

Yazoo Backwater Project Final Report to be Released Soon

The Draft Report for the Yazoo Backwater Project was released in September, 2000. After six years of additional studies and working closely with cooperating agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Vicksburg District is ready to release the Final Report. The Corps of Engineers has been working on the following issues since the release of the Draft Report in 2000:

Wetlands

The Corps has worked hand-in-hand with the EPA in developing state of the art technology for determining Wetland impacts.

Water Quality

The Corps has undertaken a four year \$1M water quality study with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). This study will quantify water quality impacts due to reforesting existing agricultural land.

Endangered Species

The Corps has undertaken a seven year \$4.9M Pondberry study with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USF&WS). The Corps has entered into consultation over Endangered Species with the USF&WS over the threatened Louisiana Black Bear and the endangered Pondberry.



Pondberry Research



Steele Bayou Drainage Structure

Economics

The Corps has had Mississippi State University (MSU) update the economics models and has had Louisiana State University (LSU) and the EPA review the economics.

Environmental Justice

The Corps has hired an independent contractor to review the environmental justice aspect of this project. 68% of the Yazoo Backwater Project area is African-American and 30% of the population lives below the poverty line. If this project is not built, the minority population will be negatively impacted.

Non-Structural Alternatives

The Corps has included several additional non-structural plans into the final array of alternatives.

Internal Review

The Corps has hosted several

Internal Team Review (ITR) briefings of the top Corps of Engineers scientists, engineers and economists from around the county to review the entire report before finalizing.

The Board of Mississippi Levee Commissioners would like to commend the herculean efforts by the Vicksburg District to make the Final Report a model for future water resources projects in the United States. The science and technology that has been developed as part of this project is state-of-the-art. The Mississippi Levee Board looks forward to the release of this Final Report and looks forward to the construction of this critical flood control project



Wetland Verification - Corps & EPA

that will provide long-overdue protection to the citizens and property owners as well as to the trees and wildlife of the Mississippi South Delta. **The Yazoo Backwater Project will balance economics (by the pump) with the environment (acquisition of reforestation easements).** ■



US Army Corps of Engineers

ENDANGERED SPECIES: USF&WS Concurs with Corps on LA Black Bear YBW Project may be "Beneficial" to the Louisiana Black Bear



The Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USF&WS) have been engaged in consultation over endangered species in the Yazoo Backwater Project area. While work is being done to complete the Pondberry Biological Opinion, the USF&WS has formally concurred that the Yazoo Backwater Project will not affect the Louisiana Black Bear. Four months of review and ad-

ditional research was gathered by the USF&WS to make the determination. In the August 10, 2006 letter by USF&WS Field Supervisor Ray Aycock they stated, "the Ser-



vice concurs with the Corps not likely to adversely affect determination for the Louisiana black bear. Effects by this project on this listed species are expected to be insignificant and/or discountable; and even possibly beneficial."

The Mississippi Levee Board would like to thank both the Corps of Engineers and the USF&WS for working together on this issue over the threatened Louisiana

Black Bear. The Yazoo Backwater Project will help create additional habitat for the bear through the acquisition of reforestation easements of up to 55,600 acres of existing agricultural land and reduced flooding. ■

See page 6 for "Levee Board Opposes USF&WS Plan for the YBW Area" article.

Board Meeting Recaps

JULY, 2006

The Board of Mississippi Levee Commissioners held their regular board meeting on July 10, 2006. Following the swearing in of the re-elected Commissioners Kenny Rogers, Nott Wheeler, Laurance Carter and Johnny Robinson, the Board took the following action: re-elected Fred Ballard as President and Kenny Rogers as Vice President of the Board; adopted

2006-2007 budget; set ad valorem tax rate of 2.19 mil (the same rate assessed for the last 10 years); accepted proposals for depositories of Levee Board funds for the next 2 years; accepted proposal of Joel Cunningham to perform the audit for the end of FY 2007 and 2008; received Chief Engineer's Annual Report on the levee, interior drainage and on all ongoing projects in the Mississippi

Levee District; accepted bid on Helicopter Application work by Provine Helicopters from Greenwood, MS; accepted bid for the sale of used 1990 GMC White Truck Tractor by Strick's Equipment.

OCTOBER, 2006

The Board took the following action at the October 2, 2006 regular board meeting: authority was given to advertise

for worker's compensation insurance; concurred with permits issued to ERDC for installing a cable and monitoring equipment at Buck Chute and to Catfish Point for a water well and duckhole construction; November 2, 2006 set as date for annual levee inspection trip; received report from the Chief Engineer on all ongoing projects in the Mississippi Levee District. ■

Levee Board Commissioners Re-Elected

Rodgers, Wheeler, Carter and Robinson Retain Seats on Board

Levee Board elections were held June 6, 2006. Kenny Rodgers, Nott Wheeler, Laurance Carter and Johnny Robinson were all re-elected as Levee Board Commissioners. Rodgers has served as Humphreys County Commissioner since 1996 and is Vice-President of the Board. Wheeler has served as one of the Bolivar County Commissioners since 1996. Carter has served as Sharkey County Commissioner since 1998. Robinson has served as one of the Washington County Commissioners since 2001. All commissioners were unopposed except Robinson.

Board President Fred Ballard stated, "we are proud to have all of our Commissioners re-elected. This is a great Board, we all work together to provide the best for the Mississippi Levee District. The issues facing this Board are carefully and thoughtfully considered before a decision is made."

The other three seats on the seven member board will be up for re-election in 2008. ■



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

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

Staff Profile Rick Boyd Engineering Technician

Rick Boyd has been employed by the Board of Mississippi Levee Commissioners since Aug. 3, 1992. A native of Metairie, Louisiana, Rick moved to the Rolling Fork area in the mid 1960's with his family. He graduated from Mississippi Delta Community College and attended the University of Southern Mississippi.

At the Levee Board, Rick is responsible for surveying, drafting, keeping up with Levee Board right-of-way, and issuing all haul permits on the levee. He is heavily involved in our annual helicopter chemical application on interior streams. Rick also schedules and supervises the levee spraying performed by our crew members.

Rick lives in the Tallula



Rick Boyd

community in Issaquena County with his son Jake. He serves his local community as a board member of the Tallula Utility Water Association. In his spare time he enjoys hunting, fishing and watching Jake compete in athletics. ■



2006 Slide Repairs Complete

The Vicksburg District has completed repairing slides within the Mississippi Levee District. A total of twelve slides were repaired this summer. Six slides were repaired by mixing lime with the material to change the property of the soil and then repacked into the levee structure. The other six slides were repaired by removing the material and repacking the soil into the levee structure.

Jerry Price is retiring January 3, 2007 after a 42 year career for the Corps of Engineers. Price has been repairing slides on the levee within the MS Levee District for the past 10 years. The MS Levee Board wishes to commend Jerry on his long distinguished career and wants to thank him for all his hard work in correcting our slide problems each year. We wish him a long, happy and healthy retirement. ■



Pushing material out.

Mixing lime with soil.



Peter Nimrod and Jerry Price.



2006 Helicopter Application

In 1950, the Mississippi Legislature authorized the two (2) Mississippi Delta levee boards to participate as local sponsors of Corps of Engineers projects within the Yazoo Basin. The Corps of Engineers began work on the Big Sunflower River & Tributaries Project in 1947. This project included channel improvements to over 700 miles of interior streams located within the Mississippi Delta. These streams provide the outlet for flood water in the Delta. The Mississippi Levee Board is responsible for minor maintenance for 350 miles of interior streams within the Mississippi Levee District.

To perform this much needed maintenance, the Mississippi Levee Board contracts with a helicopter applicator to spray a portion of the interior streams each year. A mixture of aquatic herbicides is sprayed on the underbrush and privet that is encroaching into the required clear width of the channel. This required clear width must be maintained to ensure the streams have adequate flood storage and passage capacity.

This year the Mississippi Levee Board treated 105 miles of its interior streams. Provine Helicopters sprayed on September 20-21 and 24-26, 2006. The lower part of the Mississippi Levee District was sprayed this year. Streams treated this year included parts of the Big Sunflower River, Dowling Bayou, Little Sunflower River, the Yazoo Backwater Connecting Channel and Steele Bayou. ■



Loading herbicide.

Spraying privet and underbrush.



2006 Gravel Supply Contract



Unloading limestone.

Each year the Corps of Engineers allocates funding for maintenance gravel for the various levee boards within the Vicksburg District. This year, \$378,000 was allocated to the Mississippi Levee District. A gravel supply contract is awarded to a contractor who delivers the gravel to the levee where Mississippi Levee Board



Levee Board spreading limestone.

personnel and equipment spread the gravel on top of the levee. The gravel supply contract was awarded to Gibson Quality Support Services. Limestone was placed on 6.6 miles of the Mainline Mississippi River Levee in Bolivar County. Two stretches were limestoned: Stations 319 to 526 near Deeson, MS and Stations 1775 to 1915 near Lake Beulah. The placement began October 9 and finished October 18, 2006. ■

Delta Council Mourns Passing of Delta Leader Luther Alexander

Alexander was a strong Flood Control supporter

Delta Council calls the passing of former Chairman of the organization's Flood Control Committee for many years. He was the first African-American selected as a Delta Council Officer and the first African-American County Agent in the Delta.

Delta Council Executive Vice President Chip Morgan. "He believed that the Delta needed infrastructure and a strong quality of life for all of our citizens. Whether it was flood protection, new industrial parks, community water or sewer, new highways, or quality housing, he went to work for the Delta every day ready to make things happen - there are monuments all over the region which are a testament to his life's work." ■

Chairman of the organization's Flood Control Committee for many years. He was the first African-American selected as a Delta Council Officer and the first African-American County Agent in the Delta.

"Luther Alexander broke down a lot of barriers, but those of us that worked with him knew that was because he was so busy building strong foundations for the future that barriers and obstacles became obsolete," said Delta Council Executive Vice President Chip Morgan. "He believed that the Delta needed infrastructure and a strong quality of life for all of our citizens. Whether it was flood protection, new industrial parks, community water or sewer, new highways, or quality housing, he went to work for the Delta every day ready to make things happen - there are monuments all over the region which are a testament to his life's work." ■

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Luther Alexander presiding over a Delta Council flood control meeting with local citizens and former Governor Kirk Fordice in Valley Park, Mississippi.

As written in the *Delta Democrat Times*, Oct. 22, 2006.

History of the MS Levee Board Book

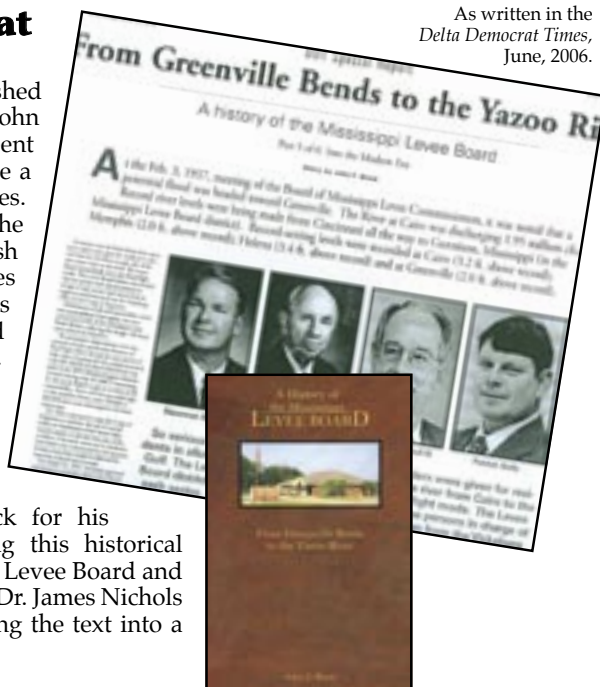
John Black research now available in book format

As part of the ongoing public information campaign, the *Delta Democrat Times* published a six week series in June and July on the History of the Mississippi Levee Board. John Black, a retired banker and longtime resident of Greenville, is a local historian who spent many hours researching the articles at the Levee Board office. Mr. Black also wrote a series in the *Delta Democrat Times* on the origin and history of Greenville's area churches. This series was later published as a book in 2005 entitled "Faith of our Fathers." The Mississippi Levee Board was very pleased with the articles and decided to publish a book entitled "A History of the Mississippi Levee Board." This book includes expanded information as well as many past and present photographs. This book is now available at the Levee Board office for \$12.95 per copy. The Levee Board would like to commend John Black for his excellent job of creating this historical record of the Mississippi Levee Board and would also like to thank Dr. James Nichols for his work in formatting the text into a book format. ■

As written in the *Delta Democrat Times*, June, 2006.



John Black



Levee Enlargement Project Update

Item 502L - 7.6 miles - 100% • Item 496L - 10.5 miles - 99% • Item 488L - 8.8 miles - 85% • Item 477L - 5.1 miles - 99%



488L - Enlarging levee base.



488L - Topping out the levee.



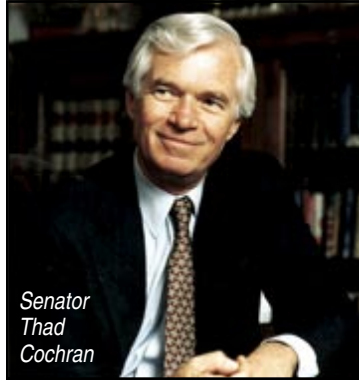
488L - Loading dump trucks with dike material.

Federal Legislative Issues

FY 2007 Appropriations & WRDA

Appropriations

The House and Senate have both marked up the FY 2007 Budget. The President's FY07 Budget had \$278M for the Mississippi River & Tributaries Project (MR&T). The House marked this up to \$290.6M. The Senate marked the MR&T budget up to \$454.5M! The Mississippi Levee Board is extremely pleased with the Senate Committee appropriations. Senator Thad Cochran (MS) chairs the Senate Appropriations Committee.



Senator Thad Cochran

Included in the House Report is the same detrimental language that was included in the FY07 Conference Report that eliminated continuing contracts and placed restrictions on reprogramming authority. The elimination of the Continuing Contract Clause forces the Corps to have all the money in place before a project can be awarded. Corps has used continuing contracts since 1922. Reprogramming Authority Restrictions have severely hampered the ability of the Corps to move money around from projects that are behind schedule to projects that are ahead of schedule. These two actions have limited the Corps of Engineers ability to wisely spend that money that Congress has appropriated.

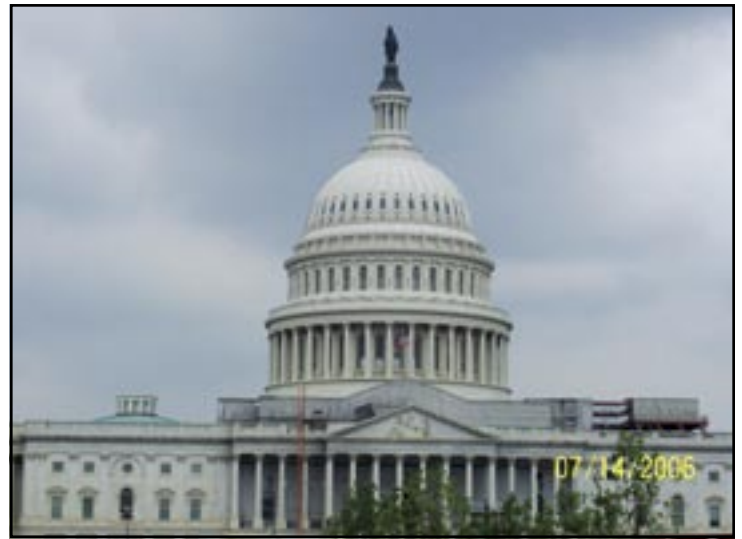
These 2 actions have affected the Mainline Mississippi River Levee Enlargement Project in Mississippi by:

1. Termination of Item 474L - a 3.4 mile item that opened bids in November, 2005.
2. Slow down in Engineering and Design of Item 468L and other items along Highway 465.
3. Termination of surveys and soil boring investigations on Items 509L and 511L.
4. Suspension of Item 488L in mid-June - which has resulted in higher costs to the government and delay of completion of this item!

The Senate Report did not contain this detrimental language. Hopefully, Congress will remove this House detrimental language from the FY2007 Conference Report and maintain the Senate's appropriation mark-up.

WRDA 2006

The last Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) was passed in 2000. For six years,



Congress has been trying to pass a new WRDA Bill. The House version of WRDA, with exceptions, is acceptable. The Senate version of WRDA is not acceptable! The following sections will detrimentally affect the Corps of Engineers and ultimately will prevent vital flood control projects from ever being built:

- *Senate Section 1003* - LA Coastal Area Ecosystem Restoration - creates the LA Water Resources Council within the MS River Commission (MRC) - this will hinder the MRC from doing its job.

- *Senate Section 2005* - Planning - another layer of bureaucracy.

- *Senate Section 2006* - Water Resources Coordinating Committee - adds an inexperienced layer of bureaucracy to guide the Corps internal procedures every 5 years.

- *Senate Section 2007* - encour-

ages the independent review panel to comment on the politics behind the project instead of the scientific and technical merit of the project.

- *Senate Section 2051-2054* - National Levee Safety Program Act of 2006 - creates National Levee Safety Committee - This will change and/or destroy the Corps responsibility for levee inspection and pass this inspection responsibility to an unknown and inexperienced group.

There are many vital flood control projects across the nation that need to be authorized by passage of a WRDA Bill. The Mississippi Levee Board supports passage of a WRDA Bill, but we must make sure it will not negatively affect our flood control projects and/or add additional layers of review for the Corps of Engineers which will further delay our projects. ■

Work Continues on New Greenville Bridge

Levee Board works with MDOT and Contractor to keep project moving

The U.S. Highway 82 Mississippi River Bridge project moves closer and closer to completion. The main span has been finished, the Mississippi Approach is well underway and work has begun on the Arkansas Approach. Regarding the Mississippi Approach, the Mississippi Levee Board has received numerous phone calls about the "hole" in the levee where the approach spans across the levee.

The "hole" is referred to as a runway. Runways are fairly common on the levee enlargement projects ongoing in our district. The notch through the levee allows for a less steeper slope on the haul roads used by the large off-road dump trucks to access riverside borrow areas. On the

levee enlargement work if and when river stages rise to a certain point and with the prospect of going higher the Corps will advise the contractor to close the runway.

Hill Brothers is the Mississippi Approach contractor with many years of experience in heavy construction including levee enlargement work. Adjacent to the new bridge right-of-way on the upstream side, Harlow's Casino is under construction. On the downstream side of the project are a levee spur dike and a natural gas pipeline crossing. Add to this the thickness of the steel beams supporting the approach roadway which span across the levee. Due to these constraints, Hill Brothers requested permission to cut a 5.5'



deep runway through the levee in order to haul materials and move equipment to the riverside of the levee and have adequate clearance.

After careful consideration, and due in large part to Hill Brothers' levee experience, the Mississippi Levee Board granted permission for this runway. Ideally they will be able to complete their riverside work and close



the runway after removing their equipment. If however, high river stages threaten they will have to rebuild the levee at the runway and wait for the water to recede before they can re-open it.

A careful observer will note that there are two runways in the levee at the Greenville City Front. One is located at the end of Main Street and the other at Central Street. ■

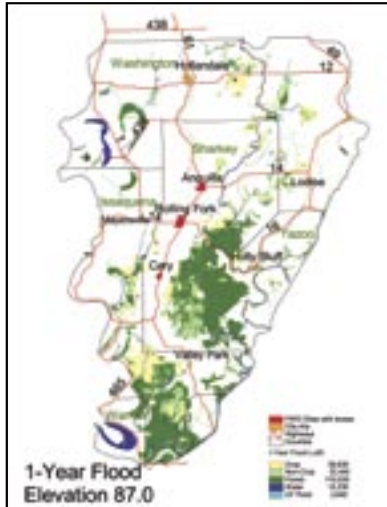
Levee Board Opposes USF&WS Plan for the Yazoo Backwater Area

Non-Structural Plan offers no Flood Control Benefits

Through correspondence received by the Mississippi Levee Board, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USF&WS) states it does not support the Mississippi Levee Board and Corps of Engineers Recommended Plan for the Yazoo Backwater Project. **The USF&WS supports a non-structural plan that will continue and even worsen the flooding conditions in the Mississippi South Delta.**

According to Jackson USF&WS Field Office Supervisor Ray Aycok, in his October 23, 2006 letter, the following is the Service plan for the Yazoo Backwater Area:

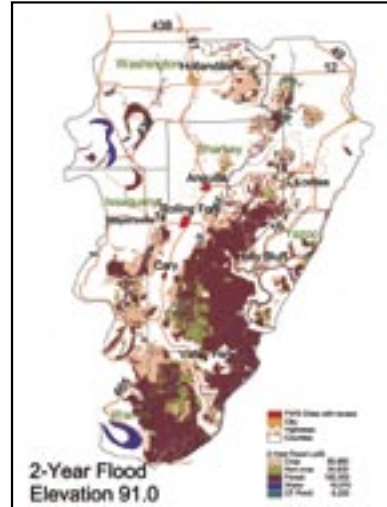
1. **No Pump!** This is a fully non-structural plan.
2. **Steele Bayou Structure gates would be left open for Mississippi River water to back into the Delta to elevation 87' or 91' and then closed.** Today, the gates close whenever the water level on the Mississippi River is higher than the water level in Steele Bayou.
3. **All lands within the 2 year flood event (below elevation 91') would be designated a Nonstructural Flood Reduction Zone (NSFDRZ).** Farmers will lose all farm benefits for agricultural land within the 2 year event. There can be no future development.
4. **Perpetual Conservation Easements offered on the existing 95,600 acres of cleared wetlands and on the 81,800 acres of forest-**



ed wetlands in the 2 year event. There is no plan to protect the local county tax base.

5. **Construction of ring levees around Cary, Rolling Fork and Anguilla to protect against the project design flood.** No mention of protection for Mayersville, Valley Park, Holly Bluff, Louise and the numerous other small towns located in the South Delta. No solution is offered concerning transportation, water supply, sewage treatment or other serious problems during a flood.

"It is apparent that the USF&WS would like to see the South Delta turn into a forested area uninhabitable for humans," stated Peter Nimrod, Chief Engineer for the Mississippi Levee Board. The USF&WS also states it may refer this project to the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). This will add additional delay to this long overdue project. The USF&WS is challenging



the wetland delineation by the Corps and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Corps and EPA are the Federal experts on wetlands. USF&WS does not have the expertise or regulatory authority in the wetlands area, yet seems to use this additional objection to stall the project.

The following is the Mississippi Levee Board & Corps of Engineers Recommended Plan for the Yazoo Backwater Area:

1. **14,000 cfs Pump that will turn on & off at 87'.** This pump will lower the 100 year event by 4.5'.
2. **Steele Bayou Structure will operate the same as today, except it will be allowed to hold up to 3' more water in the Delta during the low-water season.** Mississippi River water is never allowed to back into the Delta.
3. **Reforestation Easements will be offered to**

willing landowners on up to 55,600 acres of existing agricultural land. This proposal will target the developed lands below 87' in the one year flood event that will receive no benefits from the pump. The local county tax base will be protected.

The Mississippi Levee Board & Corps of Engineers Recommended Plan for the Yazoo Backwater Project is a model for future water resources projects located throughout the United States. **It is a combination of both structural and non-structural features that bal-**

ances economics (flood reduction benefits by the pump) with the environment (reforestation of up to 55,600 acres of existing agricultural land).



US Army Corps of Engineers.

The citizens of the South Delta have compromised with a higher pump on/off elevation, smaller pump, and more reforestation to make this project great for the



environment. 35% of the project cost is for the reforestation non-structural feature. There will be vast increases in Wetlands, Terrestrial, Aquatic and Waterfowl resources with the Recommended Plan in place.

"We truly cannot understand why an environmental group or Federal agency would oppose a project that will greatly benefit the environment in every category!," exclaimed Nimrod. ■

Great Delta Bear Affair



Above rig
4th graders from a
photos of 1927 Flood, 1973 Highwater, Levee Enlargement work and the Yazoo Backwater Project.



Are Our Food Plots for Wildlife, or for Us?

by Tommy Gary

The early fall is time for food plot preparation. We all spent much of September spraying, disking, harrowing, planting, harrowing some more, and fertilizing. And Mother Nature was kind, providing ample rains for seed germination. All the while, we imagine walking into that green field on the afternoon of the first day of bow or rifle season, only to wait for the deer to come out before dark. We can visualize dark green oats and wheat against a backdrop of fall foliage as we sit patiently in our stands, searching the timberline for a slight flicker of a deer's ear as it approaches. This visualization is what most of us think about when we think of food plots. And there is nothing wrong with this. But I do think we are missing the bigger picture.

Although most of us go through the trouble of planting and caring for food plots for the sole purpose of hunting, we must also understand that food plots are a very important deer management tool. Certainly, you can use a food plot to harvest deer. But in most cases, you can also use food plots to grow larger antlers, increase body weights, and even expand your total deer carrying capacity (more deer). This takes more than oats and wheat, but it can be and has been done before.

Year-round food plot programs are needed to significantly increase the benefits of your food plots. This obviously takes

more time and money. But the results can be exponential. Deer herd health, antler size, and other important variables are all significantly affected by nutrition. Age, doe to buck ratios, and genetics also play a role, but none are individually more important than nutrition. Year-round food plot programs can be used to increase the nutrition available on your property. In fact, I'm told that natural browse conditions in many parts of the Delta are so poor that the only way you can significantly improve nutrition is through comprehensive year-round food plot programs. Historically, most of us have planted our oats and wheat and walked away until next year.

I would strongly encourage you to investigate the possibility



Purple Hull Peas

of implementing a year-round food plot program on your property. Delta Wildlife can help you develop a program that will meet your budget and time constraints while also significantly improving your deer health and other wildlife. So the next time you're sitting over

that green field with your rifle, think about it as more than just a place to hunt. Think about it as a place to grow bigger bucks. ■

Tom Gary, Jr. is the Chairman, Wildlife and Conservation Planting Committee of Delta Wildlife.

Corps Annual Levee Inspection

The Vicksburg District Corps of Engineers inspected the levee system maintained by the Mississippi Levee Board on October 17-18, 2006. The 212 mile levee system consists of 163 miles of Mainline Mississippi River Levee, 13 miles of Brunswick Extension Levee, 28 miles of Yazoo Backwater Levee, and the eight mile Greenville Harbor Dike. Members of the inspection team included Corps of Engineers employees Lamar Jenkins, Mark Richter and Paul Keene. Chief Engineer Peter Nimrod and Assistant Engineer Bobby Thompson were also in attendance. ■



2006 Annual Levee Inspection: Mark Richter, Chief Engineer Peter Nimrod, Paul Keene and Lamar Jenkins. Not shown is Assistant Engineer Bobby Thompson.

2006 Annual Levee Inspection

On November 2, 2006, the Mississippi Levee Board hosted its Annual Levee Inspection. This year's trip started on the north end of the district near the Bolivar-Coahoma County line and proceeded downstream to Greenville. Lunch was catered by Jo Harris and served at the Catfish Point Hunting Club on the Mississippi River near Scott, MS. ■



HISTORY

1883-1997

Original Levee Board Building



The Mississippi Levee Board original Greenville office was constructed in 1883 at 211 South Walnut Street. The Board later purchased the adjacent bank building at the corner of Main Street and Walnut Street and occupied both of these structures until 1997. In 1997, the Jubilee Casino leased the property and renovated the existing buildings into a hotel called The Greenville Inn & Suites. In April, 2002, the National Society of Colonial Dames XVII Century recognized this building as a historical place as being one of Greenville's oldest commercial structures.

The Levee Board moved into temporary offices in 1997 on Theobald Street while its new facility was being constructed on Highway 82 West in Greenville. The new complex was occupied in December 1998. ■



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