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106-Phase I Archaeological Assessment of the Taube Road Site (West Parcel), NE 1/4 and NW 1/4 of Section 1, Hagar Township (T3S R18W), Berrien County, Michigan (ER-930129)

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DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

REPORT OF INVESTIGATIONS NO. 106
1994

PHASE I ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE TAUBE ROAD SITE
(WEST PARCEL), NE 1/4 and NW 1/4 OF SECTION 1, HAGAR
TOWNSHIP (T3S R18W), BERRIEN COUNTY, MICHIGAN (ER-930129)

WILLIAM M. CREMIN
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A Report of Research in
Response to a Request from:

Ms. Lara Spears
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Ann Arbor, MI 48106

And on Behalf of:

Mr. Edward J. Clements
TechniSand
P.O. Box 426
3840 Livingston Road
Bridgman, MI 49106

INTRODUCTION:

Upon receipt of a request for a proposal and budget from Ms. Lara Spears of ASTI (consultant) and acceptance of same by Mr. Edward J. Clements of Technisand (owner), authorizing a Phase I survey of property located on Taube Road in Berrien County, Michigan, a team of researchers commenced a literature and site file search, looked over information on the property provided by ASTI, and on 24-25 Sep 94 conducted on-site evaluation in order to determine whether the proposed development would have an adverse impact on potentially significant archaeological resources. There follows a report of our research program, together with recommendations derived from our examination of the study area.

PROJECT PERSONNEL:

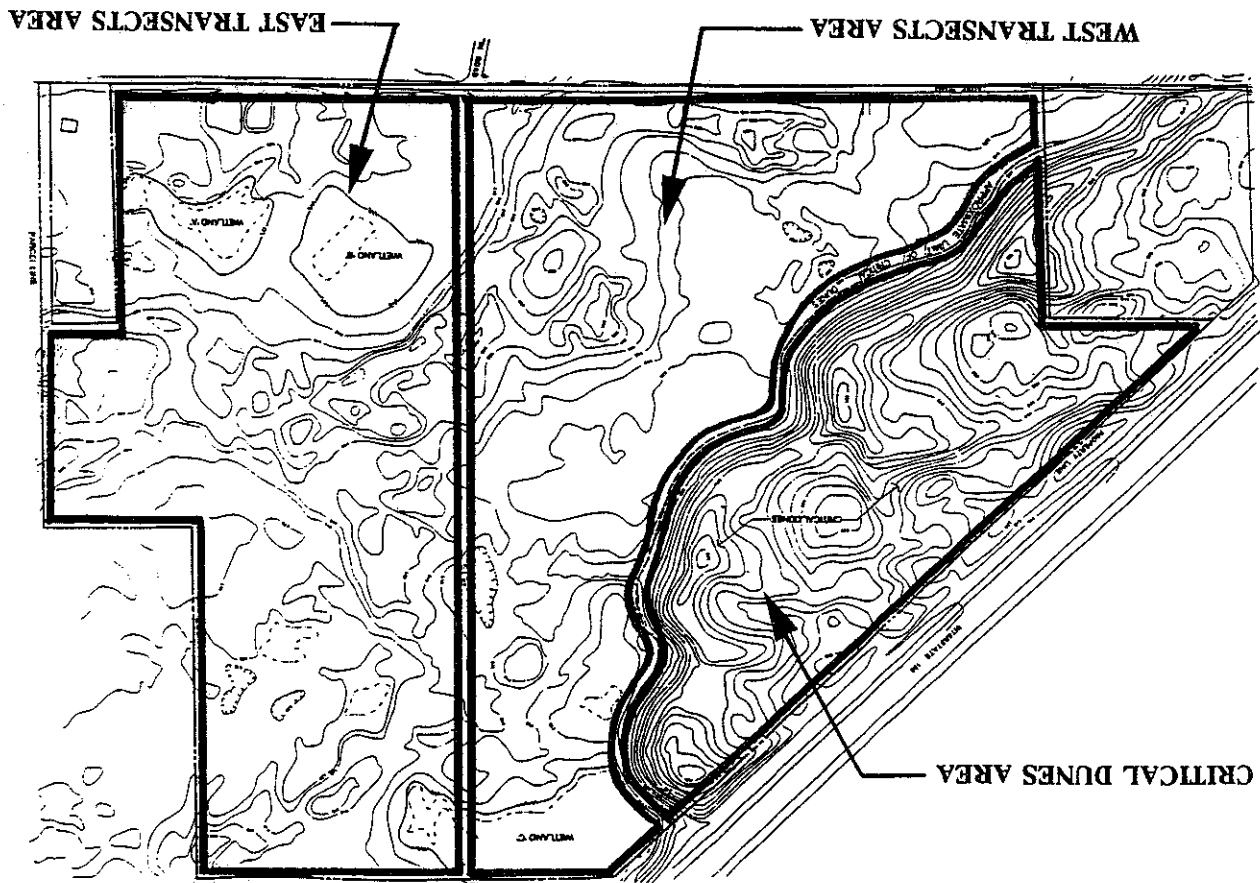
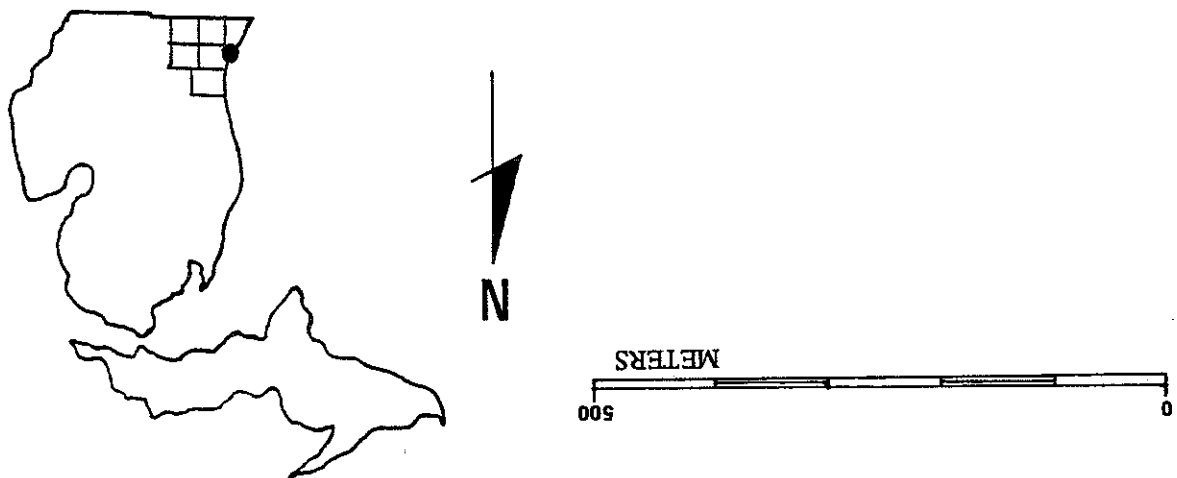
| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Principal Investigator- | Dr. William M. Cremin, Professor of Anthropology, WMU and Owner, W.M. Cremin Consulting |
| Field Supervisor | - Mr. Arthur Desjardins, Graduate Student, Department of Anthropology, WMU |
| Field Assistants | - Ms. Maura Poll, Graduate Student, Department of Anthropology, WMU - Mr. Mark Steeby, Graduate Student, Department of Anthropology, WMU - Mr. John Weaver, Undergraduate Major in Anthropology (Archaeology Concentrator), WMU |

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AREA:

The Taube Road Site (West Parcel) is an irregularly shaped tract of land comprising 126.5 acres (47.2 ha) in the NE 1/4 and NW 1/4 of Section 1, Hagar Township (T3S R18W), Berrien County, Michigan (Figure 1). It is bordered on the south by Taube Road, on the west by I-196, and on the north by the Berrien-Van Buren County line. The eastern border of the study area lacks a culturally defined boundary, crossing open country along previously established survey lines located between 261.8-400.7m E of the N-S centerline of this section.

Project area and survey transect areas

Figure 1



Elevation across the parcel ranges from less than 187.5m ASL where the summit of several sand dunes in the dune field which occupies the western third of the project and forms the dominant feature on the landscape. This is labeled in Figure 1 as "critical dunes area".

Site inspections by both ASTI (comments derived from ASTI File 2306 are here incorporated with our on-site observations) and our survey team reveal that vegetation across the study area has been quite disturbed by logging and off-road vehicle use. Thus, the project have opened the canopy, exposing the forest floor to more sunlight and creating a generally drier environment. Today supports more diverse plant life than was previously the case. The four communities identified during ASTI visits and confirmed by us include: (1) oak savanna-consisting of both scattered and clustered white and black oaks and shrubs in a thin matrix of grass and/or fern cover. The topsoil is generally thin and sterile and underlying sand is commonly exposed on the surface where plant growth is absent; (2) southern xeric forest-occupying the crests of dunes forming the dune field along the western boundary of the project. This community is dominated by black and red oak, with beech, witch-hazel, and wild black cherry also present in the canopy. The groundcover in cutover areas consists of dense clumps of greenbriar, blackberry and raspberry, with the tangled vines of grape frequently descending from tree branches (Parenthetically, this groundcover, together with steep slopes on dunes, greatly hampered the surveyors as they sought to traverse the dune field.); (3) dry-southern mesic forest-with somewhat moister conditions prevailing on the eastern side of dunes, beech joins red oak and, formerly, white oak as a co-dominant. A few small clusters of white pine were also observed growing in this area. Because logging of white oaks has taken place, opening the canopy, the area is also overgrown with woody shrubs like greenbriar, blackberry, and raspberry. But moister soil conditions than are associated with the previous community here support ferns, spleenwort, and violets; and (4) southern mesic forest-occupying the southern edge of the large wetland in the northern part of the project area, where the water table is close to the surface, are beech and eastern hemlock, together with stems of red maple and tulip-tree.

Finally, in the southeastern, southwestern and central areas of the project are several small wetlands and open areas (marsh remnants?) supporting wild grasses and sparse shrubs and with patches of bare ground and localized shallow sand blows affording 20-60% surface visibility.

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH:

Our literature, documents, and site file search indicates that no prior archaeological research has been undertaken in the study area. However, documented sites in the general area of the project

Typically, deep shovel tests revealed an "A" horizon of 8-12cm depth, with humus, if present, confined to the uppermost 2-3cm. It is typically yellowish brown in color, but somewhat darker if the test was not too near a disturbed area or sand blow. The "B"

When the survey team arrived on the Taube Road Site, they were unable to relocate the central marker shown on the project blueprint provided us by ASTI. Therefore, a utility pole at the intersection of Taube and Martin roads was selected for establishment of our datum and grid (Figure 2). From this point, transects were placed at intervals of 20m across the center of the study area. As the surveyors moved northward along individual lines of survey, shovel tests were spaced every 20m along transects. Each shovel test was 30cm in diameter and excavated to a depth of 40-50cm below the surface, or well into the sandy subsoil across the landscape. As a precaution, deep shovel tests were excavated on 9 separate occasions; these probings were typically 50-70cm in diameter and extended to a depth below surface of 1.0-1.5m.

PHASE I ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD PROCEDURES:

While none of these nearby sites appears to represent a substantial resource, that so many have been reported in the general area of this project without benefit of any systematic archaeological survey program having been undertaken certainly justifies the decision to have a Phase I survey conducted on this occasion.

An informant identified only as Veck reported to the state a Middle Woodland camp (Cowgills; 20BE158) in the NE 1/4, NW 1/4 of Section 1 and a Late Woodland camp (Harris Lake; 20BE159) in the SW 1/4, NW 1/4 of Section 12, and a person named Garlanger reported another prehistoric camp (Garlanger; 20BE160) in the SW 1/4, SE 1/4 of Section 1, T3S R18W, Berrien County. Finally, although the source is not identified, the site files also reference a Middle Woodland camp (20VA26) exposed in a sand blow in the SW 1/4, SW 1/4 of Section 30, T2S R17W, Van Buren County.

Entries in the state site files from the UMMA include a site identified as a Paleoindian camp and prehistoric camp (20BE113) in the SW 1/4, NW 1/4, NE 1/4, SW 1/4 of Section 12, T3S R18W, Berrien County, a prehistoric camp (20BE120) located in the SW 1/4, SE 1/4 of Section 1, T3S R18W, Berrien County, and 20VA15, a prehistoric campsite situated in the SE 1/4 of Section 30, T2S R17W, Van Buren County.

suggest that some informant activity and a pipeline survey by Amos Green in 1957 have produced positive results. From Green's many entries in the state site files we have Defield's Village (20BE221) in the SW 1/4 and Defield's Campsite (20BE222) in the NE 1/4 of Section 8, T3S R17W, Berrien County. These two sites are identified only as a prehistoric surface scatter and prehistoric scatter in a sand blow, respectively.

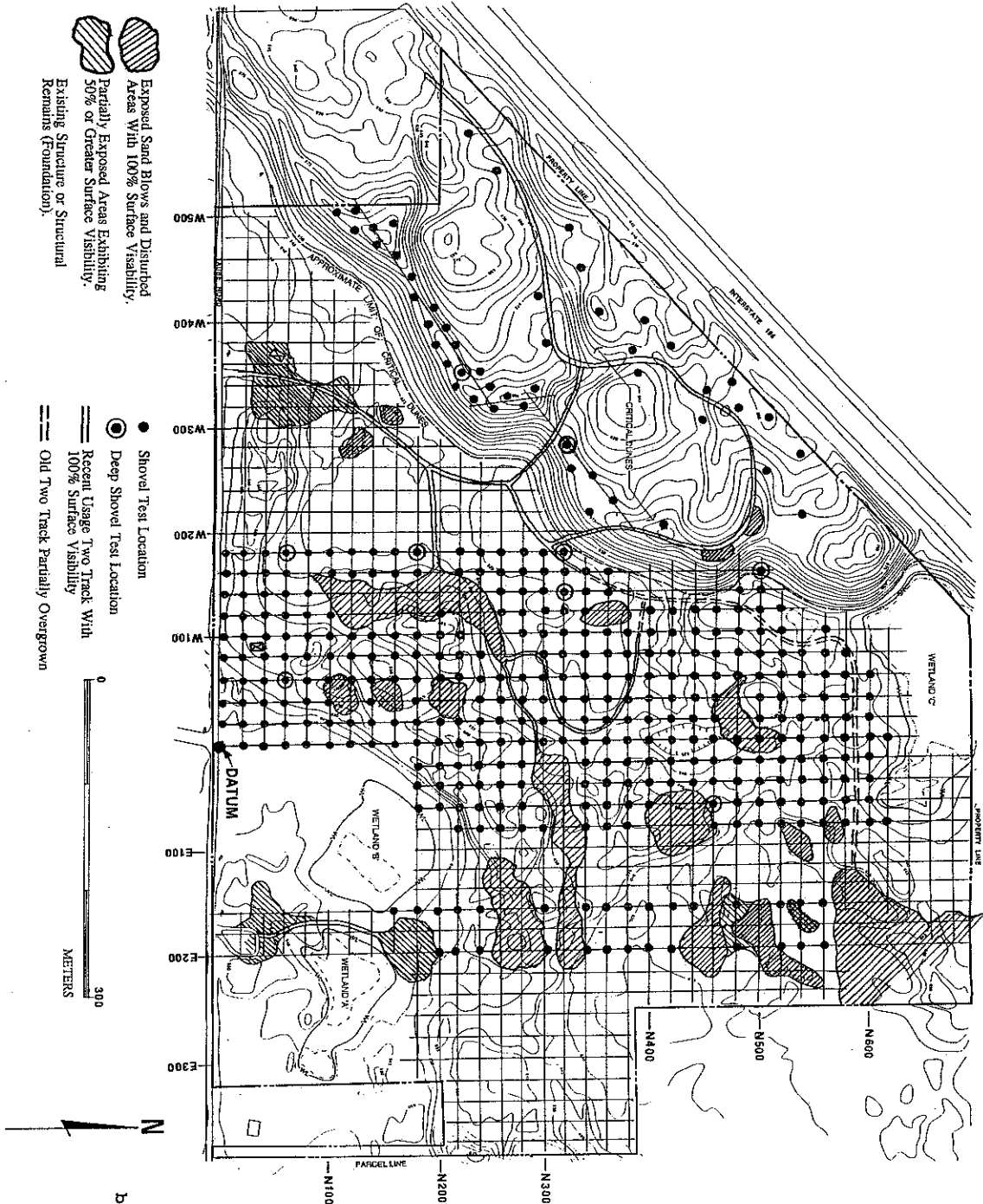


Figure 2
Observed disturbed areas, sand
blows and shovel test locations.

horizon consists of percolated sands, reddish yellow in color, and varying in depth from 25-40cm. This grades into a "C" horizon made up of very clean, almost pure white sand, without gravelly inclusions, and extending as far down as the shovel would reach.

During transect work, surveyors did occasionally deviate from predetermined lines of survey as obstructions such as large trees and dense clumps of thorny vegetation were encountered or they came upon opportunities for visual examination of the ground surface. A visual inspection without benefit of shovel testing was conducted only in those instances when surface visibility exceeded 50%. Areas affording partial exposure greater than 50% (e.g. the area that intervenes between areas designated "Wetland A" and "Wetland B" in the southeastern corner of the project) and sand blows and severely disturbed areas providing 100% surface visibility are shown in Figure 2. And subsurface probing always resumed in those areas immediately peripheral to open ground. For example, in large, deeply deflated or excavated areas on the landscape, and where vehicle tracks cut deeply into the ground, had cultural items been observed, the upper margins of the exposure were to be carefully probed in search of undisturbed contexts.

In locations where wetlands and other lowlying areas were observed to support very dense vegetation indicative of natural infilling, shovel testing along transects was interrupted. Shovel testing also proved impossible over much of the "critical dunes area", given exceeding steep slopes of unstable sand combined with dense thorny vegetative cover. Such areas are noted in Figure 2 by grid lines lacking shovel test locations and areas where the grid lines, representing survey transects, simply do not appear.

With respect to the latter area, shovel testing could not proceed along transects or even be systematically placed along the crests of sand dunes. What probing was undertaken by surveyors was rather arbitrary, but with an eye toward reasonably level surfaces adjacent to the often very deep deflated (excavated?) surfaces atop a number of dunes. Visible surfaces on the dunes were, of course, routinely examined, including a two-track which followed the crestline of the dune system for a considerable distance before descending a spur and then meandering along toward level ground at the base of the dunes. Some shovel tests were also located along the trail through otherwise dense vegetation created by the passage of off-road vehicles.

As our time on-site was getting short, a decision was made to first attempt visual examination of the southwestern corner of the project prior to initiating shovel testing along the transects previously established. A road through the area and several large clearings affording between 50%-100% visibility were carefully walked, resulting in absolutely no observations of potential interest. Some unsystematic probing with shovels around the clearings also failed to produce anything of note.

Turning to the last area requiring examination, surveyors began

their transect work north of the wetlands in the southeastern corner of the study area. Visual examination along the road and in two clearings between wetlands areas had previously proved entirely negative. And surveyors soon determined that the area they were now entering featured even denser groundcover and shrubby growth than they had encountered elsewhere in the project. A decision to run only two lines of survey spaced 40m apart, but with shovel tests being maintained at intervals of 20m along transects, was made, and with the time remaining attention was focused on the series of clearings occurring here. Once again, surveyors failed to make any positive observations as a result of their inspection of areas of good to excellent surface visibility.

RESULTS OF THE PHASE I SURVEY:

Although our coverage was not as complete as initially anticipated, it is estimated that upwards of 60% of the total project was either systematically shovel tested along transects or visually inspected where ground cover was no greater than 50%. Elsewhere, our efforts were significantly hampered by very dense and thorny plant cover, steeply sloping dunes supporting for the most part a tangle of shrub and vine growth which could barely be penetrated let alone systematically traversed, several significant areas of wetland in the northern and southeastern portions of the study area, and the negative impacts of prior logging and off-road vehicle activities. Parenthetically, I suspect that depressions occupying the summit of a number of dunes are not the result of deflation, but rather can be attributed to quarrying for sand.

Be that as it may, Figure 2 shows the placement of 395 shovel tests and the opportunities for visual inspection afforded surveyors in a number of areas across the landscape. Coverage is thinnest in the "critical dunes area", as might be expected. But nowhere along the crest of the dune field did either shovel tests or two-track disturbance reveal anything to suggest the presence of archaeological resources.

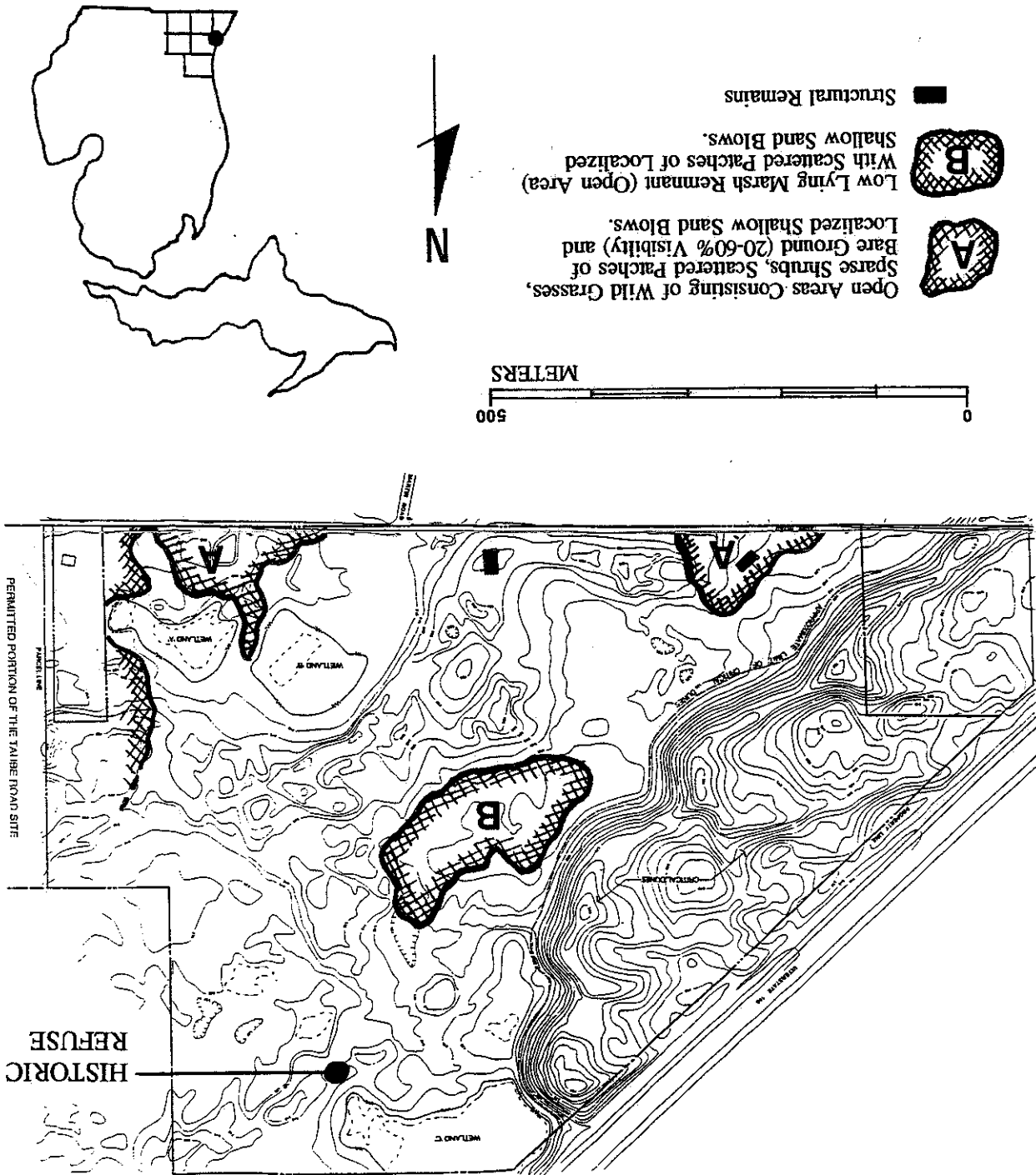
At lower elevations, we were generally more successful in attaining coverage that was both systematic and intensive. Here, the vast majority of our shovel tests were excavated, frequently augmented by opportunities to visually examine the ground surface. Once again, we were thwarted in our efforts to identify archaeological remains indicative of the presence of a site.

However, while we were totally unsuccessful in locating a single flake of chert or piece of fire-cracked rock, let alone a bona fide artifact, over the entire study area, we did make some observations bearing on limited use of the project earlier in this century.

First, at a point about 40m N and 90m W of datum the remnants of a foundation were observed (Figure 3). The old "dense" concrete block base for a small structure is almost all that remains, save for a few poorly preserved wooden elements of superstructure.

Observed clearings and historic remains.

Figure 3



Surveyors noted a few rusted sheets of corrugated metal (barn/shed roofing) scattered about, and a small grab sample of cultural items included the following:

-part of a broken plate of delft ware
-small cosmetic/facial cream jar ("Woodbury") with thick side walls and a metal cap
-part of a large bottle of clear glass with white printed and overlain lettering
-piece of window glass

In light of the size and condition of the structural remains, the small amount of trash associated with it, and its relatively recent age, we are not inclined to attach potential significance to this observation.

Secondly, surveyors encountered a small historic dump occupying a naturally deflated area at 570m N and 80m E of datum (Figure 3). This fairly deep depression contained a dense scatter of what appears to be common household debris such as broken bottles, some crockery, and lamp "hurricanes". No items of plastic and very little metal, other than a few broken pieces of cast iron, were observed. A couple of bottle necks lack seams and appear to be hand finished. One broken specimen has raised and gilded lettering reading "Coloma" and appears to be a milk bottle. Nothing here seems out of place given an early 20th century temporal placement.

The dump's small size and the fact that the cultural material appears to simply lie on the floor of the depression rather than be buried in it argue for casual discard rather than a prepared site for refuse disposal. It is not possible to associate this dump with either the small structure noted above or the shed briefly mentioned below. We do not propose potential significance for this observation, either.

Our final observation is of a small dilapidated shed fronting on Taube Road and lying about 280m W of the aforementioned concrete block foundation (Figure 3). Investigation of this structure and the area immediately surrounding it revealed absolutely no cultural items in association. We attach no cultural significance to this old shed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

In light of the very difficult conditions under which this Phase I assessment of the Taube Road site was performed, surveyors did achieve reasonably thorough coverage of the study area by incorporating both shovel testing and surface reconnaissance procedures as the opportunities arose. For reasons presented earlier, not all areas within project limits could be given the desired attention of the survey team. But we think it highly unlikely that our conclusions would be otherwise had coverage been more even across the entire parcel. Both prior experience and

time and energy devoted in the field to this project argue for the recommendation we propose. And that is that the proposed landscape altering activities will not impact on potentially significant archaeological resources and should be permitted to proceed as planned.