



Capulin Volcano National Monument

Viewshed

Capulin Volcano National Monument's viewshed offers spectacular vistas of the surrounding landscape, providing visitors a unique opportunity to take in scenery, not only of New Mexico, but also of neighboring states. The unobstructed view of the Raton-Clayton Volcanic Field, of which Capulin Volcano belongs, has been identified as one of the monument's fundamental resources and values. The viewshed seen by driving the monument's Volcano Road offers 360-degree views as the road spirals to the volcano's top, providing the most comprehensive viewable area the monument has to offer.

Status and Trends

In assessing the quality of the monument's viewshed, housing and road densities were considered, along with the proportion of man-made versus natural features comprising the viewshed area. Additionally, how conspicuous those features on the landscape are when viewed from the monument was also considered to be a significant factor to the quality of the viewshed. At present, greater than 99% of the visible area contains housing densities less than 1.5 units per square mile along with very low road densities. The proportion of the viewshed that is comprised of man-made features is less than 5%, even in the most concentrated developed areas. Characteristics of those man-made features, such as the distance from a viewing point, size, shape, and color or whether the features exhibit movement or generate noise, were considered when assessing their impact to the viewshed's quality. Overall, the majority of the man-made features within the monument's viewshed are relatively distant, small, blend with the surrounding landscape, and are located far enough away to minimize noise and motion distractions, rendering them by and large inconspicuous throughout the surrounding landscape.

Discussion

The area surrounding the monument is mostly comprised of natural and rural scenes, remaining largely undeveloped. Furthermore, the man-made features that are viewable throughout the monument's viewshed are relatively inconspicuous, resulting in a viewshed that is currently in good condition. Research has shown that people prefer landscapes that are natural versus man-made, especially when visiting a national park. The monument's 2003 visitor study revealed that 94% of the monument's visitors identified sightseeing/scenery as the number one reason they visit Capulin Volcano National Monument. The future condition of the monument's viewshed, primarily comprised of the surrounding scenery, is mainly dependent on local and regional planning since most of the viewshed's viewable area is located outside the monument's boundary.

Viewshed at Capulin Volcano National Monument.



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