

Bald Eagle Management/Monitoring Plan

For Bald Eagle Nest LE-937

8791 Corkscrew Road

Estero, Florida 33928

April 2023

Prepared by:

**Pennoni Associates Inc.
1212 Country Club Blvd., #202
Cape Coral, FL 33990
(941) 363-6788
COlson@Pennoni.com**



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Bald Eagle Nest LE-937
Bald Eagle Nest LE-937 and Proposed Park Plans

Attachments

Attachment 1: Location Map
Attachement 2: Aerial with Surrounding Water Bodies

Introduction

This bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) management plan is proposed for the Village of Estero's Park located at 8791 Corkscrew Road, Estero, FL 33928. The Village is adding passive recreational amenities to the park. A small portion of the planned amenities are proposed within the 330' and 660' buffer zones of bald eagle nest LE-937. This management and monitoring plan was developed in accordance with United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) guidelines to prevent disturbing the eagles and causing interference with typical feeding habits to the degree that causing injury, nest abandonment or death occurs and to avoid potential local, state or federal law violations.

Although the bald eagle is no longer listed as a threatened or endangered species by the FWS, it is still protected by the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection act, by Florida's eagle rule (68A-16.002 F.A.C.). The FWS and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) have established guidelines for protective buffers around nests to best protect nesting eagles.

Bald Eagle nest LE-937 was first discovered by David Willems, Village of Estero Public Works Director, in February 2023. The nest is within a Eucalyptus tree (*Eucalyptus* sp.), north of Corkscrew Road and east of US 41 in the southwest corner of the park. The closest waterbody to the nest is the Estero River which bisects the park and is located approximately 1,200 feet from the nest tree. The Estero Bay is located 3.5 miles to the west.

All monitoring, if needed, will be conducted by Cathy Olson, a certified Wildlife Biologist (The Wildlife Society) or Betsie Hiatt, a Lee County Eagle Technical Advisory Committee (ETAC) member. If abnormal behavior is observed during monitoring, the qualified eagle monitor will communicate with the contractors and construction work will cease pending coordination with Village of Estero staff. A summary report and data sheets will be provided to the Village staff within thirty business days of project completion.

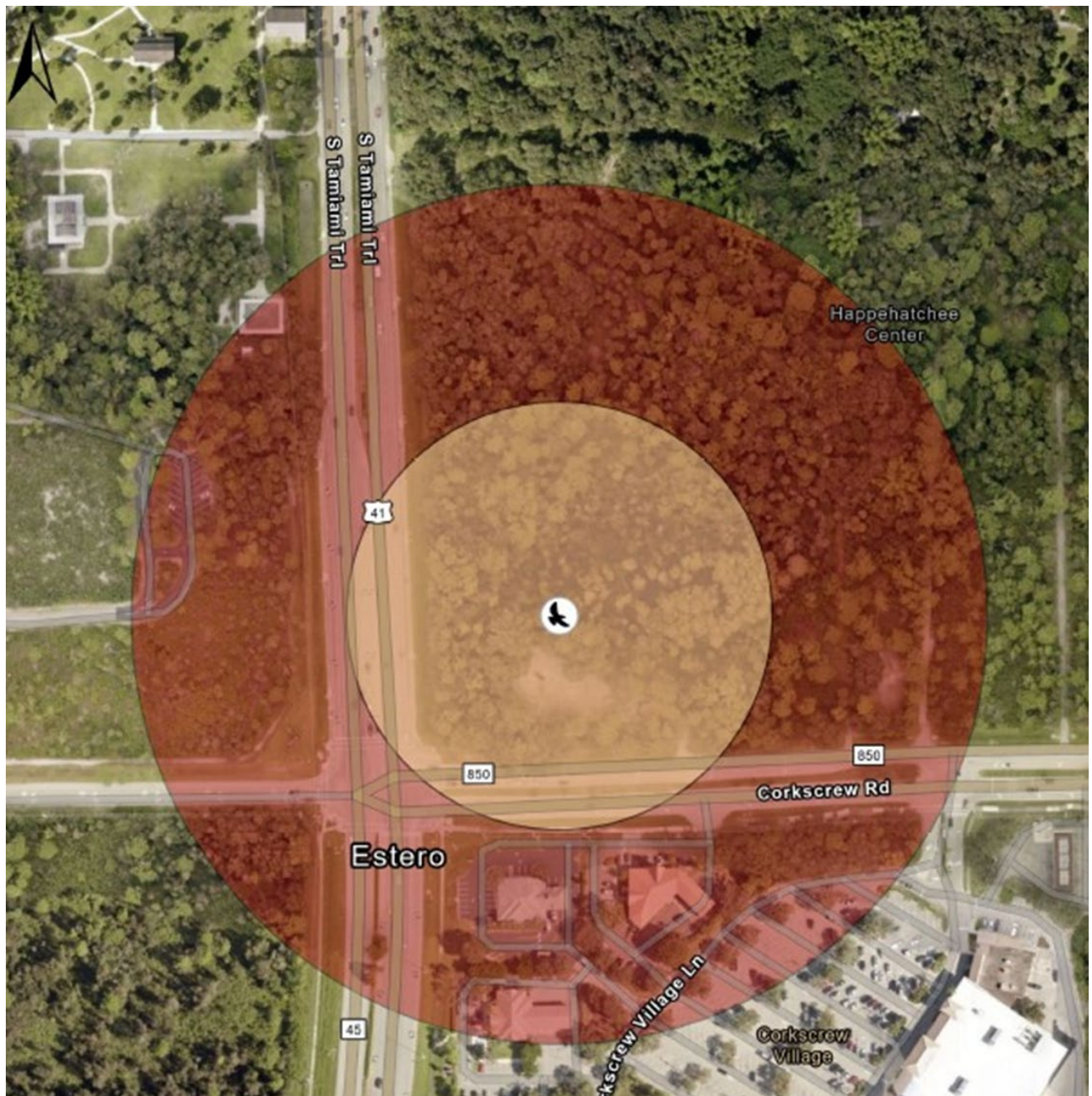
Existing Site Conditions and Proposed Work

Bald eagle nest LE-937 was first found in February 2023 by Village of Estero staff. A Pennoni wildlife biologist subsequently verified that there were two young eagles in the nest. The nest is in a Eucalyptus tree north of Corkscrew Road and east of US 41 in the southwest corner of the park. Two eaglets successfully fledged from the nest in 2023.

Proposed park development near the nest consists primarily of two elements. Invasive exotic plant removal and treatment and the installation of hiking trails including a short portion of boardwalk within the 330-foot buffer. The nest tree is in an exotic but not invasive tree and will not be removed.

Invasive exotic plant control will begin in May 2023. Park permitting with the South Florida Water Management and United States Coast Guard is currently underway.

Figure 1: Bald Eagle Nest LE-37



-  Bald Eagle Nest
-  Eagle Nest 330 ft Buffer
-  Eagle Nest 660 ft Buffer

Figure 2: Bald Eagle Nest LE 37 and Proposed Park Plans



Bald Eagle Protection Measures

Details of the eagle management plan provide reasonable assurance to avoid impacts to the eagle nest, while allowing the park project to begin are detailed below:

1. No work (exotic plant control or construction) is proposed within the primary zone (330' of the nest tree during nesting season (October 1 – May 15, which may start earlier if nesting is initiated prior to October 1 and may end earlier or later than May 15, depending on the date of successful fledging of young or documented nest failure).
2. Exotic plant control and construction may occur within the secondary nest zone (330' - 660 feet of the nest tree) during nesting season (October 1 – May 15) when a qualified nest monitor is on site in accordance with FWS Bald Eagle Monitoring Guidelines. Restrictions allow for a qualified monitor to observe the nest three times per week to ensure that construction activities do not alter normal bald eagle behavior to help ensure that the nest is not abandoned, per the Bald Eagle Monitoring Guidelines (UFWFS 2007). If work occurs during nesting season a qualified nest monitor will be used. The qualified eagle monitor will coordinate with the construction crew so that they are aware of the protection zones.
3. If construction during the nesting season occurs the contractor will install eagle nest protection signs that identify the buffer limits. Additional bald eagle information will be provided to the contractor and placed on their job board.
4. The Village of Estero has opted to keep the trail as planned but will close the trail during nesting season (October 1 – May 15) annually as long as nesting occurs. The trail closure will keep pedestrians from hiking into the nest buffers. Trail closures will consist of trail barriers and signs educating the public as to why the trails are closed.
5. If the Village chooses to work within the nesting buffers a summary report detailing eagle observations will be submitted to the Village of Estero within 30 business days of the completion of the project.

Monitoring Methodology

If monitoring is required, a qualified eagle nest monitor will arrive on site ½ hour before sunrise for a four-hour monitoring session three times per week when work is being done. Eagle behaviors and a description of work that is being performed will be described in fifteen-minute intervals. Later in the nesting season (five weeks post hatching) monitoring will be reduced to once per week and scheduled when heavy work is being done. A summary report and field data sheets will be provided to the Village of Estero.

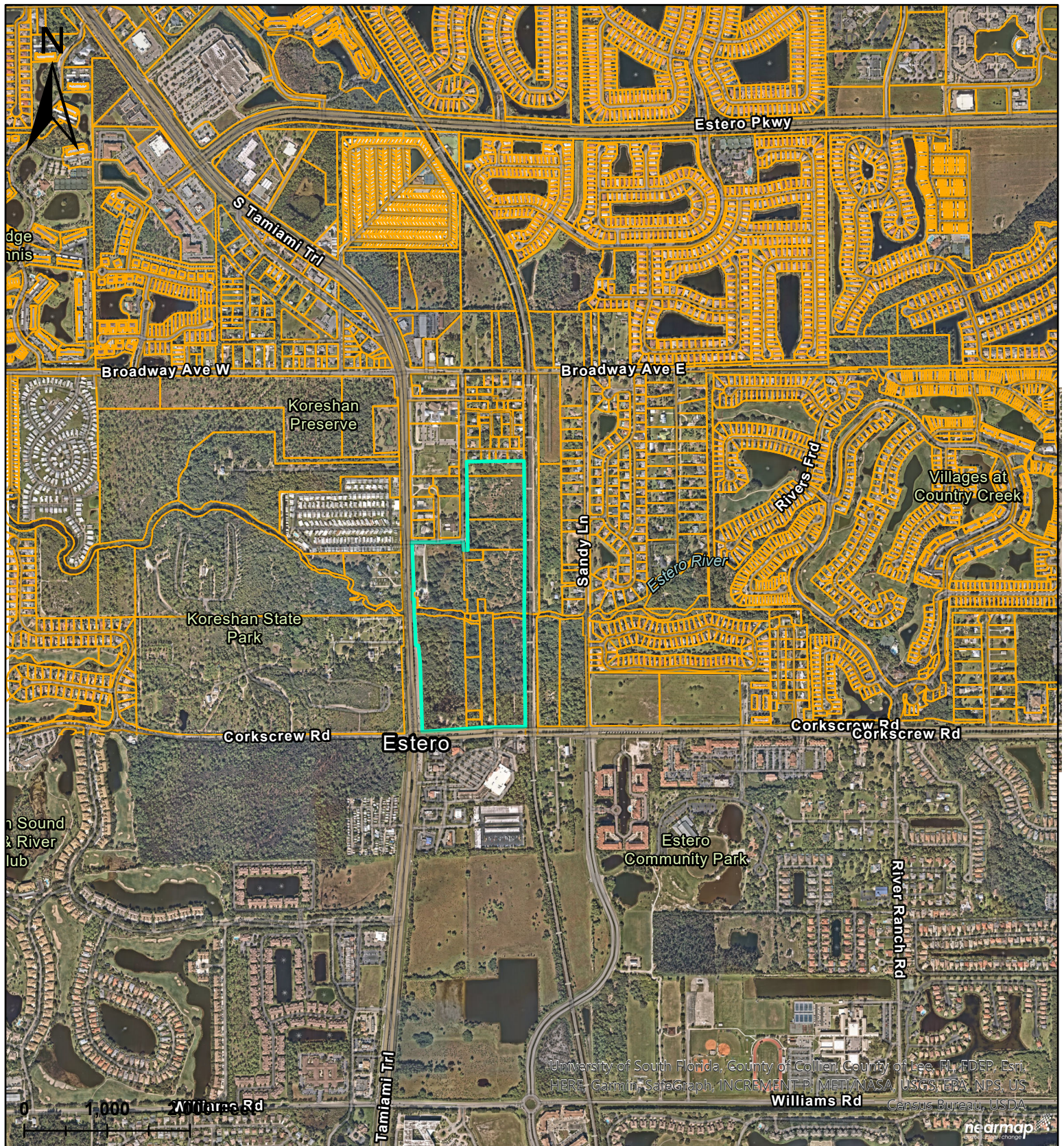
Proposed Eagle Monitors




Cathy Olson, Pennoni Associates Inc. Cathy received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Natural Resources Management from the University of Maryland in 1994 and a Master of Science Degree from the University of Florida in 1998. She has been a Certified Wildlife Biologist with The Wildlife Society since 2003, a certified ecologist with the Ecological Society of America since 2020 and has been a ecologist in southwest Florida since 1999. Cathy has monitored bald eagle nests in Lee and Charlotte County Florida and in Maryland. Additional resume information can be made available upon request.

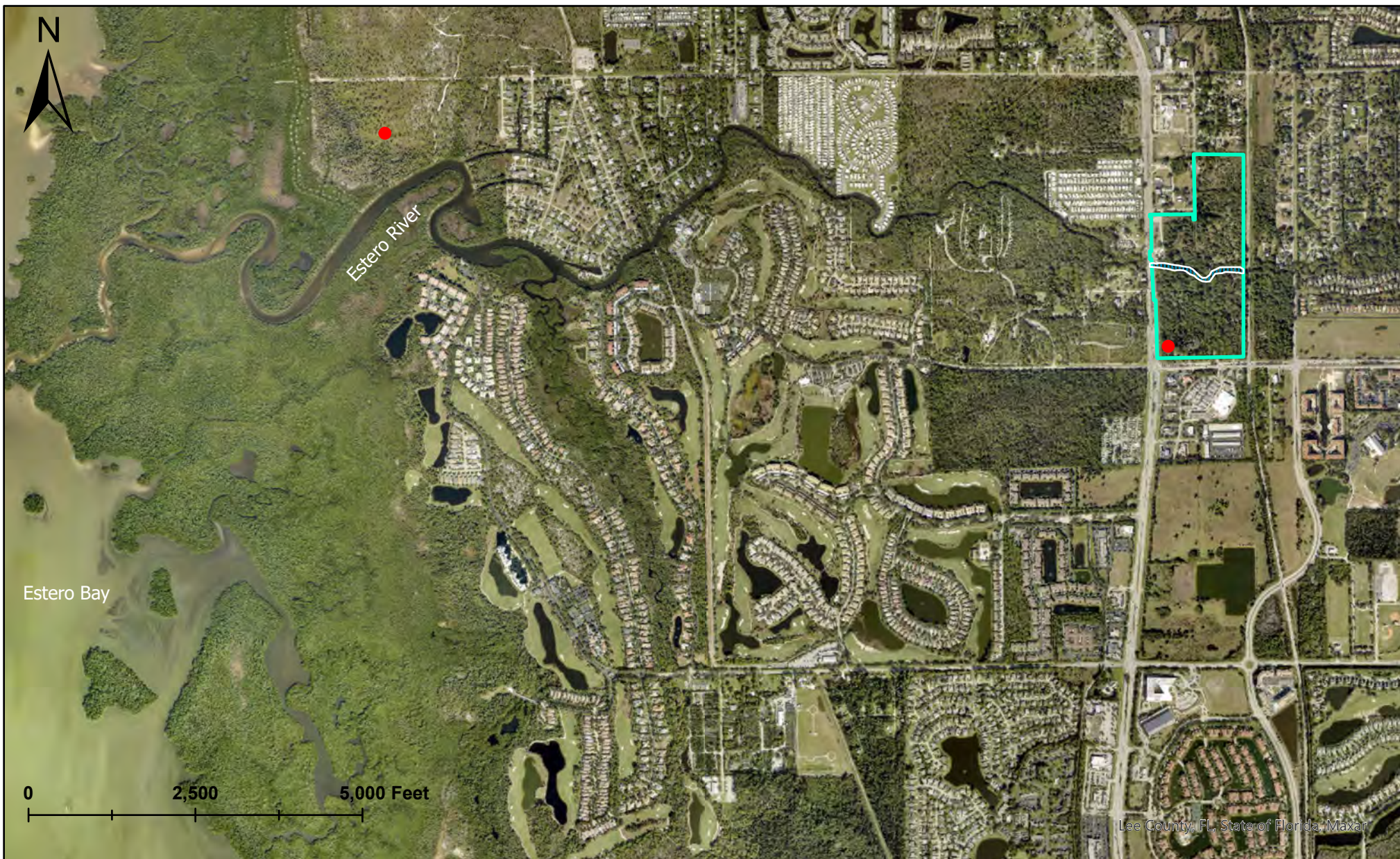
Betsie N. Hiatt, Pennoni Associates Inc. Betsie received her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Environmental Studies from Rollins College in 1995 and has been an environmental professional in southwest Florida since 1997. Betsie has been a member of the Lee County Eagle Technical Advisory Committee for 20 years and has annually monitored nests on Pine Island during nesting season during that time. Additional resume information can be made available upon request.

Literature Cited

2007. United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Bald Eagle Monitoring Guidelines.



 <p>PENNONI ASSOCIATES INC.</p> <p>1212 Country Club Blvd, #202 Cape Coral, FL 33990 T: 239.360.3075 www.Pennoni.com</p>	<p>Village of Estero Trails Project</p> <p>Estero, FL 33928</p>	<p>  Site Outline  Lee County Parcels </p>
	<p>Project: ENSTE21003</p> <p>Survey Date: 01/07/2022</p>	
		<p>Location Map</p>



PENNONI ASSOCIATES INC.

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 Cape Coral, FL 33990
 T: 239.360.3075 www.Pennoni.com

Village of Estero Trails Project, Estero

Project: ENSTE20003

- Site Outline
- Estero River
- Eagle Nest

Aerial with Nearby Water Bodies