Will Volcanoes Erupt in New England?

Mantle upwelling at the edge of the North American Continent

Lecture to the 2018 Summer Interns

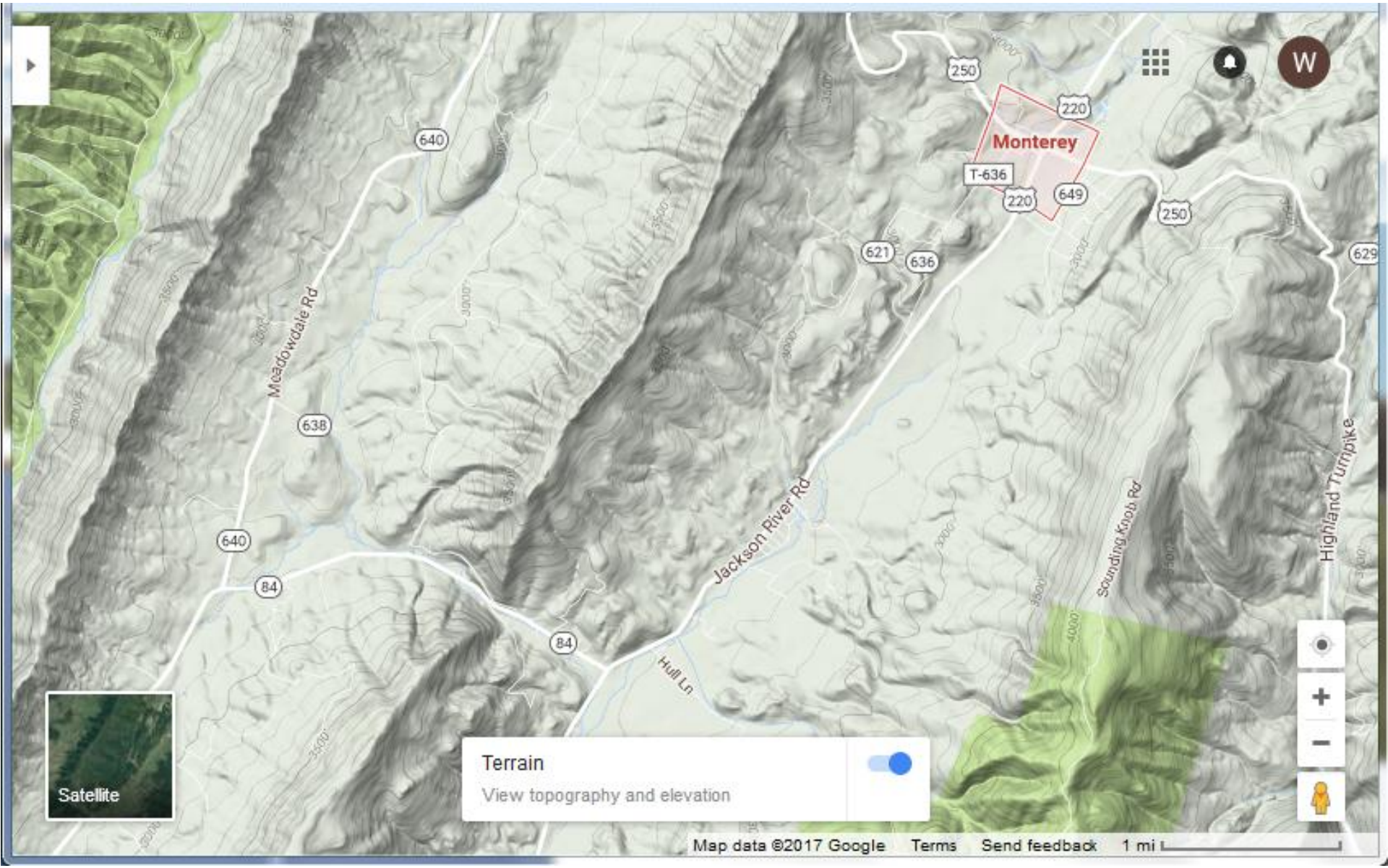
by Bill Menke

I was a LDEO Summer Intern in 1975

My interest in volcanism started the year before, when I accompanied MIT Professor Tom MyGetchin to Pacaya Volcano (Guatemala)

Part 1

The youngest volcanoes on the East Coast of North America



Monteray Virgnia area

area of folded sedimenary rock


Monterey
T-636
Trimble Knob
Meadowdale Rd
Jackson River Rd
Sounding Knob Rd
Highland Turnpike
Hull Ln
250
220
649
621
636
629
640
638
84
Satellite
Terrain
View topography and elevation
Map data ©2017 Google
Terms
Send feedback
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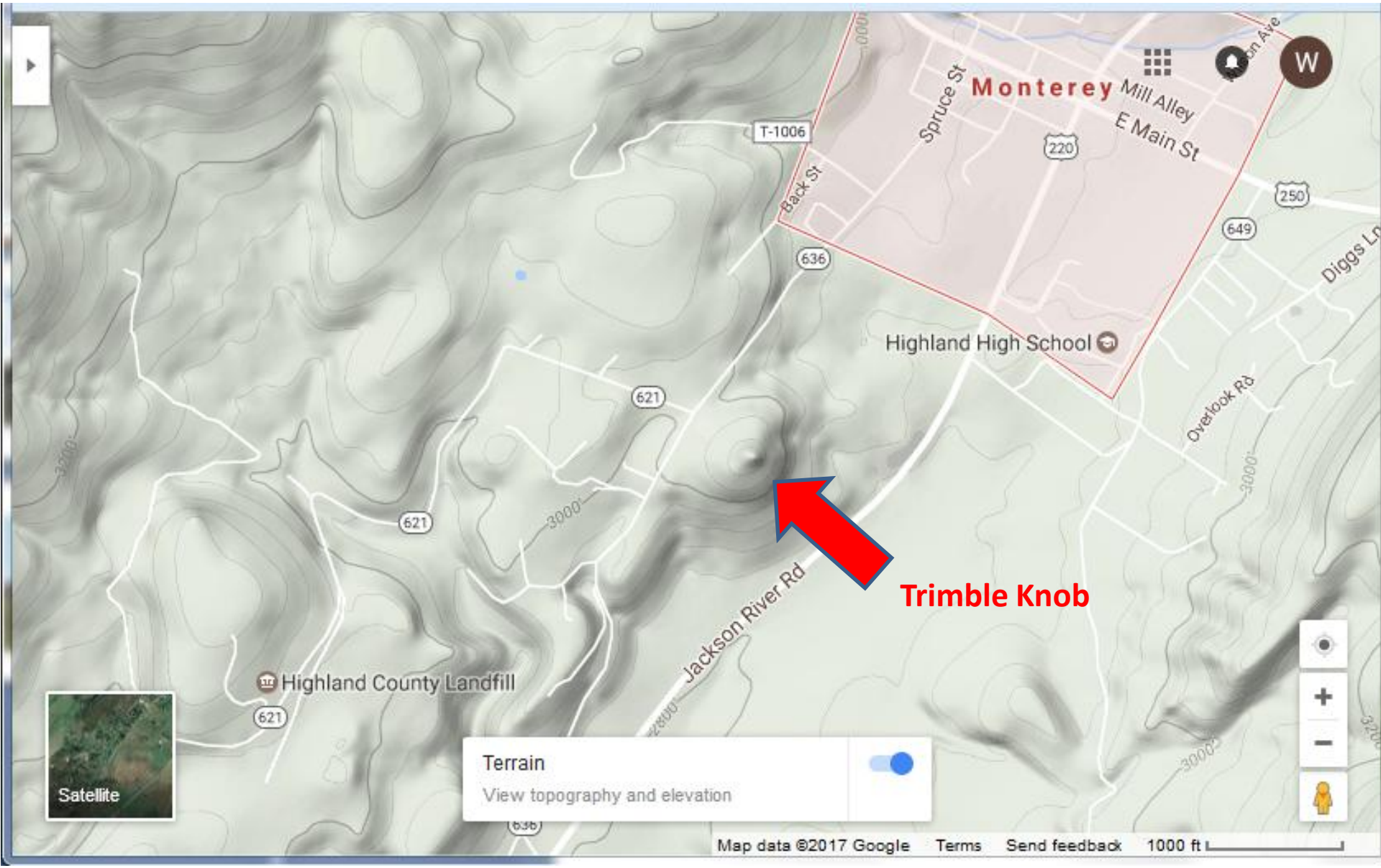
Monterey
Spruce St
Mill Alley
E Main St
T-1006
Back St
220
250
649
636
Diggs Ln
Highland High School
621
Overlook Rd
3000'
Trimble Knob
Jackson River Rd
Highland County Landfill
Satellite
Terrain
View topography and elevation
Map data ©2017 Google
Terms
Send feedback
1000 ft


Monterey
E Main St
W
Highland High School
Trimble Knob
Jackson River Rd
Highland County Landfill
Google
Imagery ©2017 Commonwealth of Virginia, DigitalGlobe, USDA Farm Service Agency, Map data ©2017 Google
1000 ft
3D Earth view is not available
Terms
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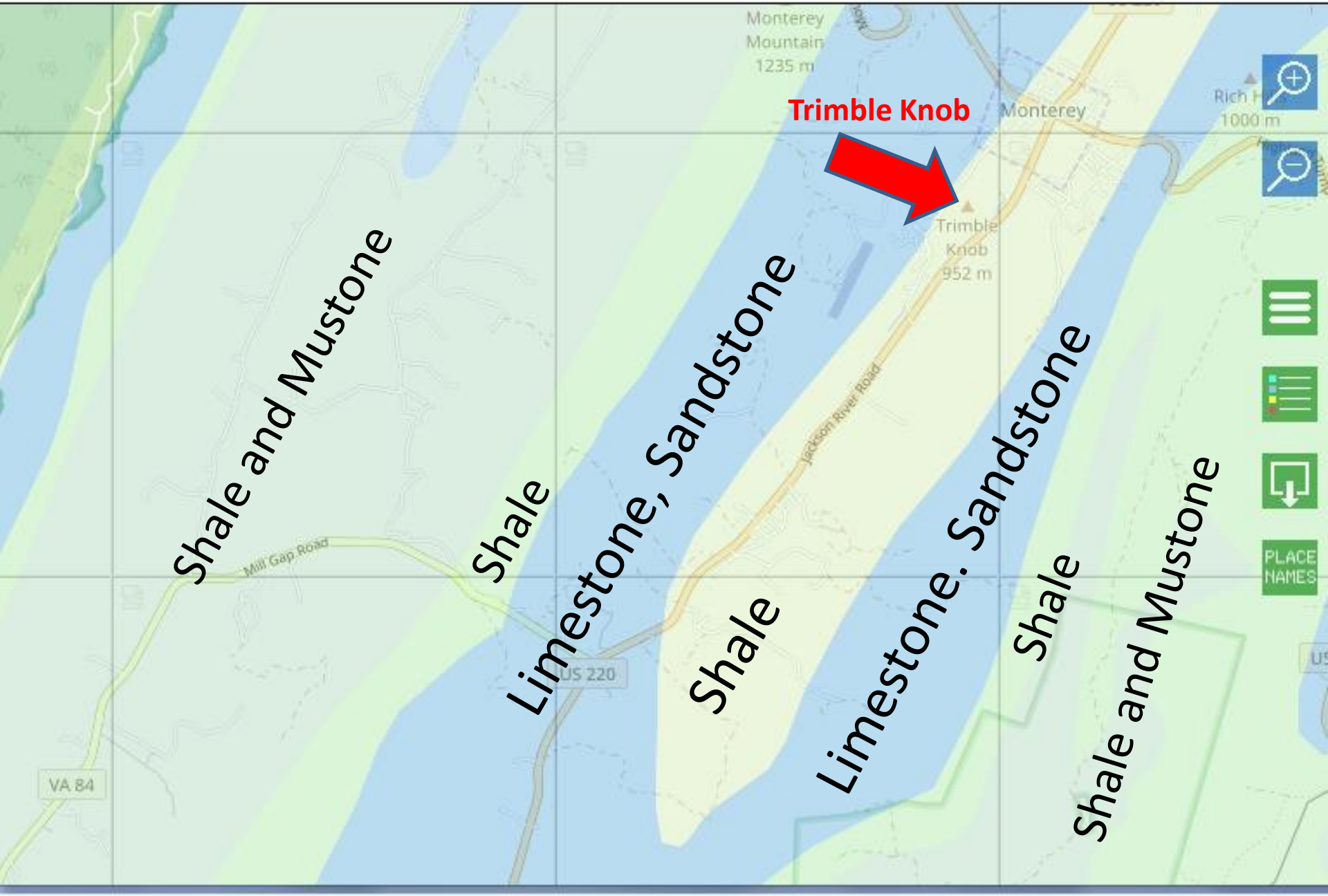
Trimble Knob



area of folded sedimenary rock

48 Ma Basalts

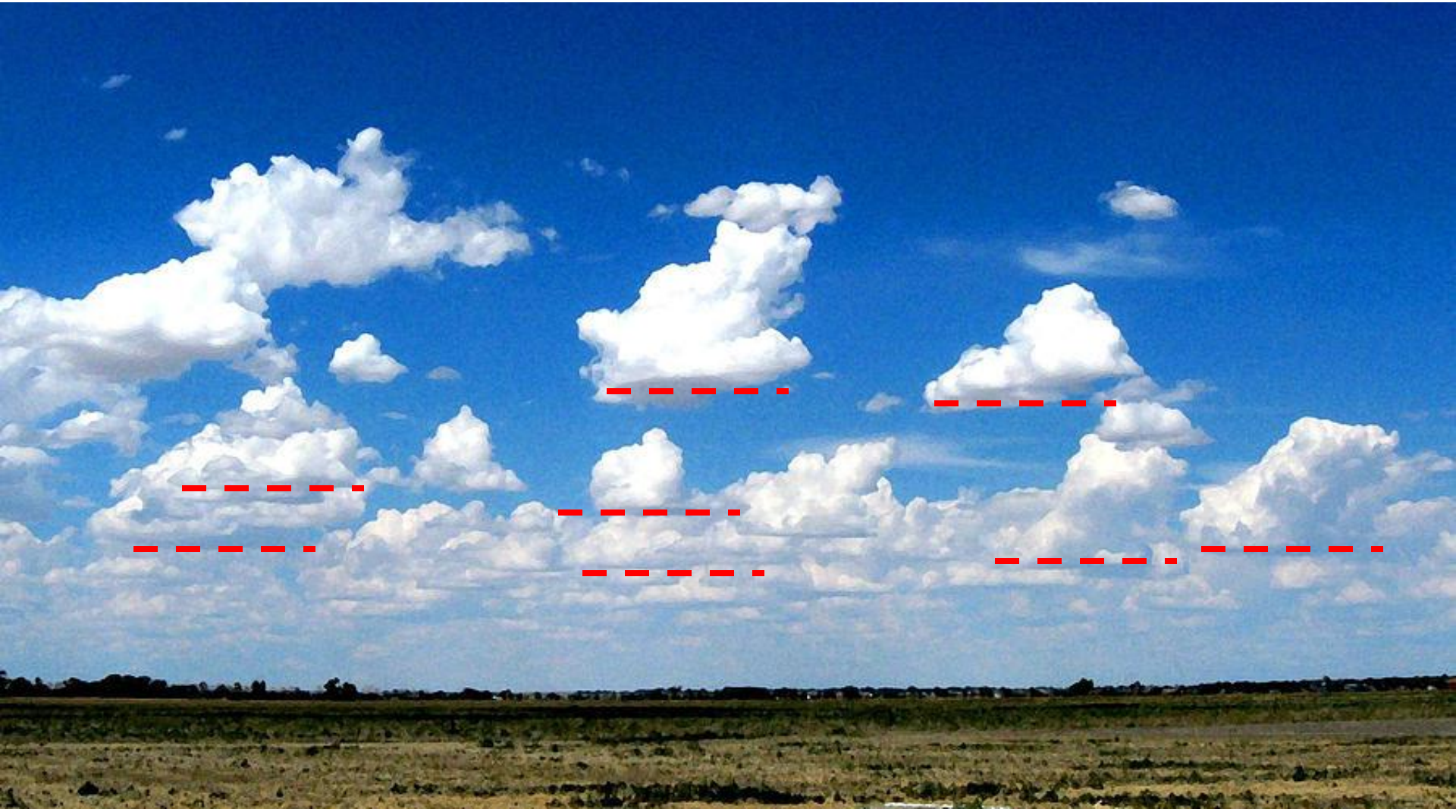
Sunset Crater (Arizona)
erupted ca 1085 CE

Part 2

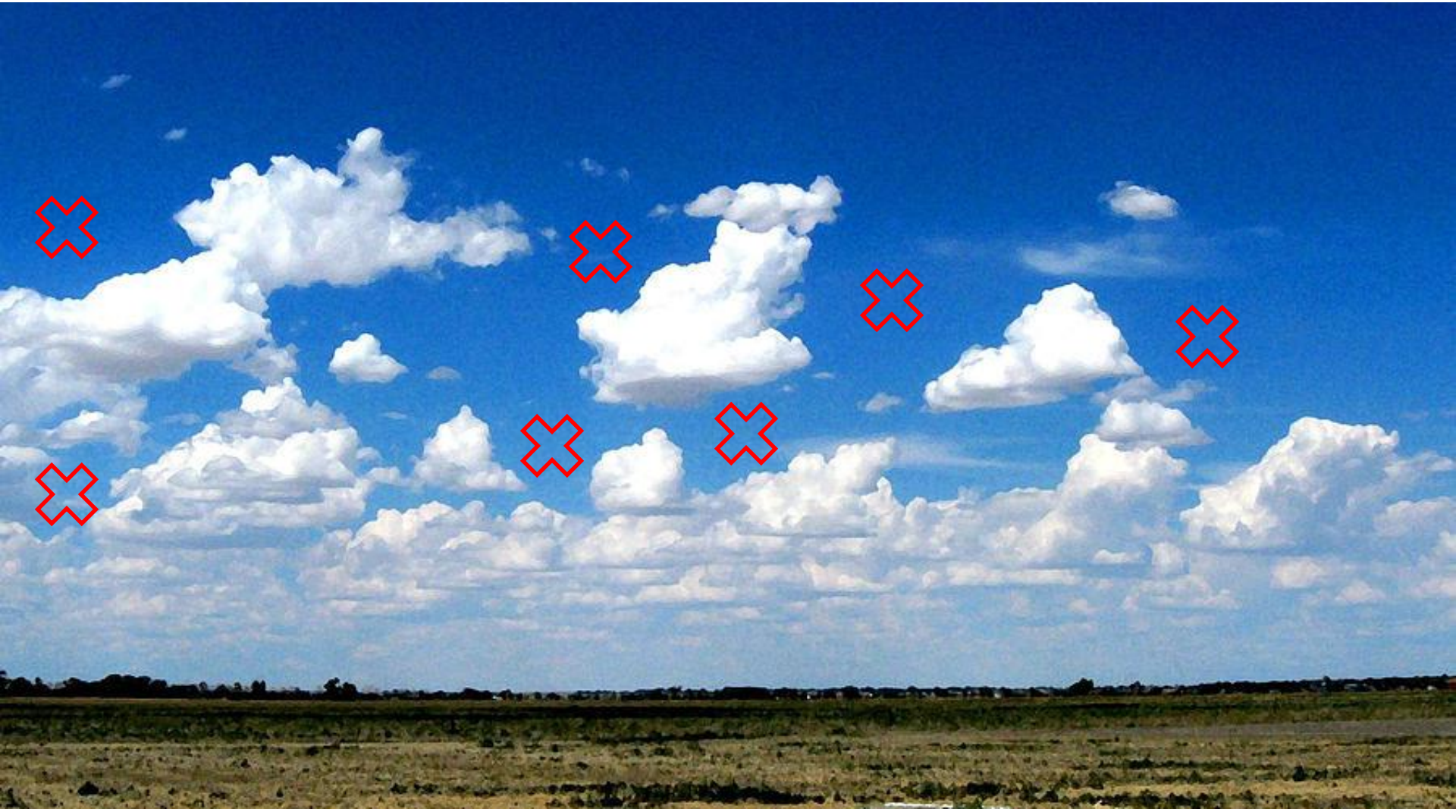
What volcanism can tell us about the earth

digression

clouds

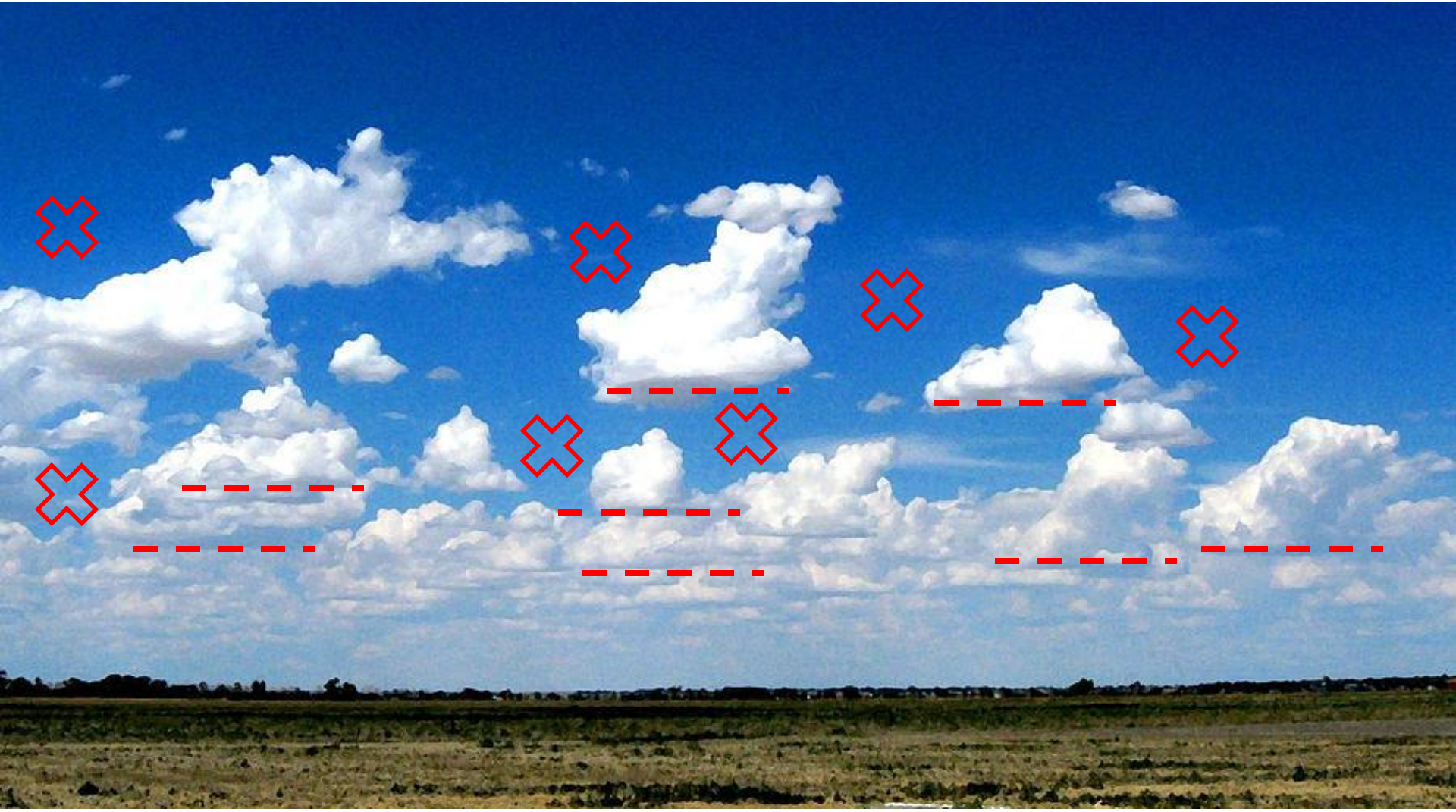


flat bottoms, all at about the same altitude



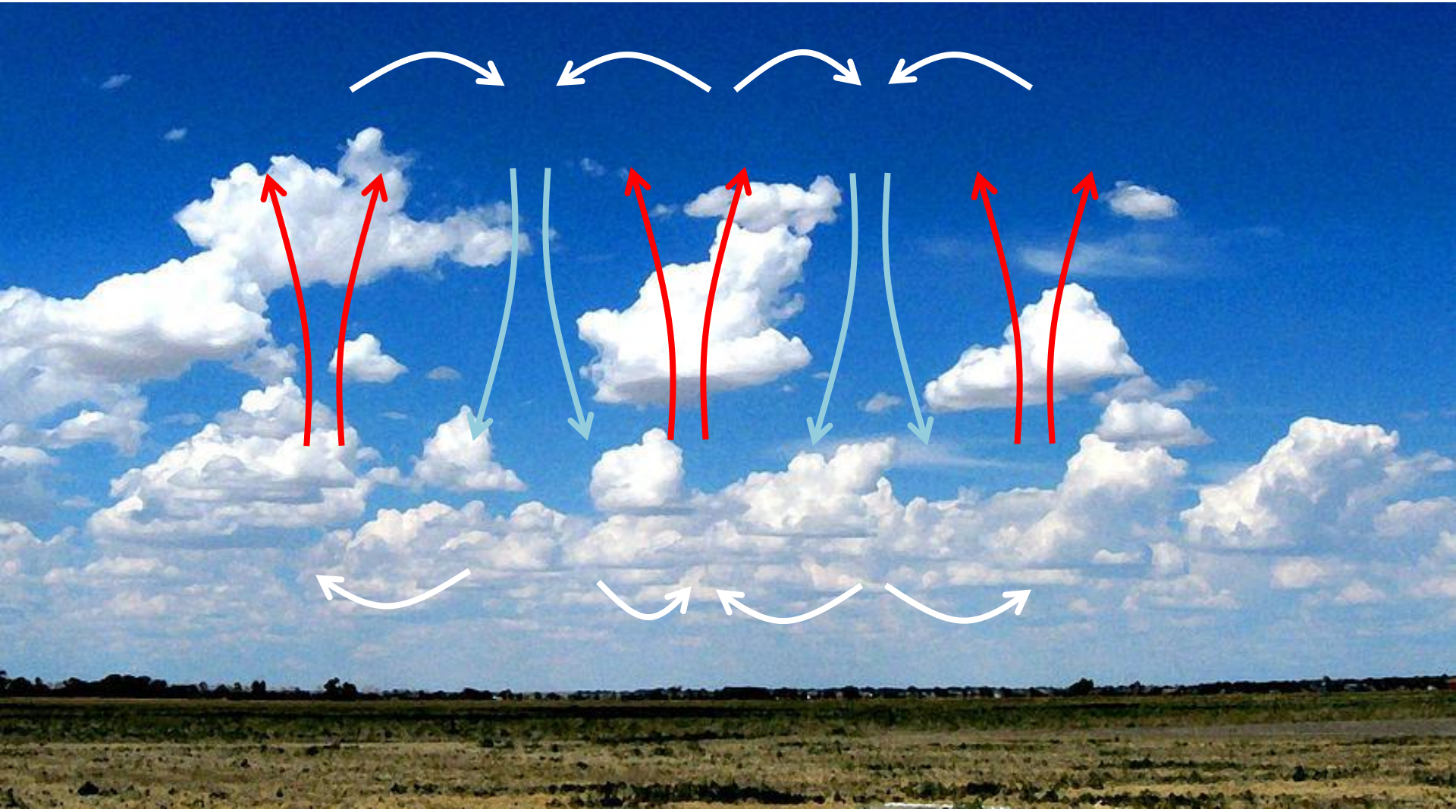
spaces between the clouds

clouds are really not the ‘complete thing’

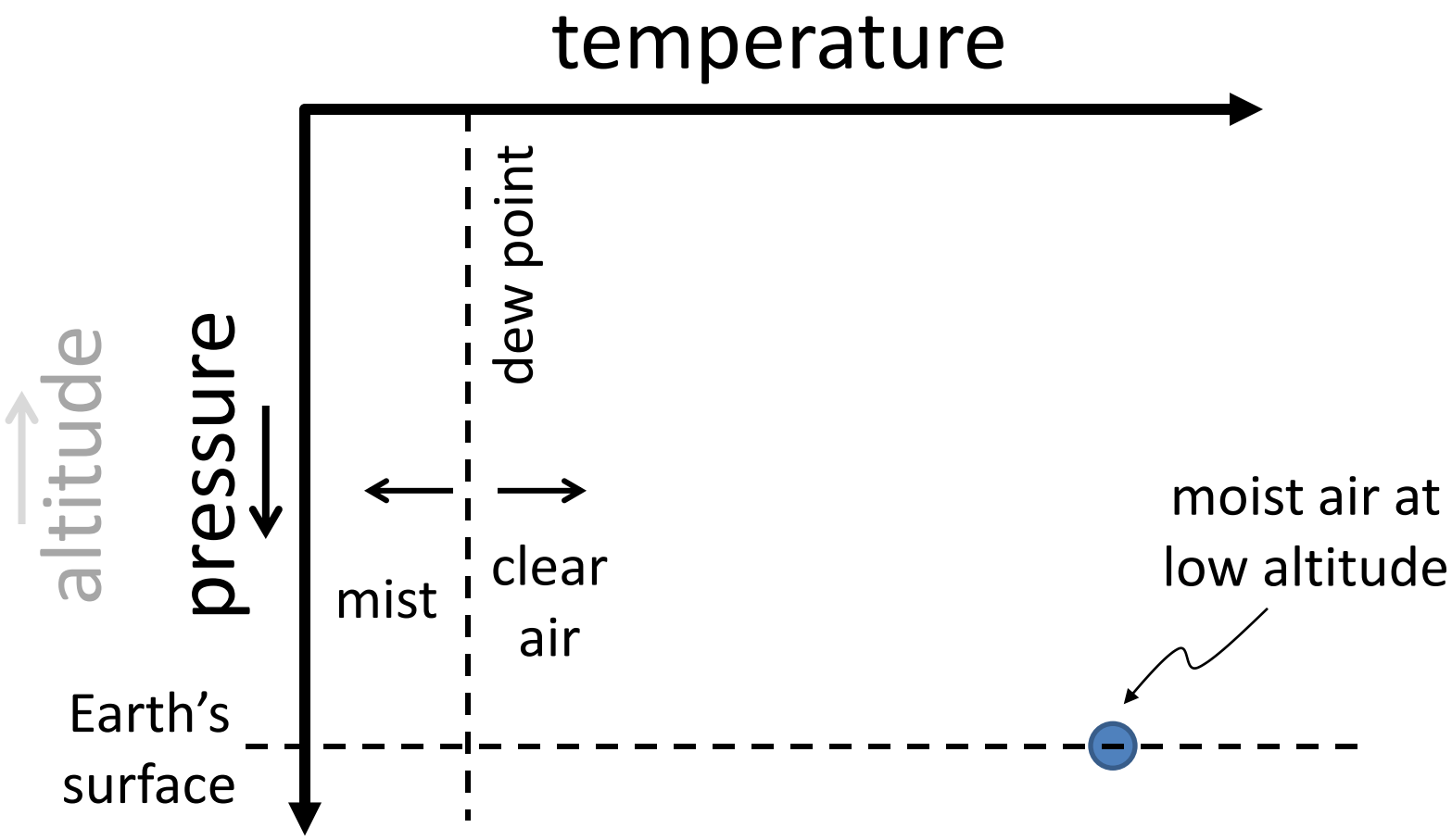


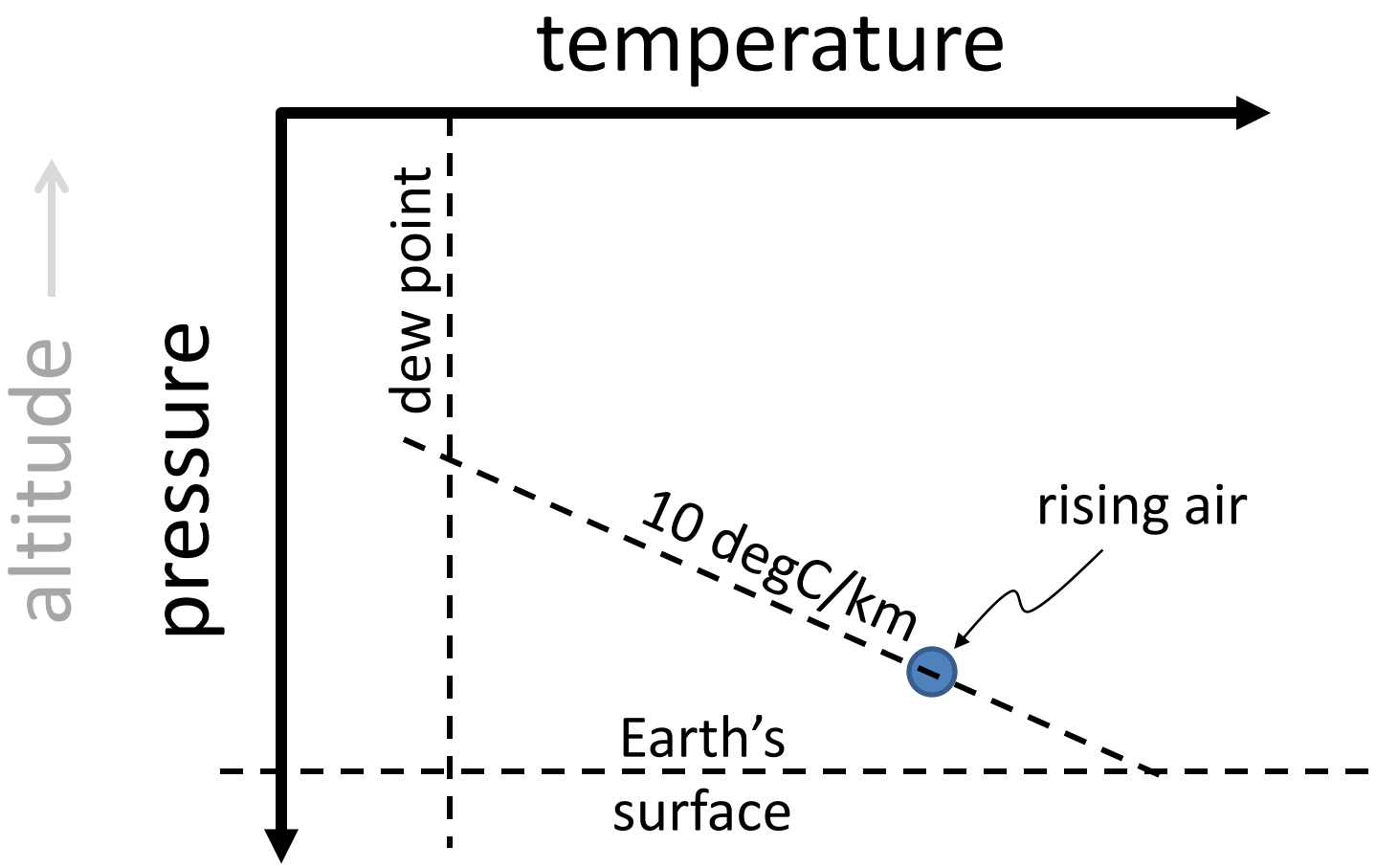
they are the part that you can see

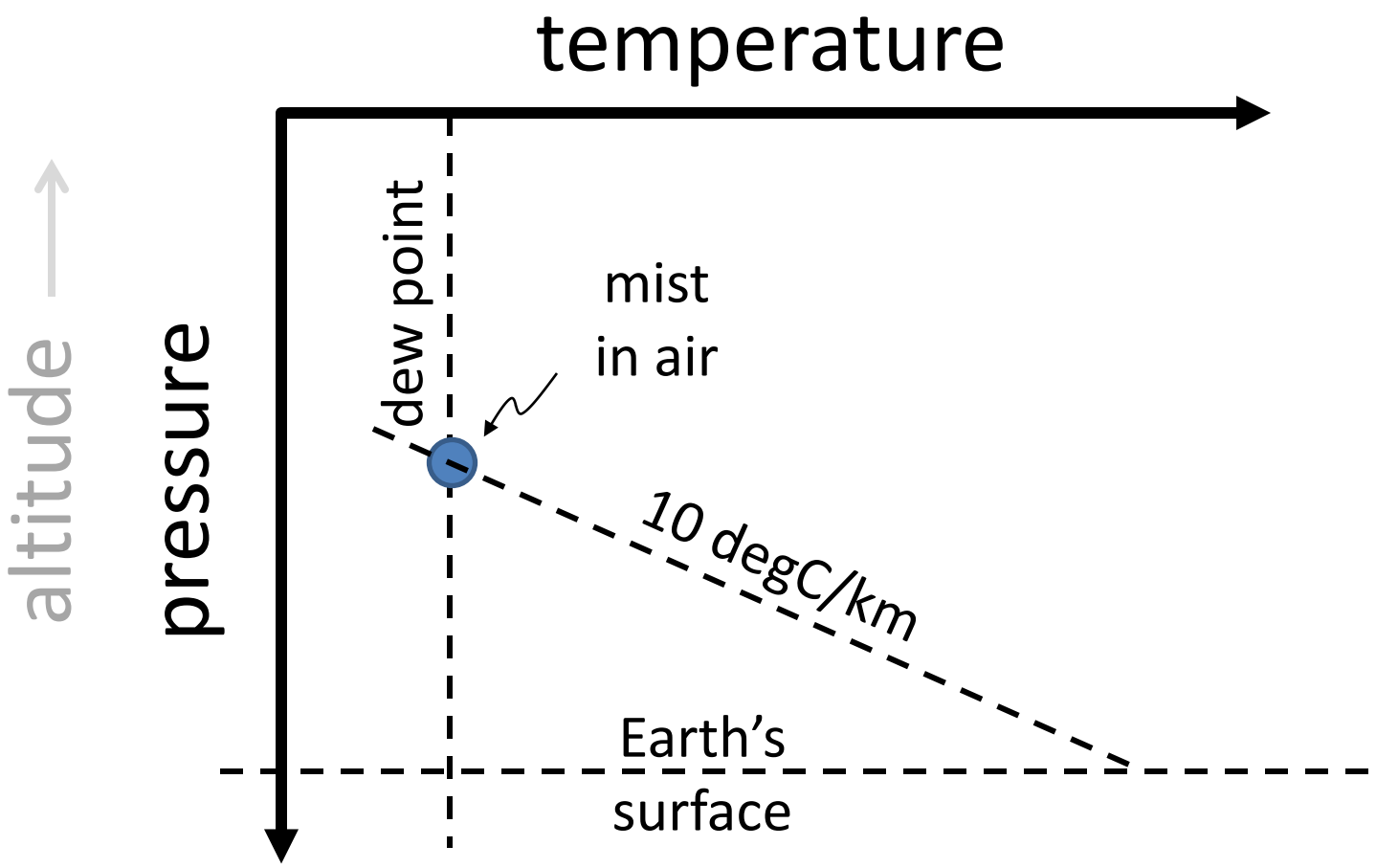
the ‘complete thing’ is a series of

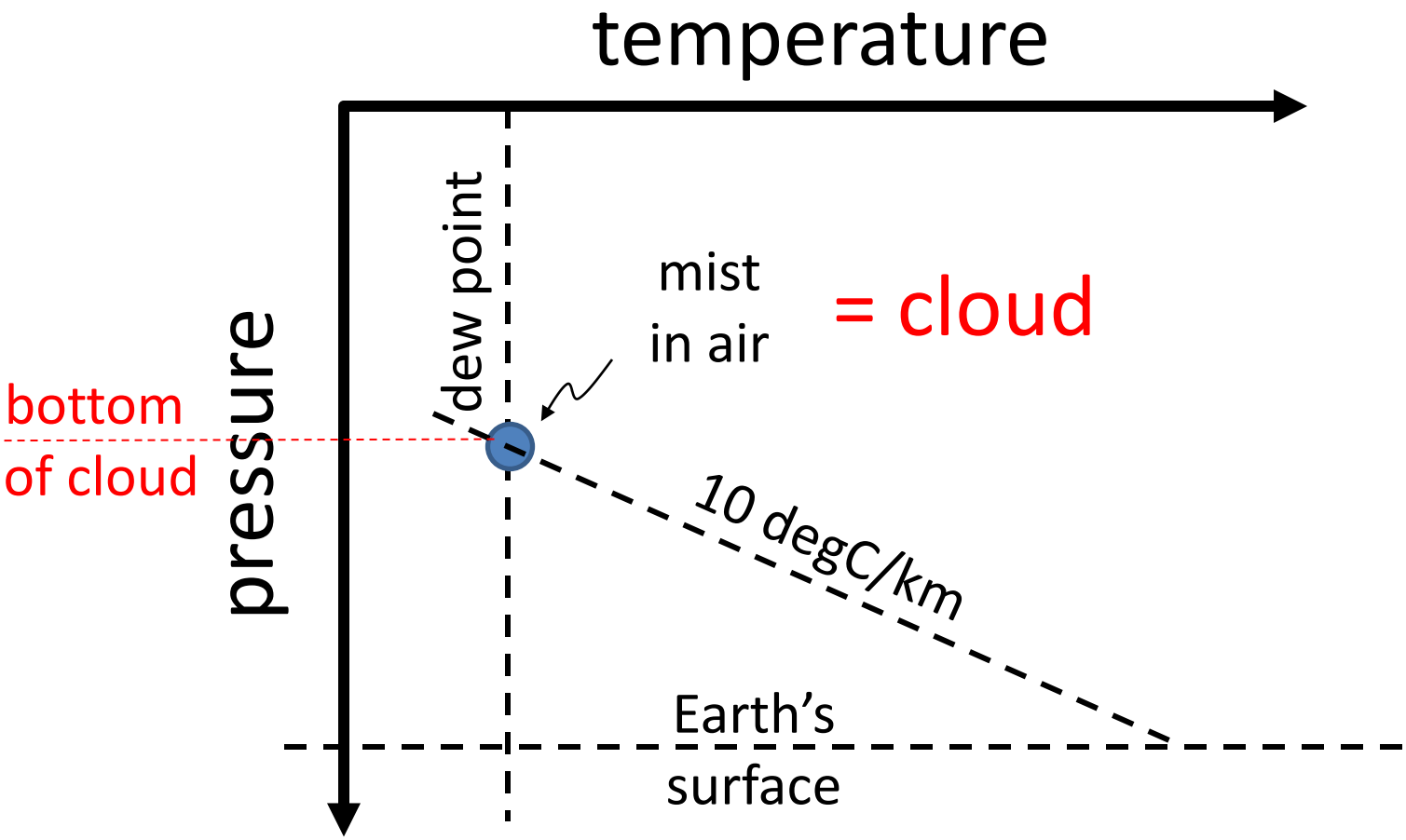


convection cells


temperature
dew point
altitude
pressure
mist
clear
air
moist air at
low altitude
Earth's
surface


temperature
altitude
pressure
dew point
10 degC/km
rising air
Earth's
surface


temperature
altitude
pressure
dew point
mist
in air
10 degC/km
Earth's
surface


temperature
pressure
dew point
mist
in air
= cloud
bottom
of cloud
10 degC/km
Earth's
surface

Rain: water droplets more dense than air so they fall down

Rain: water droplets more dense than air so they fall down

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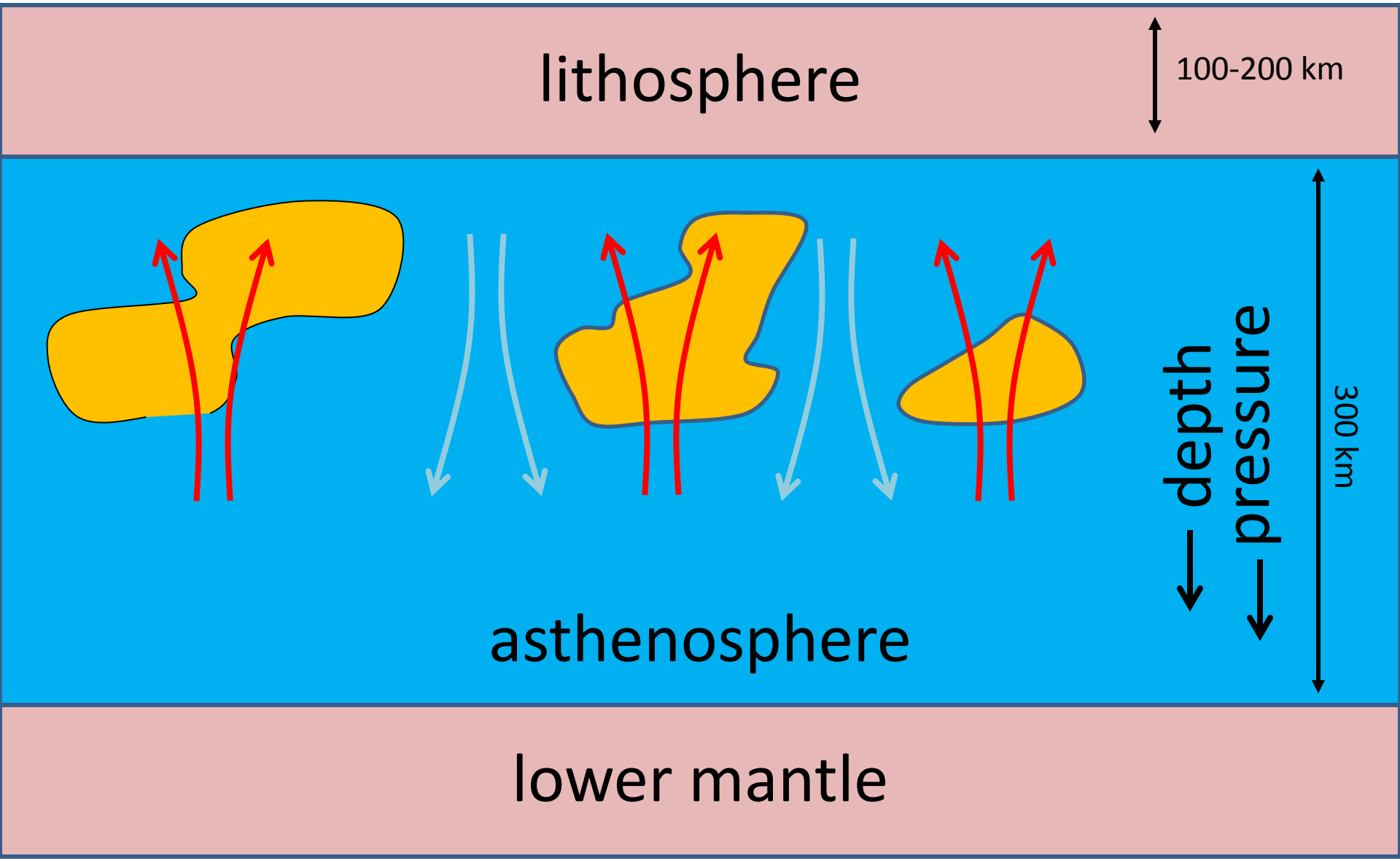
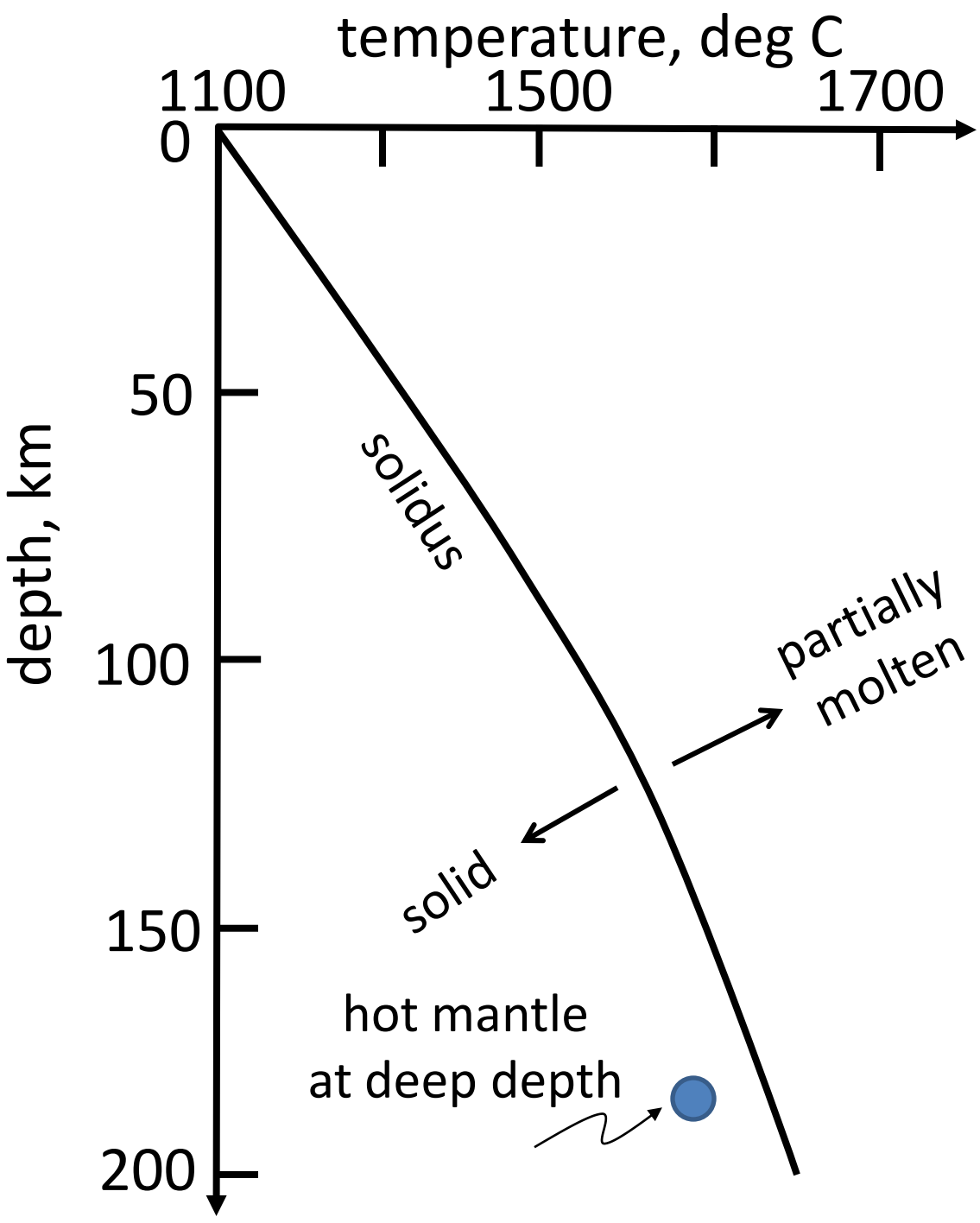
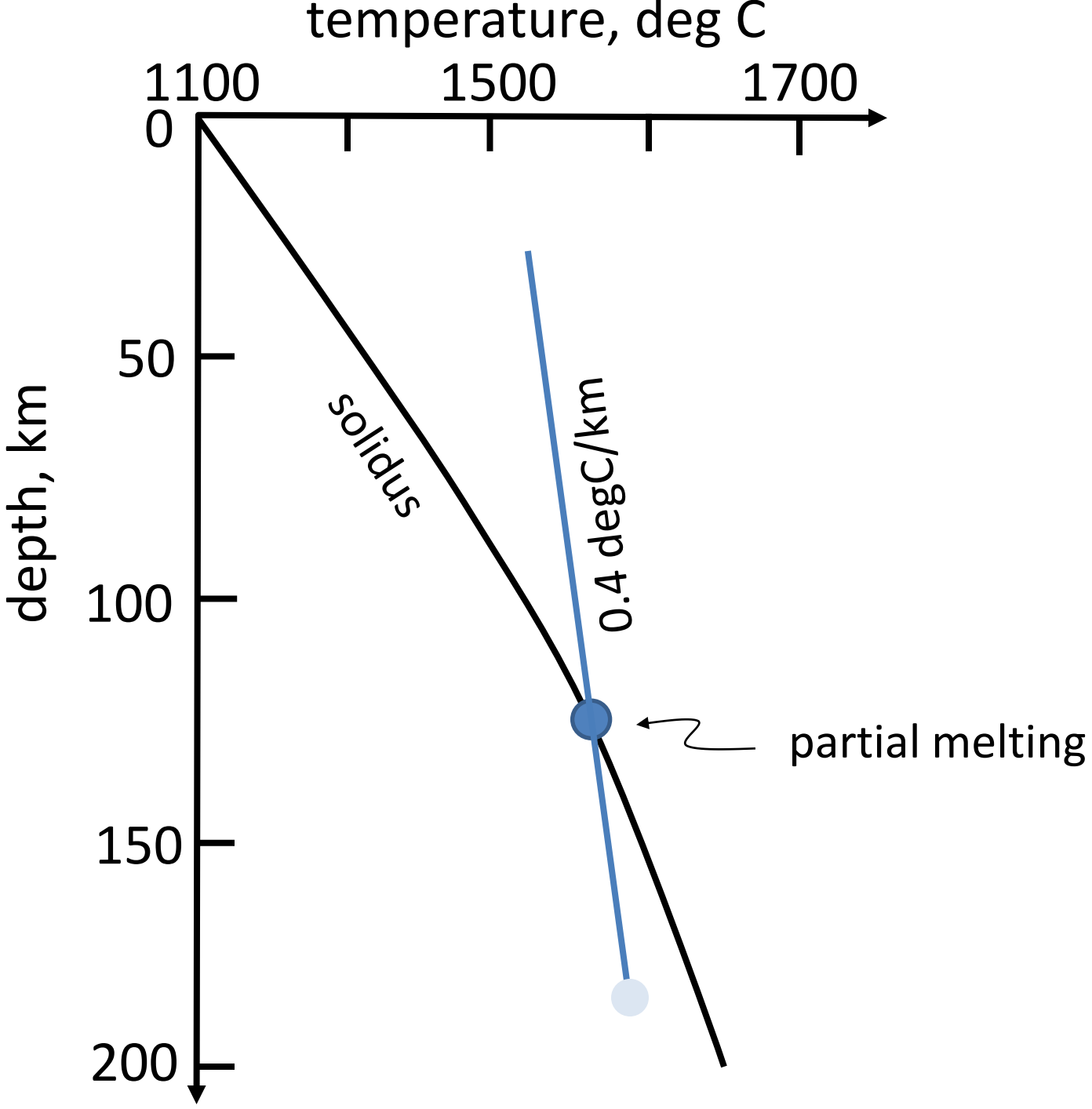
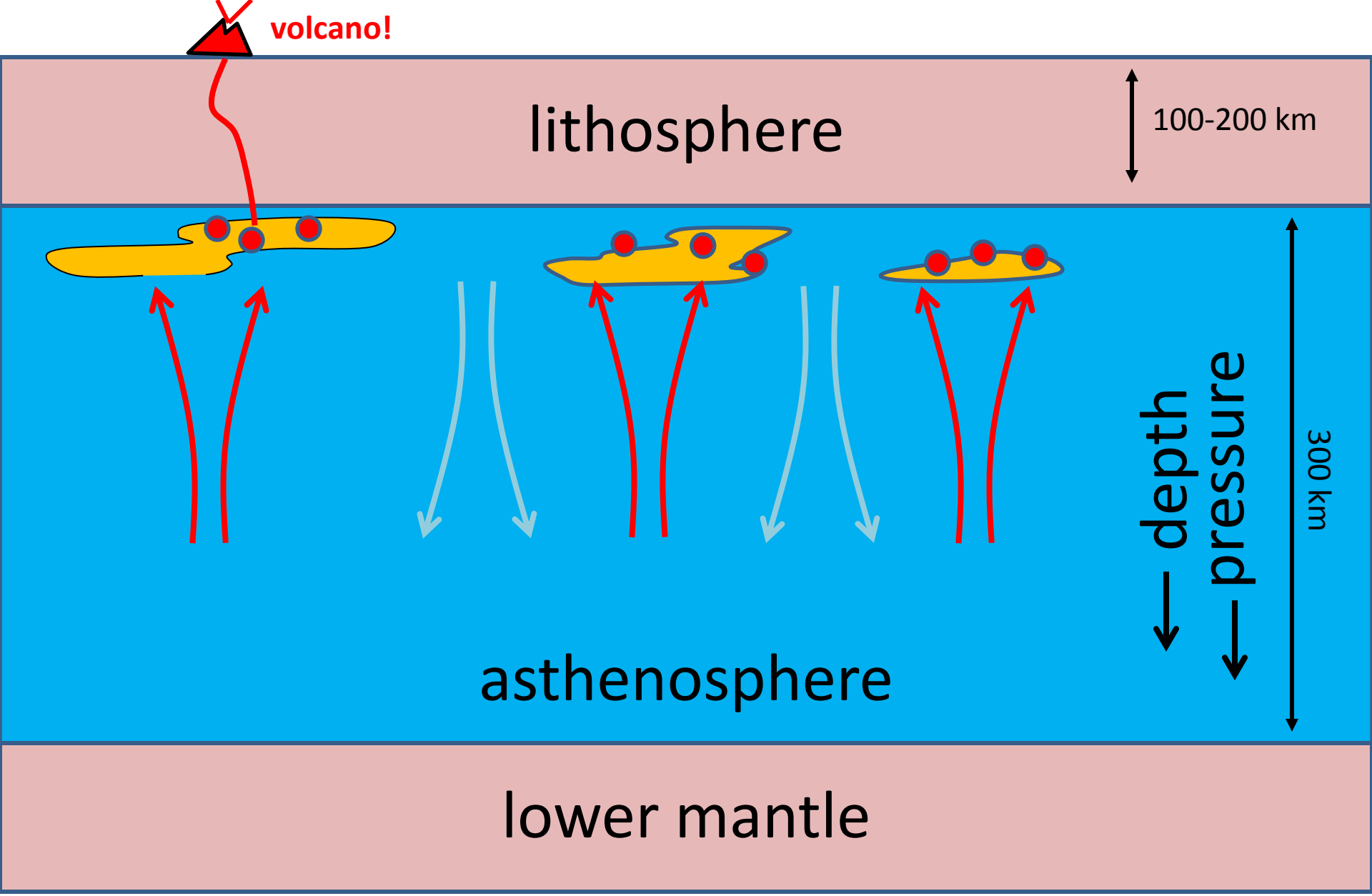

lithosphere
100-200 km
depth
pressure
300 km
asthenosphere
lower mantle


temperature, deg C
1100
1500
1700
0
50
100
150
200
depth, km
solidus
partially
molten
solid
hot mantle
at deep depth


temperature, deg C
1100
1500
1700
0
50
100
150
200
depth, km
solidus
0.4 degC/km
partial melting



magma ‘rains’ up, since it is less dense than rock

volcanism
tells us where the
asthenosphere is upwelling

Part 3

The Northern Appalachian Anomaly

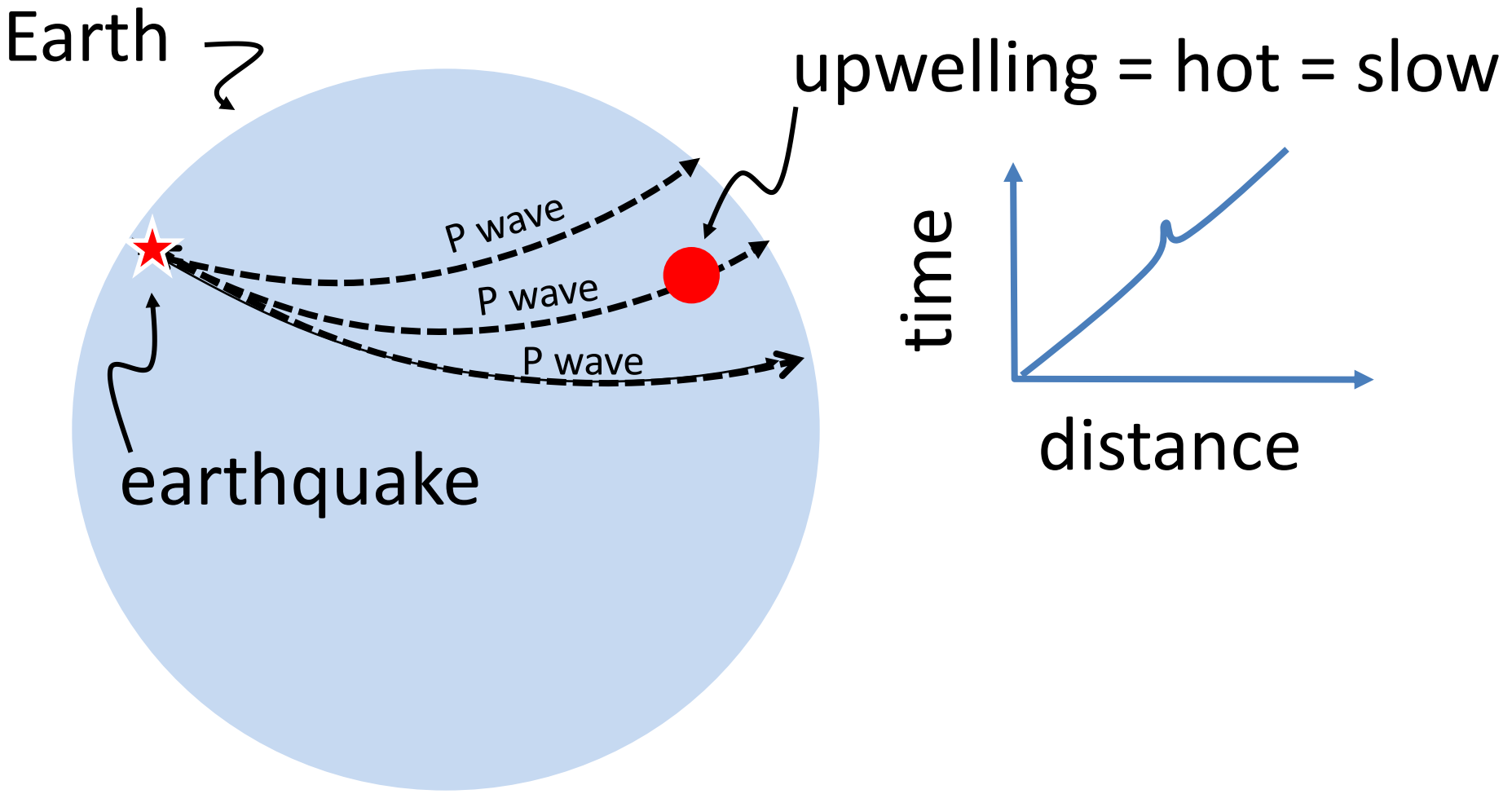
seismic velocity

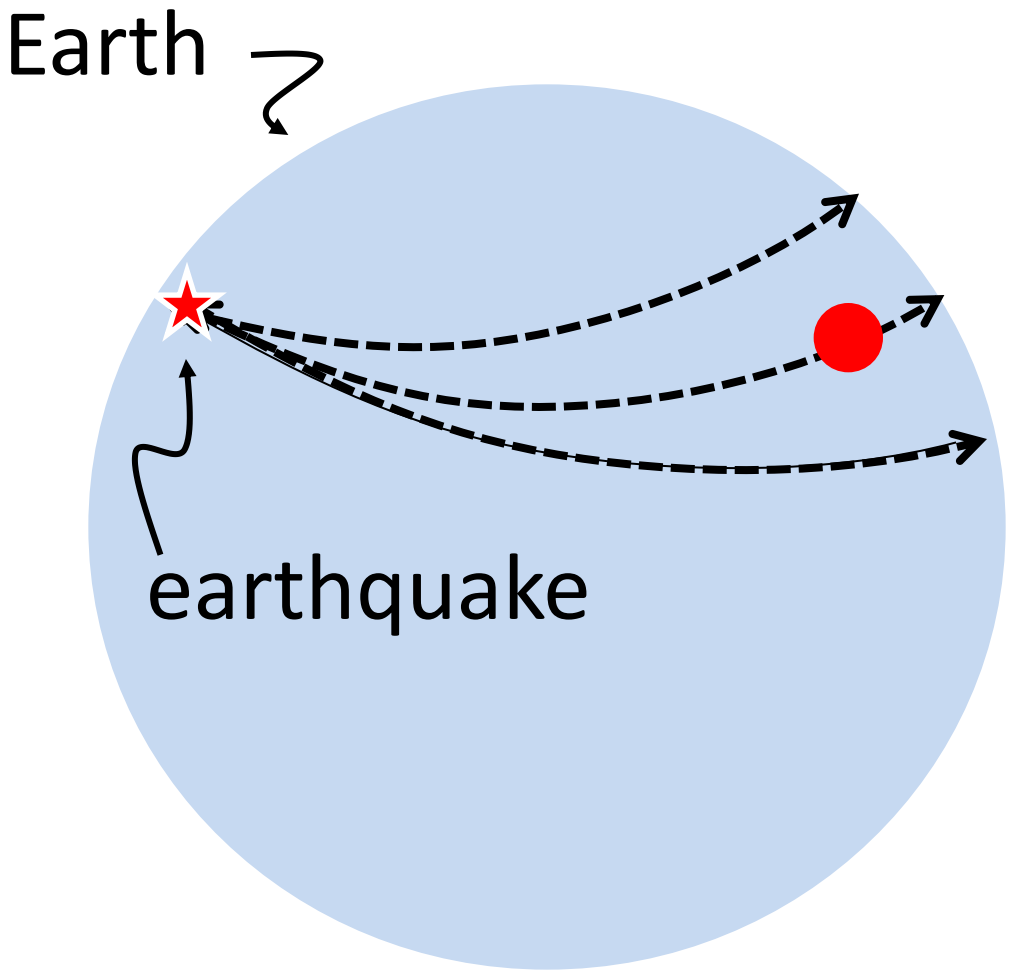
a proxy

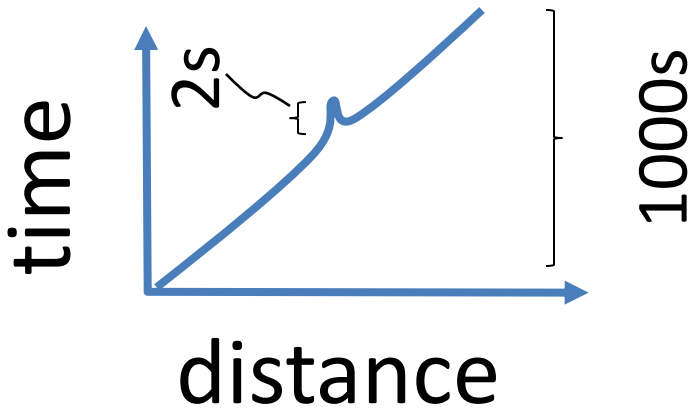
for temperature

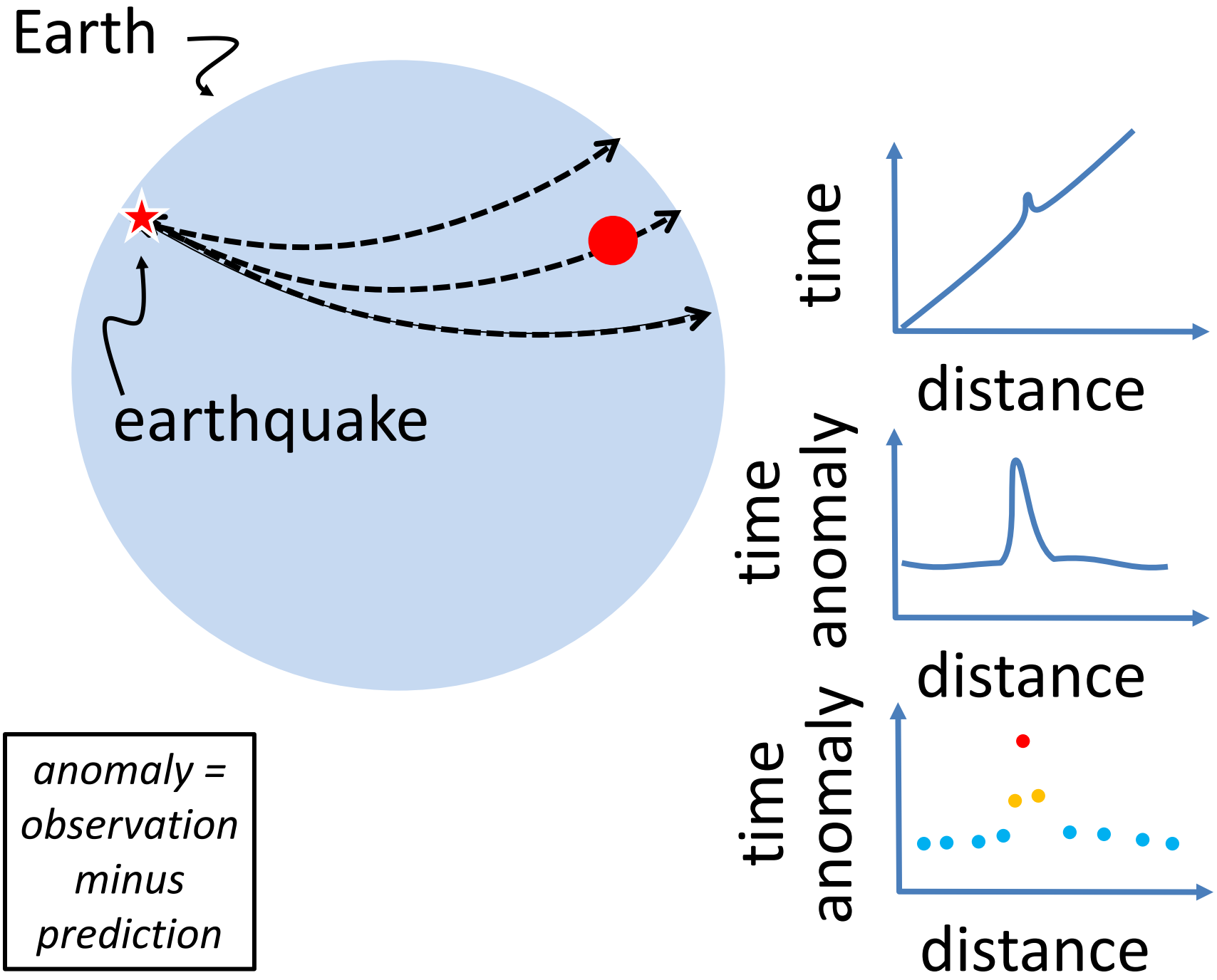
rule of thumb

1% velocity change 100K

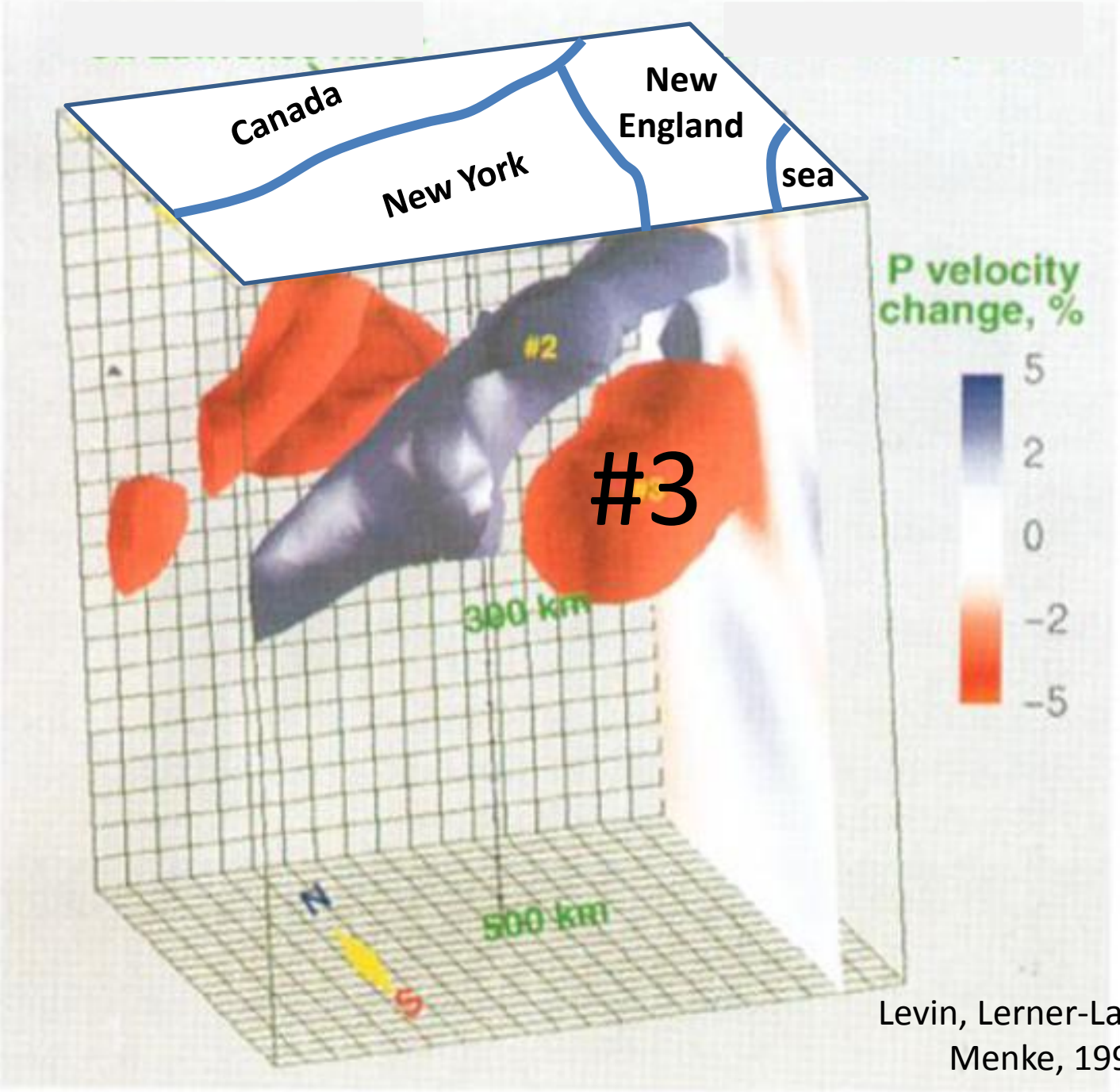

Earth
upwelling = hot = slow
P wave
P wave
P wave
earthquake
time
distance


Earth
earthquake


time
2s
1000s
distance


Earth
earthquake
time
distance
time
anomaly
distance
time
anomaly
distance
anomaly = observation minus prediction

former LDEO Graduate Student Vadim Levin
(now Rutgers Prof)



Levin, Lerner-Lam and Menke, 1995

“The interpretation of the velocity low #3 presents a challenge … while elevated temperatures are often associated with low seismic velocity, #3 is unlikely to be of a thermal origin … for at least 100 My this region has been tectonically quiet, and the temperature difference must have equibrated … a temperature anomaly on the order of 800 degC is required for a 5% decrease of compressional velocity” … [which is unrealistic]

Levin, Lerner-Lam and Menke, 1995

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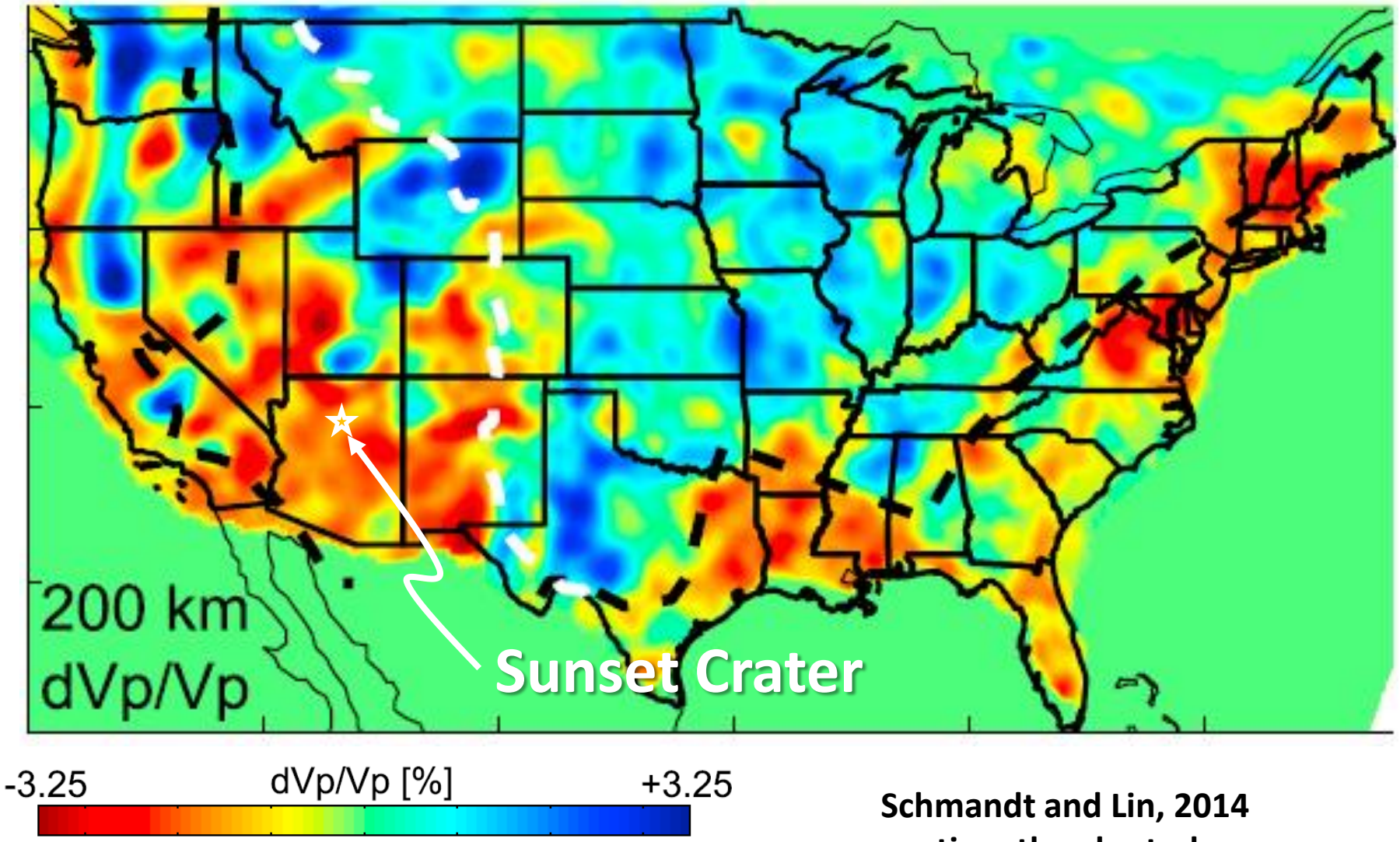
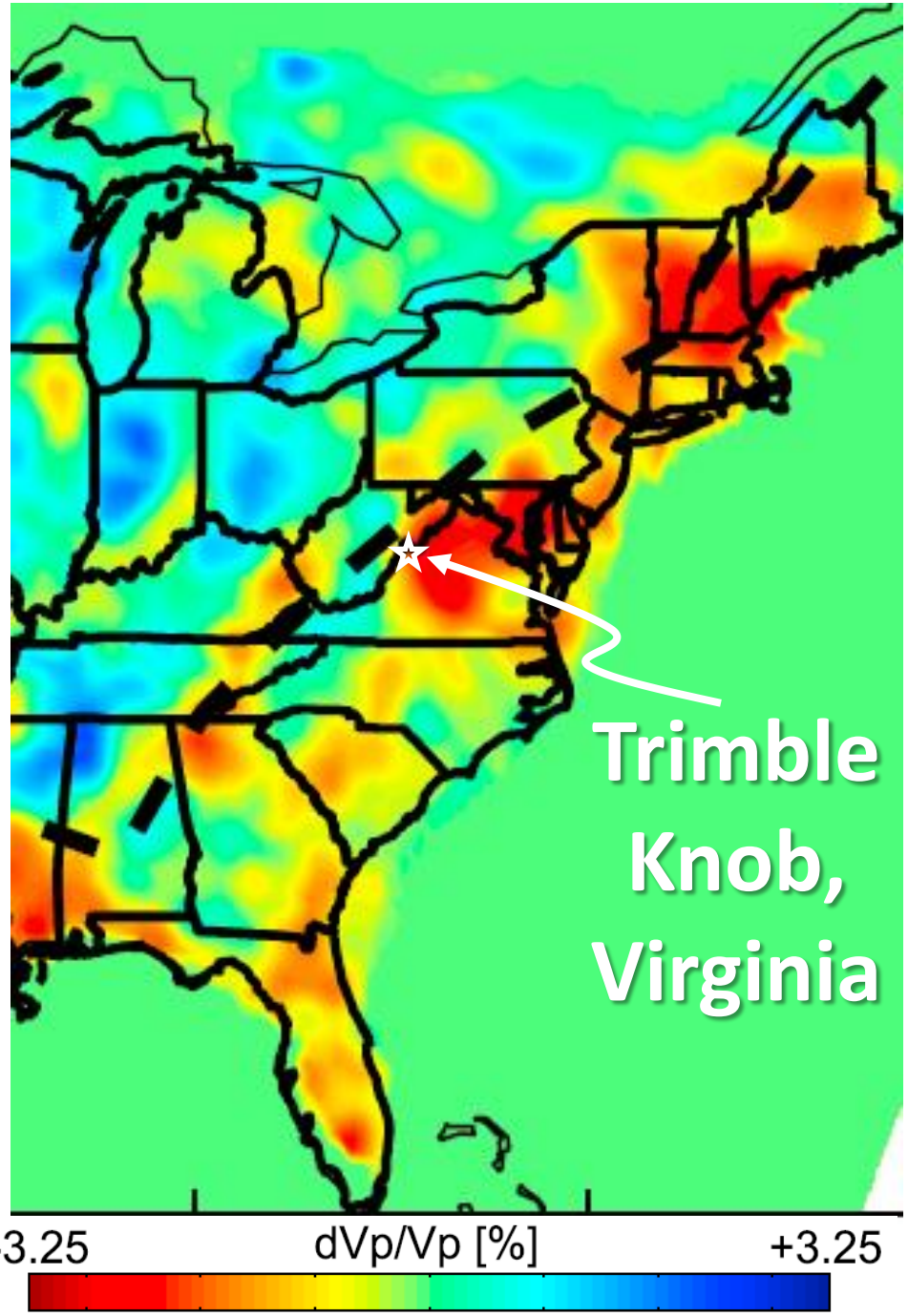
Or is it?

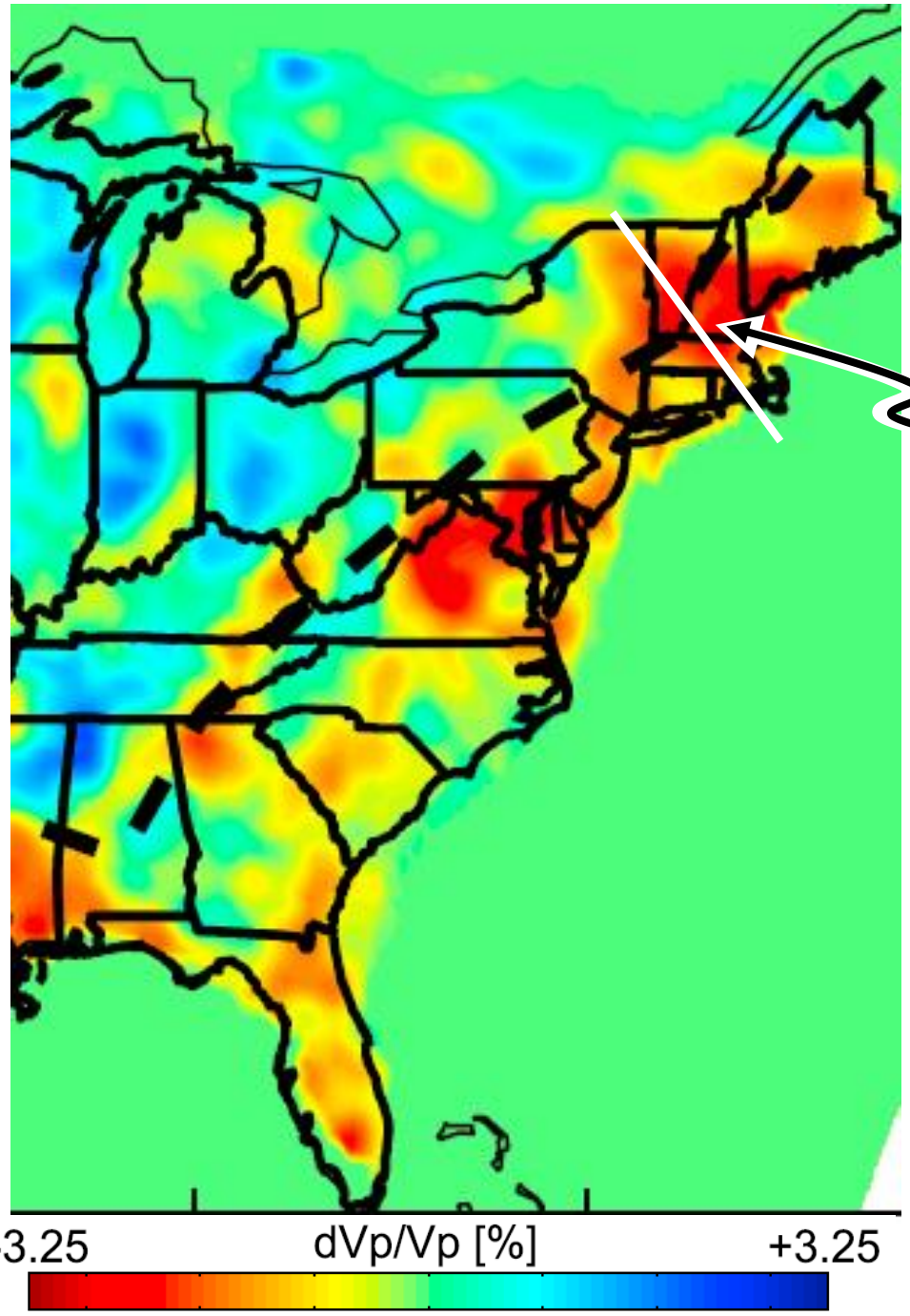
Levin, Lerner-Lam and Menke, 1995



Schmandt and Lin, 2014
continentl scale study
note parts of eastern US as slow (red) as western US



Schmandt and Lin, 2014

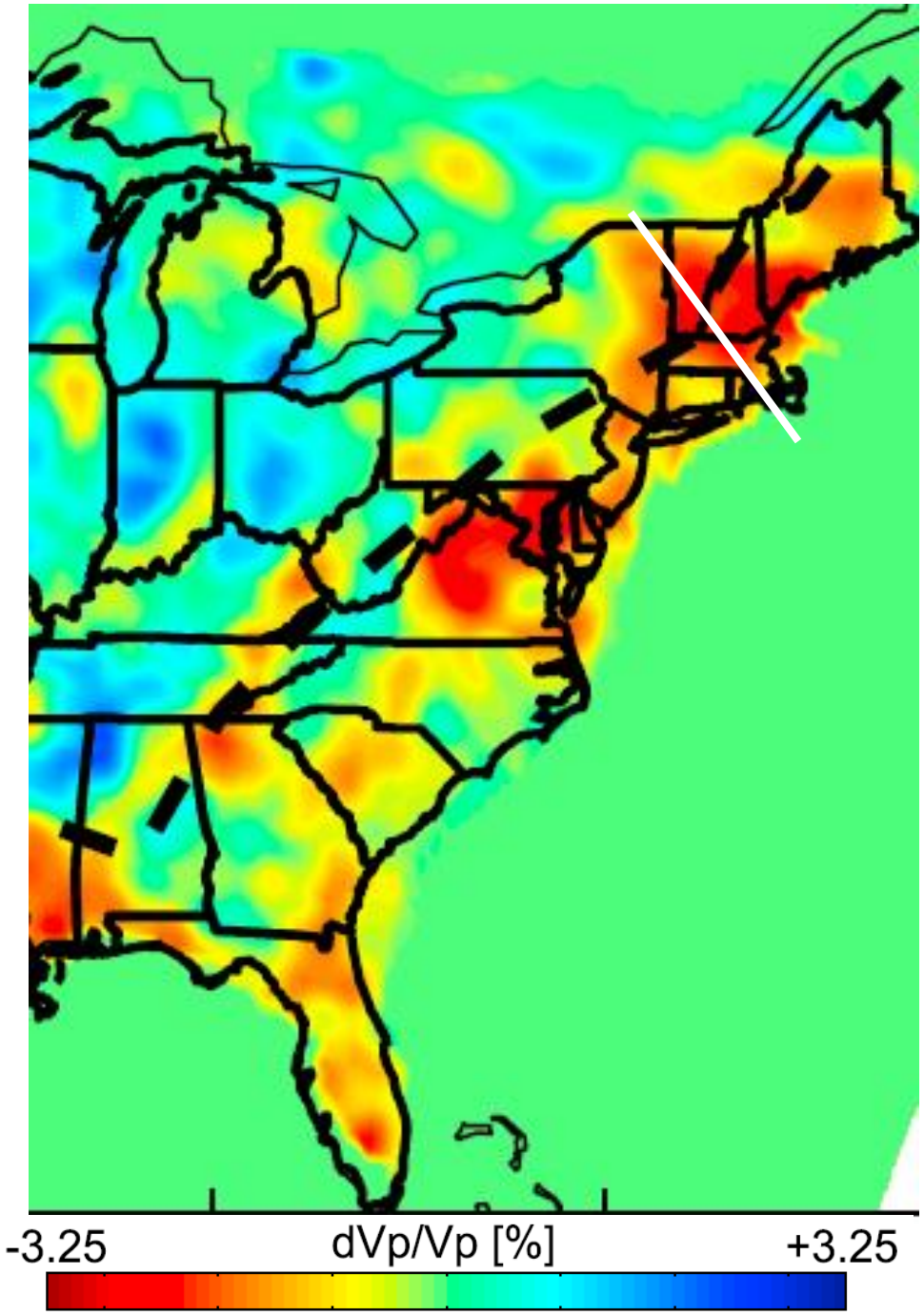


#3

Northern Appalachian Anomaly

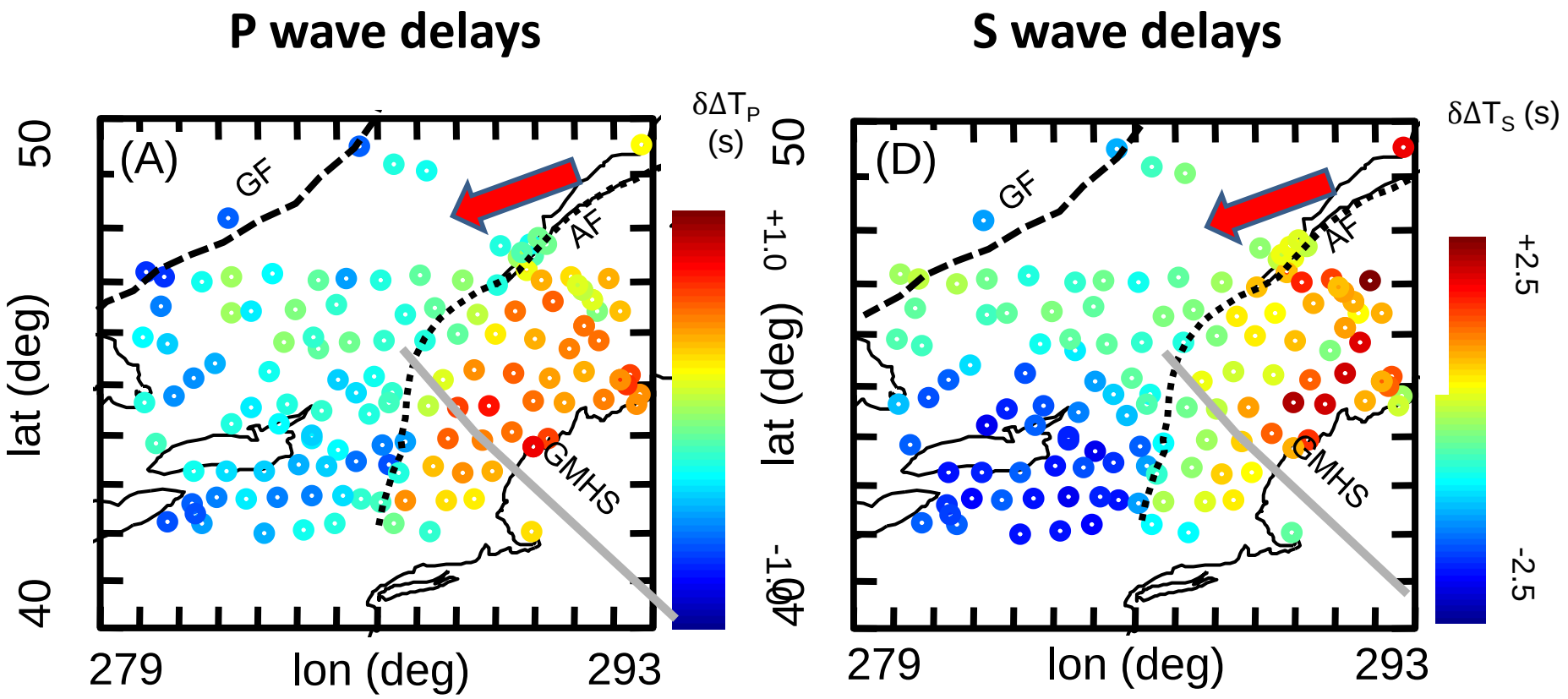
(or NAA)

Schmandt and Lin, 2014

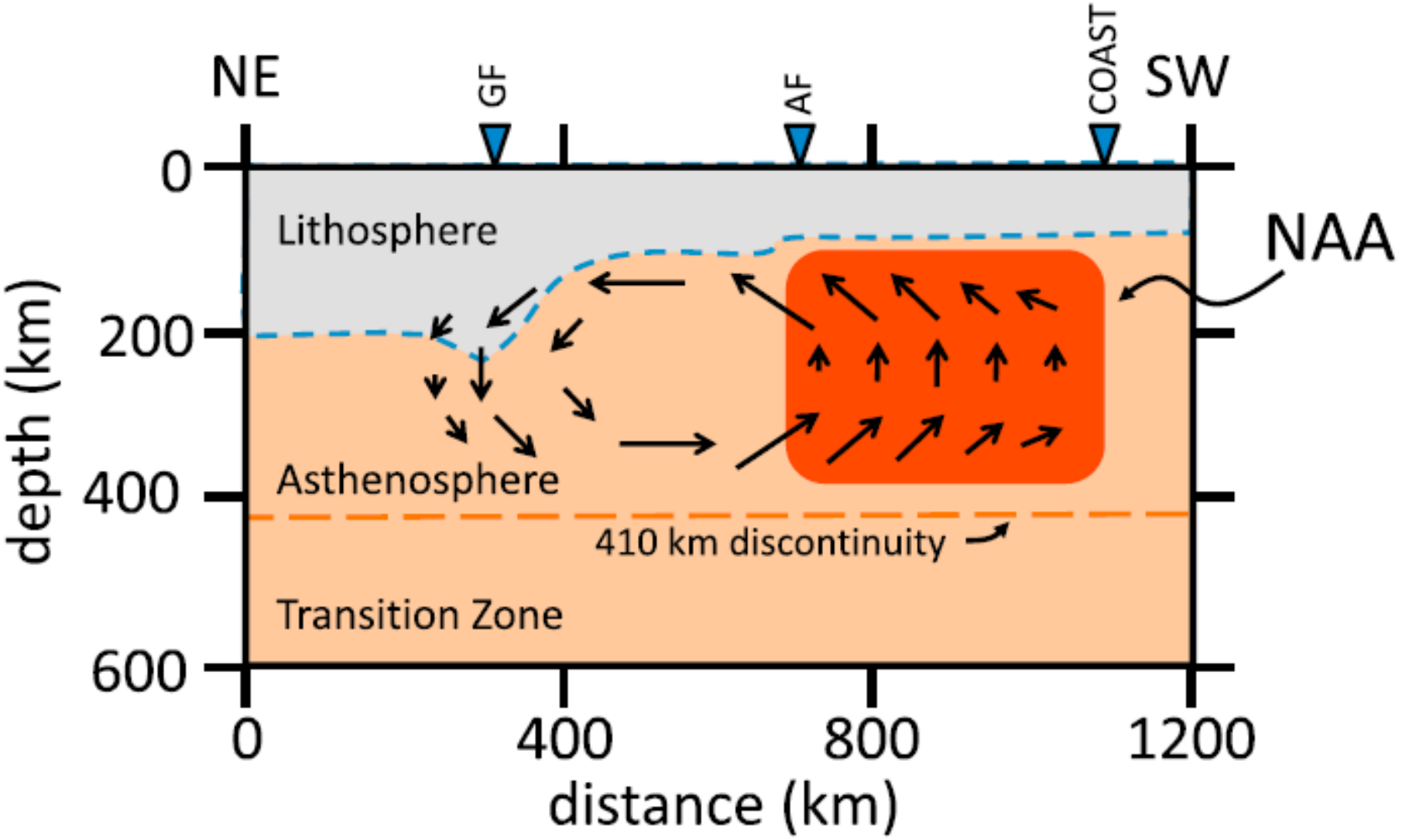


Cross-Section of the NAA

Schmandt and Lin, 2014


P wave delays
S wave delays
(A)
(D)
GF
AF
GMHS
δΔT_P (s)
δΔT_S (s)
+1.0
-1.0
+2.5
-2.5
lat (deg)
lon (deg)
50
40
279
293

Interpretation in terms of a small scale convection cell



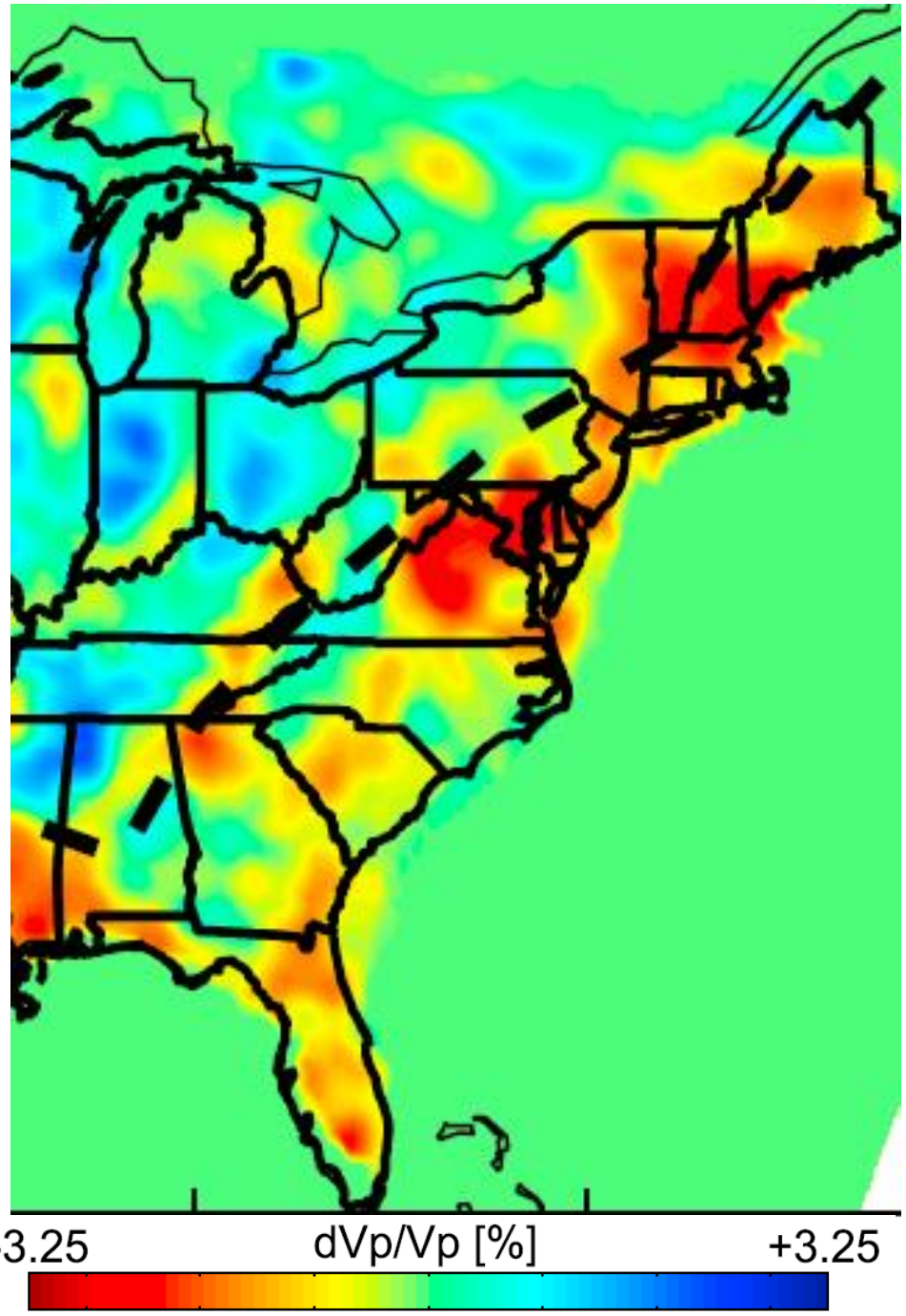
How can we “prove” that

the NAA is hot

Can we prove that the NAA is Hot?

Hot material has characteristic ratio of compressional to shear wave velocity anomalies

2015 Summer Intern
Peter Skryzalin



slow

fast

proxy for 'hot'

proxy for cold

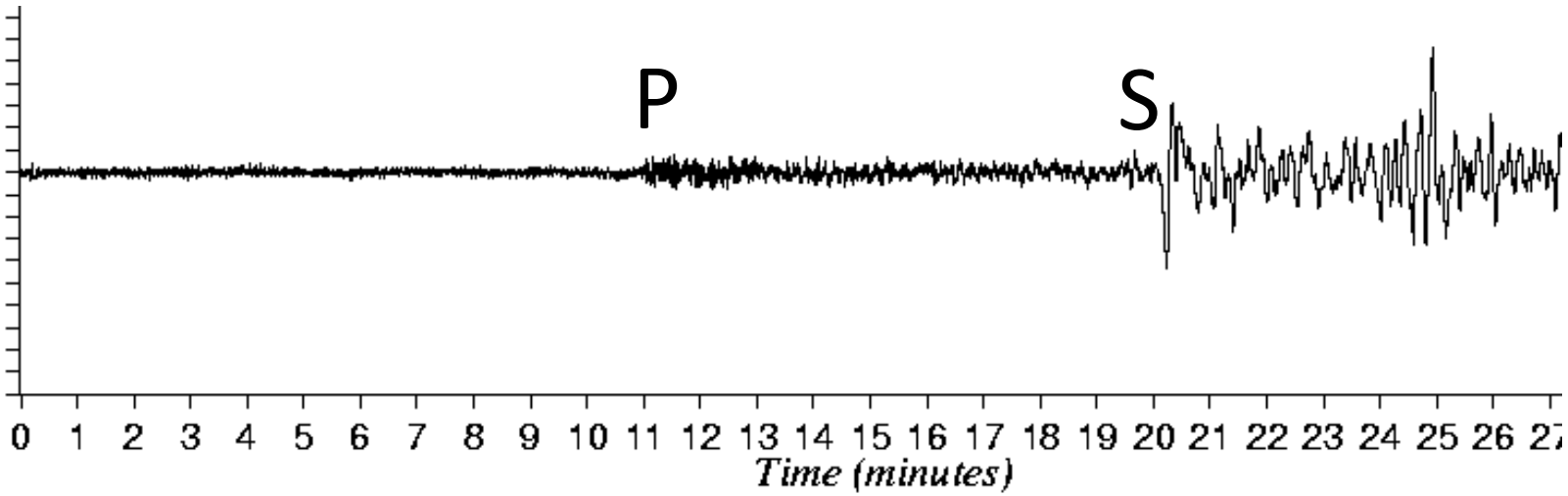
but can also be

proxy for 'dense'

proxy for 'light'

Schmandt and Lin, 2014

Earthquakes generate both P waves and S waves



and the two are affected by temperature and density is (slightly) different ways

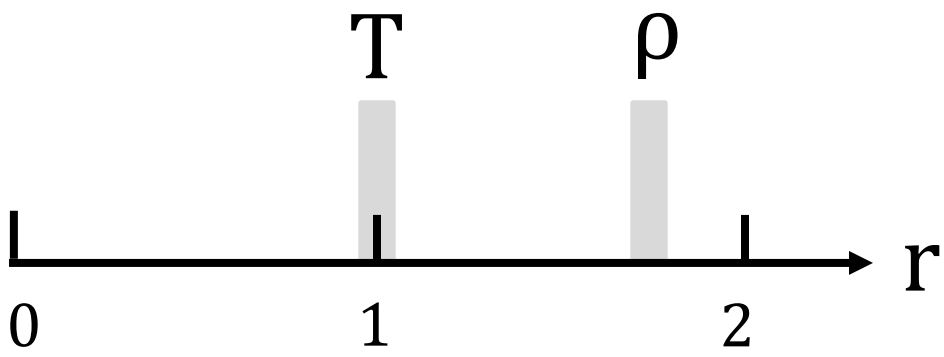
lab experiments and theoretical models

$$r = \frac{\Delta V_P}{\Delta V_S} = 1.0$$

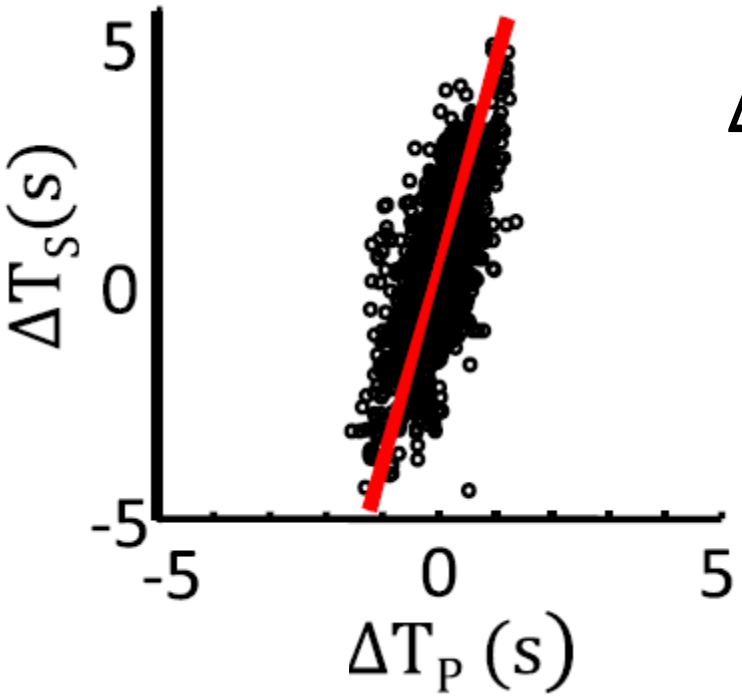
temperature, T

$$r = \frac{\Delta V_P}{\Delta V_S} = 1.8$$

density, ρ

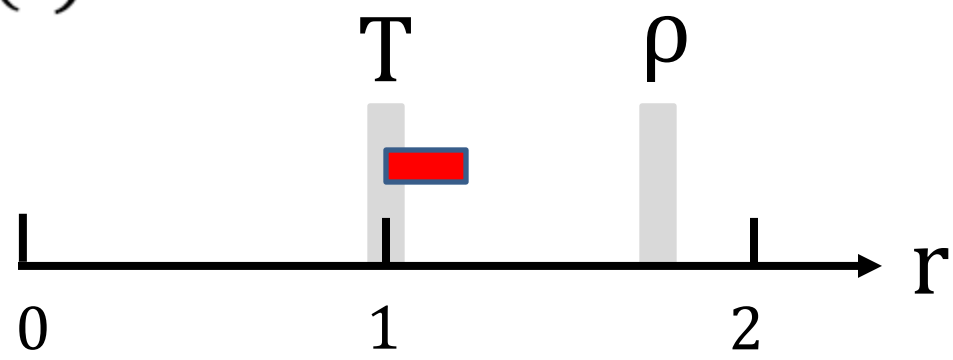


observations



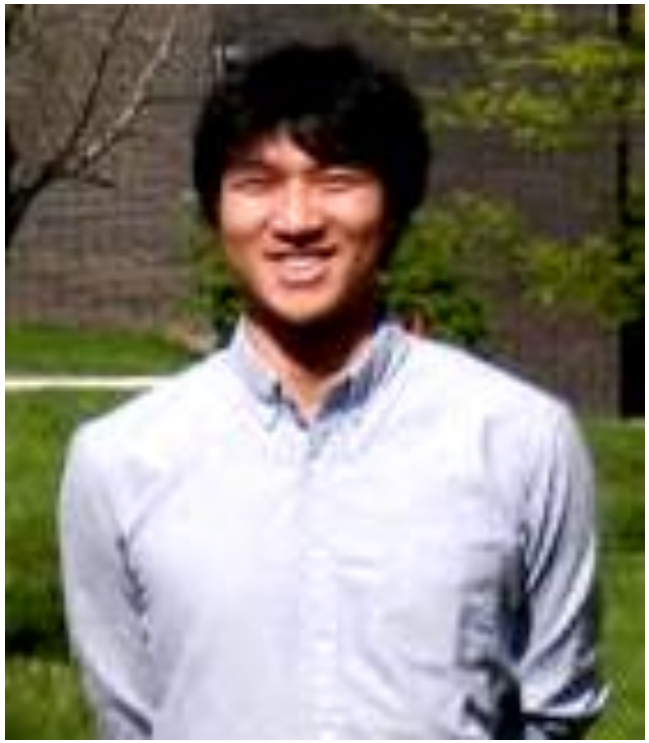
ΔT_P and are ΔT_S are highly correlated

$r=\Delta T_P / \Delta T_S$ favors temperature



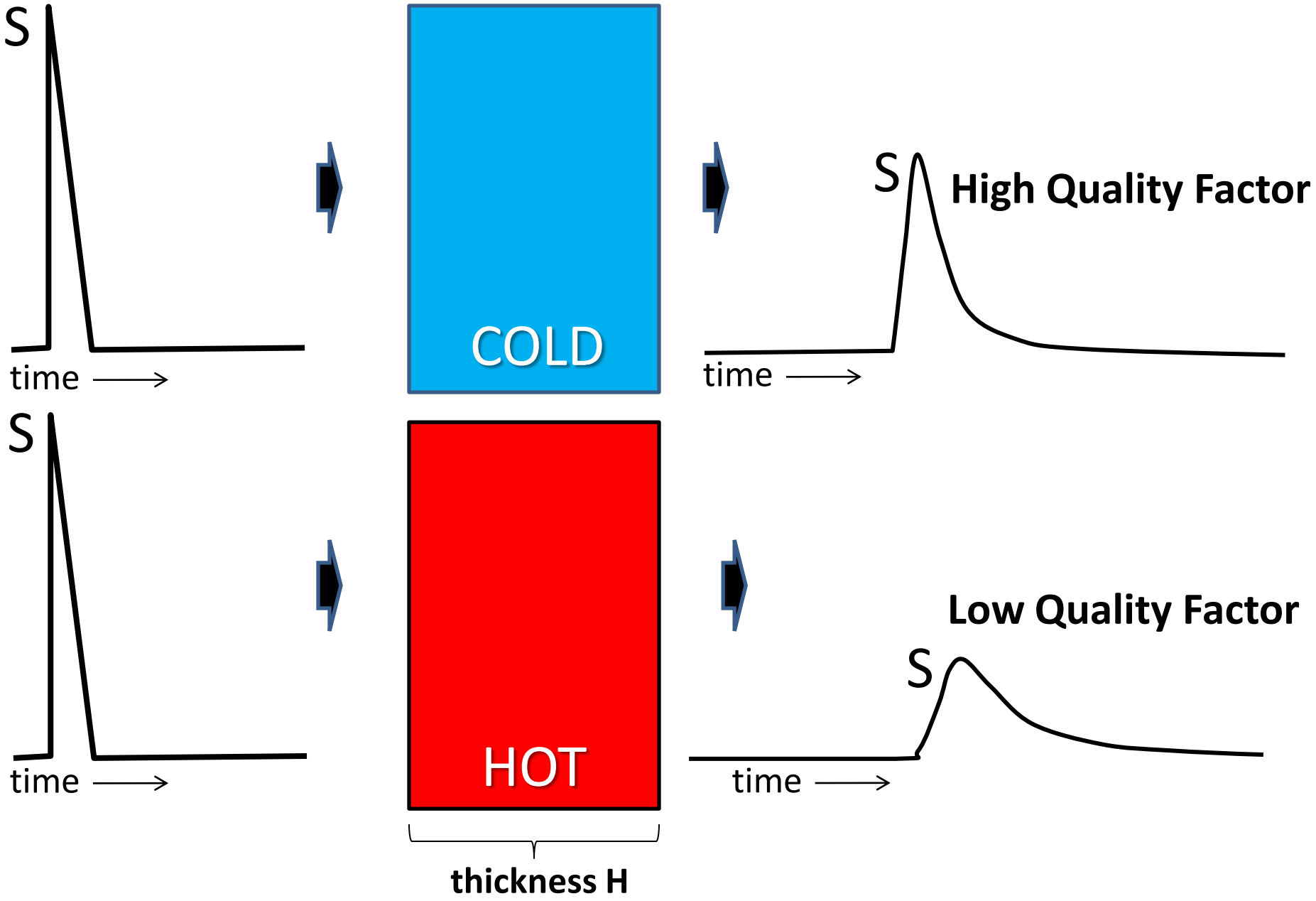
Can we prove that the NAA Hot?

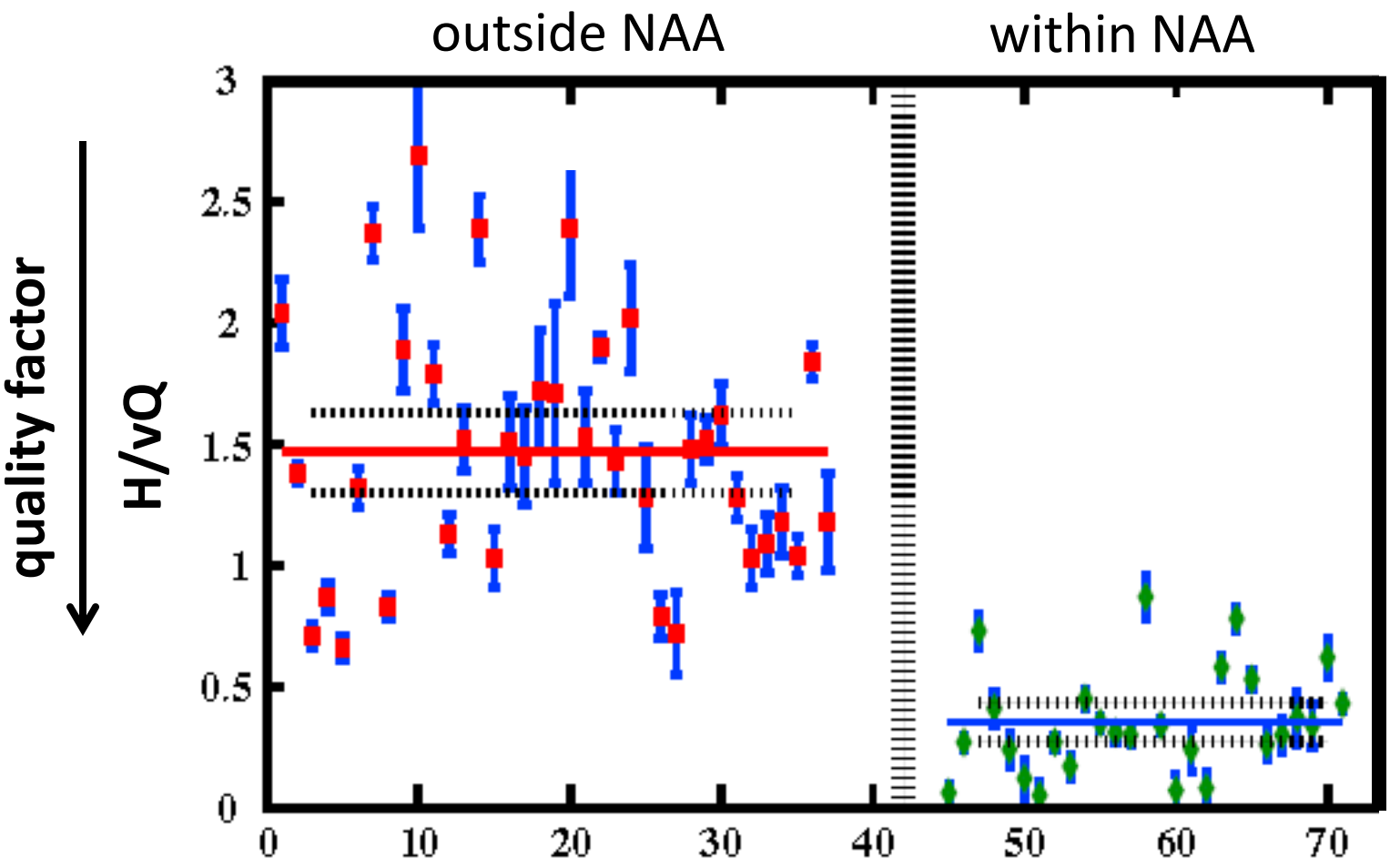
Hot material absorbs P and S waves more quickly than cold material



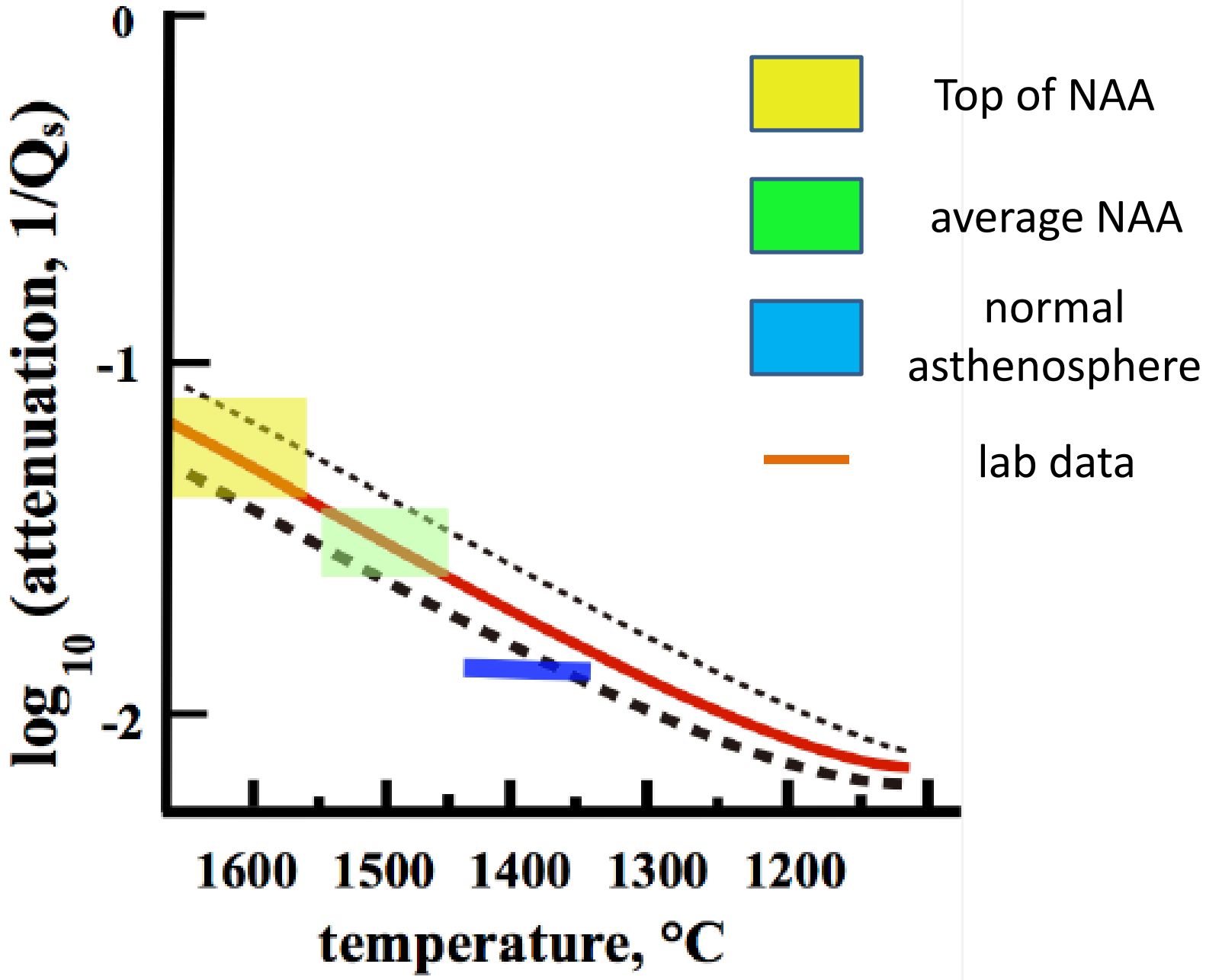
Former LDEO Graduate Student
Ted Dong

Hot material absorbs S waves very quickly





Dong & Menke, 2017



Dong & Menke, 2017

Part 4: The Next Steps

infer mantle flow directions

confirm upwelling at the NAA

find where down-welling is occurring

consequences of the convection

is the asthenosphere deforming/eroding the continent?

could volcanism occur?

Part 4: The Next Steps

infer mantle flow directions

confirm upwelling at the NAA ✓

recent paper by Vadim Levin and others

find where down-welling is occurring

consequences of the convection

is the asthenosphere deforming/eroding the continent?

could volcanism occur?

Part 4: The Next Steps

infer mantle flow directions

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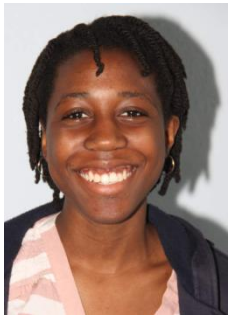
consequences of the convection

is the asthenosphere deforming/eroding the continent?

yes!

could volcanism occur?

2017 Summer Interns



Dionne Hutson

Juliette Lamoureux

Alyssa Marrero

Part 4: The Next Steps

infer mantle flow directions

confirm upwelling at the NAA

find where down-welling is occurring

consequences of the convection

is the asthenosphere deforming/eroding the continent?

could volcanism occur?

Are we sure that volcanism hasn't already occurred

Absence of Evidence is not Evidence of Absence

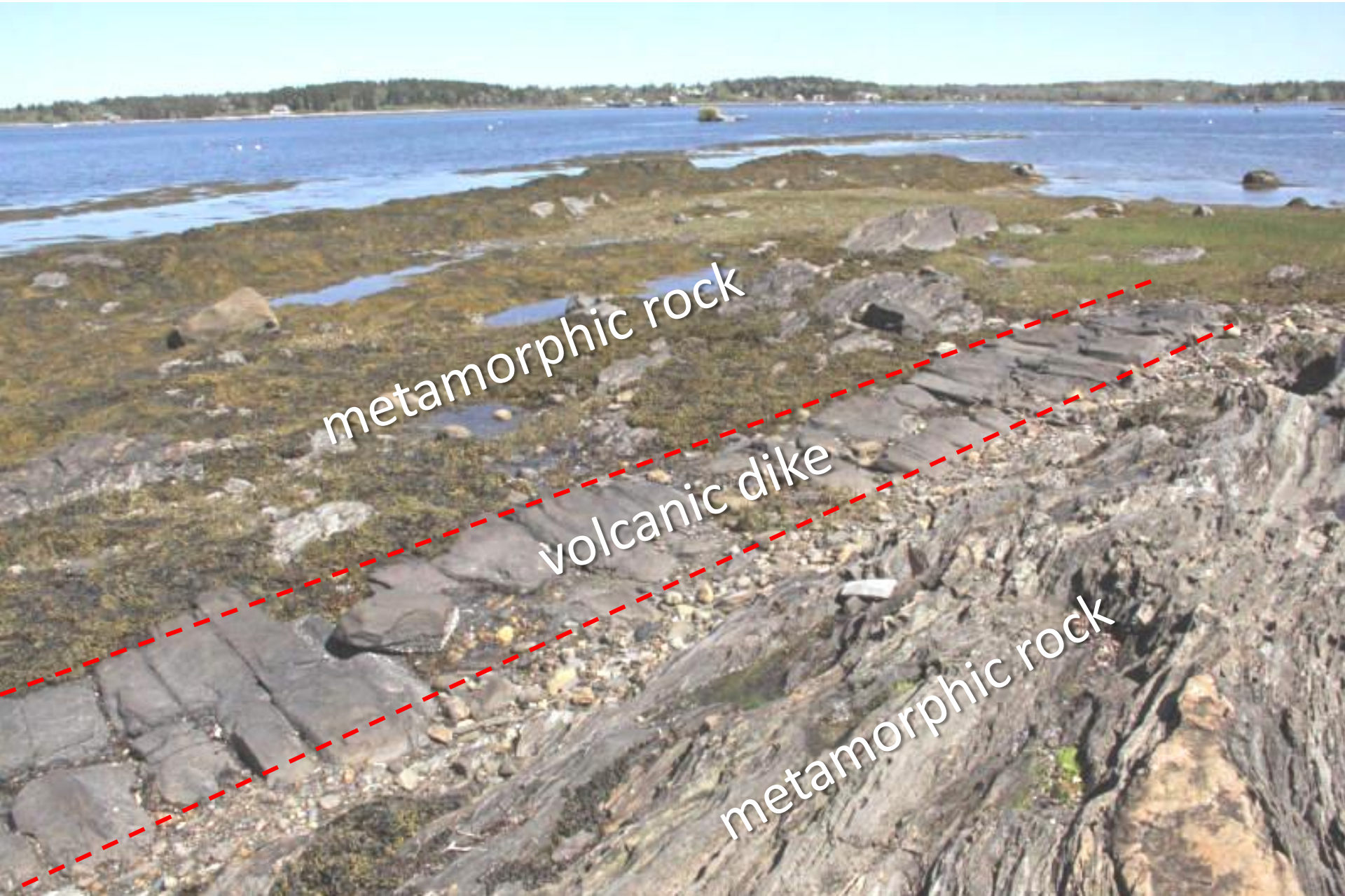
- Carl Sagan, Astronomer

Are we sure that no NAA-related volcanoes have erupted in New England?

unlike Virginia, the region has lots of volcanic features
furthermore, it was heavily eroded by the Pleistocene glaciers
a few, small volcanic features might have been ignored

Harpswell Maine

Every geologist I've asked says this is a 200 My old dike but (as far as I know) no one has actually dated it



so let’s start looking …

The End