

# Aesthetic Character

Aesthetics is one of the beneficial uses of water cited in numerous federal and state laws, rules and programs. The Coon Creek Watershed District manages and influences water and related lands with inherent aesthetic value. Some of these water resources are significant to the cultural and historic landscapes of central Anoka County and the communities within the watershed. Other lands within the watershed provide a place to escape and enjoy the beauty of nature. In some areas, public lands and parks are the backyard for individuals and communities.

Watershed resources may also be valued and used for many other uses and analysis has shown that there is an increasing demand for housing, communication sites, R-O-W, recreation, sand mining, etc.

If not carefully designed, these activities have the potential to:

- Modify the character of the landscape
- Reflect on the image of the communities of the watershed
- Affect recreation use experiences and community quality of life
- Increase long term costs due to restoration needs

Aesthetic resources of the watershed include the features and its landforms, vegetation, water surfaces and cultural modifications (physical changes caused by human activities) that give the landscape aesthetic qualities. Landscape features, natural appearing or otherwise, form the overall impression of an area. This impression is referred to as “Aesthetic character”.

Aesthetic character is studied as a point of reference to assess whether a given project would be compatible with established features of the setting or would contract noticeably and unfavorable with them.

**Aesthetic Capacity** Is an assessment of the quantity and quality of the aesthetic resources of the District

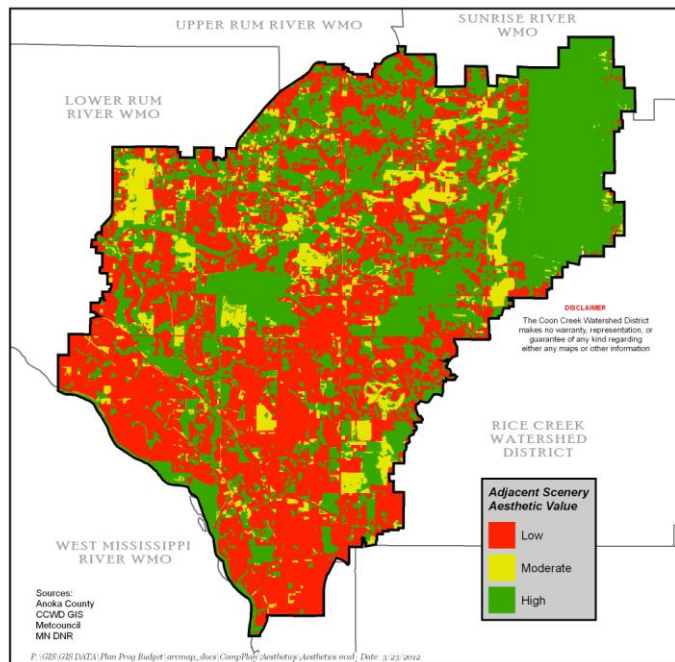
**Landscape Types** Four landscape types occur within the watershed

Landscape Type	Example
Panoramic	Lakes Sod Fields
Enclosed	Woods adjacent to creek
Feature	Dam Bridge
Focal	Waterfall Riffle/Rapids

**Landscape Character** Landscape character is the overall impression created by an area’s unique combination of features (such as land, vegetation, water and structures).

It is defined by the elements of:

- Line
- Form
- Color and
- Texture



**Aesthetic Quality** All lands within the watershed have some aesthetic value, but areas with the most variety and the most harmonious composition have the greatest value.

Aesthetic value is a measure of the visual appeal of a water or related land resource and are evaluated using seven key factors:

- Land form
- Vegetation
- Water
- Color
- Adjacent Scenery
- Scarcity
- Cultural modifications

**Aesthetic Sensitivity** Aesthetic resources have a social setting, which includes public expectations, values, goals, awareness and concern regarding Aesthetic quality. This social setting is addressed as “aesthetic sensitivity”, the relative degree of public interest in aesthetic resources and concern over adverse changes in the quality of that resource.

Aesthetic sensitivity is a reflection of:

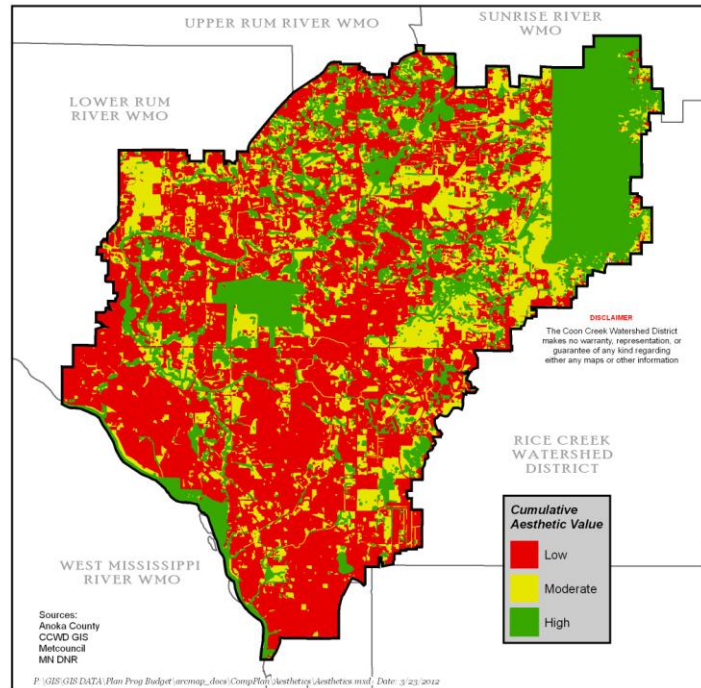
1. Types of use (farming, park & recreation)
2. Amount of use (Large numbers of people are often more sensitive)
3. Public interest (Visual quality may be a concern on Wild and Scenic Rivers, Critical Areas or key features in parks)
4. Adjacent land uses (Interrelationships with adjacent land uses can affect the aesthetic sensitivity of an area)
5. Special areas (management objectives for special areas may require special consideration)

As applied to aesthetic impact analysis, sensitivity refers to public attitudes about specific views, or interrelated views, and is key to

- identifying critical public views
- assessing how important aesthetic impact may be, and
- whether or not it represents a significant impact

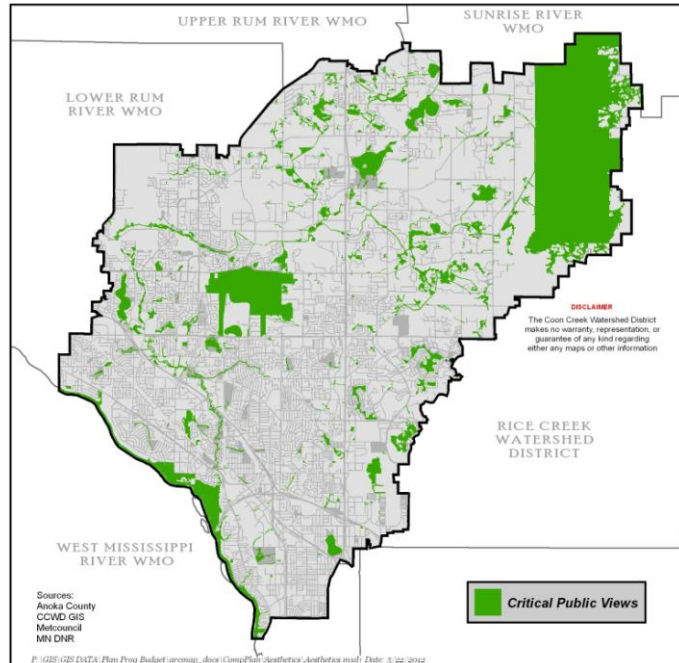
## Existing Aesthetic Condition

The existing aesthetic condition of the watershed is the baseline against which the visual impacts of a proposed action or alternatives are measured. It is compared to the critical public views and described in terms of the prevailing character and its quality



**Critical Public Views** Critical public views are those sensitive public views that would be most affected by an action because of :

- viewer proximity
- project visibility
- duration of the affected view



**Value of Aesthetics**

The necessary factors and conditions that affect aggregate demand for a service within the Coon Creek Watershed.

The initial value is based on the expected value per unit of service and is used to modify the level of service.

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In general the factors that affect aggregate demand for drainage within the Coon Creek Watershed at a particular location include:

1. The number of people with access to the service
2. Their incomes and wealth
3. The cost in time or money of getting and keeping access to the service
4. The availability of perfect or near-perfect substitutes for the service
5. People’s expressed or revealed preferences for this service compared with other competing services

**Population** An estimated 7,000 people live adjacent to highly aesthetic water and related land resources. Another 25,000 live adjacent to moderately aesthetic areas

<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>
7,000	30,305,000	90,960,304

90,960,304

**Income** Median annual income of household within and adjacent to high aesthetic areas is \$83,000.

	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>
Income: Median HH	85,042	83,750	71,382
Income: Mean Median HH	83,066	80,098	73,933
Income: Est. Total*	908,166,833	278,619,746	1,170,452,200

**Property Values**

	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>
Total Prop Value (\$)	2,099,088,100	3,020,072,400	8,078,020,400
Prop Values (\$): Median	215,950	186,600	160,000
Prop Values (\$): Mean	363,737	270,305	197,669

**People’s Preferences**

Reflects the preferences expressed in a survey of citizens, City Engineers and water resource professional conducted in April and May of 2011.

In April and May 2011 29 citizens, engineers from the seven cities within the watershed and water resource professionals who are members of the ‘planning advisory committee’ were administered a paired comparison survey of the beneficial uses of and the demands on water resources.

Aesthetics ranked second to last as a preferred use of water.

<b>Beneficial Use of Water</b>	<b>Citizens</b>	<b>City Engineers</b>	<b>Water Professionals</b>	<b>National</b>
Drinking water	1	1	1	1
Water Quality	2	2	2	2
Flood Control	2	2	3	5
Groundwater Recharge	4	4	4	7
Storm Protection	6	5	6	6
Drainage	5	8	7	8
Aquatic life and recreation	8	8	5	9
Hunting and Fishing	8	8	9	10
Irrigation	9	9	10	4
Livestock and wildlife watering	10	10	8	11
<b>Aesthetics</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
Industrial use and cooling	13	13	12	3

**Risks to Aesthetic Resources**

Involves an assessment of the exposure and vulnerability of the water and related resource functions for a given time period

Risks of disruptions to services differ from site to site and are associated with the exposure and vulnerability of the drainage system itself and the vulnerability and exposure of important landscape features that affect the functional capacity of the system. Threats that cause risk can arise from physical, social or managerial actions or processes.

**High Aesthetic Sensitivity**

High Aesthetic sensitivity is assumed to exist where landscapes, particular views or the visual characteristics of certain features are protected as a matter of public policy.

High Aesthetic sensitivity suggests that there is a great

potential for the public to react strongly to a threat to the aesthetic resource.

**Moderate Aesthetic Sensitivity** Suggests that there is a substantial potential for the public to voice some concern over impacts of moderate to high intensity.

**Low Sensitivity** A small minority of the public may have a concern over resource impacts on affected areas.

**No Sensitivity** There is no sensitivity where the potentially affected views are not “public” or because they are not valued by the public.

### **Expected Future of Aesthetics**

The future demand for aesthetics and issues related to aesthetics will involve:

**Increase in Intensity of Concerns Involving Aesthetics** As the economy recovers, the District will see a slight increase in the overall number of concerns and demands related to aesthetics. Demands will express themselves as concerns about development or projects conducted by neighbors or government that can be seen from the plaintiff’s property and perceived to affect the enjoyment or value of that property.

Other demands will arise from projects within or affecting the view of natural settings in parks, the Mississippi river or Carlos Avery WMA.

**Water Levels** The District can expect to receive increased complaints from lakeshore owners and property owner with wetlands or large open space, as water levels drop.

**Physical and Visual Access** Demand for aesthetics will largely revolve around physical and or visual access to the resource in question

### **Management Needs**

Manage Watershed District lands to attain the highest possible quality of landscape aesthetics and scenery commensurate with other appropriate public uses, costs, and benefits.

### **Policy**

It is Watershed District policy to:

1. Inventory, evaluate, manage, and, where necessary,



restore scenery as a fully integrated part of the ecosystems of the Watershed District and of the land and resource management and planning process.

2. Employ a systematic, interdisciplinary approach to scenery management to ensure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and environmental design.
3. Apply scenery management principles in all Watershed District activities where appropriate and practicable.

