

ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

2015

BULL/WOODROCK S&G ALLOTMENT

TONGUE DISTRICT

BIGHORN NATIONAL FOREST

Amy Ormseth
District Ranger

Date

Permittee

Date

**BRUCE MOUNTAIN, BULL CREEK & WOODROCK S&G ALLOTMENTS
2015 ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS**

A. Before Entering the Allotment

1. Review all clauses of your term grazing permit and the information contained within these Annual Operating Instructions (AOI). Be sure to contact David or Zach if you have questions or any portion of your grazing permit or these operating instructions is not clearly understood.
2. The current year's grazing fees must be paid before placing livestock on the National Forest.
3. Review Section G. - Maintenance of Improvements, and complete the necessary maintenance of assigned range improvements as described in that section.

B. Entering and Leaving the Allotment

Forage development has been slowed on the mountain due to cool temperatures in recent weeks. As a result, the on-date for the allotment has been tentatively delayed until July 10^h to allow the desirable forage species a chance to further develop before initiating livestock grazing. We will continue to look at conditions over the next week and visit with you to set a firm date. I remind you that you are the responsible party to meet the allowable use/herbage left guidelines described in Section D below so making sure there is adequate forage available when your sheep enter the allotment is an important decision and can affect not only your ability to meet guidelines but the length of time they may remain on the allotment.

C. Authorized Numbers and Pasture Rotation

Permittee	Authorized Livestock Numbers	Authorized Season of Use
Little Ranch Company	1350 Mature Sheep	7/01 – 9/30
	4 Horses	7/01 – 9/30

Pasture Sequence	Pasture Name
1	Woodrock North
2	Woodrock South
3	Bruce Mountain
4	Woodchuck Pass
5	East Bull Creek
6	West Bull Creek

This planned pasture rotation is designed to help provide for the long term health and productivity of each pasture but may be changed, with sound reasons and prior approval, if it becomes necessary over the course of the grazing season. You are encouraged to use adaptive management practices (e.g. use of temporary electric fence, use of riders and low stress handling techniques, combination of allotments, etc.) to help meet the allowable use requirements described in Sections D and E below. To assure your management does not negatively affect other resources, all proposed changes to these instructions must be discussed with and approved by David or Zach prior to implementation on the ground.

D. Allowable Use/Herbage Left Guidelines

The allowable use/herbage left guidelines are designed to ensure that short-term effects of livestock grazing activities are within established parameters intended to provide for the long-health and sustainability of rangeland resources. The following allowable use/herbage left guidelines will apply to all areas of your allotment. Total use by livestock and wildlife combined must not exceed any of these guidelines at the time livestock leave a pasture.

1. Upland Range Sites

Sites on sedimentary soils below 9,200 feet elevation (Excludes sites dominated by timothy and smooth brome).	Visual Obstruction Reading (VOR) of 5 or more bands for all applicable sites (a VOR of band 4 is acceptable).
Sites on granitic soils below 9,200 feet elevation (Excludes sites dominated by timothy and smooth brome).	A VOR of 5 or more bands for all applicable sites.
All <u>other</u> sites (such as sites dominated by timothy and smooth brome, or above 9200 feet elevation). This applies only if modified Robel pole cannot be used.	A. Maximum of 40% by weight in all pastures used prior to August 1 st . B. Maximum of 50% by weight in pastures used after August 1 st .

2. Riparian Range Sites

Herbaceous vegetation on all sites except areas suitable for water vole habitat.	A. A residual 5" stubble height on wide leaved carex species if livestock leave pasture prior to August 1st.* B. A residual 7" stubble height on wide leaved carex species if livestock leave pasture after August 1st.*
Willows	Maximum of 35% use of current years leaders by livestock.

3. Aspen Range Sites

Herbaceous vegetation within all aspen stands	A residual 5" stubble height for all grasses and sedges when livestock leave a pasture*
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* All stubble height guidelines stated for riparian and aspen range sites are the minimum required when transect measurements record the longest leaf length of all leaves readily available for livestock grazing for each plant measured. Leaves or portions of leaves trampled in the mud, lying on the ground or in water, protected by willows or otherwise unavailable to livestock are not to be included in the measurements. Transect measurements may also record the average length of all leaves available for grazing from each selected plant. If the average leaf method is used, all minimum guidelines shown in tables above will be adjusted downward 1".

Livestock must be moved to the next pasture or off the National Forest if in the last pasture when further use will exceed one or more of the allowable use/herbage left guidelines shown above. Moves will be completed and the pasture you are leaving shall be cleaned of livestock within 2-4 days of initiating a pasture move. It is your responsibility to manage your livestock within each pasture to assure use does not exceed any of the above guidelines. This will require constant monitoring of the vegetation by you and/or your allotment rider and not just simply waiting for estimated calendar dates to determine the proper use period for each pasture. It is imperative you take whatever steps are necessary (use of riders, move salt weekly, reduction in total numbers,

shorten length of grazing periods in pastures, etc.) to manage your livestock to assure all guidelines are met throughout each pasture.

It is also important to note the allowable use/herbage left guidelines shown above apply to all suitable range (riparian and uplands) within the allotment. To assist you with your responsibilities of monitoring the actual use, all monitoring measurements will be done using a key area concept. The key areas are generally those areas livestock have the tendency to graze first when placed in a pasture. Livestock also tend to graze these areas repeatedly. As a result, these areas will typically reach the allowable use/herbage left guidelines before any other area of the pasture. If actual use in these key areas does not exceed the allowable use/herbage left guidelines, then use in the rest of the pasture will most likely not exceed guidelines either (unless livestock are constantly pushed off the key areas to other portions of the pasture). The important thing to remember is actual use should not exceed any of the guidelines throughout the pasture. If our management causes a change in use patterns we may need to discuss a change in key area boundaries.

E. Monitoring

An integral part of the ROD for the Tongue AMP is the use of adaptive management. Adaptive management requires a continuous cycle of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation into our management approach and modifies future management based upon the results. Our best chance for success will be for permittees and Forest Service to cooperatively work together to read transects, interpret the data, and discuss any annual or long-term adjustments that may be necessary to meet the intent of the ROD.

The annual monitoring will primarily use a combination of the following three protocols:

1. **Carex Stubble Height:** Stubble height measurements will be taken using paced transects in all key areas with riparian range sites. The number and location of transects you need to read will depend on the area size and the variances of use levels. One transect within 3 feet of the water's edge may be sufficient in narrow riparian areas where use does not vary across the riparian zone. Two or more may be necessary in larger riparian areas or whenever use on streambanks (especially within 3 feet of the water's edge) is noticeably different from the rest of riparian zone. In large areas where use does not vary, locate two or more transects within 3 feet of the stream but if use varies across the zone, locate at least one transect within 3 feet of the water's edge and additional transects further away from the stream. Each transect will consist of 50 measurements with a recommended 10 or more feet between each measurement. Transects to determine the actual use must be read within 7 days after livestock leave each pasture. Photos of each transect are not required but would be helpful to substantiate your documentation.
1. **Robel Pole:** Visual obstruction readings (VOR) using a modified robel pole will be used to measure the remaining standing crop in appropriate key areas below 9200 feet (excludes sites dominated by timothy, smooth brome or very dense sagebrush): A minimum of 2-4 paced transects will be read in key areas located on sedimentary soils and a minimum of 2-5 transects in each key area located on granitic soils. Each transect will consist of 20 stations with each station a minimum of 10 meters (approximately 33 feet) apart. At each station, four VORs (one in each cardinal direction) are recorded. Transects to determine the residual standing crop must be read within 7 days after livestock leave each pasture. Photos of each transect are not required but would be helpful to substantiate your documentation.

2. **Grazing Response Index (GRI):** GRI ratings will be determined for key areas within each pasture. Upland and riparian range sites, occurring in the same or separate key areas, will be rated independently of one another. It is important that you keep accurate records of the actual number of sheep, dates livestock graze in each pasture, monitoring data gathered, and any observations of plant development throughout the grazing season. This data will be useful if you choose to cooperate with David, or Zach to complete rating forms for key areas in your allotment. Like the allowable use guidelines, the ROD for the Tongue AMP requires livestock to be managed to consistently (4 out of every 5 years) provide a neutral to positive GRI rating for each pasture.

As in recent years, the Forest Service will be completing spot checks throughout the grazing season for consistency in meeting allowable use/herbage left guidelines and gathering information for the GRI ratings. You, however, remain responsible to manage your livestock to assure these guidelines are met and neutral to positive GRI ratings are achieved. I strongly encourage you to keep close watch of the growth cycle of the desirable forage plants to be able to adjust the length of grazing periods in each pasture as necessary and to complete spot checks of all key areas on a regular basis to assure actual use remains within the guidelines stated above. Feel free to give David or Zach a call at anytime during the grazing season to compare notes and/or to discuss potential GRI ratings for your pastures. I have enclosed copies of the data forms to assist you with your monitoring. Please remember any forms and/or photos submitted to our office will be placed in the allotment monitoring folder.

F. Key Areas:

Properly selected key areas give an indication of the overall acceptability of current grazing management to meet all resource objectives. These areas may be moved or redefined in future years if monitoring results indicate a change is necessary. The following is a list of the key areas:

Woodrock:

1. The area adjacent to Dry Owen Creek and Highway 14 in SE1/4 Section 5 and NW 1/4 Section 8.
2. An area extending in 0.25-mile radius from the confluence of Prospect Creek and Bruce Creek.

Bruce Mountain:

1. The open park making up the headwaters of Bruce Creek in SW1/4 Section 27.
2. The open areas extending from Woodchuck Pass north to Woodchuck Creek and down stream for approximately 0.75 mile.

Bull Creek:

1. The open parks making up the headwaters of Bull Creek in center of Section 3 (includes area around reservoirs).
2. Open parks near Hunt Mountain Road and boundary fence with the Spring Creek S&G Allotment in S1/2 Section 32.

G. Maintenance of Improvements

Part 2, Clause 8(i) of your term grazing permit states "...the permittee will maintain all range improvements, whether private or Government owned, that are assigned for maintenance 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. The initial 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. For many improvements, maintenance will be on going and will require additional attention after livestock enter the pasture. The minimum maintenance required will be as follows:

Springs: All tanks are to be level, completely surrounded by dry ground and easily accessible by both cows and calves. The inlet and overflow pipes are to be free of crimps or breaks, completely buried or otherwise protected from livestock and capable of delivering water to and away from tanks without any water spilling in the immediate vicinity (20-30 ft.) of the tank. Livestock barriers over tanks must be sturdy and all poles and planks must be in good condition and nailed/bolted in place.

Wire Fences: Fences are to be in an upright, vertical position with all broken wires repaired, wires tight and properly spaced and all corner posts, braces, line posts, steel posts, stays, loops, staples, etc. replaced as needed. Wire spacing may be adapted to the needs of each fence but the bottom wire should be 16-18" off the ground and the top wire must be no higher than 42" above the ground. Gates are to be tight enough to prevent sagging but must be able to be easily opened and closed by the general public.

Buck and Pole Fences: Fences must be in an upright, serviceable position. Bucks that are spreading and lowering the overall height of the fence must be stabilized with a bottom brace or replaced. All poles must be nailed to bucks and all broken or rotting poles and bucks are to be replaced.

H. Range Improvement Projects

During the spring meetings there was some discussion on replacing portions of the Owen Creek sheep corrals that are nearing the end of their useful life. The permittees who normally use these corrals each year agreed to help in the reconstruction. Little Ranch Company is willing to provide posts for the project and the Forest Service may be able to purchase some wire panels but need to know the size and number needed along with any additional wood products needed to complete the project. Actual reconstruction of the corrals will be done in the year or two following the purchase of materials.

I. General Guidelines:

1. Sheep will be open herded. Excessive trailing and bunching of sheep should be avoided. Snow bank areas and steep, sparsely vegetated slopes should be avoided to minimize soil movement.
2. Sheep must be bedded in a new location every 1-3 days to avoid leaving bed grounds with little residual vegetation and/or trampled soils. In other words, the bed ground should be left in a manner that it was not obviously used for that purpose.
3. Move camps as often as necessary to comply with allowable use guidelines and avoid bedding sheep for too long in any one area. Excess firewood will be moved to the next campsite or scattered and any garbage that cannot be burned will be removed and disposed of off the National Forest.

4. Compliance with the Bighorn National Forest off-road travel restrictions are required at all times. An off-road permit may be issued, upon request, for the sole purpose of moving and tending your sheep camp. The permit will be issued with the stipulation that soil conditions must be dry and no resource damage will occur. Trips to and from sheep wagon from an open road must be kept to a minimum (preferably no more than one round trip per week) to prevent creating new trails for other people to follow. If the herder wants to use an ATV or personal vehicle several times a week it will be necessary to park the vehicle near the road and walk to the wagon.
5. Salt should be placed on rocky ground or salting troughs to avoid damage to vegetation and soils. An off-road permit may be issued, upon request, for a single entry into the West Bull Creek pasture for the purpose of stockpiling salt.
6. You or any of your employees shall not use or place poison, including cyanide guns, for predator control on National Forest lands.
7. The carcasses of animals that die near streams, roadsides, trails, and areas of concentrated public use shall be moved a distance in excess of 300 feet from said area and to a place not easily seen by the general public.
8. Do not trail the sheep to camp at noon.

ACTUAL USE RECORD - 2015

TONGUE R.D.

BRUCE MOUNTAIN, BULL
CREEK & WOODROCK S&G
ALLOTMENTS

BIGHORN NATIONAL FOREST

ACTUAL USE

Pasture	Number of Cattle	Date on Pasture	Date off Pasture

Losses: Numbers by age class and possible cause (Poison, natural or predator).

Allotment Operating Cost:

Labor costs:

Rider _____

Transportation Cost _____

Improvement Maintenance _____

Horse Maintenance _____

Water _____

Fence _____

Other _____

Improvement Construction _____

Water _____

Fence _____

Other _____

Salt _____

Permittee signature _____ Date _____

PLEASE ATTACH ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OR NOTES YOU WISH TO PLACE IN THE PERMANENT ALLOTMENT FILE.