



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Tonto Basin
Ranger
District

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File Code: 2210

Date: December 21, 2022

Jack and Sherry Cowan
Deer Creek Allotment
(b)(6)
Payson, AZ 85541

Dear Jack and Sherry:

The following are your 2023 annual operating instructions (AOI) for the Deer Creek grazing allotment. These instructions have been developed from collaboration with you and in consideration of Forest Service Handbook 2209.13, Tonto National Forest Plan, associated National Environmental Policy Act analysis, Allotment Management Plan, and available information describing range conditions.

Authorized Use

The following table describes authorized livestock numbers per grazing unit, anticipated use dates, and proposed monitoring dates. Please request a change in this schedule well in advance of the proposed dates. Please, maintain and submit records that indicate your compliance to permitted use.

Grazing Unit	Dates of Use	Tentative Monitoring Date	Authorized Livestock	Rationale/Comments
Mesa	Current-January 31 st 2023	February 7 th	163 Cows 7 Bulls	
Oak Creek (Upper Gold Creek)	February 1 st May 31 st	June 7 th	163 Cows 7 Bulls	
Clover	February 1 st April 30 th	May 8 th	29 Cows	25 Heifers and 4 cows will be separated to take advantage of excess forage and annual growth.
Deer Creek	June 1 st September 30 th	September 9 th	163 Cows 7 Bulls	
Barnhardt	October 1 st November 30 th	November 7 th	163 Cows 7 Bulls	



Clover	December 1 st December 31 st	January 8 th 2024	163 Cows 7 Bulls	
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Monitoring:

Upland utilization is measured at the end of the growing season in key areas for key forage species. This information, along with vegetation condition, forage plant production and vigor, soil and watershed condition, will be used to make informed management recommendations concerning pasture moves and stocking rates.

Riparian utilization in key reaches is measured during growing season to verify residual vegetation is present for streambank protection during flow events.

Grazing intensity will be evaluated during the growing season to make necessary changes needed for plant development and recovery.

Vegetative Use Guidelines:

Grazing will be managed so conservative use levels are achieved over the long-term in pasture key areas. It is your responsibility as permittee to take action so that livestock grazing does not exceed vegetative use thresholds. Please arrange for an allotment inspection if seasonal vegetative use of available forage approaches these thresholds.

Vegetation	Use Threshold
Upland herbaceous species	30-40% of current year's growth
Upland browse species	50% of current year's growth
Riparian herbaceous species	Limited to 40% of plant species biomass and maintain 6-8 inches of stubble height on deergrass
Riparian woody species	Limited to 50% of leaders browsed on upper 1/3 of plants up to 6 feet tall
Streambanks (if applicable)	Limited to less than 20% alteration of alterable streambanks
Mexican Spotted Owl PAC's (where applicable)	20% optimum-40% maximum
Annual Grasses	50% of current year's growth

Range Improvement Maintenance:

All range improvements must be maintained to Forest Service standards before cattle will be allowed to enter the units. You must receive verbal concurrence for each project before work can begin except routine maintenance (e.g. cleaning dirt tanks, maintaining fence, restoring pipe). It is your responsibility to be aware of and comply with fire restriction.

The following table describes the proposed 2023 range improvement projects.

Pasture	Location	Description of Work	Clearances Needed
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North Gold Creek	Cane Spring Corral	Temporary Trough in corral	Location is in a previously disturbed corral. Project is authorized.
Deer Creek	Deer Creek Well	Replace Well with solar and repair existing pipeline to steel tanks	Maintenance of existing infrastructure. Project is authorized
Deer Creek	Deer Creek Well	Add a storage tank and trough south of well and off of trail	Archeological, Biological and Hydrology review required prior to decision on project.
Multiple	Multiple	Replace/maintain infrastructure damaged by Bush Fire	Maintenance of existing infrastructure. Work is authorized.
South Gold Creek Pasture	Rubber Watershed Trick Tank	Fix storage tank and add pipeline to troughs	Project has been cleared and is authorized.

Salting:

In most cases, salt must be located no closer than ¼ mile from streams, rivers, riparian areas, trails, and known archaeological sites.

Supplements and Attractants

Protein blocks, nutritional supplement, and other attractant may be authorized.

Supplemental Feeding:

No supplemental feeding is authorized.

Weeds

Invasive plants threaten ecosystem health and grazing resources. Please assist us in preventing the introduction and spread of invasive plants.

If you have any questions, please contact Eric Hoskins, Rangeland Management Specialist, at (480) 435-5563.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Plain
District Ranger

CC: Eric Hoskins
Crystal Martinez
Ina Yazzie