
3.9 Aesthetics

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER/ SCENIC ATTRACTIVENESS

The region of the proposed action is land of varied terrain, which includes the Warner Mountains, a variety of lakes, streams and rivers, and high desert.

The primary influence of humans on the visual landscape in the vicinity of the proposed action has been through ranching, cattle grazing, and geothermal activities. Modoc National Wildlife Refuge lies mostly to the south of Alturas and covers thousands of acres of hunting, fishing, and observational grounds (Shasta Cascade 2002). Geothermal activities have resulted in the clearing of well pads in the nearby Kelly Hot Springs area.

Modoc Plateau

Canby is located on the Modoc Plateau, which is a flat, open area dominated by dry ranchland and wetlands. Vegetation is primarily shrub/grassland-dominated with sparse to dense ponderosa pine and juniper forests. The area is surrounded by mountains to the north, south, and west. The proposed action would occur within and on the border of the I'SOT community buildings and along County Road 54.

Scenic Highways

State Highway 139 is within the Master Plan of state highways eligible for official Scenic Highway designation by the State of California; however, it has not been officially designated as a Scenic Highway Route. The Modoc County General Plan recognizes highways 139 and 299 as scenic highway corridors between Adin and Tulelake. The intent of the County is to, in conjunction with historic place designations, increase tourist-related travel through the County and to protect existing scenic resources from incompatible use (e.g. billboards). The discharge pipeline would cross Highway 299.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Federal Setting

US Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, Procedures to Establish Priorities in Landscape Architecture 1978. The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service established guidelines to determine whether any change in the landscape would either impact or improve visual quality in agricultural areas. These guidelines are still in effect and would apply to this project, as there is considerable agriculture area as designated by the Modoc County General Plan (Snieckus 2002). A Visual Resource matrix rating system is used to assess the level of impact for a given project. The proposed project would not build any temporary or permanent structures that would conflict with the current scenic vista of the project area.

Figure 3.9-1: View from County Road 54 to the pipeline construction area



SOURCE: MHA 2002

Local Setting

Modoc County General Plan. The Modoc County General Plan contains limited guidelines for no scenic resources other than those for scenic highway corridors. Scenic integrity is a measure of how intact the landscape character is perceived. The General Plan notes that most highways within the County are located in highly scenic areas, however scenic highway designation may result in increased land use regulation where development may be limited (Mintier Harnish 1988a).

The proposed project sites are located near the intersection of highways 139 and 299. As the General Plan has not been updated since 1988, neither has the issue as to whether to designate additional sections of the highways as scenic highways.