



MITCHELL J. LANDRIEU  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

**State of Louisiana**  
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR  
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM  
OFFICE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT  
DIVISION OF ARCHAEOLOGY

ANGÈLE DAVIS  
SECRETARY  
  
PAM BREAU  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

August 3, 2007

Ms. Elizabeth Wiggins  
Chief, Environmental  
Planning and Compliance Branch  
USACE, New Orleans District  
P.O. Box 60267  
New Orleans, LA 70160-0267

Re: CRM Management Summary  
*Phase I Cultural Resources Records Review  
and Field Reconnaissance Performed for Lake  
Pontchartrain and Vicinity Project, Individual  
Environmental Report Area 1, (IER#1): La  
Branch Wetlands Levee, St. Charles Parish, LA*  
R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc.

Dear Ms. Wiggins:

We acknowledge receipt of your letter dated June 25, 2007, transmitting two copies of the above-referenced Management Summary report. The following comments are offered for your consideration.

Based on the results on the recently completed background and field investigations, we concur with the findings of the Management Summary that historic properties will not be affected as a result of construction of the proposed project. Consequently, we have no objections to its implementation from a Section 106 review and consultation standpoint.

We look forward to working to receiving two copies of the draft CRM report. Please include two copies of site record forms for previously recorded archaeological sites 16SC65, 16SC66, and 16SC67, which were investigated during the recent fieldwork. A few minor corrections are noted on the enclosed photocopied pages from the Management Summary. If we may be of further assistance, do not hesitate to contact Duke Rivet in the Division of Archaeology at (225) 342-8170.

Ms. Elizabeth Wiggins  
August 3, 2007  
Page 2

Sincerely,

*Pam Breaux*

Pam Breaux  
State Historic Preservation Officer

PB:PR:s

c: Mr. Robert Lackowicz (w/copy of enclosure)  
R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc.  
309 Jefferson Highway, Suite A  
New Orleans, LA 70121

by the coastal marshlands of the Louisiana Chenier Plain, on the east by the Gulf of Mexico, and on the north by the Mississippi River Alluvial Valley. A distinct physiographic unit, the plain is a broad, low-lying tract of alluvial land with an extensive network of distributaries that radiate largely gulfward either from an abandoned or active Mississippi River course.

The physiographic region of IER#1 is dominated by natural levee ridges and wetlands. The narrow natural levee ridges flank the present course of the Mississippi River and its numerous abandoned deltaic distributaries (Fisk 1944; Kolb and VanLopik 1958; Frazier and Osanik 1965). The wetlands consist of swamps, marshes, shallow lakes, and tidal channels that have water tables at or above the surface most of the time. Swamps are in broad depressions or basins distant from the natural levees of the Mississippi River and its distributaries, whereas marshes are adjacent to Lake Pontchartrain.

The topography of St. Charles Parish is typical of the lower Mississippi River region. The land slopes away from the Mississippi River and its natural levees, toward the lower swamps and marshes. Historically, drainage from the East Bank of the Mississippi River runs northerly through a system of open ditches and canals, into the swamps and marshes bordering Lake Pontchartrain.

### Geologic History and Chronology

The period from about 18,000 to 11,000 years ago marked the waning of the Late Wisconsin glaciation, the wasting of the Laurentide ice sheet over North America, and the rapid and major rise in sea level known as the Holocene transgression. As the Mississippi River continued to transport huge volumes of meltwater and outwash to the Gulf of Mexico, the coastline retreated rapidly inland away from the Mississippi entrenchment. At first, the lower ends of the entrenchments of the smaller streams were inundated, but then the entire Pleistocene surface was submerged and overridden by shallow water marine deposits.

About 12,000 years ago, the entire region experienced a variety of dramatic changes. Within a matter of a few centuries, the Mississippi River ceased carrying large quantities of glacial outwash and it was subsequently transformed from a braided to a meandering regime. The dominant sediment load of the river changed from sands and gravels to mostly clays, silts, and fine sands. About 9,000 years ago, the first Mississippi River delta complex - the Outer Shoal complex - formed well offshore from central coastal Louisiana when sea level was perhaps about 15 m (49.2 ft) lower than at present (Penland et al. 1988). Apparently this complex was inundated and largely destroyed within a thousand years by rising sea level, but it was followed by a second one - the Maringouin complex - that formed about 7,000 years ago slightly farther inland and at a higher elevation (about 5 m [16.4 ft] lower than at present). Geological studies indicate that the trunk course of the Mississippi River associated with both delta complexes was located along the western side of the alluvial valley, i.e., along the route of the later Teche meander belt (Saucier 1994).

With sea level only slightly lower than at present, the Mississippi River began constructing the Teche meander belt and Teche delta complex about 6,000 years ago (Saucier 1994). About 4,800 years ago, the Teche delta complex had developed to the southwest into the Houma, Louisiana area. At that time and because of a major upstream diversion, the Mississippi River began forming a new meander belt along the eastern side of its valley past the Baton Rouge, Louisiana area and it began constructing a delta complex (the St. Bernard complex) eastward into and beyond the New Orleans area. Within less than a millennium, the embayment was transformed into an active deltaic plain landscape with seasonal influxes of large volumes of turbid fresh water, the rapid eastward and southeastward growth of distributaries, and the formation of broad expanses of intratidal wetlands. Sea level at this time probably was not more than a meter or so below that of the present and it was rising slowly.

Considerable subsurface geological evidence (Kolb 1962; Saucier 1963) indicates that from at least 4,000 years ago, the Mississippi River has occupied a well developed meander belt essentially along its present route from Donaldsonville, eastward past New Orleans, Louisiana, including the current project

respect to groundstone, bone, and antler implements. Middle Archaic projectile point/knife types tend to be stemmed rather than notched, and in Louisiana include such types as Morrow Mountain, Johnson, Edgewood, Evans, and possibly Calcasieu types (Campbell et al. 1990:96; Green 1991; Perino 1985, 1991; Saunders 2000). Other technological innovations include the appearance of ground, pecked, and polished stone tools and the use of celts and grooved axes for heavy woodworking. The *atlatl* or spear thrower first appeared during the Middle Archaic, as indicated by bone *atlatl* hooks and by the appearance of groundstone bannerstones. In addition, the earliest moundbuilding cultures developed in the Lower Mississippi Valley in the latter half of the Middle Archaic period. In south Louisiana, examples of Middle Archaic mound sites include the LSU Campus Mounds (16EBR6), Banana Bayou (16IB24), Hornsby (16SH21), and Monte Sano (16EBR17) (Gibson 1994; R. Saunders 1994; Saunders 1999, 2000, 2003; Saunders et al. 1994).

The Late Archaic period represents a time of population growth as demonstrated by an increased number of sites dating from this period in the United States. Hallmarks of the Late Archaic period include intensification of moundbuilding, inter-regional trade of exotic materials, the production of steatite stone vessels, and the advent of fiber-tempered pottery. Late Archaic period projectile point/knife types commonly found throughout Louisiana consist of stemmed and corner notched forms, including Bulverde, Carrollton, Delhi, Ellis, Ensor, Epps, Gary, Kent, Macon, Marcos, Palmillas, Pontchartrain, Sinner, and Yarbrough types. Groundstone objects include celts/axes, bannerstones, plummets, and steatite bowl fragments (Campbell et al. 1990; Jeter et al. 1989). Additionally, there is evidence for widespread trade in shell, copper, slate, greenstone, and jasper ornaments, including carved stone zoomorphic locust beads, during Late Archaic times (Blitz 1993; Brose 1979; Smith 1986:31; Steponaitis 1986:374).

#### **Poverty Point Culture (1700 – 500 B.C.)**

The Poverty Point culture is named after the type-site (16WC5), which is located in northeastern Louisiana. It is characterized by the construction of extensive earthworks, by the presence of baked clay balls, and by a microlithic stone tool industry (Ford and Webb 1956; Kuttruff 1975; Webb 1968). At the time of its construction, the Poverty Point site was the largest earthwork in the Americas (Gibson 1985; Muller 1978). The presence of non-utilitarian items such as lapidary work, panpipes, and animal effigies in stone and shell suggests some degree of incipient social stratification in Poverty Point culture (Gibson 1974:29). The creation of extensive intra and inter-regional trade works are also evident through the distribution of these “exotic” artifacts over the landscape. Contemporary interpretations suggest that Poverty Point Culture may represent the first chiefdom-level society to develop in the eastern United States (Gibson 1985; Muller 1978), although some more recent assessments prefer to see Poverty Point as an prosperous egalitarian society (Gibson 2000:207-215).

For the project area, the Bayou Jasmine and Garcia Phases (Gagliano and Saucier#1963; Gagliano et al. 1975; Weinstein et al. 1977b) and the Claiborne Community (Gibson 2000) represent interpretations of the local manifestation of the Poverty Point Culture based on the largest period sites identified in the area. Unfortunately, at the Bayou Jasmine Site (16SJB2) the Poverty Point component lies beyond the water table and has not been excavated (Neuman 1984), and Garcia (16OR34), Claiborne (22HA35), and Cederland Plantation (22HA30) all have been destroyed. Limited excavations at Claiborne (Bruseth 1991) and surface collections at all four sites have shown reduced evidence of a rich local manifestation of the Poverty Point Culture (Bruseth 1991; Gagliano 1963; Gagliano and Saucier#1963; Neuman 1984), but the basic issue of site chronology has yet to be resolved.

#### Woodland Stage

Despite the many innovations introduced during Poverty Point times, this culture typically is portrayed as either a Late Archaic period or a pre-Woodland Stage transitional manifestation. The emergence of the

Creek cultural traits into what now is recognized as the Plaquemine Culture, sometime before A.D. 1200 (Jeter et al. 1989; Williams and Brain 1983).

Coles Creek peoples developed a new ceramic complex that included the production of larger vessels and a wider range of decorative motifs, usually positioned on the upper portion of the vessel (Neuman 1984). A number of small arrow point types make their appearance during the Coles Creek period, reflecting the continuing development and diffusion of the bow and arrow.

The hierarchy of site types included multi-mound village centers, subordinate single mound villages, non-mound villages and hamlets, and resource extraction locales or seasonal camps (Jeter et al. 1989:150; Weinstein and Kelley 1992). Natural levees situated along old cutoffs and inactive channels appear to have been the most desirable locations for settlement, while beach ridges were the most desired landforms on the Louisiana Gulf Coast. It seems likely that each multi-mound village center controlled a specific natural levee system or series of levee systems along which were located the next level of sites in the overall site hierarchy (Weinstein and Kelley 1992:351). This pattern resulted in a hierarchy in which all settlements on the natural levee of a particular relict channel or backswamp were subordinated to a paramount multi-mound center (Neuman 1984; Smith et al. 1983).

Research in southern Louisiana suggests that Coles Creek Culture in this region is distinct from that in the interior, and the period has been subdivided temporally and geographically in the Lower Mississippi Valley (Brown 1984; Kidder 1995; Phillips 1970; Weinstein 1985; Weinstein and Kelley 1992). Recognized Coles Creek phases in southeastern Louisiana include Bayou Cutler, Bayou Ramos, and St. Gabriel. The Bayou Cutler phase, spanning the early Coles Creek period, is perhaps best represented by a major cluster of sites located along Bayou Barataria including Flemming (16JE36), Isle Bonne (16JE60), Bayou Cutler I (16JE3) and Chenier St. Dennis (16JE2). Later Bayou Ramos phase components overlap the Bayou Cutler phase at some of the Bayou Barataria sites, and a concentration of sites dating from this phase occur in the project area on the levees of Bayou LaLoutre (Jones et al. 1994:418). The St. Gabriel phase, representing the transition from Coles Creek to Plaquemine Culture, is based largely on data collected from the St. Gabriel Site (16IB128) south of Baton Rouge (Woodiel 1993). Contemporary components have also been found at Mulatto Bayou (16SB12) and Pump Canal (16SC27) (Jones et al. 1994).

#### The Mississippian Stage and Plaquemine Culture

The Mississippian Stage marks the advent of a variety of interrelated regional "Mississippian" cultures who shared common systems of sociopolitical, economic, and religious organization. The advent of the Mississippian Stage is manifested at sites in the Lower Mississippi Valley and along the northern Gulf Coast through incorporation of traits such as shell tempered ceramics, triangular arrow points, and copper-sheathed wooden earspools (Williams and Brain 1983). The cultural tradition prevalent in southeastern Louisiana is referred to as Plaquemine Culture, which emerged from the preceding Coles Creek Culture in the Lower Mississippi Valley by A.D. 1200 (Kidder 1995; Neuman 1984; Weinstein and Kelley 1992).

The Plaquemine Culture site type, Medora (16WBR1), was located on the Mississippi River floodplain at Manchac Point, south of Baton Rouge, and was characterized as a ceremonial center (Quimby 1951). The following traits characterize Plaquemine Culture: the construction of truncated pyramidal (platform) mounds in association with an adjacent plaza; mounds built in stages; square or circular buildings (temples) associated with mounds; and, a distinctive ceramic assemblage characterized by a comparatively high proportion of plain dishpan-shaped bowls, jars with brushed decoration, and plates with interior decoration (Quimby 1951:129). Plaquemine Culture was also marked by settlement patterns, economic organization, and religious practices that were established during the Coles Creek period.