Rasmussen Ridge Mine

The Rasmussen Ridge Mine is located in T. 6 S., R. 43 E., Sections 9, 15, 16, 22, 23, 25, and 26, in Caribou County, Idaho (Figure 193). The mine is located about 20 air miles northeast of Soda Springs, Idaho.

The first phosphate exploration activity in the immediate area of the future mine took place in 1912. In that year, the USGS opened a large cut on a northwest-facing slope in the NE¼NW¼ of Section 26, T. 6. S., R. 43 E. (Mansfield, 1927, p. 241). The cut was about 300 feet in length, six feet in average depth and about 10½ feet in maximum width, all hand dug. This trench showed about nine feet of phosphate ore in two separate beds.

On March 17, 1947, the Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America filed for a phosphate lease in Sections 22, 23, and 25, T. 6 S., R. 43 E. This application, which was rejected for failure to file appropriate fees along with the application, was appealed in May of that year, and was permanently rejected in September, 1952. This attempt at leasing phosphate in the area of the future mine represented the first commercial interest in the phosphate ore in this immediate area.

Partly because of the expressions of commercial interest in the phosphate in this area, the USGS, in August, 1948, excavated a bulldozer trench (#1233) in the northern part of Section 6, T. 7 S., R. 44 E., about one mile southeast of the future mine (McKelvey, Armstrong, Gulbrandsen, and Campbell, 1953, p. 10-15). This trench uncovered about 135 feet of rock of the Phosphoria Formation.

Also due to the commercial interest in the phosphate ore in this area, the BLM held a lease sale on May 6, 1953. There were several tracts offered in this sale, two of which would cover the area of the future Rasmussen Ridge Mine. The first of these two tracts, Wooley Valley Unit #5, was issued as lease I-04375 to the high bidder, the J. A. Terteling and Sons Company on September 1, 1953. The second tract, Wooley Valley Unit #2, was issued as lease I-07619 to the J. A. Terteling and Sons Company but not until March 1, 1957. This delay in issuing the lease was caused by some procedural items not timely addressed.

The J. A. Terteling and Sons Company assigned both leases to the Terteling Land Company on April 1, 1959. The company initiated trenching and drilling exploration on the two leases. During 1961-63, the company excavated three exploration trenches on the two leases, in addition to recovering and resampling the 1912 trench of Mansfield.

The Terteling Land Company assigned the two leases to the Stauffer Chemical Company on June 1, 1967. The Stauffer Chemical Company immediately initiated an extensive exploration program, and during the remainder of 1967 and 1968, 26 trenches were excavated throughout the two leases and across the trend of the phosphate ore zone. Low-level exploration and mapping was conducted

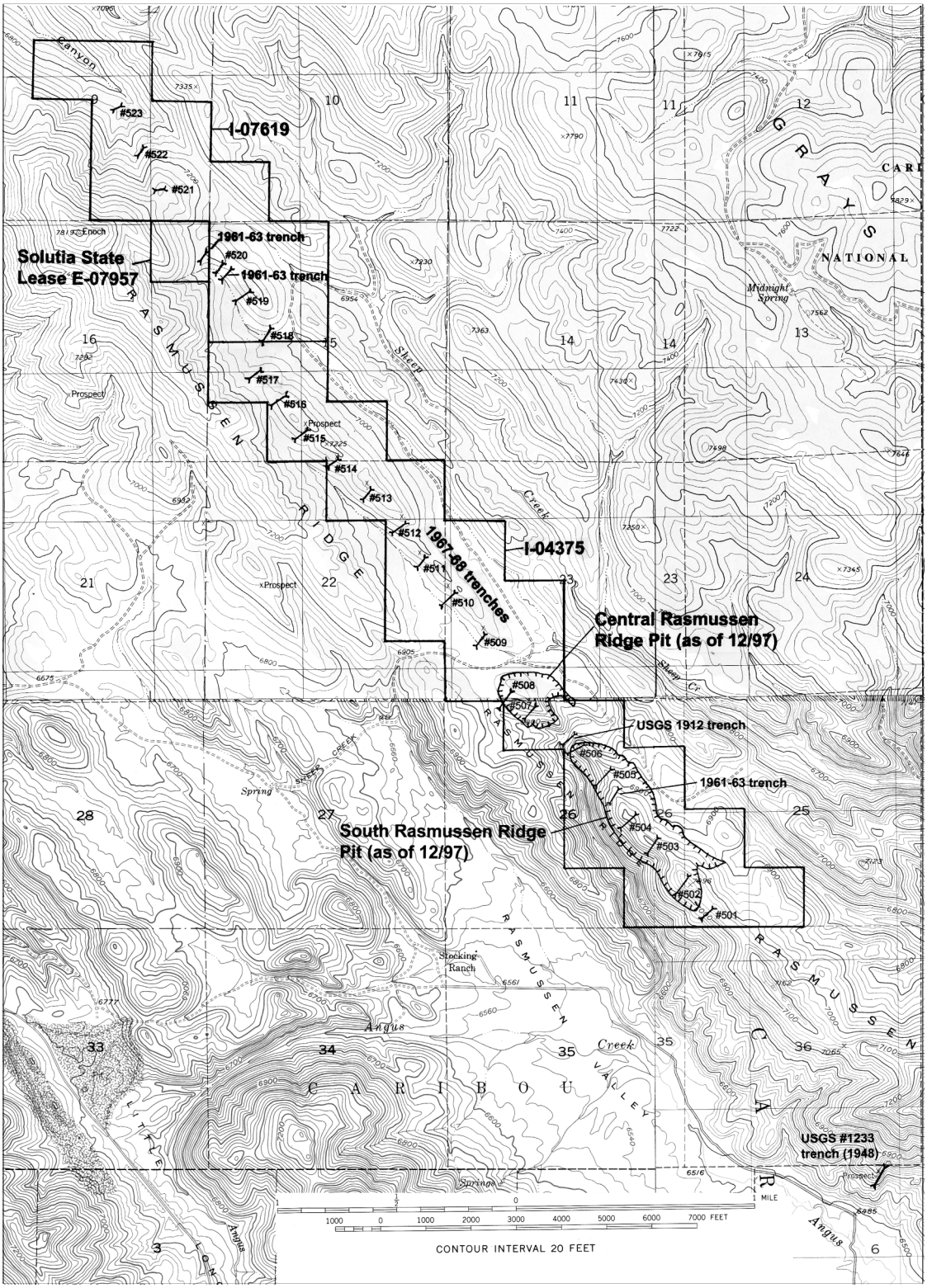

Figure 193. Map showing the location of the Rasmussen Ridge Mine, Caribou County, Idaho.

throughout the 1970's and into the 1980's. Stauffer was holding this mine development in reserve while the company was mining their Mill Canyon and Little Long Valley Mines.

In 1985, Stauffer Chemical Company's phosphorous operations were acquired by the Chesebrough-Ponds Company, which was soon acquired by Unilever N. V. Unilever N. V. sold the operations to the Imperial Chemical Company in 1986, who then immediately sold the whole operation to Rhône-Poulenc (Bennett, 1994). During 1988, the Monsanto Chemical Company contracted to drill 5 holes on the leases. Monsanto holds a State lease immediately to the southeast of the Rasmussen Ridge Mine.

With the closing of mining activities and the exhaustion of phosphate ore in the Little Long Valley Mine, Rhône-Poulenc initiated activities to open the Rasmussen Ridge Mine. Construction of an 8-mile haul road between the Little Long Valley facilities and the new mine began on August 15, 1990, and continued until January, 1991. During the fall of 1990, Rhône -Poulenc put into operation a wash plant adjacent to the loading tipple at Little Long Valley Mine that was designed to upgrade the phosphate ore. The company also drilled 8 development holes totaling 1,890 feet on the leases during 1990.

Mining at the Rasmussen Ridge Mine (the southern end of lease I-04375) was initiated in January, 1991. Mining began as a scraper-dozer operation (Figure 194). The first reported production was in

Figure 194. Initial scraper-dozer operations, Rasmussen Ridge Mine, date unknown. Photo by Peter Oberlindacher, BLM.

June, 1991. The ore was transported by end-dump trucks along the haul road to a stockpile at the old Little Long Valley Mine. A contractor, Circle A Construction Company, was used to haul the ore. There the ore was then moved via conveyor to the wash plant and tipple. The ore was initially shipped to Rhône-Poulenc's elemental furnace plant at Silver Bow, Montana. In December, 1992, the use of front-end loaders and 85-ton haul trucks was started and the scrapers were phased out of the mine by January, 1993 (Figure 195).

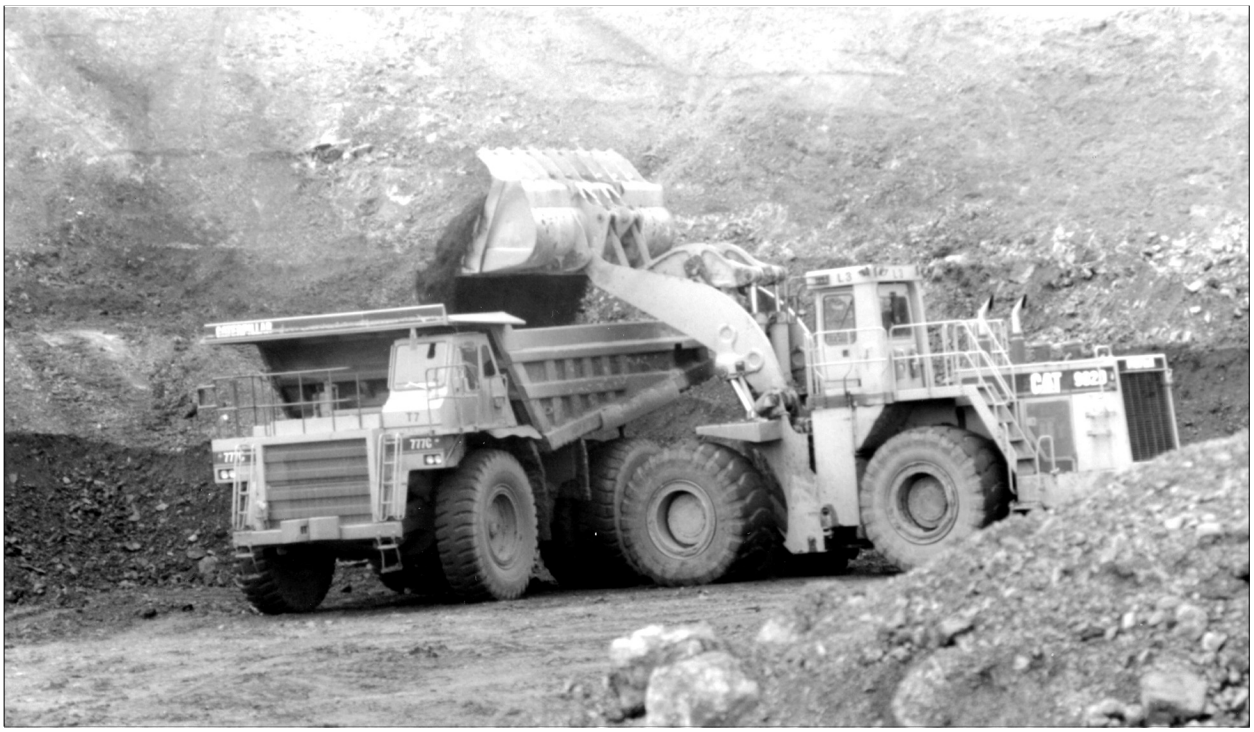

Figure 195. Current operations, Rasmussen Ridge Mine, June 10, 1998. Photo by the author.

In 1993, Rhône Poulenc and Nu-West Mining reached a 7-year agreement whereby Rhône-Poulenc would provide approximately 1.3 million tons of phosphate ore for the Conda plant of Nu-West on an annual basis. Almost the entire production of the mine went to the Conda plant. As the mine pit advanced northwestward, development drilling was conducted ahead of mining. There were 14 holes totaling 2,619 feet drilled in 1994. At the load-out facility, the use of the conveyor was phased out in 1994 and ore was directly hauled to the wash plant and the tipple by truck.

The Rhône Poulenc Basic Chemicals Company assigned the leases to Rhodia, Inc. on February 1, 1998. Rhodia is a subsidiary of Rhône-Poulenc and consisted of the agricultural and chemical business of the parent company. Nu-West Mining was designated as the operator of the mine on February 27, 1998. Rhodia assigned the two leases to Agrium, Inc. on May 1, 1998. As of this writing, Agrium,

Inc. continues to mine at the Rasmussen Ridge Mine through their subsidiary, Nu-West Mining, Inc. Morrison Knudsen's Conda Mining Company has been designated as the mine operator. Morrison Knudsen is now known as Washington International Group.