

FPA process for visual landscape special values assessment and planning

The purpose of the guideline and flow chart detailed here is to provide a comprehensive procedure for planners and FPOs responsible for visual landscape planning and analysis of forestry operations seen by the public. The guideline is set out in four stages showing a step by step process to:

1. analyse visual landscape issues and their importance, and determine the landscape management objective (LMO) and allowable level of change
2. analyse the design aspects of the operation and their compatibility with the visual landscape character
3. determine the effects and the level of impact on the visual landscape and the need for notification to the FPA
4. ensure comprehensive visual analysis, data and effective prescriptions are provided with the notification to FPA setting out visually effective operations and prescriptions to achieve the LMO and to allow review of the visual effects and suitability of the operation.

The Forest Practices Plan (FPP) special values evaluation sheet (see section 4 *Landscape*), sets out a generally linear procedure and reporting structure to be followed during the visual analysis. This is to be completed for all operations regardless of their exposure to public viewing, thus ensuring that a record is kept of the visual analysis for further review if it is required.

Experience has shown that a small proportion of operations will potentially conflict with visual landscape values and warrant extra effort in the form of detailed visual analysis to assess likely impacts and where necessary redesign of a coupe and or prescriptions to limit visual impact. In such cases, it may be necessary at times to revisit some analysis steps as the process becomes more iterative in the search for the best integration of quality visual management outcomes and operational needs. Where high viewing sensitivity exists and strong visual impact could be expected, priority may need to be given to quality visual outcomes over operational efficiency.

Starting with the first page of the landscape evaluation sheet, Stage 1 is a basic level review of the viewing exposure of the proposed operation and the overall visual sensitivity of the landscape, providing a means to record the viewing information and situation. This is required for all operations and is detailed in Stage 1 of the flow chart below. Many operations are not exposed to public viewing and are easily assessed. For others however, documentation of the essential information on viewing provides a guide to further comprehensive analysis of the proposed operation.

For operations with a high level of viewing exposure and viewer sensitivity and where the degree of change or impact is high or not necessarily clear, Stage 2 requires a more detailed site analysis and usually results in development of options for improved visual outcomes. This stage provides steps to determine and examine the appearance of the operation and ways to intervene to design changes for improved visual integration into the scenery of the particular location.

Stage 3 determines which operations are likely to have strong public sensitivity and or conflict with landscape values. This is achieved by running through the check list from the landscape evaluation sheet to identify various situations where referral of visual landscape issues to the FPA is required. The referral may prompt the need to gather further information and analysis at this stage.

Stage 4 gives a guide list to the information to be included in the required notification to promote efficient review and analysis by the FPA. The proposed operation and possible options for the design should be submitted for discussion. Minor adjustments may be needed before final decisions are made on the appropriate boundaries and prescriptions. Alternatively additional analysis may be warranted to check detailed aspects of the coupe appearance, such as scale, shape, skyline effects or exposure from additional locations. This may lead to further alterations or re-design of the harvest boundary or project proposal for improved landscape presentation.

Visual landscape management – evaluation and notification process

STAGE 1. Landscape level assessment and visual landscape management objectives (LMOs)

Landscape level assessment process – refer to the ‘Visual landscape management’ section in the Landscape manual Chapter 2, pp39–6to determine the visual landscape importance of scenery.

Determine the viewing importance of the proposed operational area from public roads, towns and viewpoints. .

- Check FT district’s viewpoint maps if available for State forests.
- Ensure that all relevant viewing opportunities are identified by review of the regional area around the operation for possible exposure to public use areas. If possible perform a computer viewshed analysis out from the proposed operational area or coupe and look for roads and towns potentially seen.
- **Field reconnaissance is required** to verify comprehensive viewing and to select representative viewpoint for further analysis. Viewpoints should be selected where possible to cover different view directions and distances and then recorded on a wide map of the surrounding area. Record co-ordinates of viewpoints, define the location and take photographs, both targeted and panoramas. A more comprehensive review of viewing from viewpoints is discussed below in Stage 2.
- Classify *public sensitivity levels* of viewpoint based on criteria in Chapter 2, p51 of [Landscape manual](#) (see the FPA website).
- Determine the view distance from the viewpoint to the coupe as *foreground, middleground or background* based on criteria in Chapter 2, p52 of [Landscape manual](#). Use computer viewshed analysis from selected representative viewpoint to verify viewing exposure and viewing distance.

Rate the *scenic quality* for the operational zone based on principles and criteria on p48 and 176 of the [Landscape manual](#). Refer to the respective *landscape character type* in Chapter 7, pp153-187 of the [Landscape manual](#). Scenic Quality maps for State forests are also available in FT district offices.

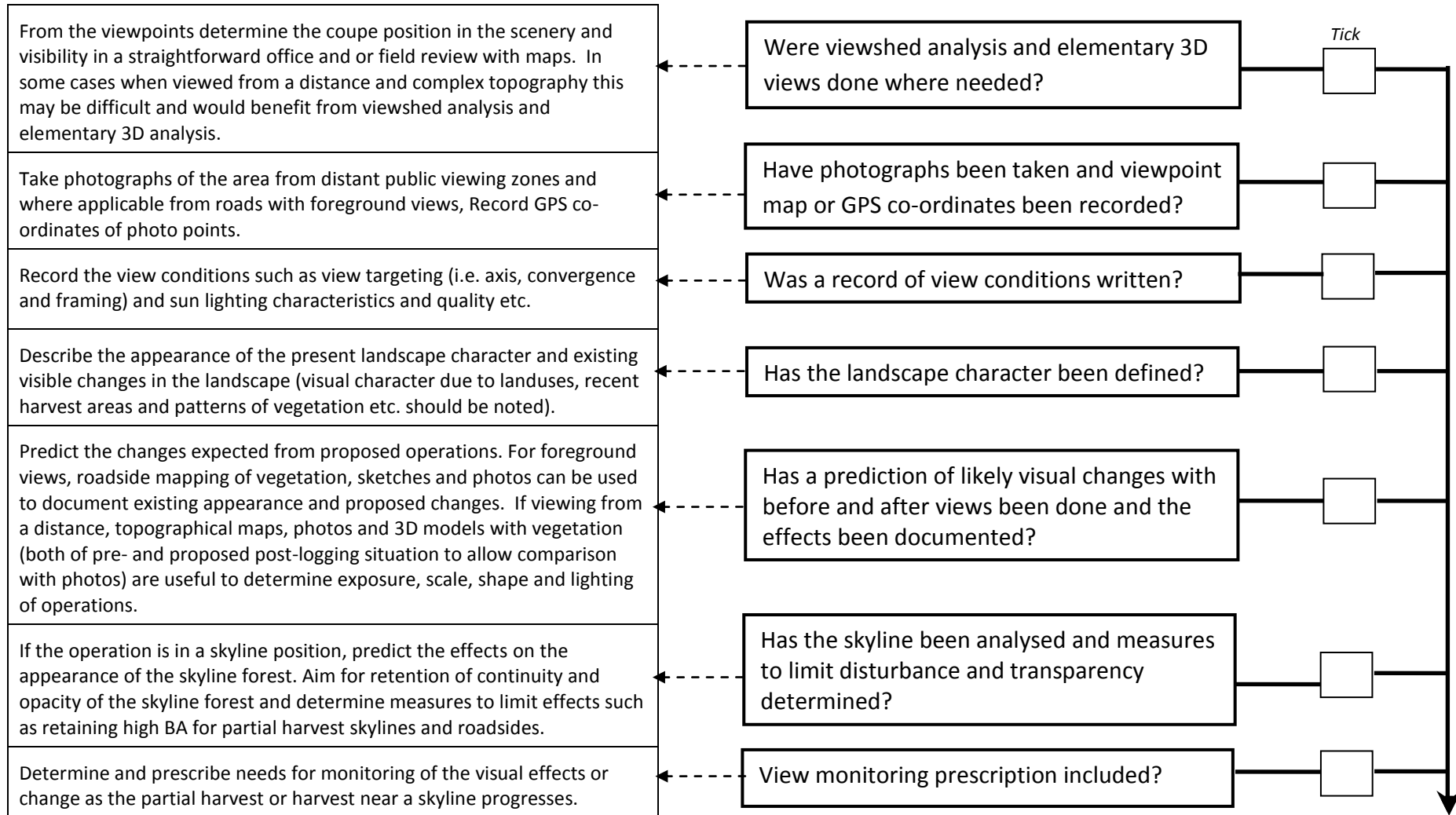
Apply data above to the VMS matrix to determine recommended *landscape management objective* for the operation (see p54of the [Landscape manual](#)),

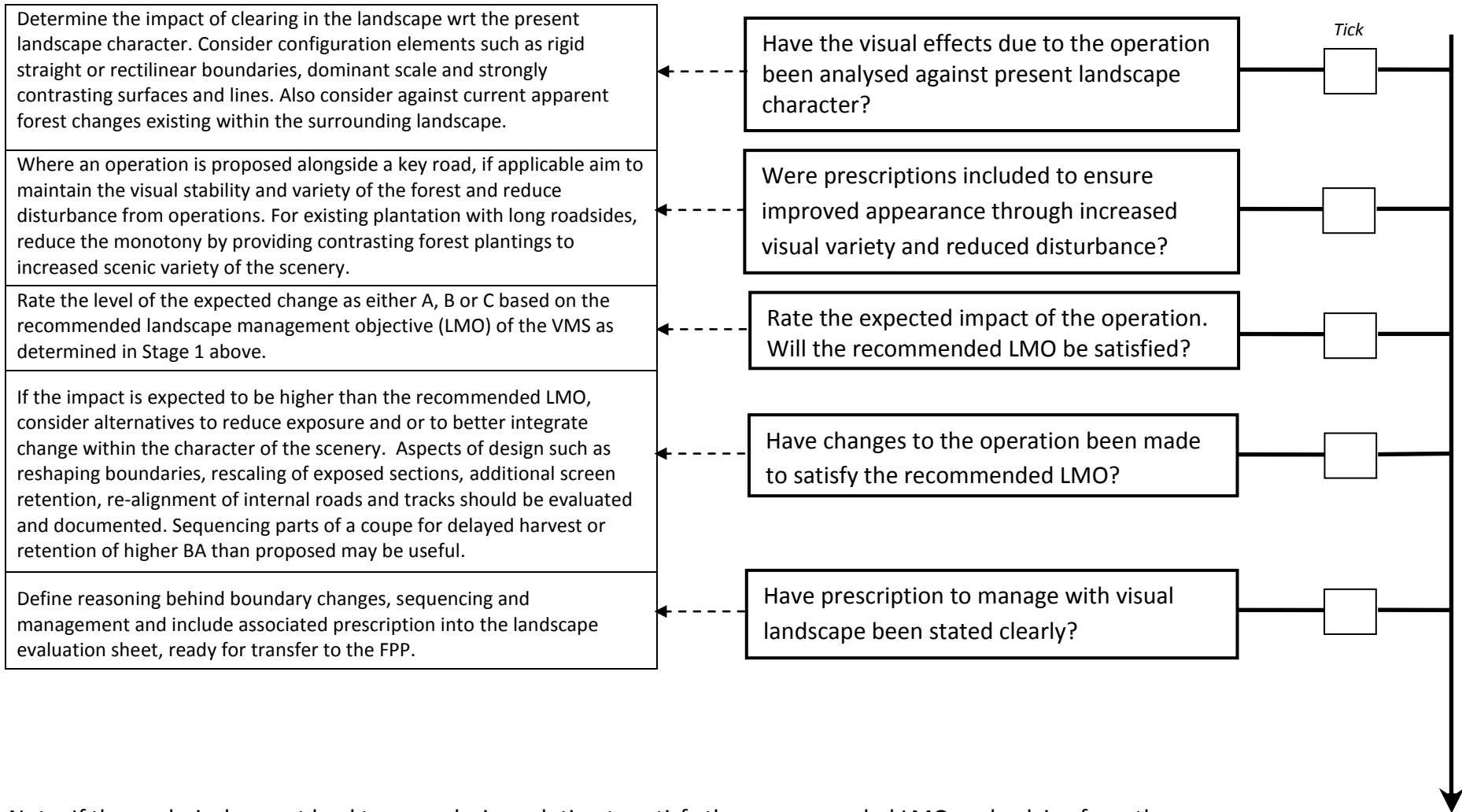
Identify potential *skyline exposure* from any of the viewpoints and record this as this is a critical aspect to address in planning and design of any operation. Use computer viewshed analysis from selected representative viewpoint to locate skylines at the viewing extent.

**Record this
information on
page 1 of the
[landscape
evaluation sheet](#)**

STAGE 2. Assessment of operations at the Site Level

Assess landscape character and coupe design compatibility – predict and evaluate the impact of proposed operations on the scenery.



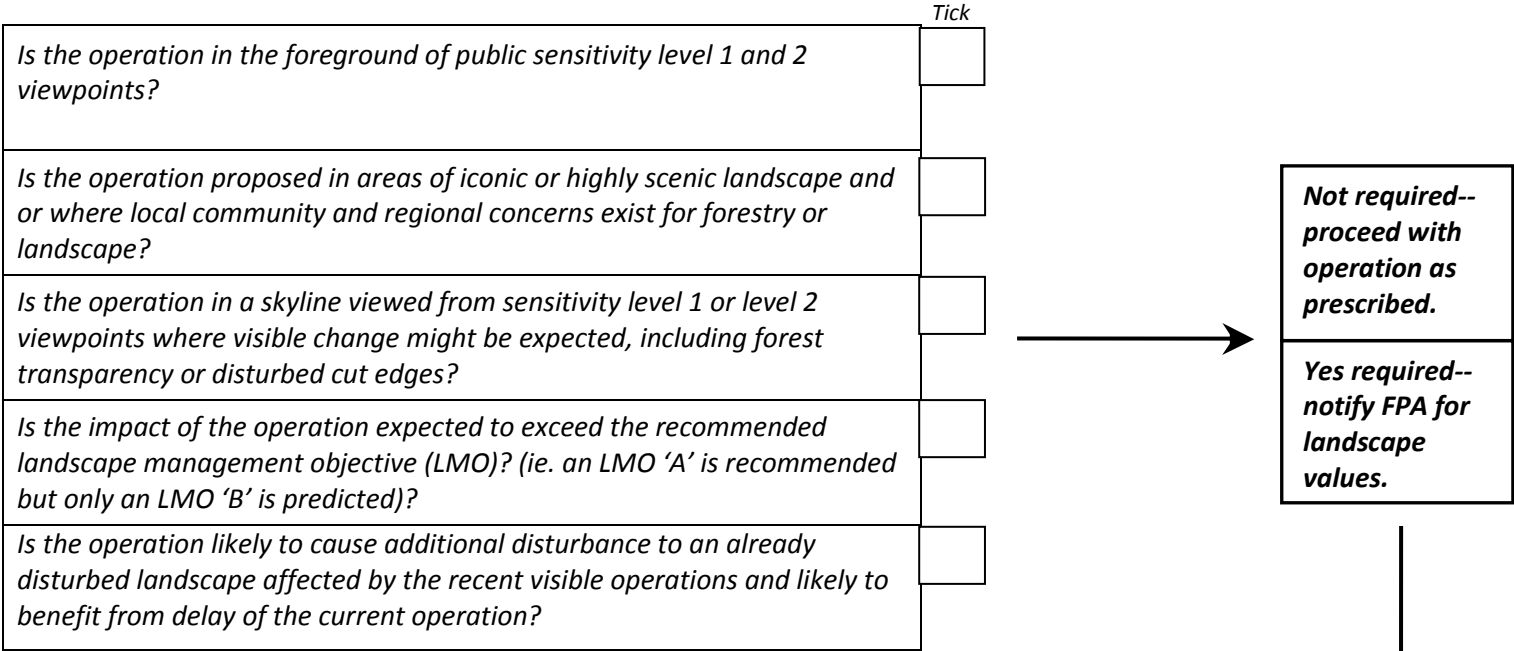


Note: If the analysis does not lead to a conclusive solution to satisfy the recommended LMO seek advice from the FPA landscape specialist on further analysis needs and options for management.

STAGE 3. Determine needs for notification of visually critical coupes to FPA

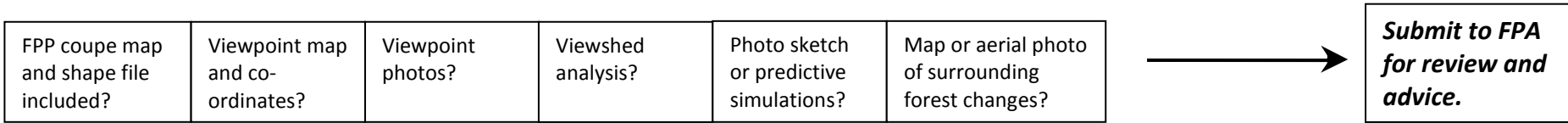
Notification is required to the FPA for operations and viewing situations with potential to adversely affect the visual values.

Check list for operation to be notified to the FPA for visual landscape values



STAGE 4. Check for the analysis data required for notification

Notify the FPA with the following supporting information and data of the landscape analysis:



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