

URAVAN MINERAL BELT HERITAGE TRAIL

Welcome to the Uravan Mineral Belt

Along this 25-mile-long historic mining loop you will witness remnants of the mining past. Western Montrose and San Miguel counties were center to one of the world's most important and active uranium and vanadium mining industries. From 1898 through the early 1960s, numerous companies extracted uranium and vanadium ore from hundreds of mines and treated the material at a handful of mills. These minerals played an essential role in American history during the World Wars, the Manhattan Project, the Cold War nuclear arms race, and nuclear energy development. After the industry collapsed, the mines and mill sites were abandoned, leaving unobstructed openings, piles of waste rock dumps, structures, artifacts, and other mining features visible on the landscape today.

Safety

Colorado's mining history has left a rich legacy. However, this legacy also includes 23,000 inactive and abandoned mines that can be as dangerous as they are picturesque. Mine sites may look safe to explore, but they often contain unstable soil, unsafe roofs and ladders, deadly gasses, poisonous snakes, and dangerous explosives. The Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety asks you to "Stay Out and Stay Alive" and not explore abandoned mines.

Cell phone coverage may be spotty or unavailable. Be prepared for no cell service along the trail.

This GeoPDF will locate your position when used with Avenza's PDF Map APP. However, there may be portions of the trail where a limited view of the sky could result in a poor GPS signal.

This map was created using a combination of the Dove Creek and Nucla BLM 100k map series for a base map. Travel routes depicted on these maps may not be current with what exists on the ground nor represent BLM approved routes.

Please do not enter any area "closed" for your safety.

Archaeology Site Etiquette

Archaeology is Everywhere. Everywhere people have lived, there are historic and cultural sites. At home or traveling to other communities, be respectful of the people and history there.

Remember to Leave Artifacts Where They Are Found. Archaeological sites tell stories of past people's lives. Moving artifacts takes away from those stories. Admire, draw, or photograph them instead.

Be a good steward of the past. It is everyone's responsibility to protect archaeological sites for the future. If you find a structure or artifact, please leave it in place.

Think about what you leave behind. Leaving your own materials at archaeological sites could spoil the experience for others. Trash, food, and campfires can contaminate sites, making it harder to learn about the past.

Be careful where you walk at an archaeological site. Stepping, leaning,

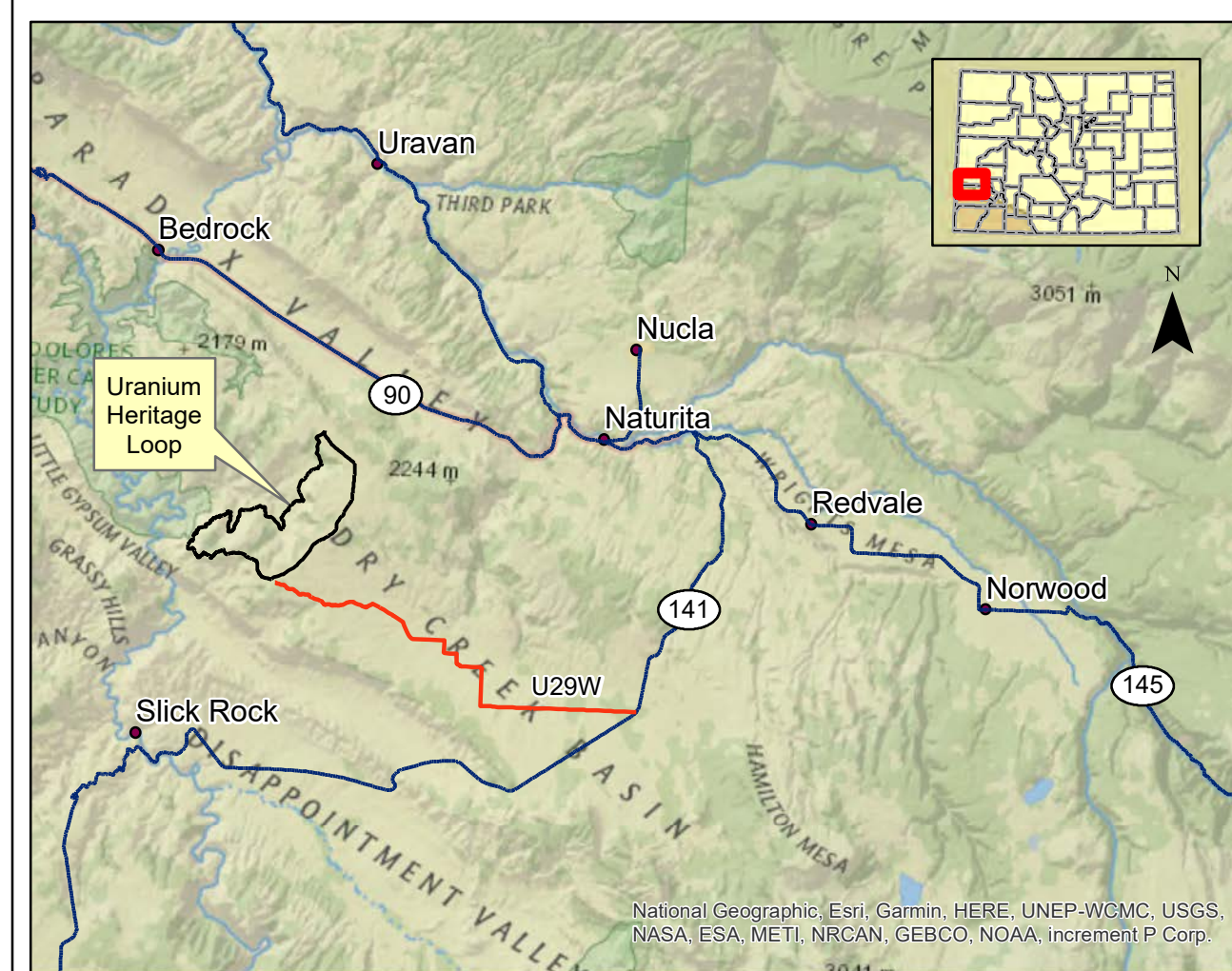
For More Information Contact  
BLM Tres Rios Field Office  
29211 Highway 184  
Dolores, CO 81323  
Phone: 970-882-1120

EMERGENCIES

Montrose County Sheriff - (970) 252-4023

San Miguel County Sheriff - (970)-728-1911

How to Get There:



The Uranium Heritage Loop is located at the northwest end of Dry Creek Basin in southwest Colorado.

Approaching from the north and east

From the junction of State Highways 141 and 145 (between Naturita and Norwood), take Highway 141 south 12.5 miles (20 kilometers). Between mile markers 44 and 45, turn west onto San Miguel County Road U29W. The U29W road will head due west for 6 miles, then meander north and west another 11.5 miles before reaching the trailhead and information kiosk.

Approaching from the south and west:

From Slickrock, take State Highway 141 east from Slickrock 23 miles (37 kilometers). Between mile markers 44 and 45, turn west onto San Miguel County Road U29W. The U29W road will head due west for 6 miles, then meander north and west another 11.5 miles before reaching the trailhead and information kiosk.

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data, or for the purposes not intended by the BLM. Spatial information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This information may be updated without notification.



Rimrock No. 2 Mine

The Rimrock No.2 mine was developed by the United States Vanadium in 1955 who worked the mine through 1963. The original mine facilities consisted of rail lines, a steel ore bin, and a portable air compress enclosed in a frame building. The mine was briefly closed and then reopened in 1965. Between 1965 and 1974 most of the original surface features were removed. The mine remained in operation until 1983 and since has been reclaimed.

What features can you find from the Rimrock No.2 mine? The original steel bin stands at the base of the waste rock dump, and it is connected to the open cut mine via a wooden trestle constructed in 1974. The trestle allowed miners to back trackless haulage vehicles up to the bin, trucks parked underneath the bin for ore, and a worker engaged the hatch with a lever to load the trucks, which then took the ore to be processed at a mill. As a means to help protect the site and provide enjoyment of future visitors please leave artifacts where you find them!

The photograph shows a circa 1940s sedan, likely used for historic mining in the area and then abandoned.



Wedding Bell Camp

What remains today of the Wedding Bell Camp are a collapsed cabin, a platform for a frame residence, three tent platforms, and an artifact assemblage. The Wedding Bell Camp originally served as a prospectors' camp during the 1900s, and later served as a uranium miners' camp from the 1940s into the mid-1960s. The tent and building platforms date to the radium boom of the 1900s and the vanadium boom of the 1910s. Most of the features, however, date to the first years of the uranium boom that began during the late 1940s.



Wedding Bell Mine

Before you is the sole surviving feature from the Wedding Bell Mine, a wooden ore chute. This vantage point offers an unobstructed overview of Bull Canyon and Wild Steer Mesa. Geologically, the Salt Wash and Brushy Basin Members of the Morrison Formation, which consist of alternating sandstone and mudstone layers, are also visible from this vantage point. You can spot the upper layers of the Salt Wash above the thicker, white, sandstone horizon in the photo. These layers featured most of the region's carnotite ore deposits. Carnotite's principal constituents were vanadium and uranium, in order of proportion. Ore rich with uranium tended to be canary-yellow, and when impurities were present, it ranged from greenish-yellow to light-brown. Ore with a high vanadium content tended to be olive-green to brick-red, and geologists recognized compounds that were blue-black to black by the 1950s.



Radium Hill #10

Radium Hill #10 Mine was developed during the early 1960s at the end of the uranium boom and it yielded ore through 1974. The site was largely destroyed through reclamation in 2008 but the original ore bin and waste rock material still remain on the landscape today.



Flag Mine

The Flag Mine operated during the area's 1950s uranium boom, and it yielded ore for a relatively short period of time. The site currently features archaeological and engineering remnants of the mine's surface plant, and a series of tunnels and open stopes (dugout areas) driven into the base of a sandstone cliff. Today an ore bin, two ore chutes, and rail line remain visible on the landscape.



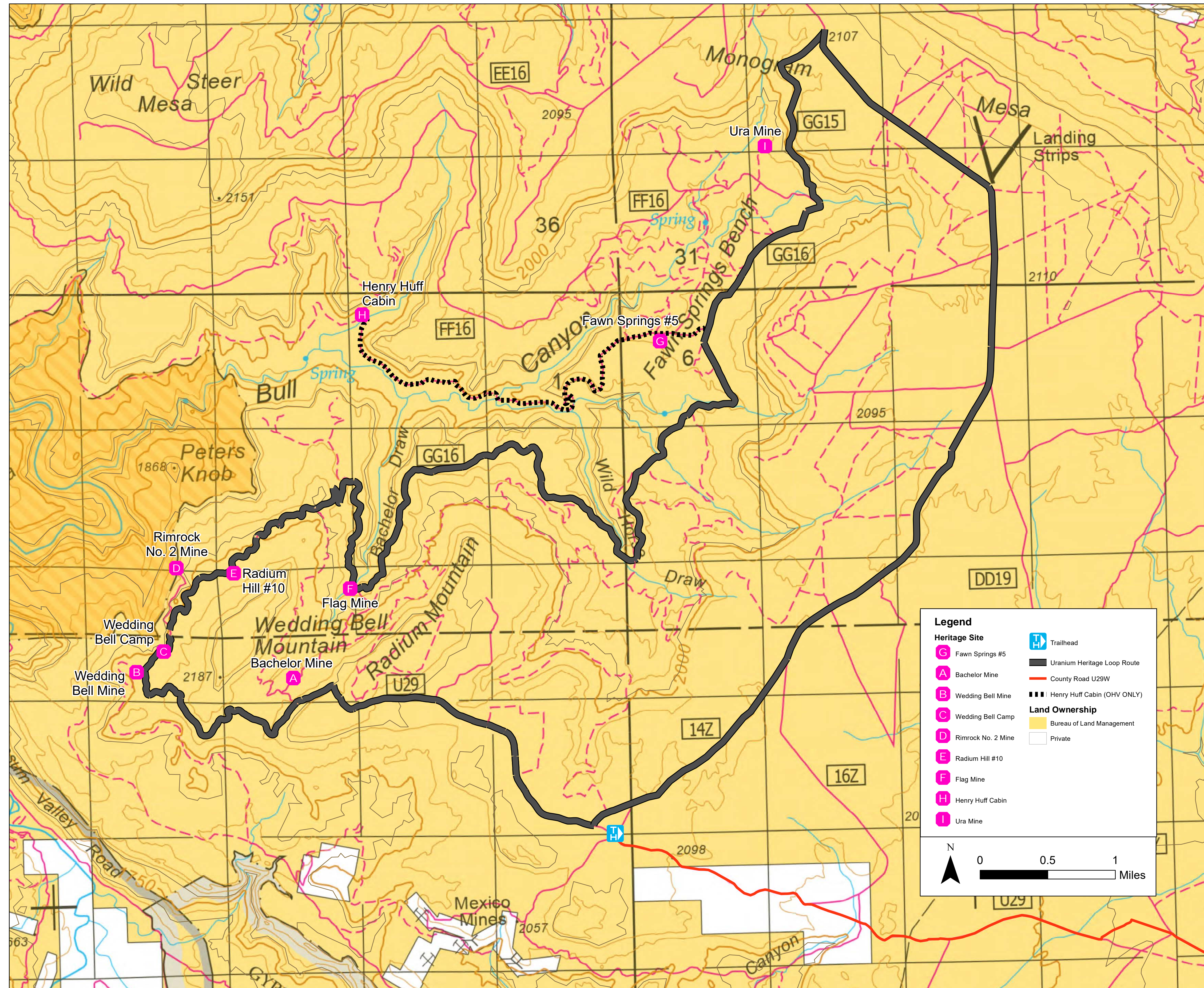
Fawn Springs Sweat Lodge

Before you are the remains of a 1950s miners' housing complex and associated 1970s uranium mine. A significant aspect of the site is the remains of Native American sweat lodge. The uranium mining industry in the Mineral Belt impacted the lives of Native Americans in the region. During the 1950s, mining companies in the Southwest began employing Native Americans, primarily Navajos and Utes, in exchange for access to uranium ore on reservations. The Indians worked primarily underground and were quickly recognized as expert miners. Because of this reputation, companies in the Mineral Belt actively recruited Navajos, who ultimately constituted a significant proportion of the workforce. In so doing, the mining industry became an agent that brought large numbers of Indians off the reservations, providing them with training and employment. The workers then improved the economies of their reservations when they returned with their earnings. By the latter half of the 1950s, around 2,500 of the 10,000 miners employed across the Colorado Plateau were Navajo.



Henry Huff Cabin

Henry Huff was the adopted son of James C. and Eliza R. Huff. Being born in southern Nevada, Huff was almost assuredly Paiute, given the historical territory of the tribe. The popular story that he was found in a cradleboard left behind by his Ute parents by settlers entering the Paradox Valley in the early 1880s is unfounded. Throughout his life he was known as "Indian" Henry. He was an accomplished hunter and killed several bears each spring. In the summer of 1900, Huff was working as a stock drover for the Galloway Ranch in Norwood. Huff obtained a Homestead Entry Patent for 160 acres along Naturita Creek west of Norwood on October 12, 1900. He reported that he was a native-born citizen in his Homestead proof but did not indicate that he was a Native American. Native Americans were not considered to be American citizens at the time, and he would not have been eligible to obtain a Homestead if he had revealed his ancestry. Huff began filing radium and vanadium mining claims in the Bull Canyon area beginning in 1911, both individually and with a variety of partners. In many of the associated claim descriptions, Huff and Galloway's cabin was used as a point of reference, with the claim locations identified as a certain distance from the cabin. This shows that the cabin was a prominent and well-known location in Bull Canyon. Beginning in 1914, the cabin was referred to simply as "Huff's Cabin" suggesting that his association with Sim Galloway had ceased, and the cabin was used primarily by Huff as the center of his prospecting ventures. Although Huff and his partners became increasingly invested in prospecting, he likely continued ranching for much of his occupation of the cabin. Following Huff's death, the cabin saw continued use as a base for ranching activities conducted by Ethan A. Tracy until 1933. The Cabin was Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2019.



**Legend**

**Heritage Site**

- G Fawn Springs #5
- A Bachelor Mine
- B Wedding Bell Mine
- C Wedding Bell Camp
- D Rimrock No. 2 Mine
- E Radium Hill #10
- F Flag Mine
- H Henry Huff Cabin
- I Ura Mine

**Trailhead**

**Uranium Heritage Loop Route**

**County Road U29W**

**Henry Huff Cabin (OHV ONLY)**

**Land Ownership**

- Bureau of Land Management
- Private

**Scale:** 0 0.5 1 Miles



Bachelor Mine

During the 1950s, the Four Corners company bulldozed a network of drill-roads radiating outward from 13 Z Road in search of carnotite and sank Bachelor Mine shaft to reach in a particularly rich deposit in 1955. The Four Corners company installed a surface plant to facilitate work underground and dismantled almost everything upon selling the property in 1958. The new operator, Bachelor Mines, Inc., replaced the surface plant in 1958, and then generated a constant stream of carnotite ore into 1963, for the Atomic Energy Commission's Cold War nuclear weapons programs. Lark L. Washburn leased the mine spanning 1963-1968, and James Herring did likewise 1971-1972, using the surface plant left in place by Bachelor Mines, Inc. Whereas most uranium mines in the region were developed via horizontal tunnels and inclined shafts, the Bachelor Mine was among a few based on vertical shafts engineered according to a template borrowed from hardrock gold and silver mines. In the template, a headframe stood over the shaft, and a hoist in a hoist house winched a skip hoisting vehicle into the headframe. Steel guides in the headframe upset the skip and dumped its contents into an ore bin standing adjacent. The Bachelor Mine is further distinguished from the region's other mines in that it still features most of its surface plant, except for the machinery and compressor and tool sheds, which are gone. The shaft collar, headframe, hoist house, prefabricated steel ore bin, explosives magazine, and an auxiliary ventilation shaft are all intact. The above features also retain small-scale details such as linkage for a communication signal bell connecting the shaft and hoist house, and a labeled canister on the bin for manifest papers accompanying ore shipments by truck.



Ura Mine

The Ura Mine was among Union Carbide's more important uranium producers, and one of the largest in Bull Canyon. Between 1965 and 1983, the mine yielded at least 200,000 tons of ore, a significant volume, for the nuclear power industry. When active, the mine had a substantial surface plant including a hoisting system, steel trestle over two ore bins, hoist house, compressor house, shoe office, and other facilities. The mine was largely reclaimed in 1999 and what remains today are the tunnel portal and trestle, and ore bins.