Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area

Management Plan



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**Administrative Review Draft**

December 6, 2023

Chapter 1 – Introduction to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area

# Introduction

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area (the NHA), California’s first National Heritage Area, includes land in Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, and Yolo counties. The region is defined by waterways and marshland, in particular the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers, the Carquinez Strait, and the Suisun Marsh, and rural, suburban, and urban communities connected by an intertwined network of waterways, levee-top highways, and bridges.

In 2009, the California State Legislature passed a comprehensive package reforming governance of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta) and related aspects of statewide water management. In Section 85301 of Senate Bill X7-1 (Delta Reform Act of 2009), the Legislature charged the Delta Protection Commission (DPC), a state agency committed to the protection and health of the Delta environment and economy, with developing:

“A proposal to protect, enhance, and sustain the unique cultural, historical, recreational, agricultural, and economic values of the Delta as an evolving place... The Commission shall include in the proposal 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.”

This charge originated in the Delta Vision process, a Governor Schwarzenegger-directed effort whose recommendations formed a major basis of the Delta Reform Act. The concept of NHA designation for the Delta originated not with the Governor's appointed Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force, but with the process's "Delta as a Place" work group, which was comprised predominantly of Delta residents. Their recommendation to consider the appropriateness of NHA designation for the Delta was formally included in the Blue Ribbon Task Force's 2008 *Delta Vision Strategic Plan* and subsequent state legislation.

Federal legislation for a National Heritage Area was initially introduced to Congress in 2010, and the *Feasibility Study for a Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area* was completed by the DPC staff in 2012. Following development of the study, the DPC staff continued to work with the region’s cultural and natural resources and historic communities as part of their ongoing work in the Delta. The NHA was Congressionally designated in March 2019 along with five other NHAs as part of the passage of the *John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act* (Public Law 116-9, Section 6001, included in Appendix A).[[1]](#footnote-2) Prior to designation, Senator Dianne Feinstein in the U.S. Senate and Congressman John Garamendi in the House of Representatives repeatedly introduced bills establishing the NHA with support from former Senators Barbara Boxer and Kamala Harris and current and former Representatives Ami Bera, Mark DeSaulnier, Josh Harder, Zoe Lofgren, Doris Matsui, Jerry McNerney, George Miller, and Mike Thompson. The DPC was named as the NHA’s local coordinating entity in the designating legislation.

The designating legislation also mandated the development of a management plan. An NHA management plan outlines the significance and purpose of the NHA; long-range policies, goals, actions, and strategies; and the programs and projects that the coordinating entity and a regional network of partners will undertake in the 15 years following designation, through 2034. The management plan was developed through a collaborative process led by the DPC (see Appendix B for the List of Key Participants and Preparers). This document is the culmination of the management planning process that began in early 2020.

## Brief Description of the Region

At their core, NHAs are defined by the past and present relationship between people and land. For the NHA, the region’s primary physical features, cultural landscapes, and historical significance provide important context for the management plan. The information in this section is based on the description of the region in the *Feasibility Study for the Sacramento-San Joaquin National Heritage Area*, developed by the DPC in 2012.[[2]](#footnote-3) A longer description can be found in Chapter 2, Understanding and Appreciating California’s Delta.

California’s two largest rivers, the Sacramento and the San Joaquin, meet southwest of the state’s capital as they carry water toward the Pacific Ocean. These rivers, smaller tributaries, and tidal flows form an inland delta comprised of more than 1,000 miles of sloughs and waterways. The Delta, along with the Suisun Marsh, Carquinez Strait, and San Francisco Bay, make up the largest estuary on the west coast of the Americas, the outlet of a watershed that encompasses nearly half of California’s surface area. In a state where water is increasingly at the center of environmental and economic discussions, the Delta is a unique and significant place.

The region was one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems on the West Coast. Native Americans have made use of the Delta’s rich flora and fauna for millennia, despite colonialism, disease, displacement, and genocide. Settlers from the United States’ westward expansion recognized the region’s agricultural potential in the mid-19th century. The late 19th and early 20th centuries were marked by significant landscape transformation and technological innovation. Reshaping the land and harnessing its agricultural productivity brought waves of Asian, European, and Latin American immigrants, whose living traditions continue to contribute to the region’s vibrancy. From waterways to wildlife, from farmlands to thriving downtowns, today’s Delta boasts a combination of natural, cultural, historical, agricultural, recreational, and economic resources that tell a unique American story and enrich Californians’ quality of life and economy.

## How National Heritage Areas Work

NHAs are living landscapes where people and land – culture and nature – have had a significant impact on one another through time, resulting in a special region with a distinct identity. NHAs are also a strategy for conserving and managing large landscapes through partnerships that lead to collaborative conservation and economic development. The first NHA was established by Congress in 1984; President Ronald Reagan called them a marriage of heritage conservation, recreation, and economic development. Every administration since Reagan's has contributed to the development of the NHAs in the U.S. today.

NHAs serve as a regional organization or “big tent” under which a variety of interests and organizations convene. They work in the following areas:

* *Historic Preservation* – preserving and protecting special places and living traditions.
* *Cultural Conservation and the Arts* – creative placemaking through conserving living traditions and using arts as an economic driver.
* *Interpretation and Education* – sharing the places, traditions, and the important stories they hold with visitors and students of all ages.
* *Natural Resource Stewardship and Enhancement* – conserving natural resources and building on scenic and recreational opportunities for people to enjoy.
* *Heritage Tourism* – driving visitation by supporting marketing and/or developing tourism infrastructure.
* *Community Revitalization and Economic Development* – using heritage assets as economic drivers through tourism and revival.

As part of the National Park Service’s (NPS) process of developing a strategy to evaluate NHAs, the Conservation Study Institute, a former NPS program dedicated to enhancing the stewardship of landscapes and communities, analyzed the way in which NHAs achieve these outcomes.[[3]](#footnote-4) The findings from that analysis are useful in understanding the elements that contribute to successful NHAs.

NHAs are built on the premise that heritage has the potential to link people to place, serving as an organizing concept to engage partners across a region in landscape-scale projects and programs. The hallmark of NHAs is the development of a network of such partners. This network consists of community leaders, local government ofﬁcials, state and federal agencies, and the business community, as well as environmental and preservation organizations. The network is woven together by the NHA’s shared heritage-based vision, which helps to sustain the network while encouraging organizations to work across areas of interest. The feasibility study and management planning processes are designed to engage partners and build constituencies, with an important outcome being to help an NHA and its management organization to be a catalyst that can activate and manage a network of partners and collaborators.

The Conservation Study Institute’s analysis led to the recognition of four critical elements for NHA success – nationally significant heritage, a collaborative framework, NPS involvement, and building the network.

**National heritage** provides a shared mission, a context for community engagement, and a sense of pride.

**A collaborative framework** serves as a broad, regional umbrella through which a variety of organizations can ﬁnd mission alignment. The NHA provides the structure for that framework, and NHA staff exhibit collaborative leadership in facilitating and enhancing partnership building within the framework.

**NPS involvement** brings the credibility of a national brand, both for the integrity of the resources involved and for the expertise the federal agency has in interpretation and resource conservation. Access to NPS staff, leadership, and technical assistance is another benefit an NHA brings to a region.

An NHA must help **build a partnership network** and, serving as a hub, maintain the network using influence instead of power. Using influence includes:

* Building capacity for smaller organizations, often through grant-making or connections to technical assistance;
* Securing sustainable funding to support consistent staffing and long-term commitments; and
* Time – time to accomplish capacity building in smaller organizations, time for more established organizations to see value in working across areas of interest, and time to integrate resource conservation objectives with economic development goals.

Through management planning, the NHA builds an effective partnership network and leads the development of a regional vision based on shared, nationally significant heritage. In planning and beyond, the NHA coordinating entity plays a variety of roles in a complex and dynamic network, connecting partners in different ways. At its best, this network is far more than the sum of its parts.

# Designating Legislation – Authorities, Duties, Prohibitions, and Requirements

Title VI of the U.S. Congress' *John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act* clearly establishes authorities, duties, and prohibitions for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area, abbreviated as "the NHA" throughout the plan. The NHA program is under the auspices of the Delta Protection Commission, which was named the local coordinating entity in the designating legislation. Throughout the document, reference to the NHA coordinating entity and the DPC are used interchangeably.

## Authorities

A series of authorities are granted to the DPC to manage the NHA. These authorities allow the DPC and the partnership network to achieve the NHA goals set forth in the Foundation section, below. Authorities include:

* making grants
* entering into cooperative agreements
* hiring and compensating staff
* obtaining funding and services from federal programs in addition to the NPS Heritage Partnership Program (HPP) funds
* contracting for goods or services
* serving as a catalyst for activities that further the NHA and are consistent with an approved management plan

## Duties

Several duties are articulated in designating legislation. One is the preparation of a management plan that is submitted to the Secretary of the Interior, which this document shall fulfill. Others include reporting on the activities and associated expenditures of the NHA and encouraging regional economic viability. Consistent with the tenets of the National Heritage Areas program, one of the primary duties is to assist public and private partners in implementing activities incorporated in the management plan, including:

* programs and projects that recognize, protect, and enhance resources
* interpretive exhibits and programs
* recreational and educational opportunities
* the development of a greater awareness of and appreciation for the NHA's special qualities
* historic preservation consistent with NHA themes
* a wayfinding system
* partnerships among the federal government, state, Tribal, and local governments, organizations, and individuals to further the NHA
* consideration of interests of diverse units of governments, businesses, organizations, and individuals in planning and implementation

## Prohibitions

The NHA has no regulatory power. To underscore this important limitation, designating legislation created by the U.S. Congress provides legislative prohibitions and protections regarding water and private property. The NHA "shall not be interpreted or implemented in a manner that directly or indirectly has a negative effect on the operations of the Central Valley Project, the State Water Project, or any water supply facilities within the Bay-Delta watershed."[[4]](#footnote-5) Moreover, like all other NHAs, legislation prohibits the acquisition of real property with federal funds appropriated for the NHA for the above purposes and sets forth specific protections for private property rights and the existing jurisdiction of regulatory entities in the region.

## Requirements

Designating legislation contains specific requirements that must be included in the management plan. The planning process incorporated consideration of all the requirements. They are listed in the table below, along with the location(s) where each requirement is addressed in the plan.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Requirements in Designating Legislation – P.Law 116-9, 133 STAT. 580 (or footnoted) | Location in the Management Plan |
| Sec. 6001(c)(2)(A) Incorporate an integrated and cooperative approach for the protection, enhancement, and interpretation of the natural, cultural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources. | All five goals reflect the intent of this requirement. Specifically, the objectives and strategies in Chapter 2 (Understanding and Appreciating California’s Delta); Chapter 3 (Stewarding the Delta’s Resources); Chapter 4 (Supporting Tourism and Economic Development); and Chapter 5 (Connecting and Supporting the Partnership Network) include a cooperative approach to the protection, enhancement, and interpretation of the NHA’s resources. Appendix I (Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA Implementation Plan), also meets this requirement as it includes a summary of the objectives and strategies from the chapters listed here. |
| Sec. 6001(c)(2)(B) Take into consideration Federal, State, local, and Tribal plans and treaty rights. | Plans and treaty rights are considered in chapters 1 (Introduction to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA), 3 (Stewarding the Delta’s Resources), and 5 (Connecting and Supporting the Partnership Network). Appendix I (Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA Implementation Plan) also meets this requirement as it includes a summary of the objectives and strategies from the chapters listed here. |
| Sec. 6001(c)(2)(C)(i) [Include] an inventory of the resources located in the National Heritage Area, and any other property within the National Heritage Area that is related to the themes of the National Heritage Area and should be preserved, restored, managed, or maintained because of the significance of the property. | Chapter 3 (Stewarding the Delta’s Resources) contains a description of the resource inventory. The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA Resource Inventory is included as Appendix E. |
| Sec. 6001(c)(2)(C)(ii) [Include] comprehensive policies, strategies and recommendations for conservation, funding, management, and development of the National Heritage Area. | Policies, strategies, and recommendations for conservation are found in Chapter 3 (Stewarding the Delta’s Resources). Policies, strategies, and recommendations for funding, management, and development are located in Chapter 6 (Establishing Sustainable Governance). Appendix I (Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA Implementation Plan) also meets this requirement as it includes a summary of the objectives and strategies from the chapters listed here. |
| Sec. 6001(c)(2)(C)(iii) [Include] a description of actions that the Federal Government, State, Tribal, and local governments, private organizations, and individuals have agreed to take to protect the natural, historical, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources of the National Heritage Area. | Actions to protect natural, historic, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources are found in Chapter 3 (Stewarding the Delta’s Resources), as well as in Appendix K (Letters of Commitment and Support). |
| Sec. 6001(c)(2)(C)(iv) [Include] a program of implementation for the management plan by the local coordinating entity that includes a description of actions to facilitate ongoing collaboration among partners to promote plans for resource protection, restoration, and construction, and specific commitments for implementation that have been made by the local coordinating entity or any government, organization, or individual for the first 5 years of operation. | The implementation plan is described in Chapter 7 (Implementation, Evaluation, and Conclusion) and is included in its entirety in Appendix I (Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA Implementation Plan). Specific commitments are found in the strategies that support goals 1 through 4 (Chapters 2-5), as well as in Appendix K (Letters of Commitment and Support). The partnership network is included as Appendix F (Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA Partners. |
| Sec. 6001(c)(2)(C)(v) [Include] the identification of sources of funding for carrying out the management plan. | The primary source of matching funding is described in Chapter 6 (Establishing Sustainable Governance). Additional sources are included in Appendix H (Potential Funding Sources). |
| Sec. 6001(c)(2)(C)(vi) [Include] analysis and recommendations for means by which Federal, State, local, and Tribal programs, including the role of the National Park Service in the National Heritage Area, may best be coordinated to carry out this subsection. | Analysis of Federal, State, local and Tribal roles is found in chapters 1 (Introduction to the Sacramento-San Juaquin Delta NHA), 3 (Stewarding the Delta’s Resources), 5 (Connecting and Supporting the Partnership Network), and 6 (Establishing Sustainable Governance). |
| Sec. 6001(c)(2)(C)(vii) [Include] an interpretive plan for the National Heritage Area. | Chapter 2 (Understanding and Appreciating California’s Delta) contains the interpretive plan. Chapter 1 (Introduction to the Sacramento-San Juaquin Delta NHA)contains foundational elements of the plan, including the statement of significance and primary themes. Appendix I (Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA Implementation Plan) includes a summary of the objectives and strategies in the interpretive plan. |
| Sec. 6001(c)(2)(D) Recommend policies and strategies for resource management that consider and detail the application of appropriate land and water management techniques, including the development of intergovernmental and interagency cooperative agreements to protect the natural, historical, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the National Heritage Area. | Chapter 3 (Stewarding the Delta’s Resources) contains strategies for resource management and Chapter 5 (Connecting and Supporting the Partnership Network) describes the network with which cooperative agreements may be developed. Appendix I (Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA Implementation Plan) also meets this requirement as it includes a summary of the objectives and strategies from the chapters listed here. |

# Role of the National Park Service

Congressional designation as an NHA signals the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta’s historical, cultural, and natural significance. This designation not only lends credibility and prestige to the region, but also establishes a direct affiliation with the federal government, facilitated through the Secretary of the Interior.

The legislative framework governing the NHA empowers the Secretary, acting through the Delta Protection Commission, to leverage funding for cooperative agreements, direct assistance to partners, and other measures aimed at facilitating the implementation of the approved management plan. The responsibility for administering assistance to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA is delegated by the Secretary of the Interior to the National Park Service. NPS, with its central office in Washington and regional offices nationwide, manages the National Heritage Areas Program. Funding for this program is channeled through the Heritage Partnership Program of the National Park Service.

The Sacramento-San Joaquin NHA is affiliated with the NPS Regional Office in the Pacific West, which manages the cooperative agreement to distribute HPP funding to the NHA and provides technical assistance and guidance in alignment with the designating legislation. The federal funding appropriated by Congress and distributed through NPS is critical to the NHA’s success. This financial support serves as the organizational seed money that supports the initiatives outlined in the management plan.

Locally, John Muir National Historic Site is the key NPS partner for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA. Additional NPS partners, including the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, the Pony Express National Historic Trail, the Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial, and nearby San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, steward resources that are significant for the NHA and play integral roles in supporting its goals and objectives.

The multi-faceted relationship between the Sacramento-San Joaquin NHA and NPS is fundamental to the successful implementation of the management plan, contributing to financial sustainability and underscoring the integrity and significance of the NHA within the broader context of national heritage preservation.

# Management Planning

In order to meet the legislative mandates, management planning began in 2020, immediately before the pandemic. The DPC staff led the planning process in conjunction with a consulting team from Point Heritage Development Consulting. A National Heritage Area Management Plan Advisory Committee provided oversight and input at every stage of the planning process. California State Parks led development of an interpretive plan for the NHA. The National Park Service provided oversight, technical assistance, and review. Throughout the planning process, the public and partners provided input through a variety of outreach opportunities. This section provides an overview of the planning process and key planning partners.

## Key Planning Partners

### Delta Protection Commission and Staff

The Delta Protection Commission, established by Section 29735 of the California Public Resources Code in the Delta Protection Act of 1992, is named as the NHA coordinating entity in the designating legislation. The 15-member state commission is structured to have predominantly local representation. The DPC includes supervisors and city council members from the five Delta counties (Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, and Yolo), reclamation district members from the central, north, and south Delta, and state agency partners (California Department of Food and Agriculture, California Natural Resources Agency, California State Lands Commission, California State Transportation Agency), as well as ex-officio representation from the California legislature. A list of members is found in Appendix B.

The NHA is one of many programs overseen by the DPC and managed by the eight-person DPC staff. The Program Manager for the Delta National Heritage Area Program led the planning process for the DPC. Other staff members, including the Executive Director, a second Program Manager, a Senior Environmental Planner, and Staff Services Manager also assisted with the project. The Executive Director chairs the National Heritage Area Management Plan Advisory Committee.

### National Heritage Area Management Plan Advisory Committee and Task Groups

The Delta Protection Commission established the National Heritage Area Management Plan Advisory Committee (henceforth, Advisory Committee) in late 2020. The 15-member volunteer committee and additional ex officio members were tasked with providing recommendations on the development of the plan, including expanding outreach to solicit input from diverse stakeholders. The committee membership of the committee are reflective of the breadth of the NHA, including geographic, cultural, and multigenerational representation. It includes representatives of:

* community organizations
* cultural organizations
* natural resource conservation organizations
* recreation organizations
* agriculture
* business organizations
* educational institutions
* museums
* tourism entities
* Tribal governments
* local government
* the National Park Service
* other public agency representatives

The synergy and collaboration within this committee and the task groups lay at the heart of the planning process and the emerging partnership network. A list of participants is found in Appendix B.

### National Park Service

The National Park Service (NPS) is the lead federal agency associated with NHAs. Through the NPS Intermountain Regional Office for regions 6, 7, and 8, the NPS Pacific–West Regional Office for regions 8, 9, 10 and 12, and the Washington DC Office National Heritage Areas Program, NPS provides the NHA with technical assistance on planning and NHA activities and channels Heritage Partnership Program (HPP) funding appropriated by U.S. Congress for management planning and implementation.

NPS staff have played several roles in planning. The planner from John Muir National Historic Site sat on the Advisory Committee and participated in the management planning task groups. The National Heritage Areas Program Regional Coordinators from both the Intermountain and Pacific-West regions reviewed elements of the plan, participated in Advisory Committee meetings, and provided guidance. The National Heritage Areas Program staff in DC, which provides guidance to the NHA Program Regional Coordinators, will complete the review of the final documents and forward the management plan to the Secretary of the Interior's Office for approval and signature.

### Point Heritage Development Consulting, LLC

Point Heritage Development Consulting (PointHDC) participated in two phases of planning: from January 2020 to June 2022, and from February 2023 through the plan's completion. The five-member consulting team included two individuals with NHA management experience, a heritage tourism specialist, a retired NPS employee with experience in NHAs, and a graphic designer. Four of the five team members have previous management planning experience. The Sacramento-based graphic designer qualifies as a Disabled Veterans Business Enterprise in California.

### California State Parks

The DPC contracted with California State Parks (State Parks), a sister state agency, to develop the interpretive plan. State Parks operates nine park units within the NHA, offers interpretation programs at its historic sites and wildlife areas, and offers a variety of recreational opportunities. As an NHA partner, State Parks can assist other partners with interpretation. The four-member team participated in the planning process, including public meetings, tribal consultation, and an online survey of interpretive providers, from June 2020 through January 2023.

## The Planning Process

Seven years passed between the development of the feasibility study and Congressional designation of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area. During that period, the DPC staff were engaged with heritage-related projects, though planning for a National Heritage Area was a lower priority given uncertainty over Congressional action. The DPC staff pivoted to meet the requirements and benefits of designation, contracting with PointHDC to assist in with management planning, contracting with California State Parks to develop an interpretive plan, and establishing a National Heritage Area Management Plan Advisory Committee.

Following orientation meetings for PointHDC in February and early March 2020, the planning process immediately shifted course due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic led to a protracted planning process because of uncertainty over the length of pandemic-related restrictions and a difficult shift to virtual meetings, particularly in a region with limited internet coverage. These conditions made building a coalition of communities, organizations, businesses, and residents challenging. Through the DPC’s commitment to the NHA, as well as the participation of volunteers on the Advisory Committee and related task groups, planning proceeded, and a coalition began to grow. Over the course of the planning process, the DPC and the consultant team employed a wide range of activities to document the NHA's foundational elements, identify needs and opportunities in the region, gather public input, and develop the programmatic and organizational recommendations in this plan.

## Background Research

Site visits, the development of project charters related to several aspects of management planning, and an analysis of existing information provided critical background information for the planning process.

### PointHDC Team Site Visits

Team members participated in three sites visits to gain an understanding of the Delta’s unique natural and engineered landscape. Visits included the Delta's legacy communities (eleven rural communities identified in state legislation), cities along the Carquinez Strait, the Suisun Marsh, John Muir National Historic Site, and many other important sites and landmarks. During the visits, the planning team met with the DPC staff, Advisory Committee members, business owners, elected officials, and representatives from several nonprofit organizations. In addition, they attended the DPC and Delta Protection Advisory Committee meetings.

### ****Project Charters****

**The planning team was initially contracted to develop a series of project charters that would serve as a road map for planning, then was contracted to develop the management plan. The charters provided information on key areas of focus in the management plan, including interpretation; implementation and funding; resource inventory; resource stewardship; heritage development and tourism; and management and organization. Each of the charters contained information on objectives and benefits, potential risks and constraints, stakeholders, and evaluative criteria.**

### ****Studies and Reports****

Numerous existing studies and reports contain information that helped ground the management plan by providing context and ongoing initiatives, as well as describing existing needs and opportunities. A few are listed here and many others are described in subsequent chapters. Significant time, effort, and funding have been applied to planning in the region by a number of different state, federal, and local agencies and organizations. These planning endeavors include many opportunities for collaborative implementation by the DPC and the NHA partnership network.

* The Delta Blue Ribbon Task Force's 2008 *Delta Vision Strategic Plan* contained both the seeds of the NHA concept and the *Delta Plan*. The *Delta Plan*, a regional plan mandated by state legislature's 2009 Delta Reform Act and coordinated by the Delta Stewardship Council, addresses the state's coequal goals for the Delta – a more reliable statewide water supply and a healthy and protected ecosystem – in a manner that protects and enhances the unique characteristics of the Delta as an evolving place. First completed in 2013, the plan is updated periodically and includes recommendations that enhance community development, cultural resource protection, recreation, and heritage tourism.
* The *Feasibility Study for the Sacramento-San Joaquin National Heritage Area* (2012) includes a discussion of water and land uses and identifies significant natural, cultural, and historic resources that justify the region's designation as an NHA.
* The *Economic Sustainability Plan for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta* (2012) contains extensive information on economic and natural resources, a description of the Delta’s ecosystem and possible conservation measures, a review of county policies for resource use, and risk management strategies for floods, earthquakes, and sea-level rise.
* More recently, the *Great Delta Trail Master Plan* (2022) has descriptions of the Delta’s landscape and resources including levees, agriculture and agritourism, rivers and waterways, roads, bridges, ferries, recreational facilities, and wildlife areas in addition to recommendations for trail development. In addition to these region-wide plans, historic district and individual site nominations to the National Register of Historic Places provide historical context for significant places.

At the mid-point of the management planning project, the team drafted the *Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area Foundational Report* (2022)*.* This report collected the results from the first phase of planning and established recommendations for completing the plan. The report included the foundation elements of the NHA, including: the mission; vision; significance; themes; partnership network; and objectives. The document laid the groundwork for projects, programs, and organizational development.

As a draft of this management plan was in preparation, the results of the inaugural *Delta Residents Survey* were released by the Delta Science Program, a subsidiary program of the Delta Stewardship Council.[[5]](#footnote-6) The report contains important baseline information on residents' perceptions of quality of life, sense of place, governance, and risk and resilience to climate change. As many of these are factors on which NHAs hope to assert a positive influence, the longitudinal implementation of the survey will provide important evaluative information about the success of the Sacramento-San Joquin Delta NHA.

## Outreach and Engagement

Partnerships and public engagement are critical to the success of NHAs. The network of partners and coalition of residents established during planning can help sustain an NHA throughout its existence and likely will evolve and grow over time. As such, management planning includes activities that engage partners and the public, soliciting their input and investment in the mission, vision, goals, and projects and programs of an NHA.

### Management Planning Task Groups

Four task groups were formed to address elements of the management plan: 1) Interpretive Planning, 2) Resource Stewardship, 3) Heritage Development and Tourism, and 4) Organization. Participants in the task groups included members of the Advisory Committee, stakeholders, and subject matter experts. Task group members participated in multiple meetings to help analyze and prioritize the information from an online survey, stakeholder interviews, and public meetings. They crafted the mission, vision, and goals for the region, laying an important foundation for all future work. They also identified key opportunities for program and project development, prioritizing them through the development of objectives and strategies. Finally, they helped delineate the appropriate role of and structure for the coordinating entity. A list of members of all four task groups is found in Appendix B.

### ****Online Surveys****

The PointHDC team developed an online survey that Advisory Committee members promoted through newsletters, social media, and other outlets. The survey was designed to gather information from residents on the needs of the Delta and potential activities for the NHA. The survey yielded 94 responses. Survey results demonstrated a lack of awareness about the importance of the region's history as well as a need for funding to conserve resources in the region. These are two areas on which the NHA could have a positive impact. In addition, State Parks sent an interpretive program survey to NHA partners asking about existing interpretive services, themes, opportunities, and challenges.

### ****Stakeholder Interviews****

The PointHDC team completed 12 interviews with stakeholders from across the region that could provide insight into various aspects of the NHA. These confidential interviews provided more in-depth information than the conversations that occurred during the site visits, providing valuable ideas on the possibility of potential projects and programs, partner relationships, regional needs, and future NHA management practices. State Parks also interviewed interpretive providers to learn more about existing interpretive programs and how their organization and sites related to the NHA interpretive themes, and to discuss potential collaboration opportunities.

### ****The Delta Heritage Forum and Public Meetings****

The Delta Heritage Forum, an event held annually since 2018, was a vital component of public outreach. During the management planning process, virtual Forums were held in November of 2020 and 2021, and the event returned to an in-person format for 2022 and 2023. In all four years, the day-long Forum included a focus on the management plan. The Forum will continue as a public engagement event for the NHA in the future.

In 2020, many partners from cultural, historical, and natural resource partners gave presentations on existing activities that align with NHA practices, and PointHDC introduced management planning. In 2021, sessions on management planning and the development of hubs within the NHA dovetailed with each other. Partners and planners hosted breakout groups on several emerging actions: tourism development and promotion; cultural and living traditions; recreation; preservation of the built environment; and conservation of natural resources. In the discussions, participants discussed each action area and considered potential roles for the NHA. In 2022, the Forum featured the interpretive plan, with a discussion on themes and potential activities, panels by local heritage practitioners and a professional from another NHA, and a presentation of the *Foundational Report*. In 2023, the DPC staff presented the draft management plan to the public, providing an opportunity for comments and discussion during the 45-day public review process.

In addition to the annual Delta Heritage Forum, PointHDC planned and conducted two in-person public meetings to gather input for the plan. One was held in Benicia on August 30, 2021, and a second was held in Walnut Grove on August 31, 2021. The agenda for both meetings included an overview of NHAs and a timeline for development of the management plan. Attendees participated in breakout groups to discuss opportunities in interpretation, education, tourism, recreation, and stewardship of cultural, natural, and historic resources. Participants identified challenges and opportunities related to each topic as well as potential partners for the NHA. Information from the meetings provided the foundation for the work of the task groups in developing the plan's draft objectives and strategies.

In 2024, a final series of meetings to present the management plan to the public were held on January X in X and January X in X. In addition, a webinar was held on January X.

### Tribal Engagement

From prehistory to the present, California has a rich and complex legacy of Indigenous culture. At present, no federally- or state-recognized Tribes reside in or have territorial holdings within the NHA. Regardless, the Delta remains a culturally significant place for contemporary Tribes, many of whom have ancestral ties to the region and continue to maintain a relationship with the region through a wide variety of cultural and conservation initiatives, as well as state and federal Section 106 consultations.

As both a California state agency and NHA local coordinating entity, the DPC must engage with Tribal governments during the NHA management plan process. These mandates are described below. However, the DPC staff have sought to exceed these basic requirements to establish a strong foundation for long-term engagement with federal and state recognized Nations and Tribes.

Governor Jerry Brown's Executive Order B-10-11 (2011) requires that each California state agency have a tribal liaison that engages in open, respectful, ongoing consultation with appropriate Native American Tribes or groups to properly manage areas, places, objects, or burials associated with their heritage, sacred sites, and traditional cultural properties or cultural traditions. Governor Gavin Newsom’s Executive Order N-15-19 (2019) reaffirms the principles in Governor Brown's executive order and acknowledges and apologizes on behalf of the State for the historical violence, exploitation, dispossession, and attempted destruction of Tribal communities, which dislocated Native Americans from their ancestral land and sacred practices. The NHA Program Manager serves as the DPC Tribal Liaison and participates in the California Natural Resources Agency's Bay-Delta Tribal Engagement Working Group with other tribal liaisons.

The National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 and the National Environmental Policy Act require consultation between federal agencies, State Historic Preservation Officers, and appropriate Tribal government officials, including Tribal Historic Preservation Officers. Federal Executive Order 13175 and the Department of the Interior Policy on Consultation with Native American Tribes require park units to conduct government-to-government consultations with federally recognized Native American Tribes when undertaking any Federal action that may have a direct impact on Tribes or Tribal lands. Appropriate Tribal officials are contacted at the earliest possible point in the planning process so that Tribal input can be incorporated into planning documents.

Initial efforts at Tribal consultation included appointing Native American Tribal members to the Advisory Committee and task groups. In June 2021, the DPC staff sent and emailed letters to a list of 33 Native American contacts in the NHA from 23 Tribes (provided in Appendix C). California's Native American Heritage Commission provided the contact list. The State Parks team sent a separate consultation letter, follow-up emails, and phone calls to the Native American Heritage Commission list in April 2022 requesting meetings for the interpretive plan. Seven Tribes responded with interest in a consultation, and the team set up virtual meetings and corresponded via email to share documents and receive input. These Native American Tribes requested the DPC continue consultation throughout the planning process and expressed interest in participating in a Tribal advisory committee recommended in this plan. Interested Tribes were also added as ex officio members of the Advisory Committee.

In September 2021, the DPC staff organized a meeting of the Tribal Engagement Working Group. The working group included representatives of the Advisory Committee, a staff person in the California State Parks tribal liaison office, and the State Parks and PointHDC teams. The working group was instrumental in identifying objectives related to resource conservation, Tribal access to lands and resources in the NHA, intergenerational education, and interpretation.

In April 2023, the DPC's sister agency, the Delta Stewardship Council, hosted representatives from four California Native American Tribes for a listening session. Topics covered during the session included Indigenous peoples' ties to the Delta, their sovereignty and relation to the State, and their input regarding Delta management. The DPC's Tribal Liaison and several Advisory Committee members participated in the session, which provided an opportunity to hear tribal perspectives and ask questions to facilitate a shared understanding that informs Tribal engagement in the Delta.

Future outreach efforts to be included here.

### The Review Process

*The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area Management Plan* underwent many levels of review prior to its final submittal to the Secretary of the Interior through the National Park Service.

#### The Delta Protection Commission and the National Heritage Area Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee reviewed individual planning components, including the themes and significance, interpretive plan, goals, and implementation plan, along with reviewing the full draft prior to submittal to the Delta Protection Commission. As the designated local coordinating entity, the DPC reviewed the draft plan and approved the final plan for submittal to the Secretary of the Interior.

#### National Park Service Review

National Park Service staff helped usher the document from one phase to the next, providing review of individual planning components, chapters, and the complete draft prior to public release of the document. Initial technical review occurred at the regional level, while final review of the plan and submittal to the Secretary of the Interior is the responsibility of the National Heritage Areas Program staff in the NPS Washington, DC office.

#### Public Review

The draft plan was released to the public for review on (date) to begin a 45-day comment period. Comments were collected via email and writing, as well as during a public meeting held to share the draft plan. Following the comment period, the planning team compiled and addressed substantive feedback provided by partners and the public, incorporating input, as appropriate, into the final planning document submitted to the Secretary of the Interior. A summary of the public engagement and review process is found in Appendix D.

# Federal Laws and NEPA Categorical Exclusion

As the local coordinating entity, the DPC will ensure federal laws pertaining to preservation and conservation are properly applied in the NHA. Such laws include the Archeological Resource Protection Act (ARPA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The development and approval of the management plan will have no effect on the many cultural and natural resources in the region within the designated boundary of the NHA. As such, the NEPA pathway proposed for the federal approval of this management plan is a Categorical Exclusion (CE), according to the National Park Service (NPS) Director’s Order No.12, “Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision Making,” and associated guidance, NPS NEPA Handbook (2015), Chapter 3.2 R: CE 3.2R, for the “adoption or approval of surveys, studies, reports, plans and similar documents which will result in recommendations or proposed actions which would cause no, or only minimal, environmental impacts.” If, or when, future projects of the NHA develop that have a direct effect on cultural or natural resources in the region, the entity responsible for the individual project will review the project through appropriate pathways, such as the NHPA Section 106 and NEPA processes, as applicable.

# State Laws and CEQA

The DPC will ensure state laws pertaining to preservation and conservation are properly applied in the NHA. Such laws include the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), California Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (CalNAGPRA), and California Endangered Species Act (CESA). Like NEPA, CEQA is intended to inform government decision makers and the public about the potential environmental effects of proposed activities and to prevent significant, avoidable environmental damage. The State Legislature provides an exemption from Environmental Impact Reports or Negative Declarations for planning studies for possible future actions that have not been approved, adopted, or funded (CEQA Guidelines Section 15262). As the CEQA lead agency, the DPC will prepare a Notice of Exemption for this management plan. If, or when, future projects of the NHA develop that have a direct effect on cultural or natural resources in the region, the entity responsible for the individual project will review the project through appropriate pathways, such as the CEQA processes as applicable.

# Foundation – Significance, Mission, Vision, and Goals

This section introduces the foundational elements of the NHA, including the primary characteristics, policies, and practices that underpin planning in the region, present and future.

## Significance and Themes

As described previously, nationally significant heritage is the unifying element that anchors a shared mission and regional sense of pride and provides partners and the public a context for engagement. Articulating that significance and the themes that help express it is an important part of planning, as everything that occurs in the NHA ultimately connects back to this foundational element. Interpretive planners from California State Parks worked with the Advisory Committee's Interpretive Planning Task Group to develop the following statement of significance and the themes that support it. The significance and themes are introduced here and explained in more detail in Chapter 2 (Understanding and Appreciating California's Delta), which contains the interpretive thematic framework.

### Statement of National Significance

At the heart of California lies a vast tidal estuary where the state's two largest rivers converge, forming a rare inland delta, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta – California’s most crucial water and ecological resource. The Delta is a place that nurtures a unique ecosystem and has supported a culturally diverse population for millennia. OThe region's water, fertile land, and proximity to the San Francisco Bay fuels California’s economy and is a critical linchpin in California’s ongoing struggle to balance environmental conservation with critical water infrastructure. As California’s population has grown, the Delta has served as an important recreational respite for the surrounding bustling cities.

### Primary Themes

California State Parks and the Advisory Committee's Interpretive Task Group developed a robust series of primary themes, storylines, and supporting themes. A summary of each primary theme is shared here and storylines, as well as the objectives and strategies built around the thematic framework, are found in Chapter 2. Supporting themes, which are interesting enhancements to the primary themes, are also listed in Chapter 2.

#### ****Theme 1: Water: Precious Lifeblood for the Delta and California****

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is California’s oasis, located at the center of the state’s water challenges and opportunities, and a water passage between the Pacific Ocean and inland California.

The storylines for this theme describe how water plays a different role in the Delta than in other areas of the United States, the importance of Delta waterways as a transportation corridor, and the growing challenges of water management for the region and California.

#### ****Theme 2: The Beating Heart of Natural California****

The Delta lies at the center of California’s biological and physical environment, supporting numerous biologically diverse species and connecting freshwater from throughout California to the Pacific Ocean.

Storylines detail how multiple factors made the Delta home to a rich ecosystem, how the Delta affects West Coast fish, wildlife, and plant life, and how the side effects of the Gold Rush on the Delta shaped the environmental movement.

#### ****Theme 3: Abundance, Diversity, Resistance, and Survival – Native Americans in the Delta****

Native Americans thrived in the Delta prior to European settlement, developing complex and diverse societies, deeply rooted in the landscape, that have endured despite existential threats.

This theme, which will continue to be vetted by Tribes with roots in the Delta, contains storylines about how important the Delta is for Tribal culture, society, and ecology in northern California, Native American management of Delta resources, the tremendous diversity of Native Americans in the Delta, and Native American's resistance and survival despite colonialism, disease, displacement, and genocide.

#### ****Theme 4: The Delta Emerges as California’s Cornucopia****

Through capital, human labor, and technology, the Delta’s lush vegetation became one of the nation’s most productive agricultural regions, with the ability to grow a large variety of crops, farmed by large and smaller operations.

Storylines describe the demanding conversion of the Delta from wetland to farmland, including the innovative engineering technologies and techniques that made the transformation possible, efforts to distribute Delta products globally, and ongoing challenges resulting from reclamation.

#### ****Theme 5: Cultural Influences of the Delta – Enduring Legacies of American, Asian, European, and Latin American Immigrants****

Bringing their own ambition and skills to the Delta, cultural and ethnic communities from Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the United States shaped the region’s agriculture and industry during the late 19th century and early 20th century and continue to leave an indelible imprint on the landscape.

The storylines for this theme describe the vibrant immigrant communities that settled in the Delta in different waves and whose legacy is still visible on the landscape. Centered on agricultural and industrial labor, the communities were a source of innovation, and despite discrimination and difficult working conditions, demonstrated persistence in securing change for themselves and the immigrant communities that followed.

## Mission and Vision

Mission and vision statements establish the long-term direction and goals that guide an NHA's daily operations. The mission and vision provide the foundation for programs, services, communications, structure, and organizational culture. The mission and vision are found below; a more detailed description is included in the business plan in Chapter 6 (Establishing Sustainable Governance).

The two statements are related yet distinct. A mission statement guides an organization's daily work, defines its purpose, and provides the basis for judging its success and programs. A vision statement inspires action and highlights an organization's long-term impact. The Organization Task Group led development of the mission and vision statements for the NHA, below, which were ultimately adopted by the Advisory Committee.

### Mission Statement

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area is a partnership that works together to recognize, enhance, and promote the Delta to help cultivate and retain appreciation and understanding of the National Heritage Area as an ecological, agricultural, recreational, historical, and cultural treasure.

### Vision Statement

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area supports living links among the past, present, and future and among farmed, developed, and wild lands in the Delta, Suisun Marsh, and the Carquinez Strait. This globally significant estuary sustains a remarkable and diverse blend of natural and human communities that have emerged over millennia. Through partnerships, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area affirms and protects this living landscape – the appreciation of Delta cultures, relationships with water and landscapes, rewards of labor and commerce, and the revitalizing benefits of recreation – and shares it with Californians and visitors from around the world.

## Goals and National Heritage Area Emphasis

The 2012 Feasibility Study set forth a series of goals that provided initial direction for the initiative. These included general concepts like supporting heritage tourism and economic development, providing resources for historic preservation, and raising awareness of the region's significance. The goals also included specific actions to create maps that highlight partners and develop an interpretive sign program.

Participants in the management planning process built upon these early goals by identifying gaps in the region's services and programming that could be an emphasis for the NHA. The consensus was that the NHA would play a significant role in tourism and stewardship of the built environment by building capacity and supporting cultural and historical organizations. Additionally, stakeholders 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 Organization Task Group generated five goals that the Advisory Committee refined and approved. The goals serve as a bridge between the NHA's high-level mission and vision and the specific objectives and strategies that the coordinating entity and partners will carry out over the next 12 years.

### Goal 1, Interpretation

Guided by interpretation, and through institutional leadership and community projects, promote and instill an evolving understanding and appreciation of the historical and ongoing changes in the Delta's land, water, wildlife, and communities.

### Goal 2, Resource Stewardship and Enhancement

Steward the heritage and culture of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, by identifying, preserving, conserving, and enhancing the unique identity, resources, and living traditions of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

### Goal 3, Heritage Development and Tourism

Support sustainable tourism and economic development by encouraging responsible use of, and visitation to, the Delta’s unique resources and communities.

### Goal 4, Partnership

Connect and support collaboration among governmental and non-governmental partners, businesses, and residents to establish a brand that readily identifies the Delta NHA and increases public awareness.

### Goal 5, Organization

Seek, establish, and maintain collaborative partnerships, effective governance principles, and sustainable business practices to manage the coordinating entity and the NHA.

# The Plan

The *Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area Management Plan* provides guidance to the Delta Protection Commission and the collaborating network of partners through 2034, 15 years after the initial designation of the NHA. The remaining chapters of this management plan are organized around the goals above and include all legislative requirements.

* Chapter 2: Understanding and Appreciating California's Delta – The interpretive plan contains a detailed interpretive thematic framework based on the statement of significance and themes set forth above. The chapter also contains the context for interpretation and education, including existing interpretation in the NHA and audiences that the NHA will target. Objectives and strategies for interpretation support Goal 1.
* Chapter 3: Stewarding the Delta's Resources – This chapter begins with an explanation of the importance of heritage and the ways in which it can be conserved. A description of the significant resources found in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area follows, including an overview of the resource inventory required by legislation and the challenges and opportunities related to the region's resources. The objectives and strategies for resource stewardship and enhancement support Goal 2.
* Chapter 4: Supporting Tourism and Economic Development – This chapter opens with a definition of sustainable tourism and an analysis of current tourism trends. This is followed by a description of tourism in the NHA, including a listing of existing partners and resources and a description of challenges and opportunities. Heritage development and tourism objectives and strategies support Goal 3.
* Chapter 5: Connecting and Supporting the Partnership Network – The NHA's partnership network described in this chapter includes federal, state, and local entities that will be involved in the collaborative implementation of the management plan. The objectives and strategies for building and maintaining the network, increasing partners' capacity, and funding projects and programs support Goal 4.
* Chapter 6: Establishing Sustainable Governance – The business plan includes a description of the local coordinating entity for the NHA, the Delta Protection Commission, an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of having a state agency in that role, and possible future coordinating entities. The chapter also contains the mission and vision that guide the NHA's coordinating entity and partnership network, and recommendations for a management and governance structure. Finally, the chapter includes a 5-year financial projection. The objectives and strategies in the business plan support Goal 5.
* Chapter 7: Implementation , Evaluation, and Conclusion – The closing chapter features an overview of the implementation plan that will guide the NHA's activities through 2034. Implementation is divided into short, mid, and long-term strategies. The chapter also contains a description of the various roles that the NHA can play in carrying out the strategies. Finally, the chapter includes evaluative measures that can assist in documenting the NHA's success.

Public engagement has been a hallmark of this plan. Through in-person and virtual public meetings, the annual Delta Heritage Forum, public presentations and lectures by the DPC NHA Program Manager, stakeholder interviews, Tribal consultation, and an electronic survey, the DPC sought to include residents' and partners' voices, ideas, and aspirations in this plan. Moreover, both the Delta Protection Commission and the NHA Management Plan Advisory Committee are structured to provide representation for the residents and organizations in the Delta, serving as important conduits for information during the planning process and into the future.

As the *Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area Management Plan* is implemented, public engagement will continue and is built into many of the strategies found in the chapters that follow. In addition, the DPC staff, in conjunction with the NHA Advisory Committee, will provide an annual update to the Delta Protection Commission and the public so that all residents and stakeholding organizations remain informed of and have the opportunity to participate in the management plan's implementation.

1. Title VI—National Heritage Areas, Section 6001, *John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act*, Public Law 116-9,  [<https://www.congress.gov/116/plaws/publ9/PLAW-116publ9.pdf>,](https://www.congress.gov/116/plaws/publ9/PLAW-116publ9.pdf,%20accessed) accessed July 15, 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. *Feasibility Study for a Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area*, Delta Protection Commission, July 2012, <https://delta.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Delta-National-Heritage-Area-Feasibility-Study-508.pdf>, accessed July 15, 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Daniel Laven, et al., “Evaluating U.S. National Heritage Areas: Theory, Methods, and Application,” Environmental Management (2010) 46:195-212. The Conservation Study Institute more recently transitioned into the Stewardship Institute. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Title VI—National Heritage Areas, Section 6001, *John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act*, Public Law 116-9,  [<https://www.congress.gov/116/plaws/publ9/PLAW-116publ9.pdf>,](https://www.congress.gov/116/plaws/publ9/PLAW-116publ9.pdf,%20accessed) accessed July 15, 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Rudnick, J., Tomari, K., Dobbin, K., Lubell, M., and K. Bidenwig. *2023 Delta Residents Survey Summary Report*. Report developed for the Delta Stewardship Council, Delta Science Program. Sacramento, CA. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)