



**ORKUSTOFNUN**  
NATIONAL ENERGY AUTHORITY

# MÝRDALSSANDUR

## A geophysical survey

**Freyr Thórarinsson**  
**Halina Gudmundsson**

**OS79022/JKD06**  
Reykjavík, May 1979

**Prepared for**  
**Jarðefnaiðnaður h/f**

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Fjölritað af  
OFFSETFJÖLRITUN HF.

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ABSTRACT

This report describes the results of a geophysical survey of the pumice on Mýrdalssandur. The survey included both geoelectrical and seismic measurements. The thickness of dry pumice above groundwater table was found to be about 3-5 meters in the lower half of the area, and increase to over 20 meters in the uppermost part of the area. The bedrock underlying the pumice is found to be relatively flat, at an elevation of 10-25 meters below sea level.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

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In the second week of July, 1978, a geophysical survey was carried out on Mýrdalssandur by the National Energy Authority, Dept. of Econ. Geology. The survey consisted of the geoelectrical soundings described in chapter 2 and the seismic survey described in chapter 3. The geophysical field work and preliminary interpretation was supervised and carried out by the geophysicists Kristján Ágústsson and Freyr Thórarinsson. Final interpretation of the geoelectrical and seismic data was done by geophysicists Freyr Thórarinsson and Halina Gudmundsson respectively. Geologist Freysteinn Sigurdsson was in charge of the project and carried out the complementary geological investigation, jointly with geologist Gylfi Einarsson of the Technical Institute of Iceland.

The aim of the survey was to map the thickness of the pumice overlying the bedrock in the area and to map the thickness of pumice above groundwater in the area. The joint interpretation of the compiled geophysical data shows, that the electrical soundings, which are more widely distributed than the seismic profiles, give a reasonable estimate of the mean depth to bedrock at each sounding location, at least in the areas covered by the seismic survey. All three exploration methods give fairly identical values as to the thickness of the dry pumice, i.e. the depth to groundwater table, the main target of the survey.

In this report, all the loose sediments on Mýrdalssandur are classified as pumice, wet and dry. Indeed, for the most part, these sediments consist of pumice, at least at the surface, but may be mixed to a considerable degree with sand and gravel.

## 2 THE GEOELECTRICAL SURVEY

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The geoelectrical survey consisted of 22 vertical electrical soundings (abbreviated as VES) with a Schlumberger array. Their location is shown in fig. 1 and given in table 1.

The VES are interpreted as three lithostratigraphic units: Dry pumice above ground-water table, wet pumice below ground-water table and bedrock. In fig. 2 is shown the thickness of the first layer, dry pumice above ground-water table, and also elevation of the ground-water table above sea level, i.e. the piezometric height. In fig. 3 is shown the thickness of the first two layers together, and also the elevation of the bedrock with respect to sea level. These are the main results of the geoelectrical survey, and they are also presented in table 1.

Fig. 4 shows a resistivity profile, which gives a fairly good idea of the lithostratigraphic structure of the area. The thickness of dry as well as wet pumice increases inland, especially above mount Hjörleifshöfði.

The bedrock is divided at 200 ohm-meters into high and low resistivity bedrock. This seems to correspond to the high and low velocity bedrock found in the seismic surveys and furthermore seems to delineate the "foundation" of mt. Hjörleifshöfði.

Finally, fig. 5 shows the distribution of interpreted resistivity values and their correspondance with the lithostratigraphic classification. These classes are distinctively separated in resistivity values, except for a slight overlap between high resistivity bedrock and wet pumice, but these overlapping values are clearly separated in the individual surroundings.

The interpretation of the VES presented here in table 1 and figs. 2-5 is done by a computer program which selects, by iterations, the interpretation model and the corresponding curve, which has a least-square-deviation from the measured values. A starting model has to be selected, the number of layers in the model being its most important feature. Any parameter of this initial model, i.e. the thickness or the resistivity of any layer, can be fixed, as opposed to being variable. For further details about this computer program, see "Johansen, H.K., 1977, a Man/Computer Interpretation System for Resistivity Soundings over a Horizontally Stratified Earth, Geophysical Prospecting 25, 667-697".



The interpreter has to select the optimal number of layers for each VES and decide what parameters in which VES should be fixed to get a consistent and plausible interpretation of the "geoelectrical-stratigraphy" of the area. In the interpretation presented in this report, the following resistivities were fixed: The resistivity of wet pumice at 400 ohm-meters in M-XIII, M-XVIII, M-XX and M-XXI and at 650 ohm in M-XIV. The value for low resistivity bedrock was fixed at 130 ohm-meters for M-XVII. Finally, the surface resistivity in M-IV was fixed, for technical reasons. All other resistivity values were variable, and thickness of layers was never fixed.

### 3 THE SEISMIC SURVEY

The seismic survey consisted of 20 refraction and 21 reflection profiles, covering the same ground. The location of profiles was marked by pegs, each bearing the same number as the profile it locates. These numbers are M-I and M-1 to M-21, and the location of the pegs is shown in fig. 1 and given in tables 2 and 3. The interpretation of the refraction and reflection profiles is given in tables 2 and 3 respectively, and shown in figs. 6, 7, and 8. Fig. 6 shows the uppermost seismic section (cf. fig. 1), including profiles M-9 to M-15 and M-21. Fig. 7 shows the section including M-1 to M-8 and M-I, and fig. 8 shows the seismic section closest to the shore, including profiles M-16 to M-20.

The seismic profiles, like the VES, are interpreted in terms of three lithostratigraphic units, dry pumice above ground-water level, wet pumice below ground-water level and bedrock. Figures 6-8 show the interpreted thickness of dry and wet pumice on the three seismic sections. Furthermore, they show the seismic velocity of the layers from refraction profiles and the apparent velocity down to bedrock from reflection profiles. The depth down to bedrock according to the geoelectrical soundings is also depicted in figs. 6 and 7. This comparison shows a good correlation between the VES and the seismic survey, and suggest that the VES interpretation from the upper half of Mýrdalssandur, where no seismic profiling was carried out, should generally give a reasonable estimate of pumice thicknesses.

The bedrock is here separated into two lithostratigraphic sub-units, high velocity and low velocity bedrock. This division seems to correspond with the division into high and low resistivity bedrock mentioned in chapter 2, and seemingly reflects the same geologic phenomena, i.e. the submerged "foundation" of mt. Hjørleifshöfði. The seismic refraction recording was done with a 12-channel ABEM-Trio seismometer with 10 m spacings between geophones. The total geophone spread was thus 110 m. The seismic impulse was provided by dynamite explosives. All profiles, except M-19, were reversed. All profiles, except M-1 and M-2, were shot twice in each direction, with offset distances of 10 and 100 meters (i.e. the distance from the shotpoint to the first geophone). The quality of the refraction profiles is generally rather good.

The seismic reflection recording was done with a single-channel Hunttec Seismograph, model FS-3 with a facsimile printer, using a sledge as an energy source and an array of 12 geophones. For each recording, the seismic impact was delivered at 40-60 points with an interval of 1 meter. Several recordings were made for each profile. The quality of the recordings is generally acceptable, although far from noise-free.

## ÁGRIP Á ÍSLENSKU

Jarðkönnunardeild Orkustofnunar gerði í júlí 1978 könnun á þykkt Mýrdalssands milli Múlakvíslar og Blautukvíslar, með jarðeðlisfræðilegum mælingum. Könnunin var gerð fyrir Jarðefnaiðnað h/f. Gerðar voru 22 viðnámsmælingar, 20 hljóðbrotsmælingar og 21 hljóðspeglunarmæling. Niðurstöður túlkunar þessara mælinga er að finna í töflum 1-3. Ennfremur er að finna í viðauka mæliferla og túlkunarferla allra viðnámsferla allra viðnámsmælinganna.

Á mynd 1 er sýnd staðsetning allra mælinganna, eða nánar tiltekið hæla, sem notaðir voru til að merkja mælistaðina fyrir landmælingu. Á mynd 2 er sýnt bæði dýpi á jarðvatn (feitlettrað) og jarðvatnshæð (skálettrað) samkvæmt viðnámsmælingum. Á mynd 3 er sýnd þykkt sandsins (feitlettrað) og hæð berggrunnsins yfir sjó (skálettrað) samkvæmt viðnámsmælingum. Mynd 4 sýnir þversnið upp sandinn samkvæmt viðnámsmælingum. Mynd 5 sýnir dreifingu viðnámsgilda. Myndir 6-8 sýna niðurstöður túlkunar hljóðbrots- og hljóðspeglunarmælinganna og samanburð þeirra við viðnámsmælingarnar. Sá samanburður gerir í fyrsta lagi kleift að túlka viðnámsmælingarnar í nágrenni Hjörleifshöfða með meiri nákvæmni en ella, og í öðru lagi styrkir hann almennt niðurstöður viðnámsmælinganna.

Helstu niðurstöður eru þær, að dýpi á jarðvatn er 3-5 m niður á móts við Hjörleifshöfða, en eykst upp sandinn og er yfir 20 m í nágrenni Hafurs-eyjar. Grunnbergið undir sandinum er flatt inn til landsins og yfirborð þess er á 10-25 m dýpi undir sjávarmáli.

TABLES



EXPLANATIONS TO TABLE 1.

- M: Number of sounding
- D: Date
- x,y,z: Coordinates
- R°: Orientation of VES (east of true north)
- L: Number of layer
- ρ: Resistivity of layer
- h: Thickness of layer
- d: Depth to base of layer
- m-m: Minimal-maximal possible thickness of layer, within 68% confidence limits
- s: m-m expressed as percentage of thickness of layer (times 1/2)

TABLE 1: MÝRDALSSANDUR - Geoelectrical survey

M	D	x	y	z	R°	L	ρ	h	d	m-m	s	Comment	
M-I	780704	612 180	7 036 230	14,38	90	1	3000	0.1	0.1				Compiled from two runs
						2	13000	4.	4.				
						3	350	35.	40.				
						4	(35)						
M-II	780704	610 430	7 036 380	17,66	≈0	1	11300	1.5	1.5				
						2	10200	3.0	4.5	4.4-4.7	4		
						3	313	27.	32.	28-37	14		
						4	143	88.	120.				
						5	34						
M-III	780705	610 280	7 039 160	37,55	0	1	10900	4.4	4.4			1	
						2	328	72.	77.	73-81	6		
						3	130						
M-IV	780705	610 830	7 037 770	24,44	0	1	14000	0.3	0.3				Fix.res.
						2	10500	2.8	3.1	3.0-3.2	2		
						3	430	38.	41.	39-43	5		
						4	180						
M-V	780705	609 200	7 039 110	37,52	12	1	4870	0.5	0.5				
						2	12400	6.3	6.8	6.6-7.0	2		
						3	510	54.	60.	57-64	5		
						4	160						
M-VI	780706	612 170	7 034 960	7,70	94	1	6730	3.0	3.0	2.9-3.0		2	
						2	424	18.	21.	19-24	11		
						3	280	24.	45.				
						4	18						
M-VII	780706	610 650	7 035 360	11,70	98	1	17500	0.3	0.3				} Uncertain values
						2	8500	3.5	3.8				
						3	1430	3.7	13.5				
						4	221	64.	77.	76-79	2		
						5	15						
M-VIII	780706	611 600	7 050 190	155,51	145	1	20300	0.7	0.7				
						2	6710	4.1	4.8				
						3	20500	23.	28.	26-30	7		
						4	741	94.	122.	98-157	24		
						5	300						
M-IX	780706	610 300	7 040 630	50,99	16	1	9550	3.3	9.3	No outp.			
						2	419	45.	55.	"			
						3	280	58.	113.	"			
						4	130			"			
M-X	780707	608 50	7 036 40	≈10	26	1	3100	0.3	0.3				Computer iteration not finished
						2	5310	3.3	3.6	3.5-3.7	2		
						3	432	27.	31.	28-33	9		
						4	250						

TABLE 1: MÝRDALSSANDUR - Geoelectrical survey

M	D	x	y	z	R°	L	$\rho$	h	d	m-m	s	Comment
M-XI	780707	614 630	7 036 450	$\approx 12$	163	1	12000	3.9	3.9		1	
						2	404	32.	36.	32-42	13	
						3	181	54.	30.			
						4	34					
M-XII	780707	614 150	7 039 480	27,31	176	1	12200	2.9	2.9	No outp.		
						2	439	44.	47.	"		
						3	227	73.	126.	"		
						4	65			"		
M-XIII	780707	612 640	7 039 250	31,61	165	1	15600	3.4	3.4			
						2	1330	10.	13.	13-14	5	
						3	400	31.	45.	40-51	16	Fix. res.
						4	222	60.	105.			
						5	35					
M-XIV	780708	612 880	7 048 870	121,63	170	1	44800	0.7	0.7			
						2	15500	23.	24.		1	
						3	650	86.	110.	107-114	3	Fix. res.
						4	150					
M-XV	780708	614 30	7 046 60	$\approx 80,$	96	1	28300	1.3	1.3			
						2	14900	16.	18.	17-18	1	
						3	603	83.	101.	38-104	3	
						4	82					
M-XVI	780708	615 610	7 045 380	63,33	$\approx 175$	1	21000	2.3	2.3			
						2	12200	8.4	11.	10-11	3	
						3	583	61.	72.	70-74	2	
						4	82					
M-XVII	780708	610 630	7 042 680	65,85	174	1	18300	0.6	0.6			
						2	10600	14.	15.			
						3	467	64.	78.	64-36	21	
						4	338	104.	182.	162-204	11	
						5	130					Fix. res.
M-XVIII	780709	610 720	7 044 170	80,58	174	1	12900	1.6	1.6			
						2	6560	18.	20.		1	
						3	400	85.	105.	99-111	6	Fix. res.
						4	130					
M-XIX	780709	610 720	7 045 500	34,85	175	1	17600	0.8	0.8			
						2	6630	31.	32.	32-33	2	
						3	410	82.	114.	100-131	14	
						4	170					
M-XX	780709	610 870	7 046 570	37,00	30	1	15100	1.2	1.2			
						2	4540	36.	37.	37-38	1	
						3	400	31.	128.	117-140	9	Fix. res.
						4	220					
M-XXI	780710	611 530	7 040 220	42,69	1	1	18000	1.1	1.1			Compiled
							10500	5.	6.			from
							$\approx 400$	50-60	55-65			two
							$\approx 30$					runs
M-XXII	780710	608 520	7 047 150	135,66	146	1	13500	1.0	1.0			Compiled
						2	2500	0.5	1.5			from
						3	10000	14.	16.			two
						4	$\approx 2000$	$\approx 20.$	$\approx 35.$			runs
						5	?	?				



TABLE 2  
JARÐSVEIFLUMÆLINGAR  
Refraction seismic

Staður. MÝRDALSSANDUR

Ár. 79

Hæll nr.		Hnit		Hæð m y.s.	Hljóðhraði, km/s						Þykkt, m		Dýpi, m á 3. lag H <sub>2</sub>
		Y-norður	X-vestur		V <sub>1</sub>	V <sub>2</sub>		V <sub>3</sub>		1. lag h <sub>1</sub>	2. lag h <sub>2</sub>		
						V <sub>u</sub> og V <sub>d</sub>	V <sub>t</sub>	V <sub>u</sub> og V <sub>d</sub>	V <sub>t</sub>				
M-I	A	7.036.230	612.180	14,38	0,3	1,4	1,4	2,6	2,5	4,0	27	31	
	B				0,3	1,4		2,4		4,0	31	35	
M- 1	A	7.036.230	612.490	12,75		1,5	1,5	2,6	2,6	~4,0?	34	~38	
	B					1,5		2,7		~4,0?	37	~41	
M- 2	A	7.036.220	612.810	13,78		1,5	1,5	5,9	5,0	~4,0?	52	~56	
	B							4,4		~4,0?		≤40 (max)	
M- 3	A	7.036.210	613.100	14,36	0,3	1,4	1,4	4,9	5,0	5,2	41	46	
	B				0,3	1,4		5,2		5,0	52	57	
M- 4	A	7.036.200	613.450	14,80	0,3	1,5	1,5	5,6	4,2	5,6	56	62	
	B				0,3	1,5		3,3		4,8	56	66*	
M- 5	A	7.036.210	611.860	17,00	0,3	1,4	1,4	4,5	4,0	6,0	42	48	
	B				0,3	1,3		3,6		4,8	45	50	
M- 6	A	7.036.230	611.540	16,87	0,3	1,4	1,4	3,8	3,7	5,6	≤23	29 (min)	
	B				0,3	1,3		3,6		5,4	32	37	
M- 9	A	7.039.350	610.090	39,29	0,3	1,6	1,6	2,3	2,3	6,0	36	42	
	B				0,3	1,6		2,3		6,0	≥42	48 (min)	
M-10	A	7.039.430	610.380	39,30	0,3	1,6	1,6	2,0	2,1	5,6		36	
	B				0,3	1,5		2,2		6,9		38	
M-11	A	7.039.510	610.660	39,52	0,3	1,7	1,6			5,6			
	B				0,3	1,6				4,4			
M-12	A	7.039.630	611.000	39,21	0,3	1,5	1,6	2,3	2,3	6,0	31,0	37,0	
	B				0,3	1,6		?		7,2	≥36	>43 (min)	
M-13	A	7.039.810	611.220	40,38	0,3	1,6	1,6			7,2			
	B				0,4	1,6				7,2			
M-14	A	7.040.040	611.420	41,40	0,3	1,5	1,6			7,7			
	B				0,3	1,6				6,9			
M-16	A	7.034.960	612.170	7,70	0,3	1,5	1,5	2,4	2,2	4,0	38	42,0	
	B				0,3	1,5		2,1		4,0	37,5	41,0	
M-17	A	7.034.970	612.470	7,29	0,3	1,5	1,5	3,6	3,7	4,0	50,0	54,0	
	B				0,3	1,5		3,7		4,0	53,0	57,0	
M-18	A	7.034.000	612.770	7,50	0,3	1,7	1,6		3,7?	4,0	~56,0?	60,0 (min)	
	B				0,3	1,5				2,4	~57,0?	60,0 (min)	
M-19	A	7.035.010	613.070	7,67		1,6	1,6				>65,0	67,0 (min)	

Ath.

\* Depth value including correction ~5,0 m

V = velocity / hljóðhraði  
u = up-dip / hallar upp  
d = down-dip / hallar niður  
t = true / réttur





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Raforkudeild

TABLE 3  
JARÐSVEIFLUMÆLINGAR  
Reflection seismic

Staður. MÝRDALSSANDUR

Ár. 79

Hæll nr.	Hnit		Hæð m y.s.	Hljóðhraði, km/s					Þykkt, m		Dýpi, m á 3. lag H <sub>2</sub>
	Y-norður	X-vestur		V <sub>1</sub>	V <sub>2</sub>		V <sub>3</sub>		1. lag h <sub>1</sub>	2. lag h <sub>2</sub>	
					V <sub>u</sub> og V <sub>d</sub>	V <sub>t</sub>	V <sub>u</sub> og V <sub>d</sub>	V <sub>t</sub>			
M-I	A	7.036.230	612.180	14,38							34
	V				1,1						31
M- 2	A	7.036.220	612.810	13,78							43?
	V				1,3						50
M- 6	A	7.036.230	611.540	16,87							
	V				1,0/1,3						31/50
M- 7	A	7.036.230	611.340	16,57							40
	V				1,3						
M- 8	A	7.036.230	611.080	15,63							64
	V				1,3						
M- 9	A	7.039.350	610.090	39,29							44/64
	V				1,2/1,3						
M-10	A	7.039.430	610.380	39,30							38/50
	V				1,2/1,3						
M-11	A	7.039.510	610.660	39,52							45
	V				1,3						
M-12	A	7.039.630	611.000	39,21							52
	V				1,2						
M-13	A	7.039.810	611.220	40,38							55
	V				1,3						
M-14	A	7.040.040	611.420	41,40							55
	V				1,2						
M-15	A	7.040.240	611.640	42,39							53
	V				1,2						
M-16	A	7.034.960	612.170	7,70							39
	V				1,3						36
M-17	A	7.034.970	612.470	7,29							54
	V				1,2						48
M-18	A	7.034.000	612.770	7,50							60
	V				1,3						
M-19	A	7.035.010	613.070	7,67							70
	V				1,3						63
M-20	A	7.035.040	613.380	8,40							61
	V				1,3						63
M-21	A										52
	V				1,2						48

Ath.

V = velocity / hljóðhraði  
u = up-dip / hallar upp  
d = down-dip / hallar niður  
t = true / réttur

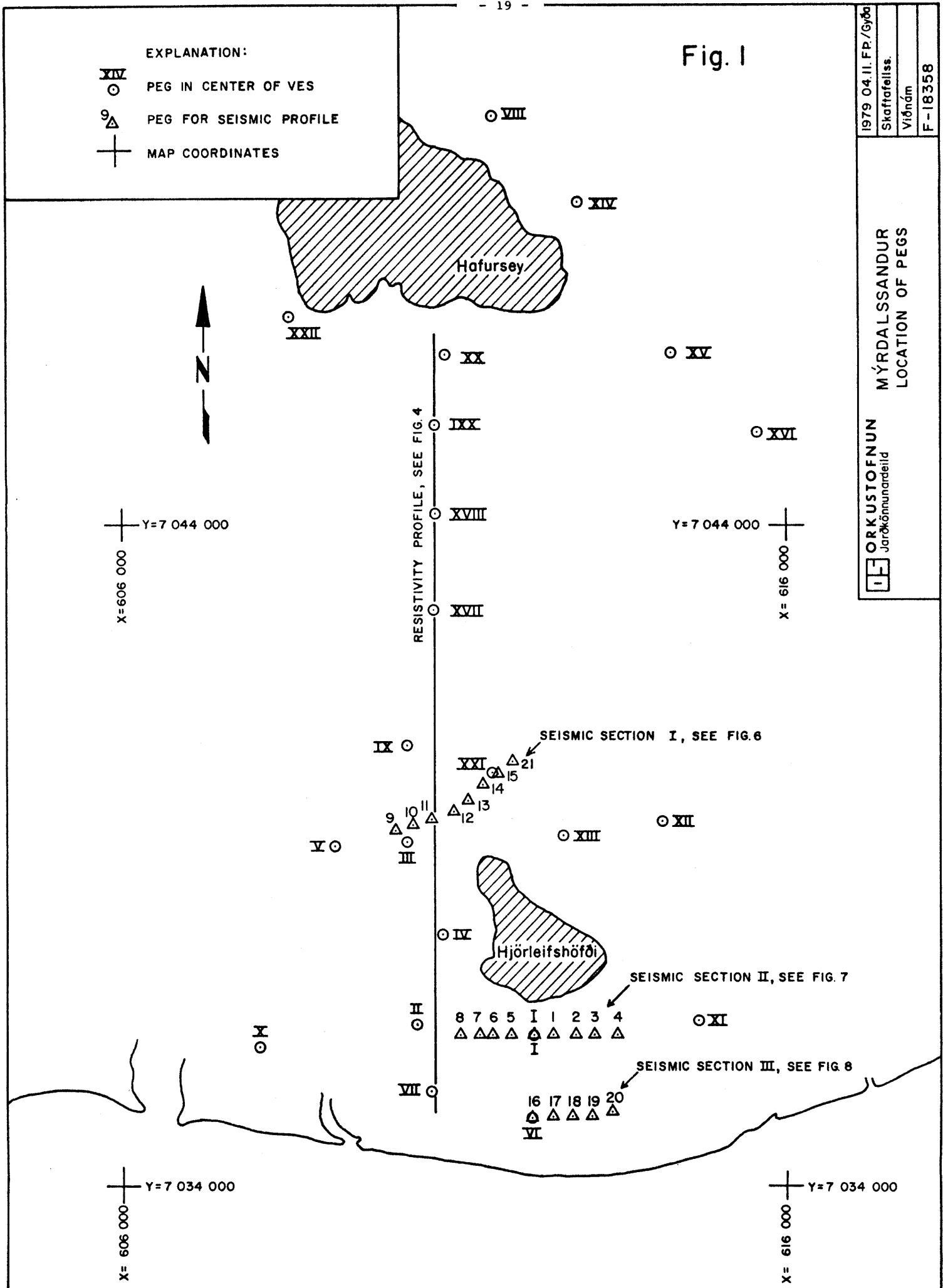
FIGURES



Fig. I

EXPLANATION:

- XIV ○ PEG IN CENTER OF VES
- 9 Δ PEG FOR SEISMIC PROFILE
- + MAP COORDINATES



1979 04. II. FP./Gyða  
 Skaffatfeliss.  
 Viðnám  
 F-18358

MÝRDALSSANDUR  
 LOCATION OF PEGS

ORKUSTOFNUN  
 Jarðkönnunardeild

Fig. 2

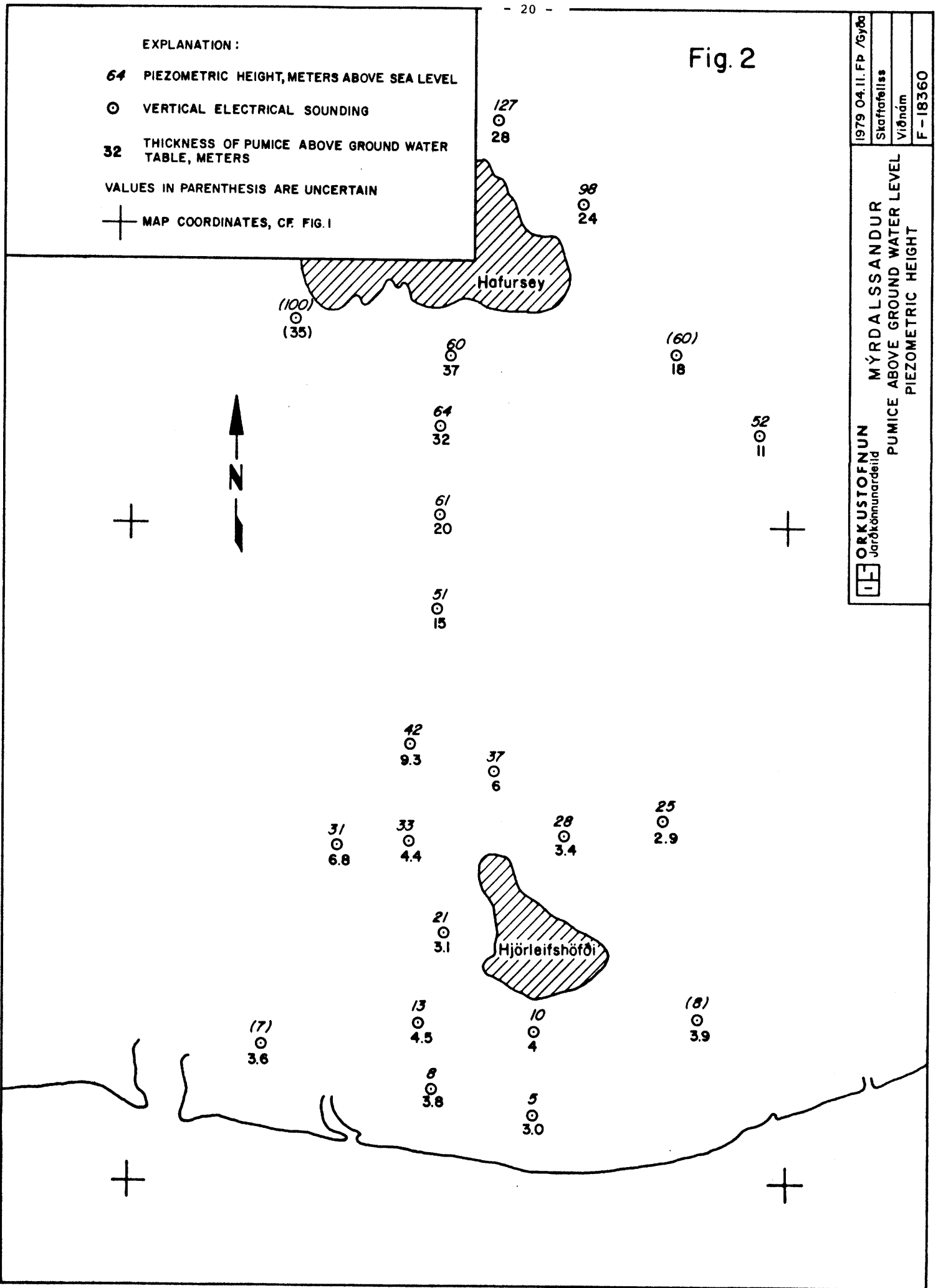
EXPLANATION :

- 64 PIEZOMETRIC HEIGHT, METERS ABOVE SEA LEVEL
- ⊙ VERTICAL ELECTRICAL SOUNDING
- 32 THICKNESS OF PUMICE ABOVE GROUND WATER TABLE, METERS
- VALUES IN PARENTHESIS ARE UNCERTAIN
- + MAP COORDINATES, CF. FIG. 1

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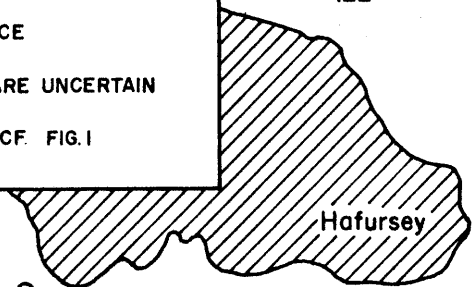
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 PUMICE ABOVE GROUND WATER LEVEL  
 PIEZOMETRIC HEIGHT



EXPLANATION:

- 22 ELEVATION OF BEDROCK, METER ABOVE SEA LEVEL
- VERTICAL ELECTRICAL SOUNDING
- 60 THICKNESS OF PUMICE
- VALUES IN PARENTHESIS ARE UNCERTAIN
- + MAP COORDINATES, CF. FIG. 1

Fig. 3



Hafursey

34  
○  
122

12  
○  
110

(-31)  
○  
(128)

(-20)  
○  
101

-19  
○  
114

-8  
○  
72

-24  
○  
105

-12  
○  
78

-4  
○  
55

(-20)  
○  
(60)

-22  
○  
60

(-39)  
○  
(77)

-13  
○  
45

-19  
○  
47

-16  
○  
41



Hjörleifshöfði

(-21)  
○  
31

-14  
○  
32

-25  
○  
40

(-24)  
○  
36

(-2)  
○  
(14)

-13  
○  
21



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THICKNESS OF PUMICE / ELEVATION OF BEDROCK

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 Stafrælliss.  
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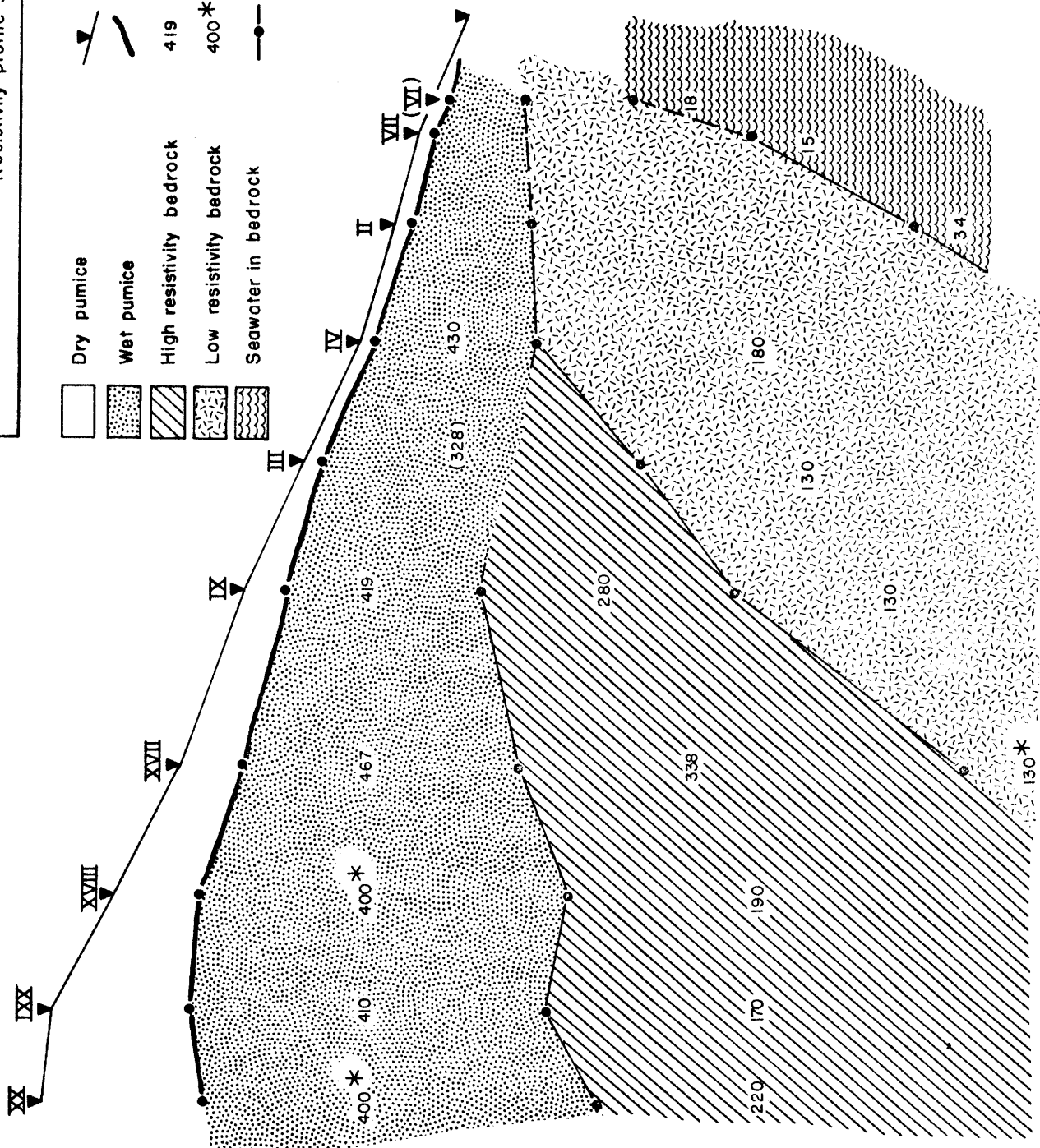
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VERTICAL EXAGGERATION 50-FOLD

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 A geophysical survey  
 Resistivity profile see fig. 1

Elevation  
 meters  
 above  
 sea  
 level

- Dry pumice
- Wet pumice
- High resistivity bedrock
- Low resistivity bedrock
- Seawater in bedrock
- VES-station
- Groundwater table
- Resistivity value, ohm-meters
- Fixed res. value
- Boundary between resistivity layers

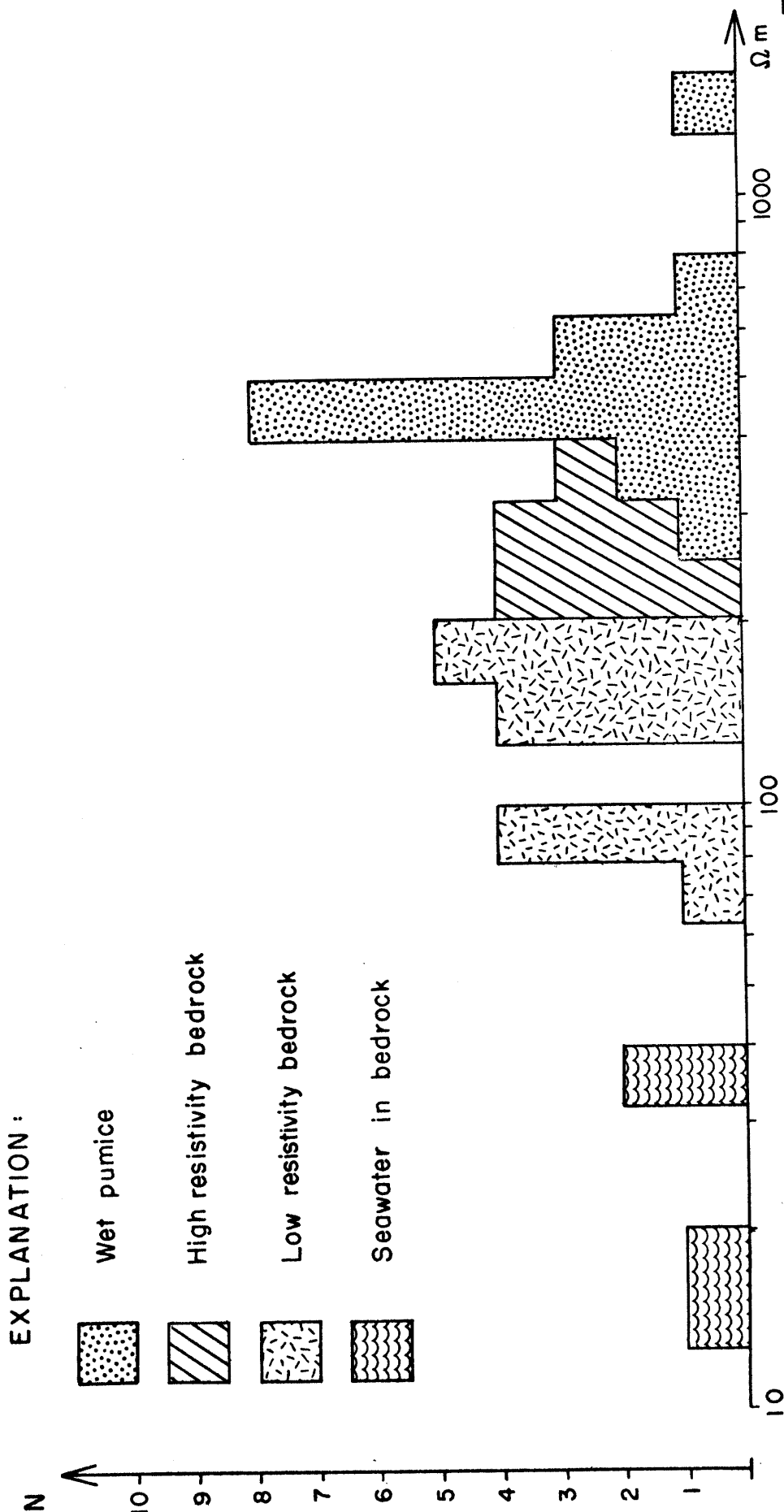


Elevation  
 meters  
 above  
 sea  
 level

Fig. 4



Fig. 5





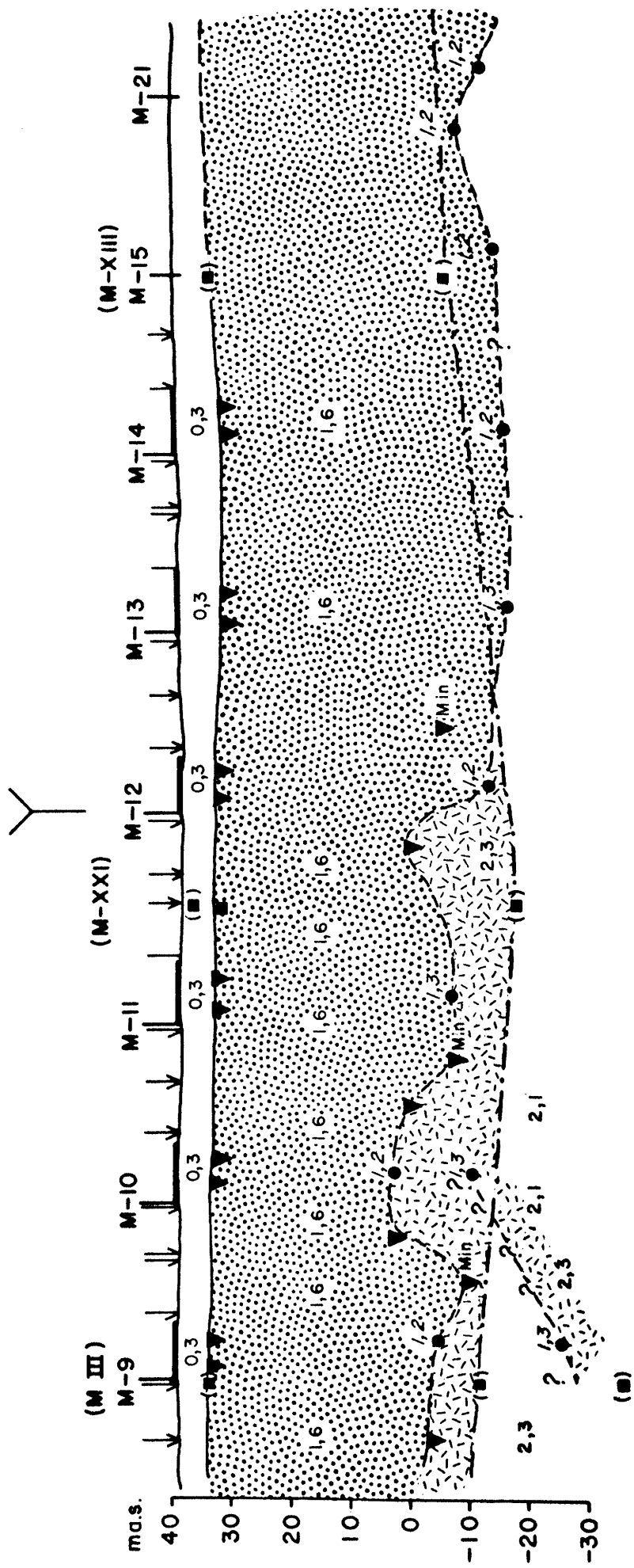


Fig. 6

(■)

Location of profiles see fig. 1  
For legend see Fig. 8

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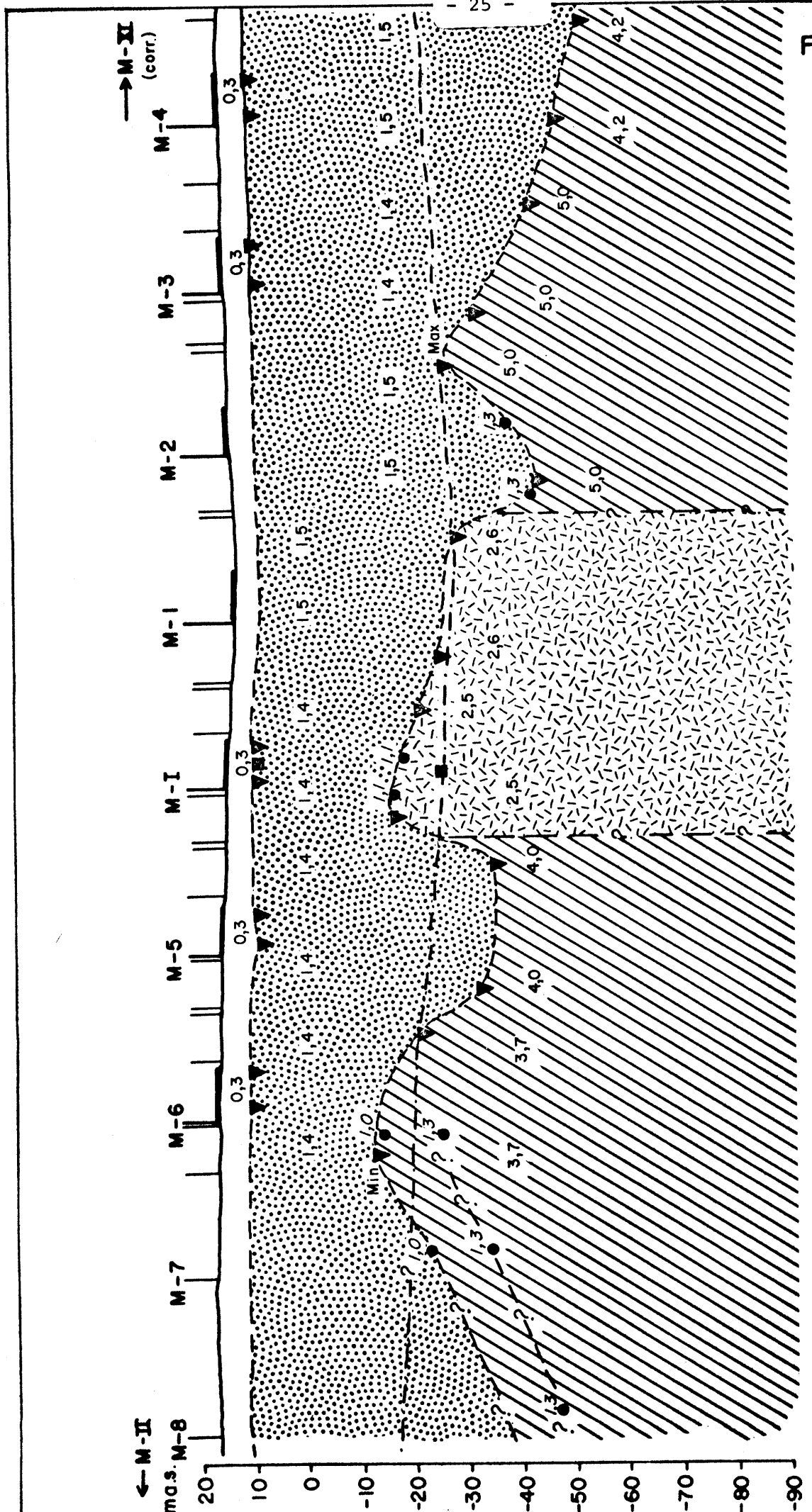
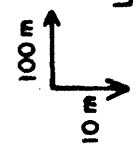


Fig. 7




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 Seismic Section II



Location of profiles see fig. 1  
 For legend see fig. 8






**LEGEND FOR FIGS. 6-8**

-  Pumice and sand above ground water level.
-  Pumice and sand below ground water level
-  Bedrock

- M-VI Peg in center of VES
- M-17 Peg marking seismic profiles

-  Geophone line
-  Shot point

-  Depth to seismic boundary from seismic refraction. Numbers indicate velocities above and below boundary
-  Minimum (Maximum) calculated depth to the next velocity layers
-  Depth to seismic boundary from seismic reflection. Number indicates average velocity down to boundary



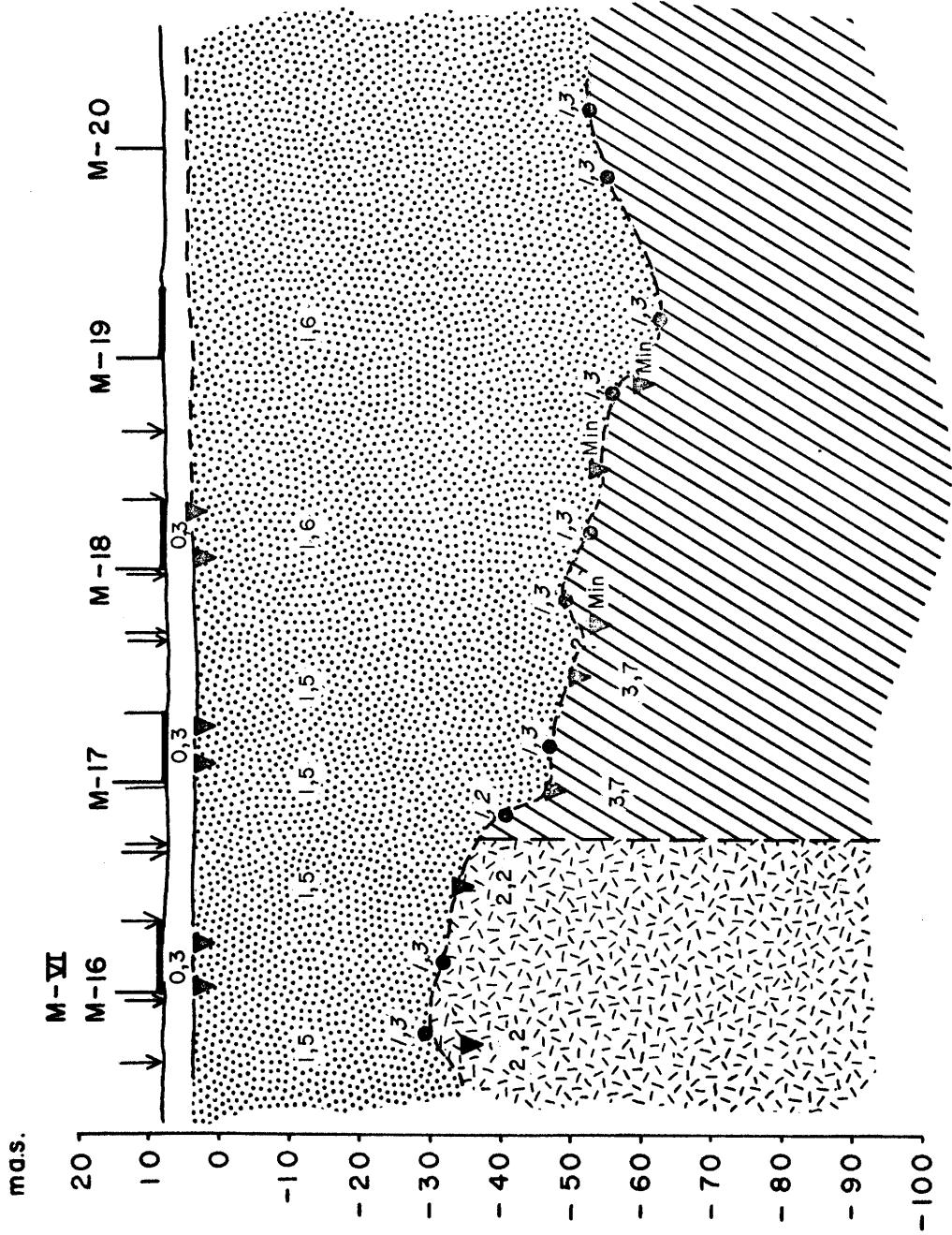
-  Depth to resistivity boundary from VES
-  Resistivity boundary

Fig. 8



Location of profiles see fig. 1

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Seismic Section III

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APPENDIX

Geoelectrical sounding curves



