



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Sawtooth National Forest  
Ketchum Ranger District

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**2012 Annual Operating Instructions**  
**For Plateau Farms, LLC**  
**Sheep and Goat Allotments**  
**Administered by**  
**The Ketchum Ranger District**  
**Sawtooth National Forest**

**Permit # 4572**

**Prepared and recommended by: Bill Whitaker, Range Management Specialist**

Approved by: /s/ Kurt J Nelson

**District Ranger**

May 21, 2012

**Date**



## Annual Operating Instructions 2012

### INTRODUCTION

**Permittee:** Plateau Farms, LLC

**Allotments Included:** Shaw Mountain Sheep and Goat, Limekiln Sheep and Goat

**Permitted Numbers and Seasons:**

Numbers	Season; Head Months (HM)	Allotment
1350 sheep 5 horse	06/20- 08/15; 2,530 HM 06/20-08/15	Shaw Mountain S&G
850 sheep 5 horse	06/01-07/05; 1006 HM	Limekiln S&G
1350 sheep	06/15-06/19; 222 HM	Willow Creek S&G

**Authorized Season of Use and Numbers**

Numbers	Season; Head Months (HM)	Allotment/herder, tender
1025 ewes/lambs 5 horse	06/15-08/07; 1809 HM 06/15-08/07	Shaw Mountain S&G* (Dario and Dario)
850 ewes/lambs 5 horse	06/05-07/01; 755 HM 06/05-07/01	Limekiln S&G (Eric and Cerlo)

\* Includes 5-day trail through the Willow Creek drainage on the Fairfield Ranger District, 6/15-6/19 (222 HM).

### BILLING

**Confirmation of payment of fees through the Lock Box in San Francisco must be received prior to livestock entering the allotment.**

### LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT

Emphasis will be placed upon once-over light use while grazing the band on the allotments. Carefully review with your herders the Terms and Conditions section of this document which contains specific management standards, guidelines, conditions and practices found in the 2003 Sawtooth National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as well as your Term Grazing Permit.

Reminder: All livestock feed or straw brought on to the Forest is to be certified noxious weed free.

Specific instructions or management actions, such as routing, or areas to avoid will be found in the sections of this AOI specific to the allotment and the band that uses it.

### **Limekiln Allotment**

As previously discussed inspections indicate that soil and vegetation recovery following the 2007 Castle Rock Fire was sufficient to allow grazing over most of the allotment with the following exceptions:

Inspections of the upland slopes on southerly aspects within the lower portions of the Limekiln and Pasture Gulch drainages (reference attached map) indicate that these slopes are still recovering and that cheat grass may impede full recovery of this area for an indefinite period. As a consequence the southerly/westerly upland slopes in the lowermost portions of Limekiln and Pasture Creek drainage's will be avoided (reference attached map). Limited grazing area and alternate watering areas in the lower portions of the Limekiln drainage limits use in this area. The lower portions of the Limekiln drainage should be primarily used by the band when first entering the allotment and in preparation for trucking from the allotment at the end of the season. The amount of area available to graze would be improved if water was trucked to different locations when the band uses the lower portions of Limekiln Gulch.

Although aspen stands and riparian areas that burned during the 2007 Castle Rock fire have recovered to the degree identified to allow grazing in the recovery plan developed for the fire, they may still be vulnerable to damage by sheep if not carefully managed. Aspen stands that burned may be grazed by the band; however, use should be light. Avoid any concentrations of sheep within individual aspen stands that burned such as bedding/nooning.

Riparian areas that burned should only be used for watering the band with the band widely distributed. Avoid any concentrations of sheep in burned riparian areas. Once the band has been watered it should be moved and nooned well away from the riparian area. We will continue monitoring sheep use in these recovery areas to insure impacts are not unacceptable.

#### **The grazing rotation for the 2012 season on the Limekiln allotment shall be as follows:**

The band of 850 ewes with lambs will graze the allotment from 6/5-7/1. On 7/2 the band will be trucked to the Owl Creek allotment.

The band will trail onto the Limekiln allotment via Greenhorn Gulch. The band will only use the lower portions of the Limekiln drainage when first entering the allotment and just prior to shipping. Depending upon water needs and once over grazing strategy's use in this portion of the allotment should be limited to approximately 5 total days. After using the lower portions of the Limekiln drainage the band will then graze up Pasture and Cow Creek drainages (steep southerly-westerly aspects in the lower portions of Pasture Creek will be avoided). After using the Cow Creek and Pasture Creek portions of the allotment to standard the band will then graze the upper portions of Limekiln Gulch to the pond in the headwaters of Limekiln Gulch. From Limekiln Gulch the band will move to the Seattle Ridge area in the allotment to graze depending

upon availability of water. We plan on replacing this trough this year prior to the band moving to this area. When the Seattle Ridge area is grazed to standard (approx. 3-4 days) the band will graze/trail to the shipping area following the tentative "circular route" discussed at this year's spring meeting. This route would roughly follow the Limekiln Gulch/Clear Creek/Timber Gulch drainage divides. Use of this route would be contingent upon your having acquired the necessary authorizations from the Bureau of Land Management. If this route proves to be unacceptable the band will graze/trail back to the shipping area following the same general route the band took to get to Seattle Ridge. The band will be trucked off the allotment to the Owl Creek Allotment from temporary corrals in lower Limekiln Gulch on 7/2. The band is authorized to unloaded near the mouth of Baker Creek and trail to the Owl Creek Allotment. As discussed the band will be trailed through the lower portions of the Silver Creek drainage via the Silver Creek bridge. Trailing to the Owl Creek Allotment should not take more than a day. Grazing instructions for the Owl Creek allotment will be provided by the range staff on the Sawtooth National Recreation Area.

- As discussed this spring monitoring last year identified that the sheep trailed across a very steep southerly-westerly aspect slope in the lower portions of the Pasture Creek drainage. **The AOI contains specific instruction to avoid slopes such as these.** Please remind your herders to avoid slopes such as these. In addition monitoring indicated that a relatively small nooning area in the upper portions of the Cow Creek drainage needs to be avoided. These areas have been identified on the attached map.
- If the circular route described above proves to not be acceptable, the band will backtrack to leave the allotment and essentially follow the same general route they used earlier in the season. The sheep should avoid areas previously used as much as possible. Areas should be specifically avoided early in the season in order provide un-grazed areas and routes for the band to use when leaving the allotment. When leaving the allotment, you are authorized to trail across areas previously grazed earlier in the season if necessary.
- Portions of the lower Limekiln drainage should be saved for the end of the season (1-2 days) if needed when preparing to truck the band from the allotment.
- The allotment boundary on the west side of the Limekiln Allotment is somewhat indistinct. It is important that your herder understands that the ridge that separates the Mahoney Creek drainage from the Cow Creek drainage is the allotment boundary and the Mahoney Creek drainage, is in an allotment under permit to Dennis Kowitz and should not be grazed by your band.
- **Plan on replacing the trough located at Seattle ridge this year. Due to the high elevations early access to this area may be difficult. The time needed for replacing the trough may be very short before the band needs it. This system relies on collected snow in order to function. For the band to water from this trough water may need to be hauled to the trough this year. We will work closely with you to determine if this is feasible and safe.**
- When accessing and grazing the Seattle Ridge area be sure your herder is aware of the

Bald Mountain Perimeter trails. It will be difficult for the band to avoid this trail careful management of the sheep will be necessary to prevent damage. You will be responsible for any damage caused by the sheep to this trail. In addition the band is to be routed well away from the resort facilities and areas associated with them. **As discussed with you on the phone (4/30) a special mountain bike race event is planned on 7/1 this year from the top of Bald Mt. In order to reduce the potential for conflicts between the sheep and this event plan on having the band leave this area no later than 6/28 if the band needs to trail off the allotment through Cow Creek. If the alternate route (circular route) proves to be feasible the band may remain in the trough area until 6/30 before trailing downs the east side of the Limekiln Gulch drainage for shipping. Close coordination with my range staff, you, and your herders will be necessary in order to prevent conflicts between grazing and this race event.**

- We are tentatively planning on placing a GPS collar on this band in order to more clearly define grazing patterns on this allotment. Please contact my range staff prior to the band entering the allotment so that a sheep can be collared prior to the band entering the allotment.
- The potential of conflicts between grazing, such as guard dogs and the general public recreating on the district is especially high on the Limekiln Allotment due to the proximity of several high use recreation trails and a busy trailhead in the Greenhorn drainage. The herder will need to be especially attentive with the sheep and guard dogs to reduce conflicts while in this area, especially if in close proximity to system trails or roads. The trailhead and major trails will be posted informing the public that sheep are in the area.
- As we discussed at this year's spring meeting, after grazing the Limekiln allotment, the band will be trucked and unloaded at the mouth of Baker Creek and trailed to the Owl Creek allotment via the bridge near the mouth of Silver Creek. The band will trail across the lower slopes of the Silver Creek drainage to access the Owl Creek allotment (1 day). In the event that wolf activity such as denning suggests that an alternate unloading site is warranted the band will unload at the mouth of the Spring Creek drainage. The range staff on the Sawtooth National Recreation Area will provide specific instructions concerning grazing on the Owl Creek allotment.

### **Shaw Mountain Allotment**

A band of 1025 ewes with lambs will graze the allotment from 6/15-8/7. These dates include five days for trailing to the allotment through the Willow Creek drainage on the Fairfield Ranger District (6/15-6/19). Please contact John Shelly on the Fairfield District prior to trailing the sheep through Willow Creek. The band will use the east fork of Willow Creek to access the Shaw Mountain Allotment. As we discussed at this year's spring meeting the herder camps and pack and saddle stock may use the west fork of Willow Creek while the band is trailing up the east fork. The band will remain high in the south unit grazing predominately northwesterly

across the heads of the south fork of Warm Springs, Cabin Gulch, Meadow Creek, Trouble Canyon, the Middle Fork of Warm Springs, and Narrow Canyon. The band will enter the north unit in the Packer Gulch, Dollarhide Summit area. As discussed at this year's spring meeting the band will avoid the very steep slopes and small drainages immediately east of Packer Gulch directly above the Warm Springs road. This area has been identified on the AOI map. After grazing the Packer Gulch/Dollarhide area to standard, the band will graze down the Warm Springs drainage to the Placer Creek/Spruce Creek drainages and use these drainages previous to shipping. Last year's collar data indicated that the more capable area in the left fork of Placer Creek could be used more and remain within the context of once over grazing. The lamb band will ship on approximately 8/7. The dry band will be trucked off the allotment following shipping the lambs. If possible keep the dries confined to the corral area after shipping. If the dries need to be removed from the corral move them a minimum of ½ mile to areas on the allotment that has not been previously grazed while waiting for the trucks. The dry band will leave the allotment on 8/7 and be trucked to the Pole Creek Allotment on the Sawtooth National Recreation Area.

- **Please follow these instructions when using the shipping facilities at Placer Creek. The sheep are to be trailed to the facility from some distance (1/4-1/2 mile) and moved directly into the corral. All sorting and holding of the sheep will be in the confines of the corral. The sheep are not to be watered or grazed within the immediate vicinity of the corral. The corrals at Placer Creek will be used 2 times this year. It is imperative that impacts in this area associated with shipping be kept to a minimum. Use of this facility is shared with Dennis Kowitz please coordinate use of the facility with him. In order to avoid recreation conflicts please inform my range staff one week prior to using the facility so that the area can be signed informing the public of this activity.**
- **The herder will avoid trailing Trouble Canyon and only use the uppermost portions of the drainage's when grazing across the south unit to access the north unit in the early spring. The lower portions of the south unit will be avoided.**
- **We have concerns about the lack of capable area on this allotment. It is important that adherence to our grazing standards be followed. The actual time spent grazing the allotment will be determined by adherence to grazing standards.**
- **The band will avoid the slopes directly above the Warm Springs road east of Packer Gulch. This are is identified on the attached AOI map.**
- **We are tentatively planning on placing a GPS collar on this band.**

## **COMPLIANCE**

This AOI is made part of your grazing permit consistent with Part 1, item 3 and Part 2, Item 8(a). **Procedures for modifying this AOI:** 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.

## **REPORTING**

The permittee is required to provide timely and complete actual use information to the Forest Officer in charge upon request. Use of calendars, maps, or actual use forms provided will be utilized to record dates for turning out, shipping, leaving the allotment, as well as location and number of days of use of each camp and or prominent drainage( those identified on maps)

We need to know dates of entry into each new allotment or major drainage, noteworthy change in sheep numbers, occupied camp or band locations with dates of occupancy, periods, of use within specific drainages, and maintenance of range facilities. Please notify us of significant losses, from predators or poisonous plants, herding problems (logistical or due to unforeseen circumstances), conflicts with other Forest users, and any other grazing related information you feel is worth reporting. Weekly reporting for trail information updates will suffice as actual use reporting with the addition of any notable changes in numbers of mature sheep.

## **INSPECTIONS AND MONITORING**

Inspections will be made within each allotment to monitor grazing use and insure compliance with the direction set forth within the AOI. Standard monitoring will include visual inspections, compliance with AOI and grazing standards, photo points, and rapid assessments to estimate use and ground cover.

Monitoring and allotment inspections will occur on the allotments to gather soil, vegetation, and use data to support upcoming National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis which is tentatively scheduled for these allotments to be completed in 2013.

Forest resource specialists will continue monitoring and conducting field reviews in 2012 in order to gather data about the Limekiln and Shaw Mt. allotments. This information will be used to help prepare upcoming National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) assessments. These assessments and decisions are scheduled to be completed before the 2013 grazing season. You are welcome to participate in this analysis process.

## COOPERATION

Once again this year we will work in partnership with Blaine County, the Idaho Department of Fish & Game and the Defenders of Wildlife (Susan Stone 208-424-9385) in fostering a non-lethal approach to preventing domestic sheep and wolf mortality. Emphasis will be on the Ketchum Ranger District, the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and other areas within Blaine County south of Galena Summit. Coordination will be important. Adjustments can be made to routing or bedding as the need arises, to head off problems. Meetings will be scheduled as necessary to assess how things are going or prevent potential problems.

Questions about what can or cannot be done in reference to defending flocks, harassing wolves, or shooting wolves should be directed to Jerome Hansen at the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) Regional Office in Jerome, Idaho (208-324-4359) or John Rachael at the Fish and Game office in Boise, Idaho (208-334-3700); Todd Grimm, USDA APHIS Wildlife Services in Boise, Idaho (208-378-5077); or local Wildlife Service's contacts. Permittees should continue working with their local Wildlife Services representative on depredation issues.

In order to reduce the potential for depredation, the Forest Service recommends that the following procedures be implemented each grazing season:

*Keep camp meat in coolers, and not hung.*

*Burn, bury, or pack out food leftovers, bones, garbage etc. including food not consumed by dogs accompanying the herders.*

*Bury or remove sheep and saddle stock carcasses from the area where they will not serve as an attractant to predators. The intent of this recommendation is not to require removal of carcasses from the allotment, but to remove them out of areas currently being grazed of areas soon to be grazed.*

*Work with IDF&G and Wildlife Services in implementing other effective preventative actions to reduce the risk of depredation.*

Contact the range staff at the Ketchum Ranger District (208-622-5371) for local Wildlife Service's contact information.

The Forest Service recognizes that Plateau Farms LLC and Idaho Department of Fish & Game have developed a "Best Management Practice for Separation between Domestic Sheep and Bighorn Sheep" agreement because of the potential for conflict between wild sheep and domestics. In addition to BMP's agreed to in that agreement, we also require the herders conduct regular sightings throughout the day for bighorn sheep. We also require that the herder make the appropriate contact with the Forest Service or Idaho Department of Fish & Game when a bighorn sheep sighting is reported on or within a minimum of one mile of the Limekiln, Shaw Mt., Owl Creek, Salmon / Pole /Champion and Fisher Creek Allotments.

We will continue to update the weekly recreation trail report regarding the location of sheep bands. This along with signing informing the public that sheep are in the area has proven successful in preventing conflicts with recreational use of the trails. We will be contacting you

on a weekly basis while the bands are on the Ketchum Ranger District to provide us with updated information.

As discussed at this year's meeting both the Limekiln and Shaw Mt. bands will be GPS collared this year. The collar will remain on the sheep through the grazing season and removed when the band approaches Ketchum at the end of the grazing season on National Forest lands.

## DROUGHT

Drought conditions will be monitored as the season progresses. Grazing will be managed on an allotment by allotment basis focusing on water availability and soil disturbance.

### **Terms and Conditions for Sheep Grazing**

Following are the Terms and Conditions applicable to sheep grazing that must be followed while grazing on the Ketchum Ranger District.

These permit terms and conditions are needed to move toward or to achieve the desired conditions, goals, and objectives for vegetation, wildlife, fish, riparian, soil and water resources described by the Sawtooth Forest Land & Resource Management Plan. Other than Guidelines, the following Terms & Conditions are binding limitations placed on management actions. Guidelines represent preferred or advisable courses of action that are generally expected to be carried out.

#### **Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines:**

- **Only one night/one time use of bed grounds is allowed. (standard).**
- **Only open or or loose sheep herding will be practiced except where site-specific vegetation management (e.g., noxious weed control or reforestation) is needed. (standard)**
- **Only annual once-over sheep grazing will be allowed, with the exception of designated sheep sheep driveways, travel routes, or where specifically authorized. (standard)**
- **Livestock salting will be prohibited in RCA's (riparian conservation areas). Sheep will be salted only at bed grounds. Salt will be placed in containers and moved with the sheep. Tarps and hollowed logs meet the criteria for salting in containers. (standard)**
- **Only certified noxious weed-free hay, straw, or feed is allowed on National Forest Systems lands. (standard)**
- **Earth-disturbing equipment used on National Forest System lands- such as cats, graders, and front-loaders-shall be cleaned to remove all visible plant parts, dirt, and material that may carry noxious weed seeds. Cleaning shall occur prior to entry onto**

the project area and again upon leaving the project area, if the project area has noxious weed infestations. (standard) No ground disturbing activities may be conducted on National Forest Systems land without prior approval from the authorized officer.

- New, reconstructed, or replaced livestock water developments must provide access and escape to and from water for all types of wildlife. (standard, reference part Three of the Term Grazing Permit under maintenance of structural range improvements)
- On all lands outside of designated travelways, motorized use shall be prohibited unless otherwise authorized. (standard)
- Damage to or loss of Forest System trails from timber harvest, livestock grazing, road construction, mining, special uses, and prescribed fire activities should be repaired or mitigated by the appropriate party. (guideline)
- Sheep should be routed to avoid slopes with loose soil conditions, active gullies, and snowbank areas that have low productivity, soil puddling, and compaction conditions. (guideline, generally site specific in the AOI)

#### **SHEEP HERDING:**

1. The permittee or herd manager will provide sufficient riders or herders to obtain proper distribution, protection, and management of sheep on the allotment as required by the Rangeland Project Decision (RPD)/Allotment Management Plan (AMP) and/or the Annual Operating Instructions (AOI).
2. Do not allow sheep to be shaded or bedded within 100 yards of all streams. If this is not reasonable due to topography ensure that the sheep are as far back as possible from the streambank.
3. Graze no closer than 200 yards from all lakes or ponds specified as closed to sheep grazing in Part 3 or your Term Grazing Permit. This may not apply on all allotments. Check Part 3 on your Term Grazing Permit.
4. Do not bed sheep within 200 yards of designated campgrounds, trails, trail heads, or maintained roads.
5. Graze rather than trail to water, and water at different locations each time.
6. The permittee is required to provide a copy of the Annual Operating Instructions to each herder, and to ensure each herder understands the written contents.

#### **OTHER**

7. Permittees are responsible for cleaning or repairing system roads and trails damaged by sheep to the condition existing prior to trailing. Immediate action is required. (standard)

8. All predator control will be in accordance with the approved Predator Control Plan and Federal and State laws and regulations.
9. Promptly remove or bury any sheep that have died within 100 yards or in sight of administrative sites, system roads or trails, corrals or sources of water.
10. Before and after shipping, sheep will not be allowed to graze, shade, or bed within one-quarter mile of the corral. Exception: After leaving the corral, the sheep will be allowed to water one time before departing the immediate area.
11. Control guard dogs when other Forest users or pets are near by.

### **SHEEP CAMPS**

12. Each camp will be kept clean. All litter and unburned material from fire pits will be hauled away and disposed of off-Forest. Human waste must be buried if it is within 150 feet from water. The use of detergent in streams is prohibited.
13. Only existing herder camps are approved for use. New camp locations must be approved by a Forest Service officer.
14. Camps will be kept in primitive condition. No improvements will be allowed. If a new fire pit is constructed, dismantled it and restore the area before moving your camp.
15. Herder camp use will not exceed 5 days per location unless prior permission is obtained from a Forest officer. Camps should be located to avoid conflict with other Forest users
16. At camp, pack and saddle stock will be high-lined, picketed or hobbled. Tying pack or saddle stock to trees at camp is prohibited.
17. Holding pens, corrals, or mangers used for riding stock will be cleaned up when camp is moved.

### **FIRE**

18. Employees must be kept informed of the current fire danger, situation, and the permittee's fire prevention responsibility. The Forest Service will advise the permittee when special fire restrictions become effective.
19. Exhaust from camp stoves must be filtered through a spark arrestor screen with 3/8 inch (or smaller) mesh.
20. Never leave campfires unattended.
21. Possession of an adequate shovel and bucket for fire control is required at camps.

### **WOLF Guidelines**

22. The permittee will be contacted immediately when the district becomes aware of wolves in an area. Possible re-routing of the band may be agreed on between the permittee and the District Ranger.
23. At camp, meat will be kept in containers to avoid attracting wolves.
24. Food wastes will be burned, buried, or packed out with other camp refuse.

**25. Preventive measures should be coordinated with Idaho Fish and Game.**

**26. Only bed sheep down for one night per bed ground under normal circumstances. When there is wolf activity in the area and fladry is used to minimize predation, bed grounds may be used for more than one night. When this situation occurs bed ground site selection needs to be discussed with the Range Management Specialist for this allotment.**

## **IMPROVEMENTS**

**27. The permittee is responsible for the maintenance of structural range improvements as delineated on Part 3 of your Term grazing Permit. These improvements will be maintained prior to placing sheep on the allotment. Please refer to your permit for the specific maintenance standards for structural range improvements.**

**Enclosures: Allotment Maps, Spanish Standards and Guidelines**