



# The Delta Council Review

Vol. 14, Issue No. 1

THE NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS AND MEMBERS OF DELTA COUNCIL

May 2019

## GRENADA BECOMES 19TH COUNTY IN DELTA COUNCIL REGION

In a historical announcement recently at the Greater Grenada Partnership annual meeting, Grenada County officially became the 19th county of the Delta Council service area.

This announcement, which was the result of a unanimous bylaws change by the Delta Council Board of Directors and the business and political community of Grenada officially requesting to be part of the Delta Council service area, marks the first time that a county has been added to the Delta Council area.

"It is lost in history why Grenada County was the only part-Delta county not included in the foundation of our regional organization founded in 1935, but this step completes the work of Delta Council and all Delta and part-Delta

GRENADA *continued on page 3*



Pictured left to right are **Glenn McCullough**, Executive Director of Mississippi Development Authority; **Keith Mitchell**, Chairman of the Greater Grenada Partnership; **Woods Eastland**, Delta Council President; **Matthew Harrison**, Greater Grenada Partnership President; **Tom Gresham**, Delta Council Development Department Chairman

## HISTORIC FLOOD RENEWS PLEAS FOR COMPLETION OF THE PUMPING PLANT

The stagnant waters have very slowly begun receding for the first time in months as the residents of the Delta and our elected officials – local, state, and regional – have increased their voices that the final piece of the Yazoo Mississippi Delta federal drainage plan be implemented to alleviate the situation – the Yazoo Backwater Pumping Plant.

Throughout March, multiple information meetings were arranged in the South Delta to address the history, impacts, and solutions to the backwater flooding. **Governor Phil Bryant** and all of our federal delegation



**Governor Phil Bryant**



**Congressman Bennie Thompson**



**Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith**



**Senator Roger Wicker**

– **Congressman Bennie Thompson**, **Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith**, and **Senator Roger Wicker** – have toured the impacted area and voiced

their support for the completion of the project in meetings, Congressional hear-

BACKWATER *continued on page 8*

## Save the Date

### 2019 ANNUAL MEETING

FRIDAY, JUNE 7, 2019

BOLOGNA PERFORMING ARTS CENTER, DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY  
CLEVELAND, MISSISSIPPI

9:15 a.m.  
2019 SALUTE TO DELTA HONOR GRADUATES

10:30 a.m.  
GENERAL SESSION

12:00 p.m.  
CATFISH LUNCHEON ON THE QUADRANGLE

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## DELTA COUNCIL

### 2018–2019 Delta Council Officers

President: WOODS EASTLAND, Indianola

Vice-President: STANLEY AYRES, Leland

Vice-President: JOHN RODGERS BRASHIER, Indianola

Vice-President: PETE HUNTER, Clarksdale

Vice-President: B. JONES, Tchula

Vice-President: FLOYD MELTON III, Greenwood

Vice-President: RANSOM MYERS, Dundee

Treasurer: ANDY ANDERSON, Rolling Fork

#### POSTMASTER:

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Delta Council

P.O. Box 257, Stoneville, MS 38776

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#### CONTACT INFORMATION:

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 257, Stoneville, MS 38776

Shipping Address:

433 Stoneville Rd., Leland, MS 38756

Phone: (662) 686-3350

Web Address:

www.deltacouncil.org

Email: info@deltacouncil.org

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

BY WOODS EASTLAND



Eastland

As my term of service concludes in a month, I would like to thank our group of Officers and Presidential Directors for serving with me this year. They have been engaged, not only at our four Officers Meetings, but throughout the year on various policy discussions on a wide range of issues that Delta Council works on.

Stanley Ayres of Leland, John Rodgers Brashier of Indianola, Pete Hunter of Clarksdale, B. Jones IV of Yazoo City, Floyd Melton III of Greenwood, and Ransom Myers of Dundee have all made tremendous contributions to this organization and region. We also thank Andy Anderson of Rolling Fork, who has served a two-year term as Treasurer.

The incoming President of Delta Council has the prerogative of appointing ten men and women to the Board of Directors. The group chosen this past year is outstanding. LaShon Brooks of Itta Bena, Shannon Brown of Indianola, Clint Dunn of Itta Bena, Graham Flautt of Sumner, Hunter Fordice of Vicksburg, Lewis Poindexter of Indianola, Errick Simmons of Greenville, Will Weathers of Greenville, Sean Wessel of Cleveland, and Mike McCormick of Union Church,

have all made valuable contributions.

As I continue to be reminded by other Delta Council leaders, your service as an Officer of Delta Council is just the beginning of the ways you can impact the Delta. This group of men and women who have served this year are impressive, and while the Delta has many challenges, we are blessed with an overabundance of leadership.

Some other highlights of recent months:

\*We are proud that Grenada County officially asked to be a part of the Delta Council region, and we now have 19 Delta and part-Delta counties in our service area. It is lost to history why Grenada was not one of the initial counties that participated in the formation, but we are so pleased that this historic milestone was consummated with a unanimous change in Delta Council bylaws. Delta Council Development Department and Delta Strong Chairman Tom Gresham and I attended their annual Grenada Partnership Banquet in March to celebrate this relationship, and we look forward to working with the citizens of Grenada County as we do with all of our communities. I would be remiss if I did not single out Keith Mitchell, a Grenada native who is President of North Mississippi for Regions Bank, for leading the effort.

\*Farm Bill implementation seems to be coming along well. We are fortunate in Mississippi that we have strong State and Regional Directors of the various departments of USDA that can be big ad-

vocates for our interests – Bobby Carson as USDA-Farm Service Agency State Director, Archie Tucker as Southeast Director of USDA-Agricultural Research Service, Roddrick Bell as Regional Administrator of USDA-Risk Management Agency, Kurt Readus as State Director of USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and John Rounsaville of USDA-Rural Development.

\*The 2019 Flood, unfortunately, has been one for the record books. The man-made misery in the South Delta will be around for several more weeks, and the water has only fallen a small amount with the Mississippi River rising again and the floodwaters not being able to be evacuated. Citizens, homes, businesses, crops, wildlife, and trees are taking the full brunt of this flood. Unfortunately, it has taken this magnitude of an event – which all of us in the Delta knew was inevitable – to get federal officials to understand the significance of the EPA veto of this project more than a decade ago. We appreciate the support that the South Delta has received from the Corps of Engineers, the Levee Boards, the Mississippi River Commission, and especially our Governor Phil Bryant, and our Federal Delegation – Congressman Bennie Thompson, Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith, and Senator Roger Wicker. We hope that continued discussions among the Administration, and especially EPA and the Corps, will result in meaningful relief. You

PRESIDENT *continued on page 6*

## GUEST COLUMN | WILDLIFE RESPONSE TO FLOODING IN THE DELTA

BILL HAMRICK

Senior Extension Associate, Mississippi State University

BRONSON STRICKLAND

St. John Family Professor of Wildlife Management and Extension Wildlife Specialist, Mississippi State University



Hamrick



Strickland

For three consecutive years now, the Mississippi Delta has endured late winter and spring floods. However, 2019 flooding has been more extensive than the past two years. In addition to Mississippi River

flooding, flood waters in the Yazoo Backwater Area are at its highest levels since the backwater levees and the Steele Bayou structure were installed. With this volume of water backing up across the area, animals are on the move and highly stressed as they just try to survive. For those animals that can move ahead of the floodwaters, they will be concentrated in areas of higher ground that may cause complications and conflict.

#### HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICTS

The potential for human-wildlife conflicts resulting from a flood of this magnitude are pretty high. With over a half million acres of land currently under some amount of water, there are large numbers of displaced animals on the move in search of higher ground. As a result, the chances for wildlife-motor vehicle collisions are much greater, especially at night. Making matters worse, many road rights-of-way are some of the only available high

ground for now and there are a lot of deer, wild hogs, and other wild animals congregated along these areas. Once floodwaters recede, the potential for such encounters will continue for a while as animals return to their home ranges.

For those able to stay in their homes, take heed when leaving the house in the morning. Wildlife could seek refuge from floodwaters on porches, decks, and in yards during the night. These animals are already highly stressed and startling them or making them feel cornered can be dangerous. The same applies to returning home or stepping out after dark and entering open sheds and barns. You don't need to live in fear, but do stay alert and be a bit more careful than usual.

When returning to flood-damaged homes, carefully go room to room checking for any lingering critters. Venomous

GUEST *continued on page 3*

## PEGGY BROWNE, USDA FSA DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR FOR FIELD OPERATIONS, VISITS DELTA

State FSA Director **Bobby Carson** and **Peggy Browne**, FSA Deputy Administrator for Field Operations, were in Mississippi this Wednesday where she met with a small group of Delta Council farm leaders. “**Peggy** is responsible for the system and concept of FSA’s 2100 state and county offices,” said Delta Council Vice President **John Rodgers Brashier** of Indianola. “We thanked her for the excellent staff they have in Mississippi - from the County leaders to the State office and **State Director Bobby Carson**. That was truly evident in the way they handled the recent government shutdown.”



**Lawrence Long, John Rodgers Brashier, Peggy Browne, Paul Dees, Will Smythe, Tim Clements**

## EASTLAND TESTIFIES TO COMMISSION ON IMPORTANCE OF COMPREHENSIVE FLOOD PROTECTION FOR THE YAZOO BASIN

Delta Council President **Woods Eastland** testified before the Mississippi River Commission on the importance of continued vigilance on maintenance and construction of authorized flood protection features in the Yazoo Basin. In the midst of a crippling 2019 flood event, **Eastland** emphasized the Yazoo Backwater Pumping Plant and the Delta Headwaters/Upper Yazoo region, which both prove what can occur or be exacerbated when authorized projects are not complete and maintenance of completed works are not performed in a timely fashion. For a complete version of his testimony, visit [www.deltacouncil.org/eastland-testimony.html](http://www.deltacouncil.org/eastland-testimony.html)



**Eastland**

### GRENADA from page 1

counties,” stated Delta Council President **Woods Eastland** of Indianola. “Grenada has many positive things occurring, and we appreciate their faith in our regional program of work.”

**Eastland** specifically thanked **Keith Mitchell**, Chairman of the Greater Grenada Partnership and a Regions Bank executive, for working with Delta Council and Grenada offi-

cial and business leaders to form the partnership.

“The Greater Grenada Partnership is all about building relationships with partners that enhance our communities’ economic outcomes. What better way for us to continue that effort than join with such an esteemed organization, as Delta Council,” stated Chairman of the Greater Grenada Partnership, **Keith Mitchell**. “Delta Council has a long history of success, and we look forward

to being an asset in the future of the Delta.”

At the banquet, **Eastland** and Delta Council Development Department Chairman **Tom Gresham** both spent a few minutes addressing the packed crowd on the work of Delta Council across many different fronts and expressed their gratitude for their faith in Delta Council.

## COTTON BOARD SENDS PRODUCERS TO COTTON INCORPORATED HEADQUARTERS



The Cotton Board recently sent producers from around the Cotton Belt to visit Cotton Incorporated headquarters in the Research Triangle of North Carolina. During the trip, producers learned about the research and promotion efforts that their checkoff dollars fund. Some of the participants in the trip included, from left, **Jan and Leyden Pugh** of Lake Village, AR; **Randy**

**Crowe** of Oxford; **Kathryn and Gary Dyksterhouse** of Greenwood; Cotton Incorporated CEO **J. Berrye Worsham**; **Lee and Brittany Fairchild** of Lake Providence, LA; and Louisiana Cotton and Grain executive vice president **Bobby Skeen**.

The trip was sponsored by Bayer, John Deere, and Syngenta

### GUEST from page 2

snakes would be my first concern, but if an exterior door or window has been pushed in, there could be anything from a raccoon on top of the refrigerator to a bear on the bed. So, do use a little caution.

### HOW FLOODING MAY AFFECT WILDLIFE POPULATIONS

So, how big of an impact will this flood have on wildlife? At this point, there is no way of knowing for sure. Already there has been higher than usual motor vehicle related mortality. Due to displacement, and in some cases isolation with little to no resources, many animals are now at higher risk of predation. Drowning will be the cause of some mortality, but probably the biggest concern is the stress from being displaced and the lack of food resources. However, unless flooding is prolonged these events should not have too big of an impact. Probably the most noticeable impact on wildlife populations will be in the form of less recruitment—the addition of new individuals to the population.

Here are some general relationships to keep in mind; the smaller and less mobile the animal is, the greater the likelihood of flooding having a negative effect. For exam-

ple, think of the effects of flooding on mice and rabbits versus deer. A flood that decimates a population of small mammals will have little, if any, effect on deer. What may be more important for animals like deer and turkey is the timing and duration of flooding. Although turkeys can fly, hens nest on the ground and flood waters could prevent a successful hatch. We have found similar results with deer. Flooding during the winter and spring essentially has no impact on deer populations or deer quality, but summer flooding can decrease fawn survival.

One tiny little sliver of sunshine amongst all of this is the potential to put a good dent in the wild hog population. Taking advantage of this situation to conduct wild hog removal may be unsettling to some, but so is having to plant corn 3 to 4 times in order to get a standing crop. They also are fierce competitors with native wildlife for resources and are opportunistic predators as well.

How big an impact the flood has on wildlife remains to be seen, but we predict, at least for the large mammals like white-tailed deer, that once the waters recede animals will recolonize their home ranges with little effect when hunting season rolls around this fall.

## MS FARM BUREAU: ACCURATE BROADBAND MAPS ARE CRUCIAL



With farmers as dependent on broadband as they are on highways, railways and waterways to ship their products across the country and around the world, the Federal Communications Commission must improve its maps to more accurately reflect rural Americans' access to — or lack thereof — high-speed broadband internet, Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation President **Mike McCormick** told a Senate committee recently. **McCormick** testified on behalf of MFBF in front of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. According to the FCC, fixed broadband is available to 72% of people in Mississippi. That's the lowest percentage of availability in the nation. However, **McCormick** explained, data from Microsoft and other groups shows that only 16% of the Mississippi population use the internet at broadband speeds. Visit [www.fb.org/news/mississippi-farm-bureau-accurate-broadband-maps-are-crucial](http://www.fb.org/news/mississippi-farm-bureau-accurate-broadband-maps-are-crucial) for more details and a full copy of **McCormick's** testimony.

## TASK FORCE, USGS DISCUSS DELTA WATER RESOURCE ISSUES



Representatives of the Governor's Delta Sustainable Water Task Force met this week in Stoneville and interacted with officials and scientists of the United States Geological Survey from around the country, who were in the State learning more about USGS' ongoing research surrounding the Mississippi Alluvial Project. After the meeting, a farm tour for the visitors was canceled due to rain, but Tribbett farmer **Will Smythe** and Clarksdale farmer **Pete Hunter** gave the visitors an overview of farming and irrigation practices in the region.

## HAZLETT NAMED SENIOR ADVISER AT THE WHITE HOUSE OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY

Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) **Jim Carroll** announced **Anne Hazlett** as the office's Senior Advisor for Rural Affairs.

**Hazlett** has served as the Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development at the **Hazlett** U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) since June 2017. In her new role at ONDCP, **Hazlett** will help shape policy aimed at improving the quality of life in rural America, coordinate interagency efforts on drug control activity impacting rural communities, and build coalitions and grassroots strategies in these areas centered on prevention, treatment and recovery. "**Anne** has done a great job in her capacity as the Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development at USDA, and we know she will continue to have an impact in this new role at the White House," said **Woods Eastland**, Delta Council President.



## DAVID PETRICK HIRED AS USDA FOREST SUPERVISOR FOR MISSISSIPPI



**Sam Franklin, Petrick, Trey Cooke and Tim Huggins**

Delta Wildlife staff is shown here with **David Petrick** (pictured second from the left), who was recently hired as the USDA Forest Supervisor for the State of Mississippi. In this role, **Petrick** will manage all national forests in the State, including Delta National Forest in the South Delta.

## ALLAN GRITTMAN ELECTED AS DELTA WILDLIFE PRESIDENT

At the recent Delta Wildlife Board of Directors meeting, **Allan Grittmann** was elected as the eleventh President of Delta Wildlife since its founding in 1990.

A native of Drew and current resident of Cleveland, **Grittmann** is the owner and operator of Grittmann Farms in North Sunflower County, where he raises rice, soybeans, and corn. **Grittmann** has served on the Sunflower FSA Board, Sunflower County Farm Bureau Board, Mississippi Rice Council Board, and was appointed by **Governor Phil Bryant** to serve on the Mississippi Prison Industries Corporation Board.

"**Allan's** passion for hunting and 10-years of service on the Delta Wildlife Board of Directors position him well to lead Delta Wildlife," stated Delta Wildlife Executive Committee member, **Bowen Flowers**. "The Past Presidents of Delta Wildlife have the utmost confidence in **Allan** and are very pleased that he has agreed to serve."

**Allan** has been married to **Cindy Williams** for nearly 30 years and has two children, **Anna McClain** and **Laura Lee**. **Allan** and **Cindy** attend Covenant Presbyterian Church in Cleveland.



## HYDE-SMITH DUCK HUNTING SEASON MEASURE SIGNED INTO LAW



**President Trump** Signs Major Lands Bill, Which Includes Federal Duck Hunting Season Extension, Special Hunts for Vets, Military and Youths.

**President Trump** signed into law a major lands bill that includes **U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith's** legislation allowing states to extend duck hunting season to January 31 and to schedule special hunts for military, veterans, and youths. The Natural Resources Management Act (S.47), which passed the Senate and House with overwhelming bipartisan support, is made up of public lands, natural resources, and water bills. The duck hunting provisions are based on the Migratory Bird Framework and Hunting Opportunities for Veterans Act (S.2942), the first bill **Hyde-Smith** introduced as Mississippi's newest U.S. Senator.

## DELTA HEALTH ALLIANCE RECEIVES HRSA FUNDING FOR MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH PROGRAM



Delta Home Visiting Initiative  
Supported by Delta Health Alliance

The Health Resources and Services Administration of the US Department of Health and Human Services has awarded a five-year funding grant to Delta Health Alliance to increase maternal and infant outcomes for expectant moms and families in four rural counties through its Delta Healthy Start Collaborative. The Delta Healthy Start Collaborative, which is part of Delta Health Alliance's broader home visiting initiatives, will combat infant mortality and low birth weight babies in regions of the Delta where resources are not readily available, particularly women's health resources. The four-county service area (Leflore, Humphreys, Holmes and Yazoo) historically sees higher incidences of infant mortality, preterm and low weight births, and teen births, particularly in low-income families.

## DRA OPENS 2019 APPLICATION PERIOD FOR COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS

Delta Regional Authority (DRA) Chairman **Chris Caldwell** announced that DRA is opening the 2019 application cycle to provide investments through its available funding opportunities. DRA funding programs are tailored to address specific infrastructure improvements, help develop the Delta's workforce and local industries and enhance regional economic opportunities.

Organizations and communities can apply online at [funding.dra.gov](http://funding.dra.gov). The deadline to submit applications is May 31, and funds are available in DRA's footprint in Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee.



# AROUND DELTA FIELDS

## IRRIGATION ENGINEER DR. HENRY MEETS WITH DELTA LEADERS



Mississippi River Alluvial Aquifer and Water Resources, Research, and Education Center officials and Delta leaders met with **Dr. Chris Henry**, University of Arkansas Associate Professor and Water Management Engineer, at the invitation of Interim MSU Research Leader **Dr. Jason Krutz**, to learn more about applied irrigation engineering and what it can bring to the new Water Center.

## BLUE RIDGE FOODS BRINGING 20 NEW JOBS TO GREENWOOD

Blue Ridge Foods, a producer of high-quality meat products, is locating a beef warehouse and distribution facility in Greenwood. The project is a \$2 million corporate investment and will create 20 jobs. Blue Ridge Foods purchased a 31,000-square-foot facility in the Greenwood-Leflore Industrial Park that is currently being retrofitted to meet the company's needs. Headquartered in South Carolina, Blue Ridge Foods' Greenwood location will allow the company more efficient access to suppliers located west of the Mississippi River. Blue Ridge Foods expects to begin operations in Greenwood in September.

## WICKER RESPONDS TO FEDERAL DISASTER DECLARATION FOR MISSISSIPPI



**U.S. Senator Roger Wicker** released the following statement in response to an announcement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency that **President Donald Trump** had approved Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant's request for a federal disaster declaration in Mississippi. The disaster declaration announced today covers the severe storms, tor-

nadoes, and flooding that impacted Mississippi February 22-24, and the Yazoo Basin backwater flooding through March 29, 2019:

"I commend **President Trump**, **Governor Phil Bryant**, and the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency for their quick action to address the impact of the severe weather events our state experienced in February and March. The federal disaster declaration announced today will expedite the deployment of federal resources to Mississippi and aid recovery efforts."

## CAMPBELL AWARDED MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



The Mississippi State University Alumni Association recognizes outstanding service and dedication to MSU, professional achievement and leadership through their recognition programs. Greenville native **John Gordon Campbell** was recently recognized with the Alumni Achievement Award. Pictured with **Campbell** is **Dr. George Hopper**, Director of the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station; and **Dr. Reuben Moore**, Interim Vice President of the MSU Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine.

## PANOLA COUNTY NOW ACT WORKREADY CERTIFIED



The Panola Partnership is pleased to announce that Panola County is now a certified ACT Work Ready Community (WRC). The certification will support Panola County in economic development, industry recruitment, and bolster existing industry by linking workforce development to education and employers' needs. The county was awarded certification in March and has already earned 83% of their new Maintaining Goals and has over 1,000 WorkReady certified residents.

## DHA RECEIVES GRANT TO PURCHASE GARDEN TOOLS, SEEDS FOR SCHOOL GARDENS



Delta Health Alliance has been awarded a \$4,000 grant from Whole Kids Foundation to expand its Delta EATS (Edible Agriculture Teaching Students) education garden program for two schools - Leland Elementary garden in Leland, MS and Sanders Elementary in Hollandale, MS. Whole Kids Foundation's Garden Grant program helps schools and organizations in the US, Canada and the UK connect students to real food through edible learning gardens aimed at improving children's nutrition and wellness.

Delta EATS will use the Whole Kids Foundation grant funding to purchase garden tools, seed starting/planting materials, and items needed for its nutrition lessons at both locations, allowing more opportunities for students to gain the knowledge to make healthy food choices for themselves and their communities.



## COOPERATIVE ENERGY AND ITS MEMBERS UNVEIL A NEW ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE



Cooperative Energy, together with the 11 Member distribution cooperatives it serves, has recently taken another step toward making a difference in the lives of its member-consumers across Mississippi. The generation and transmission cooperative unveiled on April 25, 2019, its new economic development initiative, Cooperative Competes. A component of the initiative allows economic development organizations, or the recognized authority, to apply for grant funds to offset industrial property development costs. Cooperative Competes will also create educational and networking opportunities to increase the subject matter expertise of those tasked with economic development. For more information, visit [www.cooperativeenergy.com/economic-development-cooperative-competes/](http://www.cooperativeenergy.com/economic-development-cooperative-competes/).

## 2017 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE DATA NOW AVAILABLE

Data show increases in small and large farms; older farmers; and new military service and demographic information, women farmers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the results of the 2017 Census of Agriculture, spanning some 6.4 million new points of information about America's farms and ranches and those who operate them, including new data about on-farm decision making, down to the county level. Information collected by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) directly from farmers and ranchers tells us both farm numbers and land in farms have ongoing small percentage declines since the last Census in 2012. At the same time, there continues to be more of the larger and smaller operations and fewer middle-sized farms. The average age of all farmers and ranchers continues to rise.

Results are available in many online formats including video presentations, a new data query interface, maps, and traditional data tables. All information is available at [www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus](http://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus).

## WASHINGTON CO. 1ST IN U.S. TO PARTICIPATE IN MAINTENANCE TIER



The Washington County Economic Alliance (WCEA) is pleased to announce that Washington County has met all the criteria to reach the third maintenance tier to retain their ACT Work Ready Community certification. Washington County is the first participating county in the United States to achieve third tier certification.

"ACT congratulates Washington County, Mississippi, first in the nation to achieve the third tier Work Ready Communities certification," **Fred McConnel**, Director of Work Ready Communities at ACT. "The leadership team in Washington County is a model for the nation to leverage the Work Ready Communities framework in the alignment of training and capture of growth opportunities for new and existing employers."

In early 2019, Washington County was one of 39 participating counties to reach the second tier certification. In 2017, the WCEA became the second certified ACT Work Ready Community in Mississippi.

## MEMBER FOCUS | HUNTER FORDICE



### BUSINESS OR OCCUPATION:

**Hunter Fordice** represents the third generation of owners of Fordice Construction Company, along with his brother **Dan K. Fordice, III**, which was founded by their grandfather in 1948. **Hunter** was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army Corps of Engineers (Reserve) in May of 1982, and served for six years with the 412th Engineer Command in Vicksburg, MS. He retired in October 1988 with the rank of Captain. In 2001, **Hunter** and his wife **Sallie** purchased Valley Park Plantation, LLC in Issaquena County, where they currently farm soybeans and milo. In 2007, **Hunter** and **Dan** purchased a dredge and started another construction company, Southern Delta Construction, LLC, where **Fordice** has served as Vice President since its inception.

### HOMETOWN:

**Fordice** was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and moved to Vicksburg, Mississippi when he was just 2 months old. He graduated from the University of Mississippi in 1982 with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration. But, more importantly, during his time in Oxford, MS, **Hunter** met the love of his life, **Sallie Read**, and they were married in 1984. Today they reside in Vicksburg, MS, where they have raised four daughters.

### AFFILIATIONS:

Over the years, **Hunter** has been heavily involved in the Construction Industry, as well as his local community, and has served on the Boards of numerous organizations as follows;

- BancorpSouth Advisory Board (Vicksburg, MS)
- Bear Education and Restoration Group of Mississippi (B.E.a.R. Group)
- Black Bear Conservation Coalition
- Crawford Street United Methodist Church Board of Trustees (Chairman)
- Delta Council Board of Directors (Presidential Appointee)
- Mississippi State Board of Contractors (Vice-Chairman)

- Mississippi Road Builders Association (Vice-President)
- Mississippi Valley Branch, Associated General Contractors of America
- Rotary Club of Vicksburg, MS (past President & Board member)
- Vicksburg Tallulah Regional Airport
- Vicksburg Chamber of Commerce
- Vicksburg Warren Economic Development Foundation
- Warren County Forestry Association (past President & Board member)

**Hunter's** hobbies and interests include hunting, fishing, & playing tennis.

### WHAT DO OTHERS SAY ABOUT HUNTER:

"**Hunter Fordice** has been and continues to be recognized by his peers for his character, work ethic, and balance between family, business and civic responsibilities. He has an entrepreneurial business drive, which has led him into an expanded construction business as well as farming," said **Delta Council President Woods Eastland**. "From this experience he has a clear understanding of the positives of the Delta, as well as its problems."

## DELTAN ON THE MOVE | THOMAS MILLS



### PERSONAL INFORMATION:

**Thomas** was born and raised in Greenville. He graduated from Millsaps College in 2016 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics. After graduating, **Thomas** began working as the Grower Relations Coordinator for the Mississippi Poultry Association. In December of 2016, he was offered the opportunity to move to Washington, D.C. to work for **Congressman Trent Kelly**, where he spent two years working on a multitude of issues but focused on the **Congressman's** work as a member of the House Agriculture Committee and the House Small Business Committee. **Thomas** enjoyed working on the 2018 Farm Bill to make sure Mississippi's agricultural interests were recognized and included

during Farm Bill negotiations. Outside of work, he enjoys exploring Washington, D.C. with his fiancé, **Laurel**, and his dog, **Winston**.

### CURRENT JOB TITLE & RESPONSIBILITIES:

In January of 2019, **Thomas** was appointed as the Deputy Director for Agricultural Outreach in the Office of the Administrator at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). He helps to execute the priorities of **President Trump** and **Administrator Wheeler** while communicating the concerns of agriculture across the Nation. Most of **Thomas's** time at work is spent understanding the issues farmers across the Nation face and educating them on programs that can benefit them. He works closely with EPA's program offices to ensure that agriculture has a voice in the decisions that are made at the agency, while also reaching out and recognizing new stakeholders.

### WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB:

"It is an honor to have the opportunity to serve in the **Trump Administration**. My favorite part about my job is helping farmers and ranchers navigate

the complex policies of the EPA and working toward the greater good of farming. For me, I believe I am opening the doors of the EPA to our nation's farmers and ranchers that have not been opened in several years. As a kid, I remember riding my bike through the fields of Greenville, fascinated with the planting process each year. Today, I get to assist our nation's farmers and ranchers grow the food, fiber, and fuel our nation needs. However, my mind always brings me back to the Delta and ways to positively affect the agricultural community of Mississippi."

### WHAT DO OTHERS SAY ABOUT CAMPBELL:

"As a native of the Delta, we are proud of how much **Thomas** has accomplished in his short time in Washington," said Delta Council Advisory Research Committee Chairman **Bubba Simmons** of Arcola. "As Congressman **Trent Kelly's** point person on agriculture, he was an impact player in the House during the 2018 Farm Bill. In his new role with the Environmental Protection Agency, **Thomas** can continue to play a critical role at the intersection of conservation, agriculture, and public policy."

## PRESIDENT from page 2

can rest assured that Delta Council has been, and will continue to be, fully engaged in efforts to lift up this man-made disaster.

\* On February 12-16, anywhere from 9 to 13 inches of rain fell across the entirety of the Yazoo Basin, and we saw some of the worst flooding that has ever been experienced between the flood control reservoirs and the Yazoo-Tallahatchie-Coldwater system. During the event, the water coming from the Hill portion of the Yazoo Basin pushed a combined 320,000 cfs of water into the 4 Reservoir Lakes. Because the Corps had been following the rule curve, there was storage in the lakes that allowed them to discharge a combined 35,000 cfs into the Yazoo River system at Greenwood. That means that the reservoirs reduced the peak flow by about 90%! Otherwise, everything in the Yazoo River Basin would have been historically flooded. This is why we con-

tinue to emphasize the importance of following the rule curve. Delta Council will also be part of discussions with appropriate federal and state agencies about how this event underscored some severely strained maintenance features in the Hillside area of the region, and it will be important to document how those structures could be improved to prevent future flood damage.

\*We hope you will join us for our June 7 Annual Meeting at the Bologna Performing Arts Center on the campus of Delta State University. We will be announcing our speaker shortly and it is someone that we feel will resonate with our Delta audience. I would be remiss if I did not thank our sponsors – BankPlus, Sanders, Catfish Farmers of Mississippi, Southern Ag Credit, Mississippi Land Bank, Mississippi Corn Promotion Board, Cotton Incorporated, Mississippi Rice Promotion Board, Delta State University, and Mississippi Soybean Promotion Board.

## CATFISH FARMERS OF AMERICA



Arkansas Catfish Farmer of the Year **Rosemary Baxter** with husband, **Jeff**, from Watson, Ark and Mississippi Catfish Farmer of the Year **Ben Pentecost** and wife, **Vicki**, from Doddsville.



New CFA officers (L to R) **Townsend Kyser**, Chairman; **Robert "Shorty" Jones**, President; **Andy Prosser**, Vice-President **Brad Graham**, Secretary and **Austin Jones**, Treasurer, not pictured.

# PHOTOS



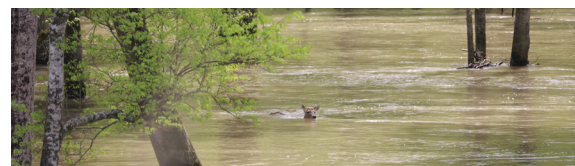
USDA-ARS and their partners, Forest Service, Delta Council, Delta Health Alliance and the Delta Research and Extension Center celebrated notable contributions and achievements of African Americans at the 42nd Annual African American History Program in February at the Charles W. Capps Entrepreneurial Center in Stoneville. The Keynote Speaker was [Senator Derrick T. Simmons](#) of Greenville. [Dr. Mark Keenum](#), President of Mississippi State University, also participated in the program.



Delta Council officers recently met to learn more about Mississippi infrastructure from Central District Commissioner for MDOT, [Dick Hall](#), among other topics.

Delta Council Past Presidents meet for the nominating of officers for 2019-2020

## 2019 YAZOO BACKWATER FLOODING



# Delta Council

433 Stoneville Rd  
P.O. Box 257  
Stoneville, MS 38776

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## BACKWATER *from page 1*

ings, press announcements and letters to Administration officials. In addition to those efforts, citizens throughout the South Delta gathered in a packed Valley Park venue as they gave **Congressman Thompson** and representatives of **Senators Cindy Hyde-Smith** and **Roger Wicker** a packet of over 6,500 signatures to encourage the EPA to reconsider its 2008 veto of the pumping plant.

“Since the water began rising across fields and roads, and into homes and businesses throughout the 5-county area of the South Delta, the voices of the residents have been heard by our local and State leaders. We are truly grateful for the continued advocacy of **Senators Cindy Hyde-Smith** and **Roger Wicker**, **Congressman Bennie Thompson** and **Governor Phil Bryant**, and their dedication to pursuing the only solution for this man-made catastrophe – the pumps,” said **Delta Council President Woods Eastland**.

As of May 1, the elevation of the Backwater is still hovering close to 96 feet, and there is expected to be very little, if any, evacuation of floodwaters since the Mississippi River is expected to make a slow rise and stay level for at least the next 30 days.

The height of the flood was at 97.2 feet on April 1, the highest level ever recorded in history since the completion of all of the other features – backwater levee, auxiliary channel, and gates. Over a half million acres of homes, trees and cropland were flooded, and today, more than 400,000 acres are still inundated.

“This year’s flood is a case study on why the Yazoo Backwater



**Flooded home on Floweree Road, south of Valley Park**

Pumping Plant was the final and most important feature of the plan to protect life and property in the South Delta,” said **David Wansley**, Chairman of Delta Council’s Flood Protection Committee and an agri-businessman from Valley Park.

“Without the pumping plant in place, floodwaters will continue to devastate the South Delta region. This is our ninth separate flood event

since 2008 that has cost more than \$400 million in that timeframe alone. This year’s flood has inundated more than 500,000 acres of land in six counties and cost even more money and wreaked misery on the people that live and do business in our region.”

The Environmental Protection Agency vetoed the Pumping Plant in 2008 in a clandestine fashion, and Congressional action in 2018 which would have mandated the Corps of Engineers to build the pumping plant despite the Administrative veto, failed on the last evening of Congressional negotiations.

“We thank our Congressional Delegation and appreciate their efforts to continue to get the Environmental Protection Agency to rescind their misguided 2008 veto of the project and/or work to achieve Congressional direction to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to immediately begin constructing the final piece of the authorized Yazoo Basin and Mississippi River and Tributaries plans,” said Holly Bluff farmer **John Phillips**, Vice Chairman of Delta Council’s Flood Protection Committee. “Without this final piece in place, the United States government has effectively abandoned an entire region of the country and will continue to make us vulnerable to flooding in the coming years.”

“We are pleased that other areas of the Yazoo Basin and the Lower Mississippi Valley have received the full benefits of the plan, but we hope Congress and the Administration will make it a top priority to finish their work – the construction of a pumping plant like dozens of others throughout the Lower Mississippi Valley that were authorized and built by the Corps of Engineers.”

For up-to-date news and photos from the backwater area, follow the flood on Facebook and Instagram at Forgotten Backwater Flood.

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



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