

# 2023 ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

## Quemado Ranger District Gila National Forest

### West Apache Creek Allotment

Prepared By:           /s/ Kaitlin Burrows            
District Range Specialist

Date: 03/10/2023

Approved By:           /s/ Randall Chavez            
District Ranger

Date: 03/10/2023

## Annual Operating Instructions

### I. INTRODUCTION

Randall Chavez and Kaitlin Burrows (Forest Service) met with Lena Milligan (Permittee) on Friday March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, to discuss management of the West Apache Creek Allotment 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	Number & Class of livestock	Dates
Burnard & Lena Milligan	17 Cow/Calf	03/01 – 02/28

#### **Authorized Use:**

Permittee	Number & Class of livestock	Dates
Burnard & Lena Milligan	0 Cow/Calf	03/01 – 02/28

#### **Resource Protection Non-Use:**

Resource protection and Development non-use is approved for the 2023 grazing season based on drought conditions.

- Fence and infrastructure were destroyed by the flood in summer 2023.
- When Resource Protection Non-Use is authorized, all assigned range developments identified in the Term Grazing Permit will be maintained to a functional status.

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.

**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.**

- Corrals got destroyed during the flood in summer of 2022.
- Needs materials for fence at boundary of Finishing Pasture – ½ mile roughly
- Trees down on neighboring border fence, neighboring permittee's responsibility.
- Could use some fencing materials (T-posts, stays, etc.) to rebuild infrastructure.

### **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.

## **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.

Consultation in 2001 dictated 40% allowable use during the dormant season, (Oct. 16<sup>th</sup> – Apr. 14<sup>th</sup>) and 30% allowable use during the growing season, (Apr. 21<sup>st</sup> – Oct 15<sup>th</sup>) annually.

In addition, allowable use levels were established for riparian woody species with no more than 25% of the riparian sprouts/seedlings within riparian areas. These riparian areas include Whiskey Creek, Apache Creek, and Kerr Canyon.

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](mailto:Randall.Chavez@usda.gov) with any questions or concerns.