

Delta Council Praises USDA Officials: Catfish Purchase

In response to the escalating crisis facing the U.S. farm-raised catfish industry, USDA Under Secretary of Agriculture, Mark Keenum, announced that the Agricultural Marketing Service would acquire \$5 million worth of farm-raised catfish to channel into the school lunch programs across the United States.

"USDA has purchased farm-raised catfish for their Section 32 programs (school lunch programs) when the catfish industry was experi-

encing depressed conditions in the past, but there is no time in the past when a purchase such as this has been more vital to the survival of this industry," stated Lester Myers, Chairman of the Delta Council Aquaculture Committee.

USDA officials emphasized that the recently-announced plans to purchase catfish for the school lunch programs could possibly be the first of several successive purchases in the coming months. In addition to

purchases for the school lunch programs, USDA has the authority to make purchases for food banks which distribute meals to underserved populations across the United States on a routine basis.

"We are going to continue to work with USDA to obtain more purchases for a variety of different catfish products because we believe that there is huge potential for some of our products to be the best fit for their needs, while at the same time propping up the

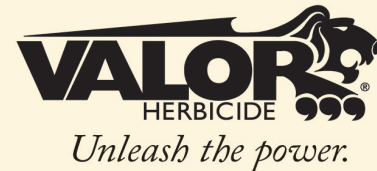
bleak outlook for this industry which was founded in the

Mississippi Delta," added Myers.



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THE NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS AND MEMBERS OF DELTA COUNCIL

October 2008

Altig to Keynote Midyear Delta Council Meeting

The 74th Midyear Board of Directors meeting of Delta Council will be held on Thursday, November 6, at the Stoneville Campus beginning at 9:00 a.m. David Altig, senior vice president and director of research at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, will deliver the keynote address at the noon luncheon, addressing key issues facing the U.S. and world economy. Delta Council will also highlight important policy issues being worked on by the area-wide organization, such as transportation improvements,



David Altig

economic development, workforce training, Delta health issues, flood protection and national farm policy.

"We are excited that Dr. David Altig, who is recognized as one of the most insightful macro-economists in the United States, will address our directors and guests," stated

John Phillips of Yazoo City, the current President of the regional organization. "With all of the financial turmoil that is affecting everyone from the smallest communities in the Delta to citizens all over the world, his speech to the Delta Council Midyear Board meeting should

be well received."

Dr. Altig also serves as an adjunct professor of economics in the graduate school of business at the University of Chicago and the Chinese Executive MBA program sponsored by the University of Minnesota and Lingnan College of Sun Yat-Sen University. Prior to joining the Atlanta Fed, Dr. Altig served as vice president and associate director of research at the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. Dr. Altig's research is widely published and primarily focused on monetary and fiscal policy issues. His articles have appeared in a variety of journals and he is the main author in one of the internet's most visited sites concerning economics, <http://macroblog.typepad.com/>.

Dr. Altig was born in Springfield, Ill., on Aug. 10, 1956. He graduated from the University of Iowa with a bachelor's degree in business administration. He earned his master's and doctoral degrees in economics from Brown University.

Six committees of Delta Council related to highways, flood control, educational and health policy, soil and water resources, economic development and farm policy, will begin concurrent sessions at 9:00 a.m. on November 6, and bring policy proposals to the full

Board at 11:00 a.m. Also, there will be recognition of the accomplishment of Delta F.A.R.M., a conservation stewardship organization that began less than ten years ago, in signing up over one million acres of Mississippi Delta agricultural land that has helped farmers and landowners implement environmental stewardship practices.

Cellular South has joined with Delta Council in the 74th Midyear Board of Directors Meeting in order to serve as the sponsor of the event.



For a full schedule of events,
please see page 4

Delta F.A.R.M. Celebrates 1 Million Acres

Delta F.A.R.M. (Farmers Advocating Resource Management) was founded in October of 1998 to help farmers become better environmental stewards and address regional natural resource concerns.

Today, Delta F.A.R.M. has



become the region's preeminent natural resource conservation organization and is preparing to celebrate 10 years of service and the enrollment of one million acres. At 9:00 a.m. on November 6th, a

formal announcement will be made at Vanlandingham Farms north of Leland to acknowledge the achievements of Delta F.A.R.M. and to commemorate the site of its one millionth acre.

After enrolling his farm into the Delta F.A.R.M. program, George Vanlandingham said, "It makes perfect sense for me and my son to participate in a

F.A.R.M. continued on page 4



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Message from the President



**John Phillips, President
 Delta Council**

I first want to encourage Delta Council directors and committee members to be certain to mark your calendars for November 6, when we will have 6 committee meetings and a directors' session between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. at the Capps Center in Stoneville.

More than any other single

message that I want to leave with readers of this newsletter, is that we owe a great debt of gratitude to those individual volunteers who serve as committee chairmen, committee vice chairmen, membership chairmen, and directors throughout the Delta. I have been astounded at the number of hours and the miles traveled by these people in order to advance the interests of issues affecting our entire region. Without any reservation whatsoever, I believe every person who has ever served as President of Delta Council can attest to the fact that there is not one working day that goes by that Delta Council is not confronted with another regional issue, and that makes sense because more than any other area of any state in the Nation, the Mississippi Delta is regional.

In preparation for the Midyear Board of Directors Meeting, I would like to stress some of the important policy issues which will be advanced by the committee chairmen, and emphasize that committee members attend the

briefings. The actions of Delta Council throughout the year hinge on the policies and priorities which evolve from these issue briefings. Among the priorities which will be addressed, are:

- the sustainability of improved health care access through the work of Delta Health Alliance, which is led by Mississippi Valley State University, University Medical Center, Mississippi State University and Delta State University.
- the expansion of the role of the Mississippi Delta Developers Association, a consortium and partnership of the economic development foundations throughout the Delta Council area, combined with utility companies and the Mississippi Development Authority.
- oppose further restrictions on farm program eligibility.
- plans for the next priorities in four-lane highway construction for the Delta.
- striking a water balance in terms of water use, water

PRESIDENT continued on page 7

Flood Control 404



**Jim Wanamaker
 Retired Chief Engineer,
 MS Levee Board**

As a levee commissioner from Humphreys County, Drue Lundy used to remind his constituents upstream, "I don't mind you sending us your water, but we don't want a deed to it." We can never lose sight of this statement. A project is not completed until downstream impacts are addressed completely, and the Yazoo Backwater Pumping Plant is the last unconstructed feature of a comprehensive flood control project to protect the Mississippi Delta.

In February, EPA vetoed the project and started transferring a water deed to the residents of the South. As EPA moved forward with this process, the Levee Board raised the issue that the Clean

Water Act exempted Congressionally authorized projects from the provisions of the Act.

Senators Cochran and Wicker requested a review of this provision by the Congressional Research Service. This resulted in a confirmation that if the Corps submitted the EIS to Congress, the project is exempt from the provisions of the Act. EPA has virtually ignored this fact and at the same time ignored Governor Barbour's request to delay the process and let an Intergovernmental Task Force work to find a compromise. In August, EPA signed the Final Determination vetoing this project.

WANAMAKER continued on page 7

Delta Council Applauds MDOT for Progress on Hwy 8 Four-Laning

Delta Council Highway and Transportation leaders applauded the efforts of the Mississippi Department of Transportation for their continued progress on four-laning Highway 8 between U.S. 61 in Cleveland U.S. 49 W in Ruleville.

"Highway 8 is a major east-west artery in the Delta that is important not only for the residents who live and commute in that area, but also for the students and staff of Delta State University who utilize that road," said Delta Council Highway Committee Chairman Tom Gresham of Indianola. "We appreciate the

work that MDOT has done to get the project to the point that contracts can begin in this calendar year which will allow for a timely completion of the project."

Currently, Highway 8 is scheduled to award a contract in January 2009, for grade, drain and bridge activities. This would allow a paving contract to be let by 2011.

MDOT District Three Engineer Kevin Magee said the project to add two-lanes will be constructed to minimize as much as possible the disruptions for current travelers on the highway.

PRESIDENT cont. from page 2
 conservation, and groundwater recharge.

• promote the development of a Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area aimed at building upon regional emphasis toward cultural and heritage tourism.

• encourage Congress to initiate emergency steps to reverse the loss of jobs and economic activity in the U.S. farm-raised catfish industry by extending disaster feed assistance,
 • and numerous other priorities of the committees on water resources, flood control,

WANAMAKER cont. from page 2

I would like to briefly explain what EPA said in their veto message and how it will impact the entire Delta in the future, if this veto is allowed to stand.

Veto message: "EPA does not believe the potential impacts of the Yazoo Backwater Area Project can be adequately mitigated to reduce impacts to an acceptable level." The Corps used the same methods to evaluate impacts and to compensate for these impacts that were used

on every other flood control project. They even used a more comprehensive method to evaluate wetland impacts. **Result:** If measured by the same standards as all other projects in the Delta, the project requires reforestation of 10,662 acres of agricultural land. However, the plan offered by the Levee Board included reforestation 55,600 acres. This is almost 5 times the acres required using previous procedures. **Still not acceptable!**

Veto message: "EPA does not believe the impacts of this

Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Rates

Commodity	Unit	Direct Payment (\$/Unit)	Max CCP (\$/Unit)	Projected '08 CCP* (\$/Unit)	Feb '09 Advance CCP* (\$/Unit)
Corn	Bushel	0.28	0.40	0.00	0.00
Grain sorghum	Bushel	0.35	0.27	0.00	0.00
Rice	Cwt	2.35	1.65	0.00	0.00
Soybeans	Bushel	0.44	0.36	0.00	0.00
Upland cotton	Pound	0.0667	0.1258	0.0808	0.03232
Wheat	Bushel	0.52	0.65	0.00	0.00

* Projected '08 CCPs based on USDA's projected prices. Final rate will depend on market-year average price for Aug '08 through Jul '09.

Schedule of Payments for 2008 & 2009:

October, 2008 -- final direct payment for '08 crop
 October, 2008 -- final CCP for '07 crop cotton, corn, grain sorghum and soybeans
 December, 2008 -- 22% advance direct payment for '09 crop (Availability dependent on timing of publication of farm bill regulations)
 February, 2009 -- advance CCP (up to 40% of projected CCP for '08 crop. (Availability dependent on timing of publication of farm bill regulations)
 February, 2009 -- final CCP for '07 crop rice
 July, 2009 -- final CCP (100% of actual payment) for '08 crop wheat
 October, 2009 -- 78% final direct payment for '09 crop
 October, 2009 -- final CCP for '08 crop cotton, corn, grain sorghum and soybeans

farm policy, education and health policy, economic development, and transportation.

Farm Policy

For farmers and allied agricultural businesses which rely on farming, Delta Council has been deeply concerned

about efforts advanced within USDA to further restrict farm program eligibility by re-defining actively engaged. Delta Council, along with the National Cotton Council and the U.S. Rice Producers Association, has voiced opposition to USDA efforts to extend further restrictions that

could potentially affect siblings, and other family members' participation in the farming operation. We look forward to seeing you at the November 6, board of directors meeting in Stoneville and we welcome committee members and guests to join us.

magnitude are consistent with current law." (Note: these wetlands are not lost, only wet for less frequency and duration of flooding). Every acre of wetlands will still flood every other year, just not for 14 consecutive days in the growing season. **EPA has set a new bar for all current and future projects.**

Veto message: "EPA is committed to participating in discussions with other federal and state agencies, and the public, concerning the best way to provide flood protection while protecting

wetlands and other natural resources." For 9½ years EPA has said they are willing to work to find a *practical alternative and a functional solution* for providing flood protection to the South Delta. **The only alternative indicated in the veto message or in communications with our congressional delegation is the veto.**

This is only a brief review of the many implications of this veto. If allowed to stand, every future and ongoing flood control project is a target for any frivolous or

environmentally expedient organization which opposes Corps' projects, Soil and Water Conservation Districts Projects or local water districts drainage projects.

I cannot thank Senators Cochran and Wicker enough for their long standing support for Delta flood control. Also, let's not forget Drue Lundy's proverb and remember that we do not have to endure a flood to act responsibly when it comes to Delta flood protection.

News from The Peabody to Catfish Row

Mississippi Public Safety Commissioner Stephen Simpson has picked former state **Sen. Neely Carlton** to be his chief of staff.



Since 2004, Carlton, a lawyer, has served as a counsel to Gov. Haley Barbour and as a legislative liaison to his administration. In 1995, Carlton, then 25, became the youngest person ever elected to the state Senate

when she was elected as a Democrat to represent Bolivar, Sharkey and Washington counties. She is a native of Greenville.

Delta Council Vice President **Gibb Steele** was recently selected as the 2008 Mississippi winner of the Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year award. Steele joined nine other



Steele

state winners from the Southeast as finalists for the award on October 14 at the Sunbelt Ag Expo farm show in Moultrie, Ga.

Johnny Pitts, who was formerly director of field services for The Cotton Board, recently was named Mid-South field representative with T.J. Beall and Company. Johnny will



Pitts

continue to live in Merigold.

Cade King, a native of Inverness and formerly Legislative Director for Congressman Chip Pickering, has been named the Legislative Director to Congresswoman Judy Biggert of Illinois.

Hugh Jack Stubbs recently retired as County Administrator in Coahoma County.



King



Stubbs



Vassel

Daniel Vassel, a native of Clarksdale and formerly an employee at Delta Council, has been named as the interim County Administrator.

Ag Pilots Target Conservation in Mississippi

In order to address growing environmental issues and develop a more sustainable industry, all facets of the U.S. Ag Industry have become better environmental stewards. In Mississippi, Ag aviators are at the center of the most recent efforts to make the industry a central part of the broader Delta environmental stewardship efforts.

The A.C.E. Pilot Program (Applicators Conserving the Environment) was developed by the Mississippi Glyphosate Stewardship Working Group to reward the best pilots and incentivize others. Collectively, the group includes CropLife America, Delta Council, Delta F.A.R.M., Mississippi Agricultural Aviation Association, Mississippi Ag Industry Council,

Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Monsanto, Southern Crop Protection Association, Syngenta, USDA Agricultural Research Service and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

“Ag pilots are highly regulated, but many pilots take additional, voluntary steps to ensure that they have no environmental impact,” stated Glenn Holloway of Holloway Air Service in Drew, Miss. Holloway continued, “This new program will afford us the opportunity to recognize and praise the best pilots among us for efforts to protect our natural resources.”

All licensed aerial applica-



tors in Mississippi who are current members of the Mississippi Agricultural Aviation Association (MAAA) and have no proven drift violations within the past 24 months are eligible to participate in the program. Each participant will complete a questionnaire that will be used to rank a pilot's

experience, track record, and voluntary environmental stewardship practices. Top scores will be validated by the Mississippi Glyphosate Stewardship Working Group. Winners will rank among the top 5% of all eligible participants and will be announced at the annual Mississippi Agricultural Aviation Associ-

ation meeting in January. Winners will receive signage for their place of business, optional graphics for their planes, a plaque and a significant cash award. Program sponsors include CropLife America, Delta F.A.R.M., Monsanto, Syngenta and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

DHA and DSU, School of Nursing Improving Access to Nursing Care in the Delta

Recruitment, Education and Retention Program Training More Nurses Serving the Mississippi Delta's Medically Underserved Populations

From the heart of the Mississippi Delta, the Delta Health Alliance and Delta State University have been working to improve career opportunities for our citizens while making a real impact in improving access to quality healthcare in the Delta.

The Delta Health Alliance is a partnership of four state-funded universities, Delta Council, three primary healthcare organizations, the Mississippi Department of Health, the Mississippi Primary Health Care Association and the Mississippi Hospital Association, united by a mission to support and maintain collaborative projects that can make real and sustainable improvements to access of healthcare services

in the region.

The Delta Health Alliance partnered with Delta State University's School of Nursing in 2006 to support and expand nursing recruitment activities, to provide preparatory education for pre-nursing students, to build new classroom space and a new clinical skills lab, and to encourage graduating students to remain in the region and pursue local career options.

Through the dedication of staff and excellent community-based programs, Delta State University's, School of Nursing enrollment has grown 300 percent since the program began. The School currently has its largest class ever with a total enrollment of 165 in spring 2008. The number of

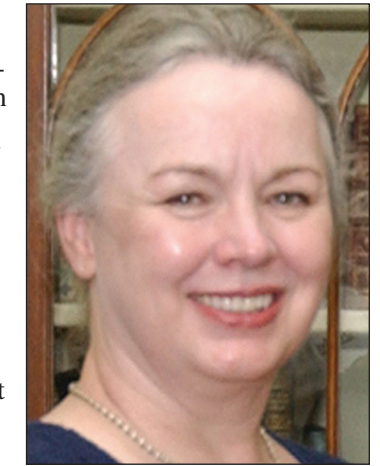
promising students interested in the program is also rising, with an increase of 59 percent of qualified applicants since 2007.

And while applications are up, **the retention rate for Nursing Students has also risen, going from 50 percent in 2006 when the grant program started to 80 percent in 2008.** However, the best news is that 80 percent of the BSN nursing class that graduated in May 2007 have signed contracts to remain in the region and practice nursing in the eighteen counties of the Mississippi Delta.

“The impact of this innovative workforce development program on our communities is clear. DSU's

School of Nursing took a comprehensive approach to improving all aspects of its recruitment and training program and has seen remarkable changes in just two short years.

Because of this program, the Delta will be served by more highly skilled nurses who have been critical to providing timely and cost-effective care for our region,” said Dr. Karen Fox, CEO of



Dr. Libby Carlson, Dean DSU School of Nursing

the Delta Health Alliance.

“We are delighted with these results,” said Dr. Libby Carlson, Dean of the DSU School of Nursing. “We could not have achieved these increases in student nurse admissions and retention without the programs put into place as a result of the Delta Health

Alliance's deep commitment to improving healthcare in the Mississippi Delta and HRSA funding.”

Oliver Picked 6th MVSU President

In a unanimous decision, the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) announced in a press conference on October 22 that Dr. Donna Oliver, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Edward Waters College in Jacksonville, Florida, will serve as the 6th President of Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU). The announcement was made following day-long interviews with various campus and community constituency groups at

Mississippi Valley State University, during which those participants had the opportunity to evaluate Dr. Oliver.

“Dr. Oliver is an outstanding choice for President,” said MVSU Board Search Committee Chair Dr. Bettye Neely. “I am confident that her leadership will allow Mississippi Valley to reach even greater heights.”

With a distinguished 30-year career in education, Dr. Donna Oliver has served as a K-12 public school biology and chemistry teacher, a col-

lege professor, and a K-16 administrator. She began her studies at Elon College, where she completed her undergraduate degree in biology and education. After teaching five years at the high school level, Dr. Oliver earned a master's of education degree in biology and curriculum and instruction, followed by a Ph.D. in curriculum and teaching, both from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Dr. Oliver will begin her service at Mississippi Valley in early January, 2009.



Dr. Donna Oliver dons a Mississippi Valley State University hat Tuesday after being named the school's sixth president. Watching Oliver, from left, are College Board members Amy Whitten and Bettye Neely; Moses Newsome, chair of the MVSU search advisory committee; and her husband, James Oliver. Courtesy of Greenwood Commonwealth.



Cellular South will be conducting a seminar before the Midyear Board of Directors meeting on November 6th called "Mobile IQ" for Delta Council Board members and guests who would like to learn more about how to use their PDAs (Personal Digital Assistant).

The seminar will begin at 8:30 a.m. in the training room of the Capps Center in Stoneville and conclude by 9 a.m. so you can attend the committee meeting of your choice.

F.A.R.M. cont. from page 1

program that helps landowners practice better husbandry on their property and the natural resources that we all depend on." He continued by saying, "We are pleased to be the farm to put Delta F.A.R.M. over the one million acre mark."

"Delta F.A.R.M. helps farmers assess their current stewardship level and teaches them how to improve by adding and expanding conservation practices on the farm," commented Homer Wilkes, State Conservationist for the USDA-NRCS in Mississippi. "The voluntary efforts of Delta F.A.R.M.'s membership and improvements made by these farmers are a testament to the ability of Mississippi farmers to meet environmental and natural resource challenges."

In addition to advising producers on sound and economically feasible conservation practices for the farm, Delta F.A.R.M. has also begun to implement projects in several watersheds in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta

region. "Delta F.A.R.M.'s efforts in the Bee Lake, Steele Bayou, and Wolf Lake watersheds have proven that the farmers of the Delta are very capable of addressing water quality concerns through voluntary approaches," stated Trudy Fisher, Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.

Delta F.A.R.M. Chairman, Mike Sturdivant, Jr. of Glendora, Miss., and former Chairman, W. A. Percy, II of Greenville, Miss., will moderate the announcement on November 6th. Speakers slated to attend include Lt. Governor Phil Bryant and EPA Region 4 Administrator Jimmy Palmer. After the formal announcement and comments by podium guests, a commissioned work of art painted by acclaimed artist Matthew Hasty will be presented to Delta F.A.R.M. by Syngenta to commemorate the event.

To learn more about Delta F.A.R.M. and its One Million Acre Celebration, visit www.deltafarm.net.

Itinerary Delta Council Midyear Board of Directors Meeting Thursday, November 6, 2008 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Charles W. Capps Entrepreneurial Center Stoneville, MS

John Phillips, Presiding

8:30 a.m. Coffee and Visiting

CellularSouth "Mobile IQ" Seminar
How to Use Your PDA

9:00-10:30 a.m. Concurrent Sessions: Delta Council Committee Meetings

Joint Meeting: Capps Room A
Flood Control Committee/Soil and Water Resources Committee
Al Rankins, Chairman, Flood Control Committee
Bowen Flowers, Chairman, Soil and Water Resources Committee

Joint Meeting: Capps Room B
Farm Policy Committee/Highway Improvement and Transportation Committee
Dan Branton, Chairman, Farm Policy Committee
Ken Murphree, Vice Chairman, Highway Improvement and Transportation Committee

Joint Meeting: B. F. Smith Administration Building Auditorium
Education and Health Policy Committee/Development Department
Dr. Cass Pennington, Co-Chairman, Education and Health Policy Committee
Tom Gresham, Chairman, Development Department

10:30-11:00 a.m. Coffee Break

11:00-12:00 noon General Business Session
Charles W. Capps Entrepreneurial Center Auditorium

**Presentation of Resolutions
Bill Kennedy, Chairman
Executive Committee**

**Delta F.A.R.M.: Environmental Stewardship for Land and Water in the Delta
Mike Sturdivant, Jr., President**

12:00 noon Luncheon

Invocation: Reverend Cecil Rhodes
Leland United Methodist Church

National Anthem: Madison Roberts, Yazoo City
Delta State University



Cellular South: Sponsors Message

Keynote Speaker:
Dr. David Altig, Sr. Vice President and Director of Research
Federal Reserve Bank, Atlanta



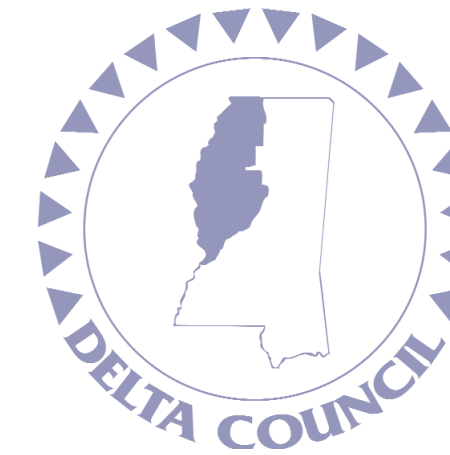
1st District Congressman Travis Childers (left) visited Stoneville to talk to the Farm Policy Committee recently. After the meeting, the Congressman visited with Delta Council Past President Bobby Carson (center) of Marks and Delta Council President John Phillips of Holly Bluff (right).



Mitzi Woods of the Delta Workforce Investment Area, Judson Thigpen of the Cleveland-Bolivar Chamber of Commerce, Sue Stidham of the Montgomery Economic Development Partnership, and Angela Curry of Greenwood-Leflore-Carroll Industrial Foundation listen to a workforce presentation at a meeting of the Mississippi Delta Developers Association.



Austin Jones (center) explains the status of the catfish business to West Higginbotham, legislative director for agriculture for U.S. Senator Thad Cochran.



Carver Randle of Indianola, Archie Tucker of Stoneville, and Mike Sturdivant of Glendora, at a recent meeting with staff members of the Institutions of Higher Learning concerning university funding formulas.



State Superintendent Hank Bounds meets with the Delta Early Learning Leadership Initiative members—business leaders from Delta Council and economic development professionals from the region—to discuss early childhood education efforts.



Dr. Antoinette A. Betschart, the Associate Administrator of USDA-ARS, was recently in Stoneville to speak about the role of the USDA Office of Technology Transfer in moving technologies from scientific research to the marketplace and to partner with businesses, state and local governments and universities. The meeting was hosted by USDA-ARS, Delta Council, Mississippi State University, and the Mississippi Technology Alliance.