

2 Environmental Setting

The Phase II evaluation area is 0.69 acres, and located in the southeastern corner of New Wharf Road/SR 409 and Milford Bypass/Route 1, in Milford, Kent County, Delaware. Figure 2-1 shows the general condition of the project area during the archaeological evaluation. Land use at the location is exclusively agricultural. This section provides a brief discussion of the environmental setting of the current project area. Specific topics covered include physiography, geology, hydrology, flora, and fauna.

Figure 2-1. Overview of the current project area, facing north looking towards New Wharf Road.



2.1 Physiography

The current project area is in the Mid-Drainage Zone of the low Coastal Plain Physiographic Province. This region is characterized by a relatively flat landscape underlain by Pleistocene sands and gravel of the Columbia formation (USDA 2015). Elevations within the region range from 15 to 30 feet above mean sea level (amsl). Elevations within the current project area are 25 feet amsl.

2.2 Geology

Soils at the location are primarily Galestown loamy sand (GaB, 0–5 percent slopes) (Figure 2-2). This soil is defined as somewhat excessively well-drained, occurs on fluvio-marine terraces, knolls, dunes, and flats, and is typically more than 80 inches above the water table (USDA-NRCS Web Soil Survey 2015). Fort Mott loamy sand (FmA, 0–2 percent slopes) is found to the northeast and southwest of the Phase II evaluation area. This soil is considered well-drained and occurs on flats and terraces.

2.3 Hydrology

The hydrologic setting of the area consists of the Mispillion River and Swan Creek. The Mispillion River flows generally east-northeasterly. It is south and east of the project area. Swan Creek flows northwest to southeast and is north of the current project area. Two additional water sources, Winsmore's Ditch and Miller's Branch, were formed from the Mispillion floodplain southeast of the Phase II evaluation area on frequently flooded, tidal soils (Lenape mucky peat).

Figure 2-2. Soils and hydrology in and around the Phase II evaluation area.



2.4 Flora and Fauna

Prior to Euro-American settlement, Kent County was densely forested by hardwoods including pine, oak, birch, and hemlock. An oak-hickory climax was present after ca. 6000 BC that was followed by a colder, wetter period with pine-oak dominated forest after 3000 BC. Oak-hickory and marsh climax vegetation and open grasslands took hold after approximately 500 BC., as the climate and sea-level rise stabilized to its current conditions (Lenert et. al. 2014:6). While Virginia pine has invaded some areas of the county, oaks are a dominant species (Matthews and Ireland 1971:2). Other wetland trees found here include red maple, sweetgum, blackgum, holly, dogwood, beech, and birch.

Kent County faunal assemblages include deer, elk, bear, turkey, rabbits, squirrels, and other small mammals and migratory birds, fish, and shellfish. Following European settlement, the introduction of horses, cattle, pig and other domestic animals is expected. No megafauna remains, such as mammoth and mastodon, have been found in Kent County (Custer 1989).

This page intentionally left blank