

I. INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

GAI Consultants, Inc. (GAI), Monroeville, Pennsylvania, completed Phase I investigations of the proposed Bridge 305 replacement project in Little Creek Hundred, Sussex County, Delaware in May 1998. The work, conducted on behalf of the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), involved background research, systematic surface survey, and shovel testing of the project area. This report presents the objectives, methods, and results of the Phase I investigations.

The proposed project involves the replacement of Bridge 305 on 6th Street over Little Creek in Sussex County (Figure 1). The survey area is located immediately west of the Town of Laurel and encompasses the existing bridge and associated roadway approaches. The survey corridor begins at a point 75 meters (246 feet) west of Bridge 305 (Station 0+180) and terminates at Station 0+390, situated 135 meters (443 feet) east of the bridge for a total linear length of 210 meters (689 feet). Planned construction involves replacing the existing wooden bridge, built in 1949, with a new concrete structure banked with riprap. Tasks for this work will include the construction of new wing walls and abutments, removal of the existing wooden structure, and excavation and shaping of the stream banks where riprap will be installed. In addition, the roadway approaches to the new bridge will be adjusted and repaved. This work will take place within the existing 25-meter (82 feet) wide ROW which encompasses roughly 0.53 hectares (1.31 acres). The Area of Potential Effect is defined as all areas within the ROW that will be impacted by proposed construction activities.

Background research provided a means for assessing the survey area's sensitivity for containing archeological resources, and generated appropriate environmental, prehistoric, and historic contexts to interpret any resources identified during the survey. GAI conducted an initial site inspection to modify preliminary assessments of resource sensitivity, to locate surface features and archeological deposits, and to identify locations that could be omitted from subsurface investigations due to poor drainage, excessive slope, or disturbance. Subsurface investigations entailed systematic shovel testing in portions of the project area to locate below-ground archeological deposits and features. Due to disturbance from the road prism (above the existing tidal marsh), steep terrain, and standing water, no shovel testing was conducted east of Bridge 305.

Fieldwork indicated that much of the survey area crossed through tidal marsh on the margins of Little Creek; the existing approaches to Bridge 305 are built upon a causeway. The brick foundation to a possible nineteenth-century mill was identified north of the project ROW, outside the limits of construction. Shovel testing within the ROW exposed modern fill deposits to depths of over one meter. No buried historic or prehistoric surfaces were encountered, nor were any artifact deposits or features associated with the brick foundation. The location of this feature with respect to a historic millpond, however, suggests that features related to the former mill complex may lie buried below the existing bridge and road prism.

Ben Resnick served as Project Manager for the Phase I survey. Bradford Botwick was the Principal Investigator and Kimberly Parsons acted as Field Director. Field crew members included Kristen Carey, Edward Miller, Steven Sarver, and Brent Schreckengaust. Geoffrey Henry performed the background research.

The work described in this report was performed pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (36 CFR Part 800). The study conforms to standards set forth in *Guidelines for Architectural and Archeological Surveys in Delaware* (Delaware Historic Preservation Office 1993) and those contained in the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation* (Federal Register 48:190:44716-44742).