

# **MAPPING EMIGRANT TRAILS MANUAL**

## **PART D TRAIL SETTING CLASSIFICATIONS**

**Prepared by the  
Mapping and Marking Committee**

**Fifth Edition  
(Revised and Expanded)**

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## TRAIL SETTING CLASSIFICATION

### INTRODUCTION

In 1991 OCTA published the original Mapping Emigrant Trails Manual which contained a methodology for classifying emigrant trails. It defined five classes (now six) that graded the trails from unaltered (Class 1) to approximate (Class 5). This methodology has proved to be a valuable tool for protecting surviving trails by allowing prioritization of the trail quality from an historic perspective and thereby identifying those most worthy of protection. It is now recognized that the setting, or the surrounding or environment, should be evaluated in a similar manner.

A feature of the trail classification system is its simplicity in dealing with a complex subject. See the MET Manual Part A for a full description. It can be used by non-professionals with minimal training and it does not require special skills such as those possessed by a landscape architect. The settings classification system should also have these features.

Federal Agencies have developed methodologies for evaluating landscapes, but they are more complex and require special expertise. One of the mostly commonly used approaches, the BLM's Visual Resource Management (VRM) system is a valuable tool, but it emphasizes scenic values. The trail setting classification system described herein emphasizes rating the quality of the setting when compared to its appearance during its period of its historic use.

### DEFINITIONS

**Setting** - The dictionary describes a setting as "the surrounding or environment." It encompasses everything from the foreground to the background and does not have a metric attached to its definition. It is basically everything that is seen.

**Period of Use** - The setting is to be evaluated based upon its ability to convey the feeling that was experienced by travelers during the period the associated trail was in use.

**Intrusions** - Intrusions are items (buildings, towers, storage tanks, etc.) that are inconsistent with the setting during the period of use. Intrusions are categorized by the impact they have on the setting. Size and contrast are important parameters to be considered. Low contrast and distant intrusions do not disqualify a setting from a high ranking.

**Intruded angle** - The angular segment in degrees impacted by Type A intrusions (definitions to follow) when viewed from a point on the trail.

Observation Point- The point on the trail from which the setting is evaluated.

Terrain Shadow – The area from any given observation point along the trail that is not seen due to intervening terrain. Any object falling in this area may be ignored even if it is a Type A intrusion.

Foreground – From the observation point to approximately one mile.

Middle Ground – From one mile to five miles from the observation point.

Background – From five miles to the ten miles or the visual horizon.

## THE SETTING DIAGRAM

Figure 1 presents a setting diagram which provides the basis for a setting evaluation and classification. The observation point is at the center of the diagram.

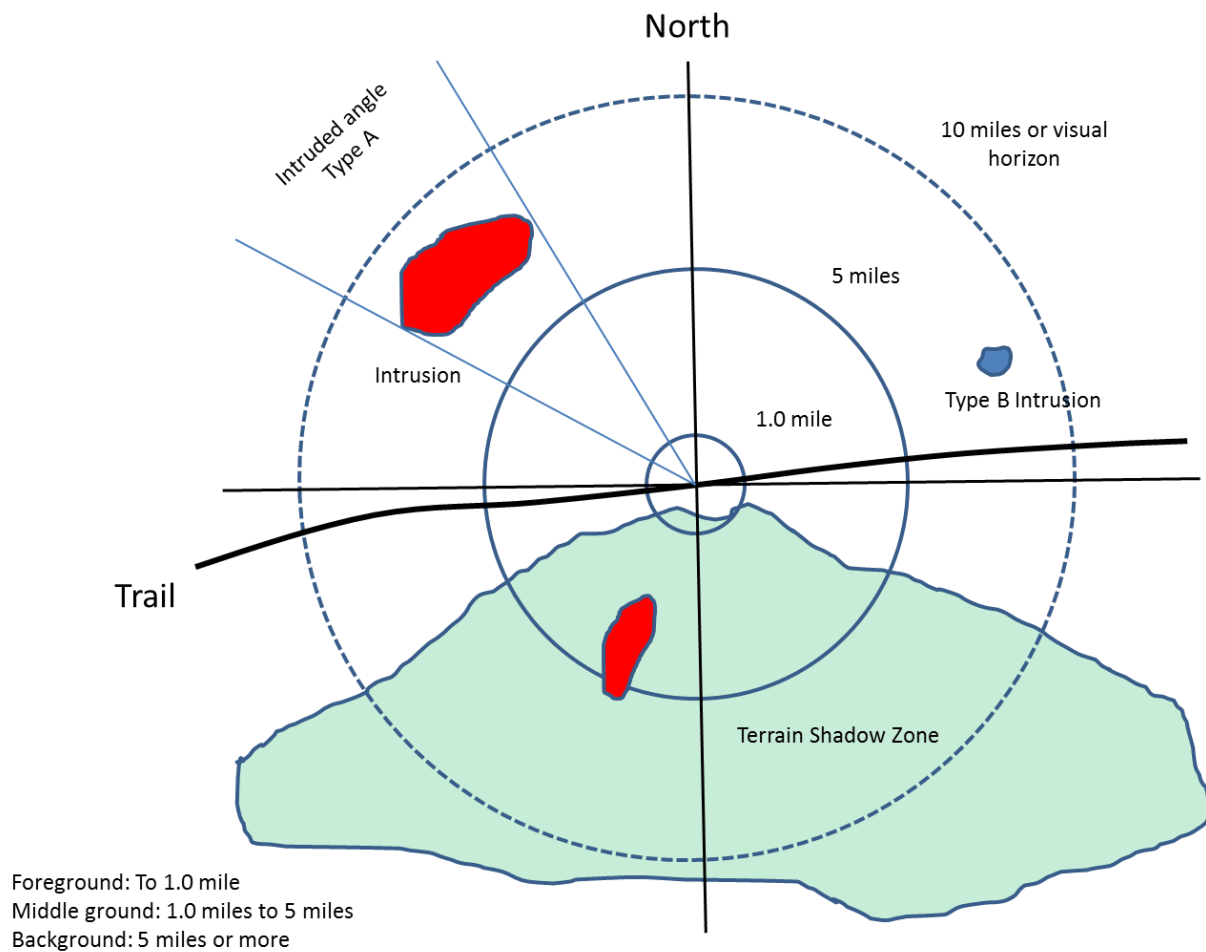


Figure 1. Setting Diagram

The nature of intrusions is discussed in the next section. The terrain shadow is an area hidden by a higher intervening terrain. Intrusions in this area need not be considered. It is possible that a large modern structure would exist in this area, but this would not detract from the setting if it is not seen.

## INTRUSIONS

As noted in the definitions, intrusions are items that are not consistent with the setting during the period of use. Intrusions are defined by three types (A, B, or C) depending upon their impact to the setting. They are:

Intrusion Types	At zero to 1 mile	At 1 to 5 miles	At greater than 5 miles
Energy facilities			
Well heads (at less than one mile)	A	A	B
Wind turbines	A	A	A
Storage tanks	A	A	B
Above ground pipelines	A	A or B*	B
High voltage transmission lines	A	A	A
Utility Lines (small pole)	A	B	B
Generating plants	A	A	A
Solar arrays	A	A	A
Commercial structures	A	A	A or B*
Mining operations	A	A	A
Chain link fencing	A	A	B
Paved highways and associated infrastructure	A	A	A
Urban developments	A	A	A
Railroad beds and infrastructure	A	A	B
Large non-native vegetation	A	B	C
Small, low contrast ranch complexes	A	A or B*	C
Historic structures	B	B	C
Graded roads (crown and ditch)	A	B	C
Class 4 trail	B	B	C
Multiple graded or paved roads	A	B	C
Interpretive signs	C	C	C
Other two-track roads (ungraded, unpaved)	C	C	C
Low visibility fencing	C	C	C
* Dependent upon size and contrast			6/27/2014 14:13

The classification of the intrusion (Type A, B or C) is dependent upon its characteristics, location and contrast. Even a Type A intrusion can have little effect if it appears in the distance and has low contrast. Contrast is the degree to which the item stands out in the general setting. Camouflage techniques are a means of lowering contrast. Figure 2 and 3 illustrate intrusions.



Figure 2. Intrusions(Clockwise): Well Head, Type A or B; Drill Rig, Type A but temporary; Split Rail Fence, Type C; Drilling Spoil Pond, Type A; Highway Trail Crossing Marker, Type C





Figure 3. Wind Turbines, Type A in Foreground, Middle Ground, and Background.

## SETTING CLASSIFICATIONS

Five settings classifications are defined:

- Class I
  - a. Type A intrusions are in the background and the intruded angle is less than 30 degrees; Type B intrusions, if any, are in the middle ground and background.
  - b. Or only Type B intrusions are present in the middle ground or background.
- Class II
  - a. Type A intrusions are in the background and the intruded angle is less than 90 degrees; Type B intrusions, if any, are in the middle ground and background.
- Class III
  - a. Type A intrusions are in background and the intruded angle is less than 180 degrees; Type B intrusions, if any, are in the middle ground and background.
  - b. Or only Type B intrusions are present in the foreground and beyond.
- Class IV
  - a. Type A intrusions are in the middle ground and Type B intrusions, if any, may be in the foreground and beyond.
- Class V
  - a. Type A intrusions are in the foreground and the intruded angle is approaches 360 degrees.

Additional guidelines follow.

## CLASS I SETTING

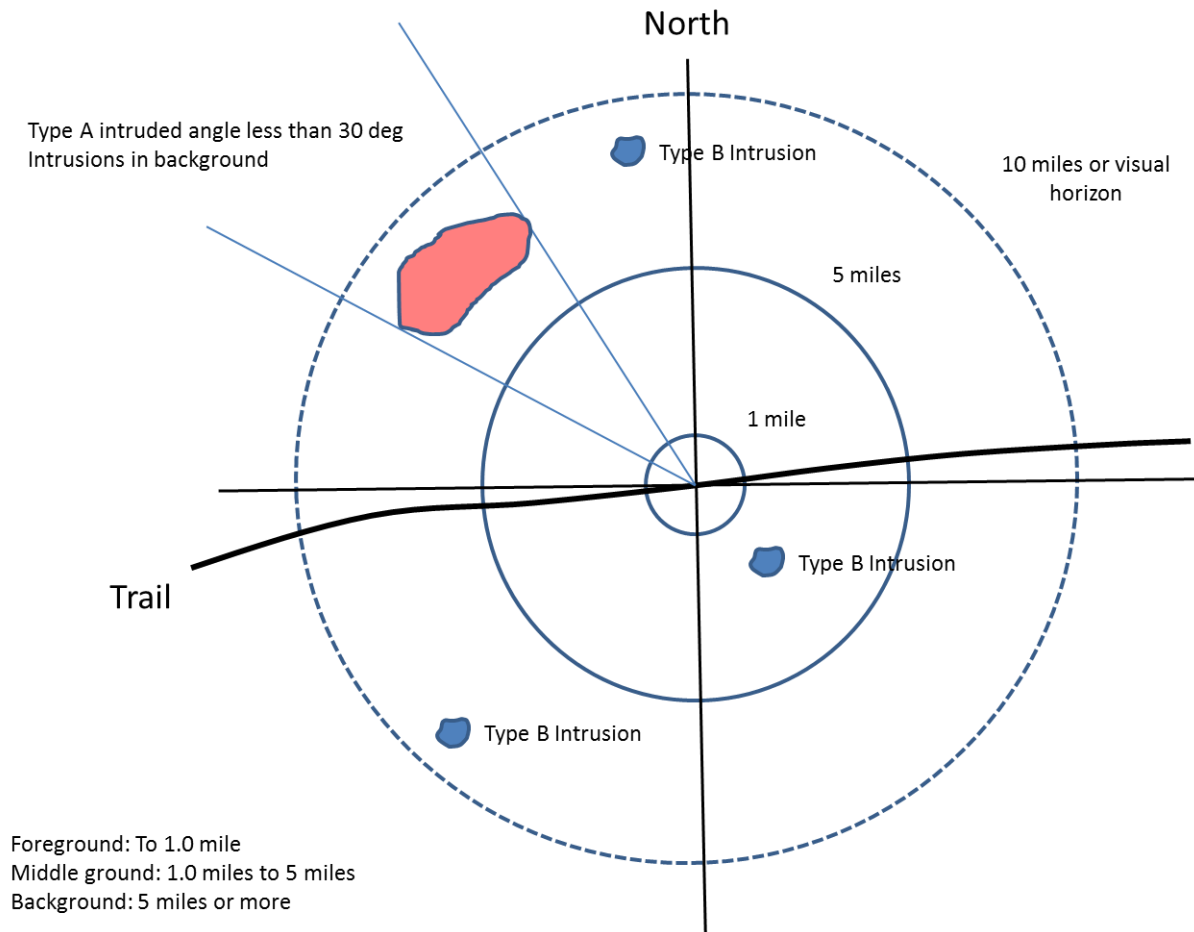


Figure 4. Class I Setting

Discussion: In a Class I setting there may be a Type A intrusion and Type B intrusions, if any, are at a distance of one mile or more. Type C intrusions may exist at any distance. Type A intrusions must be at a distance greater than five miles and must subtend an angle less than thirty degrees. If only Type B intrusions are present in the middle ground and beyond, the setting is Class I unless they are intrusive to the extent of making the setting non-representative of the emigrant experience. If the Type B intrusions are excessive, the setting is Class II or Class III.

A terrain shadow may or may not exist, but if it exists that sector is not considered in evaluating intrusions. The measurement of distances and angles is not intended to be rigid, i.e. an angle slightly greater than thirty degrees or distances varying slightly should be considered as meeting the requirement.



Figure 5. Class I Setting on the Sublette Cutoff in Wyoming. Type C intrusions in foreground (markers) and Type B intrusions in middle ground (ranching)

## CLASS II SETTING

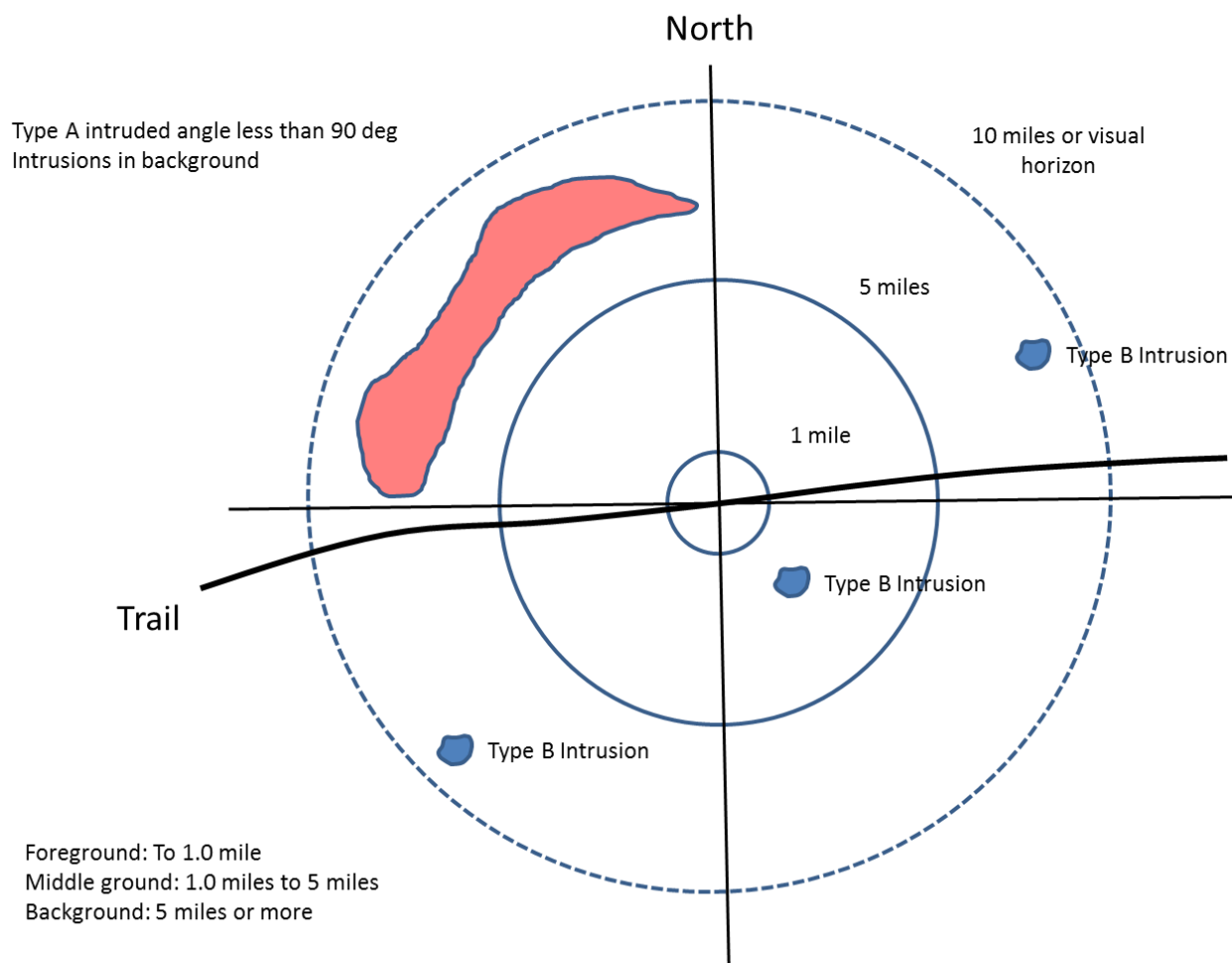


Figure 6 Class II Setting

Discussion: In a Class II setting the angle intruded by a Type A intrusion is much greater than 30 degrees but less than 90 degrees. Also Type B intrusions may appear in the middle ground and beyond. No angular measurement is associated with a Type B intrusion. Again, the terrain shadow may or may not exist, but if it exists that sector is not considered in evaluating intrusions.

If only Type B intrusions are present in the middle ground and beyond, consider a Class I setting classification if they have a low visual impact.

### CLASS III SETTING

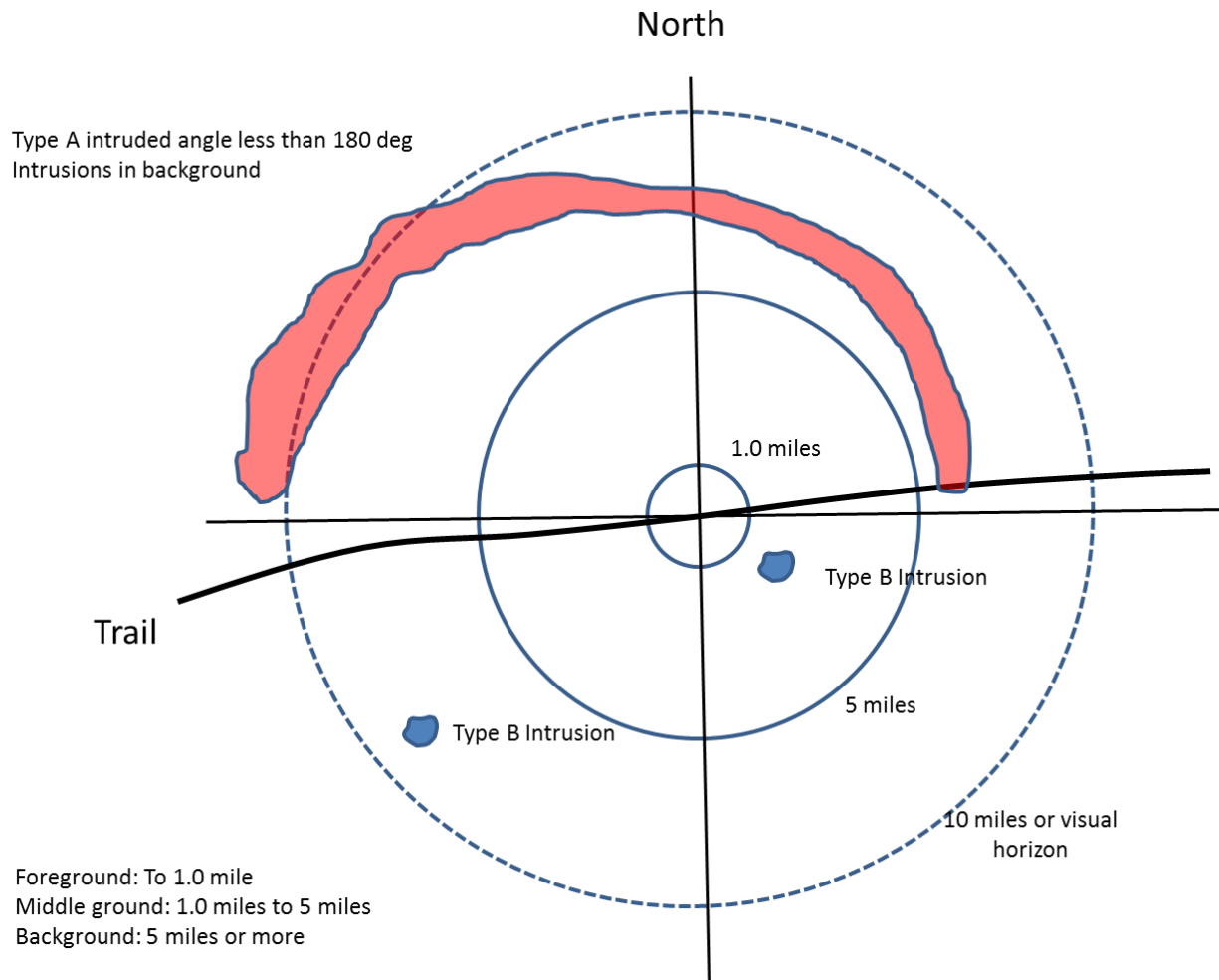


Figure 7 Class III Setting

Discussion: In a Class III setting, the intruded angle approaches 180 degrees, but it is still at a distance of five miles. Type B intrusions appear at distances from one to five miles or more. This setting class describes a situation where essentially the view in one direction is degraded by modern development at a distance of five miles or more while the view in the other direction is Class I if considered by itself.

Type B intrusions may be present in the foreground if they do not have a high visual impact. Type B intrusions in the 180 degree intruded sector may be ignored.

## CLASS IV SETTING

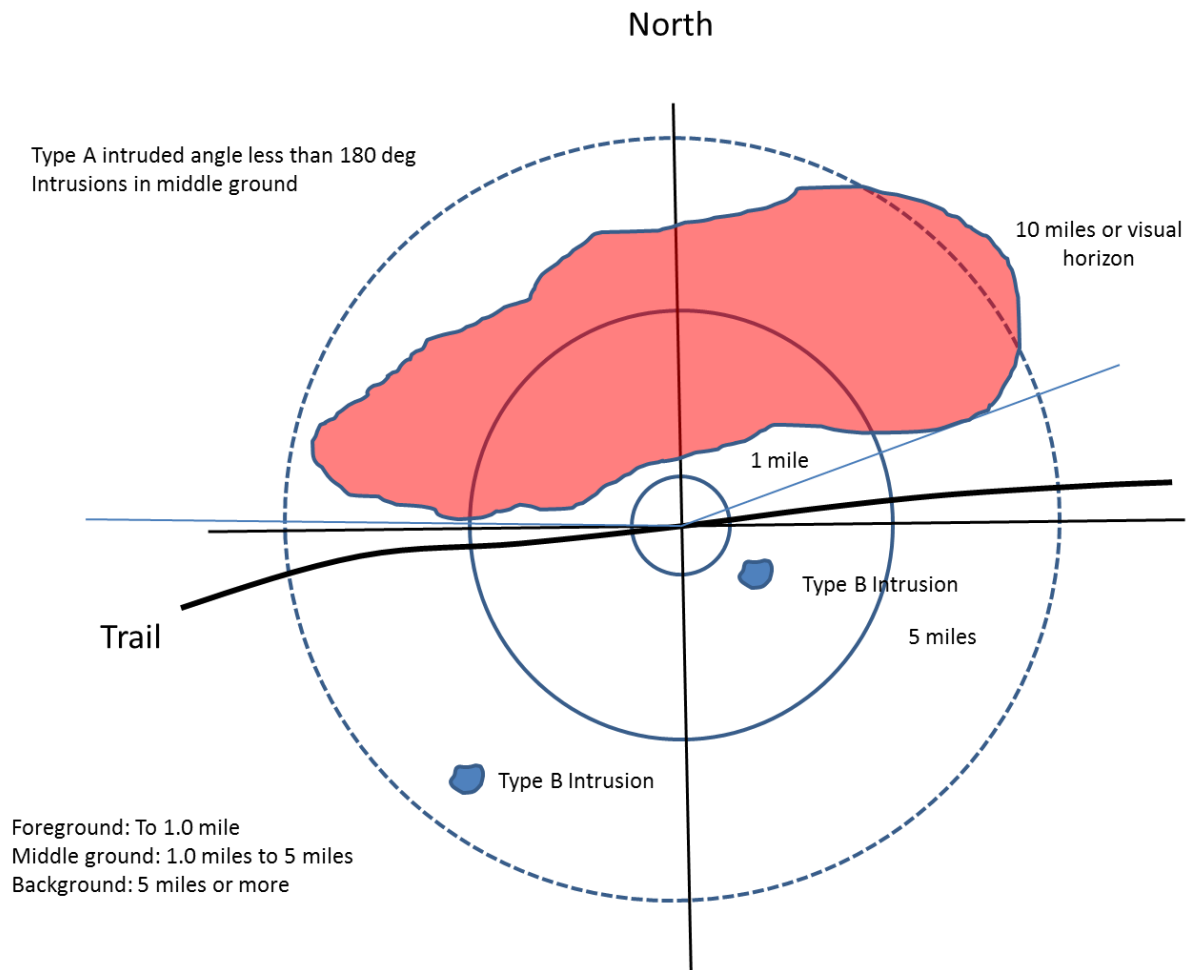


Figure 8 Class IV Setting

Discussion: In a Class IV setting the intrusions seen in a Class III setting appear much closer (at about one mile). Type B intrusions may be present in the foreground in any direction.

## CLASS V SETTING

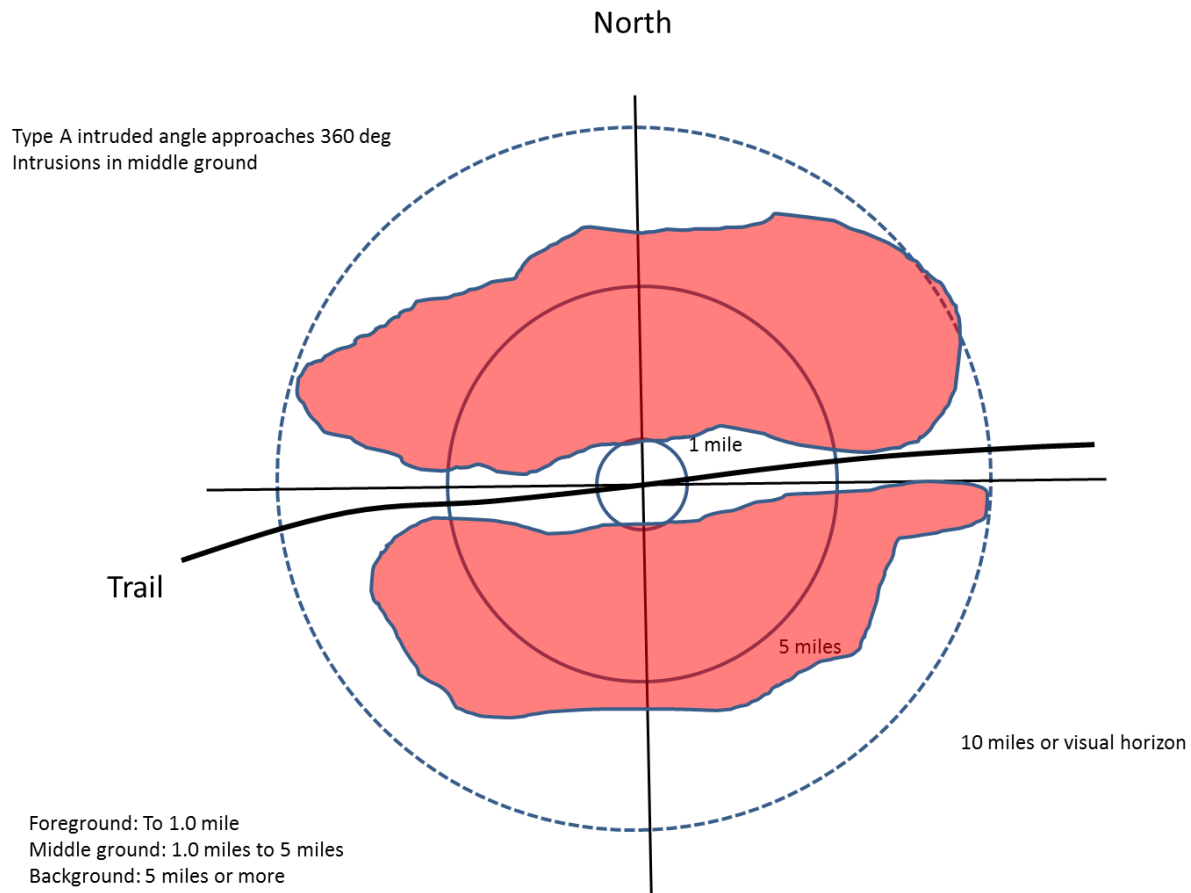


Figure 9 Class V Setting

Discussion: The setting for a Class V trail is essentially limited to the trail itself. There may be a short distance adjacent to the trail that is protected, but Type A intrusions appear in all directions at close range. Type B intrusions may also be present.

## CONCLUSIONS

As with trail classifications, there is a subjective component to the evaluation. It is impossible to be absolute in the evaluation but a differentiation of settings is possible. If a setting, or a portion thereof, presents a view that is evocative of the emigrant's experience when traveling through the same area, it should be a Class I and Class II setting. Since a setting lost is probably lost forever, evaluations should err on the side of preservation of the historic setting.