AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY FOR SUEMAUR EXPLORATION & PRODUCTION, LLC'S HOSKINS MOUND-OLYMPIA AND MCKINLEY PROSPECTS WELL PAD SITES AND ACCESS ROADS IN BRAZORIA COUNTY TEXAS

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BVRA Project Number 10-04

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ABSTRACT

An archaeological survey of two proposed well pad sites and access roads in the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge in south Brazoria County, Texas was performed by Brazos Valley Research Associates (BVRA) on February 5, 2010. The two areas investigated consist of 12.38 acres. No archaeological sites were found, and no artifacts were collected. The survey area was found to be marshy with clay at the surface. Copies of the report are on file at the Texas Historical Commission (THC), Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL), Texas State Library, Suemaur Exploration & Production, LLC, Dixie Environmental Services, Co., LP, (DESCO), and BVRA.

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FIGURES

DEFINITION OF STUDY AREA

The project area consists of two well pad sites and access roads in the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge in Brazoria County, Texas (Figure 1). The well pad site for the Olympia Prospect is 400 feet x 400 feet, and the access road is 3813 feet long and 30 feet wide. The well pad site for the McKinley Prospect is 400 feet x 400 feet, and the access road is 3503 feet long and 30 feet wide. The project area is in a marshy area that is flat and featureless, and the nearest bodies of water are small unnamed tributaries. Wharton Bayou is 1200 meters to the east-northeast. These tracts are viewed as medium to high probability areas for the presence of significant prehistoric sites because oyster and rangia shell is often found in similar settings, and this resource was used by the local Indians in prehistoric times as a food source. The project area is depicted on the Hoskins Mound 7.5' topographic quadrangle (2995-113) (Figure 2).

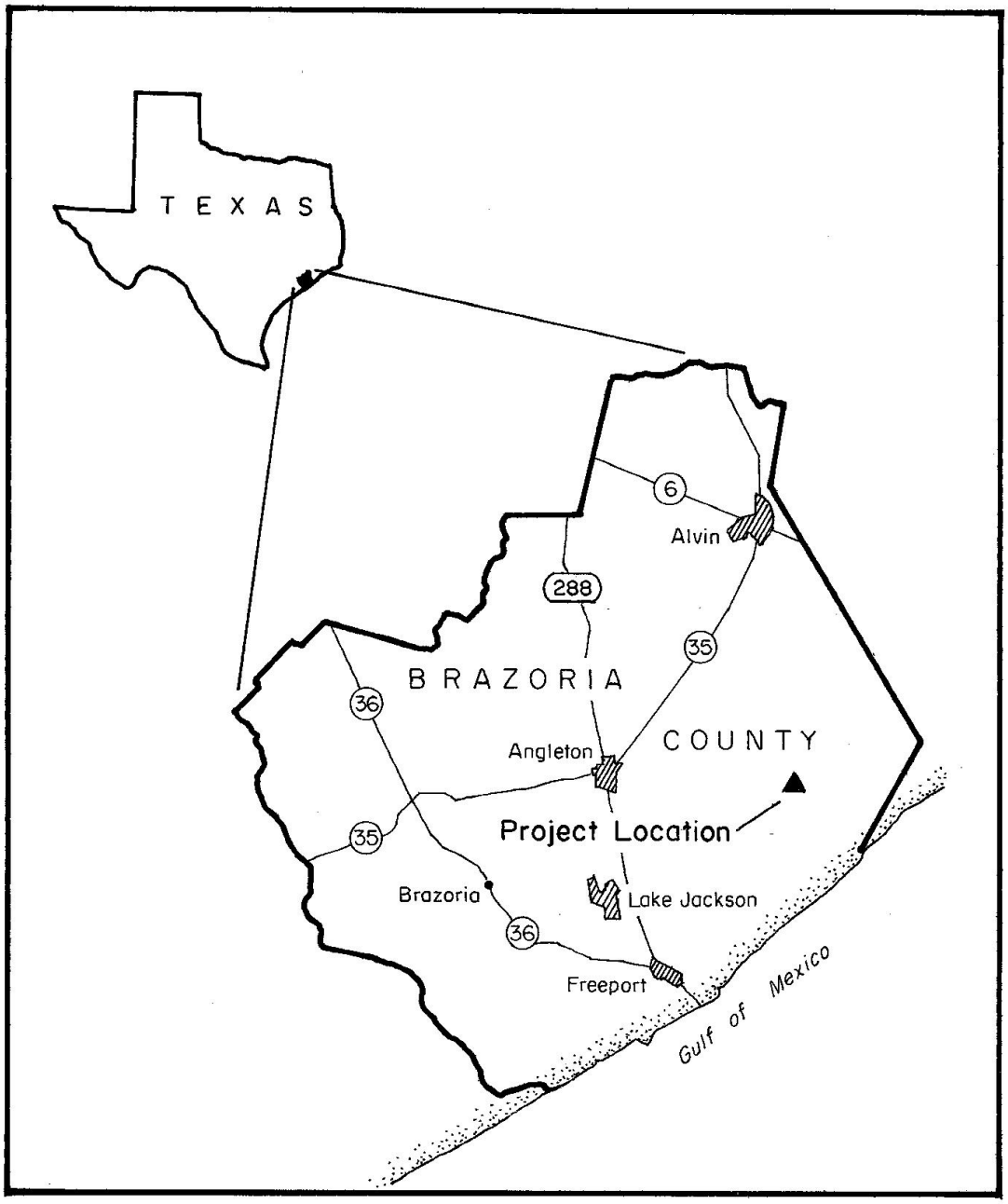

Figure 1.General Location

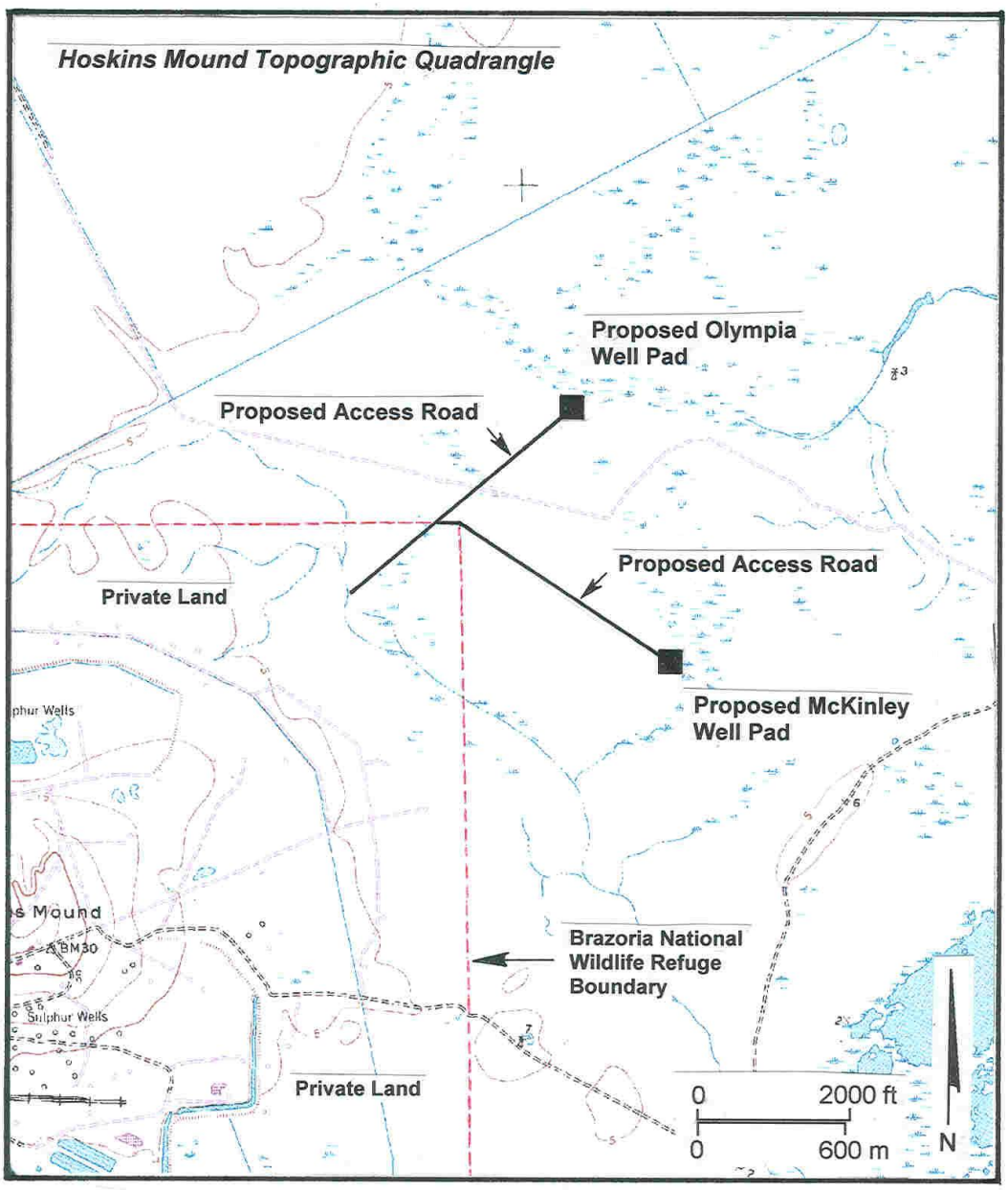

Figure 2. Project Area on Topographic Quadrangle

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

This project was performed in order to identify any cultural resources that might be present within the proposed locations of the well pad sites and access roads. Suemaur Exploration & Production, LLC (client) is the sponsor, and the client wanted to make sure that no significant cultural resources will be affected by the proposed construction. DESCO was retained by the client to perform an environmental assessment, and BVRA subcontracted with DESCO to conduct the current archaeological survey. William E. Moore was the Principal Investigator, and Phillip C. Bishop performed the field survey. The project was carried out on February 5, 2010 and involved eight person hours.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Prior to entering the field, the site records at TARL and the Atlas were checked for the presence of previously recorded archaeological sites and projects in the project area and vicinity. Relevant archaeological reports documenting work in Brazoria County were reviewed in order to become familiar with the types of prehistoric and historic sites found in the area. Some of the major works utilized are reports by Biesaart et al. (1985), Kenmotsu and Perttula (1993), and Moore and Baxter (2007a, 2007b, and 2007c). The project area was investigated by a 100% Pedestrian Survey, shovel probes, and shovel tests within the footprint of the proposed well pad sites and access roads where enough soil was present to warrant this activity. Since much of the area contained clay at the surface and (in some cases) standing water, these areas were visually observed and not shovel tested. Photographs of the project area were taken with a digital camera.

RESULTS

Examination of the files at TARL in Austin, Texas and the Atlas revealed no sites have been recorded in the project area, and a professional archaeologist had not previously examined either of the two tracts. No archaeological sites were found during the course of this survey. At the time of this survey, the area was covered with salt grass. In the past, this area may have been used for rice cultivation. According to the published soil survey for Brazoria County (Crenwelge et al. 1981: Sheet 79), the project area is located within the soil type described as Harris Clay (19), and this appears to be consistent with what was observed in the field. This soil is described as a nearly level, saline soil found in marshes. Typically, this is saline clay to a depth of sixty inches. It is very dark gray and neutral in the upper part and grades to gray and moderately alkaline in the lower part. This soil is very poorly drained, and surface runoff is very slow. It floods occasionally during abnormal high tides. The water table is within twenty inches of the surface throughout most of the year. The native vegetation on this soil is salt marsh, and areas containing these soils are used mainly as rangeland and wildlife habitat.

RECOMMENDATIONS

No evidence of a prehistoric or historic site was found as a result of this survey. It is recommended that the client be allowed to proceed with construction as planned. Should evidence of an archaeological site be encountered during the excavation associated with the well pad or access road, all work must stop until the THC can evaluate the situation. This survey was conducted in accordance with the Minimum Survey Standards as outlined by the THC.

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