

Annual Operating Instructions

BUSH CREEK ALLOTMENT
Alpine Ranger District
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest

2023 grazing season

Term Permitted Livestock Numbers and dates:

Bush Creek Allotment	11 to 27 AUMs*	11/01 to 4/30**
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*Livestock number will vary between 11 and 27 AUMs annually

**Season of use will be from November to April for a total of 141 days.

Annual Validation livestock numbers and dates:

Bush Creek Allotment	4 Horses	03/01/2023 to 04/30/2023 & 12/01/2023 to 02/29/2024
	4 head of Cattle	11/01/2023 to 11/30/2023

1. Pasture Schedule

I have approved your application to graze up to 4 head of mature cattle or 4 head of horses on the Bush Creek Allotment per the schedule below. The following table represents your grazing rotation schedule for the grazing season.

Allotment	Pasture	On	Off	Number/Class
Bush Creek	Mountain	03/01/23	04/30	4 Horses
	Bush Creek	11/01	11/30	4 Cattle
	Mountain	12/01	02/29/2024	4 Horses
	Steeple	Rest		

The schedule & level of authorized use above is an estimate and may be modified at any time prior to or during the grazing season if utilization levels, identified below, are met, if water availability is inadequate, or for other resource management reasons.

2. Utilization Standards

The following utilization standards will be applied on the Bush Creek Allotments. A management guideline of conservative use of 30-40% in the uplands as measured at the end of the grazing season will be employed to improve vegetative and soil conditions.

Our priority will be to maintain satisfactory vegetative and watershed conditions. Livestock distribution and subsequent utilization levels will help determine management.

3. Key Area Monitoring

Utilization levels, at a minimum, may be checked prior to livestock entering the allotment and near the midpoint, of the grazing period for each pasture at key areas. A Key Area is defined as:

“a portion of range, which because of its location, grazing or browsing value, and/or use, serves as an indicative sample of range conditions, trend, or degree of use seasonally. A key area guides the general area of which it is part.” (Forest Service Region 3 Rangeland and Analysis Management Guide, June 1997).

Utilization measurements will be taken on key livestock forage plants (key species). Key Forage Species is defined as:

“1. Forage species (plants) whose use serves as an indicator to the degree of use of associated species. In many cases, key species include indicator species and species traditionally referenced as increasers, decreasers, desirables, or intermediates. 2. Those species (plants) which must, because of their importance, be considered in the management program.” (Forest Service Region 3 Rangeland and Analysis Management Guide, June 1997).

District personnel may contact permittees to coordinate site visits to monitor key areas, when practical. 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. Fences must remain in a state that prevents the passage of cattle. Routine maintenance of existing improvements does not require written clearance; however, construction/reconstruction of improvements must be authorized in writing from this office.

5. Special Management Practices

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 March 1 to August 31, and no concentrations of livestock (i.e., corral use, traps, or large gatherings of livestock) and will be strategically placed to help distribute livestock away from water sources, improvements, riparian areas, high use recreation sites and trails, and roads.
- Actual placement will be at least ¼ mile from riparian areas or live water, unless otherwise approved by the Forest Officer in charge. Supplements are a tool to enhance overall livestock distribution and utilization patterns.
- Stock tanks must be surveyed for possible aquatic habitat before earth-disturbing maintenance is authorized.
- A small portion of Steeple Pasture is within designated Mexican Spotted Owl critical habit. To prevent livestock from having direct effects to riparian vegetation development

and allow for prey base habitat development, livestock will not have access to riparian habitat.

- Drafting out of open water sources for the purpose of hauling water for livestock will require the sterilization of hoses, foot-valves, hip-boots, and other equipment to prevent the spread of chytrid fungus. Please consult the Alpine Wildlife Staff for specific details in this matter.

6. **Other General 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.

Supplemental feeding, other than mineral or supplement block is not authorized on the National Forest.

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

We appreciate your cooperation and efforts in the management of the Bush Creek Allotment. If you have any questions regarding these instructions, please contact the Alpine District Range Staff at (928) 339-5000. Thank you.