Appendix 6: Scenery Management System Inventory Overview

Contents

1. Introduction

The Planning Rule requires that the plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to provide for scenic character (§ 219.10(b)(1)(i)). When developing plan components, the Responsible Official shall take into account scenic character (§ 219.8(b)(2)) and consider aesthetic values, geologic features, scenery, and viewsheds (§ 219.10 (a)(1)). The Scenery Management System represents the agency's latest science in fulfilling its legal requirements for managing scenic resources. Forest Service Manual 1921.03 requires that plan revisions use the SMS to address scenic character and develop scenery-related plan direction, unless the Responsible Official provides written justification and receives concurrence from the Regional Forester. This provides a framework for developing plan components related to scenic character by evaluating and assigning values to the scenic resources based on how people interact with the landscape, both while visiting the national forest and as the landscape serves as a backdrop to their experiences outside on the national forest.

Other guidance to support meeting the requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule include Forest Service Manual 2380 and Landscape Aesthetics - A Handbook for Scenery Management (Agriculture Handbook 701) (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1995). These documents describe the framework and contains additional information on the Scenery Management System. Additionally, several concepts detailed in Forest Service Manual 2310, Chapter 10 - Sustainable Recreation Planning are complementary to the Scenery Management System (SMS). Ecological processes and disturbance patterns provide a foundation for scenic character. Valued aspects of the built environment are integral to SMS and contributes to a landscape's sense of place. Public engagement and stakeholder input can be included in SMS to ensure

that the values of the public and how/where they relate to and interact with the landscape can inform decision-making processes on desired scenic integrity objectives and plan components.

The USDA Forest Service Washington Office developed a SMS National Inventory Mapping Protocol to meet the intent of the planning rule requirements and supporting Forest Service Manual and Handbook direction. The protocol ensures that the same processes and considerations are folded into each plan development or revision effort. Products from the National Inventory Mapping Protocol include:

- Scenic character descriptions
- Scenic attractiveness (degree of scenic diversity)
- Concern levels (importance of scenery to those viewing it)
- Landscape visibility (landscape sensitivity and how/where people view scenery)
- Scenic classes (combination of concern levels and visibility, assigns the importance of scenery for comparison with other resource)
- Existing scenic integrity (intactness of scenic character attributes)

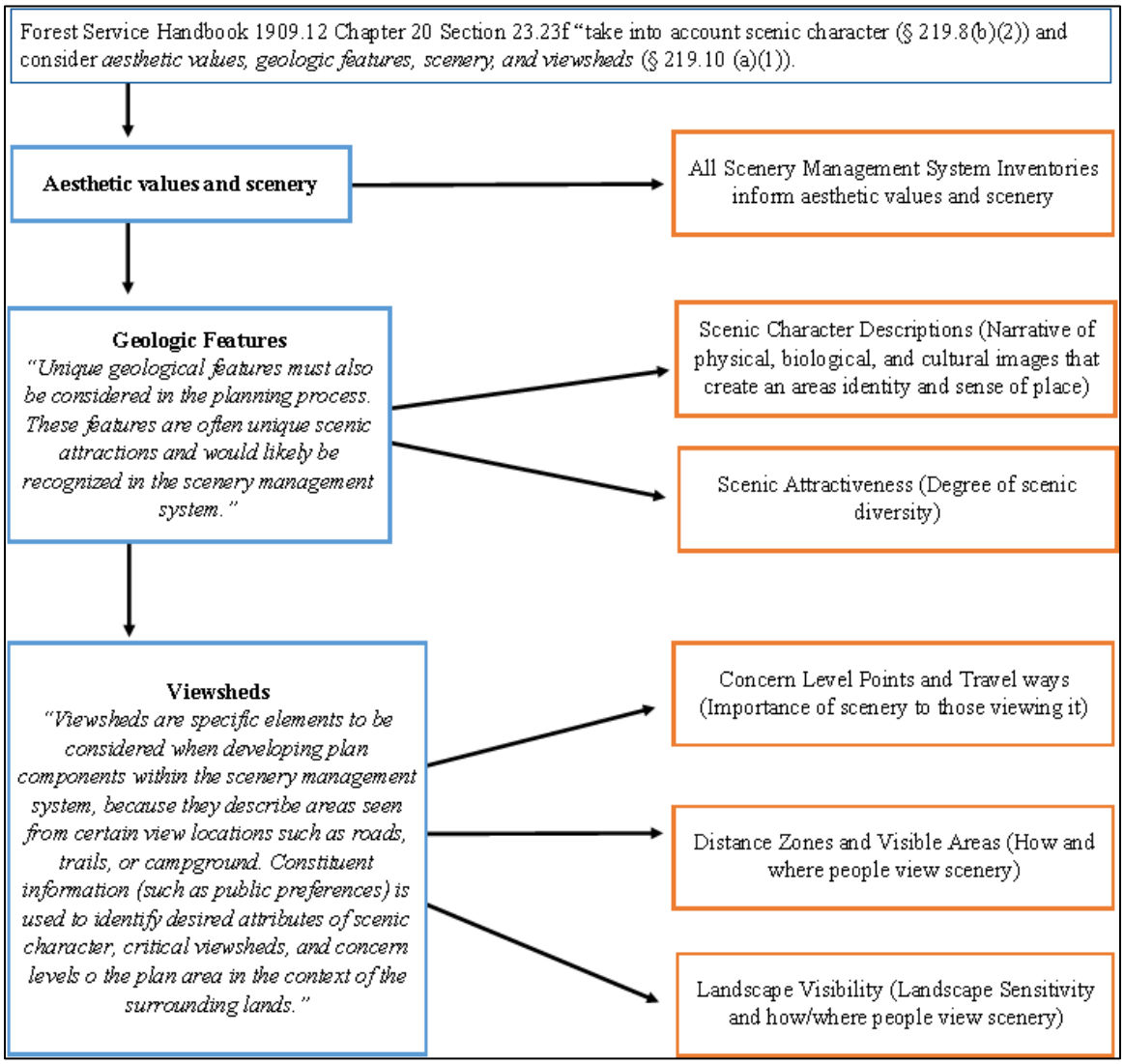

Figure A6.1—Scenery Management System Inventories ensure that Land Management Plan Revision Efforts take into account scenic character and consider aesthetic values, geologic features, scenery, and viewsheds

These inventories are essential to inform the forest assessment and establish the existing scenic conditions. Based on these products, the interdisciplinary team and public can work together to develop desired scenic integrity objectives and other components for the plan revision. The revised plan and associated scenery components will help those implementing management across the landscape understand which desired scenic character attributes are to remain intact.

2. Past Approaches and Existing Data Sources

The Visual Management System informed the development of the current 1986 Lolo National Forest Plan. Since that time, the agency shifted to the Scenery Management System, which integrates much of the same concepts from the earlier Visual Management System while updating terminology and increasing the role of constituents throughout the inventory and planning processes. It also borrows from concepts of ecosystem management and improves the integration of other biological, physical, and social/cultures resources into scenery management planning (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1995). As the Lolo National Forest Plan Revision effort continues, information from past efforts will be used as appropriate to inform the assessment and plan development process.

When the Lolo National Forest prepared for the 2006 Land and Resource Management Plan Revision, the planning team developed several of the required Scenery Management System Inventories. While the methodology used at that time reflects the guidance from the 2020 National Scenery Management System Inventory Mapping Protocol, data updates, information availability, and requirement changes required prompted us to recreate or develop preliminary inventories not available from the 2006 effort. These products will be reviewed and validated internally, as well as through public engagement efforts.

2.1 Scenic Character Descriptions

Scenic character is a combination of the physical, biological, and cultural images that gives an area its scenic identity and contributes to its sense of place. Scenic character provides a frame of reference from which to determine scenic attractiveness and to measure scenic integrity (36 CFR 219.19). Scenic character descriptions for ecological subregions across the Lolo National Forest include:

- How the landscape has developed over time using information from archeologist, historians, ecologist, and others familiar with the influences of the Lolo National Forest landscape.
- Potential landscape character, informed by potential vegetation inventories.
- Existing scenic attributes such as landform, vegetative patterns, water characteristics, and cultural features.
- Existing scenic attributes which affect the senses of the aesthetic experience other than sight, such as sound, small, taste, touch.

Earlier revision and planning efforts did not complete scenic character description narratives and are being developed as part of the assessment. To capture the scenic character descriptions as outlined above, we began with the Provinces and Ecological subregions of the United States to understand the diversity of landscapes represented across the Forest. While much of the vegetation (patterns, existing, potential), geological, landform, and water characteristics are supported from subregion and land type association summaries and other existing data and information, we integrated local knowledge and cultural influences to understand what these individual areas mean to local communities and how they interact with the landscape in these settings.

The Lolo National Forest falls within the Northern Rocky Mountain Forest-Steppe – Coniferous Forest – Alpine Meadow and Middle Rocky Mountain Steppe – Coniferous Forest – Alpine Meadow ecological provinces (Figure A6.2). Scenic character description narratives are based on their delineations with supplemental section/subregion information and resource specialist input to understand what additional landscape attributes help capture the character within that portion of the LNF.

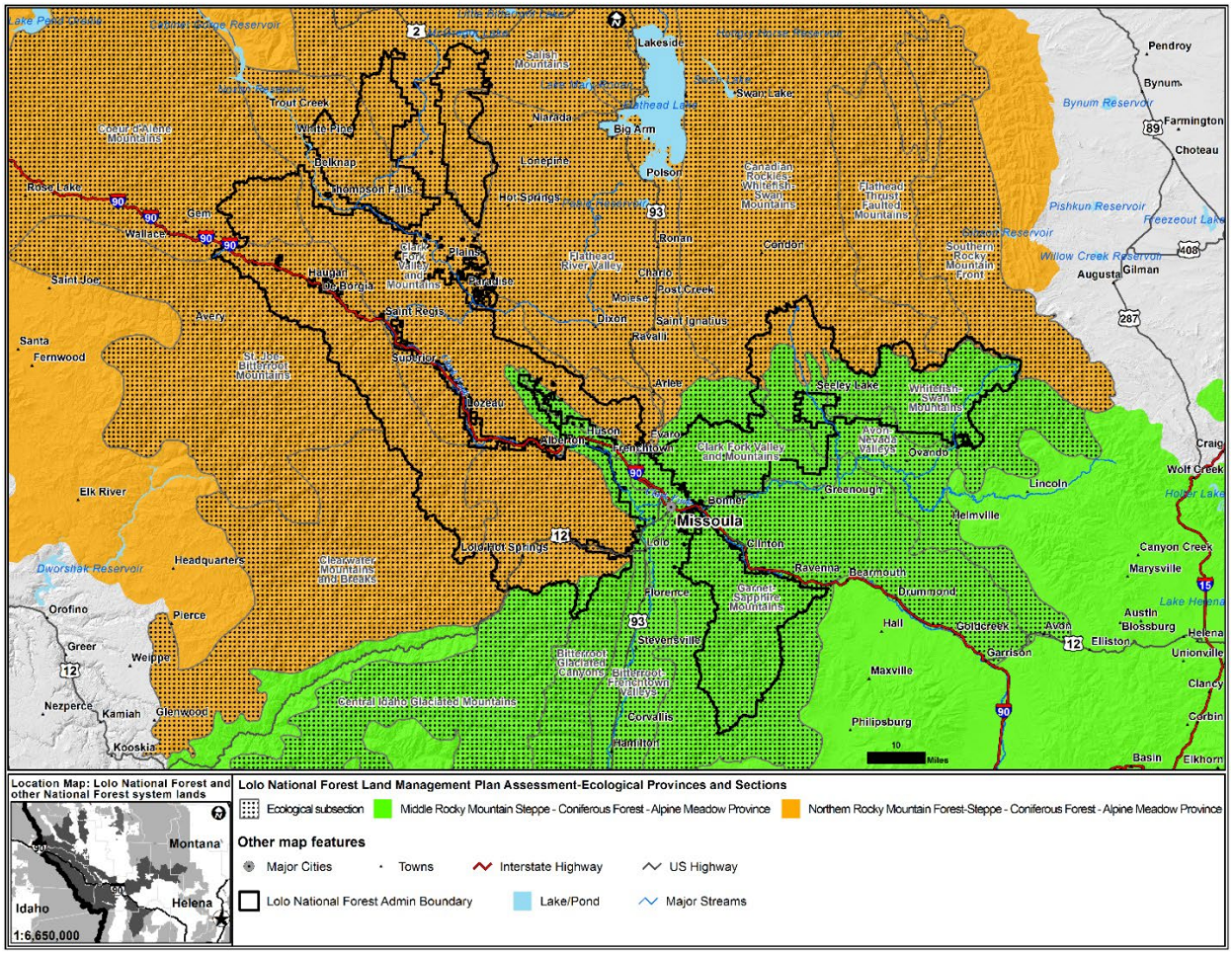

Figure A6.2—Ecological subregions of the Lolo National Forest

2.1.1 Northern Rocky Mountain Forest – Steppe – Coniferous Forest – Alpine Meadow Province

The majority (69 percent) of the Lolo National Forest falls within the Northern Rocky Mountain Forest – Steppe – Coniferous Forest – Alpine Meadow ecological province. This province includes the Superior, Plains-Thompson Falls, and Ninemile Ranger Districts, as well as the western portion of the Missoula Ranger District. The Northern Rocky Mountain Forest – Steppe – Coniferous Forest – Alpine Meadow Province is classified as a maritime-influenced cool temperate climate with warm, dry summers and cold, moist winters with heavy snow. Small areas of glaciers occur near the Canadian border. High-elevation, high-relief mountains are the main landforms. Vegetation is mainly evergreen and deciduous, needleleaf forest that varies in composition with altitude and aspect.

Within this province, there are 3 sections to help further refine and capture the diversity of landscapes represented within this western portion part of the Forest. The most prominent section is Section M333D – Bitterroot Mountains, which makes over half of the LNF (58 percent). Several subregions make up this section including the Clark Fork Mountains and Valley (M333Dc, 1,013,143 acres) and St. Joe-Bitterroot Mountains (M333Db, 405,897 acres), as well as the Coeur d'Alene Mountains (M333Dc, 91,219 acres). Additionally, northwestern portion of the Plains-Thompson Falls Ranger District falls within Section M333B – Flathead Valley Section (7 percent of the LNF), which consists of the Salish Mountains (M333Bb, 177,462 acres) and Flathead River Valley (M333Bc. 17,592 acres) subregions. Section M333C

– Northern Rockies makes up the remaining portion of this province (3 percent of the LNF) and includes the Canadian Rockies-Whitefish-Swan Mountains subregion (M333Cb, 86,923 acres). Subsections covering a very small portion of the Forest (less than 1 percent) within this province that are not discussed as part of the scenic character include Clearwater Mountains and Breaks (M333De), Flathead Thrust Faulted Mountains (M333Ce), and Southern Rocky Mountain Front (M333Ch).

Landscape attributes across all section and subsections

Within the Bitterroot Mountain section, elevation ranges from 1,200 to 7,00 feet and is comprised of steep dissected mountains, some with sharp crests and narrow valleys. The Flathead Valley section ranges from 2,000 to 7,000 feet in elevation and is characterized by glaciated mountain, glacial moraines, large glacial troughs, and glacial and lacustrine basins. The Northern Rockies section generally ranges from 3,000 to 9,500 feet, with some alpine areas ranging from 8,000 to 10,000 feet. This section has steep glaciated overthrust mountains with sharp alpine ridges and cirques at higher elevations.

Major rivers include the Clark Fork, Saint Regis, and Thompson Rivers. Several previously studied eligible and suitable Wild & Scenic River segments fall within this province including the Clark Fork River, Cache Creek, and West Fork of Fish Creek.

According to the Descriptions of Ecological Subregions of the United States for this section (McNab et al. 2007), the potential vegetation expected within this section is classified as cedar-hemlock-pine forest, Douglas-fir forest, and western ponderosa pine. Common species include western redcedar, western hemlock, western white pine, Douglas-fir, and ponderosa pine. Other notable species include grandfir and mountain hemlock. Birds are typical of the northern Rocky Mountains, such as Steller's jay and pine siskin. Dabbling ducks, harlequin ducks, and common golden eye occur. At higher elevations flammulated owl, boreal owl, Lewis' woodpecker, American dipper, pygmy nuthatch, and Townsend's warblers are among a few common avian species. Small mammals include snowshoe hare and norther flying squirrels. Rare mammals include gray wolf, fisher, wolverine, northern bog lemmings, and Coeur d' Alene salamander.

Because this province also includes Section M333B – Flathead Valley and Section M333C – Northern Rockies, some additional species may be found in this western portion of the LNF. In addition to previously mentioned species, birds associated with the northern Rocky Mountains such as Vaux's swift, calliope hummingbird, pileated woodpecker, gray jay, red-eyed vireo, and Townsend's warbler can be found here. Some additional avian species of note include osprey, boreal owl, barred owl, American dipper, Cordilleran flycatcher, and varied and Swainson's thrush. Larger herbivore and carnivore species such as deer, elk, moose, black bear, bobcat, and cougar are typical. Rare mammals also include lynx in addition to those previously mentioned.

Petty Creek, Ferry Landing, and Barktable Ridge Research Natural Areas are all within this province.

Principle natural sources of disturbance include fire, insects, and disease. Mass wasting also occurs in some areas. Fires were mostly large, low frequency, high-intensity stand-replacing fires, except for the east quarter of the section, which experienced mostly low intensity, frequent ground fire. Fire suppression efforts have altered the fire regime to a large extent.

Key historical, cultural, and present uses in this landscape

Within this province, land uses include wildlife habitat, timber harvesting, recreation. Some historic mining, and present-day small-scale mining, has taken place within this area. Grazing also occurs within valley areas.

There are many interpretive opportunities at destination developed recreation sites and historical sites. These include the Lolo Trail National Historic Landmark, where the Nez Perce National Historic Trail and the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail pass through the Highway 12 corridor. Visitors can stop by Fort Fizzle and Lolo Trail at Howard Creek to picnic, hike, or learn more about these historic features as the highway leads them to the Lolo Pass Visitor Center (managed by the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest). Other historic and cultural features within the area include the Savenac Historic Tree Nursery, which also allow reservations for overnight accommodations or group events. The administrative building at this location offers visitors Forest information and interpretation.

Although the Hiawatha Trail is managed by the Idaho Panhandle National Forest, this trail and associated St. Paul Pass Tunnel highlight the influence of developing the American West through historic rail lines, as well as the early mining and logging history of the Forest. Historic railroad corridors continue to provide recreational access and support both motorized and non-motorized use. Several National Recreation Trails are located within this province include Stateline Trail, Baldy Mountain Lookout, Skookum Butte, and Cascade Falls Nature trail. Within this subsection, several lookouts are available for reservations for overnight use and are associated with notable landscape features like Cougar Peak, Big Hole Peak, Up Up Mountain, Thompson Peak, and West Fork Butte. There are several developed campgrounds provide overnight accommodations and are often associated with water features at many of the rivers, streams, and lakes found within this part of the forest. Numerous trailheads accessing both motorized and non-motorized trail systems allow visitors to explore the Forest by foot, horseback, or offroad vehicles. Winter recreation is popular as well and supported by a network of motorized and non-motorized trails and the Lolo Pass and Lookout Pass ski areas, both of which are managed by other National Forests. The Forest's only Scenic Byway, St. Regis to Paradise, is also located within this province.

2.1.2 Middle Rocky Mountain – Steppe – Coniferous Forest – Alpine Meadow Province

The Middle Rocky Mountain – Steppe – Coniferous Forest – Alpine Meadow Province covers the remaining one-third of the LNF (31 percent). This area includes the eastern portion of the Missoula Ranger District within the Rattlesnake and Rock Creek areas and the Seeley Ranger District. Also characterized as a maritime-influences province, the temperate climate has warm, dry summer and cool to cold moist winters. Most precipitation occurs during falls, winter, and spring as snow. Dominant landforms are mountains of moderate elevations. Vegetation is mainly evergreen, needleleaf forests that vary in composition with altitude, although lower slopes and plain are dominated by shrubland and herbaceous cover.

Within this province, there are two sections to help further refine and capture the diversity of landscapes represented within this eastern portion of the Forest. The major section representing is part of the Forest is Section M332B – Bitterroot Valley, which consists of the Garnet-Sapphire Mountains (M332Bg, 276,000 acres), Whitefish-Swan Mountains (M332Bh, 216,891 acres), Clark Fork Valley and Mountains (M332Bl, 195,460 acres) subregions. Other subsections covering a lesser extent of the Forest within this section include Avon-Nevada Valleys (M332Bp. 80,577 acres), Bitterroot-Frenchtown Valleys (M332Bb, 42,905 acres), and Bitterroot Glaciated Canyons (M332Ba, 13,993 acres). Section M332A – Idaho Batholith, Central Idaho Glaciated Mountain (M332Ab) only covers about 18 acres (less than 1 percent) within this province and will not be discussed as an element of scenic character.

Landscape attributes across all sections

As described in McNab et al. (2007) and specific to Section M332B – Bitterroot Valley, this area includes high, glaciated mountain with alpine ridges and cirques at higher elevations and glacial and lacustrine basins at lower elevations. Elevation ranges from 2,500 to 6,000 feet in basin areas, and ranges from 3,000 to 8,000 feet in the mountains with some alpine areas reach up to 10,000 feet.

Major rivers include the Bitterroot, Clearwater, Clark Fork, Blackfoot, and the North Fork of the Blackfoot River. Several previously studied eligible and suitable Wild & Scenic River segments fall within this province including those associated with Rock Creek, South Fork Lolo Creek, Morrell Creek, Rattlesnake Creek, North Fork Blackfoot River, Clearwater River, and Blackfoot River.

Vegetation is classified as Douglas-fir forest and western ponderosa forest (80 percent) and foothills prairie (20 percent), mostly in the lower valleys. The upper timberline occurs at about 8,800 feet. Common tree species include western larch, Douglas-fir, subalpine fir, and ponderosa pine. Grassland species are mainly bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, and rough fescue. Similar to the other province, birds are typical of the northern Rocky Mountains and include several of the same species such as black-capped chickadee, Steller's jay, harlequin ducks, flammulated owl, Lewis' woodpecker, and American dipper. Other species noted within this section are black-backed woodpecker, Nashville warbler, and western tanager. Slightly drier and more open areas also provide habitat for dryland species such as sage grouse, black-billed magpies, and horned larks. Larger herbivore and carnivore species such as deer, elk, moose, black bear, bobcat, and cougar are typical. Small mammals include snowshoe hare and norther flying squirrels. Rare mammals include grizzly bear, gray wolf, lynx, wolverine, and northern bog lemming.

Common disturbances within this province include fire, insects, and disease. Fires are generally low intensity, frequently ground fires prior to fire suppression efforts. Fuel accumulations have now set the stage for large, high-intensity fires.

Key historical, cultural, and present uses in this landscape

Within this province, land uses are include timber harvesting with some livestock grazing. Mining and recreational uses are also important.

Several areas within this province are key popular destinations for forest visitors recreating on the Forest. The Rattlesnake National Recreation Area and Wilderness is in the backyard of Missoula and is a high-profile area for non-motorized recreation and an escape from the city. Pattee Canyon and Blue Mountain recreation areas near Missoula offer hiking, biking, and horseback trail riding experiences. Blue Mountain Equestrian and Hiking Trail is one of two National Recreation Trails within the eastern part of the Forest. Given their proximity to this small city, these areas receive a lot of day use at picnic areas, disc golf courses, and trail systems. They offer a reprieve from the city and are amazing recreation assets to add to the quality of life for those living nearby. To be able to drive 10-15 minutes outside of town and have so many options for recreation is a unique and prized amenity to the area. Also within this area, the Montana Snowbowl operates under a recreation special use permit and provides year-round recreation opportunities on National Forest System lands including skiing, disc golfing, ziplining, and mountain biking.

Rock Creek, an eligible Wild & Scenic River, is known as a blue-ribbon trout stream and is floatable in the spring and early summer months. The Welcome Creek Wilderness area and 1986 Forest Plan Sliderock Recommended Wilderness are located within the Rock Creek area and add to the undeveloped character of this portion of the forest.

The Clark Fork, Clearwater, Blackfoot, and North Fork of the Blackfoot are also known for their fisheries. In addition of fishing, these rivers are floatable and attract visitors to kayak, canoe, and float during warm summer days. The only river trail on the Forest aligns with the Clearwater River and provides opportunities for wildlife viewing while exploring a 2-mile stretch of the river before flowing into Seeley Lake. Another popular National Recreation Trail, Morrell Falls, guides visitors along a relatively flat trail to a 90-foot double waterfall. The Seeley chain of lakes area provides lake fishing and supports a popular ice-fishing community as well. The Seeley Ranger District area is a winter recreation mecca supporting both Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, and dog sledding, as well as motorized winter recreation. The Scapegoat Wilderness area is located within this province and is a gateway to the rest of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex.

2.2 Scenic Attractiveness

Scenic attractiveness is the primary indicator of the intrinsic scenic beauty of a landscape and of the positive responses it evokes in people. It helps determine landscapes that are important for scenic beauty, based on commonly held perceptions of the beauty of landform, vegetation pattern, composition, surface water characteristics, and land use patterns and cultural features. The scenic importance of a landscape based on human perception of the intrinsic beauty of landform, rock form, water form, and vegetation pattern.

The scenic attractiveness inventory breaks the landscape into three classifications:

- **Class A:** Distinctive (extraordinary or special landscapes which stand out from common landscape). Areas where landform, vegetation patterns, water characteristics, and cultural features combine to provide unusual, unique, or outstanding scenic quality. These landscapes have strong positive attributes of variety, unity, vividness, mystery, intactness, order, harmony, uniqueness, patterns, and balance.
- **Class B:** Common (refers to landscapes with ordinary and routine scenic attractiveness). Areas where landform, vegetation patterns, water characteristics, and cultural features combine to provide ordinary or common scenic quality. These landscapes have positive yet common attributes of variety, unity, vividness, mystery intactness, order, harmony, uniqueness, patterns, and balance.
- **Class C:** Indistinctive. Areas where landform, vegetation patterns, water characteristics, and cultural features have low scenic quality. Often, water and rock form of any consequence are missing in class C landscapes. These landscapes have weak or missing attributes of variety, unity, vividness, mystery, intactness, order, harmony, uniqueness, pattern, and balance.

The Scenic Attractiveness Inventory created for the 2006 revision effort aligned with current SMS mapping guidance. Because this inventory is largely based on stable information, such as landscape topography, geological and water features, and variability in vegetation (potential and existing), scenic attractiveness classification remains relatively stable over time. As we validated this existing information, we realized some areas were not classified as ‘Distinctive’, ‘Common’, or ‘Indistinctive’. This information gap can create challenges developing subsequent inventories, such as Scenic Class. To populate this classification, we relied on Appendix C of the National SMS Mapping Inventory Protocol (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2020), adjacent area classification, and knowledge of these areas. As appropriate, these areas were classified according to their surrounding areas as Class A – Distinctive, Class B – Common, and Class C – Indistinctive. Several areas pertained to recently acquired lands near Missoula and the I-90 corridor that did not have land systems inventory information associated with them during the development of the 2006 inventory. Unless directly adjacent to a ‘Distinct’ area, all were classified as Class B – Common based on their topography and adjacent area classification.

2.3 Concern Levels

Concern Levels help us capture public importance placed on landscapes viewed from travelways and use areas. Travelways are linear features across the landscape with concentrations of public viewing, such as roads, trails, railroads, and streams. Use areas are spots that receive concentrated public viewing use such as campgrounds, scenic overlooks, visitor centers, lakes, interpretive sites, and so on. Concern levels provide a foundation for other aspects of the scenery management system such as landscape visibility and distance zones. They also influence the development of existing and desired Scenic Integrity Objectives, which guide the management of scenery resources.

Concern Levels are divided into three categories. Level 1 represents travelways and use areas of high concern for scenery management. Level 2 are locations of moderate concern. Areas assigned to Level 3 represent locations of low concern. Data used to identify Concern Level Points and Travel ways have substantially updated since earlier revision efforts, therefore these inventories were re-created and validated to support SMS inventories. Refer to Landscape Aesthetics, A Handbook for Scenery Management, Agriculture Handbook 701, for detailed information on determining concern levels (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1995).

Concern Level 1: all primary and secondary travel routes, use areas and water bodies where the level of interest in scenery is high is a concern level 1 regardless of the level of use. Initial Concern Level 1 Points and Travelways included:

- All Designated Wilderness areas and primary access roads/trails
- Rattlesnake National Recreation Area and primary access roads/trails
- Administrative designated areas, including Pattee Canyon and Blue Mountain Recreation Areas, Montana Snowbowl and Lookout Pass Ski Areas, and Lolo Pass Visitor Center and Nordic ski area
- Research Natural Areas
- National Historic Trails and National Recreation Trails
- Scenic Byway, the Saint Regis-Paradise Cutoff (MT-135)
- Primary Roads (includes all Maintenance Level 5 roads)
- Eligible/Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers
- All other recreation sites at Development Scale 4 and 5, as well as Historic Sites, Lookouts/Cabins, Resorts, Interpretive sites, and Viewing areas
- Nearby non-National Forest Service points of interest, including Historical Sites, Interpretive sites, campgrounds, lookouts, and resorts.

Concern Level 2: Includes all seen areas from primary travel routes, use areas, and water bodies where the forest or grassland visitors have a moderate interest in scenic qualities or low interest in scenic qualities if the area receives moderate to high use. Initial Concern Level 2 Points and Travelways included:

- All secondary access roads (includes all Maintenance Level 4 roads)
- Trail Class Level 3-5
- All Recreation site at Development Scale 3
- Nearby non-National Forest Service points of interest, including Viewing areas and Picnic areas

Concern Level 3: All remaining roads, trails, and recreation sites not included in Concern Levels 1 and 2. These landscapes and secondary travelways and use areas have local importance only and generally get low to moderate recreation use.

2.4 Landscape visibility

Landscape visibility inventory helps identify important viewshed across the Forest. Viewsheds are specific elements to consider when developing plan components within the scenery management system because they describe areas seen from certain view locations such as roads, trails, or campgrounds (Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 20, Section 23.23f).

This inventory provides a reflection of the public concern (importance) of scenery along travel ways and at use areas as captured in the concern levels inventory. It also considers the degree of discernible detail (sensitivity) of the landscape and the distance from the viewer. Distance zones are identified as foreground (up to ½ mile from the viewer), middleground (1/2 mile to 4 miles from the viewer), and background (4 miles from viewer to the horizon). Areas not visible from assigned concern level travel ways and use areas are identified as 'seldom seen' areas.

Based on the assigned concern levels, about 467,992 acres (18 percent) of the Lolo National Forest is visible in the foreground from concern level 1 and 2 points and travelways. About 39 percent of the Forest is visible from these locations and areas as the middleground and just over one-quarter is visible in the background. The landscape visibility analysis showed that about 472,896 acres (18 percent) of the Forest is seldom seen from the locations and areas identified in the concern level points and travelways.

Table A6.1—Landscape Visibility based on the Concern Level points and travelways

Visibility Distance and Concern Level	Total Acres	Percent of the Plan Area
Foreground Concern Level 1	321,365	12
Foreground Concern Level 2	146,627	6
Middleground Concern Level 1	771,100	29
Middleground Concern Level 2	242,232	9
Background Concern Level 1	503,355	19
Background Concern Level 2	166,799	6
Seldom Seen Concern Level 1	15,874	1
Seldom Seen Concern Level 3	457,022	17
Total Acres included in the data[1]	**2,624,374**	**100**

[1]Total acres differ from the Lolo National Forest administrative boundary due to ArcGIS data processing tools. Both National Forest System and non-NFS lands are included

2.5 Scenic classes

Scenic classes are a measure of the value of scenery in a National Forest and used during land management planning to compare the importance of scenery along with the importance of other resources, such as timber, wildlife, old growth, and minerals (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1995). These classes are a combination of scenic attractiveness and landscape visibility, which takes into consideration the sensitivity and importance of scenic resources. Represented by 7 values, scenic classes 1 and 2 have high value for scenery, 3 through 5 have moderate value, and classes 6 and 7 have low value. This inventory does not take into consideration existing scenic integrity or desired conditions. It helps inform the revised plan development and desired scenic integrity objectives across the landscape.

Table A6.2— Scenic class matrix from (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1995)

Distance Zones/Seldom Seen and Concern Levels	Fg CL1	Mg CL1	Bg CL1	Fg CL2	Mg CL2	Bg CL2	Ss CL1	Ss CL2	Ss CL3
Scenic Attractiveness A	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	3
Scenic Attractiveness B	1	2	2	2	3	4	2	3	5
Scenic Attractiveness C	1	2	3	2	4	5	3	5	7

[1]Fg = Foreground, Mg = Middle ground, Bg = Background, Ss = Seldom Seen, CL = Concern Level

After applying the Landscape Visibility analysis using concern level points and travelways, this information was analyzed with the Scenic Attractiveness data to create a forest-wide Scenic Class coverage to help information development of desired scenic integrity. The majority of the Forest has a high value for scenery, covering 1,864,573 (71 percent) of lands within the Lolo NF administrative boundary. About 720,539 acres (28 percent) were found to have a moderate value for scenery and only 34,384 acres (1 percent) had low value for scenery.

2.6 Existing Scenic integrity

Scenic integrity represents the degree of direct human-caused deviation across the landscape. It is evaluated by measuring the degree of alteration in line, form, color, and texture from the natural or natural-appearing, landscape character. Mapping the existing scenic integrity allows us to understand how landscape character currently deviates from what would naturally be expected to occur there. This creates a baseline for comparing how different alternatives analyzed in the revised plan environmental analysis would affect scenery resources. There are four, nationally defined Scenic Integrity Objectives that can serve as desired conditions, and one (very low) used only in describing existing conditions.

Table A6.3—Descriptions of each existing scenic integrity classification

Existing Scenic Integrity	Description
Very High	The landscape is intact with only minor changes from the valued attributes described in the scenic character.
High	Management activities are unnoticed and the landscape appears unaltered.
Moderate	Management activities are noticeable but are subordinate to the scenic character. The landscape appears slightly altered.
Low	The landscape appears altered. Management activities are evident and sometimes dominate but are designed to blend with surroundings by repeating form, line, color, and texture of the attributes described in the scenic character.
Very Low	Used to describe landscape that are heavily altered and in which the valued attributes described in the scenic character are not evident. Very Low is only used to describe existing scenic integrity and is NOT used as a Scenic Integrity Objective or desired condition.

Based on applying the guidance from the National SMS Inventory Mapping Protocol, we compared the existing scenic integrity classification to the Visual Quality Objectives that were included in the 1986 Forest Plan. The majority of management areas with a preservation VQO showed high or very high existing scenic integrity. Over three-quarters of management areas with a retention VQO had a high existing scenic integrity, while about 20 percent had a moderate existing scenic integrity. As the allowance for modification or the intensity of management activities increased towards the modification/maximum modification VQO, these areas showed mostly a moderate existing scenic

integrity (62-66 percent) and only a small percentage of these areas (10-16 percent) showed a low existing scenic integrity classification. No lands showed a very low or unacceptable existing scenic integrity. Acres for each existing Scenic Integrity Classification is also summarized in the table below.

3. Considerations During Revised Plan Development

The Scenery Management System products help inform landscape character goals, desired conditions, and scenic integrity objectives in the revised plan. After the assessment and these inventories are complete, the revision team will develop alternatives to define where and to what degree deviations from landscape character are appropriate, prioritize management goals in areas of low scenic integrity, and identify strategies to move towards the desired conditions for scenery resources across the Lolo National Forest.

Desired scenic integrity objectives represent the minimum degree to which desired scenic character attributes are to remain intact (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1995). There are four, nationally defined Scenic Integrity Objectives that can serve as desired conditions as shown in the table below.

Table A6.4—Descriptions of desired scenic integrity objectives

Scenic Integrity Objectives	Description
Very High	The landscape is intact with only minor changes from the valued attributes described in the scenic character.
High	Management activities are unnoticed and the landscape appears unaltered.
Moderate	Management activities are noticeable but are subordinate to the scenic character. The landscape appears slightly altered.
Low	The landscape appears altered. Management activities are evident and sometimes dominate but are designed to blend with surroundings by repeating form, line, color, and texture of the attributes described in the scenic character.

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