

**2008 ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS
SAN ANTONIO ALLOTMENT
CARSON NATIONAL FOREST
TRES PIEDRAS RANGER DISTRICT**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Annual Operating Instructions meeting was held on Feb. 29, 2008 at the Conejos Peak Ranger District. Permittees that attended the meeting included Aniceto Lucero, Andrew Garcia, Marvin Casias, Felix Gallegos, Armando and Jessica Valdez and Don Larsen. Wayne Yonemoto represented the U. S. Forest Service. The Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) is a decision and appeal document that is made part of the terms and condition 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 action plan continues to be a high priority and emphasizes collaboration, rangeland health, rangeland monitoring and permittee involvement. The environmental assessment decision for grazing permit issuance is scheduled for 2008. The livestock grazing fee is \$1.35/HM (Cattle).

II. CLIMATE

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, 2008, as well as, increased chances if 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. Within the District, during the periods of Oct. to Dec., 2007 and Jan. to Feb., 2008, there were areas of favorable above normal precipitation and below normal temperatures.

III. 2007 MONITORING REPORT

Review of Monitoring data

The 2007 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. Participants discussed areas of average to below average production and average to above average production, range condition and range trend. Utilization guidelines (non-riparian guidelines) in 7 of 7 pastures (refer to 2008 Resource Condition Evaluation, Jan./Feb. Assessment for AOI) was met but improper livestock distribution caused utilization patterns in sensitive areas within the Ursulo riparian to reflect areas above proper use levels. Cattle strays (80 to 130) were a problem during late September to exit date (including Laguna Larga area and Rio de Los Pinos bridge). In 2007, Wheatgrass period of use was limited to 12 days due to limited water availability (but also limiting days was an objective because of utilization levels in 2006); Tanques period of use was limited 22 days because of resource conditions and utilization in 2006; Nutritas period of use was limited to 14 days because of resource conditions and utilization in 2006; and Oso period of use was 24 days because of

less use in 2006 of 16 days. Allotment exit date was Oct. 13, 2007 because of the Association preference of exiting on a Saturday. In 2007, riparian 4 inch stubble ht objectives were met in Nutritas (Rio San Antonio, FR 88A) and Tanques. (drainages of riparian herbage areas); Ursulo riparian guidelines were not met in the Rio San Antonio area north of the narrow canyon towards the private boundary fence (increased herding from the riparian is required); Hondo/Oso riparian areas were not inspected.

Review End of Growing Season Report

2007 End of Season monitoring, and the 2008 Environmental Assessment (EA) (grazing permit issuance) was discussed and referenced. The Association has provided a written proposal for consideration in the development of the proposed action for the EA.

AOI Compliance

- 7 of 7 pastures met end of season utilization guidelines (non-riparian areas).
- Riparian guideline met in the Nutritas (Rio San Antonio). Riparian herbage within the Tanques met the guideline. Ursulo Rio San Antonio riparian adjacent to the railway did not meet the riparian guideline.
- Tanques boundary fences must be maintained more frequently.

IV. MONITORING

AOI Includes A Reference To Following Monitoring Information:

1. Weather update (SPI and temperature)
2. Soil moisture depth
3. Water availability
4. Location of paired annual production/utilization cages with supporting photos and documentation
5. Key site map of the Allotment
6. Key forage list showing
 - a. Vegetation type
 - b. Species list
 - c. Stubble height
 1. Range readiness stubble ht./utilization guidelines
 2. Grazing season monitoring stubble ht./utilization guidelines
 3. End of season stubble ht./utilization guidelines
7. Range readiness documentation
8. Watershed health indicators

Utilization Guidelines

Within each pasture, grazing utilization would occur at 20% to 40% (percent dry weight) 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 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.*

<u>Key Forage Species</u>	<u>Stubble Ht – Inches</u>
Kentucky bluegrass	4
Western wheatgrass	4
Crested wheatgrass	4
Arizona/Thurber fescue	6
Mountain muhly	4
Needleandthread	4
Junegrass	2.5
Muttongrass	4
Sand dropseed	8

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.

V. AOI MANAGEMENT

Appendix Reference

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); tentative pasture rotation schedule and any future amendments to the AOI.

2007 Actual Use: 775 c/c; 26 bulls; 801 total., 5/21 – 10/13 (146 days)

Ursulo – 5/21 – 6/9 (20 days)

Wheatgrass – 6/10 – 6/21 (12)

Nutritas – 6/22 – 7/5 (14)

Tanques – 7/6 – 7/27 (22)

Hondo – 7/28 – 8/29 (33)

Oso – 8/30 – 9/22 (24)

Chino – 9/23 – 10/13 (21)

2007 Annual Authorized Use Request Form

Credits from previous year (above minimum dollar amount), if applicable, would apply to the current bill. The final livestock numbers and entry date would be determined after range readiness inspections. Therefore, an additional billing may be required after the first billing (which reflects the *Annual Authorized Use Request* form for 775 cow/calf, 26 bulls, 5/17 – 10/16. (10% voluntary reduction in livestock numbers).

AOI Objectives

9. Continue to minimize grazing use in the Wheatgrass to 12 to 18 days and particularly in the Laguna Larga area.
10. Continue to minimize grazing use in the Tanques to 12 to 15 days and in the Nutritas to 15 to 20 days.

11. Continue to minimize livestock excess use within the Stewart Meadows enclosure.
12. Reduce number of strays from Tierra Amarilla Grant/Allotments entering San Antone.
13. Prevent excess use into the Sublette allotment.

Concerns of the Association (Also refer to the Project Section)

14. Inspect pastures to establish exit dates during the season.
15. Strays on the allotment (owned by T.A. Grant cattle and adjacent allotments)
16. Period of use could have been longer in Ursulo, Chino, Tanques, Nutritas. Pastures had above average production
17. If a Rio San Antonio riparian enclosure is constructed in the future south of the Ursulo riparian trailway, the Association would want to be authorized periodic grazing within the new enclosure and not have livestock grazing excluded as in the Stewart Meadow Wildlife Viewing Area.
18. Locate horse pasture with forage/water adjacent to FR 87 and Wheatgrass/Nutritas

Range Readiness

The range readiness inspection is tentatively scheduled for May 2, 2008.

VI. RANGE IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS AND MAINTENANCE

The cost of maintenance is the responsibility of the permittee. Term permit projects such as allotment boundary fences, unit boundary fences, cattleguards, stock tanks and other range improvement projects must be maintained prior to the permittee entering the allotment. In addition, when allotments are in non-use, the permittees are responsible for maintenance of the assigned projects.

a. Project Status

2007 completion of maintenance projects – Northern Chino fence (approximately 3.5 miles from western bluff to the NE corner to southern Chino/Ursulo boundary); Ursulo/Wheatgrass fence (approximately 1.0 mile from the Stewart Meadow cliff north towards Laguna Larga)

2008 projects - 1) Reconstruct/maintain 1.0 mile of Wheatgrass/Ursulo fence from Laguna Larga towards Chino; or 1.0 mile of southern Oso fence; 2) Install 16 ft. metal gate at Chino north fence.

Allotment maintenance projects - 1) Repair water gap between Oso and Sublette allotment; 2) Maintain Oso/Nutritas fence near Casias tank; 3) Remove abandoned fence that surrounds earthen tank in Hondo; 4) Maintain canal to Chino Lake; 5) Ursulo – clean Llano tank and tank south of Laguna Larga in depression.

Future Desired Projects

PROJECT	STATUS
Reconstruct Wheatgrass/Chino fence from the tagging corral to the corner near Laguna Larga.	Discussion
Reconstruct Tanques/Nutritas fence	Discussion

Reconstruct/maintain Wheatgrass/Ursulo fence (3.5 miles)	Reconstruct/maintain 1.0 mile in 2007.	

VIII. APPEAL RIGHTS

This decision is subject to administrative review, pursuant to 36 CFR 251; and any appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 251.90. In accordance with 36 CFR 251.84, if you file an appeal, I am willing to meet with you to discuss any concerns you may have with my decision. If you file an appeal, you may request an oral presentation in the appeal or at any time prior to closing of appeal record (36 CFR 251.97). Additionally, if you file an appeal, you may request a stay of my decision in the appeal or at any time prior to closing of the appeal record (36 CFR 251.91).

A notice of appeal must be filed with the Forest Supervisor, Carson National Forest, 208 Cruz Alta, Taos, New Mexico 87571, Within 45 days of the date of this decision. A copy of the notice of appeal must be filed simultaneously with the Tres Piedras District Ranger, who was the deciding officer, and the address for mailing the appeal copy is Tres Piedras Ranger District, P.O. Box 38, Tres Piedras, New Mexico 87577.

Before you file a Notice of Appeal, I would ask that you contact me and then, together we would try to resolve any disagreements. I value your experience and knowledge of the allotment and appreciate the opportunity to discuss your concerns. If we cannot reach an agreement, you would exercise your appeal rights. Our discussion would ensure that we both understand the reasons for each of our positions regarding any issues. I look forward to working with you this season. I am confident that we will work effectively together to manage the resources in a manner that reflects good stewardship of the land and cattle.

for *Benjamin Romero*
 BENJAMIN ROMERO
 District Ranger

3.25.08
 Date

Attachment: Appendix

**Appendix
San Antone Allotment**

Association Members/Livestock Numbers/Permit – 861 c/c; 29 bulls;890 total; 5/17 – 10/16

<i>Member</i>	<i>Permit Livestock Number (c/c)</i>	<i>Authorized Number – Tentative 10% reduction</i>	<i>Actual Use</i>
<i>Jasper Casias</i>	55		
<i>Felix Gallegos</i>	90		
<i>Maclovio Garcia, et. al.</i>	18		
<i>Andrew Garcia</i>	115		
<i>Don & Lorraine Larsen</i>	50		
<i>Los Hermanos Lucero</i>	279		
<i>Aniceto Lucero</i>	6		
<i>Joseph B. & Elsie Romero</i>	41		
<i>Rudy Valdez</i>	180		
<i>Virgil Valdez</i>	27		
<i>San Antone Livestock Assoc</i>	29 bulls		
<i>Total</i>	890	801 (Range readiness inspection determines the authorized livestock number)	

Tentative Pastures/Period of Use (5/17 to 10/16; 153 days)

<i>Pasture</i>	<i>Dates Tentative (From – To) (# of days)</i>	<i>Days Tentative (Min. to Max)</i>	<i>Actual Use (# of days and dates)</i>	<i>Reason for Adjustment</i>
<i>Chino</i>	5/17 – 6/6 (21)	15-21		
<i>Wheatgrass</i>	6/7 – 6/28(22)	12-22		
<i>Nutritas</i>	6/29 – 7/21(23)	20-23		
<i>Tanques</i>	7/22 – 8/5(15)	12-15		
<i>Hondo</i>	8/6 – 8/31(26)	22-26		
<i>Oso</i>	9/1 – 9/28(28)	20-28		
<i>Ursulo</i>	9/29 – 10/16 (18)	12 -18		
<i>Total</i>	153 (Range readiness inspection determines the authorized entry date)	113-153		

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.