Visual Resource Management

Bureau of Land Management

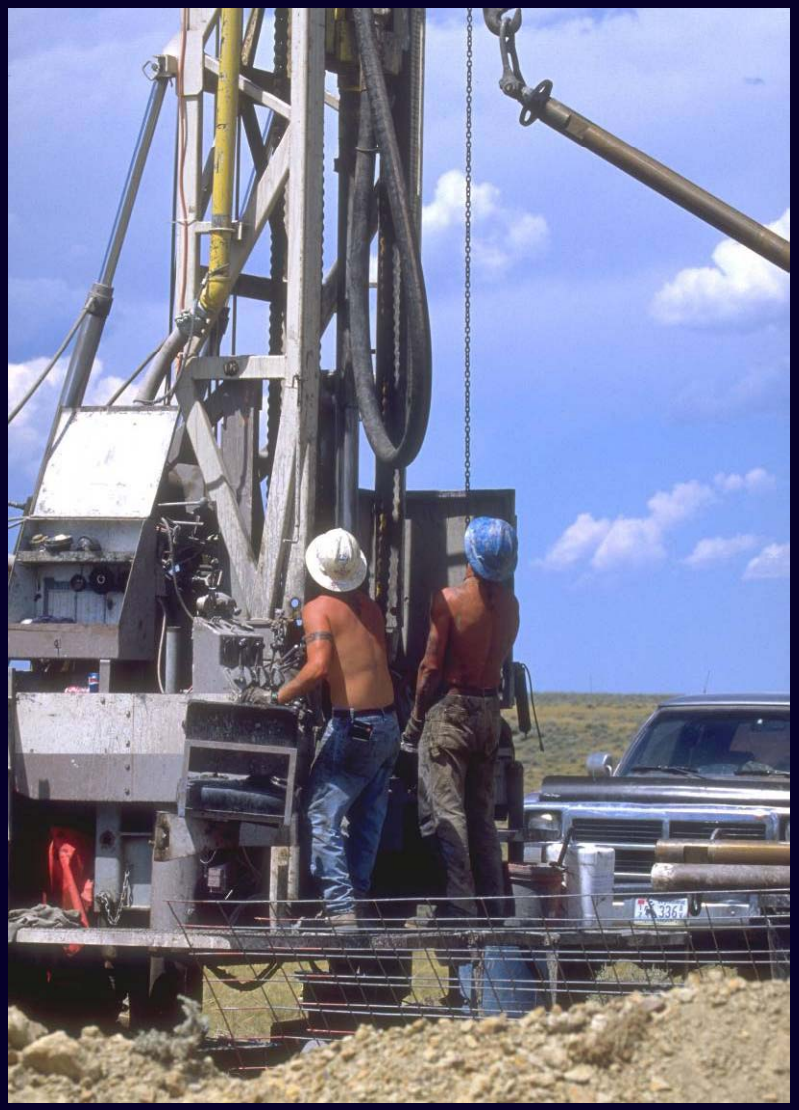
9/26/07

UNIT 12 Writing a Good EA

Writing a Good VRM Section for an EA

Objective

The class will be able to write a very good VRM section for a typical EA after completion of this session



Remember This Analytical Format?

From Previous Sessions

		Major Features		
Landscape Character Elements		Land/Water	Vegetation	Structures
	Form			
	Line			
	Color			
	Texture			

Major Parts of an EA

* Alternatives including the PA
* Affected Environment
* Environmental Consequences
* Mitigation Measures

Data Sources for VRM

- The RMP
- The VRM Inventory
- The Project Proponent
- Associated Consulting Firms
- The Contrast Rating
- Knowledge from Resource Specialists
- Input from Affected Landowners
- Field Review of Project Proposal
- Input From the General Public
- Similar Projects

Affected Environment Section

<u>Describe Landscape Character</u>

A convenient source of information is the Scenic Quality Field Inventory form (Form 8400-1)

Scenic Quality

Sensitivity Level

Distance Zones

VRM Objective

Also Contrast Rating Form

Example of Scenic Quality Field Inventory

Form 8400-1
(September 1985)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

SCENIC QUALITY FIELD INVENTORY

Date: Feb 15, 2003

District: Rawlins

Resource Area: Lander

Scenic Quality Rating Unit: 024

1. Evaluators *(names)*
Gary Long, Cimarron Chacon, Steve Knox

2. Landscape Character *(Feature)*

	a. LANDFORM/WATER	b. VEGETATION	c. STRUCTURE
Form	Gently rolling hills with stabilized	Low, somewhat clumpy in foreground	None visible
	Sand dunes		
Line	Predominately horizontal lines	Horizontal, Lines created by subtle	None Visible
	Formed by hills and low sand dunes	Changes and variation in vegetative	
		Cover which is predominately sage brush	
Color	Tan to buff colored soils where	Gray-green, with emphasis on the gray	None Visible
	Visible. Rock outcrops are gray to	The best color from the BLM color chart	
	Gray-green & brown	Is shale green	
Texture	Smooth texture with a few	Somewhat coarse in immediate fore	None visible
	Moderately coarse areas due to	Ground. Texture changes to medium &	
	Rock outcrops	smooth as we move away from KOP	

3. Narrative
This SQRU is made up of gently rolling sagebrush covered hills interspersed with stabilized sand dunes. Vertical relief is limited. It is an open, panoramic landscape, mostly devoid of human impacts. It is very representative of typical landscapes found in the Wyoming Basin. No unusual characteristics. Vegetative cover is dominated by Wyoming sage. Grass is present but not visible. The visible color is a function of the vegetation. Very little soil or rock outcrops are visible. The most outstanding feature is the feeling of vastness and naturalness you get due to the size of the unit and the relative lack of human intrusions which are limited to roads and trails, most of which are not visible from the KOP.

Proposed Action

- Section C of the Contrast Rating Form
- Project Description from Proponent
- Notes and Photos taken during field trip
- Describe in terms that relate to Landscape Character Elements for landscape features
- A High-level EA requires more detail
- Data Sources Listed Above

Environmental Consequences

- From Section D of Contrast Rating Form
- Includes narrative from back of Form

SECTION D. CONTRAST RATING SHORT TERM X LONG TERM														
ELEMENTS	1.Degree of Contrast	FEATURES												
		Land/Water Body				Vegetation				Structures				2. Does Project Design meet visual resource management objectives? Yes __X_ No ____ (explain on reverse)
		Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	3. Additional mitigating measures recommended. Yes __X_ No ____ (explain on reverse)
	Form			X				X			X			Evaluator's Names Date:
	Line		X				X			X				
	Color			X				X		X				Cimarron Chacon 7/16/04
	Texture			X				X		X				Allysia Angus

Environmental Impact

- The Environmental Impact

  is the Amount of Contrast the Project Causes

  to the Existing Landscape.

  Use Those Terms (weak, moderate, strong) Plus – Describe the Nature of the Impact.

Environmental Impact

From Section D of the Contrast Rating Form:

None = Class I

Weak = Class II

Moderate = Class III

Strong = Class IV

Environmental Impacts

- Impacts to Land/Water Body
- Building a level drilling location and access

road would cause a weak (minimal) amount of contrast to the form of the land through leveling and flattening the location site and access road. It would moderately impact line through introduction of the location and road, both of which would be visible linear features. Exposing the soil would cause a weak impact to the color in the landscape. The texture of the exposed soil would be smoother than the existing landscape, thus creating a weak contrast.

Environmental Impacts

- **Impacts to Vegetation**

- Construction of the level drilling location and access road would cause weak contrast to the form of the vegetation. Removal of vegetation would cause a moderate amount of contrast due to introduction of distinct lines in the landscape. The lighter color of new vegetation that followed completion of the project would weakly contrast with existing vegetation. The smoother texture of re-established vegetation would weakly contrast with the surrounding existing vegetation.

Environmental Impacts

- **Impacts from Structures**

- The cylindrical and rectangular form of the structures would contrast moderately with the existing landscape. They would introduce distinct vertical lines which would strongly contrast with the existing horizontal landscape. The light color of the structures as proposed would strongly contrast with the darker color of sagebrush which is the dominant color in the natural landscape. Finally, the smooth texture of the structures would strongly contrast with the coarser texture of the surrounding sagebrush

Environmental Impacts

- A statement like: “The project will affect Visual Resources.” is not sufficient

Mitigating Measures

- **Taken directly from the back of the Contrast Rating Form**

Additional Mitigating Measures (See item 3)

1. As per agreement with company representatives, relocate drill pad 250 feet northwest behind/between low stabilized sand dunes.
2. Relocate access road behind/between stabilized dunes
3. Use low profile tanks a maximum of 12 feet high rather than the standard 18 foot tanks
4. Paint facilities a color compatible with sagebrush, the dominant veg species in the area