

May 13, 2014

**BLACK LAKES ALLOTMENT #450
Carson National Forest**

Camino Real Ranger District

ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS 2014

The annual meeting for the Black Lakes Allotment was held on April 25, 2014, at the Forest Supervisor's Office in Taos, New Mexico. The Black Lakes Livestock Association was represented by Steve Vigil, Richard Tafoya, Robert Trujillo, Pat Vigil, and Luis Garcia. Melvin Herrera and Tamara Malone represented the Forest Service.

These annual operating instructions are hereby made a part of the Term Grazing Permit for the Black Lakes Livestock Association.

The Camino Real Ranger District and the permittees discussed possible drought conditions, current snow depth and water content on the allotment and the outlook on predicted weather patterns for this coming grazing season. The Southwest Region is experiencing continued drought, so any non-use this grazing season will be considered resource protection non-use. Forest Service and permittees remain optimistic about grazing this year.

Table 1- Permittee, Permitted and Authorized number and kind.

1. Permittee	Permitted Number and Kind	Authorized number and kind
Black Lakes Livestock Association	210 cow/calf 11 bulls	110 cow/calf 7 bulls
Taos Group – Cristobal N. Cisneros	7 cow/calf	0 cow/calf
Fidel T. Garcia	3 cow/calf	0 cow/calf
Luis R. Garcia	24 cow/calf	30 cow/calf 2 bulls
Genoveva Martinez	6 cow/calf	0 cow/calf
Black Lakes Group – Richard M. Tafoya	16 cow/calf	22 cow/calf 1 bulls
Michael Trujillo	15 cow/calf	0 cow/calf
Edmundo L. Vigil estate	45 cow/calf	20 cow/calf 1 bulls
South Group – Robert A. Trujillo	62 cow/calf	5 cow/calf 1 bulls
Alfonso F. Vigil	32 cow/calf	33 cow/calf 2 bull

Table 2 - Season of use

2. Season of Use	
06/16-09/30	(107 days)

Table 3 - Pasture Rotation

3. Pasture Rotation				
Pasture	Estimated Dates	Estimated Time	Actual use	Utilization%
Osha (Black Lakes)	06/16 - 09/30	107 days		
South (Black Lakes group)	06/16 - 09/30	107 days		
West (Taos)	06/16 - 09/30	107 days		

Adaptive management will continue to be applied to the management of the Black Lakes allotment which means that the season of use, numbers grazed and rotation schedules may be adjusted throughout the grazing season based on resource conditions.

4. Maintenance of Improvements

The entire cost of improvements maintenance is the responsibility of the permittee. Assigned allotment boundary fences, division fences, stock tanks, springs, cattleguards, and other range structural improvements must be maintained prior to the permittees going on to the allotment. Range improvements for the entry pastures will be inspected during the Range Readiness visit.

5. Other Items of Discussion

The 2013 grazing season was a tough year due to recent drought conditions. Forage production was below average throughout the whole allotment and utilization was right at the allowable use guidelines within key areas. Permittees took a voluntary reduction in numbers (62 percent) as resource protection nonuse. Permittees did a good job in keeping most livestock distributed throughout the allotment. The allotment as a whole was used heavier than other years due to drought conditions and the elk numbers in the area.

Permittees are concerned about high elk numbers on their allotment and use by them on their salt and damage to fences. Permittees were also concerned about the public moving their salt to areas in the allotment where they shouldn't be.

Permittees are concerned about the conditions of Forest Road 76. Forest Service reported that they are looking into doing some type of maintenance at least on the worst parts of this road.

The Camino Real District and permittees will monitor key use areas throughout the allotment.

Utilization guidelines for 2014 are 40% of available annual forage in key use areas and 4 inches stubble height in riparian zones. Forage utilization will be measured in key use areas.

The grazing fee this year is \$1.35 per head month for cattle.

The Carson NF will be undergoing Forest Plan revision and so permittees are encouraged to get involved in the process. This process may take up to several years to complete and there will be several opportunities for permittees.

There are some programs offered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) that may provide assistance to permittees to help alleviate hardships brought on by the drought. Permittees also talked about applying for equip funds with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to help fund range improvements such as fencing and possible water sources.

The Forest Service discussed ongoing efforts with the Travel Management Rule. The decision has been signed and is immediately. Permittees are encouraged to stay on roads which are open to the public as much as possible. Permittees stated that they need to use ATV's and motor vehicles for performing their required maintenance on fences and other range improvements, checking that gates are closed, checking on cattle health and location, and placing salt and mineral supplements. Forest Service requested that permittees stay on established roads and routes only. The District Ranger requested that ATV's and other motorized vehicles not be driven across open meadows or other locations currently free of system roads or routes (existing two tracks recognized on the ground, but not a Forest Service system road). Trips should be minimized as well as, liberal use by others not necessary for essential range management business.

An environmental review (Section 18) for the Black Lakes allotment is ongoing and monitoring will continue this year.

The Grazing Instructions for 2014 are the same as in 2013. Salt away from roads and streams; use herding, salt, fences, and water sources to disperse cattle across the pastures to use the available forage; avoid overuse in key areas.

Permittees and FS will look at range conditions together to determine range readiness and on-date.

Priority for Range Betterment work for 2014:

1. A metal gate is needed in the big meadow on the Bull canyon /Black lakes boundary.
2. Two wooden corner posts are needed at the allotment gate at Valle Largo.
3. The cattleguard at Tienditas needs cleaning and preferably replacement. Also need to call in for a line locate as some type of line is buried there.
4. East-west division fence needs reconstruction (1/4 mile)
5. South boundary fence is down and/or missing (1/2 mile)
6. New trough below Corner Park along the South Boundary trail.

Permittees again mentioned that private land boundary fences and uncontrolled ATV use are major concerns. This leads to fences being damaged and cut. There is a gate near the El Bordo Rustic Retreat where a hiking stile is needed. Another hiking stile is needed for the Elliot Barker trail #1, at Valle Largo. Luna/Chacon cows were reported on the allotment, and part of this is due to lack of maintenance by the Black Lakes Association. The permittees will work on maintenance and also requested a metal gate for the area. Other areas along the private land boundary also need work and will continue to work with private landowners to accomplish this.

The thinning project (Angel Fire WUI) has resulted in damaged fences along the Angel Fire boundary. This needs to be addressed in future thinning projects.

The Camino Real District will continue to provide replacement tags as needed.

Forest Service would like at least 2 weeks notice prior to any proposed change in management (either season or numbers) so that they can go look at the allotment with the permittee.

/s/Tamara S. Malone 6/6/2014

District Ranger Date