

Virtual Geologic Mapping Exercise at Lough Fee

This virtual mapping exercise focuses on a 2.5 square kilometer field area along the eastern shore of Lough Fee in County Galway, western Ireland (Figure 1; approximate latitude: 53.579°, longitude: -9.799°). The basic geology consists of a layered sequence of Silurian clastic rocks that overlie Neoproterozoic schists. Units are dissected and offset by younger faults. Virtual field investigations and construction of a geologic map will be facilitated by using the Google Earth virtual globe. The exercise works best with the web version of Google Earth, which can be accessed using the Chrome, Firefox, Opera, or Edge browsers at the URL below:

<https://earth.google.com/web/>

Note that the web version of Google Earth does not work with Safari or Internet Explorer. The exercise will work on the desktop version of Google Earth, but some of the GE tools are located in alternate places and work slightly differently.

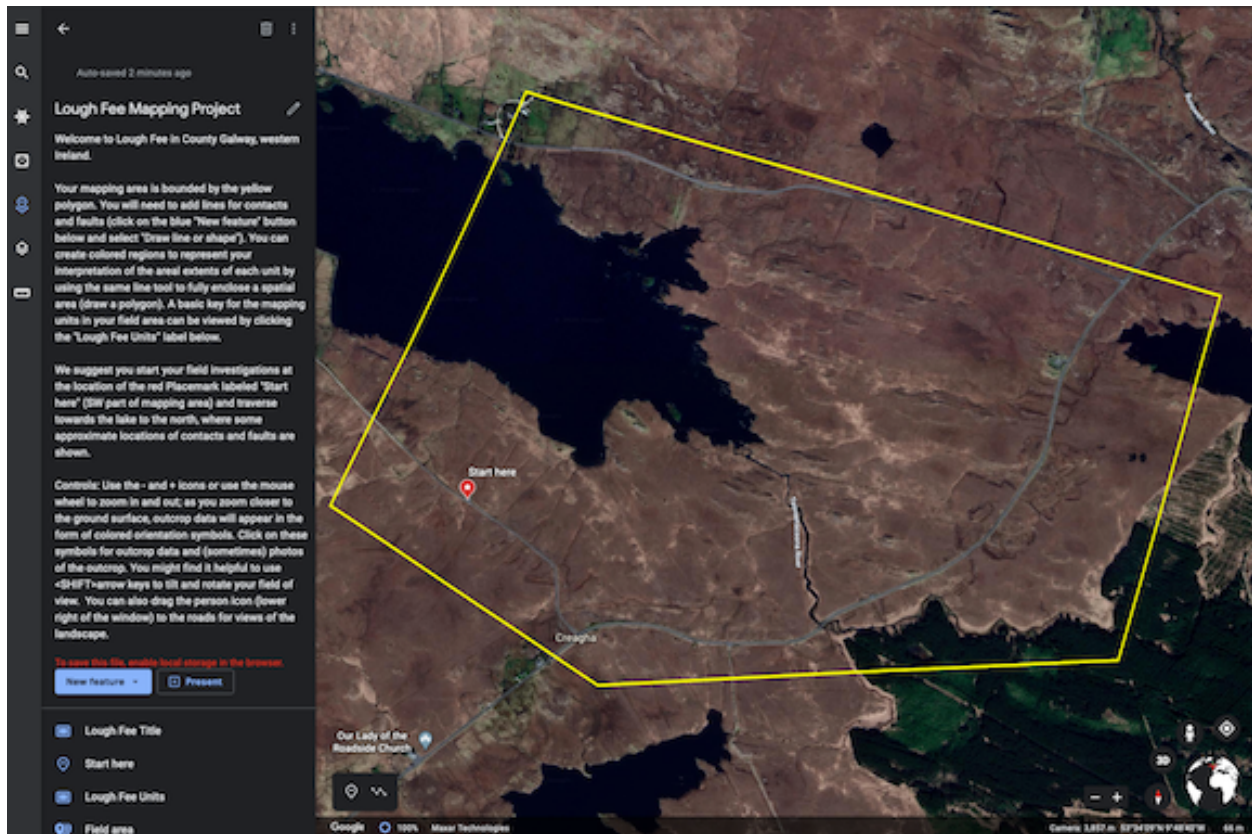


Figure 1: Lough Fee field area outlined by the yellow polygon, as seen in web Google Earth

The Lough Fee mapping exercise makes use of a KML file of field data, which can be downloaded from the URL below:

http://educ.jmu.edu/~whitmesj/GEODE/Lough_Fee/Lough_Fee_Mapping.kml

Exercise Goals:

1. In Google Earth, virtually traverse the full field area, visiting outcrops (indicated by colored orientation symbols or dots) and collecting field data.
2. Build a geologic map in Google Earth by drawing contacts between lithologic units and drawing faults where necessitated by offsets in units. Draw polygons, colored by unit, to represent the interpreted regions for each lithologic unit. Upon completion, the full mapping area, as denoted by the large yellow polygon, should be colored. Neatness counts!
3. Interpret the geology of the field area by writing detailed descriptions of the lithologic units, constructing a cross-section that interprets the geology of the area, and writing a memoir/summary of the geologic history of the field area.

To investigate the field area, start by opening Google Earth in your web browser, using this web address: <https://earth.google.com/web/>. Once you are in Google Earth click on the Projects icon at the left side of the window to import the “Lough_Fee_Mapping.kml” file from your computer (see Figure 2.) If you haven’t downloaded the file to your computer yet, it is available here:

http://educ.jmu.edu/~whitmesj/GEODE/Lough_Fee/Lough_Fee_Mapping.kml.

Once the KML file is loaded, your window should look like Figure 1.

Now you can start investigating the field area; the boundaries of the field area are indicated by the yellow polygon. We suggest that you start at the location of the red Placemark, entitled “Start here” (SW part of mapping area) and traverse towards the lake to the north, where some approximate locations of contacts and faults can be found. In Google Earth you can use the - and + icons (lower right in your window) or use your mouse wheel to zoom in and out. As you zoom closer to the ground surface, outcrop data will appear in the form of colored orientation symbols or dots. Click on these symbols for outcrop data and (sometimes) photos of the outcrop. Outcrops with photos are indicated with the camera symbol 📷.

You might find it helpful to use <SHIFT>arrow keys to tilt and rotate your field of view. You can also drag the white person icon (lower right of the window) to the roads for StreetView imagery of the landscape.

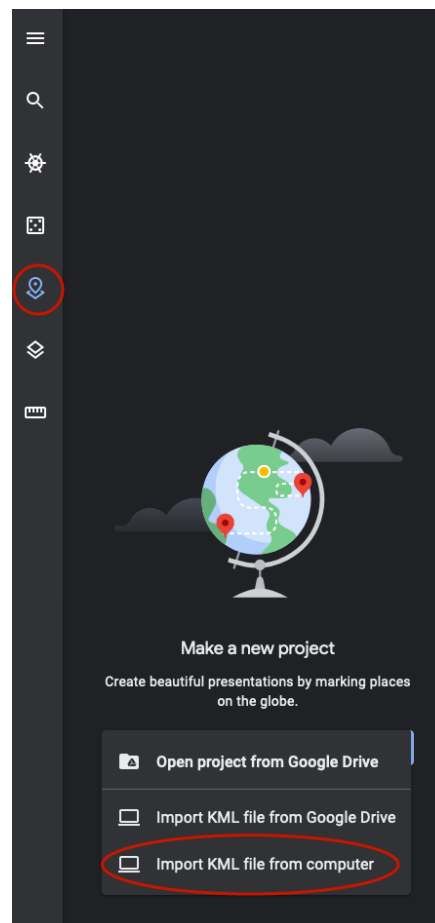


Figure 2. Loading a KML file

You will notice that the geologic field data only appears when you are zoomed close to the ground surface. A basic key for the mapping units in your field area can be viewed by clicking the "Lough Fee Units" label below the "New feature" button (also see Figure 6). However, you will need to visit the virtual outcrops to get details on the features of the lithologic units in order to complete your lithologic descriptions (see Exercise Deliverable #2 below.)



Figure 3. Examples of Placemark, black contact lines, and colored polygons for unit areas.

To complete your geologic map of the field area you will need to add lines for contacts and faults (click on the blue "New feature" button and select "Draw line or shape"). You can create colored regions to represent your interpretation of the areal extents of each unit by using the same line tool to fully enclose a spatial area (draw a polygon.) Note that you can mark key locations for use when drawing your geologic map by adding a Placemark from the same "New feature" menu; see Figure 3 for examples. Note that all of the features that you add will be viewable from any zoom extent. Thus, you can zoom in to draw your features or mark points with Placemarks and then zoom out to see how your map interpretation looks. Features can be edited by clicking on the feature and then clicking on the pencil icon in the pop-up balloon. Features can be deleted by clicking on the trashcan icon next to the feature in the list below the "New feature" button.



Remember that a completed geologic map will have the full mapping area marked by contacts and faults that bound colored regions which represent your interpretation of the areal extent for each unit. There should be no blank space within the yellow boundary polygon once your map is completed.

Draft and final versions of your geologic map can be saved as KML files on your computer by clicking on the vertical dots to the right of the trashcan in the Project window at the upper left of your screen. A button will appear, entitled "Export as KML file" (see Figure 4), which will allow you to save your geologic map. The final version of this KML file is what you will turn in as Deliverable #1.

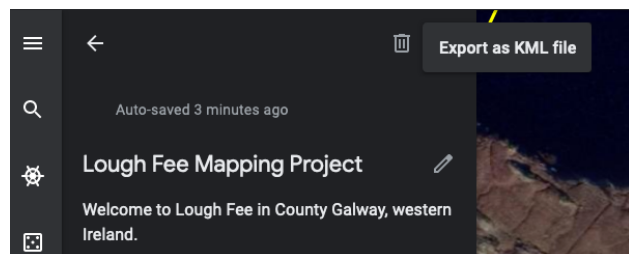


Figure 4. Example of how to save your geologic map as a KML file on your computer.

Once you have completed your geologic map, you will need to draw a vertical cross-section interpretation of the geology. At the left side of your window, there is a label entitled "cross-section line", and if you click on the "eye" symbol, a red cross-section line will appear trending from south to north across the middle of the field area. You can use the blank cross section box included with this packet to draft your cross section, by loading the box into a drawing program like Illustrator, PowerPoint, or Google Slides.

You can rotate the Google Earth view of the cross-section line in the field area to horizontal on your screen and then zoom to match the length of the cross-section line to the width of the cross-section box (see Figure 5.) That will help you to accurately transfer your contacts and unit areas from the Google Earth geology map to your cross-section box. If you are unclear on how to draw an accurate geologic cross-section, please talk to your instructor.

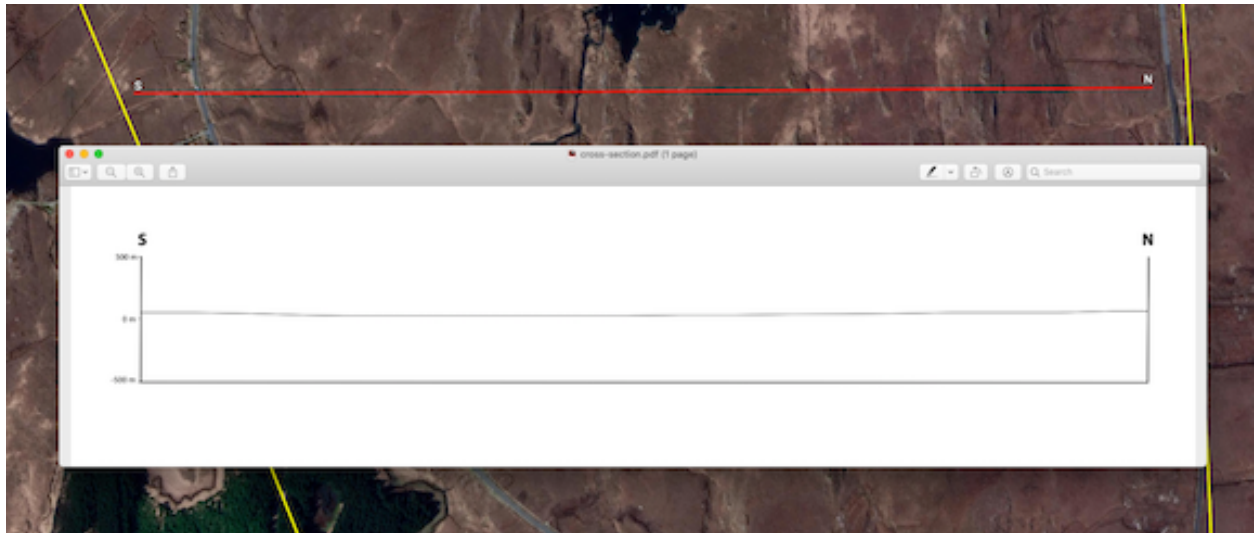


Figure 5. Example of aligning the cross-section box with the red cross-section line in GE

Exercise Deliverables:

- 1) The KML file of your completed geologic map of the Lough Fee field area.
- 2) Descriptions of the lithologic units in the field area. These descriptions will use data from the field area and can be augmented by examining the images in the Supplementary Data file to expand on the basic descriptions in Figure 6. (http://educ.jmu.edu/~whitmesj/GEODE/Lough_Fee/Supplementary_Data.pdf)
- 3) A cross-section from South to North across the field area; you can use the blank cross section box included in the packet and load it into a drawing program (like PowerPoint, Illustrator, or Google Slides) to draw your geologic interpretation.
- 4) A neat and legible memoir/summary of the geology of your mapping area. Good memoirs start with the location and characteristics of the field area, present the field data and observations, and then discuss/interpret that data in a regional tectonic context.



Figure 6: Lithologic units and symbology in the Lough Fee field area.

Useful References:

[Clift et al. 2004: Rapid tectonic exhumation, detachment faulting and orogenic collapse in the Caledonides of western Ireland](#)

Geological Survey Ireland online:

<https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/data-and-maps/Pages/default.aspx>

Graham, J.R., B.E. Leake, and P.D. Ryan, 1989. The Geology of South Mayo, Western Ireland, Scottish Academies Press, Edinburgh.

[Harper et al. 1995: Mass mortalities on an Irish Silurian seafloor](#)

Meere, P. MacCarthy, I., Reavy, J., Allen, A., and Higgs, K. 2013. Geology of Ireland: A Field Guide, The Collins Press, Cork., p. 207-220.

[Whitmeyer et al. 2009: Visualization techniques in field geology education: A case study from western Ireland](#)

[Williams & Harper 1991: End-Silurian modifications of Ordovician terranes in western Ireland](#)