (kg). All stream-sediment samples were wet-sieved onsite using a 10-mesh (2-millimeter [mm]) stainless steel screen and a plastic pan. The material that passed the screen was taken directly from the pan and saved for processing and analysis.

Upon return from the field, the sediment samples were logged into the Laboratory Information System (LIMS) at the USGS Central Region Mineral and Environmental Science Center (CRMESC), and each sample was given a unique laboratory identification number. The samples were then prepared using the following procedure. First, the sediments were air-dried at ambient temperature. Dried samples were then mixed and split using a Jones splitter. One split of the bulk material was returned to the submitter for archive, and the other split was processed for laboratory analysis by dry sieving to -80 mesh (0.17 mm). The portion of the sediment that passed the sieve was then pulverized using a shatter box to approximately -150 mesh (0.1 mm). Splits of ground material were then placed into pre-labeled cardboard containers that were sealed and sent to the USGS contract laboratories for determination of 40 elements using a four acid digestion and analysis by ICP–AES (Briggs, 2002b). The contract laboratory also determined forms of carbon (C) using the following methods:

- Total C was determined by combustion using an automated carbon analyzer (Brown and Curry, 2002).
- Carbonate C was determined using coulometric titration of CO_2 evolved after treatment of the sample with hot 2N perchloric acid (Brown and others, 2002).
- Organic C was calculated from the difference between total C and carbonate C.

The contract laboratory also determined total sulfur using an automated sulfur analyzer.

Analytical Results

Bulk-chemistry results for the stream-sediment samples are found in appendix 1. Analytical results for all filtered acidified (FA) stream-water samples are provided in appendix 2. Results for unfiltered acidified (RA) samples are found in appendix 3. Please note that analytical data for zinc (Zn) for the stream-water samples were not included in the dataset because of a contamination problem. Bulk zinc, however, is reported for the stream-sediment samples. Samples in all the tables are organized alphabetically according to their sample identification for ease of cross-reference.

Quality Assurance and Quality Control (QA/QC)

For stream sediments, site duplicate samples were collected at three of the sampling locations. These samples were collected concurrently with the primary sample using all the same equipment, processes, and procedures. Duplicate samples were submitted blind as part of the sample set. In addition, prior to submittal to the contract laboratories, blind reference samples (Standard L, Standard M, and Standard Ras-A) were integrated into the sample sets by the submitter. Additional reference standards were inserted into the sample set by USGS Sample Control. These internal reference samples were submitted with the sample set at a ratio of 10 percent and were run through the analytical procedures as blind samples. Analytical data for the internal reference samples are assessed as part of the USGS quality control system. Quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) data for Standard L, Standard M, Standard Ras-A, and the duplicate samples are found in appendix 4.

Stream-water samples for QA/QC include both field and laboratory procedure blanks, site duplicate samples, and a blind reference sample (T-167). These samples were submitted to the laboratories as part of the analytical dataset. The field blank was processed in-situ using the same procedures and equipment used for collection of the stream-water samples. The water used for the field blank sample was deionized water (NanoPure, 18M Ω) from the laboratory and was carried into the field in a clean 500-mL HDPE bottle. The laboratory blanks were processed and prepared with all the procedures and equipment used for collection of the stream-water samples with the exception that they were prepared in the laboratory. Water used for the laboratory blanks was deionized water (NanoPure, 18M Ω). Stream-water duplicate samples were collected concurrently with the primary sample using the same equipment and procedures as those used to collect all the stream-water samples. In addition, all of the analytical techniques used for this study employ extensive QA/QC protocols, which are described in an online publication (Taggart, 2002). The quality control data for the stream-water FA and RA samples are provided in appendix 5 and appendix 6, respectively.

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Appendixes

1. Bulk chemistry for 42 elements (ICP-AES), forms of carbon, and total sulfur for stream-sediment samples collected for this study
2. Composition of filtered, acidified (FA) stream-water samples
3. Composition of unfiltered, acidified (RA) stream-water samples
4. Quality assurance/quality control results for stream-sediment samples including bulk chemistry for 40 elements (ICP-AES), forms of carbon, and total sulfur
5. Quality assurance/quality control results for filtered, acidified (FA) stream-water samples
6. Quality assurance/quality control results for unfiltered, acidified (RA) stream-water samples