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This letter documents our meeting held on February 15, 2008, and subsequent phone conversations with Amy Baumer on July 1 and July 14, 2008, and will serve as your **amended** Annual Operating Instructions for the 2008/2009 grazing season on the Bridgeport and parts of the Carson Ranger Districts. Portions in **bold** reflect changes for the 2008 grazing season. In attendance on February 15, 2008 were Fred Fulstone, Marianne Leinassar, Kris Leinassar (permittee), Cheryl Probert, Amy Baumer, Ingrid Drieling, and Rixey Jenkins (Forest Service).

This AOI will cover 14 of the 17 allotments in which you are permitted. The remaining three allotments will be covered at a later date.

**AUTHORIZED USE**

**SARONI BAND**

Allotment	Number & Class	Season
Saroni Canal S&G	718 on/ 307 off (1025 total)	04/10-05/07
Risue S&G	1025 e/l	05/08-05/31
Mill Canyon S&G	1025 e/l	06/01-06/25
Poison Creek S&G	1025 e/l	06/26-09/14
Beartrap (unit of Poison Creek S&G)	1025 e/l	09/15-10/05
Leavitt Meadows (part of Poison Creek S&G)	1025 e/l	10/06-10/15

**SARONI CANAL S&G, RISUE S&G:**

- Grazing will begin on the Saroni portion, with 718 e/l accounted for on National Forest System lands, and 307 head under "off" provisions on permittee controlled private lands. The band will then graze the Risue S&G allotment from North to South.
- As a reminder, the Jackass Fire burned a portion of the Risue S&G allotment during July of 2006. It is Forest Service policy to rest burned areas for two growing seasons following a fire. This equates to the burn being rested in grazing seasons 2007 and 2008. Please avoid this area again this grazing season.



**MILL CANYON S&G:**

- Please review allowable use standards in your term grazing permit with respect to grazing management and terms and conditions of the Biological Opinion. Allowable use standards equivalent to those for the By-Day watershed portion of the Rickey Peak S&G Allotment are applicable to all National Forest System lands within the Mill Canyon watershed.

**POISON CREEK S&G including the Beartrap Unit (previously BEARTRAP S&G):**

- Entrance of sheep onto the allotment will occur near Sonora Bridge, as it has in the past.
- You may water your sheep once near Sonora Bridge at the West Walker River when entering the allotment and you may also water your sheep south of the private land near Willow Flat. Grazing use in these instances must be **no more** than that associated with watering.
- Once sheep have reached the southern end of the Poison Creek allotment, they will cross over into Long Canyon (Beartrap unit), and return northward, across Yparraquirre Canyon, continuing north toward Poore Lake, and eventually to Leavitt Meadows. Please keep use of the West Walker trail to a minimum to avoid livestock conflicts with the public.
- Due to a known population of Yosemite Toad at Beartrap Lake, the sheep must stay ¼ of a mile away from the lake.
- Sheep are allowed to cross the West Walker River while in the Leavitt unit, and are allowed to water at the river. Except when watering, your sheep must be kept at least **100 feet** away from the river. I appreciate your continued cooperation in this matter.
- Use standards on Leavitt Meadows the last several years were right at standard and in some areas slightly exceeded. Please use extra caution in this area.

**DESERT PEAK BAND**

Allotment	Number & Class	Season
Sulphur S&G	1025 e/l	4/10-5/20
Desert Peak S&G	1025 e/l	05/21-06/20
<b>Cottonwood/Burcham S&amp;G</b>	<b>1025 e/l</b>	<del>06/21-9/17*</del>
<b>*An additional 44 days of use authorized for this band of domestic sheep</b>		<b>*06/21-10/31</b>

Sheep will be trailed from Desert Peak via upper Desert Creek to Cottonwood S&G allotment. This trailing route is authorized for one (1) day. Any trailing in excess of one day is not approved. Grazing on Burcham/Cottonwood will begin on the northern portion of Cottonwood, and move southward through Burcham.

**BALD MOUNTAIN BAND**

Allotment	Number & Class	Season
Sulphur S&G	700 e/l	04/10-04/22
Pine Grove S&G	700 e/l	05/21-06/10
Bald Mountain S&G	700 e/l	06/11-07/10
<del>Cottonwood/Burcham S&amp;G</del>	<del>700 e/l</del>	<del>7/11-9/13**</del>
<b>**Use no longer authorized for this band of domestic sheep.</b>		

### **BALD MOUNTAIN S&G:**

- The portion of the Desert Peak Allotment east of HWY 338 will be grazed in conjunction with the Bald Mountain Allotment.
- To protect the populations of the forb William's combleaf in and around the upper lakes on Bald Mountain, please avoid bedding or watering your sheep in these areas.
- The Forest Service considers the access road into Bald Mountain a low maintenance road. Therefore, you must maintain any road improvement(s) needed in order for a water truck to get into the area. Any road improvement must stay within the road prism.

### **OTHER SUMMER/FALL ALLOTMENTS**

#### **RICKEY S&G: 700 e/l, 06/28-09/20**

- The planned use is to begin in the Labrosse Unit and continue onto the Rickey Unit of the allotment. As you know, the Final Recovery Plan for Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep was released in February 2008. Section E of that plan has very specific guidance. This direction includes closure of the Labrosse Unit of the Rickey S&G allotment. We are required to enter into consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the use of the Labrosse Unit. We are going to initiate informal consultation this spring. The proposed action will require that you notify us by telephone 48 hours before you enter the Labrosse Unit and that you notify us by telephone 48 hours before you exit the Labrosse Unit, in order to account for the actual season of use. No additional minimizing measures are going to be proposed. Until the consultation is complete, **you are not authorized to enter the Labrosse Unit**. I will notify you in writing as soon as the process is complete. We will also keep you informed with any written documentation related to the consultation process on the Labrosse Unit.
- As you know, By-Day Creek is home to Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, which are listed as a threatened species. The Biological Assessment/Biological Opinion provides for rest to By-Day creek every four years. By-Day creek was scheduled for rest this grazing season; therefore sheep are not allowed with **¼ mile of By-Day creek**. My office will follow up with compliance throughout the grazing season.

#### **WILD OAT S&G: 1650 e, 04/01-07/15; not to exceed 1300 sheep months, 24 days.**

- This band comes from the home ranch.

#### **CAMPBELL-LOOPE S&G: 1650 e, 09/01-10/26**

- This band comes from Pine Nuts (BLM).

### **WINTER ALLOTMENTS**

#### **SUGARLOAF S&G: 1800 e (maximum) variable numbers and seasons within the season 12/16-02/28, not to exceed 2100 sheep months; 35 days.**

#### **SULPHUR S&G (north): 5400 e (maximum in three different bands), variable numbers and seasons within the season 12/16-03/25, not to exceed 7200 sheep months; 36 days.**

### **MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS**

Allotment maps and management requirements, including improvement maintenance, salting, camping, and bedding for those allotments you are permitted to graze have been provided to you.

Range improvements listed under part three in your term permit must be maintained before livestock enter allotments. The maintenance standards, also listed in part three of your permit, must be followed when maintaining improvements. Range improvements **must** be maintained even when there is **non-use** on an allotment; **for whatever reason**.

Sheep may use a bedding/nooning area no more than **once** per season. "Good bedground management" was highlighted in your 1974 Sheep Management and Development Plan. We discussed with you areas that district resource personnel observed during the 2007 grazing season.

Place salt at least ¼ mile from water, roads, and trails. If there are specific areas that require salt placement outside these guidelines, you must obtain approval from this office prior to salting. Haul dead livestock at least **100** yards from roads, trails, and water. All garbage and debris associated with managing your livestock on Forest Service allotments must be removed from the National Forest.

If you or your employees spot a wildfire on any of your allotments, report it immediately to the Interagency Dispatch Center in Minden, NV at **(775) 883-5995**. As a reminder, if the Bridgeport Ranger District enters into fire restrictions during 2008, this restriction applies to your operation as well.

Invasive weeds are becoming a serious threat to the welfare of our rangelands. Your assistance is needed to identify new outbreaks of weed populations and to prevent the establishment of weeds on the forest. Pay particular attention to areas where stock are concentrated such as loading/unloading areas, water developments, and salting areas. A Noxious Weed Free Hay order has been implemented on our Forest. This requires any hay that is brought onto the National Forest must be certified free from noxious weeds. All livestock entering the National Forest are recommended to be fed **Certified Noxious Weed Free Forage** for at least 2 days prior to entering the Forest. Pelletized feed is not affected by this order.

Standards and guidelines applicable to your allotment(s) include the following:

#### **On the Mill Canyon S&G:**

**Disturbance** of meadow-associated **streambanks** and natural lake and pond **shorelines** is **not to exceed 10 percent** of the stream reach or **10 percent** of the natural lake or pond shoreline.

In meadows that are in **early** seral status (an early stage of succession in a plant community or vegetation type, generally characterized by plant species that are adapted to colonizing disturbed areas with a high proportion of bare soil) livestock utilization of grass and grass-like plants must be limited to **30 percent** (or minimum **six-inch stubble height**).

In meadows that are in **late** seral status (fifty percent or more of the relative cover of the herbaceous layer is late seral with high similarity to the potential natural community, a diversity of age classes of hardwood shrubs is present, and regeneration is occurring) livestock utilization of grass and grass-like plants must be limited to a maximum of **30 percent** (or minimum **six-inch stubble height**).

In meadows that are **degraded** (such as those in early seral status with a greater than **ten percent** meadow area in **bare soil and active erosion**) **total rest** from grazing is required until they have recovered and have moved to a mid or late seral status.

In riparian areas browsing on mature riparian **shrubs** (including willow and aspen) is **not to exceed 20 percent** of the annual leader growth and is not to exceed more than **20 percent** of individual seedlings.

Standard not within the Framework, but within the Biological Opinion, 45% use of current year's growth on herbaceous species in upland sites

**On the Poison Creek S&G and Rickey S&G (NOT including By-Day Creek Drainage) allotments:**

**Disturbance** of meadow-associated **streambanks** and natural lake and pond **shorelines** is **not to exceed 20 percent** of the stream reach or **20 percent** of the natural lake or pond shoreline.

In meadows that are in **early** seral status (an early stage of succession in a plant community or vegetation type, generally characterized by plant species that are adapted to colonizing disturbed areas with a high proportion of bare soil) livestock utilization of grass and grass-like plants must be limited to **30 percent** (or minimum **six-inch stubble height**).

In meadows that are in **late** seral status (fifty percent or more of the relative cover of the herbaceous layer is late seral with high similarity to the potential natural community, a diversity of age classes of hardwood shrubs is present, and regeneration is occurring) livestock utilization of grass and grass-like plants must be limited to a maximum of **40 percent** (or minimum **four-inch stubble height**).

In meadows that are **degraded** (such as those in early seral status with a greater than **ten percent** meadow area in **bare soil and active erosion**) **total rest** from grazing is required until they have recovered and have moved to a mid or late seral status.

In riparian areas browsing on mature riparian **shrubs** (including willow and aspen) is **not to exceed 20 percent** of the annual leader growth and is not to exceed more than **20 percent** of individual seedlings.

In meadow areas of great gray owl protected activity centers {a protected activity center (PAC) is defined as an area established to protect breeding adults and their offspring}, maintain herbaceous meadow vegetation at least **12 inches** in height and **covering at least 90 percent** of the meadow. The great gray owl PAC within the Poison Creek S&G allotment is located just north of Secret Lake. It is estimated that the PAC covers 50 acres surrounding the nest site.

Winter Allotments:

20% use on black sage, low sage, and bitterbrush in key deer range  
40% use on same species outside key deer winter range

Remaining Spring and Summer Allotments:

30% use on key species on range above 10,000 feet elevation  
40% use on key species on range below 10,000 feet elevation

45% use on key species in riparian sites

20% use on willow species in riparian sites

40% use on grass species in aspen, sagebrush, and mountain brush sites  
20% use on shrub species in aspen, sagebrush, and mountain brush sites

10% maximum soil disturbance on steep slopes and loose, sandy soils on range above 10,000 feet elevation

20% maximum soil disturbance on all other range above 10,000 feet elevation

10% maximum soil disturbance on steep slopes and on loose, sandy soils on range below 10,000 feet elevation

35% maximum soil disturbance on all other range

You are responsible for determining when allowable use has been reached and for moving your sheep to the next unit to be used or off the allotment when the last unit has been grazed. The Forest Service is responsible for monitoring your compliance with allowable use standards. If you need assistance determining forage use or streambank disturbance levels, contact Amy and she will help you.

If you have questions, or need additional copies of any of this information, please contact Amy.

### **REPORTING**

Allotment Summary Forms, for reporting actual use and maintenance costs are included. Please complete these forms and return them to this office by November 15, 2008 for summer allotments, and by March 30, 2009 for winter allotments. Thank you for returning last year's actual use and improvement maintenance forms in a timely manner.

### **GENERAL MANAGEMENT**

Allotments that have been combined in terms of management are not necessarily reflected in the annual Bill for Collection. Numbers and seasons in your grazing bill reflect the total head months of use on permitted allotments, but not necessarily the planned use on the ground. In cases where the bill differs from these instructions, the Annual Operating Instructions are the authorized use patterns to be implemented on the ground.

Drought prevented you from using some of your winter range in 2007-2008. This grazing credit will be reflected on this year's grazing bill.

The grazing fees for 2008 have not changed from 2007. The fee for 2008 is \$0.27 per head month.

As a reminder, approval of requests for permittee convenience non-use is not automatic and the authorized officer should discuss the reasons for the nonuse request with the permittee. Approval of a request for permittee convenience non-use must be in writing by the authorized officer. Full or partial permittee convenience non-use may be approved by the authorized officer for no more than three consecutive years and not more than four years in any ten year period.

Payment of your grazing bill is due five days prior to your earliest turnout date to allow time for

processing. As a reminder the Forest Service is required to give permittees a minimum of 30 days to pay your grazing fees. The Forest Service is requesting that permittees schedule their AOI meeting a minimum of 35 days prior to their **earliest** on date to provide adequate time to plan for the upcoming grazing season.

Amy Baumer will continue to administer your permit. Please continue to use her as your contact on the district.

I trust that you will contact me any time you have a question so that we may keep our communication open. Thank you for continuing to work with us on the Bridgeport Ranger District. If you have any questions on the management of the above allotments, please feel free to contact myself or Amy at 760-932-5852.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Cheryl F. Probert*

CHERYL F. PROBERT  
District Ranger