



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Peaks
Ranger District

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File Code: 2230

Date: April 12, 2004

Babbitt Ranches, Inc.
c/o Bill Cordasco
P O Box 520
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Dear Bill:

These are your 2004 Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) for the Slate and Wild Bill Allotments. These Annual Instructions are a part of your term grazing permit as indicated in Part Two. In addition, this letter is to document actions that need to be taken this year to keep the Forest Service and these allotments in compliance with previous commitments from environmental assessments, allotment management plans and guidelines and recommendations for rare wildlife and plant species, including those that are threatened or endangered.

Slate Mountain Allotment

The Slate Mountain Allotment consists of 46,510 acres northwest of Flagstaff, Arizona. These acres lie in the northwest corner of the Peaks Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest. The allotment is bisected by State Highway 180 and lies north of Kendrick part to the Coconino Forest boundary. The grazing system is a five pasture deferred rest rotation system.

The southern portion of the allotment is a ponderosa pine/bunchgrass community at an elevation of approximately 7000'. The northern portion is a pinyon-juniper/blue grama community.

The allotment contains the following Land Management Plan Management Areas:

- MA 3-Ponderosa Pine and Mixed Conifer
- MA 5-Aspen
- MA 6-Unsuitable Timber Land
- MA 7-Pinyon Juniper on less than 40% slopes
- MA 8-Pinyon Juniper on greater than 40% slopes
- MA 9-Mountain Grassland
- MA 10-Transition Grassland
- MA 17-Special Areas (Red Mountain Natural Area)

The Slate Mountain Allotment occurs in one 5th code watershed. The following table is a summary of number of total acres within each 5th code watershed and acres of the allotment, which occur within each watershed.

5 th Code Watershed (Acres)	Allotment (Acres)	% of Allotment Within Watershed
Cedar Deadman (227,822)	46,510	20

The following is a list of Best Management Practices (BMP's) developed for these Annual Operating Instructions.

- Monitor and enforce permittee compliance with terms and conditions of the grazing permit.
- Manage livestock grazing within (TES unit 55) meadows at an intensity that will improve vegetation ground cover (primarily the litter component) and improve species diversity of perennial grasses.
- Rotate livestock in a planned grazing system that alternates rest and graze period throughout a given year and from year to year.
- Grazing at an intensity that will maintain enough cover to protect the soils and maintain or improve the quantity and quality of desired vegetation.
- Incorporate yearlong rest from cattle into every pasture wherever possible. This yearlong rest from cattle improves overall forage health by allowing more plants to reach maturity and reproduce.

Your term grazing permit information along with your 2004 grazing schedule is listed below for these allotments:

<u>Permittee Name</u>	<u>Permit Type</u>	<u>Season</u>	<u>Permitted No.</u>
Babbitt Ranches, L.L.C.	Term	5/15-9/30	600 cows/calves & bulls

<u>Pasture Name</u>	<u>Use Dates</u>	<u>Total Number</u>
Maverick	5/15-7/16	600
Cedar	7/17-9/22	600
Cedar Holding Slate	9/23-9/30 yearlong rest	600

Wild Bill Allotment

The Wild Bill Allotment consists of 26,520 acres northwest of Flagstaff, Arizona. These acres lie near the northwest corner of the Peaks Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest. The allotment runs south of Kendrick Park to Walker Hill, east to Hochdeffer Hills and west to the Coconino National Forest boundary. The grazing system is a four pasture deferred rest rotation system.

The majority of the allotment is a ponderosa pine/bunchgrass community at an elevation of approximately 7000'. Within the ponderosa pine community lies scattered pockets of mountain meadows and aspen community types. No riparian areas within the allotment are accessible to cattle.

The allotment contains the following Land Management Plan Management Areas:

- MA 3-Ponderosa Pine and Mixed Conifer
- MA 4-Ponderosa Pine on greater than 40%
- MA 5-Aspen
- MA 6-Unsuitable Timber Land
- MA 9-Mountain Grassland
- MA 10-Transition Grassland

The Wild Bill Allotment occurs in three 5th code watersheds. The following table is a summary of number of total acres within each 5th code watershed and acres of the allotment that occur within each watershed.

5 th Code Watershed (Acres)	Allotment (Acres)	% of Allotment Within Watershed
Sycamore Canyon (103,894)	19,900	20
Spring Valley (4,174)	2,700	65
Cedar-Deadman (237,822)	4,000	2

The following is a list of Best Management Practices (BMP's) developed for these Annual Operating Instructions.

- One of the main goals for livestock grazing practices on this allotment is to maintain or improve the quality of water.
- The location, timing, and intensity of livestock grazing activities should be controlled with objectives of achieving soil cover to prevent accelerated erosion and to protect water quality.
- Structural range improvements, such as fences, water developments, trails and corrals, should be planned, constructed and utilized in a manner to enhance or maintain water quality.
- Land treatments to manage vegetation or practices to reduce erosion should be planned, implemented and maintained to minimize adverse impacts on water quality.
- Livestock management activities, such as parasite control, feeding and salting, should be done in a manner to protect water quality.
- Monitor and enforce permittee compliance with terms and conditions of the grazing permit.

- Manage livestock grazing within (TES unit 55) meadows at intensity that will improve vegetation ground cover (primarily the litter component) and improve species diversity of perennial grasses.

Your term grazing permit information along with your 2004 grazing schedule is listed below for this allotment:

<u>Permittee Name</u>	<u>Permit Type</u>	<u>Season</u>	<u>Permitted No.</u>
Babbitt Ranches, L.L.C.	Term	5/15-9/30	502 cows/calves & bulls

<u>Pasture Name</u>	<u>Use Dates</u>	<u>Total Number</u>
Kendrick Holding	6/1-6/10	502
Hochderffer	6/11-7/20	502
N. Wild Bill	7/21-9/20	502
Kendrick Holding	9/21-9/30	502
S. Wild Bill	yearlong rest	

The pasture move dates shown above are an estimate, and may need to be changed on the basis of actual range conditions. Due to current drought conditions it is vital to monitor actual conditions closely, and notify the Forest Service promptly if it appears that livestock will need to be moved sooner or later than estimated above. Grazing dates will be adjusted for this year's soil and vegetation readiness. Field checks in key forage areas such as meadows and riparian areas will be made prior to scheduled entry dates. Dates may be adjusted only with prior approval of the Forest Officer.

To facilitate livestock moves, gates may be opened two days prior to the scheduled move date only when moving into an adjacent pasture. Gates must be closed and grazed pasture entirely cleaned of livestock no later than five days following the scheduled move date. Grazed pastures must be kept clean of livestock following the pasture move.

Salt or mineral supplement locations should be rotated annually and avoid areas where cattle concentrations could cause excessive vegetation trampling, soil loss or disturbance to sensitive species or habitats. These areas would include habitats that support Mexican spotted owls, northern goshawks, rare plants, riparian vegetation, meadows or locations closer than 1/4 mile from a water source. The enclosed map shows the general location of these areas that are not obvious on the ground. These maps do not include all obvious sensitive areas like all meadows, riparian areas or water sources.

No prairie dog control (i.e., poisoning or shooting) is allowed in association with this permit.

Monitoring will be conducted in partnership with the permittee on a regular basis during the grazing season and will be used to develop next years Annual Operating Instructions that states when livestock are to be moved and how grazing patterns are to be changed during the grazing season. It is important this year for you to help us with monitoring of your grazing permit. With present and future downsizing in the Forest range program your assistance in monitoring will

become increasingly more important. This monitoring generally includes compliance with your AOI, livestock utilization and overall range condition and trends.

Utilization monitoring will be conducted throughout the year in every livestock grazed pasture following the protocol set up in the attached worksheet. In addition, key site and key species monitoring, to further conform to the Coconino Forest Plan, will be conducted at the following sites on the allotments:

Slate Mountain

<u>Management Area</u>	<u>Pasture</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Key Species</u>
Ponderosa pine	Slate	N. of Slate Mtn.	squirreltail, blue grama Wheatgrass, carex

Wild Bill

<u>Management Area</u>	<u>Pasture</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Key Species</u>
Ponderosa pine	N. Wild Bill	S. of Hochdeffer Hill	squirreltail, blue grama wheatgrass

The allowable level of utilization on herbaceous and woody vegetation is 35% on these allotments. Livestock utilization of woody vegetation in riparian areas may not exceed 20%. This will ensure proper protection and management of resources on these allotments.

Approximately 30 repeat photography point points will be put on the Forest by the permittee. This will involve ATV travel to these sites. An orange monitoring stake will be placed at ground level for long term accuracy.

Adjustments in numbers, rotation schedule or season of use will be made if allowable use standards are exceeded. To achieve the desired allowable use, it is important to have proper livestock distribution.

Refer to the attached map for the areas that are excluded from cattle grazing during the 2003 grazing season. All fences must be maintained to ensure cattle stay out of these areas. You must monitor these areas to ensure cattle do not enter them. If cattle enter these sites immediate action must be taken to remove them.

AOI's are appealable and subject to review under 36 CFR 251.

If you have any questions please call Matt Atencio, Katherine Sanchez or Mike Hannemann at 526-0866.

Sincerely,

<u>/s/ Gene Waldrip</u>	<u>4/12/2004</u>
Gene Waldrip	Date
District Ranger	

I have reviewed and agree with these Annual Operating Instructions.

/s/ Bill Cordasco
Bill Cordasco

Planned Monitoring

Monitoring on this allotment over this year and up to the next 10 years will include: compliance, allotment inspections, range readiness, forage production, rangeland utilization, condition and trend, soil and riparian condition, and threatened and endangered species habitat.

Compliance: Throughout each grazing season compliance monitoring will be done by Forest Service personnel to determine accomplishment of the terms and conditions of this permit, Allotment Management Plan, and Annual Operating Instructions.

Allotment Inspections: Allotment inspections are a written summary done each fall by Forest Service personnel to document compliance monitoring and to provide an overall history of that year's grazing. This document may include weather history, the year's success, problems, improvement suggestions for the future, and monitoring summary.

Range Readiness: Each spring, Forest Service personnel will assess range readiness prior livestock coming on the allotment to determine if vegetative conditions are ready for livestock grazing. The range is generally ready for grazing when cool season grasses are leafed out, forbs are in bloom, and brush and aspen are leafed out. These characteristics indicate the growing season has progressed far enough so grazing will not seriously impact these forage plants.

Forage Production: Forage production surveys for the allotment will be done every nine to 13 years. Methods used for these surveys will be done by the best available methods at that time. These values will be used as tools to manage this allotment, but will not be the sole measure to set carrying capacity.

Rangeland Utilization: Utilization monitoring is an estimate of the available forage by weight consumed or trampled through grazing and is expressed as a percent of the current

year's biomass removed. Utilization monitoring is designed to assess key forage utilization levels by livestock and elk during the year and from year to year.

Key forage species for this allotment include western wheatgrass, blue grama, squirreltail, Mountain muhly, and Arizona fescue. Utilization monitoring will be conducted by the permittee and spot checked by Forest Service personnel throughout the year in every grazed pasture. This monitoring will calculate an overall utilization value for a pasture 1) before livestock go into a pasture, 2) within five days after livestock leave a pasture, and 3) at the end of the growing season in the fall. Utilization will be averaged into the following five categories: no-use (0-10%), light (11-20%), moderate (21-50%), high (51-70%) and extreme (71%+). The goal for utilization will be 35% or less by livestock throughout the year with this intensive livestock grazing system.

In addition, key site and key species monitoring will be conducted in each of following habitat types: pine (oak), riparian, mountain meadow, and aspen, if these habitat types are present on the allotment and are grazed by livestock. Utilization monitoring will also occur in selected pastures rested from livestock grazing by Forest Service personnel.

Condition and Trend: Watershed and vegetative condition and trend monitoring will help determine the effectiveness of the Allotment Management Plan and long-term range and watershed trend. In the past we have used Parker 3-step and paced transects to determine condition and trend. We now have better monitoring techniques such as canopy cover and frequency ground cover plots.

Parker 3-step and paced transect monitoring points were established throughout this allotment in the 1950-60's. These transects are one of best historic records of range condition and trend. The photo points and vegetative ground cover data show how the site has changed over time. The new plots will be placed with the Parker 3-step transects in most locations to add to this historic data. The original photo points will be retaken.

Ocular plant canopy cover 0.10 acre plots will be used to compare existing conditions with potential and desired vegetative community conditions. Over time, these plots will show how canopy cover changes. Canopy cover will provide an indication of how plants are growing, assuming that if they are getting bigger and occupying more space, then they are doing well and that can be a relative gauge of vigor.

Frequency and ground cover data will be collected using the widely accepted plant frequency method (University of Arizona, Extension Report 9043, 1997). These plots will monitor trends in plant species abundance, plant species distribution and ground cover. All this information will be statistically valid. This will provide information on plant composition and additional information on regeneration.

These transects will be read at least every 10 years by Forest Service personnel. These plots will be used to help determine the effectiveness of the current management.

Precipitation: Precipitation is currently recorded within or near this allotment at Flagstaff National Weather Service Office at Bellemont, Flagstaff Airport, Sedona Airport and all the active fire lookout towers on the Forest. We suggest that additional rain gauges be established at your headquarters or other convenient location for a more accurate record of your local precipitation. This data could be recorded throughout the year and summarized in the annual inspection.

Soil and Riparian Condition: The Intergovernmental Agreement between the Forest Service and the State of Arizona that controls water quality and the Clean Water Act requires implementation and effectiveness monitoring. The objectives of monitoring are to: 1) collect data sufficient to assist line officers and resource managers in evaluating effects of management activities on soil and water resources; 2) support changes in management activities to protect soil and water quality. Monitoring will help determine how successfully managers are implementing Guidance Practices and how effectively those practices are protecting soil and water quality. Arizona Department of Water Quality (ADEQ) will continue to monitor water quality in the area.

Evaluating watershed condition can be assessed using information from the monitoring schemes above. Monitoring of plant abundance, ground cover, species diversity and estimates of overall soil condition (using the methods throughout this monitoring section) will indicate whether or not management practices are effectively meeting management goals. Trends toward improvements in species abundance and diversity should indicate that management practices are effectively improving soil condition and by inference, maintaining or improving downstream water quality and complying with water quality standards. Conversely, decreases in plant abundance and species diversity may indicate that management practices are not effective and need to be changed. Environmental factors, especially precipitation, will be considered when evaluating monitoring results.

Improving trends for riparian vegetation and stream channel conditions (if applicable on this allotment) should indicate that management practices are effectively benefiting water quality. Conversely, decreases in riparian vegetation or channel condition indicate that management practices are not effective and need to be changed. Environmental factors, especially flooding, will be considered when interpreting monitoring results. Several Fixed Station, Biocriteria Program, and other water quality monitoring sites maybe located within or near the allotment. These sites have and are being used to track long-term conditions and trends at critical points in a watershed and to develop biological criteria for stream segments. Information from these sites will be considered in evaluating the effectiveness of management practices, but may be of limited value considering the multitude of influences affecting each monitoring site.

Rationale: This monitoring program gives this alternative the best data possible to monitor the effectiveness of your Allotment Management Plan while staying within the projected Forest Service budget.