

Annual Operating Instructions
South Wahoo Allotment
Black Range Ranger District, Gila National Forest
2004 grazing season

1. PASTURE USE SCHEDULE

We have approved your application to graze 400 head of cattle on the South Wahoo Allotment for the 2004 grazing season. The following is the grazing schedule we agreed to at our annual validation meeting:

<i>PASTURE</i>	<i>ON</i>	<i>OFF</i>	<i>NUMBER</i>
South Wahoo	10/01/2004	12/31/2004	400

The schedule above is an estimate, and may be modified at any time during the grazing season if the utilization levels, identified below, are met, if water availability is inadequate, or for other resource management reason. If allowable use levels are met early in the scheduled pasture, cattle will be required to leave the Forest. Cattle are to be completely removed from the Forest by the off date. I will allow you two weeks prior to the off date to begin moving cattle off the Forest. If two weeks is not adequate, you must request additional time from this office. Please notify this office, at least five days prior to moving your cattle from the South Wahoo Allotment.

2. UTILIZATION STANDARDS

The following utilization standards will be applied on the South Wahoo Allotment:

- Riparian areas are not to exceed 25% of current year's growth on woody riparian species.
- Upland sites grazed during the growing season are not to exceed 35% of current year's growth of perennial grasses.
- Upland sites grazed during the dormant season are not to exceed 40% of current year's growth of perennial grasses.

3. KEY AREA MONITORING

At our annual validation meeting, key areas for monitoring were identified as riparian areas and transect cluster locations. Additional key areas may be identified during the season based on routine monitoring.

The idea of a key area is to find a site that is representative of a larger area in which cattle obtain the majority of their required forage resources. Key area monitoring will avoid areas directly adjacent to permanent water sources, cattle trails, roads, and fence lines.

- Riparian areas will be monitored for use on riparian woody species' current year's leaders.
- Upland areas will be monitored for use on perennial grass species.

District personnel will contact the permittees to coordinate site visits to monitor key areas. Permittee participation is encouraged. Forage utilization estimates will be consistent with the Forest Service Range Analysis Handbook methodology, and may also include FS Regional stubble-height standards, as well as other techniques generally accepted in the field of range management.

4. RANGE IMPROVEMENTS

Range improvements must be maintained to standard before cattle are allowed into a pasture. It is the permittee's responsibility to ensure that range improvements remain functional. This includes boundary fences in pastures not currently being grazed. Routine maintenance of existing improvements does not require written clearance; however, construction/reconstruction of new improvements must be authorized in writing from this office. The Forest Service will look into the possibility of cost-sharing the dozer work to clean and improve Bear Canyon Tank, "Y" Tank, Brush Tank, Woodcutter Tank, and Polecat Tank. If we cannot budget for cost-sharing this work, we will still complete the necessary archaeological and biological clearances so we can proceed once funding is available or if you decide to complete the work without FS cost-share money.

5. SPECIAL MANAGEMENT INSTRUCTIONS

The following restrictions will be implemented so that management remains in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. The instructions below relate to threatened, endangered, and proposed to be listed species as well as range/watershed conditions.

- No salt or mineral block may be placed in protected and restricted Mexican spotted owl habitat from February 1 to August 31, and no concentrations of livestock (i.e., corral use, traps, or large gatherings of livestock).
- Stock tanks must be surveyed for possible aquatic habitat before earth-disturbing maintenance is authorized.
- At our AOI meeting we discussed the listing of the Chiricahua leopard frog as a threatened species. Because of the listing of the Chiricahua leopard frog as a threatened species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an analysis was completed for all Gila allotments. We have determined that livestock grazing on

the South Wahoo Allotment has the potential to adversely affect the Chiricahua leopard frog. As a result of this determination, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will prepare a draft Biological Opinion, which may modify grazing management practiced to minimize the level of affect an action will have on a listed species. However, this determination has not yet resulted in any changes to your grazing permit. As the permittee of the South Wahoo Allotment, you have applicant status which allows you the opportunity to provide comments to the draft Biological Opinion. This office will keep you informed on the process.

The Endangered Species Act requires that actions funded or carried out by the federal government go through the consultation process to insure these actions do not jeopardize the continued existence of a listed species. Please notify this office of any planned earth disturbing activities involving riparian areas, dirt tanks, or other sources of open water.

6. OTHER INSTRUCTIONS

The permittee must obtain permission from the District Ranger, before conducting earth-disturbing activities on the National Forest. The Forest Service will arrange inspections of project areas and will prepare appropriate environmental and cultural documents before earth-disturbing activities proceed. These activities include road/earthen tank maintenance, as well as construction/reconstruction of trails, roads, earthen tanks, etc. Do not conduct any earth-disturbing activities on the Forest without written clearance from this office.

Salt must be located at least ¼ mile from water, and preferably on ridges and/or areas of low use. Do not place salt blocks in the same location as the previous year, and locate blocks on hard ground not susceptible to erosion. Supplemental feeding, other than mineral or supplement block is not authorized on the National Forest.

On yearlong ranges, calves under six months of age on January 1st are not counted against the authorized numbers until March 31st. By April 1st, these calves must be removed from the Forest or counted against the authorized numbers.

The Annual Operating Instructions are a part of the Term Grazing Permit as provided for in Part 1, Section 3. These instructions comply with the standards and guidelines found in the Forest Plan, including the 1996 Forest Plan Amendment. They also comply with the Endangered Species Act found in the Biological Assessment for the South Wahoo Allotment. Any additional information collected during the year may be incorporated into the Annual Operating Instructions.

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 (see enclosed copy of 36 CFR 251 regulations). 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 the 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 Marcia Andre, Forest Supervisor, Gila National Forest, at 3005 E. Camino Del Bosque, Silver City, NM 88061, within 45 days of the date of this decision. A copy of the notice of appeal must be filed simultaneously with Tammy Randall Parker, District Ranger, Black Range Ranger District at 1804 Date Street, Truth or Consequences, NM 89701.

We appreciate your cooperation in the management of the South Wahoo Allotment. If you have any questions regarding these instructions, please contact Ron Mortensen, Rangeland Management Specialist, or myself at (505)894-6677. Thank you.

Sincerely,

TAMMY RANDALL PARKER
District Ranger