



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Santa Fe National Forest

Espanola Ranger District
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Espanola, New Mexico 87533
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File Code: 2230-3

Date: May 6, 2003

Dear Mr. Contreras,

This letter constitutes the year 2003 Annual Operating Instruction (AOI) for the Aspen Allotment.

As discussed during our annual validation meeting April 15, 2003 it is my decision to delay entry on the Aspen Allotment to June 15, 2003. If conditions warrant, entry date and livestock numbers may be adjusted dependent on range readiness, current drought conditions, and condition of range facilities particularly fences. In addition, the grazing season may be extended if monitoring of key areas justifies a change, and is within forage use levels identified on page 4 of this document..

This decision is based on current snow pack conditions, which may affect range readiness on the allotment. Donald Serrano of my Staff has May 28, 2003 scheduled for a pre entry inspection along with the Aspen permittees. If May 28 will not work for you, please contact Mr. Serrano.

I. GRAZING SCHEDULE

Authorized Use on the Aspen allotment is shown below for this decision.

PERMITTEE NAME	NUMBER OF CATTLE/SEASON OF USE					
	Permitted	Permitted season of use	2002 % actual use**	2003 authorized	2003 authorized season of use	2003 % authorized use*
Roger Contreras	10	6/1 – 10/31	100	10	6/15 – 10/31	92
Ray and Florence Jimenez	9	6/1 – 10/31	100	Non use	6/15 – 10/31	0
Billy and Cordelia Roybal	30	6/1 – 10/31	100	30	6/15 – 10/31	91
Nambe Rio En Medio, Tesuque Livestock Association	2	6/1 – 10/31	100	3**	6/15 – 10/31	140
TOTAL	51		100	44		81

* Use is based on a combination of time and number of cattle. Odd numbers were rounded up.

** Pending permit application and approval



Pasture schedule for the Aspen Allotment is shown below for this decision.

RIO EN MEDIO HERD	NUMBER OF CATTLE	DEL PUERTO HERD	NUMBER OF CATTLE
Roger Contreras	10	Billy Roybal	30
Ray Jimenez	0	Nambe Rio En Medio, Tesuque Livestock Association	2
Nambe Rio En Medio, Tesuque Livestock Association	1		
TOTAL	11		32

RIO EN MEDIO HERD		DEL PUERTO HERD	
Pasture	Date	Pasture	Date
Ranchitos/Des Montes	June 15 – July 15	Ranchitos/Des Montes	June 15 July 1
Vigil Meadows	July 15 – August 15	Rancho Pilar	July 1 – July 15
Big Tesuque/Arbolitos	August 15 – September 15	Rincon Bonito	July 15 – July 20
El Corral Nuevo/Cañada del Oso	September 15 – October 31	El Acagui/Bluejay (10 head)	July 20 – October 31
		Puerto/NambeLake /La Vega/Los Alamitos/Los Banquitos	July 20 – October 1
		Rio Nambe	October 1 – October 31

Past and predicted drought conditions may require that cattle be moved through the units quicker or removed from the allotment earlier than expected. This decision will be made in cooperation with you and based on the utilization for key species on agreed upon and field verified key areas. The District Ranger in coordination with grazing permittees may change the routing plan described above when unforeseen circumstances such as lack of water in pasture or over use within the pasture. The grazing association or the permittees can propose changes of pastures outside of the above routing plan in coordination with this office. The grazing association or permittees, should submit a written justification to this office or coordinate with Donald Serrano of my Staff if a routing plan needs to be changed. The decision made by the District Ranger will be based upon the condition of the range, recommendations of the range staff, and the needs of the permittees.

II. COUNTING AND TAGGING

Tag replacement is not scheduled for this year. As identified in your grazing permit the calf counter policy is “Any animal 6 months of age or older as of January 1 is considered a counter. Calves less than 6 months of age as of January 1 become counters on March 1. All weaned animals are counters regardless of age.”

III. EXCESS USE

As stated in Part 3 of your term grazing permit, “Livestock grazed in excess of the numbers, outside of the period use, or of a class or kind not authorized in the current Bill for Collection. When the annual application is approved, in whole or in part, livestock grazed in excess of authorized numbers must be removed from lands of the National Forest System. Grazing use by livestock in excess of that authorized in the current Bill for Collection is cause for cancellation and/or suspension of the permit in whole or part and must be assessed at the "unauthorized use rate”.

IV. UTILIZATION/MONITORING

The proper utilization of forage is a critical factor in livestock management on the Aspen allotment. As discussed earlier monitoring will be scheduled regularly to insure that utilization levels are within recommended levels. As always grazing association directors and permittees are encouraged to participate while these evaluations are being made. Methods for monitoring utilization are adopted from Holecheck and DeGalt (2000). This method was briefly presented at the annual validation meeting. The following describes utilization levels, we agreed to for the 2003-grazing season.

Use indicators and levels are highlighted below and generally correlate to a 40 % use on forage plants.

Table 3. Qualitative characteristics of grazing intensity categories used to characterize New Mexico rangelands (Holechek & Galt, 6/00, Rangelands).		
Qualitative Grazing Intensity Category	Use of Forage by Weight	Qualitative Indicators of Grazing Intensity
Light to non-use	0-30	Only choice plants (key species) and areas show use. There is no use of poor forage plants
Conservative	31-40	Choice forage plants (key species) have abundant seed stalks; Areas more than a mile from water show little use; About one third to one half primary forage plants show grazing on key areas.
Moderate	41-50	Most of accessible range show use; Key areas show patchy appearance with one half to two thirds of primary forage plants (key species) showing use; Grazing is noticeable 1-1½ miles from water
Heavy	51-60	Nearly all primary forage plants show grazing on key areas: Palatable shrubs show hedging: Key areas show a lack of seed stalks: Grazing is noticeable in areas over 1½ miles from water
Severe	61+	Key areas show a clipped or mowed appearance (no stubble ht.): Shrubs are severely hedged; There is evidence of livestock trailing to forage; Areas over 1½ miles from water lack stubble height.

Within the Aspen allotment, the key forage species and desired stubble height are highlighted in the table below:

Table 5. Grazing intensity guide for mountain grassland rangeland in New Mexico (Holechek & Galt, 6/00, Rangelands)						
Qualitative Grazing Intensity Category	Use of Forage by Weight	Stubble Height Indicators of Grazing Intensity				
		Arizona Fescue		Bluegrass		Intermediate Wheatgrass
	---(%)-- -	-----Inches-----				
Light to none-use	0-30	8+		5+		8+
Conservative	31-40	6-7		4-5		6-7
Moderate	41-50	5-6		3-4		5-6
Heavy	51-60	4-5		2-3		4-5
Severe	61+	<4		<2		<4

Both the Forest Service and the permittee are responsible for monitoring use and stubble height on the allotment to ensure that proper use levels are **not exceeded**. If areas within a pasture or the pasture as a whole begin to approach the identified stubble heights, actions will need to be taken to limit additional forage use. We are especially concerned with use levels in riparian areas and canyon bottoms where cattle tend to concentrate use on palatable feed.

Forage use patterns, cattle numbers, salting practices, and coordination of improvements should be monitored periodically to determine when livestock should be moved between pastures. If use within that key area is approaching allowable stubble heights then the remaining key areas will also be monitored and the pasture inspected to determine overall use patterns. This information will be used to determine if cattle need to be re-distributed within the pasture or removed from the pasture.

V. IMPROVEMENT WORK

As we discussed at our annual validation meeting this year, construction of a small corral will be investigated during our pre entry inspection.

VI. SPECIAL MITIGATION MEASURES

In order to conform with the final U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service "Biological Opinion for Ongoing Livestock Grazing Activities on Allotments" which determine a No Affect and/or May Affect Not Likely to Adversely Affect on your allotment, **the following conditions must be met.**

Forage Utilization

Forage use by grazing animals will be maintained at or above a condition, which assures recovery and continued existence of threatened and endangered species. In order to attain this

standard, the above site-specific key areas and key forage utilization standards have been developed for the Aspen allotment.

Mineral Supplements/Salt Blocks

Mineral supplement/Salt block sites will be regularly rotated to reduce trampling and grazing impacts to vegetation. Cutting salt blocks in half before distributing them on the range is an easy way to avoid having to move them, as they get used before they need to be moved. In addition, all salt must be at a minimum ¼ mile from any water source.

VII. ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL

District Ranger decisions regarding issuance, denial, or administration of grazing and livestock use permits may be appealed in accordance with 36 CFR 251, Subpart C. The following standard paragraph is included in this Annual Operating Plan for the purpose of ensuring that you are aware of your appeal rights.

This Annual Operating Instruction (AOI) is hereby made a part of your term grazing permit.

This decision is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 251, Subpart C and any appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 251.90 (see attached). In accordance with 36 CFR 251.84, if you file an appeal, I am willing to meet with you to discuss any concerns you may have with my decision. If you file an appeal, you may request an oral presentation in the appeal or at any time prior to closing of the appeal record (36 CFR 251.97). Additionally, if you file an appeal, you may request a stay of my decision in the appeal or at any time prior to closing of the appeal record (36 CFR 251.91).

A notice of appeal, including the reasons for appeal, must be filed with Gilbert Zepeda, Acting Forest Supervisor, Santa Fe National Forest, P.O. Box 1689, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504-1689 within 45 days of the date of this decision. A copy of the notice of appeal must be filed simultaneously with myself John Miera, Espanola District Ranger, at, P.O. Box 3307, Fairview Station, 1710 N. Riverside Dr., Espanola, New Mexico 87533. I appreciate you contacting me to resolve disagreements before you file any Notice to Appeal. This will insure that we both understand the reasons for each other's position regarding any issues. If you have any further questions concerning this matter please contact Donald Serrano of my Staff at the above phone or address.

Sincerely,

/s/ John P. Miera
JOHN P. MIERA
Espanola District Ranger