

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY FOR THE RICHARDS, TEXAS  
FARM-TO-MARKET ROAD 149 FIBER OPTIC CABLE PROJECT  
IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, TEXAS

Antiquities Permit 6097



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RICHARDS, TEXAS FARM-TO-MARKET ROAD 149 FIBER OPTIC CABLE  
PROJECT IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, TEXAS

Antiquities Permit 6097

BVRA Project Number 11-12

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## **ABSTRACT**

An archaeological survey for the proposed Richards, Texas Farm-to-Market Road 149 fiber optic cable project in northwest Montgomery County, Texas was performed by Brazos Valley Research Associates (BVRA) on December 2 and 3, 2011 for United Telephone of Texas of Overland Park, Kansas who is doing business as Centurylink. The Texas Historical Commission (THC) issued permit 6097 for this project, and BVRA is the holder of an Archeological Resource Protection Act (ARPA) permit from the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas for work on their land. The area investigated consists of 2.4 miles of proposed cable with an easement of 10 feet (2.9 acres). The project area is in Forest Service Compartment C-5. No archaeological sites were found, and no artifacts were collected. The area was investigated through a surface survey and shovel testing. Two streams cross the highway, and these are minor tributaries that are low probability areas for significant cultural resources. Copies of the report are on file at the THC, Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL), the Texas State Library, Centurylink, and BVRA.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I am grateful to following individuals for their participation in this project. Maps and logistical support were provided by Joe Hale of Centurylink. The site files at TARL were checked by Jean Hughes, Assistant Curator of Records at TARL, for previously recorded sites in the project area. J. Randy Ferguson assisted with the field survey. The figures were drafted by Lili G. Lyddon of LL Technical Services who also edited the report. Courtney Siegert prepared the records for curation.

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## **DEFINITION OF STUDY AREA**

Centurylink (client) of Overland Park, Kansas plans to install a four-inch fiber optic cable starting at the community of Richards where it will connect to an existing fiber optic cable and ending at a cellular phone tower near Farm-to-Market Road 1791 in the Sam Houston National Forest. The project as currently proposed is 5.7 miles in length. The client stated that the focus of this project is the 2.4-mile segment within the Sam Houston National Forest, and the remainder of the project was not to be surveyed at this time. The cable will be in the right-of-way of Farm-to-Market Road 149 and on the north side (Figure 1), and this area is in Forest Service Compartment C-5. Only two areas were considered to have potential for the presence of cultural resources. These are the crossing of Farm-to-Market Road 149 by Bay Branch and a tributary of Caney Creek. The project area is depicted on the USGS 7.5' topographic quadrangles Richards (3095-321) dated 1962 and photorevised 1997 and San Jacinto (3095-312) dated 1959 and photorevised 1997 (Figure 2).

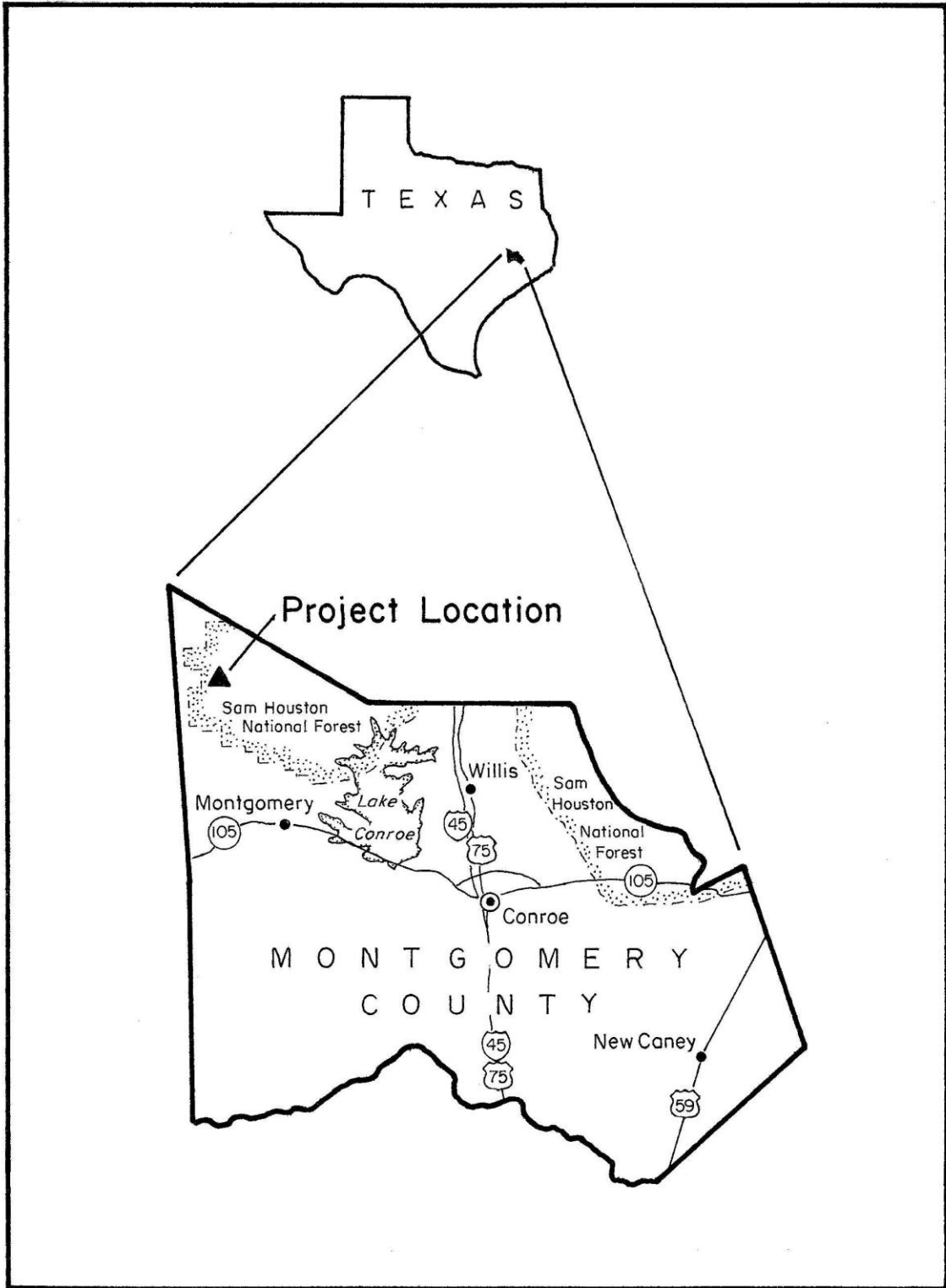


Figure 1. General Location

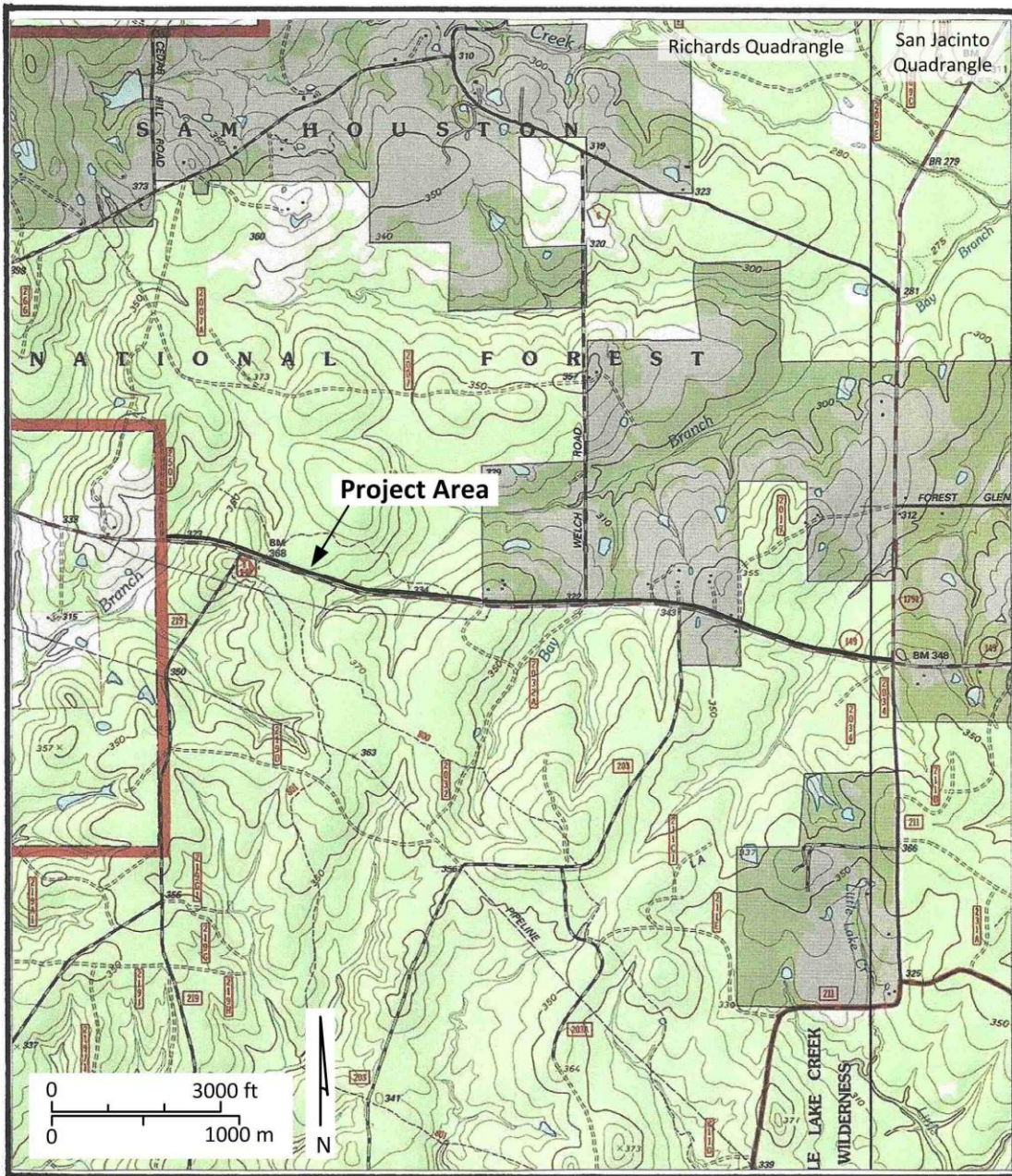


Figure 2. Project Area on Topographic Quadrangles



## **MANAGEMENT SUMMARY**

This project was performed in order to identify any cultural resources that might be present within the project area. The client (sponsor) is Centurylink of Overland Park, Kansas who intends to install a fiber optic cable from Richards, Texas to a cellular phone tower in the Sam Houston National Forest. BVRA was hired to perform the archaeological survey. William E. Moore was the Principal Investigator, and J. Randy Ferguson was the Project Archaeologist. The field survey involved 20 person hours and was performed on December 2 and 3, 2011. The reviewing agencies are the THC and the Lufkin office of the National Parks and Grasslands in Texas.

## METHODS

The project consisted of three phases. Phase I was archival research that included checking the site records at TARL and the Texas Archeological Sites Atlas were checked for the presence of previously recorded sites and prior surveys and projects in the project area and vicinity. Relevant archaeological reports documenting work in Montgomery County were reviewed in order to become familiar with the types of prehistoric and historic sites found in the area. Those reports reviewed document work at Lake Creek Reservoir (Bement et al. 1987), the San Jacinto River basin (Shafer 1968), and investigations at Scott's Ridge on Lake Conroe (Shafer and Stearns 1975; Shafer and Baxter 1975). The second phase was a reconnaissance of the area by the Principal Investigator. The entire APE was examined through a "windshield survey" and a Pedestrian Survey. Phase III involved the subsurface investigation that was performed through shovel tests on both banks of the two streams that cross Farm-to-Market Road 149. The project area was investigated by a surface inspection and shovel testing. Excavated earth from the tests was screened using ¼ inch hardware cloth, and shovel test data were entered onto a log. In addition, the project was documented through field notes and digital photography. A photograph was taken of each shovel test (Appendix I). Six shovel tests were excavated at Bay Branch (Figure 3), and two tests were excavated at the point where an unnamed tributary of Caney Creek crosses the road (Figure 4). Shovel tests were terminated when clay was encountered or it became obvious that the area had been significantly disturbed.

The first area examined was Bay Branch. Shovel Test 1 was excavated ten meters from the west bank of the creek (Appendix II, Figure 1), and this area was found to have been disturbed through road construction. The rest of the tests were dug at intervals of fifteen meters. At this point, the channel of the creek is wider than normal because of disturbance and erosion associated with road construction. The landowner allowed me to observe the stream channel to the north, and it is only about three feet wide in most places. The upper level of these tests consisted of disturbed clay over clay loam at depths between 20 and 35 cm. Mottled clay subsoil was encountered at depths of 43 to 115 cm. In those areas where intact soil appeared to be present, very few pebbles and other natural objects were found. Two tests were excavated on the east bank in an area that also appeared to have been heavily disturbed. The soil in these areas was disturbed clay containing asphalt and other intrusive materials over intact clay. Next, a shovel test was excavated on each bank of an unnamed tributary of Caney Creek. The soil in this area was very disturbed and consisted of road base materials in the first 40 cm over clay. There was no need to dig additional tests in this area because of the observed disturbance.

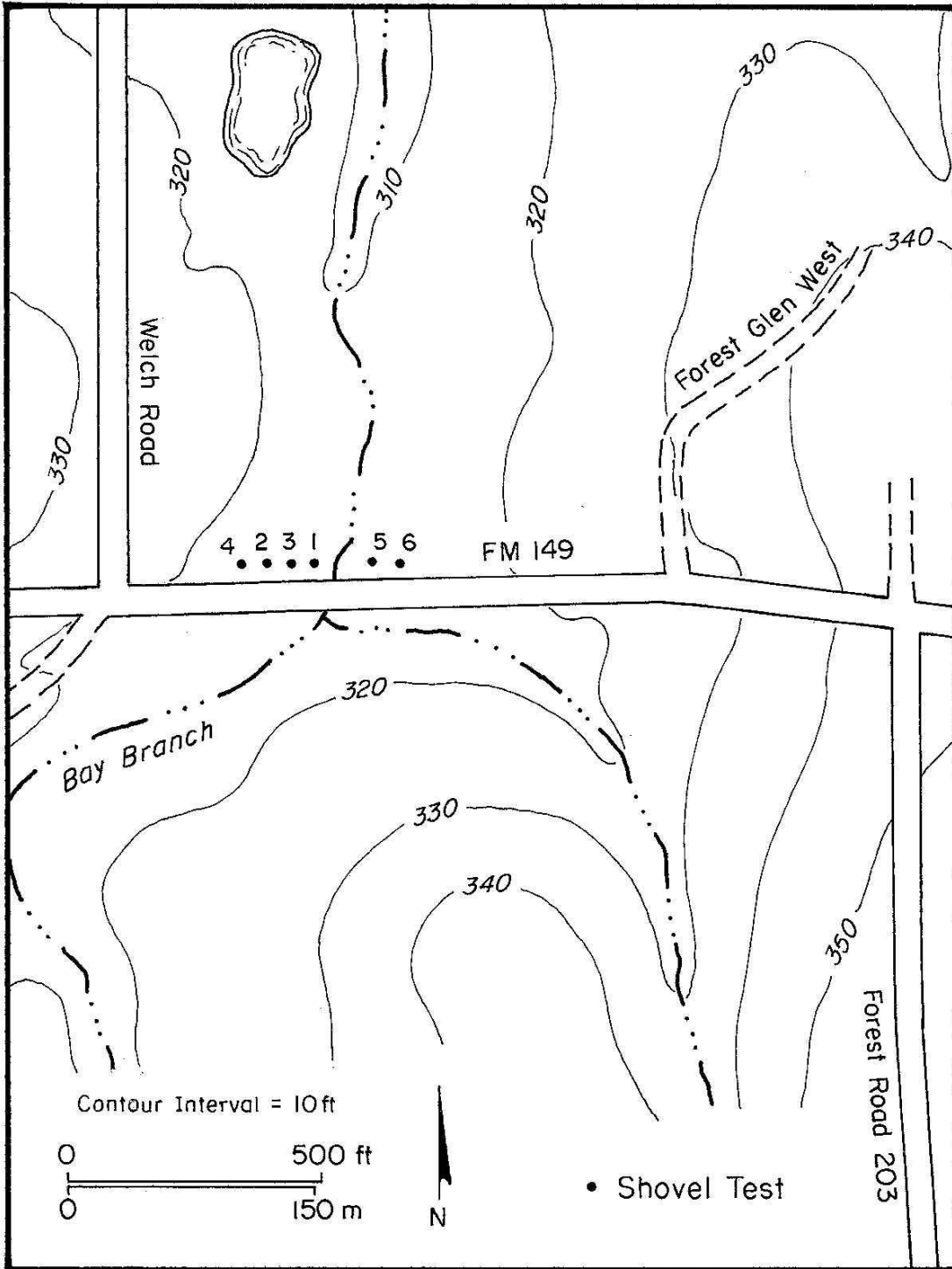


Figure 3. Shovel Tests at Bay Branch

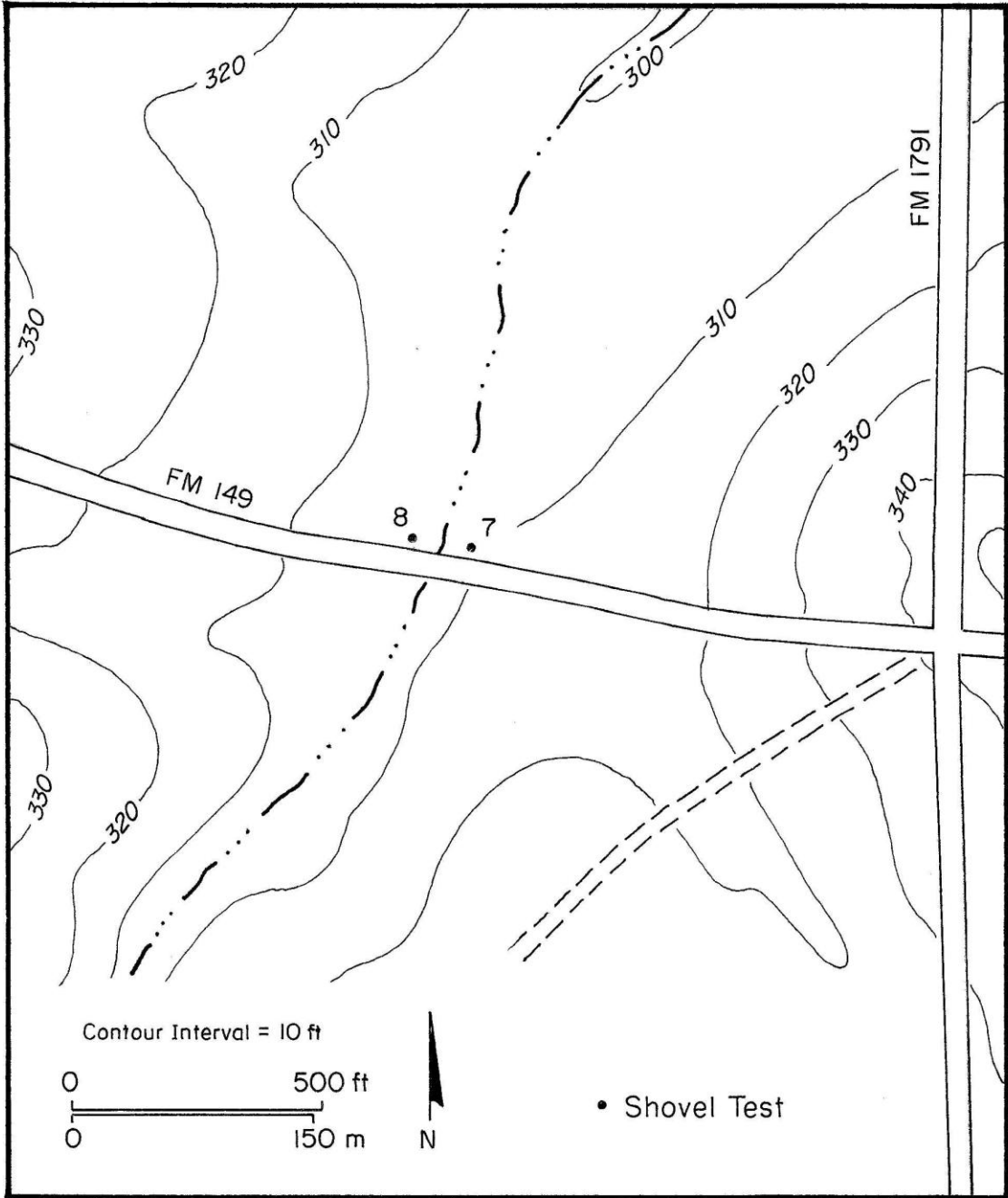


Figure 4. Shovel Tests at Tributary of Caney Creek

## **RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Examination of the files at TARL in Austin, Texas and the Atlas revealed no previously recorded prehistoric sites are in the project area. Also, there is no evidence that the area has been surveyed or visited by a professional archaeologist. No cultural resources were found as a result of this survey. The two streams within the project area are tributaries of major creeks. Based on personal experience in Southeast Texas and findings by other archaeologists, prehistoric sites are usually found on elevated landforms that have sandy soil and are near dependable sources of water. These areas are usually ridges, terraces, and pimple mounds. Buried sites can be present in the floodplains of major creeks. Not one of these scenarios is present in the project area. It is, therefore, my opinion that the APE is in a very low probability area for a significant prehistoric site. Historic sites can occur anywhere on the landscape. However, no evidence of historic utilization of the area was observed. Should a site be present, it is probable that its main locus would be on private property outside the highway right-of-way.

It is recommended that the client be allowed to proceed with construction as planned. Should evidence of an archaeological site be encountered during the construction of the 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.

## REFERENCES CITED

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APPENDIX I  
PHOTOGRAPHS OF SHOVEL TESTS



Figure 1. Shovel Test 1  
(Bay Branch in Background)





Figure 2. Shovel Test 2  
(Bay Branch in Background)



Figure 3. Shovel Test 3  
(Bay Branch in Background)



Figure 4. Shovel Test 4  
(Bay Branch in Background)



Figure 5. Shovel Test 6  
(Shovel Test 5 in Background)



Figure 6. Shovel Test 7  
(Tributary in Background)