

2015 Annual Operating Instructions

Fish Creek, Hurst Canyon, and Trail Creek S&G Allotments

Below is your Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) for the Fish Creek, Hurst Canyon, and Trail Creek S&G allotments. We are including a signature page at the end of each AOI which we are requesting permittees sign and return to the district. This signature page also includes the signatures of the district ranger and current range management specialist overseeing the allotment. We believe that this process better represents the cooperative nature of managing these areas and indicates an understanding of the information in this document as well as the information in your term grazing permit(s).

Please review your Term Grazing Permit for grazing utilization, range improvement maintenance, and salting standards. 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 circumstances.

Permitted Sheep Authorized on Fish Creek Allotment

<u>Permittee</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Head Months</u>	<u>Season</u>
Lava Lake Land & Livestock	1000	3156	06/16 - 09/19
<u>Strategy of Use:</u>	<u>Dates</u>		
745 ewes/ 1000 lambs	7/1-7/15*	15 days	

Permitted Sheep Authorized on Trail Creek Allotment

<u>Permittee</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Head Months</u>	<u>Season</u>
Lava Lake Land & Livestock	948	2525	07/01 - 09/19
<u>Strategy of Use:</u>	<u>Dates</u>		
745 ewes/ 1000 lambs	7/16-7/25*	10 days	
700 ewes	8/27-8/31*	5 days	Trailing down Walton Canyon

Permitted Sheep Authorized on Hurst Canyon

<u>Permittee</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Head Months</u>	<u>Season</u>
Lava Lake Land & Livestock	1152	2916	07/01 - 09/15
<u>Strategy of Use:</u>	<u>Dates</u>		
700 ewes	7/26-8/26*	32 days	

** The rangeland forage species may be maturing sooner this year so sheep may be moved onto the allotments 15 days sooner than planned in this AOI, as discussed in the spring meeting. This would still make all use within the dates of the permit.*

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: End of season 4-inch stubble height on hydric sedges & grasses is required along the greenline of riparian areas. Upland grass utilization should not exceed 50% of current annual production at end of season. A patchy or uneven use pattern along the greenline will usually result in stubble height standard 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 given to drier weather conditions. A stubble height trigger above 4 inches is recommended in drier conditions to plan sheep moves. Allowable use on shrubs is 50% of available new leader growth.

Sheep are allowed to graze one time once-over-lightly. Once allowable use is achieved in key areas sheep must be moved regardless of how much feed is left. Sheep use on ranges already grazed is not authorized. Once the allowable use standard in any particular area is reached all your sheep must be moved to the next area of the allotment. When proper use in the last area scheduled for use is achieved, sheep must be removed from the allotment. Only bed sheep for one night per bed ground. When there is wolf activity in the area and fladry is used to minimize predation, bed grounds may be used for more than one night. When this situation occurs bed ground site selection needs to be discussed with the Range Management Specialist.

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 greenlines dominated by deep-rooted plants. Greenlines dominated by these plants may be in a lower state of ecological condition and should be managed to increase the amount of stable hydric sedges, grasses, and shrubs where appropriate.

The drier mesic meadows adjacent to streams and springs should be watched to ensure that use levels are not exceeded. These meadows are of concern across the district and more focus on use levels in these areas will occur. While all adjacent meadows should be considered, 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.

Other factors should be considered for planning sheep moves between areas. These include upland erosion in the form of rills and gullies, bedding ground trampling, and excessive “shading” in aspen clones. Please be mindful of these and other ecological concerns when using the forest and keep sheep moving accordingly.

INFISH Grazing Module Implementation: Key areas are used to monitor representative riparian areas within a grazing unit. Key area monitoring establishes a record of utilization trend, a location for observation to plan sheep moves, a location to record whether end of season stubble height standards are met, a location to evaluate whether management impacts are effective or need to be modified.

Trailing: When trailing to your allotment call the Forest Service Range staff and let them know when you start and when you are finished trailing. When trailing through other allotments do it in a timely manner of 1-4 days.

Cleaning Grazing Units: Livestock need to begin moving from a unit prior to the indicators of use being met to ensure allowable use levels are not exceeded. This is especially important during drought conditions. Permittees should be prepared to assist herders in checking that the herd stays together. Herders should keep permittees informed of problems regarding lost or separated sheep and this information should be reported to your rangeland management specialist in a timely manner.

Fence & Water Improvements: Please refer to Part 3 of your Term Grazing Permit. Allotment boundary fences should be checked prior to sheep entering the allotment, interior fences should be checked at this time or before sheep enter a new unit. Existing improvements should be maintained each year before requesting new improvements.

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

Bighorn Sheep: We will continue working within the framework of the 2015 Strategy for Managing Separation between Bighorn Sheep and Domestic Sheep on Allotments Grazed by Lava Lake Land & Livestock, LLC and Muldoon Grazing Association, Inc. Please follow the communication and response plan in the strategy.

Gray Wolf: Wolf activity increased in the Antelope Valley in 2011 and has continued to persist. Should wolf or other predator issues arise on the allotment, please contact your rangeland management specialist with the information. Coordination with other permittees and the Forest Service is important to assess predator issues and share information on predator management decisions on National Forest lands and those areas adjacent to National Forest.

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.

Drought and Fire Restrictions: In the event that fire restrictions are put into place Lava Lake Land and Livestock will be contacted and informed of the restrictions in order to share the information with the herders.

Actual Use Report: An Actual Use Report will be mailed to you upon completion of the grazing season. This form is to be completed and returned to the Lost River Ranger District in a timely manner. Each permittee will need to provide an individual report with dates when their sheep 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.

NEPA: Our office is in the process of completing an environmental analysis and documentation for livestock grazing in five cattle grazing allotments in the Antelope Creek drainage, which are adjacent to sheep allotments which you are permitted for. We plan to include adjustments to your allotment boundary and construction of a boundary fence between Horsethief Creek and Antelope Creek drainages in this decision. Your involvement in this portion of the proposed action is crucial, as it will affect the area within your allotments and place construction and maintenance requirements in your permit for at least a portion of the boundary fence.

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

Questions and assistance regarding these instructions should be directed to Diane Weaver or the District Rangeland Management Specialist at (208)588-3400.