United States Department of Agriculture | **Forest Service** | **Southwestern Region 3**
Carson National Forest
Questa Ranger District
P. O. Box 110
Questa, New Mexico 87556
575-586-0520
TT/TDD 575-586-0520
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2012

Annual Operating Instructions (AOI)

Arroyo Hondo Allotment #00700

Carson National Forest

Questa Ranger District

MICHAEL L. CASADOS – ACTING FOR JUNE 26, 2012

JEROME A. MASTEL, QUESTA DISTRICT RANGER DATE

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Annual Operating Instructions

Introduction

This Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) is in reference to the discussion you had with Michael Casados, on **March 13, 2011**. The authorized use for the **2012 grazing** season on the Arroyo Hondo Allotment is as follows:

Table 1 –Permittee Information and Season of Use

Permittee Name	Permitted # Season		Authorized # Season		Remarks
Leo Valencia Sr.	16 c/c	7/5 to 9/15			Nonuse in 2012
Larry L. Montoya	14 c/c	7/5 to 9/15			Nonuse in 2012
Total	30 head				

Management of Livestock

It is the responsibility of the grazing permittee on this allotment upon entering the National Forest Lands to ensure proper distribution of livestock. Livestock will be pushed out of heavy use areas, and encouraged to utilize areas with light or no use. All livestock will be confined to one pasture at a time. Animals will be moved to the next use pasture when the desired level of use is reached.

All livestock must be scheduled to counting prior to entering Arroyo Hondo Allotment. The Questa Ranger District must be notified 5 days prior to time livestock enter or leave the forest. Nonuse applies only to animal numbers. Nonuse is approval to graze less than 90% of the permitted livestock during the permitted grazing season. Nonuse of a term permit must be requested in written form for all the permitted grazing season (Total Nonuse), or part of the permitted numbers (Partial Nonuse). Verbal applications will not be accepted. If a permittee elects to request “total nonuse” or “partial nonuse” he/she is still responsible for maintenance of assigned range improvements and association fees.

A credit/refund is not automatic, but must be requested in writing by the permittee(s) and approved by the District Ranger. Refer to Attachment 1 for documentation of any annual operating instruction adjustments.

Rotation Schedule

Initial distribution of your livestock is tentatively planned as follows (actual dates will be based on range readiness). There will be no livestock on the Arroyo Hondo Allotment until such time as range conditions improve. Range conditions will be monitored by the grazing permittees and district range personnel to determine when stocking can be authorized.

All livestock will be confined to one pasture at a time. Livestock will be moved to the next use pasture when the desired level or use is reached. All livestock will be handled as one herd and the gates to the next scheduled pasture may be opened a few days prior to the scheduled move. The pasture in which the livestock are leaving should be cleaned out 7 days after the scheduled date for moving. Livestock are permitted only in those pastures in which they are scheduled to be in at that time. Livestock will use only on pasture at any time. Refer to Attachment 2 for actual use information.

Table 2 - Season of Use (7/5 - 9/15)

Pasture	Season of Use	Livestock Numbers	Planned numbers of days	Comments
Italianos Canyon				Nonuse in 2012
Gallina Canyon				
E-W Gavilan				
Manzanita Canyon				

Due to drought conditions which we've been experiencing in recent years and we may again be facing this coming season on the allotments within the Questa Ranger District, this situation will require effective communication between the Forest Service and you the permittee. We are sure you recall recent drought years and the actions you and the Forest Service were faced with due to the effects on the range conditions. It is important that each of you as permittees have a contingency plan in case one of the following takes place within your individual allotments:

- Delayed entry onto the allotment due to the lack of green-up.
- Removal of some portion of your permitted livestock, sometime during the grazing season due to lack of forage.
- Acceleration of grazing rotation plans.
- Early removal of all permitted livestock due to lack of forage.

The range readiness inspection(s) will determine the exact date livestock can be moved onto the allotment, and which pasture will be grazed first. (Refer to Attachment 3 & 3-A, Range Readiness Report form FS 6200 28a (5/84) which needs to be completed to document current conditions on the allotment.) Each permittee is encouraged to participate in this decision.

Forage Utilization Standards

Desired Conditions: Forage utilization will be measured in key areas. Key areas will be the only areas used to determine forage utilization by all ungulates. A forage utilization condition of 20 to 40 percent average of native key forage species within each key area is desired. Maintaining riparian stubble heights of 3 inches or more during the entire growing season on sedges is desired.

Monitor for these standards through key species utilization in key areas and within riparian areas. Key species within the key areas have been identified, and these are what the forage utilization standard will be applied to. The following are the key forage species by vegetation type found.

Table 2 - Key forage species by vegetation type.

Location	Key Grass Species
Pinon Juniper/ Sagebrush	Western Wheatgrass Blue Grama Black Grama Galleta Crested Wheatgrass
Ponderosa Pine	Arizona Fescue Kentucky Bluegrass Mountain Muhly
Mixed Conifer	Arizona/Thurber Fescue Kentucky Bluegrass Oat Grasses
Mountain Meadow	Arizona/Thurber Fescue Kentucky Bluegrass Oat Grasses
Riparian	Red Top Kentucky Bluegrass Sedges

Distribution and Salt Plans: Herding and riding practices are encouraged to achieving proper livestock distribution on the allotment, and to provide the fullest use of the grazing season. Salt must be placed out of bottoms, away from water, roads, forest system trails, and recreational sites in an effort to distribute animals throughout each pasture and encourage animals to roam throughout. Proper salt placement and monitoring is important in achieving proper distribution. Salt should be placed in areas of historical light use. No permanent salt grounds will be established, once salt is used up, another suitable area will be found for salt, and livestock should be shown where the new salt grounds are. Any salt improperly placed will be picked up by the Ranger, and can be claimed at the district office.

Unauthorized use (trespass) will be subject to Forest Service Regulations. Violations will be handled through the Questa District Office and permitted owners are encouraged to participate or report any such violations.

All grazing Bill for Collections must be paid before placing any permitted livestock onto the National Forest lands.

Monitoring

Both the Forest Service and the permittee are responsible for monitoring use and stubble height on the allotment to manage within specified utilization standards.

If areas within a pasture or the pasture as a whole begin to approach the identified stubble heights, then the remaining key areas will also be monitored and the pasture inspected to determine overall use patterns.

Monitoring items such as distribution patterns, range readiness, cattle numbers, forage use levels, salting practices, and condition of improvement will be evaluated. A District Range Inspection Report will be completed to document what was seen while out on the allotment every time Forest Service range personnel visit the allotment. Refer to Attachment 4, "Range Inspection Report".

Ocular Utilization estimates are done on the allotment using the Ocular Estimate Method, and Key Browse Species. Refer to Attachment 5, "R3-2200-OEB" for this form to be completed. These are done by Forest Service range personnel to document any information gathered during an allotment visit.

Range personnel will also take photographs of key areas, retake any established photo points, read old study plots and/or transects, and conduct utilization/production studies when these are scheduled.

Monitoring by allotment permittees is very important. Visiting and/or having conversations with the permittees about the allotment's forage conditions can be discussed through in person dialogue or by telephone conversations.

Monitoring and compliance inspections are done on range improvements within the allotment and document in our allotment inspections reports. Range improvements information is kept track of in the NRM FS Web System.

Allotment inspections and monitoring is done on horseback within each of the pastures in the allotment. Permittees and Forest Service conduct these inspections together.

Range Improvements

It is important that you inspect and maintain the assigned allotment boundary fences, interior pasture division fences, stock tanks, springs, cattle guards and other structural improvements prior to livestock entering the allotment or pasture. Range improvements in the "entry pasture"

must be in good functioning condition prior to the July 1st entry date. All other pasture fences and waters must be maintained prior to livestock movement into the next scheduled pasture(s). In the event these improvements cannot be brought up to standard, you should notify the range personnel so we can schedule them for reconstruction as funds become available. An inspection of your allotment prior to the entry date will be made to determine if maintenance is adequate.

Table 4 – Range, Watershed, or Permittee Improvement Projects.

Project Name	Kind & Number	Location	Status	Comments
Gallina Cattle guard	1-16 foot C.G.	Boundary between private and Forest Service lands	Tentatively identified On-going	Look at the proposed site with permittee to see if it is feasible. Larry Montoya is contact
Existing fences	Fence maintenance	Permittees know which fences need maintenance	On-going every year	Permittees use materials furnished by the Forest Service to maintain fences.
Hondo Cabin and existing corral	Reconstruct backside of fence at Hondo Cabin	Off of the Taos Ski Valley Road	Planned for 2011 with possible help from RMYC??	Reconstruction of fence and corral in Summer of 2012?
Gallina Trail	Livestock trail	Gallina Canyon	On-the-ground inspection	Go out with permittees and inspect trail. Clean if possible in 2012. Larry Montoya is contact
Deer Creek/Arroyo Hondo Ridge Fence	Drift fence	On ridge	Furnish materials to get this done. May require wood poles on site.	Construct short fence on ridge to keep livestock from drifting between both allotments. Summer of 2012?
Existing Gavilan Drift Fence	Drift fence	Mouth of Gavilan Canyon	Reconstruct	Reconstruct
Manzanitas Drift Fence	Drift fence	Trail head	Reconstruct	Reconstruct in 2012 if possible.
Gavilan Canyon Trail	Gavilan Trail	Existing trail	Re-route trail	Reconstruct
East Gavilan Trail	Gavilan Trail	Existing trail	Clear and maintain	Accomplish in 2012. Involve Richard Holmes from D7
Drift fence	Italianos Trail on ridge	Existing trail	Fence to separate Italianos/Gavilan Pastures	Assess in 2012.

Fence Maintenance

It is important that you inspect and maintain the assigned fences and water developments in the "entry pasture" to a good functioning condition prior to the July 1st entry date. All other pastures fences and water developments must be maintained prior to livestock movement in to the next schedule pasture(s).

In the event these improvements can not be brought up to standard, you should notify the range personnel. An inspection of your allotment prior to the entry date will be made to determine if maintenance is adequate.

If you have a need to cut fence stays or posts while you are maintaining your fences on your allotment, you can get authorization to cut these materials by obtaining a Free Use Permit from the range personnel at the Questa Ranger District.

Allotment Status

At the present time direction for management on the allotment is being documented in the Annual Operating Instructions. An environmental analysis, NEPA process was completed in the year 2010 and a Decision Notice was signed by the Jerome A. Mastel, Questa District Ranger on September 30, 2010. The 2012 grazing season would be the second year of implementation of the EA and Decision Notice.

Open and positive communication is encouraged. Feel free to contact the range personnel if you have any questions or problems. They will be happy to discuss allotment management, on the ground status, Forest Plan standards and guidelines, and possible changes in allotment management.

Special Instructions

COUNTING: All livestock belonging to each permittee must be branded (cows/calves & bulls) with permittee of record's individual personal brand(s). Cattle would be inspected and counted @ the private ranch corrals prior to coming onto the National Forest.

Appeal Statement

This Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) is hereby made a part of your Term Grazing Permit. The annual operating instructions (AOI) give specific direction in the management of this grazing unit. The permitted owners using this allotment are encouraged to provide input in order to bring about proper and continued wise use of these renewable natural resources. Any diversion from this plan may put the Term Grazing Permit in jeopardy. If a change is needed, approval from the District is required.

If you have any questions concerning this plan please let the District Ranger know. Enjoy the use of your National Forest and the grazing unit assigned to you this season.

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. 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 the Forest Supervisor, Carson National Forest, 208 Cruz Alta, Taos, New Mexico 87571, within 45 days of the date of this decision. A copy of the notice of appeal must be filed simultaneously with Questa District Forest Ranger, who was the deciding officer and the address for mailing the appeal copy is P. O. Box 110, Questa, New Mexico 87556.

I will appreciate if you contact me and together we try to resolve disagreements before you file any Notice of Appeal. I value your experience and knowledge of the allotment. If we cannot reach an agreement, you may exercise your appeal rights. This will insure that we both understand the reasons for each other's position regarding any issues. I look forward to working with you this season. I am confident that together we will work effectively to manage the range resources in a manner that reflects good stewardship for the land and livestock.

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Attachment 1: Annual Operating Instruction Adjustments

Date	Action Item	Action Taken	Initials
3/13/11	Annual Meeting	Conducted the annual meeting on 3/13/2012 at the Questa Ranger District.	MLC
6/27/12	Range Readiness-Wednesday	Conduct a range readiness tour on the allotment to inspect forage conditions prior to turn out on the allotment.	MLC
	A Range Readiness assessment was not conducted for the allotment for it was rested in 2102 by the permittees.		MLC

Attachment 2: Actual Use Information

Pasture	Planned Livestock Number & Class	Planned Use Date On	Planned Use Date Off	Actual Use Date On	Actual Use Date Off
Italianos Canyon	-0-				
Gallina Canyon	-0-				
E-W Gavilan	-0-				
Manzanita Canyon	-0-				

Number of Livestock (Head) counted on_____.

Number of Livestock (Head) lost_____.

Report of Livestock Losses

Livestock Class	Poisonous Plants	Predators	Other	Total Losses

REMARKS:

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Attachment 3: Range Readiness Report

Allotment:_____

Date:_____

Plant development of major forage species.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Soil moisture status.

Range Ready?_____

Are the fences cow-proof and properly maintained?

Are other range improvements (stock tanks, trick tanks, pipelines, windmills, etc) maintained to permit standards?

Questa Ranger District Form

Attachment 3-A Title 2200 Range Management

2221.3 – Range Readiness Standards. The following standards will be used on the Santa Fe National Forest and are applicable on the Carson National Forest for determining range readiness:

Grasses

- Kentucky Bluegrass (Popr) - Panicles fully open
- Mutton Bluegrass (Pofe) - Plants maturing
- Western Wheatgrass (Agsm) - Six inches or more in height
- Junegrass (kocr) - Plants heading out
- Timber Oatgrass (DANT) - In full bloom
- Mountain Muhly (Mumo) - Headed out
- Arizona Fescue (Fear) - 8" or more in height, heading out

Grasslike

- Carex spp. (CARE) - Seed Formed

Forbs

- Yarrow (Acla) - Heads evident
- Lupine (LUPI) - Flower buds evident
- Dandelion (TARA) - Most plants seed disseminated
- Low Larkspur (DELP) - Full bloom
- Golden Pea (Thpi) - Full bloom

Browse

- Mountain Mahogany (CERC) - Fully leaved
- Serviceberry (Amut) - Fruit forming
- Aspen (Potr) - Fully leaved – deep green
- Ribes (RIBE) - Flowering 50% or more
- Snowberry (SYMP) - Flower buds evident
-

Use a combination of species and plants rather than a single plant or species as a guide to range readiness. Apply these standards to representative range areas. These standards have primary application under season-long and simple deferred-rotation grazing systems involving only two pastures.

Forest Service Manual January 1969 Santa Fe Supplement No. 2

Attachment 4: Questa Ranger District

YEAR_____

RANGE INSPECTION REPORT_____ALLOTMENT

Forage condition in _____unit(s). Photo taken Y or N.

Soil Moisture Conditions on the Allotment.

Overall Range Conditions (Dry or Moist Soil Conditions).

Water Availability on the Allotment.

Deterioration Range Conditions on the Allotment (soil compaction occurring).

Livestock Location (area).

Riparian Conditions (livestock present)

Did permittee attend? Yes or No _____.

Questa Ranger District Form

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Attachment 5: Utilization Study Data-Ocular Estimate Method, Key Browse Species, Form R3-2200-OEB.

Forest:	District:	Plot ID:

Allotment Name and Number:	Pasture:

Kind/Class & Number of Animals:	Period of Use:	Actual Use Animal Months

Date:	Examiners:

Spp 1:	Spp 2:

Class Interval Midpoint	Dot Count	Total (C)	(C X M)	Dot Count	Total (C)	(C X M)	Browse Utilization Classes (Herbaceous Utilization Classes are on the other side)
Class I 0 – 5% M = 2.5%							Rangeland shows no evidence of grazing use; or rangeland has appearance of negligible grazing.
Class II 6 – 20% M = 13%							Rangeland has appearance of very slight grazing. Key herbaceous forage plants may be topped or slightly used. Current seed stalks of key herbaceous species are little disturbed.
Class III 21 – 40% M = 30%							Rangeland may be topped, skimmed, or grazed in patches. Low value herbaceous plants are ungrazed and 60 – 80% of the current seed stalks of key herbaceous species remain intact. Most young plants are undamaged.
Class IV 41 – 60 % M = 50%							Rangeland appears entirely covered as uniformly as natural features and facilities will allow. 15 – 25% of the current seed stalks of key herbaceous species remain intact. No more than 10% of the low value herbaceous forage plants are utilized. (Moderate use does not imply proper use)
Class V 61 – 70% M = 70%							Rangeland has appearance of complete use. Key herbaceous species are almost completely utilized with less that 10% of the current seed stalks remaining. Shoots of rhizomatous grasses are missing. More than 10% of low value herbaceous forage plants have been utilized.
Class VI 81 – 100% M = 90%							Rangeland has mown appearance and there are indications of repeated coverage. There is no evidence of reproduction or current seed stalks of key herbaceous species. Key herbaceous forage species are completely utilized. Remaining stubble of preferred grasses is grazed to soil surface.
XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX	Totals			Totals			XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Average Utilization				XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX			XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX