

Note: This Visual Quality Assessment Technical Study Plan is based on the Visual Management System (VMS), which is the system currently used by the Forest Service to address aesthetic resources. However, the Forest Service is moving towards a new system, the Scenery Management System (SMS). The SMS will be incorporated into the Tahoe National Forest (TNF) Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), which is scheduled to be updated in 2008 or 2009.

As agreed to during the November 3, 2006 Recreation Technical Working Group meeting, the Forest Service will meet internally to discuss whether PCWA should utilize the VMS or the SMS. This study plan will be revised pending direction from the Forest Service.

POTENTIAL RESOURCE ISSUE:

Visual quality.

PROJECT NEXUS:

Project facilities and Project reservoirs could affect visual quality.

POTENTIAL LICENSE CONDITION:

- Visual Resources Plan

STUDY OBJECTIVES:

Identify all sensitivity level 1, 2, and 3 viewsheds in the study area.

Document the existing visual condition (EVC) of all Project facilities from associated viewsheds.

Identify locations of potential Project betterments with respect to identified viewsheds.

Document Eldorado National Forest (ENF) Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) and Tahoe National Forest (TNF) LRMP Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) in the study area.

EXTENT OF STUDY AREA:

The study area will include Project facilities, Project reservoirs, potential Project betterments (based on conceptual designs), and their affected viewsheds. The viewsheds include travel routes, recreation areas, and water bodies from which the existing Project facilities or potential Project betterments are visible to the public.

STUDY APPROACH:

Project Facility Assessment

- Identify the EVC of all Project facilities.
- In consultation with the USDA-FS, photograph the Project facilities and identify key observation points (KOPs). Map and describe the locations of the KOPs.

- Map Project facilities and potential Project betterments, their associated viewsheds and documented VQOs.
- Identify the land management direction associated with the VQOs relative to existing Project facilities and potential Project betterments. The VQOs associated with the existing Project facilities and reservoirs, which –are currently described and mapped in the Middle Fork American River Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2079) Draft Existing Resource Information Reports, Second Series (PCWA 2006), will be updated to reflect the most current information available from the Forest Service.
- In consultation with the USDA-FS, evaluate whether the EVC of Project facilities and potential Project betterments meet the desired VQOs of the ENF-LRMP and TNF-LRMP.
- At Project reservoirs that undergo water level fluctuations (i.e., French Meadows and Hell Hole Reservoirs), photograph the reservoirs from KOPs at full pool, lowest expected pool and near the first of each month during the peak recreation season (Memorial Day through Labor Day).
- Narratively describe water level fluctuations at Ralston Reservoir, including both daily and annual changes. In consultation with the stakeholders, determine whether it is necessary to photo-document water level changes from specific KOPs.
- In consultation with the USDA-FS, evaluate whether the Project reservoirs meet the desired VQOs of the ENF-LRMP and the TNF-LRMP.
- All evaluations would be performed in accordance with the guidance contained in the USDA-FS National Forest Landscape Management, Visual Management System (Volume 2, Chapter 1, Agricultural Handbook 462, 1974), pending direction from the Forest Service.

SCHEDULE:

To be developed in early 2007.

REFERENCES:

Placer County Water Agency (PCWA). 2006. Middle Fork American River Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2079) Draft Existing Resource Information Reports, Second Series.

United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USDA-FS). 1974. National Forest Landscape Management (Volume 2, Chapter 1): The Visual Management System (Agricultural Handbook 462).

USDA-FS. 1995. Landscape Aesthetics. A Handbook for Scenery Management. (Agricultural Handbook 701).