Diamond Gulch Mine

On November 14, 1905, eight individuals in the employ of the San Francisco Chemical Company (SFCC) located the Diamond Placer mining claim in Section 32 and 33 of T. 9 S., 43 E., BM (Figure 128). Those individuals were William S. Goodfellow, Hugh Goodfellow, Joseph J. Taylor, R. W. Hart, John Shepard Eells, H. L. Atkinson, Richard M. Lyman, and Richard A. Sullivan, all familiar names in phosphate mining claim location. Nearly two years later, on October 1, 1907, seven employees of San Francisco Chemical Company located the Dodo Placer mining claim, adjacent to the Diamond Placer. Those individuals were Joseph J. Taylor, Richard A. Sullivan, E. M. Sullivan, Arthur F. Rice, M. H. Rice, T. T. Huntington, and F. J. Brandt. It should be noted that Joseph J. Taylor was agent and attorney in fact for San Francisco Chemical Company.

During the summer of 1910, the SFCC conducted extensive exploration on the two placer mining claims (Mansfield, unpublished field notes). Apparently, it was the intent of the company to patent both of these placer claims because a formal mineral survey was conducted on September 23, 1912. The Diamond Placer was explored by 11 open cuts (trenches) and four short tunnels, for a total excavation volume of 11,032 cubic yards. The Dodo Placer was explored by 13 open cuts, three short tunnels and one vertical shaft for a total excavation volume of 14,048 cubic yards (Mansfield, 1927, p. 245-247, describes some of these workings).

Although phosphate ore was discovered in most of the excavations on the two placer claims, the company eventually chose not to patent the property under the Mining Law. The property remained inactive until 1956. During the middle 1950's, SFCC began to see the mining effort at their Waterloo Mine come to a close. In order to maintain their position, the company sought other areas of phosphate to mine and mill. On December 19, 1956, SFCC applied to the BLM for a competitive lease for 320 acres covering essentially the same ground that was covered by the two placer claims. At the request of the USGS, the BLM added an additional 40 acres to the desired parcel. BLM held a competitive lease sale on March 21, 1957. There were two bidders for the lease tract and SFCC was the successful high bidder. A Federal phosphate lease (I-07881) for 360 acres was issued to the company on May 1, 1957.

Initial stripping of the overburden began on May 3, 1960 (Figure 129) and actual mining of ore began on May 16, 1960 (Figure 130). This was the first phosphate mine to be opened and operated on Caribou National Forest lands (USGS, 1977). Operations were conducted by two subcontractors, Cherf Bros., Inc., and the Sankey Contractors, Inc. The mine consisted of two connected open pits (Figure 131). Ore was removed with a front end loader and loaded into trucks (Figure 132). The ore was then transported by trucks to a pulverizing plant at Montpelier, Idaho (Service, 1966.).

The mine operated only during the mining season of 1960. About 84,000 tons of phosphate ore were shipped from the mine. Mining proved difficult because of extensive faulting and pinching of the ore

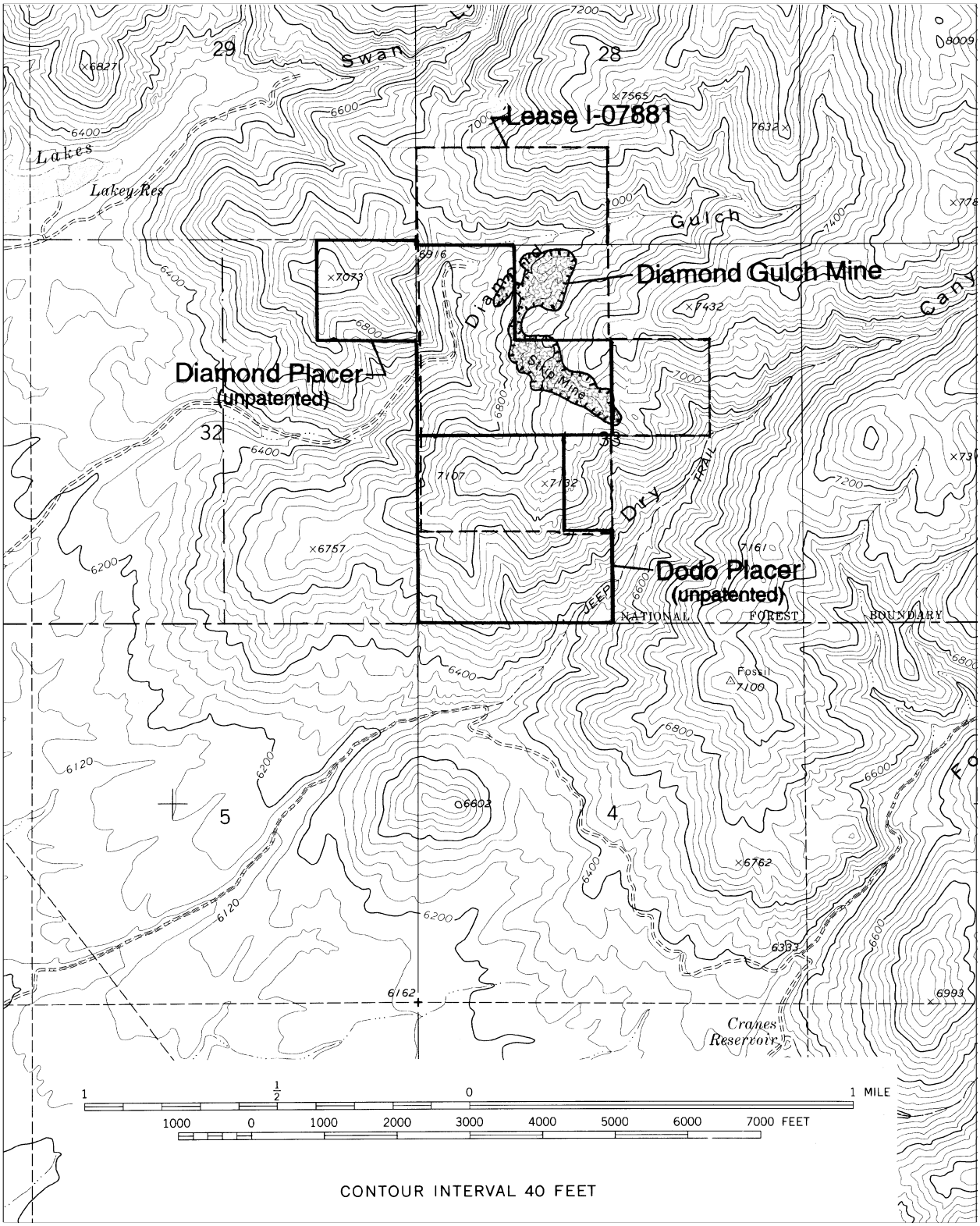

Figure 128. Map showing the location of the Diamond Gulch Mine, Caribou County, Idaho.

Figure 129. Stripping overburden, Diamond Gulch Mine, May, 1960. BLM file photo.

Figure 130. Mining ore, Diamond Gulch Mine, May, 1960. BLM file photo.

Figure 131. Diamond Gulch Mine, 1975, view east, showing open pit boundaries. BLM file photo.

bodies. Only the high-grade phosphate ore was sold and the lower-grade phosphatic shales were stockpiled on the lease and at the company's processing facility. Since the SFCC had no facilities to upgrade the phosphatic shales, an effort was made to sell the shales to either the Monsanto Company or the Central Farmers Fertilizer Company as feedstock for electro-processing into elemental phosphorous. Monsanto even engaged in a small drilling and analysis program on the lease but decided that they did not need the ore for their processing. Because of the failure to sell the lower grade shales and other economic and geologic considerations, the mine was closed prior to the 1961 mining season. Reclamation was conducted on the mine site during 1961 and 1962 (Figure 133).

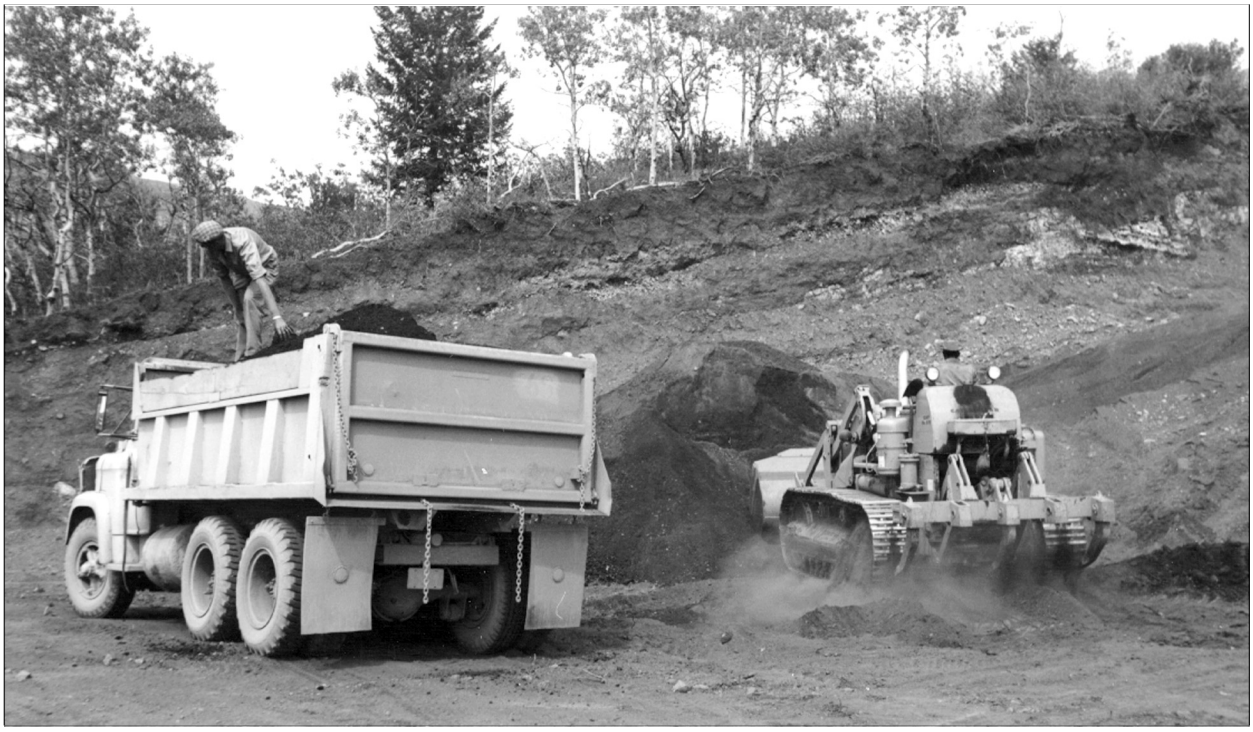

Figure 132. Loading ore, Diamond Gulch Mine, May, 1960. BLM file photo.

Figure 133. Diamond Gulch Mine, June 26, 1996. Photo by the author.

On December 31, 1968, the SFCC was dissolved with all of their assets and liabilities being assumed by the Stauffer Chemical Company, the company's sole shareholder. Stauffer Chemical Company did no further work at the Diamond Gulch Mine other than maintain the reclamation. During June, 1987, the Stauffer Chemical Company and its operations were acquired by Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd., a United Kingdom chemical giant. Imperial Chemical Industries immediately sold what had been the Stauffer company and its holdings. By September, 1987, Stauffer's former Idaho operations were firmly in the hands of Rhône-Poulenc Basic Chemicals, Inc., the US subsidiary of the major French minerals processor, Rhône-Poulenc, SA (Anonymous, 1989). The Diamond Gulch Mine remained closed throughout all of these transactions and on May 12, 1993, Rhône-Poulenc relinquished the Federal lease I-07881.