



Mississippi Delta
National Heritage Area
MANAGEMENT PLAN
March 2014

Cover art:

Mississippi River Meander Belt: Cape Girardeau,
Missouri to Donaldsonville, Louisiana.

From Geological Investigation of the Alluvial Valley
of the Lower Mississippi River. By Harold N. Fisk, 1944.

*Mississippi Delta
National Heritage Area*

**Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area
Delta Center for Culture and Learning
Delta State University
Room 130, Ewing Hall
Cleveland, Mississippi 38722
662-846-4312
Luther Brown, director
lbrown@deltastate.edu**

Table of Contents

Memo from Dr. John Hilpert, MDNHA board chair	xii
Letter from Senator Thad Cochran	xiv
Letter from Senator Roger Wicker	xv
Executive Summary	xvi
MDNHA Board of Directors	xxii
Chapter One – Introduction	1
National Heritage Areas	2
What is a National Heritage Area?	2
How are NHAs designated and managed?	2
What does a NHA do?	2
What does a NHA not do?	2
What are the accomplishments of NHAs?	3
What is the purpose of a management plan?	3
Creation of the MDNHA	4
Applicable laws	4
NEPA	4
Management structure	5
NHPA – Section 106	6
Endangered Species – Section 7	7
MDNHA legislative requirements	7
Legislation	8
The Planning Process: Development of the MDNHA Management Plan	16
Identifying a direction for MDNHA	18
Legislative considerations	19
Standards for consideration of options	19
Development of options/alternatives	19
MDNHA alternatives	20
Considering programmatic implications	21
The five alternatives	21
Build the Network	
The Selected Alternative – Partner to Save Places, Build the Network, Perpetuate Culture and Tell the Delta’s Story	24
Criteria for strategy development	27
Chapter Two – MDNHA Boundaries and Socioeconomic Environment	28
Introduction	29
MDNHA communities	30
Demographics	31
Mississippi Delta population changes: 1930-2010	32
Unemployment rates	32
Graduation rates	33
Transportation	34
Economic Development in the MDNHA	37
Who is working on economic development?	39

Chapter Three - Foundation Statement	41
Introduction.....	42
Statement of Significance.....	42
Thematic Framework.....	45
The Mississippi River and the Land it Embraces.....	45
The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound.....	46
Moving Toward Freedom: Changing America’s Character in the Struggle for Rights	47
Growing More than Cotton: The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity.....	47
The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta’s Diverse Communities.....	48
A National Heritage Area.....	49
Mission and Vision	50
Legislative duties and authorities.....	51
MDNHA goals, strategies and action steps.....	51
Chapter Four - Historical Overview of the Delta	56
Introduction.....	57
The Mississippi Delta.....	57
The River and the Land.....	57
The First Inhabitants.....	58
European Exploration.....	59
The Last Frontier.....	60
The Civil War	60
Open for Business.....	61
Cotton and Agriculture Plantations	62
The Birth of the Blues.....	63
The Rise and Fall of Delta Communities.....	64
Controlling the River.....	65
The Great Flood of 1927.....	65
The Great Migration	66
Troubled Times.....	68
Fighting for Civil Rights.....	69
Wellspring of Creativity	70
From the Past to the Present.....	71
Chapter Five - Resource Inventory Analysis	73
Introduction.....	74
Inventory Methodology.....	75
The Mississippi River and the Land It Embraces.....	76
Mississippi River	76
Agriculture and Cotton	76
Water.....	78
Land Resources.....	78
Natural Recreation Resources	79
Native American	79
Biological Resources.....	80
The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound	81
Blues Music.....	81

Moving Toward Freedom: The Struggle for Rights	83
Civil War	83
Civil Rights	85
Immigration	87
Growing More Than Cotton: Wellspring of Creativity	88
Literature	88
Cultural and Arts	90
The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta’s Diverse Communities.....	91
National Register of Historic Places.....	91
Sites Not Currently on the National Register.....	96
Additional Categories	96
Museums.....	96
State Historic Markers	97
Chapter Six –	
The Delta Experience: Perpetuate Culture and Tell the Story (Interpretive Plan).....	98
Introduction.....	99
Criteria for strategies to create the Delta Experience	100
Part One: Perpetuating Culture and Telling the Story	102
Challenges in perpetuating culture and telling the story	102
Mississippi Delta NHA Themes	104
Describing the Delta through themes	105
The Mississippi River and the Land It Embraces	106
The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound	112
Moving Toward Freedom: The Struggle for Rights.....	115
Growing More Than Cotton: The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity.....	120
The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta’s Diverse Communities	124
Perpetuating Culture – The Delta’s Living Traditions.....	127
Music – The Blues and Beyond	127
Food traditions.....	129
A heritage of storytelling – traditional folk tales, literature and film	130
The arts	131
Religion and belief systems.....	132
Agriculture	133
Outdoor life.....	134
Festivals.....	135
Telling the Delta’s Story	137
Connecting themes and places	137
Interpretive example: The story of Civil Rights in the Delta.....	140
The Strategies.....	142
Strategy 1: Research and document the Delta’s stories	142
Action Step A: Research and document the Delta’s history connected to themes.....	143
Action Step B: Research and document living traditions connected to themes	144
Action Step C: Identify practitioners of the Delta’s living traditions	144
Action Step D: Collect and preserve oral histories.....	144
Action Step E: Act as a clearinghouse for information about the Delta’s heritage	145
Strategy 2: Provide training and resources to preserve history and perpetuate culture	145

Action Step A: Present workshops, symposia forums and tours to educate residents	146
Action Step B: Providing training on preserving archival resources	146
Action Step C: Create a tour guide certification program.....	149
Strategy 3: Tell the Delta’s story through a variety of interpretive methods.....	150
Action Step A: Develop person-to-person interpretive methods	152
Guided tours for visitors.....	152
Guided tours, programs for school groups and youth organizations	152
Action Step B: Develop media-based interpretation	153
Guidebooks	153
Brochures	154
Table tents and posters	154
Passport booklets.....	154
NPS passport program	154
Wayside interpretive signage	155
Interior orientation exhibits.....	155
Website	156
Audio guides	156
Video.....	156
Part Two: Engaging Audiences.....	157
Adult residents in the Delta.....	157
Youth in the Delta.....	157
Strategy 4: Engage Delta adults and youth	157
Action Step A: Offer a variety of opportunities	159
Action Step B: Partner with MDTA.....	160
Strategy 5: Increase accessibility for travelers	160
Action Step A: Wayfinding and place identification signage	160
Lodging	161
Visitor information centers and rest areas	161
Chapter Seven - A Sense of Place: Save the Delta’s Historic Resources	162
Introduction.....	163
Criteria for strategies to save places.....	164
Four focus areas to save places	166
Preservation challenges.....	167
The Strategies	
Strategy 1: Document historic resources in the heritage area	168
Action Step A: Prepare a survey of historic resources.....	170
Action Step B: Identify threatened resources.....	172
Action Step C: Prepare National Register nominations	173
Action Step D: Assist in preparing Mississippi Landmarks nominations.....	174
Strategy 2: Increase awareness and advocate for historic and natural resource preservation	176
Action Step A: Increase awareness through publicity campaigns, “10 Most” list and documentation of best practices	176
Action Step B: Work with towns, counties, MDAH, MHT and other groups.....	178
Action Step C: Encourage stewardship of natural resources.....	180

Development of by-laws.....	222
Governance and management.....	223
Current/Future model for operations	224
Staff, volunteers.....	225
Key collaborative relationships/partnerships.....	226
National Park Service and MDNHA.....	227
Alliance of National Heritage Areas.....	228
MDNHA Partners	229
Marketing and communications.....	231
Fund development	231
Financial History and Assumption	233
Financial projections	234
Future budgets	235
Explanation of budget forecast	237
Funding sources	239
Risk and Risk Mitigation	244
Stability of funding	244
Dilution of brand	244
MDNHA Organizational Chart.....	245
Chapter Ten - Implementation Procedures and Schedule.....	246
Introduction.....	247
Heritage area goals.....	247
Annual work plan	247
Program and project criteria for implementation	248
Best practices to guide implementation.....	250
Impact of strategy implementation.....	251
Evaluation phases.....	251
Performance Goals	253
Implementation schedule	
2014-2015	259
2016-2020.....	262
2021-2024.....	266
Appendices	
Appendix A	Management Services Agreement – Delta State University and MDNHA Partnership
Appendix B	Letters of Commitment
Appendix C	Letters of No Impact
Appendix D	Resource Inventory
Appendix E	MDNHA Planning Committees
Appendix F	Groups and Stakeholders
Appendix G	Maps
Appendix H	National Trust for Historic Preservation Consulting Team
Appendix I	MDNHA Management Plan Development Resources

MDNHA Management Plan Tables

Chapter	Table	
1	1.1	MDNHA Organizational Structure
	1.2	How the management plan addresses legislative requirements
	1.3	Outreach and engagement
	1.4	MDNHA Alternatives
2	2.1	Counties in the MDNHA
	2.2	MDNHA Communities
	2.3	Delta Demographics 2012
	2.4	Mississippi Delta Population Changes: 1930-2010
	2.5	Unemployment Rates for Mississippi Delta Counties
	2.6	Graduation Rates for Mississippi Delta Counties
	2.7	Who is working on economic development?
3	3.1	MDNHA Goals
6	6.1	Theme: The Mississippi River and the Land it Embraces
	6.2	Theme: The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound
	6.3	Theme: Moving Toward Freedom: Changing America’s Character in the Struggle for Rights
	6.4	Theme: Growing More than Cotton: The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity
	6.5	Theme: The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta’s Diverse Communities
	6.6	Festivals in the Mississippi Delta
	6.7	The Story of Civil Rights in the Mississippi Delta
	6.8	Tours in the Mississippi Delta
	6.9	Who Owns Smartphones Nationally?
	6.10	Population in the Delta
	6.11	The Delta Experience: Opportunities for Engagement
	6.12	MDNHA and MDTA: Partnering to develop and promote the Delta Experience
7	7.1	MDNHA Inventory: Connection to Themes
	7.2	MDNHA Inventory: National Register of Historic Places
	7.3	MDNHA Inventory: State Historic Markers
	7.4	MDNHA Inventory – Historic Sites Not currently on the National Register
	7.5	Mississippi Landmarks in the Mississippi Delta
	7.6	Mississippi Heritage Trust’s <i>10 Most Endangered</i> Sites in the Mississippi Delta
	7.7	Who are the coordinating entity’s partners in advocacy for historic resources?
	7.8	Who could the coordinating entity’s partner with for natural resource conservation and development?
8	8.1	The Delta’s Digital Divide: Internet Subscribership
	8.2	Mississippi Delta Main Street Communities – Investment Report: January 2010-June 2013
	8.3	Vicksburg National Military Park – 2011
	8.4	Mississippi Delta – Examples of Federal Historic Tax Credit Projects – 2002-2012
9	9.1	MDNHA Partners listed in the management plan
	9.2	Current Budget for MDNHA
	9.3	Three Percent (3%) Increase per Year – National Park Service Funding
	9.4	Five Percent (5%) Increase per Year – National Park Service Funding
	9.5	MDNHA Budget Forecasts: 2015-2019
	9.6	Potential Funding Sources
	9.7	MDNHA Organizational Structure

Chapter	Table	
10	10.1	MDNHA Goals
	10.2	Performance Goals
	10.3	Short-term actions
	10.4	Mid-term actions
	10.5	Long-term actions

Photographs

Chapter 1

MDNHA Board of Directors
Public meeting in Greenwood

Chapter 3

Mississippi River
Blues singer in Clarksdale
Freedom Summer 1964
St. George's Episcopal Church in Clarksdale
Tennessee Williams
Downtown Vicksburg
Mississippi River
Birthplace of the Blues marker at Dockery Farms
Mule Man at Ground Zero in Clarksdale
Amzie Moore House in Cleveland
Tutwiler quilter
Peter's Pottery in Bolivar County
Blue and White Restaurant in Tunica
Baptist Town in Greenwood
House in Issaquena County

Chapter 4

Winterville Mounds
Vicksburg National Military Park
Chinese sculpture in DeSoto County
Downtown Yazoo City
Cotton field in Bolivar County
Mississippi River
Winterville – illustration
DeSoto expedition map – illustration
Birds in flight
Vicksburg National Military Park - Civil War re-enactments
Where the Southern Crosses the Dog
Cotton coming out of the fields
Dockery Farms in Bolivar County
Tutwiler
Flood of 1927 in Greenville
1927 Flood Museum in Greenville
Hopson Plantation in Coahoma County
Emmett Till
Bryant's Grocery in Money
Freedom Summer 1964
Margaret's Grocery in Vicksburg
Tractor in Leland

Chapter 5

Temple Adath Israel in Bolivar County
Mont Helena in Sharkey County
Baptist Town in Greenwood
Alluvian Hotel in Greenwood
Vicksburg National Military Park
Bryant's Grocery in Money
Mississippi Board of Levee Commissioners in Greenville
Cotton pickers
Yazoo River
Walking trail in Tunica
Jaketown Site in Humphreys County
Cypress trees in Greenville
B.B. King Blues Trail marker in Indianola
Cat Head Delta Blues and Folk Art in Clarksdale
Old Courthouse Museum in Vicksburg
Statue of Fannie Lou Hamer in Ruleville
Chinese sculpture in DeSoto County
Grave of Fannie Lou Hamer in Ruleville
DeSoto County Courthouse
Joe's Hot Tamale Place in Rosedale
Tunica Museum
Little Italy state historic marker in Greenville

Chapter 6

Chinese Cemetery in Greenville
Fannie Lou Hamer statue in Ruleville
Birthplace of the Blues marker at Dockery Farms
Plate of tamales
Cotton
Cotton offices in downtown Belzoni
Bryant's Grocery in Money
Cemetery headstones
Mississippi River
Winterville Mounds in Washington County
LeRoy Percy Wildlife Management Area in Washington County
Delta Research and Extension Center in Stoneville
Lower Mississippi River Museum in Vicksburg
Muddy Waters' cabin in Sharkey County
Gateway to the Blues Visitor Center in Tunica
Blues singer in Clarksdale
Cat Head Delta Blues and Folk Art in Clarksdale
Vicksburg National Military Park
Amzie Moore House in Cleveland
Poor People's March sign in Marks
Poor People's March 1968 – Mule Train in Marks
Mississippi Freedom Trail marker for Fannie Lou Hamer in Ruleville
Mound Bayou – Taborian Hospital
St. George's Episcopal Church in Clarksdale
Margaret's Grocery in Vicksburg
Craig-Seay house in Como
Cotton Row Historic District in Greenwood
Sharecroppers' house in 1939
Downtown Yazoo City
William Seaberry, owner of Po Monkeys
Sunflower River Blues and Gospel Festival in Clarksdale
Blue Front Café in Bentonia

White Front Café in Rosedale
Tennessee Williams' Festival in Clarksdale
Vicksburg murals
Bethel AME Church in Vicksburg
Bottle tree
Belzoni Catfish on Parade
Cotton coming out of the fields in 1939
Juke Joint Festival in Clarksdale
Colored theater entrance in Belzoni in 1939
Summer teachers' workshop
50th anniversary of Freedom Rides
Tour group in Leland
NPS Passport stamped
See Where the Backroads Take You
Greenville Welcome Center
Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District exhibits

Chapter 7

Tutwiler Funeral Home
Duff Green Bed and Breakfast in Vicksburg
New Roxy Theater in Clarksdale
Downtown Yazoo City
Po Monkeys in Merigold
Mont Helena in Rolling Fork
Cotton field in Bolivar County
Cypress trees in Greenville
Walkway in the woods in Tunica
Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge
Resource Center

Chapter 8

Public meeting in Greenwood
Meeting presentation
Delta Magazine
Delta State intern sampling hot tamales
Students tour at Bryant's Grocery in Money
Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival
Mississippi Freedom Trail marker
Delta Blues Legends Tours

MEMORANDUM

From: Dr. John Hilpert
Chair, Board of Directors
Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area

The Mississippi Delta is a land that is unquestionably rich in cultural and natural heritage. It was created by the Mississippi River, which dominates it to this day. It was the site of powerful pre-Columbian civilizations that built some of the oldest pyramids in the world. More recently, it was settled because of cotton, farmed first by slaves, then by sharecroppers, and now by machines guided by satellites. Its small towns were peopled by immigrants from Europe and Asia. It is the birthplace of the Blues and Rock 'n' Roll. Its children became great politicians, authors, musicians, artists, chefs and athletes. It was the scene of the social revolution we call the Civil Rights Movement. It is the ancestral home of many Americans who moved north and west during the Great Migration. It is a land that in many ways is America shrunk in time and space.

The people of the Mississippi Delta want to tell their stories to the world. They want their stories to empower their children, enlighten visitors and convince everyone of the valuable contributions to America's story that have been made by Delta people. That is why this document has been prepared. It represents over ten years of effort and paves the way for the next ten years of work. It reflects the work of hundreds of contributors who have attended board and committee meetings, public presentations and discussions, completed surveys of various kinds, and written memos and letters expressing their hopes and concerns.

Our collective effort began in 2003. That year was proclaimed the Year of the Blues by both the U.S. Congress and the Governor of Mississippi. With the help of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, together with funding from several other sources, we presented a "Share Your Heritage Workshop" at the Alluvian Hotel in Greenwood, Mississippi. The National Trust for Historic Preservation brought speakers who focused on the value of heritage and suggested that the Delta was worthy of being declared a National Heritage Area.

At about the same time, a group of Delta citizens traveled to Yale University to meet Robert Stanton, recently retired director of the National Park Service and early advocate of National Heritage Areas. Stanton then visited the Delta, promoting the heritage area concept. By 2008, after many meetings and much discussion, enabling legislation was drafted, and

in 2009, President Obama signed the Omnibus Federal Land Management Act into law, creating the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area. The following year, the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Partnership was organized as the governing board, and in 2011, this board engaged the National Trust for Historic Preservation to develop the management plan that you are about to read.

The people of the Mississippi Delta believe that this management plan will establish a well-run and sustainable enterprise that will add value to all existing efforts to tell the Delta's stories. We hope to partner with existing tourism, economic development, academic, private sector and government efforts to promote the region, and in doing so, we hope to empower local people with a justifiable sense of place, while building local economies based on heritage. And one of our most significant partnerships, that with the National Park Service, assures credibility in the minds of the traveling public and local citizenry alike. The Mississippi Delta has great stories to tell, and the National Heritage Area will provide a new podium from which to tell them.

I want to personally welcome you, the reader, to the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area. The following pages describe what our heritage area is, what stories it tells, and what programs and projects it will support during the next decade. I am proud of all the people who contributed to this plan, and thank all of them for the hard work that led to the plan's completion. I hope that everyone reading this plan is energized by its promise and excited by the land and the people and the history it describes. And I want to invite every one of you to become involved. The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area will succeed because of the partnerships on which it is based. It is for the entire Delta.

When Robert Stanton introduced the concept of a Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area, he ended his remarks with a parable in which two young boys decide to trick a wise old man. They approach the sage with a live bird hidden in their hands and ask him whether the bird is alive or dead, knowing that they can easily prove him wrong either way. His response is that the answer is in their own hands. Only their actions can produce the correct answer. And only the actions of the people of the Mississippi Delta can produce success for this important effort.

THAD COCHRAN
MISSISSIPPI

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2402

COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,
AND FORESTRY
RANKING MEMBER
COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE ON
RULES AND
ADMINISTRATION

March 21, 2014

Dr. John Hilpert
Chair
Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Partnership
Box 3152
Delta State University
Cleveland, Mississippi 38733

Dear Dr. Hilpert:

Congratulations on the completion of your management plan for the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area. The Mississippi Delta is known around the country and the world as an area rich in unique historical, natural, and cultural characteristics. This partnership with the National Park Service will help the people of the Delta tell their stories and use their rich heritage to improve their local economies. I look forward to continuing to work with you as you move forward with your plans to tell the Delta's stories to the world.

Sincerely,



THAD COCHRAN
United States Senator

TC/lc

ROGER F. WICKER
MISSISSIPPI
ARMED SERVICES
BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS
COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

SUITE 555
DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-6253
www.wicker.senate.gov

February 10, 2014

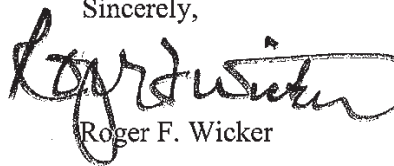
Dr. John Hilpert
Chair
Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Partnership
c/o Delta Center for Culture and Learning
Box 3152
Delta State University
Cleveland, MS 38733

Dear Dr. Hilpert,

I supported the establishment of both the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area and the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area in the Omnibus Federal Land Management Act of 2009. Both of these regions have significant heritage stories to tell, and both will benefit from this formal link to the National Park Service.

I congratulate you, your Board, and the people of the Mississippi Delta on the completion of your management plan. I look forward to working with your organization as we move into the implementation phase and hope that the National Park Service quickly accepts your management plan. Please feel free to contact me if I can ever be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Roger F. Wicker

P.O. Box 385
HERNANDO, MS 38632
(662) 429-1002

P.O. Box 3777
TUPELO, MS 38803
(662) 844-5010

501 EAST COURT STREET, SUITE 3.500
JACKSON, MS 39201
(601) 965-4644

452 COURTHOUSE ROAD, SUITE F
GULFPORT, MS 39507
(228) 604-2383

3118 PASCAGOULA STREET, SUITE 179
PASCAGOULA, MS 39567
(228) 762-5400

What is a National Heritage Area?

The National Park Service defines a National Heritage Area as a *place designated by the United States Congress where natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally significant landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography.*

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Partnership describes the Delta as *“the land where the Blues began, where Rock and Roll was created and where Gospel remains a vibrant art. It is an agricultural region where cotton was once king, and where ‘precision-ag’ rules today. It is a place that saw the struggles of the Civil War and the cultural revolution of the Civil Rights Movement. It is the home of the Great Migration, and a land of rich culinary, religious, artistic and literary heritage.”*

MDNHA Partners

Many partners will work together to successfully implement the activities in the management plan. State-level partners include the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Mississippi Department of Economic Development (Tourism Division), Mississippi Arts Commission, Mississippi Main Street Program, Mississippi Department of Transportation and Mississippi Humanities Council. University partners include Alcorn State University, Delta State University, Mississippi State University, University of Mississippi and Jackson State University. Regional partners include MACE, Mississippi’s Lower Delta Partnership, Delta Foundation, Delta Council, Delta Wildlife and the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association. Within the MDNHA’s 18 counties there are numerous partners including museums, historical societies, local governments, cultural organizations, historic sites, chambers of commerce, local Main Street programs, convention and visitors bureaus. Partnerships will continue to increase as the management plan is implemented.

It is the Mississippi Delta’s role in shaping the nation’s character and culture that earned the 18-county region Congressional designation as a National Heritage Area. This goal was achieved through legislation sponsored by Representative Bennie Thompson, Senator Thad Cochran and Senator Roger Wicker. The legislation was part of the Omnibus Federal Land Management Act of 2009 and was signed into law by President Obama on March 30, 2009. Legislation specified the boundaries of the heritage area, composition of the board of directors, duties of the coordinating entity and elements to be addressed in the management plan.

The heritage area’s boundaries include 18 counties in the Mississippi Delta: Bolivar, Carroll, Coahoma, DeSoto, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Panola, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tunica, Warren, Washington and Yazoo.

Per the enabling legislation, the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (MDNHA) Partnership was formed and a board of directors appointed. The Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University in Cleveland managed the program through the planning phase and will continue to serve as the coordinating entity to implement the management plan overseen by a 15-member board of directors. The National Park Service is the federal partner and includes three areas:

- **Vicksburg National Military Park** – The park is within the boundaries of the heritage area. The superintendent serves as the local contact for the National Park Service and is an ex officio member of the MDNHA board of directors.
- **National Park Service Southeast Region** – The Southeast Region office of the National Park Service is the partner for MDNHA, and the program manager serves as the point of contact to provide assistance with the coordinating entity’s plans.
- **Washington Program Office** – The office will provide guidance on projects and activities.

Management Plan Development

The MDNHA management plan was developed through a two-year planning process and is designed to guide activities for the next 10-15 years. The planning process included extensive public outreach to identify issues and opportunities and to engage a wide range of partners and stakeholders in contributing to the plan. This outreach will provide a solid foundation of partnerships for the plan’s implementation. Development of the plan encompassed four areas of planning:

- **Civic Engagement** included public meetings, an online survey, media coverage, stakeholder interviews, committee meetings, a community forum, communication through a website, email and social media, presentations and site visits to communities throughout the Delta.
- **Research** included reviewing economic and demographic studies, city and county comprehensive plans, tourism reports, economic evaluations of the creative economy, conservation and historic preservation studies, state agency, community and nonprofit organization plans.
- **Assessment** of findings throughout the research phase was conducted by the MDNHA board and staff to evaluate public input and to determine a course of action for the heritage area.
- **Public Review** was offered to Delta residents to read and comment on the draft management plan.

The completed Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Management Plan reflects the input of many people throughout the planning process. The plan will guide the work of the coordinating entity and its partners to meet the goals of the mission statement and to achieve the vision set forth for the heritage area.

Overview of the Management Plan

The foundation of the management plan has four elements: themes, vision, mission and goals.

Themes

Five themes capture the essence of this complex region. Within each theme are additional topics that reflect the theme:

- The Mississippi Delta and the Land It Embraces
 - Formation of the Delta
 - Early Inhabitants and Exploration
 - Transformation
 - Agriculture
 - Floods
 - The Natural World

- The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound
 - Delta culture and contrasts
 - Emergence of the Blues
 - Blues influence on American culture and music (rock ‘n ‘roll, rhythm and blues, jazz)
 - Blues today—continuity and worldwide recognition
- Moving Toward Freedom: Changing America’s Character in the Struggle for Rights
 - Slavery
 - Civil War
 - Great Migration
 - Pivotal Events and People (Emmett Till, Civil Rights leaders, Freedom Summer, MS Freedom Democratic Party, Freedom Riders...
 - The Delta today
- Growing More than Cotton: The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity
 - Literature
 - Artists
 - Food
 - Religion
 - Music
- The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta’s Diverse Communities
 - Extremes and paradoxes
 - Plantations
 - Communities
 - Immigration
 - The built environment

Vision 2025

The people who call the Mississippi Delta “home” value the significant events and unique cultural traditions that influenced the development of America. Residents, communities, institutions and cultural groups have collaborated to preserve special places connected to the Delta’s past, to honor and celebrate its diverse traditions and to document and share the history from settlement to migration, from the Civil War to Civil Rights. Residents are proud of their communities and their cultures and want to remain here to contribute to the Delta’s future. They understand the role of agriculture in their history and economy and celebrate the wellspring of creativity that birthed the internationally recognized Blues, a remarkable literary legacy and a spirit of determination. The National Heritage Area includes revitalized communities, conservation of natural resources, new venues and events to tell the Delta’s story and increased visitation by heritage travelers and demonstrates progress toward sustainable economic growth.

Mission Statement

The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area fosters preservation, perpetuation and celebration of the Delta’s heritage through a climate of collaboration and sustainable economic development. Through a comprehensive and continual system of engagement and education, the National Heritage Area leads an inclusive network of partners, institutions and residents in achieving a regional vision. We create opportunities to save our special places, maintain our vibrant traditions, enhance community and cultural pride, support

economic and social transformation and advance the appreciation and understanding of the Delta's important past and its continuing contributions to the American story. We focus on five themes: The River and the Land, Culture of the Blues, Struggle for Rights, Wellspring of Creativity, and the Delta Divide.

Goals

Four goals were developed to summarize and describe the work that will be undertaken by the coordinating entity and its partners:

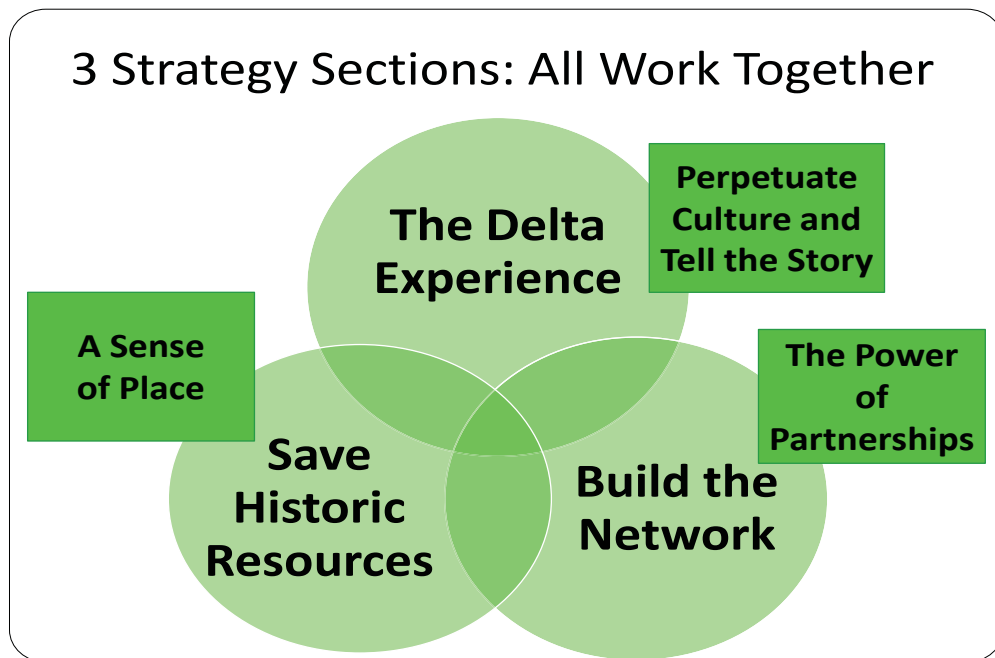
1. Perpetuate culture by preserving, celebrating and sharing the traditions, places, and stories of the region.
2. Save historic and natural resources by raising awareness, providing recognition, and directing resources to training, education and preservation.
3. Build a network **by providing engagement opportunities.**
4. Contribute to sustainable economic development through activities that will strengthen local and regional economies.

Strategies

Specific strategies and actions steps were developed in three areas. All strategies are intended to connect the coordinating entity and its partners in work that will achieve stated goals.

Table 2.2.

Mississippi Delta a National Heritage Area Organizational Structure



Perpetuate Culture and Tell the Story: The Delta Experience

Strategies and action steps for telling the Delta's story and creating an experience for residents and visitors include:

- Research and document history and living traditions connected to themes, identify practitioners of living traditions, collect oral histories and build a clearinghouse of information about the Delta's heritage.
- Provide training to perpetuate culture and tell the story through workshops, forums and tours. Set standards by creating a tour guide certification program.
- Tell the Delta's story through guided tours for visitors, school groups, youth organizations, development of guidebooks, brochures, signage and orientation exhibits and creation of a website and audio and video guides.
- Promote the Delta Experience by facilitating partnerships with cultural and heritage attractions, advocating for signage, lodging and visitor centers and developing a hospitality ambassador training program.

A Sense of Place: Save the Delta's Historic Resources

- Document historic resources by preparing a survey of historic resources, identifying threatened resources, preparing National Register nominations and assisting in preparing Mississippi landmark nominations.
- Increase awareness and advocate for preservation by planning publicity campaigns, creating "10 Most Endangered in the Delta" campaign, documenting best practices, working with towns, counties and other partners and encouraging stewardship of natural resources.
- Provide training and information to support preservation efforts and provide financial support for restoration projects by acting as a clearinghouse for grant or sponsorship opportunities and creating a grants program to provide seed funding.

The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network

- Document the value of culture and heritage to provide a baseline to track growth; inform local, state and federal officials and agencies.
- Create an identity for the heritage area through signage, presentations, meetings and media.
- Honor and celebrate partners' accomplishments by creating an awards program and hosting an annual awards event.
- Establish forums for discussion and planning. Host exchanges for the discussion of preservation, tourism and other topics, provide a forum to discuss race, economics and history and form committees to monitor and plan for preservation, conservation and telling the Delta's story.
- Offer opportunities for engagement by creating a volunteer program for MDNHA sanctioned events and projects and offering internships and student project opportunities.

Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Board of Directors

The Congressional legislation creating the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area specified 15 board members with representatives from the following organizations:

Appointed by the Governor	John M. Hilpert (chairman)
Alcorn State University	Bernard Cotton
Delta Council	Frank Howell
Delta Foundation	Spencer Nash (vice chairman)
Delta State University	Myrtis Tabb
Mississippi Arts Commission	Tom Pearson
Mississippi Department of Archives and History	Kane Ditto
Mississippi Humanities Council	Stuart Rockoff
Mississippi Valley State University	William Bynum
Smith Robertson Museum	Pamela Junior

5 additional members are appointed for staggered 1- and 2-year terms by county boards in the MDNHA.

District 1 (Tunica, Tate, DeSoto, Panola):	Kim Terrell (secretary)
District 2 (Bolivar, Coahoma, Quitman, Tallahatchie):	Kappi Allen
District 3 (Holmes, Humphreys, Leflore, Carroll):	Robert Moore
District 4 (Washington, Sunflower, Issaquena):	Paula Sykes
District 5 (Warren, Yazoo, Sharkey):	Meg Cooper

Mike Maddell, Vicksburg Battlefield Park – National Park Service liaison

(Ken Murphree served as the first board chairman from 2009 through 2011. Also serving on the board during the planning phase were Barbara Carpenter, Shirley Waring and Malcolm White.)

Coordinating Entity:

Delta Center for Culture and Learning, Delta State University, Cleveland, Mississippi
Luther Brown, director

Chapter 1

Introduction



Chapter 1

Introduction

The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Partnership describes the Delta as *“the land where the Blues began, where Rock and Roll was created and where Gospel remains a vibrant art. It is an agricultural region where cotton was once king, and where ‘precision-ag’ rules today. It is a place that saw the struggles of the Civil War and the cultural revolution of the Civil Rights Movement. It is the home of the Great Migration, and a land of rich culinary, religious, artistic and literary heritage.”*

What is a National Heritage Area?

A National Heritage Area is a place that uses shared history as a platform for action to collaborate on preservation, promotion and sustainable development based on the region’s heritage assets.

The National Park Service defines a National Heritage Area ***as a place designated by the United States Congress where natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally significant landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography.***

How are National Heritage Areas designated and managed?

- Only Congress can designate National Heritage Areas through authorizing legislation.
- National Heritage Areas are locally managed by a coordinating entity.
- National Heritage Area coordinating entities undertake a collaborative process to develop a management plan that reflects the interests and desires of residents to preserve, celebrate and share their cultural, historic and natural resources.
- The National Park Service is the federal partner to provide financial and technical assistance and to approve the management plan.

What does a National Heritage Area do?

National Heritage Area coordinating entities are engaged in many different activities. Each National Heritage Area coordinating entity develops a management plan that reflects the area’s goals and strategies to accomplish those goals. All National Heritage Area coordinating entities endeavor to:

- Create a grassroots, community-driven network to support historic preservation, natural resource conservation, recreation, heritage tourism and educational projects that meet the needs of the people who live in the National Heritage Area
- Support sustainable economic development through heritage conservation
- Foster pride of place and an enduring stewardship ethic

What does a National Heritage Area not do?

A National Heritage Area coordinating entity is not a regulatory agency and does not:

- Regulate land use or zoning for public or private property
- Require public access to private property
- Regulate water rights
- Diminish state authority to manage fish and wildlife
- Diminish obligations of the U.S. government to any federally recognized Indian tribe

Cover images:

- 1) MDNHA Partnership Board of Directors
- 2) Public meetings were held throughout the planning process.

What are the accomplishments of National Heritage Areas?

In early 2013, the National Park Service issued an evaluation report reviewing 12 of the longstanding National Heritage Areas. The assessment was conducted at the request of Congress to identify accomplishments of NHAs and used an external evaluation firm.

The Alliance of National Heritage Areas released a summary of the report's findings that National Heritage Area coordinating entities:

- **Successfully leverage federal funding** – NHA coordinating entities met or exceeded the required 50 percent match with federal, state, local and private sources at a ratio of 4-to-1.
- **Preserve resources** – NHA coordinating entities focus on conserving and interpreting cultural and natural resources of national significance.
- **Build networks of partners and encourage public involvement** – Once management plans are completed, NHA coordinating entities continue to work with partners and engage residents in the implementation of strategies.

According to the evaluation report, program priorities for National Heritage Area coordinating entities are:

- **Cultural and Natural Resource Conservation** – This area was identified as the highest priority with an average of 31 percent of programmatic dollars directed to this work.
- **Education and Interpretation** – Twenty-six percent of programmatic dollars are directed to educating visitors and residents about the region's history.
- **Recreational Development** – Many NHA coordinating entities invest in recreational assets such as trail development.
- **Marketing and Promotion** – NHA coordinating entities work with tourism partners to provide visitor services such as information centers and to develop promotions that will attract visitors and generate economic impact.
- **Community and Economic Development** – Activities of NHA coordinating entities ranged from beautification projects to programs that create or preserve jobs.

What is the purpose of developing a National Heritage Area management plan?

The process of developing a management plan for a National Heritage Area is a locally driven effort that has many benefits including:

- Understanding, involvement and consensus are built among community members, stakeholders, existing and potential partners through a transparent planning process
- Planning provides a structured forum to determine the heritage area's purpose, vision, mission, goals and strategies
- The planning process builds partnerships, solicits new ideas and garners additional community support
- The process identifies regional priorities and develops a regional vision and strategy
- Actions are prioritized and realistic expectations are set
- The development of the plan commits partners to the heritage area's goals
- The final management plan describes the policies, strategies and recommendations for the heritage area coordinating entity and provides a guide for decision making and a foundation for measuring the heritage area's accomplishments

(Source: Adapted from Components of a Successful National Heritage Area Management Plan, National Park Service)

Creation of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area

It is the Mississippi Delta's role in shaping the nation's character and culture that earned the 18-county region Congressional designation as a National Heritage Area in 2009. The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area designation was achieved through the efforts of many people over several years. Recognizing that the Mississippi Delta's unique landscape created a distinct culture that is unusually rich in heritage stories, efforts began in 2003 to organize partners to promote National Heritage Area designation that must be given by an act of Congress.

In 2009, this goal was achieved when Congressional legislation was sponsored by Representative Bennie Thompson, Senator Thad Cochran and Senator Roger Wicker. Following Congressional designation, the legislation was signed into law as part of the Omnibus Federal Land Management Act of 2009. The act was signed by President Obama on March 30, 2009. Legislation specified the boundaries of the heritage area, composition of the board of directors, duties of the coordinating entity and elements to be addressed in the management plan.

Per the enabling legislation, the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (MDNHA) Partnership was formed and a board of directors appointed to serve as the local coordinating entity. The Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University in Cleveland was chosen to manage the program through the planning phase.

Through the planning process, the Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University was chosen to provide staff and support for the local coordinating entity. (Details of the management structure are in Chapter Nine: *The Business Plan*.) The chart on the following page shows the organizational structure for the MDNHA.

Applicable Laws

National Heritage Area management plans are considered federal actions and must follow these federal environmental laws:

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) – Section 106
- Endangered Species Act (ESA) – Section 7

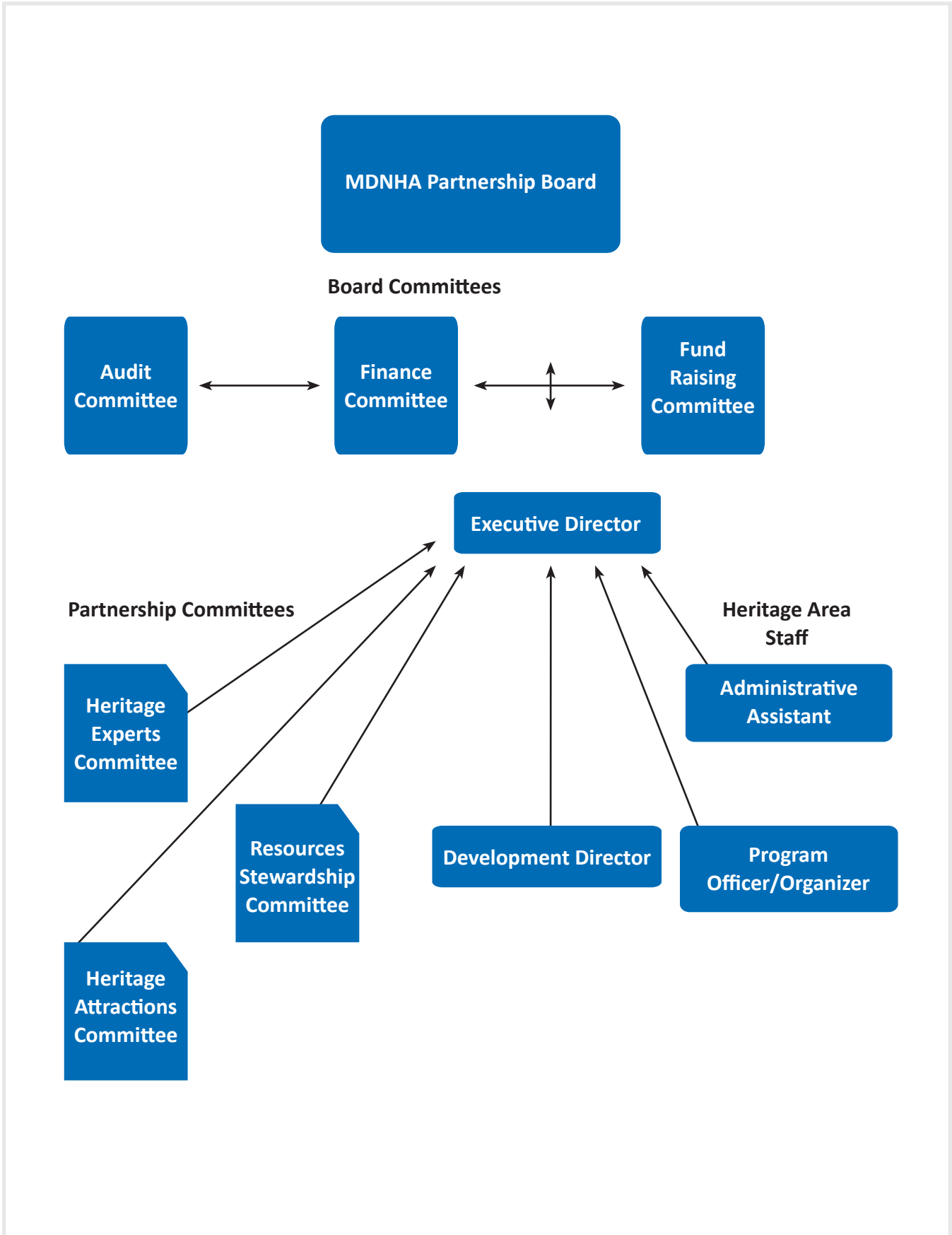
Compliance requires that the National Park Service and National Heritage Area management entities consider the potential environmental impacts of actions in the management plan and undertake any necessary consultation and public input. The development of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area's management plan has incorporated all of these requirements into the planning process and creation of the management plan. This section summarizes the requirements and the conclusions reached for each of these acts.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

This management plan has been developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (Public Law 91-190, 42 United States Code (USC) 4321 et seq.) (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500–1508), Director's Order 2: Park Planning, and NPS Management Policies 2006.

The National Environmental Policy Act establishes "a national policy, which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment." The National Environmental Policy Act requires all government agencies to develop procedures that

Table 1.1.
Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Organizational Structure



ensure open and honest documentation of existing resources and potential effects to these resources as a result of the proposed action. NEPA fosters public involvement as a key element of the decision-making process. NEPA compliance procedures are described in NPS Director’s Order 12: Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision-making and the accompanying reference manual. See the next section for a description of this plan’s compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

How this Management Plan Complies with the National Environmental Policy Act

The National Environmental Policy Act is applicable to the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Management Plan because the Secretary of the Interior approves the management plan. Evaluation of the potential for significant environmental impacts resulting from the proposed strategies and actions in this plan concluded that the appropriate NEPA pathway was a categorical exclusion, specifically 3.3R. Categorical Exclusion 3.3R states “adoption or approval of surveys, studies, reports, plans and similar documents which will result in recommendations or proposed actions which would cause no or only minimal environmental impact.” The determination that Categorical Exclusion 3.3R was the appropriate NEPA pathway precluded the need to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) – Section 106

The passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966 was a milestone for historic preservation in the United States as it specified the federal government’s role and involvement in the preservation of historic resources. The act stated a wide range of policies to provide leadership in historic preservation and to “assist state and local governments, Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations and the National Trust for Historic Preservation to expand and accelerate their historic preservation programs and activities.”

Section 106 of the act requires federal agencies to “take into account the effect of any undertaking on any district, site, building, structure or object that is included in or eligible for inclusion on the National Register.” The Code of Federal Regulations – 36 CRF, Part 800 – Protection of Historic Properties provides additional specifications to federal agencies to enact Section 106. Development of the MDNHA management plan included collaboration with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), the state’s historic preservation office.

This plan constitutes a federal undertaking per 36 CFR 800.16: “Undertaking means a project, activity, or program funded in whole or in part under the direct or indirect jurisdiction of a Federal agency, including those carried out by or on behalf of a Federal agency; those carried out with Federal assistance; and those requiring a Federal permit, license or approval.” Due to the general nature of the management plan and the uncertainty of future federal undertakings that may stem from implementation of this plan, the National Park Service has determined that this management plan will have no affect on historic properties. The Mississippi Department of Archives and History (State Historic Preservation Office) has concurred with this finding. The local coordinating entity will complete a section 106 review for each undertaking involving a federal nexus that may stem from implementation of this management plan. This management plan does not restrict the subsequent consideration of alternatives to avoid, minimize, or mitigate [a specific] a future undertaking’s adverse effects on historic properties in accordance with 36 CFR 800.1(c).

Endangered Species Act (ESA) – Section 7

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act requires federal agencies to ensure that their actions do not jeopardize listed species or destroy or adversely modify critical habitat. Section 7 also requires consultation with appropriate parties including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The heritage area’s resource inventory included identification of biological resources. The resource inventory of biological resources lists five endangered, one threatened and one candidate for designation as endangered. The Environmental Screening Form reflects the finding that the MDNHA management plan does not include any actions that would have a negative effect on these biological resources or any other natural resources. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was consulted during the planning process and confirmed these findings. The National Park Service determined that the strategies in the plan will have no effect on threatened or endangered species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with this determination. However, any future ground or vegetation-disturbing projects made possible by this plan should be reviewed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at that time.

MDNHA Legislative Requirements

Legislation creating the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area included specific directives for the creation of the management plan. Legislation is provided here and is followed by charts which provide details of how each requirement was met in the management plan.

Creation of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area

SEC. 8008. MISSISSIPPI DELTA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

(a) DEFINITIONS—In this section:

BOARD—The term *Board* means the Board of Directors of the local coordinating entity.

HERITAGE AREA—The term *Heritage Area* means the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area established by subsection (b)(1).

LOCAL COORDINATING ENTITY—The term *local coordinating entity* means the local coordinating entity for the Heritage Area designated by subsection (b)(4)(A).

MANAGEMENT PLAN—The term *management plan* means the management plan for the Heritage Area developed under subsection (d).

MAP—The term *map* means the map entitled “Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area”, numbered T13/80,000, and dated April 2008.

SECRETARY—The term *Secretary* means the Secretary of the Interior.

STATE—The term *State* means the State of Mississippi.

(b) ESTABLISHMENT

ESTABLISHMENT—There is established in the State the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area.

BOUNDARIES—The Heritage Area shall include all counties in the State that contain land located in the alluvial floodplain of the Mississippi Delta, including Bolivar, Carroll, Coahoma, Desoto, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Panola, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tunica, Warren, Washington, and Yazoo Counties in the State, as depicted on the map.

AVAILABILITY OF MAP—The map shall be on file and available for public inspection in the office of the Director of the National Park Service.

LOCAL COORDINATING ENTITY—

DESIGNATION.—The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Partnership shall be the local coordinating entity for the Heritage Area.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS—COMPOSITION—IN GENERAL—The local coordinating entity shall be governed by a Board of Directors composed of 15 members, of whom—

1 member shall be appointed by Delta State University;

1 member shall be appointed by Mississippi Valley State University;

1 member shall be appointed by Alcorn State University;

1 member shall be appointed by the Delta Foundation;

1 member shall be appointed by the Smith Robertson Museum;

1 member shall be appointed from the office of the Governor of the State;

1 member shall be appointed by Delta Council;

1 member shall be appointed from the Mississippi Arts Commission;

1 member shall be appointed from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History;

1 member shall be appointed from the Mississippi Humanities Council;

Up to 5 additional members shall be appointed for staggered 1- and 2-year terms by County boards in the Heritage Area.

RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS—At least 7 members of the Board shall reside in the Heritage Area.

OFFICERS—IN GENERAL—At the initial meeting of the Board, the members of the Board shall appoint a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Secretary/ Treasurer.

DUTIES—

CHAIRPERSON—The duties of the Chairperson shall include presiding over meetings of the Board; executing documents of the Board; and coordinating activities of the Heritage Area with Federal, State, local, and nongovernmental officials.

VICE CHAIRPERSON—The Vice Chairperson shall act as Chairperson in the absence or disability of the Chairperson.

- (c) **MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY— IN GENERAL**—The Board shall—
- i. exercise all corporate powers of the local coordinating entity;
 - ii. manage the activities and affairs of the local coordinating entity; and
 - iii. be subject to any limitations in the articles and bylaws of the local coordinating entity, this section, and any other applicable Federal or State law, establish the policies of the local coordinating entity.
- (d) **STAFF**—The Board shall have the authority to employ any services and staff that are determined to be necessary by a majority vote of the Board.
- (e) **BYLAWS— IN GENERAL.**—The Board may amend or repeal the bylaws of the local coordinating entity at any meeting of the Board by a majority vote of the Board.
- (f) **NOTICE**—The Board shall provide notice of any meeting of the Board at which an amendment to the bylaws is to be considered that includes the text or a summary of the proposed amendment.
- (g) **MINUTES**—Not later than 60 days after a meeting of the Board, the Board shall distribute the minutes of the meeting among all Board members and the county supervisors in each county within the Heritage Area.
- (h) **DUTIES AND AUTHORITIES OF LOCAL COORDINATING ENTITY**—To further the purposes of the Heritage Area, the local coordinating entity shall—
- i. prepare, and submit to the Secretary, in accordance with subsection (d), a management plan for the Heritage Area;
 - ii. assist units of local government, regional planning organizations, and nonprofit organizations in implementing the approved management plan by—
 - a) carrying out programs and projects that recognize, protect, and enhance important resource values within the Heritage Area;
 - b) establishing and maintaining interpretive exhibits and programs within the Heritage Area;
 - c) developing recreational and educational opportunities in the Heritage Area;
 - d) increasing public awareness of, and appreciation for, natural, historic, scenic, and cultural resources of the Heritage Area;
 - e) protecting and restoring historic sites and buildings in the Heritage Area that are consistent with the themes of the Heritage Area;
 - f) ensuring that signs identifying points of public access and sites of interest are posted throughout the Heritage Area; and H. R. 146—280
 - g) promoting a wide range of partnerships among governments, organizations, and individuals to further the purposes of the Heritage Area;
 - h) consider the interests of diverse units of government, businesses, organizations, and individuals in the Heritage Area in the preparation and implementation of the management plan;
 - i) conduct meetings open to the public at least semiannually regarding the development and implementation of the management plan;
 - j) submit an annual report to the Secretary for each fiscal year for which the local coordinating entity receives Federal funds under this section specifying—
 - i. the accomplishments of the local coordinating entity;
 - ii. the expenses and income of the local coordinating entity;
 - iii. the amounts and sources of matching funds;
 - iv. the amounts leveraged with Federal funds and sources of the leveraged funds; and
 - v. grants made to any other entities during the fiscal year;
 - k) make available for audit for each fiscal year for which the local coordinating entity receives Federal funds under this section, all information pertaining to the expenditure of the funds and any matching funds;
 - l) require in all agreements authorizing expenditures of Federal funds by other organizations, that the receiving organizations make available for audit all records and other information pertaining to the expenditure of the funds; and
 - m) encourage, by appropriate means, economic development that is consistent with the purposes of the Heritage Area.

(i) **AUTHORITIES**—The local coordinating entity may, subject to the prior approval of the Secretary, for the purposes of preparing and implementing the management plan, use Federal funds made available under this section to:

- i. make grants to the State, political subdivisions of the State, nonprofit organizations, and other persons;
- ii. enter into cooperative agreements with, or provide technical assistance to, the State, political subdivisions of the State, nonprofit organizations, Federal agencies, and other interested parties;
- iii. hire and compensate staff;
- iv. obtain funds or services from any source, including funds and services provided under any other Federal law or program;
- v. contract for goods or services; and
- vi. support activities of partners and any other activities that further the purposes of the Heritage Area and are consistent with the approved management plan.

(j) **PROHIBITION ON ACQUISITION OF REAL PROPERTY**—The local coordinating entity may not use Federal funds received under this section to acquire any interest in real property.

(k) **MANAGEMENT PLAN.—H. R. 146—281**

- i. **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than three years after the date on which funds are made available to develop the management plan, the local coordinating entity shall submit to the Secretary for approval a proposed management plan for the Heritage Area.
- ii. **REQUIREMENTS.**—The management plan for the Heritage Area shall—
 - a) describe comprehensive policies, goals, strategies, and recommendations for telling the story of the heritage of the region and encouraging long-term resource protection, enhancement, interpretation, funding, management, and development of the Heritage Area;
 - b) take into consideration existing State, county, and local plans in the development and implementation of the management plan;
 - c) include a description of actions and commitments that governments, private organizations, and citizens plan to take to protect, enhance, and interpret the cultural, historical, archaeological, natural, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area;
 - d) specify existing and potential sources of funding or economic development strategies to protect, enhance, interpret, fund, manage, and develop the Heritage Area;
 - e) include an inventory of the cultural, historical, archaeological, natural, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area relating to the stories and themes of the region that should be protected, enhanced, managed, or developed;
 - f) recommend policies and strategies for resource management including, the development of intergovernmental and interagency agreements to protect the natural, historic, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area;
 - g) describe a program for implementation of the management plan, including—
 - performance goals;
 - plans for resource protection, enhancement, and interpretation; and
 - specific commitments for implementation that have been made by the local coordinating entity or any government, organization, business, or individual;
 - h) include an analysis of, and recommendations for, ways in which Federal, State, tribal, and local programs may best be coordinated (including the role of the National Park Service and other Federal agencies associated with the Heritage Area) to further the purposes of this section;
 - i) include an interpretive plan for the Heritage Area; and
 - j) include a business plan that—
 - describes the role, operation, financing, and functions of the local coordinating entity and of each of the major activities described in the management plan; and
 - provides adequate assurances that the local coordinating entity has the partnerships and financial and other resources necessary to implement the management plan for the Heritage Area.

(k) **TERMINATION OF FUNDING**—If the management plan is not submitted to the Secretary in accordance with this subsection, the local coordinating entity shall not qualify for additional financial assistance under this section until the management plan is submitted to, and approved by, the Secretary.

(l) **APPROVAL OF MANAGEMENT PLAN**—

- i. **REVIEW**—Not later than 180 days after the date on which the Secretary receives the management plan, the Secretary shall approve or disapprove the management plan.
- ii. **CONSULTATION REQUIRED**—The Secretary shall consult with the Governor of the State and any tribal government in which the Heritage Area is located before approving the management plan.
- iii. **CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL**—In determining whether to approve the management plan, the Secretary shall consider whether—
 - a) the local coordinating entity represents the diverse interests of the Heritage Area, including governments, natural and historic resource protection organizations, educational institutions, businesses, community residents, and recreational organizations;
 - b) the local coordinating entity has afforded adequate opportunity for public and governmental involvement (including through workshops and public meetings) in the preparation of the management plan;
 - c) the resource protection and interpretation strategies described in the management plan, if implemented, would adequately protect the cultural, historical, archaeological, natural, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area;
 - d) the management plan would not adversely affect any activities authorized on Federal or tribal land under applicable laws or land use plans
 - e) the Secretary has received adequate assurances from the appropriate State, tribal, and local officials whose support is needed to ensure the effective implementation of the State, tribal, and local aspects of the management plan; and
 - f) the local coordinating entity has demonstrated the financial capability, in partnership with others, to carry out the management plan.

(m) **ACTION FOLLOWING DISAPPROVAL**—

- i. **IN GENERAL**—If the Secretary disapproves the management plan, the Secretary—
 - a) shall advise the local coordinating entity in writing of the reasons for the disapproval; and
 - b) may make recommendations to the local coordinating entity for revisions to the management plan.

(n) **DEADLINE**—Not later than 180 days after receiving a revised management plan, the Secretary shall approve or disapprove the revised management plan.

(o) **AMENDMENTS**—

- i. **IN GENERAL**.—An amendment to the management plan that substantially alters the purposes of H. R. 146—283 the Heritage Area shall be reviewed by the Secretary and approved or disapproved in the same manner as the original management plan.
- ii. **IMPLEMENTATION**.—The local coordinating entity shall not use Federal funds authorized to be appropriated by this section to implement an amendment to the management plan until the Secretary approves the amendment.

(p) **DUTIES AND AUTHORITIES OF THE SECRETARY**—

- i. **TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**—
 - a) **IN GENERAL**—On the request of the local coordinating entity, the Secretary may provide technical and financial assistance, on a reimbursable or nonreimbursable basis (as determined by the Secretary), to the local coordinating entity to develop and implement the management plan.
 - b) **COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS**.—The Secretary may enter into cooperative agreements with the local coordinating entity and other public or private entities to provide technical or financial assistance under subparagraph (A).
 - c) **PRIORITY**.—In assisting the Heritage Area, the Secretary shall give priority to actions that assist in:
 - conserving the significant cultural, historical, archaeological, natural, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area; and
 - providing educational, interpretive, and recreational opportunities consistent with the purposes of the Heritage Area.

- (q) PROHIBITION OF CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS—The Secretary may not, as a condition of the provision of technical or financial assistance under this subsection, require any recipient of the assistance to impose or modify any land use restriction or zoning ordinance.
- (r) EVALUATION; REPORT—
- a) IN GENERAL—Not later than three years before the date on which authority for Federal funding terminates for the Heritage Area under subsection (i), the Secretary shall—
 - i. conduct an evaluation of the accomplishments of the Heritage Area; and
 - ii. prepare a report with recommendations for the future role of the National Park Service, if any, with respect to the Heritage Area, in accordance with subparagraph (C).
 - b) EVALUATION—An evaluation conducted under subparagraph (A)(i) shall assess the progress of the local coordinating entity with respect to—
 - i. accomplishing the purposes of this section for the Heritage Area; and
 - ii. achieving the goals and objectives of the approved management plan for the Heritage Area;
 - iii. analyze the Federal, State, local, and private investments in the Heritage Area to determine the leverage and impact of the investments; and
 - iv. review the management structure, partnership relationships, and funding of the Heritage Area for H. R. 146—284 purposes of identifying the critical components for sustainability of the Heritage Area.
- (s) REPORT—
- a) IN GENERAL—Based on the evaluation conducted under subparagraph (A)(i), the Secretary shall prepare a report that includes recommendations for the future role of the National Park Service, if any, with respect to the Heritage Area.
 - b) REQUIRED ANALYSIS.—If the report prepared under this subparagraph recommends that Federal funding for the Heritage Area be reauthorized, the report shall include an analysis of—
 - i. ways in which Federal funding for the Heritage Area may be reduced or eliminated; and
 - ii. the appropriate time period necessary to achieve the recommended reduction or elimination.
 - c) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—On completion of a report under this subparagraph, the Secretary shall submit the report to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate; and the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives.
- (t) RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES—
- a) IN GENERAL—Nothing in this section affects the authority of a Federal agency to provide technical or financial assistance under any other law.
 - b) CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION.—To the maximum extent practicable, the head of any Federal agency planning to conduct activities that may have an impact on the Heritage Area is encouraged to consult and coordinate the activities with the Secretary and the local coordinating entity.
 - c) OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES.—Nothing in this section—
 - i. modifies, alters, or amends any laws (including regulations) authorizing a Federal agency to manage Federal land under the jurisdiction of the Federal agency;
 - ii. limits the discretion of a Federal land manager to implement an approved land use plan within the boundaries of the Heritage Area; or
 - iii. modifies, alters, or amends any authorized use of Federal land under the jurisdiction of a Federal agency.

(u) PROPERTY OWNERS AND REGULATORY PROTECTIONS— Nothing in this section:

- a) abridges the rights of any owner of public or private property, including the right to refrain from participating in any plan, project, program, or activity conducted within the Heritage Area;
- b) requires any property owner to:
 - i. permit public access (including Federal, tribal, State, or local government access) to the property; or
 - ii. modify any provisions of Federal, tribal, State, or local law with regard to public access or use of private land;
- c) alters any duly adopted land use regulations, approved land use plan, or any other regulatory authority of any Federal, State, or local agency, or tribal government; H. R. 146—285
- d) conveys any land use or other regulatory authority to the local coordinating entity;
- e) authorizes or implies the reservation or appropriation of water or water rights;
- f) diminishes the authority of the State to manage fish and wildlife, including the regulation of fishing and hunting within the Heritage Area;
- g) creates any liability, or affects any liability under any other law, of any private property owner with respect to any person injured on the private property;
- h) restricts an Indian tribe from protecting cultural or religious sites on tribal land; or
- i) diminishes the trust responsibilities of government-to government obligations of the United States of any federally recognized Indian tribe.

(v) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS—

- a) IN GENERAL—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section \$10,000,000, of which not more than \$1,000,000 may be made available for any fiscal year.
- b) COST-SHARING REQUIREMENT—IN GENERAL—The Federal share of the total cost of any activity under this section shall be not more than 50 percent.
- c) FORM.—The non-Federal contribution—
 - i. shall be from non-Federal sources; and
 - ii. may be in the form of in-kind contributions of goods or services fairly valued.

(w) TERMINATION OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE—The authority of the Secretary to provide financial assistance under this section terminates on the date that is 15 years after the date of enactment.

Table 1.2
How the Management Plan Addresses Legislative Requirements

Legislation – Section K Management Plan	How the requirement is addressed	Management Plan Sections
Describe comprehensive policies, goals, strategies and recommendations for telling the story of the heritage of the region and encouraging long-term resource protection, enhancement, interpretation, funding, management and development of the heritage area.	This is the core of the management plan’s strategies. The Foundation Statement and each of the three strategy sections outlines goals, strategies and recommendations to tell the Delta’s story and advocate for resource protection. The business plan outlines strategies for an organizational structure that will facilitate the heritage area’s development.	Chapters 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9
Take into consideration existing state, county and local plans in the development and implementation of the management plan.	The planning process included extensive meetings and research about state, local and county plans to develop a management plan that will complement and enhance existing or projected plans.	Chapters 1 and 2
Include a description of actions and commitments that governments, private organizations and citizens plan to take to protect, enhance and interpret the cultural, historical, archaeological, natural and recreational resources of the heritage area.	The strategy sections and business plan identify key partnerships. Letters of support confirm partners’ intent to participate in the implementation of the management plan’s activities that are relevant to their discipline and area of interest.	Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 Appendix – Letters of Support
Specify existing and potential sources of funding or economic development strategies to protect, enhance, interpret, fund, manage and develop the heritage area.	The business plan includes information on current funding as well as identification of potential funding from federal, foundations, state and regional resources.	Chapter 9 – Business Plan

Table 1.2
How the Management Plan Addresses Legislative Requirements

Legislation – Section K Management Plan	How the requirement is addressed	Management Plan Sections
<p>Include an inventory of the cultural, historical, archaeological, natural and recreational resources of the heritage area relating to the stories and themes of the region that should be protected, enhanced, managed or developed.</p>	<p>The resource inventory is divided into topics corresponding to the heritage area’s themes: agriculture, Civil Rights, Civil War, immigration, culture and arts, Blues music, Native American, recreation, land resources, water resources, Mississippi River, biological resources, literature, National Register listings and state historic markers. Additionally, an analysis of the inventory is included in the plan.</p>	<p>Chapter 5 Appendix - Resource Inventory</p>
<p>Recommend policies and strategies for resource management including the development of intergovernmental and interagency agreements to protect the natural, historic, cultural, educational, scenic and recreational resources of the heritage area.</p>	<p>Development of agreements between the management entity and partners for the protection of resources is discussed in the business plan.</p>	<p>Chapter 9 – Business Plan Appendix – Letters of support from partners</p>
<p>Describe a program for implementation of the management plan including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance goals • Plans for resource protection, enhancement and interpretation • Specific commitments for implementation that have been made by the local coordinating entity or any government, organization, business or individual 	<p>Evaluation and measurement of effect is discussed in the business plan.</p> <p>Plans for resource protection, enhancement and interpretation are in the interpretive plan (Chapter 6) and the resource protection section (Chapter 7). The letters of support address commitments of partners.</p>	<p>Chapter 10 – Performance Goals Chapter 9- Business plan Chapter 6 - Interpretation Chapter 7 – Resource protection Appendix – Letters of Support from partners</p>
<p>Include an analysis of, and recommendations for, ways in which federal, state, tribal and local programs may best be coordinated (including the role of the National Park Service and other federal agencies associated with the heritage area).</p>	<p>Partnership coordination and agreements are discussed in the business plan. Partners are identified with references to the management plan section and strategies where they will be involved.</p>	<p>Chapter 9 – Business Plan Appendix – Letters of Support</p>
<p>Include an interpretive plan for the heritage area.</p>	<p>The interpretive plan is Chapter Six: <i>The Delta Experience: Perpetuate Culture and Tell the Story</i>.</p>	<p>Chapter 6 – Interpretive Plan</p>
<p>Include a business plan that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes the role, operation, financing and functions of the local coordinating entity and each of the major activities described in the management plan. • Provides adequate assurances that the local coordinating entity has the partnerships and financial and other resources necessary to implement the management plan for the heritage area. 	<p>As specified in P. Law 111-11, the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Partnership is the local coordinating entity and shall be responsible for the operation, management and stewardship of the NHA and its resources, as documented within this management plan.</p>	<p>Chapter 9 – Business Plan</p>



Public meetings were held throughout the planning process.

The Planning Process: Development of the MDNHA Management Plan

The MDNHA management plan was developed through a two-year planning process. The process included extensive public outreach to identify issues and opportunities and to engage a wide range of partners and stakeholders in contributing to the plan. This outreach will provide a solid foundation of partnerships for the plan's implementation. This section provides a summary of the planning process.

Civic Engagement

Civic engagement focused on consideration of options and identification of key goals and strategies. Activities included:

Communications - Regular communication was maintained through an email and mail database, creation of a Facebook page and website as well as press releases and interviews with local media.

- **Presentations** - Presentations were given to government and civic groups by the MDNHA staff and the consultant team. A powerpoint presentation was created to explain the purpose of the MDNHA and to invite participation.
- **Kick Off Meeting** - The management planning process officially began on November 15, 2011. Among the 150 attendees at the kick off meeting were elected officials from throughout the Delta and representatives from local and state historic preservation, tourism, economic development, education and community development agencies and organizations.
- **Committee Meetings** - In February 2012, four committees met to provide guidance for the research and outreach phase. Agendas included:
 - **Civic Engagement** – The committee assisted in plans for public meetings, made recommendations for stakeholder interviews and reviewed questions for an online stakeholders' survey.
 - **Interpretation/Visitor Experience** – The committee reviewed the process for developing interpretive themes and made recommendations for the consultant team's fieldwork and stakeholder interviews.
 - **Resource Stewardship** – The committee reviewed the process for creating an inventory, identified key issues in stewardship of natural and historic resources, made recommendations for the consultant team's fieldwork and reviewed NEPA (environmental review) requirements.
 - **Organization/Management** – The committee reviewed the current organizational structure and identified the decisions to consider as the plan was developed.

- **Public Meetings** - Three public meetings were held in May 2012 in Greenville, Vicksburg and Clarksdale, drawing 169 participants. The meetings included an overview of the heritage area’s purpose and the process for developing a management plan. At each meeting, participants were divided into breakout groups and engaged in a discussion of three questions:
 - What are the places in the Mississippi Delta that you like to visit or tell others to visit?
 - What do you see as the heritage of the Delta?
 - What are the important stories of the Delta?
- **Interviews** - Consultant team members conducted more than 80 interviews with representatives from historic preservation, museums, tourism, downtown revitalization programs, natural resources, government, business, civic involvement, archaeology, arts and cultural interests. MDNHA board members were also interviewed. Interviews provided information on activities currently underway and garnered insights on the wide range of visions for the heritage area’s role in shaping the Delta’s future by helping to preserve and celebrate its heritage and culture.
- **Online Survey** - A survey was developed as an outreach tool and was publicized through social media, the website, email notices and local media. Respondents were self-selected; therefore, the results are not a scientific analysis; rather they are the result of an additional outreach tool to gain additional insights. There were 239 surveys completed. (The survey summary is in the appendix.)
- **Site/Community Visits** - Consultant team members made more than 25 site/community visits to learn about the Delta’s history, culture and natural resources, to identify challenges and opportunities in economic development and to assess the current visitor experience. Visits included touring communities, historic sites, historic downtowns, the Blues Trail, churches, welcome centers, restaurants, cemeteries, cultural centers, art galleries and studios, archaeological sites, wild-life refuges, local, state and national parks, B&Bs, historic neighborhoods, museums and scenic byways. Site visits also provided the opportunity to talk with many residents.
- **Exchange Regional Community Forum** - Planning reached a milestone on November 7, 2012 when almost 100 participants attended the *MDNHA Exchange Regional Planning Forum* at Delta State University in Cleveland. Participants represented a variety of interests including historic preservation, tourism, downtown revitalization, parks (state

Table 1.3 Outreach and Engagement

- 15 board members
- 65 committee members – two rounds of committee meetings
- 26 presentations
- 26 newspaper articles
- 150 at kick off meeting
- 169 at first round of public meetings
- 80+ stakeholder interviews
- 90 at second round of public meetings
- 221 in partners email database
- 239 online surveys completed
- 100 at Exchange Community Forum
- 25 site/community visits
- 714 Friends on Facebook
- 30+ people/organizations contributed to the inventory



MDNHA Partnership Board of Directors



and national), museums, community development, education, arts, history/archives, business and events. Participants were offered seven topics in sessions repeated four times during the day. Each session included brainstorming ideas, discussing opportunities and identifying the preferred role of the heritage area related to the topic. Sessions topics included Culture and Living Traditions, Historic Preservation, Natural Resources, Interpretation and Education, Tourism Promotion, Visitor Services and Organization and Management. (The summary report is in the appendix.)

Research

The consultant team reviewed many documents to gain a broader understanding of the Mississippi Delta including economic and demographic studies, city and county

comprehensive plans, tourism reports, economic evaluations of the creative economy, conservation and historic preservation studies, state agency, community and nonprofit organization plans. In addition, team members read books and articles recommended by the heritage area's program manager. (A list of resources is the appendix.)

Board Meetings

The board of directors met regularly throughout the planning process to review progress and to make plans for upcoming activities. Board meetings included:

- **November 2011** – The board reviewed the scope of work for development of the management plan. A visioning session included discussion of the board's expectations for the National Heritage Area and identification of qualities they felt make the Delta a special, nationally significant place.
- **April 2012** – Board members reviewed plans for the three public meetings scheduled for May.
- **June 2012** – The board received an update on the research phase. Plans were developed for the November Exchange Community Forum.
- **September 2012** – Board members received a situation analysis/mid-point report. A work session focused on developing mission and vision statements for the heritage area and reviewed proposed themes.
- **November 2012** – The board met following the Exchange Regional Community Forum to debrief on the meeting.
- **January 2013** – The board reviewed a report from the Exchange Regional Community Forum and approved five themes for the heritage area as well as five alternatives/options.
- **February 2013** – The board met at the conclusion of the public meetings and committee meetings to review recommendations for a selected alternative. The board agreed with the recommendations and voted to select Alternative E – A Blend.

Identifying a Direction for MDNHA

Using information gathered from the planning process, five options, described as alternatives, were developed:

- Alternative A – No Action
- Alternative B – Tell the Delta's Story
- Alternative C – Build the Network
- Alternative D – Save Places, Perpetuate Culture
- Alternative E – A Blend: Partner to Save Places, Build the Network, Perpetuate Culture and Tell the Delta's Story

Legislative Considerations

The enabling legislation creating the MDNHA (Section 8008: Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area, Omnibus Federal Land Management Act of 2009) included specific duties of the local coordinating entity but did not include a directive as to the emphasis on each activity. This allowed for the planning process to consider each activity and to determine the best course of action. Among the duties of the local coordinating entity outlined in the legislation are:

- Carrying out programs and projects that recognize, protect and enhance important resource values within the heritage area
- Establishing and maintaining interpretive exhibits and programs within the heritage area
- Developing recreational and educational opportunities in the heritage area
- Increasing public awareness of, and appreciation for, natural, historic, scenic and cultural resources of the heritage area
- Protecting and restoring historic sites and buildings in the heritage area that are consistent with the themes of the heritage area
- Ensuring that signs identifying points of public access and sites of interest are posted throughout the heritage area
- Promoting a wide range of partnerships among governments, organizations and individuals to further the purposes of the heritage area
- Encourage, by appropriate means, economic development that is consistent with the purposes of the heritage area

Standards for Consideration of Options

Although each option would place activity emphasis in different areas, all options would advance common elements:

- Create a presence for the MDNHA as a leader in the Delta's heritage and culture
- Continually extend outreach to engage new partners
- Use themes as the basis for decisions related to programming and projects
- Develop activities to engage residents and visitors

Development of Options/Alternatives

Initially, four alternatives were developed: No Action, Tell the Story, Build the Network and Save Places. In January 2013, the MDNHA board of directors reviewed the proposed alternatives and considered a number of questions including:

- **Programming**
 - Does this area of focus reflect themes and long-term goals?
 - Does this area of focus reflect the desires of stakeholders who have participated in the planning process?
 - How will this alternative impact the area's resources?
 - Is this a primary focus area to direct our resources?
 - What results will we see?
 - Are the outcomes sustainable?
 - How could elements from other alternatives be incorporated?
- **Management and Implementation**
 - What expertise is needed for implementation?
 - Will the expertise come from staff or contracted consultants – or both?
 - Who will be the primary partners?
 - What funding strategies are needed?

In addition to approving the four alternatives, the board added a fifth alternative that would blend activities from three of the alternatives – Tell the Story, Build the Network and Save Places. The following descriptions were developed to explain each alternative:

Table 1.4 Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Alternatives

Alternative A: No Action	Alternative B: Tell the Delta’s Story	Alternative C: Build the Network	Alternative D: Save Places, Perpetuate Culture	Alternative E: A Blend: Partner to Save Places, Build the Network, Perpetuate Culture and Tell the Delta’s Story
<p>Alternative A would continue the current process for telling the Delta’s story, saving important places and building partnerships. There would be no increased emphasis on the goals of the heritage area and no coordinated efforts to meet heritage area goals. There would be no management plan to guide the process and federal NHA funding would not be available to support the region’s goals. No system would be developed to track the collective contribution of individual projects to creating a climate of sustainable economic development based on the Delta’s heritage and culture.</p>	<p>Alternative B would document and develop interpretation and education that reflects the Delta’s culture, heritage and natural resources connected to the heritage area’s themes (heritage attractions, collections, interpretive materials, etc.). The development and improvement of heritage resources would be fostered in order to tell the story. The heritage area would work with these resources to further develop the experience they offer and to position these places for promotion to visitors and residents.</p> <p>Local residents would be encouraged to learn about and appreciate their heritage. Visitors would be offered a variety of ways to experience the Delta’s heritage. Students would experience the Delta through new curriculum.</p>	<p>Alternative C would position the heritage area as a convener, bringing together partners in preservation, conservation, tourism, community development and other disciplines to work together to achieve heritage area goals. The heritage area will form new committees or associations to address issues and opportunities related to these disciplines.</p> <p>The heritage area would take the lead in some program and project development and would be a partner or advocate for other programs and projects as specified in the management plan.</p> <p>The heritage area would convene partners on a regular schedule and would provide a venue for accolades for partner accomplishments that further heritage area goals.</p>	<p>Alternative D would focus the heritage area on documenting, saving and revitalizing the built environment (historic structures), conserving the landscape (natural resources), and preserving the region’s culture and heritage (living traditions).</p> <p>The heritage area would develop interpretive and educational programs connected to places to communicate their importance as part of the Delta’s story to residents and visitors.</p> <p>The heritage area would work to build local knowledge and skills in preservation. The heritage area would work to increase awareness of the economic impact of saving places and to build support for preservation.</p>	<p>Alternative E would blend elements of B, C and D to create a climate of sustainable economic development based on the Delta’s heritage and culture. The heritage area would build a strong network of partners in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Document stories and resources including the built environment (historic structures), landscape (natural resources), culture (living traditions), heritage attractions, collections, etc. * Save, revitalize and perpetuate resources through training, advocacy and direct action. * Tell the story through these resources with new interpretation and educational resources. * Increase awareness, interest and support in the Delta’s heritage and culture by residents and visitors. * Position the heritage area as a convener, leader and advocate and give accolades for partner accomplishments that further heritage area goals.

Considering Programmatic Implications

Public meetings and committee meetings in February 2013 focused on consideration of the five alternatives and recommendation of a selected alternative:

- **Public Meetings** - Public meetings were held in Greenwood and Southaven. Participants were asked to consider how the selection of the five alternatives would impact culture and living traditions, historic preservation, natural resources, interpretation and education, tourism promotion, visitor services and outreach and engagement. Participants at both public meetings selected *Alternative E – A Blend*.
- **Committee Meetings** - The public meetings were followed with meetings of the interpretation/visitor experience, civic engagement and resource stewardship committees. Each committee was asked to consider the impact of the alternatives on its particular topic specific to their committee’s focus area, i.e. What impact would an alternative have on interpretation and the visitor experience, civic engagement or resource stewardship? Committee members agreed with the recommended selection of *Alternative E – A Blend*.
- **Board of Directors Selects Alternative 5** - Following the public meetings and committee meetings, the board met to review recommendations for a selected alternative. The board voted unanimously to adopt Alternative E that blends elements of three of the alternatives. To further define the intention of a blended alternative, the board’s steering and policy committee conducted a work session to recommend specific strategies for inclusion in the management plan. The recommendations were forwarded to the full board and received approval. Strategies are developed in three interrelated categories to form the identified “blend” alternative.

Note: The activity emphasis in each alternative was shared during public meetings and committee meetings to help participants understand the types of activities that would be the focus if an alternative were selected. The activity examples were derived from the planning process (public meetings, stakeholder interviews, etc.) but were not intended to be considered as final strategies at this point in the planning process. As the planning process progressed, some of these activities were determined to be appropriate strategies and are included in the management plan’s strategy sections with extensive explanation and action steps.

Alternatives (Options)

(A, B, C and D – considered but dismissed)

Alternative A **No Action**

Alternative A would continue the current process for telling the Delta’s story, saving important places and building partnerships. Areas that would not be addressed are:

- No increased emphasis on the goals of the heritage area and no coordinated efforts to meet heritage area goals
- No management plan to guide the process

- Federal National Heritage Area funding would not be available to support the region's goals.
- No system would be developed to track the collective contribution of individual projects to create a climate of sustainable economic development based on the Delta's heritage and culture.
- The region would be likely to experience continued economic decline.

Alternative B **Tell the Delta's Story**

Description

Alternative B would focus primarily on documentation and the development of interpretation and education that reflects the Delta's culture, heritage and natural resources connected to the heritage area's themes. The coordinating entity would work with heritage resources to further develop the experience they offer and to position these places for promotion to visitors and residents. Local residents would be encouraged to learn about and appreciate their heritage. Visitors would be offered a variety of ways to experience the Delta's heritage. Students would experience the Delta through new curriculum.

Activity Emphasis

To develop and interpret the Delta's story, the coordinating entity would take the lead in some activities and serve as an active partner in others. Focus areas would include:

- Research and document cultural and living traditions, significant historical events and associated places
- Create a clearinghouse for resources that help develop and tell the Delta's story such as archival and artifact collections, artisan directories, contacts for historians and researchers, and technical assistance for interpretive planning
- Identify locations to tell stories and develop sites, museums or exhibits and provide technical assistance for interpretive development
- Develop new and engaging interpretation in a variety of formats such as guidebooks, audiotours, exhibits, events, children's activities and thematic driving and walking tours
- Create new educational programs for schools and youth-oriented organizations
- Work with tourism agencies to promote the Delta experience

Alternative C **Build the Network**

Description

Alternative C would position the coordinating entity as a convener, bringing together partners in preservation, conservation, tourism, community development and other disciplines to work together to achieve heritage area goals. The coordinating entity would form new committees or associations to address issues and opportunities related to these disciplines. The coordinating entity would take the lead in some program and project development and would be a partner or advocate for other programs and projects as specified in the management

plan. The coordinating entity would convene partners on a regular schedule and would provide a venue for accolades for partner accomplishments that further heritage area goals.

Activity Emphasis

In order to build a strong network of partners, the coordinating entity would take an appropriate role such as convener and organizer, leader and implementer, facilitator, funder, advocate, technical advisor and educator. Focus areas would include:

- Create an identity for the heritage area that conveys a clear and consistent message
- Document and publicize the economic value of investment in heritage preservation and in heritage tourism
- Communicate regularly with elected officials and other influential partners about the goals and achievements of heritage area partners
- Provide recognition for excellence in preserving, interpreting and promoting the Delta's heritage
- Regularly convene partners to address issues of preservation, tourism and other topics. Form committees to address issues as needed
- Provide a forum to address issues of race, economics and history
- Serve as a clearinghouse for volunteer opportunities with partner organizations and the heritage area's management entity
- Offer grants to provide seed money supporting projects that meeting heritage area goals
- Work with tourism partners to expand involvement of all counties and attractions in tourism promotion
- Advocate for and support efforts to improve and expand visitor services
- Develop educational programs for youth-oriented organizations and schools
- Create opportunities for students in high school and college to learn about the Delta through research and interpretive projects

Alternative D

Save Places, Perpetuate Culture

Description

Alternative D would focus the coordinating entity on documenting, saving and revitalizing the built environment (historic structures), conserving the landscape (natural resources), and preserving the region's culture and heritage (living traditions). The coordinating entity would develop interpretive and educational programs connected to places to communicate their importance as part of the Delta's story to residents and visitors. The coordinating would work to build local knowledge and skills in preservation. The coordinating entity would work to increase awareness of the economic impact of saving places and to build support for preservation.

Activity Emphasis

The coordinating entity would take a leadership role in communicating the importance of saving places that tell the Delta's story. Focus areas would include:

- Increase awareness of the importance of preserving historic resources through publicity campaigns, documentation of best practices and awards programs
- Advocate for historic preservation by working with towns, counties, state agencies and organizations



- Encourage stewardship of natural resources by working with towns, counties, state agencies and organizations
- Document and publicize threatened resources
- Serve as a clearinghouse for activities related to preserving historic, cultural and natural resources and provide connections for support
- Provide support for preservation through surveys, workshops and symposia

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative E

A Blend: Partner to Save Places, Build the Network, Perpetuate Culture and Tell the Delta's Story

Alternative E would blend elements of B, C and D to build a strong network of partners and create a climate of sustainable economic development based on the Delta's heritage and culture. The coordinating entity would work with partners to document stories and resources including the built environment (historic structures), landscape (natural resources), culture (living traditions), heritage attractions, collections, etc.; save, revitalize and perpetuate resources through training, advocacy and direct action; tell the story through these resources with new interpretation and educational resources. Increase awareness, interest and support in the Delta's heritage and culture by residents and visitors. The coordinating entity would be positioned as a convener, leader and advocate for saving places, perpetuating culture and telling the Delta's story.

The following activities generally describe the types of actions that may be completed as the plan is implemented. The coordinating entity will comply with all appropriate laws and funding requirements in implementing the strategies and actions outlined in this management plan. As specific projects are implemented, they will be reviewed for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act; consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will take place in accordance with the Endangered Species Act; and a review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act will be conducted for each undertaking involving a federal nexus. Partners or grant recipients receiving federal funds for projects in the heritage area are also required to comply with the applicable laws and policies.

Activity Emphasis

Preservation and perpetuation of historic, natural and cultural resources would encompass a wide variety of activities from Alternatives B, C and D including:

- Increase awareness of the importance of preserving historic resources through publicity campaigns, documentation of best practices and awards programs
- Advocate for historic preservation by working with towns, counties, state agencies and organizations
- Encourage stewardship of natural resources by working with towns, counties, state agencies and organizations
- Document and publicize threatened resources
- Serve as a clearinghouse for activities related to preserving historic, cultural and natural resources and provide connections for support
- Provide support for preservation through surveys, workshops and symposia
- Create an identity for the heritage area that conveys a clear and consistent message
- Document and publicize the economic value of investment in heritage preservation and in heritage tourism
- Communicate regularly with elected officials and other influential partners about the goals and achievements of heritage area partners
- Provide recognition for excellence in preserving, interpreting and promoting the Delta's culture and heritage
- Regularly convene partners to address issues of preservation, tourism and other topics. Form committees to address issues as needed
- Provide a forum to address issues of race, economics and history
- Serve as a clearinghouse for volunteer opportunities with partner organizations and the heritage area's management entity
- Offer grants to provide seed money supporting projects that meeting heritage area goals
- Work with tourism partners to expand involvement of all counties and attractions in tourism promotion
- Advocate for and support efforts to improve and expand visitor services
- Develop educational programs for youth-oriented organizations and schools
- Create opportunities for students in high school and college to learn about the Delta through research and interpretive projects
- Research and document cultural and living traditions, significant historical events and associated places
- Create a clearinghouse for resources that help develop and tell the Delta's story such as archival and artifact collections, artisan directories, contacts for historians and researchers, and technical assistance for interpretive planning
- Identify locations to tell stories and develop sites, museums or exhibits and providing technical assistance for interpretive development
- Develop new and engaging interpretation in a variety of formats such as guidebooks, audiotours, exhibits, events, children's activities and thematic driving and walking tours
- Create new educational programs for schools and youth-oriented organizations
- Work with tourism agencies to promote the Delta experience

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

Key Decisions for the Alternative

A Blend: Partner to Save Places, Build the Network, Perpetuate Culture and Tell the Delta's Story

The selection of Alternative E – A Blend resulted from the board of directors' evaluation of several factors:

- The alternative enables the development of strategies that address and accomplish the directives stated in the heritage area's legislation. Legislation directs that the coordinating entity will work with numerous partners to preserve, protect and recognize important historic, scenic, cultural and natural resources, to tell the story of the Delta and to encourage sustainable economic development.
- The alternative addresses the mission statement: the heritage area "fosters preservation, perpetuation and celebration of the Delta's heritage through a climate of collaboration and sustainable economic development."
- The alternative addresses the vision statement that describes the heritage area as a place where "residents, communities, institutions and cultural groups have collaborated to preserve the special places connected to the Delta's past, to honor and celebrate its diverse traditions and to document and share the history..."
- The alternative responds to the desires and recommendations of stakeholders who participated in public meetings, committee meetings, interviews and surveys to express their preference for a heritage area that encompasses comprehensive goals.
- The alternative allows for strategies connected to the heritage area's themes. All activities in preservation, interpretation and promotion will reflect and communicate the heritage area's themes.

The board further defined the emphasis of the selected alternative:

- Preservation of historic resources that connect to the selected themes will be a primary focus, and the coordinating entity will take a leadership role in this effort. Board members agreed with stakeholder input during the research phase that noted repeatedly the importance of saving places that tell the Delta's story. Although there have been individual and community efforts to save places, there is no regional entity advocating for preservation through raising awareness and providing resources and recognition for preservation efforts. The coordinating will focus on preservation in four ways:
 - 1) Raise awareness of the threat of losing important places
 - 2) Direct resources toward training, education and technical assistance for preservation
 - 3) Provide recognition for places that have been saved
 - 4) Secure funds to enable the coordinating entity to award seed grants for the preservation of historic resources
- The coordinating entity's role in the stewardship of natural resources will be as a partner to the agencies already engaged in this work. The coordinating entity will not engage in activities such as construction of bike trails or greenways (but will be supportive of agencies or governments who are doing this work and may provide seed grants for these activities) but will undertake activities such as development of itineraries or guides to encourage their usage.

- Plans for telling the story will be coordinated with plans for preservation of historic resources. All strategies will connect to the themes developed for the heritage area.
- Work will be coordinated with partners. The coordinating entity will identify what is already being done to tell the story – such as oral histories, school programs, events, museums, etc. – and will develop activities to:
 - 1) Support the work already underway by partners
 - 2) Develop new projects and programs to tell stories that are not already being told
- The coordinating entity’s work in telling the story will take a regional perspective – for example, creating a regional Civil Rights experience that includes existing efforts (such as brochures or tours) and further developing this theme through other interpretive methods to create a larger, unified experience.
- Plans will be developed to reach out to many audiences including tourists, school groups (K-12) or organizations targeting this age group, higher education (such as college students majoring in history, preservation, etc.) and residents of the Delta.
- Telling the story will also encompass advocating for appropriate visitor services to ensure a good visitor experience.
- The network will be built by the coordinating entity taking appropriate roles in strategies to save places, perpetuate culture and tell the Delta’s story. Each strategy will reflect the coordinating entity’s role as a leader or partner.
- Strategies will offer opportunities for stakeholders and partners to engage in a variety of ways.

Criteria for Strategy Development

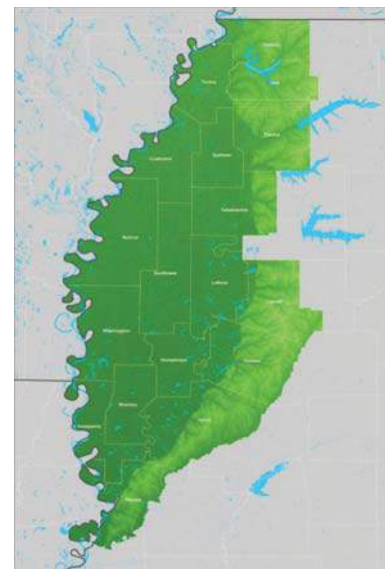
Using the selected alternative, the following criteria guided strategy selection and development:

- **Connect to Themes**—In order to advance a greater understanding of the Delta’s history and culture, strategies connect to the statement of national significance and the five themes.
- **Build a Network**—Strategies provide opportunities for ongoing outreach and engagement of Mississippi Delta residents. Strategies create projects or programs that bring partners together in many disciplines including preservation, conservation, tourism and community development.
- **Focus on Quality and Authenticity**--Projects and programs will reflect a focus on quality and authenticity through research and documentation, the adherence to professional standards in all relevant fields, and plans for maintaining projects or programs beyond the development stage.
- **Save and Celebrate**—The coordinating entity seeks to advance the understanding of the Delta’s past and its contributions to the American story; preserve resources including the built environment, natural resources and living traditions; and recognize the achievements of the MDNHA and its partners.
- **Probability of Success**—The coordinating entity will prioritize projects and programs that have a high probability of success based on partner commitments, existing planning, potential funding sources, and projected outcomes.
- **Adhere to Best Practices** – All strategies will adhere to best practices including monitoring of potential impacts on historic or natural resources. (Discussed in Chapter 10: *Implementation Procedures and Schedule*).

Chapter 2

Introduction

The Mississippi Delta's historical patterns of declining population, poverty and unemployment create special challenges for the MDNHA coordinating entity and its partners in accomplishing the goals and strategies in this management plan. A review of the statistical charts in this chapter illuminate this reality - almost a third of the Delta's residents live below the poverty threshold, disproportionately affecting African Americans because they represent 60.3% of the population of the Delta. Declining populations over the last century and lower graduation rates than the rest of the state and nation make it difficult to build a workforce in many areas. In recent decades, however, many organizations have addressed these challenges by working to revitalize communities, create new jobs based on the Delta's culture and heritage and to build new businesses, particularly those that can attract more visitors. The socioeconomic information in this chapter is referenced throughout this management plan. Many of the coordinating entity's strategies intended to add value to and partner with organizations through the Delta that are addressing these economic issues by advocating for the preservation and perpetuation of the Delta's culture and heritage as a way to generate economic impact and improve the quality of life for residents.



A Picture of the Mississippi Delta

The MDNHA includes 18 counties that contain land located in the alluvial floodplain of the Mississippi Delta: Bolivar, Carroll, Coahoma, DeSoto, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Panola, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tunica, Warren, Washington and Yazoo.

Table 2. 1
Counties in the MDNHA

Bolivar	Quitman
Carroll	Sharkey
Coahoma	Sunflower
DeSoto	Tallahatchie
Holmes	Tate
Humphreys	Tunica
Issaquena	Warren
Leflore	Washington
Panola	Yazoo

Although the Mississippi Delta is rich in culture and heritage, it is also the poorest region of the poorest state in the country. The region continues to lose population, and almost a third of residents live below the poverty threshold. The following charts show the decrease in population from 2010 to 2012, population make-up of each county, percent of individuals below the poverty threshold, unemployment rates and education levels. (*U.S. Census, 2012 data*)

Only two counties – DeSoto and Yazoo – experienced population growth between 2010 and 2012.

Seven counties experienced growth in the percentage of residents living below the poverty threshold. The poverty threshold for Delta counties in 2012 ranged from a low of 9.5% (DeSoto County) to a high of 43.2% (Holmes County) with a region-wide average of 31.7%, a slight decrease from an average of 32.98% in 2010.

This compares to Mississippi's statewide average in 2012 of 21.6%, a decrease from 21.8% in 2010, and a national average of 14.3%, a decrease from 16% in 2010. (The poverty threshold is considered to be \$11,344 for an individual under the age of 65 and \$22,133 for a family of four with two children and two adults.)

Table 2.2 MDNHA Communities

County	County Seat	Cities and Towns	Unincorporated
Bolivar	Cleveland Rosedale	Cleveland, Rosedale, Mound Bayou, Shaw, Shelby, Benoit, Beulah, Boyle, Duncan, Gunnison, Merigold, Pace, Renova, Winstonville	Alligator, Choctaw, Deeson, Hushpuckena, Lamont, Litton, Malvina, O'Reilly, Perthshire, Round Lake, Scott, Skene, Stringtown, Symonds, Waxhaw
Carroll	Carrollton	Carrollton, North Carrollton, Vaiden	Avalon, Black Hawk, Coila, McCarley, Teoc, Valley Hill
Coahoma	Clarksdale	Clarksdale, Coahoma, Friars Point, Jonestown, Lula, Lyon	Bobo, Claremont, Clover Hill, Dublin, Farrell, Hillhouse, Lu-Rand, Mattson, Moon Lake (community), Rena Lara, Rich, Roundaway, Rudyard, Sherard, Stovall
DeSoto	Hernando	Hernando, Horn Lake, Olive Branch, Southaven, Walls, Memphis (village), Lynchburg	Cockrum, Days, Eudora, Lake Cormorant, Lake View, Lewisburg, Mineral Wells, Nesbit, Pleasant Hill, West Days
Holmes	Lexington	Durant, Lexington, Cruger, Goodman, Pickens, Tchula	Acona, Mississippi, Coxburg, Mississippi, Ebenezer, Mississippi, Egypt, Franklin, Good Hope, Howard, Ituma, Lexington, Marcella, Montgomery, Owens Wells, Richland, Tchula, Thornton, Tolarville, West
Humphreys	Belzoni	Belzoni, Isola, Louise, Silver City	Lodi, Midnight
Issaquena	Mayersville	Mayersville	Fitler, Grace, Valley Park
Leflore	Greenwood	Greenwood, Itta Bena, Morgan City, Schlater, Sidon	Berclair, Browning, McNutt, Minter City, Money, Rising Sun, Ruby, Shellmound, Sunnyside, Swiftown, Quito, Wildwood
Panola	Sardis Batesville	Batesville, Como, Courtland, Crenshaw (partly in Quitman County), Crowder (mostly in Quitman County), Sardis, Pope	Askew, Curtis Station, Glenville, Longtown, Pleasant Grove
Quitman	Marks	Marks, Crenshaw (mostly in Panola County), Crowder (partly in Panola County), Falcon, Lambert, Sledge	Allen, Barksdale, Belen, Birdie, Bobo, Chancy, Darling, Denton, Essex, Hinchcliff, Locke Station, Longstreet, Oliverfried, Riverview, Sabino, Vance (partly in Tallahatchie County), Walnut, West Marks, Yarbrough
Sharkey	Rolling Fork	Rolling Fork, Anguilla, Cary	Delta City, Nitta Yuma, Onward, Panther Burn, Patmost

MDNHA Communities

County	County Seat	Cities and Towns	Unincorporated
Sunflower	Indianola	Indianola, Drew, Moorhead, Ruleville, Shaw (mostly in Bolivar County), Doddsville, Inverness, Sunflower	Baird, Baltzer, Blaine, Boyer, Caile, Dockery, Dwyer, Fairview, Heathman, Holly Ridge, Kinlock, Linn, Rome, Roundaway, Steiner, Stephensville
Tallahatchie	Charleston Sumner	Charleston, Sumner, Tutwiler, Webb, Glendora	Black Bayou, Brazil, Cascilla, Cowart, Effie Enid, Leverett, Paynes, Philipp, Swan Lake, Teasdale, Tippto, Vance (partly in Quitman County), Whitehead
Tate	Senatobia	Senatobia, Coldwater	Arkabutla, Independence, Looxahoma, Sarah, Savage, Strayhorn, Thyatira, Tyro
Tunica	Tunica	Tunica, North Tunica	Austin, Banks, Bowdre, Clayton, Dubbs, Dundee, Evansville, Hollywood, Lost Lake, Maud, Mhoon Landing, Pink, Prichard, Tunica Resorts, White Oak
Warren	Vicksburg	Vicksburg	Bovina, Eagle Bend, Flowers, Redwood, Rose Hill, Waltersville, Warrenton, Yokena
Washington	Greenville	Greenville, Hollandale, Leland, Arcola, Metcalfe	Avon, Burdett, Chatham, Elizabeth, Glen Allan, Murphy, Stoneville, Tribett, Wayside, Winterville
Yazoo	Yazoo City	Yazoo City, Betonia, Eden, Satartia	Anding, Benton, Carter, Holly Bluff, Hopewell Landing, Little Yazoo, Midway, Oil City, Tinsley, Vaughan

Table 2.3 Mississippi Delta Demographics 2012*

County	Total Population	Population Decrease or Increase from 2010	African-American	White	% Below Poverty
Bolivar	33,904	-0.7%	64.8%	33.7%	34.6%
Carroll	10,423	-1.6%	33.5%	65.3%	23.9%
Coahoma	25,709	-1.7%	75.3%	23.5%	37.2%
DeSoto	166,234	+3.1%	23.4%	73.4%	9.5%
Holmes	18,796	-2.1%	82.8%	16.2%	43.2%
Humphreys	9,189	-2.0%	74.8%	23.9%	42.0%
Issaquena	1,386	-1.4%	64.4%	34.6%	40.0%
Leflore	30,948	-4.2%	72.7%	25.7%	40.4%
Panola	34,473	-0.7%	49.4%	49.1%	28.1%
Quitman	7,798	-5.2%	69.2%	29.4%	36.3%
Sharkey	4,799	-2.4%	70.7%	28.4%	39.2%
Sunflower	28,431	-3.5%	72.6%	26.2%	31.8%
Tallahatchie	15,111	-1.7%	56.4%	41.4%	32.8%
Tate	28,490	-1.4%	30.6%	67.6%	18.1%
Tunica	10,475	-2.8%	74.4%	23.8%	27.2%
Warren	48,084	-1.4%	47.6%	50.4%	22.4%
Washington	49,750	-2.7%	71.3%	27.2%	36%
Yazoo	28,195	+0.5%	57.1%	41.2%	32.2%
TOTAL	552,195				

* Source: U.S. Census 2012

(*African Americans represent an average of 60.6% of the Delta's population. Whites are 37.8% of the population. The remainder of the population includes Hispanics and Asians.)

The population of the Mississippi Delta declined throughout the 20th century with the exception of a few counties as seen on the following chart:

Table 2.4 Mississippi Delta Population Changes: 1930-2010

	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	% Change 1930-2010
Bolivar	71,051	67,574	63,004	54,464	49,409	45,965	41,875	40,633	34,145	-51.94%
Carroll	19,765	20,651	15,499	11,177	9,397	9,776	9,237	10,769	10,597	-46.38%
Coahoma	46,327	48,333	49,361	46,212	40,447	36,918	31,665	30,622	26,151	-43.55%
DeSoto	25,438	26,663	24,599	23,891	35,885	53,930	67,910	107,199	161,252	+84.22%
Holmes	38,534	39,710	33,301	27,096	23,120	22,970	21,604	21,609	19,198	-50.17%
Humphreys	24,729	26,257	23,115	19,093	14,601	13,931	12,134	11,206	9,375	-62.09%
Issaquena	5,734	6,433	4,966	3,576	2,737	2,513	1,909	2,274	1,406	-75.48%
Leflore	53,506	53,406	51,813	47,142	42,111	41,525	37,341	37,947	32,317	-39.60%
Panola	28,648	34,421	31,271	28,791	26,829	28,164	29,996	34,274	34,707	+17.45%
Quitman	25,304	27,191	25,885	21,019	15,888	12,636	10,490	10,117	8,223	-67.50%
Sharkey	13,877	15,433	12,903	10,738	8,937	7,964	7,066	6,580	4,916	-64.57%
Sunflower	66,363	61,007	56,031	45,750	37,047	34,844	32,867	34,369	29,450	-55.62%
Tallahatchie	35,568	34,166	30,486	24,081	19,388	17,157	15,210	14,903	15,378	-56.76%
Tate	17,671	19,309	18,011	18,138	18,544	20,119	21,432	25,370	28,886	+38.82%
Tunica	21,233	22,610	21,664	16,826	11,854	9,652	8,164	9,227	10,778	-49.24%
Warren	35,785	39,595	39,616	42,206	44,981	51,627	47,880	49,644	48,773	+26.62%
Washington	54,310	67,576	70,504	78,863	70,581	72,344	67,935	62,977	51,137	-5.84%
Yazoo	37,262	40,091	35,712	31,653	27,304	27,349	25,506	28,149	28,065	-24.68%
TOTAL	621,105	650,426	607,741	550,716	499,060	509,384	490,221	537,869	554,754	-10.6%

Source: U.S. Decennial Census

Unemployment averages 12.8% in the region - above the national average of 7.9% as well as the 9.3% average for the State of Mississippi. Only DeSoto County ranks below the national unemployment average. DeSoto and Carroll counties rank lower than the state average.

**Table 2.5
Unemployment Rates for Mississippi Delta Counties***

Bolivar	11.1%
Carroll	9.2%
Coahoma	13.9%
DeSoto	7.3%
Holmes	17.6%
Humphreys	17.1%
Issaquena	13.3%
Leflore	13.5%
Panola	11.7%

Table 2.5
Unemployment Rates for Mississippi Delta Counties*

Quitman	13.4%
Sharkey	12.4%
Sunflower	15.7%
Tallahatchie	11.4%
Tate	10.6%
Tunica	15.8%
Warren	10.9%
Washington	14.8%
Yazoo	12.4%

* Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, December 2011
 -January 2013

Graduation rates from high school and college are lower in the Mississippi Delta than the state as a whole. High school graduation averages 72.2% versus 80.3% for the state. College graduation averages 14.7% versus 19.7% for the state.

Table 2.6
Graduation Rates for Mississippi Delta Counties*

	High School	Bachelor's or Higher
Bolivar	71.8%	19.5%
Carroll	78.8%	14%
Coahoma	75%	16.5%
DeSoto	88.1%	21.3%
Holmes	69.5%	11.8%
Humphreys	64.7%	10.9%
Issaquena	59.9%	4.2%
Leflore	68.3%	16.1%
Panola	72.8%	14%
Quitman	65.9%	11%
Sharkey	71.8%	19.2%
Sunflower	68.8%	13.8%
Tallahatchie	63.7%	9.1%
Tate	80.2%	14.7%
Tunica	69.9%	13.7%
Warren	82.7%	23.8%
Washington	74.6%	18.8%
Yazoo	74.4%	13%

Source: U.S. Census 2012

Transportation in the Mississippi Delta

Highways

Highway 61

This highway extends 1,400 miles from New Orleans, Louisiana to Wyoming, Minnesota. In the Mississippi Delta, the highway begins in Vicksburg and continues north to the state line into Memphis. It is a designated National Scenic Byway. It is also known as the Blues Highway through the Mississippi Delta. U.S. 61 is divided from the Tennessee state line to U.S. Highway 82 in Leland.

U.S. Highway 82

This east-west route is part of an approximately 1,600-mile road extending from New Mexico to the Georgia coast. In Mississippi, the roadway is four-laned, passing through Greenville, Indianola, Greenwood and Winona in the Delta.

U.S. Route 49

This highway extends approximately 500 miles from Piggott, Arkansas to Gulfport, Mississippi. It was the state's first highway to be four-laned in a primarily rural area. In the Mississippi Delta, the road begins at Yazoo City where the route splits into U.S. Route 49E and U.S. Route 49W, both heading north. U.S. Route 49E travels to Greenwood where it connects to U.S. Highway 82. U.S. Route 49W travels through Belzoni and Indianola where it connects with U.S. Highway 82. At Clarksdale, the highway passes through an interchange at U.S. Highway 61 and continues north to Arkansas.

Mississippi Highway 1

Mississippi Highway 1 parallels the Mississippi River, traveling approximately 150 miles through the Mississippi Delta counties of Sharkey, Issaquena, Washington, Bolivar and Coahoma. A portion of the highway is part of the Great River Road.

Mississippi Highway 8

The highway begins near the Mississippi state line and continues to travel west through the Mississippi Delta to the western state line at Rosedale.

Interstate 55

This north-south road travels approximately 1,000 miles from Louisiana to Chicago, Illinois. The Mississippi portion of the road travels from Southaven on the Tennessee border just south of Memphis to the Louisiana border. The road travels on the eastern border of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area.

Interstate 20

This east-west road travels approximately 1,500 miles from Texas to South Carolina. Interstate 20 enters Mississippi by crossing the Mississippi River and entering Vicksburg. The road runs east across the state connecting to Alabama.

Interstate 69 (under construction)

In 2007, I-69 was designated a Corridor of the Future by the U.S. Department of Transportation. It is intended to travel from the Canadian border in Michigan to the Mexican border in Texas. Construction has been sporadic due to federal funding reductions. In Mississippi, the route will follow Highway 61 from Memphis to Merigold then turn west and cross the river north of Greenville.

Airports – Commercial Airline Service

Memphis International Airport

Located southeast of downtown Memphis, Tennessee, airline carriers include AirTran, American, Delta, United, U.S. Airways and Southwest.

Jackson-Medgar Wiley Evers Municipal Airport Authority

Located in Jackson, Mississippi, east of the MDNHA, airline carriers include American, Delta, United, U.S. Airways and Southwest.

Mid-Delta Regional Airport

Located in Greenville and owned by the city, it is the only commercial airport in the Mississippi Delta and is served by Silver Airways with connections to Tupelo and Atlanta.

General Aviation Airports (no commercial airline service)

Belzoni Municipal Airport – Belzoni, Humphreys County

C.A. Moore Airport – Lexington, Holmes County

Charleston Municipal Airport – Charleston, Tallahatchie County

Cleveland Municipal Airport – Cleveland, Bolivar County

Fletcher Field – Clarksdale, Coahoma County

Greenwood-Leflore Airport (located in Carroll County)

Hollandale Municipal Airport – Hollandale, Washington County

Indianola Municipal Airport – Indianola Sunflower County

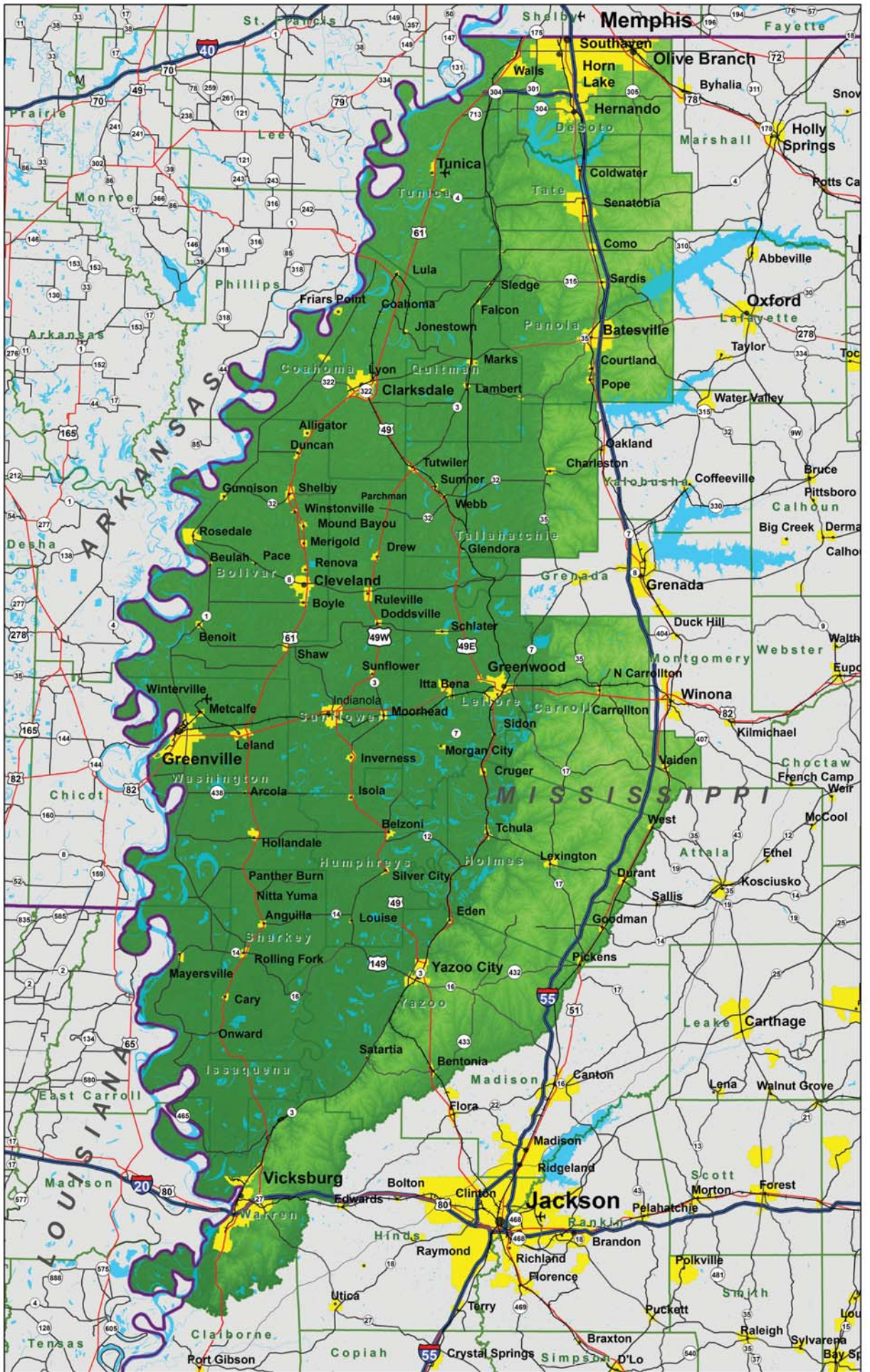
Panola County Airport – Batesville, Panola County

Ruleville-Drew Airport – Drew, Sunflower County

Tunica Municipal Airport – Tunica, Tunica County

Vicksburg Municipal Airport – Vicksburg, Warren County

Yazoo County Airport – Yazoo City, Yazoo County



Economic Development in the Mississippi Delta

Economic development in the Delta is tracked using a variety of measures depending on the purpose of the research study. This makes it difficult to determine exactly what factors are most significant in driving the Delta's economy and to identify areas with the greatest potential for growth. Economic research studies were found in four primary areas – top occupations, tourism employment, new jobs and employment in the creative economy. Each study produced different data and presents the data in different ways:

- **Top Occupations** - According to a compilation of county profiles from the Mississippi Development Authority, the top 10 occupations in the Mississippi Delta's 18 counties are service, farm, office work and office administration (tied for top employment), sales (second), production (third), transportation and management (tied for fourth), education (fifth) and construction (sixth).

Source: Mississippi Development Authority, county profiles.

Tourism Employment - The Mississippi Development Authority's Tourism Division research documents direct tourism employment in the Delta totaling 21,780 with a total percentage of employment averaging 8.7% in the 18 counties. (Note: Tunica County represents a large part of these numbers - 9,500 employees and 81% of the population employed in tourism.)

Source: Fiscal Year 2012 Economic Contribution of Travel and Tourism in Mississippi, February 2013. MDA Tourism Division, Research Program Area.

- **New Jobs** – The Mississippi Main Street Association tracks investment in revitalizing downtowns and the resulting creation of new jobs in the Delta's 10 Main Street communities (Cleveland, Batesville, Greenville, Greenwood, Hernando, Indianola, Lexington, Senatobia, Tunica, Vicksburg). The most recent study found that 703 jobs were created between January 2010 and June 2013.

Source: Main Street Report, Mississippi Main Street Association, June 2013.

- **Creative Economy** - The Mississippi Arts Commission partnered with the Mississippi Development Authority to examine creative industries in a study published in 2011, *Mississippi's Creative Economy: Realizing the Economic Potential of Creativity in Mississippi*. Looking at statewide employment in the creative economy, the Delta ranks lowest at 6.2% (jobs per 1,000 people) compared to the Capital/River Region at 15.1%, Coastal Region at 13.4%, Hills Region at 10.9% and Pines Region at 8.6%. Comparing employment in the six creative clusters against national averages (design; film, video and media; literary and publishing; culinary arts; and museums and heritage), the Delta Region ranked fifth among the state's five regions.

Comprehensive Plans and Economic Development

Communities that have developed comprehensive plans focus on issues such as community appearance, health, safety, education and economic development. Some plans include goals for economic development based on culture and heritage. For example:

- **Coahoma County Strategic Plan – 2012-2022**

"Develop and launch a marketing plan that seeks to attract new residents, tourists and businesses to Coahoma County. Capitalize on the area's cultural history and assets, including Aaron Henry (Civil Rights movement leader and politician), Charlie Conerly (athlete and former NFL star), and Early Wright (legendary disc jockey)."

- **Senatobia Comprehensive Plan - 2008 – 2023**

"Weary travelers on Interstate 55 will stop in Senatobia and be recharged by the quaint downtown, historic neighborhoods and attractive business districts, and thereafter, Senatobia will be one of their favorite places to stop and rest. Other visitors will stay at the quality overnight accommodations within the City to attend workshops and conferences, and find the City of Senatobia provides excellent business accommodations, with an attractive quality of life. Many travelers to the city will become residents after their stay in Senatobia."

- **Gaming Industry** – Four communities in the Mississippi Delta have opened casinos since gaming was legalized in Mississippi in the 1990s. These include Tunica (9), Lula (1), Greenville (2) and Vicksburg (4). The Mississippi Gaming Commission’s website states that the commission is prohibited from releasing revenue data on specific facilities. Although the commission is prohibited from releasing data on individual facilities, an October report stated that all of the state’s casinos were experiencing revenue declines in part due to increased competition from neighboring states. The report notes that among the casinos experiencing the great decline are those located in Tunica, Greenville and Lula.

Many organizations have produced studies and plans to contribute to the Delta’s economic development. Some of these include:

- *A Time for Reckoning: Testing the Will for Change in the Mississippi Delta*. Mississippi Bureau of Long Ranger Economic Development Planning and the Special Task Force for the Revitalization of the Mississippi Delta Region, 2009.
- *Cultural Heritage Tourism Development: Report and recommendations to the Mississippi Delta Revitalization Task Force*. The John C. Stennis Institute of Government, MSU, 2006.
- *Attitudes About Heritage Tourism in the Mississippi Delta*. Policy report, Delta Rural Poll, 2005.
- *Mississippi Millennium Blues Trail*. Randall Travel Marketing for the Mississippi Arts Commission, 2001.
- *Heritage Study and Environmental Assessment, Lower Mississippi Delta Region, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee*. U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service.
- *Mississippi Delta Tourism Business Survey*. Daniel R. Resenmaier and Julie Fesenmaier, Publication 98-2, Delta State University Center for Community Development, 1998.
- *Stories of the Delta*. Shapins Associates and Sylvia Angell Written Communications, 1996.
- *Cultural Plan for Marks*. Grady Hillman.
- *Cultural Plan for Charleston*. Grady Hilman.

Documentation of the Economic Impact of Culture and Heritage

Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network* includes the strategy “Document the value of culture and heritage and inform stakeholders.” The coordinating entity’s study will encompass all aspects of culture and heritage related to MDNHA themes to document their impact on economic development. Areas of study will include heritage trails, festivals, historic preservation, job creation and increased property values, new support service jobs and cultural and heritage tourism.

Table 2.7 Who is working on economic development?

There are many agencies and organizations focused on economic development in the Mississippi Delta. The heritage area will form partnerships to implement strategies in the management plan that can have an economic impact based on the Delta's heritage and culture. Agencies and organizations include:

Mississippi Development Authority

MDA is the state of Mississippi's lead economic and community development agency, providing services to businesses, communities and workers. The agency works to recruit new business to the state and retain and expand existing Mississippi industry and business. MDA also provides technical assistance to the state's entrepreneurs.

Mississippi Office of Tourism

Part of the Mississippi Development Authority, the Mississippi Office of Tourism promotes the state to domestic and international visitors. The office's cultural and heritage tourism program develops heritage and cultural trails and other programs. The office also conducts research to track visitation and expenditures to the state.

Mississippi Tourism Association

This statewide organization defines as its mission to be the voice of the tourism and hospitality industry, to promote and advocate tourism and to provide services to members which result in increased economic vitality for the state.

Mississippi Main Street Association

The association is a private, nonprofit organization contracted with the Mississippi Development Authority to implement and administer the Main Street Program to revitalize historic downtowns.

Delta Council

The Delta Council is an economic development organization that brings together agriculture and business to advance the economy. The Council serves Bolivar, Carroll, Coahoma, DeSoto, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Panola, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tunica, Warren, Washington and Yazoo counties.

Lower Mississippi Delta Partnership

The partnership include individuals, state and federal agencies and non-governmental organizations who are sensitive to the area's rich cultural history and who share a common vision of improving economic conditions for citizens as well as improving the natural environment of the area.

Mississippi Delta Tourism Association

The association includes members from 10 tourism bureaus in the Delta – DeSoto County, Coahoma County/Clarksdale, Tunica County/Tunica, Grenada County, Bolivar County/Cleveland, Sunflower County/Indianola, Yazoo County/Yazoo City, Washington County/Greenville, Leflore County/Greenwood and Warren County/Vicksburg. The association promotes the Delta brand through coordinated marketing campaigns.

Delta Foundation

Founded by 14 civil rights and community development organizations, the foundation is a nonprofit whose programs include community development, education and training and small business lending to stimulate economic development.

Mississippi Action for Community Education, Inc.

MACE is a nonprofit, minority rural development organization that works to stimulate physical, social and economic development in the rural Delta.

Who is working on economic development? *(continued)*

North Central Planning and Development District

NCPDD serves the counties of Leflore, Holmes and Carroll with services such as regional planning, local technical assistance and coordination, and review of applications for federally sponsored programs.

North Delta Planning and Development District

NDPDD serves the counties of Coahoma, DeSoto, Panola, Quitman, Tallahatchie, Tate and Tunica with services such as regional planning, local technical assistance and coordination, and review of applications for federally sponsored programs.

South Delta Planning and Development District

SDPDD serves the governments of Bolivar, Humphries, Issaquena, Sharkey, Sunflower and Washington.

Central Mississippi Planning and Development District

CMPDD serves the governments of seven adjacent counties in central Mississippi including the Delta counties of Warren and Yazoo.

Mississippi Delta Developers Association

The Delta Developers serve 20 the counties of Bolivar, Carroll, Coahoma, DeSoto, Grenada, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Montgomery, Panola, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tunica, Warren, Washington and Yazoo.

- Carroll County Development Association
- Chamber and Economic Development Center of Washington County
- Clarksdale-Coahoma County Chamber of Commerce and Industrial Authority
- Cleveland-Bolivar Chamber of Commerce
- DeSoto County Economic Development Council
- Greenwood-Leflore County Chamber of Commerce
- Greenwood-Leflore-Carroll Economic Development Foundation
- Holmes County Economic Development Council
- Indianola Chamber of Commerce
- Panola Partnership
- Sunflower County Economic Development District
- Tate County Economic Development Foundation
- Tunica Chamber of Commerce
- Tunica County Economic Development Foundation
- Vicksburg-Warren County Economic Development Foundation
- Yazoo County Chamber of Commerce

Other Programs, Projects and Organizations

Communities in Schools of Greenwood Leflore

Provides in-school skills-based art instruction for high risk youth in alternate schools, adolescent offender programs and training schools throughout Mississippi.

Cotton Pickers' of America Monument and Interpretive Center

This project was in development in 2013 and is being led by Khafre Inc., a nonprofit organization in Indianola. The monument and interpretive center will honor the contributions and work of sharecroppers and will draw visitors to the Mississippi Delta.

Chapter 3
Foundation Statement



Chapter 3

Cover images:

- 1) St. George's Episcopal Church, Clarksdale, Photo: Carolyn Brackett
- 2) Mississippi River, Photo: Carolyn Brackett

- 3) Downtown Vicksburg, Photo: Carolyn Brackett
- 4) Tennessee Williams, Historic photo

- 5) Freedom Summer, Sunflower County, Historic photo
- 6) Blues singer, Clarksdale, Photo: Mississippi Delta Tourism Association

Introduction

This chapter is the Foundation Statement for the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area and the coordinating entity. The National Park Service guidebook, *Components of a Successful National Heritage Area Management Plan*, defines a Foundation Statement as “a formal declaration of the heritage area’s core mission. It defines the basic foundations of the heritage area – its purpose, vision, mission and goals.”

The Foundation Statement’s sections include: Statement of Significance and Thematic Framework, Mission and Vision, Legislative Duties and Authorities and MDNHA Goals and Strategy Summary.

Statement of Significance

Nature, culture and a complex history combine to make the Delta one of the most storied places in the nation. Authenticity and vibrant living traditions combine to give the Delta a very real sense of place. The Delta is filled with historic properties and cultural practices that express the region’s important stories. This combination of stories that have made an important contribution to our nation’s history and resources that can tell those stories makes the Delta a National Heritage Area.

The Mississippi Delta is nationally significant because:

The Blues Shaped America’s Culture

The Mississippi Delta is the birthplace of the Blues and rock ‘n’ roll. The Mississippi Delta is recognized internationally for its role in shaping American culture in the 20th century because it is the place where the Blues was created by African American musicians like Charley Patton, Son House and Willie Brown. Blues music has brought national and international recognition to the Delta and is still performed and celebrated at numerous clubs, juke joints, museums, historic sites and festivals. The hard life of a Delta sharecropper in the late 19th and early 20th centuries gave rise to Blues music that attracted a national audience as musicians like Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf, Elmo James and Willie Dixon left the Delta during the Great Migration and found fame in Chicago, New York, Detroit and other cities. The music of Bluesmen like Robert Johnson has been performed in many genres, and hundreds of Delta natives have recorded on Blues albums. The King of the Blues, B. B. King, was born near Indianola. Ike Turner, born in the middle of the Delta, recorded the first rock song in 1951, a musical form that Muddy Waters described as “just the Blues speeded up.” The importance of the Blues in American culture is also recognized in its influence in the creation of new, uniquely American styles of music including rock ‘n’ roll, rhythm and blues and jazz.

The Civil Rights Movement Reshaped America’s Character

The Mississippi Delta was the scene of a social revolution that empowered its majority African American population. Its “foot soldiers for freedom” transformed America as the nation’s character was reshaped by the achievements of the Mississippi Delta’s leaders of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. The murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till in 1955 has been described as the “spark that lit the fuse of the modern Civil Rights Movement.” The Delta became a battleground for Civil Rights as white Citizens’ Councils were founded in Indianola

and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party was founded by courageous Civil Rights leaders like Fannie Lou Hamer and Aaron Henry. National attention was drawn to the issue of Civil Rights in 1964 when the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party sent delegates to the Democratic National Convention in New Jersey, challenging the right of the state's all-white delegation to represent Mississippi. The televised proceedings allowed the nation to see the inequities clearly. The refusal of the party's national leaders to seat members of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party is described by Congressman John Lewis, an esteemed Civil Rights leader, as a turning point in the movement. The event is credited with significantly influencing the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In the Mississippi Delta, Freedom Summer in 1964 focused the nation's attention on the Delta when national organizations joined with local Civil Rights leaders to enable African Americans to register to vote. Mississippi's power structure responded violently. Even though few African Americans were registered, Freedom Summer succeeded in bringing national attention to the issue and increased support for Civil Rights. The national repercussions of these events are still felt today. The transformation of the Delta in the subsequent years, along with the rest of Mississippi, includes the ability to claim more African American elected officials in the early 21st century than any other state.

The Mississippi Delta's Mystique Cultivated a Unique Creative Spirit

Delta authors, painters, poets, athletes and chefs have enriched America. The Delta's reflection in and influence on American society from the 19th century to the present day is evident in the multitude of books, poems and plays emerging from the creative spirit of many who have called the Delta home or were drawn to the region's mystique. A long list of authors includes Tennessee Williams, Walker Percy, William Alexander Percy, Shelby Foote, Hodding Carter, and Richard Wright along with dozens of others who have lived in or written about the Delta. The importance of these authors is highlighted on the Southern Literary Trail, a heritage trail including Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia which features authors' homes and places featured in their writing. The state of Mississippi also plans to develop a Mississippi Literary Trail. Collectively these authors have written in every genre including autobiographies, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, journalism and film scripts. While many of these authors used the Delta as inspiration or as a setting, their works often reflected larger themes of American life. William Faulkner, who hunted in the Delta, wrote "The Bear," an exploration of the conflicts between civilization and nature. Tennessee Williams based characters in his plays, such as "The Glass Menagerie," on people he knew during his childhood in Clarksdale. Authors in recent years have examined the role of the Delta in pivotal events in American history. These include books such as James Cobb's *The Most Southern Place on Earth*, and more recently, Chris Myers Asch's *The Senator and the Sharecropper*, the story of Senator Jim Eastland and Civil Rights leader Fannie Lou Hamer and the events of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, and former National Endowment for the Humanities director Bill Ferris's *Blues from the Mississippi Delta*, recognized as a classic study of Blues music. Similarly, the Delta's well-developed cuisine was taken to New York by native son Craig Claiborne. And nobody can deny the impact that Archie Manning, born and raised in the heart of the Delta has had on the American football scene.

The Mississippi Delta Moved from Slavery to Assembly Line Sharecropping to Modern Precision Ag

The Delta led the nation in transforming cotton agriculture from labor-intensive work first performed by enslaved Africans, whose labors provided the bulk of the early labor force, and then sharecroppers, to today's highly mechanized farming called "precision ag." In 1942,

the first mechanical cotton picker was demonstrated in the Delta, and within two decades cotton farming was completely mechanized. Today's cotton farming relies on computers and satellites as much as tractors and mechanical pickers, and work that was formerly done by hundreds is now done by a single person backed up by technology. This transformation, from one man and one mule per 10-15 acres to one man and one mechanical cotton picker per 1,000 acres was a key factor in the Great Migration. Although African Americans began leaving the Delta after the Great Flood of 1927, the introduction of the mechanical cotton picker meant there was no need for sharecroppers to work on the plantations. This resulted in a mass exodus from the Delta and other parts of the South during the 1940s through the 1960s as thousands of African American moved to escape the oppression of segregation and to find work in industries in the North.

The Great Flood of 1927 Sparked an Ongoing National Conversation

The Delta was created, sustained, and sometimes destroyed by the Mississippi River. At 8:00 a.m. on April 21, 1927, the levees protecting the Delta failed and the river flooded the land causing the greatest natural disaster faced by America at that time. John Barry named his epic book about this catastrophe *Rising Tide: How the Great Flood of 1927 Changed America*. That change was profound in that it raised issues on a national level about human attempts to control the environment, the increased tension of race relations when African Americans were not allowed to evacuate, and made Americans believe that disaster relief efforts should not be dependent on private charity but should be led by the federal government. Additionally, the flood changed the way the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers manages the Mississippi River. The Corps' "Project Flood" program has been the basis for the river's management since 1927 with billions of dollars invested in flood control. All of these issues contributed to a national conversation that continues to the present day – most recently rising again with comparisons to the events of Hurricane Katrina and flooding in New Orleans, Louisiana in 2005. In 2011, flooding throughout the Lower Mississippi River tested the "Project Flood" approach to river management, demonstrating that the lessons learned in 1927 still apply today. . The flood of 1927 continues to be recognized by historians as a pivotal event in the nation's history, most recently being discussed in Bill Bryson's book *One Summer: America, 1927*.

Vicksburg Was the Key to the South in the Civil War

Vicksburg controlled the Mississippi River, and the campaign for Union control of the fortress city of Vicksburg in many ways determined the outcome of the American Civil War. As the nation was torn apart by Civil War in the mid-19th century, the Union and the Confederacy both recognized the strategic importance of Vicksburg as the place where Confederates could block Union troops from navigating down the Mississippi River. President Abraham Lincoln declared "Vicksburg is the key! The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket...We can take all the northern ports of the Confederacy, and they can defy us from Vicksburg." The Union determined to defeat the Confederates at Vicksburg with several phases of battles beginning in December of 1862. The Vicksburg Campaign was a landscape-wide campaign that ranged across the Delta with battles being fought along the Yazoo Pass in the north, to Fort Pemberton near Greenwood, to the Confederate Naval Yard in Yazoo City, to running battles along Deer Creek and Steele Bayou. Several attempts were made to send federal flotillas across the Delta in time of flood, and unlike most other places, battles raged between former slaves who enlisted with the North and their former masters who fought for the South. In the spring of 1863, Major General Ulysses S. Grant launched the Union Army of the Tennessee on a campaign that led them

to take control of Vicksburg in May. For the next six weeks, Vicksburg was under siege until surrendering on July 4 with the Stars and Stripes being raised on Independence Day. The victory cut the Confederacy in two and gave the Union control of the Mississippi River. Coupled with the defeat of the Confederates at Gettysburg in the summer of 1863, these two events are considered turning points in the Civil War that eventually led to a Union victory.

Thematic Framework

Five themes build upon the Statement of Significance, capturing the essence of the complex region. Each theme is followed by a brief description of related resources.

The Mississippi River and the Land It Embraces

“The river bore the alluvial plain that is the Delta, and the Delta bore fruit...” The Delta is the Mississippi River. It is created, sustained and sometimes destroyed by the river. The Delta simply would not have the heritage it has if it were not for the river’s deposition of the vast alluvial plain, a plain pre-destined for cotton. The oldest stories of the river and the land include the physical formation of the Delta and its rich alluvial soils, Native American settlement, and early European exploration of the wilderness.



The Mississippi River

Photo: Andy Ellis

Beginning in the middle of the 19th century, the vast wilderness underwent a transformation as people tamed the Delta for agriculture. The land was clear cut, attempts were made to control the waterways, transportation carved new paths through the region, and wildlife suffered a huge loss of habitat. Labor-intensive cotton agriculture founded first on enslavement and then on sharecropping dominated the next century of development, impacting all aspects of the economy and culture. When the river escaped its banks in the Great

Flood of 1927, the planter class based disaster-relief decisions on retaining the Delta’s labor force, increasing racial tensions and raising national questions about the role of government in relief efforts.

Mechanization ushered in a new era in the middle of the 20th century, causing seismic shifts in the region’s socio-economic structure as reliance on human labor waned. Agriculture remains at the heart of the Delta’s identity, although today it is marked by innovation and sustainability and balanced with opportunities offered by the natural world and cultural traditions.

A variety of resources help tell the stories of the river and the land. Museums and parks along the Mississippi River interpret the physical formation of the region, while important physical structures such as bridges and levees demonstrate humans’ adaptation to and control over the mighty waterway. A large number of Native American mounds relate to prehistoric settlement in the Delta, while fewer resources relate to the Choctaw and Chickasaw who lived in the area historically.

Resources related to agriculture are among the most numerous in the region. There are historic plantations including main houses, gins, barns, and sharecroppers' houses, as well as urban buildings related to the cotton business. The modern landscape is clearly agricultural with operating farms, fields and gins, as well as farmers' markets in various communities. Natural resources include wildlife management areas, state parks, community parks and water resources including bayous, lakes, rivers and swamps.



Blues singer "Mule Man" performs at Ground Zero Blues Club in Clarksdale.
Photo: Roger Stolle



Dockery Farms is considered to be the location where the Blues was born.
Photo: Andy Ellis

The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound

The Mississippi Delta's fertile ground gave birth to the Blues. The Delta is recognized internationally for its role in shaping American culture in the 20th century because it is the place where the African American musicians created the Blues. Cotton agriculture contributed to deep socio-cultural and economic dichotomies in the Delta between the planter class and the labor class. These dichotomies led to the emergence of a distinctive musical form, the Blues, as well as the culture that surrounded it. The Delta has been home to hundreds of famous Bluesmen and the juke joints where they played. Music is in the lifeblood of the Delta. Rock 'n' roll was born there, emerging straight out of the Blues. Rhythm and blues and jazz are also derived from the Blues, and gospel and country have strong roots in the Delta. A uniquely American musical form, Blues music has brought national and international recognition to the Delta and still thrives in the region today.

The history and culture of the Blues can be seen in a wide variety of resources in the Delta. Authentic resources include juke joints where live Blues music is currently (or has been) played, and homes, plantations and gravesites related to Blues musicians. Modern resources include several museums and an extensive system of 79 Blues Trail interpretive markers (out of 175 placed statewide). Also important are the festivals that promote and celebrate the Blues in communities throughout the Delta.

Moving Toward Freedom: Changing America's Character in the Struggle for Rights

A social revolution swept the Mississippi Delta in the midst of the 20th century, empowering its majority African American population and focusing America's eyes and hearts on some of the best and worst moments of the Civil Rights Movement. The dichotomies created in more than a century of plantation agriculture left a legacy of inequality and fueled the struggle for rights. As in much of the South, commercial agriculture in the Delta was initially based on an enslaved workforce of African Americans. In 1863, the Siege of Vicksburg ended in Union victory, hastening the close of the Civil War. This devastating conflict brought an end to the institution of slavery, but not to the inequalities on which it was based. From Reconstruction to the emergence of a Southern mythology and the legal segregation of the Jim Crow era, deep racial divisions meant difficult times for Delta residents. When mechanization changed agriculture forever, reducing the need for human labor, many African Americans left rural farms for cities near and far. As the era of Civil Rights dawned in this nation, the Delta was home to pivotal events both horrible and inspirational, including Emmett Till's murder, Freedom Summer and the Poor People's Campaign. Leaders and activists such as Amzie Moore, Fannie Lou Hamer, the delegates of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, and the Freedom Riders are among those who paved the way for changes that are still unfolding today.

Historic plantations hold the majority of resources associated with slavery and sharecropping. Resources related to the Civil War include battlefields and defensive earthworks, especially in conjunction with the Campaign and Siege at Vicksburg. Monuments, cemeteries, historic properties and museums are also important for that history and the complex times that followed. Key types of cultural resources related to the Civil Rights movement include the homes and graves of Civil Rights leaders, landmarks associated with the movement such as churches where many meetings occurred, the store in Money that began Emmett Till's saga and a growing system of Freedom Trail interpretive markers.



Growing More than Cotton: The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity

The dark water and rich soils of the Delta grew more than cotton. Inspiration and creativity in all its forms abound in the region. The multitude of books, poems, plays and films that have emerged from the creative ranks of the Delta demonstrate how the region has reflected elements of—and has influenced—American society from the 19th century to today. Famous authors such as Tennessee Williams, William Alexander Percy, and Richard Wright are among the dozens of people who have lived in or written about the Delta.

Quilters in Tutwiler carry on a tradition of creativity.



The home of Civil Rights leader Amzie Moore in Cleveland is slated for restoration.

Photo: Heather Miller



Peter's Pottery, Bolivar County
 Photo: Mississippi Delta Tourism Association

Music is another expression of the artistry that thrives in the Delta. The Blues were born here, and rock 'n' roll emerged from the Blues. Famous artists in many genres come from the region. In addition to hundreds of Bluesmen, Ike Turner influenced rock 'n' roll, Conway Twitty and Charley Pride helped shape country music, and gospel thrives in churches across the Delta.

Creativity is found in many Delta endeavors, including the arts, food, business and religion. From Marshall Bouldin's portraits to Sammy Britt's landscapes to the Tutweiler quilters and a host of pottery guilds, the work of artists colors the Delta and reaches well

beyond it. Unique culinary traditions arose from the fusion of foodways from a variety of cultural groups who made their home in the Delta. Craig Claiborne carried these traditions to a national audience, and Viking Range built a business around the importance of good cooking. Local restaurants remain an important thread in the fabric of communities. From folk traditions with ties to Africa and the Caribbean, to Jewish, Catholic and Protestant denominations, expressions of faith contribute to the Delta's creative cultural mosaic.

The Delta's literary tradition is visible in the settings used in famous works, often the homes and communities of the region's literary giants. Greenville and Clarksdale are especially notable. Other resources that reflect the creative inheritance of the region include murals, arts venues and programs, museums, galleries and retail establishments, restaurants, churches, cemeteries, and festivals celebrating the region's food, music and arts.

The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta's Diverse Communities

"The Mississippi Delta begins in the lobby of the Peabody Hotel in Memphis and ends on Catfish Row in Vicksburg." With these geographic and cultural extremes, author David Cohn described the Delta, a land of great extremes. Indeed, author Will Campbell has defined the Delta as "a place of mean poverty and garish opulence." The contradictions that make up American society are visible in the paradoxes of the Delta—powerful and powerless, rich and poor, black and white, literate and illiterate, high class and low, sacred and secular, and humans and nature. Plantation agriculture and the stark contrasts it entails have embodied much of this divide. Yet the Delta is also



The Blue and White Restaurant in Tunica is a favorite of locals and visitors.

Photo: Mississippi Delta Tourism Association



Baptist Town in Greenwood is an African-American neighborhood of shotgun houses bound by two railroads and a bayou.



This house in Issaquena County made of a train caboose and box car shows the resourcefulness of Delta residents in making a place to live.

a place of communities. In the 19th century, the self-contained industries and large labor forces of plantations formed the basis for community. After the Civil War ended, a number of ethnic groups were recruited to the region as sharecroppers to replace black laborers or simply came seeking opportunity. Italian, Jewish, Chinese and Lebanese immigrants added elements of their cultures to the Delta's mix. The built environment in Delta communities ranges from vernacular to high style, providing a window into many aspects of the region's complex history.

A National Heritage Area

The U.S. Congress established the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area under Sec. 8008 of P. Law 111-11, the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009. MDNHA was created by Congress without a prior feasibility study. Often, feasibility studies form the basis of information that Congress and the National Park Service request to document the national significance of a proposed National Heritage Area's resources. In addition, feasibility studies contain the initial mission and vision statements for the burgeoning heritage area, along with a named management entity. In the case of MDNHA, while a mission statement existed for the Partnership, no mission statement had been developed for the National Heritage Area. Nor was there a vision statement for the organization or feasibility study to inform the management planning process.

Additionally, and different from many other National Heritage Areas, Congress remained silent on the legislative purpose and mission when it created the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area. Except for specifying certain authorities and determining boundaries of the National Heritage Area and its board composition, the law passed by Congress did not state the MDNHA's mission, nor did it recognize any key historical resources of the region, or the region as a whole, as being nationally significant. This unusual circumstance left a blank slate on which MDNHA and its partners could craft the heritage area's vision and mission as the management planning process unfolded.

Mission and Vision

The mission statement articulates how the local coordinating entity and other partners in the heritage area intend to make their vision for the future a reality. This statement was crafted by the board after a series of public meetings and partners' input on the function and role of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area. The existing mission statement for the Partnership was examined in conjunction with what the partners and the general public were expressing as important to conserving the heritage of the Delta. The board reviewed and revised several drafts of a mission statement that eventually was presented to the public in conjunction with the presentation of the draft management plan.

Mission Statement

The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area fosters preservation, perpetuation and celebration of the Delta's heritage through a climate of collaboration and sustainable economic development. Through a comprehensive and continual system of engagement and education, the National Heritage Area leads an inclusive network of partners, institutions and residents in achieving a regional vision. We create opportunities to save our special places, maintain our vibrant traditions, enhance community and cultural pride, support economic and social transformation and advance the appreciation and understanding of the Delta's important past and its continuing contributions to the American story. We focus on five themes: The River and the Land it Embraces; The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound; Moving Toward Freedom: Changing America's Character in the Struggle for Rights; Growing More than Cotton: The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity; and The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta's Communities.

In a similar fashion, the vision statement was crafted with considerable involvement from the public and the partners. The views of what the Delta should be in 10-15 years were constantly checked against the goals of the National Heritage Area and the proposed programs and projects to ensure that the planning process would eventually lead to a document that, when implemented, could help the heritage area achieve the outlined outcomes.

Vision Statement: 2025

The people who call the Mississippi Delta "home" value the significant events and unique cultural traditions that influenced the development of America. Residents, communities, institutions and cultural groups have collaborated to preserve special places connected to the Delta's past, to honor and celebrate its diverse traditions and to document and share the history from settlement to migration, from the Civil War to Civil Rights. Residents are proud of their communities and their cultures and want to remain here to contribute to the Delta's future. They understand the role of agriculture in their history and economy and celebrate the wellspring of creativity that birthed the internationally recognized Blues, a remarkable literary legacy and a spirit of determination. The National Heritage Area includes revitalized communities, conservation of natural resources, new venues and events

to tell the Delta's story and increased visitation by heritage travelers and demonstrates progress toward sustainable economic growth.

Legislative Duties and Authorities

The enabling legislation delineated as a heritage area boundary "...all counties in the State that contain land located in the alluvial floodplain of the Mississippi Delta..." It further identified the local coordinating entity, the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Partnership, with specific language governing the composition of and representation on the board. Additionally, the enabling legislation included specific duties and authorities of the local coordinating entity. To accomplish the mission and vision, the coordinating entity is authorized by legislation to:

- Carry out programs and projects that recognize, protect and enhance important resource values within the heritage area
- Establish and maintaining interpretive exhibits and programs within the heritage area
- Develop recreational and educational opportunities in the heritage area
- Increase public awareness of, and appreciation for, natural, historic, scenic and cultural resources of the heritage area
- Protect and restore historic sites and buildings in the heritage area that are consistent with the themes of the heritage area
- Ensure that signs identifying points of public access and sites of interest are posted throughout the heritage area
- Promote a wide range of partnerships among governments, organizations and individuals to further the purposes of the heritage area
- Encourage, by appropriate means, economic development that is consistent with the purposes of the heritage area

In addition, the legislation gives the coordinating entity authority to use federal funds to:

- Make grants to the State, political subdivisions of the State, nonprofit organizations, and other persons;
- Enter into cooperative agreements with, or provide technical assistance to, the State, political subdivisions of the State, nonprofit organizations, Federal agencies, and other interested parties
- Hire and compensate staff
- Obtain funds or services from any source, including funds and services provided under any other Federal law or program
- Contract for goods or services
- Support activities of partners and any other activities that further the purposes of the Heritage Area and are consistent with the approved management plan

Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Goals

The following goals emerged from the process of developing the management plan and reflect the mission and vision statements and legislative mandates. The goals are the basis for strategies and action steps that are presented in detail in the management plan's strategy sections.

Goals are presented here with notations for the section(s) where they are found in the management plan. It is also important to note that some strategies address more than one goal.

Table 3. 1 Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Goals

Goal #1

Perpetuate the unique culture of the Mississippi Delta through engagement of the people who live here to preserve, celebrate and share the places and stories of the region.

Goal #2

Save historic and natural resources by raising awareness of the threat of their loss, providing recognition for saving places and directing resources to training, education and preservation.

Goal #3

Build a heritage area-wide network of partners by providing opportunities for engagement in a variety of activities.

Goal #4

Contribute to sustainable economic development through activities that will strengthen local and regional economies.

Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Goals and Strategy Summary

Goal #1

Perpetuate the unique culture of the Mississippi Delta through engagement of the people who live here to preserve, celebrate and share the places and stories of the region.

Strategy 1: Research and document the Delta's stories

Action Steps

- A. Research and document the Delta's history connected to themes
- B. Research and document living traditions connected to themes
- C. Identify practitioners of the Delta's living traditions
- D. Collect and preserve oral histories
- E. Act as a clearinghouse for information about the Delta's heritage

Strategy 2: Provide training and resources to preserve history and perpetuate culture

Action Steps

- A. Present workshops, symposia, forums and tours to educate residents
- B. Provide training on preserving archival resources
- C. Create a tour guide certification program

Strategy 3: Tell the Delta's story through a variety of interpretive methods

Action Steps

- A. Person-to-person interpretive methods – guided tours for visitors, school groups and youth organizations
- B. Media-based interpretive methods – guidebooks, brochures, table tents and posters, passports, interpretive signage, orientation exhibits, website, audio guides, video

Strategy 4: Engage Delta adults and youth

Action Steps

- A. Offer a variety of opportunities for the Delta's adults and youth to become engaged in the activities of the coordinating entity and with partners in interpretive planning and implementation
- B. Partner with the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association to promote the Delta's culture and heritage to visitors

Strategy 5: Increase accessibility for travelers

Action Step

- A. Work with MDTA, MDOT and other partners to advocate for wayfinding signage, increased lodging, visitor centers and rest areas

(Source: Chapter Six: The Delta Experience: Perpetuate Culture and Tell the Story – interpretive plan)

Goal #2

Save historic and natural resources by raising awareness of the threat of their loss, providing recognition for saving places and directing resources to training, education and preservation.

Strategy 1: Document historic resources in the heritage area

Action Steps

- A. Prepare a survey of historic resources
- B. Identify threatened resources
- C. Prepare National Register nominations
- D. Assist in preparing Mississippi landmark nominations

Strategy 2: Increase awareness and advocate for historic and natural resource preservation

Action Steps

- A. Increase awareness through publicity campaigns, "10 Most Endangered" list and documentation of best practices
- B. Work with towns, counties, MDAH, MHT and other groups that promote the preservation of the built environment
- C. Encourage stewardship of natural resources

Strategy 3: Position the coordinating entity as a resource for training and information

Action Steps

- A. Provide training to support preservation efforts
- B. Create a virtual MDNHA Resource Center

Strategy 4: Provide financial support for restoration projects

Action Steps

- A. Act as a clearinghouse for grant or sponsorship opportunities and as either the prime or a partner applicant on grants that support Delta heritage
- B. Create a grants program to provide seed money supporting projects that meet heritage area goals

(Source: Chapter Seven: A Sense of Place: Save the Delta's Historic Resources)

Goal #3

Build a heritage area-wide network of partners by providing opportunities for engagement in a variety of activities.

Strategy 1: Create an identity for the heritage area

Action Steps

- A. Create a package including a graphic identity and messaging to illustrate and explain the MDNHA's goals and work
- B. Oversee design and installation of signage to promote MDNHA
- C. Enhance awareness of the MDNHA's goals through presentations, meetings and media

Strategy 2: Document the value of culture and heritage

Action Steps

- A. Research, document and publicize the economic impact of investment in the Delta's heritage (revitalization, job creation) and in heritage tourism (visitor data, expenditures, investments)
- B. Inform elected officials and the public of the economic value of the Delta's culture and heritage

Strategy 3: Honor and celebrate partners' accomplishments

Action Steps

- A. Create an awards program with categories to honor Mississippi Delta residents who excel in preserving, interpreting and promoting the Delta's heritage and culture
- B. Host an annual heritage awards event to recognize these individuals and to showcase the unique cultural and heritage resources in the Delta that must be preserved

Strategy 4: Establish forums for discussion and planning

Action Steps

- A. Host exchanges for the discussion of preservation, tourism and other topics
- B. Provide a forum to address issues of race, economics and history
- C. Form committees to monitor and plan for preservation, conservation and telling the Delta's story

Strategy 5: Support funding of projects that meet heritage area goals

Action Steps

- A. Act as a clearinghouse for grants and sponsorships and as either the prime or a partner applicant on grants that support Delta heritage
- B. Create a grants program to provide seed money supporting projects that meeting heritage area goals

Strategy 6: Support sustainable economic development based on heritage and culture

Action Steps

- A. Provide support to help develop new cultural and heritage-based businesses and to strengthen existing cultural heritage-based businesses
- B. Develop a hospitality/ambassador training program

Strategy 7: Provide opportunities for engagement

Action Steps

- A. Create a volunteer program for MDNHA sanctioned events and projects
- B. Offer internships and student project opportunities

(Source: Chapter Eight: The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network)

Goal #4

Contribute to sustainable economic development through activities that will strengthen local and regional economies.

Strategy 1: Document the value of culture and heritage and inform stakeholders (also Goal #3, Chapter 8, Strategy 2)

Action Steps

- A. Document and publicize the economic impact of heritage and heritage tourism
- B. Inform elected officials and the public of the value of culture and heritage

Strategy 2: Support sustainable economic development based on heritage and culture (also Goal #3, Chapter 8, Strategy 6)

Action Steps

- A. Provide support to develop cultural and heritage-based businesses
- B. Develop a hospitality/ambassador training program

Strategy 3: Support funding of projects that meet heritage area goals. (also Goal #3, Chapter 8, Strategy 5)

Action Steps

- A. Act as a clearinghouse for grants and sponsorships and as either the prime or a partner applicant on grants that support Delta heritage
- B. Create a grants program to provide seed money supporting projects that meeting heritage area goals

Strategy 4: Tell the Delta's story through a variety of interpretive methods. (also Goal #1, Chapter 6, Strategy 3)

Action Steps

- A. Develop person-to-person interpretation such as guided tours, talks, lectures, and living history demonstrations
- B. Develop media-based interpretation including print and electronic media

Strategy 5: Increase accessibility for travelers (also Goal # 1, Chapter 6, Strategy 5)

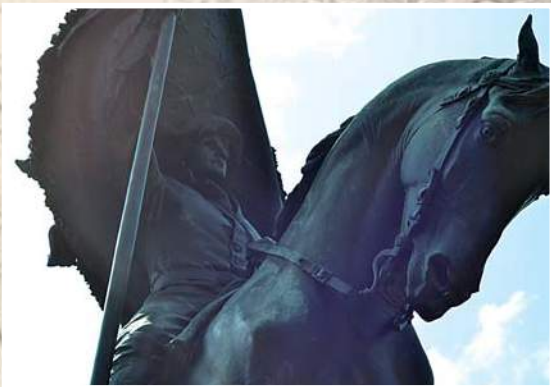
Action Steps

- A. Work with MDTA, MDOT and other partners to advocate for wayfinding signage, increased lodging, visitor centers and rest areas

(Source: Chapter Six: The Delta Experience (interpretive plan); Chapter Eight: The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network)

Chapter 4

Historical Overview of the Mississippi Delta



Chapter 4

Introduction

This chapter provides a narrative outline of the Delta's history. This overview is not intended to be a comprehensive chronicle of the people, places, and events that constitute the region's history, but rather a brief account of the historical path that leads from the untamed wilderness of the past to the magnificent complexities of the present.

The Mississippi Delta

There are some places in our nation whose influence on our history and the society we live in today has been so pervasive—has become so much a part of *who we are*—that we don't often think about or recognize their value. The Mississippi Delta is such a place. Yes, the challenges of the past and the present are made apparent in every news article or broadcast by the national media. But those challenges are only part of the story, overlooking the Delta's amazing legacy that has given our nation much in terms of music, political action, race relations, literature and foodways.

The Mississippi River, the land it defines, and the ways people have chosen to use both river and land through time have granted us this legacy. From wilderness to agricultural mecca in a half century, the modern landscape of the Delta was shaped by "King Cotton." As people transformed the land, they influenced the fates of the cultures that came to dwell here, creating the socio-economic context that birthed the Blues and contributed to many of the other important aspects of the Delta. The Delta is the ancestral home of many Americans who today live in metropolitan areas like Detroit, Chicago or Oakland. It has played an important role in changing America's attitude towards human and civil rights. It has a literary heritage that surpasses all other rural corners of our nation, and it continues to inspire storytellers and artists of all kinds. In short, the Mississippi Delta—"the cradle of American culture"—lies at the core of our national consciousness (National Park Service, 1996).

The River and the Land

The Mississippi River is the largest river in the United States, with a watershed that stretches into Canada and drains all or part of 31 states between the Rocky Mountains and the Appalachians. It rises in Minnesota and flows more than 2,300 miles to the Gulf of Mexico, touching 10 states on its southward journey. The Lower Mississippi River, below the confluence with the Ohio River, is a wide and deep corridor. The river is at its largest as it flows past Vicksburg and Natchez, before the distributaries in Louisiana's Atchafalaya Basin carry some of the water on alternate routes to the Gulf of Mexico.



The Mississippi River

Photo: Andy Ellis

The Mississippi River formed 10,000-15,000 years ago as the ice receded during the last continental glaciation event. Meltwater from retreating glaciers made its way to the ocean, carving rivers and streams that flowed at five times the current volume and carried massive

All cover images: Mississippi Delta Tourism Association

1) Downtown Yazoo City

2) Winterville Mounds

3) Chinese sculpture in DeSoto County

4) Sculpture at Vicksburg National Military Park

5) Cotton field in Bolivar County

sediment loads. The Mississippi and its tributaries formed a dynamic, meandering system that continuously changed the course and topography of the waterways and the land.

In the Yazoo Basin—an alluvial floodplain bounded by the Mississippi and Yazoo rivers and commonly referred to as the Mississippi Delta—the system formed meander belts that include natural levees, oxbow lakes, distributaries, abandoned channels, point bars, back swamps, crevasse splays, and chute cutoffs. The rivers transported alluvium from the north and the west, annually depositing it in the Mississippi Delta in layers of rich soils that, over millennia, reached depths of up to several hundred feet.



The First Inhabitants

In the earliest centuries after the river's formation, a colder climate supported fir forests and large animals that are now extinct. Small nomadic bands of Paleo-Indians hunted these animals. About 10,000 years ago, the climate warmed to modern-day temperatures and dense forests of hardwoods, cypress, and Tupelo gums grew. During this era, known archaeologically as the Archaic Period, humans

This illustration depicts the Native American culture at Winterville Mounds State Park.

Illustration: Herb Roe

made the transition from a nomadic existence to semi-sedentary lifestyle. People exploited the natural bounty of the Delta, gathering nuts and berries, fishing, and

hunting deer and other species of birds and animals that still dwell in the Delta today. These Native Americans used the waterways to trade across the region. In the Woodland Period, beginning about 2,500 years ago, people settled in large, permanent villages that corresponded with tribal organization. They continued to rely on hunting, but also began to raise corn.

The Mississippian Period, which began about 1,000 years ago, is characterized by Mississippian culture and the rise of chiefdoms. People built extensive villages and large ceremonial temple mounds. Agriculture based on corn, beans and squash became the dietary mainstay. This stable source of food allowed for the development of stratified societies where arts and culture blossomed and vast trade networks were built, extending hundreds of miles on the Mississippi River and its tributaries. These large ceremonial centers declined around 1450 AD, before the arrival of Europeans.

The Mississippian ceremonial complexes are the most easily recognizable feature of Native American cultures on today's landscape. Large earthen structures such as the Winterville Mounds and Jaketown Site rise high above the flat Delta land. These and other mounds drew archaeologists to the region more than 100 years ago, when that discipline was in its infancy. Many of the "fathers" of modern archaeology excavated the elaborate mound complexes in the region.

By the Contact Era (beginning around 1500), the region was inhabited by a number of tribes related to three large linguistic families:

- Muskogean—including the Chickasaw, the Choctaw, the Taposa, the Chakchiuma, the Ibitoupa, and the Chula
- Siouan—including the Quawpaw and the Ofo (or Ofogoula)
- Tunica—including the Tunica, the Yazoo, and the Koroa

Waterways often defined the territory of each of these groups. The Natchez to the south of the Yazoo Basin frequently interacted with these groups and with Europeans when they arrived in the area in the 16th century.

Two of the largest groups were the Choctaw and the Chickasaw. Choctaw lands included central and southern Mississippi, and Chickasaw lands included north Mississippi. To stem a history of mutual aggression, in 1816, the U.S. government, represented by Major General Andrew Jackson, delineated a border between the Choctaw and Chickasaw that divided their territory along a diagonal stretching roughly from Tunica to Batesville. A few short years later, Choctaw lands were ceded to the State of Mississippi through the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek in 1830, followed by Chickasaw lands in 1832.

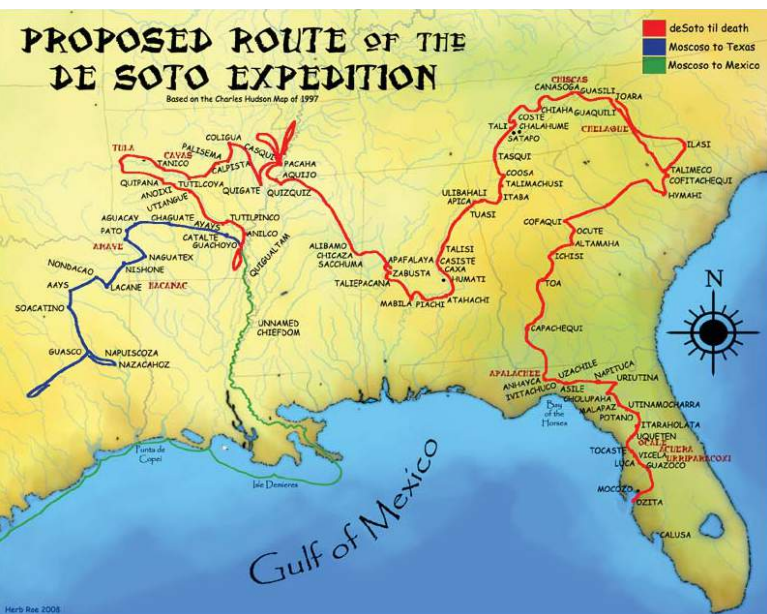
Today, there are no federally recognized tribes in the area encompassed by the Mississippi and Yazoo rivers. All of the groups mentioned suffered huge population losses from illnesses brought by European explorers. Most of the Delta's Native Americans were forced to leave Mississippi for Texas or Oklahoma by the middle of the 1800s. Some remained in the state outside of the Delta, including the federally-recognized Mississippi Band of Choctaw.

European Exploration

The first Europeans to pass through the Delta were the men of Hernando DeSoto's expedition, which landed on Florida's Gulf Coast in 1539. DeSoto led a group of more than 600 men across much of southeastern North America to search for gold and claim territory for the Spanish empire. The expedition passed through the Delta between 1540 and 1541,

crossing the Mississippi River someplace south of modern-day Memphis. DeSoto did not survive the expedition—he died near the Mississippi River to the south and west of the Delta in 1542. About half of the expedition's members made it safely to Mexico City in 1543.

The chroniclers who accompanied the expedition recorded valuable information about Native American societies across the Southeast, including their observations of villages in the Delta with several hundred houses. Unfortunately, disease and warfare also accompanied DeSoto's expedition. The explorers bore European illnesses for which the Native Americans had no immunity. The loss of life was immeasurable. Many survivors fled their homelands.



Hernando DeSoto and his team explored the Delta region between 1540 and 1541.

Illustration: Herb Roe

Over a century later, Frenchman René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, passed through the region on one of his many expeditions from New France in the north to the interior of the continent. His explorations led him through the Delta in the late 1670s and again in the 1680s. He established a small fort near modern-day Memphis in 1682. The expeditions reported no Native Americans living in the Yazoo Basin. Although Europeans passed through the Delta in these early expeditions, they made no earnest attempt to settle it.



The Delta remained a wild, untamed land well into the 19th century

Photo: Mississippi Delta Tourism Association

century, riverboats plied the waters of the Mississippi from Minnesota to New Orleans, transporting people and freight. In the 1820s and 1830s, the use of steam-powered boats with fairly shallow drafts grew from about 20 hulls to more than 1,200 hulls on the nation's largest river system. Steamboats were well-suited for the transport of agricultural products in the antebellum South. Although their use declined as railroads, and later diesel-powered tugboats, grew in popularity, some steamboats were in service in the Delta until the 1940s. Tugboats moving large tows of barges remain in service along the Mississippi River and in ports in the Mississippi Delta to the present time.

With the access provided by river transportation, the fringe along the Mississippi River bore the development of some plantations beginning around the turn of the 19th century. Planters used the labor of enslaved African Americans to grow short-staple cotton and other products that could be shipped downriver to market. Population remained sparse, and by mid-century the U.S. census recorded fewer than 3,500 whites and just over 17,000 black slaves in the Delta. A decade later, on the eve of the Civil War, the 1860 census showed the population had increased by two-thirds.

The Civil War

The Civil War visited the Delta in uneven portions. Unpopulated and inaccessible, the bottomlands were not a factor in the struggle. However, control of the Mississippi River, “the single most important economic feature of the continent,” was a primary strategic goal for both the Union and the Confederacy. President Abraham Lincoln declared “Vicksburg is the key! The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket...We can take all the northern ports of the Confederacy, and they can defy us from Vicksburg” (NPS, www.nps.gov/vick/historyculture/vickkey.htm). Vicksburg sat at the southern end of the Delta, in the middle of the “Thousand Mile Front” along the Lower Mississippi River. Unlike the rural

The Last Frontier

French, Spanish, and British crowns fought and bargained over territory in the New World. The United States was born and entered this fray. Agriculture spread across the eastern half of the continent, and industry grew in the north. The Union was tested in a Civil War that tried to tear it asunder, primarily over the issue of plantation agriculture and the slave labor necessary to drive it. Through all of this, the Delta remained apart—a vast wilderness of riverine swamps and dense forests teeming with panthers, bears, deer, and all manner of migratory waterfowl and birds.

Rivers and streams provided the only access in and out of the Delta. Throughout the 19th



Visitors enjoy watching artillery demonstrations, one of Vicksburg National Military Park's living history programs.

Photo: National Park Service

character of most of the Delta, the busy port city of Vicksburg had a population of about 4,600 people in 1860.

Although Vicksburg was strategically important throughout the war, the events of the campaign and siege of 1863 are most significant. Lt. General John C. Pemberton commanded Confederate forces at the fort that overlooked the river, and General Ulysses S. Grant led Union forces. In the campaign's Yazoo Pass Expedition, Union troops followed the Tallahatchie River to Fort Pemberton at Greenwood. Other smaller troop maneuvers related to the campaign traced the waterways closer to Vicksburg.

In all, more than 100,000 troops participated in the campaign that stretched from late March to July in 1863 and casualties (killed, wounded, and missing) reached 10,142 for the Union and 9,091 for the Confederacy. On July 4, 1863, Pemberton surrendered almost 30,000 Confederate troops to Grant. The victory, coupled with a Union victory at Port Hudson a few days later, gave the Union commercial and military control of the Mississippi, while at the same time crippling the Confederacy and rending its territory in half. This Union victory was critical in the eventual outcome of the war. The U.S. Congress established Vicksburg National Military Park in 1899 to commemorate this important campaign.



The importance of the railroad to the Delta's culture is immortalized in the famous song lyrics "Where the Southern Crosses the Dog."

Photo: Carolyn Brackett

Open for Business

When the Civil War ended in 1865, 90 percent of the Delta remained untamed. Merchant farmers, railroad and timber companies, and investors from New York and Europe were in a hurry to change that. Within a few decades, men would harvest the timber, build railroads, channelize the river, and turn the whole landscape to the purpose of growing cotton.

The pace of the United States' westward expansion exploded after the Civil War, especially with the growth of railroads. The industrial giants and robber barons of the Northeast built empires of wealth as they funded an expansion that reached every corner of the nation. In 1884, two railroads completed connections

between Memphis and New Orleans through the Delta. The Illinois Central Railroad and the Louisville, New Orleans and Texas Railway opened the interior of the Delta, introducing overland transportation and big business to the region. The State of Mississippi encouraged development, cheaply selling land to J.P. Morgan's Southern Railroad and the Illinois

Central's subsidiary, the Yazoo and Mississippi Valley Railroad. Plantations and communities sprang up, all with connections to the economic lifeline of twin steel rails.

The Delta's planter aristocracy understood the importance of the railroads to the success of commercial agriculture, as exemplified by the Percy family in Greenville. In addition to managing his extensive agricultural holdings, LeRoy Percy sat on the board of the Southern Railroad and served as attorney for the Illinois Central Railroad.

The importance of railroads in Delta culture is immortalized in numerous Blues songs. For example, the famous lyrics "Where the Southern Crosses the Dog," refers to Morehead, Mississippi, where the Southern Railroad intersects the Yazoo and Mississippi Valley Railroad (Y&MV, known as the "Yellow Dog" for the color of its cabooses.) In World War I, these lyrics became a cultural call sign of sorts, used by soldiers from Mississippi to identify others from their home state.

Cotton Agriculture and Plantations

At last, by the late 1800s, the region was wide open for agricultural development. Cotton reigned as king on this landscape. One of the most important industrial raw materials ever produced in the United States, cotton was the dominant commodity in the Western world for more than 100 years. It thrived in the rich, alluvial soils of the Delta. Labor-intensive and

wealth-generating, cotton drove the development of a plantation economy connected to national and global markets by the Mississippi River and the Delta's network of railroads.

Prior to the mechanization of agriculture, plantations were much more than large farms that produced a cash crop, they were entire self-sustaining communities. The planter family owned a large tract of land where production was carried out by a labor force comprised of individuals that were legally or economically bound to the plantation. In addition to agricultural fields and the planter's residence (often referred to as "the big house" or "the main house"), a plantation consisted of housing for the workers, barns for mules and other livestock, cotton gins and seed houses, a commissary or plantation store, and outbuildings associated with

carpentry, blacksmithing, and any other occupations needed to keep a large farm running. Plantations often had their own churches, graveyards, schools, post offices, healthcare, and even transportation facilities.

Before the Civil War, enslaved Africans and African Americans provided the labor to build and cultivate Southern plantations, including the relatively small number located in the Delta. After the war, when slavery was abolished, planters turned to other means to bind a large labor force to their lands, namely tenant farming and sharecropping. Tenant farmers rented land from planters to produce crops for sale (often through the planter). Many poor Southern blacks and whites did not have the up-front capital necessary to rent land and pay for seed and equipment, so instead contracted with planters to produce a crop to which



By the late 19th century, cotton emerged as the economic driving force for the Delta.

Photo: Marion Post Wolcott. 1939.

Library of Congress

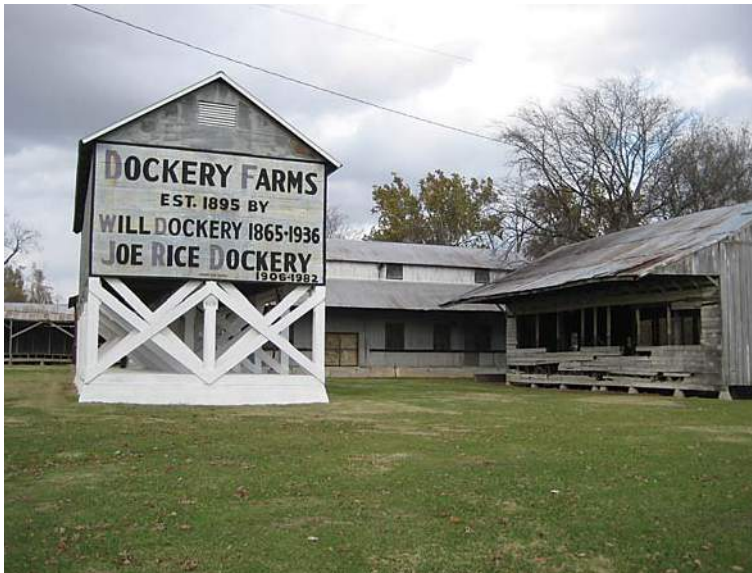
they would be entitled to a certain “share.” This was beneficial for planters, as it allowed them to share the risk on their land and also to keep more of their land in cultivation. Planters provided a “furnish” (clothes, food, housing, and equipment) and laborers were required to purchase all supplies at the plantation store. Coupon books, brozine (coins) and scrip (paper money) issued by the plantation store kept ‘croppers beholden to a particular plantation. Generally, by the end of the year there was little extra cash that the tenant farmers or sharecroppers could use to break out of the oppressive system.

The inequities inherent in the plantation economy, both before and after the Civil War, contributed much to the context that gave our nation the Blues, pivotal people and moments in the Civil Rights movement, and the incredible literary and artistic legacy of the Delta.

The Birth of the Blues

Plantation agriculture in the Delta led to the creation of a culture of stark contrasts—white and black, wealth and poverty, leisure and hard labor, “haves and have-nots.” In the late 19th century, life in the Delta was divided strictly by race under the government-sanctioned system of oppression and segregation known as “Jim Crow,” named for a popular 19th

century minstrel song and the highly exaggerated stereotype of the black character the song portrayed. Strenuous physical labor and poverty were common conditions, especially for African Americans, as they cleared the Delta, built roads and levees, and cultivated cotton. Plantations brought together large numbers of African American laborers and their families, sometimes numbering in the thousands among a much smaller white upper class. In this context, and with musical roots in African rhythms, spirituals and religious music, field hollers, and jump-ups, the musical form known as the Blues developed shortly before the turn of the 20th century.



Dockery Farms was a working plantation where many famous Bluesmen worked and created a new sound – the Blues.

Photo: Carolyn Brackett

In *Mississippi Delta—The Place, The Mindset*, Luther Brown observes that the Blues is as much a culture, “a worldview,” as it is the distinct musical form using specific chord progressions (most famously 12-bar). On plantations, in clubs, and in the informal houses of entertainment known as “jooks” (or “juke”), African American men and women sang songs about life as they lived it. Brown describes the Blues as being:

...about paradoxical contradiction and the irresolvable conflict/codependence of opposites. The Blues is about hope and despair, leaving and being left, wronging and being wronged, lynching and loving, tragedy and triumph, Saturday night and Sunday morning. It’s a way of taking trouble and making a song out of it, and helping to explain why the righteous suffer in the process, all

in a completely vernacular and secular manner. The Blues makes a joyful noise out of lamentation and mourning. It is a way of making poetic and rhythmic sense out of life, and it grows directly out of the life of the Mississippi Delta.

(Brown 2010, pp.75-76)

Brown holds up Dockery Farms as the paramount example of the plantation context in which Blues was born and counts more than a dozen famous Bluesmen who trace roots to that particular place and the surrounding area (pg. 59), among them Charley Patton, Son House, Robert Johnson, and Howlin' Wolf. In all, more than 200 Bluesmen who have made recordings were born in the Delta.

The Blues' importance to American popular music and culture cannot be overstated. It is foundational for many important styles of American music—jazz, rhythm and blues, rock 'n' roll, and country. In the first half of the 20th century, the Blues spread from the Delta and across the nation as part of a much larger cultural, economic, and demographic shift. Today, the Blues have a global reach.

The Rise and Fall of Delta Communities

In the late 19th century, the Delta saw a rise not only in plantation agriculture, but also in small-scale agriculture. The hastened development of the region offered many people the opportunity to trade their labor in clearing land for land they could farm as their own, or to earn their living in agricultural communities.



Small, thriving communities that once dotted the Delta's landscape have fallen on hard times in recent years.

Photo: Carolyn Brackett

African Americans were the largest group to come to the Delta, and the majority of independent farmers in the Delta were black. In the late 1800s, independent farmers established the self-sustaining all-black community of Mound Bayou, characterized by Booker T. Washington as "an example of thrift and self government," (The Booker T. Washington Papers, 1907). Mound Bayou grew to 4,000 inhabitants who communally owned 30,000 acres of land with 6,000 acres improved for agriculture.

Many other groups came, as well. German and Irish crews helped with timbering and building levees. Immigration offices in both Italy and China recruited laborers between the late 1870s and early 1900s. Italians were drawn primarily by opportunities in levee construction, agriculture, and peddling

hardware, while Chinese immigrants frequently operated grocery stores in the region's agricultural communities. Another group, Baltic and Russian Jews, found their niche as merchants of dry goods. Syrians and Lebanese came in the first decade of the 20th century to find employment as peddlers or in the restaurant business. Some white yeoman farmers from Mississippi's hill country brought their agricultural practices and lifestyles to the region, distinctly different than the planter culture. Mexican migrant workers came to work the land

and are still coming to work in the catfish industry. Immigration continues to the present, as in recent decades Chinese and Southwest Asians have come to the region to operate fast food businesses and hotels.

Agriculture in the Delta supported a network of small towns. Connected by railroads and rivers, surrounded by plantations, small farms, and the people who worked the land, these communities were social and economic hubs within the region. Luther Brown, in his *Mississippi Delta* appellation, described Delta communities:

They almost always had several grocery stores operated by Chinese immigrants, and several dry goods stores operated by Baltic or Russian Jews. They usually had their own blacksmiths, lawyers' offices, doctors, and business district. They were crowded places on weekends when farm families came to town. They were segregated, but relied on the spending of huge numbers of poor people.

(Brown 2010, pg. 55)

By the middle of the 20th century, this world unto itself would change dramatically as a result of economic forces, natural disaster, social pressure and agricultural mechanization. Despite major demographic shifts, the cultural impact of each of these groups would survive. Today these impacts are seen in music, foodways, religious practices, literature, arts and architecture in the Delta.

Controlling the River

Flooding was an integral part of the dynamic river system's existence, annually depositing new soils across the flat alluvial plain. To tame the land for agriculture, however, men had to tame the Mississippi River. Levees had been in use since Native American times to help control water and create suitable land for farming. This practice was adopted by 19th century agriculturalists who privately built and sustained their own levees. These efforts were not always successful, and they turned to the federal government for assistance.

Congress created the Mississippi River Commission in 1879 to oversee federal funds for flood control, and to end a long-standing debate about flood control methods between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) and the scientific community. Andrew Atkinson Humphreys, of the Corps, and James Buchanan Eads stood on opposite sides at the heart of this debate. Humphreys favored levees as the sole solution to flooding, while Eads advocated for a system that also included manmade reservoirs, outlets, and cutoffs.

In 1885, the Mississippi River Commission adopted a "levees only" policy. This policy remained firmly in place for 40 years, despite warnings from prominent engineers that such a direction could increase the danger of flooding. Unfortunately, the Corps' "levees only" policy was flawed because it was based on faulty analysis of the ways that silt-laden rivers like the Mississippi River responded to increased flow. In effect, the Corps' policy prepared the Delta for inevitable flooding.

The Great Flood of 1927

Nature tested the levee system in the spring of 1927, and at 8:00 on the morning of April 21, nature won. The Mississippi River crevassed near Mounds Landing in Bolivar County and inundated cotton fields and communities. In all, the flood impacted more than 27,000 square miles from the confluence of the Ohio River to New Orleans. Waters covered



Greenville was one of many towns devastated by the flood of 1927



The story of the famous Mississippi River flood is told at the 1927 Flood Museum in Greenville.

Photo: Rachel Anderson

hundreds of communities and thousands of farms, displacing more than a million people. Hundreds of people died. Damage topped \$1 billion. The Mississippi River reclaimed almost all of its historic flood plain. The entire Delta was inundated. At that time, the nation had known no greater natural disaster.

Beyond the loss of life and livelihoods, the flood drove a deep wedge into the heart of race relations in the Delta. Planters facing the evacuation of their poor, black labor force failed to support relief efforts, further imperiling the lives of tens of thousands. In Greenville, tensions soared as humanitarianism met the forces of the market economy, pitting members of one of the region's most prominent families—Senator LeRoy Percy and his son, William Alexander Percy—against each other. While whites evacuated, blacks were not permitted to leave. Resentment in the African American community fueled the migration of a large portion of the labor force to northern cities following the flood.

Relief efforts were complicated from the local to federal levels, and even presidential politics were dictated in part by the successes and failures associated with the Great Flood. Herbert Hoover was lauded for his coordination of relief efforts of eight government agencies, the American Red Cross, and 91 communities. Hoover defeated Calvin Coolidge in the 1928 election for U.S. President

in part because of Hoover's success in response to the flood, and Coolidge's lack of compassion and action during the crisis. The disaster also changed the face of relief efforts across the nation, necessarily involving the government in an arena that had previously been strictly philanthropic.

Flood control remains an important aspect of the Delta and all along the Mississippi. The Corps' policy shifted over time from levees only to incorporate other aspects of flood control, as was advocated by Eads early on. As a result of human manipulation, the Mississippi River runs faster and deeper now, no longer leaving alluvial sediments in the Delta, but carrying rich soils out into the Gulf of Mexico. Huge levees line the entire Lower Mississippi River. Despite these efforts, floods will always remain a fact of life for the Mississippi River.

The Great Migration

From the turn of the 20th century to the middle of it, the pressures of economics, natural disaster, technological advances, and social inequality converged to transform the Delta

once again. During what geographers call the Great Migration, millions of people left the Delta and other parts of the agricultural South and spread throughout the U.S. Delta citizens carried their traditions along with them to metropolitan areas to the North, East and West.

Extended periods of low cotton prices, especially following the panic of 1893, had previously contributed to the demise of small farms, thereby increasing the region's reliance on plantation agriculture. Many farmers were forced to sell their land and work plantations as tenant farmers and sharecroppers. Others began to follow the railroads north and west, seeking opportunities beyond the Delta. By 1915, the boll weevil was decimating cotton crops throughout Mississippi, making it even harder for farmers to make a crop, and pushing many northwards.

After 1910, W. C. Handy and other professional musicians began to popularize the Blues beyond the Delta, performing and composing sheet music in the distinctive style. By the late 1920s, Blues had become a significant element of African American and American popular music. Some Bluesmen could make a living performing, and many recorded on early record labels. Female performers helped bridge the racial divide, bringing the Blues to a white audience. Over time, Memphis, Chicago, New York, Detroit, and other cities became destinations for Bluesmen like B.B. King, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Elmo James and Willie Dixon. While this migration admittedly affected a small number of people in comparison to those who left for other reasons, their role in widely disseminating Delta Blues and culture is undeniable.

The Great Flood of 1927 marked a metaphorical and literal watershed in the Delta diaspora. The flood destroyed the homes, crops, mules and farm animals of thousands of Delta residents, and mishandled relief efforts spiked racial tensions and broke the unwritten social contract between planter and sharecropper. Thousands of African Americans left the Delta for survival or in search of a better life. The Great Depression, the spread of the boll weevil, and World War II's industrial expansion gave people more reasons to leave.

Social inequality also motivated many people to seek opportunity outside the South. Jim Crow laws legally segregated education, transportation, lodging, healthcare, and many other aspects of daily life in the Delta and across the South, but not in other parts of the U.S. Highway 61, nicknamed "Freedom Road," and the Illinois Central Railroad served as important corridors to the north.

Perhaps most significantly, the mechanization of agriculture eliminated the need for a large agricultural labor force of mules and humans. The invention of the mechanical cotton picker, which was demonstrated at the Delta Research and Extension Center in Stoneville in 1936 and used at Hopson Plantation by 1944, heralded the shift to mechanization. Along



The use of the mechanical cotton picker at Hopson Plantation in 1944 spurred the Great Migration by African Americans seeking work in the North.

Photo: Carolyn Brackett

with trucks, tractors, and mechanical cultivators, use of the cotton picker changed the agricultural equation from one man and mule per 10-15 acres to one man and a machine per 1,000 acres. Mechanization caused a greater change in plantation labor systems than the emancipation of slaves had more than 70 years earlier. According to differing arguments, mechanized agriculture was a response to an already dwindling labor force, liberated people from an abusive labor system, or displaced them and left them homeless.

In the Great Migration, people left the plantations in unprecedented numbers and made their way to the Delta's communities or to the industrial cities of the north. While the largest number of people who left were African American, white, Chinese, Jewish, and other groups left, as well. Today, many U.S. cities have Delta "alumni" organizations, and homecomings and family reunions are an important component of Delta life. Although this era represents the largest outmigration, the trend continues to the present due to poor economic and social conditions. Most Delta counties have lost population in each census since the mid-1900s.

The Delta changed. Today, once-common sharecroppers' shacks are rarely visible in the vast agricultural fields, and the Delta's Jewish synagogues host tiny congregations.

The migrants changed. The acoustic guitars of the countryside needed amplification for noisy urban settings, and the electrified Chicago Blues were born.

The nation changed. Migrants from the Delta carried their culture throughout the U.S., transforming the foodways, family life, faith, work patterns, musical tastes, and speech of the nation.



Emmett Till was 14 years old when he was murdered, an event that is credited with sparking the Civil Rights movement.

Troubled Times

In the United States, the struggle for Civil Rights that culminated in the 1950s and 1960s stretches back before the founding of the nation. The quest for abolition of slavery before the Civil War became the quest for equality after it ended. In the South, the progress African Americans made toward equality during the Reconstruction era (1865-1877) was eclipsed in the brutal backlash that followed. The legal, social, and economic context of the American South in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th was characterized by a deep divide between blacks and whites, as well as the subjugation of the rights of African Americans.

In the Mississippi Delta, the culture of the Blues was created by an economy completely reliant on plantation agriculture, an industry fueled by abundant cheap labor. Jim Crow laws ensuring "separate but equal" treatment of the races in all public services reinforced socio-economic disparities between the all-white ruling class and a laboring class that was predominantly black. In reality, "separate" was never "equal." Swift reprisals (sometimes economic, sometimes with force) resulted whenever the racial order was questioned.

Black Deltans began to confront systemic inequality in the 1940s and 1950s. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) became active in 1945,

eventually boasting such local leaders as Dr. Aaron Henry and Medgar Evers. Through the efforts of Dr. T. R. M. Howard and Amzie Moore, the Regional Council for Negro Leadership (RCNL) was founded in Mound Bayou in 1951. Conceived as an African American parallel to the economically oriented Delta Council, the RCNL extended its involvement to voting registration and other aspects of civil rights activism.

In May 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court acknowledged that “separate” was “inherently unequal” in *Brown v. Board of Education*. This ended legal segregation in public education and cracked the shell of the Jim Crow policy. In the Delta and throughout the South, the ruling fanned fears in the white ruling class that the social order would be overturned. Shortly after the decision, the White Citizens Council was established in Indianola and spread across the South, using economic pressure to oppose integration.

In this troubled environment, a 14-year old Chicago youth named Emmett Till unwittingly became the spark that ignited the flames of indignation of the modern Civil Rights movement. In 1955, he flirted with a white woman in Money and was lynched by her family. His mother, Mamie Till Bradley, held an open casket funeral in Chicago that brought national attention to the injustice. Till’s killers were tried and acquitted by an all-white jury, after which they openly sold their confession to *Look* magazine.



Bryant’s Grocery, located in Money, is where Emmett Till allegedly flirted with a white woman and was subsequently lynched by her family.

Photo: Carolyn Brackett



During Freedom Summer in 1964, more than a thousand volunteers helped register African American residents of the Delta to vote.

Fighting for Civil Rights

Emmett Till’s story rocked the nation, probing at consciences, energizing the Civil Rights Movement among people of all races, and girding strict segregationists for war. In December 1955, Rosa Parks claimed she thought of Till when she refused to give up her seat and began the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

Historian James C. Cobb observed that the Delta “earned a reputation as a citadel of white defiance” in the Civil Rights Movement (1994: 251). The brutality of Till’s murder and other physical acts of violence, coupled with the formation of White Citizens Councils that strongly opposed social equality, demonstrated the lengths many Delta residents would

go to in order to maintain the existing social order. As such, the Delta garnered the fervent attention of a number of activist groups from the 1950s through the 1970s, including the

student groups SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), and C.O.R.E. (Congress of Racial Equality). In 1961, C.O.R.E. took on the issue of segregated interstate bussing, sponsoring “Freedom Rides” in which black and white students traveled together, often facing arrest for this transgression. Voting registration was of paramount importance. In 1964, SNCC, C.O.R.E. and the NAACP were coordinated under COFO (the Mississippi Council of Federated Organizations) to participate in Freedom Summer. Over one thousand people, three-quarters of whom were white, volunteered to register voters and teach “Freedom School” where children learned to read, write, and stand up for social justice.

Delta Civil Rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer was instrumental in organizing Freedom Summer, as well as the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. A sharecropper from Ruleville, Hamer was evicted from her home when she registered to vote in 1962 and was brutally beaten for her activism the following year. Rather than succumb to intimidation, she became a charismatic leader in the movement. As a delegate for Mississippi’s Freedom Democrats, who challenged the right of the state’s all-white delegation to represent Mississippi at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, Hamer’s testimony contributed to the passage of the Voting Rights Act. In a handful of years, the efforts of leaders like Hamer, Henry, and Moore increased the number of registered African American voters in the Delta from a couple of hundred to more than 60,000.

As the Civil Rights Movement saw success in integration and voting registration, it expanded to address human rights issues such as poverty, health care, and education. Marks was the starting point of the Mule Train, part of the multi-racial *Poor People’s Campaign* organized by Dr. Martin Luther King in 1968. King was assassinated just prior to the trip to “Resurrection City,” the encampment on the Mall in Washington D.C.

Civil Rights leaders and events in the Delta formed a cornerstone of the national movement. Although sharp disparities still exist in the region, African Americans have shouldered the right and responsibility to vote and to serve as elected officials at every level, and today Mississippi has more African American elected officials than any other state. Black and white community leaders work together to continue to improve economic and quality of life issues for all Delta residents. Through the Mississippi Freedom Trail markers, driving tours in Greenville and Tallahatchie, and various museum exhibits across the region, Delta citizens recognize their struggles, celebrate their triumphs, and share these stories with the nation.

Wellspring of Creativity

Creativity has always run deep in the Delta. Perhaps this is because the region’s sharp disparities spark human imagination, or perhaps innovation is a legacy of poverty. Whatever the reason, from music to literature to art and even to business, people of the Delta have long demonstrated both talent and passion.

The importance of the Blues, and its relation to other musical forms in the Delta (especially rock ‘n’ roll, gospel and soul), is internationally significant. The Blues were born here, and rock ‘n’ roll emerged from the Blues. Famous artists in many genres come from the region. In addition to hundreds of Bluesmen, Ike Turner influenced rock ‘n’ roll, Conway Twitty and Charley Pride helped shape country music, and gospel thrives in churches across the Delta.

In addition to the Delta’s storied musical heritage, the region boasts an incredible number of authors. Brown’s *Appellation Mississippi Delta* lists more than 75 authors with ties to the region, noting that they cover “every written genre, from autobiography to journalism to



Margaret's Grocery in Vicksburg is the result of one man's creativity and an example of the creativity found throughout the Delta.

Photo: Mississippi Delta Tourism Association

conquest over nature. Faulkner spent time in Greenville, home of William Alexander Percy, Shelby Foote, Hodding Carter, Walker Percy, Clifton Taubert, and many others. The city is known as having "more writers than anywhere else in America per capita." Its authors include winners of the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, and the O'Henry Award (www.greenville.ms.us/Famous_Greenvillians/famous_greenvillians_writers.html). While many of the Delta's authors used the region as inspiration or as a setting, their works often reflected larger themes of American life.

Painting, sculpture, pottery, quilting, photography, film, and storytelling—all stand out as important traditional or contemporary arts in the Delta. The ever-present influences of the river and the land inform these arts, as do the stark contrasts of Delta life—the culture

of the Blues. Foodways and religious traditions reflect the Delta's fusion of cultures, and artistry in many forms colors the Delta and reaches well beyond it. Creativity grown in the Delta stretches from roadside groceries to presidential portraiture, from local eateries to a national appliance brand and the food columns of the *New York Times*.

From the Past to the Present

Today, the sense of place that combines nature and the decisions people made as they tried to bend it to their will remains clearly visible in the land between the Mississippi and Yazoo rivers. Yet Delta heritage reaches far beyond that landscape, touching our nation's taste for



Agriculture continues to shape the Delta's culture and economy.

Photo: Mississippi Delta Tourism Association

documentary and history to film scripts, fiction and magical realism to non-fiction, poetry to prose," (Brown 2010, 114-116).

American literature owes much to Mississippi. The most celebrated author from the Delta is Tennessee Williams, whose works frequently drew upon his childhood in Clarksdale and his understanding of the dark underpinnings of wealth, class, and power. Richard Wright and Eudora Welty are among those who held up a mirror to our consciousness of race, place, and class as a nation. William Faulkner used it as a setting for stories of human greed and the

music and food, and teaching us tolerance for differences in race and class. From untamed wilderness to unchecked agricultural development, to the trials and triumphs of the human spirit, the Delta's story is America's story condensed into little more than one hundred years.

The Mississippi River flows south behind huge, green levees, still a critical transportation artery for the region and the nation. From petroleum products to ore, grain, and scrap, the water moves heavy freight with ease on barges pushed by tugboats. Flood control remains an important, but imperfect, science, as demonstrated by the Great Flood of 2011.

The vast wilderness that existed for thousands of years was tamed in the space of a generation, and significant habitat was lost for many of the region's species. Still, wildness endures, albeit in a different form than the virgin landscape of the past. The Delta provides critical habitat for the songbirds, raptors, and waterfowl that migrate along the Mississippi Flyway. Many migratory species winter in the Delta. The region has large public refuges and private reserves where deer, black bear, wild hogs, and alligators make their homes. The waterways abound with fish. From Native American societies that lived off the abundance of the alluvial floodplain, to Teddy Roosevelt's famous bear hunt near Rolling Fork, to the hunters, fishermen, and bird watchers of today, the Delta's natural environment remains a bountiful and beautiful marvel.

Agriculture shaped the Delta's landscape, its economy, and the path of its history. Today, as in the past, Delta agriculture contributes significantly to the U.S. economy. Although cotton has had the greatest role to play, other crops also have been important. Native Americans grew corn, a product whose importance is on the rise again in recent years as biofuels gain acceptance. Soybeans were introduced after the Great Flood of 1927, rice in 1948, and catfish in 1965. All are still raised today, along with increasing acreage of peanuts. The Delta remains a place of agricultural innovation, and has led the nation in the modern development of "precision ag." Its accomplishments in this area are due to the research of public facilities like Stoneville and private companies like Delta and Pine Land Company (now Monsanto) and many other multi-national agricultural-research companies, the use of computer and satellite technology, and the Delta Council's leadership on agricultural issues at the regional, state, and federal levels.

The Delta's legacy from plantation agriculture—the culture of the Blues—gave the world an incredible musical form and helped inspire creativity in a variety of art forms, but also left the nation with a racial divide that has not closed completely. Music, the literary and culinary arts, and the visual arts continue to thrive, and have brought the region national and international recognition. Delta residents have begun to understand the importance of the built environment in illustrating this legacy—from the surviving vernacular architecture (sharecropper housing and jooks), to the utilitarian (downtowns), to the high style (antebellum and Victorian mansions). And while a racial divide still exists, people on all sides continue to work hard to eliminate it.

Today, Delta residents and leaders acknowledge the importance of the history outlined in these pages. They are working to share this history, conserve special places associated with it, and build a sustainable economic future on the Delta's heritage.

(See appendix for Historical Overview bibliography.)

Chapter 5

Resource Inventory
Analysis



Chapter 5

Introduction

An inventory of cultural, historic and natural resources is an essential planning tool because it provides insights into the many types of resources as well as connections to the heritage area's themes. The inventory was developed around the interpretive themes and categories and organized by resource categories as follows:

The Mississippi River and the Land It Embraces

- Mississippi River
- Agriculture and Cotton
- Water
- Land
- Recreation
- Native American
- Biological Resources

The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound

- Blues Music

Moving Toward Freedom:

Changing America's Character in the Struggle for Rights

- Civil War
- Civil Rights
- Immigration

Growing More than Cotton:

The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity

- Literature
- Cultural & Arts

The Delta Divide:

Creating the Delta's Diverse Communities

- National Register of Historic Places
- Sites Not Currently on the National Register

Additional Categories

Two additional inventory categories encompass listings from more than one of the themes:

- Museums
- State Historic Markers

It is important to understand that this inventory is not intended to identify every existing cultural resource within the entire heritage area. Rather, it is intended to identify the most significant resources connected to the heritage area's themes. Where relevant, decisions on the types of resources to include and to exclude are explained within the section for the

Cover images:

- 1) Vicksburg National Military Park, Vicksburg
- 2) Mont Helena, Sharkey County
- 3) Temple Adath Israel, Bolivar County
- 4) Alluvian Hotel, Greenwood
- 5) Baptist Town, Greenwood

subject resource category. For example, within the “Blues Music” category, juke joints that either have a historical association with significant Blues musicians or currently play live Blues music (even if only occasionally) were included. Conversely, bars that might be considered by some to be juke joints, but that lack the historical associations or that never feature live Blues music were generally not included. (The complete inventory is found in the appendix of the management plan. Additionally, the Chapter 6 includes charts identifying whether inventoried sites are interpreted.)

Inventory Methodology

Development of the inventory was greatly enhanced by the involvement of numerous individuals and organizations throughout the heritage area. As the inventory drafts were prepared, they were placed on the MDNHA website and notices were sent to the heritage area’s partners. Partners responded enthusiastically by providing photographs, assisting in documenting the accuracy of information and submitting listings for inclusion in the inventory.

A wide range of sources and approaches were employed to create the resource inventory. Several existing inventories from previous surveys and studies were first reviewed to identify resources. Examples of such surveys and studies include:

- Mississippi Blues Trail website
- Mississippi Freedom Trail (Mississippi Development Authority Tourism Division website)
- Mississippi Country Music Trail website
- Mississippi Delta Hot Tamale Trail website
- Central Delta Resources Inventory from the “Share Your Heritage Workshop” (2003)
- Twelve Essays About Delta Heritage – Luther Brown (2007-2008)
- National Register of Historic Places – Mississippi Department of Archives and History website
- State Historic Markers - Mississippi Department of Archives and History



The decaying grocery store in Money where the Emmett Till story is rooted is one of the MDNHA’s most significant resources in need of urgent help.

To supplement this starting point of existing inventories, extensive field work conducted by the project team revealed numerous additional resources.

Resources by Interpretive Theme Category

This section provides an overview of the resources inventoried as part of the management plan. For each of the categories of resources, a description is provided of key findings and some specific example resources are cited.

The Mississippi River and the Land It Embraces

Mississippi River

Cultural resources tied to the Mississippi River are relatively diverse. Geographically they are limited to those counties adjacent to the river, including DeSoto, Tunica, Coahoma, Bolivar, Washington, Issaquena and Warren. Many, but not all, of the resources related to the river can be grouped into the following categories:

Resources Overlapping Other Thematic Categories

Some of the cultural resources identified in the inventory as being tied to the river are also tied to other thematic categories and repeated in those inventories. An example is the Old Courthouse Museum in Vicksburg, a significant Civil War resource and museum that also interprets the river.

Resources Lost to the River

There are some cultural resources that have been lost to the river because of its changing course and they are now limited in their representation to nearby interpretive markers. Examples include the lost river port of Old Prentiss in Bolivar County near Beulah and the lost Town of Delta in Coahoma County.

River Infrastructure

Another category of river-related cultural resources includes bridges such as the Hernando DeSoto River Commemorative Bridge in Coahoma County and the Mississippi River Bridge (aka – Old Vicksburg Bridge) in Vicksburg, as well as levees such as the Greenville levee and the slave-built Rattlesnake Bayou Levee, also in Greenville.

Museums and Parks

As with the Native American theme and several others, many of the river's associated resources are in the form of museums. Some museums focus solely on the river and are state-of-the-art interpretive centers, such as the Mississippi River Museum in Tunica and the Army Corps' Lower Mississippi River Museum and Riverfront Interpretive Center in Vicksburg. The Greenville Flood Museum tells the story of the flood of 1927. Other museums address the river as one of multiple themes, such as the North Delta Museum in Friars Point, the Greenville History Museum and the Old Depot Museum in Vicksburg. Examples of parks located on and interpreting the river include the Great River Road Park in Rosedale and the Hernando DeSoto River Park in DeSoto County.

Agriculture and Cotton

This theme and its associated cultural resources are intertwined with some other key themes, including the Mississippi River and Blues Music. Dockery Farms in Bolivar County, for example, is strongly linked to some of the Blues' earliest legends, including Charley



Greenville's Mississippi Board of Levee Commissioners Building is a unique river-related resource now used as a hotel.

Patton, while the Abbay and Leatherman Plantation in Robinsonville is where Robert Johnson spent much of his early life.

Historic Plantations

This sub-category of resources constitutes a large percentage of the resources inventoried within the Agriculture and Cotton category. Several associated resources are primarily land resources that were once the site of plantations, but are now left with few if any related historic structures, such as Doro Plantation in Beulah (Bolivar County). Other plantations still retain important structures, such as the commissary buildings of the Hopson Plantation outside of Clarksdale and the Heathman Plantation in Indianola. Surviving Greek Revival homes include Clifton Plantation House in Howard (Holmes County), Prairie Plantation House in Clarksdale and Belmont Plantation home in Washington County. Much more modest homes include the wooden shacks that are part of the Shack Up Inn in Clarksdale and the shacks at Tallahatchie Flats in Greenwood. All are now used as tourist lodgings. The state's reportedly oldest brick gin building has been integrated into the B.B. King Museum in Indianola. One notable example of a plantation that is losing its historic structures because of neglect and decay is the McCain Plantation in Carroll County, the home of ancestors of Senator John McCain.

Cotton Business Historic Structures

Buildings related to the cotton business that are not located on former plantation sites are important, but less common than other types of agriculture-related structures. As perhaps the heritage area's most significant cotton center, downtown Greenwood has two such resources - the Cotton Row District on the riverfront and the Staple Cotton Cooperative.

Farmers Markets and Operating Farms/Gins

Today's functioning agricultural businesses and farmers markets can be viewed as living reflections of the Delta's agricultural past. Examples include Brussel's Bonsai Nursery in Olive Branch, the Nesbit Blueberry Plantation in DeSoto County and Cedar Hill Farm in Hernando. Notable farmers markets include those located in downtown Hernando and Olive Branch. Producers Cotton Gin in Marks (Quitman County) and the Como Consolidated Gin Company represent functioning cotton gins, while a more recent part of the Delta's agricultural tradition is the numerous catfish farms throughout the region.

Museums

Museums interpreting agriculture and cotton range from those focused solely or primarily on that theme to those covering other topics. The Aaron Cotton Company Museum in Clarksdale, for example, has a singular focus on cotton. The Museum of the Mississippi Delta in Greenwood has a strong focus on cotton and agriculture, but also addresses other subjects, such as Native American heritage. The North Delta Museum in Friars Point addresses a wide range of topics, with cotton being one.



At one time, cultivating cotton required hundreds of workers.

Photo: Marion Post Wolcott. 1939. Library of Congress



The Yazoo River is an important water resource in the Delta.

Water Resources

There are several major water resources within the heritage area that help define the landscape of the Mississippi Delta. The Mississippi River is the single most impacting natural resource within the heritage area. The river created the Delta by regular flooding over thousands of years. These systematic floods deposited sediment, forming the large, flat landform, known as an alluvial plain. The Yazoo River is another important water resource within the Delta. The Yazoo and its tributaries cover much of the rolling hills to the northeast of the vast alluvial plain. The Yazoo-Mississippi Delta is approximately 200 miles long and 70 miles across at its widest point. Oxbow lakes dot the landscape

throughout the Delta. An oxbow lake is formed when a curved meander in a river is cut off from the flow of the river during a time of flood. Some of the Mississippi River's oxbow lakes within the Delta are several miles long, and cover several thousand acres.

The Delta also contains a significant Flood Damage Reduction reservoir – Arkabutla Lake, and borders on both Sardis and Enid Lakes. While these lakes reduce flooding around the cities of Greenwood, Yazoo City, Belzoni, and other smaller communities within the Delta, they also provide outdoor recreation opportunities for millions of people every year. Wetlands are an abundant resource within the Mississippi Delta. Nearly 50,000 acres of land in the Lower Delta has been enrolled in U.S.D.A Wetland and Conservation Reserve Programs. Wetlands filter and clean water that flows through them prior to reaching the human water supply, help control flooding, and serve as habitat for important plants and animals.



Walking trails like this one in Tunica offer opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Photo: Mississippi Delta Tourism

Land Resources

The Mississippi Delta once boasted the largest expanse of forested wetlands in North America. In modern times, however, rivers in the region have been leveed, dredged, straightened, drained and diverted, in order to make more land available for agricultural and industrial use. There are still some places that exist much as they did centuries ago. The lower Yazoo River basin contains more than 1.1 million acres of remaining bottomland forests. The Delta National Forest is a prime land resource within the basin. The Forest contains 61,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forest. It is the only bottomland hardwood forest in the National Forest Service System. Conservation Easements are being used extensively to preserve existing forests within the Delta.

The National Wildlife Refuges in the Delta are a tremendous resource for the region. The Theodore Roosevelt National Wildlife Refuge Complex is the largest refuge complex in the state of Mississippi. Over 100,000 acres of refuge lands on seven refuges provide vital habitat for fish and wildlife in the Delta region.

Public parks are yet another significant resource within the Mississippi Delta. Tunica RiverPark, Moon Landing Park, and Warfield Point Park provide excellent opportunities to view the Mississippi River. Leroy Percy State Park and Vicksburg National Military Park are also examples of premier park assets within the region.

Natural Recreation Resources

The bottomland hardwood forests in the Delta provide an ideal setting for nature-based tourism. Given its unique culture and history, combined with the allure of its swampy setting, the Delta provides an opportunity for nature-based tourism perhaps unmatched anywhere in the country. Hunting and fishing are immensely popular activities in the Mississippi Delta. Some of the best fishing in the world exists in the lower Mississippi River, its tributaries, and oxbow lakes. Fishing is a multi-million dollar industry in the region and will likely only increase as preservation efforts on the Mississippi River, its tributaries and its critical habitats continue.

Non-consumptive recreation is attracting increasing numbers of people and generating growing economic benefits from tourism activity within the Delta. Types of non-consumptive natural recreation enjoyed by inhabitants and visitors of the Delta include bird watching, hiking, biking, and canoeing to name a few.

Nearly half of North America's bird species, and about 40 percent of its waterfowl, spend at least part of their lives in the Mississippi Flyway. The Mississippi Delta provides essential wetland habitat for these birds as they make their journey along the Mississippi Flyway. The Great River Birding Trail runs through the Delta. The Trail is a 2,000-mile pathway to hundreds of places to enjoy birds and wildlife.

Nature trails are abundant throughout the Delta. From wildlife management area trails to trails along the many lakes of the region, the opportunities for hiking and biking are on the rise in the Delta. Quapaw Canoe Company provides custom-guided adventures on the Lower Mississippi and several of its tributaries.

Native American

The heritage area's rich Native American history is reflected in prehistoric cultural resources and historic cultural resources as well as museums interpreting both eras.

Prehistoric Resources

Among the most common prehistoric cultural resources inventoried are mounds that were used for burials and ceremonial purposes, such as the elevated base for



Jaketown Site — Humphreys County:
This Poverty Point Culture, Tchula Period, Mississippian culture village and religious site is managed by the state of Mississippi and artifacts found in the area are featured on display in the Jaketown Museum in Belzoni.

a religious structure. While they are represented by various prehistoric eras, many are from the Mississippian period, as well as the Woodland period. Counties with a particularly high number of surviving mounds include Coahoma, and Leflore. Nearly all of the mounds are on private property being used for agricultural purposes, and they are in various levels of preservation. A noteworthy exception is the Winterville mounds site in Greenville which is owned by the State of Mississippi. Some mounds have been greatly diminished by years of plowing, while in other cases plowing has been avoided. Some mounds were even used for other purposes during the 19th century, such as for cemeteries or forming a “pedestal” for buildings. In addition to mounds, there are several habitation sites that did not feature mounds, such as the Middle Woodland Shields Site in Indianola and the Mississippian French Site in Holmes County.

Historic Resources

Among historic cultural resources are tribal boundaries designated during the 19th century through treaties among tribes such as the Choctaw and Chickasaw. These boundaries lack any sort of physical evidence but are typically interpreted through historic markers installed by the State of Mississippi. An example is the Choctaw Line marking the boundary created by Choctaw land cessions between 1820 (Doak’s Stand) and 1830 (Dancing Rabbit Creek). This boundary traversed multiple counties, including Bolivar, Coahoma, and Holmes Counties. Another historic resource is the Malmaison site in Carroll County. It is the site of the 1854 mansion of Choctaw Chief Greenwood Leflore that burned in 1942. His grave is nearby. Charley’s Trace in Leflore County is interpreted through a state historic marker near Minter City on Highway 49. It was the 18th century trail named after a Choctaw man who lived on it and was a guide on the trail. The trail led to the Mississippi River.

Museums

In addition to prehistoric and historic resources, the heritage area includes museums that interpret Native American heritage. For example, the North Delta Museum in Friars Point includes an extensive collection of prehistoric Indian artifacts and the Museum of the Mississippi Delta in Greenwood is touted as having the largest collection of Native American trade beads in the southern United States. Artifacts and furniture are also featured from Malmaison, the mansion of Choctaw Indian Chief Greenwood Leflore.

Biological Resources

The heritage area provides homes to many rare and endangered plants and animals. The remaining bottomland forests serve as critical habitat for Louisiana black bears and many songbird species. Least terns and pallid sturgeons are both species of particular concern within the region. Pondberry grows in the lowland forests of the Delta, and this plant species has become rare over time as its habitat has been converted to agricultural lands.

In addition to its endangered plants and animals, the heritage area contains some plant communities that can only be found in this region. Sky Lake contains some of the largest and oldest baldcypress trees that remain on earth, and they have international scientific significance. The Sky Lake Wildlife Management Area currently encompasses over 4,000 acres to help protect this valuable resource. The Green Ash-Overcup Oak-Sweetgum Research Natural Area, located within the Delta National Forest, is a National Natural Landmark. The area contains three very rare remnants of virgin bottomland hardwood forest containing sweetgum stands that are 250 to 300 years old.

Many of the significant biological resources within the heritage area are located within the numerous wildlife refuges and management areas in the region. Wildlife refuges managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other federal and state-owned properties preserve habitat for endangered and threatened species.

The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound

Blues Music

Of all of the interpretive themes related to the heritage area, Blues music is the most extensively marketed to a national and international audience. In addition to the system of Blues Trail interpretive markers, cultural resource types include juke joints where live Blues music is currently (or has been) played, homes of Blues musicians, museums, landmarks and similar resources. While these resources are located in large numbers throughout the heritage area, Clarksdale has the largest number of resources because of its importance to the Blues. In fact, it could be said that Clarksdale is to the Blues what Vicksburg is the Civil War.

Blues Trail Markers

The Mississippi Blues Commission has placed 79 markers in the Delta commemorating and bringing recognition to important sites and people connected to the Blues. Some have been funded by famous musicians, such as Robert Plant of Led Zeppelin and John Fogerty of Creedence Clearwater Revival. Markers continue to be unveiled and will be added to the inventory when it is updated periodically. Examples of specific stories told via the markers include the Alligator Blues in Alligator, Chrisman Street in Cleveland, Harlem Inn in Cleveland, Honeyboy Edwards in Shaw (Bolivar County) and Robert Nighthawk (Friars Point).

Homes and Home Sites of Blues Musicians

This category of Blues cultural resources is experiencing the greatest level of threat of loss because they are primarily owned privately, and often by low-income owners who may struggle in maintaining them and/or who may make architecturally inappropriate building alterations. This point is underscored by the numerous home sites that no longer feature the subject building. Examples of surviving homes include the birthplace



Legendary Bluesman B.B. King was honored with a marker in Indianola as part of the Mississippi Blues Trail.



Cat Head Delta Blues & Folk Art is located in downtown Clarksdale and sells a wide range of Blues-related items.

of Ike Turner in Clarksdale. He was born Izeah Luster Turner, Jr. in 1932. Members of his family lived here until the 1950s, and the home is privately owned. Examples of home sites that no longer feature the house include the W.C. Handy home site in Clarksdale, the B.B. King birthplace in Leflore County South of Berclair and the Muddy Waters home site in Stovall (part of the Stovall Plantation in Coahoma County). The original portion of the Muddy Waters house, where he lived until he left for Chicago in 1943, is now inside the Delta Blues Museum.

Graves of Blues Musicians

This category of resources is perhaps the second most threatened after musicians' homes, and that threat is from neglect and potential vandalism. Examples of graves, all of which have Blues Trails markers, include "Mississippi" John Hurt's grave in the St. James Cemetery in Carroll County near Avalon; the Henry "Son" Sims' grave in Clarksdale's Belle Grove Cemetery (he was reportedly buried in an unmarked grave); Joe Callicott's grave in the Mount Olive C.M.E. Church cemetery in Nesbit (DeSoto County); Memphis Minnie's gravesite in Walls (DeSoto County); the grave of Sonny Boy Williamson (real name: Aleck Miller) in the Whitfield Cemetery in Tallahatchie County and Charley Patton's grave site in Holly Ridge (Sunflower County). Patton's grave is part of a cemetery adjacent to the New Jerusalem M. B. Church where Patton was employed in the 1930s to sing religious songs. The Blues Trail markers are one way to help preserve these graves by placing a spotlight on them and encouraging their maintenance.

Juke Joints / Music Venues

Juke joints are a critical resource type for helping to promote the Delta, as most Blues fans want to be able to hear live Blues music. The Delta's best known authentic juke joint is Po' Monkey's Lounge, located in a cotton field near Merigold. Opened in 1961 in a one-room shack, it is only open on Thursday evenings. Many are concerned about its future when the owner is no longer around.

The Do Drop Inn in Shelby (Bolivar County) is open Friday and Saturday nights and serves soul food. Another well-known juke joint is Red's Blues Club in Clarksdale, visited by thousands of Blues fans. This site recently won a "Keeping the Blues Alive" award, and it was named by *Esquire* magazine as the best place in America to hear live Blues.

Another Clarksdale landmark is the Red Top Lounge where the Jelly Roll Kings were the house band (Frank Frost, Big Jack Johnson, and Sam Carr) and Ike Turner's Kings of Rhythm played here in 1951. Club Ebony in Indianola is considered by many to be one of the South's most important nightclubs. It was built and opened in 1948 and has showcased Ray Charles, Count Basie, B. B. King, Bobby Bland, Little Milton, Albert King, Willie Clayton and other legendary acts. A more recently-established Blues venue is Ground Zero Blues Club in Clarksdale. It opened in 2001 to showcase Blues musicians living in the Delta and it features a restaurant serving "down home" food. It technically would not be considered a traditional "juke joint."

In addition to juke joints, there are other types of places in the heritage area where Blues music has been played. The Bolivar County Courthouse in Cleveland is the location where W.C. Handy first played in the area with his band, helping to popularize Blues music. The Harlem Inn in Cleveland opened in 1935. As a vibrant venue for the Chitlin Circuit into the 1950s, entertainers included B.B. King, Fats Domino, Ike Turner

and Muddy Waters. Speakers were used to broadcast music outside for the overflow crowds, and there were hotel rooms upstairs. The New Roxy Theatre in Clarksdale, which is currently under restoration, was built in 1950 as a movie theater for African Americans. Muddy Waters and Sam Cooke performed at the theatre's opening. A less conventional music venue is the Hirsberg's Drug Store in Friars Point, where Robert Johnson played in front of the store in the 1930s. A young Muddy Waters witnessed one of his performances there. One site with an uncertain history and significance is the Three Forks Store in Quito in Leflore County. This building may have been the "Three Forks Store" where Robert Johnson gave his last performance in August 1938.

Other Cultural Resources

This category of Blues resources is broad and might be considered a "catch all" for resources that do not fit neatly into other categories. Among the landmarks within this category is the famed Crossroads in Clarksdale at the intersection of US Routes 61 and 49 where legend has it that Robert Johnson sold his soul to the devil in return for securing his musical talents. Another famed landmark is "Where the Southern Crosses the Dog" in Moorhead (Sunflower County). This juncture of the Southern Railroad and the Yazoo Delta Railroad (the "Yellow Dog") was established in 1897 and made famous by W.C. Handy in his 1914 song "The Yellow Dog Rag."

Among the several plantations associated with famous Blues musicians is the Hopson Planting Company south of Clarksdale where Blues pianist Joe Willie "Pinetop" Perkins was a tractor driver. He later played with Muddy Waters and enjoyed a solo career. Dockery Farms, where Charley Patton once resided, is perhaps the best known Blues-associated plantation.

A truly unique Blues cultural resource is the Belzoni Old Jail House where Charley Patton spent time in 1934. He wrote about his experience in "High Sheriff Blues."

There are also multiple radio stations tied to the Blues, particularly in Clarksdale and Greenwood. The WROX Radio Station (aka — Hopson Building) in downtown Clarksdale is now a museum. As Clarksdale's first radio station, it went on the air on June 5, 1944 at 321 Delta Avenue. From 1945 until 1955, the station was located at the current location at 257 Delta Avenue. Among Blues artists who hosted programs or performed on the air at this site were Ike Turner, Robert Nighthawk and Sonny Boy Williamson.

Other resources include the Stackhouse Recording Company (AKA Rooster Blues, etc.) in downtown Clarksdale. Designed to look like a riverboat, this building has been home to a variety of record making and selling businesses over the past several decades, although it now appears to be vacant. Cat Head Delta Blues & Folk Art, Inc. in Clarksdale is a store whose stated mission is "To organize and promote Mississippi Blues and Southern culture from within — and hopefully sell the occasional Blues CD, book, T-shirt or painting."

Moving Toward Freedom: Changing America's Character in the Struggle for Rights

Civil War

Although much of the heritage area is relatively lacking in a rich Civil War history and resources, the Vicksburg area more than compensates. Civil War resources inventoried include battlefield sites, defensive earthworks, buildings associated with the Civil War



The Old Courthouse Museum in Vicksburg is both a museum and a historic artifact that witnessed the siege.

(generals' headquarters, temporary hospitals, etc.), monuments and cemeteries, and related museums. Other resources that fit less neatly into distinct categories include Nathan Bedford Forrest's Plantation in the Clarksdale area and the levee in Coahoma County where Grant's army blew a hole in it as part of his Yazoo Pass Expedition.

Battlefield Sites and Defensive Earthworks

Many battlefields in the heritage area are privately owned by multiple owners and unprotected, such as the Franklin Church and Battlefield in Holmes County, and the Chickasaw Bayou Battlefield just north of Vicksburg. Such battlefields typically have modern development that undermines their historic integrity and interpretive potential. A similarly situated battlefield is the Big Black River Bridge Battlefield in Warren County. Part of the Vicksburg Campaign,

it has multiple private owners and only 28 acres are protected by virtue of state ownership. Privately-owned properties featuring Civil War earthworks include C.S. Fort Pemberton in Greenwood and the federal fortifications along Bear Creek (aka – Grant's Outer Line) in Warren County. While much of the original Vicksburg Battlefield has been developed and is privately owned, the surviving lands and associated earthworks are still quite extensive and protected by the Vicksburg National Military Park. This park is also extensively interpreted through interpretive centers, wayside exhibits, monuments and driving tours using telecommunications technology.

Historic Buildings

Examples of historic buildings used as military headquarters include the Robinson-Slack-Marinelli House in Friars Point, used by Union General Napoleon Bonaparte Buford, and Eureka Masonic College in Richland (Holmes County), used by Company C of the 15th Mississippi Infantry. Vicksburg features multiple headquarters buildings, including C.S. General John Pemberton's Headquarters (aka - Willis-Cowan House), which is part of the Vicksburg National Military Park, and the C.S. General Stephen D. Lee Headquarters House, which is privately owned. Buildings used during the war as temporary hospitals were often institutional buildings, such as churches, and they frequently remain in religious use and ownership. However, several historic houses in Vicksburg that were used as hospitals are privately owned today, including the McRaven House (aka – Bobb House) and the Duff Green Mansion which is a bed and breakfast inn. Other inventoried Civil War-related buildings include those associated with a Civil War figure but that experienced no particularly significant Civil War activity. Examples include the Colonel James Z. George Law Office in Carrollton and the Anchuca Historic Mansion, a bed and breakfast inn in Vicksburg that was once the home of Confederate President Jefferson Davis' brother.

Monuments and Cemeteries

A key Civil War cemetery in Vicksburg is the Cedar Hill Cemetery and Soldiers Rest. While a large percentage of Civil War resources are located in Vicksburg, monuments and cemeteries are more evenly spread throughout the heritage area. Examples include the

DeSoto County Confederate Monument in the Hernando Memorial Cemetery and the Greenwood/Leflore County Confederate Monument. In general, most monuments and cemeteries are in relatively good condition, in part because they are made of durable materials (masonry) and they receive some level of regular maintenance.

Museums

Museums interpreting the Civil War in a substantial way within the heritage area are relatively few in number outside of Vicksburg. One exception is the Museum of the Mississippi Delta in Greenwood, which features a Leflore County Military History exhibit. In Vicksburg, key museums include the main interpretive center at the military park and the USS Cairo interpretive center, also located at the park. A unique museum in Vicksburg is the Old Courthouse Museum housed in the former Warren County Courthouse. The building itself is a significant cultural resource, as it was a high profile landmark throughout the siege. The museum has a tremendous collection of Civil War artifacts that are interpreted via an “old school” approach using wooden and glass cases without modern technology that makes the museum itself somewhat of an artifact.

Civil Rights

Along with Blues music, the Civil Rights Movement and associated cultural resources will likely be one of the biggest draws to the Delta for heritage tourists. Key types of cultural resources related to the Civil Rights Movement include the Freedom Trail markers, homes and graves of Civil Rights leaders, and landmarks associated with the movement. Unlike some cultural resource categories, they seem to be relatively evenly distributed throughout the heritage area’s geography.

Freedom Trail Markers

The state’s Mississippi Freedom Trail Task Force oversees the placement of markers commemorating and bringing recognition to the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi. Four markers have been placed in the Delta to date, and more are planned. Listings will be added as new markers are unveiled when the inventory is updated periodically. The four markers interpret the following: Fannie Lou Hamer grave site and memorial gardens in Ruleville, Dr. T.R.M. Howard Home in Mound Bayou, Amzie Moore Home in Cleveland, and Bryant’s Grocery Store (Emmitt Till association) in Money.



This statue of Civil Rights leader Fannie Lou Hamer is part of a memorial garden in Ruleville.



This Chinese sculpture is one of the reminders of the many immigrant populations who have come to live and work in the Delta.

Homes and Home Sites of Civil Rights Leaders

Similar to the case of Blues musicians, the homes of Civil Rights leaders are a threatened resource category. One example of a surviving home is the Isaiah T. Montgomery House in Mound Bayou. Born into slavery, Montgomery was the founder of Mound Bayou. As the mayor, he was an active politician, participating in the 1890 Mississippi constitutional convention that disfranchised black voters. This home is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Another historic residence is the Amzie Moore Home in Cleveland, which was added to the Mississippi Heritage Trust's 10 Most Endangered list in 2011. The home of Unita Blackwell in Mayersville (Issaquena County) pays tribute to the first African American woman to be elected mayor in Mississippi. She was also a project director for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and helped organize voter registration drives. The Dr. Aaron Henry home in Clarksdale is fortunate to still be standing. Dr. Henry was the state president of the NAACP in the 1960s and his home was firebombed unsuccessfully by the KKK. Rev. George Lee of Belzoni was the first person killed in the March Against Fear event. His home is vacant and needs repair. While there may still be hope to save Rev. Lee's home, others were less fortunate. Irene Magruder was the first person in Indianola to house Civil Rights workers during Freedom Summer in 1964, and her decision influenced others who then opened their homes to the volunteers. On May 1, 1965, her home was firebombed, so only the site exists today.



The grave of Fannie Lou Hamer and her husband in Ruleville is part of a memorial garden.

Graves of Civil Rights Leaders

There are not many graves of Civil Rights movement figures that have been highlighted through formal interpretation. Among the few examples are the Fannie Lou Hamer grave site and memorial gardens in Ruleville and the Rev. George Lee's grave in the Green Grove Missionary Baptist Church and Cemetery in Belzoni. Lee was the first person killed in the March Against Fear.

Other Landmarks from the Civil Rights Movement

This category can be divided into three distinct sub-categories - 1) landmarks where organized Civil Rights activities occurred such as meetings, voter registration events and freedom marches; 2) landmarks that are representative of advancements gained in the long journey toward Civil Rights; and 3) landmarks otherwise associated with the Civil Rights movement.

With respect to landmarks where organized Civil Rights activities occurred, one good example is the Clarksdale Train Station where Civil Rights protests occurred during the 1960s. Another is the Greyhound Bus Station in Clarksdale where, in the fall of 1961, Vera Mae Pige and Idessa Johnson began efforts to desegregate the bus station by entering the whites-only section and purchasing tickets. A large percentage of buildings associated with Civil Rights organized activities are churches, such as First Baptist Church in Clarksdale that hosted three visits/talks by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the Civil Rights era; Haven United Methodist Church in Clarksdale, where Rev. Jesse Jackson hosted voter registration campaigns, as well as the state NAACP convention; and the Jennings Temple in Greenwood, the last church in Greenwood where Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke prior to his assassination on April 4, 1968. As with the homes of

many Civil Rights activists, often buildings used for organized efforts were destroyed by those against the movement. For example, the second SNCC Office in Greenwood was burned by arsonists on March 24, 1963. The third office was used from 1964 to 1968, but no longer exists. The only reminder of the Freedom School in Indianola is a historical marker. That building served as a headquarters for Civil Rights workers but was firebombed and destroyed on March 5, 1965.

With regard to landmarks representative of advancements gained in Civil Rights, some examples can be found in Mound Bayou. In fact, the town as whole is an example. Important individual sites within the community include Mound Bayou Bank and Taborian Hospital. The bank is privately owned and boarded up but still retains its architectural integrity. The vacant hospital is being rehabilitated as an urgent care center. The Mound Bayou homes of individuals such as Isaiah T. Montgomery and Mary Booze could also fit into this category.

The third category is those that represent neither organized Civil Rights activities nor advancements in Civil Rights. Most represent an event that highlighted the need for Civil Rights. For example, Bryant's Grocery Store in Money is the site that triggered the 1955 Emmett Till tragedy, credited by many historians with sparking the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Unfortunately, the building is privately owned and in a severely dilapidated condition. Related to that story is the Sumner Courthouse in Tallahatchie County - the site of the Emmett Till murder trial. Tallahatchie County has two county seats, and this courthouse was recently restored to its 1955 appearance. Yet another site within this sub-category is the Mississippi State Penitentiary (Parchman Farm). Former penitentiary inmates known for their Civil Rights efforts include Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture), James L. Farmer, Jr. and John Lewis. Because of this site's obvious need for high security, it fails to lend itself to accommodating heritage tourists.

Museums

Although there are a few museums that interpret the Civil Rights story as their primary mission, none match the scale, sophistication and advanced technology of the area's best Blues music museums. However, the few that exist do the best they can with limited means and are managed by hard-working and committed supporters. One such museum is the Rev. George Lee Museum of African American History and Heritage in Belzoni that is housed in an early-20th century shotgun house. Associated with that facility in Belzoni, the Fannie Lou Hamer Civil Rights Museum features a collection of newspaper articles on Civil Rights trials and investigations and presents re-enactments based on the life of Fannie Lou Hamer and other Civil Rights activists. In Glendora (Tallahatchie County) is the Emmett Till Historic Intrepid Center. The center is located in a former cotton gin where a metal fan was taken and tied to Emmett Till before disposing of his body in the Tallahatchie River.

Immigration

The inventory of associated cultural resources for immigration is less extensive than that of many other themes. Within the context of the Delta, the immigration topic relates primarily to groups that moved into the area from other countries, but it also includes out-migration that occurred during the mid-20th century during the Great Migration when many African Americans migrated to the Midwest and North for better employment opportunities and civil rights.

Immigration into the Delta

Several resources relate to Jewish people who immigrated during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Examples include religious structures and cemeteries such as Hebrew Union Temple in Greenville, Adath Israel Temple and the Jewish Cemetery in Cleveland, Beth Israel Cemetery in Clarksdale, Anshe Chesed Cemetery in Vicksburg, and the Greenville Jewish Cemetery. The heritage area has several stately homes owned by successful Jewish businessmen such as the Shlenker House and Bazsinsky House in Vicksburg.

While Jewish history represents a large segment of the Delta's European immigrant legacy, many other nationalities are also represented. For example, the Lebanese community is represented by Abe's Barbecue in Clarksdale. That business was founded in 1924 by Abraham Davis, who migrated from Lebanon in 1913. Italian immigrant culture is reflected in the Little Italy District immediately south of downtown Greenville and is interpreted by a state historic marker. The founders of Doe's Eat Place were part of that immigrant group. Another immigrant group not widely known outside the heritage area is the Chinese community, as evidenced by two Chinese cemeteries in Greenville, as well as the former site of the since-demolished Chinese Mission School in Cleveland, now interpreted by a historic marker. Other countries represented by inventoried historic buildings include France, Syria and Sicily.

Migration out of the Delta

While sometimes more easily overlooked, but critically important to understanding the Delta, was the outmigration by African Americans during the early to mid-20th century. During this era of the Great Migration, many African Americans moved to the North and Midwest. The history of the Hopson Planting Company near Clarksdale helped to trigger that out migration. In 1944, this company became the first ever to plant, harvest and bale cotton entirely by machinery. This new mechanization (and reduced need for labor) was a major factor in African Americans seeking factory jobs in the North. Another resource representing the Great Migration is the Clarksdale Train Station. Built in 1926, Muddy Waters left the Delta from this station in 1943, as did many others who were part of the Great Migration.



John Grisham began writing his first book – *A Time to Kill* – in the DeSoto County Courthouse.

Grisham, as well as many other communities associated with lesser known writers.

Growing More than Cotton: The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity

Literature

Of the resources inventoried for the theme of literature, Greenville has significantly more resources than any other community in the Delta because of the many literary figures from Greenville. Other resources were inventoried in places such as Clarksdale because of Tennessee Williams' upbringing there and Hernando because of more recent author John

Buildings Associated with Writers

Many of the cultural resources inventoried for the literature theme are buildings that were associated with significant writers, such as homes, churches and schools. Examples include the Old St. George Rectory in Clarksdale, where Tennessee Williams' grandfather

was the church's rector. Noted Civil War author Shelby Foote's boyhood home still stands in Greenville and is a privately owned residence. Greenville's Bass Auditorium (formerly Greenville High School) was attended by authors Walker Percy, Shelby Foote and Charles Bell. It is used for art shows and is being rehabilitated to support additional uses. *The Delta Democrat Times* Office in downtown Greenville housed the newspaper founded by Hodding Carter II. It also housed the Levee Press, publisher of books by Shelby Foote, Eudora Welty, William Faulkner and William Alexander Percy. An example of a more remotely located property is St. Mark M.B. Church in Glen Allan (Washington County). This church was attended by author Clifton Taulbert. Born in 1945, he was the author of several books including *Once Upon a Time When We Were Colored*.

Places That Inspired Writers

Tennessee Williams' grandfather - Rev. Walter E. Dakin – was the rector at St. George's Episcopal Church in Clarksdale from 1917- 1933. Tennessee spent a great deal of time here as a child, and many characters in his plays were inspired by people in Clarksdale, including a woman who lived next door and kept a collection of glass animals. She was the inspiration for his story *The Glass Menagerie*. Similarly, Grange Cemetery in Clarksdale is the site of the famous angel monument that Williams used in the play *Summer and Smoke*. Uncle Henry's Place on Moon Lake (located three miles west of Rich on Moon Road) was immortalized by Tennessee Williams in the plays *Summer and Smoke*, *Eccentricities of a Nightingale*, *Orpheus Descending*, *Streetcar Named Desire*, *Glass Menagerie*, *This Property's Condemned*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and others. It is now an inn and restaurant. It was also mentioned by Eudora Welty in "Delta Weddings." Another Williams-related building is the Cutrer Mansion in Clarksdale. This Italian Villa was the home of J.W. and Blanche Cutrer, inspirations for Williams in his plays *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Orpheus Descending*.

Mount Holly is a historic home in Washington County once owned by Shelby Foote's great grandfather and grandfather. It was referred to as Solitaire Plantation in his novel *Tournament* and one of the book's characters was based upon his grandfather. It is privately owned today and listed on the National Register. More recently, John Grisham was practicing law in Hernando and was sitting outside the courtroom of the Hernando courthouse when he started writing his first book, *A Time to Kill*.

Museums

Although the inventory of cultural resources has included a separate category for museums, the following is a brief overview of Blues-related museums. Among the several museums is the Mississippi Delta Blues Hall of Fame at Delta State University in Cleveland. This facility, part of the Charles W. Capps Archives and Museum, features plaques for recipients of the Peavine Award, an awards program founded at Delta State in 1998. Another interpretive facility is the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale. The original part of the museum was adapted in 1999 from a former freight depot built in 1918. An addition created space for more exhibits and meeting/event space. A much smaller museum is the privately-owned Rock 'N Roll Blues Heritage Museum in Clarksdale. The Highway 61 Blues Museum in Leland opened in the summer of 2001 and features exhibits on Leland area musicians. Perhaps the grandest and most state-of-the-art Blues museum is the B.B. King Museum in Indianola, which features technologically advanced interpretation and also integrates into the facility the original brick gin building where King once was employed.

Cultural and Arts

This inventory category covers a broad spectrum of resource types, including arts, crafts and retail, dining, arts venues and programs, museums, galleries, related facilities and other resource types. Unlike some of the other cultural resource categories, such as Blues music and the Civil War, resources within this category are relatively geographically dispersed throughout the heritage area.

Arts, Crafts and Retail

There are multiple arts and crafts producers in the heritage area, including potters. Examples of potters identified include McCarty's Pottery in Merigold, Peter's Pottery in Mound Bayou, and Joe Eckles Stoneware and Jim Anderson Pottery in Hernando. Cat Head Delta Blues & Folk Art, Inc. in Clarksdale specializes in all things related to the Blues music. Although antique stores can be found throughout the heritage area, Kilgore's Antiques and Buddy's Antiques in Hernando stand out as particularly sought-out shops for heritage tourists. For those looking for Mississippi products, the Mississippi Gift Company in downtown Greenwood specializes in such items, including arts and crafts. The Tomato Place in Vicksburg features handmade furniture, arts and crafts, as well as plants in a roadside produce market where locally-grown fruits and vegetables, baked goods, jams and jellies are also sold.



Joe's Hot Tamale Place, Rosedale

Dining

While the Delta offers a wide spectrum of Southern cooking it is particularly known for tamales. The Mississippi Delta Hot Tamale Trail highlights numerous restaurants and take-out stores offering authentic tamales, including Airport Grocery, Delta Fast Food and Stewart's Quick Mart in Cleveland; Abe's Bar-B-Q, Ground Zero Blues Club and Hicks' Famous Hot Tamales & More in Clarksdale; Doe's Eat Place, Hot Tamale Heaven, Maria's Famous Hot Tamales and Scott's Hot Tamales in Green-

ville; Reno's Café, Flatland Grill, Honest Abe's Tamales and Donuts, Steven's Bar-B-Que, Crystal Grill and Don's Tamale Hut in Greenwood; the Onward Store in Rolling Fork; Joe's Hot Tamale Place in Rosedale; Ervin's Hot Tamales in Sledge; The Tamale Place and Solllys Hot Tamales in Vicksburg; and the Yazoo Market and Meals on Wheels Tamales & Tacos in Yazoo City. The only geographic pattern related to tamales is that the very northern portion of the heritage area is not very oriented toward tamales, while Greenwood may be the closest to a "capital" of tamales that the Delta can offer.

Arts Venues & Programs

Arts venues and programs include both performing arts and visual arts. Among the inventoried resources is the Bologna Performing Arts Center at Delta State University in Cleveland, which offers cultural and educational programs such as plays, ballet performances, musical concerts and arts education. Similarly, the Southaven Performing Arts Center hosts local theater productions on a full-size performance stage. Smaller-scaled community theaters include DeSoto Family Theatre in Southaven and Kudzu Playhouse in Hernando. Among notable arts programs is the Delta Arts Alliance based in

Cleveland, which offers arts education programs for children in five counties and has an artist-in-residence program. Similar programs include DeSoto Arts Council Gallery and Gardens, Olive Branch Arts Council and Mid Delta Arts Association in Indianola.

Museums, Galleries and Related Facilities

This category includes places where the visual arts are displayed and interpreted. The Crown Restaurant and Art Gallery in Indianola features handmade local pottery, photographs and fine art. Another Indianola gallery is the Gin Mill Gallery, an art gallery, restaurant and Blues club located behind the B.B. King Museum. The Jim Henson Museum in Leland tells the story of the creator of the Muppets. The Southern Cultural Heritage Center (aka - St. Francis Xavier Convent) in downtown Vicksburg is an affiliate of the Mississippi Museum of Art. It tells the story of the Sisters of Mercy who educated children and nursed the sick for 132 years at Saint Francis Xavier Academy and Convent.

Other Resource Types

This category of arts and culture is somewhat of a “catch all” and includes a broad range of resource types. For example, the statewide Country Music Trail is sponsored by the state and five of the 24 markers commemorating important sites and people connected to country music are located in the Delta. The markers in the heritage area honor Conway Twitty (Friars Point), Charley Pride (Sledge), Johnny Russell (Moorhead), O.B. McClinton (Senatobia) and Ben Peters (Hollandale). New markers will be added when the inventory is updated periodically. An inventoried resource related to country music is the Mack Pride Barber Shop in Sledge. It was the barber shop of Charley Pride’s father, who worked there from 1945 until recently. Yet another genre of music represented in the Delta is gospel music. The Silent Grove Missionary Baptist Church in Clarksdale is the site where gospel music was recorded for the Library of Congress during the 1930s and 1940s.

The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta’s Diverse Communities

Overview of National Register Resources

The National Register of Historic Places, administered by the National Park Service in the U.S. Department of Interior, is the nation’s system for recognizing and designating



historically and architecturally significant historic resources.

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), the state’s historic preservation office, manages the process for designation in the state. Designated resources undergo a nomination process to document and determine their level of significance and justification for designation. Evaluation criteria include the resource’s age, integrity and significance. Resources

can be designated as individual sites, historic districts and thematic designations lacking geographic continuity. National Historic Landmark designation is given for resources deemed to have the highest level of significance. Nominations are reviewed by MDAH’s review board. If approved, the nomination is submitted to the U.S. Department of Interior for review and approval. Many of the National Register resources existing in the heritage area were addressed in other sections of the inventory’s analysis, as most fall within the thematic categories.

Geographic Distribution of National Register Resources

The map below shows the heritage area's counties. On the following page is a map illustrating the number of National Register districts and/or individual sites within each county, as well as a color-coded indication of their geographic density in terms of the number of National Register resources per 100 square miles.

(A few of the indicated numbers are undercounts because of more recent designations.)



- Bolivar
- Carroll
- Coahoma
- DeSoto
- Holmes
- Humphreys
- Issaquena
- Leflore
- Panola
- Quitman
- Sharkey
- Sunflower
- Tallahatchie
- Tate
- Tunica
- Warren
- Washington
- Yazoo

(Map courtesy Wikipedia)

Overview of National Register Resources by County

Below is a summary of the number and types of resources for each county within the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area.

Bolivar County

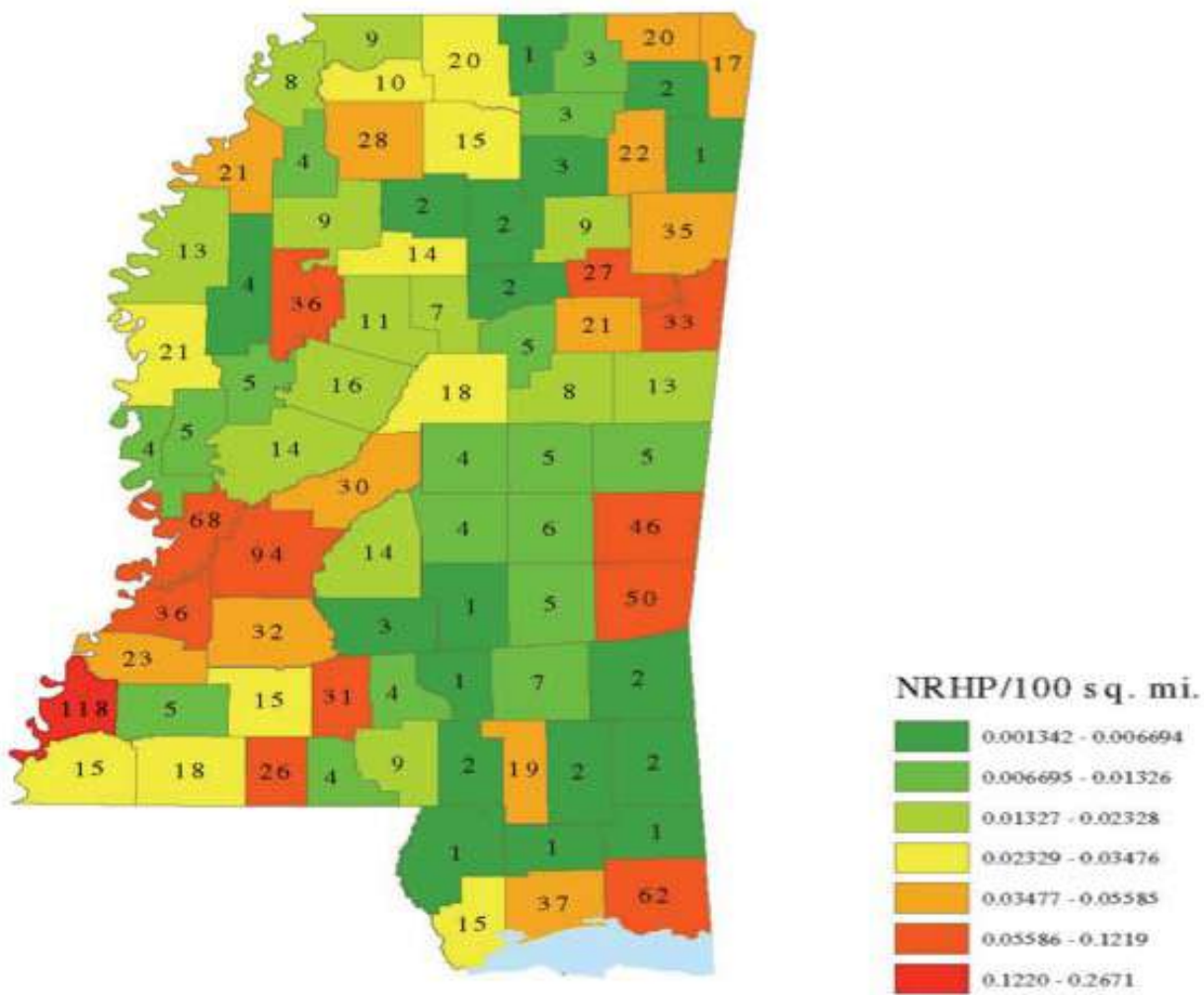
Bolivar County has 13 National Register listings. Of those, three are historic districts; two are in Cleveland and one is in Rosedale. Individual sites are relatively diverse and include Alligator Mounds, two religious buildings, a post office, a bank and a hospital. The balance of sites consists of historic homes. Several sites are affiliated with Mound Bayou and are strongly tied to the Civil Rights theme. The Mound Bayou sites are diverse and include houses associated with community leaders, Mound Bayou Bank and Taborian Hospital, which is currently being rehabilitated.

Carroll County

Carroll County has a total of 11 National Register sites. One is a historic district – the Carrollton Historic District. Of the other 10 sites, three are archeological sites, one is a bridge, one is a high school, one is a store, and one is a church and associated cemetery. The other two sites are historic sites, including Malmaison – the former home of Choctaw Chief Greenwood Leflore and the law office of J.Z. George.

Coahoma County

Coahoma County has a total of 21 National Register sites. As the color-coded map indicates, this county has a relatively high density of National Register sites. Sites include two historic



districts – one is in Clarksdale and the other in Friars Point. Of the other 19 sites, 10 are archeological sites that are geographically dispersed within the county. These sites are “address restricted” with respect to specific locations. Other National Register properties include several buildings in Clarksdale, such as Bobo Senior High School, New Alcazar Hotel, Woolworth Building, WROX Building, and Yazoo and Mississippi Valley Passenger Depot. An engineering structure on the National Register located at Moon Lake is the Yazoo Pass Levee. While this county has numerous sites identified in the inventory of Blues Music resources – most located in Clarksdale, few are designated on the National Register.

DeSoto County

DeSoto County has 10 National Register listings. Although the color-coded map indicates nine listings, a tenth one was added in July of 2012 (Springhill Cemetery in Hernando). Of the 10 listings, half are for historic districts within Hernando. Two are commercial/downtown districts, while the other three are primarily residential. With the exception of the recently-added cemetery, the other four sites are historic houses and all are located in Hernando with one exception – the Miller Plantation House in Olive Branch. Three of the four designated houses date from the Civil War or earlier.

Holmes County

Holmes County has a total of 16 designated properties and districts. Two are districts. One district is in Lexington and the other is in West. Of the other 14 sites, six are archeological. Among the balance of National Register sites are four historic houses, Holmes County State

Park, Holmes County Courthouse Complex in Lexington and Eureka Masonic College. The latter was used by a Confederate Mississippi infantry regiment as its headquarters at one point during the Civil War. While the National Register sites are relatively geographically distributed within the county, five of the 16 are in Lexington.

Humphreys County

This county has only five National Register resources, giving it a very low density ranking for such resources per 100 square miles. All five are archeological and tied to Native American heritage. Of those, two are in Belzoni, two are in Midnight and one is in Lake City. Four of the five are “address restricted,” and the fifth is rather well-known – the Jaketown Site located seven miles north of Belzoni. Because of its importance as a regional trade center of the Poverty Point culture in the Archaic period, and long human occupation, the Jaketown Site was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1990.

Issaquena County

As with Humphreys County, Issaquena County has a very low number of National Register properties. Of the county’s four sites, three are “address restricted” archeological sites located in Valley Park, Grace, and Mayersville. The other site is the Railroad Section Foreman’s House located in Valley Park and built circa 1882.

Leflore County

Leflore County has 36 sites and districts listed on the National Register, putting it within the category among the most densely populated counties for National Register resources. Of the 36 listings, eight are historic districts. Seven of those districts are located in Greenwood, while the other one is in Itta Bena. Eleven of the listings are for Native American archeological sites. In addition to that theme, there are other sites associated with other relevant themes. For example, the Civil War theme is represented by the Fort Pemberton site in Greenwood and the nearby Star of the West site (sunken Union ship) in the Tallahatchie River. Similarly, the Cotton Row Historic District in downtown Greenwood is an important resource for interpreting the rich cotton heritage of Greenwood and the entire Delta. Perhaps most noteworthy is a site that is not on the National Register – the deteriorating Bryant’s Grocery Store in Money where the Emmitt Till tragedy is rooted. Of the 36 sites and districts in Leflore County, 25 are located in Greenwood. Of the other 11 sites or districts, nearly all are archeological sites.

Panola County

Panola County, located in the northern portion of the heritage area, has 28 National Register sites and districts. Two of the designated resources are historic districts – one is located in Batesville and the other is in Como. Four National Register sites are archeological sites related to Native American heritage, a relatively low percentage relative to many of the other counties. The majority of designated properties feature historic houses and they are located throughout the county, although Sardis and Como have an especially high number of historic house listings. There are also a few historic churches listed.

Quitman County

Quitman County has four National Register properties. All four are Native American archeological “address restricted” sites. Two are in or near Marks, one is in or near Denton, and the other is in or near Lambert.

Sharkey County

This county has five National Register sites. As in the case of Quitman County, all are Native American archeological sites. However, only two are “address restricted.” Two of the sites are in the Rolling Fork area, two are in the Holly Bluff area, and one is in the Cary area. The Rolling Fork mounds, also known as the Montauk Mound, has a Civil War association as well.

Sunflower County

Sunflower County has five National Register properties and districts (although the color-coded map indicates only four). Of the five resources, two are districts – one is located in Dockery (Dockery Farms Historic District) and the other is in Indianola. Unlike most other counties, this county’s individually-designated National Register resources include no historic houses. The three individual sites include Heathman Plantation Commissary, Ruleville Depot and Woodburn Bridge in Indianola. Of the few National Register sites in this county, some are strongly linked to one or more themes. For example, the Dockery Farms and Heathman Plantation Commissary have both Cotton and Agriculture and Blues Music significance. Similarly, the Ruleville Depot has a Blues music association.

Tallahatchie County

Tallahatchie County has nine National Register properties and districts. Five are “address restricted” archeological sites. The other four sites include two bridges (Glendora and Charleston), Murphey-Jennings House in Sumner and Tallahatchie County Second District Courthouse where the Emmitt Till trial occurred. Thus, while five of the resources are directly tied to Native American heritage, one is strongly tied to the Civil Rights theme.

Tate County

Tate County has 12 National Register sites and districts (although the color-coded map indicates only 10). All are located in Senatobia. Of these listings, eight are historic districts. Of the other four resources, one is the Hickahala Creek Bridge, one is the McGehee Plantation, one is the Senatobia Christian Church, and the fourth is the Tate County Courthouse.

Tunica County

Tunica County, located in the northern end of the heritage area, has eight National Register districts and sites. Seven of the eight resources are “address restricted” archeological sites located throughout the county. The other resource is the Tunica Historic District and includes the downtown and adjacent residential areas.

Warren County

Warren County has 68 National Register sites and districts, by far the greatest number of National Register listings for any county within the heritage area. Five listings are for historic districts located in Vicksburg. The majority of designated properties in Warren County are in Vicksburg, with some of the key exceptions being Civil War sites related to the Vicksburg military campaign (Big Black River Bridge, etc.). Unlike many of the other counties within the heritage area, there are very few Native American archeological sites, and most of the National Register sites are related to the Civil War and/or are a historic house. Many of the historic houses are privately-owned and several function today as bed-and-breakfasts. There are also several institutional buildings (depot, churches, etc.) that are among the listed resources in Warren County.

Washington County

Washington County has 21 National Register sites and districts. Four are historic districts. Three of the districts are in Greenville; the fourth one is in Leland. Two of the sites are Native American archeological sites. One is the Winterville Mound site, which is state-owned and perhaps the most extensive and significant mound site within the heritage area. Geographically, roughly three-quarters of the districts and sites are located within Greenville, while the others are in Leland and elsewhere. Several of the individually designated properties are historic houses and institutional buildings. Reflecting Greenville's link to the theme of literature are two National Register listings - the Old Delta Democrat Times Building in downtown Greenville and the Leavenworth-Wasson-Carroll residence, the home of Ben Wasson, editor of a number of William Faulkner's novels and a published novelist.

Yazoo County

Yazoo County has a total of 14 National Register listings. One is a district – the Yazoo City Town Center Historic District. Of the other listings, four are “address restricted” Native American archeological sites. Geographically, six of the listings are located in Yazoo City. The county's National Register designated sites are diverse in their types and themes, and include the Afro-American Sons and Daughters Hospital built in 1928 in Yazoo City, Casey Jones Wreck Site one mile north of Vaughn, Ricks Memorial Library in Yazoo City, the Rosedale Plantation near Vaughn, and multiple historic homes throughout the county (especially in Yazoo City).

Sites Not Currently on the National Register of Historic Places

This category includes sites on the other lists that are not currently on the National Register of Historic Places.

Additional Categories Representing More Than One Theme

Museums

This resource category has already been largely covered within the previous inventory categories, as each interpretive category, with the exception of immigration and literature, included a section on museums. While the two themes of immigration and literature are addressed within some other museums related to other topics, no museums were inventoried that had a singular focus on those topics. Thus, to avoid repeating what has already been covered within all of the previous resource categories that are relevant, a description of the existing museums that were already addressed will not be duplicated here.

Museums Addressing Other Themes

An example of a museum addressing the sub-theme of transportation is the Martin and Sue King Railroad Museum in downtown Cleveland. Owned by the city, it features a 70' x 17' railroad model that depicts “any town” Mississippi. Plans call for adding exhibits to tell more of the history of railroads in Mississippi. Two museums related to the major theme of building communities are the Charles W. Capps, Jr. Archives and Museum on Delta State University's campus in Cleveland which features a collection of historic photographs

documenting life in the Delta since the Civil War and the Biedenharn Coca-Cola™ Museum in downtown Vicksburg which tells the story of where Coke™ was first bottled in 1894.

Local Museums

In addition to addressing specific heritage area themes, local museums may cover many locally significant topics. An example of a high-quality and relatively new local museum is the Tunica Museum, which interprets the history of Tunica County through exhibits, education programs, research and collections. Topics include the natural setting, Native American prehistory, early European exploration and settlement, and 19th and 20th century social, agricultural, institutional, political, military and commercial history. Another local museum is the Sam Olden Historical Museum in downtown Yazoo City. It addresses the county's diverse past – from fossils dating back some 45,000 years to Native American relics, Civil War history and African American history, to the legendary trainman Casey Jones. Also chronicled are the lives of the many famous sons and daughters from Yazoo County.



The Tunica Museum is a state-of-the-art museum interpreting local history.

Historic Markers

Among the various traditional roadside historic markers that interpret history, there are two basic categories within the heritage area – those that interpret general history and those tied to theme-specific trails.



This state-installed marker interpreting Greenville's "Little Italy" neighborhood is typical of most in the heritage area.

Theme-Specific Markers

The three categories of theme-specific markers found in the heritage area have already been addressed in this section - the Blues Trail markers, Mississippi Freedom Trail markers and the Country Music Trail.

General History Markers

The vast majority of history markers are not part of the three theme-specific marker programs described above. The heritage area themes particularly well-represented by historic markers throughout the Delta include those interpreting the Mississippi River, Native American Heritage, the Civil War, Literature and Agriculture.



BIRTHPLACE OF THE BLUES?
The precise origins of the blues are lost to time, but one of the primal centers for the music in Mississippi was Dockery Farms. For nearly three decades the plantation was intermittently the home of Charley Patton (c. 1891-1934), the most important early Delta blues musician. Patton himself learned from fellow Dockery resident Henry Sloan and influenced many other musicians who came here, including Howlin' Wolf, Willie Brown, Tommy Johnson, and Roebuck "Pop" Staples.

Chapter 6

The Delta Experience:
Perpetuate Culture and Tell the Story



Interpretive Plan

Chapter 6

Introduction

Interpretation is the term used to describe the process of identifying and documenting important stories and developing methods to share those stories in a variety of ways. In short, interpretation is the art of telling the story. This chapter is divided into two parts:

- **Part One – Perpetuating Culture and Telling the Story** – This section explores current efforts and new opportunities to perpetuate living traditions, to document historic events and to develop a variety of interpretive resources to preserve and share these stories. Strategies in this section connect to the heritage area’s themes. Additionally, the strategies will be coordinated with the management plan’s two other strategy sections – Chapter Seven: *A Sense of Place – Save the Delta’s Historic Resources* and Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships – Build the Network*. Coordination of strategies in the three sections is further detailed in this plan’s Chapter Ten: *Implementation Procedures and Schedule*.
- **Part Two – Engaging Audiences** – This section identifies key audiences – tourists, residents and students – and explores methods to attract and engage these audiences.

The Mississippi Delta: A Unique Mixture of Culture, Nature and Heritage

To experience the Mississippi Delta is to embrace the region in all its complexity. Observations about the Mississippi Delta often reflect the region’s unique mixture of culture, nature and heritage:

The Mississippi Delta is a region that has a culture as rich, sweet, and deep as the very soil of the Delta itself. It is as physically and culturally unique as any place on Earth. Its stories resonate with the American story, yet tell of a special place, special times, and special people.

Mississippi Delta: The Place-The Mindset – A Guide to People, Places and Issues

Author: Luther Brown, Director, Delta Center for Culture and Learning, Delta State University

Legislation creating the heritage area addresses the need to tell the Delta’s story in order to preserve tangible resources (places) and intangible resources (historical events and culture) through increased awareness and appreciation. The need is to be addressed by:

- Describing comprehensive policies, goals, strategies and recommendations for telling the story of the heritage of the region and encouraging long-term resource protection, enhancement, interpretation, funding, management and development of the heritage area;
- Carrying out programs and projects that recognize, protect and enhance important resource values within the heritage area;
- Including an interpretive plan for the heritage area;
- Establishing and maintaining interpretive exhibits and programs within the heritage area;
- Developing recreational and educational opportunities in the heritage area;

Cover images:

- 1) Chinese Cemetery Greenville, Photo: Delta Center for Culture and Learning
- 2) Birthplace of the Blues marker, Photo: Andy Ellis
- 3) Cotton, Photo: Andy Ellis
- 4) Fannie Lou Hamer statue, Photo: Delta Center for Culture and Learning
- 5) Cotton offices, downtown Belzoni 1939, Photo: Marion Post Wolcott. Library of Congress
- 6) Plate of tamales, Photo: Amy Evans Streeter

- Increasing public awareness of, and appreciation for, natural, historic, scenic and cultural resources of the heritage area;
- Ensuring that signs identifying points of public access and sites of interest are posted throughout the heritage area.

(Source: Creation of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area SEC.8008. Omnibus Federal Land Management Act of 2009. Signed by President Obama on March 30, 2009.)

Criteria for Strategies to Create the Delta Experience

Strategies for creating the Delta Experience were developed using the following criteria:

I. The mission and vision statements clearly reflect the importance of saving culture and heritage and telling the Delta’s story.

The mission statement states: *“The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area fosters preservation, perpetuation and celebration of the Delta’s heritage through a climate of collaboration and sustainable economic development....We create opportunities to save our special places, maintain our vibrant traditions, enhance community and cultural pride, support economic and social transformation and advance the appreciation and understanding of the Delta’s important past and its continuing contributions to the American story. We focus on five themes: The Mississippi River and the Land It Embraces; The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound; Moving Toward Freedom: Changing America’s Character in the Struggle for Rights; Growing More Than Cotton: The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity; and The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta’s Diverse Communities.”*

The vision statement describes the results of the coordinating entity’s work: *“The people who call the Mississippi Delta “home” value the significant events and unique cultural traditions that influenced the development of America. Residents, communities, institutions and cultural groups have collaborated to preserve special places connected to the Delta’s past, to honor and celebrate its diverse traditions and to document and share the history from settlement to migration, from the Civil War to Civil Rights. Residents are proud of their communities and their cultures and want to remain here to contribute to the Delta’s future.... The National Heritage Area includes...new venues and events to tell the Delta’s story and increased visitation by heritage travelers....”*

II. All strategies will connect to the heritage area’s themes.

A critical part of the planning process for the management plan was the development of themes that describe the important stories, culture and history of the region. Five themes were developed: The Mississippi River and the Land it Embraces, The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound, Moving Toward Freedom: Changing America’s Character in the Struggle for Rights, Growing More than Cotton: The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity and The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta’s Diverse Communities. Each theme has sub-themes that further define the important aspects of the theme. The strategies included in this chapter are intended to be developed to convey these themes.

III. Plans for creating the Delta Experience will be coordinated with plans for preservation of historic resources.

As noted in Chapter Seven: *A Sense of Place – Save the Delta’s Historic Resources*, there are numerous preservation needs within the heritage area’s 18 counties. The work of the coordinating entity will focus on preservation of resources connected to the identified themes. Additionally, Delta Experience strategies will be coordinated with preservation plans to develop a cohesive plan to save the Delta’s built environment and associated stories and living traditions.

IV. The coordinating entity’s work in creating the Delta Experience will take a regional approach.

Telling the story and perpetuating living traditions will be implemented with the intent of creating a unified Delta Experience. For example, creating a Civil Rights experience would include the existing work of partners (such as brochures or tours) and further development of strategies including documentation of events, collection of oral histories and development of new interpretive methods such as apps or guided tours.

V. Work will be coordinated with partners.

The coordinating entity will identify what is already being done to create the Delta Experience, such as oral histories, school programs, events and museum exhibits, and will develop activities to:

- Support and enhance the work already underway by partners, or
- Develop new projects and programs to tell stories that are not already being told

VI. Plans will be developed to engage many audiences.

Audiences may include tourists, school groups (K-12 or college) or organizations targeting these age groups, higher education (such as college students majoring in history) and residents of the Delta. Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships – Build the Network* includes many strategies for engagement of new partners throughout the Delta in addition to strategies included in this chapter.

How Will the MDNHA Create The Delta Experience?

Research and Document

- Identify stories connected to themes
- Research and document living traditions and historic events

Tell the Story

- Identify gaps in programming and products
- Establish priorities for development
- Develop new methods for telling the story

Support Historic Preservation

- Make the case for preserving resources to tell the story

Build Audiences

- Learn more about existing audiences
- Connect audiences to stories and places
- Seek new audiences

Create New Partnerships

- Identify common goals and help partners work together
- Support new marketing efforts

Adapted from Interpretive Planning Toolkit for Heritage Areas, Historic Trails and Gateways, Chesapeake Office, Northeast Region, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior

Each project supported or funded by the coordinating entity will employ best practices as described in Chapter Ten: *Implementation Procedures and Schedule*. Actions will include consultation with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (State Historic Preservation Office). It is not anticipated that any projects will create direct or indirect impact on resources. If future actions are determined to have the potential for impact, appropriate compliance to all NEPA guidelines will be implemented by the coordinating entity and its partners.

Part One: Perpetuating Culture and Telling the Story

Challenges in Perpetuating Culture and Telling the Story

Awareness and Appreciation

Lack of awareness of the importance of the Delta's history among those who live in the Delta ranked second only to funding needed to preserve historic resources in a survey of residents (68% and 78.8% respectively). Additionally, almost half of survey respondents (48.8%) said there is a lack of local pride in the Delta's heritage and culture. Reasons for this lack of awareness and appreciation of the Delta's rich heritage include:

- **Economic environment** – As noted in Chapter Two: *Boundaries and Socioeconomic Environment*, the challenges of the Delta's economic environment have persisted for generations. Almost a third of residents live below the poverty threshold. Census records show that most of the Delta's 18 counties are continuing to lose population. Continued high unemployment rates, averaging 12.8% with some counties over 17% (Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, December 2011 -January 2013), demand a focus by community leaders to create new jobs and by residents to find employment. Although studies show that the tourism industry creates jobs in the Delta, the focus of most communities (as reflected in county and city comprehensive plans) is recruitment of new industry and a variety of businesses. Additionally, a study on the region's creative economy (design; film, video and media; literary and publishing; culinary arts; and museums and heritage) ranked the Delta fifth of the state's regions in employment in these sectors.

Rural isolation, lack of central neighborhoods and communities means you will get interest in some of the towns, but poverty and lack of education are huge obstacles....If you are struggling to feed your family, you are not worried about tourists.

—MDNHA board member comment

- **Difficulty of stories**— As discussed in further detail in Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships – Build the Network* chapter many of the Delta's historical stories involve dominance by the white power structure over the region's African American population. Stories of slavery, segregation, murder, disfranchisement, poll taxes and literacy tests that impeded the right to vote, extreme poverty and the Great Migration are grim reminders of the Delta's past. Until recent years, these have been avoided by community boosters in preference for focusing on other aspects of the Delta's history and culture, such as Blues music and food. These difficult stories, however, also tell of a strength of spirit and of courageous individuals and groups who challenged and overcame these injustices.
- **Resources to perpetuate living traditions and tell the stories** – Although some of the Delta's stories are told at state-of-the art museums and living traditions are celebrated at major festivals, most of the region's efforts to perpetuate living traditions and tell the stories are undertaken by volunteer groups managing small museums, maintaining archival collections or offering educational programming. These groups devote a tremendous amount of time to these efforts with minimal resources (funding, staffing and promotion) to widen their reach and to stimulate increased awareness and appreciation of various aspects of the Delta's history and culture.

Telling the Story

Creating an experience requires involving people in the Delta's stories through a variety of methods to help them look at and think about the Delta in new ways. Challenges in telling the Delta's story include the urgency of saving structures and documenting history as well as the ongoing need for funding, staffing and volunteers:

- **Historic places are vulnerable due to lack of long-term preservation or to vandalism** – Many important historic sites are in isolated rural areas where they may easily be targeted by vandals. Others are privately owned and are not cared for with appropriate preservation methods. Still others are deteriorating due to lack of funding for building rehabilitation or the inability to recruit new owners to invest in the structures.

...Working with folks in their own communities to tell their stories is vital....

—MDNHA stakeholder comment

Limited time to document Civil Rights and Blues music oral histories – Creating an engaging experience first requires documentation of events. Documentation is a particular challenge for telling the stories of the Civil Rights Movement and the Delta's Blues traditions. The fact that the Civil Rights Movement peaked during the 1950s and 1960s means that it is critical to conduct more oral histories in the near future to supplement documentation that already exists. Some of the most significant events and personalities associated with the Blues stem from the first half of the 20th century, and individuals associated with those events and personalities are becoming fewer in numbers every day.

- **Lack of funding prevents professional development of exhibits and expert assistance to develop new activities or programs** – Developing storylines and creating exhibits or new programs that effectively engage people requires expertise in the fields of research and documentation, interpretation and program development. Many groups in the Delta undertake these activities as a labor of love, contributing time and resources to create museums, a new event or an educational program. There is a need to offer professional expertise to help guide these activities to present the highest quality exhibits and programs and to link local efforts to the coordinating entity's broader interpretive goals.



Bryant's Grocery is one of many historic resources in the Delta that are threatened with loss.

Photo: Carolyn Brackett

- **Lack of curatorial support** – With the exception of well-maintained and organized collections at places such as the Vicksburg National Military Park in Vicksburg, the B.B. King Museum in Indianola and the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, many of the cultural materials associated with the Delta's stories are fragile and in jeopardy

of being lost. These materials are in need of careful preservation, but the needed help (both financial and technical) is often not available. Many materials are not in museums, but are in private hands.

- **Limited staffing and dependence on volunteers** - The American Alliance of Museums states that nationally, volunteers contribute one million hours each week to museums making them a vital resource for museums across the country. Although some of the Delta's museums have professional staff, almost all depend on volunteers to assist with everything from giving tours to developing exhibits and planning events. Part of building the network (discussed in Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships – Build the Network* chapter) will be the creation of a volunteer opportunity database to help cultural and heritage resources recruit new volunteers for their sites, projects and events.



In addition to buildings, many historic resources such as cemetery headstones are in danger of being lost.

Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Themes

Through the planning process, five themes were developed to describe the key characteristics of the Mississippi Delta and to provide an organizational structure for planning and prioritizing activities for the heritage area. The themes encompass both tangible and intangible concepts – reflecting the actual built environment and landscape as well as the meanings, values and living traditions that are embodied in the Delta.

What are themes?

Themes are the organizing framework within which interpretation of related natural and cultural resources is conducted. They are the key ideas and concepts to be communicated to the public about the heritage area.

Source: Components of a Successful National Heritage Area Management Plan, National Park Service

Themes connect the past to the present and reveal something about the future. They embody and enforce a sense of place that makes an area special.

Source: Interpretive Planning Tools for Historic Trails and Gateways, National Park Service, Chesapeake Bay Office

The process for developing themes was incorporated into every outreach activity during the planning phase including a visioning session with the coordinating entity's board, discussions at all public meetings and stakeholder interviews, the inclusion of questions in the online survey about important stories and consideration of how the themes would be developed in each of the five alternatives. All of the findings were compiled and analyzed for both tangible and intangible elements to prepare a draft set of thematic categories. The draft thematic categories were shared at the Exchange Regional Community Forum to solicit feedback from stakeholders.

The coordinating entity's board of directors conducted an in-depth review of the thematic categories and recommendations that emerged

from the community forum and other stakeholder feedback resulting in the development of five major themes and accompanying sub-themes.

Describing the Delta through Themes

The themes describe the Delta in three ways:

- **Historic events** – Major historical events that occurred in the Delta, such as the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement, ultimately contributed to shaping the nation’s character and culture.
- **Living traditions** – The creativity that emerged from the Delta and continues to be in evidence today, ranging from the creation of the Blues to the expressions of artists in quilting, pottery and other forms, results in a unique cultural landscape.
- **The landscape** – The influence of events and culture on the Delta’s landscape and built environment includes controlling the river, taming the land and building communities.

Each theme is described in the following way:

- **Thematic categories** – The five major themes are outlined with summary phrases for each sub-category.
- **Thematic statement** – A narrative statement describes the theme’s significance to the Delta.
- **Resources** – Charts show the connection of places listed in the heritage area’s inventory to each of the five themes and supporting sub-themes and note which sites have some type of interpretation. For the purposes of the charts, interpretation was defined as having exhibits, programs, signage, tours or other ways to communicate the story to the public. It is important to note that for many of the places, the only interpretation is a historic marker or listing in a brochure. Places that are not accessible to the public (such as archaeological sites on privately owned land) are not included in the charts. The theme “The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound” notes three possibilities for places – “experience the Blues,” “learn about the Blues,” and “influences on other music types.”
- **Related Resource Inventories** – These lists cross-reference the resource inventories discussed in Chapter 5: *Resource Inventory Analysis* and the inventory listings found in the appendix.

The charts in the following section include more than 250 places associated with the heritage area’s themes that are included in the inventory of resources. (The complete inventory is in the appendix.) The charts also note that fewer than half of the places have interpretation connected to the place and the theme.

Defining Interpretation

For the purposes of the following charts, interpretation was defined as having:

- Exhibits
- Programs
- Signage
- Tours
- Printed materials
- Other ways to communicate the story

The Themes

1. The Mississippi River and the Land it Embraces

Thematic Categories

A. In the Beginning...

- How the Delta was formed (glacier, the river formed the alluvial plain, etc.)
- Native American story – mound builders and other Native Americans
- European exploration and settlement – arrival of DeSoto, Treaty of Dancing Creek

B. Transformation of the Land

- 90% wilderness after the Civil War – one of the last areas of the country to be settled and developed
- Controlling the land and water – clear cutting, floods and the levee system, waterways (erosion and sediment control)
- Transportation – steamboats, railroads, highways
- Loss of wildlife habitat (black bears, bald eagles, panthers, etc.)
- Cotton – sharecropping to mechanization
- Agriculture – beginnings to present day (leading the way in innovative farming techniques, research center, sustainability, catfish, etc)
- Wildlife - bird watching (Mississippi Flyway), butterfly watching, duck hunting

Thematic Statement

“The river bore the alluvial plain that is the Delta, and the Delta bore fruit...” The Delta is the Mississippi River. It is created, sustained and sometimes destroyed by the river. The Delta simply would not have the heritage it has if it were not for the river’s deposition of the vast alluvial plain, a plain pre-destined for cotton. The oldest stories of the river and the land include the physical formation of the Delta and its rich alluvial soils, Native American settlement, and early European exploration of the wilderness.

Beginning in the middle of the 19th century, the vast wilderness underwent a transformation as people tamed the Delta for agriculture. The land was clear cut, attempts were made to control the waterways, transportation carved new paths through the region, and wildlife suffered a huge loss of habitat. Labor-intensive cotton agriculture founded first on enslavement and then on sharecropping dominated the next century of development, impacting all aspects of the economy and culture. When the river escaped its banks in the Great Flood of 1927, the planter class based disaster-relief decisions on retaining the Delta’s labor force, increasing racial tensions and raising national questions about the role of government in relief efforts.

Mechanization ushered in a new era in the middle of the 20th century, causing seismic shifts in the region’s socio-economic structure as reliance on human labor waned. Agriculture remains at the heart of the Delta’s identity, although today it is marked by innovation and sustainability and balanced with opportunities offered by the natural world and cultural traditions.

Resources

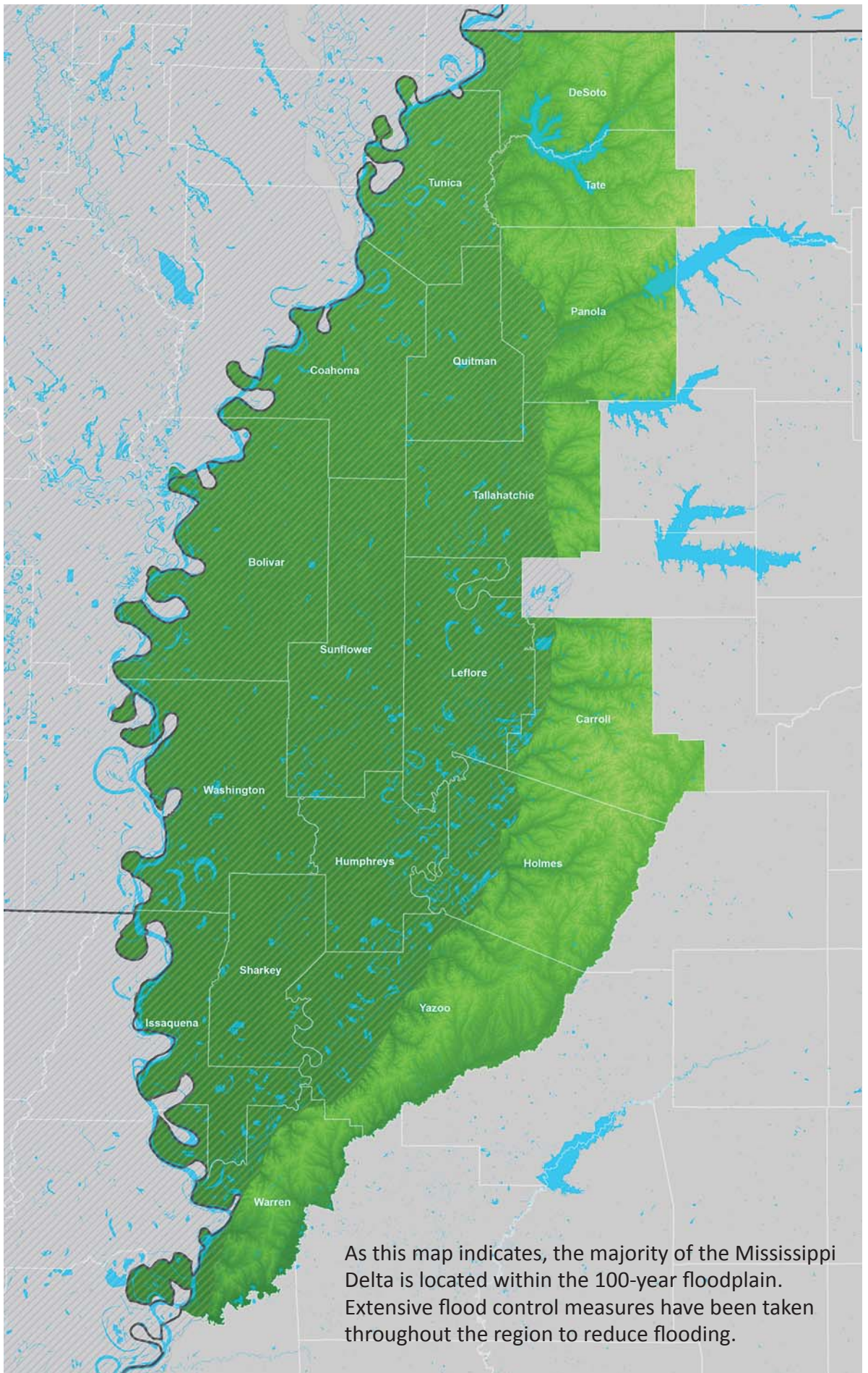
A variety of resources exist that help tell the stories of the river and the land. Museums and parks along the Mississippi River interpret the physical formation of the region, while important physical structures such as bridges and levees demonstrate humans' adaptation to and control over the mighty waterway. A large number of Native American mounds relate to prehistoric settlement in the Delta, while fewer resources relate to the Choctaw and Chickasaw who lived in the area historically. Resources related to agriculture are among the most numerous in the region. There are historic plantations including main houses, gins, barns, and sharecroppers' houses, as well as urban buildings related to the cotton business. The modern landscape is clearly agricultural, as well, with operating farms, fields and gins, as well as farmers markets in various communities.

Related Resource Inventories

- Mississippi River
- Agriculture and Cotton
- Water
- Land
- Recreation
- Native American
- Biological Resources



The Mississippi River
Photo: Andy Ellis



As this map indicates, the majority of the Mississippi Delta is located within the 100-year floodplain. Extensive flood control measures have been taken throughout the region to reduce flooding.



Winterville Mounds is the site of a prehistoric ceremonial center built by a Native American civilization that thrived from about A.D. 1000 to 1450.
Photo: Lee Jones



Winterville Mounds in Washington County
Photo: Lee Jones

Table 6.1 Theme: The Mississippi River and the Land it Embraces

Categories/ Resources	Interpreted	How the Delta was formed	Native American story	European exploration, settlement	Controlling land and water	Transportation	Loss of wildlife habitat	Agriculture/ cotton	Wildlife
Martin and Sue B. King Railroad Museum	Y					✓			
Charles W. Capps Jr. Archives and Museum	Y								
North Delta Museum	Y		✓	✓	✓	✓			
DeSoto County Museum	Y			✓		✓		✓	
Jaketown Museum	Y		✓						
Catfish Museum	Y							✓	
Museum of the Mississippi Delta	Y		✓					✓	
Tunica Museum	Y	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Mississippi River Museum	Y	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Transportation Museum	Y					✓			
Old Courthouse Museum	Y		✓						
Lower Mississippi River Museum and Riverfront Interpretive Center	Y				✓				
Mississippi Board of Levee Commissioners Building	N				✓				

Table 6.1 (continued)

Categories/ Resources	Interpreted	How the Delta was formed	Native American story	European exploration, settlement	Controlling land and water	Transportation	Loss of wildlife habitat	Agriculture/ cotton	Wildlife
Greenville History Museum	Y				✓				
Sam Olden Historical Museum	Y		✓						
Winterville Mounds	Y		✓						
1927 Flood Museum Greenville	Y				✓				
River Road Queen Welcome Center	Y					✓			
N. Mississippi Fish Hatchery	Y							✓	
Delta Conservation and Demonstration Center	Y							✓	
Delta Research and Extension Center	N							✓	
Fort St. Pierre site	Y			✓				✓	
da House of Khafre	Y							✓	
Yazoo County Agriculture Tours	N							✓	
MS Tourism Agritour Trail	N							✓	
Dockery Farms	Y							✓	
Hopson Plantation	Y							✓	
Aaron Cotton Company Museum	Y							✓	
Producers Cotton Gin	Y							✓	
B.B. King Museum	Y							✓	
Delta Pecan Orchard	Y							✓	
North Mississippi Fish Hatchery Visitor Education Center	Y							✓	
Abbey and Leatherman Plantation	Y							✓	
Linden Plantation Gardens	N								✓
Rattlesnake Bayou Levee	N				✓				
Washington County Farm Tours	Y							✓	
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Aquatic Research Center	Y							✓	
Wildlife managements areas (i.e. National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Sky Lake, Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge)	N						✓		✓



The LeRoy Percy Wildlife Management Area in Washington County preserves more than 1,600 acres of bottomland hardwood forest.



Delta Research and Extension Center in Stoneville offers an educational experience about research into the production of row crops, catfish farming and tree farming.



The Corps of Engineers' Lower Mississippi River Museum and Riverfront Interpretive Center in Vicksburg tells the story of life along the river and the Great Flood of 1927.

Photo: Lower Mississippi River Museum





The Gateway to the Blues Visitor Center in Tunica welcomes visitors to the Delta and provides information to help plan their visit.

Photo: Delta Center for Culture and Learning



Bluesman Muddy Waters's cabin in Sharkey County is a stop on the Mississippi Blues Trail.

Photo: Luther Brown

2. The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound

Thematic Categories

- Contrasts of the Delta (haves and have nots) – leading to emergence of a distinctive musical form – famous musicians, iconic juke joints
- Influence on culture
- Giving rise to rock 'n roll, rhythm and blues, and jazz
- Continuing the tradition today – national and international recognition

Thematic Statement

The Mississippi Delta's fertile ground gave birth to the Blues. The Delta is recognized internationally for its role in shaping American culture in the 20th century because it is the place where the African American musicians created the Blues. Cotton agriculture contributed to deep socio-cultural and economic dichotomies in the Delta between the planter class and the labor class. These dichotomies led to the emergence of a distinctive musical form, the Blues, as well as the culture that surrounded it. The Delta has been home to hundreds of famous Bluesmen and the juke joints where they played. Music is in the lifeblood of the Delta. Rock 'n' roll was born there, emerging straight out of the Blues. Rhythm and blues and jazz are also derived from the Blues, and gospel and country have strong roots in the Delta. A uniquely American musical form, the Blues has brought national and international recognition to the Delta and still thrives in the region today.

The history and culture of the Blues can be seen in a wide variety of resources in the Delta. Authentic resources include juke joints where live Blues music is currently (or has been) played, and homes, plantations and gravesites related to Blues musicians. Modern resources include several museums and an extensive system of 79 Blues Trail interpretive

markers (out of 175 placed statewide). Also important are the festivals that promote and celebrate Blues in communities throughout the Delta.

Resources

The history and culture of the Blues can be seen in a wide variety of resources in the Delta. Authentic resources include juke joints where live Blues music is currently (or has been) played, and homes, plantations and gravesites related to Blues musicians. Modern resources include several museums and an extensive system of 79 Blues Trail interpretive markers (out of 175 placed statewide). Also important are the festivals that promote and celebrate Blues in communities throughout the Delta.

Related Resource Inventories

- Mississippi River
- Agriculture and Cotton
- Water
- Land
- Recreation
- Native American
- Biological Resources

Table 6.2
Theme: The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound

Interpretation/ Resource	Interpreted	Experience the Blues	Learn about the Blues	Influences on other musical types
Mississippi Blues Trail markers (70+)	Y		✓	
Delta Blues Museum	Y		✓	
Crossroads	Y		✓	
Ground Zero Blues Club	N	✓		
Rock 'n Roll Blues Heritage Museum	Y		✓	✓
Pinetop Perkins Museum at Heritage Village House	Y		✓	
McLaurin Memorial Gardens	N		✓	
Greenwood Blues Heritage Museum	Y		✓	
Muddy Waters Cabin	Y		✓	
B.B. King Museum	Y	✓	✓	✓
Dockery Farms	Y		✓	
Gateway to the Blues Visitor Center at Tunica	Y		✓	
Highway 61 Blues Museum	Y		✓	
Henry "Sonny" Sims' Grave	N		✓	
Clarksdale Blues Mural	N		✓	
Tutwiler Blues Mural	N		✓	
Leland Blues Mural	N		✓	

Table 6.2 (continued)

Theme: The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound

Interpretation/ Resource	Interpreted	Experience the Blues	Learn about the Blues	Influences on other musical types
Po Monkey's Lounge	N	✓		
Bolivar County Courthouse	Y		✓	
Do Drop Inn	N	✓		
Sarah's Kitchen	N	✓		
Mississippi Delta Blues Hall of Fame	Y		✓	
Stackhouse Recording Company	N		✓	
Riverside Hotel	N		✓	
Holly Ridge Store	N		✓	
Issaquena Ave. – New World District	Y	✓	✓	
Red's Blues Club	N	✓		
Birthplace of Ike Turner	N		✓	✓
Cat Head Delta Blues and Folk Art	Y		✓	
Henry Seymour Library	N		✓	
Heavenly Rest Cemetery	N		✓	
James "Son" Thomas grave	N		✓	
Eugene Powell grave	N		✓	
Club Ebony	N	✓		
Blue Front juke joint	N	✓		
Walnut Street Bar and Grill	N	✓		
LD's Kitchen	N	✓		
Country Music Trail	Y			✓
Blues Festivals – (Table 6.6)	N	✓		



Blues singers carry on a musical tradition throughout the Delta.

Photo: Mississippi Delta Tourism Association



Cat Head Delta Blues and Folk Art in Clarksdale offers Blues music and folk art.

Photo: Chuck Lamb



Vicksburg National Military Park features hundreds of cannons, monuments and interpretive markers as well as an interpretive center and tours that tell the story of Vicksburg’s pivotal role in the Civil War.



This house in Cleveland was the home of Civil Rights leader Amzie Moore and the site where Freedom Summer was first planned.

Photo: Heather Miller

3. Moving Toward Freedom: Changing America’s Character in the Struggle for Rights

Thematic Categories

A. Troubled Times

- Slavery – riverside farms and work camps before the Civil War, growth of slave population, increasing wealth in hands of a few from cotton farming
- Civil War – Campaign, siege and fall of Vicksburg
- Lost Cause of the Confederacy – memorial associations, emergence of Southern mythology
- Jim Crow era – constitutional separation of black and white; White Citizens’ Council
- The Great Migration – mechanization of agriculture, moving North, homecomings and reunions

B. Fighting for Civil Rights

- Pivotal events (Emmett Till murder, Freedom Summer, Freedom Riders, voter registration, Democratic National Convention, Poor People’s Campaign, Civil Rights leaders)

C. Changing Times

- Changes over the years (voting, African American elected officials and leaders, working together, etc.)
- Telling the story

Thematic Statement

A social revolution swept the Mississippi Delta in the midst of the 20th century, empowering its majority African American population and focusing America’s eyes and hearts on the some of the best and worst moments of the Civil Rights Movement. The dichotomies created in more than a century of plantation agriculture left a legacy of inequality and fueled the struggle for rights. As in much of the South, commercial agriculture in the Delta was initially based on an enslaved workforce of African Americans. In 1863, the Siege of Vicksburg ended in Union victory, hastening the close of the Civil War. This devastating

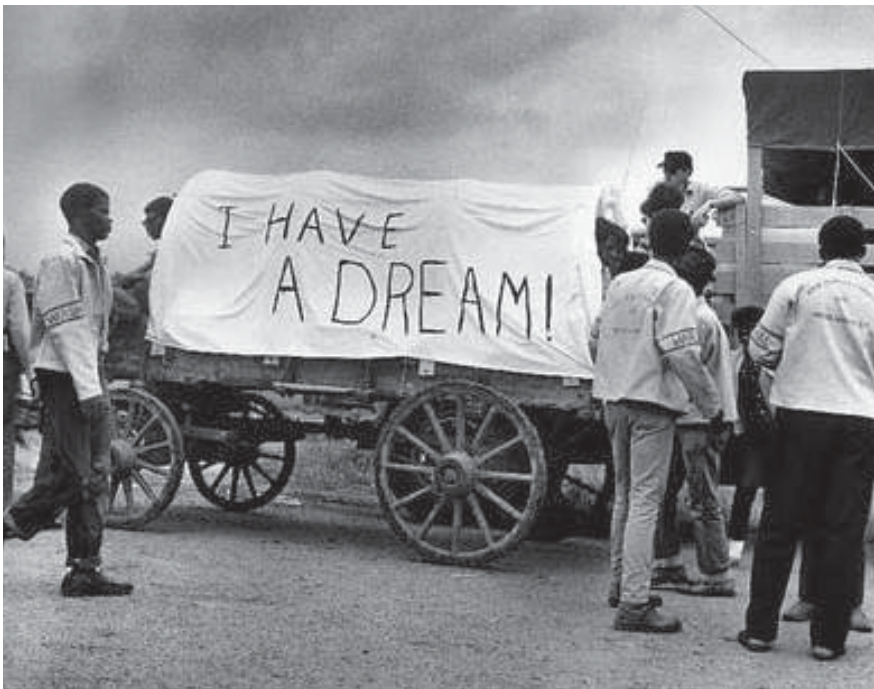


Photo: Ernest C. Withers. 1968. Library of Congress

conflict brought an end to the institution of slavery, but not to the inequalities on which it was based. From Reconstruction to the emergence of a Southern mythology and the legal segregation of the Jim Crow era, deep racial divisions meant difficult times for Delta residents. When mechanization changed agriculture forever, reducing the need for human labor, many African Americans left rural farms for cities near and far. As the era of Civil Rights dawned in this nation, the Delta was home to pivotal events both horrible

and inspirational, including Emmett Till's murder, Freedom Summer and the Poor People's Campaign. Leaders and activists such as Amzie Moore, Fannie Lou Hamer, the delegates of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, and the Freedom Riders are among those who paved the way for changes that are still unfolding today.

Resources

Historic plantations hold the majority of resources associated with slavery and sharecropping. Resources related to the Civil War include battlefields and defensive earthworks, especially in conjunction with the Campaign and Siege at Vicksburg. Monuments, cemeteries, historic properties and museums are also important for that history and the complex times that followed. Key types of cultural resources related to the Civil Rights Movement include the homes and graves of Civil Rights leaders, landmarks associated with the movement such as churches where many meetings occurred, the store in Money that began Emmett Till's saga and a growing system of Freedom Trail interpretive markers.



The Poor Peoples' Campaign planned by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. began in May 1968, shortly after King's assassination. The sharecropper contingent of the campaign began at Marks with the departure of a Mule Train destined for Washington D.C.

Related Resources Inventories

- Civil War
- Civil Rights
- Immigration

**Table 6.3 Theme: Moving Toward Freedom:
Changing America’s Character in the Struggle for Rights**

Categories/ Resources	Interpreted	Slavery	Civil War	Lost Cause	Jim Crow era	Great Migration	Civil Rights	Changing Times
DeSoto County Museum	Y		✓					
Museum of the Mississippi Delta	Y		✓					
Old Courthouse Museum	Y	✓	✓	✓				
Jacqueline House Museum	Y	✓				✓		
Hopson Planting Company	Y					✓		
Corner Drug Store	Y						✓	
Sam Olden Historical Museum	Y		✓					
DeSoto County Confederate Monument	Y		✓					
Camp Castalian Springs, Confederate Cemetery	N		✓					
C.S. Fort Pemberton	N		✓					
Chickasaw Bayou Battlefield	N		✓					
Big Black River Bridge Battlefield	N		✓					
Federal fortifications along Bear Creek	N		✓					
Duff Green Mansion	N		✓					
Planters Hall	N		✓					
Snyder’s Bluff	N		✓					
Rolling Fork Mounds	N		✓					
Vicksburg Siege Cave	N		✓					
General Stephen Lee Headquarters	N		✓					
Balfour House	N		✓					

Table 6.3 (Continued)

Categories/ Resources	Interpreted	Slavery	Civil War	Lost Cause	Jim Crow era	Great Migration	Civil Rights	Changing Times
Christ Episcopal Church	N		✓					
Ben Lamensdorf's Cotton Farm	N		✓					
Yazoo City Confederate Navy Yard	Y		✓					
Greenwood Leflore Confederate Monument	Y		✓					
Star of the West (sunken naval vessel)	N		✓					
Pemberton's Headquarters	Y		✓					
Vicksburg National Military Park	Y		✓					
U.S.S. Cairo Gunboat Museum	Y		✓					
Vicksburg antebellum homes	Y		✓					
Franklin Church and Battlefield	N		✓					
Old Greenwood Cemetery	N		✓					
Cedar Hill Cemetery	N		✓					
Belmont Plantation	N		✓					
Colonel James Z. George Law Office	N		✓					
Nathan Bedford Forrest's Plantation	N	✓	✓					
Robinson-Slack-Marilleni House	N		✓					
Grant's Yazoo Pass Expedition	N		✓					
Emmett Till Intrepid Center	Y						✓	
Fannie Lou Hamer Memorial	Y						✓	
Mound Bayou	Y				✓		✓	
Rev. George Lee Museum of African American History	Y						✓	
Bryant's Grocery Store	Y						✓	
Amzie Moore Home	Y						✓	

Table 6.3 (Continued)

Categories/ Resources	Interpreted	Slavery	Civil War	Lost Cause	Jim Crow era	Great Migration	Civil Rights	Changing Times
Dr. Aaron Henry Home	N						✓	
Clarksdale Train Station	N						✓	
New World District – Clarksdale	N				✓		✓	
Eureka Masonic College	N		✓		✓			
Lil Red Rosenwald School	N				✓			
Green Grove Missionary Baptist Church	N						✓	
Rev. George Lee House	N						✓	
Fannie Lou Hamer Civil Rights Museum	N						✓	



A Mississippi Freedom Trail marker honors Fannie Lou Hamer in Ruleville.



Taborian Hospital opened in 1942 in Mound Bayou to serve African Americans in the Delta. The facility is being renovated to serve as Taborian Urgent Care Center of Mound Bayou with funding support from a USDA Rural Development grant.

Photo: Delta Center for Culture and Learning

4. Growing More than Cotton: The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity

Thematic Categories

- **Large number of famous authors** – Education and circumstances that produced authors like Tennessee Williams, William Alexander Percy, Shelby Foote and others
- **The Delta as a setting for many books, poetry and plays** – Written about by authors who did not live in the Delta as well as Delta residents
- **Artists** – Carrying on living traditions such as quilting; creating new artistic expressions ranging from pottery to entire buildings; public art as an expression of place
- **Painters** – Local artists as well as artists with international recognition
- **Unique culinary traditions** - Fusion of food traditions from many cultural groups, local restaurants as gathering places
- **Expressions of faith** – Religious traditions - Majority Protestant, also Jewish and Catholic; oldest African American denominations; folk traditions with ties to Africa and the Caribbean, gospel music

Thematic Statement

The dark water and rich soils of the Delta grew more than cotton. Inspiration and creativity in all its forms abound in the region. The multitude of books, poems, plays and films that have emerged from the creative ranks of the Delta demonstrate the how the region has reflected elements of—and has influenced—American society from the 19th century to today. Famous authors such as Tennessee Williams, William Alexander Percy, and Richard Wright are among the dozens of people who have lived in or written about the Delta.

Music is another expression of the artistry that thrives in the Delta. The Blues were born here, and rock ‘n roll emerged from the Blues. Famous artists in many genres come from the region. In addition to hundreds of Bluesmen, Ike Turner influenced rock ‘n roll, Conway Twitty and Charley Pride helped shape country music, and gospel thrives in churches across the Delta.

Creativity is found in many Delta endeavors, including the arts, food, business, and religion. From Marshall Bouldin’s portraits to Sammy Britt’s landscapes to the Tutweiler quilters and a host of pottery guilds, the work of artists colors the Delta and reaches well beyond it. Unique culinary traditions arose from the fusion of foodways from a variety of cultural groups who made their home in the Delta. Craig Claiborne carried these traditions to a national audience, and Viking Range built a business around the importance of good cooking. Local restaurants remain an important thread in the fabric of communities. From folk traditions with ties to Africa and the Caribbean, to Jewish, Catholic and Protestant denominations, expressions of faith contribute to the Delta’s creative cultural mosaic.

Resources

The Delta’s literary tradition is visible in the settings used in famous works, often the homes and communities of the region’s literary giants. Greenville and Clarksdale are especially notable. Other resources that reflect the creative inheritance of the region include murals, arts venues and programs, museums, galleries and retail establishments, restaurants, churches, cemeteries, and festivals celebrating the region’s food, music and arts.

Related Resource Inventories

- Literature
- Cultural and Arts

Table 6. 4
Theme: Growing More than Cotton: The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity

Categories/ Resources	Interpreted	Famous authors	Art and Artists	Culinary	Expressions of faith
DeSoto County Museum	Y		✓		
Catfish Museum	Y		✓		
Yesterday's Children Antique Doll and Toy Museum	Y		✓		
Jim Henson Exhibit	Y		✓		
St. George's Episcopal Church	Y	✓			
Tennessee Williams' neighborhood	Y	✓			
Uncle Henry's Place on Moon Lake	(inn and restaurant)	✓			
Grange Cemetery	N	✓			
Alcazar Hotel	N	✓			
Greenville Writers' Exhibit	Y	✓			
Shelby Foote's family home	N	✓			
Charles Bell's family home	N	✓			
David Cohn's family home	N	✓			
Twin Oaks (home of Louise Eskrigge Crump)	N	✓			
Harris House and Studio	N	✓			
Rosebud Plantation	N	✓			
Cat Holland Site	N	✓			
Hernando Courthouse	N	✓			
Lewis "Buddy" Nordan Home	N	✓			
Emily J. Pointer Public Library (Stark Young Literary Landmark)	Y	✓			

Tennessee Williams' grandfather was the rector at St. George's Episcopal Church in Clarksdale.
Photo: Carolyn Brackett



Table 6. 4 (Continued)

Categories/ Resources	Interpreted	Famous authors	Art and Artists	Culinary	Expressions of faith
Mount Holly	N	✓	✓		
Sarah Catherine Lee Ferguson Home	N	✓	✓		
St. Mark Missionary Baptist Church	N	✓	✓		
Momma's Dream World	Y		✓		
Solomon Century of History Museum at Hebrew Union Temple	Y				✓
McCarty's Pottery	(studio)		✓		
Peter's Pottery	(studio)		✓		
Joe Eckles Stoneware	(studio)		✓		
Jim Anderson Pottery	(studio)		✓		
Hazel and Jimmy Sanders Sculpture Garden	Y		✓		
Gus Cannon's grave	N		✓		
Catfish on Parade	Y		✓		
Mississippi Gift Company	N		✓		



Margaret's Grocery in Vicksburg is a unique folk art structure.

Table 6. 4 (Continued)

Categories/ Resources	Interpreted	Famous authors	Art and Artists	Culinary	Expressions of faith
Crown Restaurant and Art Gallery	N		✓		
Rolling Fork chainsaw carved bears	Y		✓		
Mississippi Delta Hot Tamale Trail (23 sites)	Y			✓	
Silent Grove Missionary Baptist Church – gospel recordings	N				✓
Murals – Vicksburg, Leland, Rolling Fork, Tutwiler, Clarksdale	Some signs		✓		
Tomato Place	N		✓		
Catfish Row Children's Art Park	N		✓		
Margaret's Grocery	N		✓		
Historic churches	N				✓
Beth Israel Cemetery	N				✓
Anshed Chesed Cemetery (Jewish)	N				✓
Chinese cemeteries in Greenville	N				✓
Adath Israel Temple	N				✓

The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta's Diverse Communities

Thematic Categories

- **Emergence of plantations in the late 19th century** – Self-contained industries, large-scale employment, influence on the Blues
- **Immigration** – Number of ethnic groups seeking opportunity or recruited as sharecroppers to replace black laborers (Italian, Jewish, Chinese, Lebanese)
- **The built environment** – Growth of housing and communities, from vernacular types (sharecropper housing) to utilitarian (downtown buildings) to high style homes (antebellum and Victorian mansions)
- **Rise and fall of small towns**



The Craig-Seay House in Como is one of more than 20 National Register listed historic sites in Panola County.

Thematic Statement

“The Mississippi Delta begins in the lobby of the Peabody Hotel in Memphis and ends on Catfish Row in Vicksburg.” With these geographic and cultural extremes, author David Cohn described the Delta, a land of great extremes. Indeed, author Will Campbell has defined the Delta as “a place of mean poverty and garish opulence.” The contradictions that make up American society are visible in the paradoxes of the Delta—powerful and powerless, rich and poor, Black and White, literate and illiterate, high class and low, sacred and secular, and man and nature. Plantation agriculture and the stark contrasts it entails have embodied much of this divide. Yet the Delta is also a place of communities. In the 19th century, the self-contained industries and large labor forces of plantations formed the basis for community. After the Civil War ended,



The Cotton Row Historic District in Greenwood was a center of activity during the post-Civil War cotton boom.



Sharecroppers' houses, like this one photographed in 1939, were once seen throughout the Delta.

Photo: Marion Post Wolcott. Library of Congress



The historic downtown Yazoo City district is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Photo: Mississippi Delta Tourism Association

a number of ethnic groups were recruited to the region as sharecroppers to replace black laborers or simply came seeking opportunity. Italian, Jewish, Chinese and Lebanese immigrants added elements of their cultures to the Delta's mix. The built environment in Delta communities ranges from vernacular to high style, providing a window into many aspects of the region's complex history.

Resources

The resources that reflect the building of communities of the Delta are plantations and the historic homes and businesses found in downtowns and neighborhoods throughout the Delta. Regarding immigration, synagogues, cemeteries and stores related to Jewish settlement in the Delta are most easily visible, although ethnic cemeteries and eateries are among other places that reflect the groups who made their lives here.

Related Resource Inventories

- National Register of Historic Places
- Sites Not Currently on the National Register
- Museums

Table 6.5
Theme: The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta’s Diverse Communities

Categories/ Resources	Interpreted	Plantations	Immigration	Built environment	Rise and fall of small towns
North Delta Museum	Y	✓			
DeSoto County Museum	Y			✓	
Tate County Heritage Museum	Y			✓	
Tunica Museum	Y			✓	
Old Courthouse Museum	Y	✓			
Biedenharn Coca-Cola Museum	Y			✓	✓
Mont Helena	Y	✓			
Felix Labauve House	N		✓		
Bazsinkey House	Y		✓		
Shlenker House	Y		✓		
Beth Israel Cemetery	N		✓		
Anshed Chesed Cemetery (Jewish)	N		✓		
Chinese cemeteries in Greenville	N		✓		
Ralph Lembo’s Store	N		✓		
Little Italy	Y		✓		
First Baptist Church – Greenville	Y		✓		
Chinese Mission School historic marker	Y		✓		
Solomon Century of History Museum at Hebrew Union Temple	Y		✓		
Chinese grocery stores	N		✓		
Bolivar County Courthouse	N		✓		
Adath Israel Temple	N		✓		
Main Street communities – Batesville, Cleveland, Greenville, Greenwood, Hernando, Indianola, Lexington, Senatobia, Tunica and Vicksburg.	Varies			✓	

What are living traditions?

- Living traditions, also referred to as folklife, are passed down through generations over time and are closely connected to community history.
- Living traditions are shared by a group of people who have something in common: ethnicity, family, region, occupation, religion, nationality, age, gender, social class, social clubs, school, etc.
- Living traditions are learned informally by word of mouth, observation, and/or imitation.
- Living traditions have longevity but are dynamic and adaptable.

Adapted from Louisiana Folklife Program, Louisiana Division of the Arts, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

Perpetuating Culture – The Delta’s Living Traditions

History and culture have combined in the Mississippi Delta to produce and sustain a wide array of traditions that contribute to the region’s national significance. Food, music, storytelling, religion and the artistic expression are a part of daily life in the Delta. Relationships to the landscape are seen in outdoor activities and the Delta’s agricultural economic base. All of these elements are part of a rich and authentic atmosphere that residents recognize and to which visitors are drawn.

Documenting the Delta’s unique culture and supporting the continued vibrancy of living traditions are important goals of the coordinating entity. Cultural documentation, preservation and

education will benefit the Delta by helping to emphasize and reinforce cultural identity – an identity based in large part on the connections people have to each other, to the Delta and to their history in this particular place. Recognition and support by the coordinating entity and its partners will promote cultural understanding and provide validation that fosters a sense of belonging and pride for individuals and communities.

Music—The Blues and Beyond

The Delta’s musical heritage is one of the region’s defining characteristics. The Blues is the genre most closely associated with the Delta—a musical form born in the African American community, reflecting the cultural and economic disparities created by the region’s agricultural economy and exported to major urban centers through the diaspora of the Great Migration. The culture surrounding the Blues is as significant as the music, itself—the Mississippi River landscape, the “haves and have nots,” agricultural roots, local juke joints, Highway 61 and the migration that occurred as mechanization changed the region, and the expression the music gave to oppression, including tensions that boiled over in the struggle for equality.

The Bluesmen, their music and the places they played (and continue to play) are among the region’s most important resources. In addition, there are several established entities involved in the research and interpretation of Blues culture, including:

- The Delta Center for Culture and Learning, Delta State University, Cleveland
- The Delta Blues Museum, Clarksdale
- The B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center, Indianola
- The Highway 61 Blues Museum, Leland
- WROX Museum, Clarksdale
- The Mississippi Blues Commission – Mississippi Blues Trail

The Mississippi Blues Trail has been extremely successful in documenting and bringing recognition to important sites and people connected to the Blues. Since the first marker was placed in 2006, 79 of the state’s 175 markers have been placed in the Delta. The trail has been extensively promoted by the Mississippi Division of Tourism and the Mississippi



William Seaberry, owner of Po' Monkey's in Bolivar County

Delta Tourism Association. In 2012, a free App was unveiled to further enhance the tours with an interactive timeline, videos, photos and an itinerary builder.

The Mississippi Blues Commission has also established a Blues Musicians Benevolent Fund that allows Blues musicians to apply for support for food, shelter, medical care and other assistance.

More than a dozen annual festivals celebrate the Blues in Delta communities. Throughout the year, Blues music can be heard coming from places like Po' Monkey's in Merigold, Club Ebony in Indianola, Blue Front Café in Bentonia and Red's Lounge in Clarksdale.

Other musical traditions also have strong ties to the Delta. Country, rock 'n roll, and gospel all have roots in the region, and several renowned performers of these genres, as well as jazz and soul, originally hailed from the Delta.

A Delta Institution: Po' Monkey's Lounge

The rural juke joint played an integral role in the development of the Blues, offering a distinctly secular space for people to socialize, dance and forget their everyday troubles. While many juke joints once dotted the cotton fields of the Delta countryside, Po' Monkey's is one of the few to survive into the 21st century. Initially frequented by locals, Po' Monkey's became a destination point for Blues tourists from around the world during the 1990s.

Willie "Po' Monkey" Seaberry opened a juke joint at his home in 1963. Seaberry worked as a farmer and operated the club, where he continued to live, at night. By the 1990s Po' Monkey's was attracting a mixed crowd of locals as well as college students from Delta State University and Blues aficionados in search of "authentic" juke joints.

What is a Juke?

The term "juke"—sometimes spelled "jook" and often pronounced to rhyme with "book" rather than "duke"—may have either African or Gullah origins, and scholars have suggested meanings including "wicked or disorderly," "to dance," and "a place of shelter." Used as a noun, "juke" refers to small African American-run bars, cafes and clubs such as Po Monkey's. As a verb, it refers to partying.



A Mississippi Country Music Trail, modeled on the Blues Trail, has been developed with five of the state's 24 markers placed in the Delta as of 2013.

The 25th Sunflower River Blues and Gospel Festival in August 2012 drew the largest crowd in Clarksdale history when Robert Plant, Charlie Musselwhite and Bobby Rush headlined and the festival was honored with a Mississippi Blues Trail marker by Mississippi Blues Commission.

Photo: Panny Mayfield



Blue Front Café in Bentonia



White Front Café - Joe's Hot Tamale Place in Rosedale is a popular stop on the Mississippi Delta Hot Tamale Trail.

Food Traditions

The Delta's ethnic heritage resulted in the fusion of a variety of food traditions from the various cultural groups who settled the region. African, Native American, Chinese, Lebanese, Italian and Mexican foods were melded into a menu that is eaten by all classes and cultures in the Delta today: fried chicken, barbecue, catfish, tamales, okra and tomatoes, chicken spaghetti, rice, yams, cornbread, biscuits, slaw, pimento cheese, banana pudding, sweet tea and—most recently—koolickles. Many of these foods are found throughout the South. Food heritage in the Delta reflects the idea that the region is “the most Southern place on earth,” both the epitome

of the South and the source of so much that is “American,” exported to major urban centers in the diaspora.

While home cooking, including practices such as canning and barbecuing, lies at the heart of the region's food traditions, restaurants also play an important role. Participants at public meetings during the planning process cited “hole-in-the-wall restaurants” as important places for Delta culture. Several, including Doe's Eat Place, Lusco's, the Senator's Place, Rest Haven and Walnut Hills, were noted.

What is “daily bread” for some is gaining recognition as an important cultural tradition to be documented and shared with the visiting public. The Mississippi Delta Hot Tamale Trail was developed through a partnership of the Southern Foodways Alliance and the Viking Range Corporation. These entities also assisted the Culinary Institute of America in developing its first American food tour. Another tourism trail highlighting the state's food heritage features Delta cuisine—the Mississippi Culinary Trail was developed by the Mississippi Division of Tourism, the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association and its partners.

Mississippi Delta Hot Tamale Trail

In a region better known for cotton and catfish, the Delta is also the place to purchase hot tamales at more than 20 locations. How and when were hot tamales introduced to what has been called “the most Southern place on earth”? More importantly, why have they stayed? There are as many answers to that question as there are tamale recipes.

Some believe tamales made their way to the Mississippi Delta in the early 20th century when migrant laborers were brought in from Mexico to work the cotton harvest. The African Americans who shared the fields easily recognized the basic tamale ingredients: corn meal and pork. Others maintain that the Delta's history with tamales goes back to the U.S.-Mexican War 100 years earlier, when U.S. soldiers from Mississippi traveled to Mexico and brought tamale recipes home with them. Others argue that tamales have simply always been in the Delta. The Mississippian culture of mound-building Native Americans in the area reaches back thousands of years, with an agriculture based in maize.

Today, African Americans in the Delta are the primary keepers of the tamale-making tradition. It makes sense, then, that the interaction of African Americans with Mexican migrant laborers explains part of this culinary confluence. Through slavery and sharecropping, tamales have proved to be a viable support system – financially and nutritionally – to rural communities throughout the area.

Hot Tamales and the Mississippi Delta, Southern Foodways Alliance

A Heritage of Storytelling—Traditional Folk Tales, Literature and Film

People of the Delta have been telling stories in one form or another for generations. Stories teach, reflect and entertain. From stories passed down orally to the written word, to stage and cinema, to the music for which the region is renowned, expressions of Delta life and culture emerge in the words of its residents.

Folktales are a traditional way of communicating history, morals and cultural values among African American communities. Storytelling was born of customs with roots in Africa, and its relevance was ensured by African Americans' limited access to formal education within the oppressive economic system created through plantation agriculture. Storytelling is recognized in a National Park Service study of the Lower Mississippi Delta Region and was mentioned as an important living tradition in the public meetings of May 2012.

Tennessee Williams' Mississippi Delta Connection

Thomas Lanier "Tennessee" Williams III, America's great playwright and Pulitzer Prize winning-author of poetry, novels and screenplays, spent a great deal of his childhood in Clarksdale where his maternal grandfather, the Reverend Walter Dakin, was rector of St. George's Episcopal Church from 1917 to 1933. Tom, his sister Rose and their mother, Edwina Dakin Williams, lived with his grandparents in the church rectory while Tom's father traveled as a salesman. Williams' works were greatly influenced by the area and its people.

The annual Mississippi Delta Tennessee Williams Festival was inaugurated in 1993 as a celebration of his genius and the region's cultural heritage that he immortalized in dramas including *The Glass Menagerie*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Summer and Smoke*, *Eccentricities of a Nightingale*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Orpheus Descending*, *Battle of Angels*, *Baby Doll*, *This Property Is Condemned* and many others.

In 2003 the church rectory was designated a Mississippi Literary Landmark by the Friends of Mississippi Libraries and Friends of Libraries U.S.A.

Tennessee Williams Festival, Coahoma Community College

Much has been written about and by people from the Delta. The Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University has identified more than 75 authors with ties to the 18-county region, noting that they cover "every written genre, from autobiography to journalism to documentary and history to film scripts, fiction and magical realism to non-fiction, poetry to prose."

The most celebrated author in the Delta is Tennessee Williams, whose works frequently drew upon the experiences of his youth in Clarksdale. Several sites in Clarksdale interpret his story

including St. George's Episcopal Church, and Coahoma Community College sponsors the annual Mississippi Delta Tennessee Williams Festival.

Greenville is known as having "more writers than anywhere else in America per capita," including winners of the Pulitzer Prize, National Book Award and O'Henry Award.

Both Clarksdale and Greenville figure prominently on the Southern Literary Trail, which celebrates classic Southern literature in Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia.

One of the region's most beloved storytellers of the 20th century is Jim Henson, whose muppets have entertained children since the mid-1950s on *Sesame Street*, *the Muppet Show* and *Fraggle Rock*, among others. The Jim Henson Museum in Leland, Henson's hometown, celebrates beloved characters including the most famous muppet Kermit the Frog.

Film is another vibrant storytelling medium in the Delta. Documentaries have been an important method of recording life and culture. Other films have used the Delta to



Attendees to the Tennessee Williams Festival in Clarksdale enjoy watching plays performed on the front porches of the historic neighborhood where Williams spent much of his childhood.

Photo: Panny Mayfield



The student winner of the “Stella Calling Contest” during the Mississippi Delta Tennessee Williams Festival in Clarksdale recreates her winning performance at Ground Zero Blues Club. High school students across Mississippi also perform monologues and scenes from Williams’ plays in an elite drama competition awarding \$3,000 in cash prizes for their school drama departments

Photo: Panny Mayfield

Southern Literary Trail

The trail connects places in Mississippi, Georgia and Alabama, showcasing the country’s most recognized writers and playwrights of the 20th century with tours, events, performances and festivals.

In the Mississippi Delta, the Cutrer Mansion, Tennessee Williams Park and the Tennessee Williams Festival in Clarksdale, sites associated with Stark Young in Como, sites associated with Shelby Foote and Walker Percy in Greenville, and the William Alexander Percy Library and Greenville Writers’ Exhibit in Greenville are featured.

An annual Mississippi Delta Cultural Tour is hosted by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture in Oxford and includes visits to sites in Greenwood, Greenville, Indianola, Leland, Winterville and Benoit.

examine prejudices in American society, from Tennessee Williams’ classic *Baby Doll* which was filmed in Benoit in Bolivar County to *The Help* (set in Jackson, but filmed in Greenwood and concerned with racial tensions common throughout the state in the 1960s).

The Arts

From painting to public art and quilting, artistic expressions abound in the Delta. Participants in heritage area planning meetings repeatedly cited “lack” as the wellspring of creativity in the Delta. The idea that people who have little must use their imaginations and talents to transform their world is engaging, and from music to literature to the arts, this is clearly true in the Delta.

Murals in Vicksburg, Rolling Fork, Tutwiler and Leland add vibrancy to historic downtowns. Local cultural landmarks like Margaret’s Grocery in Vicksburg and the creative collection of 12-foot chainsaw carved wooden bears scattered throughout Rolling Fork demonstrate that art is part of everyday life for Delta residents.

Other media also reflect the inspiration born of place. Photographers throughout the region successfully capture elements of the landscape and of the Blues culture that permeates it. Sculpture, such as the collections at Delta State University, is another important medium.

Utilitarian crafts of the past, including quilting and the creation of pottery, have become artistic endeavors in the present. In Tutwiler, women continue generations’ old quilting traditions with the Tutwiler Quilters, an organization established in 1988. In Mound Bayou and Merigold, potters have established viable businesses where they create and sell their work.

Tutwiler Quilters

The art of quilt making is often passed down from generation to generation. In 1988, the Tutwiler Community Education Center organized a quilting group as a way for women in Tutwiler and surrounding communities to continue this living tradition and to make money to support their families. Many of the quilters learned quilting from their mothers and grandmothers. They take traditional patterns, mix them up, turn them up-side down and mix colors. The effect is a beautiful cacophony of color and design.

www.tutwilerquilters.org

The Delta abounds with artists in a wide variety of media. Independent studios and galleries feature many of the creations mentioned previously, and the Mississippi Arts Commission and the Craftsmen’s Guild of Mississippi are among the entities currently serving the artistic community. There remains a great need, however, to integrate artists into the economy,

helping artists to place fair values on their work and connecting them to opportunities to market and distribute it.



Murals depict historic events in Vicksburg.

Religion and Belief Systems in the Delta

Past and present, religion is a strong force in the Delta. The region is majority Protestant, including Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and a range of evangelical denominations. Jewish synagogues and Catholic churches also share the landscape, reflecting the region’s immigration patterns through time. The Church of God in Christ was founded in the Delta. The Missionary Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal denominations are among the oldest denominations founded by African Americans in the region, although

evangelical sects also exist. Church membership generally divides along racial lines. Throughout the Delta, church plays an important role in reinforcing cultural values, and virtually everyone belongs to a church family.



The African American tradition of placing blue bottles on the ends of tree branches to capture spirits is commonly seen in the Delta.



The First African Methodist Episcopal Church in Mississippi and first Masonic Lodge in Mississippi were organized at Bethel A.M.E. Church in Vicksburg in 1875.

Photo: Carolyn Brackett

Along with religion, beliefs may often pertain to the appeasement or capturing of harmful spirits. Bright blue funeral homes, grave offerings and bottle trees reflect a syncretic belief system with ancient ties to Africa and the Caribbean. Folk medicine—remedies based on practical experience and traditional knowledge—still remains in some communities. Aggressive folk magic, including conjure balls and mojo, were used to influence the future and luck for yourself or others. The concept of “mojo” is frequently referred to in Blues music.

Some folk traditions have crossed the line to become art. Most notably, bottle trees, an African American tradition of placing blue bottles on the ends of tree branches to capture spirits, are commonly seen in the Delta. Today, natural and metal “trees” with multi-colored bottles adorn yards and gardens of people of all cultures.

Mojo Hand

The *mojo*, or *mojo* hand is a charm that comes in various shapes and sizes but is often simply a pouch or small cloth bag containing ingredients that produce magic, including herbs, oils, rocks and minerals, bones, powders, etc.. The bags are worn around the neck or carried in a pocket. The magic itself may protect against curses or witchcraft (called gris-gris), or give power leading to love, money, prowess, etc.

Mojo is sometimes mentioned in Blues music as in this lyric from Robert Johnson’s Little Queen of Spades: Everybody say she got a mojo now, she’s been usin’ that stuff Mmm mmm mmm, ‘verybody says she got a mojo ‘cause she been usin’ that stuff But she got a way trimmin’ down hoo, fair brown, and I mean it’s most too tough

Mississippi Delta: The Place-The Mindset – A Guide to People, Places and Issues

Author: Luther Brown, Director,

Delta Center for Culture and Learning, Delta State University

Agriculture

Cotton agriculture is the reason the Delta was cleared and settled. Although cotton is no longer the only commercial crop and the labor system has changed dramatically over time, agriculture remains a cultural and economic force. It dominates the appearance of the landscape and directly or indirectly employs a significant portion of the population.



Belzoni/Humphreys County The Delta's Catfish Capitol

Catfish production emerged as a new “crop” in the 1960s to supplement cotton, rice and soybean farming. Humphreys County lays claim to having more catfish farms per capita than any other boundary in the state.

The Catfish Capitol Visitors Center and Museum in Belzoni tells the story of catfish from fingerling to the frying pan through exhibits and a collection of outdoor sculpture including models made of spawning cans, hatchery tanks and seining nets.

Belzoni's catfish connection is celebrated citywide with “Catfish on Parade,” an art exhibit featuring 33 five-foot-tall brightly painted catfish sculptures. The World Catfish Fest is held annually in Belzoni and includes a catfish eating contest.

Celebrating Belzoni's role as Catfish Capital is an art exhibit featuring 33 five-foot-tall brightly painted catfish sculptures.

In addition to the region's continued role in large-scale agricultural production, agritourism has emerged as a way to attract visitors and to generate economic impact. DeSoto County has several agritourism attractions such as Cedar Hill Farm in Hernando. This family-owned 120-acre farm offers a wide variety of activities ranging from pick-your-own crops to tours for school children to learn about agriculture.



Cotton coming out of the fields in 1939

Photo: Marion Post Wolcott, 1939. Library of Congress

Outdoor Life

Hunting and fishing have long been part of the seasonal round of life for residents of the Delta, regardless of socio-economic class. Forested wetlands and the Mississippi Flyway for migratory birds support abundant wildlife. For many residents, deer, ducks and fish are important contributions to diet and daily sustenance. For the elite, the Delta has always been a wilderness paradise for hunting. The most famous hunt is that of Teddy Roosevelt, who—out of sportsmanship—refused to shoot a treed bear near Rolling Fork, giving rise to the lovable “Teddy Bear” and the Great Delta Bear Affair, an annual event in Rolling Fork.

Today, hunting and fishing remain popular activities. Additionally, bird watching and nature viewing is a recreational pursuit growing in popularity in recent years. All of these activities have the potential to contribute to a sustainable economy as they continue to attract visitors.

Festivals

Many annual festivals celebrate the Delta's connection to Blues music, as shown on the following chart. These festivals draw local residents as well as out-of-state and international visitors, making them significant contributors to the Delta's economy. The Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival is the second oldest continuous Blues festival in the country, marking its 36th year in 2013. The Juke Joint Festival, held each spring in Clarksdale, is a good example of the multi-purpose of these festivals. The festival is publicized as "half Blues festival, half small-town fair and all about the Delta" and notes that it "celebrates our past AND living history by presenting over 100 Blues acts – most of them Mississippi or Southern, many in their 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s!"



Photo: Roger Stolle

In 2013, organizers of major Blues festivals in the Mississippi Delta, Arkansas and Memphis partnered to extend the reach of festivals held in the same time period each fall. Bridging the Blues jointly promotes the Mighty Mississippi Music Festival-Highway 61 Blues Festival in Greenville and the King Biscuit Blues Festival in Helena, Arkansas among others. A website was created to promote Bridging the Blues and provides a schedule of festivals along with information things to see and do in each area.

Other annual community festivals primarily focus on celebrations of special aspects of local culture, such as the World Catfish Festival in Belzoni and the Mississippi Delta Tennessee Williams Festival in Clarksdale as well as seasonal festivals.

Table 6.6
Festivals in the Mississippi Delta

Festival	Location	Focus or theme
Bridging the Blues	Regional/AK/Memphis	Blues
Juke Joint Festival	Clarksdale	Blues
Cat Head Mini Blues Fest(s)	Clarksdale	Blues
Sunflower River Blues and Gospel Festival	Clarksdale	Blues, gospel
Second Street Blues Party	Clarksdale	Blues
Pinetop Perkins Homecoming	Clarksdale	Blues
Hambone Festival	Clarksdale	Blues
Crossroads Blues and Heritage Festival	Rosedale	Blues
B.B. King Festival	Indianola	Blues
Bentonia Blues Festival	Bentonia	Blues
Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival	Greenville	Blues
Highway 61 Blues Festival	Leland	Blues
Sam Chatmon Blues Festival	Hollandale	Blues
Mississippi Delta Tennessee Williams Festival	Clarksdale	Performances, workshops
Delta Jubilee	Clarksdale	Food, crafts, carnival
Clarksdale Caravan Music Fest	Clarksdale	Music
World Catfish Festival	Belzoni	Catfish, music, arts and crafts
Vicksburg Riverfest	Vicksburg	Music, arts and crafts, food
Crawfish and Corvettes	Tunica	Food, music, car show
Tunica Rivergate Festival	Tunica	Food, music, arts and crafts
Delta Day Festival	Tunica	Arts, entertainment, food
Crosstie Arts and Jazz Festival	Cleveland	Music, arts and crafts
Octoberfest	Cleveland	Barbecue contest, arts & crafts
Cotton District Arts Festival	Starkville	Arts and entertainment
Jerry Clower Festival	Yazoo City	Car show, entertainment
River to Rails	Greenwood	Arts, music, food
Stars and Stripes	Greenwood	Boat parade, fireworks
Stars and Stripes	Greenwood	Boat parade, fireworks
Roy Martin Delta Band Festival	Greenwood	Christmas parade
Leland Crawfish Festival	Leland	Food, crafts, music
Juneteenth Festival	Horn Lake	Music, games, arts and crafts
Celebration of the Arts and Jazz Festival	Greenville	Heritage arts and crafts
Octoberfest	Olive Branch	Crafts, photography, food
Downtown Vicksburg Fall Festival	Vicksburg	Music, sales, bike race
Hernando Water Tower Festival	Hernando	Food, music, race

Telling the Delta's Story

As stated in Chapter Seven: *A Sense of Place: Save the Delta's Historic Resources*, it is the continued reflection of culture and heritage at places throughout the region that creates the Delta's unique sense of place and authenticity. While it is possible to hear Blues music in other places, only in the Delta can someone see where this music was born and gain an understanding of why it emerged. While the tragic story of the murder of Emmett Till can be studied in publications, only in the Delta can someone visit places such as Bryant's Grocery where the story began, the Tutwiler Funeral Home where Till's body was taken after his murder, and the Sumner Courthouse where the trial was held. Historic resources – structures, landscapes, buildings, districts and sites - create the power of place, and it is the stories of these places that bring the Delta to life.

What is Interpretation?

A planned effort to create an understanding of the history and significance of events, people and objects within which the site (or destination) is associated.

American Alliance of Museums

Effective interpretation engages visitors' senses while challenging them to think about what things mean – to look at them in entirely new ways.

Interpretation Manual for Heritage Partners
Lancaster County Planning Commission

Interpretation is the term used to describe the process of identifying and documenting important stories and developing methods to share those stories in a variety of ways. In short, interpretation is the art of telling the story. While most definitions of interpretation assume that planning is primarily targeted to tourists, this management plan approaches interpretation as an opportunity to engage residents in the process of finding, saving, telling and experiencing their own stories and to promote increased awareness and pride in the Delta's culture and heritage as well as attracting more visitors to the heritage area by creating new experiences. (Audiences are discussed in the next section of this chapter.)

Connecting Themes and Places

Development of interpretive plans begins by considering how the heritage area's themes connect to existing places, living traditions, tours and events.

As noted previously, the charts in the previous section include more than 250 places associated with the heritage area's themes that are included in the inventory of resources. (The complete inventory is in the appendix.) The charts also note that fewer than half of the places have interpretation connected to the place and the theme.

For the purposes of the inventory assessment, interpretation was defined broadly to include exhibits, programs, signage, brochures, guided or self-guided tours, performances, events or other ways to communicate the story to the public. It is important to note that for many of the places, the only interpretation is a historic marker or listing in a brochure.

The variety of methods currently used to create an experience around a theme makes it difficult to assess the visibility of themes to residents and visitors. However, it is clear that the primary focus of interpretation and experience throughout the Delta is Blues music. The Mississippi Blues Trail has capitalized on the tremendous interest in the Blues, and there are many places to learn about the history of the Blues or experience the music at clubs or festivals.

By tallying the themes represented in the inventory, it is possible to make some observations about what stories are being told in the Delta. Based on this compilation, the current order of emphasis for thematic areas is:

- Blues
- Agriculture/Cotton
- Art and Artists
- Civil Rights
- Civil War
- Native American
- Land and Water
- Transportation
- How the Delta was Formed/Settlement
- Immigration
- Famous Authors
- Built Environment - communities
- Plantations
- Slavery
- Great Migration
- Jim Crow
- Lost Cause Era
- Culinary Traditions
- Expressions of Faith
- Wildlife and loss of habitat
- Changing Times

An analysis of these findings raises several points that will be addressed in the coordinating entity's efforts to tell the Delta's story.

- **Commemoration is different from creating an experience** – Over the years, there have been great efforts to commemorate important parts of the Delta's history by numerous individuals, nonprofit organizations, local and state government. Examples include placement of 200 state historic markers at locations throughout the 18-county heritage area, the memorial gardens at Fannie Lou Hamer's gravesite in Ruleville, the development of heritage trail markers for the Blues, country music and Civil Rights and the placement of bronze plaques for Clarksdale's Walk of Fame. These and other similar activities recognize and commemorate aspects of the Delta's history that should not be forgotten. The coordinating entity's work, as described in the following strategies section, seeks to build on these commemorative efforts to create an experience. The Mississippi Blues Trail is a good example of this process. The trail was developed by placing interpretive markers at locations associated with Blues artists. Each marker was unveiled in a ceremony with the artist (if living) and family and friends gathering to celebrate the occasion. As of 2013, there were 175 markers placed across the state with 79 of those in the Delta. A website includes the text from each marker along with maps and directions, and a video archive features interviews with Blues artists, historical information on how the Blues was born and grew in popularity and samples of Blues music. Bringing the Blues to life for travelers on the Mississippi Blues Trail – creating an experience – took a major step with the creation of a Blues Trail app in 2012. Travelers along the trail can not only see the historical locations and read the markers, they can experience the sights and sounds

Why Interpretation?

It provides:

- A meaningful framework for the heritage region and its partners to make decisions about programs and projects.
- Benefits for both residents and visitors.
- A strategic focus for the heritage area where others are not working regionally or locally.
- An opportunity to augment, rather than compete with, the work of others.
- A way to organize vast amounts of information about seemingly different places into a coherent, evocative story with a heritage area that encompasses a larger geographic area and diverse array of sites and experiences.

Lancaster-York Heritage Region
Pennsylvania

that made the place important. The app includes maps, an interactive timeline, site descriptions, films, pictures and music from the Blues artists. By combining the Blues Trail with visits to museums such as the B.B. King Museum and the Delta Blues Museum and attending a Blues festival, the Delta's Blues story becomes a total experience.

- **Difficult stories are often not shared or discussed** – As previously discussed, there may be hesitancy by some partners to share and discuss the Delta's difficult stories. In recent decades, however, there has been a growing awareness in the Delta as well nationally and internationally that there is much to be gained for the future by remembering difficult stories of the past. On an international scale, this recognition led to the formation of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, founded in 1999 by nine historic sites and museums. Today, the organization has more than 200 members in 50 countries. The Coalition's mission is to transform places that preserve the past into spaces that promote civic action on today's struggles for human rights and justice. "Sites of Conscience" are defined as institutions that:
 - Interpret history through historic sites
 - Engage in programs that stimulate dialogue on pressing social issues
 - Promote humanitarian and democratic values as a primary function, and
 - Share opportunities for public involvement

Additionally, there may be an assumption that visitors will not want to hear difficult stories. However, visitor research by the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) finds that out of 160 museums from across the country that have participated in their Visitors Count program, the number one key driver for heritage travelers is that the visit had a "Positive Impact" (*Visiting the institution had a very positive impact on me/my family*). Of course this means different things at different sites, but overall characterizes what visitors describe as a "moving" experience. Positive impact can result from stories of heroism or patriotism, the success of a great victory or overcoming tremendous adversity. Interpretive messages may include communicating characteristics such as determination, endurance, resilience, survival, courage and perseverance. These qualities are found in many of the Delta's stories, and they were among the characteristics of the Delta's residents (past and present) that were repeatedly mentioned by participants at public meetings during the planning process. Stories and experiences that highlight these aspects can be a moving experience for visitors and a source of pride for residents.

- **Historic resources connected to stories may be threatened or no longer in existence** – As discussed in detail in Chapter Seven: *A Sense of Place: Save the Delta's Historic Resources*, many historic resources in the Delta are threatened. A key strategy of the coordinating entity will be to conduct a survey of historic resources, identify places

that are threatened and advocate and work for their preservation. This work will focus on resources that are connected to the heritage area's themes, especially those that are crucial to help tell specific stories. Unfortunately, some historic resources have already been lost, such as places connected to the Civil Rights Movement that were firebombed and destroyed in the 1960s. This creates challenges in telling the story that will be addressed in interpretive planning.

Interpretive Example: The Story of Civil Rights in the Mississippi Delta

“Moving Toward Freedom: Changing America’s Character in the Struggle for Rights” is one of the five major themes of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area. “Fighting for Civil Rights” is a sub-theme. The following chart identifies key places associated with Civil Rights and notes the condition of the places as well as any interpretation or commemoration. Efforts to save historic resources, interpret and commemorate the story of the Civil Rights movement provide an example of the analysis previously discussed and highlight the current lack of a cohesive experience:

- More than half of the places listed have no interpretation.
- Recognition of the places’ role in the Civil Rights Movement is primarily limited to historic markers.
- There is no overarching storyline to connect the places and give the context of a timeline of events.
- The courageous people who led the movement are not “brought to life” through any interpretive methods.
- Many of the significant places – such as offices used by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee – are no longer standing and others are empty and/or deteriorating.

(A similar evaluation process will be undertaken for interpretive development of all themes as discussed in the strategies following this section.)

Table 6.7
The Story of Civil Rights in the Mississippi Delta

Place	Location	Interpretation/ Commemoration	Condition
Bryant's Grocery – Emmett Till story	Money	Mississippi Freedom Trail marker	Shell of the building is standing – deteriorating
Emmett Till Intrepid Center	Glendora	Museum exhibits and video	Housed in former cotton gin building
Tutwiler Funeral Home	Tutwiler	Historic marker	Building is empty and deteriorating
Sumner Courthouse	Sumner	Museum is planned	Currently being restored – targeted completion 2014
Fannie Lou Hamer Memorial Garden	Ruleville	Mississippi Freedom Trail marker; commemorative monument; Hamer statue	Maintained by the City of Ruleville
William Chapel	Ruleville	No interpretation	
Amzie Moore House	Cleveland	Mississippi Freedom Trail marker	"Most Endangered" by MS Heritage Trust; vandalized; MDAH grant to restore
Dr. Aaron Henry Home	Clarksdale	No interpretation	Private home; declining condition
New World – First Missionary Baptist Church, New Haven United Methodist Church; site of Fourth Street Drug Store	Clarksdale	Historic marker at First Missionary Baptist Church	Churches are still in use
Greyhound Bus Station	Clarksdale	No interpretation; serves as the visitors' center	Good condition
Clarksdale Train Station	Clarksdale	No interpretation; meeting space, businesses, empty space	Has been renovated
Dr. T.R.M. Howard Home/ Friendship hospital	Mound Bayou	Mississippi Freedom Trail marker – located at Friendship hospital	Private home; good condition
Green Grove Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery	Belzoni	No interpretation; grave marker for Rev. George Lee	
Rev. George Lee Home	Belzoni	No interpretation	House is vacant; needs repair
Heritage Village – Rev. George Lee Museum and Fannie Lou Hamer Civil Rights Museum	Belzoni	Re-enactor – Old Storyteller; collection of newspaper articles	
Home of Unita Blackwell	Mayersville	No interpretation	
Home of Cat Holland	Greenwood	No interpretation	Home may not be original at this site
Driving Tour of Civil Rights Landmarks	Greenwood	4-color brochure	16 sites listed – 2 buildings are vacant; 2 buildings are no longer standing
Mississippi State Penitentiary (Parchman)	Sunflower County	No interpretation	

The Strategies

The establishment of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area creates an opportunity to bring together numerous partners to create the Delta Experience – bringing to life the stories, places and people to tell the heritage area’s unique stories.

The strategies in this section provide guidance to achieve this goal through research and documentation, training and resources to strengthen existing partnerships and engage new partners, and to develop and implement new methods for telling the Delta’s story to a variety of audiences.

STRATEGY 1: Research and Document the Delta’s Stories

Action Step A: Research and document the Delta’s history connected to the heritage area’s themes

Action Step B: Research and document living traditions rooted in the Delta and connected to the heritage area’s themes

Action Step C: Identify practitioners of the Delta’s living traditions

Action Step D: Collect and preserve oral histories

Action Step E: Act as a clearinghouse for information about the Delta’s heritage

Creating Experiences

Information can be translated into experience in different ways including:

Cognitive – Learning new information

EXAMPLE: READING INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE ABOUT BLUES ARTISTS ON THE MISSISSIPPI BLUES TRAIL

Emotional – Feeling emotionally connected to a story

EXAMPLE: LISTENING TO A RECORDING OF A BLUES ARTIST TELLING STORIES ABOUT HIS LIFE AND MUSIC

Participatory – Taking part in activities

EXAMPLE: STUDENTS LEARNING TO PLAY THE BLUES AT THE DELTA BLUES MUSEUM

Sensory – Engaging the senses.

EXAMPLE: ATTENDING A BLUES FESTIVAL

Adapted from Interpretive Planning Tools for Historic Trails and Gateways, Chesapeake Bay Office, National Park Service

As noted previously, planning for interpretation provides a way to organize vast amounts of information into a coherent, evocative story within a heritage area that encompasses a larger geographic area and diverse array of sites and experiences.

(Source: Lancaster-York Heritage Region, Pennsylvania)

A review of the heritage area’s themes and sub-themes confirms there are myriad stories to be told about the Mississippi Delta. Within the five themes are more than 30 sub-themes. Sub-themes can contain more than one story within a category. For example, the major theme “The Mississippi River and the Land it Embraces” has a sub-theme titled “Transformation of the Land.” Within this sub-theme is the story of agriculture that can include stories related to taming the land, establishing vast cotton farms, sharecropping, the mechanization of agriculture, farming research and development of new farming methods to ensure sustainability.

The geographic size of the Mississippi Delta and the large number of stories contained within the identified themes requires a comprehensive approach to research and document the Delta’s history.

Resources for Historical Information

- National Register listings
- Maps
- Books
- Newspapers and other periodicals
- Photographs
- Census records
- Oral histories
- Government records – court transcripts, tax records, property records, etc.
- The landscape
- The built environment

Delta Heritage Experts Committee

A committee will be formed to guide the coordinating entity's work in research and documentation of the Delta's history and living traditions. The committee will include experts from disciplines such as education, history, humanities, folk life and conservation. Subject matter experts will be included on the committee to assist with identifying resources, conducting research and ensuring that plans emerge from solid scholarship. The committee will assist with implementing interpretive strategies and will coordinate with the Resource Stewardship Committee and the Delta Heritage Attractions Committee. (More information on these committees is in Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network*).

The coordinating entity will take the following steps to provide the foundation for an authentic Delta Experience:

Action Step A:

Research and document the Delta's history connected to the heritage area's themes

Research and documentation will begin with the collection of information about what is available through books, articles and other documentation. Understanding what is already available will avoid duplicating efforts and can also provide valuable resources for interpretive planning. This process will answer questions such as:

- What documentation is available on each of the heritage area's themes?
- Is the information from a primary source? (original document or data)
- Is the information from a secondary source? (documents containing additional information or evaluation of the topic)



Colored entrance at theater in Belzoni in 1939.

Photo: Marion Post Wilcott. Library of Congress

This process will also provide guidance for additional steps that will create a comprehensive historical clearinghouse for the heritage area:

- **Identify existing sources that are considered most accurate and reliable** – Although there are many resources available on the Delta, not all are accurate sources of information.
- **Identify gaps in historical research for each theme and sub-theme** – The identification of gaps will provide direction for new research and documentation.

Research and documentation is a never-ending process for the coordinating entity and its partners. As new information is discovered, new contributions will be made to the Delta's

historical record. The continuing research process will require ongoing assistance from the committee as well as occasions when it may be necessary to contract with historians for research on specific subjects. Historical research will seek to answer questions including:

- What are the places and events that are connected to the historical story?
- Who are the people who are connected to the historical story (living or deceased)?
- What are the national implications of the historical story?
 - **Action Step B: Research and document living traditions rooted in the Delta**
 - **Action Step C: Identify practitioners of the Delta's living traditions**
 - **Action Step D: Collect and preserve oral histories**

In addition to documenting historical events, the coordinating entity will undertake a program to research and document living traditions rooted in the Delta. This program will make an important contribution to recognizing not only the origin of various traditions, but the legacy that is carried on in the present. As in the process of historical research, documentation of living traditions will begin with a review of work that has been done in this area including:

- **Mississippi Arts Commission** – The commission's Folklife Program maintains three directories – an artist roster, folk artists directory and visual arts directory. The artist roster lists 12 Delta artists; 21 folk artists are listed in that directory, and there are 36 listings in the visual arts directory.
- **Mississippi Humanities Council, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History and the University of Southern Mississippi's Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage** – These partners operate the Mississippi Oral History Project which is funded by the Mississippi State Legislature. The project is designed to document memories of Mississippi culture and heritage in the 20th and 21st centuries. The Mississippi Delta is represented in the Civil Rights Documentation Project, Delta American Chinese Heritage and others. The project also produces "Mississippi Moments," a weekly radio program airing on public broadcasting stations. Training is also provided to local communities on conducting oral histories as well as archiving and hosting public programs to share information gathered in the interviews.
- **Southern Foodways Alliance** – Based at the University of Mississippi's Center for the Study of Southern Culture, the Alliance documents and studies food cultures of the American South. In addition to developing the Mississippi Delta Hot Tamale Trail, the Alliance has developed numerous projects in the Delta including oral histories on Dockery Plantation, Chinese grocers in the Delta, the Delta Lebanese and films on Delta catfish and tamales.

The coordinating entity will work with a professional folklorist to lead the process of creating a comprehensive directory of living traditions and practitioners. The folklorist will be assisted by the Heritage Experts Committee, heritage area staff and other volunteers. The possibility of engaging students from area colleges to assist in conducting research will also be explored. Project steps include:

- Review existing databases and other information sources including publications on living traditions

Create a research process for each area of living traditions: music, food, storytelling, arts, religion and belief systems, agriculture, outdoor activities, festivals, occupations, gatherings and others as identified

- Provide training to volunteers or students who will assist in the project including:
 - Observance of cultural sensitivities
 - Instruction on how to prepare for fieldwork
 - Use of tools – recording, filming and photography
 - How to conduct an oral history interview
 - How to transcribe recordings and complete documentation forms
 - How to conduct document research to determine accuracy and authenticity
 - How to prepare documents based on new research and discoveries
 - **Action Step E: Act as a clearinghouse for information about the Delta’s heritage**
- (Create a virtual MDNHA Resource Center)**

Defining folklore

Folklore is the traditional art, literature, knowledge and practice that is disseminated largely through oral communication and behavioral example. Every group with a sense of its own identity shares, as a central part of that identity, folk traditions—the things that people traditionally *believe* (planting practices, family traditions and other elements of worldview), *do* (dance, make music, sew clothing), *know* (how to build an irrigation dam, how to nurse an ailment, how to prepare barbecue), *make* (architecture, art, craft), and *say* (personal experience stories, riddles, song lyrics). As these examples indicate, in most instances there is no hard-and-fast separation of these categories, whether in everyday life or in folklorists’ work.

American Folklife Society

This strategy is discussed in Chapter Seven: *A Sense of Place: Save the Delta’s Historic Resources*. As noted in that section, linking partners to information is an essential responsibility of the heritage area. To accomplish this goal, the coordinating entity will create a virtual Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Resource Center. Over time, this center will become the destination for anyone seeking information on all aspects of saving places and perpetuating culture. Recognizing the limitations of Internet access in the Delta, the coordinating entity will establish a location, either in its offices or at another appropriate site, to house publically accessible computers. The resource center will be open on a regular schedule and will have assistants (staff or volunteer) to aid users in finding the information they need. The virtual library may also be supplemented with a library of books and periodicals. In addition to the information detailed in Chapter Seven, the resource center will also serve as a clearinghouse of documentation of historical events and living traditions. Resources will include directories, oral histories, photographs, film, documents and other materials that help tell the story of the Delta.

STRATEGY 2:

Provide Training and Resources to Preserve History and Perpetuate Culture

Action Step A: Present workshops, symposia forums and tours to educate residents on the Delta’s heritage and culture

Action Step B: Providing training on preserving archival resources

Action Step C: Create a tour guide certification program and provide training for tour guides

The role of the coordinating entity in education and interpretation ranked at the top of the stakeholder survey (77%) and was identified repeatedly by stakeholders at public meetings and in interviews. Further descriptions by stakeholders of desired activities included providing training and resources to preserve history and perpetuate culture. These actions have the additional goal of not only saving irreplaceable resources, but also of increasing local awareness and appreciation of the Delta, encouraging involvement in the coordinating entity’s activities and setting standards of authenticity and quality for the visitor experience.

- **Action Step A: Present workshops, symposia forums and tours to educate residents on the Delta’s heritage and culture**

The coordinating entity will offer a variety of programs each year designed to educate residents on the Delta’s heritage and culture. Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network* describes the coordinating entity’s plans to establish forums for discussions on history, tourism, preservation, arts, living traditions and other topics. The forums will include an annual Mississippi Delta Heritage Conference as well as regional gatherings and common interest gatherings. All of these forums provide the opportunity for in-depth discussions on selected topics.

In addition to these discussion-based forums, the coordinating entity will also offer educational workshops, symposia and tours. The Heritage Experts Committee will assist in identifying topics and developing an annual schedule of programs.

Workshops, symposia and tours may include focus areas such as:

- **Heritage Area Themes** – A series on each of the heritage area’s themes can include an examination of historical events. Workshops can include training for local

communities on how to tell the stories related to these events. Tours will explore the places connected to the themes.

- **Living Traditions** – Practitioners of living traditions can make presentations about their work along with scholarly presentations on the importance of perpetuating these traditions. Workshops can include demonstrations or performances by practitioners and training in how to present various forms of art and artists.

- **Action Step B: Provide training on preserving archival resources**

Tangible connections to the stories of the Delta are found in thousands of documents stored throughout the Delta and the state. These records may be found in many places – from professionally maintained archival repositories to boxes in the attic of the old family home. They can illuminate a wide variety of stories about the Delta’s political, military, cultural, social, economic and religious history. Archival records can

How Can the Coordinating Entity Help Tell the Delta’s Story?

- Address disconnect between locals and their history and culture
- Raise awareness and validation that local culture and history matter
- Host forums to present, share and discuss local culture and history
- Educate people of all ages about Delta history and culture
- Help local organizations document, conserve and interpret culture and history

*MDNHA Exchange
Regional Planning Forum
participants’ comments
November 2012*

Who are partners for research and documentation of the Delta’s history and culture?

There are many groups in the Delta who are actively working to document and preserve their community’s history. The coordinating entity will seek to partner with these groups including nonprofit organizations such as:

- Bolivar County Historical Society
- Carroll County Genealogy Society
- Friars Point Historic Preservation Society
- Genealogical Society of DeSoto County
- Historic DeSoto Foundation
- Panola County Historical and Genealogical Society
- Restoration and Beautification Foundation of Yazoo City
- Tate County Genealogical and Historical Society
- Vicksburg Foundation for Historic Preservation
- Vicksburg and Warren County Historical Society
- Vicksburg Genealogical Society
- Washington County Historical Society
- Yazoo Historical Society

Mississippi Delta Workshops, Forums and Tours

Although some workshops, forums and tours currently offered in the Delta are open to residents, most are designed to attract participants from outside the Delta. Examples are:

- **Most Southern Place on Earth workshops** - Delta Center for Culture and Learning, Delta State University, Cleveland – Sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, this annual workshop brings 80 teachers from across the country for two, week-long immersive experiences in the Mississippi Delta’s culture and heritage.
- **Mississippi Delta Heritage Tours and Workshops** – Delta Center for Culture and Learning, Delta State University, Cleveland – Tours of the Delta are offered for visiting classes and tour groups on an ongoing basis. Workshops are also offered for teachers in the Delta.
- **Mississippi Delta Cultural Tour** - University of Mississippi, Center for the Study of Southern Culture – This annual, week-long tour explores the Delta’s literary, culinary and musical heritage.
- **Mississippi Delta Tennessee Williams Festival** - Coahoma Community College, Clarksdale – This annual event includes performances, tours and panel discussions of scholars concerning the legacy of Tennessee Williams.
- **Delta Dialogue** - Mississippi Action for Community Education – This annual gathering focuses on a different topic each year related to the Delta’s culture and heritage.
- **Barefoot Workshops** - New York City-based nonprofit offers week-long workshops in the Delta on documentary photography and telling the story through film and photography.

include materials owned by individuals such as photographs, letters and journals. Historical societies or other groups may have records documenting a community’s history such as records from businesses, schools and religious institutions. Governments retain records ranging from property ownership and tax records to court transcripts and commission meeting minutes.

The coordinating entity will work with partners including the Mississippi Department of Archives and History and local historical societies to offer a series of training workshops on preserving archival records, organizing records and how to use archival resources. This program has several desired outcomes:

- Saving important resources that are a legacy from the past to educate current and future generations
- Achieving a greater understanding of resources that are available in private collections as well as holdings of nonprofit groups and government agencies that help tell the Delta’s story
- Identifying resources that may be used as part of interpretive programs in exhibits, heritage tours, educational programs and other venues
- Increasing residents’ appreciation and awareness of the Delta’s past and the region’s important contribution to the history of the state and the nation

Who will benefit from archival training?

- Anyone with an interest in preserving historical records will benefit from the heritage area’s archival training. This can include:
- Individuals with personal collections
- Individuals who want to volunteer for a local organization
- Historical societies
- Religious institutions
- Schools
- Museums
- Historic sites
- Businesses
- Governments
- Civic organizations
- Cultural institutions
- Genealogical societies
- Libraries



Each summer teachers from across the country attend a teachers' workshop funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and conducted by the Delta Center for Culture and Learning.

Photo: Delta Center for Culture and Learning

- Increasing volunteer participation in local historical societies, museums and other organizations that work to document and save the Delta's history

Workshop instruction will focus on archival principles and will be designed for lay persons, volunteer organizations and other groups who want to learn how to care for their collections. Training workshops will be offered as a three-part series:

- **Conservation – Saving Your Records** – This workshop will help participants understand that their records, whether family or organizational, are an important part of the Delta's history. The workshop will provide instruction on appropriate conservation techniques including the basics of environmental control, care and handling of materials and photographs and organizational techniques. Individuals with collections will learn what to consider in loaning part of their collection to a museum or other group for exhibits or programs.
- **Organizing Archival Records** – Participants will learn basic archival principles for the arrangement, preservation and use of archival records including appraisal, accessioning, arrangement and description, and the



On the 50th anniversary of the Freedom Rides to desegregate the transportation system, Freedom Riders revisit the Mississippi State Penitentiary, known as Parchman Farm, with their families. They are entering Unit 17, the maximum security block in which the riders were originally imprisoned in 1961.

Photo: Eric Etheridge

Guided Tours of the Delta

Also giving tours in the Delta are:

- **Vicksburg** – Vicksburg enlists guides that are licensed by the National Park Service who conduct tours of the Vicksburg Military Park and nearby Civil War related sites as well as city tours. In 2013, more than 300 tours were given.
- **Delta Blues Legends Tours** – Based in Greenwood and operated by Sylvester Hoover, these 3½ hour tours focus on the story of the Blues with options to tour sites connected to Civil Rights.
- **The Real Delta Tours** – Operated by Abe Hudson, the tour covers six counties and shares stories including the Flood of 1927, the Blues and Civil Rights.
- **Mississippi Mojo Tours** – Based in Clarksdale and operated by Robert Birdsong, tours focus mainly on the Blues and Tennessee Williams.
- **Delta Blues and Heritage Tours** – Carol D. Smith offers tours focused on the Blues and the Delta's heritage.

development of finding aids. Participants will also learn what to consider if they are starting a new archive.

- **Using the Archives –** Participants will learn the types of users of archival records such as genealogists, historians, journalists and property owners and how to provide assistance; how to address security and preservation issues and understanding genealogical research methods.
 - **Action Step C: Create a tour guide certification program and provide training for tour guides**

The Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University in Cleveland is currently the primary provider of Delta heritage and culture tours. As of 2013, there are two staff (the director and program manager) who are available as expert tour guides. Tours are scheduled when a group contacts the Center and requests a tour. The recognition of the Delta Center staff's knowledge of the Delta and expertise in giving tours creates a tremendous opportunity for the coordinating entity to expand the tour program with additional tour guides. Although nationally the traditional motorcoach industry (large groups of tourists registering for tours offered by tour companies, not necessarily knowing who their fellow riders will be) has seen declines in recent years, the growth of niche or specialty tours (groups of people who are part of the same organization or who share an interest in a topic) is growing. (More information on this audience is found in Part Two of this chapter on Engaging Audiences).

An increase in tour guides who are well trained to give tours of the Delta will allow the coordinating entity to promote tours in partnership with the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association in three areas: (Source: Adapted from the Motorcoach Census 2011, American Bus Association Foundation).

- **Charter Group Tours** – These are preformed tours of organizations, associations or other groups. Groups book a motorcoach or other transportation and hire a tour guide. This is the type of tour currently serviced by the Delta Center for Culture and Learning.
- **Package Tours** – These tours are planned by a local group or operator and offered to the public for purchase. They usually include lodging, meals, transportation and attraction admissions in the cost.
- **Sightseeing** – These tours are short-term – a few hours or a day - and attract

Delta Center for Culture and Learning Heritage Tours

The Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University provides tours to a wide range of groups and organizations. In 2012, the Center gave tours to 30 groups. In 2013, the number increased to 40 tours. In 2012-2013, almost 800 people have taken tours. Group size ranges from two or three to 300 but is typically between 15 and 20 participants. Private tours for individuals are also given as schedules permit. Most tours are one day, although some, such as teachers' workshops, are six days, and some tours have taken two weeks. The Center has also provided tour guide training to the Alluvian Hotel staff in Greenwood. Groups who have taken tours include:

- College, high school and middle school classes
- Tourist groups
- Family reunions
- Teacher training workshops
- Travel writers (usually from Europe)
- Familiarization tours for the Tunica Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Niche or Specialty groups – examples include the 50th anniversary of the Freedom Rides, Mississippi Center for Justice, the MacDowell Colony (New Hampshire, artists' colony), Dollar General Human Resources managers, Federal Express managers, Grammy museum architects, Teach for America recruits, Robertson Scholars from Duke and the University of North Carolina, and law students from Harvard Law School.

Cultural Tourism DC Tour Guide Training Program

Cultural Tourism DC, a consortium of more than 250 organizations, offers a Professional Tour Guide Training Program which enables graduates to become licensed tour guides in Washington D.C. Training is in two parts:

Track I - Students dedicate 35 hours to an interactive, field-based program covering site interpretation and storytelling, site logistics, group presentation and group management skills. Training includes:

- Research, scripting, delivery and self assessment
- Intercultural methods of communication
- Safety and emergency procedures
- Walking tour techniques

Track II - Students dedicate more than 50 hours to an interactive, field-based program covering motor vehicle touring techniques, site interpretation, site logistics, navigation skills and group management skills.

Training includes:

- Cultural competence
- Guiding skills on a moving vehicle
- Itinerary planning and navigation skills
- Motorcoach and microphone techniques
- Group management techniques
- Emergency preparedness

Engaging Residents in Telling the Delta's Story

The Delta's story can be deeply personal as this comment from a resident shows:

My father was a member of the Latvian immigrant colony that came to Mississippi in the late 1940s. I feel it is important to remember these people, and it makes me sad that most Mississippians today have never heard of them.

Engaging residents in researching and telling these and other stories is an important role for the heritage area and will have the positive outcome of providing a voice for previously untold stories.

tourists who are not necessarily part of a group. They include costs for admissions and may include meal costs depending on the length of the tour. These tours are offered on a regular schedule and may or may not require advance reservations.

In order to increase capacity to accommodate tours, the coordinating entity will develop a training and certification program for tour guides. The program will include these elements:

- **Develop a training program** – The coordinating entity will research other programs and tailor a training and certification program specifically for the Delta that focuses on creating authentic and high quality tours.
- **Training and certification** – Tour guides who wish to promote their services with the endorsement of the coordinating entity will be required to complete a training program and will be awarded designation as a “Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Certified Tour Guide.” Certification will signal that a guide has extensive training in hosting groups and expertise in the Delta's heritage and culture. Tour guides will be required to take additional training periodically to maintain their certification.

STRATEGY 3: Tell the Delta's Story through a Variety of Interpretive Methods

Action Step A: Develop person-to-person interpretation such as guided tours, talks, lectures, and living history demonstrations

Action Step B: Develop media-based interpretation including print and electronic media

The National Park Service's publication, *Interpretive Planning Tools for Historic Trails and Gateways*, describes two modes of communication in interpretation:

- **Person-to-Person** – Includes guided tours, talks, lectures, living history demonstrations and theatrical performances, among others
- **Media-based** – Delivered via print or electronic media, includes everything from brochures and exhibits to films and GPS-guided handheld devices

Regardless of the interpretive tool that is used, the goal for the coordinating entity and partners will be to tell the Delta’s unique stories in ways that are educational, engaging and memorable for audiences including residents, students and visitors. Development of interpretive tools will meet the criteria described at the beginning of this chapter: reflecting the mission and vision statements, coordinating interpretive plans with plans for preserving historic resources, connecting interpretation to themes, coordinating with partners and telling the story in ways that will engage a variety of audiences. This section describes the interpretive tools the coordinating entity will use to tell the Delta’s story using the research and documentation discussed in the previous sections of this chapter.

Tours

Tours also encourage exploration of the region or communities to learn about the area’s history and culture. A number of communities have already developed tours which relate to heritage area themes. These include self-guided walking and driving tours taken with the aid of map, brochure or app. Guided tours are led by tour guides and are available by appointment. The following chart shows a cross-section of tours available in the Delta and the following strategies discuss how the coordinating entity will work with partners to promote and expand tour offerings.

Table 6.8 Tours in the Mississippi Delta

Tour	Location	Type of Tour	Organizer
Clarksdale Walk of Fame	Clarksdale	Self-guided – bronze plaques	
Writing on the Wall – Murals	Cleveland	Self-guided driving tour	Cleveland Chamber of Commerce
Civil Rights Driving Tour	Greenwood	Self-guided driving tour	Greenwood CVB
Historic Indianola Walking Tour	Indianola	Self-guided – includes Blues Trail markers	
Mound Bayou Heritage Walking Trail	Mound Bayou	Self-guided – interpretive signs and brochure	Mound Bayou AARP chapter and Historic Mound Bayou Foundation
Olive Branch Old Towne Historic Walking Trail	Olive Branch	Self-guided - brochure	Friends of Olive Branch
Tunica Walking Tour	Tunica	Self-guided – brochure and plaques	Tunica Main Street Program
Blue and Red Scenic Drives	Vicksburg	Self-guided - signage	Town of Vicksburg
Downtown Vicksburg Walking Tours	Vicksburg	Self-guided - map	
Maggio Historic Walking Tours	Vicksburg	Guided tour	Business owned by David Maggio
Haunted Vicksburg	Vicksburg	Guided tour – walking or driving	Principal tours
Agri-tours	Regional	Self-guided – website information	MS Office of Tourism

Table 6. 8 Tours in the Mississippi Delta (continued)

Delta Heritage Tours	Regional	Guided tours	Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University
Mississippi Freedom Trail	Regional	Historic markers	MS Office of Tourism
Country Music Trail	Regional	Historic markers – website	MS Office of Tourism
Mississippi Blues Trail	Regional	Historic markers – website – mobile app	MS Blues Commission
Mississippi Hot Tamale Trail	Regional	Website	MS Office of Tourism

- **Action Step A: Develop person-to-person interpretation such as guided tours, talks, lectures and living history demonstrations**
 - **Guided tours for visitors** – As the number of tour guides increases, the coordinating entity will work with the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association as well as communities to develop and promote tours to the Delta. The initial emphasis will be on increasing charter group tours to reach groups who are planning to come to the Delta. The coordinating entity will next develop themed tour itineraries that can be promoted to a variety of general and specialty interest groups. A long-range goal will be to offer sightseeing tours, most likely during major festivals when large numbers of visitors will be coming to the Delta and promotional channels are in place to reach these festival-goers.
 - **Guided tours and programs for school groups and youth-oriented organizations** – A number of museums and historic sites in the heritage area offer special programs for school groups or youth-oriented organizations in addition to tours. Examples include:
 - **Museum of the Mississippi Delta** – Greenwood – The museum offers a Discovery Kit Program. Teachers, home-schoolers and parents may check out the kits on specific subject areas such as Mississippi animals, dinosaurs, Native Americans and other topics. Kits include hands-on materials, videos, books and lesson plans.
 - **B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center** – Indianola – The museum offers school tours and teacher (K-12) workshops to develop lesson plans designed to instill pride in local cultural heritage through the history of the Blues. The museum also offers educational programs on the history of American music forms and workshops that promote literacy through the history of Delta writers and Southern literature.
 - **Tunica Riverpark and Museum** – Tunica – A variety of educational programs includes materials for hands-on learning, scavenger hunts and a time traveler adventure that allows students to explore the museum to identify important historic moments in the Delta.
 - **Vicksburg National Military Park** – Vicksburg – The site offers lesson plans for teachers on topics such as Civil War medicine and traveling trunks with clothing, games and implements to bring the 1860s to life for students. Park rangers offer a variety of programs ranging from games of the 1800s, to archaeology to the park’s many monuments.

- **DeSoto County Museum** – Hernando – The museum offers programs on geology and archaeology.
- **The North Mississippi Fish Hatchery Visitor Education Center** – Enid – In addition to guided tours, the center offers teacher workshops provided by the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science. The center also hosts Youth Wildlife Art Contests through the Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks Foundation.

As part of the Virtual Resource Center discussed in Chapter Seven: *A Sense of Place: Save the Delta's Historic Resources*, the coordinating entity will create a directory of educational tours and programs offered at cultural, heritage and natural resource sites throughout the Delta. The coordinating entity will identify opportunities to link sites to create an educational experience for school or youth-oriented groups. The coordinating entity will supplement the programs currently offered and provide the connection between sites by offering regional tours and creating new educational programs that do not duplicate those already being offered. Educators who serve on the Delta Heritage Experts Committee will assist in identifying existing educational programs and making recommendations for new programs to be developed by the coordinating entity.

- **Events and festivals** – There are a multitude of events and festivals presented throughout the Delta each year celebrating the Blues and other aspects of the area's culture and heritage. Because of the number of events and festivals already in existence, the coordinating entity's leaders determined they would not develop new events or festivals. Rather, the coordinating entity will support existing events and festivals through its grant program (Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network*) and through communication channels to heritage area audiences.

- **Action Step B: Develop media-based interpretation including print and electronic media**

Media-based interpretation will be developed with a regional perspective. Materials to be developed include:

- **Printed Materials** - Despite the explosive growth of technology for planning and experiencing destinations, printed materials are still popular both as information sources and keepsakes from a special tour, program or visit. The coordinating entity will work with partners to produce printed materials that will engage both residents and visitors including:
 - **Guidebooks** – The coordinating entity will seek partnerships (such as University Press) to publish guidebooks on the Delta's heritage, culture and natural resources. An example of a resource that will be considered for publication by the heritage area is the *Mississippi Delta: The Place, The Mindset – A Guide to People, Places and Issues*, an encyclopedia of the Delta by Luther Brown, Delta Center for Culture and Learning. In addition to guidebooks that focus on the “big picture,” guidebooks may focus on specific themes such as the Blues, artists or Civil Rights. Additional guidebooks may also focus on specific groups, such as a book that is designed for children and includes places to visit that have children's programs, tours or other activities.



Tour groups like this one in Leland are a regular sight in the Delta.

Photo: Delta Center for Culture and Learning

- **Brochures with maps** – A series of brochures will be produced to provide an introduction to each heritage area theme. Maps will locate important places connected to the themes. Beyond serving only as a piece for tourists, the brochures will note sites that are threatened or are in the process of being restored and interpreted. This additional information will help create greater awareness of the heritage area’s historic, cultural and natural resources and direct readers to ways they can support the heritage area’s efforts to save these places. These pieces can be printed on tear-off map pads (a map on one side and text on the other) – a popular and an inexpensive way to produce a piece to reach both residents and visitors.

- **Table tents and posters** – These pieces will be printed in quantity and placed in hotels, libraries, schools, museums, historic sites, parks and other locations throughout the Delta. The table tents and posters will be designed with the coordinating entity’s graphic identity (discussed Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network*) and a QR Code (quick response) linking to the coordinating entity’s website for more information.

Heritage Area Guidebooks

Guidebooks are published to connect readers to a heritage area’s history and themes. Some are sold and others are available at no charge. Guidebooks are often posted on the heritage area’s website as well being printed. Guidebooks published by heritage areas include:

- **Blue Ridge Music Trails of North Carolina** – Guidebook includes a 20-track CD and was published by the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area and the North Carolina Arts Council
- **Cane River National Heritage Area Trail Guide, Louisiana** – Published by the heritage area with support from the National Scenic Byways grant program
- **East Coastal Scenic Byway Guide** – Published by the Essex National Heritage Area in Massachusetts to link 13 towns, spotlighting culture, history and scenic beauty
- **Historic Site Guidebook** – Published by the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area; includes notes such as “family friendly” and “part of the Greenway Trail System”

- **Passport booklets** – To encourage exploration of places throughout the Delta, a series of passports will be created for specific themes beginning with the Blues (as the most well-developed theme currently). As more themes are developed and interpreted, new passports will be unveiled. Users will be able to download the passport booklet or pick up a printed booklet from the MDNHA office. Passport booklets will include information on sites connected to the theme and indicate where to get the booklet stamped. The coordinating entity will also explore the opportunity to offer a small prize to anyone who stops at all of the sites.

- **National Park Service Passport Program** – The National Park Service offers the *Passport to Your National Parks®* program that includes National Heritage Areas. Travelers can order a passport cancellation stamp



Visitors like this family from Washington D.C. stop at the MDNHA offices at Delta State University’s Delta Center for Culture and Learning to have their National Park Service passports stamped.

Photo: Delta Center for Culture and Learning

booklet from the National Park Service. The passport program encourages travelers to explore National Parks, National Heritage Areas and other affiliated sites. The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area is a participant with the cancellation stamp available at the heritage area’s offices at the Delta Center for Culture and Learning. The coordinating entity will expand the number of places where cancellation stamps are available to include visitor centers, historic sites, museums and other locations.

○ **Wayside interpretive signage** – The historical markers of the Mississippi Blues Trail, Mississippi Freedom Trail and Mississippi Country Music Trail are examples of exterior signage that includes pictures and text. The coordinating entity will continue to support the placement of signage for these trails and will determine other thematic topics that would also be appropriate for signage. Care will be given to consider the number of signs to be placed throughout the heritage area to ensure that signage enhances the experience and does not overwhelm the resources being showcased. Themes to be considered for interpretive signage are the Mississippi River, agriculture, Civil Rights, authors, immigration and the Great Migration.

Interior orientation exhibits – Establishing and maintaining interpretive exhibits was one of the directives in the Congressional legislation creating the heritage area because exhibits provide an excellent way to introduce the Delta’s story to visitors and residents and to help them venture out to experience the Delta. The coordinating entity will work with partners to identify locations in the region to place orientation exhibits. Potential locations include visitor centers, museums, libraries and courthouses. Exhibits will be designed to accommodate available space. In smaller spaces, exhibits may include one panel with information on the thematic topic, a map and a brochure rack. In larger spaces that have security or staffing, exhibits may be expanded to include multiple panels as well as video. Exhibits will be professionally designed and constructed from materials that are easy to maintain and that allow for changes to information as needed.

Electronic interpretive tools - The proliferation of technology-based interpretation in recent years offers new ways to share the stories of the Delta. Technology can create an experience with voices, pictures, music and information bringing places and events to life. In particular, the increased use of smartphones is especially useful in interpreting the Delta’s large geographic area. A June 2013

**Table 6.9
Who Owns
Smartphones
Nationally?**

Men	59%
Women	53%
Ages	
18-24	79%
25-34	81%
35-44	69%
45-54	55%
55-64	39%
65+	18%
Race	
White	53%
Black	64%
Hispanic	60%

(Source: Pew Center: Internet and American Life Project, June 2013)

study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project found that the majority of Americans - 56% - own smartphones, an increase from 46% in 2012. If trends continue, ownership of smartphones is likely to continue to increase. Ownership of smartphones is spread across all age groups, with higher rates of ownership among those in their twenties and thirties, and is almost evenly divided between men and women. By considering smartphones as an interpretive tool, the coordinating entity can make its interpretation available so that visitors and residents can explore the region by accessing information on their area of interest - whether it is Civil Rights, the Civil War, Native American history, famous authors or other topics.

Electronic interpretive tools developed by the coordinating entity will be designed to be accessed on smartphones as well as computers.

(Electronic tools will also be useful in marketing the heritage area as discussed in the next section of this chapter.) Tools will include:



Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District Orientation Exhibits

The Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District (a National Heritage Area) partnered with local tourism organizations to develop orientation centers in five locations in the district. Each center's exhibit introduces visitors to the Civil War history in the surrounding area. Exhibits include a brief history, historic pictures, excerpts from letters and journals and information on the heritage area.

- ❖ **Website** – The MDNHA website will include information on the Delta's stories and resources for planning a visit. Interpretive information will include downloadable thematic tours, suggested itineraries for walking, driving or biking tours with an itinerary builder feature, guided tour information, maps, videos (interviews with musicians, artists, Civil Rights leaders and others who are important to the Delta's story), a program/events calendar, artisans directory, information on cultural, historic and natural resources, photo galleries, blogs and articles on important events, people and places in the Delta.

- ❖ **Audio guides** – Audio guides will personalize the Delta's story through the voices of the people who live (or lived) through pivotal moments in the Delta's history. Diaries, letters, newspaper accounts and other resources identified through research and documentation work will provide a foundation for the development of tour scripts that coordinate with driving routes and heritage area themes.

Audio guides are also useful for enjoying outdoor resources. Guides can share information on outdoor activities including bird watching as well as routes for hiking and biking.

- ❖ **Video** – There are already many videos about different aspects of the Delta including interviews with artisans and musicians, film from Blues festivals and others. The coordinating entity will create a catalog of existing videos and will post links on the website. Additional videos may be made to tell additional stories.

Part Two – Engaging Audiences

The criteria outlined earlier in this chapter to create the Delta Experience emphasize engaging audiences including adult residents, youth and tourists. Although each audience segment has defining characteristics, all have the need for information and accessibility to experience places, programs and events. This section examines the three audience segments and includes strategies for engagement.

Adult Residents in the Delta

A persistent characteristic of the Delta is poverty and continued loss of population in most of the Delta’s 18 counties. Almost a third of residents live below the poverty threshold and unemployment rates, averaging 12.8% with some counties over 17% (*Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, December 2011 -January 2013*). This compares to Mississippi’s statewide average in 2012 of 21.6%, a decrease from 21.8% in 2010, and a national average of 14.3%, a decrease from 16% in 2010. (The poverty threshold is considered to be \$11,344 for an individual under the age of 65 and \$22,133 for a family of four with two children and two adults.)

High school graduation rates average 72.2% vs. 80% for the state, and college graduation averages 14.7% vs. 19.7%. Reaching beyond community activists and leaders to engage more of the population will require a dedicated effort by the coordinating entity.

Youth in the Delta

The U.S. Census Bureau’s 2012 data shows that approximately 25 percent of residents in the Delta’s 18 counties are under the age of 18. Reaching out to young people to engage them in the Delta Experience will help instill pride in their communities and encourage their involvement in the heritage area’s efforts to tell the region’s stories.

STRATEGY 4: Engage Delta Adults and Youth

Action Step A: Offer a variety of opportunities for the Delta’s adults and youth to become engaged in the activities of the coordinating entity and with partners in interpretive planning and implementation

Action Step B: Partner with the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association to promote the Delta’s culture and heritage to visitors

- **Action Step A: Offer a variety of opportunities for the Delta’s adults and youth to become engaged in the activities of the coordinating entity and with partners in interpretive planning and implementation**

The two-year planning process to develop the management plan engaged stakeholders through public meetings, surveys, interviews, presentations and social media. The coordinating entity will continue to extend its outreach to engage a wider network of adult residents and youth in the plan’s implementation. Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network* includes strategies to engage residents through volunteering, participating on committees and other activities. Telling the Delta’s stories as outlined in this

Table 6.10
Population in the Delta

County	Total Population	% under age 18
Bolivar	33,904	25.5%
Carrol	10,423	20.5%
Coahoma	25,709	28.9%
DeSoto	166,234	27.5%
Holmes	18,796	28.3%
Humphreys	9,189	28.1%
Issaquena	1,386	17.2%
Leflore	30,948	27.7%
Panola	34,473	26.7%
Quitman	7,798	26%
Sharkey	4,799	25.5%
Sunflower	28,431	23.9%
Tallahatchie	15,111	21.9%
Tate	28,490	25.2%
Tunica	10,475	30.2%
Warren	48,084	25.1%
Washington	49,750	27.4%
Yazoo	28,195	24.3%
Total	552,195	

Source: U.S. Census 2012

chapter offers additional opportunities for engagement. The following chart shows some of the ways that residents and youth can be involved in interpretive planning and implementation.

Table 6.11 The Delta Experience: Opportunities for Engagement

Activity	Adult Residents	Youth – Elementary/High School Age	Youth – College Age
Research/document history	Share stories and documents	Class research projects on selected topics	Internships and class research projects
Research/document living traditions	Share stories and documents	Class research projects on selected topics	Internships and class research projects
Identify practitioners of living traditions	Provide names and contact information		
Oral histories	Participate in interviews	Conduct oral history interviews	Conduct oral history interviews
Create information clearinghouse	Volunteer to help organize		Internship – create data organization system
Workshops/symposia on Delta history	Attend and/or speak; volunteer to plan and host	Attend workshops geared toward a youth audience	Attend workshops
Archival workshops	Attend workshops		
Tour guides	Train to become a certified guide; give tours	Assist as a “junior tour guide”	
Interpretive tools – brochures, website, video, audio	Provide information, participate in recordings for video and audio		Assist with technology – creation of website, video or audio

The coordinating entity will reach out to a wide variety of local audiences to share information on activities related to telling the Delta’s story and opportunities for engagement. Although local media, social media, websites and other communications channels will be used as one channel for reaching local audiences (see Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network* for more information), much of the outreach will be accomplished by making contacts through local organizations and following up with person-to-person discussions. Outreach to adult residents and youth will provide clear information on engagement opportunities including:

- The heritage area’s purpose, goals and benefits to the Delta
- Description of activities with details such as project goals, volunteer opportunities, length of commitment for each project, meeting schedules and contact information
- Description of new ways to experience the Delta that have been developed through the heritage area’s interpretive program

Among the groups identified for outreach are:

- Historical societies
- Arts and culture organizations
- Faith-based organizations
- Businesses – especially locally owned
- Senior citizens organizations

- Government agencies
- Youth organizations (Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc.)
- Schools – K-12
- Community colleges and universities
- Civic organizations
- Conservation organizations
- Recreational clubs (outdoors)
- Museums
- Tourism agencies
- Neighborhood organizations

- **Action Step B: Partner with the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association to promote the Delta’s culture and heritage to visitors**

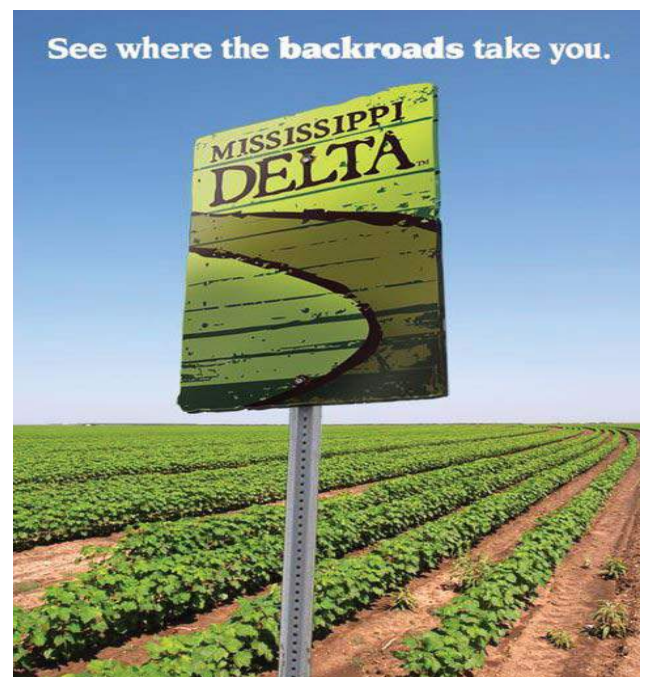


Greenville Welcome Center

Tourism is a major economic driver in the Delta with visitors coming from within the United States as well as internationally. Research by the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association (MDTA) shows visitors enjoy cultural and heritage activities such as attending festivals, visiting historic sites and museums, hearing live music, touring the Delta’s back roads and discovering new foods. The Delta is a destination for a large international audience, with visitors coming from 76 countries between July 2011 and June 2012.

The growth of tourism in the Delta can be attributed in large part to the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association. MDTA includes members from 10 tourism bureaus – DeSoto County, Coahoma County/Clarksdale, Tunica County/Tunica, Bolivar County/Cleveland, Grenada County, Sunflower County/Indianola, Yazoo County/Yazoo City, Washington County/Greenville, Leflore County/Greenwood and Warren County/Vicksburg. These partners have worked together to create a Delta brand and to promote the Delta through numerous venues. The Mississippi Development Authority’s Tourism Division has been a strong partner of MDTA, providing grant funding and promotional opportunities.

As the coordinating entity develops new interpretation to tell the Delta’s story, the MDTA will continue to be the primary promoter of travel to the Delta. The coordinating entity and the MDTA will partner to ensure that the Delta Experience is communicated to tourists and that all of the heritage area’s 18 counties are promoted as part of the experience.



The Mississippi Delta Tourism Association markets the region with the message “See where the back roads take you.” The message was developed when research showed that wandering the Delta’s back roads was a favorite activity among tourists.

Photo: Mississippi Delta Tourism Association

The following chart reflects the partnership between MDTA and the coordinating entity:

Table 6. 12
MDNHA and MDTA: Partnering to develop and promote the Delta Experience

Activity	MDNHA	MDTA
Develop and implement a plan to include all 18 counties in the MDTA	•	•
Build a region-wide network of people who are engaged in developing and sharing the Delta’s stories.	•	
Reach out to heritage, cultural and outdoor attractions to engage in tourism promotions.		•
Implement management plan strategies to develop new heritage tourism products.	•	
Promote new attractions, tours, events, etc.		•
Advocate for more visitor services	•	•

STRATEGY 5:
Increase Accessibility for Travelers

Action Step A: Work with MDTA, MDOT and other partners to advocate for wayfinding signage, increased lodging, visitor centers and rest areas

Accessibility encompasses providing amenities that make people feel comfortable and at ease during their travels through the Delta. This includes wayfinding signage, place identification signage, lodging, visitor information centers and rest areas.

Wayfinding Signage and Place Identification Signage

“Ensuring that signs identifying points of public access and sites of interest are posted throughout the heritage area” is directed in the legislation creating the heritage area.

Even with the advent of technology – GPS, smart phones, IPADs – there is still a desire among travelers to have signs pointing the way to their destination in communities and along routes that link communities.

The need for wayfinding signage was mentioned in many of the stakeholder interviews. There are already a number of signage programs including the Blues Trail, Freedom Trail, Great River Road and others, but there is currently no coordination of these efforts – and none are specifically designed to be wayfinding systems. Additionally, there is no signage to let people know they are in a National Heritage Area.

An effective wayfinding and place identification signage plan will create a system that makes it easy for travelers – both residents and visitors - to find their way through the region without detracting from the Delta’s authentic landscape. The coordinating entity will work in partnership with the Mississippi Department of Transportation to develop and implement the plan. All signage will be designed to showcase the heritage area’s graphic identity (discussed in Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network*). The coordinating entity will create a graphic template for signage using the heritage area’s graphic identity, symbols and colors to illustrate the appearance of the signs for transportation planners. The plan will include signage for:

- **Gateways** – As travelers enter the heritage area on Interstates 55 or 20, or on state highways including Highway 61, 1, 49 and 82, signs will let them know they have entered the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area.
- **Wayfinding** – A coordinated system of signage will help travelers find their way from community to community and to cultural, heritage and outdoor destinations in the heritage area. An inventory of existing signage will identify gaps in wayfinding. The heritage area will partner with MDTA to advocate with local and state transportation officials for a comprehensive and coordinated wayfinding system.

- **Place identification** – Many attractions in the Delta already have identification signs (such as museums). The coordinating entity will assess additional needs for place identification signage and work with partners to develop a plan to design, fund and install new signs.
- **Wayside interpretive signage** – As previously discussed in this chapter, the coordinating entity will develop and install a system of interpretive signs that connect to the heritage area’s themes.



Photo: Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District

Lodging

A challenge for the Mississippi Delta in increasing tourism is the need for more lodging. Tourism directors agreed that in addition to the chain hotels currently available, there is a need for more upscale facilities and for more bed and breakfasts. Plans are underway in some towns to increase lodging. Vicksburg has opened 500 rooms in recent years and will have 200-300 more in the next few years.

The 18 counties of the Mississippi Delta offer a combined total of 15,508 hotel/motel rooms as of June 30, 2012, a decrease of 211 rooms from June 30, 2011. Counties that lost rooms during this period were DeSoto (99 rooms), Sunflower (31 rooms) and Washington (91 rooms). Carroll, Issaquena and Quitman counties do not have any rooms. None of the 18 counties increased rooms during this time period. (The total does not include B&Bs, hotel/motel rooms under construction between May – November 2012, cabin rooms or condo/timeshare/cottage rooms.) *Source: Travel and Tourism Economic Contribution Report, 2011, Mississippi Office of Tourism.*

The MDTA website, visitthedelta.com, lists 28 bed and breakfasts (mostly in Vicksburg and Tunica), 25 campground/RV parks and eight cabins. Statewide, the Mississippi Office of Tourism data show an average occupancy of 76.9% for state-licensed casino hotels and 58.3% for corporate/franchise and other properties. Tourism directors in the Mississippi Delta indicated similar occupancy, ranging as high as 77%. This is good news for the Mississippi Delta as national hotel/motel occupancy averaged only 60% in 2011. (*Source: American Hotel and Lodging Association*). Bed and breakfasts averaged 43% in 2009. (*Source: Professional Innkeepers Association*).

The coordinating entity can play a role by helping communities work through any regulatory barriers to B&B and inn development by providing model ordinances and encouraging the adoption of financial incentives for B&Bs and inns.

Visitor Information Centers and Rest Areas

The heritage area is fortunate to have four state welcome centers within its borders - Delma Furniss (Coahoma County), DeSoto County, Warren County and Washington County. A Mississippi Development Authority map shows that in addition to the four state welcome centers, there are five rest areas in the Delta. Four are located on Interstate 55 and one is located on Highway 82 in Washington County. Each of the MDTA partners also offers an information center. Traveling through the Mississippi Delta, a visitor quickly realizes that visitor facilities are found only in the Delta’s communities. Once traveling along a state or county roadway, a visitor can travel many miles with no opportunity to find restrooms or refreshments. As travel increases in the Delta, the coordinating entity will work with MDTA and other partners to advocate for more rest areas in the region.

Chapter 7

A Sense of Place:
Save the Delta's Historic Resources



Chapter 7

Introduction

The sense of place inherent in the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area arises from its historic resources, encompassing buildings, districts, structures, landscapes and sites. These resources created the stage for events that shaped the region and ultimately influenced the nation. At these places a unique music emerged, the struggle for equality took form, an agricultural economy was built, Civil War battles were fought, streams of immigrants built new lives, and the works of countless authors were inspired.

This chapter discusses the intention of the coordinating entity to work with partners to save historic resources throughout the heritage area. The chapter's sections include Criteria for Strategies, Focus Areas, Challenges and Strategies to Document and Save Historic Resources.

Historic Resources in the Delta

Historic resources in the Delta create the power of place. The appeal of the Delta is its authenticity. While various aspects of Delta culture may be portable, such as music that can be played anywhere, it is important to know that the music comes from a specific place and a combination of factors that cannot be replicated. This is true with all aspects of the story of the Delta.

Equally important is the continued use of these historic resources and the continued reflection of the culture and living traditions that emerged in the over time.

Legislation creating the heritage area acknowledges the importance of preservation by including among the coordinating entity's duties:

- Carrying out programs and projects that recognize, protect, and enhance important resource values within the heritage area
- Protecting and restoring historic sites and buildings in the heritage area that are consistent with the themes of the heritage area

What are historic resources?

Historic resources include many different types of man-made and natural resources such as:

- Buildings – houses, churches, schools, theaters, commercial or government buildings
- Districts – concentration of buildings with a common history
- Structures – bridges, levees, roads, fences
- Landscapes – features of cultural significance such as farms
- Sites – places of significance such as cemeteries, battlefields, prehistoric sites

Cover images:

- 1) Duff Green Bed and Breakfast in Vicksburg, Photo: Carolyn Brackett
- 2) Downtown Yazoo City, Photo: Mississippi Delta Tourism Association
- 3) Tutwiler Funeral Home in Tallahatchie County, Photo: Carolyn Brackett
- 3) New Roxy Theatre in Clarksdale, Photo: Carolyn Brackett

The legislation further directs that the management plan:

- Include a description of actions and commitments that governments, private organizations, and citizens plan to take to protect, enhance, and interpret the cultural, historical, archaeological, natural, and recreational resources of the heritage area.
- Recommend policies and strategies for resource management including the development of intergovernmental and interagency agreements to protect the natural, historic, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the heritage area.

The idea that these special regions continue to be used by people whose traditions helped shape the landscapes is central to the significance of National Heritage Areas.

House Resources Committee, House Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands. National Park Service testimony, October 1999

Preservation of historic resources that connect to the heritage area's themes will be a primary focus of the coordinating entity's activities. This responsibility was identified during the planning process as an appropriate primary role for the coordinating entity. The coordinating entity will take a proactive leadership role in this effort to include documentation of resources, advocacy for increased awareness of the importance of historic resources, preservation training and education, and support for the implementation of specific preservation projects through fundraising assistance and awarding of funds (as available) for restoration of structures that are significant in telling the Delta's story. Although there have been individual, community and state-level efforts to save places, there is no regional entity advocating for preservation. A number of agencies in the Delta and in the state of Mississippi are already engaged in the stewardship of natural resources. While the coordinating entity will take a leadership role in preservation, it was determined during the planning process that the coordinating entity will be a supportive partner of these organizations and agencies rather than taking the lead in conservation of natural resources efforts.

Criteria for Strategies to Save Places and Perpetuate Culture

Strategies for saving places and perpetuating culture were developed using the following criteria:

- I. The mission and vision statements clearly reflect the importance of saving places and perpetuating culture in order for the heritage area to succeed.**

The mission statement states the importance of saving places: *"We create opportunities to save our special places, maintain our vibrant traditions, enhance community and cultural pride...and advance the appreciation and understanding of the Delta's important past and its continuing contributions to the American story."* The vision statement further confirms as a desired outcome of the heritage area's activities: *"Residents, communities, institutions and cultural groups have collaborated to preserve special places connected to the Delta's past..."*

II. Activities undertaken or endorsed by the coordinating entity will connect to the heritage area’s identified themes.

Although there are numerous preservation needs in the Delta’s 18 counties, including neighborhoods, schools and other structures, the efforts of the coordinating entity to save places will focus on historic resources and living traditions connected to the five themes – The Mississippi River and the Land it Embraces, The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound, Moving Toward Freedom: Changing America’s Character in the Struggle for Rights, Growing More than Cotton: The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity and The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta’s Diverse Communities. (Strategies to preserve and interpret living traditions are addressed in Chapter Six: *The Delta Experience* – interpretive plan.)

Elements that create a sense of place are those things that add up to a feeling that a community is a special place, distinct from anywhere else.

National Trust for Historic Preservation

III. Activities intended to save places and perpetuate culture will contribute to sustainable economic development.

Sustainable economic development will be addressed by considering factors including the growth of jobs through increased tourism, the opportunity to spark new market demand for historic resources and cultivating new opportunities for preservationists, historians, conservationists, artisans and others.

IV. Quality and authenticity will be a requirement of all activities.

Saving historic resources, perpetuating culture and telling the Delta’s story (addressed in Chapter Six: *The Delta Experience*), requires high standards of quality and a commitment to authenticity in every aspect of the work of the coordinating entity and its partners. The coordinating entity is committed to an ongoing investment of time and resources to ensure that this is achieved. Standards of quality and authenticity will be applied in all of the coordinating entity’s activities including research and documentation, training, education, interpretation, cultural conservation, historic preservation and conservation.

Four Focus Areas to Save Historic Resources

Recognizing that preservation and restoration of individual buildings will require the cooperation of interested partners, the coordinating entity will provide leadership in the preservation of historic resources in four ways. Each focus area is discussed in detail in this chapter. Focus areas are:

I. Coordinating entity activities will raise awareness of the threat of losing important places and work with others to advocate for the preservation of historic resources.

Despite numerous preservation efforts by individuals, organizations and communities, the Mississippi Delta's historic resources face many challenges with respect to their future preservation and sustainability. Among the reasons for the continued threat of losing historic resources is the need to increase awareness of the importance of these places. A corresponding need is one or more entities to fill the role of bringing partners together to organize the advocacy effort.

II. The coordinating entity will provide recognition for places that have been saved and people working to save and perpetuate living traditions.

As noted in Chapter 8, *The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network*, an important finding during the planning process was stakeholders' desire for the coordinating entity to provide validation that local culture and history – and the places where important events happened – matter. Stakeholders stated repeatedly that they would like for the coordinating entity to give public recognition for places that have been saved and projects that save and perpetuate heritage and culture.

III. The coordinating entity will direct resources toward training and education.

In addition to raising awareness and rewarding excellence, the coordinating entity will play a vital role in educating Delta residents about the importance of saving places and will direct resources toward training and education.

IV. The coordinating entity will be proactive in securing funds for restoration of historic resources.

The coordinating entity will address the need for funding for restoration projects that connect to the heritage area's themes in two ways – assisting partners in identifying funding sources and securing funds for restoration, and providing seed grants through the coordinating entity's grant program to support appropriate restoration projects.

Preservation Challenges

Challenges identified during the planning process will be part of the coordinating entity's documentation of resources, ongoing awareness and advocacy efforts. Specific challenges are:

- **Economic conditions** – The most fundamental challenge to preservation of resources is economic conditions. With regard to historic buildings, challenges relate to a lack of market demand, as well as a lack of capital to invest in building rehabilitation.
- **Lack of documentation** – Examples include the many undocumented Native American sites, Civil War sites that are privately owned and places associated with the Civil Rights Movement that need to be documented.
- **Natural environmental conditions** - Erosion caused by stormwater, flooding and shifting stream channels (creeks and rivers) can cause sites to disappear or be covered with permanent water, along with the archaeological materials that they contain. Such natural damage is particularly problematic for Indian mounds and Civil War earthen fortifications.
- **Agricultural practices** – Cultivation of fields (plowing, harvesting) can reshape the topography of Native American sites (including mounds) and Civil War sites (fortifications) and can also damage associated materials. Livestock, such as cattle and hogs, can also damage the landscape and archaeological resources.
- **Deterioration of Blues-associated buildings** - Buildings associated with the Blues include venues where famous musicians played and residences of Blues musicians. Because most of these buildings tend to be in economically challenged African American neighborhoods and commercial districts, their economic context contributes to their physical deterioration.
- **Deterioration of Civil Rights Movement-associated buildings** - Many of these buildings are churches where Civil Rights-related meetings occurred. Most of these buildings still have active congregations and will be preserved, although occasionally inappropriate alterations may occur. The greater danger of loss exists for homes of Civil Rights leaders that are often in economically-challenged neighborhoods.
- **Lack of regulatory protection through local historic district and landmark designation** – Although there are numerous locally-designated historic districts throughout the Delta, more are needed to preserve the wealth of significant buildings and districts. There are multiple reasons why it is a challenge to institute greater local regulatory protections. One challenge shared in many areas is property owners who want to avoid any further regulations to their property. Designation can also be difficult to achieve in economically challenged areas, and many of the Delta's historic places in greatest need are economically challenged.
- **Lack of technical expertise in appropriate ways to improve and alter historic buildings** – While the Delta is not completely lacking of craftsmen with knowledge in techniques for appropriate rehabilitation, more are needed.
- **Negative perceptions regarding certain building types** – Modest shotgun residences are a quintessential building type in the Delta, yet they are perceived by many who grew up in or around them to represent oppression and poverty. Consequently, property owners may prefer to build a new brick ranch house on their lot rather than to preserve the existing shotgun house.

The Strategies

STRATEGY 1: Document Historic Resources in the Heritage Area

Action Step A: Prepare a heritage area-wide survey of historic resources

Action Step B: Identify threatened resources

Action Step C: Prepare National Register nominations

Action Step D: Assist in preparing Mississippi Landmarks nominations

Planning and implementing a survey of historic resources in the Mississippi Delta will begin with a review of the inventory that was developed as part of the management plan. The inventory was designed to document several aspects of historic and cultural resources including:

- 500+ places connected to the heritage area's themes and sub-themes
- 290 historic sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places
- 200 State Historic Markers
- 70 historic sites not on the National Register of Historic Places

Additional categories include Recreation, Land, Water and Biological Resources. Not every site listed in the inventory is a historic resource. For example, there are farmers' markets, performance venues and campgrounds that are important resources for the Mississippi Delta but they are not historic.

The inventory's entries include a resource number and name, picture (if available), location, owner (if known) and brief comments on the history, condition, status, historic designation and other pertinent information. Inventory templates were organized by topic and listings were entered alphabetically by county. A review of the four key areas documented by the inventory provides a better understanding of the Delta's historic resources:

Table 7.1
MDNHA Inventory – Connection to Themes*

Category	Total Number of Listings	Listings – historic or historic collections
Agriculture and Cotton	50	21
Blues Music	126	126
Civil War	36	36
Civil Rights	65	65
Cultural and Arts	71	15
Immigration	22	22
Literature	27	27
Mississippi River	20	17
Museums	25	25
Native American	96	96

* Note – Some listings are found more than once in the inventory if they fit into more than one theme.

Table 7.2
MDNHA Inventory – National Register of Historic Places

County	Districts	Individual	Archaeological	Total
Bolivar	3	10		13
Carroll	1	7	3	11
Coahoma	2	9	10	21
DeSoto	5	5		10
Holmes	2	8	6	16
Humphreys			5	5
Issaquena		1	3	4
Leflore	8	17	11	36
Panola	2	22	4	28
Quitman			4	4
Sharkey			5	5
Sunflower	2	3		5
Tallahatchie			5	5
Tate	8	4		12
Tunica	1		7	8
Warren	5	63		68
Washington	4	16	2	22
Yazoo	1	9	4	14
Total	44	174	69	287

**Table 7.3
MDNHA Inventory –
State Historic Markers**

County	# of markers
Bolivar	22
Carroll	7
Coahoma	18
DeSoto	9
Holmes	11
Humphreys	2
Issaquena	1
Leflore	11
Panola	5
Quitman	2
Sharkey	2
Sunflower	10
Tallahatchie	7
Tate	3
Tunica	0
Warren	37
Washington	35
Yazoo	18
Total	200

**Table 7.4
MDNHA Inventory –
Historic Sites Not currently
on the National Register***

County	# of sites
Bolivar	4
Carroll	1
Coahoma	11
DeSoto	5
Holmes	2
Humphreys	4
Issaquena	
Leflore	7
Panola	
Quitman	
Sharkey	1
Sunflower	4
Tallahatchie	1
Tate	1
Tunica	3
Warren	7
Washington	16
Yazoo	3
Total	70

Note – This list does not indicate that all of these sites are eligible for the National Register nor that these are all sites that could be eligible. This list reflects the need for a comprehensive survey to identify sites and determine eligibility.

There is a lack of education as to why historic buildings are good. To some people, old equals bad and new equals good. Not many people realize that our old buildings are what create our unique sense of place.

— Stakeholder comment

- **Action Step A: Prepare a heritage area-wide survey of historic resources**

The Mississippi Delta’s historic resources are irreplaceable treasures that reflect specific historical eras and events. Each resource is a unique part of the larger story of the Delta and, once lost, the sense of place they engender cannot be reclaimed even through pictures, books or museum exhibits.

Historic Resources Surveys identify and record significant historical, architectural and archaeological sites. A Historic Resources Survey is the coordinating entity’s first step in a larger process to raise awareness of these resources to advocate for their preservation in collaboration with partners.

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) is the designated state historic preservation office for Mississippi. MDAH oversees Historic Resource Surveys for the state

and will be the coordinating entity's primary partner in conducting the survey. MDAH's *Comprehensive Plan 2011-2016* states as two of the agency's goals:

Expand and enhance the identification, preservation and interpretation of cultural resources

- Undertake increased survey work to identify and record historic resources, particularly where substantial development pressures or other threats exist Increase listings of properties to the National Register of Historic Places, particularly districts and threatened properties

Develop and maintain productive partnerships

- Strengthen statewide and local nonprofit organizations as effective, independent advocates of preservation
- Provide instructional information to local, state and federal government groups and their representatives to increase their capacity to administer their respective historic preservation responsibilities

Any buildings associated in any way with the Civil Rights movement or with music history, regardless of age or architectural merit, should be surveyed and sources of documentation should be cited.

Survey Inclusion Guidelines

Mississippi Department of Archives and History
Historic Preservation Division

Why conduct a survey?

Historic resource surveys provide many benefits to the heritage area:

- Provides a permanent record of structures and their history
- Engages communities in the process of research and documentation
- Creates awareness of the value of historic resources
- Identifies places worthy of National Register designation
- Identifies places that are threatened
- Provides a preservation planning tool for the heritage area and communities
- Serves as a resource for interpretation such as walking or driving tours

Steps to Develop a Survey

Developing a survey involves several steps:

- **Review existing surveys** – MDAH's database of historic properties in the region should be reviewed to determine what data has already been collected and where efforts should be focused to gather additional information on historic resources. The database should also be reviewed to determine which sites have already been identified as having potential for National Register or Mississippi Landmarks designation. The inventory prepared as part of the management plan should also be reviewed to identify sites for inclusion in the survey.
- **Research records** – Records can provide insights into a historic resource's construction, original design and costs, builders and owners, other structures on the property that are no longer extant and other information.
- **Conduct fieldwork** – A visual inspection of the historic resource will include documenting architectural styles, integrity (intact, deteriorated, changes, ruins) and identification of changes to the resources (moved, enlarged, altered).
- **Analyze findings** – Reviewing information collected through records research and fieldwork will provide a better understanding of the historic resource.
- **Prepare report** – The Historic Resources Inventory form provided by MDAH will be completed. Information will include a description of the historic resource, photograph, historical information and a sketch of the building or site plan.

Threatened Historic Resources in the Mississippi Delta

At any time, there are many endangered historic and cultural sites throughout the Delta. Examples include:

- **Bryant's Grocery** in Money and the **Tutwiler Funeral Home** are on the verge of collapsing. These two sites are pivotal in telling the story of Emmett Till's murder in 1955 – the murder that is credited with sparking the Civil Rights Movement. The **Cleveland home of Civil Rights leader Amzie Moore** is also in disrepair, although a grant from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History was awarded in 2011 to aid in the building's restoration.
- **Margaret's Grocery – Vicksburg** – Described as a “unique vernacular art environment” in the *Mississippi Folklife Directory*, the site was the work of the Rev. H.D. Dennis who promised his wife, Margaret, that he would turn her grocery store into a palace if she would marry him. The site is filled with hand-crafted folk art creations. The site is unoccupied and is the target of vandals as well as the ravages of weather and lack of maintenance.
- **Po' Monkeys – Merigold** – The last of the authentic juke joints in Mississippi, Po' Monkeys is a world-famous destination and also the home of owner William Seaberry (Po'Monkey). Situated in a cotton field, the structure was built as a sharecropper's shack in the 1920s and has been a juke joint for over 50 years. Since the site has a single owner and proprietor, the question arises – what will happen to the site when Mr. Seaberry is gone?

What will be surveyed?

MDAH offers five categories that may be considered for inclusion in a Historic Resources Survey.

- **Properties predating 1817** – Record all extant buildings regardless of condition or alterations. Record sites that may have archaeological remains.
- **Properties dating from 1817-1865** – Record all extant buildings unless alteration has destroyed architectural character. Identify sites for the most important non-extant buildings. Identify sites of Civil War military activity.
- **All other properties over 50 years old** – Record all extant buildings that have retained their architectural character and major buildings that have been altered. Record all properties associated with military activity in World War II.
- **Properties less than 50 years old** – Record buildings and other structures of exceptional architectural or historical significance. Record noncontributing buildings in proposed historic districts. *Any buildings associated in any way with the Civil Rights Movement or with music history, regardless of age or architectural merit, should be surveyed and the sources of documentation should be cited.*
- **Objects of artistic interest** – Record any freestanding object or artistic or historical interest. (Examples: statues, fountains, historic light posts)

Archaeological resource surveys

MDAH also provides specific guidelines for archaeological surveys. Guidelines address professional qualifications, laboratory and curation facilities, treatment of human remains, terrestrial and underwater archaeological research and report preparation.

- **Action Step B: Identify threatened historic resources**

Historic resources can be threatened in many ways including neglect, lack of funding for rehabilitation and maintenance, proposed demolition, inappropriate rehabilitation including design and unskilled workmanship, damage from fire or natural disas-

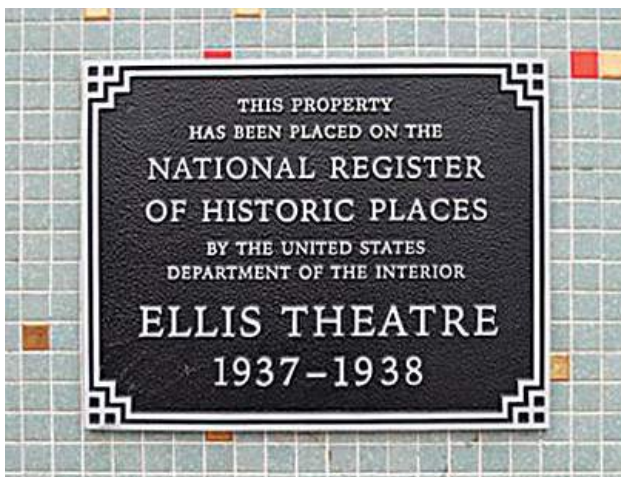
ters and unintended consequences of public policy decisions. The inventory created through the Historic Resource Survey will be a vital tool to quantify the amount and types of threats posed to Delta resources. This information will contribute significantly to the coordinating entity's efforts to increase awareness and advocacy for preservation of historic resources and to provide leadership and direction in advocating for the preservation of specific historic resources (discussed in the next section of this chapter).



Po Monkeys is an irreplaceable historic resource in the Mississippi Delta.

- **Action Step C: Prepare National Register nominations**

Once the Historic Resources Survey is completed, MDAH historic preservation staff will review the information and advise the coordinating entity on historic resources that have the potential to achieve designation to the National Register of Historic Places. During the management planning process, and particularly in the creation of the inventory, it became apparent that there are many significant resources in the Delta that are not listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Among the reasons are: lack of resources (money, expertise, time), lack of education about National Register and its requirements, misperceptions about consequences of listing or a lack of interest in designation. The heritage area inventory's National Register template shows that high style examples of architectural trends, important civic buildings and established older neighborhoods

What is the National Register of Historic Places?

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Though managed by the federal government through the National Park Service, responsibility for administration on the state level is the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) is the state's historic preservation office.

In order to be listed a property must possess significance and integrity. A nomination that describes the resource and makes an argument for its significance is vetted at the state and national levels before a property is listed.

National Register designation:

- Does not abridge or alter any private property rights
- May make the property eligible for financial incentives and grants
- Requires any federal undertaking that impacts the property to explore mitigation for adverse effects

have been examined and registered. Vernacular buildings and those with a history that is either controversial or misunderstood are less likely to have been studied. The coordinating entity’s involvement in conducting a Historic Resources Survey will offer the opportunity to address the need for education about the National Register and to facilitate an expansion of National Register listings to reflect a fuller representation of the Delta’s history and culture.

- **Action Step D: Assist in preparing Mississippi Landmarks nominations**

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History manages the Mississippi Landmarks program that was created in 1970 through the state’s Antiquities Law. This designation is the highest form of recognition bestowed on properties by the state of Mississippi and offers the fullest protection against changes that might alter a property’s historic character. Publicly owned properties that are determined to be historically or architecturally significant may be considered for designation. Private citizens may also nominate their own historically significant properties.

Proposed changes to a Mississippi Landmark must be approved by the Permit Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Department of Archives and History.

MDAH maintains an ongoing survey of potential Mississippi Landmark properties, but also welcomes nominations by communities or private citizens. As of 2013, there are 169 Mississippi Landmarks in the Mississippi Delta. The coordinating entity can assist in increasing this number by encouraging nominations and assisting with preparation or referrals to MDAH for assistance.

Table 7.5
Mississippi Landmarks in the Mississippi Delta

County	# of Landmarks	County	# of Landmarks
Bolivar	23	Quitman	1
Carroll	15	Sharkey	3
Coahoma	12	Sunflower	3
DeSoto	5	Tallahatchie	2
Holmes	21	Tate	3
Humphreys	4	Tunica	5
Issaquena	0	Warren	32
Leflore	9	Washington	16
Panola	5	Yazoo	

STRATEGY 2:

Increase Awareness and Advocate for Historic and Natural Resource Preservation

Action Step A: Increase awareness of the importance of preserving historic and natural resources through outreach in publicity campaigns, a “10 Most Endangered in the Delta” list and documentation of best practices

Creating a Strong Voice for the Delta

- **Awareness** – Knowledge gained by one’s own perception or through information
- **Advocacy** – To speak in favor of, to support or defend

Action Step B: Advocate for historic preservation by working with towns, counties, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Mississippi Heritage Trust and any other group that promotes preservation of the built environment

Action Step C: Encourage stewardship of natural resources by working with towns, state agencies and other groups to promote awareness and action to protect natural resources

Successful preservation of historic and natural resources depends on a grassroots network of advocates who understand the importance of the Delta’s history and are willing to take action to ensure the preservation of these resources. A survey taken during the management planning process noted “money needed to preserve historic resources” as the top reason for lack of preservation efforts (78.8%). Also ranking very high was “lack of awareness of the importance of the Delta’s history” (68%). These findings point to a need for the coordinating entity’s leadership role in education and advocacy.

Identifying and Reaching Audiences

An increased awareness among Delta residents at all socioeconomic levels will lead to a stronger voice in their communities to affect action by residents, elected officials and community leaders. Building on a database of more than 200 partners, the coordinating entity will create a directory that identifies key audiences for outreach including:

- **Youth** – school groups, youth civic organizations, faith-based youth groups
- **Educators and Youth Leaders** – teachers for K-12 and college-level who teach classes related to aspects of the Delta’s heritage and culture; youth leaders who engage young people in cultural, heritage and recreational activities in the Delta
- **Community leaders and activists** – persons who are actively engaged in contributing to their community’s quality of life through involvement in civic organizations or other groups and whose influence can rally others to the cause
- **Elected officials** – local officials who can influence or decide on policies that support the preservation of historic resources
- **History buffs** – persons who are interested in the Delta’s unique history and culture and may be engaged in historical societies, local museums and other organizations that help tell the story of the Delta and their community
- **Culture practitioners** – persons who are engaged in the Delta’s cultural activities – music, arts, festivals or other events who want to help the heritage area’s culture to thrive
- **Environmental advocates** – persons who are interested in the environment for whom the opportunity to save resources through preservation will resonate

Table 7.6
Mississippi Heritage Trust’s
10 Most Endangered Sites in the
Mississippi Delta

1999	Cutrer Mansion, Clarksdale Keesler Bridge, Greenwood Vicksburg Campaign and Historic Trail
2000	Irving Hotel, Greenwood Taborian Hospital, Mound Bayou
2001	Greek Revival Homes of the Mississippi Delta Rosenwald Schools – statewide
2003	The Cotton Pickers B.P.O.E. Lodge No. 148, Greenville Historic Cemeteries – statewide Indian Mounds – statewide
2005	Bryant Grocery and Meat Market, Money
2007	Afro-American Sons and Daughters Hospital, Yazoo City
2009	Alcazar Hotel, Clarksdale The Oakes African American Cultural Center, Yazoo City Teoc Community, Carroll County
2011	Amzie Moore Home, Cleveland Ceres Plantation, Flowers Mount Holly, Washington County

- **Business people** – owners of historic resources who are interested in preserving or revitalizing the resource for a business purpose such as retail, offices, a B&B and other uses

- **Local and state media** – reporters and editors for newspaper, radio and television who can help spread the news about the heritage area and its activities to save historic resources

- **Action Step A: Increase awareness of the importance of preserving historic and natural resources through outreach in publicity campaigns including a “10 Most Endangered in the Delta” list and documentation of best practices**

The designation of the Mississippi Delta as a National Heritage Area is a testament to the significance of the region’s culture and heritage and the resources that bear witness to the Delta’s many stories. Efforts to increase awareness of the importance of preserving historic and natural resources will build on and reflect this designation. Following are actions the coordinating entity will implement to increase awareness and to reach out to a variety of audiences.

Publicity Campaigns

An annual plan for publicity campaigns will be developed and implemented. Publicity campaigns will highlight both

accomplishments in the preservation of historic and natural resources and threats of loss or harm to these resources. Campaigns may include focuses such as:

- **Emphasize the heritage area’s identity and messages** – As discussed in Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network*, the heritage area’s identity will be focused on a clear set of messages that explain why the Delta’s heritage and culture are important and how people can become involved in the work of the heritage area. These messages will be communicated in all outreach regarding historic resources.
- **Benefits of preserving historic and natural resources** – As a first step in outreach, the coordinating entity will work with partners engaged in the stewardship of historic, cultural and natural resources to communicate the benefits of preserving these resources. In particular, the coordinating entity will communicate that the built environment and the Delta’s unique landscape are necessary to effectively tell the Delta’s story in an extant context.
- **Historic resources survey** – The survey discussed in the previous section can be publicized as the survey is being conducted – with opportunities for media attention as the surveyors travel to each community to document resources – and when the survey is completed – to publicize the findings and next steps to use the survey as a planning tool.
- **Economic impact of heritage** – Discussed in Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network*, the coordinating entity will conduct a study to document

the value of heritage and culture in job creation, community revitalization and other areas. Communicating the findings each time the study is conducted will inform audiences of the significant role that heritage and culture play in the Delta's economy.

- **Heritage area awards** – Discussed in Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network*, the coordinating entity will host an annual awards program to recognize places that have been saved and other contributions toward saving and telling the Delta's story, as well as highlighting important places that are threatened.
- **Get involved** – The management plan will offer myriad ways for involvement in the preservation of historic resources. The coordinating entity will communicate with target audiences to spread this message and cultivate enthusiasm and involvement.

10 Most Endangered in the Delta – In 1988, the National Trust for Historic Preservation began an annual “11 Most Endangered” announcement to raise awareness about the threats facing some of the nation's most significant historic places. Of the more than 250 places that have been listed, 97 percent have been saved. (Five places have been listed from the state of Mississippi including the Vicksburg Campaign Trail that was listed in 1997. Since that year, the National Park Service completed feasibility studies and promoted the addition of acreage and resources for the 200-mile path of the campaign trail.) Many state nonprofit preservation organizations have followed this model, including the Mississippi Heritage Trust which began a biannual “10 Most Endangered” list for the state in 1999. Since that time, 19 places in the Mississippi Delta have been included on the list (including three on statewide lists). These endangered lists demonstrate the value of highlighting threatened places to encourage their preservation.

The coordinating entity will develop a plan to create a “most endangered” list on an annual or biannual basis that will encompass the Delta's 18 counties. The plan will include categories for various types of historic resources including buildings, districts, structures, landscapes and sites, a process for nomination, review and selection of places. The coordinating entity will publicize lists through announcement events. Publicity will specify the threat and will share recommendations on how the resource could be saved. The coordinating entity will also continue to monitor and publicize the outcomes for these resources.

Documentation of Best Practice Case Studies

Successful preservation of historic and natural resources can inspire more success. To facilitate this progression, the coordinating entity will create a catalog of best practice case studies to provide models that can be replicated in the Delta. Case studies will include best practices from within the Mississippi Delta as well as relevant examples from other areas of the country with similar resources and economic challenges. The catalog will continue to grow with regular additions. A section will be created on the heritage area's website to post the case studies, making them an easily accessible resource. Case studies will also be useful in presentations to target audiences to increase awareness of the opportunities for similar successes throughout the Delta. Case studies will include information such as:

- Description of the threat to the historic resource (demolition, neglect, development, lack of funds, natural disaster, etc.)
- How groups or individuals who rallied to save the resource were inspired to take action
- Support that was used to create a plan to save or revitalize the resource (expertise from local, state or federal agencies, consultants, Internet information, etc.)
- Steps taken to save or revitalize the resource (fundraising, new regulations, enforcement of existing regulations, raising community awareness, etc.)

- Description of the outcome
- Description of how the resource is sustained and maintained
- **Action Step B: Advocate for historic preservation by working with towns, counties, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Mississippi Heritage Trust and any other group that promotes preservation of the built environment**

Working in partnership with local governments, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Mississippi Heritage Trust and others invested in preservation, the coordinating entity will be a leading force to coordinate actions and will leverage resources to advocate for preservation issues.



Mont Helena in Rolling Fork is a preservation success story thanks to the efforts of numerous volunteers.
Photo: Carolyn Brackett



Cotton fields such as this one in Bolivar County are a common sight throughout the Delta.
Photo: Mississippi Delta Tourism Association

The Historic Resources Survey will identify and document the importance of a multitude of historic resources in the Delta that may not have been previously understood to be significant. Out of the survey will also come a list of places that are threatened or endangered that deserve the attention and advocacy of the heritage area and its partners. The coordinating entity will next move to build awareness among a broad spectrum of Delta residents, creating a network of advocates for the preservation of historic resources.

As awareness and support grows, the coordinating entity will begin to work with partners on advocacy issues. As discussed in Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network*, the coordinating entity will form a Resource Stewardship Committee to monitor issues related to historic preservation and natural resource conservation. Among the

committee's responsibilities will be reviewing preservation issues that are candidates for coordinating entity support and advocacy. The committee will build a list of potential issues within the categories of historic resources. Committee members will consider a number of factors to identify issues including:

Heritage Area Goals

- How does the issue connect to the heritage area's themes?
- Will advocating for the preservation of this resource contribute to the goals of telling the Delta's story?
- Does the coordinating entity currently have the necessary resources (time, funding, etc.) to adequately address this issue?

Examples of Preservation of Historic Resources in the Mississippi Delta

- **Rolling Fork – Mont Helena** – This Colonial-style mansion was built on an Indian ceremonial mound at the turn of the 20th century. By the late 20th century, the home was unoccupied, vandalized and deteriorating. When the owner began restoring the mansion, residents in Rolling Fork rallied and formed Friends of Mont Helena, a nonprofit organization. The group developed a play, “A Dream Revisited” which is performed each year in the historic home. Proceeds are used to continue the home’s restoration.
- **Greenwood – Alluvian Hotel** - Opening in 2003, the hotel has become a landmark destination. The Viking Range Corporation took three buildings – including the vacant Hotel Irving building – to create a four-story boutique hotel. The hotel features a collection of paintings and photographs by Delta and Mississippi artists. The new hotel helped spark further restoration of the downtown.
- **Sumner -- Tallahatchie County Courthouse** – The Emmett Till Memorial Commission was formed to restore the courthouse where the 1955 trial of Emmett Till’s murderers was held. The multi-million-dollar project has received grants from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. A Civil Rights driving tour has been developed and plans call for an interpretive museum.
- **Cleveland – Grover Hotel** -Opened in 1926, the five-story hotel was promoted as the Delta’s finest hotel and Cleveland’s first skyscraper. By the late 20th century, the hotel’s glory days were over and it sat vacant and deteriorating. The building has now been revitalized into 16 condominiums.
- **Vicksburg – B&Bs** – An important part of Vicksburg’s tourism industry is the experience of staying at a B&B. These 19th century homes have been restored to accommodate visitors and offer amenities including guided tours, gift shops, dining and space for special events such as weddings or family reunions.
- **Clarksdale – Cutrer Mansion** – In 1999, the Mississippi Heritage Trust placed this Italian Renaissance home on the *10 Most Endangered* list when plans were announced to raze the building. Built in 1916 by J.W. Cutrer and his wife, Blanche Clark Cutrer, the mansion is important architecturally and also because of its connection to Tennessee Williams who found inspiration for characters in many of his plays here. The community and Delta State University joined forces to save the mansion with support from the Mississippi Legislature. The building now serves as part of the Coahoma County Higher Education Center, a partnership between Coahoma Community College and Delta State University.

Partnerships

- Who are the primary local or state partners already engaged in this issue?
- Have these partners demonstrated a commitment to this issue?
- Are there other partners who should be brought to the process?
- Would the coordinating entity’s role in this issue be as a leader or a partner to another lead organization?

Existing Conditions

- Is the issue an opportunity (such as an opportunity to revitalize a resource through support of a new donor) or a threat (such as demolition)?
- What existing plans of governments or organizations could have an impact – positive or negative?
- Is funding available or have potential funding sources been identified to create the desired outcome?
- Is there community support for the desired outcome?
- What is the projected timeline to achieve an outcome (such as dates for upcoming votes by legislative bodies or lead time to raise funds)?



Natural resources such as these cypress trees in Greenville give the Delta's landscape its unique appearance.

Photo: Mississippi Delta Tourism Association

Implementing Effective Advocacy

As the coordinating entity brings its leadership and credibility as an organization to advocate for specific issues, the staff and board will undertake an evaluation and planning process including:

- **Selection of issues** – The staff will prepare a summary of issues and recommendations from the Resource Stewardship Committee. These summaries will be presented to the coordinating entity's board of directors who will make the final decision on the issues to be embraced. A timeline for review of issues will be included in the coordinating entity's annual work plan; however, emergency issues (such as imminent threat of demolition of a significant resource) can be addressed immediately.

- **Advocacy plan** – Once issues have been selected, staff will notify partners and convene a meeting to develop strategies for advocacy. A clear message of the desired outcome will be agreed to by all partners and communicated through all advocacy venues. The message will emphasize the importance of the resource to the heritage area's goals. Strategies may include such activities as presentations to elected officials, media events at the site of the threatened resource, press releases, guest opinion columns and media interviews, posts on Facebook, Twitter and other social media outlets. Strategies may also focus on fundraising including identifying donors or writing grants. Partners will agree to specific responsibilities in implementing the advocacy plan. The lead partner will serve as the voice for the partners in all media communications. The advocacy plan will include a projected timeline for partners' focus on the issue. Intermittent review dates will be set for partners to reconvene and evaluate progress or completion of the project.

- **Documenting results** – Upon resolution of the issue, the coordinating entity will document the outcomes. The primary measure will be the success of saving the historic resource or moving plans forward in response to an opportunity. Additional measures will also be documented including the organizations partnering to address the issue, the amount of media coverage the issue garnered, the response of the public to support the issue, identification of new donors and new support from local policy makers.

- **Action Step C: Encourage stewardship of natural resources by working with towns, state agencies and other groups to promote awareness and action to protect natural resources**

The heritage area's unique landscape resulted in the evolution of the Delta's culture and heritage in ways that are nationally significant. Primary uses of the Delta's natural resources are:

- **Agriculture** - Cotton agriculture is the reason the Delta was cleared and settled. Although cotton is no longer the only commercial crop and the labor system has changed dramatically over time, agriculture remains a cultural and economic force in the region. It dominates the appearance of the landscape and directly or indirectly

Table 7. 7

Who are the coordinating entity's partners in advocacy for historic resources?

There are numerous organizations supportive of historic preservation at the local and state levels. Some have historic preservation as their primary mission while others are supportive of preservation through programming, advocacy and partnering with preservation organizations.

Local Organizations

- Certified Local Governments - CLGs are a program of the National Park Service that support local historic preservation programs. They are overseen by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History and are administered by designated city and county governments. CLGs in the heritage area are Carrollton, Clarksdale, Cleveland, Como, Friars Point, Hernando, Indianola, Leland, Lexington, Mound Bayou, Sardis, Senatobia, Sharkey County, Tunica, Vicksburg, West and Yazoo City.
- Main Street Communities - The Mississippi Main Street Association is a private, non-profit organization contracted with the Mississippi Development Authority to implement and administer the Main Street Program and to direct the revitalization efforts of downtowns and surrounding neighborhoods throughout Mississippi's cities and towns. Main Street is an economic development program based on historic preservation. Main Street communities in the heritage area are Batesville, Cleveland, Greenville, Greenwood, Hernando, Indianola, Lexington, Senatobia, Tunica and Vicksburg. Additionally, Downtown Network Partners are Belzoni and Como. The Downtown Network provides technical assistance to communities with a population of less than 1,000 or communities that are beginning a downtown revitalization program who wish to pursue full Main Street membership.
- Other Local Nonprofit Organizations - Bolivar County Historical Society, Carroll County Genealogy Society, Friars Point Historic Preservation Society, Genealogical Society of DeSoto County, Historic DeSoto Foundation, Panola County Historical and Genealogical Society, Restoration and Beautification Foundation (Yazoo City), Sunflower County Historical Society, Tate County Genealogical & Historical Society, Vicksburg Foundation for Historic Preservation, Vicksburg and Warren County Historical Society, Vicksburg Genealogical Society, Washington County Historical Society and Yazoo Historical Society.
(Source: Mississippi Federation of Historical Societies, Mississippi Department of Archives and History)

State Organizations - Government

- Mississippi Department of Archives and History (state historic preservation office)
- Mississippi Arts Commission
- Mississippi Development Authority Tourism Division
- Mississippi's Federally recognized Native American tribes

State Organizations – Nonprofit

- Mississippi Heritage Trust (statewide preservation organization)
- Mississippi Main Street Association
- Mississippi Humanities Council
- Center for the Study of Southern Culture (University of Mississippi, Oxford)
- Mississippi Museums Association
- Mississippi Historical Society
- Mississippi Chapter American Planning Association

employs a significant portion of the population. In addition to the region's continued role in large-scale agricultural production, agritourism has begun to emerge as a way to attract visitors and to generate economic impact.

- **Outdoor life** - Hunting and fishing have long been part of the seasonal round of life for residents of the Delta, regardless of socio-economic class. Forested wetlands and the Mississippi Flyway for migratory birds support abundant wildlife. The National Wildlife Refuges in the Delta are an enormous asset for the region. The Theodore Roosevelt National Wildlife Refuge Complex is the largest refuge

Wildlife Watching Generates Significant Economic Impact

Wildlife watching is one of the most popular outdoor activities in the United States. Nearly a third of the U.S. population, 71 million people, enjoyed observing, feeding and photographing wildlife in 2006, an increase of eight percent from 2001. Of this number, 95% (68 million) enjoyed wildlife watching close to home. Thirty-two percent took trips or outings (23 million).

Wildlife watchers spent \$45.7 billion on equipment and trips in 2006, contributing to federal and state tax revenues and jobs. Expenditures included travel expenses, equipment such as binoculars, cameras, bird food, memberships in wildlife organizations, camping equipment and other expenses.

Data for the state of Mississippi shows:

- 731,000 wildlife watching participants (ranking 37th in the nation)
- \$175,846,000 in retail sales for wildlife watching activities
- 3,963 jobs
- \$22,620,022 state and local tax revenue
- \$17,503,184 federal tax revenue

Source: Wildlife Watching in the U.S.: The Economic Impacts on National and State Economies in 2006, produced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Delta residents and visitors can enjoy the outdoors with walkways such as this one in Tunica.

Photo: Mississippi Delta Tourism Association

complex in the state of Mississippi. Over 100,000 acres of refuge lands on seven refuges provide vital habitat for fish and wildlife in the Delta region. For many residents, deer, ducks and fish are important contributions to diet and daily sustenance. For the elite, the Delta has always been a wilderness paradise for hunting. The most famous hunt is that of Teddy Roosevelt, who—out of sportsmanship—refused to shoot a treed bear near Rolling Fork, giving rise to the lovable “Teddy Bear” and the Great Delta Bear Affair, an annual event in Rolling Fork. Millions of dollars are spent each year on hunting and fishing licenses, with many purchased by out-of-state visitors. Additional expenditures include tackle, bait, shells and fuel.

Non-consumptive recreation – Re-establishment of the hardwood forest in the Delta will continue to increase nature-based tourism. The lure of the Delta’s swampy setting, coupled with its unique culture and history, provides an opportunity for nature-based tourism perhaps unparalleled anywhere in the country. The Mississippi Delta Grassroots Caucus notes, “In the 1990s, vacationers were visiting the Mississippi River more than 12 million times each year, generating billions of dollars and supporting tens of thousands of jobs.”

Challenges

Leaders throughout the Delta recognize environmental and economic issues can no longer be considered independent of each other and that resources should be used wisely and conserved so future generations can continue to utilize and receive the benefits these resources offer. The principle natural resource concerns in the Delta are the preservation and restoration of wildlife habitat and the quality of the water. Outdoor recreation challenges focus on accessibility. Following are key areas of focus in natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation.

- **Accessibility of outdoor resources** - Several challenges and opportunities are identified for outdoor resources:



The Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge is the oldest national wildlife refuge in the state.

- **Mississippi River** - There are few opportunities to view and experience the Mississippi River due to flood walls and land near the river owned by private owners. (Current locations for viewing the river are public parks in Tunica, Rosedale and Warfield Point near Greenville. Cruises also provide an opportunity for viewing the river.)

- **Walking and biking trails** – Although there are some trails, including the Mississippi River Trail – a bike trail that follows the Great River Road, a National Scenic Byway, from Minnesota to the Gulf -

more are desired along the river to link historic sites and communities. The creation of more trails would encourage outdoor recreation and create opportunities for events such as bicycle rides or races that would generate economic impact.

- **Bird watching** – Because the Delta is on the Mississippi Flyway it is not unusual to have more than 200 species of birds at one time – birds that either live in the region or are migrating. There are some locations for bird watching, such as the observation towers at the Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge. More places to bird watch and more promotion of this opportunity are needed.

Wildlife corridors - Many animal species have suffered in the Delta due to the fragmentation of the natural landscape as the area has developed. There is an opportunity to create protected wildlife corridors, connecting naturally functioning ecosystems for the benefit of both wildlife and people.

- **Forest restoration** - Along with swamps, bayous and rivers, the historic floodplain of the Mississippi River contained 24 million acres of hardwood forests. Today, about four million acres of forests remain. Incentives are currently in place to help Delta landowners restore forests to areas on their land that may no longer be profitable for farming. Reforestation is assisting in correcting many of the environmental problems facing the Delta while also providing an income for landowners. Also noted is the need to reforest the land between the river and the levee.
- **Forest preservation** - Conservation easements are growing in popularity in the Delta and ensure timber will be harvested in a sustainable manner. Easement holders in the Delta currently include Ducks Unlimited, Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Mississippi Land Trust.
- **Wetland restoration** - Wetlands provide critical habitat for a wide variety of fish and wildlife in the Delta. Nearly 50,000 acres in the lower Delta has been enrolled in USDA Wetland and Conservation Reserve Programs.

Implementing Effective Advocacy Partnerships for Natural Resource Conservation

The Mississippi Delta has experienced an increasing number of conservation success stories in recent years. Many of the successes can be directly attributed to partnerships.

Table 7.8

Who could the coordinating entity partner with for natural resource conservation and development?

Many public and private regional and state organizations are engaged in various aspects of natural resource conservation and development. The coordinating entity will partner with organizations that are addressing issues connected to the heritage area's themes and goals. Potential partners may include:

Regional Organizations

- Delta Council –Economic development organization brings together agriculture and business to advance the region's economy
- Mississippi's Lower Delta Partnership – Works to improve the economic conditions and natural environment of the area
- BEAR – Bear Education and Restoration - Promotes the restoration of the black bear in its historic range through education, research and habitat management
- Delta Wildlife - Strives to conserve, enhance and restore native wildlife habitats, wildlife populations and the natural resources of the Delta
- Delta F.A.R.M. - Delta Farmers Advocating Resource Management is an association of growers and landowners that strives to implement agricultural practices to conserve, restore and enhance the environment of Northwest Mississippi
- Gulf Coastal Plains and Ozarks LCC - Conducts research, develops tools to improve natural resource management
- Tara Wildlife, Inc. - Committed to the sustainable use and management of natural resources in the Delta.
- Delta Conservation Demonstration Center - Works for clean surface water and to protect natural resources

State Organizations

- Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality – Committed to conserving and improving the state's natural resources
- Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks – Mission is to conserve and enhance Mississippi's wildlife, fisheries and parks, provide quality outdoor recreation and engage the public in natural resource conservation
- Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission – Comprised of districts that guide, promote and demonstrate the conservation, protection and proper utilization of the soil, water and related resources of the state
- Institute for Environmental Justice and Community-Based Conservation (Delta State University) - Carries out scientific research and public service activities that promote environmental justice and community-based conservation
- Audubon Mississippi -- Supports preservation of birds and bird habitat
- Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts – Located in each Mississippi county, works to implement farm conservation practices, conserve and restore wetlands and wildlife habitat and protect groundwater resources
- Mississippi Wildlife Federation – Works to conserve natural resources and protect Mississippi's wildlife legacy
- Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Foundation (Wildlife Mississippi) – Works to conserve, restore and enhance Mississippi's fisheries and wildlife resources
- Mississippi Land Trust – Holds easements to conserve natural habitat
- The Nature Conservancy – Works to protect ecologically important lands and waters

Organizations realize that in order to improve conservation in the Delta, it is going to take a great, cooperative partnership effort. Coordinating entity leaders have determined that the most effective role for the coordinating entity will be as a partner to agencies that are providing leadership in natural resource conservation and recreational development.

The selection of issues and opportunities to which the coordinating entity will lend its resources and credibility will be conducted through the process described in the previous section for historic resource advocacy – selecting issues, developing an advocacy plan and documenting results. In the case of natural resource conservation issues, the coordinating entity will be a partner rather than taking a lead role. The coordinating entity will be supportive of these efforts with appropriate activities such as serving on committees, attending conferences and workshops, writing letters of support or providing small grants to assist in plan development. However, the coordinating entity may take a lead role in activities which use natural resources to help tell the Delta’s story. For example, the coordinating entity will not engage in construction of bike trails or greenways, but will be supportive of agencies that are doing this work. To support these projects, the coordinating entity may develop new itineraries or guides that follow these trails or greenways or place interpretive information in museums or visitor centers about these resources. (Details of this strategy are in the management plan’s interpretive planning section – Chapter Six: *The Delta Experience*.)

STRATEGY 3:

Position the Coordinating Entity as a Resource for Training and Information

Action Step A: Provide training to support preservation efforts

Action Step B: Create a virtual MDNHA Resource Center

Many preservation opportunities arise from partnerships and participation in existing programs. Most of the programs that are currently operating or available in the Delta originate through state agencies and organizations. Examples include the Mississippi Main Street Association which provides resources and assistance to 10 Main Street communities and two Downtown Network Partners in the Delta, and the Mississippi Heritage Trust which hosts an annual conference focused on current preservation issues.

The planning process for the heritage area’s management plan confirmed the need for the coordinating entity to be positioned in a leadership role to bring partners together and to create a cohesive plan to save historic resources.

Forest Preservation Success Stories in the Delta

The **Delta National Forest** is a huge asset for the Mississippi Delta. It is the only bottomland hardwood forest in the National Forest Service System. The forest contains 61,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forest, and there are ongoing efforts to expand the forest.

Sky Lake contains some of the largest and oldest bald cypress trees remaining on earth, and they have international scientific significance. Wildlife Mississippi worked with the Office of the Governor and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks to acquire the initial 773 acres, and the Wildlife Management Area now encompasses approximately 4,273 acres.

Paw Paw Cemetery, Clarksdale

This African-American cemetery is the burial place of veterans from the Civil War, World War I and World War II. The cemetery has been neglected, and efforts are underway by volunteers and the city to clean it up and to place a historical marker recognizing the veterans buried there.

In addition to increasing awareness and leading advocacy efforts, the coordinating entity will provide services in training and as an information resource to further a commitment to the preservation of historic resources. These “on the ground” services will reach out to partners already involved in preservation activities. Additionally, the coordinating entity will enact concerted efforts to reach new, nontraditional partners to engage and aid them in this work. For example, site visits and meetings during the planning process, as well as the preparation of the inventory, identified numerous sites ranging from historic cemeteries to homes of Civil Rights leaders to downtown buildings that are deteriorating or are threatened with vandalism or loss. In many cases, volunteer groups are attempting to save these sites and would welcome assistance from the heritage area to increase their knowledge of preservation practices and to find resources to aid in their work.

- **Action Step A: Provide training to support preservation efforts**

Preservation projects can begin for many reasons such as the desire of an individual or a group to save a site that is important in their town’s history or to revitalize their community by restoring historic properties for commercial or residential use. Once the project is underway, the individual or group may quickly discover that preservation can be a daunting undertaking. A successful outcome can mean navigating through many areas that require knowledge or expertise including documenting the history of the resource, adhering to applicable local laws or regulations, obtaining National Register of Historic Places or other designations, rallying community support, raising funds, determining an appropriate use for the resource and developing a plan for long-term sustainability of the resource. Equally daunting may be efforts by the individual or group – who are often volunteers – to know where to find the answers and support that is needed from local, state and national agencies and organizations.

The coordinating entity’s commitment to providing training will address this primary need in the Delta. The coordinating entity will develop an annual training schedule through a process that includes:

- **Identifying current issues** – Many needs were identified during the planning process. Among the topics were raising funds for preservation projects, developing local historic districts, using tax credits for rehabilitation, listing sites on the National Register of Historic Places, protecting archaeological resources, and emergency intervention for historic sites. The coordinating entity will assess these needs and will continue to reach out to the Delta’s communities to identify issues. (Also identified was the need for archival and collections care training – these topics are discussed in detail in the interpretive plan, Chapter Six: *The Delta Experience*.)
- **Develop a slate of topics** – The coordinating entity’s staff, working with the Resource Stewardship Committee, will compile a list of issues and identify the primary topics that emerge from this list. These topics will become the basis for the training schedule.
- **Determine training format** – The number of training sessions offered in a year will be based on the coordinating entity’s financial resources. Once the topics have been selected, the coordinating entity will determine the appropriate training format. Formats may include workshops, symposia and conferences. Online training may be

Preservation Resource Center New Orleans, Louisiana

The Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans is the citywide local preservation organization for New Orleans. In addition to implementing their own programs through outreach, education, a revolving fund and other activities, PRC houses a preservation library. The library has a collection of books and articles including architectural books on New Orleans, planning and zoning related documents, studies about New Orleans and information about architectural types and styles.

considered, recognizing that this option may not reach a wide audience due to limited Internet access in the Delta. A Mississippi Delta Heritage Area Conference, discussed in Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network*, addresses a heritage-area wide opportunity to provide training.

- **Plan training sessions** – Each session will be designed to present expert speakers and instructors. The coordinating entity may draw on experts within the heritage area or state, but will also bring in nationally-recognized experts as appropriate for specific sessions as needed.
- **Document sessions** – Training sessions will be recorded or transcripts prepared. This information, along with training materials, will be posted on the heritage area’s website to provide an ongoing resource.
- **Action Step B: Create a virtual MDNHA Resource Center**

Linking partners to information is an essential responsibility of the coordinating entity. To accomplish this goal, the coordinating entity will create a virtual Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Resource Center. Over time, this center will be the destination for anyone needing information on all aspects of saving places and perpetuating culture. Recognizing the limitations of Internet access in the Delta, the coordinating entity will establish a location, either in its offices or at another appropriate site, to house publically accessible computers. The resource center will be open on a regular schedule and will have assistants (staff or volunteer) to aid users in finding the information they need. The virtual library may also be supplemented with a library of books and periodicals. The MDNHA Resource Center will house an extensive collection of regularly-updated information such as:

- **Heritage Area resources** – Information on the work of the coordinating entity and how to get involved
- **Economic impact data** – Findings from the coordinating entity’s study of the economic impact of heritage and culture; other state and national economic impact studies
- **Directory of organizations** – Local, state and national organizations involved in all aspects of saving historic resources and cultural conservation
- **Directory of experts** – A directory of experts such as trades people, architects, engineers, appraisers, grant writers, lenders, attorneys, architectural historians, fundraisers, realtors, investors, accountants, folklorists, ethnographers, anthropologists, historians, building movers, conservators, contractors, developers, planners, designers and suppliers
- **Case studies** – Case studies will document success stories in the Delta and in other areas of the country. These case studies will provide inspiration as well as contacts, funding sources and other information.

- **Training sessions** – Film or transcripts of training sessions hosted by the coordinating entity or other groups will be posted.
- **Legal information** – Local, state and federal regulations regarding preservation
- **Technical information** – How-to guides and instruction on appropriate restoration techniques, how to establish a historic district, how to conduct oral histories, how to document living traditions, and other topics.
- **Designation and Awards** – How to get listed on the National Register of Historic Places, how to obtain Mississippi Landmark status, how to nominate projects for heritage area awards, and how to apply for other designations or awards
- **Funding** – Information on the heritage area’s grant program as well as other funding resources
- **Getting Started** – Information on how to start a project to save a historic resource including recruiting support, organizing for results, obtaining publicity, etc.
- **Collections Care** – Resources for caring for museum or private collections



A resource center will provide a central location for information on all aspects of preserving the Delta’s historic and natural resources, culture and heritage.

Photo: Delta Center for Culture and Learning

STRATEGY 4: Provide Financial Support for Restoration Projects

Action Step A: Act as a clearinghouse for grant or sponsorship opportunities and as either the prime or a partner applicant on grants that support Delta heritage

Action Step B: Create a grants program to provide seed money supporting projects that meet heritage area goals

Directing a portion of the coordinating entity’s resources to support restoration will address the goal of saving historic resources and telling the Delta’s story. Each project supported or funded by the coordinating entity will employ best practices as described in Chapter Ten: *Implementation Procedures and Schedule*. Actions will include consultation with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (State Historic Preservation Office). It is not anticipated that any projects will create direct or indirect impact on resources. If future actions are determined to have the potential for impact, appropriate compliance to all NEPA guidelines will be implemented by the coordinating entity and its partners.

This will be accomplished in the following ways:

- **Serve as the go-to source for funding information** – In order to assist partners in finding funding, coordinating entity staff will become conversant in granting organizations and corporations that support restoration and preservation of historic resources. This clearinghouse of potential financial resources at the local, state, regional and federal level will be valuable to partners and also directly to the coordinating entity in seeking funds to support restoration projects.
- **Provide technical assistance for specific projects** - For projects that are identified as critical to meeting the heritage area’s goals (such as rehabilitation of a historic structure), the coordinating entity will provide technical assistance in identifying potential funders and preparing proposals or applications.
- **Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Grant Program** - The coordinating entity will develop a grant program to provide seed funding supporting projects that will include restoration of historic resources based on available funding.

(Additional information on funding support is found in Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network*).

Chapter 8

**The Power of Partnerships:
Build the Network**



Chapter 8

Introduction

The success of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area depends on building and sustaining a strong network of active partnerships. This chapter discusses a variety of ways that a network of partners will be built by the coordinating entity. Sections in this chapter include Criteria for Strategies and Strategies to Build the Network.

Legislation Addresses Partner Engagement

Legislation creating the heritage area is clear in its intent that partners will be engaged in every facet of programming and activities and directs the management plan to include:

- A description of actions and commitments that governments, private organizations and citizens plan to take to protect, enhance and interpret the cultural, historical, archaeological, natural and recreational resources of the heritage area;
- Existing and potential sources of funding or economic development strategies to protect, enhance, interpret, fund, manage and develop the heritage area;
- Policies and strategies for resource management including the development of inter-governmental and interagency agreements to protect the natural, historic, cultural, educational, scenic and recreational resources of the heritage area;

Analysis of and recommendations for ways in which federal, state, tribal and local programs may best be coordinated (including the role of the National Park Service and other federal agencies associated with the heritage area)

*(Source: Creation of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area
SEC. 8008. Omnibus Federal Land Management Act of 2009. Signed by President Obama on March 30, 2009.)*

The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area encompasses a large geographic area of 18 counties and a population of more than 550,000 people. As discussed in Chapter Two: *Boundaries and Socioeconomic Environment*, although it is a region that has a rich culture and heritage the Mississippi Delta faces numerous challenges in economic development, education and other areas.

The biggest challenge is the coming together of the different groups, settling on something that people can agree to. This requires finding a diverse solution to a complicated place...The National Heritage Area needs to strive for equality for inclusion and diversity. The biggest challenge is finding something we can agree on, promote, be proud of and be willing to sell.

—MDNHA board member comment

Development of the management plan incorporated multiple tools and processes to reach out to stakeholders throughout the heritage area who in turn could inform and engage their own constituents. Engagement included public meetings, surveys, interviews, presentations and media coverage. Each outreach method required consideration of the challenges in engagement. For example, public meetings were repeated in two or three locations to make it easier for stakeholders to

Cover images:

- 1) Public meeting in Greenwood, Photo: Nancy Morgan
- 2) Meeting presentation, Photo: Nancy Morgan
- 3) I Love MS Delta t-shirt
- 4) Delta Center intern sampling hot tamales, Photo: Delta Center for Culture and Learning

Management Plan Development: Outreach and Engagement

- 15 board members
- 65 committee members
- 26 presentations
- 26 newspaper articles
- 150 at kick off meeting
- 169 at first round of public meetings
- 80+ stakeholder interviews
- 90 at second round of public meetings
- 221 partners in email database
- 239 online surveys completed
- 100 at Exchange Community Forum
- 25 site/community visits
- 710 friends on Facebook
- 30+ people/organizations contributed to the inventory

attend. Printed invitations for public meetings were mailed or distributed by board members to reach stakeholders who do not have access to the Internet. Numerous presentations were made to civic organizations, government officials and other groups to strengthen relationships. Committees were formed to serve as expert resources and to provide guidance in the plan's development. Media coverage through local newspapers, television, radio and social media reached additional audiences.

The management planning process established a strong network of partners and stakeholders who support the coordinating entity's goals and who will continue to be engaged as the plan is implemented. This chapter identifies specific strategies that will sustain the existing network while reaching out to new partners and building an even larger network.

Criteria for Strategies to Build the Network

Strategies for building the network were developed using the following criteria:

I. The mission and vision statements clearly reflect the importance of a network in order for the heritage area to succeed.

The mission statement states: *"Through a comprehensive and continual system of engagement and education, the National Heritage Area leads an inclusive network of partners, institutions and residents in achieving a regional vision."* The vision statement further confirms this intent: *"Residents, communities, institutions and cultural groups have collaborated to preserve special places connected to the Delta's past, to honor and celebrate its diverse traditions and to document and share the history from settlement to migration, from the Civil War to Civil Rights."*

II. The coordinating entity will take appropriate roles as a leader or partner in strategies to save places, perpetuate culture and tell the Delta's story.

The research phase of the management plan's development included exploring appropriate roles for the coordinating entity as a leader or partner for the plan's strategies. The strategies in this plan identify the coordinating entity's role as a leader or partner reflecting these categories: project developer and implementer, funder, convener and organizer, provider of technical

How will a strong network help the MDNHA coordinating entity accomplish its goals?

- **Strengthen advocacy** – The unified voice of partners will enhance the coordinating entity's advocacy for the preservation of heritage and culture.
- **Financial resources** – Pooling funding will extend the financial resources of the coordinating entity and partners to make specific projects achievable.
- **Program development** – Drawing on expertise from partners will supplement coordinating entity staff's expertise for developing new programs.
- **Stimulate economic growth** – A cohesive, comprehensive plan supported by a strong network will encourage investment in culture and heritage.

assistance. (The coordinating entity's organizational and management structure is further addressed in Chapter Nine: *The Business Plan*.)

III. Strategies will offer opportunities for stakeholders and partners to engage in a variety of ways.

Stakeholders and partners bring a wide variety of interests and expertise to the heritage area as well as varying capacities for involvement in the coordinating entity's activities. Although this chapter focuses on specific actions to build the network, all of the management plan's strategies offer many ways for stakeholders and partners to be engaged and to contribute to accomplishing the stated goals. Opportunities range from an organization volunteering to assist with specific program or administrative activities, attending training sessions, conferences and other events hosted by the heritage area, working with the coordinating entity to advocate for the preservation of resources, developing new interpretation of a historic or cultural site that contribute to the goal of telling the Delta's story, providing expertise for a project, taking the lead on a project with the coordinating entity as a supporting partner, or financially supporting the coordinating entity's work.

IV. The network will reach new target audiences of residents as well as visitors.

Reaching out to the Delta's residents and encouraging them to become stakeholders and partners will be the foundation of success for the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area. The saturation of "Delta" organizations and numerous studies and plans (ranging from healthcare initiatives to environmental reclamation studies to economic development plans) was addressed by stakeholders who noted "the Delta has been studied to death," and that they are continually asked to attend meetings on various issues. Conversely, there is a large percentage of the population that is never asked to participate in anything because the outreach efforts for most organizations target those who are already inclined to be engaged. For those who are already involved in many activities, the MDNHA must be presented as more than just another "Delta organization." For those who are not typically involved in civic activities, extra efforts will be made to communicate the benefits of the MDNHA and to recruit their involvement. Many audiences have been identified including elected officials, economic developers, local and state government agencies, churches, teachers, students (elementary, high school and college), clubs and civic organizations, cultural and heritage sites (historic sites, museums, cultural centers), historical societies, tourism agencies, visitor services venues (hotels, restaurants, retail), conservation organizations, artists, historians, business people and local and state media. Increasing visitation to the Delta will result from partnering with tourism-related agencies and organizations to enhance and develop the Delta as a cultural heritage destination and reaching out to potential visitors with effective marketing messages. (Increasing tourism is addressed in further detail in Chapter Six: *The Delta Experience* – interpretive plan.) An increase in tourism is not anticipated to have a negative impact on natural or historic resources in the Delta. If any future actions of the coordinating entity or its partners are determined to have the potential for impact, the appropriate level of NEPA analysis will be undertaken before any projects are implemented.

The Strategies

STRATEGY 1: Create an Identity for the Heritage Area

Action Step A: Create a package including a graphic identity and messaging to illustrate and explain the coordinating entity's goals and work

Action Step B: Oversee design and installation of signage that promotes the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area

Action Step C: Enhance awareness by communicating the coordinating entity's goals and work through presentations, meetings and media awareness

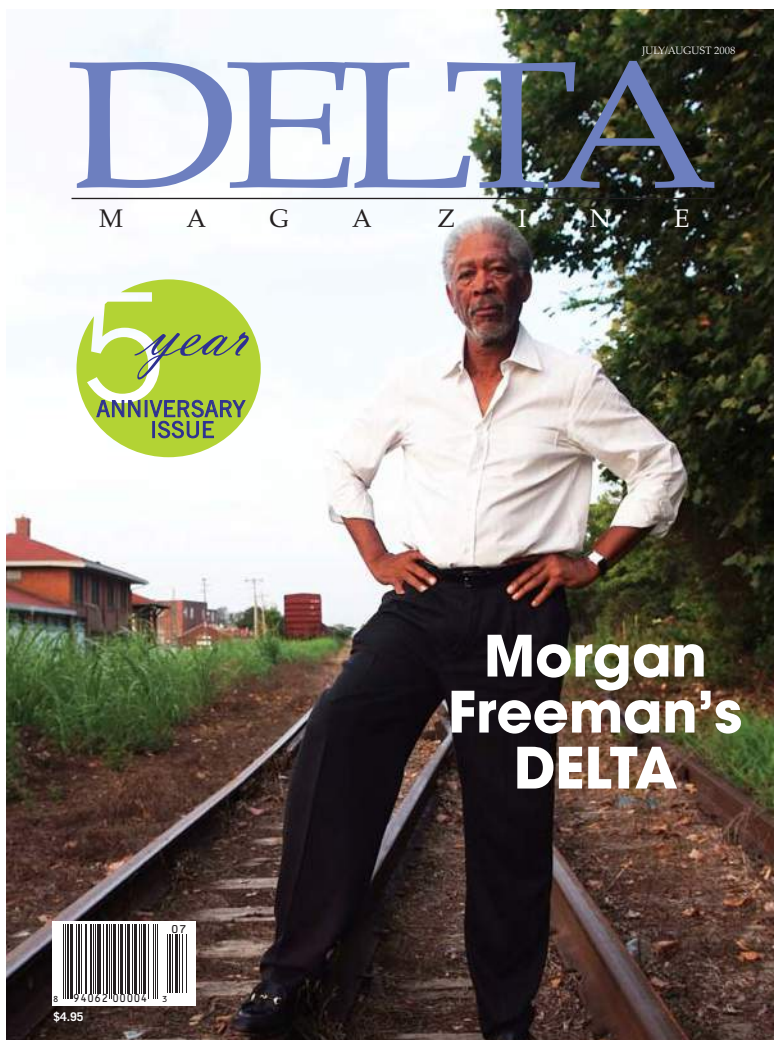
Creating awareness of the Delta's designation as a National Heritage Area is an essential step in building a network of engaged partners. Two factors will be addressed by creating an identity for the heritage area: **Increase awareness of the heritage area's designation, its existence as an organization and its goals** - The region received National Heritage Area designation in 2009 and the management plan's development has facilitated outreach to a wide range of organizations and stakeholders throughout the region. Because the heritage

An Identity for the Heritage Area Will Answer:

- What is the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area?
- What does the coordinating entity do?
- Why is the Delta's heritage and culture important?
- Are there opportunities to become involved?

area was in its early stages of development and outreach during the planning process, it was not surprising that many stakeholders agreed there was a lack of awareness of the designation. Ninety-percent of respondents to the online survey indicated they did not believe there was widespread awareness of the Delta's National Heritage Area designation.

• Emphasize the significance of the Delta's culture and heritage – The unique and nationally significant history of the Delta must be understood and embraced by the people who call the Delta home. More than 66 percent of respondents to the online survey, as well as many participants in stakeholder interviews and public meetings, noted a lack of awareness of the importance of the Delta's history and a lack of local



Delta Magazine shares the culture of the Mississippi Delta with its readers.

Table 8.1
The Delta’s Digital Divide:
Internet Subscribership

8 counties	0-20%
6 counties	20-40%
2 counties	40-60%
1 county	60-80%
1 county	80-100%

pride in the Delta’s heritage and culture as challenges that must be addressed in order to meet the goals of preserving heritage and culture and contributing to sustainable economic development.

Developing a readily-recognizable graphic element and a set of clear messages will answer questions about the heritage area’s purpose, the importance of the Delta’s heritage and culture and opportunities to become involved.

Once the graphic element and messages are developed, the coordinating entity will take additional steps to reach out to share this message in a variety of ways that can include:

- **Trademark the graphic element** - Develop guidelines for usage, and encourage usage by partners in print and electronic materials.
- **Place the graphic element for visibility** – The coordinating entity will use the graphic element in all print and electronic materials and will work with partners to place signage in prominent locations in the heritage area.
- **Develop and implement a schedule of presentations** – Building awareness and involvement in the heritage area will be achieved through continual outreach including presentations of the goals, messages and work plan to a wide range of audiences. This effort will include responding to requests for presentations as well as outreach to groups to offer presentations.
- **Use a wide variety of methods to communicate** – In recent years, communication has transitioned from traditional methods of mailing information and placing articles in local newspapers to communicating through the Internet in social media, email, websites, blogs and other forums. However, the Mississippi Delta presents a challenge in communication because much of the population does not have Internet access. In a 2010 study, eight counties reported Internet subscribership between 0-20%; six counties were between 20-40%; two counties were between 40-60%; one reported 60-80% and one county reported 80-100%. (Source: Federal Communications Commission data, Investigative Reporting Workshop of the American University School of Communication, Study of Broadband Subscribers, December 2010.) In terms of traditional media, there are only eight

Just naming something an awesome name isn’t going to make people understand how lovely it is to have this distinction bestowed upon us in the Delta.
 —Stakeholder Comment

local papers in the 18-county region. All have an on-line version. Magazines include *Delta Magazine*, *Life in the Delta*, *Mississippi Magazine*, *Bluffs and Bayous* and *Delta Business Journal*. Additionally, there are local ABC and CBS television affiliates with studios in Greenwood and Greenville as well as a PBS affiliate and an affiliate of the Fox Network, the Delta

Fox. There are approximately 35 local radio stations. The lack of Internet access in the Mississippi Delta was addressed in the planning process by using traditional means of communication – mailing announcements and invitations, sending press releases to the local media and making presentations to organizations – in addition to creating an Internet presence through a website, Facebook and email. These strategies will continue to be employed as the management plan is implemented to ensure that a wide audience is reached.

STRATEGY 2: Document the Value of Culture and Heritage and Inform Stakeholders

Action Step A: Research, document and publicize the economic impact of investment in the Delta’s heritage (revitalization, job creation) and in heritage tourism (visitor data, expenditures, investments).

Action Step B: Inform elected officials and the public of the economic value of the Delta’s culture and heritage.

There are real, tangible benefits to heritage preservation. We need to make it clear that there are immediate economic benefits associated with saving the history and heritage of the Delta. We’re talking about jobs and investments and lots of both.

—Stakeholder Comment

There are many unique aspects of the Delta’s culture and heritage as reflected in the heritage area’s themes including the origin of the Blues, the struggle for Civil Rights, transformation of the land, the dominance of agriculture as an economic force and the growth of communities with a variety of architectural styles in housing and commercial buildings. The economic impact of investments in preserving, revitalizing and telling the stories of the Delta is understood to be significant; however, there are currently no comprehensive studies to document this impact.

Many organizations and agencies in the Delta have focused their efforts on preserving the area’s culture and heritage and capitalizing on these resources for economic development. Only a few have documented the economic impact of these efforts. Two examples of tracking of investments and expenditures in culture and heritage are:

Main Street Communities

The Mississippi Main Street Association is a private, non-profit organization contracted with the Mississippi Development Authority administer the Main Street Program and to direct the revitalization efforts of downtowns and surrounding neighborhoods in Mississippi’s cities and towns. Main Street is an economic development program based on historic preservation. The association tracks investment in revitalizing downtowns. Reports on the Delta’s 10 Main Street communities show significant investment between January 2010 and June 2013:

Table 8.2 Mississippi Delta Main Street Communities – Investment Report: January 2010-June 2013*

City name	New businesses	New Jobs	Public dollars invested	Private dollars invested	Façade rehabs
Cleveland	14	44	\$873,000	\$5,000	0
Batesville	22	108	\$485,948	\$1,977,890	6
Greenville	2	12	\$115,000	\$998,500	12
Greenwood	6	10	\$43,500	\$6,388,500	20
Hernando	33	107	0	\$317,000	5
Indianola	32	152	\$387,035	\$323,340	1
Lexington	2	13	\$268,000	\$850,000	0
Senatobia	27	63	\$45,730	\$127,050	3
Tunica	16	53	\$303,043	\$213,170	10
Vicksburg	34	141	\$29,723,033	\$4,852,609	16

* Source: Main Street Report, Mississippi Main Street Association, June 2013

Vicksburg National Military Park

As one of the major attractions in the Mississippi Delta, Vicksburg National Military Park hosts thousands of visitors each year. These visits have a significant impact on the area's economy through job creation and expenditures beyond the park's boundaries on visitor services such as lodging, dining, visiting other attractions and retail purchases. A 2011 study showed the following data:

Table 8.3 Vicksburg National Military Park – 2011*

# of visits	796,035
Expenditures – all visitors	\$42 million
Expenditures – non-local	\$39 million
Jobs attributed to park (part-time and full-time)	589
Labor income	\$16 million
Value added (profits, indirect business taxes)	\$27 million

* Source: *Economic Benefits to Local Communities from National Park Visitation 2011*; Prepared by the Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies, Michigan State University for the National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior

Additional Insights on the Creative Economy, Tourism and Historic Preservation

Documentation has also been undertaken through the Mississippi Arts Commission's creative economy study, the Mississippi Development Authority Tourism Division's annual visitor research and the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association's branding research. Each of these efforts provides some insights into the economic impact of culture and heritage, although none provides a comprehensive study.

- **The Creative Economy in the Mississippi Delta**

In the Delta and across the state, the Mississippi Arts Commission has taken a strong lead in advocating for and developing the creative economy. The Arts Commission partnered with the Mississippi Development Authority to examine the existing creative industries in a study published in 2011, *Mississippi's Creative Economy: Realizing the Economic Potential of Creativity in Mississippi*. The agencies hosted a series of "Creative Economy Road Show" events, including one in the Delta, to inform people about the creative economy and garner support at the local level.

0.1389The report segmented the creative economy into six creative clusters with a total of 77 industries:

- Visual and performing arts
- Design
- Film, video and media
- Literary and publishing
- Culinary arts
- Museums and heritage

According to the report, creative cluster employment grew statewide by four percent from 2002 to 2008 with a significant dip in 2005 due to Hurricane Katrina. The Delta region has not fared as well in recent years, losing more than five percent of creative enterprise jobs from 2006 to 2007. The decline continued in 2008 (the last year of the study's data) as it did in the rest of the state due to the recession.

Looking at statewide employment in the creative economy, the Delta ranks lowest at 6.2% (jobs per 1,000 people) compared to the Capital/ River Region at 15.1%, Coastal Region at 13.4%, Hills Region at 10.9% and Pines Region at 8.6%. Comparing employment in the six creative clusters against national averages (design; film, video and media; literary and publishing; culinary arts; and museums and heritage), the Delta Region ranked fifth among the state's five regions.

- **Tourism Expenditures**

Tourism is an important part of the economy in the Mississippi Delta. In FY2012, expenditures to the Delta's 18 counties totaled approximately \$1.6 billion, reflecting almost one-fourth of the state's total tourism expenditures of \$6.16 billion. Direct tourism employment totaled 21,780 with a total percentage of employment averaging 8.7% in the 18 counties. (Note: Tunica County represents a large part of these numbers - \$789,606,465 in expenditures, 9,500 employees and 81% of the population employed in tourism.)

Research reports from the Mississippi Office of Tourism focus on visitor origin and expenditures but do not collect data on the activities of visitors while they are in the state. In 2009-2010, the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association conducted a research project to better understand visitors to the Delta. Research documenting visitors' favorite activities in the Delta showed great interest in cultural and heritage activities, but the study did not include data on expenditures to show the economic impact of culture and heritage.

Visit historic sites	65.1%
Wander back roads	56.8%
See live music	50.0%
Attend festivals	44.5%
Discover new foods	38.4%
Visit museums	32.9%
Photography	28.8%
Gaming/casinos	24.7%
Family reunions	19.2%
Shopping	17.1%

- **Tax Credit Investments for Historic Preservation**

According to the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, "Substantial federal and state tax credits are available for the rehabilitation of qualifying buildings in Mississippi. Some projects are eligible for both state and federal tax credits, and the combined credits can reduce the cost of those projects substantially. There are three primary tax incentives for the rehabilitation of historic Mississippi buildings, two federal and one state. The federal tax credits apply only to structures used for business purposes. The state tax credit is available to both business and residential properties.



Students tour Bryant's Grocery as they learn the stories of the Civil Rights movement in the Delta.

Photo: Delta Center for Culture and Learning

- The federal government offers a 20% credit for the rehabilitation of historic structures used for *income-producing purposes* and a 10% credit for the rehabilitation of non-historic buildings constructed before 1936 and used for *income-producing purposes other than residential rental*.
- The State of Mississippi offers a 25% credit for the rehabilitation of historic structures used for *residential or business purposes*. Properties qualifying for the 20% federal preservation tax credit automatically qualify for the state tax credit. (County-by-county data is not available as the Mississippi Department of Archives and History tracks statewide investment by fiscal year.)

Table 8.4 Mississippi Delta – Examples of Federal Historic Tax Credit Projects – 2002-2012

County	City	Project Name	Use	Year
Bolivar	Cleveland	Old Baptist Parsonage	Office	2002
Carroll	Carrollton	Sullivan House	Housing	2008
Carroll	Carrollton	Seven Gables	Housing	2010
Coahoma	Clarksdale	Woolworth Building	Housing/Other	2010
Coahoma	Clarksdale	John Clark House	Housing/Hotel	2003
Coahoma	Clarksdale	Prairie Plantation House (d'Oley Louise House)	Housing/Multi	2012
DeSoto	Hernando	300 West Commerce St.	Other	2003
Holmes	Lexington	R.E. Wilburn Building	Other	2004
Holmes	Lexington	303 Court Square	Commercial	2004
Holmes	Lexington	208 Court Square	Housing	2010
Leflore	Greenwood	Swayze Building	Other	2001
Leflore	Greenwood	Provine Building	Commercial	2003
Leflore	Greenwood	Physicians and Surgeons Building	Commercial	2007
Leflore	Greenwood	Frank Sistare Cotton Co.	Office	2008
Leflore	Greenwood	Ford Building	Commercial	2002
Washington	Leland	204 East Third St.	Housing	2004
Warren	Vicksburg	The Dabney House	Housing	2009
Warren	Vicksburg	Nogales House	Housing	2004
Warren	Vicksburg	Lockett Compound	Housing	2006
Warren	Vicksburg	George Washington Ball House	Hotel	2005
Warren	Vicksburg	Cherokee	Housing	2010
Warren	Vicksburg	B'Nai B'rith Literary Club	Other	2004
Warren	Vicksburg	1115 First East St.	Hotel	2004

The Need for Documentation of the Economic Impact of Culture and Heritage

As described in the previous section, although there is some information available, there are many areas where documentation is needed to provide a comprehensive picture of the economic impact of investment in culture and heritage for community revitalization and heritage tourism. Some areas where study is needed include:

- **Mississippi Blues Trail** – The trail has received an extensive investment of time and resources from the Mississippi Blues Commission, the Mississippi Development Authority Tourism Division and partners throughout the state. Seventy-nine of the state's 175 historic trail markers are in the Delta. A website and an app guide visitors to these sites. Although the trail has been in existence since 2005, no studies have been conducted to determine how many visitors the trail brings to Mississippi or to

the Delta and what economic impact is generated.

- **Festivals** – Some three dozen annual festivals are held in the Delta each year, including Blues festivals such as the Juke Joint Festival in Clarksdale and the B.B. King Festival in Indianola, that draw visitors from across the country and internationally. Although some, such as the Mississippi Blues and Heritage Festival, do make estimates of their economic impact, no studies have been conducted to calculate the economic impact of all of these festivals' collective impact on the Delta's economy.
- **Mississippi Delta Hot Tamale Trail** – In 2006, the Southern Foodways Alliance and Viking Range Corporation established the Hot Tamale Trail, to promote this unique aspect of the Delta's heritage by guiding visitors to more than a dozen places in the region. A website includes a map, information on each tamale restaurant and oral histories with the owners. There has not been a study to determine if the trail has increased visitation to these sites or generated additional revenue in these communities.
- **Cultural and heritage tourism** – It is understood among tourism promoters in the Delta that many visitors come to enjoy the region's culture and heritage. However, research by the Mississippi Development Authority Tourism Division and the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association is not cross referenced to specifically connect the activities visitors are enjoying with their expenditures. A study that connects activities with expenditures will provide better insights into the economic impact of culture and heritage as it relates to tourism.
- **Recreation** – Visitors who come to the Delta primarily for culture and heritage activities may also enjoy the Delta's recreational offerings – such as bird watching or visiting a park. National research studies show that 69% of cultural heritage travelers enjoy travel experiences that combine a variety of activities including recreation. *Source: The Cultural and Heritage Traveler 2013, Mandala Research LLC.*
- **Job creation due to historic preservation**– Although data is available on federal tax credits and statewide data is available on state tax credits, there is no tracking of job creation due to rehabilitation of these sites. Likewise, no data has been collected on the economic impact of rehabilitating historic sites that do not use tax credits. A workforce skilled in the specialty of restoring historic buildings can be documented for the number of workers and their impact on the Delta's economy.
- **Revitalization effect on property values** – A rehabilitated building – whether commercial or residential – can have a significant impact on property values. Although individual communities may track this information as part of their regularly scheduled property assessments, a Delta-wide study will better show the impact that revitalization has on raising property values and associated local tax collections.
- **Non-Main Street towns** – In addition to the Delta's 10 Main Street communities (and network partners Belzoni and Como), there are other towns that are engaged in revitalization efforts – or are making plans to revitalize – including Clarksdale, Rolling



The Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival in Greenville was started by the Mississippi Action for Community Education (MACE) and celebrated its 36th year in 2013. As one of the oldest Blues festivals in the Delta, the event attracts thousands of residents and visitors to enjoy authentic Blues, gospel and other musical styles, contributing significantly to the local economy.

Photo: Al White

Fork, Leland, Olive Branch, Tutwiler and Yazoo City. Investments in these communities' culture and heritage should also be tracked.

- **Support services and jobs** – Culture and heritage revitalization and programming activities can generate and support a number of support services and jobs that should be tracked for the percentage attributable to culture and heritage including web and collateral material design, tour guides, contractors, construction workers and retail/restaurant jobs. It is not anticipated that any actions by the coordinating entity or its partners to generate new jobs will have a negative impact on the environment.

What should be measured?

A study sponsored by the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation identified key factors to measure as well as ways to communicate economic impact. Measurements from this study as well as additional measurements specific to the Delta will be considered as a research study is developed and implemented including:

- Jobs and household income – Include a larger base than tax act projects
- Jobs and household income – Cultural and heritage employment including artisans, galleries, museum staff (guides, curators, exhibit designers, etc.), festival organizers, musicians and others
- Impact of historic designation on property values
- Environmental measures of historic preservation
- Contributions of historic preservation to downtown revitalization – including more than Main Street towns
- Impact of increased cultural heritage tourism

There is a lack of education as to why historic buildings are good. To some people, old equals bad and new equals good. Not many people realize that our old buildings are what create our unique sense of place.

—Stakeholder Comment

(Source: Adapted from Measuring the Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation, Donovan Rypkema, Place Economics, 2012)

Publicize Economic Impact Findings

Conducting an assessment of the economic impact of culture and heritage in the early years of the heritage area's existence will provide a baseline to track growth as the coordinating entity implements its plans in the coming years. Each time a study is conducted (ideally every 3-5 years), the findings will be publicized by the coordinating entity to a variety of audiences including:

- Local, state and federal elected officials
- Local, state and federal agencies – preservation, tourism, arts and other agencies can help further publicize the findings
- Delta residents – outreach through civic organizations, schools, churches and other groups as well as local media

STRATEGY 3: Honor and Celebrate Partners' Accomplishments

Action Step A: Create an awards program with categories to honor and celebrate Mississippi Delta residents who excel in preserving, interpreting and promoting the Delta's heritage and culture

Action Step B: Host an annual heritage awards event to recognize these individuals and to showcase the unique cultural and heritage resources in the Delta that must be preserved

This strategy creates a forum to address stakeholders' requests and addresses the three pillars identified to Save Places and Perpetuate Culture:

- **Provide recognition for places that have been saved** - An important finding during the planning process was stakeholders' desire for the coordinating entity to raise awareness and provide validation that local culture and history – and the places where important events happened - matter. Stakeholders stated that they would like for the heritage area to give public validation to projects that save heritage and culture.
- **Raise awareness of the threat of losing important places** – Celebration of places that have been saved also provides a forum to increase awareness of the many other places that are threatened with loss through demolition or neglect.

Direct resources toward training, education and technical assistance for preservation – In addition to raising awareness, the coordinating entity will take direct action to save places and perpetuate culture through training, education and technical assistance. The places that receive heritage awards will serve not only as inspiration but as technical case studies for saving more places in the Delta.

The development of a heritage awards program will meet all of the criteria outlined at the beginning of this chapter to build the network:

- The program will reflect the mission and vision of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area.
- The coordinating entity will take a leadership role in developing and implementing the heritage awards program.
- The heritage awards program will offer opportunities for stakeholders to engage in a variety of ways through preparing nominations, attending the event and encouraging preservation of heritage in their communities.
- The heritage awards program will engage new audiences of Delta residents by recognizing their achievements in the preservation and perpetuation of the Delta's culture and heritage.

Additionally, the heritage awards program will reflect the criteria for strategy selection:

1. Award categories will connect to the heritage area's themes:
 - The Mississippi River and the Land it Embraces
 - The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound
 - Moving Toward Freedom: Changing America's Character in the Struggle for Rights
 - Growing More Than Cotton: The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity
 - The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta's Diverse Communities
2. Projects or programs receiving awards will reflect a focus on quality and authenticity by demonstrating:
 - Research and documentation
 - Professional standards (such as collections care, interpretation, preservation practices, historical documentation)
 - Plans for maintaining the project or program after the development stage
3. Projects will save and celebrate important resources as they:
 - Improve, protect and advance the understanding of the Delta's past and its contributions to the American story

- Take direct action to preserve resources including the built environment, natural resources and living traditions

STRATEGY 4: Establish Forums for Discussion and Planning

There is a real role for (the heritage area) being an organizer, being the one to bring together the regionalism.

—MDNHA board member comment

Action Step A: Host exchanges for discussion of preservation, tourism and other topics

Action Step B: Provide a forum to address issues of race, economics and history in order to work toward reconciliation

Action Step C: Form committees to monitor and plan for issues including preservation, conservation and telling the Delta’s story

An engaged network of partners must see a place for themselves in the process of developing and implementing new heritage area projects, programs and activities. *Convener, organizer, facilitator* and *advocate* were all words that emerged repeatedly throughout the planning process as appropriate roles for the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area’s coordinating entity. Bringing people together to discuss important issues and topics will engage partners who share and support the heritage area’s goals.

Forums for discussion and planning are divided into three categories in this section – hosting exchanges to discuss pertinent topics in fields such as preservation, tourism and living traditions, providing a forum to discuss issues related to race reconciliation, and forming committees to monitor issues and provide technical assistance or training related to heritage area activities in heritage, culture and natural resource preservation and telling the Delta’s story. A summary report from each gathering will be given to the MDNHA staff and board of directors to provide input on issues that are important to stakeholders. These findings will assist the coordinating entity to develop annual work plans that address key priorities.

- **Action Step A: Host gatherings to discuss history, preservation, tourism, arts, living traditions and other topics**

Participants in public meetings throughout the plan’s development process commented that they appreciated the coordinating entity’s role in bringing people together to discuss topics that were important to them. In particular, at a day-long event, the MDNHA Exchange Regional Planning Forum, participants in several of the breakout sessions expressed a desire to continue participating in discussion gatherings that would be hosted by the coordinating entity.

The coordinating entity will develop plans for these gatherings from the recommendations made by stakeholders. An annual schedule of events will be developed and publicized to attract participants from throughout the heritage area. These events will be small gatherings of interested participants and will not have a negative impact on resources. Topics will be developed by reaching out to stakeholders throughout the heritage area to identify primary interests that connect to the heritage area’s goals. Among the options for event formats that will be considered by the coordinating entity in developing plans are:

Mississippi Delta Heritage Area Conference – A one or two-day conference would provide opportunities for dialogue and networking as well as professional development.

Representatives from many sectors including history, education, preservation, tourism, arts, faith-based organizations, economic development agencies and others would be included. (This event could also include the heritage awards discussed previously in this chapter.)

- **Regional gatherings** – Using the same format as the region-wide conference, smaller gatherings could be hosted in locations throughout the heritage area to allow access for a wider network of participants.
- **Common interest gatherings** – The coordinating entity will facilitate networks of like-minded practitioners. For example, local churches are emerging as leaders in telling local history through storytelling festivals and cemetery tours. Helping these groups connect will benefit the heritage area by creating a unified, compelling story.
- **Action Step B: Provide a safe forum to address issues of race, economics and history in order to work toward reconciliation**

The story of African Americans and their relationship to the historically white power structure in the Mississippi Delta is a long and difficult one. As described in the theme “Moving Toward Freedom: Changing America’s Character in the Struggle for Rights,” this history encompasses slavery, Reconstruction, segregation, murder, disfranchisement, poll taxes and literacy tests for the right to vote, extreme poverty and the Great Migration.

The murder of Emmett Till in 1955 is credited by many with sparking the beginning of what became the Civil Rights Movement. Many of the pivotal events of the 1960s Civil Rights movement occurred in the Delta including Freedom Summer’s voter registration campaign in 1964 and the 1968 Poor People’s Campaign, an effort to achieve economic justice for the poor. Leaders and activists such as Amzie Moore, Fannie Lou Hamer, Unita Blackwell, Dr. T.R.M. Howard, Dr. Aaron Henry, Rev. George Lee and the Freedom Riders are among those who paved the way for changes that are still unfolding today.

The state of Mississippi has begun a Mississippi Freedom Trail to place historic markers commemorating the heroic acts of Mississippi’s Civil Rights leaders. By mid-2013, four markers had been placed in the Delta honoring Fannie Lou Hamer, Dr. T.R.M. Howard, Amzie Moore and at Bryant’s Grocery where the Emmett Till tragedy began. Plans call for additional markers as funds become available.

As the theme further notes, there have been many changes over the years as African Americans gained full voting rights and now serve as elected officials and leaders in many Delta communities. According to U.S. Census records from 2002 (the most recent data available), the state of Mississippi has more African American elected officials than any other state in the country.



Fannie Lou Hamer – Mississippi Freedom Trail marker

Photo: Delta Center for Culture and Learning

Telling the Delta's Story

Many places and events tell facets of the African American story in the Delta including:

- Mississippi Blues Trail
- Mississippi Freedom Trail
- Delta Blues Museum
- Muddy Waters Cabin
- Dockery Farms
- Leland Blues Murals
- Highway 61 Blues Museum
- B.B. King Museum
- Jacqueline House Museum
- Mound Bayou
- Civil Rights Tours – Greenwood and Indianola
- Delta Heritage Tours (Delta Center for Culture and Learning)
- Juke Joint Festival
- B.B. King Festival
- Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival
- Mighty Mississippi Music Festival

Even with the emergence of African American leadership in recent years, the Delta still faces challenges including two key issues that require the heritage area's attention:

▪ **Economics** –As noted in the Socioeconomic Environment section of this management plan (Chapter Two), almost a third of the Delta's residents live below the poverty threshold – a reality that disproportionately affects African Americans because they represent 60.3% of the population of the Delta. A 2007 study found that the median household income for whites in the Delta was \$44,055, almost on par with the state average for whites of \$44,955. In striking contrast, the median household income for blacks in the Delta was \$21,165 – 23% less than the state median household income for blacks. There have been many efforts in recent years to address the need for economic improvement. In 2006, the Mississippi State Legislature created the Special Task Force for Revitalization of the Mississippi Delta Region. In 2009, the task force produced a plan: *A Time of Reckoning: Testing the Will for Change in the Mississippi Delta*. An outcome of the task force's work was the formation of the Mississippi Delta Strategic Compact, a nonprofit organization formed in 2010. The Compact works with a wide range of local, state and federal partners for the purpose of improving the quality of life for Delta residents. The Compact focuses its work in four areas: increasing the number of post-secondary graduates, connecting job seekers to living wage careers, addressing the Delta's health crisis and establishing the Delta as a center

for creative arts. The fourth goal – establishing the Delta as a center for creative arts – corresponds to goals of the heritage area and offers partnership opportunities between the two organizations. Another organization focused on improving life in the Delta is Mississippi Action for Community Education, Inc. (MACE). MACE is a nonprofit, minority rural development organization created by community leaders in 1967 to stimulate physical, social, and economic development in the rural Mississippi Delta. The organization describes its work in this way: "Very early in its history, MACE learned that beyond the problems of race and poverty, there exists in southern, rural communities the broader, structural problem of underdevelopment...for genuine community development to occur, the prerequisite human and organizational capacities must first be developed, the basic community social and political structures must first be created." Activities of MACE include producing the annual Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival in Greenville, conducting a Women's Business Training Center, hosting Delta Dialogue (an annual conference), providing training to assist with home ownership and many other programs.

Telling the Delta's story – The themes identified for the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area reflect many facets of the African American story – slavery, segregation, sharecropping, Civil Rights, changing times, creation of Blues music, expressions of faith, culinary traditions and building communities. Many places and events tell some of these stories including museums, historic sites and festivals. A number of organizations have documented this history and stories and shared them with residents and visitors. These include the Delta

Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University that hosts *The Most Southern Place on Earth* workshops funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Each year, the Center brings approximately 80 teachers from across the country to spend a week learning about the Delta's history to enable them to teach this history to their students. Guest speakers include scholars on the Delta's history as well as people who played a role in significant events. Some of the speakers are filmed, providing a permanent record of their memories and knowledge of events. The Delta State University Archives and Museum has also created a traveling exhibit to tell the story of the murder of Emmett Till and the trial of his murderers.

The Mississippi Humanities Council has an extensive oral history program developed in partnership with Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg. The project receives funding from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (appropriated by the Mississippi State Legislature) that is regranted to agencies and organizations with the goal of documenting the "collective memory of Mississippi's culture, heritage and institutions in the 20th and 21st centuries." Oral histories from the Delta include those of Civil Rights leaders, memories of the Mississippi River flood of 1927 as well as memories of many other aspects of life in the Mississippi Delta.

The confluence of these factors – the efforts that have been made to improve the Delta's economy and to document and tell the story and the persistence of poverty and often divided lives between African Americans and whites is a challenge to the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area and all of its partners. The coordinating entity seeks to contribute to sustainable economic development through programs based on the Delta's culture and heritage. Stakeholders involved in the planning process voiced a belief that the heritage area will succeed by engaging new partners and addressing issues of relationships. Specifically, the coordinating entity was asked to provide a "safe" forum to address issues of race, economics and history and to work with partners toward reconciliation.

The coordinating entity will develop plans to address this need and will look to partners engaged in this work to help shape this programming, particularly at the Margaret Walker Center at Jackson State University and the William Winter Center for Racial Reconciliation at the University of Mississippi.

- **Action Step C: Form committees to monitor and plan for issues including preservation, conservation and telling the Delta's story**

The planning process for the heritage area's management plan included forming committees to provide guidance on stewardship of historic and natural resources and telling the Delta's story. The committees met twice during the planning phase, and many committee members participated in public meetings and stakeholder interviews. The committees provided a valuable addition to the planning process as they shared their expertise on these topics. Committees also reviewed and considered the five alternatives and forwarded their recommendation of a blended

Policy and process is needed if we are providing funding or assistance to other groups. (We must also have) the ability to maintain quality control of projects that others do under the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area's name.

—MDNHA board member comment

approach to the coordinating entity's board of directors. To continue this level of engagement by experts in the stewardship of resources and telling the Delta's story, the coordinating entity will form two permanent committees to monitor and address these issues. The committees are:

Resource Stewardship Committee – This committee will monitor issues related to historic preservation and natural resource conservation. The committee will be familiar with the heritage area's management plan and recommend issues that should be addressed in each year's annual work plan. Committee members will also aid in publicizing these issues and advocating for preservation and conservation of resources.

- **Delta Heritage Attractions Committee** – "Help us help ourselves" was a stakeholder's comment about the benefits of creating an attractions network. This committee will provide a forum for cultural, heritage and natural resources attractions to become engaged in the heritage area's programs and projects to tell the Delta's story. Committee members will be familiar with the heritage area's interpretive plan and will assist in its implementation. The committee will also offer an opportunity for attractions representatives to share information and access training. The committee will interact with the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association to share new developments in telling the Delta's story that can be promoted to visitors.

STRATEGY 5: Support Funding of Projects That Meet Heritage Area Goals

Action Step A: Act as a clearinghouse for grant or sponsorship opportunities and as either the prime or a partner applicant on grants that support Delta heritage

Action Step B: Create a grants program to provide seed money supporting projects that meet heritage area goals

Directing a portion of the coordinating entity's resources to support partners' projects and activities will help to build the network and accomplish the heritage area's goals. This will be accomplished in two ways – assisting partners in obtaining funds from granting organizations or corporate sponsors and offering small grants to spark the development and implementation of projects.

- **Action Step A : Act as a clearinghouse for grant or sponsorship opportunities and as either the prime or a partner applicant on grants that support Delta heritage**

The coordinating entity's direct involvement in supporting funding of appropriate projects will result in benefits to the heritage area including:

- **Serve as the go-to source for funding information** – In order to assist partners in finding funding, coordinating entity staff will become conversant in granting organizations and corporations that support the type of work the heritage area and its partners undertake. This clearinghouse of potential financial resources at the local, state, regional and federal level will be valuable to partners and also directly to the coordinating entity in seeking funds to support heritage area-wide projects and activities.
- **Provide technical assistance for specific projects** - For projects that are identified as critical to meeting the heritage area's goals (such as rehabilitation of

a historic structure), the coordinating entity will provide technical assistance in identifying potential funders and preparing proposals or applications.

- **Increase visibility and further the goals of the heritage area** – Partners seeking to secure support will be familiar with the heritage area’s goals. They will be able to clearly communicate how their projects contribute to these region-wide goals.
 - **Connect to heritage area themes** – All coordinating entity support – whether through awarding a direct grant or providing assistance in locating a funder – will be for projects and activities that connect to the themes identified for telling the Delta’s story, saving places and perpetuating culture.
 - **Ensure authenticity and quality** – The coordinating entity’s support will be contingent on a thorough review of the project’s plans and the ability to confirm that accurate research and planning are included in the development timeline to ensure a high quality project.
 - **Encourage new ways to tell the story and save places** – By focusing coordinating entity support and grant funds for specific types of projects and aspects of the Delta’s story – such as exhibits, tours, research or programming – the heritage area will encourage innovative projects that tell the story and save places in new ways.
 - **Increase credibility and leverage funding** – The coordinating entity’s endorsement of projects through funding and other support will assist partners by increasing the credibility of their projects and help them find additional funding and support from other sources.
- **Action Step B: Create a grants program to provide seed money supporting projects that meet heritage area goals**

The coordinating entity will develop a grant program to provide seed funding supporting projects that meet the heritage area’s goals. The board of directors will appoint a subcommittee to draft guidelines for the grant program. The guidelines will be reviewed and adopted by the board and implemented by coordinating entity staff. Considerations in developing the guidelines include:

- **Grant fund** - A range of total grant funds available each year will be determined based on the overall coordinating entity budget and the appropriate amount to direct toward a grants program. Although an ideal annual grant fund amount will be determined, it is understood that available funds may vary from one year to the next based on total available funds for the heritage area.
- **Frequency** – The number of times each year that grant applications may be submitted – quarterly, twice a year or yearly – will be determined based on the anticipated number of applications and the capacity to review and make awards in a timely manner.
- **Categories** – A selection of categories will be developed based on the heritage area’s goals. Categories may include interpretation, education, preservation and tourism with sub-categories such as projects, programs, events and promotions.
- **Requirements** – A variety of requirements will be considered for applicants such as crediting the coordinating entity in all materials related to the project, a cash or in-kind match, environmental sensitivity (such as using recycled

materials for building an exhibit and meeting NEPA requirements), frequency of submitting reports or other requirements.

- **Eligibility** – A list of the types of agencies and organizations who may apply for a grant will be developed.
- **Application** – A draft application will be created to include a description of the project, budget, timeline, key personnel, methods of evaluating the project’s success, plans for publicizing the project and other information needed to allow for a thorough review of the request for funding.

Application process – The application process will be developed including determining how applications will be submitted, who will review the applications and make recommendations to the board of directors, how applicants will be notified of their application’s status and how grant awards will be publicized.

- **Reporting and evaluation** – A plan for the grant cycle’s conclusion will include a report from the grant recipient and an evaluation of the project’s success. The coordinating entity will reserve the right to use information on the grant-funded projects as case studies of the heritage area’s accomplishments.

Each project supported or funded by the coordinating entity will employ best practices as described in Chapter Ten: *Implementation Procedures and Schedule*. Actions will include consultation with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (State Historic Preservation Office). It is not anticipated that any projects will create direct or indirect impact on resources. If future actions are determined to have the potential for impact, appropriate compliance to all NEPA guidelines will be implemented by the coordinating entity and its partners.

It is okay to hand out small grants and help others find resources, but for every dollar we have and use, we need to be accountable and be able to say that it has been productive and has moved along the mission of the organization.

—MDNHA board member comment

STRATEGY 6: Support Sustainable Economic Development Based on Heritage and Culture

Action Step A: Provide support to help develop new cultural and heritage-based businesses and to strengthen existing cultural heritage-based businesses

Action Step B: Develop a hospitality/ambassador training program

Creating a “climate of collaboration and sustainable economic development” is stated in the first sentence of the mission statement. The vision statement also foresees the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area in future years as a place that “demonstrates progress toward economic growth.” Throughout this management plan there are strategies that can directly impact economic development of the heritage area by sparking employment related to preservation, tourism or arts and creating new places and activities to attract visitors. The coordinating entity will work actively with partners including the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association, Mississippi Division of Tourism, Mississippi Blues Commission, Mississippi Freedom Trail Commission and places throughout the Delta that reflect the area’s heritage and culture. As noted in Chapter Two: Boundaries and Socioeconomic Environment, the Delta has historically high rates of unemployment and households living below the poverty

level. Increasing employment through the tourism industry and the creative economy would be a step in creating a sustainable economic climate.

Because the coordinating entity seeks to engage both residents and visitors, two training programs will be developed to stimulate economic impact in these groups. This approach – creating new businesses and welcoming visitors – will address the need for economic growth from both perspectives.

- **Action Step A: Provide support to develop new heritage and culture based businesses and to strengthen existing heritage and culture based businesses**

The Delta is filled with talented people – musicians, artists, cooks, writers, historians and others – who have much to contribute to perpetuating the region’s living traditions and generating economic impact for themselves and their communities. Although there are successful heritage and culture based businesses in the heritage area, business owners face many challenges in operations and promotions. For others, owning and operating a business is not feasible; however, these people may have an interest in sharing their talents through performing at festivals, giving tours, writing new works or selling their creations in galleries and stores.

The coordinating entity will address the development and strengthening of heritage and culture based businesses in a four-fold approach:

- **Identify living traditions practitioners who are interested in business development** – Although there are many living traditions practitioners in the Delta who are well known – such as Blues musicians or owners of hot tamale stands – many more are unknown to a larger audience. The Mississippi Arts Commission maintains three directories – an artist roster, folk artists directory and visual arts directory. The artist roster lists 12 Delta artists; there are 21 folk artists listed in that directory and there are 36 listings in the visual arts directory. A first step for the coordinating entity will be to build on these directories to identify other living traditions practitioners – some of whom may not have considered that the traditions they preserve and perpetuate have economic value. Creating this database will require an intense effort by the coordinating entity and its partners and will likely involve one-on-one conversations with many people throughout the Delta to discover these “undiscovered” living traditions practitioners.

Engender respect for living traditions practitioners – Following on this “discovery” phase, the coordinating entity will take a leadership role in communicating to residents throughout the Delta that a special respect is due to those who continue to maintain and pass down the traditions that make the Delta a special and unique place. Actions can include collecting oral histories with recording and filming, sharing stories in the local media, honoring practitioners at the heritage awards program (discussed previously in this chapter) and inviting participation in heritage area programs and activities. Engendering respect also requires the coordinating entity to approach the prospect of translating practitioner’s skills into a saleable commodity with an intense sensitivity to avoiding what folklorists often call the “caged bear syndrome” – simply putting an artist or musician in front of a crowd as entertainment for tourists. Instead, the coordinating entity commits to assisting practitioners as important partners and as key resources in preserving and perpetuating the Delta’s cultural traditions.



Sylvester Hoover offers Delta Blues Legends Tours to visitors.
Photo: Sylvester Hoover

Jobs Created by Tourism

Tourism can create a wide range of jobs – full-time, part-time and contract. Examples include:

Area of Work	Examples of Jobs
Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curator • Interpretive planner • Tour guide • Exhibit designer
Historic site or event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-enactor • Tour guide • Preservationist • Historian
Arts and Festivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Craftsperson/artist • Musician • Actor
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outfitter • Guide
Travel planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel agent
Public transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driver
Auto transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rental company owner/staff
Lodging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager/staff
Food service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager/staff
Retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager/staff
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel writer • Internet designer • Publications designer • Printer

- **Provide education on business practices** – Support systems for providing education on starting a business or interacting with other businesses include the Mississippi Main Street Program, Mississippi Arts Commissions, some of the state’s community colleges, small business development centers and others. In the study *Mississippi’s Creative Economy: Realizing the Economic Potential of Creativity in Mississippi*, a goal is to expand the Arts Mean Business program of the Mississippi Arts Commission to “reach a greater number of creative enterprises and creative people.” Identifying programs such as this one and facilitating their introduction to the Delta’s “creative enterprises and creative people” will help guide the development of new heritage and culture based businesses and strengthen existing businesses. The coordinating entity will also work to connect practitioners with forums where they could generate income through performances, demonstrations, programs and other activities. Practitioners will also be connected to the heritage area’s plan to tell the Delta’s story through strategies outlined in the interpretive plan (Chapter Six: The Delta Experience) of this management plan. Additionally, the coordinating entity will develop a resource directory of sustainable models for business development that will be available to anyone who is interested in exploring these opportunities. These activities will employ best practices as described in Chapter Ten: *Implementation Procedures and Schedule*. It is not anticipated that any projects will create direct or indirect impact on resources.
- **Work with tourism partners in promotion** – As more creative enterprises and creative people emerge in the Delta, the coordinating entity will work with tourism partners including the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association and the Mississippi Office of Tourism to help promote these places and people.
- **Action Step B: Develop a hospitality/ambassador training program**

The 18 counties of the Mississippi Delta employ 21,780 workers in direct tourism employment including lodging, food services, museums, historic sites, arts, entertainment, state-licensed casino gaming and recreation, transportation, tourism construction and advertising. Employees in these and other tourism-related businesses are in daily contact with visitors to the Delta. However, interaction with visitors is more far-reaching than direct tourism employees. Visitors may interact with anyone in the Delta – ranging from a librarian at a library where the visitor is doing genealogical research to asking a police officer for directions to attending a church service and asking a parishioner about things to do in the Delta on a Sunday afternoon. Generating economic impact through tourism requires the support of all Delta residents, not just frontline tourism industry staff. Thus, there is a need to go beyond basic hospitality training and reach out to all sectors to create ambassadors for the Delta.

According to the Tourism Works for America Council, “a truly successful hospitality training program is community wide – not restricted to ‘traditional’ travel and tourism employees.” The Council identifies target audiences as those who will help increase awareness of a community’s tourism resources and support a training program:

- Elected officials and government policymakers
- Local media
- Travel industry leaders and employees
- Business and community leaders

Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area Creates Certified Tour Ambassador Program

Creates Certified Tour Ambassador Program

The JTHG Certified Tour Ambassador Program (CTA) trains those who interact with visitors in the heritage area's national parks, Civil War battlefields, Main Street communities and historic sites. The hospitality program is a half-day interactive class supported by reference materials. Classes are taught by JTHG Partnership staff and CTA alumni. Upon completion of the course, participants become Certified Tour Ambassadors, a national designation. Graduates are well versed in customer service standards as well as the unique features of the NHA. They share their knowledge with visitors, encouraging them to stay longer to explore the region.

CTAs have access to an online database and network and receive discounts to businesses and historic sites in the JTHG NHA. Designation is renewed annually and can be earned by visiting heritage area attractions, attending CTA networking events and patronizing local businesses. The program was developed by the JTHG working closely with tourism partners and includes a train-the-trainer element.

(Source: Journey Through Hallowed Ground NHA, www.hallowedground.org)

- Educators and students
- General public

As a plan is developed, elements that will be considered for inclusion are:

- **General information** – Statistics on the economic impact of tourism in the heritage area's 18 counties – employment, tax revenues, expenditures, etc.
- **Your role in tourism** – Information for each target audience about the role they play in a successful tourism industry.
- **New destinations and activities** – Information on new cultural and heritage attractions and activities developed by the heritage area and partners such as guided or audio tours, special events, museum exhibits and itineraries. These activities will employ best practices as described in Chapter Ten: Implementation Plan. It is not anticipated that any projects will create direct or indirect impact on resources.
- **How to welcome and host visitors** – Tips on how to make visitors feel welcome. Include the locations of visitor centers and tourism-related website addresses.

Once this information is developed, the coordinating entity will determine the best way to reach the target audiences. Strategies can include:

- **Information notebooks** – Create a notebook with information on the heritage area. Include maps and directions and information on dining, lodging and other information that would be helpful to visitors. Also include the tip sheet on welcoming and hosting visitors. The notebooks can be printed and distributed at key sites (attractions, visitor centers, hotels) and placed on the heritage area's website.
- **Delta heritage tours** – The first audience for hospitality-training tours of the heritage area will be employees and volunteers who staff attractions and visitors centers. As resources allow, tours can also be offered to front-line hotel and restaurant employees.

- **News updates** – The heritage area will work in partnership with the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association to send regular updates to tourism partners with notifications such as placement of interpretive signage, new tour itineraries, fairs and festivals and other news.
- **Local media** – Press releases will announce developments in the heritage area such as interpretive signage, new tour itineraries and other news.
- **Fact sheets** – Fact sheets will include information about tourism’s economic impact and developments in the heritage area. Chambers and other partners will be asked to place these on their websites and in newsletters to reach the business community and community leaders.

STRATEGY 7: Provide Opportunities for Engagement

Action Step A: Create a volunteer program for MDNHA sanctioned events and projects

Action Step B: Offer internships and student project opportunities

Heritage and cultural sites in the Delta are operated by nonprofit organizations that depend on volunteers to achieve their missions. Volunteering is an important activity for many people as it allows them to make a contribution to the quality of life in their community and to affiliate with others who have similar interests. Additionally, college students can be engaged through specific projects or internships that further their educational goals.

- **Action Step A: Create a volunteer program**

According to a report by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 64.5 million people volunteered at least once between September 2011 and September 2012.

(Source: Supplement to the Current Population Survey, sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service)

Other findings in the report include:

- Women volunteer at a higher rate than men across all age groups, education levels and other major demographic characteristics. (29.5% vs. 23.2%)
- Those ages 35-44 were most likely to volunteer (31.6%).
- Those in their early 20s were least likely to volunteer (18.9%).
- Volunteers – both women and men – spent a median of 50 hours on volunteer activities during the period from September 2010 and September 2011. Median annual hours spent on volunteer activities ranged from a high of 90 hours for volunteers age 65 and over to a low of 32 hours for those 25-34 years old.
- Most volunteers were involved with either one or two organizations – 70.5% and 19.1%, respectively. Individuals with higher educational attainment were more likely to volunteer for multiple organizations than those with less education.
- The organization for which volunteers worked the most hours during the year was most frequently religious (33.1%), followed by education or youth services related (25.5%). Another 14.2% volunteered for social or community service organizations.
- Collecting, preparing, distributing or serving food (10.7%) and fundraising (10.7%) were the main activities performed by volunteers
- 41.6% became involved with their main organization after being asked to volunteer, usually by someone in the organization. About 42.1% became involved on their own initiative.

(The completed report is available at www.bls.gov/news.release/volun.nr0.)

The coordinating entity can help recruit volunteers for heritage area-sanctioned events and projects in several ways including:

Inventory opportunities for volunteers at heritage area partner sites including heritage, cultural and outdoor sites. An ad hoc heritage area subcommittee can be formed to inventory historic, cultural and outdoor sites to document volunteer opportunities. Categories can include assisting with events, programs and festivals; fundraising, publicity, giving tours, historical research, stewardship (such as clean-up days, planting trees, etc.), cataloging artifacts, serving on the board or a committee and other opportunities. Short-term and long-term volunteer opportunities will be included. Volunteer opportunities for projects and activities initiated by the heritage area will also be listed.

- **Create a volunteer database.** Once the information is collected, a directory can be placed on the heritage area's website. The database can begin as a simple listing of volunteer opportunities and contact information. As the site is developed, the database could be designed to be searchable. This would allow potential volunteers to look for opportunities matching their interests, skills and available time for volunteering. The database will be updated regularly to ensure current information is available to potential volunteers.
- **Publicize the database.** Once the database is developed, the resource will be publicized in local media, Facebook, through participating site websites, newsletters and other venues.
- **Track use of the database.** Partners will be asked to document when they have new volunteers to track whether they learned about the volunteer opportunity through the database.

Why do people volunteer?

Before beginning to recruit volunteers, it is important to understand why people are motivated to give their time to an organization or a project. Understanding these reasons aids in appealing to residents to meet their goals in volunteering. Three key reasons are:

- **Belief in the Project —** Volunteers have a strong belief in the goals of a project or program.
- **Opportunity to Affiliate —** Volunteering offers the opportunity to socialize with others who share the same commitment and interest. Plan occasions that allow volunteers to get to know each other and build a strong camaraderie.
- **Enjoy Recognition —** People appreciate recognition of their volunteer service. Whether it is a thank you note or a full-scale awards ceremony, let volunteers know their efforts are appreciated.

- **Action Step B: Offer internships and student project opportunities**

In addition to an academic schedule of classes related to a student’s college major, hands-on learning through an internship or special project can be a tremendous opportunity for a student. Learning new skills, exploring the range of options in a chosen field and making contacts for future employment are all benefits to the student. For the coordinating entity, the creation of an internship program offers the opportunity to achieve the heritage area’s goals while engaging a new audience. The heritage area’s internship program will have two components:

- **Heritage area internships and projects** – Students will have the opportunity to work directly with coordinating entity staff to develop region-wide heritage area projects. These may take the form of internships or short-term projects that will help students complete academic requirements or gain skills to assist them in the workplace.
- **Support for heritage area partners** – The coordinating entity’s grant program (previously discussed in this chapter) will offer a category to provide financial assistance to partners to support internships or short-term projects for activities that meet heritage area goals.

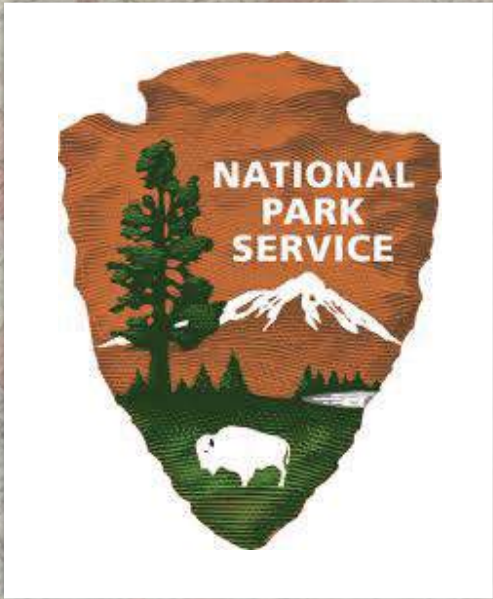
The coordinating entity will work with universities that offer undergraduate and graduate programs in history, historic preservation, public history and other related topics to shape an internship program that connects to academic requirements. Universities that may be engaged include:

- University of Mississippi – programs in African American studies, Southern studies and history
- Delta State University – program in history
- Jackson State University – program in history
- University of North Alabama – Public History Program
- Middle Tennessee State University – Center for Historic Preservation
- Mississippi Valley University
- Mississippi Delta Community College
- Coahoma Community College

Internships and student projects supported by coordinating entity will employ best practices as described in Chapter Ten: *Implementation Plan and Schedule*. Actions will include consultation with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (State Historic Preservation Office). It is not anticipated that any projects will create direct or indirect impact on resources. If future actions are determined to have the potential for impact, appropriate compliance to all NEPA guidelines will be implemented by the coordinating entity and its partners.

Chapter 9

The Business Plan



Chapter 9

Introduction

Creation of a business plan as part of the management plan is a requirement of the MDNHA's enabling legislation. This chapter results from an examination of the coordinating entity's proposed activities and a determination of the necessary operations, management, organization and structure in order to accomplish the goals and strategies in the management plan. Of particular concern in the business plan is the financial information, including anticipated revenue beyond those funds provided by the National Park Service. This chapter discusses the responsibilities of the coordinating entity in managing the heritage area organization and implementing the management plan.

I. Mission, Vision and Desired Outcome

Chapter Three: *Foundation Statement*, articulates the Foundation Statement for the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area, along with its mission and vision. To establish the foundation for the philosophy behind the business plan, the mission statement must be considered again:

The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area fosters preservation, perpetuation and celebration of the Delta's heritage through a climate of collaboration and sustainable economic development. Through a comprehensive and continual system of engagement and education, the National Heritage Area leads an inclusive network of partners, institutions and residents in achieving a regional vision. We create opportunities to save our special places, maintain our vibrant traditions, enhance community and cultural pride, support economic and social transformation and advance the appreciation and understanding of the Delta's important past and its continuing contributions to the American story. We focus on five themes: The Mississippi River and the Land It Embraces; The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound; Moving Toward Freedom: Changing America's Character in the Struggle for Rights; Growing More than Cotton: The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity; and The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta's Diverse Communities.

This vision statement is the benchmark by which the MDNHA will determine its overall success at the sunset of this management plan. The vision for the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area is:

The people who call the Mississippi Delta "home" value the significant events and unique cultural traditions that influenced the development of America. Residents, communities, institutions and cultural groups have collaborated to preserve special places connected to the Delta's past, to honor and celebrate its diverse traditions and to document and share the history from settlement to migration, from the Civil War to Civil Rights. Residents are proud of their communities and their cultures and want to remain here to contribute to the Delta's future. They understand the role of agriculture in their history and economy and celebrate the wellspring of creativity that birthed the internationally recognized Blues, a remarkable literary legacy

and a spirit of determination. The National Heritage Area includes revitalized communities, conservation of natural resources, new venues and events to tell the Delta's story and increased visitation by heritage travelers and demonstrates progress toward sustainable economic growth.

II. Management and Operations

MDNHA Coordinating Entity Management Services Agreement with Delta State University

The Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University, a public university in Cleveland has been the manager overseeing the development of the management plan on

The Delta Center for Culture and Learning is a Center of Excellence at Delta State University. The Center's mission is to promote the culture and history of the Mississippi Delta and its significance to the world.

behalf of the MDNHA Partnership. The Delta Center will continue to serve as the coordinating entity for MDNHA and will manage all operations and activities. It was also agreed that the MDNHA Partnership will incorporate as a nonprofit under the Mississippi Nonprofit Corporation Act and apply for and receive federal tax exempt status under the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

A Management Services Agreement was completed in December 2013 and provides specifics on the relationship between Delta State University and the MDNHA Partnership (coordinating entity). The agreement includes:

- **Governance** – The MDNHA Partnership's Board of Directors will set the policies, programs and budget for MDNHA consistent with the management plan and National Park Service requirements and policies.
- **Services** – The MDNHA Partnership retains Delta State University, through the Delta Center for Culture and Learning, to be the management entity for the MDNHA.
- **Chief Director of MDNHA Partnership Activities** – The director of the Delta Center for Culture and Learning will serve as the chief staff person for the MDNHA Partnership.
- **Supervision of Chief Director** – The MDNHA Partnership's board of directors will supervise the portion of the director's time spent in support of MDNHA. Delta State University, through its President and administrative officers, will supervise the director's time spent on other programs and activities of the Delta Center for Culture and Learning.
- **Additional Staff** – Delta State University will provide staff to perform services for MDNHA through the Delta Center for Culture and Learning. Staff will be employees of Delta State University and the State of Mississippi.
- **Fiscal Agent** – Delta State University will serve as the fiscal agent for funds received and disbursed by the MDNHA Partnership.
- **Payment for Services** – The MDNHA Partnership will pay Delta State University a stipulated annual sum in support of operating expenses. Additionally, Delta State University will receive compensation of 5 percent for indirect administrative compensation of external funding generated by the MDNHA Partnership. Delta State University will provide services and support to the MDNHA as if it were a unit of the university and the State of Mississippi. Services will include office space, utilities, custodial services, auditing services and handling of funds or other property.
- **Management of MDNHA** – The MDNHA Partnership will enter into and manage all

contracts for services to support the coordinating entity's activities. The board of directors will control and direct fundraising including seeking grants from public and private sources, solicitation of monetary donations and in-kind gifts from individuals, corporations, charitable foundations and other governmental or non-governmental sources and other revenue generation activities. The board will retain control of expending funds raised in support of MDNHA programs and activities. Delta State University will support these activities as determined in consultation with the board of directors.

- **Reports** – Delta State University will provide written interim and final reports including current financial reports on a regularly scheduled basis to the MDNHA Partnership and any funding agencies.

The agreement also includes a provision in the event of a vacancy in the director's position. The agreement states that Delta State University and the MDNHA Partnership will form a six person search committee with three members from Delta State University and three members from the MDNHA Partnership. A representative from the MDNHA Partnership will chair the committee. The committee will provide recommendations to the President of Delta State University who will make the final decision.

(The complete Management Services Agreement is in the appendix.)

MDNHA Board Responsibilities

The MDNHA board of directors will adhere to the legislative mandates that the U.S. Congress has defined within P. Law 111-11. Ongoing responsibilities include:

- 1. Financial resources** – The board will ensure adequate resources to allow the organization to carry out its mandate. The precedent for achieving this responsibility began during the management plan's development when board members secured a special appropriation for the coordinating entity for a five year period. This funding will continue to be solicited each year in addition to other fundraising activities discussed in this business plan. The need for continued financial resources, particularly those monies that have to be raised within the Delta, was a factor that many members of the board, partners, and the public identified as being critical to the long-term success of the MDNHA.
- 2. Staff** – As detailed in the Memorandum of Agreement, the board will have oversight of the work of the Delta Center for Culture and Learning as it related to the MDNHA.
- 3. The Board of Directors** – The board will also consider its own composition. An internal board survey conducted as a part of the management planning process highlighted the issues the MDNHA board felt were most important to its success in leading the heritage area. This profile analysis will be conducted periodically to help the board focus on effective recruitment efforts in order to ensure all needed skills, expertise and perspectives are incorporated within the board's membership.

Strategic Planning

Through regular strategic planning - and adopting a board philosophy of continuous strategic thinking - the board will prepare itself and the staff for the future. A strategic framework provides a valid reference for annual operational plans that keep the organization on the right track and tied to the mission while incorporating necessary flexibility for action.

Legal Considerations of the Coordinating Entity

I. Incorporation

Currently the board operates as an unincorporated “partnership” of volunteer board members as defined by P. Law 111-11. The board will incorporate the MDNHA Partnership as a 501c3 non-profit entity, as this designation provides limited personal liability protection to those managing the organization. In doing so, the board will develop Articles of Incorporation for the new non-profit following the State of Mississippi’s Nonprofit Corporation Act. The Articles of Incorporation is a binding legal document and includes the following:

- Name of the corporation
 - Register the name to establish a brand and to avoid use by any other entity.
- Purpose of the organization
 - The articles of incorporation should be as broad as possible to allow for future evolution of the MDNHA’s activities.
- Duration of existence
 - While P. Law 111-11 defines the limitation of the MDNHA’s funding, the National Heritage Area designation does not sunset. Therefore, the articles should be written to allow the MDNHA organization to exist in perpetuity.
- Location of offices
 - Provide the address of the MDNHA office or its “headquarters,” currently within the Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University.
- Names and addresses of the incorporators
 - List the individuals who shall file the articles of incorporation.
- Structure of the organization related to its membership
 - If MDNHA forms a formal membership organization where the members elect the board and approve major organizational decisions, it will define the categories and levels of authority of its members.
- Provisions for distribution of assets in case of dissolution
 - If MDNHA forms a public charity, its articles will clearly state that in case of dissolution the leftover assets will be distributed to another charity and may not inure to the benefit of a private individual or other non-charitable entity.

Setting Standards of Excellence

Values – often referred to as standards of excellence – provide guidelines for how the board and staff will ethically and responsibly manage their duties and obligations. The Standards for Excellence Institute provides guidelines at <http://standardsforexcellenceinstitute.org/dnn/TheCode.aspx>

II. Development of Bylaws

Bylaws for the Mississippi Delta National Heritage have been drafted. As part of the incorporation process, the bylaws will be reexamined and adopted or amended to meet current needs of board and organizational operation. Bylaws will address the following:

- Name and location of organization
- Statement of purpose
- Election, roles, and terms of board members and officers
- Membership issues (categories, responsibilities)

- Meeting guidelines (frequency, quorum)
- Board structure (size, standing committees, if any)
- Compensation and indemnification of board members
- Role of chief executive
- Amendment of bylaws
- Dissolution of the organization

III. Governance and Management

Through a financial committee structure, the board will carry out its accountability function, including the formation of separate finance and audit committees. If, in the future, the MDNHA establishes an endowment or has other sizable investments, it will also consider designating a separate investment committee within the board.

Audit Committee

An audit committee will ensure the organization carries out an independent outside audit. Its members will not include any officer of the board or member of the Finance Committee. Specific duties of the audit committee include:

- Hire an auditor
- Review the audit report with the auditor
- Assure the board that the financial statements reflect the organization's financial condition
- Request an internal audit periodically
- Verify of the organization's business is conducted ethically

While organizations with complicated financial structures, various revenue streams, and/or a budget of at least \$500,000 should consider annual independent audits, MDNHA currently does not fit that example. Instead, the board will consider having a professional accountant compile the financial statements. As MDNHA grows, the need for an annual audit may not be avoidable. Organizations that receive government funding usually do not have a choice; an outside audit is a compulsory requirement for receiving funding. Additionally, some funders may expect their grantees to share their audited financial reports as a condition for support.

Finance Committee

The finance committee will be chaired by the board's treasurer and will include members with competency in reviewing financial matters. The primary duties of a finance committee are:

- Oversee organizational financial planning and ensure the board approves the annual budget
- Safeguard organizational assets
- Draft organizational financial and accounting policies
- Anticipate financial problems
- Develop financial statements to use in reporting
- Ensure the board receives regular and timely financial statements
- Ensure accurate financial records are maintained
- Ensure all necessary legal reports are filed

Financial Reports

A financial report will be submitted to the board of directors periodically, preferably monthly. A statement of financial position (balance sheet) and a statement of activity (income vs. expenses) will be presented with additional information as required by the board's by-laws and operating procedures.

MDNHA Board of Directors Operations' Checklist

Short-term activities of the board of directors include:

- Incorporate the MDNHA as a nonprofit corporation in the State of Mississippi and apply for and receive tax exempt status under the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.
- Develop and adopt bylaws
- Form audit, finance and fundraising committees
- Develop a job description for the director
- Develop a fundraising strategy that supports implementation of the management plan that specifies the duties and responsibilities for staff and board members in fundraising
- Identify and recruit board members who provide needed skills as vacancies occur
- Define organizational values

Ongoing responsibilities include:

- Review the mission statement and make amendments as needed
- Develop annual work plans and budget (with the staff)
- Schedule and conduct strategic planning every three to five years, including an internal review of work at least every two years
- Review and update/revise operation documents biannually

Sample Income vs. Expense Statement

During the year, a statement of activities noting the actual revenue and expenses for the month and to-date will be compared to the budgets prepared for the comparable periods. Any variances from expectations will be noted and explained.

The monitoring of the financial position of the organization in relation to the budget will allow the MDNHA board of directors to take action if, for example, revenues are not sufficient to meet the projected expenses for the year. Steps will be taken to find other revenue sources or to cut costs.

Current/Future Model for Operations

When the U.S. Congress created the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area under Public Law 111-11, the Omnibus Federal Lands Management Act of 2009, it specified a number of issues related to overall management. Along with establishing the MDNHA, Congress also delineated its geographic boundaries and named the local coordinating entity. The local coordinating entity, the MDNHA Partnership, was created with specific duties that are stated in Public Law 111-11, including those outlined in Chapter 1, the introduction of this management plan. In establishing the Partnership, Congress also named the categories for its board of directors and limited membership to 15 people. The board has been functioning since 2010, with primary responsibilities focused on overseeing development of the management plan. This section examines issues that the board will consider as an operational model is developed and refined.

Good Governance Principles

- The board meets regularly to address matters of policy, strategic direction, organizational performance and community impact.
- The board receives financial and other important information sufficiently in advance of the board meeting to allow adequate time to review and prepare questions.
- The board meets regularly throughout the year, with a majority of directors in attendance.
- Board candidates are selected with an emphasis on the skills needed to advance the work of the organization.
- Accurate minutes of board meetings are kept, reviewed and approved at the subsequent meeting.
- New directors receive comprehensive orientation after election to the board.
- Ongoing training is provided regularly to the board to ensure effective service by directors.
- The board maintains active involvement through rotation of duties and/or term limits.
- Meetings deal primarily with policy formulation and the review and evaluation of the work of the organization. Routine matters are handled with dispatch.
- The committee structure reflects the organization's strategic priorities and changes, when necessary, to advance the mission. Committees are used effectively so that board members with relevant skills can focus on key issues.
- The board understands its legal obligations.
- A conflict of interest policy is reviewed periodically and signed annually by board members.
- The board is aware of all federal, state, and local obligations (and liabilities) applicable to the organization.

- 1. Staff** – The coordinating entity is housed within the Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi. The three full-time employees are Delta Center staff assigned specifically to work on matters related to the heritage area in addition to their job responsibilities for the Delta Center. Staff positions will be repurposed with job descriptions tied more closely to the strategies identified within the management plan. In addition to the director's role as director of the MDNHA coordinating entity and the Delta Center for Culture and Learning, staff titles will be adapted as needed to reflect the work of the heritage area, including the administrative assistant who is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the office, and the program director/organizer who works directly in field with the communities and partners developing specific projects of the MDNHA.

The director and program director positions are key functions within any heritage area. The director will focus primarily on policy, funding and overall direction and strategy for the MDNHA. The program director will begin the implementation of these management plan's activities with the partners. With responsibilities as community organizer, grant writer and facilitator, the program director will be critical to ensure that projects are developed that adhere to the goals and standard defined in this management plan.

Within the next five years, the coordinating entity will also consider adding a development staff position. This staff position's primary function will be to help the executive director fundraise from sources within the Delta, either from individuals, corporations and/or foundations. The development staff will also work closely with the program director to identify additional sources of grant funds that can support the programs and projects of the MDNHA and its partners.

2. Volunteers

Most National Heritage Areas depend on volunteers, and small and mid-sized NHAs may engage volunteers in significant mission and management activities. This management plan includes strategies for engaging volunteers in the work of the coordinating entity as well as volunteering for partners in heritage area-sanctioned events and projects. (Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network*)

The coordinating entity will develop clear guidelines for volunteers who will be volunteering directly with the heritage area organization, emphasizing the expectation that the volunteers will follow the organization's workplace and internal controls policies. The coordinating entity will develop a volunteer handbook and specific volunteer job descriptions. In addition, the coordinating entity may consider obtaining bonding coverage for volunteers who regularly handle cash.

The Volunteer Protection Act of 1997, passed by the U.S. Congress and recognized by the State of Mississippi, provides personal immunity to individuals who act on behalf of an organization in a volunteer capacity. However, the Act may not absolve the organization from liability for its volunteers or keep the volunteers from being named as defendants in a lawsuit.

3. Key Collaborative Relationships/Partnerships – Letters of Commitment and Support

The enabling legislation for the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area requires that the plan "include a description of actions and commitments that governments, private organizations, and citizens plan to take to protect, enhance, and interpret the cultural, historical, archaeological, natural, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area."

This management plan reflects the accomplishment of this requirement. It is based on the contributions of many partners who participated in its development the Plan. The inclusion of many programs, projects and activities was made possible by the commitments of those

who participated in the planning process and have made commitments to partner with the coordinating entity in implementation.

The first formal agreement between Delta State University and the MDNHA Partnership was agreed upon by all partners due to the success of the management planning process which was managed by the Delta Center for Culture and Learning that provided a strong foundation for continuing in the role of coordinating entity.

In addition to the strong partnership with Delta State University, other partnerships were developed throughout the management planning process, and new partnerships will continue to be established as the management plan is implemented.

The success of establishing partnerships during the planning process was evident when more

Partnership Agreements

Hand-shake Agreement – An informal agreement that relies on the good will of partners. Not legally binding.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) – A legal document describing an agreement between parties. The document defines common goals. More formal than a hand-shake agreement, but it lacks the power of a contract.

Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) – Also known as a cooperative agreement, the document defines a project to be developed by partners and specifies the responsibilities of each partner. Can be a binding legal document.

Contract – A legally binding agreement that has been offered and accepted by partners.

than 50 partners (including representatives of organizations and agencies throughout the Delta) provided letters of support and commitment for implementing the management plan. Even more important is the role the coordinating entity has played in bringing together organizations and agencies that in some cases have never worked together.

As the management plan is implemented, the format of partnerships for specific projects will be formally defined through Memorandums of Understanding, Memorandums of Agreement and even contracts that establish the framework for the working relationship between the parties in the National Heritage Area. Other partnerships may be defined by legislation or resolutions passed by a local government, and even the board of the MDNHA. While these agreements might be necessary in some instances for carrying out the activities of the partners in a National Heritage Area for the conservation of the resources, there can be other types of partnerships that do not require the legal paper in order for a partnership to develop and flourish. These hand-shake relationships within National Heritage Areas provide often the greatest flexibility to the parties in defining changing roles and can often have very positive results.

Partners can wide-ranging, from government agencies, businesses, other non-profits, Native American Tribes, other National Heritage Areas, universities, and many other groups. The heritage area will confer with its partners to determine the appropriate types of agreement for each project. For example, the coordinating entity's partnership with the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association (MDTA) could take varying forms depending on the activity:

- **Memorandum of Understanding** – This legal document would not be a contract but would specify the common goals of the MDNHA and MDTA to increase visitation to the Delta and to work together wherever possible to achieve this shared goal.
- **Memorandum of Agreement** – This document would be a cooperative agreement between the MDNHA and MDTA to work together on a specific project such as development and implementation of the hospitality/ambassador program. The document would define the responsibilities of each organization for this program.

National Park Service and MDNHA

Although National Heritage Areas are designated by Congress, the ongoing relationship at the federal level is through the National Park Service. As stated on the National Park Service website "NHAs further the mission of the National Park Service by fostering community stewardship of our nation's heritage." The National Park Service will fulfill specific roles in its partnership with the MDNHA:

- Provide technical and planning assistance
- Distribute matching funds as appropriated by Congress
- Serve as an advisor, leaving decision-making authority to the coordinating entity board and staff
- The NPS does not assume ownership of land in heritage areas or impose land controls.

The National Park Service's partnership with the coordinating entity includes three areas:

- **Vicksburg National Military Park** – The park is within the boundaries of the heritage area. The superintendent serves as the local contact for the National Park Service and is an ex officio member of the MDNHA board of directors.
- **National Park Service Southeast Region** – The Southeast Region office of the National Park Service is the partner for MDNHA, and the program manager serves as

the point of contact to review and provide assistance with the coordinating entity's plans.

- **Washington Program Office** – The office will provide guidance on projects and activities.

Alliance of National Heritage Areas

The Alliance of National Heritage Areas (ANHA) is a membership organization of National Heritage Areas. Alliance members work together to raise the awareness of federal agencies, Congress and the public of the purpose and accomplishments of National Heritage Areas.

As a member of the organization, the coordinating entity will be involved in the ANHA in many ways including (as budgets and schedules allow):

- Attend the twice-yearly membership meetings to foster networking and educational opportunities
- Participate in the annual meetings with members of Congress and Congressional staff in Washington D.C.
- Participate in research studies on the accomplishments and economic impact of National Heritage Areas
- Serve on committees
- Serve as a national leader by sharing information with other National Heritage Areas as requested to assist in their program development
- Access resources and information from the ANHA and individual National Heritage Areas to further the activities of MDNHA

MDNHA Coordinating Entity Staff and Partnership Checklist

The coordinating entity will create an effective operations system with the following actions:

- Repurpose staff titles and job descriptions at the Delta Center for Culture and Learning to reflect heritage area responsibilities
- Create a development staff position
- Develop volunteer guidelines
- Develop partnership agreements as appropriate for specific projects and ongoing partnerships
- Maintain partnership with National Park Service
- Maintain membership and involvement with the Alliance of National Heritage Areas.
- Maintain ongoing communications with its partners by participating in meetings and providing updates on the heritage area's work through public forums, newsletters, the website, social media and other venues

The following chart includes a list of partners who have committed to working with the coordinating entity. As plans are implemented, the list of partners will continue to increase. (Letters of commitment and support are in the appendix. Additionally, a list of participants in the planning process is also included in the appendix.)

Table 9.1 Partners for the MDNHA Coordinating Entity

Partner	Activity	Chapter/Strategy/Action Step
National Park Service	Ongoing technical and planning assistance, distribution of matching funds appropriated by Congress	Chapter 9
Alliance of National Heritage Areas	Networking opportunities and information resources from other National Heritage Areas	Chapter 9
Mississippi Department of Archives and History	Historic resources survey National Register nominations Mississippi Landmarks Advocacy plans for preservations Document the value of heritage Archival workshops	Chapter 6, Strategy 2, B Chapter 7, Strategy 1, A-D
Mississippi Heritage Trust	Advocacy plans for preservation	Chapter 7, Strategy 2, A, B
Delta Wildlife	Stewardship of natural resources	Chapter 7, Strategy 2, C
Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee	Stewardship of natural resources	Chapter 7, Strategy 2, C
Mississippi Delta Tourism Association	Tour guide certification Tour guide training program Guided tours Increase accessibility Document the value of heritage Heritage attractions committee Hospitality/ambassador program	Chapter 6, Strategy 2, C Chapter 6, Strategy 3, A, B Chapter 6, Strategy 4, B Chapter 6, Strategy 5, A Chapter 8, Strategy 2, A, B Chapter 8, Strategy 4, A Chapter 8, Strategy 6, B
Mississippi Office of Tourism	Promotion Document the value of heritage Support sustainable economic development	Chapter 6, Strategy 4, B Chapter 8, Strategy 2, A, B Chapter 8, Strategy 6, A
Mississippi Arts Commission	Document, preserve living traditions Document the value of heritage Develop sustainable culture and heritage businesses	Chapter 6, Strategy 1, A-D Chapter 6, Strategy 2, A Chapter 8, Strategy 2, A,B Chapter 8, Strategy 6, A
Mississippi Main Street Program	Advocacy plans for preservation Document value of heritage	Chapter 7, Strategy 1, C Chapter 7, Strategy 2, A, B Chapter 8, Strategy 2, A, B
Mississippi Humanities Council	Document, preserve living traditions	Chapter 6, Strategy 1, D Chapter 8, Strategy 5, B
Alcorn State University	Research and document stories Provide training to preserve history Internships and student projects	Chapter 6, Strategy 1, A-D Chapter 6, Strategy 2, A Chapter 8, Strategy 4, A, B Chapter 8, Strategy 6, A
Mississippi State University- Office of Student Leadership and Community Engagement	Collect and preserve oral histories Present workshops, etc. to educate residents Create volunteer program	Chapter 6, Strategy 1, D Chapter 6, Strategy 2, A Chapter 8, Strategy 7, A
Mississippi State University – Extension Service	Increase awareness and advocate for preservation Document the value of heritage Develop hospitality training	Chapter 7, Strategy 2, B Chapter 8, Strategy 2, A, B Chapter 8, Strategy 6, B
University of Mississippi – Center for the Study of Southern Culture/Southern Foodways Alliance	Research and document stories Internships and student projects	Chapter 6, Strategy 1, A-D Chapter 8, Strategy 7, B

Table 9.1 Partners for the MDNHA Coordinating Entity (continued)

Delta State University	Collect oral histories Tour guide certification program Create a virtual resource center Form committees for preservation, conservation, telling the Delta’s story Support sustainable economic development	Chapter 6, Strategy 1, D Chapter 6, Strategy 2, C Chapter 7, Strategy 3, B Chapter 8, Strategy 4, C Chapter 8, Strategy 6, A, B
Mississippi Valley State University	Collect oral histories Tour guide certification program Provide training on archival preservation Tell the Delta’s story - curriculum Create a virtual resource center Support sustainable economic development	Chapter 6, Strategy 1, D Chapter 6, Strategy 2, C Chapter 6, Strategy 2, B Chapter 6, Strategy 3, A Chapter 7, Strategy 3, C Chapter 8, Strategy 6, A
Jackson State University - Margaret Walker Center	Discussion forums on reconciliation	Chapter 8, Strategy 4, B
Mississippi Action for Community Education (MACE)	Provide training and resources to preserve history and culture Tell the Delta’s story – interpretive methods Engage Delta adults and youth Develop hospitality program Internships and student projects	Chapter 6, Strategy 2, A – C Chapter 6, Strategy 3, A, B Chapter 6, Strategy 4, A, B Chapter 8, Strategy 6, B Chapter 8, Strategy 7, B
Delta Foundation	Provide training to preserve history Tell the Delta’s story – interpretive methods Provide forum to address issues of race, economics and history Support sustainable economic development Internships and student projects	Chapter 6, Strategy 2, A-C Chapter 6, Strategy 3, A, B Chapter 8, Strategy 4, B Chapter 8, Strategy 6, A Chapter 8, Strategy 7, B
Mississippi Lower Delta Partnership	Tell the Delta’s story – interpretive methods Promote culture and heritage	Chapter 6, Strategy 3, A, B Chapter 6, Strategy 4, B
Delta Council	Support sustainable economic development	Chapter 8, Strategy 6, A
Historic Mound Bayou	Research and document the Delta’s stories Document historic resources	Chapter 6, Strategy 1, A-D Chapter 7, Strategy 1, A –D
Cleveland Heritage Commission	Research and document the Delta’s stories Document historic resources	Chapter 6, Strategy 1, A-D Chapter 7, Strategy 1, A-D
Museum of the Mississippi Delta	Collect oral histories Tell the Delta’s stories	Chapter 6, Strategy 1, D Chapter 6, Strategy 3, A, B
Winterville Mounds	Present workshops, tours, etc. to educate residents Tell the Delta’s stories	Chapter 6, Strategy 2, A Chapter 6, Strategy 3, A, B
Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life	Tell the Delta’s stories	Chapter 6, Strategy 3, A, B
Rock and Blues Museum	Tell the Delta’s stories	Chapter 6, Strategy 3, A, B
Sunflower County Civil Rights Organization	Tell the Delta’s stories	Chapter 6, Strategy 3, A, B
Bolivar County Historical Society	Provide training to preserve archival resources Tell the Delta’s stories Establish forums for discussion and planning	Chapter 6, Strategy 2, B Chapter 6, Strategy 3, A, B Chapter 8, Strategy 4, A-C
B.B. King Museum	Provide training to preserve archival resources Tell the Delta’s stories	Chapter 6, Strategy 2, B Chapter 6, Strategy 3, A, B

Table 9.1 Partners for the MDNHA Coordinating Entity (continued)

Cleveland Music Foundation	Increase accessibility for travelers	Chapter 5, Strategy 5, A
Cleveland-Bolivar Chamber of Commerce	Tell the Delta's stories	Chapter 6, Strategy 3, A, B
Tunica Main Street	Tell the Delta's stories	Chapter 6, Strategy 3, A, B
Cleveland Main Street	Increase awareness and advocate for preservation	Chapter 7, Strategy 2, A-C
Vicksburg Main Street	Support sustainable economic development	Chapter 8, Strategy 6, A
Main Street Partnership – Tate County	Support sustainable economic development	Chapter 8, Strategy 6, A
Main Street Greenville	Support sustainable economic development	Chapter 8, Strategy 6, A
Tunica Convention and Visitors Bureau	Tell the Delta's story Promotion of culture and heritage	Chapter 6, Strategy 3, A, B Chapter 6, Strategy 4, B
DeSoto County Tourism Bureau	Promotion of culture and heritage	Chapter 6, Strategy 4, B
Greenville-Washington Convention and Visitors Bureau	Promotion of culture and heritage	Chapter 6, Strategy 4, B
Bolivar County Board of Supervisors	Ongoing support	
Coahoma County Board of Supervisors	Ongoing support	
Sunflower County Board of Supervisors	Ongoing support	
Warren County Board of Supervisors	Ongoing support	

4. Marketing and Communications

The management plan demonstrates the commitment of the coordinating entities leadership to communicate regularly with all partners in order to build strong partnerships. This communication will take place in several ways:

- **Public meetings** – The coordinating entity will conduct public meetings semiannually to provide updates on the development and implementation of the management plan. One of these events will be a part of the MDNHA Awards event discussed in Chapter Eight: *The Power of Partnerships: Build the Network*. A second public meeting will be scheduled at another time during each year.
- **Annual Report** – An annual report will be prepared for submission to the Secretary of Interior and to be shared with the public. The report will detail the accomplishments of the coordinating entity during the year as well as providing a financial accounting of revenues and expenditures.
- **Presentations** – As it has done throughout the planning process, the coordinating entity will continue to make presentations to local organizations including civic, government, school and other organizations to provide information about the heritage area and to encourage engagement.

5. Financial Projections, Fund Development and Capitalization

The operating budget will be based on reliable income projections and well-researched expense projections. The budget will outline costs that are fixed and those that can be adjusted as the budget year progresses. Additional financial considerations include:

Develop a capital structure plan - The coordinating entity's capital budget will constitute a funding plan separate from and in addition to the operating budget. A capital structure planning will take into account building resources for long-term, non-operating needs. These may include asset purchases (inventory, equipment or leasehold improvements), financial stability targets (building an operating cash reserve or equipment/facility maintenance/replacement reserves), and funding program or management initiatives.

- **Build an operating reserve** – The coordinating entity will also build an operating reserve to create financial flexibility and to position the coordinating entity to withstand emergencies, temporary cash flow fluctuations, or unplanned reductions in, or delays in receipt of, revenue.
- **Plan for an endowment** – A long-term goal of the coordinating entity (not beginning before the fifth year of operation) will be to create an endowment fund. This fund will be permanently restricted and the principal will not be used for operating, cash flow or other purposes. Interest earned from the endowment investment will be designated for operations or other administrative or programmatic purposes.

6. Fund Development & Stability

Income and expenses for the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area's coordinating entity were developed for this management plan based on current income and expenses, along with assumptions for the organization in future years. These assumptions are made with both professional judgment and with best guesses at future funding and economic conditions. Patterns of funding for other National Heritage Areas have been studied and their trends have been incorporated into the assumptions for MDNHA.

It is important to recognize that funding to any National Heritage Area is rarely guaranteed from year to year. National Heritage Areas have proven to be extremely adept at raising money to match the federal appropriations. In fact, recent studies conducted by the National Park Service illustrate that many National Heritage Areas have exceeded their Congressional mandate match requirement, some by more than five dollars-to-one dollar. Many of these NHAs are located in areas that have long histories of depressed economies. By working entrepreneurially with their partners, other funding bodies, and developing innovative approaches to programs and projects, National Heritage Areas have a proven record of maintaining their positions within the communities they serve while providing a greater sense of sustainability for their organization. This will be a critical factor for the MDNHA's coordinating entity as it moves from the management plan phase to implementation. Since its inception in 2009, the MDNHA has developed a solid base of funding support including, and in addition to, the NPS funds it receives.

MDNHA Federal Appropriations

During the management planning phase, MDNHA has received federal appropriations for four fiscal years:

FY2010	\$150,000
FY2011	\$147,000
FY2012	\$147,000
FY2013	\$150,000

Financial History and Assumption

Since its designation as a National Heritage Area the Mississippi Delta has been eligible to receive funding from the National Park Service – Heritage Partnership Program, within the U.S. Department of Interior Appropriations. The MDNHA has received approximately \$148,500 for the past four fiscal years (FY2010 - \$150,000; FY2011 - \$147,000; FY2012 - \$147,000; FY2013 - \$150,000).

MDNHA, like other National Heritage Areas, is required to raise one dollar in non-federal funds for every dollar of National Park Service money received. To meet this requirement, and to support current programming and operations, the State of Mississippi, through a set-aside from the state Legislature, provides \$150,000 to the MDNHA. Another \$25,000 is provided each year by the City of Cleveland. Approximately \$10,000 in revenue is generated each year by way of souvenir sales (tee-shirts, post cards, etc.) from visitors to the Delta. A major source of funding also comes from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and although these are federal funds and cannot be used as match to the National Park Service funds, they are significant to MDNHA’s mission in furthering educational programs within the Delta, and will continue to be sought. Considerable in-kind contributions and donated services are provided each year, including personnel support and office space by Delta State University, interns and work-study students, and other miscellaneous costs for operations. The estimated costs for these services are \$39,426. Future in-kind costs are expected to continue and are estimated at a 2.3 annual percent increase.

Capital Structure Planning

Resources for long-term, non-operating needs may include:

- Asset purchases – inventory, equipment or leasehold improvements
- Financial stability targets – operating case research or equipment/facility maintenance or replacement reserves
- Funding for pilot programs
- Staff capacity building

**Table 9.2
Current Budget for MDNHA (Delta Center)**

Salaries and Fringe (currently 3 FTEs)	\$210,212
Equipment Leases	2,000
Travel Costs	2,500
Phone & Communications	2,150
Postage & Shipping	500
Office Supplies	1,000
Total	\$218,362

It is anticipated that MDNHA will, upon completion and approval of the management plan by the National Park Service, receive an increase in funding from the annual allocation to National Heritage Areas. Under the current allocation formula, the allocation could increase to \$300,000 per year (100 percent more than the current allocation). For this plan a more modest assumption is projected at between three and five percent per year, based on the current appropriations provided by Congress. However, this amount could change in both a positive or negative manner, depending on appropriations enacted by Congress in future years.

Financial Projections

A five-year forecast, 2015-2019, has been projected for the Mississippi Delta. This forecast looked at the organization's current structure and how it might grow to meet the needs of the heritage area to fulfill the requirements of the management plan and P. Law 111-11. The projections are conservative-to-mildly moderate forecasts and assume that the coordinating entity will remain housed within the Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University.

During the review period of the management plan in 2014, funding from the National Park Service is assumed to remain at current levels. By 2015 an increase in funding is anticipated, assumed at three percent (3%). A projection of five percent (5%) in National Park Service funding is illustrated for comparative purposes. It must be noted that any annual allocation from the National Park Service to the coordinating entity is not guaranteed and is dependent on a number of factors; the most notable is the continued appropriations provided by Congress to the Heritage Partnership Program.

Table 9.3
Three Percent (3%) Increase per Year – National Park Service Funding
Current Allocation Average - \$148,500

Fiscal Year	Allocation	Amount Difference
2015	\$152,955	\$4,455
2016	\$157,544	\$4,589
2017	\$162,270	\$4,726
2018	\$167,138	\$4,868
2019	\$172,152	\$5,014

Table 9.4
Five Percent (5%) Increase per Year – National Park Service Funding
Current Allocation Average - \$148,500

Fiscal Year	Allocation	Amount Difference
2015	\$155,925	\$7,425
2016	\$163,721	\$7,796
2017	\$171,907	\$8,186
2018	\$180,503	\$8,596
2019	\$189,528	\$9,025

If increases in NPS funding occur, the need for the coordinating entity to raise additional match will come into further consideration. Similarly, as NPS develops, refines and implements its formula for annual allocations to NHAs, more funds may be available to the coordinating entity, and greater emphasis will be placed on matching revenue (cash) than on leveraged dollars (in-kind or donated services). While the latter is, and will remain, an important part of the coordinating entity’s funding strategy, the board will need to focus more attention to generating additional cash, including more revenue from programs and developing additional sources of funds (grants) to meet the future needs of the organization.

In current and future budgets, if the Delta Center is given responsibilities by Delta State University that are outside the work of the MDNHA coordinating entity, associated budgets will be segregated from the MDNHA coordinating entity budget.

Future Budgets

Future budgets, for the years 2015 to 2019, for the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area’s coordinating entity are estimates and provided in the following pages. For the Income Sources, the budgets make some assumptions including the modest (3 percent) increase per year for the National Park Service funds, the continuation of all current funding from existing sources, securing other grants to support programs and operations, sales revenue from items and tours, cash donations from individuals, and interest income. In-kind support is also calculated with a modest inflation rate added each year. Expenses for the same period are also estimated. The assumption is that operations, personnel and administration will remain constant through 2015. In year 2016, a staff position for a full-time development and associated costs is added. Again, where applicable, modest increases based on an average inflation rate were included.

Table 9.5
MDNHA BUDGET FORECASTS
YEARS 2015 – 2019

INCOME SOURCES	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
NPS Heritage Partnerships	\$152,955	\$157,544	\$162,270	\$167,138	\$172,152
State of Mississippi	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
Delta State University	215,000	215,000	215,000	215,000	215,000
National Endowment for Humanities	180,000	180,000	180,000	180,000	180,000
Other Grants	30,000	35,000	40,000	45,000	50,000
In-Kind ¹	40,333	41,260	42,209	43,180	44,174
TOTAL INCOME	\$718,288	\$728,804	\$739,479	\$750,318	\$761,326
EXPENSES					
Salaries & Fringe (3 FTEs) ²	\$215,047	\$219,993	\$225,053	\$230,229	\$235,524
Development Sal. & Fringe (1 FTE) ³	0	60,000	61,380	62,792	64,236
Equipment Costs	2,500	5,000	6,000	6,000	6,000
Insurance	2,000	2,200	2,500	2,700	2,950
Phone & Communications	2,750	3,800	4,250	4,500	4,750
Travel Costs	3,150	4,250	4,800	5,000	5,250
Postage & Shipping	750	1,000	1,200	1,500	1,750
Office Supplies	1,200	2,500	2,750	3,000	3,250
Fund Raising Costs	1,000	1,750	3,500	5,000	7,500
Printing	5,000	10,000	12,500	15,000	17,500
Memberships	2,500	4,000	4,250	4,500	4,750
NEH Program Expenses	141,913	141,913	141,913	141,913	141,913
Payment to Delta State Univ.	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Administrative indirect (5% of NPS and state funds)	12,648	12,877	13,114	13,357	13,608
Marketing, PR & Web Site	10,000	25,000	27,500	30,000	32,500
Miscellaneous	2,000	2,500	2,750	3,000	3,250
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$452,458	\$546,783	\$563,460	\$578,491	\$594,731
(Adjustment of In-Kind)	(40,333)	(41,260)	(42,209)	(43,180)	(44,174)
+/- Difference	\$225,497	\$140,761	\$133,810	\$128,647	\$122,421

Explanation of Budget Forecast

The following is an explanation of the income and expense line items that appear in the Budget Forecasts table.

INCOME SOURCES

NPS Heritage Partnerships – This is the annual allocation from the Congressional appropriations provided for the National Heritage Areas. For Fiscal Year 2014, the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area is anticipated to receive \$150,000. This is the Congressionally-directed amount for a NHA in the planning phase (without an approved management plan). Once an NHA's management plan is approved, it becomes eligible for up to \$300,000 per year in heritage partnership funds. At the time of this plan's drafting, NPS is working on developing a funding formula to provide for more logical allocation of funds based upon needs of each NHA. The funding formula has been delayed in its roll-out for several reasons including the fact that Congress has continued to fund the NPS Heritage Partnerships program under a Continuing Resolution for the past several fiscal years. Given this pattern of uncertain Congressional budgets the amount reflected in this table is an estimate based upon allocations from current appropriations, it is by no means the amount that MDNHA might receive in the future, **and it is not any statement by MDNHA of the amount it is requesting for any year in this table or beyond.** In fact, the amount indicated is considerably lower than the total needs for NHA programming and projects in the Mississippi Delta.

State of Mississippi – This amount reflects a line-item appropriation by the Mississippi State Legislature to the MDNHA. This amount has been consistent for the past several fiscal years and is expected to continue.

Delta State University – Through its partnership with Delta State University, MDNHA receives income from several sources. The total of these sources is reflected in the amount indicated. This figure includes funding from the State of Mississippi (separate from the amount explained above), funding from the City of Cleveland, Mississippi, along with revenues generated from tours, souvenir sales and individual donations.

National Endowment for Humanities – This amount is a recurring grant to the Delta Center for programming related to the teacher workshops and training that occurs in the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area each year.

Other Grants – This reflects an amount, estimated, that MDNHA could raise from other sources – either corporate or foundations – to support programming and projects.

In-Kind – The amount totaled here represents the actual costs of all expenses donated by board and volunteers for the MDNHA.

EXPENSES

Salaries and Fringe – Total costs for the three full-time equivalent employees (executive director, administrative assistant and program director) for the coordinating entity

Development Salary and Fringe – Estimated cost to hire a full-time director of development for the MDNHA

Equipment Costs – Annual capital budget costs for items related to office equipment needs

Insurance – Cost related to annual director and officers liability insurance

Phone and Communications – Costs related to land-line and mobile phones, internet, etc.

Travel Costs – Includes amounts for staff travel within the MDNHA, in state and out of state

Postage and Shipping – All costs related to mailing and packaging

Office Supplies – Costs for sundry items for office operations

Fund Raising Costs – All expenses related to fund development for MDNHA

Printing – Any expenses related to in-house or contracted printing needs

Memberships – Expenses related to professional association fees

NEH Program Expenses – All costs associated with the NEH teacher workshops

Payment to Delta State University – An amount agreed to by MDNHA and Delta State in a cooperative agreement for housing the coordinating entity at the university

Administrative Indirect – A set percentage, based on the annual amount of federal and state funds to coordinating entity, for extraneous costs and services provided by Delta State University

Marketing, PR and Web Site – Costs associated with advertising and communications

Miscellaneous – Any other expense that is non-recurring

Adjustment to In-Kind – A bookkeeping modification backing out the “In-Kind” amount from Income since these are not real dollars but can be included in budgets

The table of income and expenses reflects only the operations and administration of the coordinating entity for the years 2015 to 2019. This management plan illustrates a variety of programs and projects during this five-year period. These programs and projects will have costs associated with them and, except for the cost associated with staff activities to carry-out the projects (if permitted by the grant source) a separate budget will be developed each year to track the non-personnel expenses related to these activities.

Good Governance Measures

- MDNHA has evaluated the benefits of its funding strategy to promote sustainability.
- The MDNHA board oversees fund raising and is active in securing funding and other resources through identifying prospects, supporting donor cultivation and solicitation, and direct contributions.
- The MDNHA board approves an annual operating budget and reviews fundraising projections which include projected capital expenditures.
- MDNHA board members make an annual financial contribution - with 100 percent participation – as an indication that the Board is engaged, supportive, and committed.
- When necessary, the MDNHA board will establish a fundraising committee to oversee the fundraising program and assist the professional staff in planning and raising funds.

Assuming these annual budgets are realized (even partially), a positive difference between income and expenses for operations will provide the revenue for implementing certain programs and projects within this management plan. For example, the MDNHA board, staff, and its partners have all expressed a desire to establish an annual grant program to support partner projects in the Delta. This grants program could be developed using percentage of the balance of revenue remaining each year after operational expenses are budgeted. For example, in 2015, a net difference of \$225,497 is available as unused income after operations costs are considered. If the MDNHA board established a grant program that year, an agreed-upon amount of the balance could go toward grants. Likewise, other programs and projects highlighted in this management plan could be funded from this revenue balance. Any additional funds raised, depending on their restrictions, may be used in a similar manner.

Keys to the Budget/Checklist:

- MDNHA will ensure it has an appropriate funding strategy with sufficient funding and financing to support its operations, programs and organizational sustainability.
- The mission will attract donors, both individual and institutional.
- The board and staff will ensure that the requirements of P. Law 111-11 and the management plan for the MDNHA are consistently met.
- The MDNHA is fully compliant with all state laws regarding registration to solicit funds.

Funding Sources

In addition to federal funding from the National Park Service, the coordinating entity will actively raise funds to support programs and projects through a variety of sources including foundations, corporations and government agencies. The following chart identifies potential funding sources and describes the resources available through these agencies and organizations.

Table 9.6 Potential Funding Sources

Agency or Organization	Funding Program	Funding	Description
Federal Agencies			
National Endowment for the Arts www.nea.gov	Our Town	\$25,000 - \$200,000; median of \$50,000	Supports creative placemaking projects focused on arts engagement, and design and cultural planning
	Art Works	\$10,000-\$100,000	Supports innovative art projects that engage and educate communities
	Challenge America Fast Track	\$10,000	Supports small to mid-sized organizations that reach underserved populations
	The Big Read	\$2,500-\$25,000	Programs are designed to revitalize the role of literature in American culture and to encourage reading
National Endowment for the Humanities www.neh.gov	America’s Historical and Cultural Organizations – Planning	Up to \$40,000	Supports early stages of project development for exhibits, interpretation, discussion programs, interpretive websites. Includes consultation with scholars, refinement of humanities themes, preliminary design, testing and audience evaluation
	America’s Historical and Cultural Organizations - Implementation	Up to \$400,000	Supports final scholarly research and consultation, design development, production and installation of a project for presentation to the public
	Collaborative Research Projects	\$25,000-\$100,000	Supports interpretive humanities research by a team of two or more scholars for projects that may include: increasing understanding of the humanities, hosting conference or archaeological projects
	Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions	Up to \$6,000	Helps improve the ability to preserve and care for humanities collections.
	Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections	Up to \$50,000 – planning Up to \$350,000-	Supports preventive conservation measures to mitigate deterioration and prolong the life of collections

Table 9.6 Potential Funding Sources (continued)

Agency or Organization	Funding Program	Funding	Description
Federal Agencies			
National Park Service National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT) www.nccptt.nps.gov		Up to \$25,000	Funds projects that develop new technologies or adapt existing technologies to preserve cultural resources. Can include research, training, documentation, manuscript or website development
Library of Congress – American Folklife Center www.loc.gov/folklife	Henry Reed Fund for Folk Artists	Up to \$2,000	Provides support for activities directly involving folk artists such as honoraria for presentations, programs honoring folks artists and documenting folk artists

Agency or Organization	Funding Program	Funding	Description
National Historical Publications and Records Commission www.archives.gov/nhprc	Documenting Democracy: Access to Historical Records	Up to \$200,000	Promotes the preservation and use of documentary resources. Supports establishment of archives programs, surveying and processing archival records, and converting records to online formats
	Digitizing Historical Records	Up to \$150,000	Supports digitizing nationally significant collections and making them freely available online
	Innovations in Archives and Documentary Editing	\$50,000-\$150,000	Supports innovative methods to improve the preservation, public discovery and use of historical records
	Publishing Historical Records	\$20,000-\$250,000	Supports publication of papers of major figures from American life or broad historical movements. Grants support collecting, describing, preserving, editing and publishing documentary resource materials
Institute of Museum and Library Services www.imls.gov	Museums for America	\$5,000-\$150,000	Supports activities to strengthen museums as resources for lifelong learning and maintaining collections
	National Leadership Grants for Museums	\$50,000-\$500,000	Supports projects that address challenges or needs of the museum field
	Museum Grants for African American History and Culture	\$5,000-\$150,000	Supports improving care of collections, developing professional management or providing internships and fellowships

Table 9.6 Potential Funding Sources (continued)

National Organizations and Foundations			
National Trust for Historic Preservation www.preservationnation.org	Preservation Fund	Up to \$5,000	Supports preservation planning and education or emergency intervention for historic properties. Supports professional assistance in architecture, archaeology, engineering, preservation planning, organizational development and other areas
	Johanna Favrot Fund for Historic Preservation	\$2,500 - \$10,000	Support consultant services, production of communication materials, preservation conferences and workshops and implementing innovative programs
	Rosenwald School Centennial Fund	Up to \$20,000	Provides funding for the restoration and rehabilitation of Rosenwald School buildings
	Alice Rosenwald Flexible Fund	\$500 - \$5,000	Supports preservation planning, education and rehabilitation plans for Rosenwald Schools
National Trust for Historic Preservation www.preservationnation.org (continued)	Battlefield Preservation Fund	Up to \$5,000	Supports activities including legal and research fees to mitigate development threats, fundraising and media plans, feasibility studies, landscape research, interpretation and heritage education activities
	Hart Family Fund for Small Towns	\$2,500 - \$10,000	Provides seed money for preservation projects in small towns
Kresge Foundation www.kresge.org		Varies	Offers operating and project support grants. Areas include arts and culture, community development and education
ArtPlace America www.artplaceamerica.org			Supports arts and culture to result in creative placemaking that demonstrates vibrancy and diversity

Table 9.6 Potential Funding Sources (continued)

Regional Organizations or Foundations			
Foundation for the MidSouth (MS, LA, AK) www.fndmidsouth.org		Varies	Supports community development (community enrichment, culture, economic development, leadership training, education and environment)
Delta Regional Authority www.dra.gov		Varies	Supports projects for sustainable communities and workforce development
Mississippi Government Agencies and Nonprofits			
Mississippi Department of Archives and History www.mdah.state.ms.us	Community Heritage Preservation Grant Program	Varies	Supports preservation, restoration and interpretation of historic courthouses and schools. Properties must be designated Mississippi Landmarks. (Certified Local Government communities may use funds for other historic buildings.)
	Mississippi Landmark Grant Program	Up to \$300,000	Supports the cost of acquisition, preservation, restoration and operation of designated Mississippi Landmarks
	Certified Local Government Grant Program	\$1,000-\$10,000	Supports preservation projects in designated CLG communities including building restoration, site inventory work, National Register nominations, educational programs and staff support for new historic preservation commissions
	Mississippi Archaeology Research Grant Program	Varies	Funds university archaeologists and graduate students for projects including excavations, collections analysis and laboratory testing

Table 9.6 Potential Funding Sources (continued)

Agency or Organization	Funding Program	Funding	Description
Mississippi Government Agencies			
Mississippi Arts Commission www.arts.ms.gov	Mini-grants	\$50-\$1,000	May be used to present an artist from MAC’s Artist Roster, support a consultancy with an arts organization, or assist staff travel to an arts conference
	Project grants	\$250-\$5,000	Supports projects in four areas: arts-based community development, arts education, arts industry and Mississippi Heritage
	Operating grants	\$10,000 - \$25,000	Helps nonprofit arts organizations maintain financial stability
	Special initiatives	Varies	Supports programs in four areas: Building Fund for the Arts, Arts in the Classroom, Whole Schools Initiative and Model Whole Schools
Mississippi Humanities Council www.mshumanities.org		\$1,500 - \$7,500	Supports programs in four areas: Books and Reading, Mississippi History and Culture, Civil Discourse and Capacity Building
Mississippi Office of Tourism www.visitmississippi.org	Event grants	Up to \$5,000	Provides funds for marketing and advertising of events

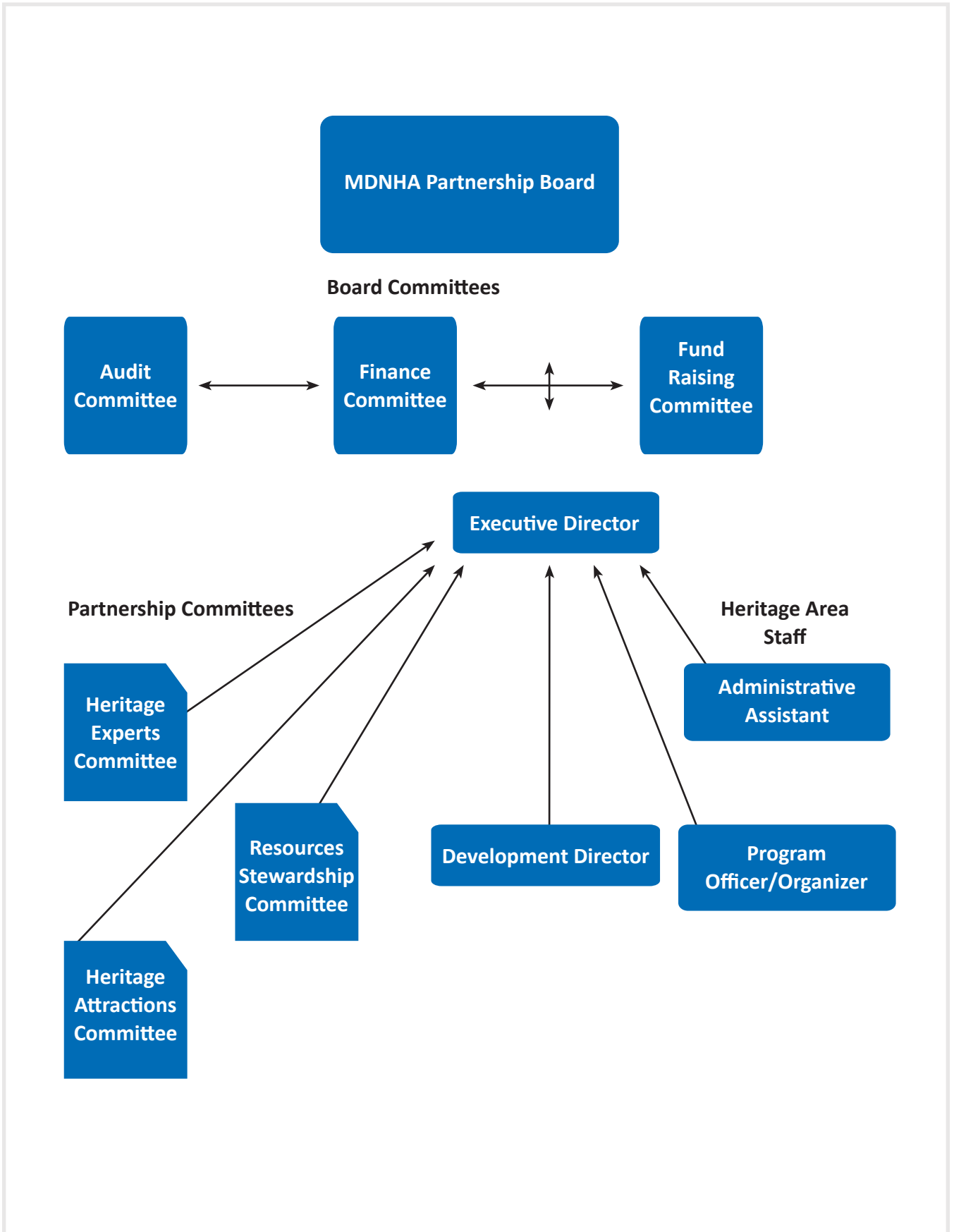
IV. Risk and Risk Mitigation

The MDNHA board bears the responsibility for the fiduciary safety of the organization. The board will be sensitive to the existence of risk, set the tone for dealing with it, and ensure proper processes and tools are in place to keep the organization safe and ready to act when a situation demands it. For the MDNHA, there are two major risks:

Stability of Funding – As with all non-profits, a consistent and reliable stream of funding is critical. Unfortunately for National Heritage Areas that rely on government funding, the budget process has become unpredictable. While Congress has maintained a steady amount of funding to National Heritage Areas over the years, there is no guarantee the appropriations to the National Park Service for National Heritage Areas will continue. For many National Heritage Areas, the loss of federal funding in any one year can be crippling, if not catastrophic. That fact is magnified for a new National Heritage Area, like Mississippi Delta. Therefore, the board and staff will prepare alternative strategies for garnering other sources of funds, not only to offset any potential loss as a result of a Congressional cut, but as a good practice of broadening its funding sources base.

- **Dilution of the Brand** – Another risk is the dilution of its brand due to potential competition from other entities. The history and heritage of the Mississippi Delta is powerful and carries with it the potential for many other organizations to capitalize on its story. MDNHA must work to position itself as the definitive, leading, organization within the Delta that helps communities preserve their rich, nationally-significant heritage and culture. To accomplish this goal, the coordinating entity, as the Congressionally-designated entity, will marshal numerous partners in the Delta to tell its story and plan for its future. Through providing leadership and working closely with partners, the coordinating entity will continue to be viewed as a local and national leader in the Delta’s preservation and conservation strategies. The brand of the Delta is too important to the sustainability of the National Heritage Area, and the board and staff will continue the good work they have already started in establishing the organization as the preeminent leader in the heritage development field.

Table 9.7.
Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Organizational Structure



Chapter 10

Introduction

As the management plan is implemented, the coordinating entity will emerge as a strong regional leader. This leadership role will encompass the development of new projects and programs described in the management plan as well as supporting the efforts of partners that further the mission of the MDNHA. Implementation of the projects and programs included in the management plan will meet the MDNHA's overarching goals that were developed to reflect and meet the mission and vision statements. The chapter's sections include Heritage Area Goals, Development of an Annual Work Plan, Criteria for Implementation, Best Practices, Implementation of Strategies, Evaluation Phases, Performance Goals and Implementation Schedules.

Table 10.1 Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Goals

Goal #1

Perpetuate the unique culture of the Mississippi Delta through engagement of the people who live here to preserve, celebrate and share the places and stories of the region.

Goal #2

Save historic and natural resources by raising awareness of the threat of their loss, providing recognition for saving places and directing resources to training, education and preservation.

Goal #3

Build a heritage area-wide network of partners by providing opportunities for engagement in a variety of activities.

Goal #4

Contribute to sustainable economic development through activities that will strengthen local and regional economies.

Annual Work Plan

The coordinating entity will develop an annual work plan as required by the National Park Service to specify activities that will be undertaken each year and to provide a reference for measuring accomplishments. The annual work plan will be an essential tool not only for the board and staff but also with funders and partners to clearly communicate each year's activities. The annual work plan will demonstrate the coordinating entity's transparency in all of its operations and will provide a framework for accomplishing each year's work. The annual work plan will include the following sections:

- **Introduction** – Overarching goals will be summarized. As the coordinating entity progresses, the introduction will include a summary of accomplishments from previous years as the foundation for the current year's activities.

- **Goals and objectives** – The current year’s goals and objectives will be described with connections to the coordinating entity’s overarching goals.
- **Actions** – Programs and projects to be undertaken by the coordinating entity in the current year will be described in detail. If a program or project is continued from previous years, a summary of activities to date will precede the description of the current year’s activities. This section will also note if the coordinating entity is the lead for a program or project or will be supporting a partner’s efforts.
- **Resources** – Partners, funding sources, research sources (for historical documentation) and other resources will be identified for each action step.
- **Budget** – The current year’s budget will be developed to include projected revenues and expenditures. The budget will also note any costs that are unknown at the time the work plan is developed.
- **Schedule** – An implementation schedule will outline activities for each month or quarter.

Program and Project Criteria for Implementation

The development of the strategies included in the management plan was based on a set of criteria that will enable the coordinating entity to accomplish the identified alternative: “Partner to Save Places, Perpetuate Culture and Tell the Story.” These criteria will continue to guide the implementation of the management plan. Criteria will apply to program and project development as follows:

- **Connect to themes** – In order to advance a greater understanding of the Delta’s history and culture, all programs and projects undertaken by the coordinating entity or its partners will connect to the statement of national significance, the five major themes or associated sub-themes. By connecting to themes, programs and projects will:
 - Fulfill one or more priorities in the annual work plan
 - Tell the stories of a significant aspect of the Delta’s past or present
 - Contribute to enhancing the Delta Experience
 - Raise awareness of historic resources and landscapes associated with the stories
 - Demonstrate the support of key partners
 - Address the interests of target audiences
- **Focus on authenticity and quality** – Programs and projects will reflect a focus on authenticity and quality through research and documentation, adherence to professional standards in all relevant fields and plans for maintaining projects or programs beyond the development stage. A focus on authenticity and quality will:
 - Base programs and projects in scholarly research led by subject experts
 - Adhere to professional standards in all disciplines including humanities, history, conservation, preservation, arts and education
 - Provide opportunities for research and documentation of subject matter through a variety of reliable information resources
 - Set standards for preserving resources including the built environment, landscapes and historical records

- Build new skills among partners and volunteers as they participate in training offered by the heritage area in research and documentation
 - Include plans to ensure the sustainability of ongoing projects
- **Save and celebrate** – The coordinating entity will advance the understanding of the Delta’s past and its contributions to the American story, preserve resources including the built environment, natural resources and living traditions and recognize the achievements of the heritage area and its partners. A focus on saving and celebrating will:
 - Increase understanding of the importance of saving historic and natural resources and living traditions
 - Result in the preservation of historic and natural resources that may be threatened by neglect, development or lack of funding
 - Result in increased appreciation and celebration of living traditions
 - Provide support that can enable partners’ projects and programs to succeed
 - Set a standard of long-term management of resources beyond the program or project development stage
- **Build a network** – Programs and projects provide opportunities for ongoing outreach and engagement of Mississippi Delta residents. Programs and projects will bring partners together in many disciplines including preservation, conservation, tourism and community development. Building the network will:
 - Include regular communication to increase awareness and support of the heritage area
 - Create opportunities for outreach and engagement of new audiences
 - Build a region-wide sense of community
 - Work with partners from many disciplines
 - Strive for the equitable distribution of heritage area resources throughout the 18-county region
 - Encourage partners to implement programs or projects that are compatible with the coordinating entity’s goals
- **Probability of success** – The coordinating entity will prioritize programs and projects that have a high probability of success based on partner commitments, existing planning, potential funding sources and projected outcomes. Careful evaluation of the probability of success will:
 - Determine if the program or project is appropriate to include in the upcoming annual work plan
 - Identify sources of funding
 - Confirm that the program or project is compatible with local, regional, state or federal planning, guidelines or regulations
 - Assess the capacity of the coordinating entity and partners to accomplish the activity within the proposed timeframe
 - Consider the potential economic impact resulting from the activity
- **Adhere to best practices** – All strategies will adhere to best practices including monitoring of potential impacts on historic or natural resources as discussed in the next section.

Best Practices to Guide Implementation

The coordinating entity has identified a set of best practices reflecting current best management practices that will guide its work in heritage development, resource preservation, interpretation and building partnerships. These best practices will be considered before implementation of activities and will be reviewed throughout development as well as in the evaluation of completed activities.

- **Protection of resources** – The resource protection and interpretation strategies described in the management plan will be continually monitored by the coordinating entity to ensure the protection of historic, cultural, natural and recreational resources. While none of the strategies included in the management plan are anticipated to have a negative impact on these resources, if the coordinating entity determines this potential exists, actions will be subject to further NEPA, NHPA and ESA analysis based on scholarly and scientific research and documentation. The coordinating entity will confer with all partner agencies (federal and state) and take appropriate actions such as environmental analysis and impact studies, Section 106 compliance and consultation with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (State Historic Preservation Office), securing of permits and other necessary steps.
- **Professional standards** – In all of its work, the coordinating entity will adhere to professional standards of disciplines including history, preservation, humanities, education, conservation and the arts. The coordinating entity will also require these standards of partners to whom it provides support.
- **Engagement and communications** – The coordinating entity will monitor engagement of partners as well as the results of efforts to reach out to and engage new partners and stakeholders in each activity. This will be accomplished through a process to include public meetings, periodic surveys, responses through communications in social and traditional media, and discussions with individual stakeholders.
- **Geographic diversity** – The coordinating entity will endeavor to work with partners in all 18 counties and will monitor the equitable distribution of resources including staff time and funding. The coordinating entity will monitor its success in working with partners in every county through an annual evaluation of activities.
- **Sensitivity** – The coordinating entity will demonstrate sensitivity to the needs of the Delta's ethnic, faith-based, educational and occupational groups in engagement, building capacity, telling the Delta's story and supporting sustainable economic development.
- **Wise use of funding** – The coordinating entity's board and staff will carefully consider where to direct funding to affect the greatest results in achieving goals.
- **Diversify funding sources** – The coordinating entity will seek to identify a wide range of funding sources at the local, state and federal levels to include individuals, foundations, corporations, governments and other sources. This diversification will prevent the coordinating entity from becoming dependent on any one source of funding for its operations or program activities.
- **Flexibility** – The coordinating entity will recognize that opportunities may arise to advance the heritage area's goals through new partnerships or funding sources that were not anticipated. The coordinating entity will maintain a degree of flexibility to consider and respond to these opportunities within the context of capacity, available time and funding.
- **Recognition** – The coordinating entity will include plans in all activities for recognition of accomplishments by the coordinating entity, partners and volunteers.

- **Measurement** – The coordinating entity will seek to measure tangible outcomes (such as programs and projects, preservation of resources or economic impact) and intangible results (such as increased pride in the Delta’s history) resulting from its work.

Impact of Strategy Implementation

A review of the strategies included in the management plan provides the following assessment that no negative impacts are anticipated to historic, cultural, natural or recreational resources:

- Plans for saving resources will be developed in partnership with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (SHPO).
- Any activity to increase lodging, visitor information centers or rest areas or ground-breaking activity of any sort will be subject to environmental review if supported by the coordinating entity. Additionally, the coordinating entity will conduct a baseline assessment of the current number of visitors and will develop strategies to assess impacts from increased visitation.
- An increase in visitation to the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area will have a positive impact of generating additional revenues for the preservation of resources including historic sites and museum collections. Any increases in visitation will have a negligible impact on natural or cultural resources.
- No actions are proposed that would have a direct or indirect impact on archaeological resources.
- Cultural landscapes would not be negatively impacted – plans call for activities to increase awareness and appreciation of their importance.
- Partners receiving grants from the coordinating entity for projects that may impact resources will be subject to environmental review.
- Plans designed to increase appreciation by Delta residents of their history and culture will encourage support for the preservation and perpetuation of these resources.

Evaluation Phases

The coordinating entity will continually monitor its activities and budgets to ensure that programs and projects meet established criteria and best practices. In addition, comprehensive evaluation phases are scheduled when the coordinating entity will conduct in-depth reviews of the heritage area’s progress toward its goals.

Evaluation phases are:

- **Annual Work Plan and Annual Report** – As each work plan is developed, the coordinating entity will assess accomplishments from the previous year. Additionally, the coordinating entity will revisit the implementation charts and determine if adjustments to the placement of activities in specific time periods is warranted. The coordinating entity will prepare an annual report to document and evaluate accomplishments in the following categories:
 - Operations – Activities of the board including ensuring financial sustainability
 - Programs – Progress toward implementation of programs and activities including involvement of a variety of partners
 - Partnerships – Outreach resulting in increases in partnerships
 - Economic Impact – Measurement of investments contributing to sustainable economic development

- **Five Year Evaluation – 2019** - The coordinating entity’s board of directors determined that an evaluation at the five-year point of implementation would be appropriate. In addition to reviewing programs and projects, the management structure will also be reviewed to determine any needed changes such as additional staff, revisions to the bylaws or other changes.
- **Funding Reauthorization Evaluation – 2023** – The heritage area’s legislation mandates an evaluation report “not later than three years before the date on which authority for federal funding terminates for the heritage area.” The heritage area’s designation in 2009 means the 15-year term of funding will be considered for renewal in 2024. The coordinating entity will begin preparations for the evaluation that will be conducted by the National Park Service. The authorizing legislation states: “The Secretary (of Interior) shall conduct an evaluation of the accomplishments of the heritage area and prepare a report with recommendations for the future role of the National Park Service.” Legislation further states that the evaluation will assess the progress of the local coordinating entity with respect to:
 - Achieving the goals and objectives of the approved management plan for the heritage area
 - Analyze federal, state, local and private investments in the heritage area to determine the leverage and impact of investments
 - Review the management structure, partnership relationships and funding of the heritage area for H.R. 146-284 purposes of identifying the critical components for the sustainability of the heritage area.

If the evaluation report recommends that federal funding of the heritage area be reauthorized, the report will include an analysis of:

- Ways in which federal funding for the heritage area may be reduced or eliminated
- The appropriate time period necessary to achieve the recommended reduction or elimination

The Secretary of Interior will submit the report to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives.

Performance Goals

As part of the coordinating entity's preparation of an annual report, accomplishments will be measured by the performance goals described in the following chart. The chart reflects the activities in Table 10.3 and Table 10.4 for the first five years of implementation. In addition to implementation of activities, the number of partners involved in each activity will also be documented.

Table 10.2
Performance Goals and Evaluation

Implementation Action	Evaluation Criteria
Create a package including graphic identity and messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Package design completed Distribution and use by partners
Oversee design and installation of MDNHA signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placement at entrances into heritage area
Communicate heritage area goals through presentations, meetings and media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of presentations Media coverage documentation
Engage adult residents and youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of outreach plan Number of residents participating in one or more activities
Create a volunteer program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development and publicity for volunteer opportunity inventory Number of new volunteers at partner organizations and coordinating entity
Form committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation of committees for resource stewardship, heritage attractions and heritage experts Development of scope of work for each committee Number of meetings and outcomes
Document the value of heritage and inform elected officials and the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of study and selection of consultant to conduct Completion of first study Meetings to present findings Publicity for research findings

Table 10.2
Performance Goals and Evaluation (continued)

Implementation Action	Evaluation Criteria
Honor residents in preserving, interpreting and promoting heritage and culture; host awards event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of award categories • Successful publicity to recruit nominations • Selection of recipients • Success of heritage awards event
Host forums and exchanges on tourism, preservation, reconciliation and other topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of partners for each event • Develop formats and agendas • Number of meetings and outcomes
Heritage-area wide survey on historic resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation to include review of databases, confer with MDAH to develop survey • Completion of survey • Publicity for survey during process and findings • Number of National Register nominations and Mississippi Landmark nominations
Advocate for preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner participation on Resource Stewardship committee • Development and implementation of advocacy plan • Publicity for threatened resources • Outcome of advocacy plan implementation (resources saved)

Table 10.2
Performance Goals and Evaluation (continued)

Implementation Action	Evaluation Criteria
Encourage stewardship of natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating entity’s assistance to conservation partners in advocacy • Publicity for advocacy plans
Provide training to support preservation efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with partners to identify issues and develop topics • Number of training sessions held and attendance
Create a virtual resource center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of resource lists • Acquire necessary computer equipment and software • Number of interns or student projects • Progress on creating center • Publicity and use of center by Delta residents and partners
Research and document Delta’s history connected to themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and identification of gaps • Topics selected and research undertaken
Research and document living traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of available resources • Number of oral histories conducted • Number of living heritage practitioners identified (working with folklorist)
Provide training on preserving archival resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of workshops offered • Number of participants

Table 10.2
Performance Goals and Evaluation (continued)

Implementation Action	Evaluation Criteria
Create a tour guide certification program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research certification programs • Development of program • Number of training sessions offered • Number of participants • Number of tour guide certified
Develop guided tours for visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database of charter group tours created • Number of tours and itineraries developed • Number of groups taking tours
Develop tours and programs for school and youth-oriented organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directory of tours and programs created
Develop printed materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of Blues Passport • Expansion of NPS Passport Program • Number of participating locations for passports • Number of guidebooks or other interpretive materials produced
Develop wayside interpretive signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage locations identified • Uniform signage design developed • Number of signs installed
Develop interior orientation exhibits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of exhibits and locations identified and approved • Designs developed • Number of exhibits installed

Table 10.2
Performance Goals and Evaluation (continued)

Develop electronic interpretive tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website developed • Number of audiotours or other electronic interpretive media developed
Engage and attract tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 18 counties participate in MS Delta Tourism Association • Design and placement of wayfinding and identification signage • Outreach to advocate for lodging and rest areas
Act as a clearinghouse for grant or sponsorship opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a database of resources • Number of partners assisted • Number of grants submitted with partners
Create a grants program to support projects that meet heritage area goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board subcommittee formed to develop grant program • Number of grants awarded
Provide support to develop new cultural and heritage-based businesses and to strengthen existing businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of living heritage practitioners identified for business development • Number of training sessions and technical assistance
Develop a hospitality/ambassador training program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and program development completed • Number of participants in training sessions

Table 10.2
Performance Goals and Evaluation (continued)

Implementation Action	Evaluation Criteria
Establish coordinating entity organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporation as a nonprofit and tax exempt organization completed • Bylaws developed • Committees formed • Job descriptions written • Staff hired • Values statement written • Annual work plan and budget developed • Partnership agreements developed • Financial stability plan developed • Strategic planning conducted

Implementation of Strategies

The implementation tables are organized around each of the strategy sections of the management plan. Each overarching strategy is stated and followed by specific action steps. The charts divide activities in three time periods:

1. Initial and short-term actions: 2014-2015
2. Mid-term actions: 2016-2020
3. Long-term actions: 2021-2024

The coordinating entity will evaluate the projected timelines each year in preparation of the annual work plan and may make adjustments to these charts as deemed necessary by the staff and board.

Initial Actions – Short Term Actions

2014-2015

Activities during the first two years will establish the heritage area through outreach and beginning the development process for selected programs and activities. The heritage area will also establish procedures for management and operations and approve a budget.

Table 10.3
Short-term Actions

ESTABLISH AND OUTREACH	Action	Chapter	Strategy/ Action Step
Create a package including a graphic identity and messaging	Design and trademark graphic element and heritage area name and provide to partners	8	1A
Oversee design and installation of signage that identifies the MDNHA at entrances into the heritage area	Place signage in prominent locations	8	1B
Communicate heritage area goals through presentations, meetings and media	Develop schedule and publicize availability for presentations	8	1C
Engage adult residents and youth	Develop outreach plan and communicate about engagement opportunities	7	4A
Create a volunteer program	Inventory opportunities for volunteers at partner organizations; publicize	8	7A
Form committees	Form resource stewardship, heritage attractions and heritage experts committees; develop scope of work and begin meetings	7 and 8	1A (chapter 7) 4C (chapter 8)
Document the value of heritage and inform elected officials and the public	Determine categories of research including cultural activities, preservation, recreation and other areas; conduct study; create brochure with summary of findings; publicize research	8	2A and 2B
PROGRAMMING	Action	Chapter	Strategy/ Action Step
Honor residents in preserving, interpreting and promoting heritage and culture; host awards event	Develop awards categories, seek nominations, select recipients, host event	8	3A and 3B
Host forums and exchanges on tourism, preservation, reconciliation and other topics	Determine formats and identify partners; host meetings on selected topics	8	4A and 4B

Table 10.3
Short-term Actions (continued)

PROGRAMMING (continued)	Action	Chapter	Strategy/ Action Step
Prepare a heritage area-wide survey of historic resources.	Review databases; confer with MDAH on survey parameters	7	1A
Advocate for preservation	Resource Stewardship Committee to identify issues; develop and implement advocacy plan	7	2A and 2B
Encourage stewardship of natural resources	Work with partners to advocate for stewardship	7	2C
Provide training to support preservation efforts	Work with partners to identify issues; develop a slate of topics	7	3A
Create a virtual resource center	Begin developing a list of resources; research potential internships	7	3B
Research and document Delta’s history connected to themes	Begin review of available resources; identify gaps	6	1A
Research and document living traditions	Begin review of available resources	6	1B
Provide training on preserving archival resources	Confer with MDAH to develop plans	6	2B
Create a tour guide certification program	Research certification programs	6	2C
Develop guided tours for visitors	Develop a database for charter group tours	6	3A
Develop tours and programs for school and youth-oriented organizations	Create a directory of tours and programs (part of resource center)	7	3B
Develop printed materials	Develop Blues Passport Participate in NPS Passport Program – add new locations; print brochures, table tents and posters; create passport booklets.	7	3B
Develop wayside interpretive signage	Identify locations for signage	6	5A
Develop interior orientation exhibits	Identify number of exhibits and locations	6	3B

Table 10.3
Short-term Actions (continued)

PROGRAMMING (continued)	Action	Chapter	Strategy/ Action Step
Develop electronic interpretive tools	Begin plans for website content	6	3B
Engage and attract tourists	Work with MDTA to include all 18 counties	6	4B
MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION	Action	Chapter	Action Steps
Incorporate as a nonprofit and tax exempt organization		9	Checklist
Develop by-laws		9	Checklist
Establish committees	Create audit, finance and fundraising committees	9	Checklist
Develop director’s job description		9	Checklist
Develop staff job descriptions		9	Checklist
Develop the board	Identify and recruit board members with needed skills (as vacancies occur)	9	Checklist
Develop values statements		9	Checklist
Develop annual work plan and budget		9	Checklist
Conduct strategic planning	Develop timeline – every 3-5 years	9	Checklist
Hire a development officer	Recruit experienced development staff person	9	Checklist
Develop guidelines for volunteers		9	Checklist
Develop partnership agreements		9	Checklist
Prepare plans to ensure stability of funding	Broaden sources of fund to include public, philanthropic, business, and public; begin to look toward developing possible revenue-generating activities	9	Checklist

Mid-term Actions 2016-2020

At this stage, programs and projects will be fully formed and implemented. Outreach activities established during the heritage area's initial years will continue in order reach new participants and form new partnerships. The coordinating entity will also prepare for and conduct a five-year evaluation in 2019.

**Table 10.4
Mid-term Actions**

OUTREACH	Action	Chapter	Strategy/ Action Step
Create a package including a graphic identity and messaging	Continue to provide graphic identity to new partners	8	1A
Oversee design and installation of signage that promotes the MDNHA	Maintain signage; place additional signage as needed	8	1B
Communicate heritage area goals through presentations, meetings and media	Continue to communicate through all channels	8	1C
Engage adult residents and youth	Continue outreach and monitor engagement	7	4A
Operate a volunteer program	Track results from database usage. Update volunteer opportunity database	8	7A
Hold committee meetings for resource stewardship and attraction.	Hold resource stewardship committee meetings to monitor preservation issues; hold attractions committee meetings to facilitate implementation of interpretive plans	7 and 8	1A (chapter 7) 4C (chapter 8)
Document the value of heritage and inform elected officials and the public	Conduct study every 3-5 years	8	2A and 2B
PROGRAMMING	Action	Chapter	Strategy/ Action Step
Honor residents in preserving, interpreting and promoting heritage and culture; host awards event.	Continue to host awards event; create a permanent record of recipients on heritage area website	8	3A and 3B
Host forums and exchanges on tourism, preservation, reconciliation and other topics	Continue to host forums and exchanges	8	4A and 4B

Table 10.4
Mid-term Actions (continued)

PROGRAMMING (continued)	Action	Chapter	Strategy/ Action Step
Act as a clearinghouse for grant or sponsorship opportunities	Build a database of funding sources; provide technical assistance for selected applications; apply for grants to support heritage area projects	8	5A
Create a grants program to support projects that meet heritage area goals	Create a board subcommittee to develop the grants program; implement program and evaluate outcomes	8	5B
Provide support to develop new cultural and heritage-based businesses and to strengthen existing businesses	Identify living heritage practitioners who are interested in business development; provide training and work with tourism partners to promote	8	6A
Develop a hospitality/ambassador training program	Research programs and develop customized program; create training materials; offer training for front-line employees	8	6B
Offer internships and student project opportunities	Work with universities to develop internships and student projects.	8	7B
Prepare a heritage area-wide survey of historic resources	Conduct survey; analyze and publicize report; identify threatened resources; prepare National Register and Mississippi Landmark nominations	7	1A
Increase awareness of the need for preservation	Develop publicity campaigns, 10 Most Endangered list and document best practices	7	2A
Advocate for heritage preservation	Create case studies of successful advocacy outcomes	7	2A
Encourage stewardship of natural resources	Create case studies of successful advocacy outcomes	7	2C
Provide training to support preservation efforts	Develop training formats, host sessions and document outcomes	7	3A

Table 10.4
Mid-term Actions (continued)

PROGRAMMING (continued)	Action	Chapter	Strategy/ Action Step
Create a virtual resource center	Create center; determine location for center to provide computer access	7	3B
Research and document Delta's history connected to themes	Conduct research to document themes and sub-themes as needed	6	1A
Research and document living traditions	Conduct research to document themes and sub-themes as needed	6	1B
Identify practitioners of the Delta's living traditions; collect and preserve oral histories	Work with folklorist and committee to identify living heritage practitioners; collect oral histories	6	1C
Provide training on preserving archival resources	Offer three-part training series; coordinate training with research	6	2B
Create a tour guide certification program	Develop program and begin offering training and certification	6	2C
Develop guided tours for visitors	Promote chart group tours; develop themed itineraries and promote to groups; track and maintain database	6	3A
Develop tours and programs for school and youth-oriented organizations	Identify links between sites for tours; offer regional tours; create new educational programs	6	3A
Develop printed materials	Develop Passports for identified themes Seek partnerships to produce guidebooks and develop production schedule	6	3B
Develop wayside interpretive signage	Develop uniform signage design; begin production and placement	6	3B
Develop interior orientation exhibits	Develop exhibit designs to accommodate available space at each location; fabricate and install exhibits	6	3B
Develop electronic interpretive tools	Create content for website; create audio guides; create catalog of videos; create new videos	6	3B

Table 10.4
Mid-term Actions (continued)

PROGRAMMING (continued)	Action	Chapter	Strategy/ Action Step
Engage and attract tourists	Work with MDOT and MDTA to develop wayfinding and place identification signage	6	5A
Engage and attract tourists	Work with MDTA to advocate for increased lodging	6	5A
Engage and attract tourists	Work with MDTA to advocate for increased number of rest areas	6	5A
MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION	Action	Chapter	Action Steps
Review values, mission and vision statements	Make revisions as needed	9	Checklist
Conduct strategic planning	Develop timeline – every 3-5 years	9	Checklist
Conduct internal audit		9	Checklist
Develop a capital structure plan		9	Checklist
Build an operating reserve		9	Checklist
Conduct five-year evaluation		9	Checklist

Long-term Actions 2021-2024

As the coordinating entity reaches this phase, programs and projects will be continued as determined during the five-year evaluation. The coordinating entity will also work with the National Park Service to prepare for and conduct its 15-year funding reauthorization review.

Table 10.5
Long-term Actions

OUTREACH	Action	Chapter	Strategy/ Action Step
Document the value of heritage and inform elected officials and the public	Conduct follow up study and create tracking system of economic impact	8	2A and 2B
Continue all outreach activities as described in previous sections			
PROGRAMMING	Action	Chapter	Strategy/ Action Step
Honor residents in preserving, interpreting and promoting heritage and culture; host awards event.	Expand exchanges to include additional topics as identified by partners	8	3A and 3B
Form committees	Expand committee structure as needed to address additional topics	7 and 8	1A (chapter 7) 4C (chapter 8)
Develop a hospitality/ambassador training program	Expand program to offer training and tours to additional sectors; update information materials	8	6B
Continue programming as determined by outcomes of activities described in previous sections			
MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION	Action	Chapter	Action Steps
Plan for an endowment		9	
Conduct reauthorization review with National Park Service		10	

Appendices

- Appendix A Management Services Agreement – Delta State University and MDNHA Partnership
- Appendix B Letters of Commitment
- Appendix C Letters of No Impact
- Appendix D Resource Inventory
- Appendix E MDNHA Planning Committees
- Appendix F Groups and Stakeholders
- Appendix G Maps
- Appendix H National Trust for Historic Preservation Consulting Team
- Appendix I MDNHA Management Plan Development Resources

Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area
MANAGEMENT PLAN • March 2014