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By 1

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ABSTRACT

Site 41BP369 is a prehistoric site on the south terrace above Wilbarger Creek, cut by CR 127, in western Bastrop County, TxDOT District 14. Phase II archaeological testing was undertaken at 41BP369 by the author in order to determine eligibility for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (in accordance with 36 CFR, Part 800) and State Landmark status. Testing was also conducted in order to determine cultural context, and horizontal and vertical boundaries of the site within the right-of-way of CR 127. The site within the right-of-way contains the remains of a prehistoric cultural zone of unknown cultural origin, that is primarily exposed on the surface. No diagnostic material was recovered during testing. Up to 50 ft of additional right–of–way will be acquired in the site area. Results of testing indicate that the site within the right-of-way is disturbed, that further investigations will not add to the overall regional prehistoric database, and that site 41BP369 does not meet the criteria for designation as a State Archaeological Landmark nor should be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

INTRODUCTION

This report describes archaeological testing conducted at 41BP369 in September of 1992. The prehistoric site is located on a terrace on the south side of Wilbarger Creek, on both sides of CR 127, 7 miles southwest of Elgin in western Bastrop County (Fig. 1). The site was recorded in 1991 by Texas Department of Transportation archaeologists during a survey for a bridge replacement project. Testing of the site was recommended at that time. Significance testing was initiated prior to a TxDOT road construction project which will construct a new bridge over Wilbarger Creek. The new bridge will replace the existing National Register listed structure on CR 127 which will be left in place. A new alignment, connecting the new bridge with existing CR 127 on both sides of Wilbarger Creek will require 0.9 acres of new right-of-way. The new alignment will cross the eastern periphery of 41BP369.

Archaeological testing, totaling 72 man hours, was conducted in September of 1992 by the author, with the assistance of the District 14, Elgin Residency. Testing at site 41BP369 was conducted to determine the site's eligibility for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, to investigate the sites possible designation as a State Landmark, and to determine the nature of the deposits and cultural contexts.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Prehistoric site 41BP369 is located along Wilbarger Creek in western Bastrop County approximately 7 miles southwest of Elgin. Wilbarger Creek drains into the Colorado River 6 miles down river from 41BP369. The site falls within the Blackland Prairie Region of the Texan Biotic Province as described by Blair (1950). The region is characterized by mesic forests of oak, hackberry, and pecan stands with intermittent sections of rolling grasslands used for pasture and cultivation; by a moist subhumid climate with minimal rainfall; and by a dominance of alluvial soils of sandy and clayey loams.

The Atlas of Texas (1979) lists the project vicinity as irregular plains with 50-80% of the area gently sloping with a relief of between 100 and 300 ft. Elevation of the site area is between 410 and 420 ft above sea level. Mean annual precipitation falls between 36 and 37 inches. The population of Bastrop County averaged approximately 43 persons per square mile in 1991.

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PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Very little has been published regarding the prehistory of western Bastrop County. Robinson (1987) reports finding no cultural resources in his archaeological survey of a proposed water transmission line south of Elgin in the 41BP369 vicinity. Taylor (1987) located fourteen archaeological sites in her survey of a lignite prospect in northern Bastrop County. Most of the recorded sites were historic and none were considered eligible for inclusion in the National Register or qualified for designation as a State Archaeological Landmark based on their low potential for yielding additional information.

There are three recorded prehistoric sites in the general vicinity of 41BP369. Site 41TV882 is located approximately 5 km northwest of 41BP369 and consists of a lithic scatter of primary reduction flakes. Site 41TV147 is located 6 km to the northwest of 41BP369 and yielded one Montell dart point and five additional chert tools. Approximately 8 km to the east of 41BP369, the "Balsh" site (41BP70) was investigated in the mid 1960's. The site was described as eroded but extensive and yielded manos, metates, triangular and expanding-stemmed dart points, and other dart points.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Site 41BP369 is located adjacent to CR 127 on the south terrace of Wilbarger Creek in western Bastrop County (Fig. 2). The site area and adjacent lands are used primarily for raising cattle. Although archaeological testing was limited to within the right-of-way, most of the site lies outside the right-of-way, west of CR 127.

Site 41BP369 is partially exposed in the CR 127 roadcut which passes through the eastern end of the site. Chert flakes and a few burned rocks were noted on the west right-of-way boundary of CR 127 in a sandy, loamy soil cap overlying a small clay uplift which formed part of the south terrace of Wilbarger Creek. The road cut extends to the right-of-way fenceline on the west side of CR 127. Site 41BP369 extends to an estimated area measuring 400x200 m along a south terrace of Wilbarger Creek.

The TxDOT bridge replacement project will require 50 ft of new right-of-way adjacently east of existing CR 127. The new right-of-way area tested had been brush cleared with a bulldozer by the landowner in 1990 or 1991 for the construction of a new fence, or possibly to allow cattle access to the creek. Most of the sandy, loamy soil that contained the prehistoric material outside the western boundary of the existing CR 127 right-of-way, was stripped away or disturbed. At the time of testing the newly acquired right-of-way was overgrown with weeds and contained a few scattered chert flakes on the surface.

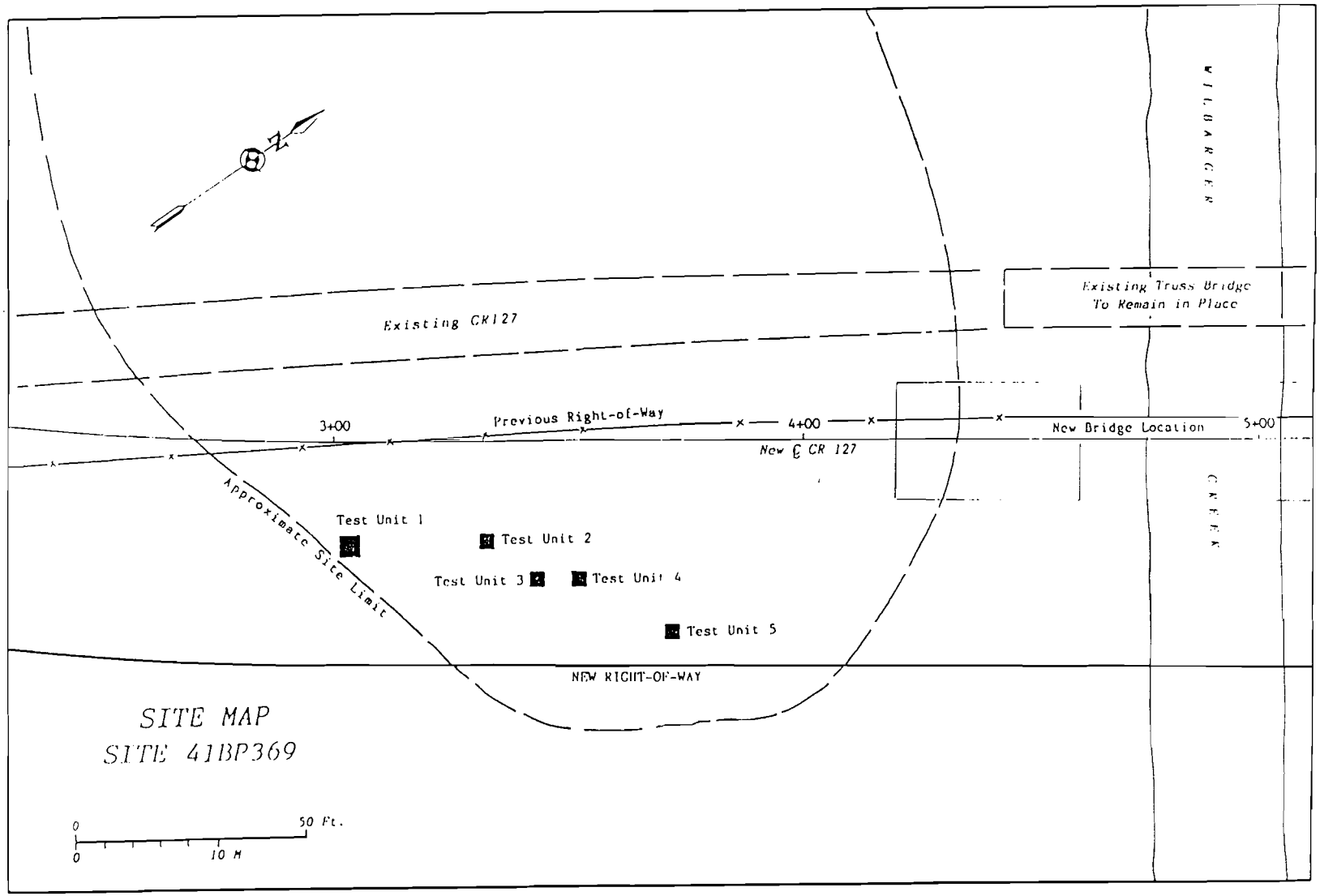

Figure 2. Site map of 41BP369.

SOILS

Wilbarger Creek cuts through Eocene, Midway Group geologic deposits in the project vicinity (Bureau of Economic Geology 1974). The general soil profile for the 41BP369 area may be characterized as consisting of a thin, sandy loam layer overlying clay. The Crockett-Wilson complexes are the general soil associations in the site vicinity and are dominated by Trinity and Ferris clay soils.

A thin layer of dark, reddish gray (10YR 311) sandy loam forms the first soil zone from the surface to between 1 and 5 cm. Zone 1 has been disturbed by past machine cutting. A thin layer of light yellowish brown (2.5Y 614) clay fill appears to replace Zone 1 in a portion of the site tested and is designated Zone 2. Zone 3 consists of a very dark grayish brown (2.5Y 312) clay and extends to approximately 40 to 50 cm from the surface. Zone 4 is a lighter grayish brown (2.5Y 512) clay level that begins between 40 and 50 cm and continues to the bottom of the test units. The cultural material was found on the surface and in Zone 1. Zones 2, 3, and 4 are culturally sterile. Soil profiles of Test Unit 1 and Test Unit 4 are provided in Figure 3.

PROCEDURES

The Testing of 41BP369 was initiated in September of 1992. The recently constructed fenceline for the existing CR 127 right-of-way was used as a baseline for the compilation of a site map and for the formation of a testing grid. One 1x1-m and four .5x.5-m test units were excavated in 10-cm increments to sterile soil levels. Test Units were dug to a depth of between 50 and 60 cm. All matrix was screened through 114-in. hardware cloth. Testing was limited to the segment of the site that occurs within the right-of-way. The actual excavation was carried out with trowels, flat and spade shovels, with the use of trowels to clean floor levels and examine possible features.

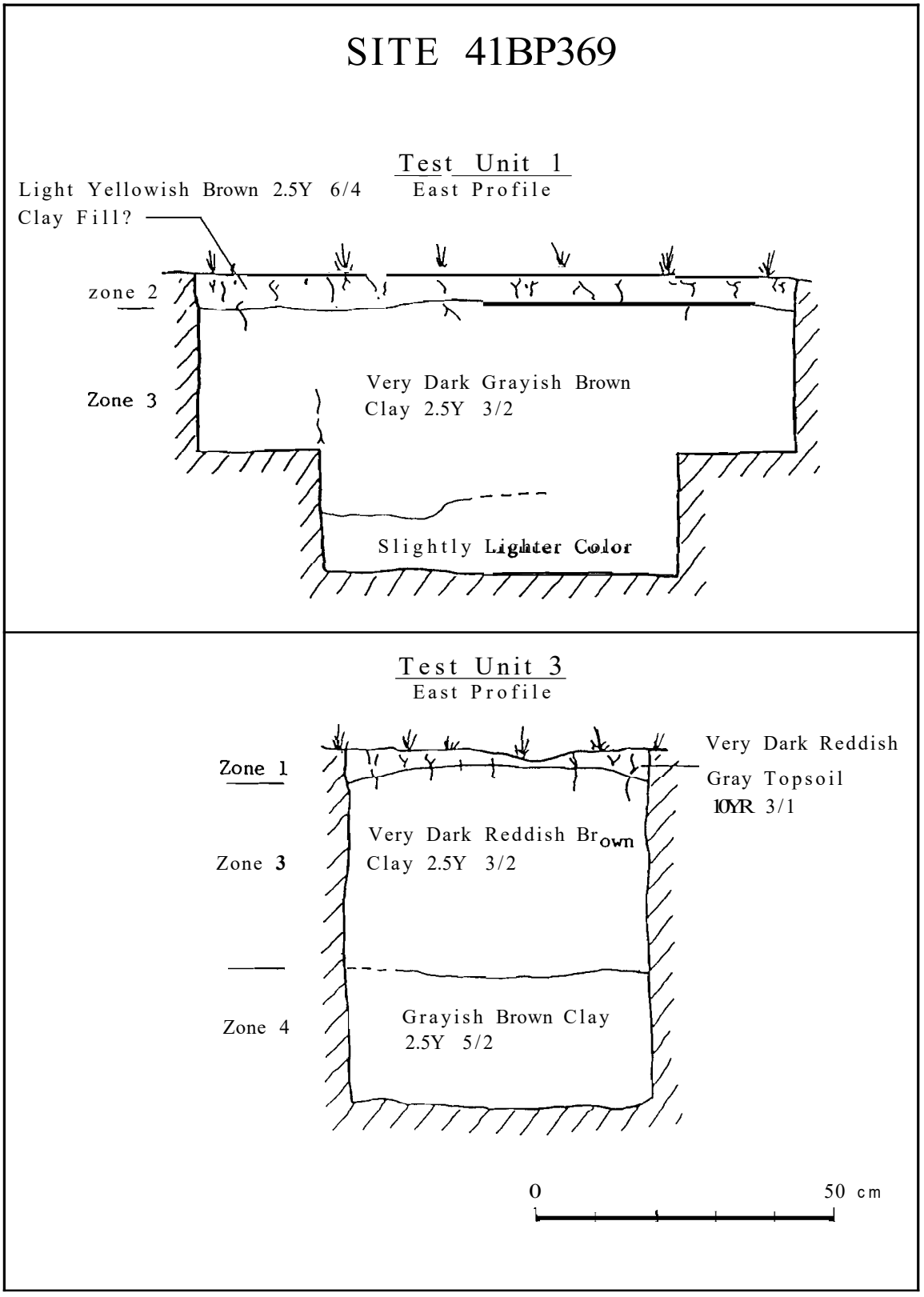

Figure **3.** East Wall Soil Profiles of Test. Unit 1 and Test Unit **3.**

MATERIAL RECOVERED

A total of eight artifacts, four historic and four prehistoric, were recovered from testing operations at 41BP369. The historic material consisted of rusted metal, linoleum, and clear and amber glass. All are modern man-made materials. The prehistoric material included one possible chert tool, and three chert flakes. Three additional chert flakes were located on the surface of the tested area but were not collected. The suspected chert tool is illustrated in Fig. 4. All artifacts will be curated at the Texas Archaeological Research Laboratory, Austin, Texas.

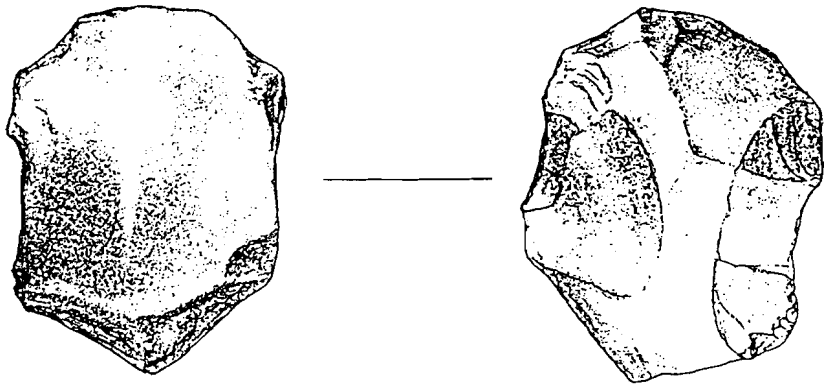

Figure 4. Chert tool from Test Unit 1, Level 1, 41BP369.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Five test units were excavated at 41BP369 in order to determine the nature of the prehistoric cultural deposits at the site and to decide if further data recovery operations would be necessary. Testing showed that the portions of 41BP369 sampled contained the remains of a culturally unknown prehistoric site disturbed by bulldozing and brush clearing.

Cultural features are lacking in the area tested. No diagnostic artifacts were found during testing or are reported from the surface of 41BP369, thus making temporal placement difficult. The greater portion of the site is located across the road from the tested area, south of Wilbarger Creek and west of the CR 127 road cut. Here, 41BP369 appears relatively undisturbed but lies outside the new and existing right-of-way. Further sampling of different portions of the site outside the right-of-way may reveal additional information regarding site function, subsistence and temporal placement.

Only a small percentage of the 41BP369 is located in the project right-of way. Additional excavation within the right-of-way will likely not add to the data already recovered or to the prehistory of the region. The approximate 200 cubic meters of fill, which will be placed on the site area to bring the new alignment up to grade, will minimize possible impact to any undetected portions of the site that may remain within the right-of-way. The portion of 41BP369 within the right-of-way is not considered worthy of designation as a State Archaeological Landmark nor should be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

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