



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Southwestern Region 3  
Carson National Forest  
Tres Piedras Ranger District

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2013  
ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS (AOI)  
SUBLETTE ALLOTMENT (00600)  
CARSON NATIONAL FOREST  
TRES PEIDRAS RANGER DISTRICT

LIST OF SUBLETTE PERMIT MEMBERS:

Leo J. & Geraldine Mora  
Orva Sowards Trust, c/o Carlyn Sowards  
Benicio & Elsie Trujillo  
Phillip & Theresa Trujillo

Prepared By:

*Anna Dominguez*  
Anna Dominguez

Rangeland Management Specialist

*4/30/13*  
Date

Approved By:

*Chris Furr*  
CHRIS FURR  
District Ranger

*4/30/13*  
Date

## **Introduction**

The Annual Operating Instruction meeting was held on March 22, 2013 at the Conejos Peak Ranger District. Permittees that attended the meeting included Elsie Trujillo, Joe Mora, Phillip Trujillo, Carlyn Sowards, and Jeff Sowards. Chris Furr, Wayne Yonemoto, and Anna Dominguez represented the U.S. Forest Service.

The Annual Operating Instruction (AOI) is a decision document that is made part of the terms and conditions of the Term Grazing Permit. The AOI includes guidance criteria described below that addresses annual resource conditions, livestock numbers, period of use, pasture rotations, monitoring and range improvements projects. The 2003 Rangeland Management Action Plan for the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests continues to be program guidance. The objectives of this strategic action plan continue to be a high priority and emphasize collaboration, rangeland health, rangeland monitoring and Permittee involvement.

The livestock grazing fee is \$1.35/HM (cattle).

The dry weather pattern conditions include the following. Within the area, the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) 3-month forecast is for increased chances of below normal to normal precipitation, Feb through April., 2013 as well as, increased chances of normal to above-normal temperatures.

The SPI definition that indicates the end-of-drought is for the SPI values to be positive 1.0 (or higher) for the past 12 months. The SPI for the past 12 months January thru December is described as Moderately Dry (-1.24 to -0.75) so the end of drought has not occurred.

SPI values of negative 0.70 or less for the past month signal drought conditions. The SPI for the past 1-month thru February is described as Near Normal (-0.74 to +0.74), so 1-month drought conditions are present. Within the District, during the periods of Oct. to Dec., 2011 and Jan. to Feb., 2013 there were various acres of favorable to normal to above normal precipitation but also areas of below normal precipitation. Also, below normal to normal, to normal to above-normal temperatures occurred.

The authorized ear tag color is green. All authorized cattle will be ear tagged correctly with the authorized letter/number. The authorized use for the current grazing season is as follows:

### **Members Information and Season of Use (Term Permit/Annual Authorized Use Request Form)**

<b>Member Name</b>	<b>Permitted (c/c: 5/25-10/10)</b>	<b>Authorized 25% reduction (c/c, 5/25-10/10)</b>	<b>Ear tag letter</b>	<b>Remarks 2013 Actual Use</b>
Leo J. & Geraldine Mora	50	38	V	
Orva Sowards	56	42	P	

Trust				
Benicio & Elsie Trujillo	15	11	T	
Phillip & Theresa Trujillo	40	30	L	
Total	161 c/c (736 HMs, AUMs); 139 days	121 c/c		

Range readiness inspections will determine the final authorized livestock number and whether range vegetation and soils meet the criteria for grazing. Range readiness will be scheduled at a later date.

Compliance with New Mexico Statewide Regulation, 21.30.6 NMAC, Bovine Trichomoniasis, effective June 17, 2005, becomes a term and condition of the United States Forest Service term grazing permit. We ask that you comply with the NM State Trichomoniasis regulations.

All livestock must be scheduled for counting prior to entering the Allotment. Tres Piedras district range personnel must be notified 5 days prior to the time that livestock enter or leave the Carson NF.

Nonuse of term permit must be requested in writing for all of the permitted numbers (Full Nonuse), or part of the permitted numbers (Partial Nonuse). Verbal applications will not be accepted. If a permittee is approved for "Full nonuse", the permittee is still responsible for maintenance of assigned range improvements.

**Review of 2012 Monitoring Data**

The monitoring information in the Allotment Study file was reviewed. The forage production improved after the July, August precipitation (normal to above normal). Participants discussed areas of below average to average production and average to above average production, livestock distribution management and utilization. All pastures had a majority of grazeable acres at average to above average production.

Utilization guidelines of 20% to 40% (end of season) in each pasture were met except Atencio and Santa Rita. FS monitoring indicated end-of-growing season utilization: San Miguel- 35%; Atencio >40%; Santa Rita – 45%; Toltec – 28%; Santa Rita and Atencio riparian area did not meet the 4 inch stubble height at the end of the growing season.

**2012 AOI Compliance**

1. Two of four pastures met the utilization guidelines of 20% to 40% utilization measured at the end of the growing season.

2. Two of four pastures did not meet the riparian standards for the 2012 grazing season in Santa Rita and Atencio pastures.
3. Permittees completed four prioritized range improvement projects/maintenance.

**2012 Actual use**

Actual use: 140 c/c: 5/26-10/6, 134 days, 16% reduction from permit, totals 616 HM, 814 AUM

**Atencio**

140 c/c, 5/26-6/16: (22days), 101 HM, 133 AUM

140 c/c 9/5-10/6: (32 days), 147 HM, 194 AUM

Total 140 c/c 54 days 248 HM, 327 AUM

**Toltec**

140 c/c, 6/17-7/1 (15 days), 69 HM, 91 AUM

**San Miguel**

140 c/c, 8/7-9/4 (29 days), 133 HM, 176 AUM

**Santa Rita**

140 c/c, 7/2-8/6 (36 days), 165 HM, 218 AUM

**Actual Use by Permittee**

J. Mora-193 HM, 255 AUM

C. Sowards -180 HM, 238 AUM

P. Trujillo-176 HM, 232 AUM

B. Trujillo- 66 HM, 87 AUM

**Tentative Rotation Schedule**

Initial distribution of your livestock in tentatively planned as follows (actual dates will be based on the range readiness determination);

Tentative Rotation Schedule (5/25-10/10, 139 days)

<b>Pasture</b>	<b>Tentative Dates (# of Days)</b>	<b>Days (min to max)</b>	<b>Actual Use</b>	<b>Reason for Adjustments</b>
<b>San Miguel</b>	5/25-6/23 (30)	20-30		
<b>Atencio</b>	6/24-7/23 (30)	35-40		
<b>Toltec</b>	7/24-8/22 (30)	35-40		
<b>Santa Rita</b>	8/23-10/10 (49)	35-40		
<b>Total</b>	(139 days) Range readiness determines the authorized entry date: utilization determines the exit date.	113-153		

**Monitoring**

Please contact Tres Piedras RD with any questions regarding monitoring and whether you wish to participate in the annual monitoring of your allotment. Your participation I encouraged. The following monitoring assessments, evaluations and methods may be conducted on the allotment:

Weather updates (SPI and temperature)

Soil moisture depth

Water availability

Reading paired annual production/utilization cages with supporting photos and documentation, Rapid Assessment Method, Cover/Frequency, Parker 3-Step, Grazing Response Index, Ocular Estimate Method by Class, Ocular Utilization Estimate by Weight, Photo Point, and Range Trend Plot.

Key site map of the Allotment

Key forage list showing community type, species list and stubble height

Range readiness stubble ht. /utilization guidelines

Grazing season monitoring stubble ht. / utilization guidelines

End of season stubble ht. /utilization guidelines

Range readiness documentation

Watershed health indicators

**Utilization Guidelines**

Within each pasture, grazing utilization would occur at 20% to 40% of the annual available forage (not to exceed 40%) and would be assessed at the end of the growing season. Utilization guidelines in the riparian areas include leaving 4 inches of stubble height of the annual available forage when livestock exit the pasture. When proper use levels are reached within the pasture, livestock will be moved to the next scheduled pasture unless other management considerations require livestock removal before proper use levels are reached.

**Key Forage Species**

<b>Pasture</b>	<b>Key Forage Species</b>	<b>Stubble Height</b>
San Miguel/Atencio	Arizona fescue	6"
	Kentucky bluegrass	4"
	Mt. muhly	4"
Santa Rita/Toltec	AZ/Thurber fescue	6"
	Kentucky bluegrass	4"
	Mt. muhly	4"
Riparian	Kentucky bluegrass	4"
	Carex	4"

Total removal of all livestock from the pasture/allotment is required. A 3 day period will be allowed to remove stray(s) permitted livestock from the pasture/allotment. Regular herding and riding management practices are important to achieve proper livestock distribution on the allotment, and to provide for the optimal duration of the grazing period. Salting practices are also described in the cattle operator instructions at the end of this AOI.

### **AOI Objectives**

- Rotate pastures to vary the cool and warm growing season rest and allow the opportunity for cool and warm season growth.
- Minimize the time spent in San Miguel and Santa Rita in order to improve forage vigor. Monitor all the pastures grazing duration in order to improve forage vigor.
- Maintain or improve the riparian green zone forage in the Santa Rita pothole area and the Atencio spring area.
- Improve livestock distribution when initially entering the pasture by moving small groups throughout the pasture, to various salt locations with rider representation from all the permittees. Also, herd/move livestock within the authorized pasture every few days to improve livestock distribution.
- As Sublette allotment permittees, you are authorized to drive (in your work truck vehicle) off the Forest Service developed roads further than 300 ft. during the performance of your maintenance responsibilities. Aspen fence stays may be removed from allotment areas adjacent to the maintained pasture fences. In addition, ATV transport of materials is allowed. During conditions (moist soil) when your vehicle tires will cause increasing soil surface disturbance and greater negative impacts, you are not authorized to drive beyond or off the established Forest Service roads or trails. This authorization will expire on 10/20/13 or may change to an earlier expiration date depending on Forest conditions, fire restrictions, seasonal closures or limited accessibility.

### **Permittee Management Concerns (Also refer to the Project Section)**

1. Fuel wood gatherers are cutting fences and ATV cross country travel is extensive. The LEO is requested to patrol the area May to October and especially on weekends/nights. Permittees are worried about the theft of calves. Public users are making new 2-tracks within Atencio/Santa Rita. Hunters are placing salt blocks at stock tanks to attract the elk. The elk population requires management to reduce numbers. Elk utilization should be measured. NM Game and Fish needs to assist permittees with funding of new projects that benefit the elk habitat.
2. Construct new water projects to increase the water sources. NEPA process is slow and they have been waiting since 2004 for the San Miguel proposed earthen pit tank. (Note: the District project priority of new pit tanks in drainages is low and the district has approved construction of only 1 new pit tank since 2001. Guzzlers, water catchments (not constructed in drainages) and well pipelines are a higher priority.)
3. BLM permittee did not lay down the 1 miles of fence in fall, 2007, 2008, and 2009. The BLM permittee lays fence down in Nov/Dec and Sublette stands fence in May. In the past, Sublette has maintained the 2 miles of fence although Sublette is assigned maintenance on just 1 mile and the BLM Permittee is assigned maintenance on the other 1 mile.
4. Toltec entry in 2010 was too late to use the available water sources. Toltec should not be grazed late in the season until new water sources are developed.
5. In Santa Rita, 8 calves were stolen. The pasture move from San Miguel to Toltec will require additional riders.
6. San Antone is not repairing the water gaps at Atencio/Santa Rita boundaries.

**Annual Authorized Use Request Form**

Credits from 2012 totaled 119 HM's or 157 AUM. Credits are partially completed in 2013 and 2014 authorized use bills due to administrative error. 2013 authorized use is 25% reduction in numbers. A staggered entry and exit may occur this year. The final livestock numbers and entry date would be determined after range readiness inspections.

**Range Improvements Projects and Maintenance**

Range improvements projects maintenance labor/costs are the responsibilities of the permittee. Term permit assigned projects such as, allotment boundary fences, pasture boundary fences, cattle guards, earthen dam stock tanks, pit tanks, and other structural improvements must be maintained prior to permittee entry onto the allotment. When allotments are in non-use the permittees are still required to maintain their assigned improvements.

The following are improvements which require special attention during the current grazing season.

**2013 Project Priority:**

- Archeological clearance of a new earthen tank in San Miguel
- Install water gap fence at river to replace existing wire fence (80 to 100ft.)
- Conejos County need to maintain the borrow ditch from the Forest road to an earthen tank located in the Santa Rita pasture.
- Narrow Gauge Railroad needs to remove several stacks of used railroad ties (200 in each stack) placed in 2008 and reinstall track cattle guard at 3 locations that the railroad company removed in 2008. (The used railroad ties were getting smaller in 2011.)
- Special attention to the southern boundary stretch of fence between the Sublette and San Antone allotment. Oso/San Miguel boundary fence needs to be maintained by San Antone Assoc.
- Contact Marvin Casias, manager of the Toltec train for the installation of train track grids

**Previous Projects Completed:**

Reconstructed/maintained Santa Rita/Atencio fence (0.25 mi.); BLM/FS laydown fence (1mi.); and installed at Toltec spring a 300 gallon drinker and 120 ft. pipeline.	2007-Completed
Reconstructed/maintained Santa Rita/Atencio fence (.25 mi); installed a 280 gallon drinker at Toltec spring near Toltec/Santa Rita boundary.	2008-Completed
Installed a replacement gate (stolen) at the stateline/Bighorn fence.	2009-Completed
Installed a replacement gate (stolen) at the stateline/Bighorn fence.	2009-Completed
Constructed additional Sublette corral pen and loading chute	2010-Completed
Expansion of the Sublette corral	2011-Completed
Install 8 ft. metal gate at Gato canyon for trailing at San Miguel south boundary	2011-Completed
Repair Atencio/San Miguel boundary fence,	2012-Completed

0.25mi. T posts: starting at river, north to Bighorn	
Replace/Install storage tank (1100 gal.) at Toltec spring	2012-Completed
Clean and seal with salt various earthen tanks throughout the allotment. Specifically repair the eroded bank of the Long Canyon earthen tank furthest to the west and nearest to the Toltec pasture. Seal tank in Santa Rita at the Santa Rita/Toltec boundary	2012-Completed
Repair fence at the Toltec Train tracks at San Miguel	2012-Completed

### **Future Projects**

Dale Tank, Vance Tank-need cleanout	Discussed-walking heavy equipment
Santa Rita/Atencio fence maintenance/reconstruction	0.3 mi. left (1.25 miles has been completed)
Construction of a new earthen tank in San Miguel: and at Toltec spring	NEPA started in 2004 for San Miguel tank: Toltec spring-1100 gal. storage tank
Reconstruction/maintenance of Atencio stateline fence	Discussed (3.5 mi.): 2011- in good condition
Maintenance San Miguel/Atencio stateline fence	Discussed (0.25 mi.): 2011- in good condition
Maintenance San Miguel/Atencio boundary fence at Bighorn	Discussed (0.5 mi)
Elevate cattle guard/add wings at Atencio by river	Discussed: possible replace base.
Elevate cattleguard at San Miguel bridge	Discussed: possibly replace with 12 ft. grid
Cleanout cattleguard at Atencio/San Miguel boundary	Discussed
Fence at Baldy canyon is needed to keep cattle from trailing out of the pasture	Discussed (20 ft.)
Install water gap fence (cable/treated wood panels) at river to replace existing wire fence	Discussed
In 2008, the railroad removed the 3 special cattle guards at the 3 locations where the tracks cross the pasture fences. The grids are 20 ft. x 6 ft.	The 3 grids need to be reinstalled by the railroad. (Completed in 2011: MP 296, 298 and at stateline.)

### **Excess Use and Unauthorized Use**

Permittees are encouraged to notify the Tres Piedras Ranger District of any known violation by permittees (excess use) or non-permittees (unauthorized use). Grazing permit holders who graze more livestock than authorized will receive a Notice of Non-Compliance, charged an excess use grazing fee, and the term permit may be suspended or cancelled in whole or part.

### **National Environmental Policy Act Status for Grazing Permit Issuance**

Direction for management on the allotment is being documented in this AOI and is in conformance with the allotment management plan (AMP). An environmental assessment was completed in 4-8-1996 and an AMP was prepared in 11-8-2004. Open and positive communication is encouraged. Please contact the range personnel if you have any questions or wish to discuss allotment management objectives, or Forest Plan standards and guidelines.

**Travel Management**

USFS Travel Management Plan was discussed. The travel management rule requires each Ranger District to designate those roads trails and areas open to motor vehicle use. Range permittee guidelines will be developed and will be included in the AOI in the future. A second travel management meeting was held in Tres Piedras on March 21, 2007 (The first travel management meeting was held in Tres Piedras July 11, 2006). Attendees provided comments to the USFS regarding roads or trails that should remain open or closed: and access routes to range improvements that are needed within the allotment. Scoping letter (dated February 2, 2009) was mailed to the public.







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## Appendix

### Grazing Permittee Instruction for Cattle Operators on Tres Piedras Ranger District

Review the term grazing permit and become familiar with the terms and conditions prior to the grazing season. Only livestock branded as shown on your application are permitted to enter the national Forest. The Forest Service (FS) and the permittees will agree to the counting locations, date and time. Entering the allotment before your authorized entry date is not allowed until livestock are counted.

A Crossing Permit is required whenever livestock enter the National Forest. Crossing the District to/From a grazing allotment is only allowed within the authorized season.

Livestock found on other unauthorized allotments or in areas without prior authorization will result in the issuance of a Notice of non-compliance that may impact your term permit. The Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) pasture rotation dates are tentative. Therefore, you must consult with the District Office two weeks before the AOI tentative scheduled rotation dates for discussion and approval of the actual move dates and any AOI adjustments.

#### Management

The management objective is to obtain proper use throughout the grazeable portions of the range according to the management requirements of the Carson Forest plan. Obtaining the best distribution of cattle on mountain ranges is made difficult because of their natural tendency to gather in openings, watering sites, drainages, riparian areas, and meadows. Proper use will be determined by the percent of forage used within key area sites. With proper livestock distribution, a uniform pattern of use would occur. Utilization levels would vary between 20% to 40% (percent dry with) in pasture key areas, and within the overall pasture's pattern of use.

Riding, herding and good salting practices will help. Frequent movement of salt within slight to light use areas is required to improve the pattern of use. Cattle should be moved to less utilized areas and heavier use should be avoided in the bottoms/meadows/openings that contain more desirable herbage. When proper use levels are reached within each pasture, livestock grazing must end and livestock must exit. An early allotment exit would result in a partial refund/credit of the grazing payment. The grazing of more than one pasture at a time must be approved by the District Ranger. All cattle on the allotment would be handled as one herd. Moves between pastures may be handled as drifting moves where gates to the next successive pasture may be opened 2 days before the agreed scheduled move date. The exit pasture that the cattle are leaving must be cleaned-out within 3 days after the scheduled date for moving.

### **Salting**

Salt must be placed in each pasture prior to cattle entering the pasture. Salt shall be located at least 0.5 miles to 1.0 miles away from streams, springs, earthen dam stock tanks and other sources of water in order to improve the livestock distribution within the pastures. Salt must be placed to minimize damage to vegetation and soil, within the tree line instead of in the middle of openings. In drainages/riparian or near roadways. Regular salt ground sites must not be established.

### **Range Improvements Projects**

Range improvement Projects assigned in your Term Grazing Permit requires annual maintenance that is to be completed prior to placing livestock in the pasture unit. Allotment boundary fences must be maintained before the entry date and interior fences must be maintained before cattle enter the pasture.

Acceptable maintenance means returning the improvement to its original functioning working order and using the equivalent materials. Particular attention, labor and time must be given to gates within the allotment to make certain that they are serviceable and can be opened and closed easily. The FS does not furnish materials or cost-share for maintenance projects.

All lay-down fences should be let-down no later than October 20, or as soon as possible after cattle leave the allotment and adjoining allotments.

Construction of new improvements or reconstruction of existing projects must have the approval of the District ranger. During the AOI meeting and throughout the year suggestions for proposed projects are accepted.

### **Special Attention Items**

Written authorization from the District Ranger is required for vehicle travel in road closure areas. All cross-country travel where allowed must not cause ruts or down-cutting in the soil surface. Cross-country vehicular travel when the ground is wet is prohibited. This written authorization is only for vehicle travel necessary for your livestock operation on your allotment. Prudent use of this authority is asked when and where general public use is concentrated. All permittees are encouraged to stay off roadways closed to vehicular travel during hunting seasons.

All temporary camps and corrals made or used by permittees or the riders will be cleared up (left in a sanitary condition) and all materials/trash will be removed from the sites. Temporary cam/corral locations should be discussed with the FS prior to setting up the camp.

Riders will be permitted 4 horses or mules per rider for work within the allotment. No untrained horses colts or other untrained stock will be allowed. Ear tags will be provided initially to new permittees on allotments that hare tagged. After initial allocation of tags, 10 percent will be provided per grazing season.

**Please notify the district Ranger with any observations of stray livestock on the Nation's Forest Lands (regardless of the time of year). Move any dead animals to rest no closer than 300 feet form water or roadways.**

**Report wildfires to: Tres Piedras Ranger Station at (575) 758-86778 or Carson Dispatch at (575) 758-6208 or (575) 758-6209. If you have any questions, please contact the Tres Piedras Ranger District office.**