



The Delta Council Review

Vol. 14, Issue No. 6

THE NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS AND MEMBERS OF DELTA COUNCIL

September 2020

85TH ANNUAL MEETING POSTPONED DUE TO COVID-19



For the first time since World War II, Delta Council is postponing its Annual Meeting.

“This decision was made after careful consideration and in consultation with health and safety experts in the State of Mississippi,” said **Paul Hollis** of Rolling Fork, a farmer who

serves as President of Delta Council this year. “It is an unfortunate reality in 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic that we cannot gather our members and guests together to celebrate the Mississippi Delta.”

Hollis stressed that the regional agricultural and

economic development organizations’ program of work is unchanged and even more important in these uncertain times that face our economy.

“We will certainly have some sort of modified Board meeting in the fall, whether using technology or socially distancing, that will examine and ratify the policies that guide Delta Council’s day to day work, among other priorities,” said **Tom Gresham**, the Indianola businessman who serves as Chairman of the Delta Council Executive Committee. “We will be making an announcement in the coming two weeks.”

The Delta Council Annual Meeting was cancelled in 1944 as World War II raged in Europe and the Far East. Recently, in 2011, the most dangerous flood since 1927 threatened the region and the meeting was altered to give citizens a briefing from federal and state officials about the disaster.



\$71.46M GRANT FOR U.S. 82 BYPASS PROJECT SECURED

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION GRANT WOULD EXPEDITE FREIGHT MOVEMENT THROUGH THE DELTA

U.S. Senators **Roger Wicker**, and **Cindy Hyde-Smith**, announced the award of \$71,460,000 from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to construct 15.6 miles of the Greenville Bypass Freight Corridor, which will complete a US 82 bypass from near the Greenville Bridge to Leland, east of Greenville. The project builds on work initiated by the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) to connect the Mississippi River bridge to an interchange with MS 1.

“Completion of the Greenville Bypass is good for Mississippi and will have a significant impact for Greenville, the

Delta, and the communities along U.S. 82,” **Wicker** said. “This major award from the U.S. Department of Transportation is the final piece of a multi-phase effort by state and local officials to ensure this highway remains a source of economic vitality for our state.”

“Work on the Leland-Greenville bypass started more than a decade ago, which makes this large grant to complete the project significant. Local and state support, along with the **Trump** administration’s attention to improving rural infrastructure, was key to winning this award,” said **Hyde-Smith**, who serves on the Senate Appropriations Committee.

“Completing the bypass will change this region by taking heavy trucks off Greenville city streets and relying on the bypass to move freight more efficiently through Washington County. The project can also serve as an economic engine to bring more commerce and jobs to the region.”

“In addition to our entire Congressional Delegation who helped make this award happen, we want to personally thank Central District **Transportation Commissioner Willie Simmons** for advocating both at the Statewide and Federal level for this opportunity,” said **Johnny McRight**, Vice Chairman of the Delta Council Transportation Committee. “There



are a lot of people and entities that helped Commissioner Simmons and our Congressional Delegation to make this priority for Washington County and the Delta a reality.”

The DOT award is part of the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) discretionary grant program. The announcement marks the start of a 60-day Congressional review period, after which the funding would be made available. It supports

the DOT’s ROUTES (Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success) initiative to address disparities in rural transportation infrastructure to improve safety and economic competitiveness in all parts of the U.S.

Congress designed the INFRA grant program to provide dedicated discretionary funding support to critical infrastructure projects across the country.

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



FIERCE

HERBICIDE 999



DELTA COUNCIL

2020–2021 Delta Council Officers

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Vice-President: PIERCE BROWN, Schlater

Vice-President: CARTER MURRELL, Avon

Vice-President: ANDY PROSSER, Yazoo City

Vice-President: HENRY REED, Belzoni

Vice-President: KIRK SATTERFIELD, Benoit

Vice-President: JIMMY WALKER, JR., Clarksdale

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

BY PAUL HOLLIS



Hollis

As you can see from the article on the front page, Delta Council has had to postpone its 85th Annual Meeting until 2021 due to health and safety guidelines mandated by state and federal officials.

While this “red letter” day on the calendar of the Mississippi Delta may be postponed, I can assure you that the work of your regional development organization is ongoing and more critical than ever.

As a farmer and a Levee Board Commissioner, I knew how important the work of Delta Council was in agriculture and flood protection. However, during my first 3 months as president of this organization, I have been exposed to the entire portfolio of Delta Council in all matters concerning the economic climate and quality of life for the Mississippi Delta and it is quite impressive.

I grew up in the Northeast Mississippi town of Amory before moving to the Mississippi Delta after college to farm. Since moving here, I have always admired the pride and dedication that Deltans have for our home and I really think it is unique to this little corner of the world.

When I was asked to serve as President of Delta Council, I was humbled and excited for the challenge. It is daunting to see the names of people who have served before me, some of whom I have been fortunate to know personally and others by their outstanding reputation. It is my hope to carry on that legacy of achievement, and I can assure you that I will work diligently to do so.

One of the unfortunate things about having to postpone the Annual Meeting is not being able to properly recognize the service of immediate **Past President Tom Gresham** and his seven officers – **Hugh Arant, Jr.** of Ruleville, **Ted Connell** of Clarksdale, **Clint Dunn** of Itta Bena, **Jeffrey Mitchell** of Cary, **Erick Simmons** of Greenville, **Gibson Steele** of Greenville and **Keith Mitchell** of Grenada. This outstanding group of Delta leaders did a fabulous job and

I want to thank them for their service.

In particular, **Tom** has been a huge asset for me both with his willingness to step in and educate me and others about the issues and challenges that the Delta faces. His service to this organization is immense and I will continue to lean on him for counsel and advice during the year.

I am excited about the group of Officers who will serve with me this year and am looking forward to our first face-to-face meeting in the next month. I have already had the pleasure of working with many of them and I hope that you will thank them for their service as you see them around the Delta.

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

Despite the pandemic, Delta Council will continue addressing the challenges

PRESIDENT *continued on page 7*

GUEST COLUMN | UPDATES FROM DELTA RESEARCH & EXTENSION CENTER

BY DR. STEVE MARTIN

Interim Director of Delta Research and Extension Center, Mississippi State University



Martin

The Delta Research and Extension Center (DREC) at Stoneville was established in 1904 and is a component of the Mississippi State University's Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine. It encompasses personnel employed by

the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station (MAFES), the MSU Extension Service (MSU-ES), and the MSU College of Veterinary Medicine (MSU-CVM). Even though 2020 will undoubtedly go down as an interesting year in the history of Stoneville, things are moving along very well for the experiment station's research and Extension programs. Like other producers in the Delta, planting of research plots was delayed due to weather. But once the weather broke, research plots and Extension demonstrations have progressed very well. Research and Extension faculty work cooperatively to solve crop and aquaculture production problems and transfer new information and technology to area producers and industry stakeholders. The primary goal of DREC is to increase the yields of commercial agriculture and aquaculture producers, while at the

same time preserving the Mississippi Delta's environment and natural resources.

DREC is also home to three national centers; the Thad Cochran National Warmwater Aquaculture Center (NWAC), the National Center for Alluvial Aquifer Research (NCAAR), and the National Pollinator Center. These three centers are collaborative efforts with Mississippi State University and the USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

NWAC was established in 1997, and provides solutions to the most pressing problems of the aquaculture industry through basic and applied research, Extension, and diagnostic services. NWAC scientists conduct research to solve problems that can be addressed in the short-term, and those that threaten the long-term viability of the industry. NWAC Extension activities focus on the dissemination of research-based information to local producers and the aquaculture industry. Three units of the Division of Agriculture Forestry and Veterinary Medicine are represented within NWAC; MAFES, MSU-ES, and MSU-CVM.

NCAAR was established in 2016 and conducts research and disseminates information for issues surrounding water-use for agriculture and natural resources in the Lower Mississippi River Basin. NCAAR aims to produce research and Extension programs directed at the conservation and sustainability of water resources for agriculture that include designing water-efficient cropping systems, improving water capture

methods, improving water distribution systems and irrigation efficiencies, use of water-saving irrigation management options, and developing economic risk assessment tools that enable producers to identify profitable, water-efficient production options.

The National Pollinator Center was established in 2019. It conducts research, provides Extension education, solves problems related to improving native and honey bee health, improving natural habitat, and minimizing risk to stressors. This is achieved by researching pesticides and pests in a way that is beneficial to both beekeepers and agricultural producers located in the Mississippi Delta. The Delta region has traditionally been an area of intense row crop agriculture with high pest pressure that routinely needs synthetic pesticides to keep populations below economic injury levels. These areas are only now seeing the influx of commercial beekeepers that traditionally have been located in other regions of the U.S. The crops grown in the region do not require pollination from bees, but commercial beekeepers often bring colonies to the region at specific times during the year to improve colony health. These colonies are needed for pollination services for farmers in other areas of the U.S., as well as producing honey for commercial beekeepers. Finding answers on which strategies increase bee health while being feasible and economical to the farmer and commercial beekeeper is of the highest priority.

DELTA COUNCIL CONGRATULATES KYLE WHITE AS 2020 DELTA HONOR GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP WINNER



Pictured from left to right is **Bowen Flowers**, member of Delta Council Executive Committee and producer from Clarksdale; **Kyle White**, Delta Honor Graduate scholarship recipient.

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.

The 2020 scholarship recipient is **Kyle White** of Byhalia. He is the son of **Carl** and **Trudy White**. He graduated from Center Hill High School in Desoto County and will attend the University of Memphis where he will study Engineering. After college, he plans to

return to the Delta to help with his father's heat and air company. "As well as being physically active and able to solve problems, my father has always expressed a good work ethic. People look up to him as he is trustworthy, smart, and hard working. These characteristics have stood out to me as I have seen how community members respect him and honor his work. I would like to continue this legacy and help our company to continue to grow," said **Kyle**.

In a video recognizing **Kyle** and the other Delta Honor Graduates, **Governor Tate Reeves** said, "Congratulations to Delta Council's Delta Honor Graduates, and particularly to **Kyle White**, the recipient of this year's top award. **Kyle** is not only a great athlete, not only active in his church, he also delivered meals to kids in elementary schools, which shows the true spirit of Mississippi."

SHERILYN JONES NAMED GOOD MIDDLING COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENT



Jones

Sherilyn Jones of Inverness has been named the Good Middling Community Service Award Recipient for 2020.

Coined after the term "good middling", the highest grade in quality cotton production, the Good Middling Community Service Award recognizes individuals who have sustained significant efforts to promote community and economic vitality in the Mississippi Delta.

"**Sherilyn Jones** has always been very involved in the life of her local community and the greater Delta area. **Sherilyn** has willingly shared her talents and her time, and we are all fortunate and appreciative of her efforts," said Delta Council Arrangements Chairwoman **Irene Long** of Indianola.

Sherilyn earned a bachelor's degree in Sociology and Psychology from Auburn University, a Master of Education in Guidance and Counseling from Mississippi State University and a master's degree in Sociology from Delta State University. She has continued educational course work from a variety of Universities as well.

She is a longstanding leader with the American Association of University Women (AAUW). During her tenure with AAUW, she served on the College/University National Committee of which she was also the Chair. She was a member of the Legal Advocacy Fund Board, served as Southeastern Regional Director, as well as the AAUW Mississippi State President. Sherilyn also started the first community college branch of AAUW in the Nation at Mississippi Delta Community College.

In addition to this work, she has moderated several political forums from local mayoral elections to U.S. Representative, Mississippi Governor and U.S. Senator elections.

In the community, **Sherilyn** has served as the first President of Mississippi Women for Agriculture since 2010 and is treasurer for the Sunflower County Humane Society Board. She is on multiple community boards of directors including the Indianola Literacy Board, Indianola Excel by Five, Indianola Open Air Market, Mississippi Tennis Association, MS Delta Community College Center for Career & Workforce Development Advisory Board, MS Council for the Humanities and the Coalition for Mississippi's Children. She is also a member of the Delta Rockers dance team.

Born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, **Sherilyn** now resides in Inverness with her husband of 44 years, **Austin Jones**. They have one son, **Andy**, and daughter-in-law **Christy** and two Grandchildren. They are members of First United Methodist Church in Indianola where she serves as a youth teacher, office assistant and assists with Bible studies. In her spare time, Sherilyn enjoys playing tennis, traveling, Bible study, tending to dogs and horses, and watching Mississippi State University sports and the New Orleans Saints.

DELTA EMPLOYERS TAKE NOTE: CARES ACT PROVIDES OJT FUNDS TO BE SPENT BY DEC. 2020

The CARES Act appropriated funding by the Legislature in HB 1795 which allocated the funds to MDES for distribution to the four local workforce areas. The largest part of the bill is \$49 million for equipment and capacity building for the 15 community colleges across the state. Each workforce area is responsible for administering those funds through a contract with MDES with projects relative to COVID-19. The community colleges submitted a list of their equipment needs, which were reviewed and accepted by South

Delta PDD and MDES. In the Delta, the bill specified Holmes, Coahoma and MS Delta Community Colleges. All funds have to be spent by December 30, 2020. The other part of the bill is for On-the-Job Training (OJT) for businesses and individuals affected by COVID-19. OJT is available in all 14 of the Delta Workforce Counties. MDES WIN Job Centers are administering the program in Bolivar, Carroll, Coahoma, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Sharkey, Sunflower, and Washington Counties. Northwest MS CC is

administering the OJT Program in Panola, Quitman, Tallahatchie and Tunica Counties.

The Delta received a total of \$9.7 million, \$8.5 for the community colleges and a little over \$1 million for OJT.

The colleges have started the process for purchasing equipment, and the WIN Job Centers have started reaching out to employers.

Please share this information with your chamber and ED members, and if they're interested in OJT, they need to contact their local WIN Job Centers.

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act



EPA ADMINISTRATOR WHEELER APPOINTS GORE TO THE FARM, RANCH, AND RURAL COMMUNITIES FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE



Gore

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator **Andrew Wheeler** is announcing the appointment of thirty-three members to the Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Federal Advisory Committee (FRRCC). Established in 2008, the FRRCC provides independent policy advice, information, and recommendations to the EPA administrator on a range of environmental issues and policies that are of importance to agriculture and rural communities. Included on the committee is **Dr. Jeff Gore**, Mississippi State University DREC Entomologist.

"We thank EPA for recognizing **Jeff Gore's** scientific horsepower," said **Bubba Simmons** of Tribbett, Chairman of the Delta Council Advisory Research Committee. "**Dr. Gore** understands the relationship between sound science, the environment, and the economics of agriculture and rural America, and he will be an effective voice on that committee."

The committee had no current members at the time of solicitation; therefore, these 33 nominees will constitute a brand new committee, and will each serve two or three year terms beginning on June 15, 2020. The new members of the FRRCC hail from twenty-four states and one territory in all ten U.S. EPA Regions, with six of the Members working in multiple states or at a national capacity. The Committee expects to meet approximately twice a year beginning in late Summer of 2020.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION APPOINTS JOHN CAMPBELL USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT STATE DIRECTOR

The Trump Administration announced the appointment of **John G. Campbell** as the new State Director for USDA Rural Development in Mississippi. He started his position on July 6, 2020.



Campbell

Campbell is a native of Greenville, Miss. He graduated from Mississippi State University in 2001 with a Bachelor of Science degree and earned

a Master of Business Administration degree from Delta State University in 2004. In 2006, he joined the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC). During his 12 years at MDAC, **Campbell** held several positions, including State Entomologist, Director of the Bureau of Plant Industry, and Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce.

"No doubt one of the greatest assets we have in the Federal Government is **John Gordon Campbell**. **John Gordon** grew up in Greenville in the Mississippi Delta and is a great friend to the Delta. He understands Delta folks, business, agriculture and the needs of our Delta people. As Chief of Staff for the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Deputy Chief of Staff for **Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith** in Washington, **John Gordon** was our 'Go To' supporter for issues here in the Delta. **John Gordon** did an outstanding job for the people of the State and the Delta. We know he will continue that level of leadership as State Director, and we thank **President Trump** for selecting him," said **Johnny McRight**, a businessman from Greenville.

NRCS CHIEF LOHR TO STEP DOWN



Allan Grittmann, Delta Wildlife President; **Paul Dees**, Delta Wildlife Board Member; **Chief Lohr**; **Bubba Simmons**, Delta F.A.R.M. Chairman

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) **Chief Matt Lohr** announced in an online video that he will be leaving USDA in order to return to Virginia and farm full-time.

Calling the moment "bittersweet" in a Facebook post, **Lohr** stated, "I have been so blessed to lead this agency, and I will cherish the experience forever."

Lohr's last day was Friday, Aug. 14. NRCS **Associate Chief Kevin Norton** will serve as acting chief of NRCS.

"**Matt** has committed his entire life to the betterment of agriculture, and we are grateful for his service to USDA," said **U.S. Ag Secretary Sonny Perdue** in a statement. "The knowledge and experience he brought to the table helped ensure our locally-led, science-based approach continues to offer farmers the conservation solutions needed to enhance their environment and commercial viability."

"We have appreciated the opportunity to get to know and work with **Chief Lohr** and wish him the best as he returns to full time production agriculture. Producers and land owners in the Delta have certainly benefitted from his guidance and leadership while at the helm of NRCS," said **Bubba Simmons**, Chairman of Delta F.A.R.M.

LELAND INDUSTRIAL PARK CERTIFIED AS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT QUALIFIED SITE

Leland Industrial Park acreage is now qualified through Entergy's Economic Development Qualified Site Program. The Washington County Economic Alliance has 500 qualified acres in this park, which is less than one mile north of Leland at the intersection of U.S. Highway 82 and U.S. Highway 61.

The Qualified Site Program certifies that professional engineers and other specialists have completed an in-depth analysis of the property. It also ensures that results of the studies are available for review. Projects undertaken on these sites are overseen by a team that provides answers, solves problems, streamlines processes and removes the red tape that can complicate a business's location or expansion.

Entergy will provide resources to promote the qualified sites and will market them to national and international brokerage firms and site consultants. Other qualified sites are in Adams, Bolivar, DeSoto, Hinds, Madison, Rankin, Tunica and Warren counties.

USDA ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR MISSISSIPPI HEMP PRODUCTION LICENSES

The Mississippi Hemp Cultivation Act (Senate Bill 2725) was signed into law on June 29, 2020. This act legalized the cultivation of hemp under a state plan to be created and implemented by the Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce. Although the act allowed for a state hemp cultivation program, the necessary funding to implement the state program was not appropriated by the Mississippi Legislature.

"I appreciate the Mississippi Legislature for providing farmers with access to a new

agricultural commodity. However, the economic stress of COVID-19 made it difficult for the Legislature to find a way to fund the program, so, the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce cannot implement a state hemp program. Should the Legislature decide to fund a hemp program, MDAC will request to be the licensing agency," said Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce **Andy Gipson**.

Gipson continued, "However, I have been in constant communication with USDA as we prepared to implement a hemp program for Mississippi. In late June, I notified USDA that the Mississippi Hemp Cultivation Act had passed, but without funding for the program. I requested USDA accept applications and issue hemp grower licenses for Mississippians under the USDA plan. USDA has agreed to this plan and Mississippians can from **August 1 through October 31**, submit applications for a hemp license from the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the U.S. Domestic Hemp Production Program."

Guidance for producers wanting to obtain a USDA hemp production license can be found at www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/hemp/information-producers.

All requirements and information related to the USDA Domestic Hemp Production Program may be viewed at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/hemp>. If you have questions, please email farbill.hemp@usda.gov or call 202-720-2491.

GREENSERV EXPANDING TO PANOLA COUNTY



Owners **John Alford** and **Will Fountain**

GreenServ, Inc., a regulated medical waste and secure document destruction company, is increasing its presence in Mississippi by locating processing operations and corporate

AROUND DELTA FIELDS

headquarters in Batesville. The project is a \$6 million corporate investment and will create 45 jobs.

GreenServ transports and disposes of regulated medical waste from its clients in hospitals and other healthcare facilities. GreenServ also will have plant-based, secure document and E-waste destruction at its Batesville facility. The company will transport all materials to its new Batesville location for processing, a procedure that transforms the medical waste into a sterilized form so it can be sent to a landfill for disposal. The company will shred all documents so they can be recycled and will introduce a reusable sharps program that will greatly reduce the amount of plastic going into the landfill, both environmentally friendly processes.

USDA-ARS WELCOMES NELSON AS NEW HYDROLOGIST

Dr. Amanda M. Nelson was recently named as the new Research Hydrologist for the USDA-ARS Sustainable Water



Nelson

Management Research Unit (SWMRU), part of the National Alluvial Aquifer Research Center (NCAAR) in Stoneville, MS. **Dr. Nelson** earned her B.S. degree in Environmental Science from Tusculum College in east Tennessee, an M.S. in Water Science from Murray State University, and Ph.D. in Agricultural Sciences from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. From 2015-2019, **Dr. Nelson** served as a post-doctoral Research Hydrologist with USDA-ARS in El Reno, OK, working with the parameterization of the APEX hydrologic model in preparation for the nationwide deployment of the Nutrient Tracking Tool. While in El Reno, she also took the lead on a long-term project, originally initiated in the mid-1970s, which examined the impact of different management regimes of cropped and native grazing lands on water quality and quantity. The project included the management, compilation, and release of the historic data. In late 2019, **Dr. Nelson** moved to Stoneville, MS, as an ORISE post-doctoral scientist with SWMRU-NCAAR to examine the effects of different crop management regimes in the Mississippi Delta on water quality and quantity, and she is looking forward to continuing and expanding that research as a permanent member of the USDA-ARS SWMRU team. **Dr. Nelson** has co-authored over 15 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters on riparian ecology, aquatic entomology, and modeling the effects of conservation management systems on agricultural water quantity, quality, and budgets.

\$2.32 MILLION IN PILT PAYMENTS TO MS COUNTIES

72 counties in Mississippi with tax-exempt, federal property will receive \$2.32 million in Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) payments for 2020. The U.S. Department of the Interior issues the PILT payments to counties, with local officials retaining authority to allocate the funds that can be used to support public safety, public schools, social services, or infrastructure.

The largest FY2020 PILT payments for Mississippi include \$255,000 to Lafayette County, \$191,955 to Yalobusha County, \$143,896 to Pike County, \$129,000 to Grenada County, \$124,147 to Sharkey County, and \$102,897 to Wayne County.

PILT payments to other Delta counties include Bolivar, \$16,942; Coahoma, \$4,109; Desoto, \$49,739; Holmes, \$2,678; Humphreys \$12,412; Issaquena \$26,052; Leflore, \$7,186; Panola, \$79,067; Quitman, \$241; Sunflower, \$1,836; Tallahatchie, \$888; Tate, \$54,911; Tunica, \$8,345; Warren, \$11,223; Washington, \$17,546; and Yazoo, \$40,291.

MORE THAN \$16 MILLION INVESTED IN HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND IN RURAL MISSISSIPPI

CARES Act ReConnect Funding to Connect 878 Rural Households

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing more than \$16 million to provide broadband service in unserved and underserved rural areas in Mississippi. This investment is part of the \$100 million in grant funding made available for the ReConnect Pilot Program through the CARES Act.

In rural Mississippi, Tallahatchie Valley Electric Power Association will use a \$16 million grant to deploy a fiber-to-the-premises (FTTP) network to connect 2,082 people, 331 farms, 32 businesses, a post office, and six fire stations to high-speed broadband internet in Yalobusha, Tallahatchie, Panola, Grenada and Quitman counties.

“The need for rural broadband has never been more apparent than it is now – as our nation manages the coronavirus national emergency. Access to telehealth services, remote learning for school children, and remote business operations all require access to broadband,” said **U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue**. “I am so proud of our rural communities who have been working day in and day out, just like they always do, producing the food and fiber America depends on. We need them more than ever during these trying times, and expanding access to this critical infrastructure will help ensure rural America prospers for years to come.”

ROBBINS NAMED AS ARKANSAS RICE FEDERATION BOARD DIRECTOR

The Arkansas Rice Federation Board selected **Kelly Robbins** as the organization's new executive director, effective August 1. He succeeds **Lauren Waldrip**, a partner at Campbell



Robbins

Ward, a Little Rock-based public affairs and public relations firm. Most recently, **Robbins** served as executive director for the Arkansas Petroleum Council, and has previously served as executive vice president for three trade groups including the Associated

General Contractors of Arkansas, the Arkansas Independent Producers and Royalty Owners Association, and the Arkansas Forestry Association.

“**Kelly** has a proven track record in association management that will serve our industry well,” said Arkansas Rice Federation Chairman **David Gairhan**. “His years of lobbying experience will benefit Arkansas Rice and we look forward to working with him.”

Robbins will oversee all trade association activities and manage contract work for the federation.

“It's an honor to join a well-established team of hardworking producers, millers, and merchants,” **Robbins** said. “With their ongoing input and guidance, Arkansas Rice will continue its successful efforts representing our important community to the public, consumers, and officials at all levels.”

The Arkansas Rice Federation represents all aspects of the rice industry including the Arkansas Rice Council, Arkansas Rice Farmers, Arkansas Rice Merchants, and Arkansas Rice Millers.

NOBILE NAMED 2020 MISSISSIPPI CATFISH FARMER OF THE YEAR

Will Nobile of Moorhead was recently named USA Catfish's 2020 Mississippi Catfish Farmer of the Year. He and his father, **Jerry**, have 650 acres of catfish ponds, a catfish hatchery and 1,500 acres of row crops. **Will's** grandfather started the family farm in the 1940s, and his father added catfish in the mid 1980s.



Nobile

Will grew up working on the farm and took over management after graduating from college.

He and his wife, **Olivia**, reside in Moorhead and have two daughters. They are active members of their church and enjoy spending family time together. **Will** serves on the board of directors of Catfish Farmers of America, Catfish Farmers of Mississippi and The Catfish Institute.

“**Will** is a fine young man who has been in the catfish industry his whole life. He is an asset to the industry and knows it well,” said **Austin Jones**, Chairman of the Delta Council Aquaculture Committee and catfish producer from Sunflower County.

VICKSBURG FOREST PRODUCTS TO ADD 60 FULL-TIME JOBS AND INVEST \$40 MILLION



The Vicksburg Warren Economic Development Partnership announced that Vicksburg Forest Products is expanding its operations to respond to market opportunities and accommodate new customers. The expansion will allow Vicksburg Forest Products to create 60 direct jobs and invest \$40 million in corporate investments.

The City of Vicksburg is supporting the project with infrastructure improvements including drainage and rail expansions on the site through grants provided to the city by the Mississippi Development Authority.

In 2018, Vicksburg Forest Products purchased the former Anderson Tully sawmill. The facility underwent a large-scale transformation and is currently producing approximately 75 million board feet of Southern Yellow Pine lumber on an annualized basis. Post expansion, Vicksburg Forest Products will be capable of producing 180 million board feet of lumber per year, consisting of a diverse product mix to better serve customers. The upgraded mill will be purchasing approximately 800,000 tons of timber annually from landowners in the surrounding areas. The company has signed a turnkey contract with a leading equipment provider and construction is scheduled to begin in October and will be completed next summer.

MEMBER FOCUS | WILL FOUNTAIN



BUSINESS:

Will Fountain and his business partner **John Alford** started GreenServ, Inc. eight years ago after discovering a need for superior customer service at a competitive price in the Regulated Medical Waste market. GreenServ currently services all of Mississippi, Louisiana and most of Tennessee and is in the process of moving into a new state-of-the-art facility in Batesville, which will allow expansion to fourteen states. This will be the beginning of growth for business and job creation. GreenServ is also launching a new document destruction and e-waste business line.

HOMETOWN:

Will is a native of Greenville, MS, attended Washington School, and boarding school for high school at Christ School in Asheville, NC. He graduated from Mississippi State University in 1997 with a degree in Horticulture. After leaving Starkville, he headed to Fairhope, AL and worked as production manager for a commercial greenhouse facility.

Will married **Portia Lary** from Greenwood in May of 1999, and they moved to New Zealand. He was awarded the Rotary District 6820

1999 Ambassadorial Scholarship, which took him to the other side of the world. There he worked with Massey University, as well as Hort Science and Crop and Food research to publish two peer review papers during this time.

Portia and **Will** moved back to Memphis, TN from New Zealand, and after the birth of their first child, moved to Oxford, MS to be closer to family. The Fountains have been in Oxford for over seventeen years and have three children; **Mary Porter** (17) **Mack** (15) and **Whit** (13).

RECENT BUSINESS EXPANSION:

After returning to Oxford, **Will** worked in medical device sales and sales management for eleven years, while working to establish GreenServ on the side. The company has experienced tremendous growth since June of 2012, and in June of 2016, **Will** moved into working full-time with GreenServ. The opening of the new facility in Batesville at the end of September will be a springboard of growth for the business. The facility will enable GreenServ to vertically integrate and offer more service lines to its customers. The business is projected to create forty-five new jobs in thirty-six months. GreenServ is enthusiastic

about contributing to Panola County and the Delta.

"Greenserv is extremely excited to be locating our new corporate offices and all of our operations in Batesville. Our transition to Batesville would not have been possible without the support of **Governor Tate Reeves**, MDA, the Panola Partnership, Batesville city officials, Delta Council, Delta Workforce Development and the Panola County Board of Supervisors," said **Will**. "Their teamwork and focus on cultivating a business-friendly environment, along with the development of an outstanding workforce in Panola County, were keys for Greenserv's decision. We look forward to being a part of the Batesville and Panola County community for many years to come."

WHAT DO OTHERS SAY ABOUT WILL:

"I have known Will and Portia for about 15 years. Will is a fine young man and a good businessman," said Delta Council Executive Committee member Woods Eastland of Indianola. "We are glad that Delta Council could help play a role in he and John Alford locating their growing business in Panola County."

DELTA COUNCIL LEADER JAMES KILLEBREW PASSES AWAY

James Edward Killebrew born November 20th, 1942, died August 8th, 2020 from an injury on his cattle farm.

James Edward or **Killdee** as he was known to his friends since high school, was a proud and loving husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, brother and brother-in-law.

"With the untimely death of **James Killebrew**, the farm and gin community have lost a great friend and supporter, and the local community has lost a great citizen. Whatever the endeavor, **James's** involvement made it better," said **John Phillips** of Holly Bluff.

Mr. Killebrew was a dynamic and successful businessman, farmer and writer by hobby. He began farming cattle as a child with his father in Coxburg. He then moved on to farming cotton at the age of 14 and winning an award in FFA.

He helped to grow his surrounding communities by starting many businesses. He saw a need for a feed store in Lexington, after the Co-op's closing and in 1982 he opened Central Mississippi Farm Supply. In 1985, he began Delta Fertilizer & Lime Company. In 1993, it was sold and is now Sanders in Tchula. In 2002, there was a need for selling and transporting cotton seed, so Tchula Company

was started. All the while when **James** was running these businesses, he continued to run the Holmes Bonded Gin & Warehouse as president since September 1985 until his death. He also continued to run a cotton farming operation and worked his cattle.



Killebrew

He received many awards for serving his community. These included: Farmer of the Year 1994-1995, Ginner of the Year 2011, ASCS Committee 1981-1990, school board Cruger Tchula Academy 1980-1981, school board Central Holmes Christian School several years, Delta Council, President of Mississippi Ginners Association 2003-2004, Country Club Board, buyer for champion animals in the Dixie National, and county Farm

Bureau president.

Services for **James Edward Killebrew** were held Monday, August 10, 2020. There was a drive through visitation at Oregon Memorial Church and a graveside service was held at Coxburg Methodist. Pall Bearers were his beloved nephews.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorials be made to: St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Blair E. Batson Children's Hospital, Jackson, MS or Coxburg Cemetery Fund.

FREE MSU RESOURCE FOR COMPARING SOIL MOISTURE MONITORING SYSTEMS



Dr. Drew Gholson in a test plot adjacent to the National Center for Alluvial Aquifer Research.

The Mississippi State University Extension Service and USDA/ARS have jointly created the National Center for Alluvial Aquifer Research (NCAAR). In doing so, they have developed a new way for farmers and consultants to learn about different soil moisture monitoring systems. And all of the information and training is free.

Mississippi State University's Row-Crop Irrigation Science Extension and Research

(RISER) initiative, with leadership provided by Assistant Professor and Extension Irrigation Specialist **Drew Gholson** and Assistant Extension/Research Professor **Himmy Lo**, launched a display of 11 soil moisture monitoring systems at the Delta Research and Extension Center's West Farm in Stoneville. Six industry partners generously supplied these systems; EnviroSolutions, High Yield Ag Solutions, Irrrometer, PrecisionKing, Trellis, and Vantage South.

The soil moisture monitoring showcase is a collaboration between MSU Extension Service, ARS, NCAAR, and the Row-Crop Irrigation Science Extension and Research (RISER) initiative. NCAAR is supported by the Agricultural Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture, under Cooperative Agreement number 58-6001-7-001. RISER is sponsored jointly by Mississippi Soybean Promotion Board, Mississippi Corn Promotion Board, Mississippi Rice Promotion Board, Cotton Incorporated, and Mississippi Peanut Promotion Board.

Anytime members of the public want to look at various soil moisture sensors, telemetry hardware, and user interfaces, they are invited to stop by NCAAR, and see a demonstration first-hand. Or, they can view all they need on one website. Instructions are also provided there for viewing live data from the monitors through web browsers and smartphone apps. Please visit <https://www.ncaar.msstate.edu/outreach/index.php#> to access this free resource.

DR. MANLEY AWARDED DUCKS UNLIMITED EXCELLENCE IN CONSERVATION AWARD



For the first time in its 83-year history Ducks Unlimited (DU) has distributed their Excellence in Conservation Awards. DU's Conservation Programs Committee (CPC) created the awards to recognize outstanding conservation accomplishments and the 10 DU staff who made them possible.

Any extraordinary accomplishment that supports DU's conservation mission of filling the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever is eligible for recognition. The inaugural 2020 awards were announced Aug. 20, during the CPC summer meeting.

"These awards were created to support morale, help maintain a high level of motivation and convey the gratitude of DU supporters and volunteers by recognizing truly exceptional conservation professionals," said **CPC Chair Dr. Christine Thomas**. "The awards recognize particularly outstanding conservation achievements by individuals who are part of the staff of Ducks Unlimited."

Among the recipients was **Dr. Scott Manley**, DU's director of conservation programs for the Mississippi Alluvial Valley, for his continuing work on DU's Rice Stewardship Partnership.



A group of Mississippi State University Extension employees were awarded the 2020 Rosalind and Rodney Foil Teamwork Award for their work together with the effects of the 2019 and 2020 Backwater flooding. Those recognized were **Emily Carter**, Sharkey/Issaquena Extension Agent; **Sandra Havard**, Warren County Extension Agent; **Preston Aust**, Humphreys County Extension Agent; **Dr. Nicolas Quintana**, Ag Economist; **Dr. Curt Lacy**, Regional Extension Coordinator; **Phillip Vandevere**, Yazoo County Extension Agent; and **Mary Catherine Brooks**, Extension Associate. **Dr. Reuben Moore**, Interim Vice-President of Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine along with **Mrs. Rosalind Foil** presented the award last week in a small ceremony. MSU recognized their work to bring awareness to the public, provide practical information on public safety and mental health education to those returning to flooded homes, and collaborating with Delta Research and Extension Center and other MSU faculty to address issues specific to the affected area.



Wednesday, August 26, **Delta Council President Paul Hollis** of Rolling Fork addressed the Mississippi River Commission on the importance of continued flood protection for the region. Visit www.deltacouncil.org/mrc_testimony_2020 to read a copy of the testimony.

PRESIDENT *from page 2*

and opportunities of this region, ranging from infrastructure improvements, flood control projects, Delta Strong, workforce development, natural resources, and an agricultural economy that remains in a very perilous situation. Furthermore, the issues surrounding the pandemic, the economy, and the fall federal elections have placed more challenges and opportunities on our regional organizations' policy plate and I can assure you that we are working hard to address them.

I began this column talking about leadership and I want to recognize the men and women I have selected to serve as Chairmen of Delta Council committees during my term as president. These men and women are fundamental to the work that Delta Council does every day and I am proud to have them on our leadership team.

Those serving as Delta Council Committee Chairmen include: **Bubba Simmons** (Advisory Research) of Arcola,

Austin Jones (Aquaculture) of Moorhead, **Irene Long** (Arrangements) of Indianola, **Wade Litton** (Development Department) of Greenwood, **Cass Pennington** (Education and Health Policy) of Indianola, **Woods Eastland** (Executive Committee) of Indianola, **Patrick Johnson** (Farm Policy) of Tunica, **John Phillips** (Flood Control) of Yazoo City, **Jim Luckett** (Forestry & Wildlife Resources) of Tutwiler, **Haywood Wilson** (Ginning & Cotton Quality Improvement) of Charleston, **Walton Gresham** (Highway & Transportation Infrastructure) of Indianola, **Gibb Steele** (Rice & Small Grains) of Lake Village, **Tim Clements** (Soil & Water Resources) of Greenville, and **John Howarth** (Soybean, Corn & Small Grains) of Cleveland.

Thank you for your confidence and friendship in the Delta's regional economic and agricultural development organization and I hope you will contact me if I can ever be of service.

Delta Council

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DELTA PRODUCERS URGED TO DETERMINE IF WHIP+ PROGRAM CAN IMPACT 2018 AND 2019 CROP YEARS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture – Farm Service Agency has started making payments through the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program – Plus (WHIP+) to agricultural producers who suffered eligible losses because of drought or excess moisture in 2018 and 2019. Signup for these causes of loss opened March 23, and producers who suffered losses from drought (in counties designated D3 or above), excess moisture, hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity, snowstorms or wildfires can still apply for assistance through WHIP+. It is anticipated that the signup may end in the near future.

To be eligible for WHIP+, producers must have suffered losses of certain crops, trees, bushes or vines in counties with a Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or a Secretarial Disaster Designation (primary counties only) for qualifying natural disaster events that occurred in calendar years 2018 or 2019. Also, losses located in a county not designated by the Secretary as a primary

county may be eligible if a producer provides documentation showing that the loss was due to a qualifying natural disaster event.

For losses due to drought, a producer is eligible if any area of the county in which the loss occurred was rated D3, or extreme drought, or higher on the U.S. Drought Monitor during calendar years 2018 or 2019. Producers who suffered losses should contact their FSA county office.

In addition to the recently added eligible losses of drought and excess moisture, FSA will implement a WHIP+ provision for crop quality loss that resulted in price deductions or penalties when marketing crops damaged by eligible disaster events. To ensure an effective program for all impacted farmers, the Agency is currently gathering information on the extent of quality loss from producers and stakeholder organizations.

USDA Service Centers, including FSA county offices, are open for business by phone only, and field work will continue



with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or

any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information on Service Centers can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus, and more information on WHIP+ can be found at farmers.gov/whip-plus.

**MAKE WEEDS BEG FOR MERCY.
FOR 6-8 WEEKS.**



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