

2009

ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS (AOIs)

SUBLETTE ALLOTMENT # 00600

List of Permittees:

Leo J. & Geraldine Mora
Dale and Orva Sowards Trust
Benicio & Elsie Trujillo
Phillip & Theresa Trujillo

**CARSON NATIONAL FOREST
TRES PIERDAS RANGER DISTRICT**

Benjamin Romero, District Ranger

Date

Annual Operating Instructions (AOI's)

INTRODUCTION

The Annual Operating Instructions meeting was conducted on Feb. 25, 2009 at the Conejos Peak Ranger District. Permittees attending the meeting included Dale Sowards, Ben and Elsie Trujillo, and Leo J. Mora. (Michael Oulette was also present). Representing the U. S. Forest Service was Wayne Yonemoto. The Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) is a decision (and appeal if applicable) document that is made part of the terms and conditions of the Term Grazing Permit. The AOI includes guidance criteria described below that addresses annual resource conditions, livestock numbers, period of use, pasture rotations, monitoring and range improvement projects. The 2003 Rangeland Management Action Plan for the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests continues to be program guidance. The objectives of this strategic plan continues to be a high priority and emphasizes collaboration, rangeland health, rangeland monitoring and permittee involvement.

The dry weather pattern condition includes the following. Within the Southwest, the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) 3-month forecast is increased chances of below normal precipitation Mar. through May, 2009, as well as, increased chances of above normal temperatures. The SPI definition that indicates the end-of-drought is for the SPI values to be positive 1.0 (or higher) for the past 12 months. The SPI for the past 12 months thru February is described as *Near Normal* (-0.74 to +0.74) so the end of drought has not occurred. The SPI for 1 month February is described as *Extremely Dry* (-2.99 to -2.00) and signals drought conditions Within the District, during the periods of Oct. to Dec., 2008 and Jan. to Feb., 2009, there were areas of favorable above normal precipitation and below normal temperatures.

The authorized eartag color is *green*. All 161 cattle must be eartagged correctly with the authorized letter/number. The authorized use for the 2009 Grazing Season is as follows:

Table 1 – Permittee Information and Season of Use (Term Permit/Annual Authorized Use Request Form)

Permittee Name	Permitted		Authorized		Eartag letter	Remarks
	#	Season	#	Season		
Leo J. & Geraldine Mora	50 c/c	5/25 – 10/10	50 c/c	5/25 – 10/10	V	
Dale & Orva Sowards Trust	56 c/c	5/25 – 10/10	56 c/c	5/25 – 10/10	P	
Benicio & Elsie Trujillo	15 c/c	5/25 – 10/10	15 c/c	5/25 – 10/10	T	
Phillip & Theresa Trujillo	40 c/c	5/25 – 10/10	35 c/c	5/25 – 10/10	L	
Total	161 c/c	5/25 – 10/10 139 days	156 c/c	5/25 – 10/10		

Range readiness inspections will determine whether range vegetation and soils meet the criteria for grazing and the final authorized livestock number and is tentatively scheduled for May 18, 2009.

Compliance with New Mexico Statewide Regulations, 21.30.6 NMAC, Bovine Trichomoniasis, effective June 17, 2005, becomes a term and condition of the United States Forest Service term grazing permit. We ask that you comply with the NM State Trichomoniasis regulations.

All livestock must be scheduled for counting prior to entering the Sublette Allotment. Tres Piedras district range personnel must be notified 5 days prior to the time that livestock enter or leave the Carson NF.

Nonuse of a term permit must be requested in written form for all of the permitted numbers (*Total Nonuse*), or part of the permitted numbers (*Partial Nonuse*). Verbal applications will not be accepted. If a permittee is approved for “*total nonuse*”, the permittee is still responsible for maintenance of assigned range improvements.

ROTATION SCHEDULE

Initial distribution of your livestock is tentatively planned as follows (**actual dates will be based on range readiness determination**):

Table 2 - 5/25 – 10/10 (139 days) – Tentative Rotation Schedule

Pasture	Tentative Dates (# of Days)	Days (min to max)	Actual Use	Reason for Adjustments
San Miguel	5/25 – 6/20 (27)	20 – 25 - 30		
Toltec	6/21 – 7/18 (28)	15 – 25 - 30		
Santa Rita	7/19 – 8/29 (42)	35 – 35 - 40		
Atencio	8/30 – 10/10 (42)	35 – 39 - 40		

REVIEW OF 2008 MONITORING DATA

The 2008 monitoring information in the Allotment Study file was reviewed. The allotment was mostly dry through June but forage production improved after the July, August precipitation (above normal). Participants discussed areas of below average to average production and average to above average production, livestock distribution management and utilization. All pastures had a majority of grazeable acres at average to above average production. Utilization guidelines 20% to 40% (end of season) in each pasture was met. FS monitoring indicated end-of-growing season utilization: Atencio – 35%; Santa Rita – 35%. Permittee monitoring indicated end-of-growing season utilization: San Miguel – 25% to 30%; Toltec southern canyon – 5%; Atencio – 30%; Santa Rita – 25% to 30%. FS did not inspect the riparian in the Toltec. End of Season Monitoring was discussed and referenced.

2008 AOI COMPLIANCE

1. End of season utilization guidelines were met in the allotment pastures.
2. The riparian areas in the Atencio/Santa Rita pastures met the riparian guideline of 4 inch stubble height.
3. San Miguel and Santa Rita had good livestock distribution.

2008 ACTUAL USE

The Appendix of the AOI, references the permit. The appendix will contain permitted number, (period of use), authorized number (period of use), actual number (period of use); pasture rotation schedule and amendments to the AOI.

Actual Use: 161 c/c, 5/30 – 10/4, 128 days

Atencio 5/30 – 7/3 (35 days)

Toltec 7/4 – 8/2 (30 days)

San Miguel 8/3 – 8/30 (28 days)

Santa Rita 8/31 – 10/4 (35 days)

MONITORING

Please contact Tres Piedras RD with any questions regarding monitoring and whether you wish to participate in the annual monitoring of your allotment. Your participation is encouraged.

The following monitoring assessments, evaluations and methods may be conducted on the allotment:

Weather update (SPI and temperature)
 Soil moisture depth
 Water availability
 Reading paired annual production/utilization cages with supporting photos and documentation, Rapid Assessment Method, Cover/Frequency, Parker 3-Step, Grazing Response Index,
 Key site map of the Allotment
 Key forage list showing community type, species list and stubble height
 Range readiness stubble ht./utilization guidelines
 Grazing season monitoring stubble ht./utilization guidelines
 End of season stubble ht./utilization guidelines
 Range readiness documentation
 Watershed health indicators

Monitoring Methods

Other monitoring methods that may be used on the allotment are: Parker 3-Step, Rapid Assessment Method (RAM), Ocular Estimate Method, Ocular Utilization by Dry Weight, Photo Point, Range Trend Plot and Cover-Frequency.

UTILIZATION GUIDELINES

Within each pasture, grazing utilization would occur at 20% to 40% of the annual available forage (not to exceed 40%) and would be assessed at the end of the growing season. (Utilization guidelines in the riparian area (Aguaje de la Petaca) includes leaving 4 inches of stubble height of the annual available forage when livestock exit the pasture). When proper use levels are reached within the pasture, livestock will be moved to the next scheduled pasture *unless other management considerations require livestock removal before proper use levels are reached.*

Table 3 - Key Forage Species:

Pasture Name	Key Forage Species	Stubble Height
San Miguel/ Atencio	Arizona Fescue	6 – 8”
	Kentucky Blue	4 – 6”
	Mt. Muhly	4 – 6”
Toltec/ Santa Rita/	AZ / Thurber Fescue	6 – 8”
	Kentucky Blue	4 – 6”
	Mt. Muhly	4 – 6”
Riparian Areas	Red Top	4 – 6”
	Kentucky Blue	4 – 6”
	Sedges	4 – 6”

Total removal of all livestock from the pasture/allotment is required. A 3 day period will be allowed to remove stray(s) permitted livestock from the pasture/allotment.

Regular herding and riding management practices are important to achieve proper livestock distribution on the allotment, and to provide for the optimal duration of the grazing period. Salting practices are also described in the cattle operator instructions at the end of this AOI.

AOI OBJECTIVES

1. Rotate pastures to vary the cool and warm growing season rest and allow the opportunity for cool and warm season growth.
2. Minimize the time spent in the San Miguel in order to improve forage vigor.

3. Maintain or improve the green zone forage in the Harmon potholes and Atencio spring area.
4. Improve livestock distribution when initially entering the pasture by moving small groups throughout the pasture, to various salt locations with rider representation from all the permittees, every few days herding/moving livestock within the authorized pasture.

Annual Authorized Use Request Form

Credits from previous year, if applicable, would apply to the current bill.

The final livestock numbers and entry date would be determined after range readiness inspections. Therefore, additional billing may be required after the first billing.

PERMITTEE MANAGEMENT CONCERNS (Also refer to the Project Section)

1. Fuelwood gatherers are cutting fences and ATV cross country travel is extensive. The LEO is needed to patrol the area May to Oct. and especially on weekends. The elk population requires management to reduce numbers. Elk utilization should be measured. NM Game and Fish needs to assist Permittees with funding of new projects that benefit the elk habitat.
2. Construct new water projects to increase the water sources and then improve the distribution. Project approval (CE) process is slow and they have been waiting 5 years for the San Miguel proposed earthen pit tank. (The project priority for new pit tanks in drainages is low; the District has approved construction of 1 new pit tank in the last 8 years; guzzlers and water catchments not constructed in the drainages are a higher priority).
3. BLM permittee did not lay down the 1 mile of fence in fall of 2007 and maybe did not in 2008. (BLM permittee lays fence down in Dec./FS permittee puts fence up in May) In the past, Sublette has maintained the two miles of fence although Sublette is assigned maintenance on just 1 mile and the BLM permittee has maintenance on the other 1 mile of fence.

RANGE IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS AND MAINTENANCE

Range improvement projects maintenance labor/costs are the responsibilities of the permittee. Term permit assigned projects such as, allotment boundary fences, pasture boundary fences, cattleguards, earthen dam stock tanks, pit tanks and other structural improvements must be maintained prior to permittee entry onto the allotment. When allotments are in non-use the permittees are still required to maintain their assigned improvements.

The following are improvements which require special attention during the current grazing season.

- Special attention to the southern boundary stretch of fence between the Sublette and San Antonio Allotments. Forest Service Officer and permittees must inspect this fence in order to determine its status.
- Clean out and seal various earthen tanks throughout the allotment. Specifically, repair the eroded bank of the Long Canyon earthen tank furthest to the west and nearest to the Toltec Pasture. Salt to seal tank in Santa Rita (Santa Rita/Toltec boundary).
- Have Conejos County Road Maintenance crew maintain the barrow ditch from the Forest Road to an earthen tank located in the Santa Rita Pasture.
- Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad need to repair a railroad cattleguard between Santa Rita and Atencio Pastures.
- Repair Atencio/San Miguel boundary fence, 0.5 miles
- Repair Atencio/Santa Rita boundary fence, 0.25 miles

2007 Projects Completed: 1) 0.25 mile of Santa Rita/Atencio fence; 2) 1 mile of BLM/FS laydown

fence; 3) installed a 300 gallon drinker and 120 ft. pipelinge at Toltec springs.

2008 Project Completed: 1) work on 0.25 mile of Santa Rita/Atencio fence; 2) install a 280 gallon galvanized drinker at Toltec spring near Toltec/Santa Rita boundary;

Future Desired Projects

Construction of an earthen tank at Toltec Spring	Discussion about the importance of more water sources in this pasture to improve livestock distribution.
Construction of an earthen tank at a different location in San Miguel Pasture	Discussion of CE process that began in 2003.
Atencio State-line Fence	Discussion; 3.5 miles fence reconstruction
Expansion of the Sublette Corral to accommodate all of the Sublette cattle during sorting and will include a loading chute and a stray pen.	Discussion, NEPA completed; design includes railroad ties/gates/cattle panel/pipe; approximately \$4500.
Santa Rita/Atencio fence construction (8 miles)	1.25 miles has been maintained/reconstructed; 0.3 miles left
Repair stateline fence San Miguel/Atencio (0.25 mile)	Discussed
Cattleguard at bridge needs to be elevated	Discussed
Repair San Miguel/Atencio boundary at Bighorn (0.5 mile)	Discussed
Cattleguards – 4 each at train tracks; elevate cattleguard at Atencio; wider 12 ft. cattleguard at bridge San Miguel	Discussed
Fence, 20 ft at Baldy canyon is needed to keep cattle from trailing	Discussed

EXCESS USE AND UNAUTHORIZED USE

Permittees are encouraged to notify the Tres Piedras Ranger District of any known violation by permittees (excess use) or non-permittees (unauthorized use). Grazing permit holders who graze more livestock than authorized will receive a Notice of Non-Compliance, charged an excess use grazing fee, and the term permit may be suspended or cancelled in whole or part

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT STATUS FOR GRAZING PERMIT ISSUANCE

At the present time direction for management on the allotment is being documented in this AOI and is in conformance with the allotment management plan. An environmental assessment was completed in 1996 and an allotment management plan was developed in 2004. Open and positive communication is encouraged. Please contact the range personnel if you have any questions or wish to discuss allotment management objectives/practices, Forest Plan standards and guidelines, and possible changes in the AOI (that require a 2-week notice).

TRAVEL MANAGEMENT

USFS Travel Management Plan was discussed. The scoping letter was dated Jan. 31, 2009. The travel management rule requires each Ranger District to designate those roads trails and areas open to motor vehicle use. Range permittee guidelines will be developed and will be included in the AOI in the future.

A second travel management meeting was held in Tres Piedras on March 21, 2007 (The first travel management meeting was held in Tres Piedras July 11, 2006). Attendees provided comments to the USFS regarding roads or trails that should remain open or closed; and access routes to range improvements that are needed within the allotment

ACTUAL USE INFORMATION

**SUBLETTE ALLOTMENT
2009 GRAZING SEASON**

Attachment 1

Pasture	Planned Livestock Number & Class	Planned Use		Actual Use		Remarks
		Date on	Date Off	Date on	Date Off	
San Miguel	161 Head of cattle					
Toltec	161 Head of cattle					
Santa Rita	161 Head of cattle					
Atencio	161 Head of cattle					

Number of Head counted on: _____.

Number of head lost: _____.

Additional Comments:

Table 1

Livestock Class	Poisonous Plants	Predators	Other	Total Losses

**UTILIZATION INFORMATION
SUBLETTE ALLOTMENT
2009 GRAZING SEASON**

Attachment 2

Pasture	Head Months (HMs)	Animal Unit Months	Allowable Utilization (percent)	Date Monitored	Observed Utilization
San Miguel					
Atencio					
Santa Rita					
Toltec					

Appendix

Grazing Permittee Instructions for Cattle Operators on Tres Piedras Ranger District

1. Review the term grazing permit and become familiar with the terms and conditions prior to the grazing season.
2. Only livestock branded as shown on your application are permitted to enter the National Forest. The Forest Service (FS) and the permittees will agree to the counting locations, date, and time. Entering the allotment before your authorized entry date is not allowed until livestock are counted.
3. A Crossing Permit is required whenever livestock enter the National Forest. Crossing the District to/from a grazing allotment is only allowed within the authorized season.
4. Livestock found on other unauthorized allotments or in areas without prior authorization will result in the issuance of a Notice of Noncompliance that may impact your term permit.
5. The Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) pasture rotation dates are tentative. Therefore, you must consult with the District Office two weeks before the AOI tentative scheduled rotation dates for discussion and approval of the actual move dates and any AOI adjustments.

Management on the Range

1. The management objective is to obtain proper use throughout the grazeable portions of the range according to the management requirements of the Carson Forest plan.
2. Obtaining the best distribution of cattle on mountain ranges is made difficult because of their natural tendency to gather in openings, watering sites, drainages, riparian areas and meadows. Proper use will be determined by the percent of forage used within key area sites. With proper livestock distribution, a uniform pattern of use would occur. Utilization levels would vary between 20% to 40% (percent dry weight) in pasture key areas, and within the overall pasture's pattern of use.
3. Riding, herding and good salting practices will help. Frequent movement of salt within slight to light use areas is required to improve the pattern of use. Cattle should be moved to less utilized areas and heavier use should be avoided in the bottoms/meadows/openings that contain more desirable herbage.
4. When proper use levels are reached within each pasture, livestock grazing must end and livestock must exit. An early allotment exit would result in a partial refund/credit of the grazing payment. The grazing of more than one pasture at a time must be approved by the District Ranger. All cattle on the allotment would be handled as one herd. Moves between pastures may be handled as drifting moves where gates to the next successive pasture may be opened 2 days before the agreed scheduled move date. The exit pasture that the cattle are leaving must be cleaned-out within 3 days after the scheduled date for moving.

Salting

1. Salt must be placed in each pasture prior to cattle entering the pasture. Salt shall be located at least 0.5 miles to 1.0 miles away from streams, springs, earthen dam stock tanks and other sources of water in order to improve the livestock distribution within the pasture. Salt must be placed to minimize damage to vegetation and soil, within the tree line instead of in the middle of openings, in drainages/riparian or near roadways. Regular salt ground sites must not be established.

Range Improvement Projects

- 1. Range Improvement Projects assigned in your Term Grazing Permit require annual maintenance that is to be completed prior to placing livestock in the pasture unit. Allotment boundary fences must be maintained before the entry date and interior fences must be maintained before cattle enter the pasture.**
- 2. Acceptable maintenance means returning the improvement to its original functioning working order and using the equivalent materials. Particular attention, labor and time must be given to gates within the allotment to make certain that they are serviceable and can be opened and closed easily. The FS does not furnish materials or cost-share for maintenance projects.**
- 3. All lay-down fences should be let-down no later than October 20, or as soon as possible after cattle leave the allotment and adjoining allotments.**
- 4. Construction of new improvements or reconstruction of existing projects must have the approval of the District Ranger. During the AOI meeting and throughout the year suggestions for proposed projects are accepted.**

Special Attention Items

- 1. Written authorization from the District Ranger is required for vehicle travel in road closure areas. All cross-country travel where allowed must not cause ruts or down-cutting in the soil surface. Cross-country vehicular travel when the ground is wet is prohibited. This written authorization is only for vehicle travel necessary for your livestock operation on your allotment. Prudent use of this authority is asked when and where general public use is concentrated. All permittees are encouraged to stay off roadways closed to vehicular travel during hunting seasons.**
- 2. All temporary camps and corrals made or used by permittees or their riders will be cleaned up (left in a sanitary condition) and all materials/trash will be removed from the sites. Temporary camp/corral locations should be discussed with the FS prior to setting up the camp.**
- 3. Riders will be permitted 4 horses or mules per rider for work within the allotment. No untrained horses, colts or other unrideable stock will be allowed.**
- 4. Eartags will be provided initially to new permittees on allotments that are tagged. After initial allocation of tags, 10 percent will be provided per grazing season.**
- 5. Please notify the District Ranger with any observations of stray livestock on the National Forest Lands (regardless of the time of year).**
- 6. Move any dead animals to rest no closer than 300 feet from water or roadways.**

Report wildfires to: Tres Piedras Ranger Station at (505) 758-8678 or Carson Dispatch at (505) 758-6208 or (505) 758-6209.

If you have any questions, please contact the Tres Piedras Ranger District office.