

ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

Valle Grande Allotment (Grassbank)

2003

I. AUTHORIZATION

At the meeting held on February 24, 2003 between Forest Service personnel, Tio Gordito permittees, and The Conservation Fund, the following was agreed to for the 2003 grazing season:

- Cattle will be received at the Grassbank beginning 4/20/03.
- Preparation for removing cattle from the Grassbank will begin approximately one week before the off-date of 10/15/03. Except for unavoidable strays, cattle will be removed by 10/15/03.
- Only Tio Gordito cattle equaling the following numbers agreed to by all parties will be placed on the Grassbank in grazing year 2003.
- Stocking and rotations is as follows:

HERD A

Permittee	Permitted #s	Authorized #s - 2003
J. Vigil	660 HM* (132 C/c 5/18 to 10/15)	636 HM (106 C/c 4/20 to 10/15)
P. Roybal	50 HM (10 C/c 5/18 to 10/15)	0
P. Casados	170 HM (34 C/c 5/18 to 10/15)	162 HM (27 C/c 4/20 to 10/15)
A. Lovato	55 HM (11 C/c 5/18 to 10/15)	51 HM (6 C/c & 5 yearlings 4/20 to 10/15)
L. Garcia	50 HM (10 C/c 5/18 to 10/15)	48 HM (8 C/c 4/20 to 10/15)
TOTAL	985 HM (197 C/c)	897 (147 C/c & 5 yearlings)

HERD B

Permittee	Permitted #s	Authorized #s - 2003
K. Huffaker & Sons	600 HM (120 C/c 5/18 to 10/15)	360 HM (120 yearlings 4/20 to 10/15)
L. McDowell	160 HM (32 C/c 5/18 to 10/15)	162 HM (22 C/c & 10 yearlings 4/20 to 10/15)
TOTAL	760 HM (152 C/c)	522 HM (22 C/c & 130 yearlings)

* **HM** – Head Months is an estimate in this table and does not reflect the exact permitted numbers authorized on the Tio Gordito Ranger District.

The authorized livestock numbers and grazing periods are no guarantee that they will stay on a pasture for the full grazing period or the allotment for the full season. Below

average forage production may require that cattle will be removed from the allotment earlier than expected. This decision will be made in cooperation with you and based on the utilization for key species and key areas as outlined in these Annual Operating Instructions.

II. PASTURE ROTATION

The rotation plan (Table 1) is subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances such as lack of water and forage in the pastures. The Forest Service or the permittee can initiate changes of pastures outside of the above rotation plan in coordination with this office. The permittee or this office must submit a written justification before change is made. Moves may be made up to 5 days before the scheduled move date and should be completed within 5 days after the move date, unless prior approval is given to adjust the use periods.

The Valle Grande will be managed as two separate herds, referred to as Herd A (North) and Herd B (South).

HERD A: Herd A will be using the northern pastures on the allotment. Loading and unloading of the large cattle trucks will occur at Seco Corrals.

Table 1a. Authorized grazing rotation. HERD A		
Numbers of Cattle	Pasture	Grazing Period
169 C/c & 15 yearlings	Valle	4/20 – 5/15
169 C/c & 15 yearlings	Ortiz East	5/15 – 6/15
169 C/c & 15 yearlings	Ortiz West	6/15 – 7/1
169 C/c & 15 yearlings	Chimal	7/1 – 8/1
169 C/c & 15 yearlings	Madrid	8/1 – 9/15
169 C/c & 15 yearlings	Valle	9/15 – 10/15

HERD B: This lot of cattle from the Tio Gordito allotment will be transported to either the Base property or Melton Corral.

Table 1b. Authorized grazing rotation. HERD B		
Numbers of Cattle	Pasture	Grazing Period
120 heifers (Huffaker)	Marquez	4/20 – 6/15
120 heifers (Huffaker)	Los Diegos	6/15 – 8/15
120 heifers (Huffaker)	Aqua Corral	8/15 – 9/15
120 heifers (Huffaker)	Melton	9/15 – 10/15

*Two Pines pasture is on rest rotation. If necessary, and if precipitation allows, the Two Pines may be used in HERD A rotation schedule (9/15 to 10/15).

III. UTILIZATION/MONITORING

The proper utilization of forage is a critical factor in livestock management on the Valle Grande Allotment. We will be checking levels of use to insure that forage utilization is within recommended levels during the grazing season. Key areas and key species (Table 2) will be monitored within the allotment. Maps with the locations of the key areas are available from this office upon request.

Table 2. Key areas and key species for the Valle Grande Allotment		
Site #	Pasture/Key Area Location	Key Grass Species
1	Valle Pasture (Sec. 6)	Blue Grama, Western Wheatgrass
2	N. end of Madrid Pasture (Sec. 33)	Blue Grama, Western Wheatgrass
3	Palmer Pasture (Sec. 34)	Blue Grama, Western Wheatgrass
4	S. end of Madrid Pasture (Junction of Sec. 5, 4, 8, & 9)	Blue Grama, Western Wheatgrass
5	N. end of Ortiz Pasture (Sec. 19)	Blue Grama, Western Wheatgrass
6	S. end of Ortiz Pasture (Sec. 29 & 32)	Blue Grama, Western Wheatgrass
7	Two Pines Pasture (Sec. 27 & 22)	Blue Grama, Western Wheatgrass
8	Two Pines Pasture (Sec. 33 & 34)	Blue Grama, Western Wheatgrass
9	Melton Pasture (Sec. 3)	Blue Grama, Western Wheatgrass
10	Los Diegos Pasture (Sec. 6 & 7)	Blue Grama, Western Wheatgrass
11	Marquez Pasture (Sec. 11)	Blue Grama, Western Wheatgrass
12	Aqua Corral Pasture (Sec. 24 & 25)	Blue Grama, Western Wheatgrass

Both the Forest Service and the permittee are responsible for monitoring forage use and stubble height on the allotment to ensure that proper use levels are not exceeded. We are primarily concerned with use levels in canyon bottoms where cattle tend to concentrate. We have identified key areas to be monitored on this allotment. Maximum allowable use is based on a conservative grazing intensity of less than or equal to 40% utilization on key forage species. Please refer to the Table 3 below for descriptors to aid in determining forage use levels.

Forage use levels should be monitored periodically by the permittee to aid in determining when livestock should be moved between pastures. **Permittee inspection summary sheets (attached) are provided for your convenience in order to record any of your observations throughout the season. You are highly encouraged to record your allotment visits to aid in documenting allotment conditions.** Forest Service personnel will attempt to visit the key areas within the allotment during the scheduled grazing period. If areas within a pasture or the pasture as a whole begin to approach the identified stubble heights (Tables 4 and 5), actions will need to be taken to limit additional forage use. If use within a key area is approaching allowable stubble heights (in gray) then the rest of the pasture will also be monitored and inspected to determine overall use patterns. This information will be used to determine if cattle are to be re-distributed within the pasture or removed from the pasture.

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.

Table 4. Grazing intensity guide for shortgrass-pinyon/juniper rangeland in New Mexico (Holechek & Galt, 6/00, Rangelands).

Qualitative Grazing Intensity Category	Use of Forage by Weight	Stubble Height Indicators of Grazing Intensity		
		Blue Grama	Western Wheatgrass	Crested Wheatgrass
	(%)	----- Inches-----		
Light to non-use	0-30	2.5+	7.0+	5.5+
Conservative	31-40	2.0-2.5	4.0-5.0	4.0-5.0
Moderate	41-50	1.5-2.0	3.0-4.0	3.0-4.0
Heavy	51-60	1.0-1.5	2.0-3.0	2.0-3.0
Severe	61+	<1.0	<2.0	<2.0

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	Western Wheatgrass	Bluegrass	Mountain Muhly	Timber Oatgrass*
	---(%)---	-----Inches-----				
Light to none-use	0-30	8+	7+	5+	5+	8+
Conservative	31-40	6-7	4-5	4-5	4-5	6-7
Moderate	41-50	5-6	3-4	3-4	3-4	5-6
Heavy	51-60	4-5	2-3	2-3	2-3	4-5
Severe	61+	<4	<2	<2	<2	<4

*Determined by personal observation.

The Forest Service may or may not conduct inspections on the grazing allotment during the on-going grazing period as time and personnel availability allows. Monitoring items such as distribution patterns, range readiness, cattle numbers, forage use levels, and condition of improvements will be evaluated. The range readiness inspection will determine whether range vegetation and soils are ready for grazing. **The grazing permit holder is encouraged to participate in these inspections.**

IV. MAINTENANCE OF IMPROVEMENTS

Maintenance of improvements i.e. (fences, springs, tanks, wells) should be complete and in satisfactory condition prior to entry date to the specific pasture. Please refer to your permit map for your responsibilities. **If your maintenance responsibilities do not meet satisfactory condition you will not be permitted to turn out or your entry date may be delayed.**

V. ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL

This decision is subject to administrative review, pursuant to 36 CFR 251; and any appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 251.90 (copy available upon request). 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 must be filed with Leonard Atencio, Forest Supervisor, Santa Fe National Forest, at 1474 Rodeo Road, Santa Fe, NM 87505, within 45 days of the date of this decision. A copy of the notice of appeal must be filed simultaneously with Joseph G.

Reddan, District Ranger, Pecos/Las Vegas Ranger District, P. O. Box 429, Pecos, NM 87552.

The permittee should always ensure that full and sincere attempts to resolve disagreements through working with the District Ranger has occurred prior to filing a Notice to Appeal. The District Ranger is willing to meet with any permittee to discuss any issues related to the action.

JOSEPH G. REDDAN
District Ranger

