

ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

2018

**Wilderness Ranger District
Gila National Forest**

XSX #808



Prepared By: /s/ Allen Graves Date: Feb 13, 2018
Range Staff

Reviewed By /s/ Permittee Date: Feb 13, 2018
Permittee

Approved By /s/ Rachelle Huddleston-Lorton Date: Feb 28, 2018
District Ranger

WILDERNESS RANGER DISTRICT

2018 ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

XSX Allotment

I. INTRODUCTION

These Annual Operating Instructions document your discussion with Allen Graves on February 13, 2018 at the Wilderness Ranger District Office.

Temp Permitted Livestock Numbers

Permittee	Number & Class of Livestock	Dates
Becky Campbell	30 Horses 360 AM/yr	03/01 – 02/28

Authorized Use

Permittee	Number & Class of Livestock	Dates
Becky Campbell	30 Horses 360 AM/yr	03/01 – 02/28

Actual on-dates and off-dates are dependent on range readiness and when allowable use standards are met. The Forest Service may approve changes to the grazing rotation in consultation with you, to address range condition and situations that may occur due to forage condition or weather related circumstances.

Pasture Rotation:

Allotment	Pasture	# of horses	Use Period
Mimbres	Kelly	30	03/01 – 06/30
XSX	Upper	30	07/01 – 02/28

This pasture rotation 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. Permittee will move from Mimbres to XSX earlier if water becomes available.

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.

It is strongly suggested that horses be moved before utilization standards are met. If allowable use levels are met early in the scheduled pasture, horses will be rotated into the next pasture or off the Forest.

II. MANAGEMENT OF LIVESTOCK

You are responsible for monitoring water availability and forage utilization. It is your responsibility to move your horses 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 horses. 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 Temp Grazing Permit are to be maintained in functioning condition. In the event these improvements cannot be brought up to a functioning condition, you should notify this office so we can 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".

Range improvements must be maintained to standard before horses 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. Routine maintenance of existing improvements does not require written clearance; however, construction/reconstruction of new improvements must be authorized in writing from this office.

2018 Improvements Planned

When improvements have been maintained, please call Allen Graves at the Black Range Ranger District and report that maintenance has been completed. If verification is not received from the permittee, inspections will be made. During that inspection, if we find maintenance has not been completed, and livestock are grazing an area unscheduled for use at the time, they will be considered unauthorized. Permittees may be billed for unauthorized use and/or permit action taken for maintenance.

All water developments must provide access and escape to and from water for all types of wildlife. Please contact Allen for assistance.

IV. 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 Wilderness District may allow naturally ignited fires to burn 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 your contribution to the permit modification.

You must provide documentation of horse numbers; dates of entering and leaving pastures, shipping dates and horse losses. 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.

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. The permittee 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.

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. Salting and Supplemental Feeding:

Salt should be placed in such a way as to distribute livestock use throughout the area. Place salt well away (>1/4 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.

V. ALLOTMENT STATUS

These Instructions implement the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) decision for the XSX Allotment dated April 14, 1999.

VI. OTHER ITEMS DISCUSSED

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

VII. 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 grazing. If stock water does not recharge, adjustments may be necessary to the rotation plan.

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.

- Stock tanks must be surveyed for possible aquatic habitat before earth-disturbing maintenance is authorized.

The Endangered Species Act requires that actions funded or carried out by the federal government go through the consultation process to insure these actions do not jeopardize the continued existence of a listed species. Please notify this office of any planned earth disturbing activities involving riparian areas, dirt tanks, or other sources of open water.

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.

VIII. UTILIZATION MONITORING OF KEY AREAS

Monitoring will be conducted to measure utilization of riparian and upland vegetation throughout the grazing year.

Key areas for monitoring have been identified as riparian areas and transect cluster locations. In addition to the cluster sites, we have identified other upland sites for monitoring, which are listed below.

Monitoring Schedule (Current Management)

PASTURE	LOCATION	SPECIES MONITORED
Middle Fork	Cluster C-2	Upland grasses
East	Mesa top in SEC 29	Upland grasses
Creek	Cluster C-2	Upland grasses
Upper	Cluster C-1	Upland grasses
Upper	SW ¼ SEC 26	Upland grasses
Allotment-wide	Riparian areas	All riparian species
Allotment-wide	MSO PAC's & habitat	Residual forage on grasses

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.

Riparian areas will be monitored for use on riparian woody species as well as riparian herbaceous species.

Upland areas will be monitored for use on perennial grass species.

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 and as described in the Allotment Management Plan (AMP).

Your Term Grazing Permit includes the specific maximum allowable utilization levels applicable to your allotment. Allowable use is calculated at a point-in-time. To comply with standards in the Gila National Forest Plan, livestock must be moved to another unit or remove them from National Forest System lands regardless of the time remaining in the grazing season before utilization standards are met.

You are responsible for tracking and complying with your permitted forage use levels. For your convenience, the North Palomas Allotment maximum allowable forage utilization levels are listed below:

The following use standards will be applied on the allotment:

- Riparian areas are not to exceed 25% of current year's growth on woody riparian species; this includes willow and cottonwood.
- Upland sites grazed during the growing season are not to exceed 35% of current year's growth, by weight, of perennial grasses.
- Upland sites grazed during the dormant season are not to exceed 40% of current year's growth, by weight, of perennial grasses.

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's resources. If you have any ideas or suggestions that will improve the management of this allotment, we would like to hear from you.

X. 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 may be 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. The decision to authorize motor vehicle use will be determined at Annual Operating Instruction meetings. 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 current grazing season for the XSX Allotment are as follows:
See section III IMPROVEMENT MAINTENANCE above.

XI. NEPA AND APPEAL RIGHTS

These Instructions implement the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) decision for the XSX Allotment dated April 14, 1999, and are not eligible for appeal under 36 CFR 251.