

**Bighorn National Forest
Powder River Ranger District**

2015

Annual Operating Instructions

For

North Canyon 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 Permit number 1522A.

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.

North Canyon C&H Allotment
YEAR 2015 ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

Permitted and Authorized for 2015:

North Canyon Allotment	LS Kind	LS Class	Permitted			Authorized		
			LS #	From	To	LS#	From	To
Rice Ranch Inc.	Cattle	Mature	800	7/01	10/05	800	7/01	10/05
	Horse	Mature	8	7/01	10/05	8	7/01	10/05
						Same as permitted		

- 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 date and number of livestock entering the National Forest and, upon request, provide for having stock counted.

Rotation Schedule as described in the AMP

Pasture Sequence	2014	2015
*Canyon (Early)	1 (Trail Through)	1 Graze
High Park	2	4
'V' East	3	3
'V' West	1	2
Canyon (Late)	4	5 (Trail Through)
*Canyon pasture is used to trail livestock on and off the allotment. Trailing takes several days and some light grazing occurs during trailing. More intense grazing should be alternated between early and late use each year		
A grazing strategy should be implemented in which season of use is rotated through all grazing units so plants are not grazed at the same time of year in successive years.		

- Entering the Allotment

The turn on date for North Canyon 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 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 are described in the Bighorn National Forest Vegetation Grazing Guidelines (revised April 2007), and in the Bighorn Forest Plan. 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 livestock leave the unit and include use by both livestock and wildlife.

North Canyon C&H Allotment is managed under a "Rotation" grazing strategy, and existing rangeland condition is considered "satisfactory". Rangeland condition determinations may be revised as trend assessments are conducted.

Upland maximum allowable use guidelines (percent utilization by weight of forage species)		
Type Of Management	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Growing Season Long	30	10
Fall and Winter	45	15
Rotation	45	35
Deferred Rotation	50	40
Rest Rotation	50	40

Riparian 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 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.		

Moves between pastures depend on forage utilization levels and other resource objectives being met for a pasture. When 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 estimating and measuring stubble height in riparian areas, and estimating percent weight of forage removed on upland sites, as described above. If there is a need for additional monitoring we prefer to jointly determine monitoring protocols and locations. Permittee participation in monitoring is a vital component in allotment management and you are encouraged to join my staff as they assess key areas, set utilization cages, and conduct utilization checks throughout the season. If you choose to submit monitoring data it will be maintained in our files.

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 generally those areas of a pasture which livestock have the tendency to go to and graze first. They are chosen in 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 Suitable rangeland on the allotment. Key areas may be revised 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 follow established protocols and be completed within 7 days of the time livestock are removed from a 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.

- 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. Benchmark sites and key areas are further described in your revised Allotment

Management Plan, and were discussed in your spring meeting. A revised map is included in that document and should be used to validate their locations.

I encourage you to keep thorough notes throughout the grazing season. Should your monitoring indicate changes might be needed in key area locations or protocols, contact Thad or Kerri.

- 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 your term grazing permit. Maintenance 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. The minimum maintenance standard for improvements is listed in the North Canyon C&H Allotment AMP.

- Planned Range Improvement Projects

The following range improvement projects were discussed and planned for the 2015 season:

Impvt #	Improvement Name	Project Description
504149C	Teepee Ridge Pipeline and Tank C	Proposed 06/12/14 on ridge near RAWS Weather station; Gary would like to install the second stock tank on this pipeline when the Forest Service will get them the trough, as planned. Prefers 8' galvanized tank. FS to provide. FS to seek HR clearance.

All new or reconstruction range improvement work should be coordinated through the range specialists. 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

Use salt placement 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:

- Scatter salt in its proper location prior to livestock entering the pasture.
- Salt should be placed between water developments, and at least 1/4 mile from water if possible.
- Salt away from small parks, trails, roads, and areas of concentrated public use.
- Place salt in rock outcrops, mature timber stands (other than aspen), or areas of dense sagebrush.
- 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.
- Remove salt from an area when proper use is reached.

- 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 authorized to maintain a camp trailer at cow camps for quarters if needed.

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

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. Please make sure both on and off dates are recorded 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.