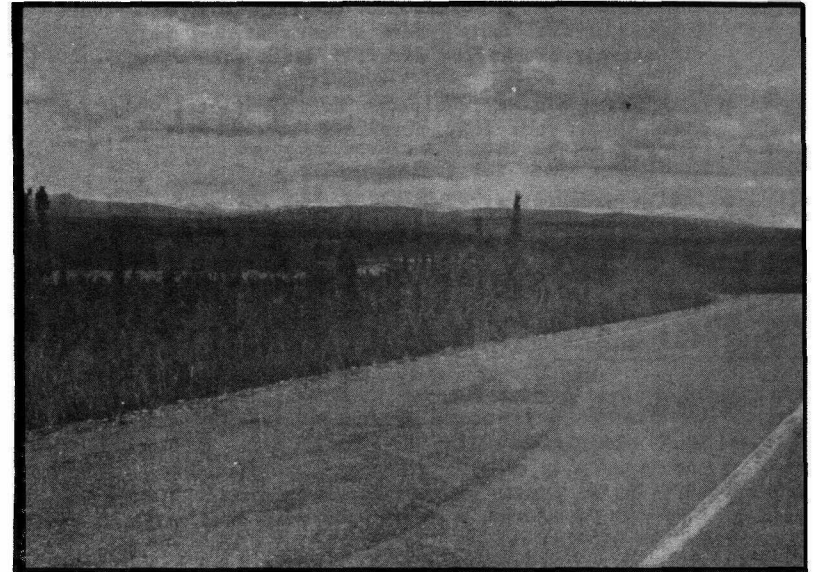


Management Unit 13

Hogan Hill



The road's vantage point on Hogan Hill provides a panoramic vista of the Alaska Range, Talkeetna Mountains and Chugach Mountains across lake-dotted lowlands, making this one of the most scenic portions of the central Richardson Highway.

General Description

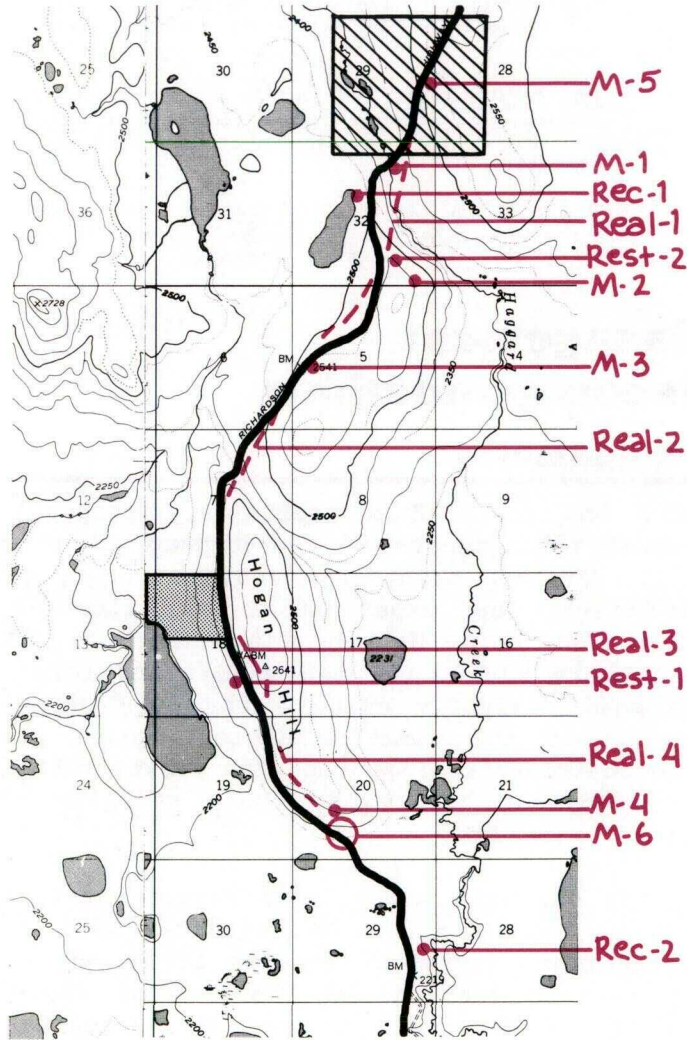
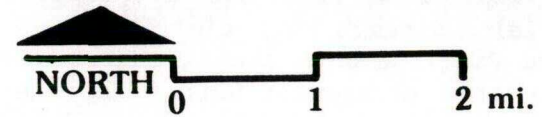
Management Unit 13 begins north of Hogan Hill near Haggard Creek and extends south for approximately nine miles along the west slope of the hill. This stretch of the central Richardson Highway has particularly high scenic resource values because it provides outstanding panoramic views across the broad Gulkana River Lowlands to the Talkeetna Mountains, the Alaska Range and the Chugach Mountains. The sharply curving highway alignment through fairly steep terrain at the edge of an embankment provides the traveler with a strong sense of the expansive landscape and a

fine expression of the Gulkana River Uplands. Unfortunately, the existing alignment also provides very little opportunity for the traveler to safely stop along the road to enjoy the views, take photos, or identify specific landscape features.

DOTPF has recently developed a preliminary proposal for major realignments along Hogan Hill which would have both positive and negative visual impacts. These are addressed more specifically in the recommendations for Realignments.

13 Hogan Hill

Assessment Units R14 – R19



KEY

- M- Impact Mitigation
- Rec- Recreation
- Real- Realignment Proposals
- Rest- Rest Area

- State Owned Land
- Federal Land
- Private Land

Throughout most of this unit, land adjacent to the highway has a moderate visual absorption capability due to the somewhat dense vegetation and varying topography characteristic of the area.

Industrial land uses and developments such as material sites, land clearings and the Trans Alaska Pipeline-have the strongest visual impact within this management unit. There are no residential or commercial structures visible from the highway.

Land Ownership & Management Responsibility

The manager of the majority of the land adjacent the highway within this unit is currently the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). However, the State has selected these lands. In addition, there is a one square mile section of state tentatively approved land located just north of Haggard Creek. DOTPF manages a 300 foot right-of-way along the highway and Alyeska manages the Trans Alaska Pipeline right-of-way which parallels and crosses the highway, never more than one half mile away. There are Native corporation owned lands and other private landholdings on the south side of Hogan Hill.

Visual Resource Management Objectives

The management recommendations presented for this unit are based the objectives of: retention, enhancement, impact mitigation and sensitive land use and development.

Retention: to retain those conditions which make this a particularly significant and memorable driving experience.

Enhancement: to enhance the traveler's opportunity for understanding and appreciation of this landscape.

Impact Mitigation: to take action to screen or reclaim those gravel sites and clearings with the most significant negative impact on the scenic experience.

Sensitive Land Use and Development: to encourage any future development to respond sensitively to the scenic qualities of the landscape.

Management Recommendations

Realignments

DOTPF has prepared a preliminary proposal for several realignments of the highway along Hogan Hill. The new alignments would strongly affect the visual and experiential qualities of the drive along Hogan Hill by flattening the curves, creating a much more even grade, and relocating the road slightly east of the existing alignment. At the same time, they would provide opportunities for improving the traveler's safety and enjoyment by creating safe stopping places along the roadside.

This is one unit where it is particularly important to consider scenic resources when making realignment decisions because it is one of the most scenic portions of the central Richardson Highway. Therefore, it may be appropriate to accept somewhat less efficient traffic movement in order to maintain this experience. More detailed outlines of the significant proposals follow.

Real-1 Haggard Creek

There are two alternative alignment proposals for this double curve which crosses Haggard Creek. The primary proposal would eliminate the double curve and maintain a single very broad, almost undetectable curve for approximately one mile. The second alternative would maintain the double curve but flatten it significantly. Additionally, the primary realignment proposal would ascend the moderately steep hill with a route that is almost perpendicular to its contours, potentially creating a more extreme visual impact than either the existing or second alternative alignments.

The existing alignment is preferred from a scenic resource point of view because the character of the double curve and slow ascent of the hill enhance the appreciation of the surrounding gentle topography. For both realignments, the vacated alignment will be a highly visible scar on the hillside which also includes a new creek crossing in an area that already has a significant scar from a previous alignment east of the present one. It would be critical to immediately reclaim the vacated alignment through active revegetation practices.

Real-2 Northern Foot of Hogan Hill

There are two realignment proposals for this winding road at the foot of Hogan Hill. The existing road has five short curves with very short tangents which provides a visually interesting approach to Hogan Hill from the north, following along the edge of a steep bank. The primary alternative would completely remove all these curves and create a much more direct and

monotonous approach. It would ascend directly up and over the hill as opposed to skirting along the base of the steep cut bank. The second alternative would maintain the general location of the road but would still eliminate the curves and would potentially create a greater visual impact by cutting deeper into the hillside. The secondary proposal would not provide adequate screening vegetation between the new and the vacated alignments whereas the primary alternative could. Neither alternative would significantly affect the more distant views.

In order to retain the interesting character of the present alignment, it is recommended that the existing road configuration be maintained and upgraded as necessary through widening, clearing inside corners for visibility or other actions in preference to realignment.

Real-3 West Slope- Hogan Hill: Potential Rest Area

The proposed realignment, approximately one half mile long would create a wide clearing in the road as it flattens the presently shallow curve. This particular section is the location of some of the finest views from Hogan Hill. The realignment, if carefully planned, could provide the best opportunity for a much needed scenic viewpoint rest area on Hogan Hill. In order to accomplish this, it will likely be necessary to redesign the curves of the realignment so that adequate distance and vegetation remains between the existing and new alignments to create a "loop" turnout out of the vacated alignment. This should be considered a high priority for realignment, with the necessary recommended modifications. (See Rest Area/Interpretive Site (Rest-1) for further details).

Real-4 Southwest Hogan Hill: Potential Scenic Turnout

The proposed realignment would flatten two minor curves, creating long clearings at the roadside with little potential for vegetative screening remaining between the two alignments. Western views across the Gulkana River Lowlands to the distant mountains are spectacular and the road widenings would provide additional turnout space for scenic viewpoints. Right-of-way vegetation should be retained to the extent possible to partially screen the clearing but avoid blocking the views from the highway to the west.

Right-of-Way Management

The right-of-way within this unit, particularly on the west side of the highway, is an important visual element in this unit's scenic experience. It is the foreground for some of the finest scenery along the central Richardson Highway and should be specifically managed to retain and enhance this experience. General recommendations for right-of-way management along the Richardson Highway can be found in the road overview section. The following recommendations are specific to this unit.

Right-of-way vegetation can be managed to either screen objectionable views or to retain or enhance the distinctive views. For most of the length of this unit on the west side of the highway the vegetation should be managed to retain the broad panoramic views across the lowlands to the distant mountains. This will require keeping the vegetation trimmed below the traveler's line of sight. In other locations, it will require selectively thinning the foreground vegetation to open filtered views.



Low-laying plants and some tall trees growing close to the road edge, as well as the sinuous alignment, help to blend the road with the natural landscape.

Where the views are strongly oriented to the west, the east side right-of-way should be managed to minimize the road design impact and to maintain the natural character of the landscape. For the most part, the current management practices have allowed the vegetation to grow quite close to the road edge. This practice should be continued as it is an effective means of blending the roadway into the landscape.

At the north end of this management unit near the Haggard Creek crossing, current management practices include complete vegetation clearing

for approximately 35 feet on either side of the road to provide visibility and minimize wildlife road kill. This, combined with the additional clearing resulting from a vacated alignment at the creek crossing, disrupts the foreground of an otherwise attractive landscape. Cleared slash should be removed, and low brush vegetation or trees should be encouraged in order to improve the roadside appearance.

To reinforce the greenbelt, the right-of-way should also act as a buffer between the road and adjacent lands. All natural vegetation, other than that cleared for viewing opportunities or highway visibility, should be retained. Necessary highway related land uses or access through the right-of-way should be located where visual absorption capability is highest, such as behind dense vegetation or landform screens.

Greenbelts

In this unit, greenbelts can be used effectively to reinforce other scenic resource management practices in retaining scenic natural areas. The changes in the orientation and depth of view along different portions of the road require that a distinction be made between these different areas for the purposes of defining appropriate greenbelts.

- West side - Central portion of unit: Within the central portion of this unit views are strongly oriented to the west. Where the land slopes steeply away from the road and the vegetation is dense, the visual absorption capability is high. In these areas sensitively sited landscape alterations can sometimes occur close to the road and

will still not be visible from the road because of the viewer's orientation. However, the land more distant from the road is quite visible because of the viewer's superior orientation. With these conditions, more attention needs to be given to the more distant lands in order to retain the wild and undeveloped character of this landscape.

On BLM and state lands, a one mile greenbelt should be established within which the following guidelines should be followed:

- Large scale clearings should not occur.
- Small scale landscape alterations and permanent structures must be located outside of view from the roadway.

Any development of land outside this greenbelt, and within the seen area should be preceded by careful visual analysis to determine an appropriate location to minimize visibility from the road.

On Native and other private lands, land owners are encouraged to utilize the opportunities provided by the landscape and viewer orientation to sensitively site development outside of view from the road.

- East side - Central portion of unit: Within the central portion of this unit, land immediately adjacent to the road on the east side is highly visible due to its steep slope and lack of tall, dense vegetation. However, land further from the road has varying degrees of visibility due to the changes in the traveler's point of view. Therefore, on lands adjacent to the roadside, a 100 foot greenbelt is recommended within which no landscape alterations should occur.

- North and south ends of unit: Along the north and south ends of this management unit, the traveler's focus is oriented in all directions; therefore, different greenbelt recommendations are appropriate. The fore and middleground of these lands are more prominent features in the view. Here, it is recommended that a 300 foot greenbelt be established on both sides of the road within which no development should occur. Development beyond this greenbelt, particularly land clearing, should be preceded by a careful visual analysis to determine the best location to minimize the visibility from the road.

Rest Area / Interpretive Sites (Rest)

Currently, there are no safe opportunities for travelers to stop at the side of the road to take advantage of the outstanding views from Hogan Hill. Development of safe and attractive roadside scenic turnouts or a rest area should be considered a priority for DOTPF in managing this corridor. Due to the location of the road on the edge of a steep embankment on Hogan Hill, there are very few existing level areas which could be developed for this purpose. However, recently proposed realignments provide the opportunity to improve this situation. The following sites have been identified as potential rest area locations.

Rest-1 West Slope-Hogan Hill (First priority if recommended road realignment occurs). As discussed

under Realignments for this unit, a modified realignment here offers an excellent opportunity to develop a safe and much needed Rest Area Interpretive Site for Hogan Hill. This location would provide some of the area's finest views across the Gulkana River basin to the Talkeetnas, Chugach and Alaska Range, as well as an excellent expression of the Gulkana River Uplands character type. Following are some guidelines for the development of this site:

- Maintain the vacated alignment as a paved entry-exit.
- Maintain as much vegetation as possible within the right-of-way between the two alignments to provide screening.
- Establish a parking area on the east side of the vacated alignment.
- Develop the level areas on the west side as picnic sites.
- Provide interpretive information on the landscape character.
- Develop a foot trail through public land to the lake on the west side.
- Provide signing on the highway 1/2 mile either side of rest area entrance.

If road realignment does not take place, there will be no rest area potential at this site. However, the potential for developing a turnout will still exist. (See Turnouts).

Rest-2 Trans Alaska Pipeline Clearing (Second priority). This former material site and clearing for an underground pipeline road crossing is located approximately 1/4 mile uphill from the road, on the east side. It offers 220 degree panoramic views of the Alaska Range and Wrangell Mountains and a close view of the pipeline as it submerges underground and crosses the site. DOTPF and Alyeska might jointly develop this as an interpretive area with information describing both the landscape and the pipeline. Further site analysis will be necessary to determine the appropriate reclamation and development for this site.

Recreation Access (Rec)

While major recreation opportunities are not found in this unit, trail and creek access are

important issues. The following two trailheads should be developed.

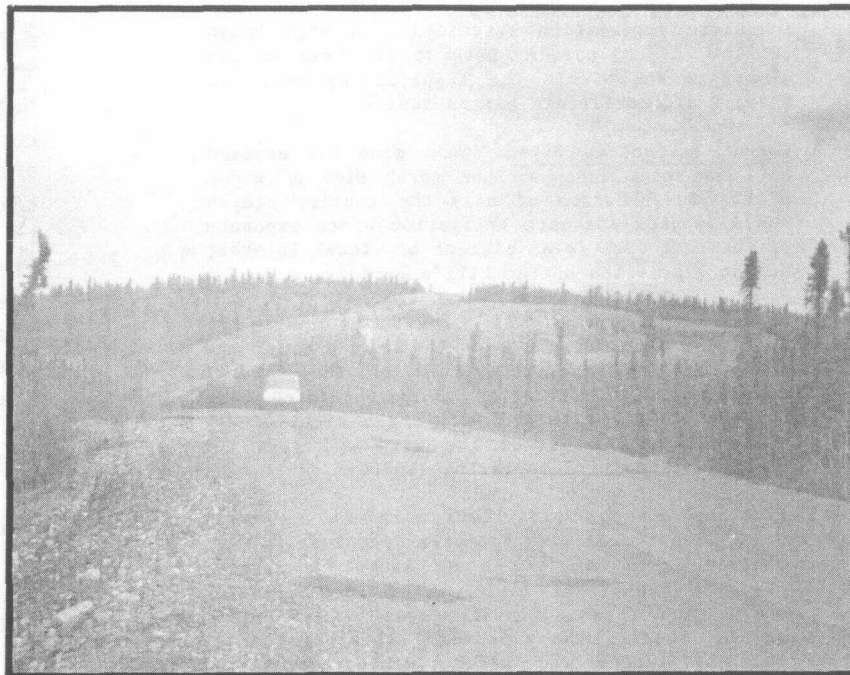
Rec-1 Haggard Creek Trailhead. A small, two car, parking area is needed for this trailhead. The area is now disturbed with clearings and a vacated alignment. The existing vacated alignment should be reclaimed as recommended under Impact Mitigation (M-1), providing a small gravel widening for trailhead parking at the south end. A trailhead information board could be located here for hiker orientation.

Rec-2 Sourdough Creek Access. There are several vacated alignments located south of Hogan Hill which create short, unpaved loop turnouts at the roadside. The southernmost of these could be developed as a parking area with a public recreational access trail (about .15 mile long) to Sourdough Creek. Selective thinning of the vegetation on the east side would open nice views to the Wrangell Mountains. Signing should be provided on the highway to indicate this access. The road surface should be graded annually to maintain access.

Impact Mitigation (M)

The most significant negative visual impacts in this management unit are created by highway and pipeline associated material sites and other clearings. The scale, contrast, road proximity, and relatively frequent occurrence of these sites combine to create distractive features in an otherwise highly scenic area. To fulfill the unit's visual resource management objectives, the sites identified for mitigation should be given immediate attention.

M - 1 Vacated Alignment. The large open clearing that was left at Haggard Creek when the road was realigned requires regrading and active revegetation to blend this area with its natural surroundings. Only a small gravel area at the south end should be maintained for parking at the Haggard Creek Trailhead.



Pipeline construction activities for gravel extraction and road crossings created numerous landscape scars that are very visible from the road. Revegetation along the edges, leaving the exposed rock faces for visual contrast and interest, would be the best way to reclaim this site (M-6).

M - 2 Pipeline Clearings. A rather sharp color and line contrast is created by this highly visible, large clearing on the far north slope of Hogan Hill. Reclamation must include both regrading and active revegetation. The impact of this site is extremely high due to its visibility from long distances on the north. This site should receive

immediate reclamation attention. A high brush (willow, alder) screen, both at the base of the clearings and within the right-of-way near the site, would facilitate mitigation.

- M - 3 Gravel Extraction Site. This site has exposed soil and rock faces on the north side of Hogan Hill. Revegetation of only the gentler slopes would provide adequate mitigation since exposure of the rock face is an element of visual interest and an expression of the hill's geology.
- M - 4 Gravel Extraction Site. Extraction here has created a steep drop off on the east side of the road that is uncharacteristic of the natural topography. Construction of a vegetated berm adjacent to the site and within the right-of-way would adequately screen the view and give the site a more natural appearing landform.
- M - 5 Pipeline Access Road. This site is currently being reclaimed with grasses planted in the clearing. If access is no longer necessary, planting trees and brush within the clearing would speed reclamation. If access must be maintained, seeding the area with flowering plants, such as lupine and vetch, would add visual interest.
- M - 6 Pipeline Crossing. This pipeline crossing resulted in large clearings on both sides of the road at the southern foot of Hogan Hill, creating a highly visible, very out-of-scale, out-of-character open space. This is a high priority site for reclamation.

On the east side of the road, the gentler slopes of the clearing should be revegetated with scattered spruce trees and dense, high brush to return the area to its more natural landcover. The steep rock cut faces and the access road can be retained since the rock faces provide an element of visual interest, and the access road is used by local rock hounds.

On the west side of the road, the clearing should be revegetated with scattered spruce and low brush to conform to the surrounding landcover. A small information turnout (gravel widening) could be created here to explain the construction of the pipeline and point out the pipeline crossing.

Land Use & Development

Native and other private landowners should be encouraged to limit their development to homesites and recreation uses. The most appropriate location for small scale permanent structures would be on the east side of the large lake abutting these properties. This location would provide the opportunity to screen development from the road if the structures are sited with a dense backdrop of vegetation to the east. One shared access road should connect with the highway and it should parallel the hill as much as possible. This may require an easement through public lands to the south. Federal and state public land management practices should give a high priority to retaining and enhancing scenic resource values. Development of these lands should be discouraged.

