



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Manti-La Sal
National Forest

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File Code: 2210/2230

Date: April 27, 2015

Harley, Lorraine and Kenneth Bates
PO Box 234
Moab, Utah 84532

**CERTIFIED MAIL – RETURN
RECEIPT REQUESTED**

Dear Mr., Mrs. and Mr. Bates:

This letter will serve as your Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) for the Castle Valley C&H Allotment for the 2015 grazing season. This AOI is made part of your Term Grazing Permit consistent with Part 1, item 3 and Part 2, item 8(a). A failure to follow these instructions is a violation of your permit. The AOI complies with the standards and guidelines found in the Forest Plan. **Please read your instructions thoroughly.**

AUTHORIZED USE FOR 2015

Allotment	Numbers	Kind	Class	Season	Permittee	Non-use	
						Resource protection	Personal convenience
Castle Valley (Pinhook)	70-150	Cattle	Cow/calf or Yearlings	05/08 to 10/01	Bates, Harley, Lorraine and Kenneth		
Castle Valley (Mesas)	178-208	Cattle	Cow/calf and Yearlings	Between 06/01 and 10/20	Bates, Harley, Lorraine and Kenneth	X	

GRAZING SYSTEM AND SCHEDULE

Pinhook portion:

Pasture	Number	Kind	Approximate Dates
Lower Pinhook	150	C/C	05/08 – 05/31
Upper Pinhook	70	Yearlings	06/01 - 08/20
Miners Basin	70	Yearlings	08/21 – 10/01

Mesas portion:

Pasture	Number	Kind	Approximate Dates
Adobe Mesa/Fisher Mesa	Used in conjunction with BLM before June 1		
Adobe Mesa/Fisher Mesa	30 yearlings from 06/01 to 06/20		



West Andy	160	C/C	06/01 – 06/30
West Andy	18-48*	Yearlings	06/01 – 06/30
East Andy	208	C/C and Yearlings	07/01 – 07/31
Private Land Sec 36 (off of Forest)**	208	C/C and Yearlings	08/01 – 08/31
Willow Basin#	208	C/C and Yearlings	09/01 – 09/25
Bachelor Basin#	208	C/C and Yearlings	09/26 – 10/20

Permitted pack and saddle stock authorized on the allotment for livestock management will not exceed four head.

*18 yearlings from 6/1 to 6/20 then 48 yearlings till 6/30. **These are private and/or State land and are not billed and are not part of permitted AUMs. They have been included in the AOI for information purposes only. # There are no fences between these two units, separation will be done through riding and salting, there may be some cattle that are in one of the other unit between 9/1 and 10/20.

You have requested and been granted an earlier on date for the Lower Pinhook unit. The reasoning for this is to be able to graze the cheatgrass in the area. This is expected to help in continuing to increase the recovery of perennial grasses in the area. The area will be monitored closely to ensure that the perennial bunchgrasses in the pasture do not receive overuse so they are able to compete with the cheatgrass.

Management Response to Drought Conditions

The drought in Utah is predicted to continue into this year. As of now, the La Sal Mountains are at 63% of normal for precipitation (see attached graph and map). Though the timing of rainfall the past 3 years in the summer and fall have kept forage production up on most of the mid and high elevation pastures, several lower elevation pastures that were used first last year or in the two previous years were dry and unproductive during the times they were grazed. This usually resulted in moving off the unit earlier than planned or overuse, if livestock were not moved in time. In these areas, the stressed forage resource will still be trying to recover from last year's dry conditions.

The degree that drought affects future forage production will depend upon intensity, frequency and timing of grazing this year. Providing plants opportunity to grow and adequate recovery from grazing before, during and after drought conditions, will have a great influence on long term vegetative productivity and rangeland conditions. It is extremely important that the proper use criteria are followed and that the allotment is monitored closely, which may involve an increase in the amount of riding you or your herd manager does.

West and East Andy have been used in June and July for several years. This was discussed during the AOI meeting and a solution of using Adobe and Fisher Mesas into June and using West Andy in the fall on this year was presented. Unfortunately, due to lack of pond water on these mesas, that solution cannot be implemented this year except for about 30 yearlings for about 3 weeks. Therefore, the plan is to use West Andy in June again but to use herding and

salting to keep the herd on the south side of the unit as much as possible. This way if we are still not able to use Adobe and Fisher Mesas in June next year, then we can plan on using the north side on West Andy next year and try to achieve a change in time of year use by “splitting” the unit in this way. You are planning on a partial non-use for resource protection (15% reduction in AUMS) on the Mesa part of the allotment and full numbers on the Pinhook part. Management may need to be adjusted depending upon actual conditions on the ground. Livestock may need to be removed from the allotment earlier than planned if drought conditions worsen.

Your allotment should be inspected for range readiness to determine forage growth and fence and water improvement conditions. **The pasture move dates shown above are an estimate, and may change on the basis of actual range conditions.** Situations may develop during the grazing season which requires changes to these instructions. If this becomes necessary, or if you cannot comply with some part of these instructions, contact the District Ranger and obtain approval before initiating changes or deviating from these instructions.

PROPER GRAZING-USE INDICATORS

Utilization standards are one indicator used in achieving or moving towards desired rangeland conditions. Taking into account duration and timing of grazing are also just as important. Utilization standards are not the desired conditions or management objectives themselves, they are indicators. Desired conditions and objectives are discussed in the 1986 Forest Plan and/or the Castle Valley Allotment Management Plan.

Desired goals in the 1986 Forest Plan include:

- Bring livestock obligation in line with rangeland carrying capacity
- Maintain upward or stable trends in vegetation and soil condition.

Management Objectives in the 1995 Castle Valley Allotment Management Plan include:

- Improve the forage resource, increase desirable plant species; and maintain ground cover (vegetation and litter) at a level that will maintain the allotment’s natural resources at its desired future condition.
- Improve and/or maintain the Lower Pinhook riparian area.

The 1990 Forest Plan Amendment for Range Proper-Use Criteria states proper use as ranging from 40-65% use of upland key species depending on the grazing system applied and from 30-60% use of riparian key species depending on season of use. This amendment kept the existing provision that proper use criteria are to be established on an allotment by allotment basis and as given in the AMP and AOIs.

There is a difference between where percentage utilized is applied and where stubble height is applied to determine proper use in riparian areas. Percent utilized is used for plant species that are within the larger riparian area (the area that is influenced by the stream and the water table) but not along the greenline. The greenline is the first perennial vegetation on or near the stream’s edge that is at least one foot wide. Stubble height measurements are used to determine proper use along the greenline. The plant species considered are typically water loving species (hydric species) such as sedges.

For the Castle Valley allotment proper use criteria for 2015 are:

<u>Upland Areas:</u>	<u>Use of Key Species</u>
Spring/Summer	*45-50%
Fall	*50-60%

***Use levels on perennial bunchgrasses in Lower Pinhook must be kept below 40% to facilitate continued recovery from the fire.**

<u>Riparian Areas:</u>	<u>Use of Key Species</u>
Spring (Early and rapid growth)	50-60%
Summer (Moderate growth)	45-50%
Fall (Slow growth)	30-40% or 4-5 inches stubble or regrowth

It is your responsibility as the permittee to recognize when proper use has been reached and promptly move all cattle as necessary. If you need some assistance, or methods and tools for determining proper use, please contact Tina Marian.

When proper use has been reached in the unit being grazed, your cattle are to be herded to the next scheduled unit. **When proper use is reached in the last unit grazed, all cattle are to be removed from the allotment, even if this date is prior to the end of your grazing season.** Cattle found on the Allotment before or after the permitted grazing season will be billed at the unauthorized use rate and permit non-compliance actions will be initiated.

You should be aware that Forest Service policy provides that “an authorized officer may require the permittee to monitor and report information on compliance with the grazing permit, allotment management plan and annual operation instructions as a term and condition of your permit.”

To facilitate livestock moves, gates may be opened a few days prior to the scheduled move date only when moving into an adjacent pasture. Gates must be closed and the grazed pasture entirely cleaned of livestock no later than five days following the scheduled move date. **Grazed pastures must be kept clean of livestock following the pasture move.** This is important to plant recovery after being grazed, especially in areas cattle are drawn to.

Please use the Grazing Response Index enclosed in your folder to track duration of use, intensity of use and time of use for each grazing unit. This is a helpful tool in assessing grazing impacts to the range vegetative resources.

STRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENTS

Since 2006, the Forest Service has entered into structural improvement agreements with each permittee which will continue for this season. The purpose of these agreements and the following inspections is to document how and if range structural improvements are being maintained.

Thank you for completing and sending in photos of your 2014 fence and spring maintenance agreements.

2015 FENCE AGREEMENT: You agreed that the Castle Valley Bndry drift fence (#42018 in permit) will be the agreed upon fence to inspect and make sure it is to permit standards as shown on the attached map.

2015 SPRING AGREEMENT: Bull Draw spring enclosure will be expanded and the trough moved out of the depression, pending the La Sal Springs EA decision. The improvement # on the permit for this spring is 44167.

When you complete your fence and spring/pond agreements you must fill out and sign the Improvement Agreement Form (pink) that is found in your folder. Please provide photographs of before and after conditions to assist in documenting compliance with maintenance requirements. Contact Tina when you complete your maintenance so she can schedule a timely inspection.

If you fail to bring the above agreed improvements up to standard by **October 20th, 2013** you will not be allowed to stock the allotment in 2016 until the agreement is fulfilled.

Range improvements are essential in ensuring that livestock are well distributed and that Forest standards and guides are met.

- Improvements are to be maintained to standard prior to livestock entering the pasture and that failure to do so is a violation of their permit and action will be taken when violations are documented.
- If improvements have not been maintained, then develop a schedule to bring them up to standard.
- Until all improvements are functional it is not appropriate to authorize full numbers or season of use, unless assurances can be made that utilization standards will not be exceeded.

The maintenance of all structural improvements listed under part 3 of your Term Grazing Permit, Special Terms and Conditions: *Construction and Maintenance of Structural Improvements* is a requirement and should be completed prior to your entry into each pasture. The allotment permittee(s) are responsible for the maintenance of all structural range improvements on this allotment. For allotments managed by an Association or Herd Manager specific maintenance responsibilities may be assigned to individual permittees by the Association President or Herd Manager.

There are many troughs on the Forest that do not have wildlife escape ramps and are thus not meeting improvement maintenance standards. All troughs on the allotment need to be equipped with a wildlife escape ramp. You can obtain them from the Forest Service office. We understand that this will not all be completed in one year and will be emphasizing getting wildlife escape ramps installed in all troughs over the next few years.

If you wish to use forest products (trees and oak brush) from the National Forest to maintain your fences/spring enclosures on your allotment, you must receive authorization from either the Moab or Monticello Office prior to cutting.

NEPA and PLANNED PROJECTS

The Forest Service is planning on completing an EA this year that will analyze the effects of the proposed water developments in Pinhook as well as other spring or water related projects on the La Sal Mountains. It is expected that a draft decision will be made in May. The 45 day objection period then begins and if objections are filing may push the final decision out to August 2015.

As of now, there are no plans to continue The Willow Basin Fuels Reduction project this summer. It will be continued in following years.

MISCELLANEOUS

Refer to Special Terms and Conditions in Part 3 of Term Grazing Permit for specific instructions pertaining to maintenance standards for range stock water developments, range fences, corrals, and herding standards.

All permitted livestock must be branded with your registered brand as documented in your Term Permit before they enter the National Forest.

Place salt blocks away from water, roads, meadows and other open areas so as to draw livestock into areas that receive light utilization. When livestock leave a pasture move the salt out of the pasture as well.

You will furnish sufficient riders or herders to achieve proper distribution of livestock.

Certified Weed Free Hay must be used if you do any supplemental feeding of horses on the allotment while gathering or moving cattle.

If you find the need to use mechanical clearing (tractors, bulldozers etc.) of fence lines or to clean ponds or other water improvements, you must have proper archeological clearance and permission from the District Ranger.

Enclosed in your AOI folder you will find an Actual Use Record sheet. As your 2015 grazing season progresses, please fill out this form in detail and return it promptly at the end of the grazing season. There are also extra sheets included in the folder where you are encouraged to document management on the allotment.

PAYMENT OF FEES

The permittee will not allow owned or controlled livestock to be on Forest Service-administered lands unless the fees specified in the Bill for Collection are paid and confirmation of payment is received prior to livestock entering NFS lands.

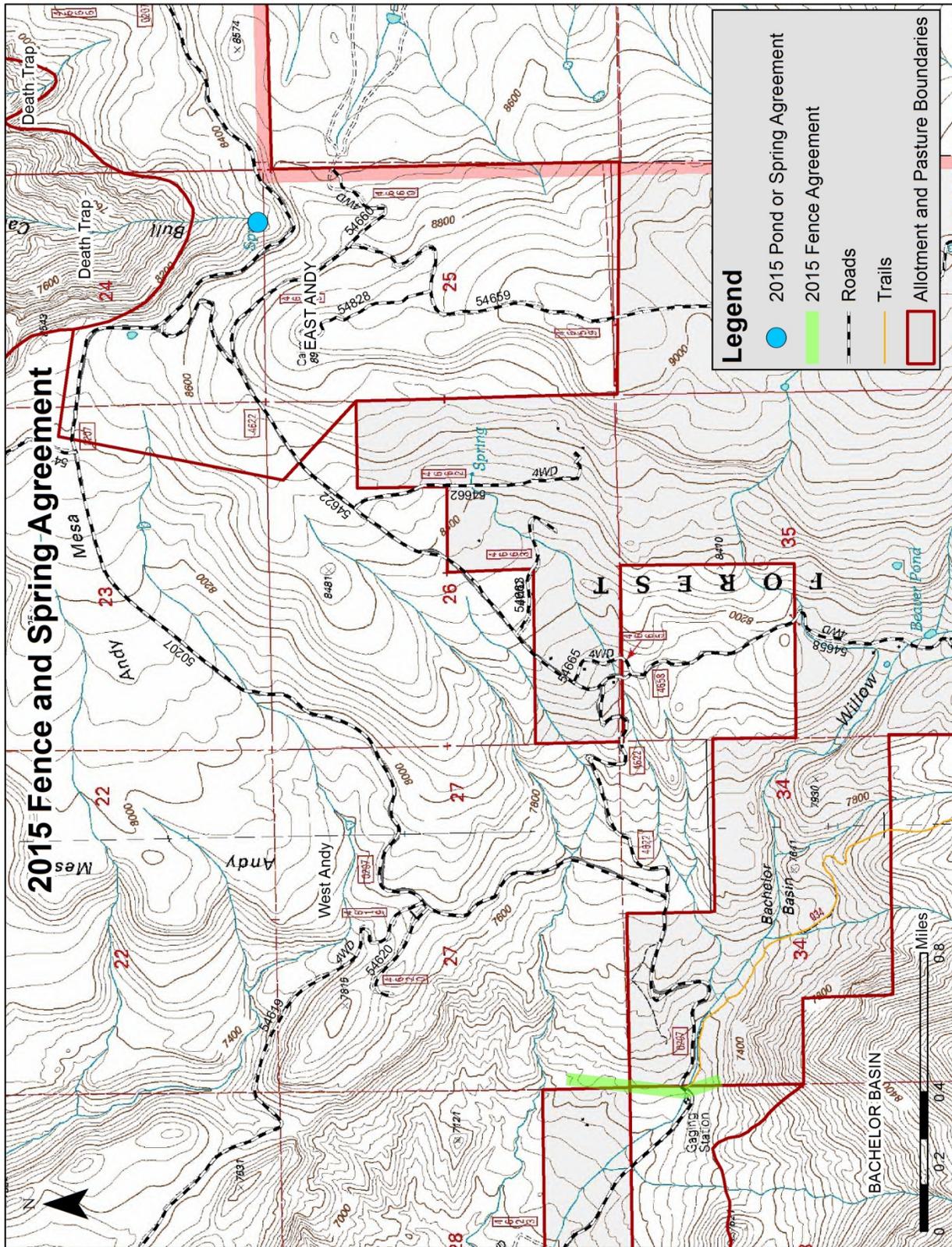
I am looking forward to working with you this summer. Please don't hesitate to call Tina Marian (435-636-3368) if you have any questions or if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely

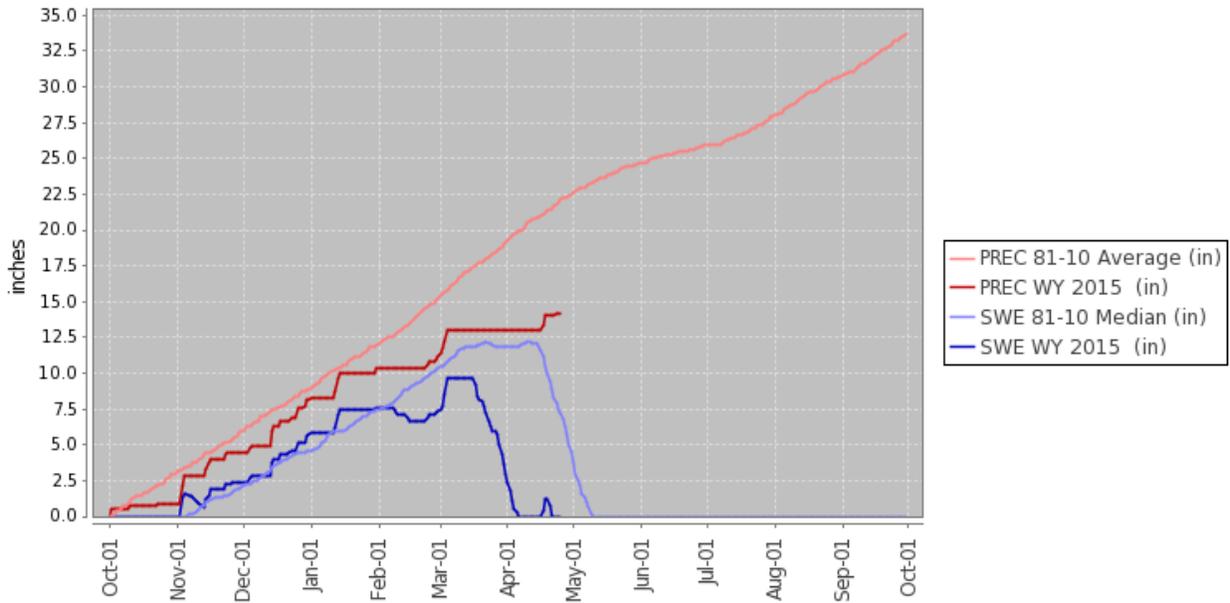


for MICHAEL DIEM
District Ranger

2015 Fence and Spring Agreement Map



Station (572) WATERYEAR=2015 (Daily) NRCS National Water and Climate Center - Provisional Data - subject to revision
 Mon Apr 27 07:51:27 PDT 2015



La Sal station shows precipitation to be about 63% of average with a dry spell from March 1 to mid-April. Recent rains and snows should help improve conditions, but still in a moderate drought.

U.S. Drought Monitor Utah

April 21, 2015

(Released Thursday, Apr. 23, 2015)

Valid 7 a.m. EST

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

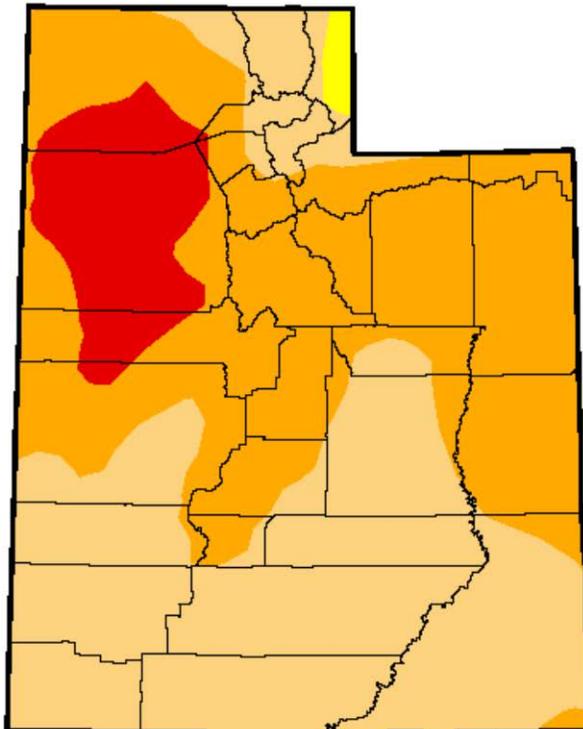
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	99.19	53.22	9.32	0.00
Last Week 4/14/2015	0.00	100.00	99.19	53.22	9.32	0.00
3 Months Ago 1/20/2015	18.00	81.10	59.00	12.51	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year 12/30/2014	18.93	81.07	58.99	12.98	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year 9/30/2014	18.89	81.11	59.30	12.98	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago 4/22/2014	5.57	94.43	89.80	17.94	0.00	0.00

Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

Author:
 Anthony Artusa
 NOAA/NWS/NCEP/CPC



<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>