

## Du Sable, Caniapiscaw, and Koksoak Rivers

### Du Sable

The Du Sable (also known as Sand River) is an important tributary of the Caniapiscaw River. The Du Sable has been at the heart of a geographical and toponymic confusion, both about its source and about its name. Contrary to the map of Mrs. Mina Adelaine Benson Hubbard (1908) describing her George River expedition, the ninth report of the Commission on Geography of Canada (James White, 1911) as well as maps of the province of Quebec published by the Ministry of Lands and Forests in 1914 and 1935, the Du Sable does not originate at Sand Lake, although both the Du Sable and Sand Lake outflows do belong to the Caniapiscaw watershed. The Commission de Géographie du Québec accepted the name 'Rivière du Sable' in 1944, replacing the name Sandy River, in the belief that the river originated from Sand Lake. The Du Sable or Sandy River is, according to White's report, the translation of the Naskapi name Katakawamastuk. According to the Naskapi of today, the real Du Sable River is/should be what is now a Du Sable tributary from the left, named officially Kayakawakamau, which means "river of the lake of sandy beaches" (this lake is currently named 'Lake Weeks'). As for the Du Sable River, the Naskapi call it Misinichikw Sipi, i.e. "The Big Otter's River", named for the giant otter. According to their myths, this monster lived in a cave near the Eaton Canyon, in a place they call Kwatasiu, located about a dozen kilometers downstream from the mouth of the river. The Innu name confirms the relationship between the river and a giant otter; they call it Meshen Tsuk Shipu (the big otter river). This name is, however, awarded also to the Kayakawakamau River, which adds to the confusion even more. There are also traces of the giant otter in the English-language names, since a small tributary of the Du Sable has the official name Big Otter Creek. White's and Mrs. Hubbard's maps have a Big Otter River marked as a tributary of the Sand River.

The Du Sable River is currently the most natural access route to the Caniapiscaw since the damming and complete diversion of the Upper Caniapiscaw. The portion of the Caniapiscaw between the Duplanter Dam and the mouth of Du Sable River is basically dry. In other words, the Lower Caniapiscaw is accessible only by its tributaries. The Du Sable is generally considered too difficult to be enjoyed by the average paddler. However, the big advantage of this access route, which starts on Lac Bazil near Schefferville, is to enable travelers to experience the incredibly amazing Eaton Canyon. Before our trip, we could find only two known descents of the Du Sable River recorded in paddling history, both before the Caniapiscaw diversion, starting below Francheville Canyon and both led by Hubert Yockey, Manhattan Project scientist. An excerpt from the book "Canoeing North into the Unknown" by B.W Hodgins and G. Hoyle reads:

1979 - Hubert Yockey, Tom Proctor, Tim Zecha and George Rines, Americans, with three decked Berrigan canoes, flew in to Lac Vincennes, the headwaters of du Sable River, and canoed down that river, the Kaniapiscaw and the Koksoak to Fort Chimo.

1980 - Yockey, Ed Gertler, Terry Zecha and Mark Holthaus repeated the trip of the previous year, the last on the Kaniapiscaw before it was dammed and the waters of Lac Kaniapiscaw diverted to the La Grande and James Bay Hydroelectric Project.

We were lucky to obtain an excellent 1980 trip report from Ed Gertler before we embarked on our trip (Ed lists also Tim Zecha's brother Terry as a trip participant). Thus, it seems to us that ours was the first documented descent of the whole Du Sable from its source.

### Caniapiscaw

The Caniapiscaw River is a tributary of the Koksoak River. Through history, the river was known under different spellings: Kaniapiskau (Albert Peter Low, 1898), Canniappuscaw (William Hendry, 1828) and Caniapuscaw (James Clouston, 1820). The name in Cree language means "rocky point". The Inuit call the river Adlait (or Allait) Kuunga (meaning: Indian River). It was also known as Wauguash River. The River originates on Lac Sevestre, 53 km south-west from Fermont, Quebec and is 737 km long. Together with the Koksoak it used to be the longest & biggest Quebec River (with the obvious exception of the St. Lawrence). Well known for its beauty, it was the pride and natural treasure of Quebec until 1985 when Hydro Quebec diverted the upper Caniapiscaw into the La Grande hydroelectric complex of James Bay, drowning around 9,600 caribou in the process. There are many spectacular waterfalls and canyons on the Caniapiscaw (though the Upper and Lower Gorge are now dry), the most spectacular and world-famous of which is Eaton Canyon (although its name seems to "mysteriously disappear" from provincial maps after the diversion, and also from the list of Quebec-parks-to-be. Government/Hydro conspiracy?) Eaton Canyon was first documented by geologist A. P. Low in 1893-1894. It was named in honour of Low's assistant David I.V. Eaton, who took the technical measurements of the canyon. Interestingly, Low's report shows the name of the canyon spelled "Eaton Cañon". Meanwhile, the Naskapi call this amazing place "Kwatasiu", which means "there is a hole (or a cave)".

About 10 km off the main Caniapiscaw flow, on the tributary Swampy Bay River, there used to be Hudson Bay Company post called Fort Mackenzie which operated until the end of WWII. One of the fort's buildings is still standing and is (according to what we've heard) being maintained as a hunting cabin. The Swampy Bay River used to be a main connection between Fort Chimo (currently Kuujuaq) and the Schefferville area, because, while it had many waterfalls and gorges bypassable by portages, its rapids are not as difficult as those on the Du Sable. This was also the route the Naskapi chose for their relocation journey in 1956.

### Koksoak

The Koksoak River is the union of the Caniapiscaw and Mélézes (Larch) rivers. It flows to Ungava Bay, passing beside the Inuit village of Kuujuaq, which is a natural terminal for canoe trips and the central hub of air routes into Nunavik. The original name of the river is Kuujuaq, meaning "a great river" or "river". The Koksoak has an average width of 2 km.

This was the most beautiful, but also physically the most difficult trip we have done so far.

### Words of Caution

These maps were created based on notes taken during our canoe trip in August/September 2009 (our trip report is available at <http://sites.google.com/site/landltrips/Trips/caniapiscou2009>).

We marked maps according to what we saw, in order to provide information to any future visitors, however, by no means do I take any responsibility for how this information will be used. I do not guarantee that it does not contain numerous errors, whether made by me personally or by the bugs in the software I used. Rapid classification is subjective. Our subjective evaluation of the class level of these rapids does NOT take into account the remoteness of the region (i.e. distance and time from help etc.), the water temperature (cold kills) and the size and power of this river (any swim could be a very long swim). Moreover, the class of rapids depends on the water level and that can change immensely through the season. Use the information provided here with caution. YOU are the only one responsible for your own decisions and for your own safety. Rivers described here are wild and very remote. Weather can be also very tough. DO YOUR OWN scouting and reconnaissance. I am not taking any responsibility for the information provided here or for your safety.

### Credits

#### Author

Lester Kovac, 2009

#### Base Topographic Maps

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#### Map work/Text

Lester Kovac, 2009

#### Contributors

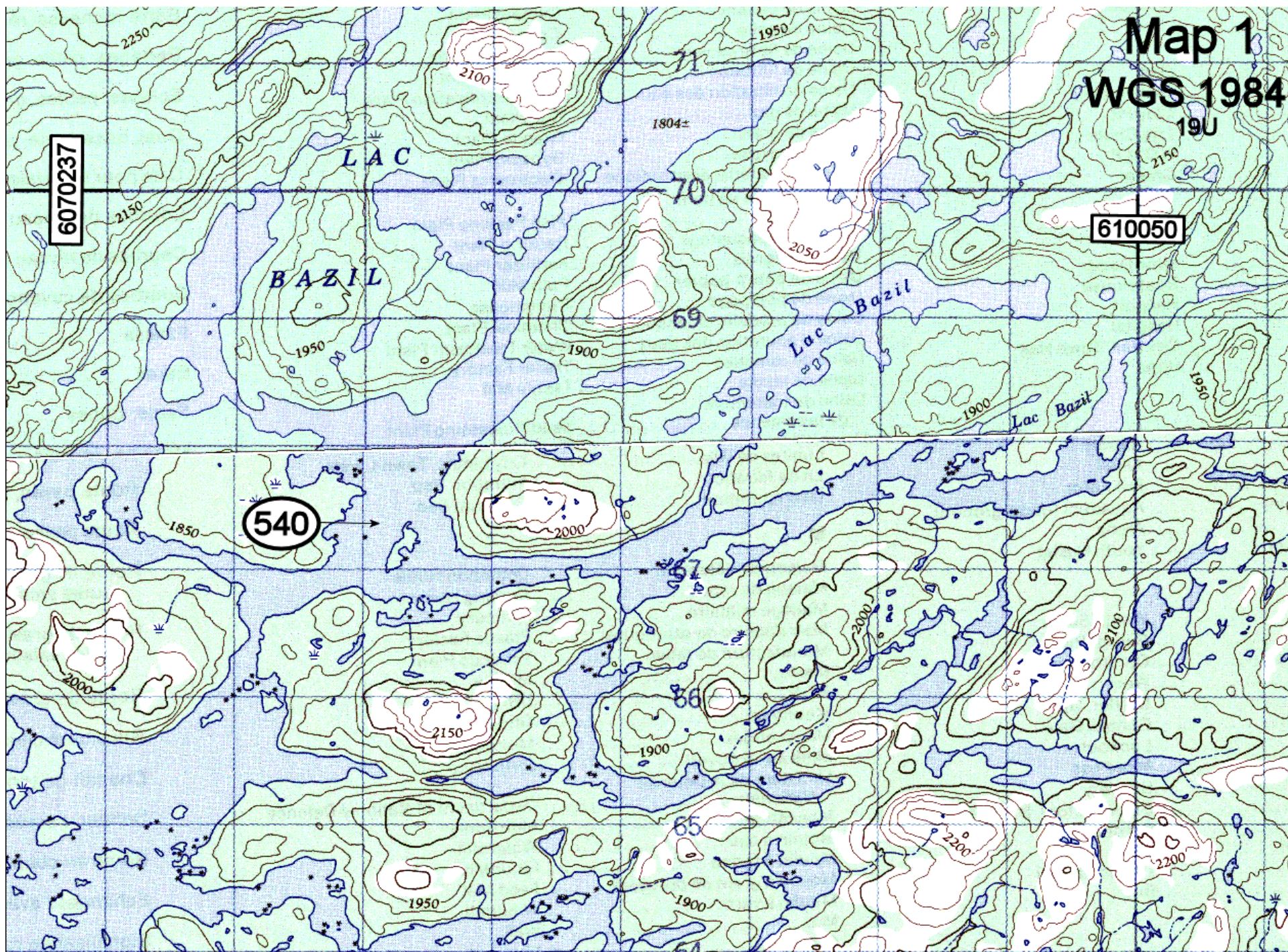
Lynette Chubb, member of expedition

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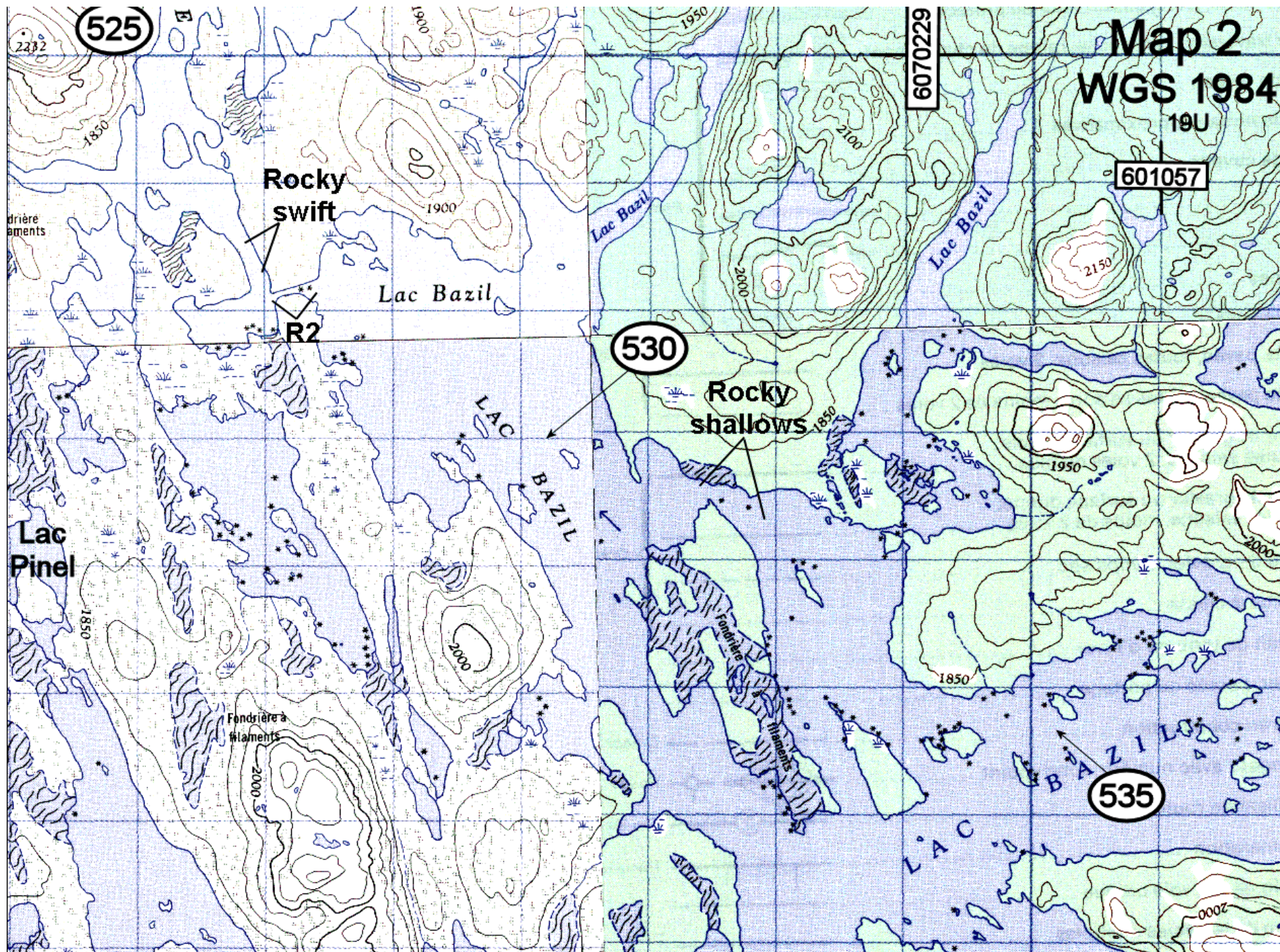
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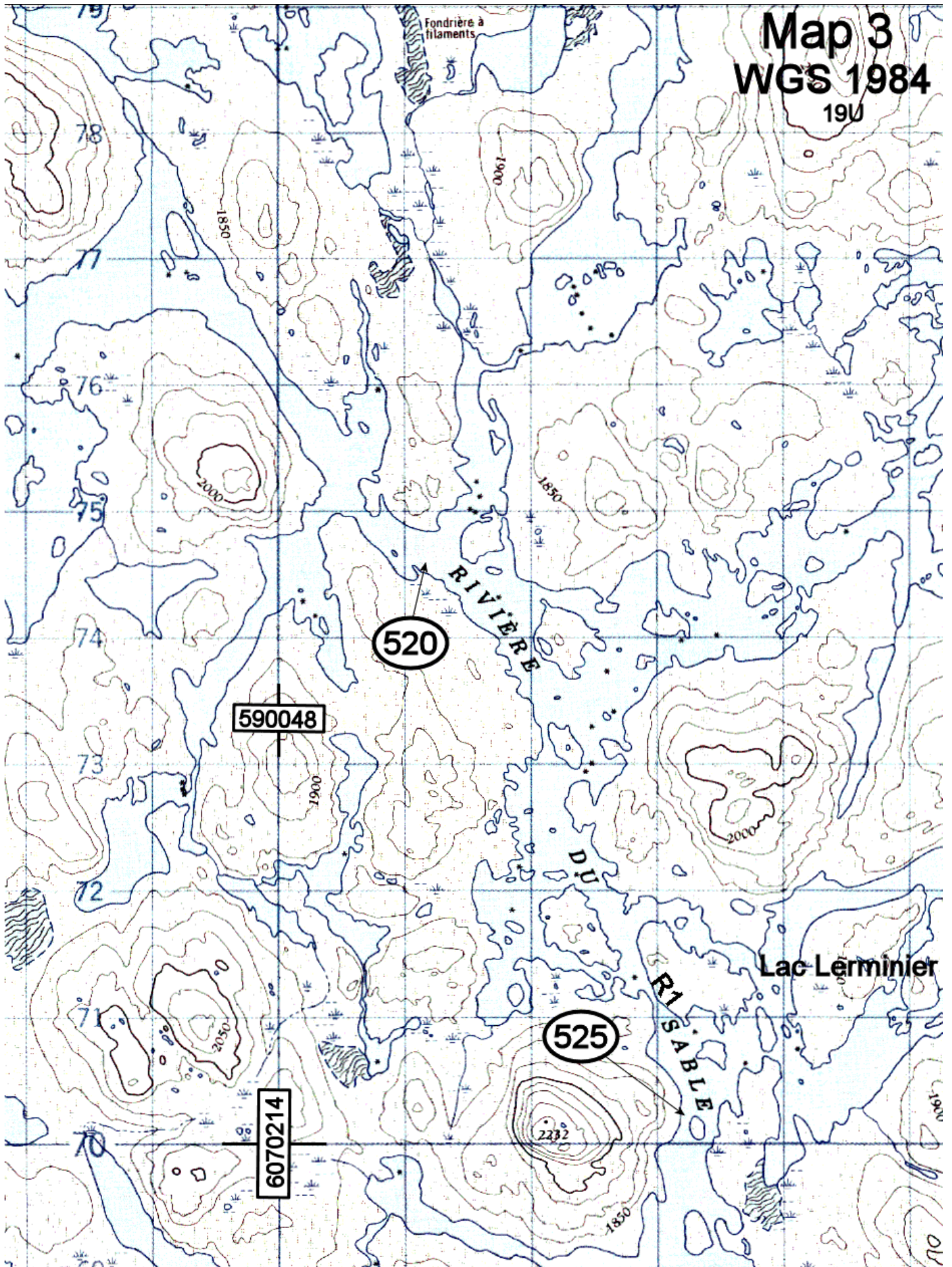








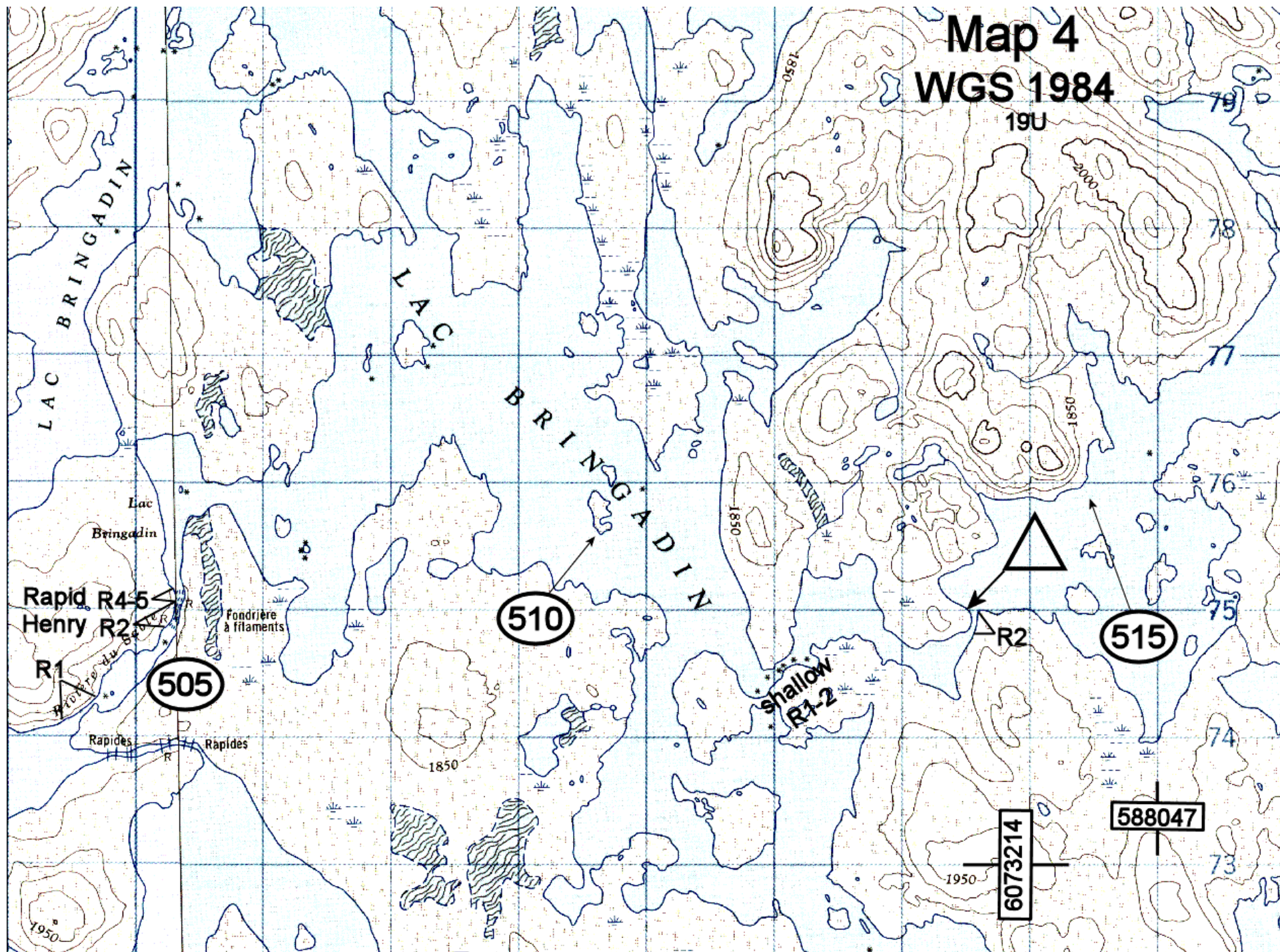
Map 3  
WGS 1984  
19U



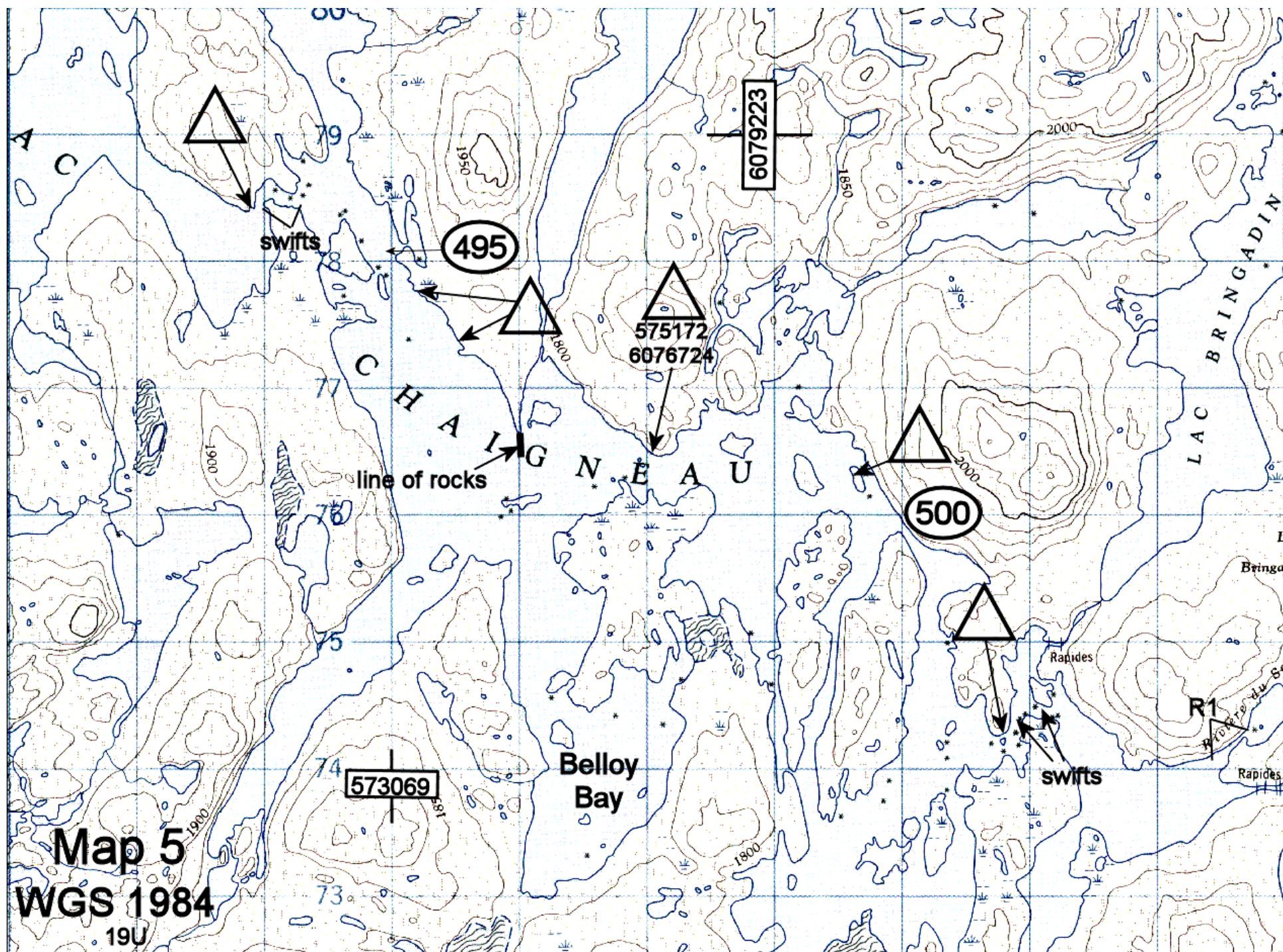


# Map 4 WGS 1984

19U









# Map 6 WGS 1984

19U

R3-4  
Francheville  
Canyon

P720

Swift

D U

Lac  
Lagrange

Fondrières à  
filaments

(485)

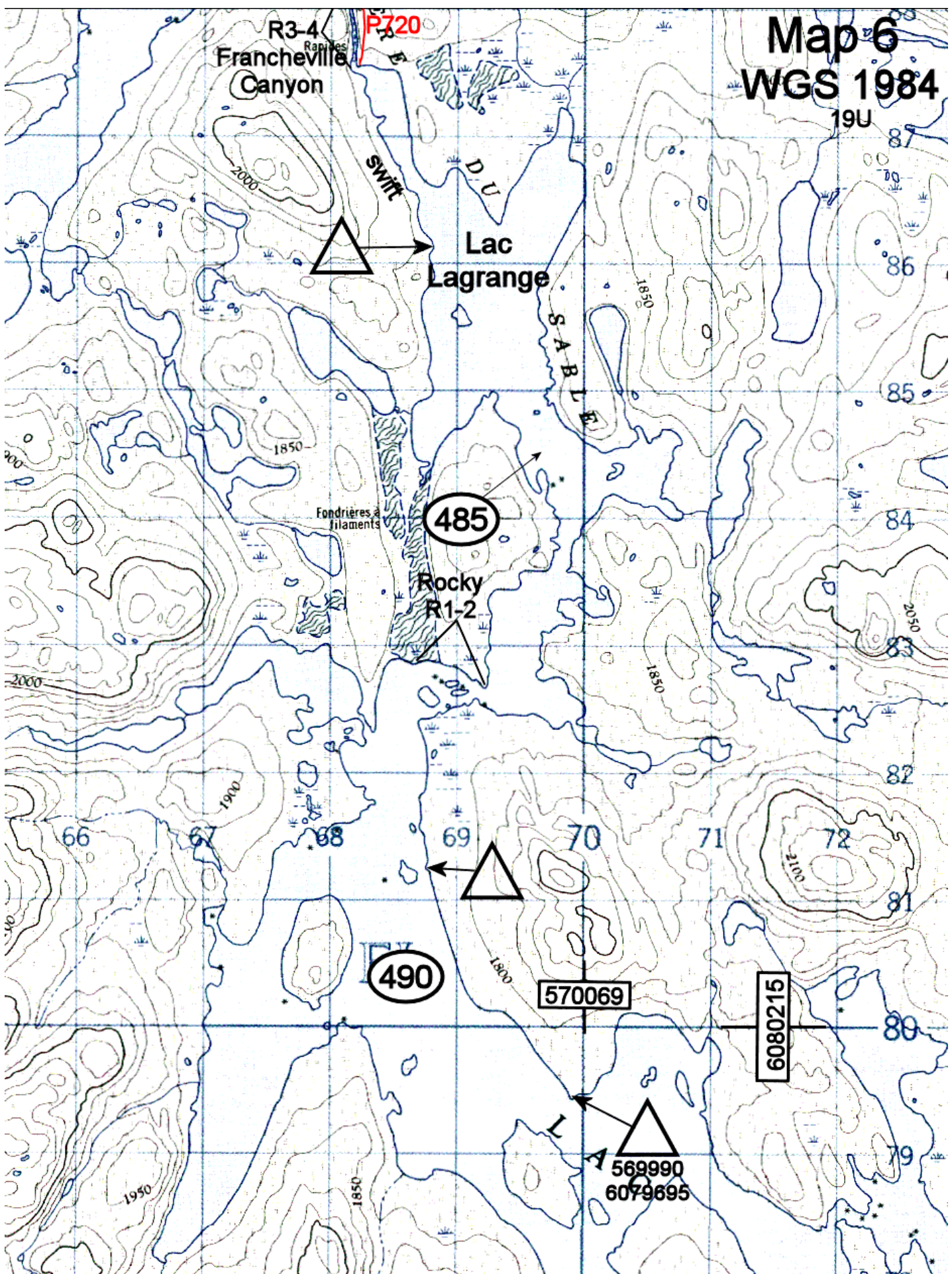
Rocky  
R1-2

(490)

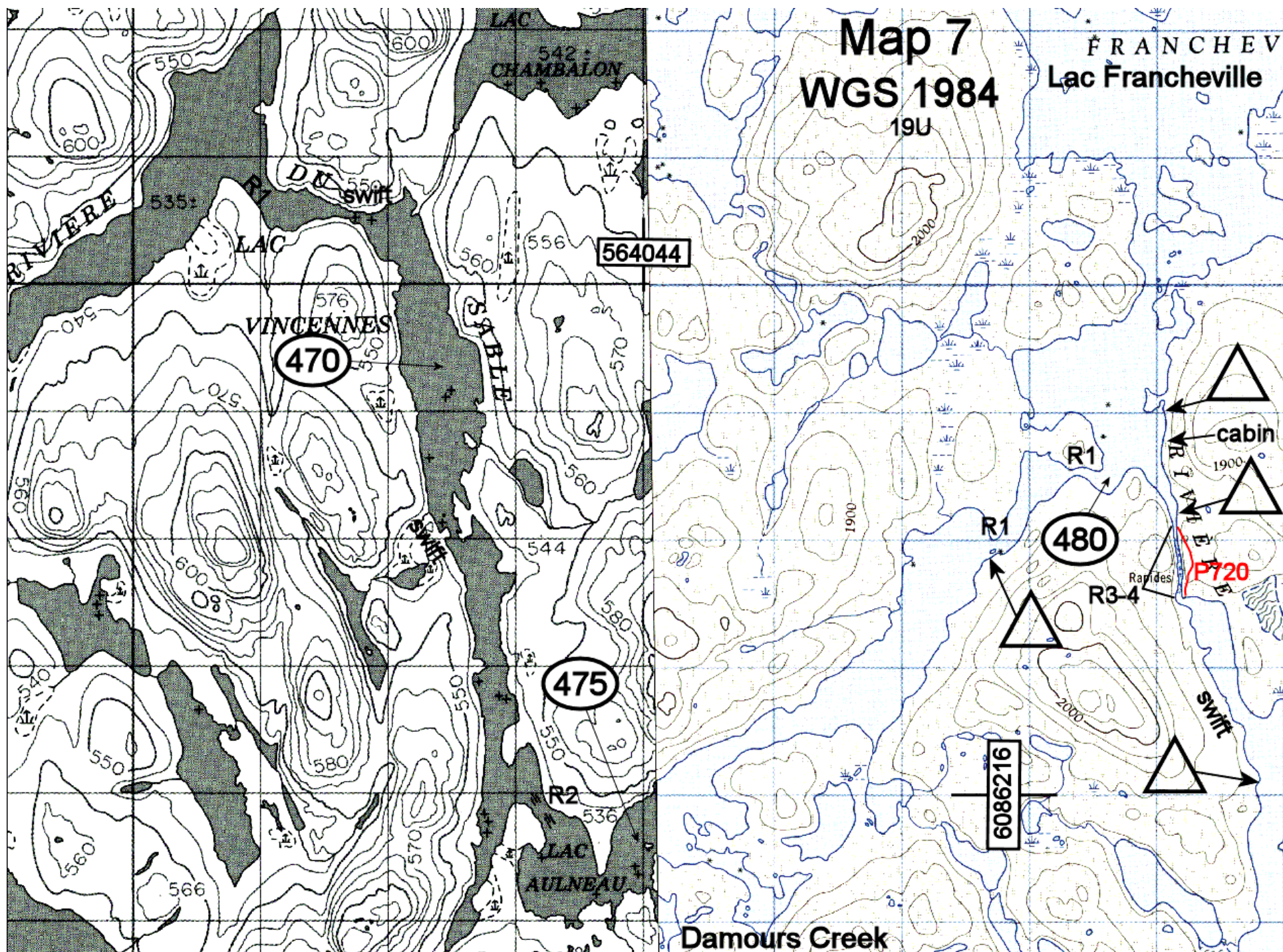
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6080215

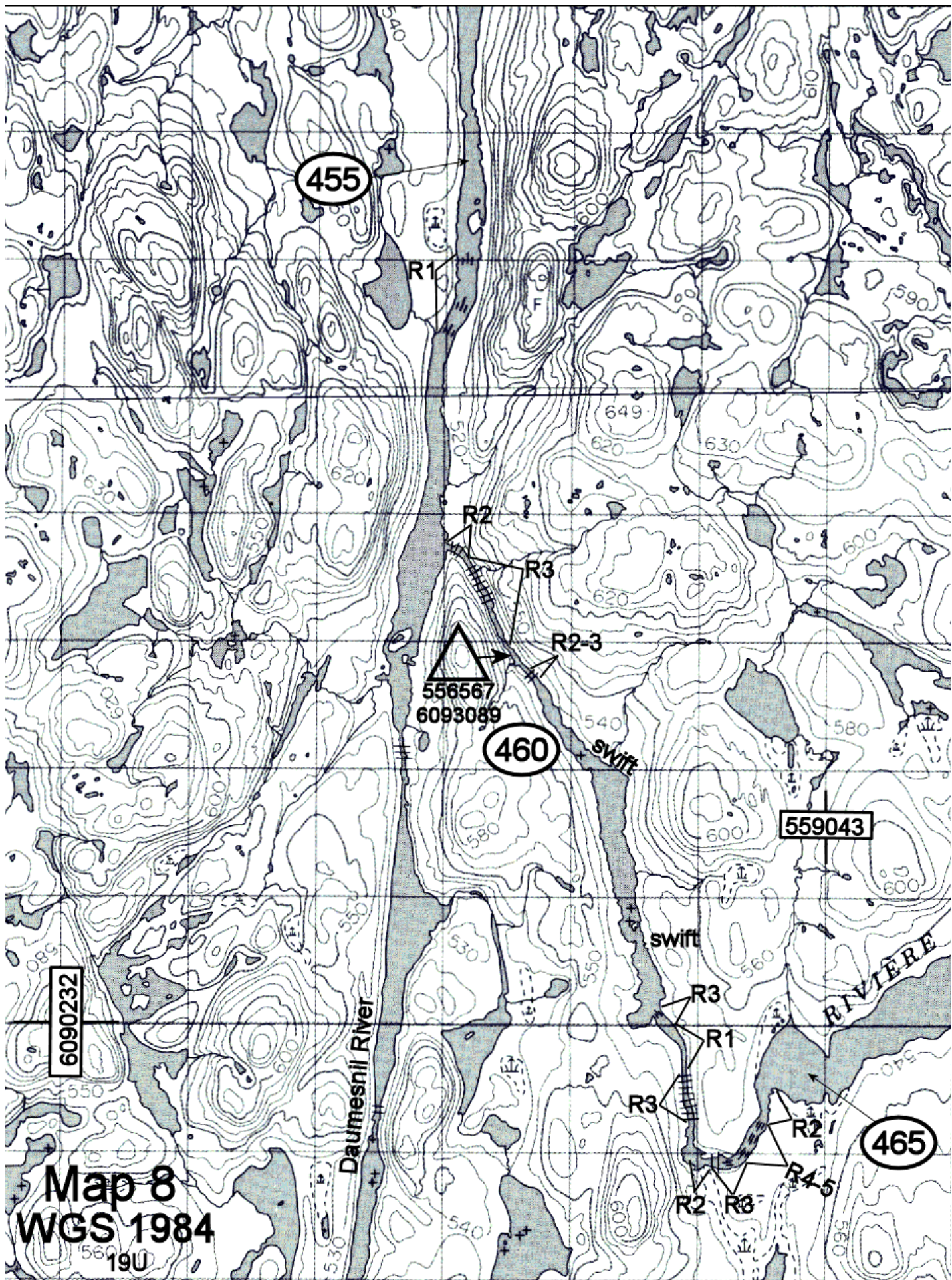
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6079695



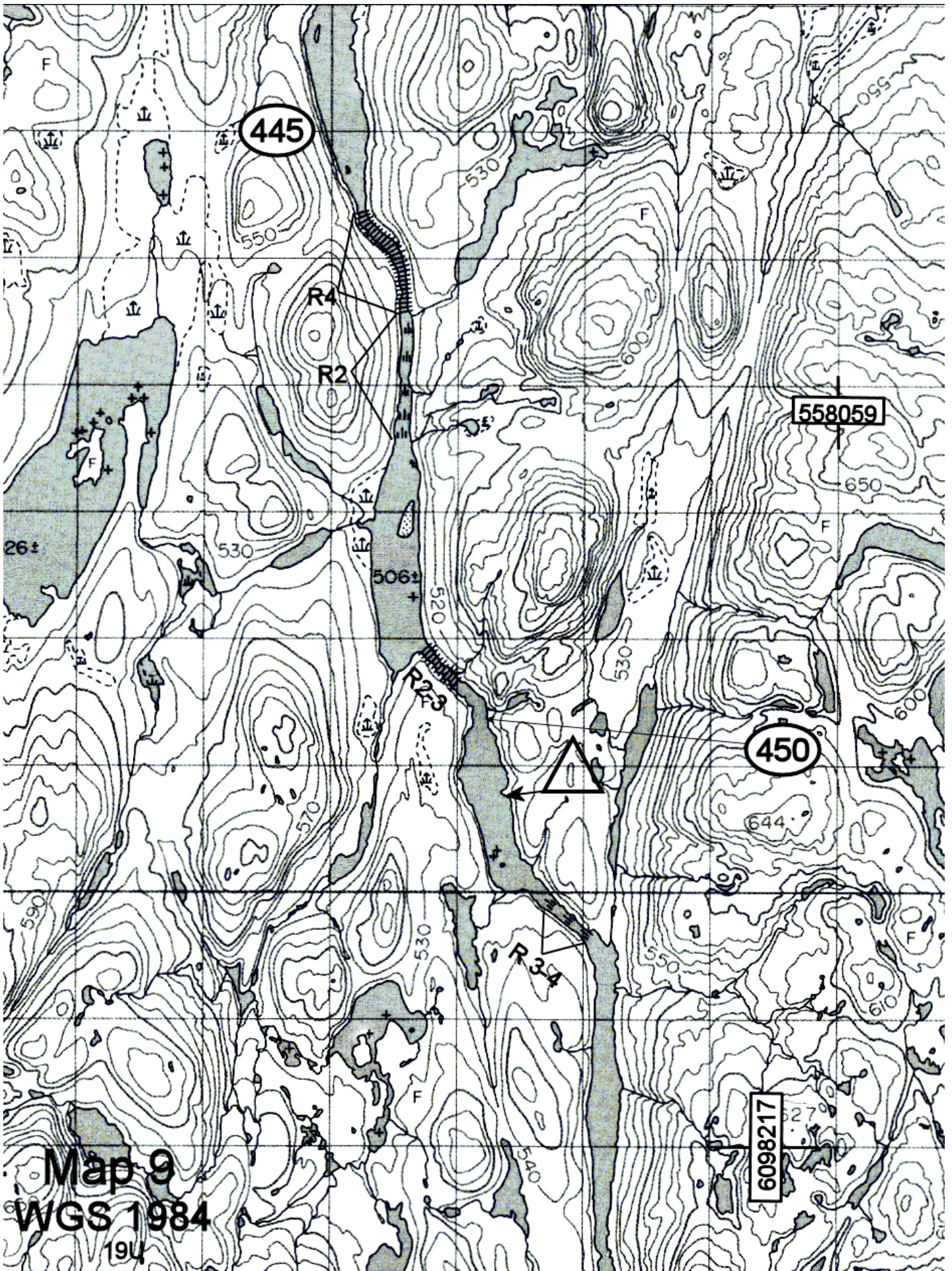














# Map 10 WGS 1984

19U

on the island

435

550042

Innu Falls

P110

R2-3

Lac Leber

598

550

R3

R4

R3

R4-5

Sloping rock bank

552823

6112051

477±

500

440

rocky R1

R6

R4

498±

548±

6108211

560

R2

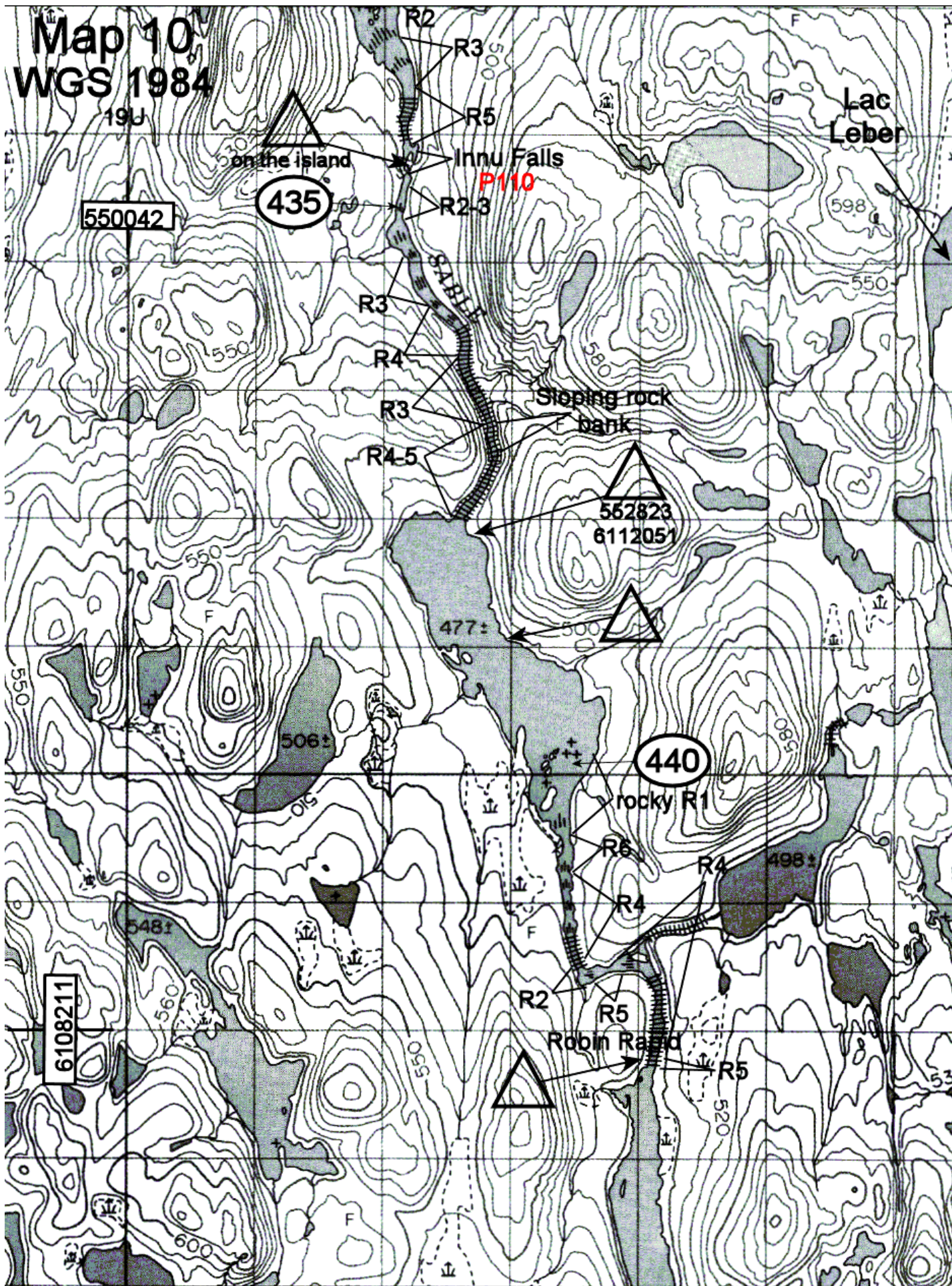
R5

Robin Rapid

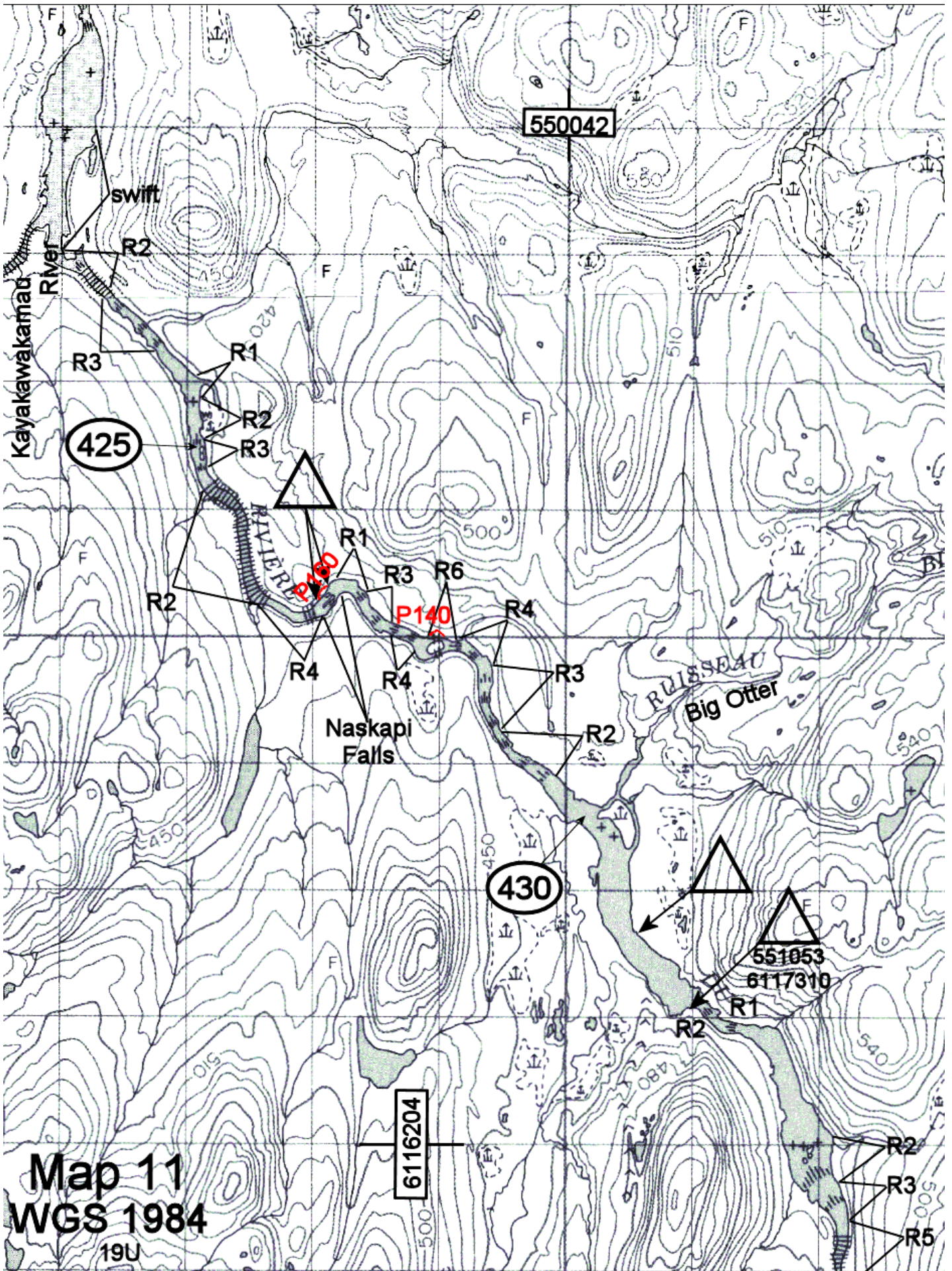
R5

520

53





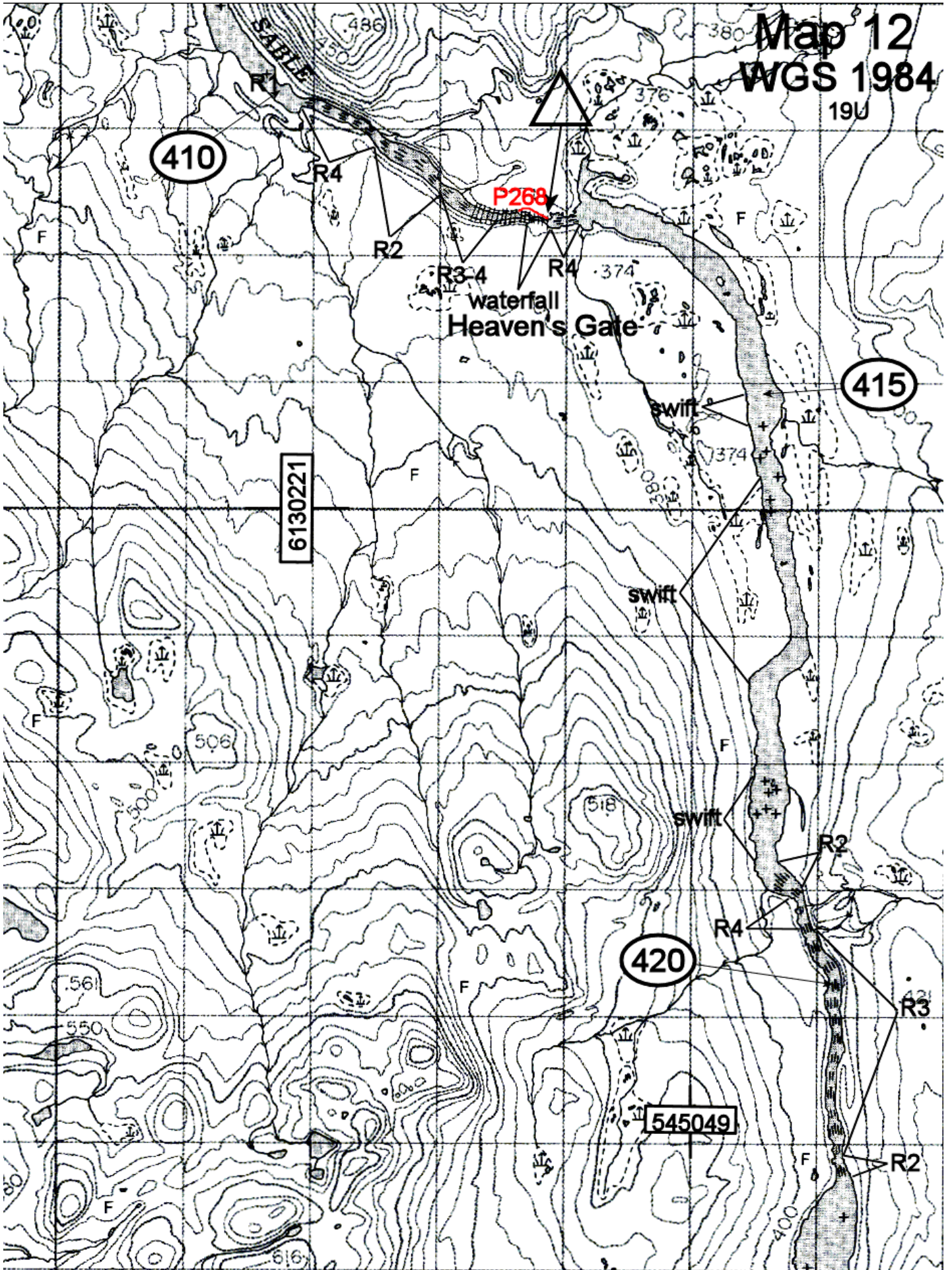


Map 11  
WGS 1984  
19U



Map 12  
WGS 1984

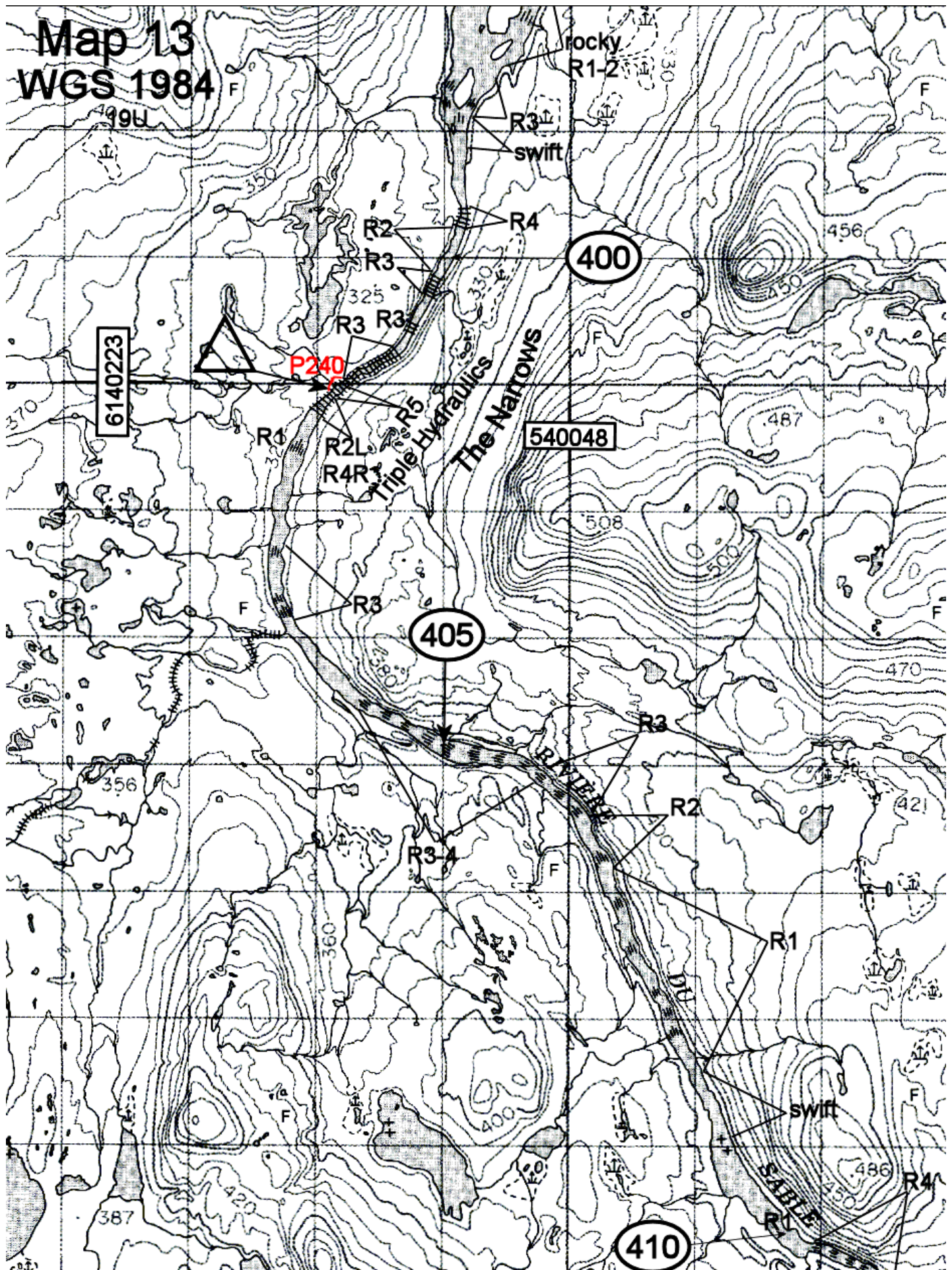
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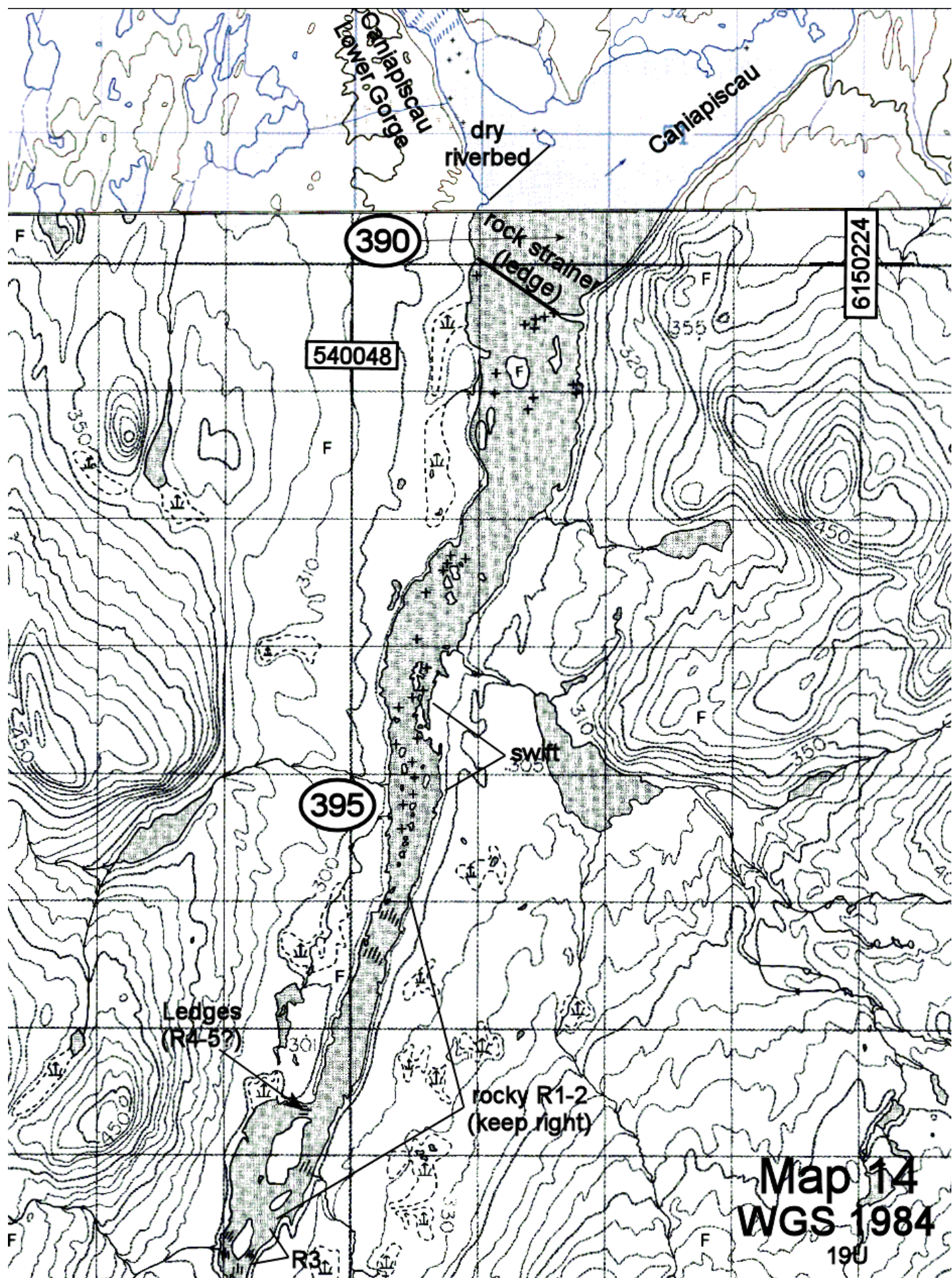


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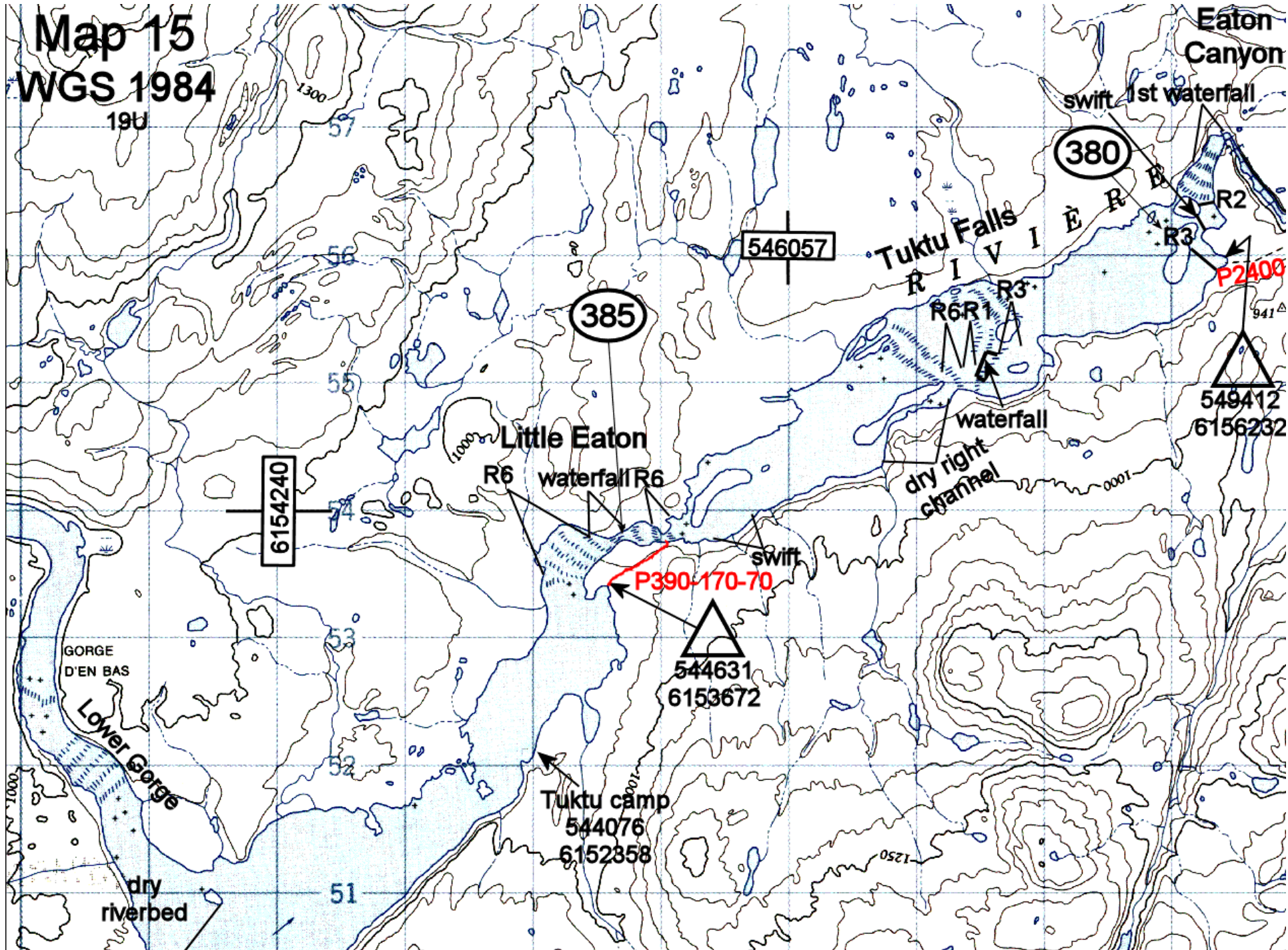
## WGS 1984





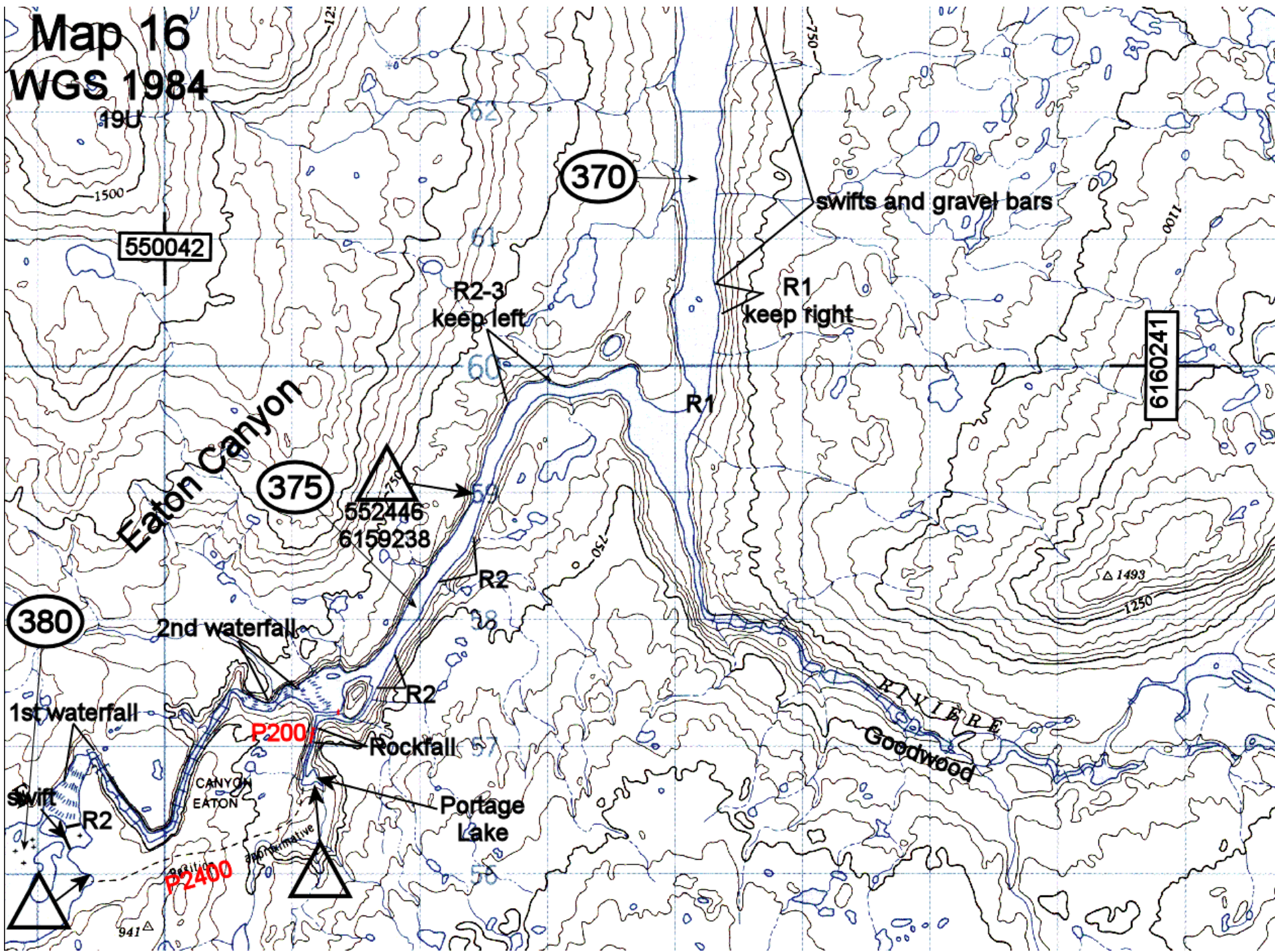






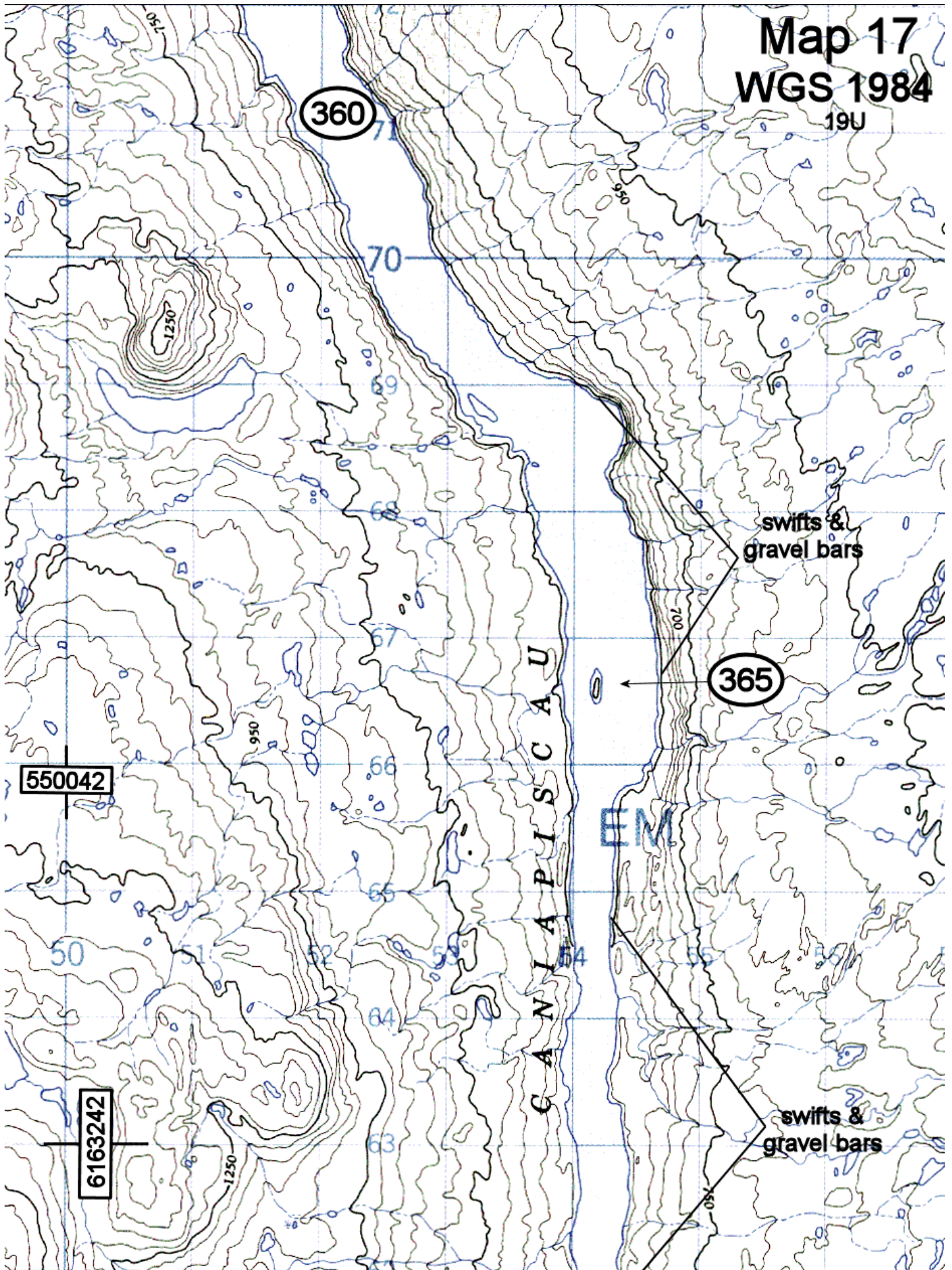


Map 16  
WGS 1984





Map 17  
WGS 1984  
19U





# Map 18 WGS 1984

19U 80

old cabin  
546969  
6178359

550042

6178220

350

sandy beaches

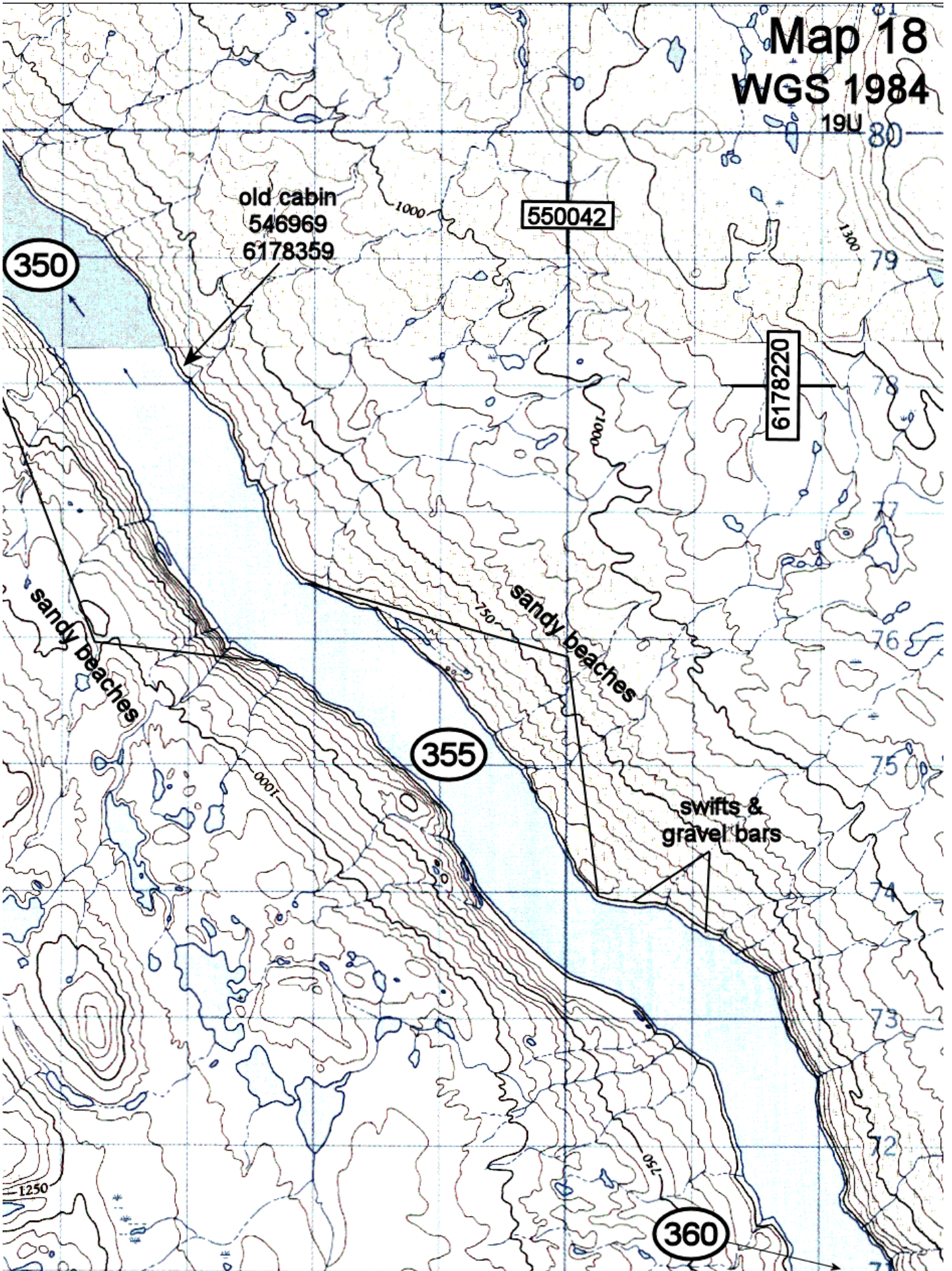
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sandy beaches

swifts &  
gravel bars

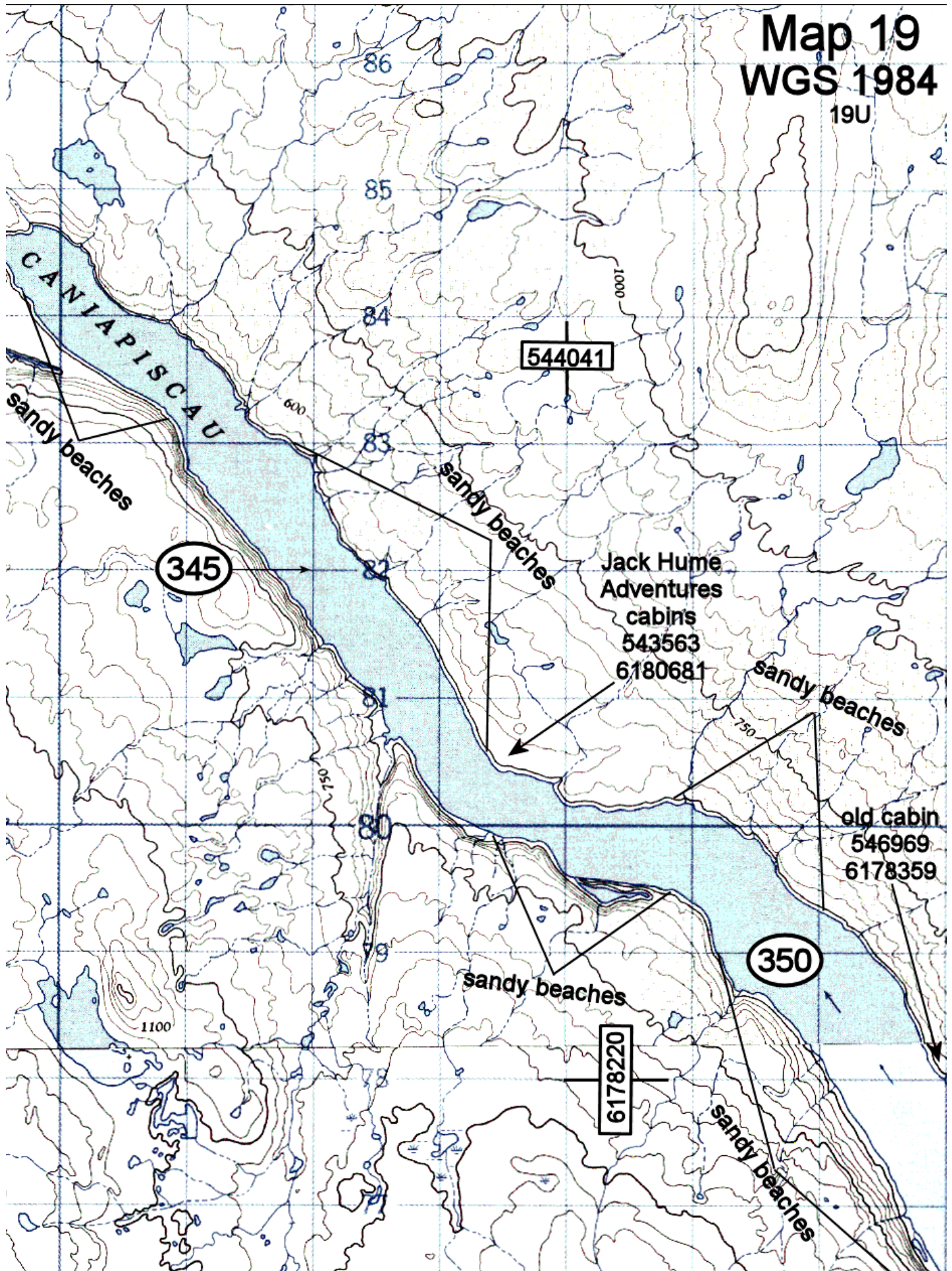
360

1250



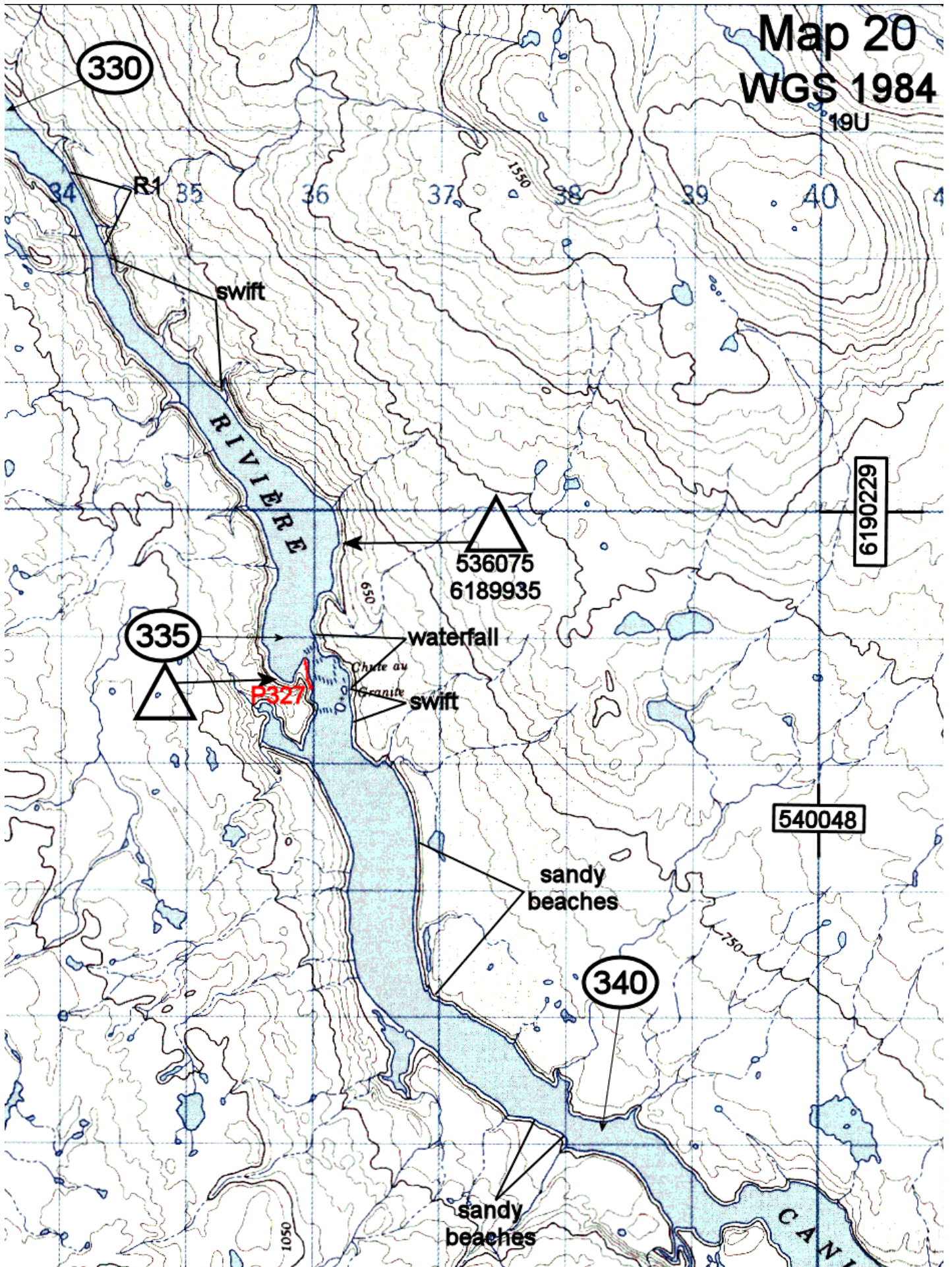


Map 19  
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19U



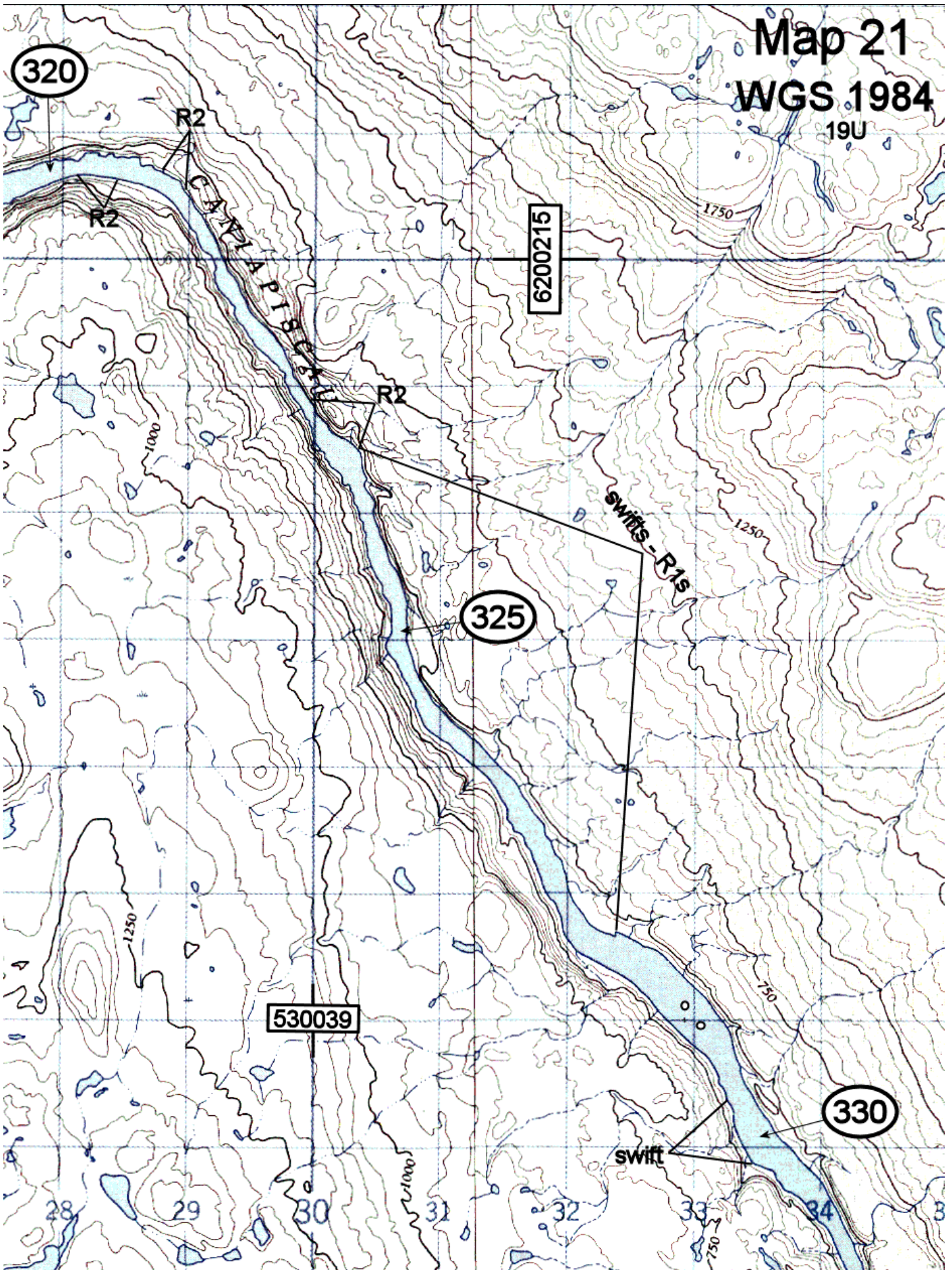


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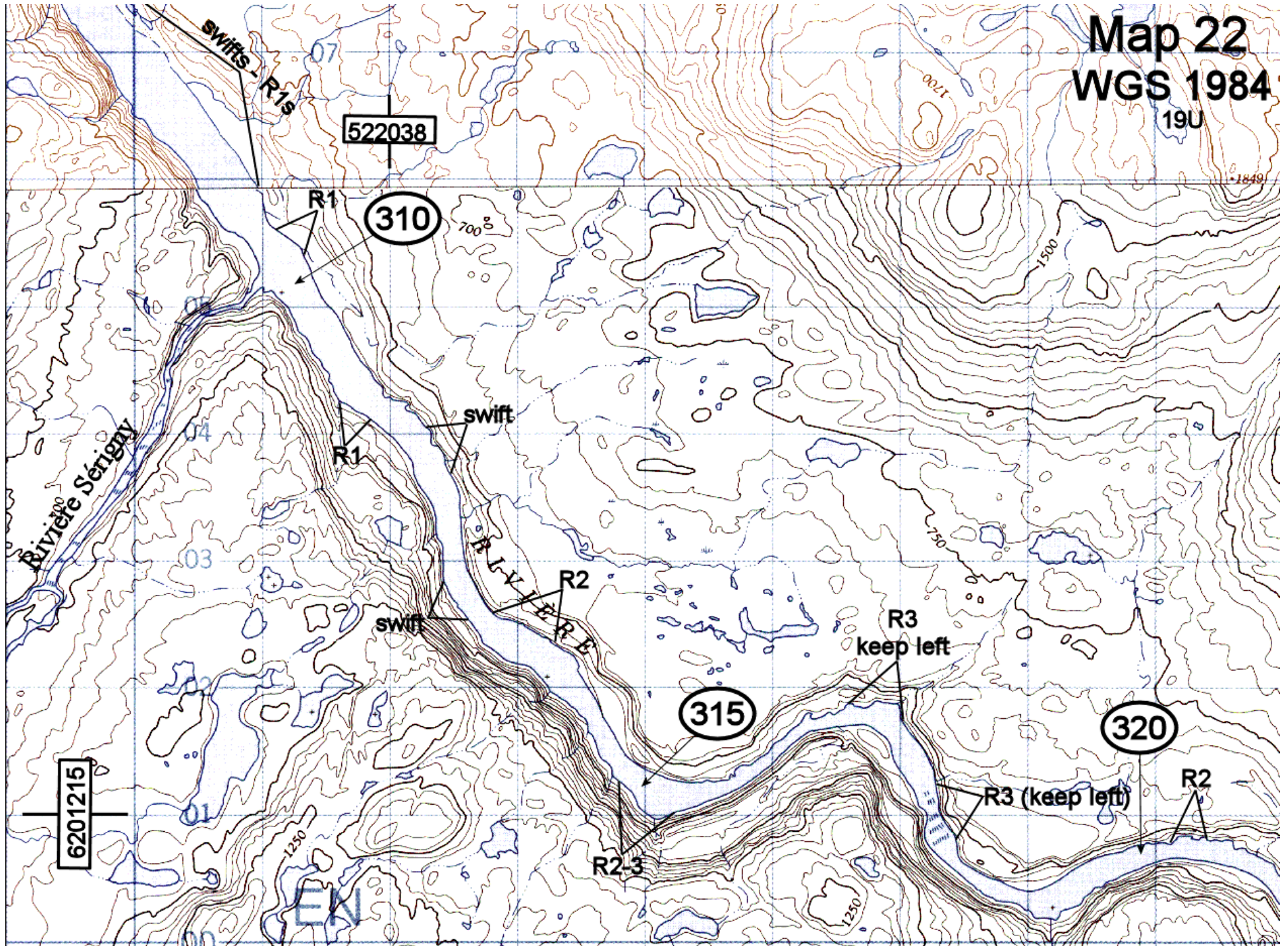


Map 21  
WGS 1984  
19U





Map 22  
WGS 1984  
19U





Map 23  
WGS 1984

19V

300

517029

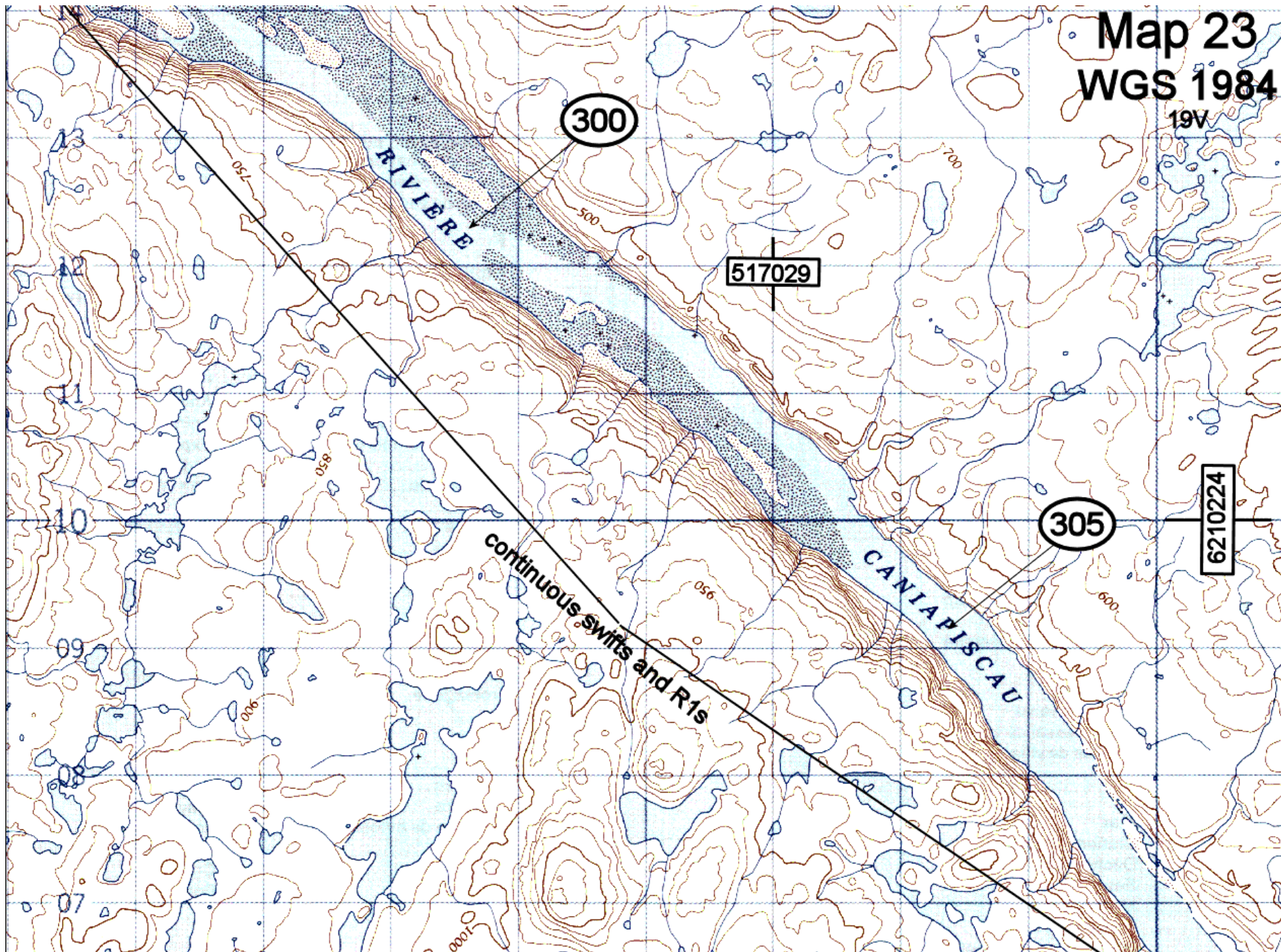
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6210224

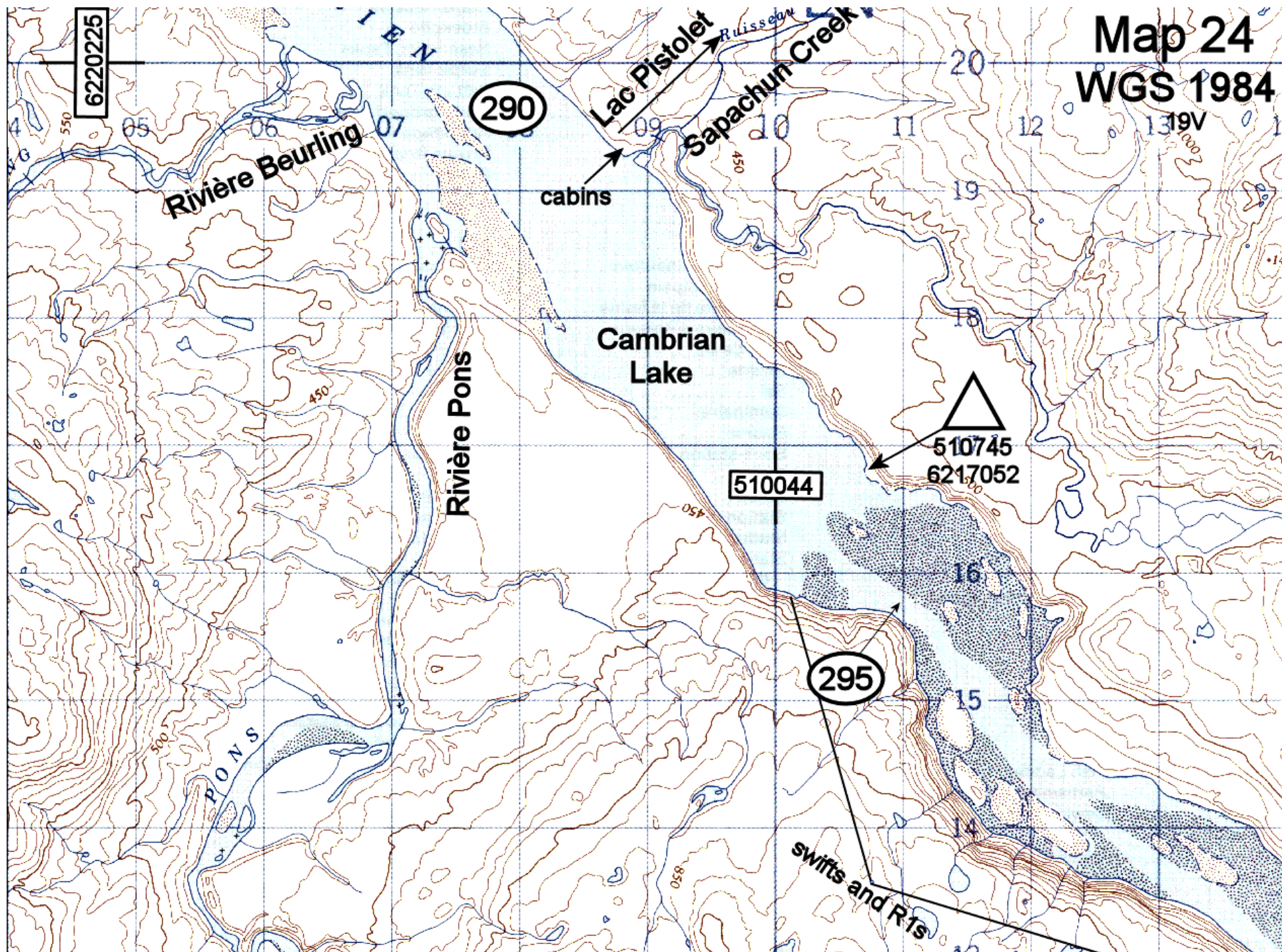
RIVIERE

CANIAPISCAU

continuous swifs and R1s

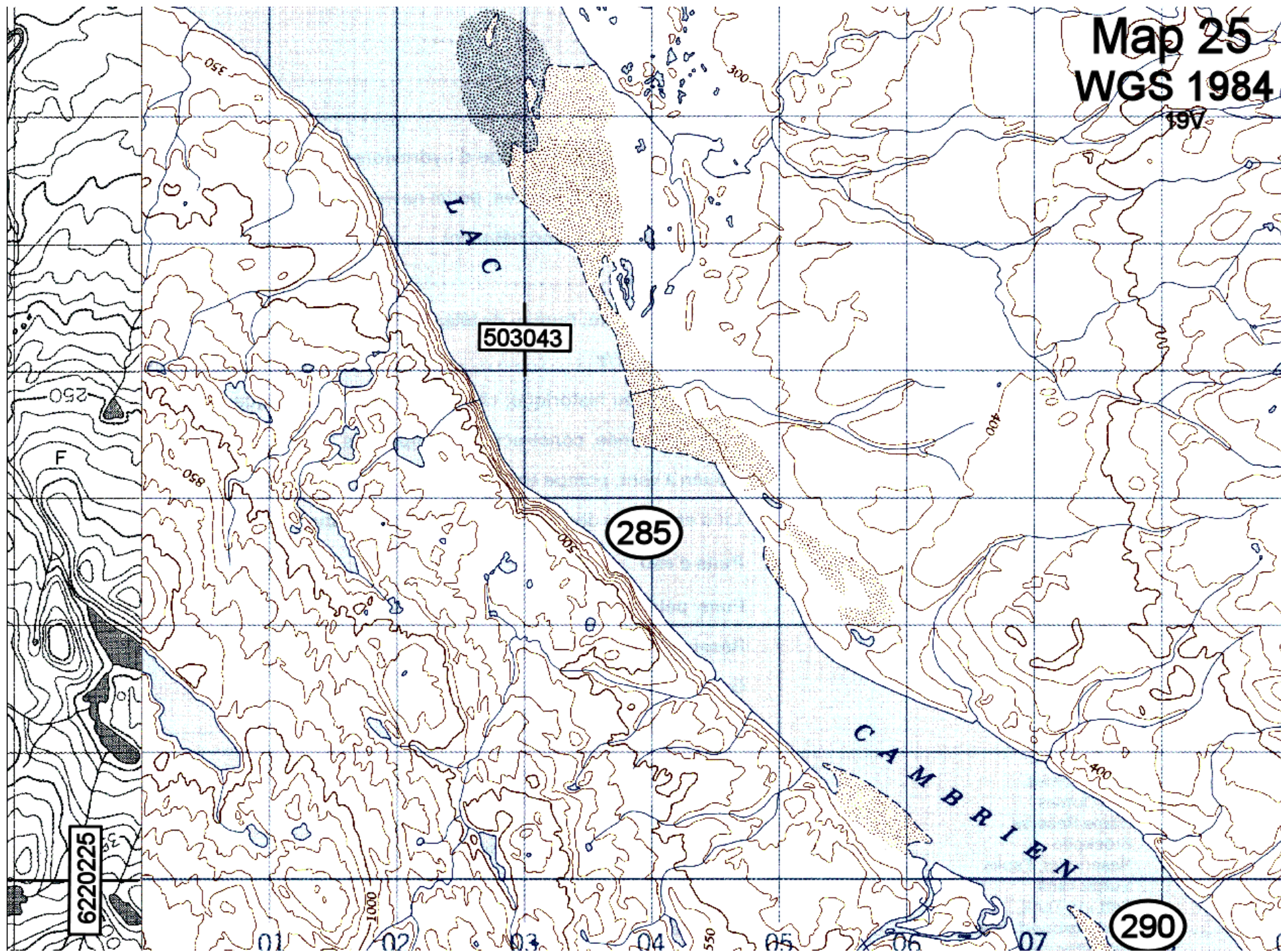






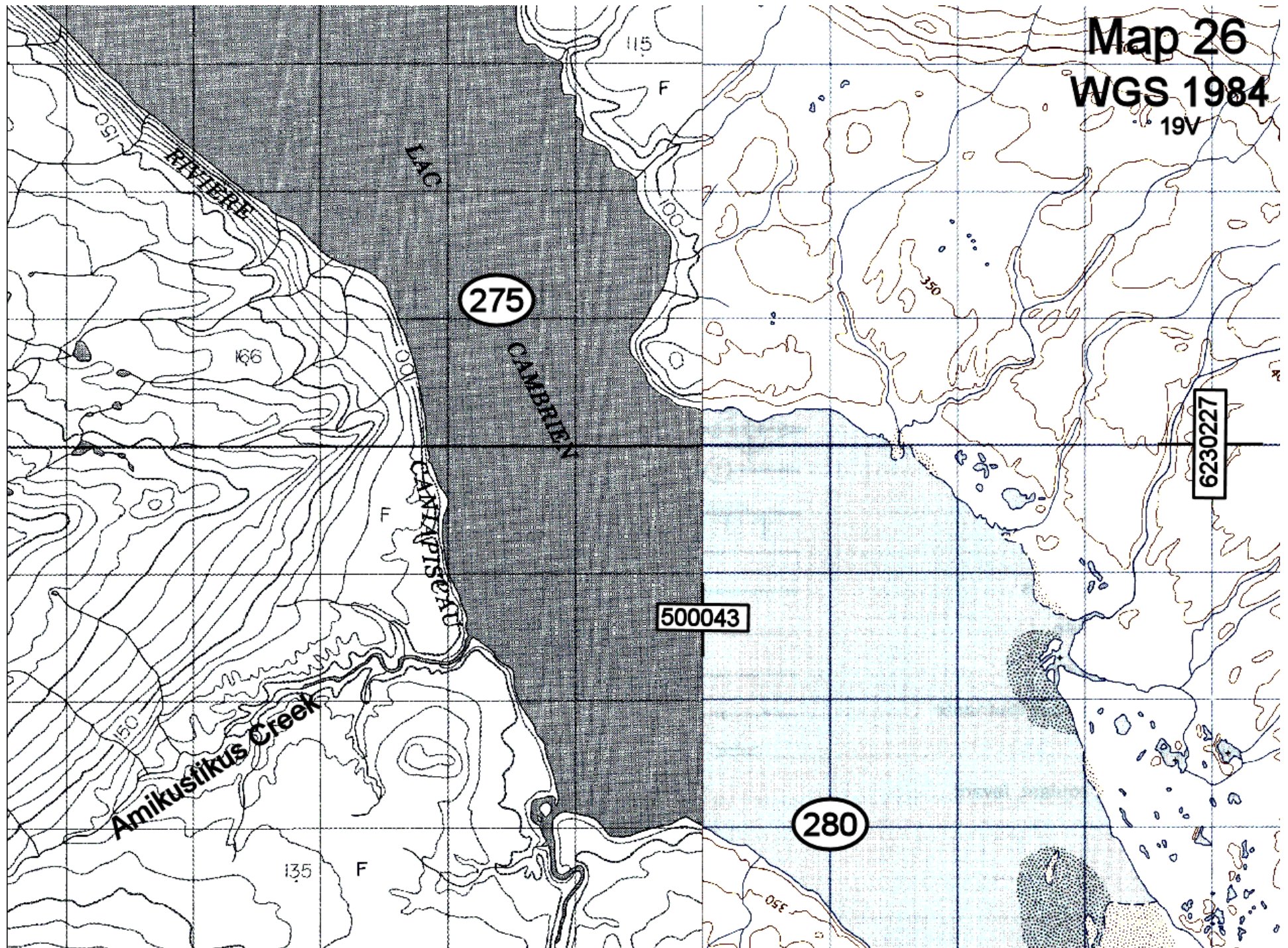


Map 25  
WGS 1984





Map 26  
WGS 1984  
19V





Map 27  
WGS 1984

265

CAMBRIEN

CANIAPISCAU

493050

270

RIVIÈRE  
DE LA  
MORT

492384  
6235462

6234235

ORT

F

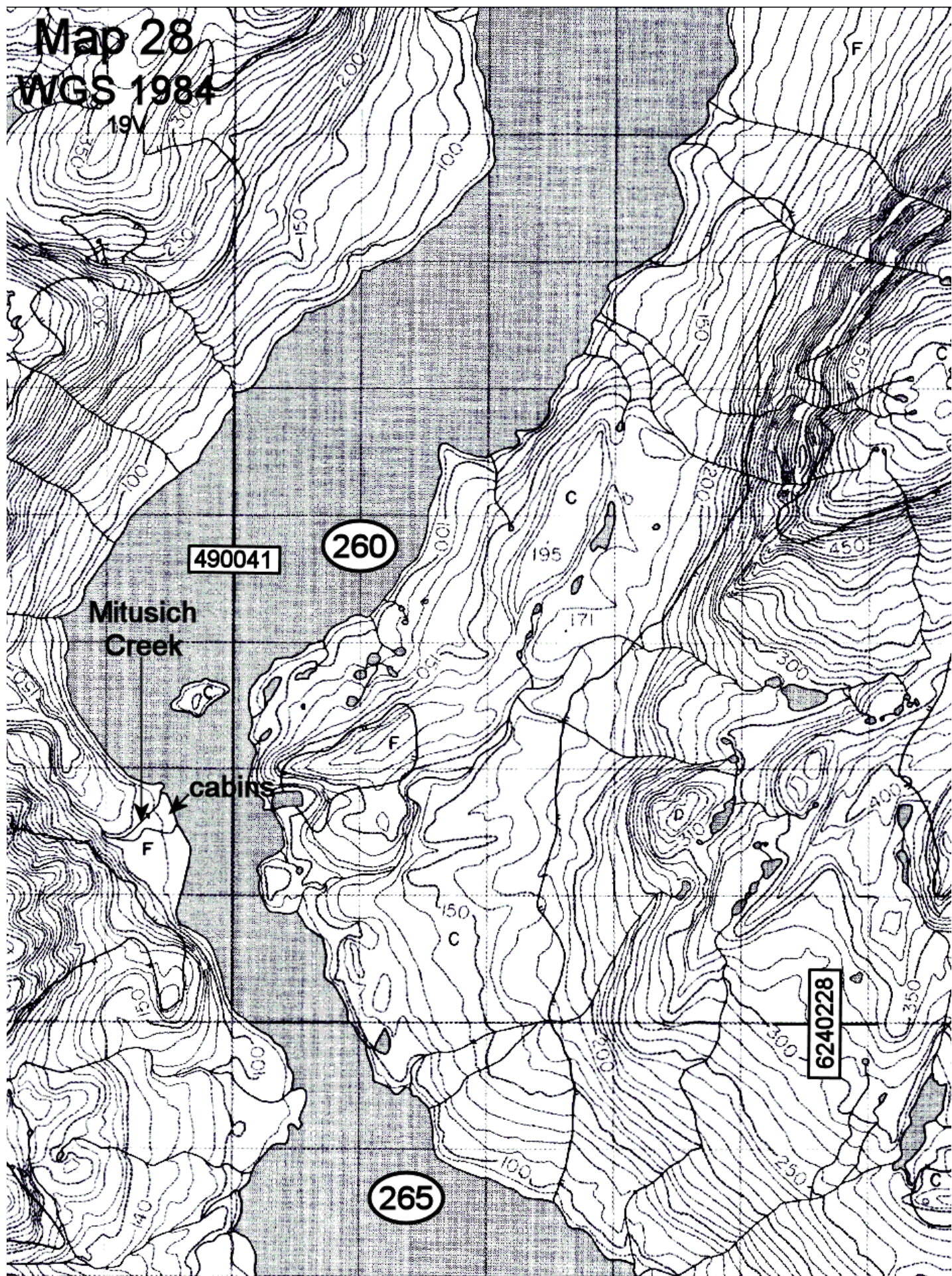
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RIVIÈRE

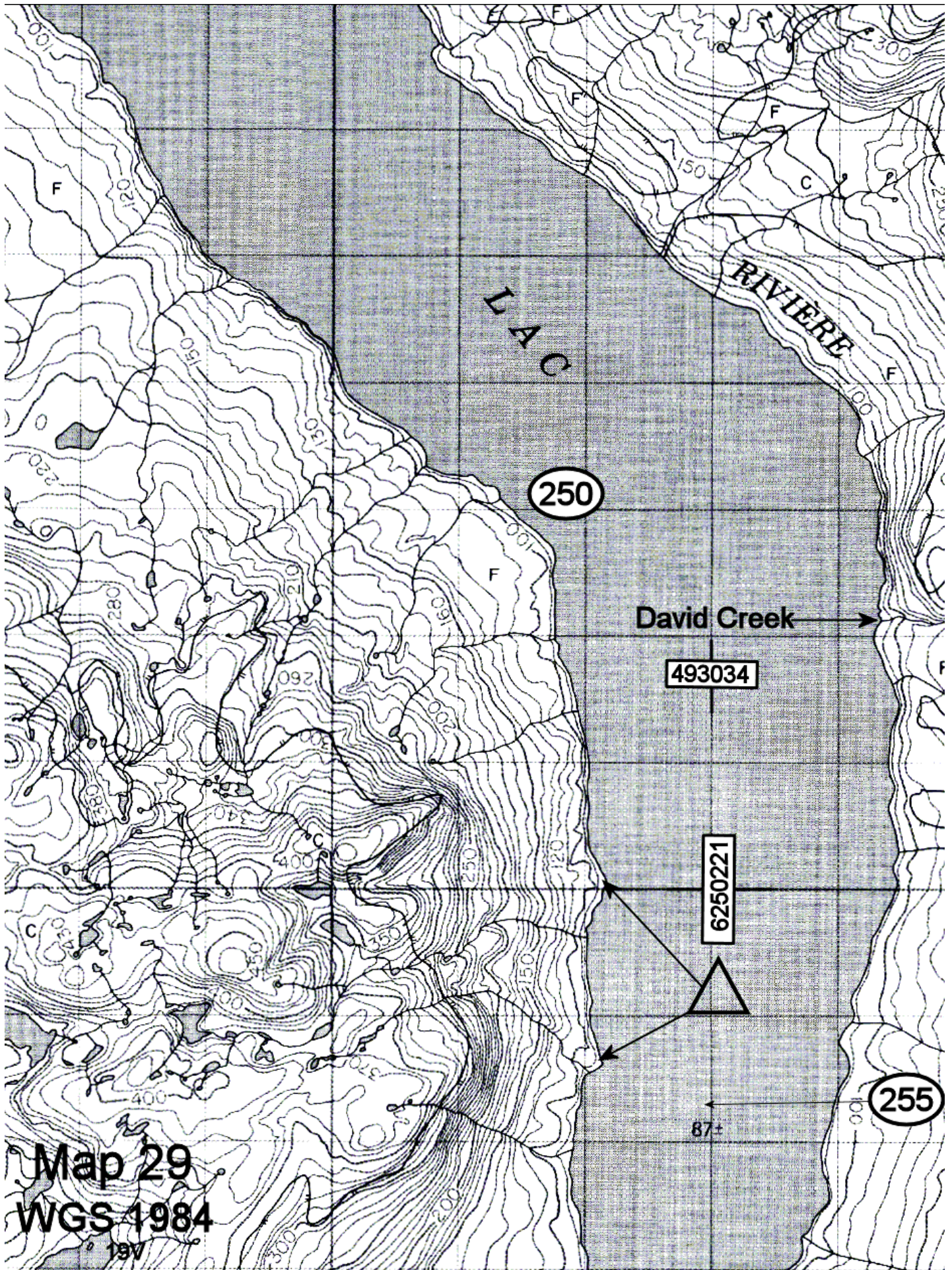
LAC



Map 28  
WGS 1984  
19V

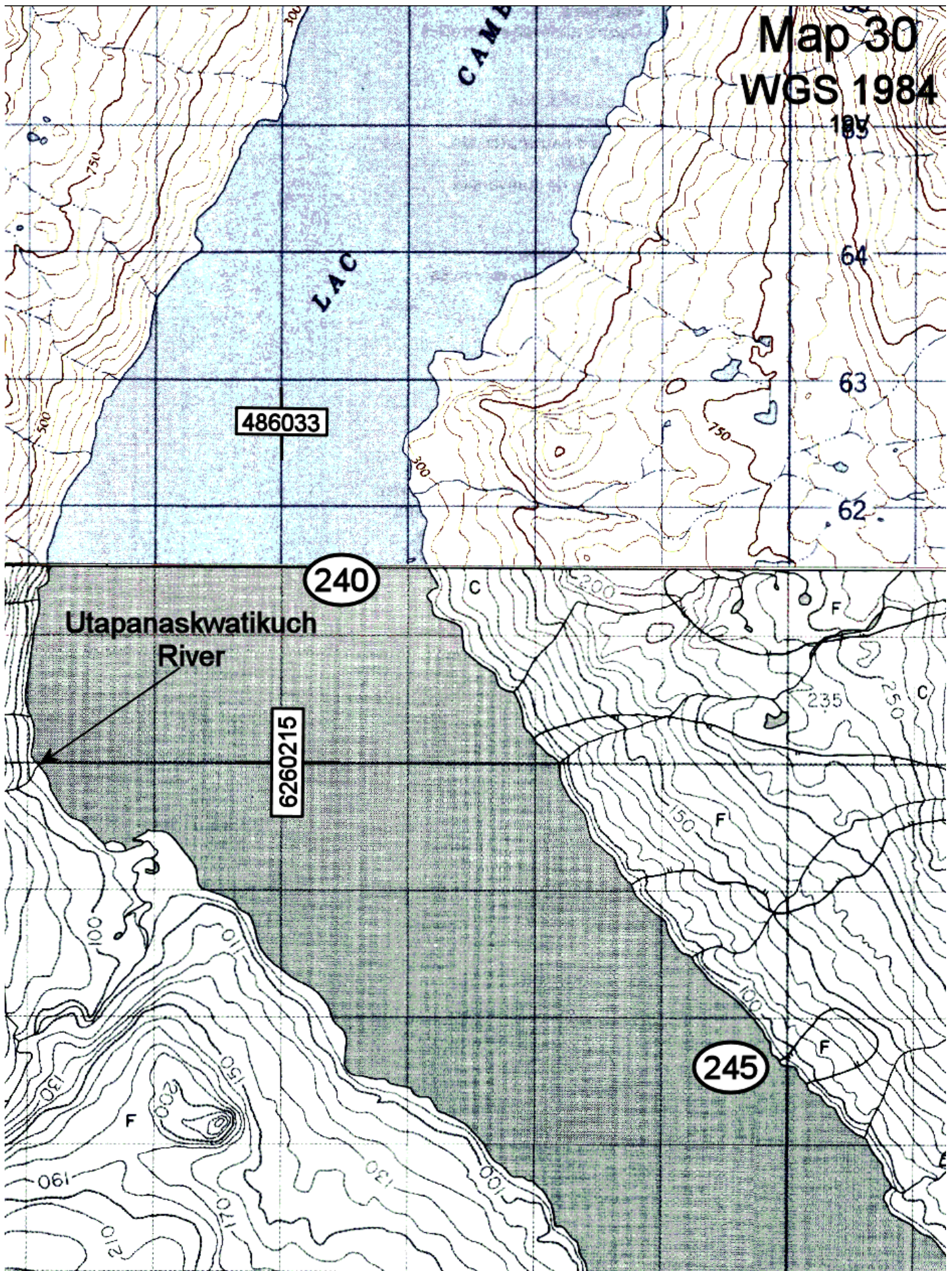






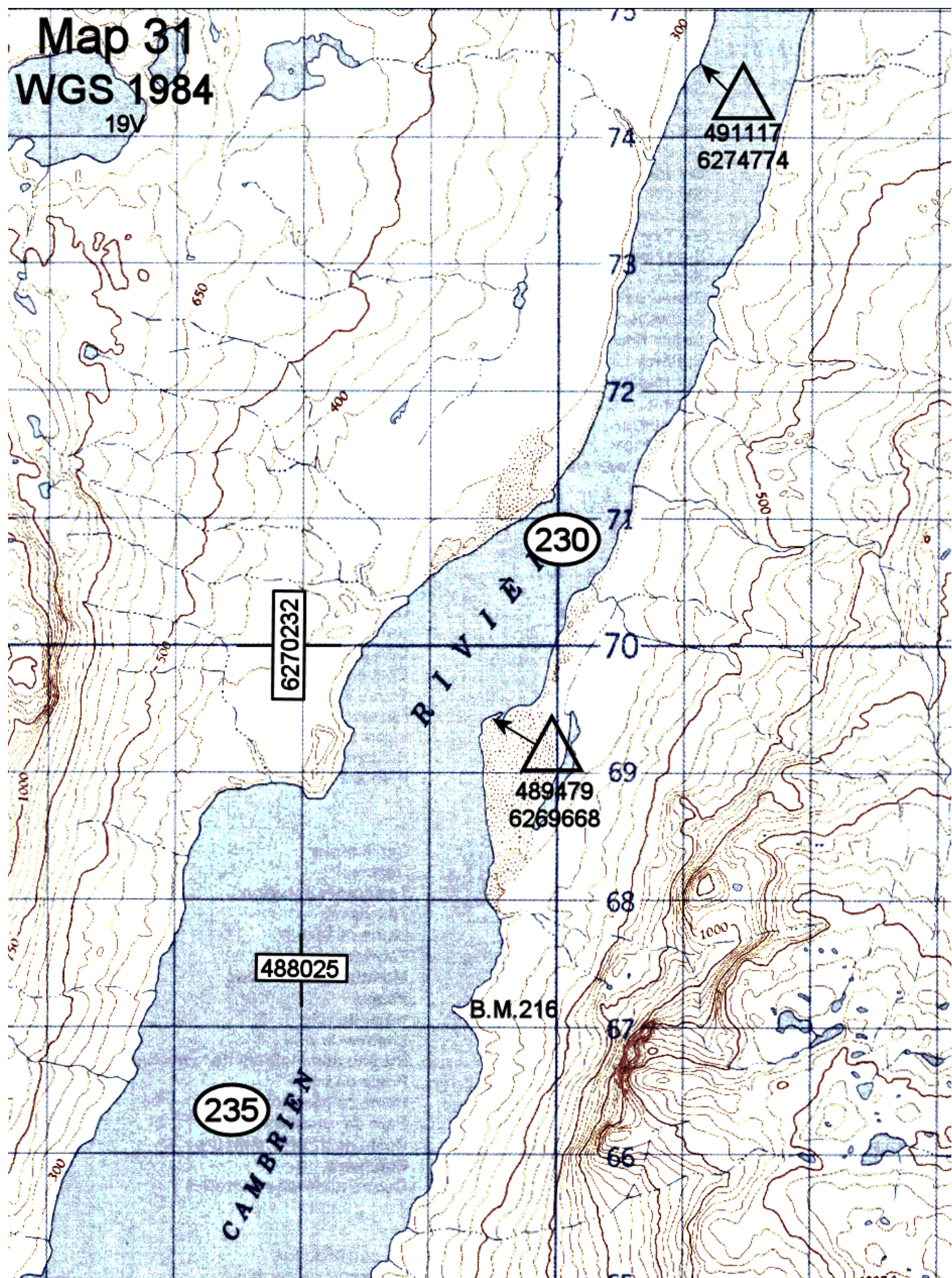


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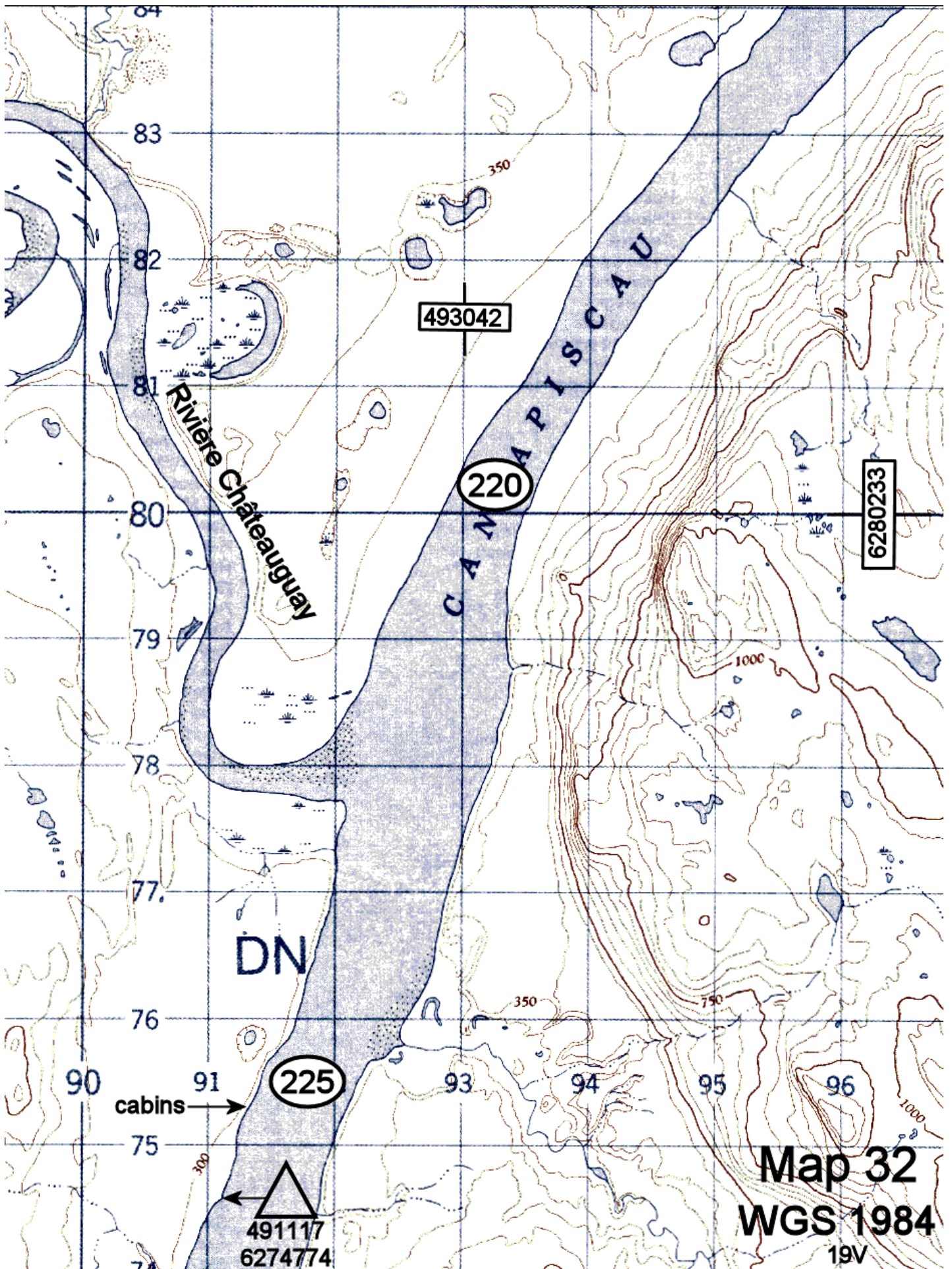




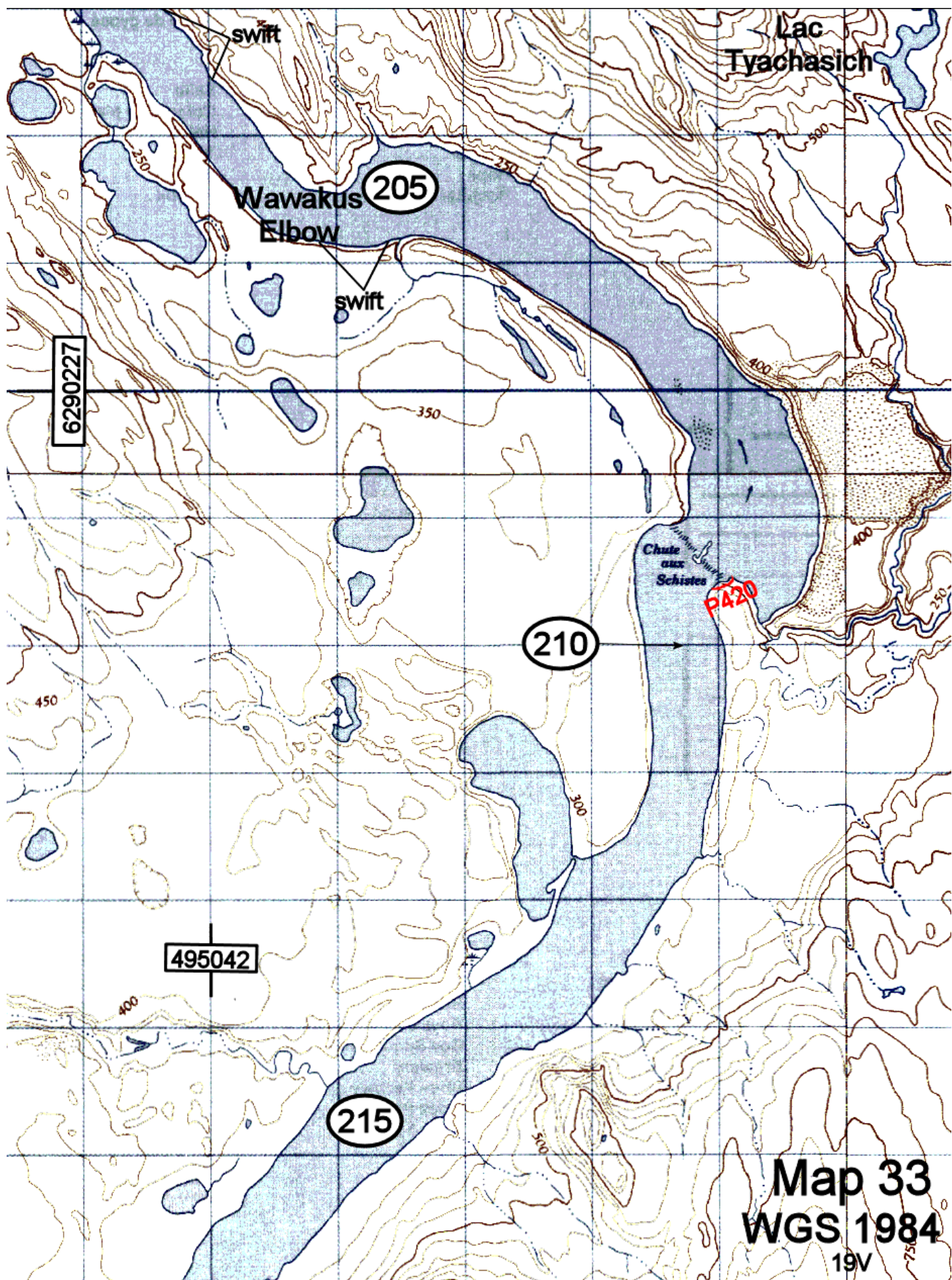
Map 31  
WGS 1984  
19V













Map 34  
WGS 1984

19V

493042

DP

DN

RIVIERE SWAMPY  
Swampy Bay River

6300244

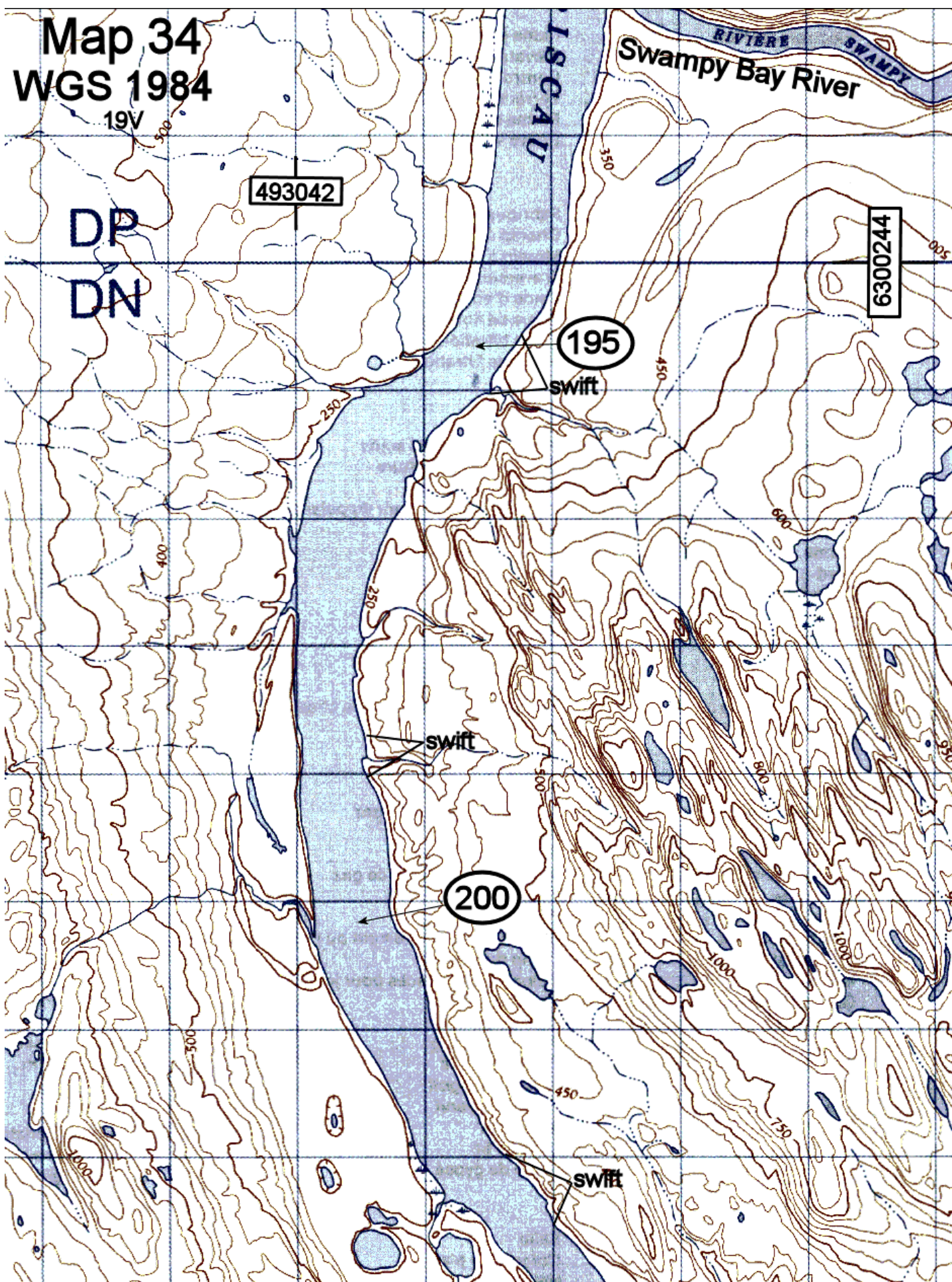
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swift

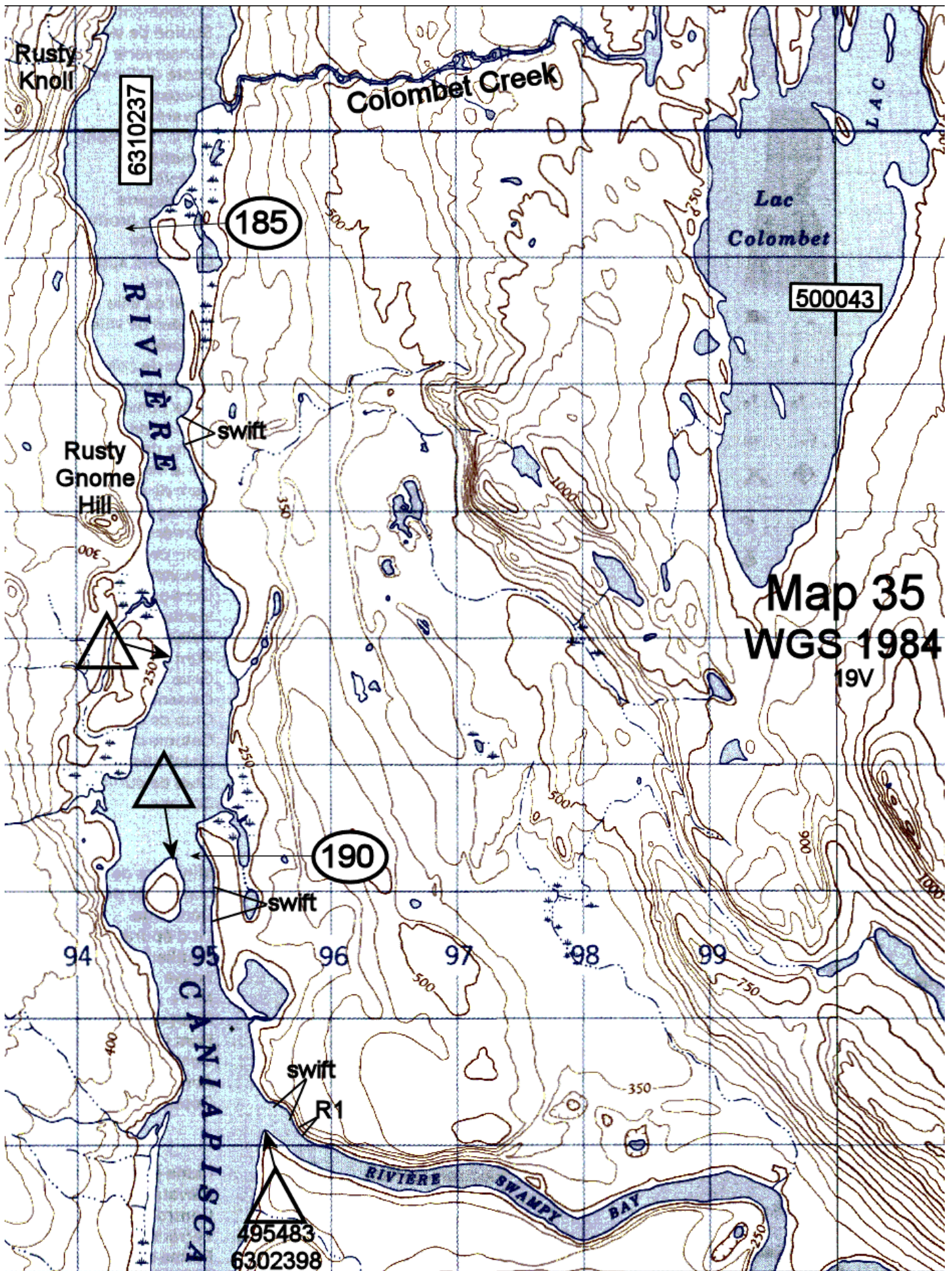
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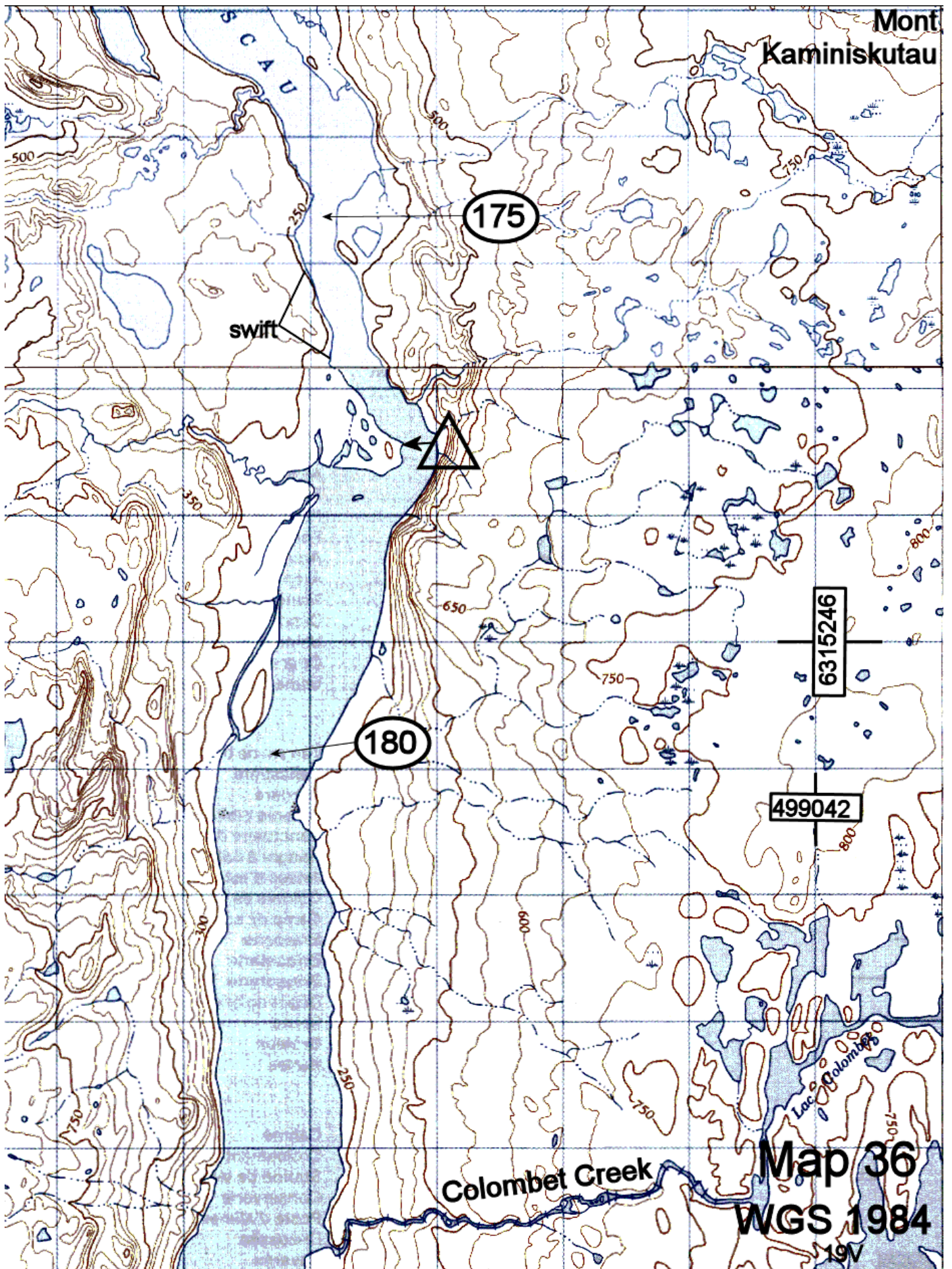
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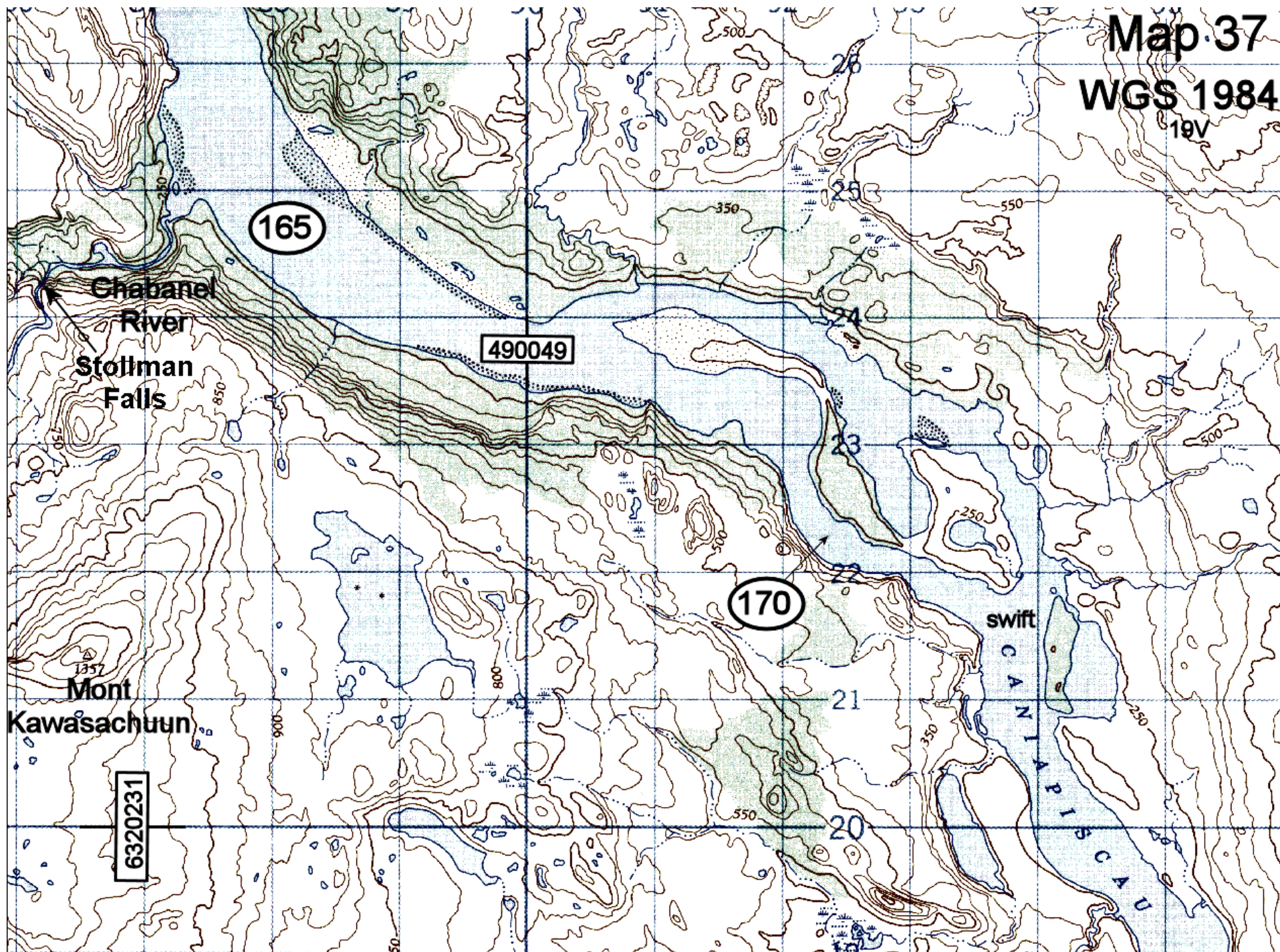




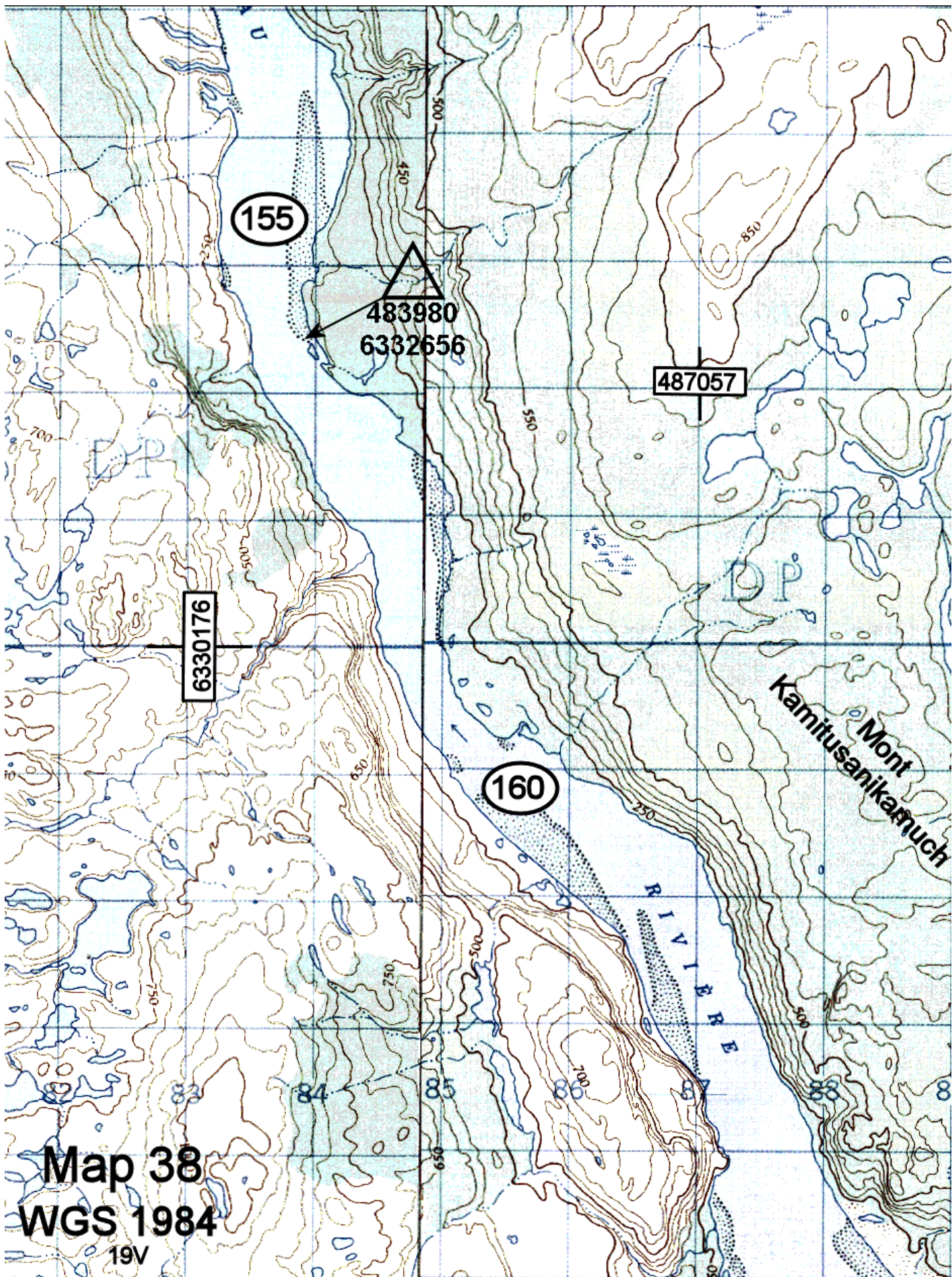




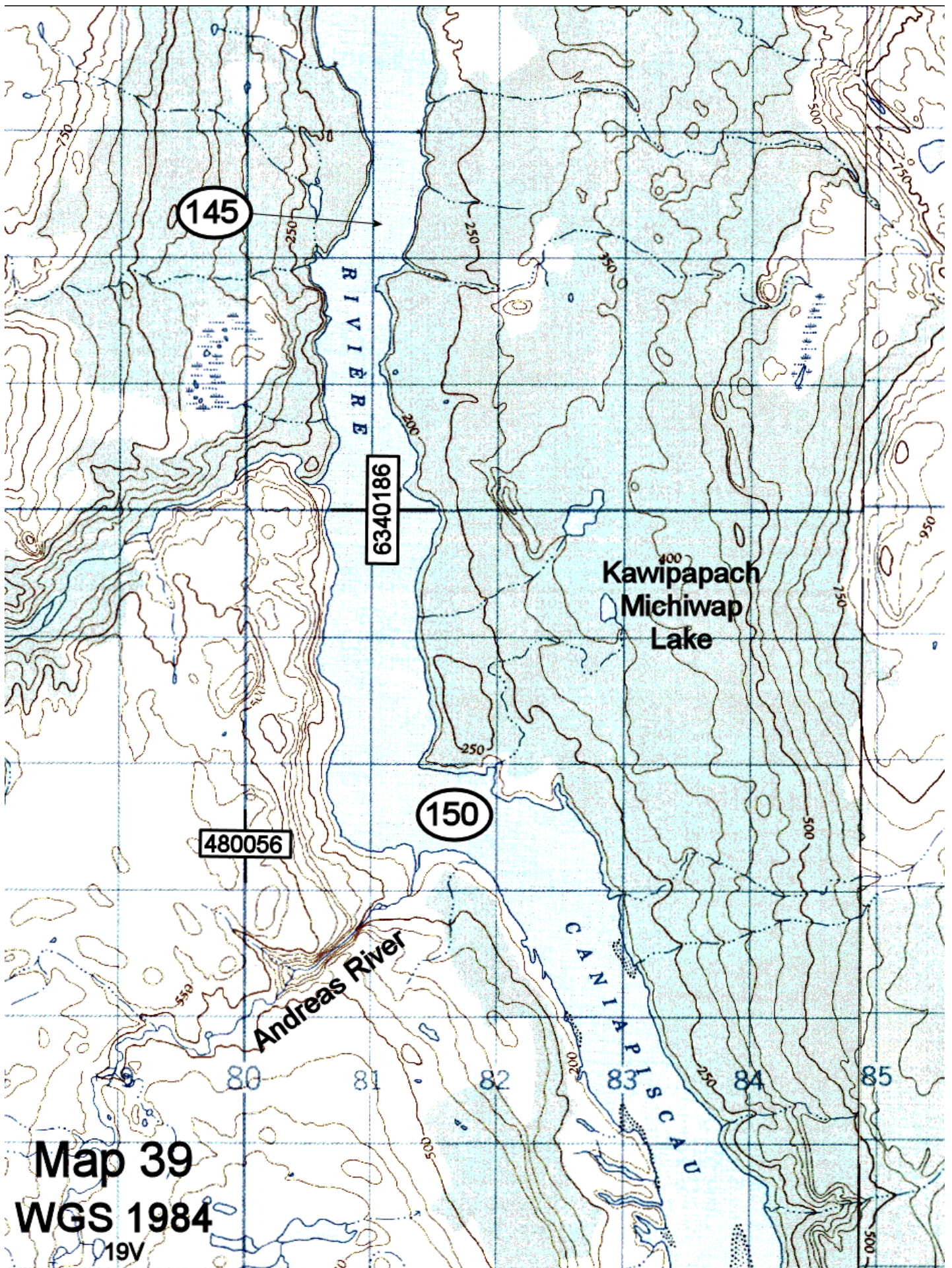
Map 37  
WGS 1984  
19V



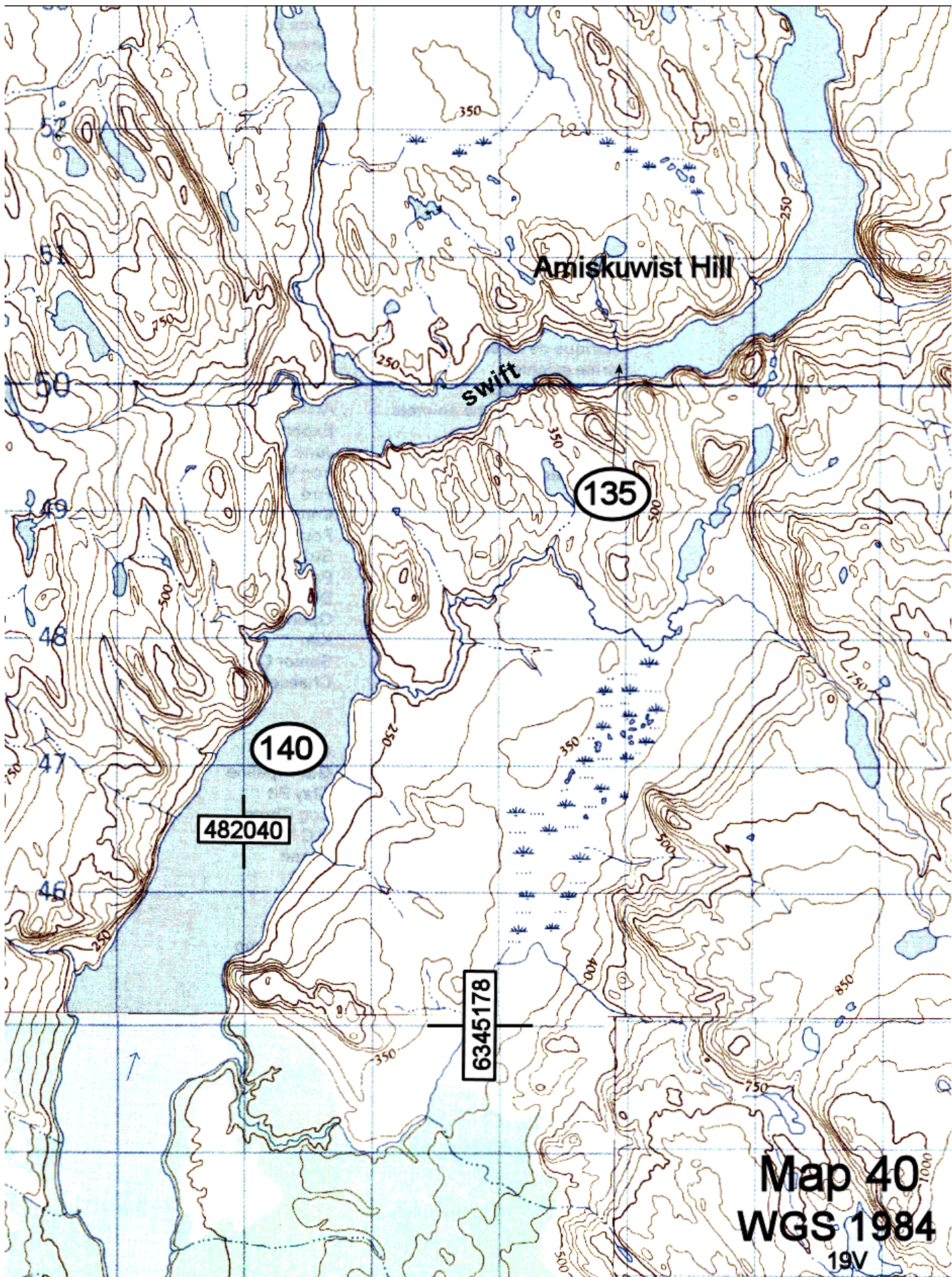














Map 41  
WGS 1984  
19V

6360220

125

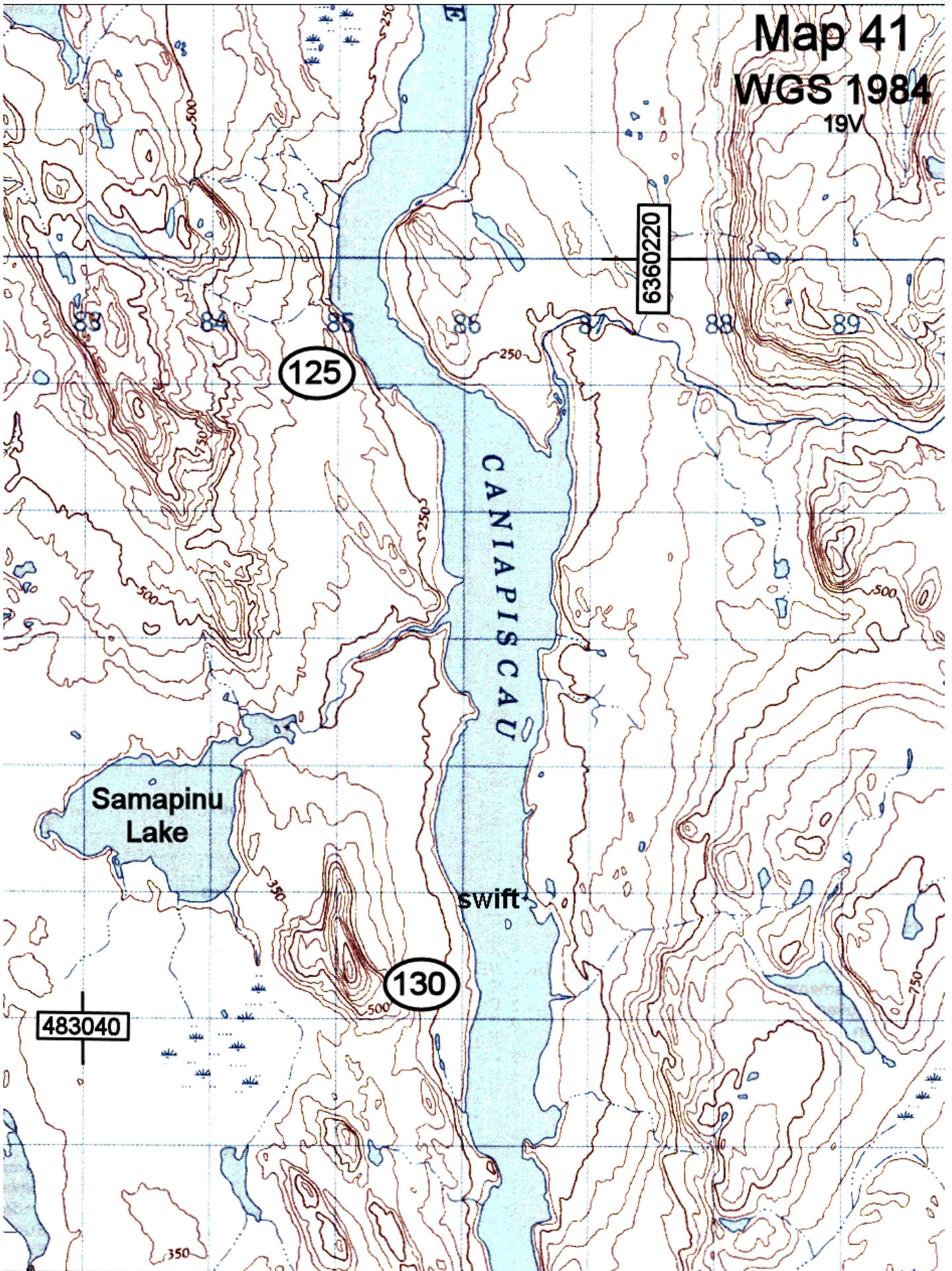
CANIAPISCAU

Samapinu  
Lake

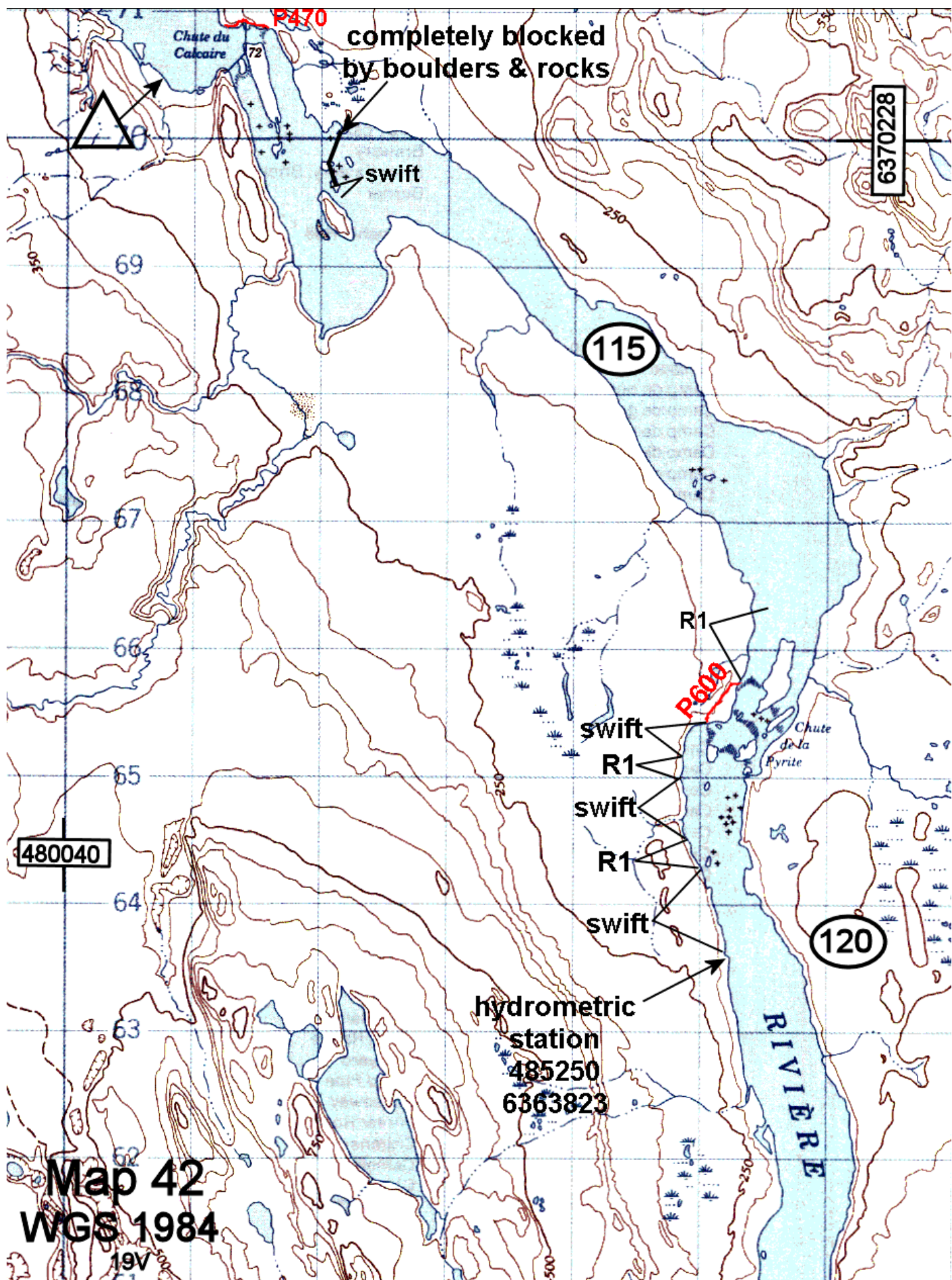
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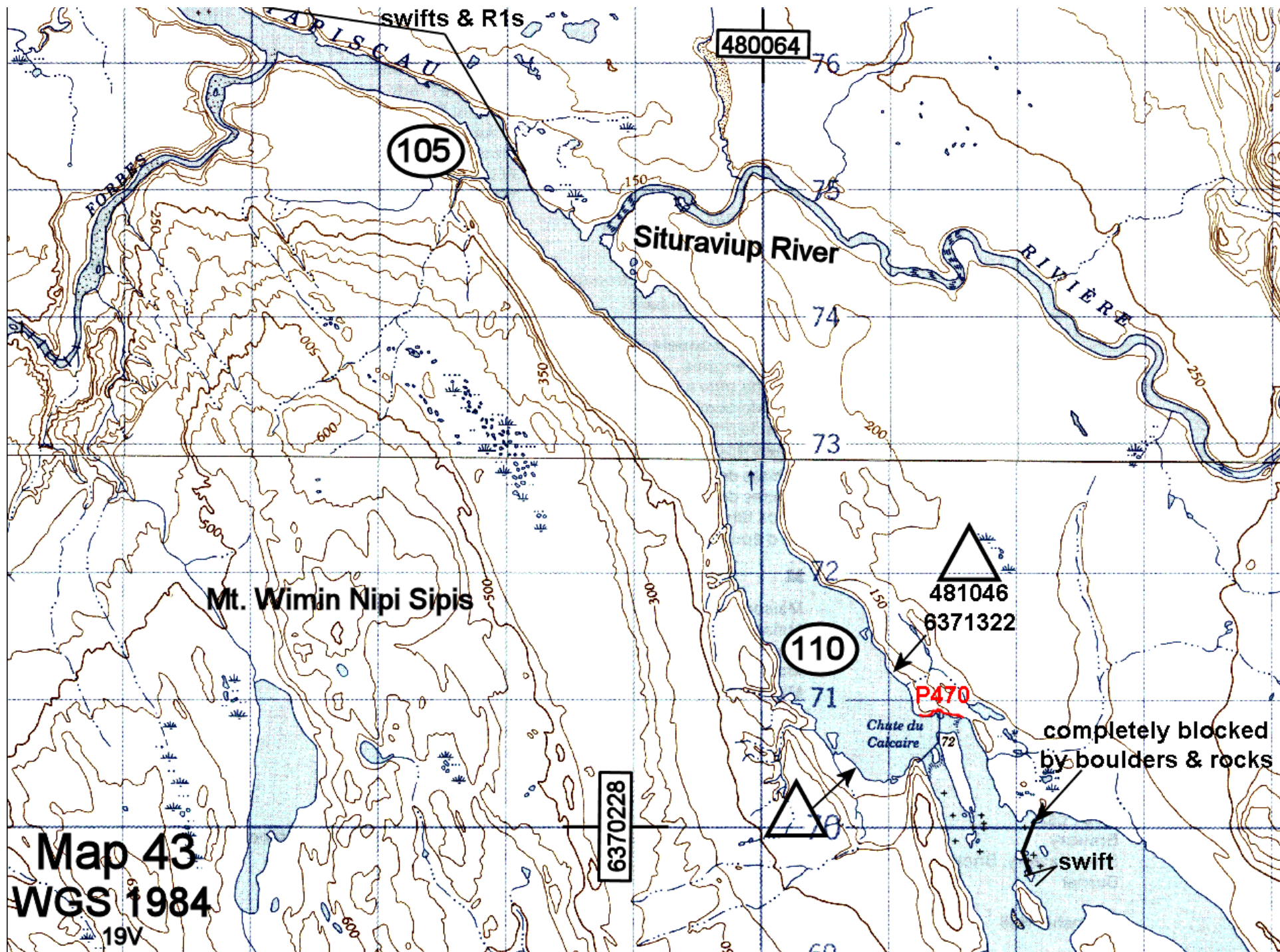
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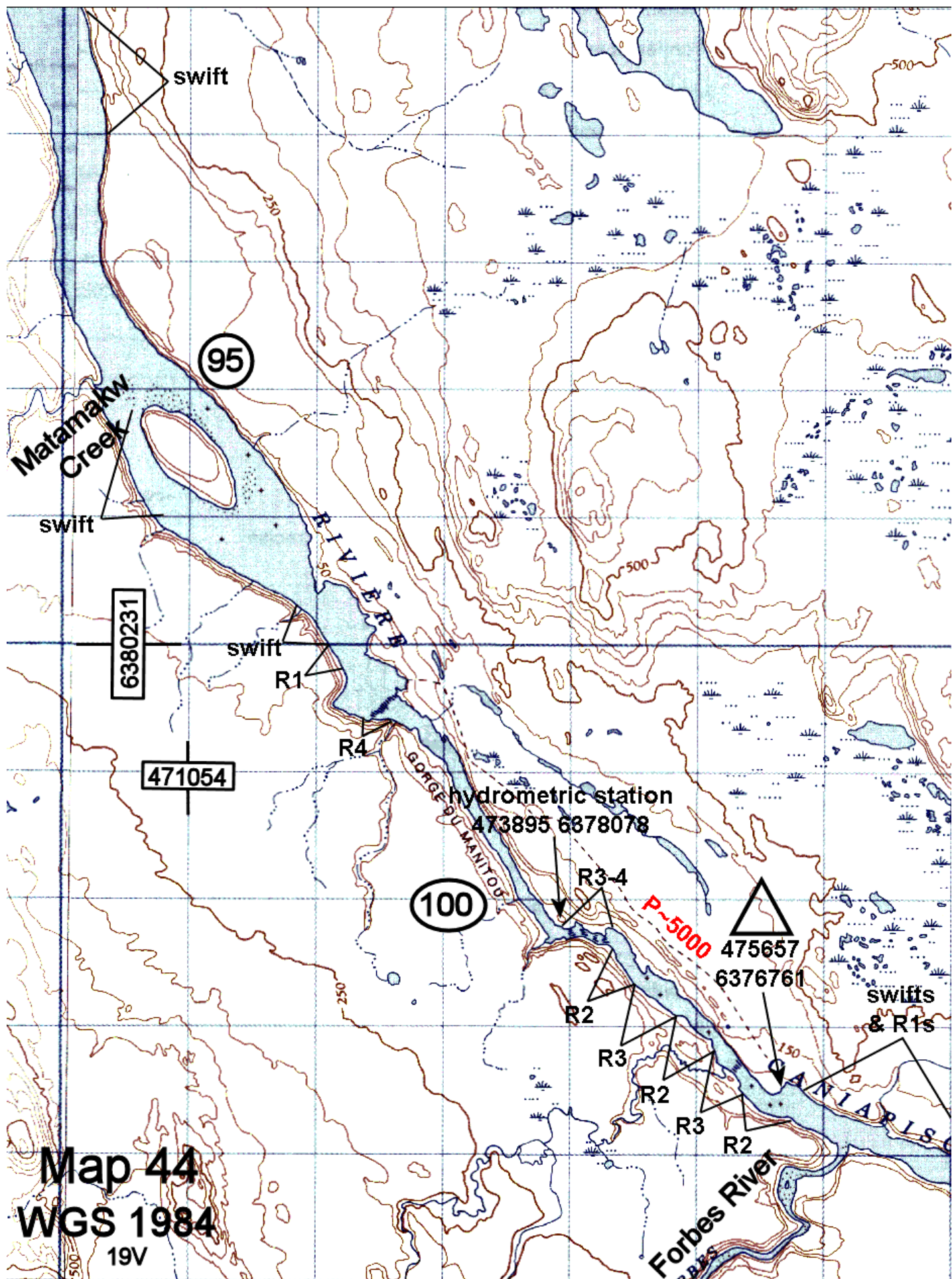




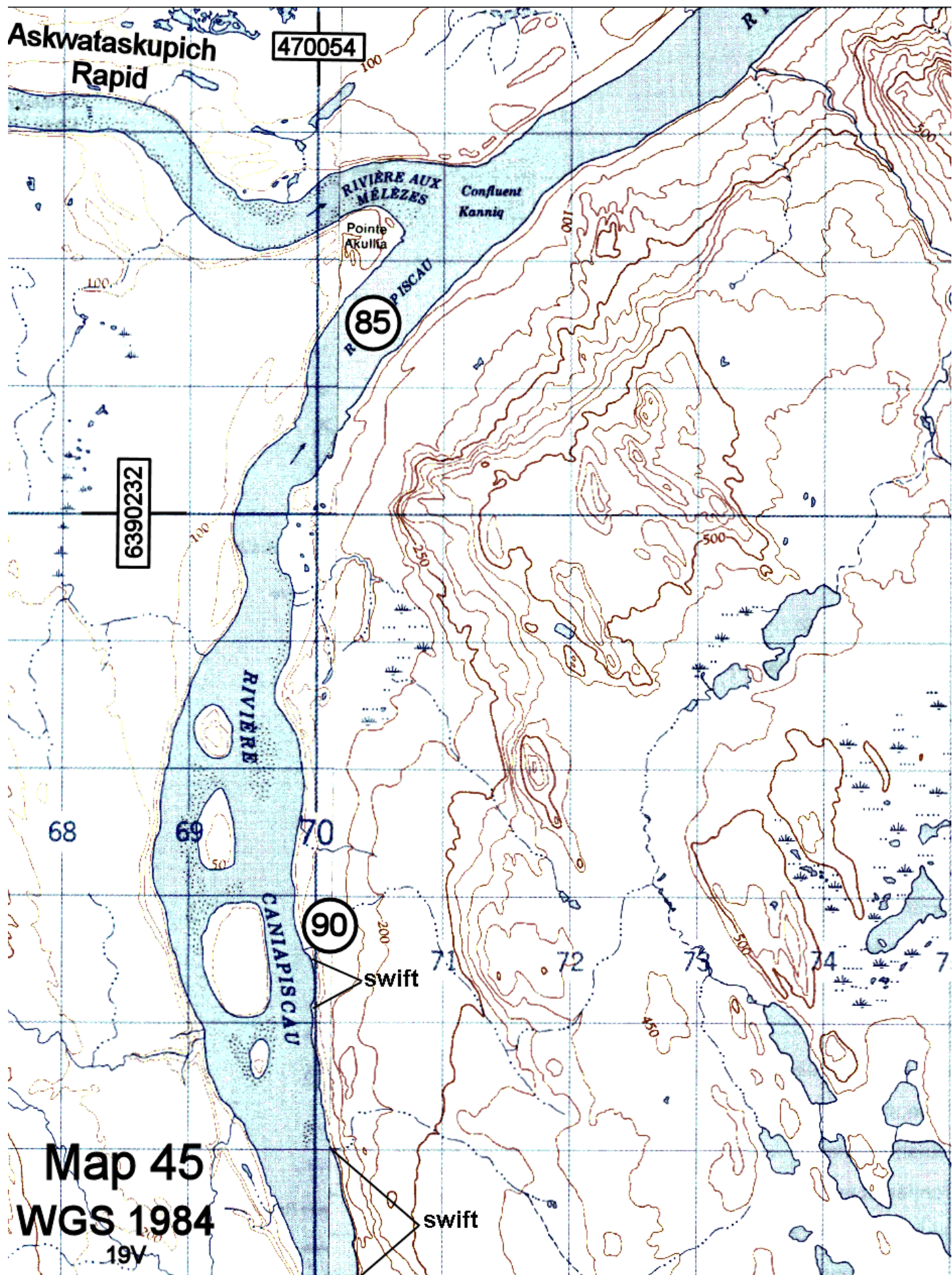






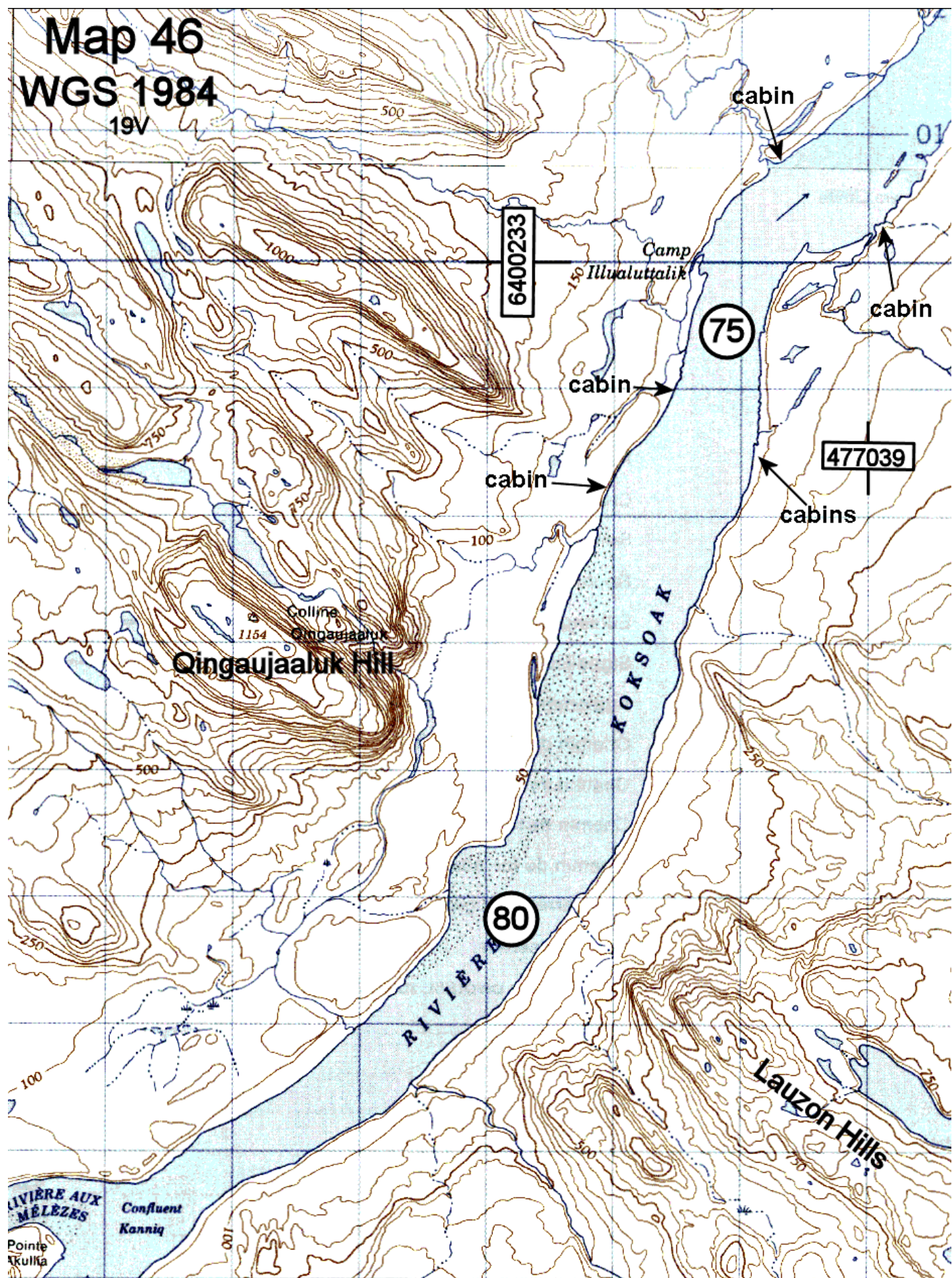




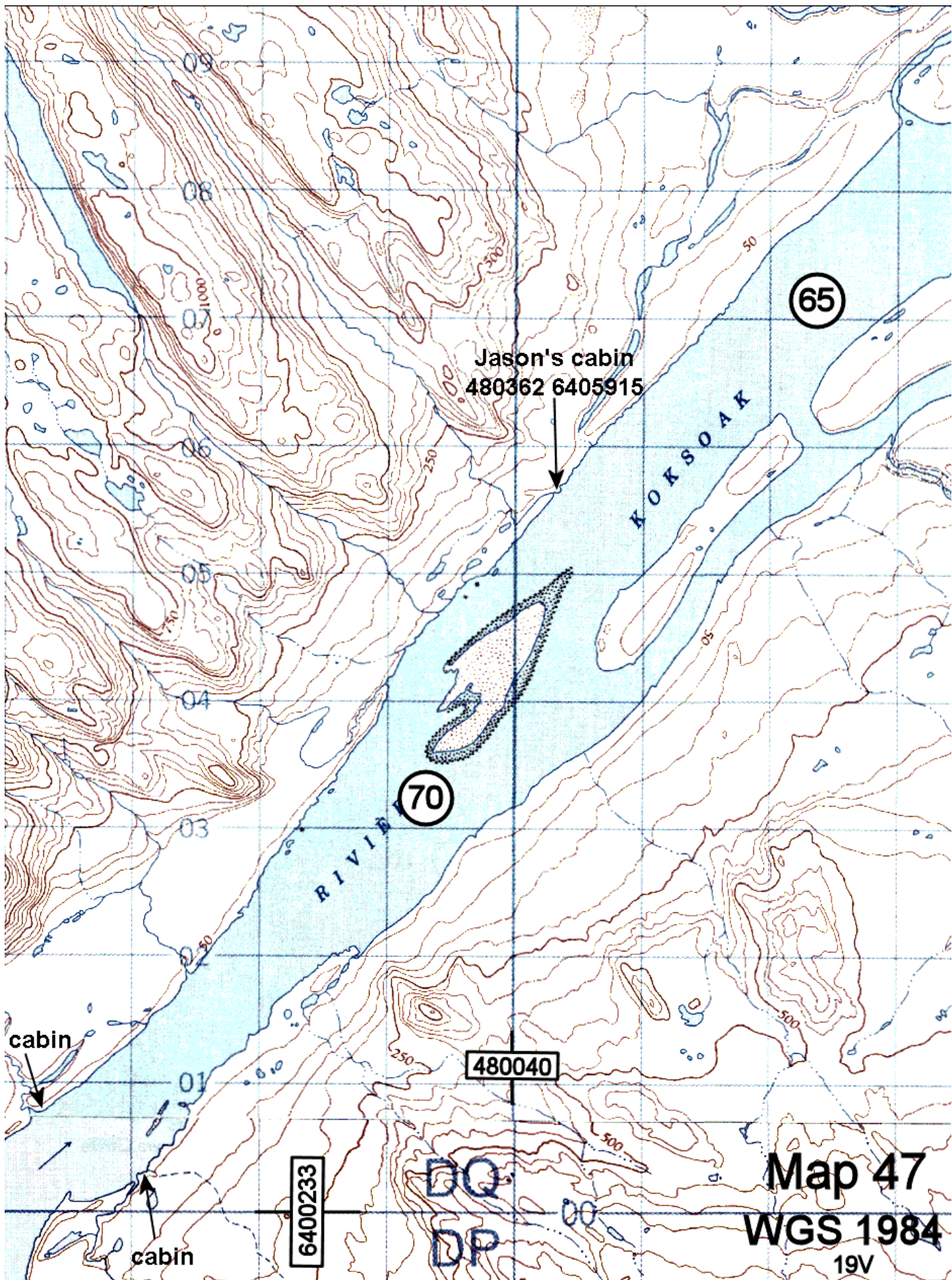




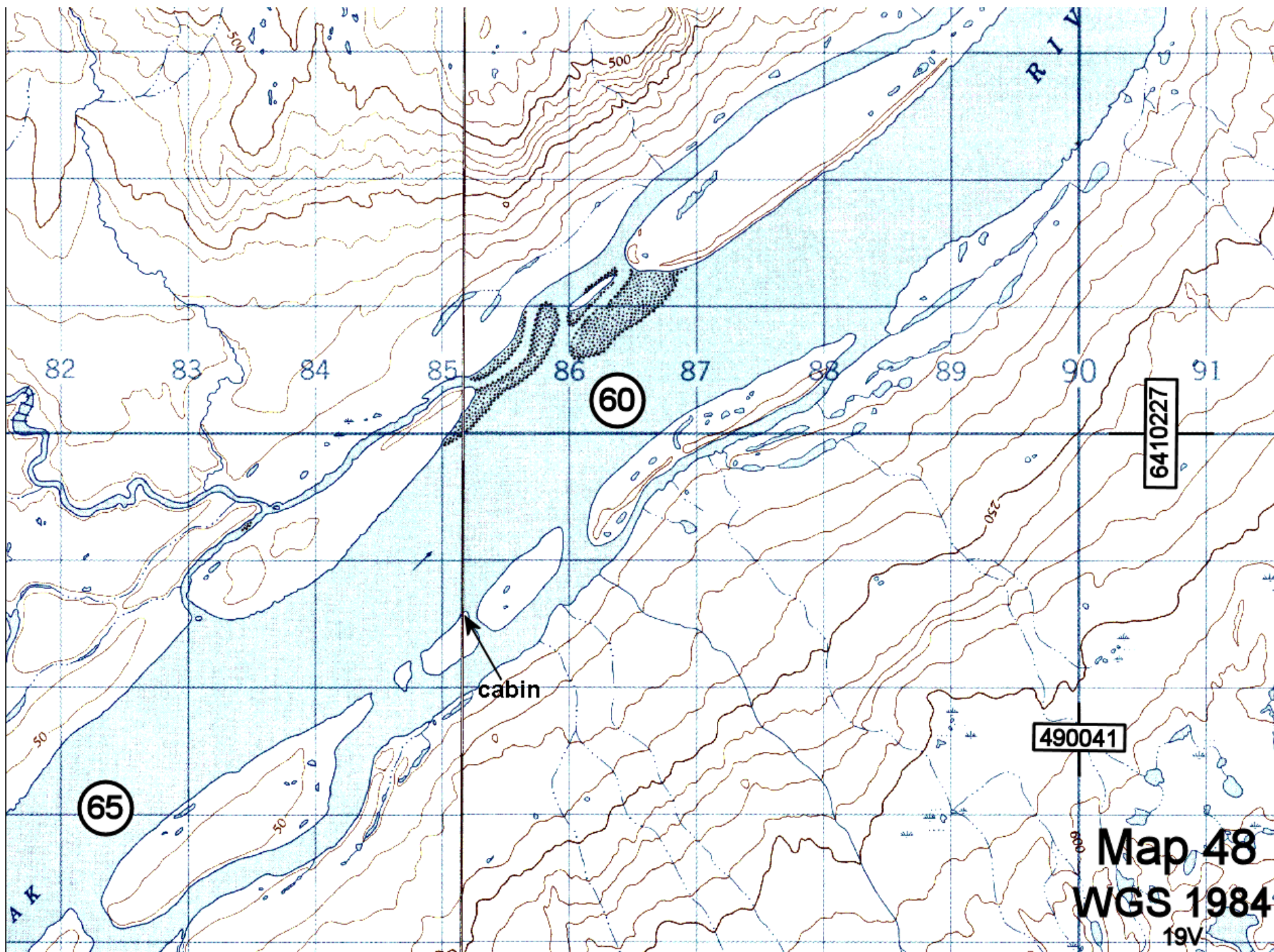
**Map 46**  
**WGS 1984**  
19V



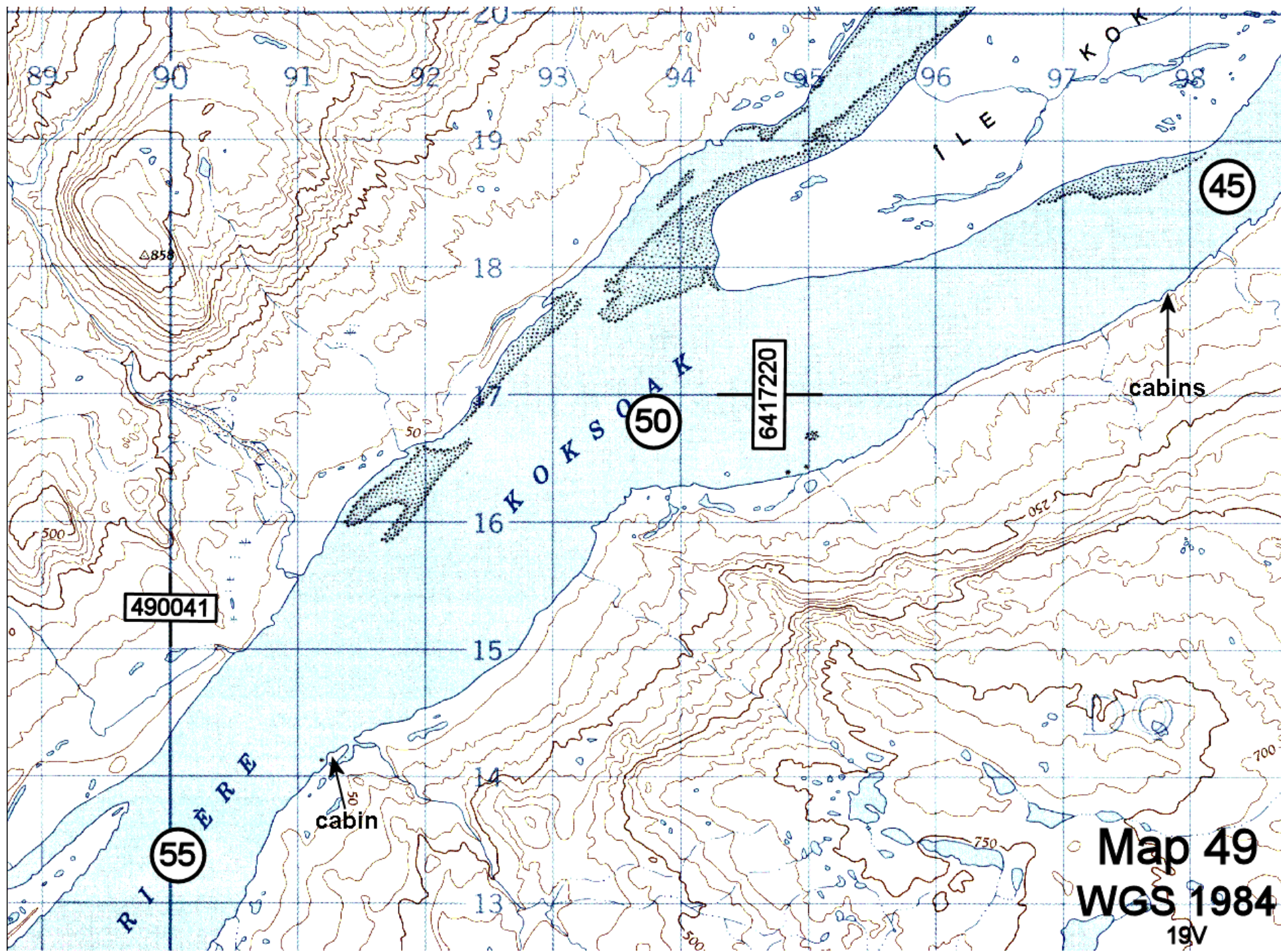




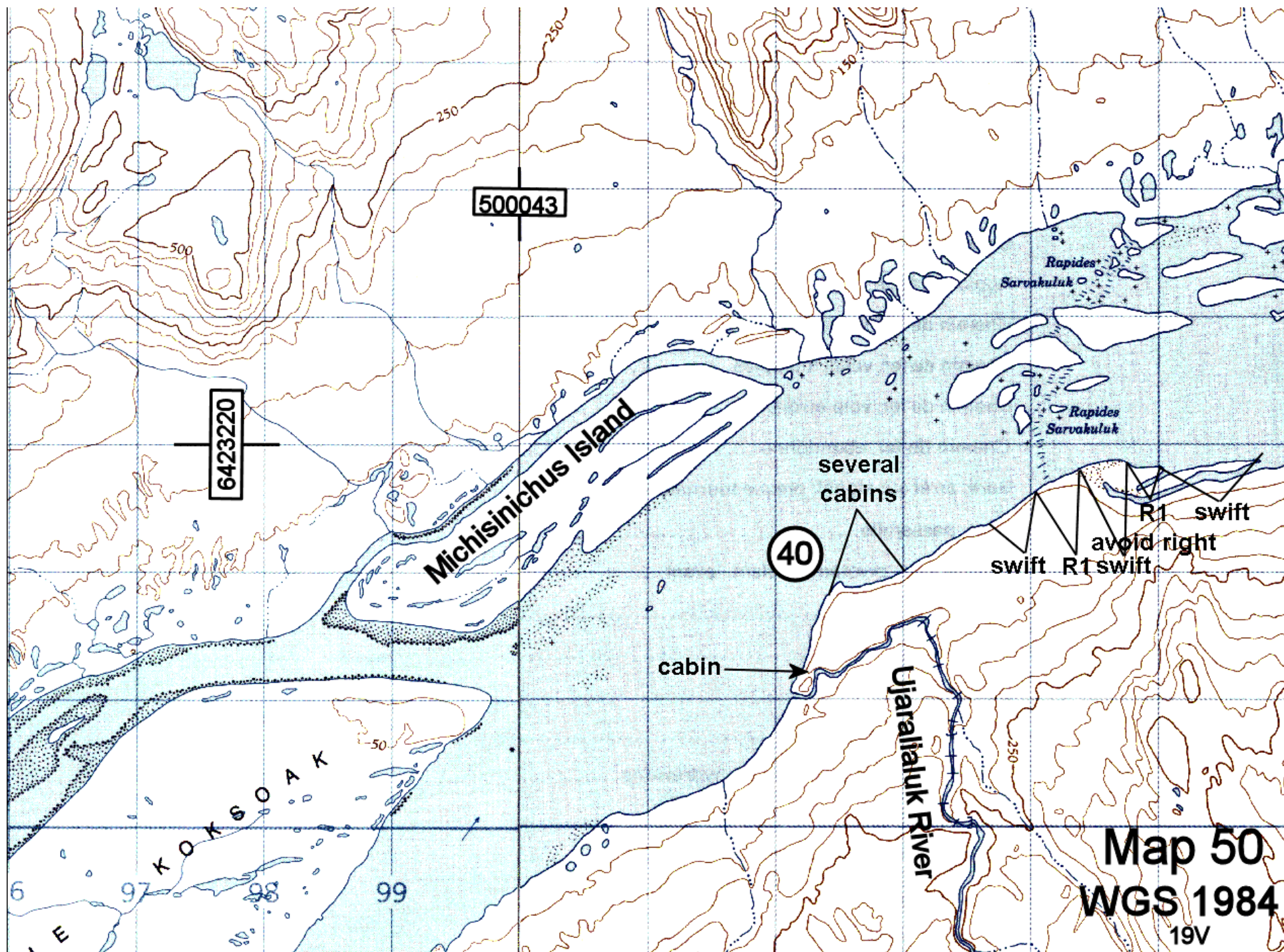




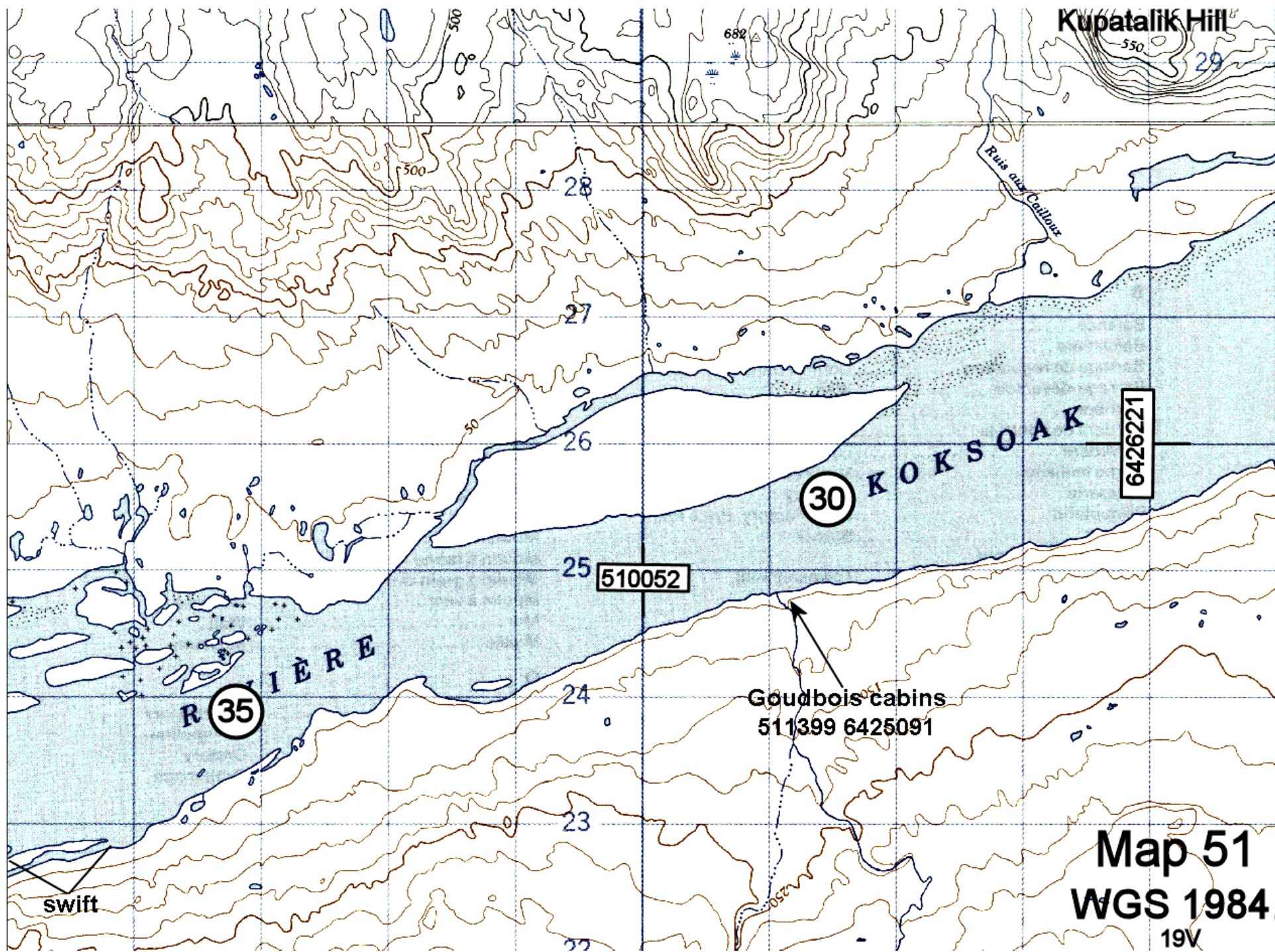




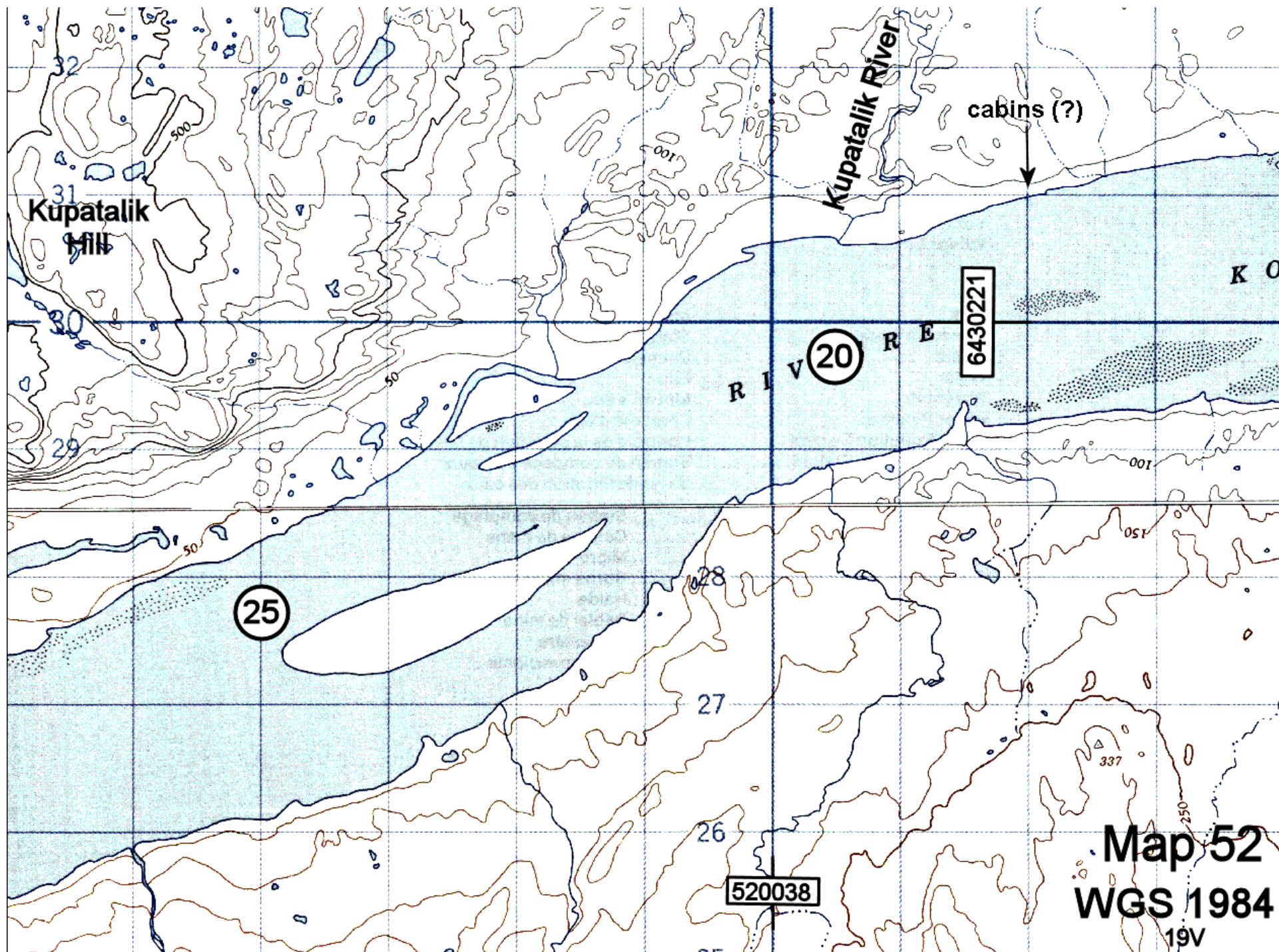














**Map 53**  
**WGS 1984**

19V

524030

4 cabins

6433214

Radio

10

15

Pangaligiaq Shoal

K O K S O A K

Highfall Creek

