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Atlantic Coast Pipeline Project

Summary of Cultural Resource Findings and Recommendations for the Buckingham Compressor Station, Buckingham County, Virginia

ERM

Archaeology

ERM conducted archaeological surveys on one primary and two alternative sites for the proposed Buckingham Compressor Station in May 2015 (Figures 1 and 2). The Primary and Alternative 2 tracts are contiguous, while Alternative 1 is approximately 1.8 miles (3 km) southwest of those parcels. All three tracts are on ridge systems that contain stands of maturing hardwood forest and planted pine. No previously recorded archaeological sites occur within the three tracts, and no new archaeological sites, cemeteries, or other cultural resources were identified. The results were provided in a report titled Phase I Archaeological Survey for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline Project: Virginia Components (Stanyard et al. 2016). The revised final report was submitted to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) on April 6, 2016, and a letter from VDHR dated February 1, 2017, indicates concurrence with our findings. The report was filed with FERC on April 15, 2016.

The survey crew consisted of five people. They report the following in the daily reports:

Primary Tract

The crew began shovel testing the survey area along five transects. After completing transects 1 – 5, the crew began transects 6-10 working from east to west. The crew continued working until completing 23 transects. The typical soil profile was a light-grey mottled with yellow silty clay loam over a red-brown clay with an average of 10 cm of soil. The vegetation was new-growth pine trees with dense underbrush. No cultural material was identified.

Alternative 1 Tract

The crew began shovel testing the survey area along five transects. The typical soil profile was a brown mottled with yellow-brown silty clay loam over a red-brown clay loam with an average of 10 – 15 cm of soil. The vegetation was a dense new-growth mixed of pine and hardwood trees.

After finishing transects 1 – 5, the crew turned around and began transects 6 – 10 working from the east on a northwest bearing. The vegetation and soil profiles remained consistent. After completing the ten transects the crew continued the same pattern of testing to finish out 25 transects. The soil and vegetation remained constant. No cultural material was identified.

Alternative 2 Tract

The crew began shovel testing the survey area along five transects. After completing transects 1 – 5, the crew began transects 6-10 working from east to west. The crew continued working in this pattern until completing 20 transects. The typical soil profile was a red-brown sandy silty loam over a red clay with an average of 20 cm of soil. The vegetation was hardwood trees with little undergrowth. No cultural material was identified.

Historic Structures

The initial historic structures survey surrounding the Buckingham Compressor Station was conducted on October 26 and 27, 2015 (Staton et al. 2016). It focused on a large tract that was being considered at that time (Figure 3). No previously recorded resources were noted within the tract or its viewshed. Two newly identified historic resources were recorded. They include 014-5068, a ca.1940 house on South James River Road and 014-5069, a ca. 1956 house on South James River Road. Both properties were recommended ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The final report was submitted to the VDHR on March 14, 2016, and a letter from the VDHR dated May 6, 2016, indicates concurrence with the findings. The report was filed with FERC on March 24, 2016.

Based on an April 11, 2017 FERC data request (FERC 2017), ERM resurveyed the area surrounding the compressor station tract which had a reduced footprint (Figure 3). The goal was to identify resources that were integral to the development of the area as an African-American community associated with Union Hill and Union Grove Baptist churches in the post-Civil War era (Tucker-Laird et al. 2017). ERM also conducted historical research at local repositories and photographed structures located within a 0.5-mile radius of the proposed compressor station site in order to document the historic character of the surrounding community. Findings indicate that the area is dominated by rural, non-farm residences constructed since World War II, and generally lacks the historic built environment and agricultural landscape features that would have characterized its late nineteenth and early twentieth century development as a distinct community. The investigations identified three resources that were not recorded during the initial survey. These resources are dwellings constructed between 1941 and 1967, and are not considered eligible for listing on the NRHP. In our opinion, the houses do not represent outstanding examples of their style and lack integrity as a result of modifications to their original forms. In addition, the associated landscape of the resources no longer reflect the agricultural character of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

One resource (014-5091) was not visible from the public right-of-way and could not be evaluated. In accordance with guidance from the VDHR, ERM recommended that this resource be treated for Project purposes as if it is eligible for the NRHP until an assessment and determination of eligibility could be conducted. The final report was submitted to the VDHR on May 24, 2017, and a letter from the VDHR dated July 31, 2017, indicates concurrence with the findings. The report was filed with FERC on May 26, 2017.

Access was granted to survey resource 014-5109 in March of 2018. The ca. 1940 two-story vernacular structure was recommended ineligible for inclusion on the NRHP. The letter report on these findings was submitted to the VDHR on March 14, 2018, and a letter from the VDHR dated March 19, 2018, indicates concurrence with the findings. The letter report was filed with FERC on May 1, 2018.

Ongoing Research

Research on the Union Hill community and its associated cultural features is ongoing. Lakshmi Fjord of the Institute for Public History at the University of Virginia has interviewed residents and identified a number of resources associated with the community, including Union Hill Baptist Church and Variety Shade Plantation (http://publichistory.as.virginia.edu/union-hill-history-project).

Variety Shade plantation was located at the intersection of Rte. 56 and Rte. 649 just east of the proposed pipeline. A small portion of the property's current boundary is crossed by the pipeline corridor. However, the plantation dwelling burned in the 1960s and the only surviving structure is a nineteenth century tobacco barn. Two cemeteries (one white and one black) and the remains of structures and old roadbeds remain on the property as well. These features do not appear to be within the project APE. Union Hill Church is located on Union Hill Road about 1.1 miles northeast of the project centerline. The church is also outside of the project APE.

Fjord notes that demarcated pastures, agricultural fields, roads, and ponds from the post-Civil War period remain in the area, along with domestic plantation complexes, agricultural buildings, dwellings, churches, schools, cemeteries, and stores. Although the corridor and the compressor station site are located within the historical boundaries of the Union Hill community, no historically significant cultural resources were identified within the project APE. The corridor is primarily wooded, with intermittent fields and field remnants. The residences identified in the APE date to the period during which the tobacco farming focus of the local residents was waning, and do not reflect the built environment of a late nineteenth-early twentieth century African American farming community.

References

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)
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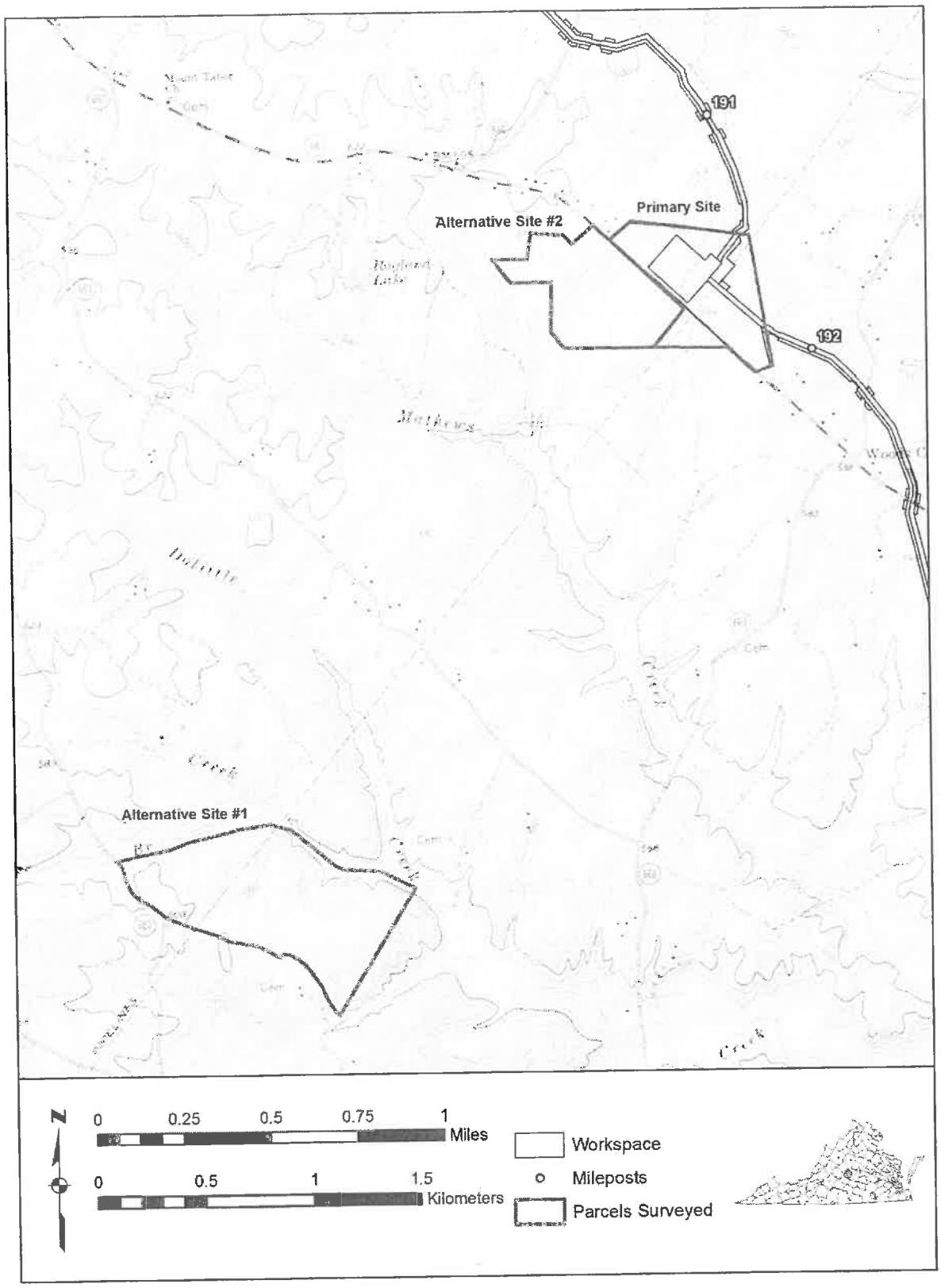

Figure 1. Buckingham Compressor Station Archaeological Survey Areas.

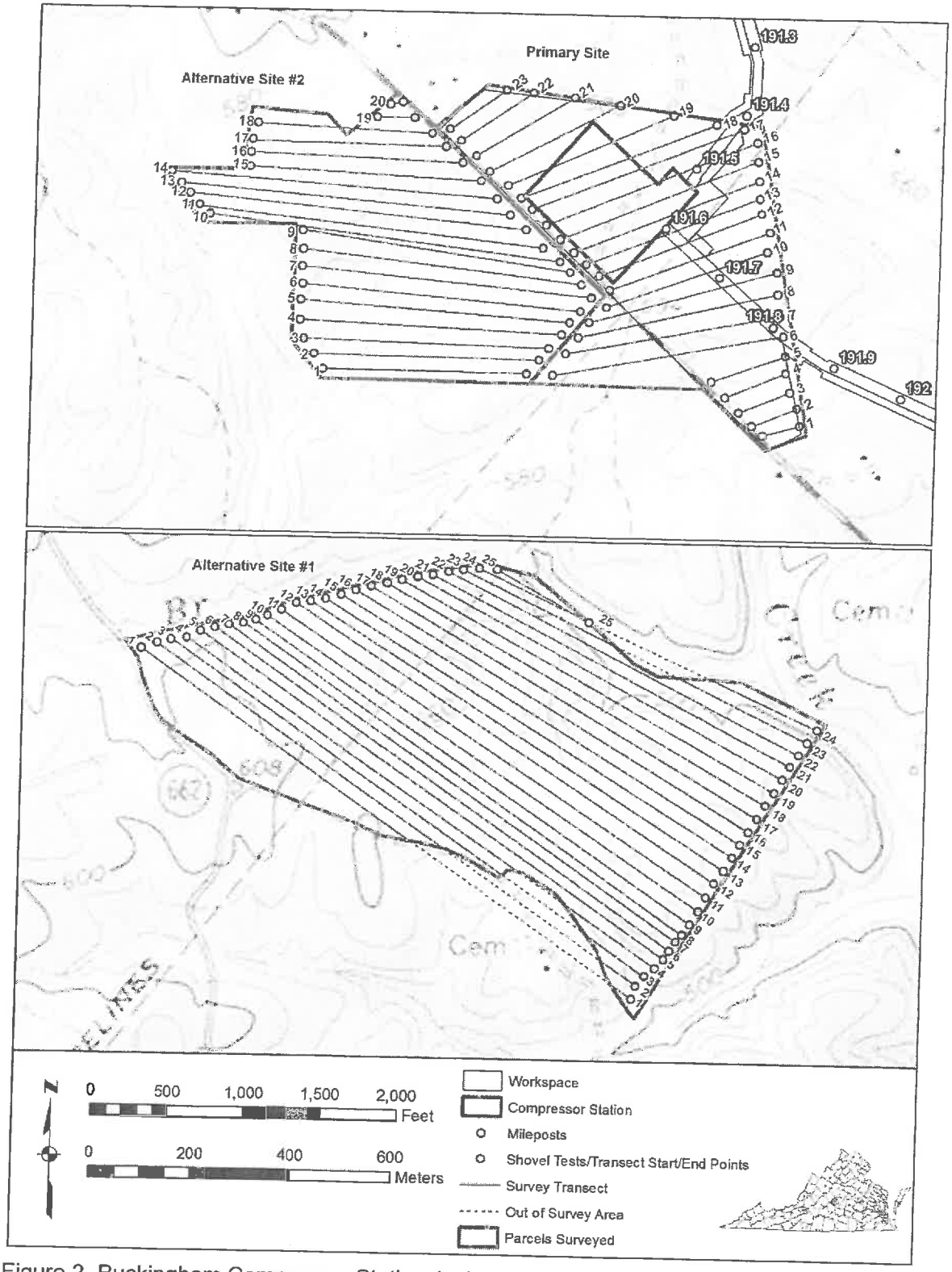

Figure 2. Buckingham Compressor Station Archaeological Survey Areas with Shovel Test Transects.

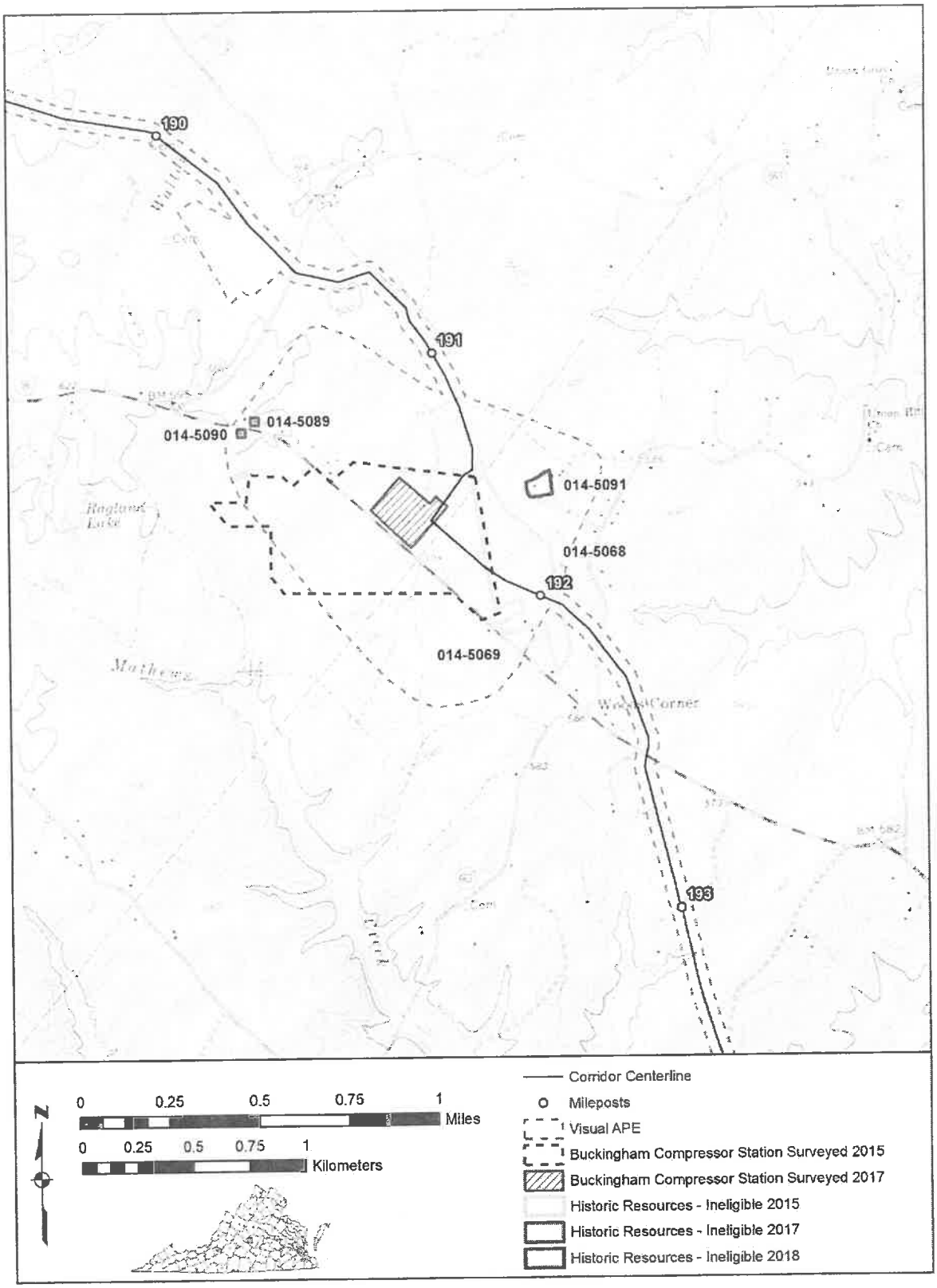

Figure 3. Buckingham Compressor Station Architectural Survey Areas