

**Bighorn National Forest
Powder River Ranger District**

2015

Annual Operating Instructions

For

Muddy Creek C&H Allotment

Recommended By: _____ Date: _____
Rangeland Management Specialist

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 10011, 10040, 1882A, 1881A, 10052.

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.

MUDDY CREEK C&H ALLOTMENT

YEAR 2015 ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

Permitted and Authorized for 2015:

<i>Muddy Creek Allotment</i>	<i>LS Kind</i>	<i>LS Class</i>	<i>Permitted Use</i>			<i>Authorized</i>		
			<i>LS #</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Use To</i>	<i>LS #</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Use To</i>
Fraley Land & Livestock LLC	Cattle	Mature	177	06/25	09/25	177	06/25	09/25
	Horse	Mature	2	06/25	09/25	2	06/25	09/25
Patchwork Partners LLC	Cattle	Mature	63	06/25	09/25	63	06/25	09/25
	Horse	Mature	1	06/25	09/25	1	06/25	09/25
Bear Track Land & Livestock	Cattle	Mature	100	06/25	09/25	100	06/25	09/25
	Horse	Mature	1	06/25	09/25	1	06/25	09/25
Tim & Jackie Reimler	Cattle	Mature	321	06/25	09/25	250	06/25	09/25
	Horse	Mature	1	06/25	09/25	1	06/25	09/25
Klondike Ranch LP	Cattle	Mature	79	06/25	09/25	79	06/25	09/25
	Horse	Mature	1	06/25	09/25	1	06/25	09/25

Before Entering the Allotment

I suggest that you review your term grazing permit, Allotment Management Plan (AMP), and Annual Operating Instructions prior to turning onto the allotment, 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.

The rotation for 2015 is as follows:

<i>Pasture</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>
East Rotation- Fraley, Dube, & Tass					
Upper Elgin	3	1	3	1	3
Lower Elgin	2	3	2	3	2
Caribou Mesa	1	2	1	2	1
West Rotation- McPhee & Reimler					
Holding	Trail	Trail	1,5	1,5	1,5
Pole Creek	1	3	2	4	2
Caribou Creek	2	1	3	2	3
Crazy Woman	3	2	4	3	4

West rotation will avoid scheduling Caribou Creek Pasture last in rotation, but rotate it between first and second.

East rotation will avoid scheduling Caribou Mesa Pasture last in rotation, but rotate it between first and second.

Muddy Holding pasture is to be used for trailing up/down use, with very short periods of 'holding' to assure guidelines are met.

Entering the Allotment

The turn on date for Muddy Creek C&H Allotment is tentatively authorized for June 25 for both rotations, but is dependent upon range readiness as discussed in the Muddy Creek C&H AMP. If livestock are delayed, the value of animal months may be credited against next year's fees, if requested by the end of the calendar year.

Resource Guidelines

Resource guidelines are described in the Bighorn National Forest Vegetation Grazing Guidelines, the Bighorn Forest Plan, and in your AMP. The allowable use guidelines for utilization of the current year's forage are listed in the following tables. These guidelines are applicable at the time the livestock leave the unit and include use by both livestock and wildlife. Muddy Creek C&H Allotment is managed under a “Deferred Rotation” grazing strategy, and existing rangeland condition is considered “satisfactory”. Existing rangeland condition determinations may be revised as trend assessments are conducted.

Uplands (percent utilization by weight of forage species)		
Type Of Management	Satisfactory*	Unsatisfactory
Deferred Rotation	A maximum of 40% of current year’s growth in first used pasture; a maximum of 50% of current year’s growth in all other pastures.	40

Riparian and Aspen** Vegetation Residue Guidelines		
Season Of Use	Existing Rangeland Condition	
	Satisfactory*	Unsatisfactory
Early Use Pasture; Livestock leave pasture prior to 08/01	5 inches	5 inches
Summer & Fall Use Pasture; Livestock leave pasture after 08/01	5 inches	7 inches

*Satisfactory is defined here as meeting or moving toward desired vegetative condition and unsatisfactory is defined as not meeting desired vegetative condition or undetermined. Vegetation residue guidelines are expressed in terms of the inches of stubble height to be left, measuring longest leaf of designated Carex species, after livestock use. In this case, all wide leaved sedges have been designated, subject to update
 ** Grass species residue guidelines within the boundaries of aspen stands when livestock leave the pasture.

Your deferred rotational grazing strategy and pasture move triggers are described in your AMP. Note that 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

Monitoring of forage use levels and other livestock impacts should occur throughout the grazing season, with management adjustments made as needed. If issues are raised indicating the need to monitor aspen, stream banks, or willows, we will work with you to determine transect locations and establish transects on the ground. Any data you collect and submit will be maintained in USFS permanent record.

To facilitate monitoring actual use, and to avoid the need to measure utilization on all Suitable rangeland, monitoring will be done using a key area concept. Key areas are listed and described in your AMP. Note that allowable use guidelines apply to all Suitable rangeland on the allotment, and that key areas may be revised as needed. The Forest Service will conduct spot checks throughout the grazing season, and I encourage your participation.

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 data. The Forest Service will conduct spot checks throughout the grazing season and I encourage your participation.

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 is included in Part 3 of term grazing permits, with maintenance standards described in your revised AMP.

Projects Planned for 2015 include:

Impr #	Improvement name	Project Discussion
105010	Muddy Cow Camp Horse Pasture Fence	Extension to eliminate water gap adjacent to US 16; discussed 3/19/14 as part of Pole Creek pit expansion. No work scheduled for 2015.
105022	East Long Park Spring	New tank was installed in 2008, need to remove old enclosure and re-build with buck and rail. The old tank is covering a hole in the enclosure, and the enclosure needs to be expanded; USFS can provide material for buck and rail fence.
105052	North Fk Crazy Woman Riparian Fence	Plan to finalize fence lay out in May 2015. Permittees to begin work this season but may require more than one season to complete.
105060	Ela Ka Wee Two Spring	Possible to include new tank placement and enclosure as mitigation for Pole Creek Gravel Pit expansion. Tank placement planned to be in old timber sale area. No work is scheduled for 2015.
105008	Upper Crazy Woman Drift	Look at relocating this fence closer to the highway to mitigate Pole Creek Gravel Pit expansion. Work could be done by WYDOT.
	Cow Camp Loading Chute	Permittees to remove old loading chute and place a mobile loading chute in its place.

The Crazy Woman Riparian Fence is the priority project for the District on this allotment. The Forest Service will provide materials needed for a 4 strand wire fence with a bottom smooth wire. Portions of this fence may be let-down to allow for unrestricted wildlife movement while cattle are not in the Caribou Creek Pasture. Permittees are to provide labor and get the fence built to Forest Service Standards and wildlife specifications. Forest Service will provide specifications. Permittees will be responsible for maintenance of the fence upon completion. Location needs to be finalized so that archeologist can walk the line and provide any necessary report to SHPO prior to fence construction.

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. The permittees and Forest Service should identify range improvements that are in need of major repair and ensure that such repairs are completed to standard during the 2015 grazing season.

Conifer Encroachment

You are authorized to assist in reduction of conifer encroachment in accordance with a Decision Memo addressing the topic signed June 12, 2006. The intent is to maintain meadows by removing encroaching conifer trees. Predominantly small ($\leq 7''$ 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. Notify the Powder River District Ranger **prior** to beginning treatment to coordinate boundaries for thinning if needed. 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

Permittees are to contact Ranger Booth for written extended stay camping permits for permit administration.

Salting and additional management practices are described in your term grazing permit as well as in your revised AMP.

Documentation on the enclosed Annual Use Report is required, and will help us to plan livestock use in the future. Return the completed form to the Powder River Ranger District Office by December 31, 2015.