

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The following technical report was prepared for the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) by Versar, Inc. (Versar), under Agreement Number 1539 (Task 2) as part of DelDOT's U.S. Route 301 project. Investigations involved Phase II archaeological evaluations of three sites: 7NC-F-122, Sandy Branch Prehistoric site; 7NC-F-124, Shell Button Historic/Prehistoric site; and 7NC-F-126, Bunker Hill Road Historic/Prehistoric site. These sites were first identified and recorded by Hunter Research (Hunter) during an initial Phase IA (Burrow et al. 2009) and Phase IB (Liebeknecht and Burrow 2010) surveys of the area also completed as part of DelDOT's U.S. Route 301 project. The Phase II investigations detailed in this terminal Phase II technical report were undertaken to enable DelDOT to determine whether the archaeological sites are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

All work was performed in accordance with the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Advisory Council's Guidelines set forth in 36CFR800 for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Properties, the Delaware State Management Plans for Prehistoric and Historical Archaeological Resources (Custer and DeSantis 1986; De Cunzo 2004), and the Guidelines for Architectural and Archaeological Surveys in Delaware developed by the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office (DE SHPO 1993).

1.2 PROJECT LOCATION

The site locations are clustered within a 2.0-kilometer (km) segment of the U.S. 301 improvement project right-of-way approximately 1.5-to-2.5 km west of the Town of Middletown, in St. Georges Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware (Figures 1-1, 1-2, and 1-3). All three sites are located in active agricultural fields lying on the edge of recent exurban development west of the historic Middletown center.

1.3 PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS

Initial Phase IA and Phase IB work for the three sites identified in this summary was completed by Hunter (Burrow et al. 2009; Liebeknecht and Burrow 2010). Phase IA work was largely composed of historical research conducted in such a way as to place the histories and landscapes within appropriate Delaware contexts (Burrow et al. 2009). The Phase IB work was intensive and included testing of 20 targeted areas encompassing over 100 acres along roughly 4.5 miles of Route 301 Section 2. Testing methods included surface collection, systematic and judgmental shovel testing, and limited test unit excavation (Liebeknecht and Burrow 2010). Recommendations of potential significance were provided as part of these investigations. Among others, sites 7NC-F-122, Sandy Branch Prehistoric; 7NC-F-124, Shell Button Historic/Prehistoric; and 7NC-F-126, Bunker Hill Road Historic/Prehistoric were recommended as potentially significant and eligible for inclusion in NRHP.

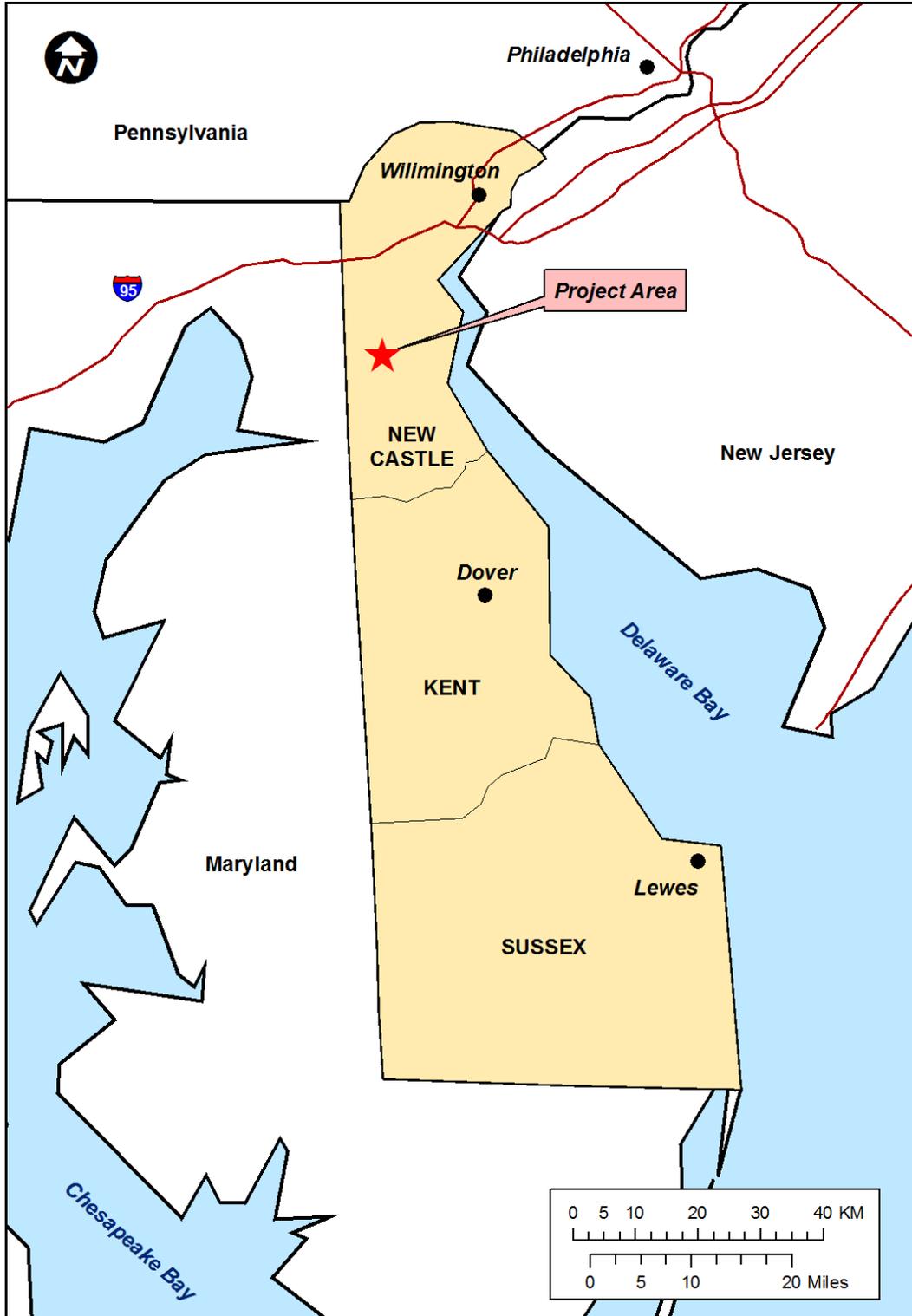


Figure 1-1. Location of Project Area within State of Delaware.

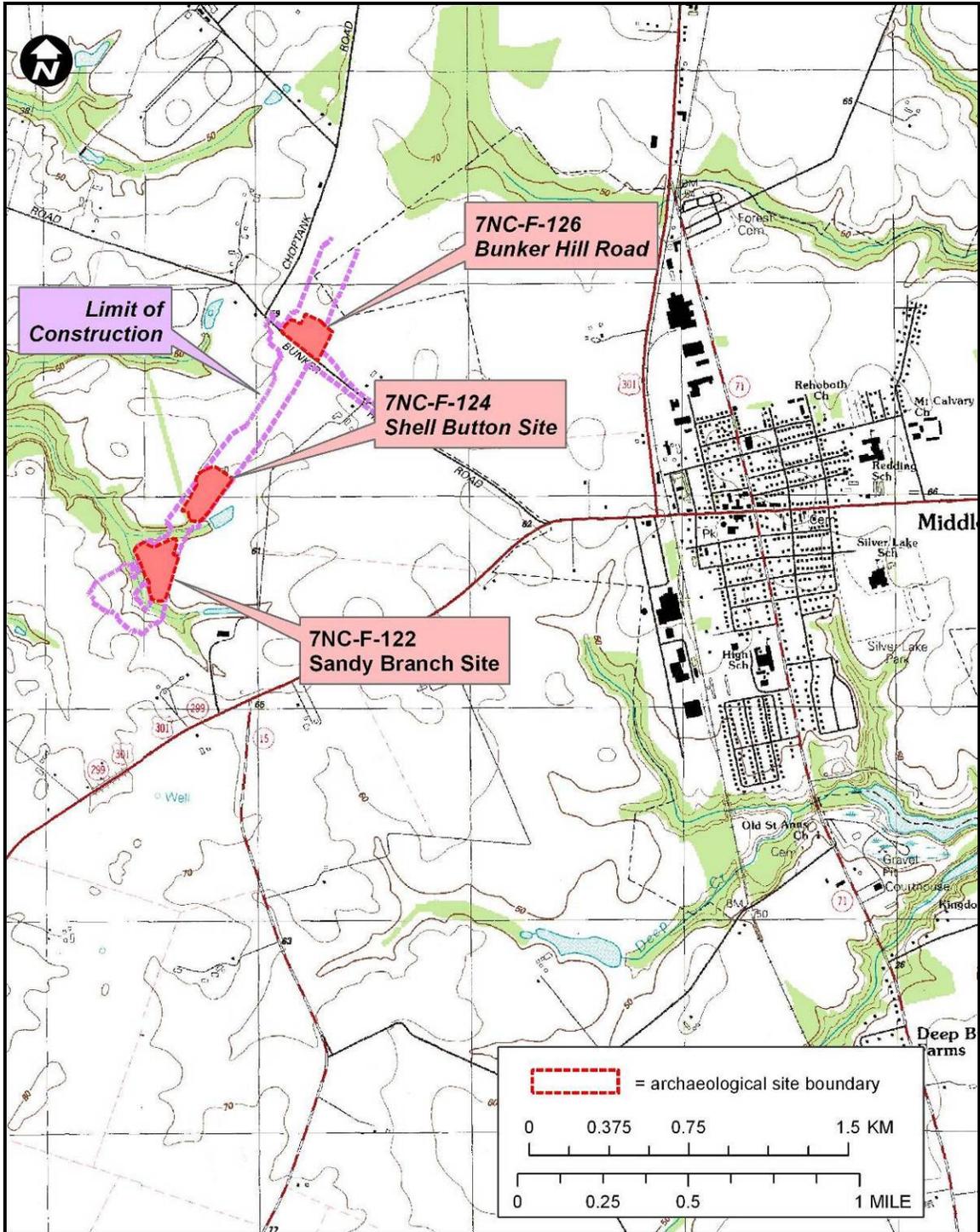


Figure 1-2. Project Area Identified on United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5 Minute Topographic Map.
(Middletown, DE and Cecilton, MD Topographic Quadrangles 1989, Delaware Data Mill created 2007)

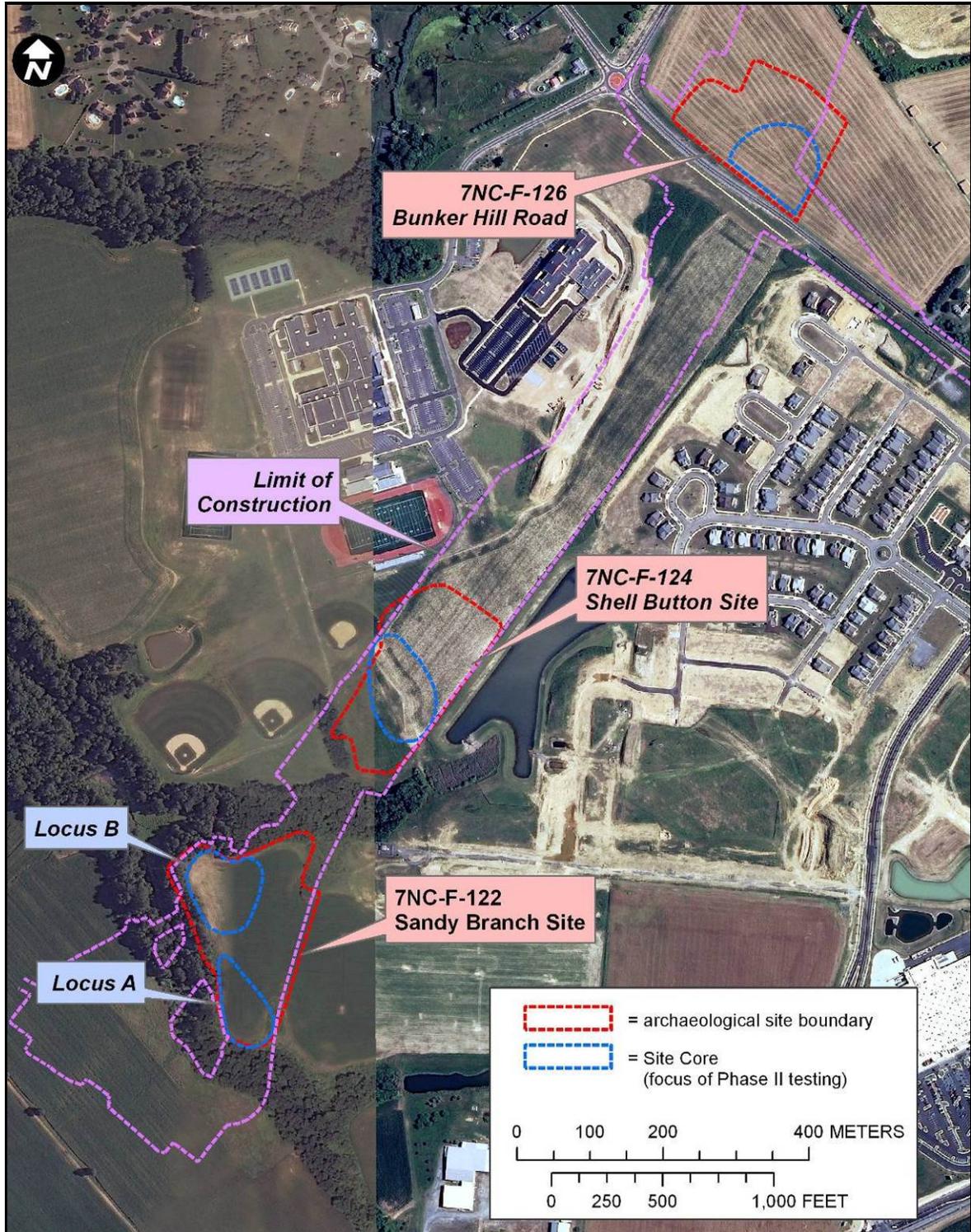


Figure 1-3. Location of Three Phase II Sites: 7NC-F-122, Sandy Branch Prehistoric; 7NC-F-124, Shell Button Site; and 7NC-F-126, Bunker Hill Road Illustrated on most Current Aerial Imagery.

(National Agricultural Imagery Program [NAIP] 2009)

Historically, Site 7NC-F-122 (Hunter Research Area 4 – Figure 1-4) was a part of the Rumsey Estate named Manwaring Hall. Though documentary evidence only confirms the location of a few structures on the estate, including Rumsey’s home near Bohemia Landing, several structures likely existed on the property. Also, the Rumsey gristmill was located along the Sandy Branch near the current site location (Burrow at a. 2009). As part of the Phase IB investigations, Area 4 was plowed and disked to facilitate surface collection. Shovel tests were placed in areas of artifact clusters and a single test unit measuring 2.5 by 10 feet was also excavated. As a result, 233 artifacts were recovered and the site was designated 7NC-F-122. The assemblage was primarily prehistoric and consistent with prehistoric assemblages from other sites in the project corridor. Though some historical artifacts were located during the Phase IB survey of Area 4, none were particularly diagnostic or of special interest (Liebeknecht and Burrow 2010).

Historically, Site 7NC-F-124 (Hunter Research Area 6 –Figure 1-5) was part of the Indian Range Plantation. The site is very near the plantation’s boundary line with the Rumsey family’s Manwaring Hall property, still visible in modern times as a narrow wooded strip (see the green diagonal strip to the west of the site on the topographic map in Figure 1-5). The Indian Range property was owned by David Witherspoon from 1749-1763 and then by his widow and descendants from 1763-1791. As part of the Phase IB investigations, Area 6 was plowed and disked to facilitate surface collection. Shovel tests were placed systematically and in areas of artifact clusters. Three test units measuring 2.5 by 10 feet were also excavated. As a result, 1,032 artifacts were recovered and the site was designated 7NC-F-124. The recovered assemblage was multicomponent. Though a rare three-quarter-grooved ax and a variety of chert, quartz, and quartzite tools were recovered, the site’s primary context was determined to be associated with the production of shell buttons using several species native to the tropics, specifically the Indian Ocean (Liebeknecht and Burrow 2010).

Historically, Site 7NC-F-126 (Hunter Area 7 North – Figure 1-6) was part of the Indian Range Plantation, and then was split off to form Maple Grove farm. The property was owned by David Witherspoon from 1749-1763 and then his widow and descendants from 1763-1791. Though documentary evidence only confirms the location of a few structures in the general area, it is possible that at least one small tenement existed on the 440 acre property. Research also confirmed the early historical importance of adjacent Bunker Hill Road, an established cart road in the 18th century (Burrow et al. 2009, Liebeknecht and Burrow 2010). As part of the Phase IB investigations, Area 7 North was plowed and disked to facilitate surface collection. Shovel tests were placed systematically and in areas of artifact clusters. As a result, 620 artifacts were recovered and the site was designated 7NC-F-126. The recovered assemblage is multicomponent. The site’s primary context was reported as being associated with the concentration of mid-to-late 18th century artifacts recovered from the site. In addition, it was theorized that the colocation of the prehistoric and historic presence along this “pinch point” of the Delmarva peninsula may be associated with overland routes in the area from the Delaware to Chesapeake bays (Liebeknecht and Burrow 2010).

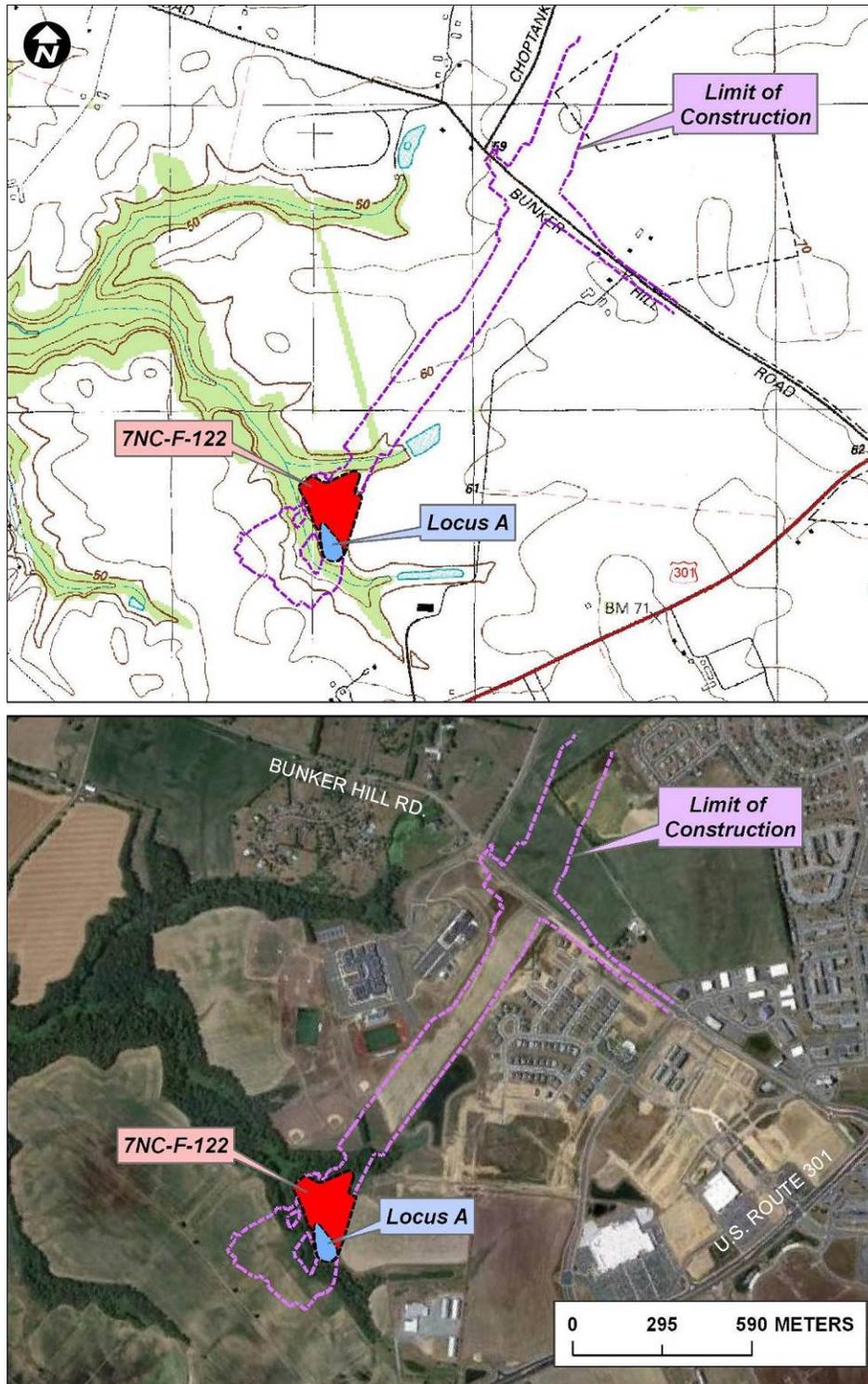


Figure 1-4. Site 7NC-F-122, Illustrated on USGS Topographic Map and Aerial Imagery.
(Middletown Topographic Quadrangle 1989, Delaware Data Mill, created 2007 and NAIP 2009)

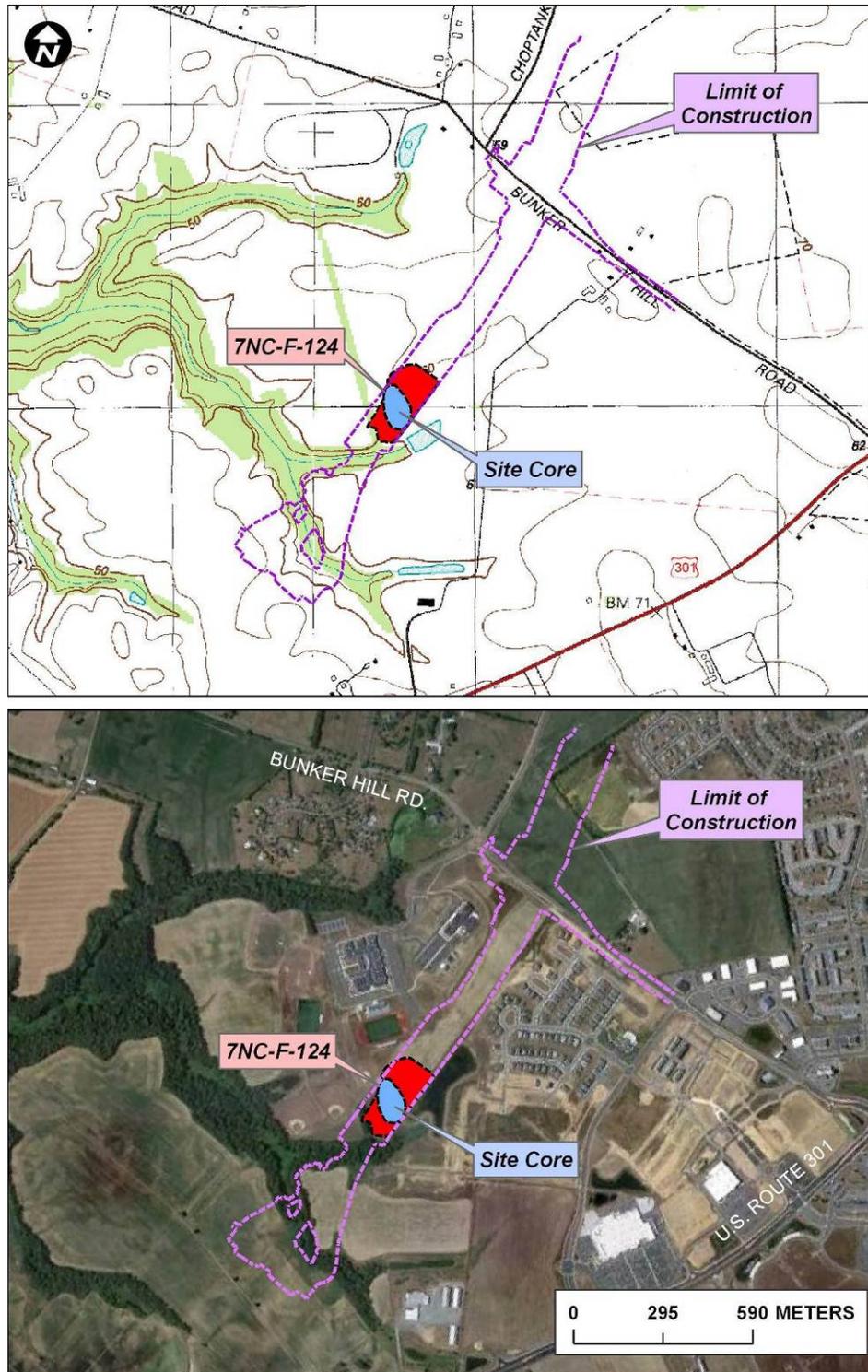


Figure 1-5. Site 7NC-F-124, Illustrated on USGS Topographic Map and Aerial Imagery.
(Middletown Topographic Quadrangle 1989, Delaware Data Mill, created 2007 and NAIP 2009)

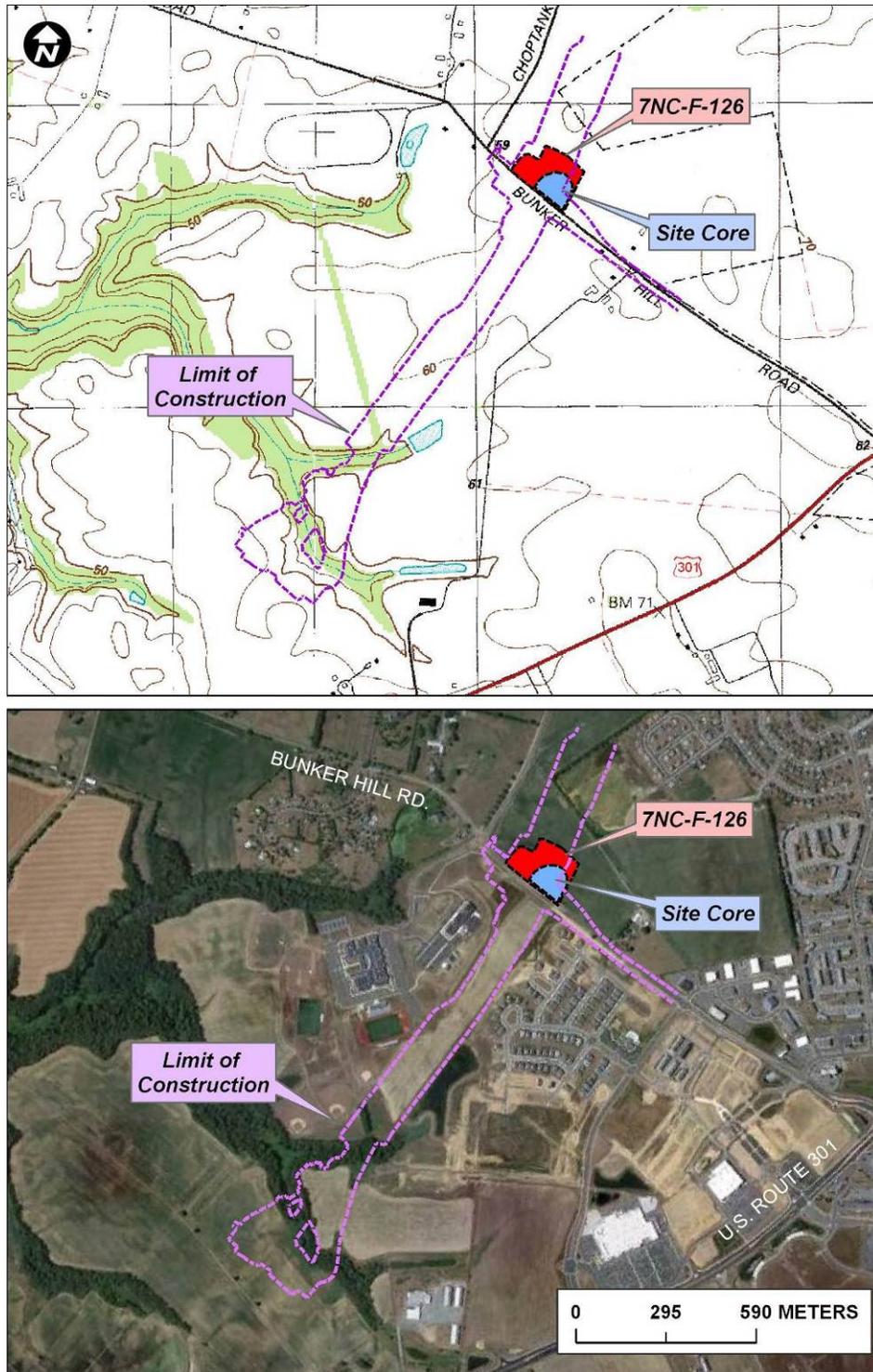


Figure 1-6. Site 7NC-F-126, Illustrated on USGS Topographic Map and Aerial Imagery.
(Middletown Topographic Quadrangle 1989, Delaware Data Mill, created 2007 and NAIP 2009)