

**CLIFTON RANGER DISTRICT
APACHE/SITGREAVES NATIONAL FOREST
ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS (AOI)**

**BLACKJACK ALLOTMENT
2025-2026**

I. PERMITTED USE:

The following table illustrates the number of livestock and season of use permitted on the Blackjack Allotment per Term Grazing Permit # 03010340 issued on February 25, 2020.

KIND	CLASS	NUMBERS	AUM	SEASON OF USE
Cattle	Cow/Calf	400	4800 *	03/01 - 02/28
Horse	Horse	15	216 *	03/01 - 02/28

* Per the January 27, 2020 Decision Notice, authorized use will not exceed 4,116 animal unit months until the Maverick Tank and Brushy Canyon water developments and the Dix Creek fence are installed and based upon monitoring results.

II. AUTHORIZED USE:

The following numbers and classes of livestock are authorized to graze on the Blackjack Allotment.

KIND	CLASS	NUMBERS	AUM	SEASON OF USE
Cattle	Cow/Calf	165	1980	03/01/25 - 02/28/26
	Bull	12	216	03/01/25 - 02/28/26
Horse/Mule	Mature	25	360	03/01/25 - 02/28/26

III. ROTATION SCHEDULE: Per the January 27, 2020 Decision Notice, the season of use will continue to be yearlong, using a deferred-rest-rotation schedule, except the two Coal Creek pastures are restricted to a season of use between November 1 and March 1. Also, Mesquite Flat pasture will typically be used in the fall. Although Dix Mesa and Dix Saddle pastures may be used during any month, it is expected they will be used primarily in conjunction with spring or fall shipping periods.

PASTURE	NUMBER	SEASON OF USE	GRAZING INTENSITY
Beef Eater	177 25 horses	03/01 – 04/30/25	Conservative 31 – 40%
Rattlesnake East	177 25 horses	05/01 – 08/31/25	Conservative 31 – 40%
Rattlesnake West	177 25 horses	09/01 – 12/01/25	Conservative 31 – 40%
Dix Mesa/Dix Saddle	177 25 horses	12/01 – 12/31/25	Conservative 31 – 40%
Lightning Mesa	177 25 horses	01/01/26 – 02/28/26	Conservative 31 – 40%
Maverick	Rest	03/01/25 – 02/28/26	Conservative 31 – 40%
Mesquite Flat (see note below)	Rest	03/01/25 – 02/28/26	Conservative 31 – 40%
Red Tank Trap	Rest	03/01/25 – 02/28/26	Conservative 31 – 40%
Coal Creek North	Rest	03/01/25 – 02/28/26	Conservative 31 – 40%
Coal Creek South	Rest	03/01/25 – 02/28/26	Conservative 31 – 40%
White Peaks	Rest	03/01/25 – 02/28/26	Conservative 31 – 40%

Lightning Mesa and Mesquite Flat pastures will not be authorized to be grazed until a fence is installed to exclude livestock from Dix Creek, the lower half-mile section of Right Prong Dix Creek, a 4-mile portion of Left Prong Dix Creek, to better ensure exclusion of livestock on the San Francisco River.

Also, the Lightning Mesa pasture will not be used until both an approximate 0.8 mile allotment boundary fence between the Blackjack and Hickey allotments is installed along Red Tank Canyon and a ¼ mile fence is installed across the upper end of the Left Prong Dix Creek exclusion area near Dix Saddle.

Livestock use is authorized for the following duration and season of use in the specified pastures: Actual dates may vary and should be coordinated with the District Office.

GENERAL DIRECTION

Refer to the Livestock Distribution Aids section below regarding salting.

The allotment will be managed using adaptive management principles to adjust the timing, intensity, frequency and duration of grazing; the grazing management system, and livestock numbers.

As outlined in the 2019 Stateline Range NEPA Environmental Assessment, since livestock numbers are anticipated to fluctuate on a year-to-year basis from an adaptive management perspective a reduced level of grazing for resource protection are within permitted numbers and non-use agreements are not necessary (Forest Service Handbook 2209.13_10).

The permittee will record actual use, including livestock numbers and dates permitted livestock are in a pasture, and provide this information to the District Office each year.

Changes to this Annual Operating Instruction is to be coordinated and confirmed in advance with the District in an AOI amendment. If emergency conditions require making a change immediately, the permittee will notify the District as soon as practical.

IV. ALLOWABLE USE STANDARDS (Grazing Intensity)

Grazing intensity is measured by the utilization of palatable herbaceous forage plants. It is not a management objective but may be used with other information to make management adjustments and decisions. Utilization is expressed in terms of the current year's production removed and therefore is measured at the end of the growing season. Seasonal utilization measurements may be useful as one indicator, along with consideration of other factors, for moving livestock to another pasture.

Utilization of key forage species may be monitored through a pasture-wide reconnaissance or measured in key areas or critical areas. Grazing intensity on woody browse is typically measured by percent leaders browsed below 6 feet on trees and shrubs.

Upland key areas are to represent management effectiveness over the entire pasture and are generally not located near water, roads, or bed grounds but should be in areas that receive substantial use. Upland key areas are usually at least ¼ mile from water and located on productive soils where grazing use would occur.

The following utilization standards apply to the Blackjack allotment:

- “Conservative use” (31 to 40%) on upland and riparian herbaceous and browse species.
- “Conservative use” (31 to 40%) in riparian areas that are properly functioning and “Light to non-use” (0 to 30%) in riparian areas that are not functioning properly. Light to non-use of 0 to 30% applies to Rattlesnake Canyon which is considered to be “Functioning at Risk” in the Rattlesnake East pasture.
- Within southwestern willow flycatcher and western yellow-billed cuckoo suitable habitat, average utilization would not exceed 35 percent of palatable, perennial grasses and grass-like plants in uplands and riparian habitats. Woody utilization would not exceed 40 percent on average.

Consistent patterns of utilization in excess of utilization standards will be used as a basis to modify management practices or take administrative actions necessary to reduce utilization in subsequent grazing seasons.

Stubble height standards may be used. Targeted stubble heights will correspond to the light and conservative intensity levels described above.

V. Livestock Distribution Aids and Animal Husbandry

Salt or supplement will be placed at least ¼ mile from all water sources and riparian areas, away from roads, high-use recreation areas, or other known livestock concentration areas except for land and resource treatment purposes. Salt or supplement should be placed and moved to less utilized areas. No salting will occur within or adjacent to identified heritage resources.

Feeding of hay or other feed is limited to feeding livestock temporarily confined to corrals and holding facilities or in emergency situations as approved by the Line Officer. Forage certified to be weed free or commercially processed should be used. No feeding of hay is approved at this time.

Corrals and traps are for sorting cattle and animal husbandry purposes and by definition; are intended to be used as needed throughout the year but for short durations of time.

VI. MONITORING

You are encouraged to participate in implementation and effectiveness monitoring activities. Monitoring and evaluation is an essential aspect of good rangeland management.

Implementation monitoring will occur regularly and be used as the basis for making adjustments using an adaptive management approach. Implementation monitoring may include, but not be limited to, such items as:

- 1) Actual use in each pasture;
- 2) Condition of range improvements;
- 3) Forage Production
- 3) Seasonal utilization, annual utilization, or stubble heights;
- 4) Other annual monitoring that may be important in site-specific situations.

Long-term effectiveness monitoring documents whether management actions are having the expected outcome in achieving resource management objectives. Examples of effectiveness monitoring include, but are not limited to, dry weight rank, pace transects, line intercept, pace quadrat frequency, cover frequency, terrestrial ecosystem surveys, riparian surveys, soil and watershed condition assessments and repeat photography. Monitoring typically occurs at established permanent monitoring points.

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.

VII. RANGE IMPROVEMENT CONSTRUCTION / MAINTENANCE

Range improvements are to be kept in satisfactory condition as outlined in the Term Grazing Permit to properly manage livestock grazing. It is important for livestock to be located in the designated pastures during the season of use as prescribed above.

Reconstruction or new improvements requires written authorization by the District Ranger through a Permit Modification. When improvements are completed the permittee will inform District Range personnel to schedule an inspection. Per the December 12, 2019 Biological Opinion, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Arizona Game & Fish Department are to be notified at least 60 days prior to cleaning stock tanks.

Work involving the use of heavy equipment will be accomplished only after prior approval of the District Ranger.

Current Year Improvement Scheduled		YEAR	2025
Improvement Type / ID #	Completion Date	Description/Comments	Status Done /Date
		Construction of the fence to exclude livestock from Dix Creek and portions of Right Prong and Left Prong Dix Creek may occur following archeology clearance and a Permit Modification being signed.	
		Construction of the allotment boundary fence between the Blackjack and Hickey allotments in Red Tank Canyon and at Curly Tank may occur following archeology clearance and a Permit Modification being signed.	

VIII. ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT REQUIREMENTS

1. Live fish, crayfish, leopard frogs, salamanders, or other aquatic organisms shall not be moved among earthen stock tanks or other aquatic sites.
2. As noted above, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Arizona Game & Fish Department (AZGFD) are to be notified at least 60 days prior to cleaning stock tanks.
3. Water shall not be hauled to any occupied leopard frog habitat or potentially suitable stock tanks from another aquatic site or tank that supports leopard frogs, crayfish, or fish. If water is needed to address drought concerns for the Chiricahua leopard frog (CLF) or livestock, approval from the USFWS is required prior to adding water to a stock tank occupied by CLFs.
4. Notify the Forest Service District Office immediately if nonnative aquatic species are detected within occupied CLF habitat.
5. Notify the Forest Service District Office of any pasture boundary or exclusion fence line failure or fence line disrepair that is adjacent to known occupied CLF habitat and the corrective actions implemented.

IX. PROTECTION

The permittee, his agents, and employees, when acting within the scope of their employment, and his contractors and subcontractors will protect the land and property of the United States under jurisdiction of the Forest Service covered by and used in conjunction with the Term Grazing Permit.

DISTRICT RANGER