

CHAPTER 13

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Archaeological survey conducted in connection with the proposed Puncheon Run Connector has involved comprehensive Phase I and II-level study of the entire project corridor and resulted in the identification of two substantial prehistoric resources on the bluffs overlooking the St. Jones River (the Puncheon Run Site [7K-C-51] on the west bank and the Hickory Bluff Prehistoric Site [7K-C-411]) on the east bank, a mid-18th-century house site (the Dawson House Site [7K-C-413], a late 18th/early 19th-century mill site (the Nixon Mill Site [7K-C-414]), and a number of other historic sites that are either of lesser interest or peripheral to the path of the highway. These archaeological resources are described and discussed individually in Chapters 7 through 12, to which the reader is referred for more detailed information.

A. Prehistoric Resources

Prehistoric occupation has been documented in abundance on both sides of the St. Jones River during the current studies and, generally speaking, the recovered evidence conforms with the patterns of settlement and subsistence established at a number of other large sites within the mid-drainage section of the Delmarva peninsula (notably, the Island Farm Site, the Carey Farm Site, the Pollack Site and the Leipsic Site). Archaeological deposits on both sides of the river offer the potential for vertical separation of cultural expressions in the Woodland I and II periods and are anticipated to contribute to the ongoing debate concerning pit features, dwelling styles and population size.

The Puncheon Run Site [7K-C-51], the existence of which was known prior to the commencement of the current survey investigations, can now be seen to be a substantive, discontinuous resource on the west bank of the river stretching along the north side of Puncheon Run and extending in places beyond the limits of the project corridor. The site is considered eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D for information it is likely to contain on Woodland I occupation within the region, specifically relating to the Barker's Landing (*circa* 3,000 B.C. to 500 B.C.) and Delmarva Adena complexes (*circa* 500 B.C. to A.D.). Within the project corridor, four separate loci were delineated within the larger site boundary and, assuming that redesign of the highway to avoid these areas is not feasible, it is recommended that a program of archaeological data recovery be devised to mitigate the project effects. Of the four loci, Locus 3, which occupies a peninsula setting directly overlooking the river, is by far the richest in terms of its potential information yield and data recovery should emphasize examination of this area.

The Hickory Bluff Prehistoric Site [7K-C-411], whose existence was unknown before this survey, is located on the east bank of the St. Jones River and extends back eastward from the rim of the bluff for a distance of approximately 225 meters (700 feet). Its period of occupation is similar to that identified for the Puncheon Run Site opposite, although earlier Archaic and later Woodland activity

are also well represented. The soil sequence at the Hickory Bluff Prehistoric Site is deeper than on the opposite western side of the river and has yielded numerous pit-like features, some of which are considered as possible dwelling structures. A portion of the site close to the bluff rim appears never to have been plowed, providing evidence of a deep cultural sequence with an extended chronology. The Hickory Bluff Prehistoric Site is also judged eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D, an opinion with which the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office has concurred. A restricted campaign of archaeological data recovery carried out in 1995 in connection with the construction of a drainage swale within the project corridor confirmed the character and quality of the archaeological data at the Hickory Bluff Prehistoric Site. Deep cultural stratigraphy, multiple pit-like features and evidence of predominantly Woodland I occupation were recorded and supply important guidance for the further data recovery that is recommended for this site.

B. Historical Archaeological Resources

One historical archaeological site has been identified within the project corridor and evaluated as being of a caliber suitable for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D. This is the Dawson House Site [7K-C-414], the nucleus of a small farmstead that appears to have been established around 1740 and was then absorbed within a larger plantation around 1780. The site is of particular interest because it included a home-based malting operation that appears to survive archaeologically. The site of the Dawson house itself apparently now lies beneath U.S. Route 13, but evidence of related domestic occupation has been recovered adjacent to the highway. If archaeological deposits at the Dawson House Site cannot be avoided, archaeological data recovery is recommended as a means of mitigating the effects of the highway project.

One other historical archaeological site that may meet the National Register criteria was identified just outside the project corridor. This is the Nixon Mill Site, the location of a fulling mill that was established on Puncheon Run sometime during the third quarter of the 18th century and which stayed in operation until around the turn of the century (possibly being converted into a sawmill towards the end of its life). The focus of the Nixon Mill Site lies outside the project corridor and for this reason a full Phase II evaluation has not been offered for this resource. While the new highway construction should not directly affect the site, there is a possibility that related drainage alterations may accelerate erosion of the mill remains. Design adjustments are recommended to avoid this adverse effect; if this is not feasible, a fuller evaluation of the site and limited archaeological data recovery are suggested.

On the west side of the St. Jones River, a series of four 18th-century landing sites are documented in the written record. No archaeological traces of these features were observed within the project corridor and no further work is considered necessary in connection with the project as currently designed. On the east side of the St. Jones River, a series of 20th-century dwelling sites were noted along the U.S. Route 113 frontage. These sites are extensively disturbed and of minimal historical interest. No further study is considered necessary.