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26-Archaeological Survey of the Proposed State Park near ~1ichigan Dunes Correctional Facility, Allegan County, Michigan

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Archaeological Survey of the Proposed State Park near Michigan Dunes Correctional Facility, Allegan County, Michigan. Robert G. Kingsley. 1978.

Project Personnel:

Principal Investigator: Robert G. Kingsley, M.A.; Instructor and Research Associate

Field Assistants: Michael Higgins, John Mezaros, Brent Gevers, (Graduate students); Larry M. Wyckoff, M.A. (Instructor): Lynn E. Skinner, B.S.

Purpose of Investigations:

This project was performed at the request of Dr. John R. Halsey, State Archaeologist, at the Michigan History Division, Lansing. The project was an archaeological survey of state-owned lands near the St. Augustine Prison; this area was surveyed to determine if cultural resources would be impacted by the development of a State Park. The fieldwork for the project was carried out on the 24th and 25th of April, 1978.

Description of Project Area:

The entire project area encompasses some 450 acres. The general environmental situation of the area is highly varied.

Proposed parking lot area: NW 1/4, NW 1/4, Sec. 34, and SW 1/4, SW 1/4, Sec 27, Laketown Township, Allegan County; approximately 70 acres. This is the area of greatest proposed development and impact. Most of the area in Sec. 27 was old apple orchard; the eastern boundary of this area was planted in pines. The 40 acres in Section 34 was mostly forested dunes. Vegetation included both deciduous and coniferous trees, as well as plentiful scrub brush. Sand blow-outs were numerous; topography was typical of sand dune areas, with high ridges seperated by ravines and occasional level areas.

State Park area: Sec. 28 (all; not a complete section), and SW approximate 1/3, S 1/2, Sec. 21, Laketown Township, Allegan County, about 380 acres. This large area consisted of forested and open sand dunes. Forest cover was both coniferous and deciduous, and scrub brush was always present. Near the Lake Michigan shoreline was beach grasses and weeds. Topography was rough, with dunal ridges alternated by ravines; ridges and ravines ran all directions. A very large knoll, rising to 823 ft MSL occupies the NW corner of Section 28.

Previous Research:

Much archaeological research has been performed by Western Michigan University in western Allegan County. Grand Valley State Colleges

has also worked in this general area. No fieldwork has been performed in the specific project area however, and there are no known sites in the project area. There are numerous known sites to the south of the project area; most are directly adjacent to the Kalamazoo River channel. Excavated sites include the Hacklander site (multi-component Late Woodland/Mississippian), Schwerdt site (Mississippian), Indian Point site (Late Woodland), and the Nordhof site (multi-component Late Woodland/Mississippian).

Procedures:

Since the 70 acre parcel will receive the heaviest impact, it was closely investigated. Systematic transect survey was employed: the six crew members lined up 30 yds apart, walked the area and placed subsurface probes at every 25 yds. The entire 70 acres was covered in this manner. Test probes revealed a soil profile ranging from totally absent topsoil in the dune areas to about 10-12 inches of topsoil in the old orchard.

The remaining area was not so systematically examined. The area was transected, but due to rough topography and/or heavy vegetation, transect spacing varied. In general, dune/ridge tops and ravine bottoms were walked. Test probes were placed at disgression, usually in areas where topsoil existed. Coverage of this area was obviously not ideal, but every effort was made to inspect ridge tops and ravines, as these are the most likely places for the existence of prehistoric sites.

Sites Recorded:

Absolutely no prehistoric cultural material or sites were recovered in any area. Historic structures and areas were discovered, but none of these seems of cultural or historical significance worth mitigation. A brief description of historic material is as follows: three areas of trash dumping were encountered, in the north and south halves of the 70 acre parcel, and in the approximate east-center of the 380 acre parcel. A windmill and apparent pumping station was discovered on a dune top at the lake edge in the approximate west-center of the 380 acre parcel. A dilapidated structure of relatively recent orgin stood some 100 yds east of the windmill; a similar structure was found near the dump in the big parcel. Evidence of sand mining or removal was found in the NE corner of the big parcel in Section 28. Finally, not far from the latter-mentioned structure was found a metal sign with the ominous warning: "Mines-Danger". The field crew however found no evidence of a mine field.

It should be added here that while our coverage of the 380 acre parcel was not particularly intensive, I am confident that we did not miss any important cultural resources. Any prehistoric sites in the area are likely to be already distroyed or buried since the dunes are not wholly stable. Much of this area was "active", that is, blowing and eroding at the time of inspection. Forest growth on stabilized areas is probably not more than 150 yrs old and it is

likely that these areas were also active since prehistoric times. The chances of survival of a prehistoric site in these dunes are slight.

Conclusions:

Since no cultural material or sites of significance were found during the course of this survey, I can recommend that this project, as outlined to me by Dr. John R. Halsey, proceed as planned.

Prepared and Submitted by:

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