Bighorn National Forest
Powder River Ranger District

2015

Annual Operating Instructions

For

Clear Creek C&H Allotment

Recommended By: _____ Date: _____
Rangeland Management Specialist

Accepted By: _____ Date: _____
Permittee

Accepted By: _____ Date: _____
Permittee

Approved By: _____ Date: _____
District Ranger

As Permittee, my signature on these Annual Operating Instructions certifies that there is no change to my permitted livestock or base property ownership as described in my grazing permit.

Upon signature by the District Ranger, these Annual Operating Instructions are hereby made a part of your Term Grazing Permits number 1725B and 10006A.

Any changes or deviation from the direction outlined in the Annual Operating Instructions will need to be requested in advance to the Powder River Ranger District. This includes changes in animal numbers, class of livestock, period of use (changes in entry or exit dates from unit to unit), or changes in pasture rotation. No changes in these instructions will be recognized without verbal or written confirmation from the Powder River Ranger District.

CLEAR CREEK C&H ALLOTMENT
YEAR 2015 ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

Permitted and Authorized for 2015:

Clear Creek Allotment	LS Kind	LS Class	Permitted			Authorized		
			LS #	From	To	LS#	From	To
Christian Family Trust	Cattle	Mature	329	7/1	9/30	300	7/1	9/30
	Horse	Mature	4	7/1	9/30	4	7/1	9/30
Fidelity Services LLC	Cattle	Mature	546	7/1	9/30	561	7/1	9/30
	Cattle	Yearling	144	7/1	9/30	0		
	Horse	Mature	8	7/1	9/30	8	7/1	9/30

- Before Entering the Allotment

I suggest that you review your term grazing permit and the following Annual Operating Instructions, and ask questions if any portion is not clearly understood.

Year 2015 grazing fees are $1.69/head month, and must be paid before livestock can be turned onto the Forest. Let Thad or Kerri know the actual date and number of livestock entering the National Forest and, upon request, provide for having stock counted.

2015 rotation:

Clear Creek Pastures	2013	2014	**2015**
Grouse Mountain	4	3	**2**
North Hospital Hill	3	2	**1**
South Hospital Hill	1	4	**3**
South Lucasta	2	1	**4**
North Lucasta	1	5	**1**
Hunter Mesa	2	1	**2**
Hunter Creek, N	3 Early	2	**3 Early**
Hunter Creek, S	3 Late	2	**3 Late**
Upper Buffalo	4	3	**4**
Lower Buffalo	5	4	**5**
Hunter Corral	5	4	**5**
Schoolhouse Park	3	2	**1**
Circle Park	2	1	**4**
Hondo, W	1	4	**3**
Holland	4	3	**2**
Hondo, E	4	3	**2**

- Upon Entering the Allotment

The turn on date for Clear Creek C&H Allotment is tentatively authorized for July 1. Plan to turn livestock onto the allotment on or after this date unless you feel that forage is not ready to be grazed, or unless you have been notified that delays are necessary to allow for further plant development. The actual date that livestock may be turned onto the allotment depends on range readiness. The value of animal months lost due to a delay for forage development may be credited against next year's fees, if requested by the end of the calendar year.

Indicators to determine range readiness are soil and vegetation conditions. Rangeland is generally ready for grazing when soil has become firm after winter and early spring precipitation, and when plants have reached a stage of growth at which grazing may begin under a specific management plan without long-lasting damage. This occurs

when grasses are headed out, forbs are in full bloom, and shrubs are leaved out. Livestock should not be turned on until all portions of the first pasture of a rotation are determined to be "ready", and subsequent pastures in a rotation will be "range ready" when their scheduled grazing use is to occur.

- Resource Guidelines

Resource guidelines below are derived from the Clear Creek C&H Allotment Management Plan, 12/20/1999. The allowable use standards for utilization of the current year's growth by livestock and wildlife will be as follows:

Uplands	A maximum of 40% of current years growth in first used pasture; a maximum of 50% of current years growth in all other pastures.
Riparian*	A 5" stubble height of all riparian sedge species
Aspen	A 5" stubble height of all grass species within boundaries of aspen stands when livestock leave the pasture.
Elk winter range areas	No more than 20% of current years growth annually on the upper one third of North Hospital Hill Pasture and 35% on the top of Hunter Mesa.

* Stubble height measurements are to record longest leaf measurements unless otherwise agreed upon.

Moves between pastures are dependent upon forage utilization levels and other resource objectives being met for a pasture. When it is determined that further use and impacts in a pasture will exceed allowable use levels, livestock are required to be moved to the next pasture in the scheduled rotation, or off National Forest if they are already in the last pasture. It is your responsibility to see that livestock are managed to best utilize available forage while assuring guidelines are not exceeded. Since precipitation, forage production levels, and other factors change from year to year and livestock utilization patterns vary, this will require monitoring by you and/or your rider throughout the season.

Livestock use beyond allowable guidelines could result in an administrative action in subsequent years, such as an adjustment to the season of use, in order to allow plants a chance to recover and restore root reserves.

- Monitoring

The primary emphasis for monitoring should be placed on measuring stubble height in riparian areas, and estimating percent by weight of forage removed on upland sites, as described above. If issues are raised indicating the need to monitor aspen, stream banks, or willows, we prefer to establish monitoring protocols and locations together with you. It is strongly recommended that permittees continue monitoring. Submission of monitoring data is not mandatory; however, actual use data must be turned in by permittees. Any utilization data you collect and submit will be maintained in permanent monitoring files.

To facilitate monitoring livestock use levels, and to avoid the need to measure utilization on all rangelands, monitoring will be done using a “key area” concept. Key areas are generally those areas of a pasture which livestock have the tendency to go to and graze first. They are chosen based upon the premise that if utilization in these key areas does not exceed allowable utilization guidelines, then use in the rest of the unit will most likely not exceed guidelines either. This is not to imply that guidelines need only be met in key areas. Allowable use guidelines apply to all rangeland on the allotment. Key areas may be revised by the District Ranger as needed.

I encourage you to contact Thad or Kerri should you have any questions, want assistance with measurements, or need monitoring forms. In order to assure your results accurately reflect livestock use, all measurements should be completed within 7 days of the time livestock are removed from the pasture. Be sure to record the date measurements are taken, and the name of the data collector(s). Photos of the transect showing its general location and actual forage remaining will support your numerical documentation. The Forest Service will conduct spot checks throughout the grazing season and I encourage your participation.

- Key Areas

Key areas serve as a monitoring and evaluation point for the degree of grazing use occurring in each pasture. Properly selected key areas give an indication of the overall acceptability of current grazing management to meet all resource objectives.

Key Area locations on Clear Creek Allotment:

Pasture	Location
Grouse Mountain	N ½ NW 9-50-83 Near improvement 103001, Elk Draw Spring
North Hospital Hill	NENE 7-50-83 in Mosier Gulch
South Hospital Hill	NW ¼ 7-50-83 in Hospital Hill Spring Draw
North Lucasta	SWSW 11-50-84, west of US 16, South of Schoolhouse Park Road
South Lucasta	SWSW 12-50-84, drainage below improvement 103016 Lucasta Spg 2
Hunter Mesa	NW ¼ 11-50-84, riparian seep on the face of Hunter Mesa
Hunter Creek	SESE 4-50-84, just east of Paradise's South Horse Pasture
Upper Buffalo	NW ¼ 8-50-84, tributary to Seven Brothers Creek
Lower Buffalo	NENE 9-50-84, above Hunter Creek Road
Hunter Corral	SW ¼ 4-50-84, near Hunter Corral
Schoolhouse Park	SE ¼ 17-50-84, near Sawmill Creek Trail
Circle Park	NWNW 28-50-84, south of Circle Park Road
Hondo Creek	SWSW 22-50-84, south of Circle Park Road
Holland Pasture	NENE 23-50-84, near mitten creek, and NESE 23-50-84, along Tie Hack Reservoir Trail

I encourage you to keep thorough notes while taking measurements and making observations during the grazing season.

- Maintenance of Improvements

Term grazing permits state that permittees will maintain assigned range improvements to standards of repair, orderliness, and safety acceptable to the Forest Service. A complete list of the improvements and designated maintenance responsibility and standards is included in Part 3 of your term grazing permit. Maintenance of each improvement must be completed prior to the time livestock enter the pasture in which the improvement is located each year, or in the case of allotment boundary fences, prior to livestock entering the pasture on either side of the fence. Materials from abandoned range improvements or maintenance activities must be removed from the Forest. Contact Thad or Kerri to revise your maintenance responsibility inventory list, accounting for improvements that are no longer present.

Planned Range Improvement Projects for 2015:

Number	Name	Project description	Progress
102008	Hunter Crk Spring		Spring box needs work, as it was not set properly; We discussed the need to develop a different collection system. No decision was mad as to work in 2015. Permittees need to look at and make a decision whether to repair or remove.
103013	Fox Cabin Spring	Needs new tank	Permittee asked for tire 10' tank in 2014. FS provided the tank and permittees are to set the tank this spring.
103027	South Lucasta/Schoolhouse Park Fence	Cattleguard needs cleaned	Forest Service and Jake need to look at fence 103078, US 16 Construction Fence 2 South and cattle guard together with a map, and seriously consider removal if it no longer serves a reasonable function. FS to contact road crew about cleaning or removal in 2015 or 2016.
103052	Lower Buffalo Fence	Needs maintenance	Fence between Lower Buffalo/Hunter Ck. Permittee will maintain in 2015. Contact FS for off-road permit to haul materials.
103074	Hunter Creek Electric Fence	Temporary fence to assist with even use on Hunter Ck. pasture	Permittee to continue use in 2015. Plans to make permanent, pending NEPA. Wire needs to be picked up immediately after livestock move out. Permittees to put in wood posts every 60 feet to sturdy up electric fence following archeology clearance.
103005 or 103039	Hospital Hill Water Develpmt or Hospital Hill #2	Trough Replacement	Trace said that he would like to replace the trough and would like to use a tire trough. He will need an off road permit to complete the work.

Grazing permit modifications for cooperative range improvements (form FS-2200-113) must be completed prior to expenditure of Forest Service funds for project work. As materials for these projects become available, these activities can be coordinated through Thad or Kerri.

- Salting Practices

The proper use of salt can be used as a management tool to help achieve proper utilization. The following guidelines must be followed when salting unless you have been given direction by a Forest Officer to do otherwise:

a) Scatter salt in its proper location prior to livestock entering the pasture.
b) Salt should be placed between water developments, and at least 1/4 mile from water if possible.
c) Salt away from small parks, trails, roads, and areas of concentrated public use.
d) Salt should be placed in areas of rock outcrops, mature timber stands (other than aspen), or areas of dense sagebrush.
e) Change your salt location at least every year and preferably every time salt is placed. Moving salt blocks at least 100 feet can prevent an area from becoming abused from salt placement year after year.
f) Remove salt from an area when proper use is reached.

- Conifer Encroachment

You are authorized to assist in reduction of conifer encroachment in accordance with a Decision Memo addressing the topic signed June 9, 2006. The intent is to maintain meadows by removing encroaching conifer trees. Predominantly small (≤7" dbh) trees may be felled using hand crews, with slash lopped to 18". Trees felled will be available for firewood, in accordance with other forest policies. As discussed in our spring meeting, contact the Forest Service prior to any treatment in order to coordinate priority treatment areas and project area boundaries. Total acres treated, before and after photos, and a map showing location of treatment unit should be submitted following treatment.

- Wolves

On Sept. 23, 2014 the US District Court for the District of Columbia vacated the USFWS wolf delisting rule under the endangered species act. The court reinstated federal protections for Wyoming wolves that were in place prior to the 2012 delisting therefore wolves are again listed under the ESA as a nonessential experimental population in all of Wyoming. Take of wolves may be authorized only by the non-essential rules or by permit issued under section 10 of the ESA. You must contact US Fish and Wildlife Service for any wolf related predation or harassment of livestock. You can contact Mike Jimenez with USFWS or your local Wildlife Services contact. Please inform the Rangeland Management Specialist of any wolf activity on your allotment as well.

- Other

Any dead livestock shall be moved to a location greater than 200 feet from water, 500 feet from developed camp sites, and out of view from roads or trails.

Much of the allotment is closed to off-road travel. Permittees are required to abide by all Forest road restrictions and closures, as are all users of the public lands. No exceptions will be made without prior written approval.

Documentation on the enclosed Annual Use Report is required, and will help us to plan livestock use in the future. Record both on-and-off dates for each pasture as well as the number of cattle. Feel free to make any other pertinent management notes, as they will be helpful in determining future management decisions for the allotment. Return the Actual Use Report to the Powder River Ranger District Office by December 31, 2015.