

2.0 Environmental Setting

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7K-C-73 is located within the Mid-Drainage zone of the Low Coastal Plain Physiographic Province. This area is underlain by the Pleistocene sands and gravels of the Columbia formation. These deposits have been extensively reworked, resulting in a relatively flat and featureless landscape. The site lies at approximately 28 to 30 feet above sea level and is located on the edge of an agricultural field and lightly wooded riparian buffer that slopes gradually northward to the west-to-east flowing Puncheon Run adjacent to the north of the site. The area between the creek and the site is low-lying and poorly drained and lies at approximately 27 feet above sea level. The local region is drained by a series of small creeks, including Puncheon Run and Isaac Branch. Both of these streams are tributaries to the St. Jones River, a tidal drainage that flows east into the Delaware Bay. Sassafras sandy loam (SaB, 2 to 5 percent slopes) constitutes the site soil and is characterized as well drained, with a water table at a depth greater than 80 inches from the ground surface (Matthews and Ireland 1971; U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA] Web Soil Survey, accessed May 2013).

The site setting likely contained plant and animal resources that attracted human settlement (Egghart 2008). Vegetation patterns shifted from a mosaic pattern to a zoned pattern in the early Holocene (post-8,000 B.C.). Pine was dominant, with lesser amounts of hemlock, birch, and oak. After 6,000 B.C., an oak-hickory climax was present, and it was followed by a pine-oak-dominated forest after 3,000 B.C. Like today, the historic-period vegetation has been described as oak-hickory and marsh climax vegetation. Early- to mid-twentieth-century historic aerials show that the currently wooded portion of the site was part of the agricultural field until ca. 1960, when it was left to become reforested (DataMIL, accessed May 2013). This portion of the site exhibits a varied topography, complete with push-piles and dug-out broad amorphous depressions illustrating a heavily disturbed north end of the site (Photograph 4).



Photograph 4: General conditions, showing varied topography in woods