

Contents

Preface	xiii
Acknowledgements	xv
1. Background and the environments	1
1.1 Placers, an historical framework	1
1.1.1 Observations, questions and truth	4
1.1.2 The key to the past	5
1.1.3 Youth, maturity and old age	6
1.1.4 Shelf geology	6
1.2 Engineering and placers	7
1.2.1 Dredging	7
1.2.2 Minerals processing	10
1.3 The placer environments	12
1.3.1 Introduction	12
1.3.2 Classifying the environments	13
1.3.3 Environmental change	20
1.4 The placer geological time scale	30
1.5 Placers – what the future holds	31
1.5.1 Technological requirements	31
1.5.2 Ecological considerations	34
References	37
2. Placer sediments and sedimentation	39
2.1 The physical background	39
2.1.1 The energy balance	39
2.1.2 Process-response elements	41
2.2 Sedimentary processes	43
2.2.1 Mechanical agents of weathering	43
2.2.2 Chemical agents of weathering	45
2.2.3 Biological agents of weathering	46

2.2.4 The susceptibility of minerals to change	46
2.2.5 The resistance of minerals to change	47
2.2.6 Erosion	48
2.3 The properties of sediments	51
2.3.1 Particle size	51
2.3.2 Particle shape	56
2.3.3 Particle density	60
2.3.4 Characteristic properties of placer minerals	62
2.4 Sedimentation	63
2.4.1 Introduction	63
2.4.2 The flow of solids through fluids	66
2.4.3 Sediment transportation and settling	80
2.4.4 Transitional-marine sedimentation	89
2.4.5 Summary	98
References	98
3. The geology of placers and their formation	101
3.1 Introduction	101
3.2 The provenances and related placer minerals	101
3.2.1 Time-related provenances	104
3.2.2 Tectonically-related provenances	106
3.2.3 Regional aspects of provenance and placers minerals' distribution	107
3.2.4 Connecting provenance with minerals characteristics	111
3.3 Placer formation	113
3.3.1 Continental placers	113
3.3.2 Transitional placers	139
3.3.3 Marine placers	156
References	161
4. Exploration and prospecting	163
4.1 Introduction	163
4.2 Exploration	165
4.2.1 Ore reserves and resources	165
4.2.2 The placer exploration model	167
4.2.3 Programme logistics	169
4.2.4 Exploration tools	173
4.3 Prospecting	187
4.3.1 Introduction	187
4.3.2 Reconnaissance	188
4.3.3 Scout testing	190
4.3.4 Close testing	193
4.3.5 Pitting	194
4.3.6 Boring	197
4.3.7 Sampling	214

References	233
Appendix 4.1 Proposed legend for mapping placer mineral deposits and environments	235
Appendix 4.2 Delineation of detrital heavy-mineral deposits	237
5. Centrifugal slurry pumps and pumping	239
5.1 Introduction	239
5.1.1 Availability of data	239
5.1.2 Reliability of data	240
5.2 Centrifugal slurry pumps	241
5.2.1 Dredge and gravel pumps	242
5.2.2 Sand slurry pumps	242
5.2.3 Jet lift pumps	242
5.3 Pump efficiencies	243
5.3.1 Centrifugal slurry pumps	243
5.3.2 Jet lift pumps	244
5.4 Design considerations	246
5.4.1 Pump heads and liners	246
5.4.2 Impellers	246
5.4.3 Shaft and bearing seals	248
5.4.4 Feed arrangements	250
5.4.5 Priming	255
5.4.6 Materials of construction	256
5.5 Cavitation in pumps	257
5.5.1 Cavitation effects	257
5.6 Hydraulic transportation of solids in pipelines	261
5.6.1 Types of slurry flow	261
5.6.2 Flow in suction pipes	265
5.6.3 Flow in delivery pipes	266
5.6.4 Calculation of total head	267
5.6.5 Limit deposit velocity	274
5.6.6 Pipeline materials and construction	276
5.6.7 Flow measurement and control	277
5.7 Practical pumping calculations	280
5.7.1 Effects of different slurry concentrations	280
5.7.2 Design considerations	281
5.8 The dredger pump	283
5.8.1 Duty	283
5.8.2 Slurry dimensions	283
5.8.3 Selecting the pipe diameter	284
5.8.4 Calculation of total head	285
5.8.5 Efficiency ratio (ER) and head ratio (HR)	288
5.8.6 Preliminary pump selection	288
5.8.7 Power consumed at pump spindle	289

5.8.8 Preliminary dredge-pump specifications	289
5.9 Primary head-feed pump	289
5.9.1 Duty	289
5.9.2 Slurry dimensions	290
5.9.3 Selecting delivery-pipe diameter	291
5.9.4 Calculation of total head	291
5.9.5 Efficiency ratio (ER) and head ratio (HR)	293
5.9.6 Preliminary pump selection	293
5.9.7 Power consumed at pump spindle	293
5.9.8 Preliminary head-feed pump specification	294
5.10 Tailings – jet stacking	294
5.10.1 Practical considerations	296
5.11 Concentrate thickening	299
5.11.1 Principle of operation	299
5.11.2 Cyclone efficiency	300
5.11.3 Cyclone duty	301
5.11.4 Cyclone selection	301
References	302
5.12 Glossary of symbols	302
6. Placer mining	306
6.1 Introduction	306
6.2 Mining systems	307
6.3 Mining methods	307
6.3.1 Availability of water	307
6.3.2 Deposit size and value	308
6.3.3 Sediments characteristics	309
6.3.4 Bedrock characteristics and geometry	309
6.3.5 The total environment	310
6.4 Mine planning	310
6.4.1 Dredge path design	313
6.4.2 Open-pit design	314
6.4.3 High-level dunes	315
6.4.4 Overburden handling	316
6.4.5 Slimes disposal	319
6.5 Hand mining	320
6.5.1 Ground sluicing	322
6.5.2 Miscellaneous methods of hand mining	324
6.6 Mechanical mining – dry methods	328
6.6.1 Bulldozer – scrapers	330
6.6.2 Bulldozer – front end loaders	330
6.6.3 Bulldozer – buried loaders	332
6.6.4 Land dredgers	334
6.6.5 Hydraulic excavators and trucks	337
6.6.6 Draglines	339

6.6.7 Bucket-wheel excavators	340
6.6.8 Drag-scrapers and trucks	341
6.9 Mechanical mining – wet methods	342
6.9.1 Hydraulic sluicing	342
6.9.2 Sluicing practice	344
6.10 Dredging	348
6.11 Bucket-line dredgers	348
6.11.1 Description	348
6.11.2 Applications of bucket-line dredgers	350
6.11.3 Construction details	352
6.11.4 Operation	354
6.12 Suction-cutter dredgers	360
6.12.1 Description	360
6.12.2 Applications of suction-cutter dredgers	362
6.12.3 Construction details	362
6.12.4 Operation	363
6.13 Bucket-wheel dredgers	366
6.14 Jet-suction dredgers	367
6.15 Drag-suction dredgers	369
References	370
7. Placer minerals processing	371
7.1 Introduction	371
7.2 Process development	371
7.2.1 Bench-scale testing	372
7.2.2 Pilot-plant testing	374
7.2.3 Open versus closed-circuit testing	377
7.2.4 Scale up	377
7.3 Process equipment and design	379
7.3.1 Feed preparation and control	379
7.3.2 Slurrying	380
7.3.3 Sizing	385
7.3.4 Classification	391
7.3.5 Densification	393
7.3.6 Distribution	393
7.4 Gravity concentration	394
7.4.1 Riffled sluices	395
7.4.2 Pinched sluices	397
7.4.3 Spiral concentrators	402
7.4.4 Jigs	404
7.4.5 Shaking tables	405
7.4.6 Rotating cones	407
7.4.7 Heavy-medium separators	409
7.4.8 Design considerations – a modern gravity treatment plant	412

8.10.2 The treatment of working capital	477
8.10.3 Cash flows	477
8.10.4 Allowing for risk	482
8.10.5 Sensitivity	483
8.11 Feasibility studies	484
8.11.1 Stage I. Orientation study	485
8.11.2 Stage II. Development of conceptual plans	485
8.11.3 Stage III. Engineering	486
8.11.4 Stage IV. Feasibility	486
References	486
Appendix 8.1 Present value of \$1 in n years hence at various rates of compound interest	488
Appendix: Conversion tables and factors	489
A.1 Conversion tables	489
A.2 Conversion factors – pump calculations	491
Index	497

7.5 Magnetic separation	415
7.5.1 Magnetic mineral types	415
7.5.2 Wet magnetic separation	418
7.5.3 Dry magnetic separation	424
7.6 Electrostatic and high-tension separation	431
7.6.1 Factors influencing separation	431
7.7 Electrostatic separators	433
7.7.1 Plate separators	433
7.7.2 Screen-plate separators	435
7.7.3 Polarity reversal	435
7.7.4 Machine selection	435
7.8 High tension separators	436
7.8.1 Machine selection	437
7.8.2 Configurations	440
References	441
8. Placer valuation	443
8.1 Introduction	443
8.2 The placer financial model	444
8.3 Ore reserves	444
8.3.1 The classification of ore reserves	445
8.4 The computation of ore reserves	447
8.4.1 Geometrics	448
8.4.2 Geostatistics	451
8.5 Grade management and control	456
8.5.1 Mine sequence planning	457
8.5.2 Cut-off grade	458
8.5.3 Blending	460
8.5.4 Dilution	460
8.6 Markets	461
8.6.1 Continuity and uniformity of supply	461
8.6.2 Concentrate purity	461
8.6.3 Metal content	462
8.6.4 Particle size range applications	462
8.7 Production	466
8.7.1 Mining	466
8.7.2 Treatment	468
8.8 Capital and operating costs	468
8.8.1 Charts of accounts	468
8.8.2 Capital costs	469
8.8.3 Operating costs	472
8.8.4 Process factors affecting costs	473
8.9 Revenues	473
8.10 Economic appraisal	476
8.10.1 Capital expenditure planning	476

8.10.2 The treatment of working capital	477
8.10.3 Cash flows	477
8.10.4 Allowing for risk	482
8.10.5 Sensitivity	483
8.11 Feasibility studies	484
8.11.1 Stage I. Orientation study	485
8.11.2 Stage II. Development of conceptual plans	485
8.11.3 Stage III. Engineering	486
8.11.4 Stage IV. Feasibility	486
References	486
Appendix 8.1 Present value of \$1 in n years hence at various rates of compound interest	488
Appendix: Conversion tables and factors	489
A.1 Conversion tables	489
A.2 Conversion factors – pump calculations	491
Index	497