

**North Palomas Allotment Annual Operating Provisions**  
 Black Range Ranger District, Gila National Forest  
 2006 grazing season

**1. PASTURE USE SCHEDULE**

We have approved your application to graze 100 head of cattle on the North Palomas Allotment. Total cattle numbers for the North Palomas Allotment are not to exceed 100 head for the 2006 grazing season. The following is the grazing rotation schedule for the North Palomas Allotment:

<i>Pasture</i>	<i># of cattle</i>	<i>Use Period</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Upper	100	3/1/06-6/30/06	Cattle will be kept in different areas of this pasture at different times using drift fences.
Creek	100	7/01/06-8/31/06	
East	100	9/01/06-10/31/06	
Shipping Trap	100	11/01/06-11/30/06	
Upper	100	12/01/06-02/28/07	

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. However, due to the rugged terrain of the North Palomas Allotment, I will allow you two weeks prior to the off date to begin moving cattle into the next pasture. If two weeks are not adequate, you must request additional time from this office. Please notify this office when you begin to move cattle and when a pasture rotation is complete.

Also we have discussed the possibility of occasionally placing livestock in the riparian demonstration area to aid in your operation during weaning, shipping, pasture rotations, and for doctoring sick cattle. This small pasture may be utilized two or three days at a time with a few head during the aforementioned activities of your operation. Please make this office aware of your activities within this pasture and keep accurate records of your use of this pasture so as to aid in determining appropriate management.

**2. UTILIZATION STANDARDS**

The following utilization standards will be applied on the North Palomas Allotment:

- Riparian areas are not to exceed 25% of current year's growth on woody riparian species; this includes Amorpha, willow, and cottonwood.
- Upland sites grazed during the growing season are not to exceed 35% of current year's growth, by weight, of perennial grasses.

- Upland sites grazed during the dormant season are not to exceed 40% of current year's growth, by weight, of perennial grasses.

### 3. KEY AREA MONITORING

Key areas for monitoring have been identified as riparian areas and transect cluster locations. In addition to the cluster sites, we have identified other upland sites for monitoring, which are listed below. Mexican spotted owl protected and restricted habitat will be monitored for compliance with the MSO recovery plan and consultation guidance criteria.

<i>PASTURE</i>	<i>LOCATION</i>	<i>SPECIES MONITORED</i>
East	Cluster C-3	Upland grasses
East	Mesa top in SEC 29	Upland grasses
Creek	Cluster C-2	Upland grasses
Upper	Cluster C-1	Upland grasses
Upper	SW ¼ SEC 26	Upland grasses
Allotment-wide	Riparian areas	All riparian species
Allotment-wide	MSO PAC's & habitat	Residual forage on grasses

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 as well as riparian herbaceous species.

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 for 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 and as described in the AMP we have been preparing for this allotment.

### 4. RANGE IMPROVEMENTS

Range improvements must be functional 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, prior to the work starting.

You have expressed the need to reconstruct fence #2102, East pasture allotment interior fence, and mentioned using the EQIP program to do it to help out with your cost. I encourage you to utilize this program through the local NRCS office. If this does not work, please let us know and we will see if we can help you out with materials.

We discussed the possibility of building some dirt tanks and/or placing a trick tank in the East pasture. We will need to get together and GPS the proposed dirt tank sites and apply to the state engineers office for a water right to build these tanks. As these dirt tanks are being built, while we have clearances and equipment, it may be possible to transport a trick tank to an appropriate spot.

## **5. SPECIAL MANAGEMENT INSTRUCTIONS**

The following restrictions will be implemented so that management remains in compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water 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 and springs must be surveyed for possible aquatic habitat before earth-disturbing maintenance is authorized.
- Livestock grazing and livestock management activities within protected and restricted owl habitats will be managed for levels that provide the woody and herbaceous vegetation necessary for 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.
- Livestock grazing within the North Palomas riparian enclosure is not authorized. Enclosure fences must be maintained to a standard, which prevents cattle passage into the enclosure.
- 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 North Palomas 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 North Palomas 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, in writing, 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. You are required to have all counters tagged. Please maintain reasonably accurate records of cattle numbers and class, throughout the grazing season. This includes accurate lists of tagged cattle numbers. Please inform this office of your additional ear-tag needs. It is important that you remove ear-tags from any cattle you sell to re-tag replacement cattle.

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 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 North Palomas 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 North Palomas Allotment. This past year and our work on the North Palomas AMP have been very productive and I want to thank you for your continued involvement and attitude which has been positive and constructive in working during these difficult times of drought. 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