

Mystic Lake Hydroelectric Project Scenery Management Plan



Prepared by NorthWestern Energy

**With assistance from
Pinnacle Research and American Lands**

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Energy**

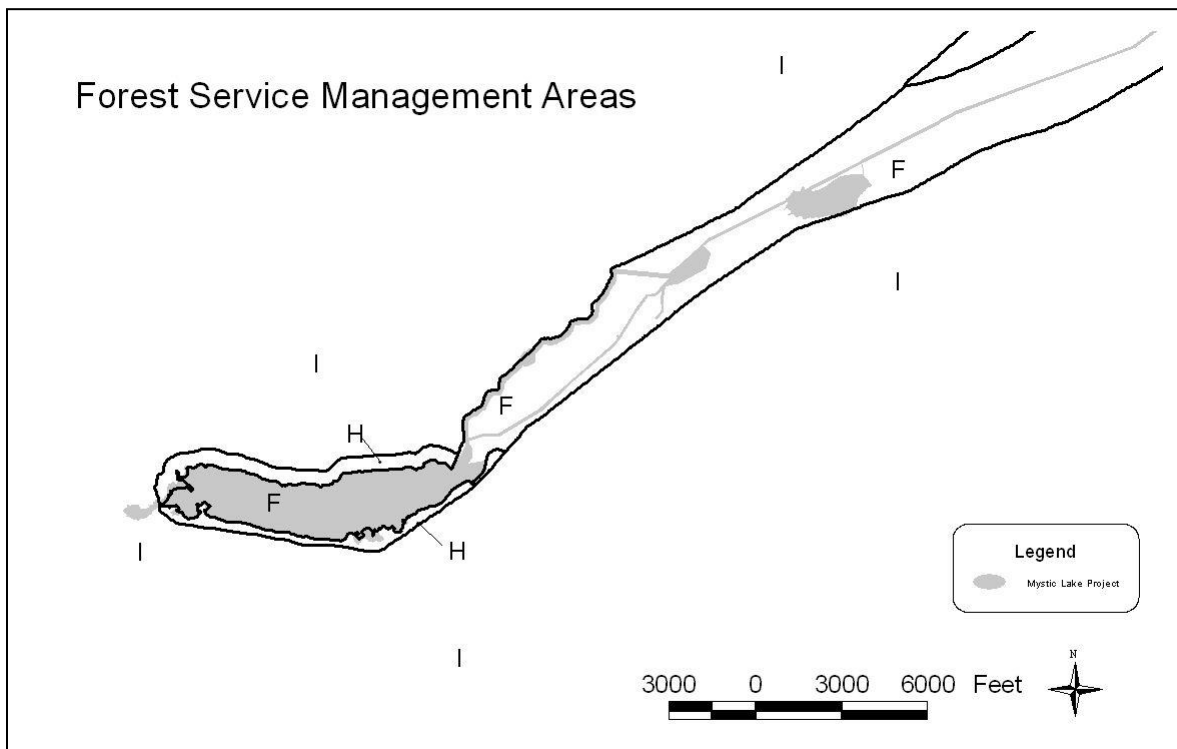
Objective of the Plan

The objective of this plan is to include scenery management objectives in the Custer National Forest Management Plan for maintenance or alteration of existing features or construction of new features at the Mystic Lake Hydroelectric Project (Project).

Scenery Management in the Project Area

The Custer National Forest Management Plan guides scenery resource management in the Project area. The Forest Plan sets Visual Quality Objectives for three management areas – F, H and I - associated with the Project (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Forest Service Management Areas at Mystic Lake Project. **VERIFY W/USFS**



Most Project facilities are located in Management Area F, including Mystic Lake and dam, West Rosebud Lake and dam, the powerhouse, employee camp, flow line, penstock and distribution lines. Management Area F prescribes either a Retention or Partial Retention Visual Quality Objective (Table 1). Forest Service staff evaluates proposed management activities that would occur in Management Area F for their effect on landscape features, accessibility, remoteness, visual characteristics, and how proposed activities would affect the quality of the setting. Selection of a Retention or Partial Retention Visual Quality Objective for proposed facilities or management activities is done on a case-by-case basis. Because of their more developed nature, Project facilities are usually managed for a Partial Retention Visual Quality Objective.

No Project facilities are located in Management Area H, which generally surrounds Mystic Lake. This management area prescribes a Retention Visual Quality Objective.

A small portion of the Project is located in Management Area I, the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Area. At the upper end of Mystic Lake, an 8.2-acre area lies within the wilderness area. At the southern edge of West Rosebud Lake, a 0.9-acre area of the lake and adjacent shoreline lies within the wilderness area. These areas are managed for a Preservation Visual Quality Objective.

Table 1. Summary of visual quality objectives for Management Areas F, H, I.

Management Area	Location Relative to Project Facilities	Visual Quality Objective
Area F	Includes most Project facilities, including Mystic Lake and dam, West Rosebud Lake and dam, powerhouse, employee camp, flow line, penstock and distribution lines.	<p><u>Partial Retention</u> - human activities may be evident and may introduce form, line, color, or texture that is found infrequently or not at all in the landscape, but the activities must remain subordinate to the visual strength of the landscape.</p> <p><u>Retention</u> – human activities are not evident to the casual visitor. Management activities may only repeat form, line, color, and texture that are frequently found in the characteristic landscape, and changes in their qualities should not be evident.</p>
Area H	Surrounds Mystic Lake and includes a portion of the upper Mystic Lake trail between the powerhouse and the lake.	<p><u>Retention</u> – human activities are not evident to the casual visitor. Management activities may only repeat form, line, color, and texture that are frequently found in the characteristic landscape, and changes in their qualities should not be evident.</p>

Management Area	Location Relative to Project Facilities	Visual Quality Objective
Area I	Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Area, which surrounds most of the Project. The uppermost portion of Mystic Lake and a portion of the shoreline of West Rosebud Lake lie within the wilderness area.	<u>Preservation</u> – only very low visual-impact recreation facilities such as trails are allowed. In general, human activities are not detectable to the visitor.

Proposed Consultation with the Forest Service

NorthWestern Energy proposes to consult with the Forest Service regarding exterior Project modifications and upgrades in order to protect and enhance the aesthetic resources of the Project area over the term of the license. Consultation would occur at least 60 days prior to any ground-disturbing activity to allow incorporation of measures to meet visual quality objectives established in the Forest Plan, and would include:

- Detailed design plans for recreation improvements proposed for West Rosebud Lake and other recreation enhancements proposed for the Project.
- Detailed mitigation plans (plan and profile views) for any work being proposed for Project features that affect the Project’s visual characteristics or the scenery management objectives of the area.
- Areas of Project features to be disguised or screened.
- Paint colors and/or textures.
- Species to be planted.
- Physical modifications to project features.

Schedule for Completion

The original plan was approved by the Commission on October 12, 2010. A revised and Forest Service-approved Scenery Management Plan will be completed and filed with the Commission every 10 years thereafter for the term of the Mystic Project License. This is the revised plan for the first 10-year window, which is being filed in the ninth year to create a consistent filing timeframe with that of the Public Access Management Plan, such that both plan updates can be completed and filed every 10 years hereafter on the same schedule. This plan will again be updated and filed in 2029, the same as the Public Access Management Plan.



West Rosebud Lake – Mystic Lake Hydroelectric Project

Forest Service Section 4(e) Condition No. - 9. Scenery Management Plan

Within one year of License issuance, or 60 days prior to any ground disturbing activity, the Licensee shall file with the Commission a Scenery Management Plan that is approved by the Forest Service. The objective of this plan is to include Forest Plan scenery management objectives for maintenance or alteration of existing project features or when construction of new project features are being proposed. At a minimum, this plan shall provide the following:

- Detailed mitigation plans (plan and profile views) for any work being proposed for project features that affect the project’s visual characteristics or the scenery management objectives of the area.
- Areas of project features to be disguised or screened.
- Paint colors and/or textures.
- Species to be planted.
- Physical modifications to project features.
- Schedule for completion.