

WILDERNESS RANGER DISTRICT

2020 ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

Mimbres, Powderhorn, Sapillo, Sheppard Allotments

I. INTRODUCTION

These Annual Operating Instructions document your discussion with Rachelle Huddleston-Lorton, Robbie Gallardo, Allen Graves, Vern Lente and Johnny Zapata on February 5, 2020 at the Wilderness Ranger District Office.

Permitted Use:

Allotment	Permittee	Numbers	Season
Mimbres/Powderhorn/Sapillo/Sheppard	The Nature Conservancy	235 Cow/Calf	3/1 – 2/28
Mimbres/Powderhorn/Sapillo/Sheppard	The Nature Conservancy	10 horses	3/1 – 2/28

Authorized Use:

Allotment	Permittee	Numbers	Season
Mimbres/Powderhorn/Sapillo/Sheppard	The Nature Conservancy	Non - Use	3/1 – 2/28
Mimbres/Powderhorn/Sapillo/Sheppard	The Nature Conservancy	Non - Use	3/1 – 2/28

II. IMPROVEMENT MAINTENANCE

All range improvements assigned in the 10-year Term 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. Maintenance to standard is required even if you have taken “nonuse”.

Range improvements are planned for the allotment during the upcoming grazing season.

- Continued maintenance of water developments, windmills, fences, and corrals as needed to successfully facilitate the grazing operation.
- Reconstruct up to 1 mile of fence #00714 on the Elk pasture boundary fence within the Mimbres Allotment. District will provide materials.
- TNC will assess boundary fence # 5076 on Mimbres Allotment and boundary fence #5226 on the North end of Sheppard Allotment.

III. ALLOTMENT STATUS

The Mimbres, Powderhorn, Sapillo and Sheppard Allotments Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) are a part of the Temp Grazing Permit as provided for in Part 3, Section

8. The AOI complies with the standards and guidelines found in the 9/30/2006 **Mimbres, Powderhorn, Sapillo and Sheppard** Allotment Decision Notice. They also comply with the Endangered Species Act on-going grazing consultation. Any additional information collected during the year may be incorporated into the annual operating instructions.

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 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 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. 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.

IV. OTHER ITEMS DISCUSSED

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

V. SPECIAL MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

Wildlife and Fish

There is documentation that identifies protected and restricted Mexican Spotted Owl habitat on the Indian Creek Allotment. MSO consultation with US Fish and Wildlife requires allowable use levels not to exceed 35% utilization on uplands.

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

The Forest Service will be directly engaged in communication and assistance in the Blue Range Wolf Reintroduction effort. Any management actions that may require movement of cattle, changes in rotation, season of use or removal from a pasture or allotment must be approved by the District Ranger. We encourage you to cooperate with the Interagency Field Team, New Mexico Game and Fish and U.S. Fish and Wildlife in management of the wolves. Please stay in communication with range personnel or the District Ranger if concerns or question arise.

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.

VI. MONITORING OF KEY AREAS

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.

Key areas for monitoring are identified as riparian areas and transect cluster locations. Additional key areas may be identified during the season based on routine monitoring.

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.

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

District personnel will contact the permittee 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.

VII. NEPA AND APPEAL RIGHTS

These Instructions implement the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) decision for the Mimbres, Powderhorn, Sapillo, Sheppard Allotment's dated September 28, 2007, and are not eligible for appeal under 36 CFR 251.

VIII. TRAVEL MANAGEMENT

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 National Forest System, 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.