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SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT OF FIVE ARCHAIC SITES AT MONROE RESERVOIR, INDIANA

Scholars from the Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology at Indiana University completed test excavations at five Archaic Period sites at Monroe Reservoir. Investigations were conducted under a contractual agreement with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources-Division of Reservoirs to assess site significance for potential nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Prior recommendations for testing, plus a continuing concern about the destructive effects of erosion, the discovery of eroding features exposed in shoreline banks, and evidence of illegal pot-hunting prompted the site investigations. Hand excavation of trenches three feet wide examined from one to five percent of each site area to determine the presence of subplowzone archaeological contexts.

The Cutright Ramp Site (12 Mo 173) and the Fairfax South Site (12 Mo 346) each contained abundant Middle and Late Archaic artifacts which were confined to the plowzone. The Pinegrove Site (12 Mo 183) revealed a moderate density of occupational debris, but artifacts were recovered only to 0.6 foot below the plowzone. Three rock clusters, a large ash stained area, and a cache of two nutstones and a grooved axe indicated intact features, but structural pits could not be defined due to soil conditions. Projectile points were sidenotched and stemmed Late Archaic types.

The Paynetown Light Site (12 Mo 193) contained very dense cultural materials, the products of its heavy Middle and Late Archaic occupations. Twelve pit features were identified at the base of a midden which extended to 0.7 foot below the plowzone. Karnak stemless projectile points dominated a large and varied assemblage of stone tools which indicated a major base camp. Features and midden are laden with sandstone firecracked rock. Carbonized botanical materials, especially hickory remains, were common. A radiocarbon date from a large roasting pit with three Karnak points placed the occupation between 2020 and 2140 B.C.

The Moores Creek Ramp Site (12 Mo 314) revealed a small midden, similar to that found at the Paynetown Light Site, but very restricted in horizontal extent. No features were identified but their presence is suspected. Diagnostic artifacts indicate a Late Archaic occupation. Portions of this site remain unplowed.

Site 12 Mo 193 and 12 Mo 314 appear to be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Recommendations for additional investigations and for protective measures have been presented to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. The project began in July of 1986 and was completed on July 1, 1987.
