



1989

88-Phase I Archaeological Survey (with Deep Testing) of a 1.5 ha (3.8 Acre) Parcel along the Grand River on Fenske Enterprises Property at 2637 Wilson SW, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504

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GREGORY R. WALZ

WILLIAM M. CREMIN

PHASE I ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY (WITH DEEP TESTING)
OF A 1.5 HA (3.8 ACRE) PARCEL ALONG THE GRAND RIVER
ON FENSKE ENTERPRISES PROPERTY AT 2637 WILSON SW,
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49504

1989

REPORT OF INVESTIGATIONS NO. 88

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

A Report of Research in Response
to a Request from:

Mr. William Slaght
Fenske Enterprises
2637 Wilson SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

INTRODUCTION:

At the request of Mr. William Slaght, archaeologists from Western Michigan University continued archaeological investigations on the property of Fenske Enterprises, 2637 Wilson SW, Grand Rapids, Michigan during the fall of 1989. As a follow-up to our Phase I archaeological survey of the proposed site of a Class 3 landfill cell in May (Cremis 1989; ER-89111), we were asked to undertake a program of survey to include, at the request of Dr. John Halsey, State Archaeologist, selected deep testing of a 3.8 acre parcel on the Grand River where Fenske Enterprises proposed to create an area of wetlands to in part compensate for the loss of wetlands in the aforementioned landfill cell located a short distance to the north of present study area. There follows a report of research conducted on 7 Nov, 30 Nov, and 1 Dec 89 in the parcel adjacent to the river, together with recommendations derived from our intensive study of this area.

PROJECT PERSONNEL:

Principal Investigator - Dr. William M. Cremis, Professor of Anthropology, Western Michigan University and Owner, W. M. Cremis Consulting

Field Supervisor - Mr. Gregory Walz, M.A. Candidate, WMU
Field Assistant - Mr. Lewis Wisser, M.A. Candidate, WMU

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AREA:

The research area of this study comprises approximately 1.5 ha

(3.8 acres) in the SE 1/4, NW 1/4, NW 1/4 of Section 18, 16N R12W, Kent County, Michigan (Fig. 1). This narrow strip of land flanking the natural Levy formation bordering the active channel of the Grand River on the north extends along the river for a distance of about 340 m E-W and varies in width from 30-60 m N-S. The river lies at an elevation of 177 m ASL, with the natural Levy rising as much as 2 m above the river. Elevations across the parcel behind the Levy range from a low of about 178 m ASL to almost 180 m ASL. The center of the parcel features a depression that at the time of our fieldwork held standing water, with elevations generally rising to both the east and west. In the extreme eastern portion of the study area, the flood bottom actually rises to an elevation equal to or exceeding that of the river's Levy system. Finally, to the rear and north of the study area is a closed 30 acre landfill cell which rises more than 6 m above the maximum elevation noted for the parcel we examined. We assume that this cell is the source for some of the modern debris we observed on the surface of the study area (Fig. 2).

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND SITES REPORTED IN THE

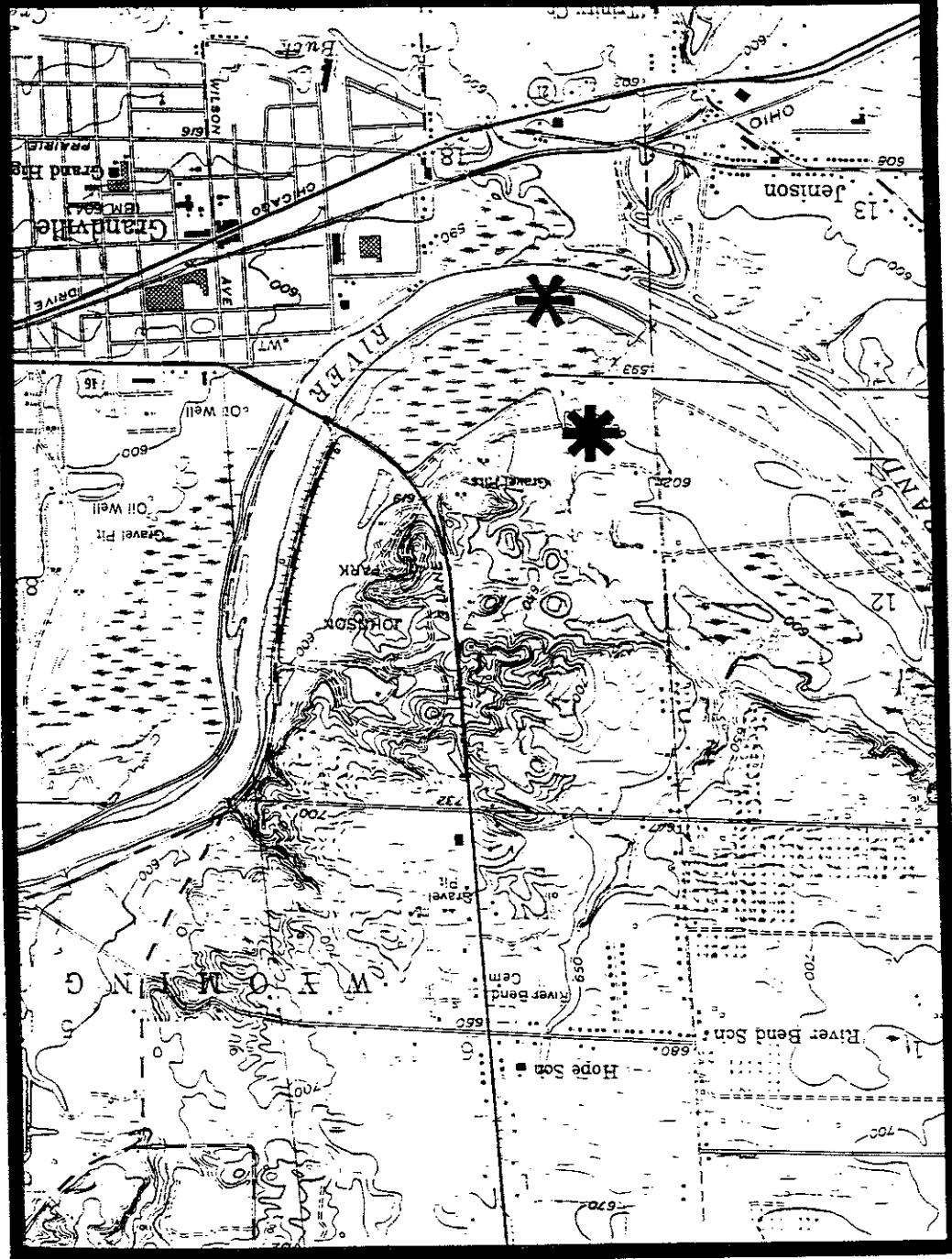
GENERAL AREA:

Based upon information provided by Mr. Slaght and contained in the state site files (Ms. Barbara Mead, Bureau of History, personal communication), our Phase I survey conducted in May 1989 (Cremitt 1989; ER-89111) represents the only prior archaeological research undertaken on the extensive holdings of Fenske Enterprises. Be that as it may, the site files do indicate the presence of many archaeological sites in this segment of the Grand River Valley. Especially noteworthy are sites recorded for the bluffs overlooking the valley

QUADRANGLE LOCATION



Fig. 1. Fenske Enterprises Class 3 Landfill Project (*) - EM 89111 Location of DNR Exchange Parcel - N- subjected to deep testing on this occasion (*)



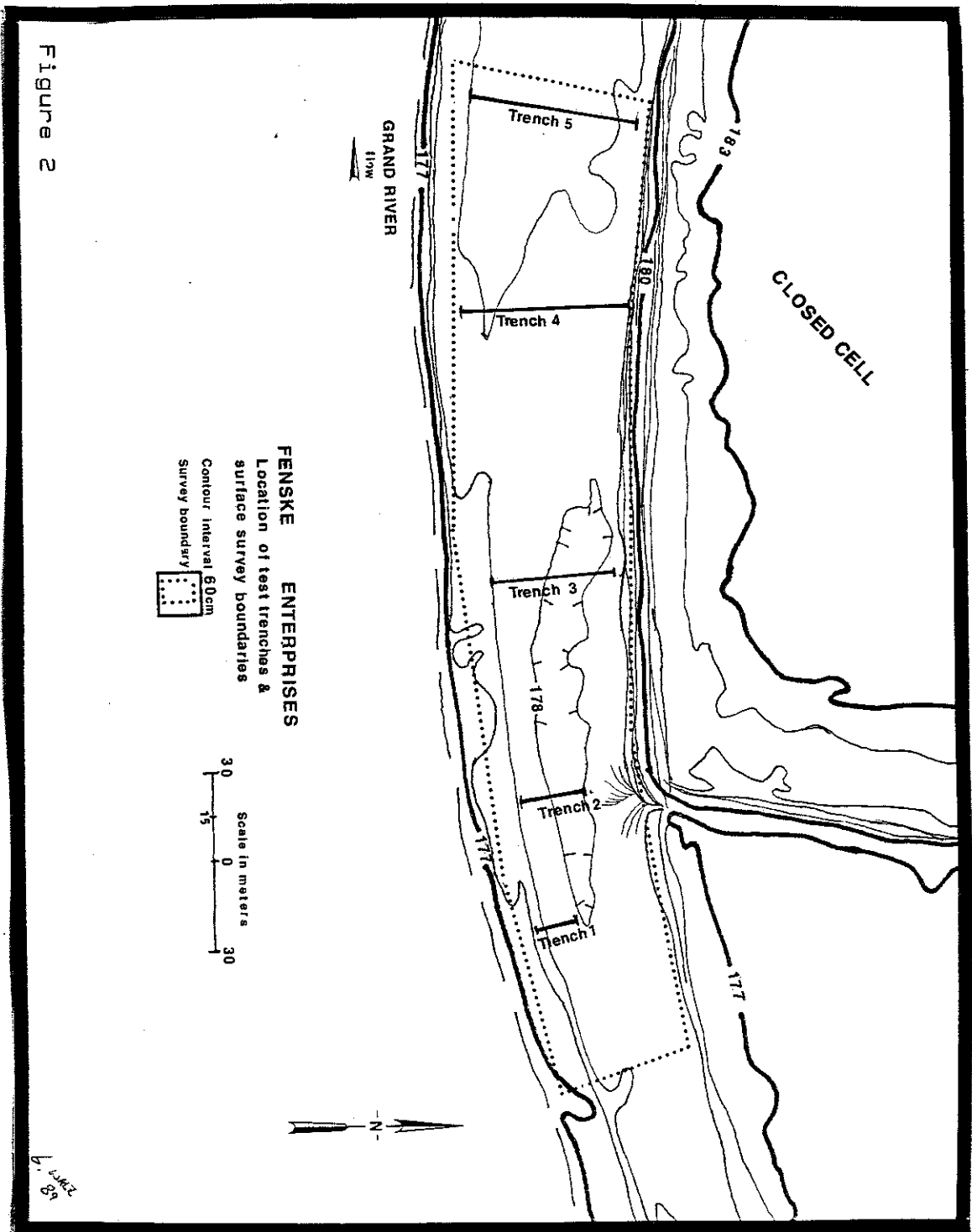


Figure 2

both to the northeast and northwest of the study area. Site 200T57 in Section 12 of Tallmadge Township, Ottawa County, is a multi-component bluff's edge site with Middle Archaic through Historic occupations in evidence. Sites 20KT46, 47, and 49 occupy the heavily dissected uplands behind Fenske Enterprises property to the northeast of the study area and are Hinsdale references to elusive village sites, a burial ground, and a circular enclosure in the area. To the south and almost directly across the Grand River from our study area is 20KT174, a possible Indian cemetery. And from this point upstream for several miles are reported no fewer than six additional sites, including the excavated Grandville Mound Group (20KT36), three reported cemeteries (20KT109, 175, and 176), and Astoquet's Village (20KT131), all located within the corporate limits of Grandville, Michigan, and a purported floodplain village site (20KT48) on the river about a mile upstream from Grandville. Clearly, this segment of the valley is very rich in recorded archaeological resources; albeit much additional fieldwork would appear to be required in order to confirm site locations now in the state site files and systematically evaluate this area for sites that may exist and are as yet unrecorded.

PHASE I SURVEY PROCEDURES:

The survey was conducted over a period of three days. We visited the study area initially on 7 Nov 89, but weather and soil conditions were such that fieldwork was confined to surface reconnaissance on this occasion. We found the field to be in corn stubble, yet affording in excess of 70-80% visibility across the parcel. The survey team, consisting of three archaeologists from WMU and Mr. David Zuckerman and a colleague from Bureau and Associates, the firm

representing Fenske Enterprises in the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) permitting process, very carefully walked the field at intervals of 5-10 m, observing nothing of significance in the process. Satisfying ourselves that no items of potential importance were present on the surface, and that conditions would not permit us to bring equipment for deep testing into the field, we concluded fieldwork to await the arrival of a better opportunity to continue our investigation.

For a variety of reasons we were unable to return to the study area until 30 Nov 89. Having previously satisfied ourselves that surface observations of potential significance would not be forthcoming, regardless of the intensity and rigor of our reconnaissance procedures, and that we could therefore conclude with a high degree of certainty that the upper 30 cm (plowzone) of the field lacked archaeological materials, we concentrated our efforts on the search for buried deposits in this floodplain setting. On this and the following day, with the aid of a Ford 555 tractor equipped with a 60 cm wide backhoe provided by Fenske Enterprises, we cut a total of five trenches across the parcel and perpendicular to the river. In compliance with the State Archaeologist's wishes, each trench was excavated to the depth of ground water; in this manner we were able to ensure that buried archaeological deposits, were they present, would in all probability be detected. Figure 2 shows the location of each trench in the study area.

The spacing of the five trenches was established so as to provide coverage across the entire length of the project area. Their placement with respect to one another varies between 50-100 m apart, and the length of each 60 cm cut ranges from 12 m on the east to

This excavation, located 50 m west of the first trench, revealed a soil profile/depositional history very similar to that of Trench 1. This trench commenced at the levy (18.3 m from the river) and extended northward for a distance of 22 m. Ground water was encountered at a depth of 3.0 m below the surface. While soil consistency and color varied little from the initial trench, we did note some distinct

Trench 2

illustrated in Figure 3.

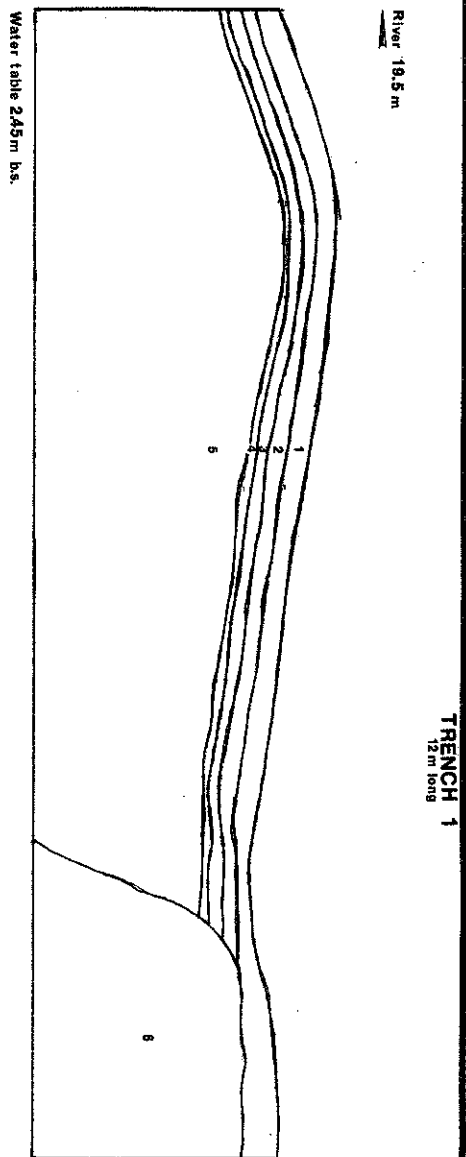
were made during excavation of Trench 1, the profile of which is employees might evaluate the deposit. No archaeological observations excavation of the trench was quickly terminated so that Fenske side of unregulated dumping (D. Zuckerman, personal communication), Upon contact with this deposit, possibly representing an earlier episode commence just below the plowzone and continue down to the water table. From its inception, an unnatural(?) grey deposit was observed to downward to the water table. At the north end of the trench, 8.7 m this we observed a relatively homogeneous brown soil which continued deposit of mottled brown and yellowish sand and sandy silt. Below of about 20 cm thickness below which was observed a 30 cm thick below the surface. The profile revealed a well developed plowzone from water's edge, ground water was encountered at a depth of 2.45 m limits of the project. Commencing at the edge of the levy about 19 m This excavation was placed approximately 50 m inside the eastern

Trench 1

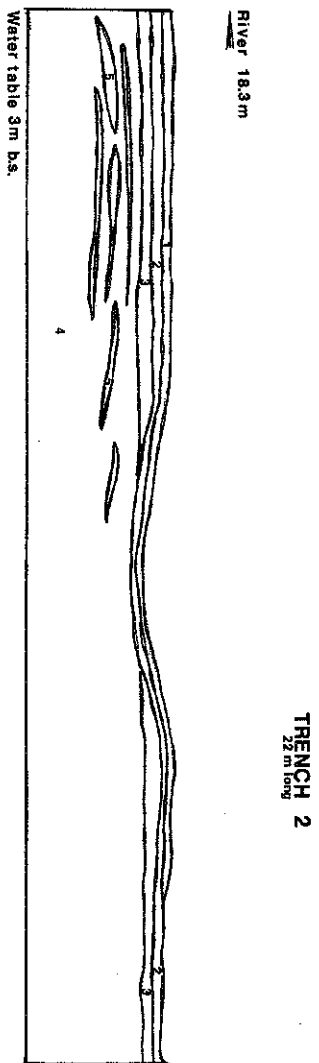
each trench.

1.8-3.0 m below the surface. There follows a brief description of area, the ground water table was reached at depths varying between 56.5 m on the west. Because of surface undulations across the study

Figure 3: Soil Profiles from Trenches 1 and 2.



Soil Horizon	Munsell
1	10YR3/4 Dark yellowish-brown
2	2.5YR3/4 Light yellowish-brown
3	10YR3/3 Dark brown
4	2.5YR3/4 Light yellowish-brown
5	10YR3/3 Dark brown
6	5Y5/1 Gray



Soil Horizon	Munsell
1	10YR3/3 Dark brown
2	10YR4/4 Dark yellowish-brown
3	10YR3/3 Dark brown
4	10YR2/2 Very dark brown
5	2.5YR3/4 Light yellowish-brown

This trench, located 100 m west of Trench 3, proved to be the most difficult due to the unconsolidated nature of the soils that resulted in continual slumping of the walls as water seeped in at the base of the trench. It commenced on the levy at a distance of 16.5 m from the Grand River and was terminated 49 m north of its

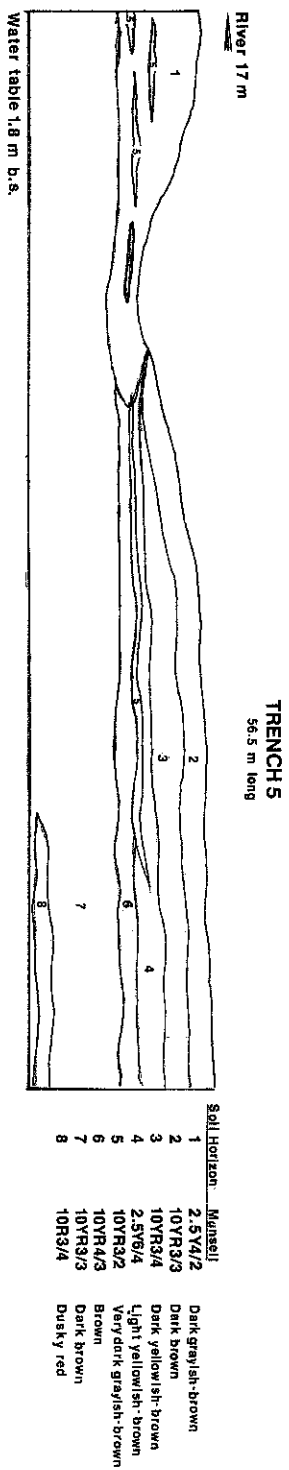
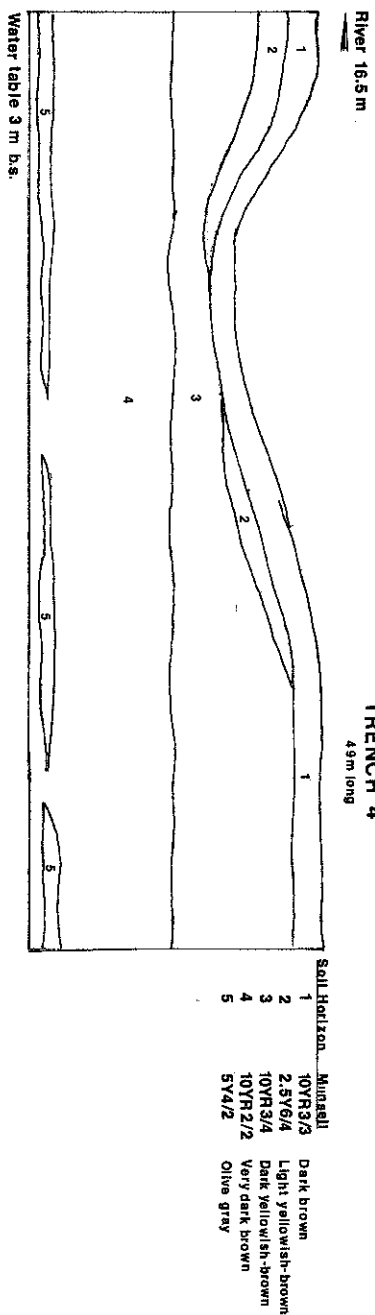
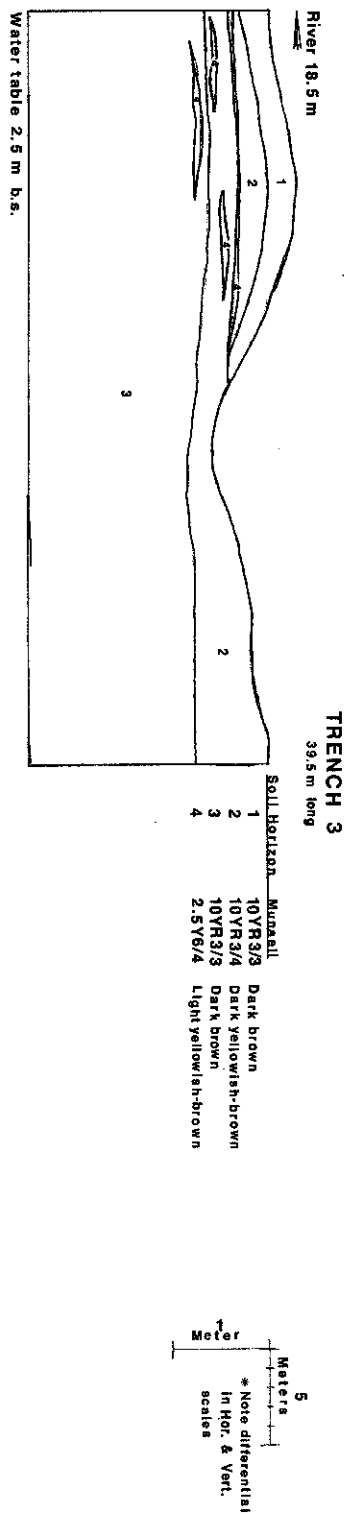
Trench 4

tion for this material. This excavation is illustrated in Figure 4. In the vicinity turned up no evidence of cultural context or association point 40 cm below surface in this trench, but careful hand excavation water situation. Several chunks of charcoal were collected from a in the area of the surface depression, reflecting a probable ponded of the trench, but were again observed to be a heavier silty clay below the surface of the field. The soils were sandy at both ends mentioned depression and was excavated to a maximum depth of 2.5 m north of its point of origin. This trench also bisects the afore- at the Levy some 18.5 m from river's edge and was terminated 39.5 m Located 75 m west of the preceding excavation, Trench 3 began

Trench 3

coal observed. Trench 2 is also shown in Figure 3. Cultural items were recovered on subsurface contexts for the charcoal were observed in the upper 10 cm of the plowzone, but no evaporation of standing or ponded water. A few small flecks of representing an area of water impoundment and slow drainage and/or with a surface depression in this portion of the study area, possibly northward and away from the river. This change appears to correlate sandy silt at the Levy to a heavier silty clay as we proceeded situational history. Soil texture also was observed to change from a lensing of sands and silts, suggesting a somewhat more active depo-

Figure 4: Soil Profiles from Trenches 3, 4, and 5.



Our last excavation was located 75 m west of Trench 4 and just inside the western limits of the study area. Trench 5 commenced on the levy about 17 m from the river and extended across the parcel to the north for a distance of 56.5 m. Here, the water table was encountered at a depth of 1.8 m, and because of the unconsolidated nature of the generally sandy soils was extremely prone to slumping almost immediately upon excavation. One positive aspect of rapid wall collapse was the exposure of a greater surface area for our examination as the excavation proceeded. At the levy on the south end of the trench, soils were typically interbedded as we had observed in other trenches where contact with the levy system had been made. On the north end, however, silty clay soils, such as were noted at a corresponding location immediately above the water table in Trench 4, predominated. Moreover, a lens of dusky-red soil of silty clay texture was observed only in this trench. Interestingly, the backhoe bucket here encountered a large buried log lying perpendicular to the trench as the water table was approached. To judge from the diameter of the exposed portion of a tree trunk, transport and subsequent deposition of the log by the river seems

Trench 5

This excavation reached a maximum depth of 3 m below the surface of the field. The soil profile was noted to be very similar to those previously described and relatively homogeneous throughout. At the base of the trench just above the water table, we did note isolated pockets of a grey-olive clayey soil. Mr. Zuckerman informed us that such deposits are typically indicative of a fluctuating water table, as might be anticipated in a flood bottom such as this. Figure 4 presents the profile for Trench 4.

most likely. Trench 5 is also illustrated in Figure 4. In summary, the excavation of five backhoe trenches went rather smoothly, with only soil slumping proving difficult to surmount. In no trench did we observe cultural items; nor did we observe any possible indications of buried archaeological deposits. In point of fact, the observations we did make strongly suggest that the parcel lies in an area of flood bottom that was frequently inundated over time. We might further venture to suggest that in times of increased flow the area lying immediately north of the current levy formation served as a "chute" or secondary channel for rapidly flowing water. While inundation has most certainly occurred on a frequent basis, the observation of a buried tree trunk is hardly indicative of water overflowing the river banks and slowly spreading over the adjacent floodplain. Rather, we can envision episodes of channel diversion, during which water moved rapidly downstream through channels on either side of the current levy system. Thus, the parcel is question may have experienced episodes for which terms such as "lackwater" or "backwater" are hardly appropriate to describe the situation. In any event, our Phase I study of this 3.8 acre parcel of land near the Grand River strongly suggests that conditions of inundation were not infrequent. As such, it seems highly unlikely that human habitation in the past occurred here with any regularity. And it is certainly noteworthy that our program of research, combining surface reconnaissance of the field and systematic deep testing of the underlying deposits, produced not a single shred of evidence for human occupation of the study area.

RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS DERIVED FROM THE PHASE I STUDY:

Based upon a thorough on-site evaluation, including both surface

reconnaissance and deep testing procedures, together with a brief

review of the literature and site files, it is our opinion, without

reservation, that the parcel in question contains no potentially

significant archaeological resources. And this conclusion is most

certainly in agreement with the observations made during our program

of trenching the study area; observations that support our case for

frequent inundation of this portion of the floodplain over time.

Inasmuch as no cultural items were recovered by the survey team

and deep testing failed to reveal the presence of buried archaeo-

logical deposits, we recommend that the proposed creation of a wet-

land area be permitted to proceed as planned.

REFERENCES CITED:

Cremitt, W.M.

1989

Phase I Archaeological Survey of the Class 3 Landfill Site on Fenske Enterprises Property at 2637 Wilson SW, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504 (ER-89111). Department of Anthro-

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