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)
CARSON MOJINO ALLOTMENT (00638)
CARSON NATIONAL FOREST
TRES PIEDRAS RANGER DISTRICT

EAST PINON PERMITTEE:

Pacomio G. and Jose D. Mondragon

Prepared By:

/s/Wayne Yonemoto — Apr. 29, 2013
Wayne Yonemoto — Date
District Range Staff

Approved By:

/s/Chris Furr — Apr. 30, 2013
CHRIS FURR — Date
District Ranger

Introduction

The Annual Operating Instructions meeting was held on Feb. 20, 2013 in Espanola. Pacomio Mondragon (permittee) attended the meeting. 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 condition 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 livestock grazing fee is $1.35/HM (Cattle).

The dry weather pattern condition includes 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 Apr., 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 February, 2012 thru January, 2013 is described as Extremely Dry (-2.99 to -2.00) 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 January is described as Near Normal (-0.74 to +0.74), so 1-month drought conditions are partially present. Within the District, during the periods of Oct. to Dec., 2012 and Jan. to Feb., 2013, there were various areas of favorable normal to above normal precipitation but also areas of below normal precipitation. Also, below normal to normal to above-normal temperatures occurred.

The authorized eartag color is Red. All authorized cattle will be eartagged correctly with the authorized letter/number. The authorized use for the current grazing season is as follows:

Permittee Information and Season of Use (Term Permit/Annual Authorized Use Request Form)

Permittee Name	**Permitted (60 c/c)**	**Authorized (c/c; 5/15 – 6/30)**	**Actual Use**	**Remarks**
Pacomio & Jose Mondragon	60 c/c	56 c/c		
Total	60 c/c; 5/15 – 6/30; 47 days; 93 HM, AUM	Feb./Mar. conditions may indicate a 10% reduction in the initial Mar. grazing bill; (Range readiness inspection		

		determines the authorized livestock number)		

Range readiness inspections will determine the final authorized livestock number and whether range vegetation and soils meet the criteria for grazing. Range readiness is tentatively scheduled for May 1, 2012.

Compliance with New Mexico Statewide Regulations, 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 a 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 permttee is still responsible for maintenance of assigned range improvements.

Rotation Schedule

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

Tentative Rotation Schedule (5/15 – 6/30), 47 days)

Pasture	**Tentative Dates (# of Days)**	**Days (min to max)**	**Actual Use**	**Reason for Adustments**
Mojino A South	5/15 – 5/26 (12)	10 - 12		
Mojino A Middle	5/27 – 6/16 (21)	19 - 21		
Mojino A North	6/17 – 6/30 (14)	12 - 14		
Carson B	Rest			
Total	(5/15 – 6/30) Range readiness determines the authorized entry date; utilization determines the exit date	47 days		

Pasture Carson B will not be grazed until infrastructure is completed for dormant or other season of use.

Review of 2012 Monitoring Data

The monitoring information in the Allotment Study file was reviewed. The forage production improved after the late monsoon 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. Utilization guidelines 20% to 40% (end of season) was met in pasture A (North, Middle, South) for crested wheatgrass (30%) and western wheatgrass (30%). Permittee pasture A utilization estimates were 25% to 30%. Pasture B was in nonuse.

2012 AOI Compliance

- Utilization guidelines 20% to 40% (end of season) was met in the scheduled pasture A.
- Improving livestock distribution in the big sagebrush openings by salting in the southern and western pinyon/juniper areas that are as far from the water sources as possible.

2012 Actual Use

43 c/c, 5/10 – 6/15 to 6/23, (no record of varied exit dates); 45 days; Total 64 HM, AUM (31% reduction from permit)

Mojino A
25 c/c, 5/10 – 6/15 to 6/23; 18 c/c, 5/11 – 6/15 to 6/23
Since, there are no interior division fences constructed yet, cattle drifted from the South A area to the Middle A area to the North A area, as the proper use levels were reached; the salt moved and cattle were herded.

Carson B
Nonuse

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 is encouraged.
The following monitoring assessments, evaluations and methods may be conducted on the allotment:
Weather update (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.
If applicaable, utilization guidelines 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

Pasture	Key Forage Species	Stubble Height
Mojino A	Western wheatgrass Crested wheatgrass	4“ 4”
Carson B	Western wheatgrass Crested wheatgrass	4” 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

- Livestock would enter either the Mojino (North, Middle, or South) unit areas depending on the range readiness assessment and the determined entry date.
- Unit areas would then be rotated by herding or frequent movement/placement of salt blocks, and by the availability of water sources. Rotate pastures to vary the cool and warm growing season rest and allow the opportunity for cool and warm season growth.
- Place salt in the pinyon/juniper and move location frequently, as far from water sources as possible. (Salt would be placed at a minimum distance of 0.5 to 1.0 mile from water)
- Meet utilization guidelines by proper livestock distribution.
- Carson B pasture is authorized for only cattle use after the infrastructure is developed. As stated in the EA Decision Notice (9/27/07), sheep use is not allowed while there is a threat of transmitting disease from the domestic sheep in these areas to a Rio Grande gorge population of Rocky Mt. bighorn sheep.

From 2007 Decision Notice/FONSI

- Authorize use during any season of the year for appropriate duration and intensity to meet management objectives, while remaining within utilization guidelines and within the capacity calculations of each pasture that is to be used. The season of use will be determined on a yearly basis through the annual operating instructions.
- Implement a flexible grazing management system, which identifies a “probable starting management” (Table 2), but which allows for adjustments to meet management objectives (e.g., changing season of use, number and/or kind of livestock, period of use or number of days, entry or exit dates, grazing system or annual rotation of pastures, and livestock distribution). Full implementation of the flexible grazing management system is dependent upon construction of the infrastructure necessary to apply the system, especially for cattle grazing. Hence, full numbers of cattle animal unit months (AUMs) will not be allowed until the necessary infrastructure is in place. Partial implementation could occur on a pasture by pasture basis.
- In any given year, only the AUMs associated with the pastures that are actually being used will be allowed.

Summary of Grazing Management for this Decision

	Carson Mojino

Type of Livestock Permitted	Cattle (cow/calves) &/or Sheep (ewes/lambs) (No sheep allowed in Carson, pasture B due to bighorn sheep)
Permitted Season of Use*	Variable seasons, throughout year
Estimated Capacity: Cattle AUMs*	326 – 407
Estimated Capacity: Sheep AUMs*	969 - 1,127

* Actual numbers and season of use authorized on a given year are negotiated annually depending on prior year grazing intensity, Standard Precipitation Index (an indicator of anticipated current year forage production and water availability), range readiness, management goals and objectives, previous year's monitoring guidelines or prescriptions, watershed health, livestock distribution assessments, allotment management plan compliance, range condition, range trend, plant vigor, monitoring interpretation and evaluation, and pastures to be used in a given year.

Probable Starting Management

A 2-pasture grazing system (Pasture 638 A North and 638 A South, which are separated by a fence) utilized by 60 cow/calves during the partial cool season growth period of May 15/June1to June15/June 30 (154 AUMs).

The management within Pasture 638 A could be expanded to simulate a 3-pasture grazing system by hauling water, strategically placing salt, and herding livestock, in order to move through North, Middle, and South pastures more effectively.

To expand it to a 4-pasture system, Pasture 638B will require road maintenance to haul water and boundary fencing along the Aguaje to control use by cattle.

Sheep will not be allowed in Pasture 638 B, while there is a threat of disease transmission from domestic sheep in this area to the Rio Grande Gorge population of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep.

Permittee Management Concerns (Also refer to the Project Section)

- Elk watering at Drake tank.
- Excess use by Tio Gordito cattle. Tio Gordito had 8 pairs grazing on Mojino from Aug., 2009 to Jun., 2010; 2 pairs grazing on Mojino at southern ridge in Dec., 2010.
- Permittee wants to enter Mojino as early as possible as determined by the range readiness inspection and exit June 20 to the Canjilon Creek allotment.
- One possible rotation would graze Carson B in May15 to June, if roads are maintained to transport water to the pasture. Stover tank may also be available as a water source that would include an exclosure for access by Carson B and Tres Orejas. A second possible rotation would be to graze Carson B in the spring; then Canjilon Creek 6/20 – 10/20; then Mojino A fall/winter (3 months) depending upon the climate (snow levels) forage and cattle numbers.
- 2010 had similar forage production to 2009. 2009 had similar forage production to 2008. 2008 had less forage production than in 2007.
- 2011 represented a drought season on the allotment. 2011 was the worst year since 2005 for crested wheatgrass production. All stock tanks were dry; water was hauled to the tank behind the old Highway 285 café. Production was below average in 2012.
- Public users are cutting greenwood behind the old Suzy's café at Highway 285.

Annual Authorized Use Request Form

Credits from previous year, if applicable, would apply to the current bill (10% reduction in numbers and/or days if Feb./Mar. continue to be dry). The final livestock numbers and entry date would be determined after range readiness inspections. Therefore, additional billing may be required after the first billing. No 2012 Credit.

Range Improvement Projects And Maintenance

Range improvement projects maintenance labor/costs are the responsibilities of the permittee. Term permit assigned projects such as, allotment boundary fences, pasture boundary fences, cattleguards, 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.

- Complete Mojino A corral (50% has been completed since 2009).
- Seal tanks with salt (1 to 2 tons of salt/tank would be purchased by FS).

Previous Projects Completed:

Maintained 1 mile of boundary fence south of the Stover tank gate at Carson B/Tres Orejas boundary.	2008 - Completed
New Mojino A corral construction	2009 – Begin construction of the corral; 2012 completed 50% of the project

Future Projects

Carson B – FS road maintenance, private owner at gated road (not locked) at southeast area	Discussed (Travel management may close or open roads on the allotment).
Carson B – Rocky tank	Discussed. Examine area for runoff and if cobbly surface; May not seal with salt; fabric liner may be required.
Carson B – guzzlers, sect. 24/25; pit tank construction	2007 EA includes guzzler/tank analysis
Carson B – Aguaje fence – trailway gap fence (2 miles); high priority	2007 EA Carson pasture does not include the Aguaje drainage within the pasture boundary; possible TCLP construction; request Archaeologist clearance for 2013
Mojino corral	CE completed in Mar., 2009. Began issuing salvage pipe material/cattle panels in Mar., 2009. Corral is 50% completed.
Mojino – 2 division fences to create North, Middle, South fence pastures	2007 EA
Adjoining the Taylor Ranch, replace 2 gates @ Highway 285 ROW fence with cattleguards.	Gates are being left open. Install fence (362 ft.) at Taylor Ranch driveway/Hwy 285, north of southern boundary corner.

Some Highway 285 cattleguards need to be annually cleaned out by the NM State Highway Dept.	Contact Tres Piedras Road Maintenance Office.
Seal tanks with salt (1 – 2 tons per tank) – Mojino peak tank (west of 2 track); Junction tank (north of the Drake tank); Suzie tank	Discussed

Excess Use And Unauthorized Use

Permittees are encouraged to notify the Tres Pierdas 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 comformance with the allotment management plan (AMP). An environmental assessment was completed in 2007 and an AMP was prepared. 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 Instructions 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 Noncompliance 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 weight) 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 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

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.

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 their riders will be cleaned up (left in a sanitary condition) and all materials/trash will be removed from the sites. Temporary camp/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 unrideable stock will be allowed. Eartags will be provided initially to new permittees on allotments that are 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 National Forest Lands (regardless of the time of year). Move any dead animals to rest no closer than 300 feet from water or roadways.

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.