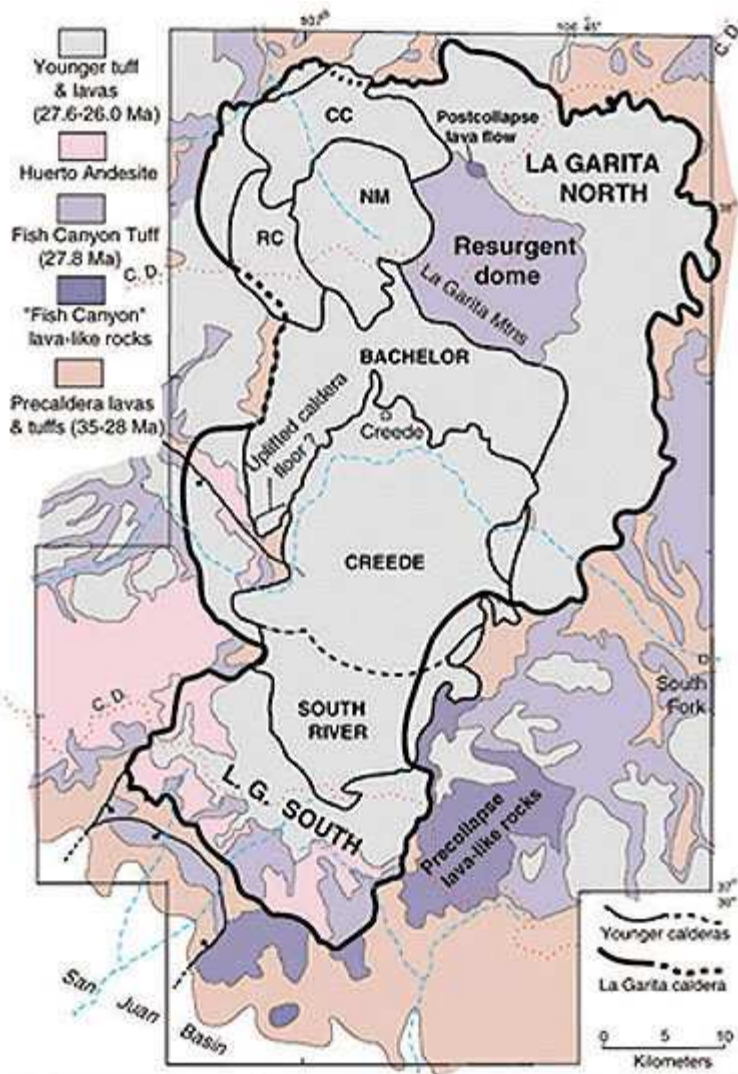


La Garita Caldera - San Juan Volcanic Field, Colorado



The scale of La Garita volcanism was the second greatest of the Cenozoic Era. The resulting Fish Canyon Tuff has a volume of approximately 1,200 cubic miles, giving it a Volcanic Explosivity Index (VEI) rating of 8. By comparison, the eruption of Mount St. Helens on 18 May 1980 was 0.25 cubic miles in volume with a VEI of 4.

The Fish Canyon eruption was the most energetic event to have occurred on Earth since the Cretaceous–Paleogene extinction event 66 million years ago. The asteroid impact responsible for that mass-extinction, equivalent to 240 teratons of TNT, was approximately one thousand times more powerful than the Fish Canyon eruption.



Generalized geologic map of the La Garita caldera

Figure 1: FISH CANYON TUFF, LA GARITA CALDERA, & ASSOCIATED LAVA FLOWS