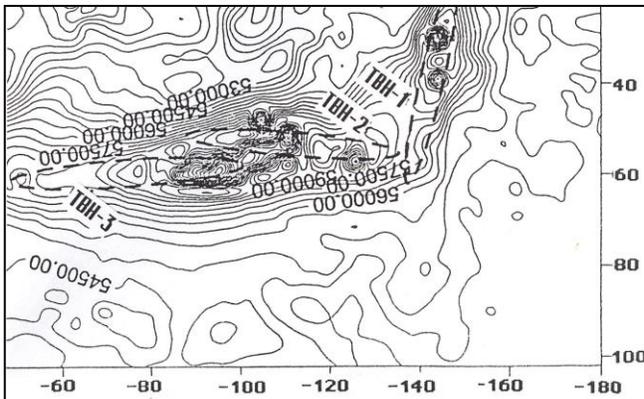


Archaeological Survey of Submerged and Buried Torpedo Boats New London, Connecticut

In 1998, as part of a plan to develop land bordering New London Harbor as a research park, DECD contracted with AHS affiliate Public Archaeology Survey Team (PAST) to identify archaeological resources in the project area. The State Historic Preservation Office was particularly interested in reported hulls of ca. 1900 U.S. Navy torpedo boats. Initially sunk in shallow water, the hulls were later overlaid by fill, as land-forming activities encroached on the harbor. PAST personnel, with subcontractors Michael S. Raber and Lanbo Liu, undertook to locate and evaluate the torpedo-boat remains using remote-sensing.

Previous attempts to locate the hulls with ground-penetrating radar had failed, so PAST turned to a better technology, the proton processing magnetometer. This device, which measures anomalies in the local background magnetic field caused by ferrous objects, was particularly well-suited for the torpedo-boat survey because the readings are independent of the orientation of the coils in the sensors and the hydrogen nuclei that generate the signal have a small magnetic moment, making the device extremely sensitive. Readings were taken at 10-foot intervals over an area measuring 335 x 590 feet, and the resultant data were processed to produce gamma contours.



Five distinct anomalies appeared near the expected location of the hulls. Three of the five were found to have more remaining material, suggesting that the other two sites may have had material removed or deeply buried. Combined with other documentary data, the evidence from the magnetometry allowed the archaeologists to compile a candidate list of seven vessels that most likely were represented by the five hulls.

In addition to preparing the archaeological report, PAST produced a permanent exhibit of torpedo-boat models, historical photographs, and interpretive text for the visitor center at Fort Trumbull State Park.



U.S.S. Foote, possibly one of the sunken torpedo boats, ca. 1897.

