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3.09 VISUAL RESOURCES

This section examines the extent to which alternatives respond to visual resources management direction established in the Forest Plan and the TM Rule. The Forest Plan visual resources direction was established under the implementing regulations of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA).

In the development of the Stanislaus National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, the Forest's visual resources were inventoried to determine the landscape's scenic attractiveness (Variety Class Inventory) and the public's visual expectations (Sensitivity Level Inventory). Based upon these inventories, Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) were established for all forest land areas. The VQOs establish minimum acceptable thresholds for landscape alterations from an otherwise natural-appearing forest landscape. For example, areas with a Retention VQO are expected to retain a natural appearance; areas with a Partial Retention VQO may have some alterations, but they remain subordinate to the characteristic landscape. Areas with a Modification or Maximum Modification VQO can have alterations that do not look natural appearing.

New roads and trails create linear alterations in landscapes that can be reduced through good design and construction techniques. Unmitigated, they can present uncharacteristic line qualities in forest landscapes, especially when the surface color contrasts with adjacent natural vegetation as from a distance in an open landscape. Forested landscapes with a dense canopy and ground vegetation have the capability of masking these linear alterations. The proliferation of unauthorized routes, particularly in sparsely vegetated landscapes, can also adversely affect the Forest's visual resources.

Analysis Framework: Statute, Regulation, Forest Plan and Other Direction

Direction relevant to the Proposed Action as it affects visual resources includes the following:

National Forest Management Act (NFMA)

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA), and its implementing regulations, required the inventory and evaluation of the forest's visual resource, addressing the landscape's visual attractiveness, and the public's visual expectations. Management prescriptions for definitive lands areas of the forest are to include Visual Quality Objectives.

Travel Management Rule

The Travel Management (TM) Rule does not cite aesthetics specifically, but in the designation of trails or areas, the Responsible Official must consider effects on forest resources, with the objective of minimizing effects of motor vehicle use.

Forest Plan

The Forest Plan contains forest-wide management direction in the form of Visual Quality Objectives and specific management area direction for visual resources (USDA 2005a). The visual standards and guidelines in the Forest Plan applicable to motorized travel management include the following.

Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs)

Preservation – Only allows for ecological changes and all other management activities, except for very low visual impact recreation facilities, are prohibited.

Retention – Provides for management activities that are not visually evident and landscape character appears unaltered with only minimal deviations. Activities may only repeat form, line, color, and

texture of the characteristic landscape. Changes in their qualities of size, amount, intensity, direction, pattern, etc. should not be evident.

Partial Retention – Provides for management activities that remain visually subordinate to the landscape and landscape character may appear slightly altered. Activities may repeat form, line, color, and texture of the characteristic landscape but changes in their qualities of size, amount, intensity, direction, pattern, etc. should remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape. Activities may also introduce form, line, color, or texture which are found infrequently or not at all in the characteristic landscape but still remain subordinate to the visual strength of the characteristic landscape.

Modification – Management activities may visually dominate the characteristic landscape. Activities such as roads should borrow naturally established form, line, color, and texture so completely and at such scale that its visual characteristics are compatible with the natural surroundings.

The Forest Plan allocations are primarily done within 12 management areas. Table 3.09-1 lists each management area along with the Visual Quality Objectives (see Appendix C, Forest Plan Direction).

Table 3.09-1 Management Area VQOs

#	Management Area	Visual Quality Objective
1	Wilderness and Proposed Wilderness	Preservation
2	Wild and Scenic Rivers and Proposed Wild and Scenic Rivers	Retention
3	Near Natural	Retention
4	Wildlife	Retention
5	Special Interest Areas	Retention
6	Research Natural Areas	Preservation
7	Experimental Forest	Varies, based on inventory
8	Scenic Corridor ¹	Retention or Partial Retention ²
9	General Forest	Modification, but may be seen at distances greater than 5 miles
10	Developed Recreation Sites	Partial Retention
11	Winter Sports Sites	Modification
12	Developed Non-Recreation	Modification

¹ Created to manage scenery in response to VQOs; this includes most areas seen from all important roads, trails, and vistas.

² Based upon sensitivity level, variety class, and distance at which the area is seen. Most sensitivity level 1 roads and trails and some sensitivity level 2 roads are included in the Scenic Corridors. These include highways, roads, and trails leading directly to major areas of interest such as Yosemite National Park, major recreation areas such as Pinecrest Lake, Wilderness areas, developed recreation sites, concentrated recreation use areas (not developed) and other popular destinations.

Effects Analysis Methodology

Roads and trails can create a change in the natural-appearing landscape as measured in form, line, color, texture, and pattern. The visual effects of roads and trails can be described from different points of view: (1) the view of the surrounding landscape as seen by travelers on the route (the route is the view origin.); and, (2) the view of the route by forest visitors (riders, hikers, campers, skiers, etc.) looking from other locations at the route.

The type of visual experience differs whether the landscape is viewed from a motorized, non-motorized mode of travel (walking, hiking, skiing), or from a fixed viewpoint such as a scenic overlook. The speed of the traveler, duration of the view, distance to area seen, vegetative screening, contrast between the adjacent natural landscape and a disturbance, and lighting are some of the factors that may influence the experience.

The proposed alternatives have the potential to affect both the visual resource, as well as the forest visitor's opportunity to view the resource. The degree of deviation from the natural-appearing landscape determines whether a route is in compliance with the VQO. The VQOs establish minimum

acceptable thresholds for landscape alterations from an otherwise natural-appearing forest landscape. Site specific variables such as distance, duration (number of locations seen from) soil color, slope/aspect, landform alteration, vegetation and other factors can influence the visibility of an alteration. These factors are known as Visual Absorption Capability (VAC). They were considered in this analysis but not formally applied.

Assumptions Specific to Visual Resources

1. Based upon the review of the Forest Plan, the basic measurement indicator for the visual resources is compliance with the Retention and Partial Retention Visual Quality Objectives.
2. The Preservation VQO is not addressed as it occurs only in Wilderness and Research Natural Areas. Motorized access is not authorized in either management area and no changes are proposed within them.
3. The Modification VQO is not addressed, since this VQO allows for obvious alterations, such as roads and trails that may not appear natural.
4. The prohibition of cross-country motorized vehicles should have a positive effect on the Forest's visual resources. This assumes that nature will take its course, healing disturbances. Vehicular barriers, gates, fencing, and signs installed along road edges usually are more severe visual impact than the route itself. This analysis does not address road closure, confinement and other implementation structures that may be installed in the future.
5. All areas with a Semi-Primitive Recreation management prescription meet the direction for visual resources to meet or exceed the Partial Retention VQO.
6. For classification, analysis, and inventory of the visual resource landscape, viewing is identified by the distance zones of foreground (300 feet to 1/2 mile), middle ground (1/2 to 4 miles), and background (4-10 miles).
7. Wheeled Over Snow Route use does not affect visual resources since any impact is short lived on existing NFTS routes that are open to public motorized use during the normal summer driving season.

Data Sources

1. The Forest Plan data set was used to identify route segments within areas with visual quality objectives of Partial Retention or Retention.
2. The 2007 National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) report determined that 76 percent of those who visited the Forest participated in viewing natural features (scenery) on National Forest System (NFS) lands (USDA 2008b). This is more than any other recreation activity. Forty-four percent identified scenery as the primary reason for coming to the Forest. This is a substantial increase from the same survey four years earlier and an indication of the growing support for scenery.

Visual Resources Indicators

1. The extent to which the proposed NFTS falls within the Retention and Partial Retention VQOs, this is measured by the number of miles traversing landscapes that are to remain natural to near-natural appearing in character.
2. Effects on key view sheds that are identified in the approved Forest Plan as the Scenic Corridor management area. Visual Quality Objectives within the view sheds vary. Areas seen within foreground are generally Retention; while more distance views (up to 5 miles) are Partial Retention, and covered under indicator one.

Visual Resource Methodology by Action

1. Direct and indirect effects of the prohibition of cross country motorized vehicle travel.

The prohibition of cross-country motorized vehicles would have a positive effect on the Forest's visual resources because it would remove the chance of continued route proliferation and the possible impact to visual resources.

Methodology: GIS analysis of added routes in relation to location within Retention and Partial Retention VQO

Rationale: The closure of routes, as compared with the No Action Alternative, would lead to a general trend of improving visual resources in areas identified with a Retention and Partial Retention VQO.

2. Direct and indirect effects of adding facilities to the NFTS including identifying seasons of use and vehicle class.

Short-term timeframe: 1 year

Long-term timeframe: 20 years.

Spatial boundary: The "viewshed" is the unit of spatial analysis when considering effects associated with changes in the NFTS or season of use.

Indicator: The extent to which the proposed NFTS falls within the Retention and Partial Retention VQOs (number of miles traversing landscapes that are to remain natural to near-natural appearing in character).

Methodology: GIS analysis of added routes in relation to Retention and Partial Retention VQOs.

Rationale: Compliance with the Retention and Partial Retention VQOs.

3. Direct and indirect effects of changes to the existing NFTS including identifying seasons of use and vehicle class.

No change in effect for visual resources.

4. Cumulative Effects

Short-term timeframe: Not applicable; cumulative effects analysis will be done only for the long-term time frame.

Long-term timeframe: 20 years.

Spatial boundary: The "viewshed" is the unit of spatial analysis for determining cumulative effects.

Indicator: Number of key viewsheds that are or have the potential to be affected by motor vehicle travel.

Methodology: Identify key forest viewsheds (scenic byway corridors, etc). These viewsheds are sometimes identified in the Forest Plan. Identify whether any of these key viewsheds are or have the potential to be affected by motor vehicle travel.

Rationale: Compliance with the Retention and Partial Retention VQOs.

Affected Environment

The diverse character and high quality of the Stanislaus National Forest's scenic resources is reflected in the latest NVUM findings (USDA 2008b). Viewing natural features (scenery) was the most popular activity identified by visitors. Scenery was given both the highest importance and satisfaction rating (90%- very satisfied).

Located between Tahoe and Yosemite on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, the Forest has a variety of settings. Ancient volcanic flows covered granite and metamorphic rock before the Sierra Nevada was uplifted. Glaciers polished plateaus and carved canyons, leaving resistant volcanic formations to stand above the valleys and canyons in the high country. At mid elevations, the gentle tilt of the western slope has the soil and moisture to support a productive mixed conifer forest, capable of growing large trees in dense stands. The lower elevations are a composite of oak woodlands, brush fields, and conifer stands.

Significant human impacts to scenery began in the Gold Rush era and were concentrated in the Mother Lode Foothill region, to the west of the Forest boundary. Several mining era projects of varying success attempted to harness the water and its power within the Forest. Beginning about 160 years ago, major water/hydroelectric projects transformed the free-flowing rivers of the Forest in some locations. Along with water diversions, dams, and reservoirs came railroads, power lines, and roads. At the same time, logging of the Forests gained momentum. Railroad and road development supported intensive and extensive timber harvest over much of the Forest. Wildfires and fire suppression activities have also left their mark. The railroads are gone, converted to roads. The roads and skid trails created by the above activities are the focus of this analysis.

Scenery and Key Viewsheds

The significant and extensive impacts from above activities are not very apparent today, due to natural recovery over time. The landscapes of the Forest generally have a great ability to absorb impacts and recover quickly, primarily due to vegetative growth. Three state highways traverse the Forest (4-Ebbetts Pass, 108-Sonora Pass, and 120-Tioga Pass). Highway 4 is a National Scenic Byway for the entire length of the Forest. Highway 120 is a National Scenic Byway within Yosemite National Park. All three routes have spectacular views of the Sierra Nevada Mountains including the high elevation sub-alpine landscapes. Highway 140, adjacent to the southern boundary of the Forest, follows the Merced River into Yosemite Valley. The Forest highways and county roads interconnect the Tran-sierra highways. From these routes, lower standard roads and trails access most of the Forest. Views from these routes and views of them from other routes are possible at thousands of locations.

The most important routes were included within the Scenic Corridor management area of the Forest Plan. These areas are to emphasize the scenic and recreation values. Following is a brief description of the 6 general areas as described and mapped in the Forest Plan (USDA 2005a, p. 144).

Merced River: including the viewshed of Highway 140.

Highway 120: including Mather, Evergreen, Cherry, Ferretti and Lumsden Roads.

Cherry Lake: including the viewshed of Cherry Lake.

Highway 108: including Fraser Flat, Beardsley, Pinecrest, Herring Creek, Eagle Meadow, Clark Fork and Kennedy Meadow Roads.

Highway 4: including Highland Lakes, Pacific Valley and Spicer Meadow (including Utica/Union Reservoirs) roads.

North Fork Mokelumne River: including the viewshed of the North Fork Mokelumne River below the Mokelumne Wilderness.

Environmental Consequences

Effects for All Alternatives

All alternatives have the potential to affect the existing landscape in varying ways and this also varies from one location of the Forest to another. All alternatives would retain more than 790 miles of existing system routes in the Retention VQO and 380 miles in the Partial Retention VQO. Alternative 4 would have the highest number of NFTS miles of roads within visually sensitive lands, but Alternative 2 with cross country travel would have the greatest potential to impact the visual resources. Alternative 5 has the least impact of all alternatives but only by a narrow margin. Table 3.09-2 illustrates the minor differences between alternatives by looking at total mileages.

Table 3.09-2 Visual Quality Objectives: NFTS

Visual Quality Objective	Alternative (miles)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Retention - Scenic Corridor	179.96	172.04	171.88	181.22	173.05
Retention - Other Resources (setting)	649.83	621.07	614.69	657.93	618.03
subtotal	829.79	793.11	786.57	839.15	791.08
Partial Retention - Scenic Corridor	352.51	336.09	332.41	355.25	336.91
Partial Retention - Other Resources (setting)	49.31	48.26	47.60	49.23	47.72
subtotal	401.82	384.35	380.01	404.48	384.63
Total	1231.61	1177.46	1166.58	1243.63	1175.71

Alternatives 2 and 3 characterize the existing situation in different ways. The primary difference is Alternative 2 (No Action) continues cross country travel and therefore all unauthorized routes will continue to be used. Table 3.09-3 displays the differences between alternatives indicating the variation between alternatives. The additions represent a small percentage of the overall NFTS ranging between 0 and 6.2% of the total miles.

Table 3.09-3 Visual Quality Objectives: Additions to the NFTS

Visual Quality Objective	Alternative (miles)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Retention - Scenic Corridor	8.08	0.00	0.00	9.34	1.17
Retention - Other Resources (setting)	35.14	0.00	0.00	43.24	3.34
subtotal	43.22	0.00	0.00	52.58	5.51
Partial Retention - Scenic Corridor	20.10	0.00	0.00	22.84	4.50
Partial Retention - Other Resources (setting)	1.71	0.00	0.00	1.63	0.12
subtotal	21.81	0.00	0.00	24.47	4.62
Total	65.03	0.00	0.00	77.05	10.13

The presence of roads within Retention or Partial Retention areas provides viewing opportunities for motorized users. The majority of roads on the forest were not identified as important (sensitivity level 1 or 2). Travel limitations placed on some of these roads would be beneficial to the scenery. While fewer people may experience the views, the view experience would be of a greater quality because of less dust, noise, and fewer impacts on other resources, such as soil (erosion).

A wide variety of uses occurs on the forest, much of it recreational. Recreation use is expected to increase 43% during the next 20 years (Cordell 2008). Sightseeing and driving for pleasure are examples of activities that directly use roads as part of the recreational experience. The character of and access to scenic views, will directly depend on the road system for many people. Predicted increases in general recreational use will provide scenery benefits to more people. Alteration of road systems can disrupt long-established access and use patterns. As described in Chapter 3.04 (Recreation) all alternatives (except Alternative 2) will close the majority of dispersed recreation access routes to motorized use. This would result in parking immediately adjacent to or on the NFTS roads and a less natural appearance generally for those traveling along these roads.

Alternative 1 (Proposed Action)

DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS

This alternative is positioned between alternatives 4 and 5 emphasizing a balance between motorized recreation and ecological values. The elimination of cross country travel will have a positive effect on the overall scenery on the Forest over time as existing unauthorized routes naturally recover.

Existing OHV use would be concentrated in fewer areas, resulting in some ephemeral loss of visual quality at those specific locations. This will not have a significant impact on lands within the Scenic Corridor Management Area (key viewsheds). VQOs would be met. Land disturbance from use on unauthorized routes will naturally recover over time, improving scenery. Increased parking and proliferation of campsites along NFTS roads will make scenery appear less natural and more congested during the peak recreation season. Currently these vehicles and campsites are out of view, but in this alternative most will be scattered along roads, in plain view, due to the elimination of motorized access. Many of the new parking areas are likely to be adapted for camping by displaced motorized campers. The pioneering of campsites along the immediate edge of the roads will also degrade the currently natural appearing landscapes at those locations. When occupied, they will be obvious to motorists but these effects are temporary.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

The direct and indirect effects disclosed above contribute to cumulative effects along with certain past, present or reasonably foreseeable future actions identified in Appendix B (Cumulative Effects Analysis). Given the terrain and vegetation cover on the Stanislaus National Forest, adding established roads or trails to the NFTS within the Retention or Partial Retention categories would not have an adverse effect on the scenic values of the Forest and key viewsheds (Scenic Corridor) will not be significantly affected. The routes currently exist and no new visual impact will result from this action. Past activities have altered the natural landscape character, creating the existing condition of the landscape. The most obvious and significant effects on scenic resources are from landform alterations, constructed facilities, and vegetation manipulation. The activities that contributed include mining, utilities, timber management, recreation facility development, fire management (suppression, prescribed burning and fuel reduction) and livestock grazing. Many impacts from these past activities were severe but now hidden by vegetative growth. Future projects that remove this vegetation can expose these unnatural appearing features, impacting scenery, and increase opportunities for unauthorized motorized use.

Alternative 2 (No Action)

DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS

Alternative 2 would continue to allow cross country travel which will result in visible impacts to the scenery at many locations, including Scenic Corridors. This alternative is the only alternative that would not close motorized access to dispersed recreation sites. Existing roads will not see an increase in parking and development of adjacent campsites as in the other alternatives.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

The direct and indirect effects disclosed above contribute to cumulative effects along with certain past, present or reasonably foreseeable future actions identified in Appendix B (Cumulative Effects Analysis). Continued proliferation of routes would occur at about 2.25 miles a year, resulting in a loss of natural character and a potential inconsistency with VQOs. This may affect key viewsheds (Scenic Corridor) at unpredictable locations. These impacts will be limited to the wheel tracks and will only be a problem within the immediate foreground. There would be little or no natural recovery on the existing unauthorized routes. Past activities have altered the natural landscape character, creating the existing condition of the landscape. The most obvious and significant effects on scenic resources are

from landform alterations, constructed facilities, and vegetation manipulation. The activities that contributed include mining, utilities, timber management, recreation facility development, fire management (suppression, prescribed burning and fuel reduction) and livestock grazing. Many of the impacts from these past activities were severe but now hidden by vegetative growth. Future projects that remove this vegetation can expose these unnatural appearing features from view and increase opportunities for unauthorized motorized use.

Alternative 3 (Cross Country Prohibited)

DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS

The elimination of cross country travel and motorized use on all unauthorized routes will have a positive effect on the overall scenery of the Forest, but would prevent motorized touring and enjoyment of the scenery at many locations.

This alternative would close all motorized access routes for dispersed recreation resulting in maximum parking along roads and proliferation of dispersed camp sites adjacent to them. Currently these vehicles and campsites are out of view, but in this alternative most will be scattered along roads, in plain view. Many of the new parking areas are likely to be adapted for camping by displaced motorized campers. The pioneering of campsites along the immediate edge of the roads will also degrade the currently natural appearing landscapes at those locations. When occupied, they will be obvious to motorists.

With no additions to the NFTS, existing OHV use will concentrate in fewer areas, resulting in some ephemeral loss of visual quality at those locations. This will not have a significant impact on lands within the Scenic Corridor Management Area (key viewsheds). VQOs would be met. Land disturbance from use on unauthorized routes will naturally recover over time, improving scenery (greater than all other alternatives).

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

The direct and indirect effects disclosed above contribute to cumulative effects along with certain past, present or reasonably foreseeable future actions identified in Appendix B (Cumulative Effects Analysis). Past activities have altered the natural landscape character, creating the existing condition of the landscape. The most obvious and significant effects on scenic resources are from landform alterations, constructed facilities, and vegetation manipulation. The activities that contributed include mining, utilities, timber management, recreation facility development, fire management (suppression, prescribed burning and fuel reduction) and livestock grazing. Many impacts from these past activities were severe but now hidden by vegetative growth. Future projects that remove this vegetation can expose these unnatural appearing features, impacting scenery, and increase opportunities for unauthorized motorized use.

Alternative 4 (Recreation)

DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS

The elimination of cross country travel and motorized use on all unauthorized routes will have a positive effect on the overall scenery of the Forest. This alternative emphasizes motorized loop driving, riding, and touring opportunities. Motorized viewing opportunities are maximized at the expense of some non-motorized potential. There are fewer restrictions placed on the type of vehicle than alternatives one and four. This alternative closes motorized access to the majority of existing dispersed recreation opportunities, but less than either Alternatives 1 or 5. Fewer campers and campsites will be displaced to immediate roadsides. Currently these vehicles and campsites are out of view, but in this alternative most will be scattered along roads, in plain view. Many of the new parking areas are likely to be adapted for camping by displaced motorized campers. The pioneering of campsites along the immediate edge of the roads will also degrade the currently natural appearing

landscapes at those locations. When occupied, they will be obvious to motorists but the effects are temporary.

With the greatest amount of additions to the NFTS, existing use will spread across more areas of the Forest, but visual impacts will be less concentrated. This will not have a significant impact on lands within the Scenic Corridor Management Area (key viewsheds). VQOs would be met. Land disturbance from OHVs on unauthorized routes will naturally recover over time, improving scenery (more than Alternative 2, less than other alternatives). This alternative has the longer season of use, beginning earlier and ending later than Alternatives 1 or 3. Weather permitting; scenery can be enjoyed earlier in the spring and later in the fall.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Same as Alternative 1.

Alternative 5 (Resources)

DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS

Emphasis is placed on natural resource and habitat values, which are essential to the scenic management system's underlying ecological aesthetic. Under the scenic management system, activities that improve forest health also improve forest aesthetics in order to reach the long-term desired condition stated in the Forest Plan. Since alternative 5 best protects natural resources, it would thus best protect scenic resources, although recreationists would have less motorized access to the scenery. The alternative would have a beneficial impact on lands within the Scenic Corridor Management Area (key viewsheds) and VQOs would be met. Land disturbance from OHVs on unauthorized routes will naturally recover over time, improving scenery (more than Alternatives 1, 2, and 4). The road and trail systems are not designed for optimal touring by recreationists and some types of use would be restricted, preventing loop tours. The season of use is the most restrictive of all alternatives. Tours in early spring (wildflowers) and in the fall (peak fall color) would be affected at many locations. Parking along roads and proliferation of campsites along NFTS roads will make roads appear less natural and more congested due to the loss of most existing motorized access routes for dispersed recreation. Currently these vehicles and campsites are out of view, but in this alternative most would be scattered along roads, in plain view. Many of the new parking areas are likely to be adapted for camping by displaced motorized campers. The pioneering of campsites along the immediate edge of the roads will also degrade the currently natural appearing landscapes at those locations. When occupied, they will be obvious to motorists but the effects are temporary.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Same as Alternative 1.

Summary of Effects Analysis across All Alternatives

Roads and trails can create a change in the natural-appearing landscape as measured in form, line, color, texture, and pattern. Authorized and unauthorized roads are generally not apparent in the middle or distance views of the forest.

Travel on roads and trails often provide the opportunity for viewing scenery. Most travel routes appear slightly altered due to grading and absence of vegetation on the travel way. This is true even of hiking trails, to a lesser extent. The road and trail facilities, although noticeable at times, generally remain visually subordinate to the landscape character being viewed.

Steep terrain, dense vegetation, boulders, and fencing along roads have helped prevent the development of unauthorized routes. Fires and thinning projects have expanded the view and often the access into areas. The removal of screening can expose existing features that were not apparent

originally, including roads and trails. This is not part of this analysis, but an issue that must be addressed and taken into consideration in future projects.

Changes or additions to the NFTS are consistent with Visual Quality Objectives. Elimination of cross country travel will have a modestly beneficial effect. Decommissioning of roads, closure of roads, conversion of roads to trails, and elimination of motorized access on existing routes are generally beneficial to scenery, but have the potential to reduce enjoyment of the scenery by those who would rely on motorized travel over unauthorized routes. Future actions to prevent entry, such as barriers posts, rocks, logs, berms and guard rails may impact scenery and will be addressed in future implementation plans.

Table 3.09-4 Summary of Effects to Visual Resources

Indicators – Visual Resources	Rankings of Alternatives for Each Indicator ¹				
	1	2	3	4	5
Disturbance/Integrity: Compliance with the Retention and Partial Retention VQOs	4	2	4	4	4
Key Viewsheds Affected by Proposed NFTS	4	2	4	4	4
Total	8	4	8	8	8
Average for Visual Resources	4	2	4	4	4

¹ A score of 5 indicates the alternative has the least impact on this resource; a score of 1 indicates the alternative has the most. There are differences between alternatives that the numbers above do not reflect due to offsetting factors. See project record for more information.

Compliance with the Forest Plan and Other Direction

Alternatives 1, 3, 4 and 5 currently meet the objectives and standards and guidelines of the Forest Plan for visual resources. Alternative 2 is likely to allow impacts within the scenic corridor that would not conform to the Forest Plan over time.