WORKING WITH JOE

By Keith Bastianini
Michael Baker International
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“Common sense and a sense of humor are the same thing, moving at different speeds. A Sense of humor is just common sense, dancing. Those who lack humor are without judgement and should be trusted with nothing.”
S.R. 0028 Improvement Project - Phase I Testing
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Archaeological Investigation for the PA Woodcock Initiative

In conjunction with PA WHSL, PennDOT District 1-0 sponsored cultural resource work for the woodcock pilot habitat site in exchange for banked mitigation credits for transportation projects that might incur wetland impacts in the district. As a consultant to PennDOT Engineering District 1-0, the Cultural Resources Section of Michael Baker Jr., Inc. (Baker) conducted a Phase 1 archaeological investigation from September 27 through October 3, 2007, for the proposed pilot habitat site. The site was located on the broad valley floor of Sandy Creek on State Game Land 39 in Sandy Creek Township, Venango County, Pennsylvania, approximately 0.8 km (0.5 mi) southeast of the town of Folk. Baker’s Phase I investigation of the pilot habitat site utilized archival research, pedestrian reconnaissance, geomorphological assessment, and subsurface testing to evaluate the defined archaeological Area of Potential Effect. The investigation yielded 48 prehistoric artifacts and a small amount of historic field scatter. The prehistoric artifacts included a complete Raccoon Notched projectile point (rlo) with an early Late Woodland temporal ascription, one bipolar artifact, two biface fragments, and 44 pieces of lithic debitage. The recovered park was found in association with an intact prehistoric hearth feature containing a concentration of large cobbles, charcoal flecking, and fire-redened earth. This artifact and feature cluster was subsequently defined and recorded with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) as the Woodcock site (39W0296).

Based on the presence of intact cultural bearing horizons with a temporarily diagnostic artifact, as well as the presence of an intact cultural feature, Baker recommended that the Woodcock Site be considered potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion D for its potential to yield data important to our understanding of prehistory. This recommendation, combined with the fact that grant funds and time were almost exhausted, jeopardized the creation of the pilot habitat site. To avoid this prospect, Baker initiated a meeting on November 20, 2007, with the PennDOT District 1-0 Regional Archaeologist and Mackin Engineering Company, designers for the proposed wetland, to discuss the need for additional archaeological testing. As a result of the meeting, Mackin proposed an alteration of the conceptual design for the wetlands to avoid impacting the archaeological site.

Since the wetland design required 15 acres of land and Baker had evaluated 10 acres during the Phase I, Mackin had enough land area to create the pilot site. The fact that the defined Woodcock site was approximately 9.7 acres allowed Mackin to easily avoid any potential disturbances to the Woodcock site during project execution. The revised design stipulates that the archaeological site boundary be marked at the outset of earthwork for the wetland. Immediately outside of the staked boundary, a permanent 15-meter high, earth embankment will be constructed around the perimeters of the identified site to protect it within a permanent barrier. The planned protective measures of the altered design negated additional archaeological investigations for the Woodcock site. The simple exchange between the consultants and PennDOT permitted the successful completion of a project that otherwise may have been in jeopardy of failing. Moreover, it resulted in the protection of a potentially significant cultural resource and helped to ensure the promise that the American woodcock find a home in Pennsylvania.

PA WHSL, the Pennsylvania Woodcock Habitat Initiative on State Lands, is a broad based partnership created in 2004 through the leadership of the Ruffed Grouse Society in response to a decline in population of the American Woodcock (Scrubneromorpha minor) in the eastern U.S.

PA WHSL Partnership includes representatives from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the US Forest Service Allegheny National Forest, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, District 1-0. In cooperation with: the PA Department of Environmental Protection; PA Fish and Boat Commission, Venango County Conservation District, PA Department of Agriculture, Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission, US Army Corps of Engineers Pittsburgh District, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Federal Highway Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

PA WHSL’s mission is to create or enhance woodcock habitat by assisting resource agencies and conservation groups in the identification of potential woodcock habitat sites within public lands across Pennsylvania and by creating a pilot habitat site.

PA WHSL committed a total of approximately $395,000 to the project, including $115,000 in grant monies and $280,000 in materials and in-kind services.
Phase I Archaeological Survey Area
Conceptual design to avoid impacting the Woodcock Site.
Merci à notre ami!
(Thank you our friend!)