

President's comments



This year has already seen many challenges for your Mississippi Levee Board, and we are rising to all of them.

Many in the environmental community continue to spread misinformation about our work, most notably about the Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project. However, we have been much more proactive in getting the truth out this year about the importance of such projects: publishing editorials and letters to the editor in newspapers from Memphis to Jackson; speaking to various civic and educational groups throughout the Delta; appearing on live radio and television programs; and promoting our message in a more concise way to the public at large through print and television. Our website, www.msleveeboard.com, has also increased in visits tremendously since this time last year.

We at the Mississippi Levee Board have been very encouraged by the tremendous response we have received from our efforts. More than once we have heard from citizens that, for the first time, they truly comprehend the importance of our work. Additionally, many public officials and business leaders have contacted us to congratulate us on our efforts.

Still, there is much work to be done. The purpose of this newsletter you are now reading is to keep all of our constituents informed and updated about the work we are doing. The best way to combat untruths and ignorance is to shed light on what is actually taking place. This is what the Mississippi Levee Board has done and will continue to do.

We encourage you to contact us with any questions or comments that you may have. Our mission is to work for you and your family to ensure the best possible protection against flooding.

Fred Ballard
President,
Mississippi Levee Board

2002 high water events pose potential problems

Heavy rain events occurred across the Mississippi Delta in late November and December 2001, that saw water levels along the Big Sunflower River and the Yazoo Tallahatchie Coldwater System move above flood stage resulting in significant flooding along both of these river systems. The worse flooding along the Big Sunflower occurred in South Washington County, east of Hollandale.

Flooding along the Yazoo Tallahatchie Coldwater System required flood fighting in the area of these streams north of Greenwood. Benefits of dredging on the Yazoo River were emphasized by the fact that no flooding occurred from this event in the Greenwood area.

– See *High Water* inside left page

Members retain seats



Ginger Morlino, secretary of the Levee Board administers the Oath of Office to Kenny Rodgers, Nott Wheeler, Jr., Laurance Carter, and Johnny Robinson re-elected Commissioners for the Mississippi Levee Board.

The election for Levee Board commissioners was held on Tuesday, June 4, 2002. Held every two years, this election saw four present members re-elected to continue on in their position. They are: Nott Wheeler, Jr., representing Bolivar County; Laurance Carter, representing Sharkey County; Kenny Rodgers, representing Humphreys County; and Johnny Robinson, representing Washington County. All but Robinson faced opposition in their respective counties.

The other three seats on the seven member board will be up for re-election in 2004.

Officers & Staff

COMMISSIONERS:

Fred A. Ballard, Jr., President,
Washington County
Kenneth Rodgers, Vice-President,
Humphreys County
Johnny Robinson, Washington County
James W. House, Jr., Bolivar County
Nott Wheeler, Jr., Bolivar County
Roy Nichols, Issaquena County
Laurance Carter, Sharkey County

STAFF:

James E. Wanamaker, Chief Engineer
Peter Nimrod, Assistant Engineer
Charles S. Tindall, III, Attorney
Judy B. Ross, Treasurer
Ginger Morlino, Secretary
Patrick Bolls, Maintenance
Superintendent
Rick Boyd, Engineering Technician

Wanamaker interviewed on Public Radio

Chief Engineer Jim Wanamaker was interviewed on Public Radio Mississippi (PRM) the morning of July 25, 2002, regarding the recently issued report by the EPA on the Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project.

Interviewed by PRM commentator, Wayne Sorge, Wanamaker countered some of the objections of various environmentalists concerning the Project, saying "We are looking to restore the level of flood protection that the people received when the project was completed, not additional development."

Many in the environmental community who oppose the Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project have done so on the grounds of possible pesticide contamination from dredging. The worry is unfounded, Wanamaker says, and is based on unreasonable demands.

"There's a lot of people (in the environmental movement) who would like to take the levees down and put the Delta back to what it was in the 1400's," he commented.

The entire broadcast can be downloaded at etv.state.ms.us/news/0207/stories.html#020725.

High Water continued from front cover

The four reservoirs in the Bluff Hills saw stages move far above the rule curve for December with the emergency spillway at Arkabutla being overtopped in mid-December. Flows from the reservoirs and from the rainfall events required extensive flood fighting activities in the Marks and Glendora area.

Rains in the Ohio, Tennessee, and Arkansas Valleys moved stages on the Mississippi River upward resulting in a high-water event in late May and early June that required the initiation of a Phase I Flood Fight.

The crests tabulated below for this event were high enough to cause minor seepage problems that required action by our crew.

Members of the Vicksburg District Corps of Engineers, the Mississippi Levee Board staff and individuals from the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Joint Water Management District met at the Levee Board on May 22nd to organize the Phase I activities. Daily levee patrols were initiated May 23rd and continued throughout our entire levee system until

May 31st. At that time, the daily patrols were discontinued in Bolivar and Washington County but continued until

parallel to the levee north of Greenville were reported by the Black Bayou Drainage District who had a crew

working in the area. Upon inspection, we found several boils in Black Bayou where it parallels the levee north of Upper Lake Ferguson Road. Our crews constructed a sandbag weir in the ditch to elevate water levels over the sand boils to prevent the movement of material throughout the high water event (see photos). We are making plans to construct access to this area so it can be routinely monitored during future high water events.

Sand boils were also discovered in an area at Buck Chute near Eagle Lake in Warren County. These boils occurred even after the installation of six relief wells following the 1997 high water event. The Vicksburg District is initiating studies and plan to install additional features in an effort to eliminate the need for sandbagging in this area on future high water events.



High water against the levee in Greenville



Sand Boil in Black Bayou



Sandbagging efforts



Completed Sandbag Weir in Black Bayou

2002 HIGH WATER CRESTS

| GAGE | DATE | STAGE |
|---------------|---------|-------|
| Arkansas City | 5/30/02 | 40.2 |
| Greenville | 6/01/02 | 51.9 |
| Vicksburg | 6/03/02 | 45.4 |

June 3rd south of the Washington/Issaquena County line.

Many areas along our levee system were monitored for seepage and sand boils, but only two areas required action by our crews. Sand boils in a ditch par-

EPA releases comments on the Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project

The Region 4 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), based in Atlanta, recently released its comments on an Environmental Assessment prepared by the Vicksburg District Corps of Engineers for the Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project. Covered in the report were examinations of cumulative impacts, freshwater mussels, endangered species, risk analysis, sediment toxicity and water quality. The Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project is an ongoing flood control maintenance project in the Yazoo Basin which will utilize a hydraulic dredge for a majority of the work.

The Board of Mississippi Levee Commissioners, based in Greenville, MS, is pleased that the EPA has released these comments, according to Jim Wanamaker, chief engineer. "This assessment is necessary for the Vicksburg District Corps of Engineers to continue with the decision making process on this important maintenance project," Wanamaker says.

"However," he adds, "we find it puzzling that, in this recently released report, concerns are voiced about the validity and appropriateness of the Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project, especially in light of the fact that EPA Region 2 has unequivocally advocated similar dredging projects, such as in New York on the Hudson River," Wanamaker continues.

Wanamaker also notes that the Vicksburg District Corps of Engineers utilized the same environmental consulting firm to perform the risk analysis for the Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project which did the analysis for the Hudson River Project for the EPA.

"Both the Mississippi Levee Board and the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Levee Board have continuously provided required maintenance on the Big Sunflower River and Tributaries Project since 1950," Wanamaker says. "Every year the Corps of Engineers inspects these projects to insure that we are maintaining these streams properly and to their specifications. We are confident of the work we have done, and are advocating that the Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project continue on to its completion. This project is vital for the protection of citizens of the Delta."

Humphreys County will sponsor hospital flood control project

Led by Humphreys County Commissioner, Kenny Rodgers, officials with the Mississippi Levee Board met with NRCS and Humphreys County officials in May to discuss flooding problems and solutions for the Humphreys County Memorial Hospital. James Johnson with NRCS discussed the need for a sponsor for the project. The Mississippi Levee Board has asked Mississippi's Congressional Delegation



Photo: (Left to Right) Henry Reed (Humphreys County Supervisor), Kenny Rodgers (Humphreys County Levee Commissioner), Bill Brown (President Humphreys County Board), James Johnson (NRCS), Jim Wanamaker (Levee Board Chief Engineer) and Bobby McCain (NRCS Engineer).

for help in eliminating the local cost share for the project. Humphreys County President Bill Brown said the County has discussed the project and has agreed to be the sponsor. NRCS will complete surveys of the area and begin designing the project. A complete plan will be presented to the Mississippi Levee Board and County officials.

July 2002 regular board meeting recap

Following the swearing in of the re-elected Commissioners, Nott Wheeler, Jr., Johnny Robinson, Laurance Carter, and Kenny Rodgers, the Board took the following action: Adopted the 2002 - 2003 Budget; set the tax rate at 2.19 mills, the same rate assessed for the last 6 years; accepted proposals for depositories of Levee Board funds for the next 2 years; accepted the proposal of Joel Cunningham for audit services ending June 03 and June 04; adopted the resolution of appreciation to the Yazoo Mississippi Delta Joint Water Management District; authorized the advertisement for bids for helicopter herbicide application; reviewed the response of the Mississippi River Commission to the Chief Engineer's statement on March 6, 2002; adopted a resolution regarding Environmental Education Center in the South Delta; authorized title and appraisal services for the next levee Item 488L; and received status reports on all the ongoing projects in the Levee District.

Thompson states support

In a statement issued just prior to his recent Democratic Primary victory, Second District Congressman Bennie Thompson was clear in his thoughts on flood control, specifically on the Yazoo Backwater Project.

"Any individual who would oppose an effort to keep flood water out of people's homes is off-target," the May 30, 2002 release read. "Claiming that 'it costs too much' won't get it. The people of the Second District deserve better."

The statement went on to have Congressman Thompson say, "When I toured flood damage in Holmes County in 1997, 2000 and again last year, I saw firsthand the devastation that unbridled floodwaters cause. I don't wish that on anybody. Therefore, I am on record in support of the pumps. I believe that it is in the best interest of my constituents to protect them from losses of life and property due to flooding."

Levee Board projects UPDATE

LEVEE ENLARGEMENT PROJECTS:

Item 502L - This 7.3 mile conventional levee enlargement and berm project is 99% complete. Chancellor & Sons has completed graveling the maintenance road on top of the levee and installing cattle guards to divide the levee into maintenance contracts.

Item 496L - This 9.8 mile levee enlargement and dredged berm project is 80% complete. Chancellor & Sons has completed the dredged sand berms and is starting to utilize conventional borrow to complete the project (see photos).



Item 477L - The Notice to Proceed was granted to ASA Enterprises of Jackson, MO on August 1, 2002. This is a 5.1 mile conventional levee enlargement project. Relief Wells were installed in 1997, therefore a berm is not needed.

Item 488L - The Levee Board has identified 33 tracts of right of way to be acquired and requested preliminary title reports. The contract for this 8.8 mile levee enlargement and dredged berm project will be awarded in Summer 2003.



BIG SUNFLOWER RIVER MAINTENANCE PROJECT:

The Mississippi Supreme Court has remanded the water quality permit back to the Mississippi Commission on Environmental Quality for additional review. The project can not proceed without a water quality permit. The EPA has submitted comments for the Corps of Engineers Environmental Assessment (see attached article).

YAZOO BACKWATER PROJECT:

The Corps of Engineers and the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding allowing MDOT to proceed with the design of the relocated Highway 465 bridge to be constructed over the outlet channel. The Final Reformulation Report is scheduled to be completed later this year. The Vicksburg District is forwarding to Washington a request to deviate from the NED (National Economic Development) Plan. This is necessary to allow construction of a plan that includes the non-structural feature for the reforestation of 62,500 acres of crop land in the one year flood plain.

GRAVEL SUPPLY CONTRACT:

The 2002 gravel supply contract has been awarded. This project will supply 12,300 cubic yards of sand-clay-gravel that will resurface 7.5 miles of our maintenance road on top of the levee in the vicinities of Avon and Winterville. The contractor will deliver the gravel to the levee where the levee board crew will be required to spread the gravel.



Recent letters to the Editor

Printed in The Clarion-Ledger

(June 5, 2002)

Flood control criticism is misguided

Needed flood control projects continue to be slammed in biased, poorly written editorials in The Clarion-Ledger ("Water Projects: Corps review a necessary process," May 2).

We lost count of the number of times the terms "waste", or "wasteful", were used in this piece to describe the Yazoo Backwater and Big Sunflower River Maintenance Projects, but we did not lose the point the editorial conveyed: that the lives and property of people in the south Delta take a back seat to the rhetoric of environmentalists, misguided political figures and The Clarion-Ledger's editorial board.

How can a price tag be put on a human being's life? The cost of the Yazoo Backwater and Big Sunflower Projects is miniscule compared to the number of lives these flood control projects will protect and save. We know that if similar projects were proposed for, say, Massachusetts or Wisconsin, there would not be the irrational outcry we are now hearing. Our regional newspapers here in the Delta support the projects because they live with the potential of flooding and realize the great gains our region would receive from them. Once again, however, the Delta just does not seem to count to Mississippi's largest daily newspaper.

We have called time and time again for facts to be given due process when the validity of the south Delta water projects is written about in this newspaper. Instead, the public is given derogative and snide adjectives in place of evidence and documentation.

Moreover, contradictions abound whenever the projects are the focus of a Clarion Ledger editorial. As but one example, at a point in the latest slam, the author writes that dredging will "actually worsen" south Delta flooding-how? A line later it is stated that the pump will, in fact, "reduce" flooding. Which is it? Those of us with science, reason and the best interests of those living in the Delta know: these projects will indeed reduce flooding.

The threat of flooding is a real one to human life. So is hysteria. We urge those who desire the facts on the two critical south Delta flood control projects to read between the lines in these editorial pages.

Alfred Rankins, Sr.
Washington County Board of Supervisors

(July 12, 2002)

Let's get priorities straight in flood control

The hysterical hostility towards flood control projects in the south Delta is truly mind-boggling. From numerous op-eds in this paper, to letters to the editor ("Drop obsession with 'flood control', June 18, T. Logan Russell), the facts are rarely mentioned on this critical issue.

Mr. Russell, for example, calls the Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project and the Yazoo Backwater Pump Projects "outdated." This is hardly the case. Two similar dredging projects were recently endorsed and advocated by the Environmental Protection Agency in both the Hudson River in New York and the Elizabeth River in Virginia.

Additionally, in contrast to what opponents claim, support for the Big Sunflower and Yazoo Pump Projects is widespread. Second District Congressman Bennie Thompson recently issued a press release saying, "Any individual who would oppose an effort to keep floodwater out of people's homes is off-target. Claiming that 'it costs too much' won't get it. (These citizens) want and deserve better." Both projects are supported by all local government agencies in the project areas, as well.

As for Mr. Russell's comparison of the south Delta economy with that of Tunica and Vicksburg, one can only scratch their head. Both of these communities have benefited from enormous casino revenue, and, in the case of Vicksburg, the National Military Park. To compare Mayersville or Drew, for instance, with these two towns is ludicrous. Moreover, businesses and industry are hesitant to invest in the south Delta precisely because better flood control is needed. Therefore, the projects on board would be an enormous boost to economic development.

Both projects would provide tremendous, tangible benefits to the south Delta. Our priorities should be clear: human beings--and their safety--must be our top concern.

Laurance Carter
Rolling Fork, MS

Roy Nichols
Glen Allan, MS

Commissioners
Mississippi Levee Board
Greenville, MS

2002 High Water AFTERMATH continues

Following the crest of this year's high water in which the Mississippi River reached stages approximately 4' above flood stage, the crews of the Mississippi Levee Board have been working non-stop since mid-June to remove drift material which the water left on the levee. Levee Board crews have completed work on 101 miles of levee with another 111 miles to be completed.



Drift removal operations.



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