

Visual Resources Management (VRM)

What Is It?

“A System for minimizing the visual impacts of surface-disturbing activities and maintaining scenic values for the future.”

Why Is It Important?

85% of Americans consider Scenery the most important value of public lands.

- After walking, the most popular ‘Recreational or Leisure Activity’ is ‘Driving For Pleasure’ (NSRE). Related to BLM’s Benefits Model (Settings/Experiences/Benefits).

It’s Required By Law!

- Federal Land Policy & Management Act (FLPMA) - BLM’s Organic Act.
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- BLM’s Mission – “...sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the Nation’s public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.”

What Is It Not? (It’s Counter-Intuitive)

- It is not a way to Stop projects! In actuality, it is a way for projects to occur!
- “Management Classes” don’t dictate where a project can and can’t occur.
- It’s even more important to do a good job with VRM in the more degraded or impacted areas (VRM Class 3 & 4 – they’re not sacrifice areas!).

VRI vs. VRM

- The San Luis Valley Field Office has a brand new Visual Resources INVENTORY (VRI) – ‘the way the landscape “actually is.’
- The next step is to amend the RMP (based *mostly* on the VRI) and decide what the Visual Resources MANAGEMENT Classes are – ‘the way we want to manage the landscape.’

VRM Classes

Areas are assigned to one of four classes based on the scenic quality, visual sensitivity, and distance zones. Each class has an objective that determines the management objectives for that area:

- Class I Objective: Preserve the existing character of the landscape. The level of change should be very low and must not attract attention.
- Class II Objective: Retain the existing character of the landscape. Allow a low level of change that should not attract the attention of a casual observer.
- Class III Objective: Partially retain the existing character of the landscape. Allow a moderate level of change that may attract attention but should not dominate the view of a casual observer.
- Class IV Objective: Provide for management activities that require major modifications of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change may be high and may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention.
- And the SLVFO even has “Class V” – the Blanca Mountain chaining area....

Best Management Practices (BMP’s)

- Form, Line, Color, Texture and Contrast Rating Analysis for new projects.