

Glenwood Ranger District

Gila National Forest

ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

2015

Copper Creek Allotment #412

Prepared By:

/s/ DK Brown
District Range Staff

Date: 01/28/2015

Approved By:

/s/ DK Brown for Debbie Cress
District Ranger

Date: 01/28/2015

Annual Operating Instructions

I. INTRODUCTION

Kendall Brown (Forest Service) met with Wayne Shellhorn (ranch manager) on January 28, 2015 to discuss current grazing year management of the Copper Creek Allotment and to plan grazing management for the upcoming grazing season. These Annual Operating Instructions are the result of that discussion.

Term Permitted Livestock Numbers

Number and class of livestock	Dates
80 Cattle-Cow/calf	03/01 – 02/28
5 horses (saddle)	03/01 – 02/28

Allotment Annual Authorization

Number and class of livestock	Dates Authorized
80 Cattle-Cow/calf	03/01 – 02/28
2 horses (saddle)	11/01 – 02/28

Allotment Pasture Rotation

Class of	Rotation	Pasture
Cow/Calf	03/01 – 03/31	Silver Pastures
Cow/Calf	04/01 – 05/30	Stout Mesa
Cow/Calf	06/01 – 10/15	Indian Creek Pasture
Cow/Calf	10/15 – 02/28	Bearwallow Pasture

Livestock are also not allowed within the reconstructed enclosure at Lower Bearwallow Park within Bearwallow pasture. We recognize the difficulty of livestock control in light of the stocking of yearlings on the T Bar Allotment, as well as condition of fences and the amount of deadfall coming down on the fences bordering T Bar.

If any one key area in a pasture being grazed by livestock exceeds utilization on the uplands or heavy hedging of woody riparian plant sprouts/seedlings becomes apparent, livestock will be moved to another area of the pasture where actual use is less than allowable use (i.e., Upper and Lower Bearwallow within the Bearwallow pasture). In the event livestock continue to return to areas that have previously met or exceeded allowable use levels, livestock will be required to be moved to the next scheduled pasture. This requirement is necessary to prevent overuse on forage plants.

II. MANAGEMENT OF LIVESTOCK

You are responsible for monitoring water availability and forage utilization. It is your

responsibility to move your livestock when sufficient water is no longer available or when proper forage utilization is achieved in a pasture. **You are responsible for keeping track of and maintaining control of your livestock.** In the event your livestock are found to be out of the scheduled pasture, you will be required to find, gather, and return your animals to the proper pasture as soon as possible. Failure to maintain control of your livestock may lead to adverse action against your Term Grazing Permit.

On 10/20/2006, as part of the Mediation Agreement, it was agreed by you and the Forest Service that a three-strike rule is in place regarding unauthorized cattle on the Reserve Ranger District. You must keep your cattle on Copper Creek Allotment. Failure to graze cattle in authorized locations and times and failure to maintain assigned range developments to standard constitute non-compliance with the terms and conditions of your Term Permit.

III. IMPROVEMENT MAINTENANCE

All range improvements assigned in the 10-year Term Grazing Permit should be maintained in a functioning condition. In the event these improvements cannot be brought up to a functioning condition, you should notify this office so we can schedule them for reconstruction as funds become available. You may apply for a free use post and stay permit for the maintenance of fences and corrals on your allotment. Poor fence condition due to lack of maintenance has been cited by you as the cause of cattle grazing in locations not authorized by your permit. It is critical that you bring all fences to functional condition and keep them there. Even though past poor fence maintenance has been a longstanding problem, you have assured that you can keep your livestock within the Bearallow and Indian Creek Pasture this year.

Contracts were awarded and started in 2013 to replace fences destroyed during the Whitewater-Baldy Fire of 2012. The contractor finished replacing the fences this past year (2014), you are to maintain them to the extent that they will control cattle within your allotment.

District personnel completed the reconstruction of the Lower Bearallow enclosure fence in 2007. Maintenance of this enclosure fence is now assigned to you. Livestock use of this enclosure is not authorized.

Any gaps/trails in the bluffs that constitute your southern exterior boundary with Mineral Creek must be "plugged" so that cattle cannot stray into Mineral Creek.

You have requested $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of fence to be built on the ridge south of the Old Tate Place private land to improve livestock control. This will allow you additional time to consider re-alignment and reconstruction of the fence that accesses Deep Creek and the private land. Contact Kendall Brown to obtain necessary clearances, permit modification, and material.

You requested material to rebuild a portion of the trap around the Old Waterman Place that was damaged during the 2012 Whitewater/Baldy fire. Kendall and you will get

together to assess the amount of fence that needs replaced, and Kendall will issue a permit modification and fence material for this project.

You would like to re-build a portion of fence near the Mineral Creek Corrals to better facilitate the handling of your livestock (estimated 100-150 yds).

You have made some progress in maintaining your assigned boundary fences. Please continue to keep these fences in good repair.

We have determined that allotment boundary fences between Copper Creek Allotment and Reserve District is in repairable condition. You will maintain your portion and Glenwood FS personnel will get with Reserve FS personnel to ensure that the other permittee's maintenance will be done. These fences will be in functional condition by May 15 of each year (unless snow/weather prevents access).

IV. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

1. Fire: Branding and warming fires should be used with good judgment: not on windy days or during times when fires are specifically restricted. The Glenwood District may manage naturally ignited fires as Wildland Fire Use fires where such fires would meet resource objectives. You will be notified if a fire use fire is expected to affect Copper Creek Allotment.

2. Records: In order to close out permit modifications you must provide documentation of materials and labor constituting your contribution to the permit modification.

You must provide documentation of cattle numbers; dates of entering and leaving pastures, shipping dates and cattle losses (grown stock and calves). This information is used to substantiate the carrying capacity of the allotment. The information demonstrates use and the need for forage to meet the economic needs of the county. This information may also be used to establish cause and effect if there is a significant change in calf crop (Example, a wolf pack becomes established near your allotment).

3. Heavy Equipment Use: Please notify district well in advance of any plans to use heavy equipment so that necessary clearances and/or permits can be obtained. You will be notified by the district when you can proceed.

4. Credit/Refund: Any credit or refund applications for grazing fees must be made as far in advance as possible. Credit/Refund applications are not retroactive and will be approved only if the District Ranger is notified of livestock removal, prior to, or at the time, the livestock are taken off the allotment. **You will be required to provide your Social Security or Tax ID number in order for a refund to be processed.**

A \$25 administrative fee will be charged for any additional bills for collection that are sent to you due to either late payment or for split billing on seasonal allotments. This fee will be collected to pay for the cost associated with issuing an additional bill for collection. There is no administrative fee for the normal "split billing" on yearlong allotments.

It is necessary for you to write the bill number on your check prior to submitting it to the lockbox. This is necessary to insure that your payment is credited to your account.

5. Short Age Calf Policy: Any short-aged calves (calves less than 6 months old on December 31) must be removed from the National Forest by April 1, or you will need to apply for and pay grazing fees for these animals from April 1 to the time they are removed from the National Forest. Calves that are 6 months old or older on December 31 need to be paid for starting January 1.

6. Salting and Supplemental Feeding:

- a. Feeding of energy supplements on National Forest land will not be permitted unless a proven need to use the supplements is shown, and a detailed plan is developed and approved.
- b. Feeding of hay on National Forest land will not be permitted unless a proven need to use the supplement is shown and a detailed plan is developed and approved. All supplemental hay must be **certified weed free** hay and you must provide the proper documentation.
- c. Feeding of vitamin or mineral supplements, protein blocks or molasses licks on National Forest land is permitted when used in the same manner as salt.
- d. Salting practices will be in agreement with the 10-Year Term Grazing Permit. Salt will be placed in areas of available feed to help draw cattle to them. Salt will not be placed within ¼ mile from water and/or in natural concentrations areas which receive heavy grazing use.
- e. No salt may be placed within 0.25 mile of areas of special management concern.

V. ALLOTMENT STATUS

The Allotment Management Plan (AMP) on this allotment is in need of update to meet Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines. At the present time, direction for management on this allotment will be documented in these Annual Operating Instructions. The scheduled date for completing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) assessment and a decision for the allotment is 2017 or later. An AMP will be developed to implement the decision.

You intend to move toward a short calving season in the spring (February/March), the removal of bulls to private land part of the year, and the use of Stout and Silver pastures for breeding and calving. You also suggested fencing upper Bearwallow meadow and restoring the meadow through feather removal of encroaching trees to re-open the meadow. We will also consider re-alignment of the road to get it out of the meadow.

VI. OTHER ITEMS DISCUSSED

You state that you have some of you cattle are ear-tagged with purple tags. You plan on continuing the tagging of the rest of the herd this spring with tags (purple). This tagging will help in identifying your cattle in the field.

You indicated that you are in favor of Fire Use on your allotment. The District Ranger will authorize necessary changes to this AOI to accommodate fire management.

VII. SPECIAL MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

No livestock are authorized within the Bearwallow enclosure. The following areas are of special management concern:

- Bearwallow Park.
- Waterman Spring
- Copper Creek
- Mineral Creek Riparian area.
- Indian Creek

These areas have typically received heavy use in the past. No salting is permitted within ¼ mile of these locations. You are expected to monitor use and move cattle when use is approaching allowable levels. These areas are considered critical habitat areas. Use will be monitored in these areas to prevent overuse by livestock.

Keep track of conditions on your allotment and make plans to reduce or remove livestock if vegetative or watershed conditions could be substantially harmed due to continued grazing.

VIII. UTILIZATION MONITORING OF KEY AREAS

Monitoring Schedule on the Copper Creek Allotment

Pasture	Monitoring	Allowable Use	Key Area
Stout Mesa & Silver Peak	06/01	Conservative (31- 40%)	C4
Holding 1 & 2 (Claremont)	03/31	Conservative (31- 40%)	Entire Pasture
Bearwallow	02/28	Conservative (31- 40%)	C3, Upper & Lower
Indian Creek	11/01	Conservative (31- 40%)	C1, C2

Special management concern areas will be monitored periodically during the time cattle are scheduled to be in or adjacent to the area.

Monitoring of herbaceous forage will be conducted by ocular estimate of use within a pasture (utilization mapping). Verification of ocular estimates will be conducted using common methodology such as weigh/clip, grazed plant numbers, or stubble height. Grazing use will be described and mapped in the following utilization categories.

Qualitative Grazing Intensity Category	Use of Forage by Weight	Qualitative Indicators of Grazing Intensity
--	-------------------------	---

Light to no-use	< 30%	Only choice plants and areas show use. There is no use of poor forage plants.
Conservative	31-40%	Choice forage plants have abundant seed stalks. Areas more than a mile from water show little use. About on third to one half of primary forage plants show grazing on key areas.
Moderate	41-50%	Most of accessible range shows use. Key areas show patch appearance with one half to two thirds of primary forage plants showing use. Grazing is noticeable in zone 1-1.5 miles form water.
Heavy	51-60%	Nearly all primary forage plants show grazing on key areas. Palatable shrubs show hedging. Key areas show a lack of seed stalks. Grazing is noticeable in areas over 1.5 miles from water.
Severe	61 +%	Key areas show a clipped or mowed appearance (no stubble height). Shrubs are severely hedged. There is evidence of livestock trailing to forage. Areas over 1.5 miles from water lack stubble height.
Holechek, J.L. and D. Galt. 2000. Grazing Intensity Guidelines. Rangelands 22(3), pg 11-14.		

If the utilization guideline for the pasture is exceeded on 30% or more of the pasture in any year, livestock will be immediately removed from the pasture. Within a pasture, areas found to exceed allowable use will become key areas for monitoring the following year. The AOI for the next year will be adjusted to correct livestock management practices (distribution, number, timing, salt and water availability, etc.) that may have led to the overuse.

In the event that 30 percent or more of the pasture exceeds the set allowable use in a grazing year, that area will be required to be less than or equal to allowable use the next year. If that same area (or a substantial portion of the same area) exceeds allowable use in two consecutive grazing years, the entire pasture will be rested for one calendar year and stocking will be adjusted to balance with forage supplies. If the same area of a pasture exceeds allowable use in two years out of five, the stocking rate and management plan will be adjusted to balance with forage supply.

Monitoring of utilization on woody riparian will be conducted in the areas below and concurrently with the associated pasture. (See Table on next page)

Pasture	Reach description	Management	Allowable Use
Indian Creek	All of Indian Creek drainage.	Grazed 06/01 – 10/15	light
Bearwallow	Copper Creek within the Bearwallow & Claremont Pastures.	Grazed 10/16 – 02/28	Not to exceed 25% woody riparian heavily hedged.
Bearwallow	Mineral Creek within the	Grazed 10/15 – 02/28	Not to exceed 25%

	Bearwallow Pasture.		woody riparian heavily hedged.
Bearwallow	Park/meadow	Grazed 10/15 – 02/28	conservative
Silver Creek & Stout Mesa	Copper Creek within the Silver Creek & Stout Mesa Pastures.	Grazed 03/01 – 05/30	Not to exceed 25% woody riparian heavily hedged.
Silver Creek & Stout Mesa	Mineral Creek within the Silver Creek & Stout Mesa Pastures.	Grazed 03/01 – 05/30	Not to exceed 25% woody riparian heavily hedged.

If allowable use is exceeded on 30% or more of the riparian reach within the pasture, livestock will be removed from the pasture. If that same reach, or a substantial portion of the same reach, exceeds allowable use in two consecutive grazing years the entire pasture will be rested for one calendar year and stocking will be adjusted to prevent overuse of the riparian reach. If the same reach of a pasture exceeds allowable use in two years out of five, the stocking rate and management plan will be adjusted to prevent overuse of the riparian reach.

If unforeseen operational conditions require a change in the management specified in this AOI please contact rangeland management personnel at the Glenwood Ranger District to obtain approval of change(s). Advanced notice of change is requested so that field inspections can be conducted. Verbal approval of changes will be followed with a letter documenting the change.