Investigation of iridium as a gate electrode for deep sub-micron CMOS technology

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Abstract

The physical and electrical properties of an Ir/SiO₂/Si stack were evaluated for advanced gate electrode application. The thermal stability of the stack was studied on MOS capacitors annealed at temperatures between 500 and 1000°C in N₂ ambient for 30 s followed by forming gas anneal (FGA) at 420°C for 20 min. The work function of iridium, found to be 4.9 eV, is stable up to 900°C, making it a good candidate as PMOS electrode. In addition, no evidence was found for any chemical reaction at the interface between Ir and SiO₂.

Keywords: Metal gate; Work function; Iridium

1. Introduction

Scaling of CMOS devices requires reduction of the capacitance equivalent thickness. The contribution of poly-depletion inherent to currently used poly-Si gates becomes more significant for aggressively scaled dielectric thickness. A realistic solution for the 45-nm CMOS technology node involves the introduction of metal gates that do not exhibit poly-depletion [1]. Another advantage of metal gates is the elimination of boron penetration into the channel. To replace n⁺ and p⁺ poly-Si gates, appropriate metals must be selected such that the work function can be selectively tuned for optimal operation of p- and n-type transistors requiring 5.17 and 4.05 eV, respectively [2]. Several metallic systems have already been proposed as potential candidates, such as Mo and TaSiN for p-MOS and n-MOS, respectively [3,4]. However, some practical problems remain unsolved such as the stability of the work function during device processing and passivation of the interface states.

In this paper, we investigate the properties of Ir as a metal gate for p-type transistors. Using capacitance–voltage (CV) measurements on MOS capacitors, we study the influence of the annealing temperature on the Ir work function. Using X-ray diffraction (XRD) analysis, the Ir/SiO₂/Si stack morphology is investigated and the annealing conditions that minimize the effective oxide charge are optimised.

2. Experimental

MOS capacitors were fabricated on (100) oriented
p-type silicon wafers. Ir films, 100 nm thick were sputtered at 150°C on thermally grown SiO₂. The thickness of the dielectric varied between 6.5 and 25 nm. The iridium gate electrodes were made with an Si₃N₄ based gate last process using a hardmask based dry etch. The areas of the capacitors were defined by a poly buffered LOCOS isolation located under the Si₃N₄ layer. The capacitor scheme is presented in Fig. 1. All samples were annealed in N₂ ambient for 30 s at temperatures varying between 500 and 1000°C. To passivate the interface states, samples were also annealed in forming gas (FGA) at 420°C for 20 min.

To examine the thermal stability of the Ir/SiO₂/Si stack, high-frequency capacitance–voltage measurements (HF-CV) were carried out on the MOS capacitors with an area of 10⁻⁴ cm² at each of the selected annealing temperatures using an HP 4284. Phase formation and change in the crystallinity of the Ir layer upon annealing were determined by XRD. The chemical stability of the stack was investigated for changes in the Ir/SiO₂ interface by TEM inspection. The sheet resistance was examined by four point probe measurements on a SSM240 system.

3. Results and discussion

The HF-CV characteristics of Ir/SiO₂/Si MOS capacitors are shown in Fig. 2.

A negative shift in flat band voltage ($V_{FB}$) was observed following annealing to 900°C. According to the formula:

$$V_{FB} = \phi_{MS} - \frac{Q_f}{\varepsilon_{ox} \varepsilon_0 d_{ox}}$$

where $\phi_{MS}$ is the Fermi level difference between the gate and the substrate, $Q_f$ is the density of fixed oxide charges, $\varepsilon_{ox}$ is the dielectric constant, $\varepsilon_0$ is the permittivity of free space and $d_{ox}$ is oxide thickness; the $V_{FB}$ shift indicates a decrease in work function of Ir or/and an increase in positive charges in the oxide. In order to distinguish between these two effects, the work function and effective oxide charges were extracted from CV measurements. By plotting $V_{FB}$ versus equivalent oxide thickness (EOT) for different annealing temperatures, we found that the work function of Ir is 4.9 eV and that it is stable up to 900°C as shown in Fig. 3. The slope of this linear plot indicates that effective oxide charges increase from $7 \times 10^{10}$ to $3 \times 10^{11}$ cm⁻² following annealing to 600 and 900°C, respectively. Thus, the $V_{FB}$ shift is attributed to a change in charge content within the dielectric rather than a work function change.

HF-CV characteristics only show a change in EOT following annealing to 900°C. Nevertheless TEM analysis performed on a sample annealed to 900°C for 30 s, does not suggest chemical reaction at the interface between Ir and SiO₂ as shown in Fig. 4. In Fig. 5, XRD patterns of Ir films deposited on SiO₂ annealed at various temperatures in N₂ for 30 s are...
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