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HPI  
R-2016

**HISTORICAL**  
**PERSPECTIVES** INC.

**Phase IB Archaeological Investigation**

**New York City Department of Environmental Protection  
Wards Point Infrastructure Improvements  
Amboy Road from Wards Point Avenue to  
U.S. Pierhead and Bulkhead Line  
Staten Island, Richmond County, New York**

**LPC Project #10DEP024R  
Department of Design & Construction / ER.R**

1708

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Prepared For:

Perfetto Contracting Co., Inc.  
250 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11215

Prepared By:

Historical Perspectives, Inc.  
P.O. Box 529  
Westport, CT 06881

Authors:

Julie Abell Horn, M.A., R.P.A.  
David C. Martin, Ph.D., R.P.A.

June 2016

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New York City Department of Design and Construction (NYCDDC), on behalf of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP), is proposing Capital Project No. SER-200208, which involves the construction of new storm sewers and appurtenances, street reconstruction (i.e. final paving, grading), and a new stormwater outfall in the Tottenville neighborhood of Staten Island. One of these site locations is situated at the terminus of Amboy Road, extending from Wards Point Avenue to the U.S. Pierhead and Bulkhead Line in the Arthur Kill (Figures 1 and 2 and Photographs 1-4). The new outfall would be located at approximately the same location as an existing drainage outlet, which currently contains a concrete drainage swale. It would be constructed within a 40 foot wide section of an 80 foot wide right-of-way leading from the intersection of Wards Point Avenue and Amboy Avenue to Arthur Kill. The right-of-way ranges from 228 feet in length on the north to 242 feet in length on the south. The Area of Potential Effect (APE) is the area that could be affected by project development. The APE for the proposed project includes the new 40-foot wide section of right-of-way for its entire length. The proposed outfall is to be placed ca. 7-8 feet below the existing ground surface within the APE.

As part of this project, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) requested that a Phase IA Archaeological Documentary Study be completed "to further assess the likelihood that the site may contain significant Native American and historic resources" (Sutphin 2010). The LPC request no doubt stems from the well known fact that the Tottenville neighborhood, also known as the "Wards Point" landform and Conference House Park in particular contain some of the most significant archaeological sites found in New York City.

In 2011, Historical Perspectives, Inc. (HPI) completed the Phase IA Archaeological Documentary Study for the proposed project. That report concluded that there was both precontact and historic period archaeological sensitivity within the project site, as shown on Figure 3. Specifically, the report indicated that despite disturbance to the ground surface of the project site visible during the initial site visit, that archaeological resources could still be present beneath this disturbance, depending on its depth. No soil borings were available for review as part of the Phase IA Documentary Study to clarify the depth of the disturbance.

HPI recommended that Phase IB field testing be undertaken in the portion of the project site between the terminus of Amboy Road and the beach, to ascertain the possible presence of both precontact and historic period archaeological resources. LPC concurred with these conclusions and recommendations (Sutphin 2011).

In 2016, HPI submitted an Archaeological Testing Protocol to LPC for review, in advance of the required Phase IB archaeological investigation. LPC responded that the archaeological testing should utilize a 10-meter testing interval for shovel tests, rather than the standard 15-meter interval (Sutphin 2016a, 2016b).

The present report presents the results of the Phase IB Archaeological Investigation, as completed by HPI, as well as results of supplemental test pit monitoring within the project site in order to locate a buried Verizon utility conduit that runs north of the planned outfall location within the project site. This monitoring was detailed in an Archaeological Testing Protocol Addendum by HPI and was approved by LPC (Sutphin 2016c).

The four STs excavated along the staked line of the proposed outfall each revealed fill soils down to the maximum depths of excavation. No natural soil strata were found, although in some cases the fill appeared to contain redeposited natural soils. All of the STs ended in obstructions that prevented further excavation. The STs in the upland portion of the APE ended at ca. 40cm below grade, and the one ST on the beach ended at ca. 57cm below grade.

Precontact archaeological sites in this neighborhood often have been documented beneath large amounts of fill soil. It is possible that precontact materials may still be found beneath the fill on the project site. Because the STs could not reach natural soils, and because planned excavations for the new outfall will extend ca. 7-8 feet below grade, the presence of archaeological resources beneath the fill stratum could be ruled out from the initial Phase IB testing results.

In order to further clarify the soil conditions on the project site, archaeologists monitored four Test Units along the existing Verizon utility conduit, located ca. 5 meters north of the ST transect. This conduit runs from the terminus of Amboy Road through the project site and under the Arthur Kill into New Jersey.

Results of the Test Unit monitoring revealed that a thick overmantle of fill soil, containing modern materials such as concrete and asphalt, covers the project site. Test Unit 4/4A contained Belgian blocks, which may have once represented a roadway surface, but which subsequently was disturbed through additional excavation. Beneath the thick fill stratum in all Test Units was a dark red sandy soil corresponding to a C horizon. There was no evidence of a buried cultural horizon beneath the fill overmantle. The only materials in the non-fill soils were small shell fragments, which occur naturally along the shoreline in this area. There was no indication that the small shell fragments represented a culturally deposited shell midden.

Based on the results of the Phase IB field investigations, HPI concludes that there are no precontact or historic period archaeological resources within the project site, and recommends that no further archaeological studies are warranted.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The New York City Department of Design and Construction (NYCDDC), on behalf of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP), is proposing Capital Project No. SER-200208, which involves the construction of new storm sewers and appurtenances, street reconstruction (i.e. final paving, grading), and a new stormwater outfall in the Tottenville neighborhood of Staten Island. One of these site locations is situated at the terminus of Amboy Road, extending from Wards Point Avenue to the U.S. Pierhead and Bulkhead Line in the Arthur Kill (Figures 1 and 2 and Photographs 1-4). The new outfall would be located at approximately the same location as an existing drainage outlet, which currently contains a concrete drainage swale. It would be constructed within a 40 foot wide section of an 80 foot wide right-of-way leading from the intersection of Wards Point Avenue and Amboy Avenue to Arthur Kill. The right-of-way ranges from 228 feet in length on the north to 242 feet in length on the south. The Area of Potential Effect (APE) is the area that could be affected by project development. The APE for the proposed project includes the new 40-foot wide section of right-of-way for its entire length. The proposed outfall is to be placed ca. 7-8 feet below the existing ground surface within the APE.

As part of this project, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) requested that a Phase IA Archaeological Documentary Study be completed “to further assess the likelihood that the site may contain significant Native American and historic resources” (Sutphin 2010). The LPC request no doubt stems from the well known fact that the Tottenville neighborhood, also known as the “Wards Point” landform and Conference House Park in particular contain some of the most significant archaeological sites found in New York City.

In 2011, Historical Perspectives, Inc. (HPI) completed the Phase IA Archaeological Documentary Study for the proposed project. That report concluded that there was both precontact and historic period archaeological sensitivity within the project site, as shown on Figure 3. Specifically, the report indicated that despite disturbance to the ground surface of the project site visible during the initial site visit, that archaeological resources could still be present beneath this disturbance, depending on its depth. No soil borings were available for review as part of the Phase IA Documentary Study to clarify the depth of the disturbance.

HPI recommended that Phase IB field testing be undertaken in the portion of the project site between the terminus of Amboy Road and the beach, to ascertain the possible presence of both precontact and historic period archaeological resources. LPC concurred with these conclusions and recommendations (Sutphin 2011).

In 2016, HPI submitted an Archaeological Testing Protocol to LPC for review, in advance of the required Phase IB archaeological investigation. LPC responded that the archaeological testing should utilize a 10-meter testing interval for shovel tests, rather than the standard 15-meter interval (Sutphin 2016a, 2016b).

The present report presents the results of the Phase IB Archaeological Investigation, as completed by HPI, as well as results of supplemental test pit monitoring within the project site in order to locate a buried Verizon utility conduit that runs north of the planned outfall location within the project site. This monitoring was detailed in an Archaeological Testing Protocol Addendum by HPI and was approved by LPC (Sutphin 2016c).

This Phase IB Archaeological Investigation has been prepared to satisfy the requirements of CEQR, and to comply with the standards of the LPC (LPC 2002; CEQR 2014). The HPI project team consisted of David C. Martin, Ph.D., R.P.A., who directed the field investigations and assisted with the report, Julie Abell Horn, M.A., R.P.A., who wrote the remainder of the report; and Cece Saunders, M.A., R.P.A. who managed the project and provided editorial and interpretive assistance.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The Phase IB field investigations involved excavation of a series of shovel tests (STs) spaced 10 meters apart along a single transect (Figure 3). The transect ran from east to west, along the recently staked line where the proposed sewer outfall will be located within the larger APE. It was located ca. 5 meters south of an existing buried Verizon utility conduit, which runs from the terminus of Amboy Road down the entire length of the APE and under the Arthur Kill to New Jersey. The site was recently marked with flags to locate the line as part of this project. At the time of the Phase IA Documentary Study site inspection, this area was noted as visually disturbed, but no maps provided information that there was a buried utility line in this location. According to the project contractor, this



utility line was installed in the mid-1990s, likely at about the same time that the adjoining residences were constructed. A deteriorating concrete culvert is located north of the Verizon conduit, as shown on Figure 3.

A total of five STs were laid out along the transect and four were excavated. ST N0/W0 was located at the far eastern end of the transect. ST N0/W10 fell within the existing concrete residential driveway, which is partially situated in the APE. Due to the impenetrable concrete surface and the adjacent Verizon conduit immediately to the north, this ST could not be offset and so was not excavated. ST N0/W20 and ST N0/W30 were located in the grassy lawn area adjoining the residence. ST N0/W40 was located on the beach portion of the APE, near the high tide line.

The STs on the project site were excavated under the direction of David C. Martin, Ph.D., R.P.A. on May 20, 2016. Field notes recorded all pertinent data including modern artifacts and the levels where they were found. Soil colors were determined with the *Munsell Soil Color Chart*. Stratigraphic profiles of all STs were recorded. A photographic record was undertaken. All STs were promptly backfilled. Appendix A presents the results of the field testing.

As noted above, HPI also monitored four mechanical test unit excavations along the buried Verizon utility conduit ca. 5 meters north of the ST transect on June 7, 2016. The purpose of the excavations was twofold: to allow project contractors to accurately determine the horizontal and vertical extent of the Verizon line so as to avoid any future impacts when the new outfall is installed, and to allow archaeologists to determine the full depth and characteristics of the project site soils.

### **III. FIELD RESULTS**

#### **A. SHOVEL TESTS**

The three STs excavated on the portion of the APE between Amboy Road and the beach (N0/W0, N0/W20, and N0/W30) all exhibited significant disturbance (Photograph 5). The very compact soils consisted of redeposited materials or imported fill, mixed with modern debris and construction materials such as concrete and gravel. This area was part of a former roadway that extended Amboy Road to the waterfront, and more recently may have been used as an informal boat launching spot. All of the STs ended in obstructions (large rocks, heavy gravel concentrations) that prevented excavations from extending through this very compacted fill stratum and reaching natural subsoil. Excavations of these STs ended at ca. 40 cm below grade.

The one ST excavated on the beach (N0/W40, Photograph 6) consisted of sand and silt that also had been redeposited. The ST ended when a large piece of iron obstructed the entire base of the ST. No undisturbed, intact soil strata were recorded in this ST. Excavation of this ST ended at ca. 57 cm below grade.

Artifacts in the fill strata of the STs consisted of modern materials and natural shell fragments, which are ubiquitous in this area, especially along the beach.

#### **B. MECHANICAL TEST UNITS**

Archaeologists were unable to breach the dense fill overmantle that covers the project site during the hand excavated shovel testing program. In order to further explore the project site soil profile, HPI returned to the site to monitor backhoe excavated Test Units along the Verizon utility line, which is situated approximately 5 meters north of the ST transect (Figure 3, Photograph 7). Four test units were excavated along the Verizon line, as described below. The test units revealed both the location and depth of the utility corridor and the natural soil profile adjacent to the conduit.

Test Unit 1 was excavated approximately five meters to the north of ST N0E0. This pit was approximately four feet square (1.2m<sup>2</sup>), and was excavated to a depth of approximately four feet (1.2m). The Verizon conduit was located at approximately 3.5 feet (0.9m) below the ground surface. There was only minimal evidence of a trench surrounding the conduit, suggesting either that the line was installed in a very narrow cut and cover trench or was installed using a method such as horizontal directional drilling, which would have negated the need for a trench. The upper soil stratum within the test unit consisted of fill, similar in composition to that observed in the STs, and including a gravel rock layer. Beneath the fill, the soil changed to a 10R 3/4 (dark red) wet sand, corresponding to a C-horizon.

This sterile soil only contained some shell fragments (which are ubiquitous along the waterfront) and became inundated with water at the base of the pit. There was no evidence of a buried cultural layer between the fill and the subsoil, and no precontact or historic archaeological resources were found in Test Unit 1.

Test Unit 2 was excavated approximately 10m west of Test Unit 1, adjacent to the existing driveway. This pit was approximately four feet square (1.2m<sup>2</sup>), and was excavated to a depth of approximately 4.5 feet (1.4m). The Verizon conduit was located at four feet (1.2m) below the surface. As with Test Unit 1, there was only minimal evidence of a trench surrounding the conduit. The upper soil stratum consisted of fill with gravel rock bedding. Beneath the fill the soil changed to a 10R 3/4 (dark red) wet sand, corresponding to a C-horizon. This sterile soil only contained some natural shell fragments and became inundated with water at the base of the pit. There was no evidence of a buried cultural layer between the fill and the subsoil, and no precontact or historic archaeological resources were found in Test Unit 2.

Test Unit 3 was excavated ca. 5m north of ST N0W20. This pit was approximately four feet square (1.2m<sup>2</sup>), and was excavated to a depth of approximately 7.5 feet (2.3m; Photograph 7). The Verizon conduit was located at seven feet (2.1m) below the ground surface (Photograph 8). The upper soil stratum consisted of fill, and at about 2.5 feet (0.8m) below the surface, the soil changed to a 10R 3/4 (dark red) wet sand, corresponding to a C-horizon. This color and texture extended to the base of the test unit. This sterile soil only contained some natural shell fragments. Surrounding the utility conduit were pockets of 10YR 2/1 (black) wet, clay loam, which may be suggestive of horizontal directional drilling methods. This soil was devoid of any other material, shell or otherwise. There was no evidence of a buried cultural layer between the fill and the subsoil, and no precontact or historic archaeological resources were found in Test Unit 3.

Test Unit 4 was excavated ca.5m north of ST N0W30. This pit was approximately a four-foot square (1.2m<sup>2</sup>), and was excavated to a depth of approximately five feet (1.5m). The upper stratum consisted of fill, with gravel rock bedding and large concrete fragments found through 60cm of excavation. At 1.9 feet or 60cm below the ground surface asphalt was encountered and, just below the asphalt (2.3 feet/70cmbs), several Belgian blocks were visible within of the south wall of the test unit (Photograph 9). No Belgian blocks were encountered in the north wall of the test unit. Beneath the Belgian blocks, the soil transitioned to a 10R 3/4 (dark red) wet sand, corresponding to a C-horizon. This soil color and texture extended to the base of the test unit. The sterile soil only contained some shell fragments; no precontact archaeological resources were found.

Due to the presence of the Belgian blocks, the decision was made to extend Test Unit 4 pit to the south to investigate if the Belgian blocks and asphalt were simply part of a fill level or if they represented a historic surface. Test Unit 4A was excavated directly to the south of Test Unit 4. This pit measured approximately three feet (1m, E-W) by four feet (1.2m, N-S), and was excavated to a depth of approximately five feet (1.5m). The asphalt and several Belgian blocks were encountered at the same depths as in Test Unit 4, along with large fragments of concrete and yellow painted asphalt. This color is similar to that one would see on walkways or platforms to designate "warning" areas. Though there were several more blocks encountered in this pit, they did not represent an *in situ* surface of any kind. If the blocks were a portion of a historic "road" or "landing" which extended to the water and was later paved over with portions of painted asphalt, the surface was demolished prior to the current excavation. Beneath the fill stratum, the soil again transitioned to a 10R 3/4 (dark red) wet sand, corresponding to a C-horizon.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The four STs excavated along the staked line of the proposed outfall each revealed fill soils down to the maximum depths of excavation. No natural soil strata were found, although in some cases the fill appeared to contain redeposited natural soils. All of the STs ended in obstructions that prevented further excavation. The STs in the upland portion of the APE ended at ca. 40cm below grade, and the one ST on the beach ended at ca. 57cm below grade.

Precontact archaeological sites in this neighborhood often have been documented beneath large amounts of fill soil. It is possible that precontact materials may still be found beneath the fill on the project site. Because the STs could not reach natural soils, and because planned excavations for the new outfall will extend ca. 7-8 feet below grade, the presence of archaeological resources beneath the fill stratum could be ruled out from the initial Phase IB testing results.

In order to further clarify the soil conditions on the project site, archaeologists monitored four Test Units along the existing Verizon utility conduit, located ca. 5 meters north of the ST transect. This conduit runs from the terminus of Amboy Road through the project site and under the Arthur Kill into New Jersey.

Results of the Test Unit monitoring revealed that a thick overmantle of fill soil, containing modern materials such as concrete and asphalt, covers the project site. Test Unit 4/4A contained Belgian blocks, which may have once represented a roadway surface, but which subsequently was disturbed through additional excavation. Beneath the thick fill stratum in all Test Units was a dark red sandy soil corresponding to a C-horizon. There was no evidence of a buried cultural horizon beneath the fill overmantle. The only materials in the non-fill soils were small shell fragments, which occur naturally along the shoreline in this area. There was no indication that the small shell fragments represented a culturally deposited shell midden.

Based on the results of the Phase IB field investigations, HPI concludes that there are no precontact or historic period archaeological resources within the project site, and recommends that no further archaeological studies are warranted.

## V. REFERENCES

### City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR)

2014 *City Environmental Quality Review Technical Manual*. City of New York, Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination. March 2014.

### Historical Perspectives, Inc. (HPI)

2011 *Phase IA Archaeological Documentary Study, New York City Department of Environmental Protection, Wards Point Infrastructure Improvements, Amboy Road from Wards Point Avenue to U.S. Pierhead and Bulkhead Line, Staten Island, Richmond County, New York*.

2016a *New York City Department of Environmental Protection, Wards Point Infrastructure Improvements, Amboy Road from Wards Point Avenue to U.S. Pierhead and Bulkhead Line, Staten Island, Richmond County, New York, Protocol: Phase IB Archaeological Testing*. May 18, 2016.

2016b *New York City Department of Environmental Protection, Wards Point Infrastructure Improvements, Amboy Road from Wards Point Avenue to U.S. Pierhead and Bulkhead Line, Staten Island, Richmond County, New York, Protocol: Phase IB Archaeological Testing Addendum*. May 27, 2016.

### Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC)

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### Sutphin, Amanda

2010 Environmental Review Comments, Landmarks Preservation Commission. February 10, 2010.

2011 Environmental Review Comments, Landmarks Preservation Commission. March 28, 2011.

2016a Archaeological Review Comments, Landmarks Preservation Commission. May 18, 2016.


2016b Archaeological Review Comments, Landmarks Preservation Commission. May 19, 2016.

2016c Archaeological Review Comments, Landmarks Preservation Commission. May 31, 2016.

### United States Geological Survey (U.S.G.S.)

1981 *Arthur Kill, N.J.-N.Y. 7.5 Minute Topographic Quadrangle*.



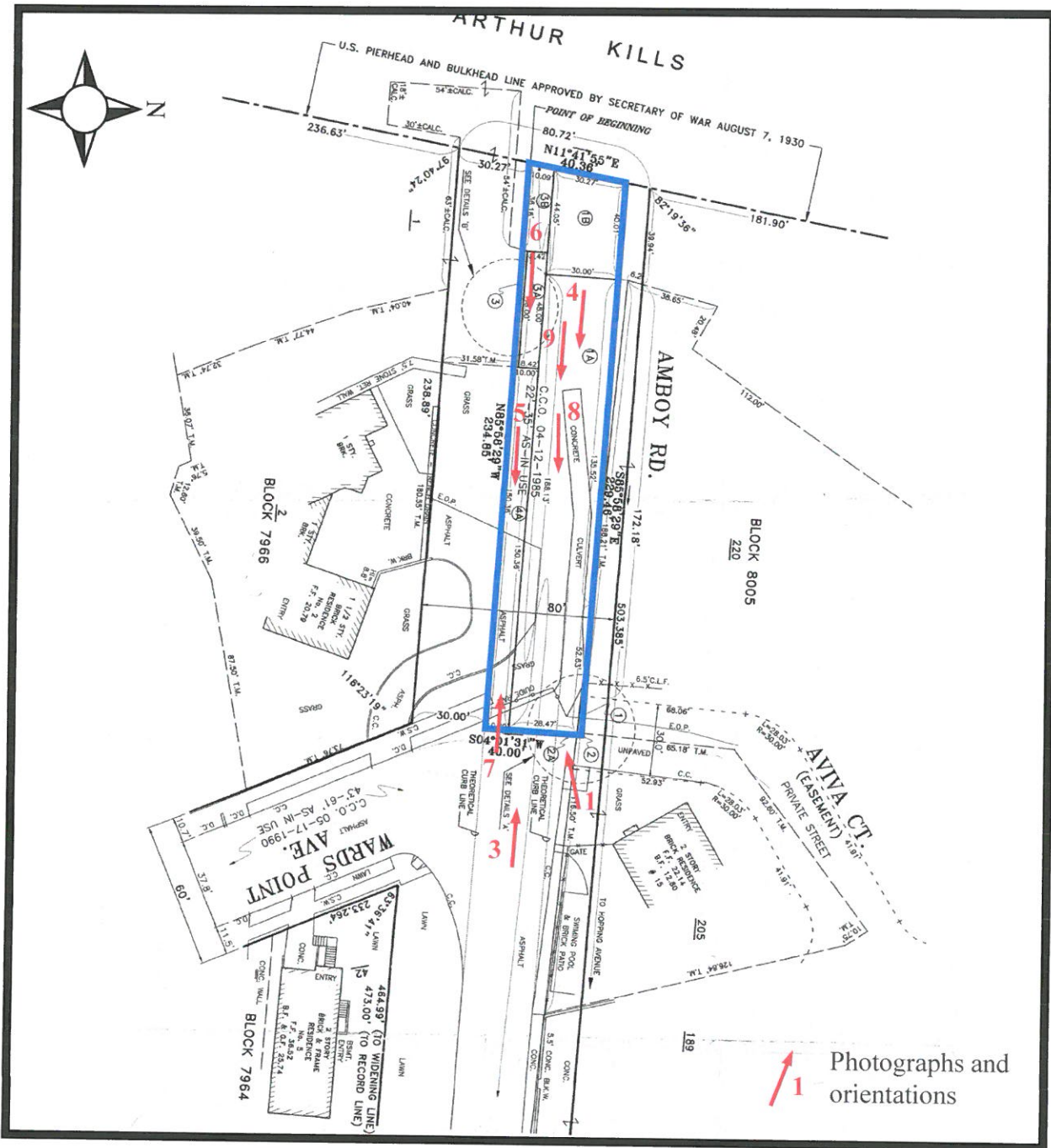
**LEGEND**  
 Area of Potential Effect

1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 FT.

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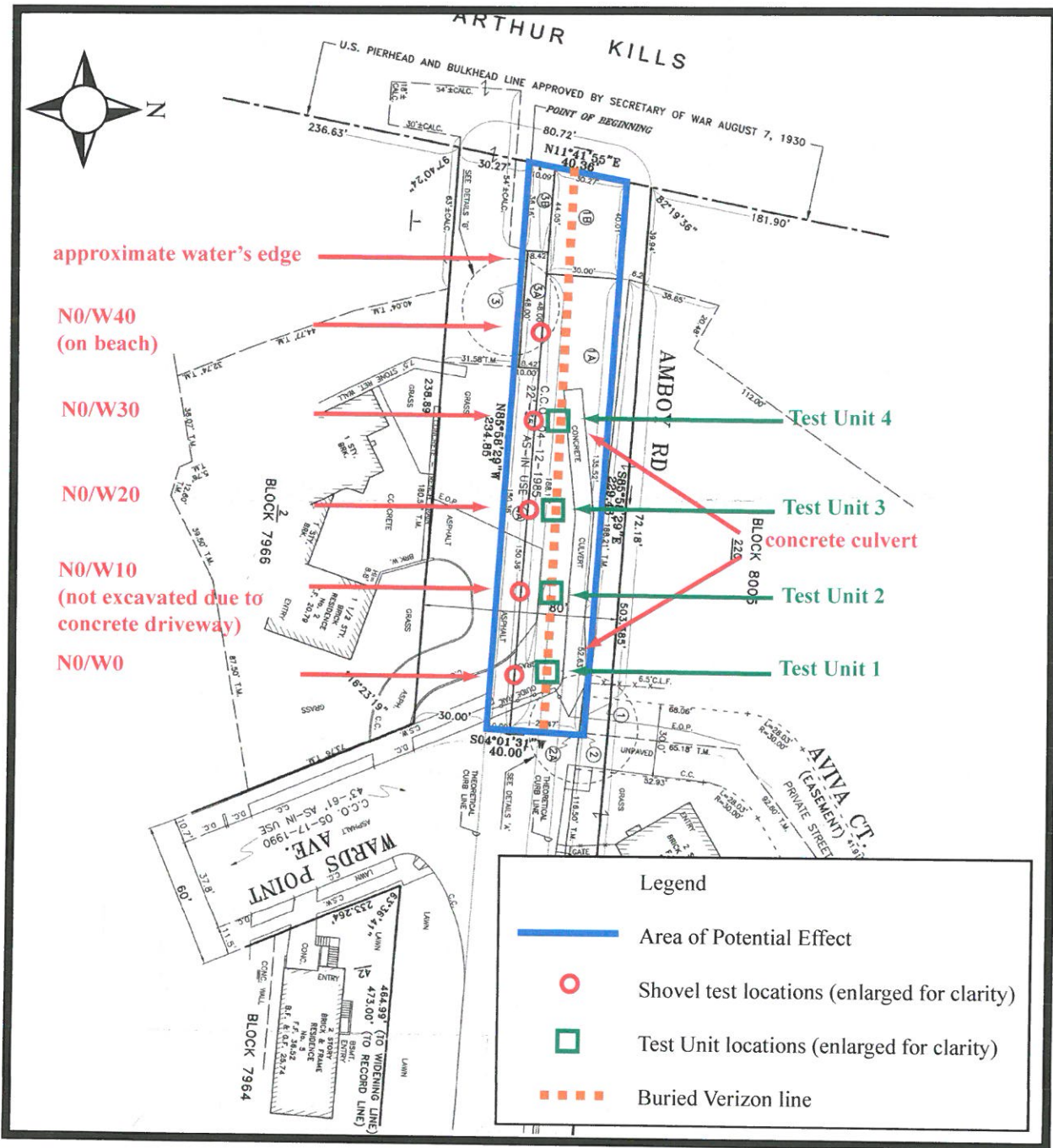
**FIGURE 1. U.S.G.S., Arthur Kill, N.J.-N.Y. 7.5 Minute Topographic Quadrangle, 1981.**



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FIGURE 2. City of New York, Department of Design and Construction, *Amboy Road Damage & Acquisition Map*, 2008.





**Phase IB Archaeological Investigation**  
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**FIGURE 3.** Shovel Test and Test Unit locations  
 City of New York, Department of Design and Construction,  
*Amboy Road Damage & Acquisition Map, 2008.*





Photograph 1: Project site section from the intersection of Amboy Road and Wards Point Boulevard to the beach, showing concrete drainage culvert or swale. View looking west from Amboy Road terminus.



Photograph 2: Project site section from the intersection of Amboy Road and Wards Point Boulevard to the beach, showing disturbed soils and landscaped yard area surrounding concrete drainage culvert or swale. Portion of asphalt driveway and large boat in background are included in APE. View looking northeast from interior of site.





Photograph 5: ST N0/W20 at conclusion of excavation. View looking east.



Photograph 8: Test Unit 3, showing Verizon conduit (green casing) at base of pit adjacent to sterile subsoil. View looking east.



Photograph 9: Test Unit 4 showing Belgian blocks in south wall. View looking east.

Appendix A: PHASE IB SHOVEL TEST (ST) LOGS

ST Transect Coordinates	Level	Horizon	Depth cmbs	Soil Color	Soil Description	Cultural Material	Comments/ Reason for Termination
N0 W0	1	Fill	0-29	10YR 3/2 Very Dark Grayish Brown	Silty sand	Modern, shell	Landscape cloth at 10cmbs
N0 W0	2	Fill	29-37	7.5YR 4/4 Brown	Compact silty sand	Modern, shell	Redeposited B
N0 W0	3	Rock	37				Rock
N0W20	1	Humic	0-8	10YR 4/4 Dark Yellowish Brown	Silty sand	NCM	
N0W20	2	Fill	8-19	10YR 5/8 Yellowish Brown mottled with 10YR 3/2 Very Dark Grayish Brown	Compact silt	Shells	Redeposited A mixed with B
N0W20	3	Fill	19-43	10YR 3/3 Brown	Gravelly silty sand		Rock
N0 W30	1	Humic	0-7	10YR 4/4 Dark Yellowish Brown	Silty sand	NCM	
N0 W30	2	Fill	7-14	10YR 6/8 Brownish Yellow	Fine sandy silt	Shell	
N0 W30	3	Fill	14-40	10YR 3/3 Brown	Coarse Sand	Modern	
N0 W30	4	Fill	40		Gravel	NCM	Gravel
N0 W40	1	Fill	0-16	10YR 6/3 Pale Brown	Sand	Shell	
N0 W40	2	Fill	16-40	10YR 5/4 Yellowish Brown	Sand	Shell, Glass	Rebar - not collected
N0 W40	3	Fill	40-57	10YR 2/1 Black	Silt	Spike	
N0 W40	4		57	Metal			Metal (Iron) across the entire ST