Black Mountain Allotment Annual Operating Instructions

Black Range Ranger District, Gila National Forest
2005 grazing season

1. PASTURE USE SCHEDULE

We have approved your application to graze 800 head of cattle on the Black Mountain Allotment for the 2005 grazing season. The following grazing rotation schedule only covers the first part of the 2005 grazing season. Before you place cattle back on the forest in September we will get together with you and make a schedule for the rest of the 2005 grazing season. At that point we will amend this AOI to reflect the schedule we make.

PASTURE	***ON***	***OFF***	***NUMBER***
University	03/01/05	04/15/05	139
Indian	03/01/05	04/15/05	170
Cooney	03/01/05	04/15/05	133
Black Mesa	03/01/05	04/15/05	126
Houghton	03/01/05	04/15/05	76
Elmo	03/01/05	04/15/05	63
Bear	03/01/05	04/15/05	44
Kennedy	03/01/05	04/15/05	44

The above schedule is an estimate and may be modified at any time during the grazing season if the utilization levels are met, if water availability is inadequate, or for other resource management reasons. If allowable use levels are met early in the scheduled pasture, cattle will be required to be moved to another area of the pasture, moved to another pasture, or removed from the Forest.

Cattle are to be completely removed from a pasture by the off date. Please notify this office at least five days prior to your cattle being moved on or off the Forest.

2. UTILIZATION STANDARDS

The following utilization standards will be applied on the Black Mountain Allotment:

- 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

Through annual validation meetings, key areas for monitoring have been identified as transect cluster locations. In addition to these key areas, Mexican spotted owl protected and restricted habitat will be monitored.

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.

Upland areas will be monitored for use on perennial grass species.

Mexican spotted owl protected and restricted habitat will be monitored to ensure that current management is providing cover for rodent prey species, the residual biomass that will support prescribed natural and ignited fires that would reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire in the Forest, and regeneration of riparian trees.

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, as outlined in Part 3 section 9(a) of your Term Permit, 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.

As part of the NEPA decision signed in September of 2004 we will need to move the drinker associated with Houghton Well as well as fence off the riparian area near the well. We will get with you this spring and design and plan how to accomplish this.

We will also provide you with fencing materials as we are able.

We will try and coordinate with the Reserve Ranger District to finish replacing the portions of the fence that were taken out by the Ten Cow fire.

You have inquired about getting FR 150 bladed. We will try and coordinate with the Gila National Forest road crew to get that accomplished.

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.

- The Chiricahua leopard frog was listed as a threatened species in 2002 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We have completed grazing consultation on your allotment regarding the effects of livestock grazing on the Chiricahua leopard frog. We determined that livestock grazing will either have no effect or will not adversely affect the Chiricahua leopard frog. As a result of this determination, there were no changes required of your grazing permit. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with this determination. Therefore, consultation has been completed. A copy of this consultation is on file with your local Ranger District.

6. OTHER INSTRUCTIONS

The permittee must obtain permission from this office, 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.

Accurate records of your operation will aid in planning and determining the effectiveness of the grazing system. Please maintain reasonably accurate records of cattle numbers throughout the grazing season.

The Annual Operating Instructions are a part of the Term Grazing Permit as provided for in Part II, Section 8(a). 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 Black Mountain 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 Black Mountain Allotment. If you have any questions regarding these instructions, please contact Ron Mortensen, Rangeland Management Specialist (505)894-6677. Thank you.

Sincerely,

TAMMY RANDALL PARKER

District Ranger