

Phase I and II Archaeological Surveys, National Register of Historic Places Nomination and Archaeological Site Impact Mitigation

Quinebaug River Wetland Mitigation Project Canterbury, Connecticut

CTDOT created a new wetland on the Quinebaug River floodplain in Canterbury, Connecticut to offset impacts to wetland resources caused by other CTDOT activities. Because the project involved Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funding, it had to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which requires that significant archaeological and historical resources be identified and that impact to such resources be avoided or mitigated.

AHS completed a Phase I Reconnaissance Survey and identified seven archaeological sites within the proposed wetland basin footprint and access road alignment. Based on the Phase II Intensive investigation, AHS concluded, with concurrence from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), that five of the sites represented a National Register-eligible district of significant archaeological resources that would be negatively impacted by the project. The significance of the District sites is primarily in their indication of the great importance and reliance local Native American people placed on the subsistence (food) resources available from the Quinebaug River, and the transportation link the river provided to the wider region for travel, trade, and communication. Coordinating with representatives from CTDOT, SHPO, the FHWA, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the State Attorney General's Office, AHS developed innovative strategies for mitigating the project-related impacts to the National Register-eligible sites. First, to minimize the potential damage that heavy construction and maintenance vehicles would impose on two sites located within and along the access road, a special construction fabric called Geotextile was placed on the road surface and covered by 12 inches of gravel. Secondly, impact to two of the sites on the floodplain was avoided by construction redesign. The only site on the floodplain that could not be fully avoided was partially preserved *in situ* and the remainder of the site was intensively tested to preserve the site's informational value. Furthermore, AHS archaeologists monitored the wetland construction to ensure that no subsurface remains such as cooking hearths were destroyed by the project. AHS prepared a National Register of Historic Places documentation form and successfully nominated the Canterbury Wetland Mitigation archaeological sites as a Connecticut State Archaeological Preserve, which ensures that these important sites will be permanently protected. A public-oriented web site and booklet on the project were also prepared.

