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SILICA (DUNE) SAND FROM THE RED DEER AREA, ALBERTA

by

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SILICIA (DUNE) SAND FROM THE RED DEER AREA, ALBERTA

Abstract

Dune sands from the Red Deer area in central Alberta contain particle sizes predominating in the 70- to 100-mesh (0.210 to 0.149 mm) range. The chemical composition varies between 73 to 87 per cent SiO_2 ; 6 to 9 per cent $\mathrm{Al}_2\mathrm{O}_3$, $\mathrm{P}_2\mathrm{O}_5$, and TiO_2 ; 1.2 to 1.7 per cent $\mathrm{Fe}_2\mathrm{O}_3$; 0.7 to 6.8 per cent CaO ; 0.3 to 1.8 per cent MgO ; and 1.0 to 7.6 per cent loss on ignition. Mineralogically the sands contain more than 85 per cent quartz, less than 10 per cent feldspar, and less than 10 per cent other minerals (goethite, garnet, hornblende, and magnetite). The grains are mainly subrounded and commonly stained.

Beneficiation tests on the sands included screening, washing, heavy liquid separation, magnetic separation, and acid treatment. Heavy liquid and magnetic separation procedures effectively reduce the iron content of the sands to a minimum of approximately 0.30 per cent in selected samples.

INTRODUCTION

Sixteen samples from sand dunes in the Red Deer area of central Alberta were collected, analyzed, and treated, in an effort to evaluate them for industrial applications. Locations of the dune fields and sampling sites are indicated in figure 1, and surveyed descriptions of the sample locations are provided in table 1. Methods used in the report are essentially the same as those adopted by Carrigy (1970) to evaluate similar dune sands in the Edmonton area to the north of the study area. Details of the procedures followed are indicated on the flow sheet provided in figure 2. Three of the samples were subjected to detailed study.

Uses for sand within Alberta are varied, and demands for quality sources are increasing. The specifications of sand for various applications have been discussed by Carrigy (1970) and McLaws (1971) and are not included herein.

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DESCRIPTIONS OF DUNES

Dune sand fields of the Red Deer area have been mapped by Stalker (1960), whose work forms the basis upon which location and sampling of dunes were carried out. Stalker (op. cit.) estimates that districts blanketed by aeolian sand deposits include about 110 square miles in the Red Deer-Stettler map-area. Most of the deposits are located in glacial lake basins; those found on outwash deposits near Buffalo Lake form the main exceptions.

Most of the dunes are U-shaped with an average height of 25 feet. Dunes east of Menaik and in the Peace Hills near Wetaskiwin are up to 80 feet high and several miles long. There is a well-developed northwest-southeast regional orientation of the long axes. All the dunes were developed in postglacial times.

PHYSICAL AND CHEMICAL PROPERTIES

Particle-Size Distribution

Approximately 100 grams of each sample were washed and screened through a nest of sieves according to procedures outlined by the American Society for Testing Materials. The results thus obtained are given in graphical form in figure 3 and are tabulated in table 2. The modal size (the fraction predominating over any other single fraction by weight) ranges from 70- to 100-mesh. The cumulative amount of sand retained on the 100-mesh sieve varies from about 56 to 87 per cent.

Mechanical analyses obtained by means of ASTM procedures are idealized and a commercial operation obtains less efficient returns of each grain size. Therefore, the treatment of selected samples analyzed in detail involved sand fractions obtained by excessive loading of the screens, in an attempt to simulate a large-scale commercial operation.

Mineral Composition

All of the washed samples were examined microscopically for mineral content. Table 3 indicates the composition of 100 representative grains from each sample. Feldspar grains were stained in a few cases as a more accurate means of identification.

Quartz is the main component, accounting for 86 to 93 per cent of the mineral grains. Lesser quantities of feldspar (3 to 7 per cent), mica, and other minerals are present, and there is little variability in the mineral content of different samples.

Chemical Composition

Table 4 lists the chemical analyses of unwashed and washed bulk samples. There is little change in composition between unwashed and washed sands except for the slight increase in SiO_2 and corresponding decrease in the other components. The silica content of the unwashed sand varies from 73 to 87 per cent and the washed sand from 73 to 88 per cent. Alumina and related oxides range between 6 and 9 per cent in unwashed samples, and 5 and 7 per cent in washed samples. The $\mathrm{Fe}_2\mathrm{O}_3$ content ranges from 1.2 to 1.7 in unwashed sands, and 0.9 to 1.4 in washed sands.

Surface Staining and Inclusions

Brown and orange surface staining of the quartz grains is common, and in a few cases inclusions also were noted. As both these features probably contribute to the iron content of the sands, an attempt was made to record the amounts of each (Table 3). Quartz staining which renders the grains opaque or transluscent over more than half the surface area was classified as "heavy." If the staining results in transparent grains or covers less than half the surface area, it was regarded as being "light."

Grain Shape

Mineral grains were assigned to four main categories: angular, if they possess sharp corners; subround, if corners are smoothed; round, if there are no angular projections; and spherical, if they approach the shape of a sphere. Results of grain counts recorded in table 3 indicate that most of the grains are subround.

COMPOSITION OF SELECTED SAMPLES

Three samples having higher than average silica contents, lower than average amounts of Fe_2O_3 , and relatively high percentages retained on the 100-mesh sieve were subjected to detailed study. The flow sheet (Fig. 2) shows the detail of their treatment. Three size fractions of each sample (0.30 to 0.60 mm, 0.21 to 0.30 mm, and 0.15 to 0.21 mm) were subjected to washing, heavy mineral separation, magnetic separation, and acid treatment. They were subsequently examined and analyzed in order to determine the results of each operation. Particular emphasis was placed upon the fraction which forms the modal size.

Mineral Composition

Sand

Little variation in mineral composition of the three size fractions was noted upon microscopic examination (Table 5). The average composition of all the fractions of any one sample compares closely with that of the bulk washed sample.

There is only a slight difference in the amount of staining in different fractions of the same sample. There is a slight tendency for the angularity of the grains to be greater in finer fractions.

Clay

The clay fraction from each of the three selected samples was subjected to X-ray diffraction analysis. All clay fractions contain montmorillonite, illite, kaolinite, and chlorite. Montmorillonite predominates in all the samples tested (Table 6).

Heavy Minerals

The heavy minerals described herein are those which sink in a liquid of specific gravity 2.9. X-ray diffraction analyses and microscopic examination indicate the presence of hornblende, garnet, goethite, and magnetite. Magnetite also commonly is present as inclusions in quartz grains.

Magnetic Minerals

A Franz Isodynamic Separator was utilized to isolate magnetic minerals. At low magnetic intensities (0.1 amps) magnetite and minerals bearing magnetite inclusions form the main magnetic fraction. At higher intensities (0.9 amps) a more heterogeneous mixture was separated, goethite being the most notable magnetic addition

Chemical Composition

The modal sizes of each of the selected samples has the same or slightly greater amounts of SiO_2 as the corresponding bulk washed samples. The percentages of each of the remaining components are correspondingly less (Table 7).

BENEFICIATION TESTS

Heavy Liquid Separation

Heavy minerals are present in the three fractions of the three samples selected for detailed analysis in amounts ranging between 0.4 and 2.3 per cent (Table 8). The amount of heavy minerals is greater in finer fractions of the same samples. There is a reduction in the Fe_2O_3 content of between 0.1 and 0.4 per cent by means of this treatment (Tables 7 and 10).

Magnetic Separation

The amounts of minerals extracted by means of magnetic separation were increased considerably by increasing the magnetic intensity (Table 9). By increasing

the amperage from 0.1 to 0.9 the percentage of magnetic minerals retained was increased from an average of 0.1 per cent (weight of the original sample) to an average of 4.3 per cent. The ultimate limit of magnetic separation was not determined. At any given intensity slightly greater amounts of the magnetic materials are extracted from finer fractions of the same sample.

Chemical analyses of the nonmagnetic minerals passing through the separator at 0.9 amperes indicate that the Fe_2O_3 content is decreased from about 0.7 per cent to approximately 0.3 per cent (compare Tables 7 and 11).

Acid Treatment

Both the light and nonmagnetic modal size fractions from the selected samples were boiled in a solution of 1 per cent HCl for 10 minutes. There was a noticeable reduction in the amount of staining on the grains as a result (Tables 5, 12, and 13), although surface coloration is not completely eliminated.

Chemical analyses reveal that the contents of Fe_2O_3 , CaO_3 , and MgO were decreased appreciably upon acid treatment (Tables 10 and 11).

Summary of Tests

Beneficiation tests on the sands are summarized in table 14. Washing of the sands appears to increase the SiO_2 content slightly with a resultant corresponding decrease in all other components. The modal size of each of the selected samples has higher quantities of SiO_2 than the washed bulk samples. Heavy liquid separation, magnetic separation, and acid treatment appear to appreciably reduce the $\mathrm{Fe}_2\mathrm{O}_3$ content. Amounts of CaO and MgO are most efficiently reduced by acid treatment.

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- Carrigy, M. A. (1970): Silica sand in the vicinity of Edmonton, Alberta; Res. Coun. Alberta Rept. 70-1, 30 pages.
- McLaws, I. J. (1971): Uses and specifications of silica sand; Res. Coun. Alberta Rept. 71-4.
- Stalker, A. MacS. (1960): Surficial geology of the Red Deer-Stettler map-area, Alberta; Geol. Surv. Can. Mem. 306, 139 pages.



APPENDIX A TEST RESULTS ON BULK SAMPLES

Locations and depths of dune sand samples Table I.

c N	Depth		Locati	on	D 0
Sample No.	(in feet)	Lsd. or Qtr.	Sec.	Tp.	R.
1 ²	3-4	12	11	47	24
2	20, 40, 60	4	15	46	24
3	2-3	NE	8	46	24
4	0-8	5	28	45	25
5	2-3	13	24	43	24
6	5-6	12	31	42	25
7	5-6	12	3	43	27
8	4-5	12	22	42	27
92	2-3	13	36	41	27
10	0-20	16	26	41	26
11	5, 10, 15, 20, 25	SW	19	39	26
12	2-3	sw	28	38	27
13	25, 30, 35, 40	NE	29	37	27
142	2-4	1	12	40	22
15	3-6	1	15	40	22
16	2-6	SE	12	39	23

¹ West of 4th Meridian
² Denotes samples subjected to detailed analysis

Table 2. Mechanical analyses of dune sands

				U.S.	Standard Sie	U.S. Standard Sieve No. (per cent retained)	cent retained	£			
Sample No.	12 (1.680)	16 (1.190)	20 (0.841)	30 (0.595)	40 (0.420)	50 (0.297)	70 (0.210)	100 (0.149)	140 (0.105)	200 (0.074)	< 200
1-2	,	ı	0.02	0.09	0.52	4.06	21.70	35.00	23.30	8.45	6.79
2	t	0.01	0.02	90.0	0.44	2.53	16.70	35.80	24.10	10,10	10.26
ო	0.09	0.19	1.10	4.03	8.08	16.80	23.00	18.00	12.08	6.22	10.38
4	0.04	0.11	0.53	1.50	3.25	9.66	22,35	22.75	16.55	9.15	14.11
Ŋ	,	0.01	0.02	0.31	3.49	22.60	28.60	18.46	12.16	4.6]	9.74
9	ı	0.07	0.17	1,46	6.20	18.85	30.30	20.10	10.35	4.19	8.28
7	1	0.01	10.0	90.0	0.74	5.66	26.35	34.00	16.50	4.01	12.62
80	•	0.01	0.07	0.87	3.67	16.32	46.40	20.05	5.14	0.91	5.56
92	•	0.01	0.71	0.86	4.35	22.40	39.25	16.62	6.95	2.34	5.71
10	1	0.03	0.13	1.40	4.95	18.00	33.75	21.65	8.86	3.11	8, 16
11	•	0.01	0.03	0.21	1.45	7.57	26.50	35.20	15.58	4.45	8.98
12	•	1	-	0.02	0.23	2.93	24,35	40.00	20.05	5.92	6.59
13	0.05	0.05	0.17	0.85	3.09	10.49	22.25	26.60	17.90	8.20	12.31
142	•	0.02	0.04	0.30	1.57	9.23	39.50	32.70	11.13	2.49	3.89
15	0.05	90.0	0.06	0.49	2.55	11.63	32.60	28.00	13.78	4.18	6.64
16	•	0.01	0.03	0.08	0.35	2.86	22.75	38.20	21.50	5.60	8.64

Screen size (mm) corresponding to sieve number ² Denotes samples subjected to detailed analysis

Table 3. Composition, staining, and grain shape of washed dune sands

Angulor Subrounded 14 72 10 75 10 75 2 81 2 84 2 89 8 88 3 84 3 84 2 82 3 87 1 90										
	Rounded Spherical	Quartz	Feldspor	Chert	Mica	Others	Heavy	Light	Inclusions	Clear
9 2 3 3 8 5 1 5 5 6 9	10 4	16	5	,	,	4	,	က	r	94
9 9 9 1 9 9 9 9 1 9 9 9	11 4	88	5	1	1	9	7	4	2	92
- 1	12 1	06	9	ı	•	4	,	_	3	94
- 1 1 8 8 8 8 1 1 5	14 -	89	9	1	1	5	t	ო	۲,	92
1 8 8 8 8 1 1 -	16 1	88	5	ı	,	9	ო	-	-	95
- 1 00000	15 1	87	4	1	ı	6	,	-	က	%
& M & M & M & M & M	6	16	7	1		2	ı	-	4	95
m M m 1 1 -	4	06	9	1	1	4	ო	2	4	16
- 1 0 0	12 1	93	4	ı	ı	က	-	5	က	92
m 1 1 -	- 91	98	9	ı	•	Ξ	-	-	-	44
1 T	- 01	88	4	4		ω	ı	2	ო	95
	12 1	89	5	ı	1	9	2	-	က	94
-	15	89	5		ı	9	-	-	9	92
	- 6	16	7	1	,	2	7	-	ო	94
15 (3-6 ft) 5 85	- 01	92	7	1	ı	-	1	2	4	94
16 (2-6 ft) 4 79	- 21	86	4	1	•	7	1	-	ო	%

¹Denotes samples subjected to detailed analysis

Table 4. Chemical analyses of washed and unwashed dune sands

Sample Na				Chemical	Analysis		
Sample No.		SiO ₂	Al ₂ O ₃ ¹	Fe ₂ O ₃ ²	CoO	MgO	L.O.1
15	A ³ B ⁴	86.44 88.02	6.34 5.70	1.17	0.79 0.80	0.30 0.25	1.13 0.60
2	A	85.19	6.86	1.49	1.13	0.47	1.54
	B	86.94	5.88	1.12	1.18	0.38	1.07
3	A B	85.29 88.44	5.76 4.78	1.43 0.97	1,33 1,30	0.51 0.38	1.88
4	A	84.82	7.12	1.74	0.88	0.45	1.45
	B	87.71	6.06	1.19	0.77	0.31	0.85
5	A B	84.30 87.00	6.59 5.34	1.59 1.24	1.81	0.55 0.38	2.07 1.32
6	A	84.17	6.36	1.62	1.75	0.55	2.01
	B	86.09	5.60	1.23	1.74	0.46	1.63
7	A	82.07	8.65	1.69	1.53	0.67	1.71
	B	85.00	7.41	1.13	0.88	0.44	0.88
8	A B	85.26 86.75	7.13 6.28	1.72	0.82 0. <i>7</i> 7	0.58 0.43	1.22 0.82
9 5	A	87.15	5.74	1.53	0.66	0.40	1.07
	B	87.02	5.18	1.03	0.66	0.28	0.60
10	A	83.09	6.07	1.54	2.21	0.48	2.41
	B	83.08	5.62	1.20	2.14	0.45	1.94
11	A B	83.34 84.67	7.14 6.43	1.62 1.14	1.32 1.20	0.48 0.39	1.69
12	A	73.40	5.82	1.26	6.81	1.82	7.55
	B	73. 2 6	5.06	1.29	7.31	1.89	7.66
13	A	77.32	5.52	1.49	4.47	1.35	5.58
	B	79.06	5.03	1.29	4.89	1.35	5.36
14 5	A	86.43	6.36	1.20	0.74	0.29	0.98
	B	87.56	5.89	0.99	0.80	0.27	0.64
15	A B	86.09 88.07	6.56 5.98	1.56 1.00	0.72 0.84	0.30 0.29	1.11
16	A	80.21	7.43	1.63	2.79	0.69	2.89
	B	79.66	7.10	1.13	2.56	0.69	2.38

Includes P₂O_s and TiO₂
Total iron calculated as Fe₂C₃
Unwashed (bulk) sample
Washed sample
Denotes sample subjected to detailed analysis



APPENDIX B TEST RESULTS ON THREE SELECTED SAMPLES

Composition, staining, and grain shape of washed sieve fractions of three dune sands Table 5.

12			Grain Shape (%)	(%) ada			Mineral Composition (%)	ompositi	(%) uo			Iron Si	Iron Staining (%)	
sample 140.	Sample 140. Description A	Angular	Subrounded Rounded Spherical	Rounded	Spherical	Quartz	Feldspar Chert Mica	Chert	Mica	Others	Heavy	Light	Inclusions	Clear
-	Fraction 1	-	72	21	ν,	84			-	^	က	3	_	2
	Fraction 2	•	98	œ	1	88	9	•	_	-	2	က	•	95
	Fraction 3	ო	80	15	7	85	٥	ı	1	•	S	9	1	89
٥	Fraction 1	,	79	20	-	06	•	,	ı	٥	က	ı	ı	26
	Fraction 2	ო	83	13	-	16	2	1	,	7	9	4	ı	06
	Fraction 3	-	92	9	_	93	4	1	•	ო	-	Ŋ	-	8
7	Fraction 1	2	82	4	7	06	ო	,	1	7	_	^	-	16
	Fraction 2 ¹	-	16	^	_	95	œ	1	•	7	-	7		92
	Fraction 3	~	94	5	1	8	ო	1	,	7	က	2	~	94

'Modal size

Table 6. Relative proportions of clay minerals and clay-size fractions of three dune sands

Sample No.	Clay Minerals
1	Montmorillonite > illite > kaolinite and/or chlorite
9	Montmorillonite > illite > kaolinite and/or chlorite
14	Montmorillonite > illite > kaolinite and/or chlorite

Table 7. Chemical analyses of washed modal size fractions of three dune sands

Sample No.			Chemical	Analysis		
	SiO ₂	Al ₂ O ₃ ¹	Fe ₂ O ₃ ²	CoO	MgO	L.O.1.
1	87.90	6.89	0.72	0.83	0.26	0.50
9	92.74	3.23	0.63	0.35	0.19	0.40
14	89.58	5.42	0.68	0.62	0.25	0.49

Table 8. Weight percentages of heavy minerals in three sieve fractions of three dune sands

Sample No.	Sieve Fraction	U.S. Standard Sieve No.	Per Cent
1	1	- 30 + 50	0.40
	2	- 50 + 70	0.46
	31	- 70 + 100	0.82
•	1		
9	1'	~ 30 + 50	0.64
	2	- 50 + 70	0.93
	3	- 70 + 100	2.27
14	1	- 30 ÷ 50	0.36
	2 [†]	- 50 + 70	0.52
	3	- 70 + 100	1.44

¹ Modal size

 $^{^{1}}_{\ 2}$ Includes P $_{2}$ O $_{5}$ and TiO $_{2}$ 2 Total iron calculated as Fe $_{2}$ O $_{3}$

Table 9. Weight percentages of magnetic minerals removed from three sieve fractions of three dune sands

	Sieve	U.S. Standard	Magnetic Mineral	s (weight per cent
Sample No.	Fraction	Sieve No.	0.1 amps 1	0.9 amps 1
1	1	-30+50	0.07	2.00
	2	-50+70	0.05	2,63
	3 ²	<i>-7</i> 0+100	0.12	3,64
9	12	-30+50	0.09	3.26
	2	-50+70	0.13	5.40
	3	-70+100	0.25	9.23
14	1	-30+50	0.09	2.83
	22	-50+70	0.08	3.65
	3	70+100	0.14	5.67

¹ Power applied to electromagnet when Franz Isodynamic Separator set at a slope of 18° and a tilt of 10° ² Modal size

Chemical analyses of light minerals in the modal size fractions of three dune sands before and after acid treatment Table 10.

	_			Chemical A	Analysis		
Sample No.	Treatment	SiC ₂	Al ₂ O ₃ ¹	Fe ₂ O ₃ ²	C ₀ O	MgO	L.O.I.
1	C³	88.30	6.43	0.50	0.76	0.23	0.54
	D ⁴	88.79	5.76	0.36	0.70	0.18	0.42
9	С	93.23	3.47	0.26	0.35	0.20	0.35
	D	92.95	3.25	0.31	0.30	0.16	0.31
14	C	89.43	5.36	0.55	0.59	0.64	0.66
	D	90.11	5.44	0.29	0.54	0.18	0.39

Includes P₂O₅ and TiO₂
 Total iron calculated as Fe₂O₃
 Untreated light mineral fraction
 Acid treated light mineral fraction

Table 11 Chemical analyses of the nonmagnetic minerals in the modal size fractions of three dune sands before and after acid treatment

Sample No.	Treatment	Chemical Analysis						
		SiO ₂	Al ₂ O ₃ ¹	Fe ₂ O ₃ ²	CoO	MgO	L.O.I.	
1	C ₃	88.99	5.87	0.36	0.80	0.19	0.41	
	D ⁴	89.09	5.69	0.26	0.72	0.14	0.38	
9	C	94.35	2.91	0.26	0.29	0.16	0.34	
	D	94.67	2.86	0.23	0.25	0.17	0.28	
14	С	90.61	5.06	0.35	0.58	0.17	0.35	
	Đ	90.89	4.94	0.29	0.52	0.14	0.23	

Table 12. Surface staining on light mineral grains in the modal size fractions of three dune sands before and after acid treatment

Sample No.	Treatment —	Iron Staining				
	rredillelli —	Heavy	Light	Clear		
1	c¹	2	5	93		
	D ²	1	1	98		
9	С	3	2	95		
	D	-	2	98		
14	С	2	-	98		
	D	1	1	98		

¹ Includes P₂O₅ and TiO₂
² Total iron calculated as Fe₂O₃
³ Untreated nonmagnetic mineral fraction
⁴ Acid treated nonmagnetic mineral fraction

¹ Untreated light mineral fraction ² Acid treated light mineral fraction

Table 13. Surface staining on nonmagnetic minerals in the modal size fractions of three dune sands before and after acid treatment

7	1		Iron Staining	
odilipie 140.		Heavy	Light	Clear
-	- ₁ 0	-	4	95
	0,	1	2	88
٥	U	_	9	93
	O	1	ۍ	95
14	U	_	ĸ	94
ı	۵	ı	ო	6

Untreated nonmagnetic mineral fraction Acid treated nonmagnetic mineral fraction

Table 14. Summary of analytical results for three dune sands

Sample No.	Treatment 1		Cher				
		SiO ₂	Al ₂ O ₃ ²	Fe 2O3 3	CaO	MgO	L.O.1
1	Α	86.44	6.34	1.17	0.79	0.30	1.13
	В	88.02	5.70	0.89	0.80	0.25	0.60
	С	87.90	6.89	0.72	0.83	0.26	0.50
	D	88.30	6.43	0.50	0.76	0.23	0.54
	E	88.79	5.76	0.36	0.70	0.18	0.42
	F	88.99	5.87	0.36	0.80	0.19	0.41
	G	89.09	5.69	0.26	0.72	0.14	0.38
9	Α	87.15	5.74	1.53	0.66	0.40	1.07
	В	87.02	5.18	1.03	0.66	0.28	0.60
	C	92.74	3.23	0.63	0.35	0.19	0.40
	D	93.23	3.47	0.26	0.35	0.20	0.35
	E	92.25	3.25	0.31	0.30	0.16	0.31
	F	94.35	2.91	0.26	0.29	0.16	0.34
	G	94.67	2.86	0.23	0.25	0.17	0.28
14	Α	86.43	6.36	1.20	0.74	0.29	0.98
	В	87.56	5.89	0.99	0.80	0.27	0.64
	С	89.58	5.42	0.68	0.62	0.25	0.49
	D	89.43	5.36	0.55	0.59	0.64	0.66
	E	90.11	5.44	0.29	0.54	0.18	0.39
	F	90.61	5.06	0.35	0.58	0.17	0.35
	G	90.89	4.94	0.29	0.52	0.14	0.23

¹A Unwashed bulk sand

B Washed bulk sand

C Washed modal size fraction

D Untreated light modal size fraction

E Acid treated light modal size fraction

F Untreated nonmagnetic modal size fraction

G Acid treated nonmagnetic modal size fraction includes P_2O_3 and TiO_2 Total iron calculated as Fe_2O_3





