

ADDENDUM to the Mount Ashland LSR Project SCENERY ANALYSIS

Project:

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

Date: **12/12/07 Addendum** to the original 4/6/07 Scenery Analysis

Prepared by: /s/ Jerry Mosier, Klamath NF landscape architect



Eastward View across the project area, which is dominated by overly dense, largely continuous mixed-conifer forest canopy and a mosaic of dry meadow patterns along some ridgelines.

1. CHANGES to ORIGINAL REPORT

NOTE: The new changes to Alternatives 2-5 in the FEIS are minor in terms of scenic quality effects. These changes would not alter the achievement of Klamath Forest Plan VQOs, or the resulting Scenic Stability levels as described in the original Scenery Analysis/Report. A description of the scenery effects resulting from changes to Action Alternatives 2-5 are as follows.

Minor Scenery Effects due to new changes common to **All Alternatives:**

- **Fuelbreaks** – No large snags (>20") or groups of snags will be felled unless they are a hazard to operations. This would not be significant within views from sensitive public viewpoints, but would slightly benefit scenery overall by increasing structural and color diversity retained within the forest canopy. Such snag retention would slightly improve and retain additional positive, socially valued aspects of the scenic character beyond what was predicted for the original alternatives, as described in the original Scenic Stability Effects section, p. 20-21.
- **Yarding** – Tops of trees shall remain attached to the trees as they are yarded (both cable and heli), thus significantly minimizing fuel loading within treatment areas. As compared to the original alternative proposals, this change would

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reduce additional fuel associated risks substantially, and thereby strengthen the overall Scenic Stability resulting from the project.

- **All Other Changes to Alternatives 2-5** – several other changes, including reduction of mastication, silvicultural prescription refinements, landing acreage reduction and location adjustments, and RR spur road restrictions, all result individually and cumulatively as little to no difference in terms of scenery effects, especially as viewed from inventoried sensitive viewpoints.

2. Correction to the Original Report/Scenery Analysis:

The Scenic Stability section, page 20, Action Alternatives, first paragraph, line 4: should state “treatments over about 25% of project area”, not “1/3 of the total acreage of the project area”.

3. Updated Project Scenery Design Standards for All Action Alternatives

(per IDT leader Sue Stresser and Happy Camp District Ranger Don Hall)

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 (as measured from the uphill slope) when visible from within 50 feet slope distance of the Beaver Creek to Mount Ashland link road edge (segments of roads 40S16 & 40S15, within stands 297, 432, 300, 405, 425, 426, 406, 438, 286, 247, 437, 337, 234, 343, 342). As necessary to create only minor visible contrasts that do not dominate over the natural appearance of the roadside scenery within 3 years of completion of project activities, fully or partially cover stumps or project associated ground disturbances with dirt, duff or woody debris. This will typically be necessary only in areas with concentrations of stumps or stobs, or where individual exceptionally prominent stumps are created. Where

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underburning is planned, stump concealment is not necessary (color contrast of the stumps will typically be reduced through scorching).

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 and/or the use of rub trees along the yarding corridors, or other methods, 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 visibility of landings visible from the Beaver Creek to Mt. Ashland link road to the extent possible (40S16/40S15), ideally through partial or full vegetative screening. Where landings must be visible from the road, create an irregular, more natural appearing opening and edge when possible, protect adjacent trees, natural landform contours and adjacent water bodies; restore roadside settings and remove project associated debris.

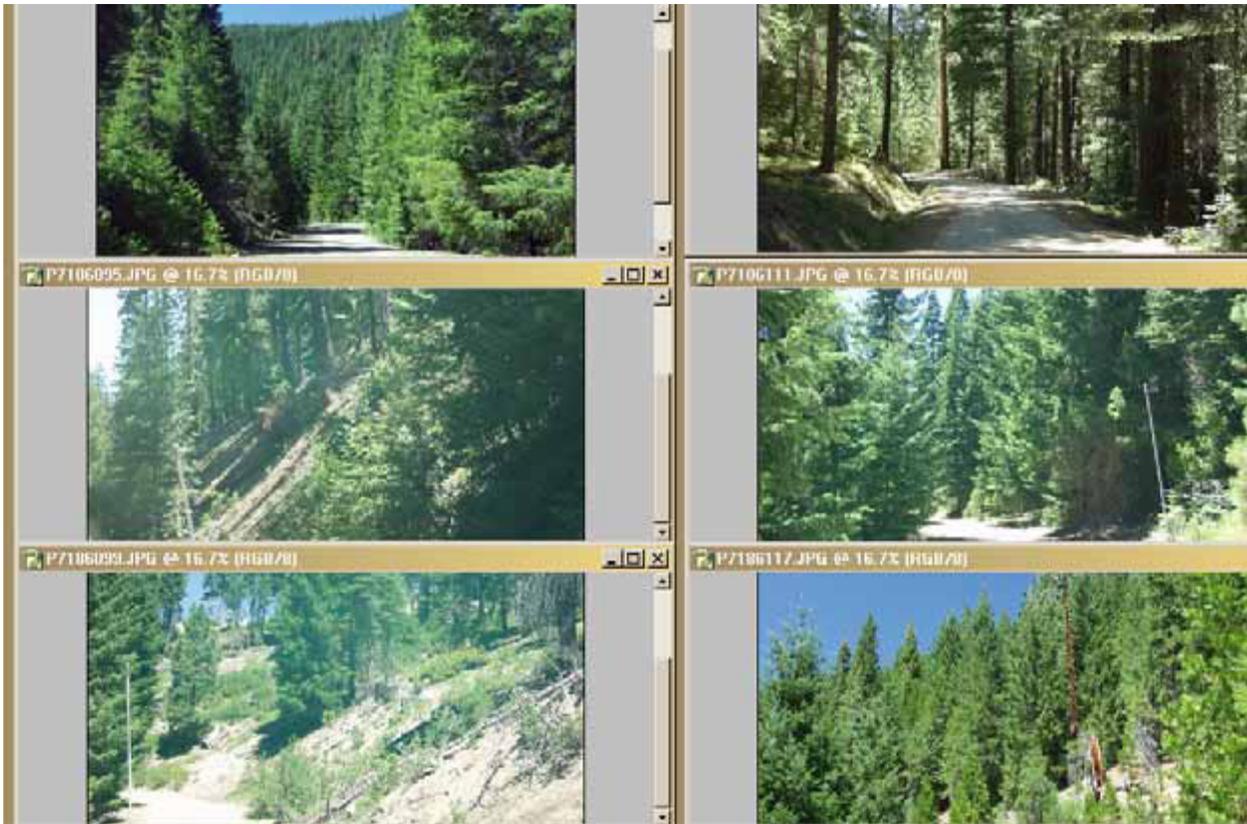
8. Create an irregular, natural appearing mosaic of burn patterns and intensities within 300 feet of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Restore any unnatural appearing evidence of fire management along the trail to become unnoticed from the trail within 3 years.

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.

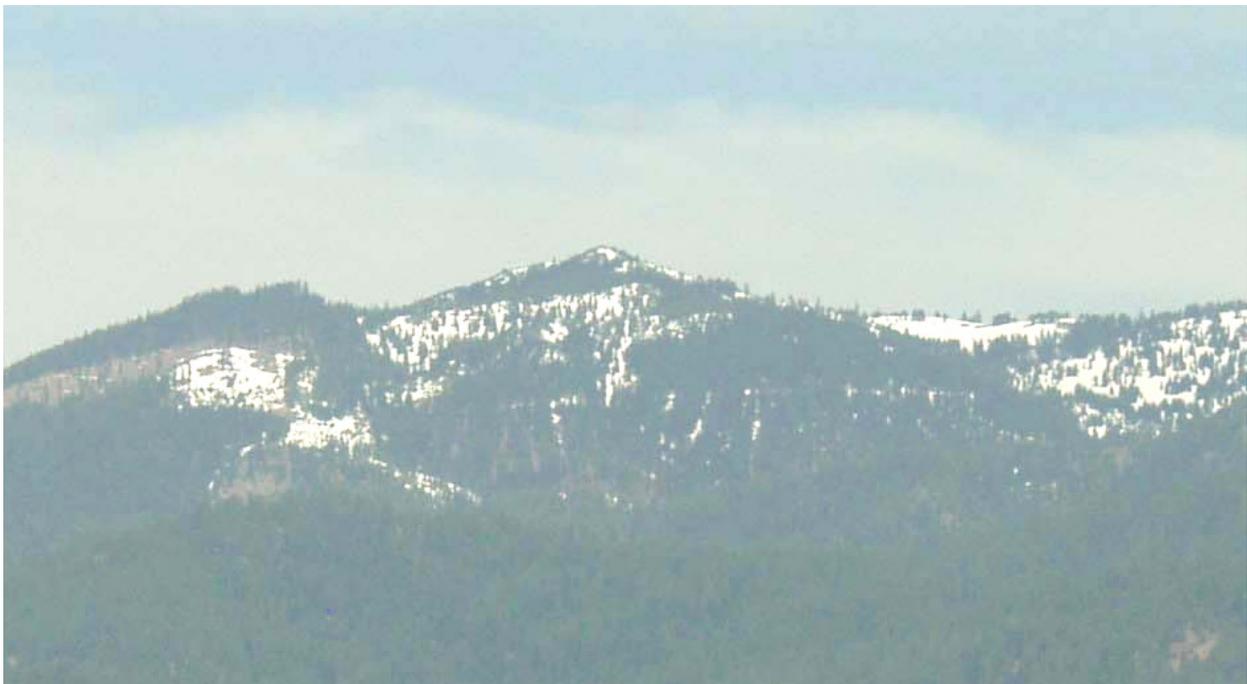
10. No mastication will occur within 150 feet of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Mastication along the Beaver Creek to Mt. Ashland link road shall achieve a clumpy and irregular distribution of undisturbed leave vegetation within 50 feet of the roadway, to appear as a natural appearing pattern with only minor visible disturbances within 3 years of project completion.

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

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Vertical linear skyline yarding contrasts which are accentuated during the project area's 4-6 months of snow (below in center of photo), to be avoided by application of Scenery Design Standard #5 above.



4. SCENERY EFFECTS PREDICTIONS for the PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

OVERVIEW: The Preferred Alternative's scenery effects vary from the other Action Alternatives, by providing the greatest overall sustainability of the valued scenic character through a substantial increase in fuel reduction activities in strategic locations as well as a similar level of scenery-beneficial thinning activities. The Preferred Alternative also excludes proposed thinning and fuels reduction activities in areas near the Pacific Crest Trail and Siskiyou Crest Road, thereby avoiding scenery disturbances in these sensitive immediate foreground views.

A. SCENIC STABILITY EFFECTS OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Scenic Stability effects of the Mt Ashland Project's Preferred Alternative upon the valued scenic character and its scenic vegetation attributes would be widespread and favorable throughout most of the project area. It proposes strategic vegetation and fuels reduction treatments encompassing over 35% of the project area⁹. These treatments located within priority forest health stands, along major ridgelines, and within predicted paths of wildfire expansion, would immediately enhance the currently diminished scenic character to a significant degree. These enhancements would be realized both within the treatment areas and across the project area as a whole, and would last for several decades.

A substantial amount (about 3,600 acres) 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 openings of in irregular, natural shapes and patterns would be introduced along key ridges and south and west aspects, resulting in a more open stand and scenic variety and a more historical appearance to the forest canopy. Most importantly, the widespread and strategically located underburning and other fuels reduction activities would substantially reduce the likelihood and severity of wildfire-created scenery impacts, such as uncharacteristically large canopy openings. The Siskiyou Crest area, where the Siskiyou Crest Road and Pacific Crest Trail crosses, is excluded from direct restorative treatments by the Preferred Alternative. However, fire risk is still reduced here somewhat through the Preferred Alternative's expanded fuels treatments within lower elevation areas below, where wildfires are most likely to originate and threaten the Siskiyou Crest. The resulting increase in ecosystem resiliency from the thinning and fuels reduction activities of the Preferred Alternative would moderately increase the likelihood that a more attractive scenic character could be perpetuated across the project area into future decades. The improved scenic character conditions resulting from these thinning and fuels reduction activities would be visually apparent to most observers within most treatment areas.

The project area's existing overall LOW Scenic Stability level (where "some dominant scenery attributes are stable") is based on the vegetation's unstable

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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 most improved by the Preferred Alternative. The MODERATE Scenic Stability level would be achieved by the Preferred Alternative, as with the other Action Alternatives. More specifically, the Preferred Alternative treatments would result in improving the existing Vegetation Scenery Attribute structural Conditions (from "Poor" to "Fair" or from "Fair" to "Strong" overall). It would also, better than the other action alternatives, reduce the vegetation's overall Ecosystem Stress (wildfire and fuel level risk) conditions. These conditions would shift from "Severe" to "Moderate" or from "Moderate" to "Minor", (per Tables 1 & 2, on page 6 of the original scenery analysis). The Preferred Alternative would best contribute to the achievement of Klamath Forest Plan Standard 11-3, to "Perpetuate the ecologically established landscape (scenic) character when implementing management activities".

B. SCENIC INTEGRITY EFFECTS OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Preferred Alternative's effects on Scenic Integrity vary slightly from Alternatives 2-5 in several ways, yet all would fully achieve Klamath Forest Plan VQO thresholds for levels of visible disturbance. The Preferred Alternative excludes proposed thinning and fuels reduction activities near the Pacific Crest Trail and Siskiyou Crest Road, thereby avoiding scenery disturbances in these sensitive immediate foreground views. There would be a minor amount of increased visual disturbance associated with logging methods (skyline yarding would slightly increase, while helicopter yarding would slightly decrease, resulting in some additional soil exposure and other noticeable ground or vegetation disturbances).

A wide range of typically subtle scenic integrity disturbances would be scattered across the project area and its viewsheds as a result of the Preferred Alternative. 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 viewed in the sensitive viewsheds would still retain a dominantly natural appearance (minor or unnoticed disturbances) within 3 years of completion. These 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 (1/2 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 viewsheds of concern would also include segments of cable yarding corridors, tractor yarding corridors and roadways, although these

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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, the Preferred Alternative, unlike the other Action Alternatives, would not alter the existing natural appearance along or adjacent to the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail or the Siskiyou Crest Road (activities in this area are not included from this alternative).

Scenery restoration within stand 340, to soften the geometric shape of a previously logged area, is proposed by the Preferred Alternative as well as all action alternatives. Alternatives 2 and 4 propose treatment of stand 239 with its scenery restoration actions to 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 of Original Scenery Analysis).

In contrast to the No Action Alternative, the Preferred Alternative and all Action Alternatives would reduce many 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 Preferred Alternative within Viewsheds 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). 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

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ranges from a natural appearance (Retention VQO) for many views, to a few views containing very 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. The PCT and Siskiyou Crest Viewshed foreground views would not be affected by the Preferred Alternative, and would continue to display a dominantly natural appearance overall (Retention VQO) except for some existing scattered road, logging and recreational site contrasts.

- o All other Inventoried Sensitive Viewsheds: The Preferred Alternative would result in scenic integrity effects as described for the Action Alternatives in the Original Scenery Analysis.

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

The Preferred Alternative would result in the same effects as described for the Action Alternatives in the Original Scenery Analysis.

~~~~~ **End of Analysis** ~~~~~

**Additional References applied within this Addendum:**

- 9 Fire and Fuels Assessment Review – Mount Ashland LSR Project, analysis by Michael Journey, Fire and Fuels Specialist, 12/3/07.