

Resource	Compatibility	Scale	Spatial Dominance
Water Resources	1.6	1.5	1.3
Landform	1.0	1.0	1.0
Vegetation	1.0	1.0	1.0
Land Use	1.1	1.0	1.0
User Activity	1.6	1.4	1.4
	1 – Compatible, 2 – Somewhat Compatible 3 – Not Compatible	1 – Minimal 2 – Moderate 3 – Severe	1 – Subordinate 2 – Co-Dominant 3 – Dominant

3.2.2.5 AI07: Hanging Rock (Appendix C Sheets 24-28)

Existing View

This view is from an overlook along the Hanging Rock Trail within the Norman Bird Sanctuary, which is located near the southeastern tip of Aquidneck Island near the Paradise Avenue State Scenic Byway in the Town of Middletown, Rhode Island. This KOP is representative of the Coastal Scrub/Scrub Forest LSZ. The overlook represents a singular available elevated location along this part of Aquidneck Island. This site is also near Second Beach, Sachuest Point NWR, and the Paradise Rocks Rhode Island Historic District. The Norman Bird Sanctuary includes approximately 325 acres and is a popular destination for residents and tourists who enjoy birdwatching, sightseeing, recreating, and sunbathing. The KOP was photographed from atop a rock outcropping along the Hanging Rock Trail that provides an elevated view of Gardiner Pond, Second Beach, Sachuest Bay, Sachuest Point, and the Atlantic Ocean.

The existing view to the south-southeast from this location features the manmade dikes, and a steel platform, along the edge of Gardiner Pond in the foreground, flanked by Sachuest Point Road and an asphalt parking area associated with Second Beach. A bathhouse is located in the middle of the parking area, and to the right of the bathhouse is a collection of lifeguard chairs. Sand dunes separate the Second Beach parking area from Sachuest Bay. Sachuest Point NWR is visible within the middle ground arching around Sachuest Bay from the left side of the view. The cloudless blue-sky fades to near white at the horizon, providing a strong contrast between the water and sky across the entire view. The water is a rough textured dark blue, with small waves breaking at the shore. The BWF is 28.3 miles (45.5 km) from this location and is visible just above the horizon to the south-southwest.

Rating panel members indicated that the scene is dominated by the man-made pond dike and platform in the foreground, as along with the parking area and adjacent dunes. As noted by one panel member, these elements in the foreground tend to draw attention away from the open view of the water. Rating panel scores for the existing conditions photograph(s) ranged from 11.3 to 13.3 (average = 12.3), which is consistent with the Partial Retention classification LSZ.

Proposed Project

Regional visibility of the RWF in this area is largely restricted to the shoreline along Second Beach, and unobstructed views across the open water of Nelson and Gardiner Ponds along the southeastern shore of Aquidneck Island (two additional KOPs are located nearby including Second Beach and Sachuest Point which provide additional information on regional visibility). Additional areas of potential Project visibility is present northeast of Gardiner Pond along Hanging Rock Road, as well as east of the pond along Third Beach Road, where views would be available across low-lying coastal wetland areas.

With the proposed RWF in place, from this KOP the nacelles and rotors of numerous WTGs will be visible in the background along the horizon. The nearest WTG would be 16.3 miles (26.2 km) south-southeast of this KOP. Rating panel members noted that the density of the RWF turbines across the horizon become a dominant focal point of the view. One reviewer indicated that the turbines were particularly noticeable under the backlit lighting conditions illustrated in this view.

Rating panel members had varying reactions to the RWF’s impact, with VIA scores ranging from 9.3 to 12.7 (average score = 10.9). These scores indicate an average reduction of 1.4 points in comparison to the existing view, with individual rating panel members indicating reductions that ranged from 0.6 to 2.4. With the RWF in place, the KOP score remains within the Partial Retention class (see Table 3.2-12). Considering the compatibility, scale contrast, and spatial dominance factors that influenced the visual impact rating at this KOP, panel member ratings demonstrated that the WTGs were generally compatible with, landform, and vegetation, and somewhat compatible with water resources, land use, and user activity (see Table 3.2-13). Scale contrast was rated as minimal for vegetation and land use, but moderate for water resources, landform, and user activity. Considering spatial dominance, panel ratings suggest that the WTGs are subordinate to vegetation and land use, and co-dominant to water resources, landform, and user activity.

Based on the compatibility, scale contrast, and spatial dominance impacts of the RWF it is anticipated that Project visibility from this KOP will be consistent with VTL 5 because it *“is not large but contrasts with the surrounding landscape elements so strongly that it is a major focus of visual attention, drawing viewer attention immediately and tending to hold that attention. In addition to strong contrasts in form, line, color, and texture, bright light sources such as lighting and reflections! and moving objects associated with the study subject may contribute substantially to drawing viewer attention. The visual prominence of the study subject interferes noticeably with views of nearby landscape/seascape elements.”* (Sullivan et al., 2013).

Table 3.2-12 – Average Visual Impact Ratings – AI07

	KAC	RCS	JMG	WLK	Average
Existing	12.7	12.0	13.3	11.3	12.3
Proposed	10.3	11.3	12.7	9.3	10.9
Change	2.4	0.7	0.6	2	1.4

Table 3.2-13 – Average Visual Impact Ratings by Resource – AI07

Hanging Rock (Norman Bird Sanctuary)			
Resource	Compatibility	Scale	Spatial Dominance
Water Resources	2.1	2.0	2.3
Landform	1.3	1.8	1.6
Vegetation	1.3	1.3	1.3
Land Use	1.5	1.4	1.4
User Activity	1.8	1.8	1.8

1 – Compatible,	1 – Minimal	1 – Subordinate
2 – Somewhat Compatible	2 – Moderate	2 – Co-Dominant
3 – Not Compatible	3 – Severe	3 – Dominant