

Annual Operating Instructions

COW FLAT, FOOTE CREEK, PS, ALPINE AND STONE CREEK ALLOTMENTS
Alpine Ranger District
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

2015 Grazing Season

1. PASTURE USE SCHEDULE

I have approved your application to graze 110 head of cattle on the Cow Flat allotment, 40 head of cattle on the Alpine allotment, and 126 head of cattle on the PS and Foote Creek allotments. Portions of the Alpine and Stone Creek Allotments are scheduled to be rested this season.

The table below represents your grazing rotation schedule for 2015 grazing season.

Allotment	Pasture	On	Off	Number/Class
Cow Flat	Lampier	03/01	05/15	97 c/c
	Cedar Sp. Holding, KK- Holding, Twin Sp. Holding while authorized to use the allotment.			As needed for calving/holding
Foote Creek Winter	Foote Creek Winter	03/01	05/15	13 bulls
Fishhook/Steeple Mesa	KP Holding, East Bull, Diaper Wash, Sweetie/Bear, Steeple Holding, Pinare Holding while authorized to use the allotment.			As needed for calving/holding
Bobcat Johnson	No, Mid, So YJ heifer, Muddy	03/01	05/15	As needed for calving/holding
PS	E. Fork Black River	05/16	05/23	126 c/c
	PS North	05/24	07/24	126 c/c
	Double Bar K	07/25	07/31	126 c/c
	Caldwell Holding	05/16	07/31	As needed for calving/holding
Alpine	Lake, Cemetery, Estes	08/01	10/31	40 heifers
Foote Creek Summer	Willow & West Thomas	08/01	09/18	126 c/c
	Cole	09/19	09/30	126 c/c
	Taylor	10/01	10/12	126 c/c
Beaver Creek		07/01	09/19	As needed for calving/holding

Foote Creek	Foote Creek Holding	05/16	10/15	As needed for calving/holding
Cow Flat	Cow Canyon	10/16	02/29/16	97 c/c
Bobcat Johnson	Upper & Lower Bobcat	10/16	02/29/16	13 bulls

The KK Bar Holding, Cole, Thomas, Cedar Springs Holding, Twin Springs Holding, Fishhook, Foote Creek Holding, and the E. Thomas Pastures are to be used as special use pastures with minimal numbers for an extended time period (such as small groups of cattle which are calving), or up to 126 cattle for a short period of time (such as shipping and gathering).

The schedule above 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 Range Personnel, for an inspection and approval. No re-grazing of any pasture will be allowed. Cattle 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.

If water availability becomes limited within pastures on the allotments, a scatter strategy may be implemented in which two or more pastures may be grazed simultaneously with cattle scattered throughout the pastures to take advantage of waters that may not otherwise service the entire herd in one pasture. If you choose to scatter your cattle in more than one pasture please coordinate this effort with the Alpine District office. Keep in mind that this option would be a temporary management strategy, and all authorized utilization levels would still apply.

2. UTILIZATION STANDARDS

The following utilization standards will be applied on the Cow Flat, PS, Stone Creek, Alpine, and Foote Creek Allotments:

- 40% use, by weight of current year's growth, on upland perennial grass species.
- 40% use, by number of growing leaders, on upland browse species.
- 45% use, by weight of current year's growth, on riparian grass species.
- 45% 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, not to exceed 40% in any one area, on grasses and forbs.
- Within Mexican spotted owl habitat, in order to maintain prey species habitat needs, a utilization level of 20-40%.

Our priority will be to maintain satisfactory vegetative and watershed conditions. Cattle distribution and subsequent utilization levels will help determine management.

3. KEY AREA MONITORING

Utilization levels will be checked prior to livestock entering the allotment and near the midpoint, 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 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 percentage of 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. 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/reconstruction of improvements must be authorized in writing from this office.

- NMMJM occupied habitat protection fence on the West Fork Black River within the Double Bar K pasture is planned to be constructed in Spring 2015.

- Replacement of troughs on Terry Flat. (FS will provide arch survey and troughs, [REDACTED] will put them in).
- Bardman corral. FS will have to determine if we have the material or not.

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 March 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.
- Drafting out of open water sources for the purpose of hauling water for livestock will require the sterilization of hoses, foot-valves, hip-boots, and other equipment to prevent the spread of chytrid fungus. Please consult the Alpine Wildlife Staff for specific details in this matter.

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 Cow Flat, PS, Stone Creek, and Foote Creek Allotments. Any additional information collected during the year may be incorporated into the Annual Operating Instructions.

We appreciate your cooperation in the management of the Cow Flat, PS, Stone Creek, and Foote Creek Allotments. If you have any questions regarding these instructions, please contact the Alpine District Range Staff or myself at (928) 339-5000. Thank you.

I have read and understand these Annual Operating Instructions for the Cow Flat, PS, Stone Creek and Foote Creek Allotments during the 2015 grazing season.

[REDACTED], Permittee

Date

Ernest Taylor, Acting District Ranger

Date