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NPS Form 10-900  
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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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71-108

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name N/A

other names/site number LEESVILLE DAM ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE/44PY30

### 2. Location

street & number N/A

not for publication

city, town Altavista

vicinity

state Virginia

code VA

county Pittsylvania

code 143

zip code 24517

### 3. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

#### Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

#### Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

VA Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: village site

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agricultural field

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

**DESCRIPTION**

[REDACTED] The village site, 420 meters by 80 meters in size, dates to the last half of the Late Woodland period (circa A.D. 1200-1600). Over the years, surface collections and human burials have been obtained from the site by local residents. Inspection of 44PY30 by the Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks (VDHL), however, indicated that most of the site is in an excellent state of preservation.

**BACKGROUND**

The Leesville Dam Archaeological Site (44PY30) is situated on the terrace [REDACTED]

The archaeological potential of the Leesville Dam Site was first recognized many years ago when the property owner and his family collected artifacts from the surface of the site. In 1941, a human burial was excavated with additional surface collecting and limited indiscriminate digging having occurred over the last 10 years.

The site was first brought to the attention of the VDHL in March 1979 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Wilmington District, North Carolina. In 1983, VDHL staff consulted with a local resident who had been collecting the site since 1975 and from whom a large ceramic sample was obtained. The collector later reported that he had uncovered a human burial while digging at 44PY30 in 1985, which he subsequently photographed before recovering with soil.

The Leesville Dam Site was visited again in May 1986 by archaeological staff of the Jefferson National Forest and the VDHL. Erosion of the southwestern end of the site by the Roanoke River was observed at that time, though the main portion was unaffected. The VDHL recorded the site in greater detail in September 1986. Information was gathered through subsurface testing since dense vegetation obscured the surface of the field (Figure 1, Photo 1). A series of 17 shovel test holes, approximately 30 cm. in diameter and ranging in depth from 33 to 63 cm.,

See continuation sheet

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)  
Archeology: Prehistoric

Period of Significance  
A.D. 1200-A.D. 1600

Significant Dates  
N/A

Cultural Affiliation  
Late Woodland Period

Significant Person  
N/A

Architect/Builder  
N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Leesville Dam Archaeological Site (44PY30), a prehistoric site in Pittsylvania County, Virginia, contains well preserved remains dating from the Late Woodland period, which could contribute significantly to research on Dan River culture. The site is characterized by high integrity of cultural features and midden, organic material, artifacts, and human remains which could provide crucial data for regional studies of settlement patterns, subsistence, material culture, and demography. The Leesville Dam Site is the best preserved village of the Late Woodland Period along this portion of the Roanoke River and could contribute to studies of Dan River cultural interaction across the piedmont of Virginia and North Carolina.

**BACKGROUND**

The Leesville Dam Site (44PY30) represents the most intact Late Woodland village site along this portion of the Roanoke River with well preserved features and midden deposit which could contribute significantly towards research on Dan River culture. Leesville Lake and Smith Mountain Lake have inundated all sites along the Roanoke River except a few which are being severely eroded by the weekly pool fluctuations. No other Late Woodland village sites to the east are presently known along the Roanoke River in Pittsylvania County. It thus represents the sole remaining well-preserved example of a key site type, the village, in Late Woodland period settlement systems for this prortion of the Roanoke River drainage. The survival of 44PY30 in a area largely characterized by loss of original riverine terrain makes the Leesville Dam Site a crucial source of information concerning the development of increasingly complex and sedentary societies as well as the spread of Dan River culture in the southern Virginia piedmont.

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were excavated in a cross-pattern throughout the field. The test holes were spaced at intervals of 25 to 50 meters. Cultural material, mostly potsherds and flakes, were recovered from all the test holes except numbers 04, 05, and 012. A concentration of artifacts, charcoal specks, and shell fragments were found in test holes number 01, 02, 03, 07, 013, and 014, conforming in distribution with a layer of dark brown midden, approximately 20 cm. in thickness, preserved under the plow zone. This area of the site, measuring approximately 150 meters by 60 meters, may represent a palisaded village. The site as a whole measures approximately 420 meters northeast-southwest by 80 meters northwest-southeast.

The site is located on silty-loam soil composing the second terrace. The terrace increases slightly in elevation towards the middle of the field, then drops slightly to the east away from the Roanoke River and to the southwest. The distribution of Late Woodland cultural remains conforms, in general, to this slight rise in elevation of the second terrace. Although the shallow shovel test holes were of insufficient depth to determine whether deeper strata containing cultural remains exist, the alluvial characteristics of the silty-loam terrace suggest the possibility that such deposits may be present.

The second terrace is approximately seven meters above the Roanoke River. A first terrace, approximately three meters above the Roanoke River, occurs in all areas except at the southwestern end of the site. It is here that the Roanoke River erodes the seven meter high bluff and the corresponding portion of the site during periods of high water release. The first terrace, however, successfully protects the second terrace and the main portion of 44PY30 from riverbank erosion.

A small portion of the site was recently subjected to indiscriminate digging in an area, measuring 15 to 30 meters, north of shovel test hole number 013. The digging conducted by local residents in the past has been largely restricted to an area defined by shovel test holes number 01, 02, and 013. The entire site is under cultivation. This disturbance, however, is very limited with pit features and midden deposit in the main portion of 44PY30 being characterized by high integrity. The human burials uncovered at the site in 1941 and 1985, and other pit features encountered by recent indiscriminate digging, demonstrate the potential for the in-situ preservation of cultural deposits at the site. The 20 cm. thick midden identified by shovel test holes is extensive and characterized by dense concentrations of occupational debris.

The artifact assemblage recovered from the Leesville Dam Site is quite diverse and includes Dan River Ware ceramics, flakes, projectile points, a few fragments of small copper pendants, fire-cracked rocks, faunal remains, and charred botanical material. The surface treatment on the

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Dan River Ware is dominated by looped net followed in frequency by cord marked (Photo 2). Knotted net and corncob impressions seldom occur. Finger pinching on the shoulder area below the rim is a common form of decoration. Folded rims and notching along the top of the rim occur rarely. One example of a cazuela bowl form was noted, otherwise the vessels appear to be globular jars with straight to everted rims. The compact paste typically contains small pieces of crushed quartz (approximately 1 mm. in diameter) as temper with a moderate proportion of the sherds exhibiting various amounts of large crushed quartz inclusions (ranging from 3 to 8 mm. in size).

The majority of the triangular projectile points and debitage from 44PY30 is made from quartz, with clear quartz being very common. Archaic period projectile points did not occur at the site.

Animal bones, fresh water snail and mussel shells are well preserved at 44PY30, and their fragments are often found on the surface of the plowed field in the main portion of the site. A wide variety of bone awls and two turtle shell cups have been recovered from the site. Charcoal flecks are visible in the plow zone and commonly occur in the midden. This suggests that other ethnobotanical remains are preserved as well.

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The presence of in-situ archaeological deposits, including human burials, pit features, and the uncultivated portion of the village midden, clearly demonstrates a high level of integrity for 44PY30. This well preserved context would benefit future archaeological research on Native American subsistence, material culture, demography, and related cultural adaptations in the southern Virginia piedmont.

The adaptation to a riverine environment at the Leesville Dam Site offers an important comparison to the Late Woodland period occupation at the Elm Hill Site in Mecklenburg County, as well as a contrast to the contemporaneous occupation of an upland setting at the Otter Creek Site in Franklin County (both of the latter being listed on the National Register). The well-preserved faunal and floral remains at 44PY30 can provide important information concerning changes in Native American adaptive patterns resulting from the increasing importance of horticulture and riverine areas to Late Woodland economic systems. The progressive importance of horticulture during the Late Woodland period also resulted in corresponding demographic changes probably observable through analysis of the human remains present at 44PY30.

The changing adaptive and economic patterns during the Late Woodland period were also systemically related to the development of progressively complex societies. Important information on the expansion of regional exchange networks could be derived through detailed material cultural studies, particularly regarding interaction with Native American groups throughout the piedmont of southern Virginia and central North Carolina. The presence of well preserved human burials could also provide important information regarding social stratification as manifested through non-egalitarian mortuary patterns. Finally, the probable presence of a palisade could provide evidence for increasing levels of regional conflict as a result of competition over economic resources and limited horticultural terrain.

KTE/AFO