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**COMMISSION COMPLETES CONVEYANCE OF ARTIFACTS
FROM SCUDDER FALLS BRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG SITES**
*State Museums in Pennsylvania, New Jersey to Store Unearthed Materials
For Future Generations, Additional Research*

NEW HOPE, PA – The Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission today announced that archaeological artifacts unearthed in the vicinity of the Scudder Falls (I-95) Bridge in 2010 and 2011 have been transferred for permanent safekeeping by state museums in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

The materials – primarily consisting of small shards of fire-cracked rocks – will be stored for future research and analysis as well as potential viewing by the public.

The conveyance of artifacts completes the archaeological research the Commission conducted as part of its environmental documentation compliance process for its multi-faceted I-95/Scudder Falls Bridge Improvement Project. The research effort was undertaken in accordance with a Programmatic Agreement that involved the Commission, the Federal Highway Administration, and the state historic preservation offices in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The work was conducted by employees of AECOM, a multi-national engineering firm that has served as the Commission’s design management consultant for the replacement bridge project.

Federal law required the Commission to unearth the archaeological artifacts as an environmental/cultural resource mitigation measure, effectively removing Native American materials from areas that could one day be impacted by an envisioned bridge/highway/interchange improvement project near the existing Scudder Falls Bridge.

“While the archaeological digs did not produce treasures of valuable metals or ancient sculptures on a par with that of the Incas or an Egyptian pharaoh, the materials should assist researchers in understanding how Native Americans lived along the Delaware River many centuries ago,” said Arnold J. Conoline, Jr., the Commission’s acting executive director.

All totaled, nearly 25,000 artifacts were recovered. The number is deceptive, however, since much of the conveyed material is non-descript pieces of stone that would be dismissed as nothing more than gravel by a layman.

Of the recovered artifacts, only 10 percent -- at best -- might be considered to be objects of interest to a non-archaeologist.

“The unearthed materials may not be glamorous, but they are sure to prove valuable to future generations of archaeologists and researchers in piecing together the puzzle of Native American life before Europeans discovered North America,” said Conoline.

The artifacts came from two different locations.

The first dig took place in late 2010 and early 2011 in the area of Reeder’s Creek at the I-95/Route 29 interchange south of the Scudder Falls Bridge in Ewing, N.J. This site yielded nearly 16,000 items, including evidence of a possible hearth, tool-making work, and evidence of settlement as long ago as 2,000 B.C. The conveyance of these materials to the New Jersey State Museum in Trenton was completed yesterday.

The second dig site was slightly north of the current Scudder Falls Bridge. While the digging at this location went deeper into the ground, it yielded fewer artifacts – roughly 9,000 items. These included small shards of pottery, a Native American pipe bowl fragment, and fish and turtle bones. Native American activity at this location, however, was limited to a relatively brief time frame – roughly 1000 to 1500 A.D. The conveyance of these materials to the Pennsylvania State Museum in Harrisburg was completed January 15.

The archaeological digs and cataloguing efforts were conducted in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act and at the request of New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Scudder Falls Bridge project consultants previously determined that further archaeological work at the two sites was warranted following archaeological testing that occurred in 2004, 2005, and 2009. Items recovered during the testing phase included pottery shards and projectile points.

Standard archaeological excavation methods were employed at both dig sites, requiring all soil to be dug by hand with shovels and trowels and passed through screens to recover artifacts. The excavation work at the Pennsylvania location extended to as much as 14 feet deep, the depth of the potential impacts of the replacement bridge piers at the site. The artifacts recovered from the archaeological digs were taken to a laboratory where they were cleaned and cataloged.

Archaeologists determined that dig locations in New Jersey and Pennsylvania were at a geographically significant point in the river because they lie in an ecotone location, the broad area upstream from where the river ceases to be tidal. Such sites were attractive to Native Americans because ecotones contained a great variety of diverse food resources in a concentrated area.

About the Commission

The Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission was formed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of New Jersey in 1934. It operates seven toll bridges and 13 toll-supported bridges, two of which are pedestrian-only spans. The Commission is a self-supporting public-service agency that receives neither federal nor state tax dollars to finance its projects or operations. Funding for the operations, maintenance and upkeep of its bridges and related transportation facilities is solely derived from revenues collected at its toll bridges. The Commission's jurisdiction extends along the Delaware River from the Philadelphia-Bucks County line north to the New Jersey/New York border. The bridges carried more than 137 million cars and trucks in 2012. For more information about the Commission and its various initiatives to deliver safer and more convenient bridge travel for its customers, please see: www.drijtbc.org.