



New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

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Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor

Rose Harvey
Commissioner

September 18, 2014

Ms. Carol S. Weed
VHB Engineering, Surveying and Landscape Architecture, P.C.
50 Main Street, Suite 360
White Plains, New York 10606

Re: Silo Ridge - 1) *Phase IA/IB Archaeological Survey: Silo Ridge Project Parcels 1, 2 and 3, and Phase II Archaeological Evaluation, West Lake Amenia Road Historic Site, and;*
2) *Avoidance Monitoring & Unanticipated Discovery Plan*

06PR02019

Dear Ms. Weed:

Thank you for requesting the comments of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), Division for Historic Preservation as part of your SEQRA process. These comments are those of the Division for Historic Preservation and relate only to Historic/Cultural resources. They do not include potential environmental impacts to New York State Parkland that may be involved in or near your project. Such impacts must be considered as part of the environmental review of the project pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (New York Environmental Conservation Law Article 8) and its implementing regulations (6 NYCRR Part 617).

Please be aware that if this undertaking will involve or require a permit, license or funding from a state or federal agency/authority the action may be subject to Section 14.09 of New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law or Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Under either of these statutes a more rigorous assessment of potential impacts to historic/cultural/archaeological resources directly or indirectly affected by the action may be required by the involved agency/authority.

The project design has been modified several times over the last decade. During this time period, Phase I survey was conducted in areas where archaeological sensitivity modelling in the region suggested that sites likely would be located. Other parts of the project area for the various permutations of the project were dismissed because of slopes greater than 15% or prior disturbance. The design modifications occurred in the northern part of the project and identified as Areas A through E and discussed below.

Phase I Results

A systematic shovel testing program was completed in project areas with less than 12 percent slopes and that were not obviously disturbed by prior grading and landfilling. Field testing was completed according to all applicable archaeological standards [New York Archaeological Council 1994; New York State

Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP) 2005]. Field testing of seemingly undisturbed locations on Parcel 1 and 2 did not recover any precontact archaeological deposits. The walkover survey and Phase IB testing did identify several features on Parcel 1, including a rock outcrop with stones piled on it (Feature 1), and ultimately four charcoal hearths (Features 2, 5, 6, and 6a). Testing around each of these features found no artifacts or cultural material. Therefore, no further archaeological investigations are warranted for these locations either.

Field testing on the lowland portion of Parcel 2 only resulted in one positive shovel test (ST) with historical material, a single cut nail. The lack of field scatter observed across this area, the presence of relatively modern material in several of the STs, and the observed soil stratigraphy in the two test trenches all indicate that Parcel 2 has had some degree of disturbance, and that no potential archaeological deposits exist within the tested area. Therefore, no further testing is recommended for this area.

The walkover survey of Parcel 3 found that it only contained stone farm walls and a drainage channel and pit built into a steep slope, but no evidence of the charcoaling industry.

Area A is in an area with slopes greater than 15%. Though not surveyed by the Louis Berger Group, Inc. (LBG) in 2006-2007 or Historical Perspectives, Inc. (HPI) in 2013, Area A meets the definition of a slope-excluded area (15% or greater) used by them and accepted by the New York State Historic Preservation Office (NY SHPO). The Proponents also state that the hill slope is outcropping rock. The proposed residential driveway and the residence will avoid the outcrop. No further work is recommended for this area.

Area B, along the northern edge of the project northwest of Area A, also is steeply sloped and heavily wooded with both rock outcrops and erratics. Though not surveyed by LBG in 2006-2007 or HPI in 2013, Area B, which includes the proposed location of two residential lots, meets the definition of a slope-excluded area (greater than 15%) used by them and accepted by the NY SHPO. No further work is recommended for this area.

Area C, northwest of Area B, also encompasses two proposed residential lots. Though not surveyed by LBG in 2006-2007 or HPI in 2013, Area C meets the definition of a slope-excluded area (15% or greater slope) used by them and accepted by NY SHPO. No further work is recommended for this area.

Area D, in the southeast quadrant of the Northern Part, is disturbed and sloped. Though not surveyed by LBG in 2006-2007 or HPI in 2013, Area D meets the definition of a slope-excluded area (15% or greater slope) and an area that has experienced prior surface modification. No further work is recommended for this area.

Area E is located on the northern edge of the current project adjacent to West Lake Amenia Road. The Project modified plans in order to address existing drainage concerns. During consultation with the Proponent, NY DOT has requested that the Project continue their re-contouring northward in order to address the drainage concerns. No cultural resources survey of Area E was conducted prior to surface modification. However, the area originally met the definition of a slope-excluded area. No further archaeological investigations of the now-disturbed area is recommended.

Ore Pits/Ponds

In 2006 and 2007, LBG defined Site-81. The site consists of 11 charcoal hearths identified along a ridge that constitutes the western portion of the Project's Northern Part. The charcoal produced in these hearths was used by local iron ore processing companies including the Peekskill Iron Company, which once owned the Northern Part of the Project. The Northern Part of the Project also contains possible iron ore pits, at least one of which is now a wetland pond within the landscaped golf course. The NY SHPO indicated that no additional work was needed as long as the pond contour was not impacted horizontally or vertically. In consultation with NY SHPO staff, it was suggested that further research into ore production and processing in the Wassaic Valley area should be a focus in the Phase I survey of Parcels 1, 2, and 3. HPI (2014) has addressed this issue, and found no basis for a historical district in the Project area based on the elements identified to date. It was determined that, while Island Green Pond and other ponds in the project area may have once functioned as ore pits, they have been modified since the cessation of the original mining operations.

Phase I Conclusions and Recommendations

Field testing and the walkover survey of seemingly undisturbed locations on Parcel 1 and 2 failed to identify any precontact archaeological deposits. However, they did identify several features on Parcel 1. Testing around each of these features failed to identify any artifacts or cultural material. Archaeological testing on the lowland portions of Parcels 1 and 2 found no artifact deposits. Therefore, no further testing is recommend for Parcels 1 and 2, but the NYS Site Inventory Form completed by LBG in 2007 was updated with the additional charcoal hearths.

From an archaeological perspective, the collection of iron industry related resources remaining on the landscape in the project site does not retain its integrity and lacks research potential. Iron ore pits have been landscaped and incorporated into an extant golf course, and now look like natural ponds. Furthermore, charcoal hearths and dirt roads in the mountains lack the potential to add to the understanding and knowledge of the industry. Phase IB testing of the hearths to establish charcoal composition was previously completed by LBG, and subsequent testing around hearths for this study failed to identify any archaeological deposits beyond charcoal.

The complex of resources related to the iron industry is indeed important to the history of the area, and particularly to the history of Amenia. The lack of feature integrity and research potential does not render the charcoal hearths, dirt roads, and mining pits-turned ponds on the project site eligible for nomination as an archaeological district.

Phase II Results

Results of the Phase II survey report indicate that the Phase II investigations at Site-82 are incomplete because the work was halted by the proponent. This site has been subjected to two rounds of Phase II testing and both times the fieldwork was terminated before the site boundaries were established. The horizontal and vertical boundaries of the site are not definitively established. No features were identified. However, the artifact assemblage is dominated by late 18th- and earlier 19th-century materials indicative of a residential occupation. The documentary research and results of archaeological field investigations to date indicate that the site could meet the criteria necessary for NR eligibility, but this was not conclusively established.

Ms. Carol Weed
September 18, 2014
06PR02019
Page 4

Phase II Recommendations

Because the site boundaries have not been established, and because no prior testing has been undertaken west of the site, there are two recommendations for the site

- Phase IB testing is should be conducted immediately west of the westernmost positive STs excavated for the Phase II investigation if any ground disturbance or property usage will occur in this area. As per state standards, STs should be placed at a 15 m (49.2 ft.) interval until two negative STs in a row are encountered, in order to establish whether or not there are archaeological deposits in this location. If additional historical archaeological deposits are encountered, then Phase II excavations are recommended to firmly establish the horizontal and vertical site limits, and address potential NR eligibility of the site.
- If the Phase II study is not taken through completion at Site-82, then Site Avoidance for the area of positive STs is recommended. Site Avoidance would to ensure that the location of the site, plus a buffer area, remains undisturbed during and after construction.

Avoidance Monitoring and Unanticipated Discovery Plan

An Avoidance Monitoring and Unanticipated Discovery Plan (Plan) was developed by VHB Engineering, Surveying and Landscape Architecture, P.C. (VHB) and prepared in consultation with SHPO. The Plan was submitted under separate cover. The Plan details an approved course of action for the site and should include a mechanism to prohibit construction or future impacts from the proposed project.

The proponent does not propose any modification to the general site area. However, in the absence of a fully defined site boundary, VHB has recommended to the Proponent that a buffer be emplaced around the site area as currently defined on the basis of shovel tests with cultural materials. The buffer will be placed 25-feet outward from the last 'positive' shovel test in all directions. Furthermore, it is recommended that an archaeological monitor be in place during any construction along the outward edge of the buffer in order to maintain the integrity of the buffer.

Complete details of approved methods are laid out in the final version of the *Avoidance Monitoring and Unanticipated Discovery Plan*. After review of the submitted Plan, our office concurs with the proposed procedures and accepts the plan as part of the overall site treatment plan.

If further correspondence is required regarding this project, please be sure to refer to the OPRHP Project Review (PR) number noted above.

Sincerely,



Wm. Brian Yates
Historic Sites Specialist