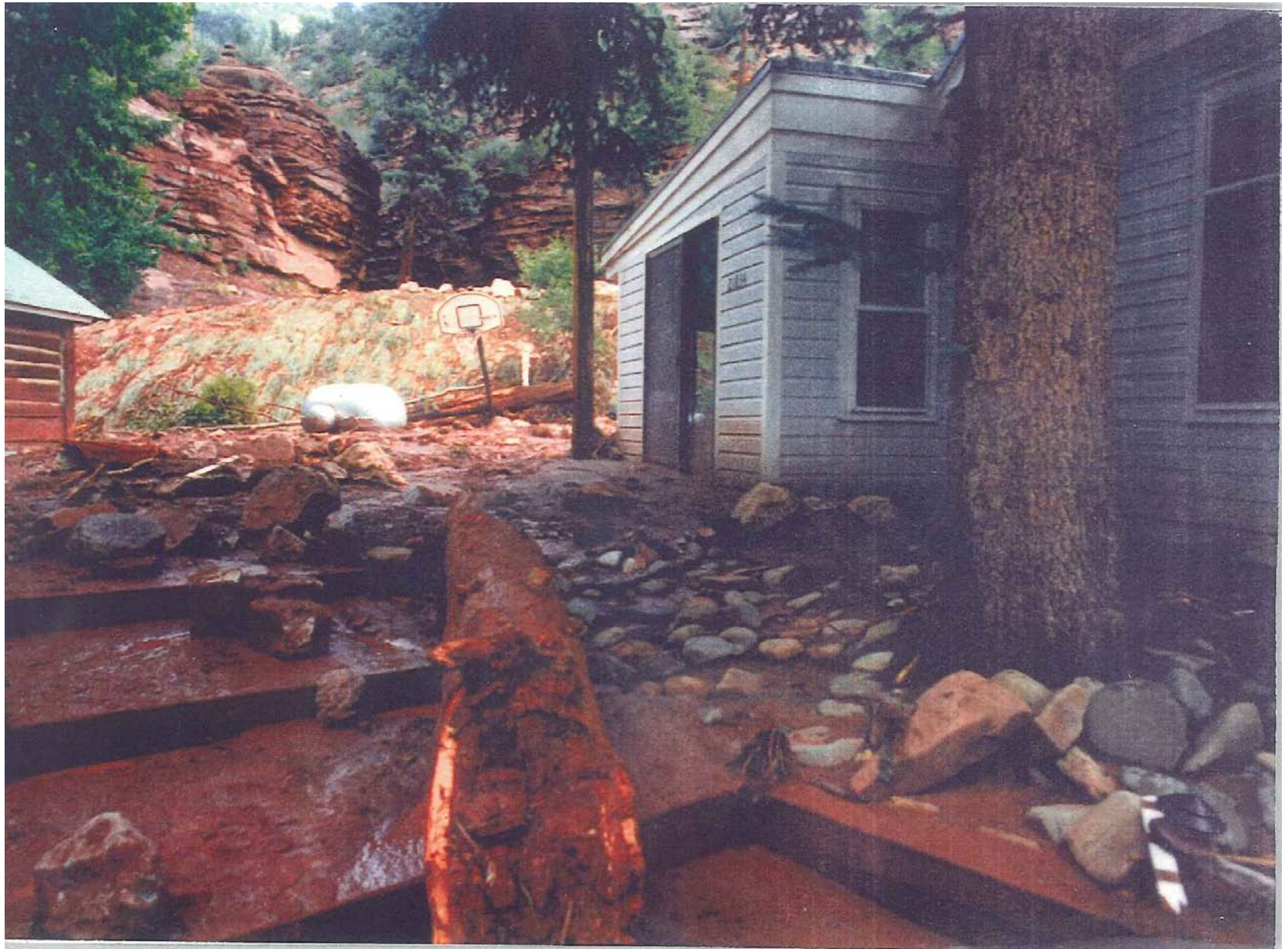


“The geologic history of the San Miguel River canyon is a history of debris flow.”

US Geologic Survey scientist Rich Madole

Canyon residents from Sawpit to Placer Valley experienced that geologic history on Friday, July 30, 1999 when debris flows cleaved Sawpit and roared out of crack canyons in Fall Creek inundating one house, surrounding another, and leaving a four inch deposit of mud in yet another. Simultaneous episodes closed Hwy 145 in various places trapping hundreds of cars in the canyon during Friday's rush hour exodus from Telluride.



Outside the home of John and Joanie Knowles, Fall Creek.



Inside the home of Bill Ellison and Michele Erwin, Fall Creek.



At the Knowles residence, Fall Creek.



Canyon residents reported that within an hour the San Miguel River rose to peak runoff levels. The rising waters were Sawpit red, heavily laden with silt, choked with timbers. Most disturbing was the sight of household objects, camping gear and lawn chairs, then household furniture in the churning flow.

“On Friday, July 30, 1999, 3.13 inches of rain fell at Fall Creek breaking the daily record for the previous ten years. Even if you remove that day from July’s record precipitation of 6.61 inches, July 1999 was still the record breaking month of the decade.”

.....Fall Creek National Weather Observer Dean Silver



Saturday, July 31, 1999, Leopard Creek flood waters at the intersection of state highway 62 and 145, Placerville. First response personnel Undersheriff Sky Walters and Placerville fireman Gary Whitfield on right.