3.15 VISUAL RESOURCES

3.15.1 Introduction

White Pass Company's proposal, which involves the development of two ski lifts and associated trails, a mid-mountain day lodge, and enlarging the White Pass SUP area to include approximately 767 acres of Hogback Basin, has the potential to affect the scenic resources of the area. As such, the scenic quality of the area will be analyzed in the context of the management direction, goals, and objectives of the Forest Plans, as amended and the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.

3.15.1.1 Management Guidelines

Since the publication of the Visual Management System (VMS) handbook in 1974, substantial advances in research and technology, as well as a significant increase in demand for high quality scenery, guided the Forest Service to update their system for scenic resource management. In 1996, the Forest Service developed the Scenery Management System (SMS) (USDA 1995) to more effectively and efficiently integrate scenic values and landscape aesthetics in Forest Plans, and incorporate human values into ecosystem management. The SMS is to replace the VMS during the planning of new projects or Forest Plan revisions as initially directed by the Chief in the SMS handbook. Specifically, the Chief stated: "begin using the concepts and terms contained in this Handbook as you work on new projects or initiate forest plan revisions" (USDA 1995). Subsequent correspondence further directs the Forest Service to utilize and adopt the SMS and its concepts (USDA 1996, 1997b, 1998e). As a result, this analysis includes reference to both the VMS and SMS. Following are summaries of the key features of each system.

Visual Management System

The goal of landscape management on all NFSL is to manage for the highest possible visual quality, commensurate with other appropriate public uses, costs, and benefits. Since the mid-1970s, the Forest Service has operated under the guidance of the VMS for inventorying, evaluating, and managing scenic resources on NFSL. The VMS provides a system for measuring the inherent scenic quality of any forest area as well as a measurement of the degree of alteration for use in inventory and management.

Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs), as defined within the VMS, are based on the physical characteristics of the land and the sensitivity of the landscape setting as viewed by humans. VQOs define how the landscape will be managed, the level of acceptable changes to the landscape character permitted in the area, and under what circumstances management activities or recreational development may be allowed. Applicable VQOs are based on land allocations established by the Forest Plan and discussed below.

For further information on the Visual Resources Management System and its use, refer to National Forest Landscape Management Handbooks (USFS 1974).

Scenery Management System

The SMS was developed to eventually replace the VMS; its principles and premises are based not only on research findings but on over 20 years experience with implementing the VMS. In October 1996, *Landscape Aesthetics: A Handbook for Scenery Management* (USDA 1995) was released to begin the transition to the SMS. This Handbook 701 supercedes AH-462, National Forest Landscape Management, Volume 2, Chapter 1, The Visual Management System, Issued April 1974.

Full adoption of the SMS is to occur as each National Forest revises its land and resource management plan. Direction for scenery management is contained within forest plan goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines. For Forests not currently undergoing the forest plan revision process, or for those requiring extensive time for revision, application of the SMS may occur at the sub-forest or project level.

At the time of this FEIS, neither the Gifford Pinchot nor the Wenatchee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans have been updated. For this FEIS, both the VMS and SMS will be used to describe the existing landscape and evaluate the range of alternatives' effects on the landscape, as initially directed by the Chief of the USFS and subsequent direction (USDA 1995, 1996, 1997b, 1998e).

The SMS uses four distance zones to describe the part of a characteristic landscape that is being inventoried or evaluated - immediate foreground (0 to 300 feet from viewpoint), foreground (300 feet to 0.5 mile from viewpoint), middle ground (0.5 to 4 miles from viewpoint) and background (over 4 miles from viewpoint).

SMS terminology differs from the VMS, and updated research findings are incorporated. Conceptually, the SMS differs from the VMS in that it increases the role of constituents throughout the inventory and planning process and borrows from, and is integrated with, the basic concepts of Ecosystem Management. The SMS pertains primarily to the social/cultural dimension of ecosystem management, but also has links to the biological and physical. Key elements and two of the most important aspects of the new SMS process are "sense of place" and "Special Places".

Special Places

Special Places are important primarily as destinations. They occur at different scales of the ecosystem ranging from an entire national forest or ranger district to a more localized area to a very specific site that may encompass only a few acres. From a landscape aesthetics viewpoint, the recreation experience, scenic setting, available facilities, and sense of place are important aspects in meeting user expectations.

The SMS measures the degree of "intactness" and "wholeness" of the landscape with "scenic integrity." SMS utilizes Scenic Integrity Levels (SIL) in much the same way that the VMS uses VQOs. The frame of reference for measuring achievement of SIL is the valued attributes of the "existing" landscape character "being viewed."

Sense of Place

Sense of place, for most people, refers to the rich and varied meanings of places and emphasizes people's tendency to form strong emotional bonds with places (Williams and Stewart 1998, 19). The importance of this concept is that it places humans in the landscape and is a tool to help managers understand the importance of places to people when doing planning or management activities. Scenery contributes to a sense of place, a mutually shared image. The majority of the recreation-oriented people who visit the National Forests have an image of what they expect to see. Such an image or mental picture is generated by available information concerning a particular area and the person's experience with that or similar areas (USDA 1995, 30). Additional constituent information can be gathered to fully address a more in-depth analysis of peoples' attachment to the landscape for reasons aside from recreation to fully understand the landscape character of a place. The focus for this assessment is the recreation-oriented user. Consequently, the White Pass Study Area has features and attractions that have special value.

While the WNF and GPNF have not revised their current Forest Plans, sense of place mapping has been conducted for the Naches District of the WNF, identifying White Pass Ski Area as having its own sense of place. In addition, Hogback Basin in the Cowlitz Valley District of the GPNF has been identified as having its own sense of place. US 12 from the GPNF boundary to the intersection with Highway 410, near Oak Creek, has been designated as a Scenic Byway (USDA and WSDOT 2000). Table 3.15-1 presents the qualifying characteristics of these unique places within the White Pass Study Area.

Table 3.15-1:
Sense of Place in the White Pass Study Area

Name of Place	Activities	Aspects/Sense of Place
White Pass Ski Area	• Downhill Skiing • Cross-country Skiing	• Ski resort setting • Developed facilities and commercial businesses on highway. • Rural setting
Hogback Basin	• Summer Hiking • Winter Backcountry Skiing and Snow Cave Camping	• Roaded Natural ROS • Unique Vegetative Community • Outstanding Destination for Regional Backcountry Skiing
US 12 – White Pass Scenic Byway	• Pleasure Driving • Scenic Viewing • Fall Color Viewing	• Outstanding diversity of vegetation types, geological formations, and wildlife. • Historic values • Scenic attractions • Roaded Natural setting

Source: Naches Ranger District, Cowlitz Valley Ranger District

3.15.1.2 Management Direction

The White Pass Study Area is located on public lands on both the Naches Ranger District of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests and the Cowlitz Valley Ranger District of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. Therefore, this FEIS evaluates the visual effects of the alternatives under both sets of Forest Plan direction, using the VMS and the SMS. Table 3.15-2 describes the relationship between VQOs and SIL as contained in the SMS (USDA 1995, 2-4).

Table 3.15-2:
Relationship between VQOs and SIL

Scenic Integrity Level/VQO	Condition	Perception, Degree of Deviation
Very High/ Preservation	Unaltered	None. Existing landscape character is intact with only minute deviations.
High/Retention	Appears Unaltered	Not Evident. Deviations may be present but must repeat form, line, color and texture of characteristic landscape in scale.
Moderate/Partial Retention	Slightly Altered	Evident, but not Dominant. Noticeable deviations must remain visually subordinate to landscape character.
Low/Modification	Moderately Altered	Dominant. Deviations begin to dominate but borrow valued attributes such as size, shape, edge and patterns of natural openings or vegetative types.
Very Low/ Maximum Modification	Heavily Altered	Very Dominant. Deviations strongly dominate valued landscape character. They may not borrow attributes such as size, shape, edge and pattern but should be shaped to blend with natural terrain.

Source: USDA 1995, 2-4

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

The 1990 Wenatchee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan prescribed VQOs for management areas throughout the forest as viewed from designated viewpoints. The White Pass Study Area is located along the White Pass Viewshed Corridor. Lands within the Wenatchee National Forest are allocated RE-1 Developed Recreation and have a prescribed VQO of Retention which corresponds to an SIL of High. Implicit in the RE-1 Developed Recreation allocation is the essential role of constructed facilities and the resulting environmental modification. Structures and other modifications must meet identified design, placement and appearance standards; however, by definition, their presence does not necessarily reduce the visual quality level to the degree they would in other land allocations or settings. A greater tolerance for environmental modifications and their effects on visual quality standards is incorporated into the RE-1 Developed Recreation allocation.

Gifford Pinchot National Forest

The 1990 Gifford Pinchot National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan prescribed VQOs for management areas throughout the forest as viewed from designated viewpoints. The White Pass Study Area is located along the White Pass Viewshed Corridor. Lands within the Gifford Pinchot National Forest are allocated 2L Developed Recreation and have a prescribed VQO of Retention which corresponds to an SIL of High. Constructed facilities and the resulting tolerance for environmental modifications are also incorporated into the 2L Developed Recreation allocation as previously described under the RE-1 Developed Recreation allocation.

Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail

The selected management alternative in the *Comprehensive Management Plan for the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail* (USDA 1982) clarifies the relationship between the trail and management of adjacent lands and is consistent with Section 7(a) of the National Trails System Act. Specifically pertaining to National Forest lands, the selected alternative states:

> "The entire landscape and its scenic quality are important to the purposes of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Viewing and understanding resource management and other cultural activities are considered to be part of the normal character of the trail. The management of various resources will give due consideration to the existence of the trail and trail users within the multiple-use concept" (USDA 1982, 17).

Activities authorized by this analysis will seek to provide a setting and experience consistent with the predominant existing trail features.

White Pass Scenic Byway

The National Scenic Byways Program is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. The program is a grass-roots collaborative effort established to help recognize, preserve and enhance selected roads throughout the United States. The White Pass Scenic Byway begins at the boundary of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and continues east to the junction of US 12 and State Highway 410. Along the way, the byway passes its namesake, White Pass. Lands at White Pass are under USDA Forest Service administration as part of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, and the highway is managed under a permit/easement by the Washington Department of Transportation. A local advocacy group is developing a Corridor Management Plan for the White Pass Scenic Byway. Corridor Management Plans have no regulatory authority but aim to spur collaborative stewardship efforts at the local level. The Washington State Department of Transportation has also designated this route as part of the White Pass State Scenic Byway. Activities authorized by this analysis will seek to be consistent with management of the byway.

3.15.2 Affected Environment

The land allocation in the Wenatchee National Forest portion of the White Pass Study Area is RE-1 (Developed Recreation) and the allocation in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest portion is 2L (Developed Recreation).

As defined in the Wenatchee Forest Plan, the Goal and Description of RE-1 is as follows:

> "Provide developed recreation in an Urban to Semi-Primitive Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) setting. This prescription is applicable to existing and potential developed recreation sites within the full spectrum of ROS settings. The areas allocated to this use include only the specific site on which development takes place. This prescription is also applicable to existing and potential Alpine (downhill) ski areas including trails, tows or lift facilities, shelters, lodges, services and parking lots. Associated developments such as skating rinks, toboggan trails, etc. may be present. Potential sites allocated to this prescription will be managed to protect or enhance the future values and conditions desired." (USDA 1990b, IV-159)

In the Gifford Pinchot Forest Plan, the Desired Future Condition for 2L is:

> "Roads, buildings, ski lifts, tables, docks, and other physical facilities are evident, but design and construction will repeat the color, shapes and lines of the surroundings. Openings usually exist to accommodate facilities and provide scenic views; trees and other vegetation will vary widely in type and size." (USDA 1990a, IV-101)

It is important to recognize that the developed recreation allocations in both Forest Land and Resource Management Plans provide a set of visual standards that deviate from those commonly applied in other land use allocations. Specifically, they anticipate and allow for more alteration or development as integral to providing the developed recreation experience. These improvements must still meet specified design, placement and appearance standards, but they are expected features on the landscape and do not decrease the VQO or SIL as rapidly as in other forest settings. Consequently, the criteria for meeting certain VQO or SIL levels are intentionally different than those for other allocations.

3.15.2.1 Visual Analysis Areas

In order to analyze existing visual conditions, the analysis area has been subdivided into five smaller, individual areas, as identified in Figure 3-46 and the representative photos in Section 3.15.2.3. Each of these areas comprises a distinctive, viewed portion of the landscape in the vicinity of the White Pass Study Area. Effects will be disclosed based on visual changes to the landscape character as viewed from specific, critical viewpoints (refer to Section 3.15.3 – Environmental Consequences) within each area. The following presents a brief description of each visual analysis area, its land allocation, and desired

future conditions as they relate to each area. Also, the distance zones from each critical viewpoint are provided.

Area 1

Area 1 is located in the northwest portion of the existing SUP area along forested, northwest facing slopes. Area 1 is in the foreground of view points #5, #6 and #7 and in the middleground of view points #1-#4. Area 1 is allocated to 2L, and exhibits two long ski trails, which traverse the slope from the *Paradise* pod to the base area. In relation to the desired future condition, Area 1 exhibits openings that have been created for facilities. The VQO is Retention. With the existing ski area facilities, Area 1 exhibits the defining aspects of the White Pass sense of place (i.e., ski resort setting – refer to Table 3.15-1).

Area 2

Area 2 is a densely forested section of the northeastern portion of the existing SUP area, along north facing slopes. Area 2 is in the immediate foreground of view points #5 and #7, the foreground of View Point #6 and in the middleground of view points #1-#4. Area 2 is in the RE-1 allocation, and coincides with the RE-1 description with its potential for developed recreation, and the presence of ski trails surrounding the area. The VQO is Retention. With no currently developed ski area facilities, Area 2 exhibits the rural setting that defines the White Pass sense of place (refer to Table 3.15-1).

Area 3

Area 3 is located along US 12 in the most visible portions of the White Pass Study Area, including cleared and graded areas, buildings and ski lifts. Area 3 is in the immediate foreground of View Point #7, foreground of view points #5 and #6, and in the middleground of view points #1-#4. Area 3 is located in both the RE-1 and 2L allocations, as it straddles the Forest boundary. The evidence of physical facilities, including ski area infrastructure, is consistent with the desired future condition for 2L and the description for RE-1. The VQO is Retention. Due to the commercial, developed nature of Area 3 in a rural, ski resort setting, Area 3 shows the defining qualities of the White Pass sense of place (i.e., ski resort setting – refer to Table 3.15-1).

Area 4

Area 4 is located in the upper elevation of the existing SUP area, in the immediate foreground of View Point #6, foreground of view points #5 and #7, and middleground of view points #1-#4. Area 4 contains ski area development, including the facilities at the summit of Pigtail Peak. Area 4 is allocated to both RE-1 and 2L due to its location in both Forests. As with Area 3, the presence of ski area facilities corresponds to the desired future condition for 2L and the description for RE-1. The VQO is Retention. With the existing ski area facilities, Area 4 exhibits the defining aspects of the White Pass sense of place (i.e., ski resort setting – refer to Table 3.15-1).

Area 5

Area 5 includes the upper elevation portions of Pigtail and Hogback Basins, which correspond to the proposed expansion area. Area 5 is in the immediate foreground, foreground and middleground of view points #1-#4, in the foreground and middleground of View Point #6, and in the middleground of view points #5 and #7. Area 5 is located entirely in 2L lands and with no existing development, the area does not currently exhibit the developed character that is described in the desired future condition for 2L lands. The VQO is Retention. With no development, Area 5 exhibits the defining qualities of the Hogback Basin sense of place (refer to Table 3.15-1).

Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail

The PCNST travels a corridor along the eastern and southern portions of the White Pass Study Area, including areas 2, 4 and 5. The PCNST is in the immediate foreground of view points #1-#3, and the foreground of view points #4-#7. Passing adjacent to the existing ski area, immediate foreground and foreground views from the PCNST include undisturbed forest, with occasional views of ski area development (e.g., ski trails) in the middleground. The VQO is Foreground Retention.

US 12

US 12 bisects the existing White Pass SUP area, passing through a range of landscapes in areas 2 and 3. US 12 is in the immediate foreground of View Point #7 and the middleground of View Point #5. The road passes through both 2L and RE-1 lands. Accordingly, the highway provides views of the developed facilities at White Pass. Within the ski area, the VQO is Retention.

3.15.2.2 Landscape Character and Visual Absorption Capability

The Landscape Characteristics and Visual Absorption Capability (VAC) for each area are documented below. VAC is the relative ability of the land to absorb use and still meet prescribed VQOs established by the respective Forest Plans. The VAC is used in determining the relative ability of any landscape to accept human alteration without loss of landscape character or scenic condition. In areas rated high, it is easier for the landscape to accept change; in areas rated low, it is more difficult to blend in activities. In general, the higher the diversity of the landscape, the higher its visual absorption capacity.

The SMS Handbook (USDA 1995) indicates that slope is the most important VAC factor on mountainous terrain, while vegetative cover is the most important factor on gently rolling landscapes. Soils and geology are also important factors. Features such as cliffs, rock outcrops and slide areas can provide natural openings from which to borrow in the design of human alterations to the landscape. Soil productivity is highly correlated to vegetation, and is taken into consideration when evaluating the vegetation factor.

In this analysis, the VAC parameter is used as a measure of the relative importance of activities that affect the landscape. A major consideration is the location of the viewer (i.e., critical viewpoints) in relationship

to viewing the landscape. Another consideration is the type of activity to be placed upon the landscape. Together these factors allow for a determination of VAC as high, medium or low.

Areas 1 and 2

Areas 1 and 2 are characterized by continuous, uniform dense stands of high-elevation conifers in a natural condition including mountain hemlock, Pacific silver fir, Engelmann spruce, and Alaska yellow cedar (refer to Section 3.5 – Vegetation). With the exception of the access road and return ski trail on the west side of the existing ski area (refer to Figure 3-46), the forest landscape appears natural. Area 1 is comprised of slopes ranging from 20 percent to nearly 100 percent. Heavy timber screens much of Area 1 from viewers along US 12. Area 2, although similar in character to Area 1, has more gentle slopes and is less exposed to viewers along US 12.

Due to the dense, natural appearing timber stands and steep slopes throughout the majority of areas 1 and 2, their capability to absorb visual changes is low. VAC is particularly low in Area 1 due to the slope that makes its entire face visible. Clearing along these slopes could create strong form and lines evident to viewers along US 12 and viewpoints along, and north of US 12. Closer to US 12, areas 1 and 2 exhibit low slope gradients with large trees along the highway. As a result, the VAC of areas 1 and 2 immediately adjacent to US 12, including View Point #7 is relatively high.

Area 3

Area 3 consists of clearing, grading and development (including buildings, lift terminals and chairlifts) associated with the White Pass Ski Area. The area has been developed for winter recreation and vegetated with grasses and forbs (refer to Section 3.5 – Vegetation). Several trails and access roads traverse across the hillside. Most of the area is visible on the south side of US 12, including the existing day lodge, several maintenance buildings and chairlift towers. On the north side of US 12, condominiums, the Krackerbarrel store/gas station, and. about 5 acres of gravel surface parking area are quite visible. During the winter most of the area north of US 12 is partially screened by high banks of snow. In the summer this area is partially screened by deciduous vegetation. Development at White Pass is characteristic of what one may expect to see associated with a developed ski area.

Area 3 has been developed in a manner that is consistent with the Forest Plan allocations (RE-1 and 2L). The development has created a more diverse landscape, as seen from View Point #7 and along US 12. Accordingly, Area 3's ability to absorb change is high. Further development would continue to add to the developed character, and would be consistent with existing developed nature of the area.

Area 4

Although somewhat similar in slope and vegetation to areas 1 and 2, Area 4 has been developed as a ski resort consistent with Forest Plan management objectives and allocations by construction and clearing for lift corridors and ski trails. Development of ski terrain in Area 4 has retained tree islands comprised of

mountain hemlock and pacific silver fir creating distinct form and line not characteristic of the more dense slopes of areas 1 and 2. The *Great White*, *Pigtail* and *Paradise* chairlifts are the most prominent features on Area 4 and lie in a straight, uphill clearing that is evident from view points #6 and #7, and other points along US 12. These developed features are consistent with the desired future condition for 2L and the description of RE-1 lands. The *Great White* and *Pigtail* chairlifts rise above the cliff line, out of the foreground view, from US 12. The *Paradise* chairlift and trails are not evident from the lower mountain (View Point #7) or US 12, but the *Paradise* pod is visible in the middleground view from Viewpoint 2.

Area 4 has been developed with chairlift corridors and ski trails, yet the area appears to be generally forested, when viewed from all critical viewpoints. This area provides a visual transition, from the heavily groomed slopes and conditions described for Area 3 to Hogback Basin. Developed features are consistent with the Forest Plan allocations (i.e., developed recreation facilities), and create a landscape that is more diverse than a similar, undeveloped forest would appear. On this basis, the VAC of Area 4 is moderate. Further development would add to the developed nature of the area and would blend in.

Area 5

Pigtail and Hogback Basins comprise Area 5. Both basins are undeveloped except for the PCNST that passes through the area from Goat Rocks Wilderness at elevation 5,850 feet, until it breaches the saddle between Goat Rocks Wilderness and Hogback Basin at an approximate elevation of 6,250 feet (refer to Figure 3-46). The PCNST is a low impact single tread native surface trail that blends into the landscape. The vegetative patterns in Pigtail and Hogback Basins differ in structure from the dense forests described for areas 1-4. Subalpine parklands populated by mountain hemlock, subalpine fir and occasional Engelmann spruce interspersed with swales consisting of shrub and herbaceous species comprised primarily of lupine, beargrass, Indian paint brush and huckleberry species characterize this area (refer to Section 3.5 – Vegetation). Pigtail and Hogback Basins are visible from upper elevations within the existing SUP area including Pigtail Peak (View Point #6).

In Area 5, Pigtail and Hogback Basins have more gentle slopes than the rest of the White Pass Study Area, and the subalpine parkland vegetation pattern provides a diverse array of openings and tree islands throughout the area. Area 5 is unseen from US 12 and the majority of the existing ski area (i.e., Viewpoints 5 and 7, and US 12) and only seen in an oblique view from View Point #6 on Pigtail Peak and Viewpoints 1 - 3 along ridges of the basin. From these points, the VAC of the basin is high. From the ground, the gradual slopes obscure much of the basin from viewers, most of whom are traveling the PCNST, and immediate foreground views are most prominent due to the predominance of parkland vegetation. The VAC of the basin within the foreground is dependent upon the type of development. As viewed from View Point #6 (foreground and middleground), the parkland vegetation exhibits linear openings (glades), which would allow for lift and trail clearing to blend in to the surrounding conditions, as compared to the distinct clearing patterns and strong form and line created by trail and lift development

in Area 3. The VAC from View Point #6 is high. From Viewpoints 1-3 (immediate foreground and foreground), the predominant glades provide a highly diverse landscape that is comprised of natural openings and tree islands. The creation of additional openings through tree island removal could blend with these natural features, resulting in a high VAC.

3.15.2.3 Critical View Points

In order to analyze potential visual impacts associated with proposed development on NFSL, seven critical viewpoints have been displayed (refer to Figure 3-46 and the representative photos below). These viewpoints are intended to represent the most commonly traveled and used viewpoints, in and adjacent to the ski area, from which development may affect the scenic quality and integrity of the area.

It is impractical to undertake a visual analysis of the entire area as a whole. Consequently, seven viewpoints were chosen to represent visually sensitive areas within the planning area, including the PCNST corridor. Fieldwork and GIS analysis were used to choose the most appropriate viewpoints and to accurately evaluate the effects.

View Point #1 – Along PCNST - Saddle between Hogback and Miriam Basins

View Point #1 is located in Area 5, which is allocated to 2L. Immediate foreground, foreground and background views dominate the views from the PCNST at the saddle between Hogback and Miriam Basins (refer to Illustration 3.15-1). From this view point, foreground topography and vegetation screen middleground views. Immediate foreground and foreground views are dominated by subalpine parkland and herbaceous plant communities. Saplings ranging in height from 2-8 feet are scattered throughout the landscape. Background views are dominated by sweeping views of the Cascade Range and partial views of Mt. Rainier. Existing views from View Point #1 meet the prescribed VQO of Retention, which corresponds to an SIL of High.

Illustration 3.15-1:
View Point 1 – Saddle between Hogback and Miriam Basin on the PCNST

View Point #2 – Ridge between Hogback and Miriam Basins

View Point #2 is located in Area 5 (2L allocation) on the ridge between Hogback and Miriam Basins, near the location of the proposed upper terminal of Chair 5, as proposed in Alternative 2, Modified Alternative 4, and Alternative 6 (refer to Figures 2-2, 2-4 and 2-6), and near the location of the proposed PCNST reroute in Modified Alternative 4. To the north and west toward the proposed development area, immediate foreground and foreground views dominate, with 4-20-foot tall saplings and trees screening middleground views (refer to Illustration 3.15-2). Facing east along this ridge, the existing *Paradise* lift top terminal on Pigtail Peak can be viewed in the middleground in some locations. Intermittent background views of Mt. Rainier occur through gaps in foreground trees but are rare. To the south and east, the terrain drops away and long distance views of Pinegrass Ridge, Divide Ridge and views into Miriam Basin dominate the scenery. Views from View Point #2 meet the prescribed VQO of Retention, which corresponds to an SIL of High.

Illustration 3.15-2:
View Point 2 – Along Proposed PCNST Reroute – Ridge between Hogback and Miriam Basins

View Point #3 – Along PCNST underneath Proposed Chairlift

View Point #3 is located in Area 5 (2L allocation) on the PCNST directly underneath the alignment of Chair 6, as proposed in Alternative 2, Modified Alternative 4, and Alternative 6 (Figures 2-2, 2-4 and 2-6). A tree island in the immediate foreground dominates upslope and downslope views from the PCNST at this location (refer to Illustration 3.15.3). In the foreground, adjacent to the tree island, are meadows and glades, ranging from 50 to 100 feet in width and consisting of a diverse patchwork of herbaceous plant communities and saplings ranging in height from 3-8 feet. Intermittent background views of Mt. Rainier exist through tree openings. Views from View Point #3 meet the prescribed VQO of Retention which corresponds to an SIL of High.

Illustration 3.15-3:
View Point 3 – Along PCNST – Underneath Proposed Chairlift

View Point #4 – Along PCNST Reroute in Miriam Basin (Eliminated from Detailed Analysis)

View Point #4 was originally located to evaluate the visual impacts associated with a re-route of the PCNST into Miriam Basin. This re-reroute has been eliminated from the range of alternatives (refer to 2.2.2 - Other Project Elements Considered). As a result, no analysis is provided for View Point #4 in the Environmental Consequences.

View Point #5 – Along PCNST – Within Existing SUP Boundary

View Point #5 is located in Area 2 (RE-1 allocation) within the existing White Pass SUP boundary, east of the existing ski trail clearing and development (refer to Figure 3-46). Immediate foreground and foreground views dominate the landscape from View Point #5, due to the predominance of mature forest. The forest vegetation restricts both middleground and background views. Large trees comprised of mountain hemlock, western hemlock, noble fir and pacific silver fir, with an understory of huckleberry species dominate immediate foreground and foreground views (refer to Illustration 3.15-4). The viewing area is primarily undisturbed except for the immediate foreground view of the PCNST that ascends the steep slope in the vicinity of the viewpoint. Existing ski trail development associated with the White Pass Ski Area is discernable through the foreground trees but largely unnoticeable to the casual observer. Views from View Point #5 meet the prescribed VQO of Retention, which corresponds to an SIL of High.

Illustration 3.15-4:
View Point 5 – Along PCNST – Within Existing SUP Boundary

View Point #6 – Pig Tail Peak to Hogback Basin

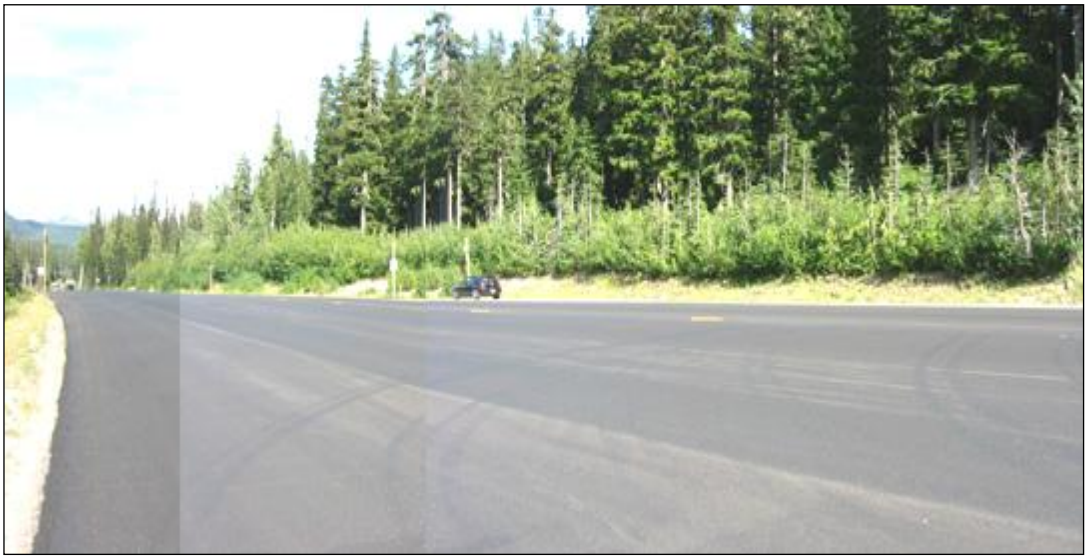
View Point #6 is located in Area 4, along the boundary between the two national forests (2L and RE-1), within the existing SUP area and atop Pigtail Peak (refer to Figure 3-46). Although immediate foreground and foreground views include lift terminals, cleared ski trail corridors, and signage associated with the White Pass Ski Area, middleground and background views dominate views from View Point #6. Gentle slopes and diverse parkland vegetative patterns comprising Pigtail and Hogback Basins are clearly evident from View Point #6 (refer to Illustration 3.15-5). Background views consisting of peaks within Goat Rocks Wilderness, the Cascade Range to the north, and Mt. Rainier dominate views from Pigtail Peak. Views from View Point #6 meet the prescribed VQO of Retention which corresponds to an SIL of High.

Illustration 3.15-5:
View Point 6 – Pig Tail Peak to Hogback Basin

View Point #7 – Along US 12

View Point #7 is located in Area 3 (RE-1 and 2L allocations), adjacent to the Krackerbarrel store/gas station on the north side of US 12 (refer to Figure 3-46). Immediate foreground views consist of the highway and several base area facilities, (including the gas station, condominiums, parking areas, base lodge, maintenance facilities) which dominate views along the highway. Alder shrubs and large trees dominate roadside vegetation adjacent to base area facilities along the south side of the highway (refer to Illustration 3.15-6). Relatively undisturbed-appearing vegetation along US 12 contributes to a natural-appearing setting and meets the prescribed VQO of Retention, which corresponds with an SIL of High. WSDOT occasionally maintains the vegetation immediately along the highway, which creates a "mowed" look along the roadway shoulder. However, after mowing, the shrubs grow new foliage, and appear more natural for the majority of the time. The existing ski area development has resulted in the removal of woody vegetation and the installation of ski lifts and facilities in the foreground of View Point #7. The ski area is evident and more reflective of a rural to urban setting and landscape character that is relevant to the land use objectives of the area, including modification of the landscape character. The evidence of physical facilities, including ski area infrastructure, is consistent with the desired future condition for 2L and the description for RE-1. In addition, the developed facilities are in character with the values that define the sense of place at White Pass Ski Area. Considering the future condition and sense of place, the foreground view of the ski area from View Point #7 meets the prescribed VQO of Retention, which corresponds with an SIL of High.

Illustration 3.15-6:
View Point 7 – Along US 12



3.15.3 Environmental Consequences

The visual effects of the alternatives were evaluated by comparing the existing landscape character and Scenic Integrity with the conditions that would exist under each alternative. For purposes of this analysis, the landscape character refers to the positive attributes of the landscape, while the scenic integrity describes interactions that deviate from the natural landscape character, including interactions such as vegetation treatments, position and duration of view, and Visual Absorption Capability.

Page 2-4 of the SMS (USDA 1995) provides a comparison of the five levels of SIL described in the SMS (USDA 1995) with the corresponding levels of existing scenic conditions and visual quality levels described in the VMS (USFS 1974). Visual Quality Standards in a developed recreation allocation anticipate and allow for more alterations or development as integral to providing the developed recreation experience. Specifically, as an example, an SIL of high equates to a VQO of retention, which allows for deviations that repeat the form, line, color, texture, and pattern common to the landscape character and scale (USDA 1995; refer to Table 3.15-2 – Relationship between VQOs and SIL). An SIL of Very High corresponds to a VQO of Preservation. Thus, an SIL of High allows for evidence of deviation (although noticeable deviations must remain visually subordinate to the landscape character), whereas an SIL of Very High would require preservation.

Illustration 3.15-FEIS 1, below, shows an example of a developed recreation facility in the landscape meeting a VQO of retention as presented on page H-17 of the SMS (USDA 1995). This photograph shows the Pine Marten Lodge and top terminal of a detachable-quad chairlift at Mt Bachelor Ski Area. The lodge and chairlift design and material selection are designed to keep the form, line, color and texture with the natural landscape in mind (USDA 1995).

Illustration 3.15- FEIS1:
An Example of a Developed Recreation Facility with a VQO of retention

Source: USDA, 1995, pg H-17

A conceptual sketch has been created to show the scale and Cascadian architectural style of the proposed mid-mountain lodge (refer to Figure 3-44). A visual simulation for the parking lot proposed under Modified Alternative 4, and Alternatives 6 and 9 has been created for View Point 7 – Along US 12 (refer to Figure 3-45). Proposed facility design was developed based on winter season viewing, when the contrast is most pronounced (particularly with respect to the contrast between openings and vegetated slopes). The designs "borrow" from the natural landscape patterns: a mosaic of openings, including talus slopes; feathering of the clearings needed for ski facilities; and use of earth tones that match the area rock and soil. By reducing color contrast and emphasizing a mosaic landscape character, proposed developments are intended to blend into the background throughout all seasons of the year. Figures 3-46, 3-47, 3-48 and 3-49 depict the locations of the scenic areas and critical view points.

3.15.3.1 View Point #1 – Along PCNST - Saddle between Hogback and Miriam Basins

Alternative 1

Under Alternative 1, no additional development would occur within the White Pass Study Area. Visual conditions would remain unchanged. Barring any natural vegetation-altering events, the landscape would continue to appear as described for Viewpoint #1 in Section 3.15.2.3.

Alternative 2, Modified Alternative 4, and Alternative 6

Under Alternative 2, Modified Alternative 4 and Alternative 6, vegetation and topography would screen all development, as viewed from the saddle between Hogback and Miriam Basins. As such, development within Pigtail and Hogback Basins would continue to meet the prescribed VQO of Retention and associated SIL of High, as viewed from View Point #1.

The aspects of Hogback Basin, White Pass Ski Area, and US 12 that contribute to their sense of place would be retained in Alternative 2, Modified Alternative 4 and Alternative 6.

Alternative 9

Under Alternative 9, no development would occur in Pigtail or Hogback Basins, and visual conditions would remain unchanged. As such, views from View Point #1 would continue to meet the prescribed VQO of Retention and associated SIL of High. The aspects of Hogback Basin, White Pass Ski Area, and US 12 that contribute to their sense of place would be retained under Alternative 9.

3.15.3.2 View Point #2 – Ridge between Hogback and Miriam Basins

Alternative 1

Under Alternative 1, no additional development would occur within the White Pass Study Area. Visual conditions would remain unchanged. Barring any natural vegetation-altering events, the landscape would continue to appear as described for View Point #2 in Section 3.15.2.3.

Alternatives 2 and 6

View Point 2 was chosen to evaluate impacts associated with the implementation of Modified Alternative 4, which includes a PCNST reroute along this portion of the ridge between Hogback and Miriam Basins. Under Alternatives 2 and 6, the upper terminal of the *Basin* chairlift would be located within 130 to 400 feet of View Point #2. The immediate foreground vegetation at this view point would remain undisturbed. Under Alternatives 2 and 6, new development would not be evident from View Point #2, although it is not expected that viewers would visit this view point without the PCNST re-route proposed in Modified Alternative 4. Clearing associated with lift and trail development would be similar to existing vegetative patterns and would slightly open views to Mt. Rainier to the northwest, thereby mimicking the subalpine parkland pattern. Any future repairs or upgrades to the existing facilities would include measures to reduce visual effects, including the use of vegetative screening, compatible colors and texture, and a Cascadian Architecture theme for any upgrades to buildings (refer to Table 2.4-2, Mitigation Measure MM22). As a result of Mitigation Measure MM22, visual conditions from View Point #2 would improve with facility maintenance and upgrades. **As a result, under Alternatives 2 and 6, the existing landscape character would be retained and the prescribed VQO of Retention, which corresponds to an SIL of High, would continue to be met.**

The upper terminal of the *Basin* chairlift would not be visible to the viewer from View Point #2, since the color of the upper terminal would be chosen to blend with the adjacent vegetation (refer to Table 2.4-2, Mitigation Measure MM19). **On this basis, the view from View Point #2 would continue to meet the prescribed VQO of Retention and the corresponding SIL of High, particularly given that viewers would not be expected to visit View Point #2 under Alternatives 2 and 6.**

The sense of place in Hogback Basin would be adversely affected by the installation of facilities and the presence of alpine skiers and snowboarders in the winter, but a Roaded Natural ROS would remain during the skiing season, and to a greater degree, during the non-skiing season. Therefore, Alternatives 2 and 6 would retain some of the aspects that contribute to the sense of place in Hogback Basin.

The White Pass Ski Area sense of place would be retained, with additional developed recreation facilities in a rural setting contributing to the sense of place. Along US 12, the sense of place would remain unchanged, as expansion to the west would not be visible to travelers along the highway.

Modified Alternative 4

Under Modified Alternative 4, the upper terminal of the *Basin* chairlift would be located in the same location as under Alternatives 2 and 6. As such, clearing associated with lift and trail development, and the visibility of the terminal would be similar to the description for Alternatives 2 and 6. **As a result, under Modified Alternative 4, the existing landscape character would be retained and the prescribed VQO of Retention, which corresponds to an SIL of High, would continue to be met.**

In addition, the PCNST would be re-routed south to the ridge and around the proposed chairlift to pass through View Point #2 in order to avoid a chairlift crossing. Immediate foreground and foreground vegetation and topography would screen lift and trail development from View Point #2 along the PCNST reroute between Hogback and Miriam Basins. As described in Mitigation Measure MM23, the trail re-route would be cleared and maintained to a 24-inch tread of mineral soil and a 6-foot clearing of trees and woody shrubs. The trail would be located to avoid the removal of trees over 8 inches DBH wherever possible. **Considering the unique vegetative patterns in the subalpine environment of Pigtail Basin and the nature of the clearing that would occur to construct ski trails, hikers and casual observers would have a hard time distinguishing ski trails from existing conditions. However, the chairlift structures and clearing would be more noticeable. Duration of impact would be minimal (five to ten minutes of trail time) and views of Mt. Rainier would not be obstructed as a result of ski area development in Pigtail Basin.**

As described for Alternative 2, implementation of Mitigation Measure MM22 would improve visual conditions from View Point #2 due to visual enhancement of the existing facilities associated with future maintenance and upgrades.

The PCNST reroute to View Point #2 would reduce the viewer's exposure to lift and trail development in Pigtail and Hogback Basins under Modified Alternative 4. However, the reroute would provide somewhat less stunning views of Mt. Rainier as compared to the other alternatives. Long distance views of Pinegrass Ridge, Divide Ridge, and views into Miriam Basin would be provided similar to the view from the existing PCNST immediately to the south of the proposal.

The sense of place in Hogback Basin would be adversely affected by the installation of facilities and the presence of alpine skiers and snowboarders in the winter, but a Roaded Natural ROS would remain during the skiing season, and to a greater degree, during the non-skiing season. Therefore, Modified Alternative 4 would retain some of the aspects that contribute to the sense of place in Hogback Basin.

Along US 12, the introduction of a new parking lot along the highway would be consistent with the White Pass Ski Area sense of place. Highway travelers currently pass through the White Pass Study Area and developed facilities along the highway are expected. Under Modified Alternative 4, the parking lot would be screened by existing vegetation and views from US 12 would continue to meet the prescribed VQO of Retention and corresponding SIL of High.

Alternative 9

Under Alternative 9, no development would occur in Pigtail or Hogback Basins. Development within the existing ski area would be faintly discernable in the middleground from View Point #2. The visibility of this development would be consistent with the desired future condition for 2L lands. As such, views from View Point #2 would continue to meet the prescribed VQO of Retention and corresponding SIL of High.

The sense of place in Hogback and Pigtail Basins would not be affected by ski area development under Alternative 9. Development would be consistent with the sense of place at both White Pass Ski Area and along US 12 since the additional ski lift, trails and new parking lot that would be evident from the highway are an expected part of this developed ski area.

As described for Alternative 2, implementation of Mitigation Measure MM22 would improve visual conditions from View Point #2 due to visual enhancement of the existing facilities associated with future maintenance and upgrades.

3.15.3.3 View Point #3 – Along PCNST- Underneath Proposed Chairlift

Alternative 1

Under Alternative 1, no additional development would occur within the White Pass Study Area. Visual conditions would remain unchanged.

Alternative 2, Modified Alternative 4 and Alternative 6

Under Alternative 2, Modified Alternative 4 and Alternative 6, the alignment of the *Basin* chairlift would be located directly overhead from the existing PCNST. Clearing associated with the lift alignment would remove a tree island along this portion of the PCNST. The removal of vegetation in the subalpine parkland would not introduce any form or line that is uncharacteristic of the existing landscape. Saplings less than 3 feet in height would not be cut (refer to Table 2.4-2, Mitigation Measure MM9). Evidence of tree removal may occasionally be visible, although stumps would be flush-cut (Table 2.4-2, Mitigation Measure MM20). Clearing associated with lift and trail development (which would include buried utility lines and exposed stream crossings at ground surface elevation) would be similar to existing vegetative patterns and would slightly open views to Mt. Rainier to the northwest, thereby mimicking the subalpine parkland pattern and retaining the existing landscape character. As a result, the vegetative disturbance under Alternatives 2, Modified Alternative 4 and Alternative 6 would continue to meet the prescribed VQO of Retention, which corresponds to an SIL of High.

The upper terminal of the *Basin* lift would be located approximately 1,000 feet uphill (slope distance) of View Point #3, and would be somewhat obscured by topography in the foreground - one would have to look up to see the terminal site, which would be subordinate to the surrounding foreground views. **The color of the upper terminal would be chosen to blend with the adjacent vegetation (refer to Table 2.4-2, Mitigation Measure MM19). The visibility of the chairlift cables and chairs in the immediate foreground of View Point #3 and the obscured view of the top terminal in the foreground would be consistent with the desired future condition for the 2L allocation, which states that "Roads, buildings, ski lifts, tables, docks, and other physical facilities are evident, but design and construction will repeat the color, shapes and lines of the surrounding. Openings usually exist to accommodate facilities and provide scenic views; trees and other vegetation will vary widely in type and size" (USDA 1990a, IV-101). On this basis, the view from View Point #3 would continue to meet the prescribed VQO of Retention and the corresponding SIL of High.** Under Modified Alternative 4, the visual effects to View Point #3 would be the same as Alternatives 2 and 6, but the PCNST would be re-routed away from View Point #3. As a result, PCNST users would no longer access View Point #3.

The sense of place in Hogback Basin would be adversely affected by the installation of facilities and the presence of alpine skiers and snowboarders in the winter, but a **Roaded Natural** ROS would be attained during the skiing season, and to a greater degree, during the non-skiing season. **Therefore, Alternative 2, Modified Alternative 4 and Alternative 6 would retain some of the aspects that contribute to the sense of place in Hogback Basin.**

Under Alternative 2, Modified Alternative 4 and Alternative 6, the White Pass Ski Area sense of place would be retained, with additional developed recreation facilities in a rural setting contributing to the sense of place. Along US 12, the sense of place would be changed through the introduction of a new parking lot along the highway; however it would be consistent with the White Pass sense of place.

Highway travelers currently pass through the White Pass Study Area where developed facilities along the highway are expected.

Alternative 9

Under Alternative 9, no development would occur in Pigtail or Hogback Basins. Development within the existing ski area would not be discernable from View Point #3. As such, views from View Point #3 would continue to meet the prescribed VQO of Retention and corresponding SIL of High.

Effects to sense of place in Hogback Basin, White Pass Ski Area and US 12 would be as described for View Point #2.

3.15.3.4 View Point #5 – Along PCNST – Within Existing SUP Boundary

Alternative 1

Under Alternative 1, no additional development would occur within the White Pass Study Area. Visual conditions would remain unchanged.

Alternatives 2 and 6

Under Alternatives 2 and 6, no additional development would be discernable from View Point #5. Views would continue to meet the prescribed VQO of Retention and corresponding SIL of High along the PCNST at View Point #5.

View Point #5 provides no views of Hogback Basin, so there would be no effect to the sense of place in Hogback Basin. With no development taking place in the vicinity of View Point #5, the sense of place of White Pass Ski Area and US 12 would remain unchanged under Alternatives 2 and 6.

Modified Alternative 4

Under Modified Alternative 4, visual effects would be as described for Alternatives 2 and 6. Terrain modifications (i.e., grading) on the Holiday trail would be undertaken, however, these modifications would not be visible from the PCNST due to foreground views being dominated by large trees in the upper story and huckleberry species in the understory.

As such, views from View Point #5 would continue to meet the prescribed VQO of Retention, corresponding SIL of High, and sense of place would remain unaffected under Modified Alternative 4.

Alternative 9

Under Alternative 9, the PCNST would be rerouted to the east of View Point #5 to avoid the proposed ski trail clearings in the *PCT* pod. Rerouting the PCNST would minimize visual impacts to travelers. As described in Mitigation Measure MM23, the re-routed trail would be cleared and maintained to a 24-inch tread of mineral soil and a 6-foot clearing of trees and woody shrubs. Additionally, the trail would be

located to avoid the removal of trees over 8 inches DBH wherever possible. Foreground views would continue to be dominated by large trees consisting of western hemlock, mountain hemlock, noble fir, pacific silver fir and huckleberry species in the understory, although clearings associated with ski trails may also be evident**. Due to the relatively large trees and steep slope, the VAC in this area is comparatively high, and the alterations to the landscape from development would be similar to the existing ski facilities. Views would continue to meet the prescribed VQO of Retention and corresponding SIL of High along the PCNST at View Point #5.**

The sense of place in the White Pass Ski Area and along US 12 would be changed by the installation of ski area facilities and the presence of alpine skiers in the winter. These alterations would be consistent with the defining characteristics of the White Pass Ski Area sense of place (i.e., ski resort setting, developed facilities and commercial businesses on highway – refer to Table 3.15-1). Development under Alternative 9 would not be discernible from, nor have an effect on Hogback Basin. Therefore the Hogback Basin sense of place would be unchanged.

3.15.3.5 View Point #6 – Pigtail Peak to Hogback Basin

Alternatives 1 and 9

Under Alternatives 1 and 9, no development would occur within Pigtail or Hogback Basins. As such, visual conditions would remain unchanged and views would continue to meet the prescribed VQO of Retention and corresponding SIL of High. Facilities within the existing ski area under Alternative 1 would appear as described in Section 3.15.2.3 for Viewpoint #6. Under Alternative 9, any future repairs or upgrades to the existing facilities would include measures to reduce visual effects, including the use of vegetative screening, compatible colors and texture, and a Cascadian architecture theme for any upgrades to buildings (refer to Table 2.4-2, Mitigation Measure MM22). As a result of Mitigation Measure MM22, visual conditions from View Point #6 would improve with facility maintenance and upgrades.

Alternative 2 and Modified Alternative 4

Although Alternative 2 and Modified Alternative 4 would have slightly different trails in the *Basin* and *Hogback Express* pods, visual impacts would appear identical in the foreground and middleground from View Point #6.

Pigtail and Hogback Basins represent foreground and middleground views from Pigtail Peak. Under Alternative 2 and Modified Alternative 4, the access trail from Pigtail Peak to the bottom terminal of Chair 5 would be somewhat apparent in the foreground, as viewed to the south. No other development would take place in the foreground. **Due to the high VAC in Area 5 and the narrow design of the access trail, the prescribed VQO of Retention and the corresponding SIL of High would continue to be met in the foreground of View Point #6.**

In the middleground, clearing and tree island removal for trail development in Pigtail and Hogback Basins would follow existing vegetative patterns and utilize natural tree openings for trail alignment. Although clearing would be required to connect natural openings, the high VAC associated with gradual slopes and the diverse subalpine parkland texture of the landscape would allow the landscape to absorb the effects of clearing. In terms of vegetation manipulation, the prescribed VQO of Retention and the corresponding SIL of High would continue to be met in the middleground.

As viewed from View Point #6, the two new chairlifts, the lodge, and associated infrastructure would appear in the middleground. These structures would be designed to blend with the surrounding landscape and the lodge would adhere to a Cascadian architectural theme to maintain scenic quality (refer to Mitigation Measure MM19 in 2.4-2 and Management Requirement MR12 in Table 2.4-3). The lift structures would traverse the area but would be subordinate to the surrounding landscape, due in part to the high VAC (i.e., low gradient slopes and diverse vegetative structure) and the implementation of Mitigation Measure MM19. Application of Mitigation Measure MM22 would ensure that any future reconstruction of existing facilities, would be similar in character and architecturally compatible with the established landscape and would comply with the approved site development plans (refer to Table 2.4-2).

The visibility of the proposed chairlifts and lodge in the middleground of View Point #6 would be consistent with the desired future condition for the 2L allocation, which states that "roads, buildings, ski lifts, tables, docks, and other physical facilities are evident, but design and construction would repeat the color, shapes and lines of the surroundings. Openings usually exist to accommodate facilities and provide scenic views; trees and other vegetation would vary widely in type and size" (USDA 1990a, IV-101). In addition, as a result of Mitigation Measure MM22, visual conditions of the existing facilities as viewed from View Point #6 would improve through facility maintenance and upgrades. On this basis, the view from View Point #6 would continue to meet the prescribed VQO of Retention and the corresponding SIL of High.

The sense of place in Hogback Basin would be adversely affected by the installation of developed facilities and the presence of alpine skiers in the winter, but a Roaded Natural ROS would remain during the skiing season, and to a greater degree, during the non-skiing season. Therefore, Alternative 2 and Modified Alternative 4 would retain some of the aspects that contribute to the sense of place in Hogback Basin.

In addition, the White Pass Ski Area sense of place would be retained, with additional developed recreation facilities in a rural setting contributing to the sense of place. The US 12 corridor is not apparent when viewing Hogback Basin from Pigtail Peak. Therefore, no evaluation of the effect on the US 12 sense of place is made.

Alternative 6

Under Alternative 6, one chairlift and associated trails would be developed in Pigtail Basin. Accordingly, potential impacts would be similar to Alternative 2 and Modified Alternative 4 in the near middleground (i.e., Pigtail Basin) and existing conditions would be maintained in the remainder of the middleground (i.e., Hogback Basin). Within the current White Pass SUP area, any future repairs or upgrades to the existing facilities would include measures to reduce visual effects, including the use of vegetative screening, compatible colors and texture, and a Cascadian Architecture theme for any upgrades to buildings (refer to Table 2.4-2, Mitigation Measure M22). As a result of Mitigation Measure MM22, visual conditions of the current SUP area as seen from View Point #6 would improve over time. **Accordingly, development would remain visually subordinate to the surrounding landscape and views would continue to meet the prescribed VQO of Retention and corresponding SIL of High.**

Effects on sense of place in Hogback Basin, White Pass Ski Area and US 12 would be as described for Alternative 2 and Modified Alternative 4.

3.15.3.6 View Point #7 – Along US 12

View Point #7 was created in order to analyze impacts along US 12 associated with the development of the proposed parking lot under Modified Alternative 4, and Alternatives 6 and 9.

Alternatives 1 and 2

Under Alternatives 1 and 2, no development is proposed that would impact views from View Point #7. Immediate foreground and foreground views consisting of base area facilities (including the gas station, condominiums, parking areas, base lodge and maintenance facilities) and the highway would continue to dominate views along the highway. Alder shrubs and large trees would dominate roadside vegetation adjacent to base area facilities along the south side of the highway (refer to Illustration 3.15-6), although WSDOT would periodically maintain this vegetation, creating a "mowed" appearance for up to several months at a time during the spring through fall, and throughout the winter. Undisturbed-appearing forest vegetation along US 12 through the ski area would continue to contribute to a natural-appearing setting and would meet the prescribed VQO of Retention which corresponds with an SIL of High. The ski area would continue to be evident and more reflective of a rural to urban setting and landscape character that is relevant to the land use objectives of the area, including modification of the landscape character. The evidence of physical facilities, including ski area infrastructure, would remain consistent with the desired future condition for 2L and the description for RE-1. In addition, the developed facilities would continue to be in character with the values that define the sense of place at White Pass Ski Area (refer to Table 3.15-1).

The rural setting aspect of the White Pass sense of place would remain unchanged, and as a result, the sense of place along US 12 would remain unchanged. Hogback Basin is not visible from Viewpoint #7, so no evaluation of the Hogback Basin sense of place is provided for this viewpoint.

Modified Alternative 4 and Alternatives 6 and 9

Under Modified Alternative 4 and Alternatives 6 and 9, a parking lot would be constructed within the foreground, low-gradient portion of the forest cover described along the highway in Area 2. The Modified Alternative 4 parking lot would be larger than under Alternatives 6 and 9, however the view from View Point #7 would be similar. Clearing would be set back from the highway approximately 220 feet. **An opening in the canopy for the entrance to the lot would be evident. However, foreground vegetation composed of alder shrubs and large trees would remain to help screen proposed clearing and parking lot development from viewers along US 12 (refer to Figure 3-45), as required by Mitigation Measure MM21 (refer to Table 2.4-2).**

Development would not be discernable to the casual observer. Clearing would be consistent with the existing built environment comprising the base area at White Pass and representative of what one would expect in a developed ski area. The presence of the parking lot would shift the landscape character of this portion of Area 2 into the more rural setting of Area 3. Nonetheless, the Forest Plan description for RE-1 indicates that "this prescription is also applicable to existing and potential Alpine (downhill) ski areas including runs, tows or lift facilities, shelters, lodges, services and parking lots" (USDA 1990b, IV-159). With this direction, and given that Area 3 meets the prescribed VQO of Retention, the development of the parking lot under Alternatives 6, 9, and Modified Alternative 4 would continue to meet the prescribed VQO of Retention.

The sense of place in the White Pass Ski Area would be changed by the presence of the parking lot. The new parking lot would enhance the user's experience by providing safe parking on the ski area side of the highway. As such, this alteration would be consistent with the defining qualities of the White Pass sense of place (i.e., ski resort setting, developed facilities – refer to Table 3.15-1).

Similarly, the US 12 sense of place would remain unchanged with additional ski area development along the highway being similar to the existing development, which is a component of the highway corridor. **As such, views from View Point #7 would continue to meet the prescribed VQO of Retention and a corresponding SIL of High.**

3.15.4 Cumulative Effects

A cumulative effects analysis was performed for each watershed at the site scale (White Pass Study Area). Past, present and reasonably foreseeable projects occurring within each watershed area are included in the analysis. Identified projects with cumulative effects may include activities that are both inside and outside the White Pass Study Area, such as US 12 paving (UCFC-13), which passes through the White Pass Study Area. Within the discussions below, cumulative impacts to visual resources are considered for short-term and long-term impacts. The cumulative effect to visual resources is an increase

in the developed character and additional visual evidence of developed recreation within the White Pass Study Area.

A list of past, present and reasonably foreseeable projects occurring within the Upper Clear Fork Cowlitz River watershed (refer to Table 3.15-3) and the Upper Tieton River watershed (refer to Table 3.15-4) that affect visual resources are presented below. For a description of project actions, refer to Table 3.0-FEIS1 in Section 3.0 – Introduction.

Table 3.15-3:
Cumulative Effects of Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Projects in the Upper Clear Fork Cowlitz River Watershed on Visual Resources

Project Number	Project Name	Cumulative Effects
UCFC-3a	Palisades Scenic Viewpoint Project	The 2-acre Palisades Scenic Viewpoint was reconstructed in 2005, resulting in an increase in the scenic quality of US 12, a scenic byway. The effects of this project overlap spatially and temporally with the White Pass expansion. Combined with the White Pass expansion and the other projects listed in this table, this project will add to the long-term increase in scenic quality of US 12, a scenic byway.
UCFC-3b	Palisades Scenic Viewpoint Project Vegetation Management	Approximately 1 acre of trees will be treated to improve the view from the Palisades Scenic Viewpoint, and will result in an increase in the scenic quality along US 12. The effects of this project overlap spatially and temporally with the White Pass expansion. Combined with the White Pass expansion and the other projects listed in this table, this project will add to the cumulative increase in long-term scenic quality of US 12, a scenic byway.
UCFC-4	Mt. Rainier/Goat Rocks Scenic Viewpoint	Approximately 0.75 acre of trees will be treated to highlight views of Mt. Rainier, resulting in an increase in the scenic quality along US 12. The effects of this project overlap spatially and temporally with the White Pass expansion. Combined with the White Pass expansion and the other projects listed in this table, this project will add to the cumulative increase in the long-term scenic quality of US 12, a scenic byway.
UCFC-11	Air Quality Monitoring Building	The construction of an air quality monitoring station on Pigtail Peak resulted in an increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area. The effects of this project overlap spatially and temporally with the White Pass expansion. Coupled with the White Pass expansion and the other projects listed in this table, this project will add to the cumulative increase in the long-term developed character of the White Pass Study Area.
UCFC-13	Highway 12 Paving Project (between Mile Posts 140.3 to 151.2)	Resurfacing on US 12 in 2004 resulted in a road surface with a more noticeably black surface. The effects of this project overlap spatially and may overlap temporally with the implementation of the White Pass expansion. Visual impacts due to this project will be short-term, as the road surface will become lighter and less noticeable with time. Combined with the White Pass expansion and the other projects listed in this table, this project will contribute to a cumulative short-term impact on visual resources within the White Pass Study Area.

Table 3.15-3:
Cumulative Effects of Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Projects in the Upper Clear Fork Cowlitz River Watershed on Visual Resources

Project Number	Project Name	Cumulative Effects
UCFC-17	White Pass Ski Area Yurt Construction	Construction of the yurt near Chair 4 resulted in an increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area. The effects of this project overlap spatially and temporally with the implementation of the White Pass expansion. Combined with the White Pass expansion and other projects listed in this table, this project will add to the cumulative increase in the long-term developed character of the White Pass Study Area.
UCFC-21	White Pass Ski Area Day Lodge Remodel	The Day Lodge was remodeled in 2003 to accommodate increased demand for guest services at the White Pass Ski Area, resulting in an increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area. The effects of this project overlap spatially and temporally with the implementation of the White Pass expansion. Combined with the White Pass expansion and other projects listed in this table, this project will add to the cumulative increase in the long-term developed character of the White Pass Study Area.

Table 3.15-4:
Cumulative Effects of Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Projects on the Upper Tieton River Watershed on Visual Resources

Project Number	Project Name	Cumulative Effects
UT-1	White Pass Ski Area Half Pipe Construction	The construction of a half pipe resulted in an increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area. The effects of this project overlap spatially and temporally with the implementation of the White Pass expansion. Combined with the White Pass expansion and other projects listed in this table, this project will add to the cumulative long-term increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area.
UT-3	White Pass Ski Area Generator Shed and Propane Tank	The construction of a generator shed adjacent to the condominiums resulted in an increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area. The effects of this project overlap spatially and temporally with the implementation of the White Pass expansion. Combined with the White Pass expansion and other projects listed in this table, this project will add to the cumulative long-term increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area.
UT-5	US Cellular Tower	The construction of a cell tower on Pigtail Peak resulted in an increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area. The effects of this project overlap spatially and temporally with the implementation of the White Pass expansion. Combined with the White Pass expansion and other projects listed in this table, this project will add to the cumulative long-term increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area.
UT-7	White Pass Ski Area Cross Country Yurt	The cross-country yurt was constructed in 2001, resulting in an increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area. The effects of this project overlap spatially and temporally with the implementation of the White Pass expansion. Combined with the White Pass expansion and other projects listed in this table, this project will add to the cumulative long-term increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area.

Table 3.15-4:
Cumulative Effects of Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Projects on the Upper Tieton River Watershed on Visual Resources

Project Number	Project Name	Cumulative Effects
UT-8	White Pass Ski Area Manager's Cabin	The construction of a Manager's Cabin in 1998 resulted in an increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area. The effects of this project overlap spatially and temporally with the implementation of the White Pass expansion. Combined with the White Pass expansion and other projects listed in this table, this project will add to the cumulative long-term increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area.
UT-9	White Pass Ski Area Manager's Office	The construction of a Manager's Office in 1998 resulted in an increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area. The effects of this project overlap spatially and temporally with the implementation of the White Pass expansion. Combined with the White Pass expansion and other projects listed in this table, this project will add to the cumulative long-term increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area.
UT-31	Cellular Phone Carrier Improvements at White Pass Communication Site	The replacement of a cell tower and building addition in Pigtail Peak will result in an increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area. This project will overlap spatially and temporally with the implementation of the White Pass expansion. Combined with the White Pass expansion and other projects listed in this table, this project will add to the cumulative long-term increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area.
UT-33	Highway 12 Paving project (between Mile Posts 151.2 and 159)	Resurfacing on US 12 in 2004 resulted in a road surface with a more noticeably black surface. The effects of this project overlap spatially and may overlap temporally with the implementation of the White Pass expansion. Visual impacts due to this project will be short-term, as the road surface will become lighter and less noticeable. Combined with the White Pass expansion and the other projects listed in this table, this project will contribute to a cumulative short-term impact on visual resources.

The cumulative, long-term effect of the projects listed in the table above, combined with the effects of the White Pass expansion, is an increase in the developed character of the White Pass Study Area due to the increased visibility of developed recreation infrastructure and additional buildings. These developments are consistent with the desired future condition for 2L, and the goal and description for RE-1 lands under the GPNF and OWNF Forest Plans, respectively. Additionally, the prescribed VQO of Retention, and the corresponding SIL of High, would continue to be met. Cumulative impacts on the scenic quality of the White Pass Scenic Byway (US 12) are analyzed in Section 3.12-4.