



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Southwestern Region 3  
Carson National Forest  
Tres Piedras  
Ranger District

P.O. Box 38  
Tres Piedras, NM 87577  
575-758-8678  
TT/TDD 575-758-8678  
FAX 575-751-3230

---

**2013**  
**ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS (AOI)**  
**SAN ANTONIO MT. ALLOTMENT (00618)**  
**CARSON NATIONAL FOREST**  
**TRES PIEDRAS RANGER DISTRICT**

SAN ANTONIO MT. PERMITTEES:

Charles & Rhonda Thomas  
Brandon & Jamie Thomas

Prepared By:

/s/Wayne Yonemoto  
Wayne Yonemoto  
District Range Staff

Apr. 30, 2013  
Date

Approved By:

/s/Chris Furr  
CHRIS FURR  
District Ranger

Apr. 30, 2013  
Date

## **Introduction**

The Annual Operating Instructions meeting was held on Jan. 24, 2013 at the Conejos Peak Ranger District. Brandon and Charles Thomas (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 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 livestock grazing fee is \$1.35/HM (Cattle) and \$0.27/HM (Sheep).

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 use for the current grazing season is as follows:

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

<b>Permittee Name</b>	<b>Permitted (e/l; 6/4 – 7/3)</b>	<b>Authorized (e/l; 6/4 – 7/3) Tentative 33% reduction</b>	<b>Actual Use</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Charles & Rhonda Thomas	711	500		
Brandon & Jamie Thomas	791	500		
Total	1502; 30 days; 1481 HM; 444 AUMs	1000 (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 28, 2013.

Compliance with New Mexico Statewide Regulations, 21.30.6 NMAC, Bovine Trichomoniasis, effective June 17, 2005, has become 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 (Total Nonuse), or part of the permitted numbers (Partial Nonuse). Verbal applications will not be accepted. If a permittee is approved for “total nonuse”, the permittee 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 (6/4 – 7/3, 30 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>
Northern Mt. Base	Rest	2 – 7		
Western Mt. Base	6/4 – 6/11 (8)	5 – 10 (8)		
North of Radio Tower (sec 5/6)	6/12 – 6/19 (8)	5 – 8 (8)		
East/South of Trick Tank (sec 5/8)	6/20 – 6/27 (8)	5 – 8 (8)		
Trick Tank (sec 6/7)	6/28 – 7/1 (4)	5 – 7 (4)		
Southern Mt. Base	7/2 – 7/3 (2)	5 – 8 (2)		
Total	(6/4 – 7/3) Range readiness determines the authorized entry date; utilization determines the exit date	30 days		

**Review of 2012 Monitoring Data**

The monitoring information in the Allotment Study file was reviewed. The forage production improved after the Jul./Aug./Sept. 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. In general, the Northern Mt. Base had above average to

below average production; Western/Southern Mt. Base had below average production; and the Mt. top had average to above average production but June to July 10 was dry. Utilization guidelines 20% to 40% (end of season) was met; Mt. Base - 35%; Mt. Top - 20%. The riparian area is within the allotment's trailway watering located within the Rio San Antonio canyon area which is the same as San Antone Ursulo's riparian watering location. The riparian area met the 4 inch stubble height guideline. The main Mt. top tank was dry by Jun. 26 and resulted in the Rio San Antonio being the only available water source for the allotment.

**2012 AOI Compliance**

- Utilization guidelines 20% to 40% (end of season) was met. Permittees monitoring program continues each year; assessments includes before, during and after livestock grazing and end of season.
- Permittees moved the herder camp every 6 to 8 days.

**2012 Actual Use**

500 e/l, 500 e/l; (total 1000 e/l, one band of sheep); 6/4 – 7/3; (33% number reduction)

Western Mt. Base	6/4 – 6/11 (8 days)
North of Radio Tower (sec 5/6)	6/12 – 6/19 (8 days)
East/South of Trick Tank (sec 5/8)	6/20 – 6/26 (7 days)
Trick Tank (sec 6/7)	No Water
Southern Mt. Base	6/27 – 7/3 (7days)
Northern Mt. Base	Rest

**Monitoring**

Please contact Tres Piedras Ranger District 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

Key site map of the Allotment

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

Range readiness documentation; Range readiness stubble ht./utilization guidelines

Grazing season monitoring stubble ht./utilization guidelines

End of season stubble ht./utilization guidelines

Watershed health indicators

Reading of 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.

**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 includes leaving 4 inches of stubble height of the annual available forage measured at the end of the growing season. 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>
Mt. Top	Arizona/Thurber fescue	6''
	Parry's oatgrass	4''
	Mt. muhly	4''
	Western wheatgrass	4''
Mt. Base	AZ/Thurber fescue	6''
	Junegrass	4''
	Crested Wheatgrass	4''
	Mt. muhly	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 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.
- Exclude livestock grazing within TEU 141E. Presently not grazed due to the distance to water sources.
- In 2007, permittee flagged the location of a proposed pit tank in section 6 (southeast of trick tank) that would improve the distribution by decreasing the trailing impacts to the forage surrounding the current water source and increase access to the forage areas to the north.
- Meet utilization guidelines by proper livestock distribution.
- Cattle on the private leased land to the east of the allotment may enter the allotment because there is no boundary fence. FS Law Enforcement Officer will be notified when private cattle are on FS.

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

- Develop additional water sources. Project development of water sources on Mt. Top area. Sheep period of use is limited to 1.5 months to 2 months.
- Provide permittees with Forest Road gate key.
- An earlier range readiness entry date, when resource conditions allow it.
- Pingue rubberweed at Western mountain base area impacts sheep health when forage is average to below average production (approximately 25 acres).
- Improve forage conditions and herbage vigor within 5 to 10 years (initiated in 2005). Develop range improvement projects.
- FS discussed with permittee changing 30 day period (NEPA) from: 6/4 to 7/3; to:
  1. 6/8 to 7/7, then 3 days (7/8-7/10) on private lease, Conejos RD entry 7/11;

2. Or 6/9 (instead of 6/4) to Conejos RD entry 7/8; or other 30 day periods depending upon Conejos RD entry date change (presently 7/11 entry date).

**Annual Authorized Use Request Form**

Credits from previous year, if applicable, would apply to the current 2 bills (500 e/l; 500 e/l; total 1000 e/l; 6/4 – 7/3; 33% number reduction). The final livestock numbers and entry date would be determined after range readiness inspections. Therefore, additional billing may be required after the first billing. The permittees are considering whether to sell replacement ewes which may decrease the total number from 1000 e/l to 900 e/l.

**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.

- Clearing (possibly burning) of down aspen sites at Mt. Top to develop sites into grazeable areas (120 acres). Biologist is examining ways to clear the site. Also, there are an additional 10 or more aspen sites of 5 to 20 acres.
- FS cost share 50% (\$240) of salt purchase for 4 tons total for 2 tanks; \$480 total for 4 tons (\$120/ton) for 2 proposed tanks at the top of mountain if constructed by permittees in 2013. Requires cultural clearance.

**Previous Projects Completed:**

Section 1 earthen dam stock tank sealed with 2 tons of salt.	2008 - Completed
Section 12 tank at FR 118 sealed with 2 tons of salt	2009 - Completed
Section 7 SW1/4 tank sealed with salt (2 tons)	2010 - Completed

**Future Projects**

In 2007, permittee flagged the location of 2 proposed pit tank in section 6, SE ¼ and section 7, NE1/4 (southeast of trick tank at Top of Mt.) that would improve the distribution by decreasing the trailing impacts to the forage surrounding the current water source and increase access to the forage areas to the north.	Discussed. Completed EA in 2013. Requires cultural clearance. Each pit tank approximately 1400 cu. yds.
Broadcast seeding in section 2/11 at the Western Mt. Base	Discussed
Increase storage capacity at existing developed spring location at the northern area of the allotment	Spring site has been located and contains 2 each, 500 gal. concrete drinkers that may last 2 days for the herd.

### **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 1996 and an AMP was prepared in 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.

## **Appendix**

### **Grazing Permittee Instructions for Sheep Operators on 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. 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 on the Range**

1. 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.
2. Use the open herding system of handling sheep for better effect on the range and the sheep. The herder should hold the lead sheep instead of pushing the rear, and train the sheep to spread out and graze contentedly, instead of following the natural tendency of certain leaders in the band to move ahead too rapidly. Practice the open herding system of grazing in order to minimize the trailing and driving directly to and from water sources. Trailing and bunching the sheep should be avoided as much as possible. The herder would bed the sheep in a different location each night, except under exceptional circumstances, and never bed the sheep at camp ( which is moved every 7 days). Re-using the bed grounds contributes to the spread of disease and parasites. 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.
3. Riding, herding and good salting practices will help. Sheep 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 partial refund/credit of the grazing payment. The grazing of more than one pasture at a time must be approved by the District Ranger.

#### **Camp Operation**

1. Move camps at least every 7 days. Locate camps to avoid contaminating water supplies. Remove trash and garbage. Leave the camp site clean and use good sanitation practices. Bury all human waste and locate latrines at least 100 feet from surface water.

### **The Herder**

1. The herder will be expected to deal with unexpected emergencies and make day to day decisions. The herder should report conditions and observations that are vital to the sheep operation. The herder must know the allotment boundary and various property boundaries within the allotment in order to avoid unauthorized use or excess use. When applicable, information on adjoining bands of sheep and their routing/bedding will be shared with permittees and their herders.

### **Salting**

1. 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 or cost-share for maintenance projects.
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. Temporary camp/corral locations should be discussed with the FS prior to setting up the camp.

3. 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.
4. 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.
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 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.