

3.0 Culture History and Archaeological Site Context

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3.1 Relevant Regional Precontact-Era Context

There are currently five (generally) accepted periods regarding the chronological sequence of Native American occupation of the Delmarva Peninsula: Paleoindian (13,000 to 6500 B.C.), Archaic (6500 to 3000 B.C.), Woodland I (3000 B.C. to A.D. 1000), Woodland II (A.D. 1000 to 1600), and the Contact Period (A.D. 1600 to 1750). Based on diagnostic artifacts recovered from 7K-C-73, it would appear that its occupation(s) date to the cusp of the Late Archaic and Woodland I periods. These are considered the relevant culture historical periods for the Phase II evaluation and are reviewed next.

The Archaic period is marked by the gradual emergence of a Holocene environment within the Atlantic episode. Warmer and wetter climatic conditions prevailed with the disappearance of grasslands and an expansion of mesic forests of oak and hemlock. Mast foods were provided by the mesic forest, which also attracted small game animals, especially deer and turkey. A marked rise in sea level during the early Holocene had a profound effect on the Delmarva Peninsula. This rise caused lowland flooding and the inundation of river systems, which sped the development of complex estuary systems. Numerous interior swamps also emerged. These changes caused a net increase in floral and faunal resources. As the climate grew warmer and plant and animal resources began to inhabit larger areas, human occupation spread into new ecological settings; as a result, Archaic period sites are found in a much broader range of topographic settings.

Overall, Archaic period sites within the mid-drainage zone are few in number, are often associated with bay/basin features, and represent short-lived hunting and processing occupations (Custer 1989:135). The Blueberry Hill Site (7K-C-107) located near a bay/basin feature and northeast of the site contained an Archaic period component (Heite and Blume 1995). 7K-C-51, the Puncheon Run Site, also contained an Archaic component (Leedecker et al. 2005). Bay/basin features are present near the site. Increased diversity and frequency of stone tools paralleled the increased diversity in the local ecology and resource seasonality. Tools used for processing plant resources became more common. Based on this information, it was anticipated that Archaic

period sites might be identified on the edges of bay/basin features and in relative upland settings overlooking extant, ephemeral, or relict water sources.

The Woodland period follows the Archaic period in standard North American archaeology culture histories and is defined traditionally (in neoevolutionary terms) as a “stage” of precontact sociocultural development marked by the appearance of ceramic manufacturing and the use of domesticated plants (Willey and Sabloff 1980). These two technological innovations are deemed significant by many because they presuppose greater sedentism with population growth and a resulting increased socioeconomic complexity, or perhaps more appropriately, intensification. The Woodland period in the greater Mid-Atlantic region is frequently characterized as a period of increased sedentism and a gradual shift toward the exploitation of domesticated cultigens (maize, beans, and squash) together with wild grasses such as amaranth and chenopodium. However, evidence for domesticated plants is sparse on the Delmarva Peninsula, and increased sedentism as a result of the adoption of domesticated plants is at best tenuous.

The Woodland I period data do suggest a greater use of aquatic resources. It is during the Woodland I period that large macroband base camps were presumably occupied on a year-round basis (Custer 1989). Storage pits and evidence of house structures are first found during this period. A microband base camp is the predominant site type identified along river floodplains and estuarine marshes. Small procurement camps are found along streams and adjacent to bay/basin features. The lack of features and lack of diverse lithic assemblage (which will be discussed in greater detail in the following section) tentatively suggest that 7K-C-73 was an ephemerally but repeatedly occupied place in the cognitive landscape of Late Archaic/Woodland I period Native Americans.

Groups inhabiting the Middle Atlantic region during the Woodland I period appear to have expanded their use of lithic raw materials to include quartz, quartzite, argillite, and rhyolite (Custer 1992; Kinsey 1977; Stewart 1984). Custer (1992:42) suggested that the use of more varied materials reflects a decrease in size of band territories. The wide distribution of non-local lithic materials, such as South Mountain rhyolite from south-central Pennsylvania, also suggests the development of long-distance exchange networks. It might also represent broader local

interaction among the groups residing on the Delmarva Peninsula who had access to these sources or access to groups with direct access to these non-local sources. Increased social complexity is argued to be evident in some areas of the Delmarva during the Woodland I period. Some researchers believe that the development of a sedentary lifestyle and the control of surplus food resources may have led to the development of ranked societies at this time. Evidence for this change presumably comes in the form of non-local grave goods that may indicate mortuary ceremonies, which were being practiced in central Delaware beginning around 500 B.C. and ending around 0 B.C. Known as the Delmarva Adena, this culture period is hallmarked by raw materials and finished items similar to those used by Ohio Valley Adena groups (Custer 1984). The settlement and subsistence patterns 2,000 to 1,000 years ago (in the later Woodland I period) are inferred to have been similar to the earlier Woodland I times.

Altogether, Woodland I artifact assemblages are purported to reflect the intensification of food production concomitant with the development of a more sedentary economy focused on riverine and estuarine resources (Custer 1984). Mortuary practices incorporating various grave goods, such as carved platform pipes; bone and antler tools; and a variety of projectile points, celts, and pestles are in place during the Woodland I period as well (Custer 1989:293). Microband base camps of the Woodland I period have been identified in or near the site; these include 7K-C-328 and 7K-C-330, which are located southwest of the APE along Isaac Branch. 7K-C-51, the Puncheon Run Site; and 7K-C-411, the Hickory Bluff Site, which are located approximately 1.5 miles to the east at the confluence of Puncheon Run and the St. Jones River, respectively, also contained Woodland I components (Leedecker et al. 2005; Petraglia et al. 2002). Relevant and detailed publications about precontact-era occupation in the broader project area may be found in the *Archaeology of the Puncheon Run Site* report (Leedecker et al. 2005) or the Hickory Bluff report (Petraglia et al. 2002).

3.2 Local Archaeological Site Context

An examination of the Delaware Cultural Resource Survey archaeological site forms and the Cultural and Historical Resource Information System (CHRIS) website (accessed May 2013) demonstrates abundant Native American occupation in the vicinity of 7K-C-73. Nearby precontact sites are primarily associated with either Puncheon Run or Isaac Branch. Most of the

sites were identified on the margins of these two waterways, one of their tributaries, or in upland settings in cultivated fields. Twenty-one recorded archaeological sites located within an approximately 1-mile radius of the West Dover Connector project corridor, including 7K-C-73, contain evidence for Native American occupations (Table 1). Three sites contain evidence for Woodland I occupations, one contains evidence for a Woodland II occupation, and 16 contain evidence for undated precontact-era components. One site contains a precontact and historic component. It was concluded during the previous Phase I investigation that, based on these sites, areas close to Puncheon Run and Isaac Branch exhibit high sensitivity for precontact archaeological resources.

Table 1. Recorded Sites within 1-Mile Radius of the West Dover Connector Project Area.

CRS #	Site #	Site Name	Period	Site Type	Site Setting
K-0467	7K-C-83	-	Precontact	Unknown	Near the north bank of Puncheon Run, west of the APE
K-0468	7K-C-82	-	Precontact	Unknown	Near the north bank of Puncheon Run, west of the APE
K-0469	7K-C-48	-	Precontact	Unknown	Formerly cultivated field, north of Puncheon Run, west of the APE
K-0470	7K-C-73	-	Woodland I	Unknown	In the APE (Test Area 1), south bank of Puncheon Run
K-0471	7K-C-49	-	Precontact	Unknown	Near north bank of Isaac Branch, south of APE (Test Area 6)
K-0515	7K-C-60	Fifer Site	Precontact	Unknown	South bank of Isaac Branch, southwest of APE
K-0516	7K-C-50	-	Precontact and Historic	Unknown	South bank of Isaac Branch, southwest of APE
K-5471	7K-C-108	UDRF Survey Dover.IV.9105	Precontact	Procurement Site	North bank of Puncheon Run, west of the APE
K-5472	7K-C-109	UDRF Survey Dover.IV.96	Precontact	Procurement Site	Near the north bank of Puncheon Run, west of the APE
K-5473	7K-C-110	UDRF Survey Dover.IV.100	Precontact	Procurement Site	Formerly cultivated field, north of Puncheon Run, west of the APE
K-6206	7K-C-326	Wyoming Lake East A	Precontact	Unknown	North bank of Isaac Branch, southwest of the APE
K-6207	7K-C-327	Wyoming Lake East B	Precontact	Unknown	North bank of Isaac Branch, southwest of the APE
K-6208	7K-C-328	Wyoming Lake East C	Woodland I	Unknown	Near north bank of Isaac Branch, southwest of the APE

CRS #	Site #	Site Name	Period	Site Type	Site Setting
K-6209	7K-C-329	Wyoming Lake East D	Woodland II	Unknown	Near north bank of Isaac Branch, southwest of the APE
K-6210	7K-C-330	Wyoming Lake East E	Woodland I	Unknown	Near north bank of Isaac Branch, southwest of the APE
K-6211	7K-C-331	Wyoming Lake West A	Precontact	Unknown	North bank of Isaac Branch, southwest of the APE
K-6212	7K-C-332	Wyoming Lake West B	Precontact	Unknown	North bank of Isaac Branch, southwest of the APE
K-6213	7K-C-333	Wyoming Lake West C	Precontact	Unknown	Near north bank of Isaac Branch, southwest of the APE
K-6214	7K-C-334	Wyoming Lake West D	Precontact	Unknown	Near north bank of Isaac Branch, southwest of the APE
K-6215	7K-C-335	Wyoming Lake West 1	Precontact	Unknown	North bank of Isaac Branch, southwest of the APE
K-6216	7K-C-336	Wyoming Lake South 1	Precontact	Unknown	South bank of Isaac Branch, southwest of the APE

Source: Delaware CRS forms; CHRIS website, accessed May 2013

The three sites containing Woodland I components were identified via diagnostic lithic artifacts. 7K-C-73 contains single Jacks Reef, corner-notched, and stemmed points. 7K-C-328 contains a quartz stemmed point that is noted as Bare Island-like. 7K-C-330 contains a small quartz corner-notched point. Prior to this investigation, only one archaeological site (the focus of the current investigation: 7K-C-73) was identified in the project corridor. Based on the local archaeological site context and the proximity of the area to undergo additional Phase I testing to 7K-C-73, it was anticipated that the newly surveyed area would contain evidence of Late Archaic and Woodland I occupation at the site.