2008 Survey Report

McGregor Preserve
Travis County

Lower Colorado River Authority

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Introduction

The McGregor Preserve is a 363-acre tract owned by the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) and a part of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve system (BCCP) set aside for Golden-cheeked warblers (*Dendroica chrysoparia*, GCWA). The preserve is located on the east side of Lake Travis, north of Hippie Hollow and Comanche Trail and south of the Cypress Creek Arm of the lake. Residential developments border the west side and now most of the east side. A wooded tract that is also managed for the GCWA and owned by Travis County, borders the preserve on its northeastern corner.

McGregor consists of steep hillsides and canyons with some moderate slope and level areas on the hilltops and valley floors. Some karst features are present, but all features that have been surveyed except for one, are considered epi-karst. Most of the land is heavily forested, the main three components being juniper (*Juniperus ashei*, cedar), live oak (*Quercus fusiformis*) and red oak (*Quercus buckleyi*, Texas oak). Some of the more exposed slopes are semi-open with small trees, most likely a result of the thin soil and harsh conditions.

Methods

LCRA personnel set up two-100 acre plots for surveys in 2008, following BCCP enumeration protocol. One plot contains prime habitat and the other plot contains transitional habitat. Plots are surveyed for up to six hours each visit, 3-5 times between March 15 and May 25.

The plots at McGregor preserve were surveyed one time each for a total of 10.7 hours. Due to unexpected loss of staff, the surveys were stopped after the initial surveys. Students from Texas A&M University started a study testing different survey methods, so staff decided to abandon the surveys this year and possibly resume in 2009.

Surveys were conducted mostly by walking slowly through habitat while looking and listening for the target species. The routes walked and areas covered varied from survey to survey. When a target species was encountered the surveyor plotted the bird's location in the field on an aerial photograph and a waypoint was recorded on a hand-held GPS unit. If the position was uncertain, a waypoint was still taken using a hand-held GPS unit. These waypoints could later be accurately plotted and analyzed using computer software.

Weather conditions were recorded at the start and end of every survey day (Table 2). All bird species observed or heard were noted.

Results

The preserve has been surveyed several times in the past, with a wide spread in the number of warbler territories found. LCRA biologists surveyed the land in 1992, 1993 and 1994 with estimated numbers of 14, 18, and 22, respectively. In 2001 a group of surveyors, put together by Blanton & Associates Inc. and Turner Collie & Braden Inc., observed 29 territories. In 2004, personnel from SWCA Environmental Consultants returned a figure of 10 to 14. Ten of these territories were entirely within the preserve and 4 more territories were only partially on McGregor. Surveys conducted by LCRA employees in 2005 found 17-21 territories and in 2006, surveys located 12-15 territories

on this property. Approximately 16-19 territories were observed at McGregor during the 2007 survey season.

In 2008, staff set up and surveyed two, 100-acre plots following BCCP protocol (see maps), a prime habitat plot and a transitional habitat plot. Unfortunately, due to loss of staff, surveys were not completed and each plot was visited only one time. This one survey collected data for three males in the prime plot and five in the transitional plot.

Discussion

Due to the loss of staff this year, surveys were not completed therefore it is difficult to create a discussion based on findings. Surveys in 2009 should include a complete enumeration of the two plots.

Table 1. Survey Hours

Date	Surveyor	Start Time	End Time	Total (hours)
March 21, 2008	BA	0740	1305	5.42
March 28, 2008	BA	0715	1232	5.28
			TOTAL	**10.70**

Table 2. Weather

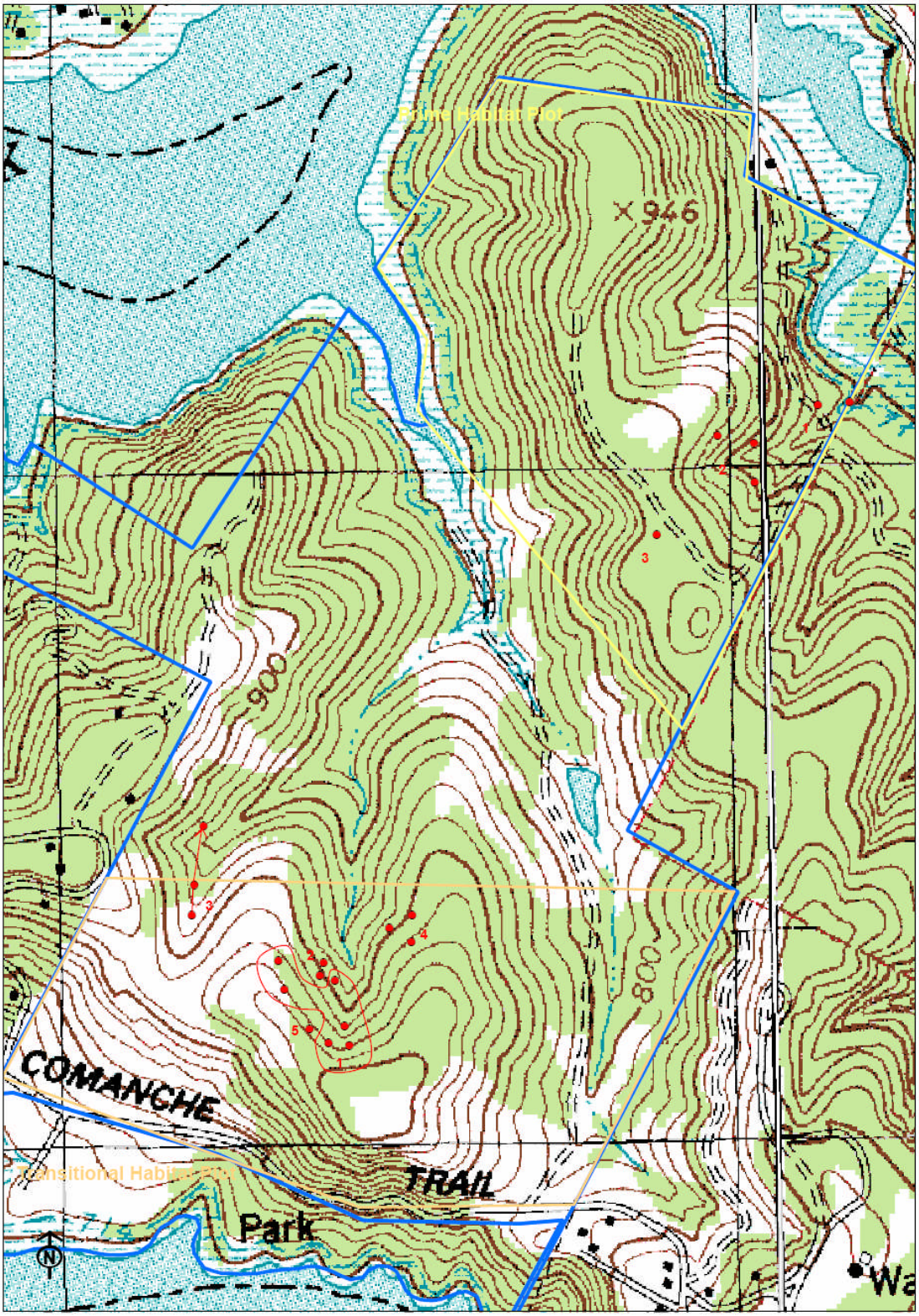
Date	Temp. F (start-end)	Wind (start-end)	Sky (start-end) % cloud cover
March 21, 2008	45 -- nn	0 – 0-5 SE	50% -- <10%
March 28, 2008	nn -- 72	0-5 SE – 5-10 SW	100% -- 40%

nn = not noted

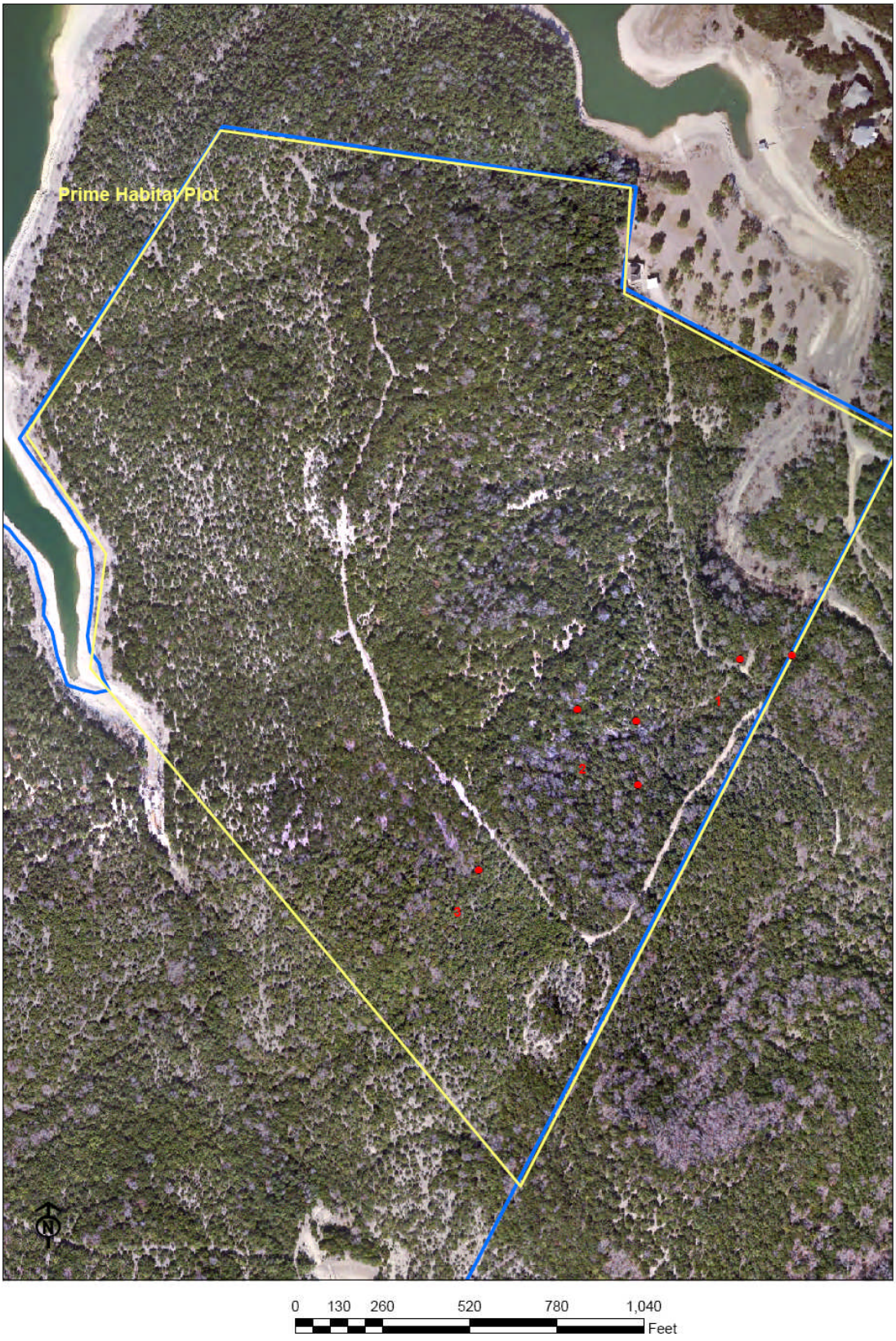
McGregor Preserve 2008 Survey - 100 Acre Plots



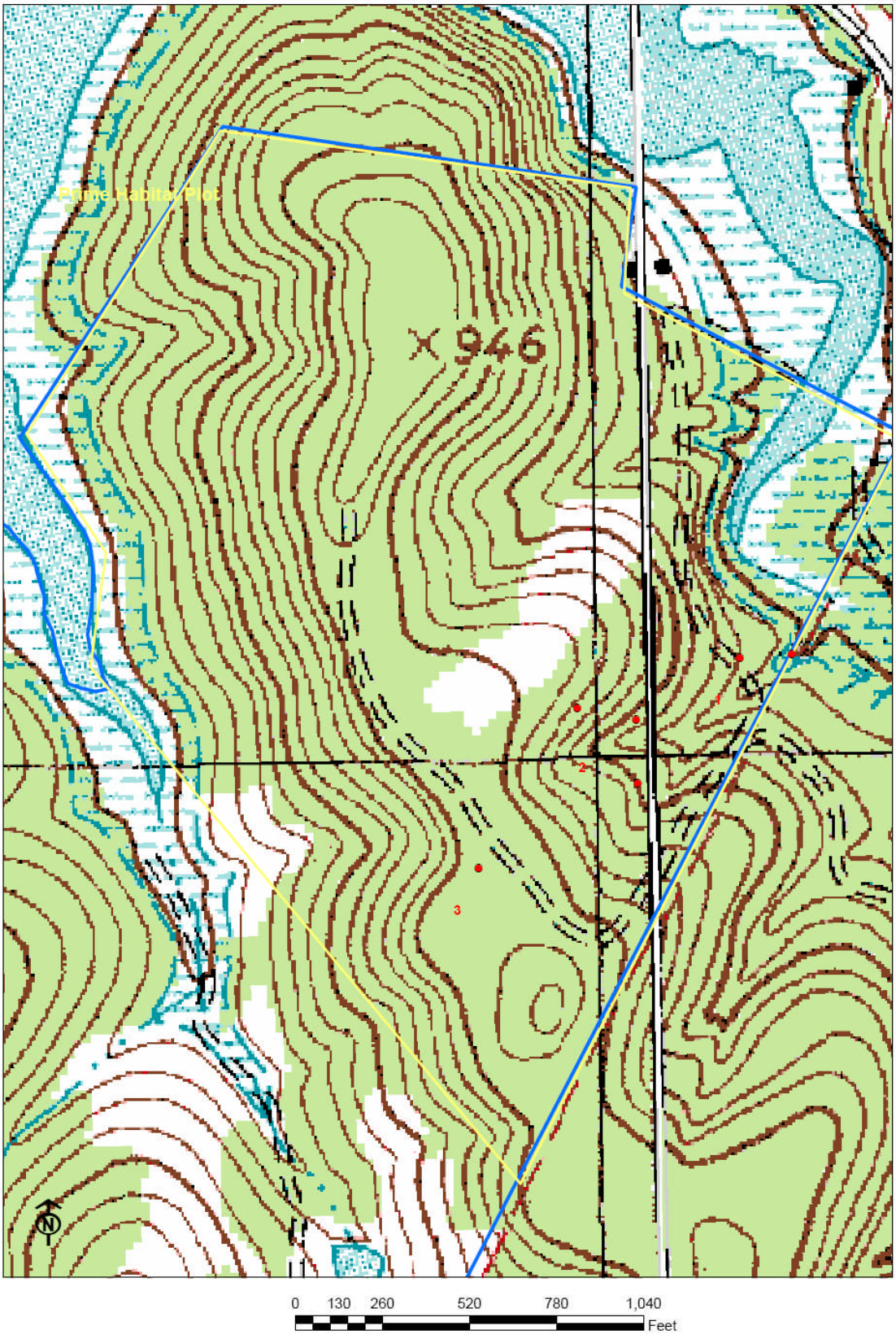
McGregor Preserve 2008 Survey - 100 Acre Plots



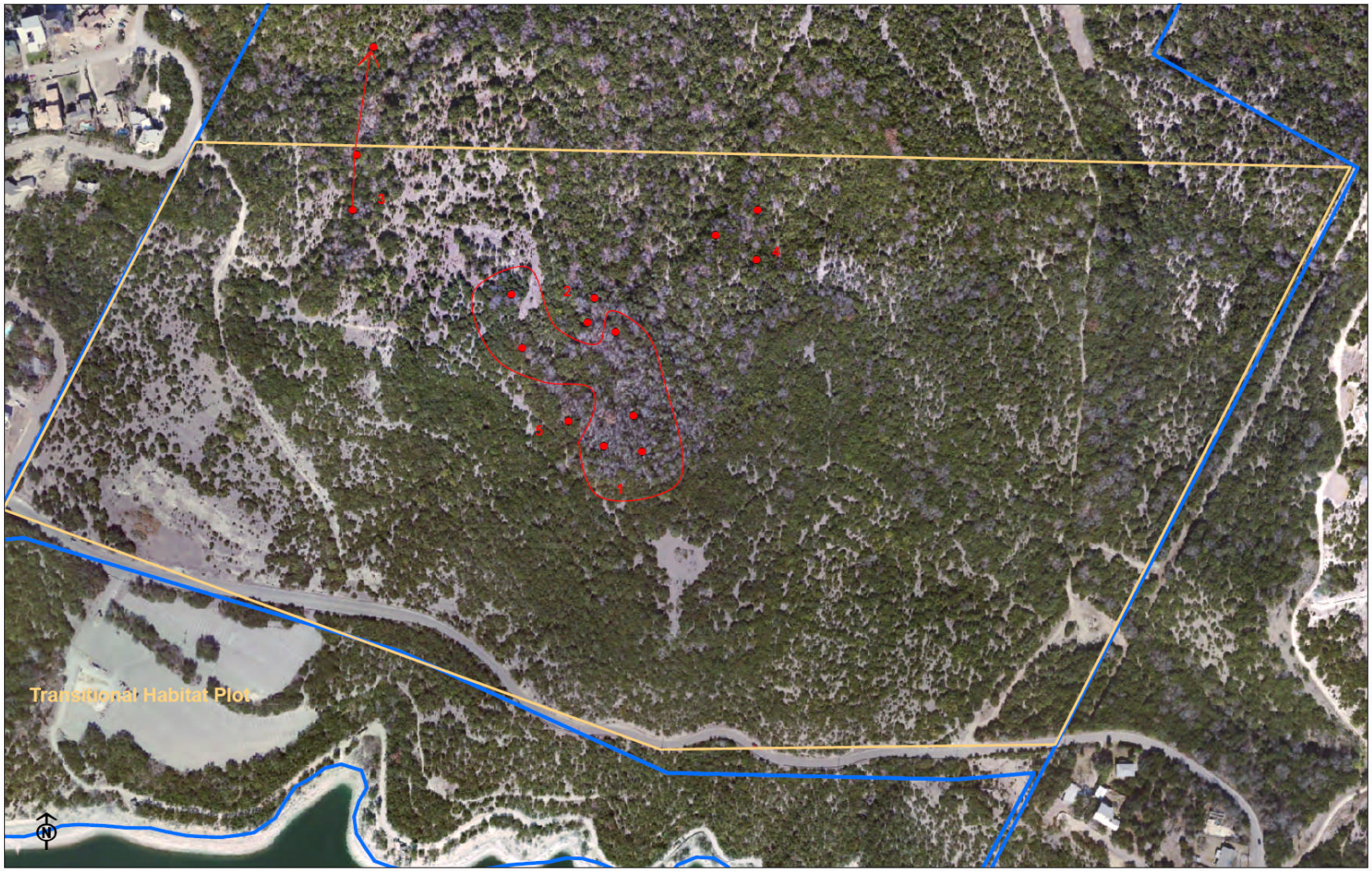
McGregor Preserve 2008 Survey - Prime Plot



McGregor Preserve 2008 Survey - Prime Plot



McGregor Preserve 2008 Survey - Transitional Plot



McGregor Preserve 2008 Survey - Transitional Plot

