



The Delta Council REVIEW

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THE NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS AND MEMBERS OF DELTA COUNCIL

December 2016

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE – Road and Bridges: Not If, But When?

By Walton Gresham

After exhaustive efforts to find more cost-efficiencies in the delivery of road maintenance and construction by the Mississippi Department of Transportation, the Legislature, and even at the Federal level, the Congress has circled around and done the same. Clearly, while there are places around the edges of our transportation infrastructure challenges whereby one could argue that savings could be accrued, the funda-



Gresham

mental issue facing our crumbling transportation infrastructure is summed up on one word, and that word is revenue.

Without additional revenues, which will require lawmakers, transportation commissioners, and other elected officials to exhibit the courage and resolve to legislate new revenues, there will come a time when we will be forced to respond to our road construction and maintenance needs due to the loss of jobs attributable to a road and bridge system that makes it illegal for interstate

commerce to travel across Mississippi bridges to deliver goods and services by Federal highway standards. Or, in a worst case scenario, the response will occur after one of the almost 2,000 bridges that are structurally-deficient in Mississippi fails and causes loss of lives.

Today, as we look into the future, we fully recognize that the real burden for addressing the needed revenues to support renovation and expansion of our transportation infrastructure rests solely with us, the constituencies who elect and support those who represent us. In order to get a better transportation infrastructure system in your local

community, in your county, and on your State roads, we urge our friends who serve in these capacities to adopt the same type of user fee which was adopted in 1987. This led the way toward the four-lane network of roads that Mississippi has so proudly traveled on for the past 30 years. The problem that has been identified and validated through every study and analysis we have seen is that you cannot financially support a 2017 road and bridge system on 1987 dollars. I personally cannot identify anything I have purchased in recent memory that costs

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GRESHAM *continued on page 4*

B.F. Smith Adult Literacy Program: 15 Years of Success

The B.F. Smith Adult Literacy Program originated in 2002. The project, designed for adults 18 years and over, began with 2 programs in 3 counties, and to date 118 programs in 13 counties (Bolivar, Coahoma, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Panola, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tunica, Washington, Yazoo) have been completed. By August, 2016, 403 students in 23 towns had been reached. Instructors bring the program to the various sites many in remote rural areas.

The data collected from pre and post testing of students who complete the program shows that in one of the major components of the program—reading comprehension that when all student scores are averaged together, students enter the program on a 3rd (2.7) grade reading comprehension level. They exit the program almost on the 6th (5.92) grade level, which is an average improvement of more than 3 grade levels (3.22) in reading comprehension.

Another key program component where growth is measured is the phonemic code. In order to read, students must be able to recognize words and sound them out. Instructors teach a short-cut to the code which includes the 21 consonant sounds and 16 vowel patterns necessary to read and to improve independently. When student scores are averaged together they begin the program knowing only 35% of this phonemic code shortcut. They exit the program knowing 94%, a 58% gain in understanding how to sound out words!

Presently, classes are underway and/or in planning stages in Bolivar, Coahoma, Desoto, Leflore, Sunflower, and Washington counties. Sponsors for the Adult Literacy program are as follows: Bank Plus, Delta Regional Authority, Delta & Pine Land, Dollar General, Feild Co-operative Association, Inc., Guaranty Bank & Trust Company, Monsanto, Planters Bank & Trust Company and StaplCotn.

Lanny Kennedy, Adult Literacy Instructor, teaching a student



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Outlook

President's Message: Challenges & Opportunities

Highways, catfish inspection, groundwater strategies, Washington farm policy considerations, cropland



Simmons

property taxes, the fiscal challenges facing State agencies and Institutions of Higher Learning in Mississippi, and the unsettling climate surrounding the potential impacts of the November elections on the Mississippi Delta represent just a portion of the issues which leaders of Delta Council have been engaged in during recent months; however, there is no more exciting development in the Delta than the recent initiatives of Delta Council which have led to our communities, counties, business leaders, utility companies and planning and development districts that have joined hands to establish Delta Strong, an area-wide commitment toward the expansion of existing investments in jobs by our current employers and the attraction of new investments from prospective

companies that could consider the Delta as a future location. Behind the efforts of Tom Gresham, Frank Howell of the Delta Council staff, and many other Delta leaders and organizations, this joint effort is the first of its kind in Mississippi, and all of us are convinced that it is our best shot at the Delta participating in the future economic growth of our State and our Country.

The Midyear Directors' meeting was a complete success, with policy discussions and the challenges that lie ahead of us for 2017, in the areas of road and bridge improvements, higher education funding, the formidable task of meeting our groundwater balance goals head-on, and the impacts of new wetlands permitting guidance that is almost certain to cause significant issues to arise in Delta agriculture. Jere Nash and Andy Taggart gave an entertaining, and informative account of the November 8, House, Senate and White House elections preview, with its far-reaching ramifications on the State of Mississippi and the Delta.

The margin of difference between profits and losses in agriculture has been extremely narrow during 2015, and again in 2016, with economists of forecasting that the same will be true W in '17. Fortunately, the Delta, as a th region, has produced better-than-to average yields per-acre in these years of and it has provided somewhat of a cushion to the impact of low commodity prices; however, the commodity to markets are sending messages that in re: the absence of short crops in the dc Southern hemisphere and Asia, the ou outlook appears to be more of the an same as we have had in the past two Te years for our \$2 billion per-year Delta agriculture industry. Even with that th dim forecast, we must remind our-m selves of just how thankful we should th be for the privilege of living in the if United States, being a rural agriculture sc area, and most of all, thankful and A! respectful for those who have served to th protect our rights. We wish everyone a an Happy Holiday season and safety for or receiving travelers in your home. —

An Op-Ed Delta Strong Organized for Economic Success

**By Tom Gresham, Chairman
Delta Council Development Department**

The Delta is excited about the launch of an initiative that has taken place over the past couple of months, and much longer than that in the planning stage. This effort, led by the Delta Council Development Department, and assisted by a lot of business and community leaders from around the region, is called DELTA STRONG. Some of you may have heard about this effort or seen car tags pop up with the logo on the front and wondered, "What is Delta Strong?"

Delta Strong is a new regional branding, marketing, and business attraction program aimed exclusively at luring new manufacturing opportunities to the region. The new initiative has been supported by private sector financial institu-

tions, our Planning and Development Districts, Port Terminals on the Mississippi River, seven local Economic Development Foundations, and our Utility partners. (See accompanying chart and logo.)

This strategy, which is being led by the Delta Council Development Department, is a four-year plan which includes outcomes, measurements and transparency that will position the Mississippi Delta region as a major player in the attraction of manufacturing, distribution, and warehousing operations.

We believe that it has the potential to revitalize economic development opportunities in our communities and in our entire region. We all know the challenges that rural areas throughout the nation face in job attraction and population loss. Instead of complaining about it or

waiting for someone to come to our res- cue, the business and economic develop- ment community of the region have decided to re-take our own narrative and target companies that can and will be successful here.

The Delta has a sense of urgency because most of our communities and counties are losing population to urban and suburban locations. Delta Council, along with most every major economist, believes this initiative will help reverse those trends with the attraction of value-added manufacturing, distribution, and warehousing.

This great region can complement our existing strengths in agriculture and manufacturing, make our communities more viable, and ensure that our children

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DELTA STRONG continued on page 6

Delta Leads the Way in Work Ready Communities

Delta Council, along with local economic development officials from Bolivar, Coahoma, Leflore, Sunflower, Tunica, and Yazoo have been diligently working to meet their Work Ready Community goals set by ACT, Inc., in order to become a fully-certified Work Ready Community. One area of focus includes the emerging workforce—which encompasses high school students and recent college graduates.

“Students must be highly skilled in order to compete in today’s job market. It is essential that the students are able to read well, be able to locate information in various forms, and be able to do math computations. ACT WorkKeys shows how capable our students are,” stated Equonda Jackson, Student Services and Test Coordinator at Cleveland Career Development & Technology Center.

Each county is working to implement WorkKeys tests in their high schools. ACT WorkKeys is a career-based assessment that determines whether students have learned the skills that are important for them to be successful in the workforce if they decide they would like to go straight to work after high school. Students taking the WorkKeys test will receive an ACT National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC). The three test areas are applied mathematics, locating information and reading for information.

“By preparing our emerging workforce for WorkKeys, we are better able to align education with workforce development

needs,” reported Todd Donald, Vice President of Workforce and Economic Development at Mississippi Delta Community College.

The Delta’s economic development community has found that companies in the area are already having success in hiring those with the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC).

Jessica Milam, Vice President of Human Resources at Planters Bank recently reported, “Our hopes with implementing the Career Readiness Certification were that we would see a smaller but more qualified applicant pool. We are currently in the process of utilizing the program and the results are as we hoped. I am able to efficiently screen applicants based on qualifications and can focus on interviewing those that I know have the skill level profiled for the position.”

If your company is searching for strategies to measure an individual’s foundational workplace skills—such as math, reading for information, and locating information, you need to learn more about this initiative. ACT Work Ready Communities are helping job seekers in your area understand what skills employers like you are looking for, and it helps local educators prepare students for success. And—they need you as an employer to value their earning an NCRC!

For more information and to show your support, please contact Christie Sledge, the workforce specialist for the Mis-



At a recent progress meeting of the Delta Work Ready Community effort, Jessica Milam, Human Resources Director for Planter’s Bank and Trust, talked to economic and education leaders from around the region about her experience utilizing National Career Readiness Certificate for hiring bank tellers. Picture with Milam are Ron Hudson, left, of the Clarksdale-Coahoma Chamber of Commerce, and Cary Karlson of the Washington County Economic Alliance.

ssissippi Development Authority at (662) 686-3388 or csledge@mississippi.org and visit workreadycommunities.org/employers.

South Mississippi Electric Becomes Cooperative Energy

South Mississippi Electric has announced that, effective immediately, the company has changed its name to Cooperative Energy. Company leaders say the new name better reflects the Hattiesburg-based cooperative’s mission and broader business model in the energy sector.

The name and new logo were revealed to more than 400 employees in attendance at the company’s All Employee meeting held at Hattiesburg’s Lake Terrace Convention Center. Cooperative Energy is a not-for-profit, member-owned, community-driven generation and transmission cooperative

that provides electricity to 11 distribution cooperatives.

In the Delta Council region, four distribution cooperatives are part of the Cooperative Energy team – Coahoma, Delta, Twin County, and Yazoo Valley Electric Power Associations.

“Changing a company name is always a major step, but we are confident this was the right thing for our company, our mission and those we serve,” said Cooperative

Energy President/CEO Jim Compton. “We have grown our energy resources, we have grown our geographic service area and honestly we outgrew our name. Cooperative Ener-

gy is a name that better defines who we are as a company.”

The company now operates in 55 of the state’s 82 counties, and also owns a generation facility in Batesville in north central Mississippi. The company, started in 1941, has expanded its renewable energy and solar generation focus in recent years adding to an already diverse energy portfolio.

“The electric power associations, both in the Delta and around the State, have played a tremendous leadership role in areas such as economic and agricultural development, and have been steadfast supporters of the mission of Delta Council,” said Louis Thompson of Tchula, a director of Yazoo Valley who sits on the Board of Directors of Cooperative Energy.



Photos:



Delta Council Past President Mike Sturdivant of Glendora presented special in memoriam recognition to the families and friends of longtime Delta leaders who have passed away during the year. Above, longtime friends of Clarksdale leader Leon Bramlett—Bill and Anne Canty of Oxford—received the recognition on behalf of Mr. Bramlett's family.



Delta Council Past President Mike Sturdivant of Glendora presented special recognition to longtime U.S. Army Corps of Engineers leader Stephen Gambrell. Gambrell is retiring, but is transitioning to a leadership role with the Lower Mississippi Valley Flood Control Association.



Delta Council Past President Mike Sturdivant of Glendora presented special in memoriam recognition to the families and friends of longtime Delta leaders who have passed away during the year. Above, the family of Delta civic leader J.Y. Trice of Rosedale—son and daughter-in-law Rev. Billy and Betty Trice of Greenville—receive the recognition from Sturdivant.



Old friends Austin Jones of Moorhead, Dr. Ed Cherry of New Tazewell, TN, Gibb Steele of Greenville, and Travis Satterfield of Benoit pause for a photograph at the Mid-Year Board of Directors Meeting.



Tunica Crankshaft Plant Officially Opens: FEUER Powertrain opened its new \$140 million automotive crankshaft plant in Tunica on Wednesday, November 16. The company, headquartered in Nordhausen, Germany, is expected to create 300 jobs in Tunica. It will be FEUER's first manufacturing facility in the United States. Pictured at the Grand Opening included, from left, Marco Illig, Senior VP of Operations for Feuer; Dominic Deig, CEO, Feuer USA; Bernd Gulden, CEO Feuer powertrain; Glenn McCullough of the MS Development Authority, James Dunn of the Tunica Board of Supervisors, Lyn Arnold of the Tunica Chamber of Commerce, and Joey Roberts of the MS Development Authority. FEUER Powertrain, established in 2003, machines and processes ready-for-installation crankshafts. The company has invested more than \$350 million in five plants in Nordhausen, where it employs more than 750 workers.



Delta Council Past President Mike Sturdivant of Glendora presented special recognition to longtime agricultural leader Dave Rhylander, who recently retired from service at Monsanto Corporation. Rhylander has long been a friend and proponent of the growth and expansion of Delta agriculture.



Delta Council Past President Mike Sturdivant of Glendora presented special in memoriam recognition to the families and friends of longtime Delta leaders who have passed away during the year. Above, the family of Delta Council Past President Seymour Johnson of Indianola – daughter Leslee Linn of Oxford (left) and wife Joan Johnson of Indianola receive the recognition from Sturdivant.



Delta Council Past President Mike Sturdivant of Glendora presented special recognition to longtime Mississippi State University Governmental Affairs leader John Tomlinson, who has retired this year. Pictured with John is his wife, Susan.



Photos

Officers and Presidential Appointees Meet in Yazoo County

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Yazoo County was the host site for a recent meeting of the 2016-17 Officers and Presidential Appointments of Delta Council. In the photo at left, Delta Council President Harry Simmons (third from left) have the Delta Council leaders a tour of his catfish processing operation and discussed some of the challenges the industry faces from unsafe foreign imports. He is shown giving a plant tour to the leaders, including from left, Lisa Cowart of Indianola, Mark Hargett of Cleveland, Robert Royal of Midnight, Clay McWilliams of Cleveland, and Reece Pillow of Greenwood.

Also, the group toured the farming operation of Rob Coker (far right) in the Lake City area, and he discussed some of the innovative and profitable conservation efforts he has implemented on his farming operation with the assistance of Delta F.A.R.M. The group included, from left, Bill Battle of Tunica, John Howarth, Jr., of Cleveland, Simmons, Cindy Baird of Indianola, Mitchell, Dan Prevost of Delta F.A.R.M. staff, Jim Thomas of Cruger, Chip Morgan of Delta Council



staff, Hargett, McWilliams, and John Mark Looney of Leland.

The group concluded with a lunch at Hines Grocery at Broad Lake and a presentation on the outlook of infrastructure funding by Delta Council Transportation Chairman Walton Gresham of Indianola.



Delta Council Mid-Year Board of Directors featured speakers Jere Nash (left) and Andy Taggart (far right)—the “Red and Blue Political Review”—entertained the Delta Council guests on their thoughts on the elections that would be held five days later. Nash and Taggart’s election forecasting was consistent with the majority of other professional political pundits, who were surprised on Election Night with the outcomes from Capital Hill and the White House. They are pictured with Delta Council President Harry Simmons (second from left) and Chairman Al Rankins (second from right).



Delta Council Past President Mike Sturdivant of Glendora presented special in memoriam recognition to the families and friends of longtime Delta leaders who have passed away during the year. Above, the family of Delta Council Past President Ralph Hand of Glendora—granddaughter Brittany Pulido, daughter Nancy Vick, granddaughter Wendy DeLassus, daughter Elizabeth Hamlin, and nephew Walker Sturdivant receive the recognition from Mike Sturdivant, who also is a nephew of Ralph Hand.



Delta Council Past President Mike Sturdivant of Glendora presented special in memoriam recognition to the families and friends of longtime Delta leaders who have passed away during the year. Above, the family of Delta Council Past President Penn Owen, Jr., of Robinsonville—Son Davis Owen of Robinsonville, as grandson Louis Holbrook of Memphis, and son Penn Owen, III, of Memphis receive the recognition from Sturdivant.



Members of the Coahoma Community College Choir, directed by Kelvin Townes, performed special patriotic music at the 2016 Mid-Year Board of Directors meeting of Delta Council. In recent weeks, the renowned singing group has performed in Washington, D.C., and was the featured act at the Clarksdale-Coahoma Chamber of Commerce banquet.



DELTAN ON THE MOVE: Dr. Valmadge Towner President, Coahoma Community College

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Valmadge is a Marks, MS (Quitman County) native. A 1987 graduate of Quitman County High School, Valmadge's initial aspirations were not in education, but to become a commercial airline pilot. However, after deciding to major in Education, he found his passion and gifting.

Valmadge graduated from Coahoma Community College with an Associate's Degree. He graduated from Alcorn State University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Mathematics, a Master of Education Degree in Mathematics and a Master of Education Degree in Administration. He attended the Principal's Summer Institute at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He received a Master of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey. He received a Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership from the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss).



Towner

Valmadge is single and serves as a caretaker for his father Reverend Ezra Towner. His church home is Silent Grove MB Church in Marks, MS. Valmadge states that his hobbies include "road trips, doing minor yard work, reading and eating foods that I should not eat."

CURRENT JOB TITLE & RESPONSIBILITIES

Valmadge serves as the superintendent of Coahoma Agricultural High School and the fifth president of Coahoma Community College. His responsibilities in general are to ensure that both institutions adhere to policies and procedures established by the board of trustees as well as to maintain financial solvency for both schools.

Outside of working for the two institutions, he still finds time to serve as the pastor of Friendship Missionary Baptist Church in Greenwood, Mississippi (Leflore County) and provide administrative assistance to his father at New Hope

Missionary Baptist Church in Clarksdale, Mississippi (Coahoma County).

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB?

"I love working with our faculty and staff and partnering with both in an effort to make both schools better. Additionally, I am thrilled to communicate with students whether it be over a meal, in meeting or while I'm walking on campus. The students give meaning to what I do each day. Seeing students grow and develop inspires me."

WHAT DO OTHERS SAY ABOUT VALMADGE:

"Dr. Valmadge Towner is an exceptional leader and educator for Coahoma Community College," said Delta Council Director and Coahoma County Administrator Daniel Vassel. "Val brings a sense of purpose and passion in whatever endeavors he undertakes, and it is paying dividends for the students and businesses in the Coahoma Community College territory."

DELTA STRONG *from page 2*

and grandchildren have opportunities here if they choose to come home after completing their formal education. That is what Delta Strong is keenly focused upon.

We know we can be successful—we have done so in the past and we have a lot of great companies located in our region today that have been here and have been profitable for a long time. In fact, the Delta has done a pretty good job maintaining our manufacturing base better than most areas in America, but what we have not been as successful in is the attraction of new industries and jobs over the past 10 to 15 years. We simply must work harder, stronger, and smarter to succeed in today's competitive environment, and the Delta Strong effort is our pathway to do just that.

Most of the Fortunate 500 companies utilize people called site location consultants to locate manufacturing operations today. These large employment, large investment deals tend to gravitate towards larger communities. Oftentimes, Mississippi does not even make the cut, and when we do, more populated areas of the State are generally at the front of the line. While it can be frustrating, it makes sense—a company hires someone to minimize risks. The lack of population and perhaps other demographic unknowns make rural areas in Mississippi and surrounding towns in neighboring States like ours a risk,

and we must disassemble that myth and perception.

While the Delta will continue to work with our friends in the site location business, the

nesses in places where high costs and high taxes are impacting their bottom line. These companies are in the 50 to 250 employee range and will be carefully targeted to have the best

individuals from the Next Move Group to help us implement this plan. During the couple of months of intensive work that has been undertaken to lay a solid foundation for Delta Strong, I think we can all attest that we continue to be impressed with their strategies, their process, their commitment, and their understanding of exactly what it takes for rural communities like ours to successfully attract additional investment.

There is a very aggressive and detailed timeline of activities and benchmarks, and as you would expect from a group of businesspeople, we are targeting results and outcomes which we plan on meeting. We look forward to sharing more milestones and victories along the way with you.

In conclusion, it is important to emphasize that this does not change the way any economic development entities or programs of work are being run. It is simply meant to add horsepower to local efforts by creating a smart, targeted regional effort. This is not something that any of our other communities, individually, have the ability to do on their own, but by working together, we can add value to all of them and the entire region. In essence, that is the fundamental mission of Delta Council and Delta Strong.

Tom Gresham is a businessman from the Mississippi Delta who serves as Chairman of the Delta Council Development Department.

Delta Strong Participating Partners to Date

Atmos Energy
Bank of Commerce
Clarksdale-Coahoma County Industrial Authority
Cleveland State Bank
Cleveland-Bolivar Industrial Foundation
Community Bank
Cooperative Energy (Coahoma, Delta, Twin County, & Yazoo EPA's)
Entergy Mississippi
First National Bank
First Security Bank
Guaranty Bank and Trust
Greenwood-Leflore-Carroll Development Foundation
Panola Partnership
North Delta Planning and Development District
Planters Bank and Trust
Port of Greenville
Port of Rosedale
Regions Bank
South Delta Planning and Development District
Sunflower Economic Dev. District
Tunica Chamber of Commerce
Washington County Economic Alliance

laser-like focus of Delta Strong is to brand and package the message of the Delta and take it directly to the owners of manufacturing busi-

nesses in places where high costs and high taxes are impacting their bottom line. These companies are in the 50 to 250 employee range and will be carefully targeted to have the best fit for our region. The entities underneath the Delta Strong umbrella are working with a talented group of

Restoring a Waterfowl Paradise

One of the largest wetland restorations in the Mississippi Delta is complete. Over 3,500 acres of critical forested wetlands is now restored and will continue to benefit wildlife, Mississippi sportsman, and the surrounding community. This work was made possible thanks to a partnership between private landowners, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Delta Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and a host of private entities.

Those private partners, Entergy Mississippi, the James M. Cox Foundation, PowerTree & UtiliTree Carbon Companies, the Caterpillar Foundation, and the Walker Foundation provided funding for the \$700,000 plus project at Mathews Brake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).

Mathews Brake encompasses over 3,500 acres of cypress-tupelo dominated wetland habitat, and according to the USFWS the brake provides habitat to over 30,000 annual wintering waterfowl. In 1980, 2,418 acres of the brake were purchased by the USFWS to establish the Mathews Brake National Wildlife Refuge. Attracting an estimated 35,000 visitors annually, the refuge serves as a significant economic driver for the local economy. Understandably, Mathews Brake is important from both a conservation and economic standpoint.

However, Mathews Brake lacked the critical water management capability fundamental for wetland habitat. Without being able to properly manage the fluctuations in water levels, the habitat can begin to experience significant negative impacts. Such was the case at Mathews Brake, where the wetland habitat had decreased by nearly 55%.

Beginning in 2015, Delta Wildlife and TNC staff began to compile the initial survey and water elevation data needed to properly understand the impact of the work that was needed. Leveraging this initial survey data and the relationships that Delta Wildlife had with many of the brake's private landowners, TNC was able to complete a full scale hydrological model. Together this laid the foundation that was crucial to the ultimate success of the project.

After a series of meetings at the Crystal Grill in Greenwood last fall, the brake's public and private landowners agreed that a large water control structure needed to be installed in Mosquito Run, the drainage outlet of Mathews

GRESHAM from page 1

the same thing as it cost in 1987 and to expect that we can squeeze cost-efficiencies alone in order to meet our transportation infrastructure dilemma is pure folly to me.

As we look into the future, if there are

those who require their public officials to adopt a "no new tax" pledge, in my view, they are asking their elected officials to ignore one of the fundamental responsibilities of government, and that is a safe transportation infrastructure that will induce the creation of new jobs, rather than deter the commerce that we so desperately need. As

for me, I am happy to support my Legislator or my local county and city officials should they have the opportunity to increase a dedicated funding stream for road and bridge improvements and defend them for voting in favor of these new taxes should any political or other faction criticize them for it. I feel strongly about this

because I believe it will take those of us in the business community to give our elected officials our assurance of public support if we are to expect them to stick their political neck on the line for better roads and bridges.

Merry Christmas.



Adjoining landowners and Delta Wildlife members were on hand for the Mathews Brake celebration. Picture, from left, are Charles, Gib, and Wilson Sproles, Preston and Jim Thomas, Delta Wildlife Past President Randy Sewell, and Scott Lemons of The Nature Conservancy.

Brake. The project was completed this past October, following the construction and installation of the water control structure. This structure now grants the USFWS refuge staff the ability to properly manage the water levels inside Mathews Brake NWR and ultimately restores the needed hydrology and wetland habitat to over 3,500

acres. "An estimated 2,000 acres of waterfowl habitat will serve as a pretty good boost to the local tourism economy through additional public hunting and outdoor recreational opportunities. It's a good deal for the ducks. It's a good deal for hunters. And it's a good deal for local businesses that cater to outdoor users" said Mike Rich, project leader for the Theodore Roosevelt National

Wildlife Refuge Complex.

"We can't overstate the role Delta Wildlife played in getting this project off the ground. Their relationship with the brake's private landowners and being able to provide the initial water elevation data is what got everyone on the same page" said Scott Lemmons, Freshwater Program Director for The Nature Conservancy.

Mathews Brake is truly an iconic natural landmark in the Mississippi Delta. A great deal of sincere appreciation should be given to the private landowners, the USFWS and the private entities that financially supported this work. Together they help restore one of the greatest waterfowl and wetland destinations in the Mississippi Delta and their efforts have ensured the brake will be enjoyed for generations to come.



Delta Council

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DELTA COUNCIL MEMBER FOCUS: Abbott R. Myers

BUSINESS OR OCCUPATION

Abbott owns and operates Myers Farm in South Tunica County. He and his son Ransom Myers operates the farm together. Myers Farm produces rice, corn, soybean, and wheat. His farming has merited him the 1999 Rice Farmer of the Year and the 2013 Swisher Mississippi Farmer of the Year.

HOMETOWN

Abbott lives in Dundee in the Southern part of Tunica County. He is married to the former Sheryl Fox of Charleston. They have two children—Kathryn Bourne (Tunica) and Ransom Myers (Dundee); and four grandchildren. They are members of Tunica Presbyterian Church where Abbott serves as an Elder.

AFFILIATIONS

Abbott is affiliated with many organizations. His affiliations include the following:

- Former Chairman and Area Vice-Chairman, Soil and Water Conservation District
- Past President, Tunica Rotary Club
- Past President of Board, Tunica Academy
- Tunica County FSA Committee Member of 18 years
- Former Commissioner, Yazoo Mississippi Delta Joint Water Management District
- Board of Mississippi Rice Council



Myers

- Elected to North Mississippi Federal Land Bank Board 1996–present. Chairman, 2004 - present
- Elected Chairman of 10th Farm Credit District Stockholders Advisory Committee
- Member, Farm Bureau, ASA, NRA

WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT HIM

“Abbott is a respected and solid citizen in our rural County. In everything he does in his understated way, he strives to make our community and this Delta a good place to live and do business,” stated Ken Murphree, the Tunica native who is the retired and longtime public official from Tunica County.

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