

WISCONSIN FOREST MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

PUB-FR-226 2003



Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Division of Forestry
PO Box 7921
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

For additional information, call **608-267-7494** or visit our web site at:
www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/forestry/

October, 2003

This document is intended solely as guidance, and does not include any mandatory requirements except where requirements found in statute or administrative rule are referenced. This guidance does not establish or affect legal rights or obligations, and is not finally determinative of any of the issues addressed.

This guidance does not create any rights enforceable by any party in litigation with the State of Wisconsin or the Department of Natural Resources. Any regulatory decisions made by the Department of Natural Resources in any manner addressed by this guidance will be made by applying the governing statutes and administrative rules to the relevant facts.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunities in its employment, programs, services, and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to **Equal Employment Opportunity Office, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.**

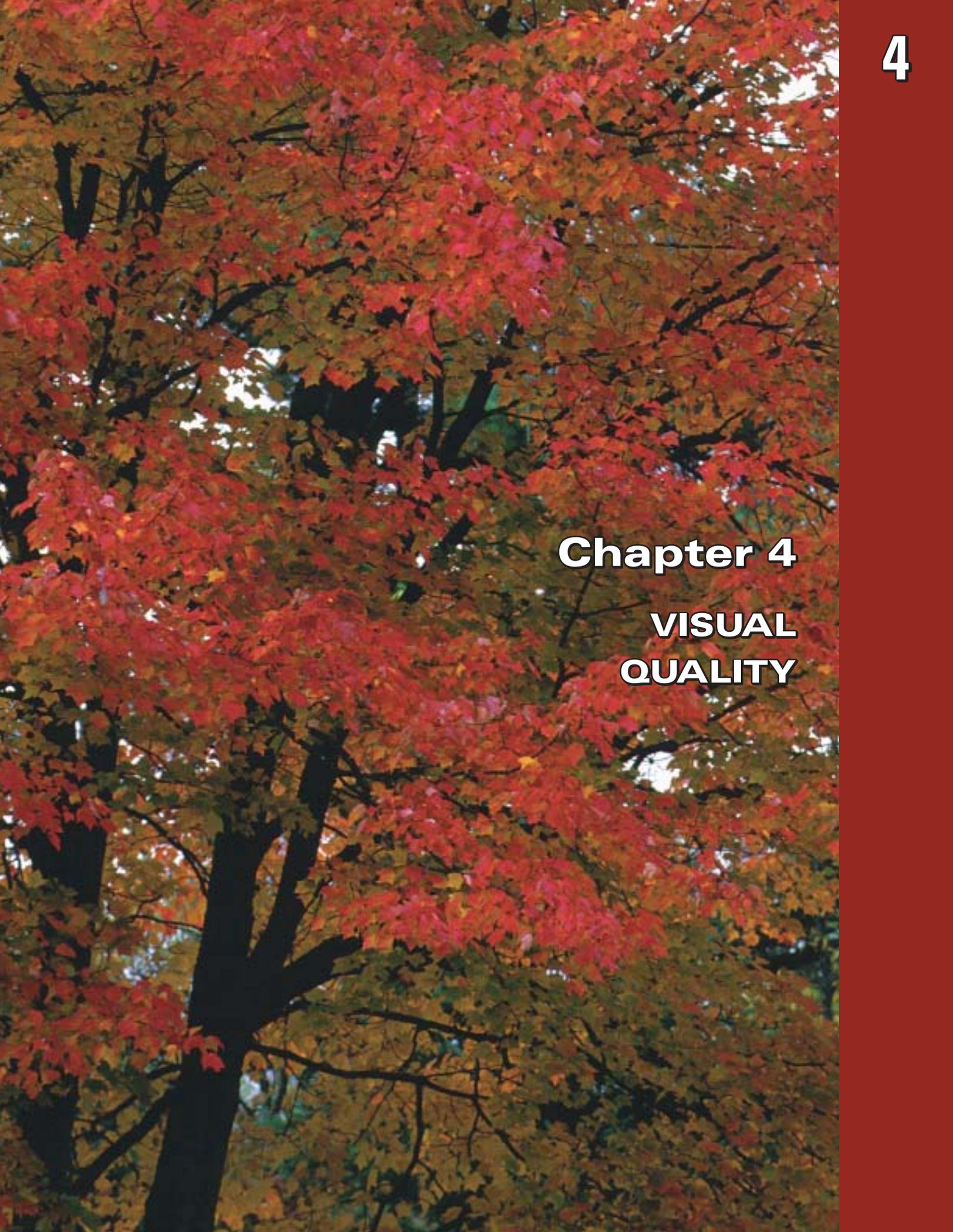
This publication is available in alternative format upon request.

Please call **608-267-7494** for more information.



Chapter 4

**VISUAL
QUALITY**



CHAPTER 4 — VISUAL QUALITY

THE VALUE OF VISUAL QUALITY	72
A Concern for Aesthetic Quality	72
Benefits of Visual Quality Management	73
VISUAL SENSITIVITY LEVELS	75
Recognizing Different Levels of Visual Sensitivity	75
Visual Sensitivity Levels	75
The Value of Recognizing Different Levels of Visual Sensitivity	76



THE VALUE OF VISUAL QUALITY



Figure 4-1: The “most sensitive” level applies to those travel routes where significant public use occurs, and where the visual quality is of high concern to all typical users.

A Concern for Aesthetic Quality

Concern about the aesthetic quality of forested lands throughout the state is a great source of pride for Wisconsin citizens. Scenic beauty – or “visual quality” – is one of the primary reasons people choose to spend their recreation and vacation time in or near forested areas. They are also attracted by the peace and quiet of the outdoors – the serenity, the solitude, and a host of other emotional, spiritual and sensory responses that make up the richly aesthetic and deeply personal experience that is so closely tied to time spent in or near our forests.

Wisconsin forests are particularly vital to the health of two industries: tourism and forest products. Many of the demands on the forests from these two industries are compatible and even complementary. Recognition of the importance of scenic values to recreational users has led to the development of a set of forest aesthetic management guidelines which have been incorporated in the Wisconsin DNR *Silviculture and Forest Aesthetics Handbook*, 2431.5. See Chapter 12: Timber Harvesting for specific techniques to balance timber harvesting and visual quality.

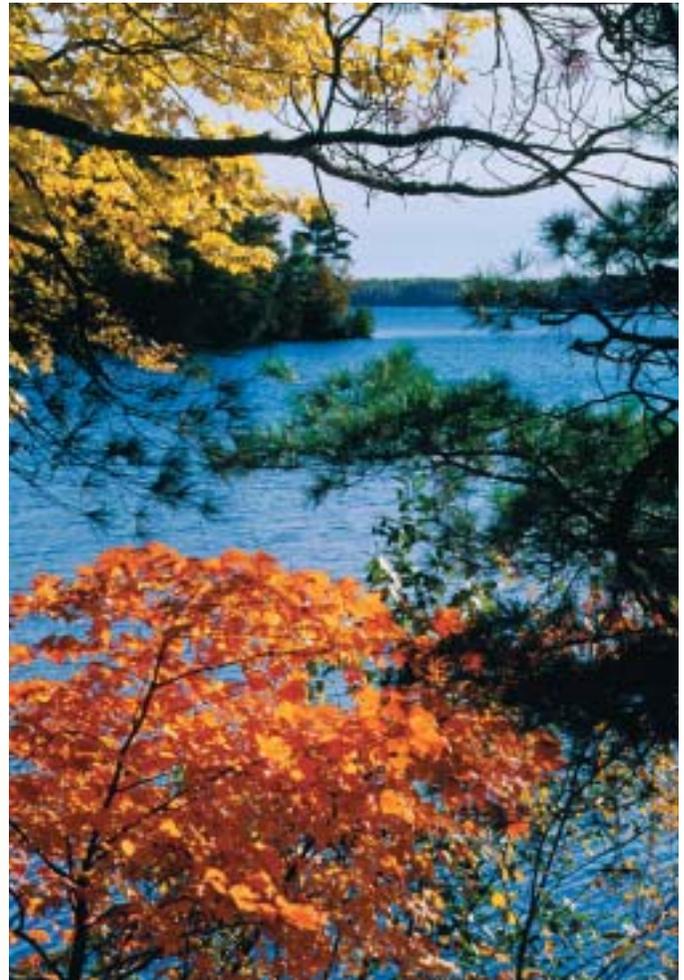


Figure 4-2: Scenic quality is one of the primary reasons people choose to spend their recreation time in or near forested areas.



Figure 4-3: Trilliums in Oneida County.

Benefits of Visual Quality Management

Visual quality is one important aspect of the broad, multi-faceted concept of integrated forest resource management. Visual quality management can:

- Enhance visual quality of forested lands for recreational users which results in a healthy tourism economy.
- Enhance public acceptance of forest management and timber harvesting, therefore, helping to sustain a healthy forest products industry.
- Minimize the visual and audible impacts of forest management activities on tourists and other recreational users.
- Minimize visibility of harvest areas by limiting apparent size of harvest.
- Minimize visual impact of slash.



Figure 4-4: Slash from pine harvests is much smaller in size than hardwood tops and limbs. Slash from mechanical harvesting, commonly used in pine, aspen and birch, is usually compacted by the processing machine.



Figure 4-5: Careful planning and control of the logging operation can have a major impact on the visual quality following a timber harvest.

- Minimize the impact of landing operations on recreational viewers and users.
- Minimize visual contrast created by snags and broken or leaning trees.
- Reduce visual impacts associated with the design and use of forest access roads.
- Reduce the visual impact of site preparation practices, and reduce the time that the effects of these practices are visible.
- Promote more natural-appearing stands.
- Enhance the aesthetics of visual management areas by minimizing visual impacts of timber stand improvement activities.
- Reduce visual impacts of treated vegetation.
- Reduce noise and unsightliness related to gravel pits.



Figure 4-6: Untreated logging slash, such as these oak tops, takes longer to decay and is often objectionable to landowners. Lopping of tops or harvesting firewood may provide a solution.



Figure 4-7: Large, unbroken clearcuts along well-traveled roads are often viewed by the public as unsightly, at least until the new regeneration becomes established on the site.



Figure 4-8: This aerial view shows a mosaic of pine and aspen stands with scalloped boundaries in a portion of the Northern Highland State Forest that is managed to enhance aesthetic quality.



Figure 4-9: This ground-level photo was taken in the center of the aerial view shown in Figure 4-8 while looking toward the lower left. This area, managed for aesthetic quality, shows oak sprouts and young aspen in the foreground, young jack pine and older aspen in the middle, and mature red and jack pine in the background.

VISUAL SENSITIVITY LEVELS

Recognizing Different Levels of Visual Sensitivity

Some of the factors important in the determination of visual sensitivity include:

- The perceived degree of sensitivity of users of that travel route or recreation area concerning landscape aesthetics.
- The volume and type of use the travel route or recreation area receives.
- The speed of travel within the route or area.



Figure 4-10: This major highway, a “most sensitive” example, carries a high traffic load through scenic hill country in Wisconsin.



Figure 4-11: An example of a “moderately sensitive” area, this narrow blacktop road winds alongside scenic Otter Creek in the Baraboo Hills.

Visual Sensitivity Levels

MOST SENSITIVE

Applies to travel routes and areas where significant public use occurs, and where visual quality is of high concern to typical users. Examples of such routes may include public highways, local roads, recreational lakes and rivers, and designated recreational trails and areas that provide a high level of scenic quality.

MODERATELY SENSITIVE

Applies to travel routes or recreation areas, not identified as “most sensitive,” where visual quality is of moderate concern to typical users. Examples of these routes and areas may include public highways and local roads, recreational lakes and rivers, and designated recreational trails that provide moderate to high scenic quality but less significant public use.

LESS SENSITIVE

Applies to travel routes or recreation areas, not identified as “most sensitive” or “moderately sensitive,” where visual quality is of less concern to typical users. Examples of these routes may include public highways and low-volume local forest roads, non-designated trails, and non-recreational lakes and rivers.



Figure 4-12: Example of a “less sensitive” area along this back road that receives very little traffic.

The Value of Recognizing Different Levels of Visual Sensitivity

Recognizing the level of visual sensitivity helps the landowner, resource manager and logger to choose the visual quality guidelines that help fulfill the landowner's expectations.

Timber sale contracts should reflect differences in visual sensitivity. An area classified as "most sensitive" would normally have different contract specifications than those used in an area classified as "less sensitive." Landings, for example should be avoided within view of travel routes or recreation areas classified as "most sensitive," while they might be visible in areas classified as "less sensitive," but located outside the travel route right-of-way.



Figure 4-13: The selective thinning in this red pine stand was designed to mimic natural changes that occur over time. Trees were removed from all size classes, so that the remaining stand has a mix of sizes, quality, and tree spacing, therefore, providing a more "natural" and less "plantation" look.



Figure 4-14: A buffer strip of uncut trees has been retained between this clearcut and the highway in the lower left of the photo to improve visual impact. A riparian management zone between the harvested area and the wetland on the right-hand side has been left uncut as well.



Figure 4-15: Autumn in the Baraboo Hills showcases the diversity found in a mixed pine and hardwood forested landscape.