

Archaeology at Block Island's Harbor Pond Site

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Deepwater Wind, a Rhode Island based offshore wind developer, contracted with PAL to conduct archaeological survey as a planning element of the proposed Block Island Wind Farm (BIWF) and Block Island Transmission System (BITS). The BIWF consists of five turbines with a maximum output of 30 megawatts. The BIWF is proposed to be located in coastal waters southeast of Block Island. The BITS is a bi-directional electric cable that will connect Block Island to the mainland Rhode Island electrical grid for the first time.

Archaeological survey on Block Island identified the Harbor Pond archaeological site situated between Harbor Pond and Trims Pond within the central island area. Native American artifacts including stone arrow or spear points, scraping implements, fishing weights, chipped-stone tool manufacturing debris, and clay pot sherds have been recovered from the site. Stones used to make the tools recovered from the site were primarily acquired from Block Island's shoreline or perhaps from the island's glacial till deposits before being transported to the site and shaped into finished artifacts. Other stones such as argillite and quartzite suggest that some the site's occupants either periodically traveled to or traded with individuals who inhabited Rhode Island's mainland. Charcoal recovered from a post hole and refuse pit at the site indicate that the Harbor Pond Site was occupied as early as 2000 BC and then again around 300 BC. The site is interpreted as a series of overlapping encampments that were occupied by few individuals or perhaps small families for several days to several weeks at a time. Activities undertaken at the site included stone tool manufacture, hunting of land or perhaps marine mammals, processing and consumption of shellfish, trash disposal, and camping.



PAL archaeologists excavate a portion of the Harbor Pond Site on Block Island.



Stone projectile points from the Harbor Pond Site.



Native American refuse pit exposed by archaeologists at the Harbor Pond Site.