

## Alder Creek C&H Allotment 2015 Annual Operating Instructions

Below is your Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) for the Alder Creek Allotment. This AOI addresses Forest Service administered lands within the Alder Creek Allotment. Please review your Term Grazing Permit for grazing utilization, range improvement maintenance, and salting standards. Actual on-dates and off-dates are dependent 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.

<u>Permittee</u>	<b>Permitted Cattle Authorized</b>				<u>Brand</u>
<u>Term</u>	<u>Non-Use</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Season</u>		
Randy Pehrson	398	0	398	6/16-10/6	
Shane Rosenkrance	118	0	118	6/16-10/6	
Randy Woodbury	58	0	58	6/16-10/6	
John Lambert	30	0	30	6/16-10/6	
<b>Total</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>604</b>		

<u>Grazing Unit Rotation</u>	<u>Estimated Days</u>		<u>Rip./(Woody)/Upland</u>
FS Willow Creek	28	6/16-7/13	5" (35-45%)/50%
* Tuscarora/Mammoth/Stewart/Sawmill	29	7/14-8/11	4" (50%)/50%
*Trail Creek/Upr.-Lwr Brown	28	8/12-9/8	4" (50%)/50%
*South Fork Alder	18	9/9-9/26	4" (50%)/50%
Big & Little Blind Canyons/Bedy	10	9/27-10/6	4" (50%)/50%

\*There are no fences separating these units and historically were considered one unit. However, the dates associated with the units will be followed as estimated above. Additional riding will be needed to keep cattle from drifting. The dates are estimates and cattle need to be moved based on utilization standards.

The 2013 White Knob fuels reduction project is still under effect. Treatment areas are in the timber/aspen vegetation community within Chimney Gulch and in steep rocky portions of Mammoth Canyon. In 2014 a FS contractor built two sections of temporary electric fence to help keep cattle out of the aspen restoration area in Chimney Gulch. Permittees will be required to maintain the temporary fence each year while livestock are in the Willow Creek Unit. Please ride to ensure no cattle occur inside of the Chimney Gulch treatment area. You will be notified when livestock will be allowed back into those areas.

The Cape Horn Draw prescribed burn area has reached the desired condition for ground cover and may be grazed as part of the Willow Creek Unit. Livestock will tend to graze the Cape Horn Draw prescribed burn area before surrounding sagebrush uplands. Care should be taken to ensure the burn area does not exceed 50% upland utilization.

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.

**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.

**Allowable Use Standard:** 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 made to drier weather conditions. It is recommended a stubble height trigger above 4 inches be used in drier conditions to plan cattle moves. Upland standards for utilization are 50% use of key species (Idaho Fescue and Bluebunch wheatgrass) on current year's growth for a deferred rotation system and 50% use on woody species.

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.

Browse use levels were exceeded last year in the Bedy Unit for the second year in a row and stubble height use levels were exceeded in the Willow Creek Unit. The Bedy Unit has seen a decrease in key riparian species such as *Carex* spp. and Baltic rush replaced with Kentucky bluegrass. This decrease is due to a combination of dryer conditions and grazing use greater than allowable use levels along the riparian areas. All other end of season use levels that were measured met expected levels. The stubble height of four inches needs to be maintained along

the riparian areas within the allotment with a 5 inch stubble height in Willow Creek to ensure proper riparian function and limit erosion and trampling of the stream banks. Watch riparian areas closely to ensure end of season indicators are met on the allotment this year. The stubble height indicator of 5 inches in Willow Creek and the 50% browse allowable use in Bedy needs to be met in the 2015 grazing season.

Other factors should be considered for planning cattle moves between units. These 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.

The Willow Creek riparian greenline monitoring site was established in 2004 and was found to be at early seral condition. This means a 5 inch riparian stubble height and 35-45% woody browse use standards will be required in the Willow Creek unit.

**Cleaning Grazing Units:** Livestock need to begin moving from a unit prior to the stubble height standard being met to ensure allowable use standards are met. This is especially important during drought conditions. In most cases 7 days should be adequate. Permittees should be prepared to assist range riders in checking that the unit cleaned stays clean, and providing range riders with adequate maps and Annual Operating Instructions. 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.

**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 cattle entering a new unit. Existing improvements should be maintained each year before requesting new improvements. Particular attention should be focused on the allotment boundary shared with the Cherry Creek Allotment. Maintenance responsibilities have been mapped and split between the allotments for increased accountability. The Alder Creek permittees are now responsible for drift and fence responsibilities between Big Flat Top Mtn. and Sheep Mountain; this means you are responsible for any cattle drifting in or out of this area. If you feel you need to add some additional drift fence, materials will be available upon request at the Lost River Ranger Station. Permittees in non-use status are still responsible for improvement maintenance.

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

**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 after cattle leave the allotment. Please notify this office when cattle are removed from the allotment. The association President will need to provide a consolidated report with dates when cattle entered the allotment, when the main herd was 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. Please return the report 2 weeks after it's received to help expedite billing credits for next season and provide data for end of season reports.

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