

## Visual Impact Assessment References

REFERENCE 4 – Rating the Degree of Contrast

Source: BLM; VRM Manual H-84131 – Visual Resource Contrast Rating; Rel. 8-30; 1/17/86

### Factors to be considered in Degree of Contrast

**Distance** – The contrast created by a project usually is less as viewing distance increases.

**Form** – Contrast in form results from changes in the shape and mass of landforms or structures. The degree of change depends on how dissimilar the introduced forms are to those continuing to exist in the landscape.

**Line** – Contrasts in line result from changes in the edge types and interruption or introduction of edges, bands, and silhouette lines. New lines may differ in their subelements (bold, complexity, and orientation) from existing lines.

**Color** – Changes in value and hue tend to create the greatest contrast. Other factors such as chroma, reflectivity, color temperature, also increase the contrast.

**Texture** – Noticeable contrasts in texture usually stem from differences in grain, density, and internal contrast. Other factors such as irregularity and directional patterns of texture may affect the rating.

**Scale** – The contrast created by the project is directly related to its size and scale as compared to the surroundings in which it is placed.

**Space** – The spatial relationship within a landscape is a major factor in determining the degree of contrast. The elements affecting spatial relationships include; landscape composition, panorama, feature and focal point, vegetation canopy and spatial position (plain, valley, slope, ridge) and backdrop.

### Degree of Contrast

Level	Rating Criteria and Score
None	The element is not visible or perceived. <b>Score 0</b>
Weak	The element contrast can be seen but does not attract attention. <b>Score 1</b>
Moderate	The element contrast begins to attract attention and begins to dominate the characteristic landscape. <b>Score 3</b>
Strong	The element contrast demands attention, will not be overlooked, and is dominant in the landscape. <b>Score 5</b>

### Variable Affects that may influence Contrast Rating

**Angle of Observation** – The apparent size of a project is directly related to the angle between the viewer's line-of-sight and the slope upon which the project is to take place. As this angle nears 90-degrees (vertical and horizontal), the maximum area is viewable.

**Length of Viewing Time** – If the viewer has only a brief glimpse of the project, the contrast may not be of great concern. If, however, the project is subject to view for a long period of time, as from an overlook, the contrast may be very significant.

**Season of View** – Contrast ratings should consider the physical conditions that exist during the heaviest or most critical visitor season of use. Such conditions include snow cover and tree defoliation during the winter, leaf color in the fall, and lush vegetation and flowering in the spring.

**Light Conditions** – The amount of contrast can be substantially affected by the light conditions. The direction and angle of lighting can affect color intensity, reflection, shadow, form, texture, and many other visual aspects of the landscape. Light conditions during heavy periods must be a consideration in contrast ratings.

**Atmospheric Conditions** – The visibility of projects due to atmospheric conditions is a major factor in determining the degree of contrast.