



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 3, 2023

Joe and Shelly Brown
Hardt Creek Allotment

(b)(6)

Payson, AZ 85541

Dear Joe and Shelly:

The following are your 2023 annual operating instructions (AOI) for the Hardt 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
Hardt Creek West	Current- January 31 st 2023	February 7 th	178 Cows 12 Bulls 36 Yearlings 5 Horses	
Black Mountain	February 1 st April 30 th	May 8 th	178 Cows 12 Bulls 36 Yearlings 5 Horses	
North Ridge	May 1 st June 30 th	July 7 th	183 Cows 12 Bulls 5 Horses	Yearlings will be removed before May 31 st
South Ridge	July 1 st August 31 st	September 7 th	183 Cows 12 Bulls 5 Horses	
Mesa	September 1 st October 31 st	November 7 th	183 Cow 12 Bulls 5 Horses	
Mud Spring	November 1 st January 31 st	Next AOI	183 Cow 12 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 2023 Proposed range improvement projects.

Pasture	Location	Description of Work	Clearances Needed
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South Ridge	Corral at boundary fence	Look into Installing an extension to the existing corral to aid in livestock movement.	Archeological, Biological and Decision Memo Required prior to any work beginning.
Eagle	Eagle nest site and Tonto Creek area	Build new fence to keep livestock away from creek	Clearances have been done.
Eagle	Indian Farm Well Water System	Add new Storage and troughs to existing Water System.	Check location of Storage and Trough. Decision Memo needed.
Black Mountain	Brown Spring	Replace existing water line, storage tank and trough.	None needed. Replacing existing infrastructure.

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