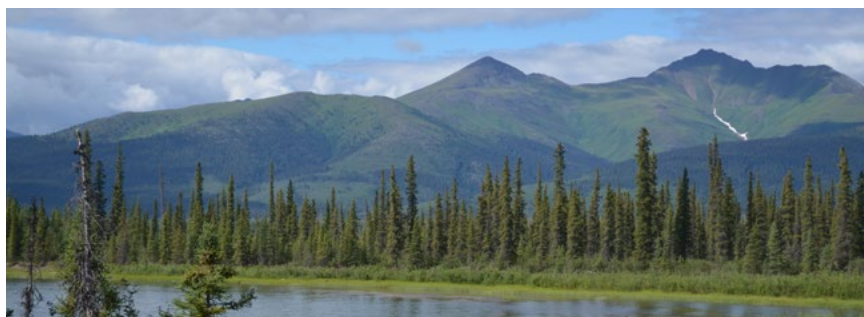




VISUAL RESOURCES INVENTORY TRAINING MANUAL



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Park views inspire people and connect them to nature and history, so much so, that the 1916 National Park Service (NPS) Organic Act specifies scenery as one of our most significant values to protect. Some of our nation’s most spectacular and historically significant landscapes are entrusted to the NPS. Many of landscapes in and around parks are at risk. Climate change causes vegetation shifts and increased wildfires affect scenic quality. There is pressure on park views in areas that are favorable for solar, wind, oil and gas, and other energy development. Daily park operations can clutter popular scenic areas. Without thoughtful NPS involvement, these activities threaten to degrade scenery important to park visitors and, in some cases, the very reason for parks’ existence.



Photo Credit: NPS

Figure 1. View of Yosemite Valley in Yosemite National Park. F.L. Olmsted’s groundbreaking 1865 Yosemite Report was a catalyst for scenery preservation embodied in NPS policy and law

The NPS, with Argonne National Laboratory, developed the **visual resources inventory (VRI)**, to improve understanding of scenery and help address these changes. The VRI methodology is designed to fit NPS needs and adapted from the best available visual quality science as developed by U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Federal Highway Administration, and private industry.

The VRI identifies two distinct, equal values of a view: its *scenic or aesthetic quality* and its *importance to the park purpose and visitor experience*. With this method, historic and/or culturally significant views can rate as high as scenic ones. Views are considered in park and regional context, meaning the process does not compare parks to one another. The NPS inventory provides framework and vocabulary to document and analyze scenic views consistently. When approached in this way, scenic views can be measured, managed, and ultimately protected. A key aspect of the NPS process is that it can be implemented by non-visual resource experts with indisputable results. ‘Citizen science’ participants like partners, stakeholders, and students not only increase park capacity to execute the inventory but also become advocates in the process.

Since implementation in 2014, over thirty parks have initiated inventories and continued to integrate results into planning and management activities. The work begins with training that is provided and funded by NPS Visual Resources Program staff. This training is both in the classroom and hands-on in the field. It is conducted in a three-day workshop along with follow up support. Results have been applied in foundation statements, special resources studies, compliance actions, and engagement for projects beyond park boundaries. Additionally, results have been included in development planning and project management at regional and park levels.

Understanding leads to preservation. Preservation work needs tangible, defensible information about the quality of critical resources. Implementing this method creates that information, providing a language to effectively and successfully protect important views and their settings.

“It is a scientific fact that the occasional contemplation of natural scenes of an impressive character... is favorable to the health and vigor of men” — F. L. Olmsted – 1865 Yosemite Report

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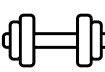
WELCOME

This manual is primarily intended to support instructor-led training on the National Park Service (NPS) approach to visual resources inventory (VRI). It will also serve as a useful reference for conducting VRI work in the future.

There are five main sections:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Pre-inventory: *inventory design and planning*
- 3.0 Inventory part 1: *scenic quality*
- 4.0 Inventory part 2: *view importance*
- 5.0 Post-data collection: *processing and mapping*

The following icons are used to highlight featured content.

-  Ideas for improving inventory effectiveness
-  Tools, usually guides and forms
-  Exercises for applying what you have learned
-  Key take-away messages
-  Thoughts or concepts to note
-  How-to instructions

Icons made by Freepik, Monkik, and Smashicons from www.flaticon.com

As you will learn, the VRI process is meant to be used in any type of unit managed by the NPS and the wide variety of landscapes where they occur. Throughout this manual the generic term “park” is used to reference all types of national park system units.

ACRONYMS

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
DOI	U.S. Department of the Interior
GIS	geographic information system
GPS	global positioning system
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act of 1966
NPS	National Park Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
SIV	scenic inventory value
SLR	single-lens reflex
UTM	Universal Transverse Mercator
VRI	visual resources inventory

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank the many NPS staff who used the draft version of the manual and provided input for improvements. We also wish to thank Jim Palmer and Tony Barret for their detailed review and thoughtful insights for enhancing the accessibility and understanding of the subject matter.

SOURCES

The NPS visual resources inventory incorporates ideas and concepts from a range of agency programs and experts in the field. The following publications served as the primary sources for many of those ideas.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Park views inspire people and connect them to nature and history. Some of our nation’s most spectacular and historically significant landscapes are entrusted to the National Park Service (NPS). People experience and learn about these places largely by moving through a park landscape and observing scenes within and beyond park boundaries. Every unit of the national park system has visual characteristics that influence how people experience it.

But, landscapes in and around parks are changing. Renewable and conventional energy development, urban growth, and internal park changes are some of the pressures creating visual change. Without thoughtful NPS involvement, these activities threaten to degrade scenery important to park visitors and, in some cases, the very reason for parks’ existence.

Therefore, the Air Resources Division of NPS, in conjunction with Argonne National Laboratory, has developed a systematic, service-wide approach for inventorying and understanding scenic views. This enables us to manage scenery as a resource, integrate scenery into resources management, and engage in scenic stewardship. It also supports our ability to consistently identify visual values and inform collaboration with stakeholders.



Visual Resources — More than just a good idea:

It’s the law

- The NPS Organic Act, explicitly calls for the preservation of scenery.¹
- The enabling legislation for many parks also calls for protection of scenery.

People care

- In a review of surveys conducted from 1998–2011, across all types of NPS areas, 90% of visitors said scenic views were very to extremely important.²

¹ The Act establishes the NPS and national park system, and provides additional direction (54 U.S.C. § 10010; enacted August 25, 1916).

² Kulesza, C., Y. Le, and S.J. Hollenhorst. 2013. National Park Service visitor perceptions & values of clean air, scenic views, & dark night skies; 1988–2011. Natural Resource Report NPS/NRSS/ARD/NRR-2013/632. National Park Service, Ft. Collins, Colorado.

The first step in managing scenery as a resource is evaluating what’s out there with an inventory. Visual resources inventory (VRI) information can provide:

- A baseline for monitoring visual changes over time.
- Maps that show view locations, visible areas, and values.
- Information for evaluating potential visual impacts of projects.
- A basis for incorporating visual resources in park management and planning.
- Resources for engaging in collaborative scenic conservation i.e., with others who own/manage scenic resources visible from and important to parks.



Visual resources include the landscape and all the visible natural and human-made features in it — everything the eye can see.

A draft version the NPS VRI methodology was tested in several parks in the summer of 2013. Starting in 2014, a final version with accompanying training was implemented. Parks have used their inventory results in several ways and the following are several examples from a variety of park types and landscapes.

1.1 VRI CASE STUDIES

Who else in NPS is doing this and why? These questions might come to mind as soon as you start considering a VRI. Parks are unique; thus, there may be several possible goals for an inventory, and many ways to use the inventory information to meet those goals. Below are brief summaries of how several parks are using inventory results.

Chaco Culture National Historical Park. Chaco Culture conducted a VRI because of potential threats to their cultural landscape from oil and gas development on neighboring BLM and tribal lands. Inventory results were shared with BLM to better explain the value of the visual landscape to the visitor experience at the park. The park staff also noted that some of the visual intrusions were the direct result of park infrastructure such as park buildings, signs, and roads.

“The NPS VRI methodology came about at an opportune moment for Chaco, which was dealing with a rapid expansion of energy development within the park’s iconic viewshed. As a resource manager, I felt that this new protocol gave me and my colleagues — for the first time, really — a set of assessment tools that was simple enough for park staff and partners to use with minimal training and that provided an intuitive language for describing a complex visual landscape in a way that we previously couldn’t articulate very well. It enabled us to capture important baseline information about the park’s visual environment that would help us to evaluate changes and impacts, and to improve park planning both internally and with



Photo Credit: Robert Sullivan, Argonne National Laboratory

Figure 2. View from Kin Bineola at Chaco Culture National Historical Park

external partners.” — Jim Von Haden, former Natural Resources Program Manager, Chaco Culture National Historical Park, NM.

Monocacy National Battlefield, Maryland. After completing an NPS VRI, Monocacy National Battlefield used the information to support the development of a viewshed protection plan that will guide park staff in proactive long-term management of views important to the battlefield.

Grand Canyon National Park. Grand Canyon captured a baseline inventory of views from the north and south canyon rims to better understand the potential impacts of a proposed resort development adjacent to the park. Similar to Chaco Culture National Historical Park, the park staff also noted that some of the visual intrusions at viewpoints were the direct result of park infrastructure.

Shenandoah National Park. Enjoying scenic views from along Skyline Drive or from the many viewpoints along trails is one of the most common visitor activities in Shenandoah National Park. The inventory helped establish baseline information about existing visual resources, most visited viewpoints, and the potential sensitivity of visitors to changes in the visual setting. After the initial effort, the park brought on an intern who coordinated a team of park staff and volunteers to complete the inventory for the park.



Photo Credit: NPS

Figure 3. View of the South Fork Shenandoah River Valley from Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park

“Doing the inventory was a great learning opportunity for staff and we successfully used the results to talk with local communities about proposed developments and the importance of protecting our scenic views.” — Jalyn Cummings, former Program Manager, Air and Water Quality, Shenandoah National Park

1.2 KEY CONCEPTS

For the past 100 years, individual parks have addressed scenery conservation in a variety of ways. Many parks have had great success in preserving scenic integrity through conscious management and collaboration with neighbors. However, the park-by-park approach to visual resource management is both inconsistent and inefficient.



A structured inventory method makes it easier to truly incorporate visual resources into informed and effective park management.

The NPS VRI is a systematic process for inventorying scenic resources within and beyond park boundaries. The inventory system was specifically designed to support the NPS mission to preserve and protect scenic views for future generations while providing helpful data for park management. Park managers,

landscape architects, planners, and natural and cultural resource specialists all contributed to the development of the NPS VRI methodology. The NPS inventory process includes foundational concepts from well-established visual inventory and management programs (e.g., Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, and the Federal Highway Administration). NPS inventory is conceived as a compliment to and not a replacement for other agency inventory methods and/or management objectives if views extend across other federal lands. As envisioned, it can overlay other agency visual resource data to better inform management of the visual landscape for their agency and your park. There are five key concepts of the NPS VRI:

1. Capturing a viewer’s perspective. Individual views comprise the basic unit of inventory in the NPS system and each view is mapped and described from a viewer’s perspective. As an inventory unit in the NPS VRI, a view consists of the viewpoint (where the viewer is standing), the viewed landscape (what they are looking at), and the viewer or viewers who are looking at the viewed landscape from the viewpoint. The decision to inventory and assess individual views is often based on the way in which viewers experience a scene. Even though visitors may move around at viewpoints the idea of capturing what the visitor sees and working to maintain that experience supports the NPS goal of providing for visitor enjoyment of scenery.

In some instances, the visitor experience is based on moving through the landscape such as hiking a trail or floating on a river. The inventory in these cases may need to assess a set of successive views that capture the sequence of movement. A conceptual approach to adapting the view-based inventory process to these situations is described in Appendix B.

2. Works in all types of landscapes. Natural landscapes, historic battlefields, archaeological sites, urban corridors, and wilderness areas all have visual resource values. The NPS VRI system does not value one type of view, such as natural scenery, more than historic or cultural views which often include development or other human-made features. Rather the visual resource values are evaluated in the context of their primary landscape character (e.g., natural, agricultural, urban), and more importantly what that landscape character looks like in the regional area where a park is located. This philosophy reflects the NPS need to assess differing visual expectations consistently across the wide variety of park landscapes and does not compare one park to another. After all, an agricultural landscape in Pennsylvania looks a lot different than an agricultural landscape in Montana.

3. Geographic in scope. People don’t “see” management boundaries when they visit parks. Important park views may extend beyond park managed property. For example, at Great Basin National Park, many views extend beyond park boundaries and some include private, BLM, and USFS lands all in the same view (Figure 4). It is the NPS’s responsibility to document and evaluate visual resources in a way



Figure 4. View from Great Basin National Park

that reflects the visitor experience. For this reason, it is essential for the NPS to look beyond its boundaries when considering visual resources. It is also important to note that visual inventory results do not dictate management actions on either NPS or other lands. Instead, inventory results are used to help the NPS understand and communicate visual resource values.

4. Balanced system. Park views are not always about aesthetic beauty. For example, some views are special because of their historic context or interpretive potential rather than (or in addition to) their purely scenic quality. The view from Brooks Hill at Monocacy National Battlefield looks out over the battlefield and some of the farms important to the story of the battle (Figure 5).

In the NPS VRI system, each view is assessed to capture two distinct and equally weighted values of the view:

- What is its scenic quality?
- How important is it to the park purpose and visitor experience?

Giving equal value to scenic quality and view importance allows the NPS to assess and understand visual resources in a more complete and holistic way. In other words, in the NPS VRI, non-scenic quality values, which include items relevant to historic and cultural values, count as much as the scenic quality in determining the total value of the view. For example, the view from Brooks Hill



Figure 5. View from Brooks Hill at Monocacy National Battlefield

at Monocacy National Battlefield looks out over the battlefield and some of the farms important to the story of the battle (Figure 5). These aspects of the view are as equally important as the aesthetic qualities.



The NPS VRI was designed in consultation with NPS cultural resource staff and includes robust incorporation of historic/cultural elements.

5. Easy to use. Finally, if the process is too difficult to use it loses much of its value for parks. Volunteers and/or park staff from any background can gain the skills to conduct an NPS visual resources inventory with relatively brief training and field practice. Because of the vast scale of many park landscapes and the dynamic nature of visual resources, the ability of park staff and volunteers to conduct inventory without visual resource specialists is a necessary part of making this system work well for the NPS. The inventory is also flexible allowing parks to start with as little as one view and build the inventory as time and staff capacity allow.

1.2.1 VIEW VS VISTA

As a unit of inventory in the NPS VRI a view is different than a vista, another term often used by NPS units. As noted, a view captures a viewer's perspective at a viewpoint. A vista is usually a planned view from a specific location that is maintained to keep that view. In a cultural landscape context, a vista is often a designed view such as the view down the National Mall.

1.3 ADOPT THE MINDSET

As a resource, scenery can be measured, managed, and protected. It is also finite and can be damaged or lost if we fail to consider it as a core responsibility, consistent with the NPS Organic Act. Comprehensive management of visual resources is a relatively new concept for the NPS as an agency. Considering scenery as a resource is key to successful integration into park management and helps NPS conserve views for the future.

Mapping and assessing visual resources using a structured, consistent, and repeatable inventory methodology allows them to be an integrated part of resource management. It also gives weight to NPS visual resource concerns when we engage neighboring landowners to work with us on collaborative conservation.



In 2011, some western parks responded to the BLM’s designation of solar energy development zones by recommending a buffer of no development within 25 miles of park boundaries. This was seen by BLM as an unreasonable approach to reducing visual impacts, in part because some of the areas in those buffer zones were not actually visible from the parks. If we are more targeted in our protection strategies, we improve our chances for success.

Still, it is important to recognize that visual resources don’t always “win” in management decisions — nor should they. There will certainly be cases where visual impacts are considered less important than safety, habitat conservation, or some other consideration. Solid visual resource information provides an additional layer of data so that potential impacts are considered and can be avoided or mitigated as appropriate.

Inventories are routinely conducted for ecological, cultural, and other resources. Visual resources can only have a seat at the table in discussions of resource management when robust inventory information is collected. The NPS VRI method introduced in this manual has been proven effective in diverse park landscapes. The consistent methodology captures the baseline information needed to elevate visual resource protection in parks and neighboring communities across the NPS.



Emotional connections to places are not directly reflected — and certainly are not diminished — by the NPS VRI system. Stories, emotions, inspiration, and personal experience are all valid reasons for individuals to value a view. They are, however, more difficult to quantify, map, and/or base management decisions on. Consider documenting or recognizing emotional connections as supplemental information to complement inventory data for especially significant or threatened views.

1.4 HOW IT WORKS

Conducting a visual resources inventory is a relatively straightforward, two-part process that is the foundation for effective visual resource management (Figure 6).



Figure 6. General visual resources inventory, analysis, and management framework

The unit of inventory in the NPS VRI is a “VIEW” much as visitor might see it and is comprised of three parts — the viewpoint, viewed landscape, and the viewer. Information is collected about each part of the view during the inventory. During the planning phase, parks identify the need for an inventory and select viewpoints for the views that meet the goals of the inventory. In the first part of the inventory, teams visit identified viewpoints, spatially define each view, describe them in a systematic way, and rate the scenic quality according to defined criteria. In the second part, a team of park experts document viewpoint and viewed landscape significance before rating the importance of each view for its value to the park’s purpose and viewer experience based on defined criteria. Scenic quality and view importance ratings are then combined into an overall scenic inventory value (SIV). The results can be used with mapping and analysis tools to better understand a park’s visual resources. All data is stored in the VRI spatial database so SIVs and other view data can be represented on maps and applied to a variety of visual analyses. The results of analyses based on sound inventory data ultimately lead to better informed management of visual resources.

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2.0 PLANNING AN INVENTORY

Many of the pre-inventory activities discussed in this section take place in advance of training workshops. These same steps can be useful for planning inventories that you would like to undertake in the future.

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

You will learn how to plan and execute a VRI including:

- Framing your approach to visual resources
- Inventory planning — where, when and who
- Inventory logistics — logistics and equipment

2.2 FRAMING YOUR APPROACH TO VISUAL RESOURCES

Inventory planning starts by asking: “Why are we concerned about visual resources at our park?” Properly framing the approach to visual resources is essential to setting appropriate goals and conducting a successful inventory. Understanding potential challenges and resource goals will inform the selection of inventory viewpoints and can also help determine the need/desire for stakeholder engagement early in the process. Here are some questions to guide the framing process:

1. Are there any issues with visual resources that the park is trying to address?

- Are you concerned about a specific proposed or existing project inside or outside the park?
- Do you anticipate changes in the landscape over time?

2. What is the context?

- Who are the stakeholders in the project or the visual setting in general?
- Are there community needs or concerns for the visual setting?
- What is the timeframe (long-term/short-term) for potential issues?
How soon could potential changes occur? How long will the anticipated visual impacts last?

3. What are your visual resource goals?

- Do you want to inform park management about decisions regarding a project or changes in the visual setting?
- Do you want a general understanding of the current condition of visual resources at the park?



Try re-framing visual resource challenges as opportunities. By thinking about “How might we...?” you can set yourself up to get the most out of your inventory.

2.3 INVENTORY PLANNING

Planning provides an opportunity to think through project logistics. Getting a good handle on all this information will keep you on track. Your project plan will likely change as things evolve — and that’s OK. The inventory process has many opportunities to adjust to your needs while still meeting the goal of gaining consistent information. The navigation diagram in Figure 7 is used throughout the training manual for easy reference to sections discussing the inventory components.

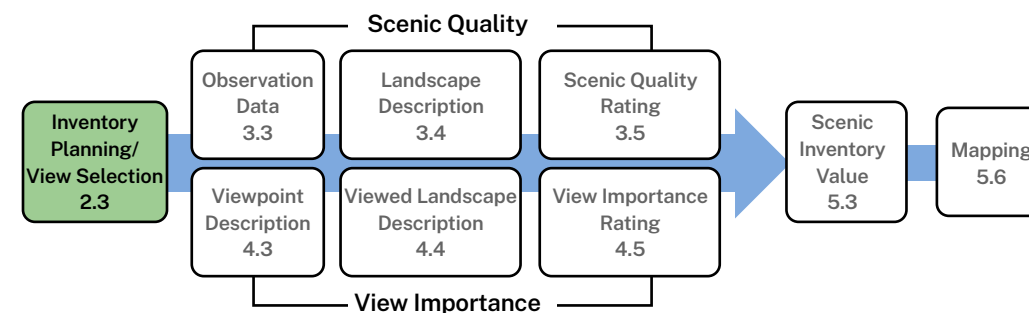


Figure 7. Navigation diagram of the NPS visual resources inventory process



The purpose of preparing an NPS VRI project plan is not to create a document but to execute an effective and efficient inventory.

The purpose of the visual resources inventory project plan is to identify:

1. Where — key views to inventory
2. Who — inventory team members
3. When — optimal dates/times for conducting the inventory
4. Logistics/supplies — items needed for inventory fieldwork



A *Project Planning Worksheet* (Appendix A) may be helpful for organizing your thoughts about the major components of a VRI. Completing the worksheet is not required, and you may find other tools you currently use to organize and plan activities just as helpful.

2.3.1 WHERE—VIEW SELECTION

Views may be selected for a variety of reasons: to establish a baseline for monitoring visual change over time; to capture the current state of visual resources in an area facing immediate development pressures; to comprehensively assess the quality of the visitor experience; or to document the character of a wilderness area. None of these approaches are wrong and it is fine to have a mix of reasons to do an inventory. Park staff are encouraged to select key views for inventory that will help them address their visual resource challenges and/or goals.



Giving thoughtful consideration to the views selected for inventory will lead to data that enable better communication and management decisions.

Common considerations for identifying specific views for inventory include:

- High visitor use areas
- Areas promoted by NPS and/or promoted in other media, e.g., hiking guides
- Recognized need to change management at the viewpoint
- Important historic, cultural, scenic, or other resource-related views
- Locations related to interpretive themes
- Views that may be “at risk” for changes, e.g., from internal or external development

For small parks, all desired views may be included and easily inventoried. However, larger parks may have hundreds of views that could potentially be included in the inventory. There may be a lack of time and resources to inventory all desired views. In this case, a subset of potential views can be selected for the initial inventory, usually using some method for prioritizing the views.

Considerations for establishing priorities for views to include in the VRI could include starting with views that are:

- The most “at risk” for changes to the view
- The most important to visitors
- The most important to interpretive themes
- The easiest to inventory quickly from a logistical standpoint

A full inventory of all views does not need to be completed at one time. A phased VRI approach can be used and is generally necessary for larger NPS areas. The phases could be based on the considerations listed above or you could divide the park into zones based on logistics or other schemes. You could then employ the considerations listed above within each zone. At Redwood National and State Parks the inventory was initiated in a small area of the park called the Bald Hills because of a potential road paving project (Figure 8). Parks are free to develop their own approach to identifying and prioritizing views to be inventoried. The most important thing is to create a master list for the inventory so that everyone is working with the same viewpoint numbers and names throughout the process.



The View Identification Worksheet (Appendix A) can be used to record views selected for the VRI, the selection rationale, and other important information about the views.



Photo Credit: NPS

Figure 8. View of the Bald Hills area at Redwood National and State Parks

2.3.2 WHO—BUILDING THE TEAMS

The NPS VRI can be implemented by non-visual resource experts. It has proven effective to have team members with a variety of backgrounds participate in the inventory. Park staff from natural and cultural resources as well as interpretation, facilities, law enforcement, and administration can all provide valuable input to the process, particularly in assessing view importance. Volunteer, partner, and stakeholder participation is an excellent way to enhance staff capacity for doing the scenic quality field work. Their participation also facilitates shared

understanding of visual resources and helps build relationships that ultimately strengthen the park's ability to achieve visual resource management goals. Contractors can also be an effective way to jump-start an inventory.

FOR SCENIC QUALITY:

- Field teams are ideally composed of 5–8 members to ensure balanced discussion and reasonable maneuverability, though as few as 3–4 members are acceptable (Figure 9).
- The field work often provides the best opportunity to involve volunteers, partners, and stakeholders. Everyone who has participated in training will be equally qualified to assess the characteristics of what they see.
- It is strongly recommended that at least one local park staff participate in each field team. The local knowledge of landscapes and park protocol is essential. Additionally, NPS leadership and participation in the inventory will lend to greater credibility to the inventory results.

FOR VIEW IMPORTANCE:

- It is not necessary for the same people who participated in scenic quality field work to participate in the view importance process.
- Group size is less significant but should include staff with different expertise because it is essential to capture non-scenic values of the viewpoint and viewed landscape, as well as information about the viewers.
- In-depth park/local knowledge is critical for well-rounded discussion and efficient completion.



Photo Credit: NPS

Figure 9. Field team at work in Petrified Forest National Park

2.3.3 WHEN—TIMING

The NPS VRI captures the scenic quality and importance of views from the viewer’s perspective. It is important to do the landscape description and scenic quality evaluation at a time that reflects the average visitor experience. To the extent possible, the timing of the inventory should avoid fall color, wildflower blooms, and other ephemeral phenomena that could substantially affect the scenic quality ratings. Situations such as smoke from a fire or very hazy days should also be avoided (Figure 10). Many parks do have visitors year-round, and in some cases, it may be desirable to inventory specific views under “leaf on” and “leaf off” or other landscape conditions to capture the different viewing experiences.

As with many resources, the views in and around parks will change over time. There is not an established schedule for repeating the inventory and there is no industry standard protocol as there might be for other resources. It is recommended that parks re-inventory views at approximately 7 to 10-year intervals. Parks in relatively protected areas can plan on the 10-year interval and perhaps even beyond that. Parks located in areas where the landscape is more subject to change should consider repeating inventory in about the seven-year time frame, maybe even 5 years, or after a major change in the landscape takes place. When repeating an inventory, it is not required to re-assess all viewpoints; instead, the VRI can be focused on those views where change has taken place or that are more important to the visitor experience.



Photo Credit: NPS

Figure 10. View at Badlands National Park under hazy air quality conditions

2.4 INVENTORY LOGISTICS AND SUPPLIES

The general model the NPS visual resources inventory training includes an in-person training and field inventory workshop at the park. It includes classroom presentations and exercises, followed by scenic quality fieldwork for the inventory. Sometimes part of the training can be done in advance through a virtual method. Volunteers and stakeholders can be helpful to expand capacity for the scenic quality part of the inventory. The in-office view importance part of the inventory follows the scenic quality work and is primarily completed by park staff. Most often the workshop represents the start of an inventory. The following sections provide general guidance on planning additional inventory work in the future.

2.4.1 FIELD WORK

In planning for the scenic quality field work, organize the list of viewpoints you selected based on effective use of time regarding travel and access. Keep in mind:

- Each team should have very clear direction on the viewpoint locations they will be responsible for and a good travel plan to help them accomplish their work.
- Each location will take approximately 40 minutes to complete the view description and scenic quality rating process.

Teams may take a little more time than this when they first get started, and often will become more efficient as they become familiar with the process. Highly proficient teams can do the landscape description and scenic quality rating in about 30 minutes. Generally, it is a good idea to have a few extra viewpoint visits planned for a team to complete each day to avoid the situation where a team runs out of work part way through the day. It’s a big commitment to get people in the field, and it is best to utilize their time effectively.



Maps can be a valuable part of giving teams clear direction to effectively accomplish the inventory. Parks should consider mapping out viewpoints, view directions, and routes to viewpoints before getting started on the VRI.

EQUIPMENT

The NPS VRI process does not require specialized equipment and most parks have the basic equipment needed. There are no specifications for the type, quality, or brand of any of the needed equipment. Here are the basics:

- Camera — to photograph the view extent as determined by the team. Can be high resolution digital single lens reflex (SLR) if desired, or as simple as a smartphone. Photos are meant to be snapshots of what the team saw and are not used for development of simulations or other types of analysis. Though there are no required standards parks may wish to establish a photo standard such as lens focal length, so the photos are consistent over time.
- GPS unit — used to record the coordinates of the viewpoints.
- Compass — to establish view boundaries.
- Tripod — helps keep the camera level for wide panoramas or multiple shots that will be stitched together.
- Clipboards — very helpful for being able to fill out inventory forms.
- Safety gear — high visibility vests, gaiters (for ticks), bug netting or other gear may be needed. Safety procedures are often park specific and should always be followed. A park staff person who is familiar with all safety protocols should provide the team with a safety briefing prior to starting field work.
- Personal field gear — team members are responsible for proper footwear, hat, sunscreen, water etc.

Along with the other equipment you will need to have the appropriate number of data collection sheets. For every view you are going to inventory for scenic quality, you need one sheet for recording data and individual ratings sheets for every team member. Additional details on the scenic quality process are presented in section 3.0.



For every scenic quality evaluation there is a parallel view importance evaluation.

2.4.2 OFFICE WORK

The office exercise of the view importance evaluation is also important from a planning standpoint as you look at completing the inventory data (Figure 11). Evaluations should be completed reasonably soon — ideally within about 2 to 3 months after the scenic quality field work. This will help maintain continuity for team members who participated in the field work and maintain momentum to get all the data completed. The only things needed for the view importance process are data forms for each view and rating guides for the participants. A meeting location with internet access may be helpful. Additional details on the view importance process are presented in section 4.0.



Photo Credit: NPS

Figure 11. View importance meeting at Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail

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3.0 INVENTORY PART 1: SCENIC QUALITY

The first part of the inventory of a view is a field exercise to describe the view and conduct the scenic quality rating. The following sections describe the process in detail and provide you the vocabulary and concepts needed for a successful inventory.

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

You will learn the standardized approach to describing views and rating the scenic quality. This includes learning how to complete the **View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet**. Specifically, you will be able to:

- Record observation data about each view such as viewpoint coordinates, view bearings, weather, observer position, and photography details.
- Identify and record visible features and qualities of the landscape including:
 - View type
 - Brief narrative description
 - Landscape character type
 - Distance zones
 - Landscape features
 - Visual elements
- Rate scenic quality based on landscape character integrity, vividness, and visual harmony.
- Facilitate discussions and record consensus ratings for scenic quality.

3.2 OVERVIEW

Scenic quality data are collected in the field, at selected viewpoints, and recorded on the **View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet**. By using a standardized approach parks will collect consistent descriptions and defensible ratings of scenic quality. Robust view description and scenic quality information can provide:

- A baseline for monitoring changes to scenic quality over time.
- Information needed for compliance with EIS/EA/CE assessment of proposed projects.
- Support for visual impact mitigation, restoration, or actions to improve existing views.

At each viewpoint, a designated recorder documents the observation data and completes the landscape description. While that happens, the other team members rate the scenic quality, using a specified set of criteria. The recorder then facilitates a consensus discussion among all team members and records the final team score and rationale for each rated component of scenic quality.

3.3 OBSERVATION DATA

Information about the viewpoint location, view boundaries, evaluation team, and conditions at the time of assessment is recorded as observation data and is the first step in the scenic quality part of the inventory (Figure 12). This information helps in understanding the conditions under which the initial evaluation was done as well as informing the process when repeating the inventory in the future. Most of the data fields are very straightforward and some of it might seem too simple to bother with; however, the people doing the field evaluation may not always be at the park, so leaving a thorough record is important. The components are defined in the following sections. An example of what a completed Observation Data section might look like is shown in Figure 13.

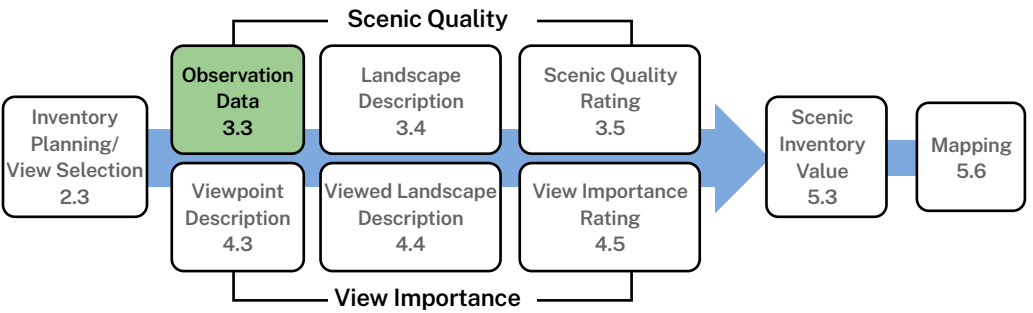


Figure 12. Navigation of the visual resources inventory process

For every view, complete the observation data fields shown in Figure 13.

Key components are also explained in the *View Description and Scenic Quality Field Guide* — a quick reference guide that is easy to take into the field.

Observation Data				
NPS Unit: <i>HAFE</i>		Date: <i>3-8-18</i>	Time: <i>10:20am</i>	
Viewpoint Name: <i>Lookdown heights/split rock</i>		Viewed Landscape Name (if needed):		
Viewpoint Coordinates		View Geometry Bearings ☒ Magnetic / ☐ True N)		
☐ UTM, Zone:	☒ Lat./Long.			
<i>N 39.32045° / W 77.72063°</i>		Left: <i>290°</i>	Right: <i>320°</i>	Center: <i>10°</i>
View Type: ☐ Panorama ☐ Feature ☒ Framed ☐ Focal ☐ Enclosed ☐ Canopied				
Rationale: ☐ Baseline Inventory ☐ Leaf-on ☐ Leaf-off ☐ Project ☐ Other—describe:				
Narrative: <i>View from Split Rock looking at Harpers Ferry and Maryland Heights</i>				
Recorder: <i>AL</i>		Evaluators: <i>TL, MP, MM, AL</i>		
Weather: ☒ Sunny/Clear ☐ Mostly Sunny ☐ Partly Cloudy ☐ Mostly Cloudy ☐ Cloudy/Overcast ☐ Cirrus				
Observer Position: ☒ Looking down at scene ☐ Looking at eye level ☐ Looking up at scene				
Photo Record				
Photographer: <i>Mark M.</i>		Camera/Lens 1: <i>Nikon D5100</i>	Camera/Lens 2:	
Camera	Photo Number(s)	Pano	Notes	
<i>1</i>	<i>1157-1159</i>	☒		

Figure 13. Example of a completed Observation Data section of the View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet

3.3.1 VIEWPOINT NUMBER

The viewpoint number is the preassigned number given to the viewpoint location as part of the inventory planning — not the number of the viewpoint in the sequence the team is doing the inventory. This is also the number that will be assigned to the point in the database, so it is important that inventory teams work with a master list of numbers for the viewpoints they evaluate and not make them up as they go.

3.3.2 NPS UNIT, DATE, AND TIME

NPS unit: Enter the NPS four-letter abbreviation for the park unit in which the inventory is being conducted. People on the team will usually know the proper abbreviation, but a data entry person, volunteer, or other non-NPS people might not.

Date: The date of the inventory for that view — not the date when the inventory process was started or when the workshop was held.

Time: Enter the time — within about 10 minutes — that the team started the inventory process at the viewpoint.

3.3.3. VIEWPOINT AND VIEWED LANDSCAPE NAME

Viewpoint Name: Enter the name of the inventory viewpoint. This should be the same name that is used on the master list to avoid confusion.

Viewed Landscape Name: Use this field only if there are two views from the viewpoint. Distinguish between the two views by adding a viewed landscape name based on a well-known feature in the view (e.g., Pike’s Peak, McAfee Knob). If there are no well-known features, use descriptive terms (e.g., “mountains to west”). This name can be determined by the team in the field.

3.3.4 VIEWPOINT COORDINATES

Enter the GPS coordinates for the inventory viewpoint and indicate if they are latitude/longitude or Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM). UTM is an alternative coordinate system that uses multiple zones to determine coordinates instead of a single map projection. The VRI database uses the North American Datum 1983 (NAD 83) projection for GIS analysis.

Record latitude/longitude coordinates in decimal degrees. The database cannot accept coordinates in degrees, minutes, and seconds so they will have to be converted to decimal degrees to be entered in the database. Do whatever is best for your team and park — but BE CONSISTENT.

3.3.5 VIEW GEOMETRY BEARINGS

Decide as a team what the limits of the view are so that everyone agrees the extent of the view that will be rated (Figure 14). Enter the compass bearings for the left side of the view, the approximate center, and the right side of the view. If it is a 360-degree view, enter 0° left and 360° right. Indicate if the compass reading is magnetic or true north. Again, it is good to be consistent. While convenient, cell phone compasses can be inaccurate enough that they should be avoided if possible.



Photo Credit: NPS

Figure 14. The first step in scenic quality field work is to determine the horizontal extent of the view and document it with photographs



It is critical that all members of the team know the left and right bearings and where the foreground of the view begins BEFORE any rating or description is done. Everyone needs to agree what is in — and out of the view — so they are describing/rating the same thing.

3.3.6 VIEW TYPE

Check the box (only one!) with the view type that best describes the view. The view type is a general descriptive term for the viewing experience based on the spatial relationship of features within the viewed landscape and the spatial relationship of the viewer to those features. The view types in the inventory process are *Panorama, Enclosed, Focal, Feature, Framed, and Canopied*. Explanations and examples of the view types are in section 3.3.13.

3.3.7 RATIONALE

Select the reason for are doing the inventory — very likely identified during planning. If none of the selections seems to work, select “other” and fill in a rationale that fits your circumstances.

3.3.8 NARRATIVE

In this section, write a brief description (1–2 sentences) of the general characteristics of the view. This should give a future reader a basic idea of what the view is, where or which direction it is looking, and a prominent feature or two. You may also wish to include information about the viewpoint such as “cliff edge” or “historic roadside marker.” An example narrative might be:

“Feature view from Fajada View Overlook, centered on Fajada Butte that runs from the eastern edge of South Mesa across Fajada Gap to western edge of Chacra Mesa”

3.3.9 RECORDER AND EVALUATORS

Recorder: The person recording the data for a viewpoint enters their name in this field.

Evaluators: Enter the names or initials of the rest of the team.

The recorder assignment on the team can change for each viewpoint. This shares the workload of the most time-consuming aspect of the process and gives others experience doing this task.



Use the *Field Team Record* to speed-up the entry of names on the data forms by allowing the recorder to simply list the initials of themselves and the evaluators. See Appendix A.

3.3.10 WEATHER

Check the correct box — using the definitions below — for the weather conditions at the start of the evaluation for each view.

- Clear/Sunny: There are few or no opaque clouds.
- Mostly Sunny: Approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of the sky is covered by opaque clouds.
- Partly Cloudy: Approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ of the sky is covered by opaque clouds.
- Mostly Cloudy: Approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the sky is covered by opaque clouds.
- Cloudy/Overcast: Almost all of the sky is covered by opaque clouds.
- Cirrus: There are high-altitude clouds that are semi-transparent, such that sunlight shines through them, but is dulled. They have minimal form and may appear as wispy patches, narrow bands, a film, or tufts of hair.

3.3.11 OBSERVER POSITION

Indicate if a viewer is primarily looking down at the viewed landscape, level with it, or looking up at the viewed landscape (Figure 15). An elevated view often shows more of the landscape than looking at eye level or up at a view. This will matter when assessing the potential visual impacts of future development or changes in the landscape because they may be more visible if you are looking down on them.



Figure 15. Images showing examples of observer position

3.3.12 PHOTO RECORD

Take a photograph of the full view that you are evaluating. There are no specifications for equipment so use whatever camera(s) you have available. This information is recorded for basic reference purposes and is especially helpful if there is a desire to repeat (or upgrade) the photos in a future inventory.

A smart phone can be a quick way to take a panorama that does not need future processing. High-resolution digital photos from an SLR camera can be beneficial for future use but the individual photos will need to be ‘stitched’ together to create a panorama (Figure 16). A tripod is very helpful for keeping the photos level, especially for individual photos that will be stitched together.

Enter the information below in the fields on each data sheet or alternatively use the **Field Team Record** and enter the data once for each field team and session.

- **Photographer:** Enter the name of the photographer for the view.
- **Camera/Lens 1, 2:** Enter the camera make and model, for each camera used. For example: Camera 1: Nikon D5100/18-55mm, Camera 2: iPad
- **Photo Number(s):** Enter the number for each photo or bounding numbers for a range of photos, for example: 1035, 1036–1039.
- **Pan:** Check the box if the photograph is a panorama or a series of photos is shot as a panorama that needs to be stitched. **This does not mean that the view type is a panorama!**
- **Notes:** If desired, add any additional notes that will inform future use of the photo record, such as the direction or subject of a specific photograph.



Figure 16. Example of stitched panorama photo from Chaco Culture National Historical Park

3.3.13 VIEW TYPE DETAILS

The visual experience of the view has an important relationship to the scenic quality of the view and to the perception of changes to the view. For example, adding projects near the feature in a feature view will often have a larger negative impact on scenic quality than locating the project in other parts of the view.

Note that some views may have characteristics of more than one view type; however, the primary apparent view type is selected for inventory purposes. This is not a scored component so there is not a wrong answer. In the narrative section, if desired, record any unusual or important information about the view type — especially if it seems to be more than one view types.

PANORAMA

Panoramic views are essentially unobstructed and usually 180° or more in width with no apparent limits to the view — at least for most of it (Figure 17). There may be a feature that limits the view to the horizon in a small portion of the view but that is not the predominant characteristic. The sky and foreground often occupy much of the scene in these views.



Photo Credit: (left to right, starting from top left) NPS; NPS; NPS; Brittini Connell; Robert Sullivan, Argonne National Laboratory

Figure 17. Examples of panoramic views

ENCLOSED

Enclosed views have features or a group of objects (e.g., trees or ridges) that form visual walls that limit the view (Figure 18). Something stops your view from going to the horizon as in a panoramic view. Examples of enclosed views include views of a meadow or small lake surrounded by trees, or a view of a large valley enclosed by mountain ridges.



Photo Credit: (left to right, starting from top left) NPS; NPS; NPS; NPS

Figure 18. Examples of enclosed views

FEATURE

Feature views contain an object or group of objects to which your eye is drawn (Figure 19). Features can be natural or human-made. Some examples of features include prominent landforms, large trees, waterfalls, towers, or historic features.



Photo Credit: (left to right, starting from top left) NPS; Robert Sullivan, Argonne National Laboratory; NPS; Christina Tenison; Robert Sullivan, Argonne National Laboratory

Figure 19. Examples of feature views

FOCAL

Focal views have features or elements that lead the observer’s eye to a point of convergence (Figure 20). Typical focusing lines include converging canyon walls, parallel rows of trees forming an “allée,” roads, trails, rivers, or stream beds. In each of the examples below, different features draw your eye through the landscape but there is not necessarily a feature to view.



Photo Credit: (left to right, starting from top left) NPS; NPS; NPS; NPS

Figure 20. Examples of focal views

FRAMED

Framed views contain visible edges of landforms, vegetation, or structures that limit the viewer’s perspective and create a feeling of “looking through a window” to the scene beyond (Figure 21). The framing objects are usually in the foreground. In forested areas, breaks in trees near the viewpoint often create framed views. In urban settings, buildings often serve as the framing features.



Photo Credit: (left to right, starting from top left) NPS; NPS; NPS; NPS

Figure 21. Examples of framed views

CANOPIED

Canopied views are in locations that give you a sense of having an overhead “ceiling” rather than viewing a canopy from an outside viewpoint. The most common features creating the canopy are trees (Figure 22). Built structures and overhanging canyon walls, can also create visual canopies. You may find that many canopied views may also be focal views where your eye is drawn in a specific direction or enclosed views where the view is limited by a backdrop. In determining the view type, remember this is not a rated factor so select which type seems to be the most prominent.



Photo Credit: (left to right, starting from top left) Robert Sullivan, Argonne National Laboratory; NPS; NPS; NPS

Figure 22. Examples of canopied views



Exercise 1: Identify view type

Figure 23. Below each photo, write the name of the view type that you think it represents: panorama, enclosed, feature, focal, framed, canopied



Answers: A-Enclosed, B-Feature, C-Panorama, D-Focal, E-Canopied, F-Framed

Photo Credit: (left to right; starting from top left) NPS; Avery Locklear; NPS; NPS; Maine.gov; NPS

3.4 LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

Few people are accustomed to systematically describing the visual landscape. This can make it difficult to get consistent information. Therefore, in the second step of the scenic quality portion, the NPS VRI process uses a standard format for describing the physical and aesthetic characteristics of a view (Figure 24). The landscape description sections of the **View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet** are shown in Figures 25–26.

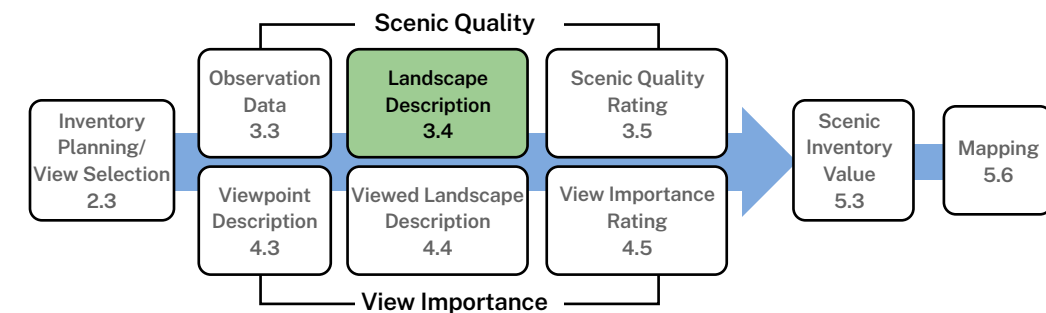


Figure 24. Navigation diagram

This structured description does not have any direct bearing on the numeric scenic quality rating and there are no ratings for the descriptive sections. Rather, the landscape description is useful for documenting current conditions and for informing land use planning or project-specific impact assessment and mitigation. The description process includes the following components that are explained in the sections 3.4.1–3.4.5:

- Landscape character type
- Ephemeral effects
- Distance zones
- Landscape features
- Visual elements

While the capacity to see and describe landscapes will help evaluators better understand the views as they complete their individual ratings, it is important not to get carried away. The longer you look at a view, the more you will see. Since the description process takes time, you will tend to notice more details in a view than a typical visitor might when they stop for a photo. Recording too much information will take extra time and might make the rating process more confusing because everyone may not include the same level of detail in their ratings.



Remember — focus on the “big stuff.” The longer you spend looking at a view the more you will see. Decide what are the most prominent features or elements in the view, capture those, and move on to the rating process.

Landscape Description															
Landscape Character Type: ☐ Natural/Natural Appearing ☐ Pastoral ☐ Agriculture ☒ Rural ☐ Suburban ☐ Urban ☐ Industrial															
Are seasonal/ephemeral effects (e.g., wildflower displays, snow, haze) important to the scenic quality of the view? ☐ Yes ☒ No If yes, please describe:															
Extent of Distance Zones															
Foreground: <i>To cliffs above Maryland heights and shoals in river</i>															
Middle ground: <i>To hotel and hills behind Harpers Ferry</i>															
Background: <i>Beyond hills over Harpers Ferry</i>															
Landscape Features															
Landform	Distance			Landcover	Distance			Land Use	Distance			Structures	Distance		
	F	M	B		F	M	B		F	M	B		F	M	B
Mountains				Development	X	X		Natural Areas	X	X	X	High Rise - Residential			
Hills	X	X	X	Barren				Timber				Low Rise - Residential		X	
Buttes				Forest - Deciduous	X	X	X	Grazing/Rangeland				High Rise - Commercial			
Mesas				Forest - Evergreen				Agriculture		X		Low Rise - Commercial			
Valleys				Forest - Mixed				Mining				Farm Buildings		X	
Ridge		X	X	Shrub/Scrub				Industrial				Misc. Indust.(Factories, etc.)			
Cliffs/Bluffs		X		Grassland				Office/Retail				Power Plants			
Canyons				Pasture/Hay				Urban Residential				Wind Turbines			
Plains				Cultivated Crops				Suburban Residential				Solar Facilities			
Beaches				Wetland/Bog				Rural Residential		X		Communication Towers			
Sand Dunes				Ocean				Transportation	X	X		Oil/Gas Wells			
Islands				Lake/Pond				Parks/Recreation				Local Roads		X	
Headlands				River/Stream	X	X	X	Urban Center				Highways			
Water	X	X	X					Small Town		X		Transmission/Substations	X		
								Energy Generation				Unidentifiable Structures			X
								Transmission				canal	X		

Figure 25. Example of a completed portion of the Landscape Description selection of the View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet

Prominent Visual Elements			
FORMS		LINES	
Descriptor	Elements	Descriptor	Elements
Rolling	hills	Vertical	Bridge abutments, cliffs
Blocky	cliffs, buildings	Horizontal	Bridges
Rugged	cliffs	Curving	Towpath, river, roads
Angular		Undulating	
Conical		Angular	cliffs
Pyramidal		Diagonal	
Rounded		Broken	
Circular		Irregular	
Flat	river, towpath		
COLORS		TEXTURES	
Color	Elements	Descriptor	Elements
green/blue	river	Smooth	
rusty	bridges	Rough	cliffs
brown	trees, cliffs	Medium	vegetation
Brick red		Coarse	
gray	town buildings	Fine	
white		Patchy	
		Stippled	
		Random	
		Uniform	
		Ordered	
		rippled	river

Figure 26. Example of a completed Prominent Visual Elements section of the View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet

3.4.1 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE

Landscape character is an overall visual and cultural impression of the landscape and embodies distinct landscape attributes that exist throughout an area. It is a product of both the natural and human influences on the landscape. The landscape character types in the inventory are *natural/natural appearing*, *pastoral*, *agricultural*, *rural*, *suburban*, *urban*, and *industrial*. The views in a park may include several different landscape character types and regional variation is expected. For example, agriculture in Pennsylvania looks different than agriculture in Colorado.



Remember — context matters. It is critical to understand what the different landscape character types look like in your area.

Before starting the inventory in the field, identify the landscape character types and their features typical for your region that may be present in the views to be inventoried. The list you create should generally include about 6–8 features for each landscape character type. Once again, too much information will complicate the rating process. The lists of features will be used during the inventory by individual raters to assess landscape character integrity. If there are too few, they will likely all be found in every view and if there are too many, no view will include most or all of the features.



The *Landscape Character Type Worksheet* (Appendix A) can be used to compile a list of important, typical features that are regionally appropriate for each identified landscape character type.

Landscape character type information is used as a baseline for assessing scenic quality based on the presence of typical landscape character features, their quality, and the impact of features that are inconsistent with the landscape character type of the view. For example, a factory would be a typical feature in an industrial landscape, but a factory in an agricultural landscape would be inconsistent with the agricultural landscape character, and for most people, would likely detract from the scenic quality of the view.



For each view, prior to rating scenic quality, the team decides which landscape character type describes the majority of the view and the recorder checks the appropriate box on the *View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet*.

Note that some views may have characteristics of more than one landscape character type; however, the predominant landscape character type is chosen for inventory purposes. After the team decides on the landscape character type, individual raters use the list of typical features from the landscape character type worksheet to complete their **Scenic Quality Individual Rating Data sheet** (discussed in more detail in section 3.5).

NATURAL/NATURAL APPEARING

Natural/natural appearing landscapes are dominated by natural features (Figure 27). In reality, few views are completely natural, and human changes can sometimes add positively to the landscape character. In natural/natural appearing landscapes, there may be evidence of human changes but they are usually minor in the overall view and do not detract significantly from the natural landscape character. Typical natural features may include:

- Mountains
- Rivers, lakes, streams, creeks, waterfalls, etc.
- Valleys
- Forests (may include forest plantations if they “look like” forests)
- Wetlands, marshes
- Deserts
- Wilderness areas and areas with wilderness character
- Coastlands/seashores



Photo Credit: (left to right, starting from top left) NPS; NPS; NPS; NPS

Figure 27. Examples of natural/natural appearing landscape character

PASTORAL

Pastoral landscapes are predominantly grassland or shrub/scrub open rangeland (Figure 28). They may have natural or planted pastures. While they may sometimes resemble natural/natural appearing areas, they have some visible evidence of grazing, ranching, or farming activities; but development is limited and widely spaced. Typical features may include:

- Ranch/farm developments, such as houses, barns, and stables
- Fences, rock walls, gravel, roads
- Grain elevators, windmills, silos, sheds, fences, sheds, pens, etc.



Figure 28. Examples of pastoral landscape character

AGRICULTURAL

Agricultural landscapes are dominated by planted fields of row crops, livestock pastures/pens, or confined feeding operations. The topography is typically flat to rolling and typically does not include steep terrain. In many areas of the country, these landscapes may be developed in grid-like field patterns with clustered farm complexes. Figure 29 shows examples of what agriculture might look like and so you need to consider what an agricultural landscape would look like in your area. Typical features that may be included in an agricultural landscape are listed below and in some areas Christmas tree farms, vineyards, orchards, or other specialty “crops” may indicate an agricultural landscape character.

- Planted fields, row crops, or rows of trees
- Houses, barns, sheds, or other farm buildings
- Silos, grain bins, grain elevators
- Fences, rock walls, gravel roads, paved roads
- Livestock yards



Figure 29. Examples of agricultural landscape character

RURAL

Rural landscapes generally consist of widely dispersed residences and may include small farms or crop areas though these are not usually dominant. Rural areas can also include small towns or villages with low populations and may often be located away from larger cities or suburbs (Figure 30). Recreation areas and natural features may also be present. Typical features may include:

- Widely scattered single-family homes with associated structures and infrastructure
- Cluster of houses with outbuildings, churches, or other structures and associated infrastructure
- Recreation and/or natural areas, including natural parks, forests, ponds, and wildlife areas may be present but if they comprise most of the view you may want to consider a different landscape character type.



Figure 30. Examples of rural landscape character

SUBURBAN

Suburban landscapes contain residential communities and mixed-use commercial development near a city (Figure 31). Population density is typically less than that of a city but more than a rural area. Typical features may include:

- A mix of home types such as single-family homes, townhomes, and maybe condominiums/apartments
- Commercial areas, schools
- Golf courses, developed parks, and undeveloped open space
- Transportation feature such as highways, roads, and large parking lots



Figure 31. Examples of suburban landscape character

URBAN

Urban landscapes contain more densely developed areas where buildings, infrastructure, and circulation patterns dominate the visual setting (Figure 32). Views that can be considered urban can also occur in small towns where there is a view of “Main Street” that is dominated by buildings, streets, lighting, and other urban features. Typical features may include:

- Buildings ranging from low- to high rise, with a mix of uses including, office, retail, and residential
- Highways, roads, bridges, railroads

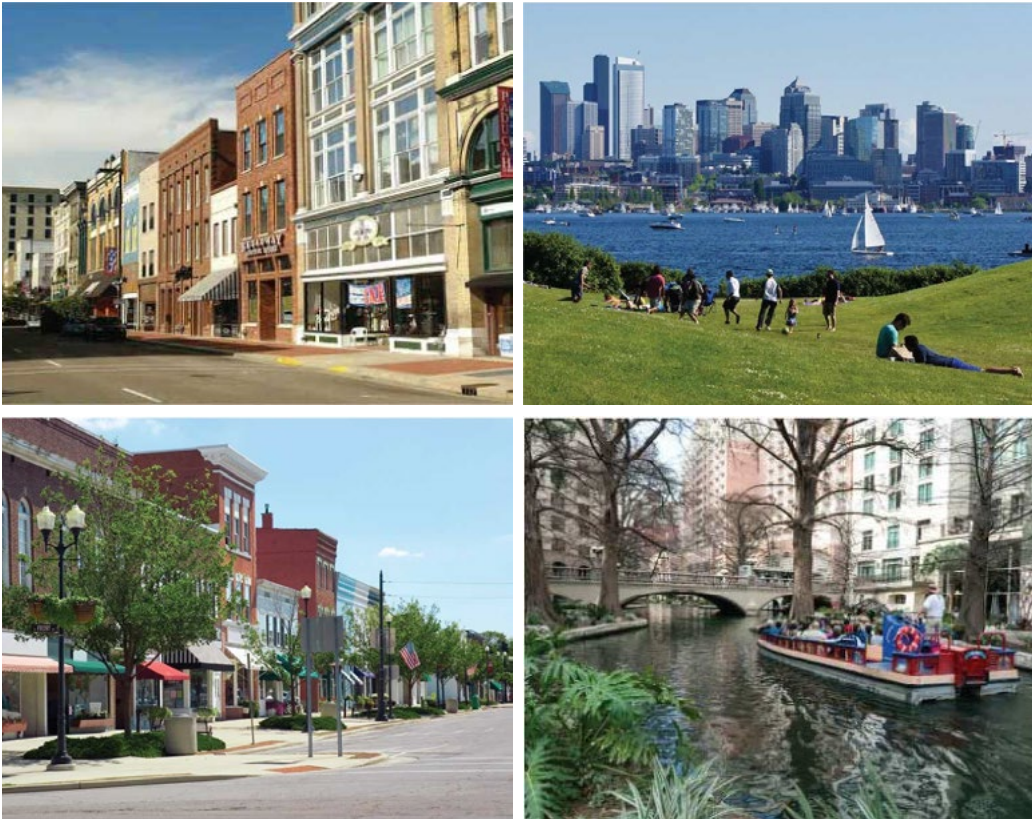


Figure 32. Examples of urban landscape character

INDUSTRIAL

Industrial landscapes may be integrated into an urban area or found on the edge of town/city centers, but these are landscape where industrial facilities are considered the dominant feature of the landscape (Figure 33). Typical features may include:

- A concentration of conventional or renewable energy extraction, generation, or transmission facilities
- Factories, warehouses, or other industrial appearing buildings
- Shipyards/railyards



Figure 33. Examples of industrial landscape character



Exercise 2: Identify the landscape character type

Figure 34. In the blank below each photograph, write in the landscape character type









Photo Credit: (left to right, starting from top left) NPS; nrel.gov, Dennis Schroeder; NPS; NPS

Answers: A-Urban, B-Industrial, C-Pastoral, D-Natural

3.4.2 EPHEMERAL EFFECTS

On the **View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet** there is a checkbox and space for descriptive text to record any seasonal/ephemeral effects (e.g., wildflower displays, snow, haze) important to the scenic quality of the view (Figure 35). For example, a wildflower display or brilliant fall foliage may have an important but temporary positive effect on the scenic quality. These conditions are often what bring life, energy, and added interest to views and make them memorable. While the inventory should capture the conditions the “typical visitor” might see a view, it is important to record the conditions that can make views even more valued for the visitors who seek them out.

An unusually overcast or hazy day may have a temporary negative effect on the scenic quality due to dulling of colors and textures. Haze can also limit visibility distance as related to the distance zones described in the next section. Haze may be due to fires, humidity, or other factors.



As noted previously, scenic quality fieldwork should generally be avoided when there are major ephemeral scenic effects such as fall color or brilliant flower displays, to reduce the influence on the ratings. However, these aspects of the landscape can be recorded so that one is aware they can be seen at times. If weather or haze conditions are particularly poor, the data collection should be rescheduled.



Photo Credit: (left to right, starting from top left) NPS, Don Dirks, volunteer

Figure 35. Wildflowers in bloom

3.4.3 DISTANCE ZONES

The delineation of distance zones for a view — foreground, middle ground, and background — is related to the visibility of landscape features and the degree to which you can see landscape details. At shorter distances, details of the landscape such as textures and colors are more visible. At greater distances, you cannot see as much detail, but larger patterns become more apparent.

Distance zones help gauge the scale of features and their prominence in the view. For example, wind turbines in the foreground of a view will appear very large, will strongly attract visual attention, and will likely dominate the view. The same wind turbines located in the background will typically appear small and may be only a minor feature in the view.



On the View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet, describe — in a brief narrative, not a measurement — where the foreground begins and ends, the middle ground begins and ends, and the background begins.

When describing landscape features visible in the view (section 3.4.4), the distance zone in which each feature is located is indicated. The distance zone descriptions on the following pages should be regarded as general guidelines, not hard and fast rules.

In some views, one or more of the distance zones may not be present. For example, in a view of a small meadow in a forest, trees may screen views of the middle ground and the background. In a view from the edge of a cliff, there may be no foreground visible, and the viewed landscape will include only middle ground and background. The following sections describe in more detail how to determine distance zones.

FOREGROUND

In the foreground, the human scale is most important, and viewers may feel like they are “part of the landscape.” The examples in Figure 36 show what would be considered the foreground in various settings including a situation in the upper left in which the view consists of only foreground. Other characteristics of the foreground zone include:

- Surface textures are often visible, and colors are distinct
- The details of trees, such as leaves and branches, are visible
- Building details such as doors, windows, and roof shapes are visible
- Details of human activities, such as people hiking, fishing, or camping are most apparent in the foreground, and wildlife is most easily observed

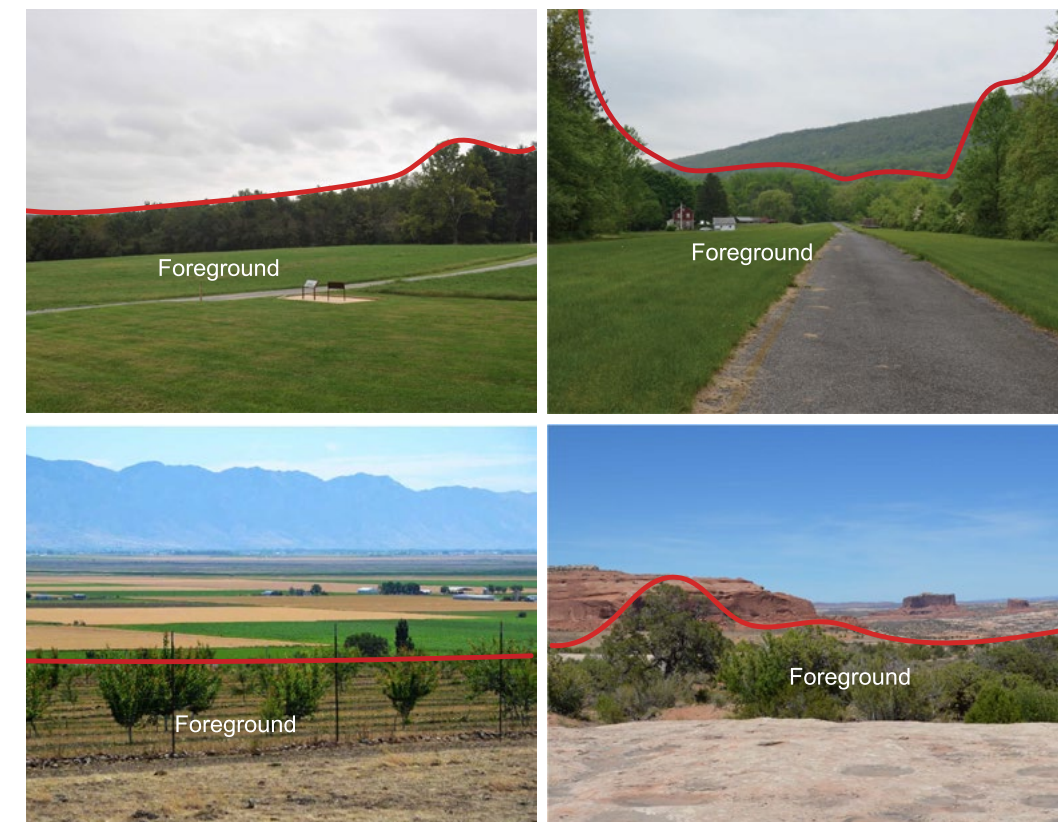


Photo Credit: (left to right, starting from top left) NPS; NPS; nrcs.usda.gov; NPS

Figure 36. Examples of foreground

MIDDLE GROUND

In the middle ground, viewers may feel more like they are looking “at the landscape” rather than “being in it.” The examples in Figure 37 show the middle ground distance zone extending beyond the foreground though sometimes as seen in the lower right photo the limits of the middle ground may not coincide with a discernable feature and an estimation based on the visible features is required. Other characteristics of the middle ground zone include:

- Individual trees and shrubs may be distinguishable, but details may not be visible
- Vegetation, landforms, and other landscape features form patterns or textures
- The form of individual buildings may be visible but with indistinct details
- The outlines of objects are less distinct, and colors become somewhat muted
- Details of human and animal activities are not visible

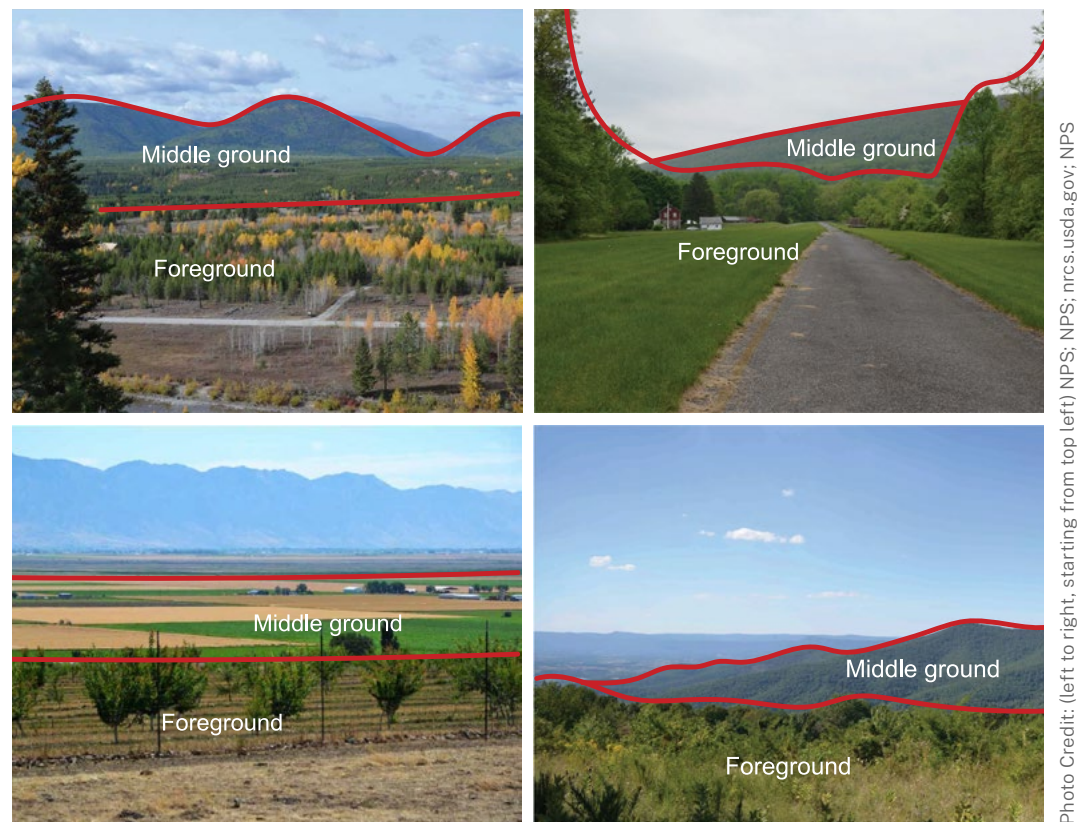


Figure 37. Examples of middle ground

BACKGROUND

In the background landscape, features are very far away and little detail is visible (Figure 38). In estimating the background limits, you rely mostly on vegetation, landforms, and normal sized structures. You may be able to see the details and movement of wind turbines that would suggest they be considered in the middle ground when in fact they are quite distant, and their level of visibility is due to their size. Other characteristics of the background zone include:

- The horizon, mountains, or other landforms dominate the backdrop
- Forest, shrub lands, grasslands, and non-vegetated areas are seen as blocks of color because texture and patterns have largely disappeared except those created by the dominant landforms
- Colors are muted, often taking on a gray or bluish hue because of atmospheric conditions

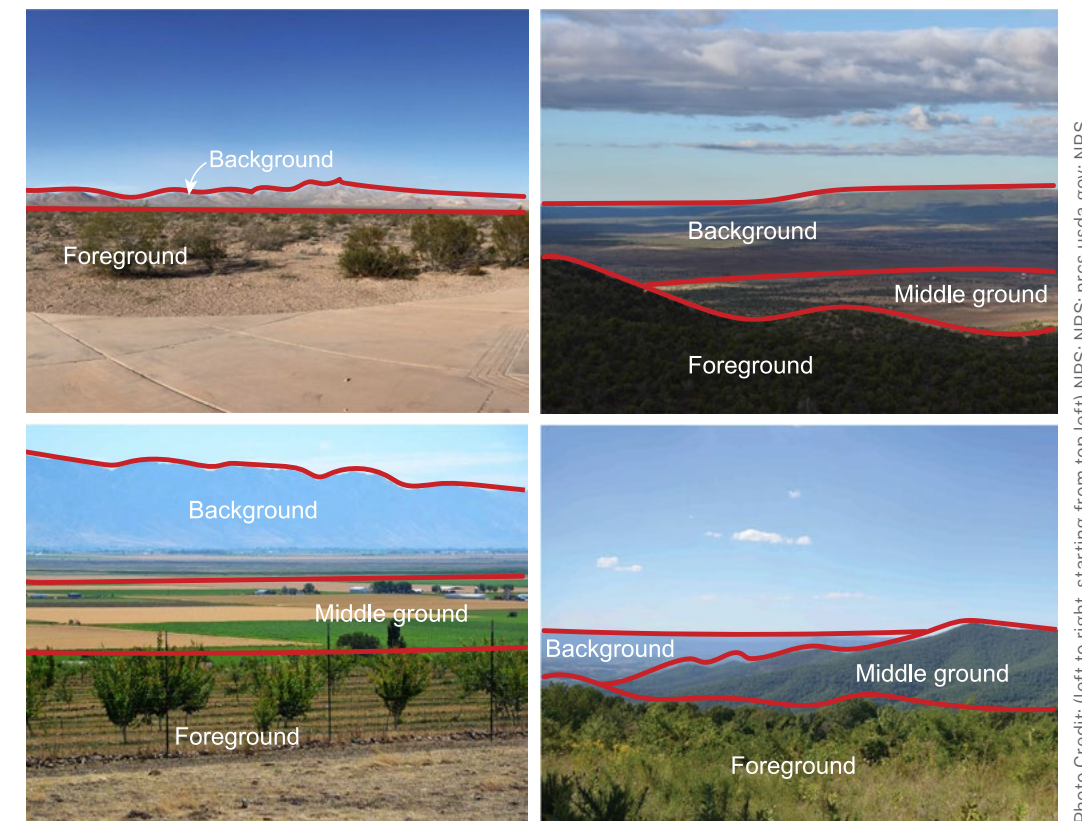


Figure 38. Examples of background



Exercise 3: Identify the distance zones

On the photo below, sketch in where you think the limit of each distance zone is.



Photo Credit: NPS, Cookie Ballou

Figure 39. Photo for Exercise 3

3.4.4 LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Landscape features are the specific natural or human-made aspects of the view that give it its unique characteristics and contribute to its value as a scenic view. Landscape features types include **landform**, **land cover**, **land use**, and **structures**. The example of the completed section of the Landscape Features section of the **View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet** shown in Figure 23 is repeated here in Figure 40 for easy reference.

For each of the landscape features types, a list of possible landscape features is provided in a checklist. Note that the same feature may occur in more than one distance zone. If an feature is visible but is not listed, you may enter it in one of the blank spaces provided.



Mark the appropriate box for the primary landscape features that are present and in which distance zone they occur.

Documenting visible landscape features is useful for establishing a baseline and understanding the potential implications of proposed projects. For example, proposed new structures may have more significant impact if there are currently no structures.

Landscape Features												
	Distance				Distance				Distanc			
Landform	F	M	B	Landcover	F	M	B	Land Use	F	M	B	Structures
Mountains				Development	X	X		Natural Areas	X	X	X	High Rise - Residential
Hills	X	X	X	Barren				Timber				Low Rise - Residential
Buttes				Forest - Deciduous	X	X	X	Grazing/Rangeland				High Rise - Commercial
Mesas				Forest - Evergreen				Agriculture		X		Low Rise - Commercial
Valleys				Forest - Mixed				Mining				Farm Buildings
Ridge		X	X	Shrub/Scrub				Industrial				Misc. Indust. (Factories, etc.)
Cliffs/Bluffs	X			Grassland				Office/Retail				Power Plants
Canyons				Pasture/Hay				Urban Residential				Wind Turbines
Plains				Cultivated Crops				Suburban Residential				Solar Facilities
Beaches				Wetland/Bog				Rural Residential		X		Communication Towers
Sand Dunes				Ocean				Transportation	X	X		Oil/Gas Wells
Islands				Lake/Pond				Parks/Recreation				Local Roads
Headlands				River/Stream	X	X	X	Urban Center				Highways
Water	X	X	X					Small Town		X		Transmission/Substations
								Energy Generation				Unidentifiable Structures
								Transmission				canal

Figure 40. Example of a completed Landscape Features section of the View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet

LANDFORM

Landforms are large, naturally formed features with characteristic shapes, such as plains, mountains, ridges, valleys, and canyons (Figure 41). For purposes of the inventory, “water” is a considered a landform type, with the actual type of waterbody, e.g., “lake”, “river” specified as a land cover type. Be sure to use local vocabulary for features — intermittent stream, arroyo, and wash can all refer to the same thing but may only be known by the specific name in your area. Also, if there is a landform (or land cover, land use, structure) that is not on the list or the local term is not listed, be sure to write it in at the bottom of the list.



Photo Credit: (left to right, starting from top left) NPS; NPS; NPS; NPS

Figure 41. Examples of landforms

LAND COVER

Land cover is the physical material visible on the earth’s surface, including vegetation, lakes, bare areas, and human-made development (Figure 42). The list of land cover types on the **View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet** includes terms such as development, forest-mixed, shrub/scrub, ocean, river/stream, and cultivated crops. While not very common, barren — or lack of any cover whatsoever as in the lower right photo below — is also in the land cover category. If there is a regional or park specific land cover that is not on the data sheet list, add it to the data sheet so it can be entered in the database.



Photo Credit: (left to right, starting from top left) NPS; NPS; NPS; NPS

Figure 42. Examples of land cover

LAND USE

In the inventory, land use is defined as the predominant, *apparent* human activities involving use of the land that are visible in the viewed landscape (Figure 43). If there is no apparent human use of the land, the land use is described as “natural areas.” The list of typical land use types includes natural areas, agriculture, urban residential, industrial, energy generation, and parks/recreation — and of course you can add others. Note that you should select the land use based on what it looks like. For example, the parks/recreation land use should be selected if developed recreation features such as boat ramps, picnic tables, or ball fields are visible and not because the area is within a park or known to be owned by a non-NPS park outside the park you are inventorying.

In many cases, land use is related to land cover. In the top two photos in Figure 43, “development” would be selected for the land cover; and for land use, you would select the type of development — small town, suburban, or residential — to help build a detailed description of the view.



Figure 43. Examples of land use

STRUCTURES

Structures are any built objects, such as buildings, towers, oil wells, and highways that are visible in the viewed landscape (Figure 44). The list of structures on the **View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet** includes some of the more common structures that might occur in a wide variety of landscapes. Again, if a visible structure is not on the list, you can add it. However, it is important that you are able to visually tell what the structure is rather than what you might know that it is. Often, especially in the background distance zone, a viewer cannot tell what type of structures they are looking at; so rather than guessing or selecting what you know them to be, select “unidentifiable structures.”



Figure 44. Examples of structures



Exercise 4: Identify the landscape features

Using the photo in Figure 45, for each of the landscape features in Figure 46, check the appropriate box for the features and the distance zone in which they are located.



Photo Credit: NPS

Figure 45. Photo for Exercise 4

Landscape Features											
Landform*	F	M	B	Landcover*	F	M	B	Land Use*	F	M	B
Mountains				Development				Natural Areas			
Hills				Barren				Timber			
Buttes				Forest - Deciduous				Grazing/Rangeland			
Mesas				Forest - Evergreen				Agriculture			
Valleys				Forest - Mixed				Mining			
Cliffs/Bluffs				Shrub/Scrub				Industrial			
Canyons				Grassland				Office/Retail			
Plains				Pasture/Hay				Urban Residential			
Ridge				Cultivated Crops				Suburban Residential			
Beaches				Wetland/Bog				Rural Residential			
Sand Dunes				Ocean				Transportation			
Islands				Lake/Pond				Parks/Recreation			
Headlands				River/Stream				Urban Center			
Water								Small Town			
								Energy Generation			
								Transmission			

Figure 46. Landscape Features section of the Vlew Desription and Scenic Quality Data sheet for use with Exercise 4

3.4.5 VISUAL ELEMENTS

Form, line, color, and texture are the visual elements used to describe the primary properties of features in the landscape. The inventory process records the most prominent visual elements in a view to provide a baseline for identifying the important elements that could be affected by changes to the viewed landscape. The example of the completed section of the Prominent Visual Elements section of the **View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet** shown in Figure 24 is repeated here in Figure 47 for easy reference.

The visual properties of landscape features in the view contribute greatly to its scenic quality, because together they form the distinct visual characteristics of the view and determine the visual relationships between the features in the view. They are also important when determining if a proposed project will “fit in” with the existing viewed landscape or not.

If a new project is added to the viewed landscape, its visual properties may be harmonious with the existing landscape features or may clash or contrast with them. This determines, in part, the visual impact associated with the project. For example, if the predominant forms in the existing viewed landscape are round, from rounded tree canopies and rounded hills, the addition of new rectangular structures will not match the forms of the existing landscape. Contrast is not always negative in the landscape. Sometimes a contrasting new or existing structure may be a positive component of a view such as barn in an agricultural landscape. Understanding the visual elements will help in understanding how contrast will affect a view.



Write which prominent features in the landscape correspond to the descriptors listed under each visual element, e.g., rolling hills, vertical wind turbines.

While typical terms for some of the most common descriptors are provided on the data sheet, other terms can be added to provide a better description.

There is no need to identify a distance zone for the visual elements, though you may find it helpful to add them to distinguish between features. For example: flat floodplain in foreground, rounded hills in middle ground.



Always start this part of description by identifying the predominant visual elements — forms, lines, colors, and textures — then note any secondary elements that seem important. Some landscapes are simple, others more complex, but the key is to highlight the 2–4 things that catch your eye and ignore the rest.

Prominent Visual Elements			
FORMS		LINES	
Descriptor	Elements	Descriptor	Elements
Rolling	<i>hills</i>	Vertical	<i>Bridge abutments, cliffs</i>
Blocky	<i>cliffs, buildings</i>	Horizontal	<i>Bridges</i>
Rugged	<i>cliffs</i>	Curving	<i>Towpath, river, roads</i>
Angular		Undulating	
Conical		Angular	<i>cliffs</i>
Pyramidal		Diagonal	
Rounded		Broken	
Circular		Irregular	
Flat	<i>river, towpath</i>		
COLORS		TEXTURES	
Color	Elements	Descriptor	Elements
<i>green/blue</i>	<i>river</i>	Smooth	
<i>rusty</i>	<i>bridges</i>	Rough	<i>cliffs</i>
<i>brown</i>	<i>trees, cliffs</i>	Medium	} <i>vegetation</i>
<i>Brick red</i>		Coarse	
<i>gray</i>	} <i>town buildings</i>	Fine	
<i>white</i>		Patchy	
		Stippled	
		Random	
		Uniform	
		Ordered	
		<i>rippled</i>	<i>river</i>

Figure 47. Example of a completed Visual Elements section of the View Description and Sceninc Quality Data sheet

FORM

Form is the visual mass, bulk, or shape of prominent objects (both natural and human-made) in the viewed landscape (Figure 48). Forms can be either two-or three-dimensional, (e.g., a two-dimensional shape such as a rounded tree or hilltop, or a three-dimensional mass, such as a pyramidal mountain). As with the landscape features sections, typical vocabulary is provided, and you can add any words that help you better describe the features. Forms are also closely related to lines and typically the edges of forms can be noted as lines in that section. You may also want to combine some of the terms such as a “horizontal rectangle” for a building. Just always remember to try to keep it simple and note the 2–3 three things that jump out at you at first.



Photo Credit: (left to right, starting from top left) csu.edu, Dave Jones; NPS; NPS; census.gov

Figure 48. Photos with examples of landscapes with different types of forms

LINE

Lines are the paths that the eye follows, such as the horizon, silhouettes, or edges of fields (Figure 49). A line is often perceived where there is an abrupt difference in form, color, or texture between two contrasting areas (an edge), or where objects in the landscape are aligned in a sequence.

In looking at the lines in a view first determine if there is a meaningful horizon line. It not only is usually the easiest place to start but, in many cases, the most sensitive area of a view if change were to happen. Creating new penetrations of the horizon can be very noticeable. After the horizon, then find the notable lines of landforms and structures because changes may add lines that are quite different. As with all these visual elements do not get too detailed — after you have the most prominent lines identified you can ignore the rest.



Photo Credit: (left to right, starting from top left) NPS; NPS; NPS; NPS

Figure 49. Views with examples of lines shown

COLOR

Color is the major visual property of surfaces in the viewed landscape and often the easiest to describe. It is often described in terms of hue (e.g., red), lightness (e.g., dark), and intensity (e.g., vivid). For the inventory, record the predominant colors of the major features in the view using common words, such as “pale yellow,” “dark brown,” “olive green,” “bright orange,” “charcoal gray,” etc. A few examples have been added to the photos in Figure 50. Feel free to use any other color terms that come to mind as “emerald green,” “burnt sienna,” etc.



Because of the great variety of possible colors, write them in along with the object to which they apply (e.g., “olive green shrubs,” “medium gray mountains”).

Note that the goal of the inventory is to record “what you see” rather than “what you know.” For example, a forested area in the background may consist of evergreen trees that might actually look dark gray and should be recorded as such. This is especially important when evaluating views at long distances or on overcast or hazy days (i.e. when normal colors are diminished and appear grayer).



Photo Credit: (left to right, starting from top left) NPS; NPS; Shaina Niehans; NPS

Figure 50. Examples of color

TEXTURE

Texture is the visual surface pattern of prominent feature(s). You might think of texture as what the landscape features might feel like if you could touch them. Texture’s prominence generally decreases with distance more rapidly than the other visual elements. In the foreground texture is usually on the surface of objects. In the middle ground, it is created by the pattern of objects. There is usually little texture in the background except on the surfaces of landforms or the landforms themselves.

Figure 51 shows a few of the most prominent textures in each view. The upper left and lower left photos show how distance affects the texture of vegetation differently than landforms. The vegetation is more distinct close up but quickly loses texture while the landforms have some significant texture visible at some distance. The upper right photo shows distinct textures in the vegetation. The lower right demonstrates the change in texture with distance — it’s the same kind of vegetation within a distance of less than a mile.

By convention, the vegetation texture is described as coarse, medium, or fine, while surface textures are described as rough, medium, or smooth.

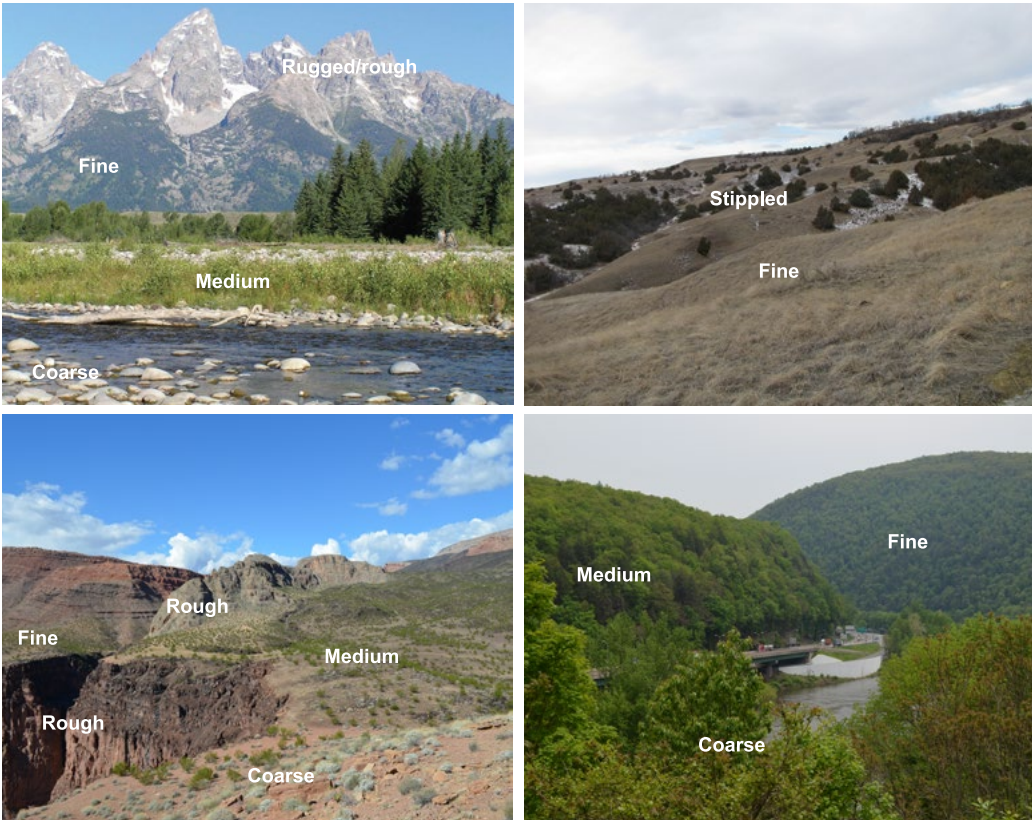


Figure 51. Examples of texture



Exercise 5: Identify the visual elements

Using the photo in Figure 52, identify and describe the visual elements in the scene in Figure 53.



Photo Credit: NPS

Figure 52. Landscape example for visual elements exercise

Prominent Visual Elements			
FORMS		LINES	
Descriptor	Elements	Descriptor	Elements
Rolling		Vertical	
Blocky		Horizontal	
Rugged		Curving	
Angular		Undulating	
Conical		Angular	
Pyramidal		Diagonal	
Rounded		Broken	
Circular		Irregular	
Flat			
COLORS		TEXTURES	
Color	Elements	Descriptor	Elements
		Smooth	
		Rough	
		Medium	
		Coarse	
		Fine	
		Patchy	
		Stippled	
		Random	
		Uniform	
		Ordered	

Figure 53. Prominent Visual Elements section of the View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet for use with Exercise 5

3.5 SCENIC QUALITY RATING

The scenic quality rating process is the final step in the scenic quality part of the visual resources inventory process (Figure 54). It is both an individual and team effort. Ideally it should be completed by 4–8 people but can be done by a minimum of three. The basic steps are described below. The determination of the view extent and landscape character type was covered previously in section 3.3.5.

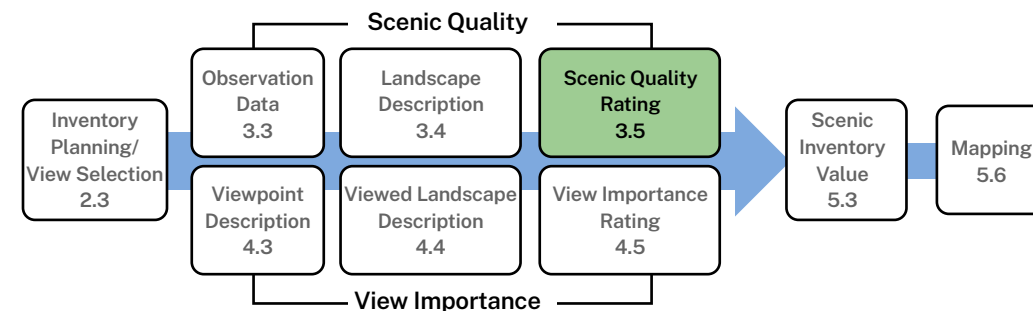


Figure 54. Navigation diagram of visual resources inventory process

Remember there are five basic steps to completing the scenic quality rating process for each view and everything up to this point has covered the first three. This section concentrates on understanding the scenic quality rating components of steps 4 and 5.

1. The team decides on the extent of the view — left and right limits and where the foreground starts (section 3.3.5)
1. The team decides the landscape character type (section 3.4.1)
2. The recorder completes the observation data (sections 3.3.6–3.3.312) and landscape description (section 3.4) and the photographer takes the photo(s) of the view (section 3.3.13)
3. **While the recorder is completing the observation data and landscape description, individual raters complete their ratings for scenic quality components**
4. **The team reaches a consensus on the final score for each component resulting in the final scenic quality rating for the view.**

If the team is sufficiently large, a team member — usually the photographer — can assist the recorder with the landscape description. For teams of 5 or more the recorder does not have to complete an individual rating sheet. For very small teams (only 3 or 4 people), the recorder should do an individual rating also.



The scenic quality rating process is designed to be a team effort and should be done by a minimum of three people — ideally more. It should **NEVER** be completed by one person.

For each view, individual team raters assess the following factors of scenic quality:

- **Landscape character integrity:** How many of the landscape character features are in the view? Is the landscape character impacted by features that are inconsistent with the landscape character? What are the quality and condition of the features in view?
- **Vividness:** Does the view have strong focal points? Does the view have bold forms and lines? Are there memorable, striking colors or contrasts? Are there bold textures or moving features, such as flowing water?
- **Visual harmony:** Do the features in the view seem well-ordered and balanced? Are features of the view in scale with each other? Do the colors in the scene work well together?

Each factor is comprised of three components that receive a rating score. Using the established guidelines — described in detail below — team members independently assign a numeric score of 1–5 to each of the components that make up the scenic quality factors. In the scoring, even numbers and half point scores are allowed.

After the landscape description and the individual scenic quality ratings have been completed for a view, the team recorder facilitates a discussion among team members — **everyone's rating counts** — to identify the final score and rationale for each component of scenic quality. This provides an opportunity for real-time quality assurance and quality control of ratings among individual team members, and results in strong adherence to the established rating guidelines among rating teams. The recorder has the final say on the consensus score which is determined to the nearest half point.

Team ratings are recorded along with a brief rationale on the Scenic Quality portion of the **View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet**. Ratings are then summed into an overall scenic quality rating which is recorded and identifies the scenic quality category for that view. Figure 55 shows an example of a completed Scenic Quality Rating section.



Only rate what you can see. Do not let your knowledge of a place influence your ratings of scenic quality. When rating, it can be helpful to imagine that you are a visitor coming to experience this view for the first time.

Scenic Quality		
Scenic Quality	Rating	Rationale
Landscape Character Integrity		
Landscape Character Features	4	Missing butte/mesa landforms
Inconsistent Features	3	Transmission line
Quality and Condition of Features	4	Mostly good, some dead vegetation
Integrity Total	11	
Vividness		
Focal Points	3	Several points draw attention
Forms/Lines	2	Generally horizontal
Color Vividness	3	Somewhat muted greens, grays, silver t-line
Vividness Total	8	
Visual Harmony		
Spatial Relationship	2	Transmission line crosses landscape at angle
Scale Relationship	3	Transmission line is tall feature
Color Harmony	3	Most colors fit together, silver prominent
Harmony Total	8	
TOTAL	27	
SCENIC QUALITY ☐ E (9-15) ☐ D (16-23) ☒ C (24-30) ☐ B (31-38) ☐ A (39-45)		

Figure 55. Example of completed ratings in the Scenic Quality section of the View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet



While the mechanics of the rating process are pretty simple, keep the ideas below in mind as you consider ratings for each view.

Many factors contribute to scenic quality. It is important not to try to ‘game the system’ because it can become very evident. Not all views – even those with high scenic quality – will rate highly for every rating criterion.

Not every view has great scenic quality. The scenic quality rating contributes half of the total SIV, and the view importance rating contributes the other half. Many views may also be very important for non-scenic reasons and end up with a high or very high SIV even if they are not rated as having “A” category scenic quality.

Follow the guidelines. If raters read the rating statement and guidelines for rating each indicator on the Scenic Quality Individual Rating Data sheet carefully, then the final scores will be both more consistent and defensible. Do not simply rate numerically with 1 as “worst” and 5 as “best.” Always refer to the specific wording for the rating criteria. The rating process helps compartmentalize how humans experience views. Be careful when rating not to take off for the same thing in multiple categories unless it is truly warranted.

Ratings are not right or wrong. The group discussion is the time for individual raters to share their observations and justifications for ratings with the team. Usually, individual ratings are relatively well aligned, but the group discussion is the time for raters with significantly different ratings to explain what they are

seeing and how they arrived at their rating. During the discussion they can either agree to come into closer alignment with the other raters, or convince others to move in their direction for the final team score. BE CAREFUL NOT TO LET ONE MEMBER DOMINATE DISCUSSIONS!

Don’t debate small rating differences. The scenic quality rating is based on evaluating nine components worth five points apiece. Long debates about small differences between ratings waste time without significantly affecting the outcome. If raw individual rating scores are close to start with, it may make sense to just average them and move on, after supplying an agreed upon rationale for the rating.

Everyone’s rating counts. Scenic quality evaluation team members should independently rate the views and fill out their individual rating sheets prior to the group discussion and rating in the field. Any discussion of the view or its qualities should be avoided prior to rating.

Rationales are critical. Even in cases when there is full agreement regarding the score, the discussion time provides a valuable opportunity for team members to share rationale with the recorder. This is an essential step which adds value and credibility to your inventory data. Without a recorded rationale, the usefulness of the rating scores is greatly diminished.

Do not rate temporary features in a view. For example, traffic, temporary construction equipment, or tents and campers are not always present. It is important to discuss as a team what to include or ignore in advance of rating, so that all raters are considering the same features.

Scenic quality evaluations are snapshots. They describe and rate the landscape as it is observed at the time of inventory. When conducting an inventory, it is important not to imagine future conditions or to rate the view based on memories of past conditions. Rather, the inventory data are a snapshot in time reflecting the visual observations on the day they were collected.

The following sections describe the major scenic quality factors and the individual rating components for each.

3.5.1 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER INTEGRITY

When people recognize the landscape character of an area (e.g., natural, rural), they expect that views in the area will conform to that character. When a variety of features associated with the recognized landscape character type are visible, the view is relatively free from features that do not fit in with the expected landscape character, and the visible features are in good condition, the result is usually a pleasing view. In the best cases, this type of view can be thought of as the ideal “postcard” view of that type of landscape.

Recall that the landscape character type is determined by the team at the description phase for each view. The evaluation of landscape character integrity is based on that landscape character type and what it looks like in your region.

Landscape character integrity for individual views is assessed by evaluating:

- Landscape character features
- Inconsistent features
- Quality and condition of features

The guidelines for rating each of these components — and examples of what a rater might add for rationales and ratings — are shown in Figure 56 and defined in the following sections.

Rate only what you see! For all the landscape character integrity components, rate what you see at the time of the rating, and not what you know about a landscape because of your expertise or from prior visits. You are trying to rate the view as a visitor might see it. For example, a field of grass might really bother biologists who know it is all invasive species, but to an untrained eye it may appear healthy and natural. Or a barn is beautiful when viewed from a mile away but in disrepair when you get closer. Rate the view as it appears from the viewpoint at the time of rating. Figure 57 shows two examples of portions of views that would be identified as a natural landscape character on the left and agricultural character on the right. Each photo shows a view with all or most of features expected in that type of landscape for the region, no inconsistent features and no discernable issues with quality and condition.

Reminder: One is the minimum score that can be assigned and five is the maximum. Even numbers and half points are allowed.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER INTEGRITY				
Landscape Character Features	Identify the degree to which the full range of important desirable landscape character features, e.g., natural features, land use types, structures, is plainly visible in the view.			RATING
	Few features are plainly visible and/or many features are missing.	Some features are present, but some features are missing.	Most or all features are plainly visible.	
	(1)	(3)	(5)	4
Rationale: <i>View has most features, butte/mesa missing</i>				
Inconsistent Features	Identify the degree to which inconsistent features, e.g., agricultural fields in an urban landscape or industrial facilities in a natural landscape, are plainly visible in the view.			RATING
	Many or major inconsistent features are plainly visible and may be dominant features.	Some inconsistent features are plainly visible.	Only a few, minor inconsistent features are plainly visible.	
	(1)	(3)	(5)	2
Rationale: <i>Transmission line</i>				
Quality and Condition of Features	Assess the quality and condition of all landscape features, including natural and human-made features. (Do not lower the rating for historic structures, if their condition is appropriate to setting.)			RATING
	Most features are of poor quality and/or are in poor condition. Natural appearing features look very unhealthy, seriously damaged, or in poor condition from pollution, or the presence of debris or litter. Built features appear to be of poor quality or are in an advanced state of disrepair.	Most features are of fair quality and/or in fair condition. Some natural appearing features do not look healthy, have some damage visible, or have some pollution, debris, or litter evident. Some built features may be of lower quality, are of unfinished construction, or not well cared for.	Most features are of high quality and in good condition. Most natural appearing features look healthy, undamaged, clean, and free of debris. Built features are of high quality with appropriate materials, designs, and finishes; and appear to be well cared for.	
	(1)	(3)	(5)	4.5
Rationale: <i>Nothing too noticeable</i>				
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER INTEGRITY TOTAL RATING				10.5

Figure 56. Example of completed Landscape Character Integrity section from the Scenic Quality section of the View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet



Photo Credit: (left to right) NPS; NPS

Figure 57. Natural and agricultural landscapes with high landscape character integrity

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER FEATURES

Landscape character features are the visual components of a landscape character type that are observed in an idealized view. These expectations are regionally specific and should be defined for each landscape character type that will be encountered by field teams in advance of conducting scenic quality evaluations. This step ensures that all teams consider the same standard when rating landscape character features.

Visual variety usually improves scenic quality when the variety results from features consistent with the landscape character. Therefore, higher scores are given to views that include more of the expected features for the identified landscape character type. Figure 58 shows two examples of agricultural landscapes. The view on the left shows a pasture, multiple farm buildings, and a silo, while the view on the right has a single crop with a tree row in the background with no other agricultural features. The view on the left would be rated higher for landscape character features than the view on the right.



Be careful not to take points off for the presence of features that are not expected as part of the landscape character type (e.g., cell towers in a natural/natural appearing landscape). These inconsistent features are considered and scored in the next section.



Considering the defined landscape character type and the list of regional expectations for that landscape character type, assign a numeric rating to the view based on how well it fits with the descriptions on the Scenic Quality Individual Rating Data sheet (Figure 54).



Photo Credit: (left to right)
waterville.maine.gov; NPS

Figure 58. Views of agricultural landscape character with higher (left) and lower levels (right) of landscape character features

INCONSISTENT FEATURES

Often, viewers will regard inconsistent features, for example, industrial facilities in a natural appearing area, as “intrusions,” that do not “fit” in the view. The inconsistent features component of landscape character integrity assesses the presence and relative prominence of features that are not consistent with the identified landscape character. Features such as strip malls or sheet metal sheds in an otherwise natural-appearing landscape or in a quaint New England village seem out of place because they are inconsistent with the dominant and expected landscape character. Typically, inconsistent features detract from scenic quality. Figure 59 shows a portion of two views with the left photo showing a minor intrusion of a road across the landscape while the right photo shows a large solar power plant in a similar desert setting.

Sometimes inconsistent features are actually attractive and contribute to the scenic quality of a view. For example, a stone bridge or a well-kept cabin in an otherwise natural setting can create visual interest. In cases where this occurs scores for focal points, lines, or spatial harmony may go up as a result of the inconsistent feature.

In assessing inconsistent features, you should not consider how much you like or dislike the inconsistencies, only their relative prominence in the view. Where inconsistent features are few or inconspicuous, landscape character integrity is higher and scenic quality benefits as a result.



Identify the degree to which inconsistent features, e.g., agricultural fields in an urban landscape or industrial facilities in a natural landscape, are plainly visible in the view.



Photo Credit: (left to right) Robert Sullivan,
Argonne National Laboratory; usgs.gov

Figure 59. Views with low (left) and high levels of visual intrusions (right)

QUALITY AND CONDITION OF FEATURES

This component assesses the apparent quality and condition of natural and human-made features in the viewed landscape. High ratings are given where natural or natural-appearing features, (e.g., forests or lakes) appear sound, healthy, and clean; or where human-made features appear to be of good quality, use appropriate design and materials, and appear to be well cared for. These factors usually have a positive effect on landscape character expression and contribute positively to scenic quality. Low ratings are given where natural or natural-appearing features appear damaged, degraded, polluted, etc.; or where human-made features appear to be of poor quality or appear neglected, vandalized, or poorly cared for.

In Figure 60, the upper left photo shows a forested area with extensive dead trees from pine bark beetle infestation and would not be a landscape considered in good condition. The upper right and lower left photos show structures exhibiting damage that would not be considered in good condition or appear to be well maintained while the lower right photo shows a historic mission site that is maintained in a condition expected for the NPS unit.

It should be noted that many NPS areas include and may even highlight historic structures and other human-influenced features that are no longer actively used and show the effects of time. Where the appearance of these features is appropriate for their age and setting, the quality and condition rating should not be lowered. The lower right photo in Figure 58 shows the remains of structures that are maintained in an expected condition for their purpose as an NPS resource.



Note: Be sure to rate the quality and condition of all visible features in the view. The quality and condition of inconsistent features is just as relevant to the viewer’s impression of a view as the quality and condition of expected features.



Assess the quality and condition of all landscape features, including natural and human-made features. (Do not lower the rating for historic structures, if their condition is appropriate to setting.)



Figure 60. Photos showing various conditions of landscape features

Photo Credit: (left to right, starting from top left) NPS; fws.gov, Tim Sweet; NPS; NPS

3.5.2 VIVIDNESS

In considering vividness as part of scenic quality, raters are looking at the components of the “Wow factor” of a view. These are the aspects of views that contribute to how visually striking or memorable they are. Memorable views have landscape features or visual elements that attract and hold attention, including strong focal points as well as bold forms, lines, colors, or textures. Where views lack landscape features or visual elements that strongly attract the eye or have weak forms, lines, colors, and textures, the view will usually be perceived as unremarkable.

It is important to note the influence of ephemeral effects in this section of the scenic quality rating. There is a checkbox and space for descriptive text to describe any short-term lighting or color effects that may positively or negatively affect the vividness ratings. For example, a wildflower display, fresh snow, or brilliant fall foliage may have an important positive effect on the scenic quality rating at the time the rating was conducted. These effects would not be seen most of the year and should be noted on the data sheet for future reference. An unusually overcast or hazy day may have the opposite effect, obscuring distant forms and lines while muting colors and textures in the view. Poor lighting or air quality conditions should be also noted on the data sheet.

Vividness for individual views is assessed by evaluating:

- Focal points
- Forms and lines
- Color vividness

The Vividness section of the **Scenic Quality Individual Rating Data sheet** is shown in Figure 61. The guidelines for rating vividness components are defined in the sections below. Figure 62 shows two examples of views that rated high for vividness during inventory. The left photo shows bold landforms and colors of a western landscape and the right photo shows a unique rock outcrop up close and green, densely vegetated hills in an eastern setting.

VIVIDNESS				
Focal Points	Identify the degree to which focal points attract visual attention.			RATING
	The view has weak focal points, or does not have any features that attract and hold attention. (1)	The view has a moderately strong focal point, or has multiple focal points and attention is focused on each one roughly equally. (3)	The view has one very strong focal point that attracts and holds visual attention. (5)	
Rationale: <i>Multiple things to focus on</i>				
Forms & Lines	Identify the degree to which landforms, lines, structures, or water features add interest to the view.			RATING
	Landforms, lines, structures, and water features are weak, poorly defined, or insignificant. These add little interest. (1)	There are one or more moderately bold and distinct landforms, lines, structures, or water features that add interest. (3)	There are very bold and distinct landforms, lines, structures, or water features that add strong visual interest. (5)	
Rationale: <i>Mostly flat, horizontal</i>				
Color Vividness	Identify the degree to which the view includes bold colors, and prominent textures or moving features. Texture and movement are secondary considerations for this component.			RATING
	Colors are generally muted and there are minimal textures or moving features. (1)	There are moderately bold colors, textures and/or prominent moving features. (3)	There are very bold or striking colors, textures, and/or moving features. (5)	
Rationale: <i>Not too bold, muted greens, grays</i>				
Are seasonal/ephemeral effects (e.g., wildflower displays, snow, haze) affecting the scenic quality of the view?				☐ Yes ☒ No
If yes, please describe:				
VIVIDNESS TOTAL RATING				9.0

Figure 61. Example of completed Vividness section from the Scenic Quality Individual Rating Data sheet



Photo Credit: (left to right) NPS; NPS

Figure 62. Views with high vividness ratings in different landscape settings

FOCAL POINTS

The presence and relative prominence of features in a view that attract and hold viewer attention are assessed as focal points. Focal points stand out from their surroundings and the contrast is what draws attention. Prominent peaks, isolated lakes, and lone trees are common focal points in natural appearing landscapes. Large buildings and other visually unique features such as fountains or monuments may be focal points in human-influenced landscapes. In the left photo of Figure 63, the rock formation is a strong focal point that stands out in the view and draws your attention, while the low rolling forested hills in the right photo lack a main feature to draw your attention.



Identify the degree to which focal points attract visual attention.



Figure 63. Views with strong (left) and weak focal points (right)

Photo Credit: (left to right) NPS; NPS

FORMS AND LINES

Bold forms and lines create visual interest, draw attention, and in the case of lines, lead the eye across the scene. The two left photos in Figure 64 show that bold forms and lines may be found in both natural and human-made features. The upper right photo lacks any distinctive forms or lines except for the horizon but the lower right photo shows some interesting lines of the river and fields created along its edges while not having strong landforms.



Identify the degree to which landforms, lines, structures, or water features add interest to the view.



Figure 64. Views with bolder forms and lines (left) and weaker forms and lines (right)

Photo Credit: (left to right, starting from top left) NPS; NPS; NPS; NPS

COLOR VIVIDNESS

Bold colors, textures, and movement create visual interest in the view. In Figure 65, the photo on the left shows some bold colors of landforms and strong contrast of the red and black, while the photo on the right shows an overall muted range of colors. Even though bold colors may be found in both natural and human-made features, it is often the case that they occur in human-influenced settings, as natural colors in the landscape tend to be less saturated. Color vividness should be considered relative to the local area. For example, the bold colors of the Painted Desert would not be expected in a grassland environment. Still, it is important to rate the colors that are seen honestly with respect to their boldness — tan and pale gray are not vivid no matter the context.

Visual texture and movement are secondary considerations for this component of vividness. These can also be found in both natural and human influenced landscapes. Rivers, waterfalls, and windmills are examples of moving features that are likely to hold interest. Textures can come from vegetation, natural surfaces, or structures in the view.



Identify the degree to which the view includes bold colors, prominent textures, or moving features. Texture and movement are secondary considerations for this component.



Figure 65. Views with high (left) and low color vividness (right)

Photo Credit: (left to right) NPS; NPS

3.5.3 VISUAL HARMONY

When landscape features in the view exhibit a consistent, orderly, or pleasing arrangement of parts and colors, the scene has strong visual harmony. This can be thought of as a measure of the quality of the visual composition. To think about visual harmony, it is helpful to look at a view as an artist might when they are considering it for a painting or a photograph. Generally, views that are balanced (but not necessarily symmetrical), ordered, have features in good size proportion to one another, and colors that seem to “fit together well,” have higher scenic quality.



Think of the view as an artist might — a composition to paint or photograph

Visual harmony for individual views is assessed by evaluating:

- Spatial relationship
- Scale relationship
- Color harmony

The Visual Harmony section of the **Scenic Quality Individual Rating Data sheet** is shown in Figure 66 and the guidelines for rating each of these components of visual harmony are defined in the sections that follow. The photo on the left in Figure 67 show strong visual harmony with a man-made feature as a focal point in balance with the river and its bank, while the right photo shows view of natural composition of lake, valley, and mountain ranges.

VISUAL HARMONY				
Spatial Relationship	Identify the degree to which the spatial arrangement of landscape features makes the view seem structured, ordered, and balanced.			
	The arrangement of features appears random or chaotic, and the view has little evident order, discernable pattern, or balance between features. (1)	The arrangement of features shows some structure or discernable pattern, but one or more features seem out of place, making the view appear somewhat disordered or unbalanced. (3)	The arrangement of features appears to have an easily discernable structure, pattern, and organization that make the view seem well ordered and balanced. (5)	RATING 2.5
Rationale: <i>Transmission line crosses landscape at an angle</i>				
Scale Relationship	Identify the degree to which the sizes of landscape features, relative to each other and to the view as a whole, make the view seem well-proportioned and balanced.			
	One or more features appear substantially larger or smaller than desirable, and seem significantly out of scale with other features or the view as a whole. (1)	One or more features appear somewhat larger or smaller than desirable, and seem out of scale with other features or the view as a whole. (3)	The features are in excellent size proportion to one another and to the view as a whole, making the view seem well-proportioned and balanced. (5)	RATING 2.5
Rationale: <i>Transmission line larger than other features</i>				
Color Harmony	Identify the degree to which the view includes a range of compatible colors and pleasing color contrasts where they occur.			
	One or more major colors clash strongly and unpleasantly with the overall color scheme of the landscape, and /or there is a very limited range of colors. (1)	One or more major colors is somewhat incompatible with the overall color scheme of the landscape, and /or there is a somewhat limited range of colors. (3)	The landscape displays a wide range of compatible colors or pleasing color contrasts. (5)	RATING 3
Rationale: <i>Most colors fit together, silver prominent</i>				
VISUAL HARMONY TOTAL RATING				8.0
SCENIC QUALITY TOTAL RATING SCORE				27.5

Figure 66. Example of completed Visual Harmony section from the Scenic Quality Individual Rating Data sheet



Figure 67. Views with strong visual harmony

SPATIAL RELATIONSHIP

The spacing, repetition, and balance between features in the viewed landscape can contribute to or detract from visual harmony. Where the locations of features relative to each other create a sense of balance, a discernable order, or a visual “rhythm” through repetition and regular spacing, scenic quality is usually improved. This is exhibited in the left photo of Figure 68. Where there is a lack of balance and no discernable order or pattern to the features in the view, the features are often perceived as “not fitting,” and this is shown in the right photo below. This lack of order usually has a negative effect on scenic quality and views with poor spatial relationship are often described as random or chaotic.



Identify the degree to which the spatial arrangement of landscape features makes the view seem structured, ordered, and balanced.



Figure 68. Photos showing good (left) and poor spatial relationship (right)

SCALE RELATIONSHIP

Where the size of features in a view relative to each other creates a sense of balance or fit, scenic quality is usually improved. Where one or more features seems much larger or smaller than they ideally would be compared to other features, especially those nearby, the features are often perceived as “not fitting.” In Figure 69, right photo shows how the scale of the turbines does not fit in with the small scale of the church and this usually has a negative effect on scenic quality. In the left photo, the farm buildings are all in the scale range and the whole farm area seems to fit in with the surrounding landforms.

In natural/natural appearing landscapes, raters may feel that because “everything is natural” that there is no possibility for scale issues. However, sometimes natural objects, such as boulders, rock outcrops, mountains, or even trees are so large that they detract from the view, especially if they block the line of sight. Scale problems are more common in developed landscapes, where buildings and other structures such as wind turbines, may loom over other features in the view.



Identify the degree to which the sizes of landscape features, relative to each other and to the view as a whole, makes the view seem well proportioned and balanced.



Figure 69. Views with good (left) and poor scale relationship (right)

Photo Credit: (left to right) NPS; Robert Sullivan, Argonne National Laboratory

COLOR HARMONY

A view with high color harmony has colors that are compatible with each. They show a reasonable range of hue and lightness and no colors stand out in a way that has a negative effect on the view’s scenic quality. In Figure 70, the photo on the left shows a natural landscape where all the colors work well together. The foreground vegetation colors are striking and demonstrate how positive color contrast can also add interest and improve scenic quality. In the photo on the right, the colors of the agricultural landscape seem harmonious; but the turbines are a jarring contrast even when considering the white farm buildings that seem to work well in the view.

In natural/natural appearing landscapes, it is rare for significant color harmony issues to occur. However, sometimes natural features can exhibit incompatible colors especially if they are damaged in way that affects color (e.g., burned vegetation or landslides). Most color harmony problems are associated with human-made objects, especially where they clash with the dominant colors found in natural appearing landscapes.



Identify the degree to which the view includes a range of compatible colors and pleasing color contrasts where they occur.



Figure 70. Views showing good (left) and poor color harmony (right)

Photo Credit: (left to right) NPS, Penny Knuckles, NREL

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4.0 INVENTORY PART 2: VIEW IMPORTANCE

The view importance part of the inventory assesses the values that help make a view meaningful to your park. Remember a view consists of the three parts; the viewpoint — where you stand to take in the view; the viewed landscape — what you see in the view between the boundaries you set up during the field work; and the viewers. The sections below explain the descriptive portion that is parallel to the landscape description process of the scenic quality assessment, as well as the actual view importance rating process.

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

You will learn the standardized approach to describing and rating view importance. This includes attaining the knowledge and skills to complete the **View Importance Data sheet** and the use of the **View Importance Rating Guide**. Specifically, you will be able to:

- Record information about each viewpoint and viewed landscape including:
 - Designated scenic features
 - Designated historic/cultural features
 - Other designated features
- Rate view importance based on three indicators: viewpoint importance, viewed landscape importance, and viewer concern
- Facilitate consensus ratings for view importance

4.2 OVERVIEW

The view importance rating captures information about the relative number of viewers and view duration, as well as information about the importance of the view to the park's goals for visitor experience. View importance data are compiled for each view as an office exercise following scenic quality evaluations. As with the scenic quality portion of the inventory, parks gain consistent descriptions and defensible ratings of view importance by using the standardized approach described here.

Evaluating and documenting view importance provides:

- A measure of the value of views to visitors and to the NPS, in addition to their inherent scenic quality.
- A structured and defensible approach to identifying and communicating the non-scenic value of views.
- Information useful in prioritizing areas for visual impact mitigation, viewpoint and viewed landscape protection and restoration, or actions to improve existing views.

The view importance evaluation focuses on the things that make the view important to visitors and to NPS but are not necessarily apparent in the view itself. While the view importance evaluation does record information about certain elements of the view, such as designated scenic or historic/cultural elements, this information requires research or knowledge beyond what is apparent to the casual observer.



The NPS visual resources inventory only seeks to assess view importance as it relates to park purpose, management, and visitor activities. This evaluation does not diminish any other understanding of the value or importance of a given view to an individual. Rather, this consistent structured evaluation, when applied across many views, provides a mechanism for mapping and communicating view importance in a way that allows views to be managed as a resource.

4.2.1 VIEW IMPORTANCE EVALUATION TEAMS

The view importance part of the NPS VRI is essential for capturing aspects of a view that are not necessarily apparent to the casual observer. For this reason, it is very important to have a team made up of individuals representing a variety of expertise areas. Park staff from natural and cultural resources as well as interpretation, facilities, law enforcement, and administration can all provide valuable input to the entire VRI process, but particularly in assessing view importance. Since in-depth local knowledge of the park is needed in this process, it is often more difficult to have volunteers or other stakeholders participate. However, they may be able to assist if they have knowledge of other local issues or have been long-time volunteers who really understand the park. It is not necessary that the team evaluating view importance be the same as the team that evaluated scenic quality, though it is helpful if they have visited the viewpoint and seen the view. It is also important to have a clear understanding of what is in the view or too far out to see etc.

4.2.2 TIMING

View importance evaluations must follow scenic quality fieldwork so that the viewpoint location and boundaries of the viewed landscape identified as part of the scenic quality evaluation can be considered in the view importance evaluation. View importance should be evaluated reasonably soon after the scenic quality field work has been completed. The completion of the description and evaluation processes often requires about 45 minutes per viewpoint.

4.3 VIEWPOINT DESCRIPTION

The viewpoint description records information about applicable scenic, historic/cultural, or other special designations for the viewpoint and is the first part of the view importance part of the VRI (Figure 71). The information that is recorded in this section is not scored and is used to provide context and supporting material for the rating process. Viewpoints may be associated with designated scenic, historic/cultural, or otherwise significant features or locations.

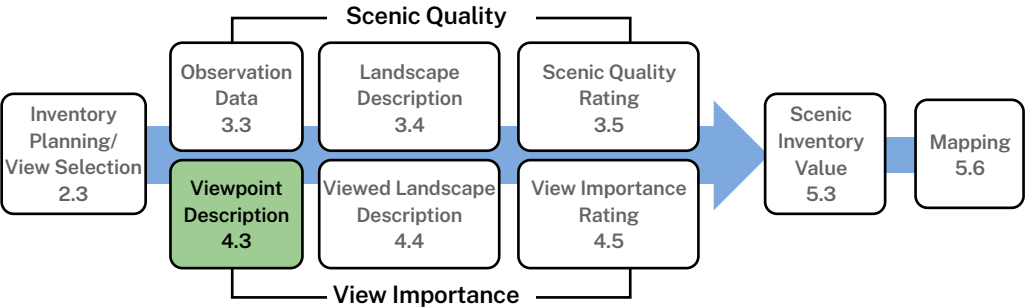


Figure 71. Navigation diagram of the visual resources inventory process



In each section (scenic, historic/cultural, other) choose all attributes that apply to the viewpoint — not the viewed landscape. If none apply, select *features not present*. If desired, record details, such as name and resource identification number for the designated/significant features identified, as appropriate.

4.3.1 SCENIC

Viewpoints may have multiple scenic attributes, for example, a viewpoint on a National Scenic Trail may also be designated as a scenic overlook. Some examples include: National Parkway, National Scenic Byway/All American Road, Wilderness Area, Wild and Scenic Area, or natural feature (e.g., peak or promontory). Be sure to enter a description (usually the feature name) for any boxes that are checked.

4.3.2 HISTORIC/CULTURAL

Viewpoints may have multiple historic/cultural attributes, for example, a viewpoint can be a Historic Property (eligible but not listed) and a National Historic Landmark. Be sure to enter a description (usually the feature name) for any boxes that are checked. You may also enter the resource identification number, name, and description for cultural features. This is not required but could be useful for cross-referencing with other systems. Consultation with cultural resources staff may be needed to correctly identify the various types of historic and cultural properties and associated attributes, which tie in directly to NPS cultural resource information systems.

4.3.3 OTHER FEATURES

Examples of other value types include recreational, residential, and/or day use area. As with scenic and historic/cultural attributes, viewpoints may have multiple other attributes as well. Be sure to enter a description (usually the feature name) for any boxes that are checked.

4.3.4 VIEWPOINT DESCRIPTION EXAMPLE

Below is an example of what a completed Viewpoint Description section of the **View Importance Data sheet** would look like (Figures 72–74). At first glance, it may look like a lot of information, but most of the descriptive elements are entered by checking the correct box and adding a brief description. Additionally, most views are likely to have only a few of the possible selections and the rest are left blank.

Viewpoint No:
5

NPS Unit Name: *HAFE*Viewpoint Name: *Maryland Heights* Date: *3/8/18*

Viewed Landscape Name:

Recorder: *John Smith*Evaluators: *DS, PJM, ASJ, MC*

VIEWPOINT DESCRIPTION	
Scenic Features (Choose all that apply)	
	Resource Name/Description
☒ Designated scenic overlook	<i>Maryland Heights Overlook</i>
☐ National Scenic or Recreation Trail	
☐ Other trail	
☐ National Parkway	
☐ National Scenic Byway/All American Road	
☐ Other designated scenic road	
☐ Wilderness Area	
☐ Wild & Scenic River [☐ Wild ☐ Scenic ☐ Recreational]	
☐ Natural feature (e.g., peak, promontory)	
☐ Other	
☐ Feature(s) not present	

Figure 72. Example of a completed scenic features portion in Viewpoint Description section of the View Importance Data sheet

Historic/Cultural Features (Choose all that apply)

☐ National Historic Trail

☐ Visual Setting Important

☐ Not Important

☐ High Potential Site or Segment

☐ Not High Potential Site or Segment

Resource Identification No.:

Resource

Name:

Describe:

☐ Historic Property (NRHP-listed)

☐ Visual Setting Important

☐ Not Important

☐ Site

☐ District

☐ Building

☐ Structure

☐ Object

☐ Traditional Cultural Property

Resource Identification No.:

Resource Name:

Describe:

☒ Historic Property (NRHP-eligible)

☐ Visual Setting Important

☐ Not Important

☐ Site☒ District☐ Building☐ Structure☐ Object☐ Traditional Cultural Property

Resource Identification No.:

Resource Name: *Harpers Ferry Nat. Hist. Dist.*

Describe:

☐ National Historic Landmark

Resource Identification No.:

Resource Name:

Describe:

☐ Identified Cultural Landscape

Resource Identification No.:

Resource Name:

Describe:

☐ National Heritage Area

Resource Identification No.:

Resource Name:

Describe:

☐ Cultural Resource (not-evaluated for, or listed on NRHP)

Resource Identification No.:

Resource Name:

Describe:

☐ Traditional Cultural Property (not evaluated for, or listed on NRHP; but identified by cultural group)

Resource Identification No.:

Resource Name:

Describe:

☐ Other

Resource Identification No.:

Resource Name:

Describe:

☐ Feature(s) not present

Figure 73. Example of a completed historic/cultural features portion in Viewpoint Description section of the View Importance Data sheet

Other Features (Choose all that apply)

☐ Park entrance [☐ Major ☐ Minor]

Describe:

☒ Day use area (picnic area, visitor center, etc.)

Describe: *popular picnic spot*

☐ Day/night use area (lodge, cabin, campground)

Describe:

☐ Other

Describe:

Figure 74. Example of a completed other features portion in the Viewpoint Description section of the View Importance Data sheet

4.4 VIEWED LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

Information collected about the viewed landscape is generally similar to that collected for the viewpoint and is used to provide context and supporting material for the rating process (Figure 75). It includes scenic, historic, and cultural elements substantially visible in the view. Viewed landscapes may be associated with designated scenic, designated historic/cultural, or non-designated features.

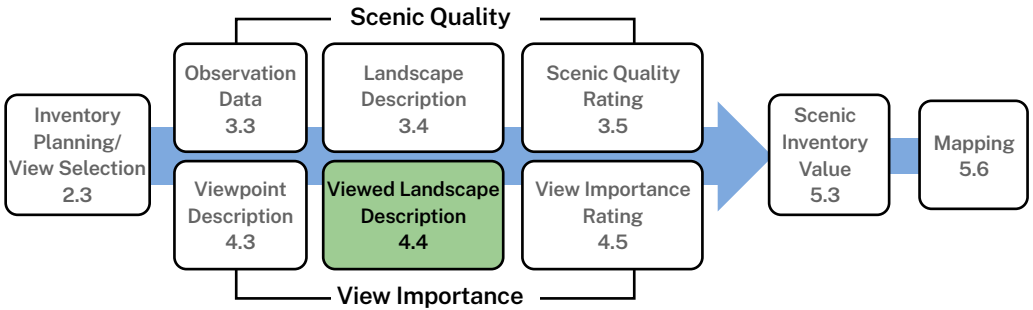


Figure 75. Navigation diagram of the visual resources inventory process



In each section, check the box(es) identifying features that constitute a substantial portion of the landscape visible from the viewpoint. If none apply, select **feature(s) not present**. Record details such as name and description, for the designated/non-designated features identified as appropriate.

4.4.1 DESIGNATED SCENIC FEATURES

Any nationally designated scenic areas that constitute a *substantial* portion of the landscape visible from the viewpoint are recorded as designated scenic features. Figure 76 shows a couple of examples of national level designations. In the left photo, the lake in the view is the Walker Lake National Natural Landmark and in the background is the wilderness area in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. In the right photo, the Delaware River that has been designated a Wild and Scenic River. Regional, state, county, or other designated scenic areas should be listed under other features. If more than one area is visible, multiple boxes may be checked. If none of the listed features constitute a substantial portion of the landscape visible from the viewpoint, check *feature(s) not present*.



For recording the presence of designated scenic areas or features consider that to constitute a substantial portion of a view the area or feature should be plainly visible to the general visitor. Do not record areas that are only a small portion of the view.



Photo Credit: (left to right) NPS; NPS, James Hicks

Figure 76. Views showing designated scenic features in the viewed landscape

4.4.2 DESIGNATED HISTORIC/CULTURAL FEATURES

Any nationally designated historic/cultural feature or traditional cultural property that constitutes a substantial portion of the visible landscape is recorded as a designated historic/cultural feature. In Figure 77, Beaverhead Rock in the left photo is a site listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Harpers Ferry National Historical Park on the right is a National Historic District. Regional, state, county, or other designated historic/cultural areas should be listed under other features. If more than one area is visible, multiple boxes may be checked. If desired, enter the resource identification number, name, and description for cultural features. If none of the listed features constitutes a substantial portion of the visible landscape check *feature(s) not present*.



Photo Credit: (left to right) NPS; NPS

Figure 77. Photos showing designated historic/cultural features in the viewed landscape

4.4.3 OTHER FEATURES

Any nationally or regionally significant scenic, historic, cultural, or scientific feature or landmark that constitutes a substantial portion of the visible landscape that does not have a federal-level designation is recorded under other features. These can be a designated feature at the state or local level. In Figure 78, the left photo shows a view of Old Rag an important local feature along the Appalachian Trail.

Note: The values for the feature/landmark must be plainly visible and recognizable, and viewing it must be important to understanding it or appreciating it. For example, a unique geological feature for which the important geological structures are visible could be an appropriate entry because the visual experience is important to understanding and appreciating the feature. The right photograph in Figure 78 shows a view of the Moab Fault from a viewpoint in Arches National Park. The fault is not within the park and not a designated feature but is an important part of park interpretive themes and clearly visible to the visitor. However, wildlife habitat may not be appropriate if the visual experience of the habitat is not critical to understanding or appreciating it. These areas will generally be named features with recognized values, not simply areas of high scenic quality, historic character, or scientific value. If no nationally/regionally significant scenic, historic, cultural, or scientific feature or landmark constitutes a substantial portion of the visible landscape check *feature(s) not present*, and no description is needed.



Figure 78. Photos showing examples of other landmarks in the viewed landscape

4.4.4 VIEWED LANDSCAPE EXAMPLE

Below is an example of a completed Viewed Landscape Description section of the **View Importance Data sheet** (Figure 79 and 80). Similar to the Viewpoint Description, at first glance there is a lot of information, but most views will have only one or two of the descriptive elements, and the information is completed simply by checking a box and adding a short description.

VIEWED LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION	
Designated Scenic Features within Viewed Landscape (Choose all that apply)	
	Resource Name/Description
☒ National Scenic or Recreation Trail	<i>Appalachian NST</i>
☐ National Scenic Byway/Road	
☐ National Park	
☐ Wild & Scenic River	
☐ National Monument	
☐ National Nat. Landmark	
☐ National Rec. Area	
☐ National Seashore	
☐ Wilderness Area	
☐ Other	
☐ Feature(s) not present	

Figure 79. Example of a completed scenic features portion in the Viewpoint Landscape Description section of the View Importance Data sheet

Designated Historic/Cultural Features within Viewed Landscape (Choose all that apply)	
☐ National Historic Trail	
Resource Identification No.:	Resource Name:
Describe:	
☐ National Historic Landmark	
Resource Identification No.:	Resource Name:
Describe:	
☒ Historic Property (NRHP-listed): ☐ Site ☒ District ☐ Building ☐ Structure ☐ Object ☐ TCP	
Resource Identification No.:	Resource Name:
Describe: <i>Harpers Ferry National Historical Park</i>	
☐ Historic Property (NRHP-eligible) ☐ Site ☐ District ☐ Building ☐ Structure ☐ Object ☐ TCP	
Resource Identification No.:	Resource Name:
Describe:	
☐ Identified Cultural Landscape	
Resource Identification No.:	Resource Name:
Describe:	
☐ National Heritage Area	
Resource Identification No.:	Resource Name:
Describe:	
☐ Traditional Cultural Property (not evaluated for, or listed on NRHP; but identified by cultural group)	
Resource Identification No.:	Resource Name:
Describe:	
☐ Other	
Resource Identification No.:	Resource Name:
Describe:	
☐ Feature(s) not present	
Other Features (Choose One)	
☐ Nationally/regionally significant scenic, historic, cultural, or scientific feature or landmark ☐ Feature(s) are not present	
Describe:	

Figure 80. Example of a completed historic/cultural features and other features portion in the Viewpoint Description section of the View Importance Data sheet

4.5 VIEW IMPORTANCE RATING

After completing the viewpoint and viewed landscape descriptions, teams rate the view importance of the view (Figure 81).

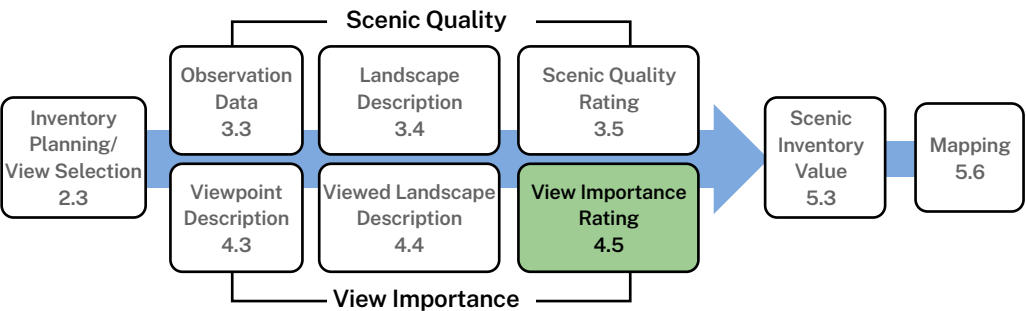


Figure 81. Navigation diagram of the visual resources inventory process

For each view, the full team evaluates the following factors of view importance:

- **Viewpoint importance:** How well publicized is the viewpoint? What level of effort goes into managing the viewer experience at the viewpoint? What level of interpretive services is offered at the viewpoint?
- **Viewed landscape importance:** How well publicized is the viewed landscape? What portion of the view is comprised of designated or significant scenic, historic, scientific, or cultural features? How well does this landscape illustrate park purpose or interpretive themes?
- **Viewer concern:** What is the relative annual visitation for the viewpoint? What is the relative view duration at the viewpoint? To what degree are the activities that viewers are engaged in at the viewpoint tied to the visual experience?

Remember that view importance is the time to bring your knowledge of the park to the process. During the view importance rating, you rate what you KNOW about a view — the location, the landscape, the history and cultural value, and the visitors — beyond what you see.

Using the established guidelines defined in the **View Importance Rating Guide**, evaluation teams working together as a group assign a numeric score of 1–5 to each of the components that make up the view importance factors identified above. Unlike the scenic quality rating process, there is no individual view importance rating. Note, even numbers and half point scores are allowed. For each inventoried view, team ratings for the view importance components are discussed and agreed upon by the full view importance evaluation team. Ratings are recorded along with a brief rationale on the portion of the **View Importance Data**

sheet. Factor ratings are then summed into an overall view importance rating that identifies the view importance category for that view. An example of a completed rating section of the **View Importance Data sheet** is shown in Figure 82. As with the scenic quality rating process, the scores represent the consensus of the group doing the evaluation, and the rationales are critical to the credibility of the ratings and ultimately the overall SIV of the view.

VIEW IMPORTANCE				
Importance Factors	Rating	Rationale		
Viewpoint Importance				
Viewpoint Publicity	4	NPS pubs/maps, commercial guides/web sites		
Viewpoint Management	4	Parking, restrooms, regular veg maint		
Viewpoint Interpretive Services	5	Interactive kiosk, scheduled ranger talks		
Viewpoint Total	13			
Viewed Landscape Importance				
Viewed Landscape Publicity	5	Most NPS publications, many other guides		
Designated Areas	2.5	Local landmark in background		
Interpretive Themes	5	View is primary to most interp themes		
Viewed Landscape Total	12			
Viewer Concern				
Visitation	5	Second most visited location in park		
View Duration	5	Most visitors somewhat long - multiple photos		
Viewer Activities	5	Most expect an undisturbed landscape for photos		
Viewer Concern Total	15			
VIEW IMPORTANCE TOTAL	40.5			
VIEW IMPORTANCE RATING	☐5 (9-15) ☐4 (16-23) ☐3 (24-30) ☐2 (31-38) ☒1 (39-45)			

Figure 82. Example of completed ratings in the Viewpoint Importance section of the View Importance Data sheet

Remember, just as discussed for the scenic quality ratings “gaming the system” will only hurt the credibility of your inventory in the long run. There are multiple factors that go into rating view importance and the validity of your data and credibility of your evaluation requires that each component be rated as accurately as possible.



Reminder: One is the minimum score that can be assigned and five is the maximum. Even numbers and half points are allowed.

4.5.1 VIEWPOINT IMPORTANCE

The location that you experience a view from can contribute to the overall importance of a view. Some viewing locations are well known as destinations for experiencing scenic views, while others have high historic or cultural value. Some viewpoints reflect significant investments in management or infrastructure. Some viewpoints provide a venue for important interpretive services. Viewpoints with all of these characteristics contribute positively to overall view importance ratings.

For each inventoried view, viewpoint importance is assessed by evaluating viewpoint:

- Publicity
- Management
- Interpretive services

The guidelines for rating each of these components of viewpoint importance are provided below. The Viewpoint section of the **View Importance Rating Guide** is show in Figure 83. Remember that this is not a data sheet that individuals fill out as they did for scenic quality, but the final rating is still determined through a group discussion.

VIEWPOINT IMPORTANCE			
Viewpoint Publicity	Identify the relative extent to which the viewpoint is promoted as a viewing destination in visitor communications (e.g., brochures, park websites) or receives external recognition in media (e.g., hiking guides, history pubs, websites, videos).		
	Viewpoint receives little or no mention in visitor communications or external media. (1)	Viewpoint is noted but not strongly promoted in visitor communications or external media. (3)	Viewpoint is well publicized in both visitor communications and external media. (5)
Viewpoint Management	For this park, identify the relative extent to which the park has expended time, funds, and effort into planning the viewpoint visitor experience and/or that the viewpoint is managed to enhance or preserve that experience.		
	The visitor experience at the viewpoint is not planned and there is little or no maintenance of grounds or facilities for the viewpoint. (1)	Moderate effort has been undertaken to facilitate visitor experience at the viewpoint. This may include addition of some infrastructure, and/or occasional maintenance. For example, occasional trash removal, adding/maintaining portable toilets, mowing/tree trimming, or erosion repair. (3)	Extensive effort has been undertaken to facilitate visitor experience at the viewpoint. This may include addition of substantial infrastructure, frequent maintenance, removing intrusive features to maintain a natural setting, extensive vegetation/trail management, or operation of a backcountry permit system. (5)
Viewpoint Interpretive Services	For this park, identify the relative level of interpretive services offered at the viewpoint, and the extent to which they contribute to the visitors’ enjoyment of scenic, historic, cultural, scientific, or other park values.		
	No interpretive services are offered. (1)	Some interpretive services are offered, such as brochures, park newspapers, interpretive panels, or digital media. (3)	Extensive interpretive services are offered, such as talks, major interpretive panels, or kiosks. (5)

Figure 83. Rating guidelines in the Viewpoint Importance section from the View Importance Rating Guide

VIEWPOINT PUBLICITY

Within many NPS areas, important viewpoints are publicized both by NPS and by others, in an effort to direct visitors to important views. NPS publicizes viewpoints through visitor guides, maps, NPS websites, social media, and other publications. Many other organizations publicize NPS views through travel and hiking guides, websites, social media, and other media (Figure 84). The extent to which a viewpoint is publicized by the NPS and by others is an indirect measure of its perceived value and importance both to NPS and to visitors.

Consider using internet resources and other research in advance of the view importance evaluation meeting to facilitate the discussions on the ratings for components such as publicity and designated areas. Having internet access in the meeting room so that you can type the descriptive and rating information directly into the database will also improve efficiency.

Identify the relative extent to which the viewpoint is promoted as a viewing destination in visitor communications (e.g., brochures, park websites) or receives external recognition in media (e.g., hiking guides, history publications, websites, movies). Assign a numeric rating to the view based on how well it fits into the three descriptions in the guide.



Figure 84. Examples of publicity sources

VIEWPOINT MANAGEMENT

Another indirect measure of viewpoint importance is the degree to which NPS has invested in improvements to the viewpoint, such as building visitor facilities (e.g., parking, restrooms, or retaining walls) to enhance the visitor experience. In Figure 85, the left photo shows a simple pullout with minimal improvements, while the right photo shows a viewpoint at Mt Rushmore where the location itself is part of a larger, highly developed visitor experience focused on the view of the memorial.

Just as important to physical improvements, viewpoint management also includes the degree to which NPS actively manages the viewpoint area to facilitate the scenic experience, such as regular mowing, or trimming trees to preserve sightlines or removing things such a cairns or impromptu memorials put in place by visitors so that the viewpoint retains the park’s desired viewing experience. Management efforts that can also be considered include backcountry permitting programs to maintain a wilderness experience or other approaches to regulate the level of visitors to retain a desired visitor experience.

Identify the relative extent to which the park has expended time, funds, and effort into planning the viewpoint visitor experience and/or that the viewpoint is managed to enhance or preserve that experience. Assign a numeric rating to the view based on how well it fits into the three descriptions in the guide.

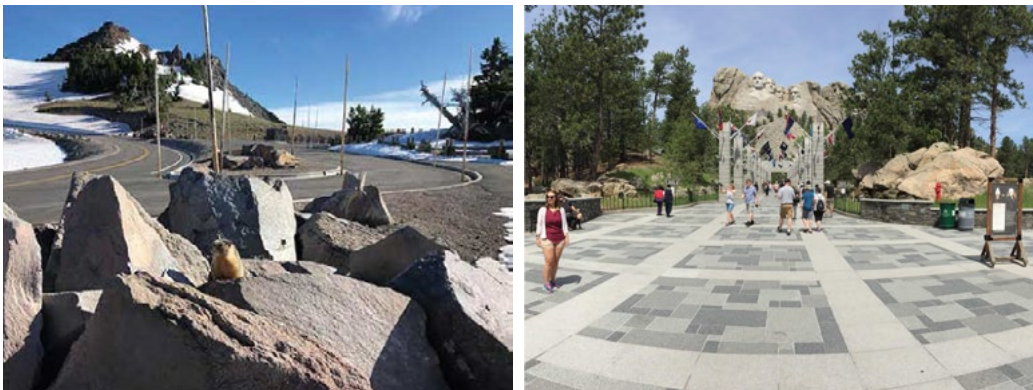


Figure 85. Photos showing examples of viewpoint facilities and management

Photo Credit: (left to right) NPS, Linda Powell, Robert Sullivan, Argonne National Laboratory

VIEWPOINT INTERPRETIVE SERVICES

The degree to which NPS offers interpretive services at the viewpoint is another indirect measure of viewpoint importance. Figure 86 shows how services may range from brochures, self-guided tours, or interpretive panels to ranger-led programs provided on a regular schedule. For rating consideration, interpretive materials can be located at the viewpoint or provided at a visitor center or other location but should be directly related to the viewpoint and not general publicity material.



For this park, identify the relative level of interpretive services offered at the viewpoint, and the extent to which they contribute to the visitors’ enjoyment of scenic, historic, cultural, scientific, or other park values. Assign a numeric rating to the view based on how well it fits into the three descriptions in the guide.



Figure 86. Examples of viewpoint interpretive services

4.5.2 VIEWED LANDSCAPE IMPORTANCE

Just as the viewpoint characteristics affect the importance of a view, the content of the viewed landscape does as well. Some views are classic and well publicized examples of geologic phenomena, historic events, or are renowned for their scenic beauty. Some views may contain a significant feature or even be entirely composed of a designated or significant area. Some views perfectly illustrate interpretive themes in a park or perhaps the very purpose for which a park exists. In Figure 87, the view of Pueblo Bonito at Chaco National Historical Park checks many of those boxes. Viewed landscapes with these attributes will contribute positively to the overall view importance rating for a view.

For each inventoried view, viewed landscape importance is assessed by evaluating:

- Viewed landscape publicity
- Designated areas
- Interpretive themes

The guidelines for rating each of these components of viewpoint importance are defined below. The Viewed Landscape section of the **View Importance Rating Guide** is show in Figure 88.



Figure 87. The view from Pueblo Bonito Overlook at Chaco Culture National Historical Park

VIEWED LANDSCAPE IMPORTANCE			
Viewed Landscape Publicity	For this park, identify the relative extent to which the viewed landscape is publicized for visual qualities (scenic, historic, cultural) in visitor communications or receives external recognition in media.		
	The viewed landscape receives little or no mention in visitor communications or external media. (1)	The viewed landscape is noted but not highlighted in visitor communications or external media. (3)	The viewed landscape is well publicized in both visitor communications and external media. (5)
Designated Areas	Identify the extent to which the viewed landscape includes all, or parts, of specially designated areas, or nationally/regionally significant scenic, historic, cultural, or scientific features or landmarks.		
	There are no known designated areas, significant features, or landmarks within the viewed landscape. (1)	The viewed landscape has some designated lands, but they do not constitute most of the view and the view is without plainly visible significant features or landmarks. For instance, a small portion of the view is comprised of a wilderness area but no significant landscape features are visible. (3)	The viewed landscape consists primarily of designated areas and/or has significant features or landmarks plainly visible. For instance, the view consists largely of a designated wilderness area or cultural landscape. (5)
Interpretive Themes	Identify the degree to which features within the viewed landscape illustrate the unit's purpose or interpretive themes.		
	The viewed landscape is clearly incompatible with the unit's purpose or interpretive themes, such as large industrial or residential developments seen from a unit emphasizing natural processes or cultural landscapes. (1)	The viewed landscape is partly compatible with the unit's purpose and interpretive themes, but may have some incompatible features, such as some modern roadways seen from a unit emphasizing natural processes or historic landscapes. Alternatively, the viewed landscape is not relevant to the unit's interpretive themes but does not detract from the themes. (3)	The viewed landscape clearly illustrates the unit's purpose and/or interpretive themes, such as a canyon landscape illustrating erosion and geologic processes. (5)

Figure 88. Rating guidelines in the Viewed Landscape Importance section of the View Importance Rating Guide

VIEWED LANDSCAPE PUBLICITY

Within and outside the boundaries of many NPS areas, important scenic, historic/ cultural, or scientifically important landscapes are publicized both by NPS and by others through visitor guides, maps, websites, social media, and other publications (Figure 89). Some iconic views may even show up on t-shirts and other gift shop items! The extent to which these landscapes are publicized by the NPS and others is an indirect measure of their importance both to NPS and to visitors.



Identify the relative extent to which the viewed landscape is publicized for visual qualities (scenic, historic, cultural) in visitor communications or receives external recognition in media. Assign a numeric rating to the view based on how well it fits into the three descriptions in the guide.

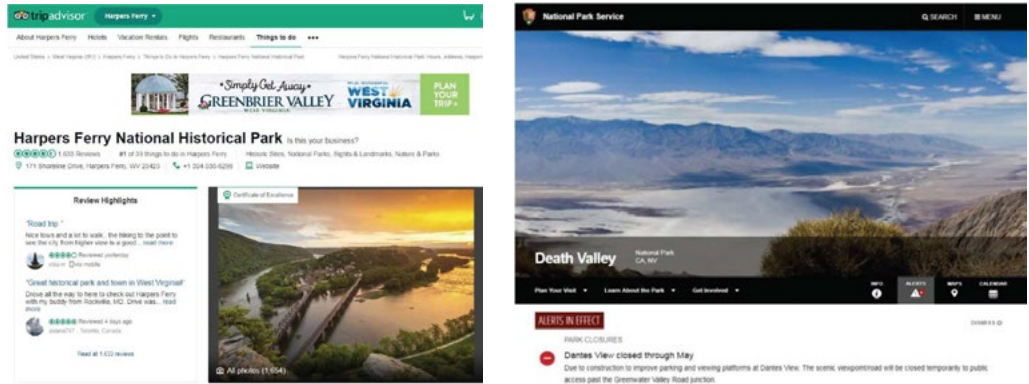


Figure 89. Examples of media sources to assess publicity

Photo Credit: (left to right) https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60722-d143167-Reviews-Harpers_Ferry_National_Historical_Park-Harpers_Ferry_West_Virginia.html; <https://www.nps.gov/deva/index.htm>

DESIGNATED AREAS

Views of nationally and regionally important scenic, historic, cultural, or scientific features or landmarks are important to both NPS and to NPS visitors because of the resource values and meaning they contain. In Figure 90, the left photo shows a view from Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument toward the Grand Canyon and the right photo shows a view of the National Historic District of Harpers Ferry.



Identify the extent to which the viewed landscape includes all, or parts, of specially designated areas, or nationally/regionally significant scenic, historic, cultural, or scientific features or landmarks. Assign a numeric rating to the view based on how well it fits into the three descriptions in the guide.



Photo Credit: (left to right) Robert Sullivan, Argonne National Laboratory; NPS

Figure 90. Examples of views that include designated areas

INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Many parks use viewed landscapes or features in viewed landscapes to educate visitors about natural phenomena, ecologic processes, important historic events, cultural values, etc. In other cases, a viewed landscape contains features that are essential to the park’s scenic character, such as views of the breaks in Cedar Breaks National Monument. In Figure 91, the left photo shows a view of the valley and mountain ranges that are an important theme at Death Valley National Park; and the right photo is a view across a key part of the battlefield at Pea Ridge National Military Park. Views that are used for interpretive purposes or that illustrate the parks interpretive themes are considered to have more value to parks.



Identify the degree to which features within the viewed landscape illustrate the unit’s purpose or interpretive themes. Assign a numeric rating to the view based on how well it fits into the three descriptions in the guide.



Photo Credit: (left to right) NPS; NPS

Figure 91. Views exhibiting interpretive themes

4.5.3 VIEWER CONCERN

The number of viewers that come to experience a view, how long they spend viewing the landscape, and the types of activities in which they are engaged are all proxy evidence for how sensitive these viewers may be to a change in the landscape. For example, it is reasonable to conclude that in highly visited locations where landscape photographers spend hours to capture the perfect lighting, viewers are likely to be concerned about potential changes to the view. Conversely, viewers may be less concerned about potential changes to views that are briefly visible while commuting to work.

Viewer concern for individual views is assessed by evaluating:

- Relative visitation
- Relative view duration
- Viewer activities

The guidelines for rating each of these components of viewed landscape importance are defined below. The Viewer Concern section of the **View Importance Rating Guide** is show in Figure 92.

VIEWER CONCERN			
Visitation	For this park, estimate the relative annual visitation for the viewpoint.		
	Viewpoint is in the bottom one third of viewpoints with respect to visitor use, i.e., it is relatively lightly visited. (1)	Viewpoint is in the middle one third of viewpoints within the unit with respect to visitor use. (3)	Viewpoint is in the top one third of viewpoints with respect to visitor use, i.e., it is relatively heavily visited. (5)
View Duration	For this park, estimate the relative view duration for visitors at the viewpoint.		
	Viewpoint is within bottom one third of the park viewpoints for view duration, i.e., on average, views are of relatively brief duration. (1)	Viewpoint is within middle one third of the viewpoints for view duration. (3)	Viewpoint is within top one third of the viewpoints for view duration, i.e., on average, views are of relatively long duration. (5)
Viewer Activities	Identify the relative importance of the visual setting to viewer activities at the viewpoint.		
	The primary activities of viewers are <i>relatively</i> independent of the visual setting, for example, where most viewers are workers or commuters. (1)	While the visual setting is important, it is not the focus of viewer activities, for example fishing, hiking, or wildlife viewing. (3)	The primary activities of viewers at the viewpoint are directly tied to the scenery, such as landscape photography, seeking wilderness experiences, or viewing historic landscapes. (5)

Figure 92. Rating guidelines in the Vlewer Concern section of the View Importance Rating Guide

VISITATION

The visitation component considers the estimated overall visitation for the viewpoint in relation to other viewpoints in the park. Most parks have views that receive a higher level of visitation and those that see fewer visitors. In Figure 93, the left photo shows one of the most popular viewpoints at Grand Canyon National Park, while the right photo shows a viewpoint at Shenandoah National Park that takes some effort to get to and has fewer visitors than other locations. In the NPS VRI, it is generally considered that views with more visitors may be more important to the visitor experience because more visitors will be impacted if there is a negative change in the view. However, this can vary greatly among the wide range of NPS units.



For this park, estimate the relative annual visitation for the viewpoint. Assign a numeric rating to the view based on how well it fits into the three descriptions in the guide.



Figure 93. Views showing different levels of visitation

Photo Credit: (left to right) NPS; Robert Sullivan, Argonne National Laboratory

VIEW DURATION

Some views are experienced only briefly, for example, a feature viewed from a passing automobile. Other views are experienced for much longer periods of time, for example, the view from a major scenic overlook with interpretive panels. In the left photo of Figure 94, the high level of improvements and activities available at Grandview Terrace at Mount Rushmore National Memorial encourage visitors to stay longer at the viewpoint. However, at a pullout along a scenic road as shown on the right on the Going to the Sun Road in Glacier National Park will likely have most visitors stop briefly for a photo.

Impacts to views that people enjoy for extended periods are most likely to have a greater potential to affect visitor enjoyment, and often are in areas of the greatest importance to viewers. In many cases, these views are also the most important to NPS because they are the locations that have been selected specifically for visitor experience an important view and thus more visitors are more likely to stay longer taking in the scenery. Protecting the views where visitors spend the greatest amount of time is likely to be a higher priority for the park.



For this park, estimate the relative view duration for visitors at the viewpoint. Assign a numeric rating to the view based on how well it fits into the three descriptions in the guide.



Photo Credit: (left to right) Robert Sullivan, Argonne National Laboratory; NPS

Figure 94. Examples of viewpoints with varying expected duration of visitors at the viewpoint

VIEWER ACTIVITIES

The NPS VRI process does not have the capacity or authority to undertake visitor surveys as a standard practice for views. Therefore, we must rely on observations of, and general knowledge about, viewer behavior or activities to make educated guesses about how concerned these visitors would be about change in the landscape. The activities that viewers are engaged in at a viewpoint provide proxy evidence about the importance of the view to them while they are engaged in that activity and to what level they may be concerned if there were a noticeable change in the view. Backpacking and hiking are often associated with the desire to enjoy the scenery as a primary part of the activity. Whereas the desire for a nice setting is important to fishing and hunting but the focus on the activity may reduce the importance of the scenery to participants (Figure 95). In another example, landscape photographers who wait for the perfect lighting conditions are demonstrating that they highly value the scenery. On the other hand, people quickly driving by a view on a daily basis may be less interested in high scenic values.



Identify the relative importance of the visual setting to viewer activities at the viewpoint. Assign a numeric rating to the view based on how well it fits into the three descriptions in the guide.



Photo Credit: (left to right) NPS, Kent Miller; NPS, D. Lehle

Figure 95. Examples of viewer activities related to scenery

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5.0 POST DATA COLLECTION: PROCESSING AND MAPPING

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this section, you will learn the basics of what can be done with the scenic quality and view importance information after it has been collected — both with the data itself and the types of analyses that can be done with the GIS toolkit. The actual uses of the VRI data and communication of visual values will vary greatly from park to park, so the real objective of this final part of the training is to have you come away feeling that you have reporting tools that will give you a better understanding of your park’s visual resources.

5.2 OVERVIEW

This section describes what happens — and what you can do — once you have some scenic quality and view importance data collected. It covers how the scenic quality and view importance ratings combine into a scenic inventory value (SIV), and gives an introduction to the spatial database and mapping tools that have been developed for the VRI.

There is also a subsection looking to the future. The future of visual resources in the NPS is about building a culture where visual resources are a standard part of park and resource management. It is not only about what you can do with the information from an analytical standpoint, but also how it is used in the future and how you can contribute to developing future tools and analysis ideas. The future of visual resources in the NPS is also about how it becomes thought of as a resource to manage and makes its way into park planning so that it can be integrated with other resources and managed over the long-term. This section will cover:

- Scenic inventory values
- Data entry and management
- Mapping
- What’s next?
- Planning and management

5.3 SCENIC INVENTORY VALUES

The scenic inventory value (SIV) is the combination of the scenic quality rating and view importance rating into a single measure that represents an overall conservation value for each view relative to other inventoried views. Figure 96 shows this step in the VRI process as bringing the two parts together so the information can be used for analysis purposes.

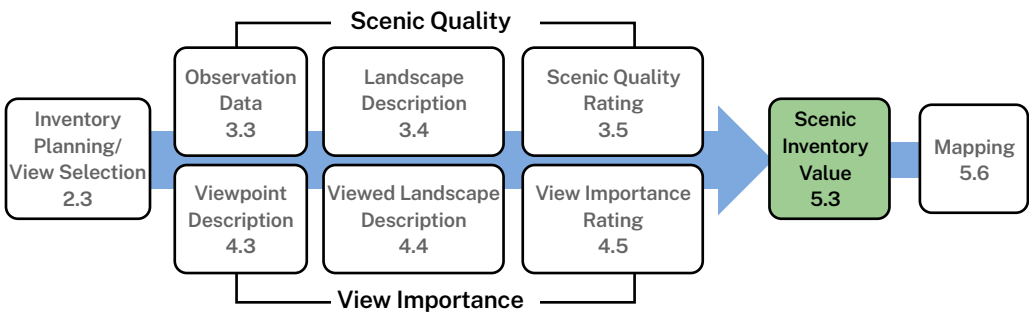


Figure 96. Navigation diagram of the visual resources inventory process

The SIV is derived using a matrix to arrive at one of five possible SIVs, ranging from Very Low (VL) to Very High (VH) (Figure 97). The SIV is the final visual resource value for an individual view that is recorded in the spatial database for further interpretation, analysis, and visualization. The scenic quality and view importance ratings are retained in the data for the SIV and can also be used for analysis.

Scenic Inventory Value Matrix						
		View Importance Rating				
		1	2	3	4	5
Scenic Quality Rating	A	VH	VH	VH	H	M
	B	VH	VH	H	M	L
	C	H	H	M	L	L
	D	H	M	L	VL	VL
	E	M	L	VL	VL	VL

Figure 97. Scenic inventory value matrix

5.3.1 RATINGS VS. VALUES

While the SIV categories “Very Low–Very High” are useful for management and mapping purposes the scenic quality and view importance ratings that determine those values are important aspects of the inventory to retain. It is important, as noted above, that the scenic quality and view importance ratings do not disappear with assigning the SIV. The SIV category for a view preserves the scenic quality rating that reflects its aesthetic qualities and the view importance rating that reflects NPS’s and visitors’ values. A view that is rated C1 and a view that is rated A4 might end up with very different management strategies for protecting the views, even though both have a “High” SIV.

5.3.2 INVENTORY = INFORMATION

At the end of the day, data collected during the inventory are information that identify values and do not suggest any particular management strategy or actions. The inventory information for scenic views — along with other resource information — is meant to inform decisions on how the park is managed as a whole and in particular how visual resources are managed.

Visual resources inventory data does not suggest management but will help better inform park management decisions along with the information on other park resources.

5.4 COMPOSITE SIV

Frequently, inventoried views will overlap, which happens when an area within the viewed landscape may be visible from two or more viewpoints. Areas visible from multiple viewpoints have additional importance because changes to the views will affect more viewpoints and viewers. To account for such areas of overlap, the inventory process includes a way to derive what is called a composite scenic inventory value (composite SIV). The composite SIV is a new inventory value that includes the highest scenic quality and view importance ratings within all the overlapping views. Composite SIVs are derived using a geographic information system (GIS) by mapping visible areas from each viewpoint (i.e., viewsheds) and combining them to identify and map areas of multiple view overlap. Figure 98 shows conceptually how the composite SIV is derived. There is more discussion and GIS mapping examples of composite SIVs in section 5.6.2.

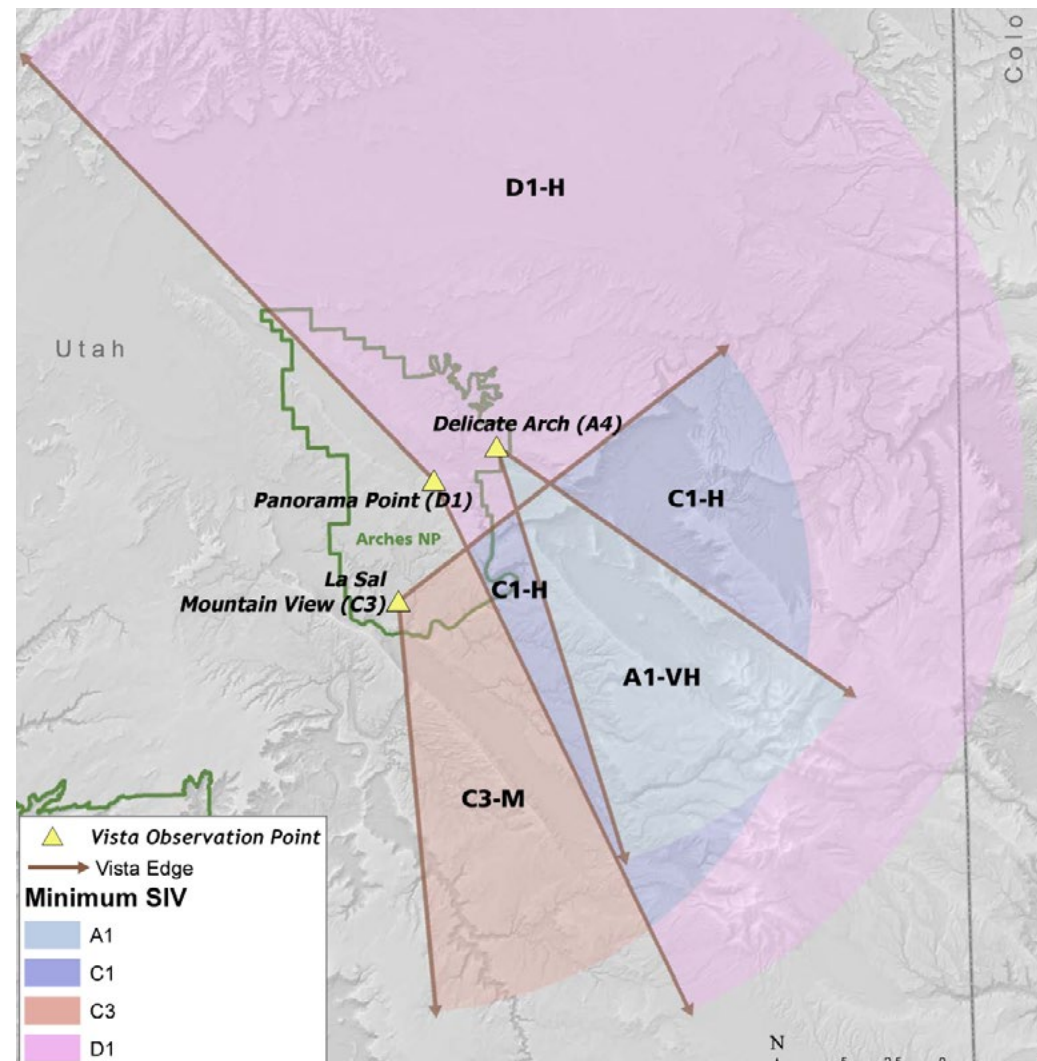


Figure 98. Hypothetical map showing concept of determining composite SIV

5.5 DATA ENTRY AND MANAGEMENT

All data collected are maintained in a spatial database at <https://irma.nps.gov/ETV/>. The database makes the data available for analysis and for future use to inform management and collaborative efforts. The integration of visual resource values with other resources allows scenery conservation to be considered in the context of overall park management. Figures 99-102 show some of the basic data entry pages that you will see when you begin to enter data. The database is user friendly and closely follows the data sheets. A detailed “How-To” document is available on the database home screen to provide further instruction.

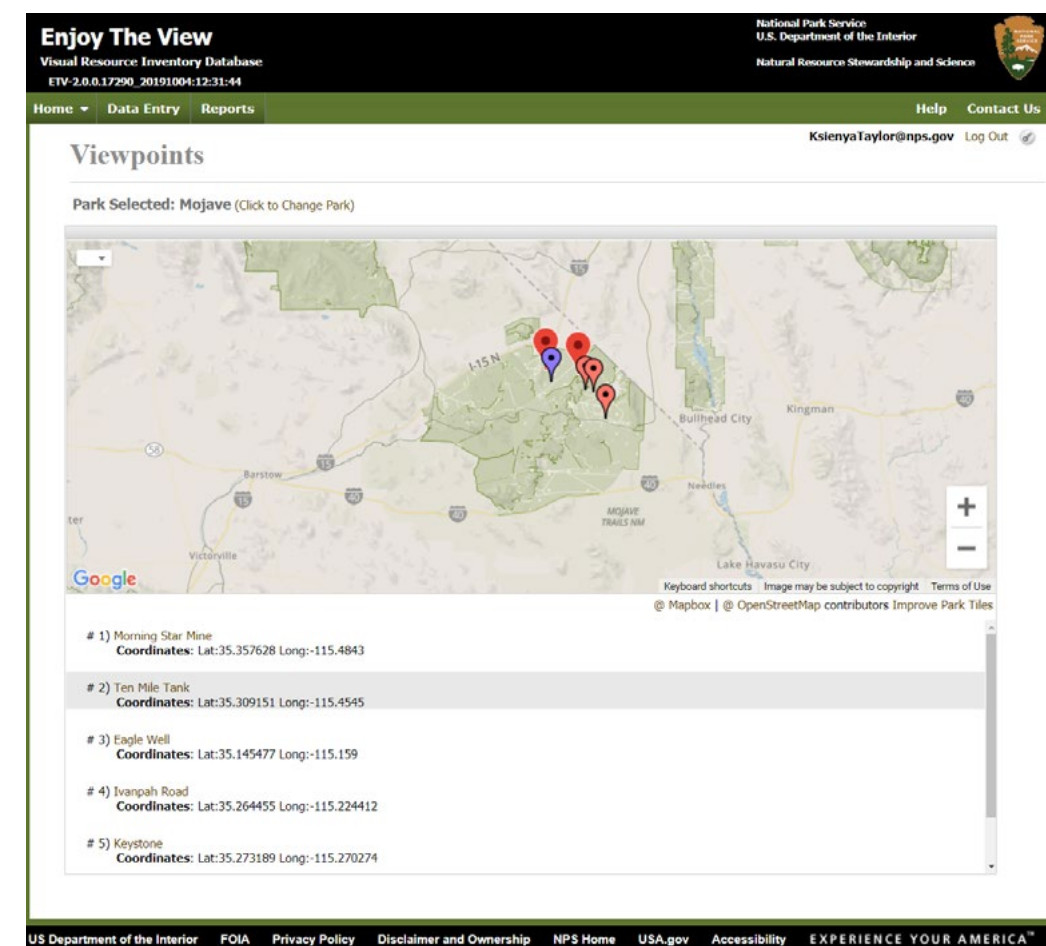


Figure 99. Viewpoint creation location map in the VRI database

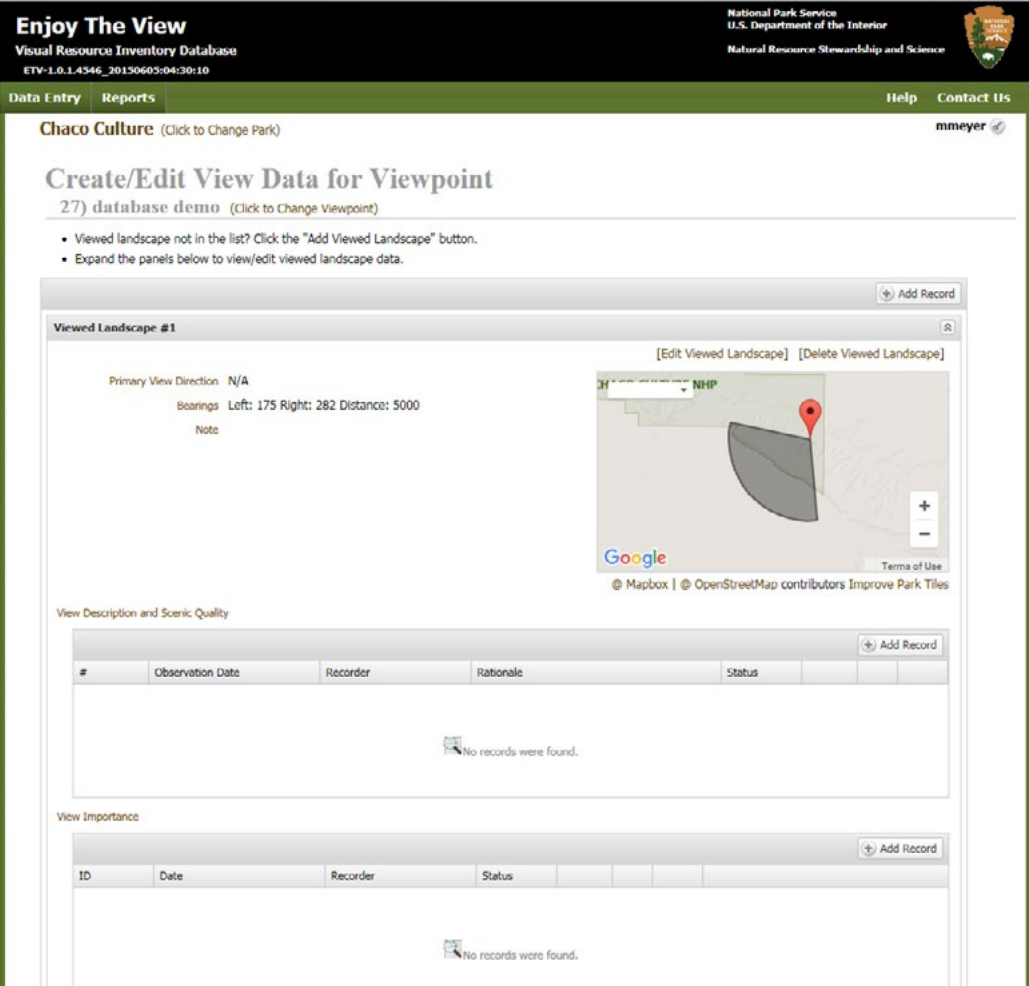


Figure 100. Example of VRI database viewpoint page for adding scenic quality and view importance data

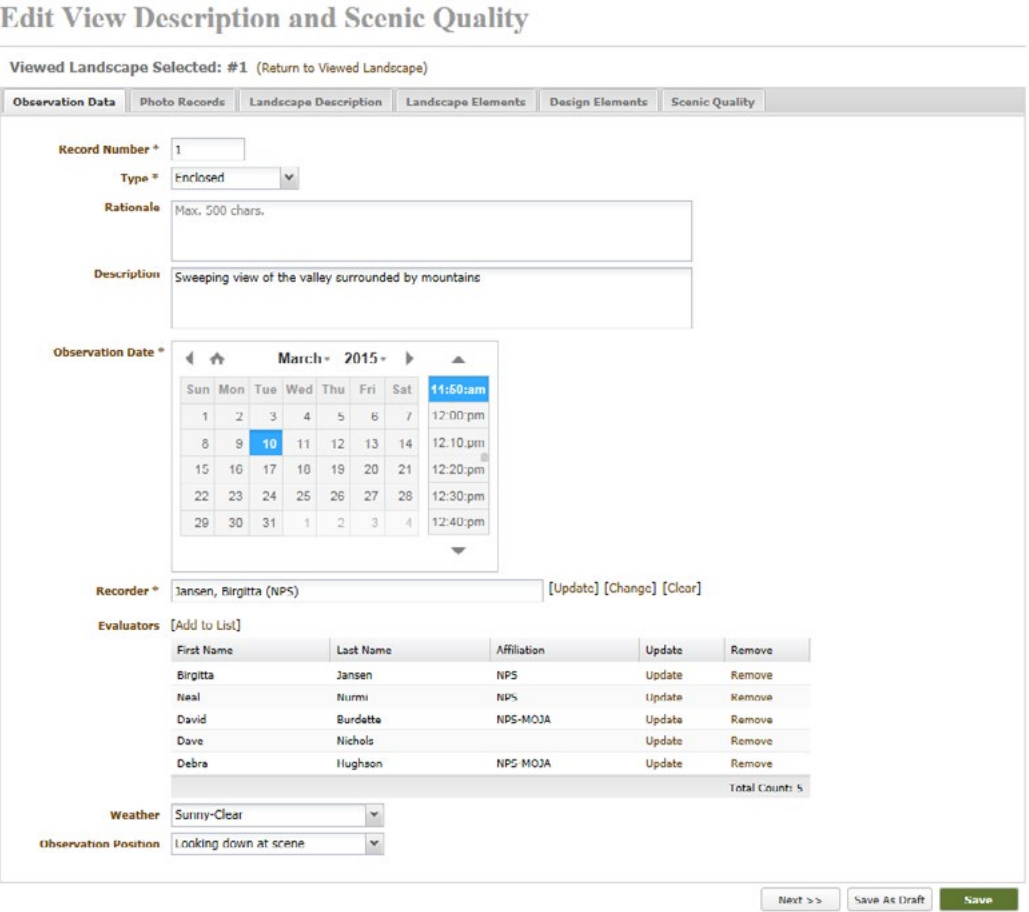


Figure 101. Example of the VRI database view description and scenic quality data entry page showing tabs that correspond to data collection sheet

Enjoy The View

Visual Resource Inventory Database

ETV-1.2.0.14345_20180209-09:02:12

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

Natural Resource Stewardship and Science



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mmeyer@nps.gov

Edit View Importance

Viewpoint Selected: #162 Morning Star Mine (Click to Change Viewpoint)

Viewed Landscape Selected: #1 (Return to Viewed Landscape)

Viewpoint

Viewpoint Subtype

Viewed Landscape

Importance Rating

Spatial Type

Point

Observation Date

March 2015

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

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16

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18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

1

2

3

4

2:00 am

2:10 am

2:20 am

2:30 am

2:40 am

2:50 am

Recorder

Woo, Denette (NPS-MQ3A)

[Update]

[Change]

[Clear]

Evaluators

[Add to List]

First Name

Last Name

Affiliation

Update

Remove

Mark

Meyer

Air Resource Division

Update

Remove

David

Burdette

NPS-MQ3A

Update

Remove

Debra

Hughson

NPS-MQ3A

Update

Remove

Denette

Woo

NPS-MQ3A

Update

Remove

Total Count: 4

Next >>

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Save

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Figure 102. Example of VRI database view importance data entry page showing the tabs corresponding to the data entry sheet

5.5.1 REPORTS

The VRI database can run several reports with the data. Two of the reports are summaries and status of the data that allow for a quick overview of the data for the park. An example of the view summary report for a park is shown in Table 1. A report called a park view brief can also be generated for each view. The brief is a tabloid size report of the scenic quality and view importance ratings for a view that also includes a panoramic photo and general location map. Though the original park view brief report is exported from the database as an 11x17, Figure 103 shows an example as an 8 1/2x11 for reference. The brief is an easy-to-read report that can be a useful tool for communicating the values of a specific view with partners and stakeholders. It is also a quick way to do a quality control review on the data.

View Summary - Visual Resources Inventory

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

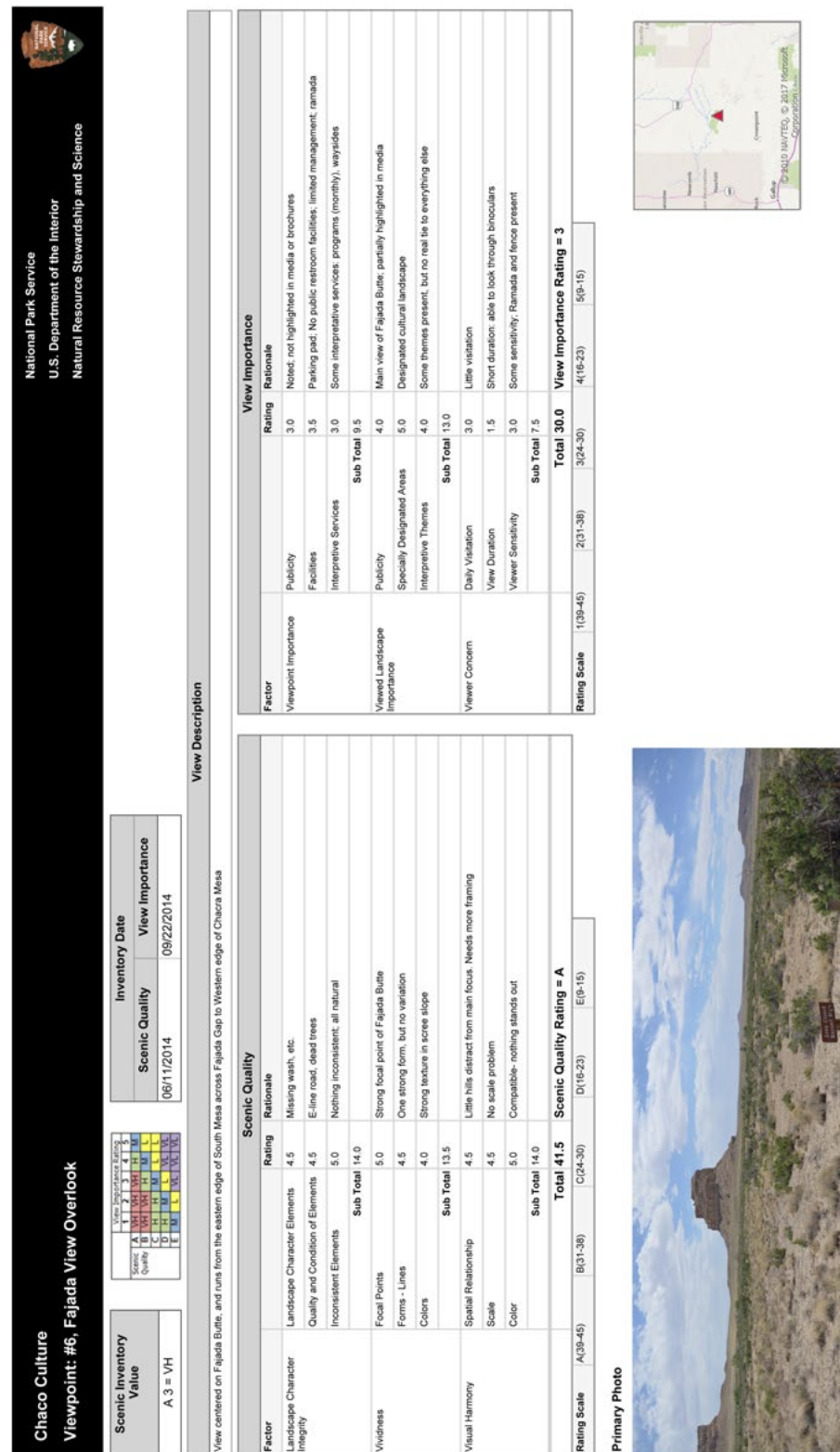
Natural Resource Stewardship and Science



Park: MONO

View Point #	View Cone #	Viewpoint Name	Center Bearing	View Type	Weather	View Status	Scenic Quality Total	View Importance
1	1	Brooks Hill		Enclosed	Mostly Sunny	Complete	B	3
2	1	Gambrill Hill		Enclosed	Partly Cloudy	Complete	C	4
6	1	Thomas Farm	0	Enclosed	Cloudy-Overcast	Complete	B	2
8	1	Worthington Farm toward Thomas Farm Complex		Enclosed	Mostly Cloudy	Complete	C	1
9	1	Worthington Looking West Past House		Panorama	Mostly Cloudy	Complete	B	1
10	1	Best Farm	115	Enclosed	Cloudy-Overcast	Complete	B	1
11	1	Thomas Barn		Enclosed	Cloudy-Overcast	Complete	B	2
12	1	Visitor Center Overlook		Enclosed	Cloudy-Overcast	Complete	B	1
15	1	Four Corners looking West		Enclosed	Cloudy-Overcast	Complete	B	3
19	1	NJ Monument		Enclosed	Partly Cloudy	Complete	B	1
21	1	Thomas Parking Area		Enclosed	Cloudy-Overcast	Complete	B	1
24	1	Four Corners-Araby Church Road		Enclosed	Mostly Cloudy	Complete	D	4

Table 1. Example of view summary report from VRI database



5.6 MAPPING

An GIS toolkit has been developed that uses the VRI data and ArcGIS to automate the creation of several map products on a park-by-park basis (Figure 104). While the mapping tools represent the final step in the VRI process, the data and mapping can then be used in conjunction with other park spatial data to better inform park management decision.

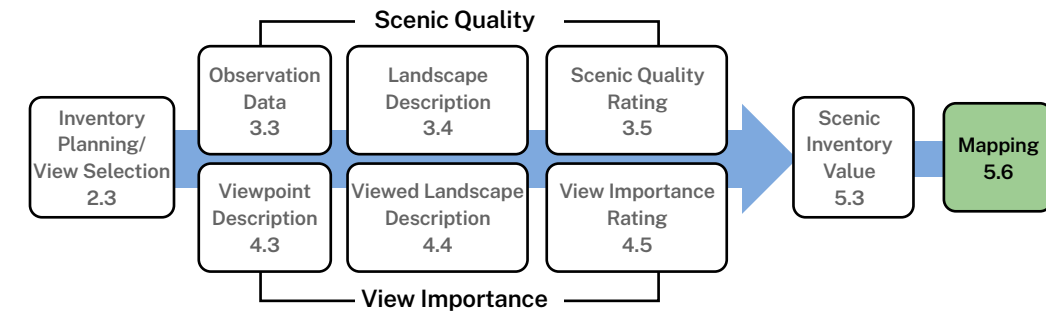


Figure 104. Navigation diagram of the visual resources inventory process

Viewpoints and view cones (depicting the left and right bearings of each inventoried view as identified in the field in combination with a user defined distance) are created directly from inventory data (Figure 105). With the addition of a digital elevation model some further analyses are possible including a viewshed analysis and the application of the SIV to the viewshed. A viewshed analysis is a mapping process that identifies the areas of the landscape that are visible from a selected location based on the topography and other factors that can be input into the analysis. These analyses are described briefly below and a detailed standard operating procedure document on how to use the ArcGIS toolkit can be found at the “Help” link on the VRI database homepage.

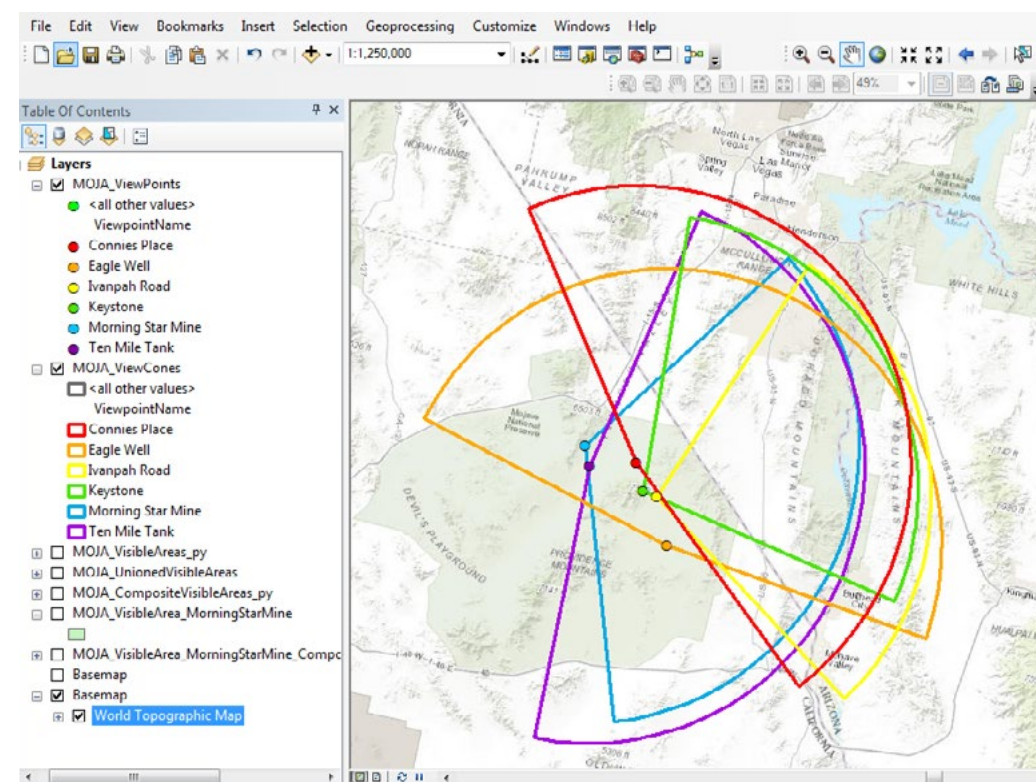


Figure 105. Example of view cone map created from GIS toolkit

5.6.1 VIEWSHED ANALYSIS

This GIS tool runs a traditional viewshed analysis from each inventoried viewpoint. The process then clips the results using the view cones and the outer extent radius that is set when mapping the view cones in the first step of using the GIS toolkit. The resulting map identifies visible areas seen from each of the individual viewpoints based on bare earth topography, and a combined viewshed showing which parts of the landscape are visible from any one of the inventoried views (Figure 106). A viewshed analysis is sometimes referred to as a seen/unseen analysis. In the combined visible areas product, each visible area has “count” information revealing how many views can see that location (Figure 107). Information about which specific views contribute to the view count is also retained by this product. The basic functions of the toolkit include:

- GIS analysis to identify visible areas of the landscape within each view
- Composite mapping that combines visible areas of overlapping views
- Additional analysis that can identify the number of viewpoints an area is visible from

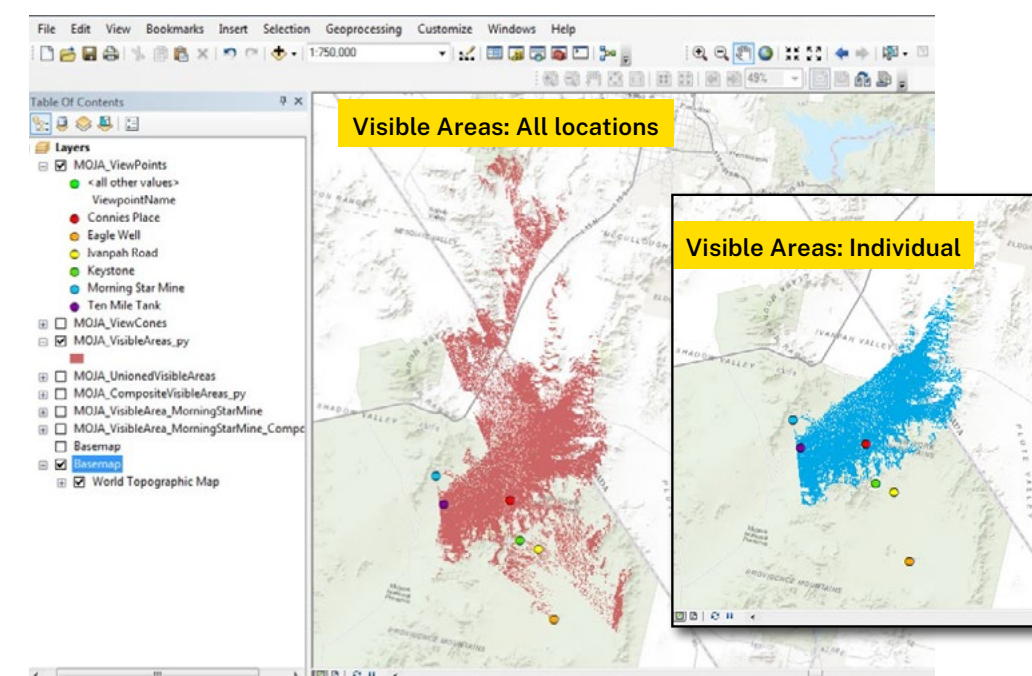


Figure 106. Example of viewshed analysis map based on viewpoints inventoried at Mojave National Preserve

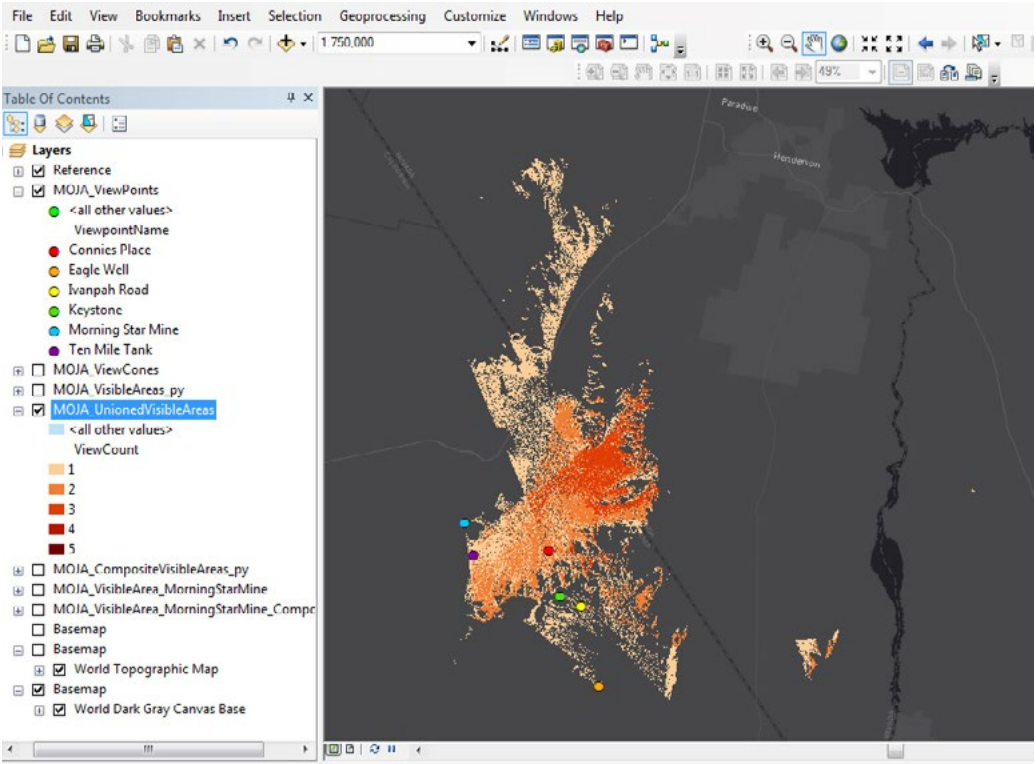


Figure 107. Example of VRI database map showing the number of viewpoints with visibility of an area

5.6.2 COMPOSITE SIV

This analysis takes the combined viewshed for a park to the next level by developing a composite SIV value for each visible area. To do this, the highest scenic quality rating and highest view importance rating from each contributing view is selected to create a new SIV for the visible area (Figure 108). The contributing ratings from all views are retained so that this can be used as a summary or data exploration product.

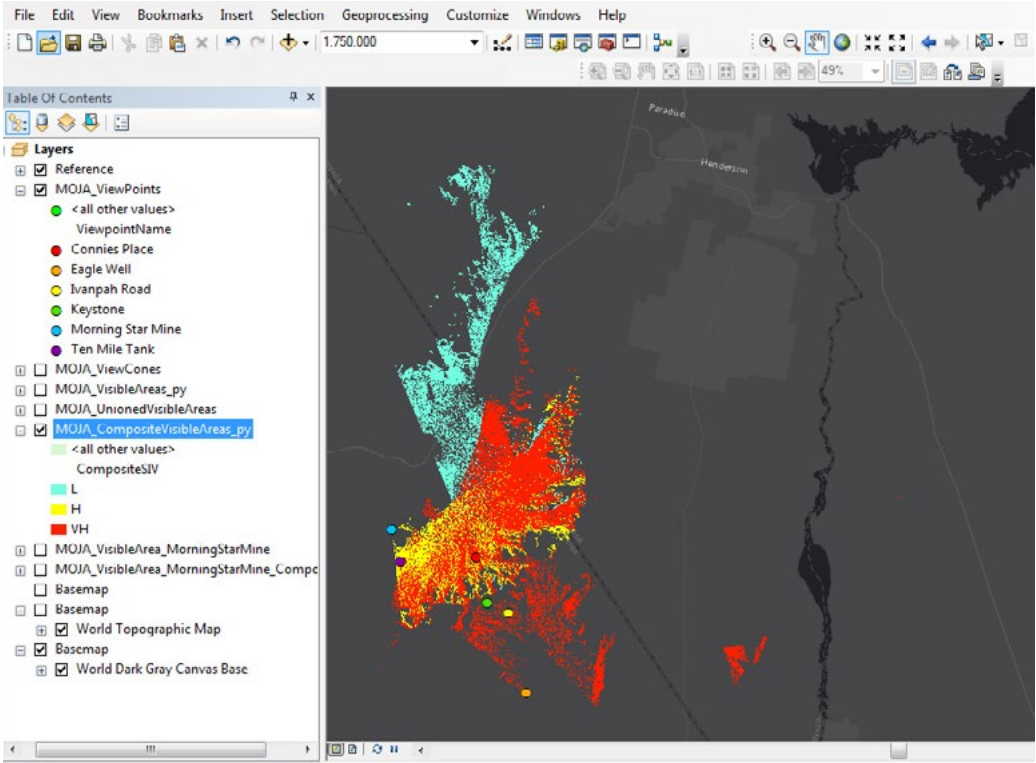


Figure 108. Example of VRI database map showing the composite SIVs of an area

5.7 WHAT’S NEXT?

One of the main goals of the NPS Visual Resources Program is to build a culture of visual resource awareness, both in in parks and among their partners. Toward this end, the data and maps that come out of the inventory process should first become communication tools that inform our own thinking about how we manage our internal resources. Taking care of our own resources will influence how we approach engaging our neighbors to find shared values and mitigate or avoid visual impacts where that makes sense. The real *what’s next* will depend on you — what you need to successfully manage your visual resources and work with your partners to protect those shared values.

5.7.1 FUTURE ANALYSIS TOOLS

The GIS toolkit has been developed to provide very basic visual resource analysis communication. New tools are sometimes added based on input from users because it is important that the toolkit is developed to meet your needs.

The toolkit was also developed as open source and you are free to develop custom tools and add them to the toolkit for others to use. It is envisioned that the best tools are likely to come from the parks, be shared among them, refined by them, and shared again.

5.8 PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

Park planning helps define the set of resource conditions, visitor experiences, and management actions that, as a whole, will best achieve the mandate to preserve resources unimpaired for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The NPS planning program has transitioned from preparing traditional stand-alone general management plans (GMP) to a more responsive and flexible planning framework to meet park planning needs and fulfill legal and policy requirements. This planning framework centers on the concept of the park planning portfolio — the assemblage of planning documents that guide decision making and satisfy law and policy. The planning portfolio can be visualized as a loose-leaf binder, to which park planning elements, such as a foundation document, GMP, strategic plans, and implementation plans, may be added, removed, or updated so the portfolio remains current. The Resource Stewardship Strategy has become one of the primary planning components where parks can add goals and strategies for visual resources in the context of multiple park resources. The portfolio can also include studies, inventories, and other data, which provide information and fill gaps identified by the park as a need.

6.0 GLOSSARY

Agricultural (landscape character type)	Landscapes that consist primarily of planted fields of row crops, orchards, vineyards, and livestock pasture or confined feeding operations. The topography is typically flat to rolling, but generally does not occur on steep terrain. These landscapes are often developed in grid-like field patters with a clustered farm complex.
Angle of observation	The angle, both vertical and horizontal, between a viewer’s line of sight and the landscape being viewed.
Background distance zone	The visible area of a landscape far enough away from a viewpoint that little detail is visible, vegetation and non-vegetated areas are seen as blocks of color, and colors are muted by atmospheric haze.
Bearing	The compass direction from an observer to a viewed object, typically measured in degrees.
Canopied (view type)	A type of view bounded on the top by features that limit the view. The features overhead create the feeling of a “ceiling” or “canopy” for the view.
Color	The property of reflecting light of a particular intensity and wavelength (or mixture of wavelengths) to which the eye is sensitive. Color is the major visual property of surfaces. Color enables the eye to differentiate otherwise indistinguishable objects.

Color harmony	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the degree to which the view includes a range of compatible colors and pleasing color contrasts where they occur. Color harmony is one of three components used to evaluate the visual harmony factor in the scenic evaluation.
Color vividness	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the degree to which the view includes bold colors, prominent textures, or moving features. Color vividness is one of three components used to evaluate the vividness factor in the scenic quality evaluation.
Components	Subparts of factors in the scenic quality and view importance evaluations in the NPS visual resources inventory. Scenic quality is assessed by evaluating three factors, each of which is comprised of three components. Similarly, view importance is assessed by evaluating three factors, each of which is comprised of three components.
Composite scenic inventory value	An NPS visual resources inventory value that is determined by the highest scenic quality rating and highest view importance rating from each contributing view in areas visible from multiple viewpoints (i.e. areas that overlap). Composite SIVs are derived using a geographic information system (GIS).
Contrast	Opposition or unlikeness of different forms, lines, colors, or textures in a landscape.
Cultural resources	Archaeological sites, structures, or features; traditional use areas; and Native American sacred sites or special use areas that provide evidence of the prehistory and history of a community.

Designated areas	In the NPS visual resources inventory, designated areas is one of three components used to evaluate the viewed landscape importance factor. It measures the extent to which the viewed landscape includes all or parts of specially designated areas, which are parcels of land appointed special status for recreation or their national and/or regionally significant scenic, historic, cultural or scientific features or landmarks.
Designated historic/ cultural components	Cultural or historic resources that have been formally recognized. These typically have a resource name and/or identification number that can provide additional information regarding the resource.
Designated scenic components	Scenic resources that have been formally recognized.
Digital elevation model	A three-dimensional representation of the surface terrain of an area that does not take into account trees, buildings, or other screening structures.
Distance zones	A subdivision of the landscape as viewed from an observer position. The subdivisions (zones) include foreground, middle ground, background, and seldom seen (BLM and USFS only).
Effect	Environmental consequences that occur as a result of a proposed action. Effects may be direct (caused by the action and occurring at the same time and place), indirect (caused by the action but occurring later in time or farther removed in distance but still reasonably foreseeable), or cumulative (incremental impacts of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions). In National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) documents, effect is synonymous with impact.

Enclosed (view type)	Enclosed views are bounded by a contiguous group of objects.
Feature (view type)	Feature views include a dominant feature or group of features that draws the eye.
Focal (view type)	Focal views have real or implied lines that converge to “lead the eye” to focus visual attention on a particular area.
Focal points	Prominent landscape features that attract and hold viewer attention.
Foreground	The visible area of a landscape in which viewers may feel like they are “part of the landscape” or the scene.
Form	The mass or shape of an object or objects that appears unified, such as a vegetative opening in a forest, a cliff formation, or a water tank.
Forms/lines	In the NPS visual resources inventory, one of three components of the vividness factor in the scenic quality evaluation. Forms and lines refer to the extent to which bold land/water forms or lines contribute to the visual interest of the viewed landscape. See <i>also</i> Form, line.
Framed (view type)	Framed views are bounded on the sides by objects that limit the view.
Geographic information system (GIS)	A computer application used to store, view, and analyze geographical information, especially maps.
Grain	Term used to help define texture. Refers to the relative size of the surface variations.
Horizon line	The apparent line in the landscape formed by the meeting of the visible land or water surface and the sky.
Impact	See effect.

Inconsistent features	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the presence and relative prominence of features that are not consistent with the identified landscape character. The inconsistent features component is one of three components used to evaluate the landscape character integrity factor in the scenic quality evaluation.
Industrial (landscape character type)	Landscapes dominated by industrial facilities. Industrial areas are typically integrated into an urban development pattern or found on the edge of town and city centers. They are considered the dominant feature of the landscape and not an isolated development.
Interdisciplinary team	A group of individuals with different training, representing the physical sciences, biological sciences, social sciences, and environmental design arts, assembled to solve a problem or perform a task.
Interpretive themes	The central concept within an exhibit, heritage site, park, trail etc. meant to engage, excite, and explain related subject matter to a visitor. In the NPS visual resources inventory, interpretive themes is one of three components used to evaluate the viewed landscape importance factor in the view importance rating.
Land cover	One of four landscape features used to describe the view. Land cover is the physical material visible on the earth’s surface, including vegetation, lakes, bare areas, etc., including human-made development.
Land use	A characterization of land in terms of its potential utility for various activities, or the activities carried out on a given piece of land.

Landform	Any recognizable physical form of the earth’s surface having a characteristic shape. Landforms include major forms such as plains, plateaus, and mountains, and minor forms such as hills, valleys, slopes, and moraines. Taken together, the landforms make up the surface configuration of the earth.
Landscape	The expanse of visible scenery, including landforms, waterforms, vegetation, and man-made features such as roads and structures. Also, the traits, patterns, and structure of a specific geographic area, including its physical environment, its biological composition, and its anthropogenic or social patterns.
Landscape character	An overall visual and cultural impression of the landscape and embodies distinct landscape attributes that exist throughout an area. It is a product of both the natural and human influences on the landscape.
Landscape character features	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the degree to which the full range of desirable landscape character features, e.g., natural features, land use types, structures, are plainly visible in the view. The landscape character features component is one of three components used to evaluate the landscape character integrity factor.
Landscape character integrity	In the NPS visual resources inventory, a measure of how well the landscape character identified in the view description process is expressed in the viewed landscape. Landscape character integrity is one of three factors in the scenic quality evaluation. It is comprised of three components: landscape character features, quality and condition of features, and inconsistent features.

Landscape character type	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the distinct and recognizable pattern of features that occur consistently across the landscape. Typical landscape character types include natural/natural appearing, pastoral, agriculture, rural, suburban, urban, and industrial.
Landscape description	In the NPS visual resources inventory, a systematic, objective, and comprehensive process for describing the visible features of a viewed landscape.
Landscape features	Visible objects and activities in the landscape that help to determine a landscape character type. The combination of landscape features helps to determine a landscape’s scenic quality. Landscape features types include landform, land cover, land use, and structures.
Line	The path, real or imagined, that the eye follows when perceiving abrupt differences in form, color, or texture. Within landscapes, lines may be found as ridges, skylines, structures, changes in vegetative types, or individual trees and branches.
Middle ground	The visible area of a landscape in which viewers may feel more like they are looking “at the landscape” rather than being in it.
Mitigation	The avoidance, minimization, rectification, reduction, or elimination of impacts over time, or compensation for impacts.
Mitigation measure	An action that avoids, minimizes, rectifies, reduces, or eliminates an impact over time, or compensates for an impact.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)	A federal law providing that property resources with significant national historic value be placed on the National Register of Historic Places. It does not require permits; rather, it mandates consultation with the proper agencies whenever it is determined that a proposed action might impact a historic property.
National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)	The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. NEPA establishes legal requirements for management of aesthetic resources.
Non-designated components	Important scenic, cultural, or visual areas, features, or landmarks that have not been formally designated, but nonetheless are nationally or regionally significant.
NPS unit name	The name of the National Park Service (NPS) unit at which the visual resources inventory is being conducted. Each NPS unit has a four-letter abbreviation.
Observer position	The vertical and horizontal placement of a viewer relative to the landscape being viewed.
Panoramic (view type)	A “wide open” view of a broad expanse of the landscape, where at least part of the view is unobstructed to the horizon.
Pastoral (landscape character type)	Landscapes that are predominantly grassland or shrub/scrub open rangeland. They may have natural or planted pastures or may appear as extensive natural/natural appearing areas with typically widely limited development.
Primary view direction	The direction in which the viewer sees the majority of the landscape in view.

Quality and condition of features	In the NPS visual resources inventory, a measure of the appropriateness of materials and the physical condition of natural and human-made features in the viewed landscape. Quality and condition of features component is one of three components used to evaluate the landscape character integrity factor.
Rural (landscape character type)	In the NPS visual resources inventory, rural landscapes consist primarily of isolated non-farm residences, or small settlements with low populations. They may include some minimal features of farming or agriculture and are often located away from larger cities, suburbs, and towns.
Scale relationships	In the NPS visual resources inventory, a measure of the degree to which the sizes of landscape features — relative to each other and to the view as a whole — make the view seem well-proportioned and balanced. The scale relationships component is one of three components used to evaluate the visual harmony factor.
Scenery	General appearance of a place or a landscape or features of a landscape.
Scenic conservation	Active pursuit of protecting valued scenery as an agency and/or in collaboration with local stakeholders, partners, and communities.
Scenic integrity	The degree of “intactness” of a landscape which is related to the existing amount of visual disturbance present. Landscapes with higher scenic integrity are generally regarded as more sensitive to visual disturbances.
Scenic inventory value (SIV)	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the inventoried value of the view. The SIV is comprised of two parts, the scenic quality rating and the view importance rating.

Scenic quality	A measure of the perceived attractiveness of landform, waterform, or vegetation in the landscape, as well as appreciation of visible human additions or alterations to the landscape.
Scenic quality evaluation	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the assessment of the relative scenic quality of the view, determined by evaluating the three scenic quality factors: landscape character integrity, vividness, and visual harmony.
Scenic quality factors	The three factors used to evaluate the scenic quality of the landscape. <i>see</i> Landscape character integrity, vividness, and visual harmony.
Scenic Quality Individual Rating Data sheet	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the data sheet on which data collected during the scenic quality evaluation are recorded. Evaluations are recorded individually, and the evaluation is followed by a group discussion to reach a consensus.
Scenic quality rating	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the total score derived from the scenic quality evaluation. The rating constitutes one half of the view's scenic inventory value.
Scenic resource area	A physical area composed of land, water, biotic and/or cultural features which have inherent scenic qualities and/or aesthetic value.
Scenic value	The importance of a landscape based on human perception of the intrinsic beauty of landform, waterform, and vegetation in the landscape, as well as any visible human additions or alterations to the landscape.
Sensitive viewpoint	A location that is valued or considered important because of the views of the landscape that it affords.

Simulation	A realistic visual portrayal that demonstrates the perceivable changes in landscape features caused by a proposed activity. This is done through the use of photography, artwork, computer graphics, and other such techniques.
Spatial relationship	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the degree to which the spatial arrangement of landscape features makes the view seem structured, ordered, and balanced. The spatial relationship component is one of three components used to evaluate the visual harmony factor.
Specially Designated Areas (SDA)	Parcels of land appointed special status for recreation or their national and/or regionally significant scenic, historic, cultural, or scientific features or landmarks.
Structures	Built objects, such as buildings, towers, oil wells, and highways that are visible in the viewed landscape
Suburban (landscape character type)	In the NPS visual resources inventory, landscapes that consist primarily of residential and mixed-use commercial development within commuting distance of a city. The suburbs typically contain a mix single family homes, townhomes, condominiums, and apartments and are sometimes divided into subdivisions.
Texture	The visual or tactile surface characteristics of various features in the landscape. Often visible as the interplay of light and shadow created by the variations in the surface of an object or landscape.
Texture contrasts	Visual contrasts between different objects or landscapes resulting from different visual manifestations of texture.

Topography	The shape of the earth’s surface; the relative position and elevations of natural and man-made features of an area.
Urban (landscape character type)	Landscapes consist of developed, densely populated areas typically centered on a central commercial core. Infrastructure and circulation patterns are present.
Vegetation	Plant life or total plant cover in an area.
View	Something that is looked toward or kept in sight, especially a broad landscape or panorama. Act of looking toward this object or scene.
View description	In the NPS visual resources inventory, a systematic, objective, and comprehensive process for describing the viewed landscape.
View Description and Scenic Quality Data sheet	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the data sheet onto which data collected during the scenic quality evaluation is recorded.
View duration	The estimated time a visitor typically experiences the view. In the NPS visual resources inventory, the view duration component is one of three components used to evaluate the viewer concern factor.
View importance evaluation	In the NPS visual resources inventory, an assessment of the relative importance of the view to NPS and to NPS visitors, apart from its scenic quality. It has three factors, viewpoint importance, viewed landscape importance, and viewer concern.
View Importance Data sheet	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the data sheet onto which data collected during the view importance evaluation is recorded.

View Importance Rating Guide	In the NPS visual resources inventory, a reference tool with established guidelines used for determining view importance ratings that are recorded in the View Importance Data sheet.
View type	In the NPS visual resources inventory, a description of the general spatial characteristics of the view. View types include panoramic, enclosed, feature, framed, focal, and canopied.
Viewed landscape	The geographic area that can be seen from a given viewpoint. In the NPS visual resources inventory, the viewed landscape factor is one of the three factors evaluated in the view importance process.
Viewed landscape importance	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the extent to which the features in the viewed landscape are publicized; have been recognized for their outstanding scenic, historic, cultural, or other values; and are used for interpretation. The viewed landscape importance factor is one of three factors in the view importance rating.
Viewed landscape publicity	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the extent to which the viewed landscape is publicized, especially for its scenic views, within NPS visitor communications (e.g., brochures, park websites, ads) or receives external recognition outside NPS in media (e.g., hiking guides, web sites, videos). The viewed landscape publicity component is one of three components used to evaluate viewed landscape importance.
Viewer characteristics	Traits of the individual viewer, such as visual acuity, visual engagement and experience, and viewer motion that affect the viewer’s perception of contrast and the ability to discern objects in the landscape.

Viewer concern	A measure of the extent and intensity of visitor use of the view, and concern viewers may have for preserving its landscape character integrity. In the NPS visual resources inventory, the viewer concern factor is one of three factors in the view importance rating.
Viewer motion	Change in position of the viewer within the landscape. The visual experience changes as the viewer moves through the landscape.
Viewer sensitivity	The degree to which viewers are sensitive to changes in the visual character of visual resources. In the NPS visual resources inventory, the viewer sensitivity component is one of three components used to evaluate the viewer concern factor in the view importance rating.
Viewing geometry	The spatial relationship of viewer to the viewed object (e.g., a renewable energy facility), including the viewer position and aspect.
Viewpoint	A point from which a landscape is viewed. Also, a point from which a landscape view is analyzed and/or evaluated. In the NPS visual resources inventory, the viewpoint is one of the three parts of a view.
Viewpoint management	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the extent to which facilities have been added or are planned and that there is management of the facilities or viewpoint area to enhance the visitor experience. The viewpoint management component is one of three components used to evaluate the viewpoint importance factor in the view importance evaluation.

Viewpoint importance	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the extent to which the viewpoint is publicized and managed for visitors. It is one of three factors in the view importance rating and is comprised of three components: viewpoint publicity, viewpoint management, and viewpoint interpretive services.
Viewpoint importance rating	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the total score derived from the view importance evaluation. The rating constitutes one half of the view’s scenic inventory value.
Viewpoint interpretive services	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the level of interpretive services offered or planned at the viewpoint, and the extent to which they contribute to the visitors’ enjoyment of scenic, historic, cultural, scientific, or other NPS unit values. In the NPS visual resources inventory, it is one of three components used to evaluate the viewpoint Importance.
Viewpoint Publicity	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the extent to which the viewpoint is publicized, especially for its scenic views, within NPS visitor communications (e.g., brochures, park websites, ads) or receives external recognition outside NPS in media (e.g., hiking guides, web sites, videos). In the NPS visual resources inventory, it is one of three components used to evaluate viewpoint importance.
Viewshed	The total landscape seen or potentially seen from a point, or from all or a logical part of a travel route, use area, or water body.
Viewshed analysis	A spatial analysis that uses elevation data, such as a digital elevation model or surface elevation model, to determine which parts of the surrounding landscape are likely to be visible from a designated point or points.

Viewshed map	The outcome of a viewshed analysis that shows which areas of the surrounding landscape would theoretically be visible from the viewshed origin (the viewpoint).
Visibility	The ability to visually discern an object in the landscape; also, the distance an individual can see as determined by light, atmospheric, and weather conditions.
Visitation	In the NPS visual resources inventory, the estimated relative annual visitation for the viewpoint relative to others within this NPS unit. In the NPS visual resources inventory, it is one of three components used to evaluate the viewer concern factor.
Vista	A vista is sometimes human created or designed for a specific view, such as creating an opening in trees for the view of a valley. As such a vista may be subject to design and/or specific maintenance to retain the view. In the NPS visual resources inventory, vista may be a view that is inventoried.
Visual contrast	Opposition or unlikeness of different forms, lines, colors, or textures in a landscape.
Visual elements	Key visual and spatial properties of the major features of the view, usually expressed as forms, lines, colors, and textures.
Visual engagement/ experience	How closely the viewer looks at an object or objects in the landscape.
Visual experience	The degree of familiarity with the visual characteristics of a particular object in the landscape based on having seen it previously.

Visual harmony	A measure of the degree to which the landscape features in the exhibit a consistent, orderly, or pleasing arrangement of parts. In the NPS visual resources inventory, it is one of three factors used in the scenic quality evaluation.
Visual impact	Any modification in landforms, water bodies, or vegetation, or any introduction of structures or other human-made visual features, that negatively or positively affect the visual character or quality of a landscape and the visual experience of persons viewing the landscape through the introduction of visual contrasts in the basic visual elements of form, line, color, and texture.
Visual impact assessment (VIA)	Analysis of the visual impacts of a proposed project, usually presented as a stand-alone technical report or contained within an Environmental Impact Statement.
Visual mitigation	Actions taken to avoid, eliminate, or reduce potential adverse impacts on scenic resources. See mitigation.
Visual resources inventory (VRI)	A systematic assessment of the visual resources present within one or more views that presents NPS managers with the means for determining baseline visual values for the views. The NPS visual resources inventory consists of a scenic quality evaluation and a view importance evaluation, which are combined to give the final scenic inventory value (SIV).
Visual resource management	The planning, design, and implementation of management objectives for maintaining scenic values and visual quality.
Visual resource	Any object (natural and built, moving and stationary) or feature, such as a landform or water body that is visible on a landscape.

Visual sensitivity	Public concern for the maintenance of scenic quality in a particular landscape setting.
Visual simulation	A pictorial representation of a proposed project in its landscape setting, as it would be seen from a specified viewpoint, and used to visualize the project before it is built, typically in order to determine its potential visual contrasts and associated visual impacts.
Visual value	See scenic quality or scenic value.
Vividness	A measure of the relative memorability of a view or landscape. In the NPS visual resources inventory, vividness is one of three factors in the scenic quality evaluation.

APPENDIX A: FORMS AND GUIDES



NPS Visual Resource Program
Inventory Planning Worksheet

Date prepared:_____

Prepared by:_____

WHY:

What is the primary visual resource challenge? (e.g., potential project, nearby land use changes, need for new facilities)

What are the visual resource inventory goals? (e.g., baseline data for planning, information for collaboration/project comments)

WHERE: What are your preliminary ideas of the areas and/or viewpoints to inventory? (e.g., a certain region of the park, primary overlooks)

Example Viewpoints (Use the View Identification Worksheet for details)

Name	Rationale for selection

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WHO:

[illegible]

WHEN:

Scenic Quality field work: Planned Date(s)_____

Alternate date(s) _____

View Importance (office): Planned Date(s)_____

Alternate Dates(s) _____

LOGISTICS (Scenic quality field work)

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| ☐ | Viewpoint travel plan(s) |
| ☐ | Maps |
| ☐ | Special access |
| ☐ | |

Equipment

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| ☐ Camera | ☐ Clipboards |
| ☐ Tripod | ☐ Safety Gear |
| ☐ GPS | ☐ |
| ☐ SQ data forms | ☐ |
| ☐ SQ Individual rating forms | ☐ |

NPS Unit: _____ Date: _____ Recorders: _____

INSTRUCTIONS: For each view to be considered for inclusion in the inventory, assign a view number, view name, and rationale for inclusion in the inventory. Optionally, complete the priority (P) and access (A) columns to assist with inventory planning. Detailed instructions are provided on the reverse side of this worksheet.

[illegible]

Number: Assign each view a number.

Name: Give the view a name. This can correspond to the viewpoint if there is only one view at that viewpoint, e.g., Stag’s Leap, or the viewpoint plus a unique descriptor, e.g., Stag’s Leap—Valley View, Stag’s Leap—Northwest.

Rationale: Provide a brief description of the reason(s) for selecting the view. Selection of views should consider the purpose of the inventory, e.g., responding to an external project, such as an existing or proposed energy development near the unit; responding to an internal project, such as an existing landfill or proposed road improvement; or establishing baseline visual resource condition. Views may also be selected based on the importance and sensitivity of the viewpoint or the viewed landscape, e.g., an historic site or an historic battlefield. View selection may also consider the level of visitor use. In cases where particular viewpoints cannot be identified (i.e., where there is dispersed usage, such as on trails, rivers, roads, or within wilderness areas) representative viewpoints may be selected, but this should be noted in the rationale.

Priority: Optionally, prioritize the viewpoint according to the following general criteria, or other criteria you identify. The purpose of assigning priority is to help you determine the most effective use of limited staff and stakeholder/volunteer resources. It is not an assignment of the importance of the viewpoint.

Example prioritization criteria:

- A. **Higher Priority**—The highest priority points are those where there may be an immediate threat to the view from a proposed project or from land management or development decisions.
- B. **Medium Priority**—These points are not likely subject to changes in the view in the near future but land management or development could affect the view.
- C. **Lower Priority**—These are points that you feel are currently somewhat protected from visual intrusions and if needed could be included in the inventory at a later time.

Other possible prioritization schemes could include dividing the NPS unit into inventory zones based on visitor exposure or spatial proximity, or inventorying designated scenic overlooks or National Register sites first, etc.

Access: Optionally, identify the general level of access to the viewpoint according to the ratings below. This can be very helpful for inventory trip planning. Generally, the level of access should be considered from the point at which you would stop a standard vehicle.

1. **Very Easy**—Access is very easy such as a scenic pullout or a short hike (about 5 minutes or less) to an overlook
2. **Moderately Easy**—Getting to the viewpoint will require about 10–20 minutes of hiking along maintained trails of easy to moderate difficulty.
3. **Moderately Difficult**—Getting to the viewpoint will require at least 30 minutes—and possibly up to a couple of hours—of hiking on trails that could range from easy to difficult.
4. **Very Difficult**—Backcountry access. Getting to these points would require at least a couple hours each way of hiking on moderate to difficult trails or on a cross-country route with no trail, such as in a wilderness area.

Observation Data															
NPS Unit:								Date:				Time:			
Viewpoint Name:								Viewed Landscape Name (if needed):							
Viewpoint Coordinates								View Geometry Bearings (☐ Magnetic / ☐ True N)							
☐ UTM, Zone:				☐ Lat./Long. (decimal deg.)											
/								Left:		Right:		Center:			
View Type: ☐ Panorama ☐ Feature ☐ Framed ☐ Focal ☐ Enclosed ☐ Canopied															
Rationale: ☐ Baseline Inventory ☐ Leaf-on ☐ Leaf-off ☐ Project ☐ Other—describe:															
Narrative:															
Recorder:								Evaluators:							
Weather: ☐ Sunny/Clear ☐ Mostly Sunny ☐ Partly Cloudy ☐ Mostly Cloudy ☐ Cloudy/Overcast ☐ Cirrus															
Observer Position: ☐ Looking down at scene ☐ Looking at eye level ☐ Looking up at scene															
Photo Record															
Photographer:								Camera/Lens 1:				Camera/Lens 2:			
Camera	Photo Number(s)			Pano	Notes										
Landscape Description															
Landscape Character Type: ☐ Natural/Natural Appearing ☐ Pastoral ☐ Agriculture ☐ Rural ☐ Suburban ☐ Urban ☐ Industrial															
Are seasonal/ephemeral effects (e.g., wildflower displays, snow, haze) important to the scenic quality of the view? ☐ Yes ☐ No															
If yes, please describe:															
Extent of Distance Zones															
Foreground:															
Middle ground:															
Background:															
Landscape Features															
Landform*	F	M	B	Landcover*	F	M	B	Land Use*	F	M	B	Structures*	F	M	B
Mountains				Development				Natural Areas				High Rise - Residential			
Hills				Barren				Timber				Low Rise - Residential			
Buttes				Forest - Deciduous				Grazing/Rangeland				High Rise - Commercial			
Mesas				Forest - Evergreen				Agriculture				Low Rise - Commercial			
Valleys				Forest - Mixed				Mining				Farm Buildings			
Cliffs/Bluffs				Shrub/Scrub				Industrial				Misc. Industrial (Factories, etc.)			
Canyons				Grassland				Office/Retail				Power Plants			
Plains				Pasture/Hay				Urban Residential				Wind Turbines			
Ridge				Cultivated Crops				Suburban Residential				Solar Facilities			
Beaches				Wetland/Bog				Rural Residential				Communication Towers			
Sand Dunes				Ocean				Transportation				Oil/Gas Wells			
Islands				Lake/Pond				Parks/Recreation				Local Roads			
Headlands				River/Stream				Urban Center				Highways			
Water								Small Town				Transmission/Substations			
								Energy Generation				Unidentifiable Structures			
								Transmission							

Inventory—View Description and Scenic Quality Rating
Quick Reference Guide

Prominent Visual Elements			
FORMS		LINES	
Descriptor	Elements	Descriptor	Elements
Rolling		Vertical	
Blocky		Horizontal	
Rugged		Curving	
Angular		Undulating	
Conical		Angular	
Pyramidal		Diagonal	
Rounded		Broken	
Circular		Irregular	
Flat			
COLORS		TEXTURES	
Color	Elements	Descriptor	Elements
		Smooth	
		Rough	
		Medium	
		Coarse	
		Fine	
		Patchy	
		Stippled	
		Random	
		Uniform	
		Ordered	

Scenic Quality		
Scenic Quality Factor	Rating	Rationale
Landscape Character Integrity		
Landscape Character Features		
Inconsistent Features		
Quality and Condition of Features		
Integrity Total		
Vividness		
Focal Points		
Forms/Lines		
Color Vividness		
Vividness Total		
Visual Harmony		
Spatial Relationship		
Scale Relationship		
Color Harmony		
Harmony Total		
TOTAL		
SCENIC QUALITY	☐ E (9-15)	☐ D (16-23) ☐ C (24-30) ☐ B (31-38) ☐ A (39-45)

TIPS for the TEAM

DELEGATE TASKS. Recorder, photographer, GPS/compass, raters.

DEFINE THE VIEW. Establish basics of the view so that everyone rates the same thing.

- Name/number
- View extent
- Distance zones

DEFINE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE. As a group, select the landscape character type from the list you made in the workshop that best fits the view.

PHOTOGRAPHER/GPS/COMPASS

VIEWPOINT COORDINATES

- Recording in UTM?—don’t forget the zone.
- Record lat/long in DECIMAL DEGREES

PHOTOS FOR A PANORAMA

- Sweep photos from left to right
- Overlap individual photos by at least a third

COMPASS

- Smart phones are not accurate —use only if necessary
- Note true or magnetic north

RATERS

READ IT, READ IT AGAIN. Read the rating guidelines each time you do a rating. This helps ensure consistency across your ratings and the group.

RATE WHAT YOU SEE. Don’t let your knowledge of ecological conditions, historic values, future projects, etc. influence your ratings.

STAY PUT. Remain at the viewpoint for the entire rating process. Moving away may skew ratings as perspective changes and some features may not be visible from the alternate location. If for any reason, such as weather, you can’t stay at the viewpoint it will be necessary to reschedule inventory of that location.

DON’T DEBATE SMALL DIFFERENCES. Protracted debates about small rating differences waste time and don’t change the outcome.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER FEATURES. Use the character features list you created when rating the presence/absence of the features for the character type.

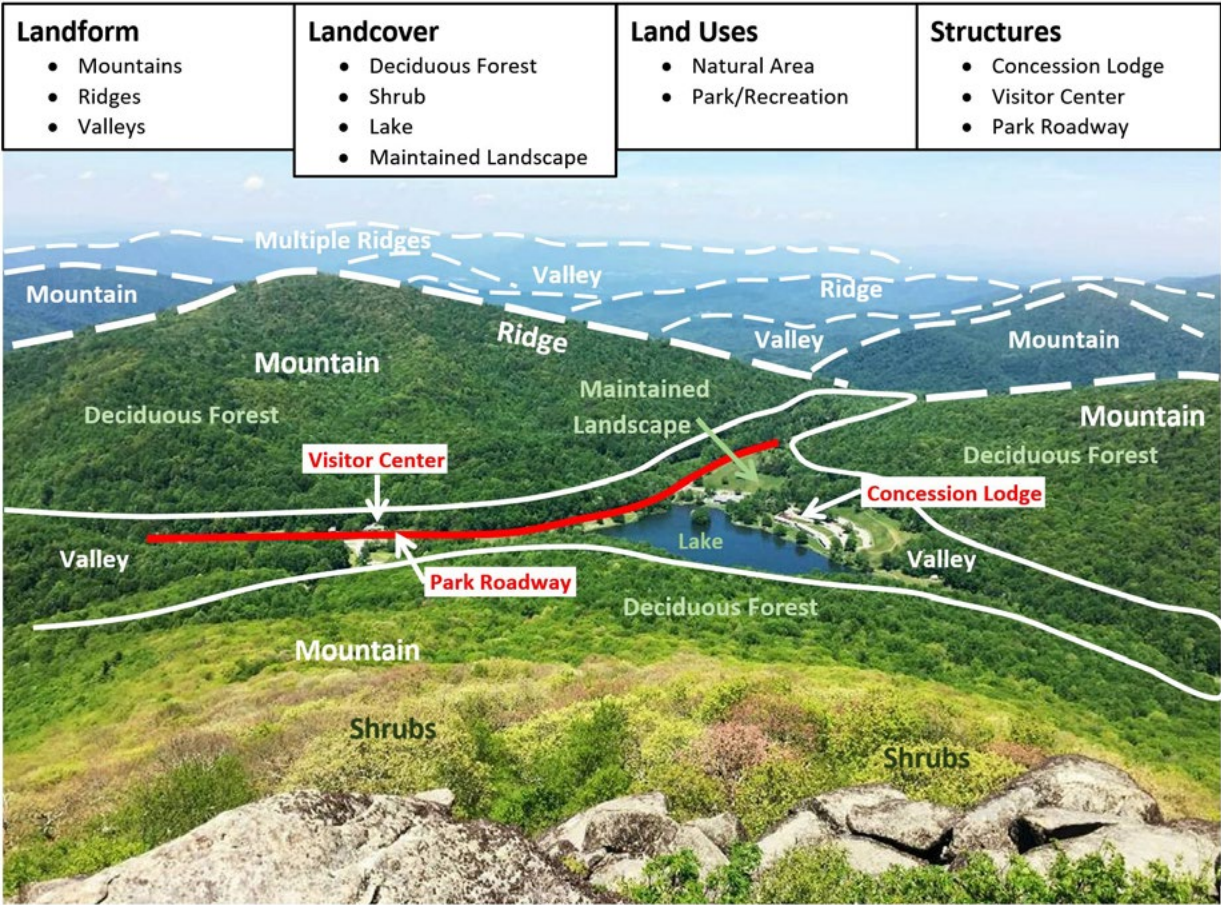
QUALITY AND CONDITION. Rate the condition of all features in the view-including inconsistent features.

COLORS. Avoid double counting when rating for **vividness** and **visual harmony**. You can have vivid colors in a view that may not fit with the rest of the colors. You can also have muted colors that may not work well together.

RATIONALES ARE CRITICAL. Providing a reason for your individual rating adds value and credibility to your data. This also facilitates the consensus discussion and real-time quality assurance for the overall team ratings and rationale.

RATIONALES ARE CRITICAL. Providing a reason for the overall team rating adds value and credibility to your data.

NPS Visual Resource Program
Inventory—Field Team Record



NPS Unit Name:		Alpha Code:	Date:
Team:	Start Time:	am or pm	End Time:
		am or pm	

TEAM LEADER	
Name:	Affiliation:

TEAM MEMBERS		
Name	Initials	Affiliation

PLANNED VIEWPOINTS			
VP #	Viewpoint Name	General Location	Completed?
			☐ Y ☐ N
			☐ Y ☐ N
			☐ Y ☐ N
			☐ Y ☐ N
			☐ Y ☐ N
			☐ Y ☐ N
			☐ Y ☐ N
			☐ Y ☐ N
			☐ Y ☐ N

CAMERA INFO		
Photographer:	Camera/Lens 1:	Camera/Lens 2:

NOTES

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Date:

Recorders:

INSTRUCTIONS: Within the context of what is typical for the regional landscape, identify the landscape character types that might be seen from the viewpoints selected for the inventory. For each one identified list, the most prominent landscape features that could be visible and that would contribute positively to a visually appealing view of that landscape type. See the reverse side of this worksheet for example features for each landscape character type.

Landscape Character Type:

Landscape Character Type:



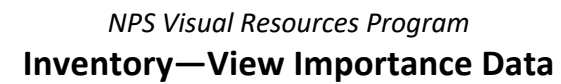
Natural/Natural Appearing Landscapes are dominated by natural features. There may be evidence of human changes to the landscape but they are minimal and do not detract from the natural landscape character. Typical features may include:

- Single-family homes, farms with barns, fields and fences
- Roads-local road networks, count/state highways
- A cluster of houses with outbuildings, churches or other structures and associated infrastructure
- Recreation and/or natural areas, including natural parks, forests, ponds, and wildlife areas

- A mix of single family homes, townhomes, condominiums, and apartments
- Commercial areas, schools
- Golf courses, planned parks, and undeveloped open space
- Highways, roads, rail stations, large parking lots

- High density of buildings ranging from low to high rise along with an extensive road network
- Highways, roads, bridges, multiple transit stations
- Developed or natural open space

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER INTEGRITY				
Landscape Character Features	Identify the degree to which the full range of important desirable landscape character features (e.g., natural features, land use types, structures) are plainly visible in the view.			
	Few features are plainly visible and/or many features are missing. (1)	Some features are present, but some features are missing. (3)	Most or all features are plainly visible. (5)	RATING
Rationale:				
Inconsistent Features	Identify the degree to which inconsistent features (e.g., agricultural fields in an urban landscape or industrial facilities in a natural landscape) are plainly visible in the view.			
	Many or major inconsistent features are plainly visible and may be dominant features. (1)	Some inconsistent features are plainly visible. (3)	Only a few, minor inconsistent features are plainly visible. (5)	RATING
Rationale:				
Quality and Condition of Features	Assess the quality and condition of all landscape features, including natural and human-made features. NOTE: Do not lower the rating for historic structures, if their condition is appropriate to setting or purpose.			
	Most features are of poor quality and/or are in poor condition. Natural appearing features look very unhealthy, seriously damaged, or in poor condition from pollution, or the presence of debris or litter. Built features appear to be of poor quality, or are in an advanced state of disrepair. (1)	Most features are of fair quality and/or in fair condition. Some natural appearing features do not look healthy, have some damage visible, or have some pollution, debris, or litter evident. Some built features may be of lower quality, are of unfinished construction, or not well cared for. (3)	Most features are of high quality and in good condition. Most natural appearing features look healthy, undamaged, clean, and free of debris. Built features are of high quality with appropriate materials, designs, and finishes; and appear to be well cared for. (5)	RATING
Rationale:				
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER INTEGRITY TOTAL RATING				



NPS Unit: Viewpoint Name: Date:

Viewed Landscape Name:

Recorder: _____ Evaluators: _____

VIVIDNESS				
Focal Points	Identify the degree to which focal points attract visual attention.			RATING
	The view has weak focal points, or does not have any features that attract and hold attention. (1)	The view has a moderately strong focal point, or has multiple focal points and attention is focused on each one roughly equally. (3)	The view has one very strong focal point that attracts and holds visual attention. (5)	
Rationale:				
Forms & Lines	Identify the degree to which landforms, lines, structures, or water features add interest to the view.			RATING
	Landforms, lines, structures, and water features are weak, poorly defined, or insignificant. These add little interest. (1)	There are one or more moderately bold and distinct landforms, lines, structures, or water features that add interest. (3)	There are very bold and distinct landforms, lines, structures, or water features that add strong visual interest. (5)	
Rationale:				
Color Vividness	Identify the degree to which the view includes bold colors, and prominent textures or moving features. Texture and movement are secondary considerations for this component.			RATING
	Colors are generally muted and there are minimal textures or moving features. (1)	There are moderately bold colors, textures and/or prominent moving features. (3)	There are very bold or striking colors, textures, and/or moving features. (5)	
Rationale:				
If seasonal/ephemeral effects (e.g., wildflower displays, snow, haze) are affecting the scenic quality of the view be sure to consider in your ratings.				
VIVIDNESS TOTAL RATING				

2

☐ Identified Cultural Landscape

Resource Identification No.: _____Resource Name:_____

Describe:

☐ National Heritage Area

Resource Identification No.: _____Resource Name:_____

Describe:

☐ Cultural Resource (not-evaluated for, or listed on NRHP)

Resource Identification No.: _____Resource Name:_____

Describe:

☐ Traditional Cultural Property (not evaluated for, or listed on NRHP; but identified by cultural group)

Resource Identification No.: _____Resource Name:_____

Describe:

☐ Other

Resource Identification No.: _____Resource Name:_____

Describe:

☐ Feature(s) not present

Other Features (Choose all that apply)

☐ Park entrance [☐ Major ☐ Minor]

Describe:

☐ Day use area (picnic area, visitor center, etc.)

Describe:

☐ Day/night use area (lodge, cabin, campground)

Describe:

☐ Other

Describe:

VIEWED LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION	
Designated Scenic Features (Choose all that apply)	
	Resource Name/Description
☐ National Scenic or Recreation Trail	
☐ National Scenic Byway/Road	
☐ National Park	
☐ Wild & Scenic River	
☐ National Monument	
☐ National Nat. Landmark	
☐ National Rec. Area	
☐ National Seashore	
☐ Wilderness Area	
☐ Other	
☐ Feature(s) not present	

Designated Historic/Cultural Features (Choose all that apply)

☐ National Historic Trail

Resource Identification No.: _____Resource Name:_____

Describe:

☐ National Historic Landmark

Resource Identification No.: _____Resource Name:_____

Describe:

☐ Historic Property (NRHP-listed): ☐ Site ☐ District ☐ Building ☐ Structure ☐ Object ☐ TCP

Resource Identification No.: _____Resource Name:_____

Describe:

☐ Historic Property (NRHP-eligible) ☐ Site ☐ District ☐ Building ☐ Structure ☐ Object ☐ TCP

Resource Identification No.: _____Resource Name:_____

Describe:

☐ Identified Cultural Landscape

Resource Identification No.: _____Resource Name:_____

Describe:

☐ National Heritage Area

Resource Identification No.: _____Resource Name:_____

Describe:

☐ Traditional Cultural Property (not evaluated for, or listed on NRHP; but identified by cultural group)

Resource Identification No.: _____Resource Name:_____

Describe:

☐ Other

Resource Identification No.: _____Resource Name:_____

Describe:

☐ Feature(s) not present

Other Features (Choose One)

☐ Nationally/regionally significant scenic, historic, cultural, or scientific feature or landmark

☐ Feature(s) are not present

Describe:

VIEW IMPORTANCE						
Importance Factors	Rating	Rationale				
Viewpoint Importance						
Viewpoint Publicity						
Viewpoint Management						
Viewpoint Interpretive Services						
Viewpoint Total						
Viewed Landscape Importance						
Viewed Landscape Publicity						
Designated Areas						
Interpretive Themes						
Viewed Landscape Total						
Viewer Concern						
Visitation						
View Duration						
Viewer Activities						
Viewer Concern Total						
VIEW IMPORTANCE TOTAL						
VIEW IMPORTANCE RATING		5 (9-15)	4 (16-23)	3 (24-30)	2 (31-38)	1 (39-45)

SCENIC INVENTORY RATINGS	Scenic Quality	View Importance	SCENIC INVENTORY VALUE (from matrix below)	

Scenic Inventory Value Matrix						
		View Importance Rating				
		1	2	3	4	5
Scenic Quality Rating	A	VH	VH	VH	H	M
	B	VH	VH	H	M	L
	C	H	H	M	L	L
	D	H	M	L	VL	VL
	E	M	L	VL	VL	VL

VIEWPOINT IMPORTANCE			
Viewpoint Publicity	Identify the relative extent to which the viewpoint is promoted as a viewing destination in visitor communications (e.g., brochures, park websites) or receives external recognition in media (e.g., hiking guides, history pubs, websites, videos).		
	Viewpoint receives little or no mention in visitor communications or external media. (1)	Viewpoint is noted but not strongly promoted in visitor communications or external media. (3)	Viewpoint is well publicized in both visitor communications and external media. (5)
Viewpoint Management	For this park, identify the relative extent to which the park has expended time, funds, and effort into planning the viewpoint visitor experience and/or that the viewpoint is managed to enhance or preserve that experience.		
	The visitor experience at the viewpoint is not planned and there is little or no maintenance of grounds or facilities for the viewpoint. (1)	Moderate effort has been undertaken to facilitate visitor experience at the viewpoint. This may include addition of some infrastructure, and/or occasional maintenance. For example, occasional trash removal, adding/maintaining portable toilets, mowing/tree trimming, or erosion repair. (3)	Extensive effort has been undertaken to facilitate visitor experience at the viewpoint. This may include addition of substantial infrastructure, frequent maintenance, removing intrusive features to maintain a natural setting, extensive vegetation/trail management, or operation of a backcountry permit system. (5)
Viewpoint Interpretive Services	For this park, identify the relative level of interpretive services offered at the viewpoint, and the extent to which they contribute to the visitors' enjoyment of scenic, historic, cultural, scientific, or other park values.		
	No interpretive services are offered. (1)	Some interpretive services are offered, such as brochures, park newspapers, interpretive panels, or digital media. (3)	Extensive interpretive services are offered, such as talks, major interpretive panels, or kiosks. (5)

VIEWED LANDSCAPE IMPORTANCE			
Viewed Landscape Publicity	For this park, identify the relative extent to which the viewed landscape is publicized for visual qualities (scenic, historic, cultural) in visitor communications or receives external recognition in media.		
	The viewed landscape receives little or no mention in visitor communications or external media. (1)	The viewed landscape is noted but not highlighted in visitor communications or external media. (3)	The viewed landscape is well publicized in both visitor communications and external media. (5)
Designated Areas	Identify the extent to which the viewed landscape includes all, or parts, of specially designated areas, or nationally/regionally significant scenic, historic, cultural, or scientific features or landmarks.		
	There are no known designated areas, significant features, or landmarks within the viewed landscape. (1)	The viewed landscape has some designated lands, but they do not constitute most of the view and the view is without plainly visible significant features or landmarks. For instance a small portion of the view is comprised of a wilderness area but no significant landscape features are visible. (3)	The viewed landscape consists primarily of designated areas and/or has significant features or landmarks plainly visible. For instance, the view consists largely of a designated wilderness area or cultural landscape. (5)
Interpretive Themes	Identify the degree to which features within the viewed landscape illustrate the unit's purpose or interpretive themes.		
	The viewed landscape is clearly incompatible with the unit's purpose or interpretive themes, such as large industrial or residential developments seen from a unit emphasizing natural processes or cultural landscapes. (1)	The viewed landscape is partly compatible with the unit's purpose and interpretive themes, but may have some incompatible features, such as some modern roadways seen from a unit emphasizing natural processes or historic landscapes. Alternatively, the viewed landscape is not relevant to the unit's interpretive themes, but does not detract from the themes. (3)	The viewed landscape clearly illustrates the unit's purpose and/or interpretive themes, such as a canyon landscape illustrating erosion and geologic processes. (5)

VIEWER CONCERN			
Visitation	For this park, estimate the relative annual visitation for the viewpoint.		
	Viewpoint is in the bottom one third of viewpoints with respect to visitor use, i.e., it is relatively lightly visited. (1)	Viewpoint is in the middle one third of viewpoints within the unit with respect to visitor use. (3)	Viewpoint is in the top one third of viewpoints with respect to visitor use, i.e., it is relatively heavily visited. (5)
View Duration	For this park, estimate the relative view duration for visitors at the viewpoint.		
	Viewpoint is within bottom one third of the park viewpoints for view duration, i.e., on average, views are of relatively brief duration. (1)	Viewpoint is within middle one third of the viewpoints for view duration. (3)	Viewpoint is within top one third of the viewpoints for view duration, i.e., on average, views are of relatively long duration. (5)
Viewer Activities	Identify the relative importance of the visual setting to viewer activities at the viewpoint.		
	The primary activities of viewers are <i>relatively</i> independent of the visual setting, for example, where most viewers are workers or commuters. (1)	While the visual setting is important, it is not the focus of viewer activities, for example fishing, hiking, or wildlife viewing. (3)	The primary activities of viewers at the viewpoint are directly tied to the scenery, such as landscape photography, seeking wilderness experiences, or viewing historic landscapes. (5)