



# The Delta Council Review

Vol. 14, Issue No. 5

THE NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS AND MEMBERS OF DELTA COUNCIL

June 2020

## DELTA COUNCIL URGES DELTANS TO MAKE COMMENTS ABOUT YAZOO BACKWATER PUMPING PLANT TO CORPS

The pumps have been studied enough. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released a Notice of Intent to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to be released in October 2020. The Statement will tier from and update the 2007 FSEIS with new data and will analyze a new project proposal to build the pump project in light of the new data.

The Notice summarizes the devastating damage flooding causes to people, the economy and the environment in the Yazoo Backwater and provides an initial comment period until Monday, June 15, 2020.

"We are encouraged thanks to the work of our friends at the Mississippi Levee Board (local sponsor), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Environmental Protection Agency, and our Congressional Delegation – **Senators Hyde-Smith and Wicker**, and **Congressman Thompson**, among others, that this renewed effort to build the Pumping Plant has momentum. We have received substantial support from our other Congressmen, our state elected officials, and even some of the environmental groups who opposed the project when it was vetoed in 2008," said **Tom**

**Gresham**, Delta Council President.

In 2007, during the previous public comment period, the Corps was swamped by a postcard campaign from the extreme environmental groups from out of State who oppose the project. In the EPA's veto message, they cited the overwhelming comments in opposition as justification for vetoing the Pumps. We have already been told they plan to mount up again and, this time, we will counteract them.

There are three ways you can comment – one is via e-mail or online submission at [www.forgottenbackwater-flood.com](http://www.forgottenbackwater-flood.com), the second is to mail a letter to the Corps, and the third is by signing a postcard to the Corps, as seen at over 100 locations across the state.

We need as many of you as possible to comment on this situation via email or online submission in your own words. If you need any additional information, the Delta Council staff is available to help.

This will not be the only comment period. Once the Supplemental EIS is released in October of this year, it will trigger another round of comments and we will be seeking your assistance again as we look to a positive Record of Decision in January 2021.

"The Delta is special and one of our hallmarks has been to work together to address major challenges. This is a major challenge and Delta Council appreciates your support as we work together to make the entire Delta a better place to live and work," said **Woods Eastland**, Chairman of the Delta Council Executive Committee.

**The Corps will accept comments on its Notice until June 15, 2020.**

Your letter should include this heading:

To the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg District  
Re: Notice of Intent published April 16, 2020, 85 FR 21218

If sent by postal mail, send to:

Mississippi Valley Division  
US Army Corps of Engineers Vicksburg District  
ATTN: CEMVK-PPMD  
4155 East Clay Street  
Room 248  
Vicksburg, MS 39183

If sent by email, send to [YazooBackwater@usace.army.mil](mailto:YazooBackwater@usace.army.mil)

## DELTA COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING HAS BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL FALL

Due to COVID-19, Delta Council is postponing its Annual Meeting until the Fall of 2020. We did not take this decision lightly, and will still be following state and federal guidelines as we look to hold Delta Council Day later in the year. This is only the third time in

over eight decades that the meeting has been altered – the first one was during World War 2, the second was during the Flood of 2011, and now the Coronavirus in 2020. We can assure you that the work of your regional development organization is ongoing and more relevant

and critical than ever. Thank you for your support of Delta Council, and the Delta! Please keep in touch, stay engaged, and most importantly, stay safe.

–**Tom Gresham**, President

## 2020-2021 DELTA COUNCIL OFFICERS NAMED

On April 14, the Delta Council Nominating Committee met to select the following new officers for 2020-21:

**Kirk Satterfield** of Benoit, and **Jimmy Walker, Jr.** of Clarksdale **Keith Mitchell** of Grenada will serve a second term as Treasurer.

**Paul Hollis**, an agricultural, community, and flood control leader from Sharkey County was selected as President.

Since the Delta Council Annual Meeting has been delayed until the Fall due to the Coronavirus, the Delta Council Executive Committee has decided that the transition date for the new Officers to begin their service is June 1, 2020. We hope that you will offer your congratulations and support to these new Officers when you see them.

Those selected to serve as Vice Presidents are:

**Pierce Brown** of Schlater  
**Carter Murrell** of Avon  
**Andy Prosser** of Yazoo City  
**Henry Reed** of Belzoni



**Paul Hollis**  
President  
Rolling Fork



**Pierce Brown**  
Vice President  
Schlater



**Carter Murrell**  
Vice President  
Avon



**Andy Prosser**  
Vice President  
Yazoo City



**Henry Reed**  
Vice President  
Belzoni



**Kirk Satterfield**  
Vice President  
Benoit



**Jimmy Walker Jr.**  
Vice President  
Clarksdale



**Keith Mitchell**  
Treasurer  
Grenada

MAKE WEEDS BEG FOR MERCY.  
FOR UP TO 8 WEEKS.



**FIERCE**  
HERBICIDE 999



## DELTA COUNCIL

### 2019–2020 Delta Council Officers

President: TOM GRESHAM, Indianola  
Vice-President: HUGH ARANT, JR., Ruleville  
Vice-President: TED CONNELL, Clarksdale  
Vice-President: CLINT DUNN, Itta Bena  
Vice-President: JEFFREY MITCHELL, Cary  
Vice-President: ERRICK SIMMONS, Greenville  
Vice-President: GIBSON STEELE, Greenville  
Treasurer: KEITH MITCHELL, Grenada

#### POSTMASTER:

Send all address changes to  
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P.O. Box 257, Stoneville, MS 38776

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

BY TOM GRESHAM



Gresham

It has been a pleasure to serve as your Delta Council President in 2019 and 2020. There are a lot of things to say about the fun and challenges that were experienced during the year, but the bottom line is that it reinforced to me what a special place our Delta home is, and that it is full of special people.

The hallmark of the Delta is our ability to work together, and that was proven time and time again during the past year. We might have plenty of challenges and opportunities, but we are fully equipped to meet them with the leadership and manpower of the people of the Delta working together through Delta Council.

We had an incredible group of Officers and Presidential Directors that served with me this year. While the onset of the pandemic curtailed our last gathering face-to-face, this group of men and women were incredibly faithful throughout the term of the

year and I want to recognize them for their service and leadership.

The Officers who have served during 2019-20 are Vice Presidents **Hugh Arant, Jr.** of Ruleville, **Ted Connell** of Clarksdale, **Clint Dunn** of Itta Bena, **Jeffrey Mitchell** of Cary, **Errick Simmons** of Greenville, and **Gibson Steele** of Greenville. **Keith Mitchell** of Grenada served as Treasurer for 2019-20.

The Presidential Directors for 2019-20 are **Will Abbay** of Memphis, **Gary Bailey** of Tunica, **Gill Corban** of Hernando, **Jimmy Ford** of Leland, **Will Hood** of Cleveland, **Jack Phillips** of Yazoo City, **Tim Timbs** of Indianola, **Mike Upchurch** of Greenwood, **Jackson Webb** of Sumner, and **Velma Wilson** of Marks.

Meanwhile, I am excited about the new slate of Officers that were elected for 2020-2021 and know that the organization will be in very capable hands. **Paul Hollis** of Rolling Fork, a most capable community and agricultural leader, will serve as our President and the Vice Presidents will be **Pierce Brown** of Schlater, **Carter Murrell** of Avon, **Andy Prosser** of Yazoo City, **Henry Reed** of Belzoni, **Kirk Satterfield** of Benoit, and **Jimmy Walker, Jr.** of Clarksdale. **Keith Mitchell** of Grenada will serve a second term in 2020-2021.

This group will continue addressing the challenges of the Delta, ranging from infrastructure improvements, flood control projects such as the Yazoo Backwater Pumps and the Upper Yazoo Project, Delta Strong, natural resources, and an agricultural economy that is in a very perilous situation in June, 2020, and the outlook is not looking any better on the horizon.

Speaking of the pandemic, we had to cancel the Annual Meeting in the Spring for only the second time in the history of the organization; the first one being in the middle of World War II in 1944. The 2011 Annual Meeting was held, but modified, to address the 2011 Flood. We plan to hold the Annual Meeting this Fall in conjunction with the traditional Fall Midyear Board of Directors meeting, assuming that state and federal regulations will allow us to assemble safely. Please stay tuned and thank you for understanding the extraordinary circumstances that lead to this decision.

I conclude this message by thanking **Woods Eastland** of Indianola for his friendship and guidance as Chairman of the Board during my term as President, and I hope to follow his example as we welcome **Paul** and his leadership team in the coming year.

## GUEST COLUMN | BIBLICAL FLOOD CAUSES WILDLIFE APOCALYPSE IN SOUTH

Originally Published on the *MeatEater.com Blog*, an Outdoor Lifestyle Company

BY PATRICK DURKIN  
OUTDOOR WRITER AND REPORTER AND FREELANCE COLUMNIST



Durkin

Turkeys starved in treetops. Ravenous raccoons killed nesting turtles and newborn fawns. Countless other wild animals perished during a record 219-day flood last year in Mississippi's Yazoo Backwater Project.

The Yazoo Backwater's surrounding levees provided the only high ground for displaced wildlife, but all those miles of manmade barriers provided little sanctuary throughout the unprecedented deluge. The Backwater, or South Delta, covers about 1,550 square miles of fertile valley in west-central Mississippi north of Vicksburg, where the Yazoo River flows into the Mississippi River.

The Yazoo Backwater reached flood stage (87 feet) on Jan. 4, 2019, peaked at a record 98.2 feet on May 23, and stayed above flood stage until Aug. 10. The flood's crest coincided with the region's peak nesting and fawning periods, crushing populations of wild turkeys, whitetail deer, and ground-nesting birds.

The Backwater's floods also drowned two people, covered three highways, and swamped or destroyed 686 residences. The seven-month flood caused at least \$800 million in agricultural losses and damage across half a million acres of farm fields.

When the stagnant waters finally receded in late summer, residents and business owners returned to homes and buildings fouled by sewage, garbage, agricultural chemicals, snakes, and rotting animal carcasses. Unfortunately, sustained rain and prolonged flooding returned this year, furthering the losses of homes, property, croplands, and wildlife.

#### DEVASTATED WILDLIFE

**William McKinley**, deer program coordinator for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, said the Backwater's 2019 fawn "crop" was devastated. So was the entire turkey population. Agency biologists and researchers at nearby Mississippi State University documented only four turkeys in 8,790 wildlife photos taken in October 2019 during a monthlong post-flood study using 300 trail-cameras. That study on the Shipland Wildlife Management Area, one of seven WMAs that flooded, also estimated a 5% fawn survival rate.

The biologists conducted weekly deer surveys along a 26-mile route on the Backwater's southwestern levees. They regularly photographed emaciated deer and counted 503 dead whitetails from mid-June to early August. They necropsied deer when possible, and attributed most deaths to starvation and heat exposure. And because this is where Mississippi first detected chronic wasting disease in February 2018, they also collected tissue samples for CWD tests.

Much of the devastation occurred on levees flanking the Yazoo Backwater's western border with the Mississippi River and its eastern border with the Yazoo River. If this were an animal horror movie, warning signs on the levees would read, "Abandon hope all ye who enter here." Everything that could fly, walk, crawl, or slither sought refuge on the containment walls. Once there, they fought for food, shelter, and shade—all of which were scarce.

**McKinley** said starving raccoons proved a nuisance and nemesis to all. They honeycombed the levees by digging burrows for shelter, making it difficult for agency and university biologists to walk without stepping into holes.

GUEST continued on page 6

## DELTA COUNCIL CONGRATULATES 2020 DELTA HONOR GRADUATES

For 16 years, Delta Council has bestowed special honor upon two exemplary students from each of the high schools throughout the 19-county Mississippi Delta Region, including public, parochial and private schools, at the Delta Council Annual Meeting. Students are selected by school administrators based on leadership, extra-curricular, scholastic, and community service.

In addition, a \$2,500 scholarship is awarded

to the top Delta Honor Graduate, as selected by higher education officials in the Delta, to help defray tuition and expenses as the student's college of choice sees fit.

"Delta Council is grateful to recognize these special young men and women throughout the Delta," said **Tom Gresham** of Indianola, President of Delta Council. "Our message to these young people is to continue your high achievements in education and leadership

by going to college, but please come home to Mississippi and the Delta to help us continue to make our communities better."

As a result of Delta Council Day being postponed until after the onset of the Fall school semester, the Salute to Delta Honor Graduates ceremony has been cancelled for 2020, but the students' honors and great achievements have not gone overlooked by Delta Council staff and supporters. Delta Honor Graduates will receive

a certificate signed by **Governor Tate Reeves** and Delta Council President **Tom Gresham** certifying that each student is celebrated as a Delta Honor Graduate of 2020. Each student will also be invited to and recognized at the Fall meeting of 2020.

The recipient of the \$2500 scholarship will be announced soon. Congratulations to all students who have been chosen by their schools as a Delta Honor Graduate for the year of 2020.

<b>BOLIVAR</b>	<b>Thomas Williams, Jr</b> Coahoma Early College High	<b>Hannah Malone</b> Central Holmes Christian School	<b>QUITMAN</b>	<b>TATE</b>	<b>Ashanti Brown</b> St Joseph Catholic School
<b>Caiden Craddock</b> Cleveland Central High	<b>DESOTO</b>	<b>Issac Randle</b> Holmes County Central High School	<b>Casey Moore</b> Delta Academy	<b>Jonathan Christon</b> Coldwater High School	<b>Camariyah Butler</b> Leland High
<b>Dakari Keyshun Crockett</b> Shaw High	<b>Eli Ashley</b> Olive Branch High	<b>HUMPHREYS</b>	<b>Roinissia Presley</b> Madison S. Palmer High	<b>Peyton McClure</b> Senatobia High	<b>Miyah Hampton</b> Greenville Christian School
<b>Semaj Daniels</b> Northside High	<b>Galin Jayne Burton</b> Northpoint Christian School	<b>Caleb Gorton</b> Humphreys Academy	<b>Talacia Robinson</b> Madison S. Palmer High	<b>Claire Meeks</b> Magnolia Heights School	<b>Alasiah Henderson</b> Riverside High
<b>Sydney Davis</b> Bayou Academy	<b>Oralia Cavazos</b> Horn Lake High	<b>Maury McClellan</b> Humphreys Academy	<b>Jhalen Wells</b> Delta Academy	<b>Chariti Nettles</b> Independence High	<b>Mary Grace Hobart</b> Deer Creek School
<b>Kearja Markhi Dorsey</b> Shaw High	<b>Adrell Evans</b> Horn Lake High	<b>Jatricia Stuckey</b> Humphreys Co. High	<b>SHARKEY-ISSAQUENA</b>	<b>Jabari "Blake" Richardson</b> Senatobia High	<b>Christopher Jackson</b> Leland High
<b>Patrick Grayer</b> Ray Brooks	<b>Brooke Gowan</b> Lewisburg High	<b>Tamilya Thomas</b> Humphreys Co. High	<b>Makiah Eason</b> South Delta High	<b>Cameron Roberson</b> Independence High	<b>Rosie Johnson</b> O'Bannon High
<b>Alexia Richardson</b> West Bolivar High	<b>Ashley Halford</b> Center Hill High	<b>LEFLORE</b>	<b>John Bryce Fulton</b> Sharkey-Issaquena Academy	<b>Marley Smith</b> Strayhorn High	<b>Jay'Den Jones</b> Greenville High
<b>Emma Short</b> Bayou Academy	<b>Taylor Howell</b> Olive Branch High	<b>Kapri Burden</b> Greenwood High	<b>Jessie Mason, Jr</b> South Delta High	<b>Adrian Turner, Jr.</b> Strayhorn High	<b>Williette Kingdom</b> Greenville Christian School
<b>Madison Smith</b> Northside High	<b>Rachel Lane</b> Lake Cormorant High	<b>Christian Glass</b> Amanda Elzy High	<b>Sarah Grace Perkins</b> Sharkey-Issaquena Academy	<b>TUNICA</b>	<b>Kyra Lewis</b> Simmons High
<b>Natassja Thomas</b> Ray Brooks	<b>Alexandra Mobley</b> Lake Cormorant High	<b>Narkeshia Green</b> Leflore County High	<b>SUNFLOWER</b>	<b>Ja'Kyla Dunn</b> Rosa Fort High	<b>Mary Michael Mahalitz</b> St Joseph Catholic School
<b>Jaylen Townsend</b> Cleveland Central High	<b>Angeline Morgan</b> Southaven High	<b>Anthony Johnson</b> Leflore County High	<b>Cori Barnett</b> North Sunflower Academy	<b>Anna Grace Gibson</b> Tunica Academy	<b>Kendall McKinnon</b> Washington School
<b>Tanarious Williams</b> West Bolivar High	<b>Klein Morrow</b> Lewisburg High	<b>Madison Rose Lary</b> North New Summit School	<b>Jacorrhiah Bracey</b> Thomas E. Edwards, Sr. High School	<b>Hailey Goff</b> Tunica Academy	<b>Chelsie Mickel</b> Greenville High
<b>CARROLL</b>	<b>Hope Joy Owens</b> Northpoint Christian School	<b>Mary Long</b> North New Summit School	<b>Ashley Gordon</b> Gentry High	<b>Mykendria Herring</b> Rosa Fort High	<b>John Bentley Suares</b> Washington School
<b>Mary Jordan Milton</b> Carroll Academy	<b>Riley Payne</b> Southaven High	<b>John (Jack) Henry Reichle</b> Pillow Academy	<b>Journey Grayer</b> Gentry High	<b>WARREN</b>	<b>Timothy Wells</b> Simmons High
<b>James Armstrong Neill</b> Carroll Academy	<b>Raegan Stafford</b> Desoto Central High	<b>Shane Houston Stephens</b> Pillow Academy	<b>Kalia Lockett</b> Thomas E. Edwards, Sr. High School	<b>Elaina Bailey</b> Warren Central High	<b>YAZOO</b>
<b>Jasmine Newman</b> J.Z. George High	<b>Cassy Tigner</b> Hernando High	<b>Cassidy Washington</b> Greenwood High	<b>James Roberts</b> Indianola Academy	<b>Kameren Batty</b> Vicksburg High	<b>Reid Turner Bain</b> Manchester Academy
<b>Robert Charles "Carson" Skelton</b> J.Z. George High	<b>Charleston Vance</b> Hernando High	<b>Juliaunia White</b> Amanda Elzy High	<b>Jillian Roberts</b> Indianola Academy	<b>Anna Ware Brown</b> St Aloysius High School	<b>Nathan Gueringer</b> Yazoo County High
<b>COAHOMA</b>	<b>Kaitlyn Weirich</b> Desoto Central High	<b>PANOLA</b>	<b>Hannah Utz</b> North Sunflower Academy	<b>Khya Gaines</b> Vicksburg High	<b>Joseph Upton Hitt</b> Manchester Academy
<b>Hunt Barksdale</b> Lee Academy	<b>Kyle White</b> Center Hill High	<b>Damien Cooper</b> South Panola High	<b>TALLAHATCHIE</b>	<b>Ian Gordon</b> Warren Central High	<b>Dylan Collins Moore</b> Benton Academy
<b>Joseph Curcio</b> Lee Academy	<b>GRENADA</b>	<b>Jay Logann Cossey</b> South Panola High	<b>Caleb Buckley</b> Charleston High	<b>Madison Henderson</b> Porter's Chapel Academy	<b>Elizabeth Keen</b> St Aloysius High School
<b>Taylor Matthews</b> Clarksdale High	<b>Shaunna George</b> Grenada High	<b>Nigel McGhee</b> North Panola High	<b>Kavon Hooper</b> West Tallahatchie High	<b>Elizabeth Keen</b> St Aloysius High School	<b>Storey Kirklin</b> Porter's Chapel Academy
<b>Antonia Morales</b> Coahoma County High	<b>John Collin Keys</b> Grenada High	<b>Taniya Phillips</b> North Panola High	<b>Shakya Truly</b> Charleston High	<b>WASHINGTON</b>	<b>Hayes Azlin</b> Deer Creek School
<b>Cordeja Murphy</b> Coahoma County High	<b>HOLMES</b>	<b>Abbi Roark</b> North Delta School	<b>Kyla Washington</b> West Tallahatchie High	<b>Britney Bettis</b> O'Bannon High	<b>Ethan Blasingame</b> Riverside High
<b>Amber Roland</b> Clarksdale High	<b>Jasmine Carthan</b> Holmes County Central High School	<b>Taylor Rowland</b> North Delta School	<b>Angela Beard</b> Coldwater High School		
<b>Aquaysheonna White</b> Coahoma Early College High	<b>Wykece Johnson</b> Central Holmes Christian School		<b>Grant Borgognoni</b> Magnolia Heights School		

## FIRST ROBOTICS PROCESS AUTOMATION CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN MS OPENS IN CLARKSDALE TO BRING HUNDREDS OF NEW JOBS TO MISSISSIPPI DELTA

Silicon Valley partnership pioneers first US-based RPA Center of Excellence in Delta Region



The Economic Development Authority of Coahoma County announced the opening of the first RPA Center of Excellence (CoE) in Mississippi. The Center is dedicated to bringing more than 200 jobs to the region by retraining and upskilling workers through a partnership with Automation Anywhere, a global leader in Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and PeopleShores, a Public Benefit Corporation.

## LOUISIANA GOVERNOR JOHN BEL EDWARDS TO SERVE AS 2020 STATES' CO-CHAIRMAN OF DRA



Delta Regional Authority (DRA) Federal Co-Chairman **Chris Caldwell** announced Louisiana Governor **John Bel Edwards** has been named the 2020 DRA States' Co-Chairman. DRA's Board of Governors annually elect a States' Co-Chairman to work directly with the Federal Co-Chairman on economic development and growth in the Delta region.

"**Governor Edwards** has demonstrated a lifetime of leadership and service, and his track record of economic growth in Louisiana will be a tremendous asset to the entire DRA region," said DRA Federal Co-Chairman **Chris Caldwell**. "I look forward to working with **Governor Edwards** as we continue our mission of strengthening infrastructure, job growth, and economic development across DRA's eight-state region."

## MSU EXTENSION APPOINTS NEW COTTON SPECIALIST



Pieralisi

**Brian Pieralisi** was appointed to that role on April 1. He replaced **Darrin Dodds**, who took the helm of the university's Department of Plant and Soil Sciences.

**Pieralisi** will work with growers to continue to refine cotton production practices in order to help them become more profitable. His activities will include cotton variety testing, as well as research and outreach on fertility management, weed control, irrigation, harvest aids and other areas of cotton production.

A native of Leland, Mississippi, **Pieralisi** earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural pest management from MSU before returning to his family farm and earning a master's degree in business administration from Delta State University. He returned to MSU to work on a doctoral degree in agronomy with an emphasis on nutrient management and soil fertility, which he will complete this summer.

## THOMASSON RETURNS TO MSU AS AG AND BIO ENGINEERING HEAD



Thomasson

A precision agriculture and cotton ginning expert is the new head of Mississippi State's Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering.

**J. Alex Thomasson** will take the reins of the MSU department effective July 1, pending approval of the State Board of Trustees, Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning.

A 15-year veteran and current endowed chairholder in Cotton Engineering, Ginning and Mechanization in Texas A&M's Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering, **Thomasson** is returning to Mississippi State, where he worked early in his career.

**Thomasson** served as an agricultural engineer and research scientist in the U.S. Cotton Ginning Laboratory for the USDA Agricultural Research Service in Stoneville, working closely with faculty in the university's Delta Research and Extension Center. Upon completion of his Ph.D. from the University of Kentucky, he then moved to Starkville where he served on the faculty in MSU's Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering from 1997-2004.

## BINGER TO LEAD USDA-ARS WATERSHED PHYSICAL PROCESSES RESEARCH UNIT



Binger

**Dr. Ron Binger** has been approved as the new research leader for the Watershed Physical Processes Research Unit, Oxford. The Watershed Physical Processes Research Unit is one of two research groups within the USDA-ARS National Sedimentation Laboratory.

**Dr. Binger** received his B.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Agricultural Engineering from the University of Illinois and a M.S. degree in Agricultural Engineering from the University of Kentucky. He has been an Agricultural Engineer at the National Sedimentation Laboratory since 1986, where his research has led to improved knowledge of the effectiveness of agricultural watershed conservation management practices and instream erosion control. **Dr. Binger** serves as Project Leader for ARS in the development of AnnAGNPS, a model derived from the ARS-NRCS partnership that accounts for sources of pollutants in small to intermediate scale watersheds. AnnAGNPS, one of the key models utilized for CEAP (Conservation Effects Assessment Project), is being applied in Agency-wide efforts to assess the national impact of Farm Bill-driven NRCS conservation practices. He has authored or co-authored over 170 publications pertaining to the understanding of watershed processes and conservation practices leading to the development of watershed modeling technology.

## COBLE HIGHLIGHTS TRENDS AND CHANGES IN LAND USE VALUES IN THE DELTA REGION REGARDING PROPERTY TAX CALCULATION



Coble

In early March, Delta Council held a meeting to discuss the trends and changes in land use valuations, which are then used to calculate property taxes for farmers and landowners.

The meeting featured **Dr. Keith Coble**, the department head in Agricultural Economics at Mississippi State University, who has been contracted by the Department of Revenue to

calculate agricultural land use values for the State of Mississippi, including the Upper and Lower Delta Resource Areas.

**Coble** said the 2020 calculations for net returns to land trended down in both resource areas across all land type classifications. The 2020 calculations include crop years 2016-2018 (three year moving average) and **Coble** said the next two years' return to land should continue to trend down – both in terms of agricultural forecasts and three significant changes that were enforced recently that so far have only impacted the 2018 calculation. These changes will then be incorporated in the next two years' calculation.

"The changes that were incorporated by the Department of Revenue and Mississippi State University include the following; the exclusion of all crop insurance proceeds, the exclusions of government payments, and an increased charge for management calculation," said **Bubba Simmons**, chairman of Delta Council's Special Working Group on this issue. "All three of these significant changes, which follow the same principles of all of our surrounding states, helped to reduce the land use valuations this year – and should continue in the coming years."

To view the presentation, visit <http://www.deltacouncil.org/tax.html>.

"While these changes have been positive, the land use valuation is one component of the final property tax bill, and landowners and farmers are still struggling with higher property taxes in most areas of the Delta across most land classes," said **Simmons**. "I do appreciate **Mike McCormick** of MS Farm Bureau Federation, and my Working Group at Delta Council, going to meet with Mississippi State University and **Herb Frierson**, Commissioner of the MS Department of Revenue, to impress upon them that these changes were needed. We appreciate **Commissioner Frierson** and Mississippi State University agreeing that these were necessary changes in order to align Mississippi's land use valuations with similar farmland in surrounding states."

## AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION PRESIDENT DUVALL WRITES LETTER TO EPA ADMINISTRATOR WHEELER IN SUPPORT OF THE PUMPS

**Zippy Duvall**, American Farm Bureau Federation President, wrote a letter to EPA Administrator **Andrew Wheeler** requesting the immediate completion of all Yazoo Basin flood control projects and reversal of the EPA's 2008 veto on the installation of the pumping station. Visit [www.deltacouncil.org/afbf\\_epa](http://www.deltacouncil.org/afbf_epa) to read the letter.

# AROUND DELTA FIELDS

## EPA OFFERS CLARITY IN LIGHT OF RECENT COURT VACATUR OF DICAMBA REGISTRATIONS

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a key order providing farmers with needed clarity following the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals' June 3, 2020 vacatur of three dicamba registrations. The cancellation order outlines circumstances under which existing stocks of the three affected dicamba products can be used for a limited period of time. EPA's order will advance protection of public health and the environment by ensuring use of existing stocks follows important application procedures.

EPA's order will mitigate some of the devastating economic consequences of the Court's decision for growers, and particularly rural communities, at a time they are experiencing great stress due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

### Details of the Order

EPA's order addresses sale, distribution, and use of existing stocks of the three affected dicamba products – XtendiMax with vapor grip technology, Engenia, and FeXapan.

- Distribution or sale by any person is generally prohibited except for ensuring proper disposal or return to the registrant.
- Growers and commercial applicators may use existing stocks that were in their possession on June 3, 2020, the effective date of the Court decision. Such use must be consistent with the product's previously-approved label, and may not continue after July 31, 2020.

## TWO NEW DIRECTORS ELECTED TO STAPLCOTN BOARD



Bailey

Jordan

Staplcotn and Stapldiscout are pleased to announce the addition of two new directors to their boards. **Coley L. Bailey, Jr.** of Coffeeville was elected for a three-year term to replace his father, **Coley Bailey, Sr.**, who retired from the board in September. **Bernard A. "Bernie" Jordan, Jr.** of Yazoo City was elected for a two-year term to replace **John Laney** of Lyon who also retired in September. They were elected by the membership at the annual meeting on September 18, 2019.

## GRESHAM AND PHILLIPS TO SERVE ON GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY



Gresham

Phillips

The Governor's Commission for Economic Recovery was established in April 2020 to make recommendations to the Governor on short-term and long-term economic revitalization. The Commission is led by a Chairman and Executive Team who represent the diverse geographical regions of the state. Together with Impact Committee Chairmen, this Commission will work to restart Mississippi's economy, growing and expanding as it explores specific recovery needs related to agriculture, construction, education, energy, finance, hospitality and manufacturing, as well as examines the unique impact that COVID-19 has had on Mississippi's minority and small business communities.

**Tom Gresham**, President of Delta Council and an Indianola business leader, has been chosen to serve on the Executive Team. **John Phillips**, a Yazoo City producer and Past President of Delta Council, has been selected to serve as a Chairman of the the Impact Committee.

## REEVES APPOINTS SULLIVAN TO CHAIR STATE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD



Sullivan

In his live update Thursday, **Gov. Tate Reeves** continued on his theme of providing information to viewers other than COVID-19 updates and proclamations. He announced **Patrick Sullivan** as his appointment for Chairman of the State Workforce Investment Board to ensure Mississippi's continued workforce development.

SWIB was created to develop and implement Mississippi's economic strategy to maximize our education, training and employment service resources, balancing the coordination of public and private sectors.

**Reeves** characterized **Sullivan** as an "experienced, battle-tested leader capable of leading efforts to invest in workforce training and grow our state's economy to lift all Mississippi families."

"**Patrick** is uniquely qualified to lead SWIB, and we know he will do an outstanding job for both employees and employers in the State of Mississippi as he works to continually improve workforce training opportunities," said **Johnny McRight**, a Greenville businessman who also serves on the Mississippi Community College Board. "**Patrick**, who grew up in Greenville, is a native Deltan who understands the challenges we face in Mississippi."

**Sullivan** has served as the executive director of the Governor's Office of Recovery and Renewal under former **Gov. Haley Barbour**, as president of the Mississippi Energy Institute, and as a member of SWIB.

## DELTA LEADER VICKERY PASSES AWAY



Vickery

Delta leader **Harry Vickery** passed away last week in Jackson. **Vickery**, a noted civic leader and businessman from Greenville, served in numerous capacities of leadership including Delta Council (President 1990-91), the

Washington County Economic Development Foundation, First Baptist Church in Greenville, and chairman of the Mississippi College Board of Trustees, among many other leadership roles in local, state, and national activities.

The family held a private ceremony in Jackson at Northminster Baptist Church. The family asks that any memorials be made to the Mississippi College School of Business.

## COVID-19 BUSINESS SURVEY



The Mississippi State University Extension Service is conducting an important statewide online survey of Mississippi businesses regarding the issues and challenges, as well as opportunities, that they have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The survey consists of two rounds. The first round will open on June 2 and close on June 12. The link for the first survey round is:

<https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/5609831/bicmssc0605>

We will send you the link for the second

round on June 29 (that round will be open for approximately two weeks as well).

**Alan** hopes to get a strong representation of business sectors across the state, and your help is vital in making that happen. The goal of the survey is to document the issues that these businesses face and develop operational and policy recommendations to facilitate not only the retention, but also the expansion, of these businesses in a changing economic environment.

It's important to remember that the survey does not ask for the identity of businesses and that the data will only be analyzed and reported in the aggregate. We hope to develop a series of short factsheets which describe the challenges and opportunities faced by Mississippi businesses categorized by business sector, geographic region, etc. However, in no circumstances will information be reported that will allow a specific business to be identified.

Thank you in advance for helping with this project. And if you haven't seen **Alan's** updated economic profiles for your community, they can be found at <http://extension.msstate.edu/economic-profiles>.

If you have questions regarding this project or would like additional assistance or educational opportunities available for businesses from Mississippi State University Extension, please don't hesitate to contact Alan at:

**Alan Barefield**, Extension Economist  
Mississippi State University Extension Service  
662.325.7995 (Office)  
[alan.barefield@msstate.edu](mailto:alan.barefield@msstate.edu)

## MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION GIVES GREEN LIGHT TO 1,000-ACRE SOLAR FARM



The Mississippi Delta will soon be home to the largest utility-owned solar farm in the state, after receiving approval from the Mississippi Public Service Commission.

Recurrent Energy, a solar facility manufacturer, will build the project on behalf of Entergy Mississippi, LLC. The project should be complete by no later than mid-2022. Once built, Entergy will assume ownership for the life of the facility. The emissions-free, renewable energy plant will sit on approximately 1,000 acres in Sunflower County and will connect to Entergy's transmission grid in Ruleville.

The project will be a single-axis tracking photovoltaic power generator. Its 350,000 PV modules will be able to generate 100 MW of clean energy, enough to power more than 16,000 homes.

## DELTAN ON THE MOVE | JOHN ROUNSAVILLE



### PERSONAL INFORMATION:

**John Rounsaville** served as State Director for USDA Rural Development the last two and a half years, having been appointed to the position in November 2017 by **President Donald Trump**. Born in Greenville, **Rounsaville** graduated from Mississippi State University with Agribusiness and Master of Agribusiness Management degrees. He is also a graduate of the University of Mississippi School of Law.

**Rounsaville** began his career in Washington, D.C. serving as a Legislative Assistant and then as Legislative Director for former Mississippi **Congressman Chip Pickering**. He returned home in 2004 to serve as Policy Advisor to former Mississippi **Governor Haley Barbour** where he managed a diverse policy portfolio including agriculture, environment, economic development, transportation, and military issues. In November 2006, **Rounsaville** was appointed by President **George W. Bush** as State Director for USDA Rural Development. Following his tenure with the Bush Administration, **Rounsaville** served as Vice President of Government Relations for Waggoner Engineering, Inc., in Jackson, Miss.

**Rounsaville** was selected as a Top 40 Under 40 Business Leader by the Mississippi Business Journal in 2008. He is an officer in the Mississippi Air National Guard and currently serves as Deputy Staff Judge Advocate for the 186th Air Refueling Wing in Meridian, Miss. A graduate of Calhoun City High School, he is the son of Billy and **Sarah Rounsaville** of Big Creek. He now lives in Madison with his wife **Laura**, a Batesville native, and their two young sons.

### CURRENT JOB TITLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

**Rounsaville** has recently been announced as the Interim Director for Mississippi Development

Authority where he will continue growing our State's economy and win business for Mississippi.

### WHAT DO OTHERS SAY ABOUT JOHN:

"**John Rounsaville** is a Delta native who has had an extremely successful career in public policy, business, and rural development. Delta Council and Delta Strong look forward to continuing our relationship with him and commend **Governor Reeves** for this excellent choice," said **Tom Gresham**, Delta Council President.

### GUEST from page 2

"I figured the raccoons would live up in the trees, but they settled into holes all across the levees and stayed," **McKinley** said. "You had to be careful where you stepped. Every 25 yards you'd find a hole with a raccoon in it. We have no idea how many were out there, but they were dying, too. They were in poor condition; unkempt and unaware, and in really poor health. When they were scavenging something, we'd get within 4 to 5 feet before they realized we were there."

### TURTLE CARNAGE

When the biologists weren't dodging raccoons and their burrows, they were driving or stepping around their means to survival.

"Empty turtle shells from red-eared sliders were everywhere," **McKinley** said. "There were thousands of them. One time we saw three raccoons tussling over a big red-eared slider. All the female turtles were on the levees. They had nowhere else to lay their eggs. The raccoons figured them out quickly. They chewed off a rear leg, reached up inside for the eggs, cleaned everything out, and moved on to the next one. They picked them clean. Those turtle shells looked like they'd been steam-washed."

**McKinley** thinks raccoons also killed newborn fawns soon after birth. Every pocket of shade held animals, so pregnant does couldn't seclude themselves when fawning.

"I can't document it, but it looked like the raccoons just gathered around the does and waited for fawns to drop," **McKinley** said. "I firmly believe that. The only broken bones were the fawns' ribs, so I doubt something bigger killed them and that the raccoons just cleaned things up. All the bigger bones were chewed, not broken. All the meat was picked clean."

**McKinley** said those scenes were among the flood's many unexpected sights and behaviors. During most floods elsewhere, deer flee lowlands for the nearest hills and higher ground. Some deer from the Yazoo Backwater probably did, too, but many did not. Those remaining spent so much time in water that their hooves grew soft with rot. **McKinley** also

recalled counting 1,200 deer scouring a field in 12 inches of standing water on a hot day, three hours before dark.

"We can't explain why so many deer stayed," **McKinley** said. "They have ways to get out, but it's not easy. On the other hand, assuming some deer fled, if they had CWD they carried it to new areas. We have lots of questions that will take a while to answer."

**McKinley** said most songbirds also fled the Backwater, but there was no escaping the stench of death and unique, unexplained oddities. Paper wasps, for instance, usually build their papier-mâché nests just off the ground in low brush. But with floodwaters covering brush and reaching far up trees and powerline poles, the wasps built their volleyball-size nests on the powerline's thick wires.

"We'd be driving along and see a wasp nest on a wire, and wonder why would they build there with trees everywhere," **McKinley** mused. "But then we'd see another nest, and another and another up on the wires."

### TURKEY STRUGGLES

The Yazoo Backwater's wild turkeys, however, left scant evidence of their presence or passing. **Adam Butler**, wild turkey program coordinator for the Mississippi DWFP, said the area's turkey flocks had already declined much of the past decade because of frequent flooding, but brood surveys in 2018 suggested a considerable boost for the population.

Unfortunately, last year's flood made poul production impossible, and **Butler** worries the flock lost the previous year's gains, and maybe more. He said turkeys can't live and forage for long in treetops, and can't find food closer to the ground during floods. That's not just **Butler's** opinion. He references research by **Michael Chamberlain**, a recent guest on the MeatEater Podcast (Episode 214), who documented only one in five adult turkeys he monitored in 2011 survived a month-plus flood farther south in the Atchafalaya Basin.

**Chamberlain** noted that turkeys move to higher ground if they know it exists. But if that ground isn't high enough to escape floodwaters, turkeys just keep searching their known turf

until starving to death. At least that's what **Chamberlain's** GPS-collared turkeys showed.

Here's how that went: A bobcat killed one hen the day the flood began. Another hen lived 21 days, and a third disappeared. It's unknown if the missing hen's collar malfunctioned or got destroyed in the flood. The lone surviving hen found dry ground 29 days into the flood as waters receded. The lone tom should have stuck with her. It died in a water-inundated area 31 days into the flood.

"Turkeys aren't like deer," **Butler** said. "Turkeys typically stay near home. They don't know the land beyond the horizon."

**Butler** said the Yazoo Backwater's turkey flock typically isn't large, and usually cycles with regional flooding. The hatch booms to bolster the flock in years with short flood seasons, and busts in years with heavy flooding. Adults typically endure because most floods recede after two to three weeks. Insects and vegetation pop up soon after, and life goes on.

### WATERY TREND

That pattern fell apart the past decade because of prolonged rains and flooding. "Adult turkeys can't survive in the trees' canopy six to seven months like we saw last year," **Butler** said. "We expect their survival in the Backwater last year was very low. It's possible the survivors might pull off a hatch this year, but it's getting late [April 29] and the river is still at flood stage."

The 2019 flood and its harm to people, property and wildlife aggravates a long festering debate in the Yazoo Backwater and extended Mississippi Delta system, which spans 200 miles from Vicksburg to Memphis, Tennessee. Levees on the valley's entire western edge protect it from the Mississippi River's floodwaters, and levees on its southeastern side protect it from the Yazoo River's floods. The land mass in between covers nearly 4,100 square miles, slightly smaller than Connecticut.

And here's the scary part: All water and waterways within the leveed valley have only one way out: a "bathtub stopper" called the Steele Bayou Structure upstream from the Mississippi River. When the Mississippi floods, the

Army Corps of Engineers shuts the Steele Bayou control gates to prevent floodwaters from backfilling the Yazoo Backwater and larger Delta.

That's no small task. By the time the Mississippi River reaches Vicksburg, it's carrying 41% of the continent's runoff, which includes its own watershed starting in Minnesota; the Missouri River's watershed starting in Montana; and the Ohio River's watershed starting in Pennsylvania.

When a swollen Mississippi River forces Steele Bayou's floodgates to shut, residents pray that winter and spring rains stay away. If they don't, the Yazoo Backwater starts filling. Everything will be fine if the Mississippi River recedes before the Backwater reaches flood stage. If not, the 2019 scenario unfolds. (That buildup began in October 2018 with sustained heavy rains.)

The Backwater's original engineers considered such emergencies: They would build a giant pumping station at Steele Bayou once the structure was finished (1969). To prevent disasters like 2019, those pumps would evacuate rainfall trapped within the levees.

But the pumping station was never built. Funding squabbles between state and federal officials delayed construction for decades, and then the Environmental Protection Agency ruled against the pumps in 2008. Regional rainfalls since then have caused simultaneous flooding inside and outside the Backwater several times.

### CONCLUSION

Meanwhile, hunting clubs, conservation organizations, and the Mississippi DWFP spent much of the 1980s and 1990s using the Conservation Reserve Program and Wetland Reserve Program to help improve the Delta area's turkey habitat. **Butler** hopes all that money and foresight wasn't in vain.

"A lot of those trees are now 25 years old, and turkeys can probably start using those areas over the next five years," he said. "We'd like to get back to doing some trap-and-release to help re-establish those flocks. It would make a great turkey woods if we give it the needed time. That would be a real success story."

## SENATOR CINDY HYDE-SMITH SPEAKS AT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP SPONSORED BY COOPERATIVE ENERGY IN STONEVILLE

Cooperative Energy, together with its members, sponsored an interactive workshop with regional elected officials and economic developers in Stoneville. **Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith** addressed the group first, speaking to current issues she is working through in Washington, including the Yazoo Backwater Area Pumping Plant. Guest Speaker **Carol Johnson**, Atlanta-based sales expert and founder of Continuous Dialog, then addressed

the group about the importance of elected officials' role in economic development in their communities.

Cooperative Energy is the wholesale electric provider for Coahoma Electric Power Association, Delta Electric Power Association, Twin County Electric Power Association, Yazoo Valley Electric Power Association, and seven other distribution systems in Mississippi.



Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith



Carol Johnson

## STATE AUDITOR SHAD WHITE MEETS WITH DELTA COUNCIL OFFICERS AND PRESIDENTIAL DIRECTORS IN STONEVILLE



Delta Council Officers and Presidential Directors met in Stoneville to learn more about challenges and opportunities in the Delta region. **State Auditor Shad White** discussed current affairs in the Auditor's office. **Kay Whittington**, **Dr. Jeannie Barlow** and **Dr. J.R. Rigby** then addressed the group concerning the water supply challenge the Delta is facing. **Dr. Karen Matthews**, CEO of Delta Health Alliance spoke about outcomes in early childhood and health education.

"The purpose of these meetings is for our Officers and Presidential Directors to get thorough briefings on the issues that Delta Council is working on in partnership with other groups," said Delta Council President **Tom Gresham** of Indianola. "I want to thank **Auditor Shad White** for making the trip to the Delta, and our audience was impressed with the delivery and passion."

## USDA-FSA ADMINISTRATOR RICHARD FORDYCE MEETS WITH REGIONAL PRODUCERS



USDA-FSA Administrator **Richard Fordyce** met with regional aquaculture and row crop producers at Simmons Catfish in Yazoo City at the invitation of MS FSA Director **Bobby Carson**. From left to right are; **Administrator Fordyce**; **Will Weathers**, Farmer's Grain Terminal; **Travis Satterfield**, producer; **Demetrice Evans**, Price Support Division Specialist; **Stan Rodgers**, sweet potato producer from Webster County; **George King**, Washington County producer; **Shane Stephens**, Vice President of Cotton Services and Warehousing, Staplcotn; **Hank Reichle**, President and CEO, Staplcotn; **Bernie Jordan**, producer; **Frank Howell**, Delta Council; **Bobby Carson**, MS FSA chairman of the State Committee.



Catfish producer and Delta Council Vice President, **Andy Prosser** gives **Administrator Fordyce** a tour of Simmons Catfish ponds while discussing the threat that birds such as pelicans and cormorants have on the aquaculture industry.

# Delta Council

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Delta Council would like to thank the 2019-20 Officers for their service and outstanding leadership during the past year.

The 2019-20 Officers are as follows:



**Tom Gresham**  
President  
*Indianola*



**Hugh Arant Jr.**  
Vice President  
*Ruleville*



**Ted Connell**  
Vice President  
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