

# 7233 ALASKA POWER AUTHORITY

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July 24, 1984

Susitna File No. 6.14.4/118.1

Mr. Dennis Money  
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1011 East Tudor Road  
Anchorage, Alaska 99504

Re: Confirmation of Discussions Regarding Peregrine Falcon Nesting  
Habitat on the Tanana River in the Vicinity of the Proposed  
Susitna Transmission Line

Dear Mr. Money:

On June 26, 1984, the Alaska Power Authority and its representatives met with you and Mike Amaral to discuss the findings of the June 11, 1984 peregrine nesting survey along the Tanana River.

You will recall that this survey was conducted to establish the location of historic peregrine nesting sites thought to be within one mile of the proposed Susitna Hydroelectric Project transmission line.

The June 11, 1984 survey revealed that only three possible areas of peregrine falcon nesting habitat occur within three miles of the proposed Healy-to-Fairbanks transmission route crossing of the Tanana River. These locations (Nenana Bluff No. 1, Nenana Bluff No. 2, and Nenana Bluff No. 3) are shown in enclosure 1. Two other locations near Nenana were previously thought to have contained historical nest sites. These locations clearly do not contain nesting habitat (see Notations 1 and 2 in enclosure 1).

Although all three areas of potential habitat found near the proposed transmission route crossing were judged to contain suitable nesting habitat for peregrines (especially Nenana Bluff No. 1 and Nenana Bluff No. 2), only one contains a documented historical nest site. The historical nest site is at Nenana Bluff No. 2 on a series of south-facing rock outcroppings about 200 - 300 feet above the valley floor and 1.4 miles east of the proposed transmission route (see Notation 3 in enclosure 1). The correct location of this nest site has been tentatively verified on the basis of the June 11, 1984 findings that appropriate nesting habitat does not exist near the junctions of Sections 4, 5, 8, and 9, T4S, R7W, F.M., or on a river bluff at the junctions of Sections 8, 9, 16, and 17, T4S, R7W, F.M.

The two locations that contain suitable potential peregrine falcon nesting habitat that have no record of previous use (Nenana Bluff No. 1 and Nenana Bluff No. 3) are located about 2.3 miles east and 2.5 miles west of the proposed transmission route, respectively.

Because the historical peregrine falcon nesting location at Nenana Bluff No. 2 lies 1.4 miles east of the proposed transmission route, it is our understanding that the only U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommended restrictions that may apply to this nesting location are those recommended for application within two miles of a nest site, but more than one mile from it (provided that project activities, including aircraft overflights, do not enter a one-mile buffer zone surrounding the nesting location). These recommended restrictions do not apply to aircraft (beyond one mile), and do not appear to specifically rule out the presence of permanent facilities producing low or negligible levels of noise (e.g., a transmission line that may be constructed and patrolled with the aid of aircraft). The recommended restrictions generally state that the use of explosives and other activities (e.g., "rock-crushing") or facilities that have noise levels sufficiently high to disturb nesting efforts are prohibited from April 15 through August 31, unless specifically authorized. Although these recommended restrictions are applied to each historical nesting location beginning on April 15 of each year, they are relaxed after June 1 in those years in which the nesting location is shown to be unoccupied. In such cases, construction activities that are normally prohibited within the two-mile buffer zone are allowed to proceed until April of the following year, as long as they do not result in permanent facilities that are capable of producing relatively "high" levels of noise of an on-going (although not necessarily continuous) nature (e.g., gasline compressor stations).

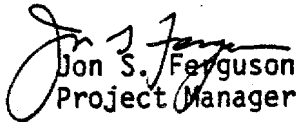
The other historical peregrine falcon nesting locations are all more than two miles from the transmission line route (Chena Bluff, 3.4 miles; Salchaket Bluff No. 2, 4.8 miles; Rosie Creek Bluff, 4.9 miles; and Bonanza Creek Bluff, 2.9 miles). All other potential nesting locations are also more than two miles from the transmission route (Salchaket Bluff No. 1, 4.4 miles; and Whiskey Island Bluff, 3.6 miles). The historical and potential nesting locations are shown on the oversize map provided to you on June 26, 1984.

Please confirm in writing whether our understanding of the restrictions regarding transmission line construction, operation and maintenance are correct in light of information provided by the June 11, 1984 survey.

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Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

  
Jon S. Ferguson  
Project Manager

TJA/JSF/jm

Enclosure as stated

cc: J. Drennan, PMS, D.C., w/encl.  
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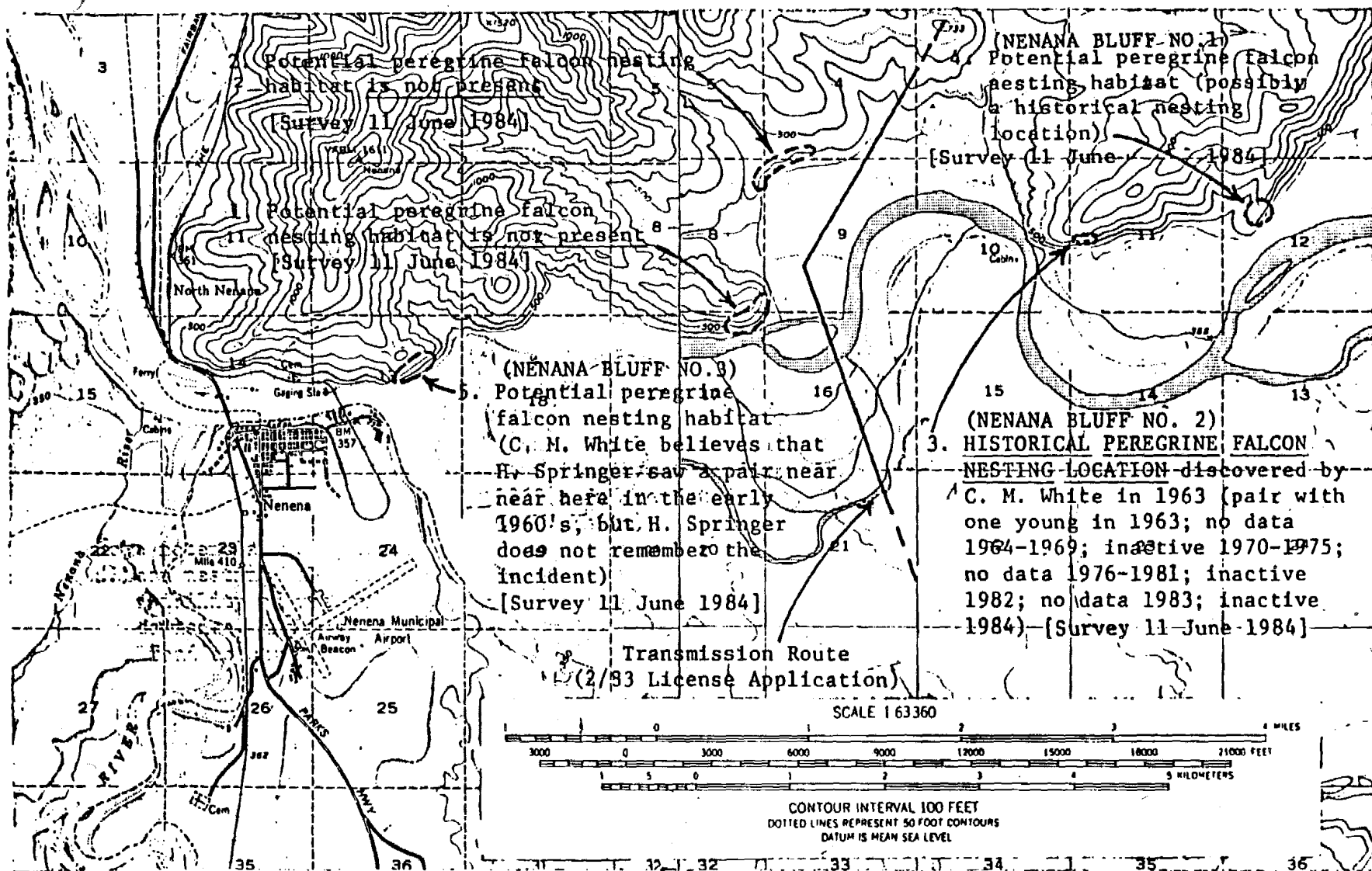


Figure 1. Information on peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) nesting habitat in the vicinity of the proposed Susitna Hydroelectric Project Healy-to-Fairbanks transmission route crossing of the Tanana River. [1963 data are from C. M. White, pers. comm. 13 June 1984; 1970-1975 data are from Haugh, J. R. 1976. Tanana River of Alaska. Pp. 254-256 in R. W. Fyfe, S. A. Temple and T. J. Cade. The 1975 North American peregrine falcon survey. Can. Field-Nat. 90: 228-273; 1982 data are from Amaral, M. J. 1982. Peregrine falcon survey of the lower Tanana River, Fairbanks to Nenena, Alaska, 1982. Unpubl. rep. by Div. Endangered Species, U. S. Fish Wildl. Serv., Anchorage; 1984 data are from an LGL Alaska Research Associates, Inc. survey for Harza-Ebasco Susitna Joint Venture, 11 June 1984].