# Bighorn National Forest
# Medicine Wheel Ranger District

## 2016

## Annual Operating Instructions

## For

## Crooked Creek C&H Allotment

Recommended By: _____ Date: _____
Rangeland Management Specialist

Accepted By: _____ Date:_____
Permittee

Approved By: _____ Date: _____
District Ranger

As Permittee, my signature on these Annual Operating Instructions certifies that there is no change to my permitted livestock or base property ownership as described in my grazing permit.

Upon signature by the District Ranger, these Annual Operating Instructions are hereby made a part of your Term Grazing Permit number 40007A, approved by the Medicine Wheel District Ranger on 04/21/2014.

Any changes or deviation from the direction outlined in the Annual Operating Instructions will need to be requested in a written notice to the Medicine Wheel Ranger District. This includes changes in animal numbers, class of livestock, period of use (changes in entry or exit dates from unit to unit), or changes in pasture rotation. No changes in these instructions will be recognized without written confirmation from the Medicine Wheel Ranger District.

## 2016 Annual Operating Instructions for Crooked Creek C&H

**Before Entering the Allotment**
Please review all clauses of your term grazing permit and the information contained within this Annual Operating Instruction (AOI). Be sure to ask questions if any portions of your grazing permit or these operating instructions are not clearly understood.

Current years grazing fees must be paid prior to livestock entering the National Forest.

The following describes the **Permitted Use** for **Crooked Creek C&H**, as described in your permit signed on April 21, 2014:

**Crooked Creek C&H Permitted**

| Number and Class | Season of Use | Head Months |
|---|---|---|
| 110 C/C | 7/11-9/30 | 297 |

**Entering the Allotment**
The following information describes your Annual Operating Instructions for Crooked Creek C&H as discussed.

**Tentative Turn on Dates**

- **07/11**

**The actual date livestock may enter the allotment will depend on range readiness.** Unless notified by a Forest Officer that a delay will be necessary to allow for further forage development, you may plan to place livestock on the allotment on the entry date shown on your Bill for Collection.

**Crooked Creek C&H Authorized Use**

| Number and Class | Pasture or Unit | Season of Use |
|---|---|---|
| 110 C/C | Fossil Ridge | 07/11-09/30 |
| | Crooked Creek | |

**Compliance:**
Upon signature, this AOI is made part of your grazing permit consistent with Part 1, item 3 and Part 2, Item 8(a). Please remember, your bill must be paid prior to entering the allotment. Other situations may develop during the grazing season which requires changes to these instructions. If this becomes necessary or if you cannot comply with some part of these instructions, the District Ranger must approve any changes in the planned area prior to implementing those changes.

**Billing:**
This AOI describes livestock movement and your paid grazing bill authorizes livestock to be turned out on National Forest System Lands.

**Due Date:** Payment of your grazing bill is due five days prior to your earliest turnout date to allow time for processing. The Forest Service is required to provide Permittee's 30 days to pay grazing fees.

**Unauthorized Use:** Livestock grazing on the National Forest System lands without the grazing fees being paid and processed are considered to be unauthorized and are cause for action to be taken against the grazing permit. Livestock remaining on the National Forest System lands after the end of the

authorized grazing season must be billed at the unauthorized use rate and administration costs, and may be cause for action to be taken against the grazing permit.

**Livestock Management**

**Type of Rotation:** Deferred Rotation

**Standards and Guidelines:**

The allowable use/herbage left guidelines are designed to ensure that short-term effects of livestock grazing activities are within established parameters intended to provide for long term health and sustainability of rangeland resources. The two general approaches used to measure actual use to determine if the guidelines were met are residual herbage left and utilization.

**Residual herbage left methods** are expressed as the amount of herbage **left** after livestock grazing has occurred, and includes methods such as, stubble height and visual obstruction methods (Modified Robel Pole).

**Utilization methods** are expressed as the amount of forage **removed** by grazing or trampling, and include methods such as, paired plots and ocular estimates.

Please review the following allowable use/herbage left guidelines that will apply to all areas of you allotment(s). Total use by livestock and wildlife combined must not exceed any of these guidelines at the time livestock leave a pasture. You are responsible for determining when allowable use has been reached and for moving your livestock to the next unit in your rotation or off the allotment when allowable use has been reached.

**Upland Range Sites**

| | |
|---|---|
| Idaho Fescue vegetation types on sedimentary soil sites on the forest below 9,200 feet elevation (Excludes sites dominated by timothy and smooth brome) | Visual Obstruction Reading (VOR) of 5 or more bands for all applicable sites in each pasture. Readings of 4 or more acceptable. |
| Idaho Fescue vegetation types on granitic soil sites on the forest below 9,200 feet elevation. | Visual Obstruction Reading (VOR) of 5 or more bands for all applicable sites in each pasture. |
| All Other Sites (sites dominated by sagebrush, timothy and smooth brome or above 9,200 feet elevation) | A. Maximum of 40% by weight in pastures used prior to August 1st.<br>B. Maximum of 50% by weight in pastures used after August 1st. |

**Riparian Range Sites**

| | |
|---|---|
| Herbaceous vegetation on all sites. | A. Average 5 inch stubble height on wide leaf *Carex* species remaining if livestock leave a pasture prior to August 1st *.<br>B. Average 7 inch stubble height on wide leaf *Carex* species remaining if livestock leave a pasture after August 1st *. |
| Willows | Maximum of 35% use of current years leaders by livestock |

*All stubble height guidelines stated above are the minimum required when transect measurements record the longest leaf length of all leaves readily available for livestock grazing for each plant measured. Leaves or portions trampled in the mud, lying on the ground or in water, protected by willows, or otherwise unavailable to be grazed are not included in the measurements.

**Aspen Range Sites**

| | |
|---|---|
| Herbaceous vegetation within all aspen and cottonwood stands. | 5 inch stubble height for all grasses and sedges when livestock leave a pasture*. |

* All stubble height guidelines stated above are the minimum required when transect measurements record the longest leaf length of all leaves readily available for livestock grazing for each plant measured. Leaves or portions trampled in the mud, lying on the ground or in water, protected by willows, or otherwise unavailable to be grazed are not included in the measurements.

Livestock should be moved to the next pasture or off the National Forest, if in the last pasture, when further use will exceed the stated allowable use. It is your responsibility to manage your livestock within each pasture to assure these guidelines are not exceeded. This will require frequent monitoring of the vegetation by you and/or your rider, and not making pasture moves based on calendar dates.

It is important to note that allowable use guidelines outlined in this AOI, apply to all suitable range sites within the allotment(s). To assist you with your responsibilities of monitoring the actual use, all monitoring measurements will be done using a key area concept. Key areas are generally those areas livestock have the tendency to graze first when placed in a pasture. In most cases, the key areas will include both riparian and upland range sites, so it is important to keep close watch on the all range sites with the key area and plan livestock moves when use is nearing the guideline on either the upland or riparian sites.

**Key Areas**

Key areas serve as a monitoring and evaluation point for the degree of grazing use. Properly selected key areas give an indication of the overall acceptability of current grazing management to meet all resource objectives. The following is a list of key areas for each allotment; these areas may be moved or redefined in future years if monitoring results indicate a change is necessary.

- **Crooked Creek Pasture**:
    1. Crooked Creek, Jack Creek and Johnny Creek riparian areas.
- **Fossil Ridge Pasture:**
    1. The southeast ¼ of Fossil ridge pasture in the vicinity of the rain trap.

If you need assistance determining use levels or identifying the key areas, please do not hesitate to contact Heather Richter.

**Monitoring**

Permittee collection and submission of *Carex spp.* stubble height data is voluntary, but requested by this office. The Permittee monitoring program was designed to give the Permittee a trigger point to help determine when livestock should be removed from a pasture. You are still responsible to manage your livestock to assure that allowable use guidelines are met in all areas of the allotment. It is strongly encouraged that you continue to complete stubble height monitoring in all key areas with riparian plant communities, to assure actual use does not go beyond the guidelines stated within this AOI. Any forms voluntarily submitted to our office will be placed in the allotment monitoring folder.

When conducting stubble height monitoring, it is recommend that you read enough transects to obtain a representative sample of the residual leaf length of the dominant sedges. The number of transects you will need will depend on the size of the area and the variances of use levels. One transect may be sufficient in a narrow riparian area where use does not vary. Two or more may be necessary in a larger riparian area if you detect utilization varies significantly within 3 feet of the water's edge, compared to

the remainder of the area. Photos of transects, along with its general location, are not required, but would be helpful to substantiate your documentation. The Forest Service will also be conducting spot checks and transect measurements of key areas throughout the grazing season to verify guidelines are being met.

**Range Improvements**

Range improvements listed in part three of your permit must be maintained before livestock enter the allotment(s). The maintenance standards listed in Part 2, Clause 8 (i) of your term grazing permit states "the Permittee will maintain all range improvements , whether private or Government owned, that are assigned for maintenance to standards of repair, orderliness, and safety acceptable to the Forest Service." The maintenance of each improvement must be completed prior to the time livestock enter the pasture in which the improvement is located each year, or in the case of allotment boundary fences, prior to livestock entering the pasture on either side of the fence. The minimum maintenance required will be as follows:

1. **Springs:** All tanks are to be level, completely surrounded by dry ground and easily accessible by livestock. The inlet and overflow pipes are to be free of crimps or breaks, completely buried or otherwise protected from livestock and capable of delivering water to and away from tanks without any water spilling in the immediate vicinity (20-30 ft.) of the tank. Livestock barriers over tanks must be sturdy and all poles and planks must be in good condition and nailed/bolted in place.

2. **Wire Fences:** Fences are to be in an upright, vertical position with all broken wires repaired, wires tight and properly spaced and all corner posts, braces, line posts, steel posts, stays, loops, staples, etc. replaced as needed. Gates are to be tight enough to prevent sagging but must be able to be easily opened and closed by the general public.

3. **Buck and Pole Fences:** Fences must be in an upright, serviceable position. Bucks that are spreading and lowering the overall height of the fence must be stabilized with a bottom brace or replaced. All poles must be nailed to bucks and all broken or rotting poles and bucks are to be replaced.

**Planned range improvements**

- If time permits construct a small buck and pole exclosure around willow stand on Crooked Creek. FS materials and labor.
- Possible construction of a new pit pond east of Crooked Creek Reservoir.
- Try to meet with permittees to address a possible electric fence north of FSR 17/271.

**Permittee Instructions**

1. Compliance with the Bighorn National Forest off-road travel restrictions are required at all times. An off-road permit may be issued (at the District Rangers discretion) upon request for the sole purpose of moving and tending your livestock camp. The permit will be issued with the stipulation that soil conditions must be dry and no resource damage will occur.
2. Salt should be placed on rocky ground or salting troughs to avoid damage to vegetation and soils. To minimize attraction to wildlife species, salt only sufficient amounts so that surplus is not left behind after livestock leave the area.
3. Salt should be placed between water developments and at least ¼ mile from water, roads, and trails. Location of salt should change every year and preferably, every time salt is place within a pasture.

4. Predator control/ Animal damage management activities on National Forest land, must be conducted in accordance with both Federal regulations and State law. Requests for assistance will be done through USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services, 307-261-5336. Wolf issues will be handled through the Fish and Wildlife Service, contact the Forest Service office for assistance.
5. Dead livestock carcasses must be moved at least 100 feet from the high water line of streams and lakes, springs, and out of the view of roads or trails, and away from any areas of significant public use.
6. Horses to be used on the allotment and kept in the horse pastures will be charged for at the same rate as for cattle. These horses will be broke and usable, for use in the management of the allotment. Application for horse use will be made each year prior to beginning of the grazing season.
7. Any equipment used in the transport of livestock, including horse trailers and stock trucks, should be washed before coming onto the allotment(s) if they have been used in areas where noxious weeds are present.
8. By USDA Order 04-00-097, all non-pelletized hay, straw, or mulch possessed, stored, or transported on National Forest System Lands, in individual bales or containers, must be tagged or marked as noxious weed free, or must have the original and current evidence of noxious weed free certification documentation present. All markings must meet the State and/or county standards for certification as noxious weed free.
9. Your assistance in locating noxious weed sites and reporting them to your Forest Officer is greatly appreciated. If you are able and willing to assist in treating noxious weeds, please work with your Forest Officer to determine how best to help.
10. If livestock are being fed hay prior to coming on to the Forest, please see to it that they are fed weed free hay at least 2 days prior to entering the Forest

**Coordination & Cooperation**
If you spot a wildfire, report it immediately to the Interagency Dispatch Center in Cody, WY at (307) 578-5740 or Toll Free (800) 295-9954.

**Notice**
The Permittee will provide the Medicine Wheel Ranger District with notification of any changes or deviation he or she wishes to make in these Annual Operating Instructions.

We look forward to working with you and solicit your cooperation and involvement in bringing about sound range and livestock management practices that will enhance all of the allotment resources. If you have any ideas or suggestions that will improve the management of the allotment, we would like to hear from you. Please keep us posted about activities and conditions on the allotment. If you have any questions or concerns regarding management, please do not hesitate to contact Heather Richter at (307) 548-5305 or Cinda Mattrocce at (307) 548-5318.