



# The Delta Council Review

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THE NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS AND MEMBERS OF DELTA COUNCIL

May 2022

## 'ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE': CORPS OFFICIALS TESTIFY ON THE YAZOO PUMPS PROJECT

At a Senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee hearing to review the Fiscal Year 2023 Army Corps budget, **Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith** focused on how to overcome the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) decision in November to halt the Yazoo Backwater Area Pumps.

"I believe the Corps understands that the Yazoo Backwater Pump project is one of my very top priorities because I have seen the suffering that has happened in Mississippi," **Hyde-Smith** said following the hearing. "It's clear to me that the Corps understands that a pumping station is the only way to bring meaningful flood protection to this part of Mississippi."

During the hearing, **Hyde-Smith** highlighted the Biden Administration's

priority for "environmental justice," highlighting the demographics of those disproportionately affected by annual floods in the Yazoo Backwater area. The population is approximately 70-percent minority households, and 30 percent of the residents live at or below the poverty line.

**Michael Connor**, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, testified that the Biden Administration considers the Yazoo Backwater Pumps an environmental justice issue. "I can assure you this is part of the environmental justice agenda to get to a project, to get to a solution because of the factors you mentioned with respect to minority residents in that area, as well as the poverty level in that area," **Connor** said. "We are getting the attention we need at a very high level," he added, noting that an



interagency working group, led by the White House Council on Environmental Quality, is trying to identify a path forward.

During the subcommittee discussion on the Yazoo Backwater Area, **U.S. Senator John Kennedy** from Louisiana added his voice to **Hyde-Smith's** call for the Army Corps and EPA to reach an agreement on the last unfinished component of the Yazoo Backwater Area flood control project — a pumping station.

## SAVE THE DATE

**DELTA COUNCIL  
87<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING  
FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 2022**

**BOLOGNA PERFORMING  
ARTS CENTER  
DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY  
CLEVELAND, MS**

*More details to come.*

## OFFICIALS BREAK GROUND ON U.S. HIGHWAY 82 ANSE DEES BYPASS IN GREENVILLE

Central Transportation Commissioner **Willie Simmons** joined officials to break ground on a major transportation infrastructure construction project in Washington County.

The project provides for the construction of approximately nine miles of four-lane highway known as the U.S. Highway 82 Greenville Bypass from State Route 1 to Leland. The groundbreaking ceremony was held at the Greenville Higher Education building.

"This is a monumental day for the cities of Greenville, Leland and all of Washington County as this bypass will greatly alleviate

traffic and increase safe driving conditions throughout the area," said **Simmons**. "There are so many people involved in getting this massive project underway, including the federal government, Mississippi Legislature, our staff, the contractors, city and county leaders, and many, many others. I thank all of you."

The project is expected to bring economic development opportunities to Greenville and Leland, and is one of the largest projects that the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) has bid to contractors. Work officially began in March 2022.

"The local economy will boom as a result of what we're doing



here today. That's what transportation infrastructure is all about," said **Simmons**.

The \$137 million project is expected to be completed by fall 2025.

## DELTA STRONG RECRUIT PARMIDA HOLDS RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY

Parmida LED Technologies (Parmida), together with Governor Tate Reeves, Sunflower County, the City of Indianola, and Delta Council/Delta Strong leaders marked the opening of the already announced location of this e-commerce business with the official "cutting of the ribbon" ceremony today.

Parmida, with its headquarters in Southern California, has strategically placed its new operations in Indianola, MS at 624 2nd Street, to serve its growing customer base in the Midwestern and East Coast markets. The company is expected to create 20 new jobs in this Delta community.

"Creating jobs in the Delta will continue to be one of my top priorities," said **Governor Tate Reeves**. "I'm excited to welcome Parmida to Mississippi, and I look forward to seeing the positive economic contribution the company will have on Indianola and Sunflower County."

Parmida, once a traditional lighting company, in 2015 pivoted their model to become an e-commerce business after identifying the growth business-to-business sales potential within emerging internet



**Matt Mahrou, Peyman Mahrou, and Parm Mahrou**



**Governor Tate Reeves cuts ribbon at Parmida along with the Mahrou family and attendees**

DELTA STRONG *continued on page 3*



## DELTA COUNCIL

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Vice-President: LA SHON BROOKS, Itta Bena  
Vice-President: LAWSON GARY, Greenwood  
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## MESSAGE FROM DELTA COUNCIL | "ALL IN THIS TOGETHER"

BY BUBBA SIMMONS  
Tribbett Producer & Delta Council Research Chairman



Simmons

In early April, the Delta Council office in Stoneville was the recipient of a visit by a very special guest – the Mississippi River Commission.

The Mississippi River Commission was established by an Act of Congress in 1879 and they are charged with the mission of developing plans to improve the conditions of the Mississippi River, foster navigation, promote commerce, and prevent destructive floods. Today, the Vicksburg-headquartered Commission provides engineering direction and policy advice to the Administration, Congress and the Army in a drainage basin that covers 41% of the United States and part of two Canadian provinces. Without a doubt, the work of the Commission over the last century and a half has made living and doing business in the Lower Mississippi Valley possible. In the Mississippi Delta, the completion of the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project as well as interior drainage has provided communities, farmers, and businesses the ability to thrive.



RDML Benjamin Adams, Tim Clements, John McKee, Commissioner Riley James, Patrick Johnson, Frank Howell, Major General Diana Holland, Commissioner Norma Jean Mattei, Colonel Geoff Van Epps, Bubba Simmons and Colonel Kimberly Peoples

And while that work remains so critical today, it was not their flood protection mission that brought them to Stoneville in April; instead, it was a new and emerging issue (groundwater) that the leadership of the Delta has asked the Commission and the Corps of Engineers to determine if they can bring to bear their engineering expertise to help the people and economy of the Lower Valley.

Just as flood protection has been so critical to the development of the region in the last 100 years, the continued viability of the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Aquifer that provides water to agriculture means over \$10 billion dollars every year just to Northwest

Mississippi, not to mention the entire Lower Mississippi Valley. The existence of that aquifer has allowed our region to be one of, if not the most productive agricultural regions in the world and it is critical that we conserve this resource so that it will be available for future generations and continue to provide jobs and economic activity for the residents of the Delta.

The Delta saw some disturbing trends in terms of water over-balance several decades ago and began immediately taking measures to ensure its continued viability. In 1990,

MESSAGE continued on page 5

## GUEST COLUMN | DISMAL DUCK SEASONS

BY TIM HUGGINS  
Executive Director of Delta Wildlife



Huggins

Duck season 21/22 ended pretty much the same as 20/21, with many people scratching their heads, wondering where are all of the ducks? The past two years have been some of the worst duck seasons many people can remember. The aerial surveys flown by MDWFP biologists confirm what most people have seen in the duck holes. Duck numbers in Mississippi were down. Sure, some areas still held good duck numbers, but those seem to be the exception rather than the rule.

#### DUCKS BY THE NUMBERS

Total duck numbers in the Delta were down 33% from the long-term average during the late January aerial survey. Mallard numbers were down 37% from the long-term average. The 138,551 Mallards counted during the late January survey were the lowest since official counts began. Our neighboring states did not escape the downtrend either. Late January, Mallard

numbers in the Arkansas Delta were about 30% lower than their historic numbers. Missouri Mallard estimates were 14% below the previous five-year average of 691,667 mallards, similar to the last 20-year average of 563,508 mallards. Louisiana numbers were down overall also. Louisiana's January estimated 2.1 million ducks is a 9% decline over the five-year average, 16% decline over the ten-year average, and 28% below the long-term 1978-2021. "Gadwall, mallard, and wigeon all declined from December estimates, and current estimates represent the lowest January count on record for these species," according to Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries.

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 protocols, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and their Canadian counterparts have not performed their waterfowl breeding population and habitat survey in two years. This means that we do not know or at least have an estimate of waterfowl populations except those based on models. We can infer that they are down because of wintering ground surveys like those performed by states, but we don't know by how much. While the habitat survey was not conducted, weather data depicted arid conditions over

much of the prairie pothole region. Dry conditions mean fewer seasonal wetlands are providing nesting habitat. There is a direct correlation between pond counts and duck nesting success. More ponds equal more ducks. Hunter success is tied to not just more ducks but new ducks. Young ducks are not as seasoned and will typically respond better to calling and decoy setups. Older ducks that have survived multiple trips through the gauntlet from Saskatchewan to Greenwood have seen every decoy set up and heard every duck call imaginable. It takes a little more cunning to get older ducks over the decoys, further decreasing hunter success and overall season satisfaction.

#### SHIFTING FLYWAYS?

There has been much talk lately of shifting flyways. The last two years of lousy duck hunting have helped fuel that narrative, but is it true? So far, recovered duck band data does not show a significant shift in the flyway. Keep in mind the Mississippi flyway is not static; it ebbs and flows in every direction. These seasonal shifts are driven primarily by weather and habitat conditions. Hopefully, we'll see better habitat conditions in the prairies for 2022 and more ducks on the pond in 2022/23.

## KENT PARRISH RETIRES FROM U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

**Kent Parrish**, Senior Project Manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg District, has retired after a long career with the Corps. **Kent** has been recognized for his outstanding work in the Mississippi River Valley a multitude of times over his career, including being name Program Manager of the Year in 2014 for his successful management of the four hundred- and sixty-mile Mississippi River Levee System (MRL).

**Kent's** impact on the Mississippi Delta and our flood protection efforts cannot be overstated. To mark this milestone, Delta Council asked friends and leaders to say a few words about **Kent** and his work in the Delta.

"**Kent** has always been a great friend of Delta Council as well as the entire State of Mississippi. He has a wealth of knowledge about Corps projects and is a reliable source of information concerning issues facing people of the Delta. His working relationship with the Delta and Delta Council will be missed in the years ahead."

**Charles Walker**  
Marks

"Mississippi is a better place because of **Kent Parrish**. The Federal government needs more people like him. **Kent** dedicated his career to helping people and I am grateful for all of his contributions."

**Daniel Ulmer**

Deputy Chief of Staff for Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith

"**Kent Parrish** has worked tirelessly for

years for the USACE; however, it is his work on the Yazoo Backwater Project that he will always be remembered for, at least here in the South Delta. During the 2019 Backwater Flood, **Kent** was all over the affected area, meeting with concerned citizens & flood victims, educating the public & elected officials on the backwater system, and most importantly, working hard on the solution, the pumps. While **Kent** will certainly be missed, his efforts will continue, and hopefully one day the residents of the South Delta will see the fruition of his work come to pass when the pumps are finally installed. Thank you, **Kent!**"

**Hunter Fordice**  
Vicksburg

"It has been my privilege to work with **Kent** for over 40 years. His commitment to flood control in the Lower Mississippi Valley is not only professional, it is personal. He cares about every person who has been negatively impacted by flooding and has worked tirelessly to help improve the quality of life in the LMV. **Kent** has been a friend to the Delta throughout his career, and he will be sorely missed by his many friends. And I am proud to be one of the many who will miss him. Thank you for your many years of professional service and your friendship."

**John Phillips**  
Holly Bluff

"For the past twenty-five years, **Kent** has been a great friend and a constant contact for us with the Corps. He has championed all



our projects and has been instrumental in the completion of many of those. He will be sorely missed by all of us at Delta Council. We hope he enjoys his retirement and know that he is very deserving of it."

**Paul Hollis**

Chairman of the Executive Committee of Delta Council

MS Levee Board Commissioner

"Due to his deep Delta roots and his passion for the well-being of every sector of the Delta's economy and citizenry, **Kent** has always had the broadest understanding of this region's priorities of anyone in the Army Corps of Engineers Chain of Command spanning from Vicksburg to Washington. Throughout the past

40 years of travel in the US and even abroad, it is often that economists, public officials, and Federal agencies extol the importance which the MS River Levees and the Stoneville Agricultural Experiment Station have played in the architecture of the Delta's landscape. In terms of the many public service employees who have played a big role in promoting the sustainability of both of these Federal-State partnerships, I can think of no name that could be more prominently associated with these 2 success stories than **Kent Parrish** of Holmes County."

**Chip Morgan**

Retired Executive Vice President of Delta Council

### DELTA STRONG *from page 1*

marketplaces. Today, Parmida is known for conducting business-to-business and business-to-customer transactions across many product lines including LED lighting applications and home goods.

"We'd like to thank Delta Strong, the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) and Sunflower County for exposing us to the strong business opportunities here and the Governor and State of Mississippi for supporting our new distribution center in Indianola," said **Peyman Mahrou**, Vice President of Parmida LED Technologies. "We believe the strong relationships we've built in Mississippi will be fundamental to our pursuit of growth and expansion into the future."

In 2017, after successfully deploying the knowledge and tools to build and successfully manage their online presence, Parmida gained the distinction as one of Amazon's 10 fastest growing companies. Their growth trajectory compelled them to investigate expanding their operations to another location as their

Southern California location was too far from growing markets. The timing was fortuitous as Delta Strong's business attraction program contacted **Matt Mahrou**, the company's CEO, in 2018 and invited him to consider expanding operations to the Delta.

"We are fortunate to have Parmida call the Delta home for its new operations," said **Wade Litton**, Chairman of Delta Strong. "I have learned that **Matt, Peyman**, and **Parm** are kind, gracious business owners that exhibit a corporate spirit that fits Indianola and the Delta very well," says **Wade Litton**. "We should all embrace Parmida and welcome them. They had many options to call home and they chose us. I look forward to seeing what is on the horizon from this entrepreneurial family and how we can help them grow even more in the future."

Parmida officials attribute the decision to relocate to Indianola to many factors. First, is Mississippi's business friendly environment and cost efficiency that would allow Parmida to operate at a lower cost structure than its competition elsewhere. Distribution

and logistics advantages in the Delta are unparalleled as evidenced by major distribution companies conducting business here. The Delta proved to be well-suited for this e-commerce business whose products can be purchased in several on-line marketplaces. The second factor is how a team effort developed to bring forth passionate, intelligent, and dependable people who had a vested interest in shaping the local economy, making it easy for Parmida to say that Indianola was their next home.

The expansion of Parmida is a case study in how organizations and communities band together to successfully recruit a new business. Delta Strong and the Sunflower County Economic Development District worked hand-in-glove to shepherd this project to successfully land in Indianola. The Sunflower County Board of Supervisors agreed to offer approximately 100,000 square feet of the former Modern Line building to Parmida. The Mississippi Development Authority provided a Capital Improvement Loan in the amount of \$1,500,000 and Community Development Block Grant funds in the amount of \$400,000

were used to provide the capital to make the necessary improvements to the facility so operations could begin this past September (2021). Even the City of Greenwood played an important role in the recruitment of this California headquartered business as they temporarily hosted Parmida operations, while renovations occurred in Indianola, for nearly two years.

"The new offices and a new store front are noticeable improvements while newly erected brick walls and new lighting have been installed in the interior," said Sunflower County Economic Development District Chairman **Richard Noble**. "With the successful recruitment of Parmida and two other companies over the last few years, the former Modern Line Manufacturing Building is well suited as a location to conduct distribution operations. We expect that Parmida will be joined in the future by similar businesses."

## MORE THAN 350 ORGANIZATIONS VOICE SUPPORT FOR EXISTING PESTICIDE LAW

Delta Council joined more than 350 organizations engaged with pesticide products in a letter sent to members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives that affirms these organization's support of the pesticide regulatory system in place today under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). The letter is in response to recently introduced legislation (S. 3283) that would undermine the science-based standards contained within our nation's pesticide law. This is the second time these organizations have reached out to Congress to voice concern over similar proposed legislation.

FIFRA has been amended by Congress several times to strengthen the regulatory standard for safety – most recently through the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) that added specific protections for infants and children. Under the provisions of the current law, pesticides that are approved for use are subject to continuous review whenever new scientific data becomes available. Officially, federal regulators must review each pesticide approved for use in the U.S. every 15 years, but the reality is that the pace of scientific development means regulators are making formal assessments much more frequently as more data becomes available.

The proposed legislation would jeopardize the continued availability and innovation of pesticide products by imposing an unscientific and unbalanced process that could unnecessarily remove pest control options from those who need them to safely grow crops, to adopt conservation practices such as conservation tillage and resource-saving crop rotations, to protect homes and infrastructure, to control pathogens and disease vectors, and to maintain green spaces, such as parks and golf courses.

To see a copy of the letter, visit <https://www.deltacouncil.org/3283letter.html>

## ISABELLA ESCOBEDO SELECTED AS 2022 DSU CONGRESSIONAL FELLOW



Escobedo

**Isabella Escobedo** is a history major, minoring in pre-law and sociology at Delta State University where she began her freshman year as a Statesman Scholar. She is from Grenada, MS, and graduated from Grenada High School in 2018. Daughter of two retired U.S. Army

officers, she has lived in various states across the nation, gaining new insights and sharing her voice in each.

"**Isabella** will be an excellent representative of Delta State University, StaplCotn and Delta Council as she serves an internship in **Senator Wicker's** office and we look forward to her representing the Delta," said **Patrick Johnson**, Delta Council President.

"I have dreamed of working in government since the earliest days of my education," **Isabella** said. "In studying United States history, I have learned about great leaders, moments, and movements that have shaped the nation and world we live in today. Specifically studying the U.S. Constitution has opened my interests to studying law and upholding constitutional ideals in government."

**Isabella** is also the recipient of the Jack Winton Gunn Award, the highest scholarly award at DSU. She is an active member of Student Government Association, where she serves as the Director of the Student House of Representatives. She works on campus in the DSU Writing Center, and is a member of the DSU Honors Program, Phi Kappa Phi Academic Honor Society, Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society, Omicron Delta Kappa Leadership Honor Society, and DSU Diversity Equity and Inclusion.

Previously, **Isabella** interned with the U.S. Department of State, specifically building networks between citizens in the Central-South Region of the U.S. (LA, AR, MS) and the Department of State/Foreign Service corps. She served as a supplemental instructor in the history department of DSU and has over three years of experience at Mississippi law firms.

**Isabella** plans to attend law school in the fall of 2022 and practice law on the local government level in the Mississippi Delta upon graduation from law school. "I have lived in the Mississippi Delta for four years, and it has become the place I call home," she added.

## MSU NAMES MICHAEL MULVANEY NEW HARTWIG SOYBEAN CHAIR

**Michael J. Mulvaney** is the new Edgar E. and Winifred B. Hartwig Endowed Chair in Soybean Agronomy at Mississippi State University.



Mulvaney

**Mulvaney** enters his MSU position after having worked as a cropping systems specialist at the University of Florida. A certified crop advisor with international agronomy experience, he has conducted research with the Global Conservation Agriculture Program at the International Maize and Wheat

Improvement Center in Mexico. He also served as the associate program manager for the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management at Virginia Tech, part of the U.S. Agency for International Development. Over his career, he has received more than \$30 million in research funding for agricultural research.

In 2013, the Mississippi Soybean Promotion Board invested in the creation of an MSU endowed chair in soybean agronomy, allowing the university to leverage funds from Monsanto and Syngenta, along with a standing research endowment from the Hartwig family, to create the Hartwig Endowed Chair in Soybean Agronomy. **Dan Reynolds**, MSU associate vice president for International Programs and weed scientist, previously served as the Hartwig Chair.

"We are excited that **Michael** has been named the Hartwig Soybean Chair, and we are eager to begin working with him," said **Bubba Simmons**, Chairman of the Mississippi Soybean Promotion Board. "Mississippi soybean farmers should be well served by his varied experience and the new perspective he will bring to soybean production in the state."

"The position was a natural fit for me," **Mulvaney** said. "Mississippi farmers grew over two million acres of soybean in 2020, making it the second largest agricultural commodity behind poultry. For something so economically important, I am excited to design a research program that's responsive to the needs of farmers."

## WILLARD NAMED DIRECTOR AND DEAN FOR MSU'S AG AND FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION AND COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES



Willard

A longtime Mississippi State faculty member and administrator is the new director of the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station and dean of the University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

**Scott T. Willard** is the permanent director and dean, after serving in these roles on an interim basis since July 2020. His appointment is pending formal approval by the Board of Trustees, State Institutions of Higher Learning. The university conducted a nationwide search, chaired by Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs **Brent Fountain**.

"**Dr. Willard** has a proven record of effective leadership and scholarship in MAFES and

the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences over the course of his highly regarded tenure at MSU," said Provost and Executive Vice President **David Shaw**. "As one of the nation's top agricultural research universities, MSU will benefit from his continuing guidance for these critical units that impact not only our state and nation, but truly make significant global contributions to agriculture and food security issues."

Vice President of MSU's Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine **Keith Coble** said, "**Dr. Willard** has a strong reputation as a world-class scholar and administrator. We look forward to his ongoing leadership in the role of director and dean."

## DENNIS KELLY OF SYNGENTA RETIRES

After 44 years of dedicated service with Syngenta, State Affairs Head **Dennis Kelly** retired on April 1.



Kelly

**Dennis** began his career with legacy company Ciba-Geigy as a Research Technician in Western New York, while attending Cornell University. After graduation, he moved to Mississippi as a Sales Representative, advancing to Sales and

Technical Marketing positions in Hawaii and California. He began working in State Government Relations and Regulatory Affairs in 1991 and was promoted to lead the State Affairs Team in 2004, a position he still holds.

**Dennis** has worked with commodity groups, State Legislatures, State Department of Agriculture Commissioners and numerous state and local Regulatory Officials across the United States on behalf of Syngenta. He is a trusted partner of these stakeholders and is the only industry representative to receive the National Association Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) Ambassador's Circle Award.

"**Dennis** has been a real friend to the United States agricultural industry, the Delta, and Delta Council," said **Frank Howell**, CEO of Delta Council.

**Dennis** has been active in many industry associations and has held leadership positions with Crop Life America, the Agricultural Alliance of NC and several others. He was one of the founders of CURES (The Coalition for Urban and Environmental Stewardship), a California association which worked on water quality and the implementation of Best Management Practices.

**Dennis** and his wife **Catherine** will continue to live in Beaufort, NC.

# AROUND DELTA FIELDS

## DR. HOMER WILKES SWORN IN AS NEW UNDER SECRETARY FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT



**Dr. Homer Wilkes and his family following his swearing in ceremony. In attendance were his wife, Kimberly Wilkes; his two sons, Justin and Harrison Wilkes; and his sister, Rosie Barrett.**

Mississippian **Dr. Homer Wilkes** was sworn in recently as the new Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and the Environment.

During his career, **Wilkes** has served within the Natural Resources Conservation Service as acting CFO, acting associate agency chief, and as Mississippi's state conservationist. Since 2013, **Wilkes** has worked as the director of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force.

## TRINA GEORGE APPOINTED AS USDA STATE DIRECTOR FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT FOR MISSISSIPPI



**George**

Filled with a passion to serve her fellow Mississippians, **Dr. Trina George's** service includes decades of experience working to develop rural communities and economic development in Mississippi. Previously, she was employed as the Special

Projects/Community Outreach and Development Coordinator in the Office of Congressman **Bennie G. Thompson**. This experience allowed her to directly engage and support the surrounding communities of western Mississippi, assisting constituents with rural housing, water, wastewater, and infrastructure requirements. Her hands-on experience collaborating with federal, state, and local governments to develop rural communities prepared her for her appointment as the USDA Rural Development State Director for Mississippi in 2009.

"We enjoyed working with **Ms. George** when she was the State Rural Development leader under **President Obama** and we welcome her back to that role," said **Frank Howell**, staffperson for Delta Council. "USDA-RD is important to our community and economic development efforts in the MS Delta."

As a part of the **Obama** Administration, this opportunity enabled **George** to continue her service to the people of Mississippi, facilitating programs that resulted in the distribution of over \$5 billion in federal loan and grant funds to rural communities.

She is the proud parent of three children, all of whom are serving their country in the Armed Forces. **George** earned her Ph.D. from Walden University in Public Policy and Administration. She holds a master's degree from Mississippi State University and a bachelor's degree from Mississippi Valley State University. She also has a Specialized Certification in Creating Collaborative Solutions: Innovations in Governance from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Executive Education and a Professional Certificate in Management and Leadership from the NeighborWorks Training Institute of America in Washington, D.C.

## DR. COREY WIGGINS CONFIRMED BY U.S. SENATE AS DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY FEDERAL CO-CHAIR

Wiggins nominated by President Biden; becomes fifth Co-Chairman to serve in the position.



**Wiggins**

Delta Regional Authority (DRA) announced **Dr. Corey Wiggins** has been confirmed unanimously by the U.S. Senate to serve as DRA Federal Co-Chairman. Nominated by **President Biden**, **Wiggins** becomes

the fifth DRA Federal Co-Chairman to serve in the position.

A native of Hazlehurst, Mississippi, Chairman **Wiggins** brings a diverse set of career experiences that include working in academia, state government, nonprofit, and private sectors. He has focused on creating equitable opportunities through systems and public policy change.

"I am grateful to **President Biden** for the opportunity to lead the Delta Regional Authority at this critical time in our country" said DRA Federal Co-Chairman **Corey Wiggins**. "Throughout my career, I have been driven

by a mission of service with an emphasis on creating equitable opportunity. I look forward to working with the communities across 252 counties and parishes served by the Delta Regional Authority to focus on solutions that will improve quality of life in the region."

## KUMAR RECEIVES U.S. AQUACULTURE SOCIETY AWARD



**Dr. Ganesh Kumar**, Mississippi State University Miss. Ag and Forestry Experiment Station (MAFES) aquaculture economist with WFA, has received the prestigious "Distinguished Early Career Award" from the U.S. Aquaculture Society, a chapter of the World Aquaculture Society. The award was presented to him recently at the Aquaculture society meeting in San Diego.

### MESSAGE from page 2

the Delta created the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Joint Water Management District to begin learning more about this resource and ways that we can conserve it. In the 2000s, the Governor's Sustainable Task Force was created with a mix of private, state, and federal agencies charged with intensely focusing on the challenge. During the same time period, the agricultural research community led by Mississippi State University and USDA-ARS have been working hand in hand with producers to learn all we can about the benefits of conservation and saving water usage and this prompted the creation of the National Center for Alluvial Aquifer Research Center in Stoneville.

Beginning in 2016, the Delta advocated for a renewed emphasis by the United States Geological Survey on understanding everything there is to know about the aquifer, its interactions with other aquifers, its interactions with the surface and many other scientific

discoveries that can help guide us to solutions for the water over-balance (The Mississippi Alluvial Project). Finally, USDA-ARS and the Army Corps of Engineers have led an effort to look at a really exciting pilot project that would take water from one area of the aquifer that enjoys robust recharge and place it in another area of the aquifer that does not have the same level of recharge and is showing concerning levels of imbalance.

The message from four producer leaders that day in Stoneville (**Tim Clements** of Greenville, who serves as Chairman of our Soil and Water Committee; **Patrick Johnson** of Tunica, who is President and also serves on the MS Department of Environmental Quality Commission; **John McKee** of Friars Point, a Delta Council director who serves as Chairman of the YMD Joint Water Management District; and myself) was that agriculture is stepping up to the plate to meet the challenge of conservation, but those efforts alone will not get us back to water balance. It is obvious that we must continue to look at innovative solutions to achieve our goal.

With that background, Delta Council told the Mississippi River Commission that this will be the issue of tantamount importance to the Lower Mississippi Valley for the next 100 years just like the building of levees and interior flood protection was for the previous 100 years. It is imperative that we have the full involvement and expertise of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Mississippi River Commission in helping us tackle this problem since there is no other entity that has the engineering capabilities that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers possesses. Delta Council, YMD, DEQ, and others would like for them to include this as a *critical mission of their agency* and partner with all the other groups that are working on solving this challenge.

The Delta has made great strides in identifying strategies and options that will result in the achievement of water balance, but it is going to take all of us working together to meet this goal. We have all heard the predictions about the importance of water in the coming decades and centuries and what an even more valuable commodity it will be. The Mississippi Delta is fortunate to have this resource and you can be assured that Delta Council, in conjunction with a whole lot of other people and agencies, are working hard every day to conserve this asset and enjoy a bright economic future.

## DELTA ON THE MOVE | THADDEUS T. FAIRLEY SR. STATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MISSISSIPPI FARM SERVICE AGENCY



### PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Fairley is a certified nonprofit professional and native of Sunflower, Mississippi. Most recently, he served as a Field Representative for Congressman **Bennie G. Thompson**, current chair of the Committee on Homeland Security. During his time with the Congressman, Fairley served as an expert on broadband initiatives and constituent services, including working on resolving issues for farmers. Prior to joining the Congressman's office, Fairley worked in the banking industry for over seven years.

Fairley has been involved in the Sunflower County Freedom Project for the past six years and served as a board member. The organization

focuses on creating a corps of academically capable, socially conscious, and mentally disciplined leaders in the Mississippi Delta. In 2020, Fairley received the Higher Purpose Award for his contributions to minority businesses and entrepreneurs.

He is a graduate of Mississippi Valley State University where he earned a bachelor's degree in computer science and mathematics and Louisiana State University at Shreveport where he earned a Master of Science in nonprofit administration.

Fairley currently resides in Indianola, Mississippi, with his wife Felicia and their two sons. He enjoys spending time with his family and traveling.

### CURRENT TITLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- The State Executive Director is responsible for:
- Directing and administering all FSA programs in the State
  - Managing all aspects of State Office day-to-day operations
  - Staffing and distribution of staff
  - FSA employees within the State
  - Representing the President, Secretary, and Administrator in Federal FSA programs.

### WHAT I LIKE MOST ABOUT THIS POSITION

"I enjoy most being able to assist farmers here in Mississippi and working with stakeholders to ensure these needs are met. Mississippi is my home and I've been here my entire life. So, simply the opportunity to do something good for Mississippi excites me more than anything," said Fairley.

## BOND, BAILEY AND SANDERS AWARDED AT MID-SOUTH FARM AND GIN SHOW

**Dr. Jason Bond**, extension and research professor in Plant and Soil Sciences at the Delta Research and Extension Center, received the Mid-South Farm and Gin Show's Ag Achievement award, along with Mississippi farmer **Gary Bailey** and independent consultant **Tim Sanders**. Bailey's farm in Tunica, Miss., was an

early hot spot for glyphosate-resistant marestail and Palmer amaranth. Bailey partnered with Bond to do multiple on-farm herbicide trials, application timing trials, equipment trials,



Gary Bailey, Tim Sanders, Angus Catchot, and Jason Bond

and more. Bond is a scientist in the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station and a weed specialist in the MSU Extension Service.

## DELTA COUNCIL HEALTH AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE PASSES MEDICAID EXPANSION RESOLUTION

MEETING HIGHLIGHTED BY TIM MOORE AND MIKE CHANEY



The Delta Council Health & Education Committee, chaired by **Dr. Cass Pennington**, unanimously approved a resolution supporting Medicaid Expansion. **Wade Litton** of Greenwood led a special subcommittee reviewing the issue and brought it before the full committee for approval.

**Moore**, President and CEO of the Mississippi Hospital Association addressed the committee on the impact of Medicaid expansion on rural healthcare, followed by arguments for and against Medicaid expansion by **Mike Chaney**, Mississippi Insurance Commissioner.

"This effort began as a discussion among a few of us concerned about the status of healthcare delivery and profitability in the Delta," said Litton. "I asked **Dr. Pennington** if we could form a working group to look at these issues and that is how we began our journey. We talked with healthcare providers in the region, healthcare providers outside of the region, **Richard Roberson** at the MS Hospital Association and our friend Insurance Commissioner **Mike Chaney** to gain insights into the dynamics that are shaping healthcare in rural America and the Delta.

"The members of this working group included **Patrick Johnson** of Tunica, **Bill Kennedy** of Inverness, **Tom Gresham** of Indianola, and **Paul Hollis** of Rolling Fork," continued Litton. "I want to emphasize that we did not start out with the goal of zeroing in on



Tim Moore



Mike Chaney

policy related to Medicaid Expansion; we simply wanted to take a holistic look at all the issues and see what shook out. As we continued to talk with the experts, it became clear, however, that Medicaid Expansion could have the biggest and most immediate impact on health delivery in the Mississippi Delta. We think that after you hear a summation of all the information that we gathered, you will agree that Mississippi should carefully examine the positive impact that Medicaid Expansion will have on our rural State. The expansion of Medicaid will allow more people to have the ability to have coverage, it will allow for healthcare providers to be in a better fiscal situation, and it will hopefully impact employers' rising insurance costs across rural areas like the one that my business operates in."



Wade Litton and Dr. Cass Pennington

## MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION AND DELTA COUNCIL CONVENE



Commissioner Riley James, Commissioner Norma Jean Mattei, and Major General Diana Holland

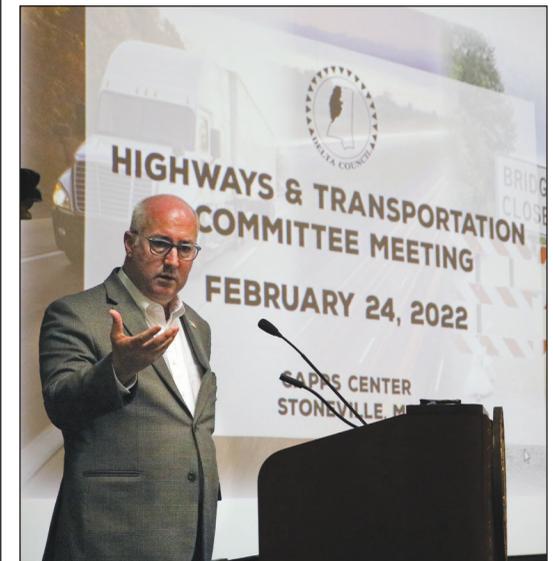
Members of the Mississippi River Commission traveled to Stoneville to meet with scientists and Delta Council leaders concerning ongoing challenges and opportunities surrounding water supply across the Delta. Presentations were given by Delta Council staff, **Bubba Simmons**, a producer from Washington County, **Dr. JR Rigby**, Associate Director for the Hydrological Transport and Response Branch in the US Geological Service (USGS) Lower Mississippi-Gulf Water Science Center, and **Dr. Andy O'Reilly**, Research Hydrologist for US Department of Agriculture, Ag Research Service (USDA ARS).

## DELTA COUNCIL OFFICERS MEETING IN STONEVILLE



Delta Council Officers and Presidential Appointees met in Stoneville to hear and discuss challenges and opportunities in the region. Delta Council President **Patrick Johnson** opened the meeting and turned it over to **J.R. Rigby**, Associate Director for the Hydrological Transport and Response Branch of the USGS Lower MS-Gulf Water Science Center, who presented an overview of water supply issues in the Delta. Following **Rigby**, **Dr. Jeff Gore**, Interim Head of Delta Research and Extension Center, addressed the group on the importance of Stoneville to the Delta. After a staff report, the meeting was adjourned.

## DELTA COUNCIL HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING



Recently, Delta Council Highways and Transportation Committee met at the Capps Center in Stoneville to hear an update from MS Department of Transportation Executive Director, **Brad White**.

## DUCKS UNLIMITED CEO ADAM PUTNAM GUEST SPEAKER AT DELTA WILDLIFE ANNUAL MEETING



Delta Wildlife held their annual board of directors meeting where Ducks Unlimited CEO **Adam Putnam** was asked to be the guest speaker. **Putnam** discussed the Memphis based conservation organization's efforts in waterfowl conservation, as well as their strong partnership with organizations like Delta Wildlife. The Delta Wildlife Board of Directors also praised **Putnam** and Ducks Unlimited for its strong support of the Yazoo Backwater Pumping Plant. Pictured is **Putnam**, **Allan Grittman**, and **John Murry Greenlee**.

# Delta Council

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## DELTA PRIORITIES INCLUDED IN OMNIBUS BILL

Congress voted for a measure to support federal programs through the remainder of Fiscal Year 2022, in addition to making important investments in Mississippi Delta projects.

The omnibus legislation (H.R.2471) includes all 12 annual appropriations bills, in addition to a nearly \$14 billion supplemental package to provide security and humanitarian assistance for Ukraine and Central European allies. The FY2022 fiscal year began on Oct. 1, 2021.

Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, was instrumental in ensuring that a number of Delta related priorities were included in the legislation. Some of those include:



Hyde-Smith

### Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies, 2022

- Mississippi Watershed and Flood Protection Operations – \$8.4 million in USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service funding to support continued Mississippi watershed and flood prevention operations to reduce flooding, erosion, and sediment damages in various authorized watersheds. \$100 million provided for overall national program, which additional authorized activities in Mississippi will be eligible for.
- Chronic Wasting Disease Research and Response – \$10 million in USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service funding to be allocated directly to state wildlife agencies for CWD testing, management, and response activities. An additional \$2 million is provided in research support for the overall

### Energy and Water Development, 2022

- Authorized U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Activities – \$105 million for 29 authorized flood control, navigation, and related projects and activities in Mississippi. \$24,546,000 for work on Mississippi's flood control reservoirs – Arkabutla, Enid, Grenada and Sardis Lakes. \$18,634,000 for dredging of Mississippi ports in Pascagoula, Gulfport, Vicksburg, Greenville and Rosedale. \$33,076,000 for operation, maintenance, and wildlife mitigation activities on the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway.
- Mississippi River Channel Navigation Improvements – \$94.8 million for construction, operation and maintenance of improvements to enhance navigation conditions along the river.

effort to detect, combat, and control CWD.

- Agricultural Research – Increases USDA Agricultural Research Service funding for research projects involving cotton ginning, genomics, forest products, groundwater availability, and other important initiatives at Mississippi research facilities and universities.

- Cogongrass Management and Control – \$3 million to support the State of Mississippi's

efforts to combat cogongrass, an invasive grass that reduces forest productivity and harms wildlife habitat on public and private lands.

- Farm Service Agency Offices – Bill language prohibiting USDA from closing FSA county offices, or permanently relocating county based employees if it would result in an office with two or fewer FSA employees.

- Mississippi River Levee Improvements – \$29 million for construction, operation and maintenance along the mainline Mississippi River levee system.
- Research and Development – \$35 million for Corps research and development, most of which takes place at ERDC in Vicksburg.
- Delta Regional Authority (DRA) – \$30.1 million for DRA, including \$15 million for flood control, public infrastructure, and rural economic development grants.
- Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) – \$195 million for ARC, including not less than \$16 million for industrial site and workforce development activities in Southern and South Central Appalachia and up to \$13.5 million for Southern Appalachia.

### Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, 2022

- U.S. Geological Survey Aquifer Study – \$2.0 million for USGS to continue assessing groundwater resources and aquifer declines in the Mississippi Delta.

### Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, 2022 Health and Human Services

- Rural Health Development Program – \$731,000 for Mississippi Rural Health Association to provide workforce development and technical assistance capacity to rural healthcare providers in Mississippi.
- Sharkey Issaquena Community Hospital Project – \$2.34 million for Sharkey Issaquena Community Hospital to renovate and modernize its facilities to better serve the patients in the hospital's 840-square-mile service area.

- Mississippi Delta Family Medicine Residency Program – \$4.238 million for Delta Health System to complete the acquisition of adequate training facilities, instruction, and equipment needed to support its new Mississippi Delta Family Medicine Residency Program.
- Mississippi Medical Education Support and Development Program – \$800,000 to Office of Mississippi Physician Workforce to develop and launch a comprehensive statewide training, support, and leadership program for faculty at residency programs around the state.
- Statewide Mental Health and Substance Abuse Telehealth Network – \$6.0 million for The University of Mississippi Medical Center to develop a statewide mental health and substance abuse telehealth network.

### Labor

- Mississippi Rural Water Apprenticeship Program – \$1.0 million for Mississippi Rural Water Association to develop training and certification courses for water and wastewater operators to ensure a skilled workforce and protect the health and environment in small communities throughout Mississippi.

### Education

- Agriculture Aviation Education Program – \$2.0 million for Delta State University and partners to develop a 12-week educational aviation program, which will expand the postsecondary education options available in the Mississippi Delta.
- The Delta Scholars Program – \$150,000 to Mississippi State University to supplement and enrich the postsecondary education programs for students who are in the Delta Scholars Program.