

Lower Cedar C&H Allotment 2015 Annual Operating Instructions

Below are your Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) for the Lower Cedar Allotment. This AOI addresses Forest Service administered lands within the Lower Cedar Allotment. 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 Cattle Authorized

<u>Permittee</u>	<u>On/Off</u>	<u>Non-Use</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Season</u>	<u>Brand</u>
Ken or Julie Buckwalter	40	34 RP	6	5/1-6/30	
Scott McAfee	19	0	19	5/6-6/30	

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. 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. 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, 50% utilization of upland key species. 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.

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

Other factors should be considered for planning cattle moves between units. These include changes in grazing behavior, such as a change 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.

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: Grazing units should be thoroughly cleaned of cattle to ensure allowable use standards are met. Enough time should be made to thoroughly clean the unit, in most cases 7 days is adequate. 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 during breeding or removed from the allotment when they disrupt herd management. Frequent back-riding indicates there is a herd management problem. It is the permittee's responsibility to correct grazing management disruption due to cattle location.

Fence & Water Improvements: Please refer to Part 3 of your Term Grazing Permit for a list of improvements to be maintained. Allotment boundary fences should be checked and maintained prior to cattle entering the allotment, interior fences should be checked and maintained at this time or before cattle 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.

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 that occurs. 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 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 regarding these instructions should be directed to Diane Weaver or the Rangeland Management Specialist at 588-3400.