United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS

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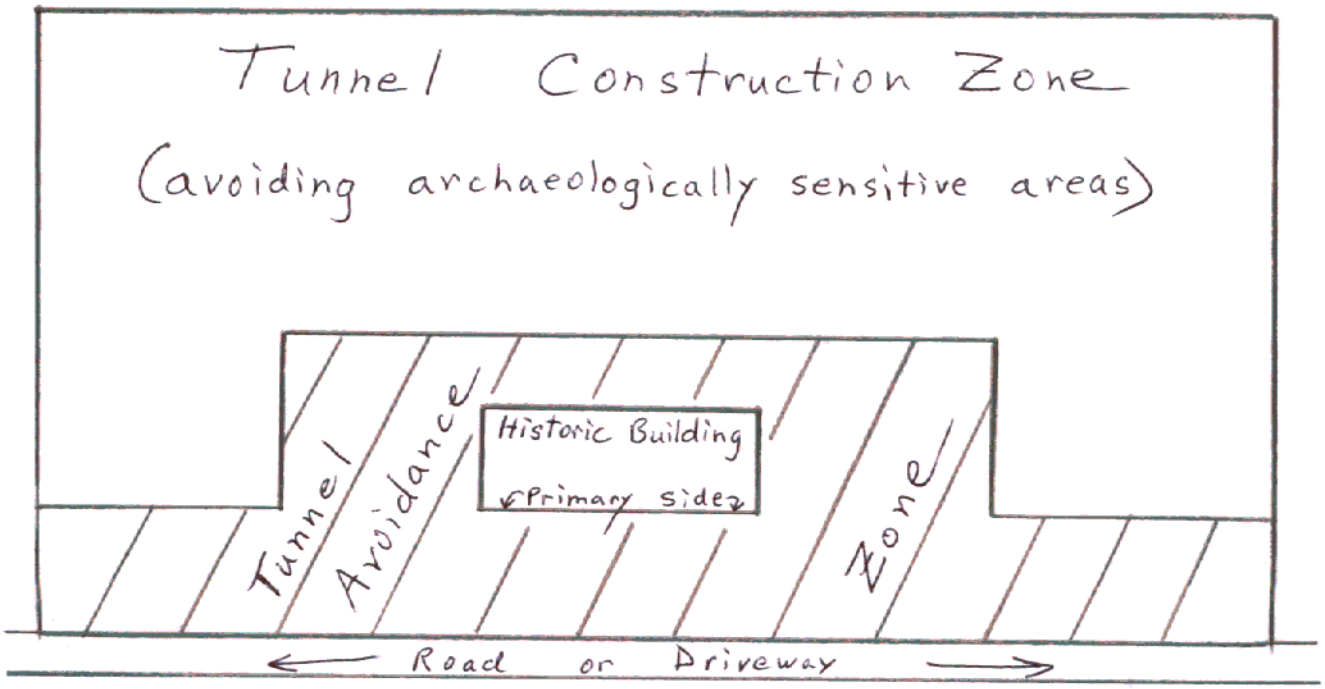
Placing Seasonal High Tunnels to Avoid Archaeological Sites and Historic Structures

Setting up seasonal high tunnels in certain locations could affect archaeological sites and historic structures. Preparation of the ground surface by grading it smooth and level for the tunnel could destroy prehistoric or historic artifacts and features like fire pits or foundations. Installing a drain system next to a tunnel to catch water runoff could also impact these kinds of archaeological resources. Additionally, the erection of a high tunnel will make a new, visible structure on a property, and that modern building might adversely affect the setting of a historic farmstead or homestead (at least 50 years old) with its traditional layout of buildings. NRCS needs to take into account the effects of assisting landowners with constructing high tunnels, in order to comply with federal historic preservation law. To that end, NRCS asks its clients to consider placing the tunnels according to the recommendations below. The historic preservation review which NRCS must conduct will proceed most smoothly when these recommendations are followed.

Stay away from areas often containing archaeological sites by placing a high tunnel at least 150 feet from streams, floodplains, shorelines, springs, bogs/marshes, and natural terraces. Also, avoid well-drained sandy soil, cellar holes and stone or brick foundations, dug wells at least 50 years old, mounds of soil or stone, and areas known to contain prehistoric Indian or historic colonial artifacts. Finally, do not attach a tunnel directly to a historic building and avoid setting a tunnel near, or in view of, the primary side of a historic house, barn, or other structure. This primary side usually is the front side and often faces a road or driveway. The following sketch shows where you might set up a tunnel to avoid affecting the primary side and view of a historic building: