

## How was the visual environment studied?

**Three landscape units** have been identified for the proposed project study area, and used to assess the visual environment of the proposed project. The landscape units are shown on Figure 3-5 and have been used to describe changes in visual character.

**Landscape Unit 1** is the western most segment of the proposed Project area.

**Landscape Unit 2** is the central segment of the proposed project area.

**Landscape Unit 3** is the eastern segment of the proposed project area.

## What constitutes an impact to the visual environment?

Impacts to the visual and aesthetic environment would be caused by changes to the existing conditions that would be brought about by construction of the project. Such changes may detract from the visual environment or enhance it. This assessment focuses on those changes that may be measured in terms of high, moderate, or low impact. For each of these changes, the accompanying consideration is the sensitivity of the viewer to these changes.



Figure 3-5 Map of Visual Analysis Units

**Landscape Unit 1** is the western most segment of the proposed Project area. Below are illustrative photos of this Landscape Unit.



View to the east of US 26. The groves of trees on BLM land are visible in the middle distance.



View of the concrete retaining wall on the south side of US 26.



View to the west of the northern shoulder of US 26.



The Mountain Air Motel on the south side of US 26.



View to the west of the access to Mountain Air Drive showing the white stone columns.



View to the east of the northern shoulder of US 26.

**Landscape Unit 2** is the central segment of the proposed project area. Below are illustrative photos of this landscape unit.



View to the west, in the Dwyer Area.



The sign for the AJ Dwyer Memorial Roadside Preservation Area.



View of large trees on the north edge of US 26.



View to the south of the access to the Wildwood Recreation Site.



View to the east of a 60" diameter fir



View to the northwest of the trees in the Dwyer Area.

**Landscape Unit 3** is the eastern segment of the proposed project area. Below are illustrative photos of this Landscape Unit.



View to the east of US 26.



View to the east of the north edge of US 26 from E. Wildwood Avenue.



View to the east of trees on the north side of US 26.



View to the west of US 26.



View of Hoodland Church, on the north side of US 26.



View of trees along the pedestrian trail.

## What are the impacts to the visual environment?

### No Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative would not change visual elements. It would not introduce visual elements into nor subtract from the environment. Over time trees could be removed due to disease, damage, or for safety. In general there would be no foreseeable change to the form, character, or quality of the visual environment with the No Build Alternative.

### Widen to the North Alternative

The Build Alternative would result in some changes to the visual environment of the proposed Project area. Direct impacts would include removal of approximately 100 mature trees (greater than 20" diameter at breast height) many of which are visually prominent; construction of cut and/or fill slopes; minor changes to access; and widening the pavement and footprint of the highway. Indirect impacts would include reduction in the visual buffer from the trees between the highway and residences, and an increase in the amount of light that reaches

the highway and some of the residences on the north side of the highway. Table 3-7 summarizes the analysis of potential impacts to visual resources in the project area and shows the evaluation of the magnitude of the impacts, as defined by the degree of change to the resource and the sensitivity of the viewers in each of the landscape units. Photographs of the existing conditions are on the previous pages, and photographic visual simulations of proposed future conditions are included on the following pages.

## How was the visual environment studied for the BLM's Dwyer Area?

In addition to the work done according to FHWA guidelines, BLM specialist's analyzed effects on the Dwyer Area according to the BLM criteria for visual impacts. BLM staff prepared a Visual Contrast Rating Worksheet that includes project information, characteristic landscape description, proposed activity description, and contrast rating with photographs of key observation areas. See Appendix B for the Visual Contrast Rating Worksheet, prepared by BLM Staff.

<b>Landscape Unit</b>	<b>Feature Changes Related to the Project</b>	<b>Visual Resource Change</b>	<b>Viewer Sensitivity</b>	<b>Level Of Impact</b>
Unit 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regrade north side of highway.</li> <li>Remove retaining wall (positive change).</li> <li>Relocate white stone columns.</li> <li>Widen pavement 10-14 feet to the north.</li> <li>Remove vegetation and trees that are not visually prominent.</li> <li>Close west access to E. Wemme Trail Road.</li> </ul>	Moderate - Low	Moderate - Low	Low
Unit 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove aprox 65 mature trees and replant native vegetation.</li> <li>Reduce the vegetative screen between the neighborhood to the north and the highway by 14 to 20 feet.</li> <li>Regrade land on north side of highway to a 3:1 slope.</li> <li>Close east access to E. Wemme Trail Road.</li> <li>Relocate Dwyer Area sign.</li> <li>Relocate guardrail, replace with less visually prominent guardrail.</li> <li>Widen pavement 14 feet to the north.</li> </ul>	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Unit 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regrade land on north side of highway.</li> <li>Remove aprox. 20 mature trees.</li> <li>Reduce the vegetative screen between the neighborhood to the north and the highway by 14-20 feet.</li> <li>Widen pavement 10-14 feet.</li> </ul>	Moderate - Low	Moderate - Low	Moderate - Low



**View To The West Showing The Existing Condition In The Corridor**



**Illustrative View Simulating The Widen to the North Alternative.**



**View To The West Of The Existing Condition In The Corridor --- near E. Wildwood Avenue**



**Illustrative View Simulating The Widen to the North Alternative --- near E. Wildwood Avenue**



**The Existing Condition In The Corridor --- Dwyer Area, View To The West**



**Illustrative View Simulating The Build Alternative --- Dwyer Area, View To The West**

## ***How would the project impact the Dwyer Area?***

The general visual environment around the Dwyer Area parcel is characterized by a forested setting intermixed with houses and roads, with utilities along US 26. No houses are directly adjacent to the part of the Dwyer Area parcel that would be disturbed and Wildwood Recreation Site is opposite the area and directly across US 26. The proposed project area is most visible from the US 26 with little visibility from houses in the general area due to the screening provided by the trees and brush in the northern end of the A. J. Dwyer parcel. Whether traveling east or west on US 26, the proposed project area is only visible in the peripheral view for a few seconds. Except while exiting their driveways, the proposed project area would not be visible to residents living along the south side of US 26.

The Dwyer Area abuts US 26 for approximately 0.27-miles. The area immediately adjacent to the highway would be cleared of trees and vegetation, which includes most of the larger trees in the Dwyer Area parcel. The width of the strip would vary from 25 to 50 feet. Approximately 65 trees over 24 inches in diameter at breast height (dbh) would be removed, including an estimated 22 older and larger trees that are greater than 40 inches dbh. The diverse group of lichens and vascular plants in the northern portion of the Dwyer Area parcel would not be disturbed as a result of the proposed project. See page 53 for a photograph of the existing condition and photographic simulation of the proposed condition for the Dwyer Area.

There would be some visual disturbance over several months during the construction period. Following the completion of the project, the general character of the parcel would continue to be dominated by a forested setting, however, the area would appear more open with younger and smaller trees. Given that a forested setting would be maintained and would change over time as new plantings mature, and the short amount of time the parcel is in view while traveling US 26, the proposed project is expected to be in compliance with management objectives associated with the Dwyer

Area and the Mt. Hood Corridor. See Appendix B for BLM's statement concerning compliance with management objectives.

## ***What are the short term and construction impacts?***

The Build Alternative would result in short-term (1 to 2 years) construction-related impacts to visual resources in the project area. These impacts would include the presence of machinery, staging areas, other required structures or equipment, and activities that would temporarily limit or obstruct views, or in some way damage features identified as contributing to the landscape's visual character. Construction-related impacts to visual resources would include the temporary construction debris located in the corridor. Short-term impacts to the study area would also include removal of mature trees, natural vegetative landscaping and re-vegetation.

## ***What are the cumulative impacts?***

Cumulative impacts are those that result from the incremental impact of the proposed project when added to other past, present, and reasonably future actions. The cumulative impact of changes in the area could include some additional loss of the larger, older trees in the area. Over time, logging, highway widening and development have caused removal of trees, cumulatively reducing the number of large old trees in the area. At the same time, trees have been planted and re-established, and the forests have grown to include younger trees as well. The BLM has no current plans for additional development of the recreation area or the Dwyer Area. There are no other projects expected that would affect the Dwyer Area. Houses could be constructed on the residentially zoned plats north and south of the project area. See the Land Use Section for land uses in the project area.