



Quick Assessment Guidance for Evaluating Visual Resources in Natural Resource Condition Assessments

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Including visual resources in Natural Resource Condition Assessments is an important step for advancing the protection of this resource. A quick assessment of visual resources is available for cases where a baseline or representative visual resources inventory cannot be implemented. The condition derived from this assessment has a low level of confidence because it is based entirely on judgment rather than inventory data. Follow steps 1–4 to identify the condition using scenic quality and view importance ratings.

For questions and draft review, please contact at visual_resources@nps.gov or call Ksienya Taylor at (303) 969-2524.

Step 1: Scenic quality and view importance ratings

Read the descriptive statements for the scenic quality and view importance measures in Table 1. Select the rating category that applies to the majority of views throughout the park. Highlight the chosen rating and description.

While assessing the scenic quality and view importance, consider scenic views throughout the park, rather than a specific view or selection of scenic views. In the context of this quick visual resources assessment tool, “scenic views” or “scenery” refer to any view with aesthetic, natural, historic, or cultural values.

Table 1. Rating descriptions for scenic quality and view importance ratings.

Measures	Rating	Description
Scenic Quality	<i>High</i>	Most views include landscapes in good condition with very few, or minor, elements that detract from desirable visual characteristics. The majority of views are also aesthetically pleasing and memorable because of bold forms and colors.
Scenic Quality	<i>Moderate</i>	Most views include landscapes in moderate condition with some elements that detract from desirable visual characteristics. The majority of views are somewhat aesthetically pleasing with forms and colors that add moderate visual interest.
Scenic Quality	<i>Low</i>	Most views include landscapes in poor condition with many, or major, elements that detract from desirable visual characteristics. The majority of views are not aesthetically pleasing with forms and colors that lack visual interest.
View Importance	<i>High</i>	Views are key to the purpose of the park and a primary reason that visitors come to the park. Views are highly publicized and extensive effort goes into facilitating the visitor experience for scenery.
View Importance	<i>Moderate</i>	Views add to the visual experience but are not the primary reason for visitation. Views receive some publicity and moderate effort goes into facilitating the visitor experience for scenery.
View Importance	<i>Low</i>	Views are not integral to the visitor experience. Views receive little or no publicity and minimal effort goes into facilitating the visitor experience for scenery.

Step 2: Resource condition assessment

Use the Table 2 below to combine the scenic quality and view importance ratings from step 1 to determine visual resources condition.

Table 2. Visual resources condition matrix.

Rating	<i>View Importance High</i>	<i>View Importance Moderate</i>	<i>View Importance Low</i>
Scenic Quality High	Very Good	Good	Fair
Scenic Quality Moderate	Good	Fair	Poor
Scenic Quality Low	Fair	Poor	Very Poor

Step 3: Anticipated land management & proposed changes

Identify the implications of existing land management plans, zoning ordinances, or other regulations that would allow land uses that could alter the visual landscape beyond park boundaries. Also, assess the implications of proposed changes from known projects. Consider scale, type of project, and other factors that would result in changes inconsistent with the existing visual landscape beyond park boundaries that is important to the experience of park visitors. The assessment of implications for the visual landscape can be based on available information from public records, park plans, park staff knowledge, and other sources.

Step 4: Discussion

Items to consider in the discussion:

- Discuss the importance of views to the park purpose and visitor experience if information about specific views is known.
- Highlight implications of change to visual landscape to identified in step 3.
- Suggest activities/strategies for protecting desirable visual characteristics of visual landscape.
- Avoid discussing trends. NPS largely lacks data from previous inventories or other documented sources that could be used to reasonably identify trends in landscape changes. Parks may be able to identify trends as they establish baseline inventories and monitor changes over time.
- Assign a low level of confidence for condition assessments determined with the quick assessments methods described above.