
Poverty Point (United States of America) No 1435

Official name as proposed by the State Party

Monumental Earthworks of Poverty Point

Location

State of Louisiana
West Carroll Parish

Brief description

The Monumental Earthworks of Poverty Point are situated in the Lower Mississippi Valley on a slightly elevated and narrow landform overlooking the surrounding alluvial agricultural lowlands. The complex comprises five mounds, six concentric semi-elliptical ridges separated by shallow depressions, a central plaza, other features and borrow areas arranged to best exploit the natural topography. It was created and used for residential and ceremonial purposes by a society of hunter-fisher-gatherers between 3,700 and 3,100 BP.

Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*.

1 Basic data

Included in the Tentative List

30 January 2008

International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination

None

Date received by the World Heritage Centre

4 January 2013

Background

This is a new nomination.

Consultations

ICOMOS consulted its International Scientific Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management and several independent experts.

Technical Evaluation Mission

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the property from 13 to 16 September 2013.

Additional information requested and received from the State Party

A letter was sent to the State party on 25 September 2013 requesting additional information on the following points:

- Type and distribution of development areas in relation to Poverty Point and possible impact on the traffic volume through Highway 577;
- Type and likelihood of adverse impact from the Trunkline underground gas reservoirs;
- Landownership profile of the areas surrounding the nominated property.

The State Party responded on 23 October 2013 and the additional information provided has been incorporated into the relevant sections of this document.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

6 March 2014

2 The property

Description

Poverty Point – so named after a 19th century plantation located near the site – is situated in the Lower Mississippi Valley on a slightly elevated and narrow landform of Pleistocene origin, Macon Ridge, 25km west of the actual course of the Mississippi River. The Ridge is delimited to the east by a meandering brook, Bayou Maçon, while on the west it slopes down gently towards Holocene-age alluvial lowlands.

The site, because of its elevated position, has never been prone to flooding, although due to the nature of the soil, gully formation and permanently wet or boggy areas have always been a common occurrence, as attested to by the ancient land formations, which were already in place at the time Poverty Point was constructed.

The setting of the property today consists of open fields with interspersed clusters of trees and delimited marshy areas. It enables an appreciation of the nominated property's layout as it probably doesn't differ substantially from what existed at the time the Poverty Point earthworks were constructed and used, because the original, more extensive natural woodland will have quickly been impacted upon by human presence.

Poverty Point consists of a large monumental earthwork complex comprising five mounds (one of which is of later date), six concentric semi-elliptical ridges separated by shallow depressions, a central plaza, traces of a causeway, arranged to best exploit the natural topography, and related borrow areas. It was created during the Late Archaic period, between 3,700 and 3,100 BP by a society of hunter-fisher-gatherers. Research has not clarified yet whether the complex had a steady residential function or was a campground occupied temporarily during ceremonies or trading fairs.

At Poverty Point, earthwork construction involved firstly the preparation of the ground surface by levelling and evening-out the terrain, then earth was carried in baskets or leather bags and was built up either by dumping compacted dirt piles or by spreading it. The mounds were finished off with a thick layer of sediments mixed with artifacts.

Three of the four mounds – Mounds B, A and E - have been built along a north-south alignment to the west of the Macon Ridge elevation and of the Plaza, which is a semi-elliptical flat area enclosed by a system of six concentric earthen ridges. Further elements described below complete the compound.

Mound B (3,700-3,400 BP) is probably the first earthwork built at Poverty Point. It originally had a conical profile (H: 6.5m, basal diameter: 55m) now slightly modified by some slumping. It was once believed to be a cemetery area, but today this interpretation is no longer accepted. An artificial ridge connects mound B to the plaza.

Mound E, coeval with or slightly later than mound B, is located south of Mound A and is roughly rectangular in shape (H: 4m, 110mx90m).

Mound C, the dating of which remains uncertain, was built in the plaza at the eastern edge of Macon Ridge; it probably had a conical shape but it was bisected by a road in the historic era; it also suffered from erosion due to its being in the vicinity of the escarpments towards the Bayou Maçon.

Mound A (3,400-3,100 BP) is the largest and latest mound at Poverty Point and one of the largest in North America (H: 22m, 215x200m). It differs from the other mounds not only because of its size but also for its peculiar cross shape, resembling a flying bird. The eastern branch of the mound is shaped into an irregular platform, from which a steep ramp reaches the top of the other cone-shaped branch. To date, the function of all mounds remains unknown.

The *six concentric earthen ridges* are the most peculiar feature of Poverty Point. The diameter of the outer ridge is 1.14km while that of the inner one is 650m. Their height varies between 1-2m in certain cases, dropping to 10-30cm in others. The rounded top of the ridges is between 15-25m wide, the depressions in between – called swales – are between 20-30m in width. These were created by removal of the sediments which were used to build the ridges. These are divided into sectors by four hollowed alleyways or *aisles*. The ridge system appears to have been constructed in different phases. Research and physical evidence indicate that the ridges were the living areas of the complex.

The *Plaza* is today a flat and empty grassy area delimited eastwards by Bayou Maçon and by the inner ridge on the opposite side. Investigations have proved that the flatness of the Plaza was created artificially, by filling gullies and levelling humps; its height was raised through substantial

earthmoving. Traces of several postholes arranged in large circles, often intersecting each other, have been detected below ground. The function of the post circles remains uncertain although an astronomical purpose has been suggested.

The *bisector ridge* in the south western sector runs perpendicular to the ridges and is connected with the *causeway*, which is an elevated linear element connecting the ridges with the area south of a depression in the ground. The only practical way up to the site from the Bayou Maçon is a gentle slope named the *dock*: investigations have demonstrated that the upper part of the slope has been enhanced artificially to improve soil stability.

The archaeological features are today mostly covered with grass, as they probably were at the time of their construction: this is the result of recent management of the site, as abandonment allowed vegetation growth and this covered all the elements until recently. Parts of the ridges still remain wooded but it is planned to remove all trees from the earthworks, and to keep only those which are in borrow areas and boggy spots.

A large amount of stone artifacts (mainly points and flints but also gorgets and vessels) have been found at Poverty Point, although no stone is available in the area. The absence of local stone also led to the production of artificial cooking stones using the local silt and clay: for their quantity and variety these artefacts are known as Poverty Point Objects.

History and development

The ecologically-rich riverine natural environment of the region favoured human use and settlement and the Ridge bears traces of human occupation (artifacts and landscape features) dating back 13,000 years. Distribution and density of these remains in the area around Poverty Point State Historic Site vary according to the length and intensity of occupation and to the level of intactness of the area concerned.

On site, the Paleoindian period (13,000–10,000 BP) is attested to by a small quantity of artifacts of non-local stone. The Early Archaic period (10,000–7000 BP) features an increased amount and diversity of point types, mostly made out of local chert, suggesting a less mobile society.

The Middle Archaic period (7,000–4,000 BP) witnessed even less mobility among hunter-fisher-gatherers and an increased cultural complexity, attested to by various factors and particularly by earthwork construction. In Louisiana several Middle Archaic mound sites survive, variable in size, arrangements, number and types of earthworks. Lower Jackson is the closest to Poverty Point.

Paucity of found lithic artifacts at Poverty Point would indicate a limited Middle Archaic occupation. This, along with a 1,000-year interruption in mound building, would suggest that cultural continuity between the Middle and

Late Archaic periods (4,000–2,500 BP) is unlikely. However, archaeological investigations have revealed that construction of Mounds B, A and E would have begun after the Middle Archaic occupation and research on geometry, measurements and alignments shows that the same measurement system used to build Middle Archaic mound complexes has been adopted at Poverty Point.

The complexity of Late Archaic culture at Poverty Point is attested to by the earthworks and landscape rearrangements and further confirmed by the rich variety of foreign stone types used for artifacts, which demonstrates that this society maintained a wide trade network that extended for hundreds of kilometres.

By 3,100 BP, evidence of Late Archaic occupation falls and nothing similar reappears elsewhere. The reasons remain unclear: some suggest climate change influences, others hypothesize that the complexity reached by this culture could not be sustained economically. Research suggests only limited occupation at Poverty Point during the Woodland period (2,500–1,000 BP) and even less in the Late Prehistoric period (1,000–500 BP).

Euro-American people settled at Poverty Point between the 1810s and 1820s: trees were removed to allow cultivation and farmsteads were built. Manual farming continued from then onwards until the end of the 19th century, with only a 10-year interruption during the American Civil War. After World War II mechanised cultivation and herbicides were introduced and cultivation only stopped at the site when the land was acquired by the State of Louisiana.

Attention to the archaeological importance of Poverty Point dates back to as early as 1953 but it was only in 1962 that the property was declared a National Historic Landmark and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1966. By 1972 further land around the archaeological site was acquired and donated to the Louisiana State Parks and Recreation Commission which transformed the site into an archaeological park, providing it with visitor facilities. At that time Highway 577 already crossed the property.

In 1977 the Trunkline Gas Company submitted a request to re-use a depleted gas field in the immediate vicinity of the nominated property, and in 1978, following federal procedures for hazard and impact assessment for properties listed in the National Register and as national monuments, a 50 year-long binding agreement was signed allowing the Trunkline company to inject, withdraw and store natural gas.

Improvements to the park and maintenance of the property have been continuing since 1972 and today the park is well equipped with maintenance, research and visitor facilities. Several works to stabilize the ground and prevent further erosion were carried out between 1980-1990.

The first written record of Poverty Point dates back to 1873, while the first brief investigations were carried out in 1913. Between the 1930s and 1970s, collection of artifacts began, carried out by two amateurs. The first scientific excavation campaign was conducted in 1952-1955, only resuming in the 1970s. Since then, research has continued steadily, both to support the park management and to clarify research problems.

3 Justification for inscription, integrity and authenticity

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis elaborated in the nomination dossier states that the nominated property exhibits a monumental and design complexity not replicated elsewhere.

The discriminating features selected for the comparative analysis are: monumentality, complexity, construction material, subsistence system of the builders. For Poverty Point, particular attention is paid to earthen monuments built by hunter-fisher-gatherers.

The comparison first aims to demonstrate that Poverty Point stands out among other monuments from the same geo-cultural basin. It then examines properties at the world level already inscribed on the World Heritage List or on the Tentative Lists, selecting five relevant sites from each list. Finally it analyses five monumental complexes from Central and South America.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis carried out in the nomination dossier is well grounded and convincing both at the regional and the global scale. Relevant properties have been considered and examined in the light of their specificities and commonalities with the nominated property. The comparative analysis demonstrates that the property exhibits outstanding specificities in respect to other sites both within the same geo-cultural basin and in respect to different cultural contexts.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- Poverty Point is a monumental complex that integrates different forms of earthwork of exceptional size and scale into a man-made landscape with a singular design supporting symbolic, ceremonial, trading and residential functions.
- It is a remarkable achievement in earthen construction in North America that was not surpassed for at least 2,000 years and stands out

both for its age and because its builders were hunter-gatherers and not agriculture-based people.

ICOMOS considers that this justification is appropriate: the dimensions of the earthworks, the extensive earthmoving and soil rearrangement, according to a refined design which appears to have consciously mastered the natural topography to create a man-made landscape, represent an exceptional testimony to the social complexity of a hunter-fisher-gatherer society. This is further confirmed by the large amount of artifacts of non-local stone type which testifies to a well-established long-distance trade network.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The State Party holds that all the physical features conveying the exceptional value of Poverty Point are within the boundaries of the nominated property and so do the associated archaeological deposits. Other earthworks are located in the vicinity of the nominated property, i.e. Lower Jackson Mound (2.9km south of Poverty Point), Jackson Place (immediately southwards) and Motley Mound (2.2km northwards), all filed by the State of Louisiana, but these sites, according to the State Party, are not associated with Poverty Point. Lower Jackson Mound predates it; artefact dating at Jackson Place shows that the earthworks belong to the Late Woodland Period (1500-1000 BP); whilst Motley Mound has not been studied sufficiently for a clear interpretation of its age, function and relation to the nominated property.

The property is well preserved despite some material loss and degradation. The current setting permits appreciation and understanding of the spatial relationships among the site components; the design of the site is still clearly perceivable.

ICOMOS agrees that a significant proportion of the elements currently known to make up the configuration of the nominated earthwork complex are comprised within the nominated property, which, with its components, exhibits a coherence of design able to convey the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

However, ICOMOS notes that the 1962 designation of Poverty Point as a National Historic Landmark also includes Motley Mound (located 2.2km north of the nominated property) as part of the designated site.

ICOMOS further observes that research has pointed out the alignments of Mound B, A and E with the earlier Middle Archaic Lower Jackson Mound to the south, and of Mound C with Motley Mound to the north. On this basis the possible relationship of these earthworks with the nominated property has been hypothesised as an intentional act to incorporate previous tradition within the wider layout of the complex.

Furthermore, ICOMOS notes that in the immediate setting of the nominated property, other traces of Poverty Point culture, i.e. core encampments or residence sites and scatters of lithics, that relate to the earthworks complex, have been detected. However no buffer zone has been proposed by the State Party.

In this regard, ICOMOS recommends that the State Party establish formalised mechanisms of regulatory protection and management to ensure that the immediate setting of the nominated property be adequately safeguarded and managed.

ICOMOS also encourages the State Party to continue scientific investigations on the features in the immediate setting of the nominated property and, in case research confirms that they were part of the nominated designed earthworks complex, consider extending it in the future as a serial property.

The nominated property is crossed by Highway 577 from north to south, cutting into two parts the Plaza and partly affecting the edges of the ridges. On 25th September 2013, ICOMOS requested clarification from the State Party on this issue, which responded on 23rd October 2013 informing that this road serves local traffic and that no available traffic counts exist for the road crossing the nominated property. However, data were retrieved from locations nearby: the highest average number of vehicles per day is around 1,500, while the lowest is less than 600. The State Party has also informed that no upgrading is foreseen for this road and, in any case, federal law prevents federal agencies carrying out projects that may harm a nationally protected historic site or that federal funds be used without review of their impact.

ICOMOS considers that Highway 577 presents a considerable interference to the experience of the site and is also a danger for visitors: solutions to divert it to outside the nominated property should be looked into.

Authenticity

ICOMOS considers that the tangible evidence of the nominated property as it has survived throughout the millennia, coupled with the extensive information obtained from the archaeological research conducted on the site and with the rich and largely undisturbed buried deposits, bear exceptional and credible witness to the proposed justification for inscription and to the culture that built the property.

ICOMOS agrees that the agricultural landscape of the close and wider setting surrounding the nominated property largely contributes to its understanding and enjoyment and it is therefore of utmost importance that this character be retained in the future.

ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity are met but fragile. ICOMOS recommends that the State Party establish formalised mechanisms of regulatory protection and management to ensure that the immediate

setting, including areas and features that functionally support the nominated property (i.e. Motley Mound, Lower Jackson Mound, Jackson Place and stretches of Bayou Maçon) be effectively protected. ICOMOS also encourages the State Party to continue scientific investigations on the features in the immediate setting of the nominated property with a view to consider extending it in the future.

Additionally, the presence of Highway 577 raises concerns in relation to the retention of integrity in the future. ICOMOS therefore strongly recommends that the authorities concerned work jointly to find solutions for diverting this road outside the nominated property. ICOMOS considers that conditions of authenticity have been met.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criterion (iii).

Criterion (iii): *bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the nominated property bears outstanding witness to the Late Archaic cultural tradition of North America. This landscape complex is an exceptional achievement of a population of hunter-fisher-gatherers who, between 3,700 and 3,100 BP, constructed remarkable earthworks in the form of mounds and ridges and rearranged the earth and relief of the land to regularize the terrain and create the plaza.

ICOMOS considers that the unparalleled monumentality of Poverty Point makes it clearly an outstanding site. The masterly manipulation of natural topography to govern and diversify the visual impact of the complex from both distant and closer viewpoints demonstrates a refined culture. Exceptionally massive and precisely planned earthworks bear unique testimony to the articulation and organisational capacity of the Poverty Point culture and contribute to shedding light on the complexity of socio-cultural patterns of prehistoric hunter-fisher-gatherer societies.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criterion (iii) and conditions of authenticity and integrity. However, ICOMOS also considers that the State Party should establish formalised mechanisms of regulation, protection and management for the immediate setting of the nominated property.

Description of the attributes

- The elevated natural topography of the site above the Holocene alluvial lowlands provided a secure place for human settlement in an area otherwise prone to flooding and influenced the layout of the complex as well as the placing of the earthworks.

- The layout of the complex in which all the components, even the less evident, play a role in defining a designed man-made landscape. All the singular elements that make up the complex as they survive in shape and substance and their reciprocal position: the mounds, the system of ridges and swales and the aisles, the plaza with the posthole circles, the causeway, the bisector ridge, the dock and the borrow areas.
- The archaeological deposits concealed below ground represent a repository of potential further information on the property and its builders.
- The extensive earth rearrangements beneath the above-ground structures attest to extensive earthmoving to combat soil erosion and to obtain the required design.
- The meandering Bayou Maçon, with its riverine vegetation, and the boggy and wooded areas contribute to providing a sense of the natural environment at the time Poverty Point was created.

Although they cannot be considered attributes of Poverty Point, the rural setting of the nominated property and the surviving archaeological remains and features located within it, are functionally important as a support to Poverty Point, and contribute to its protection and reinforce its understanding.

4 Factors affecting the property

The nomination dossier states that major factors affecting the property are: soil erosion, caused by the inherent quality of the ground; the surface water drainage pattern and its man-made modifications; tree-fall, caused by disease and decay and strong winds, which the region is prone to; and the negative impact of invasive species (Nine-banded Armadillos and Red Imported Fire ants).

In its letter sent to the State Party on 25th September 2013, ICOMOS requested additional information concerning development areas and the Trunkline Gas Company gas reservoir, both mentioned in the nomination dossier.

The State Party in its response provided details on both issues. A map showing the location of development sites has been attached. The State Party also explained that industrial development in the vicinity of the nominated property is highly unlikely due to the absence/inadequacy of infrastructure and communications. Additionally, the West Carroll Parish Police Jury, the parish government, on 8th October 2013 approved a resolution that recognises the importance of maintaining the rural, agricultural setting around the nominated property, encourages the continuation of its traditional land-use pattern and confirms that no plans for commercial or industrial development are in place in the vicinity of the site.

With regard to the underground gas reservoir, the State Party informed that at the time the proposal to reuse depleted gas fields as gas reservoirs was advanced, the

nominated property was already a federally-protected site, therefore the project underwent an extensive assessment under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA), which concluded that it would have had a low impact.

ICOMOS expresses its concerns with regard to the existence of the Trunkline gas storage facility that is planned to remain in use until 2028. The consequences of injection, withdrawal and storage of gas and the technologies in use for these operations interact with the terrain of the site.

ICOMOS considers that the assessment of the potential impact of the underground reservoir should be updated, so as to gain information with a view to reconsidering the allocation of the underground gas storage.

ICOMOS notes that the legal framework in place does foresee impact assessment processes when national agencies or funds are involved, however these procedures do not apply to private initiatives and activities. Damages to small peripheral parts of two components of Poverty Point not included within the boundaries of the nationally protected property were caused by land-leveling carried out by the owners of the farmland where they were located.

ICOMOS considers that the main current threats to the property are soil erosion caused by natural or manmade modified drainage patterns and private agriculture-related activity outside the nominated property. Potential threats may come from privately-driven development initiatives which, although unlikely at present, cannot be stopped by the current legal framework. ICOMOS recommends that the State Party works at state and local level to establish a formalised regulatory protection and management framework to strengthen the protection of the wider setting of the nominated property.

ICOMOS further considers worthwhile the elaboration of an updated assessment of the possible impacts of the gas reservoir and related operations on the nominated property with a view to reconsidering in the near future the allocation of the underground gas storage.

5 Protection, conservation and management

Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

The boundaries of the nominated property (163ha) coincide with those of the Poverty Point State Historic Site. The nomination dossier informs that, in order to include all relevant components of the site, these were determined through the observation of the natural and man-made features: to the east, the Bayou Maçon acted as a clear limit, the Harlin Bayou prevented the extension of the settlement to the north, while to the west a large boggy area, the artificial nature of which is not ascertained, also acted as an obstacle.

No buffer zone is proposed. The State Party holds that the existing physical buffers and the stable agricultural character of the setting as well as the legal framework in place, which affords adequate protection to the nominated property, are, taken together, factors that make a buffer zone unnecessary.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property contains the majority of the relevant currently-known components and associated cultural deposits that make up Poverty Point as a Late Archaic creation and which are necessary to convey the totality of its proposed value.

However, ICOMOS observes (see Integrity section) that some features that are functionally related to Poverty Point are not within the boundaries of the nominated property nor are they part of a buffer zone, one having not been proposed by the State Party.

ICOMOS further notes that within about a 4km radius of Poverty Point several core encampments or habitations and scatters of lithics have been found.

ICOMOS therefore considers that, in conformity with paragraph 104 of the *Operational Guidelines*, an area surrounding the nominated property with complementary formalized regulatory mechanisms concerning its use and development should be defined to give an added layer of protection to the nominated property. "This should include [its] immediate setting, important views and other areas or attributes that are functionally important as a support to the property and its protection". The buffer zone should be determined through appropriate mechanisms to ensure the effectiveness of the envisaged protection.

In ICOMOS' view, the existence of a buffer zone would prevent possible further damage arising from privately-driven agricultural or development activities and facilities but would also allow for future contiguous archaeological research. As a matter of fact, while the nomination dossier shows the importance of those research projects conducted around the mounds, it barely mentions the results of work in common household areas, and in areas dedicated to the fishing processing and technological support. These kinds of archaeological questions should be addressed in order to reveal much more of the daily life of the general population. In the absence of a buffer zone embracing all these potential areas, opportunities for better and more expanded archaeological projects in the near and further future may be lost.

ICOMOS also notes that the current limits of Poverty Point State Historic Site result from a policy of progressive land acquisition by the State of Louisiana, and therefore encourages the State Party to continue this policy in parallel with archaeological research so as to establish proper conditions to expand the boundaries of the nominated property, in case research results would suggest doing so.

In relation to the absence of a proposed buffer zone, ICOMOS recognises that according to the *Operational Guidelines*, the creation of a buffer zone is not mandatory. The *Operational Guidelines* further state that “clear explanation of how the buffer zone protects the property should also be provided” to underline that designing a buffer area implies providing it with adequate legal, planning or customary mechanisms to protect the nominated property.

The International Expert Meeting on World Heritage and Buffer Zones (Davos, Switzerland, 11-14 March 2008) found that “while every World Heritage property needed protection and management arrangements, not every property would have a buffer zone, as buffer zones are only one means to achieve protection and management. As outlined in the *Operational Guidelines*, there are also legal, regulatory and other methods available.” (*World Heritage and Buffer Zones – Paper Series 25*, p. 187).

However, the meeting further “recognised that actions may take place well beyond the boundaries of a property and any buffer zone that might nonetheless have a significant influence upon the outstanding universal value and integrity of a property. The concept of an area of influence may also be useful to describe a wider zone in which activities may take place that could have an impact upon the outstanding universal value and integrity of a property” (*ibid.*, p. 190).

ICOMOS is aware that buffer zones do not belong in the heritage protection tradition in the United States, where different mechanisms exist, such as the National Heritage Area programme, or others, derived from the UNESCO MAB framework, have, in a few cases, been tried successfully for World Heritage properties through, for example, the ‘cooperation areas’.

Nevertheless, as factors highlighted in Section 4 suggest, ICOMOS considers that forms of regulatory protection of the immediate setting of the nominated property should be set up, considering the necessity to protect the nominated property and to take into account the density of archaeological features inventoried in the surroundings of the nominated property.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that most of the components necessary to convey the Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property are contained within its boundaries.

However, in order to ensure Poverty Point and other attributes that are functionally important as a support to the nominated property have effective protection, ICOMOS recommends that the State Party defines the immediate setting of the nominated earthworks, which should include Motley Mound, Jackson Place, Lower Jackson Mound, a stretch of the Bayou Maçon and minor mapped sites nearby, and establish for it a formalised framework of regulatory mechanisms as part of the management process to allow it to act as a buffer zone. ICOMOS further recommends the State Party to continue its policy of land acquisition in parallel with archaeological

research so as to establish proper conditions to expand the boundaries of the nominated property, in case research results would suggest doing so.

Ownership

The nominated property belongs to the State of Louisiana; the Louisiana Office of State Property manages and maintains the property. The land surrounding the nominated property and forming its historic and geographical setting is privately owned.

Protection

In 1962 Poverty Point was designated a National Historic Landmark under the Federal Historic Sites, Buildings, Objects and Antiquities Act (1935), in 1966 it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places established by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA - 1966), and declared a National Monument in 1988 under the Federal Antiquities Act (1906). It is further protected under the State of Louisiana legislation as a State Historic Site.

The Federal legislation foresees review procedures to assess and mitigate the impact of any project on protected historic properties. The NHPA establishes that any federally-funded, licenced or permitted projects that may impact on historic properties must undergo an assessment process to determine and mitigate possible adverse influences on protected properties. Also the National Environment Policy Act (1969) and the Department of Transportation Act (1966) provide measures for the protection of registered heritage properties.

ICOMOS believes that these designations demonstrate that the nominated property benefits from the highest level of legal protection possible in the United States of America. The provisions of federal and national laws protect Poverty Point against development and change.

ICOMOS however notes that the State legal framework protects essentially the nominated property whilst its immediate and wider setting is covered by federal law which foresees assessment and mitigation procedures only when federal agencies or funds are involved. No protection measures exist to prevent damage to the nominated property that may result from activities on private land outside the nominated property, as has already occurred in the past (see Section 4).

ICOMOS considers that planning instruments may play a part in safeguarding the setting of the nominated property and therefore recommends the establishment of a formalised regulatory framework to ensure the protection of the nominated property and its setting.

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place for the nominated property is adequate. ICOMOS further considers that the protective measures for the nominated property, being a publicly owned historic park, are adequate. However, ICOMOS notes that legal protective measures do not protect the nominated

property from negative impact resulting from activity carried out by private owners of land in the immediate vicinity of the property unless this requires authorisation or funding by federal agencies. ICOMOS therefore recommends that a formal framework of regulatory and management mechanisms be established to improve the protection of the nominated property and of its setting.

Conservation

ICOMOS notes that threats to the nominated property have been adequately addressed through various integrated active measures and that maintenance of the property components is carried out regularly.

ICOMOS observes that the site has been inventoried, described and documented. LIDAR images of the property (2009) provide a precise model of the earthworks and an excellent set of high-precision geospatial data for future management of the property. Since its establishment (ca. 2000) the archaeological curatorial facility serves as the primary repository for Poverty Point archaeological collections, which are an important resource that contributes to the integrity and authenticity of the site.

ICOMOS congratulates the State Party for the work done during the past decades to protect and preserve Poverty Point.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property is in a stable and very good condition as a result of an active policy of maintenance and protection allied to regular monitoring on the ground. Continuous maintenance to counteract soil erosion remains fundamental for the long-term preservation of the nominated property.

Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

The management structure of the nominated property has been established according the legal framework in force for designated state historic sites under the jurisdiction of the Louisiana Office of State Parks. On site the staff consists of 8 full-time and one part-time employees, which is complemented by three units of the Station Archaeology Programme, established since 1995 through a Memorandum of Understanding between Louisiana Office of Cultural Development, Louisiana Parks Office and Northeast Louisiana University.

The primary source of funding derives from the State of Louisiana, however maintenance is carried out thanks to self-generated income from admittance fees.

ICOMOS considers that resources available on site are adequate for the purpose of protecting and managing the nominated property. Risk preparedness is appropriately addressed through emergency plans set up at the state, parish and park levels.

However, in the absence of a formal buffer zone, ICOMOS considers that management efforts should be extended to address the need for the protection and proper management of Poverty Point's immediate setting and for the retention of its agricultural character.

ICOMOS therefore recommends that appropriate and formal regulatory mechanisms should be put in place as part of the management process to accomplish the same level of protection as a buffer zone would. This would be both in line with paragraph 123 of the *Operational Guidelines* and actively draw on and involve the strength and diversity of stakeholder support for the sustainable protection of the nominated property.

ICOMOS further recommends that as a formal part of the management system, capacity and expertise should be built in to that system to actively use and integrate baseline datasets through a Geographical Information Systems (GIS) approach, to facilitate the process of longer-term planning and review.

Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

The detailed *Heritage Management Plan for Poverty Point State Historic Site, National Monument and National Historic Landmark* (HMP, in force throughout 2012- 2018) provides the basis for and documents a detailed integrated management process, grounded on a solid integration of archaeological research and management, with respective funding streams for the site and the research programme. The presentation to the public relies on several means and educational activities. The HMP is complemented by operational plans which facilitate the implementation of management goals, i.e. a Watershed Management Plan prepared in 2012 that sets the framework and measures to deal with erosion issues.

Involvement of the local communities

ICOMOS recognises that local communities and other interest groups have been informed and engaged in the nomination process. This is attested, for example, by the letter of support for the nomination signed on February 2012 by the United South and Eastern Tribes. The active response also demonstrates that involvement of the public and local communities is the fruit of a long process.

ICOMOS considers that the management system for the nominated property is overall adequate. However, ICOMOS observes that management efforts should be extended to set up an appropriate and formal regulatory framework for the protection and proper management of Poverty Point's immediate setting and for the retention of its agricultural character so as to achieve the same level of protection as a buffer zone.

Additionally, ICOMOS recommends that capacity and expertise should be built within the management system to profit from the potential of a Geographical Information

Systems (GIS) approach so as to facilitate the process of longer-term planning and review.

6 Monitoring

A monitoring system has been set up in coordination with the objectives of the management plan. Indicators and periodicity have been defined clearly. Monitoring records are planned to be kept on site.

ICOMOS considers that the monitoring system is adequate. However ICOMOS recommends that, to ensure an augmented effectiveness of monitoring exercises, results should be integrated into a GIS approach.

7 Conclusions

The nomination dossier has effectively illustrated the nominated property, its wider and local geographical context as well as the periodization of its human occupation, making it clear that Poverty Point Monumental Earthworks is of Outstanding Universal Value at the global scale for its age, size and articulation, in that it sheds light in an exceptional manner on the level of cultural and organisational complexity reached by a society of hunter-fisher-gatherers.

Relevant attributes conveying the Outstanding Universal Value of the site are included within the boundaries of the nominated property. However, some important features that would functionally support Poverty Point Monumental Earthworks, although protected as National Landmarks or State Historic Sites, are not encompassed within the nominated property nor included in a buffer zone, since the State Party has not proposed one.

The nominated property enjoys the highest level of protection at the national level as well as a well-established and effective management that ensures adequate maintenance and presentation to the public. However, the absence of a buffer zone coupled with a high density of archaeological features located in the vicinity of Poverty Point and a legal framework which protects designated properties only from publicly-driven or funded development activities raise some concerns with regard to the retention of the integrity of the property in the long term. Additionally the presence of Highway 577 interferes with the enjoyment of the property by its visitors and also represents a danger to them.

ICOMOS therefore considers that efforts to define the immediate setting of the nominated property, which should include important views and other areas or attributes that are functionally important as a support to the property and its protection (i.e. Motley Mound, Lower Jackson Mound, Jackson Place, and stretches of the Bayou Maçon) and to grant it adequate protection through formal

and regulatory mechanisms, should be put in place to act like a buffer zone.

Finally ICOMOS considers that Highway 577 should be diverted to outside of the nominated property and its immediate setting.

8 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the examination of the nomination of the Monumental Earthworks of Poverty Point, United States of America, to the World Heritage List be **deferred** in order to allow the State Party to:

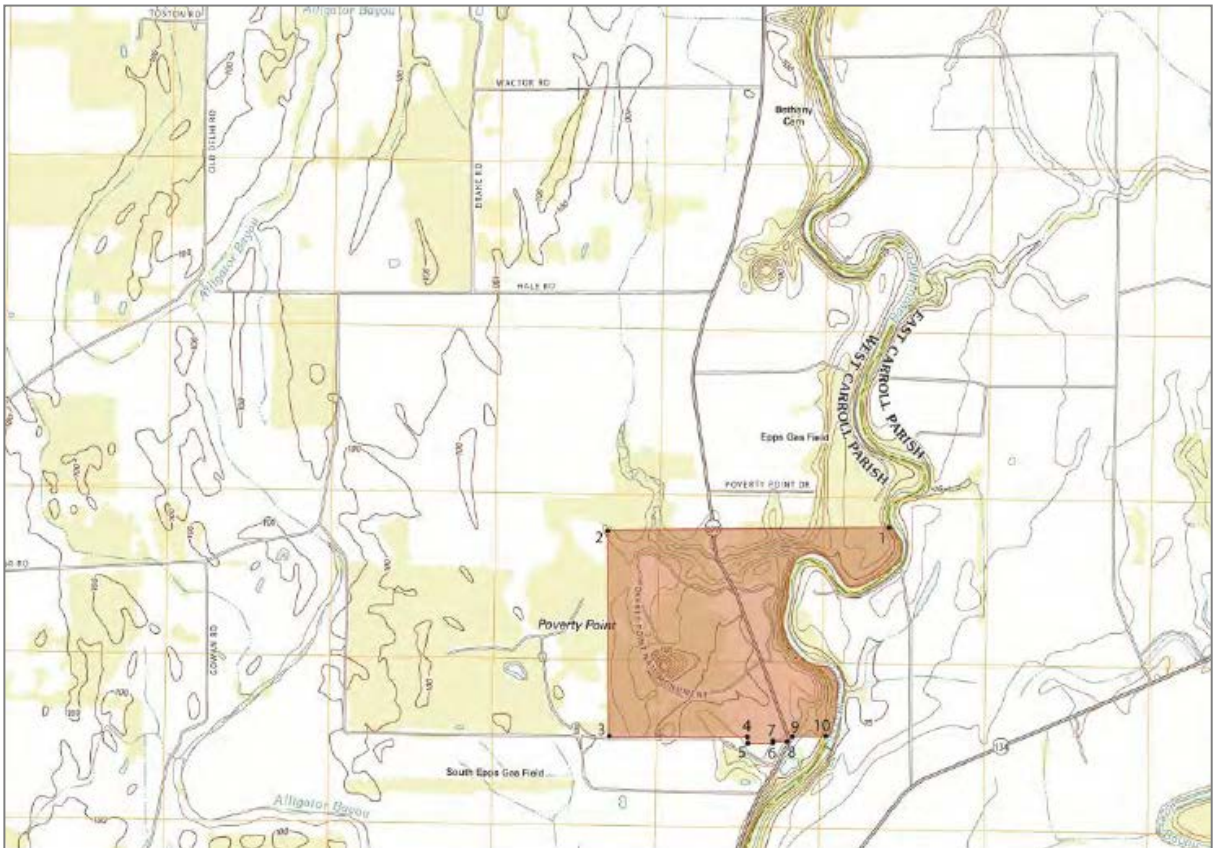
- Define the immediate settings of the nominated property, which should include important views and other areas or attributes that are functionally important as a support to the property and its protection (i.e. Motley Mound, Lower Jackson Mound, Jackson Place, and stretches of the Bayou Maçon), and establish a formal regulatory framework for the immediate settings as part of the management process to allow it to act as a buffer zone;
- Divert Highway 577 to outside of the nominated property and its immediate settings.

ICOMOS considers that any revised nomination would need to be considered by an expert mission to the site.

Additional recommendations

ICOMOS further recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

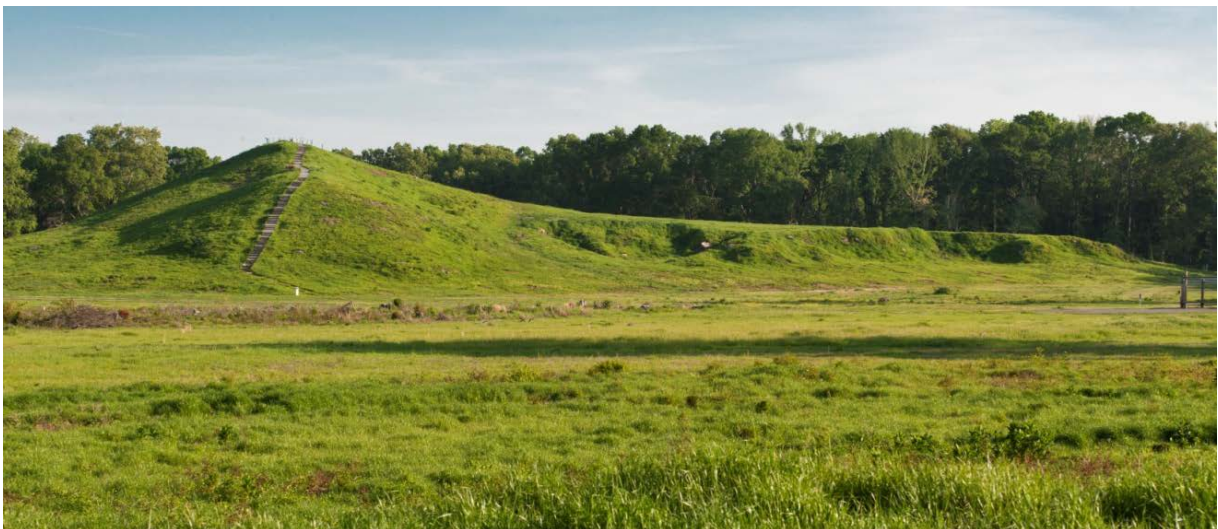
- Continuing its policy of land acquisition in parallel with scientific investigations with a view to establishing favourable conditions to enlarge the limits of the property in case research results would suggest doing so;
- Building capacity and expertise within the management system to profit from the potential of a Geographical Information Systems (GIS) approach.



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property



Aerial photograph of the nominated property



Mound A



Aerial view of the concentric earthen ridges



The Plaza