

~~Strikethrough~~ print represents text which has been deleted.

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SOUTH DELTA FLOODING

The Flood Control Act of 1941 authorized flood protection for the South Delta. Flooding in this area is caused by high stages on the Mississippi River at the confluence of the Yazoo River, causing the Steele Bayou drainage structure to be closed, trapping rainfall from a 4,093 square mile area that encompasses all or parts of 10 counties (Bolivar, Coahoma, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Washington, and Yazoo).

The federal policy decision of the 1930's to close the Eudora Floodway in Arkansas (on the west bank of the Mississippi River across from Rosedale), so that it would not accept Mississippi River floodwaters, and the less-than-projected flood reduction benefits produced by the Mississippi River cutoffs (reducing the length of the river by approximately 200 miles), resulted in adding the equivalent of 8-10 feet to the flood elevation of the Mississippi River at the junction of the Yazoo River and Steele Bayou outlet. These two changes in the original 1928 flood projections increase the crest elevation of the Mississippi River at Vicksburg and causes the South Delta (Steele Bayou) floodgates to close more often and for longer durations, thus rendering the area more susceptible to flooding.

After the backwater levees were completed in 1978, the floods of 1979, 1983, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1995, and 1997 occurred when the Mississippi River reached high stages and consequently, the outlets for Steele Bayou and the Sunflower River were closed for long periods in order to prevent Mississippi River backwaters from entering the South Delta. As a result of the completion of the Yazoo backwater levee, and the floodgates on Steele Bayou and the Little Sunflower River, Mississippi River backwater could not physically claim losses during these years. However, the interior rainfall from 4,093 square miles in 10 Delta and part-Delta counties including points as far north as Clarksdale, could not be evacuated from the South Delta. Flood

impacts to the South Delta were registered in direct proportion to rainfall over the interior of the Delta combined with the length of time the South Delta floodgates were closed due to Mississippi River high water at the Steele Bayou outlet. The South Delta narrowly escaped floods of major significance in 1994, 1997, 1998, and 2002 due to less-than-average rainfall over the 10-county watershed of the Sunflower River and Steele Bayou basin, while floodgates were closed.

Delta Council supports the alternative proposed by the Mississippi Levee Board for reducing South Delta flooding, which includes the recommended pump and a reforestation proposal that targets reforestation of more than 50,000 acres of cropland. Such a plan would substantially reduce the crest, duration, and frequency of South Delta flooding of property and homes, while at the same time establishing a total reforested acreage to a size equivalent to the combined area encompassed by Hillside, Yazoo, Morgan Brake, Mahannah, Twin Oaks, and Leroy Percy Wildlife Managements Areas. With regard to mitigation and/or the purchase of easements to satisfy environmental objectives, Delta Council urges that all purchases be accomplished through “willing seller” provisions.

Delta Council praises the responsible actions and diligent work by members of the Mississippi Congressional Delegation on behalf of property and homeowners whose economy and quality of life affected by these floods. Delta Council especially recognizes the work of U.S. Senator Thad Cochran, *former* Senator Trent Lott, *U.S. Senator Roger Wicker* and Congressman Bennie Thompson to make certain that the South Delta Project is treated similar to other previously-authorized flood control projects throughout the Lower Mississippi River Valley in terms of the federal responsibility.

Delta Council calls upon the Congress to join the Mississippi Levee Board in challenging the validity and legal jurisdiction of the Environmental Protection Agency to extend and apply an agency veto to the Yazoo Backwater Pump Project.

