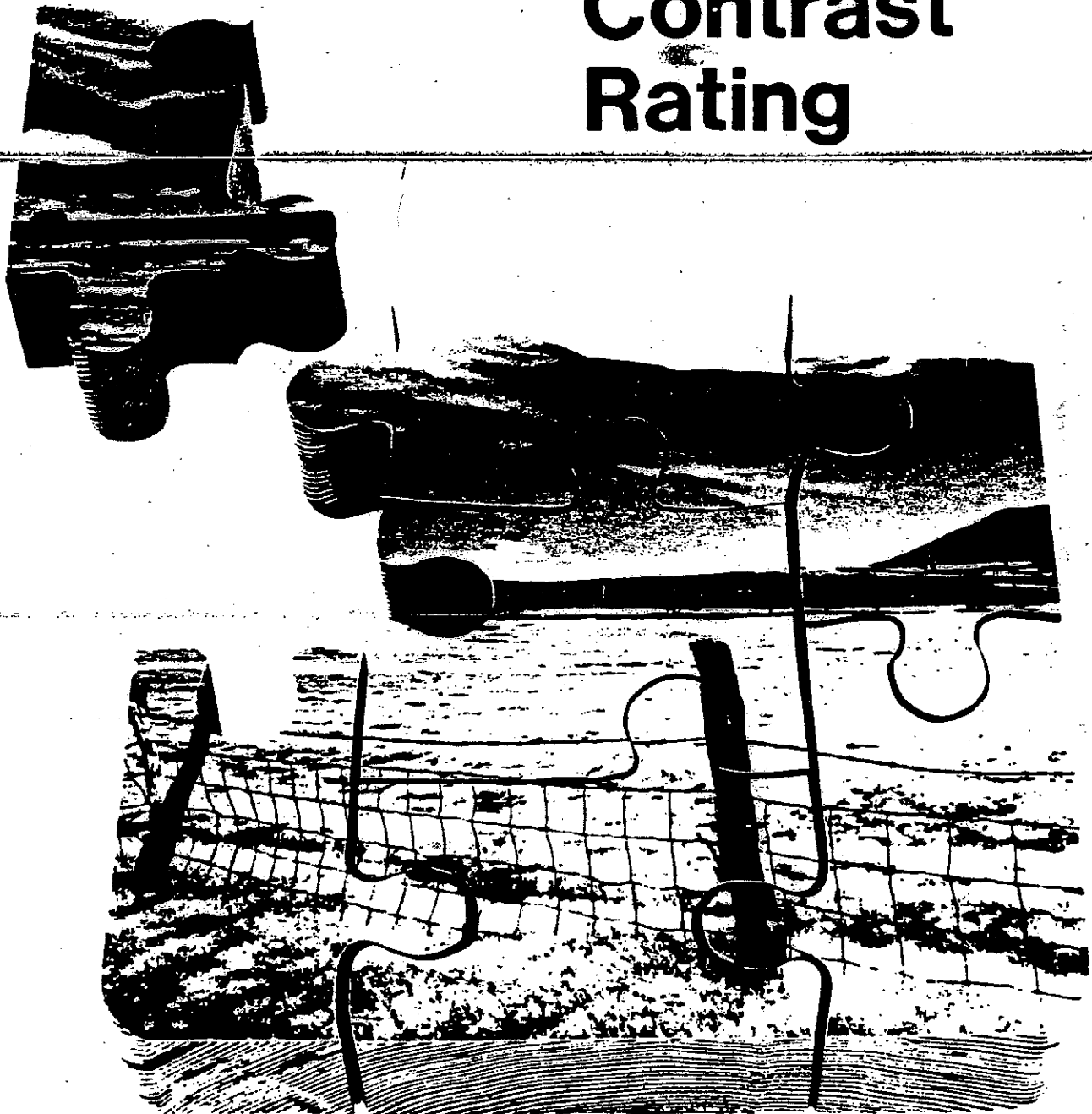


# Visual Resource Contrast Rating



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## 8400 - VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

.01 Purpose. This section describes the overall policy direction for Visual Resource Management (VRM) in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

.02 Objectives. The objective of Visual Resource Management is to manage public lands in a manner which will protect the quality of the scenic (visual) values of these lands.

.03 Authority.

A. Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, 43 U.S.C. 1701 et. seq.;

1. Section 102(a)(8). States that ". . . the public lands be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of the . . . scenic . . . values . . . ."

2. Section 103 (c). Identifies "scenic values" as one of the resources for which public land should be managed.

3. Section 201(a). States that "The Secretary shall prepare and maintain on a continuing basis an inventory of all public lands and their resources and other values (including . . . scenic values) . . . ."

4. Section 505(a). Requires that "Each right-of-way shall contain terms and conditions which will . . . minimize damage to the scenic and esthetic values . . . ."

B. National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, 43 U.S.C. 4321 et. seq.;

1. Section 101(b). Requires measures be taken to ". . . assure for all Americans . . . esthetically pleasing surroundings . . . ."

2. Section 102. Requires agencies to "Utilize a systematic, interdisciplinary approach which will ensure the integrated use of . . . Environmental Design Arts in the planning and decisionmaking . . . ."

C. Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, 30 U.S.C. 1201 et. seq.;

1. Section 102(d). Requires that measures be taken to ". . . assure that surface coal mining operations are so conducted as to protect the environment."

.04 Responsibility.

A. Director:

1. Lead responsibility for VRM functions in the Bureau is assigned to the Recreation program. This includes the development of policy, guidelines, training, and overall coordination.

## H-8431-1 - VISUAL RESOURCE CONTRAST RATING

I. Introduction.

A. Overview. The contrast rating system is a systematic process used by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to analyze potential visual impacts of proposed projects and activities. It is primarily intended to assist Bureau personnel who are not formally trained in the design arts to apply the basic principles of design in the resolution of visual impacts. It is not intended to be the only means of resolving these impacts. It should be used as a guide, tempered by common sense, to ensure that every attempt is made to minimize potential visual impacts. The basic philosophy underlying the system is: The degree to which a management activity affects the visual quality of a landscape depends on the visual contrast created between a project and the existing landscape. The contrast can be measured by comparing the project features with the major features in the existing landscape. The basic design elements of form, line, color, and texture are used to make this comparison and to describe the visual contrast created by the project. This assessment process provides a means for determining visual impacts and for identifying measures to mitigate these impacts.

II. Steps in the Contrast Rating Process.

A. Obtain Project Description. To effectively evaluate the visual impacts of a proposed project, a detailed project description is needed. Appendix 1 provides guidance on the type of information needed. The level of detail required in the description should be commensurate with the type of project proposed. This information is usually supplied by the project sponsor for BLM-initiated projects or by the applicant for non-Bureau of Land Management initiated projects.

B. Identify VRM Objectives. Use the RMP generated objectives when available. Where there are no RMP approved objectives, interim Visual Resource Management (VRM) classes will be developed using the guidelines in Handbook H-8410-1 except: (1) The inventory will be limited to the area affected by the project; and (2) the VRM classes will reflect the management decision made in existing RMP's. An RMP amendment is not required unless the project that is driving the evaluation requires an amendment.