

Item #4: Visual Quality

Evaluation Objectives: To evaluate progress in achieving visual quality objectives.

Methods: Evaluation of forest management plan visual quality objectives, visual management system and field observations.

Evaluation: Forest Plan standards for visual quality have been met during site-specific project planning throughout the monitoring period. A systematic sampling of all harvesting projects on the forest during this time period has not occurred.

A monitoring review of part of the South Island Project was done by the Flathead Forest's landscape architect. The visual quality objectives (VQOs) within the project area consist of modification and maximum modification within management areas 13, 15, 15D. The project harvest operations are currently ongoing but some units have been completed for one to two years.

Unit 6 and unit 35 were reviewed but monitoring will still continue as viewpoints to the project from Lake Mary Ronan were not completed. The low sensitivity, foreground views that were monitored met the designated VQO.

Figure 1 is from unit 6 and shows a unit harvested a couple of years ago. This unit has a lower visual impact compared to the hard edges and contrasting ridgeline tree effect of unit 35 (upper portion of figure 1 and figure 2).

Because of the high sensitivity from Lake Mary Ronan, the forest landscape architect recommends that any future projects within the viewshed of Lake Mary Ronan, a scenery analysis should be completed.



Figure 1. Unit 6 South Island Project



Figure 2. Unit 35 South Island Project

Recommended Actions: Change this monitoring item using the *Scenery Project Monitoring Form* to emphasize monitoring of site-specific projects after implementation has occurred in areas that have high visual concerns i.e. those with retention and partial retention visual quality objectives.