

The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Partnership

Request for Proposal

RFP201101

*Management Plan
for the
Mississippi Delta National Heritage
Area*

Released: May 1, 2011

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"Much of what is profoundly American- what people love
about America- has come from the delta, which is often called
'the cradle of American culture.'"

from Stories of the Delta, The National Park Service Lower Mississippi Delta Symposium,
1996

I. General Information

A. Introduction and Proposal Expectations

The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Partnership (MDNHAP) is identified as the coordinating entity for the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (MDNHA) in the Omnibus Federal Land Management Act of 2009 (section 8008). The MDNHAP is seeking proposals and cost estimates to develop a management plan and its accompanying National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance documents per the requirements outlined in the federal regulations and National Park Service (NPS) policies (a list of the legislative requirements appears in IIB, below). This management plan will provide short and long term strategies for managing the MDNHA over the next 3-15 years as it protects and maintains cultural and natural resources; accommodates sustainable uses; provides for visitor education and enjoyment; develops public understanding of the identity, purpose and significance of the MDNHA; and ensures the implementation of activities that support partnership opportunities. For purposes of this request for proposals, the environmental decision will be between a Categorical Exclusion (CE) and an Environmental Assessment (EA), and will be based on early scoping, public involvement and preliminary environmental analysis. Contractors should assume these initial analyses will support a CE. Their budget should reflect this assumption, but they should also explain how their costs and level of effort would change should the early analyses result in an EA.

Specifics concerning the MDNHA can be found in the legislation referenced earlier, available on the temporary MDNHA web site www.blueshighway.org. The MDNHA encompasses eighteen counties in northwest Mississippi that include flood plain of the Mississippi and Yazoo Rivers commonly known as the Mississippi Delta. The legal description of the MDNHA can be found at <http://www.blueshighway.org/mdnhadefault.htm>, but it roughly extends from the Tennessee border at Memphis to south of Vicksburg, and from the Mississippi River on the West to the eastern borders of the counties that include river flood plain. The Delta has rich heritage stories, and the MDNHAP seeks to promote those activities that improve, protect, and advance the understanding of the Delta's important past and its contributions to the American story.

The contractor's proposal should outline their ideas and approach for developing the management plan and meeting the requirements of its accompanying environmental document. The contractor should outline the tasks, strategies and deliverables they would perform and provide if they were selected to develop the management plan and environmental document. Deliverables must include ten bound copies of the management plan, twenty-five copies of the executive summary, and digital versions of both the management plan and the executive summary. The proposal should also provide a list of references, including those that can attest to the contractor's successful experience with the development of planning and environmental compliance documents related to National Park Service sites. Finally, the proposal should document the proposers' experience in public engagement, and how they intend to maximize it during this project.

B. Schedule of Events

MDNHAP will accept questions and inquiries from all potential bidders via its management entity, the Delta Center for Culture and Learning, box 3152, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS 38733 or by email to Lbrown@deltastate.edu. Questions should pertain directly to and follow the organization of the RFP and begin by referencing the RFP page number. **The end date for email questions and inquiries about this RFP is May 23, 2011.** In order to be considered for award, the bid must be received for the MDNHA by the required time. **Any bid proposal not received by 2:00pm on June 10, 2011, will not be considered.**

Prospective Contractors are instructed to deliver 1 original (marked as such) and 8 complete copies of the proposal enclosed in one sealed box or other package, in a manner that assures receipt by 2:00PM CDT June 10, 2011. Packages must be sealed and designate prominently the proposal number: "RFP 201101"

Mailing Address: Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area

Reference: RFP 201101

DSU Box 3152

Delta Center for Culture and Learning

Cleveland, Mississippi 38733

Hand delivery may be made to the Delta Center for Culture and Learning, room 130 Ewing Hall, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS 38733 prior to closing date and time. It is the Contractors' responsibility to ensure timely delivery of proposal; any proposal received after the bid closing time will not be accepted but returned unopened to the bidder.

C. Evaluation and Award

The MDNHAP will review and evaluate the proposals and cost estimates and interview several firms before making a selection. Proposals will be evaluated by the MDNHAP's management entity and may make use of outside consultants in an advisory role. Original bid proposals once submitted cannot be changed in any way. MDNHAP's management entity will complete its evaluation and recommend to the board of the MDNHAP for award the bidder whose bid proposal, conforming to the RFP, is most advantageous to the MDNHA, price and other factors considered. Final approval will be given by the MDNHAP board.

D. National Heritage Area Information and Background

The MDNHA is composed of 18 counties in northwest Mississippi whose history and culture is shaped by the Mississippi River and the alluvial plain it produced. This unique landscape has created a culture that is distinct from that of surrounding regions and unusually rich in heritage stories.

The purpose of the MDNHA is to tell these stories, not only of the river and its natural environs, but also of the people who have inhabited this region, from Native Americans to African slaves, share croppers, plantation owners, and immigrants from Europe and Asia. This is 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.

The MDNHA will help share these stories in creative ways that will simultaneously build Delta communities and benefit Delta economies.

E. Legislation

In March 2009, Congress passed legislation (H.R. 146, section 8008; found on website link <http://www.blueshighway.org/mdnhadefault.htm>) which created the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area. The legislation required that a management plan for the national heritage area be completed within three years of the beginning of federal funding. The MDNHAP is the coordinating entity defined in the legislation. The mission statement of the MDNHAP is available at <http://www.blueshighway.org/mdnhadefault.htm>. The MDNHAP selected the Delta Center for Culture and Learning, located at Delta State University, as the management entity that will oversee the management planning process.

F. Plan Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the planning process is to develop a national heritage area management plan and environmental document that provides for the management, preservation and interpretation of the cultural, historic and natural resources for the educational and inspirational benefit of future generations.

The scope of the plan should further provide guidance to assist the north-west Mississippi communities, organizations and citizens in preserving the special historic identity of the delta and fostering a close working relationship among all levels of government, the private sector and local communities.

The plan should also strengthen the value of the NPS with the communities, governments, and organizations within the heritage area by:

- Establishing a network of related historic resources, , educational opportunities, and events depicting the landscape of the Mississippi Delta which when joined together created a unique area of our country.
- Establishing partnerships between federal, state, local and privately owned resources in the MDNHA that represent the significance of the story of this area.

The plan will adhere to both the requirements in the legislation (<http://www.blueshighway.org/mdnhadefault.htm>) and also the guidance provided in the National Park Service's *Components of a Successful National Heritage Area Management Plan* (Planning Notebook). The Planning Notebook is available for download at <http://www.blueshighway.org/mdnhadefault.htm> or directly from the National Park Service's National Heritage Area website at: <http://www.nps.gov/history/heritageareas/FAQ/plans.htm> The Planning Notebook provides detailed information and examples of the required components of a national heritage area management plan, including the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Also available at <http://www.blueshighway.org/mdnhadefault.htm> is a recent memo from the NPS National Coordinator for Heritage Areas providing guidance on NEPA pathways, and recently updated [Director's Orders 12 governing Categorical Exclusions](#).

Legislative requirements must be included in the management plan while the components identified in the Planning Notebook may be customized to meet the needs of the MDNHA. The contractor will work closely with the MDNHAP and the NPS Regional Program Manager and Regional Environmental Coordinator to ensure these requirements are met. The MDNHAP board, and ultimately, the Secretary of the Interior will approve the final plan. The plan will be reviewed (as outlined in the Planning Notebook) to ensure that it includes a regional framework and specific strategies to assist the State of Mississippi, local governments, organizations and private citizens to protect, preserve and interpret Mississippi's cultural, historic, and natural resources. The plan must also demonstrate that it reflects the diverse interests of the citizens of the heritage area including governments, natural and historic resources protection organizations, educational institutions, business and recreational organizations. The management plan must document that adequate opportunity for public and governmental involvement was provided, including public hearings. The plan must also contain adequate assurances that the appropriate state and local officials support the plan. Their support is needed for the effective implementation of state and local aspects of the management plan.

G. Project Orientation

Contractors expressing an interest in submitting a proposal for a management plan/environmental document will review the contents of the websites listed in the Information Supplied to the Contractor section of the Submission Requirements for complete Proposal (II G, below). The contractor should request any additional information from Lbrown@deltastate.edu. Any documents and information supplied to the contractor should be considered propriety materials and shall not be made public. These materials shall be reviewed to develop a clear understanding of the project area and associated issues.

H. Information Ownership

All data, technical information, materials gathered, originated, developed, prepared, used or obtained in the performance of the contract regardless of the state of completion, which are a result of the services required under this contract shall be and remain the property of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area and shall be delivered to the MDNHA upon 30 days notice.

I. Confidentiality

Some data provided by MDNHA to the contractor are confidential. The contractor will use reasonable care to protect the confidentiality of such data.

J. News Releases and Advertisements

The contractor shall not issue news releases related to the services being provided under this contract without the prior written consent of the MDNHA. The contractor shall not use the MDNHA name, logo, images, or any data or results arising from this contract as a part of any commercial advertising without obtaining the prior written consent of the MDNHA.

II. Submission Requirements for Complete Proposal

A. Company History / Qualifications

The Contractor must provide applicable experience showing evidence of qualifications to complete a detailed plan meeting all criteria set herein, and of their ability to successfully engage the public in a planning process. Appropriate references with contact details must be included.

B. Legislative Requirements

The contractor must include in the management plan the components presented in the Planning Notebook. In addition, the following requirements are outlined in the legislation. Many of these legislative requirements are aligned with those in the Planning Notebook. As mentioned earlier, legislative requirements must be included in the final management plan.

The legislation states that the management plan 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—
 - (i) performance goals;
 - (ii) plans for resource protection, enhancement, and interpretation; and
 - (iii) 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—

(i) 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

(ii) 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.

NOTE: It is the bidders responsibility to ensure that all steps are taken as outlined in Federal Regulation H.R. 146 Sec. 8008(<http://www.blueshighway.org/mdnhadefault.htm>) and not to assume that all requirements are listed here.

C. General Task List

The contractor will work with the MDNHA to finalize and incorporate components of the management plan. The following are planning tasks required throughout the project:

- Work with the NPS Southeast Regional Office to ensure proper National Park Service review and other procedures are followed;
- Ensure the management plan meets the wishes of the MDNHAP board and the approval criteria of the Secretary of the Interior
- NPS Website: work with the National Park Service to use the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website located at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/> for collecting and responding to public comments. Responses to all public comments may be posted as a single file at this site;
- MDNHA website: Ensure all documents and announcement (drafts, NOI (Notice of Intent), NOA (Notice of Action), newsletters, are converted and posted into appropriate website products for posting onto the MDNHA website and that links to the NPS PEPC website are developed to captured public comments;
- Travel as required for public meetings or to meet with federal, state, MDNHA members, and other entities;
- Compile, edit, develop graphics, reproduce, and distribute all related publications (e.g., newsletters, fliers, Finding of No Significant Impact (FONCI) or Record of Decision (ROD) and the draft and final documents;
- Generate and maintain a mailing list;
- Compile the administrative history of the planning project (e.g., all decision-making phone calls, files, drafts, agreements).

The contractor will work closely with the MDNHA on all aspects of developing the management plan. The contractor will be responsible for ensuring that the management plan assembles all the required components into a plan that meets the approval criteria.

D. Development of Management Plan

The contractor will work with the MDNHA to finalize and incorporate components as required by the legislation and the guidance in the Planning Notebook into a cohesive management plan. The management plan will include:

- Foundation Statement (vision, mission, purpose, national significance, interpretive themes, special mandates or specific planning requirements from the authorizing legislation, board regional goals)
- Resources inventories
- Comprehensive goals, strategies and actions

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- Compilation of laws, guidelines, policies unique to the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area
 - Partner roles and commitments
 - Interpretive Plan
 - Business Plan
 - Performance goals, benchmarks, and evaluation
 - List of preparers and participants with their qualifications
 - Draft and final management plan

E. Development of Environmental Document

The contractor will work with the MDNHA to finalize the Environmental Screening which helps determine the need for a Categorical Exclusion, an Environmental Assessment, or Environmental Impact Statement. This includes contacting the appropriate agencies (Fish and Wildlife Service, State Historical Commission, etc). The contractor will then be responsible for developing the appropriate environmental document and meeting the requirements of NEPA as applicable. As stated earlier, a finding of Categorical Exclusion is expected. Should an Environmental Assessment be required, the contractor will be expected to:

- Create and publish notices of intent and availability, FONSI/ROD and any other NEPA elements required for Federal Register publication (if required)
- Consultation and coordination with appropriate counties, towns, local , state, and federal agencies, the public, Tribes, Preservation Office and the Fish and Wildlife Service as required by the legislation and NEPA
- Collect, analyze and document public reviews and comments on draft and final documents to ensure the public's concerns, ideas and needs are addressed in the plan
- Develop and analyze alternatives including the no-action alternative, alternatives considered but rejected and actions considered but rejected
- Identify environmentally preferred alternative
- Relationship to other planning projects
- Mitigation measures
- Affected environment
- Methodologies and environmental impacts of each alternative, including natural and cultural resources, visitors experiences, socio-economic conditions and identify impact topics to be addressed and impact topics dismissed, analysis, intensities, duration, conclusion, and cumulative impacts
- Consultation and Coordination
- List of preparers and their qualifications

F. Alternative Scenarios

The contractor shall gather all data and information necessary and available from the previous work of the MDNHA such as inventories, mission statement, minutes of meetings, and public comments to develop draft alternative concepts for the management of the Heritage Area.

Some of the issues and concerns that the alternatives might address are:

- What are the desired conditions of the resources and what needs to be done to protect and preserve them?
- What interpretive experiences should be provided first?
- What visitor experiences should the MDNHA pursue versus which would be better addressed by individual partner sites?
- What similar challenges are faced by a number of sites?
- What are the most important actions the MDNHA can take to encourage economic development in the national heritage area?

Should an Environmental Assessment be required, it will also examine alternative scenarios, including a no-action and environmentally preferred alternatives. The contractor will use the previous work of the MDNHAP, requirements in the legislation, and the comments and concerns obtained from the public (including state, local, federal, preservation organizations) to develop alternatives. Impact topics to be considered or dismissed as well as mitigation measures will be included in the analysis if an EA is required.

G. Contract Management & Communications

The contractor should describe the overall management approach; who will lead the planning effort (planning team or committee); how they will communicate with other decision makers, stakeholders and the public (e.g., the planning team or committee may lead internal discussions and then brief the MDNHA before discussion with key stakeholders and the public).

The contractor should describe the roles and responsibilities of its planning team and their ability to perform the tasks assigned including the production, review and approval of the management plan/ environmental document.

H. Information Supplied to Contractor

The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area's management entity will provide a background study and all information pertaining to that study. Upcoming event information will also be provided to the contractor.

The *Components of a Successful National Heritage Area Management Plan* Planning Notebook can be found at the National Park Service's National Heritage Area website located at <http://www.nps.gov/history/heritageareas/rep/heritage.htm>

The National Heritage Area Alliance website at <http://nationalheritageareas.com/> provides overviews of national heritage areas throughout the United States.

The NPS National Coordinator for Heritage Areas is Martha Raymond (martha_raymond@nps.gov). The NPS Program Director for National Heritage Areas in the Southeast is K. Lynn Berry (K_Lynn_Berry@nps.gov).

A recent memo from the NPS National Coordinator for Heritage Areas providing guidance on NEPA pathways is available at <http://www.blueshighway.org/mdnhadefault.htm>. A more detailed analysis (Director's Order 12 Categorical Exclusions) has recently been updated by NPS and can be found at https://www.historicpreservation.gov/c/document_library/get_file?p_l_id=36286&folderId=35647&name=DLFE-715.pdf.

The NPS Planning, Environment and Public comment (PEPC) website provides access to current plans, environmental impact analyses, and related documents on public review. Users of the site can submit comments on NPS documents available for public review. The external site is located at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>. The contractor should review and/or link to the PEPC site. The contractor will work with NPS Regional Office Liaison for this project to load website materials.

An earlier study of the Lower Mississippi River, which includes the region encompassed by the MDNHA can be found at <http://www.nps.gov/history/delta/>. Note that this study had a much greater geographic extent than the MDNHA, and only parts of it are relevant to this effort.

Another detailed study of the Lower Mississippi River, which includes a list of natural and heritage resources in the counties encompassing the MDNHA (Chapter 4) is available at http://www.lmrcc.org/LMR_Eco_Prof.pdf.

The website <http://www.blueshighway.org/mdnhadefault.htm> has links to further information on existing inventories of the Delta's natural and heritage resources.

I. Progressive Annual Project Plan

The contractor should develop a yearly schedule for completing the contract by January, 2014. This schedule should include adequate time for review as outlined in the *Components of a Successful National Heritage Area Management Plan*.

The contractor should supply bids for the planning process and completion of the Management Plan. This proposal should include public meetings, materials, reproduction, travel, salaries, consultant fees and publication costs for the required bound copies and executive summaries. It should be based on the assumption that a Categorical Exclusion is the preferred NEPA pathway, but include an explanation of how the later determination that the Environmental Assessment is the preferred pathway would affect the scope of work and the budget. The budget should include roles and responsibilities for each job title. MDNHA reserves the right to review staff resumes.

J. Draft Management Plan/Environmental Document Schedule

The following draft schedule is to give potential contractors an idea about typical products and time frame. The schedule will be adapted to the selected proposal and in response to a determination of Categorical Exclusion or Environmental Assessment.

<u>Task/Management Plan Component</u>	<u>Schedule</u>
Notification of finalists	August, 2011
Finalist presentations	September, 2011
Contractor selection	October, 2011
Determine NEPA Pathway	November to December, 2011
Review existing information	
Update inventories	
Continue development of foundation statement	
Develop public involvement strategy; engage partners	November to December, 2011
Begin NEPA process	
Public scoping begins	November 2011
Finalize foundation statement	November 2011
Meet with partners, stakeholders, government entities	November 2011 to March 2012
Develop alternatives, internal review, public review, public	
Comment analysis, review/revise alternatives (if EA is needed)	
Develop management scenarios, internal review, public review, public comment analysis, review/revise alternatives	December, 2011-May 2012

Select preferred and environmentally preferred alternative (only if EA is required), Internal review	June to Aug., 2012
Produce draft management plan/environmental document (Business plan, benchmarks, evaluation criteria, Implementation plan)	August to November, 2012
NPS region review/revision, state review/revision	December, 2012 to May, 2013
Public review of Draft Document	June 2013
Prepare Final Document, review/revisions	July to August, 2013
End planning process	November, 2013
Submission of the plan to the Secretary of the Interior for approval. Submission of hard copies and summaries to MDNHA	January, 2014

III. Fees and Payment

Fees and payment shall comply with the above referenced request for proposal/scope of work contract and as stated herein. The contractor shall be paid a firm fixed price as provided under the contract and tasks completed in any year.

The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area's obligation for performance of this delivery order beyond this price is contingent upon the availability of funds from which payment for contract purposes can be made. No legal liability on the part of the MDNHAP for any payment may arise for performance under this contract beyond the amount that has been authorized through the issuance of written delivery orders.

Original invoices are to be mailed directly to: Luther Brown, Director, Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area, Box 3152, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS 38733.

The selected contractor shall be responsible for the furnishing of all supplies and services required to accomplish all services required under the preceding *Submission Requirements for Complete Proposal*.