



2003

**DELTA COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT**

Message from the *President*

Bryan Jones, *President*



It has been my pleasure to serve as the President of Delta Council for 2002-03 and I hope that this report will serve as a barometer for some of the many positive developments that occurred in the Mississippi Delta over the past year. As a banker and a farmer whose livelihood depends on the current and future well-being of this region, I can attest to the members and friends of Delta Council that this organization is working diligently every day to enhance and expand the Delta's opportunities.

Whether it be farm policy or agricultural conservation, economic development or highway development, adult literacy or workforce training, Delta Council is not content

to leave the task of charting our region's future to those who are further removed from the challenges we face, and therefore not able to make the same level of decisions as those of us who live and work here. The strength of Delta Council is the ability of a diverse and varied citizenry joined together for a single-minded purpose; to make this region we call home a better place to live.

Bryan Jones -
Yazoo City

Delta Council Officers - 2002



Clark Carter -
Vice President
Rolling Fork



Brad Cobb -
Vice President
Tunica



James Killebrew -
Vice President
Tchula



Jon Levingston -
Vice President
Clarksdale



Lester Newman -
Vice President
Itta Bena



Joe Oglesby -
Vice President
Morehead



Fred Miller -
Treasurer
Anguilla



Al Rankins -
Chairman, Dev. Dept.
Greenville

Delta Council *Overview*

In the past year, Delta Council served as host for literally hundreds of meetings with thousands of Delta citizens to keenly focus on the priorities and challenges of Northwest Mississippi.

With few exceptions, these meetings were all part of an enduring legacy that the far-sighted founders of Delta Council in 1935 envisioned – the Delta Council committee system. Originally set up the three challenges upon which the organization was founded to meet – agriculture, flood control and drainage, and transportation improvements – the committee system of Delta Council has grown as the organization reaches out to meet the priorities and challenges that face the Delta region today and in the future.

The Delta Council office is located in Stoneville, Mississippi, where we began in 1935. The organization is supported and financed by dues-paying members and the counties that it represents. The Board of Directors is elected by a referendum vote of the members representing the counties and cities of the area and officers, including a President, Vice Presidents, and a Treasurer, are nominated and ratified by the Board of Directors.

We hope that when your membership information arrives in your mail that you will give careful consideration to the committees that you would like to be a part of in the coming year. It is through this unique system of citizen involvement that Delta Council has played and will continue to play an effective role in shaping a brighter future for Northwest Mississippi.



Committees & Chairmen

Advisory Research

Dan Branton, Chairman - Leland

Aquaculture

Austin Jones, Chairman - Moorhead

Educational Policy

Dr. Cass Pennington, Chairman - Indianola

Farm Policy

Bobby Carson, Chairman - Lambert

Flood Control

Tom Gary, Jr., Chairman - Greenwood

Forestry and Wildlife Resources

Burk Burkhardt, Chairman - Vicksburg

Ginning

Bill Kennedy, Chairman - Inverness

Highway Improvement

Ken Murphree, Chairman - Tunica

Rice and Small Grains

Travis Satterfield, Chairman - Benoit

Soil and Water Resources

Chat Phillips, Chairman - Yazoo City

Soybean, Wheat, and Feed Grains

Jim Robertson, Chairman - Inverness

Arrangements Committee

Sherry Smythe, Chairman - Leland

Development Department

Al Rankins, Chairman - Greenville

Delta Council

Transportation

The foundation for some of the most exciting developments in the Mississippi Delta's history continues to be laid every day throughout all corners of Northwest Mississippi through the enhancement of our region's transportation infrastructure.

At no time in the Delta's history has this much activity been underway at one time, and it portends great things for the region and the State of Mississippi.

The on-going construction of the new four-lane U.S. Highway 82 Bridge over the Mississippi River south of Greenville will dramatically increase the development of more East Coast-to-West Coast commerce when it is completed in 2006.

Over the past year, a number of public hearings and planning meetings have been held to advance the Interstate 69 project, which will traverse DeSoto, Tunica, Coahoma, and Bolivar Counties as it makes its way from Canada to Mexico. Dubbed the "NAFTA Highway", this mid-continent corridor will serve as the foundation for economic development that has not been possible in our region to date. With the committed support of our Congressional delegation to place I-69 as a "highest priority corridor" in the coming re-authorization of the federal transportation bill and the fact that Mississippi leads the nation in construction and planning activity on the route, Interstate 69 will be a reality for the region!

Not to be forgotten is the huge impact which the 1987 AHEAD Four-Lane Program is having on the State and region. As this initiative, with strong and sustained involvement from Delta Council, concludes its final years, the Mississippi Delta will be enjoying one of the top highway networks in the United States as every citizen in the state and region will have a four-lane highway within a thirty-minute drive of their home.

In addition, the Mississippi Legislature passed the Vision 21 Highway Program in 2002 with strong support and input from Delta Council that includes the "immediate" priorities of four-laning MS 6 from Clarksdale to Batesville, U.S. 61 from Vicksburg to Leland, and MS 7 from Greenwood to Grenada.



Delta Council

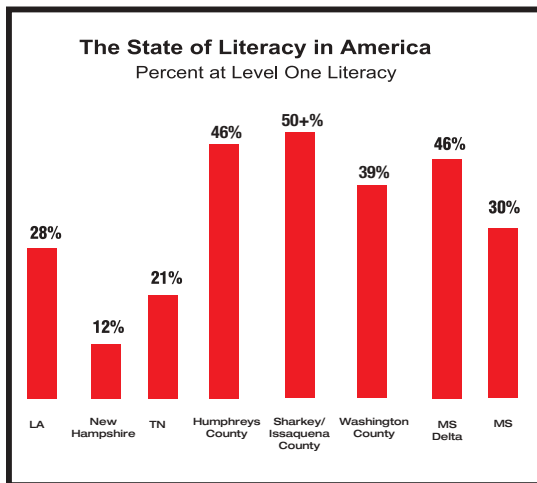
Literacy & Education

Ensuring a Brighter Future

At the 67th Annual Meeting of Delta Council only about a year ago, outgoing President Ben Lamensdorf of Cary exhorted the attendees that the most important thing they could do was to ensure that their neighbors, friends, and fellow citizens could read.

His remarks and continuing commitment set in motion the establishment of a pilot program in Yazoo County that had an immediate impact on jump-starting the reading abilities of adult participants living in the Mississippi Delta. Based on this success, Delta Council has committed to expand the program to other counties in the Delta.

The Delta Council Adult Literacy Program focuses on an accelerated, short-term experience that achieves success and increases self-esteem quickly. The program, which is led by noted Jackson educator Dr. Connie Schimmel, utilizes a proven model for continuing education which is delivered without attempting to re-engineer lifestyles or routine.



Delta Area Association for Improvement of Schools, and Delta Council, is already being recognized for both positive long-term and short-term progress in education that is accountable, measurable, and attainable.

To date, more than a million dollars of scholarship money has been awarded to 56 students who agreed to obtain their teaching degree from Delta State University and then spend four years teaching in a Mississippi Delta school. Already, this program has had a measurable impact on the teaching shortage we face in the region and the State of Mississippi.

In addition to the scholarships, the Delta Education Initiative is affording administrators and advanced teachers opportunities for continuing education and obtaining advanced degrees in return for staying at the sponsoring school district for several years.

The future of the Delta region, in terms of quality of life and economic development, rests on the education of our citizens. Delta Council is working to ensure that this future will be a bright one.



Bill Ray

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**68th Delta Council
Annual Meeting**
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Secretary of the Treas.

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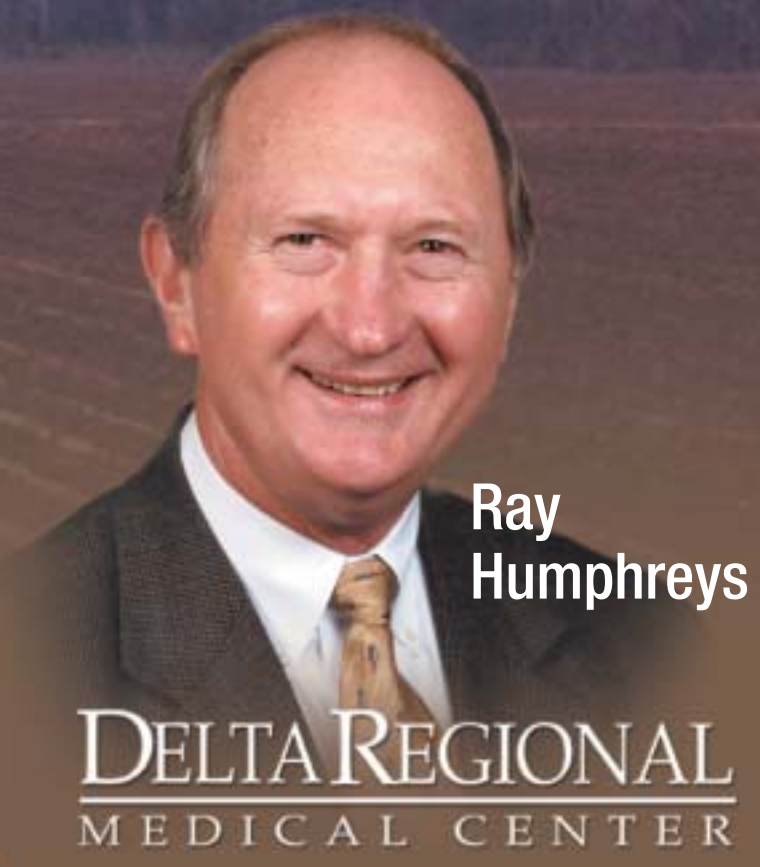


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Economics

Growing the Delta's Economy

The Development Department of Delta Council



The dramatic decline in manufacturing that has struck all areas of the United States and Mississippi has not spared the Mississippi Delta.

The Delta Council Economic and Community Development Department, forty-five years strong, is redoubling its efforts to continue the focus on regional coordination of economic development efforts. The Department is working with local, state, and federal agencies to reverse the trends of manufacturing downturn by promoting the attraction of quality jobs and increased investment in the Mississippi Delta region.



Delta Council focuses its regional economic development strategy in three critical ways; service to existing industries and business so that they may grow jobs and investments in the region; recruitment of new industries, businesses, jobs, and capital to the region; and service to communities, counties, and other public bodies so that they may possess the strongest tools available to further their economic advancement.



The organization, working in partnership with the Mississippi Delta Developers Association, kicked off a new marketing strategy to take advantage of the region's strengths in promoting ourselves to companies and capital investment. There are a multitude of unique programs available only to the Delta region, such as the Growth and Prosperity Act (GAP), Empowerment Zone, Renewal Community Zone, and the Delta Regional Authority, that are used to increase capital investment and attract high-quality jobs. Coupled with existing state and federal programs, administered through our partners such as the Mississippi Development Authority and USDA Rural Development Administration, the Mississippi Delta is well-positioned to capitalize on the economic turnaround that forecasters believe will begin in 2003 and 2004.



The future of the Mississippi Delta region's success at job creation and retention is predicated on a strong, available, and trained workforce. In response to this requirement, Delta Council has worked with private companies, legislative leaders, and our community colleges to coordinate the planning and completion of the Capps Center for Manufacturing Technology to provide a place where the needs of business and industry can be reconciled with the goal of employing Delta citizens in all levels of workplace skills.

Delta Council

Agriculture

Agriculture remains the most important economic sector in Northwest Mississippi. The farm economy in both the Mississippi Delta and across the country has been reeling since the “Asian flu” of 1998 and the subsequent downturn in all areas of the world economy.

It was during 2002, as agriculture’s balance sheet was splotted with red, that Congress passed new farm legislation that shows signs of stabilizing both the short-term and long-range situation. Previous farm legislation did not adequately respond to the drastic market price swings over the past seven years and did not have any reasonable accommodations for the impact that a strong U.S. dollar has had in overseas markets.

The new farm legislation, which was crafted behind a strong show of support from Mississippi congressional leaders, led by U.S. Senator Thad Cochran, appears to hold greater capacity to respond to these complex economic situations and maintain a reliable, economical, and sustainable agricultural sector.

With the ink barely dry on the new farm legislation, the farm law has come under serious attack from Midwestern Senators who want to limit the eligibility for producers of high-input Southern crops. Unfortunately for the Mississippi Delta, those high-input crops are our primary commodities of cotton and rice. Although several attempts by these Midwestern Senators have failed, Delta Council views this as one of its biggest challenges during the continued life of the six-year 2002 Farm Bill.

As with row crop agriculture, the catfish industry in the Mississippi Delta won some important battles in 2002 that we hope will begin stabilizing this industry. After facing a couple of years of low pond-bank prices primarily due to the invasion of an imposter fish from Vietnam in the American marketplace, the industry and Southern Congressmen were able to ensure that the Vietnamese fish, which is not even in the same taxonomic family, could not be labeled as a “catfish.”

Additional rulings by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission confirmed that Vietnam was “dumping” fish on the United States markets and further bolstered the industry’s efforts to recapture market share lost by the imposter fish species.



Delta Council

Delta F.A.R.M. & Delta Wildlife

The past year was quite successful for Delta F.A.R.M. (Farmers Advocating Resource Management) and Delta Wildlife. Both organizations spent a great deal of time working with Delta Council and the USDA on the Conservation Title of the 2002 Farm Bill. After the bill was passed, Delta F.A.R.M. and Delta Wildlife continued to work with the USDA to further develop programs and inform their memberships of new programs and changes to existing programs.

In 2002, Delta F.A.R.M. enrolled its 600,000th acre. Meeting this goal helped to solidify the organization as it now represents more than 20% of all the cropland acres in the region. Throughout the year, Delta F.A.R.M. continued to document voluntary conservation efforts of production farmers in the region and provided technical assistance to its members.

Delta Wildlife continued to implement and augment all existing habitat enhancement programs in 2002. A significant addition was made to these field programs with the Quail and Grassland Songbird Habitat Restoration Project begun in the spring. The project was quickly praised by both wildlife and water quality agencies. In only the first year, 70 species of birds utilized the project area and more than 2,300 tons of sediment was stopped from reaching the Sunflower River.

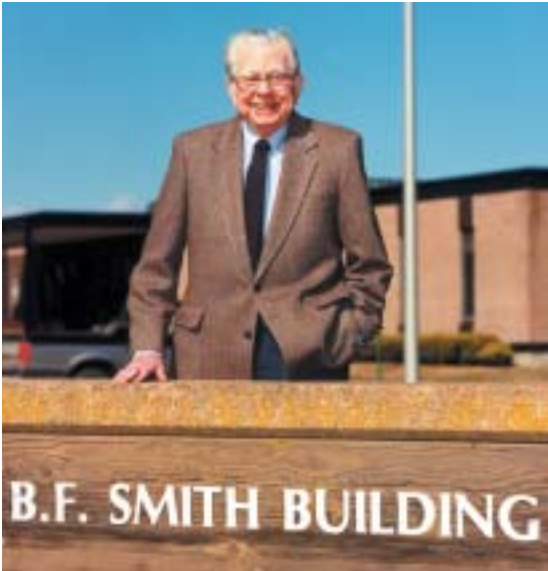
The Delta Wildlife Quail Project is the largest private land quail habitat restoration effort to be implemented in Mississippi. "Bobwhite quail populations in the Delta will surely benefit from the project, along with other species like grassland songbirds and small mammals," noted Dave Godwin, Small Game Coordinator, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Park.



Tribute

B.F. Smith

1918-2003



“As the son of a dedicated leader of the Mississippi Delta and the cotton industry, it has been my unique experience to witness what total dedication can accomplish. My father, the recently deceased B. F. Smith, was truly dedicated, never thinking of personal needs, but focusing instead on the needs of the area he served.

Many honors preserve his memory... buildings, bronze plaques, university chairs, to name a few, all commemorate his 33 years of service to northwest Mississippi.

But more meaningful memorials to his life's work include the vastly improved farm-to-market road system, new four-lane highways linking the Delta with important trade centers, crucially needed drainage and flood control projects on the Yazoo-Mississippi River basin, or the region's transformation from one-crop monoculture into diversified farming that last year produced more than 70 percent of Mississippi's agricultural row-crop products.

While B. F. Smith did not accomplish these things single-handedly, his vision, leadership, and ingenuity were critical in bringing them to full fruition. I can confidently say that of all the contributions my father made to rural northwest Mississippi, by far the most important was his singular ability to organize top business professionals and agricultural leadership into an active and cohesive group that continues to work effectively to

Written by Jimmy Smith

*The wise old owl
sat in a tree.
The less he said,
the more he could see.
The more he saw,
the more he heard.
Why can't we be like that
wise old bird?*

*B.F. Smith, et.al.
(1918-2003)*



Annual Meeting Sponsors



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2003 Delta Council
Annual Meeting

May 9th, 2003

Delta State University • Cleveland, Mississippi

Keynote Speaker: John W. Snow - U.S. Secretary of the Treasury