

Delta Vision “Delta-as-Place” Strategic Plan Work Group

Responses to Specific Task Force Requests For Blue Ribbon Task Force meeting of May 28, 2008

At its meeting of April 24, the Blue Ribbon Task Force made four specific requests of the “Delta-as-Place” Work Group. The responses generated by the Work Group and associated staff follow below.

1. The Task Force encouraged further clarification on Recommendation #12 calling for a Specific Plan to ensure the protection and continued vitality of the legacy towns.

The Delta-as-Place Work Group offers further clarification on the following points:

- The amount of development envisioned in the recommendation is small – not large subdivisions that would dramatically change the character of the communities. This is what is implied by the phrases “historic internal needs” and “historic growth rates” that are included in item (b) of the recommendation. In addition, as item (b) also states, any such development would have to be consistent with the Delta Protection Commission’s Management Plan for the primary zone, which prioritizes agriculture, habitat and recreation.
- Under the new floodplain development law SB5, any new development within the 200-year floodplain (which all the legacy towns are) will have to provide, or be provided, 200-year flood protection once the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan is completed in 2012. Thus, if any growth at all is to occur in the legacy towns over the long term, this flood protection standard will have to be met. The flood protection should be planned first, in coordination with the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan, and put in a location that will permit the legacy towns to sustain and grow their local economies through an era of change.

2. The Task Force requested further research into the National Heritage Area designation, particularly with respect to the federal role.

DPC staff conducted four interviews with directors of National Heritage Areas elsewhere in the U.S. to assess the federal role in their efforts. Each of the four confirmed that there are no federal land use restrictions or controls associated with an NHA. There is also no eminent domain or any power given to a local management entity that supercedes local authority structures. The four directors cited the advantages of the NHA designation as:

- Seed money from the National Park Service for certain specific purposes

- The ability to leverage funds from other sources with the federal funds and designation
- “Branding” of the region as affiliated with the National Park Service
- Increased visibility and stature that comes with a national designation
- Increased cooperation among stakeholders and organizations in the regions
- Coordination of various investments as part of a coherent plan agreed to by many parties

3. The Task Force requested further consideration of the Great California Delta Trail mandated under SB 1556.

The Delta-as-Place Work Group discussed the Great California Delta Trail planning effort, and agreed to incorporate it by reference in Recommendations #1 and #2, which call for the formation of the National Heritage Area and the Delta Conservancy. Given that the Trail has already been mandated by law, it was concluded that there was no need to create a separate Work Group recommendation. However, it was noted within the Work Group that the definition of the word “trail” should be interpreted broadly to include water trails and small loop trails entirely contained within single properties, in addition to regional-scale trail systems.

The Delta Protection Commission is already deeply engaged in the early stages of planning the Delta Trail, including conducting local stakeholder outreach that includes many of the individuals on the Delta-as-Place Work Group.

4. The Task Force requested consideration of additional designations that may be appropriate for the Delta.

The Delta-as-Place Work Group suggested the following designations as potentially worthy of consideration, and DPC staff researched their characteristics:

- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (US Department of Agriculture)
 - Voluntary land retirement program that helps agricultural producers protect environmentally sensitive land, decrease erosion, restore wildlife habitat, and safeguard ground and surface water.
 - Offshoot of the country's largest private-lands environmental improvement program - the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).
 - Addresses high-priority conservation issues of both local and national significance, such as impacts to water supplies, loss of critical habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife species, soil erosion, and reduced habitat for fish populations such as salmon.
 - A community-based, results-oriented effort centered around local participation and leadership. Partnership among producers; tribal, state, and federal governments; and, in some cases, private groups.

- A project begins when a state, Indian tribe, local government, or local nongovernment entity identifies an agriculture-related environmental issue of state or national significance.
- Conservation Priority Area (Natural Resources Conservation Service)
 - Areas with special environmental sensitivity that are part of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) may be eligible for designation as a Conservation Priority Area
 - Special emphasis is placed on maximizing water quality, including assisting agricultural producers to comply with nonpoint source pollution requirements, or wildlife habitat benefits through the implementation of the CRP
 - Watersheds shall be eligible for designation as a priority area only if the watershed has actual significant adverse water quality or wildlife habitat impacts related to activities of agricultural production.
 - Conservation priority area designations expire after 5 years unless redesignated
 - Chesapeake Bay has been Conservation Priority Area since 1985
- Resource Conservation District Area (US Department of Agriculture)
 - Address conservation issues such as: forest fuel management, water and air quality, wildlife habitat restoration, soil erosion control, conservation education.
 - Independent local liaisons between the federal government and landowners, conservation districts have always worked closely with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - In California, the 103 Resource Conservation Districts are "special districts" organized under the state Public Resources Code.
 - Each district has a locally elected or appointed volunteer board of directors made up of landowners in that district.
- American Heritage River (US Environmental Protection Agency)
 - Helps river communities that seek federal assistance by making more effective use of federal resources, cutting red-tape and lending a helping hand to meet challenges without any new regulations on private property.
 - Three objectives: natural resource and environmental protection, economic revitalization, and historic and cultural preservation.
 - Fourteen total across the U.S.
 - A few American Heritage Rivers also have National Heritage Area designation
- Regional Water Enhancement Program Area (US Department of Agriculture)
 - Encourages partnerships consisting of agricultural producers and other groups (such as government entities and municipal water systems) to plan cooperative projects aimed at meeting defined water quality and quantity goals in their watershed.

- Partnerships will submit proposals to USDA, which will review submissions and competitively award multi-year grants (up to five years in length) to implement the plans.
- Legislation provides a total of \$300 million over five years from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to fund RWEP grants.
- National Scenic Byways Program (Federal Highway Administration)
 - Provides resources to the byway community that will enable better management of byway organizations and the intrinsic qualities they value and protect.
 - Highway 160 already has this designation
- Preserve America – (White House initiative)
 - In cooperation with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, recognizes and designates communities, including neighborhoods in large cities, that protect and celebrate their heritage, use their historic assets for economic development and community revitalization, and encourage people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism programs.
 - More than 500 communities (including nine neighborhoods) as Preserve America Communities in all 50 states and one U.S. territory. Benefits of designation include White House recognition and eligibility to apply for Preserve America grants.
 - Could probably used for specific Delta cities

In addition, the DPC staff also researched additional National Park Service designations of potential interest to the Task Force:

- *National Monuments* - Similar to national parks, except that the U.S. president can quickly declare a national monument without congressional approval. Usually aim to protect at least one unique feature, but generally do not have the diversity of national parks. Receive less funding and afford fewer protections to wildlife than national parks
- *National Preserves* - Designation applied by the U.S. Congress to protected areas with characteristics normally associated with U.S. National Parks, but where certain activities not allowed in National Parks are permitted, such as hunting, trapping, and oil and gas exploration/extraction.
- *National Recreation Areas* - Designation often centered on large reservoirs and usually emphasizing water-based recreation for a large number of people (e.g. Lake Mead NRA, Golden Gate NRA).
- *National Recreation Trails* - Given to existing trails that contribute to health, conservation, and recreation goals in the United States. About 1,000 trails in all 50 states, ranging up to 485 miles in length, have been

designated as NRTs on federal, state, municipal, and privately owned lands. The National Park Service and USDA Forest Service jointly administer the National Recreation Trails Program with help from a number of other federal and nonprofit partners, notably American Trails, a lead nonprofit.

- *National Scenic Trails* - Designation for protected areas in the United States that consist of trails of particular natural beauty (e.g. Appalachian National Scenic Trail, Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail).
- *National Natural Landmark*- Recognizes and encourages the conservation of outstanding examples of the United States' natural history. NPS enters a voluntary agreement with the landowner to preserve the significant natural values of the site or area and assists with that conservation (which remains the owner's responsibility). Only natural areas program of national scope that recognizes the best examples of natural features in both public and private ownership.
- *Wild and Scenic Rivers* - Selected rivers in the United States are recognized for remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values. Rivers, or sections of rivers, so designated are preserved in their free-flowing condition and are not dammed or otherwise altered. Possible managing agencies are U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.
- *National Historical Parks* - designations for protected areas of national historic significance, usually nominated by a governing body overseeing historic resources.
- *National Historic Site* – Similar to National Historical Parks, these usually contain a single historical feature directly associated with its subject. Generally extends beyond single properties or buildings, and its resources include a mix of historic—and sometimes significant natural—features.
- *National Memorials* - a protected area that commemorates a historic person or event. National memorials are authorized by Congress. The memorial is often not located on a site directly related to the subject. There are 44 total including: USS Arizona Memorial and Johnstown Flood National Memorial