

APPENDIX G

Visual Contrast Ratings for New Trail Construction

Provided by

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
690 W. Garnet Avenue
N. Palm Springs, CA 92258

November 4, 2003

NOTICE ON APPENDIX REDUCTION

This technical appendix has been reduced by 50% and printed double-sided to conserve paper and to allow the technical appendices to be incorporated into the EIR/EIS. If you wish to have a full-sized copy of this appendix, please contact the CVAG at 760-346-1127.

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APPENDIX G

VISUAL CONTRAST RATINGS FOR NEW TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

This appendix presents an overview of the visual contrast rating process and an assessment of potential impacts to visual resources that would result from construction of new trails in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains Conservation Area/National Monument approved. These proposed new trails are identified in Section 7.4, *Allowable Uses in Conservation Areas*, of the MSHCP as (a) new perimeter trails and (b) the Palm Desert to La Quinta Cove connector trail. Proposed new perimeter trails are identified below; alternate alignments for these trails have not been identified.

- Garstin to Thielman perimeter trail
- Cathedral City Cove perimeter trail
- Bump & Grind to Cahuilla Hills Park perimeter trail
- Art Smith Trailhead to Homme-Adams Park perimeter trail
- Northwest La Quinta Cove peak trail
- Southeast La Quinta Cove perimeter trail

Alternate alignments have been identified for the Palm Desert to La Quinta Cove connector trail. The preferred alignment for the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Visitor Center to Deep Canyon segment is the “middle” alignment; two other alignments have been identified with one located further north and the other further south. The preferred alignment for the Deep Canyon to La Quinta Cove segment is the South Eisenhower Mountain alignment; three other alignments have been identified, these being the North Eisenhower Mountain, Indio Mountain, and Indio Canyon alignments. An intermediate access trail from Portola Avenue and adjacent to *The Living Desert* is also proposed.

Regulatory Setting

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FMPMA) requires that public lands be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, **scenic**, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmosphere, water resource, and archaeological values. BLM is responsible for ensuring that the scenic values of public lands are considered before allowing uses that may have negative visual impacts. The agency accomplishes this through its Visual Resource Management (VRM) system, a system that involves inventorying scenic values and establishing management objectives for those values through the resource management planning process, and then evaluating proposed activities to determine whether they conform to the management objectives. It is the policy of BLM that visual design considerations be incorporated into all surface-disturbing projects occurring on public lands regardless of their size or potential visual impact. Use of BLM’s current VRM manuals and handbooks to set management objectives and evaluate potential impacts is mandated.

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The 106th Congress of the United States found that the magnificent vistas of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains occupy a unique and challenging position given their proximity to highly urbanized areas of the Coachella Valley, and that these mountains provide a picturesque backdrop for Coachella Valley communities. Hence, to secure now and for future generations the opportunity to experience and enjoy these magnificent vistas, as well as other resources in these mountains, Congress established the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument on October 24, 2000. Although the National Monument consists only of Federal lands and Federal interests in lands located within its boundaries, it is clear that the quality of the visual resource extends beyond the Federal lands. One's perception of the visual integrity of these mountains cannot be compartmentalized by land ownership. Views of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains from the Coachella Valley sweep across all jurisdictions.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that measures be taken to ensure that aesthetically pleasing surroundings be retained for all Americans. Potential impacts to visual resources on BLM-managed lands are addressed in conformance with NEPA. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) provides a checklist of questions that a lead agency should normally address if relevant to a project's environmental impacts. Specifically, the checklist contains the following four questions pertaining to aesthetics that are intended to assist in the determination of whether a project may result in significant visual impacts:

- (a) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?
- (b) Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?
- (c) Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?
- (d) Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

To simplify the assessment process, BLM's Visual Resource Management system is used for both Federal and non-Federal lands. Although this system is not usually applicable to non-BLM lands, it satisfies CEQA requirements by providing sufficient information to answer the four questions above. For the purposes of this assessment, therefore, it is presumed that where VRM objectives would be met, the project would have no substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, would not substantially damage scenic resources, and would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. Conversely, where VRM objectives would not be met, substantial adverse effects may occur, though mitigation measures are identified that should reduce visual impacts. As artificial lighting is not proposed in conjunction with any of the trail construction projects, the fourth question is not applicable.

VRM Objectives

BLM established Visual Resource Management objectives for public lands in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument through its California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley (2002). These lands were designated as VRM Class II, except for designated wilderness which is Class I. New perimeter trails and the Palm Desert to La Quinta Cove connector trail would be located entirely within the National Monument, but outside designated wilderness, hence subject only to Class II objectives. The objective of 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.

Contrast Rating

The basic philosophy underlying 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. However, it is not intended to be the only means of addressing 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 contrast rating is accomplished from the most critical viewpoints, or key observation points. These points are usually along commonly traveled routes or at other likely observation locations. Factors that should be considered in selection of key observation points are angle of observation, number of viewers, length of time the project is in view, relative project size, season of use, and light conditions.

The rating is accomplished by determining the degree of contrast (i.e., strong, moderate, weak, or none) for each element. The following general criteria and factors are used when rating the degree of contrast:

<u>Degree of Contrast</u>	<u>Criteria</u>
None.....	The element contrast is not visible or perceived.
Weak.....	The element contrast can be seen but does not attract attention.
Moderate.....	The element contrast begins to attract attention and begins to dominate the characteristic landscape.
Strong.....	The element contrast demands attention, will not be overlooked, and is dominant in the landscape.

Determining Whether VRM Objectives Are Met

The contrast ratings are compared with established objectives for the VRM class. For comparative purposes, the four levels of contrast (none, weak, moderate, and strong) roughly correspond with Classes I, II, III and IV, respectively. This means that a “strong” contrast rating may be acceptable in a Class IV area, but probably would not meet the VRM objectives for a Class III area. Similarly, a “moderate” contrast rating may be acceptable in Class III and IV areas, but probably would not meet Class II objectives. In making these comparisons, the cumulative effect of all of the contrast ratings must be considered. Certain combinations of ratings may indicate there is a stronger overall contrast than the individual ratings show. For example, several “moderate” ratings when viewed in combination may warrant an overall “strong” rating. This is a judgmental determination.

Potential Mitigation Measures

Since the overall visual resource management goal is to minimize visual impacts, mitigating measures should be recommended for all adverse contrasts that can be reduced. This includes reduction of contrast in projects that have met the VRM objectives. The concepts of strategic location (in less visible and less sensitive areas), minimizing disturbance, and repetition of the basic elements (form, line, color, and texture) should be considered. Mitigation measures should also be realistic.

Visual Contrast Rating Worksheets

A visual contrast rating worksheet has been prepared for each of the proposed new perimeter trails as well as alternate alignments of the proposed Palm Desert to La Quinta Cove connector trail. Each worksheet conforms to BLM’s VRM system: VRM objectives are identified, the contrast rating is described, conformance with VRM objectives is determined, and potential mitigation measures are recommended where appropriate. These worksheets are included in this appendix.

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 BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

**VISUAL CONTRAST RATING WORKSHEET
Garstin to Thielman Perimeter Trail**

date: August 15, 2003
 weather conditions: hazy (humid); midday sun
 evaluator: Jim Foote, Outdoor Recreation Planner
 Field Office: Palm Springs-South Coast
 Activity (program): Recreation

SECTION A. PROJECT INFORMATION

project location: Sec. 36 (T4S R4E); Sec. 1 (T5S R4E)
 VRM class: II
 key observation point(s): Bogert Trail; Andreas Hills residential area (Palm Springs)

SECTION B. CHARACTERISTIC LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

land/water: mountainous terrain
 vegetation: sparse desert plants
 structures: none visible from key observation points

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	steep; rugged; complex	indistinct	n/a
LINE	bold complex skyline; subtle diagonal/vertical elements of sub-skyline landscape	indistinct	n/a
COLOR	medium gray/brown monotone	Indistinct	n/a
TEXTURE	uneven; medium/coarse	indistinct	n/a

SECTION C. PROPOSED ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

land/water: project requires new surface disturbance
 vegetation: no noticeable vegetative manipulation is anticipated;
 occasional removal of individual plants may occur
 structures: no noticeable structure installation; signs, if installed, are
 not anticipated to be noticeable from key observation
 points

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	conforms to surface except where side-hill traverses require bench cutting	n/a	n/a
LINE	band; horizontal/diagonal	n/a	n/a
COLOR	light tan	n/a	n/a
TEXTURE	smooth	n/a	n/a

SECTION D. CONTRAST RATING

1. DEGREE OF CONTRAST		FEATURE											
		LAND/WATER				VEGETATION				STRUCTURES			
		Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None
ELEMENT	Form			X				X				X	
	Line			X				X				X	
	Color			X				X				X	
	Texture			X				X				X	

X Short Term X Long Term

2. Does the project design meet visual resource management objectives? X Yes ___ No

Visual resource management (VRM) objectives are established upon a determination of visual resource management classes through the resource management planning process. Through the California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley (BLM 2002), all BLM-managed lands within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument were designated as VRM Class II, except for designated wilderness which are VRM Class I areas. The proposed Garstin-Thielman connector trail would traverse BLM-managed lands designated as VRM Class II. Changes in any of the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) caused by a management activity on Class II lands should not be evident in the characteristic landscape. Contrasts may be seen, but must not attract attention.

Assessing potential contrasts of the proposed trail relied heavily on assessing visibility of existing trails in the area. The lower portion of the Garstin Trail where it ascends from the trailhead required substantial bench cuts, thereby exposing subsurface materials of a lighter hue than in evidence at the surface. When viewed from Bogert Trail, this section of Garstin Trail as it traverses the westerly face of the ridge creates a moderate to strong contrast due to dissimilarities of line and color when compared to the characteristic landscape; the trail attracts attention and cannot be overlooked. These contrasts are emphasized by the close proximity to and small angle of observation from the key observation points. [A small angle of observation (the angle between line of sight to the segment of trail being viewed and the flat ground surface) generally exposes more of the bench cut when viewed at a perpendicular angle than would occur with a greater angle of observation.]

However, as the Garstin Trail continues to ascend and traverse the southerly face of the ridge, its visibility substantially diminishes despite the continuation of side-hill bench cuts. When viewed from Bogert Trail and the Andreas Hills residential community, the trail can scarcely be seen. Since the proposed Garstin-Thielman connector trail would intercept the Garstin Trail approximately 200-300 feet above key observation points, it is anticipated that the new trail would be similarly visible to the upper elevations of the Garstin Trail as it traverses the southerly face of the ridge, i.e., although it could be seen, it would not attract attention, especially if the mitigation measures identified below are implemented. Contrasts in line and color would be minor.

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As the new connector trail proceeds in a southerly direction to intercept the Thielman Trail, it would not likely be visible from key observation points due to topographic screening by foreground landforms. Also, the need for side-hill bench cuts is greatly reduced given the undulating landscape it would traverse, i.e., broad faces of ridges exposed to view would not be encountered.

In summary, the proposed new trail would largely not be visible or perceived. Where seen, it would not likely attract attention.

3. Additional mitigating measures recommended? Yes No

As side-hill bench cuts are the primary constituent of increased contrast from trail construction in this area due to dissimilarities of line and color when compared to the characteristic landscape, mitigating measures to reduce line and color contrasts are recommended.

- (a) Where possible, construction of the trail in continuous straight lines should be avoided; irregular lines that repeat lines of the characteristic landscape should be incorporated into the trail's design. Natural screens (vegetation and landforms) should be used where possible.
- (b) When constructing side-hill bench cuts, surface disturbance downhill of the trail's tread should be minimized. Cuts should be shaped to appear as natural forms. Freshly broken rock faces should be treated with asphalt emulsion or gray paint to reduce color contrasts.

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VISUAL CONTRAST RATING WORKSHEET
Cathedral City Cove Perimeter Trail

date: August 15, 2003
 weather conditions: hazy (humid); midday sun
 evaluator: Jim Foote, Outdoor Recreation Planner
 Field Office: Palm Springs-South Coast
 Activity (program): Recreation

SECTION A. PROJECT INFORMATION

project location: Sec. 4 & 5 (T5S R5E)
 VRM class: II
 key observation point(s): Cathedral City Cove residential area

SECTION B. CHARACTERISTIC LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

land/water: mountainous terrain
 vegetation: sparse desert plants
 structures: none visible from key observation points (water tanks generally screened from view by flood control dikes and foreground topography)

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	undulating "foothills" rising from edge of broad elongated wash channels; background of steep, rugged, complex terrain	indistinct	n/a
LINE	bold complex skyline; "foothills" dominated by diagonal elements; vertical elements more prominent in background	indistinct	n/a
COLOR	medium gray/brown monotone	Indistinct	n/a
TEXTURE	smooth/moderate "foothills" and foreground wash channel; moderate/coarse background	indistinct	n/a

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SECTION C. PROPOSED ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

land/water: project requires new surface disturbance
 vegetation: no noticeable vegetative manipulation is anticipated;
 occasional removal of individual plants may occur
 structures: no noticeable structure installation; signs, if installed, are
 not anticipated to be noticeable from key observation
 points

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	conforms to surface except where side-hill traverses require bench cutting	n/a	n/a
LINE	band; horizontal/diagonal	n/a	n/a
COLOR	light tan	n/a	n/a
TEXTURE	smooth	n/a	n/a

SECTION D. CONTRAST RATING

1. DEGREE OF CONTRAST		FEATURE											
		LAND/WATER				VEGETATION				STRUCTURES			
		Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None
ELEMENT	Form				X				X				X
	Line				X				X				X
	Color				X				X				X
	Texture				X				X				X

X Short Term X Long Term

2. Does the project design meet visual resource management objectives? X Yes ___ No

Visual resource management (VRM) objectives are established upon a determination of visual resource management classes through the resource management planning process. Through the California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley (BLM 2002), all BLM-managed lands within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument were designated as VRM Class II, except for designated wilderness which are VRM Class I areas. The proposed Cathedral City Cove perimeter trail would traverse some BLM-managed lands designated as VRM Class II. Changes in any of the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) caused by a management activity on Class II lands should not be evident in the characteristic landscape. Contrasts may be seen, but must not attract attention.

Generally, the proposed new trail would not be visible from key observation points due to topographic screening and the presence of flood control dikes along the eastern and western flanks of Cathedral City Cove. In the northeast corner of Section 5, the trail would be located on an alluvial fan that extends into the flood control channel, largely blocked from view by the dike to the east and by extending ridges to the south and northeast. Its ascent to a point where the trail proceeds in a southerly direction would also not be in view. Once having gained its elevation

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west of Cathedral City Cove, the trail would remain obscured from view by foreground landforms. The descent to the Dunn Road area would likewise be hidden from view by the intervening landscape.

Instead of using the clearly visible western leg of the Cathedral Canyon Trail to reach an elevated plateau in the southeast corner of Section 5, the proposed perimeter trail would ascend the ridge from the west. Side-hill bench cuts that may be required in this area would generally be out of view of key observation points. The descent east of the plateau would likewise be obscured from view.

The proposed trail as it meanders through the “foothills” along the southeast edge of the wash channel paralleling the southeastern edge of Cathedral City Cove would rise little above the wash. Views of this low elevation trail from key observation points would be obscured by the flood control dike. [This segment of the proposed perimeter trail would be located on lands not managed by the BLM.]

A golf course is proposed for development between the perimeter trail and Cathedral City Cove. Trail location has been determined in conjunction with design of the course and is anticipated to have no negative visual impacts due to landscaping and/or fencing that would be incorporated into the project.

In summary, the proposed new trail would largely not be visible or perceived. Where seen, it would not likely attract attention.

3. Additional mitigating measures recommended? Yes No

To minimize visual impacts of the proposed Cathedral City Cove perimeter trail, the following measures are recommended:

- (a) Where possible, construction of the trail in continuous straight lines should be avoided; irregular lines that repeat lines of the characteristic landscape should be incorporated into the trail’s design. Natural screens (vegetation and landforms) should be used where possible.
- (b) When constructing side-hill bench cuts, surface disturbance downhill of the trail’s tread should be minimized. Cuts should be shaped to appear as natural forms. Freshly broken rock faces should be treated with asphalt emulsion or gray paint to reduce color contrasts.

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VISUAL CONTRAST RATING WORKSHEET
Bump & Grind to Cahuilla Hills Park Perimeter Trail

date: August 15, 2003
 weather conditions: hazy (humid); late afternoon sun
 evaluator: Jim Foote, Outdoor Recreation Planner
 Field Office: Palm Springs-South Coast
 Activity (program): Recreation

SECTION A. PROJECT INFORMATION

project location: Sec. 24 (T5S R5E); Sec. 19 (T5S R6E)
 VRM class: II
 key observation point(s): Edgehill Drive and immediate residential area (Palm Desert)

SECTION B. CHARACTERISTIC LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

land/water: mountainous terrain
 vegetation: sparse desert plants
 structures: none

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	moderately sloping terrain increasing in steepness to the west; complex terrain penetrated by alluvial fans	indistinct	n/a
LINE	bold complex skyline; dominant diagonal elements from many ridgelines extending to the southeast; several existing trails on ridges establish diagonal bands	indistinct	n/a
COLOR	light/medium brown; existing trails are light tan	indistinct; green foreground	n/a
TEXTURE	uneven; coarse	indistinct	n/a

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SECTION C. PROPOSED ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

land/water: project requires new surface disturbance
 vegetation: no noticeable vegetative manipulation is anticipated;
 occasional removal of individual plants may occur
 structures: no noticeable structure installation; signs, if installed, are
 not anticipated to be noticeable from key observation
 points

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	conforms to surface except where side-hill traverses require bench cutting	n/a	n/a
LINE	band; horizontal/diagonal	n/a	n/a
COLOR	light tan	n/a	n/a
TEXTURE	smooth	n/a	n/a

SECTION D. CONTRAST RATING

1. DEGREE OF CONTRAST		FEATURE											
		LAND/WATER				VEGETATION				STRUCTURES			
		Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None
ELEMENT	Form			X				X				X	
	Line			X				X				X	
	Color			X				X				X	
	Texture				X			X				X	

X Short Term X Long Term

2. Does the project design meet visual resource management objectives? X Yes ___ No

Visual resource management (VRM) objectives are established upon a determination of visual resource management classes through the resource management planning process. Through the California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley (BLM 2002), all BLM-managed lands within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument were designated as VRM Class II, except for designated wilderness which are VRM Class I areas. The proposed Bump & Grind-Cahuilla Hills Park connector trail would traverse non-Federal lands within the National Monument. Nearby BLM-managed lands are designated as VRM Class II. On these BLM lands, changes in any of the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) caused by a management activity should not be evident in the characteristic landscape. Contrasts may be seen, but must not attract attention.

Two branches of a connector trail between the Bump and Grind Trail (Mirage Trail) and Cahuilla Hills Park are proposed at the lower elevations; the trails would merge at their upper elevations prior to intercepting the Bump and Grind Trail. Both branches at the lower elevations would generally parallel ridges and an alluvial fan that extend from the Park in a northwesterly

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direction. Existing trails on ridges in this area are prominent. Evidence of alluvial fan use is not apparent given the undulating nature of the landscape and localized topographic screening.

It is anticipated that improvement of existing trails or development of new trails at the lower elevation would not constitute a substantial change to the current situation. Use of existing trails on ridges would result in no new visual impacts unless these trails are improved. Widening would likely result in increased contrasts of line and color with the characteristic landscape. Development of new trails or improvement of existing trails on the alluvial fan would not likely be noticeable given opportunities for localized screening. Given the prominence of existing trails on ridges in this area, well-designed new trails or improvement of existing trails would not likely result in a substantial cumulative impact.

Visibility and prominence of the upper elevation link to the Bump and Grind Trail where it ascends a ridge prior to turning north would likely be reduced due to distance from key observation points and minimal need, if any, for side-hill bench cuts. Some contrasts of line and color would be expected, however, though contrasts would be weak. Upon turning north, the trail would not be visible.

A connector trail from the new perimeter trail near its intersection with the Bump and Grind Trail extending to the Desert Crossing shopping center is also proposed. The key observation points for this segment are the shopping center parking lot east of the commercial buildings and access road west of the buildings. Views from these locations are dominated by the shopping center facilities. Visibility and prominence of this connector trail would be similar to that described above for the new perimeter trail; some contrasts of line and color would be expected, but contrasts would be weak.

In summary, segments of the proposed trail would be seen, but not likely attract attention.

3. Additional mitigating measures recommended? Yes No

To minimize visibility of the proposed Bump & Grind-Cahuilla Hills Park connector trail, the following measures are recommended:

- (a) Where possible, utilize or improve existing trails to minimize new surface disturbance.
- (b) Where possible, construction of the trail in continuous straight lines should be avoided; irregular lines that repeat lines of the characteristic landscape should be incorporated into the trail's design. Natural screens (vegetation and landforms) should be used where possible.
- (c) When constructing side-hill bench cuts, if necessary, surface disturbance downhill of the trail's tread should be minimized. Cuts should be shaped to appear as natural forms. Freshly broken rock faces should be treated with asphalt emulsion or gray paint to reduce color contrasts.

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VISUAL CONTRAST RATING WORKSHEET
Art Smith Trailhead to Homme-Adams Park Perimeter Trail

date: August 15, 2003
 weather conditions: hazy (humid); late afternoon sun
 evaluator: Jim Foote, Outdoor Recreation Planner
 Field Office: Palm Springs-South Coast
 Activity (program): Recreation

SECTION A. PROJECT INFORMATION

project name:
 project location: Sec. 25 and 35 (T5S R5E); Sec. 10 (T5S R6E); Sec. 1 and 12 (T6S R5E)
 VRM class: II
 key observation point(s): Palm Valley Stormwater Channel; adjacent residential areas; California Highway 74 (Palm Desert)

SECTION B. CHARACTERISTIC LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

land/water: mountainous terrain
 vegetation: sparse desert plants (residential landscaping is not addressed)
 structures: residences and associated access roads extend westward into the Cahuilla Hills near the midpoint of the proposed trail, thereby creating a diffuse transitional edge between the natural and partially developed landscape

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	moderately sloping terrain increasing in steepness to the west; complex terrain dissected by Ramon, Cat, and Dead Indian Canyons	none	simple geometric residential structures
LINE	bold complex skyline; dominant diagonal elements from many ridgelines extending predominantly to the east	none	residential structures establish weak horizontal and vertical lines due to relatively small scale; straight and curving access roads create dominant bands
COLOR	light/medium brown; existing trails are light tan	indistinct	Structures of various hues; dark asphalt to light tan dirt roads
TEXTURE	uneven; coarse	indistinct	smooth

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SECTION C. PROPOSED ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

land/water: project requires new surface disturbance
 vegetation: no noticeable vegetative manipulation is anticipated;
 occasional removal of individual plants may occur
 structures: no noticeable structure installation; signs, if installed, are
 not anticipated to be noticeable from key observation
 points

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	conforms to surface except where side-hill traverses require bench cutting	n/a	n/a
LINE	band; horizontal/diagonal	n/a	n/a
COLOR	light tan	n/a	n/a
TEXTURE	smooth	n/a	n/a

SECTION D. CONTRAST RATING

1. DEGREE OF CONTRAST		FEATURE											
		LAND/WATER				VEGETATION				STRUCTURES			
		Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None
ELEMENT	Form			X				X				X	
	Line			X				X			X		
	Color			X				X				X	
	Texture				X			X				X	

X Short Term X Long Term

2. Does the project design meet visual resource management objectives? X Yes ___ No

Visual resource management (VRM) objectives are established upon a determination of visual resource management classes through the resource management planning process. Through the California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley (BLM 2002), all BLM-managed lands within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument were designated as VRM Class II, except for designated wilderness which are VRM Class I areas. The proposed Art Smith Trailhead to Homme-Adams Park connector trail would traverse a limited extent of BLM-managed lands designated as VRM Class II. On these BLM lands, changes in any of the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) caused by a management activity should not be evident in the characteristic landscape. Contrasts may be seen, but must not attract attention. Most of the trail, however, would be located on non-Federal lands.

For the most part, the proposed new trail would not be visible from key observation points due to topographic screening, though occasional glimpses of the trail might occur. In the Cahuilla Hills area, a demarcation between developed areas and the natural landscape is less clearly defined than at Cathedral City and La Quinta Coves. Trails developed along the edge of the Cahuilla Hills may be considered as occurring in a transitional zone where the edge between

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natural and partially developed landscapes is diffuse. The contrast level when comparing elements of a new trail with elements of the characteristic landscape, which includes residential structures and access roads, would likely be perceived as lower than locations where the landscape is devoid of such man-made influences.

The southern segment of the proposed trail would cross, then ascend from Dead Indian Canyon. The trail in this area would be hidden from view by a flood control dike, though individuals might catch a fleeting glimpse of the trail from Highway 74 when traveling in a northwest direction.

The Art Smith Trailhead to Homme-Adams Park trail would skirt a proposed golf course and residential area (Stone Eagle) in Section 25. It is anticipated that landscaping and/or fencing would obscure views of the trail from the development.

In summary, the proposed new trail would largely not be visible or perceived. Where seen, it would not likely attract attention.

3. Additional mitigating measures recommended? Yes No

To minimize visibility of the proposed Bump & Grind-Cahuilla Hills Park connector trail, the following measures are recommended:

- (a) Where possible, utilize or improve existing trails to minimize new surface disturbance.
- (b) Where possible, construction of the trail in continuous straight lines should be avoided; irregular lines that repeat lines of the characteristic landscape should be incorporated into the trail's design. Natural screens (vegetation and landforms) should be used where possible.
- (c) When constructing side-hill bench cuts, if necessary, surface disturbance downhill of the trail's tread should be minimized. Cuts should be shaped to appear as natural forms. Freshly broken rock faces should be treated with asphalt emulsion or gray paint to reduce color contrasts.

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VISUAL CONTRAST RATING WORKSHEET
Palm Desert to La Quinta Cove Connector Trail:
Visitor Center to Deep Canyon Alignments

date: August 15, 2003
 weather conditions: hazy (humid); late afternoon sun
 evaluator: Jim Foote, Outdoor Recreation Planner
 Field Office: Palm Springs-South Coast
 Activity (program): Recreation

SECTION A. PROJECT INFORMATION

project location: Sec. 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 (T6S R6E); Sec. 31 and 32 (T5S R6E)
 VRM class: II
 key observation point(s): California Highway 74

SECTION B. CHARACTERISTIC LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

land/water: mountainous terrain
 vegetation: sparse desert plants
 structures: none

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	rolling; moderately dissected; smooth	indistinct	n/a
LINE	distinct simple skyline; subtle diagonal foreground elements; an existing road establishes a prominent horizontal/diagonal band	indistinct	n/a
COLOR	medium gray/brown/tan monotone	indistinct	n/a
TEXTURE	even; smooth to moderate	indistinct	n/a

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SECTION C. PROPOSED ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

land/water: project requires new surface disturbance
 vegetation: no noticeable vegetative manipulation is anticipated;
 occasional removal of individual plants may occur
 structures: no noticeable structure installation; signs, if installed, are
 not anticipated to be noticeable from key observation
 points

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	conforms to surface except where side-hill traverses require bench cutting	n/a	n/a
LINE	band; horizontal/diagonal	n/a	n/a
COLOR	light tan	n/a	n/a
TEXTURE	smooth	n/a	n/a

SECTION D. CONTRAST RATING

1. DEGREE OF CONTRAST		FEATURE											
		LAND/WATER				VEGETATION				STRUCTURES			
		Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None
ELEMENT	Form			X				X				X	
	Line			X				X				X	
	Color			X				X				X	
	Texture				X				X			X	

X Short Term X Long Term

2. Does the project design meet visual resource management objectives? X Yes ___ No

Visual resource management (VRM) objectives are established upon a determination of visual resource management classes through the resource management planning process. Through the California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley (BLM 2002), all BLM-managed lands within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument were designated as VRM Class II, except for designated wilderness which are VRM Class I areas. The northerly alternative for the Visitor Center loop trail to Deep Canyon segment of the Palm Desert to La Quinta Cove connector trail would traverse non-Federal lands within the National Monument, while the southerly alternative would cross some BLM-managed lands designated as VRM Class II. On these BLM lands, changes in any of the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) caused by a management activity should not be evident in the characteristic landscape. Contrasts may be seen, but must not attract attention.

The “middle” (preferred) alignment for this segment of the Palm Desert to La Quinta Cove connector trail, which avoids a substantial traverse of University of California lands in Section 8, would require minimal alterations of landscape form, i.e., few, if any, side-hill bench cuts in view of California Highway 74 (key observation point) would be necessary. Where bench

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cuts may be required to maintain a reasonable cant, it is anticipated that the depth of cut would be minimal given the mild to moderate hillside slopes. An existing road constructed cross-slope by cut-and-fill techniques establishes a bold horizontal/diagonal line due primarily to its contrast in color to the adjacent natural landscape; contrasts of line and color resulting from the new trail would be substantially less given the relative scale of the project as well as a reduced need for bench cuts. [Note: The existing road is slated for rehabilitation.]

The southern alignment may require less surface disturbance in view of Highway 74 than the middle alignment given the moderate slope of the rolling terrain. Contrasts in line and color would be greater than contrasts in form and texture, though still considered as weak. Generally, the northern alignment would not be noticeable from Highway 74.

In summary, the middle and southern alignments of the Visitor Center loop to Deep Canyon trail segment would be seen, but neither would be likely to attract attention. Mitigation measures identified below would minimize contrasts. The northern alignment would generally not be noticeable from the key observation point.

3. Additional mitigating measures recommended? Yes No

To minimize visual impacts of the Visitor Center loop trail to Deep Canyon segment of the Palm Desert to La Quinta Cove connector trail, the following measures are recommended:

- (a) Where possible, construction of the trail in continuous straight lines should be avoided; irregular lines that repeat lines of the characteristic landscape should be incorporated into the trail's design. Natural screens (vegetation and landforms) should be used where possible.
- (b) When constructing side-hill bench cuts, surface disturbance downhill of the trail's tread should be minimized. Cuts should be shaped to appear as natural forms. Freshly broken rock faces should be treated with asphalt emulsion or gray paint to reduce color contrasts.

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**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

VISUAL CONTRAST RATING WORKSHEET
Palm Desert to La Quinta Cove Connector Trail:
North and South Eisenhower Mountain Alignments

date: August 15, 2003
 weather conditions: hazy (humid); mid-afternoon sun
 evaluator: Jim Foote, Outdoor Recreation Planner
 Field Office: Palm Springs-South Coast
 Activity (program): Recreation

SECTION A. PROJECT INFORMATION

project location: Sec. 34 and 35 (T5S R6E); Sec. 2, 3 and 4 (T6S R6E)
 VRM class: II
 key observation point(s): northwest area of La Quinta Cove

SECTION B. CHARACTERISTIC LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

land/water: mountainous terrain
 vegetation: sparse desert plants
 structures: none

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	steep; rugged; complex	indistinct	n/a
LINE	bold complex skyline; dominant diagonal/vertical elements of sub-skyline landscape becoming more subtle at upper elevations; prominent vertical water channels at upper elevations	indistinct	n/a
COLOR	medium/dark gray/brown	indistinct	n/a
TEXTURE	coarse	indistinct	n/a

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SECTION C. PROPOSED ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

land/water: project requires new surface disturbance
 vegetation: no noticeable vegetative manipulation is anticipated;
 occasional removal of individual plants may occur
 structures: no noticeable structure installation; signs, if installed, are
 not anticipated to be noticeable from key observation
 points

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	conforms to surface except where side-hill traverses require bench cutting	n/a	n/a
LINE	band; horizontal/diagonal	n/a	n/a
COLOR	light tan	n/a	n/a
TEXTURE	smooth	n/a	n/a

SECTION D. CONTRAST RATING

1. DEGREE OF CONTRAST		FEATURE											
		LAND/WATER				VEGETATION				STRUCTURES			
		Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None
ELEMENT	Form			X				X				X	
	Line		X					X				X	
	Color		X					X				X	
	Texture			X				X				X	

 Short Term Long Term

2. Does the project design meet visual resource management objectives? ___ Yes No

Visual resource management (VRM) objectives are established upon a determination of visual resource management classes through the resource management planning process. Through the California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley (BLM 2002), all BLM-managed lands within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument were designated as VRM Class II, except for designated wilderness which are VRM Class I areas. The North and South Eisenhower alternatives for the Deep Canyon to La Quinta segment of the Palm Desert to La Quinta Cove connector trail merge to form a single alternative upon descending into the Cove. The merged trails would traverse BLM-managed lands designated as VRM Class II. On these BLM lands, changes in any of the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) caused by a management activity should not be evident in the characteristic landscape. Contrasts may be seen, but must not attract attention. The two separate and distinct alternatives as they pass north and south of Eisenhower Mountain would occur on non-Federal lands.

The slopes of Eisenhower Mountain as viewed from La Quinta Cove appear pristine, i.e., no man-made modifications to the landscape are evident. In these circumstances, contrasts to the basic elements of the characteristic landscape created by project developments are often more

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readily apparent than when other man-made contrasts have already been introduced. The evaluator, then, must envision the degree to which contrasts can be mitigated in ascertaining whether visual resource management objectives would be met.

The primary factor in evaluating degrees of contrast that may result from the North and South Eisenhower Mountain alignments of the Palm Desert to La Quinta Cove connector trail is the extent and magnitude of side-hill bench cuts and/or development of trails on ridgeline crests at the steep upper elevations. Generally, bench cuts establish diagonal lines by exposing subsurface materials that usually contrast in color with the characteristic surface components. The lighter subsurface materials (as is often the case) “advance” and tend to dominate dark colors which “retreat.” The same circumstance occurs when trails are developed on the crests of ridgelines.

Assessing potential contrasts of the trail relies heavily on assessing visibility of existing trails in the area. A survey of trail bench cuts in the Coachella Valley reveals different levels of contrast. On one hand, switch-backing bench cuts where the South Lykken Trail ascends from Mesquite Avenue in Palm Springs can scarcely be seen. In contrast, bench cuts on the southern end of the same trail are prominently seen from distances exceeding two miles. The variation in visibility is attributed primarily to contrasts in color of exposed subsurface materials. Other bench-cut trails are moderately visible, e.g., north and south segments of the North Lykken Trail, the Shannon Trail, and the Araby Trail. The visibility of some of these trails, however, is primarily due to the magnitude of the cut itself, thereby establishing a line that contrasts in varying degrees with the line established by the characteristic landscape, rather than a contrast created by differences in color.

As bench cuts would likely be required on the upper flanks of Eisenhower Mountain given the extremely steep terrain, in conjunction with use of ridgeline crests where possible, it is anticipated that contrasts of line and color with the characteristic landscape would be created. It is likely that these contrasts would be visible from the northern La Quinta Cove area and may attract the attention of the casual observer. Hence, a contrast rating of weak to moderate is assessed for line and color. Given the pristine character of the slopes of Eisenhower Mountain and the importance of maintaining visual quality, the contrast rating is conservatively determined, i.e., it leans towards overestimating contrasts rather than underestimating them, for once the landscape is disturbed a return to natural conditions can be difficult. Mitigation measures identified below may lessen the trail’s visibility, but would not be expected to conceal the trail altogether.

Where the trail would descend into La Quinta Cove at its lower elevations and utilize a moderately steep canyon/alluvial fan, views of the trail would be more limited as only those looking into the canyon head-on would see it; topographic screening would preclude views from locations further to the north and south. Also, proper trail design would use localized variations in topography and surface boulders to camouflage the trail. At these lower elevations, the contrast rating for the trail would be weak; contrasts in line and color would not be readily seen.

In summary, bench cuts at the upper elevations of the North and South Eisenhower Mountain alignments may be seen and attract the attention of the casual observer, though mitigation measures identified below would reduce visibility. The lower reaches of the trail would not likely attract attention as its presence would not be readily apparent.

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3. Additional mitigating measures recommended? Yes No

As side-hill bench cuts are a primary constituent of increased contrast from trail construction due to dissimilarities of line and color when compared to the characteristic landscape, mitigating measures to reduce line and color contrasts are recommended.

- (a) Where possible, construction of the trail in continuous straight lines should be avoided; irregular lines that repeat lines of the characteristic landscape should be incorporated into the trail's design. Natural screens (vegetation and landforms) should be used where possible.
- (b) When constructing side-hill bench cuts, surface disturbance downhill of the trail's tread should be minimized. Cuts should be shaped to appear as natural forms. Freshly broken rock faces should be treated with asphalt emulsion or gray paint to reduce color contrasts.

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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**VISUAL CONTRAST RATING WORKSHEET
 Palm Desert to La Quinta Cove Connector Trail:
Indio Mountain Alignment**

date: August 15, 2003
 weather conditions: hazy (humid); mid-afternoon sun
 evaluator: Jim Foote, Outdoor Recreation Planner
 Field Office: Palm Springs-South Coast
 Activity (program): Recreation

SECTION A. PROJECT INFORMATION

project location: Sec. 2, 3, 4, 9, 10 and 11 (T6S R6E)
 VRM class: II
 key observation point(s): middle west side of La Quinta Cove

SECTION B. CHARACTERISTIC LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

land/water: mountainous terrain
 vegetation: sparse desert plants
 structures: none

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	steep, rugged, complex terrain penetrated by a broad alluvial fan	indistinct	n/a
LINE	bold complex skyline; dominant diagonal/vertical elements of sub-skyline landscape becoming more subtle at upper elevations; prominent vertical water channels at upper elevations; diagonal lines created by foreground alluvial fan	indistinct	n/a
COLOR	medium/dark gray/brown on mountain flanks; lighter values of earthen hues on alluvial fan	indistinct	n/a
TEXTURE	coarse	indistinct	n/a

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SECTION C. PROPOSED ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

land/water: project requires new surface disturbance
 vegetation: no noticeable vegetative manipulation is anticipated;
 occasional removal of individual plants may occur
 structures: no noticeable structure installation; signs, if installed, are
 not anticipated to be noticeable from key observation
 points

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	conforms to surface except where side-hill traverses require bench cutting	n/a	n/a
LINE	band; horizontal/diagonal	n/a	n/a
COLOR	light tan	n/a	n/a
TEXTURE	smooth	n/a	n/a

SECTION D. CONTRAST RATING

1. DEGREE OF CONTRAST		FEATURE											
		LAND/WATER				VEGETATION				STRUCTURES			
		Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None
ELEMENT	Form			X				X				X	
	Line			X				X				X	
	Color			X				X				X	
	Texture				X			X				X	

X Short Term X Long Term

2. Does the project design meet visual resource management objectives? X Yes ___ No

Visual resource management (VRM) objectives are established upon a determination of visual resource management classes through the resource management planning process. Through the California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley (BLM 2002), all BLM-managed lands within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument were designated as VRM Class II, except for designated wilderness which are VRM Class I areas. The Indio Mountain alternative for the Deep Canyon to La Quinta segment of the Palm Desert to La Quinta Cove connector trail would be located primarily on BLM-managed lands designated as VRM Class II. On these BLM lands, changes in any of the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) caused by a management activity should not be evident in the characteristic landscape. Contrasts may be seen, but must not attract attention.

The lower elevations of this alignment would follow a broad alluvial fan that narrows as it proceeds in a northwesterly direction. Minor modifications to the landscape would be anticipated in this area; surface modifications would likely be limited to movement of small rocks and occasional vegetation. Bench cuts would not likely be employed. Use of localized topographic screening would minimize visibility by allowing views of short trail segments only.

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Sporadic contrasts of line and color may be seen but would not likely attract attention; contrasts of color would be reduced by the inherent lighter color of the alluvial fan relative to the darker flanks of adjacent ridges.

As the trail ascends in elevation from La Quinta Cove, the terrain becomes increasingly steeper while its characteristic color darkens. The trail's ascent up the headwall of the canyon to the ridgeline may require switchbacks and bench cuts. Topographic screening at these upper elevations may minimize visibility of the trail, especially if the northeasterly facing slopes are utilized thereby yielding oblique views instead of direct views. Contrasts in line and color would thereby be minimized concomitant with reduced opportunities of observation.

In summary, the trail may be seen but would not likely attract the attention of a casual observer.

3. Additional mitigating measures recommended? Yes No

As side-hill bench cuts are a primary constituent of increased contrast from trail construction due to dissimilarities of line and color when compared to the characteristic landscape, mitigating measures to reduce line and color contrasts are recommended.

- (a) Where possible, construction of the trail in continuous straight lines should be avoided; irregular lines that repeat lines of the characteristic landscape should be incorporated into the trail's design. Natural screens (vegetation and landforms) should be used where possible.
- (b) When constructing side-hill bench cuts, surface disturbance downhill of the trail's tread should be minimized. Cuts should be shaped to appear as natural forms. Freshly broken rock faces should be treated with asphalt emulsion or gray paint to reduce color contrasts.

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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**VISUAL CONTRAST RATING WORKSHEET
 Palm Desert to La Quinta Cove Connector Trail:
Indio Canyon Alignment**

date: August 15, 2003
 weather conditions: hazy (humid); mid-afternoon sun
 evaluator: Jim Foote, Outdoor Recreation Planner
 Field Office: Palm Springs-South Coast
 Activity (program): Recreation

SECTION A. PROJECT INFORMATION

project location: Sec. 4, 9, 10, 13 and 14 (T6S R6E)
 VRM class: II
 key observation point(s): southwest corner of La Quinta Cove

SECTION B. CHARACTERISTIC LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

land/water: mountainous terrain
 vegetation: sparse desert plants
 structures: none

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	steep, rugged, complex terrain bisected by a broad alluvial fan	indistinct	n/a
LINE	bold complex skyline moderated by intervening horizontal alluvial fan; diagonal/vertical ridge elements on mountain flanks	indistinct	n/a
COLOR	medium/dark gray/brown	indistinct	n/a
TEXTURE	moderate/coarse	indistinct	n/a

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SECTION C. PROPOSED ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

land/water: project requires new surface disturbance
 vegetation: no noticeable vegetative manipulation is anticipated;
 occasional removal of individual plants may occur
 structures: no noticeable structure installation; signs, if installed, are
 not anticipated to be noticeable from key observation
 points

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	conforms to surface	n/a	n/a
LINE	band; horizontal/diagonal	n/a	n/a
COLOR	light tan	n/a	n/a
TEXTURE	smooth	n/a	n/a

SECTION D. CONTRAST RATING

1. DEGREE OF CONTRAST		FEATURE											
		LAND/WATER				VEGETATION				STRUCTURES			
		Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None
ELEMENT	Form				X				X				X
	Line				X				X				X
	Color			X					X				X
	Texture				X				X				X

 X Short Term X Long Term

2. Does the project design meet visual resource management objectives? X Yes ___ No

Visual resource management (VRM) objectives are established upon a determination of visual resource management classes through the resource management planning process. Through the California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley (BLM 2002), all BLM-managed lands within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument were designated as VRM Class II, except for designated wilderness which are VRM Class I areas. The Indio Canyon alternative for the Deep Canyon to La Quinta segment of the Palm Desert to La Quinta Cove connector trail would be located primarily on BLM-managed lands designated as VRM Class II. On these BLM lands, changes in any of the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) caused by a management activity should not be evident in the characteristic landscape. Contrasts may be seen, but must not attract attention.

The Indio Canyon alignment follows a broad alluvial fan as it gently ascends in a northwesterly direction from the southwest corner of La Quinta Cove. Minor modifications of the alluvial fan would be required for construction of the trail; modifications would likely be limited to movement of small rocks and occasional vegetation. Bench cuts would not likely be employed. Use of localized topographic screening would minimize visibility by allowing views of short trail segments only. Sporadic contrasts of color may be seen but would not likely attract attention; contrasts of line would not likely be seen.

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In summary, segments of the trail may be seen but would not likely attract the attention of a casual observer.

3. Additional mitigating measures recommended? Yes No

Although the contrasts would likely be weak to none, the following mitigation measures are recommended to ensure contrasts would be minimized.

- (a) Where possible, construction of the trail in continuous straight lines should be avoided; irregular lines that repeat lines of the characteristic landscape should be incorporated into the trail's design.
- (b) Natural screens (vegetation and landforms) should be used where possible.

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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VISUAL CONTRAST RATING WORKSHEET
Northwest La Quinta Cove Peak Trail

date: August 15, 2003
 weather conditions: hazy (humid); mid-afternoon sun
 evaluator: Jim Foote, Outdoor Recreation Planner
 Field Office: Palm Springs-South Coast
 Activity (program): Recreation

SECTION A. PROJECT INFORMATION

project location: Sec. 1 and 2 (T6S R6E)
 VRM class: II
 key observation point(s): northwest corner of La Quinta Cove

SECTION B. CHARACTERISTIC LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

land/water: isolated low elevation peak; manipulated landscape of adjacent golf course and residential development
 vegetation: sparse desert plants on peak; green grass on adjacent golf course
 structures: adjacent golf course and residential development

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	steep, isolated low elevation peak; generally flat adjacent developed areas	indistinct on peak; geometric in adjacent developed areas	geometric residential structures and associated structures
LINE	simple skyline; diagonal ridge elements extending from top of the peak; predominantly horizontal in adjacent developed areas	indistinct on peak; butt edge along adjacent developed areas	horizontal/vertical
COLOR	medium/dark gray/brown; obscured by vegetation in adjacent developed areas	indistinct on peak; green/various in adjacent developed areas	various
TEXTURE	moderate on peak; generally smooth for adjacent developed areas	indistinct on peak; predominantly smooth in adjacent developed areas	smooth

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 Visual Contrast Ratings for New Trail Construction

SECTION C. PROPOSED ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

land/water: project requires new surface disturbance
 vegetation: no noticeable vegetative manipulation is anticipated;
 occasional removal of individual plants may occur
 structures: no noticeable structure installation; signs, if installed, are
 not anticipated to be noticeable from key observation
 points

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	conforms to surface except where side-hill traverses require bench cutting	n/a	n/a
LINE	band; horizontal/diagonal	n/a	n/a
COLOR	light tan	n/a	n/a
TEXTURE	smooth	n/a	n/a

SECTION D. CONTRAST RATING

1. DEGREE OF CONTRAST		FEATURE											
		LAND/WATER				VEGETATION				STRUCTURES			
		Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None
ELEMENT	Form			X					X				X
	Line			X					X				X
	Color			X					X				X
	Texture			X					X				X

 Short Term Long Term

2. Does the project design meet visual resource management objectives? ___ Yes No

Visual resource management (VRM) objectives are established upon a determination of visual resource management classes through the resource management planning process. Through the California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley (BLM 2002), all BLM-managed lands within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument were designated as VRM Class II, except for designated wilderness which are VRM Class I areas. The Northwest La Quinta Cove peak trail would utilize a segment of the North and South Eisenhower alternatives of the Palm Desert to La Quinta Cove connector trail in Section 2; this segment would traverse BLM-managed lands designated as VRM Class II. On these BLM lands, changes in any of the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) caused by a management activity should not be evident in the characteristic landscape. Contrasts may be seen, but must not attract attention. A contrast rating analysis for this segment has been prepared. The portion of the peak trail in Section 1 occurs entirely on non-Federal lands.

Ascending the isolated peak in Section 1 would likely require bench cuts to achieve a reasonable grade. These bench cuts would likely expose subsurface materials of contrasting color to the characteristic landscape. Given the small scale of the peak, the low angles of observation

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(thereby maximizing views of the vertical dimension of the bench cuts), and the close proximity of observers (nearby golfers and occupants of adjacent residences) to virtually all sides of the peak, the contrasts of line and color would not likely be overlooked. It is not anticipated that mitigation measures would be effective given the close proximity of viewers.

In summary, bench cuts on the flanks of the isolated peak would likely be seen and attract the attention of the casual observer, though mitigation measures identified below would reduce visibility.

3. Additional mitigating measures recommended? Yes No

- (a) Where possible, construction of the trail in continuous straight lines should be avoided; irregular lines that repeat lines of the characteristic landscape should be incorporated into the trail's design.
- (b) Natural screens (vegetation and landforms) should be used where possible.

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**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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VISUAL CONTRAST RATING WORKSHEET
Southeast La Quinta Cove Perimeter Trail

date: August 15, 2003
 weather conditions: hazy (humid); mid-afternoon sun
 evaluator: Jim Foote, Outdoor Recreation Planner
 Field Office: Palm Springs-South Coast
 Activity (program): Recreation

SECTION A. PROJECT INFORMATION

project location: Sec. 13 (T6S R6E); Sec. 18 (T6S R7E)
 VRM class: II
 key observation point(s): southeast corner of La Quinta Cove

SECTION B. CHARACTERISTIC LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

land/water: mountainous terrain
 vegetation: sparse desert plants
 structures: adjacent water storage facility (new)

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	steep, rugged, complex terrain penetrated by small alluvial fan	indistinct	adjacent water storage facility: geometric
LINE	bold complex skyline; dominant diagonal/vertical elements of sub-skyline landscape	indistinct	adjacent water storage facility: predominantly horizontal
COLOR	medium brown/tan	indistinct	adjacent water storage facility: tan tank; gray support pad and hillside excavation
TEXTURE	coarse	indistinct	adjacent water storage facility: smooth

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SECTION C. PROPOSED ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

land/water: project requires new surface disturbance
 vegetation: no noticeable vegetative manipulation is anticipated;
 occasional removal of individual plants may occur
 structures: no noticeable structure installation; signs, if installed, are
 not anticipated to be noticeable from key observation
 points

	LAND/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURES
FORM	conforms to surface except where side-hill traverses require bench cutting	n/a	n/a
LINE	band; horizontal/diagonal	n/a	n/a
COLOR	light tan	n/a	n/a
TEXTURE	smooth	n/a	n/a

SECTION D. CONTRAST RATING

1. DEGREE OF CONTRAST		FEATURE											
		LAND/WATER				VEGETATION				STRUCTURES			
		Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None
ELEMENT	Form			X				X				X	
	Line			X				X				X	
	Color			X				X				X	
	Texture				X			X				X	

X Short Term X Long Term

2. Does the project design meet visual resource management objectives? X Yes ___ No

Visual resource management (VRM) objectives are established upon a determination of visual resource management classes through the resource management planning process. Through the California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley (BLM 2002), all BLM-managed lands within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument were designated as VRM Class II, except for designated wilderness which are VRM Class I areas. The Southeast La Quinta Cove perimeter trail would traverse some BLM-managed lands designated as VRM Class II. On these BLM lands, changes in any of the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) caused by a management activity should not be evident in the characteristic landscape. Contrasts may be seen, but must not attract attention. A contrast rating analysis for this segment has been prepared.

The proposed Southeast La Quinta Cove perimeter trail would generally skirt the edges of an alluvial fan as it ascends the northwest flank of the Coral Reef Mountains. Few, if any, bench cuts would be required for this low elevation trail. Minor modifications at the edges of the alluvial fan would be required for construction of the trail; modifications would likely be limited to movement of small rocks and occasional vegetation. Use of localized topographic screening

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would minimize visibility by allowing views of short trail segments only. Sporadic contrasts of line and color may be seen but would not likely attract attention.

In summary, segments of the trail may be seen but would not likely attract the attention of a casual observer. The adjacent water storage facility (new) would likely distract attention away from the trail as the dominating man-made facility in the immediate area.

3. Additional mitigating measures recommended? Yes No

Although contrasts are anticipated to be weak, mitigating measures to reduce line and color contrasts are recommended.

- (a) Where possible, construction of the trail in continuous straight lines should be avoided; irregular lines that repeat lines of the characteristic landscape should be incorporated into the trail's design. Natural screens (vegetation and landforms) should be used where possible.
- (b) When constructing side-hill bench cuts, surface disturbance downhill of the trail's tread should be minimized. Cuts should be shaped to appear as natural forms. Freshly broken rock faces should be treated with asphalt emulsion or gray paint to reduce color contrasts.

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