

Quaternary Fault and Fold Database of the United States

As of January 12, 2017, the USGS maintains a limited number of metadata fields that characterize the Quaternary faults and folds of the United States. For the most up-to-date information, please refer to the [interactive fault map](#).

Tijeras-Cañoncito fault system, Canyon section (Class A) No. 2033b

Last Review Date: 2016-06-28

Compiled in cooperation with the New Mexico Bureau of Geology & Mineral Resources

citation for this record: Kelson, K.I., and Jochems, A.P., compilers, 2016, Fault number 2033b, Tijeras-Cañoncito fault system, Canyon section, in Quaternary fault and fold database of the United States: U.S. Geological Survey website, <https://earthquakes.usgs.gov/hazards/qfaults>, accessed 12/14/2020 02:23 PM.

Synopsis

General: Right-lateral slip probably occurred on the Tijeras-Cañoncito fault system during the Laramide orogeny. Structural data suggest left-lateral Neogene displacement occurred on the fault, which is consistent with east-west extension of the Rio Grande rift and the fault's northeasterly strike. Surface rupture of middle to late Quaternary sediments along the southwestern (Canyon) section of the fault at Adobe Camp is interpreted from site-specific study. Other displaced Quaternary deposits have been identified along the southwestern section of the fault on Kirtland Air Force Base and in Tijeras Canyon. The fault apparently

controls near-surface groundwater conditions on Kirtland Air Force Base.

Sections: This fault has 2 sections. Lisenbee and others (1979 #1725) separated the Tijeras-Cañoncito fault system into five sections on the basis of structural style, fault trace complexity, and sense and amount of separation. Wong and others (1995 #1155) informally named these the Lamy, San Pedro/Ortiz, Monte Largo, Tijeras, and Four Hills sections; Wong and others (1995 #1155; 1996 #1156) assumed that the two southernmost sections (the Four Hills and Tijeras sections) are active based on evidence of Quaternary faulting noted by Lisenbee and others (1979 #1725) and GRAM, Incorporated and William Lettis & Associates, Incorporated (1995 #1430). Later findings show that there has been Quaternary activity on the Monte Largo section (Abbott and Goodwin, 1995 #1729; Kelson and others, 1997 #1781), but there is still no evidence that suggests Quaternary activity north of Golden. Stearns (1953 #1127) and Bachman (1975 #1283) map faulted early Tertiary gravel north of Golden but show no faulting of Pleistocene gravel along traces of the fault system. Thus, there are insufficient data to address the activity of the fault system north of Golden (i.e., along the San Pedro/Ortiz and Lamy sections). The fault system herein is subdivided into two sections that group sections previously identified (Lisenbee and others, 1979 #1725; Wong and others, 1995 #1155, 1996 #1156). The boundary between the two sections is inferred to be near Golden, i.e., at the boundary between the Monte Largo and San Pedro/Ortiz sections of Wong and others (1995 #1155; 1996 #1156). This boundary also coincides with the intersection of the Tijeras fault and the La Bajada fault [2032] and a cluster of contemporary microseismicity noted by House and Hartse (1995 #1160).

**Name
comments**

General: The regionally extensive Tijeras-Cañoncito fault system consists of several northeast-striking, subvertical faults, including the Tijeras, Gutierrez, Zuzax, San Lazarus, Los Angeles, and Lamy faults (Lisenbee and others, 1979 #1725; Woodward, 1984 #1735; Maynard and others, 1991 #1732; Abbott and Goodwin, 1995 #1729). The fault system commonly is referred to as the "Tijeras fault zone", but the name Tijeras-Cañoncito fault system is retained herein to denote the entire group of faults. The fault system (or parts thereof) have been mapped by Bachman (1975 #1283), Kelley and Northrop (1975 #1308), Booth (1977 #1733), Kelley (1977 #1106), Lisenbee and others (1979 #1725), Connolly (1982 #1726), Woodward (1984 #1735), Maynard and

others (1991 #1732), Karlstrom and others (1994 #7517), Abbott and Goodwin (1995 #1729), Abbott and others (1995 #1769), GRAM, Incorporated and William Lettis & Associates, Incorporated (1995 #1430), Maynard (1995 #1728), Ferguson and others (1996 #7256), Chamberlin and others (1997 #1768), Connell (1997 #1765), Read and others (1998 #7523), Ferguson and others (1999 #7551), Lisenbee (1999 #7518), Lisenbee and Maynard (2002 #7520), Maynard (2002 #7521), and Maynard and others (2002 7522). The fault system extends from an intersection with the Picuris-Pecos fault [2023] near Lamy, about 22 km southeast of Santa Fe, to an intersection with the Sandia [2037] and Hubbell Spring [2120] faults in the Four Hills area, about 16 km southeast of Albuquerque.

Section: The Canyon section is herein informally named after Tijeras Canyon, which parallels the Tijeras-Cañoncito fault system between Albuquerque and the town of Tijeras. This section includes the Monte Largo, Tijeras, and Four Hills sections identified by Wong and others (1995 #1155; 1996 #1156). The Canyon section extends from an intersection with the La Bajada fault [2032] near Golden, to an intersection with the Sandia [2037] and Hubbell Spring [2120] faults on Kirtland Air Force Base. Detailed mapping along this fault section includes 1:24,000-scale maps by Karlstrom and others (1994 #7517), Ferguson and others (1996 #7551) Chamberlin and others (1997 #1768), Connell (1997 #1765), Read and others (1998 #7523), Ferguson and others (1999 #7551), and Maynard (2002 #7521).

County(s) and State(s)	SANDOVAL COUNTY, NEW MEXICO SANTA FE COUNTY, NEW MEXICO BERNALILLO COUNTY, NEW MEXICO
Physiographic province(s)	BASIN AND RANGE
Reliability of location	Good Compiled at 1:24,000 scale. <i>Comments:</i> The location of the fault is based on 1:24,000-scale mapping by Karlstrom and others (1994 #7517), Ferguson and others (1996 #7551), Chamberlin and others (1997 #1768), Read and others (1998 #7523), Ferguson and others (1999 #7551), and Maynard (2002 #7521).
Geologic setting	The Tijeras-Cañoncito fault system forms the structural boundary

	<p>between the Española basin of the Rio Grande rift to the west and the Great Plains tectonic province to the east. The fault system has a history of recurrent movement, including Late Pennsylvanian-Early Permian displacement (Lisenbee and others, 1979 #1725), renewed activity during the late Cretaceous-early Tertiary Laramide orogeny (Cather, 1992 #1773; Lisenbee 2013 #7519), and Neogene displacement associated with east-west extension of the Rio Grande rift (Keller and Cather, 1994 #1731; Abbott and Goodwin, 1995 #1729). In addition, the fault system is associated with a series of Oligocene intrusive rocks of the San Pedro-Ortiz porphyry belt (Maynard and others, 1991 #1732). The fault traverses the epicentral area of the 1918 Cerrillos earthquake, the largest (ML 4.5 to 5.5) historical earthquake in the northern Rio Grande rift (Olsen, 1979 #1724), and may be associated with a moderate (ML 4.5) earthquake that rattled the towns of San Antonito and Zamora in 1947 (Sanford, 1976 #1734).</p>
Length (km)	This section is 42 km of a total fault length of 79 km.
Average strike	N44°E (for section) versus N46°E (for whole fault)
Sense of movement	<p>Left lateral</p> <p><i>Comments:</i> Neogene left-lateral separation along the Canyon section is based on structural data collected by Abbott and Goodwin (1995 #1729) near Golden, and by regional geologic relations. The east-down sense of vertical separation noted by Abbott and Goodwin (1995 #1729) is opposite to the west-down vertical separation noted by Lisenbee and others (1979 #1725) within Tijeras Canyon, although this difference may be insignificant if the primary sense of separation on the fault is left lateral. No piercing points have been documented along the Canyon section of the fault system.</p>
Dip Direction	<p>V</p> <p><i>Comments:</i> Subsurface data are lacking for this fault section. Lisenbee and others (1979 #1725), Kelley and Northrop (1975 #1308), and Abbott and others (1995 #1769) noted that the fault system is subvertical, exhibits evidence of predominantly lateral slip during the Neogene, and has a linear trace across linear topography.</p>

<p>Paleoseismology studies</p>	<p>Exploratory trenches excavated by Kelson and others (1997 #1781) across several strands of the Tijeras fault in September and October 1997 suggests the occurrence of late Quaternary displacement. The site is located about 1 km northeast of a stream-bank exposure of the fault described by Abbott and Goodwin (1995 #1729).</p> <p>Site 2033-1: Kelson and others (1997 #1781) excavated three trenches and a stream-bank exposure at the Adobe Camp site, located about 6 km southwest of Golden. Trench and soils studies suggest at least one and possibly two surface ruptures on several strands of the Tijeras fault since the middle to late Quaternary. Evidence of reverse and strike slip faulting revealed in the excavations suggest the possibility that the near-surface fault zone at this locality is a positive flower structure (Kelson and others, 1997 #1781).</p>
<p>Geomorphic expression</p>	<p>The Tijeras and Gutierrez faults exhibit prominent geomorphic expression, such that virtually the entire Canyon fault section is discernible on the basis of juxtaposition of different rock types. Prominent fault-related scarps are present along the fault sections, although it is presently unclear whether these are related to late Quaternary movement or differences in rock types across the fault. Preliminary analysis of aerial photography and field reconnaissance by Kelson (unpublished data, 1995) suggested the presence of scarps on alluvial surfaces along the fault near the stream-bank exposure documented by Abbott and Goodwin (1995 #1729).</p>
<p>Age of faulted surficial deposits</p>	<p>Abbott and Goodwin (1995 #1729) documented the presence of faulted alluvium along the Tijeras fault about 5 km southwest of Golden, and interpreted the alluvium as Quaternary (?). Inspection by K.I. Kelson of the exposure alluvium supports this interpretation. Lisenbee and others (1979 #1725) and Connell (1997 #1765) noted that Quaternary alluvium and colluvium are faulted by the Tijeras fault within Tijeras Canyon about 5 km east of Albuquerque. GRAM, Incorporated and William Lettis & Associates, Incorporated (1995 #1430) documented faulted Pleistocene alluvium along a splay of the Tijeras fault on Kirtland Air Force Base, and noted prominent lineaments across a Pleistocene rock-cut pediment surface. The ages of all of these faulted surficial deposits are poorly constrained, although most probably are middle to late Pleistocene in age. Abbott and Goodwin (1995 #1729) noted that the fault does not displace</p>

	Holocene alluvium in the stream bank exposure near Golden. Kelson and others (1997 #1781) showed that the fault displaced late to middle Pleistocene deposits near Golden.
Historic earthquake	
Most recent prehistoric deformation	late Quaternary (<130 ka) <i>Comments:</i> Faulted alluvium documented by Lisenbee and others (1979 #1725), Abbott and Goodwin (1995 #1729), GRAM, Incorporated and William Lettis & Associates, Incorporated (1995 #1430), and Kelson and others (1997 #1781), strongly suggest that there has been movement on the Canyon fault section during the late Quaternary.
Recurrence interval	
Slip-rate category	Less than 0.2 mm/yr <i>Comments:</i> There are no well constrained data on the Quaternary slip rate of the Tijeras-Cañoncito fault system. However, Wong and others (1995 #1155; 1996 #1156) estimated a range in slip rates of 0.02–0.72 mm/yr and a preferred rate of 0.09 mm/yr, based on regional analysis of slip rates within the Rio Grande rift. Slip-rate category assigned based on preferred rate.
Date and Compiler(s)	2016 Keith I. Kelson, William Lettis & Associates, Inc. Andrew P. Jochems, New Mexico Bureau of Geology & Mineral Resources
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