

This is a very special edition newsletter. I am pleased to announce that on Tuesday, April 9 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), and Mississippi State University (MSU) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) creating a Center of Excellence for Watershed Management in Mississippi. The Center will be administered through the Mississippi Water Resources Research Institute (MWRRRI), but will be a collaborative work effort between MWRRRI, MDEQ, and EPA.

This is not a paradigm shift to the MWRRRI's Mission Statement. What it does in essence is to build on and expand the Institute's current working relationship with EPA and MDEQ with regard to watershed management. The following bullets contain certain portions of the MOU that I felt would be of special interest to our stakeholders.

The complete MOU may be found on the first page of the MWRRRI WEB site at www.wrri.msstate.edu.

- The Parties agree that the primary purpose of the Center of Excellence for Watershed Management Program is to utilize the diverse talent and expertise of colleges and universities in various geographic areas of Mississippi to provide hands on practical products and services to help communities identify watershed-based problems and develop and implement locally-sustainable solutions.
- MWRRRI, once designated as the Mississippi Center of Excellence for Watershed Management, will serve as the point-of-contact and primary coordinating entity for colleges and universities in Mississippi with water-related expertise.
- As a Center of Excellence for Watershed Management, MWRRRI will actively seek out local stakeholders that need cost effective technical tools for scientific support, engineering support, and information technology, as well as assistance with project management,

outreach and education, and watershed planning.

- MWRRRI will work with colleges and universities in Mississippi to engage students (graduate and undergraduate), faculty and staff from the full suite of disciplines needed to adequately address specific watershed issues. When needed, MWRRRI will also draw upon other local, state, federal and Center of Excellence for Watershed Management Network resources and expertise to minimize duplicative efforts.
- In addition to helping build local stakeholder capacity, MWRRRI will also work with colleges and universities in Mississippi to build their capacity to teach environmental and watershed management approaches to both traditional and nontraditional students.
- MWRRRI will pay special attention to local stakeholders which also represent underserved populations in



watershed communities and, when possible, seek ways to work with these unique populations. This approach will build upon a MOU between MWRRRI and Alcorn State University designed to maximize water related research in the state of Mississippi.

I will be traveling across the state this summer visiting with Advisory Board members and other stakeholders to discuss the opportunities this MOU provides regarding watershed management. If you have specific questions, or would like to set up a meeting, please contact me directly via e-mail (waynew@ext.msstate.edu) or by phone (662.694.1166).

Wayne