



Jack Watson photo

Ed Otter, lead archaeologist for the Summerfield development project, shows off some of the early English and American Indian finds from the area.

Historic relics unearthed

■ Proposed Summerfield development slowed to comply with mandated studies

By Jay Hodgkins
Staff Writer

SNOW HILL — Archaeologists performing a federally mandated cultural resources study of the proposed Summerfield development say they have unearthed extraordinary finds that could contribute significantly to America's Colonial period.

With 28 sites and thousands of artifacts on the Summerfield property, including 5,000-year-old American Indian artifacts and significant Colonial-period findings dating from 1607, the findings of the cultural resources study could result in

a delay of months or even years for Summerfield developer Mark Odachowski.

Archaeologist Edward Otter said his team is performing a federal- and state-mandated study to ensure the Summerfield development will not destroy any sites of historical importance on the 1,000-acre property.

"In Phase 1 we searched the entire Summerfield property for any archaeological sites," Otter said. "Then we consulted with the state and sent them our findings, and a decision will be made whether a site has potential for the National Register of Historic Places."

"If the Colonial potential on Summerfield pans out the way I think it will, then we're going to have a significant contribution to that period's history."

Edward Otter
archaeologist

"If (any of the 28 sites) are not eligible for the national register, there is no more work," Otter said. "In Phase 2 we look at some sites and work to see if they meet national register requirements."

Phase 3 is when some sites at Summerfield could be named to the national register and when Odachowski would have to make costly or time-consuming decisions. Odachowski could

agree to work around any designated site and promise to ensure it's protection, thereby losing building space, or he could pay to have the sites undergo a full archaeological study — possibly taking years — before they are potentially destroyed during development.

Odachowski did not return several calls, but Summerfield representatives said because the state has still not mailed back their analysis of Phase 1 that they don't know what artifacts were on the property, making them unable to discuss them.

The state has told Summerfield representatives that their findings will be mailed out no later than Monday, but Otter said he is already confident several of the

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28 sites will merit Phase 2 study — even eventual national register merit.

"If the Colonial potential on Summerfield pans out the way I think it will, then we're going to have a significant contribution to that period's history," Otter said.

Among areas Otter is confident will merit further study is the home of John Selby, a justice of the peace in Colonial times. And the biggest site is one that dates back 1,000 years with American Indian artifacts and moved forward to Colonial artifacts from the 1600s.

"The first white settlers came up the (Pocomoke) River and took land grants in 1685, and for a short while white folks lived across the river from Indians," Otter said.

Otter said because American Indian artifacts, possibly as old as 5,000 years, existed on the Summerfield sites in addition to artifacts from the Pocomoke, Assateague and several other local tribes that were eventually put together on the Askiminokonson reservation near Snow Hill in the 1700s, he was working carefully with remaining members of those American Indian groups.

In June, Odachowski said he planned to turn an old mansion on the Summerfield property into a museum housing artifacts and the history of the land. Otter said the developer has always expressed an interest in history, but Odachowski may have to face decisions that will shrink the buildable areas of Summerfield or cost large amounts for study.

"If he wants to leave it there and have archaeological work done," Otter said, "we'll milk it for what it's worth."