



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Southwestern Region 3
Carson National Forest
Tres Piedras
Ranger District

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2014
ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS (AOI)
SPRING CREEK ALLOTMENT (00631)
CARSON NATIONAL FOREST
TRES PIEDRAS RANGER DISTRICT

LIST OF SPRING CREEK PERMITTEES:

Patricio A. & Linda A. Abeyta
Mark E. & Brian P. Bechaver
Jasper Casias Sr.
Brock & Tandi Canty
Edwin J. & Phyllis S. Gurule
Bradley H. & Clinton T. Huffaker, or Aaron K. Valentine
W. & K. Reed and Company

Prepared By:

/s/Wayne Yonemoto
Wayne Yonemoto
District Range Staff

May 16, 2014
Date

Approved By:

/s/Wayne Yonemoto
FOR
CHRIS FURR
District Ranger

May 20, 2014
Date

Introduction

The Spring Creek Annual Operating Instructions meeting was held on February 28, 2014 at the Conejos Peak Ranger District. Permittees that attended the meeting included Clinton Huffaker, Jasper Casias Jr., Mark Bechaver, Tyler Huffaker, Brock Canty, Edwin Gurule, and Pat Abeyta. Ed Bechaver was also present. Wayne Yonemoto represented the U. S. Forest Service.

The Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) is a decision document that is made part of the terms and conditions of the Term Grazing Permit. The AOI includes guidance criteria described below that addresses annual resource conditions, livestock numbers, period of use, pasture rotations, monitoring and range improvement projects. The 2003 Rangeland Management Action Plan for the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests continues to be program guidance. The objectives of this strategic action plan continue to be a high priority and emphasize collaboration, rangeland health, rangeland monitoring and permittee involvement.

The livestock grazing fee is \$1.35/HM (Cattle).

The dry weather pattern condition includes the following. Within the area, the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) 3-month forecast is for increased chances of normal to above normal precipitation, May through July., 2014, as well as, increased chances of normal to above- normal temperatures.

The SPI definition that indicates the end-of-drought is for the SPI values to be positive 1.0 (or higher) for the past 12 months. The SPI for the past 12 months April, 2013 thru March, 2014 is described as Near Normal (-0.74 to +0.74), so the end of drought has not occurred.

SPI values of negative 0.70 or less for the past month signal drought conditions. The SPI for the past 1-month thru March, 2014 is described as Near Normal (-0.74 to +0.74), so 1-month drought conditions are partially present. Within the District, during the periods of Oct. to Dec., 2013 and Jan. to Mar., 2014, there were various areas of favorable normal to above normal precipitation but also areas of below normal precipitation. Also, below normal to normal to above-normal temperatures occurred.

The authorized eartag color is green. All authorized cattle will be eartagged correctly with the authorized letter/number. The authorized use for the current grazing season is as follows:

Information and Season of Use (Term Permit/Annual Authorized Use Request Form)

Permittee Name	Permitted (c/c; 5/15 – 10/14)	Authorized (c/c, 5/22 – 10/14) Permitted # with 25% Reduction	Eartag Letter	2014 AOI meeting – 25% to 35% # Reduction (Final 25% # Reduction)
P, & L. Abeyta	35	26	D	
M. & B. Bechaver	35	26	B	
B. & T. Canty	51	38	P	
J. Casias	25	19	H	
E. & P. Gurule	41	31	E	

B. & C. Huffaker A. Valentine	309	232	G	
W & K Reed & Co.	41	31	R	
Total	537 c/c (2701 HMs, AUMs); 153 days;	403 c/c (25% reduction)		

Range readiness inspections will determine the final authorized livestock number and whether range vegetation and soils meet the criteria for grazing. Range readiness is tentatively scheduled for May 8, 2014.

Compliance with New Mexico Statewide Regulations, 21.30.6 NMAC, Bovine Trichomoniasis, effective June 17, 2005, becomes a term and condition of the United States Forest Service term grazing permit. We ask that you comply with the NM State Trichomoniasis regulations.

All livestock must be scheduled for counting prior to entering the Allotment. Tres Piedras District range personnel must be notified 5 days prior to the time that livestock enter or leave the Carson NF.

Nonuse of a term permit must be requested in writing for all of the permitted numbers (Total Nonuse), or part of the permitted numbers (Partial Nonuse). Verbal applications will not be accepted. If a permittee is approved for "total nonuse", the permittee is still responsible for maintenance of assigned range improvements.

Review of 2013 Monitoring Data

The monitoring information in the Allotment Study file was reviewed. The forage production improved after the July, August precipitation (normal to above normal). Participants discussed areas of below average to average production and average to above average production, livestock distribution management and utilization. All pastures had a majority of grazeable acres at below average to average production. Utilization guidelines 20% to 40% (end of season) in all 4 pastures was met. FS monitoring indicated end-of-growing season utilization: Wheatgrass – 20%; Palmer – 40%; Cow Creek – 30% to 40%; Coyote – 20%

2013 AOI Compliance

1. All pastures did meet the utilization guidelines of 20% to 40% utilization measured at the end of the growing season.
2. Improve livestock distribution by salting/herding to decrease use in the Cow Creek northern Cunningham area; in the Coyote eastern area; Palmer Hay Gulch area; Palmer southeast area.
3. Improve livestock distribution by salting/herding to increase use in the Cow Creek Miner tank area; Coyote western area.

2013 Actual Use

Actual Use: 296 cattle; 5/20 – 10/11, (145 days); 48.4% reduction with varied entry and early exit.

(Total 296 c/c with various entry dates; 1395 HM. Varied entry dates resulted in 0.6% increased reduction instead of the 47.8% (1411 HM) reduction with a single 5/20 entry date).

P. Abeyta – 21 c, 5/24 – 10/11 (141 days); 97 HM; 34 HM Credit
 M. Bechaver – 16 c, 5/24 – 10/11 (141days); 74 HM; 57 HM Credit
 J. Casias – 13 c, 5/24 – 10/11 (141 days); 60 HM; 36 HM Credit
 B. Canty – 31 c, 5/22 – 10/11 (143 days); 146 HM; 45 HM Credit
 E. Gurule – 24 c, 5/27 – 10/11 (138 days); 109 HM; 47 HM Credit
 B. C. Huffaker/ Valentine – 166 c, 5/20 – 10/11 (145 days); 791 HM; 376 HM Credit
 W. K. Reed – 25 c/c, 5/22 – 10/11 (143 days); 118 HM; 38 HM Credit
 Total HM – 1395

Wheatgrass – 5/20 – 5/31 (12 days)
 Coyote – 6/1 – 6/24 (24 days)
 Cow Creek – 6/25 – 8/28 (65 days)
 Palmer – 8/29 – 10/9 (42 days)
 Wheatgrass – 10/10 – 10/11 (2 days)

Tentative Rotation Schedule

Initial distribution of your livestock is tentatively planned as follows (actual entry date will be based on the range readiness determination):

Tentative Rotation Schedule (5/15 – 10/14, 153 days)

Pasture	Tentative Dates (# of Days)	Days (min to max)	Actual Use	Reason for Adustments
Wheatgrass	5/15 – 5/31 (17)	7 - 25		
Palmer	6/1 – 7/9 (39)	28 - 42		
Cow Creek	7/10 – 8/29 (51)	20 - 52		
Coyote	8/30 – 10/12 (44)	26 - 52		
Wheatgrass	10/13 – 10/14 (2)	22 - 35		
Total	(153) Range readiness determines the authorized entry date; utilization guidelines determine the exit date			

Monitoring

Please contact Tres Piedras RD with any questions regarding monitoring and whether you wish to participate in the annual monitoring of your allotment. Your participation is encouraged. The following monitoring assessments, evaluations and methods may be conducted on the allotment:

- Weather update (SPI and temperature)
- Soil moisture depth
- Water availability

Reading paired annual production/utilization cages with supporting photos and documentation, Rapid Assessment Method, Cover/Frequency, Parker 3-Step, Grazing Response Index, Ocular Estimate Method by Class, Ocular Utilization Estimate by Weight, Photo Point, and Range

Trend Plot.

Key site map of the Allotment

Key forage list showing community type, species list and stubble height

Range readiness stubble ht./utilization guidelines

Grazing season monitoring stubble ht./utilization guidelines

End of season stubble ht./utilization guidelines

Range readiness documentation

Watershed health indicators

Utilization Guidelines

Within each pasture, grazing utilization would occur at 20% to 40% of the annual available forage (not to exceed 40%) and would be assessed at the end of the growing season.

Utilization guidelines in the riparian areas includes leaving 4 inches of stubble height of the annual available forage at the end of the growing season. When proper use levels are reached within the pasture, livestock will be moved to the next scheduled pasture unless other management considerations require livestock removal before proper use levels are reached.

Key Forage Species

Pasture	Key Forage Species	Stubble Height
Wheatgrass	Blue grama Western wheatgrass Crested wheatgrass AZ fescue	1.5” 4 ” 4 ” 6”
Coyote	AZ fescue Kentucky bluegrass Western wheatgrass Blue grama	6” 4” 4” 1.5”
Cow Creek	Kentucky bluegrass AZ fescue Junegrass	4” 6” 2.5”
Palmer	Kentucky bluegrass AZ fescue Junegrass	4” 6” 2.5”

Total removal of all livestock from the pasture/allotment is required. A 3 day period will be allowed to remove stray(s) permitted livestock from the pasture/allotment. Regular herding and riding management practices are important to achieve proper livestock distribution on the allotment, and to provide for the optimal duration of the grazing period. Salting practices are also described in the cattle operator instructions at the end of this AOI.

AOI Objectives

- Rotate pastures to vary the cool and warm growing season rest and allow the opportunity for cool and warm season growth.
- Monitor and minimize the pasture grazing time (days) when required in order to improve forage vigor.
- Maintain or improve the riparian green zone forage.

- Improve livestock distribution when initially entering the pasture by moving small groups throughout the pasture, to various salt locations with permittee rider representation. Also, herd/move livestock within the authorized pasture every few days.
- Continue to minimize livestock excess use within the unscheduled pastures by preventing breakouts and cleaning out pastures.
- As Spring Creek allotment permittees, you are authorized to drive (in your work truck vehicle) off of the Forest Service developed roads further than 300 ft. during the performance of your maintenance responsibilities. Aspen fence stays may be removed from allotment areas adjacent to the maintained pasture fences. In addition, ATV transport of materials is allowed. During conditions (moist soil) when your vehicle tires will cause increasing soil surface disturbance and greater negative impacts, you are not authorized to drive beyond or off of the established Forest Service roads or trails. This authorization will expire on 6/30/14 or may change to an earlier expiration date depending on Forest conditions, fire restrictions, seasonal closures or limited accessibility.

2004 EA Decision Notice includes:

- Alternative D implementation with modifications:
Several ten-year term grazing permits will be issued. The season of use and the numbers permitted will be changed from the current permits to 403 - 537 cow/calf pairs, May 15 - June 15 to September 14 - October 14, 1609 to 3566 AUMs.
- Range improvement projects within the allotment will continue to be maintained by the permittees that are assigned the maintenance responsibilities.
- One guzzler will be constructed in the Palmer pasture.
- One guzzler will be constructed in the Coyote pasture.

Permittee Management Concerns (Also refer to the Project Section)

1. Inspect pastures to establish exit dates during the season.
2. ATV users are causing off- road damage on the allotment. Gates are being left open and trash is being left by public (hunters). Users are driving on the closed roads that are signed.
3. Permittees don't want the voluntary reductions to become permanent adjustments to the term permits. Term Permit adjustments would be based upon monitoring (environmental assessment analysis) that would assist in determining range condition, longterm range trend, utilization and riparian conditions.
4. Wild horses are present on the allotment. The fences that are maintained during the season are being damaged by elk, and horses continue to trail through the fences into the allotment.
5. Vegetation treatments are needed to reduce woody species encroachment.

Annual Authorized Use Request Form

Credits from the previous year, if applicable, would apply to the current bill (25% to 35% reduction in numbers and/or days if Feb./Mar./Apr. continues to be dry). The final livestock numbers and entry date would be determined after drought field inspections/range readiness inspections. Therefore, additional billing may be required after the first billing. (2013 Credit: Total 657 HM)

Range Improvement Projects And Maintenance

Range improvement projects maintenance labor/costs are the responsibilities of the permittee. Term permit assigned projects such as, allotment boundary fences, pasture boundary fences, cattleguards, earthen dam stock tanks, pit tanks and other structural improvements must be maintained prior to permittee entry onto the allotment. When allotments are in non-use the permittees are still required to maintain their assigned improvements.

Previous Projects Completed:

Cleaned out Guido Tank and Draw Tank; fence maintenance at Palmer/Coyote and Cow Creek/Deer Park FR 91B	2013 - Completed
Maintained Palmer Section 6 Corner Tank; Cow Creek American Springs; and South Wheatgrass Tank	2012 - Completed
Repaired H Brace at Coyote/Tusas Coyote	2012 - Completed
Heavy maintenance on 0.25 mi. of Coyote/Tusas Coyote	2011 - Completed

The following are improvements which require special attention during the current grazing season.

Project Priority:

- Continue maintenance of Cow Creek American Springs/pipeline
- Repair fence (0.5 mi.) at southwest corner of Wheatgrass/Palmer (Issued Mar., 2014 0.5 mile fence material)
- Cleanout 2 Tanks on the allotment
- Repair Spring Creek/Tusas Corral; Use both allotment permittees to complete work

Future Projects

Cleanout 2 tanks each year including 2014	Discussed
Tusas Corral annual maintenance is alternated between Spring Creek and Tusas	Discussed
Installation of cattleguard at FR 42 FS/private; Construct pit tank at American Springs	EA required before construction
First install guzzler at Palmer; then Coyote guzzler per EA	Discussed
Corral Construction at FR42/Hwy 64; Coyote pasture interior division fence	Possibly amend EA Decision Notice
Develop water sources in pastures; vegetation treatment; thinning; prescribed burns	Discussed

Excess Use And Unauthorized Use

Permittees are encouraged to notify the Tres Piedras Ranger District of any known violation by permittees (excess use) or non-permittees (unauthorized use). Grazing permit holders who graze more livestock than authorized will receive a Notice of Non-Compliance, charged an excess use grazing fee, and the term permit may be suspended or cancelled in whole or part.

National Environmental Policy Act Status for Grazing Permit Issuance

Direction for management on the allotment is being documented in this AOI and is in conformance with the allotment management plan (AMP). An environmental assessment (EA)

was completed in 2003 and an AMP was prepared. Please contact the range personnel if you have any questions or wish to discuss allotment management objectives, or Forest Plan standards and guidelines.

Travel Management

The Carson National Forest Motor Vehicle Use Map is available at the District Office. USFS Travel Management Plan was discussed. The travel management rule requires each Ranger District to designate those roads, trails and areas open to motor vehicle use. Range permittee guidelines will be developed and will be included in the AOI in the future.

The first travel management meeting was held in Tres Piedras July 11, 2006. A second travel management meeting was held in Tres Piedras on March 21, 2007. Attendees provided comments to the USFS regarding roads or trails that should remain open or closed; and access routes to range improvements that are needed within the allotment. Scoping letter (dated February 2, 2009) was mailed to the public.

ACTUAL USE INFORMATION

**Spring Creek Allotment
Grazing Season**

Attachment 1

Pasture	Scheduled Livestock Number & Class	Scheduled Use		Actual Use		Remarks
		Date on	Date Off	Date on	Date Off	
Wheatgrass		5/15				
Coyote						
Cow Creek						
Palmer						
Wheatgrass			10/14			

Number of Head counted on: _____.

Number of head lost: _____.

Additional Comments:

Table 1

Livestock Class	Poisonous Plants	Predators	Other	Total Losses

**Utilization Information
Spring Creek Allotment
Grazing Season**

Attachment 2

Pasture	Head Months (HMs)	Animal Unit Months	Allowable Utilization (percent)	Date Monitored	Observed Utilization
Wheatgrass					
Coyote					
Cow Creek					
Palmer					



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Appendix

Grazing Permittee Instructions for Cattle Operators on Tres Piedras Ranger District

Review the term grazing permit and become familiar with the terms and conditions prior to the grazing season. Only livestock branded as shown on your application are permitted to enter the National Forest. The Forest Service (FS) and the permittees will agree to the counting locations, date, and time. Entering the allotment before your authorized entry date is not allowed until livestock are counted. A Crossing Permit is required whenever livestock enter the National Forest. Crossing the District to/from a grazing allotment is only allowed within the authorized season.

Livestock found on other unauthorized allotments or in areas without prior authorization will result in the issuance of a Notice of Noncompliance that may impact your term permit. The Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) pasture rotation dates are tentative. Therefore, you must consult with the District Office two weeks before the AOI tentative scheduled rotation dates for discussion and approval of the actual move dates and any AOI adjustments.

Management

The management objective is to obtain proper use throughout the grazeable portions of the range according to the management requirements of the Carson Forest plan. Obtaining the best distribution of cattle on mountain ranges is made difficult because of their natural tendency to gather in openings, watering sites, drainages, riparian areas and meadows. Proper use will be determined by the percent of forage used within key area sites. With proper livestock distribution, a uniform pattern of use would occur. Utilization levels would vary between 20% to 40% (percent dry weight) in pasture key areas, and within the overall pasture's pattern of use.

Riding, herding and good salting practices will help. Frequent movement of salt within slight to light use areas is required to improve the pattern of use. Cattle should be moved to less utilized areas and heavier use should be avoided in the bottoms/meadows/openings that contain more desirable herbage. When proper use levels are reached within each pasture, livestock grazing must end and livestock must exit. An early allotment exit would result in a partial refund/credit of the grazing payment. The grazing of more than one pasture at a time must be approved by the District Ranger. All cattle on the allotment would be handled as one herd. Moves between pastures may be handled as drifting moves where gates to the next successive pasture may be opened 2 days before the agreed scheduled move date. The exit pasture that the cattle are leaving must be cleaned-out within 3 days after the scheduled date for moving.

Salting

Salt must be placed in each pasture prior to cattle entering the pasture. Salt shall be located at least 0.5 miles to 1.0 miles away from streams, springs, earthen dam stock tanks and other sources of water in order to improve the livestock distribution within the pasture. Salt must be placed to minimize damage to vegetation and soil, within the tree line instead of in the middle of openings, in drainages/riparian or near roadways. Regular salt ground sites must not be established.

Range Improvement Projects

Range Improvement Projects assigned in your Term Grazing Permit require annual maintenance that is to be completed prior to placing livestock in the pasture unit. Allotment boundary fences must be maintained before the entry date and interior fences must be maintained before cattle enter the pasture.

Acceptable maintenance means returning the improvement to its original functioning working order and using the equivalent materials. Particular attention, labor and time must be given to gates within the allotment to make certain that they are serviceable and can be opened and closed easily. The FS does not furnish materials or cost-share for maintenance projects.

All lay-down fences should be let-down no later than October 20, or as soon as possible after cattle leave the allotment and adjoining allotments.

Construction of new improvements or reconstruction of existing projects must have the approval of the District Ranger. During the AOI meeting and throughout the year suggestions for proposed projects are accepted.

Special Attention Items

Written authorization from the District Ranger is required for vehicle travel in road closure areas. All cross-country travel where allowed must not cause ruts or down-cutting in the soil surface. Cross-country vehicular travel when the ground is wet is prohibited. This written authorization is only for vehicle travel necessary for your livestock operation on your allotment. Prudent use of this authority is asked when and where general public use is concentrated. All permittees are encouraged to stay off roadways closed to vehicular travel during hunting seasons.

All temporary camps and corrals made or used by permittees or their riders will be cleaned up (left in a sanitary condition) and all materials/trash will be removed from the sites. Temporary camp/corral locations should be discussed with the FS prior to setting up the camp.

Riders will be permitted 4 horses or mules per rider for work within the allotment. No untrained horses, colts or other unrideable stock will be allowed. Eartags will be provided initially to new permittees on allotments that are tagged. After initial allocation of tags, 10 percent will be provided per grazing season.

Please notify the District Ranger with any observations of stray livestock on the National Forest Lands (regardless of the time of year). Move any dead animals to rest no closer than 300 feet from water or roadways.

Report wildfires to: Tres Piedras Ranger Station at (505) 758-8678 or Carson Dispatch at (505) 758-6208 or (505) 758-6209.

If you have any questions, please contact the Tres Piedras Ranger District office.