

**Discoveries and Site Evaluations:  
Underwater Archeological Investigations  
of Three Bridge Project Areas  
for the Delaware Route 1 Corridor,  
Kent County, Delaware**



by

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KENT COUNTY, DELAWARE**

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## ABSTRACT

This report describes the findings of an underwater archeological survey and site evaluation investigation of three proposed bridge crossings for the Delaware Route 1 Corridor highway project. The waterways investigated consisted of portions of Smyrna River, Mill Creek, and Leipsic River in Kent County, Delaware. The initial work accomplished consisted of background research, development of a predictive model and research design of nautical commerce on Delaware's interior waterways, landscape reconstructions, and a remote sensing survey utilizing a marine proton magnetometer and bathymetric recording sonar. Thirty-seven magnetic anomaly cultural targets were recorded in the bridge crossing areas surveyed. These were interpreted to represent the presence of eight underwater archeological sites and seventeen isolated objects containing magnetic material. No further investigation was recommended for the isolated objects as well as one of the underwater archeological sites, a wharf in the Leipsic River (Site 7K-C-376) which lay outside the designated bridge crossing. Another site in the Leipsic River project area (Site 7K-C-378) was interpreted to lack the potential for being considered archeologically or historically significant based on the observed presence of 20th century artifacts, and no further work was recommended for it, either. The other six underwater archeological sites were interpreted to have the potential to be considered archeologically or historically significant. They were recommended for further investigation to evaluate their eligibility for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Two of them were located in the Smyrna River project area (Sites 7K-A-110 and 7K-A-111), three in Mill Creek (Sites 7K-A-112, 7K-A-113, and 7K-A-114), and one in the Leipsic River project area (Site 7K-C-377). These sites were subsequently evaluated to determine their level of significance. Each of the sites evaluated was found to contain concentrations of refuse and lost artifacts dating almost exclusively to the 20th century. The only exceptions were a small number of isolated artifacts of late 19th century vintage. The most interesting finds were in Mill Creek. Site 7K-A-113 was found to contain the buried wreck of a small wooden row boat 13' x 3' of local vernacular construction dating to the first half of the 20th century. Site 7K-A-114 contained the skeg assemblage of a motorized wooden V-bottom Work Boat 50' x 14' dating to around 1910. It was representative of a design type that was common in the Delaware Bay and Chesapeake Bay regions during the first half of the 20th century. Both the wooden row boat wreck and the circa 1910 skeg assemblage were recovered for study and analysis. The cultural materials remaining at Sites 7K-A-113 and 7K-A-114 did not merit further study. The results of this investigation showed that there were no cultural properties eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places in the three bridge crossing project areas. No further archeological work prior to the proposed construction was recommended.

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