



The Delta Council Review

Vol. 13, Issue No. 8

THE NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS AND MEMBERS OF DELTA COUNCIL

February 2019

FARM BILL PASSES All Mississippi Congressional Delegation Votes Favorably

The House and Senate both overwhelmingly approved the 2018 Farm Bill, and it was signed into law by **President Trump** on December 20, 2018. "We appreciate the Members of Congress, including all of our Mississippi Delegation, for their work over the past year to advance this critical legislation and their positive vote on passage," said **George**

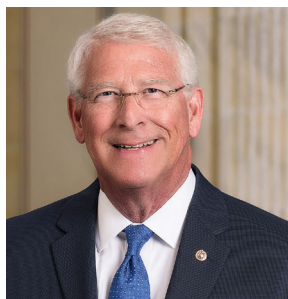
King, Chairman of the Delta Council Executive Committee.

The National Cotton Council released a summary based on the final 2018 Farm Bill Conference Report highlighting cotton policy and related provisions in the areas of seed cotton ARC/PLC program, base acres, payment yields, textile

provision, payment limits and program eligibility, environmental quality incentives program, conservation stewardship program, conservation reserve program, general provisions and report language. Please visit www.deltacouncil.org/farm-bill2018.html to review this summary in detail.

USA Rice also released a summary covering

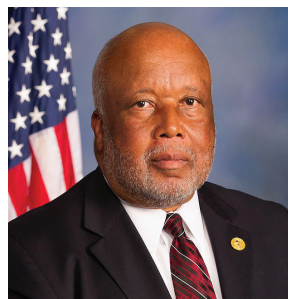
maintenance and enhancement of the price loss coverage program, increase to loan rates, and maintenance and enhancement of conservation program. This can be found at www.deltacouncil.org/usaricefarmbill.html



Senator
Roger Wicker



Senator
Cindy Hyde-Smith



Congressman
Bennie Thompson



Congressman
Trent Kelly



Retired Congressman
Gregg Harper



Congressman
Steven Palazzo

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION APPROVES PROJECTS FOR ROAD/BRIDGE REPAIR FUND

The Mississippi Transportation Commission announced funding for 163 Emergency Road and Bridge Repair Fund projects.

Totaling \$250 million, the approved projects will repair or replace 200 bridges severely restricting mobility, including 99 that are currently closed and another 91 that have posted weight restrictions.

City and county governments received \$213 million for projects on local roads. The Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) received \$37 million for projects on the state highway network.

"The Transportation Commission unanimously approved the selected projects from a pool of 690 applications totaling nearly \$1 billion," said **Commissioner Mike Tagert**,

Northern Transportation District. "Although all applications contained important projects, those awarded will provide greatest benefit to the state's crippled infrastructure."

Applications were received between November 14 and December 14 last year. Projects were chosen based on metrics that took into account bridge condition, project readiness, traffic volume, mobility, and economic impact. Each application was analyzed and ranked based on these metrics and other criteria established through joint meetings with the ERBRF Advisory Board as well as survey information received from local governments.

The Emergency Road and Bridge Repair Fund was created by the Mississippi Infrastructure Modernization Act (MIMA) of 2018,

which was signed into law during the 2018 Special Legislative Session. It authorized issuance of up to \$250 million in bonds to repair public roads and bridges in the state.

"While we were not able to fully fund the \$1 billion in requested applications, it is a start to addressing the state's critical infrastructure needs," said **Commissioner Dick Hall**, chair, Mississippi Transportation Commission. "We want to thank **Gov. Bryant** and the legislature for this is a step in the right direction. However, we need sustained funding to address all deteriorating bridges and crumbling roadways."

"Delta Council is very appreciative of the projects the MS Department of Transportation Commissioners funded in the Delta area. As the commission stated, there were \$1 Billion

worth of projects so this means there are about \$750 Million left unfunded. The cities and counties in the Delta Council area that were awarded the funding for these projects have three years to complete these projects. Delta Council urges these cities and counties that were awarded these funds to immediately proceed getting started on these projects. You can find a list of projects and map of MS with the location of all the projects on the MS Department of Transportation website," said **Walton Gresham**, Chairman of the Delta Council Highways and Transportation Committee.

See page 3 for the Delta County break down of allocations.

REPAIRS *continued on page 3*

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



FIERCE
HERBICIDE



DELTA COUNCIL

2018–2019 Delta Council Officers

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Vice-President: STANLEY AYRES, Leland

Vice-President: JOHN RODGERS BASHIER, Indianola

Vice-President: PETER HUNTER, Clarksdale

Vice-President: B. JONES, Tchula

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

BY WOODS EASTLAND



Eastland

Happy New Year and we hope that your 2019 is off to a good start.

At Delta Council, 2019 brought us a new Farm Bill that was passed with the support of ALL Members of our Congressional Delegation in December, 2018.

The measure, which passed with overwhelming bi-partisan support in both chambers of Congress, continues to provide a stable support system for our agricultural industry. Coupled with the conversion of generic base acres to seed cotton that was done in early 2018 by the retired **Senator Thad Cochran**, our producers can count on some tools to offset what appears to be continued lower prices for our major commodities.

Speaking of our Congressional Delegation, we are fortunate to have our Members on some key committees. Without going through each of their assignments, I will touch on some of them - **Senator Roger Wicker** takes the gavel as Chairman of the Commerce Committee; **Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith** continues her service on both Agriculture and Appropriations Committees; **Congressman Bennie Thompson** takes the reins as Chairman of the House Homeland Se-

curity Committee; Congressman Trent Kelly remains on Agriculture and Armed Services; **Congressman Steven Palazzo** continues his service on House Appropriations; and **Freshman Congressman Michael Guest** was seated on the Homeland Security Committee.

We have an extremely capable and engaged group of Delta Council Officers serving with me during this year and I look forward to bringing them together at the end of this month so some of our friends can brief them on critical issues, including water supply, transportation, and property taxes.

In transportation, we are saddened that our two Transportation Commissioners serving the Delta - **Dick Hall** and **Mike Tagert** - have both announced their intention to resign their seats at the end of their current terms. They both have been stalwart advocates for a strong transportation network in our State and we will miss their leadership and friendship tremendously.

Delta Council appointed a special committee a couple of years ago to work with Mississippi State University and the Mississippi Department of Revenue to see what changes could be implemented so that the property taxes could be more equitable with the same soil types and



Freshman
Congressman
Michael Guest

productivity in adjoining states. Their analysis shows that property taxes are significantly higher in Mississippi, which is hurting the value of the land, and they are looking at solutions first and foremost that do not need legislative changes. This committee, which is chaired by **Bubba Simmons**, has made significant progress on a very complicated issue, and we hope their work will yield some progress in the near future.

Befitting an election year, it seems more quiet than normal during this year's legislative session. We are working to extend the critical industrial marketing initiative that was created in 2000. The Growth and Prosperity Program (GAP) gives rural areas like the Delta an extra tool in our toolbox to retain and attract jobs. Both our existing and new companies utilize this program, and it is a significant piece in our Delta Strong marketing effort. Thanks to **Senator Buck Clarke** and **Lt. Governor Tate Reeves** in the Senate and **Representative Willie Bailey** and **Speaker Philip Gunn** in the House for their leadership. Of course, the Bryant Administration and the Mississippi Development Authority are also in strong support.

On a final note, I am pleased to report that Delta Council has completed a very successful transition between our former and current Executive Vice Presidents. Delta Council has enjoyed both strong leadership at the volunteer and staff positions, and I know that will continue. Thank each of you for your leadership and friendship to our regional effort.

GUEST COLUMN | SALUTE TO 2019 DELTA HONOR GRADUATES

BY DR. ALFRED RANKINS, JR.
Commissioner of Higher Education



Rankins

It was my pleasure to preside over the Salute to Delta Honor Graduates event that took place as part of last year's Delta Council Annual Meeting festivities. Being a son of the Mississippi

Delta, the honor placed upon these students before and during this event resonates with me. As an educator, it is exciting to see young people recognized for their hard work both inside and outside the classroom.

An 18-year tradition, the Salute to Delta Honor Graduates is normally held in May as part of the Delta Council Annual Meeting and honors more than 130 high school seniors as Delta Honor Graduates. The event

is designed to remind parents, teachers, and our local communities of the importance of bringing these bright young minds back to the Delta after they have completed their formal and advanced education.

The Institutions of Higher Learning staff members have been pleased to work with Delta State University, Mississippi Valley State University, and the high schools throughout the Mississippi Delta to make this a meaningful event. The students are chosen by school administrators using the following four criteria: Community Service, Extra-curricular Activities, Leadership, and Scholastic Achievement. There is a maximum of two students selected per school.

In the past, we have solicited the names of the honor graduates in March and April, but feedback from the universities indicated that they would like the region's gifted students to be identified earlier so they could do a better job of recruiting them - a move that Delta Council readily agreed to in the hopes

of it resulting in the potential for earlier admissions and more robust financial aid packages for Delta students.

With this change, the process to select students for the 2019 recognition began in the 2018 fall semester. The students selected will be honored as Delta Honor Graduates at the spring 2019 event and have the opportunity to compete for a \$2,500 scholarship. This scholarship will be presented to the top Honor Graduate, who will be selected by higher education officials.

The Salute to Delta Honor Graduates demonstrates Delta Council's commitment to the youth of the Delta and its recognition that they are the future of this region and our state. I am pleased that the university system assists with this important program and believe the change in the timeline will be beneficial for both the students and the universities.

To see the Delta Honor Graduates of 2019, go to page 8.

REPAIRS *from page 1*

BOLIVAR COUNTY

- \$ 2,126,550.62 - Pemble Road, Federal Route No. 665 between Symonds and Malvina
- \$ 1,193,766.59 - West Mound Bayou Rd, Federal State Aid Route 1611
- \$ 1,845,759.44 - Litton Road, Federal State Aid Route 608
- \$ 538,518.70 - West Second Avenue, Federal State Aid Route 1610

CARROLL COUNTY

- \$ 854,203.50 - County Road 69
- \$ 3,793,775.00 - County Road 87
- \$ 1,045,025.00 - County Road 215

COAHOMA

- \$ 1,537,348.34 - 1609 - Johnson Road

DESOTO COUNTY

- \$ 7,500,000.00 - Holly Springs Road
- \$ 1,474,990.00 - Starlanding Road

HOLMES COUNTY

- \$ 917,060.30 - Rayner Road

HUMPHREYS COUNTY

- \$ 515,995.00 - Seven Mile Road
- \$ 339,189.55 - Kilby Brake Road

INDIANOLA

- \$ 650,832.00 - Coll

ISSAQUENA COUNTY

- \$ 852,355.89 - Greenfield Road (Mayersville - Glen Allen Road)
- \$ 1,601,788.87 - Willette Road

LEFLORE COUNTY

- \$ 1,530,548.00 - County Road 537

PICKENS

- \$ 752,995.00 - Yazoo Street

QUITMAN COUNTY

- \$ 783,207.00 - Section 5 Rd and Airport Road

SHARKEY COUNTY

- \$ 357,634.48 - Omega Road
- \$ 293,348.00 - Sago Road

SOUTHAVEN

- \$ 1,989,500.00 - Stateline Road West Bridge

SUNFLOWER COUNTY

- \$ 860,485.20 - Blackwood Rd
- \$ 692,464.45 - McCoy Lake Rd

- \$ 837,017.15 - Tindall Rd
- \$ 621,556.60 - Lusk Rd
- \$ 620,172.00 - Kemp Rd

TALLAHATCHIE COUNTY

- \$ 4,441,973.00 - Levee Road FAP 0776

VICKSBURG

- \$ 3,737,845.00 - Kemp Bottom Road

WARREN COUNTY

- \$ 1,358,050.07 - Ballground Road
- \$ 1,542,796.96 - Freetown Road

WASHINGTON COUNTY

- \$ 1,420,259.00 - Murphy Road
- \$ 1,200,004.48 - Pricilla Road
- \$ 345,781.60 - Smiley Road
- \$ 345,781.60 - Bassi Road
- \$ 404,502.90 - Petes Dump Road
- \$ 305,921.45 - Stone Airport Road
- \$ 345,781.60 - Eifling Road

YAZOO COUNTY

- \$ 1,561,000.00 - Powell Road
- \$ 2,939,000.00 - Anding Oil City Road

MILWAUKEE TOOL OFFERS JOBS TO HDW EMPLOYEES



Jack Bilotta, plant manager for Milwaukee Tool; **Angela Curry**, executive director of the Greenwood-Leflore-Carroll Economic Development Foundation, and **Mary Ann Stinson**, plant manager at HDW, discuss details of attracting 54 laid-off HDW workers to apply for positions at Milwaukee Tool. Photo by **Gavin Maliska**

BY GAVIN MALISKA

Managing Editor at the Greenwood Commonwealth

Jack Bilotta, plant manager at Milwaukee Tool in Greenwood, was the hero of the day for the Greenwood-Leflore-Carroll Economic Development Foundation when he stepped forward and offered to hire any qualified employee of Hardware Distribution Warehouses Inc. after announcing its closing.

Unlike what HDW was experiencing before closing, **Bilotta** said business is booming for his company's

operations in Greenwood, where the 865 current employees repair electric drills and saws under warranty as well as manufacture blades and other parts. The company has expanded from its original operations to cover 440,000 square feet in three buildings.

A challenge for Milwaukee Tool is attracting people who want to work, according to **Bilotta**. HDW plant manager **Mary Ann Stinson**, who has worked for 45 years at HDW, agreed and said her company worked with employees to turn around attendance problems and make them reliable and productive.

Angela Curry, Executive Director of the EDF said they have worked with employers to find employees who would commute from outside the county and noted 4,000 people commute to jobs inside Leflore County each day. She also said the Mississippi Department of Employment Security is sending a team to help displaced workers with unemployment claims, continuing education and workforce training, resumé writing, and entrepreneurship.

BOWEN FLOWERS IS 2018 COTTON ACHIEVEMENT AWARD HONOREE

Reprinted with permission, Cotton Grower Magazine, January 2019. Visit CottonGrower.com/subscribe for your free subscription.



Bowen Flowers (right) routinely shares his farming experience with visiting groups.

BY JIM STEADMAN

Flowers, a partner in Omega Plantation in Clarksdale, MS, takes pride in the family farming operation, which includes 10,000 acres of cotton and another 5,000-6,000 acres of grain crops. But he also takes pride in giving time and attention back to the cotton industry and to his beloved Mississippi Delta.

A fourth generation Coahoma County farmer, Flowers comes by his industry involvement honestly. His father, **Dick Flowers**, was active with the National Cotton Council (NCC) and Delta Council, and set the standard for his son's involvement.

"I got involved with Delta Council at a relatively early age, shortly after finishing at Mississippi State University," recalls **Flowers**. "Through Delta Council, I got involved with the National Cotton Council and was on one of the first Producer Information Exchange tours to California. It was eye-opening for me. I brought some things home that those growers were doing and applied them to our farm."

That experience led to more involvement with the NCC, first as a producer delegate from Mississippi in the early 1990s, and more recently as an NCC director from 2006-2008 and from 2013-2015. He has served on various NCC committees and task forces, including the Farm Policy Task Force, the Environmental Task Force, the Cottonseed Program Task Force and the Crop Insurance Implementation Working Group.

He has also held leadership positions within the American Cotton Producers (ACP), which represents producer interests within the NCC. He was ACP chair in 2014 and 2015 and is currently a member of the ACP Farm Policy Task Force.

Flowers has been a member of the Staplcotn Board of Directors since the early 1990s. He served as Delta Council president, sits on the Coahoma County Farm Bureau board, is a Soil and Water Commissioner for Coahoma County, and remains active in local community activities.

"**Bowen Flowers** has left a positive footprint in all facets of his life," states **Woods Eastland**, current Delta Council president. "He is a man to whom others naturally gravitate for his opinion and input on varied issues affecting Delta agriculture. He has given selflessly of his time and resources, whether serving with Delta Council, Staplcotn, the National Cotton Council, or other agricultural organizations while fulfilling his family and civic responsibilities."

"**Bowen** has an uncommon amount of common sense, expressed directly in conversational tones without being argumentative or overbearing," he adds. "He is very effective. A lot is asked of him, and he responds with a generous giving of his time and talent. He also is a man whose values are in the right order. His family is first, and then the farming business that supports them. He is a person to be emulated."

To read the full story, visit www.cottongrower.com

USGS CONTINUES DATA COLLECTION OF MS ALLUVIAL PLAIN



Started in 2017, the Mississippi Alluvial Plain project is now in a “dual” data collection phase. The first phase, a monitoring network organized through a task force within the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), continues to gather critical water use data through a voluntary metering program. The second phase of data collection involves being able to understand more clearly the hydrogeologic framework of the MS River Valley Alluvial Aquifer, stretching south from Cape Girardeau, Mo., to Natchez, Miss., and laterally across parts of Arkansas, west Tennessee, and eastern Louisiana.

Low-level helicopter flights being flown out of the Greenwood-Leflore County Airport will continue until the entire aquifer has been mapped. A resolve sensor, called The Bird, is suspended below the helicopter and emits an electromagnetic field and radio waves down through the surface of the earth. Information obtained via the bird will be used to generate multi-spectral maps.

“The more accurate information we can retrieve, the more it will aid in gathering data that we need for the model. This will help to determine what the next steps will be in preserving the aquifer for future generations. This is so critical for the future of the Delta,” said **Bowen Flowers**, Delta Council Chairman of the Soil and Water Resources Committee.

MSU'S JIMMY AVERY ELECTED TO WORLD AQUACULTURE SOCIETY

Dr. Jimmy Avery, Extension Aquaculture Professor with Mississippi State University's Extension Service, has been elected President-elect of the World Aquaculture Society. **Avery** will assume his role at the organization's annual meeting, held in Montpellier, France, this summer. “This is a great honor for **Jimmy Avery** and the team at the Thad Cochran National Warmwater Aquaculture Center,” said **Austin Jones**, Chairman of the Delta Council Aquaculture Committee. “We know **Jimmy** will do an excellent job as president of this prestigious organization.”



Avery

DHA WELCOMES PATTON AS SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE CEO



Patton

Delta Health Alliance is pleased to announce **Stephanie Patton** of Leland has joined its team as special assistant to the chief executive officer. In her new position, **Patton** will work with non-profit organizations throughout the Delta to create more partnerships and to expand the reach of the Delta Health Alliance health care and education initiatives.

Patton has served in leadership roles with the Mississippi Economic Council, Delta Council, Mississippi Press Association, Washington County Economic Alliance, Community Foundation of Washington County, Rotary Club of Leland, United Way of Washington County, and many others.

“**Stephanie Patton** is a bright, energetic, and accomplished young professional woman who has succeeded in her endeavors. She is a great match for Delta Health Alliance because DHA's continuing growth requires additional success oriented managers to augment the impressive team already in place. **Stephanie's** presence will help to guarantee the continued success of DHA's initiatives,” said **Woods Eastland**, Delta Council President.

EPA ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO DICAMBA REGISTRATION

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced it is extending the registration of dicamba for two years for “over-the-top” use (application to growing plants) to control weeds in fields for cotton and soybean plants genetically engineered to resist dicamba. This action was informed by input from an extensive collaboration between EPA, state regulators, farmers, academic researchers, pesticide manufacturers, and other stakeholders. The registration for all dicamba products will automatically expire on December 20, 2020, unless EPA further extends it.

Secretary Perdue released the following statement regarding the EPA's decision; “It is important that the EPA has decided to renew the registration of over-the-top use of this important weed control technology on dicamba-resistant cotton and soybeans, because it presents farmers with options. This represents the conclusion of a very thorough scientific review, in conjunction with stakeholders, involving site visits and careful consideration of facts. Producers who use this weed control method should review the label, understand why changes have been made, and ensure that all requirements of the label are met when the 2019 use season begins.”

PEOPLESORES CREATES 200 JOBS IN NORTH DELTA



Jon Levingston, executive director of the Clarksdale/Coahoma County Chamber of Commerce, announced that Silicon Valley-based company PeopleShores has located

to Clarksdale, and plans to create up to 200 jobs. The technology company's initial training began in January with a job fair, hiring 25 employees with pay ranges from \$10-\$15 per hour.

The company specializes in services such as: image processing, data collection and service management, machine learning data services, web services and technology services. Once workers are trained, they are hired to do coding and other projects for a number of tech companies. The needs of corporations will determine the employees' project tasks. Instructors from the Coahoma Community College Workforce Development Center will help train employees in soft skills, technical skills, customer service skills, Excel, and other trades. Established in 2017, PeopleShores, the U.S. version of RuralShores (based in India), provides outsourcing services to large global corporations. PeopleShores has one center in a rural community in San Jose, Calif., and their second center is based in Clarksdale.

HALL AND TAGERT BOTH ANNOUNCE DECISION TO NOT SEEK RE-ELECTION



Tagert

Hall

Both Central District Transportation Commissioner **Dick Hall** and Northern District Transportation Commissioner **Mike Tagert** announced their intention to not run for re-election in 2019.

“The Delta has been represented by some very capable and effective leaders over the years, and I would rank **Dick** and **Mike** among the very best,” said Delta Council Transportation Committee Chair **Walton Gresham** of Indianola. “The Delta is grateful for their service and how responsive they have been to the needs of our region and the State of Mississippi.”

DELTA LEADER JOHN DILLARD PASSES AWAY

John Thomas Dillard, 91, of Greenville, a farmer and agribusiness leader of Greenville, passed away Friday, November 30 at Delta Regional Medical Center.

John Dillard was an active member of Delta Council, having served as President in 1987. While serving as Delta Council President he

traveled to Washington, D.C. and testified before the House Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, and Related Agencies about the need for Federal funding of agricultural research. He also served as past Chairman of both the Aquaculture Committee and the Executive Committee.

John Dillard was a recognized leader in the agricultural industry, in both row crops and aquaculture," said Delta Council Past President **Dan Branton** of Leland. "He leaves many legacies, but none perhaps more important than the work he did to help stabilize and grow the catfish industry. **John** had a great personality and possessed one of the sharpest pencils of anyone in agriculture, and that is why he was sought out for so many leadership positions."

DR. BUCKNER JOINS USDA NAREEE ADVISORY BOARD



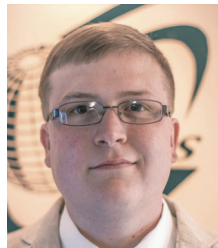
Buckner

The National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board (NAREEEAB) recently welcomed **Dr. Edmund R. Buckner**, dean and director of Land-Grant Programs for the School of Agriculture and Applied Sciences, to its array of counselors. His duties include serving in Category E. – the National Aquaculture Association, and providing advice to **Sonny Perdue**, Secretary of Agriculture, as well as to land-grant colleges and universities, on top priorities and policies for food and agricultural research, education, Extension and economics. His term will begin in the fall of 2018 and end in the fall of 2020.

In addition to his aforementioned roles, **Buckner** also serves as chair of the National Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP)4-H Leadership Committee. In this role, he provides guidance on issues impacting Cooperative Extension, the national transformational education system, which operates through land-grant universities in partnership with federal, state, and local governments.

AARON SASSENATH-COLE SELECTED AS 2019 CONGRESSIONAL FELLOW

Aaron Sassenrath-Cole has recently been selected as the 2018 Delta State University Congressional Fellow. **Aaron** currently works as a Geospatial Technician at Delta State University and is a **Sassenrath-Cole** United States Army veteran with specialized training in aviation. He exhibits a diverse and interdisciplinary background from hands-on mechanics to conducting scientific research in wildlife management, with an educational background from the Army Aviation Logistics School based in Fort Eustis, Virginia. Currently, **Aaron** is studying Geospatial Information Systems and Wildlife Management at Delta State University. "The three applicants who were interviewed were each worthy of selection. However, we had to recommend only one, and that was **Aaron Sassenrath-Cole**. Having interrupted his education to serve in the military, he displayed a maturity, discipline, and judgment which was convincing to the interviewers," said Delta Council President **Woods Eastland** of Indianola.



Sassenrath-Cole

ANDREA MAYFIELD APPOINTED AS CHAIR OF SWIB

Governor Phil Bryant recently appointed **Dr. Andrea Mayfield** as Chair of the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB). She will serve concurrently with her position as Executive Director of the Mississippi Community College Board. "I am excited to see **Dr. Andrea Mayfield** has been appointed Chairperson of SWIB. There is no doubt the capacity to train and grow our workforce here in Mississippi starts with the Community Colleges along with the efforts of our state and local Economic Development Leaders. This appointment makes perfect sense to me. I have served as a Mississippi Community College Board member since before **Andrea** began as our MCCB Executive Director, and I have worked with her on many projects and assign-



Mayfield

ments. With her knowledge and experience as well as her passion for Workforce for our great state, I know this is the perfect fit and will help move Work Force and our Community Colleges forward," said **Johnny McRight**, a businessman from Greenville who serves on the Mississippi Community College Board Member.

MEC TOUR IN WASHINGTON COUNTY



Gresham and Waller

On Thursday, January 24, the Mississippi Economic Council (MEC) visited Washington County to discuss how to enhance Mississippi's opportunities through economic competitiveness and job creation, workforce and educational achievement, business climate enhancement, workplace wellness, and more. This annual luncheon is held at over 20 locations across the state, and thanks to a generous sponsorship from Blue Cross & Blue Shield, there is no cost to attend. Pictured is Delta Council Development Department Chairman **Tom Gresham** with MEC President **Scott Waller**. For more information on MEC or to attend a tour near you, please visit www.msmecc.com.

BOZEMAN NAMED STATE FORESTER

The Mississippi Forestry Commission's Board of Commissioners announced the appointment of **Russell Bozeman** to serve as Mississippi's 13th State Forester. The State Forester oversees the state agency's



Bozeman

leadership team in the areas of forest protection, forest management, wildland fire management, forest inventory, and forest information distribution.

Bozeman holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry with a concentration in Forest Management from Mississippi State University and is a registered forester. He is a member of the Southern Group of State Foresters, National Association of State Foresters, Society of American Foresters, Mississippi Forestry Association, and Hinds County Forestry Association. **Bozeman** lives in Raymond with his wife and two daughters.

MS DELTA AG THEFT TASKFORCE NAMES NEW INVESTIGATOR

The Mississippi Secretary of State's Office is pleased to announce the hiring of **Jack Williams** as investigator for the Regulation and Enforcement Division. **Investigator Williams** will be the point of contact for any issues involving scrap metal dealer registration and metal theft or complaints. He will be the primary point of contact for the Mississippi Delta Ag Theft Taskforce.

Jack is uniquely qualified for this position, having served as a police officer with the Madison Police Department and currently serving in the Mississippi National Guard with the rank of sergeant. His primary area of responsibility will be to assist law enforcement, the agricultural community and scrap metal industry with any issues involving metal theft as well as ensuring that scrap metal dealers are registered and in compliance with the Mississippi Scrap Metal Law.

Investigator Williams can be reached by calling **601-359-9055** or by email at ag_taskforce@sos.ms.gov or Jack.Williams@sos.ms.gov.

PANOLA CO. 94% TOWARD WORKREADY CERTIFICATION



Panola County Partnership Executive Director **Joe Azar** reported that Panola County has earned 94% toward completing their goals to become a WorkReady Community through the ACT WorkReady Communities certification program, and they have surpassed three of their four goals set by ACT. To keep track of Panola County's progress, or to check the status of your county, visit www.workreadycommunities.org

MEMBER FOCUS | SHAW JOHNSON



BUSINESS OR OCCUPATION:

Shaw Johnson III is Chairman of the Board of SouthGroup Insurance and Financial Services. SouthGroup is Mississippi's largest privately owned Insurance Agency with 21 branches and 150 employees across the state. Shaw also leads SouthGroup's Clarksdale branch formerly J.H. Johnson & Co. As a 4th generation owner and leader of the agency, **Shaw** works with his clients as a risk advisor on property and casualty issues as well as emerging risks.

HOMETOWN:

Shaw is a native of Clarksdale where he graduated from the local school, Lee Academy, and then continued on to the University of Missis-

sippi. After college, he returned home and began working in the family insurance business his great grandfather, **J.H. Johnson**, established in 1894. **Shaw's** family has served the insurance needs of Clarksdale residents for 125 years.

AFFILIATIONS:

Shaw is very involved in the Clarksdale community and his church. He is a current member of the Executive Committee of Independent Insurance Agents of MS, the National Board of Directors of Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America, he serves as Chairman of Finance Committee of Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America, and is an Advisory Council member of Risk Management & Insurance University of Mississippi. **Shaw** is also a Past Chairman of the Coahoma County Chamber of Commerce. He is married to **Beth Bennett Johnson**, and they have 2 children together.

WHAT DO OTHERS SAY ABOUT SHAW:

"As evidenced by his chairmanship of the largest privately owned insurance agency and his leadership on national insurance boards, **Shaw** is recognized by his peers for his extensive leadership abilities. Furthermore, Shaw always steps forward in our community, our church, and the Delta when it is time for leadership," said **Bowen Flowers** of Clarksdale.

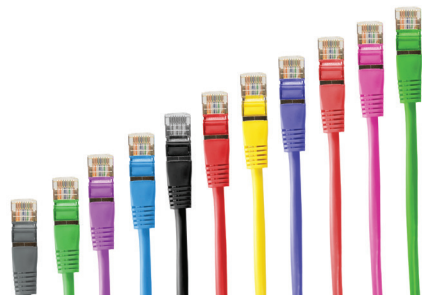
JORDAN AND KRUTZ RECOGNIZED



At the 22nd Annual National Conservation Systems Cotton and Rice Conference, two Mississippi agricultural leaders were recognized for their service. **Bernie Jordan** (left), a farmer from Carter, who serves as board chairman of Cotton Incorporated and a Delta Council Director, among many other leadership positions, was named the Cotton Farmer of the year. **Dr. Jason Krutz** (right), Director of the Mississippi Water Resources Research Institute at Mississippi State University and Interim Leader at the MS River Alluvial Aquifer Water Resources, Research, and Education Center, was named Irrigation Researcher of the year.

MS HOUSE AND SENATE PASS RURAL BROADBAND BILL; GOVERNOR SIGNS INTO LAW

Governor Phil Bryant signed into law a bill allowing rural electric cooperatives to provide high-speed internet to their customers — the first significant legislation to pass of the 2019 session. The member-owned organizations — which serve roughly half the state's population — have been restricted from offering anything but electricity due to a 1942 law. Some 60 percent of rural Mississippians lack high-speed internet access, according to a 2017 report by the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee. It is expected it will likely take at least a year before the participating cooperatives are able to begin offering high-speed connections.



DELTAN ON THE MOVE | JOHN CAMPBELL



PERSONAL INFORMATION:

John G. Campbell, a Greenville native, graduated from Mississippi State University in 2001 with a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture pest management. While embarking on his career with the USDA in Stoneville as a Biological Science Technician, **John** earned a Masters of Business Administration degree at Delta State University. In 2006, he joined the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) as a Branch Director. During his 12 years at MDAC, **John** progressed through the agency and held several positions, including State Entomologist, Director of the Bureau of Plant Industry, and Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce. In April 2018, John joined the staff of U.S. **Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith** (R-Miss.) in Washington, D.C.

CURRENT JOB TITLE & RESPONSIBILITIES:

As the Senior Advisor to **Senator Hyde-Smith**, **John** works on a range of policy areas and leverages more than a decade of experience with industry, state and local governments, and orga-

nizations to promote the Senator's priorities and work on the Appropriations, Agriculture, Energy and Natural Resources, and Rules committees. **John's** ability to connect with people, particularly from his home base in the Delta, has proven to be a valuable addition to the Senator's staff.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB:

"This job is exciting and fulfilling because each day brings a new set of challenges and opportunities to grow both professionally and personally. It is exciting to get to work for **Senator Hyde-Smith** as the state's new senator and first female to represent Mississippi in Congress. Also, it is an honor to work alongside so many Mississippians who provide a strong voice for our state. Until moving to D.C., I was not fully aware of the number of Mississippians in D.C., working very hard to make our state a better place to live. I am thankful to work with our states' strong Congressional delegation and their talented staff on issues that are important to Mississippi."

WHAT DO OTHERS SAY ABOUT CAMPBELL:

"No doubt one of the greatest assets we have in **Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith's** DC office 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 in agriculture and the needs of our Delta growers. As Chief of Staff for the Mississippi Department of Agriculture **John Gordon** was our 'Go To' supporter for our issues here in the Delta. Since arriving in Washington, **John Gordon** has already, on many occasions, shown his support of the Delta and I know he will continue to do a great job there for **Senator Hyde-Smith**, the great state of Mississippi and the Delta," said **Johnny McRight**, a businessman from Greenville.

C SPIRE ANNOUNCES NEW CONSORTIUM TO TACKLE BROADBAND "DIGITAL DIVIDE" IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

C Spire, in coordination with Airspan Networks, Microsoft, Nokia and Siklu, announced their collaboration that will test and deploy a variety of broadband technologies in combination with new service and construction models to advance broadband connectivity in rural communities. In addition, the consortium will advance new models for coordination with regional fixed and wireless internet service providers, utilities and other regional stewards. The consortium's goal is a new blueprint on a shared way forward to close the broadband adoption and affordability gap in rural communities across America.

As one of the nation's leading regional fixed and wireless broadband providers, C Spire is uniquely positioned to disrupt the current approach to rural broadband and address these challenges. These efforts are part of the broader C Spire Tech Movement initiative, which is committed to moving communities forward through technology with a



focus on broadband access, workforce development and innovation.

The gap between cities and rural parts of the country is substantial. According to a 2018 report from the Federal

Communications Commission¹, over 19.4 million rural Americans still lacked basic broadband at the end of 2017. This is having profound impacts on the nation's rural communities. Unfortunately, the problems are even more acute in states like Mississippi and Alabama where nearly a third of rural residents have no access to basic broadband. A 2017 Mississippi State University Center for Technology Outreach study² found that the state's rural counties lose millions of dollars a year in deferred economic benefits due to lack of availability and slow internet speeds. The report concluded that those same counties will lose billions of dollars over a 15-year period. To learn more, please visit www.cspire.com/company_info/about/news_index.jsp

PHOTOS



Microsoft, Nokia and CSpire teams visit the Delta and Delta Council to learn about current rural internet access and the potential for future collaborations on bridging the rural connectivity divide.



Don Davis, Division Administrator of Mississippi for the Federal Highway Administration (FHA), addresses the Highways & Transportation Committee meeting attendees about the role of the FHA in the establishment and implementation of weights and measures standards and guidelines at the Mid Year Board of Directors Meeting.



Floyd Melton; LaShon Brooks, Chief of Staff and Legislative Liaison from Mississippi Valley State University; and Dr. Jerryl Briggs, Sr., President of Mississippi Valley State University at the Mid Year Board of Directors Meeting.



Scott Horton, Agronomist at the Bayer Learning Center in Scott, led one of the STEM Career Day courses about agriculture.



Dr. Taghi Bararpour and MSU graduate student Trip Hale address STEM Career Day students during break-out sessions of the day.



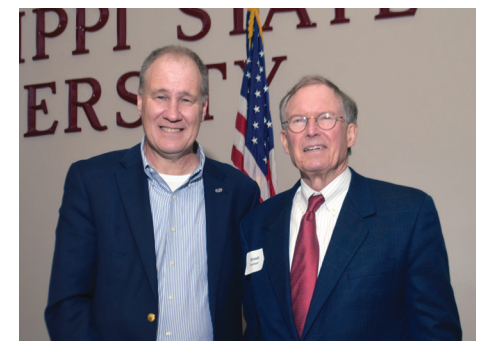
Louis Wasson, Senior Extension Associate for MSU opens STEM Career Day with a drone presentation.



Willie Huff, MDOT Division of Enforcement Director; James Williams, Chief Engineer of MDOT; Kevin Magee, MDOT District 3 Engineer; and Dr. Ruixiu Sui, USDA Research Agricultural Engineer gather between sessions at the Mid Year Board of Directors Meeting.



Mid Year Board Meeting attendees listen as Congressman Kelly delivers message



Congressman Trent Kelly and Delta Council President Woods Eastland



2019 DELTA HONOR GRADUATES

BOLIVAR

Jervais Bean, Ray Brooks
Cross Crowe, Bayou Academy
Patrick Davis, Jr., Cleveland Central High
Kennedy King, Ray Brooks
Janesia Landown, Shaw High
Tracy Syron Loyd, Jr., Northside High
Bailey Runnels, Bayou Academy
Daydemeka Scott, Northside High
William Swartzfager, Cleveland Central High
Grosby Thomas, Jr., Shaw High
Nagle Nicole Towers, West Bolivar High
Ladoria Tomese Walker, West Bolivar High

CARROLL

Logan Aaron Hodges, Carroll Academy
Jakayla Phillips, J.Z. George High
Michael Shute, J.Z. George High
Cassandra Rhea Tackett, Carroll Academy

COAHOMA

Rutledge Agostinelli, Lee Academy
Shakyla Beasley, Clarksdale High
Nautica Brown, Coahoma County High
Allyson Holmes, Clarksdale High
Halesha Jackson, Coahoma County High
Aniya Johnson, Coahoma Early College High
McKindrea Pitts, Coahoma Early College High
Madeline Riddick, Lee Academy

DESOTO

Brett Baltz, Desoto Central High
Kaiya Banks, Horn Lake High
Caden Burse, Olive Branch High
Kyana Conway, Olive Branch High
Kaylee Hargis, Hernando High
Jacqueline Madrid, Horn Lake High
Vivesh Patel, Desoto Central High
Gianna Richardson, Northpoint Christian School
Logan Smith, Northpoint Christian School

Rachel Stoner, Hernando High
Ember Suh, Southaven High
Reo Weaver, Southaven High
Dallas Williams, Lake Cormorant High
Jessica Wilson, Lake Cormorant High

HOLMES

Samantha Deering, Holmes County Central High School
Brantley Holder, Holmes Central Holmes Christian School
Peyton Killebrew, Holmes Central Holmes Christian School
Rabria Moore, Holmes County Central High School

HUMPHREYS

Ileanna Grayson, Humphreys Co. High
Tyranesha Jones, Humphreys Co. High
Tori Still, Humphreys Academy
Gracie Turner, Humphreys Academy

LEFLORE

Charles Brooks II, Greenwood High
Sunjay Chawla, Pillow Academy
Kurtina Coates, Greenwood High
Kurt Franklin, North New Summit School
Mariah Gatlin, Amanda Elzy High
Perion Jones, Amanda Elzy High
Willie McCline, Leflore County High
Jasmine Swims, Leflore County High
John Hollis Tackett, Pillow Academy

PANOLA

Ali Cummins, South Panola High
Mario Fenner, North Panola High
Ainsley Gordon, North Delta School
Nila Lamar, North Panola High
Calandra Morgan, South Panola High
Skylar Nix, North Delta School

QUITMAN

Allana Parsons, Delta Academy
Mary Grace Patterson, Delta Academy
Kamien Wells, Madison S. Palmer High
Reginald Wilbourn, Jr., Madison S. Palmer High

SHARKEY/ISSAQUENA

Hannah Bryant, Sharkey-Issaquena Academy
Keijuan Moore, South Delta High
T'Myriah Pinkins, South Delta High
Tania Rodriguez, Sharkey-Issaquena Academy

SUNFLOWER

Steven Abney, North Sunflower Academy
Knox Arnold, North Sunflower Academy
Chari Barr, Ruleville Central High
Rufus Bush, III, Gentry High
Tavares Fairley, Ruleville Central High
Presley Scott Jackson, Indianola Academy
Clint Jones, Indianola Academy
Keyjuan Meek, Gentry High

TALLAHATCHIE

Trinity Hazzard, West Tallahatchie High
Jacobus McCaskill, Charleston High
Anyjah Nash, Charleston High
Travers Stovall, Jr., West Tallahatchie High

TATE

Sadie Alexander, Magnolia Heights School
Devontre Burdette, Senatobia High
Zikrystia Coleman, Coldwater High School
Jaymee Downs, Independence High
Madahlyn Hall, Strayhorn High
Alliyah Hardy, Strayhorn High
Marvin McLeod, Coldwater High School
Sandria Nolen, Independence High
Casey Rhone, Senatobia High
Alexandra Taylor, Magnolia Heights School

TUNICA

Eugentavious Blue, Rosa Fort High
Claudia Gonzalez, Tunica Academy
Jamelia Mason, Rosa Fort High
Amelia Middleton, Tunica Academy

WARREN

Keanna Abraham, Vicksburg High

Skyler Anderson, Warren Central High
Jacob Arias, Porter's Chapel Academy
Hannah Ashley, Porter's Chapel Academy
Asia Brown, Warren Central High
Antonnea Cooper, Vicksburg High
Mattie Derivaux, St. Aloysius High School
Claire Jamison, St. Aloysius High School
Terry Jones, Jr., Unity Christian Academy

WASHINGTON

Xavier Bell, O'Bannon High
Ahdis Beruk, Greenville High
Courtnei Bowman, Greenville Christian School
SenTareyus Bush, Simmons High
Grace Ann Copell, Washington School
Raven Davis, Simmons High
Mikayla Dotson, St. Joseph Catholic School
Zaria Ford, Riverside High
Keynigejuan Hamilton, Leland High
Cade Lackey, Deer Creek School
Michael Mansour, St. Joseph Catholic School
Bailey Nell Nichols, Deer Creek School
Maddie Parkerson, Washington School
Nyra Thomas, Leland High
Jhacolby Williams, Greenville High
Randa Cecil Williams, Riverside High
Keystal Wright, O'Bannon High

YAZOO

Erryonna Cooper, Yazoo City High
Avery Eldridge, Benton Academy
Marinee Humphries, Yazoo County High
Kalyn Jefferson, Yazoo County High
Catie Merrrell, Benton Academy
Mason Adonis Myers, Manchester Academy
Cree Williams, Yazoo City High
Emma Ingram Woods, Yazoo Manchester Academy

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



FIERCE
HERBICIDE