

Annual Operating Instructions

**BOBCAT-JOHNSON, FISHHOOK-STEEPLE MESA, AND
BEAVER CREEK ALLOTMENTS**

Alpine Ranger District
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

2017 Grazing Season

I. PASTURE USE SCHEDULE

I have approved your application to graze up to 42 head of cattle on the Bobcat-Johnson Allotment, up to 80* head of cattle on the Fishhook-Steeple Mesa Allotment, and 122 head of cattle on the Beaver Creek Allotment.

Allotment	Pasture	On	Off	Number/Class
Bobcat Johnson	Nolan	03/01	05/31	35 c/c
	No/Mid/So YJ Heifer/Muddy while authorized to use the allotment.			As needed for calving/holding
Fishhook-Steeple Mesa	Fishhook	03/01	05/31	80* c/c
	East Bull/KP Holding/ Diaper Wash/ Sweetie-Bear, Steeple Holding, Pinare Holding while authorized to use the allotment.			As needed for calving/holding
Foote Ck. Winter	Foote Creek	03/01	05/31	7 Bulls
Cow Flat			As needed for calving/holding during authorized use dates.	
Beaver Creek	Castle Creek	06/01*	06/30	122 c/c
	Hawksnest	07/01	09/21	122 c/c
	East Beaver	09/22	10/23	122 c/c
	West Fletcher	Use varies throughout summer, used as a brief holding/gathering pasture.		
Foote Creek Summer, Stone Creek & Alpine			As needed for calving/holding during authorized use dates.	
Bobcat Johnson	Upper Centerfire	10/15	02/28/2018	10 Bulls
Fishhook-Steeple Mesa	Steeple	10/24	02/28/2018	80* c/c
Bobcat Johnson	Johnson	10/24	02/28/2018	35 /c

*FSH 2209.13_10_16.16 – “Annual Changes in Grazing For Trial Periods” states: “A temporary change in the number, kind, class of livestock, grazing management, or season of use from that shown on the term permit may be approved by the Authorized Officer if determined to be consistent with the Forest Land Management Plan and if the changes are determined to benefit management of the rangeland resources.” In light of this FSH direction and to resolve the disparity in stocking rates and bridge the gap between winter and summer allotments seasons of use, you are authorized to implement changes indicated by an * in the pasture use schedule listed above. Trial periods of this nature normally last 1-2 years, however due to the complexity of managing these allotments as a whole, Wallow Fire impacts to range infrastructure being repaired or replaced, and permittee proven ability for superior range management this trial period may last up to 3 years. All other management requirements, including utilization guidelines, listed in each allotment management plan will be adhered to.

The level of authorized use and grazing schedule as indicated in this AOI are based on the best information available at this time and are subject to change as actual site specific forage conditions and available livestock watering sources are determined at the start of, and during, the annually authorized season of use.

The schedule above is an estimate, and may be modified at any time during the grazing season if the utilization levels, identified below, are met, if water availability is inadequate, or for other resource management reasons. If allowable use levels are met early in the scheduled pasture, cattle will be rotated into the next pasture or off the Forest. If you are scheduled to rotate livestock to the next pasture, but feel there is adequate forage to sustain them in the current pasture and would prefer to hold off on the rotation, please contact my range personnel or myself for an inspection and approval. No re-grazing of any pasture will be allowed. Cattle are to be completely removed from a pasture by the off date. Please notify this office when you begin to move cattle and when a pasture rotation is complete.

2. UTILIZATION STANDARDS

The following utilization standards will be applied on the Bobcat-Johnson and Fishhook-Steeple Mesa and Beaver Creek Allotments:

- 40% use, by weight of current year’s growth, on upland perennial grass species.
- 40% use, by number of growing leaders, on upland browse species.
- 45% use, by weight of current year’s growth, on riparian grass species.
- 45% use, by number of growing leader’s, on riparian browse species.
- Within Northern goshawk territories, a utilization level in forested areas (includes small openings) of: 20% average by weight, not to exceed 40% in any one area, on grasses and forbs.
- Within Mexican spotted owl habitat, in order to maintain prey species habitat needs, a utilization level of 20-40%.

3. KEY AREA MONITORING

Utilization levels will be checked prior to livestock entering the allotment and near the midpoint, or sooner, 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 increaser, 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).

- Riparian areas will be monitored for use on riparian woody species' current year's leaders, as well as % use, by weight on riparian grasses.
- Upland areas will be monitored for use on perennial grass species.
- Mexican spotted owl protected and restricted habitat will be monitored to ensure that current management is providing cover for rodent prey species, the residual biomass that will support prescribed natural and ignited fires that would reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire in the Forest, and regeneration of riparian trees and shrubs.

District personnel will contact the 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 INSTRUCTIONS

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 May 1 to August 31, and no concentrations of livestock (i.e., corral use, traps, or large gatherings of livestock).
- Stock tanks must be surveyed for possible aquatic habitat before earth-disturbing maintenance is authorized.

6. OTHER 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.

Salt must be located at least ¼ mile from water, and preferably on ridges and/or areas of low use. Do not place salt blocks in the same location as the previous year, and locate blocks on hard ground not susceptible to erosion. 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. These instructions 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 Bobcat-Johnson, Fishhook-Steeple Mesa, and Beaver Creek Allotments. Any additional information collected during the year may be incorporated into the Annual Operating Instructions.

We appreciate your cooperation in the management of the Bobcat-Johnson, Fishhook-Steeple Mesa, and Beaver Creek Allotments. If you have any questions regarding these instructions, please feel free to call me or my Range personnel at (928) 339-5000 or (928) 333-4372.