



The Delta Council Review

Vol. 13, Issue No. 1

THE NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS AND MEMBERS OF DELTA COUNCIL

May 2017

Secretary Sonny Perdue to Keynote 82nd Annual Meeting of Delta Council June 9th

Delta Council President **Harry Simmons**, of Yazoo City, announced today that **U.S. Secretary of Agriculture George Ervin "Sonny" Perdue** will be the Featured Guest and Keynote Speaker for the 82nd Annual Meeting of Delta Council to be held on the Delta State University Campus at 10:30 am, Friday, June 9, 2017, at the Bologna Performing Arts Center in Cleveland.

"We are so pleased that agriculture's friend from Georgia, **Sonny Perdue**, will be the featured speaker for this year's Delta Council Annual Meeting," said **Simmons**, an aquaculture and row crop farmer and catfish processor. "**Secretary Perdue** has an impressive background as an agribusiness man and two-term successful Governor of Georgia, and we look forward to the opportunity to meet with him and hear his thoughts on the future of America's agricultural industry."



Ag Secretary Designee **Sonny Perdue** is pictured in a recent meeting with U.S. Senator **Thad Cochran** of Mississippi.

Perdue, a native of Perry, Georgia, earned a doctorate in veterinary medicine from the University of Georgia. While still in school, **Perdue** volunteered to serve his country in the U.S. Air

Force, receiving an honorable discharge in 1974 with the rank of captain. Following a brief tenure as a practicing veterinarian, **Perdue** started two businesses from the ground up, concentrating in agribusiness and transportation.

His public service began in the 1980s when he served on the Houston County Planning and Zoning Board. He then successfully ran for the state senate, becoming majority leader in just four years, followed by his election as president pro tempore.

In January 2003, **Perdue** was elected to serve as Georgia's governor and he won reelection by an overwhelming margin in November 2006. As governor, **Perdue** focused on improving education, providing better access to health care, creating quality jobs for Georgians, and increasing resources for stronger, safer communities. He was appointed by **President Trump** to

PERDUE continued on page 3

2017 Omnibus Bill Benefits Mississippi Delta

U.S. Senator Thad Cochran, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, today announced provisions in the FY2017 omnibus appropriations bill of benefit to the Mississippi Delta, including new funding to help protect the region from flooding.

Cochran was instrumental in writing the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (HR.244), which is legislation to complete the 11 remaining appropriations bills. The Senate approved the measure on a 79-18 vote, clearing the way for it to be signed into law.

"The completion of the 2017 appropriations process is good for the American people. It will allow funding to be directed to current challenges and priorities for the country. This bipartisan agreement makes program rescissions and consolidations that permitted us to direct resources to areas of

greater need, including national defense and infrastructure," **Cochran** said.

Of importance to the Mississippi Delta, the bill contains funding to improve flood control, port operations, agriculture research, and programs to help improve education and health care.

"I'm pleased the omnibus bill directs funding to the Delta for projects to protect lives, promote economic activity, advance agriculture, and address healthcare needs," **Cochran** said.

Notably, the FY2017 omnibus includes \$95.1 million for flood control projects in the Yazoo basin, an area covering more than 4,000 square miles, and other tributary basins which were either underfunded or not included in **President Obama's** last budget request. The Corps of Engineers can utilize

this funding on the Delta Headwaters, Upper Yazoo, Big Sunflower River, and Yazoo Backwater Area projects.

The omnibus funding for the Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works Program builds on the disaster relief funding **Cochran** helped secure in December to address flood damage in Mississippi and other states in the Lower Mississippi River Delta.

Overall, the FY2017 omnibus appropriations measure provides significant additional funding for national defense and border enhancement. It also contains more than 150 rescissions of funding, program terminations or program consolidations across the federal government, totaling more than \$11.427 billion.

BILL continued on page 3

Save the Date

2017 ANNUAL MEETING
FRIDAY, JUNE 9, 2017
Bologna Performing Arts Center, Delta State University

9:00 a.m.
DELTA 1000 EVENT

9:00 a.m.
2017 SALUTE TO DELTA HONOR GRADUATES

10:30 a.m.
GENERAL SESSION

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



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Message from the President

We hope that all of you who receive this newsletter will mark your calendars for the **June 9, Annual Meeting of Delta Council at Delta State University**. I am extremely pleased that **Agriculture Secretary Sonny**



Simmons

Perdue has accepted our invitation to serve as the Keynote Speaker for the 82nd Annual Meeting, which begins at 9:00 a.m. that Friday morning when the Delta Honor Graduates from public, private, and parochial schools gather so that we can celebrate "Under the Tent" at the Bologna Performing Arts Center. Concurrent with the Delta Honor Graduate event, a special event session will be held with Delta 1000 members and special guests in the McPherson Room inside the Bologna Performing Arts Center.

In the coming days, the City and County Directors who were elected to serve on the Delta Council Board will receive Committee policy recommendations related to State and local road and bridge repairs, flood protection, farm policy, higher education funding, and a wide range of other regional and State-wide issues which are important to the Delta Council area. Directors will be asked to indicate any

modifications they wish to offer to Delta Council policies electronically or by mail. Modifications have been recommended by Delta Council Committees of jurisdiction over the various issues covered in resolutions and all Directors and members of Delta Council will have access to these policy recommendations at the Delta Council website online.

As we approach the latter stages of our term as Officers in Delta Council, I want to thank the good friends I have made who serve as Vice Presidents and Treasurer. The Vice Presidents and Treasurer of Delta Council who will join me as platform guests on June 9, are: **Bill Battle of Tunica; Cindy Baird of Indianola; Mark Hargett of Boyle; Reese Pillow of Greenwood; Jim Thomas of Cruger; Hue Townsend of Belzoni; and, Clay McWilliams of Cleveland is finishing his second year of his 2-year term as Treasurer.**

Although our Mississippi fiscal year, beginning on July 1, is going to be a quite challenging year for State agencies, our Universities and Community College system, and all other essential functions of State government, I am pleased to report that the March and April revenues of State government have out-paced earlier revenue projections and actually appear to be trending toward what might be termed as economic recovery in our State. Every businessman in this region is better off when State revenues and economic growth are able to support an adequate level of public services that all

of us are accustomed to expect.

As I turn the Office of President over to another individual who will have the opportunity to advance the many missions of this organization, I would be remiss if I did not conclude my message to the membership with a special note of appreciation to the Committee Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of Delta Council who are really the change-agents of how Delta Council maintains the reputation for consensus-building and strong leadership when faced with relatively serious decisions on policies that have economic consequences. The men and women who lead the Committees of Delta Council are extremely astute and well-informed in their subject areas, and whether we are facing the task of trying to obtain cottonseed policy as a modification to current U.S. farm policy, or obtain adequate funding to address the deteriorating condition of our road and bridge system in Mississippi, the people who lead the respective Committees of Delta Council are recognized and respected leaders in their fields.

I look forward to seeing each of you on June 9, at the 82nd Annual Meeting of Delta Council and as I have repeated in previous editions of this publication, I invite any member of Delta Council to call me at any time if you have suggestions or recommendations that need to be brought to my attention or that of any of our standing Committees.

CHAT PHILLIPS

Chairman, Commission on Environmental Quality

The shallow, prolific Mississippi River Valley Alluvial Aquifer (MRVA) is the lifeblood of Delta agriculture. Unlike the irrigation aquifers in some other agricultural



Phillips

regions of the United States and the world, it is rechargeable. As the world's population grows and the demand for agricultural products continues to increase, the Delta can be positioned for its greatest period of prosperity—if we make changes and manage our water resources more responsibly.

Under Mississippi law, all water resources belong to the people of the state, not to individual landowners or farm operators. The first principle set forth in the law is that the state's water resources are to "be put to beneficial use to the fullest extent of which they are capable." However, the law also mandates conservation and prevention of "the waste or unreasonable use" of water.

Since the mid-1980s, the number of Delta groundwater wells has increased from about 3,000 to over 19,000. As a result, pumping has

Water Conservation

exceeded nature's capacity to recharge the aquifer, resulting in significant water level declines in areas of the Delta. In 2011, MDEQ established the Delta Sustainable Water Resources Task Force to obtain input from Delta Council, Delta F.A.R.M., Farm Bureau, the Soil and Water Conservation Commission, YMD Water Management District, the Corps of Engineers, and NRCS-USDA on how to address the problem. The Task Force has identified water conservation as the highest near term priority.

Farm-scale research conducted over multiple growing seasons by scientists at the Mississippi State University Delta Research and Extension Center has shown that irrigation efficiency practices can reduce water use on furrow-irrigated soybeans and corn by more than 40%. These savings are possible with no reductions in yield and reduced operating costs. Conservation practices have also been shown to reduce irrigation water use on other crops and in aquaculture and wildlife management. NRCS cost share financial assistance is available for implementation of most of these practices.

Since 2011, all new and renewed groundwater well permits have required permit holders to implement conservation practices. Some of the permits issued in 2011 have now expired and the permit holders have applied

for permit renewals. Most of the applicants have verified compliance with the conservation practice requirements in their original permits. Some, however, have not.

The requirement for conservation practices was included in the permits because they are needed to address the declines in MRVA water levels; in addition, the law mandates conservation and prohibits waste of water. Widespread adoption of computerized hole selection, moisture sensors, and surge valves are essential on land-formed fields if the Delta is going to solve its water supply problem and protect its economic future.

It is important that permit holders understand permit terms and provide the appropriate verification. Under state law, MDEQ and the Mississippi Commission on Environmental Quality have the authority and responsibility to enforce compliance with permit conditions. Over the next few months MDEQ will initiate conservation compliance efforts. These efforts will be directed towards those permittees who have not verified installation of their previously indicated conservation practices. The vast majority of permit holders have met and verified the required level of conservation practices. In fairness to them, their neighbors should do the same. Not only is water conservation the law, it is the right thing to do for the future of the Delta.

Emmerich Editors Share an Exchange with Delta Council

With newsprint outlets in five Delta counties, to Emmerich Publishing's Delta lead **Tim Kalich** of the *Greenwood Commonwealth* arranged a first-ever agency whereby Delta Council leaders and the editors of not newsprint outlets in Yazoo City, Greenwood, Greenville, Indianola, and Clarksdale, brought their views and input to Delta Council on a variety of important regional issues.

"As an organization, we carefully monitor the regional issues that evolve from the local business and agriculture community throughout our counties, but clearly, there is no way to get a better insight into the gravity of the most important issues in the region than meeting with local newspaper editors," commented **Harry Simmons**, the Yazoo County President of

Delta Council. "We look forward to repeating this same process with the balance of other important newsprint and electronic media outlets," added **Simmons**, the Yazoo County farm and business leader.

Newsprint officials from the Emmerich family of editors focused on a wide range of current Delta issues including failing road and bridge infrastructure on our State highway system; job recruitment efforts and workforce training challenges; and numerous other local and regional issues.

"The attitudes, insights, and interest in all of the subjects we discussed were encouraging, and as we expected, individually and collectively, they offered Delta Council valuable suggestions on how this organization might have a greater impact on address-

ing the topics we discussed," added **Simmons**.

Delta business leaders in attendance at the two-hour session concluded that Delta Council should take steps to reach out to other newsprint outlets throughout the region in order to engage in similar exchanges that would serve to expand the level of input from these opinion-shapers in all of our Delta counties. Also, it was recommended that we meet with regional media outlets at least annually.



Wyatt Emmerich, Delta Council President **Harry Simmons**, Indianola *Enterprise-Tocsin* publisher **Charlie Smith**, **Bowen Flowers**, **Walton Gresham** and **Hue Townsend** join regional newspaper editors from the Emmerich group at Delta Council to exchange input on a range of Delta issues.

to **PERDUE** from page 1

be the 31st Secretary of Agriculture and confirmed in late May by the United States Senate.

In addition to the Keynote by **Secretary Perdue**, Delta Council will honor more than 140 high school seniors as Delta Honor Graduates with the ceremony beginning at 9:00 a.m., located 'under the tent' next to

BILL from page 1

The following are a few of the provisions within the FY2017 appropriations bill of interest to the Mississippi Delta:

Mississippi River Valley Alluvial Aquifer – The bill also provides research funding through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Geological Service (USGS) to address declining water conditions in the Mississippi Delta, a situation that important to the long-term vitality of agriculture in Mississippi.

• \$3 million in Agricultural Research Service (ARS) funding to establish a Water Research Center at the ARS Jamie Whitten Delta States Research Center in Stoneville, for research to improve the recharge capabilities of the Alluvial Aquifer and to develop new conservation and irrigation techniques to reduce water usage in agriculture production

• \$1.5 million in ARS funding for research initiatives at the ARS National Sedimentation Laboratory in Oxford to increase the recharge capacity of the Mississippi River Valley Alluvial Aquifer

• \$2 million in additional funding for the USGS Water Availability and Use Science program to conduct groundwater resource studies in the Mississippi River Alluvial Plain in order to better understand the declining aquifer conditions in the Mississippi Delta MS Delta, which is important to the long-term viability of Mississippi agriculture.

Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Project – \$362 million for the MR&T project, \$17 million above FY2016 and \$140 million above President Obama's FY2017 budget request. (*This funding is in addition to \$290.7 million for MR&T in the continuing resolution enacted in December. Cochran worked to secure that disaster relief funding for the Army Corps of Engineers to address emergency repair work caused by Mississippi River flooding in January 2016.*)

Navigation and Channel Improvements – \$103.2 million for construction, operation and maintenance of improvements to the Mississippi River channel to facilitate the flow of commerce and use of our inland waterways

Mississippi River Levee Flood Protection – \$31.3 million for Mississippi River levee maintenance and improvements which provides flood protection to the 36,000 square-mile Lower Mississippi River Val-

ley. the Bologna Performing Arts Center. Dignitaries will welcome the Honor Graduates, their families, and school officials, to the Annual Meeting of Delta Council and present them with engraved certificates recognizing them as 2017 Honor Graduates. The top Honor Graduate will be selected by higher education officials and be presented a \$2,500 scholarship during the 10:30 a.m. business session.

"The Delta Honor Graduate event is designed to

ley.

Additional Funding for Flood Control – \$95.1 million, not included in the budget request, for flood control projects in the Yazoo basin and other tributary basins which were either underfunded or not included in President Obama's budget request for Delta Headwaters, Upper Yazoo, Big Sunflower River and Yazoo Backwater Area projects.

Additional Funding for Other Authorized Corps Activities – \$41 million, not requested in the budget request, for the Corps to perform various authorized Corps functions, such as operating and maintaining the Jesse Brent Lower Mississippi River Museum in Vicksburg, and allowing the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks to manage 14,910 acres of Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) at Lake George, Muscadine and Sky Lake.

Additional Funding for Dredging – \$3.9 million, not in the budget request, for dredging operations at MR&T ports (Greenville and Vicksburg) which were underfunded in President Obama's budget request.

Army Corps of Engineers – Port and Harbor Maintenance – Within \$70 million for 29 authorized Army Corps projects in Mississippi, \$8.4 million is provided for dredging and navigation maintenance of seven Mississippi ports: Biloxi, Gulfport, Pascagoula, Greenville, Claiborne County (Port Gibson), Rosedale, and Vicksburg.

Shallow-Draft Harbors and Channels – \$49 million, not included in the budget request, for the Army Corps to allocate additional funding for dredging of shallow draft ports and channels (Rosedale Harbor, Claiborne County Port, and Mouth of Yazoo River in Vicksburg).

Lakes – \$24.8 million for operation and maintenance activities on five lakes: Arkabutla, Enid, Grenada, Sardis, and Okatibbee.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – \$150 million, not included in the budget request, for Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations to assist federal, state and local partnerships plan and implement watershed projects to reduce flood, sedimentation and erosion damage in rural communities. These funds move toward addressing Mississippi's \$45 million backlog, and also be available to assist with the construction of structural flood control measures in the Mississippi Delta.

Catfish – The agreement includes USDA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provisions to support

raise the level of awareness of parents, teachers, and our local communities of the importance of bringing these bright young minds back to the Delta after they have completed their formal and advanced education," stated **Cass Pennington** of Indianola, who serves as Chairman of the Delta Council Education and Health Policy Committee.

The tradition of a fried catfish luncheon will conclude the program for the 82nd annual event on the

the U.S. catfish industry, which has significant presence in Mississippi.

• Language directing USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) to re-inspect all imported catfish and catfish products imported into the United States upon the day of enactment, and for FSIS to complete foreign country equivalency determinations of countries wishing to continue exporting catfish to the United States within 180 days after the date of final implementation (Sept. 1, 2017).

• \$1.6 million increase for the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to combat wildlife depredation to domestic catfish operations and related production aquaculture.

• \$3.37 million for the issuance of migratory bird management permits and language that 1) directs the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to expedite its environmental review process to authorize the take of double-crested cormorants negatively impacting catfish and other aquaculture operations; and 2) directing USFWS to issue individual depredation permits to producers while the environmental review is ongoing.

USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) – In addition to funding research on cotton ginning, forest product, and poultry, the bill rejects the Obama administration recommendation to terminate \$15.1 million for terminating ARS-sponsored researched conducted at the Jamie Whitten Delta States Research Center in Stoneville, Mississippi State University, and the University of Mississippi.

Environmental Infrastructure – \$55 million for the Army Corps to provide design and construction assistance for water and wastewater treatment facilities nationwide. The Corps could utilize \$15.5 million in funds to initiate 11 projects in Mississippi involving sewer system, wastewater treatment and water supply improvements.

Delta Regional Authority – \$25 million for the Delta Regional Authority (DRA), which is \$9 million above President Obama's budget request, and language directing DRA to allocated not less than \$10 million of the available funds towards flood control, basic public infrastructure and transportation improvements.

Essential Air Service (EAS) – \$150 million for EAS, which provides subsidies to air carriers serving small communities. Four Mississippi airports currently participate in the program: Greenville, Hattiesburg/Laurel, Meridian, and Tupelo. The

grounds of the Quadrangle on the Delta State University Campus.

Sponsors for the 82nd Annual Meeting include: BankPlus, Catfish Farmers of Mississippi, Cotton, Inc., Sanders, Inc., Mississippi Corn Promotion Board, Mississippi Rice Promotion Board, Mississippi Soybean Promotion Board, and Southern Ag Credit/Mississippi Land Bank.

Department of Transportation program provides air service to rural communities across the country that otherwise would not receive scheduled air service.

Promise Neighborhoods – \$73.2 million through the Department of Education, level with FY2016, to support the continuation costs of all current grantees. Report language was included in the Explanatory Statement granting the Department the authority to extend current high-quality grantees, such as the Indianola program, an additional two years. Washington County is the newest recipient of a Promise Neighborhood Grant.

Job Corps – \$1.7 billion, a \$15 million increase, the Job Corps program. Mississippi has Job Corps centers located in Batesville, Gulfport, and Crystal Springs. Report language was included in the Senate bill regarding the timely restoration of the Gulfport Job Corps Center.

Head Start – \$9.3 billion, an \$85 million increase above FY2016. Provides funding to help all Head Start programs keep up with costs, recruit and retain highly qualified staff, maintain enrollment, and provide high-quality early childhood services for children and families.

Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) – \$244.6 million, level with FY2016. Mississippi's HBCUs, including Coahoma Community College and Mississippi Valley State University, benefit from this program.

Strengthening Master's Degree Programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities – \$7.5 million, a \$7.5 million increase above FY2016. Funding will support graduate education opportunities at the master's level in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Alcorn State University and Mississippi Valley State University will benefit from this funding.

Mississippi Delta Health Collaborative – The Senate report provides continued funding for the Mississippi Delta Health Collaborative for FY2017. This collaborative provides leadership in the Delta region to implement heart disease and stroke prevention interventions to reduce morbidity, mortality, and related health disparities.

Delta States Rural Development Network – \$12 million, an increase of \$2 million. Provides funding for a pilot program with the Delta Regional Authority to provide technical assistance to struggling rural hospitals in the Delta region

Cochran and Wicker Announce Computing Contract to Advance Supercomputing at ERDC



Cochran



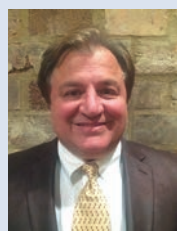
Wicker

U.S. Senators Thad Cochran and **Roger Wicker** announced the award of an \$88.8 million defense contract to continue expansion of high performance computing capabilities at the Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) in Vicksburg.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contract is the result of increased federal defense funding provided by Congress for a high performance computing modernization project at ERDC.

"Delta Council wants to thank **Senators Cochran** and **Wicker** for recognizing the impact of the research efforts that are being done at ERDC," said Delta Council **President Harry Simmons** of Yazoo City. "In addition to the critical work they perform to the Defense Department and other federal agencies, ERDC has a tremendous economic impact on Vicksburg, Warren County, the South Delta, and the entire West Central region of Mississippi."

Azar named Director of Economic Development for the Panola Partnership



Azar

The executive board of the Panola Partnership voted to offer the Director of Economic Development position to executive board member **Joe Azar**. **Azar** served on the Panola Partnership executive board for the past 6 years, and was scheduled to roll off this March.

Born and raised in Greenville, he is a graduate of the University of Mississippi with a Bachelor of Business Administration. He returned to the Delta to own and operate uniquely successful convenience stores called The Barn. At the same time, he also owned and operated one of the state's largest music production companies.

Christy Named Executive Director of YMD



Christy

Don Christy has been named the new Executive Director of the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Joint Water Management District (YMD). **Christy**, a Jackson native, has over 25 years experience working with water use policy, water quality, and water avail-

ability and supply. He holds an undergraduate degree in Chemistry from the University of Southern Mississippi; a Masters degree in Conservation Ecology from the University of Georgia; and a Doctorate in Ecology from the University of Georgia. Both his master's and doctoral research focused on water resources policy.

In his new role, **Christy** will pull from his experience as the Chief of Staff at the regional office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Atlanta, and his work assisting the Mississippi Legislature and Georgia General Assembly on environmental protection and water resource management policy issues.

"I believe water use is going to remain a most significant challenge for years to come," said **Christy**. "There are opportunities to make an impact and address some challenges through conservation and irrigation efficiency and other means. I want to be part of that equation, and work with partners like DEQ, USGS, ARS, MSU, the Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Delta Council, Delta F.A.R.M., and Farm Bureau to come up with options for dealing with these challenges."

Chairman Roberts Announces Glueck as Ag Committee Staff Director



Glueck

U.S. Senator Pat Roberts, Kan., Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry today announced changes to his senior professional committee staff. **Joel Leftwich**, the Committee's staff director, will be leaving the Committee staff later this month to pursue other interests. Replacing him as staff director will be the Committee's policy director, **James Glueck**.

"**James Glueck** is experienced in both the Senate and in agriculture policy. He accepts the responsibility for running the Committee staff at a critical time as we begin to consider the next Farm Bill. I am confident he will carry on the Committee's focus on the farmer and rancher and put their needs first."

Curry Named 2017 Advisory Council Member for FHLB Dallas



Curry

The Federal Home Loan Bank of Dallas (FHLB Dallas) announced the appointments of four new members to the Bank's 2017 Affordable Housing Advisory Council including Greenwood-Leflore-Carroll Economic Development Foundation's (GLC/EDF) Executive Director, **Angela Curry**. All appointments

began January 1, 2017, and she will serve a two-year term that will expire on December 31, 2018.

Meter Reporting Goals Met

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality reported the 10% reporting goals established for each Delta county in the voluntary metering program have been met. Thank you to all program participants who submitted their 2016 flowmeter reports. Meeting this annual goal continues to demonstrate the willingness of Delta farmers to work through voluntary measures to help manage and protect our critical water resources. We appreciate your continued participation in this program. "I want to thank all of the farmers for completing this monumental task and appreciate all of the hard work that the leadership of organizations represented on the Task Force did to achieve the metering goal," said Delta Council Soil and Water Resource Chairman **George King** of Chatham.

Cochran Names New Staff Legislative Leaders

U.S. Senator Thad Cochran recently announced personnel changes, including the naming of **Linda Good** as Deputy Chief of Staff, and promoting **Mary Martha Henson** and **Ty Mabry** to be Legislative Director and Deputy Legislative Director, respectively.

The staff shifts are the result of Cochran's current deputy chief of staff/legislative director, **Adam Telle**, being named majority clerk of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security. **Telle** replaces **Kathy Kraninger**, who accepted a position with the White House Office of Management and Budget.

USDA ARS Administrator Dr. Jacobs-Young Visits Stoneville



Jacobs-Young

Recently, **Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young**, Administrator of the U.S.D.A. ARS, visited MSU's Delta Research & Extension Center as well as Delta Council. After delivering an uplifting message to hundreds at the Capps Center for the 40th Annual African-American History Program, she met with officials at Delta Council to discuss water challenges in Mississippi Alluvial Aquifers and the neonotinoid issues.

Higginbotham Named President of Ag Council of Arkansas

West Higginbotham, producer from Marianna, Ark., has been elected by the board of directors of the Agricultural Council of Arkansas to serve as president of the organization for a two-year term. He succeeds **Rick Bransford** of Lonoke who completed his term as president.

Higginbotham, who operates a 4,500-acre

family farm in Lee County, Ark., with his father, **Steve**, brings many leadership attributes to the organization. He serves on the Arkansas Soybean Research and Promotion Board where he recently concluded a term as chairman.



West Higginbotham with wife, **Weezie**, and their three children

Duvall, MS Ag Leaders, Carstens to Headline MFBF Summer Commodity Meeting

The Mississippi Farm Bureau Foundation Summer Commodity Meeting will be held on the campus of Mississippi State University on June 21-22, 2017. Optional research tours and an opening reception/dinner will be held the afternoon and evening of June 21. Opening the conference general session on Thursday morning, June 22, will be a panel discussion made up of key ag leaders on emerging policy issues in agriculture. These leaders include: **Zippy Duvall**, **American Farm Bureau Federation President**, **Cindy Hyde-Smith**, **MS Ag Commissioner**, **Dr. Greg Bohach**, **Vice President of the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University**, and **Mike McCormick**, **MFBF President**. Following the panel, **Matt Carstens**, **Senior Vice President of Land O'Lakes**, and director of the **SUSTAIN program**, will discuss the importance of Sustainability in Agriculture today. Individual commodity break out meetings will follow the general session.

Penny Hired as Director of Policy for Ducks Unlimited



Penny

Ducks Unlimited's policy team has added waterfowl biologist and Mississippi native, **Ed Penny**. **Penny** will work out of DU's Southern Regional Office in Ridgeland, Mississippi and handle public policy efforts in 13 states. He comes from the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks (MDWFP), one of DU's strongest and most productive partners. At MDWFP, he was most recently responsible for administering the Wildlife Bureau and developing partnerships with state and federal agencies,

er, policymakers, individuals and organizations
he focused on wildlife conservation issues.

Dees Elected Chair of MS Soybean Promotion Board



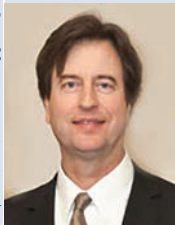
Dees

says **Paul Dees**, Leland farmer and newly elected MSPB chairman. "I'm honored that my fellow board members put their trust in me to lead this organization."

As chairman, **Dees** will lead the organization which invests soy checkoff funds on behalf of Mississippi farmers. **Bill Ryan Tabb** of Cleveland now serves as vice chairman and **Bubba Simmons** of Hollandale serves as the organization's secretary and treasurer.

In addition to **Dees**, **Tabb** and **Simmons**, other MSPB Board members include: **Tim Clements**, Greenville; **Wayne Dulaney**, Clarksdale; **Jan da Regt**, Hollandale; **Louis Geudon**, Natchez; **Jeremy Jack**, Belzoni; **Keith Morton**, Falkner; **Jerry Slocum**, Coldwater; **Jimmy Sneed**, Hernando; and **David Wansley**, Valley Park.

Coopwood New Chairman of Community Foundation Board of Directors



Coopwood

The Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi is announced that its Board of Directors has elected **Scott Coopwood** of Cleveland as its chairman for 2017.

"It is an incredible honor to be chosen as this year's chairman for Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi," said **Coopwood**. "This unique organization helps better the lives of those who live in the coverage area which includes several counties in the Mississippi Delta and I'm proud to be on board to help move our region into a positive future."

MVSU Alum Tucker Named VP at Alabama A&M



Tucker

Alabama A&M University **President Andrew Hugine, Jr.**, has announced the individual who will fill the cabinet post of Vice President for Marketing, Communications and Advancement, a key post that encompasses

fundraising, alumni affairs, electronic media communications, public relations, and print/mail.

Archie Tucker, II, who has served in the role of interim vice president since 2014 will assume the position of vice president on Wednesday, March 1.

Prior to joining AAMU in 2011 as director of development and later as assistant vice president, **Tucker** served as the chief development officer at Mississippi Valley State University, his alma mater, where he received a bachelor's degree in business administration. He also held posts at Coahoma Community College and Delta State University, where he received an MBA.

Wansley Appointed to MDOT Weight Appeals Board

David Wansley, the Issaquena-Warren County farmer, elevator operator and Vicksburg resident was recently appointed to the MS Department of Transportation Weight Enforcement Appeals Board by **Governor Phil Bryant**.

"We praise **Governor Bryant** for selecting a respected farm leader and manager of Valley Park Elevator to this important position, which plays a significant role in protecting the integrity of our weight enforcement laws and regulations in the state of Mississippi" stated **Travis Satterfield**, the Bolivar County farmer who serves as Chairman of the Delta Council Farm Policy Committee.



Delta Workforce Development Area and Delta Strong Define Sector Strategy Plan for State Workforce Board

Regional workforce developers, community and business administrators, and Delta Council and **Delta Strong** leaders came together April 5, at the Capps Workforce Training Center in Indianola to focus their efforts toward defining what employment sectors are priorities to continuing growing Delta-wide economic development efforts. Mississippi's plan under the Workforce Investment Act has been approved by the Department of Labor, and leaders are now defining which employment sectors are pivotal for further development.

New Delta Wildlife President and Directors Elected

During the spring Board of Directors meeting, **John Murry Greenlee** of Yazoo City was elected to serve a 2-year term as Delta Wildlife's President. **John Murry** has served as a Director for more than 7-years and has served as the Chairman of the White-tailed Deer and Turkey Committee Chairman for the past 3-years. He will succeed **Paul D. Dees** of Greenville, who will now serve as Chairman of the Board. **Powell Litton** of Greenwood and **Colby Spradling** of Cleveland also received a nod from the Board, as they were both elected to serve as Directors for a 3-year term. **Powell** and **Colby** are joining 28 others in service on the Board of Directors and will represent their peers and geographic regions in directing the business of Delta Wildlife.



Greenlee

NCC Elects 12 Mississippians to Leadership Positions

Twelve Mississippi cotton industry members have been elected to leadership positions in the National Cotton Council (NCC) for 2017. **Meredith Allen**, a Greenwood cooperative marketing executive, was re-elected as a NCC director.

Re-elected advisors to the NCC Board are former NCC chairmen: **Woods Eastland**, cotton producer from Indianola; **Kenneth Hood**, cotton producer from Gunnison; **Bruce Brumfield**, cotton producer from Inverness; **Frank Mitchener, Jr.**, cotton producer from Sumner; and **Sledge Taylor**, ginner from Como.

Shane Stephens, a warehouseman from Greenwood, was elected as an advisor. **Hank Reichle**, a Greenwood cooperative marketing official, was elected second vice president of Cotton Council International (CCI), the NCC's export promotion arm. **Frederick Barrier**, also a Greenwood cooperative marketing official, was re-elected as a CCI director. **Patrick Johnson**,

Jr., of Tunica, was re-elected as Mississippi chairman of the NCC's American Cotton Producers. **Johnson** was also elected as NCC Mississippi unit chairman. **David Cochran, Jr.**, a ginner from Avon, was re-elected at vice chairman, and **Coley Bailey, Jr.**, producer from Coffeeville, was re-elected as secretary. These cotton industry leaders were named at the recent 2017 NCC Annual Meeting in Dallas, Texas.

Pittman Named Director of ERDC



Pittman

Dr. David W. Pittman

has been named Director of the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center.

As ERDC Director, **Pittman** manages one of the most diverse research organizations in the world, including seven laboratories located in four states, with more than 2,100 employees, \$1.2 billion in facilities, and an annual program exceeding \$1 billion. He also serves as Director of Research and Development and Chief Scientist for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Clayton Awarded Citizen of the Year



Clayton

Planters Bank CEO **Jimmy Clayton** was honored as the 2017 Morris Lewis Jr. Citizen of the Year at the annual Indianola Chamber Main Street Meeting at the B.B. King Museum earlier this month. **Dr. Eddie Donahoe**, last year's recipient, introduced **Clayton** and presented him with the award.

Fratesi is Field Rep for Congressman Harper



Fratesi

Austin Fratesi of Leland, a graduate of Mississippi State University, recently took a job as a field representative for **Congressman Gregg Harper** working out of the Metro Jackson area.

Delta Health Alliance Receives \$4.5 Million Grant

Delta Health Alliance has received a five-year, \$4.5 million grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources, to improve access to a broad range of health care services while lowering the cost for individuals in Bolivar, Coahoma, Holmes, Humphreys, Leflore, Sunflower and Washington Counties.

"We are grateful for the Department of Health and Human Resources, the Mississippi Division of Medicaid, and our congressional delegation in pro-

viding this exciting opportunity to the Delta," remarked **Karen Matthews**, Delta Health Alliance CEO, "Our grant aims to reduce avoidable health care utilization, reduce the cost of health care, and improve the health and quality of care for Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries. We plan to do this using a whole range of healthcare and community partners to assist patients with accessing needed services."

A number of these grants were provided to



DELTA HEALTH ALLIANCE
Solutions for a Healthy Tomorrow

organizations around the country with Delta Health Alliance serving as the only recipient in Mississippi. According to information from the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services, the grant will seek to achieve a reduction in the utilization and costs of healthcare services of patients by addressing their health-related needs using new technologies, improved awareness and use of community services and support, and a more robust evaluation of health-related social services.

According to **Matthews**, Delta Health Alliance has recruited 14 clinical delivery sites and 9 community-based service providers as partners in this new initiative. Work on the new grant will start immediately and there will be announcements in the near future about programs that will be funded by the grant.

For more information about this grant or about Delta Health Alliance, please visit our website at www.deltahealthalliance.org or follow DHA on Facebook.

DELTAN ON THE MOVE

Tyler Sullivan

Personal Information:

Delta State University Statesmen former quarterback **Tyler Sullivan** was selected as a 2017 Congressional Fellow for U.S. Sen. **Thad Cochran** of Mississippi. **Sullivan** graduated from Delta State University with a degree in biology, pre-medical science. **Sullivan's** internship was as the 2017 Congressional Fellow sponsored by Delta State through the B. F. Smith Foundation of Delta Council and endorsed by Staplcofn.

During his internship which began in January, **Sullivan** assisted **Cochran's** staff in a number of capacities, including administration, scheduling and constituent services. He also had opportunities to take part in meetings related to healthcare policy. The Cochran internship program is designed to give young Mississippi students a firsthand opportunity to experience the federal legislative process and the operation of a U.S. Senate office.

The Congressional Fellows program committee selects one Delta State student each year to serve on **Cochran's** staff, with the goal of providing a better understanding of the legislative process.

Sullivan, a Louisville native, is an aspiring physician and a member of the Mississippi Rural Physician Scholarship Program. In December, 2016, **Sullivan** was named a finalist for the 2016 William V. Campbell Trophy, which is presented to the best football scholar-athlete in the country. He was one of only 12 athletes to make the final list. A graduate of the Winston Academy, **Sullivan** is the son of **Dan** and **Valerie Sullivan** of Louisville.

Current Job Title and Responsibilities:

Sullivan has completed the Congressional Fellowship program. The program is sponsored through a partnership of Delta State University, Delta Council, and Staplcofn. He gained firsthand experience working with one of Mississippi's most respected leaders. The Congressional Fellows program aims to provide a better understanding of the legislative process by serving on **Cochran's** staff. **Sullivan** has completed his semester-long journey of gaining invaluable experience and exposure to the ins and outs of the legislative processes that help to shape our nation.

What do you like most about your job?

"I love this job. Thanks to Delta Council and Delta State University, I have been given the great opportunity to be able to live and work in our



Cochran and Sullivan

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Nation's Capital, a place where so much of our history has unfolded. I have been fortunate to see many sights, museums, and landmarks, and learn so much since starting just three short weeks ago. Working on **Senator Cochran's** staff has offered me firsthand experience and insight on how our government carries out day to day operations, and how to be a true leader and advocate for the people of Mississippi. Walking home every night from work in the shadow of the United States Capitol building is truly humbling, and fills me with pride. **Senator Cochran** and his staff have been extremely generous and welcoming. I love the fast pace of D.C. I am grateful for the chance to better myself not only in my career, but as a person, that this Fellowship has provided me. This is an incredible time to be in Washington D.C. I hope that my impact on this staff has been and will be as positive as theirs has been on me."

What do others say about Tyler?

U.S. Senator Thad Cochran commended **Tyler Sullivan** for successfully completing a semester-long internship in his Washington office.

"I commend **Tyler** for his dedicated assistance to me and my office. I hope his experience on Capitol Hill will serve him well as he continues his studies and begins a career," said **Cochran**, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

NEW STAFF

Mary Catherine Davis



Davis

Mississippi State University Delta Research and Extension Center and Delta Council extend a warm welcome to their newest staff addition, **Mary Catherine Davis**. After serving as the Executive Director of the Greenville Arts Council and E.E. Bass Foundation since August of 2014, **Davis** was hired by Mississippi State University's Delta Research and Extension Center as an Extension Associate to Delta Council to aid in the development of new and ongoing Delta-wide economic and community development initiatives.

"**Mary Catherine** brings a strong background and knowledge to Delta Council and Mississippi State's efforts in rural development," said **Tom Gresham** of Indianola, who serves as Chairman of the Development Department of Delta Council. "She

has demonstrated a wide range of skill sets that will make her an asset to our communities in implementing strategies for orderly growth and progress."

Davis graduated from Mississippi State University with a Bachelors of Fine Arts then continued to earn a Masters of Fine Arts from Louisiana Tech University. Upon graduating, she relocated to the Delta, where she has utilized her education and community service background to fully integrate herself into the culture and growth of the region.

Beyond the public obligations of her previous and current jobs, **Davis** works closely with many community organizations such as Delta Hot Tamale Festival, United Way of Washington County, Mighty Mississippi Music Festival, the Deer Creek Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, City of Greenville Consortium Committee, and Delta Artists Association. She is a member of Crestview Baptist Church of Carrollton.

MEMBER FOCUS

John Mark Looney, Jr.



Looney

Business or Occupation:

John Mark is a successful, young farmer living in Washington County, MS. He is a Soybean and Corn Producer at Looney Farms in Leland. Looney Farms is a privately owned family farm with long roots. **John Mark** works alongside his father **Mark Looney** on the farm. Prior to coming home to work on the family farm, **John Mark** served as a Farmer Research Assistant at Mississippi State University.

Hometown:

John Mark is a 3rd generation "Lelander". His grandfather, **Z M Looney** moved to Leland many years ago to work in the Cotton ginning Laboratory in Stoneville. He and his father continued to carry the legacy in Agriculture. **John Mark**, not only, remains a resident in Leland, but also, lives in a home built by his grandfather.

John Mark attended Deer Creek School. He went on to graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Integrated Crop Management in 2005 and a Mas-

ters of Agribusiness Management in 2008 from Mississippi State University.

Affiliations:

John Mark is affiliated with many organizations. His affiliations include the following:

- Board Member, Mississippi Soybean Association
- Member, Farm Bureau
- Alumni, Mississippi State University
- 2015 Class Dupont/American Soybean Association Young Leaders
- 2016 Syngenta/ASA Leadership at Its Best

What they say about him:

"The Delta has been extremely fortunate that a generation of young men and women have returned home in the last two decades to sustain their family farming operations. **John Mark Looney** is among those young people who we are proud of, because of the active role he has taken in leadership programs, national agricultural leadership programs, local community activities, and the strong work ethic which his family has always been known for," stated **Gibb Steele**, a Washington County Executive Committee member of Delta Council.



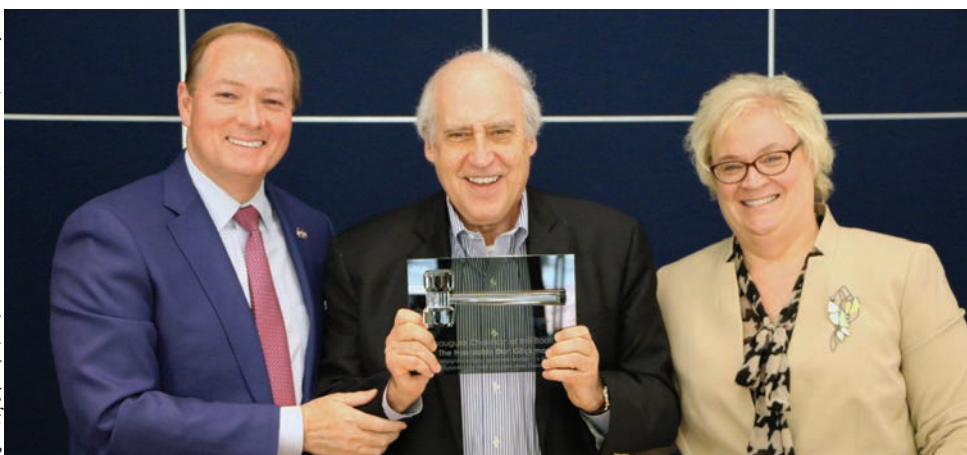
In 2016, USDA Wildlife Services began placing field staff in the Mississippi Delta to help manage bird depredation within the catfish industry. Pictured here, catfish industry leaders meet with senior USDA Wildlife Service officials and local field staff to review the efforts to manage Double Crested Cormorants during this past winter and spring. In 2017, USDA Wildlife Service will be increasing its investment towards bird management within the catfish industry in Mississippi.



Regional leaders, partners and participants from across the Delta meet with Delta Council Development Department leadership for a round-table progress report of **Delta Strong**.



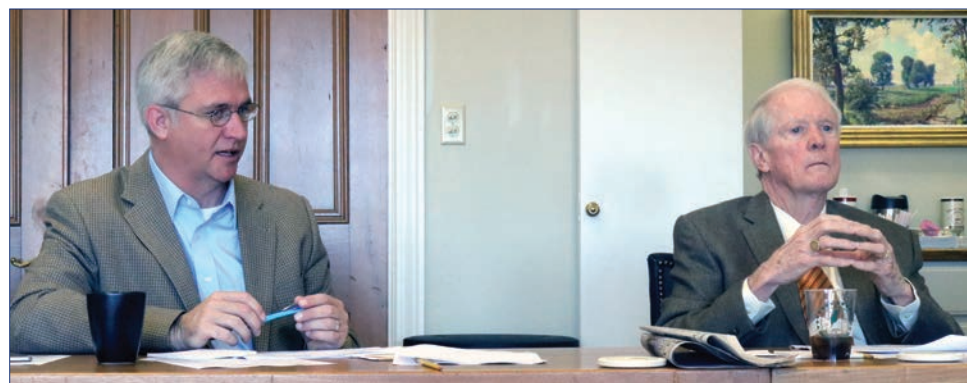
Lanny Kennedy and **Mary Virginia Watson** sit either side of Past President **Walton Gresham** as he presents the Good Middling Ladies with a Delta Strong update.



Dr. Mark Keenum, President of Mississippi State University, was appointed to the board of directors for the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research. Outgoing Chairman, **Honorable Dan Glickman**, former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, and **Dr. Sally Rockett**, FFAR Executive Director are pictured with **Dr. Keenum**.



Delta Council Past Presidents **Billy Percy**, **Kent Wyatt**, **Jimmie Dick Carter**, and **Frank Mitchener** look over materials at a recent Executive Committee meeting.



Transportation Commissioners **Mike Tagert** and **Dick Hall** meet with Mississippi Department of Transportation officials and Delta Council leaders to address infrastructure assessments and priorities in the Delta.



Good Middling Recipients **Melissa Thomas**, **Lynne Moses**, **Betty Lynn Cameron**, **Maggie Parker**, and **Betty Parker** met recently at Delta Council to prepare for the 2017 Annual Meeting.



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Tour of MS River Plumbing: Lower River Valley



Delta Council leaders **Dan Branton, Mark Fratesi, David Wansley,** and **Michael Strickland** joined with the **Corps of Engineers and Mississippi Levee Board** for a tour of the Mississippi River-Atchafalaya-Morganza-Bonnie Carrie plumbing for flood protection in the Lower Mississippi River Valley. Starting at the Morganza fixed-crest flood structure and proceeding to the Old River flood control structures, the Levee Board members and Delta Council leaders learned about the management of these Congressionally-authorized flood protection measures and a comprehensive impact analysis related to points upstream and downstream.

Governor Bryant Visits Greenwood Milwaukee



Governor Phil Bryant (center) joined Milwaukee Tool Plant Manager **Jack Bilotta** (far right) and other employees of Milwaukee Tool and community leaders recently to help the Greenwood company to celebrate some of their new product lines.



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