

## Visual Impact Assessment References

REFERENCE 2 - Scenic Quality Inventory and Evaluation

Source: BLM; VRM Manual H-8410-1 – Visual Resource Inventory; Rel. 8-28; Rel. 8-30; 1/17/86

### Factors to be considered in Existing Viewpoint Composition

**Form** – The mass or shape of an object or of objects which appear unified.

**Line** – The path, real or imagined, that the eye follows when perceiving abrupt differences in form, color, texture or when objects are aligned in a one-dimensional sequence. Usually evident as the edges of shapes or masses in the landscape.

**Color** – The property of reflecting light of a particular intensity and wavelength (or mixture of wavelengths) to which the eye is sensitive. It is the major visual property of surfaces.

**Texture** – The aggregation of small forms or color mixtures into a continuous surface pattern; the aggregated parts are enough that they do not appear as discrete objects in the composition of the scene.

**Scale** – The proportionate size relationship between an object and the surroundings in which it is placed.

**Space** – The spatial qualities of a landscape are determined by the three-dimensional arrangement of objects and voids.

### Definitions of Scenic Quality and Evaluation Key Factors

**Landform** – Topography becomes more interesting as it gets steeper or more massive, or more severely or universally sculptured. Outstanding landforms may be monumental, or they may be exceedingly artistic and subtle, or other extraordinary formations.

**Vegetation** – Give primary consideration to the variety of patterns, forms and textures created by plant life. Consider short-lived displays when they are known to be recurring or spectacular. Consider also small scale vegetational features which add striking and intriguing detail elements to the landscape.

**Water** – The ingredient which adds movement or serenity to a scene. The degree to which water dominates the scene is the primary consideration in selecting the rating score.

**Color** – Consider the overall color(s) of the basic components of the landscape (e.g., soil, rock, vegetation, etc.) as they appear during seasons or periods of high use. Key factors to use when rating “color” are variety, contrast, harmony.

**Adjacent Scenery** – Degree to which scenery outside the scenery unit being rated enhances the overall impression of the scenery within the rating unit. The distance which adjacent scenery will influence scenery within the rating unit will normally range from 0-5-miles, depending upon the characteristics of the topography, the vegetative cover, and other such factors. This factor is generally applied to units which would normally rate very low in score, but the influence of the adjacent unit would enhance the visual quality and raise the score.

**Scarcity** – This factor provides an opportunity to give added importance to one or all of the scenic features that appear to be relatively unique or rare within one physiographic region. There may also be cases a separate evaluation of each of the key factors does not give a true picture of the overall scenic quality of an area. Often it is a number of not so spectacular elements in the proper combination that produces the most pleasing and memorable scenery – the scarcity factor can be used to recognize this type of area and give it the added emphasis it needs.

**Cultural Modifications** – Cultural modifications in the landform/water, vegetation, and addition of structures should be considered and may detract from the scenery in the form of a negative intrusion or complement or improve the scenic quality of a unit. Rate accordingly.

## Scenic Quality and Evaluation Chart

Key Factors	Rating Criteria and Score		
Landform	High vertical relief as expressed in prominent peaks, cliffs, spires, or massive rock outcrops, or severe surface variation or highly eroded formations, rockslides or dune systems; or detail features dominant and exceptionally striking and intriguing. <b>Score 5</b>	Moderate mountains, steep gorges, drumlins; or interesting erosional patterns or variety in size and shape of landforms; or detail features which are interesting though not dominant or exceptional. <b>Score 3</b>	Low rolling hills, foothills, or flat valley bottoms; or few or no interesting landscape features. <b>Score 1</b>
Vegetation	A variety of vegetative types as expressed in interesting forms, textures, and patterns <b>Score 5</b>	Some variety of vegetation, but only one or two major types. <b>Score 3</b>	Little or no variety or contrast in vegetation. <b>Score 1</b>
Water	Clear and clean appearing, still, or cascading white water, any of which are a dominant factor in the landscape. <b>Score 5</b>	Flowing, or still, but not dominant in the landscape. <b>Score 3</b>	Absent, or present, but not noticeable. <b>Score 0</b>
Color	Rich color combinations, variety or vivid color; or pleasing contrasts in the soil, rock, vegetation, water or snow fields. <b>Score 5</b>	Some intensity or variety in colors and contrast of the soil, rock and vegetation, but not a dominant scenic element. <b>Score 3</b>	Subtle color variations, contrast, or interest; generally mute tones. <b>Score 1</b>
Influence of Adjacent Scenery	Adjacent scenery greatly enhances visual quality. <b>Score 5</b>	Adjacent scenery moderately enhances overall visual quality. <b>Score 3</b>	Adjacent scenery has little or no influence on overall visual quality. <b>Score 0</b>
Scarcity	One of a kind; or unusually memorable, or very rare within region. Consistent chance for exceptional wildlife or wildflower viewing, etc. <b>Score 5</b>	Distinctive, though somewhat similar to other within the region. <b>Score 3</b>	Interesting within its setting, but fairly common within the region. <b>Score 1</b>
Cultural Modifications	Modifications add favorably to visual variety while promoting visual harmony. <b>Score 2</b>	Modifications add little or no visual variety to the area, and introduce no discordant elements. <b>Score 0</b>	Modifications add variety but are very discordant and promote strong disharmony. <b>Score -4</b>

Note: Values for each rating criteria are maximum and minimum scores only. It is also possible to assign scores within these ranges.