Louisiana

Archaeological

Survey and

Antiquities

Commission

September 10, 2019 Meeting

The Louisiana Archaeological Survey and Antiquities Commission met on Tuesday, September 10, 2019, at 1:30 p.m. in the 4th floor conference room, 1051 N. 3rd Street, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

# Members Present:

Dr. Chip McGimsey

Dr. George Riser

Dr. Mark Rees

Mr. Mark Hogan

Ms. Kimberly Walden

Ms. Pat Arnould

Mr. Ray Berthelot

Dr. Heather McKillop

# Members Absent:

Ms. Kathe Hambrick

# Others Present:

Dr. Diana Greenlee

Dr. Valerie Feathers

Ms. Emily Dale

# Welcome & Introductions

The Chair, Dr. Heather McKillop, called the meeting to order at 1:35 PM. All persons at the meeting introduced themselves. Dr. McGimsey took the notes for meeting.

Dr. McKillop noted in her welcome that today was Independence Day for Belize. She noted that she missed the June Commission meeting due to conducting fieldwork in Belize at that time. She also noted that the South-Central Conference on Meso-american Archaeology will be held Oct 18-20, 2019, at LSU; paper abstracts are due by 15 September. The Department of Anthropology and Geography officially begins the Anthropology PhD program this fall. Dr. McKillop also noted the recent passing of Robert Neuman, former Curator of Anthropology at LSU, who undertook numerous investigations around the state during his tenure. And the passing of Dr. Robert Connolly, the first Poverty Point Station Archaeologist.

Everyone at the meeting introduced themselves.

**Approval of Minutes**

**MOTION:** *A motion was made by Dr. Mark Rees and seconded by Ms. Pat Arnould, to accept the minutes of the June 11, 2019, Antiquities Commission Meeting. The motion carried unanimously.*

# Old Business

The Commission currently has two open vacancies, and there was brief discussion of possible candidates to fill those positions. Kathleen Bergeron and Tad Britt had been previously suggested, and the additional names of Doug Cochran, suggested by Dr. McKillop, and Rich Weinstein, suggested by Dr. Rees, were put forward. AT least two nominees for each vacancy have to be forwarded to the Governor’s Office for Boards and Commissions for consideration.

# New Business

Division Update

Dr. McGimsey stated that the Division’s budget for this fiscal year is in good shape. It is the same operating budget as last year with no new monies, but also no reductions. He also noted that they had advertised for the vacant position and hoped to receive the list of eligible candidates from Human Resources in the next week or so. It is hoped the position will be filled by the first of the new year or sooner.

Archaeology Month Update

Dr. Valerie Feathers provided an update on the Outreach Program activities and Archaeology Month 2019. She has developed a Discover Archaeology presentation, which includes a series of class presentations presenting the basics of archaeology; the fourth day includes the excavation of a dig box. This program incorporates the Project Archaeology curriculum, including what is archaeology, classification, context, stratigraphy, dating, and site gridding, and the mock excavation. Each of the first three presentations includes a 15 minute lecture followed by one or more hands-on activities emphasizing that day’s topic. She had held an expanded version of this program over a three week period to students at the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired. This program will be given to several schools during Archaeology Month.

In development are creation of a lithic and ceramic database that among other goals, will be used to develop an Archaeology of Louisiana teaching kit. This will include numerous 3-D scans of artifacts for use in the kits. She is also hoping to begin work on an archaeology coloring book.

For Archaeology Month 2019, there will be numerous activities around the state running from 21 September through 16 November. Several of these will be school presentations, while others will have Division staff hosting a table at events. There are also four artifact exhibits opening in October. A copy of the Archaeology Month poster illustrating site loss in the coastal parishes was presented.

Dr. Feathers also noted that she and Dr. Watson are organizing s symposium on Recent Discoveries in Louisiana Archaeology for the upcoming Southeastern Archaeological Conference scheduled for Jackson, MS, on November 6-9.

*Update on Poverty Point Research*

Dr. Greenlee gave a presentation on research activities at the site over the last year. One project was the investigation of the Ridge 2 negative perimeter anomalies. Systematic survey of the site’s ridges using a magnetometer had revealed important details about their organization and structure. An area of lower magnetic values was observed along the edge of some ridges and help to define their extent. But it was unclear what this zone of lower magnetism represented. Two years ago, a series of soil cores were taken across three of these ring anomalies. The cores revealed that this area consisted of a slightly sandier soil than the surrounding sediment and is slightly topographically higher than the original ground surface under each ridge, suggesting that it is an intentional fill deposit. This anomaly also has low magnetic susceptibility. While the exact nature of this sandy deposit is not yet determined, it appears to be clearly linked to the construction of these ridges.

A second project was the investigation of the west plaza rise. This is an area of higher elevation in the western part of the central plaza. Some researchers have speculated that the rise reflects the presence of a historic farmstead at this location, which was simply not plowed down to the same extent as the surrounding fields, or that the house was placed here simply because it was a naturally higher area. In 1972, Dr. Haag conducted a series of excavations in this area but did not really address the nature of the elevation. Interestingly, this rise appears to lie along an elevated ridge that runs from Mound E to Mound G. A series of soil cores were placed across the rise and magnetic susceptibility data taken from each core hole. The results clearly demonstrate that the rise is a constructed feature. A date from the base of the fill came back at approximately 1,500 BC, indicating it is part of the Poverty Point constructions at the site. Dr. Greenlee and colleagues have obtained funding to undertake a 3-D ground penetrating radar survey over the rise with the hope that this will yield more information about the nature and construction of this feature. The work will hopefully occur in late November.

A third project was the investigation of the proposed new sewage treatment facility for the dormitory. This would involve the excavation of a new treatment pond, as well as new lines running to the pond. In 2017, shovel testing revealed that artifacts from the Poverty Point era as well as later occupations were present in this area of the site. In addition, a magnetometer survey was also conducted but did not reveal any large anomalies. In July, a series of test units were excavated at the location of the proposed treatment facility. In addition to several historic plow scars, the remnants of three possible prehistoric features were observed, and a number of Poverty Point and later pre-contact artifacts recovered. The investigation determined that no significant archaeological deposits would be impacted by the construction of the new facility.

A fourth project was the continuation of the Poverty Point Compatible Use Zone (CUZ) survey. The CUZ represents an area three miles on each side of the site in which the goal is minimize development so as to preserve the rural character of the site. Dr. Greenlee and colleagues are hoping eventually to survey the entire CUZ to assess the nature and scale of Poverty Point occupations outside the main site itself. During the last year, they focused their efforts on property immediately across Bayou Macon from the site. In total, they were able to survey 76.5 acres, including the excavation of 25 shovel tests. Over 4,700 artifacts were located and piece-plotted. As part of this effort, a magnetometer survey was also conducted around Lower Jackson Mound.

Dr. Rees asked how the survey sampling strategy was determined. Dr. Greenlee replied that it depended on several factors: which areas had not been previously surveyed, which fields they had landowner permission to survey, and which fields had a good surface visibility permitting walkover survey. She noted that many farmers in that area are practicing no-till agriculture, and don’t plow until just before they plant.

Dr. Rees asked if they had any preliminary ideas about the overall site settlement pattern, and could that be used to guide future survey. Dr. Greenlee noted that it is possible to do some very limited excavation and remote sensing, but that the guidelines of her grant did not permit extensive work examining sites away from Poverty Point. Dr. Rees asked if any artifactually dense sites had been found, and Dr. Greenlee noted that one locality directly across the bayou from the central plaza had a very dense scatter of Poverty Point artifacts. She is hoping to do some soil coring and limited test excavations here sometime in the future.

Dr. Rees asked if the results of these investigations were being incorporated into the outreach presentations. Dr. Greenlee noted that she and the Park staff are revising the hiking trail guide now. She is still waiting for the extensive magnetometer survey of the site to be published before it can be included in outreach presentations. Dr. McKillop stated how impressed she was with the amount of work conducted this past year and the effort put into working with landowners and the general public.

Limited Permit for Dr. Greenlee

Dr. McGimsey stated that every year Dr. Greenlee needs a permit to conduct limited investigations at the Poverty Point site. This permit is reviewed and approved by the Commission and that it was time to do so for the current fiscal year.

***Motion****: Mr. Ray Berthelot moved that the Commission approve a permit for Dr. Greenlee for the 2019/2020 fiscal year. The motion was seconded by Ms. Kim Walden. The motion passed unanimously.*

# Other Business

Dr. Rees announced the opening of the new Public Archaeology Laboratory at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and noted they had had an open house on 6 September at which the Division staff had attended. This facility is where the New Acadia project staff, and those working on contract projects for the US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service will be housed.

Dr. Rees also noted the ongoing Mississippi River Delta Archaeological Mitigation project (MRDAM). Mr. Sam Huey and Dr. Tad Britt from the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training will be undertaking a survey of eroding sites in the Barataria Bay region of the state in the near future. This effort will also include collecting drone footage of the sites, and the efforts of Ms. Dayna Lee to undertake outreach and consulting with community groups.

Dr. Rees indicated that the Lab is also providing help for an archaeological survey of the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana reservation near Kinder, LA. An archaeologist will be hired to oversee this effort, which will include education and professional training to Tribal staff.

Ms. Dale asked if the MRDAM site visits would be providing site update forms for the record; Dr. Rees stated that yes they would.

***Motion:*** *Mr. George Rise moved that the Commission meeting be adjourned. It was seconded by Mr. Ray Berthelot. The motion passed unanimously.*

The meeting adjourned at 2:55 PM.

