

SOIL AND PLANT SCIENCE DIVISION

Technical Soil Services

Northeast Soil Survey Region



Tolland, Connecticut, Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) Soil Survey Office (SSO)

SPSD Staff assist the Connecticut NRCS Archaeologist on a Cultural Resources Review

Purpose

The Tolland MLRA SSO and CT NRCS staff assisted Dr. Krista Dotzel, CT NRCS archaeologist, with conducting a cultural resources review on a farm prior to the implementation of a ground disturbing NRCS conservation practice. Dotzel found a small piece of chert in an archaeological test pit on the property which raised concerns that there could be more artifacts buried in the area. To further assess the site, Dotzel requested assistance to excavate more pits and confirm the soil series mapped on the land.

Background

Dotzel visited the farm before to excavate shovel test pits, which involves examining the soil for evidence of past human activity and sifting the soil for artifacts, as part of the cultural resources review process required for NRCS financial assistance. She found a chert flake, a stone which does not occur naturally in the area and must have been imported by past people, in one of the test pits. Finding this artifact required further investigation to determine if the chert was an isolated artifact or if there was a cultural resources site in that area.

On May 14, 2023, Geraldine Vega, Tolland MLRA SSO soil scientist, Paula Rosado, CT NRCS soil conservationist, and David Hussong, CT NRCS soil conservation technician assisted Dotzel (figure 1). The team did a total of five test pits and sieved the soils on site looking for more artifacts (figures 2 and 3). The test pits had a dimension of 50 centimeters by 50 centimeters and the excavation stopped at the top of the C horizon.

Key Outcomes

Dotzel used the opportunity to train staff on how to conduct a proper assessment of the soil for archaeological purposes and how to distinguish artifacts from common rocks found in Connecticut and New England. No other artifacts were found during the cultural resources assessment. Vega completed soil descriptions in each of the pits, and it was determined that the soils are correctly mapped in the area.



Figure 1. From left to right: Geraldine Vega (SPSD Soil Scientist), Krista Dotzel (CT NRCS Archaeologist), Paula Rosado (CT NRCS Soil Conservationist) and David Hussong (CT NRCS Soil Conservation Technician) working on the last pit of the day.



Figure 2. David Hussong assisting Krista Dotzel sieve the soils in search for artifacts.



Figure 3. Geraldine Vega digging the test pit for Krista Dotzel while she sieves the soils.