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METHOD AND STRUCTURES FOR DUAL DEPTH OXYGEN LAYERS IN SILICON-ON-INSULATOR PROCESSES

Background of the Invention

1. Technical Field

The present invention relates to a semiconductor structure comprising a buried oxide layer and a plurality of trench isolation structures, and to a method for forming the semiconductor structure.

2. Related Art

A semiconductor structure typically comprises semiconductor devices, such as transistors, which need to be electrically isolated from other semiconductor devices. Various isolation structures, such as a buried oxide layer ("BOX") or a trench isolation structure ("trench"), have been used in semiconductor structures to accomplish such isolation. Viewing the vertical direction as into the depth, or thickness, of a given substrate and the horizontal direction as being parallel to a top surface of the substrate, a BOX is a horizontally oriented layer that provides insulative separation between semiconductor devices at different vertical locations, while a trench such as a shallow trench isolation is a vertically oriented structure that provides insulative separation between semiconductor devices at different horizontal locations.

A BOX comprises an oxide of an intrinsic semiconductor such as crystalline silicon and may be formed in various ways, such as by using oxygen ion implantation techniques which are known by those skilled in the art. A particular manner of using ion implantation to form a BOX

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of varying depth comprises: optionally "growing" a thin (e.g., 80 angstroms) pad oxide (SiO_2) layer on the top surface by exposing the top surface to oxygen at high temperature, depositing a thicker (e.g., 3000 angstroms) layer of silicon nitride (Si_3N_4) over the pad oxide, patterning the top surface with photoresist, exposing the top surface to ultraviolet radiation, etching the unexposed silicon nitride, implanting oxygen into the substrate, annealing, stripping away the silicon nitride layer, and stripping away the pad oxide layer. The pad oxide is a buffer which reduces stresses resulting from crystal mismatch between the silicon nitride layer and the substrate. The forming of the silicon nitride layer may be accomplished by any suitable technique, such as by chemical vapor deposition. The etching of silicon nitride determines the horizontal distribution of silicon nitride thickness on the top surface and the silicon nitride thickness controls the depth of oxygen implantation. Thus, selective etching of the silicon nitride layer enables a BOX of varying depth to be formed. The oxygen implantation is generally performed at high energy density such as at $10^{18}/cm^2$ at 200 keV as disclosed in U.S. Pat. 5,364,800 (Joyner, 6/24/93, page 1, lines 40-42). The annealing is typically performed at high temperature (e.g., 1300 ^{0}F for 6 hours as disclosed in U.S. Pat. 5,364,800, page 1, lines 43-46) to cause SiO_2 formation and repair crystal damage. Another method of forming a BOX of varying depth comprises directing an oxygen ion beam through a silicon dioxide screen of varying thickness and then into the depth of the substrate (see U.S. Patent No. 5,364,800).

A trench is a vertical cavity from the top surface into the depth of the substrate, wherein electrically insulative material is placed within the cavity. A trench may be formed by techniques known by those skilled in the art. U.S. Pat. No. 5,536,675 (Bohr, 8/7/95) discloses such a technique comprising: growing a pad oxide (SiO_2) layer on the top surface of the

substrate, depositing of a layer of silicon nitride (Si_3N_4) over the pad oxide, patterning the top surface with photoresist, exposing the top surface to ultraviolet radiation, etching through the unexposed silicon nitride and continuing to etch through the pad oxide and the underneath substrate to a desired depth to form the trench, optionally growing an oxide lining on the interior surfaces of the trench to passify the interior surfaces which may have been damaged during etching of the substrate, inserting insulative material into the trench to above the top surface, and optionally polishing to remove insulative material from above the top surface. The etching of the substrate may be accomplished by using a plasma comprising HBr and NF_3, or any other suitable etching chemical material such as SiF_4. The etching may be performed isotropically or anisotropically for generating vertical and/or sloped sidewalls. Any suitable insulative material, such as silicon dioxide, silicon nitride, or spin-on glass, may be used. The insulative material is distributed within the trench so as to provide electrical insulation between semiconductor regions respectively bordering the two sides of the trench that project into the substrate from the top surface.

U.S. Pat. No. 5,536,675 also discloses how the preceding process may be modified to form a T-shaped trench comprising two contiguous segments, wherein the top segment is wider than the bottom segment. Following formation of the first cavity as described above, the substrate is patterned with a photoresist and exposed to ultraviolet radiation so as to leave the bottom of the first cavity unprotected from subsequent etching. Then a second cavity segment is formed by etching deeper into the substrate from the bottom of the first cavity. U.S. Pat. No. 5,536,675 also discloses how the preceding processes may be modified to generate a shallow trench and a T-shaped deep trench having a narrow cavity segment underneath a wider upper

segment, wherein the shallow trench and the wider upper segment of the T-shaped trench may be etched concurrently by covering the substrate with a suitable photoresist pattern prior to etching. A variety of methods of using photoresist patterning, exposure, and etching may be exploited to form a plurality of trenches concurrently. For example, a first cavity in a first location may be formed in isolation, followed by photoresist patterning, exposure, and etching so as to form a T-shaped trench in the first location while simultaneously forming an unsegmented trench in a second location.

The prior art does not disclose semiconductor structures having isolation characteristics that permit particular combinations of semiconductor devices, such as a fully depleted and partially depleted field effect transistors (FETs), to be formed on the same substrate.

All heretofore mentioned prior art is hereby incorporated by reference.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention provides semiconductor structures, and associated methods of fabrication, having isolation characteristics that permit particular combinations of semiconductor devices, such as a fully depleted and partially depleted FETs, to be formed on the same substrate. A semiconductor structure of the present invention comprises: a substrate having a top surface, a continuous BOX of semiconductor oxide, and a plurality of trenches embedded within the substrate. The depth of the BOX may vary spatially in any manner that maintains the continuity of the BOX. Each trench comprises a point on the top surface and extends into the substrate as a vertical array of one or more contiguous segments. Each trench comprises electrically insulative matter so as to facilitate electrical separation between devices.

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An embodiment of the present invention consists of a semiconductor structure

comprising: a substrate having a top surface, a continuous depth-varying BOX, a first trench, and a second trench, wherein both the first trench and the second trench are positioned between the top surface and the BOX. The first trench and the second trench may each penetrate the substrate to the same depth or to different depths. The first trench and the second trench may each touch or not touch the BOX. The first trench and the second trench may each have one segment or a plurality of segments. Regions within the substrate which are electrically separated by the insulative barrier of the first trench, or of the second trench, may comprise a semiconductor device.

Another embodiment of the present invention provides a semiconductor structure, and associated methods of fabrication, comprising a substrate having a top surface, a continuous depth-varying BOX, a first trench positioned between the top surface and the BOX, and an external trench. The external trench is external to a first region between the BOX and the first surface. The external trench borders a side of the first region and touches an end surface of the BOX such that the external trench electrically isolates the first region from a second region within the substrate.

The present invention additionally provides a semiconductor structure comprising:

a substrate having a top surface;

a continuous buried oxide layer disposed at a first depth and at a second depth within the substrate;

a first semiconductor region between the first surface and the first depth of the buried oxide layer, wherein the first semiconductor region touches the first surface and touches the buried oxide layer at the first depth;

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a second semiconductor region between the first surface and the second depth of the buried oxide layer, wherein the second semiconductor region touches the first surface and does not touch the buried oxide layer;

a gate structure on the top surface, laterally between the first semiconductor region and the second semiconductor region; and

a third semiconductor region between the first surface and the buried oxide layer, wherein the third semiconductor region is continuously distributed between the first surface and the buried oxide layer, and wherein the third semiconductor region touches the buried oxide layer at the second depth, the first semiconductor region, the second semiconductor region, and the gate structure.

The BOX and the trenches for the semiconductor structures of the present invention may be formed by methods known to those skilled in the art as discussed previously. For each circuit, the BOX is formed before the trenches are formed. Each trench of a plurality of trenches may be formed in any order and portions of two or more trenches may be formed simultaneously by suitable photoresist patterning, exposure, and etching.

It is an object of the present invention to provide silicon-on-insulator (SOI) devices with both fully depleted and partially depleted elements on a common substrate.

It is an object of the present invention to provide SOI circuit elements for both digital and analog application on a common wafer.

It is an object of the present invention to provide SOI circuit elements for usage as electrostatic discharge (ESD) protection networks.

It is an object of the present invention to provide an improved resistor element in SOI

technology.

It is an object of the present invention to an asymmetric structure to exist with a dual-step BOX.

It is an object of the present invention to allow low and high junction capacitance regions to exist with a dual-depth BOX.

It is an object of the present invention to allow an asymmetric gated lateral diode structure to exist with a dual-depth BOX.

It is an object of the present invention to permit a gated lateral diode and a vertical diode to coexist with a dual-depth BOX.

By having a BOX exist at different substrate depths and utilizing trenches having different depths of penetration, the present invention offers the following advantages. Combinations of many different semiconductor devices may coexist on the same substrate, including combinations of FETs, bipolar transistors, decoupling capacitors, diodes, gated diodes, resistors, and bulk semiconductor devices. Deep devices and shallow devices may coexist on the same substrate. Fully depleted and partially depleted FETs may coexist on the same substrate. Low capacitance MOFSETs and high capacitance MOFSETs may coexist on the same substrate. MOFSETS with low and high body electrical resistance may coexist on the same substrate. Bipolar devices and CMOS devices may coexist on the same substrate. A low-resistance shunt may be placed, without depth limitation, between an N-well resistor and the BOX while being electrically separated by a trench from another device located at a more shallow depth. Increased flexibility is afforded for dissipating heat from devices that protect chip circuits from electrostatic discharge (ESD), because a narrow space between a trench and the BOX provides a

relatively low thermal resistance path for dissipating heat.

Brief Description of the Drawings

FIG. 1 depicts, in the form of a flow diagram, a method of forming a structure comprising a depth-varying BOX and a dual depth trench, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 2 depicts a cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure showing a trench configuration with no trench touching a BOX, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 3 depicts a cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure showing a trench configuration with one trench touching a BOX, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 4 depicts a cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure showing a trench configuration with two trenches touching a BOX, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 5 depicts a cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure showing a configuration containing a fully depleted FET and a partially depleted FET, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 6 depicts a cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure showing a configuration containing an FET and a vertical diode, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 7 depicts a cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure showing a configuration containing an FET and a resistor, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 8 depicts a cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure showing a configuration containing a decoupling capacitor, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 9 depicts a cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure showing an external

trench that borders the space between a BOX and the top surface of a substrate, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 10 depicts a cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure showing an FET as a bulk device along with trenches and a depth-varying BOX, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 11 depicts a cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure showing a configuration containing an FET and a thick oxide device, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 12 depicts a cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure showing a configuration containing a polysilicon bounded diode, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 13 depicts a cross-sectional view of an asymmetric semiconductor structure having a dual depth BOX and an FET, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 14 depicts a cross-sectional view of an asymmetric semiconductor structure having a dual depth BOX and a gated lateral diode structure, in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 15 depicts a cross-sectional view of an asymmetric semiconductor structure having a dual depth BOX, a gated lateral diode structure, and a vertical diode structure, in accordance with the present invention.

Detailed Description of the Invention

FIG. 1 illustrates, in the form of a flow diagram, a method of the present invention of forming a structure comprising a depth-varying BOX and dual depth trench. The process begins with step **800**, which provides a substrate that typically comprises silicon. There are three

remaining steps: step **820** for forming a buried oxide layer, step **840** for forming a narrow trench, and step **860** for forming the dual depth trench.

The step **820** for forming a buried oxide layer begins with depositing a hardmask on the substrate. The hardmask may comprise a layer of etchable material such as silicon nitride (Si_3N_4). An alternative hardmask comprises a pad oxide (e.g., SiO_2) layer on the surface of the substrate and a layer of silicon nitride deposited on the pad oxide layer. After the hardmask is deposited on the substrate, a layer of photoresist is deposited on the hardmask and then patterned for protecting selected areas of the hardmask. After exposing the photoresist to radiation (typically ultraviolet radiation), openings are etched in the unprotected portions of the hardmask through the hardmask to the surface of the substrate. Next, oxygen ions are implanted through both the hardmask and the hardmask openings, followed by annealing to form a BOX layer, typically comprising SiO_2. The BOX layer comprises a shallow BOX layer and a deep BOX layer. The shallow BOX layer is under the protected hardmask areas. The deep BOX layer is under the openings etched into the hardmask. After the BOX is formed, the hardmask is removed

The next step **840** for forming a narrow trench starts with depositing an etchable first pad film, such as by forming a pad oxide layer on the substrate surface, followed by depositing a silicon nitride layer on the pad oxide layer. After the first pad film is deposited on the substrate, a layer of photoresist is formed on the first pad film and then patterned for protecting selected areas of the first pad film. After exposing the photoresist to radiation (typically ultraviolet radiation), openings are etched in the unprotected portions of the first pad film through the first pad film to the surface of the substrate. The etching is continued into the unprotected substrate,

thereby forming a trench in the substrate. The trench thus formed is a "narrow" trench in contrast with the wider trench, or wider trench step of a dual depth trench, formed in the subsequent step **860** (to be described below). The narrow trench thus formed will be transferred into the deep portion of the dual depth trench formed in step **860**. After the narrow trench is formed, the first pad film is removed.

The step **860** for forming a dual depth trench starts with depositing an etchable second pad film, such as by forming a pad oxide layer on the substrate surface and on the exposed surfaced of the narrow trench, followed by depositing a silicon nitride layer on the pad oxide layer. After the second pad film is deposited, a layer of photoresist is formed on the second pad film and then patterned for protecting selected areas. Unprotected areas include the narrow trench and areas on the substrate surface bordering the narrow tench. After exposing the photoresist to radiation (typically ultraviolet radiation), openings are etched in the unprotected portions of the second pad film through the second pad film to substrate material. The etching is continued into the unprotected substrate to form new openings in the substrate. The new opening beginning at the top substrate surface forms the shallow portion of the dual depth trench. The new opening beginning at the bottom of the narrow trench drives the narrow trench deeper into the substrate to form the deep portion of the dual depth trench. Next the dual depth trench is filled with electrically insulative material. The process is completed by such operations as polishing to remove filler material above the substrate surface.

FIGS. 2-15 illustrate various semiconductor structures of the present invention. In these structures, a trench will sometimes be described as touching a BOX. Such touching is intended to mean any form of physical touching including contacting at a point, abutting (contacting

along a line or along a surface element), and penetrating such that the trench occupies volumetric space within the interior of the BOX. A trench described as not touching a BOX is understood to be separated from the BOX by substrate material typically comprising silicon. Similarly, a BOX described as touching the top surface of a substrate is considered to physically contact the top surface at a point, or abut the top surface along a line or surface element of the top surface.

FIG. 2 illustrates a simplified cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure of the present invention, comprising a semiconductor substrate **10**. The substrate **10** comprises a top surface **15**, a continuous depth-varying BOX **24**, a first trench **32**, and a second trench **34**. Both the first trench **32** and the second trench **34** are positioned between the top surface **15** and the BOX **24**. Although the BOX **24** is shown as comprising two parallel segments at different depths, the depth of BOX **24** may vary spatially in any manner such that the BOX **24** is continuous. The BOX thicknesses and BOX depths at which the BOX **24** exists may be any BOX thicknesses and BOX depths, respectively, that can be attained by those skilled in the art, using known methods of forming a BOX such as the methods described herein. The distance between the substrate **10** and the BOX **24** typically varies between 0 μm and 10 μm. The BOX thickness is typically between 1500 Å and 2500 Å. A BOX disposed at two or more depths has a depth closest to the top surface **15** typically between 0.2 μm and 0.5 μm from the top surface, and a depth furthest from the top surface **15** typically between 1.0 μm and 2.0 μm. Although the BOX **24** is shown as not touching the top surface **15**, the BOX **24** may touch the top surface **15**.

The first trench **32** and the second trench **34** may penetrate the substrate **10** to the same depth or to different depths. Although the first trench **32** is shown as a two-segmented array and

the second trench **34** is shown as a single segment, trench **32** and trench **34** may each generally comprise one segment or a plurality of contiguous segments. The widths and depths of trench segments may be any trench widths and depths, respectively, that can be attained by those skilled in the art, using known methods of forming a trench such as the methods described herein. For example, a single-segment trench from the top surface **15** penetrates the substrate **10** to a depth typically between 0.20μm and 0.35 μm, and has a typical minimum width between 0.30 μm and 0.40 μm. A two-segment trench has a segment closest to the top surface **15** with a typical penetration depth between 0.20 μm and 0.35 μm and a typical minimum width between 0.60 μm and 0.80 μm, and a segment furthest from the top surface **15** with a typical penetration depth between 0.50 μm and 1.0 μm and a typical width between 0.15 μm and 0.30 μm. A sidewall of a segment may be either perpendicular to the top surface **15**, as shown in FIG. 2 (see e.g., sidewall **38** of the first trench **32**), or oriented at an arbitrary angle with respect to the top surface **15**. The bottom surface **31** of the first trench **32**, and the bottom surface **36** of the second trench **34**, may each be parallel to the top surface **15**, as shown in FIG. 2, or at an arbitrary angle with respect to the top surface **15**. The first trench **32** contains insulative material **33** so as to facilitate electrical separation between devices located to the left and right of the first trench **32** (see e.g., trench **154** in FIG. 7). Similarly, the second trench **34** contains insulative material **35** so as to facilitate electrical separation between devices located to the left and right of the second trench **34**. Neither the first trench **32** nor the second trench **34** touch the BOX **24**. The BOX and trench depths and dimensions in FIGS. 3-12 are as discussed above for the BOX and trenches of FIG. 2.

FIG. 3 illustrates a simplified cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure of the

present invention, comprising a semiconductor substrate **11**. The substrate **11** comprises a top surface **16**, a continuous depth-varying BOX **25**, a third trench **232**, and a fourth trench **234**. Both the third trench **232** and the fourth trench **234** are positioned between the top surface **16** and the BOX **25**. Although the BOX **25** is shown as comprising two parallel segments at different depths, the depth of BOX **25** may vary spatially in any manner such that the BOX **25** is continuous. Although the BOX **25** is shown as not touching the top surface **16**, the BOX **25** may touch the top surface **16**. The third trench **232** and the fourth trench **234** may penetrate the substrate **11** to the same depth or to different depths. Although the third trench **232** is shown as single segment and the fourth trench **234** is shown as a single segment, each of trenches **232** and **234** generally comprise one segment or a plurality of contiguous segments. A sidewall of a segment may be either perpendicular to the top surface **16**, as shown in, or oriented at an arbitrary angle with respect to the top surface **16** FIG.3 (see e.g., sidewall **238** of third trench **232**). The bottom surface **231** of the third trench **232**, and the bottom surface **236** of the fourth trench **234**, may each be parallel to the top surface **16**, as shown in FIG. 3, or at an arbitrary angle with respect to the top surface **16**. The third trench **232** touches the BOX **25** and the fourth trench **234** does not touch the BOX **25**. The third trench **232** contains insulative material **233** so as to facilitate electrical separation between devices located to the left and right of third trench **232**. In particular, the third trench **232** electrically separates region **50** from region **52**, and regions **50** and **52** may each comprise a semiconductor device. The fourth trench **234** contains insulative material **235** so as to facilitate electrical separation between devices located to the left and right of fourth trench **234**.

FIG. 4 illustrates a simplified cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure of the

present invention, comprising a semiconductor substrate **12**. The substrate **12** comprises a top surface **17**, a continuous depth-varying BOX **26**, a fifth trench **332**, and a sixth trench **334**. Both the fifth trench **332** and the sixth trench **334** are positioned between the top surface **17** and the BOX **26**. Although the BOX **26** is shown as comprising two parallel segments at different depths, the depth of BOX **26** may vary spatially in any manner such that the BOX **26** is continuous. Although the BOX **26** is shown as being separated from the top surface **17**, the BOX **26** may touch the top surface **17**. The fifth trench **332** and the sixth trench **334** may penetrate the substrate **12** to the same depth or to different depths. Although the fifth trench **332** is shown as a single segment and the sixth trench **334** shown as a two-segmented array, each of trenches **332** and **334** generally comprises one or a plurality of contiguous segments. A sidewall of a segment may be either perpendicular to the top surface **17**, as shown in FIG. 4, or oriented at an arbitrary angle with respect to the top surface **17** (see e.g., sidewall **338** of fifth trench **332**). The bottom surface **331** of the fifth trench **332**, and the bottom surface **336** of the sixth trench **334**, may each be parallel to the top surface **17**, as shown in FIG. 4, or at an arbitrary angle with respect to the top surface **17**. Both the fifth trench **332** and the sixth trench **334** touch the BOX **26**. The fifth trench **332** contains insulative material **333** so as to facilitate electrical separation between devices located to the left and right of fifth trench **332**. In particular, fifth trench **332** electrically separates region **54** from region **56**, and regions **54** and **56** may each comprise a semiconductor device. The sixth trench **334** contains insulative material **335** so as to facilitate electrical separation between devices located to the left and right of sixth trench **334**. In particular, sixth trench **334** electrically separates region **56** from region **58**, and region **58** may comprise a semiconductor device.

FIGS. 5-12 illustrate various arrangements of trenches and semiconductor devices. FIG. 5 shows a simplified cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure of the present invention. The substrate **210** comprises a top surface **212** and a fully depleted FET **61** which is electrically isolated by trench **60**, trench **72**, and BOX **224**. The fully depleted FET **61** comprises N+ material **62**, P- material **64**, N+ material **66**, gate **67**, gate insulator **68**, and insulating spacers **69** and **70**. The N+ material **62** and N+ material **66** each have a doping concentration typically between $10^{19}/cm^3$ and $10^{21}/cm^3$. The P- material **64** has a doping concentration typically between $10^{16}/cm^3$ and $10^{18}/cm^3$. The gate **67** minimum width is typically between 0.15 μm and 0.25 μm. The gate insulator **68** has a width approximately equal to the width of the gate **67**, and a thickness typically between 30 Å and 50 Å. The insulating spacers **69** and **70** have a maximum width typically between 300 Å and 1500 Å. The dimensions of the gate structure of FET **75** in FIG. 5, and of the gate structures depicted in FIGS. 6-12, are as discussed above for the gate structure of FET **61** in FIG. 5.

FIG. 5 also shows a partially depleted FET **75** which is electrically isolated by trench **72**, trench **86**, and BOX **224**. The partially depleted FET **75** comprises N+ material **76**, P- material **78**, N+ material **80**, gate **82**, gate insulator **83**, and insulating spacers **84** and **85**. Thus, FIG. 5 illustrates a fully depleted FET **61** and a partially depleted FET **75** within the same substrate. The N+ material **76** and N+ material **80** each penetrate the substrate **210** to about the same depth, typically between 0.10 μm and 0.25μm. The P- material **78** penetrates the substrate **210** to a depth typically between 0.50 μm and 1.0 μm. The N+ material **76** and N+ material **80** each have a doping concentration typically between $10^{19}/cm^3$ and $10^{21}/cm^3$. The P- material **78** has a doping concentration typically between $10^{16}/cm^3$ and $10^{18}/cm^3$. Noting that the FET **75** is an

NFET, the FET **75** would be a PFET if N+ material **76**, P- material **78**, and N+ material **80** were respectively replaced by P+ material, N– material, and P+ material, which would illustrate a fully depleted NFET and a partially depleted PFET on the same substrate.

FIG. 11 shows a simplified cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure of the present invention. The substrate **1010** comprises a top surface **1012** and an FET **1040** which is electrically isolated by trench **1015**, trench **1020**, and BOX **1080**. The FET **1040** comprises N+ material **1042**, P- material **1044**, N+ material **1046**, gate**1048**, gate insulator **1050**, and insulating spacers **1052** and **1054**. The N+ material **1042**, P- material **1044**, and N+ material **1046**, have geometrical characteristics and doping concentrations as respectively described for N+ material **62**, P- material **64**, and N+ material **66** of FET **61** in FIG. 5.

FIG. 11 also shows a thick oxide device **1060** is electrically isolated by trench **1020**, trench **1030** and BOX **1080**. The thick oxide device **1060** comprises N+ material **1062**, P- material **1067**, N+ material **1066**, trench **1064** which electrically separates N+ material **1062** from N+ material **1066**, and gate structure **1061**. The gate structure **1061**, which is optional and could be omitted, comprises gate **1068**, gate insulator **1070**, and insulating spacers **1072** and **1074**. Trench **1064** has the role of an insulative extension of gate insulator **1070**. Thus, FIG. 11 illustrates an FET **1040** and a thick oxide device **1060** within the same substrate. The N+ material **1062**and N+ material **1066** each penetrate the substrate **1010** to about the same depth, typically between 0.10 μm and 0.25 μm. The P- material **1067** encompasses an upper depth (defined by the penetration depth of trench **1064**) typically between 0.15 μm and 0.35 μm, and a lower depth (defined by the depth of BOX **1067**) typically between 1.0 μm and 2.0 μm. The N+

materials **1062** and **1066** are separated by a distance typically between 0.15 μm and 0.30 μm. The N+ material **1062** and N+ material **1066** each have a doping concentration typically between $10^{19}/cm^3$ and $10^{21}/cm^3$. The P- material **1067** has a doping concentration typically between $10^{16}/cm^3$ and $10^{18}/cm^3$. Noting that the FET **1040** is an NFET, the FET **1040** would be a PFET if N+ material **1042**, P- material **1044**, and N+ material **1046** were respectively replaced by P+ material, N– material, and P+ material, which would illustrate a PFET and a thick oxide device on the same substrate. The thick oxide device **1060** would function as an NPN bipolar transistor if the gate structure **1061** were not used and if a forward-biased voltage were applied between the base (P- material **1067**) and the emitter (N+ material **1062** or N+ material **1066**). The thick oxide device **1060** would function as an PNP bipolar transistor, upon application of forward biasing, if the N+ material **1062**, P- material **1067**, and N+ material **1066** were respectively replaced with P+ material, N– material, and P+ material. As stated previously, the gate structure **1061** is optional and may be omitted.

FIG. 6 shows a simplified cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure of the present invention. The substrate **310** comprises a top surface **312**, an FET **90**, and a vertical diode **100**. The FET **90** is electrically isolated by trench **101**, trench **102**, and BOX **324**. The vertical diode **100** is electrically isolated by trench **102**, trench **104**, and BOX **324**. The FET **90** comprises N+ material **92**, P- material **94**, N– material **95**, gate **96**, gate insulator **97**, and insulating spacers **98** and **99**. The N+ material **92**, P- material **94**, and N+ material **95**, have geometrical characteristics and doping concentrations as respectively described for N+ material **62**, P- material **64**, and N+ material **66** of FET **61** in FIG. 5. Although FIG. 6 shows FET **90** as

fully depleted, FET **90** could be partially depleted FET if the N+ material **92**, P- material **94**, and N+ material **95** were reconfigured geometrically to be similar to FET **75** in FIG. 5. Moreover, noting that the FET **90** is an N-type MOSFET, the FET **90** would become a P-type MOSFET if N+ material **92**, P- material **94**, and N+ material **95** were respectively replaced by P+ material, N– material, and P+ material.

The vertical diode **100** in FIG. 6 comprises P+ material **106** and N– material **108**. The P+ material **106** has a penetration depth typically between 0.10 μm and 0.25 μm, and a doping concentration typically between $10^{18}/cm^3$ and $10^{21}/cm^3$. The N– material **108** has a doping concentration typically between $10^{16}/cm^3$ and $10^{18}/cm^3$. Alternatively, the diode **100** could be reconfigured as another vertical diode such that the P+ material **106** is replaced with N+ material and the N– material **108** is replaced with P- material.

FIG. 7 shows a simplified cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure of the present invention. The substrate **410** comprises a top surface **412**, an FET **130**, and resistor structure **150**. FET **130** is electrically isolated by trench **120**, trench **144**, and BOX **424**. Resistor structure **150** is electrically isolated by trench **144**, trench **156**, and BOX **424**. FET **130** comprises N+ material **132**, P- material **134**, N+ material **136**, gate **137**, gate insulator **138**, and insulating spacers **139** and **140**. The N+ material **132**, P- material **134**, and N+ material **136**, have geometrical characteristics and doping concentrations as respectively described for N+ material **62**, P- material **64**, and N+ material **66** of FET **61** in FIG. 5. Noting that the FET **130** is an N-channel MOSFET, the FET **130** would become a P-channel MOSFET if N+ material **132**, P- material **134**, and N+ material **136** were respectively replaced by P+ material, N– material,

and P+ material.

The resistor structure **150** in FIG. 7 comprises N– resistor **148**, N+ electrical contacts **151** and **152** which couple the N– resistor **148** to external circuitry, and trench **154** which insulates electrical contacts **151** and **152** from each other. The N+ electrical contacts **151** and **152** each have penetration depths typically between 0.10μm and 0.25 μm, and doping concentrations typically between 10^{19}/cm3 and 10^{21}/cm3. The N– resistor **148** extends into the substrate **410** to a depth (defined by the depth of BOX **424**) typically between 1.0μm and 2.0 μm,, and has a doping concentration typically between 10^{16}/cm3 and 10^{18}/cm3.

FIG. 8 depicts a simplified cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure of the present invention. The substrate **510** comprises a top surface **512** FIG. 8 shows a decoupling capacitor **170**, which is electrically isolated by trench **160**, trench **162**, and BOX **524**. Decoupling capacitor **170** comprises: capacitor plate **178**, N– material **174** which serves as the other capacitor plate, capacitor dielectric **179**, insulating spacers **180** and **181**, and electrical contacts **172** and **176** which comprise N+ material. The N– material **174** also serves as a resistor between electrical contacts **172** and **176**, so that the decoupling capacitor **170** is effectively a resistor-capacitor configuration with an RC time constant, where R is resistance and C is capacitance. If there is a sudden drop in voltage, the capacitor **170** discharges its charge buildup through the resistor **174** so as to restore the voltage. The optional low-resistance shunt **182**, comprising N+ material, reduces the resistance between electrical contacts **172** and **176** and the bottom of the capacitor dielectric **179**, thereby reducing the RC time constant which hastens the response of the decoupling capacitor **170** to the sudden voltage drop. The electrical contacts **172**

and **176** each extend into the substrate **510** to approximately the same depth, typically between 0.10.μm and 0.25 μm, and each has a doping concentration typically between 10^{19}/cm3 and 10^{21}/cm3. The N– material **174** has a doping concentration typically between 10^{16}/cm3 and 10^{18}/cm3. The optional low-resistance shunt **182** has a doping concentration typically between 10^{18}/cm3 and 10^{19}/cm3., and is at a depth typically between 0.5 μm and 1.5 μm. In FIG. 8, the semiconductor structure would represent a gated diode if the N+ material of electrical contact **176** were replaced with P+ material, wherein the electrical contact **176** would become the anode **176** of the gated diode, the N– resistor **174** and electrical contact **172** would collectively become the cathode of the gated diode with cathode component **174** comprising N– material and cathode component **172** comprising N+ material. Additionally, the capacitor plate **178** would become the gate **178** of the gated diode, the capacitor dielectric **179** would become the gate dielectric **179** of the gated diode, and insulating spacers **180** and **181** would continue to have the role of insulating spacers as part of the gated diode.

FIG. 12 depicts a simplified cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure of the present invention. The substrate **910** comprises a top surface **912**. FIG. 12 shows a polysilicon bounded diode structure **915**, which is electrically isolated by trench **950**, trench **952**, and BOX **954**. FIG. 12 shows the polysilicon bounded diode structure **915** as comprising a first gated diode **960** and a second gated diode **970**. The first gated diode **960** includes: the anode comprising P+ material **926**, the cathode comprising N– material **924** and N+ material **922**, and gate structure **920**. The gate structure **920** includes gate **930**, gate insulator **932**, insulating spacers **934** and **936**. The second gated diode **970** includes: the anode comprising P+ material

926, the cathode comprising N– material 924 and N+ material 928, and gate structure 940. The gate structure 940 includes gate 942, gate insulator 944, insulating spacers 946 and 948. N– material 924 provides a common cathode for the first gated diode 960 and the second gated diode 970. The N+ material 922 and N+ material 928 each extend into the substrate 910 to a depth typically between 0.10 μm and 0.25 μm, and each has a doping concentration typically between $10^{19}/cm^3$ and $10^{21}/cm^3$. The P+ material 926 extends into the substrate 910 to a depth typically between 0.10 μm and 0.25 μm, and has a doping concentration typically between $10^{19}/cm^3$ and $10^{21}/cm^3$. The common cathode material 924 touches BOX 954 at a depth typically between 1.0 μm and 2.0 μm, and has a doping concentration typically between $10^{16}/cm^3$ and $10^{18}/cm^3$. A polysilicon bounded diode structure of opposite polarity would result if N+ material 922, P+ material 926, N– material 924, and N+ material 928 were respectively replaced with P+ material, N+ material, P- material, and P+ material. Although FIG. 12 illustrates two gated diodes, any number of gated diodes may appear within the polysilicon bounded diode structure 915, wherein a deep cathode region (e.g., N– material 924) provides common cathode material for each gated diode and is insulatively bounded by a BOX (e.g., BOX 954), wherein each gated diode (e.g., first gated diode 960) comprises an anode of first conductivity (e.g., P+ material 926) and is electrically isolated by at least one gate structure (e.g., gate structure 920), and wherein each gated diode (e.g., first gated diode 960) comprises a cathode of second conductivity (e.g., N+ material 922) and is electrically insulated by at least one gate structure (e.g., gate structure 920) and by at least one trench (e.g., trench 950).

FIG. 9 depicts a simplified cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure of the

present invention, comprising a semiconductor substrate **610** having a top surface **612**. The substrate **610** comprises a BOX **624** with a trench **191** between the BOX **624** and the top surface **612**, along with an external trench **190** that is external to region **192**, wherein region **192** comprises a space between the BOX **624** and the top surface **612**. The external trench **190** borders a side **193** of the region **192** and the external trench **190** touches the BOX **624**. There is no BOX in a space **194** between the external trench **190** and a bottom surface **614** of the substrate **610**. The external trench **190** is so insulated as to provide electrical separation between the region **192** and another region **196** of the substrate, wherein the other region **196** includes the space **194** and is external to the region **192**. The trench **191** and the external trench **190** may each have any of the characteristics generally available to the first trench **32** in FIG. 2. The BOX **624** may have any of the characteristics generally available to the BOX **24** in FIG. 2. Other region **196** may comprise a bulk semiconductor device such as the FET **730** illustrated in FIG. 10.

FIG. 10 shows a simplified cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure of the present invention. The substrate **710** comprises a top surface **712**, an FET **730**, an FET **750**, and an FET **770**. FET **750** is electrically isolated by trench **792**, trench **794**, and BOX **724**. FET **770** is electrically isolated by trench **794**, trench **796**, and BOX **724**. FET **730** is a bulk semiconductor device with no BOX below FET **730**. FET **730** is electrically isolated by trench **790**, trench **792**, and BOX **724**. FET **730** comprises N+ material **732**, P- material **734**, N+ material **736**, gate **738**, gate insulator **740**, and insulating spacers **742** and **744**. FET **750** comprises N+ material **752**, P- material **754**, N+ material **756**, gate **758**, gate insulator **760**, and

insulating spacers **762** and **764**. FET **770** comprises N+ material **772**, P- material **774**, N+ material **776**, gate **778**, gate insulator **780**, and insulating spacers **782** and **784**. The geometrical and doping characteristics of FET **770** are as given for FET **61** in FIG. 5. The geometrical and doping characteristics of FET **710** are as given for FET **75** in FIG. 5. For FET **730**, the N+ material **732** and N+ material **736** each extend to a depth typically between 0.10 μm and 0.25 μm, and have doping concentrations typically between $10^{19}/cm^3$ and $10^{21}/cm^3$. The P- material **774** has a doping concentration typically between $10^{16}/cm^3$ and $10^{18}/cm^3$. Noting that the FET **730** is an NFET, the FET **730** would become a PFET if N+ material **732**, P- material **734**, and N+ material **736** were respectively replaced by P+ material, N– material, and P+ material. Noting that the FET **750** is an NFET, the FET **750** would become a PFET if N+ material **752**, P- material **754**, and N+ material **756** were respectively replaced by P+ material, N– material, and P+ material. Noting that the FET **770** is an NFET, the FET **770** would become a PFET if N+ material **772**, P- material **774**, and N+ material **776** were respectively replaced by P+ material, N– material, and P+ material.

The preceding FIGS. 2-12 exemplify the many varieties of possible semiconductor structure configurations within the scope of the present invention. Each semiconductor structure of the present invention comprises a substrate having a BOX, at least two trenches, and semiconductor devices. The BOX and the trenches for the semiconductor structures of the present invention may be formed by methods discussed herein. For each semiconductor structure, the BOX is formed before the trenches are formed. Each trench of a plurality of trenches may be formed in any order and portions of two or more trenches may be formed

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simultaneously by suitable photoresist patterning, exposure, and etching, as discussed herein.

FIGS. 13-15 illustrate asymmetric semiconductor structures of the present invention. Each asymmetric semiconductor structure includes a dual depth BOX and two semiconductor regions such that one of the regions touches the BOX and the other region does not touch the BOX. Although a dual-depth BOX is shown in FIGS. 13-15 to illustrate asymmetric semiconductor structures, the BOX in each of FIGS. 13-15 may have any number of different depths, and may have a spatially varying thickness. Although a trench is not explicitly shown in FIGS. 13-15, one or more trenches could be inserted as necessary to provide lateral insulation between semiconductor devices, in a fashion consistent with the placement of trenches in FIGS. 2-12.

FIG. 13 illustrates a simplified cross-sectional view of a semiconductor structure of the present invention, relating to an FET. In FIG. 13, the substrate **1200** includes a top surface **1210**, a dual-depth BOX **1250** having a transition region **1252** between the dual depths, and an FET **1215**. The FET **1215** includes N+ material **1230**, P- material **1270**, N+ material **1220**, and gate structure **1240**. The source and drain of the FET **1215** may either comprise N+ material **1220** and N+ material **1230** respectively, or N+ material **1230** and N+ material **1220** respectively. The P- material **1270** serves as the channel of the FET **1215**. The gate structure **1240** represents any gate structure, such as the gate structure **920** of Fig. 12. Also shown in FIG. 13 is an FET body **1260**, comprising contiguous regions of the P- material **1270**, P- material **1275**, and P- material **1280**. Two features of the semiconductor structure of FIG. 13 relates to the fact the N+ material **1230** touches the BOX **1250**, while the N+ material **1220** does not touch the BOX **1250**. A first feature stems from the fact that N+ material **1220** does not touch the BOX **1250**, which

allows the FET body **1260** to define an electrically conductive path from the channel of P- material **1270** to a point **1290** on the top surface **1210**. This electrically conductive path, which would not exist if N+ material **1220** were touching the BOX **1250**, permits P- material **1270** to be electrically coupled with any electronic device that is electrically connected to point **1290**. A second feature is the asymmetry of junction capacitance associated with N+ material **1220** and N+ material **1230**. In particular, the N+ material **1230** has little or no junction capacitance because it touches the BOX **1250**. In contrast, the N+ material **1220** has a relatively high junction capacitance, because of the P- material **1275** existing between the N+ material **1220** and the BOX **1250**. Low capacitance is advantageous for various applications including those requiring high-speed circuitry. High capacitance is advantageous for various applications, such as SRAM applications. Thus, the semiconductor structure of FIG. 13 allows low and high junction capacitance regions to coexist on the same substrate with a dual-depth BOX.

Many modifications of FIG. 13 are possible, as illustrated in the following three examples. In a first example, noting that the FET **1215** is an NFET, the FET **1215** would be a PFET if N+ material **1220**, P- material **1270**, N+ material **1230**, P- material **1275**, and P- material **1280** were respectively replaced by P+ material, N– material, P+ material, N– material, and N– material. In a second example, the FET **1215** would function as an NPN bipolar transistor if the gate structure **1240** were not utilized and if a forward-biased voltage were applied between the base comprising P- material **1270** and the emitter comprising N+ material **1230**, such that the N+ material **1220** would serve as the collector. In a third example, the semiconductor structure of FIG. 13 would represent a resistor structure if the gate structure **1240**

were not utilized and if the P- material **1270**, P- material **1275**, and P- material **1280** were each replaced with N– material. As a consequence of the preceding substitutions, the N+ materials **1220** and **1230** would become electrical contacts, and the body **1260** would become a resistor.

FIG. 14 illustrates a simplified cross-sectional view of an asymmetric semiconductor structure of the present invention, relating to a lateral diode structure. In FIG. 14, the substrate **1400** includes a top surface **1410**, a dual-depth BOX **1450** having a transition region **1452** between the dual depths, and a gated lateral diode **1415**. The gated lateral diode **1415** includes P+ material **1430**, N– material **1470**, N+ material **1420**, and gate structure **1440**. The anode of the gated lateral diode **1415** includes P+ material **1430**. The cathode of the gated lateral diode **1415** includes the N+ material **1420** and an N– body **1460**. The N– body **1460** includes the contiguous regions of N– material **1470**, N– material **1475**, and N– material **1480**. The gate structure **1440** represents any gate structure, such as the gate structure **920** of FIG. 12. By having N+ material **1420** not touching the BOX **1450**, the gated lateral diode structure **1415** provides a low resistance path through N– region **1475**, which improves the dissipation of heat from devices that protect chip circuits from electrostatic discharge (ESD). The gated lateral diode **1415** could be reconfigured to a lateral diode of opposite polarity if the P+ material **1430**, N– material **1470**, N+ material **1420**, N– material **1475**, and N– material **1480** were respectively replaced with N+ material, P- material, P+ material, P- material, and P- material. It is also permissible to omit the gate structure **1440**, in which case the gated lateral anode **1415** would be an ungated lateral anode.

FIG. 15 illustrates a simplified cross-sectional view of an asymmetric semiconductor

structure of the present invention, relating to a gated lateral diode structure and a vertical diode structure. In FIG. 15, the substrate **1600** includes a top surface **1610**, a dual-depth BOX **1650** having a transition region **1652** between the dual depths, a gated lateral diode **1615**, and a vertical diode **1617**. The gated lateral diode **1615** includes an anode of P+ material **1620**, and a cathode of N– material **1670**, N+ material **1630**, N– material **1675**, and N– material **1680**. The gate structure **1640** represents any gate structure, such as the gate structure **920** of FIG. 12. The vertical diode **1617** includes an anode of P+ material **1620** and a cathode of N– material **1675**. The gated lateral diode **1615** and the vertical diode **1617** could be reconfigured to a gated lateral diode and a vertical diode, respectively, of opposite polarity if the N+ material **1630**, N– material **1670**, P+ material **1620**, N– material **1675**, and N– material **1680** were respectively replaced with P+ material, P- material, N+ material, P- material, and P- material. Thus the asymmetric semiconductor structure of FIG. 15 allows a gated lateral diode and a vertical diode to coexist on the same substrate with a dual-depth BOX. It is also permissible to omit the gate structure **1640**, in which case the gated lateral diode **1615** would be an ungated lateral diode.

While preferred and particular embodiments of the present invention have been described herein for purposes of illustration, many modifications and changes will become apparent to those skilled in the art. Accordingly, the appended claims are intended to encompass all such modifications and changes as fall within the true spirit and scope of this invention.

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Claims

We claim:

1. A semiconductor structure comprising:

a substrate comprising a first surface;

a continuous buried oxide layer disposed at a first depth and at a second depth within the substrate, wherein the first depth and the second depth are unequal;

a first trench between the first surface and the buried oxide layer at the first depth; and

a second trench between the first surface and the buried oxide layer at the second depth.

2. The semiconductor structure of claim 1, wherein the first trench includes at least two segments having different depths.

3. The semiconductor structure of claim 1,

wherein the first trench does not touch the buried oxide layer,

and wherein the second trench does not touch the buried oxide layer.

4. The semiconductor structure of claim 1,

wherein the first trench touches the buried oxide layer,

wherein the first trench electrically isolates a first region within the substrate from a second region within the substrate,

and wherein the second trench does not touch the buried oxide layer.

5. The semiconductor structure of claim 4,

wherein the first region includes a first semiconductor device,

and wherein the second region includes a second semiconductor device.

6. The semiconductor structure of claim 1,

wherein the first trench touches the buried oxide layer,

wherein the second trench touches the buried oxide layer,

wherein the first trench electrically isolates a first region within the substrate from a second region within the substrate, and

wherein the second trench electrically isolates the second region within the substrate from a third region within the substrate.

7. The semiconductor structure of claim 6,

wherein the first region includes a first semiconductor device,

wherein the second region includes a second semiconductor device,

and wherein the third region includes a third semiconductor device.

8. The semiconductor structure of claim 7, wherein the second semiconductor device is a fully depleted FET.

9. The semiconductor structure of claim 7, wherein the second semiconductor device is a partially depleted FET.

10. The semiconductor structure of claim 7, wherein the first semiconductor device is a fully depleted FET, and wherein the second semiconductor device is a partially depleted FET.

11. The semiconductor structure of claim 7, wherein the second semiconductor device is an FET.

12. The semiconductor structure of claim 7, wherein the second semiconductor device is a vertical diode.

13. The semiconductor structure of claim 7, wherein the second semiconductor device is a

resistor structure.

14. The semiconductor structure of claim 7, wherein the second semiconductor device is a decoupling capacitor.

15. The semiconductor structure of claim 7, wherein the second semiconductor device is a bipolar transistor.

16. The semiconductor structure of claim 7, wherein the second semiconductor device thick oxide device.

17. The semiconductor structure of claim 7, wherein the second semiconductor device is a polysilicon bounded diode structure.

18. A semiconductor structure comprising:

a substrate comprising a first surface;

a continuous buried oxide layer disposed at a first depth and at a second depth within the substrate;

single step shallow trench isolation regions touching the buried oxide layer at the first depth for isolating devices formed between the first depth and the first surface; and

dual step shallow trench isolation regions selectively touching the buried oxide layer at the second depth for isolating a group of devices formed between the second depth and the first surface, wherein the group of devices includes at least one device.

19. A semiconductor structure comprising:

a substrate comprising a first surface;

a continuous, depth-varying buried oxide layer within the substrate;

a first trench between the first surface and the buried oxide layer; and

an external trench within the substrate, wherein a first region within the substrate is electrically isolated by the external trench, the first trench, and the buried oxide layer, wherein the external trench is external to the first region and bounds a side of the first region, wherein the external trench touches an end surface of the buried oxide layer, and wherein the first region is electrically isolated from a second region within the substrate.

20. The semiconductor structure of claim 19, wherein the external trench includes at least two segments having different depths.

21. The semiconductor structure of claim 19, wherein the first region includes a first semiconductor device, and wherein the second region includes a bulk semiconductor device.

22. The semiconductor structure of claim 21, wherein the bulk semiconductor device is an FET.

23. A method for forming a semiconductor structure, comprising the steps of:

providing a substrate comprising a first surface;

forming a continuous buried oxide layer disposed at a first depth and at a second depth within the substrate, wherein the first depth and the second depth are unequal; and

forming a first trench and a second trench, wherein the first trench is located between the first surface and the buried oxide layer at the first depth, and wherein the second trench is located between the first surface and the buried oxide layer at the second depth.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein the first trench includes at least two segments having different depths.

25. The method of claim 23,

wherein the first trench does not touch the buried oxide layer,

and wherein the second trench does not touch the buried oxide layer.

26. The method of claim 23,

wherein the first trench touches the buried oxide layer,

wherein the first trench electrically isolates a first region within the substrate from a second region within the substrate,

and wherein the second trench does not touch the buried oxide layer.

27. The method of claim 26, further comprising forming a first semiconductor device in the first

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region and a second semiconductor device in the second region.

28. The method of claim 23,

wherein the first trench touches the buried oxide layer,

wherein the second trench touches the buried oxide layer,

wherein the first trench electrically isolates a first region within the substrate from a second region within the region, and

wherein the second trench electrically isolates the second region within the substrate from a third region within the substrate.

29. The method of claim 28, further comprising forming a first semiconductor device in the first region, a second semiconductor device in the second region, and a third semiconductor device in the third region.

30. The method of claim 23, wherein the step of forming a first trench and a second trench includes forming the first trench during a first time interval and forming the second trench during a second time interval, and wherein the first time interval and second time interval do not overlap.

31. The method of claim 23, wherein the step of forming a first trench and a second trench includes forming a portion of the first trench and a portion of the second trench concurrently.

32. A method for forming a semiconductor structure, comprising the steps of:

providing a substrate comprising a first surface,

forming a continuous buried oxide layer disposed at a first depth and at a second depth within the substrate;

forming single step shallow shall trench isolation regions touching the buried oxide layer at the first depth for isolating devices formed between the first depth and the first surface; and

forming dual step shallow trench isolation regions selectively touching the buried oxide layer at the second depth for isolating a group of devices formed between the second depth and the first surface, wherein the group of devices includes at least one device.

33. A method for forming a semiconductor structure, comprising the steps of:

providing a substrate comprising a first surface;

forming a continuous, depth-varying buried oxide layer within the substrate; and

forming a first trench and an external trench, wherein the first trench is located between the first surface and the buried oxide layer, wherein a first region encompasses an entire space between the buried oxide layer and the first surface, wherein the external trench is external to the first region and bounds a side of the first region, wherein the external trench touches an end surface of the buried oxide layer, and wherein the external trench electrically isolates the first region from a second region within the substrate.

34. The method of claim 33, wherein the external trench includes at least two segments having different depths.

35. The semiconductor structure of claim 33, wherein the first region includes a first semiconductor device, and wherein the second region includes a second semiconductor device.

36. The method of claim 33, wherein the step of forming a first trench and an external trench includes forming the first trench during a first time interval and forming the external trench during a second time interval, and wherein the first time interval and second time interval do not overlap.

37. The method of claim 33, wherein the step of forming a first trench and an external trench

includes forming a portion of the first trench and a portion of the external trench concurrently.

38. A semiconductor structure comprising:

a substrate having a top surface;

a continuous buried oxide layer disposed at a first depth and at a second depth within the substrate;

a first semiconductor region between the first surface and the first depth of the buried oxide layer, wherein the first semiconductor region touches the first surface and touches the buried oxide layer at the first depth;

a second semiconductor region between the first surface and the second depth of the buried oxide layer, wherein the second semiconductor region touches the first surface and does not touch the buried oxide layer;

a gate structure on the top surface, laterally between the first semiconductor region and the second semiconductor region; and

a third semiconductor region between the first surface and the buried oxide layer, wherein the third semiconductor region is continuously distributed between the first surface and the buried oxide layer, and wherein the third semiconductor region touches the buried oxide layer at the second depth, the first semiconductor region, the second semiconductor region, and the gate structure.

39. The semiconductor structure of claim 38, wherein the first semiconductor region includes N+ semiconductor material, wherein the second semiconductor region includes N+ semiconductor material, and wherein the third semiconductor region includes P- semiconductor material.

40. The semiconductor structure of claim 38, wherein the first semiconductor region includes P+ semiconductor material, wherein the second semiconductor region includes N+ semiconductor material, and wherein the third semiconductor region includes N– semiconductor material.

41. The semiconductor structure of claim 38, wherein the first semiconductor region includes N+ semiconductor material, wherein the second semiconductor region includes P+ semiconductor material, and wherein the third semiconductor region includes N– semiconductor material.