

Scenic beauty: Section II – Special Environmental Concerns, FOTG-Texas

Authority – 190-GM, Part 410, Subpart B, Section 410.24.

NRCS will provide technical assistance with full consideration of alternative management and development systems preserving scenic beauty or improving the landscape.

- Positive perceived value of special, unique, and memorable landscape physical elements.

Landscape – consistently definable appearance described by measurable visual elements, i.e., landform, water, vegetation, structures, and sky. Visual elements provide basis for describing changing landscape. Visual landscape management – manipulating landscape physical elements and functions to achieve specific resource objectives. When elements combine, patterns or images form that uniquely identify a landscape. Each landscape portrays a unique sense of place.

Landscape scene has definable visual elements combining to provide a visual resource. Landscape with high visual quality generates emotional impacts and links to sense of place and quality of life. Retaining a connection to a natural environment affects well-being.

Analysis, conservation and enhancement of scenic beauty. Emphasize conservation practices protecting and enhancing landscape attractiveness while increasing efficiency and productivity. Through planning, the visual characteristics of a scenic landscape can be protected, maintained, and improved.

Describe visual resources using four elements: landform, water, vegetation, and structures. Everything seen in any landscape is composed of a combination of these four elements. Each can be described and measured objectively, and evaluated in terms quality, landscape use, and visibility.

- Landform – shape of the land (topography, slope, and aspect). Most noticeable element, particularly as relates to horizon. For example, horizontal nature of crop landscapes makes them especially sensitive to presence of vertical elements, e.g., stream-side vegetation, shelterbelt trees, farmstead structures and utility poles. When tree rows and fences align with topography, they emphasize and enhance landform. In flat or rolling areas, horizon line is most conspicuous landscape element.
- Water – adds to aesthetic quality, modifies temperatures, serve as buffer between use areas, and directs attention from undesirable views. Shape adds value to landscape.
 - Characteristics – gurgling, rushing, spurting, falling, calm, or placid.
- Vegetation – includes agricultural crops. Varies widely in size, form, color, texture, and pattern. Shelter-belt and riparian trees are visually significant in landscapes with low crops or pastures. Row crops create visually strong lines to the viewer on the ground or from the air, so curved patterns located among straight lines will be prominent.

- Structures – evoke most obvious and descriptive mental images of *countryside*.
Farmhouses, barns, silos, wooden fences, stone walls, windmills and two-lane roads fulfill romantic notion of countryside.

Additional guidance for identifying, rating, and mapping visual resources is provided in *Procedure to Establish Priorities in Landscape Architecture* (Technical Release 65).