
Jocko Lakes Fire Salvage

Visual Resource (Scenery) Report

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for:
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Abstract

This analysis describes the existing condition of the scenic resources within the project area and discloses the potential effects of the alternatives on scenic resources for consideration in determining whether or not to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. Evaluations made in this analysis are based on the amount of changes potentially seen on the landscape from a given viewshed and identified sensitive viewpoints and the level of acceptable change for the project area. The following travel routes and use areas were identified as sensitive viewpoints for this project: Placid Creek Road, Hidden Lake dispersed recreation site, Double Arrow Lookout, Placid Lake recreation sites, Big Larch Campground, Seeley Lake, and Seeley Lake Ranger District.

The majority of effects to scenery resources are short term in duration with long term benefits to scenic quality. Short-term visual effects of salvage harvesting are often most noticeable in foreground views until the growth of new grasses, shrubs, and planted trees begin to soften the effects of salvage operations.

No significant issues were identified for the visual resource in the Jocko Lakes Fire Salvage Project. With all the visual project design features implemented, the activities in the modified proposed action would meet the partial retention and modification/maximum modification VQOs. It is anticipated that the proposed activities will meet the assigned VQOs about one growing season after all project activities are complete.

Alternative 3 would be consistent with Forest Plan standards and guidelines for visuals. No direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to scenery resources are expected in the long term from harvest activities. There are no irreversible or irretrievable commitments related to scenery resources from the modified proposed action.

Introduction

Scenery, just as any other resource, must be cared for and managed for future generations. Visual resources vary by location and existing natural features including vegetation, water features, landform and geology, and human-made elements. All activities experienced by forest visitors occur in a scenic environment which is defined by the arrangement of the natural character of the landscape along with components of the built environment.

This analysis describes the existing condition of the scenic resources within the project area and discloses the potential effects of the alternatives on scenic resources for consideration in determining whether or not to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

Regulatory Framework

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) states that it is the “continuing responsibility of the Federal Government to use all practicable means to assure for all Americans, aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.” NEPA also requires “A systematic and interdisciplinary approach which will insure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts into planning and decision-making which may have an impact on man’s environment.” To accomplish this, numerous federal laws require all Federal land management agencies to consider scenery and aesthetic resources in land management planning, resource planning, project design, implementation, and monitoring.

Several USDA handbooks have been developed to establish a framework for management of visual resources including but not limited to: National Forest Landscape Management Volume 2, Chapter 1 the Visual Management System; Agriculture Handbook 462 (USDA Forest Service 1974) and Landscape Aesthetics, A Handbook for Scenery Management; Agriculture Handbook 701 (USDA Forest Service 1995).

The Lolo National Forest Plan has recognized the importance of visual quality and scenery by providing management direction for visuals in the Lolo National Forest Plan. The Forest Plan direction listed below pertains to the project area.

Forest Plan Direction

Goals for Visual Resources

Provide a pleasing and healthy environment, including clear air, clean water, and diverse ecosystems.

Objectives

Resource/Activity Summaries

At the present time, approximately 80 percent of the Forest has a relatively natural appearance. Resource management activities are significantly constrained by visual quality objectives in areas adjacent to or readily visible from major highways, roads, trails, campgrounds, and other recreational developments. Other parts of the Forest where visual quality objectives constrain resource management activities are identified; the Forest Plan continues management that insures those natural-appearing landscapes.

Management Area Direction

Management Area 13 – (Lakes, second order streams and adjoining lands)

Visual Quality Practices:

Management activities will be designed to meet the inventoried visual quality objective as seen from viewpoints contained on the Sensitivity Level maps. Both Sensitivity Level maps and Inventory maps are on file. Exceptions may be made when an interdisciplinary team identifies the need to protect other resource values and the resulting VQO is no more than one level below the inventoried visual quality objective.

Although this management area is located within the project area, no salvage harvest activities are proposed within this management area. Some road storage or decommissioning activity may occur in MA 13. Sensitivity Level maps were reviewed and VQOs for the project area are shown on the Jocko Lakes Fire Salvage Project Visual Quality Objectives Map (Figure 7).

Management Area 16 – (suitable for timber management)

Standards

Management practices will follow guidelines for the Modification or Maximum Modification visual quality objective. Modification will normally be assigned to foreground and middleground visible from Sensitivity Level 2 viewpoints. Background and areas not seen from these viewpoints will be assigned Maximum Modification. Maps of these viewpoints, guidelines, and distance zones are on file and must be consulted to determine the visual quality objective.

Management Area 17 – (steep lands similar to MA 16)

Standards for Visual Quality Practices:

Management practices will follow guidelines for the Modification or Maximum Modification visual quality objective, except where visible from viewpoints specifically recognized as sensitive in the Forest Plan. Modification will normally be assigned to foreground and middleground visible from Sensitivity Level 2 viewpoints. Background and areas not seen from these viewpoints will be assigned a visual quality objective of Maximum Modification. Sensitivity Level maps, guidelines, and distance zones are on file and must be consulted to determine the visual quality objective.

Management Area 23 – (timbered lands with medium visual sensitivity)

Direction

Management Area 23 consists of timbered lands located primarily at elevations below 5,000 feet on south-facing slopes, and with medium visual sensitivity. These lands are important winter ranges for deer, elk, and bighorn sheep, and generally include habitat groups 2, 3, and 4. The lands are adjacent to or visible from major roads and trails, communities, and other high use areas.

Goals

Achieve the visual quality objective of Partial Retention.

Standards for Visual Quality Practices:

The area will be managed to meet the visual quality objective of Partial Retention from the viewpoints specifically recognized as sensitive. Maps of these viewpoints are on file in the Supervisor's Office and on the Ranger Districts and will be consulted to visually assess the impacts of management activities. Temporary departures from this visual quality objective may be acceptable under the following

conditions: a) long-term visual values require such an action; or b) essential road access into other management areas is impossible without this temporary departure.

Management Area 25 – (lands with a medium degree of visual sensitivity)

Direction

Management Area 25 consists of lands with a medium degree of visual sensitivity and which are available for varying degrees of timber management. These lands have a range of physical environments as determined by soil, slope, aspect, elevation, physiographic site, and climatic factors. Habitat Groups 1 through 5 with sensitive to nonsensitive soils are represented in these lands which are located along major roads, trails, communities, other high use areas, and a small number of less sensitive viewpoints.

Goals

Achieve the visual quality objective of Partial Retention.

Standards for Visual Quality Practices:

Management practices for all resources will follow guidelines for the Partial Retention visual quality objective from the viewpoints identified visually sensitive. Maps of these viewpoints are on file in the Supervisor's Office and on the Ranger Districts and will be consulted to visually assess the impacts of management activities. Temporary departures from this visual quality objective may be acceptable under the following conditions: a) long term visual values require such an action; or b) essential road access into other management areas is impossible without this temporary departure.

Methodology for Analysis

In 1986, when the Lolo National Forest Plan was adopted, the visual resource was inventoried and analyzed using the visual management system as outlined in Forest Service Handbook 462 (USDA Forest Service 1974). This system, which was released in 1974, established standards of measurement (i.e. visual quality objectives) for assessing proposed and existing impact to the scenic quality.

In 1995, after 20 years of experience with the visual management system and after additional research in the public and private sectors, the Forest Service revised the visual management system and replaced it with the scenery management system. This revised system is described in Agricultural Handbook 701, Landscape Aesthetics: A Handbook for Scenery Management (USDA Forest Service 1995). The scenery management system was used in combination with the visual management system in this analysis because the scenery management system will not fully replace the visual management system on the Lolo National Forest until the Lolo Forest Plan is revised.

ArcMap geographic information system (GIS) was used to analyze the proposed activities in regards to recreation use, sensitive travel corridor locations, potential viewsheds from sensitive travel corridors and viewpoints, and visual quality objectives assigned to the area. The potential impacts to scenic resources from this project were determined based on site visits to the project area and sensitive viewpoints, review of photos of the project area, use and interpretation of GIS data and review of research and analysis of similar projects. Evaluations made in this analysis are based on the amount of change potentially seen on the landscape from a given viewshed and identified viewpoints and the level of acceptable change for the project area. The Lolo National Forest Plan direction for visual resources was reviewed to determine the level of acceptable change for this project area.

This analysis will use visual quality objectives (VQOs) to determine if the alternatives meet Forest Plan standards and guidelines by comparing the degree of alterations to the existing landscape. The Scenery

Management System, as outlined in *Landscape Aesthetics, A Handbook for Scenery Management*, is today's best science to achieve high-quality scenery as an outcome of National Forest ecosystem management practices. The Lolo National Forest has completed Scenery Management System inventories to prepare for forest plan revision. During the forest plan revision process, scenic integrity objectives will be developed. Scenic integrity objectives (SIOs) describe the level of acceptable alteration of the natural landscape and its valued scenic attributes. Scenic integrity objective definitions are also provided to understand the subtle differences between visual quality objectives and scenic integrity objectives. Visual quality objectives are established in the Lolo National Forest Plan. The visual quality objectives found in the project area include:

Partial Retention VQO – Human activities may be evident, but must remain subordinate to the characteristic landscape (USDA Forest Service 1986). Activities may also introduce form, line, color, or texture which are found infrequently or not at all in the characteristic landscape, but they should remain subordinate to the visual strength of the characteristic landscape (USDA Forest Service 1974).

Moderate SIO – The valued landscape character appears slightly altered. Noticeable deviations must remain visually subordinate to the landscape character being viewed (USDA Forest Service 1995).

Modification VQO – Human activity may dominate the characteristic landscape but must, at the same time, utilize naturally established form, line, color, and texture. It should appear as a natural occurrence when viewed in middle-ground or background.

Low SIO – The valued landscape character appears moderately altered. Deviations begin to dominate the valued landscape character being viewed but they borrow valued attributes such as size, shape, edge effect and pattern of natural openings, vegetative type changes or architectural styles outside the landscape being viewed. They should not only appear as valued character outside the landscape being viewed but compatible or complimentary to the character within.

Maximum Modification VQO – Human activity may dominate the characteristic landscape but should appear as a natural occurrence when viewed as background (USDA Forest Service 1986).

Very Low SIO – The valued landscape character appears heavily altered. Deviations may strongly dominate the valued landscape character. They may not borrow from valued attributes such as size, shape, edge effect and pattern of natural openings within or outside of the landscape being viewed. However deviations must be shaped and blended with natural terrains so that elements such as unnatural edges, roads, landings, and structures do not dominate the composition (USDA Forest Service 1995).

The effects analysis will consider how each alternative meets these visual quality objectives from the identified sensitive travel routes and viewpoints.

Project Description

The Lolo National Forest is proposing to salvage timber within the area burned by the Jocko Lakes Fire of 2007 in order to recover economic value and meet the goals of the Lolo National Forest Plan. The Forest's proposed salvage logging would be limited to approximately 14 percent (approximately 1,648 acres) of the total area of National Forest System (NFS) Lands burned by the fire. Other National Forest Lands (almost 9,582 acres) would remain in their current post-fire condition. The Jocko Lakes Fire Salvage Project proposes to conduct the following activities:

- Salvage approximately 1,648 acres using skyline and ground-based removal systems for removal of timber from burned areas. Tree mortality within the project area is the direct result of the fires, post-fire stress (root, bole, crown scorch), or pre- and post-fire insect damage. Trees would be planted in areas that would be salvaged. Planting could include up to 2,000 acres.
- Conduct ground-based noxious weed herbicide treatments on approximately 55.1 miles of NFS Road. Weed treatments would help to reduce post-fire weed spread on established transportation corridors.
- Construct approximately 4 miles of short-term specified or temporary roads to provide access to proposed salvage areas. These roads would be decommissioned (fully recontoured and restored) following salvage activities. Long-term specified (permanent) roads would not be constructed under this project.
- Maintain approximately 55.1 miles of NFS Road that would be used as haul-routes for the salvaged timber. Best Management Practices, including road reshaping, aggregate surfacing, drainage improvements, and culvert replacements would be applied with maintenance of these roads.
- Store or decommission approximately 10.7 miles of classified and unclassified NFS Road that is not needed for current or near-future National Forest Land management. Road restoration activities would help to recover the burned area and reduce road related impacts on other resources including water quality, wildlife habitat, and native plant populations.

Affected Environment

Landscape Character

The project area is located in the transition between the Broad Valley Rockies and Columbia Rockies landscape character type subregions. The Broad Valley Rockies character type is an area characterized by widely spaced round-topped mountains and ridges separated by broad U-shaped valleys which allow for sweeping panorama views from the valley floor. The mountains of the Columbia Rockies character type are generally rounded from glaciation. The Columbia Rockies subregion also includes high gradient streams and outstanding mountain lakes (USDA Forest Service n.d.). Inherently the forest patterns of the project area are characterized by mostly continuous vegetation composed of medium to dense stands of subalpine forests including lodgepole pine, western larch, and supalpine fir and some mixed coniferous forests of western larch, Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine. Open meadows and wetlands break up the forest canopy throughout the project area. The project area, located to the west of the popular recreation destination area known as the Chain of Lakes, is valued for its scenic attributes and provides the views of scenic mountainous landscapes for the community of Seeley Lake and the visitors to the Seeley Lake area.

The scenic attractiveness, or variety class, of the project area is generally common to the landscape with its rounded mountain features, but it provides the foreground and middleground views to distinctive landscapes beyond such as the Mission Mountains or Seeley Lake. Additionally, the vibrant, golden fall colors of western larch trees provide seasonal distinctive scenic attractiveness and water features, such as Hidden Lake, are a distinctive feature in the landscape.

Existing Condition

Currently the scenic resources in the project area have been affected by a fire that burned with high severity. In August 2007, a portion of the Jocko Lakes Fire burned through the project area.

Approximately 50 percent of the area burned with high severity resulting in greater than 75 percent estimated crown mortality. The scenery has undergone a fire that burned with high severity and many of the places that had a continuous conifer canopy experienced stand replacing fire leaving large areas of visible black tree stems and burned ground surfaces. High burn severity fires typically result in crown mortality where tree crowns, including needles and small branches, are completely consumed by the fire leaving blackened, scorched trees. Patches of trees that did not burn entirely are seen as small to large patches of red-needled trees. Some other areas did not burn as intensely leaving patches of green trees interspersed with the dead and severely scorched trees.



Figure 1. Area north of Hidden Lake with blackened soil and crown mortality

While the estimated mortality in the Placid Creek drainage and portions of Finley Creek drainage is high, lands around Archibald Creek on the northern and eastern side of the fire area and other lands within the project area are less severely burned leaving a mosaic of green, red-needled, and blackened, dead trees. Where the fire has burned in a mosaic pattern, the valued landscape character attributes are mostly intact. The landscape character attributes of form, texture, and color have been affected in the higher burn severity areas.

Proposed activities are scattered throughout MAs 13, 16, 17, 23, and 25 in the Placid Creek, Finley Creek and Archibald Creek drainages, located about three miles southwest of the community of Seeley Lake, Montana. The area is accessed by Archibald Loop Road 2192 in the northeast portion of the project area, Placid Creek Road 349 through the center of the project area, and Beaver-Finley Creek Road 9974 in the southern portion of the project area. Activities are proposed throughout the project area along these main routes and other secondary routes. The Seeley Lake area is highly valued for its high scenic quality with numerous viewpoints used for viewing scenery. The primary viewpoints for the project area are:

- Placid Creek Road 349
- Hidden Lake dispersed recreation site
- Double Arrow Lookout

- Placid Lake recreation sites
- Big Larch Campground, Seeley Lake, and Seeley Lake Ranger District office.

Placid Creek Road 349 is used for driving for pleasure and as a groomed snowmobile route in the winter season. The viewshed of Placid Creek Road is more affected by the high severity burn since the road passes through the area of the fire with the highest burn severity and the most crown mortality. Along some portions of the road, the landscape retains a similar landscape aesthetic as that before the fire. In other areas, views from Placid Creek Road are currently dominated by a forest of blackened trees and scorched earth, where few of the dominant valued attributes of the landscape character are still intact. The color and form of the landscape in these areas is often what is most affected. The vertical form of tree trunks and landforms resemble the form of the area that existed prior to the fire, but with the loss of foliage in areas with crown mortality, only the blackened, skeletal frames of tree trunks remain.



Figure 2. View of Jocko Lakes Fire area along Placid Creek Road.



Figure 3. Another view of the Jocko Lakes Fire viewed from Placid Creek Road

The eastern portion of the project area is viewed from Hidden Lake and its dispersed recreation sites in the foreground viewing distance. Hidden Lake has a long history of use with car campers and anglers. Recreation use at this site is expected to continue to rise. The dispersed recreation sites were not directly affected by the fire, but portions of the fire are seen from the dispersed recreation sites and from views on the lake. The view on the hillside north of Hidden Lake is similar to the landscape viewed before the fire. Green trees are intermixed with red-needled trees and the tops of some blackened, burned trees are seen beyond the green trees.



Figure 4. Jocko Lakes Fire viewed from Hidden Lake Campground

The project area is also viewed from Double Arrow Lookout in the middleground and background viewing distances. Double Arrow Lookout is used as an overlook providing sweeping, panoramic views of the Mission and Swan Mountains.

The southern portion of the project area is viewed from Placid Lake and the Placid Lake Campgrounds in the far middleground and background viewing distances. These viewpoints are major recreation destinations with families returning year after year to enjoy the water-based and other recreation opportunities.

The viewsheds of Double Arrow Lookout and Placid Lake and its associated recreation sites have retained a similar landscape aesthetic as that before the fire. From these viewpoints the fire's mosaic burning pattern is evident and textural and color changes resulting from black, burned trees and red-needled trees are evident for longer durations of view. The burn mosaic consists of areas with blackened, burned trees interspersed with areas of red-needled trees and patches of green trees that did not burn as intensely.



Figure 5. Jocko Lakes Fire viewed from Double Arrow Lookout

The northeastern portion of the project area is viewed from Big Larch Campground, Seeley Lake, and Seeley Lake Ranger District office including the wildlife viewing blind located north of the Seeley Lake District office in the middleground viewing distance. These viewpoints are year-long recreation destinations with visitors having a strong tie to the landscape. Many visitors return to these areas year after year with their families to enjoy the recreation opportunities in this scenic landscape. The viewsheds of Big Larch Campground, Seeley Lake, Seeley Lake Ranger District office, and the wildlife viewing blind have retained a similar landscape aesthetic as that before the fire. The topographic elements and patterns of timber are still intact from these sensitive viewpoints. Some textural and color changes resulting from the fire are evident from Big Larch Campground, Seeley Lake, Seeley Lake Ranger District, and the wildlife viewing blind for longer durations of view. Highway 83 may see the northeastern portions of the project area for very short durations of view. Field review along Highway 83 determined

that existing vegetation along this travel route screens views of the fire area and project area from travelers.



Figure 6. Jocko Lakes Fire Salvage Project viewed from the Viewing Blind

The existing scenic condition is one of a changing landscape, with views and scenic attributes different from those of the past. Immediately after a stand replacing, high burn severity fire, the changes viewed on the landscape are often abrupt, leaving some viewers with a feeling of loss. This landscape will visibly appear to be in transition over the next ten to fifteen years, with some changes occurring within the next few growing seasons. The scenic resources of this landscape will continue to change rapidly as trees lose needles, debark, and fall to the ground. Over the next few years, some visitors may feel that the landscape is very stark until new grasses and shrubs reestablish and begin to soften the effects of the fire. Even though the effects will be softened in the next few years, the form and line of the landscape will be dominated by the vertical line of tree trunks until the trees have fallen and new growth sprouts around them. As trees continue to lose needles, more of the forest floor will become visible under those trees when viewed from a distance. The color of the landscape will change as trees lose needles and debark. Many of the grassy openings and vegetation on the forest floor will green up during the next growing season and blackened tree trunks will fade to a silver, gray color in the next few years. The landscape aesthetics will transition as these changes occur and the effects of the fire will fade with time.

Land Use Patterns

People are drawn to this area for its scenic quality and diverse recreation opportunities. These lands are used for driving for pleasure on roads, hunting, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, hiking, dispersed camping, fishing, and wood gathering. Placid Creek Road is used for driving for pleasure as the west-side bypass to Jocko River Valley. Archibald Loop Road is also used for driving for pleasure.

The project area is a checker board pattern of private, state, and National Forest System lands. The private lands have been harvested recently and in the past generally resulting in noticeable harvest which dominates the landscape character and borrows little from the landscape character attributes. Overall the area appears moderately to heavily altered. Timber harvest is commonly viewed in the area especially as viewed from Placid Creek Road. The National Forest System lands when viewed from Placid Creek Road have a natural appearance.

The northeastern portion of the project area has a natural appearance with management activities not readily evident. Past activities are not apparent to the average viewer in the viewsheds of Highway 83, Big Larch Campground, Seeley Lake, Seeley Lake Ranger District and Hidden Lake.

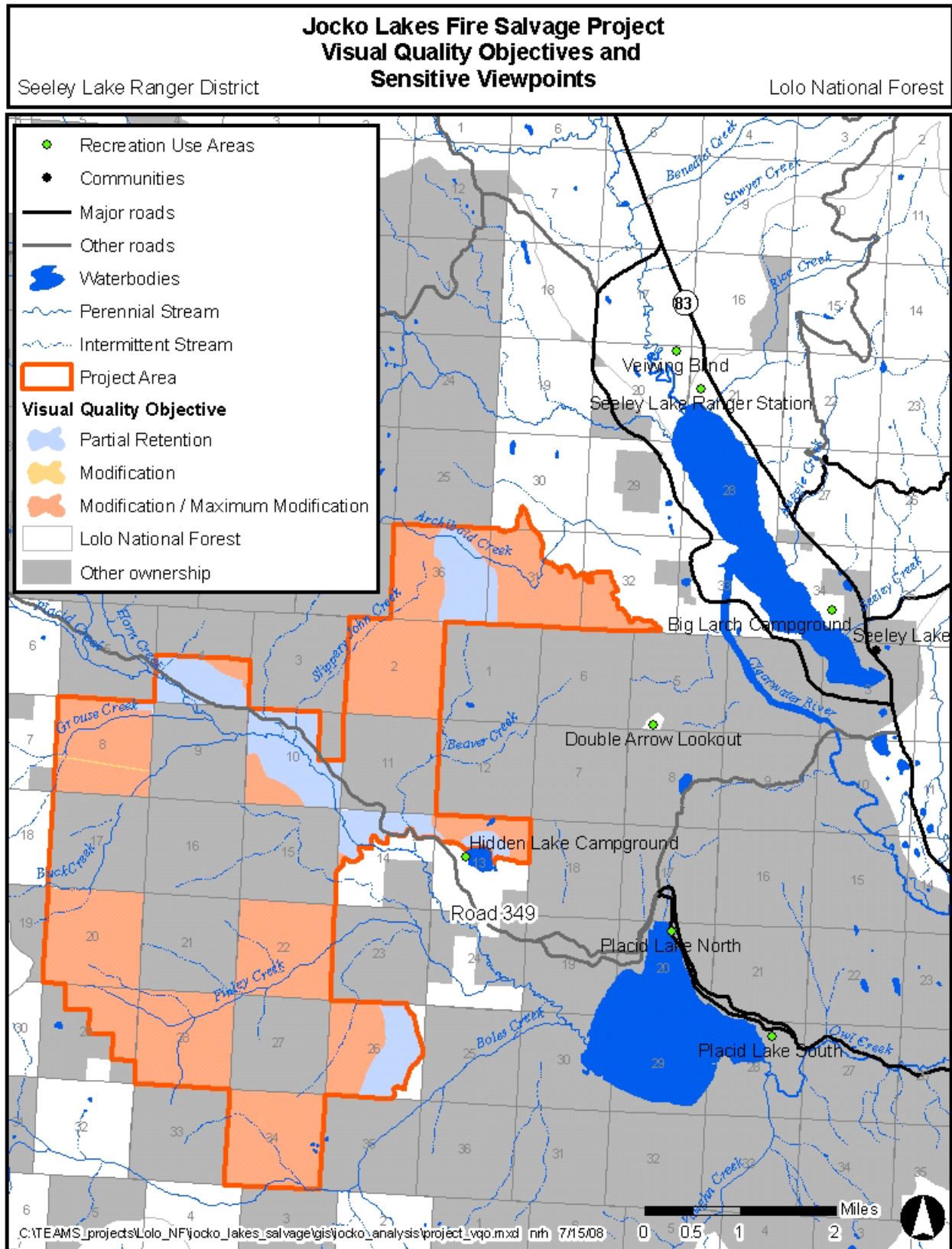


Figure 7. Jocko Lakes Fire Salvage Project Visual Quality Objectives and Sensitive Viewpoints

Project Design Features

Unit Layout and Design

- Tie unit boundaries to natural landform and vegetation edges. Minimize straight lines and geometric shapes to create vegetative shapes that mimic natural patterns.
- Unit edges should mimic natural landscape edges to be as naturally appearing as possible.
- In partial retention VQO areas within view of Placid Creek Road (units 100, 101, 102, 103), cut stumps of all size classes low (less than 6 inches on the high side of the stump)
- If paint is used for marking leave trees, mark on the back side of tree for a distance of 1 chain from the Placid Creek Road (units 100, 101, 102, 103). Use only corner boundary markers for the unit boundary marking along Placid Creek road. Mark only boundary corners for unit boundaries along Placid Creek Road.

Slash Treatment and Landings

- If there are large concentrations of slash within immediate foreground (300 feet) of Placid Creek Road they would be lopped and scattered.
- If vegetative clearing is needed at landings, shape edges to mimic natural patterns and openings by minimizing straight lines and feathering edges.
- Where possible, skid trails would not be located perpendicular to the Placid Creek Road corridor to eliminate direct views into log landings and skid trails from this sensitive travel route.
- When possible use topography and vegetation to screen landings from view of Placid Creek Road. Remove large piles of trees and/or slash by burning, chipping, etc. as soon as possible after project is complete.
- Once management activities are complete, scatter slash and debris evenly in landings and revegetate. Disperse planting and seeding to mimic existing patterns of the vegetative mosaic.

Environmental Consequences

Effects caused by the no action and modified proposed action alternatives were considered in relation to the existing appearance and desired landscape character.

Effects to existing appearance

Public attitudes and beliefs regarding aesthetics and forest management have been studied. “In general, natural forest disturbances that result in extensive areas of dead or dying trees (Haider and Hunt 2002, Ribe 1990) such as the destruction of the forest by fire or flooding are perceived negatively (Daniel 2001; Fanariotu and Skuras 2004; Gobster 1994, 1995)” (cited in Ryan 2005, 17). Large scale disturbances tend to change the landscape character of an area by altering the physical appearance of the landscape that contributed to the area’s identity and sense of place. However, less severe natural disturbances, such as low burn severity areas where understory burned but most mature trees were not killed, result in preferred forests over time (Taylor and Daniel 1984).

Effects to desired landscape character

Desired landscape character is defined as the appearance of the landscape to be retained or created over time (USDA Forest Service 1995). The action alternative, although it may have some short-term negative impacts, begins to move the landscape toward the desired landscape character. Effects that would move the vegetation toward the desired landscape character are beneficial to scenery resources in the long term. These beneficial effects are often realized over a long period of time but lead to the lasting sustainability of valued scenery attributes.

Desired landscape character often includes and is linked to preferred visual settings. Gobster (1994) summarizes visually preferred settings as having four common attributes: large trees, smooth, herbaceous ground cover, an open midstory canopy with high visual penetration, and vistas with distant views and high topographic relief.

Visual access, or how far one can see into a forest, is also a preferred scenic setting (Ryan 2005). Many areas of this landscape now have a great degree of visual access due to the loss of foliage and understory vegetation. In the long term, the visual resource will have higher scenic quality if visual access is achieved and enhanced. These aspects are most consistent with the warm dry forest types found in the project area. Other more densely vegetated areas, such as the warm and cool moist forest types found through out much of the project area, do not provide high visual access into forests.

Alternative 3 – Modified Proposed Action

The Modified Proposed Action Alternative proposes salvage treatments, tree removal, temporary road construction, and road storage and decommissioning that may have an impact on scenery resources. This section discloses the direct and indirect effects in a general manner and as related to viewsheds from the identified sensitive viewpoints. Visual effects generated by vegetative management activities vary in duration and intensity depending on the treatment prescribed and the logging method used.

Direct and Indirect Effects

Short-term visual effects of salvage harvesting are often the most noticeable until the growth of new grasses, shrubs, and planted trees begin to soften the effects of salvage operations. Short-term for this analysis refers to a three to five year period after all harvesting and slash treatment activities in an area are complete. Short-term effects are especially noticeable when the viewer has an up close view of the logging site usually in the foreground viewing distance which is up to ½-mile from the viewer. Long-term effects, which for this analysis is considered beyond five years, vary by the treatment and the logging method used.

Salvage Harvest Treatment

Salvage harvest would cut and remove dead and fire-damaged trees not having a high probability of survival. Some fire-damaged trees with green needles may be designated for removal, because these trees have a high probability of not surviving due to delayed mortality. For more detailed information on the definition of dead trees and how trees would be designated for removal, see Chapter 2 in the Jocko Lakes Fire Salvage Environmental Assessment.

The visual effects of tree removal can vary depending on the intensity of the treatment. Stumps, slash, and edge effects of newly logged areas or units, depending on the intensity of the treatment, can result in a forest that appears moderately altered in the short term. The contrast between harvest and unharvested areas in the short term is often quite noticeable.

In high burn severity areas, with estimated crown mortality of 75 percent or greater, removing the trees from the landscape would change the visual structure and texture creating a more open landscape. In middleground and background views, the appearance of an open grassy slope and expanses of dead, burned trees both appear natural, but perceptions of forest health or wastefulness of forest products often affect the viewer's preference. A mosaic of openings and clumps of trees is more naturally appearing and provides a greater degree of interest and diversity than views of all dead trees or no trees at all. In areas where the fire burned in a mosaic pattern of burned and unburned areas, the removal of dead trees would emphasize the mosaic pattern of the fire. With the retention of trees greater than 21 inches diameter at breast height and non merchantable trees, some vertical structure and diversity would remain in salvage harvest areas lessening the texture contrast that may be visible in middleground views. In these areas the transition to a more opening appearing landscape would occur gradually as dead trees fall to the ground. In areas with low or moderate burn severity, with estimated crown mortality of less than 75 percent, the removal of dead trees would result in a naturally appearing forest canopy texture of patchy openings among retained, dead trees and green trees.

Untreated areas would continue to have the vertical structure of standing dead trees and any remaining live trees. As dead trees remain and slowly fall to the ground, the effect to the visual appearance of the stand is usually a negative jackstraw appearance. As dead trees fall, the tree trunks become crisscrossed and create an appearance generally not preferred by viewers. Large amounts of dead woody material are perceived negatively by viewers regardless if the tree mortality is caused by harvesting or natural forces (Ryan 2005).

Tree stumps have impacts to visual resources in the short term and would be most noticeable in the foreground of Placid Creek Road. Visible tree stumps from timber harvesting are generally disliked by viewers (Daniel and Boster 1976). Project design features are in place to reduce the visibility of stumps and minimize their impacts. Stumps would become less visible within one to two growing seasons as grasses, forbs, and shrubs begin to reestablish. Salvage harvest treatment would occur on about 364 acres of partial retention VQO and on about 1,284 acres of modification/maximum modification VQO.

Trees would be planted in areas that would be salvaged and could include up to 2,000 acres. Effects to scenery resources by reforestation are minimal and help in the long term to move the area toward the desired landscape character.

Views from Placid Creek Road 349

The viewshed of Placid Creek Road is more affected by the high severity burn since the road passes through the area of the fire with the highest burn severity and the most crown mortality. The foreground viewshed of Placid Creek Road is allocated as partial retention VQO. Proposed salvage harvest activity would be most noticeable in units 100, 101, 102, and 103 in areas with high burn severity. Salvage harvest activity may be noticeable in other areas for short durations of view from Placid Creek Road. The viewshed of Placid Creek Road would be affected by salvage harvest with some areas becoming quite open after tree removal. The retention of trees greater than 21 inches diameter at breast height and non merchantable trees would keep some vertical structure and diversity in these treated areas. Proposed activities in the foreground viewing distance of Placid Creek Road may be noticeable, but would remain subordinate to the characteristic landscape being viewed. In untreated areas with greater than 75 percent estimated crown mortality, views from Placid Creek Road would continue to be dominated by a forest of blackened trees, with strong vertical structure. The blackened tree trunks will fade to a silver, gray color in the next few years and eventually fall to the ground resulting in foreground views dominated by downed woody material.

Views from Hidden Lake dispersed recreation site

Proposed unit 131 would be viewed from Hidden Lake and its dispersed recreation sites in the foreground viewing distance on the hillside north of Hidden Lake in an area allocated as partial retention VQO. Salvage harvest would be screened from view by shoreline vegetation which did not burn during the fire. The viewshed to the north and east of Hidden Lake dispersed recreation sites may be slightly affected by the proposed activities resulting in a naturally appearing forest. Fewer red-needled trees and blackened, burned tree tops would be visible from Hidden Lake dispersed recreation site than in the existing condition.

Views from Double Arrow Lookout

The burn mosaic viewed from Double Arrow Lookout consists of areas with blackened, burned trees interspersed with areas of red-needled trees and patches of green trees that did not burn as intensely. Proposed activities would be visible in the Archibald Loop area, Placid Creek drainage and Finley Creek drainage in the middleground and background viewing distances in areas with modification/maximum modification VQO. Salvage harvest would result in a patchy appearance of small openings in the forest canopy and burned areas. The proposed salvage harvest in the viewshed to the west and northwest of Placid Lake may be noticeable but would remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape being viewed from this area. The burn mosaic of the Jocko Lakes Fire would continue to dominate the landscape character viewed from Double Arrow Lookout.

Views from Placid Lake recreation sites

The burn mosaic viewed from these viewpoints consists of areas with blackened, burned trees interspersed with areas of red-needled trees and patches of green trees that did not burn as intensely. Units 264, 265, and 266 and a portion of unit 262 are most visible from Placid Lake and the Placid Lake recreation sites in the middleground viewing distance in areas allocated with partial retention VQO. Portions of units 221, 222, 223, 227, 292, and 291 may be visible in the background viewing distance in areas allocated with modification/maximum modification VQO. Salvage harvest would result in a patchy appearance of small openings in the forest canopy and burned areas. The proposed salvage harvest in the viewshed to the west of Placid Lake may be noticeable but would remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape being viewed from this area. The burn mosaic of the Jocko Lakes Fire would continue to dominate the landscape character viewed from the Placid Lake recreation sites.

Views from Big Larch Campground, Seeley Lake, and Seeley Lake Ranger District

Some textural and color changes resulting from the fire are evident from Big Larch Campground, Seeley Lake, Seeley Lake Ranger District, and the wildlife viewing blind for longer durations of view. Units 361 and 362 would be visible in the middleground viewing distance from these viewpoints, particularly from the wildlife viewing blind, in an area allocated with partial retention VQO. Some other salvage harvest activity may be noticeable in the background viewing distance in areas with modification/maximum modification VQO. The proposed salvage harvest units in this viewshed would occur in areas with an estimated crown mortality of less than 25 percent with some pockets of dead trees. Some slight textural changes may be noticeable in the forest canopy from the viewsheds of Big Larch Campground, Seeley Lake, Seeley Lake Ranger District, and the wildlife viewing blind, but these changes would be subordinate to the characteristic landscape being viewed.

Logging Removal Methods and Associated Facilities

The removal methods for salvage harvest include skyline and ground-based systems throughout the project area. Refer to Figure 8 for the location of each removal method in Alternative 3. The log hauling routes for the majority of the timber removal includes Placid Creek Road 349, Beaver-Finley Creek Road 9974, Archibald Loop Road 2192, Archibald Placid 2191, and other Forest Roads located off these main

routes. Approximately 55.1 miles of NFS Road would be maintained and used as haul-routes for the salvaged timber. Road reshaping and new road surfacing would be noticeable due to the fresh, lighter colored soils which would be added or exposed. After about one to two growing seasons, these road improvements would not be noticeable to the casual forest visitor.

Ground-based noxious weed herbicide treatments on approximately 55.1 miles of NFS Road would also be conducted. Weed treatments would help to reduce post-fire weed spread on established transportation corridors. Weed herbicide treatments would be noticeable for several weeks as weeds die from treatment.

Approximately 128 landings are proposed in Alternative 3. The average landing would range in size from 1/3 to 1/2 acre. Landings are most evident during project implementation before large piles of logs and slash are removed and immediately after project implementation until the landing is revegetated. Majority of landings would be away from view of sensitive viewpoints. Landings along Placid Creek Road may dominate the view until large piles of trees or slash are removed. With the visuals project design features applied, it is anticipated that landings although they may be evident, would remain subordinate to the characteristic landscape.

Ground-based Removal

Ground-based, or tractor, removal methods would take place throughout the project area. Approximately 21 acres of salvage harvest would potentially be summer tractor removal, and about 1,550 acres would be winter tractor removal.

Where tractor logging would be used to salvage trees, evidence of logging would be apparent primarily in foreground views. Tractor removal would be visible in foreground views from Placid Creek Road and from middleground views from the following sensitive viewpoints Double Arrow Lookout, Placid Lake recreation sites, Big Larch Campground, Seeley Lake, and Seeley Lake Ranger District. Tractor removal is screen from view from Hidden Lake dispersed campsites by shoreline vegetation on the north and east sides of Hidden Lake. Possible effects, particularly of summer tractor logging, include skid trails which often create lines of exposed soils across the forest floor. These effects would last for about three to five years until grasses and shrubs in the understory reestablish and lessen the effects of ground-based equipment. With the reduced impacts from the project design features for the visual resource, it is anticipated that partial retention VQO would be met from the identified sensitive viewpoints about one growing season after project activities are complete. The following table summarizes acres of tractor logging removal type in each VQO.

Table 1. Acres of tractor logging removal in each visual quality objective for Alternative 3

	Partial Retention VQO	Modification / Maximum Modification VQO
	Acres	
Potential summer tractor removal	0	21
Winter tractor removal	364	1,186
Total Tractor Removal	364	1,207

Skyline Removal

Skyline removal would be applied to three units in the southern portion of the project area. Skyline corridors have the potential to create straight lines through a normally continuous canopy of forest. Ground contact by transported material may occur resulting in ground disturbance which may be noticeable for several growing seasons. Effects of skyline logging removal to scenic resources include the potential to view into the skyline corridor from arterial roads in the southern portion of the project area.

These arterial roads are not identified visually sensitive travel routes for this project. Skyline removal may be visible from Placid Creek Road in the middleground viewing distance, but is generally screened from view by topography and any remaining live vegetation. Proposed unit 292 may be visible from Placid Lake recreation sites in the background viewing distance. Skyline removal is not visible from the following identified viewpoints: Hidden Lake dispersed recreation site, Double Arrow Lookout, Big Larch Campground, Seeley Lake, and Seeley Lake Ranger District.

About 77 acres could be removed by skyline systems in modification/maximum modification VQO. The effects to scenic resources by skyline removal would meet modification VQO. The skyline removal may dominate the characteristic landscape but would utilize naturally established form, line, color, and texture. The visual effects of skyline removal would appear as a natural occurrence when viewed in the middleground or background from Placid Creek Road and Placid Lake recreation sites.

Table 2. Summary of tractor and skyline removal acres in each visual quality objective for Alternative 3

	Partial Retention VQO	Modification/Maximum Modification VQO
	Acres	
Tractor Removal	364	1,207
Skyline Removal	0	77
Total Acres	364	1,284

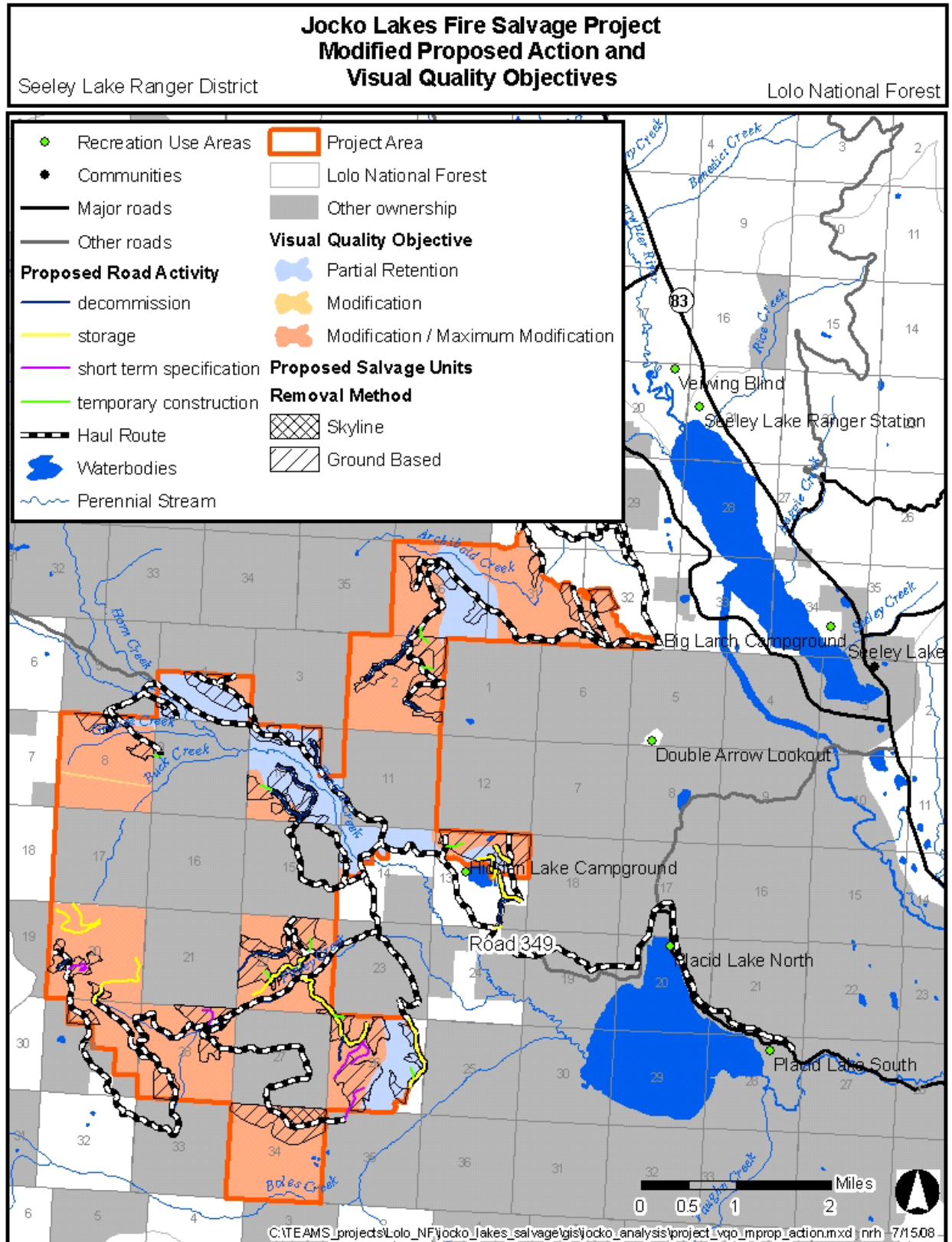


Figure 8. Jocko Lakes Fire Salvage Modified Proposed Action and Visual Quality Objectives Map

Temporary and Short Term Specification Road Construction

Approximately 4 miles of short-term specified or temporary roads would be constructed to provide access to proposed salvage areas. These roads would be decommissioned, fully recontoured and restored, following salvage activities. Long-term specified or permanent roads would not be constructed under this project. Construction of short-term specified or temporary roads can affect scenery by exposing light colored soils and creating noticeable color contrasts which may be seen in foreground, middleground and even background views. Generally short-term specified and temporary roads, once rehabilitated, revegetate quickly and would visually recover in the short term once rehabilitation activities are complete.

Short-term specified or temporary roads would be located throughout the project area and be almost entirely not visible from the identified sensitive viewpoints. While these roads would be fully recontoured after trees have been removed from the area, a short line, created by the break in the tree canopy, may be noticeable from Double Arrow Lookout or Placid Creek Road for short durations of view. Although the visual effects of the proposed temporary and short-term specified roads may be evident they would be subordinate to the characteristic landscape.

Road Decommissioning and Storage

Approximately 10.7 miles of classified and unclassified NFS Road not needed for current or near-future National Forest land management would be stored or decommissioned. Road restoration activities would help to recover the burned area and reduce road related impacts on other resources including water quality, wildlife habitat, and native plant populations.

Road storage and decommissioning activities generally have short-term effects to scenery by exposing light colored soils which create noticeable color contrasts in foreground and middleground views. These short-term effects would visually recover quickly as the areas revegetate. The long-term effects of road storage and decommissioning are beneficial to scenery resources by recontouring slopes to mimic natural landforms and rehabilitating and revegetating exposed soils generally visible on cut and fill slopes created during road construction. Road decommissioning and storage activities would be located throughout the project area and be almost entirely not visible from the identified sensitive viewpoints.

Summary of Direct/Indirect Effects – Alternative 3

This alternative would create short-term effects to scenery resources. The scenic quality of the area would still be dominated by the changes caused by the high severity burn especially as viewed from Placid Creek Road. Over the next ten to fifteen years, the landscape would begin to reestablish scenic qualities that move the area to the desired landscape character.

Partial retention and modification/maximum modification VQOs assigned to the project area would be met either at project completion or about one growing season after project activities are complete. The project has been designed to meet the VQOs assigned to the project area by the Lolo National Forest Plan in the short term.

Alternative 5 – No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 5

Alternative 5 proposes no action and initiates no human caused changes to the visual quality of the project area. However, the Jocko Lakes Fire has caused conditions that will create effects to scenery resources in the future. In high burn severity areas, where probable crown mortality exceeds 75 percent, the visual condition is not preferred by most viewers and many areas may not regenerate in a preferable manner due to lack of seed source or dense areas creating “dead shade.” Standing dead trees eventually fall to the

ground resulting in increased downed fuel with a negative jackstraw appearance of crisscrossed tree trunks on the forest floor. Large amounts of dead woody material are perceived negatively by viewers regardless if the tree mortality is caused by harvesting or natural forces (Ryan 2005). Additionally, high amounts of standing and down fuels may prevent regeneration and do not create visually preferred open stands with high visual access and a clear forest floor.

Under Alternative 5, the natural evolution of the vegetative component of the landscape would continue to change the scenic qualities of the area over time. For example, wind storms or snow and ice storms may cause more portions of the project area to blow down or contain areas of broken topped trees. Insect infestation or disease outbreaks may cause mortality in live trees adjacent to the fire area.

Alternative 5 would meet the visual quality objectives throughout the project area as it does not create any unnaturally appearing elements of form, line, color, or texture. Large amounts of dead trees in high burn severity areas would continue to dominate the landscape being viewed. This alternative would accept changes to the scenic quality initiated by natural processes only.

Cumulative Effects

The cumulative effects analysis area for scenery resources is the Jocko Lakes Fire Salvage Project area and lands in the Seeley Lake, Double Arrow Lookout, and Placid Lake viewshed corridor adjacent to the Jocko Lakes Fire Salvage Project area. Past harvest of timbered slopes is generally noticeable for 15 to 30 years depending on soils, aspect, and vegetative species composition. Areas affected by wildfire with high levels of mortality if reforested are also generally noticeable for 15 to 30 years dependent on the same landscape features. At the end of this time period the re-growth of vegetation begins to develop characteristics of a closed canopy and the area no longer appears altered. A complete list of potential cumulative actions can be found in Appendix D of the Jocko Lakes Fires Salvage Project EA.

Past Activities

Fire Suppression and Rehabilitation

The fire suppression activities have created some short-term effects including control lines and dozer lines which create wide swaths through vegetation and ground disturbance, danger tree felling for firefighter safety, fire retardant use, and openings created for safety zones which may be visible in foreground, middleground, and background views. Ground disturbance has been seeded and recontoured and effects are expected to be rehabilitated within three years. Wider swaths in vegetation and larger openings created for safety zones would take longer to rehabilitate and may be noticeable until trees reach a height of 20 feet. Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) activities include handline restoration, dozer line restoration, spot seeding and seeding of rehabilitated roads, and other rehabilitation activities. Effects to visual resources by BAER activities are short-term with long-term benefits which rehabilitate ground disturbance and reestablish vegetation in critical areas.

Wildland Fire

Large fires with high levels of mortality tend to be dangerous for forest visitors and modify the visual condition and character of the landscape being viewed. See the Existing Condition and No Action Alternative effects for information on the effects of wildland fire on scenery resources.

Timber Harvest

Past timber harvest and salvage operations have occurred throughout the project area and adjacent lands. Past timber sales include harvesting using a variety of prescriptions on National Forest, state, and private ownership. Harvesting on state owned lands occurred in the 1990s and 2007. Harvesting on private lands

has occurred from 1999 through 2007 using both regeneration and intermediate harvest prescriptions. Harvesting on NFS land has occurred from 1950s to present. See Appendix D in the Jocko Lakes Fire Salvage EA for a complete listing of past harvest activities on NFS land. These timber harvest activities may be noticeable to the average viewer but remain subordinate to the characteristic landscape being viewed in the viewsheds of: Hidden Lake dispersed recreation site, Placid Lake recreation sites, Big Larch Campground, Seeley Lake, and Seeley Lake Ranger District.

The viewsheds of Placid Creek Road and Double Arrow Lookout generally appear slightly altered by timber harvest activity. Since private lands do not have regulations for scenic resource management, the effects of ongoing salvage and harvest activities next to NFS lands can sometimes have negative effects on scenery resources when viewing a continuous landscape. The edge effects of salvage and harvest activities adjacent to NFS lands can make the landscape appear moderately to heavily altered when viewed from Placid Creek Road. Freshly salvaged areas on private lands appear heavily altered when viewed from Placid Creek Road with noticeable stumps and slash and a very open landscape with little vertical structure remaining. If activities on private lands are designed to lessen impacts to scenic resources, the difference between private lands and Forest lands are less apparent.

Removal of timber from fire lines and roadside areas for fire suppression efforts has occurred. The removal of these trees benefits the scenery resource since it decreases the amount of downed material seen from Placid Creek Road.

Livestock Grazing

The effects of livestock grazing on scenic resources generally include visible fences to manage allotments, water improvements, and livestock trails. Effects of livestock grazing can have negative effects to scenic resources when lands have been continuously grazed resulting in decreased ground cover or in areas with extensive trailing. The Jocko Lakes Fire has changed the vegetative ground cover component. Effects of livestock grazing in the area are not noticeable to the average viewer and do not dominate the landscape being viewed.

Power line and substation

Northwestern Energy has easements and maintains a substation and a 100 foot easement across multiple ownerships. The scenery resources appear moderately altered by these activities.

Mining

Mineral extraction to remove flagstone and rock minerals has occurred on state owned lands. This activity is not visible from the identified sensitive viewpoints. Effects to scenery resources are minimal.

Noxious weeds sites and control

Effects to scenery resources from the control of noxious weeds are generally not noticeable to the casual forest visitor.

Road Storage and Decommission

Road storage and decommissioning activities have occurred in the cumulative effects analysis area and generally have short-term effects to scenery by exposing light colored soils which create noticeable color contrasts in foreground and middleground views. The long-term effects of road storage and decommissioning are beneficial to scenery resources by recontouring slopes to mimic natural landforms and rehabilitating and revegetating exposed soils generally visible on cut and fill slopes created during road construction.

Other activities

Other additional activities include: road building and maintenance, road storage and decommissioning, firewood cutting, forest product gathering, personal use mushroom harvest, and summer, fall, and winter recreation including hunting, snowmobiling, hiking, dispersed camping, and driving on open roads. The effect to scenery resources from these activities is minimal. Most of these past activities have formed the current recreation opportunities in the area and most often form the viewing platform and opportunities for viewing scenery.

Present Activities

Present activities in the project area which may have some effects to scenery resources include: livestock grazing, a power line easement, fire suppression, BAER activities, noxious weed assessment and control. Livestock grazing, the power line easement, and noxious weeds sites and control generally have minimal effects to scenery resources. Fire suppression and BAER activities create some short-term effects on scenery resources. See the descriptions of these activities under Past Activities for more detailed information on these activities effects on scenery resources. The removal of cut timber associated with Jocko Lakes Fire suppression and hazard reduction would benefit the scenery resource since it decreases the amount of downed material seen from Placid Creek Road.

Other present activities include: use and maintenance of forest roads, firewood cutting, forest product gathering, personal use and commercial mushroom harvest, and summer, fall, and winter recreation including hunting, snowmobiling, hiking, dispersed camping, outfitter guide permits, and driving on open roads. These activities generally do not result in effects to scenery resources which would dominate the landscape being viewed. These activities generally remain visually subordinate to the surrounding landscape and would continue to provide opportunities for viewing scenery.

Timber Harvest

The Hidden Lake Timber Sale, planned in 2007, includes thinning 388 acres. A portion of the area planned for thinning was burned by the Jocko Lakes Fire and is included in the Jocko Lakes Fire Salvage project. Timber harvest on state owned lands is being proposed on 34 acres of burned timber. It is anticipated that although these harvest activities may be noticeable, they would remain subordinate to the characteristic landscape being viewed from Placid Creek Road. Timber harvest is anticipated on commercial timber lands within the project area and may result in a landscape which appears moderately to heavily altered in these areas. If activities on private lands are designed to lessen impacts to scenic resources, the landscape would appear slightly altered and the harvest activities would not dominate the landscape being viewed.

Reasonably Foreseeable Activities

Reasonably foreseeable future activities in the project area which may have some effects to scenery resources include: livestock grazing, a power line easement, fire suppression, wildland fire, noxious weed assessment and control, and road storage and decommissioning. Livestock grazing, the power line easement, and noxious weeds sites and control generally have minimal effects to scenery resources. Fire suppression creates some short-term effects on scenery resources. Large wildland fires with high levels of mortality tend to be dangerous for forest visitors and modify the visual condition and character of the landscape being viewed. See the descriptions of these activities under Past Activities for more detailed information on these activities effects on scenery resources.

Other reasonably foreseeable future activities in the project area include: firewood cutting, forest product gathering, use and maintenance of forest roads, summer, fall, and winter recreation including hunting, snowmobiling, hiking and dispersed camping, outfitter guide permits, and driving on open roads. Fishing

and camping use at Hidden Lake is expected to continue to rise. It is anticipated the other reasonably foreseeable future activities would have minimal effects to scenery resources which would not be noticeable to the average viewer or would remain visually subordinate to the surrounding landscape. These activities would continue to provide opportunities for viewing scenery.

DNRC plans to plant appropriate tree species in high-severity burned areas to supplement natural regeneration. Effects to scenery resources by tree planting are minimal and help in the long term to move the area toward the desired landscape character. About 0.5 miles of new road construction would be removed post harvest from state-owned lands. Timber harvest is also anticipated on commercial timber lands within the project area and may result in a landscape which appears moderately to heavily altered in these areas. If activities on private lands are designed to lessen impacts to scenic resources, the landscape would appear slightly altered and the harvest activities would not dominate the landscape being viewed.

Summary of Cumulative Effects – Alternative 3

Cumulative effects to scenery resources in the Jocko Lakes Fire Salvage Project area are expected to meet the visual quality objectives of the Forest Plan in the short term. In partial retention VQO areas, any deviations present are expected to be subordinate to the natural landscape character. In modification/maximum modification VQO areas any deviations present may dominate the characteristic landscape but would utilize naturally established form, line, color, and texture and would appear as a natural occurrence when viewed in middleground or background. Harvest activities on private lands would continue to dominate the Placid Creek Road viewshed within the Jocko Lakes Fire perimeter.

The proposed harvest activities along with the projects listed above would result in some short-term effects to scenery resources, but would meet the designated VQOs of partial retention and modification/maximum modification about one growing season after all project activities are complete. Design features are in place to minimize the effects of the project on scenery resources. These short-term effects are expected until grasses, forbs, and shrubs begin to reestablish and soften the effects of the salvage operations so that activities may be evident but be visually subordinate to the surrounding landscape. The project has been designed to meet the VQOs assigned to the project area by the Lolo National Forest Plan in the short term by applying the visual project design features.

Harvest, short-term specification or temporary road construction, road storage and decommissioning, and weed treatments associated with these alternatives, along with the projects and activities listed above, would have no cumulative effects to scenery resources. There are no irreversible or irretrievable commitments related to scenery resources from this alternative.

Summary of Cumulative Effects – Alternative 5

Cumulative effects to scenery resources in the Jocko Lakes Fire Salvage Project area are expected to meet the visual quality objectives of the Forest Plan. In partial retention VQO areas, any deviations present are expected to be subordinate to the natural landscape character. In modification/maximum modification VQO areas any deviations present may dominate the characteristic landscape but would utilize naturally established form, line, color, and texture and would appear as a natural occurrence when viewed in middleground or background.

The scenery resources of this area have been affected by the Jocko Lakes Fire. Valued scenic attributes have been altered due to the large amounts of high burn severity and crown mortality within the fire. Large amounts of dead trees in high burn severity areas would continue to dominate the landscape being viewed. This alternative would accept changes to the scenic quality initiated by natural processes only.

Conclusion

The majority of effects to scenery resources are short term in duration with long term benefits to scenic quality. Short-term visual effects of salvage harvesting are often most noticeable in foreground views until the growth of new grasses, shrubs, and planted trees begin to soften the effects of salvage operations.

No significant issues were identified for the visual resource in the Jocko Lakes Fire Salvage Project. With all the visual project design features implemented, the activities in the modified proposed action would meet the partial retention and modification/maximum modification VQOs. It is anticipated that the proposed activities will meet the assigned VQOs about one growing season after all project activities are complete. Alternative 3 would be consistent with Forest Plan standards and guidelines for visuals.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to scenery resources are expected in the long term from harvest activities. There are no irreversible or irretrievable commitments related to scenery resources from the modified proposed action.

/s/ Nicole R. Hill

TEAMS Enterprise – Landscape Architect

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