

RIO CHIQUITO ALLOTMENT #402
 Carson National Forest
 Camino Real Ranger District

ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS 2014

The annual meeting for the Rio Chiquito Allotment was held on April 7, 2014, at the District Office in Peñasco, New Mexico. Attending were Joe Romero, Presciliano and Joyce Sandoval, Archie Velarde, and Gene Dominguez from the Rio Chiquito Grazing Association. 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 Rio Chiquito Grazing Association.

The Camino Real Ranger District and the permittees discussed anticipated 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 severe to extreme drought. Forest Service remains optimistic about grazing at the low end of the range of permitted numbers this year. The 2009 Environmental Assessment of grazing on the allotment took drought into consideration and included new guidelines to improve and maintain conditions.

1. Permittee	Permit Number and Kind	Authorized Number and Kind
Rio Chiquito Grazing Association	103 cow/calf, 6 bulls to 180 cow/calf, 9 bulls	15 cow/calf, 1 bull
Gene Dominguez	(6 cow/calf)	(0 cow/calf)
Joe Romero	(112 cow/calf)	(15 cow/calf, 1 bull)
Joyce Sandoval	(5 cow/calf)	(0 cow/calf)
Presiliano Sandoval	(4 cow/calf)	(0 cow/calf)
Archie R. Velarde	(53 cow/calf)	(0 cow/calf)

2. Season of Use	
05/1 - 9/15 or 05/15 – 9/30	(138 days)

Table 1 - Pasture Rotation

3. Pasture Rotation	Planned		Actual use	utilization %
Pasture	Estimated Dates	Estimated Time		
Lower Entranas (Joe)	05/15-07/01	45 days		
*Cejita Mesa	07/02-09/30	93 days		
Cebadilla	07/02-08/06	35 days		
Rio Chiquito	08/07-09/30	36 days		
Vallecitos (Gene)	Rest	0 days		

During their 2014 annual meeting, the members of the Trampas Grazing Association determined they would not be letting Presciliano and Joyce Sandoval use the Canada Ancha as has they have been doing in recent years as one of their members was intending to graze this area this year.

Adaptive management will continue to be applied to the allotment allowing for adjustments to the rotation schedule and season of use, should conditions warrant. *Depending on grazing conditions, permittees will graze on the Cebadilla and Rio Chiquito pastures or on the Cejita Mesa pasture.

4. Maintenance of Improvements

The entire cost of improvements maintenance is the responsibility of the permittees. 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 a particular pasture. Range improvements of the first pasture entered will be inspected during the range readiness visit.

5. Other Items Discussed

The 2013 grazing year was a tough year due to severe drought conditions. Permittees contributed to a good season by volunteering a reduced stocking of the allotment of approximately 80 percent. There was below average forage production throughout the allotment. Utilization was within the utilization guidelines in key areas as monitored by Forest Service employees. Maintenance of range improvements was good.

Basic 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 should use no more than 5 days to clean out the pastures after the move date. Permittees mentioned that they had found salt on the allotment placed by the public to bait the elk.

Within revegetation areas of crested wheatgrass strive to achieve an average less-than-60% end of season utilization.

Within riparian areas: strive to maintain an average 6 inch herbaceous cover height throughout the grazing season and 35% end of season utilization.

Within non-revegetation and non-riparian areas: strive to achieve an average 40% end of season utilization to maintain/improve the vigor of the plants.

Within the Cebadilla and Rio Chiquito pastures the following guidelines will apply.

Within upland meadows, strive to maintain an average 4" herbaceous cover height throughout the grazing season to provide cover for wildlife prey base and sensitive species (voles etc.). Monitoring would trigger movement of livestock seasonally and would be taken into consideration for the following grazing season.

Within the goshawk post fledgling area (PFA) in Cebadilla maintain 20-40% maximum end of season utilization.

Permittees and Camino Real Ranger District will look at range together to determine range readiness and on-date. As per the recent Environmental Assessment, range readiness will be based on the current year's production of the Crested Wheatgrass and capacity of the first pastures, rather than on physiological development of the native plants as had been done in the past. Soil moisture and road conditions will also be evaluated before allowing the cattle to be turned on.

Forage utilization will be measured in key forage areas.

Permittees are encouraged to monitor (ie. Forage conditions on their allotment) and provide documentation copies to the Camino Real Ranger District.

Permittees are concerned about the Forest Service allowing other cattle to graze on their allotment. They feel they want to continue to rest their allotment due to drought issues. Forest Service discussed how the EA had allowed for drought conditions by creating a range of numbers allowed to graze. The low end of the range of numbers should allow for grazing during drought conditions. District Ranger will decide towards the start of the grazing season whether or not to allow Trampas allotment permittees to graze within the Rio Chiquito allotment.

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 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.

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

The continuing issue of NM highway right of way fence maintenance responsibility was discussed. Also a cattle guard at the transfer station and about ¼ mile of fence is needed along the highway right-of-way to keep cattle in the Vallecitos unit. The highway department has been unwilling to fence the area and the permittee has not stocked livestock season long for the past few years because of that. The Camino Real Ranger District will continue to work with the NM Department of Transportation. Perhaps the situation will be remedied eventually. Permittees have also talked to personnel from the Dept. in Santa Fe.

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.

Priority for Range Betterment work for 2014:

1. A new drinking trough is needed for Trick tank # 7 and one for trick tank # 6.
2. Storage tank for trick tank in Vallecitos.
3. Reconstruction and expansion of corrals in Lower Entrañas, and Jacinto Canyon.
4. Development of the "Test Hole" in Cañada de Las Entrañas was completed. Permittees are now ready to dig out a stock tank which will provide water for livestock.
5. ¼ mile of fence is needed east of highway 76 on the south end of the Cebadilla pasture along with a cattleguard.
6. Cejita Mesa Trick Tank #1 is leaking from rust holes and needs storage tank replaced.
7. Burning and thinning projects in Entrañas.

Camino Real Ranger District will provide new tags this year as needed.

Camino Real Ranger District 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 4/30/2014
District Ranger Date