GRANITE BAY QUADRA ISLAND VISUAL LANDSCAPE INVENTORY UPDATE VERS.1.0

Visual landscape Inventory Update – November 2021

Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development – West Coast Natural Resource Region

Jeremy Webb - Coast Area Visual Resource Management Specialist

BRITISH COLUMBIA
Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

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FIGURE 1: VSU #920 GRANITE BAY

Executive Summary

This 2021 Visual Landscape Inventory (VLI) update has been undertaken to enable a Visual Quality Objective (VQO) to be established under the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA) via a Government Actions Regulation (GAR) Order on a small but important forest landscape area in Granite Bay on northern Quadra Island.

On December 14, 2005 the Campbell River District Manager established new Scenic Areas and a new VQO Order[1] using GAR Sections 7(1) and 7(2). The 2005 Order cancelled and replaced the existing scenic areas and VQOs previously established in the District in 2001 and 2003.

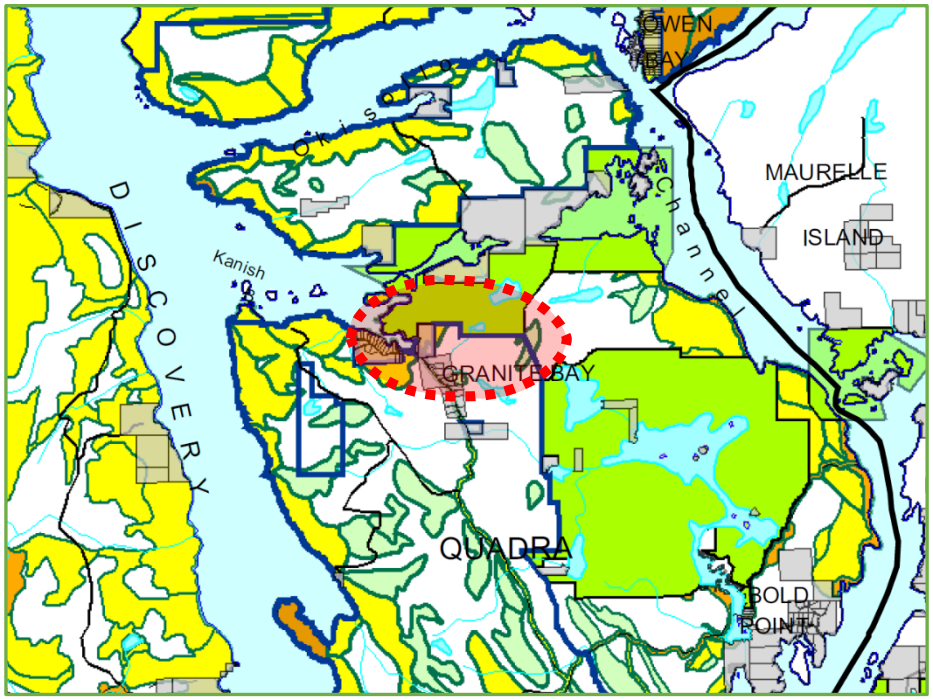


FIGURE 2: EXCERPT FROM 2005 GAR ORDER MAP 3 OF 7 SHOWING PROVINCIAL FOREST LAND AS PROVINCIAL PARK LAND

A mapping error on the official VQO maps[2] that accompany the 2005 GAR Order resulted in an area of provincial forest land being represented as Provincial Park on the official maps. In fact, the area represented as parkland is provincial forest. This mapping error left a highly visible forest landscape without an established or legal VQO and outside of a scenic area.

[1] https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-policy-legislation/legislation-regulation/gar-ministerial-orders/crfd_vqo_order_p1.pdf
[2] https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-policy-legislation/legislation-regulation/gar-ministerial-orders/dcr_rec_map20320-205620x2036.pdf

FIGURE 3: GRANITE BAY AND RECENT CUTBLOCKS AND ROADS

The mapping error was brought to the attention of the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (MFLNRORD) by way of a formal complaint registered with the Forest Practices Board in January 2017 by residents of Granite Bay who were surprised to observe forest harvesting on a landscape that they presumed to be parkland[3]. A copy of the Forest Practices Board response to the complaint is found in Appendix I

To remedy this error, field work was conducted in September 2020 by Jeremy Webb the Coast Area Visual Resource Management Specialist, who recorded photography and visual data measures from key viewpoints on the water and land to capture the extent of the visible area.

In summer 2021 the field data was compiled and in December a completed data package to support a VQO GAR Order was provided to the Campbell River Natural Resource District.

This report is accompanied by a Visual Landscape Inventory classification form, shape file and Visual Landscape Inventory (VLI) attributes that support establishing a scenic area and VQO for the provincial forest in Granite Bay by way of the GAR Sections 7(1) and 7(2) respectively.

The new VQO shifts the VQO of Partial Retention (PR) that was established prior to the 2005 GAR Order to a recommended VQO of Retention.

[3] Forest Practices Board File: 97250-20/16080. November 27 2017 letter Re: Resolution of Complaint 160-80 – Granite Bay VQOs.

VQO Classes

The VQO of Retention is a formal classification defined in the Forest Planning and Practices Regulation (FPPR) Section 1.1 "Categories of visually altered forest landscape". A full list of the VQO definitions in FPPR follows:

For the purposes of paragraph (c) of the definition of "altered forest landscape" in Section 1, the following categories are prescribed, each according to the extent of alteration resulting from the size, shape and location of cutblocks and roads:

***preservation*:** consisting of an altered forest landscape in which the alteration, when assessed from a significant public viewpoint, is

- very small in scale, and
- not easily distinguishable from the pre-harvest landscape.

***retention*:** consisting of an altered forest landscape in which the alteration, when assessed from a significant public viewpoint, is

- difficult to see,
- small in scale, and
- natural in appearance.

***partial retention*:** consisting of an altered forest landscape in which the alteration, when assessed from a significant public viewpoint, is

- easy to see,
- small to medium in scale, and
- natural and not rectilinear or geometric in shape.

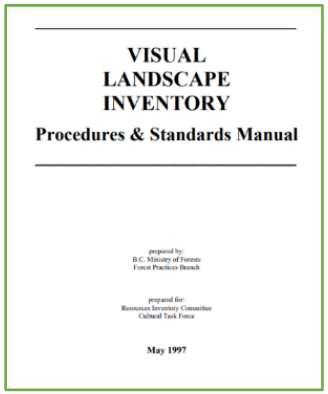
***modification*:** consisting of an altered forest landscape in which the alteration, when assessed from a significant public viewpoint,

- is very easy to see, and is
- large in scale and natural in its appearance, or
- small to medium in scale but with some angular characteristics.

***maximum modification*:** consisting of an altered forest landscape in which the alteration, when assessed from a significant public viewpoint,

- is very easy to see, and is
- very large in scale,
- rectilinear and geometric in shape, or both. *[en. B.C. Reg. 580/2004, s. 2.]*

Visual Resource Management Program Overview


VISUAL
LANDSCAPE
INVENTORY
Procedures & Standards Manual
prepared by:
B.C. Ministry of Forests
Forest Practices Branch
prepared for:
Resources Inventory Committee
Cultural Task Force
May 1997

The Government of British Columbia is entrusted with managing visual impacts on crown forest land. B.C.'s Visual Resource Management program conducts a range of activities to ensure the scenic quality expectations of the public and the tourism industry are met.

Through its Visual Resource Management program, MFLNRORD provides oversight and guidance for the stewardship of forest landscapes throughout the Province.

Guided by long standing research, the visual impact of forest development activities, primarily cut blocks and roads, is managed through a regulatory framework which is supported by detailed policies, guidebooks, and training. The primary tool or parameter that guides the levels of visible alteration of forest landscapes are the Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs).

B.C.'s reputation as an international tourism destination depends on its spectacular natural beauty (Figure 1). However, tourism and forestry can coexist through innovative forest-management practices. The Visual Resource Management program has a suite of tools to support this coexistence. As well, FRPA explicitly identifies the management of scenic values[4].

The first step in managing B.C.'s scenery is to identify the most visible and sensitive landscapes. A visual landscape inventory (VLI) maps the visible topography from public-use areas such as communities, recreational areas, highways, and waterways. B.C.'s most sensitive landscapes are usually steep, forested slopes exposed to many viewers; the least sensitive landscape is usually low in relief, more remote, and with few viewers or viewing opportunities.

The visual impact on forest landscapes of forest harvesting and related activity such as road building are guided by Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs). VQOs are established under the GAR Section 7.2. The VQO framework is a straightforward concept, where the more sensitive a forest landscape is, the lower the level of permitted visible alteration is allowed at any time.

[4]MFLNRORD Visual Resource Management web site front page: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/forestry/managing-our-forest-resources/visual-resource-management

The VQO parameters are defined in FPPR Section 1.1 – Categories of visually altered forest landscape which prescribes 5 categories defined according to the extent of alteration resulting from the size, shape and location of cutblocks and roads.

VQOs were initially established for scenic areas under the Forest Practices Code, then continued under the FRPA Section 181, as outlined in FPPR Section 1.1: Categories of Visually Altered Forest Landscape.

Under FRPA, the GAR directs how the B.C. provincial government establishes land designations or stewardship measures for forest and range values. The VQOs on the corridors and on the larger landforms on Quadra Island were established by GAR 7.2, District Manager letter, December 14, 2005[5].

[5] https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-policy-legislation/legislation-regulation/gar-ministerial-orders/crfd_vqo_order_p1.pdf

Updating the Mapping and the VQO

In the 26 years since the VQO was last updated on the Granite Bay landform in 1995, viewer expectations for scenic quality have shifted and generally increased in settings where there is a strong relationship between the forest landscapes and the activity.

Granite Bay is no exception. It is an area that receives high levels of recreational boating use from residents and from visitors. Improvements have been made to the boat launch and dock facilities. Granite Bay is a well-established launching and departure point for kayakers as well as being a destination anchorage.

Residential properties have been developed on the south side of Granite Bay since the VQO was last updated.

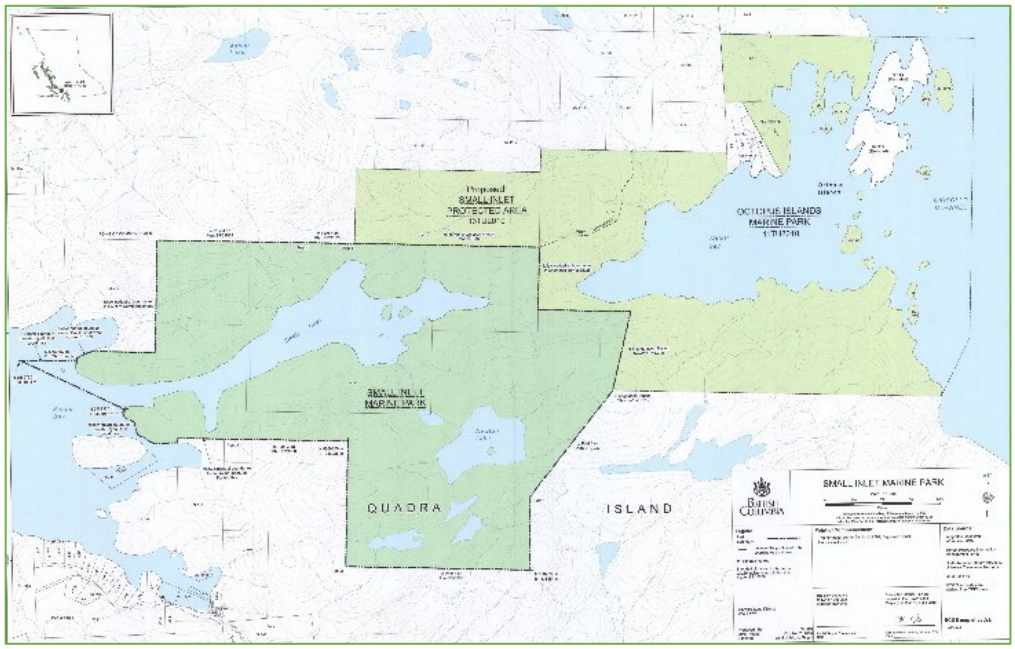


FIGURE 4: SCHEDULE A MAP OF SMALL INLET MARINE PARK

The landscape borders on Small Inlet Marine Provincial Park. Established on April 30, 1996, the park has a total area of 878 hectares with 753 hectares of upland and 125 hectares of foreshore. It is regularly frequented by boaters and kayakers and is used as an anchorage. The landform aspect is oriented west and south and is viewed for sustained periods travelling east from the entrance into Kanish Bay.

Portions of the landform are also viewed from Small Inlet Marine Park, residences on the south side and above Granite Bay, a well used public marine dock Granite Bay on the south shore of Granite Bay, and from the unnamed cove approximately 1.2 km north of Granite Bay which is used as an anchorage.

Visible Area Determination

The Visible Areas (red) were generated using the Viewshed tool in ArcGIS based on the perspective from multiple viewpoints along the Ocean Viewpoint Track (purple) and a Digital Surface Model (DSM) including trees and vegetation on the bare earth from LiDAR point cloud data (Range of Acquisition Dates: 10/14/2018-10/1/2019).

The LiDAR data was obtained from the Open LiDAR Data Portal[6] as LAZ files, converted to LAS datasets and the DSM was created by filtering to capture the tree canopy and vegetation.

The viewpoints were set at 2 metres above a 0-elevation sea level on the ocean with a 360-degree field of vision and no limit on viewing distance.

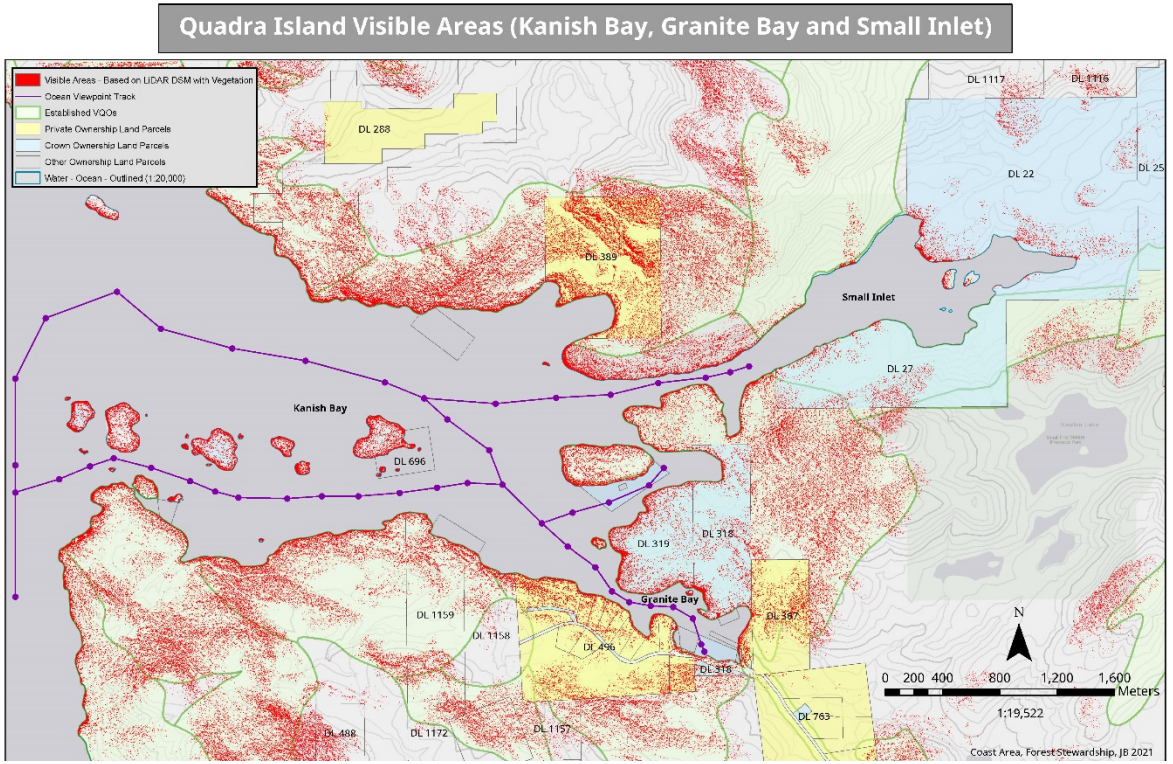


FIGURE 5: VISIBLE AREA MAPPING. JASON BRADLEY MFLNRORD 2021/10/15

Using a DSM including trees and vegetation produces a viewshed that is more precise but appears visually different than a viewshed using a Digital Elevation Model (DEM) of only bare earth because the individual trees block the view of trees behind them. As a result, DSM produces a more spread out visualization of visible areas compared to a DEM which would show more "blocks" of visible areas but not take into account the vegetation on top of the bare earth.

[6] https://governmentofbc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=d06b37979b0c4709b7fcf2a1ed458e03

Visual Sensitivity Unit Classification Form Summary Table

Pre-2005 GAR Order Visual Landscape Inventory attributes and Established VQO

VSU	EVC	VAC	BR	VC	VR	VSC	Established-VQO	Observations/Rationale
920	P	M	M	H	H	2	PR	Updated 1/1/1995

2021 Visual Landscape Inventory attributes and Recommended VQO

VSU	EVC	VAC	BR	VC	VR	VSC	Established-VQO	Observations/Rationale
920	R	M	M	H	H	2	R	Increased viewer expectations

The attributes of this forest landscape remain largely unchanged except for the Existing Visual Condition (EVC) which has shifted from a visual appearance of P-Preservation to R-Retention. In the 26 years since the VQO was established viewer expectations and numbers have increased to a level that aligns with a R-Retention VQO.

Equivalency between Visual Sensitivity Class (VSC) and recommended Visual Quality Classes (rVQCs) is provided in the 1997 Benskin[7] Memo. The term recommended Visual Quality Class – rVQC is used to distinguish between an objective established under regulation and an objective recommended by a specialist.

The Visual Sensitivity Class (VSC) of 2 aligns with a rVQC of Retention-Partial Retention.

	Visual Sensitivity Class (VSC)				
	1	2	3	4	5
RVQC	P-R	R-PR	PR-M	PR-M-MM	M-MM

[7] August 25, 1997 H. Benskin R.P.F. Director Forest Practices Branch – Visual Landscape Inventory Standards and Procedures and interim direction respecting analysis.

Visual Sensitivity Class to Visual Quality Objective Equivalency

The Visual Sensitivity Unit Classification Form outputs a VSC.

There are 5 VSC categories, VSC 1, VSC 2, VSC 3, VSC 4, VSC 5.

The VQOs for each of these VSCs is described in FPPR Section 9.2 as follows:

Objectives set by government for visual quality

9.2 (1) In this section:

"scenic area" means an area of land established as a scenic area under the *Forest Practices Code of British Columbia Act* on or before October 24, 2002 and continued as a scenic area under section 180 (c) of the Act;

"visual sensitivity class" means a visual sensitivity class established on or before October 24, 2002, particulars of which are publicly available in the Land and Resource Data Warehouse maintained by the minister responsible for the *Land Act*.

(2) The objective set by government in relation to visual quality for a scenic area, that

(a) was established on or before October 24, 2002, and

(b) for which there is no visual quality objective

is to ensure that the altered forest landscape for the scenic area

(c) in visual sensitivity class 1 is in either the preservation or retention category,

(d) in visual sensitivity class 2 is in either the retention or partial retention category,

(e) in visual sensitivity class 3 is in either the partial retention or modification category,

(f) in visual sensitivity class 4 is in either the partial retention or modification category, and

(g) in visual sensitivity class 5 is in either the modification or maximum modification category.

[en. B.C. Reg. 580/2004, s. 9.]

Appendix I – Complaint to Forest Practices Board

Forest Practices Board

File: 97250-20/16080
November 27, 2017 VIA EMAIL

Dear Participants:

Re: Resolution of Complaint 16080 – Granite Bay VQOs

This is the Board's closing letter for a complaint filed by the residents of Granite Bay (the complainants) in January 2017.

Granite Bay is on Quadra Island in the Campbell River Natural Resource District (the district). The complainants live in a subdivision on the southern side of Granite Bay. When the complainants purchased their properties, government maps showed the area across from Granite Bay as part of Small Inlet Marine Park. The complainants believed the area would not be logged. However, government had incorrectly mapped the area and it is actually located within Tree Farm Licence (TFL) 47, which means it is part of the timber harvesting landbase..

The complainants asked the district manager to establish a visual quality objective (VQO) of retention[8] on the area of the complaint. The district manager considered the request, but did not establish a new VQO. Consequently, the complainants submitted this complaint to the Board.

Background

Under the *Forest and Range Practices Act,* government establishes VQOs for scenic areas in British Columbia. VQOs define the acceptable level of visual alteration for particular areas of File: 97250-20/16063 November 27, 2017

[8] Generally speaking, a VQO of retention means any harvesting or road building will be difficult to see.

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Crown land, and forest licensees must address VQOs in their planning and forest activities. In 1997, government approved an inventory for TFL 47 that recommended a visual quality class[9] (VQC) of "partial retention" for the area subject to this complaint. This VQC meant that any harvesting in the area could be "easy to see". At about the same time, government removed some area from the TFL to establish Small Inlet Marine Park. Government maps incorrectly showed the area of the complaint as part of the park.

In 2004, government introduced the *Government Actions Regulation* (GAR). Transitional rules in the GAR changed recommended VQCs toVQOs. The GAR also allowed the district manager to establish new scenic areas and VQOs so, in 2005, the Campbell River district manager standardized VQOs in the district. He made a GAR order that cancelled the existing scenic areas and VQOs throughout the district, and replaced them with new ones.

In 2012, TimberWest discovered the area of the complaint was not within the park but instead was part of TFL 47. The complainants discovered the mapping error in 2015 and began discussions with TimberWest and the district because they were concerned the area could be logged. The district said the area had a VQO of partial retention. The complainants asked the district manager to change the VQO to "retention", which would mean that any harvesting would be difficult to see. The complainants thought that would be a fair compromise because the government mapping error led them to believe that the area was park when they purchased their properties.

The district manager considered the request, but declined to change the VQO. Instead, the complainants were encouraged to work with TimberWest to resolve their concerns about potential logging. They did work with TimberWest, who developed harvest plans for the next 15 years that satisfy the complainants' concerns. However, the complainants still wanted to have a legal VQO of retention on the area because they are looking for long-term certainty. Therefore, they filed the complaint with the Board

Resolution

Through the course of the investigation, the Board discovered that the 2005 GAR order had actually canceled the original scenic area and VQO for the area of the complaint and the new VQOs were never applied to the area because it was thought to be part of the park. As a result, there is no scenic area designation or VQO for the area. The Board brought this information to the district manager and asked if she would reconsider establishing a VQO for this area, in light of this new information. The district manager said that the district does not currently have the resources to review the GAR order, but that it intends to review the entire GAR order within three years. The complainant is satisfied with that commitment to revisit the GAR Order and considers the matter resolved.

[9] VQCs were the same definition as VQOs under previous legislation.

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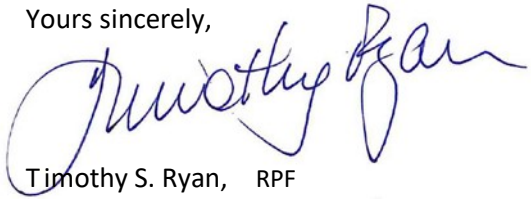
The Board is pleased with the cooperation shown by all three participants and encourages continued cooperation and consultation to mitigate the consequences of this error. This concludes the Board's involvement in this file. If you have any remaining questions or concerns, please contact Glen Pilling at (250) 213-4731.

Yours sincerely,



Timothy S. Ryan, RPF
Chair

Appendix II – Panoramas

VIEW FROM GRANITE BAY BOAT LAUNCH

VIEW FROM SMALL COVE NORTH OF GRANITE BAY

VIEW FROM ENTRANCE INTO GRANITE BAY

VIEW FROM GRANITE BAY DOCK