

Visual Resource Management Guidelines, Extracted

I 8400 - VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, dated 11/14/86

.01 Purpose. This section describes the overall policy direction for Visual Resource Management (VRM) in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

.02 Objectives. The objective of Visual Resource Management is to manage public lands in a manner which will protect the quality of the scenic (visual) values of these lands.

.03 Authority.

A. Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, 43 U.S.C. 1701 et. seq.;

1. Section 102 (a) (8). States that " . . . the public lands be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of the . . . scenic . . . values"

2. Section 103 (c). Identifies "scenic values" as one of the resources for which public land should be managed.

3. Section 201 (a). States that "The Secretary shall prepare and maintain on a continuing basis an inventory of all public lands and their resources and other values (including scenic values) . . ."

4. Section 505 (a). Requires that "Each right-of-way shall contain terms and conditions which will . . . minimize damage to the scenic and esthetic values . . ."

B. National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, 43 U.S.C. 4321 et. Seq.;

1. Section 101 (b). Requires measures be taken to " . . . assure for all Americans . . . esthetically pleasing surroundings . . ."

.04 Responsibility.

A. Director.

1. Each program (i.e., Range, Forestry, Minerals, Lands, etc.) involved in resource development work is responsible for protecting visual values. This includes ensuring that " . . . visual values are adequately considered in all management activities . . ."

B. [Self-explanatory]

C. Area Manager.

1. Prepares and maintains on a continuing basis an inventory of visual values on public lands and ensures that these values are adequately considered in the land-use planning and decision making processes.

2. Ensures that visual impacts are minimized in all resource development activities including non-BLM initiated projects.

3. [Self-explanatory]

.06 Policy.

A. "The Bureau has a basic stewardship responsibility to identify and protect visual values on public lands. . . ."

1. "The Bureau shall prepare and maintain on a continuing basis an inventory of visual values on all public lands. . . . The goal is to have a completed VRM inventory for each RMP effort. . . ."

2. Visual management objectives (classes) are developed through the RMP process for all Bureau lands. The approved VRM objectives shall result from, and conform with, the resource allocation decisions made in RMP'S.

3. [Self-explanatory]

4. The approved VRM objectives (classes) provide the visual management standards for the design and development of future projects and for rehabilitation of existing projects.

5. Visual design considerations shall be incorporated into all surface disturbing projects regardless of size or potential impact. . . ."

6. The contrast rating process " . . . is used as a visual design tool in project design and as a project assessment tool during environmental review. Contrast ratings are required for proposed projects in highly sensitive areas or high impact projects, but may also be used for other projects where it would appear to be the most effective design or assessment tool. A brief narrative visual assessment is completed for all other projects which require an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement".

.07 Overview of visual resource management system

A. The VRM System. Public lands " . . . Visual management objectives are established in RMP'S in conformance with the land use allocations made in the plan. These area specific objectives provide the standards for planning, designing, and evaluating future management projects. . . . The VRM system therefore, provides a means: to identify visual values; to establish objectives through the RMP process for managing these values; and to provide timely inputs into proposed surface disturbing projects to ensure that these objectives are met".

B. Use of Basic Landscape Design Principles. Assigning values to visual resources ". . . The information generated through the VRM system is to be used as a guide. The decision on the amount of visual change that is acceptable is made by the field manager.

"The reference here is that management discretion is tied to project development, not resource management planning decisions"

II BLM MANUAL HANDBOOK 8410-1, VISUAL RESOURCE INVENTORY, dated 1/17/86

A. Overview. The visual resource inventory process provides BLM managers with a means for determining visual values ". . . Visual resource management classes are established through the RMP process for all BLM- administered lands . . . Visual management objectives are established for each class."

B. Implementation Options. The detail of the inventory will vary with the visual character ". . . It may be necessary to modify or make adaptations to the inventory system . . . These adaptations must 1) provide a more cost-effective way to complete a quality inventory, and 2) keep the conceptual framework of the . . . (VRM) system in tact."

V-1. Visual Resource Inventory Classes. ". . . Inventory classes are informational in nature and provide the basis for considering visual values in the RMP process. They do not establish management direction and should not be used as a basis for constraining or limiting surface disturbing activities."

V-2. Visual Resource Management Classes. Visual resource management classes are assigned through RMP'S. The assignment of visual management classes is ultimately based on the management decisions made in RMP'S. However, visual values must be considered throughout the RMP process. All actions proposed during the RMP process that would result in surface disturbance must consider the importance of the visual values and the impacts the project may have on these values. Management decisions in the RMP must reflect the value of visual resources. . . ."

III 1616 - PRESCRIBED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANNING ACTIONS, dated 4/6/84

.1 Identification of Issues. This action ". . . Other resource uses and management activities not involved with the identified planning issues are analyzed as appropriate during the planning process so that all the various public land resources are covered by the RMP at the end of the process."

.16 Comprehensive Aspects of a Resource Management Plan. "A program activity or resource management concern need not be involved in an issue to be considered further in the planning process. A completed RMP must include decisions, terms, and conditions which apply to all resource management activities in the resource area and all the public lands within the resource area. . . ."

IV 1620 - SUPPLEMENTAL PROGRAM GUIDANCE, dated 11/14/86

.02 Objectives. " The 1620 series of the BLM manual contains activity specific guidance for use in resource management planning". ". . . The overall objectives of the 1620 series are to:

A. Identify program specific determinations that are usually made during resource management planning. ". . ."

.06 Policy. "The resource management planning determinations set forth in the 1620 series of the BLM Manual are required in every resource management plan and, as applicable, every plan amendment except in the following situations. If one of these exceptions applies and, as a consequence, a specific determination will not be made, the plan or plan amendment involved must contain an explanation of why the determination will not be made".

A. A determination is not required if the resource in question is not present or potentially present in the resource area and if there is no record of interest or expression of interest in the resource. ". . ."

V 1621 - SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDANCE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES, dated 11/14/86

.4 Visual Resources.

.41 Determinations.

A. Resource Management Planning. The following visual resources related determinations are required in every resource management plan unless one of the exceptions discussed in BLM Manual Section 1620.06 applies.

1. Management Objectives. Management objectives are established for the visual resources in the planning area through the assignment of visual resource management (VRM) classes. The VRM classes are assigned to all public lands within the resource area. Each class ". . ."