Pritchard Creek Mine
(Swan Valley Phosphate Mine)

The Pritchard Creek Mine is located in Lot 6, Section 6, T. 1 N., R. 43 E., at the confluence of an unnamed tributary and Pritchard Creek, about two miles southwest of the Snake River (Figures 167, 168, and 169). The mine is located on Federal phosphate lease I-06433. The history of this Federal lease, as well as its companion lease, I-010764, has been discussed in the Fall Creek Mine section.

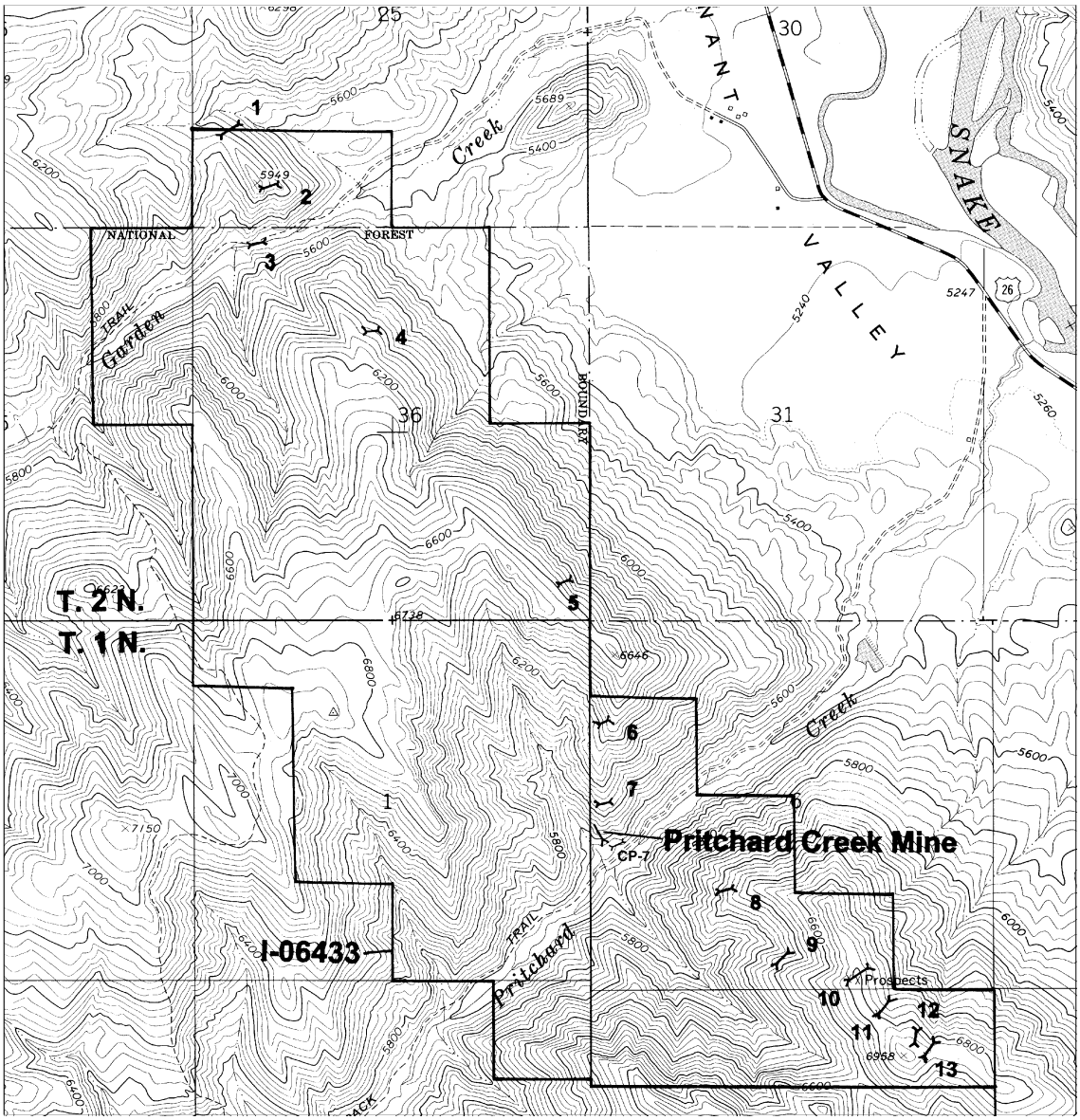

Figure 167. Map showing the location of the Pritchard Creek Mine, Bonneville County, Idaho.

Figure 168. Overview of the Pritchard Creek Mine, view northwest, 1975. BLM file photo.

Exploration directly related to the Pritchard Creek Mine started in 1961 when Wells Cargo, Inc. bulldozed a trench in the immediate vicinity of the future portal of the mine. The trench, designated as Trench CP-7, was sampled and reported by the USGS (Jobin and Schroeder, 1964). Based on

Figure 169. Panorama of the Pritchard Creek Mine area, April 16, 1976. BLM file photo.

geologic information derived from this trench and some drilling that had been conducted, Wells Cargo, Inc. submitted an underground exploration plan for the Federal lease. The exploration plan was approved on July 21, 1975, and underground operations started soon after.

The underground development consisted of about 1,000 feet of a 9' x 9' drift driven northwest on strike of the upper phosphate ore zone (Figures 170 and 171). The elevation at the portal was approximately 5,550 feet. At about 850 feet from the portal, a 100-foot crosscut was driven to the

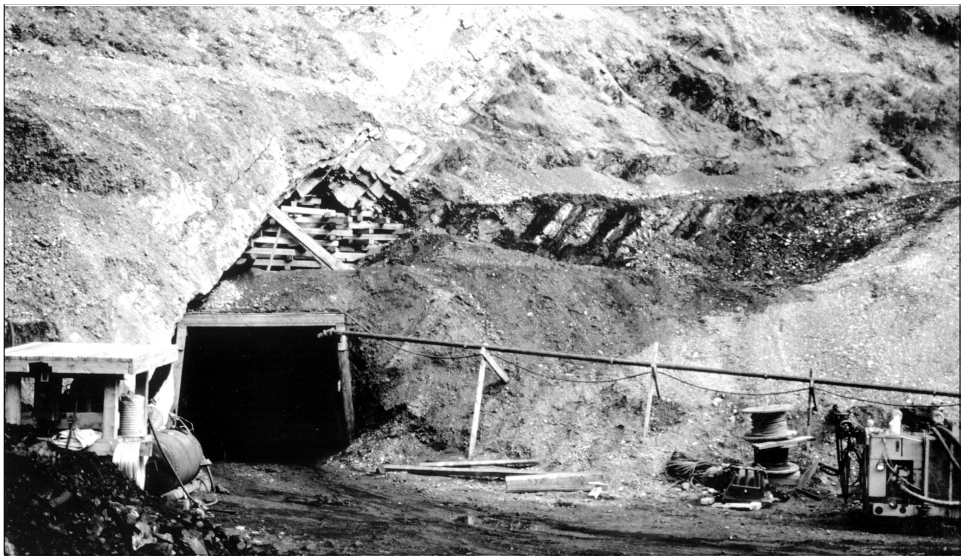

Figure 170. Pritchard Creek Mine portal, August 14, 1975. Photo by Peter Oberlindacher, BLM.

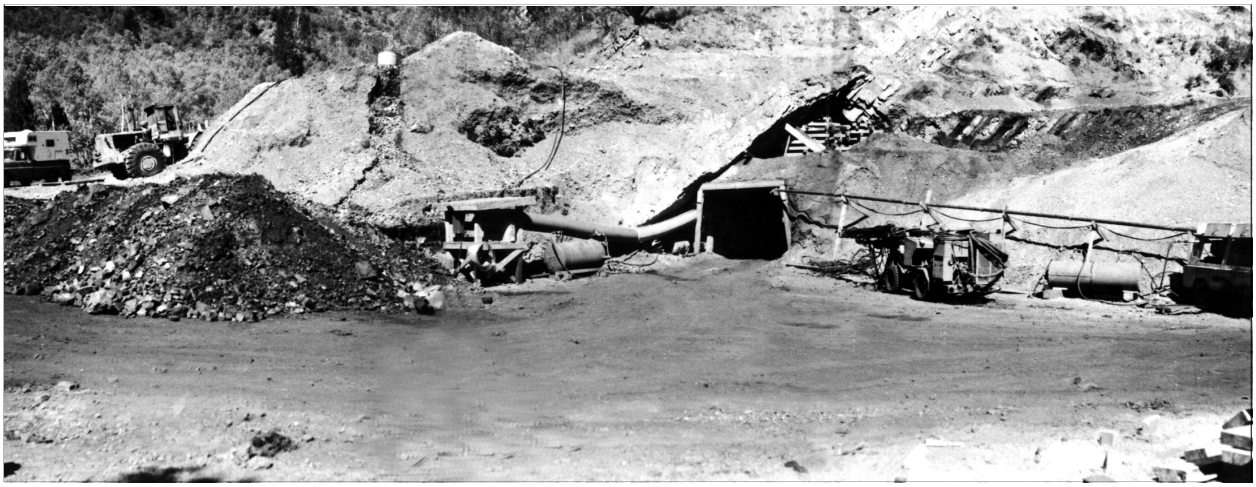

Figure 171. Panorama of the portal area, Pritchard Creek Mine, September 3, 1975. BLM file photo.

northeast to sample the lower ore zone. The crosscut had been planned to open a stope on the ore zones, but that was never completed. Mining was conducted with trackless diesel-powered excavation equipment. Mining stopped at 1,000 feet because the use of this equipment become infeasible due to distance. Underground operations terminated on March 31, 1976, and were abandoned (Figure 172).

There was an ambitious plan to drive a drift to the southeast from the portal site to link up with the Fall Creek Mine and develop the phosphate ore over a linear distance of about two miles. Also planned was the development of the existing underground work to the northwest into a room and pillar mine, using the exploratory drift as the main haulage way. However, both of these plans were abandoned when the economics of phosphate turned unfavorable for underground development.

Figure 172. Abandoned Pritchard Creek Mine portal area, June 2, 1997. Photo by Charles Horsburgh, BLM.