Visual Management

Cancels: PR 14-004-080 VISUAL MANAGEMENT, August 2006

Date: April, 2008

Application: All Forested State Trust Lands.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this procedure is to establish a process that integrates visual with financial and other important policy objectives in managing forested state trust lands. An important social concern is aesthetics. This concern creates a need for outcome-based landscape perspectives supported by silvicultural prescriptions that together balance management of aesthetics and other imperatives (such as certain wildlife habitats and forest health). Thus, when aesthetic concerns exist, the following process shall be put into action.

Action

BNR policy requires the department to first consider whether visual impacts of management activities are of local significance or have wider public impacts, such as melding with other already established visually sensitive areas (e.g., on nearby federal lands or along major travel routes). For local impacts, mitigation would generally be through FMU design alterations. For wider impacts, the department will use the Forest Land Planning Process. This process will assess visual impacts, appropriate mitigation measures (in light of known public concerns), and the resulting cost-benefit.

The resulting visual management process shall incorporate the following major steps. Regions may perform this process incrementally or as a part of the Forest Land Planning Process, as warranted by emerging visual issues.

- Step 1 – Recognize Potential Viewshed: Delineate a potential viewshed, generally through public input. A viewshed should have a size and shape that includes the viewable area (i.e., reverse slopes of hills that are not seen from vantage points or trails should be excluded), and should distinguish local from wider implications. Viewsheds, particularly those with wider implications, should be recorded in GIS.

- Step 2 – Determine Objectives for the Viewshed: Develop visual FMU objectives per PR 14-005-010 that are based on viewshed-landscape considerations. As Forest Land Planning is implemented, landscape-level objectives will be refined to include how large a portion of a viewshed must meet a specified visual stand condition at any point in time.

- Step 3 – Consider Altering the Silvicultural Prescription: Meeting viewshed objectives should first be attempted through manipulation of FMU shape and size as well as placement and number of required leave trees. Target the leave tree arrangements to detract no more than approximately 25 percent from first decade uninhibited growth potential for species prescribed for reforestation (equivalent to a Curtis' RD for leave tree legacies of less than 7.5 if the reforested cohort is Douglas-fir) and to ensure negligible impact on

survival. However, leave tree arrangements should otherwise be responsive to visual issues such as nearness to viewpoints (roads, trails, vistas, etc.). The Forest Land Planning process is anticipated to account for cost/benefits to the trusts of landscape level mitigation strategies.

- Step 4 – Validate: Once potential viewsheds and objectives are developed, they shall be recorded in a department-approved database.

In summary, local visual impacts are addressed through FMU configurations and/or scheduling, while visual issues with wider implications are dealt with through the Forest Land Planning process. Resulting FMU objectives and viewsheds shall be recorded in a department-approved database. In devising silvicultural prescriptions for viewshed FMUs, understory species shall be selected for potential future value and their ability to grow under the circumstances created, which must provide for generally unimpeded and sustained vigor.

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