

**APPENDIX C**  
**GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINATION OF VISUAL EFFECTS**  
**OF AN UNDERTAKING**  
**ON THE INTEGRITY OF A HISTORIC SETTING**

## I INTRODUCTION

This appendix provides guidance on when to assess visual effects for known historic properties as the result of an undertaking. Procedures and methodology for visual analysis will be provided by BLM and SHPO during training and in the BLM Handbook. For assessment of the setting when evaluating a property for eligibility, please refer to *National Park Service, National Register Bulletin 15*, "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation" (1997).

The integrity of a historic property relates directly to the qualities of the property's location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. A property may be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) if it meets one of the four eligibility criteria and retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance.

The property must retain the essential physical features that enable it to convey its historic identity. These features are those that define both why a property is significant and when a property was significant. The aspect of setting may not be important for all types of properties.

For sites eligible **only** under Criterion D, the property does not need to recall visually an event, person, process, or construction technique. It is only important that the significant data in the property remain sufficiently intact to yield the expected information if the appropriate study techniques are employed (*National Register Bulletin 15*). Therefore setting is not relevant to the significance of properties eligible only under Criterion D. However, sites eligible under Criterion D may be eligible under other criteria. It will be necessary to determine visual effects on such historic properties.

## II. ASSESSING AN UNDERTAKING'S EFFECTS ON SETTING

### A. Determining if Setting Needs to be Assessed

1. Specific historic properties outside the footprint of a project may require a setting assessment when the property and its location are known and the property is legally accessible. This information exchange must be conveyed during the fieldwork notification process. The BLM cultural resource specialist must provide a justification to the consultant for why the setting of the property is an important aspect of integrity.
2. Setting assessment is **not** necessary under the following circumstances:
  - a. historic properties eligible only under Criterion D;
  - b. segments of linear historic properties between two definable points no longer retain any physical trace or manifestation;
  - c. noncontributing segments of linear historic properties;
  - d. linear historic properties or contributing segments previously determined to lack integrity of setting;
  - e. the Nez Perce National Historic Trail until its location has been defined by tribal oral history or other historic documentation;
  - f. for irrigation canals when loss of the integrity to a setting is a no adverse effect;
  - g. if the proposed undertaking is consistent with land use during the period of significance;
  - h. for temporary construction elements (i.e. those elements that will be in place less than one year).

### 3. Other considerations:

- a. Trails and two-track wagon roads are generally not eligible under Criterion B. Trails and two-track wagon roads are not engineered features and therefore should not be considered eligible under Criterion C (see *National Register Bulletin 15*).
- b. The integrity of setting for eligible prehistoric A, B, or C Criterion properties should not be assessed unless tribal consultation has specifically revealed that the integrity of setting is an important aspect of the property.
- c. If an historic context has been developed and accepted by the SHPO for the property type being evaluated, follow the guidelines and eligibility thresholds established for that property type.

#### B. Determining the Area for Assessment of Historic Setting

The purpose of a setting assessment is to determine what physical features of a proposed undertaking will be visible from a historic property for which setting is an important aspect of integrity. Visibility of undertakings will vary. The scale of visual analysis should be commensurate with the scale of the undertaking. In the majority of cases, undertakings will not be seen beyond three miles; pipelines, fiber-optic and other ground level disturbance will not likely be seen beyond a mile. In rare cases, undertakings may be seen beyond five miles if they are unusually large or are skylined on the horizon, such as wind turbines and communication towers.

#### C. Visual Contrast Rating System

BLM will utilize the Visual Contrast Rating (VCR) system to determine the visual impact of a proposed undertaking on historic properties. An adverse visual impact is any modification in landforms, water bodies, or vegetation, or any introduction of structures, which negatively interrupts the visual character of the landscape and disrupts the harmony of the basic elements (i.e., form, line, color, and texture). The VCR is made from the historic property towards the proposed undertaking utilizing procedures outlined in training and/or the BLM Handbook.

#### D. Standard Measures to Reduce the Visual Contrast

BLM cultural resource personnel will utilize standard measures to reduce the visual impact of the proposed undertaking prior to making a determination of effect. Every effort should be made to design the undertaking to reduce the contrast rating prior to submitting the report to SHPO.

1. Standard measures should be used as stipulations or conditions of approval in leases, permits, etc.
2. Standard measures or best management practices for reducing the visual contrast include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Consolidating project facilities among oil and gas developers – this also facilitates cumulative analysis.
  - b. Develop coordinated road and pipeline systems.
  - c. Reduce the amount of surface development by consolidating facilities (e.g., develop bottom hole wells using directional drilling from a single surface well location).
  - d. Use low profile facilities.
  - e. Proper siting and location to maximize the use of topography and vegetation to screen development. Design projects to blend with topographic forms and existing vegetation patterns.

- f. Use environmental coloration or advance camouflage techniques to break up visual intrusion of facilities that cannot be completely hidden.
- g. Use broken linear patterns for road developments to screen roads as much as possible. This can include feathering or blending of the edges of linear rights-of-way to break up the linearity.
- h. For livestock control, use electric fencing with low-visibility fiberglass posts and environmental colors (e.g., sage green).
- i. Design linear facilities and seismic lines to run parallel to key observation points rather than perpendicular.
- j. Modify the orientation of facilities to present less of a visual impact (e.g., a facility with several tanks lined up so that one obscures the visibility of the others).

E. Determination of Effect

For historic properties for which setting is a significant aspect of integrity, effects will be determined in the following manner:

1. **No Contrast** – If the proposed project elements will not be seen, there is no contrast between the undertaking and the setting. The agency determination should be **“No Historic Properties Affected.”**
2. **Weak Contrast** – If the proposed project elements, or portions of the elements, can be seen but will not dominate the setting or attract the attention of the casual observer because the basic elements of form, line, color and texture found in the setting are repeated in the project’s physical elements, then the proposed undertaking will result in a weak contrast rating. The agency determination should be **“No Historic Properties Adversely Affected”** if there are no additional auditory or atmospheric effects.
3. **Moderate or Strong Contrast** – If the proposed project elements tend to dominate the setting, the proposed undertaking will have a moderate or strong contrast rating. The agency determination should be **“Historic Properties Adversely Affected.”**