Chapter 5 – Connecting and Supporting the Partnership Network

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# Introduction

All successful NHAs demonstrate a strong network of partners. Generally, the NHA coordinating entity is positioned at the hub of this network, facilitating collaboration among organizations under a wide umbrella that encompasses various interests and missions. A healthy partnership network comprised of public and private entities enables a region to carry out the vision established through the management planning process, including the NHA's legislated mandates. With this in mind, the NHA Advisory Committee adopted Goal 4:

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

Collaboration is mandated by the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA's designating legislation. The partnership network objectives and strategies described in this chapter address legislative sections 6001(c)(2)(A), (B), (C)(vi), and (D).

## Analysis of Partnership Opportunities

Even before management planning began, the Delta Leadership Program, a partnership between the DPC and the Delta Regional Foundation, began to explore what makes NHA partnerships successful. Participants in the 2020 program conducted stakeholder interviews about existing NHA partnerships and prepared a report on best practices and recommendations. Interviews with representatives from Muscle Shoals (Alabama), Silos and Smokestacks (Iowa), Abraham Lincoln (Illinois), and Northern Rio Grande (New Mexico) gathered information on identifying partners, incentivizing their engagement with the NHA, communications strategies, challenges, and partner contributions to the NHA. The PointHDC management planning team built on the outcomes of that project and shared a variety of NHA best practices in planning meetings with the NHA Advisory Committee, task groups, the DPC staff, and the public.

# The Partnership Network

The Delta Protection Commission, a state agency formed in 1992, worked with a wide range of partners before NHA designation in 2019. Prior to designation, the DPC staff was not focused on establishing a partnership network with NHA interests in mind, although the existing membership of the DPC provided a strong starting point, with representation from counties, water agencies, state agencies, and state legislators. The development of a broader NHA partnership network was further slowed by the pandemic, with its strict limitations on in-person meetings. The DPC created the NHA Advisory Committee in early 2020. This broadly representative group never had the opportunity to work together before the pandemic limited in-person collaboration. Over the course of management planning, the network began to coalesce through staff outreach as well as meetings with the public, task groups, and the NHA Advisory Committee; consultant site visits; and stakeholder interviews. In 2023, the network includes governmental entities, businesses, and organizations related to heritage tourism and marketing, historic preservation, land use and conservation, recreation, interpretation, education, cultural traditions and the arts, and economic development. A brief description of the network follows, and it is expected that the network will continue to grow and evolve. A partnership table is appended to this report (see Appendix F).

## The Coordinating Entity

Designating legislation names the Delta Protection Commission as the coordinating entity for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area. The DPC has three separate elements responsible for the NHA – the 15-member Delta Protection Commission, the commission staff, and the NHA Advisory Committee. The NHA is one of several programs within the state agency. The coordinating entity's composition and responsibilities are described in more detail in the key planning partners section in Chapter 1 and in Chapter 6, the business plan.

## National Partners

Several public and private partners that operate on a national scale currently are engaged with the NHA.

Although many federal agencies are involved in the use and stewardship of the Delta, presenting possible partnership opportunities for the future, only agencies under the Department of the Interior and the Department of the Army are identified as current partners.

### National Park Service

As noted in the description of key planning partners in Chapter 1, the National Park Service, under the Department of the Interior, is the lead federal agency associated with NHAs. As the management plan was developed, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA worked with the Washington DC NHA office and two regional offices, the NPS Intermountain Regional Office for regions 6, 7, and 8, and the NPS Pacific–West Regional Office for regions 8, 9, 10 and 12. Heritage Partnership Program funding appropriated by Congress for NHAs is distributed through a cooperative agreement by the NPS regional offices, which also provide technical assistance.

Two NPS units are within the NHA's boundary – Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial and John Muir National Historic Site. Administration for both units and two others outside the NHA boundary is housed at John Muir National Historic Site in Martinez. With its historic ships and interpretive and recreational focus on water, nearby San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park is also a potential NHA partner. In addition, the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail and the Pony Express National Historic Trail pass through the NHA. Individual park units and trails offer on-the-ground engagement through technical assistance, staff engagement on the NHA Advisory Committee, and opportunities for joint interpretation, programming, tourism, and promotion.

### US Fish and Wildlife Service

The NHA includes two units of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) – Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and a portion of the San Pablo National Wildlife Bay. Like NPS, USFWS is a federal agency under the Department of the Interior. Partnership opportunities may include technical assistance, citizen-science projects, interpretation, and promotion.

### US Army Corps of Engineers

The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), under the Department of the Army, plays a role in managing the Delta's levees along with the Department of Water Resources and the Reclamation Districts. The USACE's Bay Model Visitor Center in Sausalito, outside the NHA boundary, is built around a working hydraulic model of the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento - San Joaquin River Delta System built at a 1:1000 scale. This one-of-a-kind model presents important interpretive partnership opportunities for the NHA.

### Alliance of National Heritage Areas

The Alliance of National Heritage Areas (ANHA) is a 501(c)(6) membership organization that includes National Heritage Areas designated by Congress, as well as affiliated partner organizations such as heritage areas pursuing Congressional designation. ANHA promotes interests related to all NHAs, educates constituencies about the NHA program, facilitates links across NHAs, and provides a platform for sharing best practices. Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA has been a member organization since 2019.

## Tribal Partners

California's Native American Heritage Commission provided information on the 23 tribes that have ancestral ties to the region. Although there are no federally or state-recognized Tribes residing in or with territorial holdings within the NHA at present, many Tribes continue to maintain an ancestral relationship with the region through a variety of cultural and conservation initiatives, as well as consultations under state and federal law. Many tribes have strong cultural connections with the Delta. Tribal engagement efforts are described in Chapter 1. Affiliated Tribes will be important partners in education and conservation programs focused on cultural traditions and natural resources, as described in Chapter 3, Objective 2.4.

## State and Regional Partners

### State Agencies

The Delta has long been an important water and agricultural resource in California, resulting in the involvement of many state agencies in planning for and managing the region. The Delta Stewardship Council, the Delta Conservancy, and the Delta Protection Commission are focused solely on the Delta. The programmatic and jurisdictional directives of multiple state agencies has produced an unusual number of regional planning documents, causing a certain amount of confusion for the public, but also providing many implementation and partnership opportunities.

#### The Delta Stewardship Council

The Delta Stewardship Council is tasked with creating, updating, and overseeing implementation of the Delta Plan, a comprehensive plan to guide how multiple federal, state, and local agencies manage the Delta’s water and environmental resources. The Delta Stewardship Council houses the Delta Science Program that provides and synthesizes information to facilitate water and environmental decision-making in the Delta.

Although there is some overlap in focal areas for the Delta Stewardship Council, the Delta Conservancy, and the DPC, the Delta Stewardship Council's oversight role encourages cooperation and avoids duplication of efforts through an organizational structure that keeps leadership of the three agencies in regular communication. Specific opportunities for NHA partnership with the Delta Science Program include the development of the collaboratory described in Chapter 3 (Strategy 2.2.4) and the longitudinal implementation of the *Delta Residents Survey* (Strategy 4.2.5).

#### The Delta Conservancy

The Delta Conservancy is focused on ecosystem restoration in the Delta and cooperates with local communities, organizations, and governmental entities to care for the region’s natural resources, economy, and agriculture. From invasive species symposiums to waterway cleanups, the Conservancy is leading many programs that the NHA coordinating entity can support and promote and invite NHA partners to participate. Critically, the Conservancy manages several grant programs that align with the NHA's overarching goals. The DPC's grant program may be designed in part to complement and amplify the impact of the Conservancy's grants, which primarily support capital projects. Existing Conservancy grant programs, funded through a variety of state initiatives, are:

* **Ecosystem Restoration and Water Quality** – focuses on ecosystem and watershed protection and restoration projects.
* **Climate, Access, and Resources** – one-time allocation for projects that support climate resilience, community access, and natural resource protection.
* **Nature Based Solutions: Wetland Restoration** – supporting restoration, conservation, and climate resilience for wetlands.
* **Community Enhancement Grant Program** – offers funding for projects in recreation and tourism, historic and cultural preservation, and environmental education.

#### California State Parks

Nine park units located across the region conserve and interpret natural and historical resources that provide support to the NHA's significance. In addition, California State Parks oversees boater safety education for the entire state. As a sister state agency that manages publicly accessible properties for visitor recreation and education, California State Parks is a key partner. Like NPS, the agency can provide expert technical assistance to organizations in the NHA network. The DPC can partner with or contract with State Parks to help carry out a wide range of projects and programs.

#### Office of Historic Preservation (OHP)

Under California State Parks, the Office of Historic Preservation manages federally and state- mandated historic preservation programs that help to identify, evaluate, and protect historic properties and districts in California. With the wide range of activities the organization manages, OHP is a key NHA partner, especially since historic preservation was identified during planning as one of the areas in which the NHA can make a substantial impact. OHP is an important source for information and training and recognizes best practices and outstanding achievements through the Governor's Historic Preservation Awards. In addition, OHP supports local governments and communities through programs like Main Street America, Certified Local Governments, and by providing resources for local preservation commissions. Compliance and architectural review are OHP responsibilities that will be important for NHA-funded grant projects. OHP also manages tax incentive programs for preservation projects, contributing to community revitalization and economic development. Finally, OHP oversees nominations to the California Register of Historical Resources, California Historical Landmarks, California Points of Historical Interest, and the National Register of Historic Places and provides electronic access to these databases.

#### Department of Fish and Wildlife

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) owns and manages eight wildlife areas in the NHA. Each of these properties offers the public opportunities to fish, hunt, experience nature, and watch wildlife. As a state agency and public land manager, CDFW has the potential to partner on recreation and conservation projects and programs.

#### Department of Water Resources (DWR)

The Delta, Suisun Marsh, and Carquinez Strait form a landscape-oriented around water. DWR's programs include infrastructure and engineering, water quality and supply, climate change and environmental science, and recreation. As with other state agencies, there are many areas in which the NHA coordinating entity and DWR can collaborate. One potential area for collaboration is the development of additional points of water access, as lack of access is an issue raised during public meetings.

#### Visit California/California Office of Tourism

This state agency, described in detail in Chapter 4, *Supporting Tourism and Economic Development*, is a crucial partner for success in achieving Goal 3, focused on supporting sustainable tourism. As discussed in Chapter 4, this partnership is critical to the success of the NHA. There should be continued efforts to work with Visit California to raise the level of importance of marketing and promotion of the NHA to the benefit of the Delta and the state.

### East Bay Regional Park District

The East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) is the largest urban regional park district in the nation in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. The NHA contains two EBRPD units along the Carquinez Strait – the Antioch/Oakley Regional Shoreline, and the Big Break Regional Shoreline Park. Both parks offer recreational and interpretive programmatic partnership opportunities. Moreover, Big Break is the largest interpretive facility in the NHA, and its exhibits highlight the environment, history, and culture in the Delta and along the Carquinez Strait. The facility contains extensive interpretation concerning the past, present, and future of California's water (theme 1), and the Delta's natural ecosystem (theme 2), as well as touching upon the remaining themes about Native Americans, agriculture, and the region's cultural history. The Delta Discovery Experience, an outdoor interactive map of the Delta, is an excellent interpretive resource for understanding the NHA and the way in which water defines the landscape.

### Higher Education Partners

Several colleges and universities are located within a short distance of the NHA, including California State University (CSU) in Sacramento and Stanislaus, the University of California (UC) in Davis and Merced, and the University of the Pacific in Stockton. CSU Sacramento is home to the Center for California Studies, and many of the institutions have contributed to environmental and historical knowledge of the Delta.

The project that resulted in the report *Delta Narratives: Saving the Historical and Cultural Heritage of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta[[1]](#footnote-2)* provides an instructive example of the intersection of the NHA and educational initiatives. The project was led by the Center for California Studies (CSU Sacramento), and included scholars from CSU Stanislaus, UC Merced, and University of the Pacific, as well as the Center for Sacramento History, Haggin Museum, San Joaquin County Historical Society, and other historical societies and museums. Among the key recommendations in the report that are incorporated into the NHA management plan are the development of a central clearinghouse of Delta-related information (see 4.3.2), interpretive signage (see 1.2.2), and integrating Delta stories into primary, secondary, and college curricula (see 4.2.4). A Delta Narrative Curriculum for fourth grade grew out of the Delta Narratives project.)

### Other Agencies and Organizations

Many other state and regional agencies and organizations were identified in the planning process as having the opportunity to play important roles in the implementation of projects and programs in the NHA. These include the California State Archives, the California State Library, the California Arts Council, and the California Preservation Foundation. As the NHA partnership network continues to grow, these and other organizations present a range of partnership opportunities.

## Local Partners

### Local Government and Communities

As noted in Chapter 3, *Stewarding the Delta's Resources*, the NHA includes five counties, 12 incorporated cities, and 19 unincorporated communities. Local government, communities, historic downtowns, and the businesses that keep them vital, are essential to the NHA network.

Local governmental entities generally have organizational and economic capacity, and many have comprehensive plans that include elements of heritage development. The composition of the DPC, which includes city representatives and supervisors from all counties in the NHA, provides a strong connection between the NHA and many of the region's local governments. Preservation commissions, parks and recreation, and economic development are among the local governmental divisions that have the potential to collaborate on projects and programs in the NHA. In addition, the school districts in and near the NHA are potential partners for field trips to explore the Delta's natural and historical resources.

In the NHA, many towns currently have synergy and established track records in community development. The historic downtowns in the Delta have both sense of place and historic resources to build on, and there are many examples of this being done successfully – the Mei Wah Beer Room in a rehabilitated Chinese tong building in Isleton is one such example, and the Walnut Grove Iron Works located in the historic Imperial Theater is another. The Community Action Plans created by several of the Delta legacy communities in cooperation with the DPC and the Delta Conservancy to address a range of activities to improve the economy and quality of life are also successful community development initiatives (see Chapter 4).

Three communities in the NHA are part of larger programs that emphasize place-based economic development tied to historic preservation, the arts, and heritage tourism. Benicia and Oakley are Main Street communities, and Benicia and Vallejo are designated Certified Local Governments (CLGs). Main Street communities and CLGs are part of national programs that are managed through state coordinators and provide access to technical assistance and grants. Building on these programs and expanding them to other communities will help the NHA to have a significant impact throughout the region.

### Nonprofit Organizations – Cultural, Historical, Recreational, Environmental

Local nonprofit organizations that support cultural and natural resources help give NHAs their vibrancy and regional identity. There are many such organizations active in this NHA, and their increasing knowledge of and interaction with one another over the course of management planning is evidence that the network is beginning to coalesce. These include museums, interpretive centers, and historical societies, many of which are described in Chapter 3. In addition, there are a variety of other nonprofit, civic, and special interest organizations focused on culture, arts, recreation, and the environment. For example, the Friends of the1883 Clarksburg Schoolhouse are active in historic preservation and interpretation. The Delta Legacy Communities works to protect and promote the Delta's unique qualities in 11 legacy communities. Several organizations celebrate and conserve cultural traditions, including the Delta Education Cultural Society and Little Manila Rising. Restore the Delta is actively engaged in environmental issues. Appendix F provides additional information on these organizations.

### Businesses and Civic Organizations

Local businesses tied to a region’s heritage or its recreation and tourism industry reflect the NHA's authenticity and contribute to its economic impact. In the Delta, there are several types of businesses that will make strong partners as the NHA continues to develop, including agriculture and agritourism businesses, local restaurants, and marinas. Each of the communities have chambers of commerce, which are instrumental in promoting tourism and serving as a vehicle to help connect and communicate with local businesses. In addition, county farm bureaus work to promote the economic, social, and political interests of farmers and ranchers, and also to provide educational opportunities. The participation of the chambers and farm bureaus will compound the collaborative impact of the NHA, as they have long experience in effectively engaging their constituencies.

# Partnership Objectives

## 4.1 Establish and expand the partnership network through proactive leadership and effective collaboration.

The strength and engagement of the partnership network is critical to the success of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area. NHA staff and the NHA Advisory Committee can play a critical role in identifying and engaging partners, supporting the growth of capacity of partner organizations, and facilitating collaboration at the local, state, and national levels.

Through the goals and strategies in this plan, the partnership network will continue to evolve, growing from a relatively loose network of organizations in a variety of heritage-related fields to a unified coalition that will carry out the mission and achieve the regional vision that guides the NHA. The network will provide a platform for communication and collaborative action, thereby increasing overall effectiveness and offering strength in numbers, especially for smaller organizations.

### 4.1.1 Conduct partner gatherings, enabling active engagement and fostering participation in networking and collaborative initiatives.

The NHA coordinating entity will build on the role of convener that was established during the management planning process to bring together partners with related interests to implement projects and programs across the NHA network. Convening and connecting partners through interest group meetings, sharing information, and catalyzing collaborative projects and programs will not only help accomplish the goals set forth in the management plan, but will help strengthen and grow the partnership network, resulting in the NHA's long-term sustainability. The NHA coordinating entity will play a leadership role in this area, as the premier organization with a regional reach in historic preservation, cultural conservation, tourism, and community revitalization.

During the planning process, much of which was conducted virtually due to the pandemic, partners expressed the importance of in-person gatherings for networking and building relationships. The NHA coordinating entity can organize and convene in-person meetings, informational sessions, and training workshops.

Significant advances in software and online web platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic have made virtual communication an accepted tool for doing business. While virtual interactions may not replicate all the advantages of in-person meetings, they offer the benefit of increasing participation by reducing the need for extensive travel. Virtual communication will remain an important tool for convening partners.

### 4.1.2 Use the Delta Protection Commission’s position as a government agency to facilitate organizational connection at various levels.

As a state agency, the DPC is well-positioned to help connect organizations across community, state, and federal levels. There is a wide array of state and federal agencies invested in the Delta. However, for smaller, community-based organizations, understanding the roles and accessing the opportunities state and federal agencies provide can be confusing at best and challenging at worst. The DPC's detailed understanding of state government, well-established connections at all levels, and successful track-record working in the Delta make the NHA coordinating entity an effective facilitator. By convening meetings, disseminating information, and coordinating training and technical assistance, the DPC can help smaller organizations understand and navigate often difficult bureaucratic systems, and can help governmental agencies make direct connections to the communities and constituents they aim to serve.

### 4.1.3 Provide technical assistance, coordinate and promote training opportunities in interpretation, grants, resource stewardship, heritage tourism, promotion, community development, and organizational development.

An important service that the NHA coordinating entity can provide is offering technical assistance and training for heritage-related fields. In some instances, the DPC staff can work in-house to develop and offer training and technical assistance. Writing and managing grants is one such area. They can also work with state and federal agencies to host existing training or technical assistance opportunities. For example, California State Parks and the National Park Service have interpretive training that may be available to smaller organizations. Technical assistance that focuses on the development of interpretive exhibits and materials may also be available. The Office of Historic Preservation and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation offer training on Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and other activities to help preserve the built environment. Furthermore, the DPC staff can promote upcoming training offered by partners. As discussed above, the Delta Protection Commission's existing connections to organizations and agencies at all levels situate the NHA coordinating entity to facilitate training and technical assistance in a variety of ways.

### 4.1.4 Participate in the Alliance of National Heritage Areas and work cooperatively with other NHAs on joint initiatives and projects.

From joint initiatives with other NHAs to travel and training available at ANHA meetings, the NHA coordinating entity will have the opportunity to learn and share best practices in the field and stay apprised of important issues that impact NHAs. For example, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA is developing a program with Mountains to Sound NHA and Maritime Washington NHA to coordinate sharing stories of Filipinos on the West Coast, building on SSJDNA's partnership with the Filipino American National Historical Society Museum in Stockton. By participating in ANHA and collaborating with other heritage areas around the country, the NHA coordinating entity will not only enhance its own capacity, but also will help strengthen the program at a national level.

4.1.5 Continue the Delta Leadership Program.

The Delta Protection Commission, in partnership with the Delta Leadership Foundation, established the Delta Leadership Program to build and support sustained leadership development within the Delta community. The program's website states "With the challenges facing the Delta today, it is clearly in the Delta’s interest to cultivate the best in our existing leadership and to assist in creating a pipeline of informed and energetic leaders for the Delta’s future.” [[2]](#footnote-3)

The Delta Leadership Program's goals are:

• Identify and promote regional leaders in the Delta community.

• Develop skills and awareness to increase the pool of effective Delta leaders.

• Expand leaders’ knowledge regarding the key issues, opportunities and challenges that face the Delta region.

• Identify emerging leaders and deliver skills and tools to enhance their contributions to the Delta community.

• Build relationships of trust and cooperation between businesses, government, non-profit, civic, religious and cultural groups.

• Foster a shared sense of community throughout the Delta region.

The program consists of a five-day course carried out over four months, with an additional day-long Delta water tour. The program addresses issues such as water, agriculture, public safety, and economic development, and each leadership class produces a special project. In 2019, the project was focused on NHA partnership best practices. In 2023, the program was awarded the Government Innovation Award from the American Society of Public Administration’s Sacramento Chapter.

The NHA coordinating entity will provide funding for the program, assist with selection of participants and course planning, and convene and facilitate classes.

## 4.2 Provide direct support for partners through financial and technical assistance.

Providing direct support through staff time and funding is one of the most important actions that an NHA coordinating entity can take. Technical assistance is important to helping partners with limited capacity to manage and providing professional support for specific activities. By distributing NHA funding to communities via a grant program (see below and Chapter 6, Strategy 5.1.2), the DPC will help accomplish the goals of the NHA, raise awareness of the NHA's existence, and build capacity among smaller organizations.

### 4.2.1 Establish a grant program to support projects and programs that align with the NHA's goals.

Like numerous community organizations nationwide, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA partners need financial assistance to propel their initiatives forward. One of the most important strategies the DPC will undertake is developing a grant program to fund activities that help carry out the intent of the management plan. The program will include funding opportunities in interpretation, education, historic preservation, cultural conservation, arts, recreation, natural resource conservation, tourism, and community revitalization. The DPC will develop funding guidelines that follow state and federal regulations, as well as a competitive grant review process that includes representation from diverse areas of expertise.

### 4.2.2 Provide staff support to seek outside grants and funding.

The NHA designation presents opportunities to secure grants both inside and outside the region, including larger and more competitive regional and national funding that can be challenging for local partners to attain independently. This creates a platform for utilizing NPS Heritage Partnership Program funding to incentivize collaboration among partners, fostering a more cohesive network and scaling up initiatives to assist partners in achieving their objectives. This will make partners and collaborative endeavors more effective and attractive to regional and national funders while concurrently building capacity in smaller organizations.

The NHA coordinating entity can pursue grants for projects and programs in the region and provide information and technical assistance for partners seeking outside funding. For example, the Save America's Treasures program can be used for preservation of the NHA's significant historic structures. The California Community Foundation for Cultural Conservation may provide opportunities to support organizations that carry out cultural programs in the NHA. California Humanities may support arts and historical organizations. Other potential sources are listed in Appendix H.

By playing an active role in this area, the NHA coordinating entity will help overcome the barrier that many smaller organizations face – a lack of experienced fundraisers who can identify sources and develop funding applications. In addition, by orchestrating coordination between funders and prospective project grantees and by combining projects to develop larger proposals, the DPC can ensure that projects provide the necessary relevance and interest for potential funders.

### 4.2.3 Provide staff time and direct funding to carry out projects and programs that align with the management planning goals.

Many opportunities exist for the NHA coordinating entity to participate in and directly fund projects and programs due to the number of cooperating local, state, and federal agencies and existing plans for the region. This includes but is not limited to activities such as staff or contracted support for historic preservation, tourism marketing and promotion, cultural conservation, and specific projects called out in this or other partners' plans. This strategy differs from the previous two strategies in that it does not rely on grant funding, either from the NHA grant program or from an outside source. Instead, the DPC staff and NHA Advisory Committee will identify projects and programs that align with NHA goals for non-competitive assistance.

### 4.2.4 Support educational initiatives, including research scholarships and service-learning opportunities to K-12 and college students and citizen science opportunities.

The NHA coordinating entity will support educational initiatives in heritage-related fields. Providing funding for educational outreach, field trip financial support, research scholarships, internships, service-learning, and citizen science opportunities to scholars and students at all academic levels will expose the next generation of stewards to the region’s history and the cultural and natural resources associated with it. This is critical for sparking intellectual curiosity and for building a long-term stewardship ethic.

The NHA coordinating entity will support educational initiatives through efforts such as funding and staff collaboration with K-12 administrators and educators in the districts in the five NHA counties. The NHA coordinating entity also will provide funding for partners that offer service-learning and citizen science programs. In addition, the NHA coordinating entity will provide funding for research and internships for scholars and students from higher educational institutions that serve the region. The DPC will also contract with scholars to pursue research and carry out studies related to planning initiatives recommended in the management plan. The NHA' involvement in educational endeavors is also discussed in the interpretive plan (see Chapter 2, Objective 5).

### 4.2.5 Support the longitudinal implementation of the Delta Residents Survey.

In 2023, the Delta Stewardship Council, California Sea Grant, and CSUS collaborated on a household survey to understand Delta residents' livelihoods, well-being, priorities, and concerns for the region. The survey is the first of its kind in the Delta and is intended to fill a gap in knowledge regarding the region's human communities. The four primary aims of the survey are:

1. Characterize residents' sense of place;

2. Assess well-being of a diverse and evolving population living in the region;

3. Understand residents' experiences and perceptions of environmental and climate changes across the estuary; and

4. Evaluate residents' civic engagement and perceptions of governance in the region.[[3]](#footnote-4)

The *Delta Residents Survey* measures key indicators that align with the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA's mission, vision, and goals. If instituted longitudinally, the survey will lend rigorous social scientific method to measuring the success of the NHA in achieving the long-term vision and also provide a foundation for future planning. The Delta Stewardship Council plans to administer a survey every three to four years, based on the interval used in social health monitoring programs in other large social-ecological systems around the U.S.[[4]](#footnote-5)

The NHA coordinating entity will provide input into content, staff time, and funding to ensure that the survey can provide longitudinal data.

## 4.3 Build awareness and stewardship of the National Heritage Area through outreach to public and private sector partners.

Outreach within the NHA network, aimed at reaching and engaging stakeholders and partners, differs from the marketing efforts discussed in Chapter 4, which target visitors. Internal communication with existing and potential partners and stakeholders is paramount for nurturing and fortifying the NHA partnership network and boosting stakeholder and community involvement. While some promotional tools overlap between internal engagement and tourism marketing – especially digital tools like websites and social media – the target audience and messaging often diverge.

The NHA will work with rural and underrepresented communities to develop a strategy that prioritizes diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion to improve outreach and give voice to those communities. In addition, flexibility in communication methods is crucial to inclusivity. Communication preferences vary by generation, experience, location, and demographics. It is imperative not to exclude any audience, especially in an increasingly digital world. Efforts must be made to reach those in communities without secure internet access.

NHA coordinating entity staff, NHA Advisory Committee members, and NHA partners will regularly engage with people and organizations across the NHA through in-person meetings, attending events, and speaking to community organizations. Their one-on-one interaction will be critical in raising awareness and building the NHA brand.

Expanding digital communications, leveraging social media and online platforms, and maintaining a professional, current, and comprehensive website are essential for conveying messages and increasing engagement both internally and for visitors.

Traditional media, including broadcast and print, remain crucial, particularly in rural areas where many people rely on newspapers and radio. Being featured in newspapers or quoted on TV news can be vital for connecting with community leaders, establishing credibility, and securing official recognition.

In-person and word-of-mouth outreach remains indispensable, especially in the Delta's smaller, more rural communities. While reading about an organization or activity is a starting point, personal recommendations from friends often motivate people to take action and become stewards. The activities outlined under this objective, whether encouraging site visits, volunteering, or attending community meetings, all offer opportunities to enhance personal engagement, stewardship, and expand the NHA partnership network.

### 4.3.1 Continue to hold the annual Delta Heritage Forum.

The Delta Heritage Forum, first held in 2018, is a free, day-long event focused on efforts to preserve and tell Delta stories, including opportunities for partnership collaboration and networking. Residents and partner organizations are invited to participate in the annual Forum, which is important not only for sharing best practices and innovative ideas, but also for strengthening and expanding the relationships that are critical for the NHA's success. The scope includes all aspects of heritage conservation -- interpretation and education, preservation of historic resources, natural resource conservation, recreation, sustainable tourism and economic development. Past sessions at the Forum have included updates from partner organizations, input sessions on emerging projects, sessions focused on elements of the management plan, and presentations on best practices from NHA practitioners beyond Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA. Previously, the Delta Heritage Forum served as an important public engagement opportunity for the Great Delta Trail, preliminary development of travel itineraries, and the interpretive plan for this management plan. The DPC staff organizes and funds all aspects of the annual event.

### 4.3.2 Act as a clearinghouse of information to support NHA partners.

Stakeholders have expressed the need for improved accessibility to information on partners, activities, and resources within the NHA network. To address this request the NHA coordinating entity will establish an information system that serves as a central repository, or clearinghouse, to gather and disseminate information for network use. This clearinghouse may comprise various specialized databases and calendars. The NHA coordinating entity will collect, organize, and provide access to information. In certain instances, the clearinghouse will serve as a starting point, directing users to information compiled and curated by partner organizations. The scope of information that stakeholders have requested includes:

* **Resource Inventory** – The NHA coordinating entity compiled an inventory of historic, cultural, natural, scenic, and recreational assets during the management planning process (see Appendix E). The NHA coordinating entity will maintain and update this inventory, which may include additional information such as location, contact information, visitor information, and resource descriptions. (As appropriate, some location and contact information may be kept confidential.)
* **Grants and Funding Opportunities** – The DPC already shares information on grant opportunities in its regular e-newsletters. As the NHA coordinating entity, the DPC will continue to coordinate and disseminate information about grants and other funding opportunities. This will include information on sources, applications, deadlines, and best practices.
* **Partner Database** – The NHA coordinating entity serves as a hub for the partnership network. The network is extensive both geographically and in the number of heritage-related fields it includes. There is no other entity in the region that maintains a comprehensive database of partner organizations. By maintaining such a database, the DPC will facilitate connections and provide information across the NHA partnership network, helping organizations find and share services, skills, and expertise. A table of existing and potential partners is in Appendix F.
* **Interpretive Providers** – Interpretive planning for the management plan resulted in development of a database of interpretive providers in the NHA (see the interpretive plan, Chapter 2). The DPC will continue to use, update, and provide access to this information, which serves as a subset of the partner database described above.
* **Regional Planning Efforts** – Given the Delta's importance within the state for ecological, water, and agricultural resources, many local, state, and federal organizations have developed plans that intersect with the goals of the NHA management plan. Maintaining a record of and providing access to these plans will help partners find information, bridge a gap between governmental agencies and their constituents, and reduce unnecessary duplication of efforts.
* **Online Calendar** – A calendar will provide information on major events and activities in the region, including networking and training opportunities, community festivals, partner events, and informational meetings.

### 4.3.3 Conduct in-person and virtual visits and meetings with state agencies that service the NHA and local governments, community groups, and organizations in the NHA.

As the NHA coordinating entity, the DPC has an important leadership role to play in bridging communication among state agencies and local communities, governments, and organizations. As a state agency, the DPC has an inside understanding of how other state agencies function and what initiatives they are leading. The DPC is building on almost three decades of working in Delta communities and has been informally known as "the people agency" due to its on-the-ground relationships with residents and partner organizations. The status, economic sustainability, and bureaucratic understanding that comes with being a state agency is an advantage that most NHAs do not have. Leveraging the DPC's solid reputation and existing relationships will be crucial in successfully implementing the management plan.

### 4.3.4 Enlist National Heritage Area Advisory Committee members to act as information ambassadors.

The NHA Advisory Committee, which was initially formed to facilitate the development of the management plan, will continue to serve following the plan's completion (see Chapter 6, Strategy 5.2.3). As implementation moves ahead, members of the committee will continue their role as ambassadors for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA. The organization has geographic, age, cultural, and organizational diversity, providing members the opportunity to offer information to and gather input from communities and partners across the region. Moreover, the Advisory Committee's leadership in developing the management plan gives members an in-depth understanding of the purpose of NHAs, as well as the goals and strategies of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA. Members of the NHA Advisory Committee are at the center of the web that connects the entire NHA region. From attending meetings and conveying information back to their communities to speaking engagements for civic and non-profit organizations to casual discussions with their friends and neighbors, they will continue to play an important role in expanding and strengthening the NHA partnership network.

### 4.3.5 Develop an initiative for leadership capacity-building to increase engagement in rural and underserved communities.

The NHA will invest in enhancing the capabilities of rural and underserved communities by developing an initiative focused on growing leadership and creating transformative opportunities. The purpose is to empower local leaders to assist them in fostering the long-term success of the region's cultural and heritage assets. This initiative may encompass a diverse set of strategies, including promotional and professional development efforts, technical assistance, and financial support. This strategic investment aims to enable rural and underserved communities to achieve their local objectives and realize their unique growth potential. Ultimately, the initiative seeks to conserve heritage while generating equitable collective economic and community growth.

This strategy is grounded in the goals of the Delta Leadership Program (see Strategy 4.1.5) in its intention to identify emerging leaders and develop skills and tools that can enhance their contributions to their communities. The initiative will build upon the confidence that area residents have in the NHA coordinating entity, which was documented as the most-trusted state agency in the Delta in the recent *Delta Residents Survey*, further enhancing relationships of trust and cooperation between businesses, government, non-profit, civic, religious, and cultural groups as they work collaboratively to conserve the Delta's heritage.

### 4.3.6 Continue distribution of *Delta Happenings* and *Delta Heritage Courier* e-newsletters.

The DPC currently distributes two e-newsletters. The *Delta Happenings* newsletter, first published in 2016, covers the DPC and other agency activities and community events and goes to a list of about 1,600. The *Delta Heritage Courier*, initially published in 2017, focuses on general NHA topics, events and updates from NHA partner organizations, and funding opportunities and goes to a list of 545. Both are important tools for communicating with stakeholders about the DPC’s activities, including the NHA program. Both newsletters are developed by the DPC staff.

### 4.3.7 Continue to manage and expand the National Heritage Area’s web presence.

The DPC website has several pages for the National Heritage Area program, which can be accessed at https://delta.ca.gov/NHA/. At this time, the purpose of this page is to provide general information about the administrative backbone of the NHA. The Visit CA Delta website, https://visitcadelta.com/, which currently features visitor information for much of the region, will eventually also become the primary website for information about the NHA's resources and projects. The DPC staff, in coordination with NHA partners, will continue to manage both websites, following strategies recommended in the upcoming marketing plan described in Chapter 4 (Strategy 3.1.3) to manage the NHA's web identity and presence.

### 4.3.8 Implement the marketing plan to inform and engage partners.

The development of a marketing plan is currently underway (Strategy 3.1.3). The plan will include communication and marketing strategies for various audiences, including visitors, partners, and residents. To continue to build internal and external awareness of the NHA, the NHA coordinating entity will fund and provide staff to carry out the recommended strategies that target residents and public and private sector partners, as well as targeting visitors to the region.

1. Delta Protection Commission, Delta Narratives: Saving the Historical and Cultural Heritage of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, prepared by the Center for California Studies, California State University, Sacramento (West Sacramento: Delta Protection Commission, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://delta.ca.gov/delta-leadership-program/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Rudnick, J., Tomari, K., Dobbin, K., Lubell, M., and K. Bidenwig. *2023 Delta Residents Survey Summary Report*. Report developed for the Delta Stewardship Council, Delta Science Program. Sacramento, CA, pg. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Ibid., pg. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)