Project:
Mount Ashland LSR Habitat Restoration & Fuels Reduction Project
(Mt Ashland Project)

Prepared by: /s/Jerry Mosier, Klamath NF landscape architect
Date: 4/6/07
District: Oak Knoll
Photo Record: Within All Viewsheds of Concern
Simulation/Modeling: two computerized 3-D topographic (ArcInfo) models for visibility and contrast analysis, and several photorealistic computer simulations (Photoshop) to develop and communicate scenery restoration proposals.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Viewing scenery is the single most sought after recreation activity on the Klamath National Forest, and it contributes to local quality of life, recreation, tourism and economic vitality [1]. Scenery within the Mt Ashland Project area also contributes to the future scenic legacy and a nourishing sense of place for these values and settings. The project area includes recreational settings in and around the Mt Ashland Ski Area, the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, the Siskiyou Crest Recreation area, and the Interstate 5 viewshed.

The Mt Ashland Project potentially affects the current and future condition of these valued scenic resources. Scenery conservation design features were integrated within the Proposed Action alternatives in order to achieve Klamath Forest Plan Desired Conditions and direction for the scenery resource.

The geographic scope of this scenery analysis includes the project area as defined on project proposed action maps, plus small portions of adjacent viewsheds within approximately 1.5 miles from that boundary, and the consideration of project area scenery from 5 miles eastward on Interstate 5. Temporal scope of this analysis is both short term and long term, as specifically described in sections below.

Indicators used to evaluate scenic quality include "Scenic Integrity" per the USFS Scenery Management System (SMS) Handbook 701 [2], Region 5 SMS Process [3] and Klamath Forest Plan [4] guidance, and "Scenic Stability" based on the draft USFS document "Appendix J – Recommended SMS Refinements" of 7/20/06 [5]. Scenic Integrity is described in terms of Visual Quality Objectives and levels since the 1995 vintage Klamath Forest Plan's scenery direction uses those terms rather than SMS Scenic Integrity Levels. The term "scenic character" has been used to more clearly identify what is called "landscape character" in the SMS.

photo 1: Eastward View from Siskiyou Crest Road (east of Siskiyou Gap) to Siskiyou Peak, dominated by dense, largely continuous mixed-conifer forest canopy and mosaic patterns along some ridgelines.

2. PROJECT LEVEL INVENTORY

A. SCENIC CHARACTER

People value the Scenic Character within the project area for its scenic displays of rugged mountain landforms, diverse mixed conifer forest vegetation, and scattered high elevation mosaics of conifer forest, meadows and rocky ridgelines. The largely continuous yet diverse canopy pattern of mixed conifer and true fir forest is enjoyed within the more distant views, expressing subtle mosaics of intermediate and mature forest structures, narrow riparian stringers and small meadows. Smaller features within and under the forest canopy, such as small trees, shrubs, forbs, grasses, small water bodies and wildlife are more typically enjoyed in "foreground" views within one half mile of the viewer [6]. Many of these attributes of the scenic character are subject to change due from ongoing ecosystem influences, and potentially by this project as well.

The Project Area's existing Scenic Character includes the following individual socially valued scenery attributes:

Forest Vegetation: a largely continuous yet diverse mixed conifer/true fir forest canopy, displaying large trees and mature forest structures within a patchy mosaic pattern of irregular (both open and closed) canopy densities that are most prominent along

upper elevation ridgelines, and southern and western aspects. Accents of narrow riparian stringers, small meadows, understory forest vegetation (shrubs, small trees, forbs and grasses) are also valued for their scenery contributions to the area's immediate foreground views (0-300 feet). The vegetation scenery attribute, unlike other attributes listed below, is vulnerable to uncharacteristic and adverse changes due to existing ecological trends and conditions (Refer to the Scenic Stability section below).

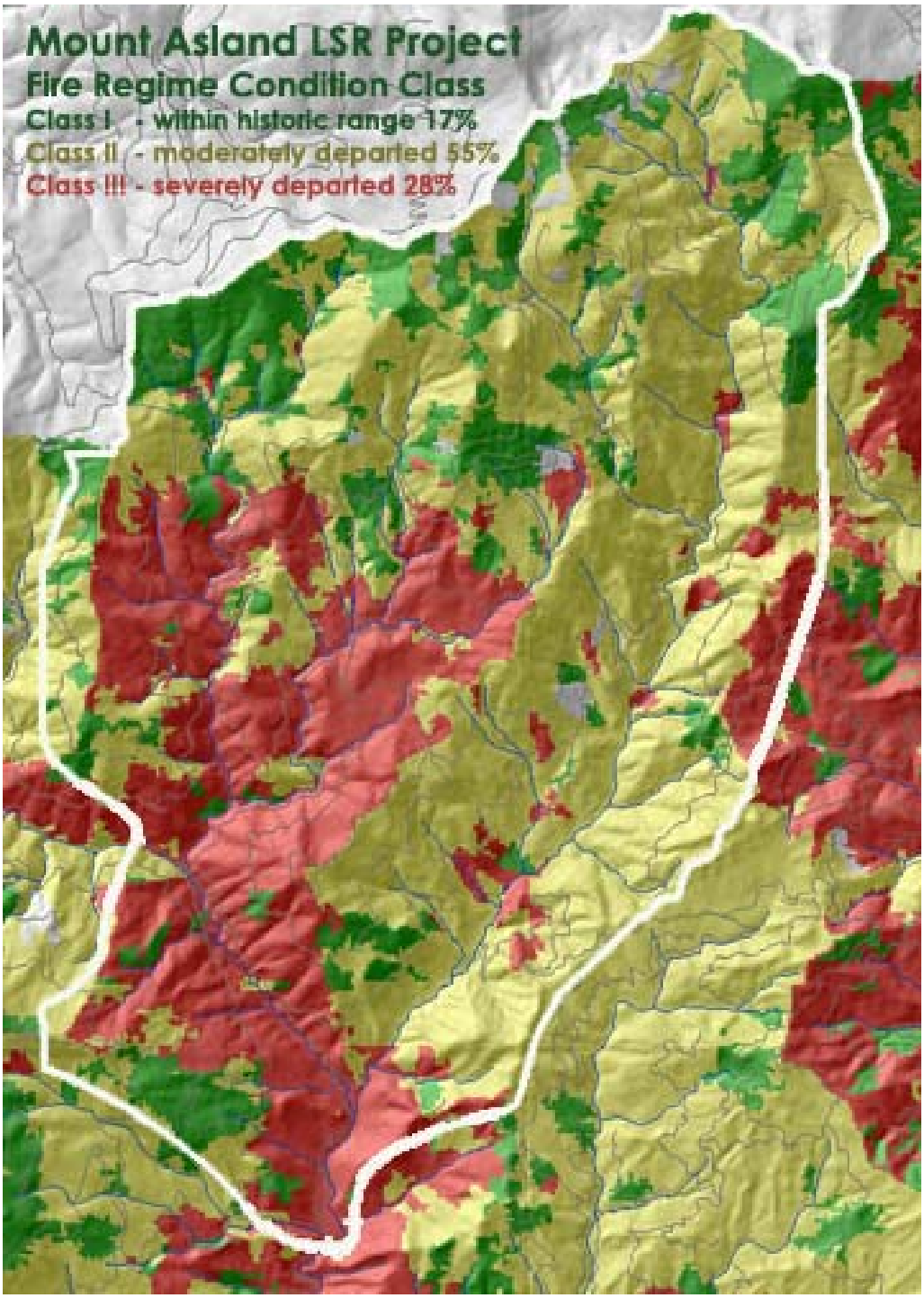
Landform: a complex 3-dimensional surface made up of moderately steep, highly dissected landforms, (typically brown, light brown and sometimes red soils) with upper elevation ridges and peaks displaying distinctively attractive patterns of craggy rocks and alpine meadows.

Waterform: perennial & intermittent streams, & annual snowfields typically lasting 3-6 months (especially attractive in upper elevation crest areas).

NOTE: Social valuation of the above scenery attributes has been confirmed primarily through national research [6] and uncontested statements of valued scenery attributes made within numerous Klamath National Forest environmental document publications.

photo 2: View of the Project Area from Interstate 5 (mid-upper elevations are dominated by largely continuous conifer forest)

B. SCENIC STABILITLY



Scenic Stability is a new scenery indicator within the USFS Scenery Management System (applied in this analysis according to procedures described in the 9/20/06 Draft Appendix J of the SMS Handbook # 701[5]).

Scenic Stability of the project area's inherent scenic character is a subject of concern due to existing vegetation conditions. Valued vegetation attributes of the scenic character are becoming increasingly scarce within the project area, with fewer large trees within open and diverse forest canopies; fewer understory shrubs, forbs and grasses, fewer meadows, and fewer opportunities to view wildlife. Dense stands of existing small and intermediate size trees typically obscure current views into and through the canopy, and diminish the variety of small spaces and species that people enjoy viewing [1].

About 80% of the project area is either moderately or severely inconsistent with, or trending away from, historic "pre-settlement" vegetation structure conditions (yellow and red areas of the map above, created from the 10/12/06 Fire Regime Condition Class -FRCC Analysis provided by Max Creasy, USFS ecologist[7]). There are widespread excesses of overly dense stands of smaller and intermediate trees, and accumulations of highly flammable forest

woody debris. These conditions are largely due to wildfire suppression and logging within past decades.

Table 3 below illustrates a specific example of the "departure", or gap between current forest canopy conditions and more historic conditions in the Mt Ashland project area - particularly important is the critical large tree-open canopy ("Late Open" deficit &"Late Closed" surplus) element of mixed conifer forest canopies, for their effect upon LSR wildlife habitat as well as the historic scenic character.

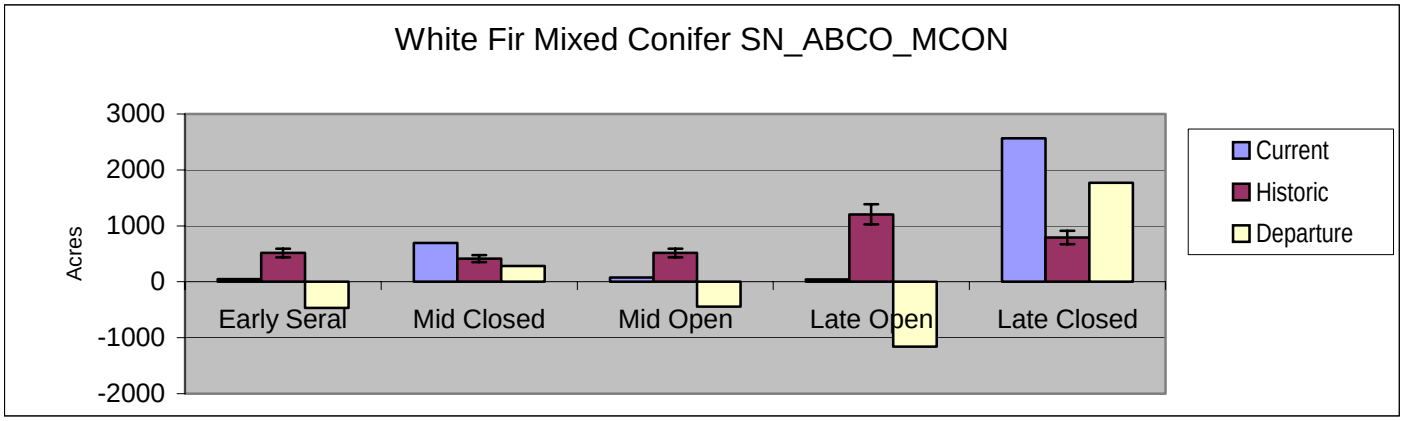


Table 3 LEGEND NOTE:
Early Seral = young trees <5" dbh
Mid Closed = trees 5-25"dbh with >50% crown closure
Mid Open = trees 5-25" dbh with <50% crown closure
Late Open = trees 25+ dbh with <50% crown closure
Late Closed = trees 25"+ dbh with >50% crown closure
This table is representative of many red and yellow areas depicted in the map above (data originated from inventoried Mixed Conifer Stands within the 5,679 acres of the Long John Creek 7th field watershed unit #6090102, in the project area). Yellow Bars below/above the "0" line indicates shortages/excesses respectively, between the existing acres and the more resilient, historic and attractive scenery conditions.

Much of the project area has missed several cycles of wildfire events which have historically occurred every 15-35 years and maintained a relatively low level of fuels across the landscape. The mixed conifer zone making up much of the project area is highly departed from natural (historic) fire frequency and fuels levels per the project's Fire and Fuels assessment[8]. This assessment indicates that approximately 96% of the project area is either moderately or severely inconsistent with historic fire intervals (FRCC classes based on fire return interval departure). The high fuel levels across the project area pose a substantial risk of extreme and intense wildfire events which are most likely to result in excessively large forest canopy openings. Such openings would likely be concentrated in distribution, and seriously diminish the project area's valued and more historic scenery pattern (widely scattered small openings with interiors mottled by individual trees and tree groupings, as

well as intricate, small scale ridgeline meadow patterns, edges, and other scenic vegetation attributes).

Based on the above vegetation and fire/fuel conditions of the project area, its Scenic Stability is classified as LOW. This means that some dominant scenery attributes are present and are likely to be sustained, however, known scenery attribute conditions and ecosystem stressors seriously threaten or have already eliminated other dominant scenery attributes). Methodology for Scenic Stability classification follows below.

Determination of Scenic Stability Levels first requires assignment of a level of vegetation "Attribute Condition" ("FAIR" to "POOR" was assigned, based on the FRCC vegetation structure conditions described above[7]) within Table 1, page 6. Then, also using Table 1, the vegetation's "Attribute Risk" is similarly assigned, as "MODERATE" to "SEVERE" based on historic fire frequency, fire cycles missed, existing fuel levels and FRCC Fire Return Interval departure classifications [8]. Next the vegetation's overall "Scenery Attribute Risk" is assigned as MODERATE to HIGH per Table 1 (some portions of the landscape have MODERATE Risk, while others have a HIGH Risk). Next, this MODERATE to HIGH RISK of the Vegetation scenery attributes is combined collectively with the project area's other scenery attributes (which all have LOW Risk) to identify an overall Ecosystem Risk for all the scenery attributes (landform, waterform, etc) in the project area. This collective risk is matched with conditions listed in Table 2 (left column) to identify a corresponding Scenic Stability Level ("LOW STABILITY" based the existing "HIGH risk to SOME" vegetation attributes). These levels and their definitions are as follows within Table 2 and following text on page 7.

NOTE: The above Vegetation Condition and Ecosystem/fire risk Stress levels correspond respectively to FRCC vegetation structure departure data and FRCC fire return interval departure data (refer to stand structure information from analysis by Max Creasy, USFS Ecologist[7], and the Fire and Fuels section of the DEIS[8] for more detailed information).

Table 1 – Individual Scenery Attribute Risk Determination

This table was applied to determine overall risk to scenic vegetation attributes (red text indicates current vegetation **condition**, fire/fuels **stress**, and vegetation attribute **risk**).

Scenery ATTRIBUTE RISK Determination				
Scenery ATTRIBUTE CONDITION	ECOSYSTEM STRESS upon the Scenery Attribute			
		MINOR	**MODERATE**	**SEVERE**
	STRONG	No Risk	Low Risk	Moderate Risk
	F A I R	Low Risk	**Moderate Risk**	**High Risk**
	P O O R	Moderate Risk	**High Risk**	**High Risk**

(Source: Draft 7/20/06 "Appendix J – Recommended SMS Refinements" to Scenery Management System Handbook #701)

Table 2 – Scenic Stability Level Determination

This table was used to assign project area Scenic Stability Levels based on the project area's collective ecosystem risks to its entire set of dominant scenery attributes.

ECOSYSTEM RISK [1] to the Dominant Scenery Attributes	STABILITY [2] of the Dominant Scenery Attributes	SCENIC STABILITY LEVEL
LOW Risk to ALL [3] **(includes dominant & minor attributes)**	ALL are Stable	VERY HIGH STABILITY
LOW Risk to ALL	ALL are Stable	HIGH STABILITY
HIGH Risk to a FEW	MOST are Stable	MODERATE STABILITY
HIGH Risk to SOME (Current Project RISK)	**SOME are Stable (Current ATT. STABILITY)**	**LOW STABILITY (Current SCENIC STABILITY)**
HIGH Risk to MOST	FEW are Stable	VERY LOW STABILITY
HIGH Risk to ALL	NONE are Stable	NO STABILITY

SCENIC STABILITY LEVEL Definitions

- VERY HIGH STABILITY – All dominant and minor scenery attributes of the valued landscape character are present and are likely to be sustained.
- HIGH STABILITY – All dominant scenery attributes of the valued landscape character are present and are likely to be sustained. However, there may be scenery attribute conditions and ecosystem stressors that present a low risk to the sustainability of dominant scenery attributes.
- MODERATE STABILITY – Most dominant scenery attributes of the valued landscape character are present and are likely to be sustained; a few may have been lost or are in serious decline.
- LOW STABILITY - Some dominant scenery attributes of the valued landscape character are present and are likely to be sustained. Known scenery attribute conditions and ecosystem stressors may seriously threaten or have already eliminated the others.
- VERY LOW STABILITY – Most dominant scenery attributes of the valued landscape character are seriously threatened or absent due to their conditions and ecosystem stressors, and are not likely to be sustained. The few that remain may be moderately threatened but are likely to be sustained.
- NO STABILITY – All dominant scenery attributes of the valued landscape character are absent or seriously threatened by their conditions and ecosystem stressors. None are likely to be sustained, except relatively permanent attributes such as landforms.

(Source: Draft USFS 7/20/06 "Appendix J – Recommended SMS Refinements", Scenery Management System Handbook #701)

C. SCENIC ATTRACTIVENESS

"Distinctive" scenic attractiveness (Class A) is prominent at the Project's upper elevation crest ridgelines and peaks, and "Typical/Common" (Class B) scenic attractiveness occurs throughout the middle and lower elevation settings within the project area. Exceptions to this may be small-scale streamside, meadow and rock outcrop features within the middle and lower elevation settings, which display "Distinctive" Class A Scenic Attractiveness.

photo 3: Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail typical foreground under-canopy view, dominated by overly dense stands of smaller pole & intermediate sized trees (many attractive larger trees exist but are often obscured by crowded conditions)

photo 4: Beaver Creek-Siskiyou Crest Link Road #40S15/40S16 views are dominated by largely continuous and dense mixed conifer stands of smaller and intermediate sized trees. Attractive natural appearing openings, large trees, under-canopy and understory views are infrequent elements in this viewshed.

D. VISIBILITY

Klamath National Forest Inventoried visually sensitive Viewsheds of Concern within the project area include:

Viewsheds with "HIGH Concern" for Scenery:

- Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT), offers views of the project area at Foreground (0-1/2 mi) and Middleground (1/2-5 mile) distances.

- Siskiyou Crest Road (#40S16) and associated Recreation Areas (Mount Ashland summit, ski area, Grouse Gap Shelter) offer numerous expansive Foreground & Middleground views of the project area.

- Interstate 5 (an eligible segment of the State of California's Scenic Highway system) offers continuous expansive Background (5+ mile) views.
- The community of Hilt offers only limited Background (5+ mile) views to portions of the project area.

Viewsheds with "MODERATE Concern" for Scenery:

- Beaver Cr to Siskiyou Crest Link Road (#40S15/40S16) offers Foreground and Middleground views.

- Community of Hilt offers Middleground and Background views into the project area.

- Cow Creek Recreation Trail offers middleground views into the project area that are very limited by topography and vegetative screening.

NOTE: The Mount Ashland Ski Area and Siskiyou Crest Recreation Area attractions, plus the I-5 views result in people viewing the project area all year long. This increases the public sensitivity for scenery in the project area because winter snows often make landscape disturbances much more prominent.

E. EXISTING SCENIC INTEGRITY

As viewed from the following Viewsheds of Concern:

- Siskiyou Crest Viewshed (Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail /PCT, Siskiyou Crest Road and associated recreation areas: Mount Ashland summit, Mount Ashland ski area and campground, and Grouse Gap Shelter). The cumulative experience along the PCT within the Project area meets HIGH Scenic Integrity overall (changes are unnoticed), where many scattered scenery disturbances are typically unnoticed. However there are also exceptions where views to national forest and private lands in and beyond the project area contain scenery disturbances associated with roads and logging. These disturbances range in Scenic Integrity level from HIGH for many to a few that are UNACCEPTABLY LOW

(strong contrasts that do not appear natural even when viewed from 5+ miles away).

- Scenic Integrity is generally the same as the PCT above, but with a greater proportion of nearby road disturbances.

- Interstate 5 (an eligible segment of the California State Scenic Highway system) MODERATE Scenic Integrity overall (scenery disturbances are minor and visually subordinate to the natural scenic character). These disturbances are due to primarily due to the Siskiyou Crest Road cut/fill slope contrasts and a few large logged areas, which range in Scenic Integrity level from High to Unacceptably Low.

- The community of Hilt Same as Interstate 5 generally, but with much less visibility to scenery disturbances in the project area, due to its lower elevation.

- Beaver Cr to Siskiyou Crest Link Road (#40S15/40S16) MODERATE Scenic Integrity overall, with scenery disturbances remaining minor and visually subordinate to the natural scenic character. These disturbances are due to roads and logging activities, which range in Scenic Integrity level from HIGH to LOW.

- Cow Creek Trail HIGH Scenic Integrity overall, with only scattered minor disturbances.

3. MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

A. **SCENIC CHARACTER GOALS** (Forest Plan & Project Level):
Maintain or enhance the attractiveness and forest canopy/stand health within the historic range of variability, and maintain or enhance the scenic character's valued scenery attribute attractiveness, and its ecological resilience to wildland fire, insect infestations, disease, drought and other stressors. Give current global climate uncertainties, ecosystem resiliency is an important strategy for perpetuating valued scenic character and other goals. Klamath National Forest Plan directs the conservation of valued scenic ("landscape") character and biological diversity, within standard 11-3, p. 4-44: "Perpetuate the ecologically established landscape (scenic) character when implementing management activities", and standard 6-1, p.4-23: "Manage to maintain the structure, composition and function of forest, rangeland and aquatic ecosystems within the range of natural variability."

B. **SCENIC INTEGRITY** (**Forest Plan Visual Quality Objectives)** (VQOs)

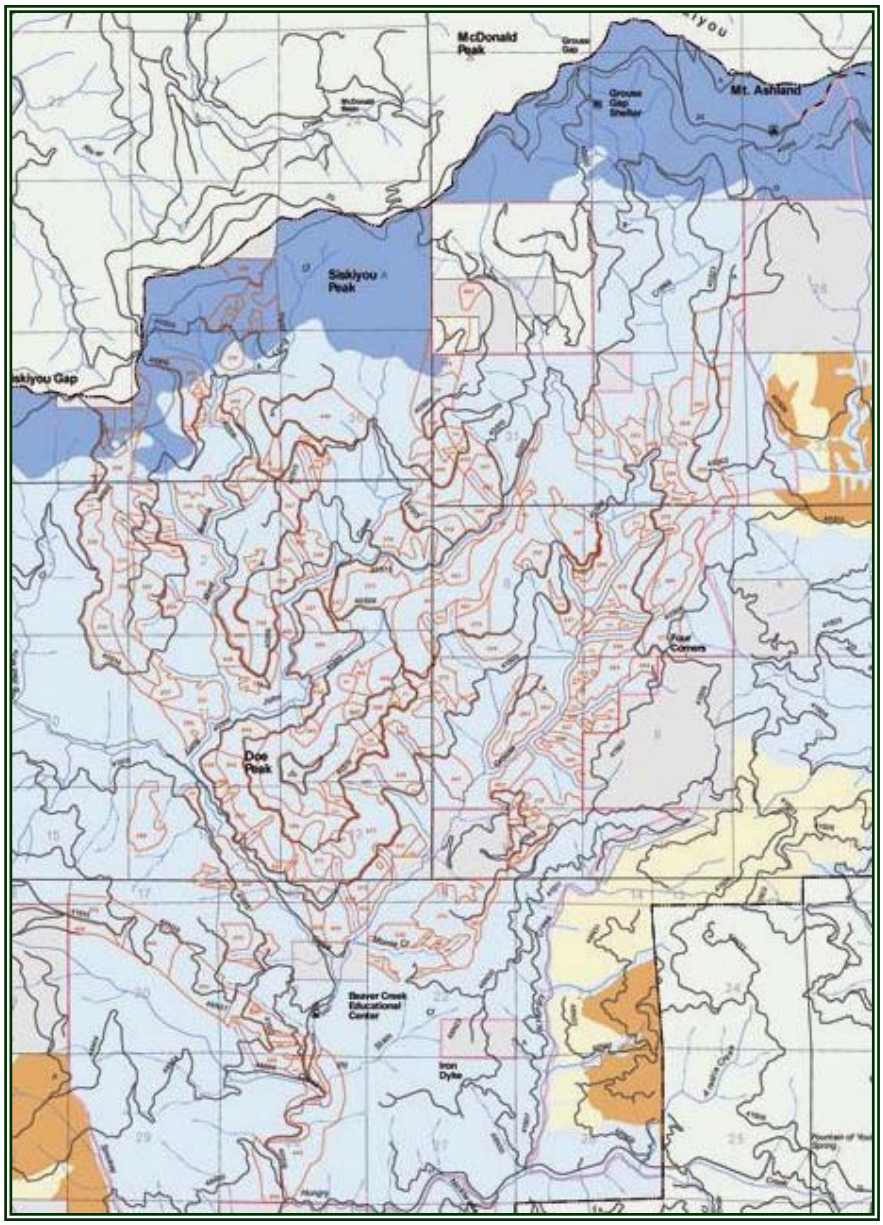
Retention VQO Management Area 11
(HIGH Scenic Integrity) Indicated by BLUE areas on Forest VQO map below (primarily Foreground view zones within ½ mile of the PCT, Siskiyou Crest Road, as well as areas of Distinctive Attractiveness Class A which occur in upper elevation crest settings.)

Management Goal –- Maintain attractive, natural appearing forest scenery.
Desired Condition - Management activities are not apparent. Views from visually important roads and trails appear forested, providing a natural or natural-appearing forest. Vegetation and ground-disturbing management activities are implemented to repeat form, line, color and texture that represent historic characteristics of the landscape. Changes in their qualities of size, amount, intensity, direction, pattern, etc. are not evident to the average visitor.
Klamath Forest Plan Standards &Guidelines: Management Area 11 "Retention VQO", Standards & Guidelines MA 11: 1– 8, 11,12,14,15.

Partial Retention VQO Management Area 15
(MODERATE Scenic Integrity) Indicated by VQO map LIGHT BLUE areas (within Middleground or Background of inventoried HIGH Concern views, and Foreground of MODERATE concern views listed in 2.D above.)

Management Goal - Provide attractive, forested scenery where activities remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape.
Desired Condition – Areas may show evidence of management activities but are visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape, providing a nearly natural appearance.
Klamath Forest Plan Standards &Guidelines: Management Area 15 "Partial Retention VQO", Standards &Guidelines, MA15: 1– 8, 10,12,15,16.

KNF Visual Quality Objective Map of the Project Area >>



BLUE = "**Retention**" VQO / HIGH Scenic Integrity (appears unaltered, changes are unnoticed)

LIGHT BLUE = "**Partial Retention**" VQO / MODERATE Scenic Integrity (minor alterations are noticeable, yet natural appearance remains dominant)

YELLOW = "**Modification**" VQO / LOW Scenic Integrity (altered appearance dominates yet reflects nearby natural features)

ORANGE = "**Maximum Modification**" VQO / VERY LOW Scenic Integrity (appears strongly altered, yet must appear largely natural when viewed at a distance of 5+ miles)

4. PRELIMINARY SCENIC QUALITY PROJECT PRESCRIPTIONS/DESIGN STANDARDS

Preliminary recommendations were first communicated to the project interdisciplinary team in 2005 through a meeting presentation with photographs identifying socially valued scenery attributes, sensitive viewsheds, restoration opportunities and typical design features for similar projects. Preliminary scenery design features were specifically identified 3/28/06, as a general scenery objective statement: "For the project's Middleground/Background views, focus on stand density and the resulting visible pattern of the thinnings, and the shape/pattern of any created openings. Foreground view scenery resource protection measures will focus on retention of large tree character, an irregularity in stand density, a diversity of species in both the canopy & understory, and minimizing roadside/trailside scenery disturbances (skid patterns, stumps, landings, fire-lines, etc)." Almost all of these project design standards were integrated into the proposed action alternatives.

5. PROJECT SCENERY DESIGN STANDARDS

Scenery design standards have been integrated within the Project's proposed Action Alternatives to achieve Klamath Forest Plan direction (Visual Quality Objectives/scenic integrity and perpetuation of ecologically established scenic character/scenic stability). Project landscape architect shall be consulted or involved during planning and layout phases to implement these standards. These standards are:

1. Thinning densities are spatially prescribed within portions of stands 340, 235 and 339 to reduce the unnatural appearance of previously logged areas.

2. Retain at least 85% of the large trees (28"+dbh) within 50 feet of the Pacific Crest Trail (stands 312, 313, 314, and 250), and 50% of the largest trees within 50 feet of the Beaver Creek to Mount Ashland link road (40S16/40S15 in stands 297, 432, 300, 405, 425, 426, 406, 438, 286, 247, 437, 337, 234, 343, and 342). Retain at least 50% of the smaller full crowned trees in varying sizes, tree groups, snags, hardwoods, shrubs and ground covers, within 200 feet of the PCT in the stands listed above, as well as within visible areas 75 feet from the Beaver Creek to Mt. Ashland link road, in the stands listed above.

3. Flush cut stumps when visible from, and within 75 feet of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, in stands 312, 313, 314, and 250. Within 75-150 feet of the trail, cut visible stumps to a maximum height of 4-6" as measured from the uphill slope. Further conceal trailside stump contrasts or project associated ground disturbances until they become unnoticeable from the trail within 3 years, by covering them with dirt, duff or woody debris.

4. Cut stumps to a 6" maximum height measured from the uphill slope when visible from within 50 feet of the Beaver Creek to Mount Ashland link road (40S16/40S15 within stands 297, 432, 300, 405, 425, 426, 406, 438, 286, 247, 437, 337, 234, 343, 342). Fully or partially cover stumps or project associated ground disturbances with dirt, duff or woody debris as necessary so they create only minor visible contrasts that do not dominate over the natural appearance of the roadside scenery within 3 years.

5. To prevent unnatural appearing vertical linear openings in the forest canopy due to cable yarding corridors, retain at least 60% of the existing forest canopy cover within the yarding corridors of stands 236, 237, 250, 435, 243, 253, 206, 212, 207, 277 and 377. This may require an increased number of cable yarding corridors, lateral yarding practices, and/or the use of rub trees along the yarding corridors to reduce damage to retained trees and their screening branches.

6. Locate skid roads, and control use of mechanical equipment to minimize visibility of associated ground and vegetation disturbances as seen from the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail in stands 312 and 313, and the Beaver Creek to Mt. Ashland link road (40S16/40S15) in stands 297, 432, 426, 286, 247, 337, 234, 343, 342 and 341.

7. Minimize the number of landings visible from the Beaver Creek to Mt. Ashland link road (40S16/40S15). Where landings must be visible from the road, protect adjacent and interior

trees, natural landform contours and adjacent water bodies; restore roadside and campsite settings and remove project associated debris.

8. Create an irregular, natural appearing mosaic of burn patterns and intensities within 300 feet of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Restore any unnatural appearing evidence of fire management along the trail to become unnoticed from the trail within 3 years.

9. Locate hand piles necessary within 50 feet of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail so that they are not visible or are largely screened from view. Piles will be completely burned to minimize visual impacts.

10. No mastication will occur within 150 feet of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Mastication along the Beaver Creek to Mt. Ashland link road shall be conducted in an irregular, natural appearing pattern that will appear as only a minor visual disturbance within 3 years.

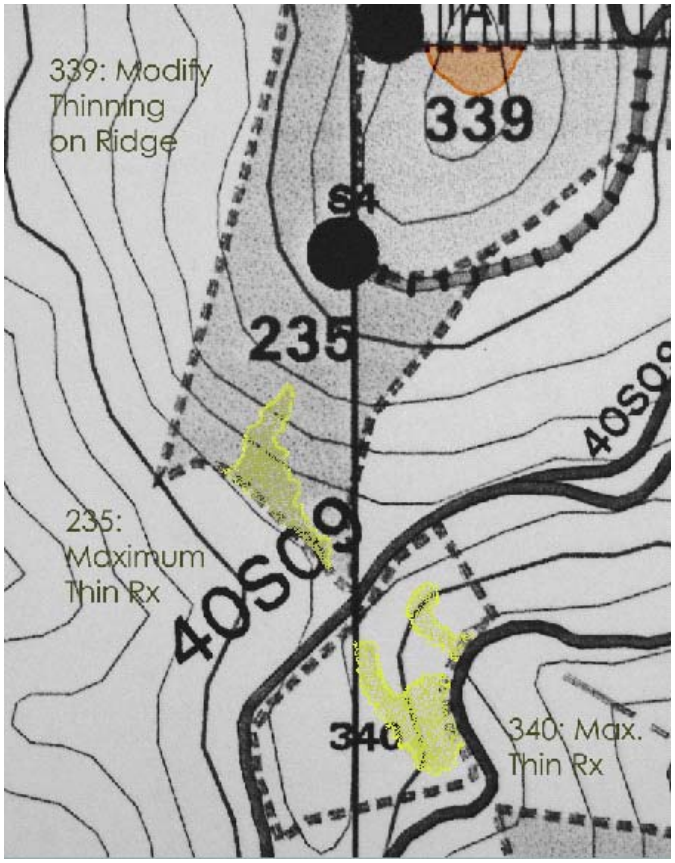
Below are photographic examples of immediate foreground road settings in which the above roadside design features would apply.

TABLE S1 Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT) – Project Scenery Prescription Design Standards & Immediate Foreground View Zone Guidelines

Stand Alt 2 Rx View Distance & Slope	Desired Stand Conditions	Stump Treatments	Logging Systems	Burning, Hand-piling, Mastication
312 Thin CGB (comb. groundbased) Mast/Handp 100-150 feet from trail. Moderately steep on west end of trail	Clumpy, natural appearing multi aged stands with moderately open & resilient tree clumps, an irregular mosaic of sizes, spacing & species; large trees 28"+ dbh & mature stand structure is common. Remove 30-50% of ladder fuels within & between clumps. Retain Landscape architect shall be involved with tree mark.	As needed to remain unnoticed & achieve natural appearance from the trail: Flush cut stumps visible within 75 feet; when 75'-150', cut to 4-6" max. height (conceal stumps with dirt, duff, woody debris, to be approved by landscape architect)	No crossing of PCT with tractor or end-lines, yard away from trail, skid roads must remain unnoticed, or be fully restored/concealed promptly with duff & woody debris, to be approved by landscape architect. Vegetation and soil damage in trail view zone must remain unnoticed. Landscape architect shall be involved during layout.	Hand pile slash within 125 feet of the PCT above the trail, and 150 feet of PCT below the trail, mastication permitted beyond. Leave/protect onsite representative natural appearing woody debris, locate most burn piles 50+ ft from trail in largely screened locations, & completely burn the piles. Within 100 feet of PCT, retain and protect the most prominent and attractive 10% of non-commercial trees, understory & snags. Consult landscape architect to identify areas & leave vegetation/debris during layout.
313 Thin MechH/Mast 150-200 feet from trail Fllat-gently sloping	Same as 312	Flush cut stumps will be achieved by Mech Harvester. Conceal stump faces as needed to remain unnoticed & achieve a natural appearance from the trail (cover with dirt, duff, & woody debris). Landscape architect shall approve stump treatments.	Cross the PCT with equipment in one location on main ridge to minimize trailside disturbance. Skid roads and vegetation damage must remain unnoticed, or be fully restored to a natural appearance promptly after project, by hand raking & concealment with duff and woody debris. Landscape architect shall approve crossing location & restoration.	Same as 312.
314 Thin Heli Handp/burn 100-200 feet from trail moderate slopes	Same as 312, but a more uniform and slightly less clumpy distribution is desired	Same as 312	----	Same as 312, OR, If underburned, retain 1/3 of PCT view zone unburned in an irregular, natural appearing mosaic of burned/unburned areas. Landscape architect shall be involved during layout & to help identify mosaic and retained vegetation/debris.
250 Thin Skyline Handp/undrbrn 150-200 feet from trail moderate slope	Same as 312, but a more uniform and less clumpy distribution is desired	Same as 312	Skyline corridors must remain unnoticed from PCT foreground views, or be fully concealed promptly with duff & woody debris. As viewed from PCT viewpoints within 1 mi to the southwest, skyline yarding corridors shall be narrow and dense enough to retain 90% screening over the corridors & still appear unaltered. Restore any noticeable damage to veg. retained in the view zone. Landscape arch shall be involved in corridor plans & approve yarding restoration.	Hand-pile slash within 150 feet of PCT, leave representative natural debris trailside, locate burn piles 50+ ft from trail in largely screened locations, and completely burn piles. Within 100 feet of PCT, retain most attractive and prominent non-commercial trees, snags & understory. OR, if under-burned, retain 1/3 of PCT view zone unburned, in an irregular, natural appearing burn/unburned mosaic. Landscape architect shall be involved during layout.

Scenery Restoration Treatments

339: Eliminate the vertical notch on skyline (far left in photo below). Remove tallest trees within the area to create a gradual tree height transition (area shaded in orange on the map at right) to blend 339 skyline into private land skyline to the north. Retain a slightly irregular canopy height throughout. Result will be similar to simulation on second photo below. This unnatural edge is visible from I-5, Siskiyou Crest Road, Pacific Crest Trail, and Mount Ashland Summit.



235: To soften vertical notch on upper left edge of the existing opening in top photo above, thin yellow area on map to the maximum degree - result will be similar to second photo above. Upper edge of 235 is also visible on far right skyline in photos below, taken from Interstate 5.

340: To reduce the linear flat top of the existing clearcut below stand 340 (photo at right), thin within 340 to the maximum degree within the yellow shaded area on map, to create a more natural appearing shape and texture as simulated in the lower right photo.

NOTE: Project landscape architect shall assist during layout of these restoration treatments.

Additional simulations, and restoration proposals to existing clearcuts visible from Mt Ashland Summit were performed, but these were not included in the proposed action alternatives because the areas were not in need of treatment to achieve the project's primary habitat and fuels reduction objectives.

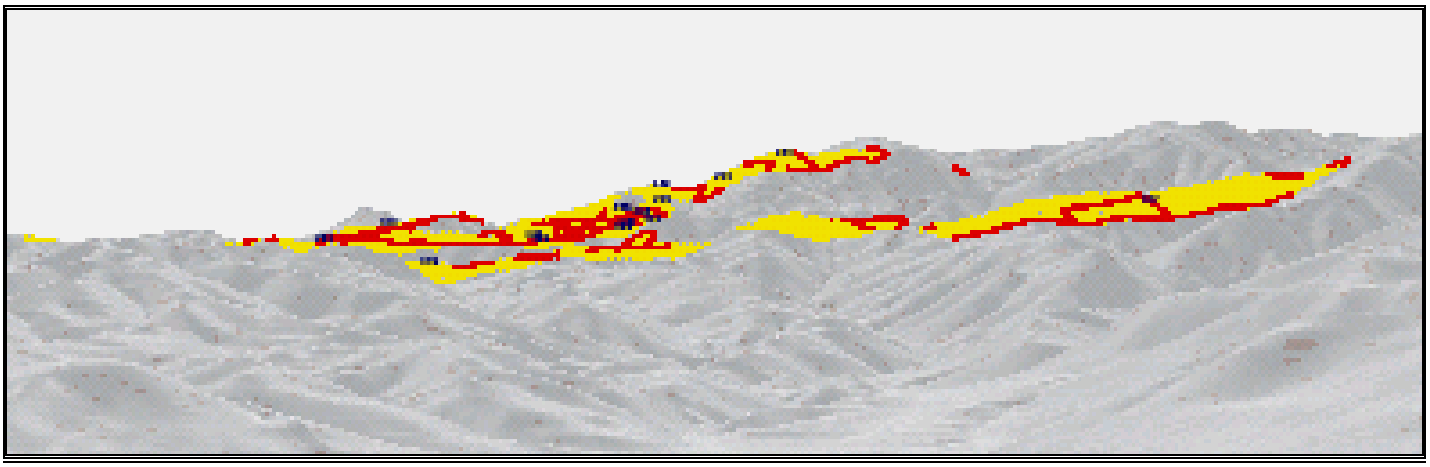
6. SCENERY EFFECTS PREDICTIONS

A. SENSITIVITY of Predicted Scenery Effects of the Alternatives (where they are expected in the project area, and whether they coincide with Viewsheds of Concern or other socially valued scenery resources).

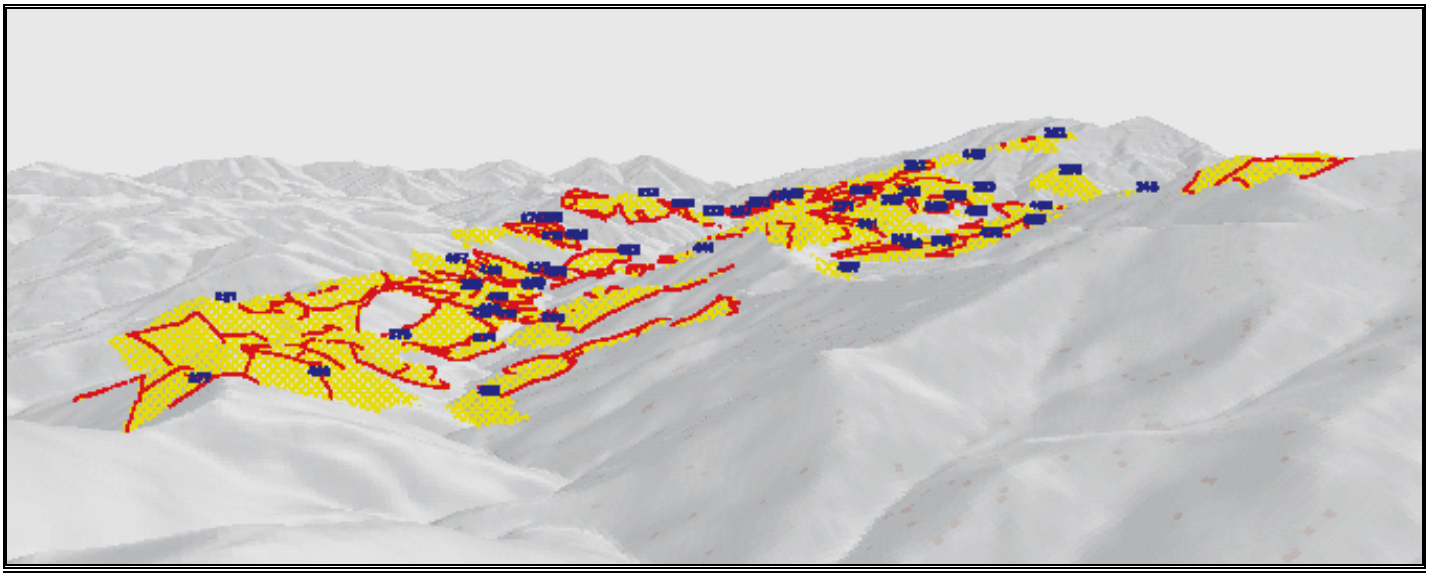
Scenic Stability Effects of the action alternatives are widespread throughout the project area within all sensitive viewsheds; however these effects will typically be visually subtle. General enhancements in scenic character such as larger average tree size, more open canopy conditions offering greater visibility through the forest, and a more diverse future understory would all result, as well as substantial enhancements in ecological resiliency within the proposed vegetation treatment areas (thinning and fuels reduction activities) as well as their larger areas of influence across the landscape, in terms of moderating fire hazard and severity.

Scenic Integrity effects are also widespread and expected within all of the sensitive viewsheds. The Hilt and Cow Creek viewsheds have very limited visibility to the project area due to screening from intervening landforms and vegetation. Scenic Integrity effects will be somewhat visible (although of relatively minor disturbance) within the Mount Ashland Summit's middleground distance viewshed, the Beaver Creek-Siskiyou Crest Link Road foreground viewshed, and the Interstate 5 viewshed.

Proposed Treatment Area/Stand Locations as viewed from Interstate 5 near Hilt
(reduced version of 42" wide computerized 3D hard copy image used to predict visibility and degree of disturbance of proposed activities)



Proposed Treatment Area Locations as viewed from Mount Ashland Summit
(reduced version of 42" wide computerized 3D hard copy image used to predict visibility and degree of disturbance of proposed activities)



B. **SCENIC STABILITY EFFECTS**

Scenic Stability effects are changes to the valued scenic character and its dominant scenery attributes, both immediate and long term. These effects are based on the complete set of the dominant scenery attributes in the project area (vegetation, landform, waterform) which are identified within Section 2.A, page 2 of this document. The Mt Ashland Project's scenery vegetation attributes which are subject to potential change and diminishment by the project or current ecosystem conditions are as follows:

"A largely continuous yet diverse mixed conifer/true fir forest canopy, displaying large trees and mature forest structures within a patchy mosaic pattern of irregular canopy densities (some closed, some open with small 1-5 acre openings) as well as larger and more prominent openings along upper elevation ridgelines. Accents of narrow riparian stringers, small meadows, understory forest vegetation (shrubs, small trees, forbs and grasses) are also valued for their scenery contributions to the area's immediate foreground views within 300 feet."

Scenic stability effects vary by the amount, distribution and timing of forest acres altered, the types of treatments proposed, and their resulting effect upon ecological resiliency of the valued scenic character and its attributes. Qualitative descriptions of Scenic Stability effects to the valued scenic attributes are provided for each alternative below. In addition, these effects are collectively quantified for the project area as a whole within a range of 6 Scenic Stability Levels, based on the predicted ecological stability of the project area's valued scenic character. Since Mount Ashland Project's

four proposed "action" alternatives vary only slightly in their scenic stability effects they will be discussed as a single group, and compared against effects of the No Action alternative.

Scenic Stability Effects of the No Action Alternative

Scenic Stability effects of the Mt Ashland Project's No Action Alternative upon the valued scenic character are widespread and adverse throughout most of the project area. The No Action Alternative would maintain and prolong the currently diminished scenic character, with its excess of overly dense stands of smaller and intermediate trees, and shortage of large trees within more open stands and scattered small (1-5 acre) openings. Since much of the project area has missed several cycles of natural wildfires the No Action alternative would also prolong the substantial risk of excessively large and concentrated forest canopy openings due to extreme wildfire events and other ecosystem stressors. These events could greatly alter the canopy pattern and overall scenic character of the project area. The No Action alternative's perpetuation of the currently diminished scenic character would remain readily apparent within most project area views, regardless of viewing distance.

The project area's overall existing LOW Scenic Stability level (in which "some dominant scenery attributes are stable") is primarily based on the current condition of the Vegetation Scenery Attributes, and its current ecosystem stresses. More specifically, the vegetation's structural condition is "Fair" to "Poor" compared to the more sustainable, attractive and historic pre-settlement conditions; and at the same time the vegetation is threatened with the "Moderate" to "High" ecosystem stresses of high fuel levels and high wildfire risk. This LOW STABILITY level would be perpetuated or possibly even lowered further to VERY LOW STABILITY ("few dominant attributes are stable") in future decades, if trends continue. The project's No Action Alternative would not contribute to implementation of Klamath Forest Plan Standard 11-3, to "Perpetuate the ecologically established landscape (scenic) character when implementing management activities".

Action Alternatives

Scenic Stability effects of the Mt Ashland Project's Action Alternatives upon the valued scenic character and its scenic vegetation attributes would be widespread and favorable throughout most of the project area. Due to their proposed strategic vegetation and fuels reduction treatments encompassing about 1/3 of the total acreage of the project area within priority forest health stands and major ridgelines, the action alternatives would immediately enhance the currently diminished scenic character to a moderate degree within the treatment areas, and moderately increase its ecological resiliency for several decades to come.

A substantial amount of the project area's overly dense stands of smaller and intermediate trees would be transformed by variable thinning activities into more open and diverse stands, where the largest trees would be retained to grow larger, further enhancing the scenic character's attractiveness. Scattered small 1-5 acre openings in irregular, natural shapes and patterns would be introduced, primarily along major ridges and south and west aspects, resulting in greater scenic variety and a more historical

appearance to the forest canopy. The widespread fuels reduction activities would substantially reduce the likelihood and severity of wildfire-created scenery impacts such as uncharacteristically large canopy openings. The resulting increase in ecosystem resiliency from the thinning and fuels reduction activities would moderately increase the likelihood that a more attractive scenic character could be perpetuated into future decades. These improved scenic character conditions would be visually subtle to some observers, yet widely apparent within most project area views.

The project area's existing overall LOW Scenic Stability level ("some dominant scenery attributes are stable") is based on the vegetation's less resilient structural conditions and its ecosystem stresses of high fire risk and fuel levels, as described above in the No Action Alternative discussion. These conditions would be substantially improved by the Action Alternatives so that the MODERATE Scenic Stability level would be achieved, with most of the dominant scenery attributes becoming stable. More specifically, the Action Alternative treatments would result in improving most existing Vegetation Scenery Attribute structural Conditions (from "Poor" to "Fair" or from "Fair" to "Strong" overall), and also reduce the vegetation's overall Ecosystem Stress (wildfire and fuel level risk) conditions (from "Severe" to "Moderate" or from "Moderate" to "Minor" per Tables 1 & 2, on page 6 of this document). The project's Action Alternatives would contribute substantially to the implementation of Klamath Forest Plan Standard 11-3, to "Perpetuate the ecologically established landscape (scenic) character when implementing management activities".

C. SCENIC INTEGRITY EFFECTS

Scenic integrity effects (the degree of visible disturbance within the Viewsheds of Concern) varies by location of the proposed activities in the viewsheds as well as their type, size and shape. Scenic integrity/visible disturbance effects of the alternatives are quantified within a range of 6 degrees called Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) and levels in the Klamath Forest Plan. Since the Forest Plan's 1995 publication, these nationally defined levels have been relabeled as Scenic Integrity Levels within the USFS Scenery Management System. Visual Quality Objectives serve to measure this disturbance for this project, in terms of overall visual dominance and degree of noticeable contrast to the existing scenic character.

The four "Action" alternatives 2-5 vary only slightly in their scenic integrity effects and are described as a single group (variances in their scenic integrity effect are identified below). Scenic Integrity effects of the "No Action" alternative 1 will be described for comparison to the four "Action" alternatives.

Scenic Integrity Effects of the No Action Alternative

No Scenic Integrity effects are expected as a direct result of the Mt Ashland Project's No Action Alternative. All existing sensitive viewsheds would display the same extent and degree of visible disturbances that currently exist (described in Section 2.E page 8).

These disturbances are typically consistent with Klamath Forest Plan Visual Quality Objectives for each viewshed, with some exceptions. Existing disturbances would gradually decrease over time through natural vegetative recovery and screening, but may be disturbed again by unforeseen future disturbances.

However, due to current fire risks in the ecosystem, the No Action alternative prolongs a much greater wildfire-associated scenic integrity risk than the Action Alternatives. Adverse scenic integrity effects of wildfire events likely within the project area include introduction of excessively large and/or geometric visual disturbances to the forest canopy, exposure of visible road contrasts, and fire salvage and reforestation activity disturbances such as unnatural appearing log landings and linear yarding patterns.

Scenic Integrity Effects of the Action Alternatives

A wide range of typically subtle scenic integrity disturbances would be scattered across the project area and its viewsheds as a result of the Action Alternatives. These disturbances would all be short term in duration, typically being noticeable for less than 5-10 years. Through application of the project's scenery design prescriptions, these disturbances would be minimized so that project activities would appear as a dominantly natural appearance with minor or unnoticed disturbances within 3 years of completion. Such high levels of scenic integrity fully achieve Klamath Forest Plan Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs). Refer to the list of viewsheds and their predicted VQO achievement below

Specific scenic integrity effects within foreground views (½ mile distant) of the viewsheds of concern would include visible disturbances such as occasional stumps, damage or removal of understory vegetation, occasional damage to remaining trees, and visible segments of skid trails, cable yarding corridors and log landings. Scenic Integrity effects within the more distant middleground and background portions of the viewheds of concern would also include segments of cable yarding corridors, tractor yarding corridors and roadways, although these would most often be largely screened by the remaining forest canopy. Other existing scenic integrity disturbances would gradually decrease over time through natural vegetative recovery and screening, but could be disturbed again by unforeseen future disturbances.

Scenic integrity effects are similar between the Action Alternatives because they all propose very similar thinning and fuels reduction activities within the project area's viewsheds of concern, where scenic integrity is measured. However, Alternatives 3 and 5 would provide a more immediate achievement of a natural appearance (Retention VQO) within proposed thinning and fuels reduction areas adjacent to the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. These alternatives propose a less disturbing helicopter yarding system along most of the trailside, versus the tractor yarding systems within Alternatives 2 and 4, which would require scenery restoration of minor skid road and cable yarding disturbances on the forest floor within 3 years. A second scenic integrity difference between some Action Alternatives is that only Alternatives 2 and 4 propose treatment of stand 239 with its beneficial scenery restoration actions. Thinning treatments within stand 239 would visually restore two existing unnatural appearing contrasts from

previous logging activities: one restoration would visually soften a blocky clearcut edge on the lower boundary of 239, and the second restoration would eliminate a strong canopy contrast on the skyline at its upper boundary. These restorations would increase the natural appearance as viewed from the Pacific Crest Trail, Siskiyou Crest Road, Mount Ashland Summit and Interstate 5 (see photos and map, page 16).

In contrast to the No Action Alternative, the Action Alternatives would all reduce fire hazards within the project area, thereby reducing the future risk of severe wildfire-associated scenic integrity effects (excessively large and geometric forest canopy openings, exposure of visible road contrasts, and fire salvage and reforestation activity disturbances such as unnatural appearing log landings and linear yarding patterns).

VQO Achievement of the Action Alternatives for each Viewshed of Concern:

- Siskiyou Crest Viewshed (Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail /PCT , Siskiyou Crest Road #40S16 and associated Mount Ashland summit, ski area, Grouse Gap Shelter and their associated recreation areas).
  The cumulative scenery experience along the PCT within the Project area would continue to display relatively high scenic integrity and would appear natural or nearly natural overall (meeting the Retention to Partial Retention VQOs). Trailside scenery effects such as visible stumps, disturbances to the forest floor and understory vegetation within stands 312, 313, 314, 206 & 250 would create moderate to minor disturbances (Modification to Partial Retention VQOs) for up to 3 years, and thereafter display a natural appearance (Retention VQO). More distant PCT views to other project activity areas would slightly alter the forest canopy yet remain natural appearing, or potentially display some widely scattered moderate disturbances, that would collectively appear as only minor scenery disturbances within 3 years of project completion, when a dominantly natural appearance would be achieved (meeting Partial Retention VQO). There would remain some scattered exceptions where National Forest and private lands in and beyond the project area contains visible evidence associated with existing roads and logging. This evidence ranges from a natural appearance (Retention VQO) for many views, to a few views containing strong disturbances which do not appear natural even when viewed from 5+ miles away (the “Unacceptable Modification” level). Scenic integrity viewed from other locations along the Siskiyou Crest Viewshed would generally appear the same as described for the PCT above, except for immediate foreground views. Other than the PCT, Siskiyou Crest Viewshed foreground views would not be affected by the Action Alternatives, and would display a dominantly natural appearance overall (Retention VQO) except for some existing scattered road, logging and recreational site contrasts.

- Interstate 5 Viewshed The cumulative scenery experience along the Interstate 5 views into the project area would continue to display relatively high scenic integrity, and would appear natural or nearly natural overall (meeting the Retention to Partial Retention VQOs, in which scenery disturbances are either

unnoticed or minor and visually subordinate to the natural appearance). Scenic integrity effects of the Action Alternatives could potentially display some widely scattered minor to moderate disturbances in this viewshed, which would appear as cumulatively as a largely natural appearing landscape within 3 years of project completion (meeting the Partial Retention VQO – only minor contrasts). Exceptions to this largely natural appearance would be the existing disturbances of the Mount Ashland/Siskiyou Crest Road cut and fill slope contrasts and a large recently logged clearcut on private lands in section 28 south of Mount Ashland. These two Unacceptable Modification level contrasts in the viewshed are expected to persist for at least 10 years.

- Beaver Cr to Siskiyou Crest Link Road Viewshed The cumulative scenery experience along this foreground-view dominated viewshed would continue to display moderate scenic integrity, in which scenery disturbances may be visually strong initially but would become minor and visually subordinate to the overall natural appearance within 3 years of project completion (possibly meeting the Modification VQO initially, and then the Partial Retention and Retention VQOs). Project activities would create these disturbances as a result of logging, fuels reduction and yarding activities.

The following Viewsheds of Concern were not given in-depth consideration or analysis because of their limited visual access to the project area and proposed project activities.

- The community of Hilt Viewshed Current and cumulative post-project scenic integrity is and will remain as moderate overall, displaying a largely natural appearance with scattered minor disturbances (meets the Partial Retention VQO).
- Cow Creek Trail Viewshed The current high scenic integrity and overall natural appearance would continue after project completion, with little to no change (meets the Partial Retention VQO).

Indirect effects, Duration, and Cumulative Effects of proposed, existing and foreseeable future actions

The Action Alternative's development of a more sustainable and attractive scenery within the project area's sensitive viewsheds supports enjoyable recreation experiences, local quality of life, tourism and economics. The No Action Alternative 1 would result in no such indirect benefits for these values, and perpetuates adverse scenery conditions and their indirect benefits.

Duration of the direct scenery effects from the Action Alternatives would be immediate (0-10 years) and also long term (10-50+ years) for both Scenic Stability and Scenic Integrity, although the long term Scenic Integrity effects would be relatively few and minor. Both long and short term Scenic Stability effects can also be expected for the No Action Alternative. These direct scenery effects would influence the indirect benefits of scenic quality mentioned above, for these periods of time.

Foreseeable future actions and recent actions within or near the project area on National Forest lands will achieve Klamath Forest Plan visual quality standards to perpetuate valued Landscape Character (Scenic Stability) and conserve the Scenic Integrity per Klamath National Forest Visual Quality Objectives. However, those on private lands may not, and may adversely influence the scenic quality of some viewsheds, particularly those with expansive views such as the Mount Ashland Summit, Ski Area, and Interstate 5. One example of this is the recent very large clearcut on private lands in section 28 just south of Mount Ashland, which is very prominent in the Interstate 5 Viewshed, and will likely meet "Unnacceptable Modification" for 10 years or more. Such strong and prominent scenery effects are interpreted by many viewers as evidence that forests are being managed in ways inconsistent to resource stewardship principles and regulations.

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References:

1 National Visitor Use Monitoring Report, for the Klamath National Forest, August 2002, prepared by Kocis, English, Zarnoch, Arnold and Warren, USDA Forest Service, p. 12-13.
2 Landscape Aesthetics, a Handbook for Scenery Management, USDA Handbook 701, 1995.
3 Landscape Aesthetics - SMS Implementation Process, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, 6/03
4 Klamath National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, 1995
5 Appendix J – Recommended SMS Refinements, 7/20/06 Draft Appendix to Landscape Aesthetics, a Handbook for Scenery Management, USDA Handbook 701 of 1995,
6 Social Science to Improve Fuels Management: A Synthesis of Research on Aesthetics and Fuels Management, Robert L. Ryan, University of Massachusetts, Amherst MA, published by USDA Forest Service in 2005. (http://www.ncrs.fs.fed.us/pubs/viewpub.asp?key=3514)
7 Fire Regime Condition Class Report for Mt Ashland LSR Project FRCC Fire Regime Condition Class/Vegetation Structure Analysis by Max Creasy, USFS Ecologist, 10/2006.
8 Mount Ashland LSR Project Fire and Fuels Assessment FRCC Fire Regime Condition Class/Fire Return Interval Departure analysis by Debi Wright, USFS Fire/Fuels Planner, 3/30/07.

This scenery analysis is consistent with Federal laws and direction pertinent to the scenery resource, which include:

- FOREST SERVICE MANUAL, Chapter 2380 Landscape Management 3/2003.
- MULTIPLE USE-SUSTAINED YIELD ACT of 1960
- WILDERNESS ACT of 1964
- WILD & SCENIC RIVERS ACT of 1968
- NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM ACT of 1968
- NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT of 1969

- ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT of 1969
- ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT of 1970
- FOREST AND RANGELAND RENEWABLE RESOURCES PLANNING ACT of 1974
- NATIONAL FOREST MANAGEMENT ACT of 1976
- SURFACE MINING CONTROL AND RECLAMATION ACT of 1977
- PUBLIC RANGELANDS IMPROVEMENT ACT of 1978
- RPA STATEMENT OF POLICY ACT of 1980
- NORTH AMERICAN WETLANDS CONSERVATION ACT of 1989
- SCENIC BYWAYS (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act) of 1991
- TOURISM POLICY and EXPORT PROMOTION ACT of 1992