

Soils, geomorphology, and multiple displacements along the Organ Mountains fault in southern New Mexico

Leland H. Gile

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The Organ Mountains fault occurs along the eastern side of the Organ and San Andres Mountains in Doña Ana County, NM. The fault is one of the youngest in NM and is of particular local interest and significance because (1) episodes of faulting are accompanied by severe earthquake activity, (2) major centers of population are nearby, and (3) the fault is very close to the headquarters of the White Sands Missile Range (WSMR). This report presents a study of soils, geomorphology, and evidence of both late Holocene and pre-Holocene displacements along the fault. A previous study along the Organ Mountains fault in southern NM found evidence of a displacement estimated to have taken place about 1,000 years ago. The late Holocene fault scarp associated with the displacement represents one of the youngest if not the youngest fault in NM. In this study, examination of an older scarp adjacent to the late Holocene scarp revealed buried evidence of late Holocene faulting below the base of the older scarp. This evidence consists of displaced sediments and soils of late Pleistocene age, and post-faulting sediments and soils similar to those at the late Holocene scarp. Prominent soils on large parts of the older scarp indicate that, as a general landscape feature, the scarp must date from the Pleistocene.



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