



**Thermal Implications on Transport in Bentonite: Using Full-Scale Engineered Barrier Experiment-Dismantling Project (FEBEX-DP) Samples for Laboratory Studies and Model Testing**

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# Disposal in Argillite SFWST Work Package

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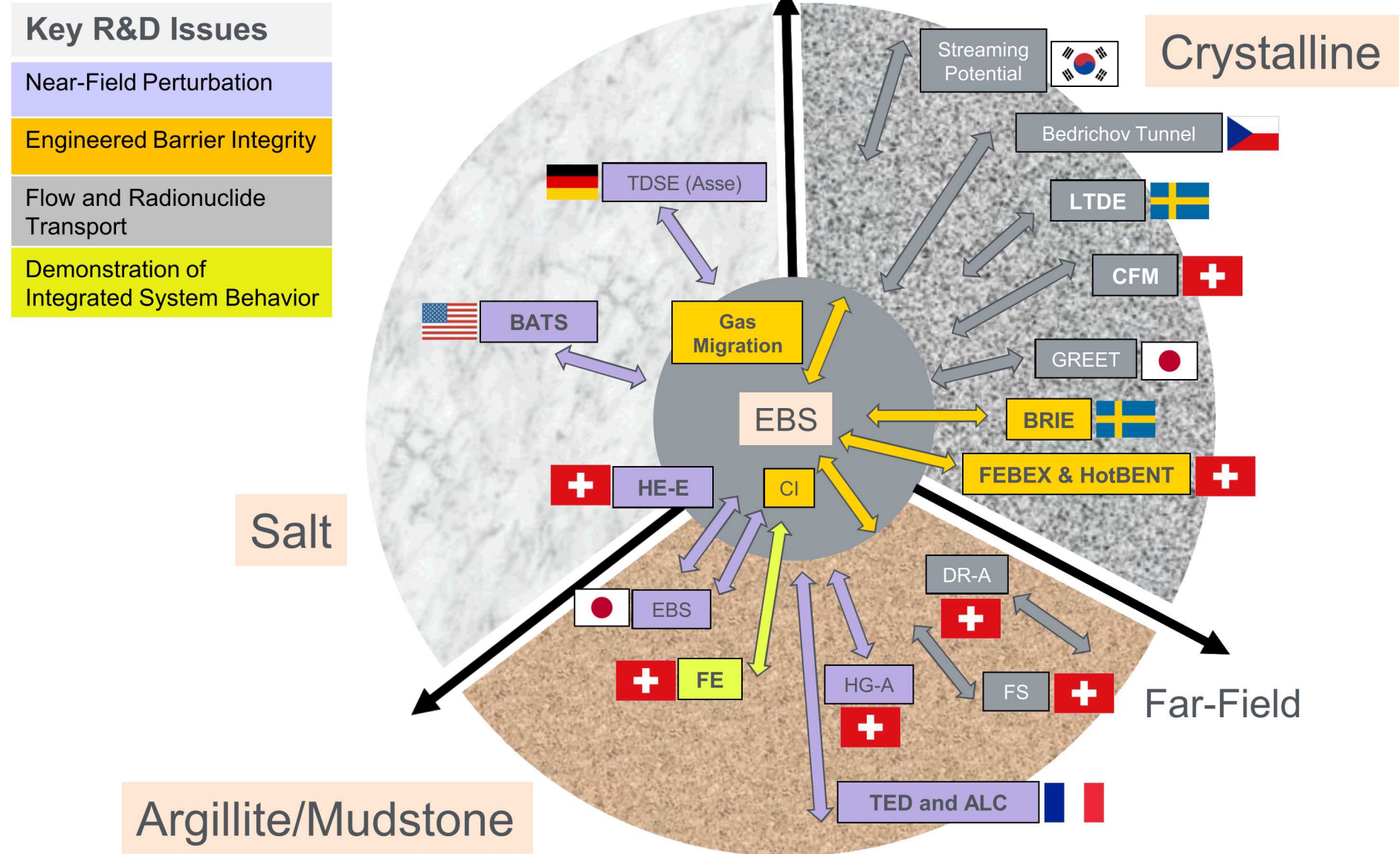


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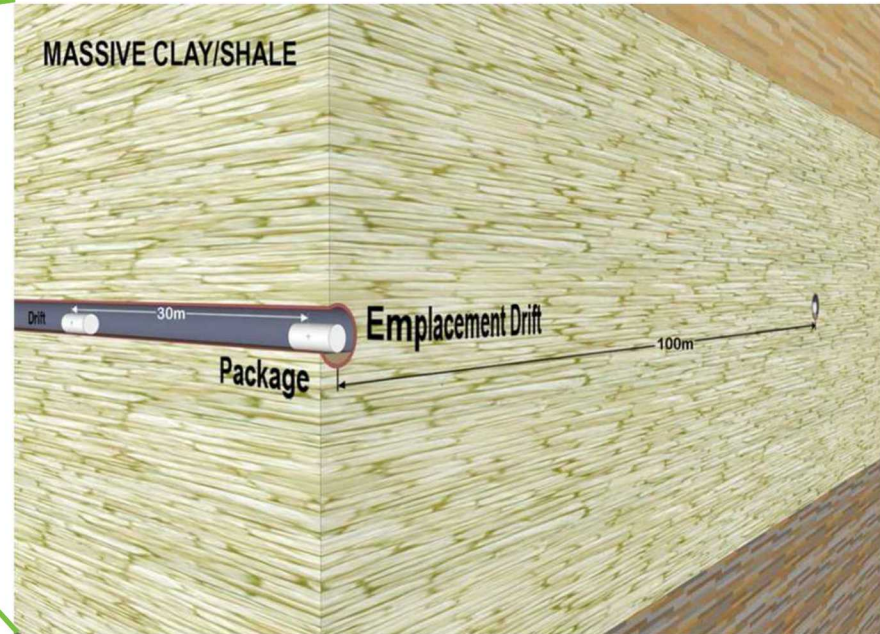
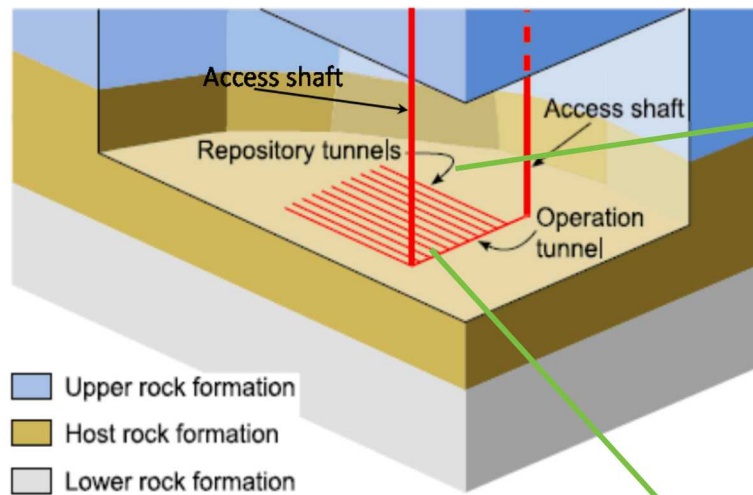
Edgar Buck



# International URL Portfolio in a Nutshell

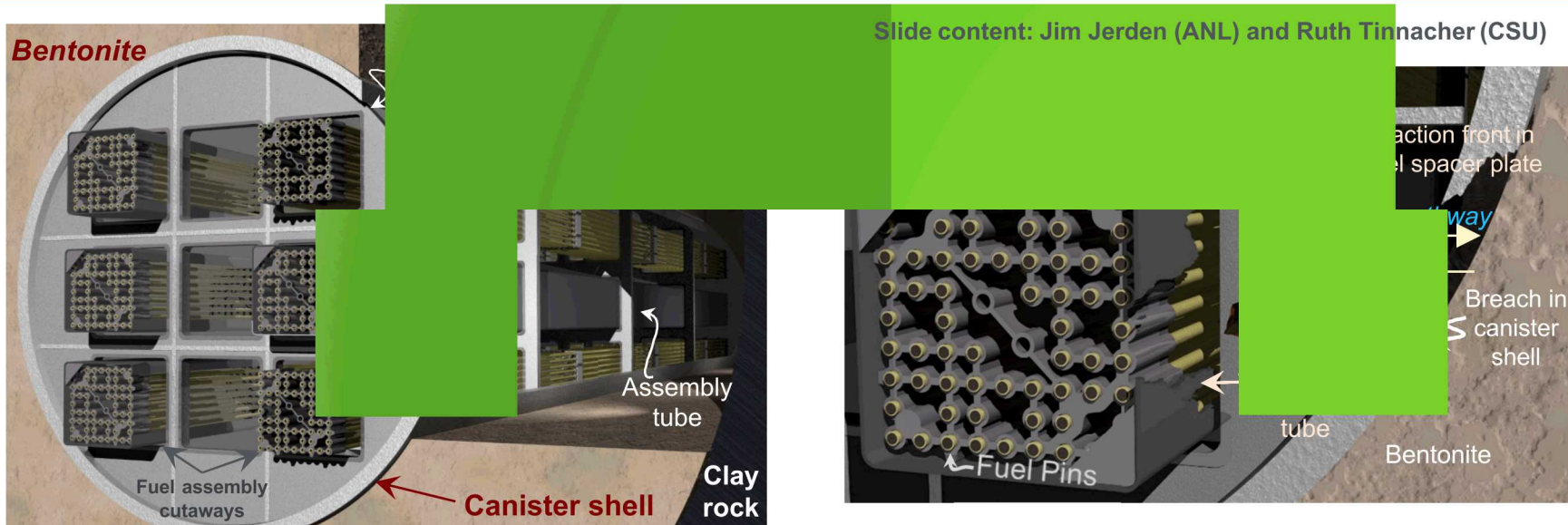


# Spent Fuel Waste Science Technology (SFWST) Campaign: Disposal in Argillaceous Clay Rock



- Coupled process modeling of Thermal-Hydrological-Chemical-Mechanical (THCM) with decay heat effects
- Engineered barrier system (EBS) model integration with performance assessment (PA)
- Thermodynamic modeling of barrier material interactions (**clay, cement, metal**) and **thermodynamic database (TDB) development**
- Clay interaction experiments:
  - **High temperature mineral phase stability, clay – metal interactions (waste package material (steel) corrosion)**
  - **Low temperature radionuclide (RN) sorption/diffusion in bentonite & modeling**

# Conceptual Model for Transport in Bentonite



- ⇒ **Bentonite (montmorillonite)** is the proposed backfill material in the EBS.
- ⇒ **Diffusion** – dominant transport mechanism in the EBS
- ⇒ **Temperature and chemical gradients (e.g., solution chemistry)** are expected over time and across the EBS.

## Goals:

- **Investigate the effects of temperature on bentonite clay barrier interactions:** clay phase change / degradation, smectite swelling, and structure / composition
- **Investigate the effects of changing chemical conditions and temperatures** on uranium(VI) sorption and diffusion.
- **Reduce the uncertainty** in actinide sorption / diffusion sub-models that are part of performance assessment (PA) models for waste repositories.

# Understanding radionuclide adsorption to clay under realistic waste-disposal scenarios

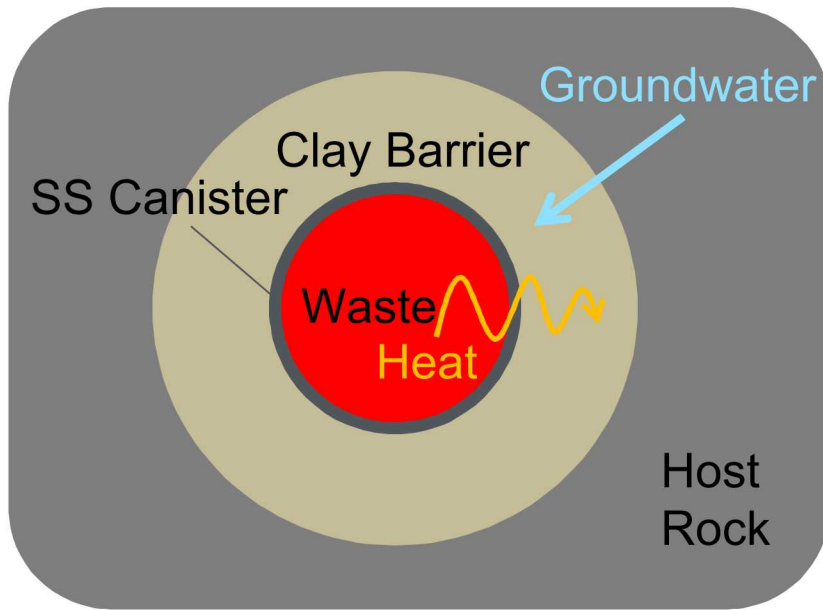
- Heat-generating waste canisters increase temperatures of surrounding engineered barriers
- Groundwater Intrusion from surrounding host rock



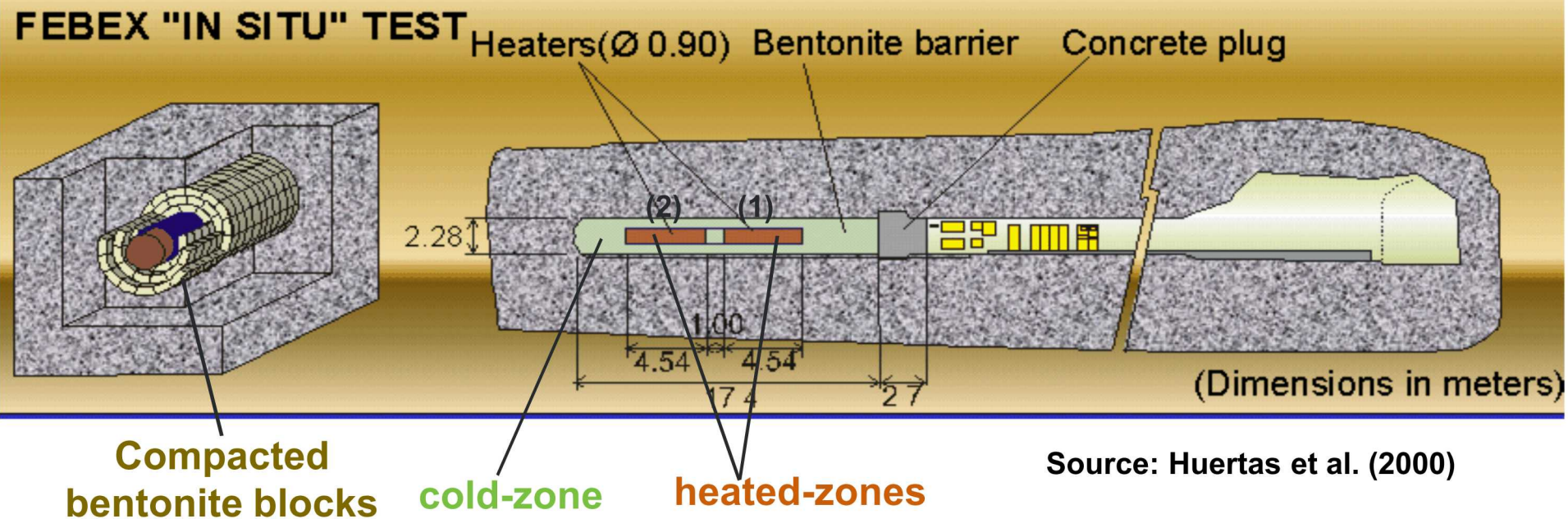
- Variable saturation across clay barrier
- Changes in pore water chemistry
- Changes in accessory mineral assemblage (e.g., calcite, ferrihydrite)
- Changes in clay structure/composition (e.g., illitization, ion exchange)



- Changes in aqueous radionuclide (RN) speciation
- Changes in mineral sorption capacity
- Changes in swelling behavior

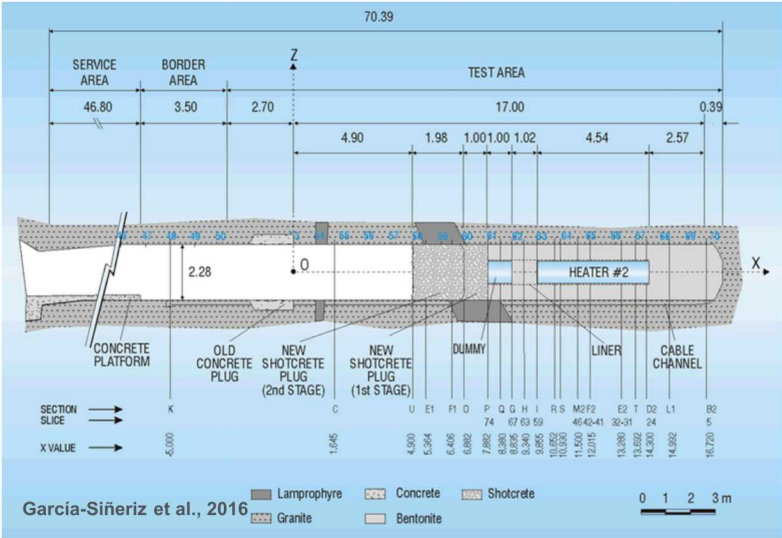


# FEBEX Full Scale Heater Test Experiment



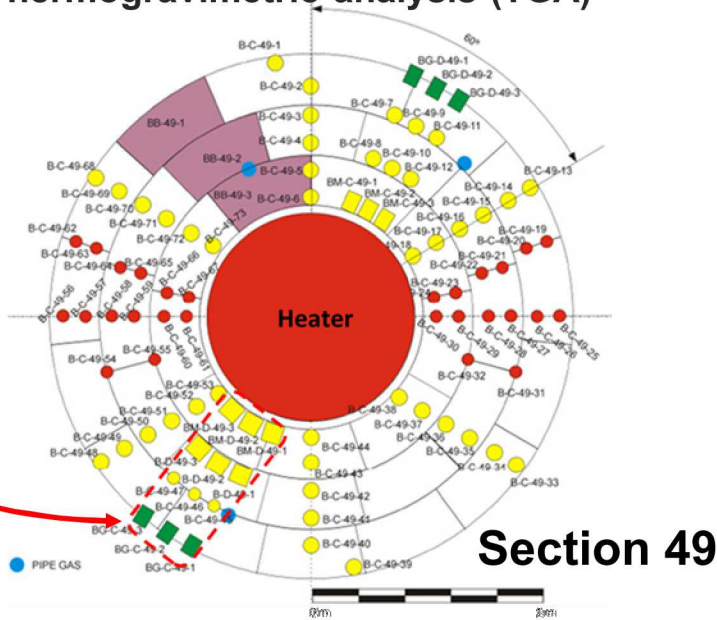
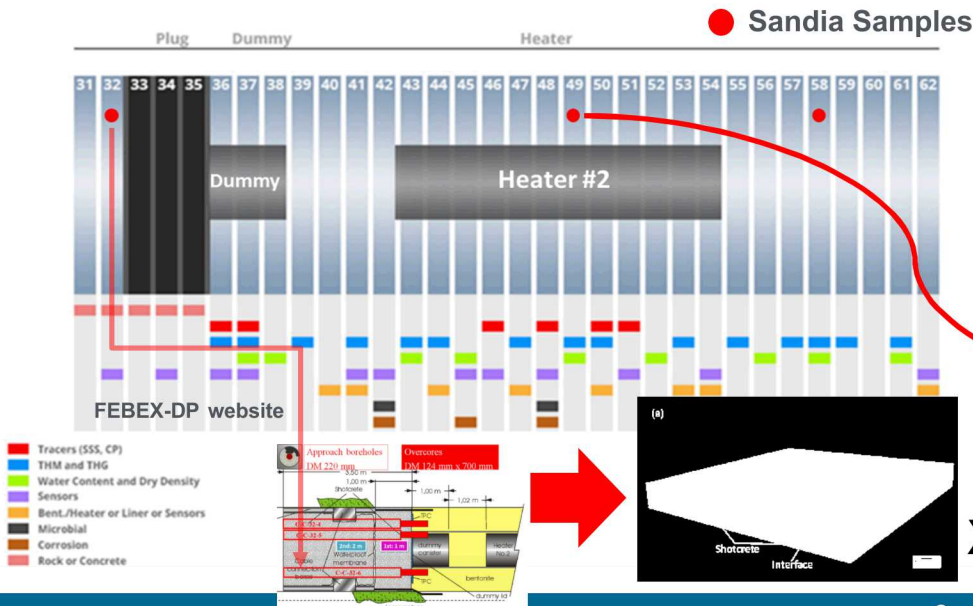
- Conducted by ENRESA under auspices of the EU at the Grimsel Test Site (GTS) in Switzerland
- Bentonite was compacted into blocks at 1650 kg/m<sup>3</sup> dry density and placed in a radial arrangement surrounding 2 heaters
- Heaters operated at a maximum of 100 °C – Heater 1 operated for 5 years; heater 2 operated for 18 years
- FEBEX-DP samples were obtained from heater 2 dismantling in 2015 after 18 years of heating
- Unique opportunity for long-term full-scale heater test and sample / data availability

# FEBEX-DP Experiment: Sampled Sections



## FEBEX-DP

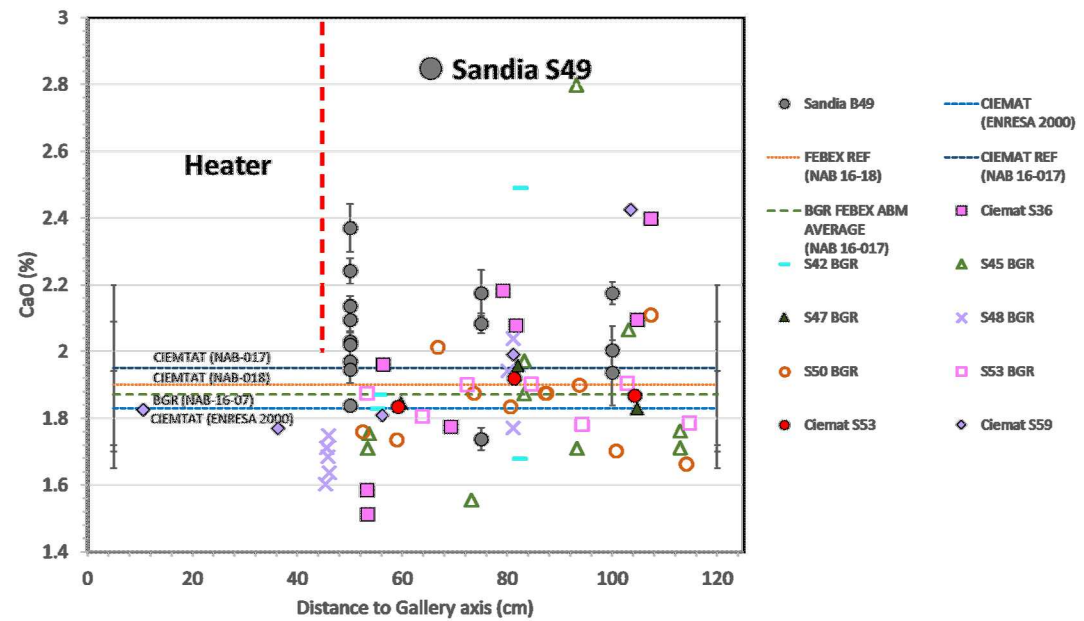
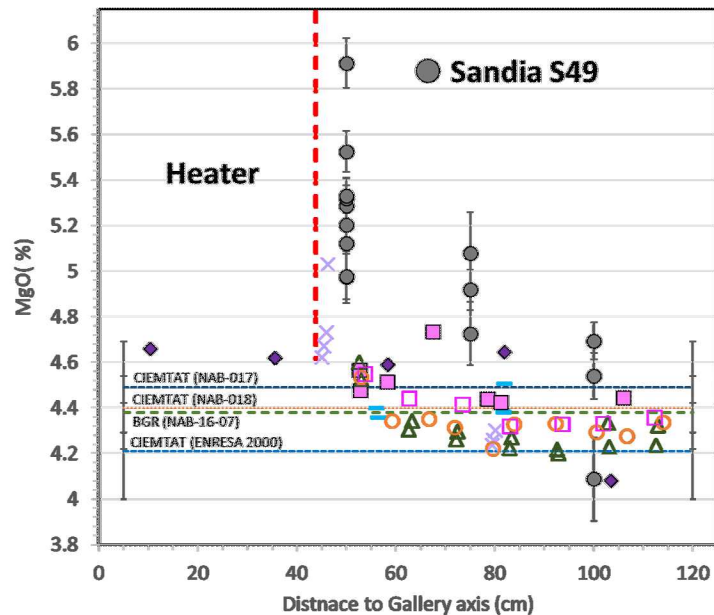
- Section 49 samples (near longitudinal central area of heater)
- Bentonite samples from close to the heater towards the outer parts of the barrier
- X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) bulk composition, X-ray CT-scan,  $\mu$ -XRF, SEM-EDS, X-Ray Diffraction (XRD), Thermogravimetric analysis (TGA)



X-ray CT-Scan

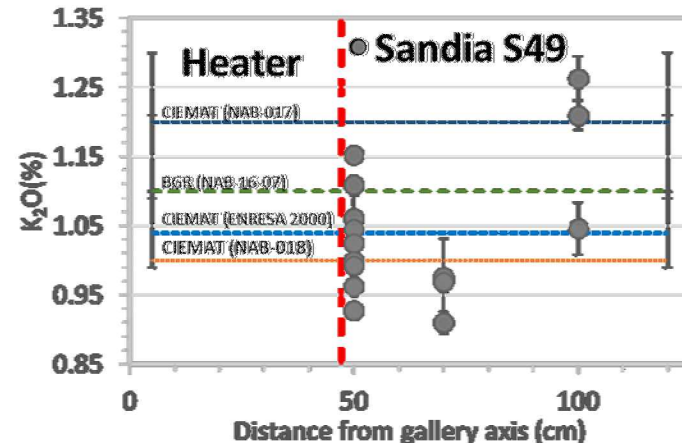
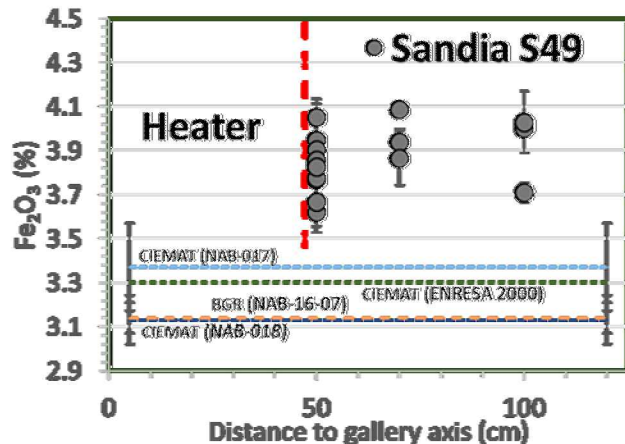
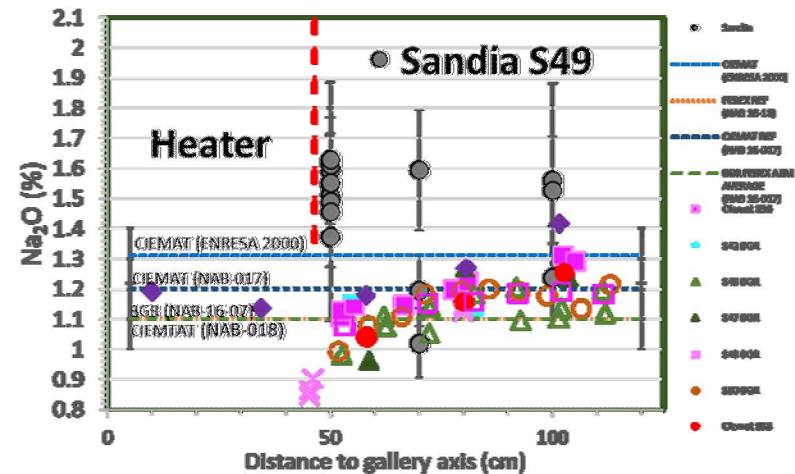
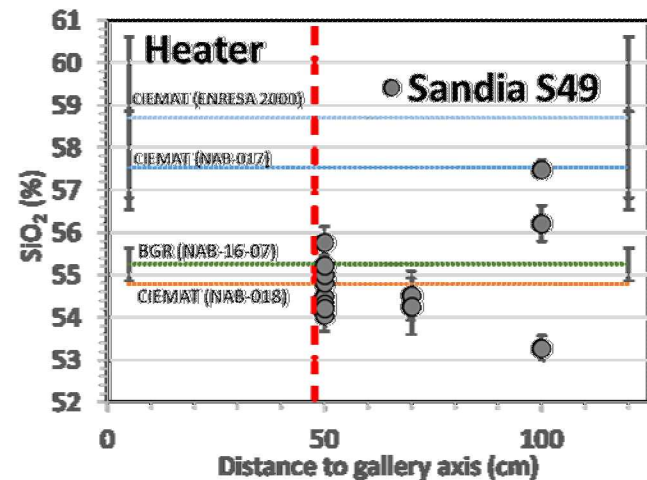
Section 49

# FEBEX-DP Bulk Bentonite Samples: X-ray Fluorescence (XRF)



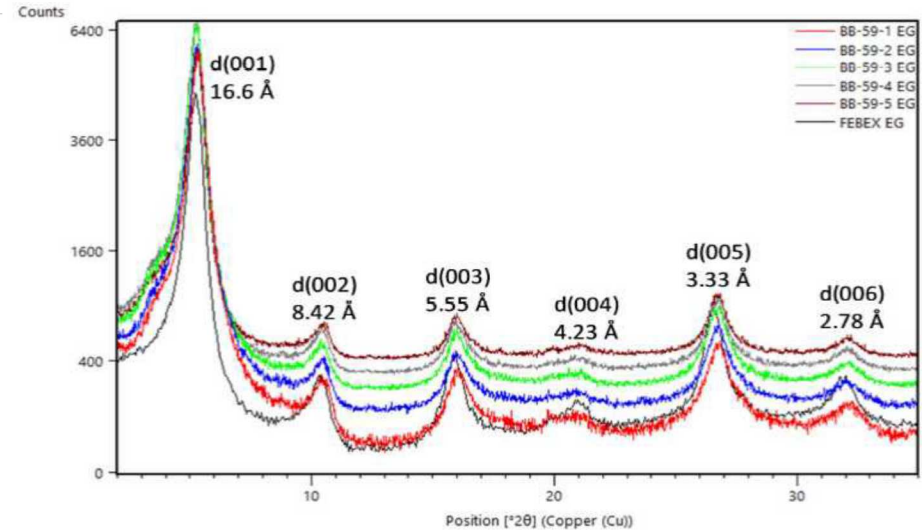
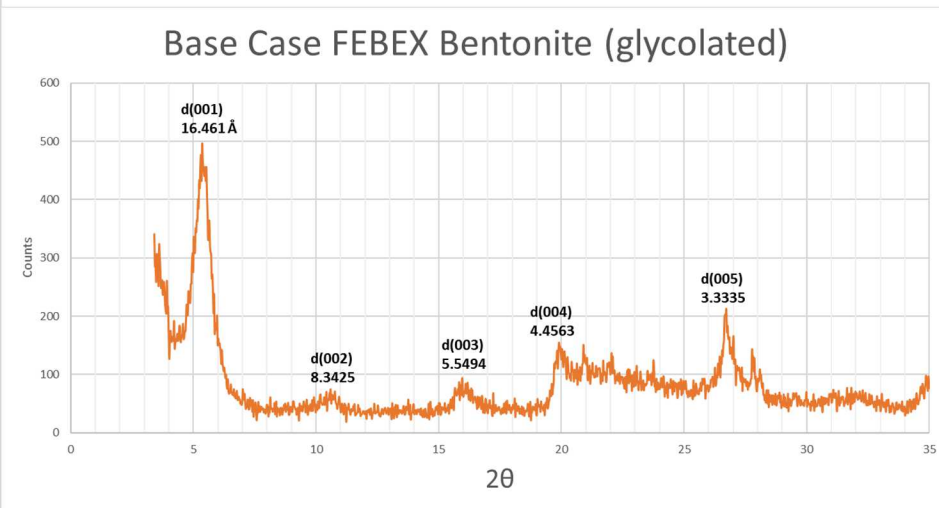
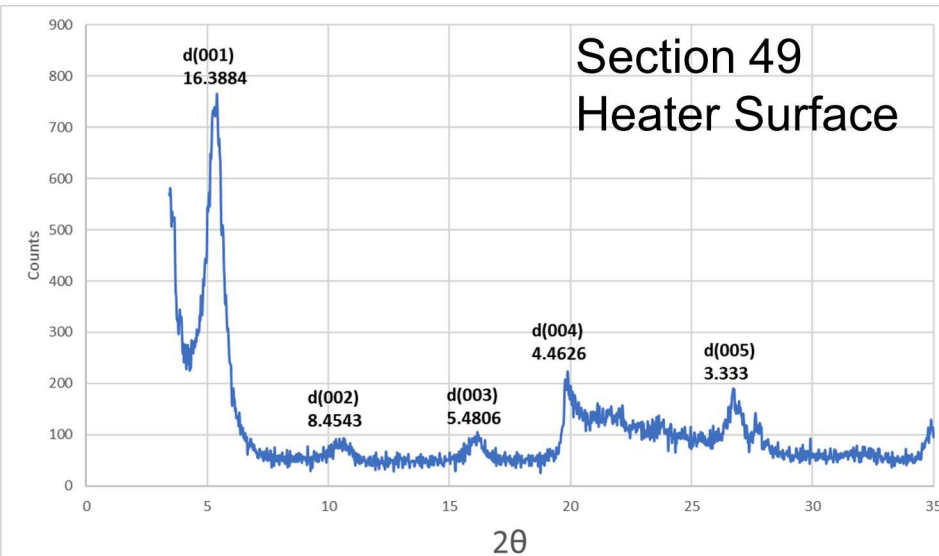
- Mg enrichment towards the heater surface – zones of increasing dry out conditions
- Bulk MgO content far from heater nominally within the bounds of other lab analyses
- Overall, CaO content is relatively variable close to the heater surface
- Mg enrichment(?):
  - Enhanced Mg content due to elevated temperatures?
  - SEM-EDS didn't show newly-formed Mg-bearing phases within the clay matrix

# FEBEX-DP Bulk Bentonite Samples: X-ray Fluorescence (XRF)

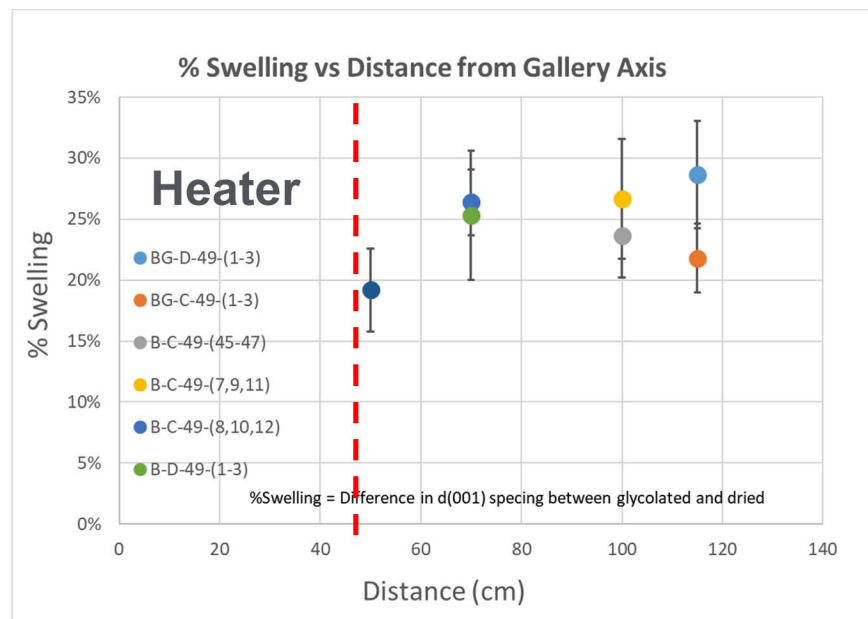
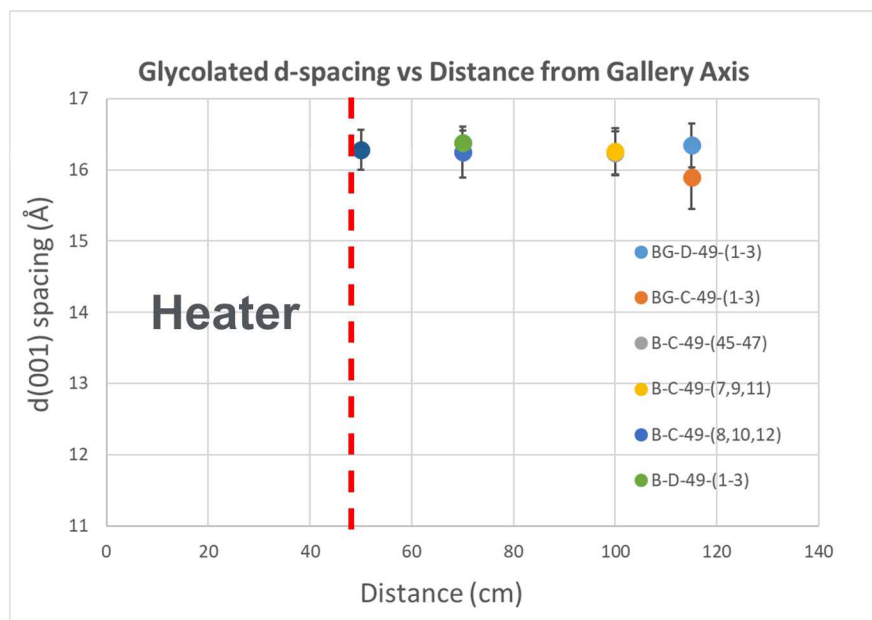


- Large uncertainties on  $\text{Na}_2\text{O}$  content – Issues with detection limits
- Slightly enriched in  $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$  relative to reference bentonite compositions
- $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ ,  $\text{SiO}_2$ , &  $\text{K}_2\text{O}$  fall within the range of reference bentonite compositions

# FEBEX-DP: Bentonite X-ray Diffraction (XRD)

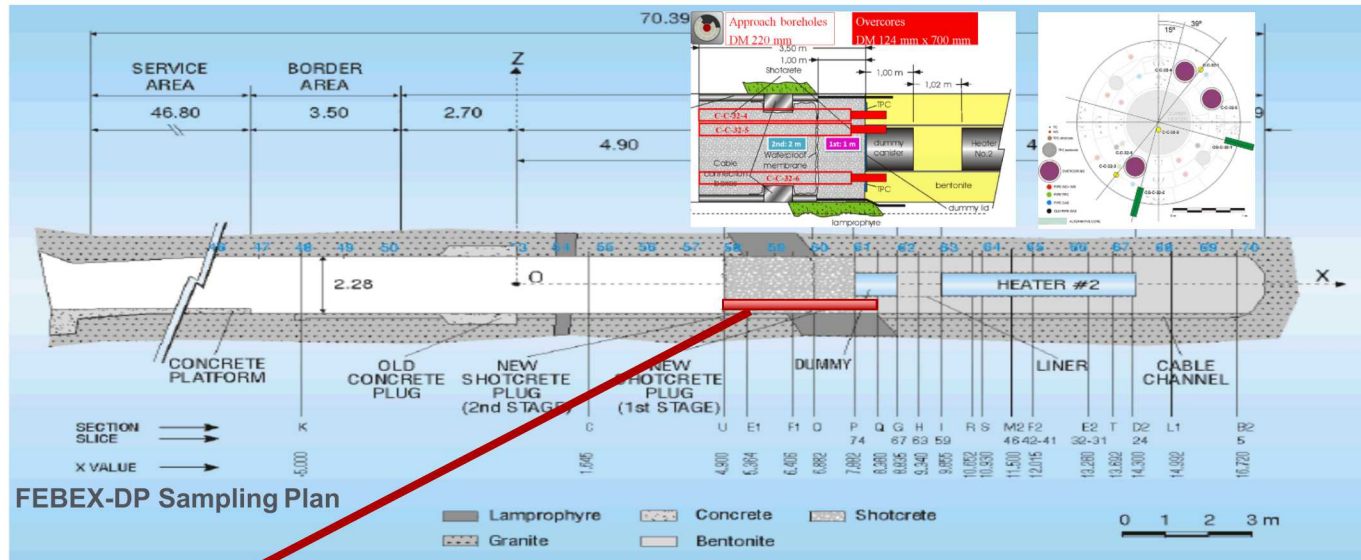


- Overall, XRD profiles are similar to those reported by FEBEX-DP project
- Clay Structural Characterization:**
  - Comparison of XRD spectra across sampled domain
  - Evaluate d(001)-spacings as a function of distance from heater surface

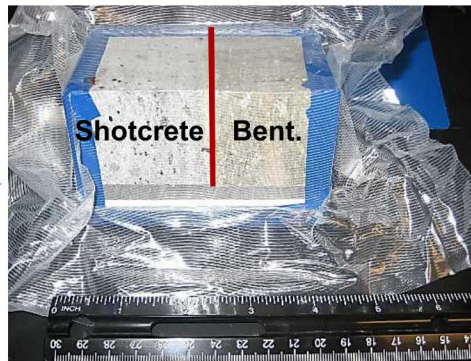


- No apparent effect of elevated temperatures on d(001) spacing for glycolated clay samples
- Slight decrease in swelling extent for samples in contact or close to the heater surface
- Prolonged exposure of bentonite to  $T = 95 - 100\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  causes some changes in swelling
  - **Correlate with compositional changes in clay close to heater surface**

# FEBEX-DP: Shotcrete – Bentonite Interface Core Extraction



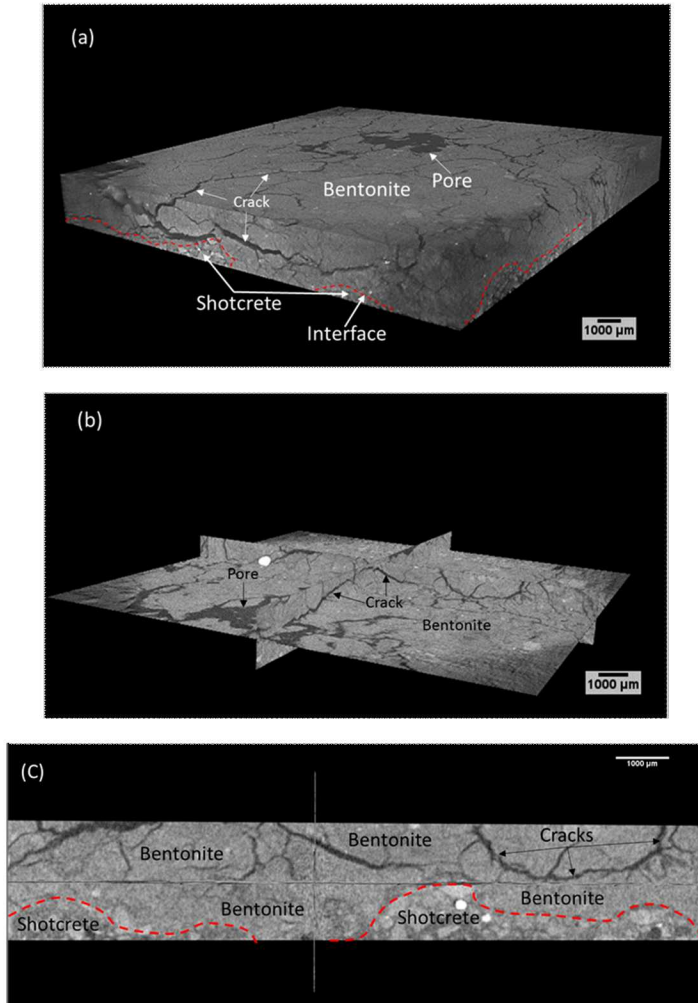
Mäder et al. (2016)



C. F. Jové Colón (SNL)

- Shotcrete/bentonite interface sampling
- Characterization studies cement/bentonite interactions
  - Phase identification (SEM-EDS, XRD,  $\mu$ -XRF)
  - X-ray CT Scan: micron-scale structures

# Bentonite – Concrete Interface Characterization (X-ray CT Scan)



## Main Features:

- Occurrence of microcracks and pore spaces – connected in many cases
- “Craquelure” or “chickenwire” microcrack pattern (desiccation)
- Some embedded granular material in bentonite matrix with radiating cracks
- Heterogeneous microcrack spatial distribution → localized regions with no cracks

## Crack – Pore pathways:

### Bentonite:

Continuous and discontinuous pore-microcrack networks (2D & 3D)

Large pores tend to be connected to microcracks

### Shotcrete:

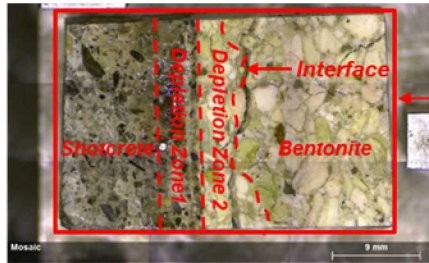
Bentonite: Large pores tend to be connected to microcracks

No or little microcracks

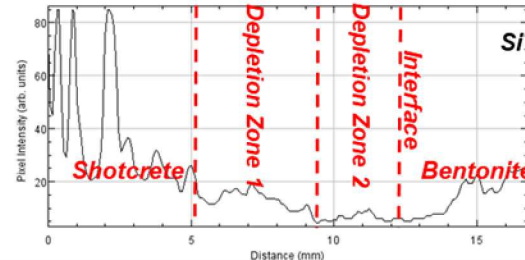
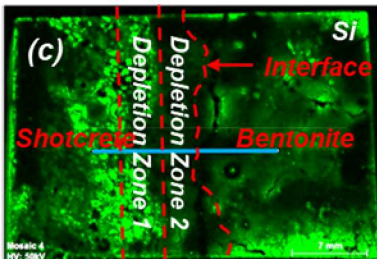
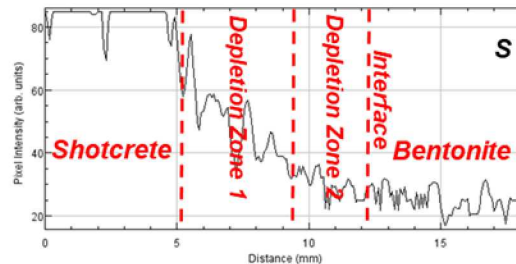
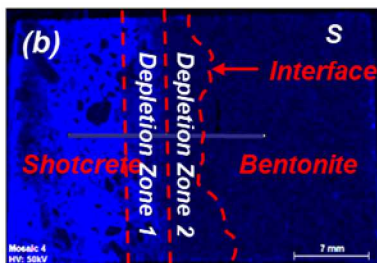
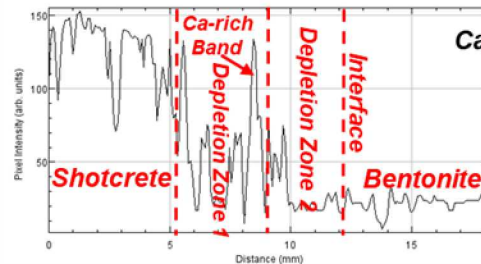
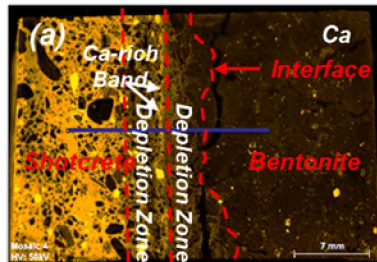
Isolated pores except at the interface

# Shotcrete - Bentonite Interface Characterization ( $\mu$ -XRF)

Thin Section



- 34.744 mm x 23.88 mm Scan Area,
- 30 $\mu$ m Spot to Spot Distance,
- 25 $\mu$ m Spot Size,
- X-ray Energy 50kV/200 $\mu$ A
- ~90 min to complete sample

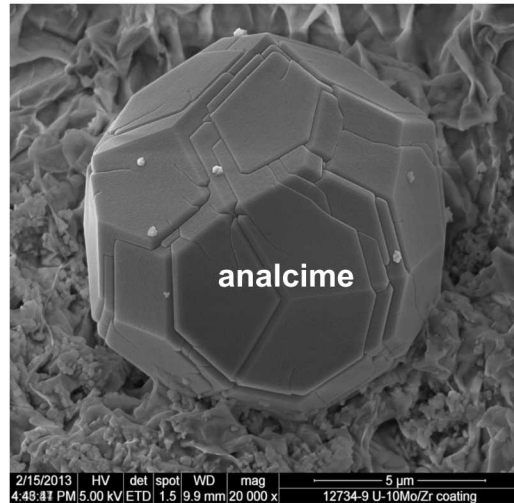


- **Main Features**
  - Compositional map at thin section (mm) scale – Scanning at the  $\mu$ m scale
  - Sharp compositional changes at the bentonite-shotcrete interface
  - Consistent spatial correlation among various elements across interface
- **Compositional Gradients**
  - Depletion on shotcrete side of the interface  $\rightarrow$  Leaching?
  - Bentonite seems compositional homogeneous at the interface
  - Limited reaction front?

Jové Colón et al. (2017)

# Authigenic zeolite produced from clinoptilolite / glass in bentonite interaction experiments

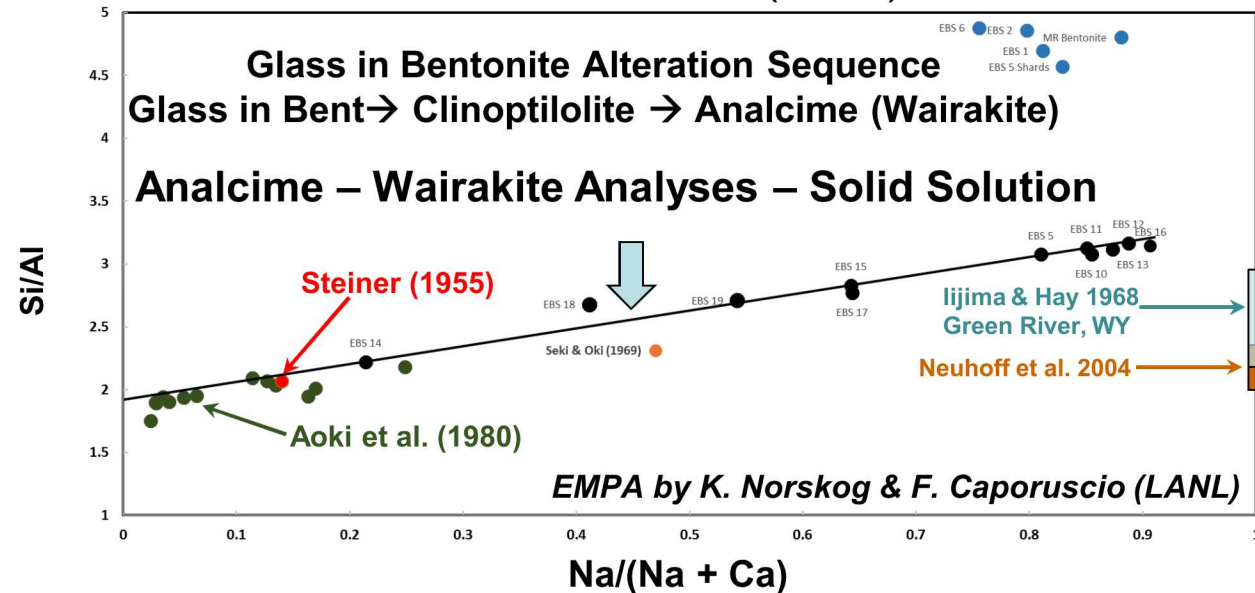
## Analcime (Bentonite only)



## Wairakite-rich zeolite (Opalinus clay + Bentonite)

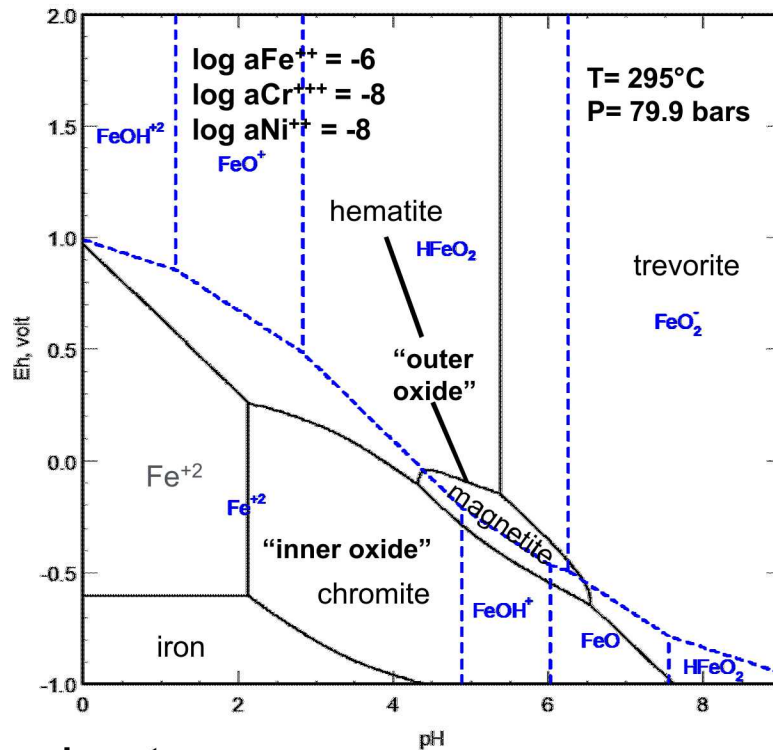


Jové Colón et al. (2017)



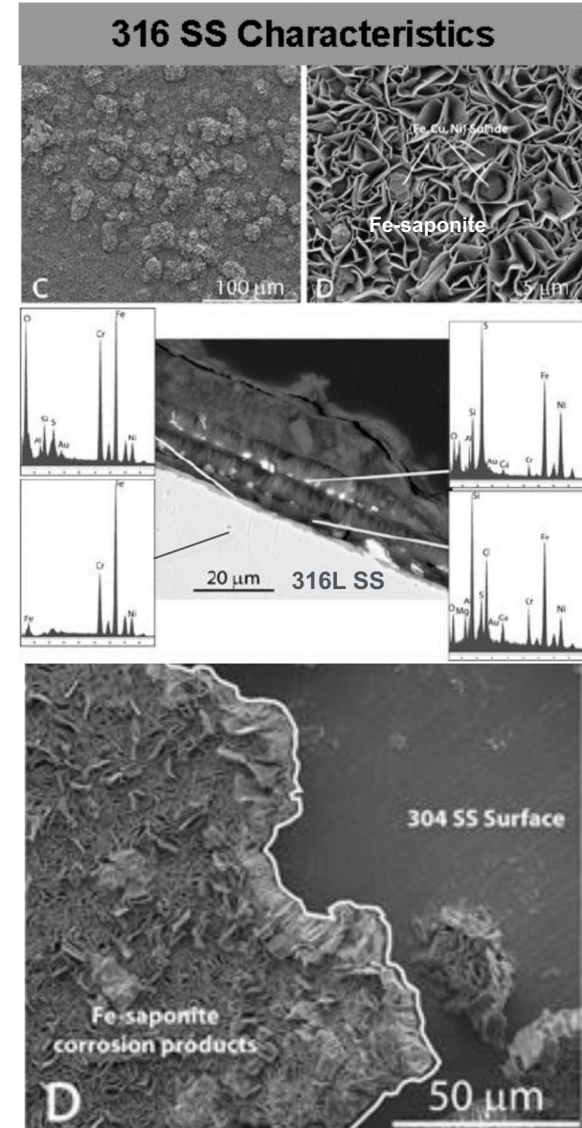
- **Bentonite Alteration and Zeolite Stability:**
  - Glass alteration in bentonite → high Si
  - Formation of analcime – wairakite zeolites
  - Wairakite – analcime solid solution → widen range of zeolite stability
  - Little or no illite formation detected
    - High Si activities prevents illite stability?

# Bentonite – Steel Interaction Experiments

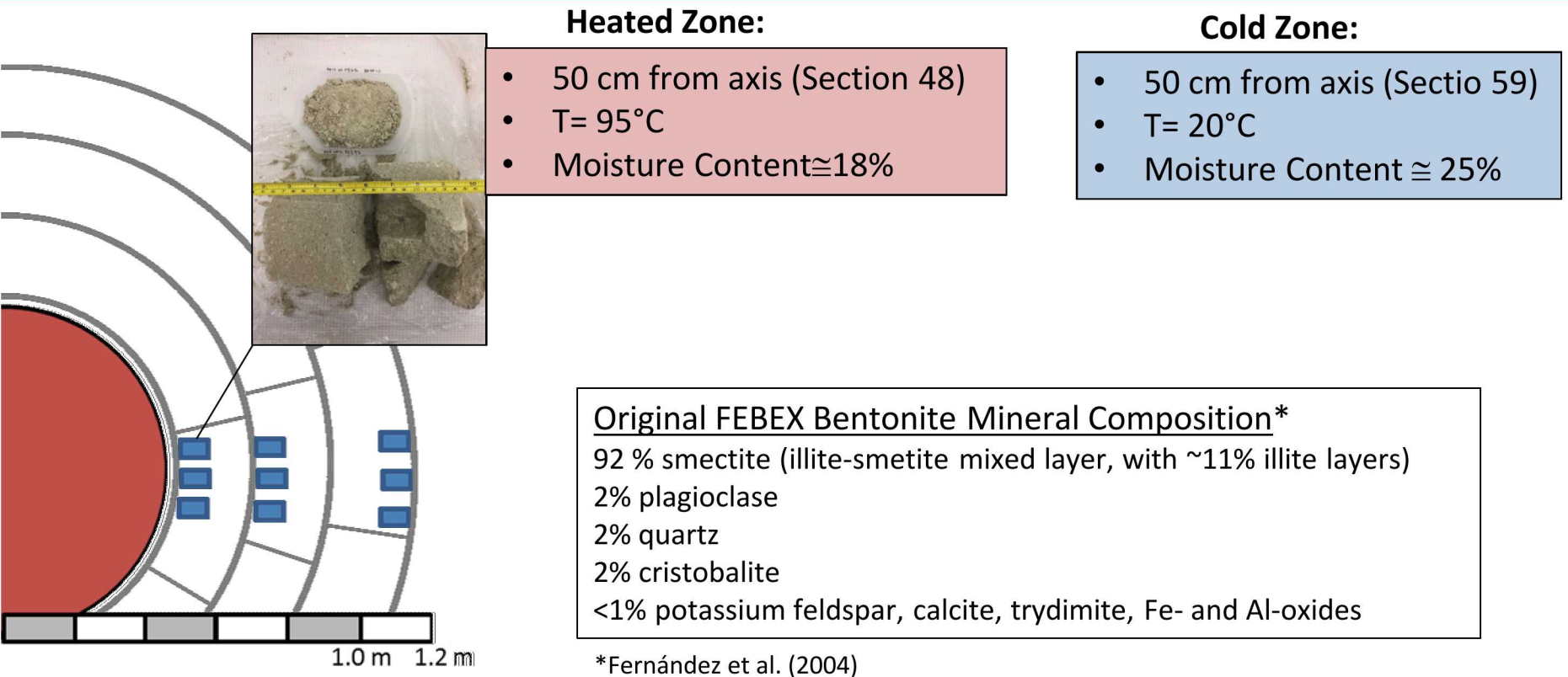


- **Experiment**
  - T = 300°C; STRIPA brine
  - Wyoming Bentonite
  - 316 Stainless Steel (SS), 304SS, low-C steel
- **Results**
  - Fe-Saponite growth perpendicular to metal substrate
  - S is generated from pyrite degradation in bentonite
  - Concurrent surface sulfide precipitation with Fe-saponite
  - More work needs to assess metal passivation effects

**Cheshire et al. (2014)**



# U(VI) adsorption experiments: FEBEX-DP clay samples that experienced different temperature and moisture regimes

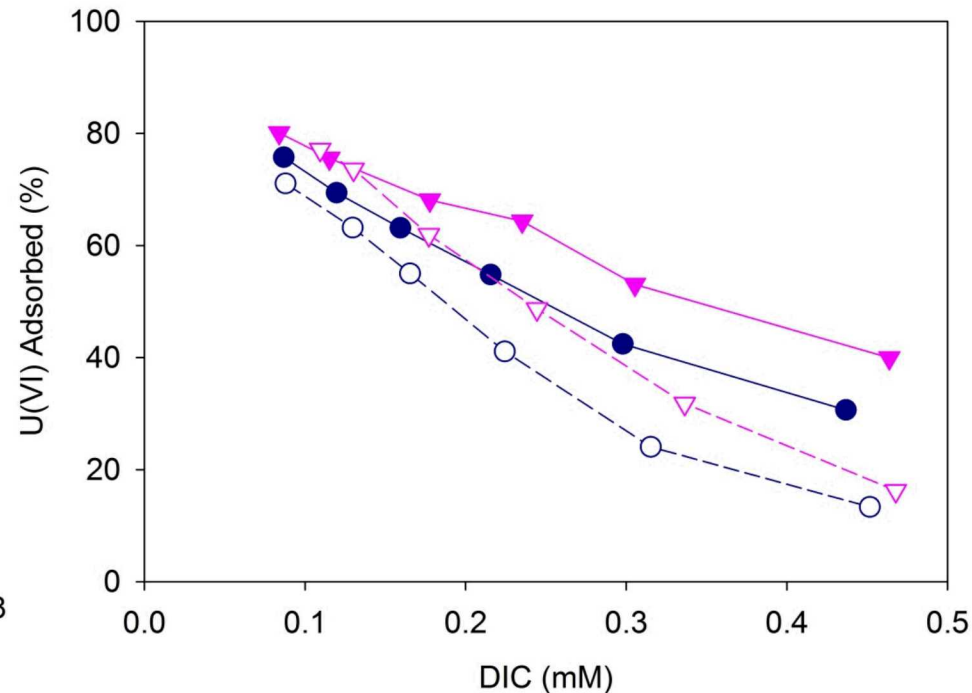
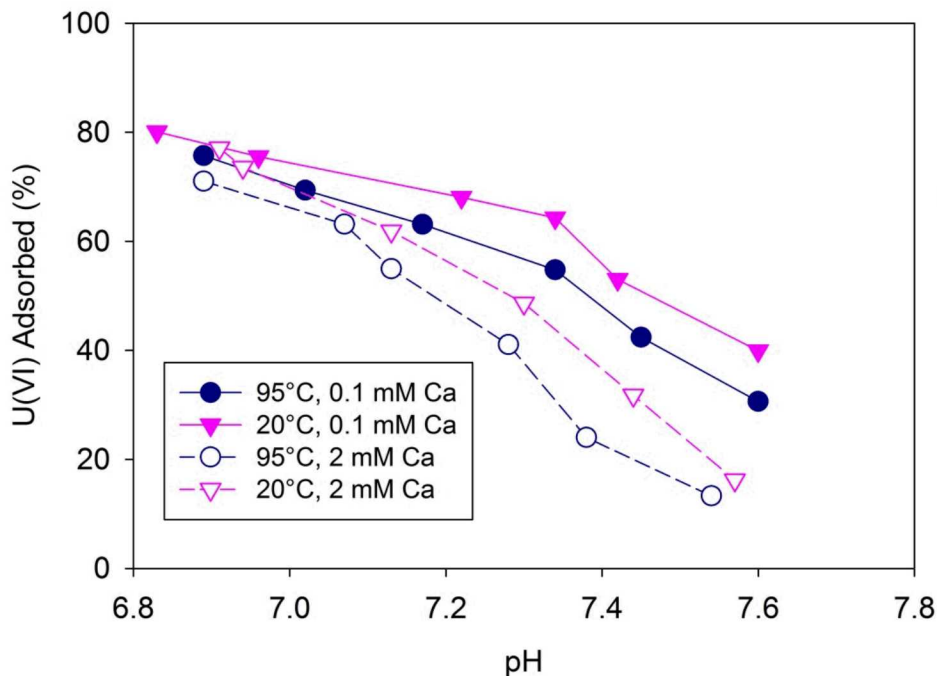


Composite samples were created from 3 replicate blocks from each location, air-dried and sieved to < 63  $\mu$ m.

Moisture content and temperature from Villar et al. (2018)

# Lower U(VI) Sorption onto Heated Bentonite

< 63  $\mu\text{m}$  fraction, bentonite composite samples, 0.5 g/L bentonite



## Up to 10% lower U(VI) adsorption on heated bentonite.

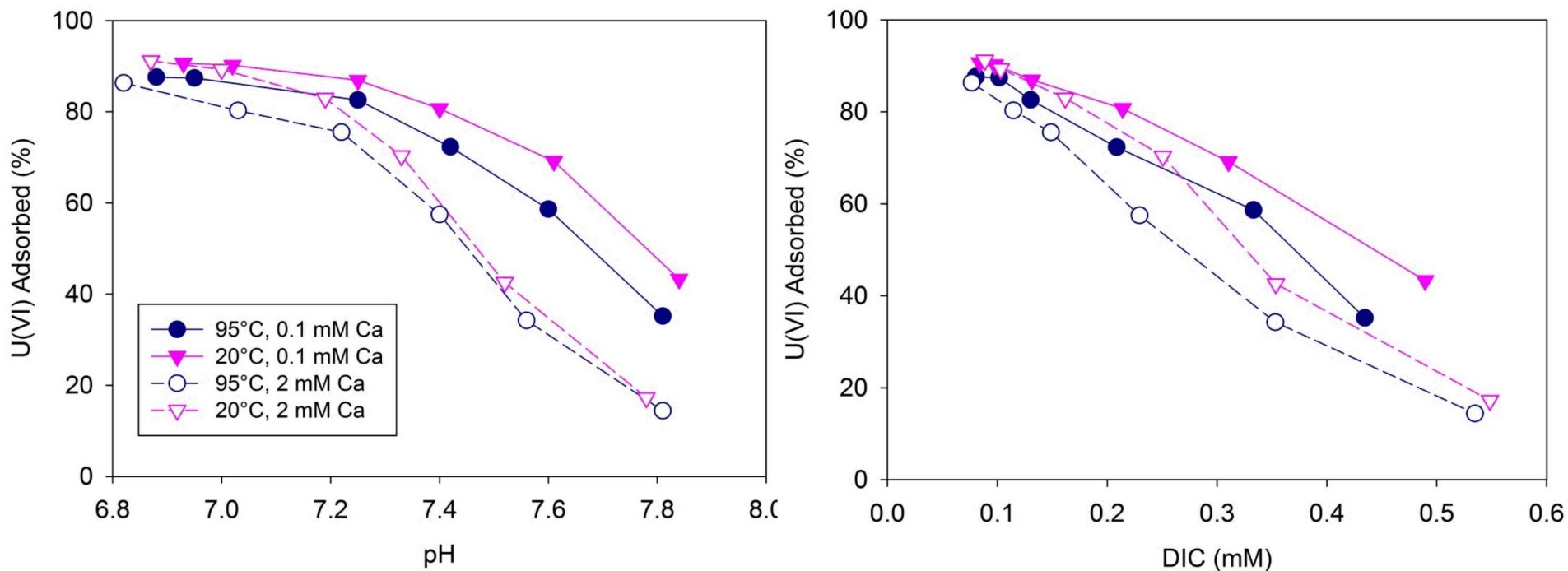
- Adsorption is lower in presence of 2 mM Ca compared to 0.1 mM Ca.
- Adsorption decreases as pH and DIC increase.

## Possible reasons for lower U(VI) adsorption:

- aqueous U(VI) speciation
- relative fraction of clay (montmorillonite) mineral phase
- structure/composition of clay mineral fraction
- structure/composition of accessory mineral fraction (e.g., Fe-oxides)

# U(VI) adsorption onto **purified** bentonite

< 2  $\mu\text{m}$  fraction, carbonate minerals removed



## **Lower U(VI) adsorption on 95°C heated bentonite persists after purification.**

- Consistently lower U(VI) adsorption onto 95°C heated sample in presence of 0.1 mM Ca
- Smaller difference in presence of 2 mM Ca
- As with bulk samples, U(VI) adsorption is lower at higher Ca concentration

# Summary

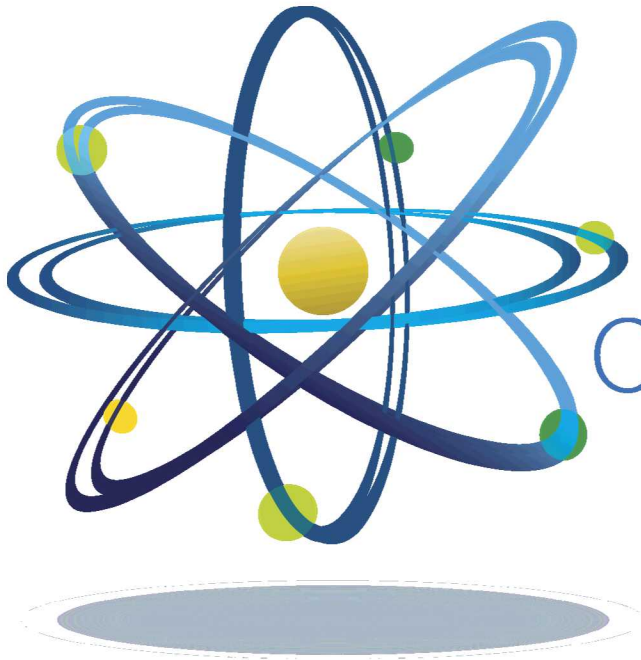
- International collaborations on URL activities and partners provide unique opportunities for data and sample collection from heater tests
- Characterization and sorption studies of *post mortem* FEBEX-DP bentonite samples indicate:
  - Mg-enrichment in clay observed in bentonite close to the heated surface
  - Slight decrease in bentonite swelling also observed close to the heated surface
  - Lower U(VI) sorption for samples subjected to 95°C relative to those exposed to ambient temperatures
  - Bentonite-cement interactions and cement leaching effects appear largely constrained to the interface
- Bentonite-metal interfacial interactions at elevated temperatures:
  - Produces zeolites (analcime) and sulfide phases
  - Fe-saponite growth perpendicular to the metal substrate
  - More work is needed to assess metal passivation effects

# Acknowledgement



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# Questions?



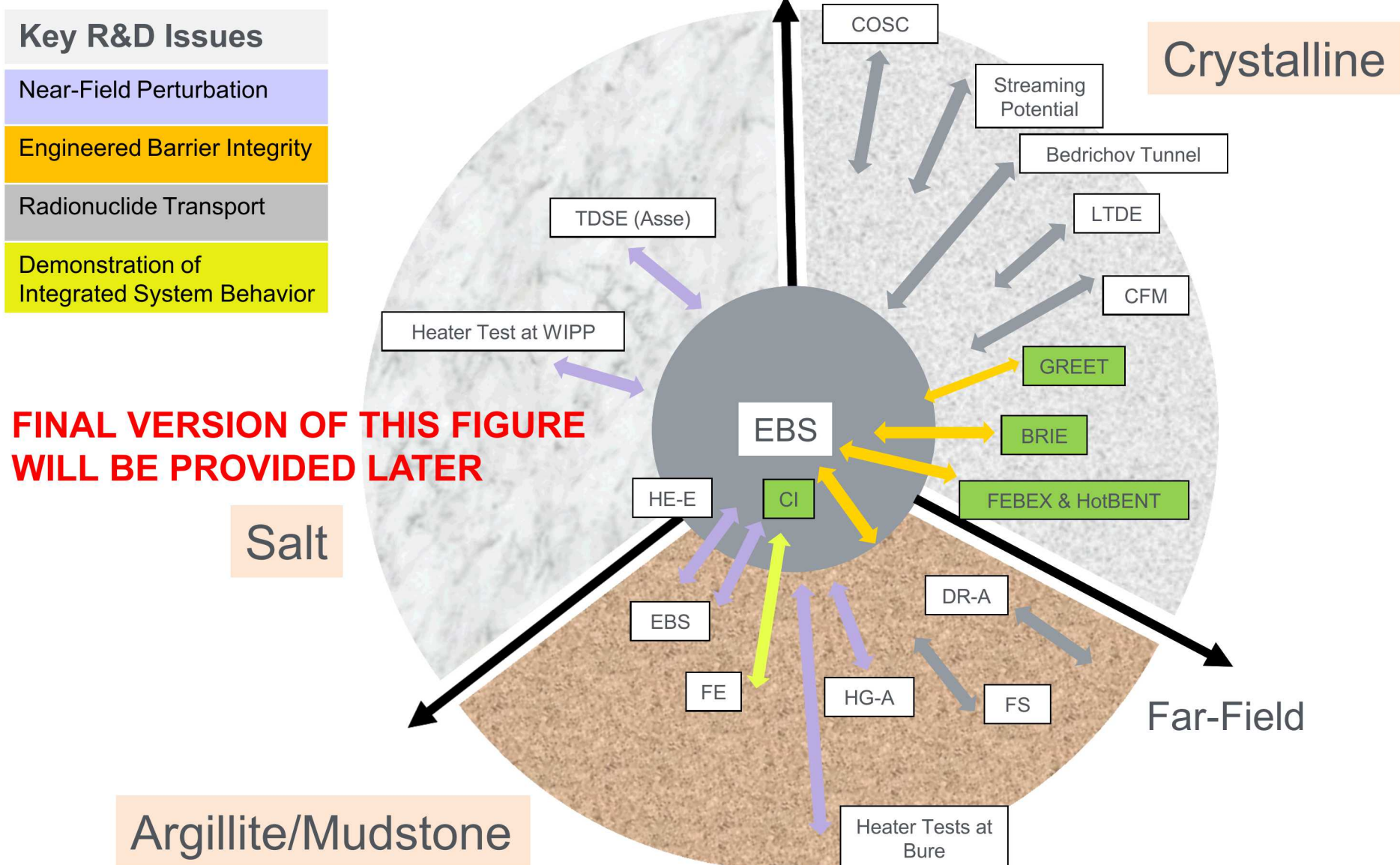
Clean. **Reliable. Nuclear.**

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# EXTRA SLIDES

# EBS fits in the DOE Underground Research Laboratory (URL) Portfolio



# Repository Phases and Relevant Processes

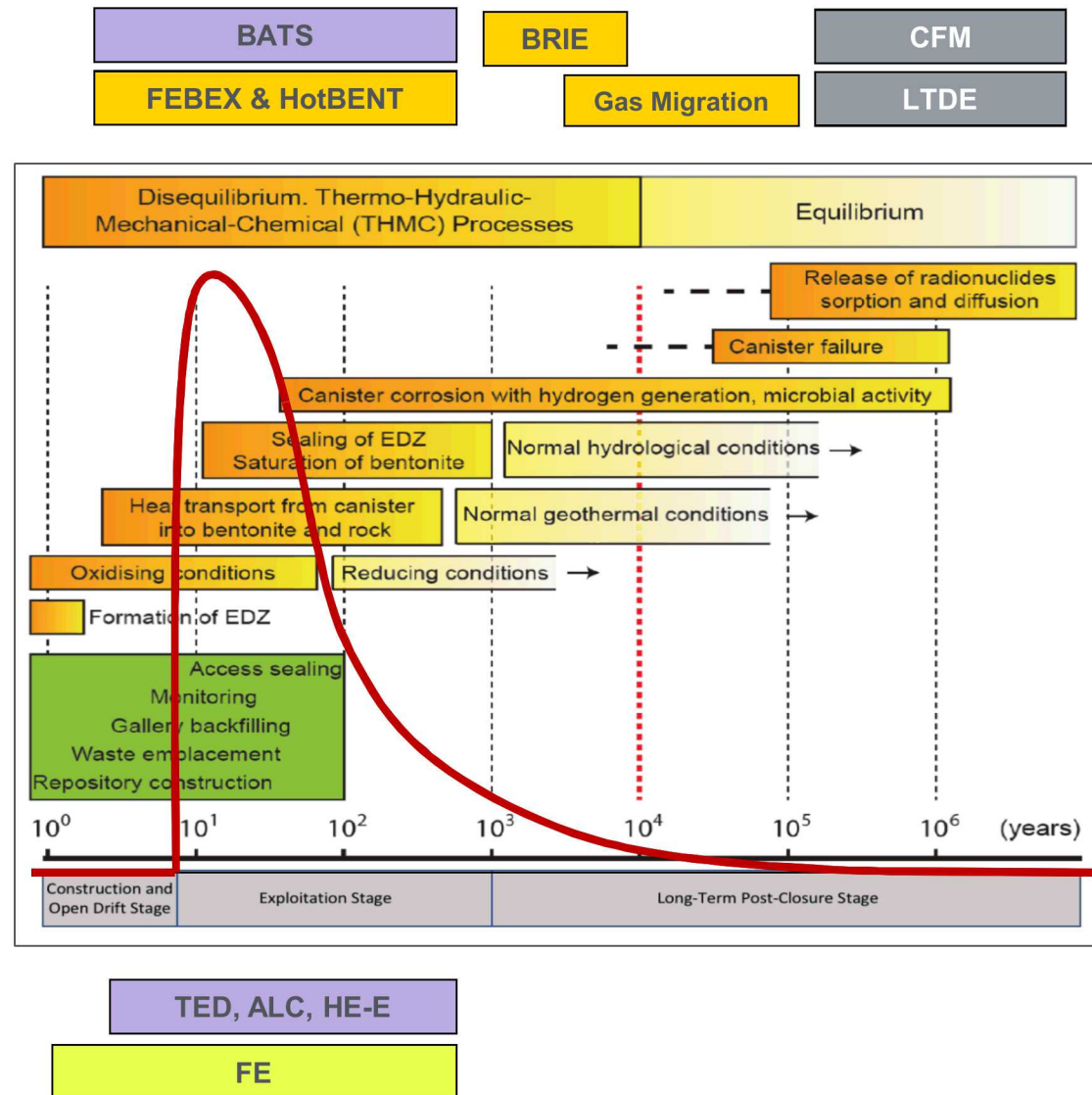
## Key R&D Issues

Near-Field Perturbation

Engineered Barrier Integrity

Flow and Radionuclide Transport

Demonstration of Integrated System Behavior



# Conceptual Model for Transport in Bentonite

- Location
  - Hosting nation or program
  - Host rock type
- Purpose of the test
  - E.g., provide basic in-situ data regarding brine flow in heated salt
    - Rock properties
    - Fluid composition, etc.
  - E.g., provide an opportunity for model validation/benchmarking with field data
- Why this is important in the context of the conceptual model for the medium (if this takes an extra slide, okay)

# Body of the talk (~6-14 slides, depending on time available)

- Additional information on test design
- Results
- Analysis/interpretation: what have we learned?
- How results will be used in supporting the safety case/safety assessment

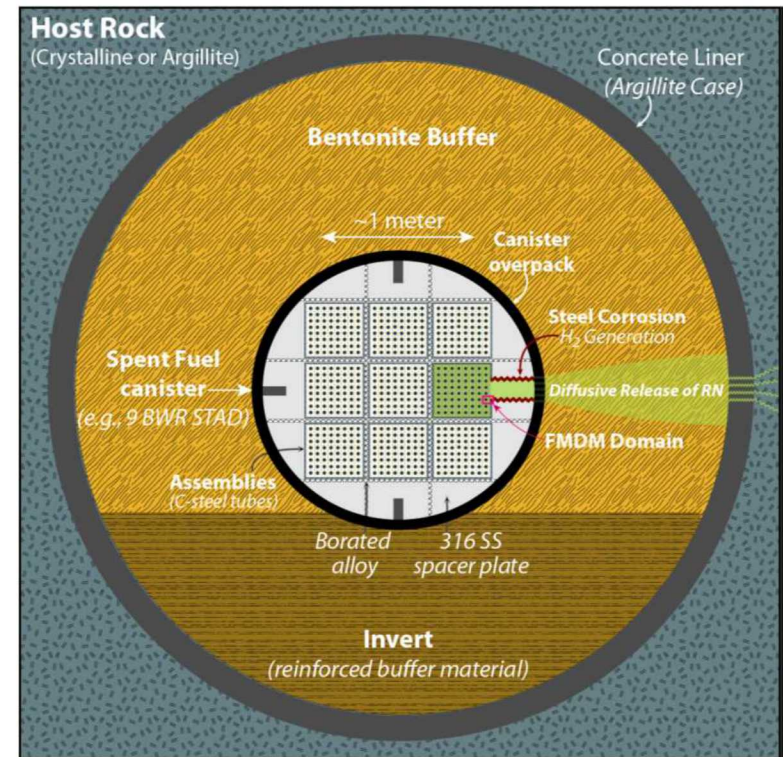
# What is the Engineered Barrier System (EBS)?

- **EBS definition from the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (10 CFR 60.2)**

- “Engineered barrier system means the waste packages and the underground facility”

- **EBS definition from to the NEA/OECD EBS State-Of-The-Art Report (2003):**

- “The “engineered barrier system” represents the man-made, engineered materials placed within a repository, including the waste form, waste canisters, buffer materials, backfill and seals.”

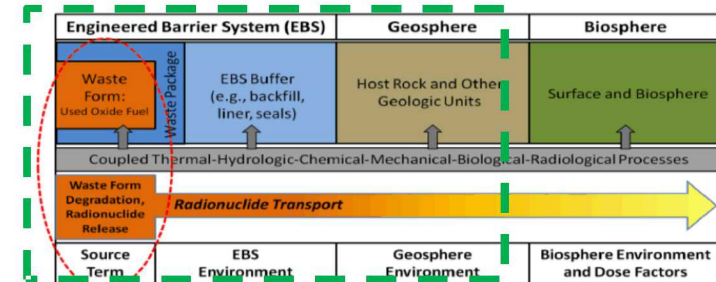


Generic EBS concept with bentonite barrier showing a canister breaching scenario (Jerden et al. 2019)

# Argillite Disposal R&D

- Reactive-transport modeling (THC) with decay heat effects
  - 1D → 3D EBS Simulation Capability
- Engineered barrier system (EBS) model integration with performance assessment (PA)
- Thermodynamic modeling of barrier material interactions (**clay, cement, metal**) and thermodynamic database (TDB) development
- Clay interaction experiments:
  - High temperature mineral phase stability, clay – metal interactions (waste package material (steel) corrosion)
  - Low-T RN sorption/diffusion in bentonite & modeling
- High temperature coupled thermal-hydrological-mechanical-chemical (THMC) modeling
- Spent fuel matrix degradation model development
- International collaborations: **FEBEX-DP** ([GRIMSEL URL](#)), **DECOVALEX19**, **SKB EBS Task Force**, **Mont Terri URL** (Switzerland)

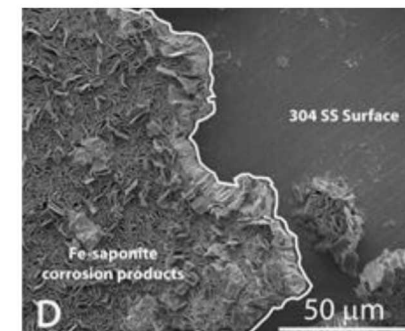
## GDSA PA Level Of Integration



## International Collaboration: FEBEX-DP



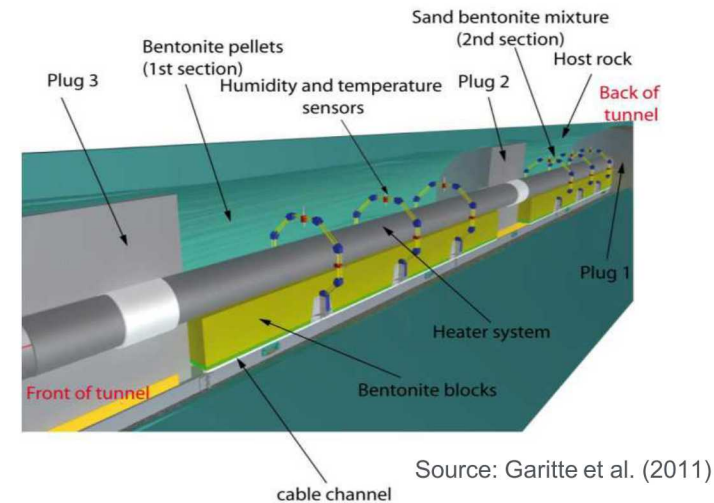
## Clay-Metal Interactions



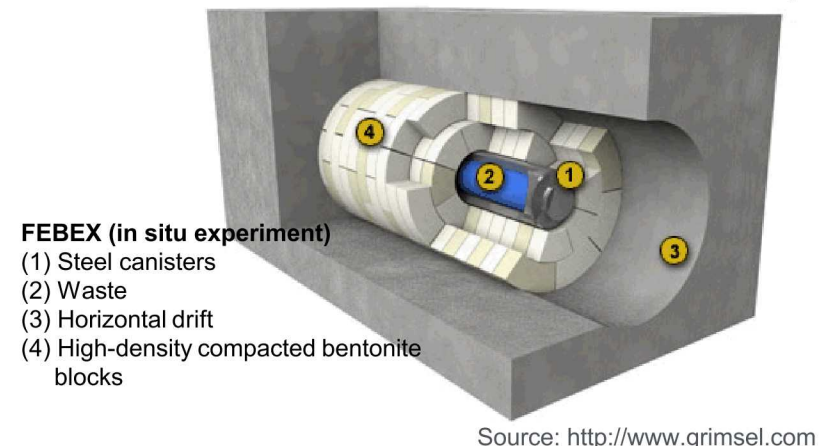
## Steel Corrosion

# What has been done for EBS? (Cont.)

- International Activities:
  - **Underground Research Laboratories (URLs):**
    - Mt. Terri (Opalinus Clay, Switzerland)
    - Grimsel (Granite, Switzerland)
    - Tournemire (Argillite, France)
    - Meuse/Haute-Marne (BURE) (Callovo-Oxfordian Clay, France)
    - FEBEX (Mock-Up, Spain; Granite, Site-Scale, Grimsel site, Switzerland)
    - KAERI/KURT (Granite, South Korea)
    - Horonobe (Mudstones) and Mizunami (Granite) Sites (Japan)
  - **International Collaborations**
    - DECOVALEX (Development of Coupled Models and their Validation Against Experiments, International Collaboration)
    - SKB EBS Task Force



**HE-E heater test at Mont Terri**

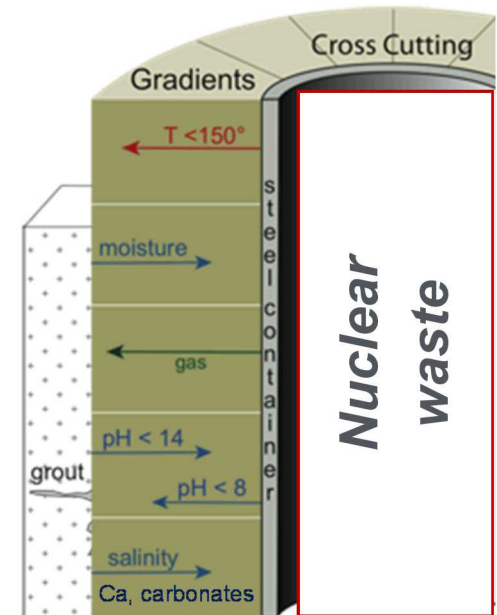


For more details, see Birkholzer et al. (2017)

# Conceptual Model for Transport in Bentonite

The long-term management of nuclear waste requires reliable predictions of radionuclide transport through engineered barrier systems (EBS).

- ⇒ **Compacted bentonite (montmorillonite)** is the proposed backfill material in EBS.
- ⇒ **Diffusion** will be the dominant transport mechanism in EBS that contributes to radionuclide dose in the environment.
- ⇒ **Gradients of chemical solution conditions and temperature** are expected over time and across EBS.

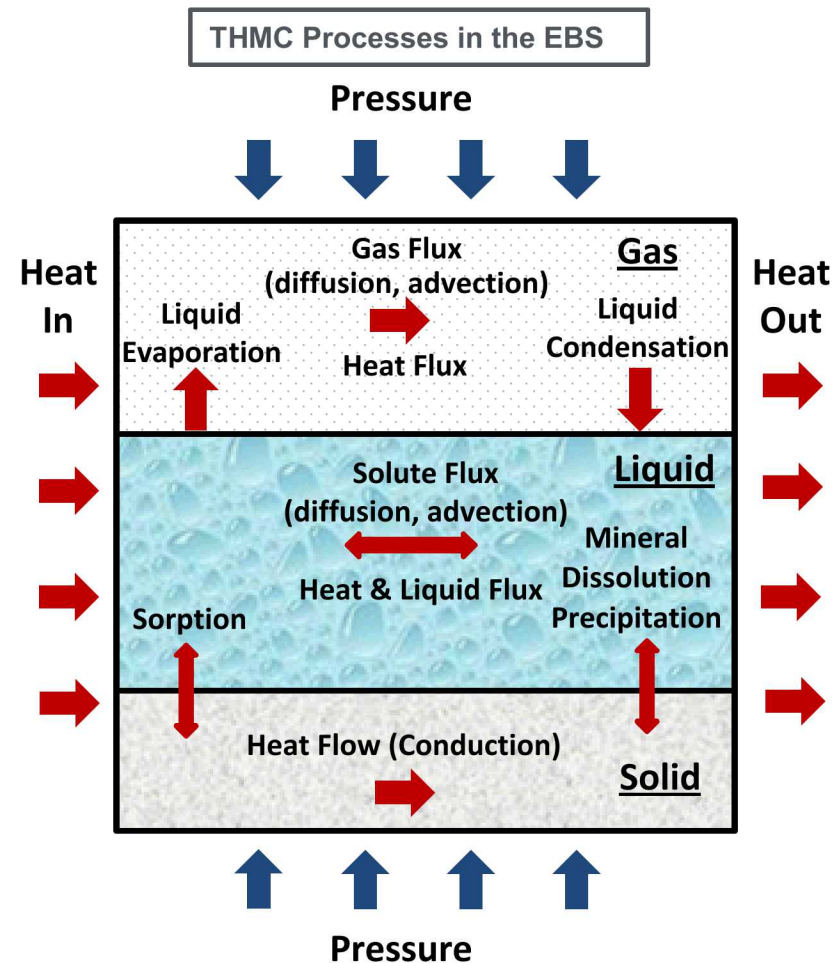


## Goals:

- **Decrease the uncertainty** in actinide sorption / diffusion sub-models that are part of performance assessment models for waste repositories.
- **Investigate effects of changing chemical conditions and temperatures** on uranium(VI) sorption and diffusion.

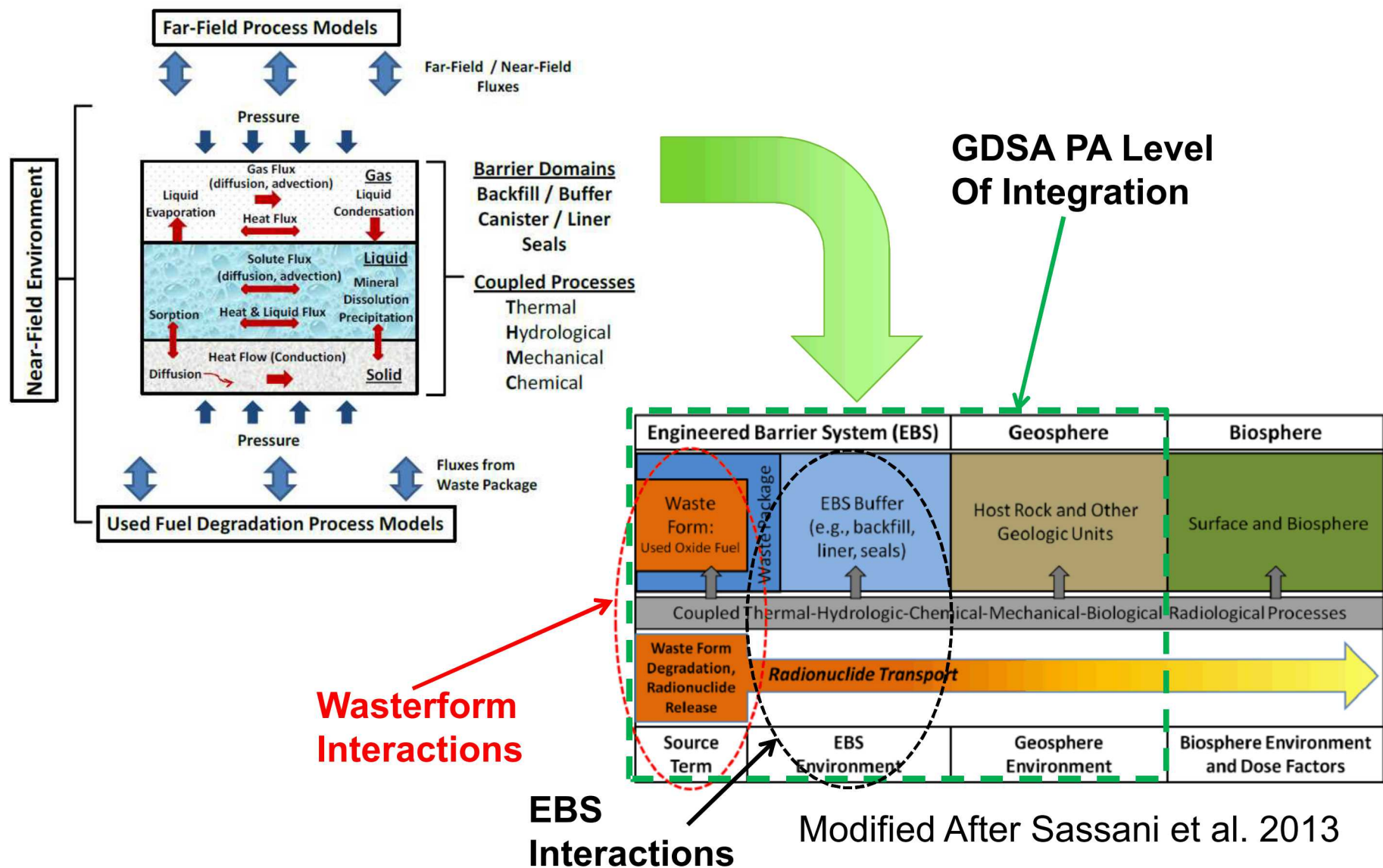
# SFWST Needs for EBS?

- Highest ranked issues:
  - Waste Form
  - THM Processes
  - Waste Container
  - Radionuclide speciation and solubility
  - Buffer/Backfill material
- **THMC processes** relevant to interactions at EBS interfaces:
  - **Loci for important degradation processes in the near-field**
  - **Shares a boundary with far-field region**
  - **THMC models must assess the generic aspects of EBS design concepts**

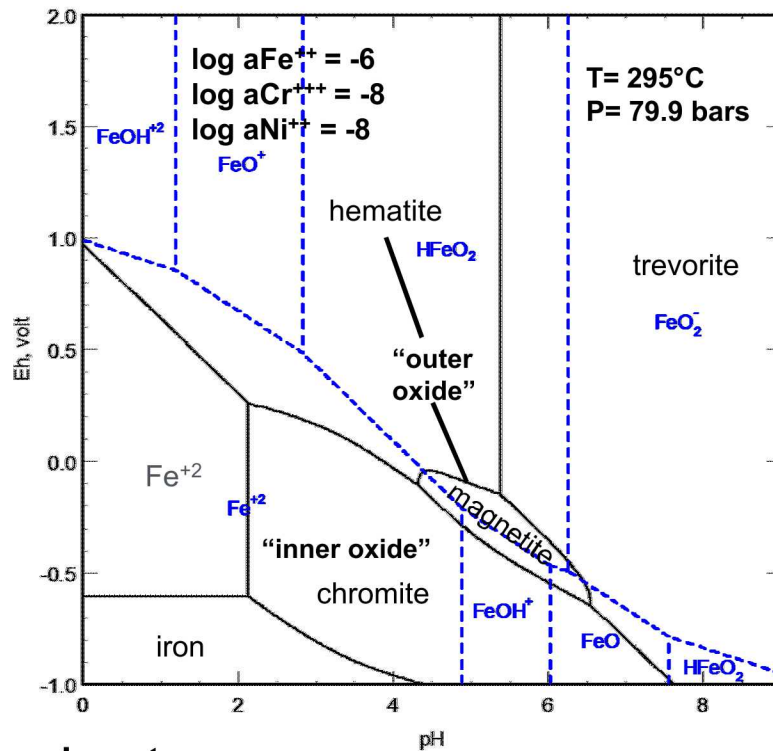


Modified After Olivella et al. (2011)

# Coupled Processes in the Near- and Far-Field

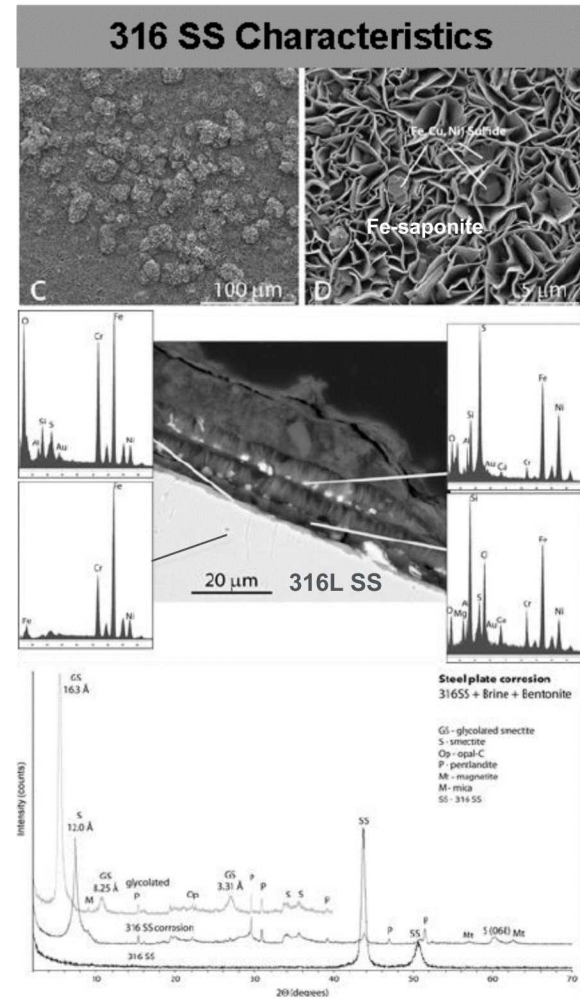


# Bentonite – Metal Interaction Experiments



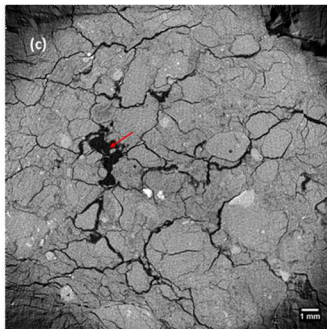
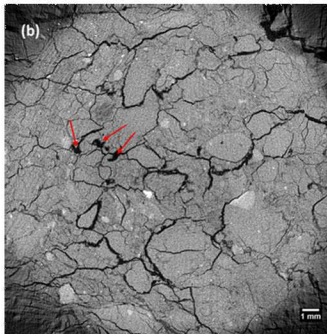
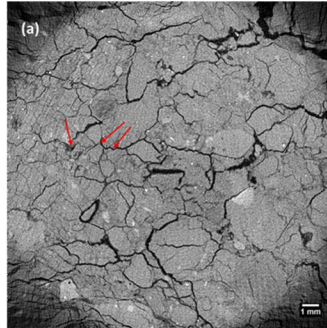
- **Experiment**
  - $T = 300^\circ\text{C}$
  - STRIPA Brine
  - Wyoming Bentonite
  - 316 Stainless Steel (SS), 304SS, low-C steel
- **Results**
  - Fe-Saponite growth perpendicular to metal
  - Concurrent sulfide precipitation
  - Observations consistent with thermodynamic relations

Cheshire et al. (2014)



# FEBEX-DP: Bentonite – Concrete Interface Characterization (X-ray CT Scan)

*Red arrows:  
microcrack  
segments  
evolving into  
pores*



**2D Slice Stack**

**Z direction**

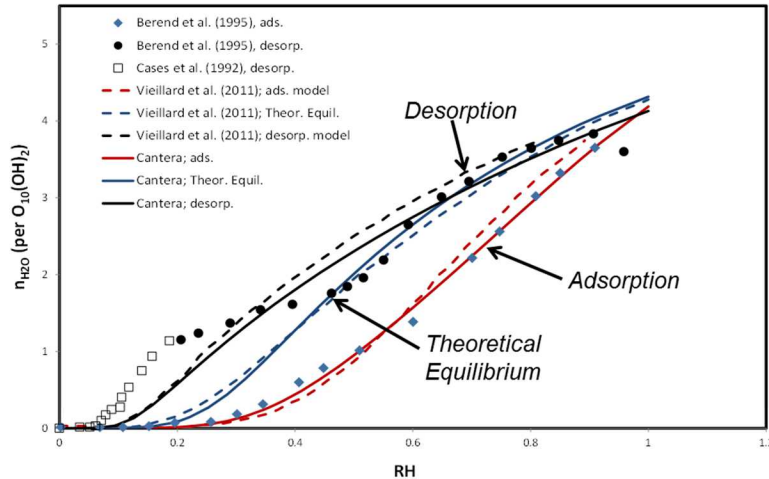


## ■ 2D – 3D Stacked Image Evaluation:

- Microcrack aperture enlargement/shrinking
- Crack segments and junctions evolving into pores
- Microcrack pathways can be highly heterogeneous

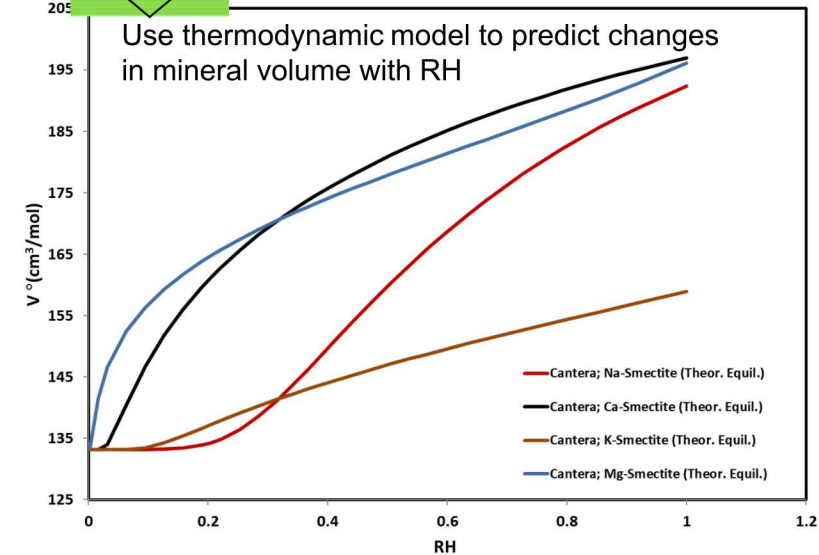
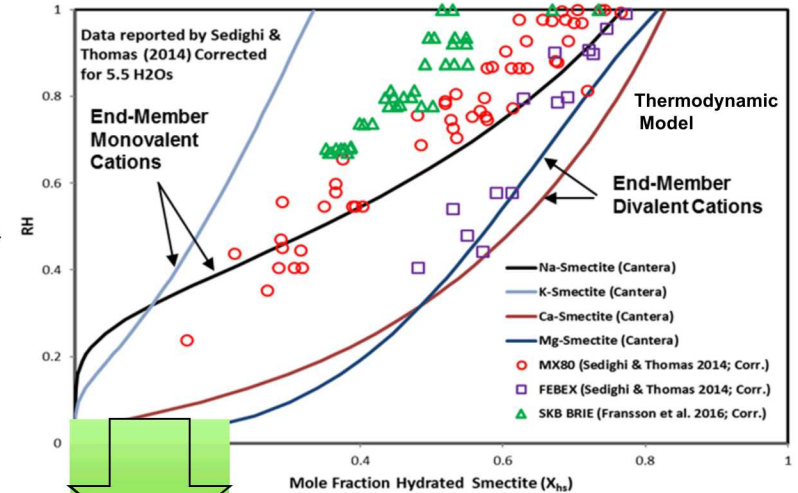
# Clay Hydration Modeling: Comparison with BRIE Water Retention Data + MX80 Bentonite

Cantera Results for Na-smectite Hydration



Fitting  $H_2O$  adsorption data for various smectite clay compositions

- Relationships between clay composition and swelling behavior
- Data retrieval from URL and laboratory experiments
  - FEBEX
  - Bentonite MX80
- Trends for monovalent and divalent cationic composition consistent with thermodynamic model predictions for clay hydration



Use thermodynamic model to predict changes in mineral volume with RH