



**NO NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
ELIGIBLE OR LISTED ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES
PRESENT FORM**



This form only pertains to ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES for this project. It is not valid for Historic Architecture and Landscapes. You must consult separately with the Historic Architecture and Landscapes Group.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project No: **Bridge 321** County: **Ashe**
 WBS No: **17BP.11.R.136** Document: **Minimum Criteria**
 F.A. No: **na** Funding: ☒ State ☐ Federal

Federal Permit Required? ☒ Yes ☐ No Permit Type: **NWP 3 or 14**

Project Description:

The project calls for the replacement of Bridge No. 321 on SR 1526 (John Griffith Road) over Helton Creek in Ashe County. The archaeological Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the project is defined as a 400 foot (121.92 m) long corridor running south and west along John Griffith Road from its intersection with NC 194. A second corridor also runs for 600 feet (182.88 m) along NC 194 extending 300 feet (91.44 m) east and west from the intersection. The corridors are approximately 150 feet (45.72 m) wide extending 75 feet (22.86 m) on either side of each road from the centerlines. Both corridors to the west of the bridge have been merged. The APE encompasses a total of 3 acres.

SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Archaeology Group reviewed the subject project and determined:

- ☒ There are no National Register listed or eligible ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES present within the project's area of potential effects. (Attach any notes or documents as needed)
- ☐ No subsurface archaeological investigations were required for this project.
- ☒ Subsurface investigations did not reveal the presence of any archaeological resources.
- ☐ Subsurface investigations did not reveal the presence of any archaeological resources considered eligible for the National Register.
- ☐ All identified archaeological sites located within the APE have been considered and all compliance for archaeological resources with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and GS 121-12(a) has been completed for this project.

Brief description of review activities, results of review, and conclusions:

Bridge No. 321 is located west of the community of Helton, east of Sturgills, and north of Lansing in the northern portion of Ashe County, North Carolina. The project area is plotted in the western half of the Grassy Creek USGS 7.5' topographic quadrangle (Figure 1).

A site file search was conducted at the Office of State Archaeology (OSA) on October 31, 2016. No previously recorded archaeological sites have been identified within the APE or within a mile of bridge. According to the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office online data base (HPOWEB 2016), the APE is within the study listed Helton Historic District (AH 323) with the study listed Helton Roller Mill (AH 59) to the southeast of the bridge (Figure 2). Topographic maps, USDA soil survey maps, aerial photographs (NC One Map), and historic maps (North Carolina maps website) were examined for information on environmental and cultural variables that may have contributed to prehistoric or historic settlement within the project limits and to assess the level of ground disturbance. An archaeological field investigation and reconnaissance was carried out on December 5, 2016, to further evaluate the project area.

Bridge No. 321 is situated just south of the intersection of John Griffith Road with NC 194 and is oriented north-south over Helton Creek. NC 194 runs east-west within the project area, while John Griffith Road heads south for a short distance from the intersection before curving west after crossing the creek. Helton Creek drains to the east and south into the North Fork New River. The APE consists of a pasture on a stream terrace north of the creek and residential properties on a gradual sloping hillside and narrow terrace to the south (see Figure 2; Figures 3–5). The hillside and narrow terrace are a mix of trees and open lawn. Overall, ground disturbance is considered minimal. Fill is present alongside the creek just northeast of the bridge. This was likely done in order to provide stability. Grading or soil erosion along the hillside and terrace to the south is also present. No disturbance was found in the pasture to the north. The historic Helton Roller Mill to the southeast has been converted into a house (Figures 6 and 7).

The USDA soil survey map for Ashe County shows Colvard fine sandy loam (Co) throughout the APE with Evard loam (EvF) mostly outside to the south (see Figure 2). However, characteristics of the landform south of the creek suggest that the Evard series extends to John Griffith Road, which is located on the narrow stream terrace. The Colvard series is nearly level, well drained, and composes the entire stream terraces on either side of Helton Creek. Due to these qualities, the soil is highly probable for archaeological resources. The Evard loam is found along the side slope and is described as well drained with a steep slope of 25 to 45 percent. Slope of 15 percent or more is not usually tested, since it is unlikely to yield archaeological sites.

A review of the site files shows no sites within a mile of the project area. This is due to a lack of investigations along this section of Helton Creek. A few projects mostly for road improvements and bridge replacements have been carried out further to the east. In general, additional work is needed in the area before conclusions can be drawn from previously known sites this area.

A historic map review was also conducted prior to fieldwork. Most early maps from the 18th and 19th centuries provide only general details concerning the region illustrating just major roads and settlements. An approximate location for the project was first identified on the 1892 USGS Wytheville topographic map (Figure 8). This map depicts Helton Creek and a road similar to NC 194. No road is present on the south side of the creek. In addition, no structures are illustrated on this map either. The subsequent 1912 *Soil Survey Map for Ashe County* illustrates much of the same picture, but two structures are shown south of the creek near the approximate location for the bridge (Figure 9). This suggests that a drive or unmarked road/trail was present. One of the two structures is probably the mill, which was established during the 19th century according to *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory* (1867–68, 1869, 1872, and 1890). The second structure could be an outbuilding associated with the mill or a house. A deed search for the mill property indicants a right of access was granted to property owners south of Helton

Creek by the various owners of the mill property. Lastly, The 1953 *North Carolina Highway Map for Ashe County* is the first to show a crossing at or near the current bridge, but structures are not identified (Figure 10).

The archaeological field investigation at Bridge No. 321 included the excavation of eight shovel test placements (STPs) (see Figure 2). A surface inspection could not be conducted due to poor surface visibility. Five STP were placed north of NC 194 in the pasture at 30-m intervals. A judgmental STP was dug just northeast of the bridge to confirm the presence of fill in this area. Two additional judgmental STPs were excavated south of Helton Creek and John Griffith Road along the base of the side slope in a residential lawn. STPs in the pasture north of NC 194 consist of two soil layers. The upper is approximately 30 to 35 cm (ca. 12 to 14 in) thick and is a dark brown (10YR 3/3) loam. It is followed by a dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) silt loam that extends to at least 75 cm (ca. 30 in) below the surface. Occasionally, a cobble layer was encountered at about 10 cm (ca. 4 in) into the second soil layer, which halted excavations in these STPs. The two STPs south of Helton Creek were similar with a thinner surface layer of dark brown loam approximately 10 to 15 cm (ca. 4 to 6 in) thick followed by strong brown (7.5YR 5/6) clay loam subsoil. Lastly, the judgmental STP northeast of the bridge did yield fill to at least 30 cm (ca. 12 in) below the surface. At which point, the test was halted. All STPs were negative for cultural material.

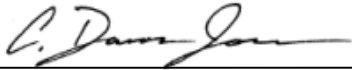
The mill just southeast of the bridge was originally known as the Perkins' Mill and later as the Helton Roller Mill. Although it is reported to have been built in 1885, this appears to be incorrect. The source of this date might be from the journal *Mountaineer Heritage Vol. 1*. (1980 Northwest Ashe High School), but a copy could not be found to confirm this. The mill was previously owned and most likely built by Johnson Perkins and passed on to his son Winfred Perkins and later to his grandson William (Will) Perkins. The building is a three-story framed structure with a stone foundation similar to other mills in Ashe County such as the Cockerham Mill and the Clark-Miller Roller Mill. The mill was powered by an overshot wheel, which no longer remains (1880 U.S. Census Non-Population Schedules). The mill race apparently ran from the west to the east. No firm evidence for it exists within the APE, but a shallow trench just south of John Griffith Road might be remnants of this feature or it could be an old road bed. It was originally thought the race would have followed the alignment of John Giffith Road and has since been destroyed. The mill dam and pond also could not be identified, but they were likely located outside the APE nearer to Helton Church and an unnamed tributary often referred to as the Mill Branch according to a land deed (Ashe County Deed Book 137, Page 908). The land deed also suggests that these prominent features (race, dam, and pond) could still be seen in the landscape as late as 1983. The mill produced flour and grist products up to the early 20th century for the local community of Helton. The mill might have been damaged and ceased operation like many other mills in Ashe County after the great flood of 1940, but details of the mills final days could be found. The earliest mention of the mill in the deed search goes back to 1893, when Winfred Perkins grants the property and the mill to his son Will (Ashe County Deed Book JJ, Page 347). Winfred had acquired the mill after his father's death in 1884. The mill and property are mentioned in Johnson Perkins' Will dated July 1, 1880 (*Ashe County Wills and Estate Papers, 1663-1978*; North Carolina Division of Archives and History). *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory* (1867-68, 1869, 1872, and 1890) also confirms that Johnson and Winfred owned the mill on Helton Creek during the late 19th century. *Branson's 1867-68* directory is the earliest citation for the mill. Although the Perkins family owned the mill, they are not listed as millers in the U.S. Census from 1870 or 1880, but rather as famers. The family could not be identified on the 1890 census. In general, there is very good evidence that the mill was built prior to 1867 and might have been built earlier as Johnson was appointed Postmaster of Helton on June 11, 1849 (*Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832-1971. NARA Microfilm Publication M841, 145 rolls, Records of the Post Office Department, Record Group Number 28*; Washington D.C., National Archives). In order to acquire this position, he would have likely owned a business such as a merchant store or mill in Helton. Although the Helton Roller Mill is of historic importance to the community of Helton, it lacks archaeological integrity. An inspection of the area within the APE failed to firmly identify archaeological remnants that contribute to

the understanding and interpretation of the still standing mill structure. As result, the Helton Mill structure and surrounding area within the APE are not considered an archaeological resource. However, features such as the mill dam, pond, or remnants of the race could very well be outside of the APE and would require addition investigations if the project expanded.

The archaeological investigations for the proposed replacement of Bridge No. 321 failed to record any archaeological resources within the APE. Subsurface testing yielded no cultural material, and the inspection surrounding the mill could not conclusively identify any contributing archaeological features. No further archaeological work is required for replacement of Bridge No. 321 in Ashe County. However, additional work will be required should design plans change to encompass property outside of the currently defined APE. Intact and recognizable mill features could be present to the west, and may contribute to the historic significance of the Helton Historic District and Mill.

SUPPORT DOCUMENTATION

See attached: ☒ Map(s) ☐ Previous Survey Info ☒ Photos ☐ Correspondence
Signed:



C. Damon Jones
NCDOT ARCHAEOLOGIST

12/8/16

Date

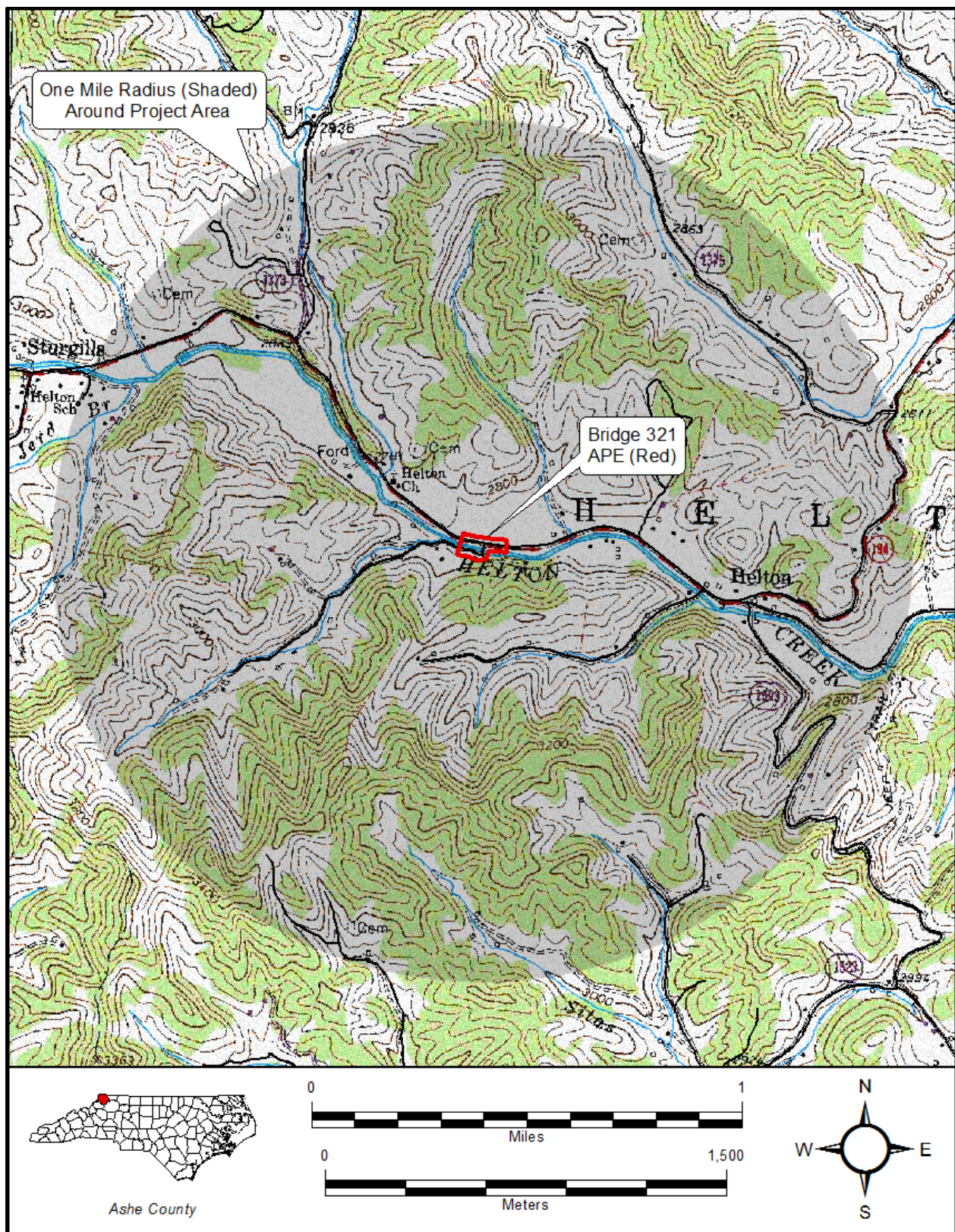


Figure 1. Topographic Setting of the Project Area, Grassy Creek (1966), NC, USGS 7.5' Topographic Quadrangle.

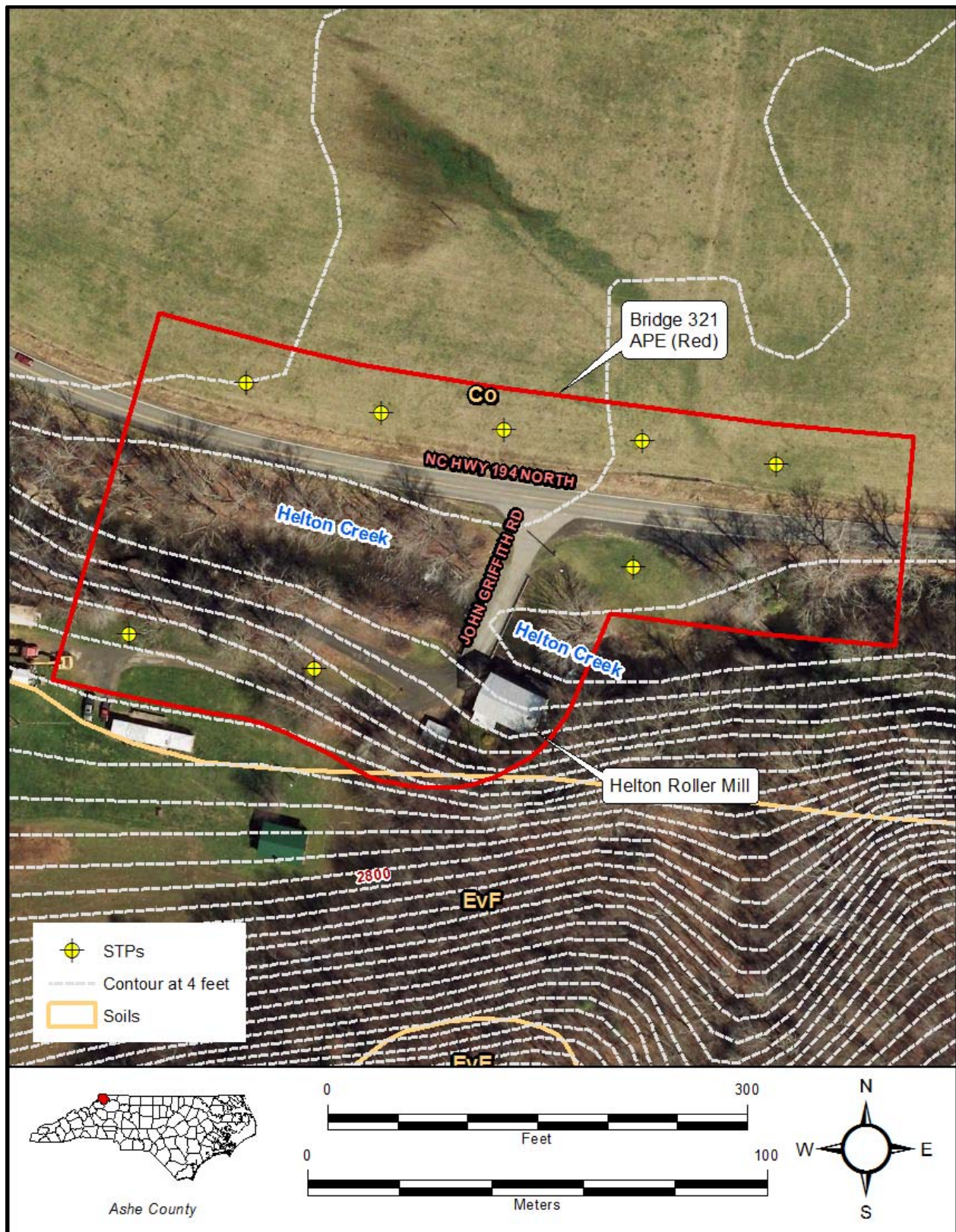


Figure 2. Aerial photograph of the APE showing development, landforms, soils, and STPs within and near the project area.



Figure 3. General View of the stream terrace north of NC 194 showing the pasture, looking west.



Figure 4. General View of the stream terrace just northeast of the bridge showing the area of fill making up the landform, looking west.



Figure 5. General View of the narrow stream terrace and foot slope along John Griffith Road south of Helton Creek showing the residential property, looking west.



Figure 6. General View of the converted Helton Roller Mill, looking east.



Figure 7. General View of the converted Helton Roller Mill, looking southwest.

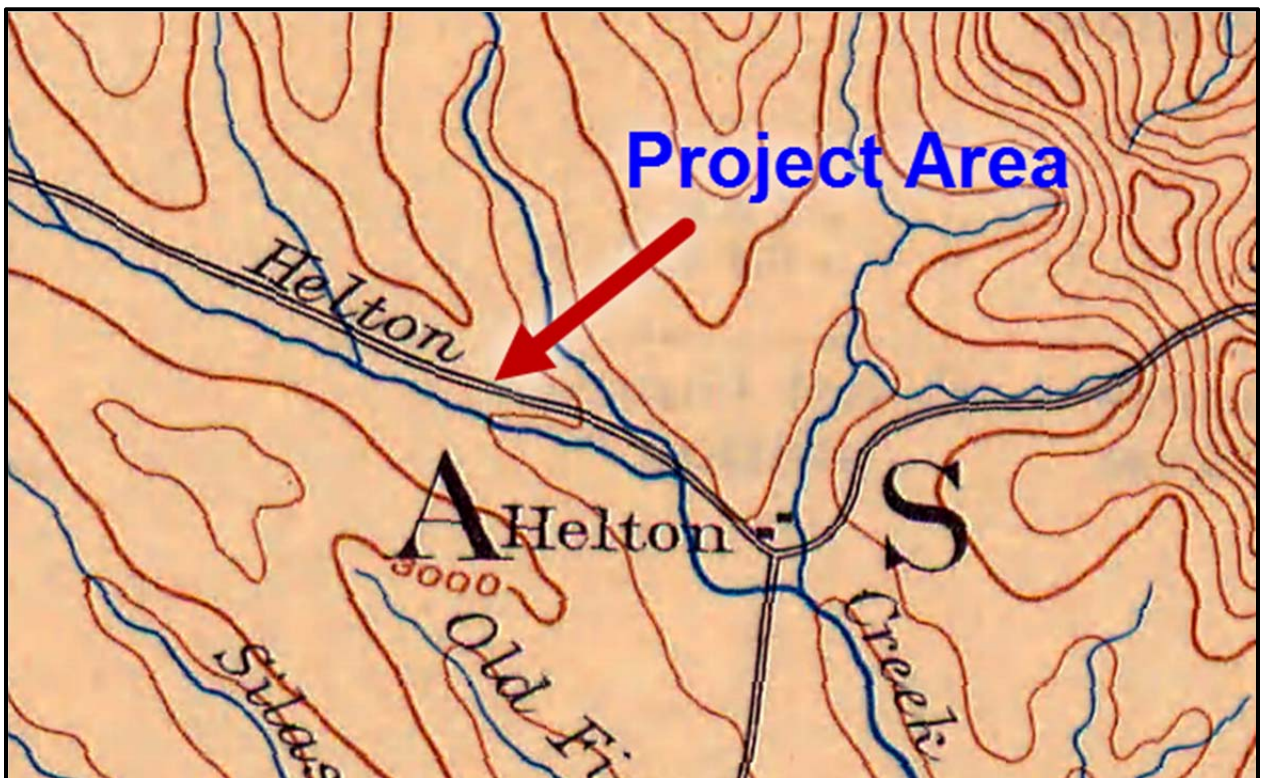


Figure 8. 1892 USGS Wytheville topographic map showing the approximate location of the project area.

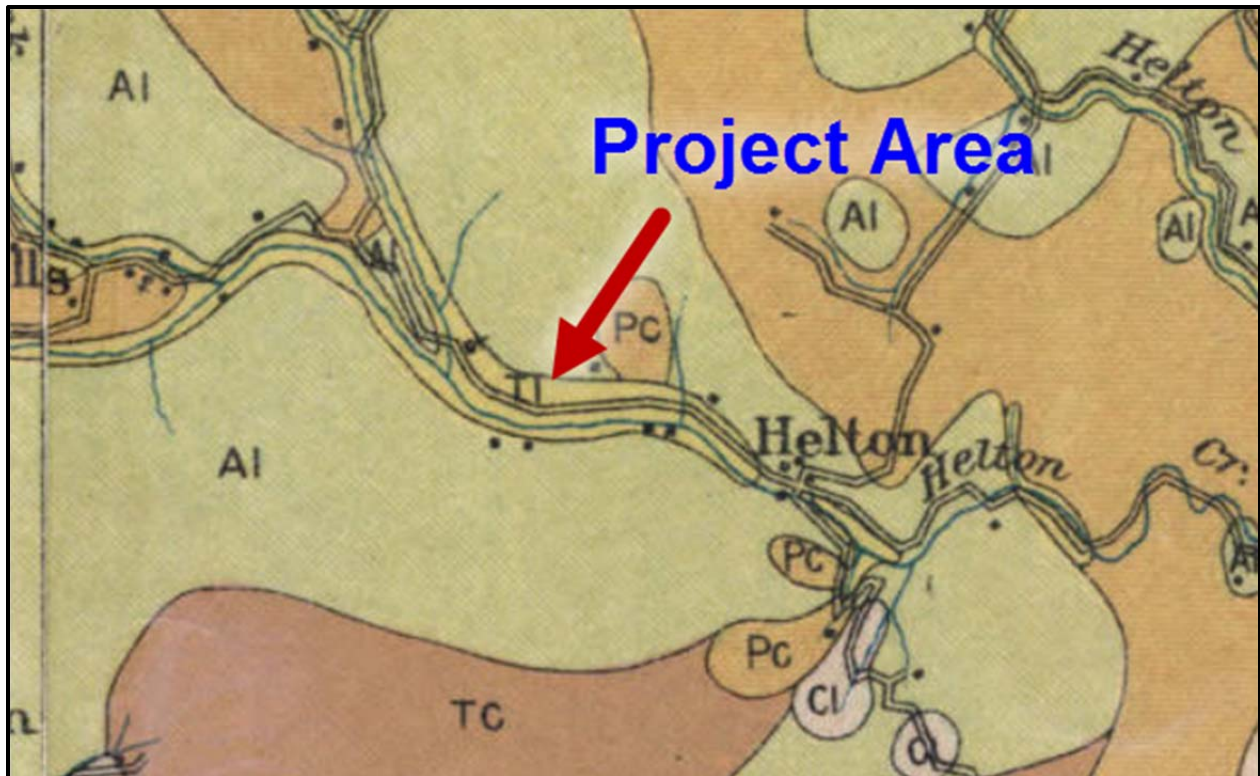


Figure 9. The 1912 Soils Map for Ashe County showing the location of the project area.



Figure 10. The 1953 North Carolina Highway Map for Ashe County showing the location of the project area.