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Scenery Resource Report

Westside Fire Recovery

Happy Camp/Oak Knoll and Salmon/Scott River Ranger Districts
Klamath National Forest
Siskiyou County, California

For Information Contact: Bob Talley, Northern California Resource Center
PO Box 342, Fort Jones, CA 96032
(530)468-2888
lalexander@sisqtel.net

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Methodology

This evaluation applies current National Forest Landscape Management methodology in conjunction with existing Forest Plan direction. It relies heavily on previous field studies of similar types of projects, as well as field observations from sensitive viewpoints, computer modeling to determine visibility of project activities, and consideration of public preferences for scenic quality. This evaluation relies on the following assumptions:

ASSUMPTION 1: Wildfires are a natural ecological process that commonly occurs on the Forest, and as such their effects to scenery are perceived as natural. Associated fire suppression activities (i.e. fire breaks) could be perceived as management activities.

ASSUMPTION 2: Project activities proposed in Modification and/or Maximum Modification Visual Quality Objective (VQO) areas would typically meet their assigned VQOs. Frequently activities in these VQO areas are not visible from any high or moderate sensitivity viewpoints, or if they are, at middle-ground or background distances.

ASSUMPTION 3: The North Fork Salmon River road (1C01) was used as a proxy for visibility from the North Fork Salmon River. State Highway 96 was used as a proxy for visibility from the Klamath River. The Scott River road (7F01) was used as a proxy for visibility from the Scott River. Differences in elevation, adjacent vegetation, topographic screening, slope position, and horizontal alignments were factors considered in determining visibility and effects from the river perspective.

ASSUMPTION 4: Because of a highly accelerated timeline to complete project analysis, winter weather conditions limiting access, and a multitude of potential viewpoints to consider for scenery effects, a computer model was used to determine visibility of project activities from sensitive viewpoints. The primary limitations of the model include no consideration for screening vegetation and elevation differences of up to five feet; therefore, the resultant analysis describes a “worst case” analysis in terms of what may be visible from viewpoints. The visibility determination has not been field verified.

ASSUMPTION 5: Sensitive viewpoints which are linear in nature, such as trails, roads, or rivers did not utilize the computer model. The visibility assessment was based on previous experience, on-the-ground knowledge, and map reviews. The visibility determination has not been field verified.

ASSUMPTION 6: Analysis was based upon professional judgment and experience of a landscape architect with 25 years of Forest scenery evaluation experience. Based on professional judgment, it is estimated that the project has an 85-90 percent probability of successfully meeting or exceeding Visual Quality Objectives as predicted. See the “Visual Resource Management” section in 2013 Forest Plan Monitoring Report for more information.

The general process for a scenery evaluation follows:

1. Determine high or moderate sensitivity viewpoints located within or adjacent to the project area from which the project may be visible.
2. Extensive/intensive office review of project descriptions and maps; assessing project activity locations (orientation, slope position, distance from viewer, etc.), logging systems, combined with on-the-ground knowledge of topography and vegetation.

3. Two team field reviews were conducted of the project area, focusing on representative examples of project activities.
4. Individual project activities were evaluated for their visibility from high or moderate sensitivity routes. Noticeable changes from project activities to existing landforms and vegetation are evaluated in terms of form, line, color, and texture contrasts. Utilizing professional expertise, the overall visual dominance and degree of noticeable contrast to the existing scenic character is then compared against the Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) which define levels of acceptable visual change. A judgement call of "meet," "not meet," or "exceed" the assigned VQO is then made.
5. To minimize scenery effects, project design features were developed; these are displayed in table 2-35 of chapter 2 of the draft EIS on the project website. Recreation and scenery project design features were designed to minimize or mitigate the effects of all action alternatives on recreation and scenery resources.
6. Cumulative effects to scenery were evaluated within a larger context than the individual project activities themselves, considering the potentially affected viewsheds as a whole.

Analysis Indicators

Analysis indicators used to determine the effects of alternatives on scenery include:

Scenic Character

The overall visual impression or image that gives a geographical area its identity. Scenic character is a qualitative description of the combination of vegetative patterns, landforms, water characteristics, and cultural features. The existing scenic character description provides a basis for comparing changes from alternatives and desired scenic character.

Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs)

Define levels of acceptable visual change, and are identified in the Forest Plan. The VQOs for the project area are defined below (table 2):

- Retention VQO - management activities are not visually evident to the casual Forest visitor.
- Partial Retention VQO – management activities may be noticeable, but are subordinate to the characteristic landscape.
- Modification VQO - management activities appear altered and dominate yet reflect nearby natural features.
- Maximum Modification VQO - management activities appear strongly altered and dominate but appear as natural occurrences when viewed at distances greater than 5 miles.

Spatial and Temporal Context

The spatial scale for analysis of effects to scenery includes the viewsheds from the Forest Plan-identified sensitive viewing locations. The temporal scale is defined as three years for short-term effects, at which time projects are required to meet their assigned VQOs (except Maximum Modification which is immediate). These timeframes are required by Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines. Long-term effects are defined as ten years or longer.

Affected Environment

Scenic Quality of or within National Forests is valued for the aesthetic enjoyment and physiological benefits it offers. “Viewing Natural Features” and “Viewing Wildlife” are the second and third respectively, most popular recreation activities of visitors to the Klamath National Forest (USDA 2012). Scenic quality within the project areas is important to the people who live and work in the area and to Forest visitors. Both of these groups travel through the areas, enjoying views from State, County, and Forest roads, and while recreating on National Forest lands, trails, rivers, or roads. The scenery of these areas contributes an important part to the Forest’s scenic resources.

Other recreational use in the project area consists of dispersed-type recreation such as hiking, equestrian, camping, hunting, and woodcutting (see the Recreation section of this chapter and the Recreation resource report). Scenery is an important component that affects recreation use, setting, and the recreation experience.

Viewsheds of the Project Areas

Table 1 displays a list of all the potential viewpoints located in/or near the three project areas that project activities could be visible from. A total of 60 potentially affected viewpoints were identified for the three project areas: Beaver Fire (9 viewpoints), Happy Camp Complex Fire (34 viewpoints), and Whites Fire (17 viewpoints). The scenery assessment of project activities uses these viewpoints. The distance zone listed identifies the closest project activity from the viewpoint.

Table 1: Identified potential viewsheds, Sensitivity Level, and Distance Zone by project area

Potential Viewpoint(s)	Visual Sensitivity Level	Distance Zone
Happy Camp Complex		
State Highway 96 (State of Jefferson Scenic Byway)	High	Foreground
Klamath Wild and Scenic River	High	Foreground
Klamath River community	High	Foreground
Hamburg	High	Foreground
Seiad	High	Foreground
Happy Camp	High	Foreground
O'Neil Creek Campground	High	Foreground
Sarah Totten Campground	High	Foreground
Curly Jack Campground	High	Foreground
Lake Mountain Lookout*	High	Foreground
Gordon's Ferry River Access	High	Foreground
Indian Creek River Access	High	Foreground
Scott River road (7F01)	High	Foreground
Scott Wild and Scenic River	High	Foreground
Johnson Bar River Access	High	Foreground
Scott Bar	High	Foreground
Sugar Pine Trail	High	Foreground
Townsend Gulch River Access	High	Foreground
Gold Flat River Access	High	Foreground

Potential Viewpoint(s)	Visual Sensitivity Level	Distance Zone
Tompkins River Access	High	Foreground
Tom Martin Peak Trail	Moderate	Foreground
Scott Bar Lookout*	Moderate	Middleground
Box Camp Trailhead	Moderate	Middleground
Paradise Trailhead	Moderate	Middleground
Grider Creek road (46N66, 46N24X)	High	Foreground
Grider Creek Campground	High	Foreground
Grider Creek (Wild andScenic River)	High	Foreground
Pacific Crest Trail	High	Middleground
Cold Springs Trailhead	High	Foreground
Tyler Meadows Trailhead	High	Foreground
Elk Creek road (7C001)	Moderate	Foreground
Elk Creek (Wild and Scenic River)	Moderate	Foreground
Bear Lake Trailhead road (16N05, 15N06)	Moderate	Foreground
Bear Lake Trailhead	High	Foreground
Beaver Fire		
State Highway 96 (State of Jefferson Scenic Byway)	High	Foreground
Klamath Wild and Scenic River	High	Foreground
Klamath River community	High	Foreground
Gottville River Access	High	Foreground
Brown Bear River Access	High	Foreground
Beaver Creek Road (8J01/11)	High	Foreground
Beaver Creek Campground	Moderate	Foreground
Pipeline Gap/Deer Camp Road* (40S01)	Moderate	Foreground
Buckhorn Bally Lookout*	Moderate	Foreground
Whites Fire		
North Fork Road (FH102)	Moderate	Foreground
Sawyers Bar	High	Foreground
South Russian Creek (recommended Wild and Scenic River)	Moderate	Foreground
Timber Camp Trailhead	Moderate	Foreground
Timber Camp Trailhead road (36N58, 36N15)	Moderate	Foreground
Pacific Crest Trail	Moderate	Middleground
Hogan Lake Trail	Moderate	Middleground
Statue Lake Trail	Moderate	Middleground
Twin/Big Blue/Paynes Lake Trail	Moderate	Middleground
Mule Bridge Road (41N36)	Moderate	Foreground
North Fork Salmon Wild and Scenic River	Moderate	Foreground
Music Creek Trailhead	Moderate	Foreground
South Russian Creek Trailhead	Moderate	Foreground
Idlewild Campground	Moderate	Foreground
Mule Bridge Trailhead	Moderate	Foreground
Eddy Gulch Lookout*	Moderate	Middleground

Potential Viewpoint(s)	Visual Sensitivity Level	Distance Zone
Eddy Gulch Lookout road (39)	Moderate	Foreground
Whites Gulch Trail*	Moderate	Foreground
South Russian Creek Trail*	Moderate	Foreground

High = high level of interest in scenery;

Moderate = secondary County or Forest road, recreation site or area, moderate use

* = Viewpoints identified as a sensitive viewpoint post-Forest Plan and as such were not utilized in the development of Forest Plan VQOs. Post-Forest Plan viewpoints are not required to meet S and G 11-1, but should be considered during project planning.

SOURCE: USDA, Forest Service, Klamath National Forest. 2009. Scenery Sensitivity Levels Map, Klamath National Forest – Westside, which is filed at the Klamath National Forest Headquarters, Yreka, CA.

Existing Scenic Character

Scenic Character is the overall visual impression or image that gives a geographical area its identity. The overall scenic character consists of steep, rugged mountainous terrain which is bisected by major rivers and tributary creeks. These creeks are flanked by mid-elevation, steep terrain with numerous side drainages. The mountains are overlain with largely continuous, mixed conifer forest canopies. There are breaks in the forest canopy from previous wildfires, rock outcrops, meadows, roads, and older harvest activities are evident. In the background, more open higher elevation ridges and peaks provide a visual backdrop.

Vegetation is diverse in both pattern and species, with the Douglas-fir/white fir mixed conifer forest being most dominant. Conifer species include ponderosa pine, sugar pine, incense cedar, and white fir. Also, common is the Douglas-fir/tanoak community where Douglas-fir dominates the overstory with hardwoods found in the understory such as canyon live oak, black oak, white oak, pacific madrone, and big leaf maple. The hardwoods are slowly being overtopped by the conifers and declining in numbers. Some forested areas are extremely dense, where wildfires have been artificially suppressed for at least 50 years. This density of vegetation not only obstructs in-canopy views to the forest floor, but provides ladder fuels thereby increasing the risk of extreme wildfire events. Streams display extremely high water clarity. Air quality is high, with coastal moisture occasionally adding clouds and haze to the typical clear views under blue skies.

The scenic character of the project areas was substantially affected by the 2014 fire season, as described in chapter 1 of the draft EIS on the project website. The fires burned with high severity in many areas, creating standing dead trees, blackened tree boles and brush skeletons, bare soil, and dying trees with brown needles. The fire opened up views into the forest, exposing hillsides, bare soil, and rock outcrops. In many places the once green forest now looks like blackened toothpicks, while ocassionally some green trees survived the fire.

Existing Scenic Integrity

Scenic integrity is the relative degree of natural appearance displayed by a landscape. In the three project areas, current scenic integrity as viewed from inventoried sensitive viewpoints is as follows: 1) Some limited evidence of existing roads, fire breaks, plantations, and past and on-going logging units. 2) Vegetation and/or topography screen most of these management activities except when in the immediate vicinity of the activity or from distant viewpoints. Cumulatively, across the project areas as a whole, the alterations are minor, and generally a near-natural appearance dominates. Therefore the project areas have Moderate Scenic Integrity and meet a Partial Retention VQO as defined in the Forest Plan.

Desired Scenic Character

The ideal, socially valued Scenic Character of the Westside project area would display a more attractive, forested condition. These conditions would include increased vegetative and spatial variety throughout a largely continuous but more open and irregular forest canopy, with more frequent small, irregular openings and edges. There would be a widepread presence of large trees as individuals and clumps, features such as outcrops, rocks and barrens, meadows, irregular patches of native shrubs, forbs and grasses in openings and forest floor understories, scattered standing snags, scattered irregular fire-killed canopy openings containing clumps of standing dead trees over a green surface of conifer seedlings. This more open forest canopy would support attractive views through the forest canopy as well as to more distant mountainous landscapes.

Management Direction

Management direction for Scenery comes from the Forest Plan primarily under Standards and Guidelines for the Visual Resource Management Program and Retention and Partial Retention VQO Management Areas 11 and 15 respectively. However a VQO is identified in the Forest Plan for *all* National Forest lands; hence each Management Area lists the appropriate VQO in a Standard and Guideline under the "Visual Resource Management" subheading. Table 2 displays VQOs of Management Areas in which activities are proposed in this project.

For the Klamath Wild and Scenic Designated Recreational River (Management Area 13), a Retention VQO supersedes the Partial Retention VQO because Highway 96 is an eligible State Scenic Highway.

For General Forest lands (Management Area 17), a Modification or Maximum Modification VQO is utilized. The location of these VQOs was determined using criteria from the Visual Resource Management System. A majority of General Forest lands have a Modification VQO.

Table 2: Desired Visual Quality Objective (VQO) by Management Area (per Forest Plan)

		Visual Quality Objective (VQO)*				
Forest Plan Management Area		Preservation	Retention	Partial Retention	Modification	Maximum Modification
Ma-5	Special Habitat			X		
Ma-7	Special Interest Area		X[1]			
Ma-10	Riparian Reserves			X		
Ma-11	Retention Visual Quality Objective		X			
Ma-12	Designated And Recommended Scenic Rivers		X			
Ma-13	Designated And Recommended Recreational Rivers		X[2]	X		
Ma-15	Partial Retention Visual Quality Objective			X		
Ma-17	General Forest				X	X

* VQO(s) are specifically identified by a Standard and Guideline for each Management Area.

1 Per Forest Plan "Manage these areas to meet the intent of the Forest VQO map. As a minimum, manage the lands within the areas to meet a Retention VQO."

2 Retention VQO designated elsewhere in Forest Plan for State Scenic Highways may supersede Partial Retention VQO.

A complete description of alternatives can be found in chapter 2 of the draft EIS on the project website.

Environmental Consequences

Alternative 1

Direct Effects and Indirect Effects

Alternative 1 would result in direct short- and long-term adverse effects to scenic character. In the short term, evidence of the fire with standing dead trees, blackened tree boles and brush, bare soil, and dying trees with brown needles or leaves would continue to be quite noticeable. Along many viewpoints, most screening vegetation has lost all needles or leaves, opening up views into the forest of bare soils, streams, and rock outcrops. Trees with burnt roots would start falling down. In two to three years, some brushes and grasses would return to the burn areas providing some green color, texture, and ground cover.

Decay and wind disturbance would lead to the smaller diameter, fire-killed trees falling down within the first ten years, with the majority of all trees falling down within the next 20 years (Russell et al. 2006). Standing trees would provide visual clues of the past fires for decades. As dead trees fall, the scenic character of areas once-forested would change becoming much more open. Extremely high fuel loads would develop creating a landscape that is susceptible to a high intensity, high severity fire. In many areas these conditions would likely create a long term vegetation change away from a conifer-dominated vegetation type towards a shrub-dominated ecosystem.

Without both harvest and replanting treatments within the project areas, current conditions would likely result in increased growth of brush. The competing brush, combined with a limited seed source would inhibit the natural regeneration of conifer species that dominated the landscape prior to the fires. The desired scenic character of a forested canopy with large tree character, as well as increased species diversity would be adversely affected. Without management treatments, achievement of the desired condition for scenery would be set back 50 plus years or more.

Visual Quality Objectives establish acceptable levels of alteration for management activities. For alternative 1, there would be no effects to the Visual Quality Objectives because no project activities will be implemented.

Cumulative Effects

Several other private land parcels within the project area have been or are proposed for salvage logging. Removal of all dead trees would create texture contrasts with adjacent forested lands. If trees are removed up to and along straight property boundaries, these line contrasts would likely be noticeable from some sensitive viewpoints.

Other ongoing and future foreseeable actions on the Forest include projects with vegetation treatments such as commercial thinning, pre-commercial thinning, and mastication. Most projects also include a fuels treatment component such as underburning, thinning of small diameter understory trees or brush, piling, and pile burning. All of these projects would affect scenery, creating both short- and long-term beneficial effects to scenic character. Densely forested areas would be opened up (thinned); this more open forest canopy would support attractive views through the forest canopy as well as to more distant mountainous landscapes. Fuels treatments would increase the resiliency of the areas to high intensity wildfires and help to perpetuate ecologically established scenery. These projects would create noticeable visual contrasts in the short term and likely be visible from some sensitive viewpoints. In two-three years after project

completion, "greening up" these activities would appear near-natural. Adding the effects of these projects to the effects of alternative 1 on scenic character would have minor cumulative effects.

Alternatives 2, 3, 4 and 5

Because of minor differences between alternatives, the analysis description for all four alternatives has been combined into one section. The four action alternatives propose hazardous fuels treatments, salvage harvest, roadside hazard treatments, and reforestation (site preparation, planting, and release). Table 3 displays the acreage of treatment types within each action alternative by type of VQO.

Table 3: Acres of Treatment Types by Alternative by Visual Quality Objectives for the project area

Treatment Type	Retention	Partial Retention	Modification	Maximum Modification
Alternative 2				
Fuels Treatments	2,264	18,162	775	231
Salvage Harvest Units (<60% of the unit is salvage logged)	1,646	9,100	697	689
Roadside Hazard	1,695	15,941	1,610	1,118
Site Prep/Plant	197	6,335	841	484
Total	**5,801**	**49,539**	**3,923**	**2,522**
Alternative 3				
Fuels Treatments	2,264	18,162	775	231
Salvage Harvest Units (<60% of the unit is salvage logged)	1,611	8,040	529	176
Roadside Hazard	1,695	15,941	1,610	1,118
Site Prep/Plant	197	6,335	841	484
Total	**5,767**	**48,479**	**3,755**	**2,009**
Alternative 4				
Fuels Treatments	2,264	18,162	775	231
Salvage Harvest Units (<60% of the unit is salvage logged)	872	8,464	664	629
Roadside Hazard	1,663	15,199	1,472	1,116
Site Prep/Plant	197	6,335	841	484
Total	**4,996**	**48,180**	**3,752**	**2,460**
Alternative 5				
Fuels Treatments	2,269	18,599	1,230	525
Salvage Harvest Units (<60% of the unit is salvage logged)	236	1,957	677	659
Roadside Hazard	1,695	15,941	1,610	1,118
Site Prep/Plant	30	2,540	801	484
Total	**4,230**	**39,038**	**4,318**	**2,785**

Direct Effects and Indirect Effects

Below is a generalized description of the various project activities and associated effects to scenic character. A discussion of effects to VQOs then follows:

Visibility Analysis

A computer viewshed analysis was used to determine the visibility of project activities. The primary limitations of the model include no consideration for screening vegetation and elevation differences of up to five feet; therefore, the resultant analysis describes a "worst case" analysis in terms of what may be visible from viewpoints. The visibility determination has not been field verified. Sensitive viewpoints were analyzed to determine if any project activity would be visible, and then if so which specific treatment(s). The analysis indicated most viewpoints would have visibility of two project treatments or more; three viewpoints would not have visibility of any activities. Results are displayed in table 4 for fire-related project areas.

Table 4: Visibility of Project Treatments From Sensitive Viewpoints for Three Project Areas.

Potential Viewpoint(s)	Visual Sensitivity Level	Project Area	Fuels Treatments	Salvage Harvest	Roadside Hazard Treatments	Site Prepatation and Planting
		Is the project area or activity potentially visible from the scenic viewpoint[1]?				
Beaver Fire						
State Highway 96 (State of Jefferson Scenic Byway)	High	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Klamath Wild and Scenic River	High	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Klamath River community	High	Y	Y	N	N	N
Gottville River Access	High	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Brown Bear River Access	High	N	N	N	N	N
Beaver Creek Road (8J01/11)	Moderate	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Beaver Creek Campground	Moderate	Y	Y	N	N	Y
Pipeline Gap/Deer Camp Road* (40S01)	Moderate	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Buckhorn Bally Lookout*	Moderate	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Happy Camp Complex						
State Highway 96 (State of Jefferson Scenic Byway)	High	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Klamath Wild and Scenic River	High	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Hamburg	High	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Seiad	High	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Happy Camp	High	Y	Y	N	Y	Y

[1] Based upon computer modeling; not field verified.

Potential Viewpoint(s)	Visual Sensitivity Level	Project Area	Fuels Treatments	Salvage Harvest	Roadside Hazard Treatments	Site Prepatation and Planting
		Is the project area or activity potentially visible from the scenic viewpoint[1]?				
O'Neil Creek Campground	High	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Sara Totten Campground	High	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Curly Jack Campground	High	Y	Y	N	N	N
Lake Mountain Lookout*	High	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Gordon's Ferry River Access	High	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Indian Creek River Access	High	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Scott River road (7F01)	High	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Scott Wild and Scenic River	High	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Johnson Bar River Access	High	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Scott Bar	High	Y	Y	N	N	N
Sugar Pine Trail	High	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Townsend Gulch River Access	High	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Gold Flat River Access	High	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Tompkins River Access	High	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Tom Martin Peak Trail	Moderate	Y	N	Y	N	N
Scott Bar Lookout*	Moderate	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Box Camp Trailhead	Moderate	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Grider Creek road (46N66, 46N24X)	High	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Grider Creek Campground	High	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Grider Creek (Wild andScenic River)	High	Y	N	Y	N	N
Pacific Crest Trail	High	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Cold Springs Trailhead	High	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Tyler Meadows Trailhead	High	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Elk Creek road (7C001)	Moderate	Y	Y	N	N	N
Elk Creek (Wild and Scenic River)	Moderate	Y	Y	N	N	N

Potential Viewpoint(s)	Visual Sensitivity Level	Project Area	Fuels Treatments	Salvage Harvest	Roadside Hazard Treatments	Site Prepatation and Planting
		Is the project area or activity potentially visible from the scenic viewpoint[1]?				
Bear Lake Trailhead road (16N05, 15N06)	Moderate	Y	N	N	Y	N
Bear Lake Trailhead	High	Y	N	N	Y	N
Whites Fire						
North Fork Road (FH102)	Moderate	Y	Y			
Sawyers Bar	High	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
South Russian Creek (recommended Wild and Scenic River)	Moderate	N	N	N	N	N
Timber Camp Trailhead	Moderate	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Timber Camp Trailhead road (39N58, 39N15)	Moderate	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Pacific Crest Trail	Moderate	Y	Y	N	N	N
Hogan Lake Trail	Moderate	N	N	N	N	N
Statue Lake Trail	Moderate	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Twin/Big Blue/Paynes Lake Trail	Moderate	Y	N	N	N	N
Mule Bridge Road (41N37)	Moderate	Y	Y	N	Y	N
North Fork Salmon Wild and Scenic River	Moderate	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Music Creek Trailhead	Moderate	Y	N	N	N	Y
South Russian Creek Trailhead	Moderate	Y	N	N	Y	Y
Idlewild Campground	Moderate	Y	Y	N	N	N
Mule Bridge Trailhead	Moderate	Y	Y	N	N	N
Eddy Gulch Lookout*	Moderate	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Eddy Gulch Lookout road (39)	Moderate	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Whites Gulch Trail*	Moderate	Y	Y	N	N	N
South Russian Creek Trail*	Moderate	N	N	N	N	N

Salvage Harvest

The removal of dead and dying trees would create large openings with line and texture contrasts with adjacent burned or forested areas. Individual larger snags and clumps with no treatment would be retained for wildlife resources. These would provide some texture to the units when viewed from sensitive viewpoints. Logging systems can further influence the noticeable visual contrasts by the disturbances they create. Helicopter creates the least visual contrasts; skyline creates linear contrasts from log skidding and cable corridors; and ground-based creates more color contrasts from soil disturbance by equipment and log skidding.

Roadside Hazard Treatments

The removal of both merchantable and non-merchantable hazard trees along system roads and through treatment units, would "open up" travel corridors in those areas where a higher number of trees are removed. In other areas where only individual or isolated trees are removed, there would be little change or effect to overall scenic character. Ground disturbance, tree stumps, and trees felled and left would be noticeable in the short term. A recovery time of three years would allow seasonal leaf and needle cast, weathering (graying) of tree stumps and chips, and resprouting of vegetation or "greening up" to soften these effects.

Hazardous Fuels Treatments

These treatments would occur along strategic ridgelines, roads, or control lines. Trees would be removed (12 inches in diameter at breast height or less) and other understory vegetation by mechanical, machine, or hand work. Slash would be piled and burned, lop and scattered, or chipped. Remaining trees would be pruned up to seven feet. The short-term visual impacts from felling and piling dead trees and then burning would create color and texture soil contrasts. Removing understory vegetation and tree pruning would open views into the forest and of the forest floor. Fuels breaks along visible ridgelines would create longer-term linear contrasts. A recovery time of three years would allow seasonal leaf and needle cast, weathering (graying) of tree stumps and chips, and resprouting of vegetation or "greening up" to soften these effects.

Prescribed Fire

The short term visual impacts from underburning would create brown vegetation, red tree crowns, blackened duff layer, and scorched trunks. Scraping control lines to mineral soil would create linear disturbances. Recovery times of three years would allow revegetation or "greening up" of many of the burn effects. At that point, any residual effects from the underburn would appear as a natural occurrence, consistent with the many wildfires that have occurred throughout the Forest. Underburning would create long term positive effects such as the creation of more open stands where forest visitors can look into stands, larger trees and wildlife can be observed by travelers, greater species diversity, and increased resiliency of the stand to wildfire. This activity would easily meet all assigned VQOs and help meet (Standard and Guideline 11-4) to perpetuate the Forest's ecologically established land

Site Preparation, Planting and Release (Reforestation)

Planting in areas previously stocked (pre-fire) with conifers, combined with rocky or unplantable sites, and tree survival rates, would provide spatial variability across the project areas. This would speed up recovery of burned areas to a mostly forested condition with some openings and appear natural in the long term. This would be consistent with the Desired Scenic Character to a forested condition.

Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs)

A "worst case scenario" has been utilized to make the "meet" or "not meet" Forest VQOs determination. This strategy was employed because results have not been field verified, nor have site specific project design features been developed to possibly reduce visual disturbances to acceptable levels. The "meet" or "not meet" determination by project treatment is based on previous Forest projects of a similar nature.

Table 5: Preliminary Results of Meeting or Not Meeting VQO by Alternative by Treatment Type.

All Alternatives and Treatment Type	Does Treatment Type Meet VQO? (Yes or No)			
	Retention	Partial Retention	Modification	Maximum Modification
Fuels Treatments	Y	Y	Y	Y
Salvage Harvest	N*[2]	Y/N*	Y	Y
Roadside Hazard	N*	Y/N*	Y	Y
Prepare Site and Plant	Y	Y	Y	Y

Minor localized short-term direct adverse effects to VQOs from management treatments would occur during project implementation with the presence of equipment, smoke, stumps, exposed soils, and cut and/or piled vegetation.

Retention VQO areas

Salvage harvest and roadside hazard treatments in Retention VQO areas would likely not meet the Retention VQO – where management activities are not visually evident to the casual Forest visitor. However an exception is allowed under Forest Plan Standards and Guideline 11-7 which states "In the case of recovery activities after extreme catastrophic events such as intense wildland fires, time periods to achieve the VQOs stated in Forest-wide and Management Area Standards and Guidelines may be extended. This would be necessary where previously unnoticed scenery alterations are exposed to view due to loss of vegetative screening, or during timber salvage activities where recovery of forest vegetation is determined to be of greater importance than achievement of VQOs within the time periods established."

The presence of high stumps and tree marking paint (if used) would be noticeable for five to 10 years even after "greening up." This includes salvage units located in the foreground distance zone of Highway 96, Klamath Wild and Scenic River, Tyler Meadows Trailhead, Cold Springs Trailhead, Grider Creek (recommended Wild and Scenic River), Grider Creek Campground, Grider Creek road (46N66, 46N24X), and the Pacific Crest Trail (between Cold Springs Trailhead and Highway 96).

[2] *= Not meeting a VQO in the three year timeframe is inconsistent with Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines numbers MA12-7 and MA13-6. However, an exception is allowed under Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines number 11-7 which states "In the case of recovery activities after extreme catastrophic events such as intense wildland fires, time periods to achieve the VQOs stated in Forest-wide and Management Area Standards and Guidelines may be extended. This would be necessary where previously unnoticed scenery alterations are exposed to view due to loss of vegetative screening, or during timber salvage activities where recovery of forest vegetation is determined to be of greater importance than achievement of VQOs within the time periods established."

Partial Retention VQO areas

Salvage harvest and roadside hazard treatments in the foreground distance zone along hiking trails would likely not meet the Partial Retention VQO in three years – where management activities may be noticeable, but are subordinate to the characteristic landscape. The presence of high stumps and tree marking paint (if used) would be noticeable to hikers for 10 years or more. This includes units bisected by both the Tom Martin Peak and Bear Lake trails.

Although this appears inconsistent with Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines numbers MA15-1, MA15-5, and MA15-10, an exception is allowed under Forest Plan Standards and Guideline 11-7 which states ”In the case of recovery activities after extreme catastrophic events such as intense wildland fires, time periods to achieve the VQOs stated in Forest-wide and Management Area Standards and Guidelines may be extended. This would be necessary where previously unnoticed scenery alterations are exposed to view due to loss of vegetative screening, or during timber salvage activities where recovery of forest vegetation is determined to be of greater importance than achievement of VQOs within the time periods established.”

All other project activities (including salvage units not located in foreground distance zones along hiking trails) would likely meet their assigned VQO of Partial Retention in three years. A recovery time of three years would allow seasonal leaf and needle cast, weathering (graying) of tree stumps and chips, and resprouting of vegetation or “greening up” to soften these effects. Thus project activities would appear near-natural to Forest visitors.

Thus in the long-term these project activities (salvage harvest and roadside hazard treatments in the foreground distance zone along hiking trails) and all other project activities would appear near-natural to Forest visitors and meet a Partial Retention VQO. Forest Plan direction would be met.

Modification and Maximum Modification VQO areas

All activities would meet their assigned VQOs within Forest Plan timelines. These activities are located either in middleground or background distance zones from sensitive viewpoints or not visible.

However cumulative scenic quality effects are evaluated in a larger context than the individual project activities themselves - the potentially affected viewsheds as a whole. The scenery analysis area includes the multitude of viewsheds throughout the project areas. When viewed from multiple viewpoints, proposed management activities in all viewsheds would be appear visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape. All viewsheds would be natural or near-natural appearing and meet or exceed a Partial RetentionVQO.

Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects of action alternatives are the same as for alternative 1.

Comparison of Effects

Scenery effects are displayed by alternative in table 6.

Table 6: Scenery Comparison of Effects of Alternatives

Indicator	Alternative 1 (No Action)	Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5
Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs)	No effect to VQOs	Minor localized short-term direct adverse effects to VQOs from management treatments during project implementation with the presence of equipment, smoke, stumps, exposed soils, and cut and/or piled vegetation. "Greening up" for three years after project completion would reduce visual evidence of fuels, roadside hazard, and site prep/plant activities to acceptable levels. Although VQOs would not be met for salvage harvest and roadside hazard treatments in Retention or Partial Retention (foreground zone along hiking trails) VQO areas, Forest Plan consistency will be met (Forest Plan SandG 11-7)
Scenic Character	Long term adverse effect with permanent vegetation change away from a conifer-dominated vegetation type towards a shrub-dominated ecosystem. Achievement of the desired condition would be set back 50 plus years or more.	Indirect long-term beneficial effect to scenic character from management treatments would be speeding up recovery of the burn areas to a conifer-dominated character that is more consistent with historic scenery conditions and Desired Scenic Character.

Compliance with law, regulation, policy, and the Forest Plan

This project would help achieve the Forest Plan desired conditions to perpetuate ecologically established scenery. Reforestation would speed up recovery to a forested condition and fuels reduction treatments would reduce the likelihood of high intensity wildfires. The project would meet Forest Plan Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) in the long term.

In the short term, noticeable visual disturbances from salvage harvest and roadside hazard treatments in Retention VQO areas and some Partial Retention VQO areas would likely not meet their assigned Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs). Although this appears inconsistent with some Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines, an exception is allowed under Forest Plan Standards and Guideline 11-7 which states "In the case of recovery activities after extreme catastrophic events such as intense wildland fires, time periods to achieve the VQOs stated in Forest-wide and Management Area Standards and Guidelines may be extended. This would be necessary where previously unnoticed scenery alterations are exposed to view due to loss of vegetative screening, or during timber salvage activities where recovery of forest vegetation is determined to be of greater importance than achievement of VQOs within the time periods established." These disturbances would "green up" over time (10 years) and meet the Retention or Partial Retention VQO. Integration of scenery project design features insures this project is consistent with Forest Plan scenery desired conditions and direction.

Literature Cited

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