



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)
SUBLETTE ALLOTMENT (00600)
CARSON NATIONAL FOREST
TRES PEIDRAS RANGER DISTRICT

LIST OF SUBLETTE PERMIT MEMBERS:

Leo J. & Geraldine Mora
Orva Sowards Trust, c/o Carlyn Sowards
Benicio & Elsie Trujillo
Phillip & Theresa Trujillo

Approved By:

/s/ Chris Furr
CHRIS FURR
District Ranger

4/30/14
Date

Introduction

The Annual Operating Instruction meeting was held on March 21, 2014 at the Conejos Peak Ranger District. Permittees that attended the meeting included Elsie Trujillo, Joe Mora, Phillip Trujillo, and Jeff Sowards. Wayne Yonemoto and Anna Dominguez represented the U.S. Forest Service.

The Annual Operating Instruction (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 improvements 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 conditions include the following. Within the area, the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) 3-month forecast is for moderately above normal temperatures. Equal chances of precipitation.

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 December 2012 to January 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 February 2014 is described as very dry (-1.99 to -1.25), so 1-month drought conditions are present. Within the District, during 2013 precipitation and temperatures that occurred varied from below normal, normal, above normal.

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

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

Member Name	Permitted (c/c: 5/25-10/10)	2014 Authorized livestock to be determined after Range readiness	Ear tag letter	Remarks 2014 Actual Use
Leo J. &	50		V	

Geraldine Mora				
Orva Sowards Trust	56		P	
Benicio & Elsie Trujillo	15		T	
Phillip & Theresa Trujillo	40		L	
Total	161 c/c (736 HMs, AUMs); 139 days			

Range readiness inspections will determine the final authorized livestock number and whether range vegetation and soils meet the criteria for grazing. Range readiness is scheduled for May 21, 2014 at the Sublette coral.

Compliance with New Mexico Statewide Regulation, 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 term permit must be requested in writing for all of the permitted numbers (Full Nonuse), or part of the permitted numbers (Partial Nonuse). Verbal applications will not be accepted. If a permittee is approved for "Full 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. The growing season was stunted until the monsoon season beginning in July resulting in lower vigor and production forage potential.

Utilization guidelines of 20% to 40% (end of season) in each pasture were met. FS monitoring indicated end-of-growing season utilization: San Miguel- 40%; Atencio-40%; Santa Rita -40%; Toltec -40%; Santa Rita and Atencio riparian area meet the 4 inch stubble height at the end of the growing season.

2013 AOI Compliance

1. All four pastures met the utilization guidelines of 20% to 40% utilization measured at the end of the growing season.

2. Riparian standards for the 2013 grazing season in Santa Rita and Atencio pastures were met.
3. Permittees cleaned out 3 dirt tanks.
4. Permittees received plastic pipe for the water gap fence construction in between San Miguel and Atencio.

2013 Actual use

Actual use: 5/26- 10/1, 129 days, 121c/c, 513 HM, 677 AUM. Additional 5% reduction of 25% authorized totaling 30% reduction.

San Miguel

5/26-6/15, 22 days, 121 c/c, 88 HM, 115 AUM.

Atencio

6/16-7/19, 34 days, 121 c/c, 135 HM, 178 AUM.

Toltec

7/20-8/29, 41 days, 121 c/c, 163 HM, 215 AUM.

Santa Rita

8/30-10/1, 33 days, 121 c/c, 131 HM, 173 AUM

Actual Use by Permittee

- J. Mora-161 HM 212 AUM
- C. Sowards -178 HM, 235 AUM
- P. Trujillo-118 HM, 156 AUM
- B. Trujillo- 46 HM, 61 AUM

Tentative Rotation Schedule

Initial distribution of your livestock is not tentatively planned until range readiness inspection. The min-max days per pasture are referenced upon reviewing the resource conditions. Actual dates will be based on the range readiness determinations.

Tentative Rotation Schedule (5/25-10/10, 139 days)

Pasture	Tentative Dates (# of Days)	Days (min to max)	Actual Use	Reason for Adjustments
Atencio		15-30		
San Miguel		22-40		
Toltec		10-29, need to estimate the grazeable acres.		
Santa Rita		22-40		

Total		69-139		
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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.

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 I encouraged. The following monitoring assessments, evaluations and methods may be conducted on the allotment:

Weather updates (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 include leaving 4 inches of stubble height of the annual available forage when livestock exit the pasture. 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
San Miguel/Atencio	Arizona fescue	6"
	Kentucky bluegrass	4"
	Mt. muhly	4"
Santa Rita/Toltec	AZ/Thurber fescue	6"
	Kentucky bluegrass	4"
	Mt. muhly	4"
Riparian	Kentucky bluegrass	4"

	Carex	4''
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1996 Decision Notice and Rational management objectives:

The Decision is to implement Alternative D with modifications to allow grazing to continue on the Sublette Allotment. The five permits will be issued for a total of 161 cow/calf operations with a rest-rotation grazing system from May 25th through October 10th. The terms and conditions of the current permit will be updated to reflect these changes. The Decision also includes the reconstruction of the three and a half miles of fence and the installment of one cattleguard. This decision will meet the purpose and need for action as described in Chapter 1 of the environmental assessment (EA).

When compared to the other action alternative this strategy will:

- Make forage available to qualified livestock operators from lands suitable for grazing consistent with land management plans (FSM 2203.21).
- Continue to contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of people by providing opportunities for economic diversity and by promoting stability for communities that depend on range resources for their livelihood (FSM 2202.1).
- Continue the application of best management practices to range activities in order to protect other natural resource values, such as water quality and riparian areas.
- Two of the permittees on the allotment do not have any pasture available until October 16th. Because of the voluntary reductions, the off-date can remain October 15th as long as the utilization standards and other standards and guidelines are met to maintain range and watershed conditions. This modification to the proposed alternative demonstrates the balance between caring for the land and serving the people.
- Review of the range monitoring since 1974 reveals a mostly stable range conditions and trend. Range inspections have documented that utilization has been moderate, plants are exhibiting good vigor, there is good diversity among age classes, native species are reproducing, and very little soil movement is taking place.

AOI Objectives

- Rotate pastures to vary the cool and warm growing season rest and allow the opportunity for cool and warm season growth.
- Minimize the time spent in San Miguel and Santa Rita in order to improve forage vigor. Monitor all the pastures during grazing in order to improve forage vigor.
- Maintain or improve the riparian green zone forage in the Santa Rita pothole area and the Atencio spring area.
- Improve livestock distribution when initially entering the pasture by moving small groups throughout the pasture, to various salt locations with rider representation from all the permittees. Also, herd/move livestock within the authorized pasture every few days to improve livestock distribution.
- As Sublette allotment permittees, you are authorized to drive (in your work truck vehicle) off 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 the established Forest Service roads or trails. This authorization will expire on 10/20/13 or may change to an earlier expiration date depending on Forest conditions, fire restrictions, seasonal closures or limited accessibility.

Permittee Management Concerns (Also refer to the Project Section)

1. Fuel wood gatherers are cutting fences and ATV cross country travel is extensive. The LEO is requested to patrol the area May to October and especially on weekends/nights. Permittees are worried about the theft of calves.
2. Unauthorized road development occurring within Atencio/Santa Rita.
3. The elk population requires management to reduce numbers especially in drought years. Elk utilization should be measured. NM Game and Fish needs to assist permittees with funding of new projects that benefit the elk habitat. Permittees have observed placement of salt block to attract elk during the hunting season.
4. Construct new water projects to increase the water sources. NEPA process is slow and they have been waiting since 2004 for the San Miguel proposed earthen pit tank. (Note: the District project priority of new pit tanks in drainages is low and the district has approved construction of only 1 new pit tank since 2001. Guzzlers, water catchments (not constructed in drainages) and well pipelines are a higher priority.) 2013 management consideration was discussed concerning this proposed project. Permittees were asked to consider the proximity of existing tanks to the proposed tank reference to the watershed potential and range condition. The availability of too much water in one small area increases the potential for overgrazing by all ungulates.
5. In San Miguel pasture, by the rail road tracks on roads accessing BLM, the lack of Cattle Guards influence the unauthorized use. BLM permitted season needs to be considered to review for unauthorized use.
6. Water storage source needs to be considered in Toltec to address flexibility in deferred rest rotation pattern use in spring, summer, or fall and when forage production allows.
7. The pasture moves to and from San Miguel to Toltec will require additional riders because of the topography and size of pasture.
8. San Antone is not repairing the water gaps at Atencio/Santa Rita boundaries.

2014 Annual Authorized Use Request Form

Credits from 2013 totaled 40 HM's or 157 AUM. 2013 authorized use is 25% reduction in numbers. One day delay entry and early exit contributed to an additional 5% reduction totaling 30%. In 2014 Authorized numbers and season will be determined at Range Readiness starting in the range of 25 to 30% reduction similar to 2013 as the drought is ongoing.

Range Improvements Projects and Maintenance

Range improvements projects maintenance labor/costs are the responsibilities of the permittee. Term permit assigned projects such as, allotment boundary fences, pasture boundary fences, cattle guards, 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.

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

2014 Project Priority:

- Archeological clearance of a new earthen tank in San Miguel—Not completed carried over to 2014
- Install water gap fence at river to replace existing wire fence (80 to 100ft.)- Plastic pipe issued to permittees and project completion is projected for 2014
- Narrow Gauge Railroad needs to remove several stacks of used railroad ties (200 in each stack) placed in 2008 and reinstall track cattle guard at 3 locations that the railroad company removed in 2008. Not totally completed, carried over to 2014.
- Special attention to the southern boundary stretch of fence between the Sublette and San Antone allotment. Osa/San Miguel boundary fence needs to be maintained by San Antone Assoc. Not completed, carried over to 2014.
- Contact Marvin Casias, manager of the Toltec train for the installation of train track grids

Previous Projects Completed:

Reconstructed/maintained Santa Rita/Atencio fence (0.25 mi.); BLM/FS laydown fence (1mi.); and installed at Toltec spring a 300 gallon drinker and 120 ft. pipeline.	2007-Completed
Reconstructed/maintained Santa Rita/Atencio fence (.25 mi); installed a 280 gallon drinker at Toltec spring near Toltec/Santa Rita boundary.	2008-Completed
Installed a replacement gate (stolen) at the stateline/Bighorn fence.	2009-Completed
Installed a replacement gate (stolen) at the stateline/Bighorn fence.	2009-Completed
Constructed additional Sublette corral pen and loading chute	2010-Completed
Expansion of the Sublette corral	2011-Completed
Install 8 ft. metal gate at Gate canyon for trailing at San Miguel south boundary	2011-Completed
Repair Atencio/San Miguel boundary fence, 0.25mi. T posts: starting at river, north to Bighorn	2012-Completed
Replace/Install storage tank (1100 gal.) at Toltec spring	2012-Completed
Clean and seal with salt various earthen tanks throughout the allotment. Specifically repair the eroded bank of the Long Canyon earthen tank furthest to the west and nearest to the Toltec pasture. Seal tank in Santa Rita at the Santa Rita/Toltec boundary	2012-Completed
Repair fence at the Toltec Train tracks at San Miguel	2012-Completed
Santa Rita Pasture/Big horn tank clean out and salt sealing	2013-Completed

Santa Rita/Vance tank clean out and salt sealing	2013-Completed
Atencio/ no-name tank clean out and salt sealing	2013-Completed
Pipe issued for the water gap fence between San Miguel and Atencio	2013-
Black pipe issued for the maintenance of the Atencio Spring.	2013-

Future Projects

Dale Tank, need cleanout	Discussed-walking heavy equipment
Santa Rita/Atencio fence maintenance/reconstruction	0.3 mi. left (1.25 miles has been completed)
Construction of a new earthen tank in San Miguel: and at Toltec spring	NEPA started in 2004 for San Miguel tank: Toltec spring-1100 gal. storage tank
Reconstruction/maintenance of Atencio stateline fence	Discussed (3.5 mi.): 2011- in good condition
Maintenance San Miguel/Atencio stateline fence	Discussed (0.25 mi.): 2011- in good condition
Maintenance San Miguel/Atencio boundary fence at Bighorn	Discussed (0.5 mi)
Elevate cattle guard/add wings at Atencio by river	Discussed: possible replace base.
Elevate cattleguard at San Miguel bridge	Discussed: possibly replace with 12 ft. grid
Cleanout cattleguard at Atencio/San Miguel boundary	Discussed
Fence at Baldy canyon is needed to keep cattle from trailing out of the pasture	Discussed (20 ft.)
Install water gap fence (cable/treated wood panels) at river to replace existing wire fence	Discussed
In 2008, the railroad removed the 3 special cattle guards at the 3 locations where the tracks cross the pasture fences. The grids are 20 ft. x 6 ft.	The 3 grids need to be reinstalled by the railroad. (Completed in 2011: MP 296, 298 and at stateline.)

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, NEPA

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 was completed in 4-8-1996 and an AMP was prepared in 11-8-2004. Open and positive communication is encouraged. 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

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. A second travel management meeting

was held in Tres Piedras on March 21, 2007 (The first travel management meeting was held in Tres Piedras July 11, 2006). 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.

2014 May Entry-FS/Permittee Consultation/Cooperation

- **Feb./Mar. - Annual Operating Instruction Meeting**
 - Follow Agenda (Review 2013 season; Discuss 2014 season)
 - Explain 2014 FS/Permittee Consultation Process
 - FS/Permittee responses to allotment/pasture drought conditions (Adjust stocking levels, period of use (entry/exit dates), distribution); Drought Responses before entry and after entry
 - Select appropriate drought management actions in consultation with permittees
 - Periodically reassess conditions and reevaluate management actions in response to drought conditions
 - Management after drought includes allowing for recovery of rangeland vegetation by adjustments (stocking levels, period of use (entry/exit dates), distribution) or pasture rest

- **Mar./Apr. - Allotment/Pasture Field meeting or Drought Field meeting**
 - Where we would inspect drought impacts (Resource Conditions of soil/watershed/water availability assessment/evaluation)
 - grass/forbs at early stages of green up or dormant
 - As many meetings as needed to assess/document drought conditions
 - Prior to the May Range Readiness Field Meeting

- **May – Pasture(s) Range Readiness Field Meeting/Rapid Assessment Method Field Meeting (10 to 14 days prior to Permit entry date)**
 - Where Range Readiness (RR) criteria are explained and assessed
 - Where Rapid Assessment Method (RAM) is explained and transect data is collected
 - Additional days would be required to complete more RAM transects
 - The RAM assesses or measures grass stubble height, species composition, cool season grass composition, desirable grass composition, short height to tall height composition, cover, production (pounds/acre), vegetation rangeland condition and apparent trend.
 - When required, the RAM would supplement the RR to provide additional data to justify a delayed entry date.
 - More than one RR/RAM Field Meeting may be required to determine 2014 entry date. For example, for permitted entry date of May 15, the first RR/RAM date of May 5 may determine that Range Readiness criteria would not be met on May 15 to May 20, but the May 5 date is too early to determine an accurate entry date.

Therefore, a second RR/RAM assessment is required to determine an entry date that is later than May 20.

- **Also, Permittees are able to request additional consultation (field (data collection) or office) meetings with the FS at any time during the calendar year**
- **Early, frequent and clear communication between FS and permittees is important**



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Appendix

Grazing Permittee Instruction 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 non-compliance 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 with) 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 pastures. 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 Improvements Projects

Range improvement Projects assigned in your Term Grazing Permit requires 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 the riders will be cleared up (left in a sanitary condition) and all materials/trash will be removed from the sites. Temporary cam/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 untrained stock will be allowed. Ear tags will be provided initially to new

permittees on allotments that have 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 Nation's 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 (575) 758-86778 or Carson Dispatch at (575) 758-6208 or (575) 758-6209. If you have any questions, please contact the Tres Piedras Ranger District office.