

**SANTA CATALINA RANGER DISTRICT
CORONADO NATIONAL FOREST
ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTION (AOI)
Agua Verde Allotment
2025 Grazing Year**

I. PERMITTED USE

The following table illustrates the number of livestock and period of use permitted on the Agua Verde Allotment as stated in Term Grazing Permit #50533.

| Kind | Class | Term Permit | | Permitted Period of Use |
|--------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| | | Numbers | AUMs | |
| Cattle | Cow/Calf | 100 | 1200 | 03/01 – 02/28 |
| | Yearlings | | | |
| | Bulls | | | |
| Horses | Mature | | | |
| | Total | 100 | 1200 | 03/01 – 02/28 |

II. AUTHORIZED USE

For the 2025 grazing year, the following numbers and classes of livestock are authorized to graze on the Agua Verde Allotment:

| Kind | Class | Number | AUMs | Proposed Season of Use |
|--------|--------------|------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Cattle | Cow/Calf | 100 | 1200 | 03/01 – 02/28 |
| | Yearlings | | | |
| | Bulls | | | |
| Horses | Mature | | | |
| | Total | 100 | 1200 | 03/01 – 02/28 |

III. ROTATION SCHEDULE

A trial period of no more than two years has been authorized and must be authorized annually per R3 FSH 2209.13, 16.16. For grazing year 2025, Ray Ranches LLC is authorized to graze the entire Agua Verde Allotment season long with 100 cow/calf pairs divided up evenly into the Hidden Spring, Charlie’s, and Upper Pastures on a trial basis. The temporary authorization of management could be modified throughout the year for resource issues or concerns.

| AGUA VERDE ALLOTMENT | | | |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Pasture | Proposed Numbers | Proposed Season of Use | Use Standard |
| Charlie’s | 33 c/c | 03/01 – 02/28 | 35% |
| Upper | 34 c/c | 03/01 – 02/28 | 35% |
| Hidden Spring | 33 c/c | 03/01 – 02/28 | 35% |
| State/Private | ---- | ---- | ---- |

Actual dates may vary depending on climatic conditions, potential wildfires, when utilization levels are reached, and time required to move cattle. Actual pasture moves will be based on monitoring and use standards shown above. Cattle will be moved into the next scheduled pasture or off the Forest when proper use has been reached. Contact the District Range Staff immediately following each pasture move. Grazed pastures must be kept clean of livestock following each move.

IV. ALLOWABLE USE STANDARDS

Management and utilization criteria designed to protect and/or enhance valuable range and riparian resources are according to the 2009 Last Chance, Barney, Fresno, Happy Valley, Cumero, Rock Pile, Agua Verde and Rincon Allotments Environmental Assessment (EA) and are incorporated as special terms and conditions within the permit.

Forage utilization will be managed at a level corresponding to light to moderate intensity (30-45%) to provide for grazed plant recovery, increased plant vigor, and retention of herbaceous litter to protect soils and provide forage and herbaceous cover for wildlife. Consistent patterns of utilization more than 45% of key species in key areas would be used as a basis to modify management practices or take administrative actions necessary to reduce utilization in subsequent grazing seasons.

Within the Rincon Mountain Wilderness, an annual utilization guideline of 35% would apply in accordance with the 1986 Coronado National Forest Plan, which was the direction in place when the allotment NEPA was completed. On wilderness allotments with a high percentage of rest or winter-only use, annual utilization will be allowed up to 45%.

Allowable use of forage is based on the amount and kind of forage on the allotment, plant needs, range condition, trend, and grazing management strategy. Duration, frequency, and timing may be manipulated within the grazing schedule to meet allowable use standards.

For simplicity, key areas are generally considered as follows: 1) full capacity rangeland located on ridgetops/mesas within a 1/4 mile from available water sources; 2) canyon bottoms/riparian areas with free flowing water or springs regardless of distance from water; 3) any area containing full capacity range with erosive soils and insufficient/marginal ground cover to protect the soil; or 4) areas containing habitat, whether occupied, suitable and unoccupied, or potentially suitable habitat, for threatened, endangered, or proposed species that are of concern to the Forest Service.

V. ADMINISTRATION

1. Grazing fees must be paid prior to March 1, 2025.
2. Sub-leasing is prohibited. Livestock placed on the allotment must be owned by the permittee and branded with the permittee's registered brand. A copy of the brand certificate must be on file at the District Office.
3. The permittee will record actual use as it occurs including livestock numbers and dates permitted livestock are in a pasture. This information will be reported at the next annual operating instruction meeting.
4. Any change or deviation from this Annual Operating Instructions is to be coordinated and confirmed in advance with the District. If emergency conditions require making a change immediately, the permittee will notify the District as soon as practical.
5. Livestock remaining in pastures beyond the specified rotation date, that are allowed to drift between pastures, or grazing in rested pastures may be considered a violation of your Term Grazing Permit.
6. Livestock should be moved when forage utilization objectives have been met or within 1 week of planned rotation dates, unless changes have been confirmed with District Range personnel.

7. The District may spot check range improvements before the entry date to ensure improvements are in a satisfactory condition. Livestock will not be allowed to enter pastures if assigned improvements are not maintained to proper standards. Livestock will not be allowed to enter pastures if fences will not keep livestock where they are placed.

VI. LIVESTOCK DISTRIBUTION & SUPPLEMENT

Salting and riding are important tools in achieving proper utilization throughout the allotment and should be used to control livestock distribution. Salt should be placed in several locations, with salt grounds changed periodically. Salt or mineral block will not be placed within 200 feet of a road or within a quarter mile of water or drainage bottom. Blocks may be removed by the District if found near water, over-utilized areas, or roads. No more than two blocks of salt should be placed at any single location and should be placed on hard ground not susceptible to erosion. Riding should be used as a tool to disperse livestock at turn-out and to keep livestock well distributed throughout the grazing season.

VII. MONITORING

Monitoring and evaluation are an essential aspect of good rangeland management. Monitoring and evaluation can be described as the gathering of information, so the manager knows what is happening to rangeland resources and why. The intent of monitoring and evaluation is to test the success of the management strategy and if needed, make adjustments.

Utilization will be monitored on key forage species, which are perennial grasses that are palatable to livestock. At a minimum monitoring will include use in key areas but may include monitoring outside of key areas. Utilization on non-grass species (forbs, shrubs and trees) may also be measured if appropriate for the site. Utilization may be monitored both during the grazing season (seasonal use) and at the end of the growing season (annual utilization). The Santa Catalina District Range Staff Officer and the permittees will be responsible for monitoring livestock grazing utilization. Over time, changes in resource conditions or management may result in changes in livestock use patterns. As livestock use patterns change, new key areas may be established, and existing key areas may be modified or abandoned in cooperation with the permittees.

Permittees will be encouraged to participate in monitoring activities. Records of livestock numbers, movement dates and shipping records will be kept by the permittees and will be provided to the District Range Staff annually.

Besides participating with the District in collecting monitoring data the permittee is encouraged to also collect monitoring information on their own. If you would like to collect your own data, the District can provide the necessary equipment and training to assist with this effort. Common implementation monitoring includes forage production, forage utilization, photo points, condition of improvements, actual use, and precipitation data.

VIII. RANGE IMPROVEMENT CONSTRUCTION / MAINTENANCE

New range improvements and all ground disturbing activities will not be initiated until proper clearances have been obtained. All ground disturbing activities require cultural resource and wildlife clearances prior to project implementation. When improvements are completed, the permittee will inform District Range personnel to schedule an inspection. Before using machinery to clean any pond, the permittee is required to give the District Office at least 30 days advance notice so that the tank can be inspected for threatened or endangered species. All work involving the use of heavy equipment will be accomplished only after prior approval by the District Ranger. Improvement schedule is dependent upon funding.

Range improvement maintenance responsibilities are assigned in Part 3 of your Term Grazing Permit. All fences that will have livestock against them at turn-out must be maintained to standards prior to livestock entering the allotment. Materials for routine improvement maintenance will be furnished by the permittee.

| Current Year Improvement Schedule | | | YEAR | 2025 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|--|-------------------|
| Permit Mod # | Improvement Type / ID # | Completion Date | Description/Comments | Status Done /Date |
| | | | Aliso Spring-polypipe | |
| | | | Paint three storage tanks | |
| | | | Grapevine Spring | |
| Improvement Accomplishments | | | YEAR | 2024 |
| Permit Mod # | Improvement Type / ID # | Completion Date | Description/Comments | Status Done /Date |
| | | | Routine Maintenance completed throughout the grazing year. | |
| | | | Installed new trough at Vail Spring | |

IX. PROTECTION

The permittee, their agents, and employees, when acting within the scope of their employment, and their contractors and subcontractors will protect the land and property of the United States, waived private land and other land under jurisdiction of the Forest Service covered by and used in conjunction with this permit. Protection will include taking all reasonable precautions to prevent, make diligent efforts to suppress and report promptly all fires on or endangering such land and property. During periods of high fire danger, branding fires will be allowed by permit only.

X. ALLOTMENT INSPECTIONS

Forest personnel may conduct periodic brief inspections of pastures within the allotment at any time to verify actual use, improvement conditions, or other non-range related activity. The permittee will be notified and invited to participate with inspections.

XI. WILDERNESS

Livestock management in wilderness requires special consideration of wilderness values. Motorized vehicle use and the use of motorized equipment (including chainsaws) is strictly prohibited in wilderness areas unless authorized through a Minimum Requirements Analysis Framework (MRAF). Manage your livestock within wilderness to minimize impacts on the natural environment and to avoid conflict with other users of the area.

XII. PERMIT CONDITIONS

This Annual Operating Instruction is hereby made a part of the Term Grazing Permit as provided for in Part 2, Section 8(a). It complies with the standards and guidelines found in the Forest Plan.

Failure to comply with any of the terms and conditions specified in Parts 1, 2, and 3 of your Term Grazing Permit may result in suspension or cancellation, in whole or in part, after written notice. This is found in Part 1, Section 3, of your permit.

Management direction and guidelines apply as specified in the 09/2021 Biological Opinion and Conference Opinion for on-going livestock grazing on the Coronado National Forest.

XIII. ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Adaptive management uses the documented results of management actions (monitoring) to continually modify management to achieve specific objectives, which are identified in the 2009 Last Chance, Barney, Fresno, Happy Valley, Cumero, Rock Pile, Agua Verde and Rincon Allotments EA. Adaptive management provides the flexibility to adjust livestock numbers and the timing of grazing so that use is consistent with current productivity and is meeting management objectives. Under the adaptive management strategy, the specific number of livestock authorized, specific dates for grazing, class of animal and modifications in pasture rotations may be administratively modified as determined to be necessary and appropriate, based on implementation and effectiveness monitoring. However, such changes will not exceed the limits for timing, intensity, duration and frequency analyzed and disclosed in the EA.

If you have any questions about any of these operating instructions, please contact Chrissy Pearson at 520-240-6304. Thank you for your cooperation.