3.10 VISUAL RESOURCES

3.10-1 INTRODUCTION

This visual analysis has been undertaken at the request of the TRPA and the Forest Service, in fulfillment of NEPA and TRPA requirements, to describe and evaluate activities proposed under the Heavenly Mountain Resort Epic Discovery Project (Proposed Action) that could result in visual impacts. The Proposed Action is intended to enhance summer activities consistent with the USDA Forest Service Ski Area Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Act of 2011, by improving year-round recreation opportunities within the developed portions of the ski area using existing facilities and infrastructure.

This visual analysis will use information taken where appropriate from the Heavenly Mountain Resort Master Plan Amendment Final EIR/EIS/EIS certified in 2007. The Heavenly Mountain Resort Master Plan Amendment Final EIR/EIS/EIS assessed the scenic quality impacts of the Master Plan Amendment and the environmental setting contained in that document remain relevant. In addition, descriptions of environmental and regulatory setting contained in the Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan 1995 Draft EIR/EIS/EIS, 1998 Heavenly Ski Resort Gondola Project EA and 2000 Revised Gondola Project Visual Analysis are incorporated by reference in this visual resource analysis. The Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan 1995 Draft EIR/EIS/EIS described the affected environment (Chapter 4.10, pages 4.10-1 through 4.10-16) and the Impact Evaluation Criteria (Chapter 4.10, pages 4.10-17 through 4.10-50). Those sections of the Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan 1995 Draft EIR/EIS/EIS are hereby referenced.

A viewshed analysis was conducted for three activities of the Proposed Action that may be visible from the south shore of the Lake Tahoe Basin. The viewshed analysis assesses the visibility of the emergency Gondola Snow Cat evacuation route (Evacuation Route), the Forest Flyer Alpine Coaster top terminal (Forest Flyer Top Terminal), and the Ridge Run Lookout Tower (Lookout Tower). The location of the activities and the photo points used in the viewshed analysis are shown in Figure 3.10-1. The viewshed analysis to determine potential visibility for each of the three listed activities with potential for visibility from the south shore and Lake Tahoe are depicted in Figures 3.10-2 through 3.10-4. These figures show south shore locations where the activities structures or tree clearing may be visible (green) or where they would likely be obscured by intervening topography (pink). The viewshed analysis models (Figures 3.10-2 through 3.10-4) do not take into account the effect of existing vegetation on obscuring views, and are based solely on topography as forest structure can change over time. In addition, two visual simulations of the Evacuation Route, including photos of existing conditions and proposed conditions are shown in Figures 3.10-5 through 3.10-8.

Figure 3.10-1 Viewshed Analysis Photo Point and Potentially Visible Epic Discovery Activity Locations

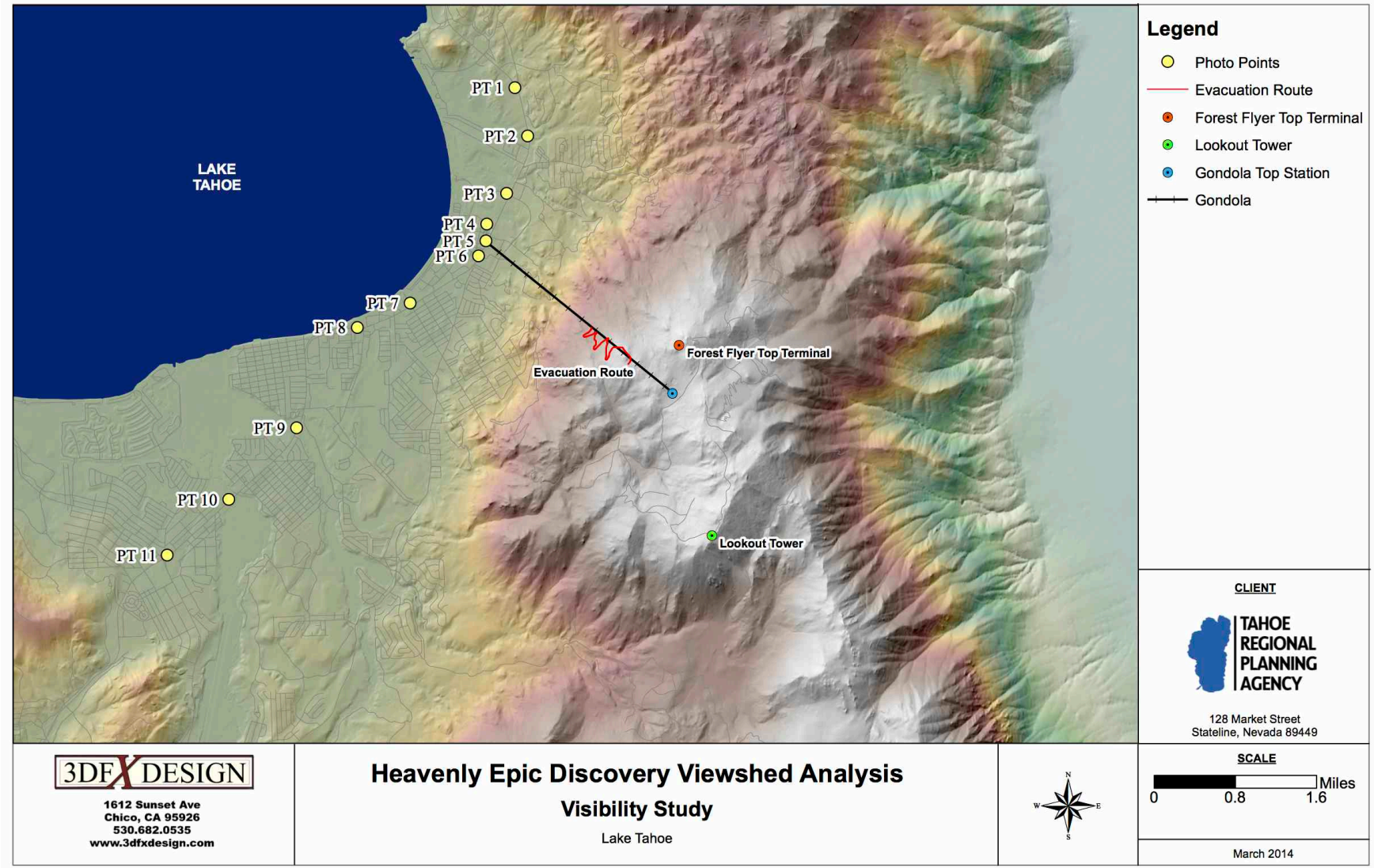


Figure 3.10-2 Viewshed Analysis – Evacuation Route Visibility

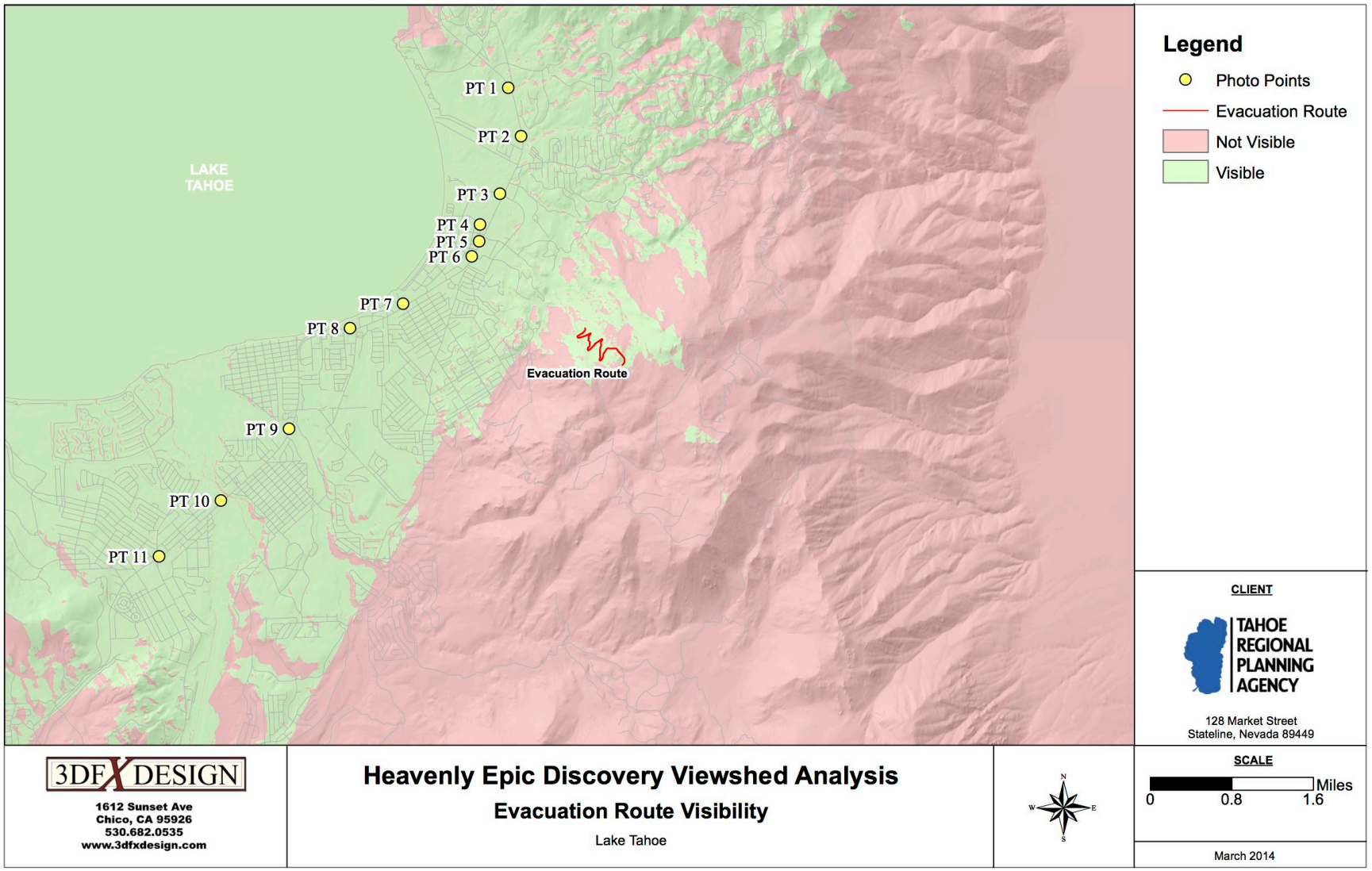


Figure 3.10-3 Viewshed Analysis – Lookout Tower Visibility

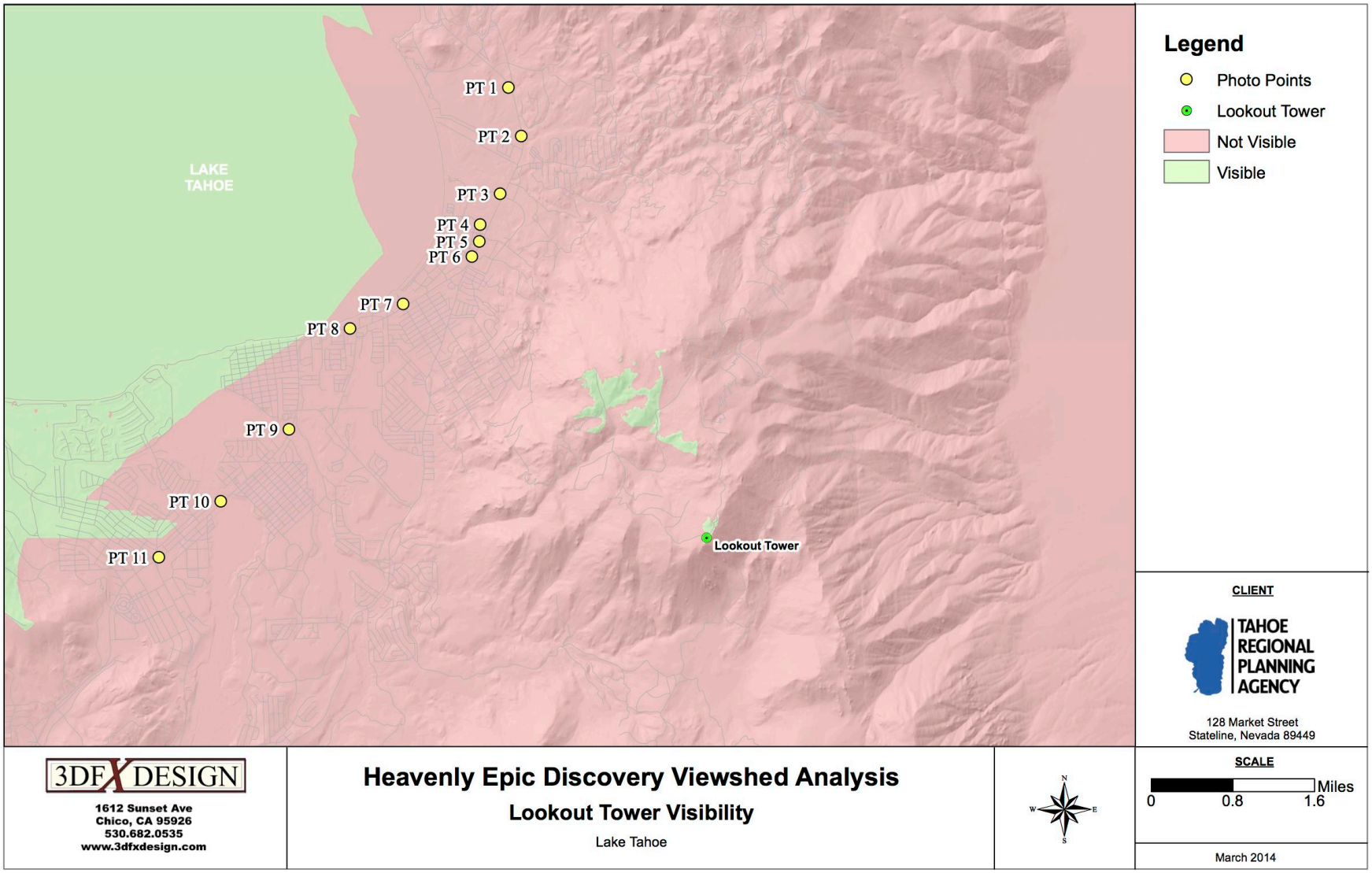
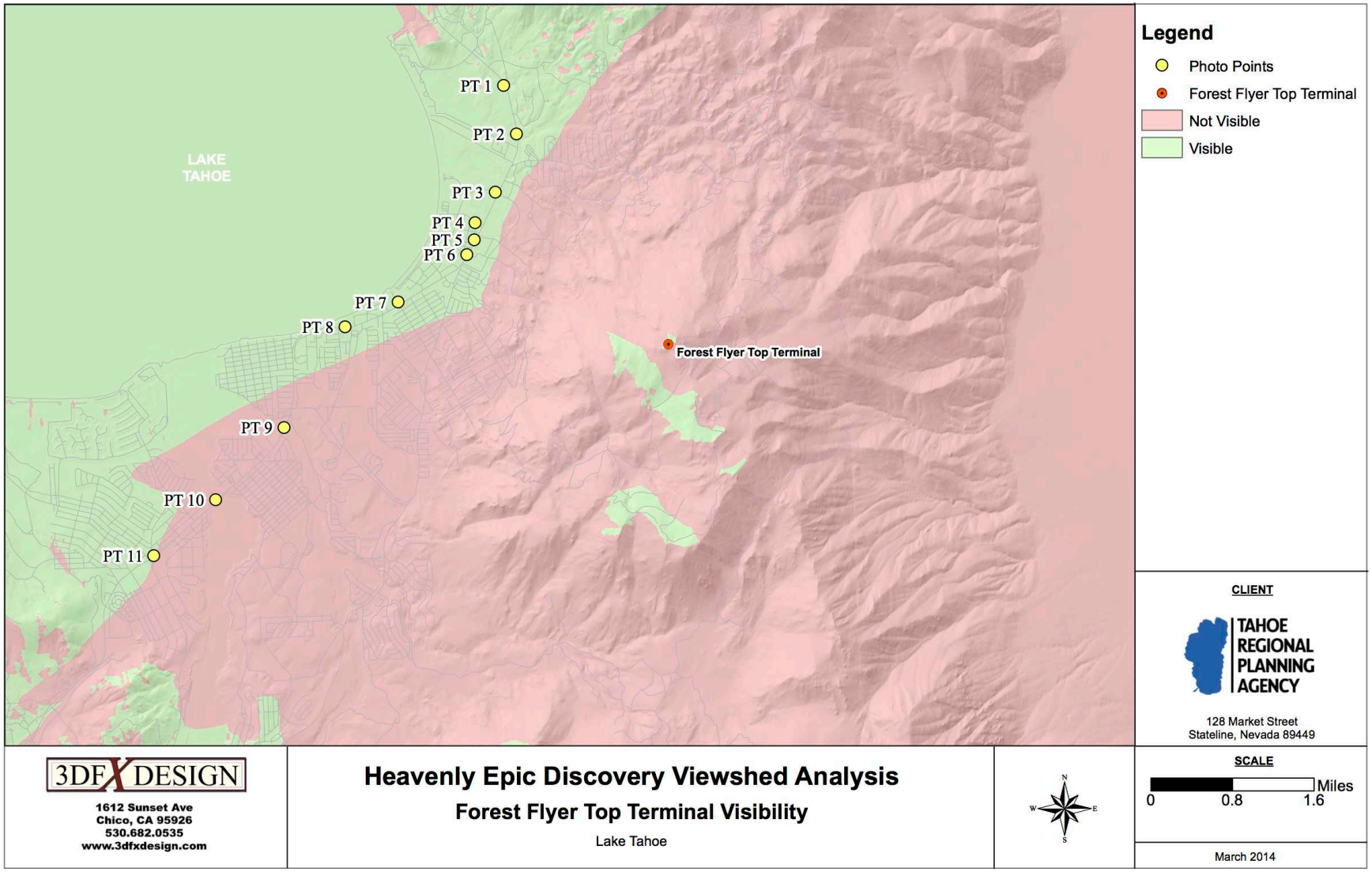


Figure 3.10-4 Viewshed Analysis – Forest Flyer Top Terminal Visibility



3.10-2 ENVIRONMENTAL AND REGULATORY SETTING

As discussed in Section 3.10-1, the descriptions of environmental and regulatory setting contained in the Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan 1995 Draft EIR/EIS/EIS, 1998 Heavenly Ski Resort Gondola Project EA and 2000 Revised Gondola Project Visual Analysis are incorporated by reference. As stated in the Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan 1995 Draft EIR/EIS/EIS, the distinguishing natural visual characteristics of the site include steep mountains, which are evenly covered by conifer trees that intermittently reveal light gray rock outcroppings, light green grasses, and dark green shrubs and groundcover. Distinguishing characteristics include East Peak and Monument Peak, which can be seen projecting slightly above the otherwise uniform ridgeline of the Carson Range. The visual character of the area is primarily conifer forest with rock outcroppings, grasses, shrubs, and groundcover which results in even coverage, with variation in texture and color ranging from dark to light green vegetation to gray rocky areas with intermittent variation from existing ski runs, resulting in sharp contrast in color, texture and form due to clearing. Visual features associated with the operation of ski facilities, such as ski lifts (support towers and cables) and ski runs (tree clearings), are more visible from distances due to close-range view obstruction by intervening vegetation and topography.

The 11 photo point locations include a location along US 50 north of Clubhouse Drive (photo point 1); US 50 near Burke Creek (photo point 2); US 50 at lake Parkway (photo point 3); Stateline Avenue near US 50 (photo point 4); US 50 near Friday Avenue (photo point 5); US 50 at Park Avenue (photo point 6); US 50 at Ski Run Boulevard (photo point 7); US 50 near Johnson Boulevard (photo point 8); US 50 near Blue Lake Avenue (photo point 9); US 50 near Lodi Avenue (photo point 10) and US 50 at SR 89 (photo point 11). Visual simulations of the Evacuation Route are shown from photo points 6 and 7 located at US 50/Park Avenue and US 50/Ski Run Boulevard and includes a picture of the existing visual condition and a computer-generated image depicting how the route would alter the existing view in winter, when the route would be most visible. These photo point locations were chosen by the Forest Service, TRPA, and the consultant team to represent typical views that would be seen by a wide range of viewers in the southern portion of the Lake Tahoe Basin. In addition to the photo point locations that depict where photos were taken during a site visit, the viewshed analysis addresses potential visibility from each viewpoint in the shaded areas of Figures 3.10-2 through 3.10-4, including views from the lake surface.

The viewshed analysis of the Proposed Action was prepared using a digitized contour base map to create a three-dimensional (3-D) model of potential visibility. Proposed Action activities determined to have potential offsite visibility were included in the model. Photographs of the site were digitized and its camera angle and viewing distance entered as reference datum. The photos were used in conjunction with the 3-D computer model to simulate results. This technique permits calculation of aspect ratio and the field of view of the project site, ensuring an accurate representation (subject to limits of the technology) of the components of the Proposed Action when viewed from the selected viewpoints.

Figure 3.10-5 Photo Point 6 (US 50/Park Ave) - Existing Conditions of the Gondola Evacuation Route Corridor

Figure 3.10-6 Photo Point 6 (US 50/Park Ave) - Proposed Conditions of the Gondola Evacuation Route Corridor

Figure 3.10-7 Photo Point 7 (US 50/Ski Run) - Existing Conditions of the Gondola Evacuation Route Corridor

Figure 3.10-8 Photo Point 7 (US 50/Ski Run) - Proposed Conditions of the Gondola Evacuation Route Corridor

The scope of the viewshed analysis included the following tasks:

1. Identify components of the Proposed Action that may result in visual impacts.
2. Evaluate effectiveness of existing ridgelines/development to reduce or avoid visual impacts.
3. Evaluate the visual impacts of the identified components.

3.10-3 EVALUATION CRITERIA

The impact evaluation criteria used in this analysis is summarized in Table 3.10-1 below. The EIR/EIS/EIS does not address nighttime light sources or dark sky compliance evaluation criteria (CEQA Environmental Checklist Item I[d], TRPA IEC II [7 a, b, c, and d], TRPA Design Review Guidelines, and El Dorado County General Plan Policy 2.8.1.1) as no new lighting is proposed for the Proposed Action or Alternative activities and no impact would occur.

Table 3.10-1

Evaluation Criteria with Point of Significance – Visual Resources

Evaluation Criteria	As Measured by	Point of Significance	Justification
1. Would the project be inconsistent with any County or City General Plan or regulations, standards, or guidelines of agencies (TRPA and Forest Service) with jurisdiction in the area regarding Scenic Resources?	a. Level of visual contrast (change in form, line, color, texture, scale of landscape) b. Amount of view obstruction (loss of view) c. Degradation in visual quality or landscape character d. Inconsistencies with regulations, standards, and thresholds (including USFS Built Environment Image Guide).	a. Strong visual contrast.[a] b. Obstruction in viewed area[b] from foreground[c] or middleground.[c] c. Loss or alteration of a specific scenic resource.[d] d. Violate adopted scenic thresholds or standards. e. Violates FS VQO Standards	TRPA Threshold Carrying Capacities (Resolution # 82- 11) TRPA's Scenic Quality Improvement Program (SQIP) TRPA Design Review Guidelines LTBMU Forest Plan El Dorado County General Plan Policies

[a] Strong Visual Contrast - (one or more of the following) regraded land forms are flat with little to no contour: line of major ridgeline is altered and not consistent with surrounding ridgelines or minor ridgelines are eliminated; inconsistent color with adjacent landscape character; elimination of landscape texture created by exposed soil or removal of vegetation; form of project grossly exceeds scale of natural land forms.

[b] Viewed area defined as area of landscape (*i.e.*, everything except sky) as shown in a photograph from the nearest sensitive viewpoint, taken with a normal (50 mm) lens.

[c] Foreground: 0-1/2 mile; Middleground: ½-3 miles.

[d] Specific Scenic Resource - (one or more of the following) landscape component that creates striking feature; Landform - steep (>60%) undulating/dissected slopes, distinctive rock outcrops, or pronounced ridgelines; Water - major bodies of water that provide reflective qualities and irregular shorelines, or major/permanent streams/rivers with diversity of meanders, flows, rapids, rock outcrops, or river-banks; Vegetation - mature stands of native or cultural species (conifers and aspen) in natural groves or distinct planted patterns (*e.g.*, trees along roads or as planted wind breaks); Man-made development - historic structures.

3.10-4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Potential impacts of Proposed Action on visual resources result from construction and operation of physical improvements such as bike trails, hiking trails, facility access trails, and maintenance roads, and new structures, including new ziplines/canopy tours and sky cycle routes, a challenge course, lookout tower, and alpine coaster.

The potential visual effects of project activities are described below. Activities that could result in off-site visual impacts to surrounding public or private land, including the Tahoe Rim Trail (TRT) are the primary focus of this analysis; however changes in scenic quality within Heavenly Mountain Resort are also analyzed. As part of this visual resource analysis, project activities that could have potential visual impacts were analyzed to determine the extent of impacts. The analysis focuses on three activities that have the greatest potential for offsite visibility: 1) Emergency Gondola Snow Cat Evacuation Route, 2) Ridge Run Lookout Tower in Sky Meadows Basin, and 3) Forest Flyer Alpine Coaster in the Adventure Peak Area.

The remaining project components (e.g., ziplines and canopy tours, hiking and access/maintenance trails, mountain excursion tour, Sky Cycle, mountain bike park, East Peak Lake water activities, Sky Meadows challenge course, and other infill and interpretive activities) have low profiles, and are screened by intervening trees and topography so that they are not discernable from offsite viewpoints. Although portions of these activities or persons recreating on the activities may be visible from distant viewpoints based on line of sight, the scale of the activities would be so small that they would not result in significant impacts to scenic resources. Selective tree removal that may occur for proposed hiking trails would not be discernable offsite. While these components would not be discernable from locations outside of the Heavenly Special Use Permit boundary they are analyzed in relation to internal (onsite) changes to scenic quality and visibility from the portion of the Tahoe Rim Trail located east of the proposed facilities and within the East Peak Reservoir Basin (see Figure 2-1).

Since the No Action/No Project Alternative would not result in any new changes, additions, or upgrades and would result in the continuation of existing management practices and facilities, no impact to visual resources would occur. No additional analysis for the No Action/No Project Alternative is included as no impact or change would occur that would adversely or beneficially impact visual resources.

Specific impacts/effects of the proposed Epic Discovery activities (including the Sky Basin Coaster Alternative) are described below and address the following impacts:

- SCENIC-1: Emergency Gondola Snow Cat Evacuation Route Would Create New Forest Clearings and Would be Visible Offsite
- SCENIC-2: Ridge Run Lookout Tower Would be Visible Off-site
- SCENIC-3: The Forest Flyer Alpine Coaster Top Terminal, Sky Meadows Zipline Canopy Tour and Sky Basin Coaster Would Create New Forest Clearings and Would be Visible Off-site
- SCENIC-4: Proposed Project Components Would Create Changes to the Scenic Quality of Views within Heavenly Mountain Resort

- SCENIC-5: Proposed Project Components Would Be Visible from the Tahoe Rim Trail
- SCENIC-C1: Cumulative Visual Resources Effects

IMPACT: SCENIC-1: Emergency Gondola Snow Cat Evacuation Route Would Create New Forest Clearings and Would be Visible Offsite

Under the Proposed Action and Alternative, an emergency snow cat access route would be cleared at strategic locations along the Gondola line below the Gondola Mid Station, as illustrated in Figure 2-5 in Chapter 2. This access route would facilitate evacuations of the Gondola during emergency situations and would allow Heavenly employees to deliver rescue supplies and personnel and transport passengers during an evacuation. It would only be used during the winter in times of operational emergencies.

The clearing for the route would be 25 to 30 feet wide to allow a standard-sized snow cat to access the Gondola line in key locations. The route would begin to the southwest of the Gondola Mid Station at the existing mid station access road and terminate near Gondola line tower #16. The entire route would be located on National Forest System lands. No permanent ground disturbance or development of a new permanent road prism or platform would be necessary for the emergency snow cat route, so offsite visibility in the summer would be minimal as existing ground cover would remain and would not contrast with the surrounding trees. Foreground views from summer visitors accessing the mountain using the Gondola would show evidence of management activity, include areas of felled trees and stumps. However, these views would be limited to the immediate vicinity of the few locations where the proposed route crosses the gondola alignment. The proposed route would be more visible in winter because the tree removal would result in a thin white corridor that would contrast with surrounding vegetation.

Since the mountainside where the route is proposed faces the south shore area of the Lake Tahoe Basin (crossing the Gondola alignment), the potential for off-site visibility was analyzed through visual simulation (Figures 3.10-5 through 3.10-8) and a viewshed analysis Figure 3.10-2. Figure 3.10-2 indicates that the route would be visible from nearly all 11 photo points selected within the south shore area along US 50. The visual simulations document changes to visual contrast from evacuation route implementation at the US 50/Park Avenue and US 50/Ski Run Boulevard intersections. In winter, the existing visual character of the mountainside adjacent to the existing gondola alignment would be altered by introduction of a narrow, yet distinct, line of cleared trees for a short length near the ridgetop, crossing paths with the Gondola and zigzagging down the mountain face; however, the route is not straight and intervening trees and topography help to mask the evacuation route. The route is most visible near the ridgeline from photo point 7 (US 50/Ski Run Boulevard) as the angle of view faces this segment of the route directly so that there are fewer intervening trees. The route would be

a small component of the view and subordinate to other landscape features, but would be a visible narrow line in the winter.

As shown in Figure 3.10-2, the evacuation route would be visible from nearly all of the 11 photo points and most of the south shore area of the Lake Tahoe Basin; however, as discussed above, visibility would be predominantly limited to winter when the snow creates contrast with the surrounding vegetation.

Based upon the location of the route, it will not be visible from off-site views in the Carson Valley because of intervening topography.

CEQA

Analysis: *Less than Significant Impact; All Action Alternatives*

The Emergency Gondola Snow Cat Evacuation Route is located in the state of California and is visible from viewpoints in California as shown in Figures 3.10-2 and 3.10-5 through 3.10-8. The visibility of new forest clearings would detract from the scenic quality of views from U.S. Highway 50 and Lake Tahoe, further contributing to the unnatural appearance of the area as viewed from City of South Lake Tahoe viewpoints located between the state line to the intersection of US 50 and State Route 89. However, the evacuation route would be visually subordinate to the existing man-made features visible within the viewshed that includes the gondola lift alignment, the forest clearing/scaring from the 2002 Gondola Fire and for many viewpoints, the Heavenly ski runs (e.g., Gunbarrel) at the California base area. Therefore, this impact is considered to be less than significant.

TRPA

Analysis: *Less than Significant Impact; All Action Alternatives*

Effect on TRPA Roadway and Shoreline Units. The Emergency Gondola Snow Cat Evacuation Route would be visible from south shore Roadway Units 1 and 31 through 35, and Shoreline Units 30 through 33. The proposed clearings would be seen from other more distant roadway and shoreline units throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin, such as Roadway Unit 4 on the west shore and Roadway Unit 21 on the north shore, where views would be too distant to result in reduction of the scenic resource thresholds, but the change would be visible and distinct on clear days in long range views to the south. The change would be visible and marked from certain viewing locations in the southern end of the Basin, except those closest to shore where intervening trees and topography would block the view. However, because of the narrow width of the tree removal (e.g., up to 30 feet) and the circuitous alignment of the proposed route (e.g., no straight lines), the tree cover immediately adjacent to the evacuation route would screen a majority of the evacuation route alignment as viewed from each viewpoint. For example, from Viewpoint 7 (Figure 3.10-8), the top of the proposed evacuation route at the ridgeline would be the most visible segment of the route because from that viewpoint, that segment would be perpendicular to the viewpoint. From viewpoints on the east side of the south shore, that segment of the evacuation

route would be difficult to discern because of trees located immediately adjacent to the forest clearing.

Effect on TRPA Designated Recreation Areas. Although many of the recreation areas are distant from the proposed modifications, clearings for the Evacuation Route would be discernible from many recreation areas in the basin. From Kiva Beach, Pope Beach, Camp Richardson, and Eagle Point, the cleared slopes would be a noticeable change in the overall view and would be a more visible and disruptive element of the view in winter due to the contrast between vegetation and snow. However, in summer when the disappearance of snow results in a reduction in visual contrast, the change in visibility would not be noticeable to the casual viewer.

From more distant recreation areas along the west and north shore of the lake, such as Kings Beach State Recreation Area, the change may be visible on clear days in winter and would represent a change in the landscape, but would be too distant and too small a change in the overall landscape to reduce the scenic quality as viewed from these recreation areas.

Based upon the proposed route alignment that follows natural contours and narrow tree removal width required for the operation of snow cats in evacuation circumstances, the Evacuation Route would not dominate the natural landscape and therefore this impact would be less than significant.

NEPA

Analysis: *No Adverse Effects, All Action Alternatives*

The 1995 Draft EIR/EIS/EIS prepared for the Heavenly Master Plan defined the existing visual condition (EVC) for the special use permit area (Figure 4.10-27) using mapping provided by the USFS. At the time of the 1995 analysis, the gondola was not constructed and the defined EVC was retention. The 1995 Draft EIR/EIS/EIS concluded that with the construction of the gondola, the EVC would be consistent with partial retention, the overall visual quality objective for the Heavenly management area.

The proposed Emergency Gondola Snow Cat Evacuation Route would contribute to an existing EVC of Partial Retention, a classification that means development is visually evident but would remain subordinate to the characteristic landscape. The Forest Service Visual Quality Objective (VQO) for this area is Partial Retention. This VQO allows for future development that is visually subordinate to the surrounding landscape character. In the Forest Plan, Forestwide Standards and Guidelines, #9 – Visual Quality Restoration or Improvement, states that... "Actions [will be] taken to restore the appearance of land or facilities where they are diminished below desired standards..." (page IV-24). The areas of the Heavenly Mountain Resort Special Use Permit where Standard and Guideline #9 is identified is from East Peak toward South Lake Tahoe, and from the southern ski area boundary toward Cold Creek (page IV-104). This area includes the

proposed location for the Emergency Gondola Snow Cat Evacuation Route. The route would increase the amount of linear forest clearing that can be seen onsite, creating contrast in color, texture, and form as a result of tree removal that would contribute further to an existing EVC of partial retention. However, the forest clearing for the route would be consistent with the surrounding landscape, which includes forest clearings/scaring from the 2002 Gondola fire located east of the gondola alignment and the existing forest clearings for the Gondola, Gondola Mid Station and the ski runs on the Face (e.g., Gunbarrel ski run). When viewed from offsite locations, the proposed evacuation route would not result in a sharp contrast due to the existing form, texture, and color variation in the vicinity. The existing vegetation, natural slopes, and rock outcroppings would remain the dominant view. The Emergency Gondola Snow Cat Evacuation Route would not be visually dominant; therefore, it would be consistent with the Forest Service VQO for the area.

IMPACT: SCENIC-2: Ridge Run Lookout Tower Would be Visible Off-site

An observation tower would be constructed near the existing Ridge Run Overlook. This facility (Refer to Photos J and K in Chapter 2) would resemble a historic Forest Service Fire Lookout Tower and would offer scenic views of High Meadows and Freel Peak as well as distant views of Lake Tahoe. The tower would be located along the ridge to the southwest of the top terminal of the Sky Express lift and anchored to the ground using four utility type poles. It would provide approximately 400 to 500 square feet for the observation deck (located approximately 28 feet off the ground) and would be approximately 44 feet tall measured from natural grade to top of the roof structure. The tower's observation deck would be located at an approximate elevation of 9,830 feet. The tower would be constructed from primarily wooded materials and would be sited to allow for barrier-free access, although access to the observation deck would not be accessible. A new footpath (approximately 164 feet in length and 4 feet in width and totaling approximately 650 square feet in land coverage) would be constructed to provide access from the adjacent maintenance road. This path would be used as a construction access corridor, resulting in a temporary disturbance corridor approximately 30 feet wide. Tree removal, except perhaps a few small trees within the rocky knoll, would not be necessary as the tower site is near existing clearings and contains few trees. Therefore, the primary concern is visibility due to the height of the structure and location of the structure along the ridgeline which may result in silhouetting against the skyline.

Visibility of the tower from the south shore of the Lake Tahoe Basin was assessed in the viewshed analysis. Potential visibility is illustrated in Figure 3.10-3. As shown in the figure, visibility of the tower from developed areas is limited to areas located northwest of the facility. The tower is not visible along the scenic US 50 corridor, including any of the 11 photo points along US 50 from SR 89 in California to photo point 1 in Nevada. No change to the travel route rating would occur for Roadway Units 31 through 35. The tower may be visible from other California viewpoints in the south shore area, including the Tahoe Keys and

potions of neighborhoods located directly west of the tower in the vicinity of the Tahoe Keys. Likewise the tower may be visible from Lake Tahoe viewpoints, specifically those on the west shore and from portions of the lake as shown in Figure 3.10-3. From the closest of these locations, a viewer would be able to see the observation deck and roof of the tower against a background of the mountain face.

As shown in the photographs included in Figures 3.10-9 and 3.10-10, the tower location, located south of the pictured ridgeline, would be visible from the Tahoe Rim Trail just west of the Nevada/California state line. Construction of the proposed tower would disrupt the current ridgeline and would alter the existing texture, characterized by trees and rock outcroppings, with a uniform wooden structure. At this distance, the structure's wood materials and natural wood color blends with the greens and browns of the trees and clearings. Surrounding vegetation is sparse and would not provide substantial coverage from view; because this is an observation lookout tower, the tower is located in an area to afford the clearest views, which subsequently also results in an area with less vegetation screening. The use of wood materials for the tower would reduce the prevalence of the structure, but visibility from the lake and the areas identified in Figure 3.10-3 would persist.

CEQA

Analysis: *Less Than Significant: All Action Alternatives*

Effect on El Dorado County Policies. The visibility of the lookout tower would be a minor element in views from the Tahoe Keys and surrounding neighborhoods and Lake Tahoe, contributing to the unnatural appearance of the area within the western limits of the City of South Lake Tahoe. However, the lookout tower would not be large enough to be visually evident to casual observers from U.S. Highway 50 or State Route 89, located over 4 miles northwest of the proposed tower location. Therefore, this impact is considered to be less than significant.

Figure 3.10-9: Panorama View of Proposed Lookout Tower Location from Tahoe Rim Trail (CA viewpoint)

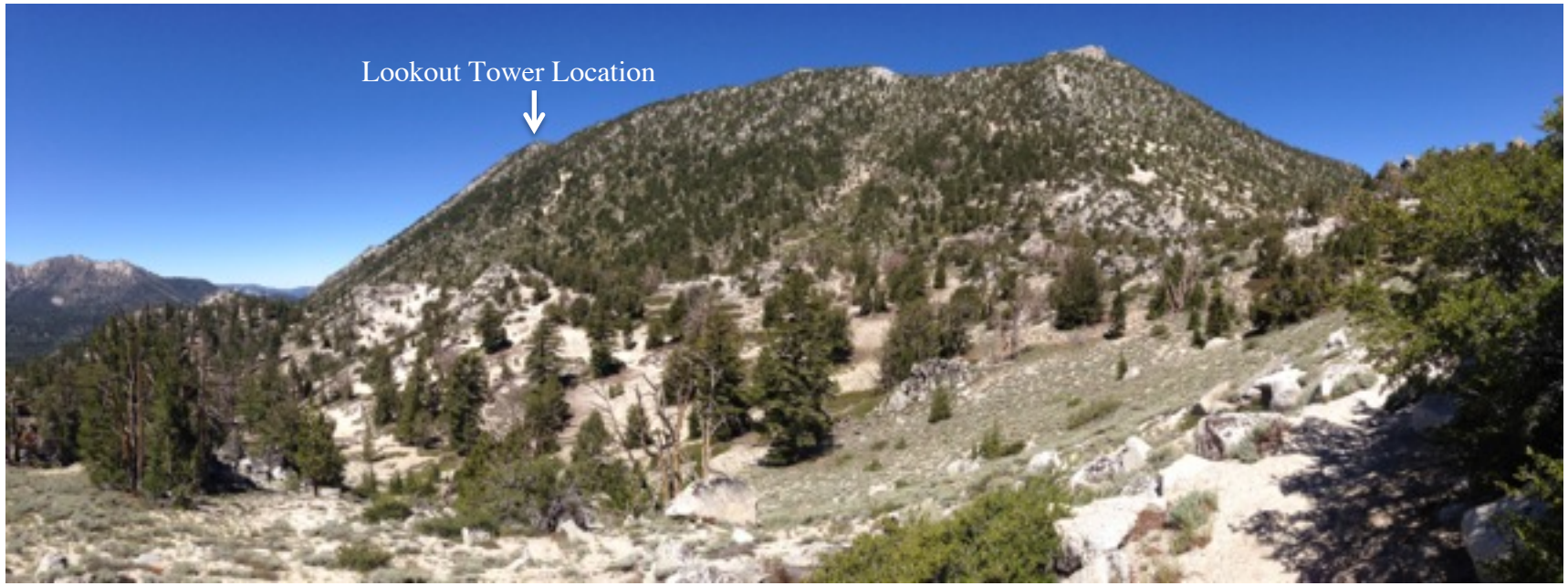


Figure 3.10-10: View of Proposed Lookout Tower Location from Tahoe Rim Trail (CA viewpoint)

TRPA

Analysis: *Less than Significant: All Action Alternatives*

Effect on TRPA Roadway and Shoreline Units. The proposed lookout tower would not contribute to the degradation of Scenic Quality and Travel Route Rating. As shown in the viewshed analysis (Figure 3.10-3) the tower would not be visible from Roadway Units 31 through 35 or shoreline units 30 and 31; however the tower would be visible within Shoreline Unit 32. The proposed tower would also be visible from other roadway and shoreline units throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin; however, the viewing distance would be so great from other units that the lookout tower would not result in degradation of Scenic Quality or Travel Route Ratings in these units.

Effect on Recreation Areas. Because of viewing distances (over 4 miles to Highway 50), it would be difficult to discern specific details of the proposed tower from recreation areas, except for the Heavenly Recreation Area itself, where many views are foreground. From Kiva Beach, Pope Beach, Baldwin Beach, and Eagle Point Campground, located between 7 and 10 miles west/northwest of the tower, the tower would be scarcely visible and would not reduce scenic quality ratings. Glare from the sun's reflection on the tower would not occur as the structure would be constructed from non-reflective wood materials (documented on plan sheet A3). Development of the tower would increase the appearance of man-made landscape; however, recreation areas are at a sufficient distance so that scenic quality would not be affected.

NEPA

Analysis: *No Adverse Effects, All Action Alternatives*

Effect on Forest Service Visual System (VMS) and Built Environment Image Guide (BEIG). The tower would contribute minimally to a Forest Service EVC of Unacceptable Modification, defined in mapping provided by the USFS for the 1995 Draft EIR/EIS/EIS prepared for the Heavenly Master Plan. The Forest Service VQO for this area is Partial Retention. This VQO allows for future development that is subordinate to the surrounding landscape character. The tower would be visually subordinate to the surrounding landscape character which includes views of other Heavenly Mountain Resort ski facilities (e.g., lift stations) and ski runs, but remains dominated by natural slopes, rock outcrops, and vegetation. Although the tower would be visible from a segment of the Tahoe Rim Trail located west of the California/Nevada stateline, the views of natural slopes, rock outcrops, ridgelines, and vegetation would continue to dominate views from this location. The proposed tower would be subordinate to the natural landscape based on its open design and natural materials and would not result in an adverse effect. The tower would be consistent with BEIG objectives for structures by utilizing large timbers, a hip roof, and colors that reflect the natural wood materials and the surrounding green/gray landscape. The massing of the

support beams would be narrow allowing views through the structure and to reflect the decreasing scale of the landscape in this location.

IMPACT: SCENIC-3: The Forest Flyer Alpine Coaster Top Terminal, Sky Meadows Zipline Canopy Tour and Sky Basin Coaster Would Create New Forest Clearings and Would be Visible Off-site

Forest Flyer Alpine Coaster

Alpine coasters are elevated, self-contained, fixed-rail rides that allow users on individual carts to descend on tracks through the forest and natural rock formations in a participant-controlled manner. Participants of the Forest Flyer Alpine Coaster would be pulled up the track line in the sleds which are locked onto tubular steel rails to the top station and then descend, as shown in Chapter 2 Photos F and G.

The bottom station of the Forest Flyer would be located a short distance to the north and west of the top terminal of the existing tubing lift within the Adventure Peak area, as shown in Figure 2-1. The track extends to the northeast in an alignment generally parallel to the existing tubing lift toward East Peak.

This activity would require a 20-25 foot wide corridor of vegetation removal for installation and operation, resulting in approximately 0.7 acre of tree removal within the Adventure Peak area that encompasses approximately 275 acres. Low shrubs and ground cover could remain within the corridor following construction, which would reduce the visibility of the track at distances. Foundations for the top and bottom terminals would be generally small in size, requiring minimal ground disturbance. The top terminal would consist of a bullwheel enclosure (approximately 150 square feet) and attendant's booth (approximately 100 square feet), each approximately 13 feet, 4 inches tall. The bottom terminal would consist of a bullwheel enclosure occupying approximately 300 square feet and storage/maintenance and attendant's building measuring approximately 600 square feet. The bottom terminal would be approximately 18 feet, 5 inches tall. No permanent road construction would be necessary for installation or operation. During winter operations, temporary rope fencing (similar to fencing used for boundary lines, etc.) would be used to protect skier safety, although the location of the Forest Flyer is not currently a popular tree skiing area.

The Forest Flyer would be located entirely within the state of Nevada, with the top terminal located at the highest elevation. A majority of the coaster track and the bottom terminal would not be visible from outside of the Heavenly Mountain Resort as these features would be below the ridgeline located to the north of the activity. Since the top terminal would be located near the East Peak ridgeline and would measure over 13 feet in height, a viewshed analysis was conducted for the top terminal to determine its potential visibility. As illustrated in the viewshed analysis (Figure 3.10-4), the top terminal would be potentially visible from US 50, Lake Tahoe, and much of the south shore of Lake Tahoe based on an analysis

of topography and the elevation of the top terminal. However, the viewshed analysis did not consider existing vegetation as the forest structure can change over time, and a field inspection of the highest point of the proposed top terminal structure found that there would not be views of the south shore from the elevation of the top of the terminal primarily due to obstruction from existing trees on the mountain ridgeline and existing topography immediately north of the terminal site. It may be visible from areas located over 6.5 miles to the west and southwest, but would be visually subordinate to the landscape because of the viewing distance and small size of the top terminal structures.

Sky Meadows Zipline Canopy Tour and Sky Basin Coaster

Alternative 1 to the Proposed Action proposes the Sky Basin Coaster instead of the proposed Forest Flyer. The design and type of coaster would be similar to what is described for the Forest Flyer; however the Sky Basin coaster location would place the bottom terminal immediately adjacent to the existing summer access roadway serving Sky Meadows Lodge and Bathrooms. The top terminal would be located near the top station of the Tamarack Express Lift. Unlike the Forest Flyer, Sky Basin Coaster would be located entirely within the state of California. Areas of the Sky Basin Coaster location are currently used for tree skiing. During winter operations, temporary rope fencing (similar to fencing used for boundary lines, etc.) would be used to protect skier safety by keeping skiers and riders away from coaster operations.

The uphill tow line and downhill coaster track would cross under the proposed Sky Meadows Zipline Canopy Tour. Tree removal required for the top of the Sky Meadows Zipline Canopy Tour and Sky Basin Coaster (clearings up to 25 feet wide) would create narrow forest clearings visible from Figure 3.10-1 viewpoint locations 10 and 11 near the South Tahoe Wye intersection of US 50 and State route 89 during winter. The top portion of the Sky Canopy Tour and Coaster activities would be located nearby the existing Skiways Glades that are visible from viewpoint 10 as shown in Figure 3.10-11. Because of intervening topography, these two activities would not be visible from other more easterly viewpoint locations in the south shore (e.g., Figure 3.10-1 viewpoints locations 1 through 9).

As required in the Proposed Action, low reflectivity, and low visual contrast materials or coatings would be required for the Coasters and Canopy Tour facilities to reduce the effects of glare and be consistent with objectives of the USFS BEIG.

CEQA

Analysis: *Less than Significant Impact: Proposed Action and Alternative 2*

The Forest Flyer top terminal would be located entirely within the state of Nevada and would not be visible from viewpoints along scenic US 50 because of intervening topography and tree cover. Tree clearing required for the Sky

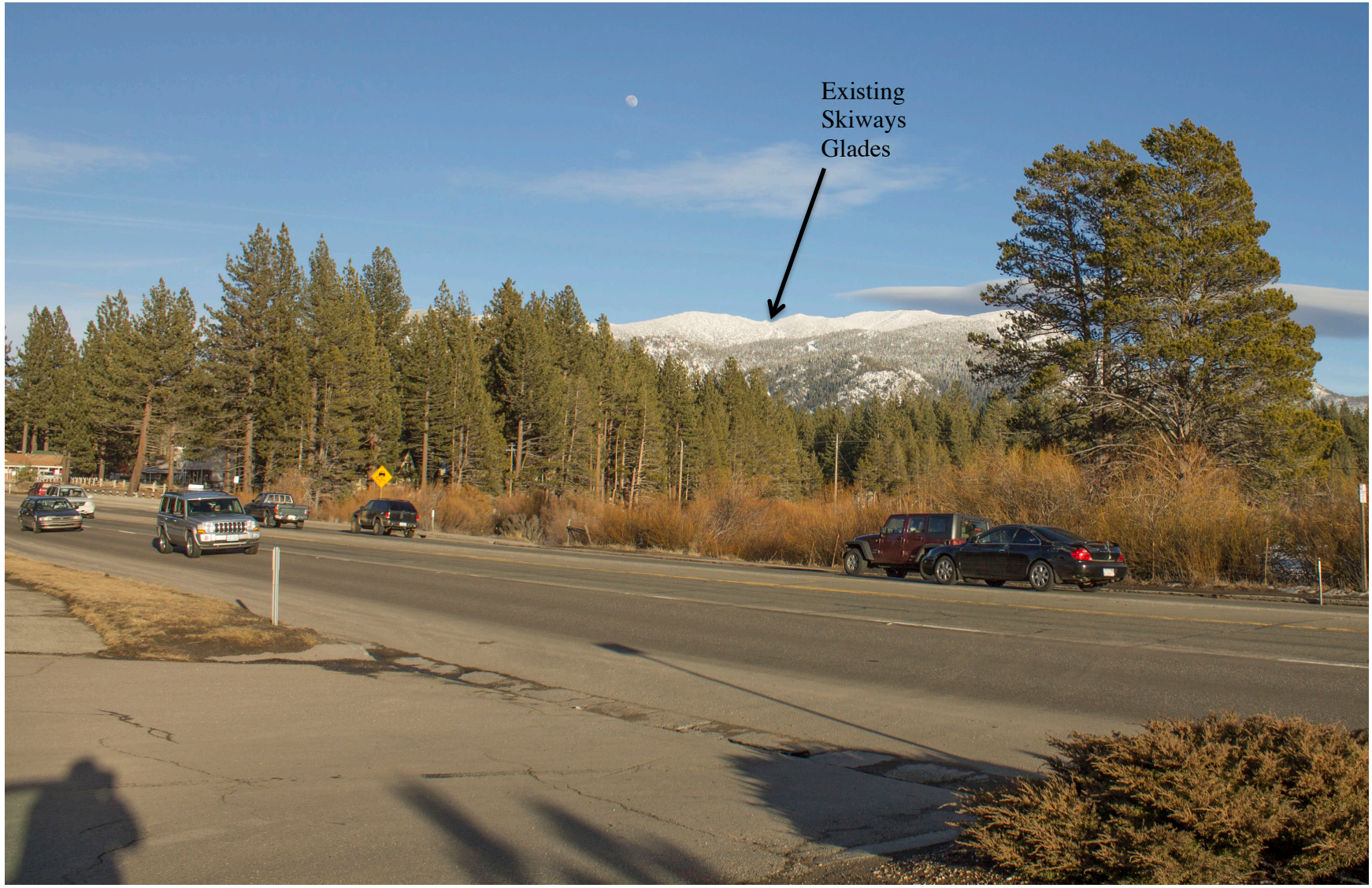
Meadows Canopy Tour would be potentially visible from viewpoints located over four miles away on the west side of the south shore near the South Tahoe Wye intersection of scenic highways US 50 and SR 89. However, the up to 20 foot wide tree removal for the canopy tour would only be required immediately adjacent to the platforms and because of intervening topography, only the tree clearing for the top most zipline platform near Tamarack Express lift top station would be visible. The narrow and short length of tree removal required near the top most platform (most of the alignment requires no tree removal because the zipline would travel over tree tops) would not be visible to the casual observer, even in winter when the tree removal would show up as a narrow band of white snow.

Analysis: *Less than Significant Impact: Alternative 1*

The alternative coaster top terminal would be located within the Sky Meadows Basin and would not be visible from most viewpoints along scenic US 50 because of intervening topography and forest areas. Views from the west side of the south shore would have the greatest potential for visibility from scenic highways (US 50 and SR 89) of the 20 to 25 foot wide forest clearing required to construct the Sky Basin Coaster. The downhill coaster track alignment switchbacks down the mountainside and would be difficult to see because it does not include long straight sections of forest clearing. The uphill coaster track clearing would emphasize the ridgeline, changing it from broken or discontinuous tree openings in the landscape to a distinguishable diagonal striation on the upper mountain face. Because of viewing distance from the area nearby the US 50/SR 89 intersection (Figure 3.10-11), the coaster track and top terminal structures would only be moderately visually apparent within the forest clearings.

The visibility of new forest clearings would detract from the scenic quality of views from scenic highways US 50 and SR 89 near their intersection, further contributing to the unnatural appearance of the area as viewed from City of South Lake Tahoe viewpoints located between the US 50/Upper Truckee River bridge and intersection of US 50 and State Route 89. However, the Sky Basin coaster clearing would be subordinate to other existing man-made features visible within the viewshed that includes the Sky Express lift corridor, Sky Express lift top station, and forest clearing associated with Heavenly ski runs (e.g., Skiways). Landscape views would continue to be visually dominated by existing winter ski facilities. Therefore, this impact is considered to be less than significant.

Figure 3.10-11 Photo Point 10 (US 50/Upper Truckee River Meadow) - Existing Conditions



TRPA

Analysis: *Less than Significant: Proposed Action and Alternative 2*

Effect on TRPA Roadway and Shoreline Units. The Forest Flyer top terminal would not be visible from viewpoints along US 50 because of intervening topography and tree cover and would therefore not contribute to the degradation of Scenic Quality and Travel Route Ratings. Tree clearing required for the Sky Meadows Canopy Tour would be potentially visible from viewpoints located over four miles away on the west side of the south shore near the South Tahoe Wye intersection of scenic highways US 50 and SR 89 and from viewpoints over 4 miles away within Lake Tahoe. However, the narrow and short length of tree removal required would not be visible to the casual observer, even in winter when the tree removal would show up as a narrow band of white snow. Therefore, the Sky Meadows Canopy Tour would not degrade Scenic Quality and Travel Route Ratings and this impact is less than significant.

Effect on Recreation Areas. The proposed Forest Flyer top terminal would not be visually evident from offsite recreation areas (views from within Heavenly Mountain Resort are addressed in Impact SCENIC-4, below).

Analysis: *Less than Significant: Alternative 1*

Effect on TRPA Roadway and Shoreline Units. Refer to the analysis above under CEQA for the Alternative. The alternative coaster top terminal and track alignment would not contribute to the degradation of Scenic Quality and Travel Route Ratings and therefore this impact is less than significant.

Effect on Recreation Areas. The alternative coaster top terminal and track clearing would not be visually evident from offsite recreation areas.

NEPA

Analysis: *No Adverse Effects, All Action Alternatives*

The top terminal and track clearing for the Forest Flyer would contribute further to an existing EVC of Partial Retention (defined for the gondola area in the 1995 Draft EIR/EIS/EIS), a classification that means development is visually evident but would remain subordinate to the characteristic landscape. However, because the coaster does not include large swaths of new tree removal in straight lines and would not be visually evident from offsite locations, its construction would be consistent with the existing EVC of Partial Retention.

The Sky Basin coaster facilities and Sky Meadows Canopy Tour would contribute further to an existing EVC of Unacceptable Modification (as mapped in the 1995 Draft EIR/EIS/EIS, Figure 4.10-27), a classification that describes an undesirable or excessive modification of a landscape. The Forest Service Visual Quality Objective (VQO) for each of these activity areas is Partial Retention. This VQO

allows for future development that is visually subordinate to the surrounding landscape character.

In the Forest Plan, Forestwide Standards and Guidelines, #9 – Visual Quality Restoration or Improvement, states that... "Actions [will be] taken to restore the appearance of land or facilities where they are diminished below desired standards..." (page IV-24). The areas of the Heavenly Mountain Resort Special Use Permit where Standard and Guideline #9 is identified is from East Peak toward South Lake Tahoe, and from the southern ski area boundary toward Cold Creek (page IV-104). This area includes the proposed location for the Forest Flyer coaster.

The Sky Basin coaster and Sky Meadow Canopy Tour are included in the management area designated as Practice 4 – Downhill Skiing. This area includes activities required to plan for the development of downhill skiing facilities. While the uppermost/visible portion of the Sky Basin coaster and Sky Meadow Canopy tour would contribute further to an EVC of unacceptable modification, the forest clearing for the coaster tracks and zipline would be consistent with the surrounding landscape, which includes the Sky Express lift corridor, Sky Express lift top station, and forest clearing associated with the Skiways ski runs when viewed from offsite locations. Landscape views would continue to be visually dominated by existing winter ski facilities. Therefore, the top terminal and clearing for the Sky Basin coaster facilities and Sky Meadows Canopy Tour would be consistent with the existing Forest Service VQO for the area.

IMPACT: SCENIC-4: Proposed Project Components Would Create Changes to the Scenic Quality of Views within Heavenly Mountain Resort

The Proposed Action and Alternatives include the following components/activities listed by area:

- Adventure Peak
  - Mid-Station Zipline Canopy Tour
  - Sky Cycle Canopy Tour
  - Forest Flyer Alpine Coaster (Excluded in Alternative 1)
  - Smaller Infill Activities
  - Hiking/Maintenance Trails
- East Peak Basin
  - Mountain Bike Park
  - East Peak Zipline Canopy Tour
  - East Peak Reservoir Water Activities
  - Interpretive Activities at East Peak Lodge
  - East Peak Lodge Hiking Trail
- Sky Meadows Basin
  - Sky Meadows Zipline Canopy Tour

  - Sky Meadows Challenge Course (Excluded in Alternative 2)
  - Ridge Run Lookout Tower and Observation Deck
  - Interpretive Activities at Sky Deck
  - Hiking/Maintenance Trails
  - Sky Basin Alpine Coaster (Alternative 1)
- Mountainwide
  - Educational Opportunities and Interpretive Information
  - Mountain Excursion Tour
  - Connecting Trails (e.g., Panorama Trail)
  - Emergency Gondola Snow Cat Evacuation Route

Most of the East Peak Basin components would be located outside the Lake Tahoe Basin and the state of California, with the exception of a small section of trail that connects the Mountain Bike Park to the Gondola Top Station area near the Big Easy lift. The Sky Meadows Basin components are located entirely within California and mostly within the Lake Tahoe Basin, with the exception of a small portion of access/maintenance trail near the Tamarack Express lift. The following Adventure Peak components are located within California: the Sky Cycle Canopy Tour, and portions of the disc golf/gem panning/kids zipline infill activities, hiking/maintenance trails, and the Mid-Station Zipline Canopy Tour. The remaining components are located in Nevada, along with the Forest Flyer Alpine Coaster and the Mountain Bike Skills Park. At least a portion of all the Adventure Peak components are located within the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Changes in View from On-Site. The proposed components would alter views on-site with clearing, grading, removing areas of vegetation, and construction of new structures. Vegetation removal and installation of man-made features would alter existing texture and form by modifying existing vegetation patterns, texture, and form; however, the visual changes would occur by season of operation and the proposed components would remain subordinate to the surrounding landscape. Visibility of these new features would be limited to the project area in which they are located (Adventure Peak, East Peak Basin, and Sky Meadows Basin) and further obscured by topography and existing trees and other vegetation.

Trails and maintenance roads, including the mountain bike park would require very little to no tree removal and would be narrow, so as to blend with the surrounding natural environment. Large, prevalent forest openings would not result and challenge features such as bridges or ramps would be limited in visibility to the area immediately surrounding the feature. The East Peak Mountain Bike Park would be located at elevations ranging from 9,500 feet to 9,300 feet at the top of the course, descending to 8,600 feet near East Peak Lake. Views of these features would be limited to the East Peak Basin as a result of topography and the low profile of such features.

Likewise, the Adventure Peak Sky Cycle, Sky Meadows Challenge Course, and Adventure Peak, East Peak, and Sky Meadows Ziplines would consist of wires, bridges, ropes, and platforms primarily attached to existing trees within the tree canopy, which would not be visually prevalent from long distance viewpoints, but would slightly alter the existing form and texture in the immediate vicinity by adding uniform, man-made structures within the canopy to contrast with the existing pattern. The bridges and platforms would be composed of natural wood and rope materials, and would be of a small mass and scale to minimize contrast and retain the existing texture. Use of wood, natural rope, and dark colored wires would reflect the color of the surrounding landscape and reduce the contrast of Epic Discovery facilities as they relate to the existing environment.

The Mid Station Canopy Tour would run from an elevation of approximately 9,235 feet to approximately 9,000 feet, and would require a 10 to 15-foot wide corridor of vegetation removal for installation and operating, resulting in 1.91 acres of tree removal for the zipline corridor and 20-foot by 20-foot queuing area at the start of the tour. The East Peak Canopy Tour would run from an elevation of approximately 9,175 feet to approximately 8,655 feet, and require 12 to 28 – foot wide corridors of vegetation removal for installation and operation, resulting in approximately 1.48 acres of tree removal for the zipline corridor and the 20-foot by 20-foot queuing area at the start of the tour. The Sky Meadows Canopy tour would run from an elevation of approximately 9,700 feet to approximately 8,780 feet, and require 12 to 20-foot wide corridors of vegetation removal for installation and operation, resulting in approximately 4.12 acres of tree removal for the zipline corridor and 20-foot by 20-foot queuing area. Low shrubs and groundcover would remain within the zipline corridors following construction and in many cases, the canopy tour ziplines would span over tree tops for large spans, which can alter the visual character within the immediate vicinity by disrupting the natural form and texture with man-made materials within the canopy. The minimization of structural materials and use of rope and wood, spaced to allow views through the structures would mimic existing vegetation and forest textures and would reduce visual contrast. The Adventure Peak Sky Cycle would be located at an approximate elevation of 9,200 feet and would result in 1.93 acres of tree removal. The Sky Meadows Challenge Course would be located in the trees and would only result in the removal of a small number of small diameter trees that would not be used for bridge and ropes anchors. These features would also be clustered with associated hiking/access trails. While platforms, bridges, ropes and wires would be visible in the immediate vicinity of the activity, they would not be visible from distant or sometimes nearby areas within the resort due to topography and tree coverage.

Interpretive activities would also result in little to no change in views as gem panning, educational activities, and disc golf result in few manmade structures, and generally blend into the surroundings. They would not result in tree removal or other actions that would alter the natural scenic quality.

The East Peak Water Activities would consist a small dock and an open shed that would be of a size and scale appropriate for the small manmade reservoir. The addition of such structures would not change the view or character of the reservoir area and would be consistent with current USFS BEIG direction.

The Emergency Gondola Snow Cat Evacuation Route would not be visually prevalent in the summer as groundcover and low growing shrubs would not be removed from the route. Although there would be a linear removal of trees (25 to 30-feet wide), the switchbacks and overall layout of the route would not result in extensive visual tunnels as surrounding trees and topography would block views from any one perspective within the resort (see Impact SCENIC-1). Figure 3.10-2 illustrates where the visual analysis finds the Evacuation Route visible. It would not be visible from a majority of the internal resort. As depicted in the figure, the Evacuation Route would be visible within the resort in the area immediately surrounding the route along the Gondola, from portions of the Panorama Trail to the northeast and the end of the Mid Station Zipline Canopy Tour, and a few other smaller locations within the resort area. Foreground views from summer visitors accessing the mountain using the Gondola would show evidence of management activity, include areas of felled trees and stumps. However, these views would be limited to the immediate vicinity of the few locations where the proposed route crosses the gondola alignment.

The Ridge Run Lookout Tower and Observation Deck would be located along a ridgeline where trees are relatively sparse. The structures would be made of wood to blend with the surrounding visual character, however the height of the Lookout Tower (44 feet) is substantial, particularly in the Sky Meadows Basin area. The tower's observation deck would be located at an elevation of approximately 9,830 feet. Figure 3.10-3 provides a viewshed analysis of the lookout tower. As shown in the figure, the Lookout Tower is visible only from a few locations within the resort, notably the immediate vicinity of the tower and northernmost portions of the Sky Meadows Zipline Canopy Tour and hiking trail, along with an area north and west of those components within the Adventure Peak area. It would not be visible from a majority of the resort. Although this is a new manmade structure, it is not out of character with a mountain resort setting that also includes lift terminals and towers, forest clearings and on mountain roadways. The proposed enlargement of the Sky Observation Deck would be a minor change in the area, which already includes a large wooden deck structure.

The Forest Flyer Alpine Coaster in the Adventure Peak area would start near the existing tubing hill. Although this is a large linear feature, low growing vegetation would be present below the tracks and the tracks would be elevated on average three to six feet above grade. While portions of this area have sparse vegetation, some tree removal is required (approximately 0.7 acre) within the coaster track corridor. Figure 3.10-4 depicts the visibility of the top terminal from within the resort, as shown in the green shaded areas within Heavenly Mountain Resort. As shown in the figure, the Forest Flyer Top Terminal would be visible in the area immediately surrounding the terminal, the southern portion of the

Adventure Peak area, a small portion of the Skyline Trail and the Canyon Express lift area in Sky Meadows Basin due to their similar elevation. Segments of the coaster track (and temporary rope fencing during winter) would also be visible from the area surrounding the existing summer uses in Adventure Peak, but much of the alignment would be screened by intervening vegetation.

The Alternative Alpine Coaster location in Sky Meadows Basin would run from the top of the Tamarack Express Lift to the proposed Sky Meadows Challenge Course. This component (the track and during winter, temporary rope fencing) would be visible from higher elevations in the Sky Meadows Basin, such as the Sky Express and Canyon Express Lifts, the Ridge Run Lookout Tower, and portions of the Mountain Excursion Tour roadway alignment located at a similar elevation as the top terminal. It would also be visible from the Sky Meadows Basin Canopy Zipline Tour, which would be overhead in some locations as well as areas south of the coaster up to the Mountain Excursion Tour route due to the slope and angling of the topography at this location. Because this coaster is located in a canyon area, views of the track from other areas of the resort are limited.

Changes in Visual Character. By introducing these components, the visual character of the mountain from within the resort would undergo an incremental change by season of component operation. The greatest difference would result from the visibility of the features in the immediate area surrounding their location. The overall internal visual character of the resort would change only subtly and would be reflective of the existing recreational features, which include linear clearing and low profile structures or supports. These changes within areas of man-modified landscape would be consistent with the existing scenic character and built environment, and would result in a negligible change in the integrity of the scenic resource.

CEQA

Analysis: *Less than Significant: All Action Alternatives*

Effect on El Dorado County Policies. The visibility of new cleared areas and the lookout tower, would be limited to the areas in which they are located (Adventure Peak and Sky Meadows Basin), and would reflect existing clearing and facilities related to recreational activities within the resort.

TRPA

Analysis: *Less than Significant: All Action Alternatives*

The proposed recreational features at Adventure Peak, Sky Meadows Basin, and the portions of the hiking and mountain bike trails located within the TRPA Basin boundary would have limited visibility outside their respective activity areas. As discussed above, portions of the Emergency Snow Cat Evacuation Route, the Ridge Run Lookout Tower, and top terminal of the Forest Flyer Alpine Coaster

may be visible outside the area immediately surrounding their location; however, these features would blend into the existing scenic character of the resort, which contains existing recreational oriented structures and forest clearings. The amount of tree removal or structural visibility would not significantly affect the overall visual character of the resort or natural scenic quality. The effects of the alternative alpine coaster site within Sky Meadows Basin would largely be limited to the area surrounding the facility within Sky Meadows Basin due to topography and tree coverage that would remain intact within the area.

NEPA

Analysis: *No Adverse Effects, All Action Alternatives*

Effect on Forest Service VMS) and BEIG. The proposed recreational facilities and associated clearing would contribute to modification of the resort. The Forest Service VQO for this area is Partial Retention. This VQO allows for future development that is visually subordinate to the surrounding landscape character. Based upon the results of the viewshed analysis which identified facility visibility both outside and within the resort boundaries, the amount of vegetation that would be removed, the location of the vegetation removal, and the retention of topography and tree coverage throughout the remaining areas of the resort, the proposed recreational features would be visually subordinate to the surrounding landscape character.

The proposed recreational facilities would be consistent with the BEIG objectives as they would be located within existing clearings where possible and the massing of components would mimic the tall, narrow vegetation and rocky outcroppings surrounding the proposed facilities. Most of the Epic Discovery activities require very little built infrastructure and consist mostly of platforms and loading/unloading stations that are similar to the existing ski lift towers and ski lift terminals. A few activities require larger structures (e.g., Ridge Run Lookout Tower and Forest Flyer Alpine Coaster) and emphasize wood materials and texture, include large openings to maintain and focus views on the surrounding landscape, and utilize earth tones to blend each component into the existing vegetation and rocky environment. Tree removal would be selective to allow for unobstructed access along the activity routes; however, most facilities are located adjacent to or within existing clearings to minimize the increase in visual contrast created by linear clearings. With the exception of the alpine coaster tracks, the structural materials would not be overly refined. Where metal or wire material is necessary, the materials would be of dark and dull color to reflect the color and texture of the surrounding landscape, similar to the rope used for a ski lift.

IMPACT: SCENIC-5: Proposed Project Components Would Be Visible from the Tahoe Rim Trail

Please refer to the analysis included in Impact SCENIC-2 regarding potential impacts associated with the proposed Ridge Run Lookout Tower.

The Tahoe Rim Trail (TRT) stretches through California and Nevada within the Heavenly Mountain Resort and is a congressionally designated National Recreation Trail. The TRT is located south and east of the Proposed Action components, with the exception of a portion of the Panorama Trail within the East Peak Reservoir Basin, which would extend the trail eastward from its current location near the Mountain Bike Park Advanced Trail, just north of Mott Canyon. The portion of the TRT rerouted by the section of the Panorama Trail would be removed and restored.

With the exception of the Ridge Run Lookout Tower, components located in Sky Meadows Basin and Adventure Peak would not be visible from the TRT due to topography and tree cover that will block views of the new facilities. Components in East Peak Reservoir Basin have greater potential for visibility from the TRT located to the east of Heavenly resort; however, only those components closest to the trail would be visible. The only component that could potentially be visible from the TRT in this location is an advanced trail proposed for the Mountain Bike Park, which would consist of a narrow single track trail and would not result in substantial change to the existing scenic quality of the area. Trees along the TRT and trees within the Mountain Bike Park would limit views beyond each of the respective trails.

CEQA

Analysis: *Less than Significant Impact: All Action Alternatives*

For analysis regarding the segment of the TRT located within California, please refer to the NEPA analysis below.

TRPA

Analysis: *Less than Significant: All Action Alternatives*

The portion of the TRT within the Lake Tahoe Basin is located southeast of the Sky Meadows Basin and is over 4,500 feet from the nearest component in that area. Topography and tree coverage would eliminate views of the components from this location. Likewise visibility of components within the Lake Tahoe Basin from the portion of the TRT outside the Basin would not occur as the components would be too far from the TRT and would be blocked by intervening trees and topography. The only Epic Discovery activity potentially visible from the TRT is the Panorama Trail, which intersects and extends the TRT. Both are located outside the Lake Tahoe Basin.

NEPA

Analysis: *No Adverse Effects, All Action Alternatives*

<u>Effect on USDA Forest Service VMS</u>. Only the Ridge Run Lookout Tower (see impact SCENIC-2) and portions of the East Peak Lake Basin Mountain Bike Park Advanced Trail and Panorama Trail (which intersects and extends the TRT) have

the potential to be visible from the TRT. The Mountain Bike Park trail would cross the uppermost portion of the Mott Canyon Lift and would be the closest component to the TRT other than the Panorama Trail. This trail would not contribute further to a Forest Service EVC of Unacceptable Modification, a classification which describes an undesirable, or excessive modification of a landscape because it would not be visually evident from the existing TRT due to substantial difference in elevation. The Panorama Trail would be visually evident from the TRT at their intersection, but would be constructed using similar design features and would not detract from the existing TRT scenic character. The Forest Service VQO for all these areas is Partial Retention. This VQO allows for future development but also directs that such development be subordinate to the surrounding landscape. The proposed mountain bike trail would meet the VQO of Partial Retention, as it would be located immediately adjacent to an existing ski lift and ski trail corridors and would result in only select, if any, tree removal. Landscape views would continue to be visually dominated by existing winter ski facilities.

IMPACT: SCENIC-C1: Cumulative Visual Resources Effects

Non-Heavenly projects in the Lake Tahoe Basin are not anticipated to change visual conditions in the vicinity of Heavenly or contribute to further visual effects from the viewpoints used for the visual analysis. The closest project that would alter visual conditions in the vicinity of the Heavenly Mountain Resort is the Forest Service's South Shore Healthy Forest Restoration Project. This project involves forest thinning on National Forest lands located west of the Heavenly Valley Creek area. The forest thinning would alter visual conditions on the treated lands, but the changes would not be visually evident from offsite viewpoints used in this evaluation. The continued development at the Van Sickle State Park project may also result in changes to the background viewshed located near the Heavenly Mountain Resort permit boundary. However, the changes that would occur under this project are lower on the mountain and would be screened by intervening trees and topography. Tree removal for trails located higher on the mountain would not be discernable.

The remaining 2007 Master Plan Phase I that may be pursued within the Basin include the Powderbowl Lodge, which previous environmental documentation found would not be visible from offsite viewpoints. Outside the Lake Tahoe Basin in Nevada, unbuilt ski runs and lift replacements were approved in the most recent Master Development Plan by the Forest Service. The Heavenly Mountain Epic Discovery Project does not include new components in these areas that would further decrease the scenic quality previously analyzed in the 2007 Master Plan EIR/EIS/EIS.

Other projects outside of the Lake Tahoe Basin would include the Stagecoach Development project approved by Douglas County for construction on Heavenly owned lands located outside of the National Forest boundary. This project would change the visual conditions at the existing Stagecoach base area with the

replacement and expansion of the existing lodge and the construction of a 120-unit condominium and parking structure project on a portion of the existing base area parking lot. This project would not be visible from offsite viewpoint locations used for the analysis of this Project and would be consistent with other adjacent residential and commercial development located in the Stagecoach base area. In addition the development would be required to conform with Douglas County's design standards and guidelines.

CEQA and TRPA

Analysis: *Less than Significant: All Alternatives*

The analysis included in this EIR/EIS/EIS considers each of the Project components included in the Lake Tahoe Basin and state of California. Neither of the Proposed Project or Sky Basin Coaster Alternative would result in significant impacts after implementation of design features included in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.5) and mitigation measures detailed in Chapter 5. When these projects within the Lake Tahoe Basin and California are considered together, indiscernible selective tree thinning, the distance between projects, and the presence of intervening topography and vegetation, result in a less than significant impact as no one viewshed would be substantially altered and the visibility and change in visual contrast of each individual action would be slight, even when considered in conjunction. Cumulative impacts from other Heavenly and non-Heavenly projects would not be discernable from the viewpoint locations used in the analysis of the Project and Alternative.

NEPA

Analysis: *No Adverse Effects: All Alternatives*

Projects outside the Lake Tahoe Basin include unbuilt ski runs and lift replacements and the Stagecoach Development (located outside the National Forest boundary), which were addressed in the 2007 Master Plan EIR/EIS/EIS. The 2007 Master Plan EIR/EIS/EIS found no cumulative adverse effect, particularly with implementation of design features shown in Table 3.10-12 of the 2007 Master Plan EIR/EIS/EIS. There are no adverse effects associated with the Project or Alternative and no effects that would be cumulatively considerable.