

## **APPENDIX M - VRM CLASSIFICATION AND OBJECTIVES**

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**Class I** – The objective of Class I is to preserve the existing character of the landscape. VRM Class I is assigned to those areas where a management decision has been made to preserve a natural landscape. This includes specially designated areas such as national wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, the wild section of national wild and scenic rivers, and other congressionally and administratively designated areas where decisions have been made to preserve a natural landscape. This class provides for natural ecological changes; however, it does not preclude very limited management activities. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and should not attract attention.

Within the planning area, 471,617 acres in VRM Class I were identified. This classification is for the highest scenic quality, with the purpose of preserving the existing characteristic landscape. VRM Class I allows for natural ecological changes only. Landscape modification activities should be restricted in these areas. Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) are managed as VRM Class I areas until Congress releases them from consideration or designates them as Wilderness Areas.

**Class II** – The objective of this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the landscape should be low and not evident. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes to the landscape must repeat the basic visual elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape. Most of the planning area Class II areas have high visual exposure and sensitivity, and many of the Class II areas serve as key viewsheds for communities and major travel corridors. Landscape modifications in these areas would be prominent and noticeable from many places.

Visual qualities in Visual Resource Class I and Class II areas are particularly important with respect to fire management activities. Smoke and visible on-the-ground activities are two direct impacts to visual resources from fire and vegetation management.

**Class III** – VRM Class III areas are managed to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the landscape should be moderate, and management activities may attract attention, but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic visual elements of line, form, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the landscape.

**Class IV** – The objective of Class IV is to provide for management activities that require major modifications to the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the landscape can be high. The management activities may dominate the view and may 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 repetition of the basic visual elements of form, line, color, and texture.

Class III and Class IV provide for more flexibility in techniques used for wildfire suppression or use for resource benefit, prescribed vegetation treatments, or emergency rehabilitation procedures. However, relaxed visual resource standards may be subordinate to overall restoration goals of improving or restoring plant communities for other purposes, such as wildlife habitat.

**Class V** – This classification is applied to areas where the natural character of the landscape has been disturbed to a point where rehabilitation is needed to bring it up to one of the four other classifications.