

## 2015 ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

### COPPER BASIN ALLOTMENT

#### SALMON-CHALLIS NATIONAL FOREST

Below is your Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) for the Copper Basin Allotment. This AOI addresses Forest Service administered lands within the Copper Basin Allotment and reflects information discussed during the meeting on April 15, 2015. Please review your Term Grazing Permit for general and special terms for: range and livestock management, grazing utilization, range improvement maintenance, salting, and forest plan standards and guidelines. Actual on-dates and off-dates are dependant on range readiness and when allowable use standards are met. The Forest Service may approve changes to the grazing rotation in consultation with the permittees to address range condition situations that may occur due to weather related or other unexpected circumstances.

#### Permitted Cattle Authorized

<u>Permittee</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Non-Use</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Season</u>
Terrence Donahue	503	0	503	7/1-10/15
Scott McAfee	350	50	300	7/1-10/15
Bart/Tina	187	0	187	6/6-10/15
Wojciechowski	50	50	0	7/1-10/15
Parsons Creek	100	0	100	6/6-10/15
	275	50	225	7/1-10/15
Bret Zollinger	188	0	188	6/6-10/15
	50	50	0	7/1-10/15
6 X Ranch	704	24	260	6/6-10/15
			420	7/17-10/15
No Tellum Cr Ranch	410	10	400	6/6-10/15
<b>Total</b>	<b>2817</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>2583</b>	

#### Grazing Unit Rotation

#### Estimated Days

#### Notes

Navarre	25	6/6-6/30	Early Cows
Sugarloaf/Corral	15	7/1-7/15	Early Cows
Hamilton*	9	7/1-7/9	Late Cows
Coyote	11	7/2-7/12	Late Cows
Corral		7/4-7/15	Late Cows
Cabin/ Mine Canyon	19	7/13-7/31	Entire Herd
Swamps/ Anderson			
Little Canyons	9	8/1-8/9	
High Canyons	32	8/10-9/10	
Potholes	10	9/11-9/20	5" trigger Willow Springs
Lower Riparian*	4	9/21-9/24	
Little Lake/ Horse Wallow	12	9/25-10/6	
Lehman	5	10/7-10/11	
Upper Riparian	REST		
Basin Flats	REST		
Mine Hill	REST		

\* small units to be used this year

**These dates are an estimate and may vary  $\pm$  2-5 days under normal circumstances. Moves will be authorized by the Rangeland Manager based on resource conditions.**

Overlap in unit use is expected, cattle may be in up to 3 units at once while trailing and placing livestock in the units designated with the \*. When the other units are used there are to be cattle in no more than 2 units. There are a number of units in this allotment that are small and using them with the entire herd at one time would increase the potential for resource damage. Managing the herd in these smaller units with a lead, middle and rear group of cattle has proved to be the most effective way to graze and is recommended in the management plan. Movements will be based on move triggers (**discussed below in Allowable Use Standard**). This will be done with the understanding that the end of season indicators must be met. Small numbers of livestock that are left behind or in units not authorized at such time can cause severe resource damage, so immediate removal of such livestock is expected.

The 6X ranch will be bringing on 420 pair on July 17th through the Hamilton unit. It will take them 3 days of trailing on the Forest to get them to Cabin Creek, where they will be joined up with the rest of the herd.

Modifications to the grazing unit rotation and estimated days of use must be requested by the permittee in advance and approved by the Forest Service. The Forest Service may initiate modifications in consultation with the permittees when changes to scheduled use are needed due to unexpected deficiencies in range conditions such as but not limited to: predatory issues, forage production, soil moisture, precipitation, insect damage, fire, hail or plant growth/recovery during drought condition.

The Allotment Management Team process, described in the Association by-laws, will be used this year in addressing issues on the allotment. The team will be made up of Bart Wojciechowski, Scott McAfee, and Seth Teichert. The Forest Service and the Association will have meetings prior to significant moves to ensure agreement on the management of the allotment.

There was a **Notice of Non-Compliance** issued in 2014 for **Failure to keep cattle within the allotment boundary and in scheduled units during scheduled time periods and failure to maintain sanitary conditions at the rider's camp.** The letter was hand delivered at your April 15, 2015 spring meeting.

**The following actions and timeframes for accomplishment are required of you to remedy the non-compliance:**

1. In 2015 and 2016, all livestock are to be kept in the scheduled pasture and on the allotment according to the 2015 and 2016 AOIs or direction from myself or a rangeland management specialist as adjustments are made throughout the season.
2. Two full time riders will be required on the allotment while cattle are on the National Forest portion of the allotment.
3. Two additional riders will be provided every day that livestock are in Hamilton and Coyote units, until they are cleaned.
4. The Mine Canyon unit will be rode twice a day to clean cattle off of Cabin Creek and the East Fork Big Lost near the Fish and Game cabin.
5. Livestock will begin being moved out of the Potholes unit when a 5" stubble height trigger is met on the Willow Springs monitoring location outside of the electric fence.
6. Permittees will assist range riders in checking that units ahead and behind the schedule are clean.
7. In 2015, less than full numbers of permitted livestock will be run on the allotment and they will be off of the allotment by the scheduled off date which is October 11. This will be re-evaluated for the 2016 grazing season.
8. The rider's camp will be cleaned of discarded materials, the corrals will be removed from the riparian area and reconstructed up the hill from the cabins. The discarded materials will be hauled off of National Forest land. The work will begin when the road to the rider's camp is passable in 2015 and will be completed by early July 2015. Riders can occupy the camp after an inspection by Forest

Service personnel and it is verified that sanitary conditions once again exist.

These actions are required through the entire 2015 and 2016 grazing seasons unless otherwise specified above. **Failure to comply with these actions within the prescribed timeframes may result in the initiation of permit suspension or cancellation procedures.**

In order to improve communications meetings have been scheduled between the Forest Service and the Copper Basin Association. The following is the meeting schedule:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Topic of discussion</b>
June 25-	Navarre Creek	discussing utilization and the move over the top with late and early cattle
July 15-	Cow Camp-	inspect the riders camp and make sure that the combining of the herd is going as planned
August 5-	High Canyons	check in on the management up to this point and prepare for the move to the high canyons
September 2	Potholes	look at the use in the potholes and discuss the final moves

The NRCS SNOTEL sites across the Lost River Ranger District currently range from 64-90% of the Water Year average through the month of March. The Upper Big Lost River ranges from 70-80% of average and the Bear Canyon and Smiley Mountain SNOTEL sites both show 71% and 70% of average respectively. All indications show that cumulative drought impacts could persist or worsen this year. If this occurs the Forest Service expects that cattle may need to be moved more quickly through units and removed prior to the scheduled off date. Forage production is dependent on growing season (April through September) temperatures and precipitation. Even when drought conditions subside there is a lag time for plants to physically recover from the stress of the drought.

**Allowable Use Standard:** End of season 4-inch stubble height on hydric sedges & grasses is required along the greenline of riparian areas. A patchy or uneven use pattern along the greenline will usually result in stubble height indicator being met. While adequate regrowth may occur under average growing season conditions, the opposite may be true during below average conditions. Special attention should be made to drier weather conditions. It is recommended a stubble height trigger above 4 inches and less than 50% browse use be used to plan cattle moves. Woody Browse use of riparian shrubs will not exceed 50% of new leader production.

The drier mesic meadows adjacent to streams and springs should be watched to ensure that 50% use is not exceeded. These meadows are of concern across the district and more focus is going to be put on use levels in these areas. While all adjacent meadows should be looked at, the drier meadows have less chance of regrowth and therefore are of highest concern. The upland annual use level of 50% should be used to manage the dry meadows and your rangeland management specialist will work with you to determine when a desired use level has been met, so that everyone understands what the meadows should look like after livestock use.

Riparian areas with greenlines dominated by Kentucky bluegrass and tufted hairgrass should also receive special attention to achieve end of season stubble height. Greenlines dominated by these plants have less bank stability than those dominated by deep-rooted plants and are sometimes in a lower state of ecological condition. They should be managed to increase the amount of stable hydric sedges, grasses, and shrubs where appropriate.

It is required to have two full time riders and frequent help from association members to assist with riding duties throughout the season. The extra riding is important in maintaining and achieving acceptable resource conditions and control of livestock. Factors that should be considered for planning cattle moves between units include prevention of stream bank trampling, increase in rate of stubble height removal, changes in grazing preference from grasses and grass-like plants to young willows and other shrubs, large groups of cattle congregating in fence corners, at gates, or riparian areas for long periods of time. Cattle should be removed from a unit prior to resource issues occurring regardless of scheduled dates.

Regularly check the high mountain lakes in the High Canyons unit to ensure that no use is occurring from permitted livestock or those from neighboring allotments.

**Designated Monitoring Areas (DMA's):** DMA's are used to monitor representative riparian areas within a grazing unit which establishes a record of utilization and trend. The information from the DMA is also used to plan cattle moves, determine if end of season indicators are met, and to evaluate whether current management is effective or needs to be modified. Permittee monitoring, documentation and photos are encouraged before entering and when leaving each unit.

**Cleaning Grazing Units:** Livestock need to begin moving from a unit prior to the stubble height or woody browse indicators being met to ensure allowable use standards are met. This is especially important during drought conditions. In most cases 7 days should be adequate to clean a unit. Permittees should be prepared to assist range riders in checking that the unit cleaned stays clean. Range riders should keep permittees informed of problems cleaning grazed units. Bulls should be kept with the main herd or removed from the allotment when they disrupt herd management. Frequent back-riding indicates there is a herd management problem. It is also the permittee's responsibility to correct problems caused by drift from other units.

Permittees should notify the Forest Service when unauthorized livestock use from adjacent allotments occurs.

**Fence & Water Improvements:** Please refer to Part 3 of your Term Grazing Permit. Allotment boundary fences should be maintained prior to cattle entering the allotment, interior fences should also be maintained prior to cattle entering a new unit. Existing improvements should be maintained each year before requesting new improvements. The Swamps pipeline should be reconstructed with one trough this year. The electric fence around the aspen stand in Charcoal Creek and at Willow Springs will be used again this year and they need to be kept clean of livestock. The four jack fences in the basin flats have not been maintained and need to be re-constructed in 2015.

**Weed Free Hay:** In accordance with State Law, please ensure that range riders bring hay that is certified and tagged noxious weed free.

**Gray Wolf:** The Copper Basin Allotment is an area of known wolf activity. Any knowledge of wolf activity on the allotment needs to be exchanged between the permittees and the Forest Service.

**Grazing Fees:** The grazing fees for the 2015 season are \$1.69/head month. Your grazing fee payment will need to be received prior to turning livestock out on the National Forest. Receipt of payment could take up to 2 weeks from the date payment is sent.

**Actual Use Report:** An Actual Use Report will be mailed to you shortly before cattle leave the allotment. This form is to be completed and returned to the Lost River Ranger District two weeks after you have removed livestock from your allotment. The Association President will need to provide a consolidated report with the numbers and dates when cattle entered the allotment, moved from unit to unit, when cattle were removed from the allotment. Each permittee will need to provide an individual report with dates when their cattle entered and left the allotment. This information is used for the purpose of evaluating and analyzing: grazing allotment and grazing unit use, compliance with annual operating instructions, and planning next season's grazing management strategy

Applications for credits for unused portions of your allotment must be requested and filed separately. Please contact our office if you need an application for credit.

Questions and assistance regarding these instructions should be directed to Diane Weaver or the District Rangeland Management Specialist at 588-3400.