

**Maryland Historical Trust Phase I  
Archeological Survey Concurrence  
Letter**





MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING  
& COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.  
Governor  
Michael S. Steele  
Lt. Governor  
Victor L. Hoskins  
Secretary  
Shawn S. Karimian  
Deputy Secretary

August 3, 2004

Ms. Janet Vine  
Acting Chief, Regulatory Branch  
Baltimore District  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
P.O. Box 1715  
Baltimore, MD 21203-1715

Re: Phase I Archeological Survey, Abingdon Woods, Harford County, Maryland

Dear Ms. Vine:

The Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) recently received a copy of the draft report on the Phase I archeological survey that was conducted for the above-referenced project. We have reviewed the document in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Article 83B, Sections 5-617 and 5-618 of the Annotated Code of Maryland and are writing to provide our comments regarding effects on historic properties.

The draft report, *Phase I Archaeological Investigation: Abingdon Woods, Harford County, Maryland*, presents the necessary documentation on the goals, methods, results, and recommendations of Phase I survey within the project area and is consistent with the reporting requirements of MHT's *Standards and Guidelines for Archeological Investigations in Maryland* (Shaffer and Cole 1994). While our current staff shortage prohibits us from providing truly substantive comments regarding the draft itself, Attachment 1 lists some specific comments and we ask that these items be addressed in the preparation of the final document.

The initial Phase I survey was conducted by Elizabeth Anderson Comer/Archaeology (EAC/A) during May and June of 2003. A survey area totaling 142 acres was established in consultation with MHT, and a total of 1,008 shovel test pits were excavated at 20 meter intervals. (Please note that the STP interval was increased to 40 meters within a 50-acre segment of the survey area due to the fact that the area contained poorly drained soils and was unlikely to yield significant archeological deposits). As a result of the survey, five archeological sites (18HA270, 18HA271, 18HA272, 18HA273, and 18HA274) were identified within the project area. Three of these five sites (18HA272, 18HA273, and 18HA274) appear to be highly dispersed prehistoric artifact scatters and most likely represent a series of short-term occupations by mobile hunting and gathering groups. None of these three sites have revealed any diagnostic artifacts, subsurface features, or intact cultural strata. Therefore, EAC/A has recommended that no further study of sites 18HA272, 18HA273, and 18HA274 is necessary. Based on the documentation presented in the report, MHT staff concur that these sites do not meet the criteria for eligibility in the National



Register of Historic Places given their low potential to yield important information. Similarly, site 18HA271 also contains a dispersed prehistoric lithic scatter (perhaps dating to the Archaic period), as well as a small concentration of historic artifacts. As described in the report, this localized concentration of late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century domestic artifacts indicates that the historic component of the site most likely represents a secondary household waste disposal area that may have been used by inhabitants of a historic house site located beyond the limits of the survey area. As neither component of site 18HA271 appears to contain intact subsurface features or undisturbed cultural strata, no further archeological investigations of this site are warranted.

The final site identified by the Phase I survey, site 18HA270, also contains both a prehistoric and an historic component. A total of 202 STPs were excavated in this particular area, 25 of which yielded cultural materials. Of the 25 positive STPs, 20 contained prehistoric artifacts (dating to the Woodland period), 4 contained historic artifacts (including ceramic sherds, brick fragments, and a piece of corroded metal), and one contained both prehistoric and historic artifacts. In addition, five earthen mounds were identified in the western portion of the site. These mounds, described as being somewhat uniform in size and shape, are each slightly concave at the top and have a trench excavated around the base. A single STP was excavated at Mound 1 during the Phase I survey, revealing charcoal flecking and a variety of prehistoric materials. Based upon these findings, EAC/A has suggested that the mounds may, in fact, be Native American burial mounds associated with the Delmarva Adena Complex.

Upon EAC/A's recommendation that further investigations be conducted at site 18HA270 prior to any ground-disturbing construction activities, Harford Investors requested that R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc. (RCG&A) conduct a peer review of the draft Phase I report and carry out additional archeological testing of the site. The purpose of both the peer review and the additional archeological testing (conducted in December of 2003) was to more clearly define the cultural affiliation and function of the earthen mounds described above. Following a pedestrian survey (which resulted in the identification of two additional mounds), 49 STPs were excavated at 10 meter intervals and two 1x1 meter test units were excavated on Mounds 1 and 6. The results of these investigations were included as a technical addendum to the draft Phase I report, and the findings clearly indicate that the mounds are consistent with charcoal hearths that were used to supply forges and furnaces during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As discussed in the technical addendum, "the presence of historic artifacts in the same excavation levels as prehistoric materials clearly defines the seven mound features as dating from the historic period. Historic activity in the area likely dislocated prehistoric materials, which then became incorporated into the historic period mounds" (page 5). The diagnostic artifacts recovered from the mounds suggest that the features date to the early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the morphology of the mounds, as well as their local and regional setting, strongly indicate that they are the remains of charcoal hearths. Such hearths, many of which have been documented on Maryland's Western Shore, were often spread out across a region where forges and furnaces were operating. Six furnaces and forges were located within Harford County between the years 1858 and 1878, and Harford Furnace itself, situated

only two miles away from site 18HA270, would have provided a very local market for the charcoal that was produced at this site.

Based on the documentation presented in the draft Phase I report and in the technical addendum, MHT staff believe that sites 18HA270, 18HA271, 18HA272, 18HA273, and 18HA274 do not meet the criteria for eligibility in the National Register of Historic Places given their low potential to yield any additional significant information. Therefore, no further archeological investigations of this project area are warranted. We appreciate the conscientious efforts that have been made by Harford Investors, EAC/A, and Goodwin & Associates to identify and evaluate the historic properties discussed above. If you have any questions or require further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Dixie Henry at 410-514-7638 or [henry@dhcd.state.md.us](mailto:henry@dhcd.state.md.us). Thank you for providing us with this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth J. Cole  
Administrator  
Project Review and Compliance

EJC/DLH/200401553

Attachment

cc: Lynette Rhodes (COE)  
Phil Cwiek (COE)  
Scott Watson (COE)  
Henry Leskinen (Eco-Science Professionals, Inc.)  
Amanda Sigillito (MDE)  
Samuel F. Heffner (Harford Investors)  
Chris Polglase (Goodwin & Associates)  
Elizabeth Comer (EAC/A)

**ATTACHMENT 1**  
**MHT Comments on Draft Phase I Report**  
**Abingdon Woods, Harford County, Maryland**

1. The reference information for the two historic maps cited in Figures 4 and 5 should be included in References Cited section.
2. The reference information for Shaffer and Cole 1994 (cited on page 1) should also be included in the References Cited section.
3. Figures 4 and 5 should include a scale and a north arrow.
4. It should be indicated in the Laboratory Methods section that all artifacts and field records will be curated specifically at the Maryland Archeological Conservation Laboratory.
5. The final version of the report should be double-sided, as this practice will conserve space in the Maryland Historical Trust Library.