

# United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
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In Reply Refer To:  
4130/4190 (NV060)

MAR 24 2008

## PUBLIC CONSULTATION FOR THE 2007 HORSE FIRE BATTLE MOUNTAIN FIELD OFFICE

Dear Interested Public:

During the fall of 2007, the Horse Fire burned approximately 5,471 acres of Public land in the North and South Buffalo Allotments. Maps 1 and 2 consist of general location of this fire.

North and South Buffalo Allotments are located in the Winnemucca Field Office (WFO). Winnemucca is responsible for Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ES&R); however, the Battle Mountain Field Office (BMFO) is responsible for grazing administration. BMFO personnel prepared a Resource Advisory report for the WFO. This report consisted of fire severity, dozerlines, burned fences, roads in need of repair, and range types affected by the Horse Fire. After review of this report and field tours, the WFO determined that treatments such as seeding and temporary fencing was not necessary for this fire.

Although seeding treatments will not occur in the Horse fire, rest from livestock grazing is required in order to promote the success of natural recovery of perennial vegetation. The Sonoma-Gerlach Resource Management Framework Plan (MFP) dated 1983 and the BMFO Normal Fire Year Rehabilitation Plan Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record dated March 1994 requires that burned areas be rested from livestock grazing for two growing seasons or until vegetative objectives are met. In addition to closing the burned area to livestock grazing, the need to temporarily suspend active use was considered. To determine the need to temporarily suspend Animal Unit Months (AUMs) of active use, the interdisciplinary team considered the treatment type, the amount of use by livestock that the burn area has received, and the suitability of the site for livestock grazing.

### **PROPOSED ACTIONS:**

The following lists the allotment affected by the Horse fire, the permittees that graze these allotments and permitted livestock as applicable, and the proposed temporary suspension for the Horse fire:

The affected permittees by allotment are as follows:

Allotment	Permittee	Use Area	Permitted Season of Use	Livestock Type	Permitted AUMs	Proposed Temp. AUM Suspension
North Buffalo	Badger Ranch	N/A	03/01-02/28	Cattle	153	0
	Ellison Ranching Co.	N/A	03/01-04/30 & 11/01-02/28	Sheep	1,194	64
	Doby George LLC.	N/A	03/01-03/31 & 11/01-02/28	Sheep	2,100	112
South Buffalo	Goemmer Land & Livestock	Buffalo Valley	03/01-04/30 & 08/01-02/28	Cattle	4,685	0

In accordance with 43 CFR 4110.3-3(b), livestock grazing would be removed from burned areas for two growing seasons or until vegetation establishment objectives are met in order to provide adequate time for vegetation re-establishment within the burned area. The closures would be reopened once the establishment objectives in the fire closure decisions have been met. Post-fire grazing management, including the period of time needed for closure, would be determined based on monitoring, achievement of site-specific resource objectives, and coordination, cooperation, and consultation with the interested public.

The ES&R Interdisciplinary Team has determined that a 176 AUM reduction is needed in the North Buffalo Allotment to promote native release. Although limited use by livestock was noted to occur within the vicinity of the Horse fire, natural water sources such as seeps along with the onslaught of new growth for both annual and perennial grasses in the burn area for the North Buffalo Allotment area of concern with temporary suspension of AUM's is required. Due to the fact that this burn area will not be fenced and watering sites are available within the vicinity of the burn area, it is necessary to temporarily suspend AUM's for permittees within the North Buffalo Allotment. Reducing AUM's on a temporary basis will provide the opportunity for vegetative communities impacted by the Horse fire to recover without causing additional stress to the rest of the allotment.

The ES&R Interdisciplinary Team has determined that a temporary suspension is not needed for the South Buffalo Allotment. The South Buffalo Allotment has recently gone through the permit renewal process. Through this process range improvement projects were identified for repair and an AUM reduction was identified for these nonfunctioning projects. The Buffalo Valley Well (RIP #1220) was identified as one of the projects in need of repair before AUM's will be restored. Since AUM's have already been reduced for this project and its affective area an AUM's reduction is not necessary. However, the Joe Saval Ranching Co. LLC. has repaired the windmill and is currently functional. In order to ensure livestock use does not occur, the current permittee will be required to shut this water off until the area affected by the Horse Fire is reopened.

The proposed temporary suspension of AUM's for each individual were developed by calculating the active preference associated with the allotment and determining the proportion of that preference designated for each permittee. It was determined that the current stocking rate for the North Buffalo Allotment is approximately 16.4 acres per AUM. With this, it is proposed that 176 AUM's will be suspended as indicated in the above table. The calculations for Badger Ranch was negligible (<10), therefore no AUM's will be proposed to be placed in temporary suspension.

Monitoring would be completed to analyze the effectiveness and success of the native release and grazing closure for two years after the date the fire was contained. Permanent representative monitoring sites would be established to monitor density of native release, and noxious and/or invasive weed encroachment. The following are the proposed vegetation objectives for the burn area.

### **Vegetation Objectives**

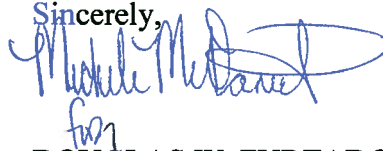
#### **1. Native Release**

Achieve a minimum of three perennial grasses per 3 foot square plot firmly rooted in the soil along a 100 foot transect.

Monitoring data of past fires indicate that achieving the minimum occurrence of perennial species listed in the above objective is an indication that sufficient root systems and above ground biomass occur at the site. Adequate root systems and above ground biomass, as brought forward in the vegetation objectives will limit redistribution and loss of soil reserves, will limit invasive weed components within the understory, and will allow for adequate production of forage to allow livestock grazing to resume without affecting the continued recovery of the burn area.

If the establishment criteria are not met by the end of the second growing season of the grazing closure, these burned areas will be evaluated for the potential to meet the criteria. Some of the factors to be considered in this evaluation will be: the relationship between the native release of pre-existing plants and seeded species as it pertains to site stability, the amount of total precipitation, amount of growing season precipitation, how close to meeting the establishment criteria is at the end of the first and second growing seasons, what benefits, if any, an additional growing season of rest might provide.

In accordance with BLM policy, this letter serves as the opportunity for the interested public, partners, stake holders, and state, local, and tribal governments to provide comments to the ES&R projects that have been developed by the BMFO ES&R interdisciplinary team. 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 Michele McDaniel, Range Team Leader at (775) 635-4083.

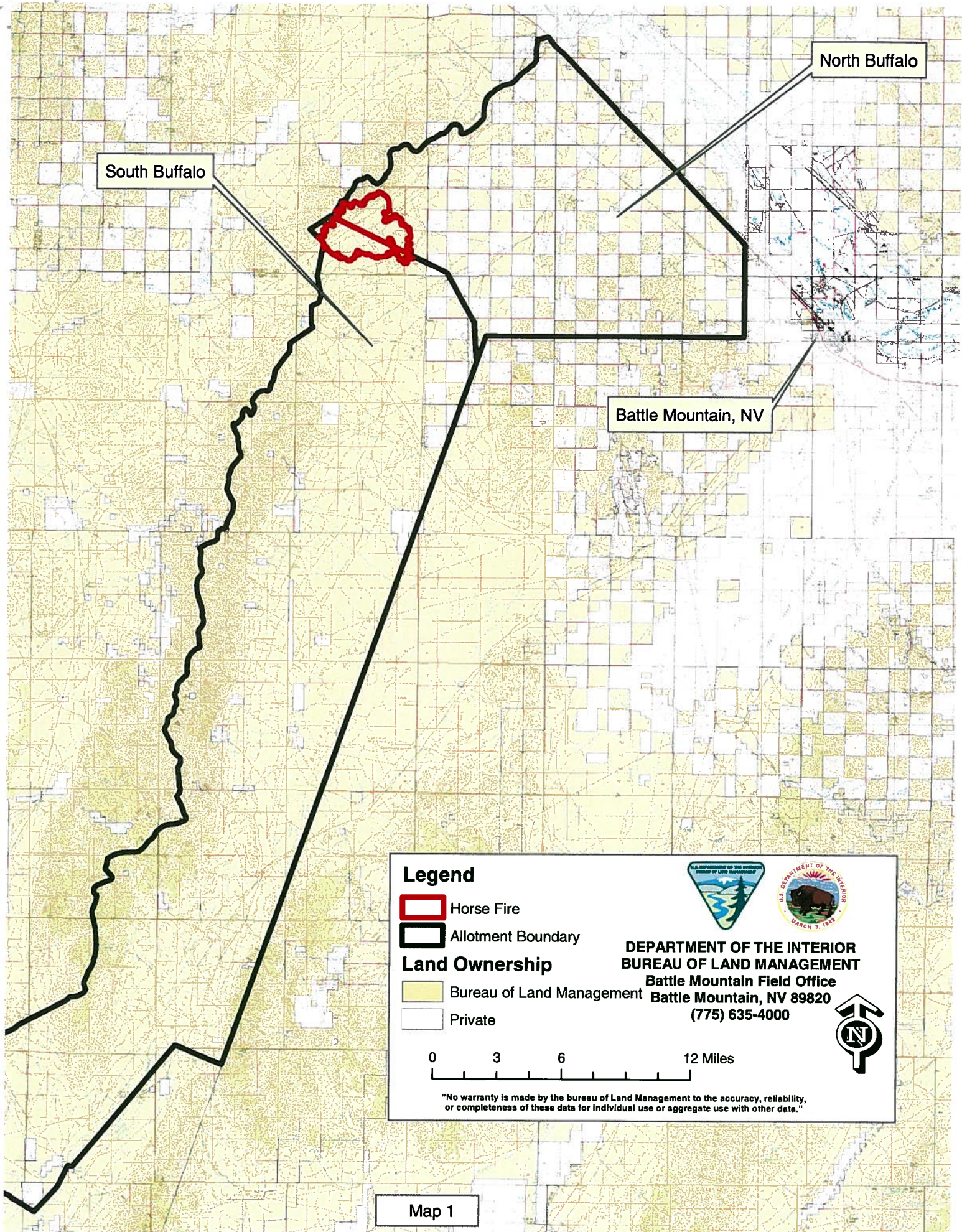
Sincerely,  


for  
DOUGLAS W. FURTADO  
Assistant Field Manager  
Renewable Resources

Enclosures

cc: Interested publics

Jerry Annis  
Vicki J. Cohen  
James J. Ferrigan Jr.  
Mandy McNitt  
Badger/Chiara Ranches - Dan Filippini  
Center for Biological Diversity - Paul J. Spitler  
Conservation Research Center - Brenda Younkin, Stewardship Director  
Doby George, LLC - Bernard Carter  
Ellison Ranching Co. - Jim Gardner  
Ellison Ranching Co. - Bill Hall  
Goemmer Land and Livestock - Shawn & Mindy Goemmer  
Humboldt County Commissioners  
Lander County Commissioners  
Lander County PLUAC - Ray Williams Jr.  
Mike Marvel Ranching - Mike Marvel  
Nevada Cattlemens Association - Meghan Wereley  
Nevada Department of Wildlife - Mike Podborny  
Nevada Department of Wildlife - Dave Pulliam, Habitat Chief  
Nevada Department of Wildlife - Larry Teske, Biologist  
Nevada Department of Wildlife Eastern Region - Steve Foree, Supervisory Habitat Biologist  
Nevada State Clearing House - Krista Coulter  
Pershing County Commissioners  
Rock Creek Ranch - Richard & Nancy Rosasco  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Vesco Ranch  
Western Watersheds Project - Katie Fite, WWP Biodiversity Director  
Wild Horse Spirit, Ltd - Bobbi Royale  
Yomba Shoshone Tribe - Teresa M. Beck



North Buffalo



South Buffalo

Battle Mountain, NV

**Legend**

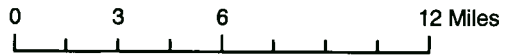
-  Horse Fire
-  Allotment Boundary

**Land Ownership**

-  Bureau of Land Management
-  Private

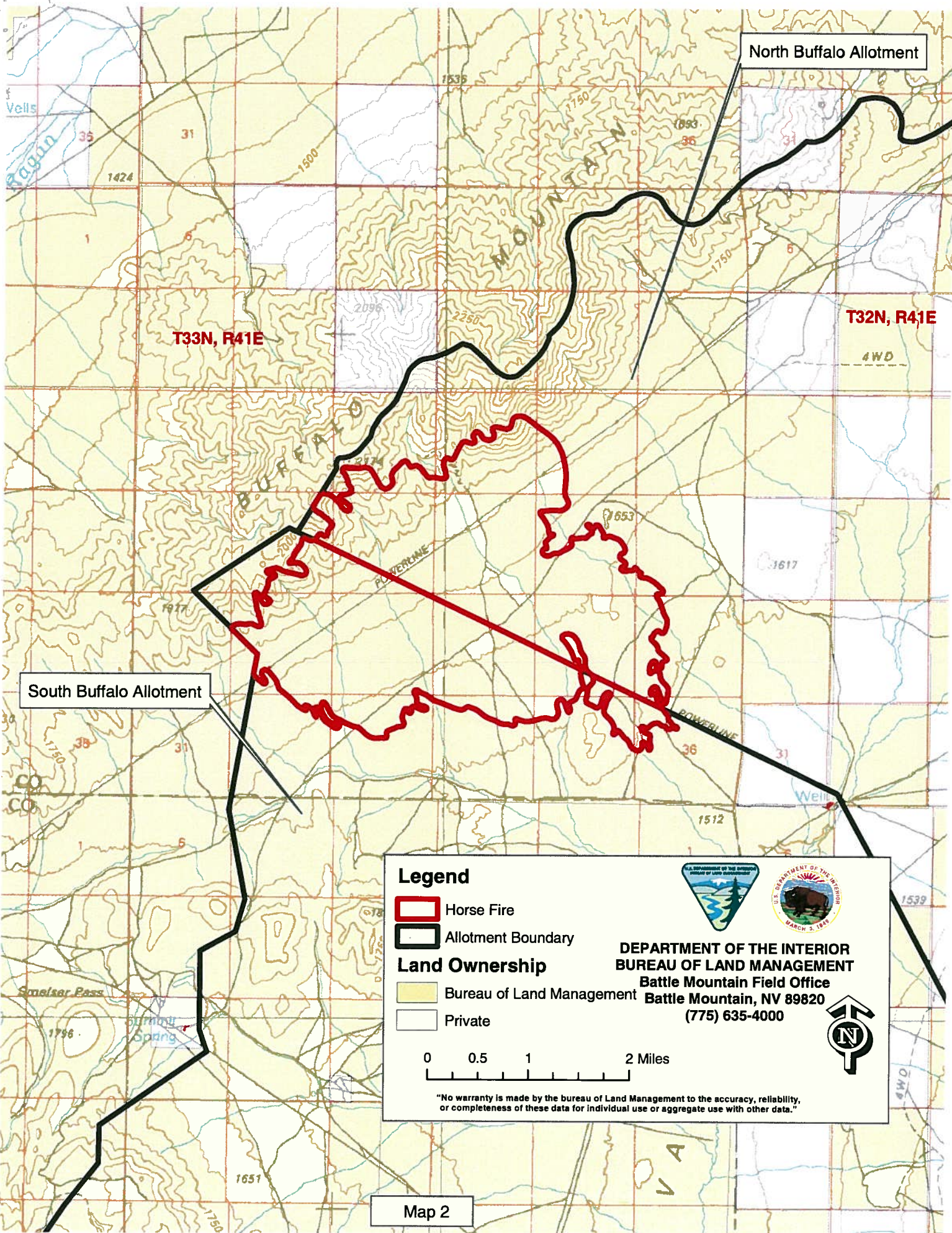


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**(775) 635-4000**



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Map 1



North Buffalo Allotment



T33N, R41E

T32N, R41E


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South Buffalo Allotment

**Legend**

-  Horse Fire
-  Allotment Boundary

**Land Ownership**

-  Bureau of Land Management
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0 0.5 1 2 Miles



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Map 2