

Ancient Mounds Heritage Area  
and  
Trails Advisory Commission

Organizational Meeting

28 May 2015

Ancient Mounds Heritage Area and Trails Advisory Commission  
Organizational Meeting

Date and Time: 28 May 2015 (Thursday), 1-3pm

Location: Capital Annex Bldg., Lt. Governor's Conference Room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor

Purpose: organize task forces and action items for commission

**Meeting Chair:**

Cathy Berry, Chief of Staff, Office of Lt. Governor

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**Attendees:**

Pam Breaux, Office of Cultural Development

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John Barbry, Tunica-Biloxi Tribe

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Tana Trichel, NE Louisiana Economic Alliance

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Dwight Landreneau, Office of State Parks

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Ray Berthelot, Office of State Parks

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Nancy Hawkins, Division of Archaeology

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Eddie Russell, West Carroll Parish Police Juror

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Kyle Edmiston, Office of Tourism

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Diana Greenlee, Station Archaeologist, Poverty Point

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Gary Stringer, Advocates for Poverty Point

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Guthrie Jarrell, Native of Epps and PP Enthusiast (not present)

**Welcome and Introductions**

Cathy Berry called the meeting to order at 1:03pm. Ms. Berry sent regards to the Commission from Lt. Governor Jay Dardenne who could not attend. Ms. Berry suggested that the meeting begin with introductions. All present stated their name and affiliation.

Ms. Berry recognized Pam Breaux, her many years of service and accomplishments, as well as her impending departure from the Office of Cultural Development. Ms. Berry invited Ms. Breaux to begin the meeting with an overview of the Ancient Mounds Heritage Area and Trails Advisory Commission.

**Overview of the Ancient Mounds Heritage Area and Trails Advisory Commission**

Pam Breaux began with a little history of the Ancient Mounds Commission, originally established in 1994, and recently re-activated. The Commission was originally created to preserve prehistoric patrimony. It identified and documented 39 mounds and produced the Northeast Louisiana Driving Trail. The Commission was re-activated because of Poverty Point's

nomination and subsequent listing as a World Heritage Site. Ms. Breaux commented on four (legislative) mandates for the re-activated Commission:

1. Protect and preserve the site and setting;
2. Continue archaeological studies;
3. Provide for cultural enhancement, educational opportunities, and tourism development for the region;
4. Involve and communicate with stakeholders in Poverty Point.

Ms. Breaux stated that there were companion/complementary goals that would be discussed later in the meeting, as part of the Poverty Point World Heritage Site (PPWHS) management plan. Participants in the plan include the Office of the Lt. Governor, the Office of Cultural Development, and the Office of State Parks.

### **Poverty Point World Heritage Site – CRT Updates**

Nancy Hawkins – *New Video for Poverty Point*. Ms. Hawkins says a new video for Poverty Point is just about ready. Ray Berthelot commented that the new video could be available by the end of June 2015. Ms. Berry commented that it had been viewed and commented on by the Lt. Governor's office, and now is in the hands of Ms. Hawkins.

Nancy Hawkins – *Brochure for Poverty Point*. Ms. Hawkins passed around a copy of the new brochure for Poverty Point. She shared with the commission that the Office of Lt. Governor was responsible for coordinating the design, and paid for the initial printing of the brochures. The National Park Service has offered to pay for a second printing. Ms. Hawkins indicated that the brochures will be shipped to Louisiana Welcome Centers, to Tribes, to Mississippi Welcome Centers, local Visitor's Centers, as well as the Welcome Centers for Arkansas and Vicksburg. Kyle Edmiston commented that the brochures would be distributed through the Louisiana Travel Promotion Association (LTPA). Mr. Edmiston continued with a comment that the Travel South USA Domestic Showcase, a gathering focused on tour operators and motor coach operators for southern travel destinations, would be a great place to present the new Poverty Point video and brochure. Mr. Edmiston will comment more on this in his update later in the meeting.

Nancy Hawkins – *New Websites*. Ms. Hawkins commented that a new website has been designed for Poverty Point, by the same company that produced the new brochure: <http://povertypoint.us>. This new website and the website currently being designed in the Division of Archaeology (DOA) will be cross-linked. Ms. Hawkins stated the two websites have slightly different audiences.

Ms. Hawkins also commented that all copies of the Poverty Point Explorer's Guide, a publication intended for younger audiences, were given out at the Dedication Ceremony in October 2014. Ms. Hawkins provided the Commission with copies of the Ancient Mound Sites of Louisiana brochure, the Indian Mounds of Northeast Louisiana Driving Trail guide, a screenshot of the new Poverty Point video which was available for viewing on YouTube, the new Poverty Point brochure, the first page of the <http://povertypoint.us/> website, the first page of the new Poverty Point website created by the Division of Archaeology, and a copy of the Poverty Point Explorer's Guide.

There was a comment about staff to work on the Commission. Ms. Breaux took a moment to comment to the group that Julie Doucet would soon join the Commission as full time staff. Ms. Doucet would work to ensure that the actions of the Commission are carried out.

Diana Greenlee – *Station Archaeology Activity*. Dr. Greenlee commented that her and Jenny Ellerbe's new book, *Poverty Point: Revealing the Forgotten City*, has been published. It can't be sold at the Park because OSP has issued a stay on purchasing things for resale. Gary Stringer, with the Advocates for Poverty Point (APP), commented that APP is considering buying the books and placing them at the Park for resale. Dr. Greenlee showed a map issued by UNESCO that shows all of the World Heritage Sites inscribed through 2014, including Poverty Point. It is available from the World Heritage Centre's website.

Dr. Greenlee continued with an update on the conditions at the site. She indicated there were erosional issues related to a 2013 rainstorm, and the state's efforts to stabilize the erosion began in January 2015. Dr. Greenlee indicated that progress was slowed due to all the rain we've experienced lately. Mound F, the newest mound, is in the newly released book but was not mentioned in the Poverty Point nomination.

Dwight Landreneau – *PPWHS Activities and Update*. Mr. Landreneau informed the Commission that there were two resignations at Poverty Point: David Griffing is retiring as Site Manager, and an Interpretative Ranger has also resigned. Mr. Landreneau indicated that Mr. Griffing agreed to stay on an extra month in order to train a new manager. Ray Berthelot commented that an internal and external call for applications for the interpretative ranger position is out, and that the application period was closed by the time of the Commission meeting. An advertisement was imminent for the site manager, and at the writing of these minutes (10 June 2015) the advertisement is out.

Mr. Landreneau spoke next about an exciting development that will impact prehistoric sites in Louisiana. The C.H. Nash Museum at Chucalissa, a division of the University of Memphis, was awarded the 2015 Public Outreach Grant of the Southeast Archaeological Conference (SEAC) for a tourism-focused project "Promoting Prehistoric Sites Along the Mississippi River in the Southeast US." The brochure, which will include information about Marksville and Poverty Point, is unique in that it presents information about prehistoric and historic Native American venues located in multiple states along the Mississippi River drainage. In so doing, the brochure goes beyond typical state products and follows the actual trajectory of many cultural heritage visitors – the Mississippi River or Great River Road. The new project will consist of the following: an updated and expanded brochure that features eighteen prehistoric or Native American museums within a 90-minute drive of the Mississippi River in the Southeast US, and a website presence that will link to each museum and archaeological site featured. (This description provided to Julie Doucet by Ray Berthelot.)

Mr. Landreneau spoke about collaborating with Dr. Greenlee regarding a Poverty Point exhibit at the Old Post Office Museum in Winnsboro featuring artifacts from the collections and paintings by Martin Pate. A similar exhibit will also appear at the Union Museum of History and Art in Farmerville, 22 July–8 October.

An update was requested on the highway marker taken down by DOTD workers during the replacement of the “steel bridge” south of Poverty Point. The marker was somewhat weathered and contained obsolete information. Rather than return it to its original location, it was decided that it should be replaced with one containing up-to-date information about the site. Dr. Greenlee wrote the text and collaborated with Ms. Carolyn Brown of the Louisiana Society Daughters of the American Colonists on the application for a new marker. Mr. Berthelot commented that on May 18, 2015, the Louisiana Society, Daughters of the American Colonists dedicated the new roadside marker near the Poverty Point World Heritage Site commemorating the significance of the site.

Next, many people began discussing the advertisements for the soon-to-be vacant site manager and interpretative ranger positions at Poverty Point. A few things were clear: the application time was brief, and a civil service examination was a required part of the application. Julie Samson commented that such a short application period didn’t give people time to take the test, as this test wasn’t administered everywhere. There was a comment that, to obtain the largest possible applicant pool, the application period should be extended to accommodate access to the test.

Kyle Edmiston – *International Marketing*. Mr. Edmiston spoke a little more about the Travel South USA Domestic Showcase, held in Shreveport earlier this year. This organization focuses on sites in Virginia to Maryland and Florida to Georgia. It is an opportunity to get information on Poverty Point to tours and operators that are already operating in the area. Mr. Edmiston said that they have better success with the international market, such as Europeans, and especially Germans. He indicated that his office is connected to six firms that work outside of the US in Canada, the UK, Germany, France, Australia, Brazil, and China. He said the new Poverty Point video and brochure would be sent to those firms. Mr. Edmiston said that a large number of German tourists were scheduled to visit Louisiana in November 2015, and one of the groups is scheduled to visit Poverty Point.

Mr. Edmiston also spoke about another opportunity to showcase Poverty Point, at the IPW 2016 (<https://www.ipw.com/>), scheduled to be held in New Orleans. He indicated that this is the largest international tour operator conference in the world and could really get the word out about Poverty Point. He also commented (and this recorder did not catch everything) that there is a four parish tourist commission/committee proposal to include East Carroll, West Carroll, Richland, and Madison parishes. Senator Walsworth is pushing the four parish tourist commission/committee proposal forward and is the point person. This commission/committee would focus on marketing and promotion for the northeast corner of Louisiana.

### **Advocates for Poverty Point Update**

Gary Stringer – Dr. Stringer spoke to the Commission about the efforts of APP on public awareness, advocacy, and public support. APP has completed the process of becoming a nonprofit 501(c)(3). APP is governed by a board of directors that currently includes Dr. Stringer as President, Dr. George Riser as Vice President, and Dr. Sean Chenoweth as Treasurer. Dr. Stringer commented that the station archaeologist and the Poverty Point site manager are also board members. Dr. Stringer stated that APP members participated in many aspects of the Poverty Point nomination and dedication, including ICOMOS meetings. Dr. Stringer continued that APP has sponsored or co-sponsored eight public presentations, and was represented at many

meetings, including the Louisiana Archaeological Society Annual Meeting, Culture Connections in Baton Rouge, and the Historical Trust Preservation Reception in Baton Rouge. Dr. Stringer said APP has a presentation that is part of the Board of Regents and National Science Foundation's "Speaking of Science" Program which he presents all over the state. APP, with guidance from Culture, Recreation and Tourism (CRT) sponsored two golf tournaments at the Black Bear Golf Course in Delhi to raise funds and awareness of the site. The Jena Band of Choctaw Indians also made a contribution to the event. APP helped with warm bodies for work at Poverty Point on the erosion issues with Mound A. And, APP provided funding for two new signs entering Epps, and maintains a Facebook page and a website. Dr. Stringer commented that he was somewhat disappointed that more people have not joined APP. He passed out a membership form along with a summary of his update.

### **UNESCO World Heritage Committee Report**

Diana Greenlee commented that a report is due December 1, 2015, and will address items raised in the review of the nomination of the site: the continued scientific investigation and land acquisition at and around the site, and minimization of the impact of Hwy 577 on visitor experience. Dr. Greenlee commented that she has been advised that if we put together a really good report UNESCO may not require future reports. Dr. Greenlee said she was working with Nancy Hawkins and Phyllis Ellin (NPS Office of International Affairs) on the report. They have an outline and are working on a draft.

Regarding the minimization of the impact of Hwy 577 on the visitor experience of the site, Dr. Greenlee said that the Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) enhanced crosswalks and signage, and painted a double line to indicate a "no passing zone" on the road through the park. She commented that DOTD was treating Hwy 577 as a regular highway and not a highway passing through a park. Dr. Greenlee had requested that the speed limit, currently 55 miles per hour, be reduced (and the district office of DOTD recommended it be reduced to 45 miles per hour), but the DOTD office in Baton Rouge rejected the request. The stretch of road in question is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of Hwy 577 through the park. Dr. Greenlee commented that perhaps collecting more data may help our bid to reduce the speed limit through the site, and then the request can be made to DOTD again. Dr. Greenlee also talked about our need to monitor the amount of through-traffic in the park. She indicated that DOTD previously placed equipment to record the amount of traffic through the site, but only for a week at a time. According to Dr. Greenlee, those counts showed great, probably seasonal, variation. She suggested that we need to collect data over a longer period, perhaps a year, to get a better sense of the road usage.

Several conversations ensued at this point about making a stronger case to DOTD to reduce the speed limit at the park. Eddie Russell said that a resolution from Dr. Greenlee and the West Carroll Parish Policy Jury would likely make a strong case. Tana Trichel commented that this was a safety concern for visitors to the site, especially children, and there should be lower speeds through the park. Dr. Stringer said that many people are looking around the site in wonder and not really paying attention to the road, which is definitely hazardous. Mr. Landreneau suggested that maybe a blinking light could be installed that would flash when motorists need to reduce speeds. Phil Boggan suggested that a formal, high level recommendation from the Office of the Lt. Governor, the West Carroll Parish Police Jury, and the Advocates for Poverty Point might be

a way to get DOTD to reconsider their decision and reduce the speed on the stretch of road through the park.

There was a motion for a joint resolution to reduce the speed on Hwy 577 from 55 miles per hour to 45 miles per hour through the park. The motion was made by Ms. Trichel and seconded by Ms. Berry. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Boggan instructed Ms. Doucet to send the resolution to Eddie Russell (West Carroll Parish Police Jury). Julie Samson told Ms. Doucet that the Lt. Governor's office had resolution language, and Ms. Doucet will see to getting the resolution language.

### **Poverty Point World Heritage Site Museum and Interpretive Center and Observatory Capital Outlay Request**

Dwight Landreneau stated they asked for the best and hoped for something. He said it would take about \$32 million to do what we'd like. He said the request was approved, but no funding was awarded. But, if money does become available in the future the project already has approval. One priority was to approve a \$350,000 line of credit. This would be used for land acquisitions. Mr. Landreneau said they could accept donations of properties to the Office of State Parks. He said this was the only way to acquire new properties until a new administration was installed, and hopefully more funding will be available. Another priority was to request a distribution of \$2.5 million from the \$32 million. Both projects were approved, and if more funds are available later (new administration?) then more can be distributed. Mr. Landreneau commented that with the current support of the Lt. Governor and senators we could get some funds as they come available.

Ms. Berry suggested that the Friends groups should ask the Lt. Governor candidates about their position on Poverty Point. John Barbry asked if there were any funds or plans for funds to begin the planning of the updates to the site. Mr. Landreneau replied that there was no money to hire a planner, but he said that the Station Archaeologist, the Site Manager, and other Parks people can work together to come up with a plan. Mr. Landreneau stated that \$350,000 would not be enough to start the design phase. Mr. Berthelot commented that the design should wait until there was money to begin the updates. Mr. Berthelot said for the Los Adaes site they came up with a design, but by the time the money was there to begin, the design was outdated. He further suggested avoiding the initial investment in a design until you can follow through with the plan. Mr. Barbry asked if there was a plan for outside investors. Mr. Landreneau replied there was but not on the level of what was needed. Investors would have naming rights. Mr. Edmiston commented that Wildlife and Fisheries got approval for their vehicles to be sponsored by other companies. Ms. Berry asked whether we could get the legislature to add the option for tax payers to support the endeavor on state tax returns. Ms. Samson replied on this, but there was much discussion going on here, and this human recorder did not catch all that was said.

Mr. Russell went back to the resolution to reduce the speed limit at the site, and suggested that the request be for 30 miles per hour, as sometimes law enforcement allows 10 miles over the speed limit before stopping to issue a citation. There were several discussions at this point that were too numerous for this human recorder to catch. There wasn't a formal motion, but all were

in agreement to change the request on the resolution to 30 miles per hour rather than 45 miles per hour.

Ms. Berry suggested that we move forward with the next item on the agenda.

### **Overview of PPWHS Management Plan and Development of Task Forces**

Pam Breaux commented that she would combine her comments about Agenda Items #7 and #8, and will take a quick look at the goals for the task forces. These are spelled out in the agenda. There are four working committees that will be staffed by internal members who will be joined by stakeholders. Ms. Breaux said that the overarching goal is to serve the citizens of Louisiana and visitors to Poverty Point World Heritage Site. She continued saying the big picture is a management plan that protects and promotes the site. Ms. Breaux further commented this is going to be a balancing act, to ensure economic and tourism development, and site protection. She referred the commission to the Site Management Goal in the agenda: “to operate PPWHS in accordance with the highest standards of management, to retain the balance among: conserving the above- and below-ground material fabric of the site; supporting a diverse natural habitat; enhancing interpretation and visitor services; addressing maintenance and management concerns; and encouraging ongoing scientific research and educational training.” Task forces will be built on these goals.

Ms. Breaux asked for recommendations of people to serve on the task forces, especially regarding advocates. Ms. Breaux commented that there is sheet in our handout that should be filled out by all commission members and submitted to Phil Boggan. Mr. Boggan is the point of contact for this Commission. (Since the organizational meeting, and upon Ms. Breaux’s departure from OCD, Mr. Boggan has assumed the position of Assistant Secretary.)

### **Discussion**

There were many discussions among commission members and stakeholders at this point. Someone suggested that Skip Smart from Louisiana Economic Development be brought in to serve on Task Force D (facilitate community based planning...). Ms. Trichel suggested that Win Rock, the foundation arm of the Rockefeller Foundation (<http://www.winrockusprograms.org/community-building-strategies/>) may be a useful organization to consider, and it could incorporate the four parish committee/commission. Ms. Trichel continued by saying that we need to make communities “development ready,” more so than in the past. The Main Street Program is small and usually includes one city or one community. Win Rock could accommodate a larger plan, particularly the four parish plan. Ms. Trichel commented that for the next meeting she would distribute what the Win Rock foundation is doing for ideas. Ms. Breaux returned us to the form in the handout soliciting comments and suggestions for people/organizations to serve on the task forces. Ms. Breaux directed the commission to coordinate with Phil Boggan, who is the point of contact for this commission, and he would be joined by Ms. Doucet later in July 2015.

Ms. Berry suggested that we perhaps consider bringing in Boy/Girl Scout groups, or Garden Clubs. Mr. Landreneau commented that State Parks already has a relationship with the Louisiana Master Gardeners.

There was a comment from someone about putting the Park Manager on a task force, and several more people commented that this position was essential for all task forces. Ms. Berry asked if there were fees charged to use the Poverty Point resources. To which Mr. Landreneau replied sometimes, but not usually, particularly if the work enhances the site. Mr. Barbry commented that the Tunica-Biloxi just had a Powwow on May 16-17, 2015 that attracted Native Americans from all over. He continued that they promote science and oral tradition in the meetings. Ms. Trichel asked if the location for the Powwow changed each year and could it be held at Poverty Point. Mr. Barbry replied that the location is usually chosen by the tribe hosting the Powwow. Ms. Trichel asked if we should contact the Bureau of Indian Affairs to help attract more Native groups and people. Mr. Barbry commented that it would be better to contact the Intertribal Council for Federal and State tribes, because the BIA is very broad and may not be as effective as more local groups who are invested in the community. Dr. Stringer suggested that Task Force C should have a strong Native American representation. Ms. Berry asked if Native Americans nationwide would be interested in Poverty Point. Mr. Barbry said yes, and that local Native American communities have people who travel and are involved in tourism. Ms. Berry suggested that maybe we should contact the “Duck Dynasty” people to promote the site. This suggestion met with about half of the commission considering the possibility and the other half not sure based on the reputation of that program. Ms. Berry then suggested that perhaps a run could be sponsored at Poverty Point. Ms. Samson asked if Louisiana Bike (<http://www.louisianatravel.com/bike>) would be a good group to partner with to promote Poverty Point. Ms. Doucet commented that there is a large bicycle event called Ragbrai (<http://ragbrai.com/>) that covers several states, and perhaps something similar could be planned for the four parish area, maybe focusing on the Mounds Driving Trail.

Ms. Breaux urged all present to let the Commission team hear about their suggestions in the coming week so they can schedule the next meeting. Mr. Boggan commented that email was the best way to reach him. Ms. Trichel asked if an email list could be sent with all who were present for this meeting.

Mr. Edmiston made a motion for the meeting to adjourn at 3:11 pm, and it was seconded by several people, including Ms. Berry.

### **Assigned Action Items:**

Resolution to reduce the speed limit on Hwy 577 through the Park to 30 miles per hour from the current 55 miles per hour. Ms. Doucet will work with Ms. Samson on getting this language together to send to the proper commission members (Diana Greenlee, Nancy Hawkins, Cathy Berry, Eddie Russell, and Gary Stringer).

Commission members to fill out questionnaire in handout and return to Phil Boggan.