

2014 Annual Operating Instructions

Willow Park C&H Allotment

Tongue Ranger District

Bighorn National Forest

District Ranger _____ Date _____

Permittee _____ Date _____

WILLOW PARK C&H ALLOTMENT
Year 2014 Annual Operating Instructions

Permitted and Authorized for 2014:

Willow Park C&H Allotment Permittees	LS Kind	LS Class	Permitted Use			Authorized		
			LS #	From	Use To	LS #	From	Use To
Duane Foss Trust	Cattle	Mature	91	07/10	09/15	91	07/21	9/15
	Horse	Mature	5	07/10	09/15	5	07/21	9/15

- 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.

2014 Rotation; Year **One**:

Year	On date	Off date
One	7/10	9/15
Two	8/1	9/15
Three	8/1	9/15
Repeat sequence		

- Entering the Allotment

The turn on date for Willow Park C&H Allotment is tentatively scheduled for July 21, and can be considered an early-on year, depending upon the date of readiness, which will be monitored. Plan to turn livestock onto the allotment on or after this date unless you feel that forage is not ready to be grazed based upon design criteria established in the NEPA analysis for the AMP revision. The varying on date schedule was established with the objective of deferring livestock grazing until plant maturity, defined by seed set, in 2 out of every 3 years.

- Resource Guidelines and Key Areas

Resource guidelines are described in the Bighorn National Forest Vegetation Grazing Guidelines, the Bighorn Forest Plan, and in the NEPA analysis for AMP revision. The allowable use guidelines for utilization of the current year's forage are listed in the following table. These guidelines are applicable at the time the livestock leave the unit and include use by both livestock and wildlife. Willow Park is considered to be managed under a "Rotation" grazing strategy. The figures below are maximum upland allowable use and riparian stubble height guidelines, by key area, based upon a 07/19/2006 assessment of 'meeting or moving toward' desired conditions on benchmark sites.

Table 1: Key areas and guidelines:

Pasture	Key Area		Key Species	Allowable Use Guideline	
	#	Type			
Penrose Meadow*	1a	Riparian	Carex	Meeting	5" on greenline
Penrose Meadow	1b	Upland	Forage	Meeting	45%
Squirrel's Nest Meadow	2	Riparian	Carex	Meeting	5" on greenline
Elk Creek meadow	3	Riparian	Carex	Not Meeting	5" prior to 08/01, 7" after 08/01
Cow Camp Meadow	4	Riparian	Carex	Not Meeting	5" prior to 08/01, 7" after 08/01
Cow Camp Meadow	5	Upland	Forage	Not Meeting	35%

*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.

Key areas are described in your revised Allotment Management Plan. They 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. 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.

Your move off of the allotment is dependent upon forage utilization levels and other resource objectives being met. 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 monitoring 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 rangeland, 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 guidelines, then use in the rest of the unit will most likely not exceed guidelines either. This is not to imply that guidelines need only be met in "key areas". Allowable use guidelines apply to all Suitable rangeland 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 any transect showing its general location and actual forage remaining will support your data. The Forest Service will conduct spot checks throughout the grazing season and I encourage your participation.

- 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 your term grazing permit. Maintenance 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. The minimum maintenance standard for improvements is as follows:

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. Obstacles, such as down logs and trees, shall be removed from the fence line. Dead and leaning trees that may fall onto the fence shall be felled and removed from the fence line.

Buck and Pole Fences, and Pole-top 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 or posts, and all broken or rotting poles and bucks are to be replaced. Obstacles, such as down logs and trees, shall be removed from the fence line. Dead and leaning trees that may fall onto the fence shall be felled and removed from the fence line.

- Planned Range Improvement Projects

The following range improvement projects have been proposed for construction or reconstruction. Grazing permit modifications for cooperative range improvements (form FS-2200-113) must be completed prior to expenditure of Forest Service funds for project work. These activities can be coordinated through Scott or Kerri.

2014 Range Improvements:

Improvement #	Improvement name	Project Description	
611-260	Frying Pan Lake Drift Fence	Discussing removal with Paradise Guest Ranch	Plan remains to remove this old steel OG fence; Foss to roll it up & Paradise haul it out.
611-273	Elk Lake ATV Cattle Guard	Coordinating installation with Forest Service Trails	This project remains on the list - would be state trails project.
UNNO	Cow Trail	Between 037 & 038	Needs cleared (by Foss or USFS crew).

- 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 ($\leq 7''$ 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. Notify the Tongue District Ranger prior to beginning treatment to coordinate boundaries for thinning if needed. 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:

- Scatter salt in its proper location prior to livestock entering the pasture.
- Salt should be placed between water developments, and at least 1/4 mile from water if possible.
- Salt away from small parks, trails, roads, and areas of concentrated public use.
- Salt should be placed in areas of rock outcrops, mature timber stands (other than aspen), or areas of dense sagebrush.
- 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 salt placement year after year.
- Remove salt from an area when proper use is reached.

- Other

Any dead livestock shall be moved to a location greater than 200 feet from water and out of view from roads or trails. 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.