

SECTION 4.2  
AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

## 4.2 AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

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This section evaluates the potential impacts of the project on aesthetics and visual resources. The primary focus of the analysis is on scenic areas and scenic views, particularly from SR 89. The impact analysis is based upon field reconnaissance and review of pertinent documents.

### 4.2.1 SETTING

The project site is located in a region considered to have high scenic value. The southern end of the Cascade mountain range traverses the area; thus, the region contains mountainous areas interspersed with valleys and meadows. Several volcanic features, such as lava tubes and lava flows, are found throughout the region. Lassen Peak, a volcano in the Cascade range, is visible to the south. Mt. Shasta, another Cascade volcano, may be seen to the north. The region is primarily forested, mostly of ponderosa pine. Several major streams are located in the region, among them the Pit River, Fall River and Hat Creek. Lassen Volcanic National Park is located approximately 30 miles south of the project site, and Ahjumawi Lava Springs State Park is located approximately 12 miles northeast.

In the vicinity of the project site, the main scenic attraction is Burney Falls, located within McArthur Burney Falls Memorial State Park approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile northwest of the project site. Lake Britton, a reservoir operated by Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E), is located north of and adjacent to the state park. The project site is surrounded by pine forest, much of which is part of the Shasta National Forest.

The proposed project is located on a site that has been previously developed for industrial uses, mainly for a sawmill. Most of the buildings were removed after closure of the sawmill in 1989. Structures that remain on the site include a barn, a shop, an office building and truck scales. There are also concrete slabs, a railroad spur and an unimproved airstrip. A former log pond with surrounding levee - now dry - is a prominent feature on the project site.

Most of the lower level of the project site has been graded and cleared of vegetation. A pond and two seasonal wetlands are the most notable natural features on this portion of the site. The upper level does contain some ponderosa pine forest. A pine forest also is located in the area between SR 89 and the project site. This forest buffer varies in width. At the northwestern corner of the parcel on which the project is located, there are no trees. Along other segments of SR 89, the buffer exceeds 500 feet in width. Some portions of this forest buffer are more dense than others. However, in the vicinity of the entrance to Hat Creek Construction, it is relatively easy to see the existing buildings and equipment on the site from SR 89.

**Figures 4.2-1 to 4.2-3** illustrate some of the views of the project site from SR 89. **Figure 4.2-1** shows one view looking south from the intersection with Clark Creek Road. At the end of a straight clearing through the trees, the shop building is discernable, but other parts of the project site are screened. **Figures 4.2-2 and 4.2-3** are located near the entrance to the project site.



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**Figure 4.2-1**  
**View of Project Site from**  
**SR 89/Clark Creek Road Intersection**

**Figure 4.2-2**  
**View of Project Site from**  
**Hat Creek Construction Entrance**



**Figure 4.2-3**  
**View of Project Site**  
**South of Hat Creek Construction Entrance**

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**Figure 4.2-4**  
**View of Bluff from Eastern Dike of Log Pond Site**

The bluff along the eastern boundary of the project site is the most prominent visual feature on site. It is also visible from portions of SR 89 as it extends beyond the project site boundaries for approximately two miles, from north of the closed commercial building to the McCloud Railroad tracks. **Figure 4.2-3** provides a partial view of the bluff, in the background. A closer view is provided in **Figure 4.2-4**. The bluff consists mostly of broken lava rock, interspersed with disturbed areas. There are small

trees and shrubs scattered on the face of the bluff, but in small numbers. As with the structures on the project site, visibility of the bluff from SR 89 varies, depending upon the presence and density of vegetation along the roadway.

### 4.2.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

#### STATE SCENIC HIGHWAY PROGRAM

In 1963, the California State Legislature established the California Scenic Highway Program. The program was established in recognition of the desirability of preserving scenic corridors for the enjoyment of future generations. Under this program, Caltrans has the responsibilities of administering and coordinating a scenic highways program and officially designating State and County highways as scenic highways. The designation of a scenic highway is a two-step process. First, a local government must request its highway for inclusion within The Master Plan of State Highways Eligible for Official Scenic Highway Designation. Second, the local government must submit a resolution of intent to initiate the designation process to the Caltrans District Director of Transportation. As part of the designation process, the local government must prepare a scenic corridor protection program for the proposed scenic highway. The protection program may include regulation of land use and intensity of development, detailed land and site planning, control of outdoor advertising, and the design and appearance of structures and equipment.

SR 89 through Shasta County has been determined to be eligible as a State Scenic Highway. Only one State Scenic Highway has been designated within the County - SR 151 from Lake Boulevard to Shasta Dam. To date, the County has taken no action to initiate the official designation process for SR 89.

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### SHASTA COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

The County General Plan contains the following objectives and policies concerning aesthetics and visual resources that pertain to the project:

#### **Scenic Highways**

##### Objectives

- SH-1 Protection of the natural scenery along the official scenic highways of Shasta County from new development which would diminish the aesthetic value of the scenic corridor.
- SH-2 New development along scenic corridors of the official scenic highway should be designed to relate to the dominant character of the corridor (natural or natural and man-made contrast) or of a particular segment of the corridor. Relationships shall be achieved in part through regulations concerning building form, site location and density of new development.

##### Policies

- SH-a To protect the value of the natural and scenic character of the official scenic highway corridors and the County gateways dominated by the natural environment, the following provisions, along with the County development standards, shall govern new development:
- Setback requirements.
  - Regulations of building form, material and color.
  - Landscaping with native vegetation, where possible.
  - Minimizing grading and cut and fill activities.
  - Requiring use of adequate erosion and sediment control programs.
  - Siting of new structures to minimize visual impacts from highway.
  - Regulation of the type, size and location of advertising signs.
  - Utility lines shall be underground wherever possible; wherever undergrounding is not practical, lines should be sited in a manner which minimizes their visual intrusion.
- SH-b The type, size, design and placement of signs within an official corridor shall be compatible with the visual character of the immediate surroundings. The County's sign regulations should be redrafted for the following locations:
- Timberlands and forest areas.
  - Croplands and grazing areas.

- Rural community centers.
- Urban and town centers.
- Recreational uses.

### **Design Review**

#### Objectives

DR-1 Promote a visually appealing developed environment in urban, suburban, town center, mixed use and rural residential settings.

#### Policies

DR-a Design review zoning should be applied to areas where special design considerations are needed to promote a design theme for a community center, large commercial or industrial areas, or for a major urban highway corridor. The application of design review zoning should be avoided where a single parcel or small groups of parcels are involved, or where the protection of natural resources or viewshed can be assured by implementation of more appropriate zoning.

### **4.2.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

#### SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines indicates that a project may have significant impacts on aesthetics and visual resources if it does any of the following:

- 1) Has a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
- 2) Substantially damages scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.
- 3) Substantially degrades the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
- 4) Creates a new source of substantial lighting and glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

#### METHODOLOGY

PMC staff conducted a field reconnaissance of the project site. During the reconnaissance, several photographs were taken to provide a record of site conditions.

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### PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

#### **Impact 4.2.1            The project may degrade the visual character of the area visible to motorists from SR 89. [PSM]**

SR 89 has been designated an “eligible” scenic highway under the California Scenic Highway Program. The status of a state scenic highway changes from “eligible” to “officially designated” when the local jurisdiction adopts a scenic corridor protection program, applies for scenic highway approval to Caltrans, and receives notification from Caltrans that the highway has been designated a Scenic Highway. To date, the County, which has jurisdiction over the segment of SR 89 that passes by the project site, has not adopted a scenic corridor protection program.

In 1999, the County Board of Supervisors voted to support a plan to have portions of state highways within the County designated as a scenic byway by the U.S. Forest Service. Under this plan, SR 89 would be designated as part of a Volcanic Legacy Scenic Byway, which would link Lassen Volcanic National Park with Crater Lake National Park in Oregon. The proposal is currently being reviewed by the Forest Service at the district level (Anderson, pers. comm., 2000). The designation would not impose any regulations on land uses located adjacent to the byway; thus, it would have no impact on the proposed project.

There is currently a buffer of pine trees between SR 89 and the area on the project site proposed for industrial use. Even with this buffer, it is still possible to see existing buildings and vehicles on the site from the highway for approximately 1,000 feet in the vicinity of the existing primary entrance to the site. Project features include a truck repair shop adjacent to and south of the existing office. This building would have a 70 foot wide by 12 foot tall exposure to SR 89 and would be the most visible new facility on the site. The repair shop would be approximately 600 feet from SR 89. The concrete plant and asphalt plant would be the most prominent new features with storage silos as tall as 65 feet. The plants would be setback approximately 1,800 to 2,100 feet from SR 89 and would be partially screened by existing structures and the repair shop from some view angles. However the plants would be visible from some view points along SR 89.

To allow for future use of the remainder of the proposed commercial-light industrial zone not addressed in this document, the project applicant proposes to retain a vegetative buffer of 100 feet from the SR 89 right of way. Since the existing strip of pines is not dense, the proposed buffer would likely be inadequate to screen the proposed buildings and improvements from the view of passing motorists on SR 89. Because of the angle of the view and the location of the improvements, views are expected to be limited to the area approximately 1,000 feet north and south of the existing primary access road. This is the approximate location of the frontage for the commercial/light industrial rezone. While SR 89 is not an officially designated scenic highway, this impact is considered *potentially significant and subject to mitigation*.

Mitigation Measure

**MM 4.2.1a** The project applicant shall submit a plan to screen the project site at a level adequate to obscure the view of the site from passenger vehicles on SR 89. Screening measures may include construction of earthen berms and the planting of shrubbery and other vegetation. Vegetation shall consist of species native to the region, and it shall provide adequate screening of the site within a period of five years after planting. Screening measures shall be applied within the buffer area between SR 89 and the existing shop on the project site, from approximately 500 feet north to 500 feet south of the Hat Creek Construction main entrance. In implementing the screening measures, the existing mature trees within the buffer area shall be maintained. In the event that vegetative screening is utilized, annual monitoring reports shall be required to document the incremental effectiveness of the barrier in screening views. The report shall include photo documentation.

*Timing/Implementation: Screening plan reviewed and approved prior to project implementation. Annual monitoring until adequate screening is demonstrated.*

*Enforcement/Monitoring: Shasta County Department of Resource Management - Planning Division.*

Implementation of the mitigation measure would reduce the visibility of the project site, lending a more natural appearance to the view from SR 89. Impacts after mitigation would be *less than significant*.

**Impact 4.2.2      The project would alter the appearance of the bluff. [LS]**

The quarrying operation would remove part of the upper level of the project site, enlarge the lower level and create a new rock face. No vegetation would be replanted on the face after quarrying operations end. This would make the affected portion of the bluff look bare. However, this would affect only a portion of the bluff, which extends beyond the boundaries of the project site. Also, much of the quarried bluff would be screened by the trees between the project site and SR 89. Finally, the underlying rock exposed by the mining would likely be similar in composition to the rock currently visible. Thus, the exposed face would likely not contrast sharply with the surrounding landscape. Nevertheless, the current topography of the site would be altered. Mining work and reclamation of the quarry area would be conducted in compliance with the conditions of the use permit and the reclamation plan. The quarry operator must meet State and County standards and protocols. Compliance with these conditions and requirements would reduce the adverse impacts of quarrying on the landscape, mainly by requiring revegetation of the reclaimed area. Impacts, therefore, would be *less than significant*.

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### **Impact 4.2.3            The project may introduce new light and glare sources into the area. [SM]**

The activities proposed in the project would require the installation of outdoor lights. This lighting could be visible from adjacent residences and from the highway, disturbing residents and potentially creating a safety hazard for motorists. Also, unshielded lighting could generate “light pollution” in the area, obscuring nighttime sky views and possibly decreasing the quality of the nighttime environment in nearby recreational areas. Newly constructed facilities may generate glare if reflective colors or materials are used. The potential glare could be a distraction to passing motorists, increasing safety hazards as well as reducing the aesthetic quality of the surrounding area. These impacts are *significant and subject to mitigation*.

#### Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measure was proposed in the Initial Study for the project:

**MM 4.2.3a**            The County shall attach conditions to the use permit which require that lighting be shielded and/or directed so that it does not shine offsite. No use, including vehicles, will be allowed to create intense light or glare that causes a nuisance or hazard beyond the property line. Proposed new lighting shall be shown on building/site plans for review and approval by the Planning Division. The lighting on the site shall be monitored by the Building Division at the time of building permit issuance and inspection.

*Timing/Implementation: A lighting plan shall be submitted and approved prior to installation of lighting.*

*Enforcement/Monitoring: Shasta County Department of Resource Management - Planning Division, Building Division.*

In addition, the following mitigation measure is proposed:

**MM 4.2.3b**            All new buildings shall either be painted or constructed of materials of neutral or earth tone colors. Roofing material shall be a non-glare, non-reflective material.

*Timing/Implementation: Upon commencement of building construction.*

*Enforcement/Monitoring: Shasta County Department of Resource Management - Planning Division, Building Division.*

Implementation of the mitigation measures would ensure that illumination and glare would not extend beyond the boundaries of the project site, nor would be emitted in significant amounts into the sky. Impacts after mitigation would be *less than significant*.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

**Impact 4.2.4            The project would have no adverse cumulative effect on aesthetics and visual resources in the area. [LS]**

The mitigation measures for the project would reduce the negative effects on views in the area. If vegetative screening is used, the project would improve the view along SR 89, giving that view a more natural appearance. Most of the surrounding area is National Forest land or State park land. Thus, development in the vicinity of the project site would be limited, and impacts on the local view shed would be minimal. Cumulative impacts, therefore, are *less than significant*.

**REFERENCES**

Merle Anderson, Superior California Economic Development District. Telephone conversation, June 15, 2000.

California Department of Transportation, Office of State Landscape Architecture. "California Scenic Highway Program." Internet site <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/>.

Jim Schultz. "Volcanic Voyage." *Redding Record-Searchlight*, January 27, 1999.