Blackfoot Narrows Mine
(Terteling Pit, Wooley Valley Unit #1)

On November 30, 1953, the BLM received an application to lease certain lands in T. 7 S., R. 43 E., from the J. A. Terteling and Sons Company (Figure 120). A lease sale was held March 11, 1955. There were four bidders at the sale; the Utah Construction Company, Grant J. Murdock, J. A. Terteling and Sons Company, and the Monsanto Chemical Company. The Terteling Company was the successful high bidder and was issued Federal Lease I-04775 on June 1, 1955.

The Terteling company immediately started stripping operations on the lease July 27, 1955 with actual mining and production starting in September, 1955. Initially, the ore was stockpiled at the mine in three separate piles according to grade; 31.5% P_2O_5, 24-27% P_2O_5, and 17% P_2O_5. The ore was stockpiled at the mine pending development of load-out facilities in Soda Springs. The mine was basically an experimental operation (Service, 1966).

According to an unpublished Bureau of Mines safety report (August 14, 1956), the mine consisted of three side-hill excavations with overburden varying from 1 to 50 feet. Ore was mined and trucked from the mine to the stockpiles which were located about one half mile from the pit. A selective bench system of mining was used and benches varied from six to eight feet in height. Overburden was removed with a bulldozer and power-operated shovel and all overburden that could not be wasted at the site of the mining operation was trucked and dumped a short distance from the mine. Exposed ore was mined by a power shovel and loaded directly onto trucks. Service (1966) reported that, in 1956, the mine was 2,000 feet in length, the depth of the cut was 80 feet.

After the mining season of 1956, except for some ore that was sold and shipped in 1960, the mine was shut down. The J. A. Terteling and Sons Company assigned the Federal lease to the Terteling Land Company on April 1, 1959. The Stauffer Chemical Company entered into negotiations with the Terteling Land Company in early 1967 in order to obtain phosphate reserves. Lease I-04775 was further assigned to the Stauffer Chemical Company on June 1, 1967.

The Stauffer Company reopened the Blackfoot Narrows Mine July 27, 1967 and shipped some ore to their Victor Chemical Works plant in Silver Bow, Montana. Stauffer contracted with the Terteling Company to act as operator of the reopened mine. The Terteling Company subcontracted the mine operations to the MacGregor Triangle Company. Plans were developed in 1967 for a 2-mile spur railroad line to connect with the existing El Paso Products railroad and run northward to a new load-out facility. At the end of the 1967 mining season, the pit was 4,800 feet in length.

In 1968, the 2-mile rail spur was built to the new Wooley Valley tipple site, north of the Blackfoot Narrows pit. Ore was hauled northward from the Blackfoot Narrows Mine. During the 1967-68 mining seasons under the ownership of the Stauffer Chemical Company, the production amounted to more that half of the entire production from the mine.

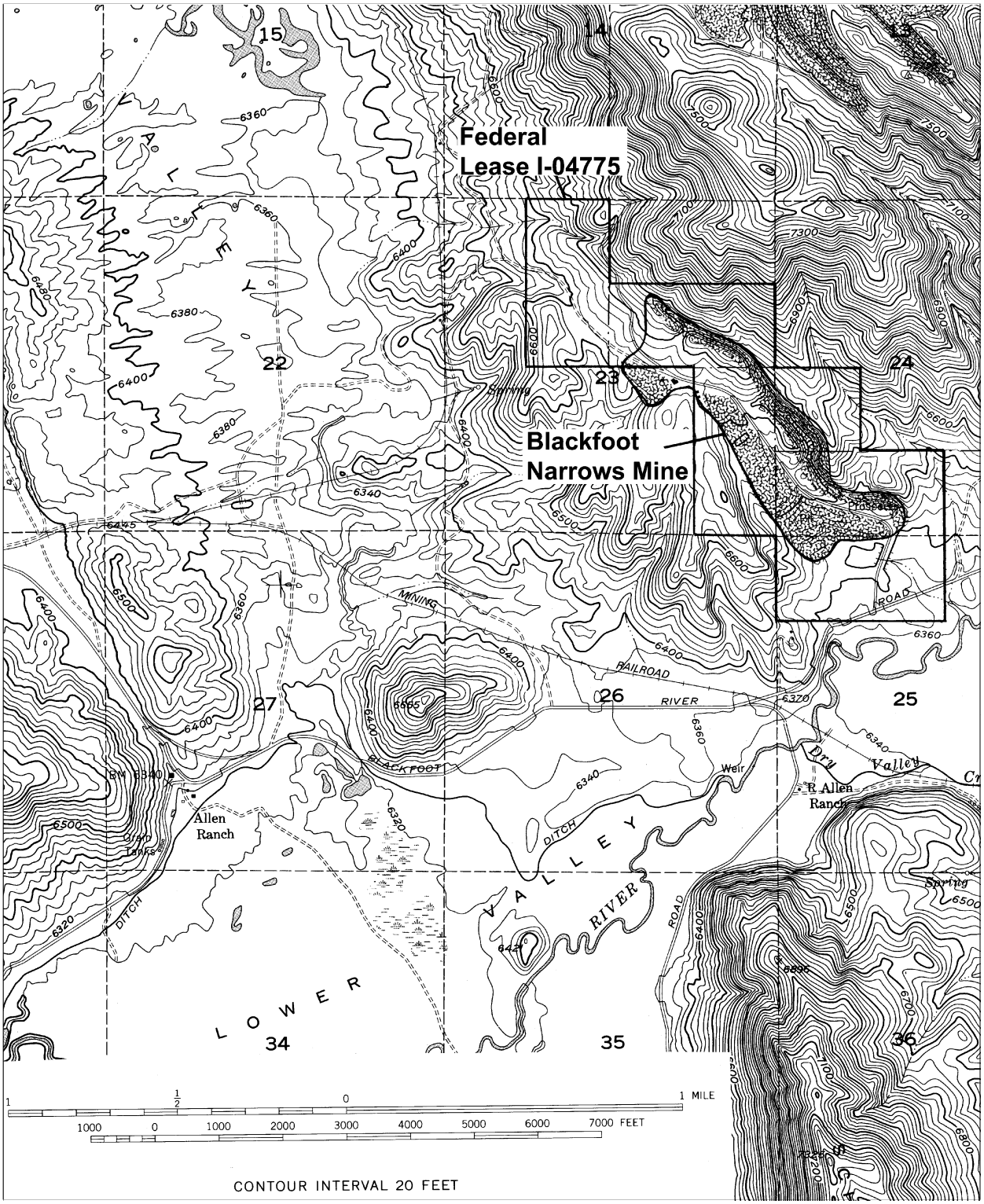

Figure 120. Map showing the location of the Blackfoot Narrows Mine, Caribou County, Idaho.

According to an unpublished Bureau of Mines report dated September 12, 1967, surface structures at the mine included railroad-loading facilities with weigh scales for scrapers, two buildings and two trailers. The phosphate rock was loaded directly into scrapers which were pushed by bulldozers. Each scraper carried about 50 tons of ore to the stockpiles at the rail loading facilities. Front end loaders moved ore from the stockpiles to rail cars.

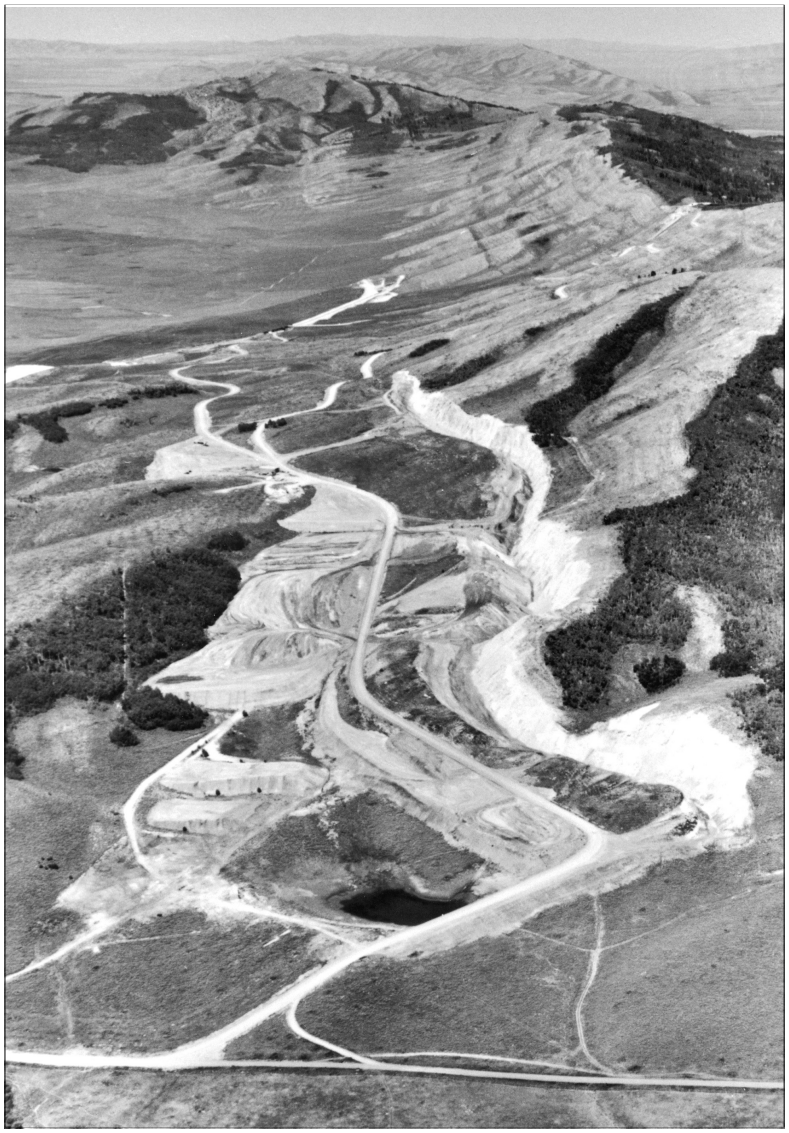

Figure 121. Blackfoot Narrows Mine, view north, 1975. BLM file photo.

Mining was suspended and the mine was closed in August, 1969. Under today's economic mining limits, the mine is considered depleted and mined-out (Figures 121, 122, and 123). In 1985, Stauffer's

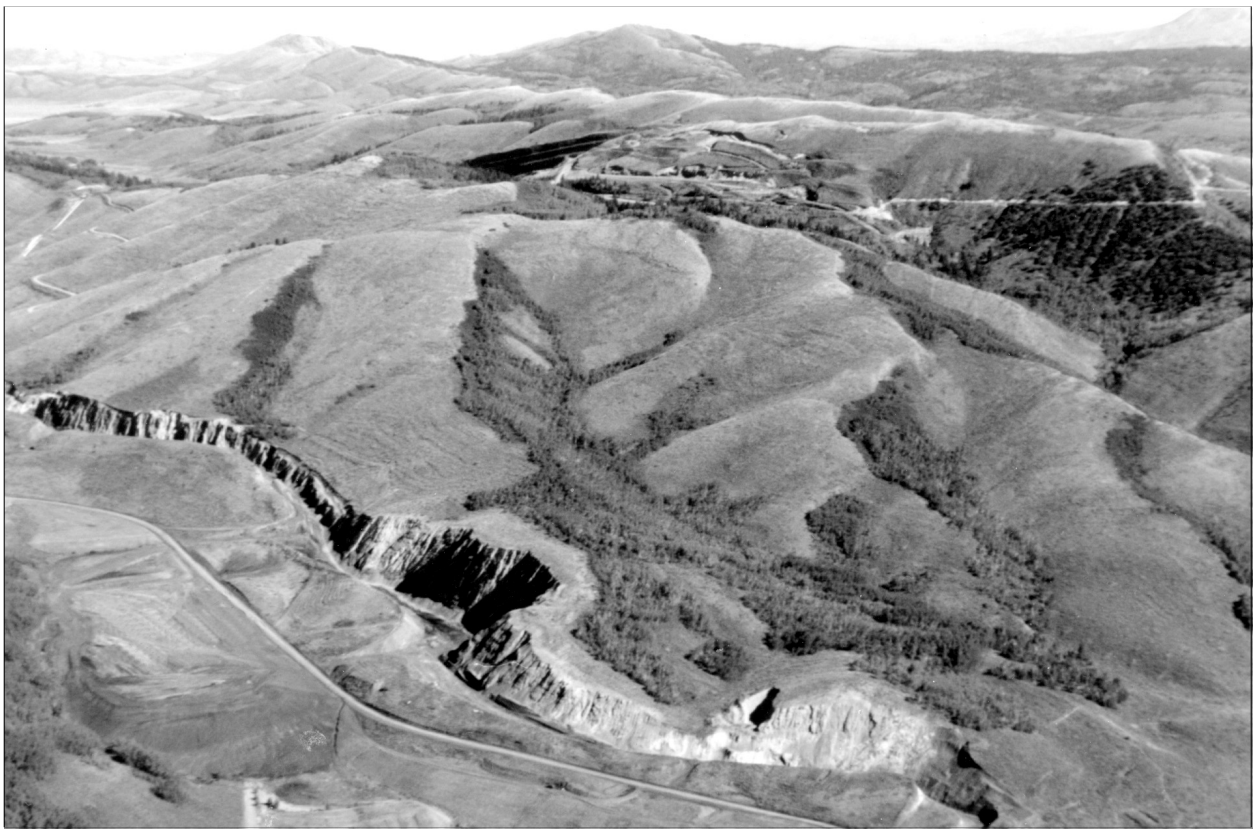

Figure 122. Blackfoot Narrows Mine, August 19, 1978. BLM file photo.

Figure 123. Blackfoot Narrows Mine, view north, June 27, 1996. Photo by the author.

Idaho phosphorous operations was purchased by the Cheeseborough-Ponds Company, which in turn was acquired in 1986 by Unilever N. V. Unilever sold all of the Idaho/Montana phosphate operations to the Imperial Chemicals Industries Company of Great Britain (Bennett, 1994). This company promptly sold some of Stauffer's basic and specialty chemical businesses. By September, 1987, all of Stauffer's Idaho operations were owned by Rhône-Poulenc, Inc., the US subsidiary of the French company, Rhône-Poulenc SA (Anonymous, 1989). On February 1, 1998, Rhone-Poulenc assigned I-04775 to Rhodia, Inc., and as of this writing, the Federal Lease I-04775 remains current and open.

There is currently a limestone quarry located on the east side of the old Blackfoot Narrows mine pit. This operation is on a BLM-issued free use permit to Caribou County, Idaho. The limestone is used on Caribou County road projects.