



## United States Department of the Interior

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In Reply Refer To:  
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SEP 22 2009

Dear Interested Public:

### **PUBLIC CONSULTATION FOR TEMPORARY NON-RENEWABLE GRAZING PERMIT FOR THE MOUNT AIRY ALLOTMENT**

On June 15, 2009 the Mount Lewis Field Office (MLFO) received an application for Temporary Non-Renewable (TNR) use for the Mount Airy Allotment. In accordance with the Grazing Regulations, "... the authorized officer shall consult, cooperate and coordinate with affected permittees or lessees, the State having lands or responsible for managing resources within the area, and the interested public prior to issuance of nonrenewable grazing permits and leases" (43 CFR 4130.6-2).

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Mount Airy Allotment was designated as a "C" or custodial category allotment in the Shoshone Eureka Resource Management Plan. The allotment borders the town of Austin, Nevada (see attached map). The allotment is comprised of 84,789 acres of public land and the elevation ranges from 4,500 to 6,000 feet. Major vegetation types include salt desert shrub, sagebrush/bunchgrass, and pinyon/juniper woodland. There are no riparian or wetland zones on public land within the allotment except within the Airport pasture which includes the Reese River and two springs. Resources within the Mount Airy Allotment include upland native vegetation, wildlife habitat for antelope, sage grouse and a variety of non-game species.

The allotment includes eleven fenced pastures where Silver Creek Ranch, Inc. and William J. Gandolfo have livestock operations. Silver Creek Ranch's permit is a sheep trailing permit for 120 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) and Mr. Gandolfo's permit is a cattle permit for 3,438 AUMs. A rangeland health evaluation of the allotment has not been completed and no formal grazing management plan for Mr. Gandolfo has been implemented. However, Silver Creek Ranch's sheep trailing was analyzed in 2007 with the Austin Complex Permit Renewal. For numerous years, Mr. Gandolfo has implemented his own deferred grazing system within the parameters of his grazing permit.

For several years now, Mr. Gandolfo has applied for TNR use within the allotment. Monitoring data collected prior to the authorization of TNR indicated that utilization objectives currently established for the allotment through the Shoshone-Eureka Rangeland Program Summary have been met and additional forage has been available on a temporary basis within the allotment. The nature of Mr. Gandolfo's applications for TNR have been consistent with the exception of the past few years which had fewer AUMs. The MLFO prepared the Mount Airy Temporary Non-Renewable Grazing Environmental Assessment #NV062-EA07-173 which analyzed the environmental impacts of the proposed action to authorize Mr. Gandolfo's TNR application. A Finding of No Significant Impact was signed on October 16, 2007. The grazing use being applied for this year has fewer AUMs than what was analyzed through the NEPA process.

The Rangeland Program Summary (RPS) objectives for the Mount Airy Allotment are 1) utilization not to exceed 50% on key species by seed dissemination and 60% by the end of the grazing year; and 2) in the long term, stop downward trends on 16,216 acres. However, due to below average precipitation over the past few grazing years, utilization objectives for authorized TNR use was 30% on key native species and 50% on crested wheatgrass by the end of the grazing year.

## APPLICATION

The following is a summary of the permitted use, authorized use for the 2009 grazing season and the application for TNR:

### 1. William J. Gandolfo 10-year Permit:

Allotment	Livestock #/Kind	Period of Use	AUMs
Mount Airy	284 Cattle	3/1 - 2/28	3,408
	33 Cattle	2/1 - 2/28	30
New Pass	23 Cattle	3/1 - 11/30	177
<b>Mount Airy Total</b>			<b>3,438</b>
<b>New Pass Total</b>			<b>177</b>

## 2. 2009 Authorized Use:

Allotment	Pasture	Livestock #/Kind	Period of Use	AUMs
Mount Airy	RXR	500 C	3/1 – 3/23	378
		600 C	3/24 – 4/14	434
		660 C	4/15 – 4/30	347
	West Gandolfo	165 C	5/26 – 6/13	103
	East Gandolfo	300 C	6/14-7/5	217
	Cody	165 C	6/4-6/10	38
		300 C	6/11 – 6/25	148
	East Veach	165 C	5/1-6/3	184
	West Veach	25C	6/4-6/14	9
	New Pass	35 C	4/20-6/15	66
	Airport	300 C	6/26-7/5	99
		600 C	7/6-9/14	1,401
	<b>Mount Airy Total</b>			<b>3,424</b>

## 3. 2009 Application for TNR:

Allotment	Pasture	Livestock #/Kind	Period of Use	AUMs
Mount Airy	New Pass seeding	400	9/15-10/31	618
	New Pass	400	11/1-11/31	408
	RXR	500	12/1-2/28	1,479
<b>Mount Airy Total</b>				<b>2,505</b>

Prior to authorization of TNR, permitted AUMs will be utilized and all utilization objectives for the Mount Airy Allotment will need to be met. If permitted AUMs are exhausted prior to TNR being authorized, livestock would be removed from the allotment. Due to the time frame associated with authorizing a TNR request, TNR if authorized would not begin until at least December 2009. AUMs would be adjusted accordingly to coincide with the approval of TNR.

**MONITORING INFORMATION**

Monitoring data collected in early April indicated that the TNR authorized last year did not exceed utilization objectives established for the TNR (30% for key native species and 50% for crested wheatgrass). Monitoring data was also collected in July which indicated that grazing use to date in the allotment has not exceeded the utilization objectives subject to this proposed TNR authorization. The following is a summary of the utilization studies:

Pasture	Key Area	Date	Key Species	Utilization Objective	Utilization %
RXR	RXR 1	4/9/2009	Indian ricegrass	30%	6%
	RXR 1A		bottlebrush squirreltail	30%	2.5%
			Indian ricegrass	30%	7%
	RXR 2		bottlebrush squirreltail	30%	12%
RXR 3	Indian ricegrass	30%	7%		
	bottlebrush squirreltail	30%	2.5%		
Airport		Indian ricegrass	30%	24%	
Reese River		bottlebrush squirreltail	30%	15%	
		inland saltgrass	30%	5%	
Airport		alkali sacaton	30%	18%	
		inland saltgrass	30%	2.5%	
West Gandolfo		alkali sacaton	30%	5.5%	
		inland saltgrass	30%	2.5%	
East Gandolfo		alkali sacaton	30%	4.6%	
		needleandthread	30%	9.2%	
West Veach		Indian ricegrass	30%	11%	
		Thurber needlegrass	30%	20.9%	
East Veach		needleandthread	30%	13.8%	
		bottlebrush squirreltail	30%	2.5%	
Cody		needleandthread	30%	3%	
		Thurber needlegrass	30%	3%	
Airport		Basin wildrye	30%	26.4%	
		inland saltgrass	30%	2.5%	
Airport		inland saltgrass	30%	6.8%	
		alkali sacaton	30%	14.5%	

### **RXR Pasture:**

The RXR pasture consists of approximately 37,700 acres of native rangeland dominated by bud sage/shadscale plant communities with fingers and pockets of Wyoming sagebrush communities. The pasture is utilized during the dormant season where livestock are removed prior to the critical growing period for key grasses and shrubs. Cheatgrass is present in the understory, but is not dominating the site with the exception of key area RXR 2 where it is becoming well established. Halogeton is also present within the bud sage/shadscale communities in pockets, but does not appear to be invading any further. Indian ricegrass was fairly sparse throughout the pasture although new plants were observed.

### **New Pass Pasture:**

The New Pass pasture is approximately 29,900 acres with a large portion dominated by Wyoming big sagebrush plant communities. There are also some higher elevation Juniper woodland communities. With the exception of the higher elevation, grasses are very sparse with Sandberg's bluegrass dominating the understory. The higher elevations include Thurber needlegrass, Indian ricegrass, bottlebrush squirreltail and Sandberg bluegrass.

### **New Pass Seeding Pasture:**

The New Pass Seeding Pasture is approximately 915 acres that is dominated with crested wheatgrass and appears in excellent condition with scattered Sandberg's bluegrass.

**Airport Pasture:**

The Airport pasture is approximately 1,428 acres and is dominated by a meadow and greasewood community. The pasture appears in good condition exhibiting diverse and healthy species.

**Cody Pasture:**

The Cody pasture is approximately 1,377 acres and is dominated by Douglas rabbitbrush, alkali sacaton and Great Basin wildrye. The pasture appears to be in good health with limited bare ground and vigorous plants.

**Gandolfo Triangle and North Gandolfo Triangle Pastures:**

Together, these pastures are approximately 3,716 acres in size. The Gandolfo Triangle is divided into east and west by highway 276 creating two separate pastures. The Gandolfo Triangle was part of a wildland urban interface project which included mowing strips to break up continuous fuel. Both pastures appeared to have a good response with a flush of native perennial grass species. Cheatgrass is more abundant within the west pasture, but does not dominate. North Gandolfo pasture is a narrow strip along the foothills between the Austin Allotment to the west and north and the Forest Service to the east. This pasture is dominated with Wyoming big sagebrush with an understory dominated by Sandberg bluegrass and bottlebrush squirreltail. Currently Mr. Gandolfo does not use this pasture due to the accessibility to the Forest Service.

**Reese River:**

The Reese River pasture is approximately 1,695 acres dominated by Wyoming big sagebrush with pockets of alkali sacaton and inland saltgrass. The sagebrush community appears to have little to no understory. The pockets of alkali meadow within this pasture appear to be in good condition exhibiting good vigor with limited bare ground. Mr. Gandolfo mainly uses this pasture to provide cover for his cattle during the winter months.

**Crow Seeding:**

Crow seeding is approximately 2,867 acres which was seeded with crested wheatgrass in the 1960's. Current condition of the seeding appears poor with increasing sagebrush and decreasing grass. The majority of grass present within the pasture (crested wheatgrass and bottlebrush squirreltail) are caged or protected by the Wyoming big sagebrush.

**Veach:**

The Veach pasture is approximately 2,654 acres and is dominated by Wyoming big sagebrush and an understory of Sandberg bluegrass and bottlebrush squirreltail. This pasture was divided into east and west through a wildland urban interface project which mowed strips to break continuous fuels. Mowing only occurred within the east pasture. Response from the mowing appeared good with an increase in needleandthread and Thurber needlegrass. After the mowing, cheatgrass appeared to dominate the mowed areas. When monitoring was completed in 2009, the amount of cheatgrass has appeared to greatly decrease along with an increase in native perennial grasses. Mowing treatments did not occur in the west pasture and is currently dominated by Wyoming big sagebrush with a limited understory of Sandberg bluegrass and bottlebrush squirreltail.

## PROPOSED TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Utilization will not exceed 30% on key native species or 50% on crested wheatgrass by the end of the grazing year.
2. If the utilization trigger of 30% or 50% is met, cattle would be required to move to the next pasture or from the entire allotment.
3. If livestock are removed from the allotment as a result of achieving maximum utilization as specified in number 1 above, any unused AUMs would be refunded to the permittee.

## CONCLUSION

Monitoring data collected indicates that the actual grazing use that has occurred in the allotment has resulted in the attainment of allotment specific utilization objectives and that additional forage is available on a temporary basis. The approval of Mr. Gandolfo's application for TNR would result in the attainment of allotment specific objectives and be in accordance with the Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council guidelines as use would occur during the dormant season following rest of key perennial grass species.

Upon the approval of this authorization, BLM would continue to monitor the allotment on a monthly basis throughout the remainder of the grazing year. If monitoring data indicates that utilization levels are met, the permittee would have 3 days to remove all livestock from the pasture or the entire allotment.

The interested public is being asked to provide any comments regarding the application for TNR by October 7, 2009. At the conclusion of the comment period, the MLFO will issue a proposed grazing decision. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Jason Spence, Rangeland Management Specialist at (775) 635- 4194.

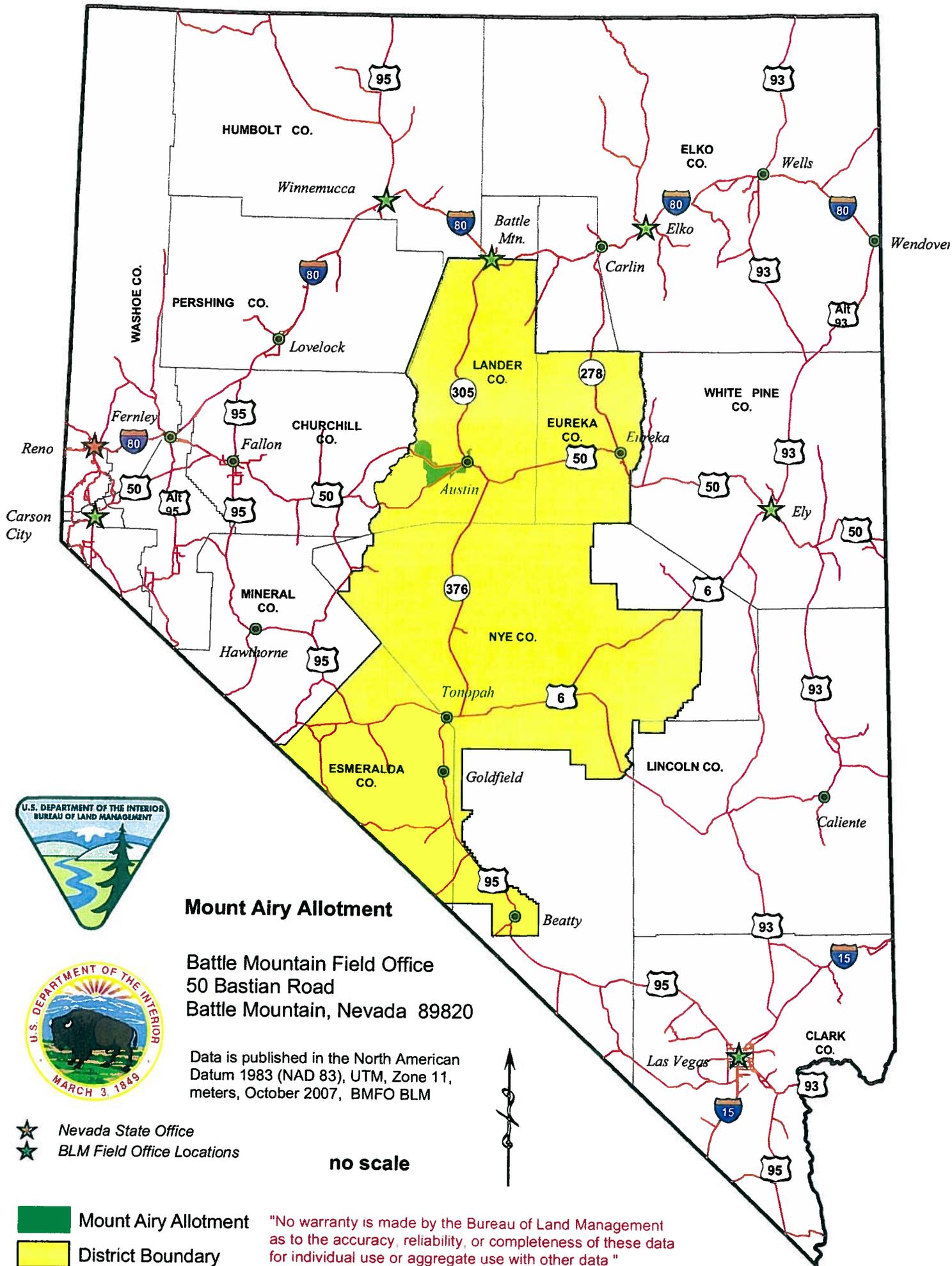
Sincerely,  
  
Acting FM

Douglas W. Furtado  
Field Manager  
Mount Lewis Field Office

Enclosure(s)

cc:

Silver Creek Ranch Inc.  
Synergy Resource Solutions, Inc.  
Nevada Commission for Preservation of Wild Horses  
Steven Carter  
Department of Agriculture  
Nevada State Clearing House  
Western Watersheds Project  
Resource Concepts, Inc.  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Sustainable Grazing Coalition  
Eureka County Department of Natural Resources  
Lander County Wildlife Advisory Board  
Eureka County Commissioners  
Lander County Commissioners  
Nevada Cattlemens Association  
Lander County PLUAC  
Wild Horse Spirit, Ltd.  
N6 Grazing Board  
Nevada Department of Wildlife  
Battle Mountain Band Council  
Duckwater Shoshone Tribe  
Timbisha Shoshone Tribe  
Yomba Shoshone Tribe



**Mount Airy Allotment**

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Data is published in the North American Datum 1983 (NAD 83), UTM, Zone 11, meters, October 2007, BMFO BLM

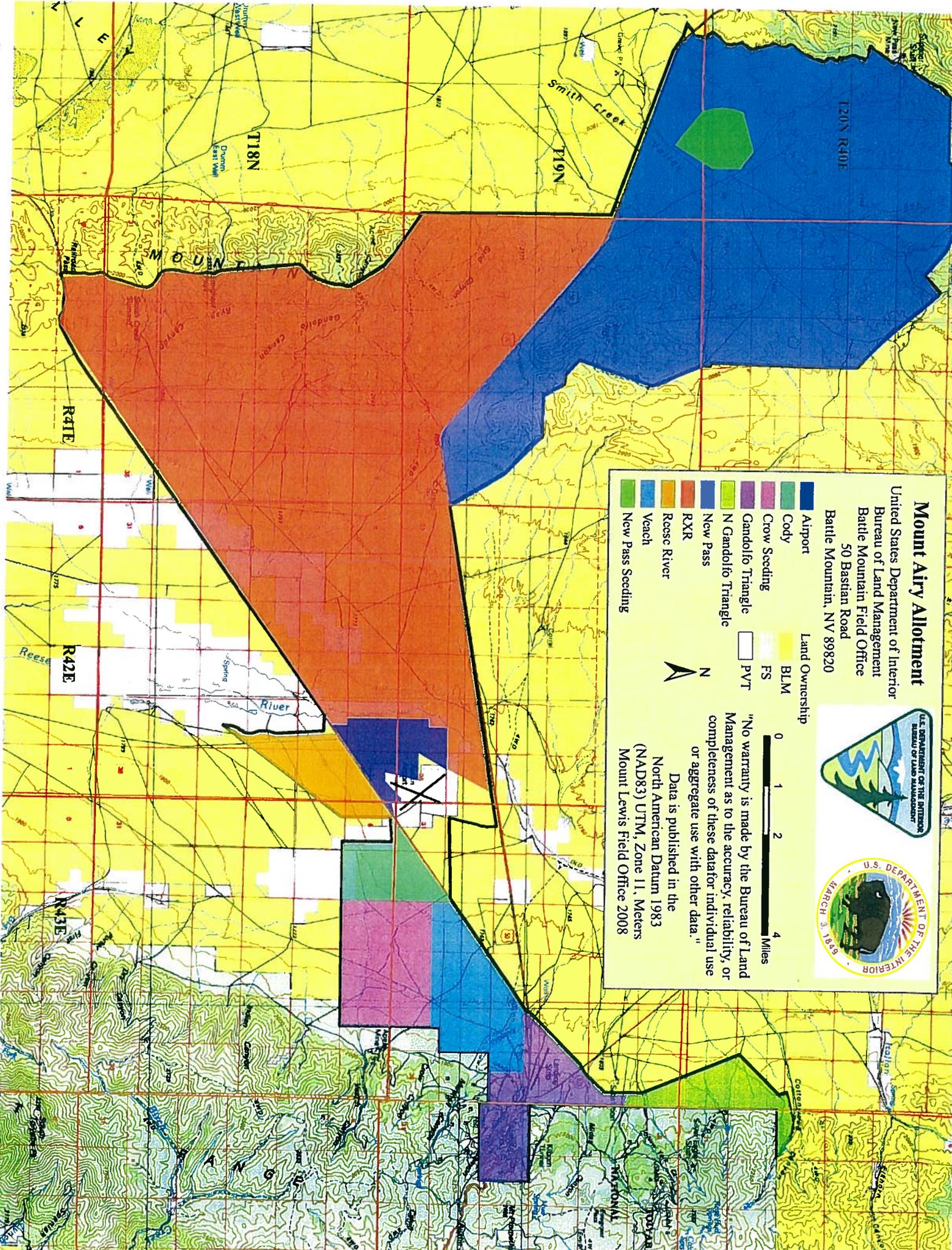
- ★ Nevada State Office
- ★ BLM Field Office Locations

no scale



- Mount Airy Allotment
- District Boundary

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 50 Bastian Road  
 Battle Mountain, NV 89820



- |  |                     |  |     |
|--|---------------------|--|-----|
|  | Airport             |  | BLM |
|  | Cody                |  | FS  |
|  | Crow Seeding        |  | PVT |
|  | Gandolfo Triangle   |  |     |
|  | N Gandolfo Triangle |  |     |
|  | New Pass            |  |     |
|  | RXR                 |  |     |
|  | Reese River         |  |     |
|  | Veach               |  |     |
|  | New Pass Seeding    |  |     |



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 North American Datum 1983  
 (NAD83) UTM, Zone 11, Meters  
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