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(54) **SHALLOW TRENCH ISOLATION
STRUCTURE FOR SHIELDING TRAPPED
CHARGE IN A SEMICONDUCTOR DEVICE**

Related U.S. Application Data

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(57) **ABSTRACT**
A semiconductor structure comprising a first field effect transistor (FET), a second FET, and a shallow trench isolation (STI) structure. The first FET comprises a channel region formed from a portion of a silicon substrate, a gate dielectric formed over the channel region, and a gate electrode comprising a bottom surface in direct physical contact with the gate dielectric. A top surface of the channel region is located within a first plane and the bottom surface of the gate electrode is located within a second plane. The STI structure comprises a conductive STI fill structure. A top surface of the conductive STI fill structure is above the first plane by a first distance D_1 and is above the second plane by a second distance D_2 that is less than D_1 .

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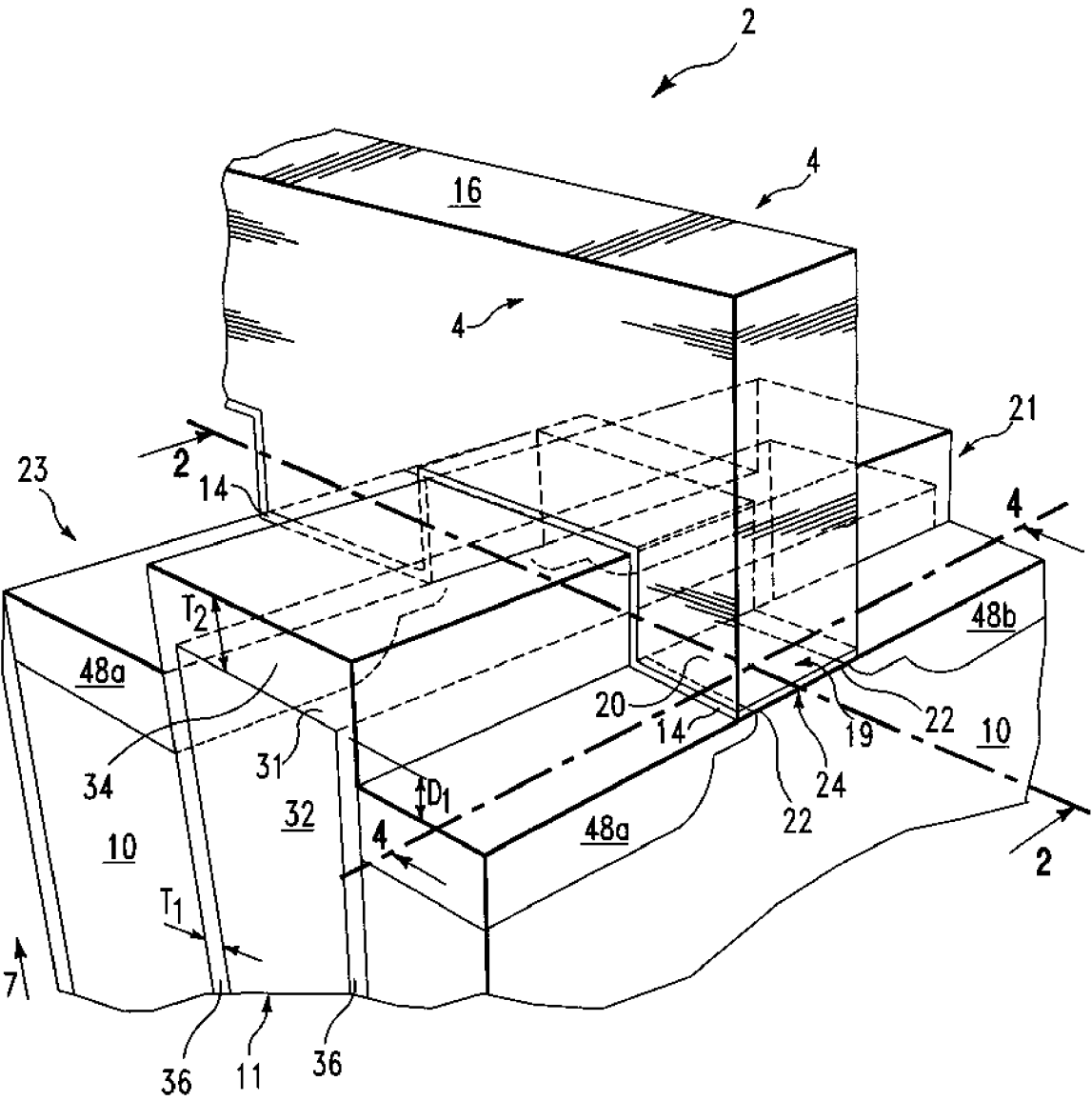


FIG. 1

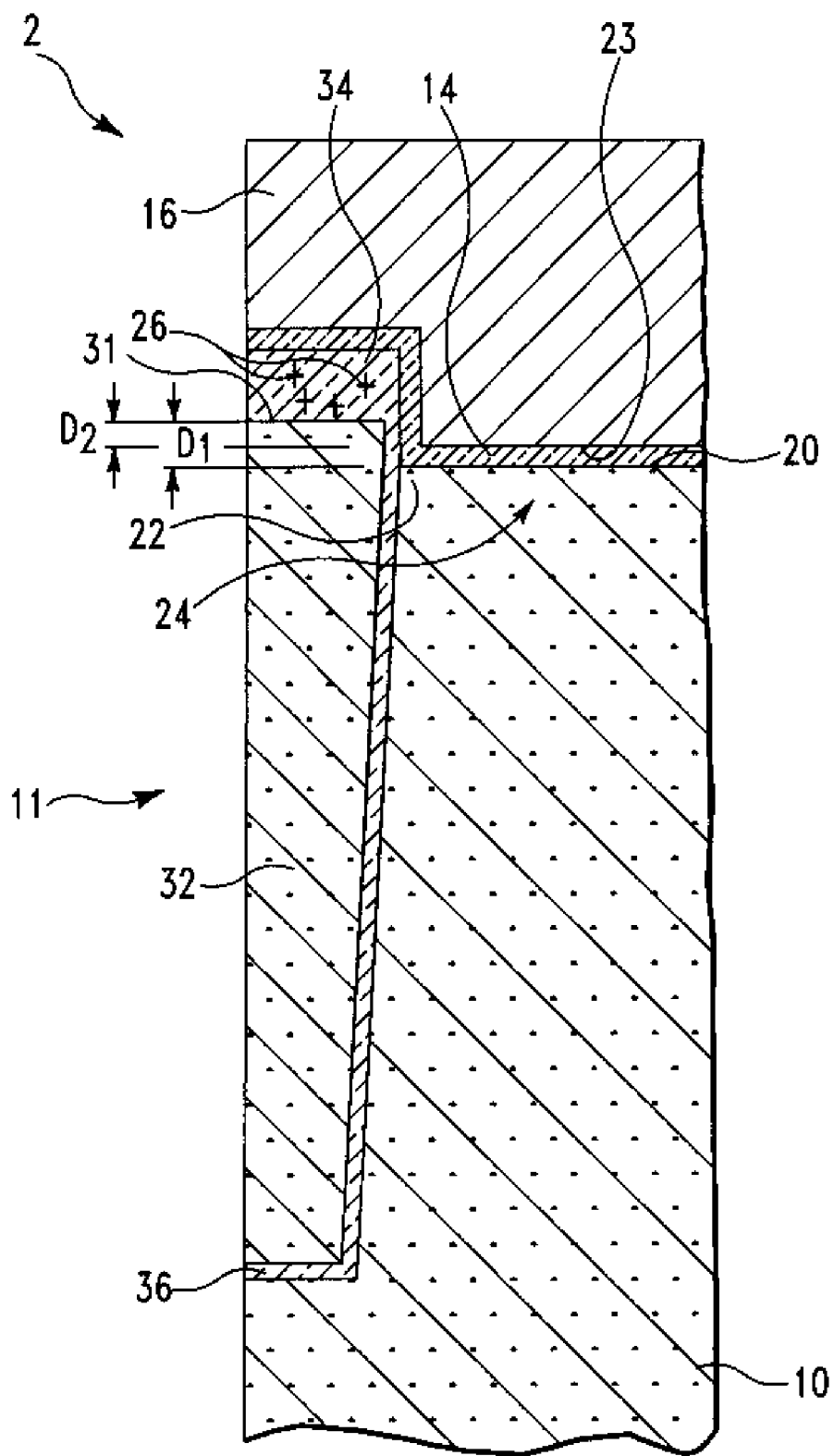


FIG. 2

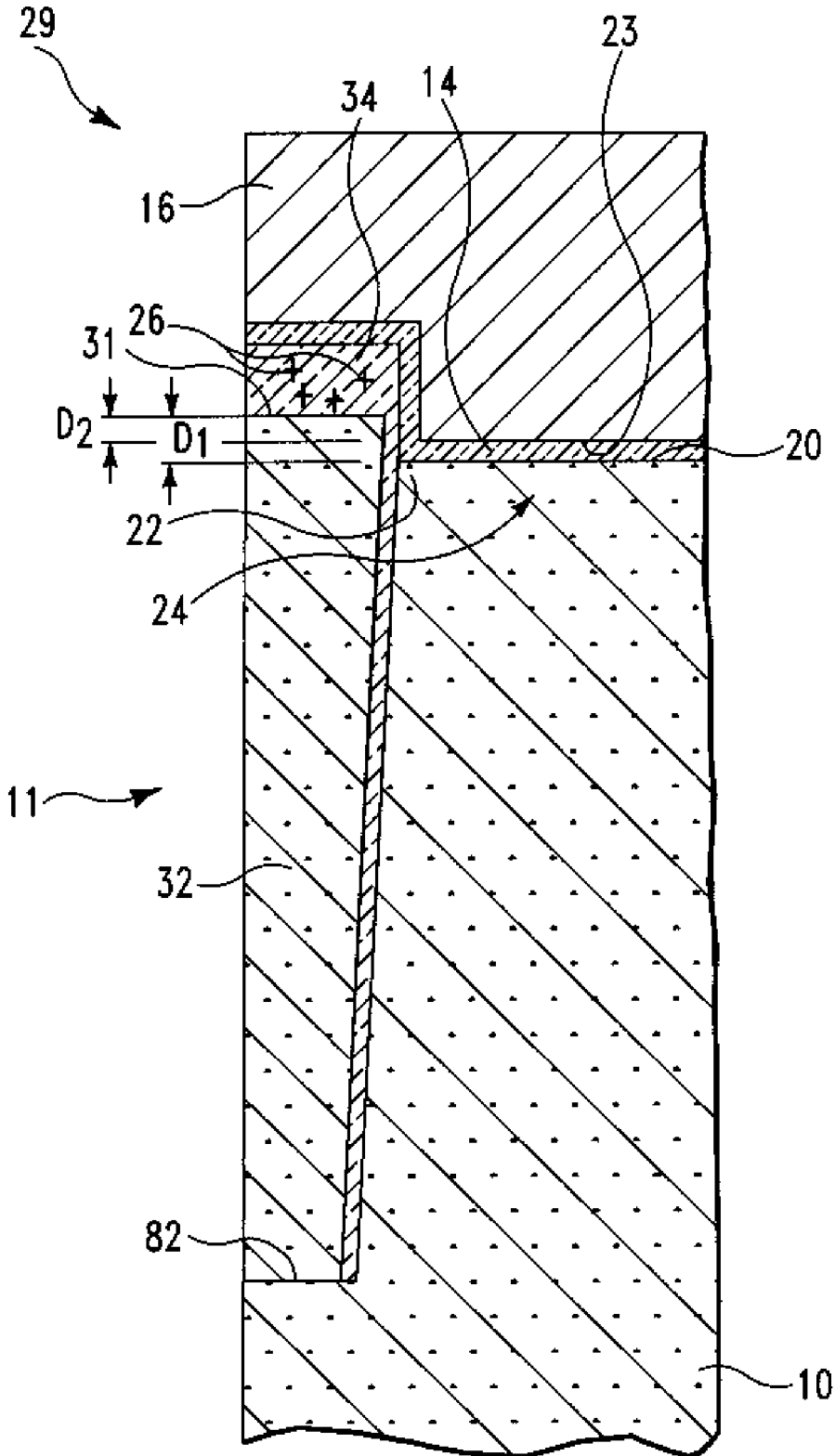


FIG. 3

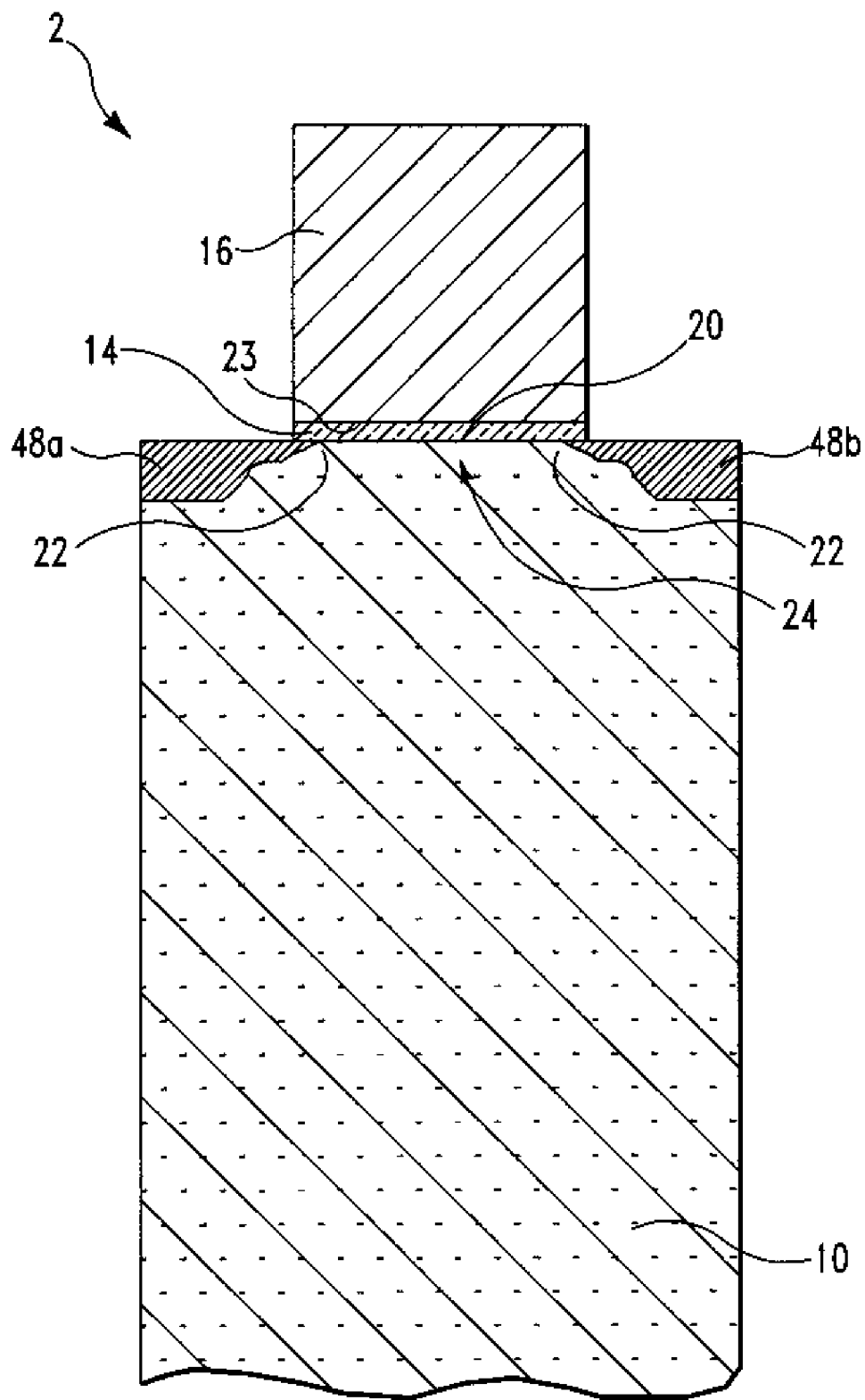


FIG. 4

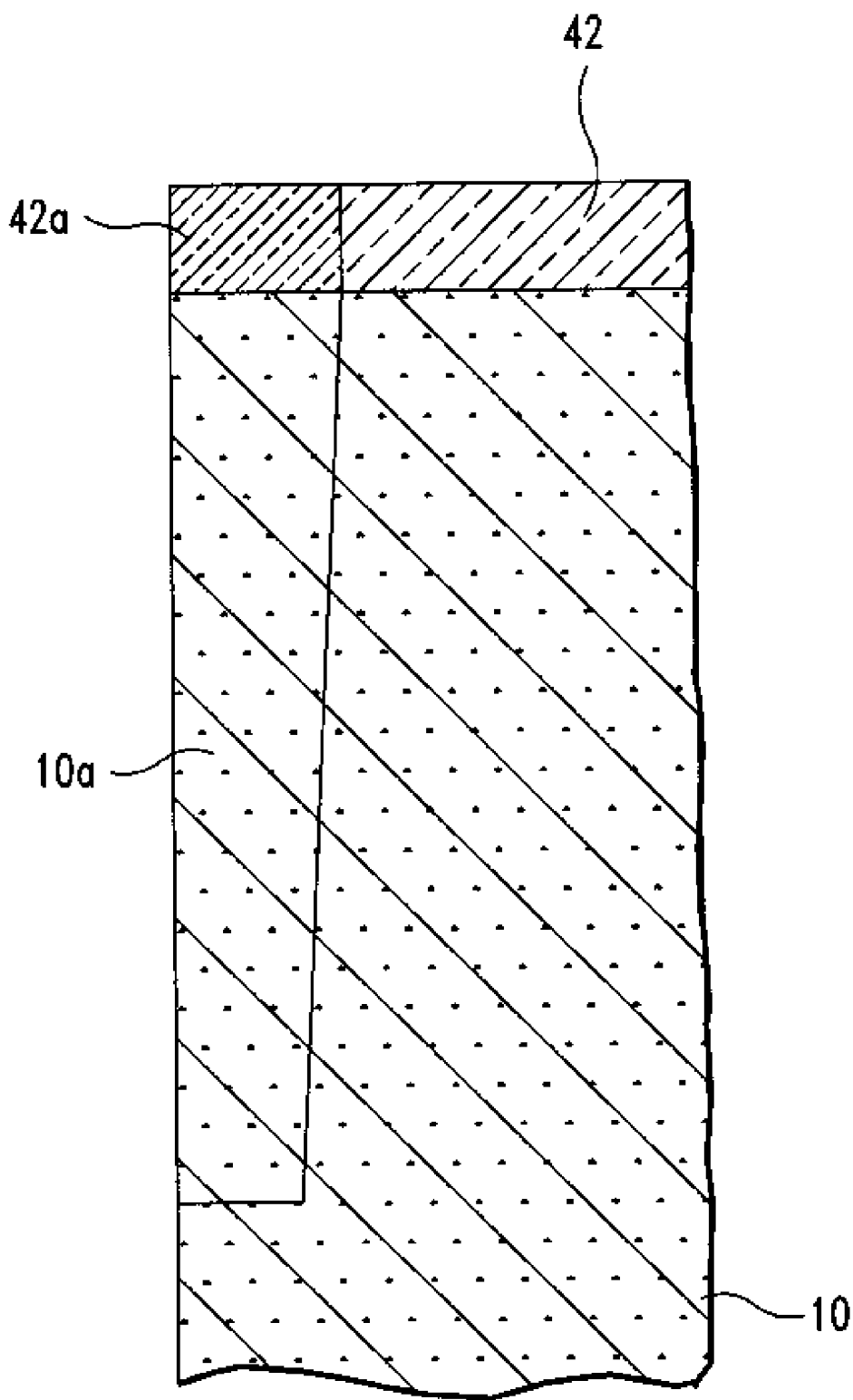


FIG. 5A

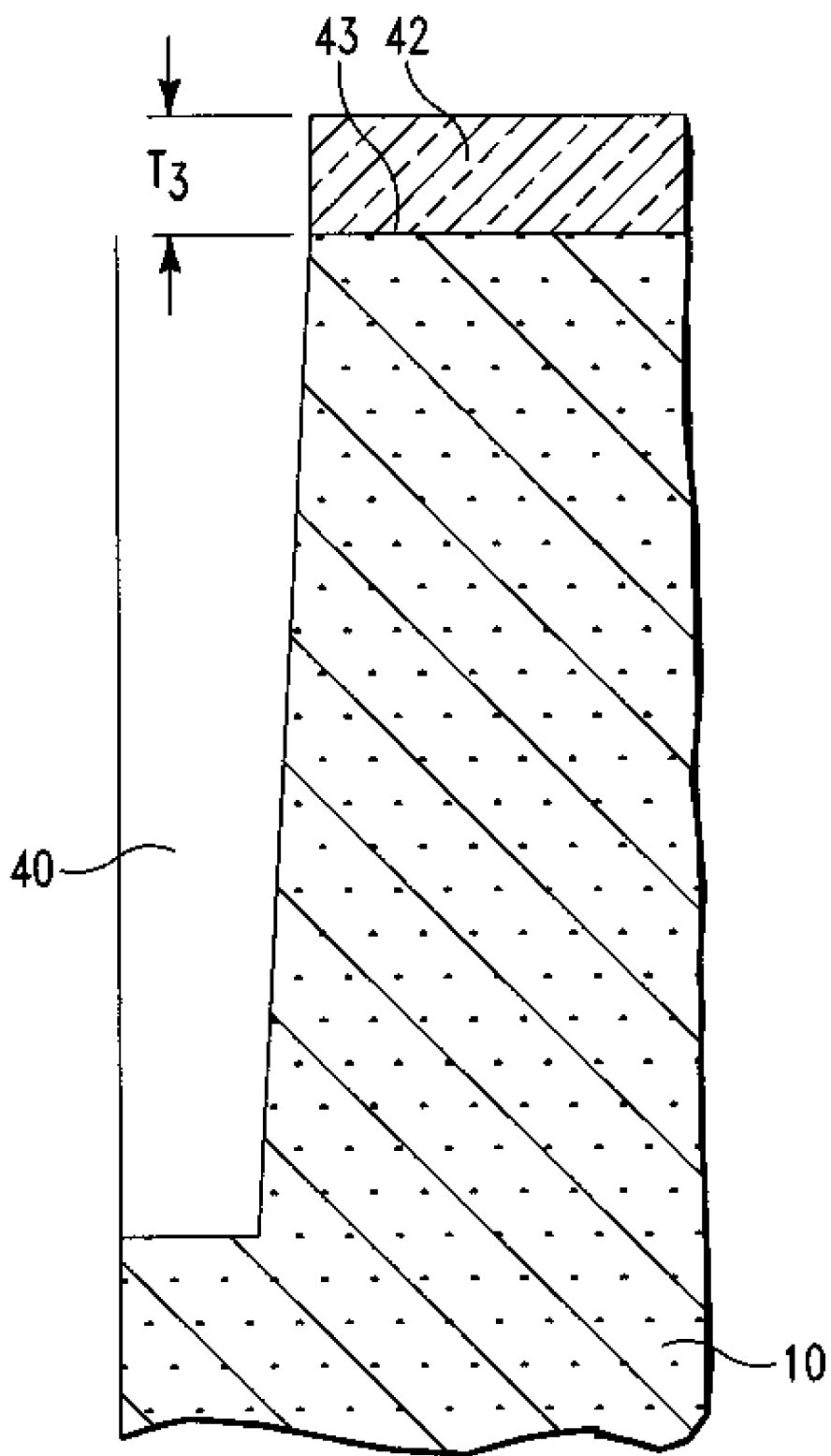


FIG. 5B

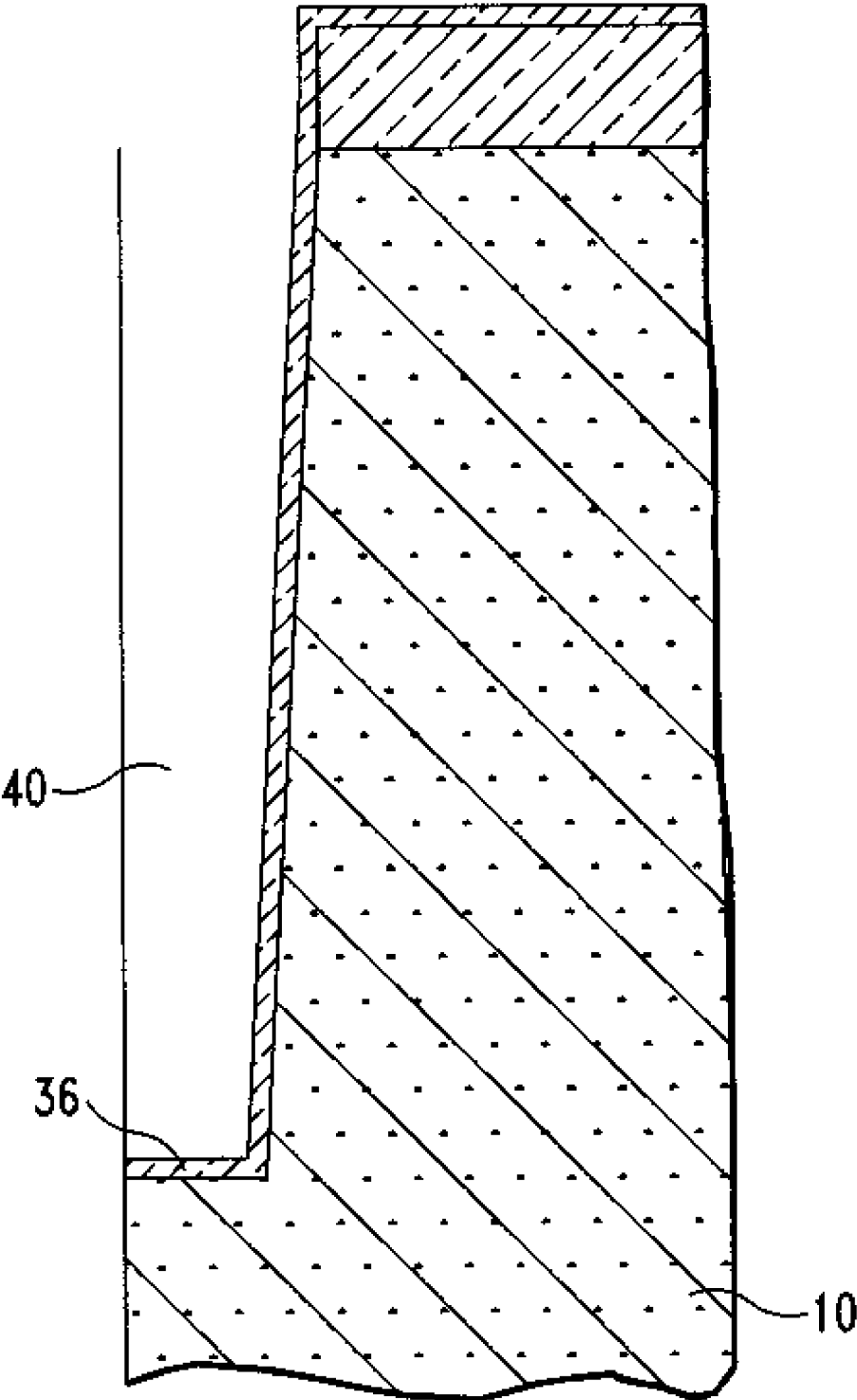


FIG. 5C

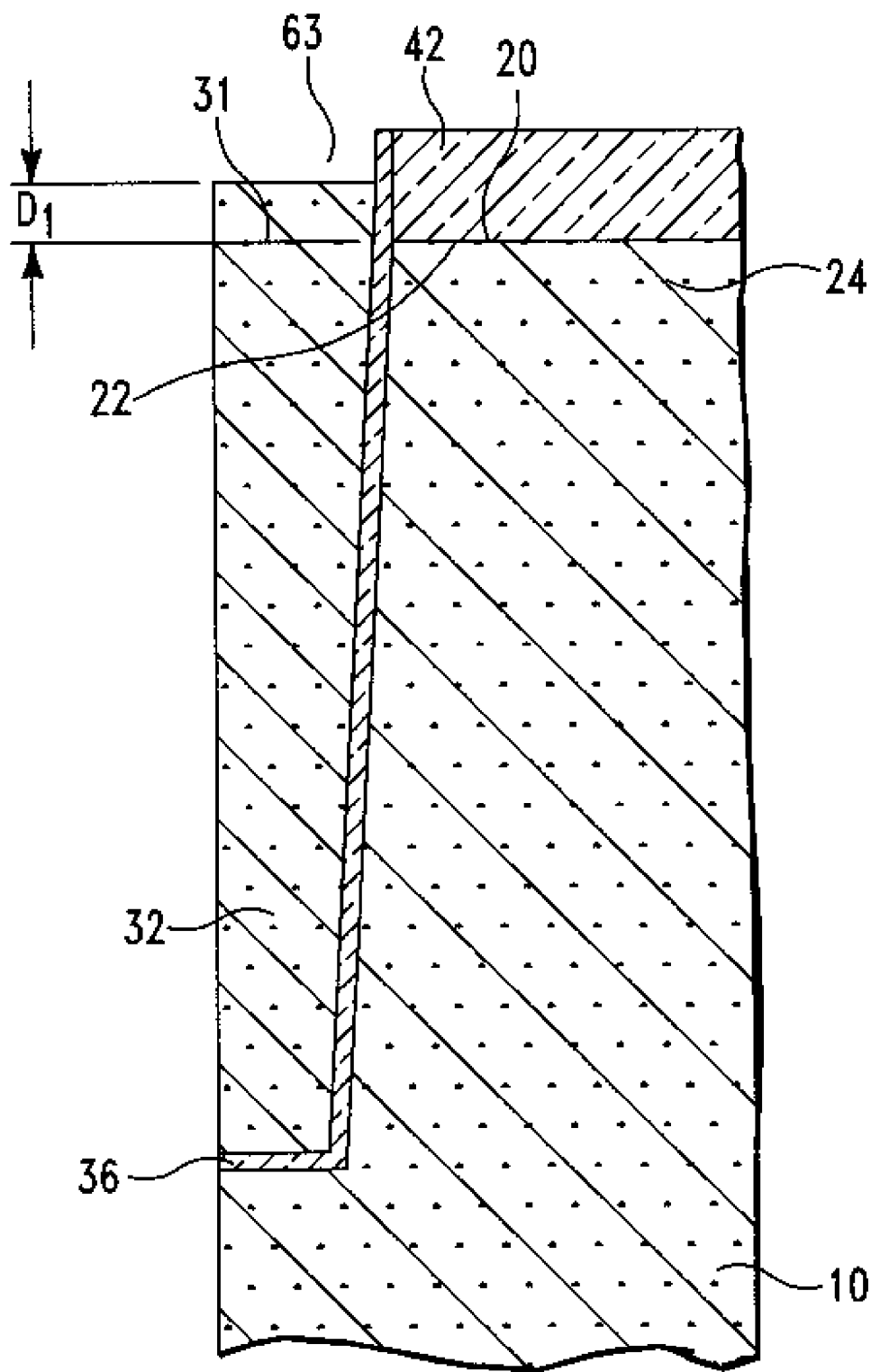


FIG. 5D

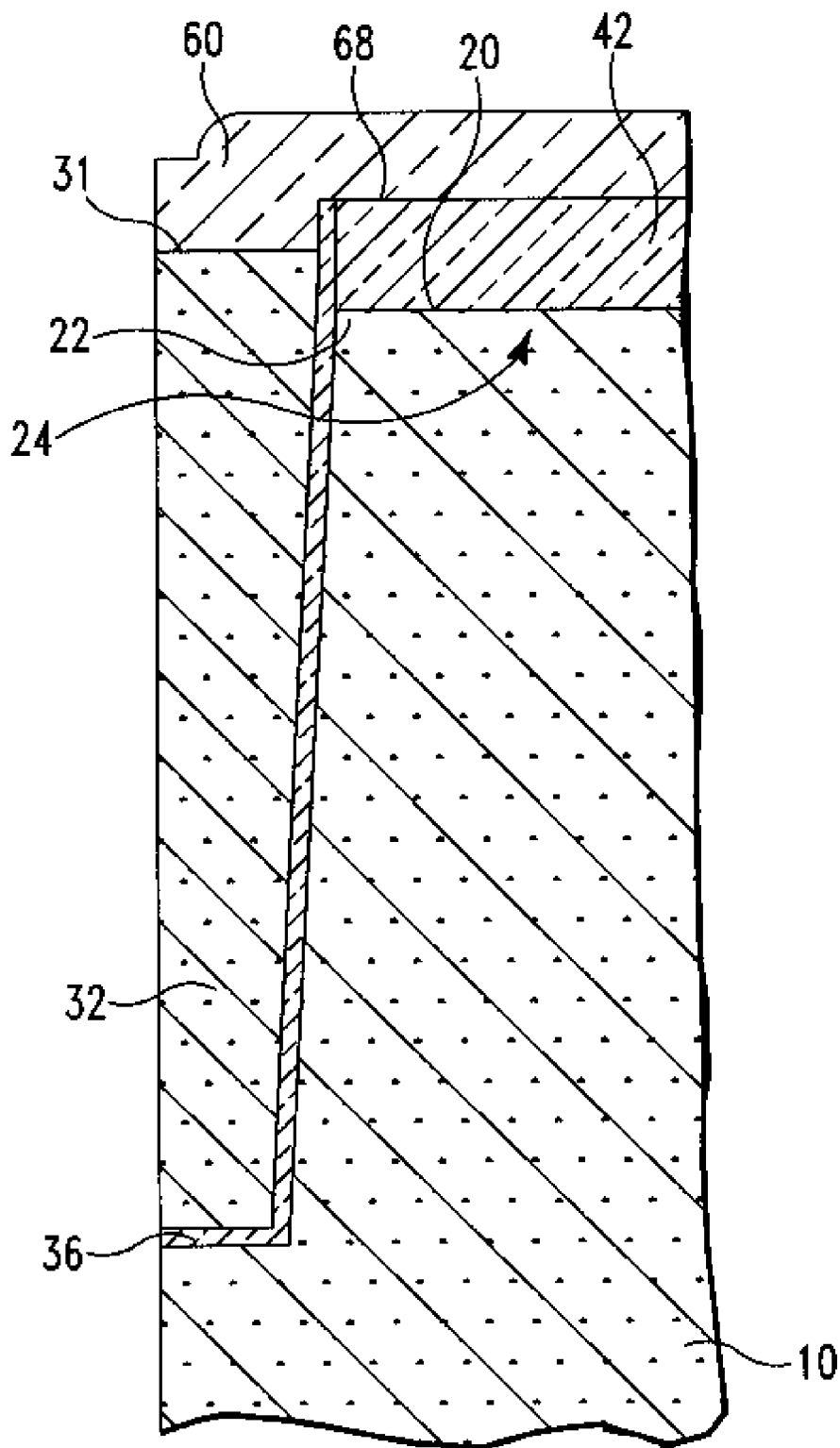


FIG. 5E

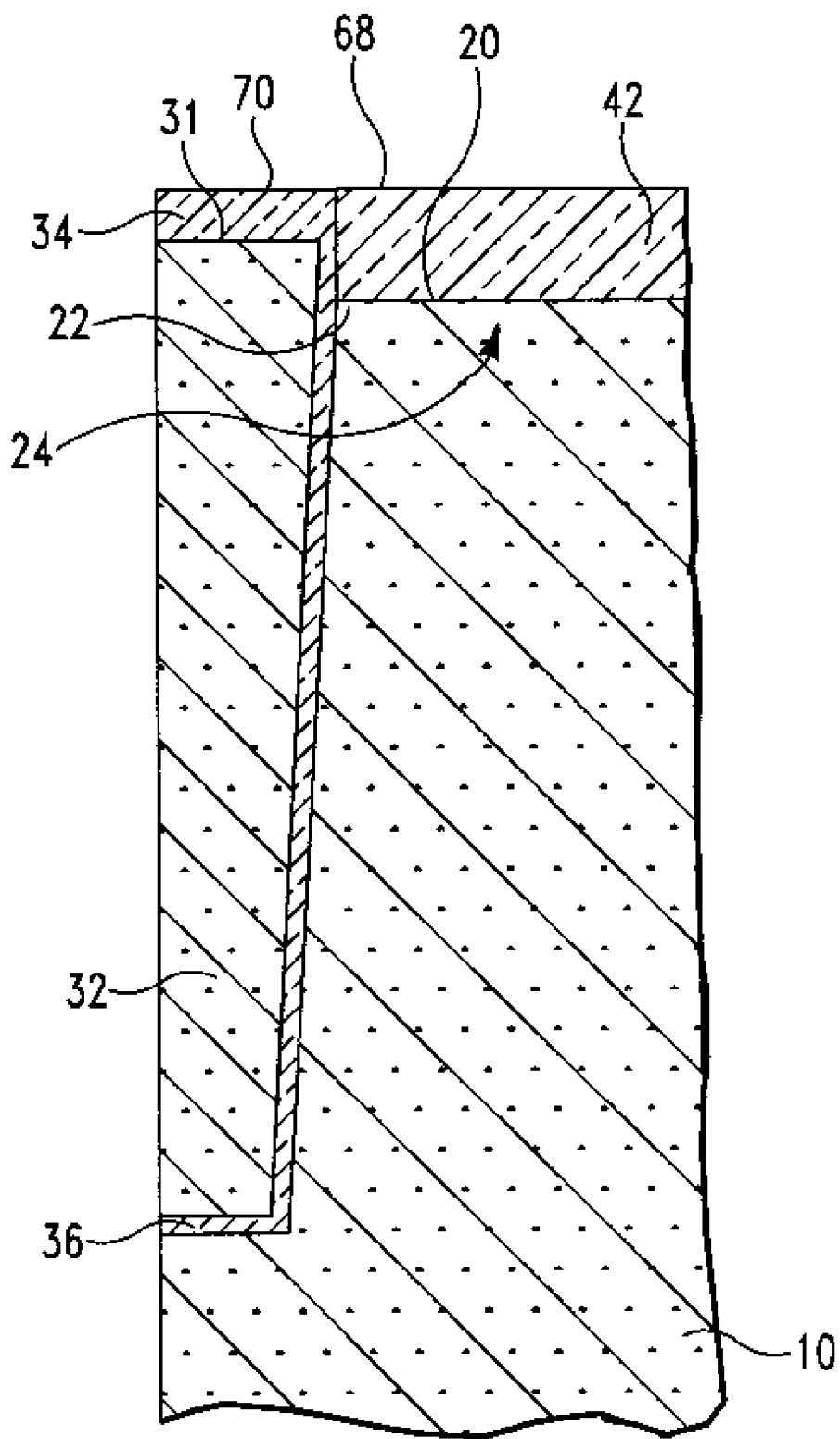


FIG. 5F

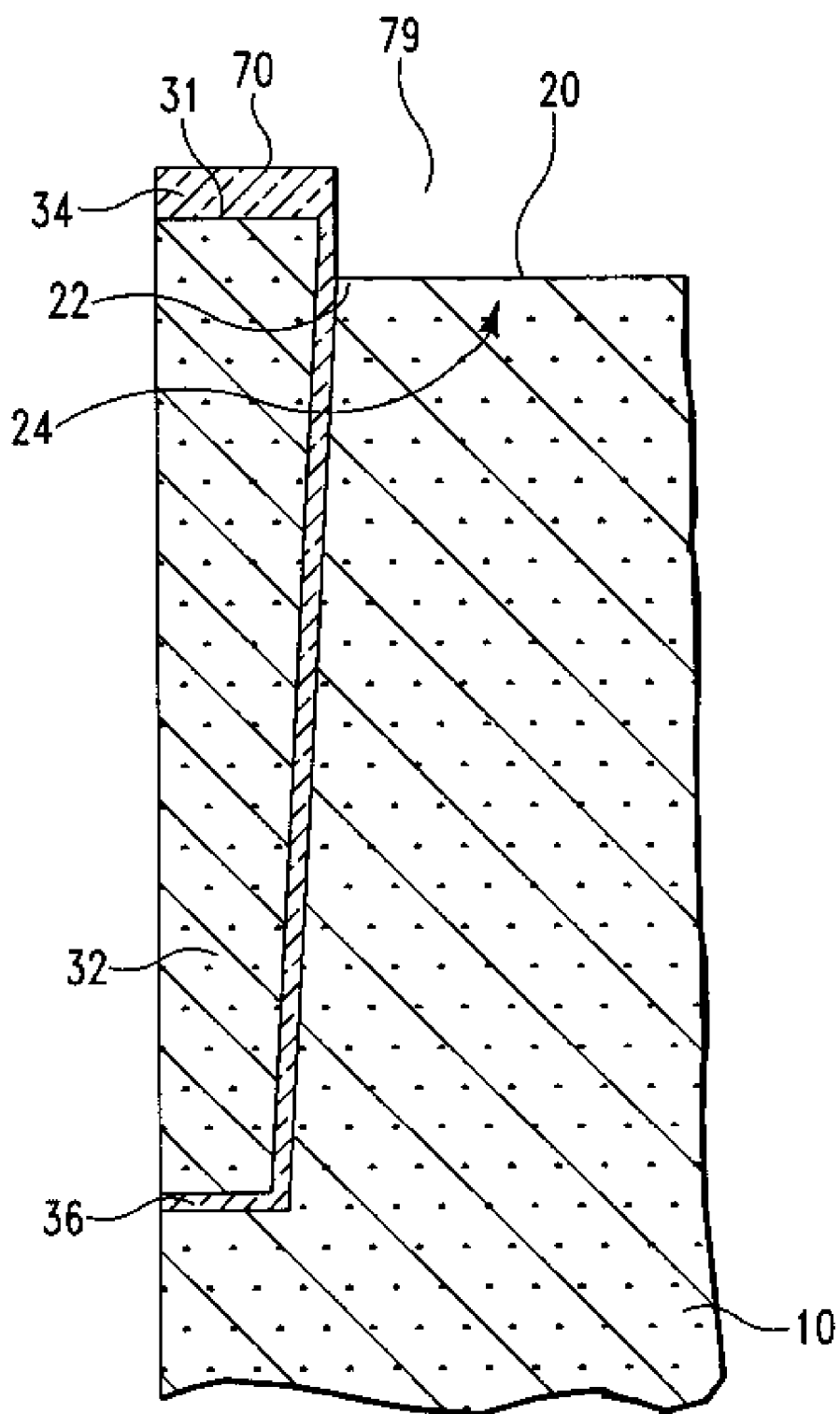


FIG. 5G

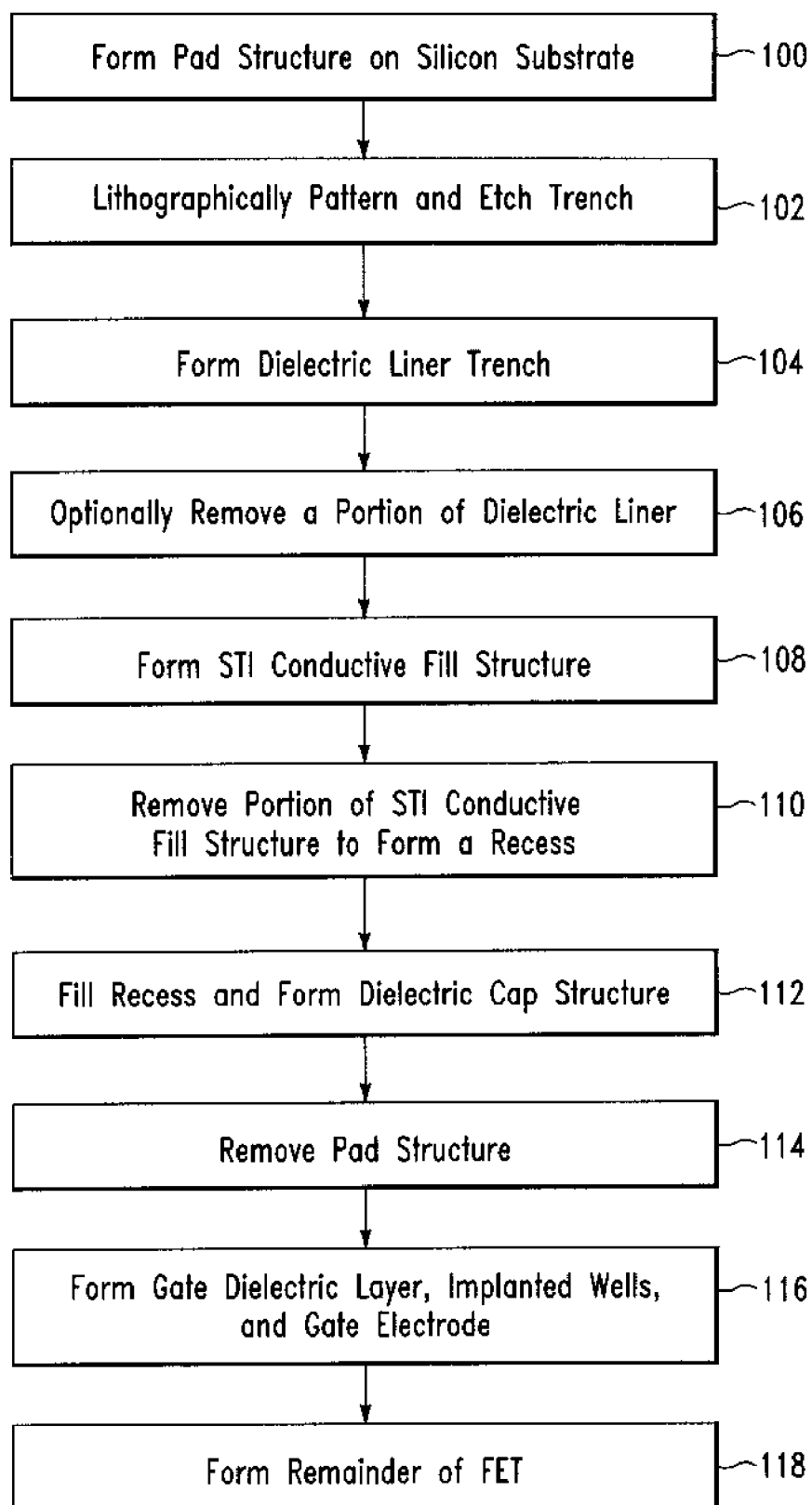


FIG. 6

SHALLOW TRENCH ISOLATION STRUCTURE FOR SHIELDING TRAPPED CHARGE IN A SEMICONDUCTOR DEVICE

[0001] This application is a continuation application claiming priority to Ser. No. 11/276,132, filed Feb. 25, 2006.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Technical Field

[0003] The present invention relates to a structure and method to shield a trapped charge from devices within a semiconductor structure.

[0004] 2. Related Art

[0005] Unwanted electrical charges within an electrical structure may cause devices within the electrical structure to malfunction. Therefore there is a need for protecting devices within an electrical structure from the affects of unwanted electrical charges.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The present invention provides a semiconductor structure, comprising:

[0007] a first field effect transistor (FET) comprising a channel region formed from a portion of a silicon substrate, a source structure formed adjacent to said channel region, a drain structure formed adjacent to said channel region, a gate dielectric formed over said channel region, and a gate electrode formed over said gate dielectric, wherein a bottom surface of said gate electrode is in direct physical contact with said gate dielectric, wherein said channel region comprises a first corner device and a second corner device, wherein a top surface of said channel region is located within a first plane, and wherein said bottom surface of said gate electrode is located within a second plane;

[0008] a second FET; and

[0009] a shallow trench isolation (STI) structure located adjacent to said channel region, wherein said STI structure isolates said first FET from said second FET, wherein said STI structure comprises a dielectric liner formed in a trench within said silicon substrate, a conductive STI fill structure formed over said dielectric layer, and a dielectric cap layer formed over and in contact with a top surface of said conductive STI fill structure, wherein said top surface of said conductive STI fill structure is above said first plane by a first distance D_1 and is above said second plane by a second distance D_2 that is less than D_1 .

[0010] The present invention provides method for forming a semiconductor structure, comprising:

[0011] providing a silicon substrate;

[0012] forming, within said a silicon substrate, a shallow trench isolation (STI) structure comprising a dielectric liner formed in a trench within said silicon substrate, a conductive STI fill structure formed over said dielectric layer, and a dielectric cap layer formed over and in contact with a top surface of said conductive STI fill structure;

[0013] forming within said bulk silicon substrate, a first field effect transistor (FET) and a second FET, wherein said first FET comprises a channel region formed from a portion of said silicon substrate, a source structure formed adjacent to

said channel region, a drain structure formed adjacent to said channel region, a gate dielectric formed over said channel region, and a gate electrode formed over said gate dielectric, wherein a bottom surface of said gate electrode is in direct physical contact with said gate dielectric, wherein said channel region comprises a first corner device and a second corner device, wherein a top surface of said channel region is located within a first plane, wherein said bottom surface of said gate electrode is located within a second plane, wherein said shallow trench isolation (STI) structure located adjacent to said channel region, wherein said STI structure isolates said first FET from said second FET, wherein said top surface of said conductive STI fill structure is above said first plane by a first distance D_1 and is above said second plane by a second distance D_2 that is less than D_1 .

[0014] The present invention advantageously provides a system and associated method for protecting devices within an electrical structure from the affects of unwanted electrical charges.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] FIG. 1 illustrates a perspective view of a semiconductor structure 2 comprising a shallow trench isolation (STI) structure, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

[0016] FIG. 2 illustrates a first cross sectional view of the semiconductor structure of FIG. 1, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

[0017] FIG. 3 illustrates an alternative to the semiconductor structure 2 of FIG. 2, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

[0018] FIG. 4 illustrates a second cross sectional view of the semiconductor structure of FIG. 1, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

[0019] FIG. 5A-5F illustrate a cross sectional view of a forming method and structure for forming a semiconductor structure of FIGS. 1 and 2, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

[0020] FIG. 6 illustrates a flowchart describing a process for forming the semiconductor device of FIGS. 1-5, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0021] FIG. 1 illustrates a perspective view of a semiconductor structure 2 comprising a shallow trench isolation (STI) structure 11, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. The semiconductor structure 2 comprises a silicon substrate 10, a field effect transistor (FET) 21, a FET 23 (only partially shown in FIG. 1), and the STI structure 11 (i.e., comprising a dielectric liner 36, a conductive STI fill structure 32, and a dielectric cap structure 34). The STI structure 11 is located within a trench (i.e., see trench 40 in FIG. 5B) formed in the silicon substrate 10 between the FET 21 and the FET 23. The STI structure 11 physically and electrically isolates the FET 21 from the FET 23. The following description of FET 21 also applies to FET 23. The FET 21 comprises a source structure 48a, a drain structure 48b, a gate dielectric layer 14, a shared gate electrode 16 (i.e., the gate electrode 16 is shared by the FET 21 and the FET 23), and a channel region 24. The channel region 24 is formed from a portion of the

silicon substrate **10** and is located between the source structure **48a** and the drain structure **48b**. The channel region **24** provides a conductive path (i.e., controlled by the gate electrode **16**) between the source structure **48a** and the drain structure **48b**. The channel region **24** comprises corner devices **22**. The corner devices **22** are defined as edge sections of the channel region **24**. The corner devices **22** are parasitic devices comprising slightly different physical and electrical characteristics than a central portion **19** of the channel region **24**.

[0022] Semiconductor structures (e.g., semiconductor structure **2**) may be used (operated) in any type of circuitry. During operation of semiconductor structures over a period of time, an unwanted electrical charge buildup **26** (see FIG. **2**) in dielectric regions of STI structure may be caused when operating the semiconductor structure within circuits in certain environments. For example, when a semiconductor structure is operated over a period of time in circuitry within a radiation environment (e.g., satellite circuitry, circuitry in a nuclear power plant, etc.), radiation (e.g., from a solar burst, from nuclear power plant facilities, etc.) may cause a trapped electrical charge build up to form within dielectric regions of STI structure within the semiconductor device. If the dielectric regions of the STI structure are located near FET channel regions (e.g., channel region **24**), the trapped electrical charge build up in the STI structure may cause corner devices (e.g., corner devices **22**) to turn on thereby increasing source to drain leakage currents which in turn may cause the semiconductor structure (i.e., the FETS within the semiconductor structure) to malfunction and ultimately fail. Therefore, the semiconductor structure **2** of FIG. **1** provides an STI structure **11** that shields the corner devices **22** within the channel region **24** from any an unwanted electrical charge buildup within the STI structure **11** (i.e., within the dielectric cap structure **34**).

[0023] The STI structure **11** of FIG. **1** comprises a dielectric liner **36**, a conductive STI fill structure **32**, and a dielectric cap structure **34**. The dielectric liner **36** lines a formed trench (e.g., see trench **40** in FIG. **5B**) and the conductive STI fill structure **32** is formed over and in contact with the dielectric liner **36**. The dielectric cap structure **34** is formed over a top surface **31** of the conductive STI fill structure **32**. The dielectric liner **36** and the dielectric cap structure **34** may comprise, inter alia, silicon dioxide. The conductive STI fill structure **32** may comprise, inter alia, doped polysilicon. The dielectric liner **36** may comprise a thickness T_1 of about 2 nanometers (nm) to about 20 nm. The dielectric cap structure **34** may comprise a thickness T_2 of about 20 nm to about 100 nm. A top surface **20** of the channel region **24** resides in a first plane. During operation (i.e., over a period of time) of the semiconductor structure **2** in certain environments (e.g., a radiation environment such as, inter alia, satellite circuitry, circuitry in a nuclear power plant, etc.), an unwanted electrical charge buildup **26** (i.e., see FIG. **2**) may be found within the dielectric cap structure **34**. No such charge buildup is possible in conductive materials, such as that employed for the conductive STI fill structure **32**. If the electrical charge buildup **26** within the dielectric cap structure **34** occurs near the channel region **24**, the electrical charge buildup **26** could cause the corner devices **22** to turn on thereby increasing source structure **48a** to drain structure **48b** leakage currents which in turn may cause the semiconductor structure **2** (i.e., the FETS **21** and **23**) to malfunction and ultimately fail. Therefore, the STI structure **11** is formed such that the top surface **31** of the conductive STI fill structure **32** is raised a

specified distance (D_1) above (i.e., with respect to direction **7**) the first plane. As a result of the above mentioned configuration (i.e., the raised top surface **31**), the dielectric cap structure **34** (i.e., formed on the top surface **31** of the conductive STI fill structure **32**) is also raised above the first plane so that the dielectric cap structure **34** is not adjacent to the channel region **24**. The conductive STI fill structure **32** shields the corner devices **22** from any electrical charge **26** buildup within the dielectric cap structure **34** thereby preventing damage to the FETS **21** and **23**. The top surface **31** of the conductive STI fill structure extends above first plane (and the top surface **20** of the channel region **24**) by a distance D_1 that is about 1.5 to about 4 times the thickness T_1 of the dielectric liner **36**. The distance D_1 may be selected from a range of about 5 nanometers to about 80 nm nanometers.

[0024] FIG. **2** illustrates a first cross sectional view of the semiconductor structure **2** of FIG. **1**, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. The first cross sectional view of FIG. **2** is taken along line **2-2** of FIG. **1**. FIG. **2** clearly illustrates the distance D_1 (i.e., as described in the description of FIG. **1**) and the unwanted charge build up **26** within the dielectric cap structure **34**. Additionally, FIG. **2** illustrates a distance D_2 . The distance D_2 represents a distance that the top surface **31** of the conductive STI fill structure **32** is raised above (i.e., with respect to direction **7**) a second plane (i.e., a bottom surface **23** of the gate electrode **16** resides in the second plane). The distance D_1 is greater than the distance D_2 .

[0025] FIG. **3** illustrates an alternative to the semiconductor structure **2** of FIG. **2**, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. In contrast to the semiconductor structure **2** of FIG. **2**, the semiconductor structure **2a** of FIG. **3** comprises electrical connections **82** between the conductive STI fill structure **32** and the silicon substrate **10**. A portion of the dielectric liner **36** has been removed prior to formation of conductive STI fill structure **32** so that the conductive STI fill structure **32** may be electrically connected to the silicon substrate **10**. The electrical connections **82** will prevent electrical floating of the conductive STI fill structure **32** without necessitating any additional top-side connections.

[0026] FIG. **4** illustrates a second cross sectional view of the semiconductor structure **2** of FIG. **1**, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. The second cross sectional view of FIG. **2** is taken along line **4-4** of FIG. **1**.

[0027] FIG. **5A-5F** illustrate a cross sectional view of a forming method and structure for forming a semiconductor structure **2** of FIGS. **1** and **2**, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

[0028] FIG. **5A** illustrates the silicon substrate **10** comprising a pad structure **42**, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. The pad structure **42** may comprise, inter alia, a pad oxide layer and a pad nitride layer. Portion **10a** of the silicon substrate **10** and portion **42a** of the pad structure **42** comprise portions that will be removed in order to form the shallow isolation trenches **40** of FIG. **5B**.

[0029] FIG. **5B** illustrates a formed shallow trench **40** within the silicon substrate **10**, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. A masking/etching process is used to form the shallow isolation trenches **40**. Any masking/etching process using standard lithographic techniques known to a person of ordinary skill in the art may be used. The

masking/etching process removes the portion **42a** (i.e., from FIG. 5A) of the pad structure **42** and portion **10a** (i.e., from FIG. 5A) of the silicon substrate **10**. The pad structure **42** may be processed to a thickness T_3 such that after a planarization process, the conductive STI fill structure **32** will be above a top surface **43** of the silicon substrate **10** by a minimum amount. Note that surface **43** of the silicon substrate **10** will become surface **20** of the channel region **24**.

[0030] FIG. 5C illustrates a formation of the dielectric liner **36**, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. The shallow isolation trenches **40** are lined with the dielectric liner **36**. The dielectric liner **36** may comprise, inter alia, silicon dioxide. The dielectric liner **36** may be formed as a thermally-grown silicon dioxide, using a chemical vapor deposition (CVD) process to deposited silicon dioxide, or any combination thereof. The dielectric liner **36** may be formed comprising a thickness of about 3 nm to about 20 nm.

[0031] FIG. 5D illustrates a formation of the conductive STI fill structure **32**, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. The conductive STI fill structure **32** is formed within the remaining portion of the shallow isolation trench **40** (i.e., after the dielectric liner **36** has been formed). Material for conductive the STI fill structure **32** (e.g., doped polysilicon) is deposited over the entire structure, then planarized to the top of pad structure **42**, using a known process such as, inter alia, chemical-mechanical polishing, etc. A recess **63** is then formed within the conductive STI fill structure **32** such that the surface **31** of the conductive STI fill structure **32** extends above the top surface **20** of the channel region **24** (i.e., within the silicon substrate **10**) by the distance D_1 that is about 1.5 to about 4 times the thickness T_1 of the thin dielectric liner **36**.

[0032] FIG. 5E illustrates a first formation step for forming the dielectric cap structure **34** of FIGS. 1 and 2, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. A cap dielectric layer **60** is formed within the recess **63** (see FIG. 5D) and over a top surface **68** of the pad structure **42**. The cap dielectric layer **60** may comprise, inter alia, silicon dioxide. The cap dielectric layer **60** may be formed using any technique known to a person of ordinary skill in the art including, inter alia, a CVD process.

[0033] FIG. 5F illustrates a second formation step for forming the dielectric cap structure **34** of FIGS. 1 and 2, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. A portion of the cap dielectric layer **60** is removed and the resulting dielectric cap structure **34** is planarized such that a top surface **70** of the dielectric cap structure **34** is coplanar with the top surface **68** of the pad structure **42**.

[0034] FIG. 5G illustrates a formation of a recess **79**, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. The recess **79** is formed by removing the pad structure **42**. After the pad structure **42** is removed the semiconductor structure **2** of FIGS. 1 and 2 is formed by forming the, implanted wells, the gate dielectric **14** layer, the gate electrode **16**, the source structure **48a** and the drain structure **48b** in accordance with techniques known to a person of ordinary skill in the art. An additional over-etch during patterning of the gate electrode **16** will be required to clear the extra topography introduced by having the step between the top surface **20** of channel region **24** and the top surface of the dielectric cap structure **34**.

[0035] FIG. 6 illustrates a flowchart describing a process for forming the semiconductor device of FIGS. 1-5, in accor-

dance with embodiments of the present invention. In step **100**, the pad structure **42** is formed. In step **102**, a masking/etching process is used to form the shallow isolation trenches **40**. Any masking/etching process using standard lithographic techniques known to a person of ordinary skill in the art may be used. In step **104**, the shallow isolation trenches **40** are lined with the dielectric liner **36**. In optional step **106**, portions of the dielectric liner **36** are optionally removed so that the semiconductor structure **2a** of FIG. 3 comprising the electrical connections **82** between the conductive STI fill structure **32** and the silicon substrate **10** may be formed. The portions of the dielectric liner **36** may be removed using, inter alia, an RIE process. In step **108**, the conductive STI fill structure **32** is formed within the remaining portion of the shallow isolation trench **40** (i.e., after the dielectric liner **36** has been formed). In step **110**, A recess **63** is formed within the conductive STI fill structure such that the surface **31** of the conductive STI fill structure **32** extends above the top surface **20** of the channel region **24** (i.e., within the silicon substrate **10**) by the distance D that is about 1.5 to about 4 times the thickness T_1 of the dielectric liner **36**. In step **112**, the dielectric cap structure **34** is formed. In step **114**, the pad structure **42** is removed. In step **116**, the implanted wells, the gate dielectric **14** layer and the gate electrode **16** are formed in accordance with techniques known to a person of ordinary skill in the art. In step **118**, the FET **21** is formed in accordance with techniques known to a person of ordinary skill in the art.

[0036] While 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.

1. A semiconductor structure, comprising:

a first field effect transistor (FET) comprising a channel region formed from a portion of a silicon substrate, a source structure formed adjacent to said channel region, a drain structure formed adjacent to said channel region, a gate dielectric formed over said channel region, and a gate electrode formed over said gate dielectric, wherein a bottom surface of said gate electrode is in direct physical contact with said gate dielectric, wherein said channel region comprises a first corner device and a second corner device, wherein a top surface of said channel region is located within a first plane, and wherein said bottom surface of said gate electrode is located within a second plane;

a second FET; and

a shallow trench isolation (STI) structure located adjacent to and in contact with said channel region, wherein said STI structure isolates said first FET from said second FET, wherein said STI structure comprises a dielectric liner formed in a trench within said silicon substrate, a conductive STI fill structure formed over said dielectric layer, and a dielectric cap layer formed over and in contact with a top surface of said conductive STI fill structure, wherein said top surface of said conductive STI fill structure is above said first plane by a first distance D_1 and is above said second plane by a second distance D_2 that is less than D_1 , and wherein said gate dielectric is formed over and in contact with said dielectric cap layer of said STI structure.

2. The semiconductor structure of claim 1, wherein said STI structure is adapted to shield said first corner device and said second corner device from a trapped electrical charge build up within said dielectric cap layer, and wherein said electrical charge build up within said dielectric cap layer is generated during operation of said first FET and said second FET over a period of time.

3. The semiconductor structure of claim 1, wherein said conductive STI fill structure comprises doped polysilicon.

4. The semiconductor structure of claim 1, wherein each of said dielectric liner and said dielectric cap layer comprise silicon dioxide.

5. The semiconductor structure of claim 1, wherein said first distance D_1 is configured to prevent a trapped electrical charge build up within said dielectric cap layer from electrically damaging said first corner device and said second corner device.

6. The semiconductor structure of claim 1, wherein said dielectric liner comprises a thickness T configured to prevent trapped electrical charge build up within said dielectric liner from electrically damaging said first corner device and said second corner device.

7. The semiconductor structure of claim 6, wherein said thickness T is in a range of about 2 nanometers to about 20 nanometers.

8. The semiconductor structure of claim 1, wherein said dielectric liner comprises a thickness T , and wherein said distance D_1 is in a range of about $1.5 \cdot T$ to about $4 \cdot T$.

9. The semiconductor structure of claim 8, wherein said distance D_1 is in a range of about 5 nanometers to about 80 nanometers.

10. The semiconductor structure of claim 1, wherein a bottom surface of said conductive STI fill structure is electrically connected to said silicon substrate.

11. The semiconductor structure of claim 1, wherein said gate electrode is formed over said dielectric cap layer of said STI structure.

12. The semiconductor structure of claim 1, wherein said dielectric liner is formed in said trench such that said conductive STI fill structure is not in contact with said silicon substrate.

13. The semiconductor structure of claim 1, wherein said second FET comprises a second channel region formed from a second portion of said silicon substrate, and wherein said shallow trench isolation (STI) structure is located adjacent to and in contact with said second channel region.

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