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Prepared for:

Delaware Department of Transportation

Archaeological Data-Recovery at Site 7NC-E-152

Airport and Churchman's Road Intersection Improvement Project
Duross Heights, New Castle County, Delaware

Prepared by:

URS

Burlington, New Jersey

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Patricia Miller
Douglas Mooney
Jennifer Rankin

URS Corporation
437 High Street
Burlington, New Jersey 08016

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Abstract

This report documents the results of archaeological investigations conducted at Site 7NC-E-152, a multicomponent prehistoric site located near the community of Duross Heights, New Castle County, Delaware. The investigations were prompted by the Delaware Department of Transportation's (DelDOT) proposed roadway improvement project, encompassing the intersection of Airport and Churchman's Roads. The site is situated atop a low wooded bench overlooking a series of first-order tributary streams and expansive wetlands associated with the nearby Christina River.

The Phase I and II evaluations revealed Native American materials distributed in at least four spatially distinct and non-overlapping areas of more concentrated artifact deposits. Based on these data, Site 7NC-E-152 was interpreted as likely representing a series of distinct, short-term Native American occupations resulting from past exploitation of locally available resources associated with nearby Churchman's Marsh. Given the apparent preservation of intrasite horizontal artifact patterning and the recovery of diagnostic artifacts, the site was considered to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The area of potential effects (APE) for Phase III investigations was limited to the boundaries of the project's preferred alternative roadway improvement design, encompassing an area of 550 square meters. The data-recovery fieldwork was completed in two stages, together consisting of 18.4% of the APE. The field investigations expanded on the Phase II testing and consisted of test unit block excavations within high-density artifact clusters.

The Phase II and III investigations recovered 5,118 chipped stone artifacts, 156 cobble tools, 17 ceramic sherds, and 876 pieces of fire-cracked rock. Diagnostic points and ceramics, along with one radiocarbon date, indicate occupations in the Archaic, Woodland I, and Woodland II periods. In addition, 1,161 historic artifacts were found, likely associated with a nineteenth-century residence or farmstead that once stood near the site. A silver brooch dating to the Contact period was also found, but was the only artifact of European manufacture recovered from this period.

Three prehistoric features were identified, including a pit of unknown function, a cache of cobble tools, and an earth oven. Spatial analysis revealed a degree of temporal patterning of occupations that provided information to address research issues related to lithic material use and technology, site-formation processes, and settlement patterns in the Churchman's Marsh area.

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