

**CARBONATE PLAY DEVELOPMENT IN  
MESOZOIC SEQUENCES OF THE U.S. GULF RIM  
Influence of Physiographic Setting and Structural Controls**

**11<sup>th</sup> Version**

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**SEPTEMBER 18, 2024**

**SEMINAR OVERVIEW**

Most of industry has ignored conventional carbonate plays for years, as higher commodity prices drove the development of unconventional (mostly shale) plays. However, conventional carbonate plays remain a viable economical alternative, especially for smaller companies. And, there is now application for both CCUS projects as well as mining of lithium brines.

A conventional carbonate play is the juxtaposition of a limestone or dolostone reservoir facies sealed by a micritic carbonate or shale facies, with its hydrocarbons sourced from a nearby organic-rich carbonate or siliciclastic mudstone. Understanding the controls on carbonate play type distribution and geometry is critical for more successful exploration or exploitation in any basin. Hence, delineating potential carbonate plays from seismic or wireline logs requires a sound understanding of the depositional and diagenetic controls that create the reservoir facies. These controls must be evaluated within the context of physiographic setting and the structural framework. Specifically, one must appreciate the environmental controls on carbonate facies development, and the potential pathways for diagenesis and porosity evolution, some of which can be tied to the influence of reactivated basement faults.

This seminar reviews the key controls on Jurassic and Cretaceous carbonate play occurrence and distribution along the U.S. Gulf of Mexico rim, especially the strong influence of physiographic setting, both at the global and local scale. On a global scale, physiographic setting refers to the location of a prospective basin or sub-basin with respect to the paleoequator. Such a position determines a tropical or subtropical setting, as well as the prevailing paleotrade wind systems, which were a critical influence on carbonate sedimentation and play distribution. Along the ancestral Gulf of Mexico, Mesozoic carbonate facies with reservoir quality occurred within tropical and subtropical settings, and easterly paleotrade winds often were a major influence on their occurrence and distribution. On a local scale, physiographic setting refers to the depositional bottom topography associated with a platform or ramp-like profile. This preexisting bottom

topography critically controls the occurrence and distribution of carbonate facies and also early diagenesis. In addition, progressive burial diagenesis influenced facies' porosity and permeability evolution, with deep-seated faulting often playing a major role in the development of reservoir quality, as well as hydrocarbon entrapment. Therefore, understanding the relative timing of secondary porosity development in these carbonates is often the key to exploiting regional porosity trends, and this point will be stressed in this seminar.

This seminar ends with a detailed evaluation of the attributes (reservoir, source, seal, and trapping mechanism) of conventional Mesozoic carbonate play types along the northern U.S. Gulf rim. These plays are related to physiographic setting and illustrated with representative reservoir analogs. This discussion is backed by rock-based observations and examples that note the various pathways for porosity and permeability evolution, as well as the timing of reservoir development. Seismic attributes are noted, where possible. For most play type case studies, their relationship to regional and/or local structural influences are established, since structuring could initiate the play, help control porosity evolution, set up the trap, or do all three things.

The case studies of Mesozoic carbonate plays, including their diagenetic and porosity evolution pathways, discussed in this seminar include:

**Jurassic:** Smackover; Haynesville (aka, Gilmer or Cotton Valley Limestones) and Knowles (?)

**Lower Cretaceous:** Sligo; James Limestone; Glen Rose; Edwards; and Knowles (?)

**Upper Cretaceous:** Very brief review of depositional chalk plays, if time permits\*

**\*NOTE:** Since I present a separate one-day, in-depth seminar on the Austin Chalk trend in Texas and Louisiana, I will not get into any details regarding chalk plays. **Note that the next Austin Chalk Seminar will be held later in 2024 (TBA).**

The ultimate goal of this seminar is to provide participants with guidelines and procedures that enhance their ability to exploit a particular play concept in other areas around the ancestral U.S. Gulf of Mexico. These relationships also have application to both Paleozoic- and Tertiary-aged sequences.

The online (Zoom) seminar begins at 8:00AM and ends at or before 5:00 PM, with breaks for coffee and lunch and other informal breaks.

## COMMENTS FROM PREVIOUS SEMINARS

“I learned a ton about the reef/ramp models and enjoyed diving deeper into the carbonates of the GOM, especially the Smackover.”

Quality of Instruction: “Outstanding, as always.”

“I appreciate all of the relating of your experiences and I think it is generous too.”

“I really appreciate your time and effort to go over the introduction (basic concepts) the first day of the class. That was excellent and easy to follow.” (submitted by a geophysicist)

Was this seminar helpful in broadening your understanding of Mesozoic carbonate plays around the northern rim of the Gulf of Mexico?: “Absolutely. It is very meaningful to see formations you work around the entire rim. Just that view creates new ideas and angles in your normal area.”

“...but I really benefitted from the overall carbonate review. PLUS, the review gave me new angles to consider the plays I already work.”

“...it was a fantastic seminar and I learned a great deal in the short span of time we had together...”

“I like having the case histories, looking for recurring themes. Explicit suggestions for exploration. I’ll recommend this course for others here in the office.”

“Your course really pulled all of the depositional and diagenetic pieces together. I loved every moment of it! It has really made me think deeper about applying depositional position and diagenetic effects on porosity to each prospect areas. Thank you!”

“I was fortunate enough to be able to attend Jeff’s carbonate plays seminar this week. The seminar was very informative and well structured, providing an in-depth overview of carbonate sedimentology through the lens of oil and gas exploration.”

“Yes, this was a great introduction to the GOM for me. More importantly for my own work, there were a ton of concepts that I feel I can apply to the Mississippian plays I am working on in SE Sask.”

“Quality of instruction was great as always and much appreciated.”

“I really enjoyed your Tyler short course and came away with a number of new ideas to apply to exploration. The best I’ve attended!”

## SCHEDULE

- 8:00        **PRESENTATION 1.** Introductory Comments
- 8:15        **PRESENTATION 2.** Limestone Diagenesis and Porosity Evolution: Controls, Processes and Products, and Timing
- 9:00        **PRESENTATION 3.** Dolomitization and Porosity Evolution
- 9:45        Coffee Break
- 10:00       **PRESENTATION 4.** Carbonate Depositional Environments: Controls and Attributes; Models (steep platform versus ramp)
- 11:30       **PRESENTATION 5.** Rock-Based Principles Used to Delineate Carbonate Depositional Cyclicity and Their Applications.
- 12:00       Lunch
- 12:30       **PRESENTATION 6.** Classification of Carbonate Play Types and Analogs with Applications to the Jurassic and Cretaceous sequences of the U.S. Ancestral Gulf of Mexico Region (with short stretch breaks)
- 1:45        Coffee Break
- 2:00        **PRESENTATION 6.** Continued (with short stretch breaks)
- 5:00        Seminar Ends

## JEFF DRAVIS BIOGRAPHY

Jeff Dravis is a carbonate geologist whose consulting activities primarily focus on aiding in the discovery of oil and gas deposits, or enhancing their development once they are found. He also conducts applied carbonate training seminars for industry every year.

Jeff received his Bachelor of Science degree in Geology from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas. He received a Master of Science degree in Marine Geology from the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences in Florida. His thesis was entitled "Holocene Sedimentary Environments on Eleuthera Bank, Bahamas.," supervised by Dr. Harold R. Wanless. Jeff then entered Rice University, Houston, Texas, to begin work on deep-water carbonates under the direction of Dr. James Lee Wilson. He was awarded a Ph D in Geology; his dissertation was entitled "Sedimentology and Diagenesis of the Upper Cretaceous Austin Chalk Formation, South Texas and Northern Mexico."

Dr. Dravis began his professional career in Houston with Exxon Production Research Company. There, he conducted applied research on carbonate facies, diagenesis and porosity evolution, but also headed up Exxon's worldwide training efforts in carbonates. This training included teaching in-house seminars, as well as leading combined modern (Bahamas and Florida) and ancient (Texas and New Mexico) carbonate field seminars for the corporation.

In 1986, Jeff started his own consulting practice in Houston. First, he founded Dravis Interests, Inc. to provide technical expertise and training in applied carbonate petroleum geology to the oil and gas industry. Then Dravis Geological Services was created to handle mostly technical consulting projects. Jeff has been involved in 199 technical projects worldwide, working sequences ranging in age from Cambrian to upper Tertiary. He has presented 335 in-house and field seminars to industry, both on a public and private basis, including 74 modern field seminars to Caicos Platform in the southeastern Bahamas, and numerous ancient field seminars to west Texas and New Mexico. His clients are domestic and foreign oil companies, both majors and independents. This is the eighth online version of this seminar presented since the fall of 2020.

Jeff is an Adjunct Professor of Geology at Rice University. Since 1987, he has taught parts of graduate courses, taken students into the field, and served on thesis committees. In 2016, as an adjunct professor, he began teaching the carbonate geology segment of the University of Houston's Professional Master's Program in Petroleum Geology. The next segment will be taught in June and July of 2024.

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5-31-2024

**REGISTRATION FORM**

**CARBONATE PLAY DEVELOPMENT IN  
MESOZOIC SEQUENCES OF THE U.S. GULF RIM**

**SEPTEMBER 18, 2024**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE (Geologist, Engineer, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE \_\_\_\_\_

WORKING CARBONATES NOW? \_\_\_\_\_ WHERE? \_\_\_\_\_

WORKED CARBONATES IN THE PAST? \_\_\_\_\_ WHERE? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

COMPANY \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

BUSINESS PHONE (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE: August 21, 2024**

**SEMINAR FEE: \$1,095.00 USD/person**

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MC/VISA/AMEX CREDIT CARD PAYMENT CAN BE MADE OVER THE PHONE.  
BANK WIRE TRANSFER IS ALSO POSSIBLE AND PREFERRED.

ZOOM Meeting link and PDF's of lectures will be sent after payment is received.

Contact Jeff Dravis at 713-819-4444 or by email: [jdravi@rice.edu](mailto:jdravi@rice.edu)