CASE STUDIES FOR EVALUATING PHOTOSIMULATIONS FOR VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Principle
Avoid foreground visual obstructions

Statement
The presence of objects in the base-photograph's foreground that effectively screen or distract from the proposed visual change should be avoided if possible, and minimized if not.

Explanation
An important characteristic of a "worst-case" view is that the project extent and exposure are as high as possible for the KOP. One aspect of this is that the photograph should reasonably avoid foreground elements that obstruct or distract from the view of the project. While a photograph is a static record of the view, viewers will move around the KOP to better see and understand a view. For instance, the view of the project from or across a road should not be obstructed by a truck that is passing.

Case Study. Victor Head Trail
The Victor Head Trail in the Nash Stream State Forest is a short spur of the Cohos Trail, just north of Christine Lake in Stark, NH. The Victor Head overlook presents an expansive panoramic view to the south toward the White Mountain National Forest. A 345 kV transmission line is proposed to be collocated with an existing 115 kV line on the far side of Christine Lake, a bit over 4 miles away. The area is forested, but the viewpoint is at the head of a rock ledge that drops away creating the panoramic view.

Discussion
Figure 1 shows a view from Victor Head across Christine Lake. A large tree in the foreground largely obscures the existing transmission line ROW on the far side of the lake. While this photograph captures the character of the view, it does not represent the "worst-case" view toward the project. Figure 2 is approximately 25 ft to the left and shows a much less obstructed view. It is reasonable to expect viewers to walk around and settle where the view is most open. Figure 2 is a better representation of the "worst-case" condition.

FIGURE 1. The base photograph used for the developer's photosimulation from the Victor Head Trail.



FIGURE 2. The base photograph used for the agency's photosimulation from the Victor Head Trail



Statement of Limitations: The simulations presented here were entered into the public record as part of a permitting process. They were prepared to be printed on 11-by-17-inch paper. However, in the process of distribution as PDFs they may have been substantially compressed. The figures presented here were clipped from these PDFs, converted to high quality JPGs and their resolution reduced. The original photosimulation has been substantially changed and as presented here should be used only as learning material.

Source: The figures used in this case study are taken from materials submitted to the U. S. Department of Energy and the New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee.