

Senators: Backwater Project Exempt from EPA's Veto

The Mississippi Levee Board is grateful that Senators Cochran and Wicker have again advised the Bush Administration that the Yazoo Backwater Project should be exempt from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) "veto" under the Clean Water Act (CWA). The Senators recently provided the Administration with documentation that the Project qualified for the exemption and asked for a full explanation of why that information was ignored by the government.

When the EPA issued its "veto" in late August 2008, it stated that the Yazoo Backwater Project could be exempt if there was proof that the original 1982 Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) had been

submitted to Congress in advance of appropriations for construction. That is a statement of the legal standard for the exemption, found in Section 404(r) of the CWA. However, EPA said that, after consultation with the Corps of Engineers, it found no evidence that the 1982 EIS was submitted to Congress, although the Corps of Engineers provided documents to the Mississippi Levee Board showing that the 1982 EIS was indeed submitted to Congress. These key documents were ignored by EPA.

The Corps, following its then-applicable standard procedures, sent the 1982 EIS to congressional committees and members in March 1983. Documents from this period reflect that the

Corps expected the Project to be exempt. The Senators have now asked the obvious question: why was this critical information overlooked or ignored in the EPA "veto"? Who is responsible for this error?

The Mississippi Levee Board was shocked when the Corps of Engineers provided it with copies of the 1983 letters to Congress, as well as other important documents, in response to our Freedom of Information Act request. We fail to understand how the Administration could at the same time release these documents to the public, and fail to address them in relation to the "veto" of this Project. We have always felt that the Yazoo Backwater Project is good for the economy and the environment, and

that it is exempt from EPA's authority.

For many years, opponents of the Yazoo Backwater Project have not hesitated to misrepresent and even distort the facts. This latest revelation, that the government hid critical documents, is of a far greater magnitude. EPA agreed that the "key issue" for application of the exemption was whether the 1982 EIS was submitted to Congress. The Corps had documents reflecting that this occurred, yet the EPA Final Determination imposing the "veto" does not even mention these documents. The Board finds it hard to believe that this was a benign oversight.

The Board appreciates the continued support of our congressional delegation for the Yazoo Backwater Project.

The Delta Council Review

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THE NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS AND MEMBERS OF DELTA COUNCIL

December 2008

MDOT Representatives Outline Road Upgrade Status In the Region

Speaking to the Highways and Transportation Committee of Delta Council, District Engineers Richard Allen of Batesville and Kevin Magee of Yazoo City gave the packed room of regional transportation leaders a status report on the priority transportation issue of Delta Council.

Allen, the District Engineer which serves the northern part of the Delta Council area out of the Batesville MDOT office, gave the Delta Council crowd good news about progress being made on I-269 between Collierville, TN and Hernando, MS. The 269 segment will connect with I-69 in Hernando, where the already completed section of I-69 extends from I-55 in Hernando to US Highway 61 in Robinsonville. The 28.5 mile stretch of interstate highway from Collierville which is planned from Collierville to Hernando, will serve as an outer loop for the Memphis metropolitan area, and promises to bring an expanded commercial distribution corridor into Mississippi upon

its completion. Allen advised the Delta Council audience that progress is being made toward the completion of four design phases along the corridor, with right of way acquisitions and utility relocations to follow shortly. The construction phases will then be set to begin sometime in 2010.

The District Engineer for the Northern District also reported that the Delta Council priority road between Clarksdale and Batesville continues to receive funding for right-of-way acquisition and other pre-construction phases in preparation for future 4-laning. Allen did, however, emphasize that without additional MDOT funding, the US Highway 6 /US 278, 4-laning between Batesville and Clarksdale will be an extremely long-term process.

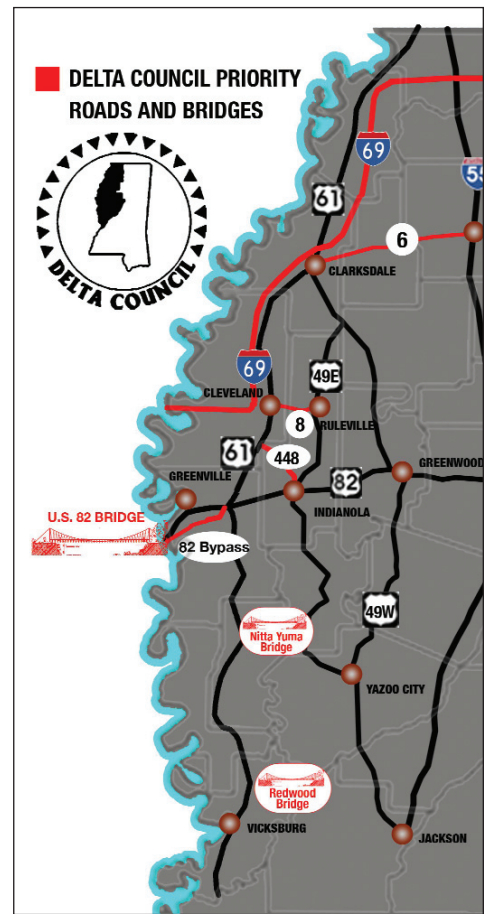
In the Central District, Central District Commissioner Dick Hall, accompanied by District Engineer Kevin Magee, announced that the 4-laning of Highway 8 between Ruleville and Cleveland would

be awarded to a construction contract during the first quarter of 2009.

"We are pleased that we can report to the Delta Council audience today that this 4-lane priority will move into its first phase of construction during 2009, with the hope that students and the traveling public will be able to ride on a 4-lane highway between Ruleville and Cleveland by the beginning of 2012," stated Hall.

Other priority roads that were reviewed with the Delta Council audience included:

- the U.S. Highway 82/ Mississippi River Bridge and bypass in Washington County
- the upgrade of State Highway 448 between Indianola and U.S. Highway 61
- the U.S. Highway 61 Bridge realignment in the Nitta Yuma area
- the completion of the U.S. Highway 61/Redwood Bridge over the Yazoo River in Warren County



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Future Delta: Noticeable Increase in Young Farmers, Allied Agriculture

In response to the growing number of young Delta citizens returning home to pursue a career in agriculture since the passage of the 2002 farm bill, Delta Council Executive Committee leaders requested that these new, young agricultural leaders identify an activity that

would be reserved specifically for them.

"We invited a number of these young farm and agricultural leaders to enlist their ideas of an activity that we could establish which recognizes the types of things which they would enjoy," stated John Phillips, the Delta Council Presi-

dent from Yazoo County. "It was interesting to hear the things they would like to do and to kickoff the idea, First South Farm Credit Association and Delta Council will co-sponsor an event in Tunica on February 18-19, inviting these young people for an evening out

event and morning seminar related to some of the most pressing issues facing Delta agriculture," added Phillips.

The Future Delta Committee said they would like to hear Keith Collins, the

FUTURE continued on page 4

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Message from the President



John Phillips, President
 Delta Council

Development Department:

The efforts of Delta Council to restore the Growth and Prosperity industrial incentives to Bolivar, Leflore, Quitman, Tallahatchie, Washington, and Yazoo Counties is ongoing. We are enlisting the help of Finance Committee and Ways and Means Committee members Senator Buck Clarke and Representative

David Norquist, respectively, to assist us in getting legislation to restore these economic incentives to those six counties, as well as six more Delta counties which could be affected if we are not successful in this legislative effort. Local development executives from the Delta, Supervisors, and Mayors have gotten behind this effort and we appreciate the unity.

Workforce Training:

The Workforce Training efforts to create a "one-stop" process, so that local employers do not become frustrated with the inherent complexities of accessing workforce training, is something that Lt. Governor Bryant, Speaker McCoy and the Office of the Governor have acknowledged as a sound idea and an excellent pilot program for the Mississippi Delta. Community College representatives, the Delta Workforce Investment Area, the Mississippi Employment Service, and the Mississippi Development Authority have joined Delta Council in this effort, and Representative Willie Bailey, Representative David Norquist and Lt. Governor Bryant

have offered to introduce legislation establishing this pilot program. We are grateful to these lawmakers and the respective agencies of State government along with Community College leadership which have assisted in support of this centralized, "one-stop" pilot program.

Farm Policy:

As of print time, we are still awaiting the release of the rules and regulations for the farm bill. The law actually states that these regulations shall be published in December, but the more pressing issue is the unrealistic timetable which this delay places on production lenders, landlord-tenant arrangements, routine Farm Service Agency changes which accompany passage of every farm bill, and the unreasonable expectation that we can satisfy all of these issues prior to going to the field in February. Delta Council has expressed its frustration and concern to the Department and Senator Cochran has echoed these concerns to USDA, while urging them to avoid any further delay.

PRESIDENT continued on page 3

Grain Basis in the Midsouth: Why So Crazy?

Basis is a lot more unpredictable than what we are used to, and volatility, at times, matches that of the futures market. For these reasons, I have been asked to write a short article about cash basis in the Delta. Why the local basis bids to farmers are trading at levels much lower than in previous years. The best way to address this problem is to divide the explanation into 3 parts: what determines basis, why is basis so poor, and what to look forward to in '09 and beyond.



Bill Bullard
 Hurley and Associates

What determines local river basis

in the Midsouth? We start with the price of cash grain at the gulf which is determined by foreign demand and ocean freight. Following this, the export facility needs to make a margin. Let's say, for example, the FOB basis bid at the gulf on corn is 50 over Dec. and the terminal wants a 5 ct p/bu margin. The exporter's bid to the Midsouth river shipper would be 45 over Dec. But next, the river elevator has to "book" a barge to get the product to the gulf. Barge freight trades in the cash market daily but let's say, for this example, the barge freight from Memphis to the gulf costs 50 cts p/bu. Now, the local FOB price at Memphis becomes 5 under Dec. The river elevator also needs a margin and most like to operate on at least 15 cts p/bu. Follow this arithmetic and you will find the local basis in Memphis

that will be offered to the farmer is 20 cts/ p/bu under Dec. Over the past couple of years, barge freight has been the volatility part of the basis that has weakened values. Each 100% change in barge freight computes to approximately 10 cents/ bu and barge freight at harvest has reached 1000%. Hedging works because of the expectation that cash and futures will come close together in the delivery month at delivery locations. Called convergence, this connect between basis and futures allows elevators to operate on modest margins, bankers to loan money on a secured product, and farmers to use the future market (or HTA contracts) to hedge the price of their grain. In the summer of 2007, the wheat basis became totally

BULLARD continued on page 7

Bill Bullard is a Senior Marketing Consultant with Hurley and Associates of Charleston, MO and is currently serving as the Executive Secretary of the Mid-South Grain Association.

Payment Schedule

Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Rates

Commodity	Unit	Direct Payment (\$/Unit)	Max CCP (\$/Unit)	Projected '08 CCP* (\$/Unit)	Feb '09 Advance CCP* (\$/Unit)
Corn	Bushel	0.28	0.40	0.00	0.00
Grain sorghum	Bushel	0.35	0.27	0.00	0.00
Rice	Cwt	2.35	1.65	0.00	0.00
Soybeans	Bushel	0.44	0.36	0.00	0.00
Upland cotton	Pound	0.0667	0.1258	0.0808	0.03232
Wheat	Bushel	0.52	0.65	0.00	0.00

* Projected '08 CCPs based on USDA's projected prices. Final rate will depend on market-year average price for Aug '08 through Jul '09.

Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Schedule

Schedule of Payments for 2008 & 2009 Crops:

October, 2008 – final direct payment for '08 crop
 October, 2008 – final CCP for '07 crop cotton, corn, grain sorghum and soybeans
 December, 2008 – 22% advance direct payment for '09 crop (Availability dependent on timing of publication of farm bill regulations)
 February, 2009 – advance CCP (up to 40% of projected CCP for '08 crop. (Availability dependent on timing of publication of farm bill regulations)
 February, 2009 – final CCP for '07 crop rice
 July, 2009 – final CCP (100% of actual payment) for '08 crop wheat
 October, 2009 – 78% final direct payment for '09 crop
 October, 2009 – final CCP for '08 crop cotton, corn, grain sorghum and soybeans
 December 2009 – 22% advance direct payment for '10 crop
 February, 2010 – advance CCP (up to 40% of projected CCP for '09 crop. (Availability dependent on timing of publication of farm bill regulations)
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Delta Area Projects Update

• US 61 Bridge at Redwood \$32.7M

Bridge which was projected to be complete by Summer 2009 is 86% completed scheduled to open Spring 2009

• HWY 82 Greenville Bridge

Mississippi Approach Complete \$86M: Main Span Complete \$110M: Arkansas Approach \$66M is 94% and projected completion is June 2009: Phase 4 - Demolition and main span

riding surface will be let Summer of 2009: Expect to open bridge to traffic Spring 2010

• HWY 82 Greenville Bypass

Phase 1 (Greenville Bridge to HWY 1) 32.5 M – Grade Drain & Bridge is 30% complete; Phase 2 – (HWY 1 to Leland) Grade, Drain, Bridge – Let in July 2009; Phase 3 (Greenville Bridge to HWY 1 is projected to be let in 2011;

Phase 4 Paving (HWY 1 to Leland) is projected to be let in 2013; Bypass opened to traffic roughly in 2015.

• HWY 61 Bridge at Nitta Yuma

Currently being investigated by archaeologists for possible cultural resources (graves); Will move to Right-of-Way acquisition when study is complete; Scheduled to be let in 2010

• HWY 448 Indianola to Shaw

After public meeting in 2003, study was "shelved" due to lack of support for MDOT concepts; Locals favored a route that would ultimately cause more traffic/congestion on HWY 82 in Indianola; MDOT is waiting for some unified community support for a transportation solution that would serve to facilitate mobility rather than just funnel traffic onto HWY 82.

BULLARD cont. from page 2

disconnected from the futures market. Farmer bids at \$2.00 under July became the norm. The weak basis was not because elevators were making a big profit. It was due to hedge funds running up the futures price to such high levels that the futures price was not in line with world wheat values. The only way for U.S. SRWW wheat to trade in the world market was for the exporter to offer overseas buyers a lower basis to make wheat competitive with wheat being offered by other countries. The lower basis also helped wheat be competitive with corn as a feed in the U.S. domestic market. Was this cheap basis a bad thing for the producer? Not really, unless the wheat was already sold on a HTA contract. The loss in basis was more than offset by a futures price much higher than would have been the case if specs were not in the market. Funds are not buying today and you see where prices are now.

Moving along to the 2008 crop year, other factors had a detrimental effect on basis, the chief one being price volatility. Soaring future prices took its toll on elevator buyers; in fact, some of our local buyers were forced out of business. The margin calls were out of control and banks tightened up credit lines. Many elevators simply ran out of the ability to borrow money to meet margin calls, and in some cases were not willing or able to offer any kind of cash price, except maybe for the spot market. Elevators had to widen profit margins to offset the higher cost of borrowing money and the greater expense of handling a more expensive product. The bigger the elevator margin the lower your basis. Lastly, but most importantly, the cost of barge freight soared. In both '07 and for the first part of '08, demand for barges was unprecedented. Materials of all sorts moved upriver to meet demand needs of our booming economy. Barges used to move grain down river became less available. To add to the

problem, the cost of diesel fuel rose dramatically and barge owners demanded more money. The higher cost of barge freight is passed to the producer in the form of a lower basis. Barge freight during the fall of the '08 harvest reached historically high levels due to quality problems at the gulf that kept barges from being unloaded, and the late harvest that caused a huge grain movement off the farm in a short period of time. Barge companies could not keep up with demand and prices rose accordingly. We are moving out of the '08 harvest and the very things that caused basis volatility are changing: Futures prices are back to more normal levels and barge freight is cheaper thanks in part to much lower diesel prices. Currently, soybean bids are excellent while corn, milo, and wheat bids suffer from big crops and a slowing global economy. In time the best medicine for cheap basis may be cheap basis. There has been a large increase of on-farm storage

built over the past 24 months that will take some of the pressure off the harvest movement. Cheap wheat basis for the past two years combined with a lower futures price and low yield has caused many Midsouth producers to forego planting wheat. There is also talk about adding a CBOT southern delivery point for wheat. This should help the wheat basis in '09. But heed this caution, if more waves of investment money enter the commodity markets, prices could again race higher causing the same basis problems we had before. There are a couple things you can do to protect against having to sell at distressed basis levels. The most important is to have access to storage, preferably on-farm. Unfortunately, some of the Delta crops don't store so well, so storage management becomes an issue. We also see a lot more producers use the futures market as a hedge. By doing this, you are not captive to any particular grain company and you can shop basis when you are ready to sell the cash product.

New Initiative Focuses on Water Quality in the Mississippi River Basin and Gulf of Mexico

A new initiative announced today aims to reduce nutrient and sediment movement into the United States' largest river system, the Mississippi River. Monsanto is partnering with multiple agricultural and conservation groups that are working with farmers to help reduce runoff from the Mississippi River into the Gulf of Mexico.

The Nature Conservancy, the Iowa Soybean Association and Delta Wildlife are all working collaboratively with farmers to remove nutrients and sediment from agricultural runoff in the Mississippi River Basin. The National Audubon Society is working with homeowners and others to implement measures which can improve wildlife habitat and the quality of water entering the Mississippi River. The new initiative by Monsanto will advance the group's work and help determine the effectiveness of various conservation measures on improving wildlife habitat and water quality.

"The Mississippi River is an ecological treasure and an economic powerhouse," said Michael Reuter, who oversees The Nature Conservancy's Great Rivers Partnership, which was created to help advance conservation of the world's major river systems, including the Mississippi. "This new effort by Monsanto will help show how we can make farming and conservation in the Mississippi River Basin more compatible so that nature and people alike benefit from improved water quality and enhanced wildlife habitat."

"We're proud to work on this bold conservation initiative which we believe offers a sustainable vision for agricultural landscapes, wherein farmers can support our world's growing needs for food, fiber and fuel in ways that not only preserve water quality, but also support diverse and abundant wildlife populations," said Jerry Steiner, executive vice president at Monsanto. "We believe this initiative can serve as an

important stepping stone toward the goal of preserving natural resources and wildlife in the Mississippi River Basin for future generations."

"Farmers are emerging in key leadership roles through their investments, and by participating in the planning and implementation of practices that perform environmentally. It's our goal to support them and help them make meaningful progress," said Roger Wolf, Director of Environmental Programs at the Iowa Soybean Association. "Our goal is to use science—research and data—to systematically develop and implement a suite of management techniques that help production agriculture measurably improve stewardship while maintaining or increasing profitability."

"Delta Wildlife is pleased to join forces with Monsanto, The Nature Conservancy, Iowa Soybean Association, and Audubon to implement a large-scale project that will improve water

quality in the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico," stated Bobby Carson, Chairman of the Delta Wildlife Board of Directors. "While significant environmental benefits will certainly accrue from this project, it will also nurture a more sustainable and profitable future for agriculture."

"Audubon is pleased to be part of this effort to foster a sustainable Mississippi River watershed for people and wildlife," said Roger Still, Vice President of Audubon's Mississippi River Initiative. "We are committed to engaging individuals to take action in their own lives to help address the water quality and habitat issues in the watershed. This effort complements our broader Mississippi River Initiative."

Monsanto has committed more than \$5 million dollars to the partnership, including \$1.5 million to support Delta Wildlife's efforts in the Lower Mississippi Valley.

House Transportation Chairman Touts Road Improvement Plan

In a presentation to the Delta Council Highways and Transportation Committee, House Transportation Committee Chairman Warner McBride (Panola County)



praised the work of organizations like Delta Council who have been steadfast supporters of road improvements across the State.

"We are in a challenging situation from a budget standpoint in State government, but Chairman Tom King of the Senate and I are working together to try to formulate a plan whereby we can accelerate some of the most pressing road improvement needs in our State," stated McBride, the veteran lawmaker from Courtland.

In the meeting with Transportation

Committee members of Delta Council, McBride concurred with Delta Council policy which urges that any road program include legislative language outlining similar criteria as that which accompanied the successful 1987 4-lane program and the current Vision 21 Program. In the law, roads were officially and specifically designated in the legislation allowing the revenues for the fuel tax to be used exclusively for the designated roads. Also, a national traffic standard was utilized to determine which roads would be built in the first, second, and third phases. And, the legislation specifically budgeted a funding plan which was estimated to allow the roads to be built on a pay-as-you-go basis.

McBride also advised the Transportation Committee of the Delta's regional economic development organization that there are many creative financing tools available on certain roads today, which were not available in 1987. McBride suggested that Mississippi lawmakers should explore all alternatives for upgrading, properly maintaining and financing our road system.

Water Management Leaders Discuss Delta Groundwater

Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Water Management District Commissioner Chat Phillips of Yazoo County, opened up the discussion about new data related to the Delta's groundwater supplies at the Delta Council Soil and Water Resources Committee Meeting at Stoneville on November 6. Phillips, a diversified farm operator from the Eden area, told committee members that the Water Management District, working in cooperation with the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, would need to take more aggressive steps in the future, in order to properly conserve the Delta's abundant water supplies.

"The Delta regional Water Management District is 20 years old this year, and it should be noted that groundwater supplies, groundwater use, and groundwater recharge must be evaluated over a long planning horizon, in order to avoid costly mistakes in terms of conserving this resource," stated Phillips.

Phillips and Water Management District Executive Director Dean Pennington told the committee of Delta Council that monitoring of groundwater supplies reveals that there are difficult challenges ahead, in terms of sustaining current water use levels. On the other hand, the data clearly shows areas of the

Delta where groundwater recharge has outpaced groundwater use during the 20-year history of the Water Management District, and water levels are recovering slightly.

"The alluvial aquifer is an extremely complex geological phenomena which none of us fully understand, but we presented this information to Delta Council because there is a need to make certain that those who supported the formation of the Water Management District fully understand the outlook and the alternative strategies which we must evaluate if we are going to expect the Delta's groundwater supplies to support

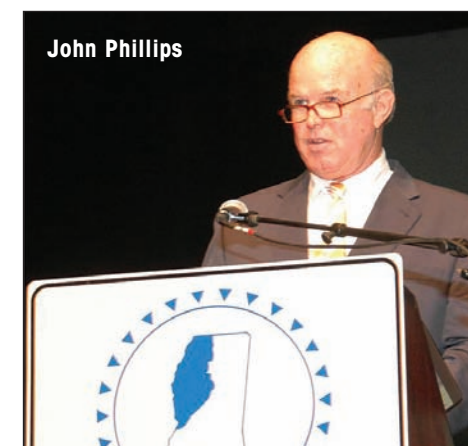
the economic and environmental viability of this region as one of the most intense agricultural production regions in the country," stated Pennington.

The Soil and Water Resources Committee of Delta Council, chaired by Bowen Flowers of Coahoma County, adopted resolutions pertaining to the presentation made by the Water Management District and offered encouragement and cooperation for the District's efforts to employ management strategies which ensure the continued availability of the Delta's groundwater.

Delta Farm Leaders Critical of USDA Rule Changes

Delta Council Farm Policy Committee Chairman, Dan Branton, told Delta farmers at its annual Mid-Year Board Meeting, that the organization is gravely disappointed that USDA apparently intends to utilize their authority to extend further restrictions on eligibility to participate in farm programs, beyond the stated intent of the 2008 Farm Bill.

"Farmers are submerged in some of the most difficult economic times we have ever faced, and our own Department of Agriculture now decides to restrict the income protection features of the 2008 Farm Bill further than



John Phillips

Congress stipulated in the law," stated Branton.

The Delta Council Farm Policy Committee discussed their anticipation that USDA rules would be released in the coming days, which would change the definition of actively engaged, as it pertains to which family members, members of the partnership, farming corporation, or others are eligible to participate in farm programs. The 75-year-old farm organization that represents Delta agriculture and business in the region voiced strong opposition to these anticipated actions by USDA to expand

upon the intent of the 2008 Farm Bill, as passed.

"We fully intend to enlist the support of all national commodity organizations that represent farmers to oppose USDA actions to restrict eligibility, and if the Department insists upon carrying this forward, we will enlist the support of our friends in Congress and even consider the courts as a final recourse for reversing any such action by USDA," stated John Phillips, the Yazoo County farmer who serves as President of Delta Council.

PRESIDENT *cont. from page 2*

Water Resource Developments:

Senator Cochran and Senator Wicker have challenged the Corps of Engineers Headquarters and the Environmental Protection Agency to produce a response to findings which their offices have made that documentation exists which suggests that the Yazoo Backwater Pumps are exempt from the precedent-setting EPA veto of the project. Local public officials and South Delta property owners from the affected area have cautioned that the entire Yazoo Basin drainage plan relies jointly on each component in the plan being successfully completed; therefore, as all of us observe the actions by Senator Cochran and Senator Wicker on our behalf, it is extremely important to note that drainage and flood protection improvements in all parts of the Delta

will foreseeably be the subject of serious discussions if the Delta is faced with no solution to improved flood protection for the southernmost part of the basin.

In other water resource developments, the Delta's Water Management District has concluded another year of groundwater measurements and there are clearly new and more pressing challenges ahead of us than we would like, in terms of the priorities and designated uses for permitted withdrawals from the Delta's alluvial aquifer. Delta Council is working closely with the Water Management District for planning purposes and the implementation of strategies to avoid further regulations on groundwater use.

Education and Health Policy:

Among all of the Delta Council activities, the activities under the

supervision of Co-Chairmen Cass Pennington of Indianola and Kent Wyatt of Cleveland, have been the most intriguing to me, because I had very little knowledge of Delta Council's role in these activities. Highly-successful adult literacy programs, health care access for the working uninsured, Tele-stroke projects, and the full implementation of a state-of-the-art Electronic Health Record system available to Delta health care providers are only a sampling of the types of activities which this committee has been involved through the work of Delta Health Alliance, the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Delta State University, Mississippi Valley State University, and Mississippi State University. If you are not aware of the reach which these programs have made into our Delta communities, it is an

aspect of Delta Council that you should seek to know more about.

We have an extremely busy agenda ahead of us for 2009, at a time when forecasters agree that the year ahead of us will be the harshest economic climate we have faced since the Great Depression. Recognizing that the Delta is almost certain to sustain economic upheaval commensurate with the rest of the Nation, the leadership of our committees are shifting into a mode of preparation and attention to those things which will allow us to be ready to seize opportunities that are certain to arise as we emerge from these times of economic uncertainty.

Have a happy holiday season.

John Phillips



Delta F.A.R.M. Celebrates 10 Years

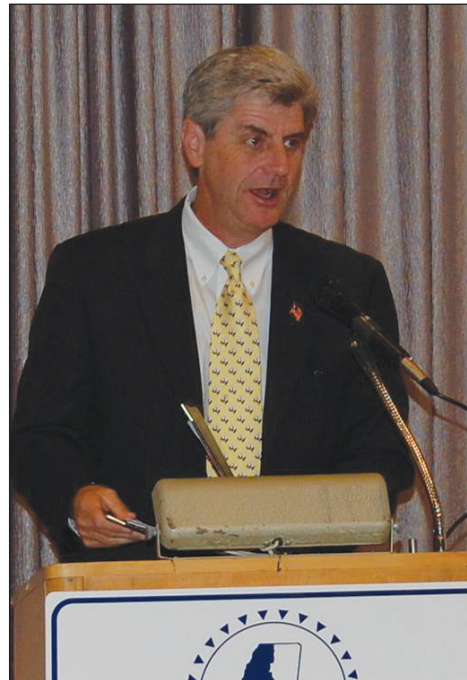
Delta F.A.R.M. celebrated its 10th Anniversary and the enrollment of 1,000,000 acres on November 6th. At the Sponsors and Partners Breakfast that morning, Delta F.A.R.M. Chairman Mike Sturdivant, Jr. recognized Syngenta, Monsanto, FMC, and Farmers Grain Terminal for their 10-year commitment to the organization with a proclamation from Governor Haley Barbour. At 9:00 a.m., Delta F.A.R.M.'s Founding Chairman, W. A. Percy, II, made the formal announcement to the press at Vanlandingham Farms, the site of the 1,000,000th acre. Lt. Governor Phil Bryant and Jimmy Palmer, EPA Region 4 Administrator, both spoke at the announcement, praising the effort of the organization and its members in addressing environmental concerns within the region. Left to right: W. A. Percy, II, Mike Sturdivant, Jr., Jimmy Palmer, Lt. Governor Phil Bryant, Brian Vanlandingham, and George Vanlandingham.

Sunflower County Businessman Applauds Bryant's Support of Workforce Training Initiative

The Development Department Board of Directors of Delta Council, combined with the participation of the Educational and Health Policy Committee of Delta Council, led by Sunflower County convenience store owner Tom Gresham, advised the audience that the Delta Council Development Department would focus on improved workforce training delivery as its highest priority for 2008-2009.

Gresham, who serves as Chairman of the Board of Directors for the regional economic development efforts of Delta Council, asked Lt. Governor Phil Bryant to speak about a proposed initiative which Delta Council has advanced to the Governor, the Mississippi House of Representatives, and Lt. Governor Phil Bryant.

"This Delta pilot initiative is aiming to reduce or eliminate the complexity of access to the workforce assistance programs for both existing and new employers," stated Lt. Governor Phil Bryant. "The potential success of this pilot program will be judged by the results in eliminating or at least reducing the



Lt. Governor Phil Bryant

headlines about job loss in this region." The Delta Council proposal for a Delta

Workforce Cabinet has already received favorable reaction from the various state agencies which currently perform workforce training functions. Also, Lt. Governor Bryant in the Senate, Representatives Willie Bailey and David Norquist in the Mississippi House of Representatives, and the Governor have indicated that a pilot workforce training project in the Delta would be an effective way to protect the jobs currently provided by existing employers in the Delta, as well as serve to create a "one-stop shop" for workforce training coordination for any employer.

The Delta Council Development Department proposal has been endorsed by economic development professionals associated with the Mississippi Delta Developers Association, a regional group of community economic development executives who coordinate job recruitment on behalf of the communities located in the Delta Council area.

The Workforce Training Pilot Project will include a cabinet which consists of:

- a representative of the Delta Workforce Investment Area,

- a representative from the Mississippi Department of Employment Security,
- a representative of all four community colleges which serve the Northwest Mississippi region,
- a representative from the Mississippi Development Authority,
- and up to five representatives from the business community in the region, who provide input for priority-setting and planning.

The Pilot Project will require a coordinator to be hired by the cabinet, in order to sustain the day-to-day efforts of delivering workforce training for the purpose of job retention, job expansion and recruitment of new jobs.

"With more than 800 employees from the Delta, I can speak from experience to the fact that if I was not deeply involved in Delta Council, I simply could not sort out the best method for accessing the available workforce training programs for my 800+ employees," stated Tom Gresham.



Central District Highway Commissioner Dick Hall (left) visits with Delta Council Vice Presidents Bob Eley of Cleveland (center) and Merlin Richardson of Angulla recently in Stoneville.



James Johnson of Greenwood (right) receives Special Recognition from Delta Council President John Phillips on his retirement from USDA-NRCS and his many years enhancing the Delta's conservation efforts.



Delta Council recently passed a resolution in memory of Emory McKeithen, who passed away this fall, for his many years of service to the Delta agricultural landscape, as a leader in the crop protection industry and advocate for promotional efforts aimed at encouraging more use of U.S. grown cotton. Wife Dorothy McKeithen (left), daughter Dorothy Ginn, and grandson Andrew White were presented the framed resolution by Delta Council President John Phillips at the Delta Council Midyear Board of Directors meeting.



A group of Delta Council leaders recently visited the Harlem Children's Zone in New York as part of an effort to learn more about the intensive intervention program aimed at at-risk children.



Delta Council recently passed a resolution in memory of Ollie Mohamed, who passed away this year, for his many years of service to the Mississippi Delta and the State as a civic leader and powerful State Senator. Wife Annelle (second from right), and sons David (left) and Ollie, Jr. (right) were presented the framed resolution by Delta Council President John Phillips at the Delta Council Midyear Board of Directors meeting.

Delta Health Alliance Executive Reports To Regional Business Leaders

In a presentation offered to regional business leaders from Delta Council, Dr. Karen Fox, CEO of Delta Health Alliance, gave a briefing of highlights and actions of the young organization.

Delta Health Alliance is a non-profit entity formed in 2002 for the purpose of developing methods that improve access to healthcare for the underserved and working uninsured population in the 18 Delta and part-Delta counties in the Northwest Mississippi. Although served by excellent healthcare providers throughout the region, Dr. Fox reported that the average physician in the Mississippi Delta sees more than three times as many patients per year as the average physician in the United States and twice as many as the average Mississippi physician.

"And, even though our physicians and other healthcare providers are under an overwhelming patient load, there are

thousands of people in the Delta, many of them holding down a job having no health insurance, who simply have difficulty accessing healthcare," stated Dr. Fox.

Dr. John Hilpert, President of Delta State University and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Delta Health Alliance praised the work of the young organization in identifying strategies for systematically and professionally evaluating methods for addressing the chronic health problems such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity and cardiovascular issues in the Delta.

"Utilizing our existing healthcare providers, Delta Health Alliance has the capacity to bring technology to the Delta which will create sustainable, long-term improvements to healthcare access for this region," stated Dr. Hilpert.

Delta Health Alliance is introducing

electronic health records, expanded Telemedicine programs, such as Tele-stroke and Tele-ICU, other benefits which Hilpert suggested could never have occurred without the formation of Delta Health Alliance.

"The Delta Health Alliance concept grew from the Offices of U.S. Senator Thad Cochran, and his strong commitment toward improving the health profile of the Mississippi Delta, simply put, the strides which we have made toward improved access to healthcare would not have been possible without the enthusiastic support of Senator Cochran," concluded Hilpert.

Delta Health Alliance is a non-profit organization with a professional staff and five directors representing Delta State University, Mississippi Valley State University, the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Mississippi State University and Delta Council.

FUTURE cont. from FRONT PAGE

recently-retired Chief Economist for USDA, who is widely recognized as one of the most knowledgeable voices in agricultural supply-demand-offtake and market price responses during the past 25 years of U.S. and global agriculture. They also pointed out that they would like to have a top Washington official join them for their morning seminar, which would follow an event on the evening before at the GoldStrike Casino in Tunica on the night of February 18.

Delta Council members are urged to forward names of potential participants under the age of 45, to the Delta Council offices, if interested in including local farmers and affiliated agricultural business people in the meeting invitation.



Senator Thad Cochran's chief agricultural aide, West Higginbothom (right), was presented a resolution by Delta Council President John Phillips praising him for his efforts this year on the 2008 Farm Bill.



Dave Altig, chief economist for the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank (Atlanta), was the keynote speaker at the Midyear Board of Directors meeting.