

**Annual Operating Instructions**  
**And**  
**Resource Protection Nonuse**  
**Memorandum of Understanding(MOU)**

South Escudilla Allotment  
Alpine Ranger District  
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests  
**2011 grazing season**

**1. NON-USE AGREEMENT/MOU**

I have approved your application for Non-Use for resource protection on the South Escudilla Allotment for the 2011 grazing season. The reason cited for Non-Use is the below- average precipitation on the allotment since October, 2010 resulting in poor forage production and a lack of stock water. So far this winter, we have received very little precipitation and the outlook through June, 2011 is for warmer temperatures and below average precipitation to continue.

If climatic conditions change and you wish to stock the South Escudilla Allotment, please contact Ron Mortensen or Curtis Chee so a range readiness inspection can be conducted on the allotment. In order to stock the South Escudilla Allotment, the area must receive near-average precipitation and at appropriate times to produce adequate forage to sustain livestock and wildlife, and maintain vegetative and watershed resources in a satisfactory condition. If these conditions are met, and the allotment is stocked, you will be issued an Amended AOI.

**2. UTILIZATION STANDARDS**

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

- 25% use, by weight of current year's growth, on upland perennial grass species.
- 25% use, by number of growing leaders, on upland browse species.
- 25% use, by weight of current year's growth, on riparian grass species.
- 25% use, by number of growing leader's, on riparian browse species.
- Within Northern goshawk territories, a utilization level in forested areas (includes small openings) of: 20% average by weight.

**3. KEY AREA MONITORING**

Although no livestock grazing on the South Escudilla Allotment is currently authorized for the 2011 grazing year, the District may still conduct key area monitoring on the allotment. This monitoring would be used to document grazing by wild ungulates (primarily elk), for use in future planning and recommendations to the Arizona Department of Game and Fish. This information will also aid in determining range condition for future livestock grazing authorization. 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 and/or wildlife 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 increasers, 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 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 and shrubs.

District personnel will contact the permittees to coordinate site visits to monitor key areas, when practical. 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, whether the allotment is stocked or not. 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.

#### **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.

**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 South Escudilla Allotment. Any additional information collected during the year may be incorporated into the Annual Operating Instructions.

We appreciate your cooperation in the management of the South Escudilla Allotment. If you have any questions please contact Ron Mortensen or Curtis Chee, range personnel at (928) 339-5000 or (928) 333-4372. Thank you.

I have read and understand these Annual Operating Instructions for the South Escudilla Allotment during the 2011 grazing season.

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Permittee

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Date