Chapter 3 – Stewarding the Delta’s Resources

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# Introduction

Designating legislation directs the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area to increase public awareness of, and appreciation for, natural, historic, scenic, and cultural resources, and to protect and restore historic places consistent with the NHA's interpretive themes. To ensure these mandates are accomplished, the legislation further directs the management plan for the NHA to include policies and strategies for resource management (Sec. 6001(c)(2)(C)(ii), (iii), and (vi)), as well as actions that partners will take to protect resources (Sec. 6001 (c)(2)(A)), (Sec. 6001(c)(2)(B)) and (Sec. 6001(c)(2)(D)).

With this charge in mind, the Advisory Committee adopted as the second goal for the NHA the following:

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.

Understanding the concept of cultural heritage and why it is important to communities is crucial for achieving this goal. This chapter begins with an exploration of cultural heritage and its importance, followed by a description of the resources that characterize the Delta. The majority of the chapter is dedicated to sharing the objectives and strategies to facilitate the protection and enhancement of those vital resources.

# The Importance of Heritage

Heritage refers to the physical and intangible manifestations of history, traditions, place, and identity that are passed down from one generation to another. It includes tangible elements like historic buildings, archival materials, artifacts, and landscapes, as well as intangible elements like language, foodways, oral traditions, social practices, rituals and customs, festive events, music, dance, and traditional knowledge. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) places significant value on conserving both tangible and intangible elements of cultural heritage in the face of growing globalization, stating "From cherished historic monuments and museums to living heritage practices and contemporary art forms, culture enriches our lives in countless ways and helps build inclusive, innovative, and resilient communities".[[1]](#footnote-2)

Heritage is essential for several reasons:

* Cultural heritage shapes the identity of communities and individuals, providing a sense of belonging and continuity with the past. It helps people understand their roots and provides a foundation for shaping their future.
* Shared heritage promotes cohesion and cooperation within communities. It fosters mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect among diverse groups.
* Tangible heritage, such as landscapes, historic sites, and artifacts, provides valuable insights into the past. Natural and historic places help people understand how communities have changed and the challenges they faced, fostering historical awareness and knowledge.
* Intangible heritage, such as traditional arts and craft, serves as a source of inspiration for contemporary artists and creators. It contributes to cultural diversity and creativity in the present, which in turn adds to community vibrancy.
* Heritage offers valuable educational opportunities, helping present and future generations learn about their past, traditions, and the significance of conserving and preserving it.
* In a living landscape like the Delta, nature and culture are closely intertwined. Sustainable practices that help safeguard ecosystems contribute to overall environmental conservation efforts and quality of life.
* Heritage sites attract visitors, generating economic benefits for local communities. Sustainable tourism practices can help preserve these sites while providing income and employment opportunities.

To ensure the continued relevance and preservation of heritage, it is essential to have effective stewardship and management practices in place. Integrated approaches that consider both ecological and cultural aspects are important for achieving a balance that conserves the unique heritage of living landscapes and sustains local economies while ensuring the long-term viability and health of the environment. Collaboration among governments, communities, nonprofit organizations, and businesses helps steward and enhance resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

# Description of Heritage Resources

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area is a vibrant living landscape defined by a unique inland delta and the way it has been modified over time, especially for agriculture. The themes detailed in the previous chapter are built around this landscape and the people who have lived in and adapted the Delta, the Suisun Marsh, and the Carquinez Strait. The following pages contain a description of the natural, cultural, historical, agricultural, and recreational resources that characterize the region.

## The Resource Inventory

The *John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act*, the designating legislation for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area, requires that the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA management plan include an inventory of resources located in the NHA that are related to the interpretive themes and should be preserved, restored, managed, or maintained because of the significance of the resource (Sec. 6001(c)(2)(C)(i)).

The resource inventory in Appendix E includes key natural, cultural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources of the NHA that support the region’s nationally important story and interpretive themes. These resources can be categorized in two ways. First, major landscape resources that span the region include waterways, levees, water management facilities, Mount Diablo (a resource that can be seen throughout the NHA, but is not located in the NHA), agricultural resources, and wildlife areas. Second, placed-based cultural and historical resources that support the NHA include communities, built resources, museums, transportation resources, recreational facilities, and festivals. A narrative description of the NHA's resources follows.

## Waterways

The Delta, the Suisun Marsh, and the Carquinez Strait form the largest estuary on the west coast of the Americas – a freshwater and saltwater corridor for fish and wildlife, as well as an important human corridor for commerce and recreation.

### The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta

Over 1,000 miles of rivers and sloughs form the backbone of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta’s natural ecosystem, key to shaping the region’s settlement patterns, vital to the development of the Delta and its role in the American story, and crucial to the continued sustainability of its communities and economy. Five major rivers converge in the Delta – the Sacramento, San Joaquin, Mokelumne, Cosumnes, and Calaveras – from which stem smaller rivers and sloughs. The five Delta rivers capture nearly half of the snowmelt and rainfall for the entire state. Of these five, the Cosumnes River is the last completely free-flowing river in the region – all others have been managed in some way. In addition, some Delta waterways do not follow natural channels at all, but were constructed for water circulation, shipping, and irrigation and to obtain material for levee construction by dredging.

The Delta’s system of channels, bays, and sloughs connects the upper watersheds of the Sacramento Valley, the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and the great Central Valley to Suisun Marsh, Carquinez Strait, the San Francisco Bay, and marine environments of the Pacific Ocean. The ecosystems supported by the Delta and its watersheds are an integral component of the California Floristic Province, one of 25 biodiversity hotspots of global importance for conservation of species.

Due to its location at the confluence of California’s two largest rivers – the Sacramento River and the San Joaquin River-- the Delta serves as a key migration corridor for many fish and wildlife species. The heart of the Delta, largely free from urban development, is approximately 500,000 acres in size, and contains a diversity of ecosystems, including wetlands, waterways, riparian woodlands, grasslands, and floodplains. Delta farmlands also serve as valuable habitat for waterfowl, particularly when practices such as seasonal flooding are utilized. The Delta and its watershed provide a unique habitat resource for more than 200 species of marine and freshwater fish, as well as millions of migratory waterfowl and other migratory and resident birds. Delta waterways help support California’s $1.5 billion commercial and recreational fishing industries. Maintaining the Delta ecosystem is critical for supporting the 80 percent of commercial fishery species that migrate through or live in the Delta.

While the Delta will never be restored to historical conditions, a few examples remain of the historical Delta ecosystem:

* Riparian floodplain at the Tall Forest on the Cosumnes River is a riparian forest with a canopy height of up to nearly 100 feet. The Cosumnes River Riparian Woodlands are a 254-acre parcel within the 50,000 acre Cosumnes River Preserve (not all of which is in the NHA). It is one of the few remaining areas that resembles the pre-European Central Valley riparian forests. Designated a National Natural Landmark (NNL) in 1976, it is the only NNL in the NHA.
* Tidal wetlands at Rush Ranch possess a largely intact prehistoric marsh form, habitat for rare and native plants, and a gradual transition between the marsh and undeveloped upland grasslands. The site, owned by the Solano Land Trust, provides habitat for several rare plant species including Suisun thistle, Suisun marsh aster, and Jepson's Delta tule pea.
* Vernal pool grasslands at Jepson Prairie in the northwest Delta still has largely intact topography, hydrology, and soils. Numerous vernal pools, or seasonal pools, support a high diversity of native plant species, and provide habitat for unique, rare and imperiled plant and wildlife species including Solano grass, Colusa grass, the Delta green ground beetle, and Conservancy fairy shrimp.

### Suisun Marsh

The Suisun Marsh, immediately west of the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers, is laced with miles of sloughs and channels that are important for the species that depend on the marsh, as well as recreational users. Suisun Marsh is one of the largest contiguous estuarine wetlands in North America; an important nursery for fish; a wintering and nesting area for waterfowl and waterbirds; and an essential habitat for plants, fish, and wildlife, including several scarce and sensitive species. The marsh encompasses more than 10 percent of California’s remaining natural wetlands.

### Carquinez Strait

Further westward is the Carquinez Strait, which is the only natural outlet for waters of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, Sacramento Valley, and San Joaquin Valley to drain to the San Francisco Bay and then into the Pacific Ocean. While partially developed, the Carquinez Strait contains open water, mudflats, marsh, grassland, woodland, and other habitats.

## Agriculture and Fisheries

Just as land and water define the region's landscape, agriculture and fisheries have played dominant roles in the culture and economy of the Delta, Suisun Marsh, and Carquinez Strait.

Much of the Delta landscape is dedicated to agriculture. Its origins in both family farms and large agricultural corporations, including historic irrigated agribusinesses that rival the biggest in California today, reflect the variety of agriculture in the state from the 1850s to the current era. Agriculture in the Suisun Marsh is limited, but portions of the upland areas are used for grazing (approximately 20,000 acres) as well as some grain production. The Carquinez Strait historically played a key role in agricultural processing and storage, including grain warehouses, flour mills, and canning facilities.

The California Department of Conservation’s Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program classifies much of the Delta as Prime Farmland, which is the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long term agricultural production. The Delta’s flat terrain, fertile soils, benevolent climate cooled by breezes from San Francisco Bay, abundant water resources, and waterborne access to San Francisco, Sacramento, and Stockton has provided extraordinary opportunities for agriculture. The region’s culturally diverse farmers have also displayed inventiveness and ingenuity to adapt agricultural systems to local conditions. The farmlands provide the setting, too often unacknowledged in National Register nominations and other documentation, for the Delta’s historic landmarks, districts, sites, and other properties.

Crops vary based on the soils deposited on riverbanks and marshes and the success of drainage and reclamation, as well as farming systems, markets, and farmers’ preferences. Early products such as dairies and sugar beets have declined, while other crops, such as almonds and wine grapes, have grown in popularity. Since 1900, the specialty crops familiar to most Californians, including asparagus, pears, and tomatoes, have become intertwined with Delta agriculture. Today, agriculture occupies 415,000 farmed acres in the Delta, producing $95 million in gross farm revenue in 2016. Considering the economic multiplier effect, agriculture supports 12,400 jobs and $1.7 billion in economic output in the five Delta counties.[[2]](#footnote-3)

In 1992, the California State Legislature safeguarded the Delta from suburban development through passage of the Delta Protection Act. Such legislative action is unique to the Delta and reflects the importance of Delta agriculture to the region and state. The legislation created the Delta Protection Commission and required the Commission to prepare and adopt a long-term resource management plan for land uses within a large rural area called the primary zone.

The Delta presents opportunities for connecting visitors to the region's rich agricultural resources through agritourism, which includes u-pick operations, farm stands, wine and spirits tasting, restaurants, farm stays, and event facilities. The Delta is home to one of the oldest, continuously operating u-pick and truck farm operation in the United States, Bachinni’s Fruit Tree in Brentwood, in business for more than 80 years. Year-round agritourism resources in the NHA include the Old Sugar Mill, a restored sugar beet factory in Clarksburg with 14 wine tasting rooms, and nearby tasting rooms in Clarksburg, Freeport, and Walnut Grove. Bogle Family Wine Collection, one of the largest wineries in the United States, began in Clarksburg and has their headquarters, production facility, and tasting room there. Delta Farmer’s Market is a year-round market and tasting room located at the intersection of State Routes 12 and 160 between Isleton and Rio Vista.

Canneries for packing and shipping the region's produce, especially vegetables like asparagus and tomatoes and fruits like pears and apricots, were once another common sight in the region, especially along the Carquinez Strait.

The produce canneries followed the rise of the commercial fishing industry, which flourished in the area in the latter half of the 19th century. The first salmon cannery on the West Coast was constructed off the West Sacramento riverfront in 1864. The Carquinez Strait was an ideal location for fishing canneries due to its proximity to productive fishing grounds and transportation routes. Canneries were initially located on ships, but eventually became common in the communities that line the Strait.

Salmon was the main commercial fish, although the striped bass, first introduced near Martinez, also gained popularity. Much of the labor of harvesting the fish was carried out by Italian, Greek, Portuguese, and Spanish immigrants, among whom intense ethnic rivalries were common. Unlike the fishermen themselves, most of the cannery workers were Chinese laborers working under American or European supervisors. The Martinez birthplace of Joe DiMaggio may be a place to tell stories of this industry, as the DiMaggio family were fishermen.

The history of canneries in the Carquinez Strait reflects the rise and fall of California's canned food industry, with its roots dating back to the 19th century and evolving over time to adapt to changing markets and conditions. Fishing canneries were gone by the 1920s, following the decline of commercial fishing due to overharvesting and environmental degradation from hydraulic mining. Produce canneries continued to flourish in the region until the mid-20th century. Few canneries for fish or produce are still standing and none are operational, but they are a type of historic resource that the NHA could help protect and interpret.

## Historic Infrastructure

For well over a century, the Delta has been a highly managed landscape. The historic infrastructure that has made this management possible and that is ever-present in the region's viewsheds fits into the category of "major landscape resources," mentioned above. Interpreting these resources will help people understand the natural and cultural landscapes that comprise the NHA. Some of the resources described below will have the added tourism benefit of helping move visitors through the region. Many of the features are also worthy of state and national designations, documentation, and preservation.

### Levees

Construction of over 1,100 miles of levees throughout the Delta, which enclose 57 islands and tracts, is among the most significant land reclamation projects in American history. The pattern of levees, tracing the banks of rivers and sloughs, and the agricultural fields and drainage works they contain, are a character defining feature of the Delta. This levee system is crucial for protecting some of the world’s most productive farmland, the state’s water quality, urban population centers on the periphery of the Delta, smaller Delta communities, vital natural resources, and infrastructure. An additional 200 miles of levees are found in Suisun Marsh, vital to managing the Delta’s salinity and protecting the natural wetlands. Since many Delta levees protect land that has subsided to elevations below sea level, they hold back water year-round, rather than only during floods, and so are acknowledged as “the hardest working levees in America" in *the Delta Plan* (2013).

Levees are owned, maintained, and improved by a complex network of private landowners, reclamation districts, and public agencies. The Delta’s aging levees are affected by sea level rise, subsidence of islands, increased winter runoff, and earthquakes. Levees require frequent maintenance and often expensive improvements to ensure their integrity since levee failure can destroy buildings, crops, roadways, statewide drinking water infrastructure, and sensitive ecosystems. To alleviate these threats, state and federal agencies regulate maintenance and improvements for certain levees.

### Water Management Facilities

Managing water has been essential to Delta life since the construction of its first levees, ditches, and tide gates in the late 19th century. The region’s easy access to irrigation water protected reclaimed lands from droughts that left farms in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys parched. The Delta’s location at the hub of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project has focused attention on balancing the region’s resources and unique landscape with the water needs of the rest of the state. Debates about these projects from the 1940s to the contemporary era have often defined Californians’ understanding of the Delta. The importance of Delta water for the state cannot be overstated. The Delta supplies drinking water for 27 million Californians and supports a $50 billion agriculture industry throughout the state. Key resources of the NHA related to water management facilities include local irrigation, the Mokelumne Aqueduct, the Central Valley Project, and the State Water Project.

### Scenic Roadways

The region's roads are the primary arteries for tourism and residential circulation. Many were built on levee tops in the early decades of the 20th century. State Route 160 through the NHA is designated as a State Scenic Highway. From Sacramento to Antioch, the road was part of the Victory Highway, a transcontinental route that memorialized American forces in World War I. River Road from Isleton Bridge to Courtland Bridge is an officially designated Sacramento County Scenic Highway.

### Bridges

More than two dozen bridges help people navigate the Delta, many of which date back at least a century. Of these, the Tower Bridge, the historic US Route 40 crossing over the Sacramento River, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and 13 others are listed in the California Register of Historic Places. The bridges are a unique and defining feature of the Delta. The most iconic bridges of the rural Delta are the five of the remaining six Strauss-Trunnion Heel Bascule Bridges in California – Freeport Bridge, Isleton Bridge, Paintersville Bridge, Steamboat Slough Bridge, and Walnut Grove Bridge. The distinct bridge style, pioneered by Golden Gate Bridge designer Joseph Strauss, is featured on the NHA’s logo. The Walnut Grove Bridge was the first of its kind west of the Mississippi River. Other historic bridges include the Middle River Swing Bridge, the Old River and Bacon Island Road bridges, the vertical lift Rio Vista and Three Mile Slough bridges, and the Alfred Zampa Memorial Bridge and Benicia-Martinez Railroad Bridge over the Carquinez Strait.

### Ferries

Ferry service in the Delta traces its history to the need to link federal forts in the mid-19th century. Private ferries soon followed. Today, only a few ferries remain active, two of which are considered state highway assets managed by Caltrans and operate around the clock to serve the public. The Ryer Island Ferry, served by the free-moving Real McCoy II, crosses Cache Slough between Ryer Island and Rio Vista as part of State Route 84. The Howard Landing Ferry, served by the cable-drawn J-Mack, crosses Steamboat Slough as part of State Route 220. The private Victory II is a free-running ferry that takes vehicles from Jersey Island to both Webb Tract and Bradford Island.

### Railroads

The Delta’s railroads and roads were built in the early 20th century to transport crops to market. Many rail lines follow riverbanks or levee tops, capturing trade previously carried by the riverboats that served waterfront villages and farms. Several branch railroads also pushed into the Delta as harvests of more valuable farm products increased. The Sacramento Southern Railroad is no longer active, although California State Parks owns portions of the right-of-way. The Sacramento Northern Railway is also no longer active, but functioning track is associated with the Western Railway Museum, just outside the current boundary, near Rio Vista. Some freight trains still pass through the NHA regularly, especially near the Carquinez Strait, and passenger service for commuters and long-distance travel remains active today. Rail can help provide visitor access to the region from the densely-populated Bay Area.

## Public Lands

The Delta and the Suisun Marsh contain 74,000 acres of public lands, and the Carquinez Strait has an additional 7,000 acres. These public lands include national, state, regional, and local parks; national and state wildlife areas; recreation facilities; and regional trail systems. They are important for conserving natural resources, preserving historic resources, and providing areas for recreation.

### Units of the National Park Service

The NHA contains two units of the National Park Service and portions of two National Historic Trails. John Muir National Historic Site in Martinez includes the Muir family's Victorian mansion, carriage house, windmill, orchards and vineyard, family gravesite, and Mount Wanda Wilderness. Muir, a celebrated naturalist and conservationist, was influential in establishing some of the earliest national parks. The site also includes the Vincente Martinez Adobe, an 1849 structure that is part of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail. The park area south of State Highway 4 falls outside of the NHA boundary, including Mount Wanda and the Muir-Strentzel gravesite.

Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial preserves the site of the deadliest home front disaster of World War II. The national memorial honors the sailors and civilians who died when the ship they were loading with munitions exploded in 1944. Most of the casualties were African Americans, and the disaster illuminated the issues of segregation and racial inequality in the military. Today the site provides a place to reflect on and explore social justice in American society. The national memorial is a five-acre area within the Military Ocean Terminal Concord. The land is owned by the Army, with which NPS collaborates to maintain the memorial, coordinate historic preservation efforts, and provide access for visitors to the secure area during times of year when military operations are not occurring.

Two national historic trails traverse the region – the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historical Trail and the Pony Express National Historic Trail. The former commemorates the eponymous Spanish commander's path from Mexico to San Francisco Bay in the late 18th century, and the latter follows the Pony Express Route traveled between 1860 and 1861. NPS promotes the trails, provides maps, and historic information, and works with local agencies to maintain segments of the trails.

### Units of California State Parks

The NHA includes nine state parks within its boundaries – two historic sites, one museum located within a historic property, three recreational areas, one wildlife area, and portions of land within other public properties.

The historic parks interpret several different aspects of and time periods within California history. The restored Benicia Capitol State Park is the site of California's third seat of government (1853-54). The park also includes the mid-19th century Fischer-Hanlon House. Marsh Creek State Historic Park, the newest park in the system and not yet open to the public, encompasses more than 3,600 acres of natural habitat that was once a large cattle ranch, Rancho Los Meganos. The park is currently engaged in joint planning with the City of Brentwood. The park's historic John Marsh House currently lies beyond the NHA boundary. The Locke Boarding House Museum, operated in partnership with the Locke Foundation, was built in 1909 to cater to the Chinese immigrants who constructed the Southern Pacific Railroad. For much of its commercial life, the boarding house was run by a Japanese family whose members were later sent to Internment camps during World War II. The building is a primary contributing structure in the Locke National Historic Landmark District, and the museum includes exhibits to orient visitors who come to tour the historic district.

Three state recreation areas feature diverse wildlife habitats and offer opportunities for birding, camping, cycling, fishing, hiking, picnicking, and water-based recreation. Benicia State Recreation Area lies along the narrowest part of the Carquinez Strait. Brannan Island State Recreation Area is comprised of the islands and marshes surrounding its namesake island. Frank's Tract State Recreation Area near Bethel Island, popular among anglers and waterfowl hunters, is an open water site known for its waterfowl, water-loving mammals, and fish. Formerly farmland, Frank's Tract is flooded due to a breach that was never repaired.

State Parks is beginning a park classification and general plan project for Delta Meadows, which is a property east of Locke that is significant for the riparian woodlands that were prevalent in the Delta prior to reclamation.

### National Wildlife Refuges

The NHA has two refuges managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in Hood consists of approximately 18,000 acres along the Pacific Flyway. The refuge’s marshes, vernal pools, and grasslands are remnants of the landscape that sustained the Native American population and greeted early settlers. A portion of the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Bay in Vallejo lies within the NHA, encompassing diverse habitats in its open bay, tidal marshes, mud flats, and wetlands.

### State and Local Wildlife Areas

In addition to the two national wildlife refuges and State Parks units, the NHA boasts 15 state and local wildlife areas that protect a wide range of ecosystems. Diverse habitats are home to birds, fish, mammals, and reptiles, as well as many different plant communities. Some of the wildlife areas offer recreational access, while others are maintained primarily as conservation areas. Eight of the refuges are managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Others are owned and managed by land trusts or through public-private partnerships. For example, the Cosumnes River Preserve, which includes the NNL Cosumnes River Riparian Woodlands, is owned by a coalition of seven partners: federal, state, and local governmental agencies, Ducks Unlimited, and the Nature Conservancy.

### Regional Shorelines

The NHA is home to four parks within the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), which maintains and operates a system of regional parks in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. EBRPD is the largest urban regional park district in the United States. All of the shorelines have amenities such as trails and fishing access. The Antioch/Oakley Regional Shoreline has a fishing pier built on old bridge pillars, as well as a plaque that marks a campsite along the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail. Big Break Regional Shoreline in Oakley is named for 1928 levee break that formed the estuary at the edge of the San Joaquin River where saltwater meets snowmelt. Big Break has a staffed visitor center with displays about the Delta, as well as the Delta Discovery Experience, an outdoor educational area with a 1,200 square foot interactive map that allows visitors to see how water flows through the Delta. Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline in Crockett and Martinez includes both bluffs and shoreline that provide a gateway to the Delta. Radke Martinez Regional Shoreline includes recreation and picnic facilities operated by the City of Martinez in addition to trails and open space managed by EBRPD.

### Regional Trail Systems

Planned and existing trail systems throughout the Delta, Suisun Marsh, and the Carquinez Strait form important recreational arteries on both land and water. They help link the region's natural, cultural, and recreational resource sites to one another and connect the region to outside communities. Some trail systems are planned, built, and managed by a single agency; however, most include multiple agencies in their planning and implementation.

The Great California Delta Trail is the system most closely associated with the themes and goals of the NHA. State legislation charged the DPC with planning the Great California Delta Trail that, when complete, will connect the San Francisco Bay Trail to Sacramento River Trails, crossing through portions of all five Delta counties. Trail segments are conceived, developed, built, and managed locally. The DPC approved the *Great California Delta Trail Master Plan* in 2022; the plan provides a framework for the DPC to work in partnership with local trail planners, facilitating coordinated planning and implementation across jurisdictional boundaries. The Great California Delta Trail will include cycling and hiking routes, with interconnections to other land and water trail systems, recreational facilities, and public transportation. The DPC has designated segments of the Delta Trail in Contra Costa, Sacramento, Solano, and Yolo counties.

As mentioned above, two national historic trails, designated by Congress, pass through the region – the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historical Trail and the Pony Express National Historic Trail. Both routes connect to existing state and local trails and roads.

Other regional trail systems include:

* American Discovery Trail (a portion of a cross-continental trail network)
* Carquinez Strait Loop (includes sections of the Bay Area Ridge Trail)
* Delta de Anza Regional Trail (regional designation of the national historic trail)
* Iron Horse Trail
* Mokelumne Coast to Crest Trail
* San Francisco Bay Trail
* San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail

## The Built Environment

The NHA is home to many historic structures that are the tangible expressions of the region's history and Built Environment cultures. The region encompasses:

* Three National Historic Landmarks, including two districts
* Nine California Historical Landmarks
* 39 listings in the National Register of Historic Places, including 10 districts and one statewide nomination
* 77 properties listed in the California Register of Historic Places, including 12 districts
* 11 California Points of Historical Interest

Among the many resources included in the resource inventory in Appendix E are individual historic properties and districts. The inventory features the relationship between resources and the NHA's interpretive themes. The interpretive plan found in Chapter 2 also demonstrates the linkages between themes and some of the key historic resources.

### National Historic Landmarks

The highest level of designation within the national historic preservation program, National Historic Landmark (NHL) designation is bestowed by the Secretary of the Interior on properties that are nationally significant and possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the nation. The National Historic Landmark Program was created in 1960. Today there are over 2,600 NHLs in the US. National Park Service staff manages the NHL Program, assisting organizations and citizens from across the country in the nomination and review process. The NHA has two NHLs within the boundary and another with Delta origins in San Francisco:

* The John Muir House in Martinez, the centerpiece of the John Muir National Historic Site, was designated in 1962. It is owned, operated, and interpreted by NPS.
* The Locke Historic District, built in 1915 and designated in 1990, is the largest remaining example of a historic rural Chinese American community in the country.
* The *Alma*, a flat-bottomed scow schooner built in 1891 to ply the Delta and San Francisco Bay, is part of San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.

### Properties Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to maintain the National Register of Historic Places composed of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service and supports the efforts of public agencies, private organizations, and individuals to identify, evaluate, and protect significant historic and archaeological resources.

There are 38 National Register listed properties within the NHA boundaries, including 12 individual properties and two districts in Contra Costa County, six individual properties and five districts in Sacramento County, eight individual properties and three districts in Solano County, and one individual property each in San Joaquin and Yolo counties. Nine resources each are in Benicia (Solano County) and Martinez (Contra Costa County) and seven in Walnut Grove (Sacramento County).

The statewide multiple property nomination for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in California, 1850-1970, prominently features the Delta.

Seven ships were also listed in the National Register. The Delta King Steamboat, formerly of Rio Vista, now serves as a hotel and restaurant on the Old Sacramento Waterfront. Six others were part of the Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet for national defense but have been relocated.

### California Historical Landmarks

The highest designation for a resource on the state level in California is a California Historical Landmark. California Historical Landmarks are buildings, sites, features, or events that are of statewide significance and have anthropological, cultural, military, political, architectural, economic, scientific or technical, religious, experimental, or other historical value. The NHA includes eight California Historical Landmarks:

* Benicia Arsenal District, Benicia, Solano County
* Benicia Capitol, Benicia, Solano County
* Fischer-Hanlon House, Benicia, Solano County
* John Muir Home, Martinez, Contra Costa County
* The Old Homestead, Crockett, Contra Costa County
* Site of the Murder of Dr. John Marsh, Martinez, Contra Costa County
* Turner/Robertson Shipyard Site, Benicia, Solano County
* Vicente Martinez Adobe, Martinez, Contra Costa County

### Properties Listed in the California Register of Historic Places

The California Register, established by the State Historical Resources Commission, is the authoritative guide to the state's significant historical and archeological resources. The program encourages public recognition and protection of resources of architectural, historical, archeological, and cultural significance, identifies historical resources for state and local planning purposes, and determines eligibility for state historic preservation grant funding.

Seventy-seven resources in the California Register are in the NHA, consisting of 24 individual properties and three districts in Contra Costa County, 13 individual properties and five districts in Sacramento County, 17 individual properties and four districts in Solano County, six individual properties in San Joaquin County, and five individual properties in Yolo County. Martinez leads communities with 15 listings, followed by eleven in Benicia (Solano County), eight in Vallejo (Solano County), and seven in Walnut Grove (Sacramento County).

### California Points of Historical Interest

California Points of Historical Interest are sites, buildings, features, or events that are of local (city or county) significance and have anthropological, cultural, military, political, architectural, economic, scientific or technical, religious, experimental, or other historical value. Many are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Points of Historical Interest designated after December 1997 and recommended by the State Historical Resources Commission are also listed in the California Register. No historical resource may be designated as both a Landmark and a Point. Seventeen California Points of Historical Interest are in the NHA – four in Benicia, one in Rio Vista, and six each in both Contra Costa and Sacramento counties. All are included in the resource inventory in Appendix E along with their connection to the NHA's themes.

## Museums

The region has 16 museums that align with NHA's mission, vision, and themes, all of which are listed in the resource inventory in Appendix E. The museums are critical resources, as most of them share the region's stories from within the context of historic properties. Many are run by local historical societies with volunteer or limited paid staffing.

Antioch, Benicia, Crockett, Isleton, Martinez, Pittsburg, Rio Vista, and West Sacramento are home to collections and interpretation of community history by area historical societies. In all but West Sacramento, the museums are located within historic structures.

The community of Locke is home to several museums focused on the Chinese experience – the Dai Loy Gambling House Museum, the Jan Ying Chinese Association Museum, the Joe Shoong Chinese School Museum, and the Locke Boarding House (a unit of the California State Park system), all of which are housed in contributing historic structures in the Locke National Historic Landmark District.

Many of the museums have archives that preserve and provide access to document collections, including the Contra Costa County Historical Society History Center, the East Contra Costa Historical Society, the Locke Boarding House, and the museums in Crockett, Isleton, Martinez, and Pittsburg.

Two museums feature specific aspects of the region's history. The private collection in the Dutra Museum of Dredging, located in a historic craftsman-style mansion in Rio Vista, shares the history of sidedraft clamshell dredging and the Dutra family's legacy. The Sacramento Regional Fire Museum highlights the establishment of fire service in the region in 1850, the year California attained statehood, providing a window into aspects of immigration and building community, as well as offering fire safety education to the public.

Two museums are currently in the planning phase. The 1883 Clarksburg Schoolhouse will serve as a local history museum and a community event venue. The Discover the Delta Foundation Education Center is in planning as a gateway landmark to the Delta. Both are committed to helping orient NHA visitors.

## Community Festivals, Sports, and the Arts

Thirty-five annual festivals add vibrancy to the Delta each year, helping to share and conserve living traditions. Across the Delta, communities celebrate history, cultures, foodways, music, agriculture, the natural environment, and water recreation. From Asian heritage to agriculture, and from waterfronts to waterfowl, there are festivals and special events throughout the calendar year. Festivals involve significant community collaboration and result in increased community pride and revenue generation through tourism.

Facilities that accommodate sports and the arts can be important economic drivers in communities and often rely on a combination of public and private funding. Some communities have adaptively reused historic theatres and offer a mix of events. Preserved and operated by the El Campanil Theatre Preservation Foundation, the El Campanil Theatre in Antioch was recognized by the Art Deco Society of California with their 2018 Eclectic Architecture Award and hosts a long list of live performances. The California Theatre in Pittsburg, preserved and managed by the City of Pittsburg, hosts live performances of popular plays and musicals. The CineLux Delta Cinema in downtown Brentwood, originally built in 1930s, is currently being renovated. The preserved theaters contribute to the sense of place and exemplify the intersection of historic preservation, the arts, and economic development.

Minor league baseball or municipal stadiums are found in West Sacramento, Pittsburg, and Martinez, with the latter community being the home of the three pro DiMaggio brothers, including Hall of Famer Joe DiMaggio. Although not all the stadiums are historic, the Pacific Coast League has had a presence in the region since its establishment in 1903, and team names such as the River Cats harken back to region's history. Famous players such as the DiMaggios, who worked in the fishing industry, bridge baseball history with the region's cultural and economic history. Not only do these major destinations in the NHA offer gateway interpretive opportunities, but through the development of NHA-related merchandise (see Strategy 3.1.6, Chapter 4), revenue generation could benefit other historic resources in those communities.

## Water Recreation and Hunting

Marinas are a common Delta access point for water recreation. Over the past two decades, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta has supported approximately 100 marinas, many of which offer both motorized and non-motorized boating, as well as paddle sports. Most marinas in the Delta are privately owned and operated; public marinas are limited to the more urban areas along the Carquinez Strait. Private marinas provide many services to Delta boaters, including boat slips, launch ramps, parking, restrooms, restaurants, convenience stores, picnic facilities, camping sites, pump outs, used oil collection centers, recycling centers, and fuel stations. There are several locations in the NHA where marinas are concentrated, including the 10-mile scenic Delta Loop along the Mokelumne and San Joaquin Rivers southeast of Isleton, Bethel Island, the south end of the Antioch Bridge, and Walnut Grove. Nearly half of both public and private docks and marinas currently include paddle sport launch points and often rentals. The Great Delta Trail Master Plan identifies recommended launch locations for a future Delta Water Trail. Sherman Island is an extremely popular windsurfing spot.

The Delta is also home to 20 private yacht clubs. Some of these social organizations centered on boating have been in existence since the late 1920s.

Fishing is a popular activity, and access is available at many of the shorelines, wildlife areas, and recreation areas described above.

The Sacramento River between Rio Vista and the tip of Sherman Island remains one of the best windsurfing areas in the world. The Rio Vista Windsurfing Association and Sherman Island Kiteboarding Organization work to promote the sport and preserve water access. Windsurfing is a seasonal sport, primarily April through September, when the weather is warm and the Delta winds blow.

The Delta lies within the Pacific Flyway, an annual migratory route for waterfowl such as green-winged teal, American wigeon, Canada goose, northern pintail, snow goose, and mallard. Much of the land in Suisun Marsh is owned by private duck clubs, though public waterfowl hunting areas are found there as well. The region contains many private hunting clubs on agricultural lands. Twelve public facilities are listed on the VisitCADelta.com website.

## Key Resources Located Beyond the NHA

Numerous resources near the NHA boundary can be considered as potential assets and affiliate sites for the NHA. The NHA boundary is based in large part on elevation, as that criterion was used in earlier state legislation related to the Delta. The boundary did not take into consideration factors that often contribute to the establishment of an NHA boundary, including historical and cultural features, political boundaries, and topographical features such as major roads. As such, the boundary set forth in the designating legislation bisects many of the small cities in the region, excluding historic districts and museums that tie to the NHA's themes and goals. Two such resources are the Western Railway Museum near Rio Vista and the Delta King, listed in the National Register, is in Old Sacramento. In addition, the 51-acre site of the future California Indian Heritage Center is located at the confluence of the American and Sacramento rivers, near but beyond the boundary.

The NHA also excludes the three largest cities in the region – Sacramento, Stockton, and Vallejo – which are either just outside of the NHA or only partially within the NHA. While all three cities contain many historic and cultural resources that connect to the NHA's themes and goals, as well as greater tourism infrastructure, the City of Stockton is most intimately connected with the Delta. The Filipino National Historical Society and the Haggin Museum can both play a role in sharing the history and culture of the Delta. The University of the Pacific, California's oldest university, founded in 1851, is both an educational partner and a historic resource.

As the state capital, Sacramento has many museums and historic resources tied to the history of the Delta. Old Sacramento, which lies across the Sacramento River from the NHA, includes historic buildings, structures, and the Delta King paddlewheel riverboat that represent the importance of the Delta as a water highway during the 19th and early 20th century. The nearby Crocker Museum, the oldest art museum in the West, boasts paintings of the Delta by Gregory Kondos and Wayne Thiebaud in its collection and has featured larger exhibitions of both Kondos' and Thiebaud's Delta art. The SMUD Museum of Science of Curiosity has an exhibit that examines the Delta as part of California's water challenges. The State Indian Museum and Sutter's Fort, which is in the eastern portion of Sacramento's original grid street system, reflect the story of the Delta's Native American culture and early European and American settlement of the region.

The boundary also excludes a decommissioned US Army base in Rio Vista and other nearby public lands. In 2022 and again in 2023, Congressmen Mike Thompson (District 4) and John Garamendi (District 8) introduced legislation to expand the NHA boundary to include 62 acres of public land in Solano County, enhancing opportunities for redevelopment. The proposed expansion encompasses the decommissioned United States Army Reserve Center (Rio Vista), U.S. Coast Guard Station Rio Vista, Beach Drive Wastewater Treatment Plant (City of Rio Vista), and Sandy Beach County Park (Solano County).

Finally, Mount Diablo, a 3,849-foot peak that lies outside the boundary, is visible throughout the NHA as well as much of Northern California. The dominant landscape feature in the region, the mountain is sacred to the Indigenous community and an essential part of their traditions. Newer immigrants to the area developed a strong bond with the mountain. Authors such as Bret Harte, John Muir, and Eugene O’Neill described the peak in their work. Mount Diablo State Park became one of the first parks in the state and was expanded through the efforts of California State Parks and the grassroots organization Save Mount Diablo.

# Resource Stewardship and Enhancement

Through management planning activities such as public meetings, the annual Delta Heritage Forum, stakeholder interviews, and the online survey, the Advisory Committee's Resource Stewardship and Enhancement Task Group led the development of a series of objectives and strategies that will result in protection, improved access, and/or added value to resources in the NHA. The first step in developing these objectives and strategies was identifying key challenges and opportunities facing the region's natural, historic, scenic, and cultural resources.

## Challenges for Resource Stewardship and Enhancement

### Fragility of Resources

The rural Delta is a highly engineered landscape characterized over the last century by changes to the natural environment primarily for the benefit of agricultural production. As such, the region's cultural and natural resources have a long track-record of co-existence. Today, climate change and aging infrastructure are clear threats to the Delta's natural and cultural resources. As land has subsided, leaving much of the primary zone below sea level, weather extremes and sea level rise wrought by climate change could be devastating. Results of the 2023 *Delta Residents Survey* underscored this concern, as residents identified "aging infrastructure" as the biggest challenge to quality of life.[[3]](#footnote-4) The Delta's small population, discussed below, is an important factor contributing to aging infrastructure, as there is greater pressure and economic incentive to address public and private infrastructure in more populated areas. The potential impacts of the Delta Conveyance Project, a proposed tunnel that would transport water from the Sacramento River in the north Delta to Clifton Court Forebay in the south Delta, on resources is currently the subject of federal and state environmental review documents. As noted in Chapter 1, the NHA does not take a position on the Delta Conveyance Project.

### Small Population

The rural Delta has a small population, with less than 10,000 people inhabiting the "primary zone," an area defined by state statute as the rural, agricultural core of the Delta. Approximately 573,500 residents live in the secondary zone, although not all of them live within the NHA boundary.[[4]](#footnote-5) The primary zone's tiny population lies within an hour of the San Francisco Bay Area, with its population of nearly 8 million, in a state that has almost 40 million residents. These population comparisons highlight how few potential advocates and volunteers there are who can be actively engaged in resource stewardship and enhancement. While both the primary and secondary zones have resources that illustrate the history of the Delta, resources in the primary zone are more vulnerable to decay due to the depopulation that occurred as the mechanization of agriculture led to a decrease in the need for farm laborers.

### Historic Preservation Limitations

Preserving the historic downtowns contributes to sense of place and helps draw visitors. In the Delta, many of the historic rural communities are virtually intact but need preservation support and expertise. Historic preservation, while evident in some communities, is less frequent in others due to a constellation of inhibiting factors. The Delta's small population correlates with a lack of potential investors and funding to restore and reuse historic properties. In some locations, despite the presence of levees, flood regulations require new or renovated buildings to be raised ten feet, making many preservation projects economically infeasible. In other locations, adaptively reusing historic buildings could drive economic development and help alleviate housing shortages. Currently, there is no regional nonprofit organization to provide support or advocate for historic preservation.

### Lack of Regional Organization for Cultural Resources

Just as there is no regional organization for historic preservation, no organizations with a regional footprint exist to help coordinate, advocate for, or support the historical societies and cultural organizations found across the Delta. Historical societies and cultural organizations are often run by volunteers or with limited staffing. Many of the historical societies have repositories of historic artifacts and archives, but do not have the capacity to conserve and exhibit collections. The NHA can help build capacity by connecting organizations and providing direct support, grants, and access to outside funding opportunities, technical assistance, and training.

### Lack of Water Access

Although recreation, in particular water recreation, is a primary economic driver in the Delta, partners and the public repeatedly identified improved facilities for water access as a critical need. Access is defined as more public boat landings, connection to Delta communities, and access to other opportunities for people to get out on the water. There are about 100 boat launches and marinas, but many of these are private. Although a number of businesses offer kayak and paddle board rentals, there is room for additional businesses, and people in public meetings perceived access to the smaller waterways best suited to paddle sports as limited. Furthermore, people find it difficult to easily visit many of the towns by boat.

### Lack of Funding and Awareness

A few notable challenges emerged in the survey data collected from 94 respondents. The survey included the question “What are the main challenges facing the National Heritage Area related to preserving historic places, cultural traditions, and natural resources? (Respondents could check all that applied.) The top two responses were:

* Lack of awareness about the importance of the area’s history – 79 percent
* Funding needed to preserve resources – 69 percent

Another survey question asked respondents how they would like to see the NHA engaged in interpretation, cultural and natural resource stewardship, recreation, tourism, and education. The top-ranked response was that the NHA should provide leadership and management in historic preservation, as well as larger regional projects like trail development, signage, the development of visitor centers, and community revitalization.

## Opportunities for Resource Stewardship and Enhancement

### Significant State Presence

There are many agencies, including state government and nonprofit organizations, whose primary mission is conservation of natural resources. The Delta Protection Commission is an established conservation leader and currently the NHA coordinating entity. The DPC’s leadership, existing network of conservation partners, and understanding of the complex web of state agencies in the Delta provides an opportunity to grow partnerships between the NHA and other organizations.

State programs, through state agencies and nonprofits, offer both technical assistance and funding for historic preservation. The California Historic Tax Credit, created in 2019 as an incentive for rehabilitating historic properties, is one example of programs that could benefit the Delta. Moreover, grant programs for conservation and preservation projects are available through state agencies, including the Delta Conservancy and the California Office of Historic Preservation.

Several state agencies operate as land managers in the Delta. This includes California State Parks, Department of Water Resources, State Lands Commission, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. These agencies all have capacity to connect people to the landscape as they develop and implement plans, fund projects, and support visitor services. The DPC has existing relationships with all of these entities and can help implement plans, partner on projects, and leverage skills and funding.

### Strong Track Record of Natural Resource Conservation and Agriculture

As noted above, the presence of multiple state agencies and nonprofit organizations dedicated to conservation in the region has resulted in a strong track record of natural resource conservation success. Similarly, the region's agricultural heritage and the continuing presence of farms in the Delta, many that have been passed down through multiple generations demonstrates important economic continuity. State agencies and organizations like the county Farm Bureaus, the Nature Conservancy, and Ducks Unlimited provide recognition and support for conservation and agriculture, underscoring the importance of both activities, as well as the integrated approach that will continue to be critical to the successful protection of cultural and natural resources in the complex environment.

### Existing Plans and Initiatives

Under California legislation, the DPC has the legislated responsibility to prepare and adopt a long-term resource management plan for land use in the primary zone of the Delta; the *Land Use and Resource Management Plan* was adopted in 1995 and updated in 2010 to guide local land use decisions on projects regarding agriculture, flood protection, natural resources, recreation, and utilities and infrastructure. The legislative intent behind this plan was to protect the existing land uses in the primary zone.

With the 2009 Delta Reform Act, the California Legislature became more expansive in its approach to the Delta. One of the key state agencies active in the region, the Delta Stewardship Council, was created by the Act to develop a "comprehensive, long-term, legally enforceable plan to guide how multiple federal, state, and local agencies manage the Delta’s water and environmental resources."[[5]](#footnote-6) The *Delta Plan* includes 15 California state agencies, including the DPC, as well as five federal agencies. Its coequal goals address ecosystem restoration and water supply and quality, which are to be accomplished in a manner that protects and enhances the cultural, recreational, natural, and agricultural values of the Delta as place that continues to evolve. The *Delta Plan's* comprehensive breadth and its integration of multiple state and residential interests make it a powerful tool for resource stewardship and enhancement. The plan also addresses how the Delta relates to the state, reflecting different mandates among the state agencies active in the Delta.

Several other planning efforts related to resources have either resulted from the *Delta Plan* or complement its intent. The DPC's *Vision 2030* (Strategic Plan), adopted in 2021, includes strategic themes focused on water, agriculture, flood protection, natural resources, recreation, and utilities and infrastructure. Other plans include the *Great California Delta Trail Master Plan* (2022), the *Feasibility Study for the Sacramento-San Joaquin NHA* (2012), and the *Economic Sustainability Plan for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta* (2012). In addition, The DPC has worked with five legacy communities – Clarksburg, Courtland, Hood, Isleton, and Walnut Grove – in developing Community Action Plans. These plans highlight the communities’ needs and desires, such as bicycle and pedestrian improvements, community design, historic preservation, and broadband infrastructure.

The California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) updates California's *Statewide Historic Preservation Plan* every five years, with the last plan completed in 2019. The stated purpose of that plan is to guide the activities and priorities of agencies, organizations, and the public involved in preservation. In addition, nominations for the National Register of Historic Places are a source for historical context for sites and districts.

### Local Organizations Interested in Cultural Heritage

The NHA has many local organizations dedicated to the Delta's history and cultures. Eighteen of these are represented on the Advisory Committee. Many organizations are annual participants in the Delta Heritage Forum, where they connect with other organizations in the NHA and share their activities with a public audience. The partnership network is described in Chapter 5 and a table of partners is found in Appendix F.

## Determining the NHA’s Role in Resource Stewardship and Enhancement

To determine an appropriate role for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area, the Resource Stewardship and Enhancement Task Group considered public input and examined the identified challenges and opportunities. They confirmed that while the Delta Stewardship Council has taken a leadership role in ecosystem restoration and water quality and supply, there is no corresponding organization with a focus on preservation. Emerging from task group meetings was consensus that the NHA can fill that role and should focus its resources on preservation of the built environment and support of cultural and historical projects and programs. Because of the many agencies and organizations focused on natural resource conservation, task group members recommended that the NHA should have a supporting partner role rather than a leadership role in conservation issues and programs.

# Resource Stewardship and Enhancement Objectives and Strategies

The major objectives and specific strategies for caring for and building on the unique resources in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area were developed through the process detailed in the "Outreach and Engagement" section of Chapter 1. The public and partners provided input through a variety of methods, including public meetings, the annual Delta Heritage Forum, stakeholder interviews, and online surveys. The Resource Stewardship and Enhancement Task Group and the Tribal Working Group provided additional input on the role of the NHA and existing and potential partners, and also helped refine the ideas generated in the engagement process into a series of potential strategies. With recommendations from the Resource Stewardship and Enhancement Task Group, the Advisory Committee adopted four primary objectives and the strategies to achieve them, including partners and the potential role(s) for the NHA coordinating entity. The Tribes were provided a draft of relevant sections of the management plan so that their input could be incorporated in the final draft plan. Furthermore, during review, additional outreach was done to solicit specific commitments from partners.

This section, which corresponds with the implementation plan for Goal 2 (see Appendix I), provides a narrative description of the actions the NHA will take to preserve, conserve, and build upon the region's heritage resources in the 15 years following designation.

## Objective 2.1 Through National Heritage Area support and projects, leaders and residents are more aware of the importance of preserving historic resources that contribute to the area’s unique sense of place.

The historic structures, historic and prehistoric archaeological sites, archival documents, and objects of the NHA are the focus of this objective. The Advisory Committee recognized that preservation of the built environment is a critical need which the NHA can facilitate by providing leadership and funding. The majority of strategies below involve various aspects of historic preservation – documenting resources, education and training, and funding.

As noted previously, there is no organization dedicated to historic preservation on a regional scale in the Delta, so the DPC, as the coordinating entity for the NHA, will fill that role. Preservation entities with a statewide reach, the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) and the California Preservation Foundation, are key partners for all historic preservation strategies. Local governments – especially planning departments, historic landmarks advisory commissions, and preservation review commissions – are essential partners in carrying out the preservation strategies. In the communities where they exist, Certified Local Governments (CLGs), Main Street programs, and historical societies are also important partners, especially for individual projects. While most communities have historical societies, there are three communities with CLGs (Benicia, Elk Grove, and Vallejo) and four with Main Street programs (Benicia, Brentwood, Martinez, and Vallejo).

To carry out the strategies below, the NHA will retain professional assistance either through employing permanent staff, hiring an independent contractor, or sharing staffing with a partner agency or organization. This and all other staffing needs are addressed in Chapter 6, Goal 5.

### Strategy 2.1.1 Document historic resources and cultural landscapes in the Delta.

Preservation begins with understanding the resources, so the first strategy involves the documentation of historic structures and cultural landscapes. The resource inventory is an important tool for this, as it contains a listing of all historic resources related to the NHA's themes (see Goal 4.3.3 and Appendix E). In addition, historical research and architectural documentation help in understanding sites and landscapes. The NHA may pursue documentation through the National Park Service's Historic American Buildings Survey, Historic American Engineering Record, and Historic American Landscapes Survey (HABS/HAER/HALS) or with university partners whose students can produce documentation to HABS/HAER/HALS standards. Such documentation is the basis for listing properties in the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historic Places. It also informs decision-making in preservation projects. Copies are retained in the collection at the U.S. Library of Congress where they can be accessed digitally.

Built resource inventories are fundamental historic preservation tools that are essential in providing the knowledge base that informs community planning and historic preservation initiatives. In addition to maintaining the resource inventory developed during the management planning process, the NHA can play a critical role in supporting new inventory projects in communities and thereby providing a foundation for historic preservation of buildings and structures within the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, Suisun Marsh, and Carquinez Strait.

### Strategy 2.1.2 Secure assistance from the California Office of Historic Preservation to develop a historic context statement for the NHA region.

The DPC will lead the development of a historic context statement for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA in partnership with OHP. This could be accomplished with staff or through a contract or interagency agreement. The historic context statement will be another crucial documentation tool for the NHA. Historic context statements establish an analytical framework for recognizing and assessing resources. They achieve this by identifying and describing the elements of geography, history, and culture that influenced the evolution of a region's land use patterns and built environment.

### Strategy 2.1.3 Support designations of historic resources, including the development of best practices.

Designations are another important preservation tool that not only recognize properties worthy of preservation, but also include other benefits. NPS's National Register of Historic Places, authorized by the National Preservation Act of 1966, is part of a national program aimed at organizing and assisting public and private endeavors to recognize, assess, and conserve the nation's historic and archaeological assets. Similarly, the State Historical Resources Commission's California Register of Historical Resources encourages recognition and protection of resources, provides information for planning, determines state grant funding eligibility, and provides certain protections under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). County and community programs can be stepping stones to the state and national programs, and also serve to raise awareness locally. In addition, expanding the number of CLGs and Main Street programs in the region will contribute to historic preservation and community revitalization.

* During the planning process, several properties were mentioned specifically that could benefit from designation at the state or national level. These include but are not limited to:
* The Old Sugar Mill in Clarksburg, designed by architect William Raymond Yelland, was constructed in 1934 and is an example of adaptive reuse.
* The 1883 Clarksburg Schoolhouse is currently undergoing rehabilitation as an interpretive facility and community center.
* Several properties and districts are identified in the NPS' NHL theme study entitled *Finding a Path Forward, Asian American and Pacific Islander National Historic Landmarks Theme Study*.[[6]](#footnote-7) Some are already listed in the National Register of Historic Places but could have their level of significance raised, and others remain to be listed. Properties in the study are:
* Holland Union Gakuen, a Japanese culture and language school in Clarksburg
* Walnut-Grove Chinese-American Historic District
* Walnut-Grove Japanese American Historic District
* Walnut Grove Gakuen Hall
* Sikh Gurdwara Sahib in Stockton (outside the NHA, but with strong cultural ties)
* Little Manila in Stockton (outside the NHA, but with strong cultural ties)
* Isleton Chinese and Japanese Commercial Historic Districts

Many more properties eligible for state and national designations will be identified as a result of strategy 2.1.1, documenting the historic resources and cultural landscapes in the NHA. For example, the more densely populated areas in Antioch, Brentwood, and Oakley have numerous properties that may be eligible. Suburbanization of these communities is a relatively recent phenomenon, and there is less recognition of the older buildings in these communities than in other towns in the NHA.

The NHA will coordinate funding through grants and direct support, and offer technical assistance to assist with local, state, and national designations of historic resources. Part of this strategy includes articulating and sharing best practices appropriate to the region, which may be accomplished with guidance from NPS, OHP, the California Preservation Foundation, and local organizations such as the Contra Costa County Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission. The NHA can provide information that could be used to establish objective standards or best practices for local governments to adopt.

### Strategy 2.1.4 Provide information and coordinate training to educate residents and leaders, including elected officials, about preservation and its benefits.

The Delta Protection Commission staff will function as the historic preservation leader in the NHA, offering support and convening partners to learn about and carry out preservation of the region's resources. The DPC will disseminate information and coordinate training that helps people understand the benefits of historic preservation. Benefits include fostering community identity and connection, educating future generations about the past, revitalizing neighborhoods, attracting tourism and business investment, and contributing to economically and environmentally sustainable development. Educating residents and elected officials will cultivate a coalition of leaders and practitioners that will protect the Delta's built environment.

The DPC will work to support and convene, sharing information with partners on best practices, funding opportunities, tax incentives, and upcoming training provided at the state and local levels. In addition, the DPC will collaborate with organizations that have developed preservation training to offer local in-person workshop and web-based training modules on a range of topics such as Section 106 compliance, preservation benefits, preservation of historical objects and archival collections, and preservation-related topics concerning the work of local planning and preservation governmental agencies. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, NPS, OHP, the California Preservation Foundation, and the National Preservation Institute offer the information and training on best practices that the DPC will share.

### Strategy 2.1.5 Support the existing groups and organizations that promote historic preservation through grants, technical assistance, and collaborative stewardship.

Nearly every community in the NHA has organizations dedicated to protecting historic resources and sense of place. These are the entities that are promoting historic preservation and implementing preservation projects within their communities. The variety of organizations ranges from local historical societies, organizations committed to specific projects, CLGs, Main Street programs, and historic preservation commissions. The NHA will build a supportive network of these organizations by convening and coordinating, providing information and technical assistance, and offering grants so that they can steward the region's special places.

### Strategy 2.1.6 Promote and educate community organizations, property owners, and developers about the Mills Act and other tax programs that provide incentives for preservation.

Navigating myriad tax benefits and other economic incentives for preservation is a complex process that often deters people who are unfamiliar with these programs. By educating owners of historic properties about preservation tax credits, the NHA can increase the success rate of preservation in the region. NPS, OHP, and the California Preservation Foundation are critical sources of information. The NHA will share information and coordinate programs to connect individuals, organizations, and developers to the information they need.

### Strategy 2.1.7 Create a fund to preserve historic places and landscapes.

The NHA will create a pool of capital reserved to facilitate the preservation and rehabilitation of historic properties. The NHA will develop guidelines for the distribution and administration of the fund, which will be different from grant funding (see Goal 4.2.1). The revolving fund could be set up as a loan program with the restriction that the borrowed monies are returned to the fund to be reused for similar preservation activities. Activities could include preservation and repair loans for historic properties, as well as technical assistance through consultation and construction management. Partners who could help set up and potentially sponsor this longer-term strategy might include the Delta Conservancy and the State Coastal Conservancy in addition to OHP and the California Preservation Foundation.

### Strategy 2.1.8 Provide information and coordinate training to educate residents and partners on how to save historical records, documents, and artifacts.

Many organizations and individuals in the NHA have historical records, documents, and artifacts. Such items are found in local museums, archival depositories including libraries, churches, and governmental offices, historical societies, and homes. Just as there is no regional historic preservation organization currently in existence, there is no regional organization for the conservation of historic objects and articles. Such items offer insights into the past, providing tangible connections to the past. Safeguarding these materials helps ensure that future generations can learn from and appreciate the knowledge, experiences, and achievements of people who came before us.

The NHA will disseminate information and coordinate training to develop conservation best practices, bringing in the professional expertise found in the , the California Preservation Program and California State Archives and programs at nearby educational institutions, such as University of the Pacific, University of California at Davis, and California State University, Sacramento.

The NHA does not anticipate developing a regional repository, but rather will support the existing repositories with funding, capacity building, technical training, publicity, and sharing information. The 2015 Delta Narratives project carried out by the DPC in collaboration with area scholars and museum professionals included development of a list of museums and historical societies. The list contains a brief description of organizations’ holdings, topical interests, and contact information. As part of the NHA’s information clearinghouse role, the DPC will continue to update the list.

Strategy 2.1.9 Study and support expansion of the NHA boundary.

Many historical, cultural, and natural resources that potentially contribute to the NHA's themes lie outside its current legislated boundary. Described above in *Key Resources Beyond the NHA*, communities, historic districts, historic and natural sites, and museums merit future consideration for their connection to the NHA's themes and their potential contributions to achieving the NHA's goals. The DPC will undertake a boundary analysis to determine what additional communities and sites to include in the NHA, giving consideration to their potential economic and conservation impacts.

With or without a boundary analysis, Congress may decide to expand the boundary based on the original purposes of the legislation, such as the proposed 62-acre expansion in Rio Vista, Solano County. When such expansions occur, the NHA will incorporate new areas into goals and strategies set forth in the management plan.

## Objective 2.2 The region’s leaders and residents embrace a conservation stewardship ethic centered on the integrity of the rivers and estuary, habitat protection, and native biological diversity and productivity.

Protecting and restoring a vibrant and healthy Delta ecosystem is one of the coequal goals set forth in *The Delta Plan*, the comprehensive, long-term management plan for the Delta and the Suisun Marsh developed by the Delta Stewardship Council.[[7]](#footnote-8) Because water supply and ecosystem restoration are paramount in the plan, the majority of the 20 state and federal agencies that have a primary or supporting role in implementing the plan's recommendations have expertise with environmental concerns. In addition, there are many local public, private, and nonprofit organizations dedicated to environmental conservation. As described above, the Advisory Committee determined that the most appropriate role for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA regarding natural resources would be to support the myriad environmental initiatives by raising awareness of the public through outreach, education, and facilitation. The NHA can also provide grants, direct financial support, and staff assistance to the agencies and organizations in the partnership network that are carrying out conservation projects and programs (see Goal 4).

### Strategy 2.2.1 Share educational information developed by partners about conservation strategies and environmental issues.

From multiple state agencies to nonprofit organizations with different geographic or topical interests, many entities are generating information on conservation strategies, issues, and activities in the NHA. An appropriate and much needed role for the DPC to fill is to serve as the organization that gathers, synthesizes, and distributes educational information about conservation strategies and environmental issues. Serving as a clearinghouse for information will advance ongoing natural resource conservation efforts in the NHA, and providing educational information will complement the work of EcoAtlas, a program under the San Francisco Estuary Institute that provides general information about ecosystem restoration projects.

### Strategy 2.2.2 Recruit volunteers and coordinate activities and events to clean up the region’s landscapes and waterways and combat invasive species.

Each year local, state, and national organizations plan and carry out a number of seasonal and annual events that engage volunteers in natural resource conservation. For example, Coastal Cleanup Day, organized each September by the California Coastal Commission, focuses on coastal and waterway cleanup, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife organizes California Invasive Species Action Week annually in June. Although the NHA will not lead a conservation program, through promotion, volunteer recruitment, staff participation in planning and implementation, and funding, the NHA can assist with these established events and others carried out by nonprofit organizations, communities, and public agencies.

### Strategy 2.2.3 Support development of a virtual and physical “collaboratory,” a hub for a network of agencies, academia, non-governmental organizations, communities, and industry to better address major modeling, data, and management issues.

The Delta Science Program, under the Delta Stewardship Council, upholds the Delta Plan's objectives by advocating adaptive management based on scientific knowledge. The Delta Science Program will lead development of a virtual, and eventually physical, network hub in which they will promote collaboration of public agencies at all levels, educational institutions, nonprofits, communities, and private industry to advance scientific understanding and adaptive management based upon it. Under the direction of the Delta Science Program, the NHA will help fund and convene partners in this endeavor, employing the NHA partnership network to bring local communities and nonprofit organizations to the table.

## Objective 2.3 The National Heritage Area supports projects and programs to foster understanding and appreciation of the region’s cultures and living traditions among residents, leaders, and visitors.

Throughout history, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta has been home to many different cultures. Native Americans from more than two dozen Tribes lived in the region or came here to harvest resources for their food and to support their cultural traditions. Westward-bound American settlers reshaped the land for agriculture, forging new lives. Successive waves of immigrants, initially from Asia and Europe and later Latin America, came to work in agriculture, fishing, and other resource-intensive industries that dominated the landscape, past and present. They also labored in the canneries that grew up in the Delta and along the Carquinez Strait in the late 19th and early 20th century. Each group that settled here adapted to the region while preserving their distinct identities through language, foodways, and other customs, enriching the Delta's cultural tapestry. As a result, the region today remains a testament to the resilience and cultural vibrancy of these groups.

By stewarding cultural heritage, especially the knowledge and traditions that are honored, celebrated, and passed down through generations, the NHA will help strengthen sense of place, foster community pride and intergenerational connections, help maintain cultural diversity, and contribute to socio-economic wellbeing. Partners that will assist in carrying out this objective are the many cultural organizations, historical societies, museums, and Tribes that are the Delta's culture-keepers.

Many National Heritage Areas have benefitted by committing resources to professional ethnographic or folkloric positions. The NHA will explore the best way to do this, either by contracting with professionals or scholars, or supporting staffing within partner organizations. This potential position is addressed in Chapter 6, Goal 5.

### Strategy 2.3.1 Develop a committee to advise on cultural projects.

Using the Delta Independent Science Board as a model, the NHA will create a specialized advisory body to address cultural conservation and promotion in the region. The committee could be comprised of representatives with expertise in various aspects of cultural heritage, including historians, cultural anthropologists, folklorists, community leaders, representatives from Tribes and other cultural groups, and experts in heritage preservation. The activities of the committee could include advising on policies related to cultural heritage preservation, tracking and compiling research and documentation on the region's cultures, developing strategies to engage communities and cultural groups, recommending initiatives for education and outreach, and collaborating with partners to implement cultural heritage projects. The ethnographic or folklore coordinator position (see Strategy 2.3.2) would help support and administer the committee.

### Strategy 2.3.2 Support initiatives to do ethnography and spoken history, and to document culture and living traditions.

Just as documenting historic structures is an important tool in preserving the built environment, documenting culture and living traditions, including through oral histories, is critical for conserving and sharing traditions. Information and interviews can be used in educational programs that facilitate the transmission of cultural knowledge. Such information can also be used to develop programs, exhibits, tours, and events (see the interpretive plan, Chapter 2). Three areas of focus for documentation arose during planning:

* Traditions of the diverse cultural groups connected to the Delta through time,
* Traditions related to water and its role in connecting the area.
* Traditions concerning agriculture and foodways.

By means of grants, direct financial support, technical assistance and training, and active staff involvement, the NHA will back projects and programs led by partners focused on documenting culture and conserving and sharing living traditions.

## Objective 2.4 Support California Native American Tribes and descendants of Native peoples to reconnect with, experience, and celebrate the significant and ancient cultural and natural resources in the region.

For thousands of years, the Delta's resources were integral to the lives and cultures of Native Americans. This vital connection between culture and nature is integral in cultural revitalization and natural resource protection. Tribes hold traditional knowledge that can contribute to solving ecological challenges, while respecting and enhancing cultural values and properties.

To maintain important biodiversity within the natural landscape, Native American cultures place great value on managing plants and wildlife. As noted in the interpretive plan, Chapter 2, many species play important roles in traditional stories, the understanding of place, and the practical use in everyday life. Contemporary research has demonstrated how burning was used as an effective tool in landscape management. In addition, Tribes harvested and sometimes managed species of plants, fish, fowl, and mammals, many of which retain Tribal importance. Ethnographic evidence suggests there were at least 20 native villages in the Delta, all of which participated in extensive modification and tending of the landscape and its rich resources. Tribal modification and tending of the Delta likely was extensive and profound.

While no Tribal governments are located in the region today, there are 23 California Native American Tribes that have historical ties to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The NHA has a responsibility, a legislative mandate, and the opportunity to work with the Tribes to strengthen and enhance the special connections between Tribes and the Delta, and to rebuild connections where time and the consequences of colonialism have diminished them. The Advisory Committee created a Tribal Engagement Working Group (see Chapter 1) to engage Tribal representatives in considering how the NHA could benefit their cultures and communities. The Tribal Engagement Working Group included representatives of Tribes with ties to the Delta, as well as staff from California State Parks tribal liaison office and members of the Advisory Committee and State Parks and PointHDC planning team. The following strategies, which lay a foundation for ongoing and evolving Tribal involvement, were developed by that working group.

The Tribes are the primary partners for all the strategies below. The strategies below will be guided by the Tribal advisory council (see Chapter 2, Strategy 1.4.1). Other partners include the California Native American Heritage Commission, Native American Studies programs at area universities, and museums, including the Maidu Museum outside the NHA, and the California Indian Heritage Center under development by California State Parks. Finally, all state agencies active in the Delta have designated Tribal liaisons; the liaison for the DPC, the NHA coordinating entity, is currently the Project Manager for the NHA.

### Strategy 2.4.1 Consider the development of a Tribal land acknowledgement.

The NHA will work directly with the 23 California Native American Tribes who once lived in and whose lives were enriched by the bountiful flora, fauna, and water in Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to determine whether they feel a land acknowledgement is appropriate. If the Tribes would like the initiative to move forward, the NHA will work with them to develop a land acknowledgement. This act of recognition, respect, and education would honor the people who stewarded the land for generations and acknowledge their historical and ongoing connection. A land acknowledgement by the NHA would demonstrate a commitment to equity, justice, and ethical responsibility, and help promote cultural awareness, inclusivity, and reconciliation.

### Strategy 2.4.2 Continue to engage California Native American Tribes in the planning and implementation of NHA projects and programs.

As a state agency, the DPC has existing relationships with California Native American Tribes with ties to the Delta. The NHA management planning process built on those relationships through planning activities focused on Tribal engagement and the development of a Tribal Engagement Working Group. This is a foundation for what will be continued and ever-deepening involvement of Tribes with state or federal recognition, as well as organizations and state agencies supporting Tribal interests. The DPC staff will actively work to engage Tribes through the leadership of the Tribal Engagement Working Group and will consider the most appropriate ways in which to convene and connect with the 23 Tribes with connections to the NHA and its resources.

### Strategy 2.4.3 Facilitate documentation, interpretation, and right of access to places with meaning for or traditional use by Native people.

National Heritage Areas are significant for the connection, past and present, between people and place. There are many Tribes whose prehistory and history is tied to sacred places and places of traditional use in the Delta – often these places are the same. The effects of centuries of policies and actions rooted in colonialism and westward expansion of the United States damaged or completely severed the connection between Tribes and such places. Through grants, direct funding, staff involvement, and technical assistance, the NHA will assist Tribes in documenting places with meaning or traditional use and facilitating Tribal access to those places. The names, locations, and uses of places will not be made public without the consent of the Tribes. Where appropriate, interpretation to build public understanding and appreciation for places and their meaning will be developed at the request of, and in conjunction with, the Tribes.

### Strategy 2.4.4 Provide opportunities to document, interpret, and practice traditional lifeways based on the region’s natural environment.

In addition to assisting with places of meaning and traditional use, the NHA will assist Tribes in documenting, conserving, and sharing living traditions. This strategy ties to programs supporting the intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge and customs (below, 2.4.4). It also goes beyond such programs, emphasizing projects and programs that help build and curate understanding of traditional knowledge and customs, facilitating opportunities for Tribes to practice customs, and providing educational opportunities within Tribes. If appropriate, traditional knowledge and customs may be interpreted more broadly so that the public can understand and appreciate traditional lifeways, and environmental stewards can incorporate traditional knowledge into planning for the long-term sustainability of Delta natural resources. The NHA can assist with this through grants, direct funding support, staff involvement, and coordinating technical assistance and training. Any sharing of knowledge beyond the Tribes would be developed at the request of, and in conjunction with, the Tribes.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) – practices and understanding concerning ecosystems, resource management, and environmental interrelationships – contributes valuable perspectives to sustainable approaches to natural resource management.[[8]](#footnote-9) This strategy also includes providing opportunities for Tribes to practice TEK in the NHA, encouraging them to actively collaborate in environmental stewardship through the application of TEK.

The NHA will provide grants, direct funding support, staff involvement, connections to projects and programs that can incorporate Tribal involvement, and technical assistance and training focused on TEK.

### Strategy 2.4.5 Support educational programs to facilitate intergenerational knowledge of Tribal histories, cultural traditions, and traditional ecological knowledge.

The previous strategy emphasized documenting, interpreting, and practicing traditional lifeways. This strategy builds upon that foundation, providing Tribes the support they need to maintain and transfer that knowledge to future generations. UNESCO recognizes an urgent need to enhance the intergenerational transition of Indigenous knowledge, complementing mainstream formal education.[[9]](#footnote-10) Recognizing elders as holders of knowledge and authority and purposefully bringing together different generations to share experiences and knowledge can enrich participants’ lives, provide cultural continuity, and help address social, community, and Tribal issues. Such programs leverage the strengths and positive contributions that the young and the elderly bring to one another and their communities. Programs would include the methods by which history and customs are passed down, such as storytelling, singing, and apprenticeship, knowledge of traditional arts, and traditional ecological knowledge.

The NHA will identify programmatic models and support Tribes with funding, technical assistance, and relationship-building with other partners in the network on projects and programs. The purpose of such projects and programs may be to help sustain and pass on traditional knowledge within the Tribes, to educate partners, and to integrate TEK into current or future natural resource management initiatives. Primary partners are the Tribes and the California Native American Heritage Commission, in addition to the many partners focused on resource conservation in the NHA. Other partners could include the Maidu Museum, located outside the NHA in Roseville, and the California Indian Heritage Center, currently in planning for a location in West Sacramento.

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6. Odo, Franklin, ed. *Finding a Path Forward: Asian American Pacific Islander National Historic Landmarks Theme Study*, National Historic Landmarks Program, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
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9. [Indigenous Knowledge and Knowledge Transmission (unesco.org)](about:blank), accessed August 10, 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)