

Rhode Island Archaeology Field Note #3

Tropical Storm Sandy and Rhode Island Archaeology: The Crescent Beach Site

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Tropical Storm Sandy impacted the New Shoreham coastline on October 29, 2012. The storm exposed a portion of a previously unknown Native American archaeological site, known as the Crescent Beach Site, beneath Corn Neck Road south of the Block Island town beach. Corn Neck Road is a state road and the Rhode Island Department of Transportation retained PAL to conduct archaeological recovery of Native American artifacts exposed by the storm prior to the repair of the roadway. Archaeologists working with tribal representatives from the Narragansett Indian Tribal Historic Preservation Office excavated the entire exposed surface mapping in the location of all the artifacts with a total station. Hundreds of Native American artifacts including quartz and quartzite waste debris generated by chipped-stone tool manufacture, a few roughly shaped or incomplete stone tools, a quartz arrow point, and Native American clay pot sherds were recovered from the exposed land surface. Analysis of the archaeological data is currently ongoing, although preliminary interpretations are that the Crescent Beach Site was a location where the indigenous Block Islanders camped, made stone tools, and cooked or processed foods. Clay pot sherds and the triangular arrow point from the site suggest that the Crescent Beach Site was occupied during the Woodland Period between roughly 1600 and 500 years ago.



Archaeologists recover Native American artifacts from the Crescent Beach Site on Block Island.