Visual Resources Management

Key Points

- Alternative D would manage the largest number of acres under objectives that would maintain inventoried visual values within the decision area.
- Alternatives B and C would manage the least number of acres under objectives that would maintain inventoried visual values within the decision area.
- The Proposed RMP would manage a larger number of acres under objectives that would maintain inventoried visual values within the decision area when compared to Alternatives B and C, and less acres when compared with the No Action alternative and Alternatives A and D.

Summary of Notable Changes from Draft RMP/EIS

Refinements to the GIS data identified errors to acres of Wild and Scenic Rivers tentatively classified as Wild that had been incorrectly categorized as VRM Class II. Changes for the action alternatives and the Proposed RMP in VRM Classes I and II contained in **Table 3-242** reflect these acre corrections.

Issue 1

How would visual resource management and varying types and intensities of forestry management affect visual resource values on BLM-administered lands in western Oregon?

Background

Public lands have a variety of visual values. These different values warrant different levels of management. Because it is neither desirable nor practical to provide the same level of management for all visual resources, it is necessary to systematically identify and evaluate these values to determine the appropriate level of management.

The Visual Resource Management (VRM) System is the inventory and planning actions taken by the BLM to identify visual values and establish objectives for managing those values. The BLM's VRM System consists of two distinct components:

- Visual resource inventory (VRI) classes (VRI Class I through VRI Class IV): identify the visual values
- Visual resource management (VRM) classes (VRM Class I through VRM Class IV): establish the objectives for managing visual values

The inventory consists of a scenic quality evaluation, sensitivity level analysis, and a delineation of distance zones. Based on these three factors, the BLM places BLM-administered lands into one of four visual resource inventory classes. These inventory classes represent the relative value of the visual resources; Inventory Classes I and II being the most valued, Class III representing a moderate value, and Class IV being of least value.

Inventory classes are informational in nature and provide the basis for considering visual values in the RMP process. Visual resource inventory data for the planning area is stored and maintained at the Oregon State Office's Geospatial Information Systems department. Inventory classes do not establish management direction and the BLM does not use them as a basis for constraining or limiting surface-disturbing activities, except for VRI Class I:

- **VRI Class I**—The BLM assigns this class to areas where the management goal is to preserve a natural landscape. Unlike other VRI classes, VRI Class I is assigned based on a pre-existing preservation management objective rather than on the existing condition of the visual resources. This includes areas such as Wilderness Areas, Wilderness Study Areas, and other congressionally and administratively designated areas where preservation of the existing landscape is the objective of the designation.
- **VRI Class II, Class III, and Class IV**—The BLM assigns these classes based on an overlay of existing scenic qualities, sensitivity levels, and distance zones as documented through the inventory process. Areas inventoried at a Class II have higher existing visual resource value than do areas inventoried at VRI Classes III or IV. Areas inventoried at VRI Class IV have the lowest existing visual resource value.

The BLM designates VRM classes through a resource management plan. Unlike VRI classes, which, with the exception of VRI Class I, represent an area's existing visual value, VRM classes establish objectives, which prescribe the amount of change allowed through BLM management actions in the characteristic of the landscape. The allowance for noticeable change under VRM classes increases as the VRM class number increases:

- **VRM Class I**—The objective of this class is to preserve the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape would be very low and must not attract attention.
- **VRM Class II**—The objective of this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape would be low. Management activities may be seen, but would not attract the attention of the casual observer.
- **VRM Class III**—The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape would be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but would not dominate the view of the casual observer.
- **VRM Class IV**—The objective of this class is to provide for management activities, which require major modifications 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.

Visual values identified through the visual resource inventory are considered with other resource values in the resource management planning process. The assignment of VRM classes can vary from the VRI class placement except for VRM Class I, which is automatically assigned to VRI Class I areas. For example, the BLM is not precluded from establishing a VRM class of IV on an area that inventoried as a VRI class of II or III. Outside of VRI Class I areas, the BLM is not required to generate land use allocations or other resource designations considered during planning based on the inventoried VRI class. For example, the BLM is not precluded from establishing the Harvest Land Base on an area that inventoried as a VRI class of II. The BLM establishes visual management objectives through the designation of VRM classes in conformance with the objectives of the designated land use allocations and other resource designations (e.g., Wild and Scenic Rivers, Special Recreation Management Areas, and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern) considered during planning. **Appendix B** contains details of the management objectives and the assignment of VRM classes.

Summary of Analytical Methods

As part of this plan revision process, the BLM performed an updated visual resource inventory within western Oregon and established updated VRI classes. The BLM evaluated the loss or protection of visual values (scenic quality, sensitivity levels, and distance zones) by each alternative and the Proposed RMP from those identified during VRI classifications.

The BLM evaluated, by each alternative and the Proposed RMP, acres proposed for management under each VRM class, and analyzed how this management would affect existing visual resource values. Specifically, the BLM evaluated the effects to visual resource values by considering how management under the VRM class would likely change the existing character of the landscapes in a manner that could change the current acres in each VRI class over time. The identification of VRI classes is a calculation resulting from the combined rankings attributed to scenic quality, sensitivity levels, and distance zones. Of these three visual quality elements, land use planning decisions under consideration for this RMP revision would bear little influence decreasing sensitivity levels or changing distance zones. As such, the BLM focused this analysis on actions that could influence the third of these visual quality factors, scenic quality. The BLM assumed visual values to be potentially negatively influenced on acres assigned to be managed under a less protective VRM class than the identified VRI class, since the less protective the VRM class, the higher the level of permissible visible change. For example, BLM-administered lands inventoried as VRI Class III are considered to have moderate visual values; management of these lands under VRM Class IV, which allows for high levels of visible change, could adversely influence the inventoried characteristics of the natural landscape. The BLM concluded that the alternative or the Proposed RMP with the least acres managed under a less protective VRM class than their assigned VRI class would have the least potential effect to the inventoried visual values, and the alternative or the Proposed RMP with the most acres managed under a less protective VRM class than their assigned VRI class would have the largest potential effect change to the inventoried visual values.

Analysis Assumptions

For the purposes of this analysis, the BLM used VRI classes as a proxy to evaluate potential effects of forest management activities on scenic quality values and overall inventory scores. The BLM assumed that the following forest management activities would not degrade the inventoried visual value or scenic quality scores to an extent that would change the inventoried class:

- **VRI Class II**—Thinning could take place within VRI Class II areas without degrading their visual resource values to an extent that would change their VRI class. Regeneration harvest could not take place in VRI Class II areas without degrading visual resource values to an extent that would change their VRI class.
- **VRI Class III**—Thinning and regeneration harvest with retention could take place within VRI Class III areas without degrading their visual resource values to an extent that would change their VRI class. Clearcut harvests could not take place in VRI Class III areas without degrading visual resource values to an extent that would change their VRI class.
- **VRI Class IV**—All harvest types could take place within VRI Class IV areas without degrading their visual resource values.

The BLM acknowledges that this assumption likely overestimates the potential acres on which BLM forest management activities could possibly affect VRI classes. Since VRI classes are a calculation of three visual values, BLM-administered lands within the planning area could be inventoried as VRI Class II or III where scenic qualities are rated as being of moderate or low but sensitivity levels and distance zones are rated high.

The BLM assumes that no management actions would degrade lands identified as VRI Class I, as all acres identified an VRI Class I would be assigned to VRM Class I, and thus managed for very low to no visual contrast.

The Planning Criteria provides more detailed information on analytical assumptions, methods, and techniques, and geographic and temporal scales, which is incorporated here by reference (USDI BLM 2014, pp. 123–124).

Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

All surface-disturbing activities, regardless of the alternative or management action, would be subject to the management objectives of the underlying land use allocation. The visual resource contrast rating system analyzes the potential site-specific impacts of surface-disturbance and the facility design and placement on an area's visual components. The BLM would design surface-disturbing activities and facilities to mitigate visual effects and conform to the area's assigned VRM class objective.

Degradation of scenic qualities would potentially occur from surface-disturbing activities, such as those associated with regeneration timber harvest occurring within the Harvest Land Base or with construction of roads. Effects on visual resource values would also result from some actions proposed to manage other resources and uses (e.g., reciprocal rights-of-way and utility corridors). The BLM deemed that programs not addressed in this section have no, or negligible, potential to impact visual resource values under any of the alternatives or the Proposed RMP.

Table 3-240 shows the VRI class acreage and **Figure 3-143** shows the VRI class distribution in the decision area.

Table 3-240. Visual Resource Inventory class distribution in the decision area†

District/ Field Office	VRI Class I (Acres)*	VRI Class II (Acres)	VRI Class III (Acres)	VRI Class IV (Acres)
Coos Bay	579	16,382	61,070	246,829
Eugene	0	60,556	123,517	126,977
Klamath Falls	337	6,584	14,992	192,496
Medford	20,078	293,850	210,068	301,954
Roseburg	0	71,759	102,000	249,805
Salem	7,239	103,920	66,769	227,666
Totals	**28,233**	**553,052**	**578,415**	**1,345,726**

* The BLM assigns this class to areas where the management goal is to preserve a natural landscape. Unlike other VRI classes, VRI Class I is assigned based on a pre-existing preservation management objective rather than on the existing condition of the visual resources.

† See footnotes in **Table 3-241**

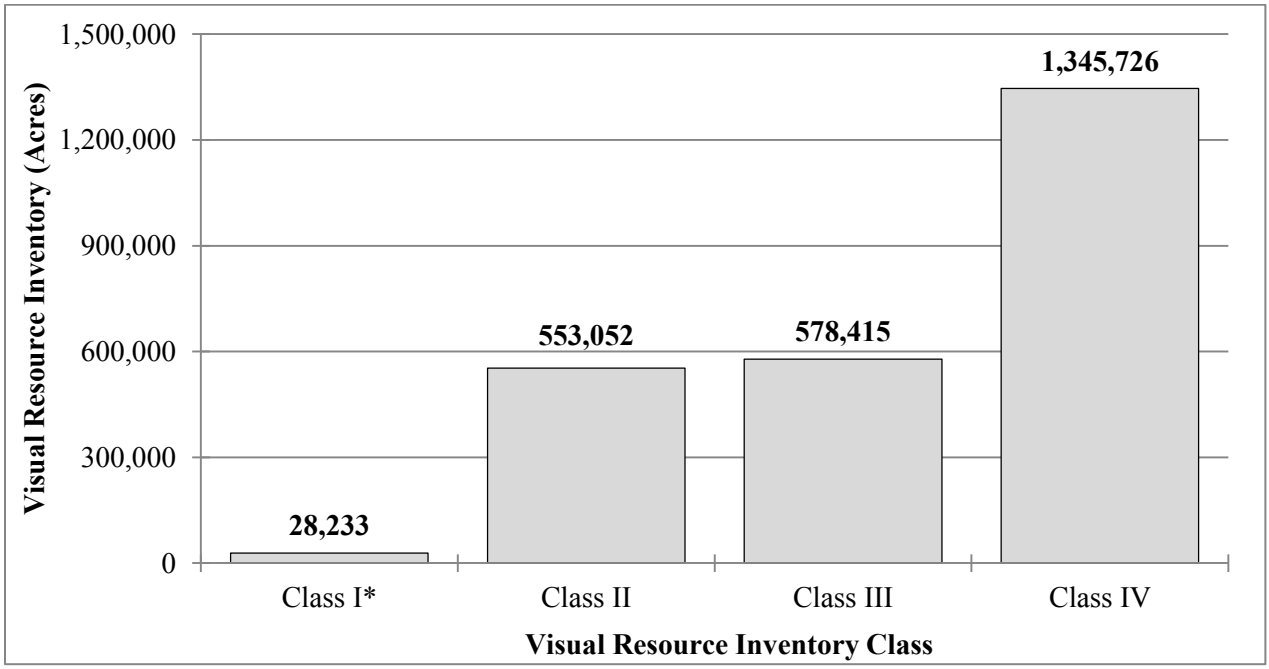

Figure 3-143. Visual Resource Inventory class distribution for the Proposed RMP† within the decision area

* The BLM assigns this class to areas where the management goal is to preserve a natural landscape. Unlike other VRI classes, VRI Class I is assigned based on a pre-existing preservation management objective rather than on the existing condition of the visual resources.

† See footnotes in **Table 3-241**

Effects from VRM Designation

Table 3-241 shows the acres assigned to each VRM class under each alternative and the Proposed RMP. Areas designated as VRM Class III or IV would allow more surface- and forest-disturbing effects and potentially have greater adverse effects on the visual resource's scenic quality than those areas designated as VRM Class I or II. The current visual values would potentially degrade to a moderate level if the BLM manages inventoried areas under a VRM Class III, and the visual values would be more severely reduced if managed under a VRM Class IV.

Table 3-241. Acres of Visual Resource Management classes in the decision area

VRM Class	No Action (Acres)	Alt. A (Acres)	Alt. B (Acres)	Alt. C (Acres)	Alt. D (Acres)	PRMP (Acres)
Class I	22,165*	27,628	27,628	27,628	27,628	28,233†
Class II	125,220	129,372	93,252	93,293	51,900	127,974
Class III	633,537	30,137	34,339	34,246	1,048,902	68,113
Class IV	1,691,128	2,283,679	2,315,571	2,315,623	1,342,361	2,254,535
Unknown‡	6,812	8,046	8,072	8,072	8,071	7
Totals	**2,478,862**	**2,478,862**	**2,478,862**	**2,478,862**	**2,478,862**	**2,478,862**

* Discrepancies exist in the current datasets for acres managed as VRM I within the Medford District under the 1995 RMPs.

† Calculations from GIS present the appearance of an additional 608 acres of VRM Class I under the Proposed RMP as compared to the action alternatives. However, there are no additional units proposed for management under VRM Class I under the Proposed RMP.

‡ Unknown acres result from GIS analysis resulting in small portions of slivering

Under all alternatives and the Proposed RMP, there would likely be a general decrease in visual values in the decision area over time, as the BLM would manage a substantial acreage of BLM-administered lands under a less protective VRM class than the assigned VRI class (**Table 3-241**). Compared to the other alternatives, Alternative D would likely have the least decrease in visual value, as it would have the fewest acres where the BLM would manage for a less protective VRM Class than the assigned VRI class. Alternative A and the Proposed RMP would have the largest acreages in the most protective management classes (VRM Class I and II), while Alternative B and C would have the largest acreages assigned to the least protective management class (VRM Class IV), which would allow for the most visual contrast and change to the visual landscape.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative, the VRM classes set under the 1995 RMPs would remain. Under this continued management, there would be virtually no change to the characteristics of the landscapes designated VRM I. There would be limited change to the visual values of the landscape in VRM Class II areas, which only allow for low levels of contrast from management actions. Ongoing resource use and development in areas managed as VRM Class III or IV would have the potential to degrade visual resources.

The No Action alternative would result in a general decrease in visual values in the decision area, as management allowing for moderate or high levels of change (VRM Classes III and IV) on inventoried lands of high and moderate values (VRI Classes II and III) would likely occur (**Table 3-242**). However, this decrease in visual values would be slightly less in the No Action alternative compared with Alternatives A, B, and C, and the Proposed RMP, all of which would manage more acres allowing for moderate or high levels of change than the No Action on lands with high and moderate inventoried values as compared to the No Action. This decrease would be slightly more than what would occur under Alternative D.

Table 3-242. Visual Resource Inventory class designations by Management class

Alternatives and the Proposed RMP VRM Management Class Designations		VRI Class I (Acres)		VRI Class II (Acres)		VRI Class III (Acres)		VRI Class IV (Acres)		VRI Unknown (Acres)	
No Action	**Acres**	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%
VRM I	22,165	22,165	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VRM II	125,221	-	-	67,506	12%	17,872	7%	39,743	3%	100	7%
VRM III	683,537	-	-	186,340	34%	218,511	80%	277,592	20%	1,094	78%
VRM IV	1,391,127	-	-	285,702	52%	33,010	12%	1,072,258	76%	157	11%
Unknown	6,812	-	-	2,091	> 1%	1,296	> 1%	3,381	> 1%	44	3%
Totals	**2,228,862**	**22,165**	**100%**	**541,639**	**100%**	**270,689**	**100%**	**1,392,974**	**100%**	**1,395**	**100%**
		Total acres managed under a less protective VRM Class than assigned VRI Class								**513,215**	**23%**
Alt. A	**Acres**										
VRM I	27,628	27,628	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VRM II	129,372	-	-	92,457	17%	30,438	5%	6,462	> 1%	15	1%
VRM III	30,137	-	-	5,079	1%	25,038	4%	17	> 1%	3	> 1%
VRM IV	2,283,679	-	-	439,335	81%	508,426	89%	1,335,838	99%	80	5%
Unknown	8,046	-	-	1,864	> 1%	1,158	> 1%	3,385	> 1%	1,639	93%
Totals	**2,478,862**	**27,628**	**100%**	**538,735**	**100%**	**565,060**	**100%**	**1,345,702**	**100%**	**1,737**	**100%**
		Total acres managed under a less protective VRM Class than assigned VRI Class								**960,984**	**39%**
Alt. B	**Acres**										
VRM I	27,628	27,628	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VRM II	93,252	-	-	76,533	14%	16,713	3%	1	>1%	5	>1%
VRM III	34,339	-	-	5,079	1%	29,241	5%	17	>1%	2	>1%
VRM IV	2,315,571	-	-	455,244	84%	517,946	91%	1,342,298	99%	83	5%
Unknown	8,072	-	-	1,880	>1%	1,160	>1%	3,385	>1%	1,647	94%
Totals	**2,478,862**	**27,628**	**100%**	**538,736**	**100%**	**565,060**	**100%**	**1,345,701**	**100%**	**1,737**	**100%**
		Total acres managed under a less protective VRM Class than assigned VRI Class								**986,431**	**40%**
Alt. C	**Acres**										
VRM I	27,628	27,628	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VRM II	93,293	-	-	76,574	14%	16,714	3%	1	> 1%	4	> 1%
VRM III	34,246	-	-	5,079	1%	29,147	5%	16	> 1%	4	> 1%
VRM IV	2,315,623	-	-	455,203	83%	518,039	91%	1,342,299	99%	82	5%
Unknown	8,072	-	-	1,880	> 1%	1,160	> 1%	3,385	> 1%	1,647	94%
Totals	**2,478,862**	**27,628**	**100%**	**538,736**	**100%**	**565,060**	**100%**	**1,345,701**	**100%**	**1,737**	**100%**
		Total acres managed under a less protective VRM Class than assigned VRI Class								**986,483**	**40%**
Alt. D	**Acres**										
VRM I	27,628	27,628	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VRM II	51,900	-	-	51,816	10%	75	> 1%	3	> 1%	6	> 1%
VRM III	1,048,902	-	-	484,953	89%	563,201	99%	702	> 1%	46	3%
VRM IV	1,342,361	-	-	86	> 1%	624	> 1%	1,341,612	99%	39	2%
Unknown	8,071	-	-	1,880	> 1%	1,161	> 1%	3,385	> 1%	1,645	94%
Totals	**2,478,862**	**27,628**	**100%**	**538,735**	**100%**	**565,061**	**100%**	**1,345,702**	**100%**	**1,736**	**100%**
		Total acres managed under a less protective VRM Class than assigned VRI Class								**493,825**	**20%**
PRMP	**Acres**										
VRM I	28,233	28,233	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VRM II	127,974	-	-	81,585	15%	35,351	6%	10,690	1%	348	20%
VRM III	68,113	-	-	34,015	6%	12,114	2%	21,894	2%	90	5%
VRM IV	2,254,535	-	-	423,148	79%	517,700	92%	1,312,394	98%	1,293	74%
Unknown	7	-	-	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	7	> 1%
Totals	**2,478,862**	**28,233**	**100%**	**538,748**	**100%**	**565,165**	**100%**	**1,344,978**	**100%**	**1,736**	**100%**
		Total acres managed under a less protective VRM Class than assigned VRI Class								**976,601**	**39%**

* Dark shaded boxes denote acres managed at equal or more protective VRM Class than the assigned VRI Class and would be managed with commensurate or lower levels of change permitted.

Alternatives A, B, and C

In Alternatives A, B, and C, the BLM would manage visual resources on congressionally reserved lands where decisions have been made to preserve a natural landscape (e.g., designated Wilderness Areas and Wild and Scenic Rivers) as VRM I, and designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern according to their assigned inventory class. The BLM would manage the following as VRM II: designated and recommended Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers classified as Scenic; National Trail management corridors; District-Designated Reserve – Lands Managed for their Wilderness Characteristics; and Special Recreation Management Areas that fall within the Primitive and Backcountry settings. The BLM would manage the following as VRM III: designated and recommended Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers classified as Recreational; and Special and Extensive Recreation Management Areas that fall within the Middle Country setting. The BLM would manage all other lands as VRM Class IV, which would allow management activities that result in major modifications to the existing character of the landscape.

Alternatives A, B, and C would result in a general decrease in visual values in the planning area as the management allowing for moderate or high levels of change (VRM Classes III and IV) on inventoried lands of high and moderate values (VRI Classes II and III) would occur (**Table 3-242**). Under Alternatives A, B, and C, the BLM would manage 960,984 acres (Alternative A), 986,431 acres (Alternative B), and 986,483 acres (Alternative C) allowing for moderate or high levels of change on lands with high and moderate inventoried values.

Alternative D

In Alternative D, the BLM would manage visual resources on congressionally reserved lands where decisions have been made to preserve a natural landscape (e.g., designated Wilderness Areas and Wild and Scenic Rivers) under VRM I, and designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern according to their assigned inventory class. The BLM would manage the following as VRM Class II: designated and recommended Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers classified as Scenic; National Trail management corridors; and Special Recreation Management Areas that fall within the primitive and backcountry setting. The BLM would manage the following as VRM Class III: designated and recommended Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers classified as Recreational; and Special and Extensive Recreation Management Areas that fall within the middle country setting. The BLM would manage all other lands according to their VRI Class, except that in the Harvest Land Base, the BLM would manage lands inventoried as VRI Class II as VRM Class III.

While overall visual resource value is likely to decline over time under Alternative D, the decline would be less than under the other alternatives and the Proposed RMP. Under Alternative D only 493,825 acres would be managed allowing for moderate or high levels of change (VRM Class III or IV) on lands with high and moderate inventoried values (VRI Class II or III).

Proposed RMP

In the Proposed RMP, the BLM would manage visual resources on congressionally reserved lands where decisions have been made to preserve a natural landscape (e.g., designated Wilderness Areas and Wild and Scenic Rivers) under VRM I, and designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern according to their assigned inventory class except that the BLM would manage designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern within the harvest land base that are VRI Class II as VRM Class III. The BLM would manage the following as VRM Class II: designated and recommended Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers classified as Scenic; National Trail management corridors; District-Designated Reserve – Lands Managed for their Wilderness Characteristics; and Special Recreation Management Areas that fall within the Primitive and Backcountry settings. The BLM would manage the following as VRM Class III:

designated and recommended suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers classified as Recreational[126]; and Special and Extensive Recreation Management Areas that fall within the Middle Country setting. The BLM would manage all other lands as VRM Class IV, which would allow management activities that result in major modifications to the existing character of the landscape.

The Proposed RMP would decrease the visual resource values within the decision area as management allowing moderate or high levels of change (VRM Classes III and IV) on inventoried lands of high and moderate values (VRI Classes II and III) would occur (**Table 3-242**). Under the Proposed RMP, the BLM would manage 976,601 acres allowing for moderate or high levels of change on lands with high and moderate inventoried values.

While visual resource value is likely to decline over time under the Proposed RMP, the decline would be less than under Alternatives B and C but greater than under Alternatives A and D and the No Action alternative.

Effects to Visual Resources from Forest Management

Certain sustained-yield timber management regimes are more or less compatible with the range of VRM class objectives. **Table 3-243** displays the level of compatibility for each VRM class compared to the management regimes for the High Intensity Timber Area (HITA), Moderate Intensity Timber Area (MITA), Low Intensity Timber Area (LITA), Uneven-aged Timber Area (UTA), Owl Habitat Timber Area (OHTA), and the No Action alternative.

Table 3-243. Compatibility of sustained yield management regimes with VRM classifications

Classification	HITA (Even-aged Management)	LITA/MITA/No Action (Two-aged Management)	OHTA/UTA (Uneven-aged Management)
VRM I			
VRM II			
VRM III			
VRM IV			

Notes:
Dark grey boxes indicate that the management regime would generally be incompatible.
Cross-hatched boxes indicate that the management regime may be compatible.
Light grey boxes indicate that the management regime would generally be compatible.

Areas inventoried as VRI Class II or III represent higher and moderate relative values of visual resources than the lowest represented by VRI Class IV. **Table 3-244** presents the acres of each VRI class that are in the Harvest Land Base under each alternative and the Proposed RMP. Regeneration timber harvest would not diminish the existing visual values of areas that are VRI Class IV. Management under the High Intensity Timber Area would diminish the visual resource values of VRI Class II and III areas, but

[126] All designated and recommended suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers would be allocated to the Congressionally Reserved Lands and the National Landscape Conservation System land use allocation, in which the BLM would manage for the protection of river segments' classifications, outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs), water quality, and free-flowing condition. Within designated and recommended suitable Recreational segments, a designation of VRM Class III would require that changes on the landscape be moderate and not dominate the view of the casual observer. The management direction for the Congressionally Reserved Lands and the National Landscape Conservation System would require the BLM to protect all identified ORVs, including scenery ORVs, regardless of VRM class designation, and the BLM would manage visual resources in designated and recommended suitable river segments with scenery ORVs consistent with both the land use allocation management direction and VRM class designation.

regeneration harvest with retention under the Low Intensity Timber Area, Moderate Intensity Timber Area, and No Action would only diminish the visual resource values of VRI Class II areas. It is worth noting that under all alternatives and the Proposed RMP, the largest designated VRI class of the Harvest Land Base would be VRI Class IV; timber harvest would not degrade the overall visual values of these areas. No acres of VRM Class I occur within the Harvest Land Base, and as such, discussions below exclude this VRM Class.

Thinning under the Owl Habitat Timber Area and Uneven-aged Timber Area would not diminish the visual resource quality of VRM Classes II, III, or IV. The acres reflected below include all lands within the harvest Land Base and do not separate the acres associated with these compatible sub-allocations from the total sum. As such, the below acres are an overestimation of the possible acres on which incompatible timber harvest management would be possible to occur.

Table 3-244. The Harvest Land Base within each Visual Resource Inventory class

Visual Resource Inventory Class	No Action (Acres)	Alt. A (Acres)	Alt. B (Acres)	Alt. C (Acres)	Alt. D (Acres)	PRMP (Acres)
Class II	174,030	69,785	116,425	141,535	133,680	100,410
Class III	209,996	82,103	117,755	154,676	168,159	102,647
Class IV	381,717	191,595	321,557	444,543	348,026	290,808
Unknown VRI	208	418	599	580	518	525
Totals	**765,951**	**343,901**	**556,336**	**741,334**	**650,383**	**493,865**

Alternatives A and C include High Intensity Timber Area and Uneven-aged Timber Area forest management within the Harvest Land Base. Forest management within the High Intensity Timber Area would include clear-cutting which would be potentially incompatible with the largest number of VRM Classes as it is incompatible with all but VRM Class IV. Uneven-aged Timber Area forest management would be compatible with all VRM Classes. Management under Alternatives C and A would result in the highest number of acres (Alternative C, 296,211 acres) and the fourth-highest number of acres (Alternative A, 151,888 acres) of all alternatives and the Proposed RMP where adverse effects from forest management practices could potentially occur. The large difference in sizes of the Harvest Land Base accounts for the differences in acres.

Alternative B and the Proposed RMP include Moderate Intensity Timber Area, Low Intensity Timber Area, and Uneven-aged Timber Area forest management within the Harvest Land Base. Forest management within the Moderate Intensity Timber Area and Low Intensity Timber Area would include regeneration harvest with some level of retention, which would be potentially incompatible with only VRM Class II lands. Uneven-aged Timber Area forest management would be compatible with all VRM Classes. Management under this alternative and the Proposed RMP would result in the second-highest number of acres (Proposed RMP, 203,057 acres) and the lowest number of acres (Alternative B, 116,425 acres) of all alternatives and the Proposed RMP where adverse effects from forest management practices could potentially occur.

In the No Action alternative, effects to visual resources from sustained-yield timber management—all of which would include some level of retention—would occur on 174,030 acres. This would potentially degrade the visual resource quality of 174,030 acres of VRI Class II lands. Timber harvest activities under the No Action alternative would potentially affect visual resource quality on the third-most acreage compared to other alternatives and the Proposed RMP.

Alternative D includes Moderate Intensity Timber Area, Owl Habitat Timber Area, and Uneven-aged Timber Area forest management within the Harvest Land Base. Forest management within the Moderate Intensity Timber Area would include regeneration harvest with some level of retention, which would be potentially incompatible with only VRM Class II lands. Owl Habitat Timber Area and Uneven-aged Timber Area forest management would be compatible with all VRM Classes. Management under Alternative D would result in the second-lowest number of acres (133,680 acres) of all alternatives and the Proposed RMP where adverse effects from forest management practices could potentially occur.

References

USDI BLM. 2014. Resource Management Plans for Western Oregon Planning Criteria. Bureau of Land Management, Oregon/Washington State Office, Portland, OR. http://www.blm.gov/or/plans/rmpswesternoregon/files/rmp-criteria.pdf.

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