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# Definitions

The following are definitions of technical terms which may be unfamiliar to the reader or are needed to clarify the ways that sometimes ambiguous terms are used in this report.

**Background:** Background commonly refers to that portion of the seen area which is most distant from the viewer. Technically the background is considered to be the area which is more than 3 to 5 miles from the viewer.

**Distance Zones:** A seen area, or view, is commonly divided into three distance zones to assist in its description and evaluation. These three distance zones are the foreground, middle-ground and background.

**Foreground:** The foreground is that portion of the seen area which is nearest the viewer. It is considered to include visible lands and features up to 1/4 or 1/2 mile from the viewer.

**Greenbelt:** A greenbelt is a management tool for lands beyond the road right-of-way. Greenbelts are usually considered to be relatively narrow, linear management strips following landscape features such as roads, rivers and power lines, or as edge treatments around parks, and between potentially conflicting uses. Greenbelts are often left in an undisturbed or "natural" condition. This study, however, uses a broader concept of a greenbelt. The actual width, character, maintenance and management responsibility of a given greenbelt area is variable and dependent on desired objectives, site conditions and adjacent management activities and land uses. Thus greenbelt widths vary from as narrow as 25

feet to over 100 feet. In some, selective vegetation clearing or land use is allowed and/or encouraged, while in others it is not recommended.

**Impact:** An "impact" is the effect that some visible element would have on the viewer. Visual impacts may be positive or negative. Thus, for example, an abandoned material site immediately adjacent to the road could have a negative impact on most viewers if it is visually prominent and incongruous with the forms, textures and patterns of the surrounding lands. A small, neatly maintained cabin nestled amongst the trees would, on the other hand, usually have a positive impact on most viewers.

**Impact Mitigation:** Impact mitigation refers to measures used to reduce negative visual impacts associated with land uses and developments. These measures fall into four classes: Removal of the structure or visually objectionable feature from view. Screening the visually objectionable use, feature or structure from view. Reclamation of the site so that a new use which is more sensitive to visual objectives is found or modification of the landform and/or vegetation take place to make the area more visually compatible with the surrounding landscape. Design actions are taken to make the site or development visually more attractive and in greater harmony with the surrounding landscape.

**Information Turnout:** These are places along the road where travelers can stop and obtain information related to road conditions, services and recreational opportunities. This report recommends information turnouts be located at highway junctions.

**Middleground:** Middleground refers to that portion of the seen area between the foreground and background. The middleground is commonly considered to extend from 1/4 to 1/2 mile from the viewer to 3 to 5 miles.

**Reclamation:** Reclamation refers to measures taken to restore a used or disturbed land area to its previous natural condition or to find a new use for the area which is more compatible with surrounding land uses and has a less adverse visual impact.

**Rest Area:** A rest area is a place along the road where travelers can rest from some of the rigors of vehicular travel as well as meet personal needs for eating, relieving oneself, napping, and exercising. Rest areas are primarily short term use areas in close proximity to the road. Longer term uses -- such as camping, hiking, fishing and picnicking -- should be located at sites more removed from the noise, dust and visual disturbance associated with the road. This study further considers rest areas as places where travelers should have the opportunity to experience and understand the surrounding landscape by siting such areas in places which clearly display the general character of the region and providing information signs, interpretive displays, trails, etc.

**Right-of-Way:** As used in this study, the right-of-way refers to the road surface and the land beyond its edge which are under public ownership and are managed by the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF). Right-of-way widths are typically 150 feet beyond the centerline of each side of the road. Narrower widths are often found where roads pass

through private lands patented prior to statehood.

**Scenic Highway:** While there is no one nationally accepted or adopted definition of a "scenic highway," in 1964 the U.S. Department of Commerce defined a scenic route in very basic terms as "...having roadsides traversing areas of relatively high aesthetic or cultural value." A list of inventory criteria was attached and later updated in 1974. More specific attributes of a scenic highway found in these criteria or commonly used in other definitions include: the route provides an appreciation and understanding of the natural landscape, history, geology, and human land use; the visual experience offers diversity; the route is primarily for pleasure travel, not commercial or through traffic; it provides accommodations for picnicking, parking, walking, or camping; it limits or avoids undesirable commercial development at the immediate roadside; and it provides access to or between other points of scenic and recreational interest. Approximately 10 states manage their own scenic highway systems, and some provide for locally managed systems.

**Scenic Resource Management:** This refers to management policies and actions which, based upon clearly stated and adopted goals and objectives, employ appropriate tools to retain, enhance and/or restore the view and experience of a portion of the landscape. Tools recommended here consist of right-of-way and view management, greenbelts, turnouts, impact mitigation (reclamation, screening, etc.) and road alignment and design. Scenic resource management actions recommended in this report focus on the foreground distance zone, particularly those areas

within and immediately adjacent to the road right-of-way.

**Seen Area (See Viewshed)**

**Turnout:** A turnout is a place along the road where travelers can stop briefly. Turnouts typically have limited development consisting of no more than a widening of the road and possibly a locational sign, litter barrel or informational sign. They serve a variety of purposes, including taking photographs, pondering views, reading interpretive information, changing drivers, passing and turning around, depositing litter, etc.

**Vegetation Screening Potential:** The vegetation screening potential is the rating of the land-cover's ability (trees, shrubs, grasses) to screen or soften the visual impact of land development and resource use. A dense stand of white spruce trees would be considered to have a high vegetation screening potential while an open bog with low shrubs and scattered black spruce trees would have a low vegetation screening potential.

**View Management:** View management refers to those actions taken to preserve, enhance or restore a particular view. These typically include selective clearing, selective pruning and tree and shrub planting.

**Viewshed:** A viewshed or seen area is a means of describing all lands and features visible from a particular viewpoint or location. Viewsheds may be depicted on maps and can be derived from on-site observation or through special graphic techniques. Computers are being used more and more today to map viewsheds.

**Visual Absorption Capability:** This is a rating of a given land area's ability to minimize the visibility of land development and/or resource use activities. A visual absorption capability rating is a function of two factors: the density and character of the vegetation (see Vegetation Screening Potential) and the slope of the land with respect to the position of the viewer (see Visual Magnitude).

**Visual Magnitude:** Visual magnitude refers to the slope of the land with respect to the position of the viewer. It is used in conjunction with the vegetation screening potential rating to determine an overall visual absorption capability. An area which is nearly perpendicular to the viewer's line of sight, such as a steep hillside, would have a high visual magnitude rating. Such a rating indicates that anything placed within that area would probably be highly visible and difficult to screen from view. Similarly an area would have a low visual magnitude if the visible landscape surface were parallel to or sloping away from the viewer's line of sight. Such lands provide greater opportunities for minimizing the visibility of structures and uses.

