

# A NEGATIVE FINDINGS CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY OF THE PROPOSED LOUISIANA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CERTIFIED SITE IN EVANGELINE PARISH, LOUISIANA

by  
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*Prepared for*

*J. Ronald Landreneau &  
Associates, Inc.*

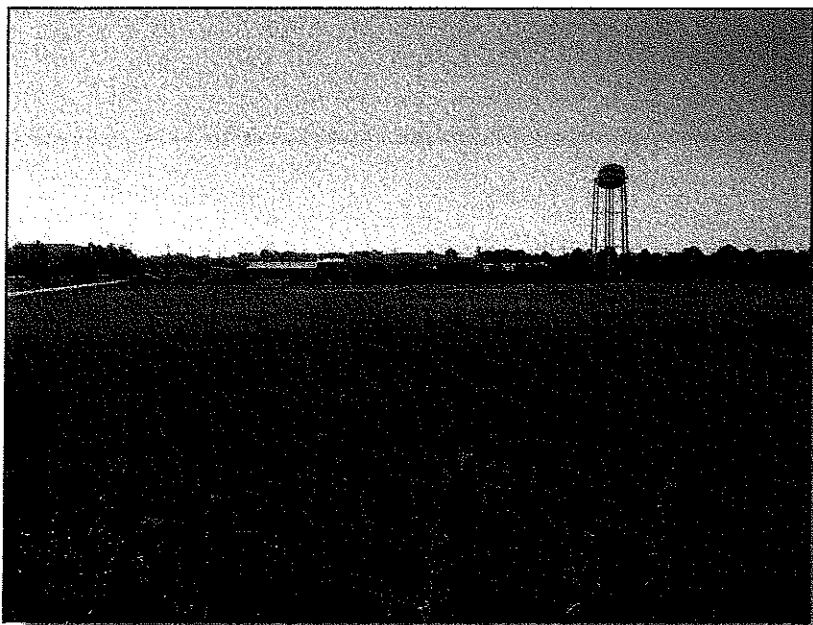
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Lead Agency: SHPO



# ABSTRACT

Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc., personnel completed a records review and cultural resource survey for a proposed Louisiana Economic Development Certified Site in Evangeline Parish, Louisiana. This work was conducted at the request of Justin Fontenot of J. Ronald Landreneau & Associates, Inc. The records review for this project was conducted on May 13, 2011. Fieldwork was conducted on May 16–17 and June 15, 2011. The project area is located northeast of the city of Ville Platte along both sides of Maxie Rae Road and just west of Industrial Road. The area investigated consisted of approximately 40.7 ha (100.0 acres) located in the E½ of the W½ of Section 45 and E½ of the W½ of Section 45, T4S, R2E, Ville Platte Township, Evangeline Parish.

The records review consisted of a file search using information provided by the Louisiana Office of Cultural Development, Division of Archaeology to identify cultural resources or cultural resource investigations documented in the area. The records review indicated that no previous survey and no cultural resources were documented within the current project area.

Field investigation consisted of an intensive pedestrian survey supplemented with screened shovel tests. This work yielded no cultural resources within the project area. The southern portion of the project area had evidence of heavy disturbance and episodes of intermittent inundation. Based on the findings of the records review and cultural resource survey, no archaeological sites or historic properties listed in, or recommended eligible for, the National Register of Historic Places will be affected by the proposed construction activities. Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc., recommends no further work and cultural resource clearance for the proposed project area.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc. (CRA), personnel completed a file search on May 13, 2011, and fieldwork on May 16–17 and June 15, 2011, for the proposed Louisiana Economic Development (LED) Certified Site in Evangeline Parish, Louisiana (Figure 1). This file search and cultural resource survey was conducted at the request of Justin G. Fontenot of J. Ronald Landreneau & Associates, Inc., to meet the requirements of the LED certification program. The proposed project area consisted of approximately 40.7 ha (100.0 acres) of mixed agricultural field and grass land. The file search using information provided by the Louisiana Office of Cultural Development, Division of Archaeology (State Historic Preservation Office [SHPO]) was conducted by Justin B. Morrison. Fieldwork for the project was completed by Shane G. Pickett and Justin B. Morrison in approximately 30 person hours. The cultural resource survey was supervised by Shane G. Pickett. A copy of the scope of work is provided as Appendix A.

## Purpose of Study

The study was conducted to comply with requirements set forth by the LED Certified Sites Program. This program is designed to make Louisiana more competitive for economic development deals by certifying sites that have the ability to break ground within 90 days because all rights to build are in place. SHPO reviewed data concerning the project as a part of the program. Upon review of the project information, they requested a phase I archaeological survey prior to any construction in the area. All work associated with this investigation was conducted pursuant to standards set forth by the SHPO and those outlined by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended (36 CFR 800) for properties listed on National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Louisiana's Comprehensive Archaeological Plan (LCAP) was referred to for guidance throughout this investigation (Smith et al. 1983). All fieldwork and reporting activities were completed with reference to federal (NHPA) guidelines.



Figure 1. Map showing the location of Evangeline Parish in the state of Louisiana.

The purpose of this assessment was to 1) locate, describe, evaluate, and to make appropriate recommendations for the future treatment of any historic or prehistoric archaeological properties that may be affected by proposed construction activities, and 2) to assess the potential for archaeological sites requiring preservation in place. Field notes, records, and site photographs will be curated at the CRA office in Shreveport, Louisiana.

## **Project Description**

J. Ronald Landreneau & Associates, Inc., is proposing to acquire an LED certification for the survey area (Figures 2 and 3). Certification of this property is intended to promote development at the location. The proposed project area is approximately 40.7 ha located in the E½ of the W½ of Section 45 and E½ of the W½ of Section 45, T4S, R2E, Ville Platte Township, Evangeline Parish. More specifically, the project area extends to the north and south of Maxie Rae Road and measures approximately 647.3 m (2,123.7 ft) in length. The width runs approximately 578.9 m (1,899.6 ft) east to west.

## **Summary of Findings**

The records review conducted using data available from the LA SHPO indicated that no portion of the project area had been previously surveyed, and no sites were recorded within the area.

No cultural resources were located during fieldwork. No features or structures were observed at this location. The lack of archaeological deposits or historic structures suggests limited research potential for the project area. For these reasons, the area of potential effect (APE) for the proposed construction activities is not recommended for further work. Therefore, cultural resource clearance is recommended.

## **Report Organization**

This report is organized into six numbered chapters and one appendix. Chapter I provides an overview of the project and summarizes the results of the archaeological investigation.

Chapter II is an overview of the geomorphology and environmental setting of the project area. Chapter III presents the previous investigations and background records search of the project area. Chapter IV details the methodological approach and research design of the archaeological investigation. Chapter V discusses the results of the current archaeological investigation. Report summary and recommendations regarding future work in the project area are presented in Chapter VI. The appendix contains the scope of work developed for the current archaeological investigation.

## **Project Personnel**

Paul Bundy, M.A., RPA, served as principal investigator. Shane G. Pickett, M.A., served as field supervisor and report author. Justin B. Morrison completed site file research and assisted with the fieldwork as an archaeological technician. Final report production was completed by the CRA CAD and publications departments.

## **II. ENVIRONMENTAL**

This section of the report provides a description of the modern environment and considers those aspects of the physical environment that may have influenced the location and methods for finding archaeological sites. The discussion of the modern environment specifically provides information regarding the physiography, soils, vegetation, and climate.

### **Physiography**

The project area is located in Evangeline Parish, Louisiana, which is part of the West Gulf Coastal Plain physiographic region. This region is part of the Gulf and Atlantic Coastal Plain province of North America (Murray 1961). This is a belt of Pleistocene coastwise terraces that stretch along the Gulf Coast. The APE is situated on the Prairie Complex, the youngest of the terraces that constitute the coastwise terrace belt (Kniffen 1968).

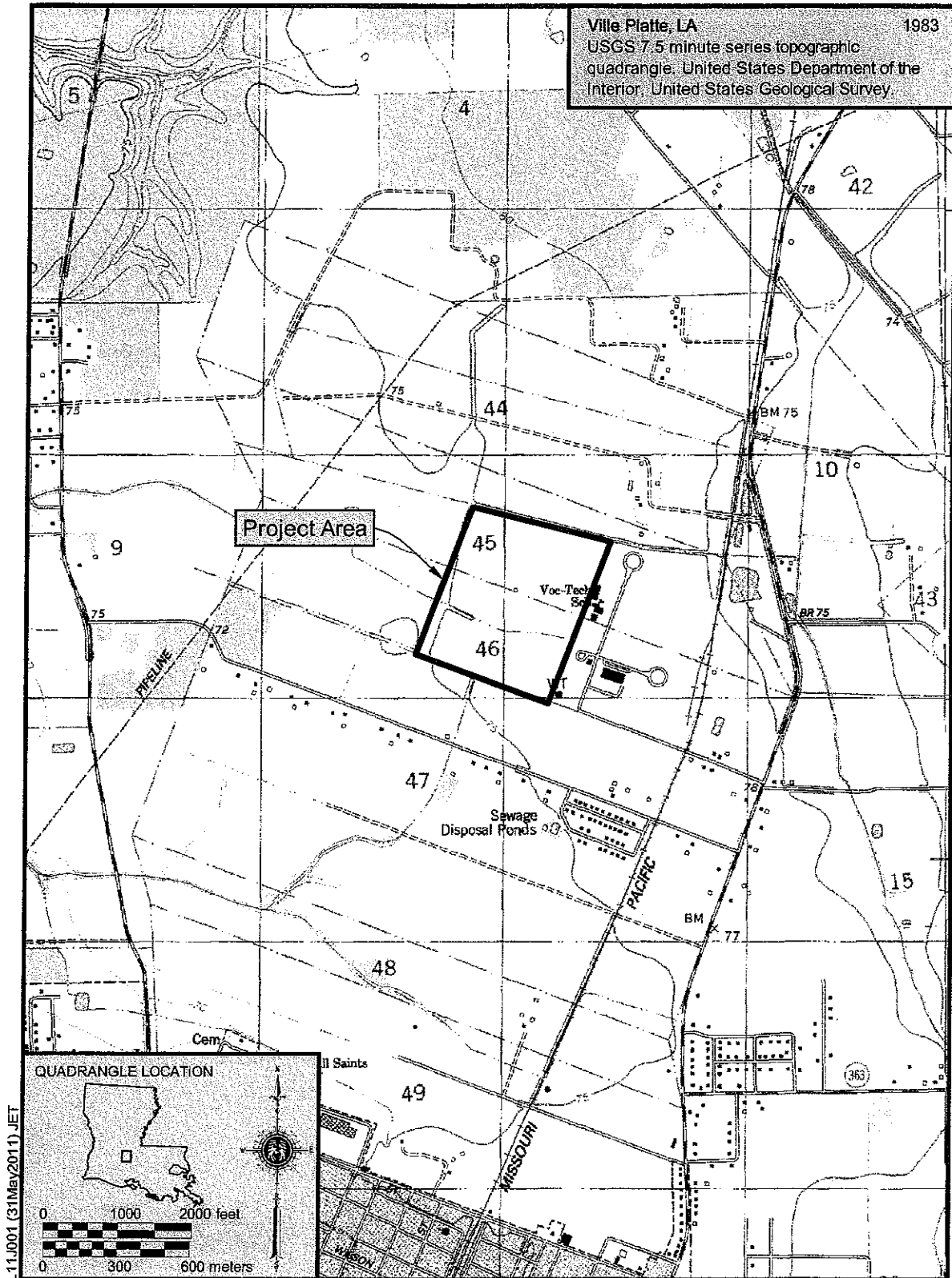


Figure 2. Topographic map showing the location of the project area.

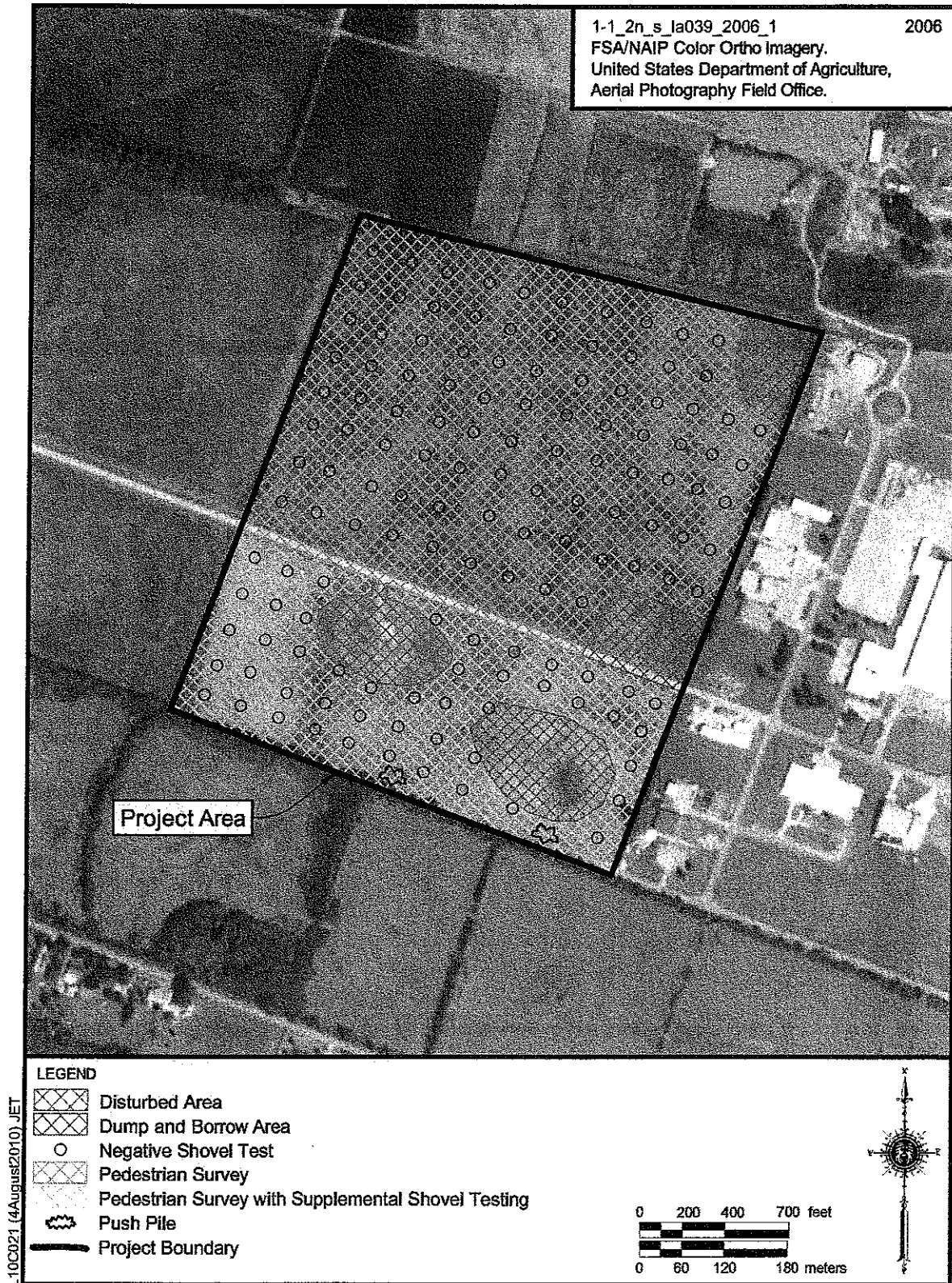


Figure 3. Project location depicted on the 2005 Aerial map.

Local drainage networks on this complex are poorly developed. This results in high groundwater levels and moderate to severe seasonal flooding. Drainage is controlled by abandoned channels of the Red or Calcasieu Rivers, which are Holocene or late Pleistocene in age (Autin et al. 1991).

Evangeline Parish has three distinct physiographic regions, including level to nearly level terraces of the Prairie Formation in the southern part of the parish, gently sloping terraces of the Bently and Montgomery Formations in the northern portion of the parish, and level to nearly level Red River bottomland of recent floodplains in the northeast corner of the parish (Touchet et al. 1974). Elevation within the project area varies little, ranging from approximately 21.3 to 22.9 m (70.0 to 75.0 ft) above sea level, and lies on nearly level terraces of the Prairie Formation in the east-central region of the parish (Touchet et al. 1974:1). Soils contained within the Prairie Formation consist of silty soils high in natural fertility, and landforms entail floodplain, meander-belt, and backswamp deposits of the middle Pleistocene ancestral Mississippi River, Red River, local fluvial equivalents of tributary streams, and coastal plain streams. The parent material of the region is clay, silty clay loam, or sandy clay loam that grades to sand and gravel (Louisiana Geologic Survey [LGS] 2002). The drainages within the project area empty towards the west and southwest along an intermittent drainage of Bayou Joe Marcel, located approximately 2.7 km (1.7 mi) to the west.

## Soils

Soils within the project area were identified utilizing the Web Soil Survey online database maintained by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS 2011).

Two soil complexes were identified within the project area: Wrightsville-Vidrine complex (0–1 percent slope) on the western and central areas and Patoutville-Crowley

complex (0–1 percent slope) on the eastern side (NRCS 2011). These soil associations are poorly drained and are very slowly to slowly permeable. They also reside on broad drainage divides (Touchet et al. 1974). Occurring in the native grassland areas and around the APE along the eastern edge of the terrace, they are influenced by post-Prairie age loess and have light and dark colored loamy and clayey subsoil. The Wrightsville-Vidrine association is predominantly Wrightsville soil mixed with Vidrine, Acadia, Calhoun, and Crowley soils. Surface soils of this association tend to be thick, gray and light-gray (10YR 6/1; 10YR 7/1) silt loam with a subsoil of grayish brown mottled with yellowish brown, red, and yellow silty clay. Surface soils can range up to 45.7 cm (18.0 in) in thickness. The Patoutville-Crowley association is made up primarily by Patoutville soil with a mix of Crowley, Jeanerette, Midland, Mowata, and Vidrine soils. Surface soils of this association tend to be gray-brown (10YR 5/2) silt loam with a subsoil of dark grayish brown mottled with yellowish brown, red, and silty clay. Surface soils can range up to 17.8 cm (7.0 in) in thickness. The Wrightsville-Vidrine complex is found in and along depressions, while the Patoutville-Crowley complex is located along low terraces and microridges (NRCS 2011).

## Vegetation

The West Gulf Coastal Plain physiographic region is located within the Southern Pine Forests of the lower Mississippi Valley. It should be noted that within the last 150 years this area has undergone massive changes due to excessive logging that has taken place throughout this region. Much of the bottomland hardwood and upland mixed forests have been converted into commercial pine forest (Jeter and Williams 1989). Their composition and relative abundance vary greatly from place to place. In addition to the longleaf pine, the southern pine forests in the area also include extensive areas of slash pine, loblolly, and

short leaf pine, most of which have been introduced more extensively with the vast increase in logging in the last 100 years.

## Description of the Project Area

The proposed project area is approximately 40.7 ha located in the E½ of the W½ of Section 45 and E½ of the W½ of Section 45, T4S, R2E, Ville Platte Township, Evangeline Parish. The APE is generally located 3.08 km (1.90 mi) to the northeast of Ville Platte, Louisiana. The project area is situated along Maxie Rae Road running north and south and extends approximately 409.4 m (1,343.2 ft) north and 245.0 m (803.8 ft) south. The width reaches approximately 578.9 m (1,899.6 ft) east to west. The eastern border of the APE is approximately 127.9 m (419.6 ft) west of Industrial Road. This area is referred to as

the Prairie Complex region and is comprised of nearly flat low terraces (Kniffen 1968).

The majority of this area is currently row crops in an agricultural field, and the remainder is in marsh and prairie grasses (Figures 4 and 5). Within the APE, sediments in the agricultural field generally had a shallow or truncated brown (10YR 4/3) Ap horizon with a maximum depth of 15 cm, overlying a brown (10YR 5/3) mottled with dark yellowish brown (10YR 3/4) silty clay Bw-horizon. Where undisturbed, sediment profiles of the grassland field had a shallow or truncated brown (10YR 4/3) Ap horizon having a maximum depth of 10 cm, overlying a brown (10YR 5/3) mottled with dark yellowish brown (10YR 3/4) and yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) silty clay Bw-horizon. Subsoils also held heavy inclusions of manganese. These profiles generally conform to the description of the soils mapped in the area.



Figure 4. Overview of northern portion of project area, facing east.





Figure 5. Overview of southern portion of project area, facing west.

### III. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

On May 13, 2011, a search of records maintained by the NRHP (available online at: <http://www.nr.nps.gov/nrloc1.htm>) and the SHPO was conducted to: 1) determine if the project area had been previously surveyed for archaeological resources; 2) identify any previously recorded archaeological sites that were situated within the project area; 3) provide information concerning what archaeological resources could be expected within the project area; and 4) provide a context for any archaeological resources recovered within the project area. The examination of SHPO data consisted of a review of professional survey reports and records of archaeological sites for an area encompassing a 1 mi radius of the project. The review of professional survey reports and archaeological site data in the area provided basic information on the types of archaeological resources that were likely to

occur within the project area and the landforms that were most likely to contain these resources. The results are discussed below.

SHPO records revealed that no previous archaeological sites or surveys have been conducted or recorded within the project area and no previous archaeological sites or surveys have been delineated within 1 mi of the APE.

### Map Data

In addition to the file search, a review of available maps was conducted to help identify any historic structures that may be located within the project area. The following maps were reviewed:

1960 Ville Platte, Louisiana, 15-minute series topographic quadrangle (United States Geological Survey [USGS]);

1983 Ville Platte, Louisiana, 15-minute series topographic quadrangle (USGS).

The reviewed maps indicated no structures older than 50 years in age in or adjacent to the project area. This area has experienced some landscape modification over time, and any structures modern or historic in age have been demolished or removed. The results of the map review for each map are presented below.

### **1960 USGS**

This map indicates no historic structures or cemeteries present in or adjacent to the APE.

### **1983 USGS**

This map indicates four modern structures just east of the project area (Figure 2). These structures were not present on the 1960 USGS map and do not meet the age requirement for historic properties. No other structural elements or cemeteries were observed in the area.

## **Survey Predictions**

Considerable effort has been directed toward the development of predictive models aimed at archaeological site probability over the last 25 years, specifically in central Louisiana (e.g., Anderson et al. 1988, 1999; Anderson and Smith 2003; Campbell and Weed 1986; Hillman 1980; Johnson 1984a, 1984b; Johnson et al. 1986; Phillips and Willingham 1990; Servello 1983; Thomas et al. 1982; and Willingham and Phillips 1987). The end result of this work suggests a correlation between the probability of finding prehistoric sites and the distance from water or wet environments. Ridges or landforms within 200.00 m (656.71 ft) of a water source are considered to have a high probability for containing prehistoric archaeological sites.

Incorporating data from the known distribution of sites in the parish, the available information on site types recorded, and the nature of the present project area, certain predictions were possible regarding the kinds of sites that might be encountered within the project area. The nearest natural water source, Mill Creek, is located approximately 1.8 km (1.1 mi) from the APE. This suggests that the

project area is located in an area with a low probability of containing prehistoric sites. For this reason, prehistoric open habitations were considered unlikely in the area. Historic sites were considered possible due to the region's connection with agricultural and lumber enterprises; however, a review of historic maps indicated no historic structures or cemeteries within the project area.

## **IV. METHODS**

Although the APE is situated in an area of low archaeological site probability, both prehistoric and historic archaeological sites are possible, and the area was systematically investigated. The entire project area was subjected to an intensive pedestrian survey supplemented by shovel test probes (STPs). In areas with excellent ground surface visibility (GSV), 50 m (164 ft) intervals were used. In areas with inadequate GSV (less than 25 percent), shovel test intervals were tightened along transects to maximize coverage (Figure 3).

In all cases, STPs measured not less than 30 cm in diameter and extended well into the subsoil, which was very shallow. All fill removed from the tests was screened through .64 cm (.25 in) mesh hardware cloth, and the sidewalls and bottoms were examined for cultural material and features. No archaeological deposits were uncovered by STPs. All areas adjacent to, but outside of, the project area were visually inspected to determine if any cultural resources may have been present; however, none were observed.

Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) coordinates were recorded with a MobileMapper 6 global positioning system (GPS) unit manufactured by Magellan to verify locations within the project area. All UTM positions recorded by the GPS unit during the project were taken under sunny conditions, with typically three to five satellites being tracked. This unit is capable of accuracy to less than 3 m.



## V. RESULTS

This survey consisted of a combination of intensive pedestrian survey and shovel testing. The majority of the project area consisted of recently planted row crops in an agricultural field. Intensive pedestrian survey supplemented with screened STPs was conducted throughout the entire project area.

The northern two-thirds of the APE consisted of a recently planted agricultural field of row crops. The GSV was excellent at 80–90 percent (Figure 4). The surface soil was truncated (0–15 cm deep) and only held a plow zone above the subsoil. The southeastern corner of the northern portion, however, was groomed as an athletic field and had inadequate GSV (less than 25 percent). The surface soil in this area had been mechanically stripped and leveled, leaving only subsoil.

The southern portion of the APE resides below Maxie Rae Road and is overlain by marsh and prairie grasses (Figure 5). Overall, the southern third of the APE below Maxie Rae Road was heavily disturbed with truncated surface soils (0–10 cm in depth), and it showed evidence of periodic inundation by the intermittent drainage along the southwestern border (Figure 3). Along the southern border, two large push piles were within the APE. A large dump and a borrow area associated with road and construction projects exist near the road. The southern portion of the APE also held visual subsurface disturbances utilized for drainage relief of the field area.

### Depositional Context

Profiles observed within the APE were typical of the soil series mapped for the area (Wrightsville-Vidrine and Patoutville-Crowley silty loam associations). Shovel tests revealed sediments in the agricultural field generally had a shallow or truncated brown (10YR 4/3) Ap horizon overlying a brown (10YR 5/3) mottled with dark yellowish brown (10YR 3/4) silty clay Bw-horizon. In the areas of undisturbed grassland field, the sediment

profiles had a shallow or truncated brown (10YR 4/3) Ap horizon overlying a brown (10YR 5/3) mottled with dark yellowish brown (10YR 3/4) and yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) silty clay Bw-horizon. Subsoils also held heavy inclusions of manganese. These profiles generally conform to the description of the soils mapped in the area.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CRA personnel completed a records review and cultural resource survey for a proposed LED Certified Site in Evangeline Parish, Louisiana. The proposed project area is approximately 40.7 ha located in the E½ of the W½ of Section 45 and E½ of the W½ of Section 45, T4S, R2E, Ville Platte Township, Evangeline Parish. The records review referenced cultural resource data maintained by the SHPO to identify any cultural resources or cultural resource investigations documented in the area. This work indicated that no surveys or sites were documented in the current project area.

Field investigation consisted of an intensive pedestrian survey supplemented with screened shovel tests executed at 50 m intervals except in areas with inadequate GSV, where transects were conducted along tighter intervals. No cultural material or structures were identified, observed, or recorded by this cultural resource survey.

Based on the findings of the records review and cultural resource survey, no archaeological sites or historic properties listed in, or recommended eligible for, the National Register of Historic Places will be affected by the proposed activities. CRA makes the following recommendations: 1) the APE is recommended for no further work and 2) cultural resource clearance is recommended for the APE.

Note that a principal investigator or field archaeologist cannot grant clearance to a project. Although the decision to grant or withhold clearance is based, at least in part, on

the recommendations made by the field investigator, clearance may be obtained only through an administrative decision made by the LA SHPO.

If any previously unrecorded archaeological materials are encountered during activities in the project area, the SHPO should be notified immediately. If human skeletal material is discovered, the construction activities should cease, SHPO should be contacted immediately, and SHPO guidelines should be followed.

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## **APPENDIX A. SCOPE OF WORK**



## **Scope of Services**

The survey area consists of approximately 100 acres associated with the proposed LED "Certified Site" location. The phase I archaeological investigations for the proposed project can be initiated within 5 working days of the notice to proceed and a detailed report of findings can be submitted to J. Ronald Landreneau & Associates, Inc., within 15-25 business days of the completion of fieldwork, depending on the number and types of resources encountered, if any.

This work will be conducted in accordance with current specifications for conducting fieldwork and preparing a phase I cultural resources survey report issued by the Louisiana SHPO.

## **File Search/Archival Research/APE**

A review of the archaeological site files maintained by the LA SHPO will be conducted for the proposed project area plus a 1 mile buffer. The result of this review will be summarized in the report.

## **Field Research**

The field investigation will consist of an intensive survey of the proposed area following standard archaeological methods (i.e., pedestrian and shovel test survey). The portions of the project area that cross terrain with good surface visibility (for example plowed/cultivated fields) or characterized by steep slopes (creek bank) will be subject to pedestrian survey. This entails a walking, visual inspection of the ground surface to identify historic and prehistoric artifacts. Portions of the project that are located on relatively flat terrain with poor surface visibility will be shovel tested. This assessment method requires the excavation of screened shovel tests measuring 30-x-30 cm at intervals of 30 m. All archaeological sites and historic structures discovered within the intensive survey area will be recorded following current LA SHPO specifications.

## **Deliverables**

The results of the archival and field investigation will be documented in a detailed written report. The report will conform to the specifications of the LA SHPO. The report will describe all cultural resources located during the investigation and make recommendations for their treatment in relation to potential impacts. In addition, site survey forms and historic structure forms will be prepared for each archaeological site and historic structure recorded with this data submitted to the proper agency. If a letter report is all that is needed a PDF will be submitted electronically. Five copies of the report will be submitted to J. Ronald Landreneau & Associates, Inc., for distribution to reviewing agencies. CRA will make any necessary revisions to the report requested by the reviewing agencies.

