



File Code: 2230
Date: May 3, 2018

Dear Permittee:

Recently, my staff and I met with Mitch McClaren, from University of Arizona, to discuss conditions, concerns, and strategies for the ongoing and worsening drought we are experiencing in Arizona. Many of you know and have worked with Mitch. In our meeting he described the severity of our drought conditions and gave an update on current and historical precipitation levels. He also provided some possibilities for what we might expect over the next few months.

The drought we are currently experiencing has not only affected water availability but is also impacting available forage and the potential for new forage growth should we receive normal monsoon moisture this summer. The Tonto National Forest received hardly any moisture last fall and winter which has resulted in little to no annual production across the forest. Mitch explained that the multi-season drought has also affected the ability of plants to take advantage of moisture. He expects that forage production will be reduced even further this summer and fall. Much of the normally used browse has become unavailable as forage due to extremely low moisture levels. In some areas, large patches of shrubs and trees are beginning to die all together.

Based on the reports of conditions across the Forest, I believe we should continue efforts to balance livestock numbers with available forage and water. It is anticipated both forage and water availability will lessen prior to the monsoons. At this time, I am recommending most ranchers only continue to graze the minimum numbers required to maintain their herd genetics and desirable behavioral qualities on Forest lands.


In order to reduce drought impacts to the greatest extent possible, my staff will focus efforts to approve critical range infrastructure needed to utilize available forage and reduce impacts to rangelands. I have also asked my staff to consider creative solutions and employ the drought planning efforts we have worked through with the University of Arizona over the last few years. We will consider requests from individual permittees in an effort to assist them while also remaining diligent to protecting the resources of the National Forest.

We intend to continue addressing each allotment individually, and want to continue working side by side with our permittees and ranchers. District Rangers will engage with each of you further to develop individual allotment strategies. At the request of Arizona Cattlemen's Association, I would like to invite you to a meeting to discuss the current situation, outlook, and strategies for the next few months along with University of Arizona staff and other interested participants Friday May 11 at 10:00 AM at the Fountain Hills Community Center, 13001 N La Montana Drive, Fountain Hills, Arizona.



I look forward to meeting with you all as we continue in our partnership to manage the Tonto National Forest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. A. Mantua", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

for NEIL BOSWORTH
Forest Supervisor

cc: District Rangers