TOWN OF FAIRFAX
STAFF REPORT
March 18, 2021

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Ben Berto, Director of Planning and Building Services

SUBJECT: Ridgeline Scenic Corridor Area/Boundary Clarification

BACKGROUND

Staff continues to work on developing a digitized, georeferenced baseline map of the Town's Ridgeline Scenic Corridor (RSC) as defined in Zoning Chapter 17.060 Ridgeline Development. The Town's RSC regulations cannot be fully implemented without diagrammatic documentation of the RSC location and boundaries. Commissioner Newton assisted in development of the latest product now being considered by your Commission.

This is the tenth Planning Commission meeting on the Ridgeline Scenic Corridor.

DISCUSSION

As noted in prior staff reports and evidenced by the number of meetings already required on just this one aspect of ridgeline development, attempting to review and consider amendments to the entire Zoning Chapter 17.060 is a comprehensive undertaking that should await an update of the overall General Plan, the genesis of the visual resources programs, policies, and maps from which the zoning regulations have been derived.

Nonetheless it will assist the Town's residents, reviewing bodies, and staff to have a legally and procedurally grounded reference map that can be applied to property boundaries to use as the basis for RSC determinations. Currently no such useable map has been adopted by the Town.

Commissioner Newton met with staff twice to review efforts to date and determine to what extent RSC boundaries as currently defined can be mapped. The Commissioner agrees with staff that as currently written, the 100-vertical foot boundary cannot be literally applied or mapped.

Commissioner Newton came up with a creative way to diagrammatically show the problems with literal application of the 100-vertical foot RSC. She suggested a map that used a gradation of colors ("ombre") that shows the Town divided into 100 vertical-foot layers. This way, the extent of each vertical layer is clearly shown. The Town's talented GIS designer did so (see Attachments A and B), and the results are clear:

Attachment A shows the color-gradated 100-foot vertical intervals, with the area between the 200-foot elevation and the 300-foot elevation outlined. This is basically the first 100 feet uphill of where the designated ridgeline of Fairfax Ridge terminates at the base (196' elevation).

The outlined 200-300 vertical elevation layer shows that there is at least 10 miles of hillside in Town would be within that 100-vertical foot slice of the Fairfax Ridge RSC downhill from its 300-foot elevation. The continuous length adjacent to Fairfax Ridge's 300'-200' RSC alone is more than 5 miles in length.

Further, the Attachment A map shows that the additional 100-foot vertical slices of Fairfax Ridge's 100-vertial foot RSC would encompass virtually the entire Town, were the current definition attempted to be strictly and literally applied.

Commissioner Newton and staff came up with a functional application of a vertical RSC that could be applied at this time. RSC Chapter 17.60 looks closely at development in relation to mapped ridgelines. Elsewhere in the Zoning Ordinance, it lists a 35-foot maximum building height for hillside development. If a 35-foot vertical drop from a ridgeline, measured perpendicular to the ridgeline, is mapped and included as part of the RSC, any development on any property located within that 35-foot vertical distance could be identified and would be subjected to the RSC regulations. Importantly, the 35 vertical-foot 'zone' can be mapped and doesn't extend across the entire Town as does the 100 vertical-foot zone. Attachment B, which is still work in progress, shows application of a 35-vertical foot zone on two designated ridgelines. As can be seen, there are places where the 35-foot vertical distance bulges out from the designated ridgeline, reflecting finger subridges and including properties on those subridges for application of ridgeline development regulations.

In terms of other RSC map products, the Commission has previously opined that applying a digitized, georeferenced version of the 1974 Visual Resources Map No. 9 is appropriate for determining its mapped RSC corridors (see Attachment C). The Commission also supported using the 150-horizontal foot RSC map, showing RSC's that for the most part closely follow the 1974 Map of Visual Resources RSC. Attachment D shows the 150-horizontal foot RSC overlaid on the 1974 Visual Resources Map No. 9 RSC's.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff hopes the overall Commission can support this workable application of the vertical RSC zone. If so, direct staff to complete mapping the 35-vertical foot RSC, and combine it with digitized, georeferenced RSC "Map Visual of Visual Resources" and the 150-horizontal foot RSC map as the bases for determining RSC's area and boundaries.

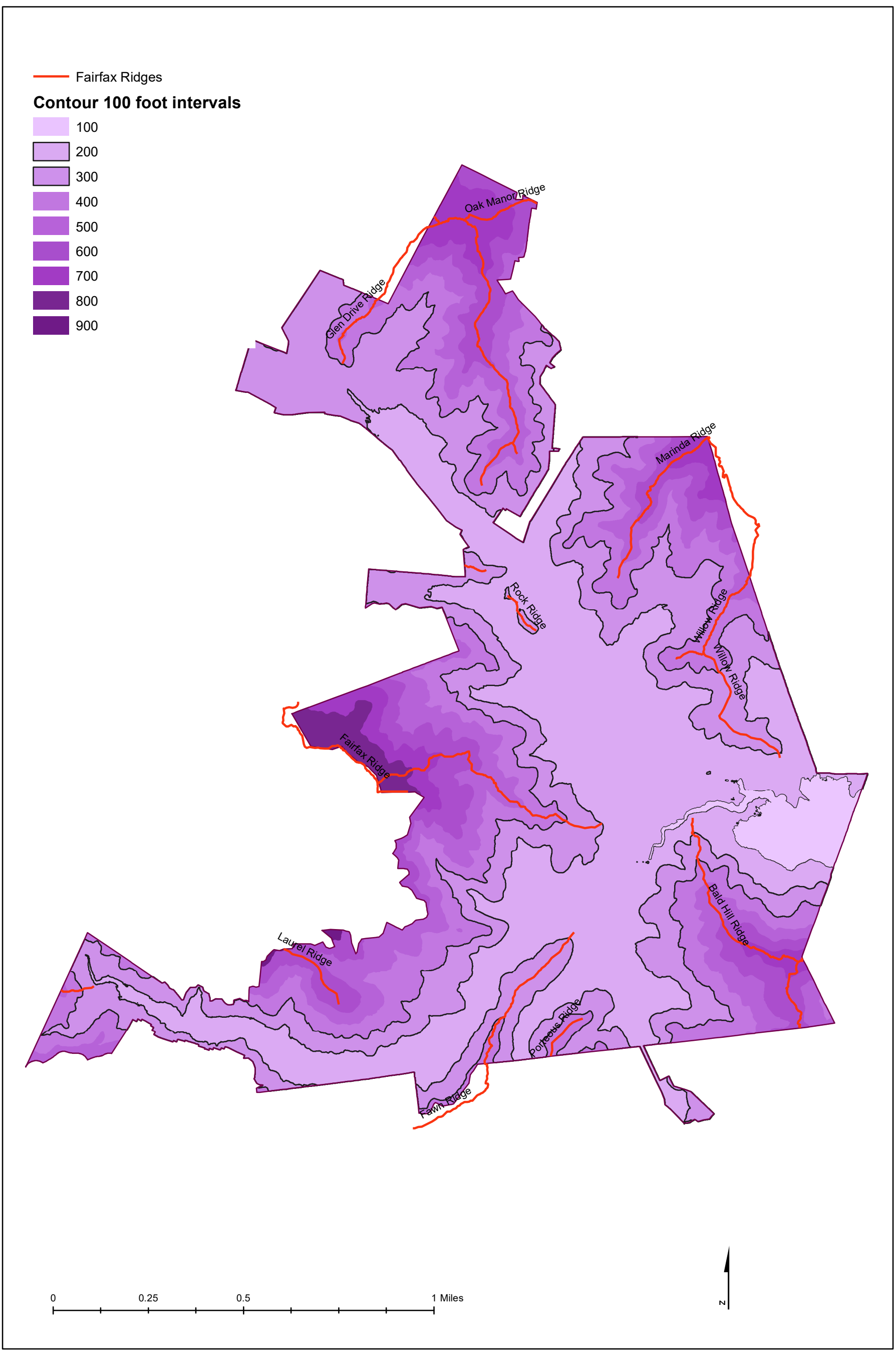
ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A	Map: Fairfax 100-Foot Contours
Attachment B	Map: Fairfax 100-Foot Contours with rough cut 35-foot vertical drop
Attachment C	1974 Visual Resources Map No. 9, Georeferenced
Attachment D	Map: 150 Foot Horizontal Distance and Georeferenced 1974 Map No. 9

Fairfax - 100 Foot Contours

200 -300 Foot Contours Highlighted

Draft 3/18/2021



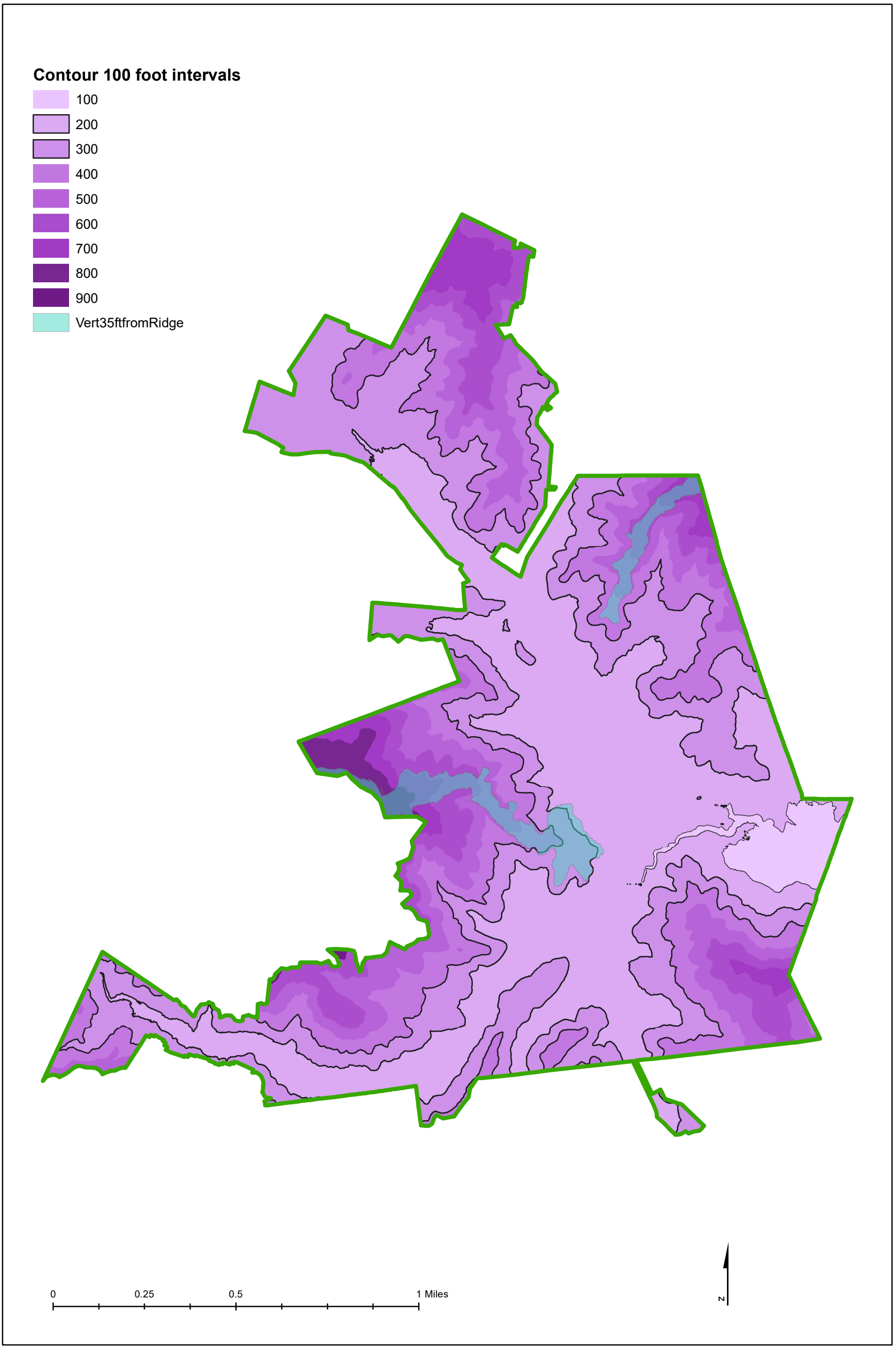
Document Path: X:\Planning and Building Services\GIS Projects\Ridges\MXDs\contour100ft20210308.mxd

ATTACHMENT A

Fairfax - 100 Foot Contours

200 -300 Foot Contours Highlighted
Rough Cut of 35 Foot Vertical Drop from Ridges

Draft 3/18/2021



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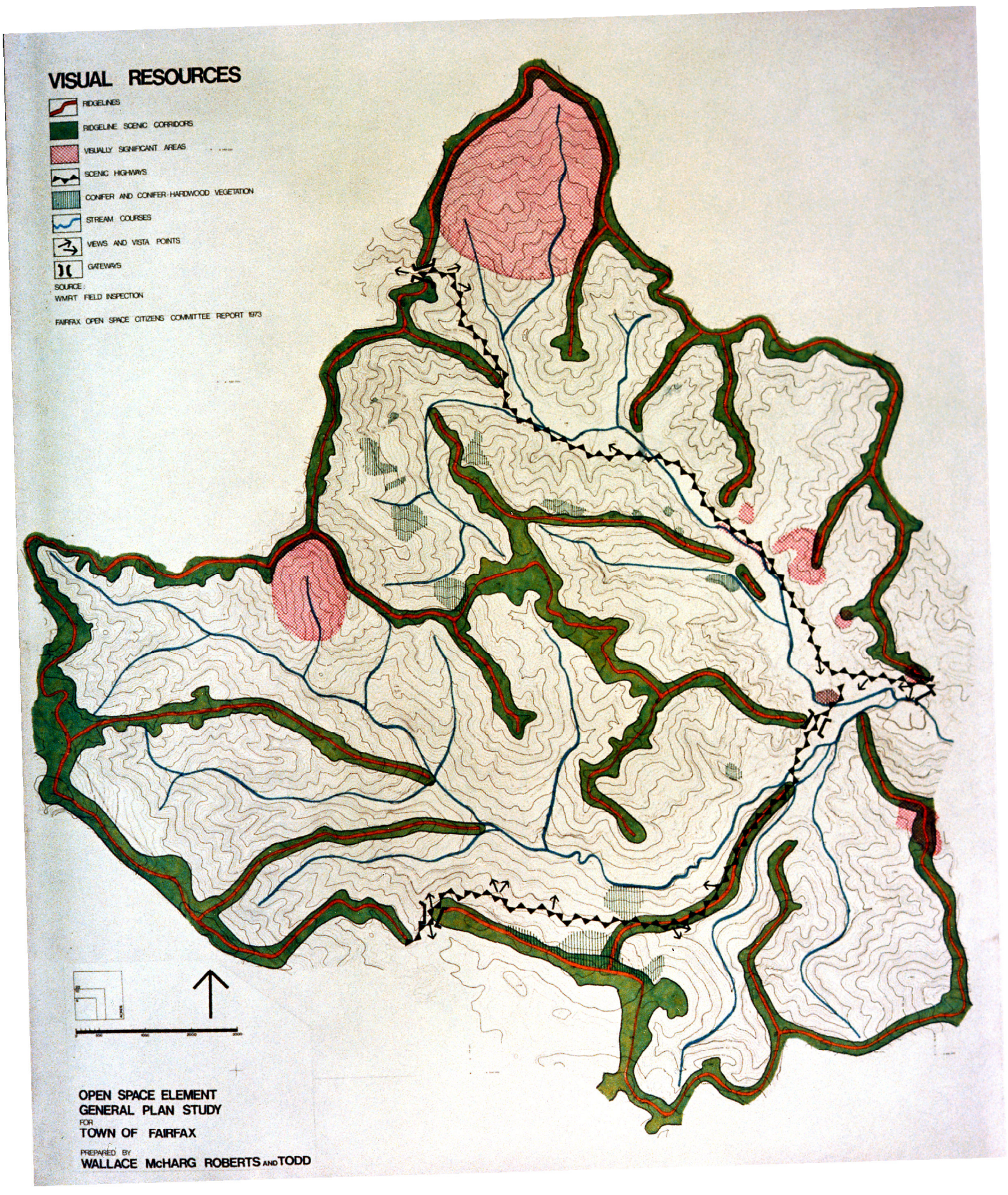
ATTACHMENT B

1974 Visual Resources Map No. 9 Georeferenced

Draft 1/21/2021



N

0 2,500 5,000 10,000 Feet

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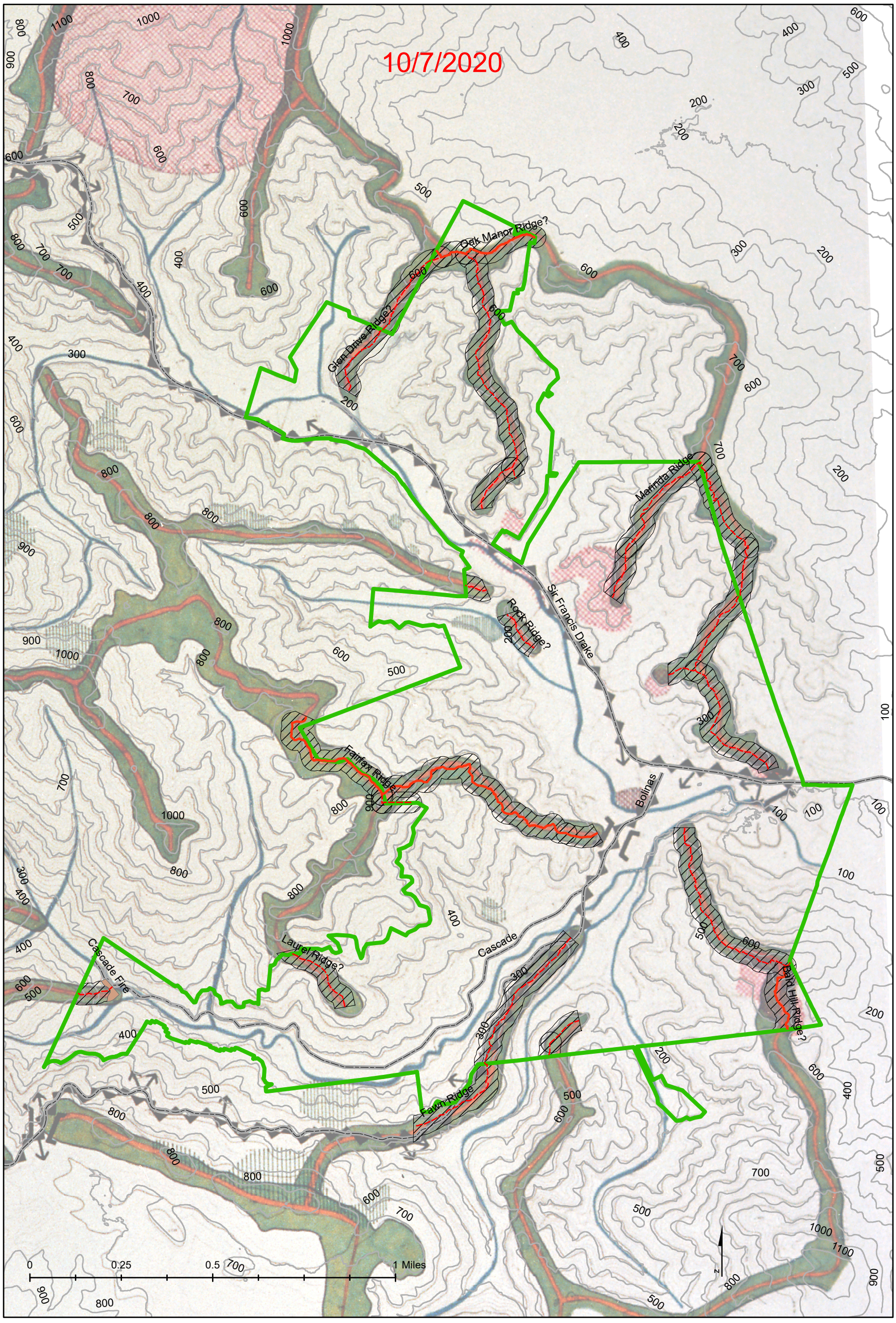
ATTACHMENT C

Fairfax Ridges
150 Foot Horizontal Distance and Georeferenced 1974
Visual Resources Map No. 9



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ATTACHMENT D