Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area

Background

After years of tireless efforts by Congressman John Garamendi and Senator Dianne Feinstein, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area was created on March 12, 2019 when the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act was signed into law. Although there are now 55 National Heritage Areas (NHAs) nationwide, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA is California's first.

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA traces back to the 2009 Delta Reform Act, which charged the Delta Protection Commission with developing a proposal to protect, enhance, and sustain the unique cultural, historical, recreational, and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place. The proposal would include a plan to establish state and federal designation of the Delta as a place of special significance, which may include application for a federal designation of the Delta as a National Heritage Area.

The Commission completed an NHA Feasibility Study in 2012, incorporating public involvement throughout its process via public meetings and presentations, stakeholder interviews, review memos, and study team meetings. The National Park Service reviewed and found that the Feasibility Study met the criteria for NHA designation, subject to Congressional approval. The study was submitted to Congress for consideration and to the Delta Stewardship Council for inclusion in the Delta Plan.

Prior to Congressional designation, the Commission embarked on the Delta Heritage Area Initiative to advance and elevate recognition of the Delta's unique values.

What are National Heritage Areas?

National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated by Congress as places where natural, cultural, historic, and recreation resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally important landscape. NHAs are a grassroots, community-driven approach to heritage conservation and economic development. Designated local coordinating entities collaborate with communities to determine how to make heritage relevant to local interests and needs.

NHAs support historic preservation, natural resource conservation, recreation, heritage tourism, and educational projects through public-private partnerships. National Park Service provides technical assistance and distributes matching federal funds to NHA entities. NHAs have no effect on water rights, property rights, or hunting and fishing rights within the designated area. See the NHA Program website: *www.nps.gov/heritageareas* for more information.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area (NHA)?

The new NHA boundaries extend from Sacramento to Stockton to Vallejo. The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA will promote the Delta's communities, resources, and history. The Delta Protection Commission serves as the local coordinating entity.

What is the role of the Delta Protection Commission as the local coordinating entity?

The Delta Protection Commission is a State of California agency governed by a 15-member board; eleven of these 15 members are local agency officials (5 county supervisors, 3 city council members, 3 reclamation district trustees), which provides strong local agency governance. As the local coordinating entity, the Commission is responsible for:

- Developing a management plan through a public engagement process;
- Coordinating heritage projects and programs among diverse partners; and
- Providing funding and support to local agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other parties that are implementing heritage promotion, preservation, and education programs.

The Commission pursued heritage projects as part of its Delta Heritage Area Initiative; these current activities are continuing under the auspices of the NHA. Federal agencies are encouraged to consult and coordinate with the Commission on activities that may have an impact on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA.

What is the role of the management plan for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA?

The Commission has three years from designation to prepare a management plan, which will provide guidance on ways to preserve, enhance, and educate the public about Delta and Carquinez Strait heritage. Required components include comprehensive policies, strategies, and recommendations, a resource inventory, an interpretive plan, and an implementation and funding program. The Commission must consider the interests of government, businesses, organizations, and individuals in the preparation and implementation of the management plan.

What are the goals for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA?

The 2012 Feasibility Study provides six goals for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA. The management plan process will revisit these goals:

1. Identify the Delta as a region of national significance
2. Support economic development
3. Promote heritage tourism, ecotourism, and agritourism and compatibility with agriculture
4. Make partner site maps available
5. Undertake and provide resources for historic preservation
6. Develop interpretive sign and Delta history programs

What are the interpretive themes for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA?

According to the National Park Service, interpretive themes articulate the reason or reasons that visitors should care about a cultural resource such as a building, historic site, or landscape. The 2012 Feasibility Study developed five interpretive themes for the NHA. The management plan process will revisit these themes:

1. At the heart of California lies America's inland delta.
2. Conversion of the Delta from marshland to farmland was one of the largest reclamation projects in the United States.
3. Multi-cultural contributions and experiences have shaped the Delta's rural landscape.
4. The Delta, California's cornucopia, is amongst the most fertile agricultural regions in the world.
5. The Delta lies at the center of California's water resource challenges.

What types of heritage projects form the foundation of the NHA?

The Commission's work on Delta heritage, before and after NHA designation, has involved public education, historic preservation, tourism and recreation development, visitor amenities, and economic development activities, including:

- The Delta Narratives project, which prepared essays that connected the history of the Delta to important regional and national trends and provided recommended actions to preserve and share these narratives.
- The Delta Heritage Forum, a free, full-day event focused on efforts to preserve and tell Delta stories, opportunities for partnerships and collaboration, and networking.
- The Delta Heritage Courier electronic newsletter
- Delta Anthology, a collection of writings intended for those interested in the region's rich culture and heritage.
- A fourth-grade Delta Narratives Curriculum.

How will the NHA designation benefit the Delta?

Designation has both tangible and intangible benefits. The legislation authorizes potential federal funding, although these are not large. National recognition will highlight the importance and distinctiveness of the Delta's and Carquinez Strait's people, environment, and history for a state and national audience and widen the constituency that cares about the future of the Delta. The NHA also will further develop the brand identity of the region and help boost tourism providers and the local tourism economy.

How will the public and partner organizations be involved in the NHA?

Public involvement and partnerships are crucial to NHA planning and management; they reflect local stakeholder ownership of the NHA, as well as local capabilities to recognize, maintain, and enhance the heritage resources of the region. The Commission will conduct outreach to organizations and the public throughout the NHA and provide multiple opportunities for input during the preparation and implementation of the management plan. The NHA will also feature a partnership program for interested organizations such as historical societies, museums, parks, and events. Partners will work on projects and activities that further the objectives of the NHA.

How will NHA decisions be made?

The 15-member Commission board will approve the management plan, which guides the long-term activities of the Commission and partner organizations, and will provide direction on specific NHA projects and activities. Decisions about the management plan and specific projects will be made after extensive outreach with partner organizations and the public. The Commission and National Park Service will also agree on annual work plans for the NHA, which describe proposed tasks and spending for National Park Service funding and local matching funds.

Interested in learning more?
Contact the Delta Protection Commission
dpc@delta.ca.gov or call (916) 375-4800

Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area Boundary

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Legend

Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA Boundary

Area not included in boundary

OFFICE: Land Resources Program Center
REGION:Pacific West Region
PARK: SASA

MAP NUMBER: T27/105,030
DATE: OCTOBER 2012

N W E S

10 0 10 20 Miles