

**CLIFTON RANGER DISTRICT
APACHE/SITGREAVES NATIONAL FOREST
ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS (AOI)**

**Wildbunch
2023 - 2024**

I. PERMITTED USE:

The following table illustrates the number of livestock and season of use permitted on the Wildbunch Allotment as per Term Grazing Permit # 03010342 issued on February 27, 2020.

| KIND | CLASS | NUMBERS | AUM | SEASON OF USE |
|------------|-------------------------|---------|------|---------------|
| Cattle | Yearlings (9-18 months) | 35 | 248 | 01/01 – 10/31 |
| Cattle | Yearlings (9-18 months) | 48 | 169 | 01/01 – 05/31 |
| Cattle | Cow/Calf | 311 | 4995 | 03/01-02/28 |
| Horse/Mule | Horse | 8 | 117 | 03/01-02/28 |

II. AUTHORIZED USE:

The following numbers and classes of livestock are authorized to graze on the Wildbunch Allotment this year.

| KIND | CLASS | NUMBERS | AUM | SEASON OF USE |
|------------|----------|---------|------|-------------------------|
| Cattle | Cow/Calf | 220 | 1980 | 03/01/2023 – 10/01/2024 |
| | Cow/Calf | 311 | 1555 | 10/01/2023 – 02/28/2024 |
| Horse/Mule | Mature | 8 | 115 | 03/01/2023 – 02/28/2024 |

III. ROTATION SCHEDULE: (Livestock use is authorized as follows in the pasture rotation schedule. Deviations from this will be considered not in compliance and must be made in advance and amended in the AOI to remain in compliance with Forest Officer Instructions.

Actual dates may vary (+ or – 5 days) dependent on utilization levels, range conditions and time required moving livestock.

| PASTURE | NUMBER | SEASON OF USE(calendar) | GRAZING INTENSITY | KEY AREA | KEY SPP |
|--------------------|--------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------------------------|
| South/Indian Creek | 220 | 3/1 – 6/1/23 | Conservative 31 – 40% | P10, P2,C6 | Bocu, bogr, bohi, hibe, scsc |
| Roan Cow | 110 | 6/2 -10/01/23 | Conservative 31 – 40% | C3, | Bocu, bogr, bohi, hibe, scsc |
| North | 110 | | | | |
| Mudsprings | 311 | 10/02-01/01/24 | Conservative 31 – 40% | C2, C7 | Bocu, bogr, bohi, hibe, scsc |
| Indian Creek | 156 | 01/02/24 – 02/28/24 | Conservative 31 – 40% | P12, P5, C3 | Bocu, bogr, bohi, hibe, scsc |
| South | 155 | | | | |
| Horse (as needed) | 8 | 3/1 – 2/28/23 | Light 0-30% | C4 | Bocu, scsc |

*** Indian Creek/South will be used in dormant (winter/spring) and not used during the summer months to reduce chances of cattle to reach the rivers.

*** Temporary fence will be designed, cleared and implemented to assist in management of above line. Look at electric fence as a temporary fence.

IV. ALLOWABLE USE STANDARDS (Grazing Intensity)

Allowable use of forage is based on the amount and kind of forage on the allotment, plant needs, range condition, trend, and grazing management strategy. Duration, frequency, and timing may be manipulated within the grazing schedule to meet allowable use standards. Grazing intensity may be described in terms herbage removed during the grazing and/or growing period, or as a utilization level at the end of the growing period. Removal of leaf material, when the plant is actively growing can affect root growth which in turn affects future leaf growth. Sufficient leaf area is essential to support plant functions through photosynthesis.

The allowable use levels for this allotment are established for key areas and key species by pasture for the time period livestock are in a pasture. The use on key species in key areas should be used as a trigger the length of the grazing period in each pasture. The establishment of the utilization standards is consistent with 36 CFR 222 regulations, FSM 2210 and 2230, and FSH 2209.21.

For simplicity, key areas are generally considered as follows: 1) full capacity rangeland located on ridgetops/mesas within a ¼ mile from available water sources; 2) canyon bottoms/riparian areas with free flowing water or springs regardless of distance from water; 3) any area containing full capacity range with erosive soils and insufficient/marginal ground cover to protect the soil; or 4) areas containing habitat, whether occupied, suitable and unoccupied, or potentially suitable habitat, for threatened, endangered, or proposed species that are of concern to the Forest Service.

Key areas should be designated in cooperation with the Forest Service and the permittee.

Grazing Intensity is discussed by Holechek and others (Holechek, Jerry L., Rex D. Pieper, and Carlton H. Herbel. 2004. Range Management, Principles & Practices. Prentice Hall, page 248):

Table 3. Qualitative characteristics of grazing intensity categories used to characterize New Mexico rangelands (Holechek & Galt, 6/00, Rangelands).

| Qualitative Grazing Intensity Category | Use of Forage by Weight | Qualitative Indicators of Grazing Intensity |
|--|-------------------------|---|
| Light to non-use | 0-30 | Only choice plants (key species) and areas show use. There is no use of poor forage plants |
| Conservative | 31-40 | Choice forage plants (key species) have abundant seed stalks; Areas more than a mile from water show little use: About one third to one half primary forage plants show grazing on key areas. |
| Moderate | 41-50 | Most of accessible range show use; Key areas show patchy appearance with one half to two thirds of primary forage plants (key species) showing use; Grazing is noticeable 1-1½ miles from water |
| Heavy | 51-60 | Nearly all primary forage plants show grazing on key areas: Palatable shrubs show hedging: Key areas show a lack of seed stalks: Grazing is noticeable in areas over 1½ miles from water |
| Severe | 61+ | Key areas show a clipped or mowed appearance (no stubble ht.): Shrubs are severely hedged; There is evidence of livestock trailing to forage; Areas over 1½ miles from water lack stubble height. |

V. ADMINISTRATION

1. The permittee will record actual use as it occurs; including livestock numbers and dates your permitted livestock are in a pasture. This information will be reported at the next annual validation meeting.
2. Any change or deviation from this Annual Operating Instructions is to be coordinated and confirmed in advance with the District in an AOI amendment. Additionally, as per terms and conditions of the grazing permit, the permittee shall provide 5 days’ notice of moving livestock on or off the allotment. Credit or refunds generated are based upon this documentation. If emergency conditions require making a change immediately, the permittee will notify the District as soon as practical.
3. Livestock remaining in pastures beyond the specified rotation date, that are allowed to drift between pastures, or grazing in rested pastures may be considered a violation of your Term Grazing Permit.

4. Livestock should be moved when forage utilization objectives have been met or within 1 week of planned rotation dates, unless changes have been confirmed with District Range personnel.

5. The District may spot check range improvements before the entry date to insure improvements are in a satisfactory condition. Livestock will not be allowed to enter pastures if assigned improvements are not maintained to proper standards. Livestock are not allowed to enter pastures if fences will not keep livestock where they are placed.

VI. SALT AND MINERAL BLOCK

Typically, salt or mineral blocks are not to be placed within a quarter mile of water or drainage bottoms. With District Ranger approval, salt may be placed closer than a quarter of a mile to water for specific purposes. Salt will be used to attract cattle to areas of a pasture typically not utilized and or for soil/range condition treatment purposes. Blocks may be removed by the District if found near water, over-utilized areas, meadow bottoms or roads. Feeding and/or supplements such as molasses are not authorized, unless on a case by case for specific purposes and approved by the District Ranger.

VII. MONITORING

Monitoring and evaluation is an essential aspect of good rangeland management. Monitoring and evaluation can be described as the gathering of information so the manager knows what is happening to rangeland resources and why. The intent of monitoring and evaluation is to test the success of the management strategy and if needed, make adjustments. The following types of monitoring can be collected and will be used by the Forest Service for management decisions.

1. Forage Production
2. Forage Utilization/ Stubble Height measurements.
3. Photo Points
4. Condition of Improvements
5. Actual Use
6. Grazing Response Index
7. Precipitation.

VIII. RANGE IMPROVEMENT CONSTRUCTION / MAINTENANCE

The permittee will maintain all range improvements that are assigned for maintenance on pages 11 – 14 of the Term Grazing Permit. Reconstruction or new improvements requires written authorization by the District Ranger through a Permit Modification. When improvements are completed the permittee will inform District Range personnel to schedule an inspection. Before using machinery to clean any pond within defined wildlife habitat, the permittee is required to give the District Office at least 45 days advance notice so that the tank can be inspected for threatened or endangered species. All work involving the use of heavy equipment will be accomplished only after prior approval of the District Ranger.

The following table can be addressed in pen and ink as improvements are developed and copies be added to 2240 files.

| Current Year Improvement Scheduled | | YEAR | 2021 - 2022 | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Improvement Type / ID # | Completion Date | Description/Comments | | Status Done /Date |
| | | | | |

IX. PROTECTION

The permittee, his agents and employees, when acting within the scope of their employment, and his contractors and subcontractors will protect the land and property of the United States, waived private land and other land under jurisdiction of the Forest Service covered by and used in conjunction with this permit. Protection will include taking all reasonable precautions to prevent, make diligent efforts to suppress and report promptly all fires on or endangering such land and property. During periods of high fire danger, branding fires will be allowed by permit only.

X. ALLOTMENT INSPECTIONS

Forest personnel may conduct periodic brief inspections of pastures within the allotment at any time to verify actual use, improvement conditions, or other non-range related activity. The permittee will be notified and invited to participate on extended (3-5 days) inspections.

Notes:

Little Pasture – Incidental use for trailing between pastures & working facilities.

Blue River – No grazing – Livestock not allowed.

Sandrock – No grazing – Livestock not allowed.

XI. PERMIT CONDITIONS

This Annual Operating Instructions is hereby made a part of the Term Grazing Permit as provided for in Part 2, Section 8(a). It complies with the standards and guidelines found in the Forest Plan.

Failure to comply with **any** of the terms and conditions specified in Parts 1, 2, and 3 of your Term Grazing Permit may result in suspension or cancellation, in whole or in part, after written notice. This is found in Part 1, Section 3, of your permit.

VINCENT
VOELKER

 Digitally signed by VINCENT
VOELKER
Date: 2023.02.28 08:53:59
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DISTRICT RANGER

DATE