Chapter 4 – Supporting Tourism and Economic Development

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# Introduction

Throughout the process to develop the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA's management plan, the Advisory Committee, task groups, staff, and stakeholders identified the current resources supporting tourism and recognized opportunities to further develop heritage resources and to enhance tourism marketing. This work aligns with the Congressional mandate requiring the NHA to "carry out programs and projects that recognize, protect and enhance important resource values" and to "increase public awareness of, and appreciation for, natural, historical, scenic, and cultural resources."[[1]](#footnote-2) Specifically, it aligns with designating legislation requirements for an integrated and cooperative approach to the enhancement of resources (Sec. 6001(c)(2)(A)).

Goal 3 was adopted to reflect this intention:

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

To achieve this goal and its accompanying objectives and strategies, the DPC will engage a person dedicated to heritage development and tourism with substantive experience in this area. This may be accomplished by retaining professional assistance either through employing permanent staff, hiring an independent contractor, or sharing staffing with a partner agency or organization. This intention is further discussed in Chapter 6, Goal 5.

The incentive for the NHA to undertake sustainable tourism development as a key activity is supported by the work of many other National Heritage Areas that have successfully developed, interpreted, and promoted their cultural, historic, natural, and recreational resources through strong partnerships. An earlier study of the economic impact of six NHAs noted that tourism is “a primary source of economic benefit” and recognized the importance of partnerships: “NHA partnerships are encouraged through initiatives that increase educational and recreational opportunities for both residents and tourists. Increased visitation by tourists and the increased economic activity are important objectives of heritage areas.”[[2]](#footnote-3)

# Sustainable Tourism: The Intersection of Heritage Tourism and Ecotourism

Travel and tourism are two of the most dynamic economic sectors in the world, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). The Council's research shows that tourism accounts for 7.6% of the global gross domestic product (GDP) and 18.4% of the GDP in North America.[[3]](#footnote-4)

Although people have been traveling for vacations in the United States since the 19th century, the advent of defining travel industry segments began in the late 20th century. In the ensuing decades, the desire to promote cultural, historic, and natural resources and outdoor recreation moved to the forefront for many tourism agencies who recognized the opportunity to generate economic revenue and to support a high quality of life for residents.

Among the most prominent travel industry segments are ecotourism, also referred to as geotourism, and heritage tourism, also referred to as cultural heritage tourism. While this segmentation is helpful to tourism planners and promoters to understand and address the specific interests of tourists, the intertwining of these terms is clear in the definitions for each:

* **Ecotourism**: The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of local people, and involves interpretation and education."[[4]](#footnote-5)
* **Heritage** **tourism**: The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as "traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes cultural, historic, and natural resources." [[5]](#footnote-6)

Taken together, these definitions encapsulate Goal 3 – **support sustainable tourism** – which sustains the community or region while generating beneficial economic impact.

Sustainable Tourism is defined as:

Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.[[6]](#footnote-7)

Sustainable tourism is particularly attractive for communities interested in maintaining or enhancing their community's character and sense of place. In addition to economic impact and job creation, sustainable tourism increases the area's attractiveness to outside industries and people seeking to relocate to locales rich in historic, cultural, and natural amenities, which results in more civic pride, and offers residents more shops, activities, and entertainment offerings the local market alone might not be able to support.

Sustainable tourism can be a positive outcome of **creative placemaking**. The American Planning Association notes: "Successful creative placemaking highlights unique community characteristics. Projects can focus on connecting local history with the present, bringing cultural influences into the spotlight, and creating new traditions. It builds connections between people and places by encouraging collaboration."

Many planning organizations have developed guidelines and how-to manuals for creative placemaking. Four primary attributes of placemaking for tourism are:

1. **Context and conservation** – An aesthetically appealing visual appearance can contribute to a sense of place and a meaningful experience for tourists. The beauty and authenticity of destinations should be preserved, protected, and maintained.
2. **Site interpretation** – Sites hold the stories and history for a place to engage tourists and residents. Interpretation should be clear, memorable, and accurate to encourage interaction with a place.
3. **Comfort and image** – Destinations should reflect a sense of place and be visually pleasing. They should feel safe, comfortable, and clean.
4. **Access and linkage** – Visitors should be able to easily reach a destination on streets, bike lanes, and pedestrian paths.[[7]](#footnote-8)

Actions to support sustainable tourism for the NHA will:

* Support cultural, historic, and natural resource asset-based development.
* Share the stories of the region's unique identity in a variety of venues.
* Preserve natural resources to share with current and future generations.
* Support local businesses and organizations that reflect the area's sense of place.
* Offer activities for outdoor recreation that also sustain the environment.

Cultural heritage travel has clear implications for positive economic impact and enhanced quality of life for a community’s residents. Over the past three decades, studies have consistently shown that people who want to experience culture and heritage are frequent travelers who spend more than general leisure travelers. They are more likely to stay in a hotel, motel, or bed and breakfast, and almost half of their expenditures are spent on activities, dining, and shopping. A national study determined that cultural heritage travelers want:[[8]](#footnote-9)

* travel experiences where the destination, its buildings and surroundings, have retained their historic character;
* travel to be educational; they want to explore and learn about local arts, cultural, environment, and history;
* to participate in experiences rather than be a spectator;
* to engage with locals;
* to stay in accommodations that relate to the culture or heritage of the destination.

The growing interest in outdoor activities and experiences also creates new opportunities for the tourism industry. To experience nature, most Americans must leave home. A 2020 report estimated that 83 percent of the U.S. population lives in urban areas, up from 64 percent in 1950. This number is projected to reach 89 percent by 2050.[[9]](#footnote-10) For ecotourism, the implications are clear. Areas that conserve and share their traditional heritage (nature, culture, history) and provide outdoor experiences for visitors can benefit economically.

Post-Pandemic Travel

Although the purpose of this chapter is to consider tourism development and promotional opportunities, it is important to acknowledge that the tourism industry is likely to be in recovery for several years due to the COVID-19 pandemic which put pressure on staffing, fuel prices, and other aspects of the industry. Prior to the pandemic, the U.S. travel industry experienced 10 years of growth in domestic leisure travel, domestic business travel, and international inbound travel segments. In 2021, domestic leisure travel was still recovering with total expenditures of $751 billion (104 percent over 2019), but domestic business travel spending was 56 percent below and international travel was 78 percent below 2019 levels.[[10]](#footnote-11)

# Tourism in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area

Tourism has been the subject of numerous studies for the region over the past two decades. Of particular importance, both to tourism and partnerships, is the *Delta Plan*. The plan is a product of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act of 2009 that established the Delta Stewardship Council as one of three state agencies whose work is centered in the Delta. The act required development of a comprehensive, legally enforceable plan to guide how federal, state, and local agencies manage the Delta's water and environmental resources. While much of the plan adopted in 2013 is dedicated to conserving the Delta's ecosystems and water supply, one chapter focuses on the protection and enhancement of cultural, recreational, agricultural, and natural resources. This chapter includes the goal of designation as a National Heritage Area and recognizes the importance of tourism to the region's economy.

Other plans include Recreation and Tourism in the Delta (2019) and The Economic Sustainability Plan for the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta’s Recreation and Tourism Chapter Update (2020).[[11]](#footnote-12) These studies provide data and analysis on visitation and emerging trends. The studies also identified numerous resources that can appeal to visitors including historic and cultural sites, agritourism opportunities, wineries, and others. A survey conducted for the Recreation and Tourism in the Delta report found that visitors enjoy attending festivals, historical sightseeing, boating, dining, hiking/walking, wine tasting, and driving for pleasure.

The *Great California Delta Trail Master Plan* (2022) was the result of legislation passed by the California State Legislature in 2006. The trail’s purpose is to link resources throughout the Delta to provide public access to natural resources and to support opportunities for outdoor recreation. Studies and reports for individual resources also provide valuable insights, such as the *1883 Clarksburg Schoolhouse Feasibility Study* (2018), the *Artist-in-Residence Project, Walnut Grove* (2018), and the *Asian American Heritage Park Feasibility Study* (2018).[[12]](#footnote-13)

## Determining the NHA’s Role in Heritage Development and Tourism

The management planning process referenced and built on these studies in a variety of activities including public meetings, site visits, an online survey, and stakeholder interviews. The Heritage Development and Tourism Task Group reviewed findings during this process and held multiple meetings to craft objectives and strategies to guide sustainable tourism development. To determine an appropriate role for the NHA, the Heritage Development and Tourism Task Group considered issues and opportunities in five areas:

### Administration

* Should the NHA management plan include objectives and action steps for heritage development and tourism?
* What is the role of the NHA coordinating entity in heritage development and tourism?
* What is the organizational structure to support the NHA’s role?

### Building Support

* How can support for tourism be built among elected officials and residents?
* How can the NHA coordinating entity and its partners encourage California’s elected officials to develop the infrastructure to support increased tourism?
* How can the NHA coordinating entity partner with Native people to ensure stewardship of resources and continuation of traditions?

### Promotion

* How can the NHA position the Delta and Carquinez Strait as a unique brand and destination in California?
* How can the NHA attract target audiences both in-state and out-of-state?
* What types of promotions will communicate the opportunity for unique visitor experiences?

### Education

* What materials and activities are needed to educate visitors and residents about the area and its history and culture?
* How does heritage development and tourism intersect with interpretation and resource stewardship and enhancement in the management plan?

### Direct Action

* What visitor services are needed and how can the NHA support development of these services?
* How can the NHA help sites to become visitor ready?
* What new tourism products can be developed based on the area’s history and culture?

The resulting objectives and strategies illuminate the leadership role that emerged as the NHA recruits an experienced sustainable tourism professional for its staff, continues to build a strong partnership network, and implements and tracks the success of this chapter’s activities.

## Heritage Development and Tourism Resources

There are multiple agencies and attractions currently promoting the California Delta with various messages, as well as multiple plans that focus on attracting visitors. The Delta Protection Commission has taken a leadership role in coordinating some of these activities and is seeking to build strong tourism-based partnerships at the state and local level as the coordinating entity for the NHA. The following is a summary of tourism-related activities in the state and in the region.

### Visit California: The State’s Official Tourism Agency

Tourism is a major industry in California, drawing visitors from throughout the United States and from international markets. In 2022, travelers spent $134.4 billion, directly supporting more than 1.1 million jobs and generating $11.9 billion in state and local tax revenues (nearing pre-pandemic levels). According to the U.S. Travel Association, California ranks number one as the state with the highest visitor spending (followed by Florida, Texas, and New York).

Visit California, the state’s official tourism agency, is a nonprofit organization that works in partnership with the state’s tourism industry to develop marketing programs designed to attract visitors. The California Office of Tourism, a state agency, collects assessment fees to fund Visit California’s activities. The California Tourism Act of 1995 enabled the tourism industry to collect assessment fees to support marketing, resulting in a Tourism Assessment Program created in 1998. The program includes five travel and tourism industry categories: attractions and recreation; restaurants and retail; transportation and travel services; and passenger rental cars. Exemptions include businesses with revenues of less than $1 million or with less than one percent of gross receipts as tourism revenues. The office also manages 21 official state welcome centers. The nearest such facility for the NHA is the Fairfield Welcome Center off Highway 12 in Solano County (in the Jelly Belly Candy Company factory building).

Visit California manages a wide array of programs to promote the state through partnerships with the tourism industry. These include in-depth travel industry research, travel media campaigns, visitor publications, and cooperative advertising programs. Opportunities for engagement by the NHA are discussed in Objective 3.1.

#### California Tourism Regions

Visit California divides the state into 12 thematic tourism regions. Each region is promoted on the agency's tourism website with featured itineraries. The NHA's geographic area is divided into three of these thematic regions, with two counties divided further into two regions, complicating the NHA's branding and messaging as a tourism destination. Although places such as restaurants or recreational outfitters in some of the NHA’s communities can be located on the website, visitcalifornia.com, there is no presence for the Delta as a unique region or a National Heritage Area. Following are the three regions with the NHA county listed first, followed by other counties in the region that are outside of the NHA:

* **Central Valley** – Contra Costa (part), San Joaquin, Solano (part), Yolo – outside: Colusa, Fresno (part), Glenn, Kern (part), Kings, Madera (part), Merced, Placer (part), Stanislaus, Sutter, Tulare (part), Tuolumne (part), Yuba
* **Gold Country** – Sacramento – outside: parts of Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Madera, Mariposa, Nevada, Placer
* **San Francisco Bay Area** – Contra Costa (part), Solano (part) – outside: Alameda, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Sonoma

#### Destination Stewardship and Sustainable Travel Plan

A new program created by Visit California to assist destinations in sustainable tourism development and stewardship strategies dovetails with the NHA's goal of sustainable tourism development. Through this program, Visit California provides a Responsible Travel Toolkit and a Sustainable Resource Center website. Guiding principles for the program which can be adopted by the NHA require thatstrategies must:[[13]](#footnote-14)

1. Enhance and enrich the visitor’s experience of California.
2. Contribute to a quality of life for Californians that cannot be sustained by local populations alone.
3. Respect the history and unique culture of every community.
4. Contribute to California’s economy in ways that are equitably distributed and support stable employment.
5. Influence the appropriate and effective dispersal of visitors across geographies and need periods.
6. Ensure that natural resources are used responsibly and cared for by locals and visitors alike.
7. Honor and preserve the natural beauty of California.

#### Tracking Economic Impact

Annual studies commissioned by Visit California track economic impact throughout the state with detailed data for each county. Data includes direct spending (lodging, food, transportation, and other expenditures), jobs and earnings attributed to the tourism industry, and tax revenue collected by local and state governments.

The top five counties in California for visitor-generated taxable sales in 2022 are Los Angeles, including the city of Los Angeles and Beverly Hills; Orange, which includes Disneyland and many major attractions; San Diego, which includes the San Diego Zoo and other major attractions; Riverside, which includes Joshua Tree National Park and other major attractions; and San Francisco (city and county).

A comparison of travel data from the pre-pandemic year of 2019 and the post-pandemic year of 2022 showed that the five counties in the NHA are recovering their tourism markets, although only San Joaquin County exceeded its pre-pandemic visitor spending and tourism industry employment. Following is a summary of county tourism data:[[14]](#footnote-15)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| County | 2019 Visitor Spending  (Millions) | 2022 Visitor Spending  (Millions) | 2019 Tax Receipts:  Local and State  (Millions) | 2022 Tax Receipts:  Local and State  (Millions) | 2019 Employment | 2022 Employment |
| Contra Costa | 1,739 | 1,446 | 133 | 103 | 18,230 | 15,700 |
| Sacramento | 3,481 | 2,988 | 257 | 208 | 33,430 | 32,000 |
| San Joaquin | 847.5 | 1,081.7 | 74 | 82 | 9,540 | 10,090 |
| Solano | 735 | 717.3 | 53.8 | 47.9 | 4,700 | 4,620 |
| Yolo | 411.7 | 384.7 | 30.8 | 27.6 | 2,810 | 2,750 |

### Visit CA Delta

Although there is no official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for the Delta, a coalition of agencies and organizations formed to create the Delta Marketing Task Force in 2016. The Delta Protection Commission and the Delta Conservancy provided leadership, and partners included chambers of commerce, visitor bureaus, tour operators, and tourism businesses. With grant funding from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration, the task force created a five-year marketing plan (2017-2022) and a website to encourage travelers to "Visit CA Delta; The Heart of California."[[15]](#footnote-16)

The task force set as its mission "The Delta will be recognized as a world-class tourism destination and as a place for people, homes, and businesses, filled with human history, cultural richness, and diversity."

The website, visitcadelta.com, provides information on places to visit, stay, dine, and shop. Additionally, the website provides suggestions for a variety of activities such as attending a festival, birdwatching, water recreation, cycling, or exploring the area's historic sites. Following NHA designation, a section was added to provide information about the NHA. The task force also created the popular "Best of the Delta" promotion to recognize excellence in restaurants, towns, recreational outfitters, museums, RV camping, and other attractions.

The five-year marketing plan concluded in 2022 as plans were underway for the NHA management plan. The Heritage Development and Tourism Task Force identified the need for a new marketing plan, which is discussed in Strategy 3.1.2.

Tourism Promotions in the Delta

Several agencies and businesses in the region promote the California Delta to tourists. The California Delta Chambers and Visitor's Bureau (californiadelta.org) is a coalition of chambers of commerce, visitor bureaus, businesses, and others who work together to promote the region. The agency focuses promotions on recreation including boating, fishing, and other water activities. The chamber also produces maps and hosts the popular annual event, Taste of the Delta. The Isleton Chamber of Commerce produces the annual magazine *Delta Life*, which is distributed to hotels, convention centers, welcome centers, attractions, RV parks, car rental agencies, and restaurants in the surrounding region. The magazine includes directories for visitor services such as dining and lodging, profiles on Delta communities, and feature stories on special places in the area (https://isletonchamber.com/delta-life-magazine/).

Other agencies engaged in promotion include:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| County | Community | Promotional Organization | Websites |
| Contra Costa | Brentwood | City of Brentwood | [https://www.betterinbrentwood.com/](about:blank) |
| Contra Costa | Martinez | Downtown Martinez and Co. | [https://downtownmartinez.org/](about:blank) |
| Contra Costa | Pittsburg | City of Pittsburg | [https://www.pittsburgca.gov/our-city/visiting](about:blank) |
| Sacramento | Isleton | Isleton Chamber of Commerce | [https://isletonchamber.com/delta-life-magazine/](about:blank) |
| Solano | Benicia | City of Benicia | [https://www.visitbenicia.org/](about:blank) |
| Solano | Rio Vista | Discover Rio Vista | [https://discoverriovista.com/](about:blank) |
| Solano | Vallejo | Visit Vallejo | [https://www.visitvallejo.com/](about:blank) |
| Yolo | West Sacramento | Visit Sacramento | [https://www.visitsacramento.com/plan/neighborhoods/west-sacramento/](about:blank) |
| Yolo | Davis, Winters, Woodland, West Sacramento, Yolo County countryside | Yolo County Visitors Bureau | [https://visityolo.com/](about:blank) |

### Legacy Communities

California’s 2009 Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Act listed eleven Delta “legacy communities” as having a rich and distinct natural, agricultural, and cultural heritage: Bethel Island, Clarksburg, Courtland, Freeport, Hood, Isleton, Knightsen, Locke, Rio Vista, Ryde, and Walnut Grove.

These small communities located within the boundaries of the NHA each reflect the area's history and culture, from settlement to the development of agriculture and commerce to modern-day popular recreational activities on land and water. Collectively named Legacy Communities, these places provide unique opportunities for visitors to learn about the area's history through tours, attractions, and special events. Some also provide places for visitors to dine, shop, and stay.

The Act required the Delta Conservancy and the Delta Protection Commission to support and promote these communities. As part of this effort, the Delta Protection Commission, with support from the Delta Conservancy, worked with five legacy communities – Clarksburg, Courtland, Hood, Isleton, and Walnut Grove – to develop Community Action Plans.These plans highlight the communities’ needs and desires, such as bicycle and pedestrian improvements, broadband infrastructure, community design, and historic preservation. Subsequent projects focused on broadband infrastructure and community design in these and other legacy communities.

Opportunities for heritage development and tourism for Legacy Communities — Bethel Island, Clarksburg, Courtland, Freeport, Hood, Isleton, Knightsen, Locke, Rio Vista, Ryde, and Walnut Grove — are discussed in Objective 3.2.

### Carquinez Strait/Eastern Contra Costa County Communities

Communities in the Carquinez Strait include Antioch, Benicia, Brentwood, Crockett, Discovery Bay, Hercules, Martinez, Oakley, Pittsburg, Rodeo, and Vallejo. These communities have larger populations than the Legacy Communities and as such can provide visitor services including lodging and dining. These communities also offer a variety of attractions including museums, historic sites, parks, trails, and other recreational experiences.

### Attractions and Experiences

The NHA region offers a wide variety of attractions and experiences to engage, entertain, and educate visitors. Chapter 3, Stewarding the Delta's Resources, includes descriptions of these resources including National Park Service sites, California state-owned parks, hiking/biking trails, museums, recreational resources, and cultural events. The resource inventory (Appendix E) includes details about these places.

### Festivals and Events

Festivals and events in the NHA celebrate agriculture, ethnic traditions, and the water, including fisheries, waterfowl, boating, and yachting. Many of the festivals attract hundreds, sometimes thousands, of visitors from outside of the region. Cook-offs and culinary events focus on farming and often feature trademark crops such as asparagus, pears, and wine grapes. Many local restaurants highlight fresh local produce or cuisines of various ethnic traditions. Sporting events also draw many participants for events such as Ironman California, the Delta Century bicycle ride, and various 5Ks, 10Ks, half-marathons, and other races that traverse the Delta.

The following chart lists major annual events as of 2023. Events that are aligned with the NHA's mission offer opportunities for support from the NHA, and all events offer opportunities to create a presence for the NHA through distribution of materials, setting up an information booth, and sharing information on things to see and do in the NHA region.

| Date(s) | Festival | Location |
| --- | --- | --- |
| February 19 | Isleton Spam Festival | Isleton |
| March 4 | Delta Blues Festival | Antioch |
| April 29 | California Duck Days | Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area (Davis) |
| April 22 | John Muir Birthday-Earth Day Celebration | Martinez |
| May 6-7 | The Great Vallejo Race | Vallejo/San Francisco Bay |
| May 13 | Taste of Oakley | Oakley |
| May 13 | Locke Asian Pacific Spring Festival | Locke |
| June 16-18 | King of the County BBQ Challenge and Music Festival | Martinez |
| July 16 | Flor do Oakley Holy Ghost Festival | Oakley |
| July 1 | Oakley Summer Fest | Oakley |
| July 3 | Barron Hilton Fireworks Display at Mandeville Island | Mandeville Tip County Park |
| July 23 | Benicia Holy Ghost Festa | Benicia |
| July 29-30 | Benicia Waterfront Festival | Benicia |
| July 30 | Courtland Pear Fair | Courtland |
| August 5 | Taste of the Delta | Stockton |
| August 6 | Rio Vista and Isleton Holy Ghost Festa | Rio Vista |
| August 12 | Oakley Kids Fishing Derby | Oakley |
| August 19 | Pittsburg Jazz, Blues, and Funk Festival | Pittsburg |
| August 26 | Hog August Bites | Rio Vista |
| September 17 | Wines of Clarksburg and Art Auction | Clarksburg |
| September 23 | Heart of Oakley Festival | Oakley |
| October 7-8 | Vallejo Waterfront Weekend | Vallejo |
| October 13-15 | Rio Vista Bass Derby and Festival | Rio Vista |
| October 14 | Downtown Brentwood Coalition’s Annual Oktoberfest | Brentwood |
| October 7 | Oakley Harvest Festival | Oakley |
| November 4-5 | Pittsburg Fishing Derby | Pittsburg |
| December TBD | Bridge Marina Yacht Club Lighted Boat Parade | Antioch |
| December TBD | Pittsburg Yacht Club Lighted Boat Parade | Pittsburg |
| December TBD | Sacramento Capital City Yacht Club Lighted Boat Parade | West Sacramento |
| December 2 | Stockton Delta Reflections Lighted Boat Parade | Stockton |
| December 2 | Vallejo Lighted Yacht Parade | Vallejo |
| December 9 | Discovery Bay Lighted Boat Parade | Discovery Bay |
| December 2 | Marina West Yacht Club/Oxbow Marina Lighted Boat Parade | Isleton |
| December TBD | San Joaquin Yacht Club Lighted Boat Parade | Bethel Island |

## Challenges for Heritage Development and Tourism

Although SSJNHA has great potential for heritage development and tourism, planners also identified several challenges. This chapter's objectives and strategies address these challenges and provide partnership-based actions to transition challenges into opportunities.

### No Representation in State Tourism Marketing

Visit California, the state’s official tourism agency, does not currently promote the Delta as a region or the area’s designation as a National Heritage Area. The state is promoted through 12 thematic regions discussed previously. None of the regions reference the Delta, which is divided into three of the thematic regions. Although places such as restaurants or recreational outfitters in some of the NHA’s communities can be located on the website, visitcalifornia.com, there is no presence for the Delta as a unique region or a National Heritage Area.

### No DMO in the Delta

There is currently no official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for the Delta. Visit CA Delta is a partnership of the Delta Protection Commission, Delta Conservancy, Delta businesses, Chambers of Commerce, Visitor Bureaus, tour operators and others who promote the Delta through a website, visitcadelta.com, managed by the Delta Protection Commission, as well as social media accounts.

### Minimal Accommodations

The lack of accommodations in the heart of the Delta minimizes the opportunity to generate economic impact from tourism as visitation is generally limited to day trips. Lodging is primarily located in larger cities such as West Sacramento, Martinez and Benecia.

### Dangerous Roads and Traffic

Traffic and transportation were identified in all meetings – Advisory Committee, task groups, and public meetings – as a significant issue. The two-lane roads which traverse the Delta are challenging for cyclists to use and at times have heavy automobile traffic from commuter traffic that uses the Delta as a pass-through route.

### Cultural and Heritage Attractions Not Well Recognized

The Delta is recognized and promoted as a recreational destination for water-based activities. Previous studies and plans focused on development and maintenance of recreational resources but addressed cultural and heritage resources minimally. As a result, the importance of the area’s cultural and heritage attractions and communities are not recognized at the same level as the recreational resources.

## Opportunities for Heritage Development and Tourism

In addition to challenges, there are also significant opportunities for heritage development and tourism. Opportunities include:

### Five Year Marketing Plan

A new five-year marketing plan has been funded (2023) and will be developed with leadership from the NHA coordinating entity, the Delta Protection Commission. (Strategy 3.1.2)

### Visit California Membership

Visit California, the state’s tourism agency, does not require a membership fee to participate. The agency offers many promotional programs at no cost or low cost for tourism destinations to participate (Strategy 3.1.1).

### Partnership with Stockton

Representatives from Stockton, which is adjacent to the NHA boundary, participated in the management planning process and have expressed a strong interest in partnering with the NHA. Stockton offers additional attractions connected to the NHA’s themes, and the city has more than 2,000 hotel rooms, providing much-needed lodging options for the NHA. Visit Stockton, the city’s convention and visitors bureau, promotes the city to groups and conventions in addition to individual and family travelers, [www.visitstockton.org](about:blank).

### Partnerships with New Attractions

* The Pacific Flyway Center is a massive $35 million project slated for development in Fairfield, within the NHA boundary. As one of North America’s four bird migration routes, the flyway provides habitat for more than 200 bird species and other animals. The proposed center will be an open space land preserve and include an interpretive center and educational facilities as well as outdoor education and viewing programs. Funds have been secured for Phase One, development of a "Marsh Walk" to include trails, visitor parking, and interpretive signage. The timeline for completion of the center is not stated on the website, [https://pacificflywaycenter.org/](about:blank), but the NHA will keep apprised of progress and begin establishing a partnership.
* Plans for the California Indian Heritage Center are in development for a facility located in West Sacramento, adjacent to the NHA boundary. The center will include a library, outdoor plaza, public art area, interpretive and educational facilities. As with the flyway center, a timeline is uncertain, but the NHA will maintain contact with California State Parks and other partners as the project progresses, [https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page\_id=22628](about:blank).
* Plans for the Great California Delta Trail call for a regional trail system that will connect the San Francisco Bay Trail to Sacramento River Trails, crossing through portions of all five Delta Counties. Trail segments will be conceived, developed, built, and managed locally. The Delta Trail Master Plan, completed in 2022, provides a framework to develop a network of partners including the DPC to facilitate coordinated planning and implementation across jurisdictional boundaries. The Great California Delta Trail will include routes for bicycling and hiking, with interconnections to other land and water trail systems, recreational facilities, and public transportation. Water trails will provide continuity in places where land trails are not feasible, [https://delta.ca.gov/recreation-and-tourism/](about:blank).

### Resource Stewardship and Interpretation

Implementation of the objectives and strategies discussed in this management plan's interpretive plan and resource stewardship and enhancement chapters (chapters 2 and 3) will develop new attractions, programs, events, and experiences to share the NHA's culture and heritage with visitors. These activities will connect to the product development objectives and strategies in this chapter and will provide new opportunities to promote the area and to attract new tourist markets. The intention to create NHA coordinating entity staff positions focused on resource stewardship and enhancement and heritage tourism development and promotion is discussed in Chapter 6 (Establishing Sustainable Governance).

### Grant Program

NHA leaders plan to develop a grant program (Chapter 5, Strategy 4.2.1) to support programs and projects connected to the management plan. Funding opportunities for heritage development and tourism projects will help enhance existing cultural and heritage attractions, develop new attractions, and support promotions to attract visitors.

# Heritage Development and Tourism Objectives and Strategies

The objectives and strategies for heritage development and tourism resulted from the task group's in-depth examination of the existing tourism industry in the NHA area as well as promotions through the state's tourism agency. Actions to implement these plans will place the NHA coordinating entity as the leader of a strong coalition committed to developing a sustainable tourism program. The program will engage visitors to experience the culture and heritage of the Delta resulting in a beneficial economic impact for those who live here.

## Objective 3.1 Tourism promotions by National Heritage Area leaders and partners attract visitors who appreciate the area’s history, culture, recreational, and outdoor opportunities and contribute to the region’s economy.

By working together, with leadership from the NHA coordinating entity, partners will build on previous achievements, address challenges, and succeed in attracting visitors. The following strategies will be implemented to build partnerships, identify target markets, and to develop plans for tourism promotion and marketing.

### Strategy 3.1.1 Convene tourism partners to create a regional network to develop a sustainable tourism program.

As previously discussed, the NHA coordinating entity will be positioned as the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) with staff dedicated to developing a regional network of tourism partners. A critical step in this strategy is the formation of a strong relationship with the state's tourism agency, Visit California. As the management plan was in development (2023), Visit California began a two-year planning project to develop actionable recommendations and implementation strategies for each of the tourism agency's twelve designated tourism regions. Plans called for examining destination brand perceptions, environmental challenges, workforce development, and marketing. The process included establishing committees for each region to participate in a series of meetings, as well as conducting surveys and stakeholder interviews. As previously discussed, the California Delta is not recognized as a unique region but is included in three of the twelve tourism regions. In the summer of 2023, the DPC staff began participating in the planning process and began discussions with Visit California about the NHA and the Delta as a unique place. Although the outcome of Visit California's planning process was unknown at the time the NHA management plan was completed, the NHA coordinating entity committed to continuing to build a partnership with the agency and to participate in opportunities for promotion and marketing. The foundation of the network's planning will be adoption of the principles stated in Visit California's Sustainable Tourism and Destination Stewardship Program (discussed previously). Other partners for the NHA's tourism network include the area's chambers of commerce, tourism bureaus, the National Park Service, the East Bay Regional Park District, California State Parks, communities, attractions, historical societies, museum associations, and tourism-oriented businesses. The NHA will establish and convene a regular schedule of meetings to build the network and to support implementation of the management plan's strategies.

### Strategy 3.1.2 Conduct market research to gather more information on current visitors and to identify new target audiences.

*The Delta Tourism Awareness 5-Year Marketing Plan: 2017-2022* (discussed previously) included visitor data gathered as part of a market research report for the Delta Protection Commission. The report provided insights into visitors’ interests, citing outdoor activities as primary activities with growing interest in cultural and heritage experiences. Another report, *Recreation and Tourism in Delta (2019),* also provides data on visitation. Detailed information offered insights into activity preferences, length of stay, expenditures, lodging, and sources of information for trip planning.[[16]](#footnote-17)

Although these studies provided solid data, both were completed before the pandemic that began in early 2020 and decimated the travel market worldwide for several years. Two factors reflected in Visit California's travel research and marketing point to the importance of having post-pandemic data with which to plan tourism development and promotions:

* The tourism industry is still in a recovery mode while travel increases each year.
* It is essential to understand the current tourist and to respond to changes they may have made in travel planning, choice of destination, and expectations for the travel experience.

To plan an effective marketing campaign for the NHA with judicious use of funds, the NHA coordinating entity will retain a travel research agency to conduct market research. The NHA coordinating entity will build into its work calendar plans to update the research at appropriate intervals. The data gathered from visitor research will inform the NHA tourism partners network about current visitation – who is coming to the region, what activities they enjoy, what experiences they would be interested in, expenditures, and other information. Additionally, research will identify new target markets that would be worthy of investing additional staff time and resources. These markets may include diverse audiences who have not previously visited the Delta but whose travel interests align with the experiences offered in the region. The NHA coordinating entity and its contracted travel research agency will work closely with Visit California to craft a survey that coordinates with the state's visitor research. This will allow comparison to other regions of the state and to identify opportunities for promotional partnerships with destinations outside of the NHA boundaries, particularly in the three tourism regions created by Visit California that include parts of the NHA.

Delta Tourism Awareness 5-Year Marketing Plan: 2017-2022

The marketing plan's mission, vision and objectives provide a foundation for the NHA's marketing plan as summarized:

**Mission**

Recognized as a world-class destination filled with human history, cultural richness, and diversity.

**Vision**

Economy based on agriculture, recreation, tourism and historic preservation.

**Project Objectives**

Increase awareness: place of ecological and cultural importance;

Establish tracking metrics;

Economic impact

**Plan Objectives**

Strategic blueprint for development and marketing;

Respond to consumer needs;

Support existing and support new resources;

Initiate promotions, products, partnerships

### Strategy 3.1.3 Work with partners to develop a three to five-year marketing plan to brand and promote the state’s first NHA.

Developing a successful heritage tourism destination requires marketing that reaches desired audiences, sparks interest and results in a visit. “Great marketing helps destinations and sites distinguish themselves from the competition through dynamic images, targeted messages, and engaging content.”[[17]](#footnote-18)

Development of the *Delta Tourism Awareness 5-Year Marketing Plan: 2017-2022* predated designation of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area but sets a precedent for a collaborative marketing plan. The plan's mission, vision, and objectives established a foundation from which the NHA and its partners can build (see chart). A significant outcome of the marketing plan was the creation of a website, visitcadelta.com, to promote the region. Because the plan was created prior to NHA designation, not all of the communities within the NHA boundaries were included. Following designation, a section was added to the website for the NHA, and the logo was revised to identify the National Heritage Area.

With this foundation of experience, the NHA coordinating entity and its partnership network will collaborate to develop a new five-year marketing plan to brand and promote the state's first National Heritage Area. The marketing plan will be designed to create brand recognition based on the interpretive themes of the NHA (see Chapter 2) through a slate of communications tools to create a compelling, unified look and message. The Visit CA Delta partnership developed several of these tools that can be adapted and expanded, including a logo, website, newsletter, collateral materials, and social media. The marketing plan will include strategies for the development of toolkits and tip sheets to encourage the use of key messaging and the NHA brand. These resources will include design guidelines for the appropriate use of branding materials.

The marketing plan will include strategies that have various levels of cost requirements, including no-cost activities, to provide opportunities for destinations and attractions at all levels to participate. All promotions will be based upon findings in the market research to ensure they are reaching target markets. A variety of promotions may include advertising, media campaigns, attendance at travel-trade shows, and other activities. Emphasis will be placed on opportunities to participate in the promotional activities of Visit California including providing story ideas, listings in travel guides and on the state's website. The marketing plan will also include specific strategies to track results from all promotions. The plan will be reviewed each year to evaluate successes and places where campaigns fell short of expectations. Based upon this review, the plan will be revised and updated as needed to ensure it continues to respond to current market trends. (As the NHA management plan was in development, the DPC secured funding for development of the marketing plan.)

### Strategy 3.1.4 Create and consolidate regional tourism information for trip planning.

Today's travelers have high expectations for accessing information and assistance when planning and taking a trip. Travelers expect to find information in many places – through social media, mobile applications (apps), websites, printed guides and brochures, exhibits, and direct assistance from knowledgeable visitor center hosts.Among the actions the NHA coordinating entity will take are:

* Establish an easy-to-use system for partners to regularly submit information about events, programs, tours, or other activities that can attract and engage visitors. Regularly update Visit CA Delta’s website with current information on destinations, attractions and activities.
* Create an online map of the NHA that identifies key sites and links visitors to more information.
* Create and regularly update an app that provides trip planning information.
* Create printed guides and brochures and distribute materials throughout the region.
* Provide training for visitor center hosts to learn about all the region has to offer to visitors.
* Submit road trip itineraries to Visit California for inclusion in Road Trip Republic promotions.

### Strategy 3.1.5 Use media and social media to generate awareness and visitation.

Studies show that although use of specific media formats varies by generation, all age groups of travelers use online resources to plan their trips. One study in 2023 found that while Baby Boomers (born mid-1940s-early1960s) primarily use websites found via a search engine (43 percent) as does Gen X (born mid-1960s to early 1980s) (36 percent), Gen Z (born around 1997 to early 2000s) primarily uses Tik Tok (42 percent) and Instagram (39 percent). Millennials (born early 1980s to mid-1990s) primarily use Facebook (40 percent). Approximately one-quarter of all generations use online content such as news articles and blogs. A smaller number, between 15 and 20 percent, use streaming services such as YouTube, and only 10-14 percent use review websites such as TripAdvisor.[[18]](#footnote-19)

Understanding the wide variety of media and social media outlets and how they can be effectively used for travel promotion will be an ongoing task for the NHA coordinating entity and its partners. Strategies will be included in the marketing plan to track trends in the use of media and social media and to reach potential visitors through these channels. To support partners in implementing the marketing plan's strategies, the NHA coordinating entity will create a variety of "how to" toolkits such as a media toolkit that provides templates, examples, and instructions on how to develop messaging and content to attract visitors with broader media and social media coverage.

### Strategy 3.1.6 Create branding merchandise with the NHA logo.

Merchandise featuring the NHA logo will serve two purposes – raising awareness about the NHA and generating revenue to support NHA programs. The NHA coordinating entity will consult with other NHAs to determine the types of merchandise that are most often purchased by tourists and residents. Based upon this research, the NHA coordinating entity will create a line of merchandise, using non-federal funds, which could include clothing and various types of souvenirs for sale through its website, at welcome centers, and locations throughout the NHA.

### Strategy 3.1.7 Consider developing receptive tour services for groups.

As a long-term strategy, the NHA coordinating entity will consider developing a receptive tour service to facilitate group travel to the region and to provide earned income for the NHA. Receptive tour operators are locally based and have in-depth knowledge of the region's destinations. A receptive tour program can include creating special tour packages for groups and offering the opportunity to go "behind the scenes" to enjoy experiences not otherwise available such as special tours, entertainment, and programs.

## Objective 3.2 Tourism products based on the NHA’s history, culture, and natural resources are easily accessible for visitors to learn about and experience.

Heritage development is the process of preserving historic, cultural and natural resources, planning for their long-term protection and interpretation, and preparing to receive visitors. Once preservation and protection are addressed, a destination can plan and prepare for visitors. Preservation and conservation of historic, cultural, and natural resources can strengthen a community’s sense of place and is essential for developing a successful cultural heritage tourism program.

The places and experiences that visitors seek – known in the tourism industry as "products" – must live up to the branding, messaging, and marketing discussed in Objective 3.1. Product development is described as follows:

"At the heart of cultural heritage tourism is experience engagement – developing authentic and appropriate experiences to enhance the overall appeal for visitors. For cultural heritage tourism, the focus on asset-based or place-based development must ensure authenticity, compatibility, and sustainability. Placemaking centers on what already exists, and expansion complements the essence – the character – of a community or city. Important to remember in developing any kind of tourism are the key components of a visitor experience: a place to eat, a place to shop, a place to tour, and a place to sleep. These activities, when combined, provide the economic drivers for tourism."[[19]](#footnote-20)

The following strategies, when combined with the objectives and strategies for resource development and enhancement (Chapter 3) and interpretation (Chapter 2) will achieve the goal of tourism product development/heritage development to offer memorable visitor experiences and to generate economic impact for the NHA region.

### Strategy 3.2.1 Adapt the Delta wayfinding plan to include the NHA and install signage, where appropriate, to promote the NHA.

Consistently placed, branded wayfinding signs in the NHA can guide visitors to NHA sites and interpretive opportunities while traveling in the Delta. In 2018, the Delta Marketing Task Force, Delta Conservancy, Delta Protection Commission and Delta Stewardship Council issued a signage plan. The plan included an assessment of current signage locations and conditions. Plans were developed for a variety of sign types including welcome, wayfinding, place marker, and interpretive panels. Detailed design guidelines and guidance to select contractors was also included. Because the signage plan was developed prior to NHA designation, signage designs do not include the NHA. However, the plan can be adapted to include the NHA prior to implementation. Wayfinding signage design will be coordinated with designs for interpretive signage discussed in Chapter 2. This strategy will fulfill the Congressional mandate to “Ensure that clear, consistent, and appropriate signs identifying points of public access and sites of interest are posted throughout the NHA.”

### Strategy 3.2.2 Create ½-day, 1-day and multi-day tours and thematic tours.

Connecting historic sites, recreational and nature-based offerings, and cultural resources to create multi-day and multi-faceted visitor experiences is an important benefit for NHA partners. Attractions may be grouped to reflect the NHA's themes and to appeal to a variety of interests, such as historical topics, traditional arts or music, natural landmarks, and agriculture, and to enjoy local foods and restaurants.

There are many supporting plans to develop tours among many existing and planned regional trail systems throughout the Delta, Suisun Marsh, and Carquinez Strait. These trail systems help link the region’s recreational, cultural, historical, and natural resource sites to one another, and help connect the region to outside communities. (See resource inventory, Appendix E, for details on trails.)

Additionally, during the NHA management planning process, the DPC staff drafted a set of tour concepts that identify places of interest and would help to organize travel through the Delta. Tour themes include agriculture; art and literature; Asian and Pacific Islander; gearhead; Indigenous; natural resources; Prohibition; railroad; recreation; river; Southern European; sports; and World War II.

The many trails in the region and the draft set of tour concepts will provide a foundation for further development of tour experiences that can fit a traveler's schedule, whether for 1/2-day, 1-day, or a multi-day tour. Tours can include options for driving and cycling to travel from site to site.

As part of the NHA tour development process, partners will explore opportunities in two areas – the first opportunity addresses a new plan and the second considers reviving a previously successful tour route.

1. Coordinate with the Great Delta Trail to develop visitor experiences.

In 2006, the DPC was directed by the California State Legislature to develop the Great California Delta Trail System to increase access to the Delta's natural resources for outdoor recreation. The *Great California Delta Trail Master Plan* (2022) provides a framework for local and state agencies as they develop trails that will eventually link the San Francisco Bay Trail system and the planned Sacramento River trails in Yolo and Sacramento counties. The Delta Trail will also link to existing park and recreational facilities on land and water trail systems throughout the Delta. The directive for the Great California Delta Trail is to include routes for bicycling and hiking, with interconnections to other land and water trail systems, recreational facilities, and public transportation. Water trails will provide continuity in places where land trails are not feasible. Connecting plans for the Great California Delta Trail with the development of tours through the NHA will enhance both efforts and engage numerous partners throughout the Delta. The management of both programs through the DPC further enables effective partnering of these programs.

1. Reactivate the Delta Farm and Winery Trail to support agritourism.

The Delta presents opportunities for connecting visitors to the rich agricultural resources through agritourism, which includes u-pick operations, farm stands, wine and spirits tasting, restaurants, farm stays, and event facilities. Agritourism can be mutually beneficial with trail network development. The *Economic Sustainability Plan 2020 Recreation and Tourism* update found that the number of farms with direct sales operations have increased throughout the Delta since 2002, including farm stands and u-pick sites. The NHA coordinating entity will work with partners to reactivate the Delta Farm and Winery Trail with updates to inform visitors of sites that can be toured as well as the availability of nearby visitor services.

VISITOR READINESS

Open at least 3 days a week - including one weekend day.

Staffed or committed volunteers.

Programs and guided tours offered.

Professionally designed exhibits, interpretive signs

Wayfinding signage

ADA compliant

Public parking

Restrooms

Website or social media information for visitors

### Strategy 3.2.3 Develop history-focused activities and connect experiences to recreational activities.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, planning for sustainable tourism encompasses heritage tourism and geotourism. Travelers may often arrive at a destination with a primary purpose, such as water recreation, hiking, or birdwatching, and also have interests in learning more about an area's history by visiting historic sites and museums or attending a cultural event. Research has shown that the Delta is primarily recognized as a recreational destination for water-based activities. The area's cultural and heritage attractions and communities are not as well recognized. The NHA coordinating entity will work with partners to further develop the stories and interpretation of these places through exhibits, tours, and programs and to market these activities to visitors who are coming for recreational purposes. The NHA coordinating entity will also support existing history-focused activities through grants, promotions, and technical assistance. The NHA coordinating entity will work with outfitters and outdoor attractions to place information including brochures, kiosks, interpretive panels, and other information at a variety of local businesses to inform visitors of the cultural and heritage focused activities that can be enjoyed in the region. The development of the Pacific Flyway Center offers an example of this opportunity. As the center opens in phases and attracts area residents and visitors, the NHA coordinating entity can work with Center staff to place information about the NHA at the site by providing brochures or an information kiosk.

### Strategy 3.2.4 Work with historic and cultural sites to increase access.

Many of the historic and cultural sites in the NHA are operated by small organizations with limited staff or are managed by volunteers. As such, many are open on a limited basis or require an appointment. A 2023 survey of Delta residents found only 2.8% were involved with a historical society or arts-based organization.[[20]](#footnote-21) The NHA coordinating entity will investigate the reasons for lack of volunteerism and identify steps to attract more volunteers to historic and cultural sites. The NHA coordinating entity will work with these sites, such as the Clarksburg Schoolhouse, Locke Historic District, Isleton Museum, Dutra Museum of Dredging, and the Antioch Historical Museum, providing technical assistance and potentially grant funding to assist them in becoming visitor ready (see chart for description of visitor readiness). Special focus will be on assisting sites to be open to welcome visitors who are in the Delta for recreational activities (Strategy 3.2.3). As water-based and other recreational activities occur during the day, a special effort will be made to open historic and cultural sites on selected evenings when there is an event (such as the Courtland Pear Fair or Rio Vista Bass Derby) that attracts large numbers of visitors to attract these visitors.

### Strategy 3.2.5 Create orientation exhibits for welcome centers and other locations.

Because tourists often travel without a clearly defined schedule, there is a great opportunity to generate visitation throughout the NHA by making sure they know what the area offers. The placement of exhibits and displays can attract attention and encourage visitors to explore the area. A uniform design using the NHA logo will create brand awareness. Options for orientation materials can include:

* **Front desk or lobby displays** – These small exhibits can include pictures, QR codes, and pockets to place brochures.
* **Table tents** – These small, stand-up pieces can be printed in mass quantities and placed on tables in hotels which offer a continental breakfast for their guests. The table tents would include a QR code to scan for more information.
* **Posters and banners** – These can be created for use at selected locations, such as visitor centers, to publicize attractions or special events, including festivals or tours.
* As the management plan was nearing completion, the Downtown Brentwood Coalition
* announced the purchase of a historic building for its offices. Additionally, the building may serve as a visitor center, creating an opportunity for the NHA coordinating entity to build a partnership
* to share information about the entire region at this location. Locations with similar opportunities include the Isleton Museum, Clarksburg Schoolhouse, Benecia Visitor Center, and Fairfield Welcome Center, an official state welcome center located off Highway 12 in Solano County (in the Jelly Belly Candy Company factory building).

## Objective 3.3 The NHA and partners will support recreational resources and educate residents and visitors to enjoy recreational activities safely and responsibly.

As the NHA coordinating entity informs visitors and residents about recreational opportunities, the coordinating entity and its partners will also encourage safe and responsible enjoyment of the Delta's water and land-based resources. The *Economic and Sustainability Plan for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta: Recreation and Tourism Chapter Update, 2020* (ESP: 2020) will provide guidance to implement the strategies discussed below as well as other relevant activities. The report notes that although Delta-specific studies on recreation use have not been conducted, using available data from other sources provides some insights into the Delta's recreation market (numbers are approximate per year using pre-pandemic data):

* 8 million resource-related uses (boating, fishing)
* 2 million urban parks-related (golf, picnic, turf sports)
* 2 million right-of-way-related (bicycling, driving)

A 2023 survey also found that 65.7% of Delta residents engage in land-based recreational activities, 39.1% participate in water based recreation, 35.5% participate in wildlife viewing/birding, and 28.1% participate in fishing or hunting.[[21]](#footnote-22)

The Delta Protection Commission's *Vision 2030 Strategic Plan* includes objectives and strategies for recreation and tourism. As the coordinating entity for the NHA, the DPC will incorporate these *Vision 2030* strategies into its work for the NHA. Following are the strategies from that plan, revised to reflect the format of NHA strategies in this management plan.

### Strategy 3.3.1 Partner with public agencies and private entities to increase and expand recreation and tourism in the Delta.

The NHA resource inventory includes information on recreation resources and will be regularly updated to ensure accuracy and usefulness. In addition to maintaining a resource inventory, the NHA and its partners will respond to needs outlined in the ESP 2020 to develop and maintain recreation resources by providing technical assistance and, as appropriate, grant funding. This work will also include addressing strategies included in the *Great California Delta Trail Master Plan* by supporting collaboration efforts. An important outcome of this strategy will be directing visitors and residents to enjoy recreational opportunities on public lands and at private recreation facilities that will protect private lands from unauthorized recreational uses.

### Strategy 3.3.2 Promote and encourage Delta-wide coordination and collaboration on boating, boating safety, and related programs.

There are many agencies and organizations that prepare materials and offer training on boating safety including the Coast Guard, marine insurance companies, local boating providers, and the California State Parks' Division of Boating and Waterways. In recognition of these existing resources, the NHA's Heritage Development and Tourism Task Force determined that the NHA coordinating entity should not create an additional program and instead will work with these partners to distribute materials and to promote educational resources.

### Strategy 3.3.3 Coordinate with the Great Delta Trail to develop and distribute educational materials on bicycle safety.

Although the Delta is a scenic, primarily rural area, cycling is difficult and often dangerous due to the roadways on levees that lack wide shoulders or bike lanes. The NHA coordinating entity will work with partners through the Great Delta Trail to identify safe routes and to develop and distribute educational materials and tour apps for cyclists. Information will be posted on partner websites, and printed materials will be available at welcome centers as well as restaurants, campgrounds, bike shops, libraries, and other tourism attractions.

## Objective 3.4 A network of tourism partners will support development of appropriate tourism infrastructure and facilitate the engagement of residents, cultural groups, and businesses toward the development of a tourism industry that remains sensitive to the region’s rural communities, traditional economies, and natural resources.

Actions to support sustainable tourism for the NHA will support asset-based cultural and heritage development, offer recreational activities that preserve resources, convey the region's unique identity, and support local businesses.

To achieve this goal, the NHA coordinating entity and its tourism partners will also support actions to develop and maintain the necessary infrastructure to make the region visitor ready. A challenge to this objective is the recognition that the NHA and its partners do not control all aspects of the visitor experience; therefore, it will be essential to build credibility as an organization that acts as a catalyst to influence decision makers at the local, state, and federal levels.

### Strategy 3.4.1 Communicate the NHA’s goal of sustainable tourism development and facilitate partner adoption of strategies to achieve the desired outcomes.

The NHA coordinating entity will serve in a leadership role to research issues related to the management plan and its annual workplan to develop coordinated messages for sustainable tourism development. The NHA coordinating entity will work with partners to use this messaging to regularly update local, state, and federal elected officials and their staff. The NHA coordinating entity will track measurable results from this strategy by gathering information from partners on the use of messaging. Tracking results will allow the NHA coordinating entity to analyze the success of outreach and the effectiveness of messaging. NHA leaders will also participate in activities such as the Alliance of National Heritage Area's annual day on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. meeting with federal elected officials and will schedule regular meetings with staff members of federally elected officials in their California offices.

### Strategy 3.4.2 Communicate identified needs for the development and maintenance of infrastructure (communications, transportation, lodging, etc.) to the California State Legislature.

The California State Legislature is a bicameral body including the lower house – the California State Assembly – and the upper house – the California State Senate. The Assembly has 80 members, and the Senate has 40 members. The Legislature is a full-time institution, one of only ten in the country. The Legislature has met in the state capital of Sacramento since 1854. The Legislature is responsible for creating the state's budget, which includes allocating funds for infrastructure needs that are important to the Delta.

The NHA coordinating entity and its partners will establish effective working relationships with members of the California Legislature, most importantly with those representing communities in the NHA. Currently there are two ex officio members of the Delta Protection Commission representing the Senate and the Assembly. NHA leaders and partners will attend legislative committee meetings when legislation relevant to infrastructure funding or resource policies is being discussed. A wide range of issues may be monitored such as transportation plans affecting visitor traffic, commuter, and agricultural routes; communications infrastructure plans; financial incentives for business development such as lodging or restaurants; and funding for historic preservation, conservation, or cultural preservation.

The NHA coordinating entity will educate and inform partners throughout the region of relevant legislation and encourage partners to work with their legislators to support sustainable tourism development.

### Strategy 3.4.3 Consider economic opportunity zone status.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 established California Opportunity Zones as a mechanism to provide tax incentives for investment in designated census tracts. Investments made by individuals through special funds in these zones would be allowed to defer or eliminate federal taxes on capital gains.

The goal of place-based development is explained by the California and Community and Place-Based Solutions state agency managing the program:

Place-based economic development strategies are initiatives to encourage economic and community development activity in defined geographic areas. Many communities have started emphasizing place-based strategies to strengthen hyperlocal activities around physical places, economic conditions and social infrastructure. Place-based economic development strategies include a variety of approaches to incentivize investment in disadvantaged communities, including funding for infrastructure and public facilities, job creation and workforce development, affordable and workforce housing, and more.

Within the NHA, an area from Antioch up to Rio Vista and Isleton is already an opportunity zone. The NHA coordinating entity will work with partners to explore additional opportunities to expand the program to more communities within the region.

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15. Visitcadelta.com [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. *Recreation and Tourism in the Delta, 2019,* California State University, Sacrament, for theDelta Protection Commission [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Cultural Heritage Tourism: Five Steps for Success and Sustainability, Cheryl M. Hargrove, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. State of the American Traveler Survey, Destination Analysts, August 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. *Cultural Heritage Tourism: Five Steps for Success and Sustainability,"* Cheryl M. Hargrove, American Association for State and Local History, Rowan & Littlefield Publishing, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. *Delta Residents Survey Summary Report,* October 2023, Prepared by a research team from the Delta Stewardship Council, University of California Davis, University of California Berkeley, and Oregon State University. An Advisory Committee included representatives from Sacramento State University (Environmental Studies), San Francisco Estuary Partnership, Tufts University, Delta Conservancy, Rural Community Assistance Partnership, Delta Protection Commission, River Delta Consulting, Valley Vision, UC Merced (Agriculture Economics), NOAA Fisheries Southwest Fisheries Science Center, Restore the Delta, and Public Health Advocates. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Delta Residents Survey Summary Report, October 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)