MAR 19680141: NORTHERN ALBERTA

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Raymend Thomas

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PHOTOGEOLOGICAL STUDY

SULPHUR PROSPECTING PERMIT NO. 176

NORTHERN ALBERTA

Prepared For

Raymend Thomas

August, 1968

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SULPHUR PROSPECTING PERMIT NO. 176

NORTHERN ALBERTA

INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared at the request of Mr. Raymend Thomas. The request made was for a photogeological analysis of Sulphur Prospecting Permit No. 176, integrated with other available geological information. A map of North-Central Alberta, Figure 1, shows the general geological setting of the Permit and its relationship to other sulphur permits in the area. Figure 2 represents the results of this preliminary study on a photogeological mosaic.

The immediate objective of this photogeological study was to identify from the study of aerial photographs those areas that, from our present knowledge, would be the most favourable for the occurrence of sulphur. Such areas could then be examined in the field to determine the presence or absence of sulphur.

Sulphur Prospecting Permit No. 176 totals approximately 8,320 acres.

BEDROCK GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Sulphur Prospecting Permit No. 176 is located in Townships 119 and 120, Range 1, West of the Fifth Meridian, approximately 100 miles northeast of Fort Vermilion and 50 miles north of the Peace River.

This Permit lies along the approximate erosional edge of the Cretaceous rocks and is largely in the area of Devonian bedrock. In this regard it is geologically analogous to Sulphur Prospecting Permit No. 8, the sulphur discovery Permit which is similarly situated about 60 miles to the south-southwest.

Devonian rocks include limestones, dolomites, shales and evaporites. Cretaceous rocks which may be present only at the southwest edge of the Permit are expected to be shales with some sandstones. The bedrock is generally overlain by a variable thickness of glacial till, glacio-lacustrine and Recent deposits.

Sulphur Prospecting Permit No. 176 is located at the base of the Caribou Mountains, where the rather steep hills slope to the northeast and give way to the almost flat lowlands. The area is drained by tributaries of the Jackfish River, which flows eastward into Wood Buffalo Park and empties into the Peace River.

MODE OF OCCURRENCE AND RELATIONSHIP OF SULPHUR TO GENERAL GEOLOGY

Within the general area of interest in which sulphur prospecting permits have been issued (Figure 1), the principal bedrock formations are of Cretaceous age, but, to the north and northeast, erosion has stripped off the Cretaceous beds exposing older Devonian rocks. The Devonian, as well as overlying Cretaceous rocks, are generally inclined gently westward into the Alberta Syncline so that progressively younger rocks of both Paleozoic and Mesozoic ages are present in that direction.

The bedrock, whether of Devonian or Cretaceous age, is overlain by a variable thickness of glacial and related sediments. The thickness of these overlying sediments is generally at a minimum in those areas where river valleys are deeply incised and greatest in the hilly portions of the area.

The surficial geology of the area is of particular interest to the subject of possible economic occurrences of sulphur because of the probability that any economic deposits in this area are in surficial deposits.

The last glacier to cover the subject area was of Wisconsin age. Dating by 'carbon 14' method indicates that this advancement over the region occurred over 31,000 years ago. Ice flow features on the Glacial Map of Canada indicate that this glacier came from an area west of Hudson Bay. The thickness of the glacier is estimated to have been approximately 5,000 feet and the average direction of flow in the subject area was to the west-southwest.

The general absence of terminal moraines and other ice marginal features indicates that the retreat of the glacier was mainly by rapid stagnation. Dead-ice moraine forms the surface or underlies lacustrine deposits over much of the regional area.

As the glacier retreated, the lowland to the north was blocked by ice and meltwaters and could not drain freely. Extensive proglacial and superglacial lakes were formed, resulting in the deposition of glacio-lacustrine deposits that vary in thickness from a few inches to fifty feet or more.

It is, at this time, not clear as to what extent the sulphur is developed in surficial deposits and to what extent it may be present within the stratified deposits of the Cretaceous and/or Devonian, but both modes of occurrence may exist. The most likely commercial deposits are, however, probably surficial.

Sulphur occurrences in the general region may be broken into three groups, as follows:

(1) In muskeg or other poorly drained lacustrine or "dried lacustrine" areas. The most important known apparent example of this type is the Sulphur Prospecting Permit No. 8 discovery occurrence.

(2) Deposits of elemental sulphur in connection with active springs with or without associated gas. One such known occurrence involved gas, which was, at least in part, combustible.

(3) Cretaceous shales in the area frequently contain finely disseminated sulphur. Although we know of no reported concentrations of significant size from the Cretaceous, the possibility of such economic occurrences cannot be entirely eliminated.

In many parts of the general area, burnt shales have also been reported. These usually appear to be associated with recent slumps, possibly because the slumping brings the combustible material, which may include sulphur, in contact

with the surface. The origin of the combustion is, at this time, purely conjectural, but lightning produced forest fires are the most likely cause.

We are not prepared, at this time, to enter into detailed discussions of theories of the origin of the sulphur because of the large number of presently uncertain factors in this new area. Studies in the area are, however, likely to yield substantial information over the coming field season. Meanwhile, theories of origin from Paleozoic connate waters or from bedded Devonian and other gypsum and anhydrite deposits are of principal interest.

The manner of occurrence of sulphur deposits will determine whether they can be mined at the surface by stripping or from deeper strata by the Frasch process.

Solution of many of the questions of origin and occurrence is of prime economic importance and should be given very detailed attention as the present permit areas are evaluated.

Meanwhile, it is of general interest to the overall sulphur problem in this region that continuous flowing sulphur springs have been known in the area for nearly 200 years and that such springs are still known along a broad area along the Mesozoic-Paleozoic surface geological contact that extends from Western Saskatchewan, through the McMurray oil sands area, and across the present region of sulphur permits into the southern part of the Northwest Territories near Pine Point and westward along the Liard River. It is of further possible significance that there appears to be a genetic relationship between these sulphur occurrences and the McMurray oil, which has a four percent to five percent sulphur content. In addition to this, there is considerable free sulphur associated with the McMurray oil sands, both within and outside of the oil saturated area. As a measure of the amount of sulphur already known to have been deposited, probably

from the same type of connate waters that can be expected to have deposited the sulphur under study, we might refer to the "reserve" of the sulphur in the McMurray oil sands. Most recent estimates indicate that there is over 600 billion barrels of oil-in-place in the McMurray oil sands. This oil contains four to five percent of sulphur weighing approximately eight to ten billion long tons.

The above and other evidence available would indicate that what is needed to produce an economic sulphur deposit in this area is a favourable combination of faults and fractures for sulphate spring exits, sulphur supply in the connate waters and poorly drained lacustrine or other flat basin areas immediately adjacent to the spring exits. All these individual circumstances are known to exist. Under the proper combination of circumstances, there is no definite limit to the amount of sulphur that could be formed. Whether or not, or where, commercial deposits are present remains to be seen.

PHOTOGEOLOGICAL STUDY WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FIELD EVALUATION

Aerial photographs of the subject Permit area were examined stereoscopically for the purpose of selecting general areas of interest that, from our present knowledge, would appear to be most favourable for the occurrence of sulphur. The areas recommended for field study are those that we believe are most likely to have sulphur occurrences at or near the surface.

Photo-alignments, interpreted as surface expressions of bedrock faulting or fracturing, are plentiful within the study area. These fractures follow a general southwesterly trend in the southern portion of the Permit, but, to the north, their pattern becomes more complex. The number of fractures visible on the aerial photographs suggests that bedrock is relatively near the surface here.

Although the Permit appears most favourable from the standpoint of structure and its position in relation to the Cretaceous-Devonian contact, the lack of prominent catchment basins is somewhat discouraging.

The following areas of interest are recommended for field examination.

'Area 1' consists of three small closed areas that could represent "dried" muskegs. Shallow augering of selected spots within these features is recommended.

'Area 2' is a somewhat larger depressional feature located in the northwestern portion of the Permit. Even though the area is reasonably well drained, the presence of numerous fractures makes it worthy of consideration. Ground checking should include shallow augering of lacustrine deposits that may be present.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From our overall sulphur studies in the general area, we conclude that the most likely sources of commercial sulphur are surficial deposits.

We also conclude, from our regional studies of the sulphur prospects of the subject area, that surficial deposits of sulphur are likely to occur in muskegs, lakes, or abandoned lacustrine depressions, with particular reference to such areas that are along or adjacent to fractures and/or faults responsible for sulphate water springs.

We have determined that a number of such features show well on the air photographs and these areas have been outlined on the accompanying photogeological mosaic, Figure 2.

In view of the above, it is recommended that a field check be made of the localities that have been indicated by the photogeological study to be prospective. This field check would be that indicated as Step 1 of Phase II in our letter of July 17, 1968.

[redacted]

V. A. Farley

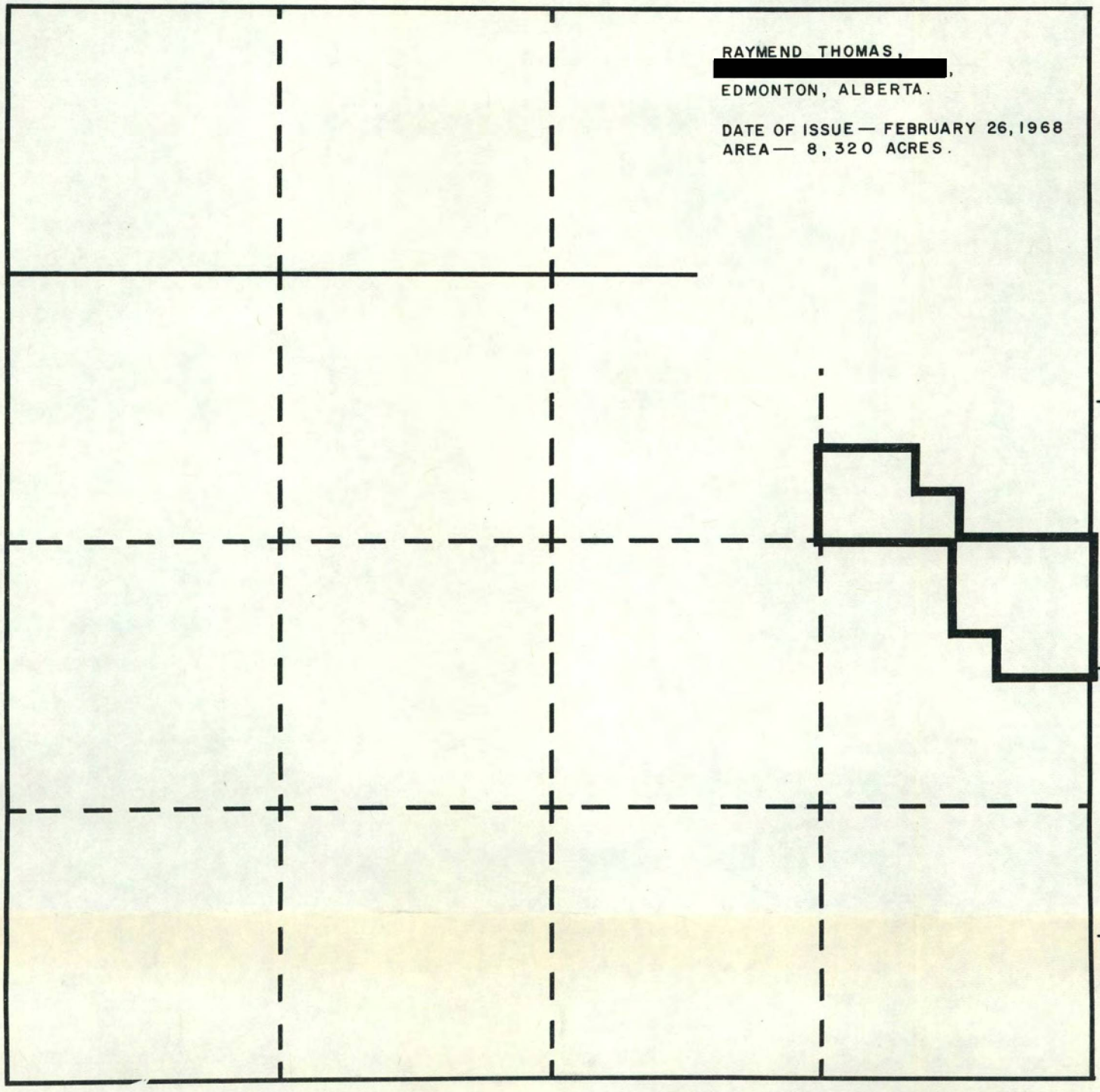
[redacted]

S. R. L. Harding, P. Geol.

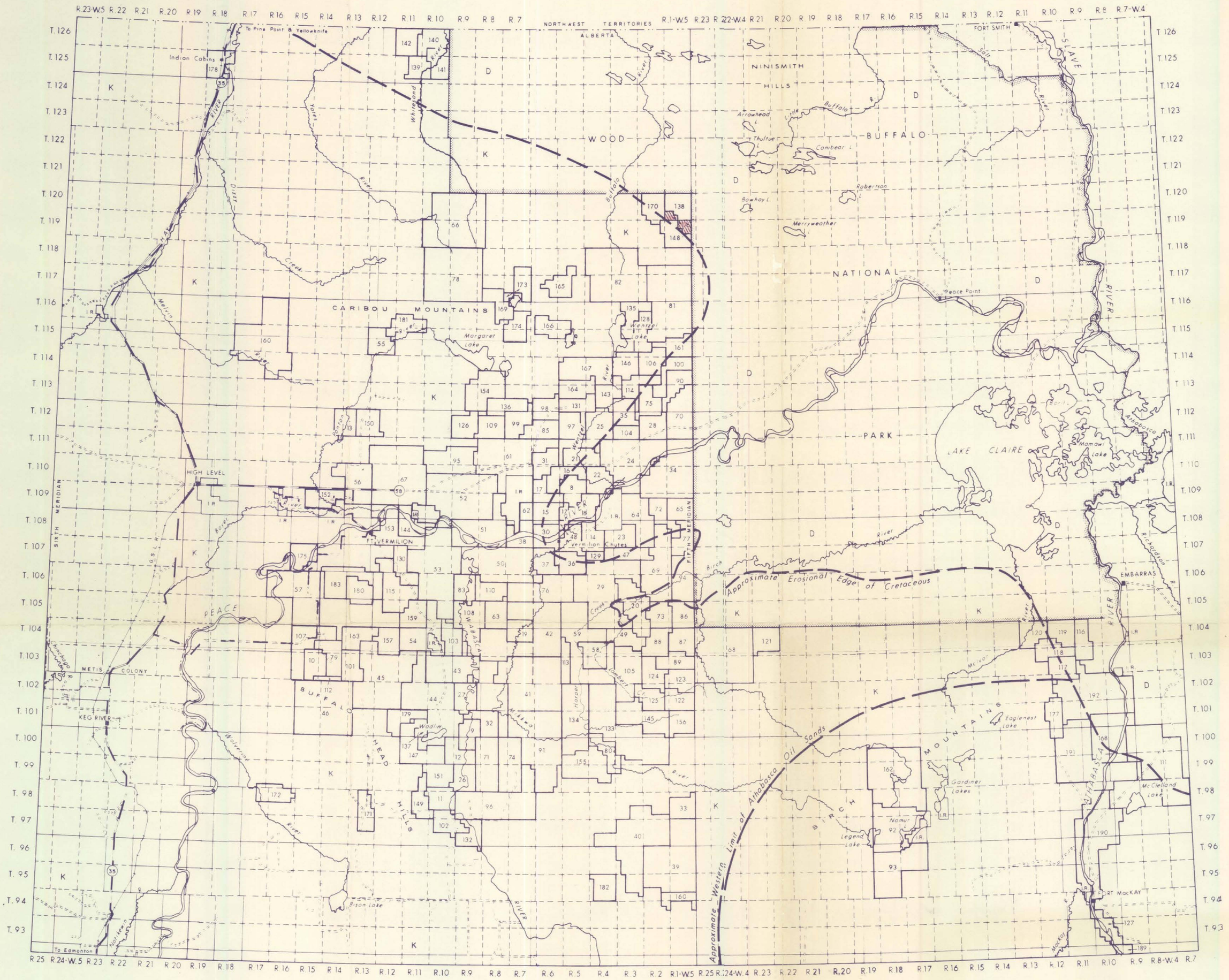
1009 Fourth Avenue S.W.,
Calgary 2, Alberta.
August 15, 1968.

VAF/SRLH/ab

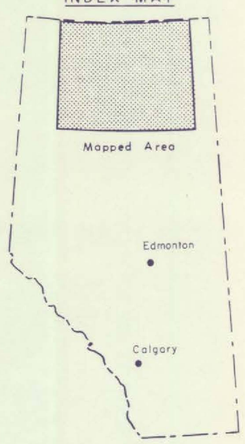
SULPHUR PROSPECTING PERMIT No. 176



84O/8 SE
84P/5 SW



INDEX MAP



LEGEND

K — Cretaceous Formations

D — Devonian Formations

94 — Sulphur Prospecting Permits

Subject Permits

Highway - Gravelled

All Weather Road - Gravelled

Dry Weather Road - Dirt - Truck Trail

NORTH - CENTRAL ALBERTA

SHOWING

SULPHUR PROSPECTING PERMITS

16 0 16 32

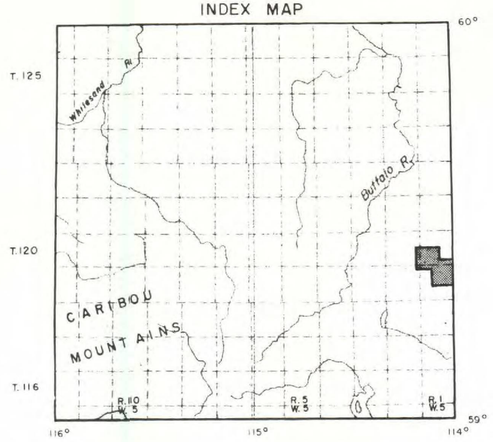
SCALE: 1" to 16 MILES

NOTE: Permits as Published to: (Data on later permits not yet available)

J.C. SPROULE AND ASSOCIATES LTD., CALGARY

19680141 FIGURE-1

INDEX MAP



PHOTOGEOLOGICAL MOSAIC

SULPHUR PROSPECTING PERMIT

No. 176

JACKFISH RIVER AREA

ALBERTA

PREPARED FOR

RAYMEND THOMAS

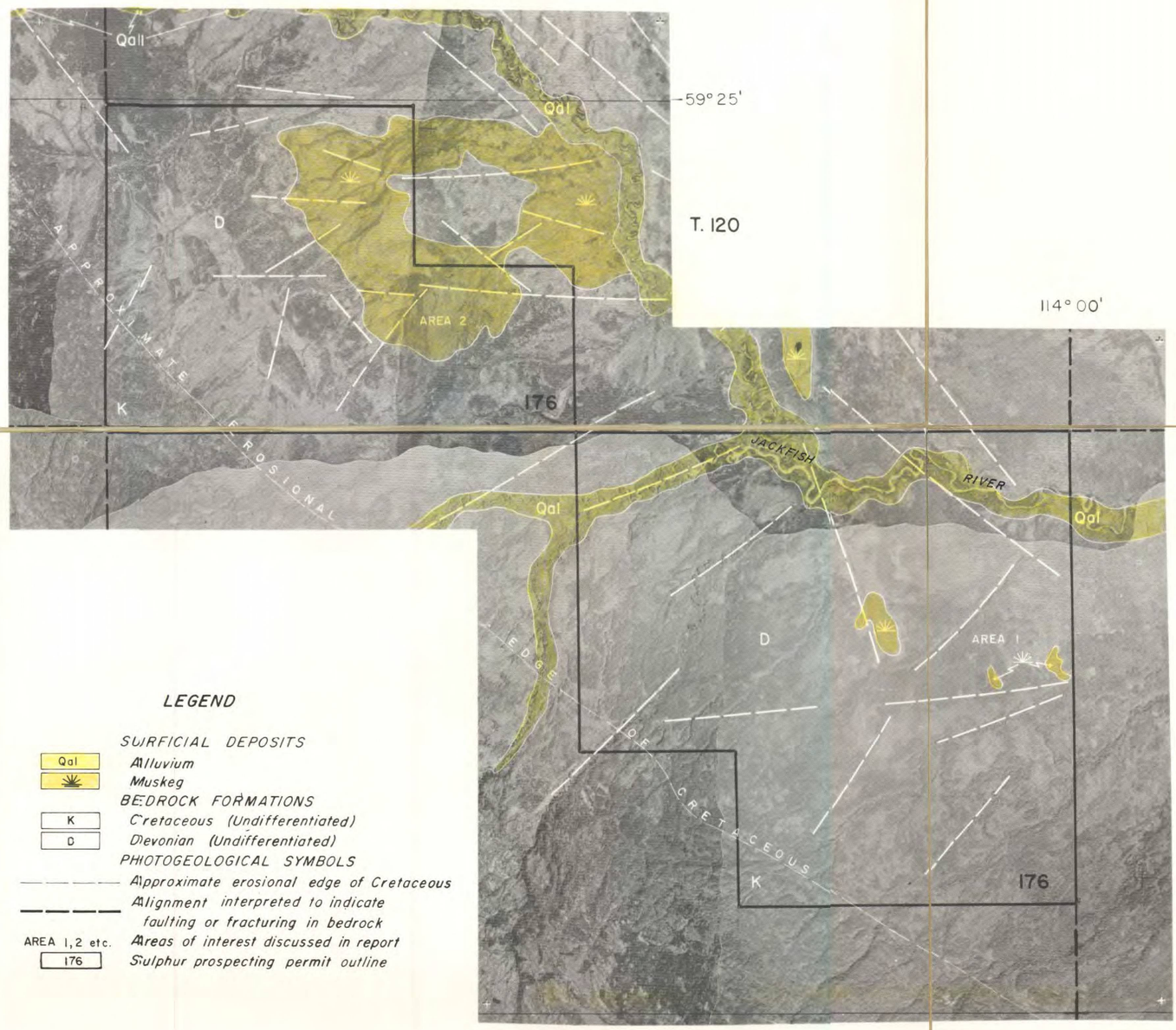
Mi 1/2 0 1 2 3 Mi.

APPROXIMATE SCALE IN MILES

THIS IS A SEMICONTROLLED MAP-MOSAIC AND SHOULD NOT BE MISTAKEN FOR AN ACCURATE GEOGRAPHIC BASE

J.C. SPROULE AND ASSOCIATES LTD. CALGARY, ALBERTA

AUGUST 1968



LEGEND

SURFICIAL DEPOSITS
- Qal — Alluvium
- Muskeg

BEDROCK FORMATIONS
- K — Cretaceous (Undifferentiated)
- D — Devonian (Undifferentiated)

PHOTOGEOLOGICAL SYMBOLS
- Approximate erosional edge of Cretaceous
- Alignment interpreted to indicate faulting or fracturing in bedrock
- AREA 1, 2 etc. — Areas of interest discussed in report
- 176 — Sulphur prospecting permit outline

19680141 FIGURE 2