

USDA Satellite Features Feed

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FEATURE – USDA PROJECTS PROTECT CULTURAL RESOURCES

INTRO: Agriculture Department construction projects sometimes unearth artifacts from past cultures, which need special handling. The USDA's Patrick O'Leary has more from suburban Washington, D.C. (1:57)

THE ROYAL LAKE DAM IN FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA IS LIKE MANY FLOOD CONTROL PROJECTS AROUND THE COUNTRY. IT WAS BUILT DECADES AGO WITH HELP FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE. WHEN AN UPGRADE WAS NEEDED, USDA ONCE AGAIN HELPED WITH CONSTRUCTION – AND WITH AN IMPORTANT PRE-CONSTRUCTION PROCESS.

Jack Bricker, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service: We had to come out and do a little archaeological investigation to see if there was anything out here before we came in with the construction equipment and disturbed the site. *(VO: And we have found several hundred artifacts dating back as far as 4,000 years at this site.*

CONSIDERATION OF CULTURAL RESOURCES IS MANDATED BY LAW FOR FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECTS LIKE THIS ONE. USDA'S NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE HAS A SYSTEM IN PLACE FOR THAT.

Bryan Lee, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service: We looked at the area and realized that there was enough area there that had not been disturbed before.

VO: So a survey was conducted over the entire work area.

PARTNERING WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS, NRCS BROUGHT IN A TEAM OF ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND OTHER EXPERTS.

Lee VO: *We found a few tools, projectile points, scrapers. The artifacts date to what we call the late archaic period. We know that one or two tribes lived in that area that might have affinity to those remains. So we contacted the Tuscarora and the Catawba Indians for this particular project.*

THE ARTIFACTS ARE NOW IN A LOCAL MUSEUM, CLEARING THE WAY FOR A NEW SPILLWAY TO PROTECT THE COMMUNITY.

Sharon Bulova, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors: It's a very heavily used area and I think people were fascinated that something was there to be found. *VO: And I thought it was pretty neat that the effort was made and it was a very powerful partnership.*

Bricker: NRCS, as well as all federal agencies, take cultural resources very seriously all across the country, *VO: and it's all a collaborative effort.*

NEAR WASHINGTON, D.C., FOR THE US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I'M PAT O'LEARY.