

Appendix 3

Visual Resource Management



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APPENDIX 3. VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

A. DEFINITION

Visual Resource Management (VRM) classes are used to define minimum management objectives. Each class describes the degree of modification allowed in the basic elements of the characteristic landscape under various circumstances. The objective is to retain the character of the landscape as much as possible.

The VRM classes are defined in terms of three factors: 1) scenic quality, 2) visual sensitivity, and 3) distance zones. The classes are then used as the basis for the following objectives: 1) enhancement, 2) rehabilitation, and 3) protection. Finally, these objectives outline the VRM program for resource planning and project design.

B. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT CLASSES

Class I

This class encompasses mostly natural ecological changes but does not preclude very limited management activity. Any contrast created within the characteristic landscape must not attract attention. This class applies to wilderness areas, wild and scenic rivers, and other, similar situations.

Class II

Changes in any of the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) caused by a management activity should not be evident in the characteristic landscape. The contrast may be seen but must not attract attention.

Class III

Contrasts to the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) caused by a management activity may be evident and may even begin to attract attention but should remain subordinate to the existing landscape.

Class IV

Contrast may attract attention and be a dominant feature of the landscape in terms of scale but should repeat the form, line, color, and texture of the characteristic landscape.

Class V

Change is needed or change may add acceptable visual variety to an area. This class applies to areas in which the natural character has been disturbed to the point where rehabilitation is needed to bring it back into character with the surrounding landscape. This class would apply to areas identified in the scenic evaluation in which it has been necessary to apply the lowest quality classification because of unacceptable cultural modification.

C. DESIGN TECHNIQUES FOR MITIGATING VISUAL IMPACT

1. Landform/Waterbody

a. Reduce the size of cut and fill slopes. Consider:

1. relocating to an area with less slope;
2. changing road width, grade, etc;
3. changing alignment to follow existing grades; and
4. prohibiting dumping of excess material on downhill slopes.

b. Reduce earthwork contrasts. Consider:

1. rounding and/or warping slopes;
2. retaining rocks, trees, drainages, etc.;
3. toning down freshly broken rock faces with asphalt-emulsion spray or with gray paint;
4. adding mulch, hydro mulch, or topsoil;
5. shaping cuts and fills to appear as natural forms;
6. cutting rock areas so forms are irregular;
7. designing to take advantage of natural screens (i.e., vegetation, landforms); and
8. grass seeding of cuts and fills.

c. Maintain the integrity of topographic units. Consider:

1. locating projects away from prominent topographic features; and
2. designing projects to blend with topographic forms in shape and placement.

2. Vegetation

a. Retain existing vegetation. Consider:

1. using retaining walls on fill slopes;
2. reducing surface disturbance; and
3. protecting roots from damage during excavations.

b. Enhance revegetation. Consider:

1. mulching cleared areas;
2. controlling planting times;
3. furrowing slopes;
4. digging holes for plants on cut/fill slopes;
5. choosing native plant species;
6. stockpiling and reusing topsoil; and
7. fertilizing, mulching, and watering vegetation.

c. Minimize impact on existing vegetation. Consider:

1. partial cutting instead of clear cutting;
2. using irregular clearing shapes;
3. feathering/thinning edges;
4. disposing of all slash;
5. controlling construction access;
6. utilizing existing roads;
7. limiting work within construction area;
8. selecting type of equipment to be used;
9. minimizing clearing size (i.e., strip only where necessary); and
10. seeding cleared areas with grass.

d. Maintain the integrity of vegetative units. Consider:

Utilizing the edge effect for structure placement along natural vegetative breaks.

3. Structures

a. Minimize the number of visual structures.

b. Minimize structure contrast. Consider:

1. using earth tone paints and stains;
2. using cor-ten steel (self-weathering);
3. treating wood for self-weathering;
4. using natural stone surfaces;
5. burying all or part of the structure; and
6. selecting paint finishes with low levels of reflectivity (i.e., flat or semigloss).

c. Redesign structures that do not blend/fit in. Consider:

1. using rustic designs and native building materials;
2. using natural-appearing forms to complement landscape character (use special designs only as a last resort); and
3. relocating structure.

d. Minimize the impact of utility crossings. Consider:

1. making crossings at right angles;
2. setting back structures at a maximum distance from the crossing;
3. leaving vegetation along the roadside;
4. minimizing view time;
5. utilizing natural screening; and
6. relocating structure

e. Recognize the value and limitations of color. Consider:

1. that color (hue) is most effective within 1,000 feet. Beyond that point, color becomes more difficult to distinguish and tone or value determines visibility and resulting visual contrast;
2. that color has limited effectiveness in structures that are silhouetted against the sky;
3. that painting structures somewhat darker than the adjacent landscape compensates for the effects of shade and shadow; and
4. selecting color to blend with the land instead of the sky.