

2023 ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

Quemado Ranger District Gila National Forest

Underwood Lake & Trout/Dillman Creek Allotments

Prepared By: /s/ Kaitlin Burrows
District Range Specialist

Date: 3/10/2023

Approved By: /s/ Randall Chavez
District Ranger

Date: 3/10/2023

Annual Operating Instructions

I. INTRODUCTION

Randall Chavez & Kaitlin Burrows (Forest Service) met with Patti and Dennis Swapp (Permittee) on Friday March 10, 2023, to discuss management of the Underwood and Trout/Dillman Creek Allotments during the current grazing year and to plan grazing management for the upcoming grazing season. These Annual Operating Instructions are the result of that discussion.

Term Permitted Livestock Numbers:

Permittee	Allotment	Number & Class of livestock	Dates
Swapp Land & Cattle Co.	Underwood Lake	185 Cow/Calf	05/01 – 10/31
Swapp Land & Cattle Co.	Trout/Dillman Creek	48 Cow/Calf	04/01 – 01/31

Authorized Use:

Permittee	Allotment	Number & Class of livestock	Dates
Swapp Land & Cattle Co.	Underwood Lake	185 Cow/Calf	05/01 – 10/31
Swapp Land & Cattle Co.	Trout/Dillman Creek	48 Cow/Calf	04/01 – 01/31

Pasture Rotations:

Underwood Lake:

Number & Class of Livestock	Rotation Date	Pasture
185 Cow/Calf	05/01 – 06/15	Lost Spring
185 Cow/Calf	06/16 – 08/15	Underwood
185 Cow/Calf	08/16 – 09/15	Steele
185 Cow/Calf	09/16 – 10/31	Romero

Creek and Big Bend pastures will not be used this grazing year. See Utilization Monitoring Section for Riparian Utilization Levels of Woody Vegetation.

Trout/Dillman Creek:

Number & Class of Livestock	Rotation Date	Pasture
48 Cow/Calf	04/01 – 08/15	Bill Lee Mesa
48 Cow/Calf	09/01 – 09/30	Dillmon
48 Cow/Calf	10/1 – 10/15	Mesa
48 Cow/Calf	10/15 – 01/31	Foxy Grandpa

Use of the Dillman Pasture is authorized this grazing year based on water and forage availability. See allowable use in the Utilization Monitoring Section.

* Pastures that are scheduled for holding and/or doctoring can be used for these purposes until allowable use is reached.

The above schedule for stocking the allotment depends upon the availability of forage and water. Some flexibility in the above pasture rotation dates will be allowed for justifiable causes such as weather conditions, livestock management needs, and range conditions. If there is a need to deviate from the above pasture rotation schedule by more than 15 days, you must notify the Ranger District of the proposed change in the pasture rotation date and the reason for the change. A deviation from the above schedule of more than 15 days must be approved verbally or in writing. All Credit and Refund requests require approval from the District Ranger. Only preapproved requests for Resource Protection Non-Use are eligible for Credit (IV. General Instructions 4. Credits and Refunds).

II. MANAGEMENT OF LIVESTOCK

The permittee is responsible for monitoring water availability and forage utilization and moving livestock when sufficient water is no longer available or when proper forage utilization is achieved in a pasture. The permittee is responsible for keeping track of and maintaining control of livestock. In the event livestock are found to be out of the scheduled pasture, it is required to find, gather, and return those animals to the proper pasture as soon as possible.

III. IMPROVEMENT MAINTENANCE

All range improvements assigned in the Term Grazing Permit are to be maintained in a functioning condition. In the event these improvements cannot be brought up to a functioning condition, you should notify the Range Staff at the Quemado Ranger District to schedule them for reconstruction as funds become available.

Pending Approval: The following requests for maintenance have been made and require additional analysis and/or clearances prior to approval.

- 5033- Underwood Lake Spur ABF reconstruction and adjustment Eastern 1 mi. Need: Clearances
- FSR 36 needs maintaining; needs a blade ran down it. Need to check with Archologist.
- Fence between Hell Roaring Mesa and Bill Lee Mesa (1/2 mile) needs rebuilt
- Proposed new Water Point (well) on Bill Lee Mesa. Needs: Category Exclusion and Clearances.

Please note that maintenance of range improvements or any other activity that involves any physical ground disturbance must have prior approval from the District Ranger.

IV. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

1. Fire: Branding and warming fires should be used with good judgment - not on windy days or during times when fires are specifically restricted. If there is an emerging wildfire on the allotment, we will notify you and elevate your concerns regarding the fire management.

2. Records: To close out permit modifications you must provide documentation of materials and labor constituting your contribution to the permit modification. You must provide documentation of cattle numbers such as dates of entering and leaving pastures. This information is used to substantiate the carrying capacity of the allotment. The information demonstrates use and the need for forage to meet the economic needs of the county. This information may also be used to establish cause and effect if there is a significant change in calf crop (Example, a wolf pack becomes established near your allotment).

3. Heavy Equipment Use: Please notify district well in advance of any plans to use heavy equipment so that necessary clearances and/or permits can be obtained. You will be notified by the district when you can proceed.

4. Credit/Refund: Any credit or refund applications for grazing fees must be made as far in advance as possible. Credit/Refund applications are not retroactive and will be approved only if the District Ranger is notified of livestock removal, prior to, or at the time, the livestock are taken off the allotment. All Credit and Refund requests require approval from the District Ranger. Only preapproved requests for Resource Protection Non-Use are eligible for Credit.

In an effort to address administrative needs to process additional bills and credits the Quemado Ranger District has established a minimum guideline of 10 percent of permitted numbers for midseason adjustments in livestock numbers.

5. Salting and Supplemental Feeding:

- a. Feeding grass, alfalfa, or any other type of hay (whether in bale or cube form) as a primary feed source on National Forest System Lands is not authorized. Feeding hay or supplements as a primary feed source indicates a severe lack of available forage and livestock shall be removed from areas with little or no forage available.
- b. Supplementing with vitamin or mineral supplements, protein blocks, molasses licks, etc. on National Forest land is permitted when used in the same manner as salt.
- c. Salting practices will be in alignment with the 10-Year Term Grazing Permit. Salt and supplement will be placed in areas of available feed to help draw cattle to them. Salt and supplement will not be placed within ¼ mile from water and/or in natural concentrations areas which receive heavy grazing use.

V. SPECIAL MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

Keep track of conditions on your allotment. Make adaptive management plans and contact the district range management staff if vegetative/watershed conditions could be substantially harmed due to current management.

The following grazing restrictions will apply in portions of the Romero Pasture of the Underwood Lake Allotment:

No salt, mineral or supplemental feed may be placed in this area from February 1 to August 31, and no concentrations of livestock, i.e., corral use, traps or large gathering of livestock is allowed. Routine maintenance of range developments is allowed.

Construction or reconstruction of range developments is permitted only outside the restricted season. The purpose of this restriction is to mitigate impacts to wildlife.

The following grazing restrictions apply to the Dillman Creek Pasture of the Trout/Dillman Allotment:

As outlined in the 2002 Decision, the Dillman Creek pasture is to be grazed with the resource objective of suppressing herbaceous vegetation in favor of woody vegetation. Allowable use of woody vegetation in this pasture is limited to 10% of riparian sprouts and seedlings.

VI. UTILIZATION MONITORING

Utilization monitoring will normally coincide with livestock moves between pastures or from the forest. You are encouraged to participate in monitoring conducted on the allotment.

The Underwood Lake Decision Notice dated September 16, 2002 established key area forage utilization guidelines of 40% allowable use on Kentucky Bluegrass and 35% allowable use on remaining forage species. When livestock are permitted to graze within Creek and Big Bend pastures, utilization of woody riparian species is limited to no more than 10% of the riparian sprouts/seedlings within a pasture heavily hedged. Within other riparian areas on the allotment that contain woody riparian plants, utilization is limited to no more than 25% of the riparian sprouts/seedlings within a riparian area.

The Trout Creek/Dillman Decision Notice dated December 17, 2002 established key area forage utilization guidelines of 30% allowable use on Kentucky Bluegrass, and 20% allowable use on other forage species during growing and dormant season. When livestock are permitted to graze within Trout Creek, Dillman Creek and Trout Campground pastures, utilization of woody riparian species is limited to no more than 10% of the riparian sprouts/seedlings within a pasture. Within other riparian areas on the allotment that contain woody riparian plants, utilization is limited to no more than 25% of the riparian sprouts/seedlings within a riparian area.

If you observe utilization levels approaching these guidelines you will need to take action for making changes to the grazing in that area. There are many actions that can be taken, such as pasture moves, locating your livestock on different waters, moving of salt and supplements, etc. We will work with you in order to insure that any actions taken are appropriate.

VII. TRAVEL MANAGEMENT

The Gila National Forest Travel Management Decision signed in September 2013 was implemented in 2016 on the Quemado Ranger District. This rule prohibits cross country motorized travel and has restricted all motorized vehicle travel on the Gila National Forest (GNF) to authorized motorized routes only on NFS land.

Some motorized uses are exempt from the prohibitions of the designation process (36 CFR 212.51(a): "Motor vehicle use that is specifically authorized under a written authorization issued under Federal law or regulation" (CFR 212.51(a) (8) is one of the exempted uses. The permittees and/or their employees must comply with all GNF

Travel Management regulations, except those allowed under this authorization as described below:

1. The permittees and/or their employees will be authorized for off road or unauthorized travel routes on their specific grazing allotment(s) to carry out the necessary activities for grazing and livestock management. This includes range improvement maintenance and/or reconstruction as designated in their grazing permit, placement of salt or other supplements, and for emergency livestock health purposes.
2. It is prohibited to operate any vehicle off NFS lands, State or County roads in a manner which damages or unreasonably disturbs the land, wildlife, or vegetative resources (36 CFR 261.15(h)). Moist soils are especially susceptible to damage through rutting or compaction; therefore, use of motorized vehicles on saturated soils should be avoided.
3. Utilize roads or trails designated for motor vehicle use to access range improvements, salting grounds, or livestock emergencies where possible. This includes trails and roads open for public use, those specified as "administrative use only", and keeping within fence rights-of-way while accomplishing fence maintenance where possible.
4. This authorization and associated activities are specific to your grazing permit(s) and allotment management only; recreational use including hunting or game retrieval with motorized vehicles is not authorized.

VIII. MODIFICATIONS

If unforeseen operational conditions require a change in the management specified in this AOI please contact rangeland management personnel at the Quemado Ranger District. Change requests should be made in advance so that field inspections (if necessary) can be conducted. Approval of changes to this AOI may be verbal or written, depending on the nature of the change requested. Verbal changes will be documented to your file for record keeping purposes.

Contact Randall Chavez at (575) 773-4678 or Randall.Chavez@usda.gov with any questions or concerns.