

ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

2014

OWEN CREEK S&G ALLOTMENT

TONGUE DISTRICT

BIGHORN NATIONAL FOREST

Clarke McClung
District Ranger

Date

Permittee

Date

OWEN CREEK S&G ALLOTMENT
2014 ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

A. Before Entering the Allotment

1. Review all clauses of your term grazing permit and the information contained within these Annual Operating Instructions (AOI). Be sure to contact David or Zach if you have questions or any portion of your grazing permit or these operating instructions is not clearly understood.
2. The current year's grazing fees must be paid before placing livestock on the National Forest.
3. Review Section G. - Maintenance of Improvements, and complete the necessary maintenance of assigned range improvements as described in that section.

B. Entering and Leaving the Allotment

The on-date for the allotment is tentatively set for July 16th. If you do not hear from us you can plan to place livestock on the allotment on the 16th or after as you determine what best fits your schedule. I remind you that you are the responsible party to meet the allowable use/herbage left guidelines described in Section D below so making sure there is adequate forage available when your sheep enter the allotment is an important decision and can affect not only your ability to meet guidelines but the length of time they may remain on the allotment.

C. Authorized Numbers and Pasture Rotation

Permittee	Authorized Livestock Numbers	Authorized Season of Use
Mike and Lisa Kimsey	900 Ewe/lambs	7/16-9/13
	2 Horses	7/16-9/30

The Owen Creek allotment is considered a single pasture, season long grazing system. In an effort to help meet the allowable use/herbage left guidelines, and to reduce use in the key areas, you have agreed to move the sheep as one herd through different areas of the pasture to simulate a rotation. You are encouraged to use adaptive management practices (e.g. use of temporary electric fence, use of riders and low stress handling techniques, combination of allotments, etc.) to help meet the allowable use requirements described in Sections D and E below. To assure your management does not negatively affect other resources, all proposed changes to these instructions must be discussed with and approved by David or Zach prior to implementation on the ground.

D. Allowable Use/Herbage Left 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 the long-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: This is expressed as the amount of herbage left after livestock grazing and includes methods such as stubble height and visual obstruction methods (Robel pole).

Utilization methods: This is expressed as the amount of forage removed by grazing or trampling and includes methods such as paired plots and ocular estimates.

The following allowable use/herbage left guidelines will apply to all areas of your allotment. Total use by livestock and wildlife combined must not exceed any of these guidelines at the time livestock leave a pasture.

1. Upland Range Sites

Sites on sedimentary soils 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 (a VOR of band 4 is acceptable).
Sites on granitic soils below 9,200 feet elevation (Excludes sites dominated by timothy and smooth brome).	A VOR of 5 or more bands for all applicable sites.
All <u>other</u> sites (such as sites dominated by timothy and smooth brome, or above 9200 feet elevation).	Maximum of 35% by weight.

2. Riparian Range Sites

Herbaceous vegetation on all sites except areas suitable for water vole habitat.	A residual 8" stubble height on wide leaved carex species remaining.*
Willows	Maximum of 35% use of current years leaders by livestock.

3. Aspen Range Sites

Herbaceous vegetation within all aspen stands	A residual 5" stubble height for all grasses and sedges when livestock leave a pasture.*
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* All stubble height guidelines stated for riparian and aspen range sites 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 of leaves trampled in the mud, lying on the ground or in water, protected by willows or otherwise unavailable to livestock are not to be included in the measurements. Transect measurements may also record the average length of all leaves available for grazing from each selected plant. If the average leaf method is used, all minimum guidelines shown in tables above will be adjusted downward 1".

Livestock must be moved to the next pasture or off the National Forest if in the last pasture when further use will exceed one or more of the allowable use/herbage left guidelines shown above. It is your responsibility to manage your livestock within each pasture to assure use does not exceed any of the above guidelines. This will require constant monitoring of the vegetation by you and/or your allotment rider and not just simply waiting for estimated calendar dates to determine the proper use period for each pasture. It is imperative you take whatever steps are necessary (use of riders, move salt weekly, reduction in total numbers, shorten length of grazing periods in pastures, etc.) to manage your livestock to assure all guidelines are met throughout each pasture.

It is also important to note the allowable use/herbage left guidelines shown above apply to all suitable range (riparian and uplands) within the allotment. To assist you with your responsibilities of monitoring the actual use, all monitoring measurements will be done using a key area concept. The key areas are generally those areas livestock have the tendency to graze first when placed in a pasture. Livestock also tend to graze these areas repeatedly. As a result, these areas will typically reach the allowable use/herbage left guidelines before any other area of the pasture. If actual use in

these key areas does not exceed the allowable use/herbage left guidelines, then use in the rest of the pasture will most likely not exceed guidelines either (unless livestock are constantly pushed off the key areas to other portions of the pasture). The important thing to remember is actual use should not exceed any of the guidelines throughout the pasture. If our management causes a change in use patterns we may need to discuss a change in key area boundaries.

E. Monitoring

An integral part of the ROD for the Tongue AMP is the use of adaptive management. Adaptive management requires a continuous cycle of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation into our management approach and modifies future management based upon the results. Our best chance for success will be for permittees and Forest Service to cooperatively work together to read transects, interpret the data, and discuss any annual or long-term adjustments that may be necessary to meet the intent of the ROD.

The annual monitoring will primarily use a combination of the following three protocols:

1. **Carex Stubble Height:** Stubble height measurements will be taken using paced transects in all key areas with riparian range sites. The number and location of transects you need to read will depend on the area size and the variances of use levels. One transect within 3 feet of the water's edge may be sufficient in narrow riparian areas where use does not vary across the riparian zone. Two or more may be necessary in larger riparian areas or whenever use on streambanks (especially within 3 feet of the water's edge) is noticeably different from the rest of riparian zone. In large areas where use does not vary, locate two or more transects within 3 feet of the stream but if use varies across the zone, locate at least one transect within 3 feet of the water's edge and additional transects further away from the stream. Each transect will consist of 50 measurements with a recommended 10 or more feet between each measurement. Transects to determine the actual use must be read within 7 days after livestock leave each pasture. Photos of each transect are not required but would be helpful to substantiate your documentation.
1. **Robel Pole:** Visual obstruction readings (VOR) using a modified robel pole will be used to measure the remaining standing crop in appropriate key areas below 9200 feet (excludes sites dominated by timothy, smooth brome or very dense sagebrush): A minimum of 2-4 paced transects will be read in key areas located on sedimentary soils and a minimum of 2-5 transects in each key area located on granitic soils. Each transect will consist of 20 stations with each station a minimum of 10 meters (approximately 33 feet) apart. At each station, four VORs (one in each cardinal direction) are recorded. Transects to determine the residual standing crop must be read within 7 days after livestock leave each pasture. Photos of each transect are not required but would be helpful to substantiate your documentation.
2. **Grazing Response Index (GRI):** GRI ratings will be determined for key areas within each pasture. Upland and riparian range sites, occurring in the same or separate key areas, will be rated independently of one another. It is important that you keep accurate records of the actual number of sheep, dates livestock graze in each pasture, monitoring data gathered, and any observations of plant development throughout the grazing season. This data will be useful if you choose to cooperate with David, or Zach to complete rating forms for key areas in your allotment. Like the allowable use guidelines, the ROD for the Tongue AMP requires livestock to be managed to consistently (4 out of every 5 years) provide a neutral to positive GRI rating for each pasture.

As in recent years, the Forest Service will be completing spot checks throughout the grazing season for consistency in meeting allowable use/herbage left guidelines and gathering information for the GRI ratings. You, however, remain responsible to manage your livestock to assure these guidelines are met and neutral to positive GRI ratings are achieved. I strongly encourage you to keep close watch of the growth cycle of the desirable forage plants to be able to adjust the length of grazing periods in each pasture as necessary and to complete spot checks of all key areas on a regular basis to assure actual use remains within the guidelines stated above. Feel free to give David or Zach a call at anytime during the grazing season to compare notes and/or to discuss potential GRI ratings for your pastures. I have enclosed copies of the data forms to assist you with your monitoring. Please remember any forms and/or photos submitted to our office will be placed in the allotment monitoring folder.

F. Key Areas:

Properly selected key areas give an indication of the overall acceptability of current grazing management to meet all resource objectives. These areas may be moved or redefined in future years if monitoring results indicate a change is necessary. The following is a list of the key areas:

1. Open parks on ridge tops adjacent to salt grounds near Bear Rocks and Spring #482.
2. All riparian areas associated with Owen Creek and Aber Creek.

G. Maintenance of Improvements

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". A complete list of the improvements and designated maintenance responsibility is included in Part 3 of your term grazing permit. The initial 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. For many improvements, maintenance will be on going and will require additional attention after livestock enter the pasture. The minimum maintenance required will be as follows:

Springs: All tanks are to be level, completely surrounded by dry ground and easily accessible by both cows and calves. 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.

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. Wire spacing may be adapted to the needs of each fence but the bottom wire should be 16-18" off the ground and the top wire must be no higher than 42" above the ground. Gates are to be tight enough to prevent sagging but must be able to be easily opened and closed by the general public.

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.

H. Range Improvement Projects

During the spring meetings there was some discussion on replacing portions of the Owen Creek sheep corrals that are nearing the end of their useful life. The permittees who normally use these corrals each year agreed to take inventory and provide a list of materials needed to replace the worn out portions. The list of materials will be held to compete for available funds in future years but we need to have a good idea of the amount of funds needed to help us set priorities. Actual reconstruction of the corrals will be done in the year or two following the purchase of materials.

I. General Guidelines:

1. Sheep will be open herded. Excessive trailing and bunching of sheep should be avoided. Snow bank areas and steep, sparsely vegetated slopes should be avoided to minimize soil movement.
2. Bed grounds must be monitored and managed to avoid leaving them with little residual vegetation and/or trampled soils. In other words, the bed ground should be left in a manner that it was not obviously used for that purpose.
3. Compliance with the Bighorn National Forest off-road travel restrictions are required at all times. An off-road permit may be issued upon request for the sole purpose of hauling salt to a central storage location and/or fence materials when posts and wire are required for heavy maintenance or to rebuild a section of fence. The permit will be issued with the stipulation that soil conditions must be dry and no resource damage will occur. Trips to and from the storage area from an open road must be kept to a minimum (preferably no more than twice each grazing season) to prevent creating new trails for other people to follow. The herder must walk or ride horse to tend sheep, check salt locations, or check fences – the use of ATVs or motorcycles for such purposes is strictly limited to open roads within the allotment.
4. Salt should be placed on rocky ground or salting troughs to avoid damage to vegetation and soils. It should also be placed between water developments and at least 1/4 mile from water. Salting near water just encourages livestock to stay nearby.
5. You or any of your employees shall not use or place poison, including cyanide guns, for predator control on National Forest lands.
6. The carcasses of animals that die near streams, roadsides, trails, and areas of concentrated public use shall be moved a distance in excess of 300 feet from said area and to a place not easily seen by the general public.
7. Make a concerted effort to use all areas suitable for grazing within each pasture. The bottom line is all grazing must be done so it does not exceed the allowable use guidelines.

ACTUAL USE RECORD - 2014

TONGUE R.D.

OWEN CREEK ALLOTMENT

BIGHORN NATIONAL FOREST

ACTUAL USE

Pasture	Number of Cattle	Date on Pasture	Date off Pasture

Losses: Numbers by age class and possible cause (Poison, natural or predator).

Allotment Operating Cost:

Labor costs:

Rider _____

Transportation Cost _____

Improvement Maintenance _____

Horse Maintenance _____

Water _____

Fence _____

Other _____

Improvement Construction _____

Water _____

Fence _____

Other _____

Salt _____

Permittee signature _____ Date _____

PLEASE ATTACH ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OR NOTES YOU WISH TO PLACE IN THE PERMANENT ALLOTMENT FILE.