

**APPENDIX J**

**SCENIC ANALYSIS**

# Scenic Quality

## Mt. Ashland Ski Area Expansion

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### Landscape Character

The unique geology of the Siskiyou Mountains forms the basis for describing the landscape character of the Scenic Analysis Area. Landscapes develop as a result of geological, biological, and human processes. Developing in layers, these processes illustrate the evolution of the landscape elements comprising the current landscape character. The Scenic Analysis Area straddles the ridgeline of the eastern Siskiyou Mountain Range. Flowing east-west, this ridgeline is a transition of landscape patterns. Along the cooler, wetter north-facing slopes, the rocky ridgeline caps off a continuous dense canopy of conifer draping the creek drainages above the City of Ashland. Natural breaks in this canopy occur only at rocky outcrops and along sparsely-spaced meadows and within avalanche chutes. The existing ski runs cut through this once-continuous canopy cover in narrow, finger-like swaths. Depending on viewer location, these runs vary from being merely noticeable, to obvious unnatural alterations. During the winter, the runs are more pronounced from the contrast between snow and vegetation.

Along the south-facing slopes of the Analysis Area, the dense conifers along the lower drainages thin in density and extent, with increase in elevation. Irregular patterns of subalpine meadows and clusters of fir dominate the landscape pattern here. At higher elevations, meadows blend into a rocky spine of granite crags near summit peaks. The exposed rocky peak of Mt. Ashland appears overshadowed by the prominence of radio communication and weather service structures located at the summit. Below these peaks, the Crest Road slices through the meadows, forming a winding line of bare road cuts and fill slopes, some of which persist as unnatural scars in the landscape. Structures along this line are limited to a group of buildings at the entrance to the Mt. Ashland Ski Area. These buildings contrast noticeably, failing to blend with the sense of place of the subalpine setting.

The **valued landscape character** of an area can be described in terms of the positive attributes that contribute to the landscape's aesthetic value. These attributes may vary according to the scale at which the landscape is being viewed. For example, when viewed from the Upper Bear Creek Valley (commonly referred to as part of the Rogue Valley), the Analysis Area is recognizable as a forested backdrop in which color and form dominate. Hence, valued attributes from this distance are patterns of vegetation rather than textures of individual trees. Evidences of human alterations (roads, ski lifts, structures, recreation sites, etc.) are generally not included when describing the "valued landscape character". Exceptions occur when these deviations become so integrated over time into the sense of place of an area, that they become positive attributes themselves. Evidences of lines, vegetative patterns, and structures related to the ski area, therefore, can be considered as part of the valued landscape character at all scales, provided these deviations borrow from natural appearing attributes of the surrounding landscape. This is the case with the majority of the Mt. Ashland landscape.

Given this, the **valued landscape character** of the Mt. Ashland Landscape is described as follows:

When viewed as middleground and background from sensitive travel routes, the mostly natural appearing landscape dominates. This includes an overall pattern of dense canopy at lower elevations, thinning into a more open, intermittent canopy along the rocky summit ridgeline. Openings resemble meadows, avalanche chutes and other patterns common to subalpine regions in the Siskiyou Mountains. Linear openings such as avalanche chutes tend to be located within dissected drainages while openings from meadows and rock outcrops are usually present along ridgelines and upper portions of concave slopes. Although evident, ski runs are not obvious, and may go unnoticed to the casual visitor, depending upon specific viewpoint and duration of view. Buildings and other facilities structures should not be readily apparent from these views.

When viewed as foreground along sensitive travel routes, the evidence of ski runs becomes more obvious, but borrows heavily from natural characteristics aforementioned. The presence of buildings, facilities, lift towers and lines, and other related structures are prominent at this scale. However, these elements should reflect (in their form, color, textures, and scale) the attributes of the surrounding subalpine landscape. When viewed in immediate foreground from within the Special Use Permit area, these elements would dominate the recreation experience, as is inherent in order to provide the recreation function intended, while promoting design excellence.

### **Valued Viewpoints and Viewsheds**

In analyzing the potential scenic impacts, it is necessary to discuss the most common travel routes and viewpoints in which the ski area is a component. Changes in landscape character when viewed from these “valued viewsheds” serve as the basis for measuring scenic integrity.

Sensitive views into the Analysis Area have been established as part of the Land and Resource Management Plans of both the Rogue River and Klamath National Forests. These views are part of larger viewsheds along sensitive travel routes. They include:

- 1) “**Crest Viewshed**”: Foreground views along the Crest Road (MA-11 KNF) and the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (MA-11 KNF)
- 2) “**Ski Area Viewshed**”: Foreground views from within the Special Use Permit area boundary of the Mt. Ashland Ski Area (MS-4 RRNF)
- 3) “**California Viewshed**”: Background views from Interstate 5 - California (MA-11 KNF)
- 4) “**Rogue Valley Viewshed**”: Background views along primary travel routes, Upper Bear Creek Valley, hereafter referred to as the Rogue Valley (MS-4 RRNF)

**Foreground** views include seen or potentially seen areas in the immediate foreground *up to one mile*. **Middleground** views include seen or potentially seen areas *between one and five miles* from the viewer. **Background** views equate to distances *greater than five miles*.

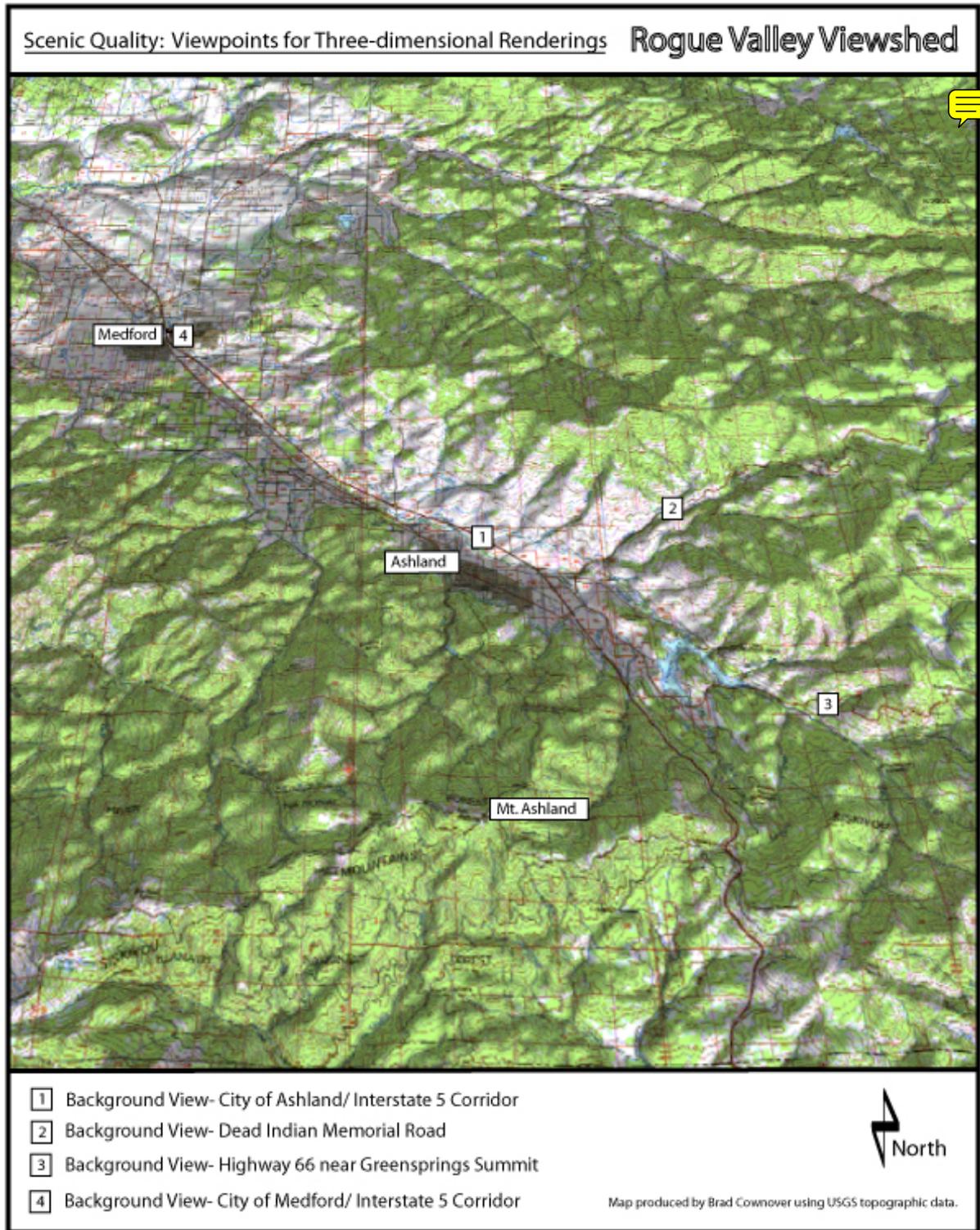
During project planning, additional viewpoints were selected for the purpose of simulating the potential effects of ski run expansion. In addition to representing the most common views from within the Rogue Valley, these viewpoints were chosen in order to display the best range of possible viewing angles and to be consistent with the viewpoints chosen in the 1991 FEIS. Modifications to the exact locations, and choices of these viewpoints have been made with this Draft EIS iteration in order to better disclose visible effects to representative views. It is important to note that the views into the Analysis Area change with any minor disposition of viewpoint. Especially when viewed at lower elevations, the visibility of the Analysis Area is directly related to potential screening from foreground ridges. The selected viewpoints are intended to be representative of the majority of those possible.

Three-dimensional renderings of the current condition (Alternative 1, No-Action) and all action alternatives (Alternatives 2-6) were produced for the following viewpoints:

- 1) Background view, **City of Ashland/ Interstate 5 Corridor**: (representative view along this portion of Interstate 5 and vicinity of City of Ashland)
- 2) Background view, **Dead Indian Memorial Road**: (representative view from the northeast side of the Rogue Valley)
- 3) Background view, **Highway 66 near the Greensprings Summit** (representative view for east side of Rogue Valley)
- 4) Background view, **City of Medford/ Interstate 5 Corridor** (representative view along this portion of I-5, the City of Medford, and northern Rogue Valley)

Field analysis from these viewpoints serve as the basis for the evaluation of scenic resource impacts relative to the expansion of ski runs. Viewpoints utilized for renderings are portrayed on Map 1. Collectively, these rendering are used to help illustrate the potential visual impacts associated with views along primary travel routes in the Rogue Valley.

# Map 1. Scenic Quality Viewpoint Map



Discrepancies between these points and points used in the 1991 FEIS are a result of refined planning. Medford views were originally excluded from simulations as run visibility would be negligible due to the oblique viewing position. Renderings for the alternatives from along the California and Crest Road viewshed were not included, as the proposed ski runs are concentrated on the north side of the mountain.

In addition to representing the most common views from within the Rogue Valley, these viewpoints were chosen in order to display the best range of possible viewing angles and to be consistent with the viewpoints chosen in the 1991 FEIS for the Master Plan. Modifications to the exact locations, and choices of these viewpoints have been made with this Draft EIS iteration in order to better disclose visible effects to representative views. It is important to note that the views into the Scenic Analysis Area change with any minor disposition of viewpoint. Especially when viewed at lower elevations, the visibility of the Analysis Area is directly related to potential screening from foreground ridges. The selected viewpoints are intended to be representative of the majority of those possible.

### **Assumptions Regarding Simulations**

The effects of the ski expansions have been illustrated in several computer-generated, three-dimensional renderings. Each simulation depicts the winter view from the naked eye as well as a "zoomed image" view for clarity between alternatives. Simulations reflect impacts immediately after tree removal activity and do not depict lift towers, parking lot improvements, or structures as these are not currently (and would not be in any of the alternatives) visible with the naked eye.

The simulations shown represent computer-generated 3-dimensional renderings of the project area. The renderings are derived from a compilation of USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle digital elevation data and vegetation based on a black and white ortho-rectified image of the corresponding quadrangles. The location, density, and heights of vegetation (overstory trees) were further refined based on recent aerial and oblique photographs. Hence, the rendering of the existing conditions from the various viewpoints represents the existing conditions to the degree of accuracy possible with available data.

An average haze factor was used for the renderings to best represent the average viewing conditions within the valley. It is understood that the visibility is often much worse or slightly better than depicted. The overhead renderings are planimetric depictions of the area from an aerial view to aid in illustrating the varying extents of development.

**Note:** it is not intended that the existing conditions renderings be 100% absolutely photo-realistic and accurate down to individual trees, when compared with reality. These images are not intended to replace reality. Their purpose is to establish a representative rendering of the existing conditions by which to illustrate the relative changes in landscape character between alternatives.

The following simulations present a **Composite View** (a finished layout, with labels, of the Zoomed and Naked Eye Images for each view by alternative, and a **Plan View** (a planimetric overhead/aerial view by alternative).

ASHLAND VIEW  
Alternative 1



Zoomed Image



View with Naked Eye

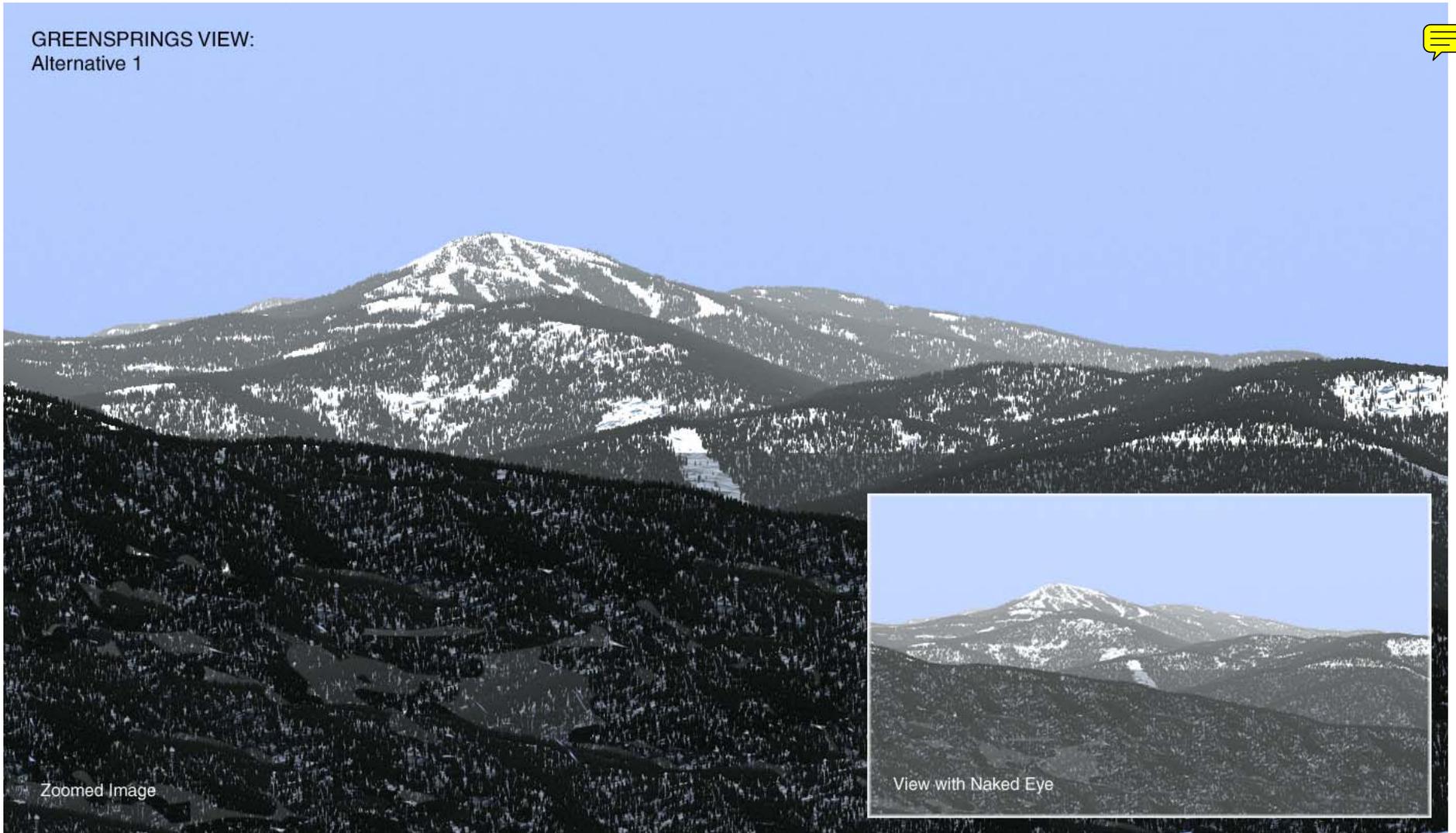
DEAD INDIAN MEMORIAL ROAD:  
Alternative 1

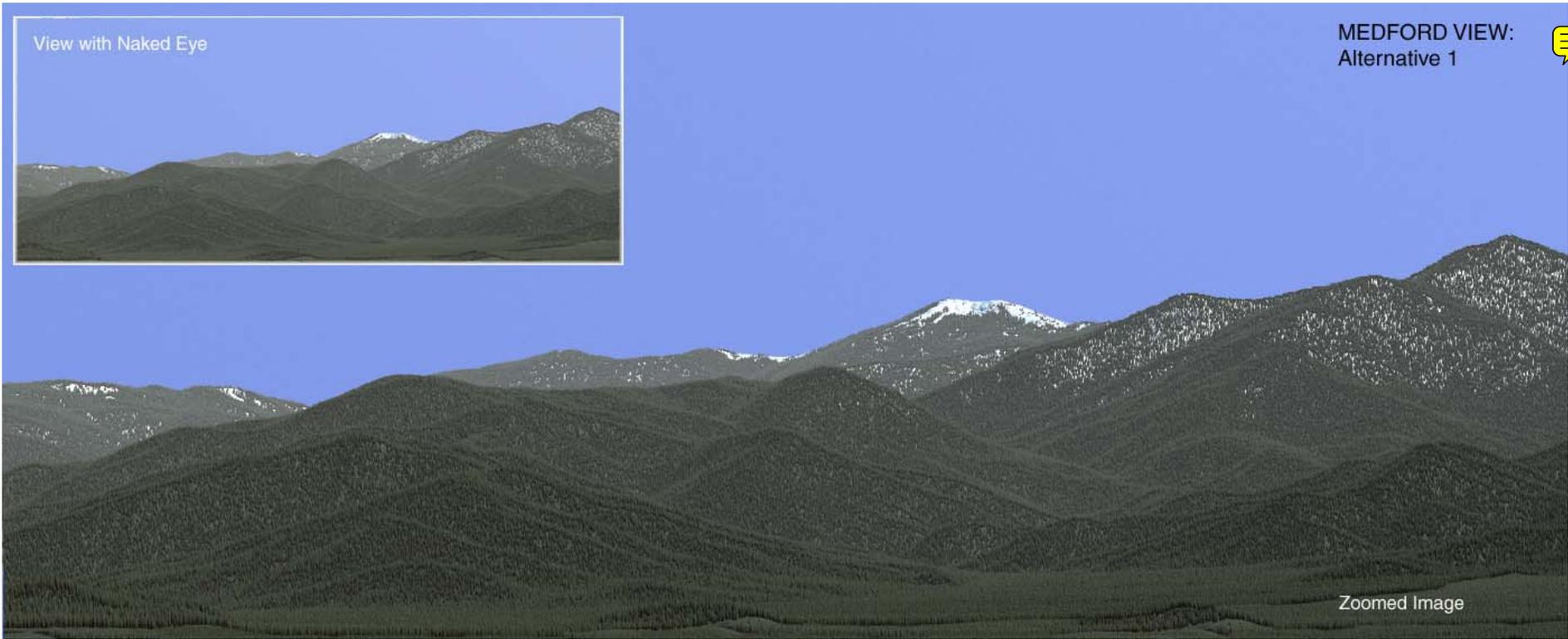


Zoomed Image

View with Naked Eye

GREENSPRINGS VIEW:  
Alternative 1





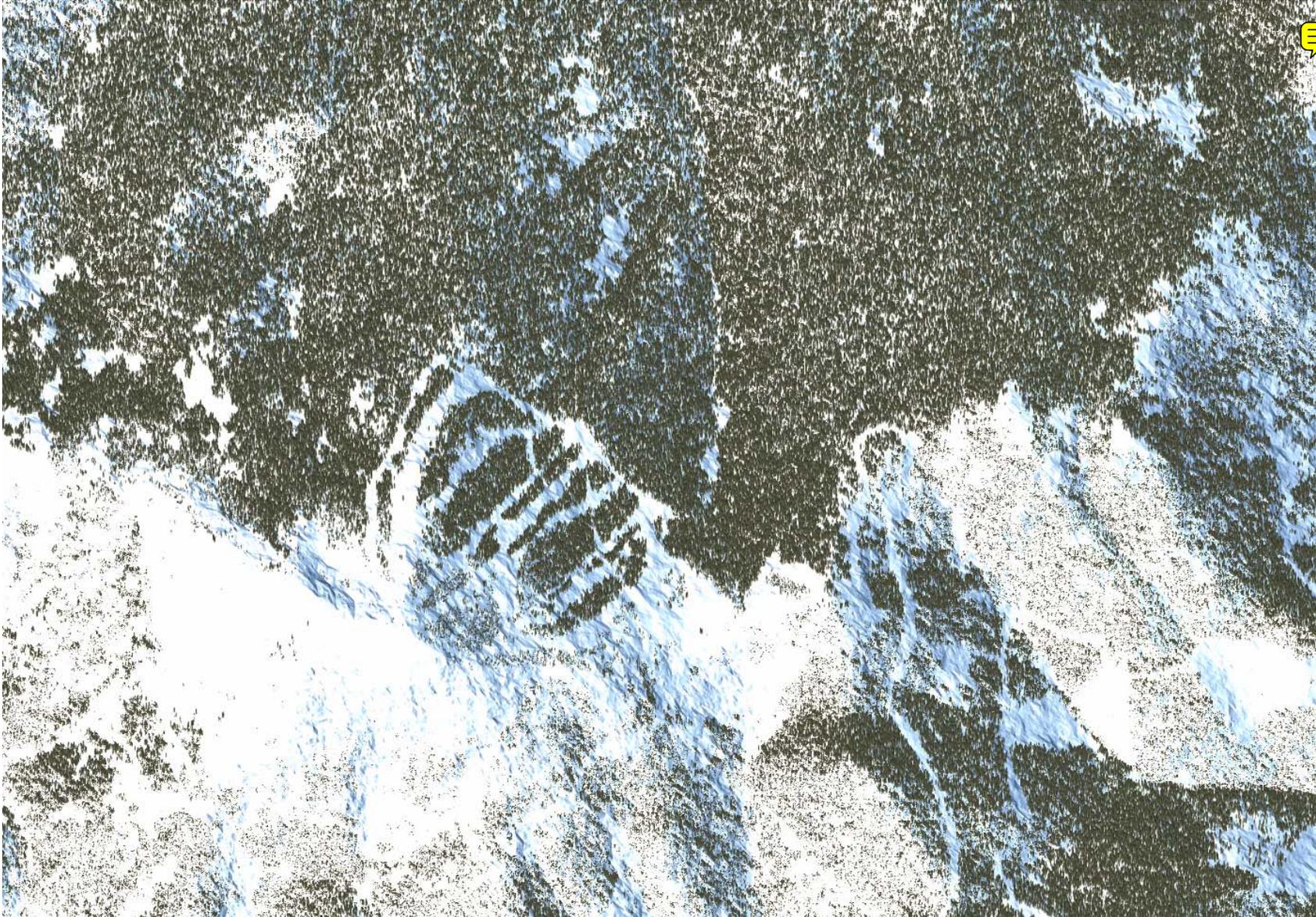
View with Naked Eye

MEDFORD VIEW:  
Alternative 1

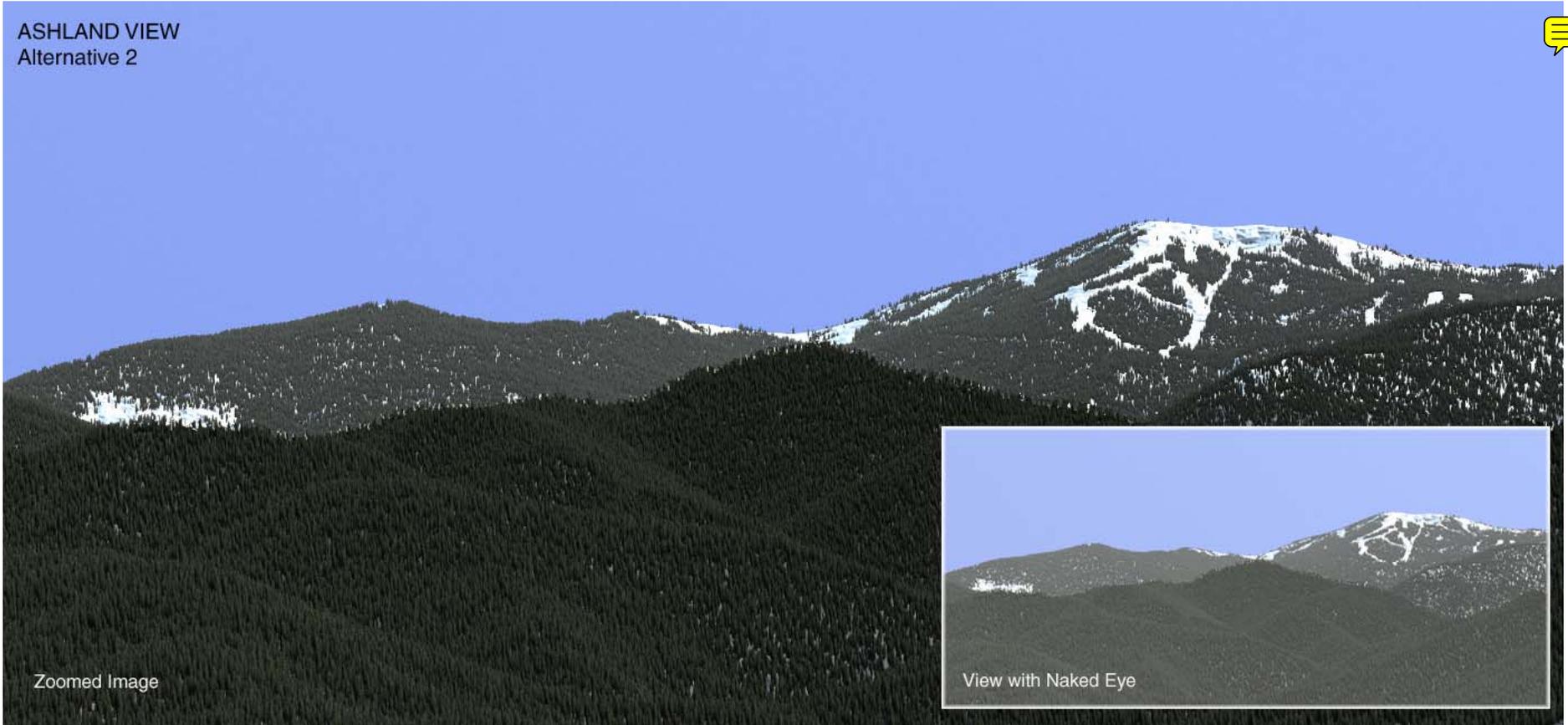


Zoomed Image

**Alternative 1—Plan View**



ASHLAND VIEW  
Alternative 2



Zoomed Image

View with Naked Eye

DEAD INDIAN MEMORIAL ROAD:  
Alternative 2

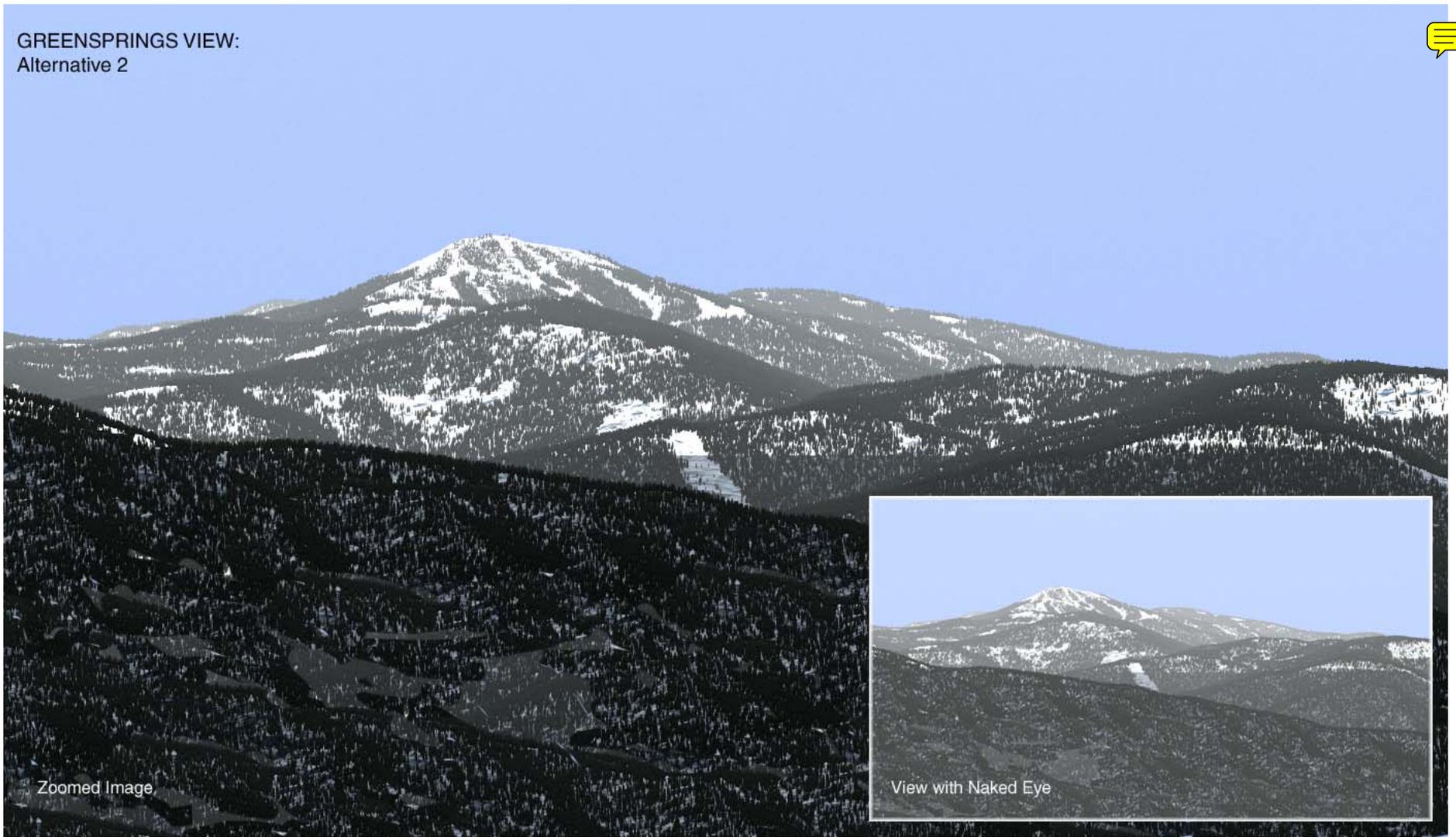


Zoomed Image

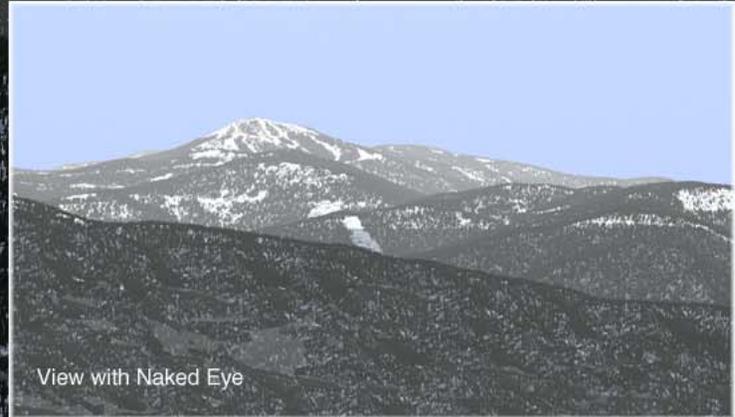


View with Naked Eye

GREENSPRINGS VIEW:  
Alternative 2



Zoomed Image



View with Naked Eye



View with Naked Eye

MEDFORD VIEW:  
Alternative 2

Zoomed Image

**Alternative 2—Plan View**



ASHLAND VIEW  
Alternative 3



Zoomed Image



View with Naked Eye

DEAD INDIAN MEMORIAL ROAD:  
Alternative 3



Zoomed Image

View with Naked Eye

GREENSPRINGS VIEW:  
Alternative 3



Zoomed Image

View with Naked Eye

View with Naked Eye



MEDFORD VIEW:  
Alternative 3

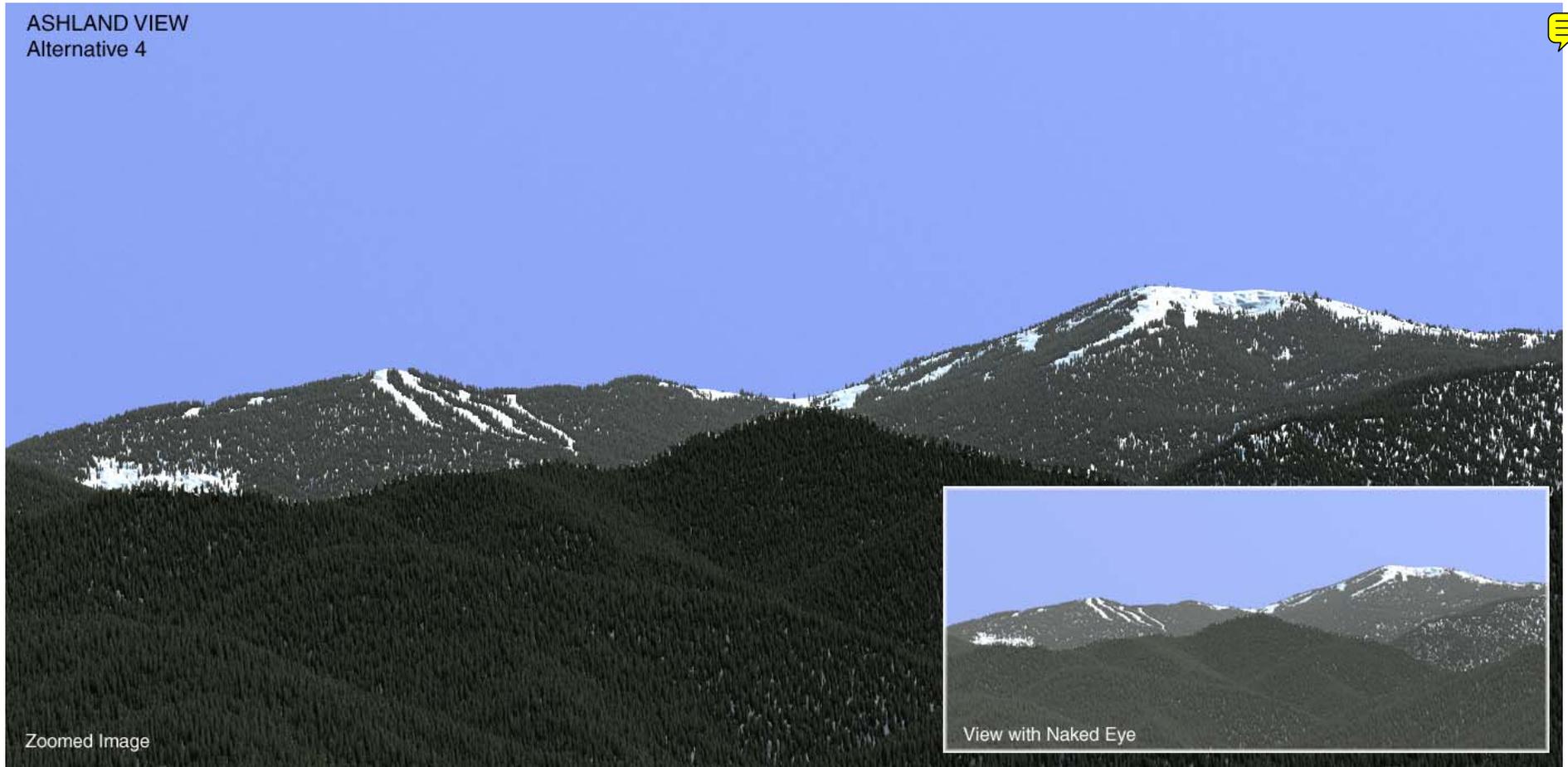


Zoomed Image

**Alternative 3—Plan View**



ASHLAND VIEW  
Alternative 4



Zoomed Image



View with Naked Eye

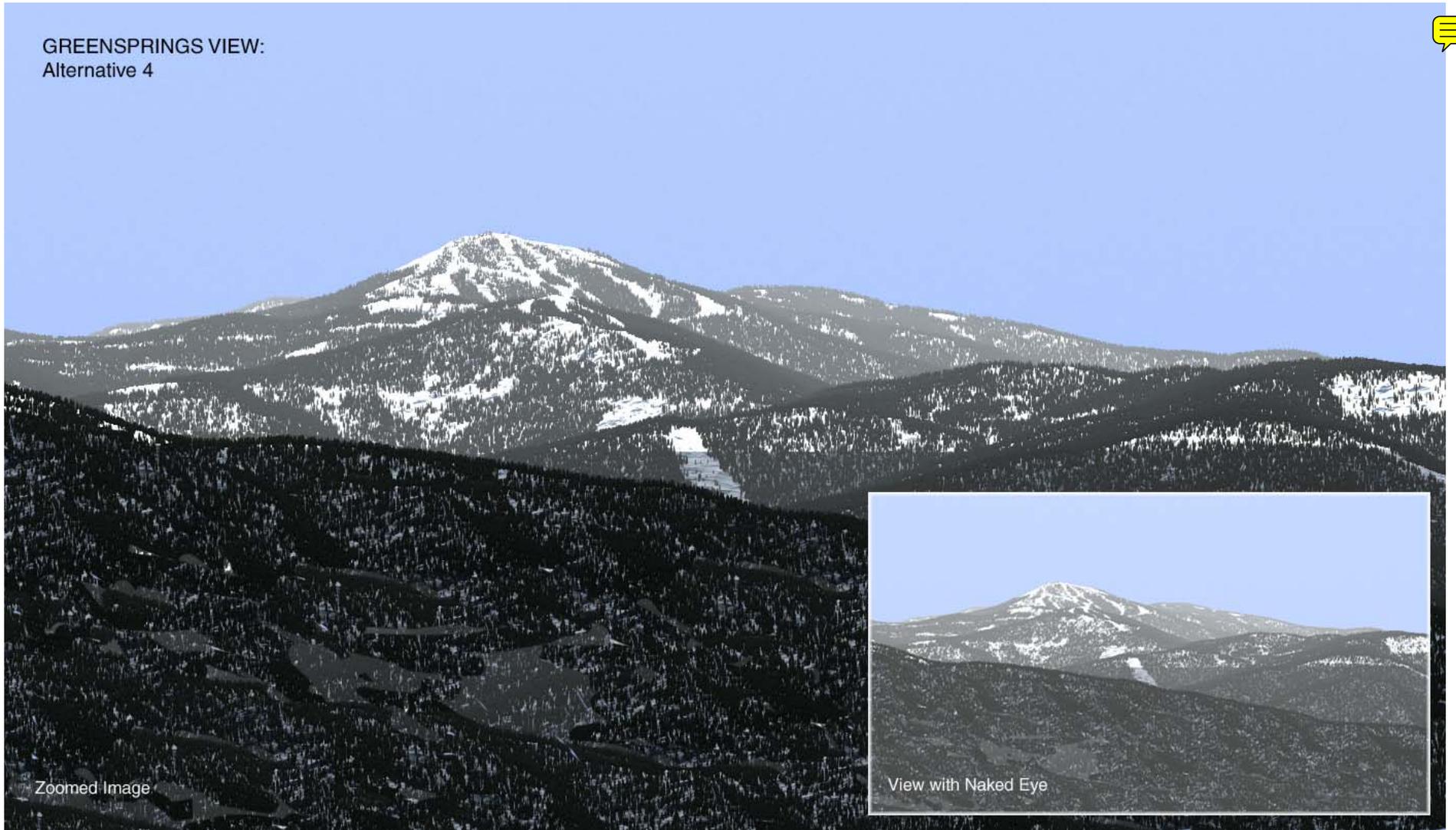
DEAD INDIAN MEMORIAL ROAD:  
Alternative 4



Zoomed Image

View with Naked Eye

GREENSPRINGS VIEW:  
Alternative 4



Zoomed Image

View with Naked Eye



**Alternative 4—Plan View**



ASHLAND VIEW  
Alternative 5



Zoomed Image



View with Naked Eye

DEAD INDIAN MEMORIAL ROAD:  
Alternative 5

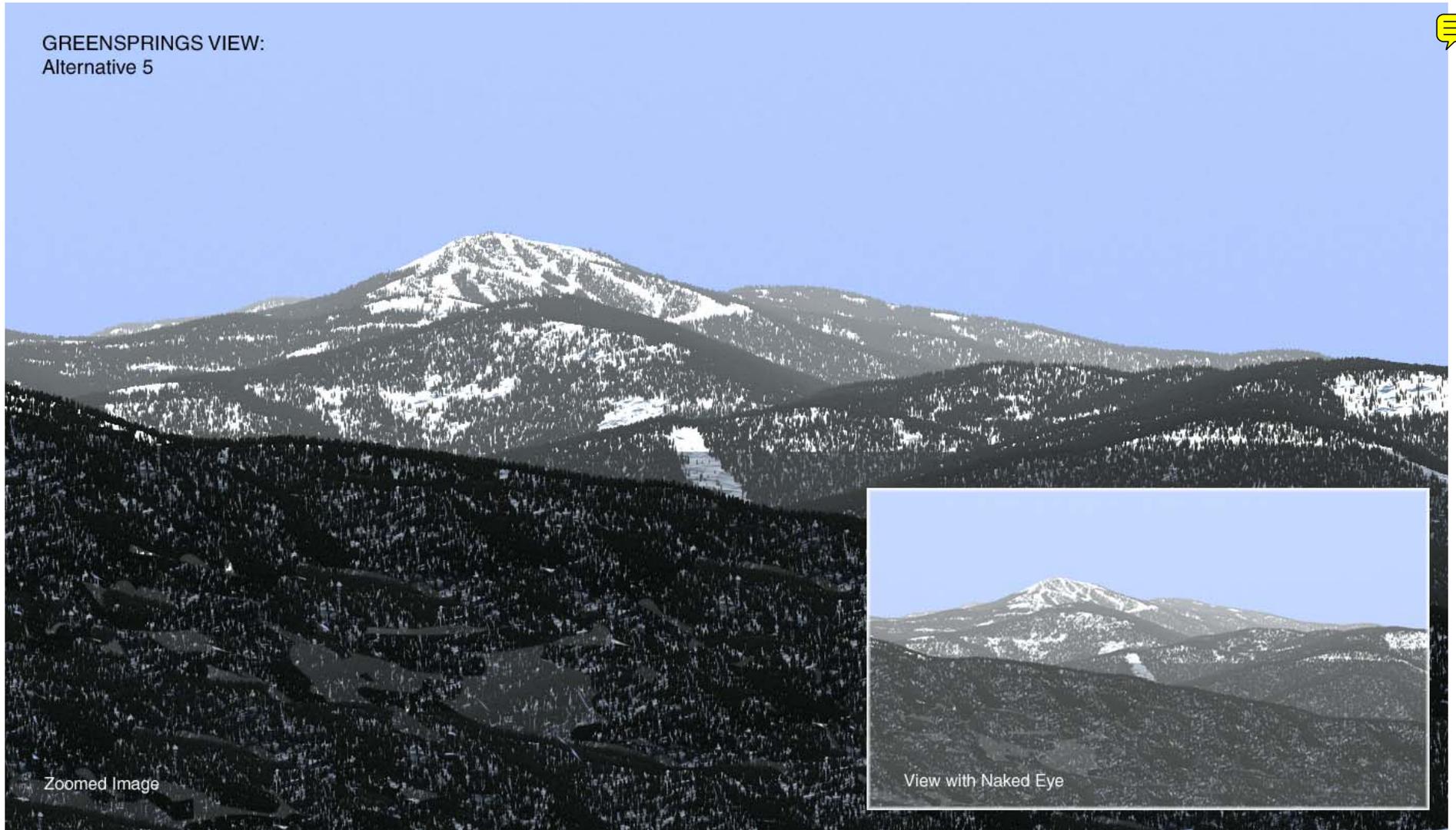


Zoomed Image



View with Naked Eye

GREENSPRINGS VIEW:  
Alternative 5

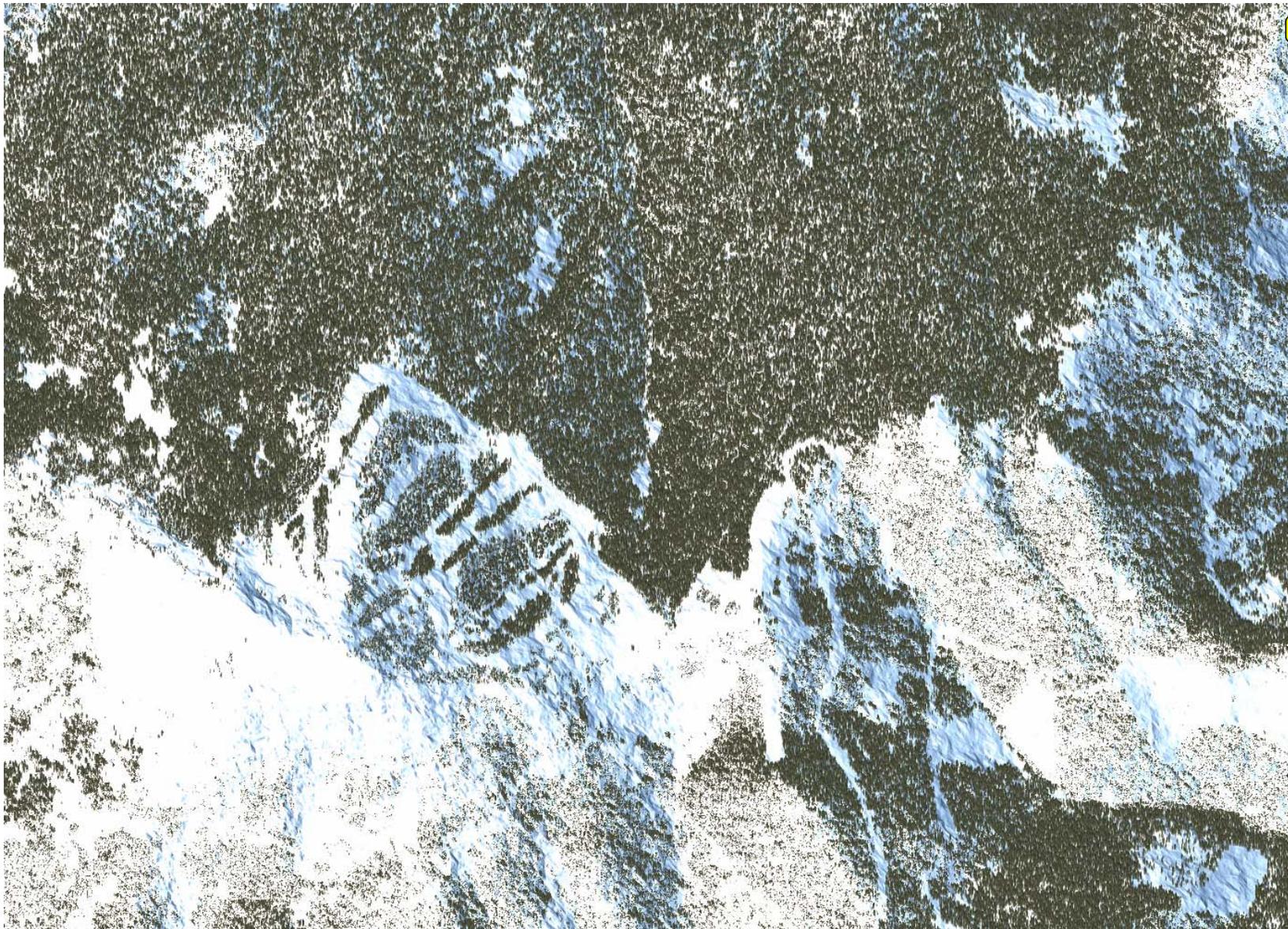


Zoomed Image

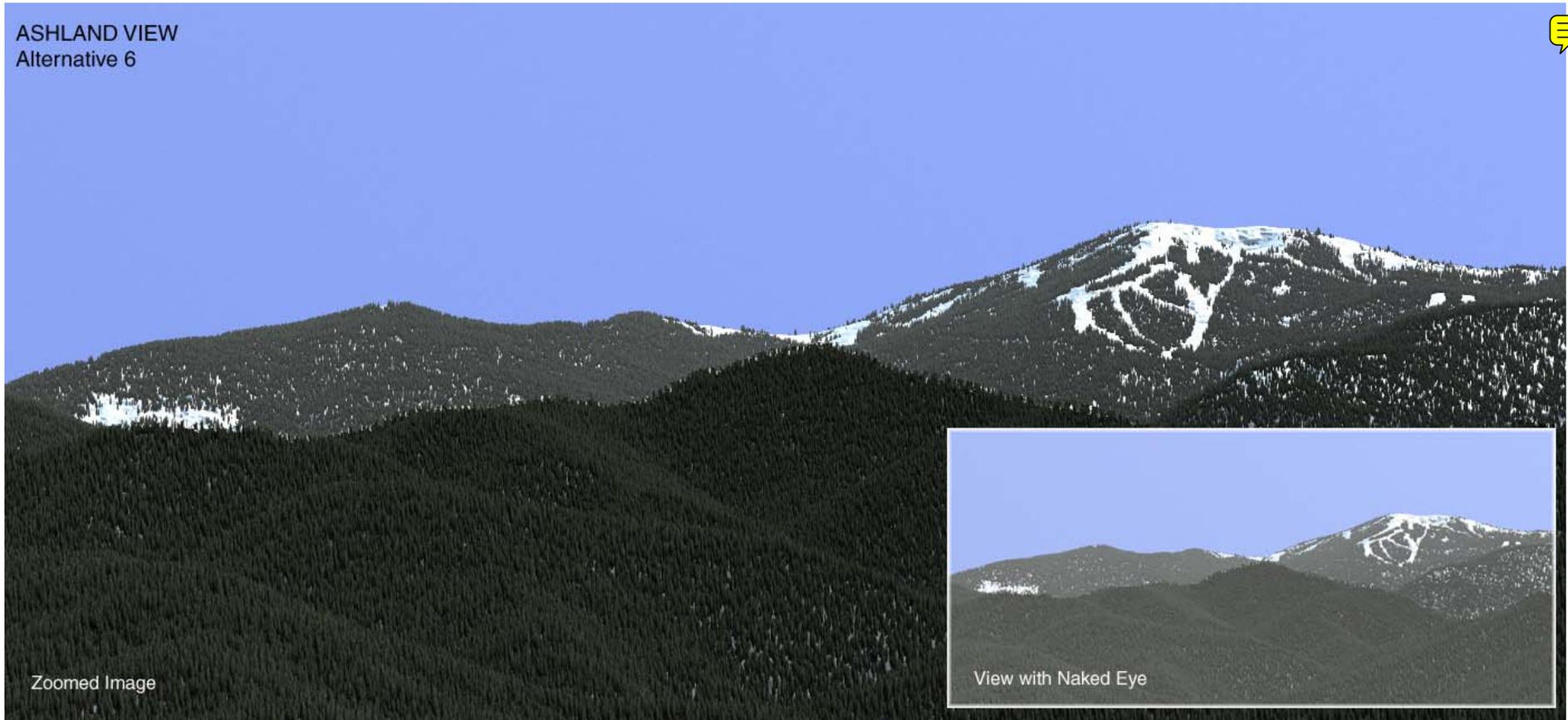
View with Naked Eye



**Alternative 5—Plan View**



ASHLAND VIEW  
Alternative 6



Zoomed Image



View with Naked Eye

DEAD INDIAN MEMORIAL ROAD:  
Alternative 6

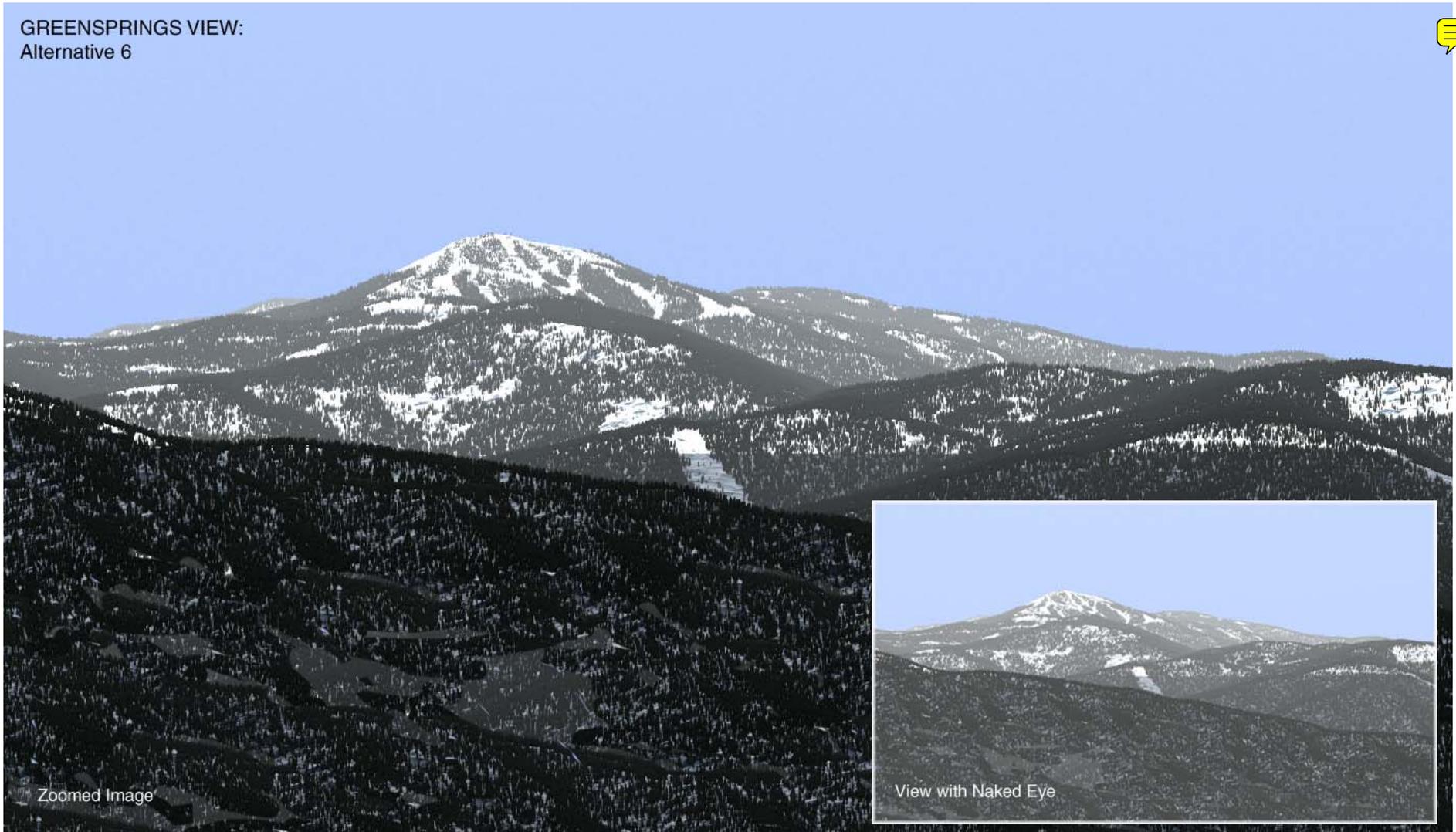


Zoomed Image



View with Naked Eye

GREENSPRINGS VIEW:  
Alternative 6



View with Naked Eye



MEDFORD VIEW:  
Alternative 6



Zoomed Image

**Alternative 6—Plan View**



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