

3.6 Historic and Archaeological Resources

3.6.1 Existing Conditions

Historic Resources

An existing automotive repair garage is located on the project site. No other structures are present. The DEIS evaluated the potential presence of historic and archaeological resources. A summary of the DEIS findings is presented here.

National & State Register of Historic Places

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), assists municipalities, organizations and individuals in identifying, evaluating, and preserving state historic and archaeological resources. The SHPO administers programs authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the New York State Historic Preservation Act of 1980. SHPO also evaluates the potential effect of proposed projects on historic and archaeological resources in accordance with the regulations implementing SEQRA.

According to the OPRHP interactive website, the Palisades Interstate Parkway (PIP), located in proximity to the Minisceongo Park property, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The existing structure, an automotive repair garage, is a modern structure that does not meet the requirements for eligibility for the State or National Registers and is not considered to have historic value.

Town of Ramapo planning department personnel indicated that a cemetery had been located on the project site prior to the mining activities that had been conducted there. According to a survey map prepared in 1947 for the proposed construction of the Palisades Interstate Parkway, a 1.56 acre cemetery, in the ownership of "Katherine Onderdonk", was located at the southwest corner of the project site straddling the Ramapo/Haverstraw town line near the current intersection of Route 202 with the PIP access road.

According to the Genealogical Society of Rockland County, a cemetery had been located on the project site, known as the Coe/Gurnee family burial plot. This plot was shown on a 1936 Works Progress Administration (WPA) Survey for Clarkstown, New York, identified as "No. 73, Haverstraw". The plot contained approximately 25-30 graves with headstones dating from 1809 to 1912. By 1958, the cemetery was in poor condition, with many of the headstones missing.

Those that remained were moved to the Brick Church Cemetery in Spring Valley.¹ Follow-up discussions with Superintendent Paul Neil of the Brick Church Cemetery indicates that the Coe family graves were moved from the Coe/Gurnee family burial plot to the church cemetery in 1966. It is expected that all burial plots were relocated at this time prior to mining activities occurring on this portion of the project site.

¹ Marie Koestler, Genealogical Society of Rockland County, email correspondence, August 15, 2005.

Archaeological Resources

Section 14.09 of the New York State Historic Preservation Act of 1980 establishes a review process for activities carried out by a state agency that may affect historic or cultural properties. If a project requires any permits or is receiving funding/grants or any other approvals from State agencies, review by OPRHP is required.

Minisceongo Park is located on a site that has been disturbed significantly by previous mining activities. A review of United States Geological Survey (USGS) maps (Thiells Quadrangle) shows the extent of mining activities on the site. The 1938 USGS Thiells Quadrangle map shows no indication of mining on the site, however by 1955, one mining symbol is present towards the eastern portion of the site, west of the 400-foot contour line. By 1982, the entire eastern half of the site, excluding only wetlands areas, was mined.

A series of aerial photos, dating from 1958 to 2000 also show significant disturbance to the upland portion of the project site. The first of these photos, dated May 10, 1958, shows a large portion of the middle of the project site cleared of vegetation. In a second photo from 1977, a series of dirt roads are apparent and the area of clearing had expanded, though most activities were being conducted at the center of the project site. Disturbance can be seen throughout all but the very fringes of the upland portions of the site. Aerials from both 1984 and 2000 show gradual re-vegetation.

It is evident from the review of USGS Quadrangle maps and aerial photos that the project site was heavily disturbed between 1955 and 1982. As a result, any prehistoric artifacts would have been removed, disturbed or destroyed along with excavation activities. The above mentioned aerial photos and quadrangle maps were sent to the NYS OPRHP for agency review.

3.6.2 Potential Impacts

Historic Resources

In a letter dated November 1, 2005, the NYS OPRHP determined that the proposed project will have no adverse impact on properties in or eligible for inclusion in the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The letter is included in Appendix B of the SEIS.

Archaeological Resources

In a letter dated September 2, 2005, the NYS OPRHP determined that the proposed project would have no impact on archaeological resources (see Appendix B of the SEIS). Therefore, no further analyses are warranted.

3.6.3 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are proposed, as no potential impacts to historic or archaeological resources have been identified.