

Delta Protection Commission Meeting
January 20, 2022

AGENDA ITEM 10: Great California Delta Trail Master Plan

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Requested Action: **Consider approval of Great California Delta Trail Master Plan**

Type of Action: Action

Background: Public Resources Code (PRC) sections 5852-5855 requires the Commission to develop and adopt a plan and implementation program for a continuous recreation corridor, including bicycle, hiking, and water trails, around the Delta called the Great California Delta Trail (Great Delta Trail). Under this statute, the Commission does not itself develop trails, but works in partnership with local entities to coordinate planning and implementation across jurisdictional boundaries. Trail segments are conceived, developed, built, and managed by local entities. In areas of Sacramento, Yolo, and Contra Costa counties, where trail development nearly outpaced the Commission’s Western and Eastern Blueprint planning, some 47.3 miles of Great Delta Trail segments have already been designated and are open to trail users. Many more miles have been planned or proposed.

Plan Approach and Structure: As required by statute, the Great Delta Trail will link the San Francisco Bay Trail system at the Carquinez Bridge in Contra Costa and Solano Counties to planned and existing Sacramento River trails in Yolo and Sacramento Counties.

The Great California Delta Trail Master Plan (Plan) provides a framework that lays out the important considerations Delta region trail planners should account for, including both opportunities and constraints in development of the trail. Additionally, it is intended to help the public understand the goals and strategies for the trail, and the range of possible benefits from the trail. Recreational trails provide multiple tangible benefits to communities. The 2020 update to the Economic Sustainability Plan Recreation and Tourism chapter (ESP) identified the Great Delta Trail as among immediate action priorities for improving the Delta recreation economy. Recreation focus group participants for the ESP update reinforced the need to improve visitation, with suggestions such as adding new businesses and public access facilities.

Importantly, the Plan is meant to be a useful tool for our community partners who are involved in trail development, and to support agency planning efforts rather than mandate local agency

land use changes. It is one element of the Commission’s overall mission to support the Delta economy.

As presented today, the final draft Plan format and much of the content remain similar to the draft presented to the Commission in November 2021, which incorporated input from the Stakeholder and Technical Advisory Committees (SAC-TAC), as well as public and levee manager surveys in summer and fall 2021 and presentations to the Delta Protection Advisory Committee in September and November 2021. However, new content has been added and revisions have been made in response to comments received during the public comment period, conducted from November 18 to December 16, 2021. The final draft also documents comments and responses to all comments and input over the past year as described below.

Outreach Since the November Commission Meeting: Two online public workshops were held during the comment period, on November 30 and December 8, 2021. These workshops are documented in a new Appendix I, and new Appendix J (attached) presents a matrix summarizing comments, with responses indicating the type and location of changes made in the plan, if applicable. Survey results are presented in Appendices A and D.

Key Plan Recommendations: Key recommendations focus on ways the Commission can support trail plans and projects throughout the Delta and have been slightly clarified, but largely remain unchanged. Another set of recommendations are for the practitioner, relating to trail design elements and operational considerations to foster consistency across the many different potential implementing entities. Some of these have been strengthened, such as including precautions with respect to pesticide and herbicide use and ensuring coordination with private property owners and agriculture operations. The remainder are general recommendations regarding signage, wayfinding, and maps. The Plan can be found at the following link: <https://delta.ca.gov/calendar/commission-meeting-january-2022/>

Next Steps: If approved by the Commission, we will distribute copies of the Master Plan to interested partners, including the SAC-TAC participants. Based on input from these groups, we anticipate there will be several potential candidates for additional trail segment designations to present to the Commission over the next several years.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies), the Great California Delta Trail Master Plan is a planning study for possible future actions that the Commission has not approved, adopted, or funded and as such is exempt and does not require preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) or Negative Declaration (ND). Section 15262 does require consideration of environmental factors. Chapter 2 of the Plan details existing conditions, opportunities, and constraints to be

considered by any entity proposing to implement a trail that could be designated as a segment of the Trail. These environmental factors include not only physical characteristics and infrastructure but natural and cultural resource considerations. Chapters 4 and 5 of the Plan provide design and implementation guidance that focuses on context-sensitive trail design. The Plan provides guidance, but no directed action or changes in land use. Trail segments proposed for designation as part of the Delta Trail would be reviewed and approved at the local level and would undergo environmental review within the applicable jurisdiction.

Requested Action: Approve final draft Great California Delta Trail Master Plan and approve Commission staff filing of a CEQA Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse.

Relationship to Vision 2030 (Commission strategic plan):

Recreation and Tourism (Strategic Theme)

R.1 Partner with public agencies and private entities to increase and expand recreation and tourism in the Delta to all.

1.2 Identify recreation needs and constraints and apply available resources to meet them, including public-private partnerships and multiple use of appropriate Delta lands.

1.3 Extend the Great California Delta Trail by continuing planning, support, and collaboration efforts.

1.4 Develop partnerships to promote the Delta as a unique destination region to potential visitors, in-state, nationally and internationally.