

Fall Creek Mine

The Fall Creek mine is located in the NW¼NW¼ Section 17, T. 1 N., R. 43 E., in Bonneville County, Idaho. Geographically, the mine is about three miles southwest of the Snake River, up the Fall Creek Canyon, and about 1,200 feet up a small unnamed side canyon to the northwest (Figure 134).

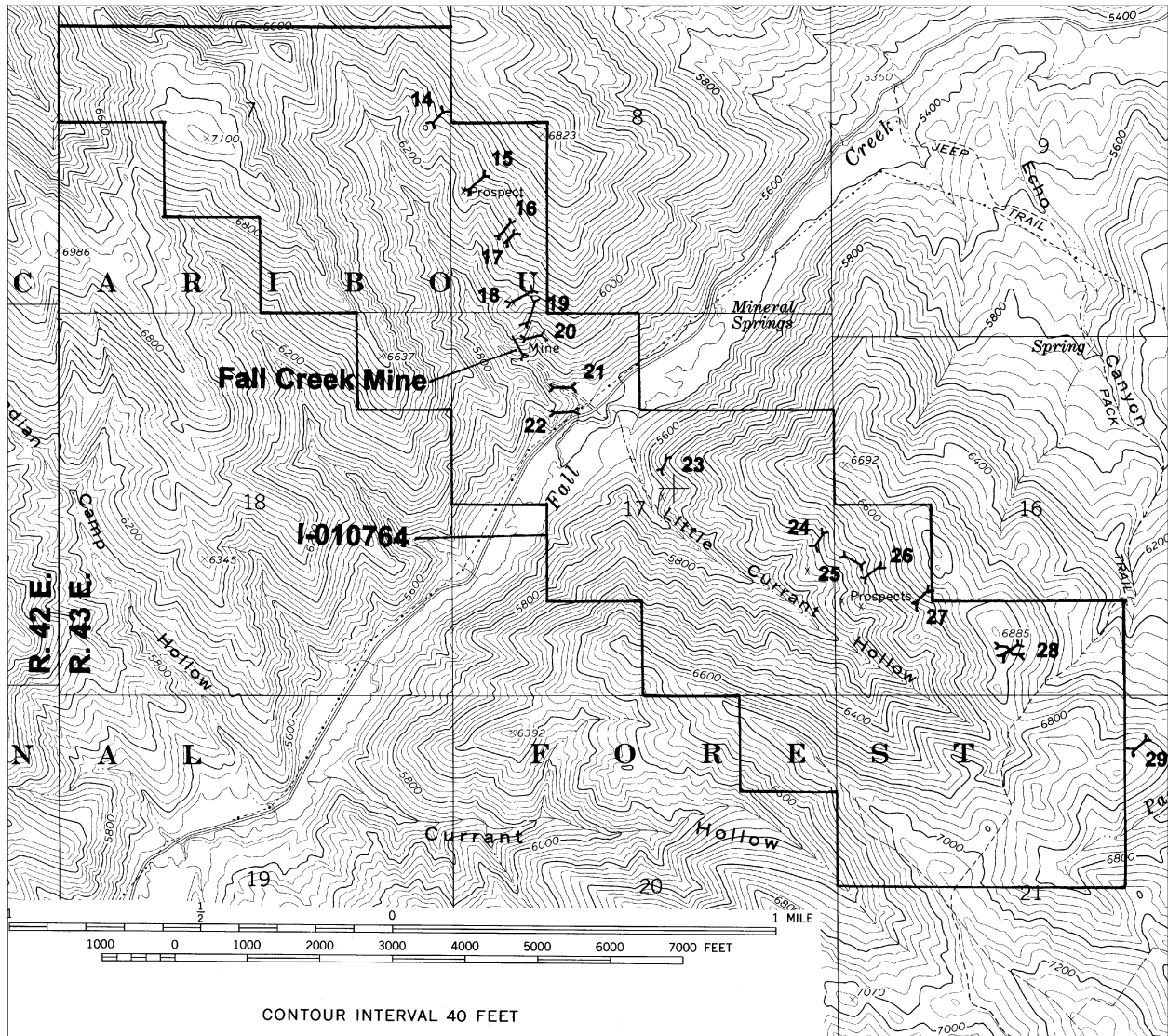


Figure 134. Map showing the location of the Fall Creek Mine, Bonneville County, Idaho.

The occurrence of phosphate in this part of the Caribou Range has been known for many years (Schultz and Richards, 1912; Schultz, 1918; Kirkham, 1924). There was no exploration interest in these deposits until September, 1950 when the USGS hand dug some trenches in the area and sampled

the phosphate ore (Smart and others, 1954, p. 5). The mineral resources of the Fall Creek area were discussed by Vine and Moore (1952) and Savage (1961), and the geology of the area was mapped starting in 1961 (Jobin and Schroeder, 1964).

Based on the published findings of the USGS and others, Phillips Petroleum Company did preliminary sampling and mapping of the phosphate in the Fall Creek area in 1955 (Sears, 1955). E. A. Rasmussen of Rexburg, Idaho and Clifford Purser of Rigby, Idaho applied to the BLM for a Federal noncompetitive phosphate lease (I-06433) on June 16, 1955 for lands in the immediate vicinity of Fall Creek. On November 7, 1955, Rasmussen bought out Purser's interest in the phosphate lease application. The lands applied for exceeded the Mineral Leasing Act's limits on acreage for a single lease so the lands were divided into two separate leaseholds (I-06433 and I-010764) (see Pritchard Creek Mine for description of I-06433). The two phosphate leases were finally issued on August 1, 1959 to E. A. Rasmussen. Rasmussen and others had formed a mining company entitled E. A. Rex Mining Corporation earlier and on September 1, 1960, the leases were assigned to this company. As an interesting aside, the phosphate ore contains an anomalous amount of uranium and for a while, the E. A. Rex Mining Corporation held mining claims for uranium over the same area as the lease.

From 1955 to 1959, the E. A. Rex Mining Corp. started limited development of an underground mine, initially for uranium and, later, for phosphate rock (Service, 1966, p. 175) (Figure 135). About 150 feet of drift was driven in the phosphate bed. The adit was 8 feet by 10 feet in size and ran along the N. 25° W. strike of the "A" zone of the phosphate bed. The elevation of the portal was 5,800 feet above sea level and the adit had a slight curvature to follow the strike. The adit was timbered and lagged for the first 60 feet.

During the late spring and early summer of 1960, the E. A. Rex Mining Corporation, through an operating company, Wells Cargo, Inc., explored the leases with an extensive trenching program (Figure 136). Bulldozer cuts were made approximately every ½ mile along the outcrop of the phosphate ore in the two leases (Jobin, unpublished report, May 14, 1962). Wells Cargo, Inc. bought the controlling interest of the E. A. Rex Mining Corporation in late 1961. Wells Cargo, Inc. continued to use the E. A. Rex name for their operations. In 1962, Wells Cargo, Inc. conducted a limited trenching program, and in 1963, the USGS trenched and sampled sections of the phosphate ore. Based on the results of these exploration events, Wells Cargo, Inc. sold an option to the Mineral Development Department of the FMC Corporation to reopen the Fall Creek Mine adit in the fall of 1964. All field work was under the supervision of O. A. Power and H. B. Fowler (Larsen, unknown date). The underground workings were extended about 150 feet for a total length of about 300 feet and a 60-foot crosscut was driven to the northeast from the end (Figure 137). This crosscut intersected the "B" zone of the phosphate ore bed. That was the last underground development conducted in the Fall Creek Mine. FMC Corporation did not continue their option on the property, and the underground workings were abandoned (Figure 138).



Figure 135. Fall Creek Mine, date unknown. Photo courtesy of the FMC Corporation.



Figure 136. FMC prospecting at the Fall Creek Mine. Photo courtesy of the FMC Corporation.

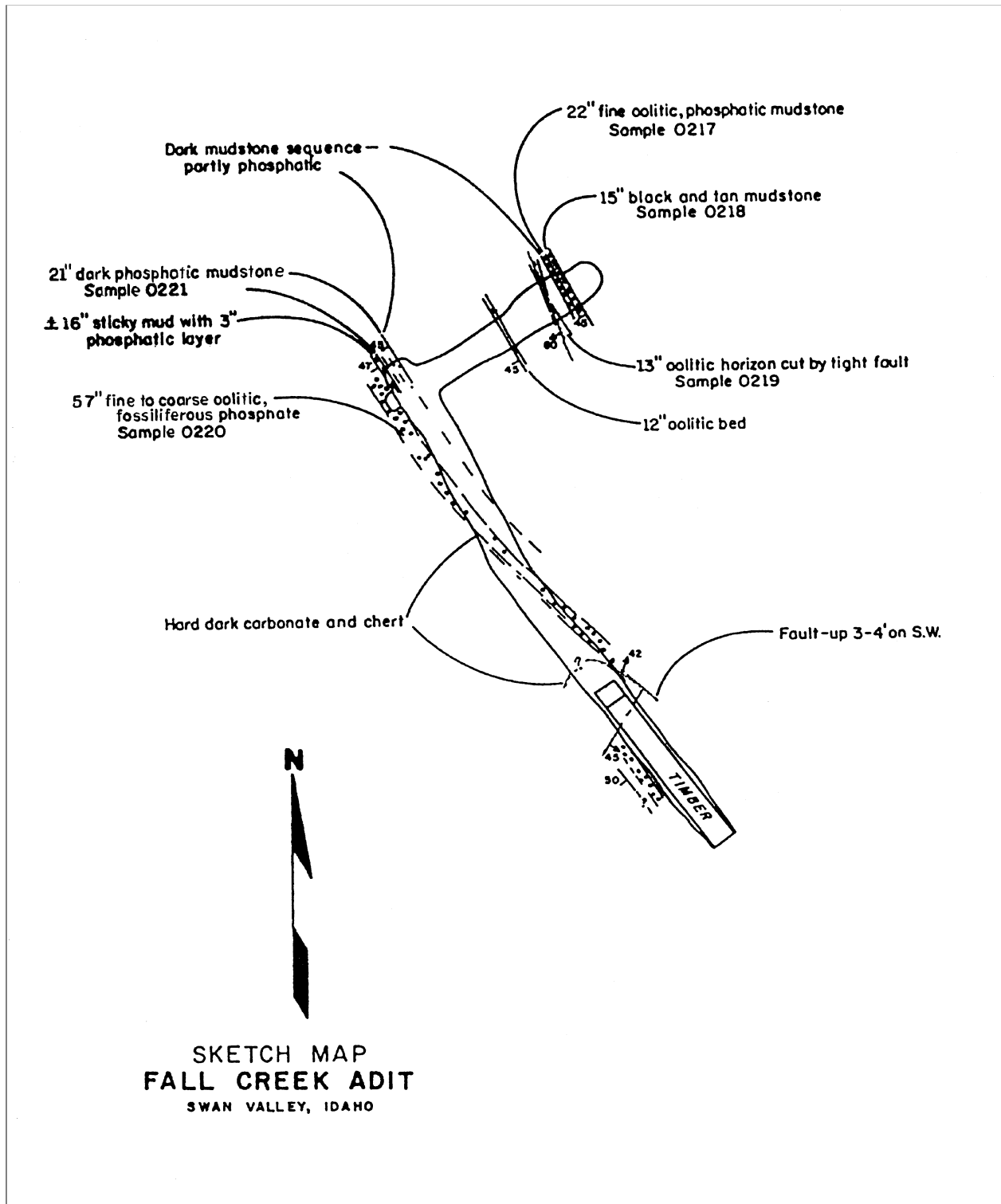


Figure 137. Map of FMC's underground workings at Fall Creek Mine. Map from Larsen, date unknown, Anaconda Collection, File 80210.01, American Heritage Center, Laramie, Wyoming.



Figure 138. Caved Fall Creek Mine adit, June 2, 1997. Photo by Charles Horsburgh, BLM.

In December, 1977, the Wells Cargo, Inc. company and the Western Cooperative Fertilizers Ltd. (WCFL) of Calgary, Alberta, Canada entered into an agreement whereby WCFL would purchase shares in Wells Cargo, Inc. over a period of time. On October 3, 1979, WCFL was designated operator of the two leases. By January, 1985, WCFL had acquired 705,230 of the 706,730 shares (99.8%) of Wells Cargo, Inc./E. A. Rex Mining Corporation. The Western Cooperative Fertilizers Ltd. continued to use the E. A. Rex name for the leaseholder.

On June 9, 1997, WCFL/E. A. Rex Mining Corporation applied for lease relinquishment for Federal leases I-06433 and I-010764, and on August 27, 1997, the relinquishments were accepted by the BLM.