



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Tonto Basin
Ranger
District

28079 N HWY 188
Roosevelt, AZ 85545
Phone: 602.225.5395
Fax: 602.225.5354

File Code: 2210

Date: January 26, 2024

Jack and Sherry Cowan
Deer Creek Allotment
13456 N. HWY 87
Payson, AZ 85541

Dear Jack and Sherry:

The following are your 2024 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 |
|---------------------|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| South Fork | Current-March 31 st | April 8 th | 163 Cows 7 Bulls | |
| North Gold Creek | April 1 st June 31 st | July 8 th | 163 Cows 7 Bulls | |
| South Gold | July 1 st September 31 st | October 8 th | 163 Cows 7 Bulls | |
| Hardt Creek | October 1 st Next AOI | Next AOI | 163 Cows 7 Bulls | |

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 |
|----------------|-----------------|--|---|
| 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 and rebuild corral | Project has been cleared and is authorized. |
| North Gold Creek | FR 177 | Fix existing road at Lion Spring crossing | Existing infrastructure. |
| Hardt Creek | Corral footprint | Remove star thistle and brush to rebuild corral | Existing infrastructure. Botany clearance needed. |
| Barnhardt | FR 1438 | Create road maintenance agreement and realign road to previously existing road | Archeological clearance may be needed. |
| North Gold Creek | Temporary trough location | Relocate trough and add a temporary storage tank in better location | Archeological, Biological and Hydrology review required prior to decision |
| Mesa | Water lot | Brush water lot | Already existing infrastructure |
| Deer Creek | Windmill water lot | Rebuild old water lot fence. Add storage, trough and about ¼ mile | Archeological, Biological and Hydrology clearances needed |

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