Scenery Management for NHT

Historic Trails Preservation Workshop May 6-8, 2008
Phoenix, Arizona

Overall Objective

After this presentation, you will be able to:

- Describe the basic principles and concepts of the BLM and USFS scenery management systems
- Understand how VRM/SMS can be applied to National Historic Trail preservation
- Have a basic understanding of how to determine scenic values associated with historic trails and how to determine scenic integrity
- Apply the appropriate actions to your project in order to protect the visual setting and scenic integrity

Overview of VRM/SMS

What is scenery management (VRM/SMS)?

Why do we manage scenery?

How do we manage for scenery?

Definitions of VRM/SMS

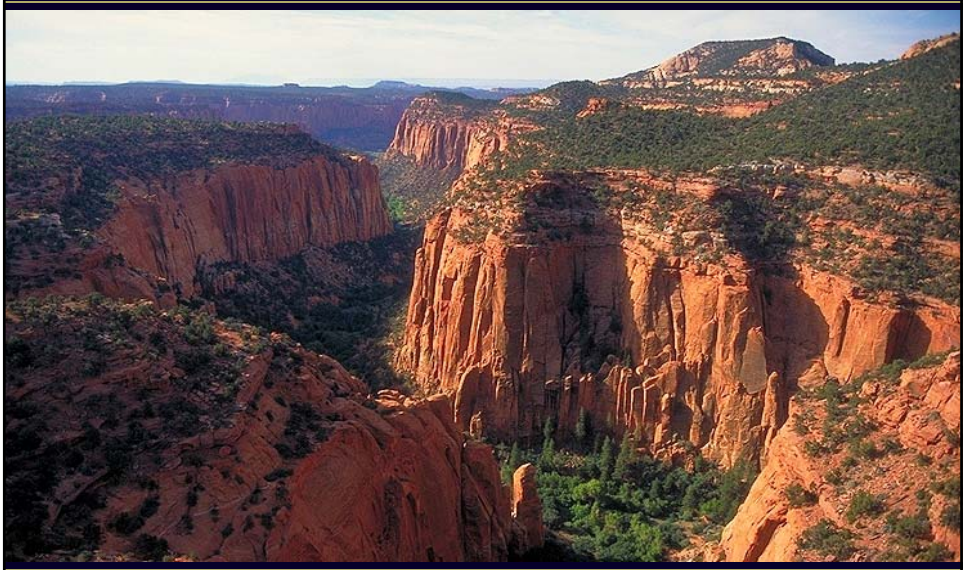
VRM — The inventory and planning actions taken to identify visual values and to establish objectives for managing those values; and the management actions taken to achieve the visual management objectives

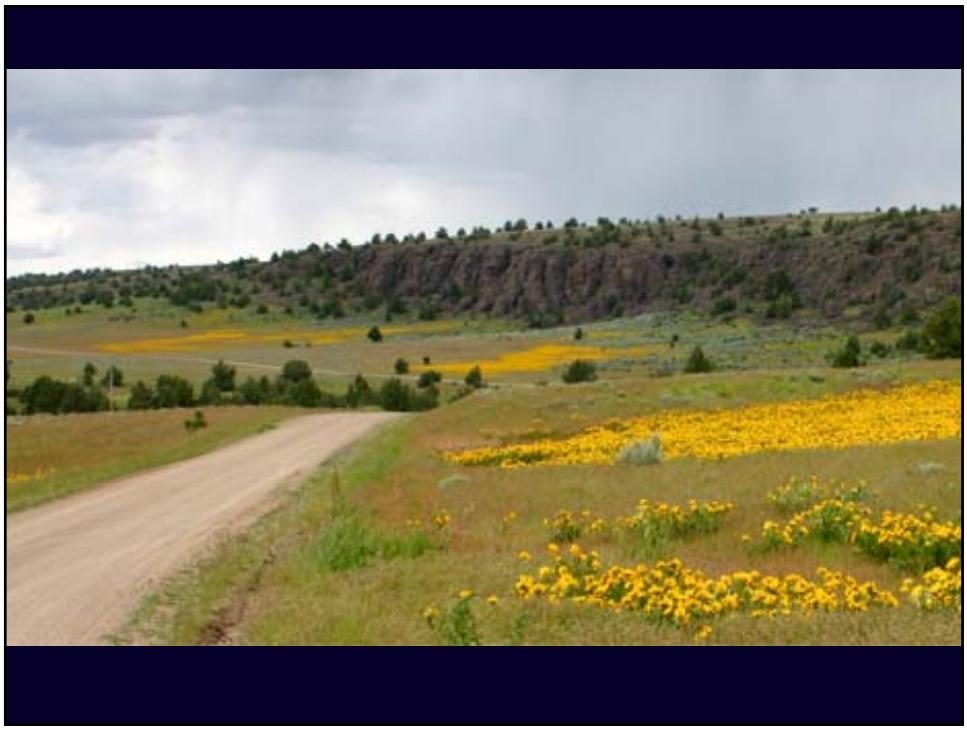
SMS — Scenery Management System provides an overall framework for the orderly inventory, analysis, and management of Scenery. It is a tool for integrating the benefits, values, desires, and preferences regarding aesthetics and scenery for all levels of land management planning

BLM/USFS manage lands with inherent scenic value…

UNIT 1

Public lands contain a variety of scenic landscapes.



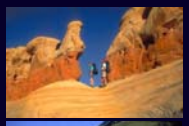


The scenic significance of many landscapes is cultural or historic.

Lands provide a place to escape and enjoy the beauty of nature.

They also provide a connection with our history

Public lands are the backyard of many communities.



Lands are also valued for many other activities and uses.

Increasing Demand for:

-Communication Sites

-R-O-Ws

-Recreation

-Mineral Development

-Wind Energy

If not carefully designed, activities have the potential to:

- modify character of landscape
- reflect on BLM/USFS public image
- affect visitor experience and community quality of life
- cause project delays through protest, appeals
- increase long term costs due to restoration needs

Benefits if carefully designed...

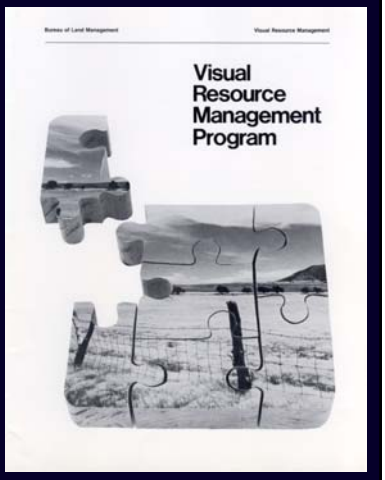
Benefits

Benefits

Benefits

Authority for Managing Scenery

- BLM/USFS has addressed scenery since 1950's
- NEPA (1969)
- FLPMA (1976)
- VRM/VMS Policy 1970's-80s



Legal Authority for Managing Scenery

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) 1969

- Assure aesthetically pleasing surroundings
- Require agencies use a system based on environmental design arts for planning and mitigation

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) 1976

- Protect scenic values
- Maintain an inventory of scenic values
- Minimize damage to scenic values

BLM/USFS Policy for Scenery

BLM Policy: Manual Section 8400: Visual Resource Management (1984)

- Basic stewardship responsibility
- Each program has responsibility
- Maintain inventory of visual values for all lands
- Develop VRM classes through Land Use Planning
- Design activities to meet classes

USFS Policy: Landscape Aesthetics: A handbook for Scenery Management (2005) Also the VMS system for roughly 50% of the current Forest Management Plans

- Common terminology.
- Consistent procedures for inventory, analysis, and synthesis.
- Standards and guidelines for scenery management.
- Techniques for monitoring

Fundamental Principles

- Language of Looking at Landscapes (Form, Line, Color, Texture..)

- Principle philosophy~ Reducing Contrast in the Landscape

BLM/USFS Policy for Managing Scenery

Land Use Planning Level

- Variety of Landscapes
- Maintain an Inventory of Visual Values
- Assign Visual Objectives

- **BLM Handbook 8410**:
  - Inventory & VRM Classes
  - [land use planning]

BLM/USFS Policy for Managing Scenery

Activity/ Project Level

- Analyze the landscape
- Use design techniques to reduce contrast
- Manage activities to Meet VRM objectives

- **BLM Handbook 8431**:
  - Contrast- Rating
  - [project analysis/ evaluation]

Principle Components of VRM/SMS

1. • **Inventory Scenic** Values
   - Scenic Quality, Sensitivity Level, Distance Zones for the BLM.
   - Scenic Attractiveness, Landscape Visibility, Constituents Analysis, Seen Areas and Distance Zones
   - (Required for every acre of BLM/USFS land)
2. • Establish Management **Objectives** (Land Use Planning level)
   - (Required for every acre of BLM/Forest Service land)
   - This includes Scenic Integrity in the Forest Service
   - Part of land use decisions
3. • **Design/ Evaluate** Activities to meet objectives (Project level)
   - Contrast Rating Form in the BLM

Looking at Landscapes



Landscape Character

The character of a landscape is the overall impression created by its unique combination of visual features (such as land, vegetation, water, and structures).

Landscapes Types

Panoramic

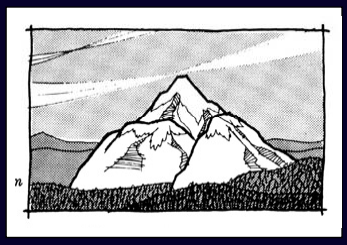
Feature

Enclosed

Focal

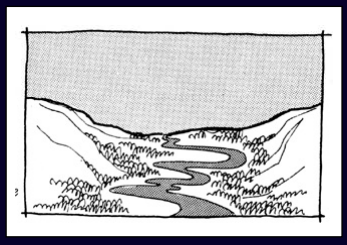
Landscape Character Elements

Form



Color

Line



Texture

UNIT 4 – Looking at

Land Use Planning & VRM Inventory

VRM Inventory

Visual Resource Inventory

VRM Inventory Process

Provides means to determine visual values on public lands

VRM Inventory

VRM Inventory Process

Inventory Process Has 3 Parts

- Scenic Quality Evaluation
- Sensitivity Level Analysis
- Delineation of Distance Zones

VRM Inventory

Based on Inventory of These Three Factors – BLM Lands Become:

- Class I
- Class II
- Class III
- Class IV

These are inventory classes, not management classes!

VRM Inventory

Scenic Quality Evaluation

All lands have scenic value but areas with the most variety & the most harmonious composition have the greatest scenic value.

VRM Inventory

Scenic Quality Evaluation

Scenic Quality is a measure of the visual appeal of a tract of land.

Public lands are given an A, B, or C rating based on apparent scenic quality.

VRM Inventory

Scenic Quality Evaluation

Determined Using 7 Key Factors

- **Land Form** – Steep & massive - more interest
- **Vegetation** – Variety of pattern, form, texture
- **Water** – Adds movement, serenity
- **Color** – Season, high use period
- **Adjacent Scenery** – Enhances overall impression
- **Scarcity** – Relatively unique
- **Cultural Modifications** – Detract or compliment

Inventory

Scenic Quality Evaluations

You Will Use 7 Key Factors to Rank Lands as A, B, or C

Comparative Basis – similar features in Physiographic Province

VRM Inventory

Hypothetical Class C Scenery

VRM Inventory

Sensitivity Level Analysis

Factors to Consider

- Types of Users
- Amount of Use
- Public Interest
- Adjacent Land Uses
- Special Areas

Sensitivity Level Analysis

Types of Uses

Sensitivity level varies by use

Oil/Gas Production

Recreation

Sensitivity Level Analysis

Amount of Use

Areas seen by large numbers of people are often more sensitive.

Sensitivity Level Analysis

Public Interest

Visual Quality may be of concern to Local, State, or National groups.

Sensitivity Level Analysis

Adjacent Land Uses

Interrelationships with adjacent land uses can affect Visual Sensitivity of an area.

Sensitivity Level Analysis

Special Areas

Management objectives for special areas frequently require special consideration.

Distance Zones

Three Distance Zones

- **Foreground/Middleground: 0 – 5 miles**
- **Background: 5 – 15 miles**
- **Seldom Seen: beyond background or can't see**

Distance Zones

Determining Inventory Classes

- Combine Overlays for:
  - **Scenic Quality**
  - **Sensitivity Levels**
  - **Distance Zones**
- Use Matrix (H-8410-1) to Determine Inventory Classes
- Use GIS to overlay data

Determining Inventory Classes

Class I – Assigned to those areas in which a management decision has been made to maintain a natural landscape.

Class II, III, & **IV** – Assigned based on combinations of Scenic Quality, Sensitivity Levels, and Distance Zones as shown in the following matrix.

Basis for Determining Visual Resource Inventory Classes

		Visual Sensitivity Levels						
		High			Medium			Low
Special Areas		I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Scenic Quality	A	II	II	II	II	II	II	II
	B	II	III	III/IV*	III	IV	IV	IV
	C	III	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV
		f/m	b	s/s	f/m	b	s/s	s/s
		Distance Zones						

* if adjacent area is Class III or lower, (ie - Class II) assign Class III, if higher, (ie. Class IV) Class IV

Visual Simulations

2d: Photoshop Basics

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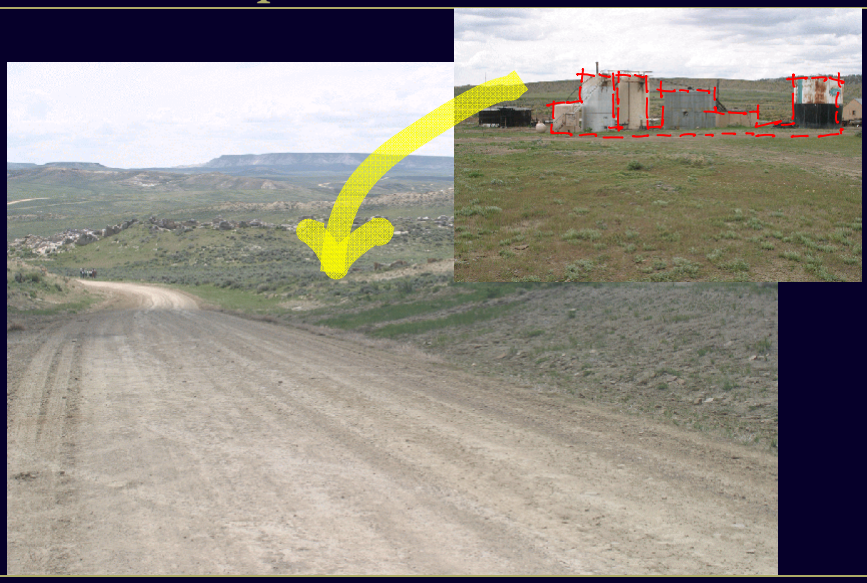


2d: Photoshop Basics

Project Planning & Scenery

Visual Design Fundamentals

- Proper Siting & Location
- Repeating Landscape Character Elements
- Reduce Unnecessary Surface Disturbance

Proper Siting & Location

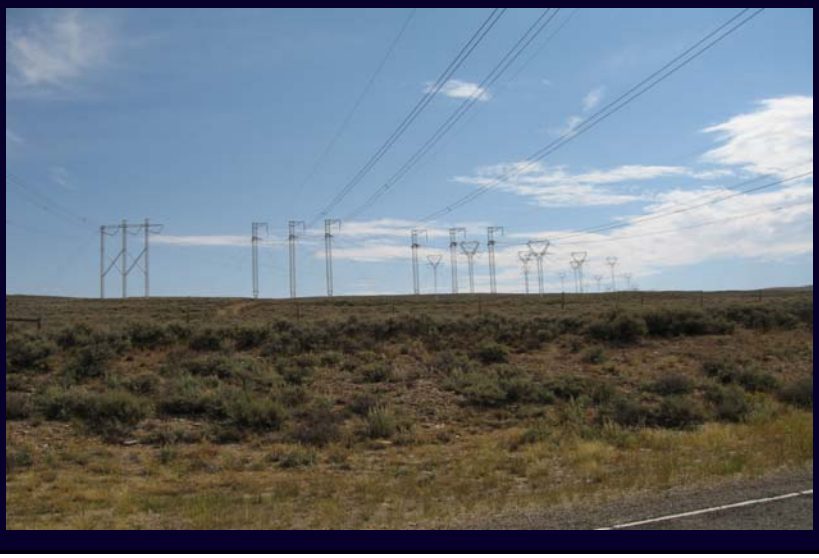
- Gas Well Exposed on Skyline

Proper Siting & Location

- Gas Well Located Below Skyline

Proper Siting & Location

Power Line Silhouetted Against Sky



Proper Siting & Location

- Power Line Located Against Landforms

Repeating the Element "COLOR"

- Highly effective use of color to minimize visual impacts for Power line development

Repeating the Element "COLOR"

- Gas Development near Parachute, CO

Repeating the Element "COLOR"

- Same scene, better color