

Delta Protection Commission Meeting
January 21, 2021

AGENDA ITEM 10: Receive report on Economic Sustainability Plan (ESP)-Recreation and Tourism Chapter update

Prepared by: Virginia Gardiner

Presented by: Erik Vink and Virginia Gardiner

Requested Action: **Receive report and consider recommendations**

Type of Action: Information

Background: Public Resources Code section 29759 requires the Commission to prepare and adopt an Economic Sustainability Plan (ESP), and Public Resources Code section 29761.5(a) requires the Commission to review the Plan (and update it if necessary) every five years. The Commission adopted the ESP in January 2012. Commission staff initiated the update of the ESP Recreation and Tourism Chapter in July 2019. The update has included a review of relevant recreation and tourism studies completed after 2012, a data-gathering phase including assembling and analyzing best available current data (visitation, economic activity, and emerging recreation and tourism trends), and a series of five focus groups conducted between March and April 2020. Commission staff and our consultant team are wrapping up the draft document preparation and are preparing to finalize the update in March 2021. Commission staff provided progress updates at the July and November 2020 Commission meetings.

Outreach: Commission staff has presented the draft ESP Recreation and Tourism Chapter update findings and recommendations to the Delta as Place Interagency Working Group, the Delta Protection Advisory Committee, and to local and state government and community representatives at a workshop on December 16, 2020.

The December 16 workshop provided a snapshot of the comments and questions we've received through the outreach presentations. Participants sought clarification on key trends, data, and findings. The group also reviewed the issues and constraints associated with Delta recreation and tourism, and identified aging infrastructure, lack of facilities, and water quality/waterway obstructions as top issues in an instant poll. The group was also asked about priority recommendations, and identified expanded promotion of VisitCADelta.gov, permitting assistance, establishing a facilitator entity, implementation of the National Heritage Area and Great California Delta Trail, maintaining and upgrading existing facilities, and expanding public facilities as priorities. Finally, the discussion concluded with an exchange of ideas on how a

responsible entity or facilitator organization could focus attention on recreation and tourism improvements.

Outreach continues during January 2021 with individual meetings with local agencies and interested community members. In addition, public input is being solicited through our communications channels (targeted email, Delta Happenings, and Commission social media), culminating with a public workshop on January 26, 2021. The draft document was posted on the Commission’s website in November and public comments will be accepted at submit@delta.ca.gov through January 29, 2021. Commission staff intend to present a final ESP Recreation and Tourism 2020 Update for Commission consideration at its March 18, 2021 meeting.

Advancing ESP Recreation and Tourism Recommendations: One of the main recommendations from the consultant team’s report is to have a responsible entity or facilitator organization focused on Delta recreation and tourism improvements. Commission staff are interested in Commission feedback on the idea that the Commission is best positioned to act as a primary facilitating entity to champion actions that support and enhance Delta recreation and tourism. This initiative could include public and private partners to develop and advance a priority recreation and tourism agenda by and for the Delta, with a goal of stimulating the recreation economy.

Commission staff would complete an evaluation of Commission work priorities before serving in this function, and it might require difficult decisions about other work priorities that will need to be deferred or even abandoned to allow Commission staff resources to be directed toward this effort.

Requested Action: Receive report and provide feedback/support for a Commission role as a facilitating entity to champion actions that support and enhance Delta recreation and tourism.

Relationship to Vision 2030 (Commission strategic plan):

Regional Economy (Strategic Theme)

E.1 Lead the implementation and required updating of the Economic Sustainability Plan (ESP).