



**2012 - 2013 ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS
CERRO AZUL ALLOTMENT 647
TRES PIEDRAS RANGER DISTRICT
CARSON NATIONAL FOREST**

/s/Chris Furr

Chris Furr
District Ranger

12/21/12

Date

Introduction

The Annual Operating Instructions meeting was held on Oct. 4, 2012 at the Association's El Prado office. The members that attended the meeting included Palemon A. Martinez, Gerald Chacon, Tony A. Valdez, Gerald Chacon, and Floyd Archuleta. Wayne Yonemoto represented the U. S. Forest Service.

The Annual Operating Instructions (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 improvement 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 environmental assessment Decision Notice for grazing permit issuance was completed and signed on Sept. 28, 2011. The livestock grazing fee is \$1.35/HM (Cattle).

Climate

The Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) will be used to define drought conditions. SPI values are available monthly from the Western Regional Climate Center (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA) at www.wrcc.dri.edu. The following descriptions are indicators in determining drought conditions. Conditions will be determined by the size of the negative number; the larger the negative number, the more severe the drought. SPI values of negative 0.70 or less for the past month signal drought conditions. 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 October thru September is described as Moderately Dry (-1.24 to -0.75) so the end of drought has not occurred. The SPI for the past 1-month thru September is described as Near Normal (-0.74 to +0.74), so 1-month drought conditions are present.

Within the District area, the NOAA 3-month forecast (Nov., 2012 to Jan., 2013) is for increased chances of normal to below-normal precipitation, and normal to above-normal temperatures. Within the District, during the periods of Oct. to Dec. 2011, and Jan. to Mar. 2012, there were various areas of above-normal to below-normal precipitation, and below-normal to normal to above-normal temperatures. Within the allotment, the growing season precipitation in general was normal to below-normal with various pasture areas above-normal, but the middle areas of Sandlin/McKenzie contained the least forage production (moderate to below-moderate) due to rainfall pattern. Lemitas, Sandlin and McKenzie contained areas with the highest forage production and Barranca had areas of moderate to below moderate forage production.

Within the District, during the periods of October 2011 to September 2012, there were various areas of favorable normal to above normal precipitation as well as areas of below normal precipitation. Also, below normal to normal to above-normal temperatures occurred.

Monitoring Report

Review of Previous Season Monitoring data

Participants discussed areas of below-moderate to moderate forage production, and moderate to above-moderate production, pattern-of-use, range condition/apparent trend, utilization and stubble height. The previous year’s utilization guidelines (non-riparian) within 4 of the 4 pastures were met. The end-of-season monitoring and the environmental assessment Decision Notice was discussed and referenced.

Within Sandlin, Lemitas and McKenzie, the estimated production/vigor of forage was below moderate to moderate (average), to high moderate for cool season grasses and moderate to high-moderate for warm season grasses due to below-normal to above-normal precipitation received during the cool to warm growing season period. Barranca had below moderate to moderate forage production, but high forage cover.

Pasture	End of Grazing Season (May 31)	End of Growing Season (Sept. 30)
Barranca	40%	10%
Lemitas	30%	15%
Sandlin	40%	30%
McKenzie	40%	30%



AOI Compliance/Issues

- Persistent problem of gates being left open and cattle not being in authorized pastures, especially gates between Barranca/McKenzie.
- Completion of McKenzie/Lemitas corral cattleguard would assist in reducing incidents of cattle not being in the proper pastures.
- BLM allotment cattle enter Sandlin (western area) when BLM grazes the adjacent pasture. BLM grazing season is Apr. 20 to Oct. 20. Fence section and gates within the 4 miles of boundary fence may need to be repeatedly inspected/repaired/closed by the Association. Presently, BLM is assigned maintenance responsibilities for this fence section, but quick, urgent repairs of fence segments by the Association is necessary.
- Wild dogs are present on the allotment. Max Martinez (USDA APHIS) would be notified.
- Association reported that ATV's/4 wheelers are making new roads and cutting fences. Trash dumping on the eastside of McKenzie. Abandoned vehicles were removed in the 2008-2009 season. FS maintained FR 558 from Highway 285 to the Lemitas corral in 2010.
- Association has an NRCS EQIP current/pending application for cost share projects (well, storage tank, pipeline) and also plans to apply with Taos Soil and Water Conservation District.

Monitoring

AOI includes a reference to the following monitoring information:

- Weather update (SPI and temperature)
- Soil moisture depth
- Water availability
- Location of paired annual production/utilization cages with supporting photos and documentation
- Key site map of the Allotment
- Range readiness documentation
- Watershed health indicators
- Key forage list showing (Vegetation type, Species list, Stubble height)
- Stubble height
 1. Range readiness stubble ht./utilization guidelines
 2. Grazing season monitoring stubble ht./utilization guidelines
 3. End of season stubble ht./utilization guidelines

Utilization Guidelines

Within each pasture, grazing utilization would occur at 20% to 40% (percent dry weight) of the annual available forage (not to exceed 40%) and would be assessed at the end of the growing season. If applicable, the utilization guideline in the riparian areas includes 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

Western wheatgrass
Crested wheatgrass
Blue grama
Galleta
Needle and thread
Sand dropseed

Stubble Ht – Inches

4
4
2.5
2.5
4
8

Monitoring Methods

Other monitoring methods that may be used on the allotment are: Parker 3-Step, Rapid Assessment Method (RAM), Ocular Estimate Method, Ocular Utilization by Dry Weight, Photo Point, Range Trend Plot and Cover-Frequency.

AOI Management

2011- 2012 Actual Use:

246 cattle total; 11/1 – 5/31 (212 days), but staggered entry and exit occurred as shown below.
(Total 1604 HM, AUM; 23% reduction; Credit 312 HM)

Barranca – 11/1 – 11/15

Lemitas – 11/16 – 1/17

Sandlin – 1/18 – 3/23

McKenzie – 3/24 – 5/31

E. Martinez

14 C, 11/21 – 5/14, 81 HM, AUM

S. Bender

8 C, 11/21 – 5/8, 44 HM, AUM

M. Rivera

25 C, 11/3 – 5/10, 155 HM, AUM

15 C, 5/11 – 5/27, 8 HM, AUM

Valdez L & C

100 C, 11/1 – 5/25, 677 HM, AUM

63 C, 5/26 -5/27, 4 HM, AUM

24 C, 5/28 – 5/29, 2 HM, AUM

4 C, 5/30 – 6/3, 1 HM, AUM

M. Archuleta

13 C, 11/10 – 5/3, 75 HM, AUM

14 C, 11/21 – 5/3, 75 HM, AUM

27 C, 5/4 – 5/5, 2 HM, AUM

20 C, 5/6 – 5/12, 5 HM, AUM

12 C, 5/13 – 5/26, 6 HM, AUM

G. Chacon

12 C, 11/3 – 5/9, 74 HM, AUM

60 C, 11/1 – 5/9, 375 HM, AUM

53 C, 5/10 – 5/17, 14 HM, AUM



32 C, 5/18 – 5/19, 2 HM, AUM
19 C, 5/20 – 5/21, 1 HM, AUM
8 C, 5/22 – 5/24, 1 HM, AUM
6 C, 5/25 – 5/30, 1 HM, AUM
5 C, 5/31 – 6/6, 1 HM, AUM (Missing 2 C)

Association Grazing Operation
BLM East – 10/1- 10/14
BLM Pajarito – 10/15 – 10/31

Current Year Annual Authorized Use Request Form

Credits from previous year (above minimum dollar amount), if applicable, would apply to the current bill. The final livestock numbers and entry date would be determined after range readiness inspections. Therefore, additional billing may be required after the first billing (which reflects the *Annual Authorized Use Request* form).

2012 application - 242 cattle, 3/1/12 – 5/31/12; 11/1/12 – 2/28/13

2013 application – 240 cattle, 3/1/13 – 5/31/13; 11/1/13 – 2/28/14 (Credit 312 HM)

Moderate to below moderate forage production would require lower numbers than the full numbers of permitted cattle to be placed on the allotment during 11/1 to 2/28 grazing season. Association members voluntarily are entering with less numbers as shown below. Actual use would document the difference between the authorized bill number and the actual number grazing within the allotment. Due to management practices during the fall, winter and spring season, the actual number of cattle will fluctuate by cattle entering/exiting on different dates during the grazing season, resulting in a staggered herd entry/exit. The number of cattle AUMs on the allotment will be in compliance with the number authorized within the AOI and grazing bill. Association will notify FS when cattle are placed or removed from the allotment.

AOI Objectives

- Reduce the utilization levels in the Barranca and reduce/limit the number of days grazed.
- Minimize the incidence of cattle within unscheduled pastures by improving and continuing the past actions (such as increasing Association supervision visits and completing the NEPA approved proposed projects (cattleguards) which address this problem).
- Improve livestock distribution and the pattern of use in Lemitas by supplemental feeding (salt/protein) in areas that are slightly used because of distance to water sources and herding livestock away from heavily grazed areas where livestock loaf and congregate due to areas of desirable forage or close proximity to water sources.
- Compliance with New Mexico statewide regulations, 21.30.6 NMAC, Bovine Trichomoniasis, effective June 17, 2005, becomes a term and condition of the USFS term grazing permit.



Assoc. Members	Permitted # (Cattle)	Authorized #	Actual #
J. M. Archuleta	60	29	
Chacon Family, LLC	60	60	
G. & F. Chacon Living Trust	12	12	
Erminio Martinez	17	20	
Steve Bender	5	2	
Macario Rivera	26	26	
Valdez Land & Cattle, LLC	120	90	
Totals	300	239 (20% reduction)	

Tentative Pasture Rotation Schedule

Pasture	Range of Days (Min - Max)	Period of Use (Days)	Actual Use (Period of Use)	Reason for Adjustments
Barranca	30 – 43 - 53	11/1 - 11/21(limit to 21 days)		
McKenzie	53 – 63 - 73	11/22 – 1/24 (64)		
Sandlin	53 – 63 - 73	1/25 – 3/29 (64)		
Lemitas	53 – 63 - 73	3/30 – 5/31 (63)		
	Permitted Dates (11/1 – 5/31) 212 days; 300 c, 11/1 – 5/31, 2091 HM, AUM			

The allotment will be monitored during the authorized period to adjust days on the rotation schedule. The water sources will be evaluated to determine the exit pasture (Sandlin or McKenzie). When the grazing system is a 4 pasture deferred rotation, Sandlin, McKenzie or Lemitas may change in the authorized number of days by +/- 14 to 21 days because of the variable resource conditions. The transitional climatic periods of Oct./Nov. and Mar./Apr. may cause a number-of-days adjustments in these 3 pastures. Grazing McKenzie during cold temperature periods can be a hardship when snow is present but Sandlin and Lemitas are more suitable for grazing during cold temperatures due to the lower elevation.

Range Readiness

The range readiness inspection occurred on Oct. 18, 2012.

Range Improvement Projects and Maintenance

Maintenance of range improvements is the responsibility of the permittee. Assigned term permit projects such as allotment boundary fences, unit boundary fences, cattleguards, stock tanks and other range improvement projects must be maintained prior to the permittee entering the allotment. In addition, when allotments are in non-use, the permittees are still responsible for annual maintenance of the assigned projects.



Association will install 1 cattleguard in 2013 (tentatively McKenzie/Lemitas cattleguard @ Lemitas corral).

Project Status (Maintenance, Proposed)

Project Description	Status
McKenzie/Lemitas Cattleguard	2003 CE complete, implement
Barranca/TCLP Cattleguard	2003 CE complete, implement
McKenzie/Lemitas Cattleguard @ Lemitas Corral	2003 CE complete, implement
Lemitas/McKenzie fence improvement	Initiated in 2007, requires 150 T posts, stays
Lemitas corral improvement	Discussed, guardrail/railroad ties
Barranca 200 acre big sagebrush mech. Treatment (mowing, tractor tire trampling) or burn	2006 Cultural clearance completed
Sandlin – 1.7 mi. pipeline replacement from Lemitas Corral drinker to Sandlin pipeline to Sandlin drinker #4.	Completed in 2011 with FS cost share.
Cleanout cattleguards – Sandlin/BLM cattleguard; McKenzie or Barranca powerline cattleguard	FS will clean in 2012
Barranca 0.6 mi. pipeline extension from TCLP trick tank drinker to section corner (34/35/2/3) drinker	New drinker would provide water to Barranca and state section 2 of Cerro Azul BLM allotment. (Before cooperators agreement signed, TCLP wanted to complete its pipeline to the trick tank storage tank to evaluate its function. Possibly complete by fall, 2011.
Proposed waterlot fence at 2 southern Barranca/BLM boundary fence to water cattle from both BLM/Barranca.	Discussed; Cultural clearance/EA required; temporary electric fence may be installed
Barranca – repair trick tank apron with brie	Discussed
McKenzie – Storage tank/1300 ft. pipeline with 2 drinkers	Existing
Sandlin – 1.25 mi. with 4 drinkers	Existing
Lemitas – 1.25 mi. with 3 drinkers	Existing
Upper McKenzie big sagebrush treatment (mowing, burn)	Discussed
McKenzie tank maintenance – clean out Cerro Azul, Shaw, McKenzie tanks.	Discussed
Lemitas juniper treatment (crusher, thinning, herbicide, fire torch, masticator (\$1200/Ac))	Discussed
Lemitas – New sec. 12 powerline pit tanks, 1 each	Discussed; cultural clearance done.
Lemitas maintenance of 2 tanks (Manuel, Sec.	Discussed



31and Sec. 12)	
Sandlin juniper treatment	Discussed
Existing Sandlin Arroyo well casing	Redrill, deeper using existing well casing. New NEPA not needed.
Sandlin - 2.0 mi. pipeline extension from Drinker #4 to new Drinkers; Pipeline drinker replacement with tire drinkers	Flagged site; need cultural clearance
Kenyon tank enclosure – new well/storage tank/drinker	Discussed
New Sandlin/BLM boundary fence (arroyo crossing design at Canada de las Lemitas	Inspected site
Sandlin Maintenance at Arroyo tank	Re –channel the water flow into the Arroyo tank. Channel has washed out.
Maintain FR 558. Cattle trucks/trailers haul to the Lemitas corral. Trim trees along the road.	Discussed.
Association is interested EA for big sagebrush treatment (chemical product, Spike, tebuthiuron)	Discussed

Travel Management

USFS Travel Management Plan was discussed. The Travel Management Decision has been completed and in the future, a District Motor Vehicle Use Map will be published. 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. The scoping letter dated Jan. 31, 2009 was mailed to the public. In the past, two travel management meetings were held in Tres Piedras (July 11, 2006 and March 21, 2007). 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.



Grazing Permittee Instructions For Cattle Operators On The Tres Piedras Ranger District

1. Review the term grazing permit and become familiar with the terms and conditions prior to the grazing season.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Livestock found on other unauthorized allotments or in areas without prior authorization will result in the issuance of a Notice of Noncompliance that may impact your term permit.
5. The Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) pasture rotation dates are tentative. You must consult with the District Office two weeks before the AOI scheduled rotation dates for approval of any AOI adjustments.

Management on the Range

1. The management objective is to obtain proper use throughout the useable portions of the range according to the management requirements of the Carson Forest plan.
2. 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 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 within 20% to 40% (percent dry weight) in pasture key areas, and within the overall pasture's pattern of use.
3. 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.
4. 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 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 two days before the agreed scheduled move date. The exit pasture that the cattle are leaving must be cleaned-out within three days after the scheduled date for moving.

Salting

1. 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 pasture. 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 Improvement Projects

1. Range Improvement Projects assigned in your Term Grazing Permit require 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.
2. 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 for maintenance.
3. 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.
4. 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

1. 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.
2. All temporary camps and corrals made or used by permittees or their riders will be cleaned up (left in a sanitary condition) and all materials/trash will be removed from the sites. Camp locations should be discussed with the FS prior to setting up the camp.
3. Riders will be permitted four horses or mules per rider for use on the allotment. No untrained horses, colts or other unrideable stock will be allowed.
4. Eartags will be provided initially to new permittees on allotments that are tagged. After initial allocation of tags, ten percent will be provided per grazing season.
5. Please notify the District Ranger with any observations of stray livestock on the National Forest Lands (regardless of the time of year).
6. Move any dead animals to rest no closer than 100 yards from water or roadsides.

Report wildfires to: Tres Piedras Ranger Station at (505) 758-8678 or Carson Dispatch at (505) 758-6208 or (505) 758-6209.

If you have any questions, please contact the Tres Piedras Ranger District office.