# Annual Operating Instructions

**Nutrioso Summer C & H Allotment and**
**West Fork C&H Allotment**
Alpine Ranger District
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
**2012 grazing season**

Following the 2011 growing season, post fire monitoring concluded that areas on your allotment that received low and unburned/underburned fire severity can support livestock grazing for the 2012 grazing year. Standard livestock forage utilization guidelines outlined in the AMP will apply. The monitoring also concluded that pastures with only small amounts of moderate and high burn severity areas are available for livestock grazing with the following mitigation measures:

- Livestock grazing in the moderate to high burn severity areas will be limited to incidental use; there will not be any planned grazing in these areas. This will be accomplished through herding, temporary fencing, or other intensive management techniques.
- The incidental grazing of moderate to high burn severity areas will be monitored. If it is determined that more than incidental use is occurring in the moderate to high severity burned areas adjustments (increased herding, fencing, removal of cattle from the pasture or forest, etc.) in management of the livestock will be required.

Issues with respect to Allotment Infrastructure have been identified, and were discussed with you at your annual meeting. We currently have 3.3 miles material for you to maintain/replace your fire damaged fences. More material may be available to you as funding becomes available. Please notify the District Office before starting any major reconstruction.

## *1. PASTURE USE SCHEDULE*

I have approved your application to graze 129 head of cattle on the West Fork Allotment.

Grazing rotation Schedule:

| Allotment | Pasture | On date | Off date | Number |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Nutrioso Summer** | **Resource Protection Non-Use due to the 2011 Wallow Fire.** | | | |
| **West Fork** | **Kettle Holes** | **7/15/12** | **8/31/12** | **129** |
| | **Home** | **9/01/12** | **9/14/12** | **129** |
| | **Lookout/Holding** | **9/15/12** | **10/31/12** | **129** |
| | **Blow Draw** | **TBA** | | |

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 reasons. If allowable use levels are met early in the scheduled pasture, cattle will be rotated into the next pasture or off the Forest. If you are scheduled to rotate livestock to the next pasture, but feel

there is adequate forage to sustain them in the current pasture and would prefer to hold off on the rotation, please contact district range personnel for an inspection and approval. No re-grazing of any pasture will be allowed. Livestock are to be completely removed from a pasture by the off date. Please notify this office when you begin to move cattle and when a pasture rotation is complete.

## ***2. UTILIZATION STANDARDS***

The following utilization standards will be applied on the **Nutrioso Summer Allotment**:

- 25% use, by weight of current year's growth, on upland perennial grass species.
- 25% use, by weight of current year's growth, on riparian grass species.

The following utilization standards will be applied on the **West Fork Allotment**:

- Riparian areas are not to exceed 45% of current year's leaders on woody riparian species, nor 45%, by weight, of riparian grasses.
- Upland sites are not to exceed 40%, by weight, of current year's growth of perennial grasses.

It is important to keep your livestock scattered throughout the scheduled pasture through herding and salting.

## ***3. KEY AREA MONITORING***

Utilization levels will be checked prior to livestock entering the allotment and near the midpoint, or sooner, of the grazing period for each pasture at key areas. A key area is defined as:

*"a portion of range, which because of its location, grazing or browsing value, and/or use, serves as an indicative sample of range conditions, trend, or degree of use seasonally. A key area guides the general area of which it is part"* (Forest Service Region 3 Rangeland and analysis Management Guide, June, 1997).

Utilization measurements will be taken on key livestock forage plants (key species). Key forage species is defined as:

*"1. Forage species (plants) whose use serves as an indicator to the degree of use of associated species. In many cases, key species include indicator species and species traditionally referenced as increaser, decreasers, desirables, or intermediates. 2. Those species (plants) which must, because of their importance, be considered in the management program"* (Forest Service Region 3 Rangeland and Analysis Management Guide, June 1997).

- Riparian areas will be monitored for use on riparian woody species' current year's leaders, as well as % use, by weight on riparian grasses.
- Upland areas will be monitored for use on browse species' current year's leaders, as well as % use, by weight on perennial grasses.
- 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 and shrubs.
- Utilization monitoring will occur on key areas as well as critical and/or sensitive areas.

- Utilization monitoring will generally avoid areas within ¼ mile of livestock water sources, livestock trails, and areas directly adjacent to livestock fences.

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. Fences must remain in a state that prevents the passage of cattle. Routine maintenance of existing improvements does not require written clearance; however, construction or reconstruction of improvements must be authorized in writing from this office.

At our annual validation meeting we discussed the installation of a large water lot fence to utilize a stock tank on the vacant Black River allotment to provide water for better cattle distribution. I will discuss this with the District Ranger, and contact you with more information.

## ***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.
- You are required to contact this office prior to entering the allotment, and when entering a new pasture within this allotment, to provide the actual number of livestock and dates of the entry and exit. You are also required to get an accurate count of livestock entering the allotment and specific pastures, and recording the numbers and dates on a permanent document to be given to the Alpine Ranger District. If you recommend changes to this AOI, you must first obtain approval from the District Ranger. Additionally, if any unforeseen circumstances occur which may affect your ability of comply with this AOI, you must also notify the District Ranger.
- 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 and shrubs.
- You are authorized to graze only those pastures listed in the Pasture Use Schedule of this AOI, unless amended. You must also prevent your livestock from grazing pastures not scheduled for use, and other allotments. It is your responsibility to ensure that gates remain closed and fences are kept in a functional state.

***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.

The Annual Operating Instructions are a part of the Term Grazing Permit as provided for in Part 1, Section 3, and comply with the standards and guidelines found in the Forest Plan. They also comply with the Endangered Species Act found in the Biological Assessment for the Nutrioso Summer 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. 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 Jim Zornes, Forest Supervisor, P.O. Box 640, 30 S. Chiricahua Dr. Springerville AZ 85938, within 45 days of the date of this decision. A copy of the notice of appeal must be filed simultaneously with Richard Davalos, District Ranger, Alpine Ranger District, P.O. Box 469, 42634 HWY 180/191, Alpine, AZ 85920.

I have read and understand these Annual Operating Instructions for the Nutrioso Summer and West Fork Allotments during the 2012 grazing season.

_____ _____

[redacted], Permittee Date

_____ _____

Richard Davalos Date
District Ranger