

T. C.

**2008 ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS
EAST PINON ALLOTMENT 648
CARSON NATIONAL FOREST
TRES PIEDRAS RANGER DISTRICT**

I. INTRODUCTION/OBJECTIVES

The East Pinon Operating Instruction meeting was held on March 10, 2008 at Tres Piedras Ranger District. Dolores Vigil and Rudy Vigil attended the meeting. The Forest Service representative was Wayne Yonemoto. The Annual Operating Instructions are hereby made part of the Term Grazing Permit. Carson Forest Annual Operating Instructions are posted on the Carson Forest Web site (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/carson>). Natural resources, Range, District, Allotment. Annual Operating Instructions contain items that are guidance criteria addressing proper use of the East Pinon allotment. NEPA for grazing permit issuance was completed in 2007.

II. ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

A. Weather Report

2003 Rangeland Management Action Plan for the Santa Fe and Carson National Forest will be referred to during the 2008 grazing season. The plan stresses communication, permittee involvement, monitoring, range administration, and reference to the Standard Precipitation Index addressing adaptive management during near normal, drought and drought recovery conditions. Permittees are recommended to have a drought contingency plan.

Standard Precipitation Index (SPI) will be used to define drought conditions following the 2003 Rangeland Management Action Plan for the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests. SPI values are available from the Western Regional Climate Center at www.wrcc.dri.edu. The following are indicators in determining drought conditions. Conditions will be determined by the size of the negative number, the larger the negative number, the more severe the drought. Example SPI values of positive 1.0 or more for the past 12 months signal the end of drought. The following are the 12 month SPI through the end of Feb., 2008: 12-month SPI through the end of Feb., 2008 is -0.74 to 0.74 (near normal conditions)

Tres Piedras precipitation records are referenced for the determination of the Annual Authorized Use. Allotment stocking should adjust with effective precipitation patterns. 2006 spring production was stunted due to spring drought conditions, summer rains allowed for cool season green up and good warm season production. 2007 spring effective precipitation was below normal to normal. 2007 summer precipitation patterns were normal to above normal.

B. Summary of 2007 grazing season

2007 summary references allotment inspection reports, monitoring, studies, evaluation analysis worksheets, working deferred maintenance list, end of season report, and climatic reports. Current years management objectives are developed based on previous years monitoring information and 2008 forecasted weather conditions.

Pinon permittees were billed 22 c/c, 7/12 to 8/27.

Actual use was Pasture C, 22 c/c, 7/14 to 7/19, 4 HM, 5 AUMs.

The permittee was not able to haul water to Pasture C because the roads were too muddy.

The permittee evaluated Pasture C in October and utilization was none to slight. Forage production was average to above average. End of season reviews were not completed on East Pinon by USFS staff. From review of adjacent areas estimated production/vigor of forage was below moderate for cool seasons and moderate to high moderate for warm seasons due to the pattern of precipitation received. It is estimated that Pasture C was 0% to 10%. Pastures A and B were in nonuse.

C. 2008 AOI Objectives

The following are summarized objectives for the **2008** grazing season reviewed with permittees at the AOI meeting.

East Pinon has three pastures, A (Servilleta), B (Taoses), C (Tres Orejas), due to incomplete boundaries and poor access to haul water, pasture A and B have not been used since 2002. Pasture C (Tres Orejas) has been used since 2003 during varying grazing seasons due to resource conditions.

- **A (Servilleta)** – 2008 Nonuse. As stated in the EA Decision Notice (9/27/07), no grazing by livestock would occur before the June/July, 2008 Botanical survey for *Astragalus ripleyi* within 1168 acres (TEU 119). If plants are found, then following mitigative measures would be implemented: livestock grazing occurs only one of three years; or no livestock grazing until after full seed development (possibly May/June/July period). In response to drought, resting Pasture A more than one of three years may be required. USFS - document update deferred maintenance list for allotment boundary.
- **B (Taoses)** – 2008 Nonuse. USFS - analysis/evaluation of roads in travel management plan.
- **C (Tres Orejas)** – Complete project maintenance prior to entry. FS/permittees will inspect the projects for compliance prior to entry. USFS - analysis/evaluation of roads in travel management plan. Review of Tres Orejas pasture before and after livestock use to estimate utilization in 2008.

D. 2008 Range Readiness

Tentatively scheduled for the week of May 12, 2008. FS and permittees will meet at allotment. Also at this time, project maintenance inspections would be completed and permittees will not be allowed to enter until maintenance responsibilities are met.

E. 2008 Grazing Fee and Annual Authorized Use Request

The livestock grazing fee for grazing year 2008 is \$1.35 (c/c) and \$.27 (e/l) on National Forests. The authorized season of use was discussed. Approximately forty days are needed to complete the 2008 AOI and administrative billing process.

East Pinon permittees are authorized:

Pasture C - 20 c/c from 5/15/08 to 6/30/08.

A second range review will be conducted if permittees request additional authorized use of the pasture. Average to below average resource conditions may require alterations in the grazing system, period of use or cattle removal from the allotment.

F. Tentative Rotation Schedule

All allotment rotation plans are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances such as lack of water or low forage production. Range Readiness inspection will confirm availability of forage and adjust annual schedule if needed. The pastures currently have minimum-goal-maximum days, HM and AUM. It is the responsibility of the permittee to ensure proper distribution of livestock addressing utilization standard of 40% of annual production.

Table 1- East Pinon 2008 permitted/authorized dates/Actual Use/rotation

Pastures	Permitted @ Full Implementation (163 – 203 AUMs) Minimum-goal-Maximum Days at 30 c/c 47 - 97 – 156 days	Authorized season: #c/c, dates; (HMs/AUMs); Minimum-goal-Maximum days;	2008 Actual Use	2008 Carson Forest standard of utilization at end of season

(A) Servilleta	29 HMs 38 AUMs	Non-use, boundary fence maintenance (non-permittees)		
(B) Taoses	14 HMs 19 AUMs	Non-use, boundary fence maintenance (non-permittees)		
(C) Tres Orejas	47 days 53 HMs 70 AUMs	20 c/c, 5/15 – 6/30, 47 days, (31 HM, 41 AUM) 30---40---47 days		

G. Monitoring references and Utilization standards

The following list describes priority monitoring data of the East Pinon allotment addressing proper use.

1. East Pinon annual field work spreadsheet
2. Prairie dog utilization prior to livestock entry date-Inspection reports, documented on spreadsheet
3. Fence conditions-Deferred maintenance list
4. SPI, weather forecast and water availability- weather record, Deferred maintenance list
5. Soil moisture depth and temperature-Inspection reports
6. Production cages, Parker, and permittee key areas, reviewed with methods listed on the Tres Piedras Monitoring Plan
7. Key forage list per pasture-AOI obtained from 1970 blue line map
8. Key areas reviewed if accessible-Inspection reports
9. Existing stubble heights on key species--Production/Vigor of key species per pasture at range readiness and end of season

Below is a table of key species with stubble heights requirements for pasture entry. It is stressed that stubble heights of key species and utilization are two different ecological concepts. Stubble height is related to:
 The effect of grazing on the physiological response of individual plant-vigor
 The effect of residual vegetation in protecting the soil from wind or water erosion.
 Utilization will be estimated with the USFS Ocular estimate method by class.

Table 2-East Pinon key species stubble heights reference

Key areas	Pasture Key Species requirements for entering pastures	Range readiness	End of season	Estimated production/vigor
	(A) Servilleta			
Section 25	Blue gramma 1.5" Western wheatgrass 6-8" Crested wheatgrass 6+''			
Section 31	Blue gramma 1.5" Western wheatgrass 6-8" Crested wheatgrass 6+''			
	B (Taoses)			
Section 36	Blue gramma 1.5" Western wheatgrass 6-8" Crested Wheatgrass 6+			
	C (Tres Orejas)			
Section 25	Blue gramma 1.5" Western wheatgrass 6-8" Crested Wheatgrass 6+''			

Section 26	Blue gramma	1.5"			
	Western wheatgrass	6-8"			
	Crested Wheatgrass	6+"			
Section 36	Blue gramma	1.5"			
	Western wheatgrass	6-8"			
	Crested Wheatgrass	6+"			

Prairie dog utilization and drought conditions can stunt forage production and affect the authorized period of use. Also, they may contribute to a higher level of percent utilization at the end of the season. As a result, permittees may have less available AUMs. The allotment monitoring spreadsheet has been organized to document these factors that influence production and vigor of forage. Analysis of quantitative/qualitative monitoring data is a reference for estimating if standard of utilization at the end of the growing season was met. The utilization guideline is 20 to 40% (percent dry weight) of the annual forage production assessed at the end of the year. The riparian utilization guideline includes leaving 4" stubble height of the annual available forage when livestock exit the pasture. Within Pasture C, the Arroyo Aguaje de la Petaca contains intermittent stream flows and various segments of the canyon have riparian areas.

III. DEFERRED MAINTENANCE

During range readiness, project maintenance inspections would be completed and permittees will not be allowed to enter the pasture until maintenance responsibilities are met. Deferred maintenance assigned in the Term Grazing Permit requires annual maintenance that must be completed prior to placing livestock in the pasture. Allotment boundary fences must be maintained before the entry date and interior fences must be maintained before cattle enter the pasture. The cost of maintenance is the responsibility of the permittee. Maintenance requires returning the improvement to its original functioning condition and using similar construction material as when it was initially constructed. Additional technical maintenance information and specification guides can be found on the Natural Resource Conservation Service web site at, <http://www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/fotg/intro3.html> When allotments are in non-use, permittees are responsible for maintenance of allotment improvements referred to in a deferred maintenance list. Construction of new improvements or reconstruction of existing projects must have the approval of the District Ranger.

The deferred maintenance list is referenced to prioritize annual maintenance priorities which are listed on this AOI in Project Status section below.

A. 2008 Deferred Maintenance Priorities

- Boundary fence repairs (including northern portion of section 25).
- New projects -- Pasture C (Tres Orejas) section 25-2 cattleguards (depending on Right of-Way status or .5 miles of new fence (relocation of existing fence to the west side of main road).
- Future Projects -- Pasture C (Tres Orejas)-Section 25, 36-sagebrush control/seeding.

B. Travel Management Plan

USFS Travel Management Plan was discussed. 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

Benjamin Romero
BENJAMIN ROMERO
District Ranger

4/2/08
Date

Attachment: Appendix

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, spring, 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 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 material. 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 you 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 unreadable stock will be allowed.
4. Ear tags 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.