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## Delta Charters Parkway Plan Analysis January 2015

### **Introduction:**

The American River Parkway Plan (ARPP) provides the guidelines for recreation activities that may be conducted on the American River Parkway. This report analyzes the proposed concession agreement with Delta Charters for compliance with the ARPP including potential impacts to users and the natural environment as required by the ARPP.

### **Activity Description:**

Delta Charters is a combination of personal watercraft instruction, rentals and tours that would be conducted on the Sacramento River but will be launched from Discovery Park boat launch. Additional description can be found in the operations proposal included with this analysis.

### **Goals and Concept Policies of the American River Parkway Plan**

#### **Goals (Page 10)**

- To provide, protect and enhance for public use a continuous open space greenbelt along the American River extending from the Sacramento River to Folsom Dam; and
- To provide appropriate access and facilities so that present and future generations can enjoy the amenities and resources of the Parkway which enhance the enjoyment of leisure activities; and
- To preserve, protect, interpret and improve the natural, archaeological, historical and recreational resources of the Parkway, including an adequate flow of high quality water, anadromous and resident fishes, migratory and resident wildlife, and diverse natural vegetation; and
- To mitigate adverse effects of activities and facilities adjacent to the Parkway; and
- To provide public safety and protection within and adjacent to the Parkway.

#### **Concept Policies (Page 11)**

##### **1.1 Balanced Management**

The American River Parkway is a unique regional asset that shall be managed to balance the goals of controlling flooding; preserving and enhancing native vegetation, native fish species, the naturalistic open space and environmental quality within the urban environment; maintaining and improving water flow and quality; providing adequate habitat connectivity and travel corridors to support migratory and resident wildlife; providing recreational opportunities; and ensuring public safety.

## **1.2 Recreation**

The Parkway shall be oriented to passive, unstructured water-enhanced recreation activities which are appropriate in a natural environment, and which are not normally provided by other County recreational facilities. To this end, development in the Parkway shall be minimal, and facilities which are primarily visitor attractions should be placed in less sensitive areas within the County Park system. Insofar as possible, development shall not occur in areas where natural ecosystems are still relatively undisturbed.

## **1.3 Resource Protection**

Limitation on the use of the Parkway through design and management tools to prevent overuse of the Parkway and preserve the environmental quality, thereby ensuring the integrity of the Parkway for future users.

## **1.4 Land Use**

No existing publicly owned Parkway lands shall be disposed of through sale, lease, or de facto uses adverse to the goals and policies of this Plan, in order to assure the long-term protection and integrity of the present boundaries of the Parkway.

## **1.5 Cooperation**

Coordination and cooperation in Parkway planning and management is essential, especially in recognizing the many important roles of jurisdictions and agencies with regulatory responsibilities within the Parkway.

## **Aquatic Recreation defined in the American River Parkway Plan (pg 98)**

### *Aquatic Recreation*

Aquatic recreation includes activities which are dependent upon the American River for their execution and enjoyment. Access and facilities to support aquatic recreation are permitted in the Protected, Limited Recreation and Developed Recreation land use categories. In Protected Areas, all aquatic recreation activities are permitted except motorized boat launching. The river supports a number of prized recreational anadromous fish, including steelhead, Chinook salmon, American shad, and striped bass. These fish are pursued from boats, the bank, and by wading. In addition, commercial guided fishing boats offer drift-fishing trips on the river. Populations of largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie, sunfish, catfish and other recreational fish, thrive in certain dredger tailing ponds where the water is deep enough to meet oxygen and temperature requirements. Fishing is permitted in these ponds, unless otherwise noted on an area plan.

**5.22** Swimming, wading, snorkeling and scuba diving are activities that occur, although they are not encouraged due to swift currents, water temperatures, slippery and uneven ground, submerged debris and vegetation, and absence of lifeguard services.

**5.23** Boating, canoeing, kayaking, rafting, sailing, motor boating, and similar activities are permitted Aquatic Recreation activities.

## **Commercial Activities defined in the American River Parkway Plan (pg 106)**

Commercial activities in the Parkway are intended to augment and improve the Parkway visitor's experience. The primary purpose of any permitted commercial activity should be consistent with the goals and policies of this Plan.

Commercial activities may be permitted in Developed Recreation areas as an auxiliary component of a permitted recreational facility or interpretive/educational facility. Commercial activities which occur on the Parkway are usually operated by private concession rather than by the County. A concession is a privately operated activity, usually for profit, which occurs on public domain by authorization of the responsible land use authority. A number of concessions have been awarded within the Parkway, including raft and canoe rentals, activities associated with the Ancil Hoffman Golf Course and operations of the Effie Yeaw Interpretive Center. Concessions are normally awarded when a desired activity or service can be accomplished more efficiently by a private entity than by the County.

Commercial activity by concession can be divided into two general groups: services and sales. Commercial services include such activities as garbage pickup, maintenance of grounds and structures, restoration planting and monitoring, professional instruction, and rental and boarding of horses. Commercial sales include food and beverages, recreation equipment, "convenience items" and other recreational or educational/ interpretive merchandise. In the future, commercial sales could also include a stand for the sale of produce and/or plants at the proposed native plant nursery and farm (preferably organic farm) in American River Ranch.

These two groups, service and sales, may occasionally overlap. For example, a raft rental may include the sale of food and beverage. Recommended criteria to facilitate determinations on the establishment of commercial activities in the Parkway are included in the Implementation Measures section (Chapter 11) of this plan.

## **Compliance with the Goals and Policies of the Parkway Plan**

Personal Watercrafts are an Aquatic Recreation Activity (ARPP page 98) and is specifically allowed in section 5.23 *"Boating, canoeing, kayaking, rafting, sailing, motor boating, and similar activities are permitted Aquatic Recreation activities."* In this case, personal watercrafts are not specifically called out as approved, however personal watercrafts are motor boats, or vessels. California Department of Boating and Waterways defines a Personal Watercraft as "a vessel 13 feet or less in length, propelled by machinery, which is designed to be operated by a person sitting, standing, or kneeling on the vessel. Its use is subject to all state, local and federal regulations governing the operation of powerboats of similar size."

Delta Charters is a proposed concession launching on the American River Parkway at Discovery Park Boat Launch, but riding is strictly limited to the Sacramento River. Page 106 of the ARPP outlines the criteria in which the Department should consider concession activities. In this case, Delta Charters is both a commercial service and commercial sales as defined by the ARPP. The

instruction training and tours would fall under the commercial services definition and the rental option would fall under the commercial sales definition of the ARPP. Both activities are allowed but must first be approved by the Board of Supervisors and are only allowed in Developed Recreation land use designations.

### **Impacts to other users**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Potential Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation Steps</b>
Trails Recreation	No potential impact. No trails are located at Discovery Park Boat Launch, the designated launch location, where the proposed concession will launch watercrafts from.	No trails are located at Discovery Park Boat Launch. Delta Charters will launch watercrafts just like other users of the Boat Launch.
Aquatic Recreation	Additional users on the river and boat launch conflict as watercrafts are launched and ridden on the Sacramento River.	Personal Watercrafts will be launched just like any other boat or watercraft at the Discovery Park Boat Launch. Delta Charters staff will wait their turn to get the watercrafts into the water and participants will get on watercrafts at the dock area.  During times that an Instruction or Training class is to occur, the maximum class size for instruction will be 6 participants. 6 participants, with 1 instructor still make the group size “family group” (3-10) designation of the ARPP.
Nature Appreciation	Personal watercrafts could impact nature appreciation by increased visibility, noise, and approaching wildlife.	The concession contractor is bound to the goals and policies of the Parkway Plan and County ordinance which protect wildlife from certain impacts. Further, the personal watercraft operation will not impact any more than the regular summer boat use on the river.
Recreational Enjoyment	Increased personal watercrafts could have an impact on picnicking and other recreation enjoyment activities.	The impact to recreation enjoyment activities is very minimal. The two activities use different amenities in the Parkway and only share parking spaces. The concession will not draw a significant number of participants to impact parking at the locations.

## **Environmental Impacts**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Potential Impact</b>	<b>Mitigating Steps</b>
Damage to the natural environment	Additional concession traffic could cause damage to the natural environment through trail and bank erosion.	The locations selected for the concession activity are in Developed Recreation land use areas and are currently exposed to a high number of parkway visitors. The access areas that will be used by Delta Charters are designed to withstand the traffic caused by the pedestrian use anticipated with this concession agreement. Delta Charters will be limited to existing launch locations at Discovery Park.

## **Department Impacts**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Potential Impact</b>	<b>Mitigating Steps</b>
Restroom Use	Increase restroom use	The existing restroom facilities are adequately maintained to accommodate the use.
Ranger Staff Time	The concession agreement could increase the need for Ranger responses.	The Concession operator is required to have all participants wear approved life vests as well as all staff will maintain first aid and CPR certification, as well as Lifeguard certifications. This additional training will assist the Rangers if an emergency occurs during the activity.

## **Impact Monitoring**

The Department staff will be responsible for implementing the provisions of the concession agreement during the term of this contract as well as ensuring that all trash, equipment and activity impacts are adequately mitigated. Significant changes and or damages will be documented and evaluated by staff to ensure proper steps are taken to protect or repair the impacted area. If activity limitations are required based on the results of the impact monitoring, the Department will ensure the necessary measures are in place to prevent further impacts from occurring.

## **Final Determination**

The Department of Regional Parks has determined the proposed concession will not adversely impact the American River Parkway and is recommending consideration and approval for the Delta Charters Concession Contract.