Lanes Creek Mine

The Lanes Creek Mine is located near the southern end of Rasmussen Ridge in Section 4, T. 7 S., R. 44 E. (Figure 176). The mine is located on private land/private minerals owned by the Bear Lake Grazing Association, a cooperative of about 54 area ranchers. Initially, the land was patented under the Desert Land laws to George M. Pugmire of Bear Lake County on May 4, 1888.

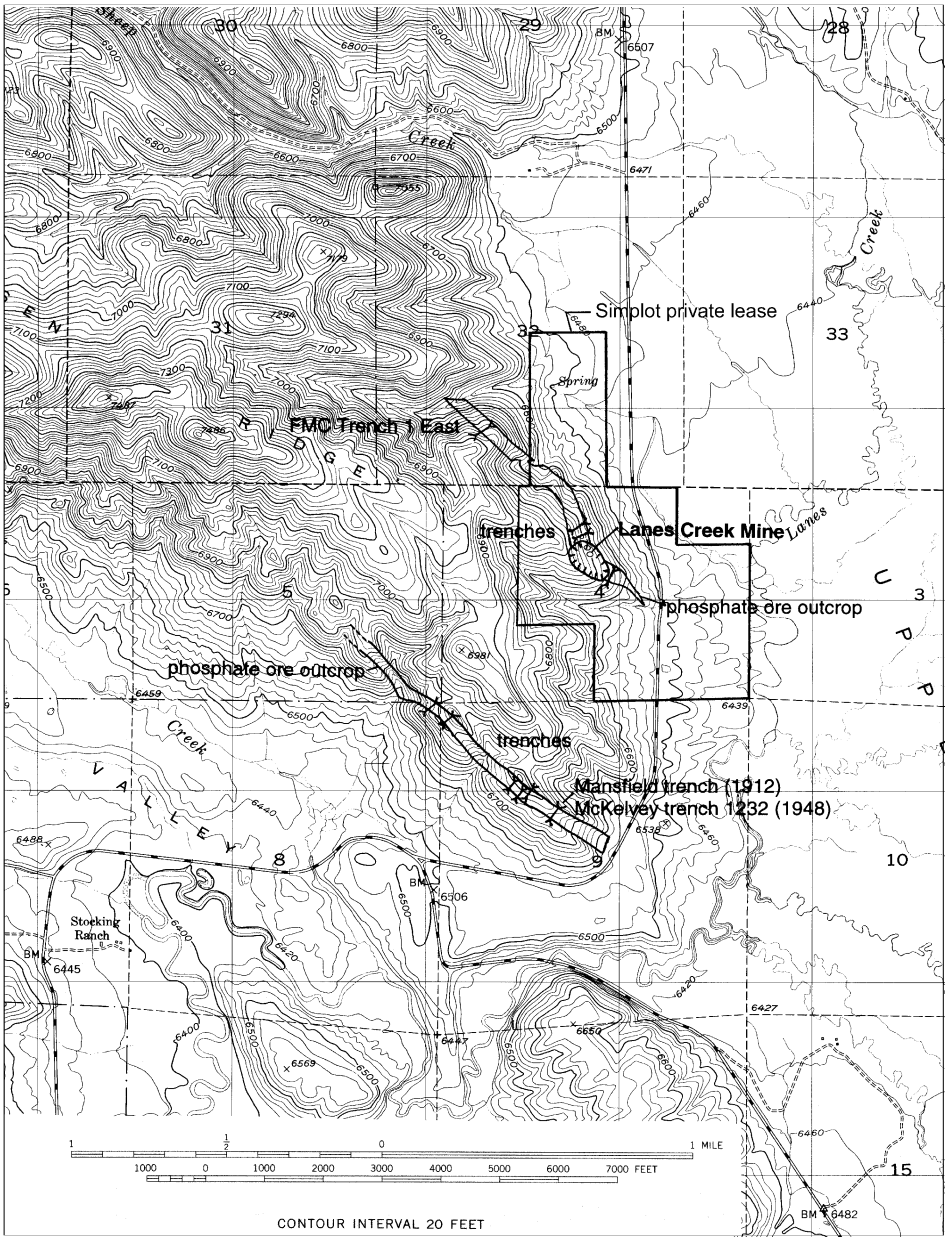

Figure 176. Map showing the location of the Lanes Creek Mine, Caribou County, Idaho.

The phosphate resource was first explored by the USGS in August, 1912 (Mansfield, 1927). The USGS survey party opened two exploratory trenches, or pits, across the phosphate ore bed in the SE¼NW¼ Section 9, T. 7 S., R. 44 E., about one mile south of the future site of the Lanes Creek Mine. These trenches opened both the top and the bottom of the phosphate ore zone. Phosphate analyses from the trenches are given in Mansfield (1927).

Mansfield's 1912 trenches were reopened and resampled (trench #1232) as a part of the overall study of the Western Phosphate Field in 1948 (McKelvey, Armstrong, Gulbrandsen, and Campbell, 1953). In 1975, Rioux and others mapped several additional trenches in the vicinity of the future Lanes Creek Mine including 3 sites within the boundaries of the future mine. These trenches were probably excavated by mining companies seeking the phosphate ore zone.

The lands in the current private leasehold were originally leased from the Bear Lake Grazing Company by John Archer in the early 1970's. Archer sold the lease to the Alumet Company while retaining an overriding royalty. Alumet Company is a partnership between Earth Science, Incorporated (20%), National Steel Corporation (40%), and the Southwire Company (40%). Alumet drilled the ore body on the lease in 1974, during the winter of 1977, and again in the summer of 1978, preparatory to opening the open-pit mine.

The mine was opened in August, 1978. The initial mining contractor was the HK Contractor's Company. The operation was conducted with rubber-tired excavation equipment with bulldozer assistance (Figure 177). The first shipment of fertilizer-grade ore was by truck over the existing road through the Blackfoot Narrows to the Wooley Valley loadout facility and sent by rail to the Valley Nitrogen Company of Helm, California. During the summer of 1983, Alumet shipped approximately 50,000 tons of ore to the J. R. Simplot Company plant at Conda, Idaho. In 1987, and 1988, shipments of ore were made by truck (Figure 178) to the Maybe Canyon railroad facilities and shipped to the Conda plant of Agrium Corp. The most recent operator of the mine was Washington Construction (Conda Mining Co.). The biggest production year for the mine was 1988. Production from the mine was suspended in late 1988 or early 1989, however, the mine was never officially closed and remains available for limited production.

Alumet's Lanes Creek Mine was acquired by the J. R. Simplot Company in September, 1997, along with all of Alumet's other phosphate interests. Reshaping and reclamation of the waste dump at the mine was initiated in June, 1998 (Figure 179). As of the writing of this report, the mine is closed but not abandoned or reclaimed (Figures 180 and 181).

Figure 177. Beginning of mining at Lanes Creek Mine, August, 1978. Photo courtesy of Frank Hamill, Alumet.

Figure 178. Ore trucks at Lanes Creek Mine, date unknown. Photo courtesy of Frank Hamill, Alumet.

Figure 179. Reshaping Lanes Creek Mine dump by the J. R. Simplot Company, June 8, 1998. Photo by the author.

Figure 180. Lanes Creek Mine, view north, June 8, 1998. Photo by the author.

Figure 181. Lanes Creek Mine, view south, June 8, 1998. Photo by the author.