



# United States Department of the Interior



## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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[http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle\\_mountain\\_field.html](http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle_mountain_field.html)

In Reply Refer To:  
4130 (NVB0100)

**AUG 19 2011**

Dear Interested Public:

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

On June 8, 2011, 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 borders the town of Austin, Nevada (see attached map) and comprises of 84,789 acres of public land with elevations ranging from 4,500 to 6,000 feet. Major vegetation types include salt desert shrub, sagebrush/bunchgrass, and pinyon/juniper woodland. The only riparian or wetland zones on public land are within the Airport Pasture which includes the Reese River and two springs. The Mount Airy Allotment includes 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. Neither a rangeland health assessment nor formal grazing management plan has been completed for Mr. Gandolfo's operation. For numerous years, Mr. Gandolfo has implemented a deferred rotation grazing system within the parameters of his grazing permit. The sheep trailing permitted use was analyzed through the Austin Complex Permit Renewal in 2007.

For several years, Mr. Gandolfo has applied for TNR use within the allotment. In 2007, the MLFO prepared Environmental Assessment #NV062-EA07-173 analyzing environmental impacts of TNR within the Mount Airy Allotment for which a Finding of No Significant Impact

was signed. All TNR applications since 2007 have been similar. Monitoring data collected at the conclusion of the 2010 TNR resulted in only 22% of the available forage utilized within the RXR Pasture. The utilization objective established through the Shoshone-Eureka Rangeland Program Summary is 50% on key species by seed dissemination and 60% by the end of the grazing year. However, for the last three years, modified utilization objectives (30% on key native species and 50% on crested wheatgrass by the end of the grazing year) were established due to drought conditions. These utilization objectives have not been exceeded in TNR authorizations in recent years.

## APPLICATION

The following is a summary of the permitted use, authorized use for the 2011 grazing season and the application for TNR:

### 1. William J. Gandolfo Permitted Use:

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. 2011 Authorized Use:

Allotment	Pasture	Livestock #/Kind	Period of Use	AUMs
Mount Airy	RXR	200	3/1 – 3/14	92
		300	3/15 – 3/22	79
		350	3/23 – 3/31	104
		445	4/1 – 4/30	439
	East Gandolfo	70	3/15 – 4/15	74
	West Gandolfo	70	4/16 – 5/16	71
	East Veach	70	5/17 – 6/17	74
	New Pass	445	5/1 – 6/15	673
	New Pass Seeding	475	6/16 – 6/17	31
	New Pass Seeding	545	6/18 – 7/18	555
	New Pass	545	7/19 – 8/31	788
	New Pass	395	9/1 – 9/3	39
	New Pass	245	9/4 – 9/5	16
	New Pass	145	9/6 – 9/7	10
	Airport	150	9/1 – 9/3	15
	Airport	300	9/4 – 9/7	39
	Cody	100	9/6 – 9/22	56
	Airport	345	9/8 – 9/25	204
<b>Mount Airy Total</b>				<b>3,359</b>

## 3. 2011 Application for TNR:

Allotment	Pasture	Livestock #/Kind	Period of Use	AUMs
Mount Airy	Airport	545 cattle	9/26 – 11/31	1200
	RXR	545 cattle	12/1 – 2/28	1613
	Reese River	100 cattle	12/1 – 2/28	296
<b>Total</b>				<b>3,109</b>

Prior to authorization of TNR, permitted AUMs will be exhausted and utilization objectives not exceeded in any pasture. Further use monitoring will be conducted prior to the authorization of TNR to ensure utilization is within limits and that no significant environmental impacts are occurring or will occur from the approval of TNR. If permitted AUMs are exhausted prior to TNR being authorized, livestock would be removed from the allotment. If the TNR is approved, AUMs would be adjusted accordingly to coincide with the decision effective date.

**PASTURE INFORMATION****Airport Pasture:**

The Airport pasture is approximately 1,428 acres dominated by a dry meadow and a greasewood community. The meadow is adjacent to the Reese River and includes two springs. The meadow appears to be in good condition exhibiting diverse and healthy species. The wet spring has resulted in more production of inland saltgrass and alkali sacaton. The meadow was still wet when visited on July 20, 2011. This pasture, scheduled for livestock turnout on September 1, will also be used for a portion of the proposed TNR.

**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 big sagebrush communities. The season of use is during the dormant season where livestock are removed prior to the critical growing period for key species. Cheatgrass is present, but does not dominate the understory. Halogeton is also present within the bud sage/shadscale communities in pockets, but does not appear to be invading any further. Indian ricegrass is sparse throughout the pasture; however, field observations indicate that some recruitment of this species is occurring. Shadscale and Wyoming big sagebrush recruitment were also observed. This pasture would be utilized through the proposed TNR with turnout scheduled for December 1. As of July 20, 2011, utilization was negligible.

**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 bluegrass dominating the understory. The higher elevations include Thurber needlegrass, Indian ricegrass, bottlebrush squirreltail and Sandberg bluegrass. Utilization has not been conducted in this pasture because livestock were just turned in the previous day to monitoring efforts conducted on July 20, 2011. Utilization will be conducted prior to an action on the TNR application.

**New Pass Seeding Pasture:**

The New Pass Seeding Pasture is approximately 915 acres dominated by crested wheatgrass and Wyoming big sagebrush. This pasture appears to be in good condition; however, Wyoming big sagebrush is increasing. The MLFO has been working with Mr. Gandolfo to meet the objectives identified for the WUI projects within the East Veach and East Gandolfo Pastures. Due to adjustments within the WUI pastures, livestock have not been turned out and utilization has not been collected within the pasture. Utilization will be conducted prior to an action on the TNR application.

**Cody Pasture:**

The Cody pasture is approximately 1,377 acres 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. Utilization has not been conducted in this pasture because livestock were not turned out at the time utilization was collected. Utilization will be conducted prior to an action on the TNR application.

**East and West Gandolfo Triangle Pastures:**

Together, these pastures are approximately 3,716 acres in size and divided by Highway 276. Both pastures, dominated by Wyoming big sagebrush, have an understory dominated by Sandberg bluegrass, bottlebrush squirreltail, needleandthread and Indian ricegrass. As part of a wildland urban interface project, strips were mowed in both pastures to reduce continuous fuel loads. Approximately half of the West Gandolfo Pasture and the entire East Gandolfo Pasture were treated. Initial response of the treatment increased cheatgrass production within the mowed strips; however, recent observations have indicated a decrease in this undesirable species. Recent observations have also indicated an increase in needleandthread, Thurber needlegrass and Indian ricegrass. The objective of the WUI project is to reduce fine fuels below 700 pounds per acre, which would decrease fire behavior if a wildfire were to occur. The environmental assessment for the WUI project identified livestock grazing as one of the methods to control fuel loading around the town of Austin. Mr. Gandolfo has been working with the MLFO to graze the pastures as part of his permitted use. Utilization objectives within the WUI project could vary from year to year depending on production of fine fuels. Production for 2011 is above normal, therefore one percent over the utilization objective within the West Gandolfo Pasture would be considered insignificant.

**Reese River:**

The Reese River pasture is approximately 1,695 acres dominated by Wyoming big sagebrush, pockets of alkali sacaton and inland saltgrass. The sagebrush community appears to have little to no understory. The pockets of alkali meadow appear to be in good condition exhibiting good vigor with limited bare ground. TNR from December 1 through February 28 has been applied for within this pasture. Mr. Gandolfo uses this pasture in conjunction with his private for thermal cover. The majority of the cattle remain on private lands where hay is fed, but because gates are left open between the private and public, all of the cattle could be on public land at one time. Utilization has not been conducted in this pasture because livestock were not turned out at the time utilization was collected. Utilization will be conducted prior to an action on the TNR application.

**Crow Seeding:**

The Crow seeding is approximately 2,867 acres seeded with crested wheatgrass in the 1960's. Current condition of the seeding appears poor with increasing sagebrush and decreasing grass. The majority of perennial grasses present within the pasture (crested wheatgrass and bottlebrush squirreltail) are caged/protected by the Wyoming big sagebrush. Due to the conditions of this pasture, Mr. Gandolfo has used this pasture once over the past five years. Utilization has not been collected within the pasture because it is not scheduled for use during the 2011 grazing year; however, utilization will be conducted prior to an action on the TNR application.

**Veach:**

The Veach pasture is approximately 2,654 acres and into two pastures (East and West) through the wildland urban interface project previously mentioned. The east pasture was the only pasture treated. Initial response was an increase in cheatgrass production. Recent field observations have indicated that needleandthread and Thurber needlegrass are increasing and cheatgrass is decreasing within the mowed strips. The untreated West Pasture is also dominated by Wyoming big sagebrush, but has a limited understory of Sandberg bluegrass and bottlebrush squirreltail. West Veach is not scheduled for use this year; therefore, utilization data has not been collected, but will be conducted prior to an action on the TNR application. Although the East Veach Pasture was utilized earlier in the year, WUI objectives have not been obtained and livestock were authorized to return to the pasture to reduce fine fuel loads. Utilization has not been collected because livestock had just re-entered the pasture prior to utilization efforts on July 20, 2011, but will be conducted prior to an action on the TNR application.

**MONITORING SUMMARY TO DATE**

Pasture	Key Area	Date	Key Species	Utilization Objective	Utilization%
RXR	RXR 1	7/20/2011	Indian ricegrass bottlebrush squirreltail	30% 30%	3% 3%
	RXR 2		Indian ricegrass bottlebrush squirreltail	30% 30%	3% 3%
	RXR 3		Indian ricegrass bottlebrush squirreltail	30% 30%	3% 3%
Airport	Inland saltgrass Alkali sacaton		30% 30%	3% 3%	
East Gandolfo	needleandthread crested wheatgrass		30% 30%	3% 3%	
West Gandolfo	Indian ricegrass		30%	31%	

Above normal precipitation has modified the growing season of most species within the allotment. In response, Mr. Gandolfo has modified his grazing management. Currently, pastures not utilized to date include the Airport, Cody, Reese River, West Veach, New Pass Seeding and Crow. The RXR pasture was utilized as part of the 2010 TNR authorization (Dec 1 – Feb 28 2011) and 2011 grazing year annual use (March 1 – April 30, 2011).

### **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 because of achieving maximum utilization as specified in number 1 above, any unused AUMs would be refunded to the permittee.

Although the allotment received above normal precipitation, vegetation is still recovering by rebuilding root systems and storing carbohydrates. For this reason, utilization objectives proposed for the TNR, if approved, would remain at 30% on key native species or 50% on crested wheatgrass by the end of the grazing year.

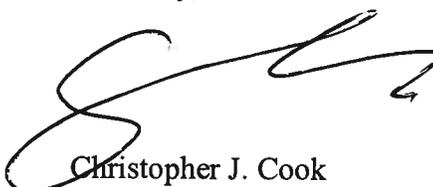
### **CONCLUSION**

Monitoring data collected for past TNR authorizations has shown that the approval of TNR has not exceeded utilization objectives. This includes the modified levels of 30% on key native species and 50% on crested wheatgrass. Precipitation levels for 2011 are above normal, increasing plant vigor and production. Cooler temperatures lasting until late spring/early summer has extended or adjusted growing seasons of many species. Approval of Mr. Gandolfo's TNR application is recommended due to increased forage production and dormant season grazing.

Monitoring would be conducted prior to an action on the TNR application and if approved, throughout the remainder of the grazing year. If monitoring data indicates that utilization levels are exceeded or that the TNR is causing environmental impacts, 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 within 15-days of the date of this letter. At the conclusion of the comment period, the MLFO will issue a proposed grazing decision, which will include additional monitoring data collected within the allotment to support the BLM's decision. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Jason Spence, Rangeland Management Specialist at (775) 635-4194.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Cook', with a large loop at the beginning and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

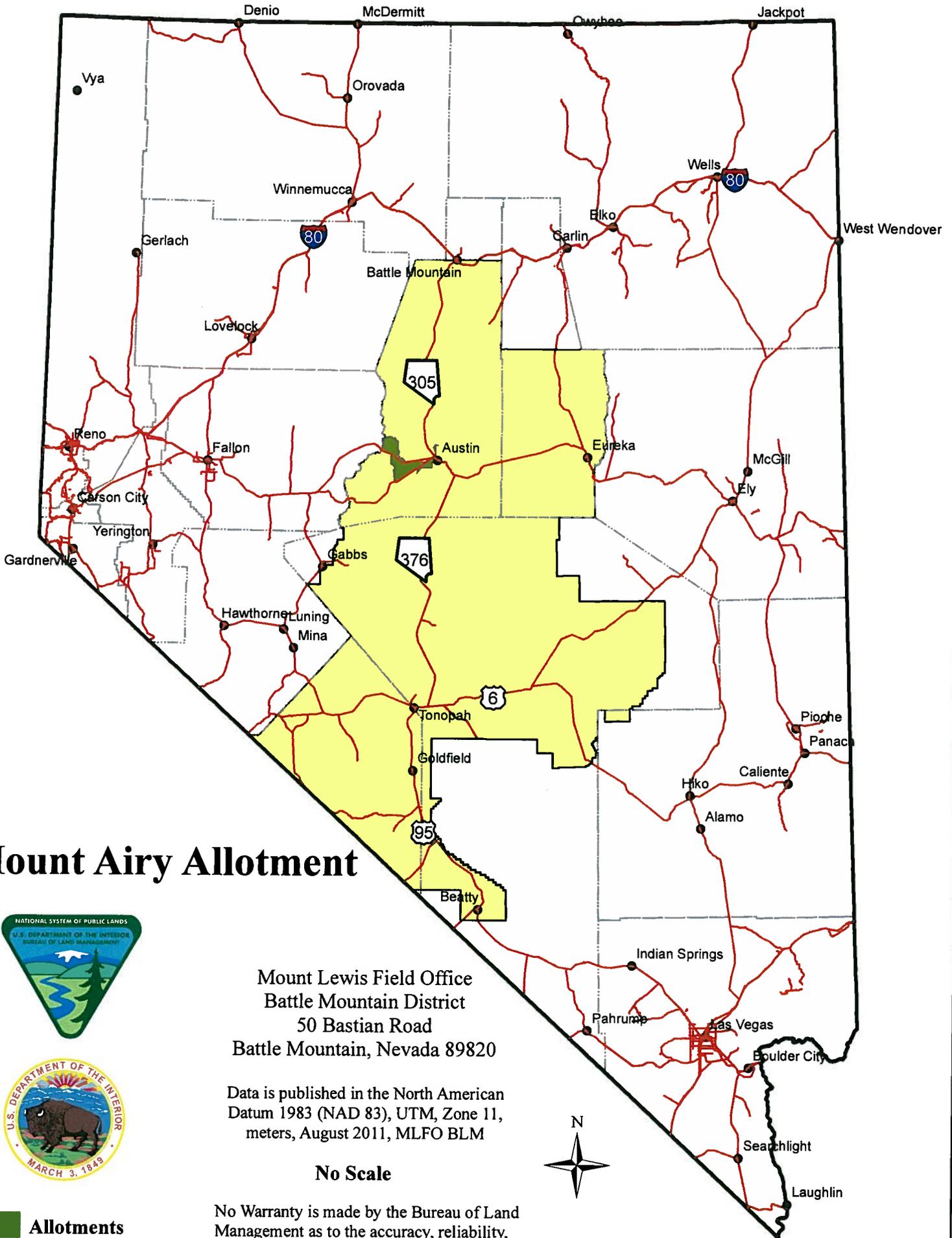
Christopher J. Cook  
Field Manager  
Mount Lewis Field Office

Enclosure

cc: Interested Public – Mount Airy Allotment

cc: Mount Airy Allotment Interested Public

Joseph G. McDade-Superintendent, BIA-Eastern Nevada Agency  
Rob Mrowka, Center for Biological Diversity  
Jake Tibbitts, Eureka County Dept. of Natural Resources  
Kevin Kinsella, Eureka Moly LLC  
Kristi McKinnon, JBR Environmental Consultants, Inc.  
Joy Brandt, Lander Co PLUAC  
Ray Salisbury, Lander Co PLUAC  
Frank Whitman, Lander Co PLUAC  
Philip Williams, Vice Chairman, Lander Co PLUAC  
Louis Lani, Lander Co. Wildlife, PLUAC, Planning, HRBWA  
Gene Etcheverry, Lander County Executive Director  
Alan Gubanich, LAS Acting President Manhattan Advisory Board  
Henry Filippini Jr., N6 Board  
Jeremy Lutz, Biologist Nevada Department of Wildlife  
Dave Pulliam, Supervisory Habitat Biologist Nevada Department of Wildlife  
Robert Williams, Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office  
Nevada State Clearing House  
David Fanning, Nye County Public Works  
John McLain, Resource Concepts, Inc.  
Paul Inchauspe, Silver Creek Ranch Inc.  
Richard Orr, Sustainable Grazing Coalition  
Daniel Petterson, Director SW PEER  
James Eason, Town of Tonopah  
Katie Fite, WWP Biodiversity Director Western Watersheds Project  
Craig Downer  
David Spicer  
Lorinda Wichman, Commissioner  
Mark Bennett  
Norma Darrough  
Steven Carter



# Mount Airy Allotment



Mount Lewis Field Office  
 Battle Mountain District  
 50 Bastian Road  
 Battle Mountain, Nevada 89820

Data is published in the North American Datum 1983 (NAD 83), UTM, Zone 11, meters, August 2011, MLFO BLM

No Scale



- Allotments
- District Boundary

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.

**Mount Airy Allotment**  
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 50 Bastian Road  
 Battle Mountain, NV 89820



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

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Data is published in the  
 North American Datum 1983  
 (NAD83) UTM, Zone 11, Meters  
 Mount Lewis Field Office 2008

