

Appendix H:

VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT CLASSES AND OBJECTIVES FOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT-ADMINISTERED LANDS

The overall objective of visual resource management is to manage public lands in a manner that will protect the quality of the visual (scenic) values in accordance with Section 102(a)(8) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Visual Resource Management (VRM) system is a methodical approach to inventorying and managing the scenic resources of the public lands.

The visual resource inventory process (BLM Manual Section H- 8410- 1) provides the agency with a means of determining visual values. The inventory consists of a scenic quality evaluation, a sensitivity level analysis, and a delineation of distance zones. Based on these factors, as well as legislative or administrative mandates, one of four VRM Classes is assigned to BLM- administered lands.

Class I, the most highly valued visually, is assigned to those areas where decisions have been made to maintain a natural landscape. This includes areas such as a national wilderness, the wild component of a Wild and Scenic River (WSR), Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) designated for scenic values, and other congressionally and administratively designated areas where decisions have been made to preserve a natural landscape. Classes II, III, and IV are assigned to areas based on a combination of scenic quality, sensitivity level, and distance.

The specific objective(s) of each VRM Class provide(s) the standards for planning, designing and evaluating actions. The Contrast Rating System (BLM Manual Section 8431) provides a methodical means to evaluate activities and determine whether they conform with the approved VRM objectives. The degree of contrast is measured by assessing how much a proposed activity stands out when viewed from key

observation points and compared with the predominant natural landscape elements of form, line, color and texture.

The VRM Classes and their corresponding management objectives are as follows:

Class I - To preserve the existing character of the landscape. This class provides for natural ecological changes; however, it does not preclude very limited management activity. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention.

Class II - To retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Class III - To partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Class IV - To provide for management activities that require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level

of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. These management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance and repeating the basic landscape elements.

The VRM System, therefore, provides a means to identify visual (scenic) values; establish objectives through the Resource Management Planning process or on a case-by-case basis for managing these values; and provide timely input into proposed surface-disturbing projects to ensure the assigned objectives are met.

See
Maps 4A, 4B, 4C, and 5