2014 Annual Operating Instructions

Rock Creek C&H Allotment

Powder River Ranger District

Bighorn National Forest

District Ranger _____ Date _____

Permittee _____ Date _____

ROCK CREEK C&H ALLOTMENT
Year 2014 Annual Operating Instructions

Permitted and Authorized for 2014:

Rock Creek Allotment	LS Kind	LS Class	Permitted			Authorized		
			LS #	From	To	LS#	From	To
Love Land and Cattle	Cattle	Mature	300	7/1	9/26	270	07/15	09/26
	Horse	Mature	6	7/1	9/26	6	07/15	09/26

- Before Entering the Allotment

I suggest that you review your term grazing permit and the following Annual Operating Instructions, and ask questions if any portion is not clearly understood.

Year 2014 grazing fees are $1.35 /head month, and must be paid before livestock can be turned onto the Forest. Let Scott or Kerri know the date and number of livestock entering the National Forest and, upon request, provide for having stock counted.

Planned rotation:

Pasture Sequence	2013	**2014**	2015
Rock Creek Pasture	REST	**4**	4
Johnson Creek Pasture	2	**3**	3
South French Pasture	1	**2**	1
North French Pasture	3	**1**	2

Limited livestock use is to occur in areas where rangeland vegetation was burned by the 2012 Gilead Fire, to reduce threat of erosion and enhance recovery. Stocking is planned to be lighter and Rock Creek pasture used late in the year. Resource protection non-use is authorized.

- Entering the Allotment

The turn on date for Rock Creek C&H Allotment is tentatively authorized for July 15. Plan to turn livestock onto the allotment on or after this date unless you feel that forage is not ready to be grazed, or unless you have been notified that delays are necessary to allow for further plant development. The actual date livestock may be turned onto the allotment depends on range readiness. The value of animal months lost due to a delay for forage development may be credited against next year's fees, if requested by the end of the calendar year.

Indicators to determine range readiness are soil and vegetation conditions. Rangeland is generally ready for grazing when soil has become firm after winter and early spring precipitation, and when plants have reached a stage of growth at which grazing may begin under a specific management plan without long-lasting damage. This occurs when grasses are headed out, forbs are in full bloom, and shrubs are leaved out. Livestock should not be turned on until all portions of the first pasture of a rotation are determined to be "ready", and subsequent pastures in a rotation will be "range ready" when their scheduled grazing use is to occur.

- Resource Guidelines

Resource guidelines are described in the Bighorn National Forest Vegetation Grazing Guidelines, and in the Bighorn Forest Plan. The allowable use guidelines for utilization of the current year's forage are listed in the following tables. These guidelines are applicable at the time the livestock leave the unit and include use by both livestock and wildlife. Rock Creek C&H Allotment is managed under a "Rotation" grazing strategy, and existing rangeland condition is considered "satisfactory". Existing rangeland condition determinations may be revised as trend assessments are conducted.

Maximum allowable use guidelines (percent utilization by weight of forage species)		
Type Of Management	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Growing Season Long	30	10
Fall and Winter	45	15
Rotation	**45**	35
Deferred Rotation	50	40
Rest Rotation	50	40
Riparian Vegetation Residue Guidelines		
Season Of Use	Existing Rangeland Condition	
	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Early Use Pasture Livestock leave pasture prior to 08/01	**5 inches**	5 inches
Summer & Fall Use Pasture Livestock leave pasture after 08/01	**5 inches**	7 inches
*Satisfactory is defined here as meeting or moving toward desired vegetative condition and unsatisfactory is defined as not meeting desired vegetative condition or undetermined. Vegetation residue guidelines are expressed in terms of the inches of stubble height to be left, measuring longest leaf of designated Carex species, after livestock use. In this case, all wide leaved sedges have been designated, subject to update.		

Moves between pastures are dependent upon forage utilization levels and other resource objectives being met for a pasture. When it is determined that further use and impacts in a pasture will exceed allowable use levels, livestock are required to be moved to the next pasture in the scheduled rotation, or off National Forest if they are already in the last pasture. It is your responsibility to see that livestock are managed to best utilize available forage while assuring guidelines are not exceeded. Since precipitation, forage production levels, and other factors change from year to year and livestock utilization patterns vary, this will require monitoring by you and/or your rider throughout the season.

Livestock use beyond allowable guidelines could result in an administrative action in subsequent years, such as an adjustment to the season of use, in order to allow plants a chance to recover and restore root reserves.

- Monitoring

The primary emphasis for monitoring should be placed on measuring stubble height in riparian areas, and estimating percent by weight of forage removed on upland sites, as described above. If issues are raised indicating the need to monitor aspen, stream banks, or willows, we prefer to jointly determine appropriate protocols and locations. Permittees are no longer required to submit annual stubble height data; however, it is strongly recommended that you continue monitoring. Any data you collect and submit will be maintained in permanent files.

To facilitate monitoring actual use, and to avoid the need to measure utilization on all suitable range, monitoring will be done using a key area concept. "Key" areas are generally those areas of a pasture which livestock have the tendency to go to and graze first. If utilization in these "key areas" does not exceed allowable utilization standards, then use in the rest of the unit will most likely not exceed standards either. This is not to imply that standards need only be met in "key areas". Allowable use standards apply to all suitable range on the allotment. Key areas may be revised as needed.

I encourage you to contact Scott or Kerri should you have any questions, want assistance with measurements, or need monitoring forms. In order to assure your results accurately reflect livestock use, all measurements should be completed within 7 days of the time livestock are removed from the pasture. Be sure to record the date measurements are taken, and the name of the data collector(s). Photos of the transect showing its general location and actual forage remaining will support your numerical documentation. The Forest Service will conduct spot checks throughout the grazing season, and I encourage your participation.

- Key Areas

Key areas serve as a monitoring and evaluation point for the degree of grazing use occurring in each pasture. Properly selected key areas give an indication of the overall acceptability of current grazing management to meet all resource objectives. Key areas are displayed on the Appendix 2 Benchmark Sites and Key Area map included in your draft allotment management plan.

Pasture	Key Area Location
South French Ck	Cull Watt Park, Willow Creek drainage, N1/2 NE1/4 06-50-83
	Cull Watt Park, along FDR 366, NE1/4 06-50-83
North French Ck	along Johnson Creek, E1/2 NE1/4 29-51-83
	tributary to Johnson Creek, SW1/4 29-51-83
	along trail between French Creek Cow Camp and Johnson Creek, NW1/4 30-51-83
Rock Creek	North Fork Sayles Creek, SENW 12-51-84
	along pack trail south of Ginger's cabin, NWNW 11-51-84
Johnson Creek	area immediately north of Paradise Horse Pasture, N1/2 NW1/4 34-51-84
	tributary to Johnson Creek, NE1/4 19-51-83
	on Keno Creek, 21-51-83
	on meadow along pack trail, 22-51-83

I encourage you to keep thorough notes throughout the grazing season. Should your data indicate changes might be needed in key area locations, contact Scott or Kerri to discuss adjustments.

- Maintenance of Improvements

Term grazing permits state that permittees will maintain assigned range improvements 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 term grazing permits. 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. Materials from abandoned range improvements or maintenance activities must be removed from the Forest. Contact Scott or Kerri to update range improvement inventory lists that are no longer accurate. The minimum maintenance standard for improvements is as follows:

Springs: All tanks are to be level, completely surrounded by dry soil, 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 spilling any water 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 fastened 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. Gates are to be tight enough to prevent sagging but must be able to be easily opened and closed by the general public. Any 'let down' fences for which you are responsible should be let down after grazing use, for the winter.

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 fastened to bucks, and all broken or rotting poles and bucks are to be replaced.

- Planned Range Improvement Projects

Improvement #	Improvement Name	Project Description
107005	Rock Creek Allotment Boundary Fence, East Half	Move as per AMP; Permittee to complete when time allows.

Grazing permit modifications for cooperative range improvements (form FS-2200-113) must be completed prior to expenditure of Forest Service funds for project work. As materials for these projects become available, these activities can be coordinated through Scott or Kerri.

- Conifer Encroachment

You are authorized to assist in reduction of conifer encroachment in accordance with a Decision Memo addressing the topic signed June 9, 2006. The intent is to maintain meadows by removing encroaching conifer trees. Predominantly small (≤7" dbh) trees may be felled using hand crews, with slash lopped to 18". Trees felled will be available for firewood, in accordance with other forest policies. As discussed in our spring meeting, contact the Forest Service prior to any treatment in order to coordinate priority treatment areas and project area boundaries. Total acres treated, before and after photos, and a map showing location of treatment unit should be submitted following treatment

- Salting Practices

The proper use of salt can be used as a management tool to help achieve proper utilization. The following guidelines must be followed when salting unless you have been given direction by a Forest Officer to do otherwise:

a) Scatter salt in its proper location prior to livestock entering the pasture.
b) Salt should be placed between water developments, and at least 1/4 mile from water if possible.
c) Salt away from small parks, trails, roads, and areas of concentrated public use.
d) Salt should be placed in areas of rock outcrops, mature timber stands (other than aspen), or areas of dense sagebrush.
e) Change your salt location at least every year and preferably every time salt is placed. Moving salt blocks at least 100 feet can prevent an area from becoming abused from repeated salt placement.
f) Remove salt from an area when proper use is reached.

- Other

Carcasses of dead livestock on National Forest lands will be removed or caused to be removed by the owner to a distance of at least one hundred (100) feet from live water, and at least five hundred (500) feet from any areas of concentrated public use.

Permittees are required to abide by all Forest road restrictions and closures, as are all users of the public lands. No exceptions will be made without prior written approval.

Documentation on the enclosed Annual Use Report is required, and will help us to plan livestock use in the future. Please make sure both on and off dates are recorded for each pasture as well as the number of cattle. Feel free to make any other pertinent management notes, as they will be helpful in determining future management decisions for the allotment. Return the Actual Use Report to the Powder River Ranger District Office by December 31, 2014.