

Wood Ducks to Nest Soon

The Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) lives in swamps, ponds, and rivers throughout the Southeast United States and may be the most colorful of all North American waterfowl species. But unlike other waterfowl, the Wood Duck doesn't migrate each year, it lives here in our own backyards.

Wood Ducks nest in hollow cavities each spring, and the female Wood Duck begins searching for suitable cavities in February. Once a cavity is identified, she prepares a bed for her eggs with down and other debris. The duck will then breed and lay approximately 13 eggs. If she is unsuccessful in hatching her eggs, she will breed and nest again until

successful.

Successful Wood Duck nesting depends on the availability of adequate nesting sites and the exclusion of nest predators. Because of this, Delta Wildlife implemented a Wood Duck Nesting Box Program in 1992. The program provides inexpensive nesting boxes and predator guards to its membership and the general public, along with installation and maintenance instructions. Since program inception, Delta Wildlife has distributed and installed more than 3,000 nesting structures in the Mississippi Delta.

Recently, Delta Wildlife has received a new shipment of Wood

Duck boxes. To purchase new cypress Wood Duck boxes and predator guards for your property, please contact the Delta Wildlife office at (662) 686-3370. The cost of the nesting structure and predator guard will be \$30.

Delta Wildlife also encourages those who already have Wood Duck boxes to clean them out and replace the bedding material with fresh saw dust or wood shavings before the end of February. It is also important to make sure the boxes and predator guards are structurally sound. This will ensure better nesting success for those Wood Ducks who choose to nest in these structures.



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THE NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS AND MEMBERS OF DELTA COUNCIL

February 2008

Farm Bill Emphasizes Reform

"While the Senate-farm bill responds to those who are advocating reform, the bill acknowledges the realities of the rapidly escalating input costs largely resulting from the national energy policies of the U.S.," stated Bill Kennedy, President of Delta Council.

The Senate measure is a product of bi-partisan efforts spearheaded by Sen. Kent Conrad (ND), Sen. Blanche

Lincoln (AR), Sen. Saxby Chambliss (GA) and Sen. Thad Cochran (MS).

The Senate bill sustains the level of target price, and direct and countercyclical benefits as the 2002 farm law.

However, with the elimination of the 3-entity rule, the addition of spousal eligibility, and the means test approach of the adjusted gross income restrictions, the Senate bill institutes

significant reform of current farm law.

"Behind the lead of Chambliss, Cochran, and Lincoln, the full Senate adopted a farm bill that holds the promise of sustaining Southern agriculture during a period when the pendulum of uncertainty is threatening the economic viability of some Southern crops," Kennedy added.

See Farm Bill
Side-by-Side
comparison chart
on page 6



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Record Shifts in Crops Bring Economic Uncertainty

With record-low planting intentions for the Delta cotton crop in 2008, combined with soaring catfish feed-costs, which are driven by grain prices, allied agricultural businesses that sell inputs to farmers are carefully evaluating their short-term economic horizons.

"Despite the fact that some of the North Delta counties such as Coahoma, Tunica, and Quitman, are experiencing less crop shifts than the Delta as a whole, the overall impact of the second consecutive year of these crop shifts remains unknown," cited Dan Branton, Chairman of the Delta Council Farm Policy Committee.

The agricultural infrastructure built around the Delta cotton industry rep-

resents huge investments of capital and thousands of high-paying jobs servicing agricultural loans, selling inputs, and performing services that are not often required in areas that are traditionally grain-producing agricultural economies. According to Mississippi State University's crop budget surveys, the average input cost necessary to grow an acre of soybeans is 35% of the amount estimated to grow an acre of cotton or rice. The majority of disparities in production costs between soybeans and cotton is represented in production inputs and services, which means jobs.

The individual farm operator is receiving a market signal which tells him that he should shift cotton acres

into soybeans, corn, and wheat production, therefore reducing his production loan and outlays for inputs such as seed, fertilizer, crop protection materials and labor.

"While the individual farmer should fare well under the current grain market, the Delta community will likely experience a downturn in economic activity as a consequence of the farm sector needing less inputs and services to make a crop," added Branton.

In addition to the effects of crop shifts away from cotton for the second consecutive year, grain prices are putting heavy pressure on the catfish industry which has already been the target of imported fish products.

"Grain prices are driving food

costs up 25-40% on many items in the grocery store, and according to industry sources, the pond bank price of catfish needs to be 88¢, in order to service the increased cost of production which has resulted from catfish feed ingredients soaring from \$240 per ton last year to \$360 per ton this year," stated Bill Kennedy, the Sunflower County President of Delta Council.

"In summary, Delta Council is pleased that farmers are receiving favorable markets for grain and oil-seed-crops, and we hope that 2009 will take cotton and catfish to the next level, in order for these crops to enjoy the same economic stability, without downsizing of jobs and infrastructure," Branton added.



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Message From The President



**Bill Kennedy, President
Delta Council**

2007 might not awaken any images of radical change which took place in the Delta. However, in reflection of the last six months as President of Delta Council, I have observed some very significant

events and activities, and I am certain that historians will look back and cite 2007 as a particular point in time when seeds of change began to take root.

For example, 2007 marked a time when even the casual observer, riding through the Delta, noticed that *amber waves of grain* were substituted as the crop of choice on land that has predominantly been referred to as "those old cotton fields back home." The impact of those changes, whether temporary or permanent, will not be known for several years. However, there is no question that Delta farmers are extremely savvy when responding to market signals that help them determine which crops they will produce on their land. The bigger question about the sweeping changes of crops dedicated to the Delta land might be, "how are these crop shifts going to affect Delta communities?"

Another phenomena of 2007 are the **farm policy reforms** that appeared to be moving forward in the Congress as part of the 2008 farm bill. Land-owner-involvement in farming operations, cash rent and share rent operation structures, and the involvement of at-risk family members in multigenerational farming operations, will all be impacted by this farm bill. This impact will cause every member of every farming family in the Delta, and every cash rent tenant to re-examine how their farming operations will be structured beyond 2008. These are more than simply subtle changes, these are reforms which will cause families, farm operators, lenders, and creditors to carefully examine the farm balance sheet.

In addition to farm policy reform, **I-69** has received a push forward

PRESIDENT continued on page 3

MDA Director Meets with Area Developers, Delta Council Leaders



Gray Swoope

Gray Swoope, Executive Director of the Mississippi Development Authority, who serves as Gov. Haley Barbour's chief advocate for development of the State's communities and its resources, met in Greenwood with local leaders of economic development foundations from the Delta Council area.

In meetings with Delta Council community leaders, following a 2-hour session with local economic development professionals from the Delta region, Swoope reiterated his emphasis on community preparedness.

"Gray has been a very good friend of the Mississippi Delta and he continues to point out that the one, great strength of the Delta is its regionalism," stated Tom Gresham, the Indianola businessman who serves as Chairman of the Delta Council Development Department Board of Directors.

Swoope pledged his support of Delta Council's efforts to focus on community preparedness through its programs to enhance the delivery of workforce training, adult literacy, early childhood learning, and the leadership role which Delta Council has exerted on behalf of the Delta Health Alliance.

"This is the first time that we have had the opportunity to discuss community preparedness with Gray in a conference-table setting, and he has offered the support and energy of his offices to make certain that these Delta Council initiatives are a complete success," Gresham added.

At the Midyear Board of Directors meeting in November,

Barbour gave his universal endorsement to the energy which Delta Council is focusing on preparing our workforce and preparing our communities for the competitive marketplace of job recruitment.

"Collaborating with our workforce partners, including the local communities, workforce investment areas, community colleges and Mississippi Employment Service, we have recognized that in order to retain existing jobs among those businesses who have already invested in the Delta, we must re-examine the way we deliver the tremendous potential of our current workforce training programs," Gresham said.

"The capacity exists today, for us to establish the most effective workforce upgrade programs in the State, but to do this, all of us must agree that the status quo is simply not up to standards," Gresham concluded.

Conservation and Regulatory Programs Expanded to Include Catfish

The Senate version of the 2008 farm bill includes important features aimed at bringing greater economic stability to the catfish industry, and to those who are considering conservation programs as an alternative land-use to catfish production.

Also, Sen. Thad Cochran and Sen. Blanche Lincoln included language in the Senate measure which would extend USDA grading programs to

catfish, with the goal of distinguishing U.S. farm-raised catfish from other inferior grades of fish products. The catfish industry, working through Catfish Farmers of America, Delta Council, and other catfish advocacy groups, asked the offices of Senators Cochran and Lincoln to establish food safety inspection programs for the catfish industry, similar to poultry, eggs, and beef products.



Under provisions of USDA inspection programs, catfish industry leaders will establish standards related to the mislabeling and adulteration of catfish products, which will carry penalties for the violation of either standard. All domestic and foreign competitors will be

required to meet equivalency standards, as imposed by USDA, in order to market catfish in the U.S. marketplace.

"The efforts to establish grading and inspection programs was supported by Catfish Farmers of America, Catfish Farmers of Mississippi and Delta Council," stated Aquaculture Committee Chairman Lester Myers.

"We view that working in cooperation as an industry, processors, producers, and USDA can shape the grading and inspection programs so that our product receives the prominent reputation in the marketplace, which it rightfully deserves," Myers added.

CATFISH CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

In a special effort to expand the Conservation Reserve Program to include potential enrollment for catfish ponds, Delta Council, Catfish Farmers of America and Catfish Farmers of Mississippi urged

Senators Cochran and Lincoln to include farm bill language that would allow for catfish farms to enroll in the CRP program for the first time since it was founded in the 1985 Farm Bill. Working in cooperation with USDA-Farm Service Agency offices in Washington D.C., the Farmable Wetlands Program under CRP was redesigned to include catfish ponds.

"For those farmers who view that the cost-price squeeze currently ongoing in the catfish industry threatens their sustainability, this program will allow an alternative for enrollment for a 15-year CRP sign-up, utilizing local soil rental rates calculated at the county Farm Service Agency office," stated Bill Kennedy, president of Delta Council.

Additionally, the successful Wetlands Reserve Program will continue to be available to catfish ponds, and behind the leadership of Senators Chambliss, Cochran and Lincoln, corrections have been offered in the appraisal process which allow the program to return to a more competitive, market-oriented offer by USDA.

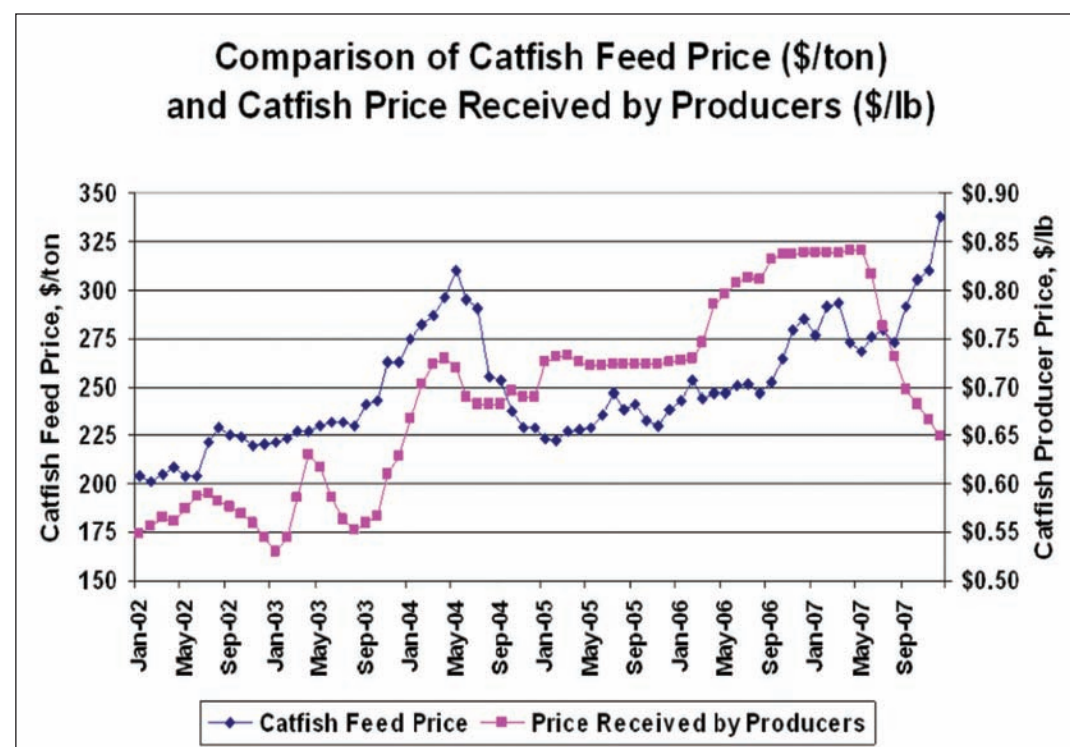
Catfish Contractions

The economy of the Delta will absorb a significant shock during 2008, due to the alternative energy policies of the United States and the unintended consequences which these policies have on feed prices for catfish and other livestock.

"The two primary feed mill operations in the State of Mississippi are Delta Western in Indianola and Fish Belt Feeds in Moorhead, and both report to us that the price of feed for the 2008 crop will be almost 50% higher than the same feed purchase prices in 2007, due to the price of soybeans, corn and wheat," stated Bill Kennedy, the President of Delta Council from

Sunflower County. Every analysis shown by economists at Mississippi State University, project an economic disaster in the catfish industry during 2008, due to the cost-price squeeze which will be felt by catfish producers.

"In order to accommodate the rapidly escalating cost of catfish feed, it has been estimated that pond bank prices to the farmer needs to be approximately 85-90 cents per pound, and instead, the prevailing price is 65 cents per pound," according to Lester Myers, the Sunflower County feed mill operator who is also Chairman of the Delta Council Aquaculture Committee.



FARM BILL SIDE-BY-SIDE ANALYSIS FROM FRONT PAGE

Commodity Provisions and Support Levels	Current Law	House Bill	Senate Bill	Administration
Target Price	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upland Cotton \$0.7240 Corn \$2.63 Soybeans \$5.80 Wheat \$3.92 Rice \$10.50 Peanuts \$4.95 Sorghum \$2.57 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upland Cotton \$0.7000 Corn \$2.63 Soybeans \$6.10 Wheat \$4.15 Rice \$10.50 Peanuts \$4.95 Sorghum \$2.57 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upland Cotton \$0.7225 Corn \$2.63 Soybeans \$6.00 Wheat \$4.20 Rice \$10.50 Peanuts \$4.95 Sorghum \$2.63 	Eliminates current price-based CCP program and replaces with revenue-based program; USDA estimates target revenue for cotton @ \$516.86 per acre
Optional Revenue-based Program	N/A	Target Revenue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upland Cotton \$496.93 Corn \$344.12 Soybeans \$231.87 Wheat \$149.92 Rice \$548.06 Peanuts \$683.83 Sorghum \$131.28 	State-level revenue program where target revenue based on 90% of rolling average of crop insurance price election. Available as an option beginning in 2010. Producers opting for this program receive \$15 fixed payment but forego direct payments and non-recourse marketing loan.	
Direct Payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upland Cotton \$0.0667 Corn \$0.28 Soybeans \$0.44 Wheat \$0.52 Rice \$2.35 Peanuts \$36 Sorghum \$0.35 	No Change from Current Law	No Change from Current Law	Upland cotton rate set at \$0.1108 per pound
Marketing Loan Rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upland Cotton \$0.52 Corn \$1.95 Soybeans \$5.00 Wheat \$2.75 Rice \$6.50 Peanuts \$3.55 Sorghum \$1.95 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upland Cotton (Base) \$0.52 Corn \$1.95 Soybeans \$5.00 Wheat \$2.94 Rice \$6.50 Peanuts \$3.55 Sorghum \$1.95 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upland Cotton (Base) \$0.52 Corn \$1.95 Soybeans \$5.00 Wheat \$2.94 Rice \$6.50 Peanuts \$3.55 Sorghum \$1.95 	Loan rate set at 85% of 5-year Olympic average of farm price with maximum set at \$0.5192 for cotton. Based on current prices, the '08 cotton loan rate estimated at \$0.44. Not addressed in USDA's legislative language.
Prevailing World Market Price	Statute: Secretary to determine (adjusted to US quality and location) By Regulation – Secretary uses average of the 5 lowest-priced growths quoted for Middling (M) 1-3/32, C.I.F. Northern Europe (NE) [Statute refers to NE in section authorizing additional adjustments]	Average of the 3 lowest-priced growths quoted for Middling (M) 1-3/32, C/F Far East (FE)	No Change From Current Law – the formula is not prescribed.	

I-69/269 Gets Major Funding:

After more than 3 years of working with the Mississippi Department of Transportation and local leaders in DeSoto County, a major breakthrough was registered in obtaining initial funds in the amount of \$7.7 million for I-269 (the easternmost portion of the I-69 outer loop from Collierville to Hernando). Senators Cochran and Lott obtained an authorized level of funding in the amount of \$70 million in the SAFE-TEA LU legislation enacted in 2005. MDOT began initiating an alternatives analysis in 2007, which is prerequisite to accessing the funding for a high-occupancy vehicle lane to be constructed as a part of I-69 from the Tennessee stateline to Hernando.

"We applaud the work of Sen. Cochran's office and the U.S. Department of Transportation, in coordination with MDOT officials so that access to these funds could begin to materialize and be applied toward continued progress on I-69 in Mississippi," stated Ken Murphree, former Transportation Committee Chairman of Delta Council and an effective local advocate for the I-69 project.

The \$7.7 million will allow MDOT to utilize the federal funds to offset current costs of 6-laning between Memphis and Hernando along the I-55/I-69 route. Hopefully, funds that would have been allocated toward the cost of the I-55/I-69 construction will be re-directed to

accelerate and fully implement the I-269 outer loop extending from Collierville to Hernando, and then extending on to Highway 61 in the vicinity of Robinsonville. The westernmost segment of I-69 between Hernando and Robinsonville was opened in 2006, marking the first segment of I-69 open to traffic throughout the 7-state footprint of the proposed project.

When I-269 is completed, it is hoped that it will create a commercial-industrial corridor loop in North Mississippi adjacent to the Memphis metropolitan area which will serve as a connector for four-lane U.S. 72, four-lane U.S. 78, Interstate 55, and four-lane U.S. Highway 61.

The 25-year multi-billion dollar interstate project also received significant funding for the Mississippi River crossing in the Benoit-Arkansas City area. The I-69 Mississippi River crossing has already received \$75 million in prior year appropriations.



Proposed I-269

Whitten Delta Research Center Receives Boost from Cochran:

The five-state regional research center for USDA at Stoneville received more than \$3 million for continued modernization of its laboratories. In recent years, the laboratory has received an estimated 20% of the total funds needed for the 10-year modernization project.

Future rendering of the renovated Jamie Whitten Building in Stoneville upon completion of ten-year modernization program.



Cochran Continues to Push Delta Health Alliance:

In his continued role to address health disparities in the Mississippi Delta, U.S. Senator Thad Cochran has included \$25 million in the recent federal appropriations measure for a consortium of universities in Mississippi to create improved access, education and research in the profile of Delta health. University of Mississippi Medical Center, Mississippi State University, Delta State University and Mississippi Valley State University serve as the principal leaders in establishing priorities and goals for the Delta Health Alliance.

"Accountability and the measurement of outcomes is the primary goal of Delta Health Alliance, in terms of bringing long-term improvements to the health of the Delta citizenry," stated John Hilpert, the Chairman of the Board of Delta Health Alliance and the current President of Delta State University.

Working through demonstration and pilot projects, Delta Health Alliance determines the measurement of outcomes on a small scale in order to carry projects pertaining to diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, electronic health records, and early learning to the landscape level of the Delta.

"There are proven national models which can be used as an experiment for success in the Delta, --- some of them work, but most of them need to be retro-fitted in order to accomplish the needed outcomes for the Delta population," stated Dr. Marshall Bouldin, the Medical Director of Delta Health Alliance, who administers the successful Delta Diabetes Project across more than 7 counties in the Delta.



John Hilpert

Delta Wildlife's Forest Management for Wildlife Habitat Program

Delta Wildlife is pleased to announce the commencement of a new Forest Management for Wildlife Habitat Program. Delta Wildlife members may request the services of our Registered Forester to assist in achieving wildlife and forestry management goals. Management plans and recommendations are tailored to fit a landowner's specific goals or objectives. The program is split into three levels:

Level 1

This most basic program involves a "window cruise," or walk-through of the property to assess the current condition of the forest stand. Delta Wildlife staff will observe and document species composition, species diversity, stem density, canopy density, available browse and forage food sources, understory species composition, and overall forest health. These factors will be considered to develop a general written recommendation of forest management practices enabling the

landowner to achieve their specific wildlife habitat management goals.

Level 2

This program is designed for the forest landowner interested in active management of their forest stand. To assess forest stand conditions, Delta Wildlife staff will conduct an intensive ground survey of existing wildlife habitat conditions and contract a Mississippi Registered Forester to perform a timber cruise and estimate current stand volumes. The landowner will be responsible for the cost of the timber cruise. Using the cruise data, Delta Wildlife staff will develop a specific forest management plan that will include:

- Current assessment of forest stand and wildlife habitat conditions
- Current estimate of timber volume and value
- General management recommendations for 1 rotation or a 50-year period
- Specific management recommendations for a 10 year period



Level 3

Landowners participating in the Level 2 program will have the option to participate in this advanced program if immediate timber harvest could be utilized to improve wildlife habitat on their property. Basically, Delta Wildlife staff will oversee the implementation of the forest management plan. A Registered Forester will be contracted to administer the timber

sale at the landowners expense (which can be deducted from timber harvest revenues), while Delta Wildlife ensures the harvest is performed to specifications and to meet the wildlife habitat improvement objectives of the landowner.

For additional information or to sign up for the program contact Delta Wildlife at 662-686-3370.

PRESIDENT continued from page 2

through the careful work of U.S. Senator Thad Cochran. The I-269 outer loop from the vicinity of Collierville, Tenn. to Hernando, is on the move and is certain to provide a thoroughfare for economic progress and commerce in the Northwest corner of the Mississippi Delta.

Recently, we have welcomed at least two new leaders to the excellent core of economic development professionals in the Delta, in Washington and Yazoo Counties. Delta Council looks forward to working with Ed Johnson of Greenville and Henry Cote of Yazoo City.

The long and enduring process of upgrading U.S. Highway 6 between Batesville and Clarksdale, to a four-lane, has begun. With the help of U.S. Sen. Thad Cochran and the commitment by the Mississippi Department of Transportation, we are years away from traveling on a 4-lane from Clarksdale to Batesville (I-55), but the important mile-

stone of 2007 is that this project has commenced.

And, two of the most pressing agenda items of 2007 which have spilled over into 2008, will be issues that will have an economic impact on the future Delta region. The Cinderella story of American agriculture has been the Mississippi farm-raised catfish industry. Due to the unintended consequences of U.S. alternative energy policy, grain prices have been driven to all-time highs, feed prices are causing contractions in the farm-raised catfish. Catfish feed costs represent an estimated 60% of the total cost of production in the catfish industry, and during the past 12 months, feed costs, which are directly associated with the cost of soybeans, corn and wheat, have sky rocketed to a level which is forcing successful catfish farmers and huge acreages of catfish production to revisit their options. This problem is among the top priorities of Delta Council's program of work for 2008.

And, finally, drainage improvements

throughout the entire Yazoo basin and extending throughout the entire lower MS River Valley, are being confronted with a huge challenge by the Environmental Protection Agency's recent decision to arbitrarily halt the Yazoo Backwater Project by utilizing an extremely rare veto authority, which EPA has utilized only 11 times in the past 25 years... nationwide.

After partnering with the Corps of Engineers and the Levee Boards to ground truth the actual wetlands impacts of the Yazoo Backwater pumps over the past 4 years, and jointly developing the most sophisticated wetlands evaluation ever performed in the Lower Mississippi River Valley, the EPA has essentially said that a flood control project in the United States should not leave an area drier than it was before the project was completed. To a small businessman from Inverness, Miss. like me, this is a frightening prophecy, and I personally see ramifications for the entire Delta Council region, ---drainage districts, soil and water conservation dis-

tricts, counties, cities, businesses, recreational hunting clubs, and both of our levee districts.

Recently, someone reacted to this veto threat by EPA, commenting that, "there is nothing about this political decision by EPA that could not be solved with one big Delta flood, similar to 1991, and there is one thing for certain, it will happen---the only question is when."

The saddest situation is that when this friend made this comment to me, I began pondering just how serious this decision by the Environmental Protection Agency really is. On a positive note however, Delta Council is proud of the fact that every Mississippi elected official extending from the Governor's office to both of our United States Senators, and all the way down to our local sheriffs departments and supervisors have endorsed this project in recent months. Surely, history will reflect that it was not the fault of responsible Mississippi public officials when that flood occurs and there is no pump.

Stoneville Hardwoods Lab Receives Boost from Cochran

U.S. Senator Thad Cochran began emphasizing the need to accelerate research on forestry and wildlife resources in the Delta in 1988, when he reversed agency plans to close the Bottomland Hardwoods Research Center of USDA and at the same time, increase its research capacity. During the past 20 years, Cochran has been largely responsible for the center, as it has become the premier bottomland hardwoods research center in the United States.

"At a time when forestry research suffered serious cutbacks across the nation, research on wildlife and forestry resources, including bottomland hardwoods, has grown exponentially, due to Senator Cochran's keen interest in this rich Delta resource," stated E.C. "Burk" Burkhardt, of Vicksburg, the longtime hardwoods research advocate and former chairman of the Delta Council Forestry and Wildlife Resources Committee.

In recent years, the Hardwood Lab

has expanded its work on stand development, wildlife habitat research, endangered species habitat, and afforestation, commonly known as the conversion from cropland to forestry. The lab boasts of twelve scientists working exclusively in the field of bottomland hardwoods, with emphasis on establishing industry standards for seedling quality.

Recent funding for the laboratory has enabled it to expand its hydrology work and attract top scientists to measure the biological diversity of bottomland hardwood stands in the Mississippi Alluvial Valley. Fiscal year 2008 funding priorities will be aimed at creating a Stoneville partnership with Mississippi State University in the field of forestry and wildlife resources, similar to the partnership between USDA and Mississippi State University in the field of agricultural research at the Delta Branch location of Mississippi State University.



Pictured (left to right): Steve Meadows, Tracy Hawkins, Buck Bryant, Nathan Schiff, Ted Leininger, Paul Hamel, Dan Wilson, Brian Lockhart, and Ray Souter. Stoneville scientists not shown are: Emile Gardiner, Diane DeSteven and Margaret Devall.

Budget Cuts Snare Beaver Control Program



The highly-successful Beaver Control Assistance Programs of USDA in Mississippi, were reduced in federal support for the first time in its 15-year history. The federal-state-local cost-sharing program which enables participating counties to offer beaver trapping, will experience reduced services which will impact the availability of USDA personnel to address damages to public and private property caused by beaver dams.

"The Beaver Control Assistance Program is another highly-successful USDA cost-share program, much like

the Boll Weevil Eradication Program, and we will work tirelessly over the coming year to have funds restored to a level which will allow the program to grow, as opposed to taking a step back," stated Butch Scipper, the Quitman County Chancery Clerk who has been a long-time advocate for the program.

Roads, bridges, forestry, agricultural property and commercial developments have all benefited from the implementation of the federal cost-share program which is extended to counties in exchange for a per-county fee. Local and State contributions toward the program amount to approximately 50% of the total program costs, with an equal balance coming from federal appropriations.

"Due to the sustained effort of this beaver program over the

past 15 years, beaver damages have been kept in-check in our county and if we do not recover the program to its previous level of funding, it will only take us two to three years for the progress made over the past 15

years to be completely undermined -- beavers are prolific and tireless construction workers," stated Laurance Carter of Sharkey County, whose county has been a participant in the program since its inception.

History of Beaver Control Program Funding

Year	Federal	MDOT	County	General/Contingency	MS Forestry Commission	Private Fees	Totals
1995	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$164,000		\$12,619	\$476,619
1996	\$150,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$164,000		\$13,884	\$527,884
1997	\$211,263	\$100,000	\$116,000	\$539,000		\$17,633	\$983,896
1998	\$340,413	\$100,000	\$120,000	\$447,784		\$14,500	\$1,022,697
1999	\$340,413	\$100,000	\$120,000	\$447,784		\$20,000	\$938,896
2000	\$337,803	\$100,000	\$132,000	\$500,000		\$6,997	\$1,069,803
2001	\$356,089	\$100,000	\$132,000	\$500,000		\$9,900	\$1,097,989
2002	\$367,976	\$250,000	\$195,000	\$200,000	\$100,000	\$9,102	\$1,112,078
2003	\$472,990	\$250,000	\$186,000	\$200,000		\$9,900	\$1,118,890
2004	\$461,578	\$250,000	\$180,000	\$200,000		\$20,000	\$1,111,578
2005	\$426,868	\$250,000					



Central District Highway Commissioner Dick Hall, Senator Willie Simmons, and Pam Chatman of Shaw talk to an assembled crowd on U.S. 61 south of Shaw to honor a stretch of highway recognizing Pam Chatman. Pam is the news director of WABG and involved in many community activities in the Delta.



Ed Johnson, a native of Florida and recently a businessman in Chicago, was recently introduced as the new chief executive officer for the Economic Development Center of Washington County.



New Prothonotary Warbler Bird Boxes available at Delta Wildlife, \$15.



Newly appointed Yazoo Chamber of Commerce Director, Henry Cote speaks with community leader Fred Merrill at a February 7th crime meeting.



Members of the Delta Early Learning Leadership Initiative recently visited the Children's Defense Fund's SPARK sites in Cleveland and Hollandale. (From left) Oleta Fitzgerald of CDF, Tom Gresham of Indianola, Skip Graeber of Clarksdale, and Patsy Clerk of the Cleveland SPARK site visit Mrs. Sue Givens' class at Nailor Elementary in Cleveland.



West Higginbothom, Sen. Thad Cochran's senior agricultural staff advisor, meets with area catfish leaders Austin Jones and Lester Myers to discuss agricultural issues.