



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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Ag Commissioner Gipson Addresses Federal Officials Stressing the Urgent Need to Finish the Yazoo Backwater Area Pump Project

Today, Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson addressed federal policy makers during an Agricultural Leader Roundtable Meeting in Vicksburg to discuss flood risk reduction solutions in the Yazoo Backwater Area. Federal officials attending included Jeaneanne Gettle, Deputy Regional Administrator with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); Brian Frazer, Director of Oceans, Wetlands and Communities Division with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Michael Connor, Assistant Secretary with the U.S. Department of the Army (Civil Works); and Stacey Jensen, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Army (Civil Works). Gipson stressed the urgency to finish the pumps and gave the following remarks.

I would like to thank each of you for being in Vicksburg today to discuss flood risk reduction solutions in the Yazoo Backwater Area and for your invitation to address the Agricultural Leader Roundtable. I greatly appreciate your five-month timetable in the Joint Memorandum of Collaboration between the U.S. Department of the Army (Civil Works), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to reduce flood risk in the Yazoo Backwater Area. I look forward to working together on this urgent need as we move ahead. The time for action is now.

I was delighted to learn about the Joint Memorandum of Collaboration in January. Since we have been talking about this issue for many years, including a dozen or so meetings with your agencies, I hope that this may be the last time we have to gather to talk about this issue. We have talked enough, and now, it is time for action. It is time to quit delaying and finish the pumps.

The Yazoo Backwater Area flood issue has been front and center my entire administration as Ag Commissioner. When I was sworn in April 2018, the floodwaters were rising in the South Delta, and planting was delayed. In 2019, more than half a million acres flooded, so no crops were planted. In 2020, it happened again. This problem could have been fixed 50 years ago!

The Yazoo Backwater Area of Mississippi has experienced significant flooding nine out of the past 12 years, which has devastated local economies and natural resources. If the pump station was in place, much of this man-made devastation could have been prevented. During 2019, over 550,000 acres flooded in the Yazoo Backwater Area, of which more than 225,000 acres were agricultural cropland. Most of this cropland was not planted that year due to the flood. Within the flooded region, 687 homes were affected by the floodwaters, with at least 252 categorized as having major damage or destroyed. The economic and environmental impact to the South Delta was devastating. The estimated economic impact to crops alone was \$617 million. In 2020, approximately 490,000 acres flooded in the area once again. Of those acres, 196,000 acres were cropland. The backwater floods of 2019 and 2020 are the two highest backwater flood events since the completion of the Yazoo Backwater Levee and Drainage Structures in 1978. Much of the devastation that South Delta residents face now can be prevented if construction of the Yazoo Backwater Area Pump Project is completed.

If action is not taken, it will happen again. The time for talk is over, and the time for action is now. It is time to finish the pumps.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to present on behalf of the State of Mississippi today. This comes at a crucial time when our nation's food security is in jeopardy with supply chain issues, the Russia/Ukraine war, inflationary pressures and many other factors. We desperately need reliable access to this South Delta farmland so our farmers can continue doing the work to keep America fed and clothed.

We have strong confidence in the research of the USACE, and we believe the pumps provide the long-term solution necessary to alleviate the perpetual flooding in the South Delta. We look forward to working with you to see the pumps completed and protect the Yazoo Backwater Area as soon as practical. Thank you.

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Photo Attached.



Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson (right side of table) addressed federal policy makers at an Agricultural Leader Roundtable Meeting in Vicksburg discussing flood risk reduction solutions in the Yazoo Backwater Area. He expressed appreciation for the Joint Memorandum of Collaboration between among the U.S. Department of the Army (Civil Works), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to reduce flood risk in the Yazoo Backwater Area and stressed the urgency to finish the Yazoo Backwater Area Pump Project.