

5.12 Aesthetic and Scenic Resources

Potential impacts on aesthetics and scenic resources arising from implementing Alternative Groups A through E and the No Action Alternative are discussed in this section. The potential impacts would arise mainly from visual intrusions on the natural landscape from expansion of existing buildings; construction of new facilities undertaken in support of the waste transport, treatment, storage, and disposal in the 200 Areas; and activities associated with the borrow pit at Area C. Existing aesthetic and scenic resources of the Hanford Site are described more fully in Section 4.8.10.

Most facilities are not visible to the public because of the size of the facilities, the size of the Hanford Site, the location of the facilities within the Hanford Site, the terrain and restricted access to the site, and the distance between the viewer and the activity on the site.^(a) The exception is the construction, operation, and eventual closures of the Area C borrow pits (see Figure 4.1 in Section 4).

The Area C borrow pit site is a large polygonal area located adjacent to and south of SR 240 and centered approximately at the intersection of Beloit Avenue and SR 240. This site is about 926 ha (2287 ac) in size and is located next to the Fitzner Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology Reserve (ALE) but is not part of the Hanford Reach National Monument. The area was designated as conservation (mining) in the Record of Decision (ROD) (64 FR 61615) for the *Final Hanford Comprehensive Land-Use Plan EIS* (DOE 1999). The operation of the borrow pit would not be visible from vehicles using SR 240 from the southwest until they are approximately three-quarters of the way past the site. The reason for this restriction in the viewshed^(b) is the elevated terrain adjacent to SR 240, separating Area C from the road. Travelers coming from the northwest on SR 240 would notice the site sooner and would be able to observe the activities in passing. The pits, themselves, would be located a minimum of 152 m (500 ft) from SR 240. During borrow pit site development, the bringing of utilities from the Hanford 200 West Area to the site would be noticeable by those traveling on SR 240. The Area C borrow pits would be within the northerly viewshed from Rattlesnake Mountain.

During the operation of the Area C borrow pits, a maximum of approximately 70 pits would be excavated, and 86 ha (213 ac) would be disturbed (Alternative Group B – Upper Bound waste volume). From the air and SR 240, the surface terrain will look pockmarked. During the 12 plus years of the site's operational life, stockpiles of sand, gravel, rock, and silt/loam would be located within 305 m (1000 ft) of SR 240. The individual borrow pits would be restored when their useful life ends. This restoration includes replacing excavated topsoil and re-seeding the area. After extraction of resources from the borrow pit area is complete, the site pit slopes would be re-graded and irregular terrain lines installed to blend the site with the surrounding terrain. No permanent adverse aesthetic or scenic impacts would be expected.

(a) Those accelerated process lines (APLs) located within CWC would not be seen and those outside would be dwarfed by the surrounding buildings. As a consequence it is concluded that the APLs would have no impact on aesthetic and scenic resources.

(b) Defined as the scenic resources that can be seen from a particular vantage point.

Fugitive dust associated with development and operation of the Area C borrow pits is a recognized, potential problem, and, as a result, a program would be undertaken to keep fugitive dust controlled during site development and operation, even during off hours. The use of soil adhesives, the application of water, and the discontinuance of excavation and truck loading activities, when winds are excessive, are some of the control measures that would be employed. As a consequence, fugitive dust from the borrow pit area would not be expected to develop into an adverse aesthetic or scenic impact.

Elk occupying the ALE site are sometimes seen from SR 240. Operation of the borrow pit might reduce the likelihood of sighting these animals near Area C because they might migrate farther away from where they might be seen from the highway as a result of these activities.

Travelers can see some site facilities in the 200 West Area on an 11-km (7-mi) segment of SR 240 south of the Yakima Barricade (near the junction of SR 240 and SR 24). At the closest approach, facilities associated with waste-management activities are about 3 km (2 mi) distant. Facilities throughout the 200 Areas are visible from elevated locations, such as Gable Mountain, Gable Butte, and Rattlesnake Mountain, and in the distance from atop the bluffs, east of the Columbia River. These locations generally are not points for public viewing because of their restricted access; however, they may be points of viewshed observation important to Native Americans.

5.12.1 Alternative Group A

The potential aesthetic impacts in Alternative Group A would be those associated with

- use of the modified T Plant Complex
- construction of additional disposal trenches of a deeper and wider design
- construction of caps for disposal facilities would raise the surface about 1.7 m (5.5 ft) for 169 ha to 179 ha (416 to 439 ac) for the Hanford Only to the Upper Bound waste volumes, respectively
- excavation of capping materials, temporarily disturbing 69 to 73 ha (170.4 to 180.6 ac) in the Area C borrow pit.

The T Plant Complex is a facility that has been in place for about 50 years and is not considered in terms of aesthetic impacts. Trench construction and the capped trenches for LLW, MLLW, and ILAW likely would not be noticeable from points of public viewing.

5.12.2 Alternative Group B

The potential aesthetic impacts in Alternative Group B would be those associated with

- construction of a new waste processing facility
- construction of additional disposal trenches of the current design

- capping of the LLW, MLLW, and ILAW trenches over an area ranging between 187 to 210 ha (462 to 519 ac) for the Hanford Only to the Upper Bound waste volumes, respectively
- excavation of capping materials, temporarily disturbing 77 to 86 ha (190 to 210 ac) in the Area C borrow pit area.

The T Plant Complex is a facility that has been in place for about 50 years and, as in Alternative Group A, is not considered in terms of aesthetic impacts. The new waste processing facility probably would be noticeable from SR 240 as one more multi-story building with a 30-m (100-ft) stack. Even if seen, it is questionable that it would be distinguishable from the other industrial buildings in the 200 West Area. Trench construction and the capped trenches for LLW, MLLW, and ILAW likely would not be noticeable from points of public viewing. The potential for aesthetic or scenic impacts related to excavation operations at the borrow pit would be essentially the same as those for Alternative Group A.

5.12.3 Alternative Group C

The potential aesthetic impacts in Alternative Group C would be those associated with

- use of the modified T Plant Complex
- capping of the disposal facilities over an area of 151 to 160 ha (373 to 395 ac) for the Hanford Only to the Upper Bound waste volumes, respectively
- excavation of capping materials, temporarily disturbing 62 to 66 ha (153 to 163 ac).

The T Plant Complex is a facility that has been in place for about 50 years and, as in Alternative Group A, is not considered in terms of aesthetic impacts. Trench construction and the capped LLBGs and LLW, MLLW and ILAW trenches would likely not be noticeable from points of public viewing. The potential for aesthetic or scenic impacts related to excavation operations at the borrow pit would be essentially the same as those for Alternative Groups A and B.

5.12.4 Alternative Group D

Alternative Group D contains three subalternative groupings that are dependent on the location of disposal. The potential for aesthetic impacts for all subalternatives is bounded in the numbers presented below. The potential aesthetic impacts in Alternative Group D would be those associated with

- use of the modified T Plant Complex
- capping of the disposal facilities for 150 to 155 ha (370 to 383 ac) for the Hanford Only to the Upper Bound waste volumes, respectively
- excavation of capping materials, temporarily disturbing 2 to 64 ha (153 to 158 ac).

The T Plant Complex has been in place for about 50 years and, as in Alternative Group A, is not considered in terms of aesthetic impacts. Trench construction and the capped trenches for LLW, MLLW, and ILAW likely would not be noticeable from points of public viewing. The potential for aesthetic or scenic impacts related to excavation operations at the borrow pit would be essentially the same as those for Alternative Groups A through C.

5.12.5 Alternative Group E

Alternative Group E contains three subalternative groupings that depend on the location of disposal. The potential for aesthetic impacts for all subalternatives are bounded in the numbers presented below. The potential aesthetic impacts in Alternative Group E would be those associated with

- use of the modified T Plant Complex
- construction of caps for disposal facilities for an area of 150 to 155 ha (371 to 383 ac) for the Hanford Only and Upper Bound waste volumes, respectively
- excavation of capping materials, temporarily disturbing 62 to 64 ha (153 to 158 ac).

The T Plant Complex is a facility that has been in place for about 50 years and, as in Alternative Groups A, C, and D, is not considered in terms of aesthetic impacts. Trench construction and the capped trenches for LLW, MLLW, and ILAW likely would not be noticeable from points of public viewing. The potential for aesthetic or scenic impacts related to excavation operations at the borrow pit would be essentially the same as those for Alternative Group A.

5.12.6 No Action Alternative

The potential aesthetic impacts in the No Action Alternative would be those associated with

- use of the T Plant Complex
- expansion of the CWC
- construction of caps for disposal facilities for an area of 158 to 159 ha (389 to 393 ac) for the Hanford Only and Upper Bound waste volumes, respectively
- extraction of capping materials from the Area C borrow pit temporarily disturbing 14 ac (35 ac) for that purpose.

Trench construction and the capped MLLW trenches likely would not be noticeable from points of public viewing. ILAW would be disposed of in vaults. Although the expansion of the CWC buildings might be noticeable from SR 240, they are co-located with other buildings in the developed 200 West Area and likely would not be considered an adverse aesthetic impact. Trench construction and capped MLLW trenches likely would not be noticeable from points of public view, particularly SR 240.

The potential for aesthetic and scenic impacts related to excavation operations at the borrow pit would be substantially smaller than those for the action alternative groups, as less than 20 percent of the volume of materials would be needed for MLLW trench capping.