



**COVERSHEET  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

Operation Title: **Guidance for Assessing Impacts to Existing Scenic and Aesthetic Uses under the Natural Resources Protection Act**  
Identification No.: **DEPLW0541-A2003**  
Revision No.: **00**  
Originator Name: **Judy Gates**  
Reviser: **N/A**  
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**APPROVALS:**

Bureau of Land and Water Quality Director:

Brooke Barnes \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name Signature

QMSC Chair:

Malcolm C. Burson \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name Signature

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- ( ) Bureau of Air Quality ..... By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- ( ) Bureau of Land and Water Quality ..... By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- ( ) Bureau of Remediation and Waste Management ..... By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- ( ) Office of the Commissioner ..... By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- ( ) Quality Management Steering Committee ..... By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- ( ) Bureau QACs and Lead auditors..... By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Bureau of Land and Water Quality  
Division of Land Resource Regulation  
Licensing Unit**

Standard Operating Procedure

Guidelines for Assessing Impacts to Existing Scenic and Aesthetic Uses  
under the Natural Resources Protection Act

**1. APPLICABILITY.** This standard operating procedure (SOP) applies to all licensing staff in the Bureau of Land and Water Quality's Division of Land Resource Regulation (Division) after December 1, 2002. It applies to the processing of applications filed with the Department under the Natural Resources Protection Act (NRPA).

**2. PURPOSE.** This SOP is intended to establish consistent procedures for staff assessments of potential impacts to existing scenic and aesthetic uses during the processing of NRPA applications by the Division of Land Resource Regulation.

**3. RESPONSIBILITIES.**

3.1 **COMPLIANCE.** All licensing staff in the Division of Land Resource Regulation are responsible for becoming familiar, and complying with, the contents of this procedure prior to processing an application. The attached appendices are to serve as reference materials throughout the processing of applications. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that licensing staff is familiar with and adhere to the procedures outlined in this SOP. Enforcement & Field Services staff Drafting Department Orders will also adhere to these procedures.

3.2 **OTHER.** The Licensing Coordinator is responsible for initial development, approval, distribution, and maintenance of the proposed SOP. Policy and Procedures staff in the Bureau of Land & Water Quality will track this SOP. The name of responsible individuals, document title, dates of last revision, and document numbers will be recorded.

**4. GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES.**

4.1 **ORIGINATION AND CONTENTS.** Division Licensing staff will be trained in the use of the Basic Visual Assessment (VIA) form (Appendix A) and Visual Impact Assessment Matrix (Matrix) (Appendix B) associated with this SOP. The appendices will be used by Division Licensing staff when potential impacts on existing scenic and aesthetic uses are identified during the processing of an NRPA application. The VIA and matrix will be used as guidance for determining whether a proposed activity will have an unreasonable adverse impact on an aesthetically significant place, as defined in Chapter 315, Section 9. The completed VIA and matrix will be included in the project file. Associated definitions included in this SOP apply to the VIA and matrix.



- 4.2 SOP DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL PROCESS. Approval of this SOP follows the preliminary draft cycle and final approval cycle for Bureau-specific SOPs described in SOP No. OC-PE-0001, Standard Operating Procedure Development, Format, Approval, and Distribution, dated June 15, 2001. The Director of the Bureau of Land and Water Quality and the Maine DEP's QAM approve the final SOP.

## 5. REFERENCES.

- 5.1 MAINE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLAN (JUNE 2001).
- 5.2 MAINE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE ON STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (OC-PE-0001).
- 5.3 MAINE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, BUREAU OF LAND AND WATER QUALITY, STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE SUPPLEMENT TO OC-PE-0001 (DEPLW2001-22).
- 5.4 LANDSCAPE AESTHETICS: A HANDBOOK FOR SCENERY MANAGEMENT. REVISED OCTOBER 2000. U.S. FOREST SERVICE.
- 5.5 SMARDON, R.C. AND HUNTER, M. 1983. THE FUTURE OF WETLANDS: ASSESSING VISUAL – CULTURAL VALUES. TOTOWA, NJ.



**APPENDIX A: Basic Visual Impact Assessment Form**

VISUAL ELEMENTS	VISUAL SUB ELEMENTS	INDICATORS/CLUES	ELEMENT RATINGS	ELEMENT SCORES	
LANDSCAPE COMPATIBILITY ↓	COLOR	Significantly different color, hue, value chroma	Severe	3	
			Moderate	2	
			Minimal	1	
			None	0	
	FORM	Incompatible 2/3 dimensional shape with landscape surroundings	Severe	3	
			Moderate	2	
			Minimal	1	
			None	0	
	LINE	Incompatible edges, bands, or silhouette lines introduced	Severe	3	
			Moderate	2	
			Minimal	1	
			None	0	
	TEXTURE	Incompatible textural grain, density, regularity or pattern	Severe	3	
			Moderate	2	
			Minimal	1	
			None	0	
SUBTOTAL →					

SCALE CONTRAST



Major scale introduction/intrusion	Severe	12
One of several major scales or major objects in confined setting	Moderate	8
Significant object or scale	Minimal	4
Small object or scale	None	0



SCORE

SPATIAL DOMINANCE

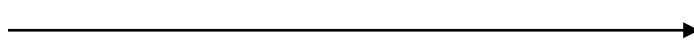


LANDSCAPE SITUATION BACKDROP	Object/activity dominates or is prominent in whole landscape composition; or is prominently situated within the landscape; or dominates landform, water, or sky backdrop	Dominate	12
		Co-Dominate	8
		Sub-ordinate	4
		Insignificant	0



SCORE

TOTAL VISUAL IMPACT SEVERITY



Severe	27-36	
Strong	26-18	
Moderate	17-9	
Weak or Negligible	8-0	



**Definitions associated with Appendix A.**

- A. Backdrop.** The distant part of a landscape located from 4 miles to infinity from the viewer.
- B. Color.** The property of reflecting light of a particular wavelength that enables the eye to differentiate otherwise indistinguishable objects. A hue (red, green, blue, yellow, etc.) as contrasted with a value (black, white, or gray).
- C. Contrast.** Diversity or distinction of adjacent parts. Effect of striking differences in color, form, line, or texture of a landscape.
- D. Dominance.** The extent to which an object is noticeable when compared to the surrounding context.
- E. Form.** The structure, mass or shape of a landscape or an object. Landscape form is often defined by the edges or outlines of landforms, rockforms, vegetation patterns, or waterforms, or the enclosed spaces created by these attributes.
- F. Landform.** One of the attributes or features that make up the Earth's surface, such as a plain, mountain, or valley.
- G. Landscape.** An area composed of interacting ecosystems that are repeated because of geology, landform, soils, climate, biota, and human influences throughout that area.
- H. Landscape Character or Landscape Composition.** Particular attributes, qualities, and traits of a landscape that give it an image and make it identifiable or unique.
- I. Landscape Compatibility.** The elements of color, form, line, and texture that typically determine landscape character.
- J. Line.** Anything that is arranged in a row or sequence. In landscapes – ridges, skylines, structures, changes in vegetation, or individual trees and branches – may be perceived as line.
- K. Scale Contrast.** The degree to which an activity or object dominates or intrudes into a landscape or confined setting.
- L. Situation.** The position of the activity or object within the landscape.
- M. Spatial Dominance.** The degree to which an activity or object dominates the landscape; is prominently situated within the landscape; or dominates landform, waterform, or sky backdrop.
- N. Texture.** The grain of a landscape or repetitive pattern of tiny forms. Visual texture can range from smooth to coarse.
- O. Visual Elements.** The landscape's components that make up the overall visual character of a landscape.
- P. Waterform.** One of the attributes or features that make up the Earth's surface, such as a pond, lake, stream, river, waterfall, estuary, or ocean.



**APPENDIX B: Visual Impact Assessment Matrix**

SCENIC SIGNIFICANCE OF VIEW	Impact severity Rating	Severe	Strong	Moderate	Weak/None
	Scenic significance	36-27	26-18	17-9	8-0
High					
Medium					
Low					
Unrated					

**LEGEND**


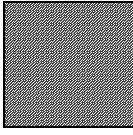
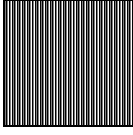


-  **UNACCEPTABLE.** High level of visual contrast in line, form, color, or texture between existing high quality landscape and development proposal; view of water or other significant visual resource obstructed. May be grounds for project denial.
-  **ACCEPTABLE WITH MAJOR MITIGATION.** High degree of contrast on landscape of medium significance; moderate degree of contrast on highly significant landscape. Project re-design necessary.
-  **ACCEPTABLE WITH MITIGATION.** Some modification to project siting or design necessary to achieve better landscape 'fit.'
-  **ACCEPTABLE WITH MINOR MITIGATION.** Relatively minor adjustments to plan or siting necessary to achieve a higher level of project compatibility.
-  **LOW/NO IMPACT.** No perceptible change to the visual landscape. No mitigation required.

Chart is recommended method for reviewing visual impacts and determining level of effort required for mitigation and/or reconsideration of project siting and design. Application of the recommended actions should consider length of view and viewer expectation.

Appendix B  
 Basic Visual Assessment Form  
 DEPLW0451-A2002  
 (Used with permission of Terrence DeWan & Associates)



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Bureau of Land and Water Quality  
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