IDENTIFICATION SURVEY FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES WITHIN
THE HAWKS NEST – ROUTE 614 TIE-IN PARCEL IN BUCHANAN
COUNTY, VIRGINIA
PPMS NO ; 85126

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is proposing construction of a section of the Coalfields Expressway (CFX) in Buchanan County, Virginia. Approximately two miles of the CFX Project has been designated as the Hawks Nest section. This section lies within an area permitted for coal mining under Paramount Coal Company’s Permit No. 1101903. Proposed surface mining activities within the permit area will include a post mining use change with grading for a road bed in conjunction with the CFX project. The Department of Historic Resources (DHR) has assigned File No. 2007-0104 to the coal permit area and determined on June 26, 2007 that proposed mining operations within the permit area would have no effect upon known historic properties.

The VDOT must establish logical termini for this section of the CFX project. Since the coal mining permit area boundary does not represent a logical terminus of a highway project, VDOT has proposed that this section of the CFX project will extend about 1500 feet northeast of the permit area boundary in order to tie in with State Route 614. Grading operations required to facilitate the Route 614 tie in include primarily fill work within an area of about 18.25 acres (Figures 1 and 2). For the purpose of the following discussion, this 18.25± acre section will be referred to as the Hawks Nest – Route 614 tie-in Parcel, or “the Parcel”.

RESULTS OF FIELDWORK

The Hawks Nest – Route 614 tie-in Parcel lies on steeply sloping terrain along the side of a northerly tending ridge line overlooking Poplar Gap. Elevation ranges from about 1950 feet at the permit area boundary to about 1670 feet at the toe of a fill slope along Route 614 about 1150 feet west southwest of Poplar Gap.

From an archaeological standpoint, the only areas which might have potential for containing undisturbed cultural deposits would be rock shelters beneath cliff lines or relatively level areas adjacent to streams, gaps, or topographic benches.
At the time of the site visit, leaves from the predominantly deciduous forest cover had fallen and the ground was covered with a light dusting of snow. This provided an excellent opportunity to examine the steep ridge slopes for the presence of cliff lines, rock shelters, or structures. The ridge slopes within the Parcel exhibited no substantial cliff lines which would be conducive to formation of rock shelters.

The only relatively level terrain within the Parcel is situated at Poplar Gap and within a graded lawn area adjacent to a trailer. The ground surface in both of these areas has been completely disturbed by past grading and landscaping activities.

In conjunction with the permit application for the Paramount Coal Company Hawks Nest Surface Mine A, a DHR archives search was conducted for previously recorded cultural resources within a ½ mile radius around the permit area boundaries. No previously recorded resources were identified within the search area, which includes the Hawks Nest – Route 614 tie-in Parcel.

Plate I of the *Geological Survey of Buchanan County, Virginia, Bulletin XVIII*, published by the Virginia Geological Survey in 1918 includes a detailed topographic map based on survey data compiled 1913-915. This map shows a road passing through Poplar Gap and two houses in the vicinity of the current project area. A small family cemetery also shows up on the 1963 (photorevised 1977) Harman 7.5 minute topographic quadrangle.

The two previously mapped house locations and the cemetery were designated as Locations A, B, and C for the purposes of the reconnaissance survey. A brief description of each location and methodology for the reconnaissance survey is provided below.

**Location A.** This location is about 1300 feet west of Poplar Gap on a cut out bench on the south side of Route 614. The 1915 map accompanying the Geologic Bulletin XVIII shows a house at this location. Examination of the area indicates that this location has been subjected to extensive grading and landscaping. The single family dwelling currently standing at this location appears to be a “double wide” mobile home constructed during the last quarter of the twentieth century. This structure is situated about 150 feet southwest of the proposed boundary for the Parcel (Figure 2 and Plate 1).

**Location B.** This location is about 1900 feet west of Poplar Gap at the mouth of a steep hollow on the south side of Route 614. The 1915 map accompanying the Geologic Bulletin XVIII shows a house at this location. Examination of the area indicates that the mouth of the hollow adjacent to the road has been subjected to extensive grading and landscaping. The single family dwelling currently standing at this location appears to be a manufactured home constructed during the last quarter of the twentieth century. This structure is situated about 750 feet west of the proposed boundary for the Parcel (Figure 2 and Plate 2).

**Location C.** A small family cemetery is located about 150 feet north of Route 614 in Poplar Gap (Figure 2 and Plate 3). This location is shown as the Owens Cemetery on the Harman topographic quadrangle. The cemetery is bounded on three sides by a fence and measures about 80 feet east-west by 30 feet north-south. The cemetery contains at least 21 graves. Some of the graves are marked by inscribed head and foot stones while others are marked by unmodified
field stones placed vertically in the ground. Inscriptions on the stones identify members of the Owens, Fields, Matney, Betcher, and McClanahan families. Dates of death range from 1910 to 1989. The Parcel boundary is about 250 feet southwest of the cemetery.

The two structures at Locations A and B and the cemetery at Location C do not appear to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criteria A, B, C, or D. All of these locations lie outside of the Parcel and will not be directly affected by proposed mining or construction related activities.

Examination of the steep ridge slopes comprising the remainder of the Parcel showed no evidence of rock shelters, structures, or significant cultural features. No properties on or considered eligible for inclusion in the NRHP were encountered within the area of potential effects for the Parcel. Proposed mining and construction related activities will have no effect on historic properties and no further cultural resource evaluations are recommended for the Hawks Nest – Route 614 tie-in Parcel.
Figure 1. Section of 1963 (photorevised 1977) Harman 7.5 minute topographic quadrangle showing general location of Hawks Nest – Route 614 tie-in Parcel.
Figure 2. Section of plan sheet showing location of Hawks Nest – Route 614 tie-in Parcel And it’s relation to Locations A, B, and C.
Plate 1. Mobile home on site of previous structure at Location A.

Plate 2. Manufactured home on site of previous structure at Location B.
Plate 3. Owens Cemetery at Location C.

Plate 4. View south from cemetery across Poplar Gap of ridge line within Hawks Nest – Route 614 tie-in Parcel.