

**2006 ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS  
SPRING CREEK ALLOTMENT 631  
CARSON NATIONAL FOREST  
TRES PIEDRAS RANGER DISTRICT**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The Spring Creek Annual Operating Instruction meeting was held on March 16, 2006 at Tres Piedras Ranger District from 10:00-12:00. Spring Creek attending permittees were, Patricio Abeyta, Mark Bechaver, Jasper Casias, Broch Canty, Edwin Gurule, Phyllis Gurule, Brad Huffaker, Clinton Huffaker, Tyler Huffaker, Aaron Valentine, Jim Sowards, and Shane Sowards. Forest Service representatives were Ernesto Hurtado, Wayne Yonemoto and Anna Dominguez.

**II. OBJECTIVES**

The Annual Operating Instructions are hereby made part of the Term Grazing Permit. The following items are guidance criteria addressing proper use of the Spring Creek allotment.

**III. WEATHER REPORT**

Standard Precipitation Index (SPI) is a way of measuring drought; negative numbers indicate drought and positive for wet conditions. The SPI is a probability index that only considers precipitation. To be considered out of the drought the SPI has to be near normal conditions for 12 consecutive months. The following are the current and 12 month SPI from February 2006.

1-month SPI through the end of January 2006 is -1.55 below normal

12-month SPI through the end of January 2006 is 0 near normal

Tres Piedras precipitation records are referenced supporting recommended Annual Authorized Use. Allotment stocking should adjust with prevailing drought conditions.

**A. Fire**

2006 Fire season is expected to start early and experience above normal fire potential. Permittees are recommended to have a fire exit plan.

**IV. REPORT CARD**

**A. Review of 2005 End of Season Summary**

2005 End of Season Summary report and Spring Creek spreadsheet contain 2006 recommendation. Overall estimated production/vigor of forage was low-moderate. 2005 allotment utilization standard of 40% at the end of the season was met in three of four pastures. One of the four pastures did not meet USFS standard of utilization mostly due to early elk utilization of cool season grasses and drought. Spring Creek permittees disagree; it was discussed to review the allotment more closely in 2006. NMGF has prioritized Spring Creek and Tusas Wheatgrass pastures for future range project as of 2/2006.

Due to the dynamic influences on resource condition a spreadsheet (management too) compiling/summarizing chronological allotment management and resource conditions was completed in 2004, 2005 and 2006. The spreadsheet contains allotment management, GRI, estimated production/vigor, and documentation of end of season utilization standards. Allotment monitoring reports support pasture rating in Spring Creek spreadsheet.

Spring Creek spreadsheet helps identify management objectives for each pasture in the attempts to use livestock as a tool to enhance range conditions.

The following are summarized pasture objectives for 2006:

- Wheatgrass, Minimize days in Wheatgrass, usually adequate water but limited in forage, due to early elk utilization. Early monitoring of elk utilization prior to livestock entry. Pasture has been prioritized by NMGF for future forage improvement, therefore, continue/increase monitoring.
- Coyote, Range Readiness evaluation of watering points, maximize days, Rider to consistently move livestock off low lands.
- Cow Creek minimize days, evaluation of elk use, Rider to consistently move livestock off low lands.
- Palmer, Range readiness evaluation of watering points considering rotation adjustment. Maintain days in Palmer. Rider to consistently move livestock off low lands.

**B. Review of 2005 Inspection Reports**

2005 reports are referenced in making management adjustments and recommendations for the 2006 grazing season documented in Spring Creek spreadsheets and 2006 AOI.

**V. 2005 AOI**

**A. AOI reference**

The Carson Forest Web site address was submitted to permittees for their reference of Annual Operating Instructions. <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/carson>, Natural resources, Range, District, Allotment.

**B. 2006 Annual Authorized Use Request**

Spring Creek permittees discussed and voluntarily agreed to a 25% reduction with a five day delayed on date addressing resource protection. Annual Authorized Use Request forms were signed by attending permittees.

**Table 1-Spring Creek 2006 permitted/authorized data**

<b>Spring Creek Permittees</b>	<b>Permitted season 5/15-10/14 Permitted Number</b>	<b>2006 Authorized 5/20-14/14</b>
Patricio Abeyta	35 c/c	26 c/c at 25% reduction in numbers
Mark and Brian Bechaver	35 c/c	26 at 25% reduction in numbers
Jasper Casias	25 c/c	19 at 25% reduction in numbers
Broch Canty	51 c/c	38 at 25% reduction in numbers
Edwin Gurule	41 c/c	31 at 25% reduction in numbers
Bradley, Clinton & Tyler Huffaker	80 c/c	60 at 25% reduction in numbers

Clinton and Tyler Huffaker	72 c/c	54 at 25% reduction in numbers
Sam Martinez-Waived		
Ernest Sanchez-Waived		
James Sowards	157 c/c	118 at 25% reduction in numbers
W. & K. Reed & Company	4 c/c	31 at 25% reduction in numbers
<b>Total</b>	<b>537 c/c</b>	<b>403 c/c for 148 days</b>

**C. 2006 Grazing fee**

The livestock grazing fee for grazing year 2006 is \$1.56 c/c and \$.31 e/l on National Forests. The reduction in grazing fees is due to the increase in both forage value index (FVI) and beef cattle price index, which are offset by a larger increase in the production price index (PPI).

Unauthorized use of National Forests is \$4.83 for livestock and \$.97 for sheep and goats.

**D. Tentative Rotation Schedule**

Tentative 2006 rotation schedule was discussed. The following rotation plan is tentative due existing drought conditions. Range Readiness inspection will confirm availability of water and adjust 2006 tentative rotation schedule if needed. The pastures currently have a range of days. A goal day has been established on this AOI. Larger pastures, Coyote, Cow Creek, and Palmer have a 5 day adjustment range. 2006 goal for Wheatgrass is to minimize total days since it probably will have spring and fall use due to its location by the corral.

It is the responsibility of the grazing permittee to ensure proper distribution of livestock addressing utilization standard of 40% of annual production.

**Table 2-2006 Spring Creek Pasture rotation**

<b>Tentative rotation of pastures</b>	<b>Range of days Min-GOAL-Max</b>	<b>2006 Actual rotation and days</b>	<b>2006 Utilization</b>
Wheatgrass	2----7----25	5/20-5/26, 7 days	
Coyote	26---50---52	5/27-7/20, 55 days	
Cow Creek	20---50---60	7/21-8/29, 40 days	
Palmer	28---40---40	8/30-10/13, 45 days	
Wheatgrass	trailing	10/14-10/14, 1 days	
		<b>148 days</b>	

**Table 3-Spring Creek key species requirements**

<b>Pastures</b>	<b>Key Species</b>	<b>Range Readiness required heights</b>	<b>Range readiness heights</b>
Wheatgrass	Crested Wheatgrass	6" or more in height	
	Western wheatgrass	6-8" or more in height	
	Arizona fescue	8" or more in height	
Coyote	Arizona fescue	8" or more in height, heading out	
	Western Wheatgrass	6-8" or more in height	
	Kentucky blue grass	Panicle fully open	
Cow Creek	Arizona fescue	8" or more in height, heading out	
	Kentucky Bluegrass	Panicle fully open	
Palmer	Western wheatgrass	6-8" or more in height	
	Arizona fescue	8" or more in height	
	Blue gramma	1.5" <b>warm season</b> threshold	

**VI. MONITORING**

**A. 2003 Rangeland Management Action Plan**

2003 Rangeland Management Action Plan for the Santa Fe and Carson National Forest will be referred to during 2006 grazing season. The plan stresses communication, permittee involvement, monitoring, and range administration.

**B. Range Readiness Field Meeting**

2006 range readiness meeting attendance is strongly recommended due to drought conditions. Range readiness is scheduled for 5/10/06 at 9:00 am at Wheatgrass corral. Evaluation of range readiness conditions will determine management adjustments if needed in the forecasted continued drought.

Range readiness inspections will review the following:

1. SPI , weather forecast and water availability
2. Soil moisture depth and temperature
3. Production/Vigor of key species per pasture
4. Existing stubble heights on key species
5. Growing stage of Range readiness species indicators
6. Elk utilization prior to livestock entry date
7. Fence conditions

**C. Utilization Standards**

Livestock utilization is not to exceed 40 % of annual forage production at the end of the year. Early elk utilization and drought conditions can stunt forage production effecting permitted

grazing time in order to meet 40% utilization standard at the end of year (end of growing season). Permittees are recommended to have a contingency plan due to early elk utilization, water availability and possible continued drought conditions.

Tres Piedras Utilization standards in the riparian area (green zones) are 4" stubble height of the annual available forage. The few riparian areas identified in Spring Creek have been intermittent in the past drought years. These areas should be monitored prior to livestock use to document forage production and wildlife utilization.

Most Green zones are intermittent reaches or constructed dirt tank which collect water as precipitation allows. These intermittent watering areas are the available water for all ungulates. Green zones are sensitive areas and will be monitored to minimize intensity.

#### **D. Monitoring references and methods to use in 2006**

8. Spring Creek spreadsheet
9. Tres Piedras weather records
10. Standard Precipitation Index (SPI)
11. Allotment watering point availability-2006 deferred maintenance list
12. Soil moisture depth and temperature
13. Production cages reviewed with ocular method
14. Allotment map-2006 deferred maintenance list
15. Key forage list per pasture
16. Methods listed in Tres Piedras Monitoring plan

#### **E. NEPA schedule**

NEPA was completed in 2004

### **VII. MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS**

The cost of maintenance is the responsibility of the permittee. Fences, cattleguards, stock tanks, trick tanks 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 allotment improvements referred to in deferred maintenance list.

#### **A. 2005 Project Status**

- USFS maintained Forest road 83 to Wheatgrass corral in spring of 2005.
- Permittees purchased panels for the Wheatgrass corral and Tusas permittees installed them
- Permittees Clean out American Spring and any other natural spring to encourage water flow.
- Permittees reconstruct or maintain Palmer dirt tank in the Wheatgrass so that it holds water. In the spring of 2005 the tank was holding water but the water was leaking out from under the dirt dam. USFS maintained the tank in 2004 in which small cobble was noted which will make it difficult for the tank to seal. Continued monitoring in 2006 in deferred maintenance watering point availability.

#### **B. 2006 Project Status**

- Permittees Clean out American Spring and any other natural spring to encourage water flow.
- Permittees repair of Esquibel tank in Palmer if water level allows. Berm needs to be enforced.

- Continued monitoring of Wheatgrass Pasture for proposed vegetation project with NMGF in the migratory elk range.

### **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 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.

ERNESTO HURTADO  
District Ranger