

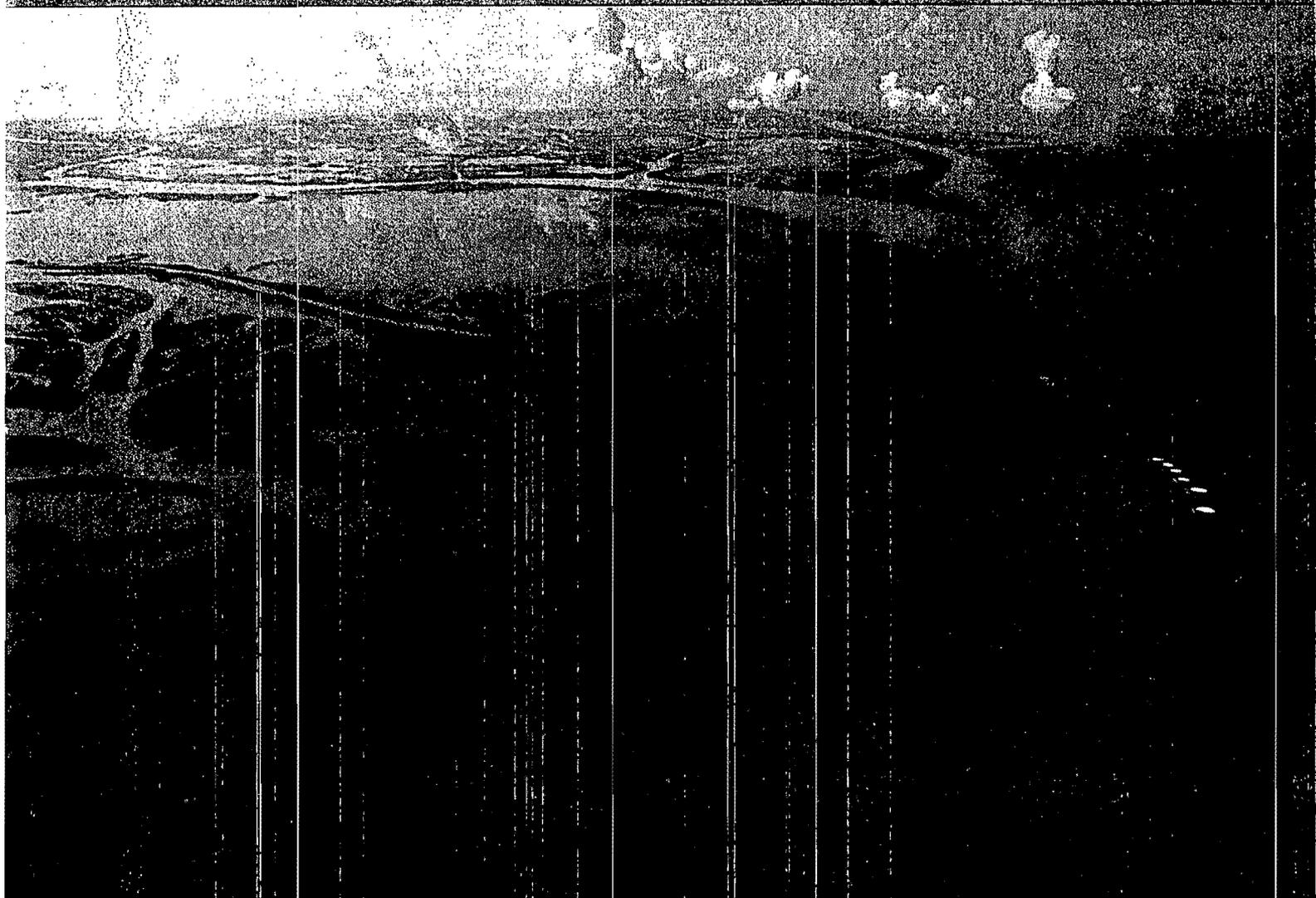
Mississippi Delta Regional Initiative  
**Delta Tourism Development Forum**  
October 18-20, 2000, Memphis, Tennessee

**Final Report**

**The Office of Policy for the Secretary Coordinated an Administration-wide effort to consider the benefits of a National River Institute and National Museum of the Mississippi River. In partnership with the White House Council for Environmental Quality and the American River Heritage Project, the department facilitated interagency task force meetings at the department as well as the White House. It was determined that such an institute would enhance the future management of rivers for transportation and environmental purposes as well as stimulate tourism and economic development in the Mississippi Delta Region of the country.**

National Museum  
of the  
Mississippi River

CENTER FOR EXPLORING RIVER CULTURE, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY



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## Executive Summary

As part of the Mississippi Delta Region Initiative, a subcommittee of the Delta Task Force convened to organize a forum that would focus on tourism development, a key strategy for economic growth in the region. The subcommittee, chaired by Deputy Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy Albert C. Eisenberg, included members from the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Housing and Urban Development, the Interior, and Transportation. Over the course of several months the subcommittee organized a two-day Delta Tourism Development Forum in Memphis, Tennessee.

A total of 134 stakeholders from the public and private sectors from each of the seven Delta states attended the Delta Tourism Development Forum. These stakeholders included state tourism directors, economic development district administrators, tourism attraction operators, educators, and local, state, and federal government officials.

After considering remarks from several experts in tourism development, the participants divided into four working groups that generated inventories of the region's assets and needs. The groups also designed visions for tourism development in the region, as well as strategies and action steps to achieve those visions. An inventory of all of these findings is attached.

Before the Forum adjourned, the groups convened to discuss their findings. The participants were asked to prioritize their findings. The following is a brief summary of the results of the large-group discussion, and a synthesis of the transcripts from the individual group sessions.

### Assets

The most significant assets that the group identified can be divided into four main categories:

- 1) Culture, Heritage, and History
- 2) Natural Resources
- 3) People and Southern Hospitality
- 4) Outdoor and Indoor Recreation Opportunities

The group identified the following subcategories for each of the main categories of assets:

- 1) Culture, Heritage, and History
  - a. Music--Jazz, Blues, Rock 'n Roll
  - b. Food
  - c. Literature
  - d. Historic Sites
  - e. Civil War/ Revolutionary War
  - f. Native Americans
  - g. African Americans
- 2) Natural Resources
  - a. Agriculture
  - b. River
  - c. Trails
  - d. Parks

- e. Wildlife
- f. Aquaculture
- 3) People and Southern Hospitality
  - a. Human Resources
  - b. Volunteer Force
  - c. Diversity
- 4) Outdoor and Indoor Recreation Opportunities
  - a. Festivals
  - b. Theme Parks
  - c. Jazz Lands
  - d. Museums
  - e. Cities
  - f. Sports
  - g. Gaming
  - h. Fishing
  - i. Hunting
  - j. Bird Watching

## Needs

The group identified five main categories of significant needs:

- 1) Transportation Infrastructure
- 2) Workforce Education and Development
- 3) Tourism Indicators and Research
- 4) Better Marketing
- 5) Leadership

These five main categories of needs include the following subcategories:

- 1) Transportation Infrastructure
  - a. River views and access, including cross-river access
  - b. Roads
  - c. Bridges
  - d. Rail
  - e. Airports
- 2) Workforce Education and Development
  - a. Qualified workers
  - b. Education
  - c. Young leadership
  - d. Keep young people in the region
- 3) Tourism Indicators and Research
  - a. Rural and Urban
  - b. Use of University Experts
- 4) Better Marketing
  - a. Signage

- b. Packaging
- c. Branding
- 5) Leadership
  - a. Unified
  - b. Local
  - c. Broad-based and diverse
  - d. Political
  - e. Streamline
  - f. Create entity to carry out Mississippi Delta Initiative

## Visions

The group widely agreed upon four major, guiding visions:

- 1) The region must create a borderless environment, so that the Delta has a common identity and can work together.
- 2) Delta residents are the first tourists and assets of the region, but the area also has worldwide appeal.
- 3) Tourism should be a major force in economic and workforce development in the Delta region.
- 4) Leadership is essential.

## Strategies

The most common strategies that the group identified can be divided into six main categories:

- 1) Brand and Package
- 2) Include Tourism and Business as Part of Transportation Infrastructure Planning Process
- 3) Develop Regional Tourism Indicators and Research
- 4) Educate the Appropriate Groups
- 5) Obtain Funding and Technical Assistance for Grants
- 6) Establish Permanent Working Group Chartered by the Seven Delta States

The group identified the following specific actions associated with each broad strategy:

- 1) Brand and Package
  - a. Coordinate/network Regional Events
  - b. Remove Delta "Boundaries" and, instead, Cross-sell
  - c. Create a Regional Website
  - d. Publish a Regional Brochure
- 2) Include Tourism and Business as Part of Transportation Infrastructure Planning Process
  - a. Establish an Inclusive, Comprehensive and Sustainable Planning Process
  - b. Reconvene the Delta Transportation Consortium
- 3) Develop Regional Tourism Indicators and Research
  - a. Produce user-Friendly Data

- b. Secure Rural and Urban Data
- c. Distribute Data
- 4) Educate the Appropriate Groups
  - a. Educate Political Leaders on Tourism
  - b. Educate Community and Region on Local Assets and the Region's Importance as an Economic Source
  - c. Educate the Tourism Industry on Cross-Selling
- 5) Obtain Funding and Technical Assistance for Grants
  - a. Seek Out Non-Traditional Sources of Funding
  - b. Gain Private Sector Financial Support
- 6) Establish Permanent Working Group Chartered by the Seven Delta States
  - a. Utilize the Delta Regional Authority if it is Approved<sup>1</sup>
  - b. Single Point of Contact for Each State
  - c. Create and Carry Out a Regional Tourism Plan
  - d. Obtain a Statement of Commitment from States to Support Tourism as a Vital Industry

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<sup>1</sup> A new Delta Regional Authority was signed into law by President Clinton in December 2000.



## Inventory of Assets

- ❖ Rich cultural and musical heritage
- ❖ Food
- ❖ Friendly attitude/southern hospitality
- ❖ Natural assets
- ❖ Sporting activities
- ❖ Writers, artists, musicians, folk culture
- ❖ People
  - Diverse culture
  - Positive values
  - Hospitality
  - Culture and history
  - Music, cuisine, literature
- ❖ Land
  - Destinations
  - Recreation opportunities
  - Great river road/Mississippi River Trail
  - Natural resources: parks, refuges, wildlife
  - Agriculture/aquaculture
- ❖ River
  - Location
  - Transportation
  - Cities
- ❖ Natural beauty
- ❖ Historic sites
- ❖ Creative people
- ❖ Hospitality
- ❖ Diversity
- ❖ Rivers
- ❖ Good food
- ❖ Festivals
- ❖ Highway infrastructure
- ❖ Music
- ❖ Civil war rev.
- ❖ Parks
- ❖ Forests
- ❖ Theme parks, jazz lands
- ❖ French colonial culture
- ❖ Large cities, gateways
- ❖ Trails
- ❖ Wildlife habitats
- ❖ Agriculture
- ❖ Eco-tourism/wetlands/flyways
- ❖ National scenic byways

- ❖ Partnerships
- ❖ Educational institutions
- ❖ Lack of other industries
- ❖ Delta culture and heritage
- ❖ Museums
- ❖ Cane river heritage area
- ❖ Civil rights sites
- ❖ Native American history
- ❖ Spanish history culture
- ❖ Lewis Clark expedition history
- ❖ Louisiana Purchase
- ❖ Transportation infrastructure
- ❖ Existing customer base
- ❖ Religion
- ❖ Natural assets and resources, diversity and uniqueness
- ❖ Cultural and heritage history including music food and people
- ❖ Recreation--outdoor and indoor
- ❖ History culture
  - Historical sites
  - Music
  - Civil war rev. war
  - French colonial culture
  - Delta culture
  - Museums
  - Heritage areas
  - Civil rights sites
  - Native American
  - Spanish history
  - Lewis and Clarke expedition
  - Louisiana purchase
  - Religion
  - Genealogy
  - Preservation
- ❖ Infrastructure
  - Education
  - Cities/hubs/gateways
  - Transportation
  - Trails
- ❖ Partnerships
- ❖ Natural resources
  - Natural beauty
  - Parks
  - Forests
  - Rivers
  - Wildlife habitats
  - Agriculture

- Natural scenic byways
- Eco-tourism
- ❖ Special attractions
  - Parks
  - Theme parks
  - Festivals
  - Good food
  - Wine trails
  - Civil rights sites
  - "Gaming"
  - Rivers/lakes
- ❖ People
  - Creativity
  - Hospitality
  - Existing customer base
- ❖ River
- ❖ Gambling
- ❖ Music
- ❖ Agriculture
- ❖ Southern hospitality
- ❖ People
- ❖ Central location
- ❖ Food
- ❖ Outdoor recreation
- ❖ Geology
- ❖ Lakes
- ❖ Wetlands
- ❖ Historic sites
- ❖ Ohio river
- ❖ Fishing
- ❖ Hunting
- ❖ Bird watching
- ❖ Photography of wildlife
- ❖ Rice capital
- ❖ Art
- ❖ Literature
- ❖ Historic cemeteries
- ❖ Art
- ❖ Blues--Beal Street
- ❖ Jazz--New Orleans
- ❖ Rock n' Roll
- ❖ Variety
- ❖ Density
- ❖ Food--barbeque, Cajun, catfish, variety, density
- ❖ Cotton fields
- ❖ Agriculture

- ❖ Plantation homes
- ❖ French quarter
- ❖ Ducks
- ❖ Mississippi river
- ❖ Cultural
- ❖ Mardi gras and other festivals
- ❖ Jazz bands
- ❖ Native American parks
- ❖ Retracing heritage
- ❖ Natural assets--rivers, wetlands, lakes, agriculture, central location, geology
- ❖ Cultural, heritage history--music, food civil war archeological, native American, African American, art, literature
- ❖ Outdoor recreation including wildlife activities, fishing, hunting, gaming, boating, biking, riding
- ❖ Human Resources including southern hospitality, volunteer force, lifestyle diversity, oral history
- ❖ Festivals
- ❖ Archeological sites
- ❖ Multi-modal transportation
- ❖ Transportation history
- ❖ African Americans and native Americans history
- ❖ Civil war history
- ❖ Ethnic communities--diversity
- ❖ "Lifestyle" diversity
- ❖ Mississippi River
- ❖ New Orleans
- ❖ Natural forest
- ❖ Grace land
- ❖ Ridge parkway
- ❖ Little rock
- ❖ Rendez-vous
- ❖ Tunica
- ❖ Biloxi
- ❖ Vicksburg
- ❖ Duck hunting
- ❖ Deer hunting
- ❖ State parks
- ❖ Land between the lakes
- ❖ History--mark twain
- ❖ Diversity
- ❖ History (each stands alone as an asset): geology, agriculture, culture, environment, natural resources
- ❖ Food
- ❖ Flexibility in future development
- ❖ Academic institutions
- ❖ Have raw tourism assets

- ❖ Relatively near Eastern population centers
- ❖ Music and music history
- ❖ Great River Road/Mississippi River Trail
- ❖ The River itself
- ❖ World-class recreation, natural resources, destinations and activities; environment
- ❖ Faith-based culture, history, values (small town)
- ❖ People in Delta uniquely hospitable
- ❖ Qualities of people of Delta and small-town values

## Inventory of Needs

- ❖ Education/workforce development
- ❖ Adequate infrastructure--social and physical
- ❖ Good tourism marketing
- ❖ Resource preservation and enhancement
- ❖ Funding
- ❖ Regional thinking
- ❖ Transportation System
  - River views/river access
  - Cross river access
  - Infrastructure: roads, bridges, rail
- ❖ Education
  - Value of tourism industry for economic development
  - Education and training of for qualified workers
  - Communication with each other both intra and inter state
  - Development of grassroots support
- ❖ Self awareness: know who we are and validate our self worth
- ❖ Need common regional identity through marketing program/strategy
- ❖ Acknowledge different set of measures and strategies for rural areas
- ❖ Money
- ❖ Qualified work force
- ❖ Branding
- ❖ Packaging
- ❖ Better enlarged airports, rail, highways
- ❖ Better signage
- ❖ Lack of tourism indicators
- ❖ Private investment in major attractions and accommodations
- ❖ Incentive package (tax rebates, credits)
- ❖ Better co-operation, partnerships (fed, state, local)
- ❖ Better use of university experts
- ❖ Market/promotion
- ❖ Workforce development
- ❖ Actions
- ❖ Timelines
- ❖ Funding strategies
- ❖ Technical Assistance (fed)
- ❖ How to get funds
- ❖ Where funds are
- ❖ Streamlining lessons
- ❖ Action team "prince of the planet"
- ❖ Political support at all levels
- ❖ Educate communities
- ❖ And agencies on diversity sensitivities
- ❖ Expand involvement levels and cooperation
- ❖ Improve image

- ❖ Need a prince of the plan
- ❖ Less bureaucracy for implementing
- ❖ To pour the foundation to see the house
- ❖ Regional time line
- ❖ Erase the borders among agencies and associations to support the region
- ❖ To be the gum on the shoe to get the money and bill
- ❖ Developing local leadership
- ❖ Encourage broader entrepreneurship
- ❖ Customer service mentality
- ❖ Involve/enlighten young leadership
- ❖ Political support
- ❖ Keep young people here
- ❖ Fix low morale
- ❖ Roads
- ❖ Bridges
- ❖ Money and funding
- ❖ Airports
- ❖ Training of workforce
- ❖ Refurbish historic preservation
- ❖ Research
- ❖ Educating the community
- ❖ Planning
- ❖ Need a prince of the planet
- ❖ Action plan
- ❖ Timelines
- ❖ Funding strategies
- ❖ Technical assistance
- ❖ Cut red tape, reduce bureaucracy, streamline
- ❖ Research measurement and inventory
- ❖ Physical infrastructure
- ❖ Roads bridges airports buses preservation and refurbishing sites
- ❖ "P" Theory of people planning and physical infrastructure
- ❖ People: leadership, political support, education, training, sensitivity to diversity, population stability
- ❖ Money
  - Private investment in attractions and accommodations
  - Incentive package (rebates, credits)
- ❖ Marketing/Promotion
  - Packaging
  - Branding
- ❖ Cross-river access
- ❖ Lack of time/people.expertise to plan, study and carry out plan
- ❖ Population dispersed
- ❖ Common communication links among similar local interests for idea sharing
- ❖ Need to have regional identity
- ❖ Need to better utilize educational institutions as partners

- ❖ Education decisionmakers of tourism as viable industry
- ❖ Unified regional inventory of assets and needs
- ❖ Need to learn from ADC about learning about region
- ❖ Need to take raw tourism assets and bring to higher level for marketing
- ❖ Different set of tourism measures for rural areas
- ❖ River views/river access
- ❖ Market river/region to Congress and federal government in addition to visitors
- ❖ Tourism is an industry and force for economic development
- ❖ Better marketing of recreational destinations
- ❖ Vocational training and development
- ❖ Need to market our culture to ourselves and continue our intrinsic value
- ❖ Need for grassroots support
- ❖ Justify need to political leaders
- ❖ Lack of private sector buy-in
- ❖ If research data exists it must be identified and disseminated
- ❖ Tourism must be realized as an industry
- ❖ Coordinate/network of regional events (leads to branding and packaging)
- ❖ Create entity to carry out Mississippi Delta Initiative

## Inventory of Visions, Strategies and Next Steps

- ❖ Promote and develop tourism as the major force in economic development in the Delta region.
- ❖ A thriving cohesive 219-? County region of the US bordering the Mississippi River that attracts worldwide visitors.
- ❖ Create a Delta of full employment, educated workforce and population, as well as the eradication of poverty.
- ❖ Realize the Delta as a quality place to live and visit
- ❖ Identity: one distinct destination
- ❖ Boundaries remain
- ❖ Multiple travel modes
- ❖ Major tourism routes
- ❖ Nonpolitical regional tourism entity--including state tourism directors
- ❖ Make Delta residents the "first" tourists
- ❖ Annual calendar of events
- ❖ Delta wide event,--multi-faceted or focused
- ❖ Reconvene the Delta Transportation Consortium
- ❖ Delta Heritage Area
- ❖ Delta marketing program--logo/cross-selling
- ❖ Decentralized points of contact for attractions
- ❖ Regionally focused statement
- ❖ A self-sustaining love affair with the region
- ❖ Develop comprehensive education strategy with Congress/Fed Gov't as primary target audience
- ❖ Develop comprehensive planning process that is reliable, inclusive, representative, sustainable, and accountable. Apply process nationwide. Community-led, community-driven.
- ❖ Statement of commitment from states to support tourism as vital industry.
- ❖ Develop an appropriate infrastructure at visitor destination that responds to visitor needs.
- ❖ Develop comprehensive education strategy for local community and potential visitors on visitor expectations, destinations and potential.
- ❖ Include tourism and business element factors in transportation planning infrastructure.
- ❖ Comprehensive and precise inventory of all assets in region.
- ❖ Search out non-traditional sources of support (financial, etc.).
- ❖ Create a borderless environment
- ❖ "Made in the Delta" branding
- ❖ Need a working group of 7 Government appointed state tourism director or designees, tourism related businesses and organizations that are local, and a coordinating body that is organized, need federal representation
- ❖ Dual Approach: one attraction/many places; one place/many attractions
- ❖ Leadership working group
- ❖ Internet site
- ❖ Corporate sponsorship
- ❖ Partnership for branding
- ❖ Financial institutional involvement

- ❖ Loan incentives
- ❖ Entrepreneurial spiriting
- ❖ Research: measurements pre and post
- ❖ Research
- ❖ Product inventory
- ❖ Market survey research (visitor behavior)
- ❖ Economic impact pre and post
- ❖ Organize regional tourism indicators and research--info received is too broad
- ❖ Delta Boundaries must disappear--creation of Delta Initiative; states contribute to the above--regional marketing
- ❖ Infrastructure development--must be grassroots; workforce development; hiring of staff at commission level able to harness and coordinate the initiative
- ❖ Justify need to political leaders
- ❖ Lack of private sector buy-in
- ❖ If research data exists it must be identified and disseminated
- ❖ Tourism must be realized as an industry
- ❖ Coordinate/network of regional events (leads to branding and packaging)
- ❖ Create entity to carry out Mississippi Delta Initiative

#### Next Steps

- Master plan
- Leadership team
- Assigned through state or selves
- Delta Working group
- Cross boarder efforts
- Borderless
- Can be subgrouped as well
- Need to have private sector/specific Delta representation on the working group
- Delta website
- Take the working group up a notch to come from the Governor
- What about the Delta Center as a Starting point?
- Delta authority would provide immediate forum, Delta Center could be the body for implementing
- Action plan to have dual approach: one location and many attractions; one attraction and many places (eg blues, birdwatching, foods)
- Cross-selling--birds know no borders
- Train educate drivers of taxis and buses
- Website, brochures, distribution



Mississippi Delta Regional Initiative  
**Delta Tourism Development Forum**  
October 18-20, 2000, Memphis, Tennessee

**Key Note Speeches and Formal Presentations**

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## **Welcoming Remarks** **By Rodney E. Slater, U.S. Secretary of Transportation**

On behalf of President Clinton and Vice President Gore, I am delighted to officially welcome you to this important forum. And once again, I thank all of you for participating. I also want to acknowledge my colleagues from the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Housing & Urban Development and Interior -- as well as the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) -- for all the hard work that went into making this event possible.

Today, at the dawn of this new century and new millennium a powerful idea and a resolute commitment are working together for good for those who love the Mississippi Delta and believe in its future.

The powerful idea is the focal point of this forum: The Delta should use travel and tourism as a premier strategy for regional growth. The resolute commitment is that of the nation, as expressed by President Clinton and Vice President Gore, to extending the circle of prosperity to every byway and wetland of the Delta across seven states.

The President's promise to help the Delta goes back more than a decade, to his work as chairman of the Lower Mississippi Delta Commission. By starting the Delta Regional Initiative in 1998, he and Vice President Gore reaffirmed this promise. As the President has said, "We are committed to continuing work on this initiative to ensure that people throughout the region can participate fairly and fully in the unprecedented prosperity our Nation enjoys today."

The Vice President strongly supports the President's commitment to sharing America's bounty with the Delta. "Poverty in the Delta remains at unacceptably high levels. We can do better. We have to do better -- and we will do better..."

That is why we are here in Memphis, some 160 strong, representing both the public and private sectors. We are here to help fulfill the President's promise for a better life for the Delta by establishing a region-wide strategy to promote economic development through tourism.

### **PROGRESS REPORT ON DELTA INITIATIVE**

But first, as Chairman of the Mississippi Delta Regional Initiative, I would like to give you a progress report on what's happened to our Delta Initiative proposals pending before Congress as both houses move toward adjournment.

Last week the U.S. Senate included some \$20 million in the fiscal year 2001 budget for the Delta Regional Authority -- and we anticipate favorable action in the House of Representatives as well.

The President's budget had included requests for an additional \$159 million in targeted funding for Delta projects; this is over and above the amounts that would normally go to the

Delta. The prospects look good for some \$7 million in rural development projects administered by USDA and \$8 million for DHEW health centers, to be paid for by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The outlook for other portions of the President's proposal is less certain.

Both House and Senate have appropriated almost \$231 million for 39 DOT Delta Initiative projects. This includes \$100 million for the U.S. Highway 82 Bridge over the Mississippi River at Greenville.

Congress has also approved \$94 million for the I-49 segment running through Arkansas from Texarkana to the Louisiana border. While I-49 is not part of the Delta proper, this major transportation artery will significantly improve market access via connecting routes that do run through the Delta.

The President's New Markets legislation -- which offers tax incentives and other inducements to encourage business development in low-income areas throughout the country -- has passed the House. If the Senate takes action before Congress adjourns, the New Markets bill could become law this year. While this legislation applies to the entire country, the Delta would be a major beneficiary.

We've come a long way since last May's historic Delta Vision, Delta Voices conference in Arlington, Virginia. You will shortly receive a letter providing a more complete update on our accomplishments, including the "Delta Circuit Rider" technical assistance project and the MentorNet program, which addresses the issue of the "digital divide."

## **WHY TOURISM?**

The most recent accomplishment I would like to mention, was organizing this Forum on Delta Tourism. Tourism is a 'natural' for this region. Like President Clinton, I am a son of Arkansas. And like the president, "I have traveled the beautiful valleys, wetlands, and other natural splendors of the Delta for much of my life." The Delta is a treasure of American history and natural beauty. Its unique culture has helped shape the growth of the nation. In other words, the Delta is just the kind of place that the world wants to visit.

Focusing on travel and tourism makes sense. Tourism is not only the world's largest industry; it is one of the fastest growing. Here in the United States, tourism employs more than 16 million people and generates nearly half a trillion dollars in business. We estimate the Delta's share at about \$13 billion annually. So there is a lot of room for improving our revenue share. One of our goals this week is to develop a strategy that significantly increases that amount.

As incomes rise, people can afford longer vacations or they are willing to travel greater distances to find exactly what they want. As the American population ages, many older Americans enjoy using retirement as an opportunity to visit old haunts and new places. Half of

the 850 million American and Canadian passengers who travel between cities by bus today are over 55.

As we evaluate marketing directed toward new categories of potential tourists, we should "think outside the box" and consider, for example, the travel interests and needs of the 40 million Americans with disabilities who might want to visit our region.

## **TRANSPORTATION AND TOURISM**

By far the biggest force promoting tourism worldwide is globalization -- which President Clinton has called (with good reason) "The central reality of our time." The world economy today is 15 times what it was 40 years ago. As trade and communication between nations has expanded and living standards increased, so has the desire to travel.

There is a direct connection between the travel and tourism industry and transportation. Without transportation, there can be no travel. The reason that all too many communities in the Delta are "left behind," is that they are not connected to the great arteries of commerce -- the roads, the river ports, the railroads and the airports that move travelers and tourists to and from their destinations.

That is what transportation is all about -- it is the tie that binds people and communities together. And that is why transportation is a central theme of President Clinton and Vice President Gore's efforts to extend America's record-level prosperity to communities that have been left behind, by forging links between these communities and a wider world.

The Delta is not the only region seeking to speed growth by promoting tourism. During the past week I have either hosted or attended three major international transportation meetings where travel and tourism was as a significant topic.

Last week in Washington, D.C., I hosted an historic International Transportation Symposium that drew a thousand participants from some 90 countries to develop a shared vision of the future of transportation. The symposium devoted an entire panel session to the subject of Heritage and Cultural Tourism.

On Friday I met with the transportation ministers of the Western Hemisphere. Our focus was on establishing a regional Partnership for Safer Skies. Our prime concern was safety, of course. Safety remains President Clinton and Vice President Gore's top transportation priority and the "North Star" guiding all that we do at the U.S. Department of Transportation. But we were also driven by the knowledge that a perceived lack of aviation safety in Latin America could dash regional hopes for expanded travel and tourism.

Finally, this past Monday I participated in the U.S.-China Aviation Symposium, where the focus on improving China's civil aviation system was driven, in part, by China's desire to expand tourism, which is already a major industry for them.

One reason Latin America and China consider travel and tourism, as an engine for growth, is that this industry makes full use of the existing historic, scenic and cultural heritage that is already available. China needs no new capital investment to create The Great Wall.

Another reason for exploring the tourist option is that tourism is a labor-intensive industry. However, I would emphasize that a "tourism for growth" strategy need not be limited to employment opportunities exclusively at the entry level. Creating, operating and maintaining the transportation, hotel, and other infrastructure needed to support tourism, will create jobs from the mailroom to the boardroom.

What makes sense for developing countries overseas makes sense for a developing region right here in America. Our focus on the potential of travel and tourism to expand the Delta's economy is not only a good idea; it is part of a major global trend.

## **PARTNERSHIP -- THE KEY TO SUCCESS**

To take maximum advantage of this trend, we require a new, higher level of partnership among all the principle players, including between government and the private sector. That is one of the reasons I am so grateful for the support the Convention and Visitor's Bureau and Chamber of Commerce have given to this event.

What we needed was a framework that would support a wide-ranging discussion of our options with participation by key stakeholders at all levels: government (at the federal, state and local level), industry, trade associations, and organized labor as well as consumers and interest groups.

That is why we chose to call this gathering a "forum" -- a place for an open discussion to explore new approaches.

In terms of new approaches, you are in for a treat tomorrow morning, with a presentation by Congressman Harold Ford of his "Vision for Tourism in the Delta." Congressman Ford is a true son of the Delta whose pragmatic and determined style has earned him considerable praise, both here and in Washington. As one of the first to cosponsor legislation to create the Delta Regional Authority, he has a proven track record of commitment to the future of this region.

In a few moments Al Eisenberg and Leslie Doggett will give you an overview of the Delta Initiative and "marching orders" for this Forum. You have been promised that this forum will be an intensive work session. We plan to keep that promise.

The course ahead will be difficult, but in terms of the future of our region, the rewards will exceed what we dare to imagine.

So, it's time to get ready: In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Widen the space of your tent; stretch out your hangings freely; lengthen your ropes; make your tent pegs firm -- for you will burst out to the right and to the left."

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**Delta Tourism: Developing our Legacy**  
**By Leslie R. Doggett, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Tourism Industries,**  
**U.S. Department of Commerce**

It has been said that tourism is the “Rodney Dangerfield” of the U.S. economy... it just “don’t get no respect.” And, though I may argue the grammatics, the message is right on target because tourism is an unsung hero of the American economy. In the last eight years since I’ve been at Commerce, tourism has generated over \$3.7 trillion dollars in expenditures, \$622 billion dollars in state, local, and federal taxes, and \$157 billion dollars in trade surpluses. During this time frame, tourism has supported over 5.6 million jobs, with employment growing faster in the tourism sector than employment in the overall economy. The category of travel and tourism industries outpaces average GDP growth and accounts for one third of the trade surplus in the services sector. Yet, despite such robust economic performance, tourism’s contributions to American prosperity are not fully recognized, nor understood, nor targeted for development by many policy makers.

I came here today with a purpose. To stop that ignorance dead in its tracks. To kick tourism’s economic development role out of the closet once and for all. To declare that we at this Forum – and then others following our lead – must use the impetus of the longest economic expansion in American history to unleash America’s tourism potential. How? First by acknowledging with crystal clarity what tourism really is.

Travel and tourism is an enterprise of job creation, business growth, community development, and export generation. As surely as America exports its widgets, ideas, and technology, it exports its culture. As surely as our governments provide economic development funds to clean up failing neighborhoods, travel and tourism develops local assets to bring jobs, sales, construction, taxes and pride back into our communities. As surely as an entrepreneur can build a multi-national company from a garage, a small business owner can construct an international tourism enterprise from a vision and a set of local assets.

Tourism is a fascinating blend of intellectual property and infrastructure. First and foremost, our job is to capture our customers’ dreams and desires. Then we must strive to build an experiential product that delivers the dream through services, properties, and amenities. Only then can we begin to promote. Too often, that proposition is perceived as exactly the reverse. Our professionals are viewed as marketers of the assets and infrastructure, rather than visionaries and community builders – like the developers, elected officials, and corporate leaders alongside whom we serve.

Tourism is also the original virtual enterprise, day-in-and-day-out bringing a host of allied industries to bear on the delivery of a dream, a vision, a product. Perhaps because our economic impact is disbursed throughout so many industries – and maybe because tourism is popularly viewed by its own consumers as a luxury item – our industry has never demanded that government, or society at large, view us with appropriate gravitas. Even though tourism

contributes \$540 billion dollars to the U.S. economy annually, we've never grabbed economic analysts by their skinny little ties and said, "Look here. More powerful than the sum of its financial or military might, the United States succeeds because of its wealth of human experience." That is what tourism is all about and THAT is what we as a nation need to nurture.

If you understand this – and if you find your enthusiasm rising because it feels like I'm hitting a nail on the head, you – we – are on to something. The good news is that we are not alone. The concept is beginning to percolate not only in government, but also within the U.S. travel industry and in communities across America.

With this Forum, we have the opportunity to create a new national paradigm for tourism development. Therefore, I want to suggest a goal for the next 24 hours. A simple goal. I want this Delta Tourism Development Forum to be a wake-up call for the entire Mississippi Delta and the nation at large. A call that tourism is an outstanding economic engine that is not just about marketing, but is about strategic product development centered around a vision. A call that we in this room bring to our work a quality of enthusiasm and commitment that will allow us to make travel and tourism THE leading economic development tool of the ENTIRE Mississippi Delta Initiative.

Understand that this is much more than a rallying cry. It is an opportunity for which the Mississippi Delta Initiative has been chosen to pioneer. The Delta Tourism Development Forum is history in the making. For the first time ever, the myriad agencies of the federal government have been tasked with coming together to support regional tourism development. Our marching orders from the President are to identify and coordinate all of the relevant resources of the federal government and bring them to bear on just one thing: facilitating you and your vision for tourism in the Mississippi Delta region.

I see our role in this Initiative as nothing short of a test case in the birth of a movement. And there are precedents that we can learn from. Two years ago, the U.S. Department of Commerce initiated a cultural heritage tourism program called American Pathways. Through it, we reached out to communities across America and asked them to tell us their stories. The travel industry across America – tour operators, state travel offices, CVB's, and others — brought the broadly-distributed cultural assets of each participating community together under five themes, all of which are now promoted under a single brand: American Pathways. Brands are valuable because they imply a promise. What the American Pathways brand promises is America itself: authentic, up close and personal. It puts a new face on American travel. Today, 48 states participate in 101 branded tours that serve the 46% of travelers now seeking cultural heritage experiences. As with any new effort, we've learned a lot from this program, and we'll share everything we learned with you.

The same conviction that fueled my enthusiasm for American Pathways fuels my commitment to this Forum. I believe that people are the most priceless product of the Mississippi Delta region – their stories, their perspective, their discoveries. And I know one thing for sure: that the Delta

holds what America increasingly seeks: **an authentic experience** born of humanity's richness and resolve. As such, the region's richest promise for the future may lie in its eloquent past.

Cultural heritage is the legacy we are left by all those who went before us. What is the legacy we will create? What will we leave to enrich those who come after us, not only in the next generation, but well into the next century?

We are here today because President Clinton wants a part of his legacy to be an inspiring vision for the Mississippi Delta. He has brought us to this point. Now the rest is up to us because it is not his vision that is intended to dominate the process. The Mississippi Delta Initiative is about harvesting the ideas and commitment of all who have a stake in the region, and leveraging federal resources to transform that vision into reality – resources that will continue to exist no matter whose name precedes the words "President of the United States" on the Oval Office letterhead.

That said, I didn't come here just to listen, nor did I take up my role in the federal government just to crunch numbers for the President's reports. I have a vision for tourism in America, and I believe it is borne out elegantly here. Tourism, particularly cultural heritage tourism, has the potential to be a vigorous force in society. Because it delivers on the promise of travel itself: cultivating understanding of the people and events that shape our world, fostering greater tolerance for our fellow man. I believe fueling an economic engine that can be harnessed to achieve social betterment is a heck of a way to spend your working hours. And the Delta Tourism Development Forum provides us with the opportunity to do just that – and be an example for the rest of the nation. In so doing, it will inform and inspire the entire Delta Initiative, serving as its vigorous and defining heart and soul.

Let's work together today and tomorrow, not just to produce a vision, but to produce change. Let's not create just a statement, but rather an anthem – a unifying song that calls us all to action, inspires us all to faith in what can be.

But let's be clear. If this is, in fact, the birth of a movement, it is NOT going to be pretty or neat. It will be inelegant and messy, chaotic and painful at times, especially as we wrestle the basic issues to the ground over the next day or so. But if we believe that the future is in our hands, that no one else will carry greater responsibility for stewarding the Delta legacy, if we pray for a supportive community and reach out for all of the resources that community can bring to our vision -- if we commit not just to survival, but to creating an environment for prosperity – the movement will succeed, the movement will thrive, abundant life in the Delta will be a part of our legacy.

Speaking of legacy, I must not fail to recognize, on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce, Norman Minetta, and his entire staff, our shock at the tragedy in Missouri this week. Too recently, our Department experienced the sudden and incomprehensible loss of a true leader and our numerous colleagues. Our hearts go out to the Missouri Delegation. As our work to support

a vibrant future for the Delta gets underway, let's try to bring to it the extra measure of respect and responsibility engendered by the privilege of carrying on.

I also want to thank and recognize my superb staff for their commitment and contributions to this Forum. Please join me in acknowledging the hard work of Helen Marano, [Director Tourism Development], Linda Harbaugh [Acting Director, Tourism Policy Coordination], Vivian Vasallo [International Trade Specialist], Melissa Bennett and Shirley Williams [Program Analysts], Margie Parker [Program Assistant], and Valerie Barnes [TPC Coordinator]. Join me, too, in acknowledging Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater, for informing this Forum with his dedication and vision, and please give a particularly enthusiastic thanks for the enormous contributions of Al Eisenberg and the entire Department of Transportation team.

# # #

**American Pathways to the Information Superhighway**  
**By Leslie R. Doggett, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Tourism Industries,**  
**U.S. Department of Commerce**

Welcome and thank you for joining us for lunch. Thank you, too, for the hard work we've done this morning – and your commitment to the work to come. This afternoon, as we turn our attention to strategies for tourism development in the Delta, let me pose a few questions...

How does a kid from Alaska find the best barbecue in Memphis? How do a couple of newlyweds in Taipei discover which jazz clubs attract the locals in Louisiana? And how will a group of French seniors make their way through Kentucky for some of the best antiques in America?

This morning you heard me advocating that we seize the economic moment. But that alone will not ensure our success! Travel and tourism today is about more than either bricks OR clicks. It's about people: our stories, our traditions, our ways of life. As we reach for our economic due, as we pack for the journey on the information superhighway, we must never forget that, in tourism, our product -- first and foremost -- is an experience. And the richness of that experience can only be attained by putting people first.

Today's tourist is a sophisticated traveler who wants far more than a day at the beach. She wants to be immersed in much more than the hotel swimming pool! For example, in 1998, museums outpaced theme parks in popularity with a record 850 million visits. This and other factors point to a need to re-evaluate the tourism menu. Travelers today want a main course of experience or education – with fulfillment on the side.

These desires have spurred one of the fastest growing travel trends in America....cultural heritage tourism. Forty-six percent of U.S. travelers engaged in this brand of tourism in 1998. That leads me to think that questions like those I raised at the opening of my remarks must frame our conversations about tourism in the Delta.

The good news, I believe, is that the hunger for cultural heritage experiences reflects a maturing of our society. Not just in the mindset of the traveler, but also in the concept of the ownership of cultural assets. What used to be a gift from the wealthy, is now, without a doubt, the prized possession of the grassroots.

In that new world order, the Commerce Department's "American Pathways" program attempts to anticipate the appetites of the boy from Alaska, the couple from Taipei and the senior group from France. We're happy to be able to provide, on your seats today, t-shirts celebrating the program, and information to help you explore its potential. As many of you know, two years ago we put out a call across the nation, asking tourism professionals to partner with communities to tell us the real stories behind the American way of life. We asked them to do it in a way that made sense on several levels: promotion of new tourism exports, small business growth, local

economic development and support of community pride. Response exceeded all expectations. What started as 74 tours last year has now grown to 101 in 48 states.

And I am proud to say that the Delta region is well represented in the program. You play host to 17 tours, with 3 operators based directly in the region. The state tourism offices of Missouri, Kentucky and Louisiana, along with 7 regionally based CVBs, have backed these tours with their endorsement. Each itinerary offers the visitors who infuse close to \$13 billion annually into the region's economy a unique taste of the Delta and her people. From following the sweet scent of soul food across Arkansas, Mississippi and Tennessee, to tracing the Underground Railroad from slavery to freedom, these tours provide original pathways through centuries of life that shaped the Delta region.

Speaking of which, I am very pleased to announce today a call for submissions in the third round of American Pathways tours. Three new themes will be added this year, featuring women leaders, Hispanic heritage, and legends of American sport. More information will soon be provided on the US Department of Commerce's Tourism Industries website -- [www.tinet.ita.doc.gov](http://www.tinet.ita.doc.gov) -- so please be sure to log on and get your application and all the details in early November.

All official American Pathway Tours are accessible to a global audience on a consumer website: [www.americanpathways.com](http://www.americanpathways.com). That website is what separates American Pathways from past tourism promotion strategies. Brochures and similar sales materials -- our industry's stock and trade -- are high dollar, "low-touch" ways of communicating with our customers. It is technology that helps us to harvest widely distributed local assets and efficiently assemble them for consumption in the global marketplace. That kid or couple or group can now click on [americanpathways.com](http://americanpathways.com) and hop on the information superhighway, exiting at "I Have A Dream" or "Lady Liberty" or "Food for the Soul" -- three of American Pathways' five compelling themes. In seconds, our travelers will find themselves transported to a back road in Missouri, Tennessee, or Arkansas as quickly and easily as they might stumble onto Park Avenue in New York City.

The Internet is, after all, the great equalizer. Many worry that the information superhighway has too few ramps serving the Delta. I'd like to suggest that tourism can help address that. Tourism may be the engine through which the Delta gets wired. After all, the number one product sold on the Internet isn't Martha Stewart popover pans or Amazon's best-selling novels -- it's travel. I'd like to suggest that the Delta's economic future lies in cultural heritage tourism because it already manufactures the product that the world wants. That is its history, traditions and culture. And they can be packaged for tourists and then promoted through e-commerce, ultimately finding their way to the global shopping cart.

A friend of mine was recently e-shopping for rain boots. Within twenty minutes, she had browsed in Britain, the United States and Scotland. She'd seen merchandise priced from \$60 to \$300 dollars. She'd cruised the aisles of a massive e-warehouse and visited several small retailers. In a matter of moments, the entire stock of a specialty shop tucked deep in the British

countryside was displayed right there on her desktop. All she had done was type in "rain" and "boots" and a world of choices was delivered to her door.

For the past year or so, a traveler from anywhere in the world has been able to open a door into the virtual living room of dozens of American towns just by typing in words like "American history tours" or "American culture." The evocative name "American Pathways" leads that cyber-traveler to a menu of simple choices: a state, a month of travel, and one of five inviting themes. Within seconds, visions of Memphis' Clayborn Temple AME church, where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led his last march with striking sanitation workers, or Harding's Family Restaurant, which specializes in fresh Southern fried fish from area lakes, dance across the traveler's computer screen, whether that screen is located in Sydney or Singapore. Through American Pathways, a world of possibilities beyond the traveler's previous access or expectations unfolds.

American Pathways not only helps us to reach that traveler, it helps us to "brand" a particular kind of travel, to put a new face on the American travel experience. The promise of this brand is implicit in both its name and the compelling descriptions of its tour itineraries, which offer stories that put a real face on the American Dream.

American Pathways has proven that a single on-ramp to the information superhighway -- [americanpathways.com](http://americanpathways.com) -- managed in Washington, D.C. and hosted by Alamo Rent-A-Car in Florida -- can deliver a league of nations to a low-tech Bayou doorstep. The sponsoring regional tour operator needn't even operate a web page nor pay for the technology, since the message is carried to market by someone else who benefits by doing so. Yes, we must build the tourism infrastructure of the Delta. Yes, the region must have access to the technology of its future. But, perhaps more important yet, the Delta must keep hold of its humanity. Must preserve both its stories and its storytellers.

What is the unifying Delta experience? Who is the quintessential Delta character? Along what paths and through what journeys can one travel to the heart and soul of the Mississippi Delta? How can the people of the Delta protect and preserve a rich legacy still standing in sharp contrast to the big-box American landscape?

Today's luncheon speakers, Ouida Barnett Atkins and Robert Parris Moses, will lead us through Delta journeys. Their legacies -- both separate and entwined -- weave a wonderful new thread into the fabric of the Delta of today. In their jobs as teachers at Lanier High School, they lead Jackson, Mississippi's freshest young faces through the most important journey of their lives. Ms. Atkins and Dr. Moses are examples of people upon whose faces and through whose stories the Delta way of living is made real for visitors. My guess is they will put a new face on presumably familiar experiences even for those in the room who are among the region's natives.

Ms. Atkins, a Jackson native, is the daughter of former Governor Ross Barnett, and the granddaughter of a Civil War Veteran of the siege of Vicksburg. After receiving her bachelors and masters degrees, she married and raised five children while teaching in private schools in

Louisiana. With her children grown, Mrs. Atkins moved back to Jackson and took up her post teaching World History at Lanier High School.

Dr. Moses, meanwhile, is a New York native who became a pivotal organizer for the civil rights Movement as a Field Secretary for the Student Non Violent coordinating committee (known as SNCC). He also co-directed the Council of Federated Organizations, a group that incorporated all of the major civil rights organizations and agencies working in Mississippi. He became the driving force behind the Mississippi Summer Project of 1964 and was a primary organizer of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party that same year.

As you can imagine in the Mississippi of the 1960's, the Administration of Ms. Atkins father, Governor Barnett, did not take kindly to "Mr." Moses' attempts to register African-Americans to vote. Governor Barnett had campaigned on a segregation platform and branded Mr. Moses an "outside agitator." Nonetheless, our speaker prevailed, contributing significantly to one of the most important journeys in the life of the region. Mr. Moses subsequently returned North and pursued his doctorate at Harvard. A MacArthur Fellow from 1982 to 1987, he worked full-time teaching algebra to middle schoolers as a volunteer, developing the concept for "The Algebra Project." He returned to Jackson, Mississippi to implement the landmark program, in just one chapter of a remarkable life chronicled in a variety of films, biographies, and documentaries. He presently commutes between Cambridge, Massachusetts and Jackson, where he and Ms. Atkins now serve as professional colleagues.

Please welcome Ouida Barnett Atkins and Dr. Robert Moses.

# # #

**Closing and Introduction of Cardell Cooper**  
**By Leslie R. Doggett, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Tourism Industries,**  
**U.S. Department of Commerce**

As we prepare to wrap up our activities and move into the next phase of the job ahead, I ask myself "what have we learned?"

1. Tourism is an economic development tool.
2. If it is one of the Delta's core products, it merits resource allocation just like more traditional products like those of agriculture, oil and gas, or manufacturing.
3. The Delta has outstanding array of available assets, but perhaps its chief asset is that blend of history, natural resources, recreation, characters, and values that together creat the Delta's unique "culture."
4. That rich Delta culture emerges in part because the Delta fought perhaps harder than anyone else in America to live Democracy. The East Coast may be considered the cradle of Democracy, but here is where it passed through the fire and emerged as a more perfect union, here is where we walked the walk and became our hopes and dreams.

These points, all raised in the past 24 hours or so, lead me toward a new vision for the Mississippi Delta Tourism Development effort. They lead me to that unifying anthem I mentioned yesterday morning. Throughout the history of mankind, rivers have marked man's progressions. If the Nile was the cradle of civilization, then perhaps the Mississippi is where civilization came of age. The Nile marks a milestone of the earlier millennia, the Mississippi marks a similarly defining "moment" of the recent millennia mankind's struggle for Democracy.

But concepts will not move us to reality. Deliverables will move us toward our goals. I suggest that one of the best deliverables to come out of our efforts here – aside from the report of the proceedings – would be an inventory of the federal government's tourism assets. That's step one. Step Two is to overlay that inventory with the assets and needs identified here, and to create a profile of federal resources for tourism development in the Mississippi Delta region. From there, strategies can be developed to access the resources, to fill in the blanks, and by what means and on what timeline. Al and I need for you to call on us, if this is indeed what you want. We will work out the details of how such a request is accomplished – the realities of government and the chain of events that will result in that action. Then you will have to call on the new Administration to carry it out. The bottom line is that the President will probably have to mandate that OMB collect and monitor the inventory – and that the Mississippi Delta provide the demonstration project for such coordination.

Regardless of the details and challenges ahead, let's leave this room with a new sense of urgency, and a new energy. As Sen. Hohn said yesterday, you forged the Delta legacy, and thus America's enduring legacy. You lived through the hard part, now it's time to bring home the rewards. Let's make that our call to action: Bring it home. Bring it home. Bring it home.

Cardell Cooper is Assistant Secretary for the Office of Community Planning and Development at the U.S. department of Housing and Urban Development. He is an apt closing speaker for us today because he gets right to the heart of what we've been discussing. We began by saying tourism is a tool for community development. Now let's hear from the expert what that might mean as we move forward.

Closing:

Thank you so very much. This has been a truly rewarding experience. It's time to go out there, fan out across the Delta, into our communities, and into our seats of government, and one by one, leader by leader, let's work together and -- bring it home.

**Native American Sites and Delta Literature in Mississippi**  
**By Terry Everett, Assistant Professor of English,**  
**Delta State University**

I presume to tell you where you are. Long before this place became Memphis it was a Chickasaw village called in English translation Fourth Bluff. I don't know the Chickasaw words, and I don't know how the Chickasaw's determined that this was the fourth bluff. But, in February of 1995 I came to the Memphis airport to get Cochise Anderson, Chickasaw poet/story teller/educator/actor/fancy dancer, and the first place we went was to a local museum run by the University of Memphis, Chucalisa, that features a reconstructed village and other important artifacts. And so I greet you with one of my own poems about that occasion:

**FOURTH BLUFF MORNING**  
(For Cochise Anderson)

This morning the black crows  
fly over Memphis as they did  
not so long ago when Memphis  
did not exist, and I walk now  
with Cochise in the damp leaf-meal  
beneath old trees here at Fourth Bluff  
where the Nonconnah waters flow  
into the Father of Waters,  
and I watch Cochise's eyes fill  
with the spirits of ancestors  
blowing in the wind and falling  
in the gentle mist, residing  
in the grassy mounds, whispering  
in the trees, rippling in the blood,  
the muscles, and dark wings of crows.

Let me remind you where you are in another way. I represent Mississippi on this panel, and in Mississippi we think of the Delta where cotton was King and the Blues was born in this classic way as formulated by Greenville Jewish writer David Cohn: the Delta begins in the lobby of the Peabody in Memphis and ends at Catfish Row in Vicksburg.

But since we are here today to speak of the Greater Delta, let me go at this in yet another way. I tell my students at the beginning of each semester that the three largest cities in Mississippi are Memphis, New Orleans, and Mobile. In that spirit the cities of the Delta we are talking about are Chicago, St. Louis/East St. Louis (to name two that are not on the map you have been given), Memphis, and New Orleans (two that are on your map). And so, even though I represent Mississippi on this panel, I want to begin with something in Memphis in connection with what I'm supposed to say about Native American sites in the Delta: Chucalisa Museum. As I've already indicated, Chucalisa Museum has important holdings, and it is a developed site,

thanks largely to the work of faculty at the University of Memphis. But it has experienced difficulties that have caused it to be shut down a lot in recent years. If we could solve the problems of that museum's neighborhood, we would go a long way toward solving the problems that have led to this Delta Initiative. Tourists frequently are afraid to go into the neighborhood where Chucalisa is located.

Let me come on down the river to a site that is not developed, where there is only a sign: Sunflower Landing at Lake DeSoto near Rena Lara, a small town south and west of Clarksdale. Here was an important place of contact that has all kinds of possibilities for development.

On down the river is an important place that does not have so much as a sign. Tureen Landing north of Rosedale according to local Bolivar County of Mississippi legend was a place of crossing on the Trail of Tears. On a Saturday morning in that February of 1995, Cochise Anderson and I stood in the snow while he wept and talked and recorded the moment on his camcorder, and later I wrote this poem:

ANCESTRAL WINDS  
(for Cochise Anderson and Mary Anne Ross)

At Tureen Landing we have stood  
among the snakes and doves and eagles  
feeling the presence before we knew  
of those who failed to make and those  
who made this crossing on the Trail  
of Tears, this southern route that wound  
beside the Arkansas and stopped  
in Oklahoma. You felt, then,  
made me feel it, too, that presence  
in the Cottonmouths so peaceful  
in the slack water, in eagles  
soaring high overhead, in doves  
silently watching us from limbs  
waving in ancestral winds.

On down the river near Greenville sit the Winterville Mounds, a developed site with a museum of Mississippian era artifacts unearthed years ago by Yale archeologists. This site was once under the jurisdiction of the State Parks system and has recently come under the control of the Department of Archives and History. I hope this development bodes well for a site that has been allowed to run down. Thinking about this site reminds me that the whole area of the Greater Delta we are talking about is roughly equivalent to the area under water during the 1927 flood and reminds me to refer to the great book written about that flood and its consequences by John Barry: *RISING TIDE*, which reminds us all that the Delta had been under water before and likely will again:

In 1543, Garcilaso de la Vega, a member of Hernando de Soto's expedition, was

one of the first white men to see the Mississippi River. He recorded its power: "Then God, our Lord, hindered the work with a mighty flood of the great river, which...came down with an enormous increase of water, which in the beginning overflowed the wide level ground between the river and the cliffs"--meaning the river's banks, which towered above the river at low water--"then little by little it rose to the top of the cliffs. Soon it began to flow over the fields in an immense flood, and as the land was level, without any hills, there was nothing to stop the inundation. On the 18th of March, 1534,...the river entered with ferocity through the gates of the town of Aminoya [an Indian village near the present site of Greenville]. It was a beautiful thing to look upon the sea that had been fields, for on each side of the river the water extended over twenty leagues"--nearly 60 miles-- "of land, and [within] all of this area...nothing was seen but the tops of the tallest trees....These floods occur every fourteen years, according to what an old Indian woman told us, which can be verified if the country is conquered, as I hope it will be." (p. 173)

Another developed site in this classic Delta is Cottonlandia Museum in Greenwood, which has a fine collection of artifacts that goes back before the Mississippian Period and extends into the near-present with artifacts from most of the five civilized tribes (Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Creek, Seminole). Cottonlandia also possesses a fine collection of Greenwood Leflore (infamous Choctaw chief and successful politician) materials.

Before I move on to the literature, I'd like to just mention some other sites and events in the Greater Delta. Pow Wows occur annually at Memphis (summer) and Natchez (fall). "Pioneer and Indian Days" occurs annually at Ridgeland, Ms (Jackson suburb) at the Crafts Center on the Natchez Trace. Choctaw arts and crafts are exhibited and dances are performed in costume.

Now, let me switch to literature. I'm expected to say something about Faulkner and so I'll begin with him and the literature of what he calls "the ultimate funneling tip" in GO DOWN, MOSES, one of his two great works on the classic Delta (the other being his story of the 1927 flood: OLD MAN, included within THE WILD PALMS, but frequently anthologized separately. "The ultimate funneling tip" has as its eastern border the Tallahatchie and Yazoo Rivers as GO DOWN, MOSES presents the wilderness shrinking from 20 miles west of Faulkner's Jefferson (our Oxford) in "The Bear" to the south Delta area of what is now the Panther Swamp Wildlife Refuge and the Delta National Forest in "Delta Autumn." In "Delta Autumn" Faulkner delivers his warning to us:

This Delta, he thought: This Delta. This land which man has deswamped and denuded and derivered in two generations so that white men can own plantations and commute every night to Memphis and black men own plantations and ride in jim crow cars to Chicago to live in millionaires' mansions on Lakeshore Drive, where white men rent farms and live like niggers and niggers crop on shares and live like animals, where cotton is planted and grows man-tall in the very cracks of the sidewalks, and usury and mortgage and bankruptcy and measureless wealth, Chinese and African and Aryan and Jew, all breed and spawn together until no man has time to say which one is which nor cares....No wonder the ruined woods I used to know dont cry for retribution! he

thought: The people who have destroyed it will accomplish its revenge.

In more recent times near where the Tallahatchie helps make the Yazoo, Lewis Nordan has carved his masterpieces, especially WOLF WHISTLE, the great novel that insinuates strongly that so much of our trouble with such things as gang violence grow out of our failure to do justice in the Emmet Till case. Born and reared near that same confluence of rivers, Endesha Ida Mae Holland has made great drama and autobiography of her Greenwood childhood and early adulthood. On down the Yazoo near Panther Swamp, we find the dark woods and water and the Choctaw continuance that reverberates in the Choctaw novels of Louis Owens (THE SHARPEST SIGHT and BONE GAME).

On the western side of this classic Delta we find the sites that spawned the works of Clarksdale area literature in many of the plays of Tennessee Williams, the fiction and non-fiction of Lerone Bennett, Jr., the famous editor of EBONY, and the fiction and poetry of Jack Butler.

One could do a whole course on the writers of Greenville alone. Let me mention a few, many of whom are not only of significance to the literature of the Delta but also to the literature of the world: William Alexander Percy (his LANTERNS ON THE LEVEE and his friendships that brought the literary world to Greenville) and then the great generation that followed him: Shelby Foote, Walker Percy, Ellen Douglas, Charles Bell, David Cohn--and then the younger generations that followed: Angela Jackson (great African-American woman poet who deserves more attention--read her poem "Mak'n My Music"), Brooks Haxton, Beverly Lowry, D.C. Berry. Some other writers of importance to the region are Yazoo City's Willie Morris and Jackson-area writers James Whitehead, Richard Ford, Eudora Welty, Barry Hannah

Faulkner and others give us the challenge from the dark side. He and others also present the incredible beauties of human, vegetational, inorganic, organic, and animal Nature, but allow me to close with one of my own poems about some of the beauties:

#### ADORATION/ADORATION

Golden/ocher/burnished copper/  
Orange-fusion of sun flames on the edge  
Of evening as I shut the engine down  
To watch again, alone this time, I think,  
The magic light intensify to red  
And deeper red above the evening-edge  
And the silver/ocher, silver/charcoal  
Ripple and shine below the fold where sky  
Meets land just beyond the shining water,  
And I know I've seen this with Other eyes  
Before, and I know I see it now  
With Other eyes shining in the dark  
Beside me, breathless as I in awe  
And wonder and total adoration.

**Remarks**  
**By Ken Murphree, Tunica County Administrator, Mississippi**

Rags to Riches Story

Pg. 1

- \*Hope & Opportunity
- \*16,000 jobs / unemployment rate
- \*Wage rates / labor demand / medium family income
- \*Indications of poverty – food stamps, TANF, Child support
- \*Consumer goods, cars, better clothing, housing

Conditions

Did all this just fall out of sky and land in Tunica?

- \*Local commitment to support gaming industry
- \*Jobs
- \*Infrastructure
  - Assess, local road system, airport, rail
  - Water & Sewer
  - Utilities electricity & gas
  - Communication Pg. 2
  - Emergency services – law enforcement, fire, ambulance
  - Medical facilities
  - Landfill – Storm water management
- \*Workforce
  - Labor Supply
  - Skills training
  - Work ethic for hospitality industry
  - Communication skills

Strategic planning

- \*Existing assets
- \*Desires & Goals
- \*Capabilities
- \*Develop Plan
- \*Financial Plan

**Infrastructure - Paths to Tourism Development**  
**By Ray Bryant, Executive Director,**  
**Lower Mississippi Delta Development Center**

As far back as the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission in the late 1980's, residents of the Delta have talked and speculated about the potential of tourism as a tool to bring economic recovery to the region. Tourism provides an important link between **respect for the history and culture of the Lower Mississippi Delta**, environmental integrity, and the **region's untapped potential for economic development**. This a theme that resounded from every state during public hearings held by the Delta Commission in 19989-90 as it fashioned a plan for economic development for the Delta.

The Delta Commission's final report, "The Delta Initiatives" spent more print on the tourism section than any other phase of economic development. This was reflecting the message that the people of the region were sending that tourism can and should play an important role in the Delta's future economic development. After all, the Delta offers a many faceted menu of drawing cards that can entice visitors to the region. History, Literature, Native and African American Heritage, Music, Natural Resources and Beauty and the Mississippi River are just a few of the attractions that hold potential. The "Delta Vision, Delta Voices: The Mississippi Delta Beyond 200" report that was completed earlier this year had a lot to say about tourism and its place in the future of the Delta and was a compilation of hearing sessions held in the region in 1999. This is documentation 10 years after the Delta Commission's work that the region still believes that tourism holds one of the keys to economic development of the Delta.

Today, our task here is to discuss the role that our infrastructure plays in developing the tourism potential for the Delta. Infrastructure is a word with broad meanings, so when I think of infrastructure and how it interfaces with tourism development, I think of bringing visitors to the region - I think of good roads, good bridges, good air, water and rail ports - I think of the river that is the artery through the entire region and its opportunity to bring visitors to the Delta. I, especially, think about an active seven state Delta Transportation consortium that would work cooperatively to develop a regional multimodal transportation plan for the region. I also think of good communication tools to tell the stories of the Delta that we want visitors to hear, I think of a seven state regional consortium for tourism development than emphasizes the region and not just one state, I think of a regional web site/s to tell the Delta's stories on the internet and I think of African American and Native American Cultural Centers and routes to tell these stories. I also think of the infrastructure that is needed to service our visitors when they arrive - I think of an association of bed and breakfast establishments and, indeed, the development of new B&B,s - I think of new user friendly trails for driving or riding bicycles through the Delta, I think of new or improved camp sites, adequate sanitary facilities, picnic tables, food service areas and many other features. When I think of these things, the bottom line for all of them results in **JOBS** for the residents of the Delta or **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**.

Let me stop at this point with the general philosophy and talk to you about the real world as we at the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Center have encountered it over the past seven years.

In 1993, the LMDD Center initiated the development of the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) Bicycle route, an infrastructure endeavor. This was an idea gleaned from the Commission's final report in 1990 and was jump started by a group of interested persons in the Delta region of Tennessee. The Center's overall plan for the Delta was to develop a continuous bicycle route from St. Louis, MO to New Orleans, LA utilizing existing roads that cyclists helped select and felt safe to ride. The Center, local government leaders and bicyclists from West Tennessee worked with the Tennessee DOT to open the first part of the route, a 177 mile segment from downtown Memphis to Reelfoot Lake near the Kentucky border in 1996. At the same time we were developing the route in Tennessee, we were traveling around the entire Delta region talking to DOT's, cyclists, state and local leaders about opening connecting segments in the other six states. What we found was enthusiasm and acceptance for the idea throughout the region. Soon, we were able to open segments in Kentucky, Missouri and Illinois. Some time later, we opened segments in Arkansas and Mississippi and now we are opening the segments in Louisiana. The idea gained the support of all the governors in the Delta region and all of them or the state legislatures pledged and contributed start-up funds to work on the trail. The Center was able to obtain, from the USDOT, an approved MRT road sign that can be used in every state to designate the trail. We believe that the MRT is the first and, maybe, the only Delta effort, to-date, that has this kind of support and **THAT IS SIGNIFICANT**. Today, a bicyclist can now ride on a continuous identified bicycle route from Ste. Genevieve, MO to New Orleans along the Mississippi River. We are hoping that cyclists soon will be able to ride from Lake Itasca, MN to New Orleans on the MRT. The upper Mississippi River states of Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin have requested the opportunity to designate a route and tie into the MRT at St. Louis and go to the headwaters in Minnesota. All of us involved with the MRT are really excited about this possibility and are working as we speak to make this happen within the next year.

In 1999, the Delta Center and the Mississippi River Trail, Inc. applied for designation as one of the nationally recognized Millennium Trails. In June of 1999, the MRT was recognized as one of sixteen National Millennium Trails designated by the program sponsors, USDOT, Rail-to-Trails Conservancy and the White House Millennium Council, because it offers links to the region's landscape, history, and culture. We believe that this offers the entire Delta region some real advantages since a national web site has been developed to publicize and help market these significant trails. Exposure and marketing leads to tourism interest that leads to visitor days to the region.

I tell you this story for many reasons. First, regional tourism efforts can succeed. Second, the states in the Delta region can and should work together to enhance tourism. Third, we have learned some important truths about the region - some good - some not so good.

The MRT has shown us that the Delta region must continue to improve its roads, bridges and other infrastructure. We know that we must build good wide shoulders on the roads (federal,

state and local) of the region as they are being improved to make them safer and convenience to non-motorized travel. Many bridges are still dangerous for motorized travel and especially for bicycle travel. This must change in the near future. Hotels, motels, bed and breakfast and other accommodations are lacking in too many rural towns and cities. This need must be addressed. Small restaurants, cafes or stores to buy snacks, sandwiches, drinks and other basics are lacking in too many rural localities. Our riders have found that personal attitudes of local residents, especially many auto and truck drivers, need to become more tolerant and friendly toward visitors on bicycles or other tourists. The Delta still has some other major problems in rural areas with service infrastructure to host visitors - sanitary facilities are almost non-existent in some areas and some visitors have told us that worker attitudes in the service industries in parts of the region are sometimes less than helpful.

Let me quickly highlight what the LMDDC believes should be the highest priorities for the Delta region:

**\* 1. Develop and improve the transportation infrastructure of roads/bridges/water/air and rail routes that can and will support the combined potential of the Great River Road for motorized travel, the MRT for bicycle and auto travel and the development of a Wildlife Viewing and Birding Corridor.** We believe that this combination can produce a world class Mississippi River tourism attraction from the headwaters in Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico and especially in the Delta.

- This priority can and should be supported by a reactivated Delta Transportation Consortium made up of all the Transportation Departments in the Delta states working with the U.S. DOT.

**\* 2. Initiate an active Delta regional tourism working group** to initiate and implement strong marketing and promotion programs to assure that African American and Native American Cultural Centers and routes and a Delta Music Heritage Route are established for the entire Delta region.

**\* 3. Develop a Delta Hospitality Association** to promote, advertise and encourage development of hospitality options where none now exist, especially in rural areas of the Delta.

A couple of cyclists from the West Coast that are now traveling the MRT from the headwaters of the Mississippi River to New Orleans. These persons are in their 60's and they are spending several weeks making this journey. To aid and assist our efforts to make the MRT a class bicycle route, they offered to report to us on their experiences as they travel along. On one recent communication, they were desperately needing help with routing through some areas where signage is not installed and to identify places to stay along the route. This particular incidence happened to be in the state of Illinois. We were able to provide some information that we had compiled about the route and amenities available. Their next message stated that they had had a rough time finding suitable accommodations and had to put in very long days on the trail, but after viewing the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers converging at Cairo, they felt that it had all been worthwhile. Let me quote, "Standing at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, it all seemed worth it: the headwinds, the traffic, the hills, the lack of paved shoulders - maybe even the horn blasts from rude drivers." We interpret this message to say that our visitors have concluded that the Delta is a region that is attractive to visitors and one that they would visit

again and again, but the region needs to give attention to helping rural areas develop those infrastructure elements and improve visitor attitudes that are missing to make this a world class destination for tourists.

Let me emphasize that the clock is ticking and the Delta region has a window of opportunity to really concentrate on making the tourism industry in the region truly a major component of the economic development mix, but we must act promptly and wisely. The economy is good, people are traveling and the region has all the resources that it needs to make the Delta a world class tourist destination. The time for talking is coming to an end: The question is: **Does the Delta have the will to do the things necessary to make it happen?**

We, at the Delta Center, believe that the Delta can meet these challenges and that working together, the region can make tourism the tremendous economic generator it can and should be and help bring jobs and prosperity to this great heartland region.

## Synopsis of Session 2: Challenges, Needs, Infrastructure, Work Force, Natural Resources and Facilities

By Sharon Calcote, Marketing Supervisor,  
Louisiana Office of Tourism

### Speakers:

Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, Lieutenant Governor, Louisiana  
Martha Ellen Black, Executive Director, East Prairie Missouri Enterprise Community  
Ray Bryant, Executive Director, Lower Mississippi Delta Development Center  
Ken Murphree, County Administrator, Tunica County  
Bill Chandler, International Organizer, Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Union

Louisiana Lieutenant Governor began the session by showing a music video which highlighted all of the various types of music found in the delta region: blues, rhythm and blues, jazz, gospel and dixieland. In the delta region, the Mississippi River has provided us a war ground, work ground and play ground. The river divides us and man has built bridges. Looking at the river, it gives and takes. As an economic engine, it has great vitality, but it is not evenly distributed. The river brings riches to some and poverty to others. The river and the delta presents contrasts. These contrasts represent the story of the delta. We are here to come together to make this river region work for us. Our resources, if fully developed, can equalize the delta playing field. Our successes can be enormous because of our resources. There is an explosion of cultural interest and its finding its way into the states. Music and musical styles founded in the delta can be the next tool to attract cultural tourists. Couple cultural tourism themes with bricks and mortar efforts such as Main Street, where there is a \$75 investment for every \$1 spent. Our scenic byways is an example of the benefit of developing partnerships. Our speakers here today will present the successes of partnership development and how these partnerships identified and addressed while at the same time resolving challenges.

**Martha Ellen Black:** Contrary to what people say, I want to set the record straight: Missouri heads the delta. East Prairie, population 3,500, was designated an enterprise community and part of our plan was to develop tourism - the heart of human development. We had to build relationships, infrastructure which included bricks and mortar - but also included people. The greatest thing about the East Prairie Enterprise Community was the networking - building relationships and trust. One of these relationships was built through the Southern Forum which brought our small community in touch with big name people like Al Eisenburg, Lee Powell

During the Southern Forum, we looked for common threads. Those aspects that made us special. We looked at historic attractions, cultural attractions, natural attractions and began an inventory. We assessed what we have - and identified what we wanted to do with it. We started pulling communities together so when travelers visit, we have several things to show them. We started with three buses the first year. It's our beginning. Being part of the delta, we have more opportunities to build upon. During our inventory and development process, we also experienced some obstacles. Poverty was a concern. How can we invite people to visit with

empty buildings? We also need a bottom-up approach. Our partners, both federal and state, need to support communities. To move our initiative forward, we need to be aggressive with communities. In working with communities, we identified that back water flooding was another major obstacles. The flooding impaired our development. We couldn't reach our culture and history because of the flooding - the flooding was also hurting the environment. So to develop a community plan, I recommend identifying obstacles, taking an inventory of each community and find ways to share. Rodney Slater tells a story about ants moving a loaf of bread. One ant can't move the loaf of bread - but an army of ants can. We need to move together - as an army - and then we can have several threads running through the region.

**Ray Bryant:** In 1990, the Mississippi River Delta Commission was talking about what impact tourism can have on the region. Tourism helps bring together resources for economic development. The Delta Commission Report dedicated more print copy to tourism than any other economic development area. Tourism can be part of the economic development recovery. The delta has many diverse characteristics: Native American history, literature, Mississippi River.... Delta Voices - Delta Vision talks about its place in the delta. Tourism holds the key. But, we need to look at infrastructure in the delta - Infrastructure has a broad meaning. We need to look at infrastructure and how it interfaces with tourism. We need good airports, good port systems, river arteries, bridges...to coordinate these infrastructure needs, I've recommended an active, seven-state transportation consortium. The consortium could emphasize the entire delta, not just one state - through a good transportation system - we can tell the stories of the delta. We need to develop cultural centers, bed&breakfasts, new places to stay and visit, new trails, campsites, picnic tables, food service...all bring jobs and economic development to the region.

In 1993, the concept of a Mississippi Trail and bike trail was organized from St. Louis to New Orleans. It was jump-started in West Tennessee. In 1996, the first segment of the trail was opened with a I-40 Welcome Center in Memphis to the Kentucky state border- a 177-mile route. We then began to go to other states in the delta to coordinate the trail in other delta states: Kentucky, Missouri, Illinois, Arkansas and Mississippi, and Louisiana are putting up the Mississippi Trail signs. Besides creating a seven-state bike trail, we accomplished one other thing: we were able to garner support of all seven governors to support the trail and to provide start-up funds, developing a cooperative venture of all seven delta states.

In 1999, the Delta Development Center and the Delta Initiative applied for and received designation of one of 16 millennium trails. We were selected because of the links to landscape, culture and nature. We are making this resource available to millions of visitors from all over the world.

Regional tourism can succeed - but there are truths about the region that must be told. We need to improve roads and build wider shoulders; we need adequate hotels, motels and B&Bs in rural communities - we need small food shops located at points along the trail - this does not exist for trail users. And, most of all, we need hospitality...locals needs to be friendly.

I have identified three priorities for the region:

- 1) Develop transportation and water resources. Create a consortium that organizes and combines projects from the head waters to the gulf.
- 2) Assure stories and interpretive centers are established.
- 3) Develop a delta hospitality association to market and promote, especially in the smaller communities.

The delta is attractive to visitors and these visitors would come again and again - but we need to improve the infrastructure and improve the attitudes of locals to welcome visitors.

Finally, we need to act promptly and accurately. Does the delta have the will to do the things to make it happen? If we do, we can make tourism the economic generator for the region.

**Ken Murphree:** Tunica is a rags to riches story. The Tunica phenomenon - a very small community became a destination after deciding to bring gaming into the community. We sought the gaming industry because we were desperate. We took the risk to invite this unknown industry into our mist. We had high unemployment, child support problems...the county made a commitment to bring change. This was a local effort and a local commitment. We wanted to create jobs - so we took the risk.

In Tunica, nothing was there - it was totally agricultural. The Town of Tunica is eight-miles south of the casino. We now have 10 casinos and have established the third largest concentration of casinos in the United States.

We did what this meeting is all about. We used a methodology to focus on ways to take advantage of the opportunities presented by tourism. We identified our assets, needs and created a vision and strategy. We looked at existing assets, looked at what we wanted - we were realistic. We developed a plan - a strategy. Our other key part was financial - had to find a way to pay for plan. We had to build roads - we developed a master transportation plan. We needed improvements to sewer and water - our electrical company didn't even extend power to the area where the casino was developed - This was an obstacles - in the beginning the casino operated on a generator - now it's doing nicely with the power company (both are happy).

Because of the economic boom brought by the casino - our emergency services have expanded from 10 employees to 120. We did not have medical services - now we have medical. We worked hardest on work force development. We worked to mesh job skills to training skills to develop the work force necessary for the casinos.

**Bill Chandler:** The south has been impoverished for a long time. Workers are the key to the development of wealth in the south. We have suffered from no pay or little pay. There is a lack of re-investment in the south. Companies have come in to use our resources - but ship the

money out. Coca Cola re-invested in the south and that's apparent in the Atlanta area Mississippi ranks 50<sup>th</sup> among the states. Ten years ago when the gaming industry began talking about casinos in Mississippi, we had great expectations. Number One expectations was the creation of jobs...Mississippi had the highest unemployment rate and the lowest pay. We also were glad that this was an industry that would not run-away - like manufacturing. The gaming industry would stay and re-invest in the community. We supported the referendum to let gaming begin.

Now, during the construction of the casinos and the later operations - we began to lose enthusiasm. Contractors didn't hire local workers at decent pay. We were seeing out-of-state workers at low pay. The delta is primarily unionized from agriculture to state workers. When we first began working with state workers their pay averaged between \$13,000-20,000. We began lobbying effort to improve pay incentives from \$13,000 to \$24,000. Instead of being 50<sup>th</sup> among states for pay, Mississippi workers became 43<sup>rd</sup> among the states in pay. We began working with the hotels and motels, restaurants and casinos - they found themselves in similar situations. Workers were used to small properties - not large hotels - and these workers were cast aside. Transportation was another problem. Many workers did not have cars - the casino started a shuttle service to transport workers to work. Housekeeping is still the lowest paid. We saw in Mississippi a lack of training, lack of discipline among workers and they were being replaced by out-of-state workers.

Using Las Vegas as an example - there are higher wages - the higher wages provide for re-investment into the community. Workers can become homeowners - improve the quality of life for community - and improves the quality of lives of workers. In Mississippi, we had problems with the quality of workers. We established collective bargaining and set up training center which was funded through a 3/10ths of an hour fee to help employees train for jobs - housekeeping, food service...casinos employ 3,000 workers a year and are beginning to pay a living wage (\$11-12/hour) that can be re-invested into the community. Mississippi and Vegas have large difference between them - \$6 - to \$12 per hour. Vegas has premier health care plan, workers earn enough money to own a car, and workers are trained to do quality work. I've been talking to workers in Mississippi and along the Gulf Coast - people are eager to improve life People are willing to work hard.

There are three points to make here:

- 1) Training is necessary - In Mississippi we developed the Mississippi Training Center
- 2) We would like to have workers decide if they want union representation
- 3) Workers need collective bargaining to have voice in the industry and to move forward like Las Vegas has.

We can improve the quality of life in the delta, like in Las Vegas, and have re-investment in the community - by working together.

**Recap:**

-Small communities, coordinated efforts, lightening strikes and we have challenges of improving workers' dignity. People are working hard - but we still have obstacles: transportation needs, attitude, education and training will make the delta better.

Public relations can also be a tool to get your message out. When people read about you in travel and tourism magazines or in newspapers - it creates more awareness.

A message to our federal partners - we need investment into the region - and we can have powerful impact.



Mississippi Delta Regional Initiative  
**Delta Tourism Development Forum**  
October 18-20, 2000, Memphis, Tennessee

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