

# Greenville ceremony heralds awarding of deed

## Ownership of Mat Casting Field, Lands transferred to MS Levee Board from Corps

A special ceremony held in Greenville, MS, Tuesday, October 15, marked the transfer of land and property from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to the Mississippi Levee Board. Included in the transfer was ownership of the Greenville Mat Casting Field and Loading Unit Lands.



Mayor Paul Artman, Senator Cochran, Fred Ballard, Congressman Thompson and Col. Rick Clapp.

Dignitaries and leaders on hand heralded the event as positive economic news, not only for the Greenville/Washington County area, but the entire Delta. These leaders included

Mississippi Senator Thad Cochran and Second District Congressman, Bennie Thompson.

The granting of the land deed will make up for jobs lost in the recent closing of the Corps casting field in Greenville and the relocation of its bank grading unit to Memphis. As Mississippi Levee Board President, Fred Ballard, told the assembled group, the Corps had expressed a desire to replace those lost jobs.

"In an effort to fulfill that wish, the Corps agreed that this property could be developed to replace the lost jobs," Ballard said in his opening remarks. "The Levee Board, along with the City of Greenville, asked our members of Congress to insert language in

the appropriation bill authorizing and directing the Corps of Engineers to transfer ownership to the Mississippi Levee Board. The Levee Board, in turn, will partner with the Greenville Port Commission to manage and develop the property," Ballard added.

Addressing the crowd gathered at the event, all who agreed on the enormous benefits that will be derived from the new development, were: Greenville Mayor Paul Artman; President of the Washington County Board of Supervisors, Al Rankins; Greenville Port Director, Harold Burdine; Washington



Senator Cochran and Congressman Thompson

County Industrial Foundation Chairman, George Berry; Congressman Thompson and Senator Cochran. Colonel Frederick Clapp, Jr., Commander of the Vicksburg District Corps of Engineers, formally presented the deed to the Levee Board.

The Greenville Mat Field was originally authorized by the U.S. Congress in 1928 as part of the Mississippi Rivers and Tributaries Project. The original project area consisted of 100.27 acres and was later expanded to the current project area of 351.55 acres of fee land and 2.4 acres of easement land. The site has been occupied by the Corps of Engineers for 54 years. In 1995, leasehold interest was transferred from the Vicksburg Corps District to the Memphis District. - MSLB

## From the Chief Engineer

You will note, in this second issue of IMPACT, the flurry of activity we have been involved with here at the Mississippi Levee Board over the past few months. From heralding new occasions and opportunities to commemorating historical events, all this work is done with one ultimate goal in mind: the protection of our citizens from flooding.

Part of our goal at the Mississippi Levee Board is to draw as much attention as possible to the work we do and why we do it. Providing flood control for our people opens the door for economic advancement and growth. The way in which we provide flood control helps protect our environment and keep

it safe for future generations. We view the work we do, in conjunction with the Corps of Engineers and other organizations featured in this issue of IMPACT, as essential for the future of the Mississippi Delta.

Unfortunately, there are still those, armed with misinformation and untruths, resisting our efforts at every turn. Many of these very people who oppose the projects the Levee Board endorses have never set foot in the Delta!

Nevertheless, we believe that time—and truth—are on our side. The Mississippi Levee Board has been here for many, many years and will continue to be here to fight for necessary and much needed flood control projects, such as you will read about in this publication.

We hope you enjoy this issue of IMPACT. If you have any comments or suggestions, please feel free to e-mail me at jim@msleveeboard.com. I look forward to hearing from you!

# Corps continues push to raise deficient levees

VICKSBURG, MS – The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and area levee boards are pressing to upgrade deficient Mississippi River levees in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas.

After the 1973 flood, the Corps revised the flowline of the Mississippi River. This left 303 miles of levee in the Vicksburg district deficient in grade and section. Many were too low to provide adequate protection in the event of worst flood that can reasonably be expected to occur, the "project design flood."

Failure of a mainline Mississippi River Levee at peak flood would lead to catastrophic damages in the affected state.

"We try to concentrate on the most deficient reaches first to bring them up to project design flood," said Dean Trawick, Mississippi River levee project manager for the Corps' Vicksburg District. "We leapfrog to more serious areas as necessary."

The work, which includes levee enlargement, construction of berms and some relief wells, has been concentrated in Mississippi and Louisiana during the past two to three years.

In 2002 there are 23.2 miles of levees under construction in Mississippi and 6 miles in Louisiana, he said. Scheduled to be awarded for construction this next year are 8.8 miles in Mississippi and 7.4 miles in Louisiana.

Kent Parrish, senior project manager of the Vicksburg District, said excellent weather during the past few years have boosted the projects and have put many of the contractors ahead of schedule. "Currently there are approximately 100 miles of levee in Louisiana, 50 miles in Mississippi, and 20 miles in Arkansas deficient in grade," he said.

"With Congress providing sufficient funding and the Fifth Louisiana Levee Board and Mississippi Levee Board providing the necessary rights of ways, we have been able to make excellent progress. It has been a great collaborative effort."

In the past two years, levee construction has focused on the areas from Lake Providence south toward Mound in Louisiana and south of Mayersville in Mississippi. The Corps continue to concentrate in these areas but will also include work near Vidalia, La.

Under the MR&T program, the Vicksburg District is responsible for 186.1 miles of levee in Mississippi; 198.7 in Louisiana; and 75.6 in Arkansas.

Since 1976, the Vicksburg District has raised 23.2 miles in Mississippi, 16.6 miles in Arkansas and 40.1 miles in Louisiana, including those reaches currently under construction.

Trawick said levee raising is complicated and there are several methods of controlling water seepage, which is one of the major concerns.

"When water gets up next to the levee, water tends to try to come

through or under it." The levee is built such that the water cannot pass through it, leaving it seeking a route under the foundation.

"If you don't control that flow, you will have a problem. Even though the dirt will hold on one side of the levee, there could be weaknesses below the levee. That pressure has to be relieved."

There are two ways to control the pressure. A berm on the land side keeps seepage from coming up near the levee and helps hold the water down to avoid any damage to the foundation of the levee itself, Trawick said.

The Corps drills relief wells in cases where there is not enough room to maneuver to put in a berm.

"In a lot of places we are using a well which will regulate the material coming under the levee. The water is not the problem, but the pressure of that water moving material. The water table has to be relieved before it reaches the point of moving material with it," he said.

While reducing the threat of flooding, the Corps is also focusing on ways to improve the environment or minimize environmental losses as part of the construction process.

"We have been working with landowners to produce a win-win scenario to make sure that our borrow pits are designed for duck habitats or aquatic habitats," Trawick said.

"We have been able to reduce impacts to the environment by using dredged material on many of our berms," Trawick said.

Existing berms are dug up and the good clay material is used to raise the levee. Then a retaining dike is built where the existing berm was located to hold dredged material, mainly sand, which is then pumped in from the river to reconstruct the berm.

"By using this construction method, we minimize the amount of dirt needed which reduces the land we have to disturb," Trawick said.

Parrish said that the most deficient levees in Lake Providence and Mayersville have been enlarged while protecting bottomland hardwoods to the maximum extent by using this innovative technique. "For example, at Mayersville, the District was able to save over 500 acres of bottomland hardwoods by using material from the old berm to raise the levee," he said.

The Corps anticipates completing the critical levee raising projects by the year 2031. - **MSLB**



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# Wildlife's silent steward

By Trey Cooke

Executive Director, Delta Wildlife, Inc.

The Mississippi Levee Board is known for its service in flood protection. For this reason, most Delta citizens recognize and respect the role in which the agency provides. However, many of us overlook the fact that the Mississippi Levee Board protects and serves much more than just people. Thousands of native plants, native wildlife species, and migratory birds benefit from their actions.

The Mississippi Levee Board protects and serves plants and wildlife through two major mechanisms. The first mechanism is through improved drainage and flood protection. Plants and wildlife are much like people...too much water and they drown. Prolonged flooding has serious negative impacts on almost all plant and wildlife populations except for fish, aquatic plants, two trees, and a small assortment of highly adaptable animals. In some cases, the organisms that are designed to live in the water become stressed or die because of changes created by prolonged flooding.

The second mechanism is much more contemporary and



consist of habitat enhancement and management. Many of the lands used in levee systems and spoil banks along drainage ditches create additional wildlife habitat for an abundance of species. The levee systems provide habitat for more than a hundred species of riparian and grassland-loving birds like the Eastern Bluebird, Eastern Meadowlark, Bobolink, and Dickcissel. Spoil banks are created when ditches are cleaned out and the excess soil is piled adjacent to the drainage system and also generate additional and unique habitats. Annual grasses and weeds grow quickly on these sites and provide abundant habitat for species such as quail, small mammals, and grassland songbirds. These type habitats are rare in the Delta and are critical for species that depend on them.

Even though it is not the primary objective of the Mississippi Levee Board, the Mississippi Levee Board has protected, created, and maintained thousands of acres of critical wildlife habitat in the Mississippi Delta, making them wildlife's biggest silent steward. - **MSLB**

## Wanamaker speaks to students

Jim Wanamaker spoke to the Matty Akin 4th graders on October 11, 2002 about the Mississippi River and the Mississippi River Levees. His presentation opened with a review that 41% of the continental United States is drained by the Mississippi River (this includes water from 31 states and 2 Provinces in Canada). The impact of the Great Flood of 1927 focused attention of the Nation on the need for Federal involvement in assisting with flood control along the Mississippi River. In 1928, the Congress passed the Flood Control Act authorizing the comprehensive Mississippi River & Tributaries Project that provides authority for the Corps of Engineers to operate and maintain one of the greatest inland waterways for navigation in the world and to provide flood protection from the Mississippi River to the residents of the Delta.

Wanamaker explained the importance of revetment and dikes constructed in the River to maintain the channel in place and help move sediment to the Gulf of Mexico which reduces the need for dredging. The review of the environmental benefits to navigation versus railroad and trailer trucks was outlined in the handout presented to all the students. It would take 870 trailer trucks or 225 railroad cars to move what one 15 barge tow on the River will transport.

The Chief Engineer then focused on a brief history of the Levee Boards explaining that the Mississippi Delta is divided into two Levee Districts. The presentation continued with an explanation of how the levee has grown from the first levees in the 1800's to the levee that we see along the River today. He explained how the Corps of Engineers calculates the Project Design Flood on the Mississippi River and how the 1973 flood changed the flow line used by the Corps along the River. He finished his presentation by informing the students that the revised flow line left 69 miles of levee in Mississippi deficient in grade and that the Levee Board and the Corps of Engineers currently have 23 miles of this deficient levee being raised at this time. - **MSLB**

## In Memoriam: Former Levee Board Commissioner, John Allen Darnell 1918-2002



John Allen Darnell, 84, Glen Allan farmer and Levee Board Commissioner for Issaquena County from July, 1980 to July, 1996, died of cancer on October 4, 2002.

Mr. Darnell was born January 23, 1918 in Lexington, MS and moved to Glen Allan at an early age. He graduated from Glen Allan High School and then attended Mississippi State University. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, stationed in the South Pacific. After his discharge, he returned to Glen Allan to begin a life of farming.

Mr. Darnell is survived by his wife, the former Eileen Davis for 56 years. He was a lifetime active member of the Glen Allan United Methodist Church, serving in all capacities, including men's Sunday School teacher for over 25 years. Mr. Darnell served his county as supervisor, tax collector, sheriff, Delta Community College trustee, Bank of Anguilla director, Farm Bureau director, Federal Land Bank director, Delta Council director and Levee Board Commissioner. He served his state on the State Health Commission, State Council on Aging and State Ethics Commission. - **MSLB**

# Officers & Staff

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# October 2002 Board Meeting Recap

Levee Board took the following action: authorized advertisement of bids for workman's compensation insurance, pick up truck, and tractor; concurred with the permit issued to Malouf Construction for load test pilings on the new Hwy 82 Bridge; reviewed the upcoming Deed Presentation Ceremony; read the report of the committee on the Land Management Agreement with the Greenville Port Commission; reviewed plans for the November 4th Annual Levee Inspection; authorized the Board to execute a Memorandum of Agreement with other agencies for the eradication of Cogongrass; authorized the first renewal of the lease with JMBS Casino; and received status reports on all the ongoing projects in the Levee District. - **MSLB**



**2002 ANNUAL LEVEE INSPECTION** - On November 4, 2002 the MS Levee Board hosted it's annual levee inspection. This year's trip started in Filtler, MS and proceeded upstream through the levee enlargement jobs and then to Greenville, MS.

# Recent letters to the Editor

Printed in *The Clarion-Ledger* - October 31, 2002

## Clarion-Ledger opposed to flood control?

It's become a tired mantra for *The Clarion-Ledger*: Oppose the Big Sunflower River Maintenance and Yazoo Backwater Projects as "boondoggles", "wasteful", "harmful to the environment", etc. while simultaneously knocking the critical work of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Human life is at stake with these projects and *The Clarion-Ledger's* editorial board is ignoring the facts.

Quick to raise flags over the alleged dangers of DDT and toxaphene—which the paper erroneously claims will be stirred up by the aforementioned projects—the provable and very real threat of flooding is forgotten. The possibility of any danger coming to our citizens from fish ingestion is statistically negligible compared to the measurable disasters of high waters and flooding.

Why this newspaper also chooses to single out flood control projects in the Delta as examples of government waste is beyond me. *The Clarion-Ledger* normally has never found a government program it didn't like, regardless of cost. But, for some reason, this editorial board turns into *The Washington*.

Times when it comes to critically needed flood control projects for the Delta! Why single out the Big Sunflower and Yazoo Projects when government waste is astronomical in so many other non-essential fields?

I beg this newspaper to stop perpetuating untruths about, and slinging arrows at, projects that will protect our people, our property and will lead to economic development. Enough is enough!

Ken West  
Leland, MS

**Mail your comments in support of the Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project:**

**Vicksburg District Corps of Engineers, Attn: CEMVK-PP-PG: Marvin Cannon,  
4155 East Clay Street, Vicksburg, MS 39183-3455**

**Or email to: [BigSunflowerMaintenance@mvk02.usace.army.mil](mailto:BigSunflowerMaintenance@mvk02.usace.army.mil)**

**Or visit our website at: [www.msleveeboard.com](http://www.msleveeboard.com)**

## Mississippi Levee Board joins with Corps in announcing the SEIS on Big Sunflower Project

The Board of Mississippi Levee Commissioners, based in Greenville, joins the Vicksburg District Corps of Engineers in announcing a decision to complete a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) on the Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project. The SEIS will broaden the scope of the Corps' recently released Environmental Assessment.



Darlove, MS area flooding December 2001

"Meetings with the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) indicated that DEQ will need approximately one year to review the application for the Water Quality Permit in accordance with the state's Supreme Court decision," says Jim Wanamaker, Chief Engineer of the Mississippi Levee Board.

"We expect the schedule for the SEIS will run concurrently with the review by the DEQ."

According to Wanamaker, two flood events in South Washington County last November and December again reminded area residents and officials of the need to expedite both the DEQ review and SEIS. The first studies involving the maintenance of these channels were initiated following flooding in the region in July of 1989.

The original construction on the Big Sunflower River & Tributaries Project was initiated by the Corps of Engineers in 1947, with the work completed in the mid-1960's. The Delta's two Levee Boards have continuously performed the required minor maintenance for this project for over the last 50 years.

The Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project, which requires major maintenance to be performed by the Corps, will restore the capacity of the channels affected to the same level found after work completed in the 1960's.

"We are very disappointed in the delay for this much needed project," Wanamaker continues. "But we do hope that the additional review by the Vicksburg District Corps and the Mississippi DEQ will alleviate future litigation when the next contract is awarded by the Corps." - MSLB

## Board Member Profile:

### President Fred Ballard



Fred Ballard, Jr., a Leland, MS native and Washington County Levee Commissioner since 1988, currently serves as the Board's President. In that capacity, he also serves on the Executive Committee of the Mississippi Valley Flood Control Association.

A cotton farmer by profession, Ballard has lived in Washington County all of his life. Ballard also grows milo, soybeans and corn among his crops, in addition to 1,000 acres of catfish ponds.

Ballard and his wife, Sammie, have three children: a son, Bo, and two daughters, Kimberley Jackson and Leah Jane Turner. Among his many social and community activities, Ballard is a former Rotarian and an active member of the First Baptist Church in Leland.

When asked what initially attracted him to the Mississippi Levee Board, Ballard answers "community involvement. Flood control is such an important component of economic development and public safety, I thought my involvement with the Levee Board would be the best avenue through which to help my part of the state grow and prosper."

Being an active member of the Levee Board has made Ballard more optimistic about the future of flood control for the South Delta, he says.

"Of course, we still need to get our projects up and running and in place to help everybody in our district," Ballard says. "Our work is very important. The activities we are involved in now will impact the future for many years to come, and that's why I'm glad to be a part of this outstanding organization." - MSLB



Fred Ballard (left) presents a Resolution of Appreciation to Herbert Huddleston, chairman of the YMD Joint Water Management District on September 18, 2002. The Resolution thanked YMD personnel for their dedication and conscientious service during high water events. YMD has offered personnel and resources for the Levee Boards use during highwater inspections since 1995.

### PUBLIC MEETING

Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project

Tuesday, December 3, 2002  
7:00 P.M.

South Delta High School  
Rolling Fork, MS

# Levee Board projects UPDATE

## LEVEE ENLARGEMENT PROJECTS:

**Item 502L** - This 7.6 mile conventional levee enlargement and berm project is 99% complete. The turfing has not been accepted on this project.



Item 477L - Enlarging Base of Levee

**Item 496L** - This 10.5 mile levee enlargement and dredged berm project is 87% complete. Chancellor & Sons has sub-contracted the rest of this project to G.B. Boots Construction Corp. of Laurel, MS.

Conventional borrow is being used to top out the levee (see photo).



Item 496L - Topping out the Levee

**Item 477L** - This 5.1 mile levee enlargement project is 20% complete. ASA Enterprises started August 1, 2002 and is utilizing tractors and scrapers to haul conventional borrow (see photo).

**Item 488L** - The Levee Board is working on right-of-way acquisition appraisals. This contract for this 8.8 mile levee enlargement and dredged berm project will be awarded in Summer, 2003.



Item 3 - Completed Maintenance

## BIG SUNFLOWER RIVER MAINTENANCE PROJECT:

The Vicksburg District Corps of Engineers has determined that an SEIS for the Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project needs to be performed (see attached article). The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) is working on answering the concerns raised by the Mississippi Supreme Court.

## YAZOO BACKWATER PROJECT:

The Final Reformulation Report of the Yazoo Backwater Project is scheduled to be completed in January, 2003.

## GRAVEL SUPPLY CONTRACT:

The 2002 Gravel Supply Contract has been completed. This project supplied 14,300 c.y. of sand-clay gravel to resurface 8.5 miles of our maintenance road on top of the levee in the vicinities of Avon and Winterville. James Arnold of Greenwood, MS was the supplier for the project. Levee Board crews spread the delivered gravel (see photos). - **MSLB**



Gravel Supply Contractor delivering Gravel



Levee Board Crews spreading Gravel

# Washington County Drainage District Provides needed services, assistance

A major ally to the Mississippi Levee Board and its work are the drainage districts located throughout the Delta. Close to the Levee Board's Greenville base is the Washington County Drainage District. The District is a collaboration of the Black Bayou, Bogue Phalia and Riverside Drainage Districts which regularly meets and shares resources.

Drainage districts were organized in Mississippi for the purpose of reclaiming wet, swamp or overflowed lands for agricultural and sanitary purposes. The districts consist of a system of artificial main drains, lateral drains, natural drains as well as water courses and levees.

"Essentially, our job is to maintain the drainage canals that were originally constructed in the early part of the last century," says Ben Sayle, a certified public accountant who served as Secretary of the Washington County Drainage District for some 30 years.

Sayle says that, originally, the Drainage District sold bonds to pay for the construction of these canals. "Taxes were also assessed

based on the benefits that landowners received from these canals," Sayle says. "That money, then, was used to retire the bonds while also paying for additional

maintenance and construction."

The Washington County Drainage District works closely with the Mississippi Levee Board, Sayle says. "We often have the Corps of Engineers come in and do work on some of our main drainage canals," he notes. "We work through the Levee Board on such activity. (The District) would assign our rights of way on canals to the Levee Board, which, in turn, would work out the construction of the maintenance contract with the Corps."

The District, which was formed at the beginning of the 1900's, manages over 350 miles of ditches. Eddie LaFoe is the President of the Washington County Districts and Jimmy Dolittle is manager. Commissioners include John Arledge, Dan Branton, Gibb Steele, Jimmy Reed, David Furr and David Duprelle. The Districts attorney is Harold Mitchell. - MSLB



Track-Hoe performing needed maintenance

## Keeping the Delta safe and beautiful.



The Delta is one of the most unique places in our country.

Your Mississippi Levee Board works hard everyday to keep our land productive, beautiful...and safe.

From flood control projects that keep us protected and grow our economy, to working to shield our environment from harm, your Mississippi Levee Board believes in the Delta – and we believe in your future.



For more information, call 662-334-4813 or visit [www.msleveeboard.com](http://www.msleveeboard.com)

## She should be thinking about arithmetic and new friends this school year...



Your Mississippi Levee Board cares about the children of the Delta and their parents who work hard to provide the best lives they can for their families. The last thing these folks should have to worry about is dangerous high water. Unfortunately, flooding continues to be a very real risk for too many of our friends and neighbors.

That's why your Mississippi Levee Board works hard to provide the best and latest flood control projects for the Delta. Every day, your Mississippi Levee Board is on the job, fighting to make flooding a distant memory, instead of the reality it is today.

**...not flooding.**



For more information, call 662-334-4813 or visit [www.msleveeboard.com](http://www.msleveeboard.com)

# '27 Flood Commemorative Marker unveiled

A public ceremony dedicating the state's newest historical marker was held Friday, October 25, at 2 p.m. at the DP&L Community Center in Scott, MS. The marker will be located near the site of the crevasse where the rain-swollen Mississippi River burst through the levee, causing the Great Flood of 1927. The Washington County Historical Society funded the marker project and hosted the dedication ceremony. The marker is located on State Highway 1 near its intersection of County Road 450, the old Choctaw road connecting Highway 61 to Highway 1.

The marker text reads: The Great Flood of 1927. After months of rain-fall a swollen Mississippi River broke the levee at Mound Landing, some 2 1/2 miles west on April 21, 1927. The flood waters caused widespread destruction and loss of life in seven states. The breadth of the disaster focused attention on the Delta and helped initiate a national flood control program.

Former Governor William Winter, President of the MS. Dept of Archives and History as well as Elbert Hillard the Department's Director were on hand for the ceremony. While markers are privately funded, both the content and text must be approved by the Board of Trustees of the Department of Archives and History. - **MSLB**



Sam Angel (MS River Commission), Elbert Hillard, Billy Payne (1927 Flood survivor), Princella Nowell (MS Historical Society) and former Gov. William Winter.



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