Louisiana

Archaeological

Survey and

Antiquities

Commission

December 10, 2024 Meeting

The Louisiana Archaeological Survey and Antiquities Commission met on Tuesday, December 10, 2024, at 1:30 p.m. in the 4th floor conference room, 1051 N. 5th street, Baton
Rouge, LA.

# Members Attending:

Dr. Chip McGimsey

Dr. Mark Rees

Dr. Heather McKillop

Ms. Julie Doucet

Mr. Ray Berthelot

Mr. Thurston Hahn

# Members Absent:

Dr. Chandler Vidrine

Ms. Kim Walden

Dr. Ryan Gray

# Others Attending:

Ms. Sadie Whitehurst

Ms. Josetta Leboeuf

Mr. Michael Carpenter

Dr. Douglas Wells

Ms. Nancy Hawkins

Ms. Sara Hahn

Mr. Carey Coxe

Dr. Rachel Watson

Dr. Diana Greenlee

# Welcome & Introductions

The Chair, Dr. Heather McKillop, called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM. Dr. McGimsey took the notes for meeting.

Dr. McKillop noted the very successful South Central Conference on Mesoamerica was held on the LSU Campus October 18-20, 2024. The Louisiana Archaeological Society was one of the meeting sponsors.

She also reported that the Department of Geography and Anthropology had requested four new positions, including one focused on southeastern archaeology, but that the administration had not moved on any of those requests.

Everyone attending the meeting introduced themselves.

**Approval of Minutes**

Dr. McKillop noted one small correction to the September 10 meeting minutes.

***Motion:*** *Ms. Julie Doucet moved that the Commission accept the September 20, 2024 meeting minutes. It was seconded by Dr. Mark Rees. The motion passed unanimously.*

# Old Business

Dr. McGimsey gave a brief update on the Division of Archaeology. He noted that Dr. Senna Chapman has been hired as the new Site Files Manager and will start on 30 December 2024. She received her BA degree from LSU, a Master’s degree from West Texas State University, and her PhD from York University. Her graduate work focused on research in Africa but she has worked for Coastal Environments, Inc., here in Louisiana for several years.

Dr. McGimsey provided a brief update on the research at the LSU Campus Mounds that was approved by the Commission at its September meeting. Mound A was successfully cored and there ae plans to return in March 2025 to collect cores from Mound B.

A brief update was provided on the status of research at the Raley property at Poverty Point. A firm, Waggoner and Ball, has been selected to develop the park’s Master Plan, and OVAI has completed the remote sensing survey of the property. CRA will be undertaking the shovel test survey beginning in February 2025.

Dr. McGimsey also provided a brief summary on research at 16ST301 in Mandeville. A weekend test excavation was recently held that provided an opportunity for 10 students from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and LSU to gain experience in fieldwork.

Dr. McKillop asked if there was an update on the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Cultural Development. Ms. Kristin Sanders had been dismissed from that position in June 2024. Carrie Broussard, deputy Assistant Secretary, continues to serve as acting Assistant Secretary and State Historic Preservation Officer.

# New Business

 Archaeology Month Update

Ms. Josetta LeBoeuf gave an update on the results of this year’s Archaeology Month. The poster highlighted the work of the public and avocational archaeologists in Louisiana archaeology, as well as recognize the 50th anniversary of the Louisiana Archaeological Society. A total of 33 events were held across the state, including three International Archaeology day events, 12 lectures or poster presentations, three lab or excavation open days, and six children’s activities. Events were held in 21 parishes to an estimated audience of 3900 people.

 16CU128 Permit Request

The presentation was made by Mr. Carey Coxe, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. The State is planning to replace the existing I-10 bridge over the Calcasieu River in Lake Charles, and site 16CU128 lies in the footprint of the new bridge. Coastal Environments, Inc. has completed the Phase I and Phase II investigations at the site and will be undertaking the mitigation investigation. Mr. Coxe presented a Powerpoint presentation that outlined the history of investigations, the results of that work, and described the proposed mitigation excavations.

Dr. Rees if there would be an opportunity to reassess the field methods once the excavations began, and how they proposed to deal with the shallow water table at the site. Ms, Sara Hahn, CEI Project Director who will be leading this field work, noted that water levels are very dependent on tides and which direction the wind is blowing but they were able to excavate to the base of the deposits in previous work, sometimes utilizing a sump pump to keep the water out of the units.

Dr. McKillop asked how they would keep the walls from collapsing in the wet sediments. Ms. Hahn replied that previous work had demonstrated that the sediments were pretty stable and they had not had this problem previously. Using buckets and pumps to keep the water out of the units did not result in collapsed walls or floors. Dr. McKillop asked if they would put wood planks in the units to stand on while excavating – Ms Hahn replied that this was planned. Dr. McKillop also asked who was directing the project; Ms. Hahn replied that Dr. Wells and Mr. Rich Weinstein were the Principal Investigators while she would be the Field Director.

Dr. Rees initiated an extended discussion on the remains of the historic sawmill in the project area, as well as other historic deposits. It was noted that intact brick foundations are present in the project area and the Sanborn maps indicate that parts of the sawmill plant extended into this area. But much of the sawmill has been eroded away, and the grounding of a casino boat on the site during Hurricane Laura also significantly impacted the remaining sawmill deposits. The Sanborn maps also indicate that habitation likely did not occur in the area of the site.

Dr. McKillop asked who the permit would be issued to; Dr. McGimsey replied that both the archaeological contractor (CEI) and DOTD would sign the permit. She also confirmed that the depth of archaeological deposits was about 1.5 m; Ms. Hahn agreed that was the anticipated depth. There was discussion about the degree of organic preservation, noting that most pre-contact deposits existed within a fluctuating water table which typically results in very poor bone preservation. It was noted that the landform the site sits on used to extend much further south and has been significantly truncated by erosion, the original bridge construction, and continual dredging of the Calcasieu River.

Dr. Rees asked what the total excavated area was; Ms. Hahn replied that the proposal called to excavate 42 square meters. They were anticipating a crew of 4-12 people depending on weather and availability.

***Motion:*** *Mr. Ray Berthelot moved that the Commission meeting approve the 16CU128 permit request. It was seconded by Dr. Mark Rees. The motion passed unanimously.*

 Poverty Point Update

Dr. Diana Greenlee presented an update on her activities over the past year. One effort was a limited survey at the Watson Brake site (16OU175) where the Gentry family who owns the north half of the site undertook to log timber from the land outside the site. They kindly allowed Dr. Greenlee and volunteers from the Division to conduct a surface survey of approximately 10 acres of clearcut land immediately adjoining the north half of the site. A total of 414 lithic artifacts were piece plotted, nearly all of which were debitage and FCR. Two points, a Delhi and a Macon, were found. Some artifacts were found along the north side of Watson Brake, but the majority were found on and around a broad low knoll (16OU316) northwest of Watson Brake.

Dr. Rees asked if the knoll was natural. Dr. Greenlee and Dr. McGimsey replied that all the available information at this point is that it is a natural landscape feature and not a mound. Dr. McKillop suggested Dr. Greenlee prepare an article for the LAS newsletter on the results of the Watson Brake survey.

A second project examined the buried ‘mounds’ that have been identified in the plaza area at Poverty Point. These are only visible in remote sensing data and their origin is unknown. Dr. Greenlee with two colleagues received a grant to conduct 2D and 3D electrical resistivity tomography mapping of these features. Preliminary analysis of the data indicates that the ‘mound’ is comprised of the same sediment as the subsoil, suggesting it is not a culturally constructed feature. Other data suggests the sediment contains a high frequency of hydrocarbons, unlike other sediments at the site. Dr. Greenlee noted that there will be a Time Team video coming out when all the data is available.

Dr. Greenlee noted the retirement of Ms. Alisah Wright as Poverty Point collections manager after 26 years of service.

She assisted in a Louisiana Master Naturalist survey of the park property. A total of 45 bird, 23 fungi, 22 butterfly, and 24 plant species were identified. The group plans to return in the spring and summer to a more comprehensive inventory of the plants and animals present at the site.

Dr. Greenlee and colleagues presented a poster of the recent Southeastern Archaeology Conference meeting. The poster focused on the reanalysis of profiles first obtained in the 1980s by Dr. Glen Green on Ridge 2 Northwest. His excavations identified one or two possible structure floors with potentially a burned structure over one of the floors. Dr. Greenlee had reexcavated a couple of Dr. Green’s units to remap the profiles. The strata identified by Dr. Green were clearly visible. Detailed analysis, including micromorphological sampling, revealed the presence of one ‘floor’ that was exposed long enough for water-laid sediments to accumulate on it. What Dr. Green thought might be an overlying collapsed burnt structure turned out to be a midden deposit that was lacking any obvious ash. Dates from the midden layer fall between 1400-1200 BC within the range for Poverty Point.

Dr. Greenlee also provided a preliminary update on the results of the remote sensing survey of the Raley property. The work was conducted by Ohio Valley Archaeology, Inc. and included magnetometer survey of the entire property as well as ground-penetrating radar (GPR) and electrical resistivity survey of selected areas. Only the preliminary map of the magnetometer data is available and it identifies several areas that were selected for the subsequent GPR and resistivity survey. The shovel test survey of the property will begin in February 2025.

# Other Business

There was no other business before the Commission.

***Motion:*** *Dr. Mark Rees moved that the Commission meeting be adjourned. It was seconded by Ms. Julie Doucet. The motion passed unanimously.*

The meeting adjourned at 3:15 PM.

