

Delta Protection Commission Meeting
July 21, 2022

AGENDA ITEM 11: Receive report on Delta National Heritage Area Management Plan development

Prepared by: Blake Roberts

Presented by: Blake Roberts

Requested Action: Receive report on Delta National Heritage Area Management Plan development

Type of Action: Information

Background: The Delta Reform Act of 2009 and Delta Plan Recommendation DP R1 called on the Delta Protection Commission (Commission) to pursue federal designation of the Delta as a National Heritage Area (Water Code Section 85301(b)(1)). Legislation establishing the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area (NHA) and designating the Commission as the local coordinating entity was signed into law on March 12, 2019. The Commission’s first primary task is to prepare and receive approval from the Secretary of Interior for a Management Plan. The Management Plan will outline the significance and purpose of the NHA, as well as the activities that the Commission and a regional network of partners will undertake over the next twelve years.

The Commission has worked with the NHA Management Plan Advisory Committee (NHA Advisory Committee) and four advisory task groups, Point Heritage Development Consulting, LLC (PointHDC), and California State Parks to prepare major elements of the plan. The PointHDC contract ended on June 30, 2022. A request for proposal for a consulting team to assist with the next stage of preparation of the Management Plan will be available soon. The California State Parks contract is still active through December 31, 2022.

Management Plan Requirements: Legislation mandates that the Management Plan represent the diverse interests of the NHA. The planning process must provide the opportunity for the public and all levels of government to be involved, including consideration of government plans and Tribal governments’ plans and treaty rights. The Management Plan must incorporate an integrated and cooperative approach to the protection, enhancement, and interpretation of the natural, cultural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources of the NHA. Required components include:

- A resource inventory;
- Policies, strategies, and recommendations for conservation, funding, management, and development of the NHA;
- Recommendations on coordination with governmental and Tribal programs;
- A description of actions that the partnership network will take to protect regional resources;
- An interpretive plan;
- Funding sources; and
- An implementation plan that includes actions to facilitate regional collaboration and specific commitments for the first five years by the Commission and partners.

Finally, the legislation prohibits the acquisition of real property with federal funds appropriated for the NHA and sets forth specific protections for private property rights and the existing jurisdiction of regulatory entities in the region.

Outreach to Date: Commission staff kicked off public outreach for the management plan in January 2021 with the first NHA Advisory Committee meeting. The committee has met nine times to date. Four advisory task groups – Heritage Development and Tourism, Interpretive Planning, Organization, and Resource Stewardship – have also met to discuss specific topics.

In addition to the NHA Advisory Committee and Task Groups, Commission staff worked with PointHDC and California State Parks to conduct the following outreach activities:

- Two in-person public meetings in Benicia and Walnut Grove in August 2021.
- A session on the management plan process at the Delta Heritage Forum, which was held virtually on November 3, 2021.
- Two online surveys, one intended for the general public and the other for interpretive providers such as historical societies and museums.
- Interviews with stakeholders and interpretive providers.
- Meetings with tribal officials to discuss the management plan and interpretive plan.

Recommendations to Date: The management planning process is assessing the needs and opportunities in the region and considering the appropriate role of the Commission. A critical component is identifying partners and understanding current leadership in potential focus areas. Participants in the management planning process identified gaps in tourism services and programming, and stewardship of the built environment that could be a primary emphasis for the NHA. Additionally, participants agreed that the NHA would most likely take a supporting role in resource stewardship of natural resources because there are already several agencies with leadership roles in the Delta. The NHA Advisory Committee and task groups worked with

PointHDC to identify heritage development and tourism and resource stewardship focus areas through draft objectives, strategies, and actions.

As these focus areas continue to develop, Commission staff will also need to consider the staffing that will be necessary to implement and manage these activities. The management plan will include a section on the organizational and management strategy with recommendations for administering the day-to-day work within the NHA. Several management options remain to be considered and tested during the balance of the management planning process. One significant question to be examined is whether the Commission should be the long-term coordinating entity for the NHA.

California State Parks has led preparation of the interpretive framework, which will include a statement of the NHA's significance; interpretive themes and subthemes; existing conditions; identification of audiences and visitor needs; and opportunities, challenges, and recommendations. State Parks staff worked with the Interpretive Planning Task Group to develop a statement of significance and a set of themes for the NHA. Commission and State Parks staff are currently engaged with tribal representatives to fully develop a theme focusing on indigenous peoples.

Commission staff will present on the following draft components of the plan

- Interpretive themes and subthemes;
- Heritage development and tourism objectives;
- Resource stewardship objectives;
- Management and organization options;
- Vision and mission statements

Next Steps: The management plan is built on an understanding of foundational elements of the NHA – purpose, values, themes, significant resources, regional partnership network, administrative capacity and commitments, funding, and mandates. Work accomplished to date has articulated most of these elements. The NHA Advisory Committee and task groups have built on this foundation by establishing a series of objectives for the protection, enhancement, and interpretation of the natural, cultural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources of the NHA. Next steps are to:

1. Refine the objectives/actions identified by the task groups.
2. Work with the NHA Advisory Committee to articulate 3 to 5 primary goals for the NHA.
3. Collaborate with partners to determine roles and contributions in undertaking actions in the management plan, and secure commitments from partners.

4. Work with the Management Task Group to develop the business plan.
5. Develop an implementation plan for goals, objectives, actions, budget, and timeline.
6. Identify the ways in which the goals, objectives, and actions will meet legislative requirements, and create a plan outline that shows where legislative requirements will be addressed.
7. Prepare the draft management plan document for Commission and National Park Service review prior to public review.

Commission staff anticipate presenting a draft plan to the Commissioners for potential public release in early 2023.

Relationship to Vision 2030 (Commission strategic plan):

Delta Heritage (Strategic Theme)

H.2 Protect and promote the tribal, cultural, and historical resources of the Delta.

2.1 Implement the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area.