

**Summary Report of the Archaeological Debris Removal
at Tyndall's Point Park in Gloucester County, Virginia**

Submitted to:

Carol Steele, Director
Parks, Recreation and Tourism
Gloucester County, Virginia

Submitted by:

DATA Investigations, LLC
3267 Kings Creek Road
Hayes VA 23072

Author:

Thane Harpole

December 12, 2003

INTRODUCTION

In October 2003, DATA Investigations was contracted by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism to monitor the removal of storm debris from Tyndall's Point Park in Gloucester County, Virginia. Tyndall's Point Park is a 4-acre park in Gloucester Point located adjacent to the west side of Route 17 near the Coleman Bridge. This park protects the well-preserved remains of Civil War earthworks that were built to defend this strategic location during the war. Prior to the Civil War, an 18th-century merchant town known as Gloucester Town and Revolutionary War fortifications occupied the Gloucester Point Area. The high winds from Hurricane Isabel on September 18, 2003 toppled and damaged over 40 trees, resulted in some disturbance to the earthworks and the parkland immediately surrounding them. The damage appeared to be minor, but archaeological monitoring was necessary in order to ensure the documentation of disturbed cultural resources and the prevention of further impacts to the resources.



View of a portion of Tyndall's Point Park before tree removal.

Staff members from DATA Investigations were consulted in the early stages of this project to help draft a project work plan that would minimize further damage to the Park's cultural resources. An archaeologist monitored the debris removal operation conducted by Treetop Services during the first week of December, 2003. The archaeological monitoring and documentation was completed in accordance with the guidelines established by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and FEMA.

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

A records and survey data search was conducted to identify archaeologically sensitive areas within Tyndall's Point Park. The park is located within the National Register of

Historic Places Gloucester Point Archaeological District (#85001251), which contains over 17 sites, including domestic and military sites. Three of these are located west of Route 17: 44GL34 (the extant earthwork), 44GL300 (an historic trash scatter), and 44GL301 (an historic trash scatter). Only Site 44GL34 is located within the park. Although not within the project area, Site 44GL358 contains a Civil war encampment that was located "inside" the fort (44GL34) and whose projected boundaries would have extended under Route 17 into the Tyndall's Point Park portion of the fort. Along with the military-related sites, the 1707 plat of 18th-century Gloucester Town indicates that portions of the town could be located within the project area. Limited excavations conducted within the county park by the Gloucester County Archaeological Project during the 1970s recovered evidence of Civil War activity, as well as some artifacts dating the 18th and early 19th centuries. It is reasonable to expect, based on the limited excavations within the park as well as the extensive excavations conducted on the east side of Route 17, that intact subsurface cultural features (encampments, gun positions, and "outskirts" of Gloucester Town) are located within the project area (see Higgins et al. 1995, Hazzard 1987, GCAP GL1 unpublished notes, and archaeological site inventory files located at the Department of Historic Resources in Richmond for further information on these resources).

Based on the previous archaeological investigations and historic research the archaeologically sensitive were determined to be the extant/visible earthworks, inside the earthworks, and in the sunken portion on the exterior of the earthworks. Staging areas and heavy equipment were only allowed on hard surface roads and the old right of way (formerly Washington Street) through the project area. No heavy equipment was allowed in the sunken area outside the earthworks, or on the earthworks.

RESULTS

The debris removal was completed successfully with minimal adverse effects to the archaeological resources within Tyndall's Point Park. The use of light equipment and hand labor prevented any further damage to the earthworks. All fallen or leaning trees were removed by Treetop Services. Overturned stumps were either pushed back into place or ground away, and the resulting depressions were filled with mulch. The two large stumps located on the sides of the earthworks were carefully cut away, and the depressions carefully backfilled with the disturbed soil and mulch. Some of the mulch was also sprayed onto the tops and sides of the earthworks to help ease erosion and diminish plant growth.

In all, three artifacts were noted during the project, including a fragment of 18th-century wine bottle glass, a large cow bone, and a sherd of 19th-century annular whiteware.



In addition, oyster shell was found scattered across the park in numerous rootballs. The artifacts were recorded and returned to where they were found in accordance with FEMA guidelines. The artifacts suggest the presence of 18th- and 19th-century activity areas within Tyndall's Point Park.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the debris removal from Tyndall's Point Park in Gloucester County, Virginia was completed with little or no adverse effect to the intact archaeological resources. While few artifacts were identified during this work, the presence of intact Civil War earthworks and the concentration of archaeological features found during excavations in other portions of the Gloucester Point Archaeological District suggest the high probability that significant intact cultural resources are located within the park. Continued maintenance and preservation of the earthworks and park land is suggested. In addition, some erosion was noted along portions of the earthworks, and the earthworks are in some areas overgrown with vegetation. It is recommended that efforts be made to fill in eroded areas of the earthworks with sterile soil and to cover portions of the earthworks with a layer of mulch to prevent weed growth and further erosion.

REFERENCES CITED

- Gloucester County Archaeological Project
1976-9 Field notes and documentation associated with surveys at Gloucester Point and throughout the county. Records curated by the Gloucester County Historical Committee, Gloucester, Virginia.
- Hazzard, David K. and Martha W. McCartney
1987 "Rescue Efforts to Save the Vanishing Traces of Gloucester Town," in *American Archaeology*, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 68-80.
- Higgins, Thomas F., III, Charles M. Downing, Kenneth E. Stuck, Gregory J. Brown, and Karl J. Reinhard
1995 *The Civil War at Gloucester Point: Mitigation of Site 44GL358 Associated with the Proposed Rt. 17 Coleman Bridge Project, Gloucester County, Virginia*. Technical Report Series No. 19. The William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research, Williamsburg, Virginia. Submitted to the Virginia Department of Transportation, Richmond.