Incorporating Natural History into the Proposed Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area

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Topics

(1) Mississippi Delta characteristics
(2) Tourism in the Mississippi Delta
(3) National Heritage Areas
(4) Why a NHA in the Mississippi Delta?
(5) Research and the Creation of the NHA
Mississippi Delta

19 County region in Northwestern Mississippi; encompasses the Yazoo-Mississippi floodplain
Figure 3. Median Household Income (in 1999 dollars).

Percent Below the Poverty Level in the Mississippi Delta, by County for 1980, 1990 and 1998

Percent for U.S. = 12.7 (1998)


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Percent of Persons Below Poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolivar</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carroll</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coahoma</td>
<td>39.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeSoto</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holmes</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humphreys</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issaquena</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leflore</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panola</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharkey</td>
<td>43.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunflower</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tallahatchie</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tate</td>
<td>24.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tunica</td>
<td>52.7</td>
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<td>Warren</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yazoo</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tourism’s Impact in Mississippi

- 91,500 jobs (state’s largest private-sector employer)
- Annual payroll of $1.6 billion
- Estimated direct sales of $5.7 billion
- Estimated state tax revenues of $450 million
- Estimated local tax revenues of $144 million

National Heritage Areas
Defined

“A National Heritage Area is a place where natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography. These patterns make National Heritage Areas representative of the national experience through the physical features that remain and the traditions that have evolved in the areas. Continued use of the National Heritage Areas by people whose traditions helped to shape the landscapes enhances their significance.”

Source: www.cr.nps.gov
Management of National Heritage Areas

“National Heritage Area” is a federal designation, but does not denote land management in the traditional sense;

NHAs are managed by local groups;

state agencies, private commissions, or private voluntary organizations;

The National Park Service acts as a coordinating entity, providing expertise and access to funding for a 15-year period
National Heritage Area Designation

Designation as a National Heritage Area is made by Congress, in response to local initiative.

Criteria for Designation as a NHA:

(1) Completion of a suitability/feasibility study
(2) Public involvement in the feasibility study
(3) Demonstration of widespread support among residents for the heritage area designation
(4) Commitment from key constituents (e.g. governments, industry, private organizations)
Why a National Heritage Area in the Mississippi Delta?

Delta Blues

King Cotton

Great Migration

Civil Rights Movement
History of Effort to Create a Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area


(2) Formation of Blues Highway Association (2002) The Delta Center for Culture & Learning

(3) Visit from Robert Stanton, former NPS director (2003)


(5) Visit from Brenda Barrett (Dec. 2003)
Possible Management Entities

(1) Delta Center for Culture and Learning, Delta State University
(2) University Center for Economic Development, Mississippi Valley State University
(3) Mississippi State Blues Commission
(4) USDA Rural Development
(5) Tunica RiverPark
(6) Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi
(7) Mississippi Arts Commission/Mississippi Heritage Program
(8) Mississippi Department of Archives and History/Mississippi Historical Society
(9) Southern Cultural Heritage Foundation, Vicksburg, MS
(10) Mississippi Division of Tourism
Research Objectives

Purpose: Develop the potential for the proposed Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (MDNHA) to incorporate natural history into its management approach.

Specific Objectives:

(1) Understand the ways in which natural history is incorporated as an element of local heritage in existing heritage areas.

(2) Understand elements of the Delta’s natural history and survey opportunities to incorporate these into the MDNHA.

(3) Identify potential partner organizations, e.g. resource management entities within the boundaries of the MDNHA.

(4) Develop opportunities to incorporate participatory research & education into the process of creating & managing the MDNHA.
Natural History of the Delta

Mississippi River/
Water

Hunting/
Outdoor Recreation

Bird Migration/
Mississippi Flyway

Soil/Topography

Bottomland
Hardwood
Forests
Role of Research in Creating Heritage Areas

According to the National Park Service:

“Federal designation depends upon Congressional support, whether the region’s resources are nationally important and the degree to which the public is engaged in and supportive of designation.”
Role of Research in Creating Heritage Areas

Research can play an important role in:

(1) **Identifying** important resources, stories and interpretive opportunities;

(2) **Understanding** local conditions, preferences, and possibilities.

(3) Establishing **partnerships** with local agencies;

(4) Building **community support** for the designation;

(5) **Clarifying perceptions** about the designation.