

Appendix E. Visual Resource Management Classes

Visual Resources

An inventory of visual resources was conducted by the Arcata Field Office of the U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM). It evaluated and assessed the scenic quality of the landscape, the sensitivity of people to changes in the landscape, and the viewing distances to determine the degree of cultural modification allowed in any given area. These areas were then assigned management classes, ranging from level 1 (pristine) to level 5 (highly disturbed).

Scenic Quality

To evaluate scenic qualities of the Reserve, the area was divided into subunits based on relatively homogeneous landscapes. Each subunit was then evaluated by seven key factors (landform, vegetation, water, color, adjacent scenery, scarcity, cultural modifications) and rated from a standard point system. The greater the landscape's beauty, the higher the score. Class A refers to areas that combine the most outstanding characteristics of each rating factor. Class B refers to areas in which there is a combination of some outstanding features and some features that are fairly common to the physiographic region. Class C refers to areas in which the features are fairly common to the physiographic region. The 3,100 acres of undisturbed old growth forest qualify as Class A. Approximately 2,750 acres qualify as Class C because they have recently been timber harvested. Class B lands comprise the remainder of the Reserve and total approximately 1,550 acres.

Sensitivity Levels

Visitor use and public attitudes or concern for particular areas within the Reserve determine levels (high, medium, low) of sensitivity. The undisturbed old-growth forest is rated high and the remaining lands are rated medium.

Distance Zones

The visual quality of the Reserve may be magnified or diminished by the visibility of the landscape from viewing routes and key observation points. Areas that are close to the visitor

usually have a greater effect than areas that are farther away. The landscape that can be seen from the trails was mapped and divided into four basic distance zones: foreground, middle ground, background, and seldom seen.

Management Classes

Visual resource management classes describe the different degrees of modification allowed to the basic elements of the landscape. Class designations were derived from analyzing the information obtained from the scenic quality, sensitivity levels, and distance zone evaluations.

- **Management Class 1:** Under this classification, natural ecological changes and very limited management activity are allowed. Any contrast created within the characteristic landscape must not attract attention. The undisturbed old-growth redwood forests totaling 3,100 acres fall under Class 1.
- **Management Class 2:** Under this classification, changes in any of the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) caused by a management activity should not be evident in the characteristic landscape. Contrasts are seen but must not attract attention. Approximately 1,550 acres are included in this management class and comprise the timber harvest areas that have had over 20 years of nondisturbance and generally appear in a natural condition to the common visitor.
- **Management Class 3:** Under this classification, contrasts to the basic elements caused by a management activity are evident but should remain subordinate to the existing landscape. This class includes approximately 2,750 acres of shrub and pole harvested areas, several other smaller timber harvest areas that require watershed restoration work, and the Elk River Corridor for the first three miles.
- **Management Class 4:** Under this classification, any contrast attracts attention and is a dominant feature on the landscape in terms of scale, but it should repeat the form, line, color, and texture of the characteristic landscape. The Elk River Trailhead, Salmon Pass Trailhead, and currently undeveloped Alicia Pass Trailhead fall into this category.