



World Heritage / Patrimoine Mondial

Name: Mitchell

Surname: Coffman

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Supervisor of thesis:

Joseph S. Popadic Committee Chair Charles F. Fryling
Committee Member Michael W. Wascom Committee Member

Institution of Supervisor:

LSU, School of Landscape Architecture
Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture, 302 Design
Building
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Signature

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Mitchell Coffman
Master of Landscape Architecture
Master of Science Environmental Studies

Please provide a 500 words abstract outlining your thesis; you may wish to attach a table of contents or any other relevant material:

The Atchafalaya Basin Proposal for Nomination to the World Heritage Site List

The Atchafalaya Basin in the Southern United States is a cultural, environmental, historical and natural land region of such universal importance, designation as a World Heritage Site is appropriate. This thesis provides a justification for this designation through compliance with cultural and natural criteria detailed in the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972. The treaty, also known as the World Heritage Convention (WHC) promotes natural and cultural landscape preservation on an international level. This thesis lists the cultural and natural arguments for nominating the Atchafalaya Basin to the World Heritage Site list.

National, regional and local heritage preservation movements have a strong foundation of support from landscape architects and planners. The environmental science community has an equally dedicated base working on behalf of the natural preservation movement. In recent years, the two studies have commingled their efforts to preserve the great cultural and natural landscapes of the world. The resulting preservation of culture and nature provides protection for the world's most biologically diverse ecosystems and geomorphic phenomena while recognizing man's historic and physical influence upon the land.

In September 2001, Louisiana State University Landscape Architecture students unveiled a plan to promote heritage tourism in the thirteen parishes comprising the *Atchafalaya Heritage Trace*. The Atchafalaya Heritage Trace Commission requested the study in support of the commission's effort to gain federal designation of an *Atchafalaya Natural Heritage Area*. I participated in the research project as a student in the Master of Landscape Architecture program. Professor Sadik C. Artunc, in conjunction with a preexisting management plan guided the class in this regional planning project. The class set out to identify, enhance, develop and conserve the natural and cultural significance of the 13 parishes that comprise the Atchafalaya Trace. This regional planning exercise paralleled research in my second major field of study in graduate school, environmental planning and management.

As a candidate for a dual degree, Master of Landscape Architecture and Master of Science in Environmental Studies, my interest in pursuing a regional planning thesis topic that might focus upon heritage landscapes narrowed with the advice of Professor Michael Wascom of the LSU Environmental Studies Department. The study of international environmental treaties in Professor Wascom's International Environmental Law Colloquium included discussion of the

1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. This treaty seeks to protect heritage landscapes across the world in a globally cooperative manner.

This thesis project investigates the history of the World Heritage Convention while detailing the criteria within required for gaining World Heritage Site designation. This thesis project also discusses two issues often associated with World Heritage designation; land rights and tourism impacts. The historical significance of the Atchafalaya Basin is undeniably strong. Pre-Columbian Indians, Native Americans, African-Americans, French and Acadians settled in the basin. These inhabitants, most notably the Acadians, successfully established a unique cultural heritage in and around the basin that is worthy of international preservation. Existing basin management programs conserve, protect, restore and use the cultural and natural resources of the landscape while promoting the unique qualities associated with the region. One such state program, the Atchafalaya Heritage Trace focuses upon the preservation & promotion of the varied cultures of past basin inhabitants and current residents living in the 13 parishes that comprise the basin.