



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Mount Lewis Field Office

50 Bastian Road

Battle Mountain, Nevada 89820

Phone: 775-635-4000

Fax: 775-635-4034

http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle_mountain_field.html

In Reply Refer To:

4120 (NVB0100)

JAN 30 2013

Dear Interested Public:

With this letter, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Mount Lewis Field Office (MLFO) is soliciting public comments for the Toiyabe West Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Project. This project would thin (reduce the density of) or substantially remove encroaching pinyon pine and juniper trees from as much as 6,000 acres of important wildlife habitat on the western slope of the Toiyabe Mountain Range (see enclosed map). The proposed project area is located in central Nevada, approximately 20 miles north of the town of Austin, and lies within the Austin grazing allotment. MLFO would implement this project without impacting soils, non-target vegetation or cultural resources.

The primary purpose of this project is to enhance habitat for wildlife, particularly for sage-grouse, whose numbers have declined throughout their range. Livestock and wild horses would also benefit from the project. Pinyon and juniper woodlands are expanding throughout the Great Basin region at the expense of shrubs, grasses, and forbs. Increases in both density and distribution of pinyon and juniper trees are especially evident in the proposed project area, resulting in a decreased quantity and quality of habitat for several wildlife species. Removal of trees from selected portions of the project would reverse or retard the degradation of remaining high-value wildlife habitats.

Habitats that would be selected for treatment currently support healthy and diverse plant communities but are being actively and aggressively invaded by pinyon and juniper trees. Usually these sites will be found above 6,000 feet in elevation, on gentle to moderate slopes, and have relatively deep, productive soils. Individual treatment sites would vary in size, but most would be smaller than 400 continuous acres.

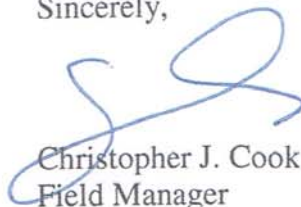
Potential treatment sites would be identified and prioritized in two ways. First, beginning in spring 2013, sage-grouse movements and habitat use will be monitored via radio and satellite telemetry, which will provide useful site-specific information on key movement corridors as well as nesting and brood-rearing areas that are being encroached by pinyon and juniper. Second, areas associated with riparian resources (springs, seeps and especially wet meadows) that exhibit a pinyon-juniper encroachment problem, will be given a high priority for treatment. Riparian

areas are especially important for sage-grouse and other wildlife in central Nevada. Although such areas constitute a small percentage of the total habitat area, they provide a relative abundance of succulent forbs and insects crucial for sage-grouse chick survival.

The thinning/removal of pinyon and juniper trees in the project area would be accomplished by chainsaw crews, most likely from the Battle Mountain Bootstraps program. Felled trees would normally be left on the ground without further treatment (lop and scatter) in order to minimize costs. However, harvest of downed trees by the public would be encouraged in order to reduce woody fuels. Operations could begin as early as spring/summer 2014 and would continue on a seasonal basis for multiple years as priorities and funding allow.

Interested parties are invited to provide written comments concerning this proposed project. Please submit any comments to the above address within 15 days of the date posted on this letter. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Stamm, project lead, (775) 635-4185. Following the public comment period, the MLFO will prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) which will be available to the interested public for review.

Sincerely,

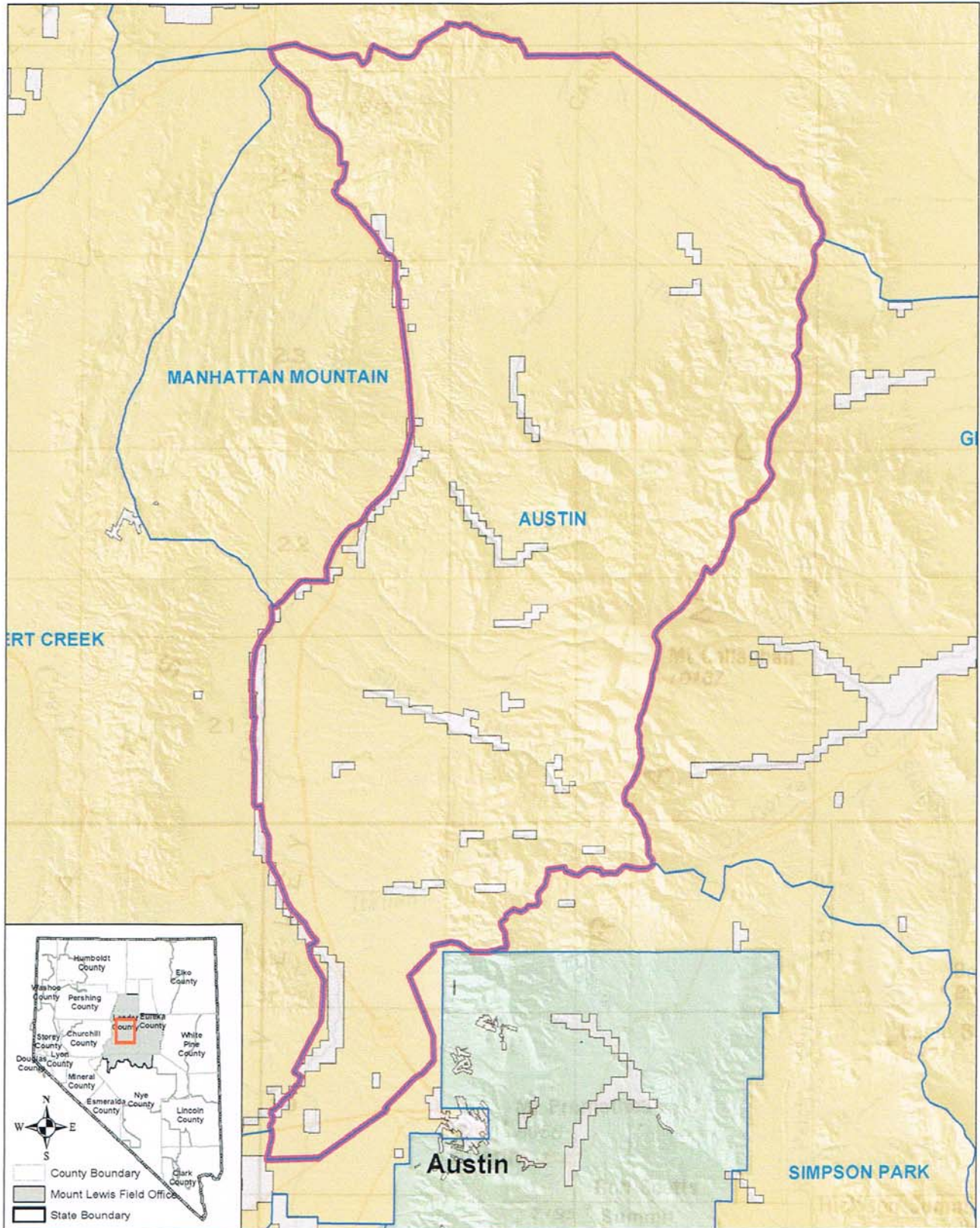


Christopher J. Cook
Field Manager
Mount Lewis Field Office

Enclosure

cc: Austin Allotment interested public

Toiyabe West Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Project



Legend

12/13/2012 BMDO Staff

-  Allotment Boundary
-  Bureau of Land Management
-  Project Boundary
-  Forest Service
-  Private



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. Original data were compiled from various sources. This information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This product was developed through digital means and may be updated without notification.

United States Department of the Interior
 Bureau of Land Management
 Battle Mountain District Office
 50 Bastian Road
 Battle Mountain, NV 89820



Deniz Bolbol, American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign
Lori A Carpenter, 7Q10
Churchill County Commissioners
Lauryn Wachs, The Cloud Foundation
James McDermott, Diamond Springs Ranch Incorporated
Bill Hall, Ellison Ranching Co.
Jake Tibbitts, Eureka County Department of Natural Resources
Gene Etcheverry, Lander Co Executive Director
Joy Brandt, Lander Co PLUAC
Ray Salisbury, Lander Co PLUAC
Frank Whitman, Lander Co PLUAC
Philip Williams, Lander Co PLUAC
Louis Lani, Lander Co. Wildlife, PLUAC, Planning, HRBWA
Manhattan Advisory Board
Henry Filippini Jr., N-6 Grazing Board
June Sewing, National Mustang Association
Elmer Bull, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Alan Jenne, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Jeremy Lutz, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Katie Miller, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Steven Siegel, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Susan Seidl, Nevada Livestock Association
Skip Canfield, Nevada State Clearing House
Skip Canfield, Nevada State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Jeff White, Newmont Mining Corporation
Lee Simpkins, NV Energy
Martha A. Rand, Rand Properties, LLC.
John McLain, Resource Concepts, Inc.
Paul Inchauspe, Silver Creek Ranch Inc.
Pamela Scutt, Snowball Ranch
Brenda Younkin, Teton Science Schools
Dan Gralian, TS Ranch
Steve Williams, USFS, Austin Ranger District
Katie Fite, Western Watersheds Project
Jim Baumann
Mark Bennett
Steven Carter
Ken Conley
Tom Connolly
Craig Downer

Martin Etcheverry
James Gallagher
Ellen Gardner
Joe McGloin
Mike McWilliams
Jane Trigerro
Lorinda A. Wichman
Dave Woolfolk
Richard Orr, Sustainable Grazing Coalition
Shari Welsh
Pete Tomera
Edward Koch, Fish and Wildlife Service
Jack Alexander, Synergy Resource Solutions, Inc