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Redwood™**

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# **Peregrine Falcon Annual Report 2013**

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**February 1, 2014**



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## **Project Description**

**Title:** Peregrine Falcon HCP Monitoring

**Purpose:** Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) monitoring

**Date Initiated:** March 1999

**Projected End Date:** Ongoing

**Manager:** Sal Chinnici, Forest Science Manager

### **Executive Summary:**

During the 2013 peregrine falcon breeding season we conducted surveys for peregrine falcon activity at two traditional eyries (nests) at Scotia Bluffs and Holmes Bluff, a third known nest in a large old-growth redwood snag at Tom Gulch, and the new nest at Shively Bluff that was first investigated in 2010, and confirmed in 2011. In addition, a new nest was discovered along the Van Duzen River near Pamplin Grove (hereafter South Runenberg). Surveys at all five sites were to monitor possible nesting activity, although no timber operations (other than road use) were planned during the breeding season within 0.5-mile of any nesting area in 2013. The Tom Gulch snag has also been used by ospreys and northern spotted owls for nesting in the past, and so the snag was monitored for potential nesting activity by those species as well. The Scotia, Holmes, Shively Bluff, and S. Runenberg nests were all occupied this year. Peregrine activity was observed early in the season at the Tom Gulch nest snag, but nesting did not occur. One juvenile peregrine was fledged at the Scotia eyrie, one at Holmes, two at Shively, and two at S. Runenburg.

No changes in the HCP peregrine falcon monitoring strategy are recommended at this time.

**Reviewed:**

**Director, Forest Science**

Original signed by:

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**Mike Miles**

**Project Manager / Primary Author**



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**Sal Chinnici**

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## PROJECT DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION LIST

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) is a covered species under the HRC HCP. The species was formerly listed as endangered under the California State Endangered Species Act and also under the Federal Act, but has been found to be recovered and delisted pursuant to both the State and Federal Acts. It is also a Board of Forestry Sensitive Species, and a California Fully Protected Species. The objective of surveying for peregrine falcons on HRC lands is to survey traditional and potential nest sites and adjacent habitat if timber operations are to occur within 0.5 mile (conventional operations), or 1.0 mile (e.g., helicopter operations), and to apply HCP nest site protection measures when necessary to ensure a high probability of successful nesting.

## **METHODS**

Surveys were conducted according to section 6.5.2.1 of HRC's HCP, the Mutually Agreed Upon Peregrine Falcon Survey Language (as modified, Appendix I) and followed guidelines in Protocol for Observing Known and Potential Peregrine Falcon Eyries in the Pacific Northwest (Pagel 1992), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Monitoring Protocol (USFWS 2003). Additional nest checks or surveys are sometimes done in an attempt to establish whether a site is active, occupied, or to assess nesting success. Survey locations and dates are in Table 1.

**Table 1. 2013 Peregrine Falcon Surveys.**

| Known Eyrie Location | Associated THP (name, #)      | Visit 1 Date | PEFA activity?         | Visit 2 Date | PEFA activity?                          | Visit 3 Date | PEFA activity?         | Visit 4 Date | PEFA activity?    |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|---|--------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Tom Gulch            | monitor only                  | 2/20/13      | Adult Pair at snag     | 3/19/13      | Adult Pair at snag                      | 5/17/13      | No                     | 6/3/13       | No                |
| Scotia Bluffs        | Nanning Broken Ridge (09-088) | 1/29/13      | Adult Pair at cliff    | 2/6/13       | Adult Pair at cliff, female on ledge    | 5/17/13      | Pair and 1 fledgling   | 7/9/13       | Single Adult PEFA |
| Holmes Bluff         | Shively Creek 12 (12-041)     | 2/18/13      | Adult Pair at cliff    | 4/23/13      | Adult pair (Female possibly incubating) | 5/30/13      | Adult and one nestling | NA           | NA                |
| Shively Bluff        | monitor only                  | 2/20/13      | Adult Pair at cliff    | 4/24/13      | Pair and 1 nestling                     | 5/28/13      | Pair and 2 nestlings   | NA           | NA                |
| S. Runenberg         | Strong Armed (12-126)         | 5/30/13      | Female and 2 nestlings | NA           | NA                                      | NA           | NA                     | NA           | NA                |

## RESULTS

In 2013 the Tom Gulch, Scotia, Holmes, Shively, and S. Runenberg territories were all occupied by a pair of peregrine falcons. Nesting occurred at all of the sites with the exception of Tom Gulch. The Scotia Bluffs eyrie fledged one juvenile falcon, the Holmes eyrie one juvenile, two were fledged from the Shively eyrie, and two fledged from the newly found S. Runenberg nest (Table 2). An adult pair of peregrines was observed at the Tom Gulch nest this year, following four consecutive years that we had not observed peregrines there. 2013 was the fourth consecutive year that the Scotia, Holmes and Shively nests were all occupied. Peregrine activity was suspected near S. Runenberg in 2012, and nesting was confirmed during the 2013 season. Brief notes on the individual sites and nest ledge locations are included below.

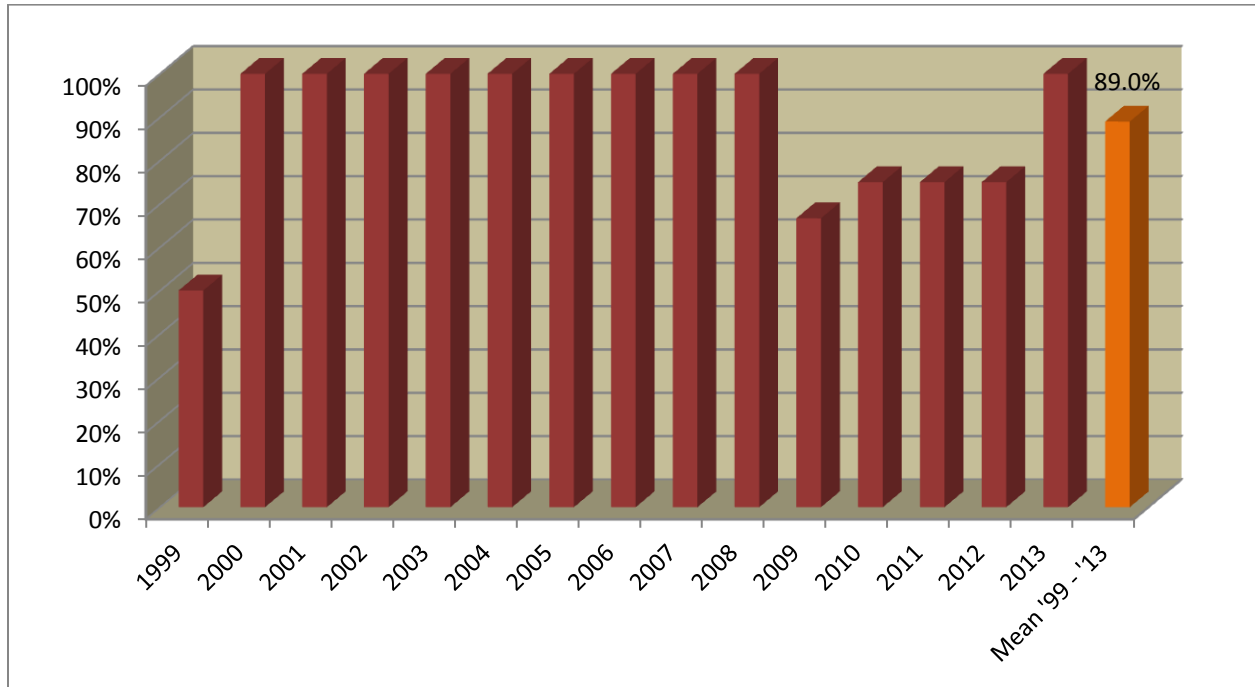
The percent of known territories occupied in 2013 was 100% (5 of 5), compared to a mean of 89% over the period 1999-2013 (Figure 1). The reproductive rate (measured as number of juveniles per occupied territory) was 1.2 in 2013, compared to a mean of 0.66 over the period 1999-2013 (Figure 2).



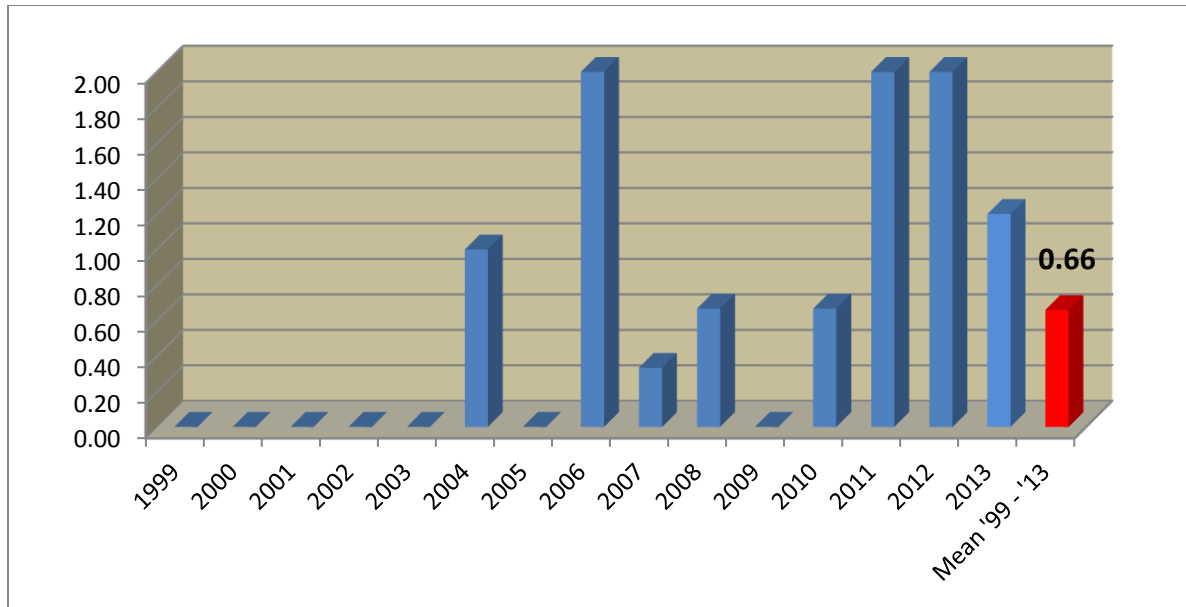
**Table 2. Status of HRC peregrine falcon eyries by year (if known).**

| Eyries        | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008   | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Scotia Bluffs | NC   | U    | U    | PN   | PU   | PN2J | PF   | PN4J | PN   | PNN    | PU   | PN2J | PN2J | PN1J | PN1J |
| Holmes Bluff  | U    | U    | U    | PU   | U    | M    | M    | PU   | M    | U + SA | PU   | PU   | PN2J | PN2J | PN1J |
| Shively Bluff |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |        |      | PU   | PN2J | PN3J | PN2J |
| Tom Gulch     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | PN1J | PN2J   | NC   | NC   | NC   | NC   | PU   |
| Runenb-urg    |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |        |      |      |      |      | PN2J |

NC = no contact, U = unknown status, PN = pair nesting, PU = pair unknown, PF = pair failed, SA = subadult.



**Figure 1. Percent of territories occupied.**



**Figure 2. Reproductive rate for occupied territories.**

## TOM GULCH

The Tom Gulch nest site is a large old growth redwood with its top half consisting of a massive, truncated dead snag (Figure 3). It was first discovered to be occupied by peregrine falcons in 2007 during a survey for osprey (*Pandion haliaeetus*). The snag was also occupied by peregrines in 2008, but was not active from 2009 to 2012. In 2013 no operations were planned near the site, but surveys were conducted in preparation for future operations on the McCloud-Shaw THP, as well as potential road and stream restoration projects. We conducted four survey visits to the area (Table 1). No osprey activity was noted. A pair of adult peregrines were observed on the first two visits and seemed to exhibit territorial behavior, but no nesting behavior. Northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) survey visits to activity site 331 for the 2013 nesting season found that a single, non-nesting female occupied the territory.

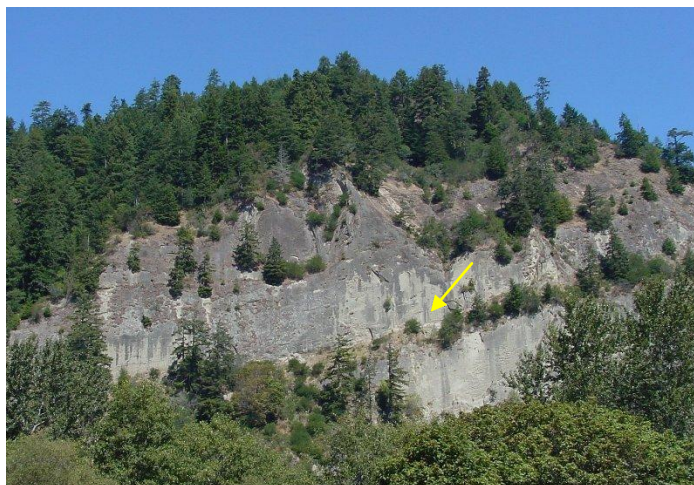
There are other peregrine falcon nests in trees in nearby watersheds (Hamm, pers. comm.). It is currently unknown if the pair that has previously nested in Tom Gulch is nesting in another snag in the area, or in another watershed. There are other tree and snag nesting opportunities within the pair's territory that may not be readily detected by our surveys.



**Figure 3. Tom Gulch Snag (arrow indicates approximate location of nest cavity).**

## **SCOTIA BLUFFS**

The Scotia Bluffs traditional cliff site was occupied by a pair of falcons again this year, and at least one juvenile peregrine was confirmed fledged. The 2013 nest ledge appeared to be the same as used in 2011-2012 (Figure 4). Based on observations, the ledge appears to be a broad, deep ledge created by erosion of the cliff face, as are many of the known and potential ledges at Scotia Bluffs. In 2013 a nesting pair and one fledgling was confirmed on the 17 May visit.



**Figure 4. Scotia Bluffs (arrow indicates approximate location of nest ledge).**

## HOLMES BLUFF

The Holmes Bluff eyrie fledged one juvenile in 2013 from the same nest ledge as used in 2012. The current eyrie is higher on the bluff face and farther downriver than previous ledges (i.e. until 2011) (Figure 5). The nest ledge is partially obscured and protected by a pampas grass clump and fir sapling. The cliff behind is a cove-like structure. A nesting pair with one fledgling was confirmed with three survey visits during the 2013 season.



**Figure 5. Holmes Bluff (arrow indicates approximate location of nest ledge).**

## SHIVELY BLUFF

At Shively Bluff a peregrine falcon activity site and potential new eyrie was discovered incidentally during a northern spotted owl survey in 2010, when a pair of peregrine falcons were heard and observed nearby. Surveys during the 2011 nesting season were adequate to confirm pair occupancy, the location of a nest ledge (Figure 6), and the fledging of two juveniles. In 2012 three survey visits confirmed three fledglings at the Shively site. During the 2013 season, an adult pair was confirmed to nest and produce two fledglings from the same ledge.



**Figure 6. Shively Bluff (arrow indicates approximate location of nest ledge).**

## **SOUTH RUNENBURG**

In late August of the 2012 breeding season an HRC wildlife biologist was conducting a daytime spotted owl field visit and observed a peregrine falcon flying and vocalizing near a bluff along the Van Duzen River east of Carlotta in an area referred to as Runenburg Camp. Whitewash was also observed on the cliff face, indicating a possible nest ledge. During a peregrine survey on 30 May, 2013, an adult female peregrine and two nestlings were observed at the ledge, which is relatively low on the cliff but well obscured by vegetative cover (Figure 7). This newly discovered nest produced two young, and will be added to the HRC list of peregrine nests to monitor in future years.



**Figure 7. S. Runenburg bluff (the nest ledge is partially hidden by trees, lower right).**

## **DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Occupancy and reproduction for the five known peregrine falcon sites on or adjacent to HRC lands continues to be relatively high over the past three seasons. Of the five known peregrine falcon eyries monitored during the 2013 season, all five sites were occupied, though nesting did not occur at Tom Gulch (100% occupancy). There were six juvenile peregrines produced (at least one at Scotia, one at Holmes, two at Shively, and two at S. Runenburg) for a reproductive rate of 1.2 young per occupied territory.

There were no operations within 0.5 mile of any of the eyries with the exception of use of the Shively Road, as discussed in the property-wide language. The property-wide language was revised to account for the new eyrie at Shively Bluff on 14 July 2011, with the concurrence of the Wildlife Agencies on 26 July (Appendix I). There were no operations within 1.0 mile such as helicopter yarding, blasting, or pile driving at any eyrie location during the breeding season. Operations were scheduled to occur either before or after the breeding season in other buffer locations.

With the exception of the Tom Gulch site, all of the other sites (Scotia, Holmes, Shively, and S. Runenburg) are on bluff faces above either the Eel or Van Duzen Rivers at what are very popular recreation sites in the spring and summer months. The S. Runenburg nest cliff is more obscured than the others, and occurs south of the river and the Highway 36 corridor. At the Eel River sites, HRC personnel commonly observe swimmers, boaters, recreational vehicle riders, and even rock climbers near the falcon eyries. It may be that nesting activities are often well along (e.g. young are hatched) by the time that significant disturbance by the public begins near the bluffs.

### **2014 SURVEYS**

Surveys in 2014 will again include monitoring of traditional and known sites (i.e., Tom Gulch, Scotia Bluffs, Holmes Bluffs, Shively Bluff, with the addition of S. Runenburg). All forestry and science staff will continue to report incidental peregrine sightings to the wildlife staff, and follow-up surveys will be conducted when necessary.

No change in the HCP monitoring strategy for peregrine falcons is recommended at this time.

## **REFERENCES**

Hamm, K. 2012. Personal communication. Senior Biologist and HCP Coordinator for Green Diamond Resource Co.

Pagel, J.E. 1992. Protocol for observing known and potential peregrine falcon eyries the Pacific Northwest. Pp. 83-96 In Proceedings: Symposium on peregrine falcons in the Pacific Northwest. J,E, Pagel, ed. Rogue River National Forest, Medford, OR 97501.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2003. Monitoring Plan for the American Peregrine Falcon, A Species Recovered Under the Endangered Species Act. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Divisions of Endangered Species and Migratory Birds and State Programs, Pacific Region, Portland, OR. 53 pp.



## APPENDIX 1

### PEREGRINE FALCON SURVEY LANGUAGE

#### Final DFG, USFWS and HRC Mutually Agreed Upon Peregrine Falcon Survey Language (3/30/00) as modified (1/8/07) and 7/14/11.

Surveys shall be conducted at traditional and potential nest sites if operations occur between January 15 and August 15. If operations occur after August 15 and before January 15, no surveys are required. Survey visits shall be scheduled based on the estimated duration of operations. The area of influence will be 0.5 mile for conventional operations and 1.0 mile for helicopter operations. All surveys shall follow Pagel (1992), *Protocol for Observing Known and Potential Peregrine Falcon Eyries in the Pacific Northwest*, with respect to placement of observation posts, duration of surveys, time of day of surveys, observer preparation and equipment, and weather conditions. Helicopter surveys for peregrine falcon should not be conducted without prior consultation and concurrence with both the USFWS and DFG.

1. Surveys at traditional sites shall be conducted according to the following guidelines:
  - a. If operations commence after January 14:
    - i. One survey shall be conducted prior to operations, but no more than five days prior to operations.
    - ii. Conduct two additional surveys spaced at least 25 days apart but no more than 30 days. If due to the estimated duration of operations, two additional surveys cannot be spaced by at least 25 days, conduct two additional surveys well distributed throughout the operational period of the project prior to June 30 and prior to completion of operations.
  - b. If timber operations commence before January 15 (beginning at least two weeks prior to January 15), those survey requirements as specified above for operations that commence after January 14 shall be applied, except that all three surveys would occur concurrently with operations.
  - c. Surveys shall not be required for hauling on the Shively Road within the 0.5 mile disturbance minimization buffer for the Holmes and Shively eyries as per the 8 January 2007 and 14 July 2011 consultations.
2. Surveys of potential sites shall be conducted according to the following:
  - a. If timber operations commence after January 14:
    - i. One survey shall be conducted prior to operations, but no more than five days prior to operations.
    - ii. In addition, if the estimated duration of operations allows, conduct one survey prior to the completion of operations spaced at least 25 days after the first survey but no more than 30 days. If the operational period is estimated to end in less than 25 days, conduct the additional survey half-way through the estimated operational period.



## **APPENDIX 2**

### **MAPS OF PEREGRINE FALCON EYRIES**

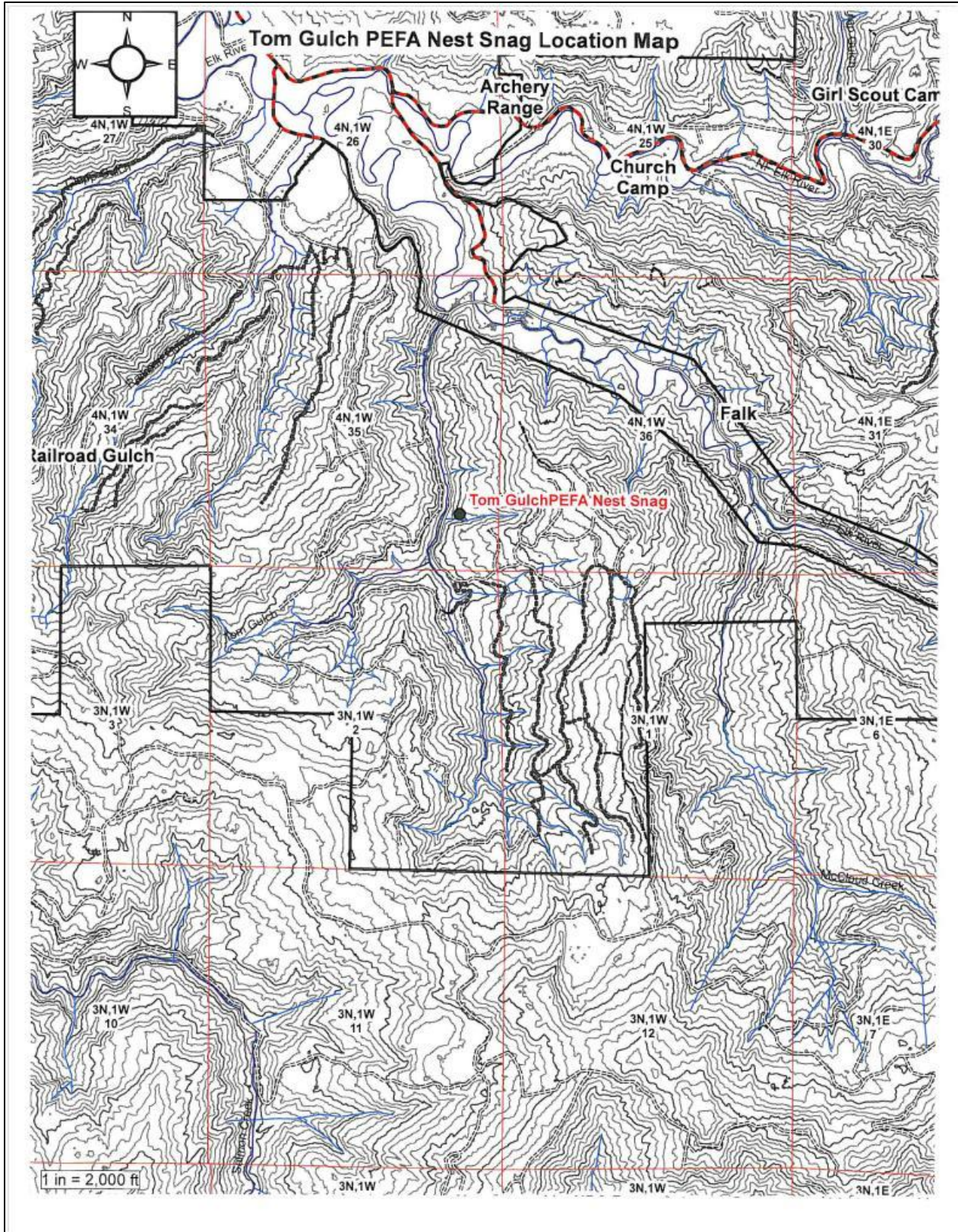


Figure 8. Tom Gulch Peregrine Falcon Nest Snag Location Map.



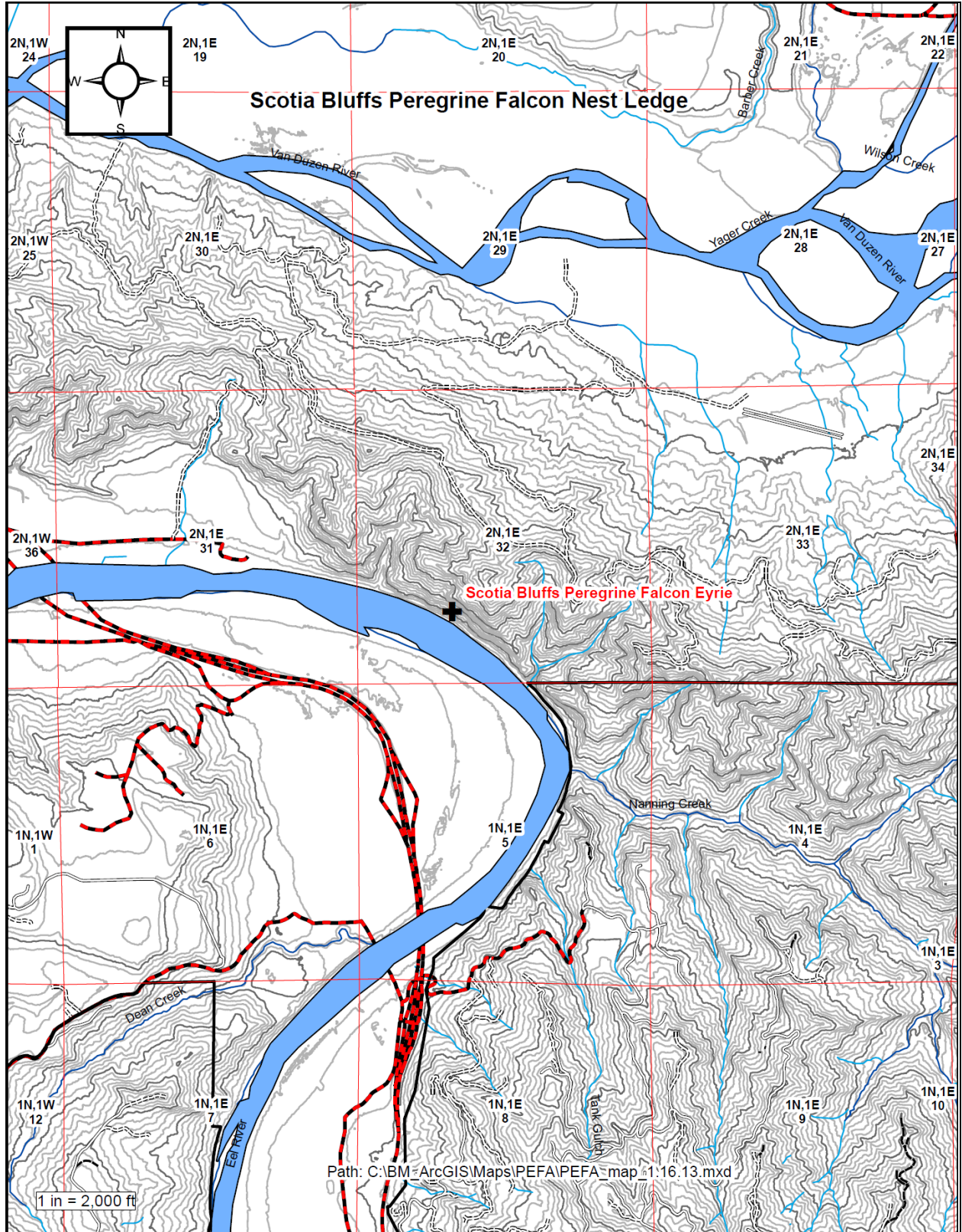


Figure 9. Scotia Bluffs Peregrine Falcon Nest Ledge.



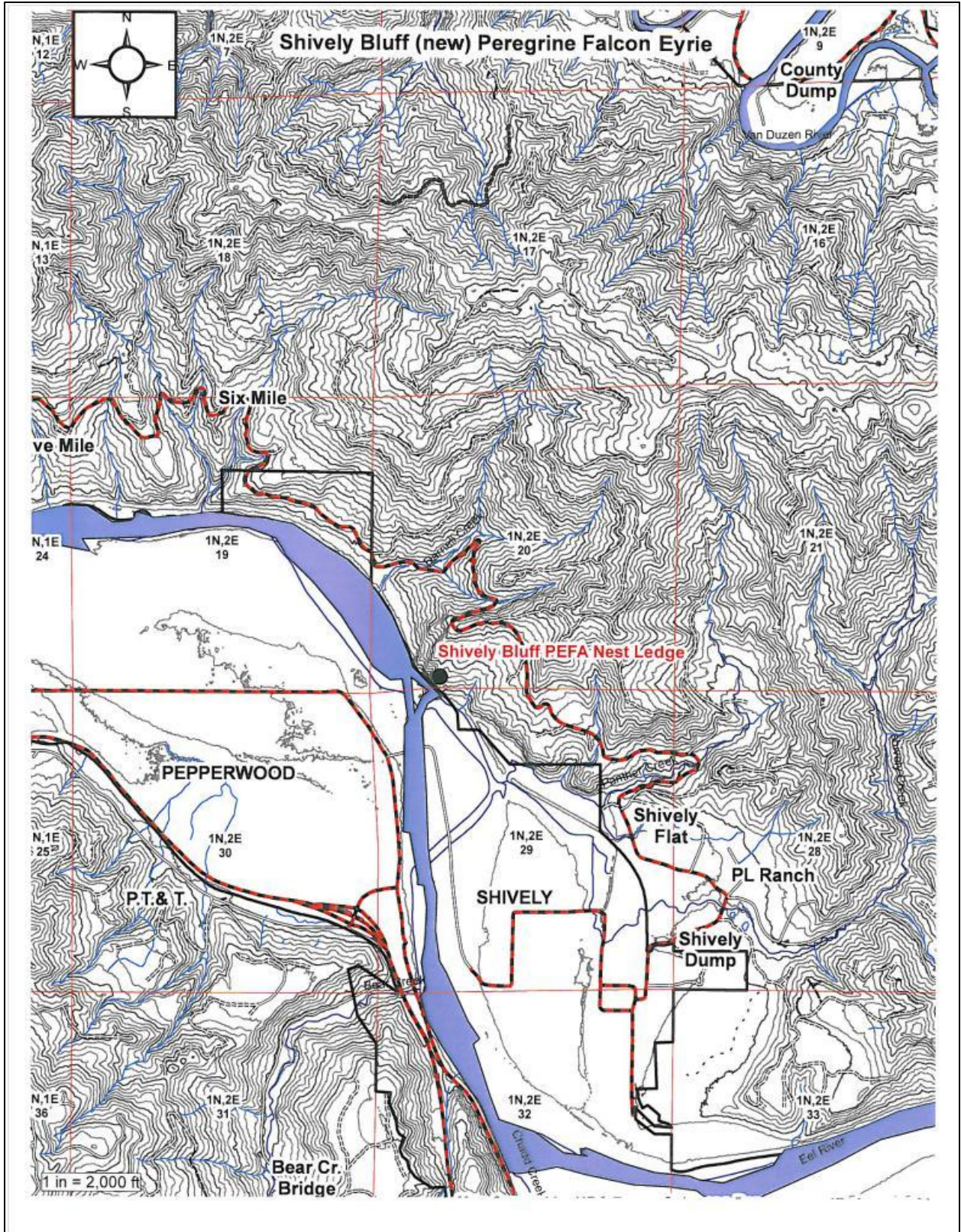


Figure 10. Shively Bluff (new) Peregrine Falcon Eyrie.



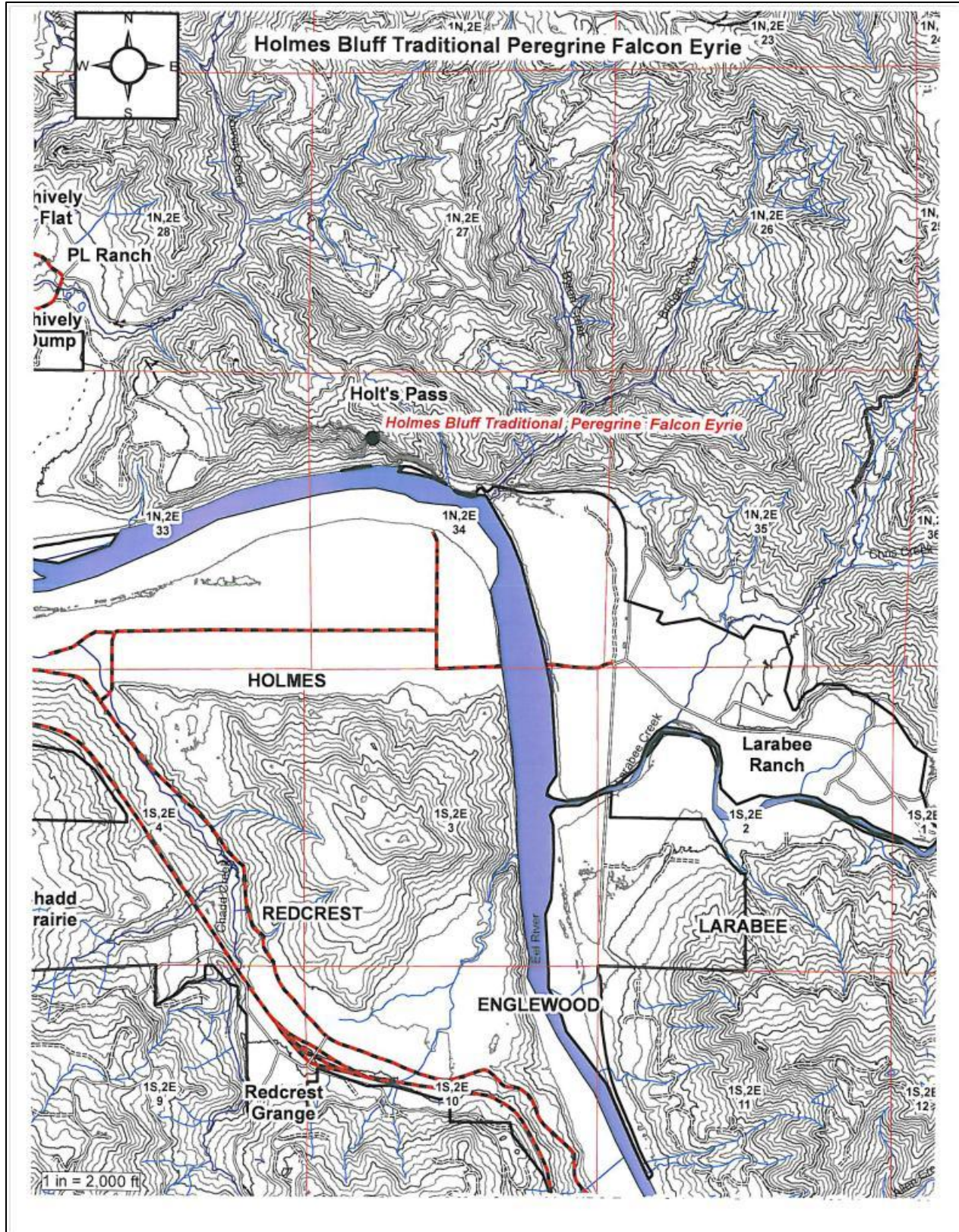


Figure 11. Holmes Bluff Traditional Peregrine Falcon Eyrrie.



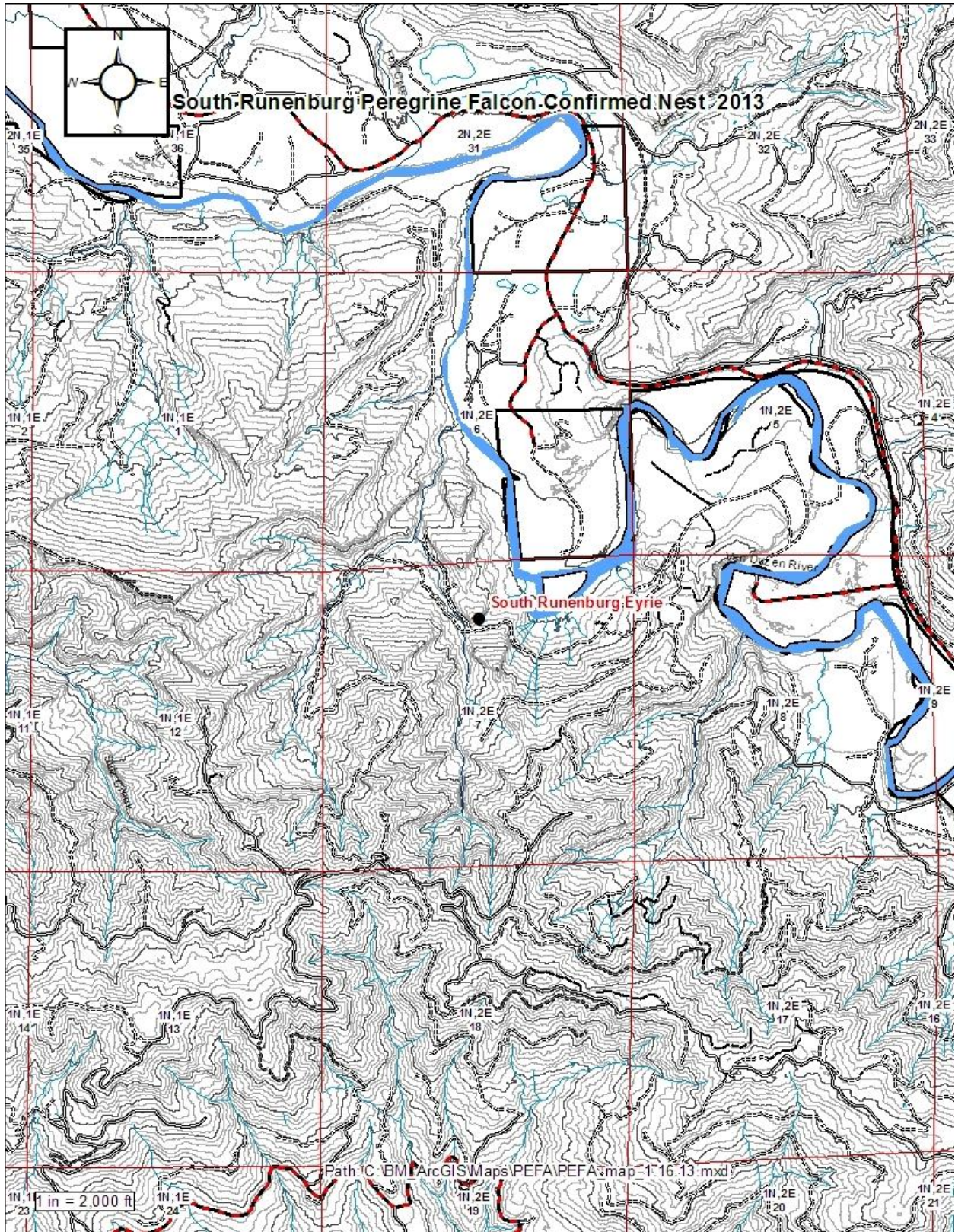


Figure 12. South Runenburg (new) Peregrine Falcon Eyrice