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Evaluating Methods for Measuring and Managing the Cumulative Visual Effects of Oil and Gas Development on Bureau of Land Management National Conservation Lands in the Southwestern United States

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Abstract
The public lands of the United States administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are used for multiple purposes, like conservation, recreation, grazing, mining, logging, and oil and gas development. Many of these activities have the potential to disturb the surface of the landscape, which can negatively impact scenic values. While the BLM has a system for managing visual resources and mitigating the potential impacts of development on visual quality, it does not adequately consider cumulative visual effects, which are the combined impacts of the same type of activity on the environment over space and time. This paper studies the challenges and opportunities faced by managers of Canyons of the

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Ancients National Monument in southwestern Colorado, a landscape particularly affected by oil and gas development, at measuring and managing cumulative visual effects. This paper also reviews the results of a series of interviews conducted with experts in the field of cumulative visual effects and of a visual preference survey that highlight the strengths and limitations of existing methods for assessing cumulative visual effects. This research paper concludes with a list of recommendations for the BLM to incorporate cumulative visual effects into its existing visual resource management system and details directions for future research on this subject.

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