

# District archaeologists investigate prehistoric site

By John Killeen, archaeologist

**O**n an October afternoon, 10 New York District archaeologists journeyed into the wetlands of Port Monmouth, N.J., to evaluate a prehistoric site discovered in 1998 by Corps archaeologists. Kirsten Davis, Jeffrey Fry, Lynn Rakos, Christopher Ricciardi, Jenine Gallo, Gail Woolley, Rafal Turek, Carissa DeRooy, and Alek Petersen evaluated the site near the levee footprint on the Port Monmouth combined flood control and shore protection feasibility study project.

“The site is important because it is one of three sites known this close to the Raritan/Sandy Hook bayshore,” said Christopher Ricciardi. “The evaluation was agreed to be necessary by New York District and the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office.”

The evaluation determined the size, type and date of the site. Size determination is made by excavating regularly spaced holes around the site of initial discovery until the artifact recovery drops off to zero in all directions.

“When this is accomplished you map the grid of holes that you have produced and this is the site boundary,” said Ricciardi.

The age of the site will be determined by the ceramic pottery discovered at the site dated to the

Woodland period (circa 1000 BC – AD 1600). This is when pottery was first produced by Native Americans. To verify this date two pottery pieces were sent to the University of Washington for a process called thermoluminescence. The age determination will be available during the Spring 2003.

The site type is determined by the location, the number and types of artifacts discovered. We have found a resource procurement hunting/gathering site. It was determined that this type of site is a debitage due to the number of artifacts found. Debitage is lithic stone flakes that are the product of making and maintaining sharpening stone tools such as arrowheads, scrapers and knife blades. On resource procurement sites, we normally don't find more than one or two arrowheads, scrapers or knives. On more permanent habitation sites the artifacts would have included these and other types of artifacts.

Also discovered was that the site is mainly outside the proposed levee footprint and avoidable.

The analysis process is ongoing and the group is creating maps and writing the evaluation report and recommendations coordinated with the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office.



Interns Rafal Turek and Carissa DeRooy (above) and John Killeen, project archaeologist, and intern Kirsten Davis (right) excavating the prehistoric site at Port Monmouth, N.J. The prehistoric site was discovered in 1998 by Corps archaeologists

