

2011 Annual Operating Instructions  
 Smith Mountain, Boulder Creek, Price Valley, and Curren Hill Sheep Allotments  
 Council and New Meadows Ranger District, Payette National Forest

These annual operating instructions are for implementing grazing management activities on the Smith Mountain and Price Valley allotments for the 2011 grazing season. This plan was developed with the participation of the livestock permittee on April 15, 2011. The interdisciplinary resource personnel and livestock permittee who participated in development of this plan are:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>
1. Frank Shirts	Permittee
2. Kim Pierson	New Meadows District Ranger
3. Greg Lesch	Council District Ranger
4. Andy Bumgarner	Range Specialist
5. Jennifer McMorris	Range Specialist
3. Brian McMorris	Range Specialist

<u>PERMITTEE</u>	<u>2011 AUTHORIZED NUMBERS / SEASON</u>	<u>ALLOTMENTS</u>
Frank Shirts	Band #1 940 ewe/lambs 6/16- 8/20	*Price Valley
	Band #2 940 ewe/lambs 6/1- 8/20	**Smith Mountain
	Dry Band 1750 dry ewes 8/21-10/10	**Smith Mt/*Price Valley
	14 Pack Stock 6/1-10/10	Smith Mt/Price Valley
	*The Victor Loon Allotment maybe used by the Dry Band if needed.	

The Boulder Creek S&G and Curren Hill S&G Allotments are not authorized to have domestic sheep on them this year because they are deemed unsuited for domestic sheep grazing by the Record of Decision for the: Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and Forest Plan Amendment Identifying Suitable Rangeland for Domestic Sheep and Goat Grazing to Maintain Habitat for Viable Bighorn Sheep Populations (FSEIS ROD).

\*The Head of Boulder area is not authorized for domestic sheep. See map  
 \*\* Sheep Creek and part of the Lost Creek Units are the only areas of the Smith Mountain allotment open to grazing. See map

These instructions are a guideline for grazing management. This AOI is made part of your grazing permit consistent with Part 1, item 3 and Part 2, Item 8(a). Situations may develop during the grazing season which requires changes to these instructions. If this becomes necessary, or if you cannot comply with some part of these instructions, contact the District Ranger and obtain approval before initiating changes or deviating from these instructions. Refer to Part 2 of your term grazing permit for general terms and conditions that apply to these operating instructions.

Grazing fee of \$0.27/HM must be paid prior to livestock entering National Forest. This bill is due five (5) days prior to your earliest turnout date. The New Meadows Office must receive confirmation from Lockbox that payment has been made prior to livestock entering the Forest.

## **TERMS AND CONDITIONS PERTAINING TO SEASON OF USE AND LIVESTOCK NUMBERS**

The grazing prescriptions are designed to meet the resource needs of the soils and vegetation. Additionally, fisheries biologists have completed Biological Assessments on the grazing prescriptions. The known or potential problem areas have been identified along with the respective mitigation measures designed to eliminate each adverse effect

The District Ranger may modify the season of use and livestock numbers permitted on any given year. The season of use is dependent upon weather conditions (annual precipitation and temperature) which influences annual forage production and range readiness. The District Ranger's authority to modify term grazing permitted use is further described in Part 2, Section 8 (b)&(c) of your permit.

Turnout will not occur prior to range readiness. Range readiness is measured by soil moisture and plant growth. Soils may be damp, but not saturated, and should be firm to avoid excessive compaction due to livestock. Grass species other than bulbous bluegrass and cheatgrass must be a minimum of 6 inches in height and out of the boot stage. Arrowleaf balsamroot should be in bloom or past bloom.

### **Livestock Rotations**

The rotation schedule and maps show an outline of grazing for the 2011 grazing season.

#### **Band #1 (Price Valley Band) - Unit rotation are as follow:**

This band will unload at the log and block fence on the East Branch of the Weiser. They will then graze the state land before heading over to the West Branch area and possibly the East Branch area. The northern Idaho ground squirrel site behind the guard station will need to be avoided. The bands will graze north to around the switchback on the West Branch Road where they will then head to the Mud Creek Drainage. Once in the Mud Creek Drainage they will then head north up the east side to Brush Mountain. Make sure the sheep do not cross over the ridge on Brush Mountain and graze the north side. They will then graze south down the ridge separating the Mud Creek and East Branch Weiser for a ways. After they graze this area they will cross the East Branch and graze back north towards Yantis Ditch and then to Railroad Saddle for shipping of the lambs. Shipping will be around August 20<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Band #2 (Smith Mountain Band) - Unit rotation are as follow:**

This band will unload on Grouse Creek Road by the Grouse Creek Ridge & Upper Grouse Creek Roads. They will then graze south to get the feed that dries up first. The sheep will then graze north in the Sheep Creek Unit to Butter Gulch country in the Lost Creek Unit. From there they will graze north to Railroad Saddle for shipping of the lambs. Shipping will be around August 20<sup>th</sup>.

### **Dry Band (Smith Mountain/Price Valley) – Unit rotation are as follow:**

After shipping of the lambs at Railroad Saddle the two ewe/lamb bands will combine into a dry band. They will begin grazing south down the west side of the Lost Creek Unit in the Smith Mountain Allotment. After that they will graze over to the West Branch of the Weiser and the southwest portion of Brush Mountain. During this time you will need to make sure you do not use any areas that were used earlier by the ewe/lamb bands. After standards are met or October 10<sup>th</sup> the band will head back to Railroad Saddle to be trucked off the Forest. However if standards are going to be met early the dry band has the option to be trucked to the Victor Loon Allotment as long as the area they are going has not been grazed by another band.

### **Livestock Trucking Instructions/Livestock Shipping Instructions**

Livestock will be trucked onto the allotments following range readiness. Livestock will then be trucked off the allotment after allowable use is met or by October 10. You will need to call before you are going to turnout or truck off.

Lambs from the bands will ship from portable corrals at Railroad Saddle.

### **Allowable Use/Mitigation Measures**

The following allowable use criteria and mitigation measures are to be followed for all grazing activities. There will be Forest Service personal monitoring these standards throughout the grazing season along with any long term vegetation monitoring that may be collected this grazing season.

1. Sheep are to move to the next Unit or leave the allotment after 30% use in riparian areas and uplands is reached. This is equivalent to once over grazing by a band of sheep. When the permittee observes proper use standards being reached, the livestock will be moved to the next Unit or off the Forest and the permittee will notify the Forest Service.
2. Sheep watering is limited to one time per location.
3. One night per bed site.
4. Grazing around all high mountain lakes is prohibited.
5. Bedding of sheep in plantations will be prohibited until plantation trees have grown to a size that reduces their susceptibility to damage from livestock.

### **Salting Requirements**

Salting is restricted to the following:

1. No less than .25 mile from water, and not to be placed in meadow bottoms
2. Only at bed grounds.
3. Contained and not placed directly on the ground.
4. Unconsumed salt will be removed from the site.

5. Salting of sheep in plantations will be prohibited until plantation trees have grown to a size that reduces their susceptibility to damage from livestock.

### **Other Management Requirements**

Implement the Emergency Response Plan (ERP) dated March 29, 2011. Actions taken are to ensure separation between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep.

Domestic sheep grazing may only be permitted where separation from bighorn sheep can be permitted. If separation cannot be maintained permitted domestic sheep shall be prohibited as directed by the Emergency Response Plan.

The Payette National Forest will notify permittees immediately of any known stray or domestic sheep.

Your herders will be required to document at least once a day the location of the domestic sheep. When the herder GPS the location for the day it must be when they are with the sheep. This will need to be recorded and turned into the New Meadows Ranger District throughout the summer on a weekly basis. The Forest Service will provide one GPS unit with batteries and one log book per band so you can accomplish this. You and your herders will be trained in the use of the GPS Unit before turnout. If the GPS provided to you is broken or lost because of negligence you will be responsible for replacing it.

If dipping of sheep becomes necessary, the permittee will contact the District Range personnel to determine an appropriate site. The permittee will implement a closed system and haul all effluent off National Forest System lands.

No bedding or salting on Forest System trails.

The permittee is responsible for ensuring there is no trash left behind when moving sheep camps.

### **MAINTENANCE OF RANGE IMPROVEMENTS**

All range improvements must be maintained prior to turning livestock into the unit scheduled for use. If an existing range improvement has been properly maintained but requires reconstruction, a cooperative effort can be made between the Forest Service and permittee to reconstruct the development, depending on funding. The permittee is required to provide the materials and labor during routine maintenance.

Portable corrals will be utilized at Railroad Saddle for shipping.

### **MONITORING OF THE ANNUAL LIVESTOCK GRAZING ACTIVITY**

We are requesting you to report actual use information for each unit grazed. If you have any questions about completing the form, please call the Range Department at the Forest Service at (208) 347-0300. We request the forms be returned by the 2012, AOI meeting.

## **MULTIPLE USE REQUIREMENTS**

All plantation grazing must be coordinated with the Forest Service prior to grazing the plantations. There will be some planting this year in the Upper Weiser Project around the East Branch Weiser on the fork going to Yantis Ditch that you will need to avoid. There is about 42 acres that will be planted this year. If you would like someone to show you where these plantations are at on the ground you can contact Darrel Simpson or John Champa at the Council Office (208-253-0100). See map provided at AOI meeting.

Four timber sales could have cleanup activity (chipping and hauling, and burning) taking place this year on the Price Valley Allotment; Squirrely Billy, Upper Squirrel, Upper Weiser, and Muddy Squirrel. All of these activities could have chipping and hauling. Currently there is about 90 acres of Upper Weiser and 300 acres of Muddy Squirrel planned to be burned in fall or spring. All of the logging activity has been completed. See map provided at meeting.

The East Lost Project will be taking place next to the Price Valley and Smith Mountain Allotments. It will be in the East Fork Lost Creek drainage on the Warm Springs S&G Allotment north to Butter Gulch. The road work is finished, but could see logging starting this year.

A Colalition Project could begin planning this year.

If there is damage to Forest System trails by the permittee's livestock the permittee will need to repair it or pay for it to be repaired.

A culvert will be replaced at Yellow Jacket Creek on the Boulder Creek road this summer. The Boulder Creek Road will be closed while this is being done. The dates for the replacement have not been set at this time.

## **SPECIAL MANAGEMENT**

The northern Idaho ground squirrel (NIDGS) was listed in April 2000 as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. There are known colonies of NIDGS located on the Price Valley and Smith Mountain Allotment (along the East and West Branch, Mud Creek, Butter Gulch, and Lost Creek). To mitigate effects of livestock grazing in the NIDGS sites, you will be required to avoid these sites. Avoidance includes livestock management activities such as trailing, bedding, and grazing within the colony sites. If you are unsure where the NIDGS sites are located, contact the Forest Service and we will show you the sites in order to prevent any accidental use of the areas. See map provided at AOI meeting for sites.

In the event a designated mitigation measure fails to protect a species listed under the Endangered Species Act (Chinook salmon, Steelhead, and Bull Trout), a change in authorized grazing activity will occur. If proper use grazing levels are reached then livestock are to be moved to the next grazing unit or off of the allotment. If livestock grazing does not comply with

the terms and conditions of these Annual Operating Instructions, then Forest Service policy and procedures regarding administrative permit actions will be followed.

Invasive weeds are becoming a serious threat to the welfare of our rangelands. Your assistance is needed to identify new outbreaks of weed populations and to prevent the establishment of weeds on the forest. Pay particular attention to areas where stock are concentrated such as loading/unloading areas, water developments, and salting areas. The Payette National Forest is part of Region 4 of the Forest Service. Region 4 has a requirement that any hay that is brought onto the National Forest to be certified free from noxious weeds. All livestock entering the National Forest are recommended to be fed **Certified Noxious Weed Free Forage** for at least 2 days prior to entering the Forest.

The Forest Service is planning to be present when the sheep are trucked onto and off of, the Forest this year. Please call ahead to let us know when you'll be coming onto the Forest so we can arrange to meet you.

In addition to these instructions, you identified additional management practices in your letter to me from April 19, 2007. These management practices will need to be implemented for the 2011 grazing season with the exception of #8 and #9 which are specifically addressed in the ERP. The management practices you identified are:

1. Perform a careful health inspection of all domestic sheep and remove any old, unthrifty, or sick animals from the band prior to turnout onto the Forest. Cull any old, unthrifty, or sick animals from the band as soon as they are identified throughout the grazing season and when the lambs are shipped.
2. Increase the number of guard dogs.
3. Continue using 2 herders for each band. Ensure that one of these herders is attending each band at all times by staggering lunch breaks, etc. At least one herder will sleep by each band of sheep at night.
4. Each band will have its own pack string which will camp on the ridgelines where the sheep bed each night. The combination of multiple herders and pack strings will allow for continuous control and supervision of both bands for the entire time they are on the Forest, 24 hours a day.
5. Each pack string will have access to a cell phone to enable direct communication with the permittee for the entire grazing season. This will allow more frequent reporting to the owner of death losses and more frequent updates on counts.
6. Herders will count marker sheep (black, horned, belled, etc.) daily to assure that no small groups of sheep have separated from the main band.
7. Each pack string will carry binoculars to improve their ability to spot bighorn sheep.

8. If the herders or pack strings spot any bighorn sheep within the Boulder Creek, Price Valley, and Curren Hill S&G Allotments, they will adjust their grazing path or haze the bighorns out of the area to minimize the possibility of direct contact.
9. The permittee will immediately (within 72 hours) report any bighorn sheep sightings within the Boulder Creek, Price Valley, and Curren Hill S&G Allotments to the USFS and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.
10. Ewes with mastitis (blue bag) will not be left behind to recover and catch back up to the band later, but will be removed from the band or killed.
11. Predator attacks, primarily wolf attacks, create the most significant risk for stray domestic sheep because they cause sheep to scatter from the main band. In such cases, the permittee will immediately notify the USFS, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and Idaho Wildlife Services and begin efforts to identify the sheep that were killed and to locate and re-gather any scattered sheep.
12. The permittee will implement the IDFG's *Emergency Response Plan* which allows representatives of the IDFG or a permittee to kill any bighorn sheep that come into contact with domestic sheep on a grazing allotment. See letter from IDFG to Hells Canyon Preservation Council dated August 12, 2004 (wherein the *Emergency Response Plan* is referenced). This will ensure that if the permittee observes any intermingling between a bighorn sheep and a domestic sheep, then the bighorn sheep will be killed and not allowed to return to its home herd. The permittee will immediately advise the Forest Service and IDFG if the authority exercised in this *Emergency Response Plan* is implemented.
13. Shirts will allow the IDFG to remove or kill its domestic sheep which are located outside of private lands or permitted public land grazing allotments, or are located within public land grazing allotments outside of the permitted season of use (hereafter referred to as offending livestock), provided that the following conditions have been met: a) the offending livestock are found to be in immediate association with bighorn sheep and pose a health risk to said bighorn sheep; and, b) reasonable but unsuccessful attempts have been made over a 5-day period to notify Shirts regarding the offending livestock so they can remove said livestock; or, c) Shirts is notified and agrees that IDFG field personnel can remove or kill the offending livestock; or, d) Shirts is notified, but fails to remove the offending livestock within 10 days of said notification; and, e) the IDFG makes a reasonable attempt to notify the office of the Idaho state veterinarian prior to any removal action, or as soon as possible after the removal action is taken if the attempt at prior notification fails; and, f) the IDFG immediately turns over to Shirts or to the Idaho state veterinarian any offending livestock removed or killed pursuant to the preceding provisions.

You are responsible for ensuring that your herders are informed and understand the standards, guidelines, and other management direction in this plan.

Please review the AOI for consistency with our discussion at the annual meeting, and sign and return it to me. If I do not receive a signed copy from you within two weeks, this AOI will serve as the final copy approved by the District Ranger.

*/s/ Kim Pierson*  
Approved by  
Kim Pierson  
New Meadows District Ranger

*June 6, 2011*  
Date

*/s/ Greg Lesch*  
Approved by  
Greg Lesch  
Council District Ranger

*June 7, 2011*  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Frank Shirts Jr.  
Permittee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Amendment 1:

**Contact List**

**Permittee Name: Frank Shirts Jr.**

**Permittee Phone Number**

**Home: (208) 482-7392**

**Cell: (208) 880-2607**

**Ranger District Name: New Meadows**

**Ranger District Phone Number (208) 347-0301**

**Contact District Ranger: Kim Pierson - New Meadows Ranger**

**Home: (208) 630-4139 Home Cell**

**Cell: (208) 541-5809 Work Cell**

**Ranger District Name: Council**

**Ranger District Phone Number (208) 253-0101**

**Contact District Ranger: Greg Lesch - Council Ranger**

**Home: (208) 549-0413**

**Cell: (208) 741-0511**

**Ranger District Name: McCall**

**Ranger District Phone Number (208) 347-0401**

**Contact District Ranger: Lisa Klinger - McCall Ranger**

**Cell: (208) 634-9324**

**Contact Range Specialist: Amy Baumer**

**Cell: (208) 630-4339**

**Contact Wildlife Biologist: Ana Egnew**

**Office: (208) 634-0791**

**Cell: (208) 630-4679**

