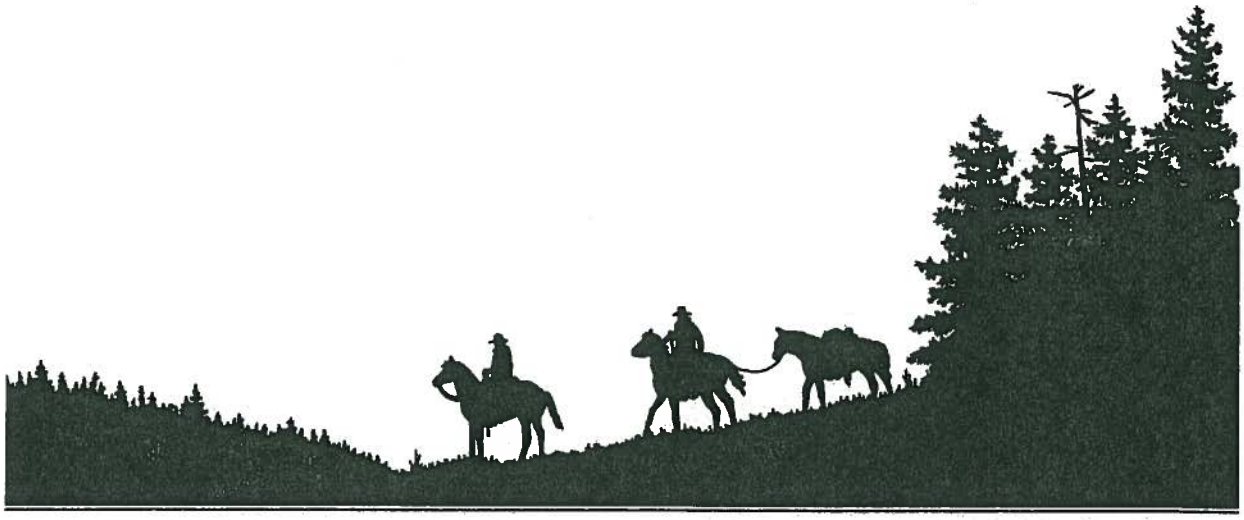
ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

2016

Black Range Ranger District
Gila National Forest

Wedgewood Allotment #221



Reviewed By: /s/ _____ Date: 10/27/16
Permittee

Approved By: /s/ _____ Date: 10/27/16
District Ranger

BLACK RANGE RANGER DISTRICT

2016 ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

Wedgewood Allotment

I. INTRODUCTION

These Annual Operating Instructions document your discussion with Allen Graves and Shane Shannon on October 27, 2016 at the Black Range Ranger District Office.

Term Permitted Livestock Numbers:

Permittee	Number & Class of livestock	Dates
Sterling O. Roberts, Trevor G. Roberts, and Gerald M. Roberts	12 Cow/Calf	11/01 – 02/28

Authorized Use:

Permittee	Number & Class of livestock	Dates
Sterling O. Roberts, Trevor G. Roberts, and Gerald M. Roberts	12 Cow/Calf	11/01/2015 – 02/28/2016

Pasture Rotations:

Class of Livestock	Rotation Date	Pasture
Cow/Calf	11/01 – 02/28	Wedgewood

This schedule will depend on range readiness, available water, weather conditions and permittee needs. Changes to the grazing rotation must be approved by the Forest Officer in advance. An **"amended"** AOI must be developed to reflect the approved changes.

The off-date for a pasture is the date when the livestock are to be fully out of the unit, or in the case of the last pasture, fully off of National Forest System lands. We recognize that moves cannot usually be accomplished in one day. It is your responsibility to begin early movement of livestock to ensure that pastures are clean by the dates specified.

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.

III. IMPROVEMENT MAINTENANCE

All range improvements assigned in the 10-year Term Grazing Permit are to be maintained in a functioning condition. In the event these improvements cannot be brought up to a functioning condition, you should notify the Range Staff at the Black Range Ranger District to 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 the allotment. Maintenance to standard is required even if you have taken **"nonuse".**

No new range improvements are planned for the Wedgewood Allotment at this time. If the need for range improvement materials arises during the grazing season, please contact this office.

IV. TRAVEL MANAGEMENT

The Gila National Forest Travel Management Decision signed in September 2013 was implemented July 1, 2016, on the Black Range Ranger District. This rule prohibits cross country motorized travel and has restricted all motorized vehicle travel on the Gila National Forest (GNF) to authorized motorized routes only on NFS land.
Some motorized uses are exempt from the prohibitions of the designation process (36 CFR 212.51(a): "Motor vehicle use that is specifically authorized under a written authorization issued under Federal law or regulation" (CFR 212.51(a) (8) is one of the exempted uses. The permittees and/or their employees must comply with all GNF Travel Management regulations, except those allowed under this authorization as described below:

1. The permittees and/or their employees are authorized for off road or unauthorized travel routes on their specific grazing allotment(s) to carry out the necessary activities for grazing and livestock management. This includes range improvement maintenance and/or reconstruction as designated in their grazing permit, placement of salt or other supplements, and for emergency livestock health purposes.

2. It is prohibited to operate any vehicle off NFS lands, State or County roads in a manner which damages or unreasonably disturbs the land, wildlife, or vegetative resources (36 CFR 261.15(h). Moist soils are especially susceptible to damage through rutting or compaction; therefore, use of motorized vehicles on saturated soils should be avoided.

3. Utilize roads or trails designated for motor vehicle use to access range improvements, salting grounds, or livestock emergencies where possible. This includes trails and roads open for public use, those specified as "administrative use only", and keeping within fence rights-of-way while accomplishing fence maintenance where possible.

4. This authorization and associated activities are specific to your grazing permit(s) and allotment management only; recreational use including hunting or game retrieval with motorized vehicles is not authorized.

5. Activities identified for the 2016 grazing season for the V+T Allotment are as follows: Maintenance of fences and Livestock management.

V. 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 Black Range District may allow naturally ignited fires to burns on the district this coming year. We will notify you if we plan to let a fire burn on your allotment.

2. Records: In order to close out permit modifications you must provide documentation of materials and labor constituting you 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 by the District Ranger providing the following conditions are met:

- Refunds will only be approved where the term grazing permit has been waived, the waiver of term grazing permit has been confirmed by the authorized officer, and a new permit issued to a qualified applicant indicated on the waiver of term grazing permit (FS-2200-12), or if a current permittee has applied for, and the authorized officer has approved, nonuse for which grazing fees have previously been paid.
- Grazing fee credits will be approved when late entry or early removal of livestock is requested in advance by the permittee for legitimate reasons and/or when delayed entry or early removal of livestock is requested by the authorized officer for reasons of resource protection. Credit for grazing fees will not be approved merely for the convenience of the permittee after the bill for collection is issued.

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

Salt should be placed in such a way as to distribute livestock use throughout the area. Place salt well away (>¼ mile) from any water sources, or key areas that traditionally receive heavy use such as roads, parks, and riparian areas. Place salt in areas of light use to draw cattle to those areas such as oak thickets or under the aspen, spruce or pine. Salt locations must be moved every year and do not place more than one block in a location. The best distribution can be obtained by scattering one-half block chunks in areas of light use. Salt or supplement will not be placed near areas where such placement is liable to result in conflicts with other Forest users. Pick-up your salt after livestock are rotated to the next pasture.

Any hay, straw, or supplemental feed used in association with your grazing permit must be certified and tagged as free of noxious weeds and/or noxious weed seeds.

VI. ALLOTMENT STATUS

These Instructions implement the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) decision for the Wedgewood Allotment dated September 23, 2014 and the Wedgewood Allotment Management Plan.

VII. OTHER ITEMS DISCUSSED

The District Ranger will authorize necessary changes to this AOI to accommodate fire management.

VIII. SPECIAL MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

Keep track of conditions on your allotment. Make plans to reduce or remove livestock if vegetative/watershed conditions could be substantially harmed due to continued drought. The forecast for the upcoming winter and spring is drier than normal. If stock water does not recharge, adjustments may be necessary to the rotation plan and or removing livestock.

Wildlife and Fish

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife was consulted during the NEPA process in 2014. There were no issues with regard to Threatened and Endangered (T&E) species within the allotment.

Heritage and Cultural

You must obtain permission from this office, 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.

IX. UTILIZATION MONITORING OF KEY AREAS

Monitoring Schedule (Current Management)

Allowable Use: (Standards by Pasture and Key Area)

Pasture	Key Area	Key Species	Allowable Use	
			Upland	Riparian
All	Grassland Openings	Upland bunchgrasses	31-40%	N/A

If allowable use is reached on any key area prior to the scheduled off date, you will need to immediately move your livestock to the next unit or off National Forest if that unit is the last in the rotation. This will usually necessitate beginning the move one or more days prior to reaching allowable use or the scheduled off date.

Monitoring: The range personnel will conduct allotment inspections each year to ensure compliance with the terms and condition addressed in the Term Grazing Permit, including the Allotment Management Plan and Annual Operating Instructions. The permittee may also schedule inspections at any time.

The idea of a key area is to find a site that is representative of a larger area in which cattle obtain the majority of their required forage resources. Key area monitoring will avoid areas directly adjacent to permanent water sources, cattle trails, roads, and fence lines.

Because of the small size of the Wedgewood Allotment, it is not practical to establish individual key areas. Therefore, all primary rangeland within the allotment will be considered key for utilization monitoring. Utilization monitoring will avoid areas directly adjacent to permanent water sources, cattle trails, roads, and fence lines.

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.

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.

X. NEPA AND APPEAL RIGHTS

These Instructions implement the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) decision for the Wedgewood Allotment dated September 23, 2014, and are not eligible for appeal.