

**BACKGROUND REPORT  
VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT  
IN SUPPORT OF THE  
FLOUNCE AROUND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**



Prepared for:

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Medford District  
Butte Falls Resource Area  
3040 Biddle Road  
Medford, OR 97501

Prepared by:

Lee Anderson  
VRM Specialist  
1508 Angelcrest Drive  
Medford, OR 97504

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## **VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT BACKGROUND REPORT FLOUNCE AROUND PROJECT**

The Flounce Around Project is situated on the south, west and north shores of Lost Creek Reservoir on lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, Butte Falls Resource Area, Medford District.



### **VRM CLASSES**

The Flounce Around project area has been identified in the BLM Resource Management Plan (RMP) as visual resource management (VRM) Classes II and III. Please refer to the RMP for the Visual Resource Management Classes map.

### **VRM CLASS OBJECTIVES**

The objective of VRM Class II is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

The objective of VRM Class III is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

### **SCENIC QUALITY**

Scenic quality of the study area is classified as Class A, high quality natural scenery at Lost Creek Reservoir and scattered rock bluffs along the north shore, plus Class B, natural scenery that is common to the Oregon Cascade Mountain Character Type.

### **SENSITIVITY LEVELS**

Sensitivity levels of concern for scenery are high, with many recreationists using the lake for boating, fishing, swimming, camping, hiking, bicycling and enjoying the outdoor environment. Additionally, State Highway 62 traverses the project area in an east-west orientation, affording views to the lake and its scenic backdrop. Highway 62 connects the Rogue Valley to Crater Lake National Park, so it is an important travel route for viewing landscape scenery.

**DISTANCE ZONES**

Distance zones of visibility for the Flounce Around project area are foreground/ middleground, plus some areas that are seldom seen. BLM Handbooks and Manuals describe foreground/ middleground as the area that can be seen from each travel route or recreation area for a distance of 3- to 5-miles, based on topographic screening.



Because Highway 62 and Lost Creek Reservoir are situated in the Rogue River viewshed, surrounded by steep mountainous terrain, most of the project area is located within the foreground/middleground distance zone.

**SEEN AREAS & SELDOM SEEN AREAS**

Seen areas and seldom seen areas were mapped on USGS topographic maps, based on field analysis and analysis of the topographic model (DEM) utilizing MICRODEM software. Because the mountainous terrain includes numerous streams, canyons, benches and minor draws, there are many occurrences of seldom seen areas. Please refer to the attached

MICRODEM plot of seen areas and seldom seen areas. The green areas are visible from sensitivity level one areas; brown areas are not.

**LANDFORM/WATERFORM**

The serpentine Rogue River has carved a circuitous, twisting route through the steep mountainous terrain enclosing the Flounce Around project area. Construction of Lost Creek Reservoir by the US Army Corps of Engineers has created a large water body with horizontal line contrasting with the steep mountains. Landform slopes range from <5% on the south shore to bluffs with slopes >150% at Flounce Rock.



## VEGETATION

Vegetation around Lost Creek Reservoir has a great deal of visual variety, with thick stands of dark green mixed conifer trees (Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, sugar pine, incense cedar), medium green hardwood trees (black and white oak, madrone, ash) and numerous brushfields of poison oak and gray-green wedge leaf Ceanothus. Large grassy flats occur on the south shore near the marina and campground, plus on the north shore on Corps administered lands. Woody vegetation has a wide variety of ages and sizes, creating a mosaic of patterns and textures that drape over the steep mountains.



On private lands within the viewshed, logging has created new openings in the forest canopy with unnatural skyline edges that need visual rehabilitation. Most of the BLM-administered lands are covered by dense vegetation, trees and shrubs, and forest fuels that have built up to unnatural levels. Fire has been excluded from project lands for several decades, which has changed the visual resources of the vegetation within the project area. Historic photos show that vegetation was more widely scattered, giving an open feeling to the forest. The growth of trees and shrubs has limited visibility through the forest, creating a jungle-like appearance of brush, tree trunks, branches and forest litter on the ground.



## **ROCKFORM**

Rocks in the project area are dramatic, with dark gray vertical bluffs in scattered locations along the north shore, plus the large expanse of dark gray bluffs on the west side of Flounce Rock.



## **SUMMARY OF SCENIC EFFECTS OF ACTION ALTERNATIVES**

**Rockform** – No change would occur.

**Waterform** – No change would occur.

**Landform** – In general, no change would occur. One landform change would occur at a proposed helicopter landing adjacent to Highway 62 northeast of IO-160841. Westbound traffic would have a long duration view into this proposed landing, and there is little- to no-vegetative screening. Construction of this landing would not meet VRM Class II, as removal of existing pine and Douglas fir trees and landform grading would be evident to the casual observer. These visual contrasts could be mitigated, as described in the table and comments below.

**Vegetation** – Under any action alternative, vegetation would be modified and/or removed, but in general the modification of trees, shrubs and other woody debris would not be evident to the casual observer in the long-term. Short-term visual contrasts would occur, with color and texture changes that would remain for one- to three-years. In most cases, within one-year there would be sufficient green-up of remaining vegetation so that no visual contrast would remain. Only in rare occurrences would color or texture contrasts remain for two- or three-years. Increased amounts of wildflowers and grasses add seasonal color in spring and summer.

Two occurrences of visual contrast would occur in Section 23, T33S, R2E if Slashbuster were to be used to clear brush and small trees adjacent to recreation roads and sites on the west shore of Lost Creek Reservoir. These Slashbuster units would create unnatural colors and textures for a period of one- to three-years, until green-up of remaining vegetation occurred. These visual contrasts could be mitigated, as described in the table and comments below. Please refer to the following analysis tables and the attached detailed visual contrast rating forms for details.