

APPENDIX IV  
GLOSSARY

## GLOSSARY

- Aboriginal** - Prehistoric peoples in North America.
- Alluvium** - Deposits of gravel, sand, and soil which are transported by flowing water.
- Archaeology** - The study of the people of the past through the recovery and analysis of the artifacts they left behind and their context.
- Archival Research** - Research done at places in which public or historical records, charters and documents are stored and preserved.
- Artifact** - Any object shaped or modified by man, or as a result of human activity.
- Assemblage** - The array of contemporary objects and associations found at an archaeological site.
- Auger** - A large tool for boring holes deep in the ground.
- Basecamp** - A prehistoric dwelling site for hunter-gatherers from which resource procurement forays are made.
- Biface** - A stone tool that has been flaked on both sides.
- Bifurcate** - A projectile point from the Archaic Period (6500 B.C.), it is a small point with a notched base.
- Cache** - A collection of artifacts and/or ecofacts which has been deliberately stored for future use.
- Cobble** - Frequent lithic tool resource for prehistoric peoples.
- Core** - A piece of stone from which other pieces of stone are flaked off to make artifacts.
- Cortex** - Weathered exterior of a piece of lithic material, may be either vein or water-worn cortex.
- Cross-section** - A transverse of a portion of a feature, horizontally and vertically removing soil from one section.
- Cryptocrystalline** - Indistinctly crystalline; having an indistinguishable crystalline structure. For example, chert and jasper.
- Culture** - The non-biological mechanism of human adaptation.
- Debitage** - Waste material from the manufacture of stone tools.
- Deciduous** - Leaf bearing trees that shed in autumn.

**Detritus** - Particles of rock or other material worn or broken away from a mass, as by the action of water or glacial ice; any disintegrated material; debris.

**Diagnostic** - Artifact with identifying traits that categorize the item to a specific time period.

**Direct Percussion** - Part of the lithic reduction process, a percussor is directly applied to the worked material with a sharp blow.

**Extant** - Still in existence.

**Fallow Field** - A plowed but not planted field.

**Feature** - Any soil disturbance or discoloration that reflects human activity, or an artifact that, being too large to remove from a site, normally is recorded only; for example, house, storage pits, etc. Can also be a very dense collection of artifacts; for example, a lithic chipping feature.

**Field Reconnaissance** - The walking of a field to examine the surface for any artifacts, architectural remains, or obvious archaeological features.

**Flake** - A piece of waste material from the manufacture of stone tools, caused by percussion or pressure applied to the object by an external agent (e.g. hammerstone, antler pressure flaker); flake itself may be further utilized as a tool (see "Debitage").

**Hinterland** - The land directly adjacent to and inland from a coast. Also a region remote from urban areas; back country.

**Historic** - The time period after the appearance of written records. In the New World, this generally refers to the time period after the beginning of European settlement at approximately 1600 A.D.

**Holocene** - The latest division of the Quarternary period, which commenced around 12,000 B.P.

**Hundred** - A subdivision of some English and American counties.

**Hydrophytic** - A type of plant that grows in and is adapted to an aquatic or very wet environment.

**Indirect Percussion** - In the lithic reduction process, a punch is held against the worked material and the punch is struck a sharp blow with a percussor.

**In Situ** - From the Latin, meaning "In the original place".

**Intestate** - A person who dies without making a will.

**Interface** - A surface regarded as the common boundary of two bodies or spaces.

**Lithic** - Pertaining to or consisting of stone.

**Loam** - A loose soil composed of roughly equal parts of silt, clay, and sand, especially a kind containing organic matter and of great fertility.

**Locus** - A defined archaeological site or testing location.

**Macro-band Base Camp** - For a hunter-gatherer society, an archaeological site one hectare (2.5 acres) or larger in area characterized by a wide variety of tool types, abundant ceramics, semi-subterranean house structures, storage pit features, and abundant debitage from tool manufacture and reduction.

**Mean Ceramic Date** - A date obtained from the study of historic ceramics recovered from a site that approximates the median occupation date of the site.

**Mega Fauna** - A number of species of presently extinct mammals including mammoths and mastodons.

**Mesic** - A vegetation pattern characterized by relatively wet-adapted plant species, such as oak and hemlock forests.

**Micro-band Base Camp** - A component of a macro-band base camp, perhaps one or two extended families, which periodically operates independently of the macro-band group.

**Midden** - A refuse heap.

**Mitigate** - To make the effects of a public works project on an archaeological site less severe or intense by excavating it, preserving it in place, or by moving the Proposed Right-of-Way.

**Orphans Court Records** - The County Court responsible for the welfare of orphans when a father died without a will. Orphans Court watched over the estate until the children (if any) reached majority. A guardian was appointed by the Court, who was to make periodic returns of the estate to the Court. When the youngest heir came of age, the property could be divided among the heirs. These court records are filled with information regarding income, personal property, education, repairs of houses and outbuildings, contracts, and other useful material about eighteenth and nineteenth century life.

**Pedestrian Survey** - The walking and collecting of an archaeological site without the excavation of subsurface units. Also known as surface collection.

**Pleistocene** - A division of the geologic Quarternary Period, which began around 2.3 to 3 million years ago and is associated with rapid hominid evolution from Australopethicinae to Homo sapiens sapiens.

**Plowzone** - In a plowed field, the upper layer of organic soil which is continually reworked by the plow. In the Middle Atlantic region this is about 8-12 inches.

**Posthole** - A hole dug in the ground into which a post is placed.

**Postmold** - The organic stain in the ground which is left by a decayed wooden post. A postmold stain may occur inside of a posthole stain on an archaeological site.

**Prehistoric** - The time period before the appearance of written records. In the New World this generally refers to indigenous, pre-Contact societies.

**Probate** - The official proving of a will as authentic or valid.

**Procurement Site** - A place that is visited because there is a particular item to acquire; i.e., lithic outcrops.

**Profile** - A side view of a feature or test unit.

**Projectile Point** - Strictly speaking, a biface attached to the head of an airborne item of weaponry, like an arrow or a thrown dart; frequently used indiscriminately when referring to any biface.

**Sherd** - A piece of broken pottery.

**Slag** - The byproduct of the incomplete combustion of coal, particularly soft coal. Commonly known as "clinkers".

**Soil Horizon** - Soils are divided into 3 horizons, which reflect different kinds of chemical and physical processes that have resulted from changing climatic conditions.

**Staging Site** - A temporary camp where preparations are made for another operation such as a hunting foray.

**Stratigraphy** - The examination of the soil layering on an archaeological site; the characteristics of each individual stratum and its relationship to others in the sequence is critical to understanding the temporal and spatial characteristics of the site.

**Strata** - The various layers of human or geological origin which comprise archaeological sites.

**Subsoil** - Sterile, naturally occurring soils not changed by human occupation.

**Subsurface** - Below the surface, not visible from the surface.

**Surface Collection** - Act of walking along a surface such as an open field or plowed field, and collecting artifacts seen on the surface of the ground. Also known as pedestrian survey.

**Tool Kit** - A collection of artifacts from a sealed context within a site interpreted as being designed for a specific function.

**Uniface** - A stone tool that has been flaked only on one side.