

Annual Operating Instructions

Corduroy Allotment

Black Range Ranger District, Gila National Forest

2004 grazing season

1. PASTURE USE SCHEDULE

We have approved your application to graze 800 head of yearling cattle on the Corduroy Allotment for the 2004 grazing season. At our annual validation meeting on February 27, 2004, we developed the following grazing rotation schedule:

<i>PASTURE</i>	<i>ON</i>	<i>OFF</i>	<i>NUMBER</i>
South pasture	04/15/04	06/30/04	50
Spring pasture	04/15/04	06/30/04	152
Indian pasture	04/15/04	06/30/04	153
Corduroy pasture	04/15/04	06/30/04	50
Inman & Cox pastures	04/15/04	09/30/04	245
Burnt Cabin pasture	04/15/04	09/30/04	80
Taylor pasture	04/15/04	10/15/04	70
Indian pasture	07/01/04	10/15/04	203
Spring pasture	07/01/04	10/15/04	202
Black Mountain pasture	RESTED	RESTED	RESTED

The schedule above is an estimate, and may be modified at any time during the grazing season if the utilization levels, identified below, are met, if water availability is inadequate, or for other resource management reason. If allowable use levels are met early in the scheduled pasture, cattle will be required to leave the Forest. Cattle are to be completely removed from the Forest by the off date. I will allow you two weeks prior to the off date to begin moving cattle off the Forest. If two weeks is not adequate, you must request additional time from this office. Please notify this office, at least five days prior to moving your cattle from the Corduroy Allotment.

2. UTILIZATION STANDARDS

The following utilization standards will be applied on the Corduroy Allotment:

- Riparian areas are not to exceed 25% of current year's growth on woody riparian species, by leader.
- Upland sites grazed during the growing season are not to exceed 35% of current year's growth of perennial grasses.
- Upland sites grazed during the dormant season are not to exceed 40% of current year's growth of perennial grasses.

3. KEY AREA MONITORING

At our annual validation meeting, key areas for monitoring were identified and are listed below.

- Black Mountain Pasture – South ridgeline of Bell Canyon.
- Indian Pasture – Indian Cieniga, and the confluence of Corduroy and Doagy Canyons.
- Burnt Cabin Pasture – Burnt Cabin Flat.
- Inman Pasture – Vicinity of the junction of FDR's 226 & 226A.
- Cox Pasture – ½ ways between Inman Cieniga and Alexander Tank.
- Taylor Pasture – Taylor Canyon (riparian).
 - Uplands between Alexander Canyon and Shallow & Keith tanks.

The idea of a key area is to find a site that is representative of a larger area in which cattle obtain the majority of their required forage resources. Key area monitoring will avoid areas directly adjacent to permanent water sources, cattle trails, roads, and fence lines.

- Riparian areas will be monitored for use on riparian woody species' current year's leaders.
- Upland areas will be monitored for use on perennial grass species.
- Mexican spotted owl protected and restricted habitat will be monitored to ensure that current management is providing for cover for rodent prey species, the residual biomass that will support prescribed natural and ignited fires that would reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire in the Forest, and regeneration of riparian trees.

District personnel will contact the permittees to coordinate site visits to monitor key areas. Permittee participation is encouraged. Forage utilization estimates will be consistent with the Forest Service Range Analysis Handbook methodology, and may also include FS Regional stubble-height standards, as well as other techniques generally accepted in the field of range management.

4. RANGE IMPROVEMENTS

Range improvements must be maintained to standard before cattle are allowed into a pasture. It is the permittee's responsibility to ensure that range improvements remain functional. This includes boundary fences in pastures not currently being grazed. Routine maintenance of existing improvements does not require written clearance; however, construction/reconstruction of new improvements must be authorized in writing from this office.

You have identified a portion of the Taylor Creek/Inman pasture fence (sec. 10) that is in need of being reconstructed. We will provide you with the fencing materials. You have also requested that we consult with the FS fire personnel about having them clear the fence lines. We will check on this and inform you as to their decision.

You have also asked us to look at the possibility of extending the existing pipeline, that runs from Cooney Tanks into the Black Mountain Pasture, to Beaverhead and placing a storage tank near the Jordan Tank. Also we discussed the possibility of running an extension from the above proposed pipeline into the South Pasture as well as place a storage tank there. We do not have funding for such a project this year but will keep it in mind as we plan and budget for FY 05. We also discussed the possibility of a cost/share with the NRCS, and we will look into pursuing it.

We discussed the need for PJ thinning on the ridges of Bell Canyon. We will look into the possibility of such a project and keep you informed of any progress we make. Again it is unlikely we will have any funding for this project this year.

Keep in mind that all new improvement construction and reconstruction will require biological evaluations and archaeological clearances as well as permit modifications. These will be initiated in the planning phases of these project proposals.

5. SPECIAL MANAGEMENT INSTRUCTIONS

The following restrictions will be implemented so that management remains in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. The instructions below relate to threatened, endangered, and proposed to be listed species as well as range/watershed conditions.

- No salt or mineral block may be placed in protected and restricted Mexican spotted owl habitat from February 1 to August 31, and no concentrations of livestock (i.e., corral use, traps, or large gatherings of livestock).
- Stock tanks must be surveyed for possible aquatic habitat before earth-disturbing maintenance is authorized.
- At our AOI meeting we discussed the listing of the Chiricahua leopard frog as a threatened species. Because of the listing of the Chiricahua leopard frog as a threatened species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an analysis was completed for all Gila allotments. We have determined that livestock grazing on the Corduroy Allotment has the potential to adversely affect the Chiricahua leopard frog. As a result of this determination, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will prepare a draft Biological Opinion, which may modify grazing management practiced to minimize the level of affect an action will have on a listed species. However, this determination has not yet resulted in any changes to your grazing permit. As the permittee of the Corduroy Allotment, you have applicant status which allows you the opportunity to provide comments to the draft Biological Opinion. This office will keep you informed on the process.

The Endangered Species Act requires that actions funded or carried out by the federal government go through the consultation process to insure these actions do not jeopardize the continued existence of a listed species. Please notify this office of any planned earth disturbing activities involving riparian areas, dirt tanks, or other sources of open water.

6. OTHER INSTRUCTIONS

The permittee must obtain permission from the District Ranger, before conducting earth-disturbing activities on the National Forest. The Forest Service will arrange inspections of project areas and will prepare appropriate environmental and cultural documents before earth-disturbing activities proceed. These activities include road/earthen tank maintenance, as well as construction/reconstruction of trails, roads, earthen tanks, etc. Do not conduct any earth-disturbing activities on the Forest without written clearance from this office.

Salt must be located at least ¼ mile from water, and preferably on ridges and/or areas of low use. Do not place salt blocks in the same location as the previous year, and locate blocks on hard ground not susceptible to erosion. Supplemental feeding, other than mineral or supplement block, is not authorized on the National Forest.

Accurate records of your operation will aid in planning and determining the effectiveness of the grazing system. Please maintain reasonably accurate records of cattle numbers throughout the grazing season. We will need shipping tickets of cattle entering and leaving the Corduroy Allotment.

The Annual Operating Instructions are a part of the Term Grazing Permit as provided for in Part 1, Section 3. These instructions comply with the standards and guidelines found in the forest Plan, including the 1996 Forest Plan Amendment. They also comply with the Endangered Species Act found in the Biological Assessment for the Corduroy Allotment. Any additional information collected during the year may be incorporated into the Annual Operating Instructions.

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 (see enclosed copy of 36 CFR 251 regulations). 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 Marcia Andre, Forest Supervisor, Gila National Forest, at 3005 E. Camino Del Bosque, Silver City, NM 88061, within 45 days of the date of this decision. A copy of the notice of appeal must be filed simultaneously with Tammy Randall Parker, District Ranger, Black Range Ranger District at 1804 Date Street, Truth or Consequences, NM 89701.

We appreciate your cooperation in the management of the Corduroy Allotment. If you have any questions regarding these instructions, please contact Ron Mortensen, Rangeland Management Specialist, or myself at (505)894-6677. Thank you.

Sincerely,

TAMMY RANDALL PARKER
District Ranger