ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Heritage Sites

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Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area Feasibility Study

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Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area Feasibility Study

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Kayaking at Lake Chicot State Park *(Arkansas Delta Byways)*

ARKANSAS DELTA NHA FEASIBILITY STUDY · EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

This feasibility study documents the national significance of the Arkansas Delta and presents a compelling case for its designation as a National Heritage Area (NHA). Across 17 counties in eastern Arkansas, the Mississippi River and its tributaries shaped a landscape where agricultural transformation, human labor, federal action, social struggle, and cultural expression changed the course of American history, doing so with a clarity and continuity rare among American regions.

The Arkansas Delta built agricultural systems that fed national markets and gave rise to labor movements that changed the rights of American workers. Federal programs reshaped rural life, military installations supported the nation's defense, and music born in Delta towns reached audiences worldwide. That history remains visible in working farms, small towns, wildlife refuges, historic sites, churches, and courthouse squares, carried forward by communities that still keep the Delta's traditions and vibrant culture alive and evident.

This study documents 295 resources that convey those nationally important stories, records broad public support for designation, and lays out substantial opportunities for conservation, education, recreation, and economic development. The feasibility study also identifies an experienced coordinating entity capable of leading the work. Measured against the seven statutory requirements established by Congress, the Arkansas Delta meets or exceeds each of them.

The Arkansas Delta's significance already exists, plainly, in the land, the history, the music, and its people. Designation offers something different: national recognition, a shared identity, and the organizational capacity to connect and strengthen what generations of Delta residents have already built and continue.

About the Study

Arkansas State University's Heritage Sites Program began planning for a proposed Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area in late 2024, with Point Heritage Development Consulting facilitating the process and the Delta Regional Authority providing financial support. A-State Heritage Sites brought more than two decades of regional stewardship to the effort through its management of Historic Dyess Colony: Johnny Cash Boyhood Home, the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum, the Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center, and Lakeport Plantation Museum.

Located from Clay County to Chicot County, these four sites tell distinct chapters of a much larger regional story. Together, they demonstrate the need for a framework that can connect resources, communities, and stories across the entire Delta landscape. An NHA would provide that framework while allowing local organizations to retain ownership and control of their properties, programs, and priorities.

The study area for the Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area covers approximately 10,500 square miles and is home to just under 500,000 people. Jonesboro, Pine Bluff, Paragould, West Memphis, and Blytheville are its largest cities, while Helena-West Helena, Stuttgart, Forrest City, and Lake Village anchor the surrounding farm country. Agriculture and agricultural processing remain the foundation of the regional economy, joined by steel manufacturing, transportation, and a growing heritage and outdoor recreation sector.

The planning team spent more than a year testing the concept with the people who know the region best. Between January 2025 and March 2026, the planning team conducted four rounds of fieldwork and visited more than 40 sites. Ten public meetings from Piggott to Monticello gathered community perspectives, while 11 confidential stakeholder interviews and an extensive public survey expanded that record. The process reached approximately 300 people, including county judges, mayors, farmers, musicians, preservationists, business owners, tourism leaders, and residents.

The overall response was decisive. In an electronic survey with 106 participants, 93 percent supported or strongly supported designation of an NHA. At a March 2026 public meeting in Helena-West Helena, every participant voted to support both the proposed interpretive themes and the NHA. That support reflects a region ready to claim its place on the national and international stage.

A Nationally Significant Landscape

The Arkansas Delta is a nationally significant cultural landscape, shaped by the Mississippi River, where agriculture, labor, federal power, and struggles over rights came together in ways that changed America. Federal, state, and private responses to floods, economic crises, war, and social change transformed the Delta from floodplain to agricultural powerhouse, helping to build national markets and labor systems. In this landscape, struggles over race, rights, and belonging helped drive broader movements for social change. These experiences gave rise to a Delta culture that reached far beyond the region through music, literature, faith, and foodways.

The Delta is significant because natural forces and human choices converged here with lasting national consequences. The Mississippi River and its tributaries created the floodplain, while Bayou Bartholomew and Bayou Meto carried water through its interior. Crowley's Ridge offered high ground above the lowlands, and the Grand Prairie supported the growth of a nationally important rice industry. Together, these features created a distinctive landscape tied to national systems of agriculture, transportation, commerce, conservation, and flood control.



The Arkansas Roots Music Festival is held each spring at the Historic Dyess Colony: Johnny Cash Boyhood Home. *(A-State Heritage Sites)*

Americans encountered opportunity and hardship across this floodplain in equal measure. Enslaved people cleared forests, cultivated fields, and created wealth that others claimed. After emancipation, tenant farmers and sharecroppers sustained an agricultural economy that often trapped families in debt and poverty. Farmers, engineers, labor organizers, musicians, writers, soldiers, and community leaders each left marks that extended far beyond eastern Arkansas.

Floods and earthquakes changed the physical landscape, while agricultural development transformed wetlands and forests into some of the nation's most productive farmland. Federal programs responded to disaster, depression, war, and rural poverty, and grassroots movements challenged the economic exploitation and racial injustice woven into that system. Out of churches, radio stations, clubs, front porches, and family gatherings grew musical traditions that carried the Delta's voice into the mainstream of American culture.

Five interpretive themes express that national significance.

Shaped by River and Ridge traces how settlement, engineering, agriculture, conservation, and stewardship transformed a dynamic river environment into a working landscape central to national transportation and flood-control systems. The Great River Road All-American Road, Crowley's Ridge Parkway National Scenic Byway, and four national wildlife refuges now provide public access to that history and to the Mississippi Flyway.

Roots in the Soil follows the transformation of forests, wetlands, and prairie into an agricultural system built first through enslaved labor and later through tenancy, sharecropping, mechanization, and scientific innovation. Lakeport Plantation Museum, working cotton and rice farms, historic farmsteads, gins, elevators, processing facilities, and agricultural communities reveal both the productivity of that system and its human cost.

Reform, Mobilization, and the Remaking of the Delta examines how floods, depression, global conflict, and Cold War tensions brought federal power deep into the region. The New Deal resettlement community at Dyess, the wartime Japanese incarceration sites at Rohwer and Jerome, and the former alert facilities interpreted by the developing National Cold War Center in Blytheville connect the Arkansas Delta directly to national policy, military history, and constitutional questions.

Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers explores the blues, gospel, country, rockabilly, and Americana traditions that carried the Delta's voice throughout the nation and around the world. Johnny Cash, Levon Helm,

King Biscuit Time, the King Biscuit Blues Festival, Delta churches, local musicians, and community performance traditions form a musical legacy of extraordinary reach. The theme also includes the literary influence of Ernest Hemingway, whose years in Piggott contributed to work that changed American literature.

Conflict and Cooperation, Rights, and the Search for Belonging traces the continuing struggle over land, labor, citizenship, race, and opportunity. Indigenous displacement, the Elaine Massacre of 1919, the interracial organizing of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, Japanese American incarceration, and the civil rights movement place the Arkansas Delta at the center of national debates over freedom and belonging.

Together, these themes add up to more than a collection of important sites. They describe a regional landscape where major currents of American history met, collided, and produced consequences the nation still confronts.

A Landscape of Evidence

The Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area Resource Inventory documents 295 resources across all 17 counties. The inventory includes nine National Historic Landmarks, one unit of the National Park System, four National Wildlife Refuges, two National Scenic Byways, and 76 properties individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Seventy-eight resources, representing approximately 26 percent of the inventory, support two or more interpretive themes. That overlap demonstrates how closely the region's environmental, agricultural, cultural, political, and social histories remain connected across the landscape.

Public access further strengthens the proposed NHA. Of the 295 documented resources, 252 are open to the public, representing 85 percent of the inventory. Visitors can already experience the region's history through museums, historic properties, wildlife refuges, scenic routes, trails, music events, agricultural landscapes, and community institutions.

The Arkansas Delta remains a living landscape, not a static museum piece. Cotton, soybeans, sweet potatoes, and rice still grow in the fields that shaped the region's economy, and congregations still sing music rooted in generations of faith and struggle. Musicians carry the blues forward in the Delta's clubs, while farmers, families, volunteers, and local organizations keep the region's places and traditions alive.

NHA designation would connect these resources without removing them from local control, allowing communities to tell a larger story together while each participating site keeps its own character and independence.



Pumpkin Hollow is an agritourism destination in Clay County, offering seasonal attractions such as a pumpkin patch and haunted attractions. *(Arkansas Delta Byways)*

The Opportunity Ahead

The Arkansas Delta already possesses the history, resources, traditions, and public commitment needed for a successful NHA. Designation would strengthen that foundation and allow communities to pursue opportunities that no single organization or county could fully advance alone.

Small towns and volunteer organizations care for nationally important resources despite limited staff and funding. An NHA could provide technical assistance, professional documentation, planning support, partnership development, and access to competitive grants. Museums and historic sites that now interpret separate chapters of Delta history would connect more easily through a shared regional framework.

Recreational resources also offer substantial opportunities. The Delta Heritage Trail, wildlife refuges, scenic byways, rivers, bayous, and nationally recognized waterfowl habitats already draw cyclists, paddlers, hunters, birdwatchers, and other visitors. Coordinated interpretation would tie those experiences to the history, communities, and cultural traditions that give the landscape its character.

Music tourism represents the region's strongest near-term opportunity. International audiences recognize the Delta's influence on blues, gospel, country, and rockabilly music, yet eastern Arkansas draws only a fraction of the travelers who visit Memphis and the Mississippi Delta for that same musical heritage. A coordinated NHA would link venues, festivals, museums, communities, and musicians through regional itineraries and stronger promotion.

A-State Heritage Sites has identified three priorities for the NHA's early years: expanding music tourism, strengthening interpretation at Rohwer, and creating a subgrant program for regional partners. Each priority builds upon existing resources, documented public interest, and immediate opportunities for measurable results.



Cane Creek State Park highlights the landscape where the Mississippi Alluvial Plain meets the Gulf Coastal Plain. *(Arkansas Tourism)*

A Proven Partner

A-State Heritage Sites is proposed as the coordinating entity for the Arkansas Delta NHA. It offers the experience, institutional stability, regional relationships, and administrative systems needed to begin work immediately following designation.

As a program of Arkansas State University, A-State Heritage Sites already manages public funding and operates historic properties across the region. Its work also includes educational programming, regional partnership coordination, and the financial systems needed to administer federal funds and partner subgrants. Its record across multiple Delta communities demonstrates both long-term commitment and practical ability.

A-State Heritage Sites also manages Arkansas Delta Byways, a tourism promotion organization whose 45-member board includes representatives from 15 of the proposed NHA's 17 counties. That established network provides a strong regional base and a direct connection to tourism organizations, historic sites, businesses, public agencies, and community leaders. The remaining two counties, Jefferson and Lincoln, fall within a different regional tourism association. That distinction is administrative rather than historic or geographic, as Chapter 3 explains.

The conceptual financial plan projects annual revenue of $643,014 during the first year and $816,179 by the fifth year, producing cumulative revenue of $3,571,850 from six sources. Federal support is projected at $150,000 annually during the first three years, a conservative estimate of base funding before a management plan is approved, and a minimum of $300,000 annually during years four and five after

completion of the plan. Non-federal funding would exceed the required match by more than two dollars for every federal dollar.

The Arkansas Delta would enter the National Heritage Area System with institutional capacity, established partnerships, accessible resources, and financial potential, ready to act from the moment of designation.

Meeting the National Standard

The National Heritage Area Act establishes seven requirements for evaluating a proposed National Heritage Area. The Arkansas Delta meets all seven.

Its natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources form a nationally distinctive landscape best understood and stewarded through regional partnerships. Living traditions remain part of community life here rather than remnants of the past, and conservation, recreation, education, and economic-development opportunities continue to grow.

The region's resources retain the integrity needed to support accurate, lasting interpretation, and the planning process documented broad support among residents, local officials, community organizations, businesses, and regional partners. A-State Heritage Sites, the proposed coordinating entity, brings the experience and administrative capacity needed to lead the work, and the 17-county boundary reflects a shared geography, interconnected history, coherent resource base, and regional identity that residents already recognize.

The Arkansas Delta is a landscape shaped by water, transformed through human labor, and tested by disaster and injustice. Federal action and local determination remade the region, and music carried its voice far beyond its borders. Its resources tell nationally important stories of agriculture, labor, race, migration, reform, war, conservation, literature, and cultural invention.

The record assembled through fieldwork, research, public meetings, interviews, resource documentation, and community review leads to one conclusion: the Arkansas Delta merits designation as an NHA.

Designation would recognize an identity already rooted in the land and claimed by its people, not one manufactured or imported from elsewhere. It would connect nationally important places that now stand apart, give local partners the means to accomplish more together, and bring long-overdue national attention to one of America's most consequential cultural landscapes.

The Arkansas Delta has the significance, the resources, and the public support and leadership needed to succeed. This feasibility study makes the case for designation and recommends that the Arkansas Delta take its rightful place in the National Heritage Area System.



Delta Dirt Distillery in Helena is a family-owned farm-to-bottle distillery. *(Arkansas Delta Byways)*



Paddling on the Mississippi River *(Arkansas Delta Byways)*

ARKANSAS DELTA NHA FEASIBILITY STUDY · CHAPTER ONE

Introduction – Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area Feasibility Study

An important chapter in the American story runs through the Arkansas Delta, carried by the Mississippi River and the tributaries that feed it, and told today through working farms, small towns, wildlife refuges, and the music still played in the churches and clubs where it took shape. The 17 counties of eastern Arkansas that make up this landscape are bound together by shared geography and a shared history, one that reaches from the Mississippian mound builders through the plantation economy, the labor movements of the twentieth century, and the sounds that carried the Delta's name around the world.

This feasibility study examines whether that landscape and its resources meet the standard Congress has established for designation as a National Heritage Area (NHA). It is both an analytical document and a record of a community-driven planning process. The chapters that follow present the region's history, document its national significance and the resources that support it, describe a proposed governance structure, and evaluate the Arkansas Delta against the statutory requirements for designation. This chapter introduces the study, the region it covers, the National Heritage Area concept, and the process the planning team followed to reach this point.

A National Heritage Area for the Arkansas Delta

Arkansas State University's Heritage Sites Program (A-State Heritage Sites) began planning for a proposed Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area in late 2024. Under the direction of A-State Heritage Sites, Point Heritage Development Consulting (PointHDC) facilitated the planning process. Funding was provided by the Delta Regional Authority (DRA), the federal-state partnership Congress created in 2000 to advance economic development across the Lower Mississippi Delta region. The Arkansas State University System Office has supported the study's congressional engagement strategy throughout the planning process. Appendix A – Planning Participants lists the full planning team and the individuals and organizations who helped guide the study.



Agricultural outbuildings at Historic Dyess Colony: Johnny Cash Boyhood Home

A-State Heritage Sites has managed heritage properties in the Arkansas Delta for more than two decades. Its four sites – the Historic Dyess Colony: Johnny Cash Boyhood Home, the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum in Tyronza, the Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center in Piggott, and Lakeport Plantation Museum near Lake Village – each tell a story of national significance, and together they span the Delta geographically and thematically. The current initiative grew from a straightforward premise: the four sites each tell part of a larger regional story, and the NHA framework offers a structure for interpreting that story across the broader Delta landscape while strengthening conservation and economic development throughout the region.

About This Study

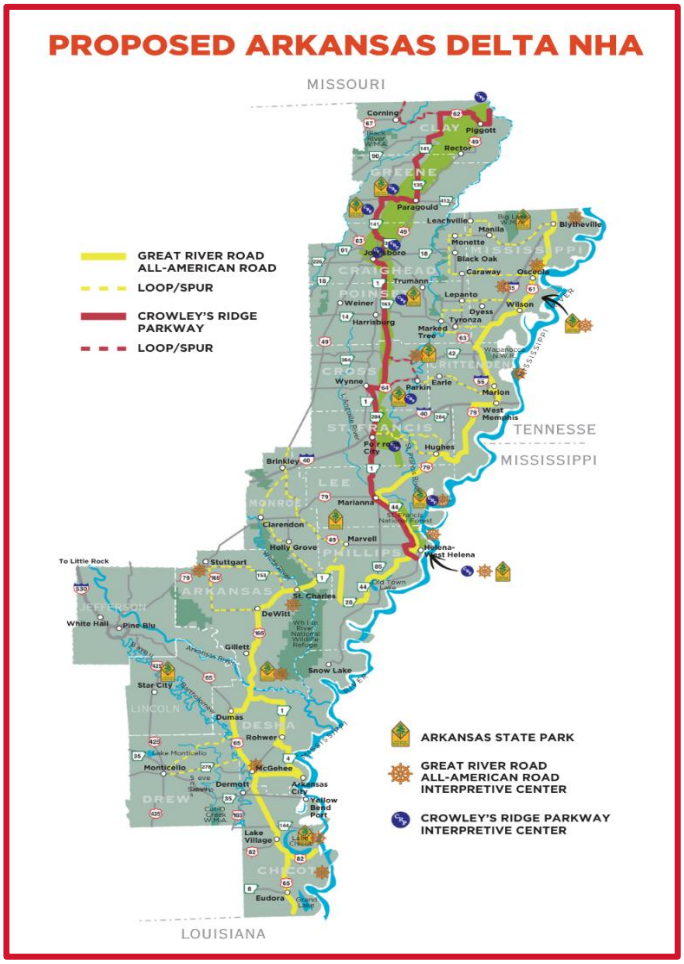
This feasibility study contains the following elements:

- *Chapter 2 – A History of the Arkansas Delta* presents the historic context of the Arkansas Delta, tracing the region's story from its natural formation into the twenty-first century and situating that story within the broader arc of American history.
- *Chapter 3 – Building the Case for Designation* defines the Arkansas Delta's national significance, presents five interpretive themes and the resources that give them tangible form, and establishes the boundary proposed for the NHA. The chapter also includes a discussion of opportunities identified through the public engagement process.
- *Chapter 4 – Governance & Management Framework* sets out the governance and management framework for the proposed NHA, including the recommended coordinating entity, the partnership network, and a conceptual staffing and financial plan.
- *Chapter 5 – Meeting the Statutory Requirements for Designation* evaluates the proposed Arkansas Delta NHA against the statutory requirements of the National Heritage Area Act (Public Law 117-339) and presents the study's conclusions and recommendation.
- Appendices provide detailed information on planning participants, site visits and public engagement activities, the resource inventory, the partnership network, and resolutions and letters of support.

The Arkansas Delta Study Area

The Arkansas Delta study area encompasses 17 counties in eastern Arkansas, stretching from Clay County on the Missouri border in the north to Chicot County on the Louisiana state line to the south.

Arkansas County	Chicot County	Clay County
Craighead County	Crittenden County	Cross County
Desha County	Drew County	Greene County
Jefferson County	Lee County	Lincoln County
Mississippi County	Monroe County	Phillips County
Poinsett County	St. Francis County	



The Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area study area

Four natural systems give the region its physical character and its coherence as a single landscape. The Mississippi River and its tributaries, including the White, Arkansas, St. Francis, and L'Anguille rivers, deposited the alluvial soils that made the Delta one of the nation's most productive agricultural regions and carried people, commodities, and culture across the region and beyond it. Bayou Bartholomew and Bayou Meto, slow-moving waterways that wind through the lowland landscape, support some of the most important wildlife habitats in the region and have guided settlement and commerce since long before European contact. The Grand Prairie, a flat expanse distinguished by its heavy clay soils, developed its own agricultural economy centered on rice rather than cotton. Crowley's Ridge, a narrow band of high ground running north to south through the western part of the study area, offered a refuge from the floodplain and shaped settlement patterns from the region's earliest inhabitants to the present. *Chapter 2 – A History of the Arkansas Delta* traces the human history that unfolded within and in response to each of these landscapes.

Farms across the study area are still planted in cotton and rice, and the musical traditions born in Delta towns and churches are still performed in those same places today. That working, living quality – a landscape still influenced by the people who inhabit it rather than preserved as a static artifact – is central to the region's value as a potential National Heritage Area.

National Heritage Areas

National Heritage Areas are places where historic, cultural, and natural resources combine to form landscapes of national distinction. Each NHA is designated by Congress and is a lived-in, working region, home to communities, farms, businesses, and traditions, where conservation is achieved through partnership and voluntary collaboration rather than federal regulation or land ownership. NHAs form part of a National Heritage Area System that the National Park Service (NPS) administers on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior. Local coordinating entities manage each NHA, receiving annual appropriations from Congress and technical assistance from NPS, with federal funding required to be matched by non-federal sources. As of 2026, the National Heritage Area System includes 62 designated areas in 36 states and territories.

The first NHAs were designated in the 1980s as a new approach to conservation, one built on local stewardship and public-private partnership rather than federal ownership. The concept grew steadily over the following decades, and by January 2023, Congress had formally codified the National Heritage Area System and standardized the process for designating new areas. NPS's role in that system centers on support and review. NPS provides technical and financial assistance to coordinating entities, reviews feasibility studies and transmits its evaluation to Congress, and reviews and approves management plans on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior. That role helps maintain consistency and accountability across the system.

NHA designation carries no jurisdictional or regulatory authority of its own. It has no effect on private property rights, and it does not change how land-use decisions are made; those decisions remain where they have always rested, with private landowners and local government.

The National Heritage Area Act

This feasibility study is conducted in accordance with the National Heritage Area Act, Public Law 117-339. The Act standardized the process by which NHAs are studied and designated, replacing years of inconsistent, one-off legislation with a single statutory framework. The Act directs that a feasibility study assess whether a proposed area:

- has an assemblage of natural, historic, and cultural resources that represent distinctive aspects of the heritage of the United States, are worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use, and are best managed through partnerships among public and private entities that link diverse, sometimes noncontiguous resources and active communities;
- reflects traditions, customs, beliefs, and folklife that are a valuable part of the story of the United States;
- provides outstanding opportunities to conserve natural, historic, cultural, or scenic features, and for recreation and education;
- contains resources that are important to the area's identified themes and retain a degree of integrity capable of supporting interpretation;
- includes a diverse group of residents, business interests, nonprofit organizations, and state and local governments that are involved in the planning process, have developed a conceptual financial plan

outlining the roles of all participants, including the federal government, and have demonstrated significant support for designation;

- has a potential management entity to work in partnership with that group to develop the proposed NHA while encouraging state and local economic activity; and,
- has a conceptual boundary map supported by the public.

Chapters 3 and 4 address many of these requirements directly, and Chapter 5 evaluates the proposed Arkansas Delta NHA against each of them in turn.

The Act also protects private property. Designation does not abridge any right of a public or private property owner, require public access to private land, alter state, local, or Tribal land-use authority, or convey land-use or other regulatory authority to a local coordinating entity. Congress holds authority to designate a National Heritage Area. Designation generally follows completion of a feasibility study and NPS review.

The Feasibility Study Process and Community Engagement

Feasibility studies for NHAs require field research, community engagement, thematic development, development of a resource inventory, boundary analysis, and organizational assessment. Documenting national significance, developing and testing interpretive themes, analyzing resources and a potential boundary, and evaluating organizational capacity all required direct and sustained engagement with the people, places, and institutions of the Delta. The planning process reflected that requirement at every stage.

Planning Structure

The feasibility study was structured around five components consistent with NPS guidance: project initiation; analysis of issues and opportunities; priority sites, stories, and partners; organizational implications; and preparation of the feasibility study document. An advocacy strategy focused on engaging the congressional delegation ran alongside the planning work and will continue as the study advances toward submission.

A-State Heritage Sites brought substantial existing infrastructure to the study, including its own partner network and the board of the regional tourism association Arkansas Delta Byways, which includes three representatives from each of the 15 counties in its footprint. Given that foundation, the planning team invested its engagement effort in intensive, field-based outreach rather than a standing committee structure, an approach that reached a wider cross-section of the region and yielded rich, firsthand information from communities, sites, and leaders across the Delta. Appendix B – Site Visits and Public Engagement provides details on this process.

Fieldwork and Site Visits

The planning team conducted four periods of fieldwork in the study area between January 2025 and March 2026, visiting more than 40 sites across the 17 counties. The fieldwork spanned the full extent of the study area, from the Missouri border to the Louisiana state line, and covered the range of resource types and community contexts that define the region, including A-State Heritage Sites properties, other nationally significant historic sites, national wildlife refuges, state parks, natural and cultural interpretive facilities, working agricultural operations, and Main Street communities.

Fieldwork also served as the primary vehicle for stakeholder engagement. During site and community visits, the planning team met with more than 60 individuals through scheduled meetings and conversations, including university leadership and faculty, state agency staff, local elected officials, cultural organization directors, business owners, and community leaders from across the study area. The planning team also attended a quarterly meeting of the Arkansas Delta Byways board during the study period, gaining access to the network of county representatives that forms the backbone of regional heritage tourism coordination. Appendix B provides a complete record of sites visited and individuals engaged.



The childhood home of musician Levon Helm in Marvell was moved from Turkey Scratch to its present location. *(Encyclopedia of Arkansas)*

Public Meetings

The planning team held ten public meetings across the study area distributed geographically so that communities across the Delta had meaningful access to the planning process. The first round, held in spring and summer 2025 in Blytheville, Helena-West Helena, Monticello, and Piggott, introduced the NHA concept and invited community members to share their knowledge of the region's significant stories and places. The second round, held in spring 2026 in Helena-West Helena, Jonesboro, and Pine Bluff, presented the study's developing findings on themes and national significance and solicited input on regional needs, priorities, and concerns. One of the second-round meetings was livestreamed to extend its reach beyond those who could attend in person. The purpose of the final round, held in November 2026, was to present the full feasibility study to the public and solicit feedback.

Public meetings were structured as informal community conversations rather than formal, regulatory-style proceedings, combining brief presentations with facilitated discussion so attendees could share their own knowledge and perspectives as part of the conversation.

Stakeholder Interviews and Public Survey

The PointHDC team conducted 11 confidential stakeholder interviews with individuals whose knowledge and perspectives were particularly relevant to the study's key questions, representing regional history, journalism, heritage tourism, economic development, agriculture, state government, and community leadership. Confidentiality allowed for frank assessments that might not have emerged in a public forum, and the resulting insights inform this study throughout, particularly the findings presented in Chapters 3 and 4.

A publicly distributed online survey engaged residents, community members, and stakeholders across the study area, gathering 106 responses. The survey asked about awareness of the NHA concept, the stories and topics most closely associated with the region, perceived opportunities and concerns related to designation, interest in partnership and volunteer involvement, and general demographic information. Survey findings are presented throughout this study, particularly in the discussion of opportunities in Chapter 3.

Background Research and the Situational Analysis

Alongside community engagement, the planning team conducted background research to inform the study's findings on national significance, interpretive themes, and resources, drawing on historical scholarship, existing interpretive and heritage planning documents, resource inventories, relevant state and federal designations, and NPS guidance on the feasibility study process.

In June 2026, the planning team prepared a Situational Analysis for A-State Heritage Sites. This internal planning document synthesized the study's progress against the statutory requirements for designation and confirmed that the foundational elements of designation – national significance, interpretive themes, a supported boundary, a capable coordinating entity, and demonstrated public support – were substantially in place.

The Situational Analysis helped the planning team scope the work required to complete this feasibility study: developing the historic context narrative presented in Chapter 2, finalizing the resource inventory, and preparing the governance and financial framework presented in Chapter 4.

The historic context narrative, statement of national significance, and interpretive themes developed through this process were submitted for review by subject matter experts in the relevant fields of history and cultural heritage, strengthening the scholarly foundation of this feasibility study.



The start line of the Skirmish: A Delta Festival in downtown Jonesboro *(Jonesboro Advertising and Promotion Commission)*

The Partnership Network and the Concurrent Planning Context

This feasibility study builds on an existing foundation of heritage planning, institutional relationships, and tourism infrastructure. Arkansas Delta Byways, the nonprofit organization that A-State Heritage Sites manages to promote the region's two National Scenic Byways, the Great River Road All-American Road and the Crowley's Ridge Parkway, provides both a structural foundation and a philosophical alignment for the proposed NHA. The Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism is an active partner across the study area through its three divisions, and coordination with the department has been a feature of the planning process. Beyond funding this study, the Delta Regional Authority's ongoing investment in infrastructure, workforce development, and economic development across the region reflects a long-term federal commitment to the Delta that NHA designation would complement. Appendix C – Current and Potential Partners provides a fuller inventory of these and other organizations relevant to the proposed NHA.

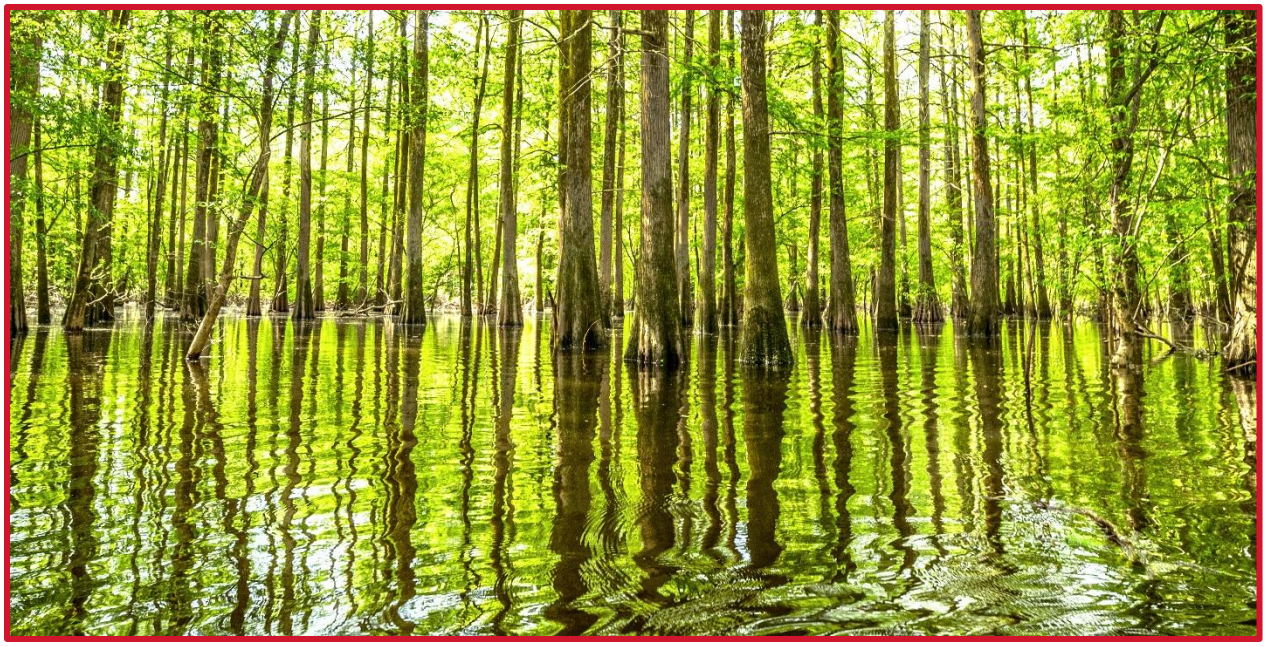
National Environmental Policy Act and Other Federal Laws

The planning process has had no potential for significant adverse impacts on the cultural and natural resources within the proposed boundary of the NHA. Therefore, no formal declaration is required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Upon designation, the local coordinating entity named in enabling legislation will be responsible for ensuring that federal laws pertaining to preservation and conservation are

properly applied within the NHA, including but not limited to NEPA, the Archeological Resources Protection Act, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act. Should a future NHA project have a direct effect on cultural or natural resources, the entity responsible for that project will review it through the appropriate pathway, such as Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act or the NEPA process, as applicable.

Conclusion

The Arkansas Delta is a landscape shaped by water, worked by generations of farmers and laborers, and carried outward through music that reached across the world. Its 17 counties hold historic sites, working farms, natural landscapes, and small towns still telling that story today. The chapters that follow present the evidence: a historic narrative spanning the region's full arc, a statement of national significance and the themes and resources that support it, a governance framework built on more than two decades of heritage work, and an evaluation of the proposed Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area against the statutory requirements for designation. Together, they make the case that the Arkansas Delta is ready to take its place in the National Heritage Area System.



Located within the St. Francis National Forest, Mississippi River State Park preserves a variety of Delta habitats, including Horner Neck Lake. *(Arkansas Tourism)*

ARKANSAS DELTA NHA FEASIBILITY STUDY · CHAPTER TWO

A History of the Arkansas Delta

The Arkansas Delta refers to two related but distinct geographies. In the broadest sense, it is one of the state's six natural regions, occupying roughly the eastern third of Arkansas and forming the western edge of the Mississippi embayment, the low, flat expanse of alluvial deposits known as the Mississippi River Alluvial Plain. Bounded by the Ozark and Ouachita uplands to the west and the Mississippi River to the east, the Delta stretches from the Missouri state line to Louisiana, its surface built up over thousands of years by repeated flooding and the accumulation of river-borne silt, sand, and clay.[1]

Within that larger natural region lies a second, more precisely bounded geography: the 17-county study area under consideration for National Heritage Area designation, extending from Clay and Greene counties on the Missouri line to Chicot County on the Louisiana border. This study area does not capture every corner of the natural Delta. Instead, it draws together the core counties, waterways, towns, and cultural landscapes in which the region's nationally significant stories are most fully documented and visible on the ground today. Where this narrative refers broadly to "the Delta," it means the larger natural and cultural region described above; where it refers to "the study area," it means the more narrowly drawn landscape that will ultimately inform the boundary of the proposed heritage area.

Water is the organizing fact of this landscape. The Mississippi River forms the region's eastern edge and its historic outlet to the world, while its interior is defined by the Arkansas, White, St. Francis, and L'Anguille rivers, along with Bayou Bartholomew, Bayou Meto, and a dense network of smaller streams, sloughs, and

[1] Stroud, Hubert B. "Mississippi Alluvial Plain," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed July 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/mississippi-alluvial-plain-444/; Foti, Thomas. "Geography and Geology," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed July 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/geography-and-geology-401/.

oxbow lakes. These waterways carried the earliest travelers into the region, determined where population centers such as Helena, Pine Bluff, Jonesboro, West Memphis, Stuttgart, and Blytheville would rise, and continue to shape how residents and visitors experience the Delta today.

River, Ridge, and Floodplain

For most of its history, the Delta's defining feature has been water in transition. The landscape was, by turns, forest, swamp, floodplain, and field, depending on the season and the century. The dominant landform is the flat, low-lying alluvial plain built by the Mississippi River and its tributaries. The region flooded frequently, causing large-scale settlement to lag behind other parts of the American South.

Crowley's Ridge rises unexpectedly out of this plain. The ridge is a narrow band of loess-capped hills that runs roughly 150 miles from southeastern Missouri to Helena, varying from a half mile to 12 miles in width and reaching, at its highest points, only a few hundred feet above the surrounding lowland.[2] The landform's modest elevation offered stable, well-drained ground that led to the development of communities along its spine. Crowley's Ridge gives the northern Delta its defining high ground, a role no comparable landform plays farther south.

South of the ridge, the landscape's defining characteristic shifts from elevation to drainage. Bayou Bartholomew, which begins near Pine Bluff and winds more than 350 miles before reaching the Ouachita River in Louisiana, is by some measures the longest bayou in the world and served for decades as the principal transportation route into the timber and farm country of southeast Arkansas.[3] Bayou Meto, rising farther north and meandering roughly 150 miles across the Grand Prairie before joining the Arkansas River, played a similar role for the communities of Arkansas and Jefferson counties.[4] Where Crowley's Ridge offered elevation, these slow-moving bayous offered navigable, fertile bottomland corridors, drawing settlement to the southern portion of the study area.

Between the bottomlands of the White and Arkansas rivers lies a fourth landform, the Grand Prairie, a flat expanse of native grassland. Historically, the Grand Prairie was distinguished from the surrounding Delta by a dense, nearly impermeable layer of clay beneath its topsoil that resisted growth of the bottomland hardwood forest found elsewhere in the region.[5] That same clay, ill-suited to cotton, proved ideal for holding water for rice cultivation; Stuttgart and surrounding communities grew up around that industry. From prehistoric times to the present, the Grand Prairie has been an important waterfowl habitat and hunting ground.



The Grand Prairie is a notable habitat for migrating duck species along the Mississippi Flyway. *(Arkansas Game and Fish Commission)*

[2] Stroud, Hubert B. "Crowley's Ridge," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed July 8, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/crowleys-ridge-12/.
[3] DeArmond-Huskey, Rebecca. "Bayou Bartholomew," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed July 8, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/bayou-bartholomew-2226/.
[4] "Bayou Meto," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed July 8, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/bayou-meto-2445/.
[5] "Grand Prairie," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed July 8, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/grand-prairie-2996/.

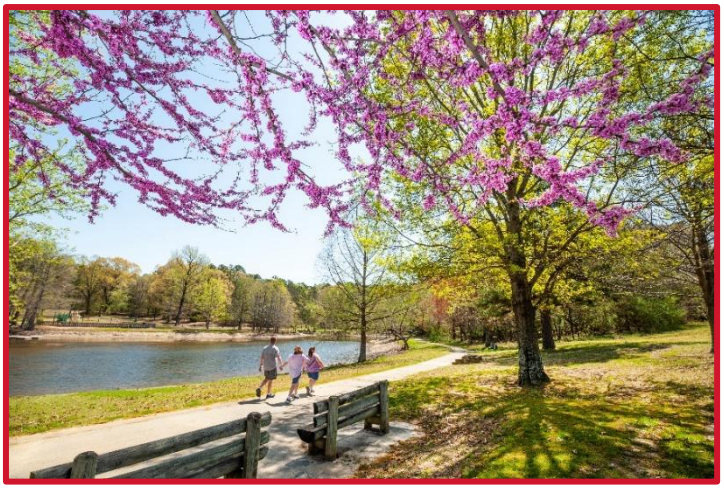
Treeless, flat, and defined by soil rather than by elevation or a stream corridor, the Grand Prairie stands apart from the alluvial plain, Crowley's Ridge, and the bayous alike, even as it shares their common origin in the region's underlying geology and hydrology.

Together, these four landforms shaped nearly every dimension of life in the Delta – where people settled, how they traveled, what crops they could raise, how they hunted and fished, and how they rebuilt their communities after the floods that periodically reclaimed the lowland. That interaction can still be seen in the region's transportation corridors, its agricultural patterns, its parks and wildlife refuges, and its town plans, making the relationship between water and high ground one of the most fundamental and enduring aspects of the Delta's history.

The historic narrative that follows proceeds generally chronologically, while organizing closely related histories together to trace their development and connections across time. Throughout, the emphasis remains on how the Delta's distinctive landscape of alluvial plain, ridge, bayou, and prairie shaped, and was shaped by, the people who called it home.

Formation of the Delta Landscape

As the last continental ice sheets retreated from the upper Mississippi Valley beginning around 15,000 years ago, meltwater rivers surged south through the valley, spreading sand and gravel across the landscape in broad, shifting, braided channels. These coarse, poorly sorted deposits known as "valley train" sediments still underlie much of what is now the St. Francis Basin, evident today in the low terraces that parallel Crowley's Ridge.[6] As the climate warmed and the ice retreated north, the outwash rivers narrowed into the single, meandering channel of the modern Mississippi River, reworking the older glacial sediment into the finer, rich alluvium that would eventually make the Delta's farmland among the most productive in the world.[7]



Crowley's Ridge State Park sits atop Crowley's Ridge, which rises 250-500 feet above the Delta, running for over 150 miles. *(Arkansas Tourism)*

Geographers divide the Arkansas Delta into natural subregions, each formed by this same interplay of ice, flood, and river migration. Crowley's Ridge and the Grand Prairie form the region's two most distinctive physiographic features; the other subregions are defined less by elevation or soil than by the rivers that built them.[8] The St. Francis Basin, lying between Crowley's Ridge and the Mississippi River in the northeastern part of the study area, mixes old glacial outwash terraces with more recent floodplain built by the St. Francis, Tyronza, and Little rivers, laced with abandoned channel segments that formed crescent-shaped oxbow lakes.[9] The White River Lowlands, occupying the center of the region, were built by the White River and its tributaries the Black and Cache, and include some of the largest remaining stands of bottomland

[6] Klimas, Charles, Thomas Foti, Jody Pagan, and M. Williamson. *Potential Natural Vegetation of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley: St. Francis Basin, Arkansas, Field Atlas*. (Vicksburg, MS: U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center, 2012), 2–3.
[7] Klimas et al., *Potential Natural Vegetation of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley*, 2–3.
[8] "Arkansas: A Six Region Journey – Mississippi Alluvial Plain," *Arkansas Department of Education and AETN*. Accessed July 8, 2026. https://www.arkansastv.gov/programs/sixregionjourney.
[9] Klimas et al., *Potential Natural Vegetation of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley*, 2–3.

hardwood forest in the entire Lower Mississippi Valley.[10] The Arkansas River Lowlands, sometimes called the Delta Lowlands, form the southern edge of the study area, shaped by the Arkansas River's own floodplain as it approaches its confluence with the Mississippi near the Louisiana state line.[11]

The same rivers that built the Delta's terraces and bottomlands kept reworking them for thousands of years after the ice retreated, a geologic process that has not fully subsided. Much of the St. Francis Basin lies within the New Madrid Seismic Zone, an area of ongoing tectonic activity whose largest historically recorded ruptures, in 1811 and 1812, remain etched into the basin's terrain today.[12]

Bayous, Bottomlands, and River Ecology

The bayous and bottomlands introduced above are among the most ecologically significant landscapes in the Lower Mississippi Valley. Bayou Bartholomew, never channelized by the Army Corps of Engineers, preserves one of the richest aquatic communities in the region. Surveys have documented dozens of native freshwater mussel species, including the federally endangered pink mucket, alongside a correspondingly diverse fish population.[13] Because mussels depend on fish to carry their larvae between sites, a healthy mussel population is itself a marker of a healthy river, and conservation biologists regard the bayou as a benchmark for an unmodified Delta waterway.[14]



Bayou Bartholomew, never channelized by the Army Corps of Engineers, preserves one of the richest aquatic communities in the region. *(Arkansas Tourism)*

The bottomland hardwood forests of the White River Lowlands support a similarly outsized diversity of life, with more than 70 tree species sustaining wildlife from black bears to migratory songbirds.[15] Several hundred oxbow lakes and sloughs along the lower White River give the region the largest concentration of wintering mallard ducks in North America, reflecting the Delta's position along the Mississippi Flyway. Lake Chicot in the south and the sloughs of the St. Francis Basin in the north extend that same habitat the length of the study area.[16]

The region's wildlife also sustained the Delta's human population. Fish, mussels, waterfowl, and fur-bearing animals supplied food, tools, and trade for the Delta's inhabitants. This ecological wealth has shaped human use of the Delta for millennia.

[10] Stroud, "Mississippi Alluvial Plain," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.
[11] "Arkansas: A Six Region Journey – Mississippi Alluvial Plain," *Arkansas Department of Education and AETN*.
[12] "The New Madrid Seismic Zone," *U.S. Geological Survey*. Accessed July 7, 2026. https://www.usgs.gov/programs/earthquake-hazards/new-madrid-seismic-zone.
[13] Brooks, J.A., R. L. Minton, S. G. George, D. M. Hayes, R. Ulmer, and F. Pezold. "Diversity and Distribution of Native Freshwater Mussels in Bayou Bartholomew, Arkansas," *Southeastern Fishes Council Proceedings* 50 (2008), 8–18.
[14] Brooks et al., "Diversity and Distribution of Native Freshwater Mussels in Bayou Bartholomew, Arkansas," 9.
[15] "Dale Bumpers White River National Wildlife Refuge," *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*. Accessed July 8, 2026. https://www.fws.gov/refuge/dale-bumpers-white-river.
[16] White, Mel. "Mississippi Flyway," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed July 8, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/mississippi-flyway-5926/.

Indigenous Homelands Before European Contact

Early Occupation and Adaptation

For over 10,000 years, people have made their home in the Arkansas Delta, arriving not long after the late-Pleistocene climatic and river changes that reshaped the Mississippi Valley. Paleoindian hunters entered the mid-South by around 10,500 BCE (Before the Common Era), tracking mammoths, mastodons, and giant bison across a landscape that remained cold and glacially influenced even as the climate warmed toward the Holocene. Within a few thousand years, their descendants had shifted toward the more settled Dalton culture (9,500–8,500 BCE), adapted to a warming climate. The clearest evidence of that shift lies in Greene County, at the Sloan site. Excavations there uncovered artifacts arranged in deliberate clusters around human burials dated to roughly 8,500 BCE, making it the oldest known cemetery anywhere in the Western Hemisphere.[17]

During the Archaic period (8,500–600 BCE), communities in the Delta grew larger and more settled, supplementing hunting and gathering with the cultivation of native plants.[18] By around 1,200 BCE, some communities in southeastern Arkansas were building the region's first earthen mounds. These mounds likely marked territory and hosted periodic ceremonies among dispersed kin groups. Early mound builders were drawn into a much larger trade network centered at Poverty Point in northeastern Louisiana. Participants in that network, including communities in southeastern Arkansas, exchanged worked stone, marine shell, and finely carved ornaments across hundreds of miles before the network's decline around 1,000 BCE.[19]

Agriculture, Towns, Mounds, and Trade

The Woodland period (600 BCE–900 CE) brought new technologies and new ceremonial architecture to the Delta. At the Helena Mound site, near the confluence of the Mississippi and St. Francis rivers, people built conical earthen mounds over log tombs in the style of the Hopewell ceremonial complex in the Ohio River valley. Artifacts recovered from burials at the site, including ornaments of copper, silver, and marine shell, attest to trade connections reaching well beyond the Delta.[20]

By around 900 CE, more productive strains of corn, beans, and squash allowed Delta communities to support larger populations through intensive field agriculture. This shift gave rise to the Mississippian towns and chiefdoms (900–1541 CE) that were still flourishing when the first Europeans arrived at the end of that period.[21]

Cultural Regions and Uncertain Boundaries

Archaeologists group the Mississippian-era communities of the wider region into several overlapping traditions, and the Delta sat at the meeting point of two of them. Across the northeastern counties of the study area, in the St. Francis Basin and along the Mississippi River, communities belonged to the broader Mississippian tradition. This tradition was marked by large fortified towns, platform-mound centers, and intensive corn agriculture.[22]

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[17] Whayne, Jeannie M., Thomas A. DeBlack, George Sabo III, and Morris S. Arnold. *Arkansas: A Concise History* (Kindle edition) (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2019), ch. 2.
[18] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 2.
[19] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 2.
[20] Ford, James A. "Hopewell Culture Burial Mounds Near Helena, Arkansas," *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 50, pt. 1 (1963), 47.
[21] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 2.
[22] Anderson, David G. "Monumentality in Eastern North America during the Mississippian Period," in *Early New World Monumentality*, ed. Richard L. Burger and Robert M. Rosenswig (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 78–108, 84.

Farther south, along Bayou Bartholomew and the lower Ouachita and Saline rivers, a related but distinct Plaquemine tradition took hold. Its core territory was centered in present-day Louisiana and Mississippi, with only its northern edge reaching into southeastern Arkansas. Plaquemine communities built similar mound-and-plaza centers but relied more heavily on hunting, fishing, and gathering than on field agriculture. Their pottery, religious imagery, and mortuary customs differed enough from their Mississippian neighbors to mark a real cultural boundary, though one that shifted over time with alliance, conflict, and intermarriage.[23]

The cultural boundary evident in the archaeological record was not necessarily a linguistic one. Scholars have variously proposed Tunican or Siouan language affiliations for Casqui and Pacaha, while Caddoan speakers lived to the west and south of the Delta. By the time the French arrived in the 1670s, the same landscape was home to the Quapaw, speakers of a Dhegihan Siouan language distinct from both the Casqui and Pacaha's Tunican or Siouan speech and from the nearby Caddoan languages. Attempts to connect specific Mississippian-period communities to any one of these later linguistic and Tribal identities through place names, vocabulary preserved in the Soto narratives, or pottery styles have so far proven inconclusive.[24]

Casqui, Pacaha, and the Parkin Landscape

Nowhere is the density of the Delta's late Mississippian towns clearer than along the St. Francis and Tyronza rivers in present-day Cross County and the Mississippi River bluffs of Mississippi County. At the Parkin site, a 17-acre town occupied from roughly 1000 to 1550 CE, residents built a central platform mound more than 20 feet tall alongside six smaller mounds around an open plaza. The settlement was enclosed within a defensive ditch fed by the river and surrounded by a wooden palisade.[25]

Similar towns clustered along the Mississippi bluffs to the northeast, in what archaeologists call the Nodena phase (1400–1650 CE). These were fortified, carefully planned villages whose residents raised corn on the surrounding bottomland and buried their dead with finely made effigy pottery.[26] Both clusters were part of larger political networks made up of satellite villages spaced two to three miles apart, each oriented toward a central town where a paramount leader resided. Archaeological evidence suggests the two networks were frequently in conflict with one another in the century before European contact.[27]



A head effigy vessel from the Nodena site, now displayed at the Hampson Archeological Museum State Park in Wilson *(Arkansas Tourism)*

These are the same two polities Spanish chroniclers would later name Casqui and Pacaha. Archaeologists generally identify Parkin with Casqui and the Nodena-phase towns with Pacaha.[28] These towns, with their moats, mounds, and fields, were centuries old by the time any European set foot in Arkansas, the product of a sophisticated, populous

[23] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 2.
[24] Morse, Dan. "The Nodena Phase." *Towns and Temples Along the Mississippi*, David H. Dye and Cheryl Ann Cox, eds. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 66–97, 97; "Quapaw Nation Tribal Name Origin and History," *Quapaw Nation*. Accessed July 8, 2026. https://www.quapawtribe.com/.
[25] "Parkin Archeological State Park," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed July 8, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/parkin-archeological-state-park-1246/.
[26] Mowdy, Marlon. "Nodena Site," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed July 8, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/nodena-site-7925/.
[27] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 2; Mowdy, "Nodena Site," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.
[28] "Parkin Archeological State Park," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*; Mowdy, "Nodena Site," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.

Native society that had organized the Delta's landscape on its own terms long before anyone arrived to describe it in writing. The Indigenous landscape and its history remain accessible today. The Parkin site is preserved as Parkin Archeological State Park, a National Historic Landmark where the central platform mound still rises above the St. Francis River and an Arkansas Archeological Survey research station continues to study the site and curate its collections. Artifacts from the Nodena-phase towns are exhibited at Hampson Archeological Museum State Park in Wilson.

The historical Tribe most closely associated with the Delta's late Mississippian towns is the Quapaw (also spelled Ogáxpa, Ogahpah), the "downstream people," whose oral traditions describe an ancestral migration down the Mississippi River from the Ohio Valley.[29] Archaeologists and the Quapaw Nation itself note that the exact relationship between the historic Quapaw and the Mississippian-period residents of sites like Nodena remains an open question, complicated by the cultural devastation that followed European contact. The Quapaw Nation, headquartered in Oklahoma, has continued to participate in consultation on the preservation and interpretation of Mississippian-period sites throughout the Arkansas Delta.[30]

European Encounter, Colonial Claims, and the Quapaw

The Spanish and the Hernando de Soto Expedition

The first Europeans arrived in what is now Arkansas during the Spanish expedition led by Hernando de Soto, who sought wealth across the Southeast between 1539 and 1543. Soto's army included more than 600 soldiers accompanied by horses, war dogs, and herds of hogs kept as a mobile food supply. By the time they reached the Delta in June of 1541, the expeditionary force had already spent two years in the South searching for a civilization as wealthy as the Aztec and Inca empires that Spanish conquistadors had encountered in Latin America.[31] The arrival of the Spanish expedition coincided with a severe drought that was already straining the agricultural economies of the region's Indigenous communities, part of the onset of the Little Ice Age; Soto's demands for food and porters compounded that stress.[32]

Soto's men reached the main town of Casqui, identified with the Parkin site discussed above, on June 24, 1541. Casqui's leader welcomed the Spaniards with food and hides and asked whether Soto could bring rain to end the drought. When a downpour followed a cross-raising ceremony the Spanish leader ordered performed atop the town's central mound, Spanish chroniclers claimed the Indigenous people credited him with divine power. Casqui warriors then guided the Spaniards to the rival town of Pacaha, where Soto hoped to find gold, but the Spaniards found only copper, a metal that Southeastern Indigenous societies prized as sacred but that held little value for the Spanish. Soto's secretary described Pacaha as a well-built, moat-encircled town consistent with the fortified Nodena-phase sites discussed above.[33]

Finding no wealth at Casqui or Pacaha, Soto spent the following year exploring present-day Arkansas, searching for silver, clashing along the way with Caddoan-speaking Tula warriors before wintering at Autiamque, between present-day Little Rock and Pine Bluff. There, cold and the death of the expedition's only skilled translator left the Spaniards increasingly unable to communicate with the communities around

[29] "Quapaw Nation Tribal Name Origin and History," *Quapaw Nation*.
[30] Mowdy, "Nodena Site," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*; Key, Joseph Patrick. "Quapaw," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed July 8, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/quapaw-550/; "Quapaw Nation Tribal Name Origin and History," *Quapaw Nation*.
[31] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 3; Mitchem, Jeffrey M. "Route of the de Soto Expedition," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/route-of-the-de-soto-expedition-7679/.
[32] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 3.
[33] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 3.

them. In the spring of 1542, Soto pushed south to Guachoya, near the confluence of the Arkansas and Mississippi rivers, where his demand for tribute drew a defiant reply from the chief Quigualtam. An enraged and already ill Soto ordered a nearby town burned before dying at Guachoya in May of 1542. His men first secretly buried him, then exhumed his body and sank him in the Mississippi to conceal his death from surrounding communities. Luis de Moscoso, the expedition's newly elected leader, marched the roughly 300 survivors overland toward Mexico before a lack of food forced a return to the Mississippi to build boats. The expedition finally reached Spanish territory in 1543, having found no wealth and with only half the men who had entered Arkansas two years before.[34] The Spanish expedition left devastation in the Indigenous communities it passed through, exposing them to Old World pathogens, enslaving Indigenous people, destroying villages and fields, and disrupting the region's social and economic order.

The French Arrive

More than a century passed before Europeans returned to the Delta. In June 1673, the Jesuit missionary Jacques Marquette and the trader Louis Jolliet came down the Mississippi River from the Great Lakes. They became the first Frenchmen to encounter the Quapaw, whose four villages clustered near the confluence of the Arkansas and Mississippi rivers. The Quapaw welcomed the Frenchmen with the calumet, a ceremonial pipe whose sharing signified alliance and safe passage, and persuaded Marquette and Jolliet to turn back before reaching the Gulf of Mexico rather than risk French contact with rival Tribes downriver.[35]



Henri de Tonti, called the "father of Arkansas" for his role in establishing the first permanent European settlement, the Poste aux Arkansas, or Arkansas Post *(Portrait by Ben Brantly [1935], courtesy of the Arkansas State Archives)*

In 1682, René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, descended the Mississippi to its mouth and claimed the entire river basin for France, naming the territory "Louisiana" for King Louis XIV. Henri de Tonti, an Italian-born officer who had accompanied La Salle since 1678, witnessed a ceremony asserting French sovereignty near the future site of Arkansas Post and received a land grant near the Quapaw village of Osotouy. Four years later, in the summer of 1686, he sent six men to establish a trading post there. Led by Jean Couture and Jacques Cardinal, they exchanged French goods for beaver pelts with the Quapaw. This "Poste aux Arkansas" became the first permanent European settlement in the lower Mississippi Valley, and Tonti is remembered in Arkansas as the colony's founding figure.[36] Arkansas Post National Memorial, a unit of the National Park System and a National Historic Landmark, preserves the site today. Its trails, exhibits, and archeological remains interpret more than three centuries of Quapaw, French, Spanish, and American history.

Arkansas Post's early history was unstable. Tonti's original settlement was largely abandoned by 1699, and English traders quickly moved into the vacuum created by the French

[34] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 3; Miller, Adam. "Spanish Explorers and Settlers," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/spanish-explorers-and-settlers-4975/.
[35] Toudji, Sonia. "French Explorers and Settlers," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/french-explorers-and-settlers-4974/.
[36] Baker, Lea Flowers. "Henri de Tonti (1649–1704)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/henri-de-tonti-2537/; DuVal, Kathleen. "Arkansas Post," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/arkansas-post-3/.

departure. In return, France sent a missionary, Father Nicholas Foucault, to settle among the Quapaw in 1701. Foucault was murdered by his own Indigenous guides the following year, becoming, in colonial memory, Louisiana's first Catholic martyr.[37] Not until the Scottish financier John Law revived interest in the Arkansas concession around 1720, and the colonial government assigned a permanent military garrison in the early 1730s, did a more durable French presence take hold.[38]

Arkansas Post's economy depended primarily on the region's wildlife and on Quapaw partnership. Hunters and traders supplied its chief exports, which included salted buffalo meat, rendered tallow, and bear's oil. Money was scarce, so trade moved largely through barter, French goods exchanged for the products of the hunt. The deerskin and fur trade that would later dominate the trading post's economy remained comparatively minor until the very end of the colonial period.[39]

The Quapaw

From the late seventeenth century through much of the eighteenth century, the Quapaw were the Delta's most consequential political and economic actors. They were the principal military ally, trading partner, and source of provisions and intelligence for the French and the Spanish. However, colonial officials and Quapaw leaders understood their alliance in different terms. When the Quapaw chief Cossenonpoint agreed in 1769 to recognize the new Spanish governor as his "father," he invoked an Indigenous political idiom in which a father was expected to provide generously rather than command. The Quapaw, unlike the French residents of the Post, who swore that same day to obey the Spanish crown absolutely, understood themselves to be listening respectfully to a valued ally, not submitting to a sovereign. The Quapaw consistently refused to cede legal jurisdiction over their own people to European courts.[40]

This alliance came at a devastating cost. Epidemic disease, intensified by sustained contact after 1673, reduced the Quapaw population from an estimated 10,000 at the time of Marquette and Jolliet's visit to only 700 by 1770. As their numbers fell, the Quapaw consolidated their settlements, and by the time of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the entire nation numbered only about 550 people living in three communities along the Arkansas River.[41] Throughout this period, the Quapaw also faced sustained pressure from the Osage, who claimed hunting territory in northern and western Arkansas.

Intermarriage between French residents and Quapaw families further tied the two communities together, though the surviving evidence for it is uneven. Sacramental records document only a handful of formal unions, but contemporary observers repeatedly described such intermarriage as a common practice from the colony's earliest years. Because diplomatic and trade marriages typically followed Quapaw custom rather than Catholic rite, many would have left no trace in church registers. Moreover, some of the mixed-heritage, or métis, population that colonial visitors attributed to these unions descended from French men's relationships with enslaved Indigenous women from other Tribes.[42]

[37] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 4; Key, Joseph Patrick. "European Exploration and Settlement, 1541 through 1802," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/european-exploration-and-settlement-1541-through-1802-2916/.
[38] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 4.
[39] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 4.
[40] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 4.
[41] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 4; Joseph Key, "Quapaw Tribe," *64 Parishes*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://64parishes.org/entry/quapaw-tribe.
[42] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 4.

Edge of Empires: France, Spain, and Britain on the Mississippi

The Quapaw alliance grew more valuable as control of the lower Mississippi Valley shifted among three European powers over the eighteenth century. An interpretive marker at Arkansas Post National Memorial describes the succession of outposts on this stretch of river as symbolizing "a dream of the imperial age: to connect the Gulf of Mexico to North America's vast interior by the great rivers that drained it."[43] France ceded Louisiana to its ally Spain in 1762, following Britain's victory in the French and Indian War. Fearing British ambitions on the Mississippi, Spain took formal command of Arkansas Post in 1766, renaming it Fort Carlos III for the Spanish king while retaining most of the French traders and soldiers already stationed there.

The fort's position at the junction of the Arkansas and Mississippi rivers made it a persistent target during these colonial rivalries. During the American Revolution, Spain's alliance with France, and by extension with the American cause, drew Arkansas Post directly into the conflict. On April 17, 1783, in what is generally regarded as the westernmost engagement of the Revolutionary War, a partisan force of British loyalists and Chickasaw allies led by former British officer James Colbert attacked Arkansas Post. The force first seized a group of Spanish settlers from the village surrounding the fort before launching a night attack on Fort Carlos III itself.[44]



The Great Cross exhibit at Arkansas Post National Memorial commemorates the founding of the Poste aux Arkansas by Henri de Tonti. *(Arkansas Tourism)*

The Spanish-French garrison, reinforced by Quapaw allies, repulsed the attack after several hours of fighting. The Quapaw as a nation had formally remained neutral in the colonial war, but a small number of warriors present at the fort joined the counterattack, among them the Quapaw-French métis Saracen, later celebrated in Arkansas memory for rescuing captive children during the fighting. Although the Colbert Raid marked the last serious military contest for control of Arkansas Post, the contest for the Mississippi Valley itself ended at the negotiating table, not on the battlefield. In 1800, Spain ceded Louisiana to France in a secret treaty, and in 1803, before France could even take formal possession, Napoleon Bonaparte sold the entire territory to the United States.[45]

From Louisiana Purchase to American Territory

The Louisiana Purchase was negotiated in Paris in the spring of 1803 and ratified by the United States Senate that fall. The agreement transferred more than 800,000 square miles of French territory, including all of present-day Arkansas, to the United States for 15 million dollars, the largest single land acquisition in

[43] "Edge of Empires," interpretive exhibit panel, Arkansas Post National Memorial, National Park Service and Arkansas Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Site visited March 2026; Sesser, David. "Colbert Raid," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/colbert-raid-1163/.
[44] Sesser, "Colbert Raid," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.
[45] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 4; Key, Joseph Patrick. "Sarasin (?–1832?)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/sarasin-1756/.

American history.[46] France formally ceded possession of the colony at New Orleans on December 20, 1803, but authority over remote Arkansas Post changed hands more slowly. U.S. Army Lieutenant James Many arrived to take possession of the fort on behalf of the United States in March 1804. He encountered a settlement of 400 residents, a Spanish garrison of three soldiers, and a dilapidated fort that government appraisers valued at just 631 dollars.[47]

Arkansas moved through a succession of American territorial governments after 1803. It was initially part of the Louisiana Territory, then the Missouri Territory, until Congress created a separate Territory of Arkansas in 1819.[48] Arkansas Post served as the new territory's first capital, hosting its inaugural legislature and William Woodruff's first edition of the *Arkansas Gazette* that same year, before the seat of government moved to the newly platted town of Little Rock in 1821.[49] Washington Irving, who visited Arkansas Post in 1832, captured this same contrast in his short story "The Creole Village" (1836), setting the fading, languid Old World customs of a Post-like settlement against the enterprising bustle of new American towns like Little Rock.[50] New arrivals from the United States frequently disparaged Arkansas Post's French Creole residents as idle and superstitious, excluding them from public office and jury service. The French language faded quickly from public life, and within a generation the colonial world that Quapaw, French, and Spanish families had built together over more than a century had been substantially displaced by American institutions, law, and settlement.[51]

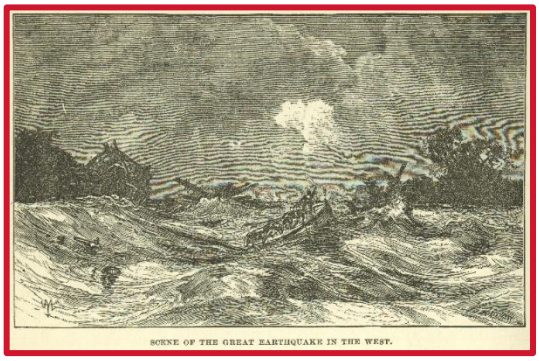
American settlement followed transportation, and transportation followed the path of least resistance through a landscape still dominated by swamp and forest. In use since at least the 1760s, the Southwest Trail carried travelers diagonally across Arkansas from the Missouri line toward the Red River. Beginning in the 1820s, a military road connecting Memphis to Little Rock was surveyed through some of the Delta's most difficult lowlands, opening the interior to settlers arriving from the east. Ferries operated where roads met rivers at Little Rock, Memphis, Helena, and many other smaller crossings. In time, these early routes would become the byways, trails, and heritage routes that still organize how visitors move through the Delta today.[52] Through most of its history, however, the Delta's waterways remained the most reliable source of transportation.

The New Madrid Earthquakes

During the early nineteenth century, no single event reshaped the Delta's physical land more dramatically than the New Madrid earthquakes. Beginning on December 16, 1811, with an epicenter near present-day Blytheville, and continuing through major aftershocks on January 23 and February 7, 1812, the New Madrid earthquakes ranked among the most powerful ever recorded in the continental United States. The quakes

[46] Baker, Lea Flowers. "Louisiana Purchase," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/louisiana-purchase-2383/.
[47] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 4.
[48] Bolton, Charles S. "Louisiana Purchase through Early Statehood, 1803 through 1860," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/louisiana-purchase-through-early-statehood-1803-through-1860-398/; "Arkansas History Timeline: 1800s," *Arkansas Secretary of State*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://www.sos.arkansas.gov/education/arkansas-history/arkansas-history-timeline/1800s.
[49] "Arkansas History Timeline: 1800s," *Arkansas Secretary of State*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://www.sos.arkansas.gov/education/arkansas-history/arkansas-history-timeline/1800s.
[50] Cande, Kathleen H. "Frederick Notrebe (1780–1849)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 24, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/frederick-notrebe-4126/.
[51] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 4.
[52] Akridge, Scott. "Southwest Trail," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/southwest-trail-2305/; Scoggin, Robert W. "Roads and Highways," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/roads-and-highways-4209/; Dougan, Michael B. "Transportation," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/transportation-399/.

were felt as far away as Boston and were strong enough to ring church bells a thousand miles from the epicenter. Their magnitude has been estimated between 7.3 and 7.5.[53] Because the epicenter lay almost directly beneath the St. Francis River basin, the quakes reshaped the ground there. Land along the river dropped as much as 15 feet in places, swallowing standing forests and transforming a long stretch of the river into a wetland expanse still known today as the Sunken Lands. Observers reported the Mississippi River appearing to run backward as seismic waves surged upstream, and thousands of aftershocks continued into the spring of 1812.[54]



19th-century print of the Mississippi River during the New Madrid earthquakes *(State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia)*

The earthquakes struck a landscape that was still sparsely settled, but their consequences for land and law outlasted the event by decades. Congress responded in 1815 with the New Madrid Relief Act, which is regarded as the first federal relief legislation for a natural disaster in the United States.[55] The legislation authorized New Madrid certificates, which allowed settlers whose land had been rendered uninhabitable to claim new acreage elsewhere in the Territory. The resulting overlap between those certificates and the preemption claims of settlers already occupying the same ground produced land disputes that ultimately reached the United States Supreme Court.

Arkansas Post, Territorial Settlement, and the Delta Frontier

An interpretive marker at Arkansas Post National Memorial describes the American townsite between 1805 and 1840 – a settlement of homes, stores, taverns, mills, and docks that reached a population of about 1,000 inhabitants at its height in the 1820s and 1830s.[56] The settlement declined over time, as river traffic that had sustained it gradually shifted elsewhere. Union gunboats bombarded and destroyed much of the remaining town in 1863. Eventually, the railroads and highways that reorganized Delta commerce later in the nineteenth century bypassed Arkansas Post entirely, isolating it economically until virtually nothing remained above ground of the first European settlement in Arkansas.[57]

Arkansas Post's decline coincided with the start of the survey of western land. On November 10, 1815, a surveying party led by Prospect K. Robbins, working north from a baseline set by Joseph C. Brown, marked the intersection of their two lines in a headwater swamp near present-day Brinkley, establishing the Initial

[53] Earthquake Hazards Program. "Summary of 1811-1812 New Madrid Earthquakes Sequence," USGS. Accessed August 19, 2026. https://www.usgs.gov/programs/earthquake-hazards/science/summary-1811-1812-new-madrid-earthquakes-sequence; Whayne, Jeannie. *Delta Empire: Lee Wilson and the Transformation of Agriculture in the New South* (Kindle edition), (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2011), ch. 1; Hendricks, Nancy. "New Madrid Earthquakes of 1811–1812," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/new-madrid-earthquakes-of-1811-1812-2218/.
[54] Hendricks, Nancy. "Sunken Lands," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/sunken-lands-2222/; Hendricks, Nancy. "New Madrid Fault," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/new-madrid-fault-2219/.
[55] Ponti, Crystal. "How a Trio of Hellish Earthquakes Prompted America's First Disaster Relief Act," History. Published July 10, 2019. Last updated June 30, 2025. Accessed October 21, 2026. https://www.history.com/articles/new-madrid-relief-act-william-clark.
[56] "American Townsite, 1805–1840," interpretive panel, Arkansas Post National Memorial, National Park Service. Site visited March 2026.
[57] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 4.



This marker in the swamps at Louisiana Purchase State Park marks the base line for the survey of the Louisiana Purchase. *(Arkansas Tourism)*

Point from which would be measured all subsequent Louisiana Purchase lands in Arkansas and much of the American West.[58] That point, now preserved at Louisiana Purchase State Park, embodies the new legal and spatial order the United States imposed on a wetland landscape Indigenous peoples had occupied and used for thousands of years. A landscape once organized around rivers, hunting territories, and village clusters was now to be divided into uniform square sections, surveyed, titled, and sold to individuals.[59]

Removal, Migration, and the End of Indigenous Landholding in Arkansas

Another major change after 1803 was the relationship that American governance brought to Indigenous land, one very different from what the colonial era had allowed. Across the young nation, white Americans hungry for agricultural lands to settle pushed the original Indigenous inhabitants west. In Arkansas, the pressure fell first on the communities with the strongest claims to the Delta's most valuable land, but it soon touched every Indigenous nation with ties to Arkansas, disrupting hunting, fishing, trade, and settlement patterns.

Territorial officials eager to open Quapaw land to settlement pressured the Tribe into a treaty in 1818, through which the Quapaw ceded 30 million acres used mainly for hunting. The Tribe retained about two million acres along the Arkansas River in exchange for annuities and the promise of a lasting alliance with the United States.[60] That promise did not hold. Territorial secretary Robert Crittenden and other prominent settlers who coveted the remaining Quapaw land campaigned publicly to discredit the Tribe. In 1824, they forced a second treaty on the Quapaw, requiring them to relinquish their remaining Arkansas land entirely and relocate to Caddo territory in Louisiana. Chief Heckaton pleaded with territorial officials to relent, comparing removal to being cast out among strangers and asking simply, "Have mercy – send us not there."[61] The Quapaw began the march to the Red River in January 1826, only to watch their crops flood twice in the spring. More than 60 people died of destitution that summer, and under Heckaton's leadership the Tribe drifted back to Arkansas over the following years, completing its return by November 1830. The reprieve proved temporary. In 1833, under pressure from the federal Indian Removal Act of 1830, the Quapaw agreed to a final removal to Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma. Many families, no longer trusting the federal government, scattered instead to Louisiana, Texas, or the Choctaw Nation rather than join the 1834 removal march. A few, led by the Quapaw-French leader Saracen, remained in Arkansas.[62] The

[58] Gill, John P. "Louisiana Purchase Survey," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/louisiana-purchase-survey-2204/; Houser, B. J. "Blackton (Monroe County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/blackton-monroe-county-3202/.
[59] "Louisiana Purchase State Park," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/louisiana-purchase-historic-state-park-1237/.
[60] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 5.
[61] "The Quapaw: The Downstream People," exhibit panel, Delta Cultural Center, Helena-West Helena. Site visited April 2025; Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 5.
[62] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 5.

Osage, the Quapaw's longtime rivals for hunting territory in northern and western Arkansas, met a similar fate, ceding land in 1818 and relinquishing their remaining Arkansas claims in a final 1825 treaty that sent them to the Three Forks area of present-day northeastern Oklahoma.[63]



The old military road at Village Creek State Park is now a multi-use trail with interpretation of the road's role as part of the Trail of Tears. *(Arkansas Tourism)*

The removal of Arkansas's Indigenous population coincided with a much larger forced migration passing through the Territory. In the decade following the Indian Removal Act of 1830, an estimated 60,000 Cherokee, Muscogee (Creek), Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole people, along with enslaved African Americans, white spouses, and missionaries traveling with them, crossed Arkansas on the way to Indian Territory. Some traveled overland along the Memphis-to-Little Rock military road and the Southwest Trail, fording or ferrying the Delta's rivers in caravans of wagons and livestock. Others came by contracted steamboat up the Arkansas River. That decade's cold winters and dry summers led to further trauma, as the military, private contractors, and Tribal leaders alike frequently failed to keep pace with need.[64] Passage through the Delta was one of the principal routes the federal government used to carry out the removal of Indigenous people from their ancestral homelands – thousands of people crossed the Mississippi at Memphis and Helena, then continued west along the overland corridor to Indian Territory.

By the time Arkansas achieved statehood on June 15, 1836, no recognized Indigenous lands remained within its borders. In barely three decades, the region had shifted from a landscape where Quapaw, French, and Spanish families negotiated a durable, if unequal, coexistence to one in which every Indigenous nation with a historical claim to Arkansas soil had been forced out of it.[65] The Quapaw Nation, the Osage Nation, and descendant communities of the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole families who crossed the state continue to maintain historical and cultural ties to the Arkansas Delta. Their consultation remains central to how the region's sites are preserved and interpreted. What ended by 1836 was Indigenous landholding, not Indigenous presence, and the memory of that dispossession, and of the survival that followed it, remains one of the Delta's most important and least widely known stories.

The Plantation Frontier, Cotton, and Enslavement

Settling the Frontier

The American settlers who followed the surveyors and moved onto land from which Indigenous inhabitants had been forced encountered a relatively undeveloped frontier within the expanding American South. Lacking the plantations and aristocratic traditions of the antebellum South, the Delta was still viewed by settlers as largely untamed wilderness, where food came as much from hunting as from growing crops, and

[63] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 5.
[64] "Native American Heritage in Arkansas: Trail of Tears," *Arkansas.com*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://www.arkansas.com/plan-your-trip/plan/trip-ideas-itineraries/native-american-heritage-in-arkansas-trail-of-tears; Sloan, Kitty. "Trail of Tears," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/trail-of-tears-2294/.
[65] "The Last of the Natives," exhibit panel, Delta Cultural Center, Helena-West Helena. Site visited March 2026; Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 5.

farmland was first-generation, cleared by the people who worked it.[66] Formal institutions reached these communities unevenly.

Fur and hides were one part of a broader extractive economy that shaped this frontier Delta. Hunters supplied turkey, prairie chickens, waterfowl, and large game, while trappers pursued beaver, raccoon, and possum for a hide and fur trade that supported merchants in Delta towns, even as it pushed bear, prized for meat and oil, toward near-extinction. Another industry, the manufacture of pearl buttons, grew up around the freshwater mussels drawn from the region's rivers and flourished into the twentieth century. Clammers harvested mussels from the riverbeds, factory workers soaked and cut the shells into circular blanks, and the blanks were shipped to plants in Iowa and Illinois to be finished into buttons for the clothing trade.[67] The practice, like the fur trade before it, was profitable but unsustainable. It significantly depleted the Delta's mussel populations, and although later conservation efforts have sought to restore them, several species remain in decline today.

This frontier economy of hunting, trapping, and harvesting mussels would not last. Cotton was already emerging as a far more important economic driver, one that would soon reorganize the Delta's economy and landscape entirely.

The Cotton Gin and Global Cotton Demand

From the Delta's first years as an American territory, the region was drawn towards a global market – the textile mills of New England and Britain, whose demand for cotton would soon tie the region's fortunes to buyers thousands of miles away. Eli Whitney's 1793 invention of the cotton gin, which separated fiber from seed dozens of times faster than hand labor, transformed short-staple cotton from a marginal crop into the raw material for an expanding textile industry. Over the following decades, the center of American cotton production moved from the Carolinas and Georgia toward the fresh, fertile lands of what contemporaries called the Old Southwest, a region that included Arkansas. Built up over millennia of river flooding, the Delta's warm climate and deep alluvial soils were exceptionally well suited to the crop. As early as the 1820s, well before large-scale American settlement had reached much of the region, cotton had become the territory's leading commercial crop.[68]

Clearing Forests and Draining Wetlands

Turning the soil's potential into cultivated acreage required transforming the Delta's physical landscape. To early American settlers, the dense forests, canebrakes, and wetlands that had supported Indigenous life for millennia were nearly impassable. Much of the Mississippi shoreline offered nowhere to land, with flooded forest reaching miles inland before giving way to swamp and bayou.[69] Settling this landscape was as dangerous as clearing it. One pioneer family that cleared 25 acres of Delta bottomland and built a cabin there lost four children to what they called "swamp fever" within a year and abandoned the farm. In Chicot County, cholera was said to be the most feared killer of all, driving families off some of the state's richest land.[70] The work of clearing, draining, and fencing this land to prepare it for cotton fell mostly to enslaved

[66] "Delta Pioneers," exhibit panel, Delta Cultural Center, Helena-West Helena. Site visited March 2026.
[67] "Shells, Blanks, and Buttons of Freshwater Mussels," exhibit panel, Delta Cultural Center, Helena-West Helena. Site visited March 2026.
[68] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 7; McNeilly, Donald P. *The Old South Frontier: Cotton Plantations and the Formation of Arkansas Society, 1819–1861* (Kindle Edition), (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), prologue.
[69] McNeilly, *The Old South Frontier*, ch. 1.
[70] McNeilly, *The Old South Frontier*, ch. 1.

laborers rather than to the planters who owned it, a pattern of remaking the land that would recur, on an even larger scale, well into the twentieth century.

The federal government took some early notice of the challenge. An 1850 act granting swamp and overflowed lands to the states allowed Arkansas to claim millions of acres of wetland on the condition that the state undertake drainage. Delta planters, already profiting from cotton, were among the first in the state positioned to benefit from the resulting land grants. The underlying work of clearing and draining the bottomland forests remained dependent on enslaved labor.[71]



Raft of river logs being fed into log trough at mill in Marked Tree *(Arkansas State University Museum)*

Enslavement in the Antebellum Delta

Cotton's expansion into the Delta was inseparable from the expansion of enslavement. As planters and aspiring landowners cleared land and established plantations along the Mississippi, Arkansas, and other Delta rivers, they brought enslaved people with them or purchased them after arrival. In the decades before the Civil War, Arkansas's enslaved population grew far faster than that of any other slave state, increasing 335 percent between 1830 and 1840 and another 136 percent between 1840 and 1850. Despite the rapid increase, Arkansas continued to rank near the bottom of all slave states in total numbers.[72] Unlike the planters and farmers who came to Arkansas by choice, the enslaved people who accompanied or preceded them were forced there under coercion, a migration that permanently separated many from their families. Much of the Delta's enslaved population growth was fed by the domestic slave trade. After Congress closed the international slave trade in 1808, traders increasingly moved enslaved people out of Virginia and other Upper South states toward the newer cotton country of the Old Southwest, including the Arkansas Delta.[73]

By 1860, more than 111,000 enslaved people lived in Arkansas, making up just over a quarter of the state's population; the overwhelming majority lived in the southern and eastern lowlands.[74] Some Delta counties became majority-enslaved and majority-African American well before the Civil War. In Chicot County, enslaved people made up less than a quarter of the population in 1830; by 1860 they made up more than 83 percent of it, the highest proportion of any county in the state.[75] Enslavement in Arkansas was also highly concentrated. On the eve of the Civil War, just over half the state's enslavers held no more than four enslaved people each, while roughly one in eight owned 20 or more – the threshold contemporaries used to define a "planter." That relatively small planter class nevertheless controlled a disproportionate share of the state's wealth. By 1860, the richest ten percent of Arkansas taxpayers held more than 70 percent of its taxable wealth.[76] Much of that wealth rested on credit as much as on land. Factors and commission merchants in Memphis and New Orleans extended loans that allowed planters to purchase land and enslaved laborers

[71] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 7.
[72] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 7.
[73] McNeilly, *The Old South Frontier*, ch. 2; Moneyhon, Carl H. "Slavery," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 6, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/slavery-1275/; Jackson Beavers, Sara. *Fugitives from Injustice: Freedom-Seeking Slaves in Arkansas, 1800–1860* (National Park Service, Underground Railroad Special Resource Study), 4–6.
[74] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 7.
[75] Cashion, Scott. "Chicot County," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 6, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/chicot-county-753/.
[76] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 7.

against the value of crops not yet picked. By one estimate, enslaved labor added at least 16 million dollars to Arkansas's economy every year by the late antebellum period.[77]

Plantation Landscapes and Arkansas's Later Development

Just as settlement occurred later, Arkansas's cotton economy developed later than that of the older Deep South states. At the onset of the Civil War, its planter class was still, in the judgment of one historian, only a modest imitation of the established elites of the older South – less educated, less wealthy, and holding smaller plantations and fewer enslaved people than their counterparts further east. Many of the Delta's planters were themselves members of already-established slaveholding families from Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and elsewhere in the eastern South. Sons of planters in those states brought capital and enslaved laborers west to extend family wealth rather than build it from nothing. Some remained absentee owners for years, residing at family seats farther east and leaving day-to-day management to overseers.[78]

One result of this settlement pattern is that the Delta produced far fewer of the grand plantation mansions often associated with the antebellum South. Most Delta planters, even the most affluent, lived in comparatively modest houses well into the 1850s, investing their capital in land and enslaved labor rather than in architecture. Lakeport Plantation, in Chicot County, is a rare exception and one of the few surviving antebellum plantation houses on the Arkansas side of the Mississippi River.[79] Kentucky migrant Joel Johnson, brother to U.S. Vice President Richard Mentor Johnson, established the plantation around 1831. By his death in 1846, he held more than 3,700 acres and 95 enslaved people. His son Lycurgus, who inherited it, expanded the holding to 4,400 acres and 155 enslaved people by 1860, the same year he finished the Greek Revival house that still stands.[80]



The house at the Lakeport Plantation Museum was built by the Johnson family of Chicot County. Construction began in 1860, and the interiors were never completed. *(Arkansas State University Heritage Sites)*

Lakeport's grandeur was the exception rather than the rule. Across the Delta, the plantation economy was defined far more by working landscapes – fields, cabins, gins, and levees – than by architecture. The enslaved labor that built and worked those landscapes left a much more significant imprint on the region than any structures.

Timing also set the Arkansas Delta apart from its neighbor across the river. On the eve of the Civil War, plantation agriculture in Arkansas was concentrated along the Mississippi and Arkansas rivers. Much of the northeastern interior, including the St. Francis basin and the Sunken Lands, remained swamp and forest. That land was cleared and drained only in the early twentieth century, when timber companies and planters organized drainage districts and converted cutover land to cotton. In Mississippi County, the number of tenant farmers grew from 1,204 in 1900 to 9,561 in 1930. Northeastern Arkansas thus became

[77] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 7; Moneyhon, "Slavery," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 6, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/slavery-1275/.
[78] McNeilly, *The Old South Frontier*, Prologue.
[79] DeBlack, Thomas A. "Lakeport Plantation," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 6, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/lakeport-plantation-1117/; "History," *Lakeport Plantation, Arkansas State University Heritage Sites*. Accessed August 6, 2026. https://lakeport.astate.edu/school-tours-2/.
[80] DeBlack, "Lakeport Plantation," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*; "History," *Lakeport Plantation, Arkansas State University Heritage Sites*.

one of the last plantation frontiers in the South, built on tenancy and sharecropping rather than enslavement. That timing helps explain why the Southern Tenant Farmers Union would take root there in the 1930s.[81]

Labor from Can See to Can't See

An exhibit at the Delta Cultural Center titled "From 'Can See' to 'Can't See'" captures the daily reality behind the history described here. Most enslaved people on Delta plantations worked outdoors, under the direction of a white overseer, performing the punishing, sunup-to-sundown labor cotton demanded. They cleared virgin land, plowed, weeded, and, at harvest, picked and baled cotton. Pickers dragged sacks down long rows for hours at a stretch, emptying them into baskets at the row's end before starting again; a skilled picker could gather well over 200 pounds of cotton in a single day.[82]

Some formerly enslaved Arkansans who were interviewed decades later by the Federal Writers' Project recalled owners who avoided separating families and provided adequately for the people they enslaved. Others described frequent, severe whippings, and enslaved people who covered for those who could not keep pace in order to spare them punishment. Enslaved people resisted where they could, working deliberately slowly, feigning illness or injury, damaging tools, or running away, more often to the nearby woods than on the long journey to freedom in the north or in Texas.[83] This labor, and the resistance to it, did not end with emancipation. The sharecropping system and the mechanized cotton economy that eventually replaced it grew directly out of the plantation labor regime.

Rivers, Steamboats, and Early Towns

The River as Highway and Hazard

Rivers, not roads, remained the most significant form of transportation in the Delta through most of the antebellum period. Prior to 1850, not one mile of railroad track had been laid anywhere in the state, and no bridge crossed any of its major rivers. By comparison to the network of roads established in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, river travel was a far safer and more efficient way to move people and goods through the Delta.[84]

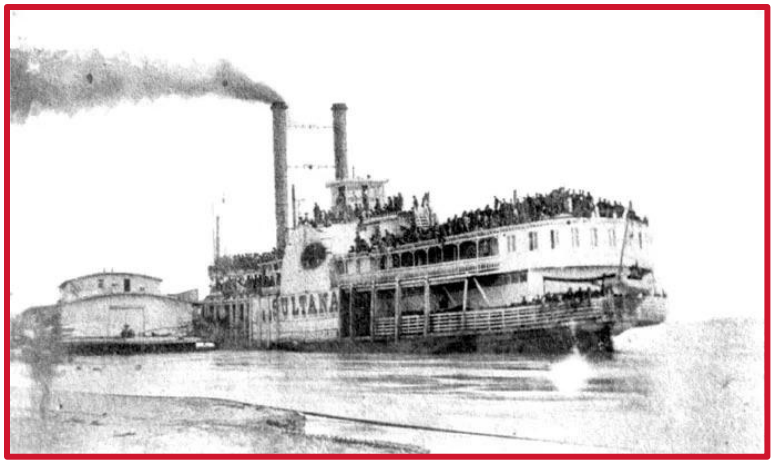
The Mississippi River and its Delta tributaries, the Arkansas, White, and St. Francis rivers, carried travelers and freight to New Orleans, Memphis, and St. Louis and, through those cities, to national and international markets. Initially, flatboats and keelboats carried cotton and other goods downstream to New Orleans, but neither could easily make the return trip upriver; flatboats were typically broken up for lumber once they reached market, while keelboats brought back only a few goods, slowly, against the current. Eventually, steamboats that could move heavy cargo both up and down the waterways came to dominate river traffic.[85]

The Steamboat Era

The first steamboats reached Arkansas waters in the early 1820s. The *Eagle* arrived at Little Rock in March 1822, after a 17-day journey upriver from New Orleans. The ship was built along the shallow-draft lines

[81] Whayne, *Delta Empire*, ch. 3.
[82] "From 'Can See' to 'Can't See,'" exhibit panel, Delta Cultural Center, Helena-West Helena. Site visited March 2026; Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 7.
[83] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 7.
[84] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 7.
[85] Neumann, Caryn E. "Steamboats (Civil War)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 6, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/steamboats-6437/.

pioneered by Henry Shreve for the West's fast, unpredictable rivers. Similar vessels soon began serving landings on the Arkansas, White, and Mississippi rivers.[86] These early boats were small and cramped by later standards, with modest cabins and often unreliable machinery. Passengers shared the vessels with cargo and livestock. Even so, steamboats dramatically increased mobility in the Delta, connecting isolated landings and farms to the wider world in ways no overland route could match.



The Sultana is shown leaving Helena (Phillips County) with approximately 2,400 passengers shortly before it exploded in April 1865. With roughly 1,800 deaths, it is the worst maritime disaster in American history. *(Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)*

Through the 1830s and 1840s, steamboat capacity grew alongside the Delta's expanding cotton economy. The *Arkansas*, a vessel over 150 feet long with separate cabins and staterooms for male and female passengers, could make the round trip between New Orleans and Little Rock in just 16 days by 1836. Boats of every size soon served landings on all the Delta's major rivers. Their most important cargo was cotton. As Delta planters expanded production, from roughly six million pounds statewide in 1840 to 26 million by 1850, steamboats carried the crop to market and returned with manufactured goods, furniture, and news from Memphis, St. Louis, and New Orleans.[87] At harvest, a boat's arrival was a communal event. Planters and their families gathered at the landings to see how much cotton the ships would carry, distinguishing each line's boats by their whistles. The enslaved workers who loaded 500-pound bales onto the decks experienced the same boats very differently, as backbreaking labor that nonetheless offered rare contact with free and enslaved boat hands from beyond the plantation.[88]

Navigating the rivers demanded specialized skill and no small amount of luck. Shifting channels, submerged snags, and moving sandbars claimed hundreds of Arkansas steamboats over the nineteenth century, and a boiler explosion could destroy a vessel in seconds. In 1840, the boilers on the steamboat *Persian* failed on the Mississippi River near Napoleon, killing 30 passengers and crew.[89] The deadliest disaster in the river's history would strike these same waters at the close of the Civil War. These hazards did little to discourage river travel, since the Delta's entire economy depended on it.

River Towns

Arkansas's extensive river system created a decentralized market that enabled river landings and towns to spring up throughout the Delta rather than funneling all trade through a single city in the region, though few of these towns achieved lasting stability. On the Mississippi, Helena and Napoleon emerged as the Delta's principal commercial centers.[90] Napoleon was platted at the confluence of the Arkansas and Mississippi rivers by merchant Frederick Notrebe, who built warehouses there around 1820. Napoleon grew into the seat of Desha County and a major stop for steamboats unloading freight and passengers bound up the

[86] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 7.
[87] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 7.
[88] Whayne, *Delta Empire*, ch. 1.
[89] Christ, Mark K. "Persian [Steamboat]," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/persian-15700/.
[90] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 7.

Arkansas and White rivers.[91] Also in Desha County, Arkansas City grew up around a Mississippi River landing in use since at least 1834, four years before planter Charley Campbell built the town's first house near the site. Arkansas City blossomed into a major port in the latter half of the nineteenth century.[92]

Inland, other towns grew along the Delta's smaller rivers. Pine Bluff was settled in 1819 as a trading post on the Arkansas River by Joseph Bonne. It became a cotton-bale shipping point where steamboats could dock and was incorporated in 1832.[93] Arkansas Post, its role as territorial capital and government seat already fading by this period, continued for a time as a river shipping point among newer towns, even as the settlements around it grew to eclipse it.[94]

Despite the abundance of crops and goods to ship, many of the river towns struggled to establish themselves amidst flooding and unstable river channels. Of the towns mentioned above, Napoleon was ultimately destroyed by erosion and inundation, and Arkansas City was devastated by the Great Flood of 1927.[95] Mark Twain gave Napoleon's disappearance its most famous telling in *Life on the Mississippi*, building a chapter around a dying man's request that he retrieve a hidden fortune from the town, only to find on his return that Napoleon itself had been swallowed by the river, with "nothing left but a fragment of a shanty and a crumbling brick chimney."[96] Because of the constant uncertainty, Delta planters often preferred to deal directly with merchants and creditors in larger cities rather than through local towns, slowing local growth. Cotton had drawn the Delta into a national and global economy. Within a few years, that same economy would help draw the Delta into the war that would end enslavement in Arkansas.

Civil War, Emancipation, and the Struggle for Control of the River

The Civil War in the Delta

The Mississippi River made the Delta strategically indispensable to both the Union and Confederate armies in the Civil War. Control of the river meant control of the Confederacy's ability to move troops, supplies, and cotton between its eastern and western halves. Union planners recognized early that seizing key points along the Arkansas shore – Helena, Arkansas Post, and Pine Bluff among them – would help sever that connection and open a base of operations against Vicksburg, the Confederacy's last major stronghold on the river.[97] For the first year of the war, fighting in Arkansas occurred mostly in the northwest corner of the state, but its outcome directly reshaped the Delta's fate. The Confederate defeat at Pea Ridge in March 1862 secured Missouri for the Union, weakening Confederate Arkansas and enabling Union forces to turn toward the Mississippi River and occupy Helena without a fight on July 12, 1862.[98]

[91] Teske, Steven. "Napoleon (Desha County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/napoleon-desha-county-356/.
[92] Reaves, Paula. "Arkansas City (Desha County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/arkansas-city-875/; "Arkansas City River Port," historical marker, Arkansas Sesquicentennial Commission, 1986, Historical Marker Database. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=299004.
[93] Bearden, Russell E. "Pine Bluff (Jefferson County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 5, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/pine-bluff-908/.
[94] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, 78, 129.
[95] Teske, "Napoleon (Desha County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.
[96] Twain, Mark. *Life on the Mississippi* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1883), 199–203.
[97] DeBlack, Thomas A. "Civil War through Reconstruction, 1861 through 1874," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/civil-war-through-reconstruction-1861-through-1874-388/.
[98] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 7.



Battery C is one of the parks preserving the batteries used during the Battle of Helena. *(Arkansas Tourism)*

Helena's occupation transformed the town almost overnight into the most important Union stronghold in the state. It became a supply base, a port for the Federal fleet on the rivers, and a magnet for thousands of formerly enslaved people who followed Union lines to freedom.[99] Confederate forces worked to deny the Union the rest of the river. In late 1862, they fortified a bend of the Arkansas River at Arkansas Post with a large earthwork, Fort Hindman, meant to protect the river approach to Little Rock and harass Union shipping on the Mississippi below it. The fortification did not last long. In January of 1863, Union forces backed by ironclad gunboats overwhelmed its roughly 5,000-man garrison and destroyed the fort completely.[100]

The Battle of Helena

Confederate commanders saw Helena as the key to reversing the war in Arkansas. Recapturing it would remove an important Union stronghold and, should Vicksburg fall, give the Confederacy a valuable position on the river. By the time Confederate forces attacked in July 1863, Union defenders had spent a year fortifying the town. Four steep hills ringed Helena's western approaches with artillery and rifle pits, Fort Curtis guarded the main road in, and the gunboat USS Tyler waited offshore. [101]

The Confederate assault, launched at dawn on July 4, unraveled almost immediately. Confusion over the attack order left three Confederate columns attacking piecemeal rather than together, and the outnumbered Union garrison drove them back with heavy losses. Confederates suffered more than 1,600 casualties to the Union's 239 and gained nothing.[102] The same day the attack on Helena failed, Vicksburg surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant, and Robert E. Lee's army was retreating from Gettysburg. With Vicksburg gone, the Mississippi lay entirely in Union hands. Helena's failed recapture meant Arkansas's Confederates had lost their last real chance to contest the river in the Delta, and Union forces took Little Rock two months later.[103]

Arkansas Post and Other Civil War Battles in the Delta

Arkansas Post's fall, described above, was the first of several actions that shaped the Delta's war beyond Helena. At Chalk Bluff, in Clay County, Confederate cavalry fought a delaying action in May 1863, crossing the flooded St. Francis River on a makeshift bridge to escape pursuing Union troops after a failed raid into Missouri.[104] Pine Bluff withstood a Confederate cavalry attack that October, when a Union garrison reinforced by formerly enslaved residents who barricaded the streets with cotton bales held off a force that outnumbered it four to one. In Chicot County in June 1864, 600 Confederate cavalry held off 3,000 Union

[99] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 7; "Helena – A City Transformed," exhibit panel, Delta Cultural Center, Helena-West Helena. Site visited March 2026.
[100] Christ, Mark K. "Arkansas Post, Battle of," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/battle-of-arkansas-post-525/; Sesser, David. "Fort Hindman," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/fort-hindman-8640/.
[101] "Confederate Plans to Fortify Helena" and "Battle of Helena Prologue," exhibit panels, Delta Cultural Center, Helena-West Helena. Site visited March 2026.
[102] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 7.
[103] "Battle of Helena Epilogue," exhibit panel, Delta Cultural Center, Helena-West Helena. Site visited March 2026; Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 8.
[104] Taylor, Michael. "Chalk Bluff, Skirmish at (May 1–2, 1863)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/skirmish-at-chalk-bluff-1128/.

troops for most of a day at Ditch Bayou, near Lake Chicot, before withdrawing, one of the last serious armed clashes in the Delta.[105]

War Damage to Levees and Infrastructure

The war left the Delta's fields as damaged as its towns. Levees built up over decades were breached, neglected, or deliberately destroyed as both armies fought for control of the rivers, and the drainage systems that had begun to open the wetlands to cultivation fell into disrepair. The consequences became fully apparent after the war, when floodwaters that antebellum levees might have contained instead spread freely across abandoned fields. A major flood in 1867 tore new gaps in what remained of the levee system.[106] Rebuilding this infrastructure became one of the defining burdens of the postwar Delta, a landscape that required constant, expensive engineering to remain cultivable.

The Sultana Disaster

The war's final blow to the Delta came after the fighting had already ended. In the early hours of April 27, 1865, weeks after General Lee's surrender and President Lincoln's assassination, the steamboat *Sultana* exploded on the Mississippi River near present-day Marion, in Crittenden County. The ship was carrying more than 2,100 passengers, most of them Union soldiers recently released from the Confederate prison camps at Cahaba and Andersonville and bound for home. As many as 1,800 people died, making it the deadliest maritime disaster in American history, with a death toll exceeding that of the *Titanic*, though it went largely unnoticed at the time amid the nation's mourning for Lincoln. The wreck is believed to rest beneath a soybean field on the Arkansas side of the river, and a museum in Marion now preserves its memory.[107]

Emancipation and Reconstruction

For the roughly 111,000 Arkansans held in bondage at the war's start, its end brought a transformation with no precedent in the state's history. A formerly enslaved woman from Chicot County remembered a Union officer gathering people from three plantations and declaring, "You're as free as I am." The elderly among them threw down the sticks they walked with and shouted for joy.[108] But freedom alone could not answer the practical questions about land, wages, and political voice that followed.

Formerly enslaved people hoped the federal government would redistribute confiscated plantation land, the rumored "forty acres and a mule." Arkansas's own Union commander proposed exactly that, but Congress and President Andrew Johnson refused, and most Delta planters kept their land.[109] The Freedmen's Bureau, established in 1865, managed the transition instead. Military farm colonies at Helena and Pine Bluff leased abandoned and confiscated plantations to operators who hired formerly enslaved people for wages or a share of the crop.[110] Without land of their own, however, they had little leverage, and the arrangement that eventually prevailed was sharecropping, a system that left a legally free labor force without land, capital, or full independence. Poor harvests and collapsing cotton prices in 1866 and 1867 deepened the hardship

[105] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 8.
[106] "Levees, Slavery, and Maintenance," *Technology's Stories*, Society for the History of Technology. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://www.technologystories.org/levees-slavery-and-maintenance/.
[107] Hendricks, Nancy. "Sultana," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 24, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/sultana-steamboat-2269/.
[108] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 8.
[109] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 9.
[110] Finley, Randy. "Freedmen's Bureau," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/freedmens-bureau-3031/; Sesser, David. "Military Farm Colonies (Arkansas Delta)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/military-farm-colonies-arkansas-delta-8474/.

for formerly enslaved and white farmers alike. Even Lakeport's Lycurgus Johnson, who fared better than most planters, saw his taxable property fall from 171,581 dollars in 1860 to 18,556 dollars in 1865. His cotton crop dropped by more than half, though it was still enough to make him Chicot County's largest producer by 1870.[111]

Reconstruction briefly opened a door to African American political power. Arkansas's 1868 constitution gave African American men the right to vote and hold office. Eight African American delegates helped write it, among them James Mason, the son of Sunnyside Plantation's owner Elisha Worthington and a woman he had enslaved; Mason had been educated at Oberlin College and the French Military Academy.[112] By 1873, 20 African American legislators sat in the Arkansas General Assembly, several from Delta communities, even as Klan violence brought martial law to Delta counties including Crittenden, Drew, and Mississippi.[113] Political opportunity for African Americans in Arkansas ended by 1874, when Conservative Democrats regained power and rewrote the constitution to favor landed elites. The institutions built in the meantime – churches, schools, and civic organizations – supported community and outlasted Reconstruction.

African American Community Building

Delta communities grew quickly after the war. Planters recruited African American workers from other states, and Arkansas gained a reputation as a place where African Americans might build a better life. One bishop called it "destined to be the great Negro state of the country."[114] Independent African American churches, most often Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal congregations, anchored community life across the Delta. Helena minister Elias Camp Morris became president of the National Baptist Convention, one of the most prominent African American religious leaders in the country.[115] Education followed. Missionary teachers opened schools even before the war ended, including Pine Bluff's Town Colored School in 1864. Pine Bluff became home to Branch Normal College in 1873, the state's first institution of higher education for African Americans and predecessor of today's University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.[116]



Ferdinand Havis, an ex-slave and a successful businessman and politician in Pine Bluff (Jefferson County), circa 1890 *(Arkansas State Archives)*

Pine Bluff's Ferdinand Havis, born enslaved, became a successful businessman and held office as alderman, state representative, and county official. African American-owned newspapers followed, including Pine Bluff's *Weekly Herald*, founded in 1900, giving Delta communities from Pine Bluff and Helena to smaller towns like Wynne an independent voice.[117] Pine Bluff's African American commercial economy extended well beyond retail and publishing. In August 1886, Wiley Jones, born enslaved and later one of the wealthiest African Americans in the South, secured a franchise to build the city's streetcar

[111] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 9.
[112] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 9.
[113] Graves, John William. "African Americans," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/african-americans-407/; Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 9.
[114] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 9.
[115] Graves, "African Americans," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/african-americans-407/; Britton, Nancy. "Religion," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/religion-396/.
[116] Stricklin, David and Chris Stewart. "Philanthropy," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/philanthropy-4853/; Dougan, Michael B. "Education, Higher," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/higher-education-5334/.
[117] Kirk, John A. "Civil Rights and Social Change," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/civil-rights-and-social-change-4564/; Bearden, "Pine Bluff (Jefferson County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.

line, one of the first such franchises awarded to an African American businessman anywhere in the nation. Jones went on to acquire a 55-acre park and racetrack, extensive rental property, and a partnership in one of the city's major real estate firms, building a fortune estimated at roughly 300,000 dollars by his death in 1904.[118]

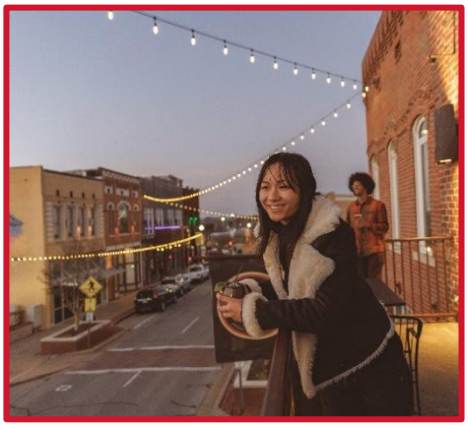
African American Arkansans also built fraternal and economic institutions offering mutual aid outside a white-controlled economy hostile to African American participation. The Royal Circle of Friends, founded in Helena in 1909, grew into an organization of more than 100,000 members across nine states.[119] Richie C. Holbrook, a Helena minister who also worked in education, real estate, and insurance, and his wife Georgia, a teacher at the city's Peabody School, were active in the Royal Circle of Friends and built business interests of their own as well. By 1911, Georgia Holbrook is recorded as owning the Star Theatre on Elm Street, advertised at the time as the city's only theater for African American patrons and a venue for vaudeville and motion pictures.[120]

Pine Bluff's African American business community proved influential well beyond Arkansas. Ottaway (O. W.) Gurley grew up and was educated in Pine Bluff before moving to Tulsa, Oklahoma, where he became the principal founder of the Greenwood District, the African American business community later known nationally as Black Wall Street, destroyed in the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921.[121]

Emergence of the New South: The Delta in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Railroads and the Rise of Market Towns

Railroads reorganized the Delta's geography as thoroughly as the river once had. Arriving slowly between the 1870s and the 1920s, rail lines freed towns from dependence on a navigable river, and a crossroads where two lines intersected could grow as quickly as river ports had in the past. Paragould, formed where rival lines built by Jay Gould and cotton merchant James Paramore crossed in Greene County, took its name from a combination of the two men's own names; it grew into one of the Delta's principal rail towns.[122] Jonesboro and Blytheville also developed into rail, agricultural, and commercial centers.[123]



Founded as a railroad town, Jonesboro continues to be a center of commerce in the Delta. *(Arkansas Tourism)*

As railroads multiplied through the 1870s and 1880s, they created a wave of new communities. Merchants supplied goods to a growing rural population, and towns along the lines competed

[118] Hall, Brenda J. "Wiley Jones (1848–1904)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 11, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/wiley-jones-337/.
[119] Teske, Steven. "Helena-West Helena (Phillips County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/helena-west-helena-phillips-county-950/.
[120] "Richie C. and Georgia Holbrook: Entrepreneurship and Religion in the Early 20th Century Arkansas Delta," Department of Arkansas Heritage. Accessed August 11, 2026. https://www.arkansasheritage.com/blog/dah/2021/06/01/richie-c.-and-georgia-holbrook-entrepreneurship-and-religion-in-the-early-20th-century-arkansas-delta.
[121] Bearden, "Pine Bluff (Jefferson County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.
[122] Hodge, Michael. "Railroads," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/railroads-1185/.
[123] Jackson, Donna. "Jonesboro, Lake City and Eastern Railroad," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/jonesboro-lake-city-and-eastern-railroad-13507/.

for the freight and passenger traffic that determined which towns would thrive.[124] Proximity to water no longer guaranteed a town's survival once rail lines redrew the map of opportunity. Towns without rail service suffered, their population and commerce both dwindling.

The country store became the essential intermediary of this rail-and-cotton economy. Local merchants supplied sharecroppers, tenants, and small farmers with seed, tools, and provisions on credit, secured by a lien against the coming crop, then marketed that crop to cotton factors and mills further up the chain.[125] This crop-lien system tied Delta farmers of every race to a cycle of debt that a single bad harvest could deepen for years.

Timber, Cotton Processing, and the New South Vision

Arkansas's political and business leaders embraced what promoters called the New South vision, an effort to attract northern capital and industrial development to a region still recovering from the Civil War. In the Delta, that vision remained tied to the land. Most of the era's new industries were extractive, timber and cotton processing chief among them, and were largely financed and controlled by out-of-state investors.[126] Sawmill towns sprang up wherever virgin timber and rail access converged, drawing workers and stripping the Delta's remaining old-growth forests within a few decades, a transformation that later contributed to runoff and flood-control problems.[127]



The historic square of the town of Wilson *(Arkansas Delta Byways)*

Cotton generated a second wave of industry. Gins, compresses, and cottonseed mills reduced the cost of preparing cotton for market. Towns with this infrastructure drew related businesses and reinforced cotton's hold on the regional economy. Scott Bond, a formerly enslaved farmer who began renting land after the Civil War, exemplified the rare African American entrepreneur who profited from this expansion, building a mercantile business and eventually a 12,000-acre plantation in St. Francis County despite the era's hardening racial barriers.[128]

Wilson and the Company-Town Model

The Delta's most fully realized company town grew from a single inheritance. Robert E. Lee Wilson, who inherited 400 acres of Mississippi County timberland at his father's death, built a sawmill in 1886. Unlike most timber operators who abandoned cut-over land, Wilson cleared and drained his holdings for cotton. Lee Wilson and Company grew into one of the largest plantation enterprises in the South. The company built

[124] "Heyday of Delta Towns," exhibit panel, Delta Cultural Center, Helena-West Helena. Site visited March 2026.
[125] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 10.
[126] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 10.
[127] "Taming and Clearing the Land," exhibit panel, Delta Cultural Center, Helena-West Helena. Site visited March 2026; Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 10.
[128] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 10.

or bought railroads to move its cotton and timber, opened its own gins, banks, and mercantile stores, and founded several towns outright, including Marie, Victoria, Armorel, and the town of Wilson itself.[129]

Wilson's company town illustrates how thoroughly this New South economy fused agriculture, industry, and racialized labor into a single system. The company owned the housing its workers rented, ran the stores where they bought supplies on credit, and built downtown Wilson's English Tudor-style commercial buildings around a central square.[130] Mechanization eventually reduced the need for the labor force the town had been built to house, and by the early twenty-first century most residents commuted elsewhere for work. Since 2010, new ownership has invested in restoring the town's historic core, an adaptive reuse effort that has kept Wilson's company-town landscape visible despite the shift from its original economic purpose.[131]

Rice, Diversification, and Continuing Industry

Rice cultivation took hold on the Grand Prairie beginning in 1904, when farmer W. H. Fuller harvested a successful commercial crop in Lonoke County in a region that German immigrant colonists had settled a generation earlier around Stuttgart.[132] Farmers organized the Stuttgart Rice Mill in 1907 and, following a price collapse after World War I, a farmers' cooperative in 1921 that grew into Riceland Foods. Riceland, headquartered in Stuttgart, grew into one of the world's largest rice millers.[133] It remains a farmer-owned cooperative today, with mills in Stuttgart and Jonesboro processing rice grown across the Delta.

By the early twentieth century, the working landscape that had begun with cotton gins, sawmills, and rail depots had grown to include rice mills and grain elevators as well. This pattern of agricultural processing visible on the landscape would carry through to soybeans, poultry, and the Delta's modern agricultural economy.

Tenant Farming, Sharecropping, and the Crop-Lien Economy

A New System of Land and Labor

By the early twentieth century, the system born of Reconstruction's failed land reform had become the Delta's dominant form of agricultural organization. Sharecropping, in which a farmer worked a plot in return for a share of the crop it produced, and tenant farming, in which a farmer rented land and often tools or a mule from an owner, were the basis of the majority of the region's farms. Together, sharecropping and tenant farming dictated the working lives of most of the Delta's African American and white residents.[134]

[129] Whayne, Jeannie. "Robert Edward Lee Wilson (1865–1933)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/robert-edward-lee-wilson-1800/; Grisham, Cindy. "Lee Wilson & Company," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/lee-wilson-company-4437/; Whayne, *Delta Empire*, ch. 4.
[130] Grisham, Cindy. "Wilson (Mississippi County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/wilson-mississippi-county-4294/; Sesser, David. "Company Towns," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/company-towns-7626/; Whayne, *Delta Empire*, ch. 5.
[131] Grisham, "Wilson (Mississippi County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.
[132] Teske, Steven. "Rice Industry," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/rice-industry-380/; Shrum, Bill. "Stuttgart (Arkansas County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/stuttgart-820/.
[133] Hendricks, Nancy. "Riceland Foods," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 7, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/riceland-foods-3114/.
[134] United States Census Bureau, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: Agriculture, 1930*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1932), 14–18, 92–97.

Sharecropping

Sharecropping emerged out of an earlier unsuccessful alternative. Immediately after the Civil War, planters experimented with contract labor, paying wages to work gangs much as they had once directed enslaved labor. Conflict between formerly enslaved people who wanted independence and the landowning planters who had limited cash on hand made the arrangement unworkable. Sharecropping offered each side something it wanted. Formerly enslaved people had little capital and, with it, little realistic hope of owning land outright, but sharecropping let them leave the old slave quarters for 20- to 30-acre parcels they worked semi-independently. Landless white farmers were a growing population in this era, as the antebellum economy collapsed and cheap Delta land drew in families with no capital of their own. They entered the same system for a different reason – not escape from bondage, but the absence of any other way onto the land. Landowners "paid" sharecroppers only in a loose sense: rather than the weekly or monthly wage promised under contract labor, sharecroppers received a share of the crop's proceeds once it was sold at year's end.[135] On paper, the system offered sharecroppers a path toward independence. In practice, sharecroppers depended entirely on landowners or merchants for housing, seed, tools, food, and credit to survive the growing season, with income arriving only once a year, when the harvest was sold and the landowner settled accounts. The system often became exploitative through the plantation commissary, where landowners or local merchants advanced supplies against the coming crop at inflated prices with interest.[136]

Tenant Farming and Debt Peonage

Cash-renting tenants, who paid a fixed rent rather than sharing the crop, occupied a rung above sharecroppers, but the crop-lien system bound tenant farmers and sharecroppers both to the land through debt regardless of formal status. Landlords and merchants held legal claims on a tenant's future harvest, and if a tenant owned mules or tools, those too were pledged against the debt. Some planters and local officials treated this lien as license, holding that an indebted tenant or sharecropper had no legal right to leave before settling accounts. Law enforcement officers routinely arrested and returned those who tried, acting in practice as the plantation's own police force, a coercion historians have termed "debt peonage." This same system of coercion also relied on the manipulation of vagrancy laws, under which African Americans were arrested on fabricated charges and sentenced to court-ordered labor. This practice persisted for decades, resurfacing with particular force during the catastrophic 1927 flood.[137]

By 1930, more than two-thirds of Arkansas's farms were operated by tenants, one of the highest proportions in the nation.[138] The system was especially dominant in the Delta counties along the Mississippi River, where large-scale cotton production demanded an abundant, low-cost labor force, and tenant families lived with chronic insecurity: annual contracts, fluctuating cotton prices, arbitrary accounting, and the ever-present threat of eviction.[139]

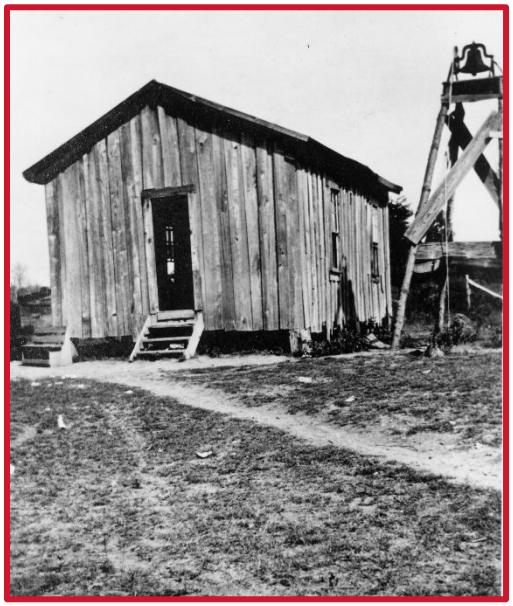
The same coercive logic reached beyond sharecroppers and tenants. At Sunnyside, in Chicot County, the plantation's new owners began recruiting Italian immigrant families in 1898 under contracts that bound them to work off the cost of their passage, housing, and provisions before they could leave. Federal investigators

[135] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 10.
[136] Baptist, Edward E. *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 120–125.
[137] Hawkins, Van. *Moaning Low: From Slavery to Peonage, Involuntary Servitude in the Arkansas Delta*. (Jonesboro, AR: Writers Bloc, 2019), 139.
[138] United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: Agriculture, 1930, The Negro Farmer in the United States*. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1932), 14–19.
[139] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 10.

later examined the arrangement as peonage, and it remains one of the most thoroughly documented cases of debt bondage in the region's history.[140]

Race, Labor, and Power

Both African American and white tenants endured this exploitation, but race determined its severity. White tenants, though marginally better positioned socially, remained constrained by the same debt peonage and by political systems dominated by planter elites.[141] African American tenants carried an additional burden that white tenants did not, one backed by the force of law. The term "Jim Crow," derived from a blackface minstrel song of 1828, had become the name for the entire system of legally enforced racial segregation across the South by the late nineteenth century. In Arkansas, the legislature passed its first such law in 1891, mandating separate railroad cars for African Americans, a model soon extended to streetcars, waiting rooms, and other public accommodations across the Delta and the state.[142] The same legislative session further weakened the state's Reconstruction-era African American political presence through the Election Law of 1891. The law used a standardized secret ballot that functioned as a de facto literacy test and placed the machinery of elections under one-party Democratic control. By 1895, no African Americans remained in the General Assembly, and none returned for 80 years.[143] A poll tax requirement adopted the following year combined with an all-white Democratic primary to keep African American Arkansans from the polls well into the twentieth century.[144] Segregation and disenfranchisement left African American tenants with little recourse to courts, law enforcement, or elected officials, who functioned, in practice, as extensions of landowner power, and with the constant threat of extralegal violence hanging over any effort to organize or protest.[145] However, African American veterans returning from World War I, including 1,000 from Phillips County alone, brought home a determination that plantation life could and would change. White political leaders and white veterans expected the opposite – a return to the prewar racial status quo, to be defended by force if necessary.[146]



Hoop Spur Church north of Elaine, above, was the scene of a violent shootout when Black sharecroppers met on the evening of September 30, 1919. *(Arkansas History Commission)*

The imbalance of power turned violent in Phillips County in the fall of 1919. On September 30, African American sharecroppers meeting at a church in Hoop Spur, near Elaine, to organize for fairer cotton prices and an honest accounting of their debts came under fire after a confrontation with local law enforcement. In the days that followed, at least 100

[140] Barry, John M. *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America* (Kindle edition), (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), pp. 109–111; Metrailer, Jamie. "Sunnyside Plantation," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 6, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/sunnyside-plantation-4455/; Razer, Bob. "Peonage," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 8, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/peonage-4562/.
[141] Graves, "African Americans," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.
[142] Moneyhon, Carl H. "Jim Crow Laws," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 11, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/jim-crow-laws-4577/.
[143] Branham, Chris M. "Election Law of 1891," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 11, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/election-law-of-1891-4033/.
[144] Kladky, William P. "Voting and Voting Rights," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 11, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/voting-and-voting-rights-4916/.
[145] Woodruff, Nan Elizabeth. *American Congo: The African American Freedom Struggle in the Delta* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 116.
[146] Woodruff, *American Congo*, 75, 86–87.

African Americans were killed amid violence involving white mobs and federal troops sent to restore order. The actual number of African American casualties is likely more than twice that number, and at least five white men also died.[147] More than 100 African American men were arrested, and 12 were sentenced to death after trials that lasted only minutes. The United States Supreme Court eventually overturned these convictions in the 1923 case *Moore v. Dempsey*. The ruling established federal courts' authority to review state criminal trials tainted by mob-dominated proceedings. No white participant was ever charged. The Elaine Massacre remains the deadliest act of racial violence in Arkansas history, and among the deadliest in the nation, a measure of what tenant farmers risked when they tried to organize against the system that bound them.[148]

Daily Life and Rural Culture

The rhythm of the agricultural year organized sharecropper life from planting through settling accounts. Families chopped and thinned cotton through the summer, picked from late summer into fall, often with children working alongside parents, and settled accounts with the landowner or merchant each winter before the cycle, and sometimes the family's residency, began again.[149] Most tenant families lived in small, unpainted frame houses provided by the landowner, supplemented what the commissary offered with a garden and livestock of their own, and built community life around a country church and, where one existed, a segregated school.[150]

Blues, gospel, and string-band traditions developed within this same rural setting, performed on front porches, in churches, and at Saturday gatherings in towns. These internationally known musical forms drew on the same fields, debts, and daily routines that defined sharecropping.[151]

Floods, Levees, Drainage, and the Remaking of the Landscape

Flood as Recurring Reality

Flooding was a recurring feature of the Delta landscape that shaped crops, towns, transportation, health, and settlement patterns alike, from the earthquakes and inundations of 1811 and 1812 to the levees that gave way near the Civil War's end.[152] Smaller floods struck the Delta repeatedly through the decades that followed, drowning crops, spreading typhoid and other waterborne diseases, cutting off roads and rail lines, and periodically forcing entire communities onto higher ground.[153] Delta residents came to treat flood season as a fact of life.

Levees, Drainage, and Confidence in Engineering

The Mississippi is the second longest river in the United States, rising in Minnesota and flowing 2,350 miles to the Gulf of Mexico, draining all or part of 31 states along the way.[154] The river forms a wide, deep

[147] Stockley, Grif. "Elaine Massacre of 1919," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 8, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/elaine-massacre-of-1919-1102/.
[148] Stockley, "Elaine Massacre of 1919," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.
[149] "The Sharecropping Era," exhibit panel, Delta Cultural Center, Helena-West Helena. Site visited March 2026.
[150] "The Sharecropping Era," Delta Cultural Center.
[151] Koch, Stephen. "Blues Music," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 8, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/blues-music-2605/.
[152] Brewer Jackson, Donna. "Levees and Drainage Districts," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 8, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/levees-and-drainage-districts-1165/.
[153] Brewer Jackson, "Levees and Drainage Districts," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.
[154] "Mississippi River Facts," Mississippi River National Recreation Area, National Park Service. Accessed August 10, 2026. https://www.nps.gov/miss/riverfacts.htm?for-guid=62a79b73-f097-420f-b4ae-78eb6d13ca4c.

corridor of the Lower Mississippi Valley below the confluence with the Ohio River – a stretch that fronts the Arkansas Delta as it flows past river towns such as Helena and Lake Village. By the turn of the twentieth century, decades of flood damage along this immense system had contributed to a national engineering debate about how to control the Mississippi River.



Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the Marked Tree Siphons, built in 1939, draw water from the St. Francis River over its levee to continue downstream. *(Arkansas Delta Byways)*

The practice of levee-building was not new. Indigenous peoples had used earthen levees to manage water and create farmable land centuries before, and planters adopted the same approach, privately building and maintaining their own levees with mixed success.[155] When private efforts proved unequal to the river, nineteenth-century planters turned to Washington, D.C. In 1879, Congress created the Mississippi River Commission to coordinate flood control the length of the river and to settle a long-running dispute between engineers who favored levees alone and those who argued for a broader approach. Andrew Atkinson Humphreys of the Corps of Engineers stood on one side, insisting that levees alone should hold the river in its channel, while James Buchanan Eads argued for a system that also incorporated reservoirs, outlets, and cutoffs. Humphreys and the Corps prevailed. By 1885, the Commission had committed formally to a "levees-only" policy, rejecting spillways, floodways, or any deliberate outlet that would let the river spread beyond its banks. This policy held for the next 40 years despite warnings from prominent engineers that it rested on a flawed understanding of how a silt-laden river like the Mississippi responded to rising flow, and that the policy was preparing the Delta for catastrophic flooding.[156] Mark Twain mocked the Commission's ambition to master the river, writing that no commission, "with the mines of the world at their back," could tame what he called "that lawless stream."[157] In the Delta, a new confidence in engineering made possible the early twentieth century agricultural expansion. Drainage canals, pumping plants, and higher levees seemed to rein in the Mississippi, although those changes fundamentally altered the river's natural relationship to its floodplain.

The Great Flood of 1927

That confidence collapsed in the spring of 1927. Weeks of heavy rain across the Mississippi watershed pushed every tributary over its banks at once, and Arkansas's levees began failing well before the flood became a national catastrophe. In Mississippi County, a levee protecting Drainage District 17 near the Missouri border gave way in a small rupture on March 28, then failed far more seriously on April 16, sending water across tens of thousands of acres of farmland and isolating some towns.[158] Arkansas's Mississippi River frontage largely held, while interior levees did not; the more severe flooding in the state came from failures along the St. Francis, White, Arkansas, and Little River systems rather than from the levees on the Mississippi

[155] "History of Levees," National Levee Database, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Accessed August 10, 2026. https://levees.sec.usace.army.mil/levee-basics/history-of-levees/.
[156] Barry, *Rising Tide*, 90–100; Brewer Jackson, "Levees and Drainage Districts," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.
[157] Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, 85.
[158] Whayne, *Delta Empire*, ch. 6.

River. The danger compounded in mid-April, when levee breaks at Dorena and New Madrid, Missouri, sent additional floodwater surging toward the state line at roughly 15 miles a day, adding to the pressure already building on the St. Francis Levee District's works in northeast Arkansas.[159] Then, on April 21, the Mississippi crevassed near Mounds Landing in Bolivar County, Mississippi. This was the single largest breach of the disaster, defining the moment that a series of regional levee failures became a catastrophe engulfing the entire lower valley.[160]

Across the length of that valley, the flood eventually covered more than 27,000 square miles from the confluence of the Ohio River to New Orleans – a vast portion of the Mississippi River's historic floodplain. Floodwaters displaced more than a million people, killed hundreds, and caused over a billion dollars in damage.[161]

For most of the Arkansas Delta, the disaster arrived not as a sudden wall of water, but rather as a slow, relentless rise that gave the river weeks to spread across the landscape before it crested. Arkansas suffered more than any other state. Floodwaters eventually covered roughly 6,600 square miles and 36 of the state's 75 counties, submerging more than two million acres of farmland under water that reached up to 30 feet. Around 100 Arkansans died, more than 350,000 people were displaced into 80 Red Cross relief camps in the state, and livestock losses ran into the tens of thousands. Near the mouth of the Arkansas River, the Mississippi's flow peaked at roughly three million cubic feet per second, a volume not matched since.[162]

The flood's toll fell heaviest on those with the least. Lake Village resident Willie Williams later described watching the levee give way, the water roaring in as houses, chickens, dogs, and even caskets swept past on the current, a scene repeated up and down the river as communities lost everything. As historian Van Hawkins stated, "Flooding hurt the rich, but devastated the poor."[163]

Federal Flood Control and Environmental Management

The scale of the 1927 disaster discredited the levees-only doctrine and forced Washington to accept a role it had long resisted. The Flood Control Act of 1928 committed the federal government to the full cost of Mississippi River flood control, funding a system of levees, floodways, and spillways engineered to channel floodwaters away from communities and farms.[164] In the Delta, the decades that followed brought larger levees, new drainage canals, and pumping plants designed to lift interior water over the levee line and back into the river, infrastructure that still defines the region's relationship to its rivers today. The environmental consequences reached beyond flood control itself. Confined now to a narrower channel, the Mississippi began running faster and deeper. Rather than depositing alluvial sediment across the Delta as it long had, the river increasingly carried those rich soils out into the Gulf of Mexico, while at the same time reducing wetland areas at the river's mouth.[165] The 1927 flood marks a turning point – after it, flood control in the Delta became a matter of federal engineering and federal money, not merely local levee boards and individual planters. This began a pattern of federal intervention that shaped the Delta in the twentieth century.

[159] Whayne, *Delta Empire*, ch. 6.
[160] "Its Mightiest Rampage," exhibit panel, Delta Cultural Center, Helena-West Helena. Site visited March 2026.
[161] Watkins, T.H. "Boiling Over," *The New York Times*, April 13, 1997. Accessed August 10, 2026. https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/97/04/13/reviews/970413.13watkint.html.
[162] Hendricks, Nancy. "Flood of 1927," Encyclopedia of Arkansas. Accessed August 8, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/flood-of-1927-2202/.
[163] Hawkins, *Moaning Low*, 137.
[164] Barry, *Rising Tide*, 406.
[165] Kemp, G. Paul, John W. Day, and Angelina M. Freeman. "Restoring the Sustainability of the Mississippi River Delta," *Ecological Engineering*, Volume 65, April 2014, 132.

Political, Social, and Economic Consequences

The flood also had significant political, social, and economic consequences. President Calvin Coolidge appointed Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover to coordinate relief efforts across eight federal agencies, the American Red Cross, and dozens of affected communities. Hoover's visible management of the crisis strengthened his national reputation ahead of the 1928 presidential election. He won that election after Coolidge declined to seek another term.[166]

The flood's aftermath exposed deep inequities. African American sharecroppers made up the overwhelming majority of the people displaced along the lower Mississippi.[167] In a number of relief camps, National Guard and local authorities forced African American refugees to labor on levee repairs at gunpoint in exchange for food and shelter, often invoking vagrancy statutes to arrest and coerce men who resisted.[168] Some planters used the emergency to prevent their own tenants from leaving at all. The pattern held across the Delta more broadly. Planters facing the loss of their labor force were often reluctant to support relief efforts that might let sharecroppers leave for good, and the strain of mishandled relief widened racial tensions in the already paternalistic and coercive labor relationship between planter and tenant.[169] Reports of these conditions circulated nationally and fed a wave of African American migration out of the Delta and out of the South entirely.[170] For those who stayed, the flood deepened the debt and dependency that already defined tenant life, and left both African American and white Delta residents aware that the landowners, merchants, and local officials who controlled their lives could not control the river.[171]

The flood's costs did not end when the water receded. Post-1927 crop prices briefly rewarded planters who managed to get a crop in the ground, but the underlying economics were already fragile, as Delta agriculture, like farming nationally, had never fully recovered from the recession that followed World War I. Drainage districts across the Delta emerged from the flood with levees damaged and bonded debts unpaid, and appeals to the Mississippi River Commission for federal repair had minimal results.[172] Recovery had barely begun when a second disaster struck – the drought of 1930–31 – which Arkansans faced while still recovering from the flood and which deepened the same cycle of debt, crop failure, and dependency the flood had exposed. The 1929 stock market crash occurred in the midst of this series of disasters. By the time the Great Depression settled over the country, the Arkansas Delta had already endured three years of compounding agricultural crisis, including flood, fragile recovery, and drought. That crisis left planters, tenants, and drainage districts alike with little capacity to absorb what followed.[173]

The Great Depression, New Deal Reform, and Rural Experimentation

The Collapse of the Cotton Economy

Cotton prices continued to fall through the early 1930s, worsening economic conditions and exposing how little security the tenant system offered the people who worked the land.[174] For sharecroppers and tenant farmers bound to landlords and merchants through the crop-lien system, falling prices meant deeper debt

[166] Barry, *Rising Tide*, 414.
[167] Barry, *Rising Tide*, prologue.
[168] Hawkins, *Moaning Low*, 139.
[169] Watkins, "Boiling Over."
[170] Woodruff, *American Congo*, 115.
[171] Barry, *Rising Tide*, prologue.
[172] Whayne, *Delta Empire*, ch. 6.
[173] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 11; Whayne, *Delta Empire*, ch. 6.
[174] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 11.

rather than relief, since a smaller harvest still had to cover the same annual obligations for rent, seed, tools, and food advanced on credit. Landowners, facing the same price collapse from the opposite side of the ledger, responded by reducing tenants' shares, tightening credit, and evicting families outright when a farm could be worked more cheaply with less labor. The result deepened patterns of dependence and landlessness already generations old in the Delta, but the scale of dispossession during the early 1930s was unlike anything the region had experienced before.[175]

The Agricultural Adjustment Administration and Tenant Displacement

Washington's response to the agricultural crisis was the 1933 establishment of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), which paid landowners to reduce cotton acreage in an effort to raise prices by cutting supply.[176] In principle, the AAA's enabling statute required landlords to share acreage-reduction payments with their tenants and sharecroppers. In practice, across the Arkansas Delta, payments flowed overwhelmingly to landowners, who found it more profitable to farm fewer acres with fewer workers than to divide federal payments among tenants they no longer needed.[177] Evictions surged as a direct consequence, and a program designed to stabilize farm incomes instead accelerated the very displacement it might have eased. This contradiction, a federal agricultural policy that answered a rural crisis by intensifying it for the people least able to absorb the shock, created the conditions for the labor organizing that would follow later in the decade.[178]



The federal administration building of the Dyess Colony *(Arkansas State University Heritage Sites)*

Dyess Colony and New Deal Resettlement

Not every New Deal response to the crisis intensified displacement. In 1934, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) established the Dyess Colony in Mississippi County as one of the nation's first and largest agricultural resettlement communities. FERA's director in Arkansas was William Reynolds Dyess, a Mississippi County farmer who had also worked in levee construction before entering politics. His practical experience in agriculture shaped the colony's development, giving him a working farmer's understanding of what tenant families needed, an outlook uncommon among New Deal administrators.[179]

The creation of Dyess Colony was a deliberate attempt to put dispossessed farm families back on the land under better terms than the tenant system had offered. William Dyess, who went on to become Arkansas's first WPA administrator, used his political connections to create the resettlement colony that ultimately bore his name. He proposed the project to federal relief administrator Harry Hopkins and secured 16,000 acres

[175] Daniel, Pete. *Breaking the Land: The Transformation of Cotton, Tobacco, and Rice Cultures since 1880* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 161–162.
[176] United States Department of Agriculture, *Report of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, May 1933–February 1934* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1934), 1–12.
[177] Auerbach, Jerold S. "Southern Tenant Farmers and the New Deal," *Journal of Southern History* 28, no. 3 (1962): 325–348, 330.
[178] Grubbs, Donald H. *Cry from the Cotton: The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union and the New Deal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 63–67.
[179] Hawkins, *Moaning Low*, 160.

for what was designated Colonization Project No. 1. Nearly 500 impoverished farm families resettled at Dyess, each provided with a small subsistence farm along with a house, outbuildings, and access to the colony's cooperative store, cannery, and other shared services. This arrangement was intended to give families a path toward independent ownership rather than perpetual tenancy. Among the families who arrived in March 1935 were Ray and Carrie Cash, who settled with their children into a five-room house built from lumber cleared on the colony's own land. Their son, Johnny Cash, grew up at Dyess and later credited the experience directly in his music, including in songs such as "Pickin' Time" and "Five Feet High and Rising." The colony's significance rests on this federal experiment in rural resettlement, as well as on the fame of the musician it produced.[180]

A parallel New Deal experiment took shape in Phillips County at the Lakeview Resettlement Project, created specifically to address landlessness among African American farmers. Established by the Resettlement Administration beginning in 1935 and formally dedicated in 1938, Lakeview provided participating families with farms, houses, outbuildings, and a path toward eventual landownership at a time when most federal resettlement projects in Arkansas, including Dyess, were restricted to white families. The project developed into the community of Lake View, and its surviving farmsteads and landscape were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2019. Lakeview demonstrates both the possibilities and the racial inequities embedded within New Deal efforts to restructure rural life in the Delta.[181]

The Pfeiffer Family and Local Paternalistic Reform

Private philanthropy provided a very different Delta response to the same crisis. The wealthy Pfeiffer family, led by Paul and Mary Pfeiffer, relocated to Piggott from St. Louis in 1913. They had acquired more than 60,000 acres of Clay County farmland by the 1930s.[182] The Pfeiffers helped area residents through the hardship of the Depression in several concrete ways. When townspeople came to his door looking for work, he set them to painting his house, one coat after another, until it had accumulated more than forty layers of paint by the Depression's end. The family also let it be known that they needed quilts, and when tenant farmers' wives brought them from miles around, they bought every one regardless of quality, storing the surplus unused in an upstairs closet.[183] When Piggott's bank failed amid a wave of closures across the state in late 1929, a group of local businessmen organized a successor, the Piggott State Bank, and elected Pfeiffer its president. The bank reopened within days and took in more than



This was the Pfeiffer family home in Piggott, Clay County. The Pfeiffers were the in-laws of Ernest Hemingway. *(Arkansas State University Heritage Sites)*

[180] "History," Historic Dyess Colony: Johnny Cash Boyhood Home, Arkansas State University Heritage Sites. Accessed August 10, 2026. https://dyesscash.astate.edu/about/.
[181] Sesser, David. "Lakeview Resettlement Project Historic District," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 19, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/lakeview-resettlement-project-historic-district-15371/.
[182] "Matilda and Karl Pfeiffer House," Arkansas Register of Historic Places, Arkansas Department of Heritage. Accessed August 10, 2026. https://www.arkansasheritage.com/arkansas-register/matilda-and-karl-pfeiffer-house.
[183] Hawkins, Ruth A. *Unbelievable Happiness and Final Sorrow: The Hemingway-Pfeiffer Marriage* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2012), 155.

$30,000 in deposits on its first day alone, restoring the town's access to banking even as Pfeiffer made clear he intended the arrangement to be temporary.[184]

The Pfeiffers' Piggott home, along with the barn Paul Pfeiffer converted into a writing studio for his son-in-law Ernest Hemingway, stands as a record of the wealth the plantation economy could sustain. It also documents the sharply different circumstances of the tenants and sharecroppers who worked land like the Pfeiffers' own.[185] Where Dyess Colony represented a federal attempt to restructure rural poverty through public investment, the Pfeiffer family's response represented an older Delta tradition – paternalistic philanthropy extended by wealthy landowners to the disadvantaged communities on which their own wealth depended.

Agricultural Research, Education, and Institutional Development

The instability of the 1930s also accelerated a longer-term investment in agricultural research and education that would reshape the Delta's farm economy for decades afterward. Arkansas State University in Jonesboro was established in 1909 as the First District Agricultural School, one of four regional agricultural schools created by the state legislature at the urging of the Arkansas Farmers Union. The institution's early mission of training farmers and improving agricultural methods continued to expand through the twentieth century as the school grew first into a college and eventually, in 1967, into a university.[186] That agricultural mission persisted alongside the institution's growth, and cooperative research facilities such as the Judd Hill Research Station, jointly operated with the University of Arkansas, continue to connect the Delta's agricultural past to ongoing scientific work on the crops that still define the regional economy. Federal and state investment in agricultural extension and research expanded through the same decades that brought the AAA and the resettlement colonies at Dyess and Lakeview to the Delta. Together, these efforts formed another strand in the region's response to crisis through public policy, private wealth, and institutional development.

The Southern Tenant Farmers Union and Farm Labor Organizing

Conditions for Organizing

By the mid-1930s, several pressures were reshaping Delta agriculture, including tenant displacement, unfair AAA payment distribution, arbitrary eviction, and mounting debt. These pressures combined with the region's history of racial oppression and limited legal protection for agricultural workers to bring sharecroppers and tenant farmers to a new resolve.[187] County governments, law enforcement, and courts functioned largely as extensions of landowner power, insulating the crop-lien system from reform and leaving collective resistance without any institutional outlet. The Arkansas Delta, where citizenship, labor, and land ownership had never been distributed equally, became a proving ground for a broader argument about economic justice, one that asked whether the promises of American democracy extended to the people who worked its cotton fields.

[184] Hawkins, *Unbelievable Happiness and Final Sorrow*, 121–122.
[185] "History," Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center, Arkansas State University Heritage Sites. Accessed August 10, 2026. https://hemingway.astate.edu/history/.
[186] Banta, Brady M. "Arkansas State University (ASU)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 10, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/arkansas-state-university-asu-2374/.
[187] Woodruff, *American Congo*, 159–165.

Founding, Demands, and Strategy

In July 1934, 11 white and seven African American tenant farmers met at the Sunnyside School near Tyronza, in Poinsett County, and formed the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU).[188] The union's organizers, H. L. Mitchell and Clay East, ran a dry cleaning shop and gasoline station in Tyronza.[189] The STFU's interracial character – African American and white members meeting, voting, and holding office together – was extraordinary in the Jim Crow South, and it remains the organization's most distinctive feature. The Southern Tenant Farmers Museum, housed in the Mitchell-East Building in Tyronza, interprets the union's history in the building that served as its unofficial headquarters until threats forced its offices to relocate to Memphis.[190]

The union's demands were direct. It sought fair distribution of AAA payments between landowners and tenants, written contracts in place of verbal arrangements, an end to arbitrary evictions, and formal recognition of the economic value that tenants' labor represented.[191] Its strategy relied more on visibility than on formal negotiation. Organizers held mass meetings in rural churches and schoolhouses, distributed printed literature including the union's own newspaper, and built alliances with sympathetic clergy, journalists, civil liberties organizations, and New Deal officials willing to give tenant grievances a hearing in Washington.[192]



The Southern Tenant Farmers Museum was originally headquartered in this storefront in Tyronza. *(Arkansas State University Heritage Sites)*

Repression, Strikes, and Growth

Landowners and local authorities met the union with swift, often violent, resistance. Members faced evictions, blacklisting, arrest, and physical violence, and union meeting places were sometimes burned. Local courts frequently sided with landowners outright. Near Parkin, in Cross County, a planter's eviction of nearly 100 sharecropper families in early 1936 was upheld in court on the grounds that union membership itself constituted a conspiracy to retain their homes, a ruling that made the evictions, carried out at gunpoint, entirely legal.[193] Violence against the union's out-of-state allies proved damaging to planters' public standing. After a failed 1936 strike, planters turned to violence to reassert control. Preacher Claude Williams and Memphis socialite Willie Sue Blagden, who had come to Arkansas in support of the union, were beaten by planters' hired men in attacks that drew widespread newspaper coverage. Of all the violence directed at STFU members and supporters, the beatings suffered by Blagden and Williams were among the most damaging to the image of Delta planters. Those attacks brought national attention to the union, though did not result in the higher wages that sharecroppers were seeking.[194]

Despite this repression, the union grew rapidly. In 1935, the union staged a cotton pickers' strike that succeeded in raising the piece rate for picking cotton to 75 cents per 100 pounds, one of its clearest concrete victories. Two years later, on September 12, 1937, hundreds of African American and white members

[188] Grubbs, *Cry from the Cotton*, 63.
[189] Cobb, William H. "Southern Tenant Farmers' Union," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 11, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/southern-tenant-farmers-union-35/.
[190] "History," Southern Tenant Farmers Museum, Arkansas State University Heritage Sites. Accessed August 11, 2026. https://www.astate.edu/outreach/history-and-heritage/heritage-sites/southern-tenant-farmers-museum/history.html.
[191] Grubbs, *Cry from the Cotton*, 66–67.
[192] Woodruff, *American Congo*, 161–162.
[193] Grubbs, *Cry from the Cotton*, 102–104.
[194] Hawkins, Van. *Plowing New Ground: The Southern Tenant Farmers Union and Its Place in Delta History*. (Virginia Beach, VA: Donning CO., 2007), published in cooperation with the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum, 109.

gathered outside Parkin to hear Norman Thomas speak, a rally captured in photographs that remain among the most widely reproduced images of the union's interracial character.[195] By 1938, it claimed more than 35,000 members organized into hundreds of locals across Arkansas, Missouri, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Oklahoma.[196] That growth did not last. Internal divisions over the union's brief affiliation with the CIO's United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America between 1937 and 1939, combined with continued landowner pressure, weakened the STFU considerably by the decade's end.

National Significance and Legacy

The STFU's significance extended well beyond the Arkansas Delta. Its strikes, roadside eviction protests, and congressional testimony brought national attention to rural poverty, the contradictions embedded in New Deal agricultural policy, and the possibility of interracial labor organizing in the Jim Crow South. Historians have since identified the union's willingness to build coalitions across racial lines, and its reliance on organizing tactics that anticipated the postwar civil rights movement, as evidence of its broader national importance.[197]

As the union's influence in Arkansas waned in the early 1940s, leadership increasingly turned toward a different response to Delta poverty – helping members leave the region. Working with the Amalgamated Meat Cutters union, STFU organizers ran what participants called an "organized migration," recruiting and transporting Delta workers to jobs in New Jersey, Michigan, and other northern states. The effort was a wartime version of an exodus already reshaping the Delta and one that would accelerate in the postwar decades.[198]

The union itself did not disappear so much as transform. In 1946 it affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, becoming the National Farm Labor Union and shifting its organizing efforts toward farmworkers in California. There, in the San Joaquin and Imperial Valley strikes of 1949–1951, Mitchell claimed that 20,000 workers walked out of the fields. A young picker who rode in the union's organizing caravan, César Chávez, later recalled receiving his first union card from the National Farm Labor Union, signed by Mitchell himself, a direct link between the cotton fields outside Tyronza and the farm labor movement Chávez and Dolores Huerta would go on to build.[199] In 1952, the union became the National Agricultural Workers Union. Arkansas State University's Heritage Sites program now interprets this legacy at the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum.

The Great Migration

Mechanization and Rural Restructuring

The mechanization that emptied much of the Delta's countryside in the mid-twentieth century had roots going back to the 1930s. Pine Bluff-area inventor John D. Rust and his brother Mack demonstrated a working mechanical cotton harvester in that decade, but they lacked the capital to bring it to market. AAA-driven evictions had displaced many tenants and sharecroppers from their plots, but most stayed nearby as day

[195] Grubbs, *Cry from the Cotton*, 94–98; Woodruff, *American Congo*, 169–171; Boyle, Louise. *Southern Tenant Farmers' Union Photographs, 1937 and 1982*, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Cornell University. Accessed August 11, 2026. https://rmc.library.cornell.edu/EAD/htmldocs/KCL05204mf.html.
[196] Cobb, "Southern Tenant Farmers' Union," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.
[197] Woodruff, *American Congo*, 152, 161–171.
[198] Grubbs, *Cry from the Cotton,* 188–191; Woodruff, *American Congo,* 198–199.
[199] Hawkins, *Plowing New Ground*, 144; Grubbs, *Cry from the Cotton*, 188–191; Cobb, "Southern Tenant Farmers' Union," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*; "History," Southern Tenant Farmers Museum, Arkansas State University Heritage Sites.

laborers rather than leaving the region, and that surplus of cheap, available hand labor gave planters little incentive to invest in an expensive new machine.[200] World War II changed the calculation. The number of tractors on Arkansas farms more than doubled between 1940 and 1945, from roughly 12,500 to more than 26,500, as wartime labor shortages pushed planters toward machinery.[201] International Harvester's assembly lines produced the first mechanical cotton pickers in 1943, though full mechanization required retooled gins capable of handling machine-picked cotton's extra debris and, later, chemical herbicides that could replace the hand-hoeing of weeds. By the early 1950s those obstacles had fallen away, and a machine and a single operator could do the work that had once required a family and a mule on ten or 15 acres.[202]

Mechanization displaced sharecropping and tenant families on a massive scale, completing a transformation of the Delta system that had begun after emancipation. Farms consolidated, fields grew larger, and most of the small tenant houses that were once common eventually disappeared. Rural towns that had been built around a large resident labor force lost population and tax base as that labor force became unnecessary, a pattern that has continued in much of the Delta into the twenty-first century.

An Exodus Decades in the Making

The exodus that mechanization accelerated had begun decades earlier. World War I's industrial demand drew southern African American workers north in increasing numbers beginning in 1917. Arkansas alone lost more than 23,000 African American residents that summer according to contemporary reporting. Federal and demographic data would eventually place the number of southerners who left the region during the war years above 400,000.[203] The pace slowed after 1920 but never reversed, and it accelerated again with the 1927 flood, the collapse of cotton prices during the Depression, and then wartime and postwar mechanization. Migrants left for many reasons – Jim Crow laws and disenfranchisement, the threat of racial violence, limited educational opportunity, defense-industry jobs opening in northern and western cities, and the disappearance of the work that had tied them to the land. Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, Memphis, and California's cities became the principal destinations, connected to the Delta by rail lines and, later, highways that carried people away from the Delta.[204]



Birthplace of John H. Johnson, now preserved as a museum, in Arkansas City *(Arkansas Tourism)*

What Migrants Carried

Migrants carried the Delta with them. Family and church networks were rebuilt in Chicago's South Side and Detroit's east side neighborhoods. Delta foodways found new markets in northern kitchens, and homecoming reunions became, and remain, a fixture of Delta community life, drawing former residents and their descendants back from cities across the country. Publisher John H. Johnson, born in Arkansas City in 1918, was one such migrant. His family left for Chicago in 1933, after no high school in Arkansas City

[200] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 12; Woodruff, *American Congo*, 159.
[201] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 12.
[202] Daniel, *Breaking the Land*, 212–226.
[203] Woodruff, *American Congo*, 40.
[204] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 12.

would admit him; he went on to found *Ebony* and *Jet*, building the largest African American-owned publishing company in the United States.[205] Perhaps most significantly, migrants also carried the sound of the Delta north on record labels, radio programs, and word of mouth, reshaping American popular music.

Music, Storytelling, and Delta Cultural Expression

Arkansas Delta music grew directly out of the conditions that are chronicled in this narrative, including forced labor and its aftermath, the rhythms of cotton work, the tradition of the church, and the disruption of migration. Music has also always functioned as a form of storytelling, carrying historical memory such as sharecroppers' grievances, migration routes, flood and hardship, and faith and endurance. Blues, gospel, country, rockabilly, R&B, soul, and Americana all took root in Delta communities. The Arkansas Delta formed part of the broader Mississippi Delta musical region while developing its own radio, church, club, and cross-genre networks. Folklorist William Ferris, a scholar of musical culture on both sides of the Mississippi River, asserts that this music took the hardship of Delta life and turned it into something communal and durable – a way of making meaning out of suffering that could be shared rather than borne alone.[206]

A fluid geographic boundary between the Delta's blues tradition and the string-band and old-time music of the Arkansas Ozarks and Ouachitas is in part a product of the same forces that sorted Delta history along racial lines. The two regions sit at opposite ends of the state, and their musical traditions are often treated as entirely separate worlds. Historian Karl Hagstrom Miller has shown that African American and Southern white musicians long shared a common repertoire of ballads, ragtime, and string-band music. Beginning in the 1920s, the recording industry marketed the music of African American performers as "race records" and that of white performers as "hillbilly" or "old-time" music, creating a musical color line that had not previously existed with such rigidity.[207] Ozark folklorist John Quincy Wolf Jr. spent decades recording traditional musicians across the state. His field recordings documented Ozark ballads and string bands alongside Delta blues and sacred harp singing, treating them as related expressions of one regional folk culture rather than wholly separate traditions.[208]

Helena, King Biscuit Time, and the Blues

Helena's role as a river port and rail junction made it a natural center of Delta musical exchange. In 1941, that tradition led to the establishment of the first regularly broadcast blues radio program in the United States. Blues musicians Sonny Boy Williamson (born Aleck "Rice" Miller) and Robert Lockwood Jr., a Turkey Scratch native and stepson of blues legend Robert Johnson, persuaded KFFA station owner Sam Anderson to air a live blues show, sponsored by the Interstate Grocery Company's King Biscuit Flour. *King Biscuit Time* went



King Biscuit Time is broadcast weekdays from the Delta Cultural Center in Helena. *(Arkansas Tourism)*

[205] Kienzle, Thomas E. "John H. Johnson (1918–2005)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 13, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/john-harold-johnson-2354/.
[206] Ferris, William. *Blues from the Delta* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1978), 3–10.
[207] Miller, Karl Hagstrom. *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 1–7.
[208] Blevins, Brooks. "John Quincy Wolf Jr. (1901–1972)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 13, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/john-quincy-wolf-jr-3033/.

on the air on November 21, 1941, and has broadcast nearly every weekday since, making it the longest continuously running daily radio program in American history. The King Biscuit Entertainers expanded to include drummer James "Peck" Curtis, pianist Pinetop Perkins, and slide guitarist Robert Nighthawk. The program reached listeners across the mid-South, eventually reshaping the sound of blues musicians far from Helena.[209] As of 2026, the program continued to broadcast five days a week from the Delta Cultural Center's Sounds Gallery.

Founded in 1986, the King Biscuit Blues Festival is one of the nation's foremost blues festivals, drawing tens of thousands of visitors to historic downtown Helena each October. Held over three days along the Mississippi River, the festival celebrates Helena's musical heritage and the Delta blues tradition that grew around the long-running *King Biscuit Time* radio program.[210]

West Memphis, KWEM, Highway 61, and Performance Circuits

West Memphis developed its own, looser version of Helena's model in February 1947, when radio station KWEM began broadcasting from a studio on East Broadway, letting aspiring performers buy airtime for as little as 15 dollars.[211] Across the Mississippi River, Memphis mayor E. H. Crump's political machine kept the city under tight control for decades, enforcing an early curfew and close regulation of liquor, gambling, and nightlife even on famed Beale Street.[212] In West Memphis, outside Crump's jurisdiction, no such restrictions applied. The Arkansas side of the river became the place where Memphis's music went after Memphis closed for the night, and where the blues, country, and rockabilly sounds developing on both sides of the river could mix largely free of interference. West Memphis clubs stayed open around the clock, liquor flowed without the same licensing constraints, and gambling operated in a legal gray zone tolerated by local authorities, drawing thousands of patrons nightly from Memphis itself. West Memphis clubs like the Plantation Inn, the Cotton Club, and Danny's booked live blues and country acts nightly for crowds that Memphis's more regulated venues could not accommodate after hours.[213]



This exhibit at Arkansas State University Mid-South explores the West Memphis radio station that was important in the early careers of many musicians. (*Arkansas State University Mid-South*)

Highway 61 provided an important corridor for this musical exchange. Running through northeastern Arkansas to West Memphis before crossing the Mississippi River into Memphis and continuing south through the Mississippi Delta, the route later known as the "Blues Highway" linked musicians and audiences across the region.[214] African American performers traveled a broader network of juke joints, clubs, theaters, and other venues that became known as the Chitlin' Circuit, providing places to perform

[209] Fry, Robbie. "King Biscuit Time," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 13, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/king-biscuit-time-radio-program-2618/.
[210] "History," King Biscuit Blues Festival. Accessed August 13, 2026. https://kingbiscuitfestival.com/history/.
[211] Miller, Adam. "KWEM," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 13, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/kwem-radio-station-8240/.
[212] Lauterbach, Preston. *Beale Street Dynasty: Sex, Song, and the Struggle for the Soul of Memphis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015), 210–230; Nelson, Rex. "Google data center poises West Memphis for boom," *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, June 4, 2026. Accessed August 13, 2026. https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2026/jun/04/google-data-center-poises-west-memphis-for-boom/.
[213] Gordon, Robert. *It Came from Memphis* (New York: Atria Books, 1995), 25–38; Waggoner, Jeff. "Plantation Inn Nite Club," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 13, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/plantation-inn-nite-club-11969/; Miller, "KWEM," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.
[214] Lauterbach, Preston. *The Chitlin' Circuit: And the Road to Rock 'n' Roll*. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), 17–19, 36–38.

for African American audiences during Jim Crow segregation.[215] Moving from town to town and venue to venue, musicians carried songs, styles, and personnel with them, allowing blues, gospel, R&B, country, and early rock and roll to continually influence one another.[216]

KWEM, a live-performance radio station established in West Memphis in 1947, served as a formative incubator for the region's sound. The station allowed local musicians to secure airtime through sponsorship or a small fee, creating an unusually accessible outlet for emerging performers across racial and musical lines. KWEM gave early radio exposure to Howlin' Wolf, B. B. King, Ike Turner, Johnny Cash, and Elvis Presley, among many others. Although live performances ended in 1955 and the station ceased operations in 1960, its run helped connect the Delta's musicians to live performance opportunities, recording studios, and wider audiences. [217]

R&B, Rock and Roll, Country, Americana, and the Wider Delta

Delta musical influence radiated well beyond the radio stations and clubs of Helena and West Memphis. Louis Jordan, born in Brinkley in 1908 to a bandleader father, built a national following in the 1940s with a stripped-down, horn-driven "jump blues" sound that laid direct groundwork for R&B and rock and roll, influencing later musicians from Chuck Berry to Ray Charles.[218] Conway Twitty, raised in Helena after his family moved there from Mississippi, moved between rock and roll and country stardom over a four-decade career.[219] Levon Helm, born near Elaine and raised at Turkey Scratch, grew up listening to *King Biscuit Time* on his family's cotton farm before becoming the drummer and a lead voice of The Band, helping to define the Americana genre decades later.[220] Big Bill Broonzy, raised on a farm near Pine Bluff, became one of Chicago blues' most influential guitarists and a folk-blues ambassador to European audiences.[221] Pine Bluff and West Memphis both developed vibrant club scenes that supported this exchange of styles and performers in the mid-twentieth century.

Gospel Music

Gospel music's Delta roots run at least as deep as the blues. Sister Rosetta Tharpe was born Rosetta Nubin in 1915 in Cotton Plant, Woodruff County, to an evangelist and mandolin-playing mother; she began playing guitar and singing in church at age four. She went on to become gospel music's first star to record for a major label, blending gospel lyrics with blues-inflected electric guitar work in a style that scandalized some in the gospel community, yet drew crowds in nightclubs and concert halls. Tharpe's 1945 recording "Strange Things Happening Every Day" is frequently cited among the earliest rock and roll records. Although her hometown sits just outside of the study area, her Delta influence is undeniable; in 2017, the Arkansas legislature designated Highway 17 between Cotton Plant and Brinkley, Monroe County, the Sister Rosetta Tharpe Memorial Highway in her honor.[222] Helena native Roberta Martin became one of the most influential figures of gospel music's golden age, shaping the genre as a singer, pianist, composer, arranger, publisher,

[215] Lauterbach, Preston. *The Chitlin' Circuit*, 78–82, 103–106.
[216] Lauterbach, Preston. *The Chitlin' Circuit*, 133–137.
[217] Miller, "KWEM," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.
[218] Koch, Stephen. "Louis Thomas Jordan (1908–1975)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 13, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/louis-thomas-jordan-1685/.
[219] Bledsoe, C. L. "Conway Twitty (1933–1993)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 19, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/conway-twitty-608/.
[220] "Arkansas' Greatest Hits: A Road Trip Playlist," Arkansas.com. Accessed August 13, 2026. https://www.arkansas.com/articles/arkansas-road-trip-playlist.
[221] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 15.
[222] McNeil, William K. and Terry Buckalew. "'Sister Rosetta' Tharpe," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 13, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/sister-rosetta-tharpe-1781/.

and leader of the nationally prominent Roberta Martin Singers.[223] Women were particularly important in carrying the Delta's gospel traditions to national audiences, with both Martin and Sister Rosetta Tharpe helping shape the development and wider influence of the genre.

Delta native and songwriter John Handcox, born in Brinkley in nearby Monroe County, based his union anthem "Mean Things Happening in This Land" on gospel themes, writing songs for the Southern Tenant Farmers Union and becoming an important voice of the sharecroppers' movement.[224] Al Green, born in 1946 near Forrest City to a sharecropping family that sang gospel together, carried the region's gospel-inflected vocal style into secular soul music before returning to the ministry and to gospel recording in the late 1970s.[225]

Johnny Cash and Dyess

Ray and Carrie Cash moved their family, including three-year-old J.R. Cash, to the Dyess Colony on March 24, 1935, into a five-room house built with lumber cut on the colony's own land. Cash lived there until his 1950 high school graduation. Dyess' rhythms of cotton work, its churches, and the gospel and country music carried by radio into the household, including Sister Rosetta Tharpe's recordings, strongly influenced Cash's songwriting.[226] Arkansas State University restored both the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home and the Dyess Colony Administration Building, with both projects completed in 2014.[227] In 2026, the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home mounted *Ragged Old Flag: Johnny Cash and the American Experience* for the nation's 250th anniversary. The exhibit uses individual Cash songs as entry points into episodes of American history, demonstrating how Delta music can serve as a way of sharing the past.[228]



The Delta Rhythm and Bayous Wellness Plaza celebrates the living musical tradition of the Delta while providing public space for wellness and community gathering. *(Arkansas Tourism)*

Music as a Living Tradition

Music remains an important living tradition in the Arkansas Delta. The Delta Cultural Center in Helena continues the daily broadcast of *King Biscuit Time*, and the community hosts the King Biscuit Blues Festival each fall.[229] The Arkansas Delta Byways Tourism Association's Music Trail marks sites connected to Delta musicians across the region, and the Delta Rhythm & Bayous Highway that follows U.S. 65 from Pine Bluff to Indianola, Mississippi, also interprets the region's

[223] Freeman, Greg. "Roberta Evelyn Martin (1907–1969)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 20, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/roberta-evelyn-martin-2779/.
[224] Koch, Stephen. "John L. Handcox rolls on," *Arkansas Times*, September 29, 2005. Accessed August 13, 2026. https://arktimes.com/entertainment/arkansongs/2005/09/29/john-l-handcox-rolls-on.
[225] Hill, Jack W. "Al Green (1946–)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 13, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/al-green-2773/.
[226] Westman, Anna K. "Historic Dyess Colony: Boyhood Home of Johnny Cash," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 13, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/historic-dyess-colony-boyhood-home-of-johnny-cash-8190/.
[227] "History," Historic Dyess Colony: Johnny Cash Boyhood Home, Arkansas State University Heritage Sites; Westman, "Historic Dyess Colony: Boyhood Home of Johnny Cash," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.
[228] "Johnny Cash boyhood home opens new American history exhibit in Dyess," KAIT8, August 3, 2026. Accessed August 13, 2026. https://www.kait8.com/2026/08/03/johnny-cash-boyhood-home-opens-new-american-history-exhibit-dyess/.
[229] "History," King Biscuit Blues Festival.

music history.[230] In 2015, the Arkansas General Assembly designated the Pine Bluff Delta Rhythm & Bayous Blues Cultural District, and in 2026, the community opened the Delta Rhythm & Bayous Blues & Wellness Plaza to celebrate the state's role in shaping Delta blues and American music.[231] The Arkansas River Delta Blues Trail, launched in 2025 by the nonprofit Arkansas Originals, began placing historical markers honoring blues musicians connected to the Arkansas River corridor, including Pine Bluff native Bobby Rush.[232] Contemporary church choirs, gospel quartets, blues clubs, and community festivals across the Delta continue to connect the past and the present.

Literature and Visual Art

The Delta's creative influence was not confined to music. In the antebellum period, Arkansas became closely associated with a distinctly American literary tradition known as Old Southwest humor. The genre relied on tall tales and character sketches, often using frame narration to contrast an educated, genteel narrator with the vernacular voice of a frontier storyteller. The genre's best-known example, Thomas Bangs Thorpe's "The Big Bear of Arkansas" (1841), frames a Mississippi steamboat passenger's account of hunter Jim Doggett's outlandish pursuit of a legendary bear and helped earn Arkansas its "Bear State" nickname. Alongside contemporaries such as Augustus Baldwin Longstreet and George Washington Harris, Thorpe's vernacular storytelling anticipated and directly influenced the work of Mark Twain, an early example of American writers turning to frontier speech at a time when many of their peers still looked to European literary models.[233]

Ernest Hemingway married Pauline Pfeiffer, daughter of Piggott landowners Paul and Mary Pfeiffer, in Paris in May 1927. Over the following years he made extended visits to the Pfeiffer home in Piggott, where his in-laws converted a barn into a private writing studio for him. It was in that barn that Hemingway wrote substantial portions of *A Farewell to Arms*, published in 1929, along with several short stories. Hemingway would go on to be awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1953 and the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954. Hemingway's association with the Delta remains that of a visiting writer rather than a native figure central to its history, but the Piggott barn is a rare physical link between the region and a major work of American literature. In 1997, Arkansas State University acquired the Pfeiffer house and barn, its first Heritage Site. The site opened as the Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center in July



The Pfeiffer family converted their barn into a studio for Ernest Hemingway to write while in the Delta. *(Arkansas State University Heritage Sites)*

[230] "Arkansas Delta Music Trail: Sounds from the Soil & Soul," Arkansas Delta Byways. Accessed August 19, 2026. https://deltabyways.com/travel/arkansas-delta-music-trail/; "Act 451: Delta Rhythm & Bayous Highway," PB Junction. Accessed August 19, 2026. https://pbjunction.com/act-451-delta-rhythm-bayous-highway/.
[231] "Delta Rhythm & Bayous Cultural District," Explore Pine Bluff. Accessed August 19, 2026. https://www.explorepinebluff.com/delta-rhythm-bayous-cultural-district.
[232] "The Birthplace of an American Art Form," Arkansas River Delta Blues Trail. Accessed August 19, 2026. https://arkansasriverdeltabluestrail.org/.
[233] Menefee, Samuel Pyeatt. "The Big Bear of Arkansas," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 24, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/the-big-bear-of-arkansas-3018/.

1999, timed to coincide with Hemingway's hundredth birthday.[234]

Painter Carroll Cloar, born in 1913 on a farm near Earle in Crittenden County, built a nationally recognized career depicting Delta rural life. From memory and his family's old photographs, he painted in a narrative, dreamlike style that has drawn comparisons to Grant Wood and Henri Rousseau; his 1964 painting *Where the Southern Cross the Yellow Dog* took its title directly from W. C. Handy's "Yellow Dog Blues," explicitly linking the Delta's visual art to its musical tradition. Cloar's work is held in collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, alongside regional collections closer to home.[235]

The Delta's literary tradition extends into the present. Best-selling novelist John Grisham was born in Jonesboro in 1955 while his parents were helping extended family on a cotton farm near Black Oak in Craighead County. Grisham often returned to the Black Oak farm for summers with his grandparents. Those experiences helped shape *A Painted House* (2001), a coming-of-age novel about a Delta tenant-farming family. The book marked a departure from the legal thrillers that made him famous and was later adapted into a television movie.[236]

World War II, Japanese American Incarceration, and Wartime Mobilization

A Wartime Landscape

World War II mobilization transformed the Delta's built environment. Beginning in 1941, the U.S. Army Air Forces established a chain of pilot-training fields across the region as part of a nationwide expansion of flight training. Primary flying schools opened at Thompson-Robbins Air Field in Helena-West Helena and at Pine Bluff's Grider Field, while an advanced twin-engine school opened at Blytheville.[237] Stuttgart hosted a glider and advanced flying school where pilots trained on the WACO CG-4A glider before the field shifted to twin-engine aircraft; Women Airforce Service Pilots served there as part of wartime staffing.[238] Southeast of Pine Bluff, the Army's Chemical Warfare Service activated the Pine Bluff Arsenal in November 1941; the arsenal was a roughly 15,000-acre installation that manufactured incendiary munitions and employed about 10,000 civilians, quickly becoming one of the region's largest employers.[239] The Blytheville field closed with the war's end in 1945, but was reactivated in the 1950s as Blytheville Air Force Base, anchoring the Delta's Cold War defense economy.[240]

[234] Dismukes, Deanna. "Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 13, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/hemingway-pfeiffer-museum-378/; "History," Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center, Arkansas State University Heritage Sites.
[235] Branham, Erin. "Carroll James Cloar (1913–1993)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 13, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/carroll-james-cloar-453/.
[236] Shipley, Mary Gay. "John Grisham (1955–)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 24, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/john-grisham-1089/; Hendricks, Nancy. "A Painted House," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 24, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/a-painted-house-book-and-movie-2255/.
[237] Kent, Carolyn Yancey. "Thompson-Robbins Air Field," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 19, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/thompson-robbins-air-field-5762/.
[238] Rucker, Steve. "Stuttgart Army Air Field," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 14, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/stuttgart-army-air-field-4176/.
[239] Bearden, Russell E. "Pine Bluff Arsenal," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 14, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/pine-bluff-arsenal-2927/.
[240] Hartley, Jillian. "Eaker Air Force Base," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 14, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/eaker-air-force-base-2795/. The site was renamed Eaker AFB in 1988, after World War II General Ira C. Eaker.

Japanese Incarceration Camps at Rohwer and Jerome

Following President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 in February 1942, federal military authorities forcibly removed Japanese Americans from the West Coast under the doctrine of "military necessity." The newly created War Relocation Authority administered the incarceration camps to which many were sent. By the end of the war, more than 120,000 people of Japanese descent had been incarcerated, nearly two-thirds of them American citizens.[241]

Two of the ten incarceration camps were built in the Arkansas Delta on marshy, tax-delinquent farmland acquired with federal assistance. The Rohwer Relocation Center in Desha County opened September 18, 1942, and held more than 8,400 people at its peak. The Jerome Relocation Center in Chicot and Drew counties opened weeks later and held nearly as many before closing in June 1944, the shortest-lived of the ten camps. Together the two camps incarcerated roughly 16,000 people behind barbed wire and armed guard towers.[242] Rohwer remained open until November 1945, one of the last camps in the country to close. Among the children held there was five-year-old George Takei, later an actor and civil rights activist, who has returned repeatedly to Arkansas over the decades to help ensure the camps are not forgotten.[243] Although most of the camp's buildings were removed after Rohwer closed, archaeological evidence and surviving foundations within the former camp landscape continue to document its physical layout and provide evidence of daily life there.[244] Rohwer's memorial cemetery is the most intact surviving feature of Arkansas's two incarceration camps. The site was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1992, and the WWII Japanese American Internment Museum opened nearby in McGehee in 2013 to interpret the camps at both Rohwer and Jerome.[245]

Military Investment and Local Economies

The war's demand for labor and materiel strained the Delta's agricultural workforce, accelerating the turn toward mechanization. Military construction and Pine Bluff Arsenal wages drew workers away from the fields at a time when cotton farmers faced renewed wartime demand. Arkansas addressed the resulting shortage in part with German and Italian prisoners of war, transported from nearby camps to work in agriculture. Federal wartime spending – an estimated 300 million dollars on Arkansas military bases and in war-related industry – expanded infrastructure and brought sustained federal investment into a still-overwhelmingly rural region.[246]

[241] Bearden, Russell E. "Japanese American Relocation Camps," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 14, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/japanese-american-relocation-camps-2273/; "Japanese American Life During Incarceration," National Park Service. Accessed August 20, 2026. https://www.nps.gov/articles/japanese-american-incarceration-archeology.htm.

[242] Bearden, "Japanese American Relocation Camps," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*; Bearden, Russell E. "Rohwer Relocation Center," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 19, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/rohwer-relocation-center-369-2/; Bearden, Russell E. "Jerome Relocation Center," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 14, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/jerome-relocation-center-2399/.

[243] Bailey, Jeff. "George Hosato Takei (1937–)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 14, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/george-hosato-takei-2189/.

[244] "Japanese American Life During Incarceration," National Park Service.

[245] Bearden, "Japanese American Relocation Camps," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.

[246] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 12.

Civil Rights and the Struggle for Belonging

Civil Rights Organizing and the Vote

Civil rights organizing in the Delta grew out of institutions already active in the region. The NAACP's defense of the men convicted after the Elaine Massacre signaled its determination to challenge Jim Crow justice. NAACP chapters had taken root in Delta counties by the 1920s, some of which shared members and meeting halls with Southern Tenant Farmers Union locals in the following decade. The Reverend J. M. Flowers's Committee on Negro Organizations built on this foundation, holding 16 large meetings across the state in 1940, drawing around 4,000 people. African American veterans returning from World War II further accelerated this organizing; as happened with World War I, African American veterans were impatient with the disenfranchisement their families had endured for generations. In addition, organizers like Annie Mae Bankhead fanned out across plantation communities selling poll tax receipts door to door and enlisting rural ministers to preach the right to vote from the pulpit. The U.S. Supreme Court's 1944 ruling against the all-white Democratic primary further opened the polls. About 500 African American Arkansans voted in Pine Bluff's Democratic primary in 1947, most carrying NAACP-endorsed ballots into the booth.[247]

The SNCC Arkansas Project

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was formed in 1960 by student activists at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. The organization launched its Arkansas Project in 1963, drawing student volunteers from Philander Smith College in Little Rock and from AM&N College in Pine Bluff, now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. The project's headquarters sat in Pine Bluff, with field offices in Pine Bluff, Helena, and Forrest City, each responsible for organizing several surrounding counties. SNCC workers opened "freedom centers" offering tutoring in African American history, English, and math, as well as training in how to integrate a restaurant or register to vote. In the fall of 1963, African American high school students in Pine Bluff canvassed door to door out of a house known as the Freedom House, distributing poll tax books to bars, barbershops, and churches; by election day they had registered 2,876 African American voters.[248]



Downtown Pine Bluff and the Jefferson County Courthouse *(KATV)*

February 1965 brought a wave of confrontation in Pine Bluff. Comedian Dick Gregory and SNCC organizer William Hansen were jailed for six months for attempting to integrate a segregated truck stop, a sentence later overturned on appeal. Someone fired shots at SNCC worker Reverend Benjamin Grinnage during a restaurant demonstration. Thirty-nine African American demonstrators were arrested at that protest alone, and a state trooper assaulted AM&N student and SNCC volunteer James Jones at another. Governor Orval Faubus, increasingly wary of the African American vote but unwilling to break with segregationist allies,

[247] Woodruff, *American Congo*, 214.
[248] Riffel, Brent. "In the Storm: William Hansen and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Arkansas, 1962–1967," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2004): 404–419, 408–410.

branded Hansen a "professional agitator" and placed SNCC's Arkansas activities under state police surveillance.[249]

School Desegregation in the Delta

The U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* declared segregated public schools unconstitutional, and its 1955 follow-up ordered desegregation to proceed "with all deliberate speed," a vague timeline that Delta school districts used to delay for years.[250] Compliance came only after federal court orders and the funding threat written into the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and some Delta districts held out into the early 1970s. In Crittenden County, Earle's schools saw especially violent resistance to desegregation. When African American students walked out in 1970 to protest the terms of desegregation, police and state troopers fired without warning on a crowd of peaceful marchers and beat fleeing demonstrators, arresting dozens, including the Reverend Ezra Greer, a local civil rights leader. Families of students who continued the protest afterward lost their jobs and homes on the plantations where they worked.[251]

Cold War Readiness and the Modern Federal Delta

From World War II to the Cold War

Several of the Delta's wartime training fields closed permanently after 1945, but the federal government's readiness to reinvest in Delta land and infrastructure carried directly into the Cold War, when a new military presence took hold. Blytheville's airfield, dormant since 1945, reopened in 1955 as Blytheville Air Force Base under the Strategic Air Command (SAC). By 1959, the 97th Bombardment Wing had made Blytheville home to B-52G Stratofortress bombers and KC-135A refueling tankers, part of the nation's nuclear deterrent.[252] During the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, two of the base's nuclear-armed B-52s flew continuous airborne alert, ready to strike the Soviet Union if war broke out, one of the closest points the Cold War came to turning hot.[253] The base employed thousands of military personnel and civilians at its peak, drawing new residents from across the country into Mississippi County and, with them, outside perspectives and connections the rural Delta had rarely absorbed at this scale. It anchored the county's economy for nearly four decades before closing in 1992 as the Cold War wound down. The closure hit Mississippi County hard, and for years the empty runways stood as a symbol of the region's economic struggles. Beginning in 2019, local leaders and a nonprofit board began developing a museum at the former base and opened a first exhibition in 2020. By January 2024, Congress had formally designated the site the National Cold War Center, the nation's official Cold War museum.[254]

Federal Power, Local Change, and the New South

The pattern of substantial federal investment in the Delta stretches back to the levees the Army Corps of Engineers built after the Great Flood of 1927, deepened through New Deal resettlement and wartime mobilization, and repeated itself once more with the Cold War. Each wave of federal engagement

[249] Riffel, "In the Storm," 412–414.
[250] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 13.
[251] Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Concise History*, ch. 14.
[252] Hartley, "Eaker Air Force Base," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.
[253] "Blytheville warming up for Cold War museum at defunct Air Force base," Talk Business & Politics, January 3, 2023. Accessed August 15, 2026. https://talkbusiness.net/2019/06/blytheville-warming-up-for-cold-war-museum-at-defunct-air-force-base/.
[254] "Congress Officially Designates the National Cold War Center," The National Cold War Center. Accessed August 19, 2026. https://nationalcoldwarcenter.com/news/congress-officially-designates-the-national-cold-war-center/.

reorganized Delta land, labor, and local economies, and each left the region more tightly bound to national systems than before.

In 1987, Nucor Corporation formed a joint venture with Yamato Kogyo to build Arkansas's first major steel mill in Blytheville, shipping its first wide-flange beam the following year. Nucor-Yamato's success drew a second Nucor plant to the county in 1992 and paved the way for the industry's later growth.[255] Beginning in 2014, Big River Steel built a steel mill near Osceola in Mississippi County using recycled scrap and electric arc furnace technology. U.S. Steel acquired Big River Steel in 2021 and subsequently expanded the Osceola complex; U.S. Steel itself became part of Nippon Steel in 2025. By 2026, Mississippi County was widely described as the nation's largest steel-producing county, with billions of dollars in new capital investment building on a foundation laid over decades through the county's natural river access and substantial federal investment in transportation, power, and industrial infrastructure during World War II and the Cold War.[256]

The Contemporary Delta

Agriculture and Economic Change

In the early twenty-first century, agriculture remained the Delta's economic foundation, although cotton no longer dominated the industry. By the 2020s, soybeans, rice, corn, and wheat covered more Delta acreage than cotton. The region's farms are complemented by catfish ponds, poultry operations, and modern processing plants that link Delta commodities to national and global markets much as cotton factors once did. The Grand Prairie's rice economy, centered on Stuttgart and cooperatives like Riceland, remains one of the nation's most productive. Modern Delta farms rely on irrigation systems, aerial crop dusting, laser-guided land leveling, and GPS-based precision agriculture, technologies that have reduced labor needs and increased yields just as mechanization did in the middle of the twentieth century.

Population Loss and Community Challenges

The mechanization and out-migration that reshaped the twentieth-century Delta have not run their course. Phillips County's population fell by nearly 35 percent between 2010 and 2025, with Helena-West Helena alone losing 33 percent of its residents over that time.[257] State and federal assessments available in 2026 showed poverty rates in the Delta well above the state and national averages, with more than a third of Delta children living in poverty. Rural counties also faced acute challenges in infant mortality and other health measures. These challenges are compounded by declining populations, shrinking tax bases, and long distances to hospitals and specialists.[258] Despite the hardship these figures describe, Delta communities have significant resources and resolve. Local leadership, heritage- and recreation-based economic development, and a wealth of natural and cultural resources upon which to build continue to shape how Delta towns respond to the pressures of the twenty-first century.

[255] "With Steel, State Lures Interlocking Industries," *Arkansas Business*, 2022.
[256] "Land of Steel Expands: Osceola's Big River Steel Direct Reduced Iron," *Arkansas Business*, June 23, 2026. Accessed August 15, 2026. https://www.arkansasbusiness.com/article/land-of-steel-expands-osceola-big-river-steel-direct-reduced-iron/.
[257] U.S. Census Bureau, "QuickFacts: Phillips County, Arkansas" and "QuickFacts: Helena-West Helena city, Arkansas." Accessed August 19, 2026. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/phillipscountyarkansas/PST045225.
[258] Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Arkansas Title V Needs Assessment. Accessed August 15, 2026. https://mchb.tvisdata.hrsa.gov/Narratives/Overview/d948dcf5-97f7-44c5-8dcc-221fc6788a10.

Heritage Tourism and Living Traditions

Arkansas State University's Heritage Sites program connects the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum, the Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum, the Historic Dyess Colony, and Lakeport Plantation Museum, interpreting labor organizing, literature, music, and plantation life under a single institutional umbrella. The Delta Cultural Center, the WWII Japanese American Internment Museum, Rohwer Japanese American Relocation Center, Parkin and Hampson archeological state parks, and the federally designated National Cold War Center further extend that same work of interpretation. The two nationally designated byways and the music trails and districts provide access to a chain of sites and connect the stories across the landscape. Community festivals carry the region's heritage forward in living traditions, especially music, agriculture, and waterfowl hunting. Major examples include the King Biscuit Blues Festival in Helena; Wings Over the Prairie and the World Championship Duck Calling Contest in Stuttgart; the Arkansas Rice Festival in Weiner; the Cotton Fest in Wilson; Juneteenth in the Bluff in Pine Bluff; and the Delta Crawfish Festival in Jonesboro. Dozens of smaller county fairs and harvest festivals likewise mark the agricultural calendar that continues to structure rural Delta life.

Recreation and Conservation

The Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism's *Connecting the Natural State: 2025–2030 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* sets five strategic priorities for the state: sustaining community investment, improving accessibility, fostering outdoor innovation, supporting public wellness, and promoting environmental stewardship.[259] Moreover, Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders' *Natural State Initiative*, established by executive order in 2023 and chaired by First Gentleman Bryan Sanders, names growing the Arkansas Delta recreation economy among its own priorities. The initiative has set a goal of doubling the state's outdoor recreation economy by 2032, and has designated the Delta Heritage Trail one of only four statewide Economic Opportunity Zones targeted for tourism investment.[260] Crowley's Ridge Gravel Trail, developed by studioDRIFT, adds to the region's cycling appeal, and the state's nationally designated byways, the Great River Road All-American Road and Crowley's Ridge Parkway, extend this recreational economy to scenic driving.[261] The Mississippi Flyway



The Delta Heritage Trail State Park, a rail-to-trail conversion that spans the southern Delta, represents the Arkansas State Parks' largest-ever investment. *(Arkansas Tourism)*

[259] *Connecting the Natural State: 2025–2030 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*. Arkansas Office of Outdoor Recreation, Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism. Accessed August 15, 2026. https://adpht.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/Arkansas-SCORP-2025-2030-1.pdf.

[260] "Sanders' *Natural State Initiative* Issues Recommendations to Take Arkansas' Outdoor Economy to the Top," Arkansas Governor's Office, December 13, 2023. Accessed August 15, 2026. https://governor.arkansas.gov/news_post/sanders-natural-state-initiative-issues-recommendations-to-take-arkansas-outdoor-economy-to-the-top/.

[261] "Crowley's Ridge Gravel Trail," studioDRIFT. Accessed August 15, 2026. https://www.studiodriftar.org/crgt; "Great River Road: Travel the Arkansas Delta Region Along this National Scenic Byway," Arkansas, the Natural State. Accessed August 19,

routes migratory waterfowl through the Delta each fall and spring, and the state draws more than 100,000 waterfowl hunters annually, generating close to a million dollars a day in economic activity during duck season. Hunting is concentrated on wildlife management areas like Bayou Meto, Big Lake, and St. Francis and on Stuttgart's identity as a national capital of duck calling and waterfowl culture. A 2021 resolution to support waterfowl habitat recognized the connection between rice cultivation in the Grand Prairie, flooded timberlands, and waterfowl hunting.[262] Finally, Big River Crossing opened in 2016 on the century-old Harahan Bridge; the pedestrian and bicycle path allows visitors to cross the Mississippi River between West Memphis and Memphis.[263] Reflecting growth in the sector, eastern Arkansas's workforce related to outdoor recreation grew from roughly 920 jobs in 2017 to more than 1,200 in 2024.[264]

Why the Arkansas Delta Matters

The history recounted here is a critical part of the nation's story. It is a record of how land, labor, race, and federal power have shaped one American region across four centuries, and how Delta residents have continued to build community, culture, and meaning within and against those forces. The description of the themes and resources that follow translates this history into the framework of national significance required to designate the Arkansas Delta as a National Heritage Area.

2026. https://www.arkansas.com/plan-your-trip/plan/trip-ideas-itineraries/great-river-road-travel-the-arkansas-delta-region-along; "Crowley's Ridge Parkway National Scenic Byway," Arkansas Delta Byways. Accessed August 19, 2026. https://deltabyways.com/scenic-byways/crowleys-ridge-parkway-national-scenic-byway/.

[262] "Gov. Hutchinson Emphasizes Importance of Waterfowl, Rice to Arkansas," Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, April 14, 2021. Accessed August 15, 2026. https://www.agfc.com/en/news/2021/04/14/gov-hutchinson-emphasizes-importance-of-waterfowl-rice-to-arkansas/.

[263] Satterfield, W. W. "Big River Crossing," Encyclopedia of Arkansas. Accessed August 15, 2026. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/big-river-crossing-12235/.

[264] "Economic Impact," Arkansas Office of Outdoor Recreation, Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism. Accessed August 15, 2026. https://adpht.arkansas.gov/office-of-outdoor-recreation/economic-impact/.

ARKANSAS DELTA NHA FEASIBILITY STUDY · CHAPTER THREE

Building the Case for Designation

The preceding chapter, *A History of the Arkansas Delta*, establishes the historic context for this feasibility study. This chapter builds on the events described in that chronology, drawing out the relationships among landscape, history, and resources that support the case for National Heritage Area designation.

The chapter begins by defining the Arkansas Delta's national significance and organizing that significance through five interpretive themes. Within that thematic framework, representative places and resource types are presented, giving the themes tangible form. The chapter also includes consideration of opportunities for conservation, interpretation, education, recreation, and community and economic development. Finally, the chapter closes with the justification for a boundary designed to encompass the region's strongest concentration of significant stories and supporting resources.

The Arkansas Delta's national significance rests on the relationships among its many stories, the assemblage of resources that convey those stories across the 17-county region, and a working landscape where long-established traditions of farming and music remain part of daily life. That combination – history, resources, and a living landscape – is what National Heritage Area designation is intended to recognize and sustain.

Defining National Significance

A National Heritage Area must contain natural, historic, and cultural resources that, together, give the region a distinctive place in the nation's story. Those resources must also merit recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use. The National Heritage Area Act establishes this standard and notes that such resources are best stewarded as a network built through partnerships among public and private entities.[265]

Individual designations play a role in this analysis, but they are not the focus. The Delta already holds numerous historic and natural designations, including National Historic Landmark and National Register listings; state parks, interpretive centers, and wildlife management areas; national scenic byways; four national wildlife refuges and a unit of the National Park System, among other resources. Taken individually, these designations and protected resources recognize particular sites, corridors, and natural areas. The question this chapter asks, however, is broader: whether the region's resources, considered together at a landscape level, retain the significance and integrity needed to convey the Delta's contribution to the national story.

A full determination of whether the proposed NHA meets the National Heritage Area Act's statutory requirements is reserved for the feasibility analysis presented later in this study. What follows here is the foundation for that determination – a statement of the Arkansas Delta's national significance and the interpretive themes, resources, and boundary that support it.

[265]National Heritage Area Act, Public Law 117-339 (codified at 54 U.S.C. § 120103(a)(3)(A)).

Statement of National Significance

The Arkansas Delta is a nationally significant cultural landscape, shaped by the Mississippi River, where agriculture, labor, federal power, and struggles over rights came together in ways that changed America. Federal, state, and private responses to floods, economic crises, war, and social change transformed the Delta from floodplain to agricultural powerhouse, helping to build national markets and labor systems. In this landscape, struggles over race, rights, and belonging helped drive broader movements for social change. These experiences gave rise to a Delta culture that reached far beyond the region through music, literature, faith, and foodways.

The Arkansas Delta's significance lies in the connections among the Delta's landscape, labor systems, federal power, cultural expression, and struggles over rights and belonging. The river, bayou, ridge, and prairie landscapes shaped where and how people settled and farmed, and generations of clearing, draining, and leveeing then reshaped that landscape in turn. Agricultural labor systems influenced wealth, mobility, migration, and community life, while flood, economic crisis, war, and Cold War readiness drew substantial federal intervention. Music, literature, art, faith, and foodways grew out of these same conditions and carried Delta experiences far beyond the region. A National Heritage Area provides a framework for interpreting these interdependent stories across the many sites and working landscapes that no single resource can convey alone.



Once a free-flowing river system, Big Lake NWR was changed to a lake/swamp ecosystem by the New Madrid earthquakes of 1811-1812. Big Lake today consists primarily of wooded swamps and open water. (*Arkansas Delta Byways*)

Interpretive Themes

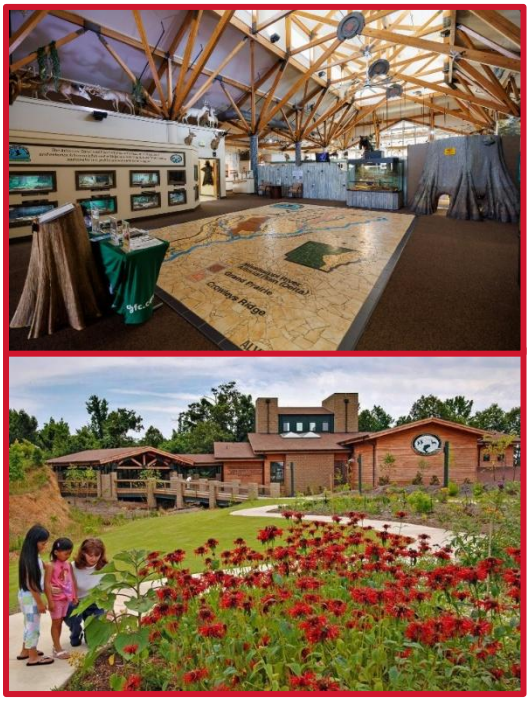
The five interpretive themes that follow translate the Arkansas Delta's national significance into an organizing framework for interpretation. They are analytical rather than chronological, and they are deliberately interconnected. Each theme draws together related developments from the previous chapter, *A History of the Arkansas Delta,* and connects them to extant resources and living traditions. Each begins with a formal theme statement, followed by a concise discussion of its thematic scope and representative resources and resource types.

Theme 1 | Shaped by River and Ridge

Shaped by the Mississippi River and its tributaries and bayous, and anchored by the rare high ground of Crowley's Ridge, the Arkansas Delta reveals how people adapt to powerful natural forces – flood, flow, and change. Through settlement, engineering, and stewardship, people transformed this dynamic river landscape into a working environment central to national systems of transportation, agriculture, flood control, and conservation.

The Mississippi River and its tributaries, Bayou Bartholomew and Bayou Meto, the Grand Prairie, and Crowley's Ridge form the physical framework within which every other Delta story unfolds. Where people settled, how they moved goods and themselves, what they farmed, and where their communities took root were all responses to this landscape. High ground attracted settlement, navigable water invited commerce, and fertile bottomland supported agriculture on an increasingly intensive scale.

That landscape did not remain fixed. Generations of clearing, draining, building levees, and engineering water management remade the Delta's forests and wetlands into farmland. This transformation was punctuated by moments of crisis – chief among them the New Madrid earthquakes and the Great Flood of 1927 – that reshaped both the physical terrain and the federal government's role in its management. The scale of that engineering, sustained over more than a century, contributes to the region's significance.



The Delta is served by two Arkansas Game and Fish Nature Centers: the Gov. Mike Huckabee Delta Rivers Nature Center and the Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center. (*Arkansas Tourism*)

That relationship between people, water, and land continues today, expressed now through conservation and outdoor recreation as much as through agriculture and flood control. Wildlife refuges and a network of land and water trails and scenic byways carry the theme into the present, evidence that the Delta's engagement with its landscape remains active rather than historical.

Representative Resources / Resource Types

The Great River Road All-American Road and the Crowley's Ridge Parkway National Scenic Byway serve as the primary interpretive corridors for this theme, connecting visitors to the river and ridge landscapes and the communities that grew up across the region. Dale Bumpers White River National Wildlife Refuge, Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge, and

Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge protect the bottomland hardwood and wetland ecosystems that define the Mississippi Flyway, preserving remnants of the forest that once covered the Delta and sustaining the waterfowl populations that have drawn hunters and naturalists to the region for generations. Crowley's Ridge State Park, Village Creek State Park, Lake Frierson State Park, and Lake Poinsett State Park preserve the distinctive loess topography and mixed hardwood forest along Crowley's Ridge, which is among the most ecologically unusual landscapes in the mid-South.

Arkansas Post National Memorial and Louisiana Purchase State Park anchor the river corridor's deep history, marking the region's earliest sustained European presence and the survey point from which the Louisiana Purchase was measured, while Parkin Archeological State Park and Hampson Archeological Museum State Park document Indigenous communities that thrived along the river long before European contact. The Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center and the Governor Mike Huckabee Delta Rivers Nature Center provide interpretive access to the Ridge's ecology and the bayou and river systems of the Delta lowlands, respectively.

The levee system is a defining working resource. Its roads, drainage infrastructure, and engineering structures, including the Marked Tree Siphons, an early twentieth-century feat that carries water beneath the St. Francis River, remain visible across the landscape and tell the story of the federal investment that transformed the Delta's relationship to its rivers, making large-scale agriculture possible while reshaping the region's hydrology in ways still unfolding today.

Theme 2 | Roots in the Soil

In the transformation from Delta forests and wetlands to one of the nation's most productive agricultural regions, evolving labor systems, transportation networks, crops, and technologies reshaped rural life, community identity, foodways, and patterns of migration across the United States. From family farms to cooperatives, agriculture continues to sustain communities and drive the region's economy.

Agriculture in the Arkansas Delta is best understood as an integrated industrial system rather than a sequence of events: the clearing of forest and wetland, the choice of crop, the terms on which land and labor were organized, the transportation networks that carried commodities to market, the facilities that processed the crops, and the technologies that repeatedly reorganized all of the above. Cotton dominated that industrial system for a century and a half. Rice, concentrated on the Grand Prairie's distinctive soils, developed alongside it as a second, intensive expression of the same underlying pattern of transforming the Delta's landscape into productive farmland.

Landownership and labor sat at the center of that integrated agricultural system, and the arrangements that governed them – enslavement, then tenancy, sharecropping, and crop-lien credit – shaped far more than agricultural output. They determined who could accumulate wealth and who could not, and they set in motion

the migrations that eventually carried hundreds of thousands of Delta residents to cities across the country. Mechanization accelerated the decline of the labor arrangements that had defined the preceding decades and reorganized rural communities; its effects remain visible in the region's population and settlement patterns.

Working farms, agricultural research institutions, cooperatives, and the foodways that grew out of generations of rural life remain active parts of the regional economy and identity, making this a theme with as much presence in the Delta's present as in its past.



Riceland Foods operates this rice and soybean storage and processing facility near Stuttgart. Riceland, founded in 1921, is a 10,000-member agricultural cooperative. *(U.S. Department of Agriculture)*

Representative Resources / Resource Types

All four A-State Heritage Sites carry direct connections to the agricultural story. Lakeport Plantation Museum documents cotton agriculture and the labor systems that sustained it, and the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum, considered further under *Theme 5 | Conflict and Cooperation, Rights, and the Search for Belonging*, is rooted in the same agricultural conditions that made labor organizing necessary. The Historic Dyess Colony and the Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center, explored more fully under *Theme 3 | Reform, Mobilization, and the Remaking of the Delta*, mark contrasting responses to the agricultural crisis of the 1930s – public resettlement and private philanthropy.

Hampson Archeological Museum State Park and the Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie document the region's agricultural diversity across time, from Indigenous agricultural practices through the rice economy that developed in the Grand Prairie and continues today. Judd Hill Research Station, a cooperative facility operated by Arkansas's two major universities, represents the ongoing investment in agricultural science that connects the Delta's agricultural past to its future.



More than 15,000 artifacts depicting farm life on the Grand Prairie, including that of early German settlers, are on display at the Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie. *(Arkansas Delta Byways)*

The Arkansas Delta is a designed working landscape. The integrated agricultural resources – cotton gins, grain elevators, rice paddies, processing facilities, and modern agricultural operations visible across the 17 counties – give this theme its most immediate expression on the land. Town squares and rural main streets, with their courthouses, churches, depots, and commercial buildings, reflect the communities that agriculture built, while shotgun houses and sharecropper dwellings, where they survive, document the material conditions of agricultural labor. Farmers' markets, county fairs, and community festivals carry living foodways traditions forward, and portions of the Delta Heritage Trail and the two byways link many of these agricultural landscapes and communities.

Theme 3 | Reform, Mobilization, and the Remaking of the Delta

In the wake of flood, economic collapse, and global war, the Arkansas Delta became a testing ground for federal reform, private initiative, and grassroots organizing. New Deal agricultural policies, resettlement experiments, interracial labor activism, paternalistic philanthropy, and wartime mobilization reshaped land use, labor systems, and community life, expanding federal authority and contributing to the Delta's integration into national political, economic, and defense systems.

This theme examines how institutions and communities responded when the environmental and agricultural systems described in the first two themes entered crisis. The 1927 flood and the Great Depression prompted very different models of intervention: federal flood control and agricultural research and policy, resettlement at Dyess and Lakeview, private philanthropy, and interracial labor organizing. Considered together, these efforts reveal competing assumptions about who should bear responsibility for rural hardship, and how far government, landowners, or workers themselves should go in remaking the Delta.

World War II extended federal involvement from reform into mobilization. Airfields, defense installations, and the Pine Bluff Arsenal brought military spending, infrastructure, and new populations to the region, while the incarceration of Japanese Americans at Rohwer and Jerome placed the Delta within a national civil-liberties crisis. Cold War investment at Blytheville extended the federal presence into the second half of the century. Where *Theme 5 | Conflict and Cooperation, Rights, and the Search for Belonging* examines the implications of these episodes for rights and belonging, this theme focuses on the institutions, policies, and physical investments through which federal power reshaped the region.



The cemetery at the Rohwer Japanese American incarceration site *(National Park Service)*

The result is a modern Delta whose agricultural, educational, civic, and defense landscapes bear the marks of repeated public investment and policy intervention. Read at the landscape scale, those resources show how a rural region became increasingly integrated into national systems of agriculture, disaster management, social policy, and defense.

Representative Resources / Resource Types

The federal flood-control program that followed the 1927 flood, including the levee, drainage, and engineering structures examined more fully under *Theme 1 | Shaped by River and Ridge*, represented a major

federal undertaking. The flood-control infrastructure reshaped the region's relationship to its rivers on a scale that touched nearly every county in the proposed NHA.

A-State Heritage Sites' Historic Dyess Colony: Johnny Cash Boyhood Home anchors this theme's account of New Deal resettlement. It is set within one of the better-preserved resettlement communities in the United States and illustrates the federal government's attempt to put displaced families back on the land under more equitable terms. The Lakeview Resettlement Project Historic District provides an important African American counterpart to Dyess, documenting New Deal efforts to resettle families whose lives were upended by flood and economic crisis. The Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center documents the private philanthropic response to that same rural hardship in Piggott.

The Southern Tenant Farmers Union's interracial organizing, together with the earlier violence against African American sharecroppers organizing at Elaine in 1919, also examined under *Theme 5 | Conflict and Cooperation, Rights, and the Search for Belonging*, established the stakes against which this era's federal and private reform efforts unfolded.

The Rohwer Japanese American Relocation Center and the World War II Japanese American Internment Museum in McGehee, along with the Jerome site in Desha County, together represent one of the most significant concentrations of Japanese American incarceration resources outside the West Coast, preserving the memory of a civil liberties failure carried out under the authority of a federal government simultaneously positioning itself as the defender of democracy abroad. Pine Bluff Arsenal and surviving wartime airfield landscapes at Helena, Pine Bluff, Stuttgart, and Blytheville represent the broader military infrastructure that brought federal investment and mobilization to the Delta.



The National Cold War Center is being opened in stages at the former Eaker Air Force Base in Blytheville. *(Arkansas Tourism)*

The developing National Cold War Center in Blytheville, located at the former Eaker Air Force Base and home to one of the nation's Strategic Air Command alert facilities, demonstrates that federal power in the Delta extended well beyond the New Deal and World War II. New Deal-era civic buildings, schools, and landscape features surviving across the study area give this theme a presence throughout the region, connecting the broader story of federal intervention to the communities that experienced it firsthand.

Theme 4 | Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers

In the Arkansas Delta, blues, gospel, country, rockabilly, and Americana music emerged from everyday experience and local landscapes, giving voice to work, faith, struggle, and perseverance. Through radio, performance, and recording, Johnny Cash, Levon Helm, and other artists carried Delta sounds nationwide. The region's association with writers and artists, especially Ernest Hemingway during his years in Piggott, connects the Delta to broader currents in twentieth-century American literature and culture.

This theme explores the concentration of nationally influential artists with roots in the Delta, as well as the networks that allowed the musical forms they shaped locally to travel across the nation and around the globe. Blues, gospel, country, rockabilly, and Americana developed in the Delta as interconnected expressions of a shared set of conditions – work, faith, migration, segregation, family, and community. Music moved outward from the region along shared channels, including radio broadcasts, highways, performance circuits, churches, and recording networks.

Helena, West Memphis, and Pine Bluff form three especially important music nodes. Helena's KFFA and *King Biscuit Time* gave blues a nationally influential broadcast platform. West Memphis's KWEM, Highway 61, and club scene created a crossroads where blues, country, and early rock and roll mixed in a largely unregulated atmosphere just across the Mississippi River from Memphis. Pine Bluff's club history and contemporary Delta Rhythm & Bayous initiatives extend this musical geography through the southern Delta. Artists including Johnny Cash, Levon Helm, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Louis Jordan, Conway Twitty, Big Bill Broonzy, and Bobby Rush demonstrate the breadth of styles and communities associated with the Delta's music. These artists shared their sound through the same networks that carried many other musicians with Delta roots. Festivals, churches, clubs, and contemporary musicians keep this tradition alive.



Watermelon Girls, acrylic on panel, 23" x 34", by Carroll Cloar, 1986 *(Encyclopedia of Arkansas)*



This house museum was part of the set for the movie adaptation of John Grisham's Delta novel *A Painted House*. *(Encyclopedia of Arkansas)*

Literature and visual art broaden this theme beyond music. Old Southwest humor helped shape a distinctly American vernacular tradition, with echoes of it seen in Mark Twain's style. Ernest Hemingway wrote substantial portions of *A Farewell to Arms* during extended visits to Piggott, while John Grisham's *A Painted House* drew on summers spent with family near Black Oak. Carroll Cloar's paintings translated rural Delta memory into a nationally recognized visual record of the mid-South.

Representative Resources / Resource Types

Two of the A-State Heritage Sites sit at the center of these stories. The Historic Dyess Colony: Johnny Cash Boyhood Home connects Cash's musical development to the agricultural, religious, and family environment of his childhood. The Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum in Piggott documents Hemingway's years in the Delta and ties this rural corner of the South to the mainstream of American literary modernism.

The Delta Cultural Center in Helena, home to *King Biscuit Time*, preserves both the story and the tradition of a broadcast that shaped how the world heard the Delta. The KWEM studio site and the related exhibit in West Memphis interpret how that radio station carried Delta sounds across the region. The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Museum and Cultural Center and the Arkansas State University Museum hold collections

documenting the region's musical and cultural heritage, and Pine Bluff's Delta Rhythm & Bayous Cultural District encompasses a contemporary collection of music-related heritage resources in the southern Delta.



The King Biscuit Blues Festival is held each October in downtown Helena. *(Arkansas Delta Byways)*

Music trails and arts districts, including the Arkansas Delta Music Trail: Sounds from the Soil & Soul, the Delta Rhythm & Bayous Highway, Pine Bluff's Delta Rhythm & Bayous Cultural District, and the Arkansas River Delta Blues Trail, connect these heritage sites, performance venues, and communities into interpretive corridors. The childhood home of Levon Helm, relocated to Marvell, offers a point of connection to one of the Delta's most celebrated musical sons. The King Biscuit Blues Festival in Helena and the Osceola Heritage Music Festival, along with the live music still performed in churches, clubs, and community gatherings across the Delta, are contemporary expressions of a Delta musical tradition that continues to evolve.

Theme 5 | Conflict and Cooperation, Rights, and the Search for Belonging

The Arkansas Delta has been both refuge and battleground, setting the context for conflict, cooperation, and survival among Indigenous peoples, settlers, laborers, soldiers, and displaced communities as power, race, and opportunity were contested over time. Through forced removal, enslavement, war, labor conflict, racial violence, and civil rights struggles, the Delta reveals how Americans have sought belonging, justice, and control of place within the nation's evolving democratic ideals.

Belonging, citizenship, rights, and control of place provide the analytical thread connecting the widely separated periods encompassed by this theme. Indigenous societies had occupied and organized the Delta landscape for thousands of years before European contact introduced new alliances, conflicts, and competing claims to land and authority. Under American rule, those claims gave way to treaties, land cessions, and the forced removal of Indigenous nations from Arkansas. The same questions of power and belonging continued through enslavement, the Civil War and emancipation, and the institution-building through which formerly enslaved Arkansans established churches, schools, businesses, and civic organizations across the Delta.

The question of who could participate fully in the region's economic, political, and civic life resurfaced throughout the twentieth century. The Elaine Massacre of 1919, interracial organizing through the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, the wartime incarceration of Japanese Americans at Rohwer and Jerome, voting-rights organizing, and school desegregation each tested the meaning and limits of citizenship and democratic participation in a different period. These episodes overlap with the agricultural and federal-policy histories addressed elsewhere in this thematic framework, but here the focus is on rights, civil liberties, and the continuing struggle over who could claim full belonging within the Delta and the nation.

Representative Resources / Resource Types

Parkin Archeological State Park and Hampson Archeological Museum State Park anchor the theme's Indigenous history. Parkin preserves the town generally identified by archaeologists with Casqui, encountered by the de Soto expedition in 1541, while Hampson interprets the Nodena tradition associated



Hampson Archeological Museum State Park in Wilson *(Arkansas Tourism)*

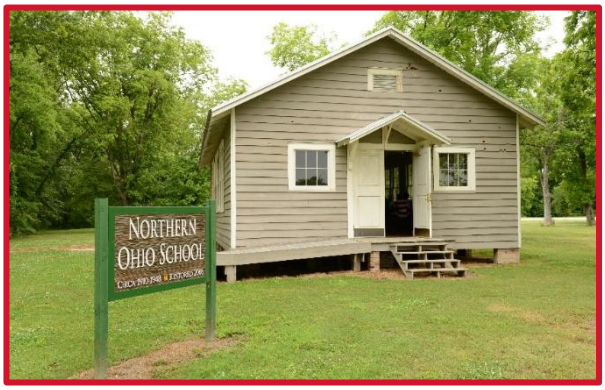
with the towns identified as Pacaha. Other significant archeological resources, including the Nodena, Zebree, Eaker, and Menard-Hodges sites, document the density and complexity of Indigenous settlement in the Lower Mississippi Valley; because many are location-restricted, their significance must be balanced with the need to protect sensitive archeological resources from public disclosure.

The landscape of Indigenous removal extends this story beyond individual archeological sites. During the 1830s, Cherokee, Muscogee (Creek), Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole people crossed the Delta on their forced migration to Indian Territory, traveling along the Memphis-to-Little Rock military road and the Southwest Trail, crossing rivers by ferry and ford, and in some cases traveling by steamboat. Historic transportation corridors, river crossings, and associated landscapes within the study area therefore provide tangible connections to the federal removal policies that displaced Indigenous nations from their homelands and brought thousands of people through the Arkansas Delta. The Mississippi crossings into the Delta from Memphis and at Helena were important points of entry for this westward removal corridor.

Arkansas Post National Memorial and Arkansas Post State Park document another long history of contested land, authority, and alliance. The area preserves associations with Quapaw-European interaction, French and Spanish settlement, imperial competition along the Mississippi, and the transition to American rule. The 1783 Colbert Raid at Arkansas Post, generally regarded as the westernmost engagement of the Revolutionary War, directly connects this Delta landscape to the national struggle for American independence.

Fort Curtis, the surviving battery positions in Helena, and Chalk Bluff Battle Site document the Civil War's passage through the Delta and the strategic importance of its rivers and transportation corridors. The Sultana Disaster Museum in Marion extends that story into the war's aftermath, interpreting the 1865 destruction of the *Sultana*, which was carrying recently released Union prisoners of war north from Confederate prisons – an event remembered as the worst maritime disaster in American history.

A-State Heritage Sites' Southern Tenant Farmers Museum interprets interracial labor organizing amid the agricultural and socioeconomic inequality and racial oppression of the early twentieth-century Delta, while the Elaine Massacre Memorial at the Phillips County courthouse in Helena commemorates the violence directed against Black farmers and sharecroppers attempting to organize in 1919. Together, these resources illustrate both organizing for greater economic and political participation and the resistance that organizing encountered. The Rohwer Japanese American Relocation Center, the World War II Japanese American Internment Museum in



Northern Ohio School, established in 1910 for African American children at Parkin, is preserved at Parkin Archeological State Park. *(Arkansas Tourism)*

McGehee, and the Jerome site extend the theme into the wartime denial of civil liberties, connecting the Delta to a nationally significant history of contested citizenship and belonging.

African American churches, schools, cemeteries, historic business districts, and other community institutions across the study area provide a broader landscape of post-emancipation community building and civil rights activism. These resources document the institutions through which generations of Delta residents created community, pursued education and economic opportunity, organized politically, and sustained the long struggle for full participation in civic life.

A Strategic Assemblage of Resources in the Arkansas Delta

The theme discussions above identify representative resources that give each interpretive theme tangible form on the landscape. The Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area Resource Inventory (Appendix D) extends that evidence across the full study area, providing the quantitative and geographic basis for evaluating whether the region possesses the strategic assemblage of resources a National Heritage Area designation requires. Rather than revisiting resources already introduced by theme, this section analyzes the inventory as a whole: its scale, its diversity, the degree to which its resources support more than one theme, its geographic distribution, its public accessibility, and its existing record of federal and state recognition.

The inventory was compiled through fieldwork, documentary research, and review of existing federal and state designations, and refined through input from project partners and community members. Each entry was evaluated against the chapter's five interpretive themes and assigned to one or more themes accordingly, so the inventory functions both as a record of individual places and as a working tool for assessing how thoroughly those themes are expressed across the landscape.

Analyzing the Broad Array of Resources

Measure	Inventory
Total resources	295
Theme 1 – Shaped by River and Ridge	93
Theme 2 – Roots in the Soil	64
Theme 3 – Reform, Mobilization, and the Remaking of the Delta	101
Theme 4 – Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	60
Theme 5 – Conflict and Cooperation, Rights, and the Search for Belonging	80
Resources supporting more than one theme	78
Publicly accessible	252

The theme totals overlap by design. Of the inventory's 295 resources, 217 support a single theme, 60 support two themes, 13 support three themes, three support four themes, and two support all five themes. Every resource ties to at least one theme, and about 26 percent contributes to more than one. That overlap, discussed further below, is itself evidence of how tightly the Delta's landscape and history are woven together.

Resource Categories

The inventory contains a broad array of resource types.

Resource Type	Share of Inventory
Historical	66 percent
Cultural or Living Tradition	49 percent
Recreational	26 percent
Natural	26 percent
Educational or Interpretive	23 percent

Many resources fall into more than one category, so these figures do not sum to 100 percent. Read together, they describe a living cultural landscape rather than a static collection of historic properties. Historic buildings and archeological sites sit alongside working agricultural land, wildlife refuges and natural areas, byways and trails, museums and interpretive centers, and the festivals, churches, and music venues where Delta traditions are still practiced.

The inventory also has a strong landscape-scale character. Beyond individual sites, it includes region-wide systems such as the levee and drainage infrastructure that reshaped the Delta's rivers, the music trails and highways that connect performance venues and heritage sites across the region, the Rohwer incarceration landscape, transportation corridors, and farms and fields. These are resources best understood as connected systems rather than isolated points on a map.

Thematic Overlap

That overlap is an analytical strength rather than a complication. Seventy-eight resources, about 26 percent of the inventory, support two or more of the chapter's five themes. This demonstrates that those themes are not simply parallel categories but are materially interconnected on the ground. Agricultural resources also document the reform movements and labor conflicts that grew out of the plantation economy. Sites associated with wartime mobilization raise questions of rights and belonging as directly as they document federal investment. Music resources carry the same histories of migration, faith, community, and civil rights that run through the Delta's other themes. Engineered river corridors connect the story of landscape transformation to the exercise of federal power. This overlap is the bridge from theme-by-theme discussion to the National Heritage Area concept itself: the same places and systems allow more than one nationally significant story to be interpreted from a single stretch of ground.

Geographic Reach

The inventory's geographic reach further supports the coherence of the proposed core boundary. All 17 of the study area's counties contain inventoried resources. Concentrations are greatest in Mississippi County, with 41 resources, followed by Phillips (27), Arkansas (26), Jefferson (22), Desha and Poinsett (19 each), and Craighead (18). Nine additional resources span more than one county, and one corridor extends across Crittenden and Mississippi counties.

Theme 1 | Shaped by River and Ridge and *Theme 3 | Reform, Mobilization, and the Remaking of the Delta* are represented in all 17 counties. *Theme 5 | Conflict and Cooperation, Rights, and the Search for Belonging* is represented in 16, and *Theme 2 | Roots in the Soil* and *Theme 4 | Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers* in 15 each. That breadth matters more than any single county's total, because it shows the interpretive framework reaching across the full proposed area rather than depending on one or two concentrated clusters. The

unevenness that remains reflects a series of anchor concentrations connected by waterways, agriculture, transportation corridors, and cultural networks, not a weakness in the underlying assemblage.

Telling a National Story

Fifteen resources in the inventory carry a distinct federal designation that anchors a nationally significant story within this broader assemblage: nine National Historic Landmarks, one National Park System unit, four National Wildlife Refuges, and two National Scenic Byways. Arkansas Post National Memorial accounts for both the National Park unit and one of the National Historic Landmarks, so these categories overlap by one.

The nine National Historic Landmarks include Arkansas Post National Memorial, the Menard-Hodges Site, Parkin Archeological State Park, and the Rohwer Japanese American Relocation Center Cemetery. The remaining five are the Louisiana Purchase State Park Marker, the Eaker Archeological Site, the Nodena Site, Louisiana Purchase State Park, and Centennial Baptist Church. The four National Wildlife Refuges are Dale Bumpers White River, Wapanocca, Big Lake, and Cache River. The two National Scenic Byways are the Crowley's Ridge Parkway and the Great River Road, itself also designated an All-American Road. Together, these federally recognized sites and landscapes provide fixed national anchors for the historic, cultural, and natural stories interpreted throughout this chapter.

National Register Recognition

An additional 76 resources in the inventory are individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).[266] This is a measure of documented historic significance and integrity rather than of national significance in its own right. Only resources with a distinct national designation or federal status – such as National Historic Landmark, National Park System unit, National Wildlife Refuge, or National Scenic Byway – are presented here as nationally significant on the basis of that designation alone.

Integrity, accordingly, is best understood at two levels: the documented integrity of individually listed and designated properties, and the broader, field-observed integrity of the working landscapes, natural systems, and cultural corridors that make up the rest of the inventory.

Public Access

Public accessibility is a further strength of the assemblage. Over 250 of the inventory's 295 resources, about 85 percent, are open to the public. The remaining resources include private working farms, sensitive archeological sites, active industrial facilities, and other resources that contribute to significance without functioning as visitor destinations.

An Assemblage to Support a National Heritage Area

The value of this assemblage lies less in the number of resources it contains than in how those resources relate to one another. Across the Delta's 17 counties, historic sites, cultural institutions, working farms, natural systems, transportation and engineering corridors, recreational resources, and living traditions combine to make the chapter's five themes visible on the ground. Their thematic overlap, their geographic reach, their public accessibility, and the federal and state recognition many already carry together demonstrate the kind of strategic assemblage a National Heritage Area is designed to recognize and sustain.

[266] This figure reflects National Register-listed properties tied directly to the study's five interpretive themes rather than a complete count of every NRHP listing in the study area. The inventory is built to document resources that convey the Delta's national significance, not to catalog every individually listed property regardless of its connection to those themes. Many privately owned homes are also excluded from this version of the inventory, a choice made to keep the document manageable and to respect the interests of owners whose homes are not open to the public.

Opportunities for an Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area

The Arkansas Delta's national significance, its five interpretive themes, and the strategic assemblage of resources documented above describe a landscape ready for designation. A National Heritage Area would build on that foundation by connecting, strengthening, and extending the reach of conservation, interpretation and education, recreation, and community and economic development already underway across the region. Many of the opportunities described below emerged directly from engagement conducted during the feasibility study, including public meetings, stakeholder interviews, and the region-wide survey, and they reflect priorities identified by residents, partner organizations, and the A-State program proposed to coordinate the NHA.

Complementing Existing Regional Programs

The Arkansas Delta already benefits from two strong regional programs, and an NHA would complement both. Arkansas Delta Byways promotes the region to travelers. Its work centers on marketing and visitor information for the two National Scenic Byway corridors across 15 counties. The Delta Regional Authority invests in infrastructure, workforce training, and economic development across eight states. It serves as a funding partner rather than a regional coordinator of heritage resources.

An NHA fills the space between these roles. It would provide technical assistance to small museums and historic sites, coordinate interpretation across all five themes and all 17 counties, support preservation and conservation projects through subgrants, and bring partners together around a shared regional vision and plan for the future. A-State Heritage Sites would continue to operate the Byways program, which would serve as one of the NHA's primary interpretive corridors and promotional platforms. Delta Regional Authority investments in infrastructure and workforce development would, in turn, strengthen the communities where NHA projects take place.

Conservation and Preservation

Many of the Delta's most significant resources are stewarded by small communities, local governments, and volunteer organizations that have limited capacity for documentation, maintenance, or interpretation. Designation would connect these efforts to technical assistance, professional documentation, ongoing stewardship support, and grant funding for historic, cultural, and natural resources, extending the reach of preservation work that currently depends on the capacity of individual towns, counties, and nonprofit organizations. In turn, preservation projects can catalyze downtown revitalization, contributing to economic vitality in communities.

Interpretation and Education

The Delta's stories are generally told site by site, through museums, historic sites, and festivals operating independently of one another. Arkansas Delta Byways already connects and promotes sites and communities along the region's two nationally designated corridors, the Crowley's Ridge Parkway and the Great River Road All-American Road, giving the NHA an established interpretive platform to build on rather than create from scratch. National Scenic Byway designation calls for a corridor management plan that describes how each byway's significant resources will be interpreted. In the Delta, those plans focus on the two road corridors and the communities along them. An NHA interpretive plan would extend that work



The rockabilly exhibit at the Arkansas State University Museum *(Arkansas Delta Byways)*

across all 17 counties and all five themes, including Pine Bluff and the rest of Jefferson and Lincoln counties, which neither byway reaches. The NHA interpretive framework could support a range of activities, including orientation exhibits, cross-site interpretation and programming, digital interpretation, place-based educational curricula, and signage that connects visitors to the broader regional story rather than a single location. Small museums and historic sites in particular stand to benefit, gaining access to interpretive planning and content development that few could develop on their own.

Recreation and Natural-Resource Connections

The Delta's wildlife refuges, state parks, trails, and water routes already draw visitors for hunting, paddling, cycling, and wildlife viewing. Despite the strong state and federal presence in this sector, NHA designation would connect this outdoor recreation infrastructure to the historical and cultural themes that give it meaning. The Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area could link experiences such as cycling the Delta Heritage Trail or spending a morning in a duck blind with the region's agricultural and conservation history.

Heritage Tourism and Visibility

National recognition and coordinated marketing would help connect the Delta's sites, festivals, and small businesses under a single regional identity, extending the reach of communities that currently work to attract visitors largely on their own. The economic development such coordination supports is likely to be incremental rather than transformative: a heritage trail becoming the catalyst for a new bike shop, or a restored museum helping attract development of a new restaurant or small business, rather than a single large investment. In counties that have lost population for decades, the trails, venues, and gathering places that heritage investment creates are not incidental amenities, but rather part of what it takes to keep a community viable.

Additional opportunities stand out as particularly well suited to the region's existing assets. Outdoor recreation – from the Delta Heritage Trail to the region's waterfowl hunting traditions – is a growing part of the region's economy and a state priority; designation could help connect these recreational experiences more directly to the region's history. The concentration of nationally significant resources associated with federal intervention and policy, including the Dyess resettlement colony, the Rohwer and Jerome Japanese incarceration sites, and the developing National Cold War Center, gives the Delta a distinctive interpretive portfolio within the National Heritage Area system. Finally, the nation's 250th anniversary has created new opportunities to connect sites such as Arkansas Post and the Louisiana Purchase survey point to the broader national story and to sustain greater interest in the region's history beyond the commemoration.

A-State Heritage Sites – Priorities for the National Heritage Area

As the proposed coordinating entity, A-State Heritage Sites has articulated a set of priorities for the NHA that reflect its two decades of heritage work in the Delta and align closely with the opportunities identified through the feasibility study's engagement process.

The first priority is to sustain and strengthen the program's four existing heritage sites as the NHA's anchor institutions. The Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum, the Historic Dyess Colony: Johnny Cash Boyhood Home, the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum, and Lakeport Plantation Museum are distributed across the study area, giving the NHA an institutional presence from Clay County in the north to Chicot County in the south. Together they represent agricultural history, labor systems and organizing, federal intervention, musical traditions, and struggles over rights and belonging that define the region's significance. Already operational, with established audiences and interpretive infrastructure, these sites provide the foundation on which the NHA's broader programming could be built.



A group of students visiting the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum *(A-State Heritage Sites)*

Expanding music tourism is identified as the region's single greatest near-term opportunity. The Delta's musical legacy is internationally recognized, yet the region draws only a fraction of the music-heritage visitors compared to the number who travel to Memphis and the Mississippi Delta. Further, many of those visitors are passing through or near the Arkansas Delta without knowing what is there. Coordinated music heritage itineraries, stronger interpretation at key sites, and marketing aimed at audiences already drawn to the region's musical heritage on the eastern bank of the Mississippi River may close that gap. The American Music Tourism Act, signed into law in October 2026, strengthens this opportunity by directing the U.S. Department of Commerce to identify significant music destinations and events and promote travel to them by American and international visitors. The law defines music tourism broadly to include festivals, live performances, museums, studios, and venues of all sizes, which aligns closely with the sites and itineraries an Arkansas Delta NHA would develop and promote. Music, in this sense, functions as an entry point – visitors drawn by the sound are well positioned to encounter the agricultural history, labor struggles, migration patterns, and cultural exchange that gave Delta music its meaning.

Increasing the visibility and interpretive capacity of the Rohwer Japanese American Relocation Center is a further priority. Rohwer is among the most nationally significant resources in the study area. The federal government's use of the region's landscape to incarcerate Japanese Americans during World War II, connects directly to two of this chapter's interpretive themes. A-State Heritage Sites has already developed interpretation for a walking tour of the site. Further interpretation is at the adjacent Delta Heritage Trail State Park, which follows the railroad corridor along the site's eastern edge, the same route that carried more than 16,000 Japanese Americans to the Delta from their West Coast homes. A longer-term management and interpretation strategy for the site remains a goal, one that would substantially strengthen both Rohwer itself and the NHA's broader interpretive portfolio.

A subgrant program to support partner organizations in pursuing all of the opportunities described here is another priority. NHA competitive grants distributed throughout the 17 counties would fund heritage planning, preservation, interpretive programming, signage, and organizational capacity building, investments that make a tangible difference at the community level. Administering the program through a dedicated staff position responsible for technical assistance and subgrant coordination would keep the

process accessible to smaller and less experienced organizations, and that same capacity would help partners pursue outside funding as well.

Meeting the Statutory Standard

The National Heritage Area Act identifies outstanding opportunities for conservation and for recreation and education among the qualifying elements of a proposed heritage area.[267] The opportunities described above cut across conservation, interpretation, recreation, and visibility, and each builds on platforms, sites, and organizations the region already has in place. Together, they demonstrate that the Arkansas Delta already has the foundation that standard calls for. What the region lacks is the region-wide coordinating capacity and the connective structure a National Heritage Area is designed to provide. Designation could connect the Delta's resources, festivals, trails, and heritage institutions, strengthen the organizations that sustain them, and expand their reach among visitors, students, and communities.

Boundary

A National Heritage Area's boundary is often developed or confirmed over the course of the feasibility study process. Site visits, resource surveys, and public engagement running alongside historical research all help refine where that line is eventually drawn. What emerges is meant to capture a cluster of connected places and stories substantial enough to tell something distinctly American about a region. Patterns of industry, culture, and movement across the landscape carry real weight in that determination, often as much as the rivers and roads that shape the land itself, because physical geography alone rarely settles the question. Equally important is how people have lived on that land – the customs they have kept, the sense of place they have built across generations, and the way settlement patterns and land use reveal the connections that hold a region together. County and other political lines offer a convenient way to describe the resulting area, but they follow the history and culture already established there rather than define it. A sound boundary must encompass the resources and relationships that convey the region's national significance while remaining practical for partnership-based management.

For the Arkansas Delta, boundary determination follows from the analysis already presented in this chapter. The resources documented in the preceding section, the opportunities identified for conservation, education, and recreation, and the interest expressed through engagement conducted during the feasibility study together point toward a defined core within the broader Delta region.

The Proposed Boundary – A 17-County Core

That core consists of 17 counties in eastern Arkansas: Arkansas, Chicot, Clay, Craighead, Crittenden, Cross, Desha, Drew, Greene, Jefferson, Lee, Lincoln, Mississippi, Monroe, Phillips, Poinsett, and St. Francis. Stretching from Clay County on the Missouri line to Chicot County on the Louisiana border, this core represents the strongest and most readily understood expression of the Arkansas Delta, supported by four findings.

The first factor in determining the National Heritage Area boundary is landscape coherence. The 17 counties encompass much of eastern Arkansas, where the Mississippi, Arkansas, White, and St. Francis rivers have shaped the broad alluvial plain. Crowley's Ridge rises above the surrounding lowlands and extends from the Missouri border to Helena-West Helena. The region also includes the Grand Prairie, bottomland forests, and Bayou Bartholomew and Bayou Meto. The Mississippi River defines the region's eastern edge. These

[267]National Heritage Area Act, Public Law 117-339 (codified at 54 U.S.C. § 120103(a)(3)(C)).

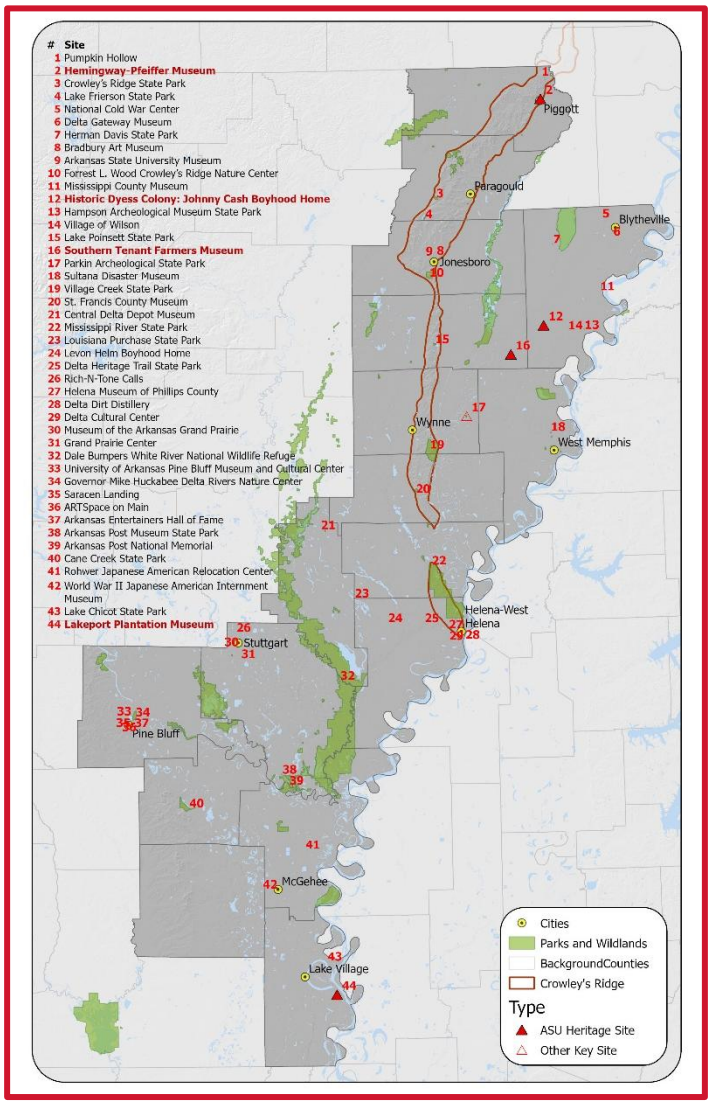
systems do not stop cleanly at any county line, but together they give the proposed core a shared geologic and hydrologic identity that is unmistakably the Arkansas Delta.

The second factor is thematic and resource coherence. Resources tied to the study's five interpretive themes appear in every one of the 17 counties. River systems, levee and drainage networks, and the routes that carried migration and music outward form multi-county corridors that link concentrations of significance from north to south, as the resource analysis in the preceding section demonstrates.

The third factor is regional identity and public understanding. Residents and visitors already recognize the Arkansas Delta as a distinct region shaped by the Mississippi River and its broad lowlands, separate from the Ozark and Ouachita uplands to the west. A boundary drawn around the 17 counties matches how the region already understands itself, rather than asking the public to accept an unfamiliar line on a map.

The fourth factor is the practical use of county boundaries for partnership-based management. Counties are units that local governments, tourism offices, and cultural organizations already use to coordinate their work. A boundary drawn along county lines gives a future coordinating entity a structure it can work with immediately, rather than one it must first explain.

The 17-county core is larger than the 15-county footprint of Arkansas Delta Byways, and the difference is deliberate. The Byways footprint reflects an administrative decision about how the state's regional tourism associations divide their territory. Jefferson and Lincoln counties belong to Arkansas' Land of Legends, a separate tourism region, and neither National Scenic Byway passes through them. Their landscape and history are unmistakably Delta. Both lie on the alluvial plain of the Arkansas River and Bayou Bartholomew, and both were shaped by cotton, enslavement, and tenancy. Jefferson County is home to Pine Bluff, the second-largest city in the study area, and its 22 inventoried resources rank fourth among the 17 counties. A boundary drawn around tourism districts would leave out places central to the Delta's story, so the proposed boundary follows the landscape instead.



This map shows the boundary for the Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area, as well as key sites within it.

The Western Edge and Opportunities for Further Study

The proposed western boundary is a practical administrative limit rather than a cultural divide. The Delta's landscapes, communities, and stories extend into the eastern portions of several of the counties that lie immediately to the west of the study area. The Grand Prairie's rice and waterfowl economy stretches into portions of neighboring counties. Similarly, rockabilly clubs, studios, and radio stations trace a corridor along Highway 367 into the Arkansas hill country, an extension of the Delta's musical networks that deserves evaluation on its own terms rather than automatic inclusion of whole counties. Civil rights history also raises a question farther north, where the successful 1955 school desegregation in Hoxie reflected many of the same issues of citizenship and belonging addressed in *Theme 5 | Conflict and Cooperation, Rights, and the Search for Belonging*. Following designation, the coordinating entity could consider further study to determine whether some of the adjoining landscapes described above belong inside the boundary. Any future expansion into these areas should be judged by the same standard applied in this study: national significance, resource integrity and concentration, thematic coherence, geographic logic, community support, and manageability.

Connections Beyond the Boundary

The Arkansas Delta is part of a larger Lower Mississippi landscape. Its river systems, agricultural economy, and cultural traditions connect it to Memphis and west Tennessee, the Missouri Bootheel, the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, and the lower Mississippi Valley in Louisiana. These connections extend the Arkansas Delta's stories beyond the proposed boundary without diminishing the coherence of the 17-county core.

Across the river, the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area shares important histories of cotton agriculture, African American migration and civil rights, and blues traditions. The Arkansas Delta brings a different combination of resources to those shared stories, including the nationally significant history of interracial farm-labor organizing, extensive New Deal, wartime, and Cold War federal intervention, and musical traditions shaped by exchange among blues, gospel, country, rockabilly, R&B, and the folk traditions of the Arkansas uplands. These overlapping and distinctive stories support separate heritage-area identities while creating strong opportunities for interpretation and collaboration across the Mississippi River.

Conclusion

Taken together, the evidence presented in this chapter establishes the foundation for the proposed Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area. The 17-county core contains a substantial and geographically distributed assemblage of natural, historic, and cultural resources that conveys five interrelated themes that combine to tell a nationally significant story. Resources include nationally designated sites that anchor the region's history, many publicly accessible historic and cultural properties, working landscapes, natural areas, cultural institutions, and living traditions. This assemblage of resources presents clear opportunities for conservation, interpretation, education, recreation, and community and economic development.

The proposed boundary captures the principal Arkansas concentration of these resources and stories while remaining practical for partnership-based management and collaboration with connected landscapes beyond it. This chapter therefore establishes the significance, thematic coherence, resource base, opportunities, and geographic framework on which the feasibility for designation rests. The formal evaluation of the proposed National Heritage Area against the National Heritage Area Act's statutory requirements is presented in Chapter 5 of this study.

ARKANSAS DELTA NHA FEASIBILITY STUDY · CHAPTER FOUR

Governance & Management Framework

A National Heritage Area functions through partnership rather than federal ownership. Its success depends on the capacity of a coordinating entity to convene partners, administer funds, and sustain a shared vision over time. This chapter presents the governance framework proposed for the Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area. It identifies the coordinating entity, describes the governance structure that will support it, outlines a staffing and financial plan, and establishes the roles that partners across the 17-county proposed National Heritage Area are expected to play.

The framework presented here builds directly on the findings of the Situational Analysis, completed in June 2026, and on the coordinating entity assessment conducted throughout the feasibility study process. It reflects governance models used by comparable National Heritage Areas – several of which are anchored by universities or established nonprofit organizations – and adapts those models to the institutional landscape and community priorities of the Arkansas Delta.

Mission and Vision

The Arkansas Delta NHA's mission and vision statements articulate the purpose that the coordinating entity and its partners are organizing around. Both statements grew directly out of the interpretive themes and public engagement process, and both are reflected in the governance structure outlined in this chapter.

Mission Statement

The Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area unites the communities, organizations, and institutions of eastern Arkansas in a shared effort to conserve the region's nationally significant resources, expand heritage tourism and education, and strengthen the Delta's economic and cultural vitality.

Vision Statement

The sound of the Delta – its music, its voices, its traditions – carries far beyond its borders, drawing recognition to a region too often overlooked. Communities across the Delta are economically stronger, culturally confident, and connected to one another through a shared regional identity. Young people who grow up here see a future worth building rather than a past worth leaving.

How the Statements Reflect Community and Regional Priorities

The mission statement expresses three commitments of the National Heritage Area: conserving nationally significant resources, expanding heritage tourism and education, and strengthening economic and cultural vitality. Sharing the region's history, tourism growth, and economic development were the three most frequently cited expected benefits in the public engagement process, and the mission statement commits the coordinating entity to all three rather than privileging one over the others. These benefits track closely with what public meeting attendees and survey respondents identified as what they most wanted from designation.

The mission's opening commitment, to unite the communities, organizations, and institutions of eastern Arkansas in a shared effort, responds directly to public opinion that surfaced repeatedly in meetings and interviews. Stakeholders consistently rejected any framing of the study area as an upper Delta and a lower Delta, insisting instead that the region be treated as a single, coherent landscape. One participant put it plainly during the engagement process, saying the region could not be divided, that it was simply "the Delta." The mission statement's emphasis on a shared, region-wide effort gives that sentiment an operating principle, and a commitment to broad geographic representation described earlier in this chapter.

The vision statement creates an image of the sound of the Delta carrying beyond its borders, reflecting the engagement process's clearest finding about the region's most underused asset. Music was identified as the Delta's strongest entry point for outside visitors in every mode of engagement. Moreover, stakeholders were direct about the gap between the region's musical significance and its national visibility, drawing repeated comparisons to Clarksdale, Mississippi, and the Mississippi Delta's more developed blues tourism. The vision statement's insistence that the Delta's sound and story reach a wider audience gives that priority a place at the center of the NHA's long-term aspirations, not only its near-term programming.

The vision statement's closing commitments, to communities that are economically stronger and culturally confident, and to young people who see a future worth building here, speak to the demographic reality that shaped much of the engagement process. Every county in the study area but two has experienced double-digit population loss over the past two decades, and stakeholders framed quality of life and regional pride as preconditions for reversing that trend rather than side benefits of designation. The vision statement's focus on confidence, connection, and a future worth building reflects that framing directly, and it sets a bar for the NHA's work that extends beyond visitor counts or grant dollars.

These statements are consistent with the goals articulated during the feasibility study and both will be tested again during the management planning process that follows designation as the NHA moves from planning into operation. In the meantime, the governance mechanisms described in this chapter – the geographic representation, the subgrant program's community-facing priorities, and the staffing plan's emphasis on partnership and technical assistance – are the operational means by which the coordinating entity is expected to carry the mission and vision forward.

Statutory Basis

The National Heritage Area Act requires that a feasibility study identify a potential management entity capable of carrying out the coordinating role and demonstrate that governments and other partners are willing to work with that entity in developing the heritage area. Guidance from the National Park Service further specifies that the entity be representative of the varied interests within the proposed area, including natural and cultural resource organizations, governments, businesses, and community groups whose work will be affected by the heritage area's plans and programs. The governance framework presented in this chapter is designed to satisfy that standard.

The Coordinating Entity

The *Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area Feasibility Study* identifies Arkansas State University's Heritage Sites Program (A-State Heritage Sites) as the coordinating entity for the proposed National Heritage Area. This identification reflects a practical assessment of institutional capacity conducted throughout the planning process. Community input reinforced that assessment. Public meeting participants, interviewees, and survey

respondents frequently pointed to A-State Heritage Sites' work at Dyess, Tyronza, Piggott, and Lake Village and its management of Arkansas Delta Byways as evidence of its readiness. Resolutions from county and municipal governments (Appendix F) reflect that support. Three qualities distinguish A-State Heritage Sites as an appropriate National Heritage Area coordinating entity.

Institutional Stability

As a program of Arkansas State University, A-State Heritage Sites operates within a financial and administrative infrastructure capable of receiving federal appropriations, managing grants and subgrants, and sustaining operations through changes in leadership and funding cycles. That infrastructure includes stable state funding for core staffing positions and established familiarity with the state legislative process, both of which the program draws on regularly. Program leadership has secured substantial preservation funding for major projects across the Heritage Sites portfolio, demonstrating the kind of sustained fundraising capacity a coordinating entity depends on. This university backing gives the Arkansas Delta NHA the institutional stability and administrative capacity to sustain its coordinating role over the long term from day one.



The Historic V.C. Kays House on the campus of Arkansas State University serves as the administrative offices of the A-State Heritage Sites. V.C. Kays was the first president of Arkansas State University. *(A-State Heritage Sites)*

Regional Credibility

A-State Heritage Sites has managed nationally significant properties across the study area for several decades, building relationships with communities, elected officials, and cultural organizations from Clay County to Chicot County. That track record extends beyond the Heritage Sites program itself. Arkansas State University as a whole has a long history of community outreach across the Delta, with established mechanisms for engaging local governments, schools, and civic organizations that predate and extend well beyond the Heritage Sites program's own work. This university-wide outreach infrastructure, combined with the program's role managing Arkansas Delta Byways, a regional tourism association, and its 45-member, 15-county board, gives the coordinating entity an existing network on which to build.

Practical Experience

Education and public programming, interpretive planning, grant writing, fundraising, historic preservation, community engagement, and partnership development are core activities of A-State Heritage Sites' existing work. These are the same functions an NHA coordinating entity must perform, and the program's staff already possess them.

Partnership Network

A National Heritage Area is, at its core, a partnership organization. Its capacity to conserve resources, share stories, support communities, and sustain its work over time depends entirely on the depth and breadth of its partner network. The National Heritage Area Act requires that a proposed NHA demonstrate the potential for a partnership-based, community-driven approach to managing a nationally significant landscape. The Arkansas Delta meets this requirement. The region has an existing and active network of organizations, institutions, public agencies, and community groups that collectively provide the foundation for an effective NHA partnership network.

Existing Partnership Infrastructure

The foundation of the Arkansas Delta partnership network is already in place. A-State Heritage Sites has built relationships with elected officials, cultural organizations, state agencies, and federal partners across the study area over more than two decades, and its four heritage sites are distributed throughout the region, giving it a presence in communities from Clay County to Chicot County.

Arkansas Delta Byways adds another layer, with a 45-member board that includes three representatives from each of the 15 counties in its footprint, providing organized heritage and tourism representation at the county level across nearly the entire study area. The organization also promotes the region's two nationally designated scenic byways, the Great River Road All-American Road and the Crowley's Ridge Parkway National Scenic Byway, linking many of the study area's key heritage sites and landscapes along established, visitor-ready corridors. That existing infrastructure gives the NHA an advantage on one of its core functions, connecting resources across a large geographic area into a coherent visitor experience.

Beyond this core, the study area has a broad array of organizations whose work touches on the stories, resources, and communities that the proposed NHA would connect and strengthen. National and state parks, national wildlife refuges, state agencies, museums and interpretive facilities, local historical societies, Advertising and Promotion Commissions, Main Street programs, economic development organizations, universities and community colleges, municipal governments, county judges, and businesses are all active across the region. Each is doing valuable work within its own sphere, but these efforts are largely uncoordinated. They are operating in parallel rather than in concert. Arkansas Delta Byways provides some of this coordination, but its focus is centered on tourism, and its geographic reach has gaps. Jefferson County, home to Pine Bluff, one of the Delta's largest cities, falls outside the Byways footprint and is organized instead through a different regional tourism association, and neither of the region's two nationally designated byways passes through Jefferson or Lincoln counties. Without a broader regional framework to connect organizations across the full study area, amplify their impact, and direct resources toward shared priorities, these efforts remain smaller than the sum of their parts. The NHA strategy provides the coordinating infrastructure that enables a region's assets and organizations to function as a coherent whole rather than a collection of independent efforts.



The Bradbury Art Museum on the campus of Arkansas State University in Jonesboro *(Arkansas Delta Byways)*

Higher Education Partners

Arkansas State University's engagement with the proposed NHA extends well beyond the A-State Heritage Sites program. The university's Heritage Studies Ph.D. Program, one of only a handful of such programs in the country, provides a direct pipeline of graduate-level expertise in historic preservation, public history, applied heritage, and cultural resource management. The History Department, which shares faculty with Heritage Studies, brings research capacity and scholarly credibility to the interpretive and documentation work required by an NHA, especially in public history. The Arkansas State University Museum and the Bradbury Art Museum hold collections relevant to the region's cultural and natural history. The university's public radio station provides a communications infrastructure and a tradition of regional storytelling that aligns naturally with the NHA's interpretive mission. The Delta Center for Economic Development contributes expertise in heritage-based economic development, community capacity building, and regional coordination. The university's Institute for Rural Initiatives offers a further avenue for collaboration, with a mission focused on rural community and economic development that closely parallels the NHA's own goals for the Delta. Together, these units represent a breadth of academic and applied capacity that strengthens A-State Heritage Sites' ability to deliver programming, advance projects, and sustain outreach across the region.

University administrators and faculty across these programs have expressed strong support for the proposed NHA. Several people have identified specific ways in which the university's resources can contribute, including graduate assistantships and faculty research, as well as outreach, public education, grant management, and community engagement. There is a shared understanding within the institution that the NHA represents an opportunity to advance A-State's mission as a regional university in the fullest sense – not simply a university located in the region, but one actively committed to the region's growth, identity, and quality of life.

Arkansas State University in Jonesboro is not the only university with a meaningful stake in the proposed NHA. Arkansas State University Mid-South, located in West Memphis, connects the university system to the gateway between the Arkansas Delta and the Memphis metropolitan area and is home to an exhibit on KWEM, the pioneering radio station whose programming bridged the music scenes across the Mississippi River into Mississippi and Tennessee. The University of Arkansas at Monticello, which hosted one of the feasibility study's public meetings, is part of the same UA System and owns the Taylor House, a historic plantation with interpretive potential in the southern Delta. Judd Hill Cooperative Research Station, operated jointly by Arkansas State University and the University of Arkansas, represents a point of collaboration between the two university systems already embedded in the Delta landscape, as well as a model for the kind of cross-institutional partnership the NHA could encourage more broadly.



Restored by the University of Arkansas-Monticello, the Taylor House is among the few remaining examples of Arkansas vernacular architecture built before the Civil War. *(Encyclopedia of Arkansas)*

State and Federal Partners

The Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism is an active partner across the study area through all three of its divisions. The Division of State Parks manages significant resources along Crowley's Ridge, at river corridor sites, and at archeological parks across the Delta. It is also expanding its presence in the region through Delta Heritage Trail State Park, a rail-to-trail conversion that will ultimately span more than 84 miles. This project reflects Arkansas's growing investment in outdoor recreation infrastructure in the Delta.

The Delta Cultural Center in Helena-West Helena, operated by the Division of Heritage, is one of the most significant heritage interpretation facilities in the proposed National Heritage Area, documenting the music, history, and culture of the Arkansas Delta and serving as the broadcast home of King Biscuit Time. The Division of Arkansas Heritage administers preservation programs, maintains the Arkansas Register of Historic Places, and connects Delta institutions to national preservation resources. The Division of Arkansas Tourism promotes the region through two of the state's 12 tourism regions that overlap with the proposed NHA boundary and operates Arkansas Welcome Centers that serve as visitor gateways to both. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, a separate state agency, is also an important partner, managing the Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center and the Governor Mike Huckabee Delta Rivers Nature Center, as well as wildlife management areas and water trails across the study area. The planning process has included ongoing coordination with both the department and the commission, and continued collaboration with these entities will be a priority for the NHA upon designation.

At the federal level, the National Park Service has a presence in the study area through Arkansas Post National Memorial and through NPS programs that support heritage development, preservation, and interpretation across the region. The Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are all active in the Delta through programs related to agricultural conservation, flood control, and wildlife management, programs whose missions align directly with themes in the proposed NHA. The Delta Regional Authority is a federal-state partnership created by the U.S. Congress in 2000 (Public Law 106-554) to promote economic development across the Lower Mississippi River region and the Alabama Black Belt. As the funder of this feasibility study, the DRA is a logical partner for the NHA going forward.

Cultural and Community Organizations

The study area's cultural and community organizations form the heart of the NHA's prospective partnership network. Museums, heritage sites, and interpretive facilities span the region, from the Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie in Stuttgart to the Sultana Disaster Museum in Marion. They also include the World War II Japanese American Internment Museum in McGehee and the National Cold War Center in Blytheville. Together these institutions serve as anchor sites and prospective partners. Each brings its own audience, programming, and expertise to a coordinated regional NHA.

Similarly, festivals and events – including the King Biscuit Blues Festival in Helena, Wings Over the Prairie Festival in Stuttgart, the Skirmish Delta Gravel Festival in Jonesboro, the Wilson CottonFest, and others related to the Delta's heritage – demonstrate sustained capacity for cultural programming at a regional scale and an existing audience for the stories the NHA would tell.

Churches, civic organizations, and community groups active in every county in the study area represent the grassroots layer of that network, connecting the NHA's work to the daily life of communities rather than just their institutional infrastructure. Together, these organizations reflect a region with deep reserves of cultural energy and civic commitment that are assets that no amount of federal investment can create from scratch, but that the NHA designation is designed to organize, support, and put to work.

Municipal and County Government

Municipal and county governments across the study area are important partners and, under the National Heritage Area Act, their support constitutes a distinct form of evidence that the proposed NHA meets the requirement for demonstrated governmental interest. Elected officials and county judges in communities throughout the 17-county proposed National Heritage Area were engaged as the planning process

advanced. That engagement consistently revealed awareness of the region's heritage assets, interest in the economic development potential of an NHA, and a willingness to support a regional initiative.

Main Street programs are operating in at least seven communities within the proposed National Heritage Area, including Blytheville, Dumas, Helena-West Helena, Jonesboro, Osceola, Paragould, and Pine Bluff. In addition, West Memphis recently transitioned its Main Street program into a municipal initiative focused on revitalizing a broader area than the original Main Street footprint. All of these programs are natural NHA partners, as they are already focused on downtown revitalization, historic preservation, and community identity in ways that align directly with the NHA's mission.

Finally, Advertising and Promotion Commissions, established by municipal and county governments under state law and funded by dedicated tourism taxes, operate across the study area as quasi-governmental partners focused on visitor promotion and heritage programming.



The historic Collins Theater in downtown Paragould *(Arkansas Delta Byways)*

Emerging Heritage Development Activity

Beyond the established organizational infrastructure, the region is already generating entrepreneurial heritage development activity that signals the kind of private and community investment that NHA designation tends to attract and accelerate. The development of the Louis Hotel in Wilson, a project that anchors broader community revitalization efforts in a small Delta town, demonstrates what can be accomplished when private investment, community vision, and commitment to place align. In Pine Bluff, the Delta Rhythm and Bayous cultural district demonstrates how heritage-led investment can anchor downtown revitalization in a community that has faced some of the Delta's most acute economic challenges. Studio DRIFT's trail planning and development work is operating at the intersection of heritage, culture, and outdoor recreation, connecting the Delta's natural and cultural landscape in ways that anticipate and complement

the NHA's interpretive framework. Delta Dirt Distillery, a family-owned farm-to-table operation in Helena-West Helena, builds contemporary entrepreneurship and visitor experience on the region's agricultural heritage. Each of these efforts reflects the instinct that drives the NHA initiative that the Arkansas Delta's history, landscape, and culture are assets worth investing in, and that such investment builds communities as well as economies.

Partner Inventory by Category

Category	Partners Identified	Representative Examples
Academic Institutions and Libraries	7	Arkansas State University Mid-South, Black River Technical College, University of Arkansas at Monticello
Arts and Culture	10	Arkansas Heritage, Arkansas Arts Council, Americana Music Triangle
Business and Industry	11	Delta Dirt Distillery, Nucor Steel, Riceland
Economic Development and Tourism	9	Arkansas Delta Byways, Arkansas Dept. of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, Eastern Arkansas Planning and Development District
Environment and Agriculture	11	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Dale Bumpers White River NWR, St. Francis National Forest
Funders and Grant Makers	7	Delta Regional Authority, Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council, National Endowment for the Humanities
History and Humanities	11	Arkansas Post National Memorial, National Cold War Center, Sultana Disaster Museum
Municipalities and Government Agencies	23	17 county governments; Advertising and Promotion Commissions in Helena-West Helena, Jonesboro, Paragould, Pine Bluff, Stuttgart, and West Memphis
Religious Institutions and Communities	4	Beth El Heritage Hall, Centennial Baptist Church, Our Lady of the Lake
Total	**93**	

Beyond the anchor institutions and coordinating bodies described above, a fuller inventory of the Arkansas Delta NHA's current and potential partners has been compiled and is catalogued in Appendix C. That inventory identifies 93 organizations across nine categories, documenting the breadth of sectors the NHA can draw on for programming, funding, conservation and recreation initiatives, professional expertise, and public support. The table above summarizes the categories, the number of partners identified in each, and representative examples.

What the Inventory Shows

The seven Academic Institutions and Libraries, together with the higher education partners described above, extend the NHA's research and programming capacity well beyond Arkansas State University. Two-year colleges and regional education cooperatives, including Black River Technical College, the Crowley's Ridge Educational Service Cooperative, and the Northeast Arkansas Educational Cooperative, offer a pipeline for teacher professional development and adult education programming in the northern counties, while Phillips

Community College of the University of Arkansas and the University of Arkansas campuses at Pine Bluff and Monticello extend that reach into the central and southern Delta.

The 10 Arts and Culture partners round out the interpretive and programming side of the network. Some, including Arkansas Heritage and the Arkansas Arts Council, are grantmaking arms of state government with the capacity to fund interpretive and artistic programming directly. Others, including the Americana Music Triangle, the Delta Rhythm and Bayous Cultural District, and the John R. Cash Revocable Trust, are mission-aligned organizations already promoting the same musical and cultural traditions the NHA's interpretive themes are built around, and represent co-programming partners rather than funding sources.

Eleven Business and Industry partners, ranging from major manufacturers such as Nucor Steel and U.S. Steel's Big River Steel to hospitality and outdoor recreation businesses such as the Embassy Suites Red Wolf Convention Center and Mack's Prairie Wings, represent the NHA's sponsorship and in-kind support base. Some, including Delta Dirt Distillery, have already provided event space, tours, and sponsorship to A-State Heritage Sites programming, giving the NHA a track record on which to build rather than a purely speculative relationship.

The nine Economic Development and Tourism partners supply coordination and marketing infrastructure that the engagement process identified as a top regional need. Arkansas Delta Byways and the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism are already deeply integrated into A-State Heritage Sites' work. Arkansas' Land of Legends, the regional tourism association covering the two counties outside the Delta Byways footprint, extends that same coordination across the full National Heritage Area. The Eastern Arkansas Planning and Development District and the Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Arkansas contribute regional planning data and byway stewardship the NHA can draw on directly.

Eleven partners in the Environment, Agriculture, and Gardens category connect the NHA to the working landscape at the center of its interpretive themes. State and federal land managers, including the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, the Dale Bumpers White River National Wildlife Refuge, and St. Francis National Forest, offer land-based interpretation and outdoor recreation infrastructure, while working farms such as Whitton Farms and community gathering points such as the Judd Hill Farmers' Market keep the region's agricultural heritage visibly active rather than confined to museum exhibits.

The seven Funders and Grant Makers, including the Delta Regional Authority, the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council, the Arkansas Office of Outdoor Recreation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, represent funding sources beyond the NHA's own federal appropriation. Several, including the Delta Regional Authority and the Judd Hill Foundation, have already funded A-State Heritage Sites work, strengthening the match capacity described in the Conceptual Financial Plan that follows.

Eleven History and Humanities partners anchor the NHA's scholarly and interpretive credibility. This category includes Arkansas Post National Memorial, the study area's only National Park Service unit, alongside museums such as the National Cold War Center, the Sultana Disaster Museum, and the Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie, and professional bodies such as the Arkansas Museums Association and the American Alliance of Museums that set standards the NHA's own sites can work toward.

Municipalities and Government Agencies form the largest category, with 23 partners comprising all 17 counties in the study area and six Advertising and Promotion Commissions. County government support satisfies the National Heritage Area Act's requirement for demonstrated governmental interest directly, while the Advertising and Promotion Commissions, funded through dedicated lodging and prepared food taxes in

Helena-West Helena, Jonesboro, Paragould, Pine Bluff, Stuttgart, and West Memphis, give the NHA a ready-made marketing apparatus in the region's largest population centers.

Four Religious Institutions and Communities preserve historic properties tied directly to the region's immigrant, African American, and Jewish heritage. These sites offer both physical venues for public meetings and a direct connection to the communities whose history the NHA's interpretive themes seek to tell, and several have already hosted feasibility study engagement.

Taken together, this inventory shows that the breadth described in the Strengths and Limitations assessment below is not aspirational. Ninety-three identified partners across nine sectors, of which several are already active supporters of A-State Heritage Sites' work, give the NHA a partnership base broader than its coordinating entity alone could construct from scratch.

Strengths and Limitations of the Heritage Partnership Network

Taken as a whole, the Arkansas Delta's partnership network reflects a region that has long been doing the foundational work of heritage development through multiple organizations and across a wide geographic area. The region has the organizational breadth, institutional anchors, geographic coverage, and track record of collaborative work that a functioning NHA requires. The network is not yet fully coordinated, and organizations tend to operate within their own communities and funding streams rather than across county lines. Cross-county collaboration mechanisms are underdeveloped, and some communities, particularly in the southern portion of the study area, have fewer institutions with the capacity to engage actively in a regional initiative. These are common conditions in rural regions that have experienced sustained economic stress, and they are precisely the conditions the NHA strategy is designed to address. The coordination infrastructure, technical assistance, and modest grant support that an NHA provides exist specifically to help organizations and communities participate more effectively in a regional initiative than they could on their own. The planning team's conclusion is that the Arkansas Delta's partnership network has sufficient breadth and depth to support a functioning NHA upon designation, and that the NHA itself would measurably strengthen the network over time.

Governance Model

The proposed governance model follows a structure common among National Heritage Areas coordinated by universities or established institutions: a single coordinating entity holding fiscal and administrative responsibility, supported by an advisory council that ensures broad geographic and sectoral representation. This model differs from the independent nonprofit board structure used by some NHAs, in which a newly formed 501(c)(3) organization assumes full governing authority. The university-anchored model is better suited to the Arkansas Delta because it builds on existing institutional capacity rather than requiring the creation of a new organization, and because it allows the NHA to benefit immediately from A-State's financial systems, staff infrastructure, and decades of community trust.

Under this model, A-State Heritage Sites retains fiscal and legal responsibility for the National Heritage Area, including the administration of federal appropriations, execution of subgrant agreements, and compliance with NPS reporting requirements. The Advisory Council, described below, does not hold fiduciary authority but functions as the primary mechanism through which the region's communities and partner organizations shape the NHA's priorities, programming, and grantmaking.

A-State's authority over property remains the same with or without NHA designation. The university would continue to own and operate its four heritage sites, and any future decision to acquire property would rest

with the university and its governing board, as it does today. Under the National Heritage Area Act, federal funds appropriated through the Heritage Partnership Program may not be used to acquire real property or any interest in real property.

The Advisory Council

As an early priority following designation, A-State Heritage Sites will establish an Advisory Council, with the coordinating entity taking the lead in its formation. This Council may be a distinct body from the existing Arkansas Delta Byways board, giving the NHA a dedicated forum built specifically around its own priorities rather than relying solely on an existing structure. The Council is intended to ensure that the NHA's programming and funding priorities reflect the full geographic and cultural breadth of the region, and that communities without a formal seat in the university's existing partner network have a direct channel into the NHA's decision-making.

The Advisory Council composition could draw on the categories of representation identified through the engagement process. County and municipal officials, cultural organization leaders, state agency staff, federal partners, local government, and community representatives should be considered for Council membership, with seats distributed to reflect the geographic range of the National Heritage Area rather than concentrated in any single sub-region. Given the diversity of the National Heritage Area, spanning the Grand Prairie, the bayou system, Crowley's Ridge, and the river lowlands, this study further recommends that A-State include representation from each of these groups, as well as from the region's higher education partners, tourism and economic development organizations, and Indigenous and descendant communities connected to the region's history. The Council would serve in an advisory capacity only, with A-State Heritage Sites retaining primary authority and final decision-making responsibility as the coordinating entity.

The Council would set a regular schedule to review program priorities, advise on subgrant criteria, and provide the coordinating entity with the kind of grounded, local knowledge that shaped this feasibility study. Detailed provisions governing Council size, terms, officers, and committee structure would be developed during the management planning phase that follows designation, in consultation with the Council's future members.

Roles and Responsibilities

Effective governance depends on clear expectations for what the coordinating entity provides and what partners might contribute. The following roles reflect the division of labor identified through the feasibility study's engagement process and are consistent with the roles assumed by coordinating entities and partners in comparable NHAs.

Coordinating Entity Structure

As coordinating entity, A-State Heritage Sites will administer federal appropriations and required matching funds, develop and update the management plan, hire and supervise NHA staff, administer a competitive subgrant program for partner organizations, coordinate regional programming and interpretation, lead advocacy and reporting to NPS and Congress, and convene the Advisory Council. The program will also continue to operate its four heritage sites and the Arkansas Delta Byways program as anchor institutions and interpretive corridors for the NHA.

Partner Organizations

Partner organizations, including museums, historic sites, state agencies, universities, municipalities, counties, and community groups, will contribute local knowledge, programming capacity, volunteer support, and site access, and will participate in Advisory Council representation and NHA-sponsored events. Where formal agreements are appropriate, the coordinating entity will develop memoranda of understanding with key partners, including the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism; the Delta Regional Authority; and the University of Arkansas System institutions active in the study area. These agreements will define shared responsibilities for programming, interpretation, and resource stewardship.

Staffing Plan

A-State Heritage Sites currently directs its staffing toward management of its four heritage sites and the Delta Byways program. Assuming the coordinating-entity role will require additional capacity, though the program's existing structure provides a strong foundation on which to build.

In the near term, following designation, the program anticipates the need for one additional staff position dedicated to NHA coordination, encompassing partnership development, programming support, and federal reporting. As NHA activity expands in the years following the approval of a management plan, a second position focused on subgrant administration and technical assistance to partner organizations is anticipated, reflecting the priority the program has placed on a competitive grants program accessible to smaller and less experienced organizations across the study area. Additional administrative support may be added as the pace of NHA activity requires. These additions are modest relative to the scope of the study area and are consistent with staffing levels at comparable NHAs in their early years of operation.

Conceptual Financial Plan

The National Heritage Area Act requires a conceptual financial plan demonstrating the coordinating entity's capacity to meet federal matching requirements. Contemporary NHA legislation typically authorizes federal appropriations of up to $1,000,000 annually over a 15-year period, subject to a 50 percent non-federal match. Newly designated NHAs seldom receive the maximum appropriation in their early years. Congress sets NHA funding each year through the appropriations process. NHAs developing a management plan receive a base level of funding and become eligible for additional funding once the Secretary of the Interior, acting through NPS, approves the plan. In Fiscal Year 2026, that base level was $157,500.

Based on this pattern, and consistent with the funding trajectories of comparable NHAs, this study uses $150,000 annually as a conservative planning figure for the years before plan approval, with funding rising toward the statutorily authorized level following management plan approval. The required match is not expected to present a significant obstacle. A-State Heritage Sites brings substantial in-kind and administrative capacity to the federal match requirement through the university's existing financial and administrative systems, and additional match is anticipated from a combination of state agency partnerships, outside grants, revenue generated by the heritage sites, philanthropic support, and partner contributions to subgrant-funded projects.

The five-year projection below presents anticipated annual operating revenues and expenses for the NHA coordinating entity, developed in consultation with A-State Heritage Sites and reflecting the format recommended by NPS feasibility study guidance. Figures are conceptual, prepared for planning purposes, and will be refined as actual appropriations, grant awards, and operating costs are confirmed (see financial table on the following page).

Conceptual Financial Plan	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	5-Year Total
REVENUES						
Admissions / Earned Income	$49,937	$51,934	$54,011	$56,172	$58,419	$270,473
Contributions / Donations	$50,849	$52,883	$54,998	$57,198	$59,486	$275,414
Programs / Rentals	$12,104	$12,588	$13,092	$13,616	$14,161	$65,561
Sales	$24,124	$25,065	$26,042	$27,058	$28,113	$130,402
NHA Funding (Federal)	$150,000	$150,000	$150,000	$300,000	$300,000	$1,050,000
State Appropriation	$356,000	$356,000	$356,000	$356,000	$356,000	$1,780,000
Total Revenue	**$643,014**	**$648,470**	**$654,143**	**$810,044**	**$816,179**	**$3,571,850**
EXPENSES						
Administration, Operations, Management	$293,190	$296,122	$299,083	$302,073	$305,095	$1,495,563
Consultants	$115,000	$150,000	$75,000	$35,000	$35,000	$410,000
Equipment, Furnishings, Exhibits	$100,000	$104,000	$108,160	$112,486	$116,986	$541,632
Subgrants and Related Expenses	$25,000	$30,000	$35,000	$40,000	$50,000	$180,000
Professional Organization & Membership Fees	$5,000	$6,000	$7,500	$7,500	$7,500	$33,500
Travel & Related Expenses	$12,000	$12,000	$12,000	$12,000	$12,000	$60,000
Miscellaneous & Other Expenses	$2,500	$2,600	$2,704	$2,812	$2,925	$13,541
Total Expenses	**$552,690**	**$600,722**	**$539,447**	**$511,872**	**$529,506**	**$2,734,236**
Net Operating Position	**$90,324**	**$47,748**	**$114,696**	**$298,172**	**$286,674**	**$837,614**

Reading the Projection

Total projected revenue rises from $643,014 in Year 1 to $816,179 in Year 5, an increase driven primarily by modest annual growth in earned income and philanthropic support and by a scheduled increase in federal NHA funding. Revenue is diversified across six sources. Earned income and philanthropy, including admissions, contributions, programs and rentals, and sales, together account for roughly a fifth of total revenue and grow steadily as heritage site visitation and NHA programming expand. State Appropriation, reflecting the university's existing base support for A-State Heritage Sites, remains flat at $356,000 annually and provides a stable institutional floor beneath the NHA's operations, consistent with the institutional stability described earlier in this chapter.

NHA funding is the federal appropriation administered through the NPS Heritage Partnership Program. It is projected at $150,000 annually in Years 1 through 3, an estimate of the base funding available to NHAs before the Secretary of the Interior approves a management plan. In Years 4 and 5, it rises to $300,000, reflecting the expectation that the NHA will complete its management plan and secure approval by that

point. The trajectory matches the funding pattern anticipated earlier in this chapter and reflects a conservative, not optimistic, assumption about the pace of appropriations.

On the expense side, costs are highest in Years 1 and 2, driven by consultant expenses of $115,000 and $150,000 associated with management plan development and early organizational start-up, alongside initial investment in equipment, furnishings, and exhibits. During those years, existing A-State Heritage Sites staff would coordinate management plan development with the consultant team. Their time, supported by the state appropriation, would count toward the non-federal match. Consultant costs fall sharply to $75,000 in Year 3 and settle at $35,000 in Years 4 and 5 as the NHA transitions from planning to steady-state operations. Administration, operations, and management costs are the largest expense category throughout the period, growing modestly each year, consistent with routine cost-of-living increases rather than expanding staff levels beyond those described in the Staffing Plan above. The Subgrants and Related Expenses line grows from $25,000 in Year 1 to $50,000 in Year 5, reflecting the intent, described earlier in this chapter, to build out a competitive subgrant program as the NHA matures.

The projection shows a positive net operating position in every year of the five-year period. That position grows from $90,324 in Year 1 to $286,674 in Year 5, for a cumulative five-year surplus of $837,614. This margin is not intended as a target for discretionary spending. Instead, it reflects conservative revenue assumptions paired with the front-loaded cost of establishing a new program within an existing institution. It also provides a buffer for reserve building, unanticipated start-up costs, and the kind of opportunistic subgrant or programming investment that the engagement process identified as a regional priority.

The projection also demonstrates that the required non-federal match is comfortably achievable. Against $1,050,000 in cumulative federal NHA Funding over five years, the remaining revenue sources – $2,521,850 combined – provide a non-federal match ratio of more than two to one, well above the 50 percent match the National Heritage Area Act requires. This confirms the assessment made earlier in this chapter that A-State Heritage Sites' existing financial infrastructure and revenue base are sufficient to meet the statutory match requirement without placing new strain on the university or the coordinating entity.

Partnership Coordination

As the NHA moves from feasibility study to implementation, A-State will rely on the working relationships already developed with partners rather than on formal contractual agreements. Ongoing coordination with the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, the Delta Regional Authority, Arkansas Delta Byways, and other higher education and state agency partners will continue through the same channels that have supported the feasibility study process, including regular communication, shared planning, and collaborative programming. This approach reflects the flexible, partnership-based model that distinguishes National Heritage Areas from other management structures, and it lets the coordinating entity adjust individual partner relationships as the NHA's priorities evolve. Where a specific project or funding arrangement calls for



The Arkansas Delta NHA Public Meeting was held at The ARTSpace on Main in Pine Bluff on March 10, 2026. *(A-State Heritage Sites)*

more structure, the coordinating entity can formalize that one relationship, but this is expected to remain the exception rather than the standard practice.

Transition to Management Planning

This chapter presents governance recommendations at the level of detail appropriate to a feasibility study. The identification of A-State Heritage Sites as coordinating entity is the central governance decision required for designation, and that determination is complete. The detailed structure, composition, and bylaws of the Advisory Council, the specific terms of partnership agreements, and the finalized financial plan will be developed during the management planning process that follows congressional designation, in consultation with the partners identified throughout this study.

This sequencing is consistent with National Park Service guidance and with the practice of comparable NHAs, which typically finalize governance details after designation, once a coordinating entity has secured the legal standing and initial funding needed to carry out a full public planning process. The foundation established here – a capable coordinating entity, a governance model informed by community engagement, and a preliminary financial framework – positions the Arkansas Delta NHA to move directly into that process upon designation.

Conclusion

The governance framework outlined in this chapter satisfies the statutory requirement for a management entity described as capable of carrying out the coordinating role. A-State University and its Heritage Sites program offer institutional stability, regional credibility, and the practical heritage experience the role requires. The model proposed here – anchored by the university and supported by an Advisory Council – is grounded in the practices of comparable National Heritage Areas and in the input of the Arkansas Delta's own communities. This foundation positions A-State Heritage Sites and its partners to carry the work forward into management planning as designation moves ahead.



Utilizing a converted railroad bridge, Big River Crossing connects West Memphis and Memphis in one of the few foot crossings of the southern portion of the Mississippi River. *(Arkansas Delta Byways)*

ARKANSAS DELTA NHA FEASIBILITY STUDY · CHAPTER FIVE

Meeting the Statutory Requirements for Designation

The National Heritage Area Act, enacted as Public Law 117-339, establishes seven requirements that a feasibility study must address before Congress may designate a National Heritage Area. Codified at 54 U.S.C. § 120103(a)(3)(A)-(G), the requirements ask whether a proposed area contains a nationally distinctive assemblage of resources, reflects living traditions, and offers outstanding opportunities for conservation, recreation, and education. They also ask whether the area retains sufficient integrity to support interpretation, demonstrates broad public and governmental support, identifies a capable management entity, and has a conceptual boundary supported by the public.

This chapter evaluates the Arkansas Delta against each requirement. The analysis draws on the historic context developed in Chapter 2. It also draws on the statement of national significance, the interpretive themes, and the resource inventory presented in Chapter 3, along with the governance and financial framework described in Chapter 4. It also reflects more than a year of direct engagement across the region: four rounds of fieldwork encompassing more than 40 sites, ten public meetings, 11 confidential stakeholder interviews, a public survey with 106 respondents, and continuing discussions with county judges, mayors, business owners, residents, and heritage professionals throughout the 17-county study area. Together, this record demonstrates that the Arkansas Delta satisfies all seven statutory requirements and is prepared to advance toward congressional designation.

Requirement (A) | An Assemblage of Nationally Distinctive Resources

Requirement (A) calls for an assemblage of natural, historic, and cultural resources that is distinctive to the heritage of the United States and worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use. It also considers whether those resources are best managed through partnerships among public and private entities that connect diverse, and sometimes noncontiguous, resources and active communities.

Chapter 3 defines the Arkansas Delta's national significance in these terms:

> *The Arkansas Delta is a nationally significant cultural landscape, shaped by the Mississippi River, where agriculture, labor, federal power, and struggles over rights came together in ways that changed America. Federal, state, and private responses to floods, economic crises, war, and social change transformed the Delta from floodplain to agricultural powerhouse, helping to build national markets and labor systems. In this landscape, struggles over race, rights, and belonging helped drive broader movements for social change. These experiences gave rise to a Delta culture that reached far beyond the region through music, literature, faith, and foodways.*

That statement describes a distinctive heritage that aligns with Requirement (A), and the resources documented in this study give that heritage physical form. The following paragraphs describe the assemblage by theme, by resource type, and by geographic distribution.

The Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area Resource Inventory (Appendix D) documents 295 resources across the 17-county study area, each associated with one or more of the study's five interpretive themes. *Theme 1 | Shaped by River and Ridge* accounts for 93 of those resources. *Theme 2 | Roots in the Soil* accounts for 64. *Theme 3 | Reform, Mobilization, and the Remaking of the Delta* accounts for 101, the largest share in the inventory. *Theme 4 | Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers* accounts for 60. *Theme 5 | Conflict and Cooperation, Rights, and the Search for Belonging* accounts for 80.

Seventy-eight resources, approximately 26 percent of the inventory, support two or more themes. This overlap illustrates how the Delta's agricultural, labor, federal, musical, and civil rights histories intersect as parts of a broader regional story.

Fifteen resources in the inventory have a national designation. These include nine National Historic Landmarks, one unit of the National Park System, four National Wildlife Refuges, and two National Scenic Byways. One of the byways, the Great River Road, also holds All-American Road status. Another 76 resources are individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Although these federally recognized properties anchor the assemblage, the Delta's distinctiveness extends beyond formally designated sites. Working cotton and rice fields, grain elevators, levees, church congregations, juke joints, and Main Street business districts contribute to the historic and cultural fabric of the region. Sixty-six percent of the resources are historic, 49 percent reflect culture or living traditions, and roughly one-quarter each have recreational, natural, or educational and interpretive value. The result is a landscape in which many of the activities that shaped the region remain visible and active.

The resources are distributed throughout the region rather than concentrated at a few sites. Each of the 17 counties contains inventoried resources, and Themes 1 and 3 are represented in every county. This pattern reflects the circumstances contemplated by the statute: diverse and sometimes noncontiguous places and communities that can be more effectively connected through partnerships. The network described in Chapter 4 is anchored by A-State Heritage Sites and Arkansas Delta Byways and includes 93 identified partners across nine sectors (see Appendix C). It provides a practical foundation for coordinating stewardship across county

and organizational boundaries. The Delta's resources are nationally distinctive, merit continued recognition and use, and are well suited to a partnership-based approach rather than a single form of ownership or control.

Requirement (B) | Living Traditions, Customs, and Folklife

Requirement (B) considers whether the proposed area reflects living traditions, customs, beliefs, and folklife that are important to the story of the United States.

The Arkansas Delta is a living landscape, not a collection of traditions confined to the past. Cotton and rice continue to be grown on lands long associated with those crops, carrying *Theme 2 | Roots in the Soil* into the present. The region's foodways show similar continuity. Farmers' markets, county fairs, and community festivals reflect an agricultural calendar that still shapes rural life.

Blues, gospel, country, rockabilly, and Americana music, the sounds the Delta carried to national audiences, are still heard in churches, clubs, and festivals, from Sunday services across the region to the King Biscuit Blues Festival in Helena. These living musical traditions are at the heart of *Theme 4 | Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers*. Baptisms in rivers and bayous continue in some Delta communities, expressing an enduring relationship among faith, place, and shared memory. On the Grand Prairie, waterfowl hunting remains one of the Delta's most distinctive traditions, sustained by businesses such as Mack's Prairie Wings and RNT Calls and celebrated through the World Championship Duck Calling Contest in Stuttgart. These traditions reflect the relationship between people and water at the center of *Theme 1 | Shaped by River and Ridge*.



This cotton gin still stands at the Judd Hill Plantation. While most of the plantation remains a commercial enterprise, part of it is a research farm, where new farming techniques and crop varieties are demonstrated each summer at the Judd Hill Field Day.

These customs are how Delta communities mark the seasons, gather, and sustain their connection to place, not performances staged for visitors. Because the rivers, ridges, and fields that shaped the Delta's history continue to influence daily life, the proposed area meets Requirement (B).

Requirement (C) | Outstanding Opportunities for Conservation, Recreation, and Education

Requirement (C) calls for outstanding opportunities to conserve natural, historic, cultural, or scenic features and to support recreation and education. Many of the opportunities described in this section came directly from the public: residents identified them in survey responses, in public meetings, and in conversations with the project team throughout the planning process.

The Arkansas Delta offers substantial conservation opportunities, many of which build on work already underway. Four National Wildlife Refuges protect portions of the bottomland hardwood forest and wetlands that once covered much of the alluvial plain and continue to support the Mississippi Flyway. State parks along Crowley's Ridge preserve one of the mid-South's most distinctive landforms. Levee and drainage infrastructure built after the Great Flood of 1927, including the Marked Tree Siphons, remains in use today. Preserving and interpreting these resources require coordination and technical assistance that smaller towns and counties may

not be able to provide on their own. National Heritage Area designation could connect these ongoing conservation efforts with professional expertise, grant opportunities, and stewardship support.

Residents and area leaders described these needs in concrete terms. Mayor Carolyne Blissett of Arkansas City, a community with significant heritage resources but few visitor services, described the value that national attention and modest grant support could bring to a town such as hers. Arkansas City already has the Delta Heritage Trail, the John H. Johnson Commemorative Plaza, and Mississippi River frontage, yet visitors have few places to eat or stay. The NHA's proposed subgrant program responds directly to that need. Competitive grants would help communities like Arkansas City preserve historic buildings, develop interpretation and signage, and create the small-scale visitor experiences that connect residents and travelers to the Delta's history.

Recreational opportunities in the Delta are also growing. The Delta Heritage Trail State Park, a rail-trail planned to extend more than 84 miles, and the Crowley's Ridge Gravel Trail are drawing new cyclists to the region. The Delta's water trails and its waterfowl hunting grounds, centered on the Grand Prairie, draw a different set of visitors, paddlers and hunters who come to the region for its rivers, wetlands, and fields rather than its trails. Through the Natural State Initiative, Arkansas has set a goal of doubling the state's outdoor recreation economy from approximately $3.5 billion to $7 billion over the next decade. The Delta could share in that growth by linking outdoor experiences to the cultural and historic stories that distinguish the region. An NHA could, for example, connect time spent in a duck blind or on the Delta Heritage Trail with the agricultural and conservation history of the surrounding landscape.

Educational opportunities are present throughout the study area. Arkansas State University's Heritage Studies program, including one of only a small number of Ph.D. programs of its kind in the country, and its Department of History provide research capacity and help prepare public historians for work across the region. The four A-State Heritage Sites already offer school programs, and a coordinated NHA could extend that capacity to smaller museums and historic sites that want to develop educational programming but lack sufficient staff.

Between its natural systems, its growing recreational infrastructure, and its institutional resources, the Arkansas Delta offers the outstanding conservation, recreation, and education opportunities that Requirement (C) describes.

Requirement (D) | Resources That Support the Themes and Retain Integrity

Requirement (D) considers whether resources important to the proposed area's identified themes retain sufficient integrity to support interpretation. Each of the 295 resources in the inventory (see Appendix D) was evaluated in relation to the study's five interpretive themes and assigned to the theme or themes it supports. The inventory therefore provides a direct measure of how fully the themes are represented across the landscape. As noted under Requirement (A), inventoried resources are found in all 17 counties. Two themes are represented in every county, while the other three appear in 15 or 16 counties. This reach shows that the resources supporting the Delta's national significance extend across the proposed area rather than clustering around only a few sites.

Integrity in the Arkansas Delta can be considered at two levels. First, the nine National Historic Landmarks, the unit of the National Park System, and the 76 properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places have been evaluated under federal standards addressing location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Second, fieldwork documented the integrity of working landscapes, natural systems, and cultural corridors that make up much of the remaining inventory. Levees, agricultural fields, music trails, and river and bayou corridors remain recognizable and interpretable even when they carry no formal designation. Both forms of integrity are important in the Delta, where active cotton fields and grain elevators convey the

region's history alongside preserved buildings and museum sites. Of the 295 inventoried resources, 252, or 85 percent, are open to the public, providing direct access to most of the assemblage.

Independent subject-matter experts reviewed the statement of national significance, the five interpretive themes, and the historic context narrative, further strengthening the feasibility study's scholarly foundation. That review confirms what the resource inventory already demonstrates: the Delta's resources, from its nationally designated landmarks to its working agricultural and cultural landscapes, retain the integrity needed to support interpretation. The Arkansas Delta therefore meets Requirement (D).



The St. Francis County Museum features exhibits on famous county residents, including singer Charlie Rich, boxer Sonny Liston, and Arkansas's first African American millionaire Scott Bond. *(Arkansas Delta Byways)*

Requirement (E) | Broad Participation, a Conceptual Financial Plan, and Demonstrated Support

Requirement (E) calls for diverse participation in the planning process, a conceptual financial plan that identifies the roles of participants, including the federal government, and significant support for designation among residents, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and state and local governments.

Participation in the Arkansas Delta NHA planning process has been extensive (see Appendix B). The planning team completed four rounds of fieldwork, visited more than 40 sites, met with more than 60 people through stakeholder sessions, held ten public meetings across the study area, and conducted 11 confidential stakeholder interviews. Approximately 300 people took part in at least one element of the process, including county judges, mayors, business owners, farmers, musicians, journalists, heritage professionals, and residents. Among the 106 public survey respondents, 93 percent supported or strongly supported NHA designation, 94 percent anticipated participating in NHA-sponsored activities, and 77 percent of respondents representing organizations reported that their organizations would be interested in partnering with the NHA. At a March 2026 public meeting in Helena-West Helena, participants unanimously supported both the proposed themes and the NHA in a show of hands.

Government participation has occurred at multiple levels. County judges and mayors across the 17 counties were engaged during the planning process and expressed awareness of the region's heritage assets and willingness to support a regional initiative. The analysis of the partner network in Chapter 4 identifies 23 municipal and government agencies, including all 17 county governments and Advertising and Promotion Commissions in six of the region's largest population centers. Seven Main Street programs operate in other communities across the study area. Altogether, 93 organizations in nine sectors, including academic institutions, businesses, industries, funders, government agencies, and religious institutions, have been identified as current or prospective NHA partners (see Appendix C). Several have already contributed funding, meeting space, or program support to A-State Heritage Sites.

The conceptual financial plan in Chapter 4 identifies the roles of the participating entities. Over five years, it projects annual revenue increasing from $643,014 in the first year to $816,179 in the fifth, for a cumulative total of $3,571,850. The plan identifies six revenue sources: earned income, philanthropic contributions, programs and rentals, sales, a state appropriation reflecting the university's existing support for A-State Heritage Sites, and federal NHA funding administered through the National Park Service's Heritage

Partnership Program. Federal support is projected at $150,000 annually during the first three years, a conservative estimate of base funding before approval of a management plan, and $300,000 annually in years four and five, for a five-year total of $1,050,000. The other projected revenue sources would provide more than two dollars in non-federal funding for every federal dollar, exceeding the required one-to-one match. The plan also anticipates a positive operating balance in each year, creating flexibility for subgrants and programs identified by regional partners as priorities.

Taken together, the record of participation, public support, and financial planning shows that the Arkansas Delta meets Requirement (E).



The interior of the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home at the Historic Dyess Colony, featuring the family's original piano (*A-State Heritage Sites*)

Requirement (F) | A Potential Management Entity Committed to Partnership and Economic Activity

Requirement (F) calls for a potential management entity capable of working in partnership with the individuals and organizations described under Requirement (E), developing the National Heritage Area, and encouraging state and local economic activity.

Chapter 4 identifies Arkansas State University's Heritage Sites Program as the proposed coordinating entity for the Arkansas Delta NHA. That recommendation is based on the program's institutional stability, regional credibility, and two decades of relevant experience. As part of Arkansas State University, A-State Heritage Sites operates with the financial and administrative systems needed to receive federal funds, administer subgrants, and maintain operations through changes in funding and leadership. The program manages four nationally significant heritage sites from Clay County to Chicot County and operates Arkansas Delta Byways, whose 45-member board includes representatives from 15 of the study area's 17 counties. This existing

structure provides a regional partnership network and geographic reach that a newly created organization would need years to develop. As Chapter 3 explains, the NHA would complement the work of Arkansas Delta Byways and the Delta Regional Authority, extending coordination, technical assistance, and grant support to all 17 counties.

Under the proposed governance model, A-State Heritage Sites would retain fiscal and legal responsibility for the NHA and work with an Advisory Council representing governments, cultural organizations, businesses, and community interests from across the region. The council would give communities and organizations outside the university a direct role in shaping NHA priorities. The structure reflects feedback gathered during the planning process and is comparable to governance models used by other university-affiliated National Heritage Areas.

The A-State Heritage Sites office, working with the Advisory Council, will also encourage locally grounded economic activity. Stakeholders offered practical examples of the development an NHA could support: a heritage trail that helps create demand for a bicycle shop, or a restored museum that attracts visitors and strengthens the case for a new restaurant. The proposed subgrant program, described under Requirement (C), would help communities across the region pursue projects like these.

Because the National Heritage Area Act protects private property rights, designation would not change local land-use authority, regulation, or ownership. County and municipal governments would retain every land-use power they hold today, and the NHA would have no authority to zone, permit, or otherwise regulate private land. Landowners who wish to have no involvement with the NHA would remain free to make that choice, and nothing in the statute or in the proposed management structure requires otherwise. The question of federal involvement in land use came up repeatedly during public engagement, given a region built on generations of family farmland, and the answer residents received was the same one the statute provides. Designation recognizes and supports the Delta's heritage, and designation leaves control of the land itself exactly where the land already sits.

A-State Heritage Sites is already a functioning organization rather than one newly created. A-State Heritage Sites could begin coordinating NHA activities from the date of designation instead of spending the NHA program's first years setting up basic operations. The organization's work is inherently partnership-based, built on relationships with local and county governments, tourism organizations, and cultural institutions across the study area, and those relationships translate directly into the kind of collaborative management Requirement (F) describes. Economic development sits at the center of A-State Heritage Sites' mission rather than at the margins of the organization's work, since heritage tourism is one of the primary tools it already uses to draw visitors and investment to the communities the organization serves. That focus extends beyond A-State Heritage Sites itself: the university's Delta Center for Economic Development, described in Chapter 4, brings additional expertise in heritage-based economic development, community capacity building, and regional coordination directly to the NHA's work. A-State Heritage Sites has the capacity, partnerships, and economic-development focus necessary to serve as the NHA coordinating entity, satisfying Requirement (F).

Requirement (G) | A Conceptual Boundary Supported by the Public

Requirement (G) calls for a conceptual boundary map that is supported by the public.

The proposed Arkansas Delta NHA boundary encompasses 17 counties in eastern Arkansas, extending from Clay and Greene Counties at the Missouri border to Chicot County at the Louisiana line. As described in Chapter 3, four considerations support this boundary. First, the counties share a coherent landscape formed by the Mississippi River system, its bayous, the Grand Prairie, and Crowley's Ridge. Second, the resource inventory demonstrates thematic continuity across all 17 counties. Third, residents and visitors recognize the

Delta as a region distinct from the Ozark and Ouachita uplands to the west. Finally, county boundaries provide practical administrative units already used by local governments and tourism organizations.

Support for the proposed boundary was consistent across the study's engagement activities. Survey respondents, public meeting participants, and stakeholder interviewees generally described the Delta as a coherent region rather than a group of unrelated or competing communities. When public meeting participants were asked directly whether they supported the boundary, the response was affirmative and, at more than one meeting, unanimous. One stakeholder summarized the regional perspective by explaining that the area should not be divided into an upper and lower Delta because residents understand it simply as the Delta. The planning team did not treat the study area as fixed at the beginning of the process. Instead, the team presented, discussed, and tested the boundary through engagement with the affected communities.

The planning process also considered the proposed boundary's western and northern edges. The Grand Prairie's rice economy and the rockabilly music corridor extend west of the 17-county area, while the region's civil rights history connects it with communities farther north. Rather than enlarging the initial boundary to include every related place, the study recommends evaluating these connections through possible future study after designation.

The conceptual boundary is grounded in geography, resources, regional identity, and established administrative relationships, and the engagement record demonstrates public support for it.

Conclusion

The Arkansas Delta meets the seven statutory requirements for National Heritage Area designation. The region contains a distinctive and extensive assemblage of natural, historic, and cultural resources, distributed across a 17-county landscape best stewarded through partnership. Living traditions remain part of everyday life across the Delta. Opportunities for conservation, recreation, and education are substantial, and many are already supported by existing state and regional initiatives. The Delta's resources retain sufficient integrity for interpretation, and the planning process has documented broad public and governmental participation and support. A-State Heritage Sites offers the institutional capacity to coordinate the NHA, and the proposed boundary reflects the region's geography and the identity its residents already claim for themselves.

That evidence, drawn from the history, the themes, the resources, and the governance framework presented throughout this study, leads to one recommendation. This feasibility study recommends that Congress designate the Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area.

ARKANSAS DELTA NHA FEASIBILITY STUDY · APPENDIX A

Planning Participants

This appendix lists the individuals and organizations who helped guide the development of the *Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area Feasibility Study*. It identifies Arkansas State University Heritage Sites Program staff, the Point Heritage Development Consulting planning team, the subject matter expert who reviewed the study's historic and thematic content, and the National Park Service staff member who provided guidance throughout the planning process.

Appendix A – Planning Participants

Arkansas State University Heritage Sites Program Staff

- Dr. Adam Long, Executive Director
- Penny Toombs, Assistant Director
- Shannon Williams, Director, Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center
- Ruth O'Laughlin, Director, Lakeport Plantation Museum
- Will Reaves, Director, Historic Dyess Colony: Johnny Cash Boyhood Home and Southern Tenant Farmers Museum
- Sandra Smythe, Administrative Assistant

Planning Team

Point Heritage Development Consulting

- Dr. Nancy I. M. Morgan, Principal
- August R. Carlino
- Peter Samuel
- Elizabeth Holtzer, Designer

Subject Matter Expert

(Subject Matter Expert review will be addressed after the November 2026 meetings.)

- Dr. William R. Ferris – University of North Carolina, Joel R. Williamson Eminent Professor of History; Senior Associate Director of CSAS; Adjunct Professor in the Curriculum in Folklore; Emeritus; former Chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities

National Park Service

(NPS review will be addressed after the November 2026 meetings.)

- Caroline Hugh, National Heritage Areas Intern
- Chris Stein, Midwest Regional Coordinator, National Heritage Areas
- Elizabeth Vehmeyer, Program Coordinator, National Heritage Areas

ARKANSAS DELTA NHA FEASIBILITY STUDY · APPENDIX B

Site Visits & Public Engagement

This appendix documents the fieldwork and community engagement conducted between January 2025 and November 2026. The planning team visited more than 40 sites across the 17-county study area, held ten public meetings in Delta communities, convened stakeholder meetings, and facilitated a public survey that shaped the study's findings throughout.

Appendix B – Site Visits & Public Engagement

Site Visits

Site	Location
Arkansas Post National Memorial (NPS)	Arkansas County
Arkansas Post State Park	Arkansas County
Arkansas State University Museum	Jonesboro, Craighead County
Arts and Science Center for Southeast Arkansas	Pine Bluff, Jefferson County
ARTSpace on Main	Pine Bluff, Jefferson County
Big River Steel	Osceola, Mississippi County
Cemetery at Simmons Bank Field, UAPB	Pine Bluff, Jefferson County
Craighead Forest Park	Jonesboro, Craighead County
Crowley's Ridge Parkway	Multiple counties
Crowley's Ridge State Park	Greene County
Delta Cultural Center	Helena-West Helena, Phillips County
Delta Dirt Distillery	Helena-West Helena, Phillips County
Delta Heritage Trail State Park	Multiple counties
Delta Peanut	Jonesboro, Craighead County
Delta Rhythm and Bayous Blues Cultural District (including the Wellness Plaza)	Pine Bluff, Jefferson County
The Edwardian Bed and Breakfast	Helena-West Helena, Phillips County
Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center	Craighead County
Governor Mike Huckabee Delta Rivers Nature Center	Pine Bluff, Jefferson County
Great River Road All-American Road	Multiple counties
Hampson Archeological Museum State Park	Wilson, Mississippi County
Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center (A-State Heritage Site)	Piggott, Clay County
Historic Dyess Colony: Johnny Cash Boyhood Home (A-State Heritage Site)	Dyess, Mississippi County
Japanese American Internment Museum	McGehee, Desha County
John H. Johnson Commemorative Plaza	Arkansas City, Desha County

Site	Location
Judd Hill Cooperative Research Station	Poinsett County
Kays House / A-State Heritage Sites Program Office, Arkansas State University	Jonesboro, Craighead County
KWEM Exhibit (Arkansas State University Mid-South)	West Memphis, Crittenden County
Lakeport Plantation Museum (A-State Heritage Site)	Near Lake Village, Chicot County
Louisiana Purchase State Park	Monroe County
Mack's Prairie Wings	Stuttgart, Arkansas County
Marked Tree Siphons	Marked Tree, Poinsett County
Matilda and Karl Pfeiffer Museum and Study Center	Piggott, Clay County
National Cold War Center	Blytheville, Mississippi County
Open Season (restaurant)	Stuttgart, Arkansas County
Parkin Archeological State Park	Parkin, Cross County
RNT Calls	Stuttgart, Arkansas County
Rohwer Japanese American Relocation Center	Desha County
Saracen Landing	Pine Bluff, Jefferson County
Southern Tenant Farmers Museum (A-State Heritage Site)	Tyronza, Poinsett County
The Station (rehabbed historic power station)	Paragould, Greene County
Sultana Disaster Museum	Marion, Crittenden County
Taylor House, University of Arkansas at Monticello	Monticello, Drew County
Town of Wilson	Wilson, Mississippi County
University Museum and Cultural Center, UAPB	Pine Bluff, Jefferson County
Village Creek State Park	Cross County
West Memphis Commercial Historic District	West Memphis, Crittenden County

Public Meetings

Date	Community	Venue / County
Apr 2025	Helena-West Helena	Bethel Heritage Hall, Phillips County
Apr 2025	Monticello	University of Arkansas at Monticello, Drew County
Aug 2025	Piggott	Matilda and Karl Pfeiffer Museum, Clay County
Aug 2025	Blytheville	Blytheville Chamber of Commerce, Mississippi County
Mar 2026	Jonesboro (also livestreamed)	Reng Center, Arkansas State University, Craighead County
Mar 2026	Pine Bluff	ARTSpace on Main, Jefferson County
Mar 2026	Helena-West Helena	Delta Cultural Center, Phillips County
Nov 2026	Pine Bluff	ARTSpace on Main, Jefferson County
Nov 2026	Jonesboro	Reng Center, Arkansas State University, Craighead County
Nov 2026	Helena-West Helena	Phillips County

Stakeholder Meetings

Date	Name(s)	Title(s) / Role(s)	Organization / Affiliation
Jan 2025	Dr. Adam Long, Penny Toombs, Shannon Williams, Ruth O'Laughlin	A-State Heritage Sites staff	Arkansas State University
Jan 2025	Dr. Ruth Hawkins, Gretchen Sikotnik, Jim Jackson	Retired A-State Heritage Sites Director, Delta Byways members	Arkansas Delta Byways
Jan 2025	Dr. Will McClain, Dr. Justin Castro, Dr. Ed Salo, Dr. Len Frey, Dr. Cliff Jones, Mark Smith	A-State faculty and staff – Administration; Economic Development Center; Heritage Studies and History programs; campus radio station	Arkansas State University
Jan 2025	Dr. Brendan Kelly, Dr. Todd Shields	A-State Administration – President; Chancellor	Arkansas State University System
Jan 2025	Jeff Woods	Mayor	City of Tyronza
Jan 2025	Tom Smith	Senior Vice President of Inclusion, Community, and Sustainability, The Louis Hotel	Town of Wilson, Mississippi County
Jan 2025	John Alan Nelson	County Judge	Mississippi County
Jan 2025	Mike Gibson	Trustee	Judd Hill Foundation

Date	Name(s)	Title(s) / Role(s)	Organization / Affiliation
Jan 2025	Kevin Smith	Former mayor, former state legislator, community leader	Helena-West Helena
Jan 2025	Harvey, Donna, Thomas, and Donavan Williams	Owners	Delta Dirt Distillery
Apr 2025	Angie Stephens	Owner; Delta Byways member	RNT Calls
Apr 2025	Fara Foster	Executive Director; Delta Byways member	Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie
Apr 2025	Shea Lewis, Marty Ryall, Shane Broadway	Secretary of Parks, Heritage and Tourism; Director, Division of Heritage; Government Relations, ASU System Office	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism; Arkansas State University System
Apr 2025	Jeff Owyoung	Mayor	City of McGehee
Apr 2025	Sammy Angel	Landowner and area leader	Lake Village; Chicot County
Aug 2025	Miranda Reynolds	Main Street Director	The Station; City of Paragould
Aug 2025	Jessie Griffin, Carolyne Blissett	County Judge; Mayor	Drew County; Town of Arkansas City
Aug 2025	Blake Johnson, Jeremy Woodridge, Mike Patterson, Bradley Sheffler	State Senator, State Representative, County Judge, Mayor	Piggott, Clay County
Aug 2025	Buddy Bradberry	Interpreter	Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center
Aug 2025	Cody Walker, Elizabeth Kimble	Director; Education Coordinator and Delta Byways member	Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center
Aug 2025	Jeff Kollath	Executive Director	Sultana Disaster Museum
Aug 2025	Mark Young, Craig Rickert, Alison McDaniel, Donna Malonel, Danny Kapales	Executive Director, Chamber of Commerce; Executive Director, Jonesboro A&P Commission; Chamber board member and Signature Bank; Director of Communications, City of Jonesboro; Director of Parks (former), City of Jonesboro	Jonesboro, Craighead County
Aug 2025	Jim Jackson, Raymond Whiteside	Director of Tourism, Delta Byways member, community development leader; Community Development Specialist	West Memphis A&P, Crittenden County
Aug 2025	Bruce Lockett, Sheri Storie, Jimmy Cunningham, Michael McCray, Joy Blankenship	Councilman, City of Pine Bluff; Executive Director, Tourism Development Director, and Public Relations and Cultural Development Specialist, Pine Bluff A&P Commission; Executive Director, Pine Bluff Downtown Development	Pine Bluff, Jefferson County

Date	Name(s)	Title(s) / Role(s)	Organization / Affiliation
Aug 2025	John Alan Nelson, Melisa Logan, Dr. Christian Ostermann, Joseph Alley, Staci Malone, Mary Gay Shipley	Mississippi County Judge; Mayor, City of Blytheville; Executive Director and Exhibition Manager, National Cold War Center; City Clerk, City of Wilson; community leader	Mississippi County; City of Blytheville; National Cold War Center; City of Wilson
Mar 2026	Elisabeth Engel	Director	ASU Museum, Jonesboro
Mar 2026	Dawna Parker	Director	Arkansas Welcome Center, Helena-West Helena
Mar 2026	Ronald Fields	Superintendent	Arkansas Post National Memorial (NPS)

Stakeholder Interviews

Name	Title / Role	Organization / Affiliation
Joy Blankenship	Executive Director	Arkansas' Land of Legends Travel Association
Jimmy Cunningham	Director, Delta Rhythm and Bayous Cultural District; Tourism Development Director, Pine Bluff A&P Commission	Pine Bluff, Jefferson County
Helen Halbert	Executive Director	Helena-West Helena A&P Commission
Marcel Hanzlik	Past President; former Regional Director, AR State Parks (Upper and Lower Delta)	Arkansas Delta Byways
Dr. Cliff Jones	Deputy Director	Delta Center for Economic Development, Arkansas State University
Carolyne Blissett	Mayor	Town of Arkansas City
John Alan Nelson	County Judge	Mississippi County
Rex Nelson	Senior Editor and Columnist	Arkansas Democrat-Gazette; former Delta Regional Authority appointee
Dr. Ed Salo	Associate Director, Heritage Studies Ph.D. Program; Professor and Chair, History Department	Arkansas State University
Martin Smith	Principal / Founder	Ecological Design Group (EDG) and studio DRIFT
Kim Williams	Travel Writer; Director, Arkansas Great River Road	Arkansas Tourism

ARKANSAS DELTA NHA FEASIBILITY STUDY · APPENDIX C

Current & Potential Partners

This appendix catalogs the 93 organizations identified as current or potential partners for the proposed National Heritage Area, organized across nine categories from academic institutions to religious communities. Each entry describes the organization, its existing or prospective partnership activities, and any current planning documents that inform the National Heritage Area's work.

APPENDIX C – Current & Potential Partners

ARKANSAS DELTA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA CURRENT & POTENTIAL PARTNERS			
ORGANIZATION	**DESCRIPTION**	**PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES**	**CURRENT PLANNING DOCUMENTS**
Academic Institutions			
Arkansas State University Mid-South	Originally established as a vocational-technical school, Arkansas State University Mid-South, serves more than 1,500 students annually in credit and non-credit training programs. It's located in West Memphis.	Hosts exhibit on KWEM, an important historic radio station. Possible partner for related programming and tourism activities.	*Arkansas State Strategic Plan* https://www.astate.edu/about/strategic-plan.html
Black River Technical College	Founded as Black River Vocational Technical School in 1971, the school is now a public, 2-year college with an open admissions policy and is committed to meeting the needs of citizens of Northeast Arkansas. It annually enrolls over 2,500 students and has two locations.	Potential partner for educational activities in the northern counties of the Delta. Has been represented previously on Heritage Sites advisory committees.	
Crowley's Ridge Educational Service Cooperative	The purpose of the Crowley's Ridge Education Service Cooperative is to be of assistance to member schools in achieving more efficient use of their shared resources; to be of assistance in meeting or exceeding accreditation standards; and to promote coordination between districts.	Past and potential future partner for professional development activities for area teachers.	
Northeast Arkansas Education Cooperative	The Mission of the Northeast Arkansas Education Cooperative is to provide the highest quality leadership, service and support to member districts in their efforts to facilitate effective learning for all students.	Past and potential future partner for professional development activities for area teachers.	
Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas	Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas is a two-year college serving the people of Eastern Arkansas. Through robust partnerships, the College is committed to building stronger communities by delivering quality, affordable education for college transfer and work skills training.	Past host of community meetings and potential partner for educational activities in the central Delta.	
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff	The University in Pine Bluff embraces its land-grant mission of providing cutting-edge research, teaching, outreach, and service programs that respond to the social and economic needs of the state and region. Its mission is to promote and sustain excellent academic programs that integrate quality instruction, research, and student learning experiences responsive to the needs of a racially, culturally, and economically diverse student population.	Operates a historic museum, as well as an arts center and public programs and events in the central Delta. Potential for further partnerships in education and other areas.	*150 Forward Strategic Plan* https://chancellor.uark.edu/150-forward/
University of Arkansas at Monticello	The University of Arkansas at Monticello is recognized as a model open access regional institution dedicated to empowering students to realize and develop their potential. It is expected that students will serve the communities of Arkansas and beyond to improve the quality of life as well as generate, enrich and sustain economic development.	Operates a historic museum as a heritage tourism destination. Also a past partner for archeological related programming. Hosted a public meeting for the feasibility study.	
Arts & Culture			
The Americana Foundation	The Americana Foundation is a national grantmaker that funds projects across the United States, including occasional historic preservation and agricultural initiatives in Arkansas. It has provided funds for historic and cultural projects in the state and support tied to Americana-focused grant initiatives, such as past cultural stewardship planning grants.	Potential partner for music based initiatives.	
Americana Music Triangle	The Americana Music Triangle includes Arkansas as part of its five-state regional music heritage trail, featuring key Delta blues and country music roots sites like Helena and Dyess. Sites in Arkansas include the King Biscuit Blues Festival and the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home.	Partner in promoting regional music heritage.	
Arkansas Arts Council	The Arkansas Arts Council, an agency of the Division of Arkansas Heritage, advances and empowers the arts by providing services and funding for programming that encourages and assists literary, performing, and visual artists and arts organizations in achieving standards of professional excellence.	Potential funding agency and partner on arts based programming.	
Arts and Science Center for Southeast Arkansas	The Arts & Science Center for Southeast Arkansas serves as a cultural crossroad: engaging, educating, and entertaining through the arts and sciences.The museum offers three exhibition galleries, interactive youth activity space, and the 232-seat Catherine M. Bellamy Theater.	Potential partner for arts based programming in the central part of the Delta.	
Bradbury Art Museum	Bradbury Art Museum (BAM) is a contemporary art space on the campus of Arkansas State University. Its mission is to holistically support the arts and art education in the local community by hosting rotating exhibitions from both local and national contemporary artists alongside accessible arts programming.	Past partner on programming and regional fine arts programming in the north of the Delta.	

ORGANIZATION	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES	CURRENT PLANNING DOCUMENTS
Delta Rhythm & Bayous Cultural District	Located in the historic town of Pine Bluff, the Delta Rhythm & Bayous Cultural District has an open-air plaza that blends the energy of the blues with places to play, relax, and connect. It's a place where culture, movement, and community come together in one vibrant space.	Potential partner for arts based programming in the central part of the Delta.	
Division of Arkansas Heritage	Originally known as the "Department of Arkansas Natural and Cultural Heritage," legislation grouped together several culturally oriented divisions under one department. The agency name changed to the Division of Arkansas Heritage in 1985.	The DAH can provide grants to support cultural heritage initiatives.	*Arkansas Heritage Strategic Plan* https://www.arkansasheritage.com/about-us/strategic-plan
Grand Prairie Center	The Grand Prairie Center is owned and operated by the Phillips County Community College of the University of Arkansas. It has a large meeting space that is suitable for business, social, civic, educational, cultural, and entertainment events. Riceland Auditorium seats 668, which may expand to accommodate 1,193.	Past host of community meeting and potential partner for arts based programming.	
John R. Cash RevocableTrust	The Trust manages the estate, trademarks, and publicity rights of the late country music legend Johnny Cash. Key activities include protecting his intellectual property, managing official projects, and preserving his historical archives.	Longtime partner of the Historic Dyess Colony: Johnny Cash Boyhood Home.	
Mid-America Arts Alliance	The Mid-America Arts Alliance's mission is to strengthen and support artists, cultural organizations, and communities throughout the six-state region of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas.	Past exhibit sponsor.	
Business & Industry			
Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation	Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation (AECC) is based in Little Rock and is proud to provide power for more than 1 million members of Arkansas's electric distribution cooperatives.	Longtime underwriting sponsor.	
Big River Steel	U. S. Steel's Big River Steel facility in Osceola, Arkansas brings mini mill leadership, a LEED-certified steel mill, and an innovator's mentality to their plan to be a leader in sustainable steelmaking and products.	Potential industry sponsor.	
Delta Dirt Distillery	The Delta Dirt Distillery is a family-owned, craft distillery located in some of the richest farmland in the country – the Arkansas Delta. Owned and managed by the Williams family who have farmed in the region for four generations, their distillery is located in Helena-West Helena, and provides tours and tastings.	Provides public tours and tastings and has provided space for meetings in the past. Past sponsor of events.	
Embassy Suites Red Wolf Convention Center	Located on the campus of Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, the facility offers over 40,000 sq. ft. of event space and a luxury hotel ideal for hosting meetings and events.	Longtime lodging and event partner.	
Mack's Prairie Wings	Known as the "Waterfowl Capital of the World," Stuttgart is home to this legendary outfitter that has become a pilgrimage site for hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts from across the country. The store offers a huge selection of gear, expert service, and an immersive shopping experience.	Potential sponsor.	
Nucor Steel	Nucor is North America's largest and most diversified manufacturer of steel and fabricated steel products. Through proactive training, shared responsibility and a culture rooted in care and accountability, Nucor is dedicated to having one of the safest records in the industry. Their Arkansas plant is located in Blytheville.	Past sponsor of the Johnny Cash Music Festival. Potential sponsor other projects.	
Riceland	Riceland Foods is the world's largest miller and marketer of rice serving 5,500 farmer members in Arkansas and Missouri. As a farmer-owned cooperative, Riceland stores, transports, processes and markets more than 2.5 million metric tons of grain each year. Their headquarters is located in Stuttgart.	Potential sponsor.	
RNT Calls	RNT Calls is more than a place to buy duck calls; it is also a destination where the visitor can watch the process of building the world's leading waterfowl calls, merging precision technology with classic call-making craftsmanship to create a timeless work of art. They also host a museum of duck calls.	Active on Arkansas Delta Byways board.	
Saracen Casino Resort	Saracen Casino Resort is a major gaming and entertainment destination located in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, featuring an 80,000-square-foot casino floor, a 14-story luxury hotel, and a 1,600-seat event center. It is owned by the Quapaw Nation, and is located south of Little Rock.	Potential sponsor.	
Southland Casino Hotel	The Southland Casino Hotel in West Memphis offers a complete experience. Visitors can shop on-site, dine at three restaurants, or relax at the café. The resort offers the biggest and newest casino in the Mid-South.	Potential sponsor.	
The Village of Wilson	Wilson, Arkansas, branded as "America's Village," is a revitalized historic agricultural community in Mississippi County featuring English Tudor architecture, farm-to-table dining, and upscale boutique hospitality.	Past partner for events, dining and lodging.	

ORGANIZATION	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES	CURRENT PLANNING DOCUMENTS
Economic Development & Tourism			
Arkansas Delta Byways Regional Tourism Association	The Delta Byways are linked by two National Scenic Byways – Crowley's Ridge Parkway and the Arkansas segment of the Great River Road All-American Road. These have been established to encourage travelers to experience the heart of America.	The Arkansas State University Heritage Sites has been the administrator of this nonprofit for thirty years.	Hawkins, Ruth, and Nancy Clark, eds. *The Great River Road-Arkansas Corridor Management Plan* . Jonesboro: Arkansas Delta Byways, 2002.
Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	This Department has three major divisions: Arkansas State Parks, Arkansas Heritage, and Arkansas Tourism. In addition to managing all state parks, it promotes Arkansas's natural and cultural history and heritage. Through its tourism division, the Department promotes travel and focuses on enhancing Arkansas's image for visitors.	Longtime partner and funding source for Arkansas Delta Byways. Operates state parks and heritage ares in the Delta, in addition to the Delta Cultural Center.	*Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030* https://adpht.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/Arkansas-SCORP-2025-2030-1.pdf
Crowley's Ridge Gravel Trail	The Crowley's Ridge Gravel Trail is a 249-mile mixed-surface bikepacking route in Arkansas featuring roughly 10,000 feet of elevation gain, passing through 7 state parks, 1 national forest, and 18 Delta towns.	Emerging tourism resource in the northern Delta.	
Crowley's Ridge Scenic Byway	Crowley's Ridge Parkway is a 212-mile National Scenic Byway spanning northeast Arkansas and the Missouri Bootheel, taking about 5.5 hours to drive. It follows a unique ridge rising 200 to 500 feet above the flat delta.	Operated by Arkansas State University.	
Delta Center for Economic Development	The Delta Center for Economic Development at Arkansas State University connects education, business, and community to promote growth across the Arkansas Delta region.	Located on Arkansas State University campus. Resource for economic development.	
Eastern Arkansas Planning and Development District	The Development District works in partnership with local leaders to align resources, strengthen regional planning, and support data-driven economic development throughout 12 counties in Eastern Arkansas.	Resource for economic development.	*Data by County* https://www.eapdd.org/databycounty *Arkansas Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* https://arkansaseconomicregions.org/wpcontent/uploads/2024/02/ARCEDS-2014-3.pdf https://www.eapdd.org/_files/ugd/eb67d_b5337639e35946ceaeab1c8073455448.pdf
Land of Legends Travel Association	Land of Legends Travel Association promotes regional tourism, local events, and outdoor recreation across four counties in southeast Arkansas: Jefferson, Grant, Cleveland, and Lincoln	Tourism promotion association for two of the seventeen counties.	
Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Arkansas	The Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Arkansas promotes and preserves the Great River Road National Scenic Byway, coordinates regional tourism, and supports local historic and economic development.	Oversees the Great River Road All-American Road. A-State Heritage Sites is a technical advisor to the commission focused on history and culture.	*Interpretive Plan* https://mrpcmembers.com/resources-and-forms/
Thrive, Inc.	Thrive, Inc. is a social impact design and community development organization located in Helena-West Helena. Thrive specializes in providing community-engaged strategy, brand identity, and wayfinding services for rural cities and places. It helps rural towns grow through branding, placemaking, and youth programs.	Active on Arkansas Delta Byways board and potential partner in the central Delta.	
Environment & Agriculture			
Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service	The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service is a statewide educational outreach network and a part of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. It delivers research-based information, practical training, and local support through physical offices in all 75 Arkansas counties.	Past and potential future partner for professional development activities for area teachers.	
Arkansas Department of Agriculture	The state agency is charged with supporting and promoting Arkansas agriculture. Through its Natural Resources, Forestry, Livestock and Poultry, and Plant Industries divisions, it manages conservation and water quality programs, forest and farmland stewardship, and marketing initiatives such as Arkansas Grown, Arkansas Made, the Century Farm program, and agritourism promotion.	Potential partner for interpreting the Delta's agricultural heritage and working landscapes. Opportunities include but are not limited to joint agritourism and farm trail promotion through Arkansas Grown and Arkansas Made and recognition of multigenerational Delta farms via the Century Farm program.	*Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Plan 2024-2029* https://media.ark.org/agri/FINAL-2024-2029-NPS-Management-Plan.pdf
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) is the state government agency responsible for managing fish, wildlife, and natural habitats, and setting hunting and fishing rules.	Operates natural areas and interpretive centers around the Delta. Has an outdoors based educational program for K-12 students that is incorporated into the state curriculum.	*Wildlife Action Plan* https://www.agfc.com/education/arkansas-wildlife-action-plan/
Arkansas State University College of Agriculture	Arkansas State University College of Agriculture is an academic department at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, Arkansas, that offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs focused on farming, food production, and rural business. It prepares students for careers in the agricultural industry of the Lower Mississippi Delta region.	Longtime partner and resource for agricultural history and projects.	
Dale Bumpers White River National Wildlife Refuge	The Dale Bumpers White River National Wildlife Refuge was established on September 5, 1935 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt with the purpose to protect and conserve migratory birds and other wildlife resources. It is one of the most important areas for wintering waterfowl in North America.	Outdoor recreation destination and potential partner.	

ORGANIZATION	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES	CURRENT PLANNING DOCUMENTS
Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center	The Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center is a public educational facility in Jonesboro, Arkansas, featuring interactive exhibits, live native animals, and outdoor trails. Operated by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, it highlights the natural history and ecology of the local Crowley's Ridge land mass.	Past partner for educational activities.	
Governor Mike Huckabee Delta Rivers Nature Center	The Governor Mike Huckabee Delta Rivers Nature Center is an educational facility in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, featuring nature trails, a large aquarium, and wildlife exhibits. Run by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, it spans 130 acres.	Potential partner for educational activities.	
Judd Hill Farmers' Market	Judd Hill Farmers' Market is a seasonal, open-air community market in Jonesboro, Arkansas, featuring local produce, handmade crafts, and live music. Established in 2006 and located on the farm at Arkansas State University, it connects regional growers with the public.	Potential partner.	
Pumpkin Hollow	Arkansas's longest-running pumpkin farm, located in Piggott, Arkansas. Established in 1993, it offers family-friendly autumn activities, a corn maze, and nighttime haunted attractions.	Attraction and active on Arkansas Delta Byways board.	
St. Francis National Forest	This forest is a scenic protected area in eastern Arkansas covering about 23,600 acres along the St. Francis and Mississippi rivers. Established in 1960, it is managed jointly with the larger Ozark National Forest and is unique for being the only national forest where the public can view the Mississippi River directly from its shoreline.	Potential partner.	
Whitton Farms	This is a 15-acre, family-owned chemical-free and sustainable specialty crop farm in Tyronza, Arkansas, specializing in heirloom vegetables, cut flowers, and pantry goods. It operates out of a historic sharecropper cabin in the Arkansas Delta.	Past and potential future partner.	
Funders & Grant Makers			
Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council	The Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council (ANCRC) is a state-level organization that manages grants and a trust fund for acquiring, managing, and preserving state-owned historic sites, natural areas, and outdoor recreation lands.	Major granting source for historic sites in the state. The A-State Heritage Sites have received substantial support.	
Arkansas Office of Outdoor Recreation	The Arkansas Office of Outdoor Recreation is a state government unit that encourages the growth of the outdoor economy, promotes natural assets, and supports health and stewardship. Established in 2021 within the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism (ADPHT), it functions as a central resource for local communities and outdoor enterprises.	Major granting source for public parks and other outdoors initiatives.	
Delta Regional Authority	The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) is a federal-state partnership established by Congress in 2000 to boost economic growth, create jobs, and improve living conditions in the lower Mississippi River Delta area.	Funder of this feasibility study and potential future funding source.	*Regional Development Plan* https://dra.gov/about/strategic-development-plan/
FM Bank and Trust	FM Bank & Trust is a unified regional community bank brand formed by five partner banks with shared common ownership across Northeast Arkansas. Designated as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), it supports local hometown programs and regional housing incentives.	Sponsor of Arkansas State University Heritage Sites.	
Judd Hill Foundation	The Judd Hill Foundation is an Arkansas nonprofit trust that supports agricultural research, education, and rural healthcare. Established in 1985 the foundation was named for Judd Hill and manages a massive agricultural legacy in Poinsett County.	Longtime underwriting sponsor.	
Kays Foundation	The Kays Foundation is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization created to financially support Arkansas State University (A-State) in Jonesboro. Originally started in 1911 by the university's founding president, Victor C. Kays, it provides grants and endowments for faculty, staff, and campus programs.	Potential funder.	
National Endowment for the Humanities	The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) operates in Arkansas primarily through HumanitiesAR (formerly known as the Arkansas Humanities Council), an independent nonprofit affiliate established to support local public programs, research, and educational projects.	Past and potential future funder.	
History & Humanities			
American Alliance of Museums	The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) in Arkansas refers to the presence and accreditation of AAM-certified institutions within the state, setting high professional and operational standards for local museums. A select group of Arkansas museums have achieved this gold standard of national accreditation.	Accrediting organization and resource for museums.	

ORGANIZATION	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES	CURRENT PLANNING DOCUMENTS
Arkansas Historical Association	The Arkansas Historical Association is a nonprofit group that promotes the study, preservation, and teaching of Arkansas history through its official journal, annual conferences, and educational outreach.	Resource for Arkansas history professionals.	
Arkansas Museums Association	The Arkansas Museums Association (AMA) is a state organization founded in 1966 that supports museums, cultural institutions, and museum workers. It promotes high professional standards, encourages member networking, and builds public interest in Arkansas museums.	Offers professional development and programming for museum professionals.	
Arkansas Post National Memorial	The Arkansas Post National Memorial (frequently called a monument) is a protected National Park Service site in Gillett, Arkansas. It marks the location of the first permanent European settlement in the lower Mississippi River Valley, established in 1686. It also preserves a site of Native American history, a Revolutionary War skirmish, and a Civil War battle.	The only National Parks Service unit in the proposed region. Resource for the interpretation of indigenous stories.	*Arkansas Post National Memorial General Management Plan and EIS 2003* https://npshistory.com/publications/arpo/gmp-eis-2003.pdf
Butler Center for Arkansas Studies	The Butler Center for Arkansas Studies is a research library, historical archive, and public program department created in 1997 to promote the history, literature, art, and culture of Arkansas. The center is located in downtown Little Rock.	Resource for Arkansas history.	
Humanities Arkansas	HumanitiesAR (formerly the Arkansas Humanities Council) is a Little Rock-based nonprofit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities founded in 1974. It promotes history, literature, and culture by awarding grants to local organizations and running state-wide educational programs.	Past and potential future funder.	
Japanese American Internment Center	Arkansas had two World War II Japanese American concentration camps: the Rohwer War Relocation Center and the Jerome War Relocation Center. Built by the federal government following the attack on Pearl Harbor, these camps imprisoned nearly 16,000 innocent people in the southeastern Arkansas Delta.	Past partner for events and meetings. Coordinates with both Desha County and the A-State Heritage Sites on the Rohwer Japanese American Relocation Center	
Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie	The Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie in Stuttgart, Arkansas, is a cultural and historical institution showcasing pioneer life, agriculture, and duck hunting. Founded in 1974, the 20,000-square-foot facility houses over 10,000 artifacts detailing the heritage of Arkansas County.	Active on Arkansas Delta Byways board and longtime community partner.	
National Cold War Center	Located in Blytheville, the National Cold War Center is America's official federal museum dedicated to the Cold War, featuring the country's only intact Strategic Air Command alert center and a massive collection of original Berlin Wall segments.	Community partner and host of exhibits and meetings.	
Sultana Disaster Museum	Sultana Disaster Museum in Marion, Arkansas, commemorates the 1865 explosion of the steamboat Sultana—the deadliest maritime disaster in U.S. history. A new 17,000-square-foot facility will be opening in 2026, featuring artifacts, personal soldier stories, and a 14-foot model of the boat.	Active on Arkansas Delta Byways board and longtime community partner.	
The Hemingway Society of Arkansas	The Hemingway Society of Arkansas is associated with the Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center, which is run by Arkansas State University in Piggott, Arkansas. It preserves the historic home and writing studio of author Ernest Hemingway, who had strong ties to the area through his second wife, Pauline Pfeiffer.	Potential partner on events related to the Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum.	
Municipalities & Government Agencies			
Arkansas County	Arkansas County protects its heritage resources by maintaining historic dual-district courthouses, securing state preservation grants, and listing key sites on the National Register of Historic Places. Key preservation efforts center on the 1928 Classical Revival courthouse in Stuttgart and the 1931 Art Deco courthouse in DeWitt	The County government supports and embraces heritage preservation and will continue to play a role with the heritage area after national designation.	
Chicot County	Chicot County protects its local heritage resources through architectural preservation grants, educational partnerships, and museum stewardship. Key focal points include the restoration of the historic courthouse and the preservation of antebellum sites.	The County government supports and embraces heritage preservation and will continue to play a role with the heritage area after national designation.	
Clay County	Clay County protects its heritage resources through dedicated advisory boards, targeted grants, and land conservation programs. These efforts safeguard historical narratives, cultural sites, and natural lands across different regions	The County government supports and embraces heritage preservation and will continue to play a role with the heritage area after national designation.	
Craighead County	Craighead County protects its heritage resources through local partnerships, cultural centers, and hazard mitigation planning. Key efforts involve collaborating with groups like the Craighead County Public Library and maintaining cultural sites	The County government supports and embraces heritage preservation and will continue to play a role with the heritage area after national designation.	

ORGANIZATION	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES	CURRENT PLANNING DOCUMENTS
Crittenden County	Crittenden County protects its heritage resources through local history preservation, museum operations, and architectural landmark upkeep. Key focal points include the Crittenden County Museum and historic properties listed on the National Register	The County government supports and embraces heritage preservation and will continue to play a role with the heritage area after national designation.	
Cross County	Cross County protects significant heritage and archaeological resources through state parks, local historical societies, and preservation partnerships. Key sites include two important State Parks and the Cross County Museum in Wynne.	The County government supports and embraces heritage preservation and will continue to play a role with the heritage area after national designation.	
Desha County	Desha County protects its heritage resources through local organizations, historic grants, and community-driven preservation programs. Key groups driving these efforts include the Desha County Historical Society, municipal programs in towns like Dumas, and state-backed preservation grants.	The County government supports and embraces heritage preservation and will continue to play a role with the heritage area after national designation.	
Drew County	Drew County protects its heritage resources through local government partnerships, historical societies, and designated archives. Key bodies leading these efforts include the Drew County Historical Society, the Drew County Museum Commission, and local academic archeological projects.	The County government supports and embraces heritage preservation and will continue to play a role with the heritage area after national designation.	
Greene County	Greene County protects its heritage resources through local organizations, historical societies, and dedicated museums. Key groups leading these efforts include the Greene County Museum and the Greene County Historical & Genealogical Society.	The County government supports and embraces heritage preservation and will continue to play a role with the heritage area after national designation.	
Helena-West Helena Advertising and Promotion Commission	The Commission manages local tourism funds using a 2% tax on lodging and prepared food, and is led by a seven-member team.	The Advertising and Promotion Commission can play a vital role in marketing and promoting the various activities and programs of the National Heritage Area.	*Downtown Revitalization Plan – HWH Rising* https://armadillo-flute-ppdj.squarespace.com/hwhrising
Jefferson County	Jefferson County protects its heritage resources through local historical societies, public proclamations, and partnerships with state programs. Key efforts involve documenting local landmarks, maintaining regional history museums, and registering historic sites.	The County government supports and embraces heritage preservation and will continue to play a role with the heritage area after national designation.	
Jonesboro Advertising and Promotion Commission	The Jonesboro Advertising and Promotion Commission promotes tourism, and drives economic growth in Jonesboro, by funding event advertising, managing local hotel tax revenues, and supporting community projects.	The Advertising and Promotion Commission can play a vital role in marketing and promoting the various activities and programs of the National Heritage Area.	*One Jonesboro* https://www.ecologicaldg.com/works/one-jonesboro
Lee County	Lee County protects its unique cultural and natural heritage resources through local conservation districts, historical trusts, and state partnerships, notably anchoring landmark sites like the Louisiana Purchase Historic State Park.	The County government supports and embraces heritage preservation and will continue to play a role with the heritage area after national designation.	
Lincoln County	Lincoln County protects its local heritage through grassroots conservation, landmark documentation, and regional planning. Key efforts involve managing soil and water resources, preserving local history, and registering historic sites.	The County government supports and embraces heritage preservation and will continue to play a role with the heritage area after national designation.	
Mississippi County	Mississippi County protects its rich cultural and physical heritage through active local societies, targeted grants, and community-driven museums. Key contributors include the Mississippi County Historical and Genealogical Society, the Mississippi County Museum in Osceola, and municipal preservation efforts.	The County government supports and embraces heritage preservation and will continue to play a role with the heritage area after national designation.	
Monroe County	Monroe County protects its local heritage resources through historic building preservation, ecological refuge management, and state-backed grant funding. Key preservation efforts involve the Monroe County Courthouse in Clarendon, local environmental stewardship via the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge, and targeted structural restoration grants	The County government supports and embraces heritage preservation and will continue to play a role with the heritage area after national designation.	
Paragould Advertising and Promotion Commission	The Paragould Advertising & Promotion Commission manages tourism development funds through a 3% lodging tax and supports local community events. Founded in August 2018, the group allocates revenue collected from local hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, and vacation rentals.	The Advertising and Promotion Commission can play a vital role in marketing and promoting the various activities and programs of the National Heritage Area.	*Discover Paragould 2042*
Phillips County	Phillips County protects its rich local heritage through key institutions like the Delta Cultural Center, the Helena Museum of Phillips County, and local groups like Main Street Helena working to safeguard Delta history, Civil War sites, and blues music traditions.	The County government supports and embraces heritage preservation and will continue to play a role with the heritage area after national designation.	
Pine Bluff Advertising and Promotion Commission	Pine Bluff Advertising and Promotion Commission is a seven-person destination marketing agency funded by local prepared food and short-term lodging taxes to promote travel, fund cultural and sporting events, and support the Pine Bluff Convention Center.	The Advertising and Promotion Commission can play a vital role in marketing and promoting the various activities and programs of the National Heritage Area.	*Pine Bluff Comprehensive Plan 2022* https://searpc.com/plans/page/266/pine-bluff-comprehensive-plan-2022

ORGANIZATION	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES	CURRENT PLANNING DOCUMENTS
Poinsett County	Poinsett County protects its heritage resources through local leadership, citizen-led historic designations, and partnerships with state conservation groups. Key contributors include local preservation advocates and the Poinsett Conservation District.	The County government supports and embraces heritage preservation and will continue to play a role with the heritage area after national designation.	
St. Francis County	St. Francis County, Arkansas protects its local heritage resources through community-driven cultural foundations, historic site preservation, and regional partnerships. Key organizations leading this work include the St. Francis County Cultural Foundation, the Colt Community Development Corporation, and state agencies.	The County government supports and embraces heritage preservation and will continue to play a role with the heritage area after national designation.	
Stuttgart Advertising and Promotion Commission	The Stuttgart Advertising and Promotion Commission is a local municipal body in Stuttgart, Arkansas, that manages tourism tax revenues to advertise the city, promote local events, and support community programs.	The Advertising and Promotion Commission can play a vital role in marketing and promoting the various activities and programs of the National Heritage Area.	
West Memphis Advertising and Promotion Commission	The West Memphis Advertising and Promotion Commission manages local tourism tax funds and oversees the city's convention and visitors bureau, holding public meetings every month. They also manage the West Memphis Civic Center.	The Advertising and Promotion Commission can play a vital role in marketing and promoting the various activities and programs of the National Heritage Area.	*GROW West Memphis 2040* http://www.westmemphisutilities.com/DocumentCenter/View/3503/GROW-West-Memphis-2040-Final-
Religious Institutions & Communities			
Beth El Heritage Hall	This is a historic, neo-classical former Jewish synagogue located in Helena-West Helena that now operates as a cultural and community event space under the Delta Cultural Center.	Host of public and community meetings.	
Centennial Baptist Church, Helena-West Helena	This is a historic 1905 Gothic Revival brick church, significant as the functional headquarters of influential religious leader Elias Camp Morris and as a rare African-American designed landmark.	Potential restoration and interpretation opportunity.	
Italians of Sunnyside Foundation	The Italians of Sunnyside Foundation is a charitable organization in Lake Village, Arkansas, that preserves the history and heritage of the 1895 Sunnyside Plantation Italian colony. It highlights the struggles and legacy of early Italian immigrants who settled in the Arkansas Delta.	Community partner and resource on Italian heritage around Lake Village.	
Our Lady of the Lake, Lake Village	Our Lady of the Lake in Lake Village, Arkansas, is a historic Catholic church, a local community landmark, and a repository for regional immigrant history. It sits directly on the banks of Lake Chicot.	Host of public and community meetings.	

ARKANSAS DELTA NHA FEASIBILITY STUDY · APPENDIX D

Resource Inventory

This appendix presents the inventory of 295 natural, historic, and cultural resources documented across the 17-county study area. Each entry records the resource's location, ownership, designation status, associated interpretive theme, and public accessibility, providing the evidentiary foundation for the significance analysis presented in Chapter 3.

APPENDIX D – Resource Inventory

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
8- Mile Creek Trail	Old County Road	Paragould	Greene	City of Paragould	Paragould's trail system features urban biking, hiking and walking trails along a route that will connect most of the city's parks, downtown areas, and several school sites.				Shaped by River and Ridge	R	Y
A.M. Bohnert Rice Plantation Pump #2 Engine	S.E. Corner of US 165 and Post Bayou Lane	Gillett	Arkansas	Private	The A. M. Bohnert Rice Plantation Pump #2 Engine is a rare surviving example of an early twentieth-century pump engine.	NRHP			Roots in the Soil	H	N
Adams Land Company/Gin	402 North Main	Leachville	Mississippi	Adams Land Company	Adams Land Company operates the world's largest, most technically advanced cotton gin. and also helps farmers market their cotton, as it is shipped around the world.				Roots in the Soil	C	Y
African American Cultural Center	1005 Logan Street	Jonesboro	Craighead	City of Jonesboro	Exhibits on the lives and achievements of African American residents of the region.				Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Albert King Marker	West Hale Avenue and South Poplar Street	Osceola	Mississippi	Town of Osceola	Marker commemorates Albert King, who was born in 1923 in Indianola, Miss., but lived and played his music in Arkansas in the towns of Forrest City and Osceola.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/H	Y
American Legion Hut and Merci Car	406 Porter Street	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	Private	Constructed in 1922, the Richard L. Kitchens Post in Helena is one of the oldest American Legion buildings in Arkansas. An antique boxcar from the Merci Train is located on the hut's grounds.				Remaking the Delta	C/H	Y
Anderson House, Dr. A.G.	Duncan and Main streets	Eudora	Chicot	Chicot Chamber of Commerce	The house is significant today as the best extant example of a T-shaped, vernacular central hall cottage.	NRHP			Roots in the Soil	H/N	Y
Antioch Missionary Baptist Church	County Road 781	Sherrill	Jefferson	Baptist Church	Founded in 1868 by Reverend Louis Mazique, the church is significant for its association with the African-American community in the Sherrill area of Jefferson County.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Remaking the Delta	H	Y
Arkansas City Commercial District	DeSoto Avenue and Sprague Street	Arkansas City	Desha	Multiple	There are three two-story masonry structures built in the early 1900s which represent the last vestiges of a thriving commercial district.	NRHP			Remaking of the Delta	C/H	Y
Arkansas City High School	Robert S. Moore Avenue and President Street	Arkansas City	Desha	Arkansas City School System4th	Constructed in 1910, this is a two-story brick Renaissance Revival structure with a three-story central tower of Italian Villa inspiration.	NRHP			Remaking of the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	N

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Arkansas County Courthouse Northern District	East 3rd and S. College Streets	Stuttgart	Arkansas	Arkansas County	The building is an excellent local example of Classical Revival styling.	NRHP			Remaking of the Delta	C	Y
Arkansas County Loop-Great River Road	Varies	Multiple	Arkansas	Arkansas County	This is an official route off the Great River Road All-American Road.			Part of the Great River Road All American Road	Shaped by River and Ridge	C/E/H/N/R	Y
Arkansas Delta Levee and Drainage System	Mississippi River and interior drainage systems	Multiple Cities	Multiple	Multiple levee/drainage districts; US Army Corps of Engineers and local/state partners	Region-wide working system of levees, drainage canals, roads, pumps, siphons, and related engineering structures that transformed Delta hydrology and made large-scale agriculture possible after repeated floods.				Shaped by River and Ridge	E/H/N	Y
Arkansas Delta Music Trail: Sounds from the Soil & Soul	Multiple sites and communities	Multiple Cities	Multiple	Arkansas Delta Byways Tourism Association / Arkansas State University Heritage Sites	Regional interpretive music trail marking sites connected to Delta musicians and musical traditions across the Arkansas Delta.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E/H/R	Y
Arkansas Entertainers Hall of Fame	One Convention Center Plaza	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	Pine Bluff Convention Center	The Hall of Fame showcases the careers of the many entertainers who have come from the State of Arkansas.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C	Y
Arkansas Post Museum State Park	5530 Highway 165 - junction of Hwy 169	Gillett	Arkansas	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	Five buildings have lifestyle exhibits from Colonial to modern times. Includes dog-trot log cabin, Quapaw pottery, etc.			Arkansas State Park/Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Roots in the Soil	C/E/H	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Arkansas Post National Memorial	1741 Old Post Road	Gillett	Arkansas	National Park Service	This is the site of the first semi-permanent French settlement in the lower Mississippi River Valley.	NHL	National Historic Landmark /National Park Unit		Shaped by River and Ridge	C/E/H	Y
Arkansas Railroad Museum	1700 Port Road	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	Arkansas Railroad Museum, Inc.	The museum has been showcasing the rail transportation history of Arkansas since 1983. Train cars and engines make for an authentic railroad experience.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/H	Y
Arkansas River Delta Blues Trail	Multiple markers along the Arkansas River corridor	Multiple Cities	Multiple	Arkansas Originals	Research-based interpretive trail launched in 2025 that places historical markers honoring blues musicians connected to the Arkansas River corridor, including Pine Bluff native Bobby Rush.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E/H/R	Y
Arkansas State College Historic District	2405 Aggie Road	Jonesboro	Craighead	Arkansas State Universtiy	This District encompasses the most intact section of the Arkansas State College (now University) campus that maintains integrity from the district's period of significance.	NRHP			Remaking of the Delta	C/H	Y
Arkansas State University Museum	320 University Loop West	Jonesboro	Craighead	Arkansas State University	The museum contains a collection of Northeast Arkansas history, culture, and natural history with more than 80,000 regionally acquired objects.			Part of the Arkansas State University System	Roots in the Soil; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers; Conflict and Cooperation	C/E	Y
Arkansas Welcome Center	1107 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	Arkansas Tourism Bureau	Offers visitors to Arkansas up-to-the-minute information on attractions, regional events, travel directions, and weather conditions.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Arkansas Welcome Center at Blytheville	I-55	Blytheville	Mississippi	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	The center offers visitors up-to-the minute information on attractions, regional events, and weather conditions.			Arkansas State Welcome Center	Shaped by River and Ridge; Remaking the Delta; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C	Y
ART Space on Main	623 S. Main Street	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	City of Pine Bluff	The ARTSpace features 3rd Space, a retail gallery of works by regional artists; community gallery space; a hands-on arts workshop studio; and event space.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E	Y
Arts & Sciences Center/SE Arkansas	701 South Main Street	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	City of Pine Bluff	ASC presents programming in the visual arts, performing arts, and the sciences through exhibits, performances, classes, and local partnerships.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E	Y
Battery A Site, Battle of Helena	Intersection of Adams and Beech	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	City of Helena-West Helena	This is one of four batteries erected by the Union army in 1862. Union troops occupied the city in July 1862 and established a major supply depot for General Grant's siege of Vicksburg.				Conflict and Cooperation	H	N
Battery C Site, Battle of Helena	1100 Yorkshire	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	City of Helena-West Helena	Battery C Park includes one of four earthen batteries erected by the Union army in 1862. This strategic location briefly fell to the Confederates during the Battle of Helena on July 4, 1863.				Conflict and Cooperation	H	N
Bayou Meto Schoolhouse	Highway 276 west of Hwy 11	Bayou Meto	Arkansas	City of Bayou Meto	The Bayou Meto Schoolhouse is one of only a few remaining usable structures that are still on the original site.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Remaking of the Delta	C/E/H	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Bear Creek Lake Recreation Area	2675 Highway 44	Marianna	Lee	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	The 600-acre lake is open year round and provides many recreational opportunities.			Arkansas Recreation Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Belmont Missionary Baptist Church and Cemetery	8420 Belmont Road	Moscow	Jefferson	Baptist Church	Established in 1901, the church and cemetery are the oldest extant resources in the vicinity associated with the African American settlement in Jefferson County.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Remaking the Delta	H	Y
Beth El Heritage Hall	406 Perry Street	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	Delta Cultural Center	Jews first settled in Helena in the early 1840s. In addition to serving Jews in Helena, Beth El was a regional congregation that attracted Jews from many smaller towns in the region.				Remaking of the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y
Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church	1384 Old Highway 64	Crawfords-ville	Crittenden	Private	The church is the best ecclesiastical example of the Tudor Revival style in Crawfordsville.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Remaking of the Delta	H	Y
Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge	State Highway 18	Manila	Mississippi	US Fish and Wildlife Service	Big Lake NWR was established in 1915 to provide habitat and protection for migrating and wintering birds and is an important link in the Mississippi migration corridor.		National Wildlife Refuge		Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Big Lake Wildlife Management Area	State Highway 18	Manila	Mississippi	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	The 12,161-acre wildlife management area is adjacent to the Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge.			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Big River Crossing/Harahan Bridge	Mississippi River at West Memphis	West Memphis	Crittenden	Big River Park Conservancy	At nearly a mile in length, Big River Crossing/Harahan Bridge is the longest public pedestrian and cyclist bridge across the Mississippi.				Shaped by River and Ridge		Y
Big River Steel	2027 E State Highway 198	Osceola	Mississippi	U.S. Steel Corporation	From iron ore in Minnesota to steel production in Arkansas, this $1.9 billion investment strengthens U.S Steel's ability to create steel made in America, from start to finish.				Remaking the Delta	C	N
Big River Trail	3600 Block of East Broadway	West Memphis	Crittenden	City of West Memphis	The trail offers scenic pathways along the Mississippi River for cycling, running, and walking. The trail stretches from West Memphis into the Arkansas countryside.				Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Black River	Various locations	Corning	Clay		Formed by three smaller streams, the Black River provides opportunities for fishing, duck hunting and wildlife watching.				Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Blytheville Air Force Base Exhibition	3711 Idaho Street	Blytheville	Mississippi	The National Cold War Center	The Blytheville Air Force Base Exhibition is the first phase of development of the National Cold War Center.				Remaking of the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	E/H	Y
Blytheville Commercial Historic District	Various Streets	Blytheville	Mississippi	Multiple	There are 75 resources within the boundaries of the district, including 39 that are historically significant.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	H	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Blytheville Greyhound Bus Station	109 N. 5th Street	Blytheville	Mississippi	City of Blytheville	This Art Moderne style station was built in 1939. and it is believed to be the only one of its kind still in existence.	NRHP			Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y
Boggy Bayou Farm	Highway 42 East	Arkansas City	Desha	Private	This property is significant for its depiction of a Depression-era tenant farmstead.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Shaped by River and Ridge; Roots in the Soil; Conflict and Cooperation	H	N
Bradbury Art Museum	Fowler Center, 201 Olympic Drive	Jonesboro	Craighead	Arkansas State University	The Bradbury Art Museum features changing exhibitions of contemporary art in all mediums.			Part of the Arkansas State University System	Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers; Conflict and Cooperation	C/E	Y
Buck Island Wildlife Management Area	Mississippi River	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	The island's virgin natural setting offers five miles of hiking trails through a 1,000-acre hardwood forest and 500 acres of sand bars ideal for a variety of recreational activities.			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Buffalo Island Loop-Great River Road		Multiple Cities	Mississippi	Various	This route is an official loop off the Great River Road National Scenic Byway, beginning and ending at Blytheville in Mississippi County.		Part of the Great River Road All American Road		Shaped by River and Ridge	C	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Buffalo Island Museum in the First National Bank Building	Highway 18	Monette	Craighead	Monette City	The museum includes Doctor's Office, Kitchen, Beauty Shop, Farming, Hunting, Bedroom, Toys, Farming tools, Music, School Memorabilia, and a Reading Room	NRHP			Roots in the Soil; Conflict and Cooperation	C/E	Y
Bushy Creek Wildlife Management Area	D. Burnett Road	Hickory Ridge	Cross	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	Brushy Creek consists of 220 acres of mostly open land habitat that has been reforested in bottomland hardwoods. Great hunting and recreational opportunities.			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Cache River National Wildlife Refuge	Multiple access points	Brinkley	Monroe	US Fish and Wildlife Service	The Cache River, with the lower White River ecosystem in eastern Arkansas, represents the largest remaining tract of contiguous bottomland hardwood forest in North America.		National Wildlife Refuge		Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Cane Creek State Park	50 State Park Road	Star City	Lincoln	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	Located where the Coastal Plain meets the Mississippi Delta, this park offers the visitor the opportunity to experience both in one visit.			Arkansas State Park	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Captain Daniel Matthews House	335 Elizabeth Avenue	Osceola	Mississippi	Private	This is an example of a simplified Queen Anne style residence from the early period of development in the community of Osceola, Arkansas.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Roots in the Soil	H	N
Cattail Marsh Wildlife Management Area	Near town of Delaplaine	Delaplaine	Greene	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	Small tract located on the Cache River, near the Dave Donaldson Black River Wildlife Management Area.			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Cemetery at Simmons Bank field, UAPB	University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff / Simmons Bank Field	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff	Historic cemetery at the UAPB campus/athletic complex				Conflict and Cooperation	H	Y
Centennial Baptist Church	616 York Street	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	Baptist Church	Severely damaged by storms in 2020, the building was significant as the church of Elias Morris who was a driving force in the establishment of the National Baptist Convention.	NHL	National Historic Landmark		Remaking of the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	N
Central Delta Depot Museum in the 1912 Railroad Depot (part of Lick Skillet RR Historic District)	100 West Cypress	Brinkley	Monroe	Central Delta Historical Society	The museum displays a wide variety of exhibits interpreting the natural, social, agricultural, and cultural history of the Arkansas Delta as well as an exhibit on jazz trumpeter and big band leader Louis Jordan.	NRHP			Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/H	Y
Chalk Bluff Park, Battle Site and Natural Area	County Road 368	St. Francis	Clay	Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission	Chalk Bluff overlooks the St. Francis River and lies at Arkansas's northeast point of Crowley's Ridge. It's important both geologically and historically.	NRHP		State Natural Area	Conflict and Cooperation	E/H/N	Y
Chicot County Courthouse	417 Main Street	Lake Village	Chicot	Chicot County	The building contains many Art Deco features. The vertical emphasis is reflected by the continuous concrete casing that spans the second and third-story windows.	NRHP			Remaking of the Delta	H	Y
Clarendon Tourist Welcome Center	204 Madison Street	Clarendon	Monroe	City of Clarendon	Exhibits include panels displaying information about the 1927 flood, the Civil War, and the Louisiana Purchase.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	H	Y

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Cotton Boll Stadium	Scogin Drive	Monticello	Drew	University of Arkansas	Built in 1936 in association with the Public Works Administration for the University of Arkansas at Monticello, this facility is still in use today.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Remaking the Delta	C/H/R	Y
Craighead County Courthouse	511 Main Street	Jonesboro	Craighead	Craighead County	Built in 1934, this is the only notable example of Art Deco construction in Jonesboro.	NRHP			Conflict and Cooperation	H	Y
Craighead Forest Park	4910 S. Culberhouse Road	Jonesboro	Craighead	Jonesboro Parks and Recreation Dept.	Craighead Forest Park is a city-owned park located in the scenic beauty of Crowley's Ridge. The park offers many recreational opportunities.				Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Crittenden County Courthouse	85 Jackson Street	Marion	Crittenden	County of Crittenden	The Crittenden County Courthouse is a Classical Revival style two-story brick building completed in 1911.	NRHP			Remaking of the Delta	H	Y
Crittenden County Museum	1112 Main Street at Commerce Street	Earle	Crittenden	Crittenden County	The museum is housed in the renovated Missouri Pacific Railroad Depot. The collection includes a variety of art and historic artifacts from the region.	NRHP			Remaking of the Delta; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/H	Y
Crocketts Bluff Hunting Lodge	North of Highway 153 on a dirt road	Crocketts Bluff	Arkansas	Private	The Crocketts Bluff Hunting Lodge is significant in its representation of a facility used for social and recreational hunting purposes.	NRHP			Shaped by River and Ridge	C/H	N

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Cross County Museum and Archives	711 East Union	Wynne	Cross	Cross County Historical Society	Features the history of Cross County with exhibits, county history and touring exhibits.				Remaking of the Delta; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	E/H	Y
Crowley's Ridge Gravel Trail	100 Main Street - starting point	Piggott	Multiple	State of Arkansas	This is a 249-mile bikepacking route that goes from Piggott to Marianna. And traverses 7 state parks, 1 national forest and 18 delta towns.				Roots in the Soil	N/R	Y
Crowley's Ridge Parkway National Scenic Byway	Varies	Multiple Cities	Multiple	Delta Byways/National Scenic Byway Association	The Crowley's Ridge Parkway is a National Scenic Byway that runs through eastern Arkansas and highlights Crowley's Ridge, a unique geological formation that rises above the Mississippi Alluvial Plain.		National Scenic Byway		Shaped by River and Ridge; Roots in the Soil	C/E/H/N/R	Y
Crowley's Ridge State Park	2092 Highway 163 N	Walcott	Greene	Arkansas Parks	This park lies atop the forested Crowley's Ridge. Many of the park's features date from the early 1930s when the Civilian Conservation Corps built the facilities.	NRHP		Arkansas State Park	Shaped by River and Ridge	H/N/R	Y
Cummins State Farm	2450 Highway 388	Grady	Lincoln	Arkansas Department of Corrections	Cummins State Farm, also known as Cummins Unit, is the state's oldest operational state prison farm.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	N
Cut-off Creek Ravines Natural Area	Off County Road 51	Collins	Drew	Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission	This 377-acre area, which lies within the Cut-off Creek Wildlife Management Area, is a valuable example of Coastal Plain transition to Mississippi Alluvial Plain.			State Natural Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Cut-off Creek Wildlife Management Area	Off County Road 51	Collins	Drew	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	This 9,080-acre public hunting area is mostly bottomland hardwood with some upland sites.			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Dale Bumpers White River National Wildlife Refuge	57 SCC Camp Road off Highway 1	St. Charles	Arkansas	U,S, Fish And Wildlife Service	This refuge is the largest remaining tract of bottomland hardwoods (160,000 acres) in the state.		National Wildlife Refuge		Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Davies Cemetery	Lake Hall Road	Lake Village	Chicot	Private	The Davies Cemetery contains thirteen marked graves. These burials took place more than sixty-nine years ago.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Conflict and Cooperation	H	Y
Delta Cultural Center	Locations at 95 Missouri Street and 141 Cherry Street	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	The Delta Cultural Center has multiple buildings and outdoor park and exhibit areas, with major exhibits in a restored depot and a Visitors Center on Cherry Street.				Roots in the Soil; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/H	Y
Delta Dirt Distillery	430 Cherry Street	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	The Williams Family - Delta Dirt Distillery Inc..	Delta Dirt Distillery is a family-owned, craft distillery located in the Arkansas Delta. They grow their own produce and grains on the farm where these authentic spirits are distilled.				Roots in the Soil; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C	Y
Delta Gateway Museum	210 W. Main Street	Blytheville	Mississippi	Delta Gateway Museum	Housed in the historic Kress Building in the heart of Blytheville's Commercial Historic District, this regional heritage museum illustrates broad historical themes.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E/H	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Delta Heritage Trail State Park		Multiple	Multiple	Multiple	When the rail-to-trail project is complete, it will be 84.5-miles long. To date, there are 71 miles of trail completed.			Arkansas State Park	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Delta Peanut	9605 CW Post Road	Jonesboro	Craighead	Delta Peanut Co.	Delta Peanut is a 100% farmer-owned, state-of-the-art peanut shelling facility that is the first of its kind in the Mid-South.				Roots in the Soil	C/E	Y
Delta Rhythm & Bayous Cultural District	Main Street - Second to Fourth Avenues	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	City of Pine Bluff / Pine Bluff Advertising & Promotion Commission / Delta Rhythm & Bayous partners	Downtown cultural district organized around Pine Bluff's blues, gospel, and broader American music heritage, with interpretive and public-space investments.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers; Conflict and Cooperation	C/E/H/R	Y
Delta Rhythm & Bayous Highway/ Cultural District	Varies	Pine Bluff	Multiple		This is a multi-state cultural heritage initiative spanning US Highway 65 in Arkansas and US Highway 82 in Mississippi.		National Cultural Highway		Shaped by River and Ridge	C/E/H/R	Y
Delta Rhythm & Bayous Wellness Plaza	Third Avenue and Main Street Bobby Rush Way	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	City of Pine Bluff / Pine Bluff Advertising & Promotion Commission	Downtown cultural district organized around Pine Bluff's blues, gospel, and broader American music heritage, with interpretive and public-space investments.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers; Conflict and Cooperation	C/E/H/R	Y
Demott Historical Museum	215 East Iowa Street	Dermott	Chicot	City of Dermott	The museum has an extensive collection of photos and information on the Dermott area founding families.				Roots in the Soil; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E/H	Y

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Desha County Courthouse	608 Rober S. Moore Avenue	Arkansas City	Desha	Desha County	This 1900 Romanesque Revival structure is widely recognized as one of the most architecturally significant structures in southeast Arkansas.	NRHP			Shaped by River and Ridge; Roots in the Soil; Conflict and Cooperation	H	Y
Desha County Museum	264 Hwy 165 East	Dumas	Desha	Desha County	The museum includes ten buildings furnished with artifacts of the Delta.				Roots in the Soil; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E/H	Y
DeWitt City Park/Mitchell Lake	South Whitehead Drive	DeWitt	Arkansas	DeWitt City	A thirty-five-acre park offers an attractive rest stop for travelers. Park offers free fishing, a walking path, and a playground.				Shaped by River and Ridge	R	Y
Ditch Bayou Battle Site	Hwys 65/278	Lake Village	Chicot	Private	This is the site of the largest battle in Chicot County and the last significant Civil War battle on Arkansas soil in 1864.				Conflict and Cooperation	H	Y
Downtown Osceola	Walnut Avenue	Osceola	Mississippi	Multiple	Downtown Osceola features the Main Street Osceola offices, Bingo Hall, Pocket Park, unique shops, and restaurants, and 41 buildings on the National Register.	NRHP			Roots in the Soil	C/H	Y
Dr. Herbert H. McAdams House	300 East Nettleton Avenue	Jonesboro	Craighead	Jonesboro Montessori School	This 1913-era Craftsman-Style house is significant for its association with the development of the medical profession and community in Jonesboro.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y

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Draper Cemetery Site	Cross County Road 747	Colt	Cross	Private	The site is significant as a remnant of the mid-19th century development period of Cross County.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Conflict and Cooperation	H	Y
Drew County Courthouse	201 South Main Street	Monticello	Drew	Drew County	This courthouse is a striking example of a Classic Revival, Art Deco, Art Moderne-style building designed by architect H. Ray Burks in 1932.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	H	Y
Drew County Historical Museum	404 South Main Street	Monticello	Drew	Drew County Historical Society	This museum contains artifacts and antiques in a home built in 1909; it features two 1800s log cabins, guided tours, and activity programs				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E/H	Y
Drew County Loop-Great River Road	Varies	Multiple Cities	Drew	Great River Road National Scenic Byway	The drive west through Drew County to Monticello gives a clear picture of the transition from Delta lowlands to the upland timber country and Coastal Plains topography.		Part of the Great River Road All American Road		Shaped by River and Ridge; Roots in the Soil	C/E/H/N/R	Y
Ducks Unlimited Park	Mississippi River Banks	West Memphis	Crittenden	Ducks Unlimited	This is a 1,500 acre public park and conservation site located by the Mississippi River in West Memphis, Arkansas, directly across from downtown Memphis.				Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Dumas Area Arts Council	100 South Main Street	Dumas	Desha	Dumas Area Arts Council	Located in the former Dante's Department Store, this is now the home of the Dumas Area Arts Council.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C	Y

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Dyess Colony Driving Tour	Colony Center	Dyess	Mississippi	Multiple	Interpretive markers include the school, hospital, cotton gin, cannery, administration building, commissary, cafe and shops. This Driving Tour is of the Colony Center only.				Remaking the Delta; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers; Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y
Eaker Archeological Site	Located on the Eaker Air Force Base	Blytheville	Mississippi	US Air Force	The site is the largest and most intact Late Mississippian Nodena phase village site within the Central Mississippi Valley.	NHL	National Historic Landmark		Conflict and Cooperation	H	N
Earl Buss-Bayou Deview Wildlife Management Area	AR 14 or 214	Weiner	Poinsett	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	The 4,254-acre area is comprised of three separate tracts of land developed specifically as wintering waterfowl areas considered by many sportsmen as the best duck hunting area.			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Elaine Massacre Memorial	622 Walnut Street in Court Square Park	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	City of Helena-West Helena	The site is meant to be a place of remembrance and reverence to memorialize the black sharecroppers who died during a massacre that occurred in Helena in September 1919.				Roots in the Soil; Remaking the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	C/E/H	Y
Estevan Hall	653 S. Biscoe Street	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	Private	Also known as the Hanks Homestead, Estevan Hall is one of the oldest structures in Phillips County. Built in the 1820s, it has been continually owned and occupied by a member of the Hanks family.				Roots in the Soil	C/H	N
Ethel Wildlife Management Area	281 Padgett Levee Road	DeWitt	Arkansas	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	This 176-acre area is composed of early successional hardwoods intermixed with older bottomland hardwoods.			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y

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Fargo Agricultural School Museum	484 Floyd Brown Drive	Fargo	Monroe	State of Arkansas	Floyd Brown started the Fargo Agricultural School in 1919. The school provided a quality high school education to thousands of black students for 30 years. Now a museum celebrating Brown's legacy.				Roots in the Soil; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	H	Y
First Baptist Church	306 E. Cross Street	Forrest City	St. Francis	Baptist Church	The first brick church for a black congregation in Forrest City was completed by 1914. This church is a significant example of generations of black religious leadership in Forrest City.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Remaking the Delta	C/H	Y
First Missionary Baptist Church	313 South New Orleans Street	Brinkley	Monroe	Baptist Church	The First Missionary Baptist was founded as the Colored Missionary First Baptist Church of Brinkley in 1875. It continues to be a source of community to the Brinkley's African American Baptist members.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Remaking the Delta	C/H	Y
Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center	600 East Lawson Road	Jonesboro	Craighead	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	The Nature Center tells the story of the unique ridge that traverses the Arkansas segment of the Mississippi Delta with indoor and outdoor exhibits, films, and trails.			State Nature Center	Shaped by River and Ridge	E/N	Y
Fort Curtis	250 Columbia Street	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	City of Helena-West Helena	Fort Curtis is a partially-reconstructed American Civil War fortification built in 2012 to replace the original structure destroyed during Reconstruction.				Conflict and Cooperation	H	Y

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Fowler Center for the Arts	201 Olympic Drive	Jonesboro	Craighead	Arkansas State University	This facility is known throughout the South as a hub for civic, arts, and community functions.			Part of the Arkansas State University System	Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers; Conflict and Cooperation	C	Y
Freddie Black Choctaw Island Wildlife Management Area	President Avenue	Arkansas City	Desha	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	Located along the Mississippi Flyway, Choctaw Island provides stopover habitat for migrating birds and has been designated an Important Bird Area.			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	H/N/R	Y
Freedom Park	680 South Biscoe	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	Delta Cultural Center	Freedom Park is the first location in Arkansas designated as a National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom site and interprets the African American experience during the war.		National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Site		Remaking the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y
General Robert E. Lee Monument	67 West Main Street	Marianna	Lee	United Daughters of the Confederacy	The General Robert E. Lee Monument, was erected by the United Daughters of the Confederacy in honor of Lee County's Confederate soldiers.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	H	Y
George H. Dunklin Jr. Bayou Meto Wildlife Management Area	31 Duck Lane	Humphrey	Arkansas	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	The area consisting of 33,832 acres between Stuttgart and Pine Bluff. It's internationally known as a prime waterfowl hunting facility and a winter-habitat.			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/T	Y

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Governor J.M. Futrell House	130 South 14th Street	Paragould	Greene	Greene County	Historic home of Governor Futrell, who served from 1933 to 1937, and is best known for saving Arkansas from financial ruin during his term in the depression era.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Remaking the Delta	H	N
Governor Mike Huckabee Delta Rivers Nature Center	1400 Black Dog Road	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	The Delta Rivers Nature Center teaches visitors the Delta's heritage, wildlife and ecology in both indoor and outdoor settings.			State Nature Center	Shaped by River and Ridge; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	E/N/R	Y
Graceland Cemetery	2122 West Pullen Street	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	City of Pine Bluff	There are several important people buried here who influenced politics and various inventors who are notable in the region.				Remaking the Delta	H	Y
Grand Lake	Near town of Eudora	Eudora	Chicot	City of Eudora	Wooded lake is excellent for catches of bass, catfish and panfish, along with multiple other varieties of fish.				Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Gravel Hill Cemetery	Clay County Road 336	St. Francis	Clay	Private	The cemetery began during the Civil War when soldiers killed in action at the nearby Chalk Bluff Battle were buried there.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Conflict and Cooperation	H	Y
Gravesite of World's Largest Man	2206 US Highway 64	Marion	Crittenden	Private	Billed as the "World's Largest Man" during his circus days, James Grover "Big Jim" Tarver is buried in the Crittenden Memorial Cemetery in Marion.				Remaking of the Delta	C/H	Y

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Great River Road National Scenic Byway of Arkansas	Varies		Multiple	Great River Road Commission/Delta Byways/National Scenic Byway Association	The byway offers travelers a glimpse into the rich history and culture of the Delta region and the agricultural lands that have been shaped by the river.		All American Road and National Scenic Byway		Shaped by River and Ridge; Roots in the Soil	C/E/H	Y
Greene County Historic Courthouse	Corner of 3rd Street and West Court Street	Paragould	Greene	Greene County	Erected in 1888, this building functioned as the county courthouse until a new building was built in 1996. Today it houses the Paragould Regional Chamber of Commerce.				Remaking the Delta	H	Y
Greene County Museum	130 South 14th Street	Paragould	Greene	Greene County Historical Society	Located within the J.M. Futrell House, the museum's 14 rooms are filled with treasured, unique, artifacts and heirlooms.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	H	Y
Grider Field/Pine Bluff Regional Airport	709 Hangar Row	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	City of Pine Bluff / Pine Bluff Aviation Commission	Current municipal airport developed from Grider Field, a World War II primary flying school that trained military pilots as part of the national wartime mobilization.				Remaking the Delta	H/R	Y
H.L. Mitchell/Clay East Building	Main Street	Tyronza	Poinsett	Private	This building is significant because of who used it: two of the principal founders of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU), Henry Clay East and H.L. Mitchell. Both considered socialists.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Roots in the Soil; Remaking the Delta	C/H	N
Hale Avenue Historic District	Hale Avenue	Osceola	Mississippi	Multiple	Hale Avenue was established as the main east/west commercial corridor in the town of Osceola when it moved west from its original location. Buildings are from 1900 to 1919.	NRHP			Roots in the Soil; Remaking the Delta	C/H	Y

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Hall Cemetery	Clay County Road 347	St. Francis	Clay	Private	Many of St. Francis' notable families are buried at Hall Cemetery. These families have some of the more ornate gravestones.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Conflict and Cooperation	H	Y
Hammock House	502 South Pecan	Dermott	Chicot	Private	Historic 1911 house built by Judge E.G. Hammock, an early mayor of Dermott and a district Chancellor Judge for a quarter-of-a-century.				Roots in the Soil; Remaking of the Delta	H	N
Hampson Archeological Museum State Park	33 Park Avenue	Wilson	Mississippi	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	Hampson Archeological Museum State Park exhibits a nationally renowned collection from the Nodena site, a 15-acre palisaded village that once thrived on a meander bend of the Mississippi River.			Arkansas State Park	Roots in the Soil; Conflict and Cooperation	E/H	Y
Harrisburg Commercial Historic District	Multiple streets	Harrisburg	Poinsett	Multiple	This district represents the 1888-1959 commercial core of the Poinsett County governmental seat.	NRHP			Roots in the Soil	C/H	Y
Helena Museum of Phillips County	623 Pecan Street	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	Great River Road National Scenic Byway	Phillips County history is told through exhibits using the museum's impressive collections. One feature is a diorama of the Battle of Helena.		National Scenic Byway		Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/H	Y

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Helena River Park and River Walk	Perry Street to Levee	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	City of Helena-West Helena	An elevated boardwalk takes visitors right to the edge of the river, with interpretive panels that explain some of the local ecosystem and Civil War history.				Shaped by River and Ridge; Conflict and Cooperation	C/E/H/N/R	Y
Hemingway-Pfeifer Museum and Educational Center	1021 West Cherry Street	Piggot	Clay	Arkansas State University	The home of Paul and Mary Pfeiffer, whose daughter Pauline was married to Ernest Hemingway from 1927-1940, It includes a studio building where Hemingway wrote portions of *A Farewell to Arms* .	NRHP		Part of the Arkansas State University System	Roots in the Soil; Remaking of the Delta; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E/H	Y
Heritage Park and Amphitheater	Heritage Park Road	Piggot	Clay	Piggott Parks and Recreation Dept.	Heritage Park is an outdoor park complete with a stocked fishing lake, three pavilions, picnic grounds, amphitheater, walking trails, two playgrounds and a fishing dock.				Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Herman Davis State Park	Baltimore Avenue and Highway 18	Manila	Mississippi	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	The park consists of a grassy area, with a concrete walk leading to the memorial. The memorial is a granite obelisk, memorializing Herman Davis a soldier in WWI.			Arkansas State Park	Shaped by River and Ridge	H	Y
Historic Dyess Colony Center	110 Center Drive	Dyess	Mississippi	Arkansas State University	This site focuses on the 1934 establishment of the nation's largest agricultural resettlement project. It includes exhibits about the history of the colony and lifestyles of the colonists.	NRHP			Roots in the Soil; Remaking the Delta; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers; Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y
Horseshoe Lake	Six miles east of Hughes, via Arkansas 38	Hughes	St. Francis	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	This is the second largest natural lake in Arkansas and is surrounded by massive stands of cypress trees. Very popular with anglers.				Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y

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Hotel Pines	Main Street and West 5th Avenue	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	Pine Bluff Rising	When it opened in 1913 the Hotel Pines was regarded as one of the finest hotels in Arkansas, located conveniently near the Union Station.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	H	N
Immanuel High School	68 Immanuel Road	Almyra	Arkansas	Citizens for Immanuel	The Immanuel High School building was constructed by African Americans for the sole purpose of educating their children in the 1800s.	NRHP			Remaking of the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	N
Independence School	921 East Fourth Street	Stuttgart	Arkansas	The Stuttgart Agricultural Museum	This is a good example of a rural, one-room Plain Traditional style school built in 1914.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Remaking of the Delta	C/E	Y
Jerome Japanese American Relocation Center - Marker	Off US 165, Southwest of McGehee	Jerome	Drew	Arkansas Department of Transportation	Granite marker commemorates site of a World War II relocation center for Japanese-Americans. Kiosk tells narrative history of the camp.				Remaking the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y
Jerome Japanese American Relocation Center Memorial (Landscape)	US 165	Jerome	Drew	State of Arkansas	This is the site of the Japanese-American Relocation Camp that existed during WWII in Jerome. A number of structures are still standing.		One of two Japanese American incarceration centers established in Arkansas	Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Remaking the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y
John H. Johnson Commemorative Plaza	Delta Heritage Trail Arkansas City trailhead	Arkansas City	Desha	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism/Local Partners	Public commemorative plaza honoring Arkansas City native John H. Johnson, founder of Johnson Publishing Company and a nationally influential African American publisher and entrepreneur.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers; Conflict and Cooperation	C/E/H/R	Y

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John H. Johnson Museum	Courthouse Square	Arkansas City	Desha	Friends of the John H. Johnson Museum	This museum honors the life of founder and publisher of Ebony and Jet magazines.				Remaking the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y
John Tushek Building	108 Main Street	Lake Village	Chicot	Private	The John Tushek Building is a brick commercial, retail and office structure designed in a vernacular interpretation of the Beaux-Arts style. The restored building is Lake Village City Hall.	NRHP			Remaking of the Delta	H	Y
Johnny Cash Boyhood Home	Access from Dyess Colony	Dyess	Mississippi	Arkansas State University	This was the boyhood home of music legend Johnny Cash that inspired such hits as "Five Feet High and Rising." The Cash home is one of the few houses remaining in the former New Deal-era colony.	NRHP			Roots in the Soil; Remaking the Delta; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E/H	Y
Johnny Cash Memorial Highway	Highway 17 between Dyess and Wilson	Dyess	Mississippi	Arkansas Department of Transportation	Named in honor of the town's most famous son -- legendary country musician Johnny Cash.				Roots in the Soil; Remaking the Delta; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C	Y
Judd Hill Cooperative Research Station (aka Judd Hill Plantation)	Highway 214	Trumann	Poinsett	Judd Hill Foundation	An historic 3,800-acre cotton farm and agricultural research center. Originally founded by Orange Judd Hill in 1925.				Roots in the Soil; Remaking the Delta	C/E/H	Y
King Biscuit Blues Festival	319 Phillips Street	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	KBBF (King Biscuit Blues Festival)	The fesitval attracts thousands of people every year in October to preserve the music of the Delta. Named after the long-running radio show, King Biscuit Time				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/H	Y

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King Biscuit Time	Delta Cultural Center, 223 Cherry Street	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	Delta Cultural Center / Arkansas Heritage; broadcast partnership with KFFA	Blues radio program founded in Helena in 1941 and still broadcast five days a week from the Delta Cultural Center's Sounds Gallery; a living tradition tied to the Delta's national music story.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E/H	Y
KVSA Radio - The voice of southeast Arkansas	US Highway 65 South	McGehee	Desha	Last owned by: Southeast Arkansas Broadcasters, Inc.	This radio station has been serving up tunes in the Arkansas Delta for more than 60 years. The building is an icon on the Delta landscape.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/H	N
KWEM Radio Exhibit	2000 West Broadway	West Memphis	Crittenden	Arkansas State University Mid-South	KWEM Radio, an historic West Memphis radio station that influenced the course of modern music, is interpreted at ASU Mid-South in West Memphis.			Part of the Arkansas State University System	Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/H	Y
Lake Ashbaugh	Off Highway 280 near the Dave Donaldson Wildlife Area	Delaplaine	Greene	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	This 500-acre lake 10 miles east of Pocahontas is a favorite spot for all types of fishing.				Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Lake Austell/Lake Austell Trail	Village Creek State Park	Wynne	Cross	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	Lake Austell Trail meanders along steep, hogback ridges and through a wooded stream valley to Lake Austell.			Arkansas State Park	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y

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Lake Chicot State Park	2542 Highway 257	Lake Village	Chicot	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	At 20 miles long, Lake Chicot is the largest natural lake in Arkansas and the largest oxbow lake in North America.			Arkansas State Park	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Lake Frierson State Park	7904 Highway 141 S	Walcott	Greene	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	Up on Crowley's Ridge, this 335-acre lake offers a peaceful setting for bream, catfish, crappie, and bass fishing.			Arkansas State Park	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Lake Kate Adams	Off Route 43	Arkansas City	Desha	Arkansas City	The lake serves as a popular site for fisherman, bird watchers, duck hunters, and those wanting a pristine view of Delta sunsets				Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Lake Monticello	AR. Highway 35	Monticello	Drew	City of Monticello	Originally planned to be a secondary water reservoir for Monticello, the 1,520-acre lake is becoming well known as a bass lake.				Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Lake Poinsett State Park	5752 State Park Lane	Harrisburg	Poinsett	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	Lake Poinsett is 640-acres and it is nestled atop Crowley's Ridge. It provides excellent fishing and other recreational opportunities.			Arkansas State Park	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y

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Lake Village WPA Post Office Mural	206 S. Cokley Street	Lake Village	Chicot	US Postal Service	The Lake Village mural, by Illinois artist Avery Johnson, depicts a wildlife scene native to the area.	NRHP	US Post Office		Shaped by River and Ridge	H	Y
Lake Wallace	191 Lake Wallace Road	Dermott	Chicot	Town of Dermott	Lake Wallace is 362 acres of cypress trees and stumps with line stretching largemouths hiding in the shadows.				Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Lakeport Plantation Museum	601 Highway 142	Lake Village	Chicot	Arkansas State University	The Lakeport Plantation house, a modified Greek Revival home built circa 1859, is one of the only remaining plantation homes unaltered on the Mississippi River.			Part of Arkansas State University System	Roots in the Soil; Remaking of the Delta	C/E/H	Y
Lakeview Agricultural Resettlement Colony	Arkansas Highway 44	Lake View	Phillips	Town of Lake View	Lake View was an early resettlement colony specifically for African American farm families during the Depression. It was a counterpart to the Dyess Colony in Mississippi County.				Roots in the Soil; Remaking the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	Cc/h	N
Lee County Courthouse	15 Chestnut Street	Marianna	Lee	Lee County	Architects used the Classical Revival style, which was considered more fashionable and representative of the county's ambitions to add to the original 1890 structure.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	H	Y
Lee County Wildlife Management Area	Off Highway 131	Haynes	Lee	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	The 200-acre management area is comprised of old agricultural fields that have been reforested, providing a an abundance of wildlife.			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge		Y

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Lepanto Commercial Historic District	Various Streets	Lepanto	Poinsett	Multiple	This district was once a thriving commercial center for Lepanto. There are 41 buildings and 7 ancillary structures within the district boundaries, including 26 that are historically significant.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	C/H	Y
Lepanto Museum USA	310 S. Greenwood Avenue (Main Street)	Lepanto	Poinsett	Town of Lepanto	The Museum provides displays of Delta history in replicas of old-time stores at the only town named Lepanto in the United States.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E/H	Y
Levon Helm Boyhood Home	Carruth Avenue and North Elm Street	Marvell	Phillips	Private	The boyhood home of Levon Helm was relocated to its current site. Helm was best known as the drummer and singer for the Canadian rock group "The Band," and went on later to lead his own band .			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/H	Y
Levon Helm Marker	Highway 243	Turkey Scratch	Lee	Arkansas Department of Transportation	Levon Helm gained fame as a member of the famous group The Band. He was awarded two Grammy awards for Best Americana Album. He grew up in Turkey Scratch.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C	Y
Lincoln County Courthouse	300 South Drew Street	Star City	Lincoln	Lincoln County	Lincoln County Courthouse, constructed in 1943 is significant as the best, and perhaps only, example of the Art Deco style in the county.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	C/H	Y
Lindbergh Marker	Lakeshore Drive	Lake Village	Chicot	Lindbergh Foundation	Historical marker on North Lakeshore Drive marks the site where Col. Charles A. Lindbergh landed his plane, "Lucky Lindy," after conducting his first night flight.				Remaking of the Delta	H	Y

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Lion Oil Company Duck Hunting Lodge	625 Cook's Lake Road	Casscoe	Arkansas	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	This is a good representation of a facility used for social and recreational hunting purposes in the Arkansas Delta.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Shaped by River and Ridge	C/H/R	Y
Little House	207 Madison Street	Dell	Mississippi	Private	This house is the best example of a Craftsman bungalow in the small town of Dell in Mississippi County. The design of the home has been a key focal point in the community for over seventy-five years.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Remaking the Delta	H	N
Lon Mann Cotton Research Station	Highway 1 South	Marianna	Lee	University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture	Established in 1925, the Cotton Research Station is known for developing improved cotton cultivars with genetic traits for faster fruiting and earlier maturity.			Part of the Arkansas State University System	Roots in the Soil; Remaking the Delta	N	N
Louis Rudolph and Flossie Belle Ritter House	100 East Nettleton	Jonesboro	Craighead	Private	This is an example of a Spanish Colonial Revival Style residence in northeastern Arkansas designed by prominent local architect Elmer A. Stuck.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Roots in the Soil	H	N
Louisiana Purchase State Park	Highway 362 near Blackton	Brinkley	Monroe	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	This site preserves the initial point from which all surveys of the property acquired through the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 were initiated.	NHL	National Historic Landmark	Arkansas State Park	Shaped by River and Ridge	H/N/R	Y
Louisiana Purchase State Park Marker	Highway 362	Marianna	Lee	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	This stone marks the base established November 10, 1815, from which the lands of the Louisiana Purchase were surveyed by United States engineers.	NHL	National Historic Landmark	Arkansas State Park	Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y

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Mack's Prairie Wings	2335 Highway 63 North	Stuttgart	Arkansas	Mack's	Mack's is a retail establishment that provides equipment for sportsmen of all kinds. Stuttgart is known as the "Waterfowl Capital of the World".				Shaped by River and Ridge	C/E/R	Y
Mallard Lake	Within Big Lake Wildlife Management Area	Manila	Mississippi	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	The 300-acre lake, maintained by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, was created in 1967 by the placement of a series of levees in the marshy lowlands of the 12,000-acre preserve.			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Manila Depot Museum	Manila train depot -105 Baltimore Avenue	Manila	Mississippi	Manila Depot Committee	This local area museum, which opened in 2001, is housed in the old Manila train depot. The museum houses military exhibits as well as exhibits showing what the depot looked like during operations.	NRHP			Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E/H	Y
Marianna/Lee County Museum	67 West Main Street	Marianna	Lee	Marianna Chamber of Commerce	Housed in a circa 1910 Elks Club building, the museum features a general store, parlor and kitchen, cotton farming, and various other displays.	NRHP			Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/H	Y
Marion McCollum Lake Greenlee	West Cypress Street	Brinkley	Monroe	Monroe County Parks	Lake Greenlee is a 300-acre reservoir located just 2.3 miles southeast of Brinkley. It is well known by sportsmen for the excellent fishing there.				Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Marked Tree Commercial Historic District	Various Streets	Marked Tree	Poinsett	Multiple	The district represents the commercial core of Marked Tree. Within the boundaries are 15 buildings, with 10 being historically significant. Time frame is 1910-1937.	NRHP			Roots in the Soil	C/H	Y

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Marked Tree Siphons	Off US 63	Marked Tree	Poinsett	US Army Corps of Engineers	Built as part of the St. Francis River Basin Flood Control Project, these uniquely engineered structures were designed to divert the river's flow to deposit it on the other side of the levee.	NRHP			Shaped by River and Ridge	H	N
Martha Beall Mitchell House and Museum	902 W. 4th Avenue	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	City of Pine Bluff	Martha Mitchell became America's most admired Washington, DC socialite and whistleblower of the Watergate break-in.				Conflict and Cooperation	H	Y
Matilda and Karl Pfeiffer Museum	1071 Heritage Park Drive	Piggot	Clay	The Pfeiffer Museum Board	The museum houses the Matilda Pfeiffer gem and mineral collection from around the world, Native American artifacts, and an extensive library.				Remaking of the Delta	E/H/N	Y
McClendon-Mann-Felton Cotton Gin	331 Lee Road 303	Marianna	Lee	Family owned	The gin combines the earlier ginning operations of the Mann-McClendon families and the Felton family, longtime prominent residents of Lee County.				Roots in the Soil	C	Y
Memphis to Little Rock Road - Village Creek State Park	Village Creek State Park	Newcastle	Cross	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	The Memphis to Little Rock Road Segment - is a remnant of the early nineteenth century road from Little Rock to the Mississippi River through eastern Arkansas.	NRHP		Arkansas State Park	Shaped by River and Ridge; Roots in the Soil	C/H/R	Y
Memphis to Little Rock Road, Blackfish Lake to Hill Lake Segment	Cross County Road 1005	Gladden	St. Francis	Arkansas Department of Transportation	The Memphis to Little Rock road first constructed in the 1820s became a route for people to immigrate to the west. It was also used to relocate tribal members from their ancestral homelands.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y

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Memphis to Little Rock Road, Highway 306 Segment	Arkansas Highway 306	Pinetree	St. Francis	Arkansas Department of Transportation	The Memphis to Little Rock road first constructed in the 1820s became a route for people to immigrate to the west. It was also used to relocate tribal members from their ancestral homelands.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y
Menard-Hodges Site	Located within the Arkansas Post National Memorial	Nady	Arkansas	National Park Service	This is an archaeological site that includes two large platform mounds as well as several house mounds.	NHL	National Historic Landmark		Roots in the Soil; Conflict and Cooperation	C/E/H	Y
Merrisach Lake	146 Merrisach Lane	Tichnor	Arkansas	Private	A very secluded, peaceful and quiet campground. Located on the Arkansas River System. A favorite of those who hunt in the Wildlife Management Areas nearby.				Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Mississippi County Courthouse Museum and Historical Society	In the original Fred G. Patterson Store. 207 West Hale Avenue	Osceola	Mississippi	Mississippi County Historic Society	The building remains much as it was in those early years as the Fred G. Patterson Store, with the fixtures, shelving, and stools remaining untouched.				Shaped by River and Ridge; Remaking the Delta; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers; Conflict and Cooperation	C/E/H	Y
Mississippi County Courthouse, Chickasawba District	200 W. Walnut Street	Blytheville	Mississippi	Mississippi County	This structure is a 1919-21 Colonial Revival courthouse. The foyer introduces the stateliness of this building, with a ceiling two floors high and walls and floor of white marble.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	H	Y

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Mississippi County Courthouse, Osceola	Hale Avenue and Poplar Street	Osceola	Mississippi	Mississippi County	The Osceola Courthouse is a Neo-Classical structure completed in 1912. It is the only building in the county - and one of the few in the state - where baked stone tile has been used.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	H	Y
Mississippi River State Park	Bear Creek Lake	Marianna	Lee	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	The Mississippi River State Park is a 550-acre park within the St. Francis National Forest.			Arkansas State Park	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Missouri-Pacific Depot	100 S. Railroad Street	McGehee	Desha	McGehee Area Chamber of Commerce	The structure is significant for its 1910 Mediterranean/Craftsman architectural style It currently houses the Internment Museum.	NRHP			Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y
Monroe County Courthouse	123 Madison Street	Clarendon	Monroe	Monroe County	The 1911 courthouse features a classically-influenced design by Charles L. Thompson.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	H	Y
Monroe County Loop-Great River Road	Variety of roads	Multiple Cities	Monroe	Monroe County	This is an official route off the Great River Road National Scenic Byway. The loop through Monroe County takes visitors on an historic journey passing a variety of unusual sites.		Part of the Great River Road All American Road		Shaped by River and Ridge	C/E/H	Y

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Monticello Confederate Monument	Oakland Cementery	Monticello	Drew	Drew County	The monument stands at the end of the main entrance road to the Oaklawn Cemetery. It was dedicated in 1915 to the Confederate soldiers of Drew County.	NRHP			Conflict and Cooperation	H	Y
Monticello WPA Bas-Relief Mural in the Monticello Post Office	211 W. Gaines Street	Monticello	Drew	Monticello Economic Development Commission	As part of the WPA post office art project, this mural is comprised of three bas-reliefs of unglazed terra cotta sculptures illustrating tomato culture.	NRHP	US Post Office		Roots in the Soil	C/H	Y
Moore Bayou Recreation Area	Arkansas Highway 169	Gillett	Arkansas	US Army Corps of Engineers	This is a campground with a boat launch that provides access to the five-mile Arkansas Post water trail, a cooperative boat trail.				Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Moore-Hornor House	323 Beech Street	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	Delta Cultural Center	The Moore-Hornor Home served as a hospital following the Battle of Helena. Bullet holes in the parlor doors are a vivid reminder of the Battle of Helena.	NRHP			Conflict and Cooperation	H	Y
Mt. Zion Methodist Episcopal Church South Cemetery	County Road 367	Vanndale	Cross	Private	Mount Zion Methodist Episcopal Church South Cemetery comprises graves of early settlers of Vanndale, Wynne, and the surrounding area, and Cross County.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Remaking of the Delta	C/H	Y

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Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie	921 East 4th Street	Stuttgart	Arkansas	Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie, Inc.	A museum with more than 15,000 artifacts depicting farm life on the Grand Prairie, including that of early German settlers.				Roots in the Soil	C/E/H	Y
National Cold War Center	Eaker Air Force Base 4701 Memorial Dr	Blytheville	Mississippi	The National Cold War Center	The National Cold War Center, will be a major tourist attraction that will provide an immersive experience in interpreting and honoring the legacy of the Cold War.				Remaking the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	E/H	Y
New Hope School	3762 Arkansas Highway 284	Wynne	Cross	Cross County Historical Society	The New Hope School is a single-story wood frame structure that was built in stages. In 1903, a single-room schoolhouse was built to serve the students of District 25.	NRHP			Remaking of the Delta	H	N
Nodena Site	East of Wilson	Wilson	Mississippi	Private	Around 1400–1650 CE an aboriginal palisaded village existed in the Nodena area on a meander bend of the Mississippi River. This is an archaeological site.	NHL	National Historic Landmark		Conflict and Cooperation	H	N
Northern Ohio School	Highway 64 and Highway 184	Parkin	Cross	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	This restored one-room African American schoolhouse, served children of the Northern Ohio Lumber and Cooperage Company employees.			Arkansas State Park	Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y

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Nucor Steel	7301 East County Road 142	Blytheville	Mississippi	Nucor Corporation	Second Nucor steel operation in Mississippi County, opened after the success of Nucor-Yamato; part of the industrial cluster that reshaped the county's economy after the Cold War era.				Remaking the Delta	C/H	N
Nucor- Yamamorto Steel Company	5929 East State Highway 18	Blytheville	Mississippi	Nucor - Yamamoto Steel Company	Steel mill established through a 1987 Nucor-Yamato Kogyo joint venture; its success helped establish Mississippi County as a major modern steel-producing center.				Remaking the Delta	C/H	N
Old Town Lake	East o f Highway 44/85 junction	Lake View	Phillips	Phillips County	Old Town Lake is a 1200-acre Mississippi River oxbow now separated from the river by a levee. Popular with anglers.				Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Osceola Heritage Music Festival	Courthouse Square	Osceola	Mississippi	City of Osceola	An annual community event held the third weekend of May, this multi-day festival showcases a mix of classic rock, blues, country, and ’80s music, plus family-friendly activities and great food.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C	Y
Osceola Times Building	112 N. Poplar Street	Osceola	Mississippi	The Osceola Times	This 1901 office was the first building in "New Town," having been used continuously as a newspaper office since that time. It remains the oldest and tallest commercial building in the city.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	H	Y

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Paragould Downtown Historic Commercial District	Various Streets in Paragould	Paragould	Greene	Multiple	Comprising buildings from 1882 to 1953, the structures reflect such architectural styles as Twentieth Century Commercial, Classical Revival, & Minimal Traditional.	NRHP			Roots in the Soil	C/H	Y
Parker Homestead	16944 Homestead Road	Whitehall	Poinsett	Parker Homestead	Parker Homestead is a recreated 19th-century town located six miles south of Harrisburg, featuring a vast collection of buildings and artifacts.				Roots in the Soil	C/E/H	Y
Parkin Archeological State Park	Highway 64 and Highway 184	Parkin	Cross	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	The Parkin Indian Mound Site, which covers 17 acres, was the largest fortified ceremonial mound and population center in the early protohistoric period.	NHL	National Historic Landmark	Arkansas State Park	Shaped by River and Ridge; Roots in the Soil; Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y
Phillips County Courthouse	622 Cherry Street	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	Phillips County	This courthouse was completed in 1915. The most distinctive features of the building are the recessed sections of cast-stone blocks with engaged fluted Corinthian columns.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	C/H	Y
Piggott Commercial Historic District	Various streets in Piggott	Piggot	Clay	Multiple	The historic district contains the original plat of the town's commercial and government center as laid out in 1887 near the St. Louis Southwestern Railroad line.	NRHP			Roots in the Soil	H	Y

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Piggott WPA Post Office Mural	119 North Third Street	Piggot	Clay	US Postal Service	The Piggott Post Office is one of 21 Arkansas post offices that had murals installed in their lobbies between 1939 and 1942 as part of a New Deal art project.	NRHP	US Post Office		Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y
Pillow-Thompson House	718 Perry Street	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	Private	The home, built in 1896 by Jerome B. Pillow, is one of the finest examples of Queen Anne architecture in the South. The only Victorian house in Arkansas built entirely of wood.				Remaking the Delta	H	N
Pine Bluff Arsenal	10020 Kabrich Circle	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	US Army	Active Army installation established in 1941 by the Chemical Warfare Service; which transformed the local economy and tied the Delta to national defense systems.				Remaking the Delta	H	N
Pine Bluff Commercial Historic District	Multiple streets	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	Multiple	The Pine Bluff Commercial Historic District is a good example of Late 19 th and early 20 th century American commercial style buildings.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	C/H	Y
Pine City Natural Area	AR. Highway 86	Clarendon	Monroe	Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission	This 160-acre area represents an opportunity to preserve habitat for an isolated population of the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker.			State Natural Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N	Y

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Pine Tree Cooperative Wildlife Management Area	7337 Highway 306 West	Colt	St. Francis	University of Arkansas/Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	This 11,850-acre area, owned by the University of Arkansas, was established as a branch agricultural experimental station. It also serves as a resource for a variety of recreational uses.			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Poinsett County Courthouse	Courthouse Square	Harrisburg	Poinsett	Poinsett County	Built in 1917, the building was designed as a Palladian structure featuring two identical main entrances with grand full-height Corinthian porticos.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	H	Y
R.L. Wilson Confectionary	330 S. Main Street	Jonesboro	Craighead	Private	Also known as the Princess Café, this building played a prominent role in the lives of those living in Jonesboro.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Roots in the Soil	H	N
Rector Historic Commercial District	Various Streets	Rector	Clay	Multiple	This district contains the original commercial area as laid out in 1882 on the St. Louis and Texas Railroad line.				Conflict and Cooperation	H	Y
Rector Visitor Center	703 South Main Street	Rector	Clay	City of Rector	Rector's Visitor Center opened in 2011 in the old Rector Jail and Waterworks building, a 1915 building listed in the National Register of Historic Places.	NRHP			Remaking of the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	E/H	Y

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Riceland Foods	802 E. Harrison Street	Stuttgart	Arkansas	Riceland Company	Riceland represents thousands of rice farmers across the southern states and handles one-third of the total US rice crop.				Roots in the Soil	C/N	N
Ring Slough Wildlife Management Area	County Road 309 off US 62	Corning	Clay	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	This small 86-acre tract is near the Dave Donaldson Black River WMA. Overgrown field systems cover the majority of the habitat on this area.			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Ritz Civic Center	306 West Main Street	Blytheville	Mississippi	Private	Local and touring stage productions are showcased in this renovated former movie palace. It was known as one of the finest vaudeville theaters on the circuit,				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/H	Y
Rivervale Inverted Siphons	Just SW of AR 135 across Little River	Lepanto	Poinsett	US Army Corps of Engineers	Also known as the Rivervale Tunnel, this 750-foot monolithic structure was completed in 1926 as a way to prevent flooding in the area and convert the land to agricultural production.	NRHP			Shaped by River and Ridge	H/N	N
RNT Calls	2315 Highway 63 North	Stuttgart	Arkansas	RNT Company	RNT is the premier producer of duck and goose calls, and sells these on-line and at their store in Stuttgart where they also have a museum of duck calls.				Shaped by River and Ridge	C	Y

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Rohwer Japanese American Relocation Center (Landscape)	Near Rohwer	Rohwer Area	Desha	Multiple ownership; interpreted by Arkansas State University Heritage Sites and preservation partners	Former War Relocation Authority incarceration center that held more than 8,400 Japanese Americans at its peak.		One of two Japanese American incarceration centers established in Arkansas during World		Remaking the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	C/E/H	Y
Rohwer Japanese American Relocation Center Cemetery	Arkansas Highway 1	Rohwer	Desha	Desha County	Site of Japanese American internment camp during World War II (1942-1945). Monuments honor former Rohwer internees who served in the US armed forces in Europe.	NHL	National Historic Landmark	Part of the Arkansas State University System	Remaking the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	C/E/H	Y
Roland Mound Site	Restricted	Gillett	Arkansas	Private	An archaeological site situated along Dry Lake, an old channel of the White River. It features evidence of Native American occupation dating to prehistoric times.	NRHP			Roots in the Soil	H	N
Roth Prairie Natural Area	Roth Prairie Road	Stuttgart	Arkansas	Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission	Roth Prairie is a 41-acre tract of tallgrass prairie. Grass species typical of tallgrass prairies dominate the site, such as big bluestem and Indiangrass.			State Natural Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	H/N	Y
Saenger Theater	West 2nd Avenue and Pine Streets	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	Private	Built in 1924 the Saenger Theater features a facade styled in a Classical/Colonial Revival motif and an ornate interior described as in the Florentine style.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	C/H	N

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Saracen Landing	200 Lake Saracen Drive	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	Pine Bluff Parks and Recreation Dept.	The 500-acre Lake Saracen is a major focal point for Pine Bluff's Central Business District. It's a favorite spot for anglers and provides great access for boats.				Shaped by River and Ridge	C/R	Y
Selma Rosenwald School	Collins Road	Selma	Drew	Selma Masonic Lodge	As the only surviving Rosenwald school in Drew County, this represents a significant part of Julius Rosenwald's legacy as a benefactor to Black education.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	N
Seven Devils Swamp Wildlife Management Area	Located between AR Hwy. 35 and US 278 East	Collins	Drew	Drew County	This is a true wetland ecosystem, composed almost totally of cypress, tupelo, buttonbush, locust and willow			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Sheffield Nelson Dagmar Wildlife Management Area	Highway 70 West	Brinkley	Monroe	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	The 800-acre Sheffield Nelson Dagmar is a bottomland hardwood overflow area with many lakes, ponds, sloughs and bayous. It's great for hunting and fishing			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Singer Forest Natural Heritage Area	Levee Top Road	Marked Tree	Poinsett	Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission	Singer Forest is a 519-acre bottomland forest/overflow swamp, one of the few remnants of the forest community that prevailed throughout this part of Arkansas.			Natural Heritage Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y

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Sister Rosetta Tharpe Memorial Highway	Arkansas Highway 17, Cotton Plant to Brinkley	Multiple Cities	Monroe	Arkansas Department of Transportation	State-designated memorial highway honoring gospel and rock-and-roll pioneer Sister Rosetta Tharpe; the route connects her birthplace area with Brinkley in the Delta.			Arkansas memorial highway; Ark. Code § 27-67-227	Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E/H/R	Y
Sloan Site	Location restricted		Greene	The Archaeological Conservancy; research/stewardship relationship with Arkansas Archeological Survey	Dalton-period archaeological cemetery dated to roughly 8,500 BCE; the oldest known cemetery in the Western Hemisphere.				Conflict and Cooperation	E/H	N
Southern Tenant Farmers Museum	117 South Main Street	Tyronza	Poinsett	Arkansas State University	The historic Mitchell-East Building and adjacent former bank in Tyronza have been renovated by Arkansas State University to create the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum.			Part of the Arkansas State University System	Roots in the Soil	C/E/H	Y
St. Charles Battle Site	Located within the Dale Bumpers National Wildlife Refuge	St. Charles	Arkansas	U.S Fish and Wildlife Service	St. Charles is considered the site of the single most deadly shot of the Civil War that occurred on June 17, 1862, when a shot was fired into a gunboat boiler.	NRHP			Conflict and Cooperation	C/E/H	Y
St. Francis County Loop	The Great River Road	Multiple Cities	St. Francis	Multiple	This route is an official loop off the Great River Road National Scenic Byway. It includes side trips through St. Francis County to the towns of Madison and Forrest City .		Part of the Great River Road All American Road		Shaped by River and Ridge	C/E/H/N/R	Y

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St. Francis County Museum	603 Front Street	Forrest City	St. Francis	St. Francis County	The museum includes geologic, Native American, African American and county historic exhibits. Also included areexhibits on famous county residents,				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers; Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y
St. Francis Levee District	Varies	Multiple Cities	Multiple	US Army Corps of Engineers	This district maintains roughly 235 miles of mainline levees along the Mississippi River, protecting seven counties: Mississippi, Crittenden, Craighead, Cross, Poinsett, St. Francis, and Lee.		Part of the Mississippi River and Tributaries project.		Shaped by River and Ridge; Remaking of the Delta	N	N
St. Francis National Forest	Highway 44	Marianna	Lee	US Forest Service	The 20,946-acre area consists of upland hardwood forests on the hilly Crowley's Ridge section and additional acreage adjacent to the St. Francis and Mississippi Rivers.		National Forest		Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
St. Francis River Bridge	US 70	Madison	St. Francis	Arkansas Highway Department	Built in 1932-33, this is one of only three swing-span bridges in Arkansas. It was built with a central pier that could be rotated by two people cranking a large hickory handle.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	H	Y
St. Francis Sunken Lands Wildlife Management Area	Off AR 135 between Caraway and Rivervale	Marked Tree	Poinsett	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	The Sunken Lands, stretching over about 30 miles along the St. Francis River Floodway, are used for waterfowl hunting, which accounts for the majority of the area's recreational use.			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y

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St. John Missionary Baptist Church	709 Morning Star Street	Arkansas City	Desha	The Baptist Church	Designed in the 1930 Craftsman style, St. John M. B. Church was probably the most influential African-American church historically in Arkansas City.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Remaking the Delta	C/H	Y
St. Peter's Catholic Church	207 East 16th Avenue	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	Catholic Church	The 1903 church is significant due to its association with Father John Dorsey, the first African-American priest in a southern state.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Remaking the Delta	C/H	Y
Star City Commercial Historic District	Jefferson and Bradley Streets	Star City	Lincoln	Multiple	The historic district is significant for its representation of early to mid-20th century commercial architecture.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	C/H	Y
Stateline Sand Ponds Natural Area	CR 135 (State Line Road)	Corning	Clay	Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission	The natural area includes ancient sand dune/pond complexes, floodplains, terraces, and associated landforms of the Pleistocene Mississippi River			State Natural Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N	Y
Storm Creek Lake	South End of St. Francis National Forest	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	US Forest Service	The 420-acre lake is at the top of Crowley's Ridge and lies within the south end of the St. Francis National Forest and Mississippi State Park.		National Forest		Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Striplin Woods Natural Area	55 S CC Camp Road	St. Charles	Arkansas	Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission	A 30-acre hardwood forest displaying considerable diversity over an elevational gradient extending from blufftop down to the margin of the White River.			State Natural Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	E/N	Y
Sultana Disaster Museum	104 Washington Street	Marion	Crittenden	Sultana Museum, Inc.	The Sultana was a Mississippi River paddlewheel steamboat whose destruction in an explosion on April 27, 1865, is the greatest maritime disaster in United States history.				Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	Y
Taylor Field	1201 E. 16th Street	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	City of Pine Bluff	Taylor Field is an excellent example of a Works Progress Administration (WPA) constructed baseball stadium from the New Deal era.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	H/R	Y
Taylor Log House and Site	Off State Highway 138 (184 Plantation Lane)	Winchester	Drew	University of Arkansas, Monticello	The cypress-log house was the centerpiece of Hollywood Plantation which encompassed 11,000 acres at one time.	NRHP		Part of the Arkansas State University System	Roots in the Soil	H	Y
Temple Meir Chayim	4th and Holly Streets	McGehee	Desha	Private	Temple Meir Chayim was built soon after World War II to serve the Jewish community of southeast Arkansas, which had been present for a century.	NRHP			Conflict and Cooperation	C/H	N

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
The Blues Trail: Mississippi to Helena Marker	Cherry Street north of Missouri Street	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	City of Helena-West Helena	This marker promotes the vital role Helena played in blues history. Helena was once home to many Mississippi-born blues legends.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E	Y
The Edwardian Inn	317 Biscoe Street	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	Private	Built in 1904 as the William A. Short House, The Edwardian Inn stands as one of Helena's finest examples of turn-of-the-century architecture. It has functioned as an Inn for over 40 years.				Remaking the Delta; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/H	Y
The Painted House Museum	Highway 135	Lepanto	Poinsett	Citizens for a Progressive Lepanto	This is a house constructed for the movie *A Painted House* based on the best-selling novel by John Grisham who grew up in Arkansas, and wrote about his experiences there.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E/H	Y
The Station	201 N. Second Avenue	Paragould	Greene	Private	This is a facility located within a 1923 historic power plant that is used for public events and available for private events.				Remaking the Delta	E/H	Y
Trail of Tears Water Route Markers	Levee Walk Pavillion, Missouri Street	Helena-West Helena	Phillips	City of Helena-West Helena	Two markers commemorate the grueling Water Route to Indian Territory. This was one of several routes to forcibly remove and relocate Native Americans to territory in Oklahoma.				Conflict and Cooperation	C/E/H	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Trumann Library and Museum	1200 West Main Street	Trumann	Poinsett	Town of Trumann	The museum features a permanent collection of local artifacts and showcases special exhibits. Included is a Singer sewing machine from the plant, which for decades employed many residents.				Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E/H	Y
Trusten Holder Wildlife Management Area	15 miles NE of Dumas near Pendleton bridge	Pendleton	Desha	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	An oxbow lake, LaGrues Lake, provides excellent wetlands habitat for the area's native wildlife and migrating waterfowl.			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Tucker State Farm	2400 State Farm Road	Tucker	Jefferson	Arkansas Department of Corrections	Tucker State Farm is the state's second-oldest prison farm. Tucker State Farm only held white inmates and became known as the “white man’s prison.”			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Conflict and Cooperation	H	N
Turner Neal Museum of Natural History and Pomeroy Planetarium	397 University Drive	Monticello	Drew	University of Arkansas, Monticello	The museum displays a variety of natural history materials including invertebrates, fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, fossils, minerals, and plants.			Part of the Arkansas State University System	Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	N	Y
Tyronza Commercial Historic District	South Main Street	Tyronza	Poinsett	Multiple	The district, including the 1916-1959 commercial core of the community, contains 25 resources, with 18 historically significant.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	C/H	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
U.S Highway 61/"Blues Highway (Americana Music Highway	U.S Highway 61 West Memphias to Blytheville	Multiple Cities	Crittenden and Mississippi	Arkansas Department of Transportation	Historic north-south music corridor linking West Memphis, Memphis, northeastern Arkansas, and the Mississippi Delta; Highway 61 is also known as the 'Blues Highway.'			Americana Music Highway under Ark. Code § 27-67-227	Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	C/E/H/R	Y
University of Arkansas-Pine Bluff Museum and Cultural Center	1200 North Univesity Drive	Pine Bluff	Jefferson	University of Arkansas	The Museum's purpose is to collect, preserve, and promote the rich history of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and the surrounding Arkansas Delta.				Remaking the Delta; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers; Conflict and Cooperation	C	Y
US Post Office	100 East Huntington Avenue	Jonesboro	Craighead	Private	This structure is significant for its direct association with the growth and expansion of Jonesboro.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Conflict and Cooperation	H	N
US Senator Hattie Caraway Gravesite	2349 W. Matthews Avenue	Jonesboro	Craighead	City of Jonesboro	Senator Hattie Carway was the first woman to ever be elected to the US Senate in the 1930s.	NRHP			Remaking of the Delta	H	Y
Victor Cicero Kays House	2506 Aggie Road	Jonesboro	Craighead	Arkansas State Universtiy	This house is a great example of the Tudor Revival style. Designed for the founding President of what became Arkansas State University in 1936. The restored building houses A-State Heritage Sites.	NRHP			Roots in the Soil; Remaking of the Delta	H	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Village Creek State Park	201 county road 754 off AR 284	Wynne	Cross	Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism	The park includes 25 miles of multi-use trails winding through the rolling hills and hardwood forest of Crowley's Ridge.			Arkansas State Park	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
W.E. Brewer Scatter Creek Wildlife Management Aea	AR 34 West from AR 135	Paragould	Greene	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	The area is comprised of old field systems maintained as permanent open land with excellent opportunities for hiking, photography, wildlife viewing or birdwatching.			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	N/R	Y
Wallace-Menard-Coose Cemetery	529 Nady Road	Nady	Arkansas	Private	The Cemetery is part of a landscape that retains physical traces, as well as historical and cultural continuities, from Arkansas' colonial era.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Roots in the Soil	C/E/H/N	Y
Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge	Highway 42 East	Turrell	Crittenden	US Fish and Wildlife Service	Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is an important stopover for waterfowl traveling through the Mississippi Flyway.		National Wildlife Refuge		Shaped by River and Ridge	E/N/R	Y
Watson Jail	Main Street	Watson	Desha	Town of Watson	The Watson Jail is an example of the type of jail typically found in small towns in the early twentieth-century.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Conflict and Cooperation	H	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Waverly Plantation	Junction County Roads 215 and 7	Waverly	Crittenden	Private	The property is an excellent example of plantation agriculture in Crittenden County.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Roots in the Soil	H	N
West Main Street Residential Historic District	West Main Street	Blytheville	Mississippi	Multiple	Residences reflect a wide variety of architectural styles including Classical Revival, Gothic Revival, Tudor, American Foursquare, and Craftsman in addition to vernacular folk house forms.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	H	Y
West Memphis Commercial Historic District	East Broadway between 7th and 10th Streets	West Memphis	Crittenden	Multiple	The district encompasses the lartest concentration of historic commercial buildings in West Memphis. There are 22 historic buildings dating from 1930 to 1950.	NRHP			Remaking of the Delta; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	H	Y
West Washington Avenue Historic District	500 to 626 Washington Avenue	Jonesboro	Craighead	Multiple	1890-1930 structures including American Foursquare, Queen Anne Classical Revival, Tudor Revival, and Spanish Revival styles.	NRHP			Conflict and Cooperation	H	Y
Whitehall Wildlife Management Area	S.H. 214 West, 2.9 miles off S. H. 1,	Whitehall	Poinsett	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	The Whitehall Wildlife Management Area is located on the L'Anguille River, west of Crowley's Ridge and southwest of Harrisburg. Great hunting opportunities.			State Wildlife Management Area	Shaped by River and Ridge	C/R	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Widner-Magers Farm Historic District	3398 AR 181 North	Dell	Mississippi	Private	Constructed over a period of years, spanning from 1912 to 1939, the Widner-Magers Farm Historic District is an example of a collection of Plain/Traditional buildings.	NRHP			Roots in the Soil; Remaking the Delta	C/H	Y
William Stone House	44 Old Military Road East, Jct. of AR 306 and Ellis Lane	Colt	St. Francis	Colt Community Development Corporation	This is an example of a Plain Traditional residence with applied Colonial Revival and Folk Victorian detail. It serves as a museum with displays on the history of Northern St. Francis County.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta; Delta Soundtracks and Storytellers	H/E	Y
Wilson Cemetery	County Road 828	Trumann	Craighead	Private	The cemetery is important for its role as the primary cemetery for the residents of Trumann during the town's formative years.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Roots in the Soil	H	Y
Wilson Commercial Historic District	Numerous Streets	Wilson	Mississippi	Multiple	The District is a representation of a progressive company town, The Wilson Company, operating under the "New South"model from the 1920s to the 1950s.	NRHP			Shaped by River and Ridge; Remaking the Delta	C/H	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Wilson High School Gymnasium	Main and Lee Streets	Wilson	Mississippi	Private	The gymnasium is a key building in the community development of the town of Wilson. When built it was considered a first-rate facility offering a range of athletics to Wilson students.	NRHP			Remaking the Delta	C/H	N
Wilson Town Square	US Highway 61	Wilson	Mississippi	Private	The recently renovated town square features Tudor styled architecture and a remodeled café, a community garden, specialty shops, and a hotel.				Roots in the Soil	C/H	Y
WW II POW Camp Site	Highway 61 south of Bassett	Bassett	Mississippi	Town of Bassett	One of eight World War II prisoner-of-war camps in Arkansas, the Bassett camp housed German soldiers captured and sent to the United States. Two concrete columns still stand.				Remaking of the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	H	Y
WWII Japanese American Internment Museum	100 South Railroad Street	McGhee	Desha	McGehee Industrial Foundation	This interpretive center contains the exhibit “Against Their Will” and explains the history of Japanese Americans interned nearby during WWII.				Remaking the Delta; Conflict and Cooperation	C/E/H	Y

Resource Name	Address	City	County	Owner/Manager	Description	National Register, NHL, or NNL	National Resource	State Resource or Designation	Themes	Category (C=Cultural & Living Traditions) (E=Educational & Interpretive) (H=Historical) (N=Natural) (R=Recreational)	Open to the Public?
Wylds Cabin	East Arkansas Community College Campus	Forrest City	St. Francis	East Arkansas Community College	Built in 1843, this was the home of David Wylds, a pioneer from Georgia who traveled to Arkansas to hunt bears and then established a farm here.			Arkansas Register of Historic Places	Roots in the Soil	H	Y
Wynne WPA Post Office Mural	402 E. Marriman Avenue	Wynne	Cross	US Postal Service	Ethel Magafan of Colorado Springs, CO, painted the mural and chose the theme "Cotton Pickers." The mural was installed in 1940.	NRHP	US Post Office		Remaking of the Delta	H	Y
Zebree Homestead	Protected Location within the Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge	Buckeye	Mississippi	Private	This site is significant as the oldest known site of the Mississippian culture south of St. Louis. It appears to have been settled from Cahokia around 900 CE, with evidence of habitation and tool making.	NRHP			Shaped by River and Ridge; Roots in the Soil	C/H	N

ARKANSAS DELTA NHA FEASIBILITY STUDY · APPENDIX E

Affected Environment

This appendix describes the natural, cultural, and socioeconomic conditions of the 17-county boundary affected by the proposed designation.

Appendix E – Affected Environment

Population and Socioeconomic Conditions

The proposed Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area covers approximately 10,500 square miles and includes 17 of the state's easternmost counties. The 2020 US Census reported that just under 500,000 people call this area home.[268] The region is predominantly rural, economically challenged, and experiencing declining populations.

Only three of the counties saw population growth between 2023 and 2024 – Craighead, +1.4 percent; Greene County +0.5 percent; and Jefferson County +0.2 percent. These counties also have the region's largest communities: Jonesboro, 82,000; Pine Bluff, 42,000; and Paragould, 29,000. During the same period, five of the counties saw population declines between 0.2 percent and 1.2 percent, and nine of the counties experienced declines between 1.4 percent and 2.5 percent.[269]

The Delta Regional Authority considers 16 of the 17 counties economically distressed; with Arkansas County the only exception.[270] The median incomes of all 17 counties ($34,400 - $62,500) fall below the Arkansas state average of $62,600. Only three counties have poverty rates that are below (better than) the state average of 15.5 percent.

Regarding education, Craighead County, home to Arkansas State University, is the only county that has a BA education rate (32.9 percent) that is higher than Arkansas's state average of 27.1 percent. Ten of the counties have a BA education rate below 20 percent.

Many of the region's counties have a high percentage of African American residents compared to Arkansas average of 15.2 percent. Only two counties, Craighead and Greene, have a percentage of African American residents that is below the state average. Ten of the counties have African American residents that represent 40.6 percent to 62.4 percent of their population.

Land Use and Transportation

Despite challenging socioeconomic conditions, the proposed Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area is rich in natural resources that shape how people use the land. The region has a diverse landscape that includes the well-drained high land of Crowley's Ridge, Bayou Bartholomew's waterways that offer important transportation routes into timberlands and farmlands, and Grand Prairie's clay soils that allow for the cultivation of rice. The area also supports diverse hardwood forests and a rich collection of flora and fauna.[271]

The rivers' depositional soils and navigable waterways spawned some of the earliest intensive agriculture and trade networks in North America. By the 1830s, enslaved labor made cotton the region's largest crop. Farming continued after emancipation, first through sharecropping and later to the mechanized agriculture

[268] "Arkansas: 2020 Census," United States Census Bureau. Accessed October 15, 2026. https://www.census.gov/library/stories/state-by-state/arkansas.html.
[269] "Population Change," University of Alabama – Little Rock, Arkansas Economic Development Institute. Accessed October 15, 2026. https://youraedi.com/vintage-2024-county-population-estimates/.
[270] "Arkansas," Delta Regional Authority. Accessed October 20, 2026. https://dra.gov/states/arkansas/.
[271] Brooks, J.A., R. L. Minton, S. G. George, D. M. Hayes, R. Ulmer, and F. Pezold. "Diversity and Distribution of Native Freshwater Mussels in Bayou Bartholomew, Arkansas," *Southeastern Fishes Council Proceedings* 50 (2008), 8–18.

still seen today. The rich soils continue to support some of the nation's most fertile farmlands. Recent fluctuations in commodity prices and higher input costs have negatively affected the agricultural sector, particularly row crops like soybeans, corn, cotton, and rice.[272]

While many of today's roads follow corridors that were shaped by ancient trade routes and dictated by the waterways, the region has two major interstate highways that cut across the landscape. Interstate 40 spans the Mississippi River between Memphis, TN, and West Memphis, AR, serving as an important transcontinental commercial trucking route connecting the Southeast with the West Coast.[273] Interstate 55 is a heavily trafficked north-south trucking corridor that runs through the northeast part of the region before crossing into Tennessee at Memphis.

Air and Water Quality

The rural landscape and abundant waterways have largely preserved good air and water quality. This translates into important natural territories for the plants and animals of the region. The intact habitats of southeastern Arkansas are important wintering grounds for the Mississippi flyway. It is recognized as one of the nation's premier hunting grounds, particularly for waterfowl and trophy class white-tailed deer.

Arkansas Fish and Wildlife Ecological Services Field Office is the lead organization for monitoring and helping with recovery efforts for threatened and endangered species recovery.[274] Projects include bottomland hardwood restoration, streambank stabilization, and timber stand improvements. Since 2018, the office has collaborated with conservation groups to protect the imperiled speckled pocketbook mussels.

Arkansas has an abundance of good quality groundwater. In some areas, however, the groundwater supply is being depleted faster than the rate of recharge. Ten of the region's 17 counties have been designated as critical groundwater areas. If this trend continues, it will result in permanent damage to the aquifers and a serious groundwater shortage.[275]

Tourism, Business, and Industry

Tourism

Many people travel to the Arkansas Delta to experience top-tier hunting. Many others make a pilgrimage to experience the birthplace of some of America's most distinctive musical traditions and performers. The music of the Arkansas Delta, born of the physical and cultural challenges of the region, forms the basis for blues, gospel, country, rockabilly, R & B, soul, and Americana music. Some of the best-known Delta musicians include Johnny Cash, Conway Twitty, and Sister Rosetta Tharpe. Visitors come to drive the designated blues highways and trails and to attend festivals and concerts that celebrate these artists and the music that still strikes a chord with audiences today.

[272] "State of the State 2024: Arkansas ag sector enters 2024 after healthy 2023," Talk Business Net. Accessed October 15, 2026. https://talkbusiness.net/2024/01/state-of-the-state-2024-arkansas-ag-sector-enters-2024-after-healthy-2023/.
[273] "Navigating America's Busiest Highways: The Key Routes Dominating Truck Traffic," Truck Drivers USA. Accessed October 15, 2026. https://truckdriversus.com/navigating-americas-busiest-highways-the-key-routes-dominating-truck-traffic/.
[274] "Endangered Species," U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Accessed October 15, 2026. https://www.fws.gov/program/endangered-species
[275] "Natural Resources: Critical Groundwater Areas," Arkansas Department of Agriculture. Accessed October 15, 2026. https://agriculture.arkansas.gov/natural-resources/water-management/groundwater-protection-and-management-program/critical-groundwater-areas/.

Business and Industry

Agriculture and agriculture processing are core economic and manufacturing drivers in the Arkansas Delta. Rice, soybean, and red wheat are processed for livestock feed, food products, and biofuels.[276] Riceland, headquartered in Stuttgart, is the largest rice miller in the world; its operation in Jonesboro is the largest single mill. Eastern Arkansas is the hub for the state's cotton production, which is the 4th largest nationally.[277] Poultry and fish farms are also important industries.

[276] "Agriculture Facts," Farm Bureau Arkansas. Accessed October 15, 2026. https://www.arfb.com/pages/education/ag-facts/.
[277] "Industry Research," World Trade Center Arkansas, University of Arkansas. https://arwtc.uark.edu/industry-research/.

ARKANSAS DELTA NHA FEASIBILITY STUDY · APPENDIX F

Resolutions & Letters of Support

This appendix compiles the resolutions and letters of support submitted by county governments, municipalities, and partner organizations across the study area. Together, they document the breadth of public and governmental support for designation described in Chapter 5.

(Additional Resolutions and Letters of Support will be solicited during the public comment period.)

Appendix F – Resolutions & Letters of Support

State Officials

- Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders
- Representative Glenn Barnes, District 65
- Representative Kenneth B. Ferguson, District 64

County and Municipal Resolutions

- Quorum Court of Jefferson County
- Pine Bluff City Council

Academic Institutions

- Southeast Arkansas College

Arts, Culture, History & Humanities

Economic Development, Businesses & Industry

- Southeast Arkansas Regional Planning Commission

Environment & Agriculture

Tourism

- Pine Bluff Advertising and Promotion Commission

Religious Institutions

STATE OF ARKANSAS
SARAH HUCKABEE SANDERS
GOVERNOR

October 14, 2026

Adam Long, Executive Director
Arkansas State University Heritage Sites
PO Box 2050
State University, AR 72467

Dear Dr. Long

On behalf of the state of Arkansas, I am writing to support the effort to create Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area, which would be the first NHA in Arkansas. Arkansas Delta NHA would build on previous state investment to create locally driven partnerships and long-term collaborations between state, federal, local, and private entities.

Arkansas Delta NHA would include several important state properties. Arkansas State University operates four Heritage Sites that have long been anchors for heritage tourism in the Delta, including the Historic Dyess Colony: Johnny Cash Boyhood Home, a statue of whom is now standing in the US Capitol. The NHA would also include the Delta Cultural Center, which is operated by the Division of Heritage. The DCC preserves some of our most important musical heritage, including the "King Biscuit Time" radio program, the nation's longest running daily blues radio program. The area also contains several State Parks, two Game and Fish Nature Centers, natural areas, wildlife refuges, scenic byways and historic properties.

I am especially excited by the opportunity to highlight the Delta Heritage Trail State Park. When the rail-to-trail project is completed later this year, it will run 84.5 miles connecting important natural and cultural landmarks throughout the Delta and will represent the State Parks' largest ever investment. We welcome the opportunity for building partnerships along this route to increase opportunities for outdoor recreation and heritage tourism.

National Heritage Areas play a vital role in helping communities better share their stories with others and drive tourism, which plays an ever-growing role in Arkansas' economy and is a priority of the state. I am pleased to support this designation.

Sincerely,

Sarah Huckabee Sanders
Governor of Arkansas

State Capitol Building • Little Rock, AR 72201
Telephone: (501) 682-2345
www.governor.arkansas.gov

REPRESENTATIVE
Glenn Barnes
2004 W Vaugine Avenue
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71601
870-329-7957 Cell
pinehillmbc111@gmail.com

DISTRICT: 65
Counties:
Part Arkansas
Part Jefferson

COMMITTEES:
Public Health, Welfare and Labor
Aging, Children and Youth, and Legislative Affairs
Alternate,
Joint Committee on Advanced Communications and Information Technology

STATE OF ARKANSAS

House of Representatives

September 3, 2026

Dr. Adam Long
Executive Director
Arkansas State University Heritage Sites
PO BOX 250
State University, AR 72467

Dear Dr. Long:

I am honored to support Arkansas State University's feasibility study for the proposed Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area. The Delta, rich in historic, cultural, agricultural, and natural treasures, holds profound significance, particularly through the contributions of Jefferson, Lincoln, and Desha counties to our state's and nation's history.

By designating this area as a National Heritage Area, we pave the way for collaboration that will preserve our shared culture and history. This initiative is vital for our rural communities, as it fosters connections among historic sites, cultural institutions, and local businesses, ultimately fueling economic growth and expanding educational opportunities in Southeast Arkansas.

I extend my gratitude to Arkansas State University Heritage Sites for spearheading the feasibility study and engaging local communities. I strongly advocate for a positive determination and support for the legislation to designate the Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area. Together, with local leaders and stakeholders, we can advance this inspiring initiative.

Sincerely,

Glenn Barnes
State Representative
District 65

GB/jc

REPRESENTATIVE
Kenneth B. Ferguson
P.O. Box 5661
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71611
870-413-8942 Cell
kenneth.ferguson@arkansashouse.org

DISTRICT: 64
Counties:
Part Desha
Part Jefferson
Part Lincoln

COMMITTEES:
Public Health, Welfare and Labor
Insurance and Commerce
Alternate,
Joint Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs
Rules
Legislative Joint Auditing Committee

STATE OF ARKANSAS

House of Representatives

September 3, 2026

Dr. Adam Long
Executive Director
Arkansas State University Heritage Sites
PO BOX 2050
State University, AR 72467

Dear Dr. Long:

I am pleased to support Arkansas State University's feasibility study for the proposed Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area. The Delta is rich in historic, cultural, agricultural, and natural treasures, with Jefferson, Lincoln, and Desha counties playing significant roles in our state and nation's history.

Designating this area as a National Heritage Area will provide opportunities for collaboration in preserving our shared culture and history. It is especially important for rural communities, fostering connections among historic sites, cultural institutions, and local businesses, ultimately enhancing economic growth and educational opportunities in Southeast Arkansas.

I thank Arkansas State University Heritage Sites for leading the feasibility study and engaging local communities. I urge a positive determination and support for legislation to designate the Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area. I look forward to working together with local leaders and stakeholders to advance this initiative.

Sincerely,

Kenneth B. Ferguson
State Representative
District 64

KBF/jc

STATE OF ARKANSAS

COUNTY OF JEFFERSON

QUORUM COURT

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-53

A RESOLUTION OF THE JEFFERSON COUNTY QUORUM COURT SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF THE ARKANSAS DELTA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

WHEREAS, the Arkansas Delta is a unique and diverse region encompassing nationally significant cultural and historical resources, as well as natural, scenic, educational, and recreational resources that reflect a distinctive contribution to the collective American identity; and

WHEREAS, the Arkansas Delta region is distinguished by its expansive floodplain shaped by the Mississippi River and its tributaries, its network of bayous, and the prominent rise of Crowley's Ridge, as well as its transformation into one of the nation's most productive agricultural regions; its role in Depression-era reform, wartime mobilization, and civil rights history; and its influential musical traditions that have reached audiences throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, the United States Congress has the authority to designate National Heritage Areas encompassing regions where natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources combine to form cohesive and nationally distinctive landscapes shaped by geography and cultural traditions; and

WHEREAS, the Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area Feasibility Study was authorized by Arkansas State University and supported by the Delta Regional Authority; and

WHEREAS, Arkansas State University retained Point Heritage Development Consulting to evaluate the region's natural, historic, cultural, educational, and recreational resources and to work with the Arkansas State University Heritage Sites Program in developing the Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area Feasibility Study; and

WHEREAS, the following counties are included in the National Heritage Area Feasibility Study: Arkansas, Chicot, Clay, Craighead, Crittenden, Cross, Desha, Drew, Greene, Jefferson, Lee, Lincoln, Mississippi, Monroe, Phillips, Poinsett, and St. Francis Counties; and

WHEREAS, Jefferson County possesses an exceptional concentration of natural, cultural, historic, agricultural, educational, and recreational resources, including the Arkansas River, Bayou Bartholomew, Bayou Meto, Lake Saracen, Delta wetlands and bottomland forests, historic agricultural landscapes, significant African American communities and institutions, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, historic churches and neighborhoods, railroad and river-port heritage, museums, cultural organizations, blues and gospel traditions, parks, trails, wildlife habitats, and hunting, fishing, boating, and other outdoor recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, these resources collectively reflect the nationally significant history, culture, environment, and living traditions of the Arkansas Delta and are directly relevant to the Feasibility Study; and

A RESOLUTION OF THE JEFFERSON COUNTY QUORUM COURT SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF THE ARKANSAS DELTA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

WHEREAS, Jefferson County supports the Pine Bluff/Jefferson County National Heritage Trails Task Force, established by the City of Pine Bluff to identify, document, and promote Jefferson County's inclusion in local, state, regional, and national heritage trails and related cultural-tourism initiatives; and

WHEREAS, Jefferson County is home to the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, a Historically Black College and University and the second-oldest public university in the State of Arkansas, whose history, programs, collections, and institutional legacy represent significant cultural and heritage assets of the Arkansas Delta; and

WHEREAS, the Arkansas State University Heritage Sites Program has worked diligently with counties, regional organizations, municipal governments, schools, and state agencies to preserve the Arkansas Delta's cultural and historic assets and enhance outdoor recreational and educational opportunities throughout the region; and

WHEREAS, the Arkansas State University Heritage Sites Program desires to serve as the coordinating entity in pursuing designation of the Arkansas Delta as a National Heritage Area under the National Park Service;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE JEFFERSON COUNTY QUORUM COURT:

SECTION 1. The Jefferson County Quorum Court hereby supports the continued development and completion of the Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area Feasibility Study.

SECTION 2. The Jefferson County Quorum Court further supports the inclusion of Jefferson County within the proposed Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area and the pursuit of congressional designation of the region as a National Heritage Area.

SECTION 3. The Jefferson County Quorum Court recognizes the potential of this designation to preserve and promote the region's nationally significant history, culture, natural resources, educational opportunities, recreational assets, and living traditions for the benefit of present and future generations.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED by the Jefferson County Quorum Court this 10th day of August, 2026.

A RESOLUTION OF THE JEFFERSON COUNTY QUORUM COURT SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF THE ARKANSAS DELTA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

SPONSORED BY:

Melanie Johnson Dumas

JUSTICE MELANIE JOHNSON DUMAS
JUSTICE OF THE PEACE, DISTRICT 7
JEFFERSON COUNTY, ARKANSAS

APPROVED:

Ivan D. Whitfield

IVAN WHITFIELD
JEFFERSON COUNTY JUDGE
JEFFERSON COUNTY, ARKANSAS
DATED: AUG 1 0 2026

ATTEST:

Shawndra Taggart

SHAWNDRA TAGGART
JEFFERSON COUNTY CLERK
JEFFERSON COUNTY, ARKANSAS
DATED: AUG 1 0 2026

Attachment – 1 page

Received
JUL 29 2026
Jeff Co. Clerk

FACT SHEET

Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area

Prepared from publicly available information from Arkansas State University Heritage Sites

62 NHAs | **Nationally designated across 36 states and territories**

What Is a National Heritage Area?

A National Heritage Area (NHA) is a nationally recognized landscape where natural, cultural, historic, agricultural, and recreational resources combine to tell an important story about America's heritage. NHAs remain locally managed, do not create federal land ownership or land-use controls, operate through partnerships, and receive technical assistance from the National Park Service.

Arkansas Delta Initiative

Arkansas State University Heritage Sites is leading a feasibility study to determine whether the Arkansas Delta qualifies for National Heritage Area designation. Themes include history, culture, music, agriculture, Civil Rights, military history, Civil War battles, rivers, wetlands, scenic landscapes, historic communities, traditional arts, and outdoor recreation.

Purpose & Community Benefits

- Preserve historic and cultural resources
- Expand heritage tourism and visitor spending
- Strengthen local economies and downtown revitalization
- Increase educational opportunities and conservation
- Support museums, interpretive trails, and partnerships
- Protect local control of private property and zoning

Arkansas State University's Role

For more than 25 years, Arkansas State University Heritage Sites has managed historic properties, assisted preservation planning, promoted heritage tourism, secured grants, and served as administrative agent for Arkansas Delta Byways.

Community Participation

Residents, organizations, businesses, nonprofits, tribes, educational institutions, and local governments are encouraged to attend meetings, share stories, identify important places, recommend resources, submit letters of support, and participate in planning.

Representative Resource Themes

Cultural: Blues, gospel, African American heritage, festivals, and foodways

Historic: Civil Rights, downtowns, railroads, schools, and historic communities

Military: Military history, Civil War battles, battle sites, memorials, and veterans' stories

Agricultural: Cotton, rice, soybeans, timber, and aquaculture

Natural: Mississippi, Arkansas, and White Rivers; bayous and wetlands

Recreational: Hunting, fishing, birding, cycling, hiking, and scenic byways

Why It Matters

Designation can help preserve the Delta's identity, increase tourism and economic opportunity, support small businesses, encourage historic preservation, connect communities, and share nationally significant stories.

Sources: Arkansas State University Heritage Sites and its National Heritage Area initiative; National Park Service, National Heritage Areas Program (62 designated NHAs in 36 states and territories).

CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY
OF PINE BLUFF, ARKANSAS

RESOLUTION NO. 5076

A RESOLUTION OF THE PINE BLUFF CITY COUNCIL SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF THE ARKANSAS DELTA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

WHEREAS, the Arkansas Delta forms a unique and diverse region in Arkansas and encompasses nationally significant culture and history, as well as spectacular natural, historical, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources that reflect a unique contribution to the collective American identity; and,

WHEREAS, the Arkansas Delta region is distinguished by its expansive floodplain shaped by the Mississippi River and its tributaries, its network of bayous, and the prominent rise of Crowley's Ridge, as well as its transformation into one of the nation's most productive agricultural regions, its role as a setting for Depression-era reform, wartime mobilization, and civil rights history, and its influential musical traditions that reached audiences across the United States; and,

WHEREAS, the United States Congress has the authority to designate National Heritage Areas that encompass a region where natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape shaped by geography and cultural traditions; and,

WHEREAS, the Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area Feasibility Study was authorized by Arkansas State University and supported by the Delta Regional Authority; and,

WHEREAS, Arkansas State University hired Point Heritage Development Consulting to evaluate the natural, historic, cultural, educational, and recreational resources and work with the Arkansas State University Heritage Sites Program to develop the Feasibility Study for the Arkansas Delta; and,

WHEREAS, the following counties are included in the National Heritage Area Feasibility Study: Arkansas, Chicot, Clay, Craighead, Crittenden, Cross, Desha, Drew, Greene, Jefferson, Lee, Lincoln, Mississippi, Monroe, Phillips, Poinsett, and St. Francis; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Pine Bluff possesses nationally and regionally significant cultural, historic, natural, and recreational assets, including historic downtown Pine Bluff, the Arkansas Railroad Museum, the Arts & Science Center for Southeast Arkansas, Lake Saracen, the Delta

Rivers Nature Center, all of which contribute to the heritage of the Arkansas Delta and support the goals of the Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area Feasibility Study; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Pine Bluff established the National Heritage Trails Task Force to document and promote Pine Bluff/Jefferson County inclusion on local, state, regional and national heritage trails and areas

WHEREAS, the City of Pine Bluff supports the establishment of Delta Rhythm & Bayous Highway (1st legislatively enacted multi-state music highway) an Arkansas Delta music travel corridor; and

WHEREAS, Pine Bluff is the origin point of Bayou Bartholomew the world's longest bayou and supports the development of outdoor/heritage recreation; and

WHEREAS, the City of Pine Bluff has recently opened the Delta Rhythm & Bayous Blues and Wellness Plaza as the largest outdoor gallery dedicated to Delta music and culture in the nation, once completed; and

WHEREAS, Pine Bluff is home to the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, a Historically Black College and University and the 2nd oldest land-grant university in the state, which is and houses enormous Arkansas Delta cultural and heritage relevance and assets; and

WHEREAS, the Arkansas State University Heritage Sites Program has worked tirelessly with the counties, various regional organizations, municipal governments, regional schools, and state agencies to preserve our cultural and historic assets and enhance outdoor recreational and educational opportunities in the area, and has the desire and will act as the coordinating entity to pursue a National Heritage Area designation under the National Park Service,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PINE BLUFF, ARKANSAS, that the Pine Bluff City Council supports the development of the Feasibility Study and the designation of the Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 17TH day of AUGUST, 2026.

MAYOR

ATTEST:

Janice L. Roberts
City Clerk

CITY CLERK

SPONSOR:

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

CITY ATTORNEY

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS:

Lloyd Haddock Jr. (9)

Steven Mayer (9)

Glen Brown Jr. (9)

William Gillis (9)

Lorrette Frazier (9)

Yvonne Denton (9)

LaTisha Branson (9)

Office of the President

October 6, 2026

Dr. Adam Long
Executive Director
Arkansas State University Heritage Sites
P.O. Box 2050
State University, Arkansas 72467

Re: Support for the Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area Feasibility Study and Proposed Designation

Dear Dr. Long:

On behalf of Southeast Arkansas College, I am pleased to express our strong support for Arkansas State University's efforts to conduct a feasibility study and develop a proposal for the congressional designation of the Arkansas Delta as a National Heritage Area.

The Arkansas Delta possesses an extraordinary collection of historic, cultural, agricultural, educational, musical, natural, and recreational resources. Its nationally significant stories include Native American history, the development of Delta agriculture, African American heritage, the Civil War, the struggle for civil rights, the evolution of blues and gospel music, the importance of the Mississippi River and its tributaries, and the contributions of generations of Delta residents to the history of Arkansas and the nation.

Southeast Arkansas College recognizes that National Heritage Area designation could provide a valuable framework for communities, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, businesses, museums, and government agencies to work together to preserve and interpret these important resources. The initiative could also support:

- Heritage tourism and visitor development;
- Historic preservation and community revitalization;
- Educational programs, internships, and student research;
- Workforce training and career development;
- Small-business growth and entrepreneurship;
- Arts, music, festivals, and cultural programming;
- Parks, trails, waterways, and outdoor recreation; and
- Regional collaboration and economic development.

As an institution committed to education, workforce development, and community service, Southeast Arkansas College understands the value of connecting students with the history, culture, and economic opportunities of the region. The proposed Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area could create meaningful opportunities for students to participate in research, historic preservation, hospitality and tourism, storytelling, digital media, skilled trades, entrepreneurship, and other career-related activities.

We also recognize that National Heritage Areas are locally managed partnerships. Such a designation would not transfer ownership of private or public property to the federal government, impose federal zoning requirements, or interfere with existing property rights. Instead, it would encourage voluntary cooperation and provide participating communities with opportunities to pursue technical assistance, grants, private investment, and other resources.

Southeast Arkansas College supports Arkansas State University's feasibility study and the development of a locally driven proposal for the designation of the Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area. We encourage favorable consideration of this important regional initiative and look forward to l opportunities to collaborate with Arkansas State University and other partners as the study and designation process advances.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to preserving and promoting the remarkable heritage of the Arkansas Delta.

Sincerely,

Tyrone Jackson
President
Southeast Arkansas College
1900 Hazel Street
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71603

Pine Bluff - White Hall - Jefferson County
Metropolitan Planning Organization
MPO
Southeast Arkansas Regional Planning Commission
1300 Ohio Street, Suite B, Pine Bluff, AR 71601
870-534-4247 Fax 870-534-1555 www.searpc.com

August 20, 2026

Dr. Adam Long
Executive Director
Arkansas State University Heritage Sites
P.O. Box 2050
State University, Arkansas 72467

Re: Support for the Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area Feasibility Study and Proposed Designation

Dear Dr. Long:

On behalf of the Southeast Arkansas Regional Planning Commission, I am pleased to express our strong support for Arkansas State University's efforts to conduct a feasibility study and develop a proposal for the congressional designation of the Arkansas Delta as a National Heritage Area.

Since its establishment in 1964, the Southeast Arkansas Regional Planning Commission has worked to promote coordinated regional development, improve governmental efficiency, reduce unnecessary duplication of services, and advance the health, safety, prosperity, and general welfare of Southeast Arkansas. The proposed Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area is consistent with these objectives and presents an important opportunity to strengthen collaboration among counties, municipalities, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, businesses, cultural institutions, and residents throughout the region.

The Arkansas Delta possesses an extraordinary collection of historic, cultural, agricultural, musical, natural, educational, and recreational resources. Its nationally significant stories include Native American history, African American heritage, the development of Delta agriculture, the Civil War, the struggle for civil rights, blues and gospel music, historic communities, traditional arts, and the influence of the Mississippi River and its tributaries on the region's development.

National Heritage Area designation could provide a valuable regional framework for preserving and interpreting these resources while supporting:

- >Heritage tourism and visitor development;
- Historic preservation and downtown revitalization;
- Regional economic development and job creation;
- Small-business growth and entrepreneurship;
- Workforce training and educational opportunities;
- Infrastructure and transportation planning; and
- Cooperation among local governments and regional partners.

A National Heritage Area could help participating communities coordinate projects across jurisdictional boundaries, develop shared tourism and marketing strategies, connect historic and cultural sites, and pursue grants, technical assistance, private investment, and other resources. This regional approach could be especially valuable to rural communities that may have significant heritage assets but limited capacity to develop and promote them independently.

The Southeast Arkansas Regional Planning Commission supports Arkansas State University's feasibility study and the development of a locally driven proposal for the designation of the Arkansas Delta National Heritage Area. We encourage the meaningful involvement of counties, municipalities, community organizations, educational institutions, businesses, property owners, and residents throughout the study and planning process.

We appreciate Arkansas State University's leadership in advancing this important regional initiative and look forward to opportunities to collaborate as the feasibility study and designation proposal move forward.

Respectfully,

Larry Reynolds
Executive Director
Southeast Arkansas Regional Planning Commission
1300 Ohio Street, Suite B
Pine Bluff, AR 71601

PINE BLUFF
ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION COMMISSION

August 26, 2026

Adam Long, PhD
Executive Director
A-State Heritage Sites
P.O. Box 2050
State University, AR 72467

Re: Support for National Heritage Area Designation for the Arkansas Delta

Dear Dr. Long:

On behalf of the Pine Bluff Advertising & Promotion Commission, I am writing to express our strong support for designating the Arkansas Delta as a National Heritage Area (NHA).

The Pine Bluff Advertising and Promotion Commission is the governing body of Explore Pine Bluff, the official destination marketing organization for Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Funded through local lodging and prepared food taxes, the Commission works to drive economic vitality and elevate quality of life by positioning Pine Bluff as a premier destination for leisure travel, conventions, and cultural events. Through strategic marketing, community partnerships, and local programming, Explore Pine Bluff champions the city's rich culture and heritage, local businesses, and community growth.

Because of this focus, our work is deeply tied to the region's historic towns, working and recreational lands, waterways, and Delta traditions. National Heritage Area designation directly aligns with our goals to expand cultural and heritage tourism as an economic revitalization strategy for Pine Bluff and Jefferson County, while complementing ongoing local, state, and federal initiatives.

We particularly value the NHA model's collaborative approach, respect for private property rights, and emphasis on voluntary participation. An NHA designation will help both residents and visitors better understand, enjoy, and preserve the unique places that make the Arkansas Delta special, all while supporting sustainable economic development.

Thank you for your leadership on this effort. We are proud to add our voice in support.

Sincerely,

Sheri Storie

Sheri Storie
Executive Director