

**Mississippi**  
**LEVEE BOARD**  
*Where people come first.*

**Then...**



**75th Anniversary**  
**1927 FLOOD**

*How far have we come?*

**...and Now**



[www.msleveeboard.com](http://www.msleveeboard.com)

## BOARD Members

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



MS Levee Board Office - Greenville, MS



## STAFF Members

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

## A MESSAGE from the Chief Engineer

### *The Significance of The Great Flood*

by Jim Wanamaker



*The 75th anniversary of the Great 1927 Flood is upon us, an event which ravaged the Delta and forever changed the region. The members of the Mississippi Levee Board and I thought it appropriate to commemorate this historic moment with this brochure. If there is one important lesson we can learn today from this cataclysmic event, which took place 75 years ago, April 21st, it is that we can never rest easy about the power of the great Mississippi River. That is why the Mississippi Levee Board has as our mission the protection of the lives and property of Delta citizens. It is a charge we take with full earnestness and dedication.*

*As you will see in this publication, the Mississippi Levee Board is involved in many different projects and activities to insure that the Delta is safe from flooding. From flood control projects to outreach educational programs, we have never been more active in our 137-year history than we are at the Levee Board today. Strong opposition from extremist environmental groups to providing flood protection to the Mississippi Delta area make it more crucial today than ever before that facts, not fears, are presented before the public about the work we do.*

*We hope you will find this publication interesting and informative. We also hope you will join us in our mission to keep Delta residents informed, safe and protected so that another 1927 Flood will never happen again.*

Jim Wanamaker  
 Chief Engineer

# WHAT WE DO... a brief history of the Levee Board

As the Mississippi River moves toward the Gulf of Mexico, it divides its flood plain into a number of large basins, each bounded on one side by the bluff of the valley wall and on the other by the high ridges or natural levees of the river itself. The Yazoo-Mississippi Delta is such a basin. Before man's involvement, these basins along the river flooded when the river exceeded bank full relieving the channel of water it could not carry.

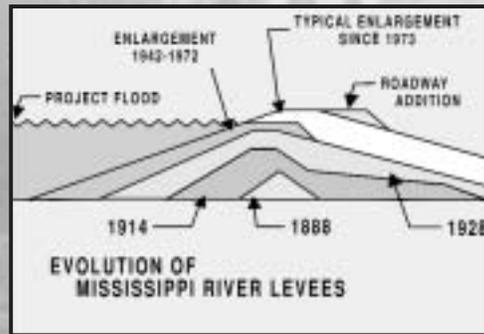
The Yazoo-Mississippi Delta lies at the neck of a funnel at which point the Mississippi River drains 31 states and two provinces of Canada. The drainage area served covers an area extending from New York to Montana. Forty one percent of the United States

drains past Vicksburg at the south end of the Delta. Almost 200 years of effort have gone into relieving the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta from periodic overflow flooding the Mississippi River to make the region safe for residents to develop industry, agriculture, and to build lives in thriving and growing cities.

The efforts to contain flooding from the Mississippi River and from interior streams has been and continues to be the responsibility of the region's elected levee boards.

The Mississippi Levee District, governed by the Board of Mississippi Levee Commissioners, has maintained its efforts against the threat of flooding continuously since 1865.

**The Mississippi Levee Board has maintained its efforts against the threat of flooding continuously since 1865**



# WHAT we are doing...

The Mississippi Constitution charges the Levee Boards with responsibility to provide protection of lives and property to the citizens of the Delta from floods from the Mississippi River. Following the Great Flood of 1927, Congress recognized that the floodwaters from 41% of the Continental United States drain down the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico and passed the Flood Control Act of 1928 which authorized the Mississippi River & Tributaries Project (MR&T) which included a uniform levee system. Following the 1973 Flood, the Corps of Engineers determined that the levee system could not pass the Project Design Flood. The **Levee Enlargement Project** in Mississippi includes 69 miles of deficient levee beginning just below Greenville and extending toward Vicksburg with a maximum enlargement of 8' in the vicinity of Mayersville, MS. The Mississippi Levee Board currently has 18.1 miles of deficient levee under contract. By 2003 another 17.3 miles will be under contract.

The Flood Control Act of 1944 authorized channel improvements for flood control on the Big Sunflower River and its tributaries. In 1950, the Mississippi Legislature authorized the Delta's two Levee Boards to participate as the local sponsor for the Corps of Engineers on interior stream projects. The Mississippi Levee Board has the responsibility to maintain 350 miles of interior streams within its district. The Big Sunflower River & Tributaries Project was initiated in the 1940's and completed in the 1960's. It included 633 miles of channel improvement. In the early 1990's, following several floods on the Bogue Phalia, the Corps determined that due to sediment accumulation, major maintenance is required. The **Big**

**Sunflower River Maintenance Project** will restore the authorized flood control capacity to approximately 130 miles of the original 633 miles of channel. Additional work along Steele Bayou was authorized in the Flood Control Act of 1965 to provide a higher level of protection to the City of Greenville than achieved in the original project. The Upper Steele Bayou Project has been completed through Greenville with work remaining in the Yazoo Wildlife Refuge.

The Flood Control Act of 1941 authorized the design and construction of the **Yazoo Backwater Project** to protect the South Delta of Mississippi. This projects included a combination of levees, drainage structures and pumps. The Steele Bayou and Little Sunflower drainage structures were completed in 1969 and 1975, respectively. The Yazoo Backwater levees were completed in 1978. During highwater, when flood water from the Mississippi River backs up the Yazoo River, the Yazoo Backwater Levee, along with the closed drainage structures, prevents the backwater from entering the South Delta. The Connecting Channel was constructed and completed in 1978

to connect the Big and Little Sunflower Rivers, Deer Creek and Steel Bayou, bringing water from 4093 square miles of the Delta to the Steele Bayou Drainage Structure where a pumping plant can be constructed. During highwater situations, when the gates are closed on the drainage structures to keep out the Mississippi River floodwaters, pumps are needed to evacuate rainfall that falls in the Delta which flows downstream and has no outlet to the river. The pumps are the last remaining unconstructed feature of the Yazoo Backwater Project.

The Mississippi Constitution charges the Levee Boards with responsibility to provide protection of lives and property to the citizens of the Delta from floods from the Mississippi River.



Levee Enlargement Project



Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project



Yazoo Backwater Project



# The Clarion-Ledger

## The Clarion-Ledger - Guest Column

The Vicksburg District, along with the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), continue to monitor the impact of dredging in and out of the Delta. A recently completed independent risk assessment of the proposed dredging on the Big Sunflower project found that the work will not impact DDT levels in the Delta.

Menzie, Cura, & Associates Inc. concluded, "The proposed dredging project neither exacerbates or ameliorates these risks."

This organization is the same group that subcontracted the work on the Hudson River Study for the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA has endorsed dredging the Hudson River to remove contaminated sediments. The Hudson River is very similar to the Big Sunflower River Project in that the Hudson River is contaminated with PCBs, a DDT-like substance.

Heavy rains experienced in the Delta in November and December flooded homes and left many other residents stranded from their homes in south Washington County. This was flooding that would have been prevented had this project been completed.

Construction on the project is being delayed, waiting for the state Supreme Court to rule on a motion for rehearing filed over eight months ago by DEQ.

The Board of Mississippi Levee Commissioners will continue to work to see that the citizens of the Mississippi Delta are afforded the flood protection authorized by the Congress. This protection is much too critical to be railroaded by erroneous information and media partiality.

Fred A. Ballard Jr., is president of the Mississippi Levee Board Greenville. For more information, the Web site is [www.msleveeboard.com](http://www.msleveeboard.com) and the Corps of Engineers' Web site is [www.mvk.usace.army.mil](http://www.mvk.usace.army.mil).

## LETTERS and EDITORIALS...

### THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

## The Commercial Appeal - Letter to the Editor

I am writing in response to the published letter "Corps Mission Was Completed Long Ago" (February 7, 2002). It is very apparent that the author, Mr. Marcus, lives on top of a hill and has never been required to move from his home or transport his children to the school bus in a boat due to flooding. All projects constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers originate from people who have a problem. These people contact their Congressional delegation which provides authority for the Corps of Engineers to complete a study and recommend a solution. All projects constructed by the Corps of Engineers must be authorized by the Congress and meet a test of providing at least \$1 in benefits for every dollar spent. This is the only agency whose projects must meet this criterion.

Many flood control features such as Arkabutla, Sardis, Enid, and Grenada Lakes provide tremendous recreational benefit and are assets to the fisheries community. All of the flood control projects being constructed in the Mississippi Delta also require mitigation. Mitigation requirements for the Tenn-Tom Waterway and other projects in the Yazoo Basin will result in the acquisition of approximately 58,000 acres of developed lands, which will be reforested for mitigation. These lands will result in terrestrial, waterfowl and aquatic habitats to offset any environmental losses and will be available for public hunting.

I must also point out that the Upper Steele Bayou Project providing flood protection to Greenville Mississippi includes well over \$6 million spent as part of that flood control project in the Yazoo Wildlife Refuge. A recent bird count in the refuge indicated 100 species of birds with a total of 88,495 individual birds being tallied in that refuge.

In the eyes of those who live in the Mississippi Delta, the Corps of Engineers is construction projects to better our lives, strengthen our economy and protect our environment. It is far from being a "wasteful tax boondoggle" as Mr. Marcus puts it.

James E. Wanamaker, P.E. P.L.S. Chief Engineer  
Mississippi Levee Board

## The Bolivar COMMERCIAL

## The Bolivar Commercial - Letter to the Editor

The frequent heavy rains experienced over the last three months have emphasized the importance of the pumps operated by the city of Cleveland to evacuate floodwaters. These pumps allow Cleveland to pump water out of the developed areas of the city into channels that move southward into the Bogue Phalia and the Sunflower River. In talking with city officials, they have expressed the fact that every time we have extremely heavy rains many phone calls are received by the public works office to be sure the pumps are working. As citizens of Bolivar County, we are sure everyone realizes the importance of these pumps in providing needed protection to homes and businesses.

As pointed out above, water pumped out of Cleveland goes into tributaries of the Bogue Phalia and the Big Sunflower River and heads South. The Board of Mississippi Levee Commissioners is currently working diligently to see that our water moves safely through the remainder of the Delta into the Mississippi River eventually to the Gulf of Mexico. Two projects vital in providing this protection are experiencing heated opposition from the environmental community.

The Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project is designed solely to restore flows on the Big Sunflower River system below Hwy. 82 so that the channels will carry our water safely downstream. This is what they were designed to do when the project was completed in the mid '60s. The same people in the environmental community who oppose the dredging on the Big Sunflower River system support dredging the Hudson River to remove contaminants. It is difficult for us to understand how dredging can be good for the Hudson River and bad for the Sunflower.

When this water passes on down through the Delta, it enters the Mississippi River through the Steel Bayou Outlet Structure. When the Mississippi River is high, the Steele Bayou Outlet Structure is closed, preventing the Mississippi River from backing into the Delta. At the same time, it also closes the outlet for our floodwater, resulting in flooding of the south Delta area. The solution is simple. We need a pump that will evacuate the Delta's storm water when the gates are closed just like our pumps in Cleveland protect us. The Yazoo Backwater Project was authorized in 1941. Every feature of this project has been completed except for the pumps.

Work on the Big Sunflower is currently being delayed while the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality waits for a decision from the Mississippi Supreme Court on a petition filed May 3rd of last year. The final report on the Yazoo Backwater Pumps will be out for review in early summer.

The next time it rains in Cleveland and we begin to wonder if the pumps are working, let us remember that our fellow citizens downstream are waiting for a maintenance project to get out of court and a pump project to be built that was authorized 60 years ago. We ask that citizens of Cleveland and Bolivar county support these two projects in any way they can. For additional information, contact the Mississippi Levee Board at 662-334-4813 or visit our web site at [www.msleveeboard.com](http://www.msleveeboard.com).

Nott Wheeler Jr. & James W. House Jr. / Board of Mississippi Levee Commissioners  
Bolivar County, MS

## ECONOMIC BENEFITS...

In addition to the life, property and wildlife protection the Mississippi Levee Board provides, their ongoing projects also supplies an impressive economic boost to the Delta.

The Mississippi River & Tributaries (MR & T) Project employs countless Delta workers on various job sites. Item 502L, a 7.3 mile long conventional levee enlargement in northern Issaquena County, is an \$8 million project which is 94% complete; and Item 496L, the 9.6 mile environmentally-friendly levee enlargement project centered around Mayersville, MS is a \$26 million job which is 81% complete. These two important construction contracts that the Mississippi Levee Board has sponsored bring much needed work to an economically challenged area. Levee enlargement work will continue with an additional 50 miles of deficient levee to be raised with completion slated for 2031.



Protecting the lives and property of the Delta has always been the mission of the 137-year old Mississippi Levee Board. We work hard to keep our citizens and environment safe from the ravages of flooding. As but one recent example, the Mississippi Levee Board and Corps of Engineers are currently raising the mainline Mississippi River levee south of Greenville; this will provide much needed protection for the South Delta.



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



Just another role the Mississippi Levee Board plays to better the lives of Delta residents. Through maintenance of completed projects, we're here to keep Delta citizens safe from flooding. As but one example, the Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project is currently underway and is a key component of flood control.

Yet, some extreme environmental groups are opposed to the Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project. They claim it will harm the environment. Nothing could be further from the truth. This project is necessary for the safety and well-being of our citizens.

For the facts on the Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project, as well as our many other activities, please call 662-334-4814, or visit our web site at [www.msleveeboard.com](http://www.msleveeboard.com).



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

*We've come a long way in flood control since  
The Great Flood of 1927. But there's still much  
more to be done. Please join us at the  
Mississippi Levee Board in ensuring the safety  
and protection of all Delta citizens.*



2283 Highway 82 West  
Greenville, Mississippi 38701  
662-334-4813  
Fax: (662) 378-9592  
[www.msleveeboard.com](http://www.msleveeboard.com)